

ART *mag*
by SYBARIS.

017



About



COMMISSIONS



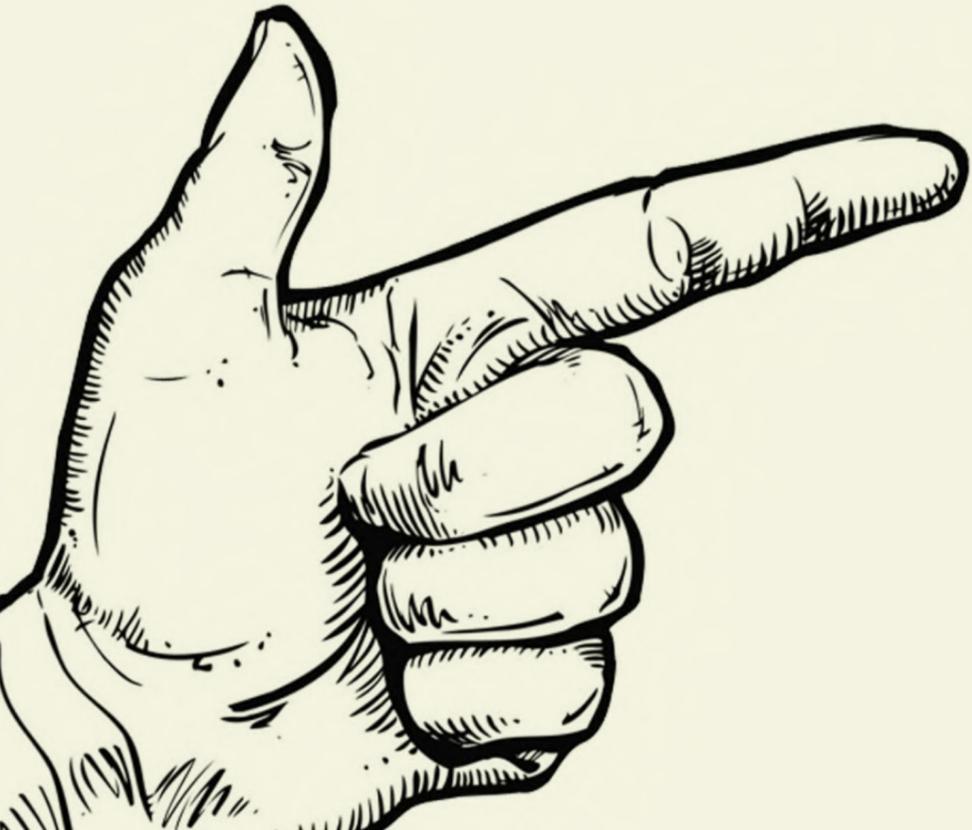
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Editor's *note*

Who were the first patrons in the history of art to commissioning artwork and what was their purpose? How has commissioning changed for the artist and for the entity requesting the art piece? What can be predicted as the future of the commissioning world? Our May issue explores the many and different ramifications of art commission in the past and in the present.

Historical facts and recent scandals can make a quirky encapsulation of what is like to be commissioned to do art; to be commissioned an art piece for an individual, business, or government can sometimes be compared to making an agreement with the devil. *“Commissioned artwork can be anything: a portrait, a wedding gift, artwork for a hotel, etc. Unfortunately, there are no universal rules for art commissions. Consequently, many clients take advantage of artists,”* says Clara Lieu, an art critic for the Division of Experimental and Foundation studies and a professor at the Rhode Island School of Design.

This issue aims to track down the history of ancient civilizations and the Renaissance in its relation to commissioned work, and its present manifestations in within political quarrels of respectable art institutions.



A Brief History of Artwork Commission: *Ancient Rome and the Italian Renaissance*

An artwork commission is the act of soliciting the creation of an original piece, often on behalf of another. Art pieces can be commissioned by private individuals, by a business, or by the government. When and why did the term commission began to take effect in the art world and what was its purpose? And what has this term become today?

In early times of human civilization, artwork commissions served as a public display to enforce authority and reassure who **the power** belonged to.

