Early Talent and Patronage: Born on March 6, 1475, in Caprese, Italy, Michelangelo displayed his artistic talent at an early age. He was sent to Florence to study grammar under the Humanist Francesco da Urbino, but he showed no interest in his studies, preferring to copy paintings from churches and seek the company of painters. At 13, he apprenticed under the painter Domenico Ghirlandaio and then went to study sculpture in the garden of the Medici, Florence’s leading family and patrons of the arts.

Sculptural Innovations: Michelangelo's sculptures were groundbreaking. His 'Pietà,' completed when he was in his early twenties, and his colossal statue of 'David,' finished before he turned thirty, are exemplary for their unprecedented levels of emotional expression and technical mastery. The 'Pietà' showed a level of detail and polish unique for its time, and 'David' became an icon of Renaissance art.

Architectural Contributions: Although renowned for his sculptures and paintings, Michelangelo was also a gifted architect. He was one of the architects of St. Peter's Basilica and designed its massive dome, which later influenced the development of Western architecture.

The Sistine Chapel Ceiling: Michelangelo’s most famous painting is the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel in the Vatican, Rome, completed between 1508 and 1512. The work consists of over 300 figures over 500 square meters (5,382 sq ft) of ceiling and includes iconic scenes such as the 'Creation of Adam.' This project was originally meant to include only 12 apostles, but Michelangelo negotiated to create a more complex composition that included various biblical scenes and figures.

Poetic Endeavors: Beyond visual arts, Michelangelo was also a prolific poet; he penned more than 300 poems, sonnets, and madrigals. His poetry includes complex feelings about art, life, love, and religion.

Physical Strain and Challenges: The Sistine Chapel ceiling was a physical ordeal for Michelangelo, who painted mostly standing up with his head tilted backwards. He often complained about the physical strain it caused him, as reflected in a humorous sonnet he wrote about the ordeal.

Contemporaries and Rivals: Michelangelo had a famously complex relationship with fellow artist Leonardo da Vinci, who was 23 years his senior. They were rivals, and their differing views on art highlighted the transition between the early and high Renaissance.

The Last Judgment: Between 1536 and 1541, Michelangelo painted 'The Last Judgment' on the altar wall of the Sistine Chapel, which depicted a powerful and muscular Christ judging the souls of humanity. This fresco stirred controversy due to its nudity and the muscular depiction of Christ, leading to later "censorship" where clothes were painted onto some figures.

Personal Life and Temperament: Michelangelo was known to be solitary with a gruff character, and he never married. His letters and poems often reflect his personal struggles, his fervent religious beliefs, and his deep devotion to his work.

Legacy and Death: Michelangelo continued to work until his death at the age of 88 in 1564. His prolific career spanned over seven decades, and his influence on the development of Western art is unparalleled. He was the first Western artist whose biography was published while he was alive, and both Giorgio Vasari and Ascanio Condivi wrote biographies of his life. Michelangelo’s legacy endures not only in his artworks but also in the standard he set for artistic genius and creativity.