

# CLEVELAND ART



# Mind of the Master

Michelangelo's preparatory drawings provide a glimpse into his genius

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## EXHIBITION

### Michelangelo: Mind of the Master

September 22, 2019–  
January 5, 2020

Kelvin and Eleanor Smith  
Foundation Exhibition  
Hall

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## SEE IT BEFORE THE CROWDS

### Member Preview Days

Fri and Sat/Sep 20 and 21

“The world has many kings, but only one Michelangelo,” wrote poet Pietro Aretino in a letter to the artist in 1537. No stranger to praise, the sculptor, painter, and architect Michelangelo Buonarroti gained widespread fame over the course of his 88 years, a lifespan that encompassed the height of the Italian Renaissance—a moment ripe for such a talented individual to flourish. Championed by patrons including the Medici banking family in Florence and a succession of popes in Rome, Michelangelo created works that still astound us today, from the Sistine Chapel ceiling frescoes and the marble sculpture of David to the design for the dome of Saint Peter’s Basilica.

*Michelangelo: Mind of the Master* brings together 28 drawings spanning his career and his most

famous works. Giorgio Vasari’s 1568 biography of the artist recognized drawing as a key component of Michelangelo’s “perfection” in every art, and indeed, drawing permeated his planning for commissions, whether for fresco, sculpture, or architecture.

The working studies and sketches in the exhibition, most of which cover both sides of the paper, provide a front-row seat to Michelangelo’s remarkable capacity for invention, but they also reveal the prolonged and sustained labor that fueled his work. Once key treasures in the collection of Queen Christina of Sweden (1626–1689), 25 of these drawings travel to Cleveland from the Teylers Museum in Haarlem, the Netherlands, marking the first time these works are on view together in the United States.

**Emily Peters**  
Curator of Prints  
and Drawings

### Study of the back and left arm of a male nude

for the tomb of Giuliano de’  
Medici, 1523–24. Black chalk;  
19.2 x 25.7 cm

All works on these pages:  
Michelangelo Buonarroti  
(Italian, 1475–1564). Teylers  
Museum, purchased in 1790.  
© Teylers Museum, Haarlem



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## MUSIC

**Apollo's Fire Baroque  
Bistro** Fri/Sep 27, 12:00,  
Ames Family Atrium.  
Free; no ticket required.

**Fretwork Presents "Mu-  
sic from the Age of Mi-  
chelangelo"** Wed/Oct 23,  
7:30, Gartner Auditorium.

**Chamber Music in the  
Galleries** Wed/Nov 6,  
6:00. CWRU Historical  
Performance Ensemble.  
Free; no ticket required.

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## TALKS

**Exhibition Tours *Michel-  
angelo*** Oct 2–Dec 29,  
Wed and Thu/11:00, Sat  
and Sun/2:00. Limit 25.  
Tour ticket required.

**Michelangelo's Figures,  
Turned and Toned** Sat/  
Oct 12, 2:00, Gartner  
Auditorium. Cammy  
Brothers, Northeastern  
University. Free; ticket  
required.

**Curator Talk: Michelan-  
gelo: Mind of the Master**  
Tue/Oct 29, 12:00, in the  
exhibition. Curator Emily  
Peters. Preregistration  
and exhibition ticket  
required.



**Study of a striding male  
nude** for the *Battle of  
Cascina*, 1504 or 1506. Black  
chalk; 40.4 x 25.8 cm

**Seated male nude, separate study of his right arm** for the Sistine Chapel ceiling, 1511. Red chalk, heightened with white; 27.9 x 21.4 cm

Among these sheets are two that Michelangelo made to prepare for the enormous *Battle of Cascina* (1501–4), a fresco commission for one wall of the grand hall within the Piazza della Signoria in Florence. The fresco was never completed, but Michelangelo’s planned composition was well known among Renaissance artists through his drawings. In one of the few surviving studies for the project, he used supple black chalk to sketch the strong outlines of a nude male figure striding forward while twisting in space (left). Combining his knowledge of ancient sculpture with that of human anatomy, he made a new type of human figure: heroic in form, monumental in scale, and active in pose. Such groundbreaking ideas about the expressive potential of the human body displayed, to his contemporaries, a shocking bravado.

Just a few years later, Michelangelo was in Rome to paint the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel (1508–12) for Pope Julius II. He used red chalk, a densely pigmented medium, to plan for many of the more than 300 figures across the fresco. The five double-sided drawings for this project displayed in the exhibition reveal his focus on the monumental figure as seen from far below. Strong outlines, precise rendering of dramatic light and shadow, and exploration of gesture—reaching, twisting, and extending—characterize these studies, including that of an *ignudo* (athletic male nude) to adorn the space between two narrative scenes (above). Never one to waste paper, on the back he drew God the Father’s arm as it reaches toward Adam for the *Creation of Adam* scene, just one of many sketches across the sheet (below).

More than two decades later, Michelangelo painted the *Last Judgment* (1536–41) on the altar wall

**Studies of figures and limbs; figure sketches** for the Sistine Chapel ceiling, 1511. Red chalk, leadpoint; 27.9 x 21.4 cm



fresco of the Sistine Chapel for Pope Clement VII. He used black chalk to plan the many figures, such as Saint Lawrence, who perches across a cloud beneath Christ in the final fresco. The drawing for the figure (see the cover of this issue) displays the combination of accomplishment and economy achieved by Michelangelo at this stage of his career, with an emphasis on the outline and the density of the figure through muscles and form. He sketched the head on the lower left of the sheet with just enough information to convey exactly what he needed to depict the figure in paint.

Michelangelo’s drawings for sculptural projects represent a different preparatory approach. To plan for the tomb of Giuliano de’ Medici (1520–34), he made many drawings for the reclining marble figure of Day atop the tomb. On view in the exhibition are four double-sided studies for the figure made from a posed model. Michelangelo isolated the most complicated joints of the body, such as the shoulder and elbow (see p. 5), carefully planning their three-dimensional modeling in a piece-by-piece approach. He meticulously studied even those parts of the figure that would not necessarily be seen.

The works in the exhibition survive despite Michelangelo’s several campaigns to burn his drawings for fear that others would steal his ideas. Only around 600 drawings—out of what must have been many thousands—have survived the ravages of fire and time. Don’t miss this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to experience the mind and hand of this legendary artist at work. 🏛️