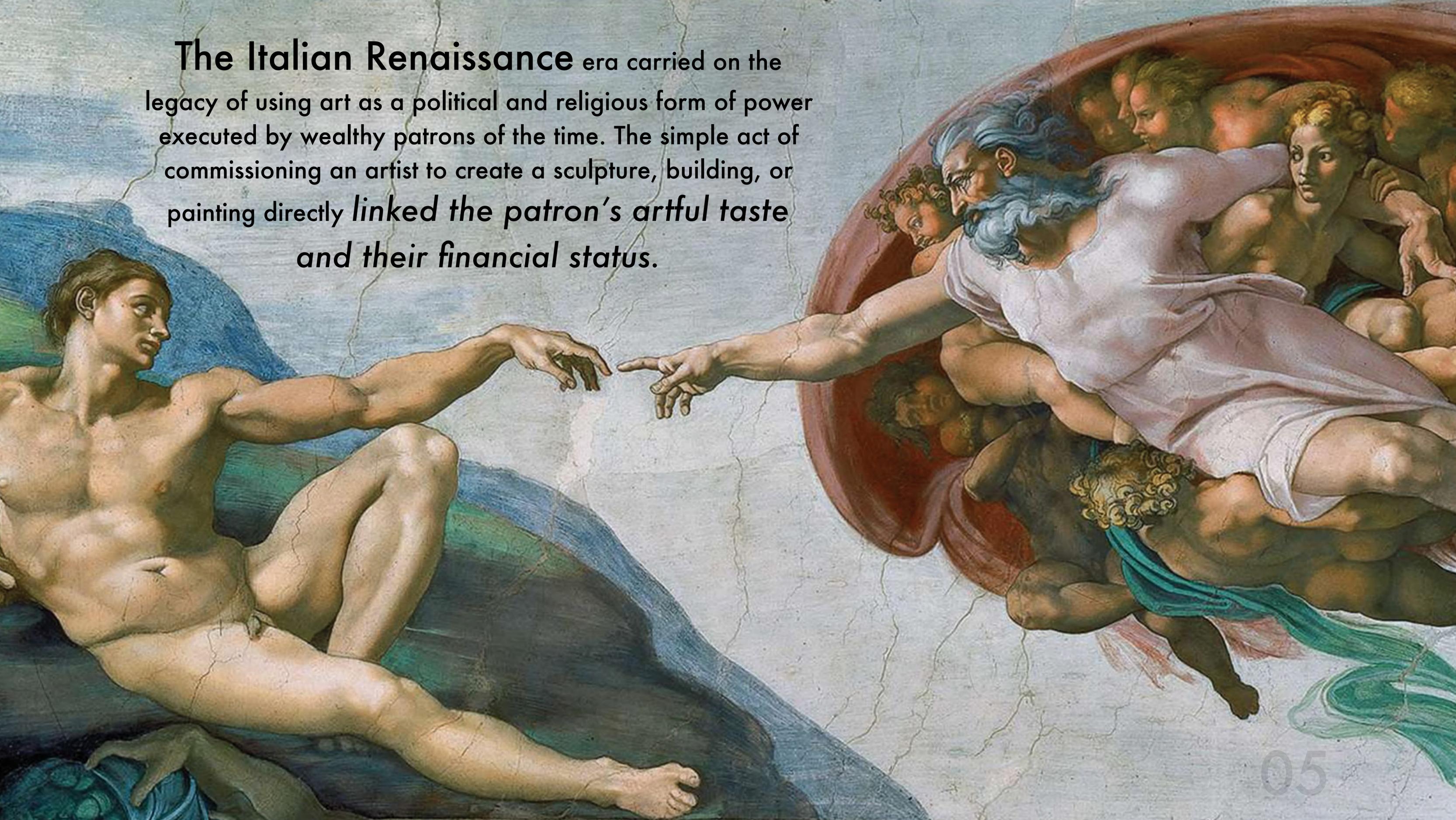


Ancient Rome, a civilization which did not appreciate art at all but cared about power, created large and in-charge artwork pieces *to satisfy the Emperor's ego*.

The image shows the Roman Coliseum, a massive ancient amphitheater in Rome, Italy. The structure is built of travertine and tuff, featuring three tiers of arches. The top tier is mostly missing, leaving the lower two tiers visible. The sun is low in the sky, creating a warm, golden light and long shadows. The sky is a clear, pale blue.

