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The Sistine Secrets: Michelangelo's Forbidden Messages In The Heart Of The Vatican



Synopsis

The Shocking Secrets of Michelangelo's Sistine Chapel Artwork
The recent cleaning of the Sistine Chapel frescoes removed layer after layer of centuries of accumulated tarnish and darkness. The Sistine Secrets endeavors to remove the centuries of prejudice, censorship, and ignorance that blind us to the truth about one of the world's most famous and beloved art treasures.

Book Information

Paperback: 336 pages

Publisher: HarperOne; 1 edition (May 12, 2009)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 006146905X

ISBN-13: 978-0061469053

Product Dimensions: 5.3 x 0.8 x 8 inches

Shipping Weight: 9.6 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

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Customer Reviews

This book describes many of Michelangelo's high Renaissance artworks in the Vatican City, Florence and elsewhere and claims Michelangelo was directly influenced by Jewish religious teachings of the Talmud, Midrash and Kabbalah in his subject matter as well as deeper symbolic messages of Christian religious art, particularly in the Sistine Chapel. The authors note that Michelangelo was virtually adopted by Lorenzo de Medici and educated in an intellectual environment of the de Medici court that included Renaissance scholars and philosophers who were proponents of ideals of unity of religious and philosophical thought. Among other sources, the authors claim these studies included Jewish teachings and philosophical works based on Jewish teachings. The authors argue that the Jewish component of those intellectual discussions at the "School of Athens" in the de Medici family palace must have been picked up and internalized by the young Michelangelo as a lifetime intellectual influence and a sympathy to Jewish religious and mystical thought. This tenuous speculation about his early education is the basis of the central claim. In order to accept the theme, one has to accept the central speculation about Michelangelo's

alleged fascination with the Jewish teachings. Several detailed observations, subjective interpretations and speculations about the artworks in the Sistine Chapel and elsewhere are then provided in the book to validate these claims. These interpretations of the artworks are the strength of the entire argument. The authors provide skimpy evidence of this alleged fascination in Michelangelo's letters and poetry, his known associates, or in any accounts of his contemporaries.

We all love a good yarn about Vatican secrets. What are those wacky prelates up to now? But what a great tale it would be if one the Vatican's own treasures -- Michelangelo's bravura painting of the Sistine chapel ceiling and front wall -- was laden with anti-Catholic messages and secret insults against popes? That's the idea behind *Sistine Secrets*. The book sets the stage by discussing little-known tales of artists embedding secret messages in their art. How many know, for instance, that sculptor Daniel French's Lincoln Memorial statue show Abe's forming the initials "A" and "L" in sign language? And what are the strange openings in the leafy canopy to either side of the head of the central figure in Botticelli's "Primavera"? Could the artist, in an age in which human dissection was taboo, have surreptitiously revealed his participation in this illicit practice by embedding the outline of human heart and lungs into his painting? I'm not sure what art historians make of this theory, but it certainly got my attention. Having established the fascinating possibility that artist embed "secrets" into their art, the authors move on to their main thesis. Michelangelo's tumultuous family life and apparent homosexuality come in for scrutiny. The story of how he snuck in at night to carved "Michelangelo made this" on the band across the Virgin's chest (in badly-spelled and ungrammatical Latin) was fun and accurate as far as I know. But from here, things got dodgy. Michelangelo, taken in by the de Medici family, is supposedly instructed in the ways of the Kabala as well as neo-platonic teachings supposedly banned by the Church. I'm no scholar, but Church teaching took Plato quite seriously, seeing in his theory of the ideal forms an echo of divine perfection.

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