The Roman Coliseum for example, was commissioned by *Emperor Vespasian* around 70-80 AD that would be used as an amphitheater to hold public spectacles such as mock sea battles, animal hunts, executions, dramas based on classical mythology, and gladiators killing each other. *These barbaric actions represented the power the Emperors back in ancient Rome felt needed to be acknowledged by the public but it was not for the love of art but rather for power.*

The Italian Renaissance era carried on the legacy of using art as a political and religious form of power executed by wealthy patrons of the time. The simple act of commissioning an artist to create a sculpture, building, or painting directly *linked the patron's artful taste and their financial status.*



During the 15th century, the **Medici family of Florence** became one of the wealthiest of all investing in the banking business. Around 1434, Cosimo de' Medici was one of the wealthiest patrons who gave the Renaissance its permanent mark in the art world. Amongst the most celebrated artworks commissioned by the Medici family include Sandro Botticelli's Birth of Venus (ca. 1484-86), Donatello's bronze David (c. 1428-32), Michelangelo's Tomb of Lorenzo de Medici, Duke of Urbino (c. 1525), and the Uffizi Gallery itself which now houses most of the Medici art collection. This particular family converted Florence into the cultural landmark it is today. **Other families like the Borgia and the Sforza** also used to hire artisans to construct statuary and building in their honor as propaganda.





The commission world nowadays continues as a form of granting fellowships and sponsorships for mainly public decorations of cities. Artists that specialize in architecture, painting, sculpting, and design are highly marketable and feasible people to commission. **The powerful institutions of the world, whether in ancient Rome, the Renaissance, or in 2019, they have a responsibility to create cultural movements and support the arts.**

The intertwining between art and power has had a history of its own throughout different eras of human civilization that have changed art collections, museums, and galleries forever. Different cities and eras in history were defined by the powerhouse, wealthy patrons, and powerful families that created legendary art pieces that *are still considered the top masterpieces of the world.*

Top Commissioned Art Pieces by Top Commissioners of All Time

Who are these great art commissioners and which pieces did have they granted to the art world?

The Last Supper by Leonardo da Vinci

Ludovico Sforza was the fourth son of Francesco I Sforza and is famed as the patron of Leonardo da Vinci and other artists that defined the Milanese Renaissance. Ludovico commissioned the piece at the beginning of the 1490s when he was in conflict with the French over the Italian Wars with Louis XII of France. The painting was commissioned by Sforza to be the centerpiece of the mausoleum.



The opposite wall of the refectory is covered by the Crucifixion fresco by Giovanni Donato da Montorfano. This art piece by da Vinci is perhaps the most celebrated of his work and the most important commissioned piece by the Sforza family. *Leonardo da Vinci and Ludovico Sforza had a special relationship that benefited both parties in terms of creating art.*



Commissioned by Ludovico Sforza, Duke of Milan

The Medici Family of Florence is considered to be the leaders of the Renaissance. Their patronage and political support of the arts helped catalyze the Italian Renaissance into a fully formed cultural movement.



*Commissioned by
Lorenzo di Pier
Francesco de' Medici*



After gaining an enormous fortune in banking, the House of Medici is responsible for most of the Uffizi Gallery in Florence. Botticelli's major art patron was Lorenzo "il Magnifico" de' Medici. Lorenzo first commissioned Botticelli's Pallas Athena Taming a Centaur (c. 1482) as a wedding gift to Semiramide Appiano and later on commissioned the Allegory of Spring (c. 1487). Other prominent figures of the Medici family include Giovanni de' Medici, Cosimo de' Medici, Pope Leo X, Catherine de' Medici, and Marie de' Medici.

The Sistine Chapel by Michelangelo

Pope Julius began his papacy in 1503 till his death on February 21, 1513. Julius, nicknamed the Warrior Pope, is considered to be one of the most powerful influential popes of all time. As a great patron of the arts, Julius commissioned the Raphael Rooms, the Sistine Chapel, and the remodeling of Saint Peter's Basilica.



*Commissioned by
Pope Julius II*

This commission gave Michelangelo the title of the High Renaissance artist. The ceiling's various painted elements form part of the entire body of work of the Chapel. Other artists who did frescos for the Chapel include Sandro Botticelli, Domenico Ghirlandaio, and Pietro Perugino. Michelangelo's focus laid on the nine scenes from the Book of Genesis, specifically The Creation of Adam is the most famous section of this iconic ceiling. The amount of commissions the Vatican City has executed makes this amazing city a top patron of the arts now and during the Renaissance era.

The Borgia Apartments by Pinturicchio (Bernardino di Betto)

The Italian-Spanish noble family during the grandeur of the Renaissance was an ambitious, greedy, and celebrity-like powerful force that infamously prevailed during Rodrigo's papacy as Pope Alexander VI. Murderous and scandalous acts for power benefited the legacy of the Borgia during the 14th and 17th century as their road to success led them landing two members of the family elected pope.



*Commissioned by
Rodrigo Borgia (Pope
Alexander VI)*

First, it was Alfonso de Borgia and later on Rodrigo de Borgia, who was the man who commissioned the artist Pinturicchio. The artist was commissioned to decorate a suite of six rooms in the Apostolic Palace of the Vatican. These rooms now form part of the Vatican Library. The frescos from Pinturicchio were the first that created a trend in style and exposure during the Renaissance that may have collided with Perugino, Lo Spagna, and 'baby' Raphael.

There is no doubt how history can teach a lesson in 2019 in terms of rediscovering the old and *new forms of power and politics in art.*



The relationship may have changed for the better over time, but its connection is ultimately there, whether for mutually exclusive benefits or for the achievement of game-changing massive cultural movements.



*The freedom to create
within the restrictions of
commissioned work:*
**MoMA's Folk Art
Museum and DS+R
Scandal**

Nowadays, the Museum of Modern Art Commissions in New York is considered to be one of the most powerful patronages of art as of 2019.

AMMO

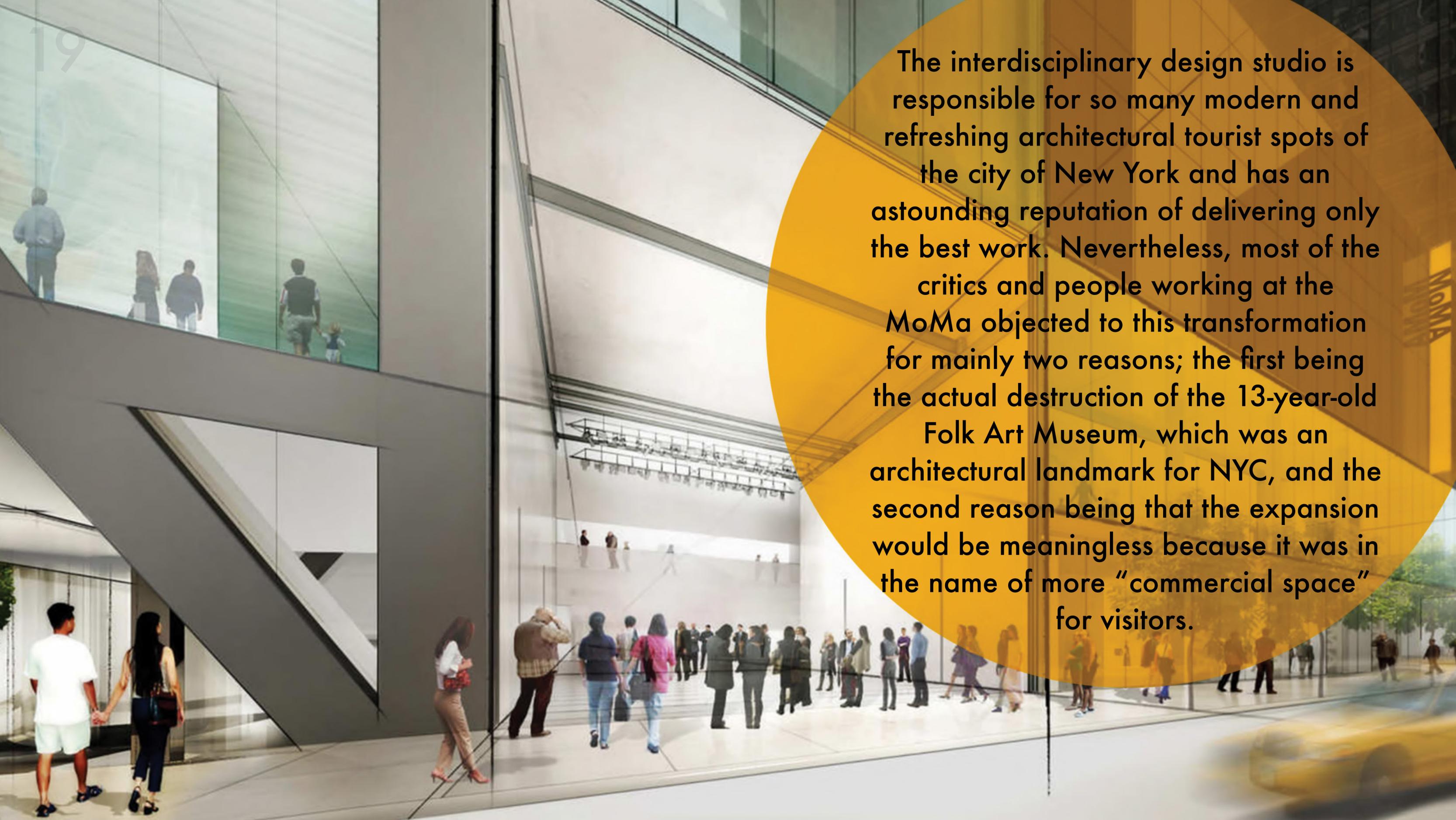
*Moreover, the scandalous and dramatic commissions that happen nowadays still involve politics and funds. Yet, there are many commissions by **MoMa PS1** that are successful and highly experimental and rewarding for the artist.*



Modern commissions are difficult and sketchy when the infrastructure of an institution is at stake. That is when things get messy and very public. One big example is the scandal revolving the MoMa's decision to demolish the American Folk Art Museum back in 2014 which involved the **DS+R design firm**. In a statement released early January of 2014, Glenn Lowry, the director of the MoMa, confirmed that the American Folk Art Museum, designed by Tod Williams and Billie Tsien Architects, will be demolished in order to make way for the redesigning and expansion of the museum by Diller Scofidio + Renfro.







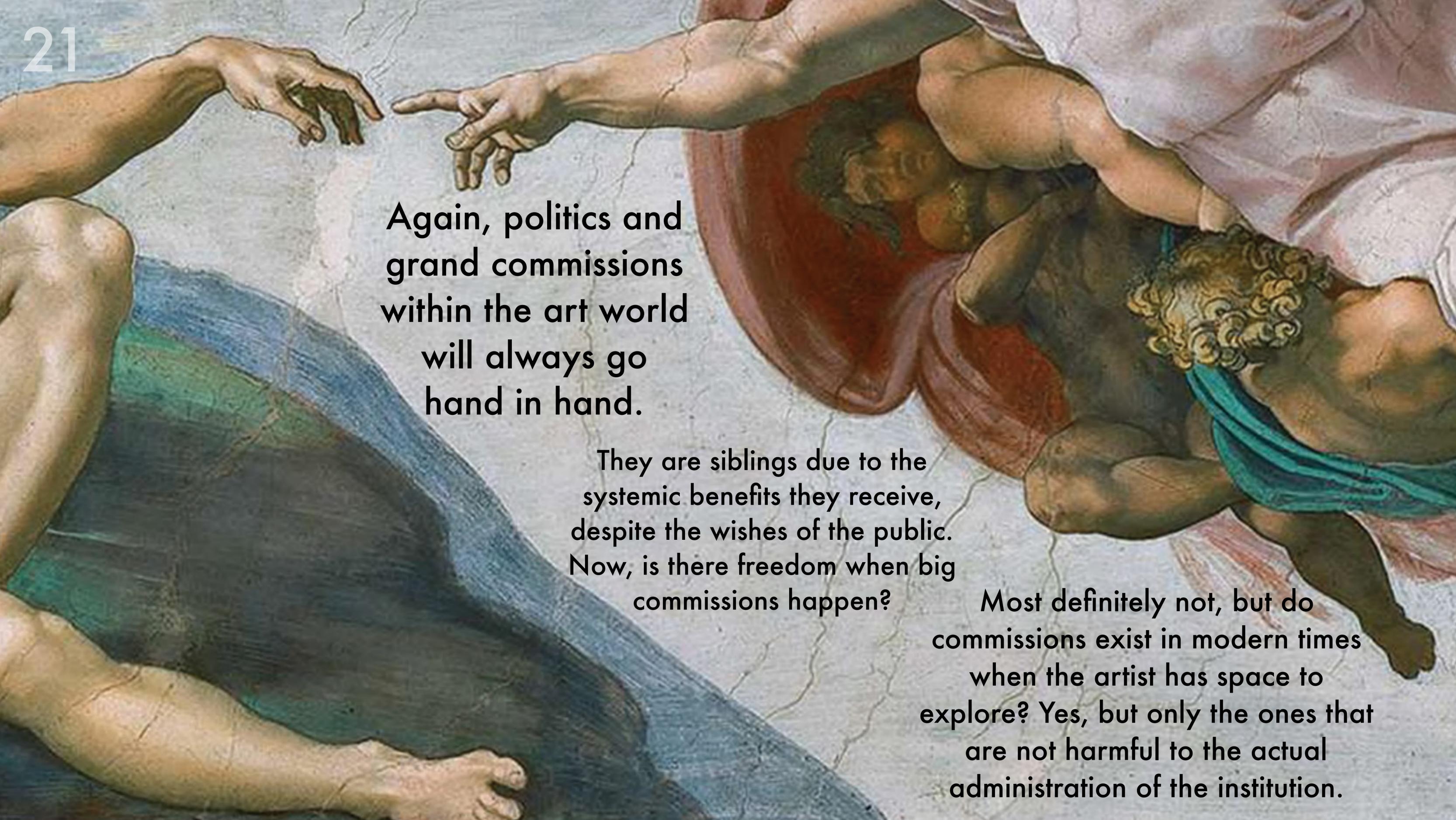
The interdisciplinary design studio is responsible for so many modern and refreshing architectural tourist spots of the city of New York and has an astounding reputation of delivering only the best work. Nevertheless, most of the critics and people working at the MoMa objected to this transformation for mainly two reasons; the first being the actual destruction of the 13-year-old Folk Art Museum, which was an architectural landmark for NYC, and the second reason being that the expansion would be meaningless because it was in the name of more “commercial space” for visitors.

The next phase of the commission scandal was questioning the ethical and moral values that DS+R design firm had for the MoMa. Could they be able to reject the commission from the most prestigious museum of NY?

Could they be able to simply say no to the commission while staying true to their ethic work values? Could they be able to please everyone by giving respect to the reification of the MoMa and the critics opposing the demolishing of the Folk Art Museum? *In the end, for capitalistic*

purposes and to please one of the most powerful patrons of the art in the world, DS+R created the commission with shame and disrespect from the general public of New York and lovers of the old MoMa.



A detail of Michelangelo's famous fresco 'The Creation of Adam' from the Sistine Chapel. The image focuses on the two hands reaching toward each other: the hand of God on the right, extended from a reclining position, and the hand of Adam on the left, reaching out from a lying position. The space between the two fingers is the central focus of the text.

Again, politics and grand commissions within the art world will always go hand in hand.

They are siblings due to the systemic benefits they receive, despite the wishes of the public. Now, is there freedom when big commissions happen?

Most definitely not, but do commissions exist in modern times when the artist has space to explore? Yes, but only the ones that are not harmful to the actual administration of the institution.

Gabriela Salazar's *In Advance of a Storm Art Book*

Her main target throughout her body of work has been to investigate the relationship between human-made spaces and structures and the unpredictable or invisible forces that act upon them. She highlights the changes due to the effect of what humans have created in the physical world. Her use of materials and sites, wordplay, psychogeography, and phenomenology have brought her a database of the different states of the found, the altered and the made. Her depth and commitment to finding answers, but most importantly asking questions, has led Salazar to explore her focus through sculpture, drawing, site interventions, and is now most recently working on writing and publishing.

Gabriela Salazar's career is probably one of the most unconventional, minimalist, and abstract ones coming from Long Island City. As a New York native, she excelled in collaborations and asking the right questions through her art.

This art book contains photographic documentation of **In Advance of a Storm**, the original interviews between Salazar and her parents Luis and Antonia, and essays by architects Billie Tsien and Tod Williams, sculptor Amy Brener, and photographer Lucas Blalock. The covers are silkscreened by the artist and 50 of the books are a special edition that include a hand-letterpress card from the day of the opening.

The grand inauguration for Salazar's published art book took place at Printed Matter in midtown Manhattan this past Wednesday, April 10.





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