

A detailed marble sculpture of a seated, bearded man, likely a prophet or philosopher, by Michelangelo. The figure is shown from the waist up, seated on a simple rectangular base. He has a long, flowing, curly beard and hair. His right hand is raised to his chest, and his left hand rests on his lap. He is wearing a draped garment that falls over his legs. The sculpture is set against a dark background.

Michelangelo

Author: Eugène Müntz
Translation: Arthur Borges

Layout:
Baseline Co Ltd,
61A-63A Vo Van Tan Street
4th floor
District 3, Ho Chi Minh City
Vietnam

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Foreword

“The true work of art is but a shadow of the divine perfection.”

- Michelangelo

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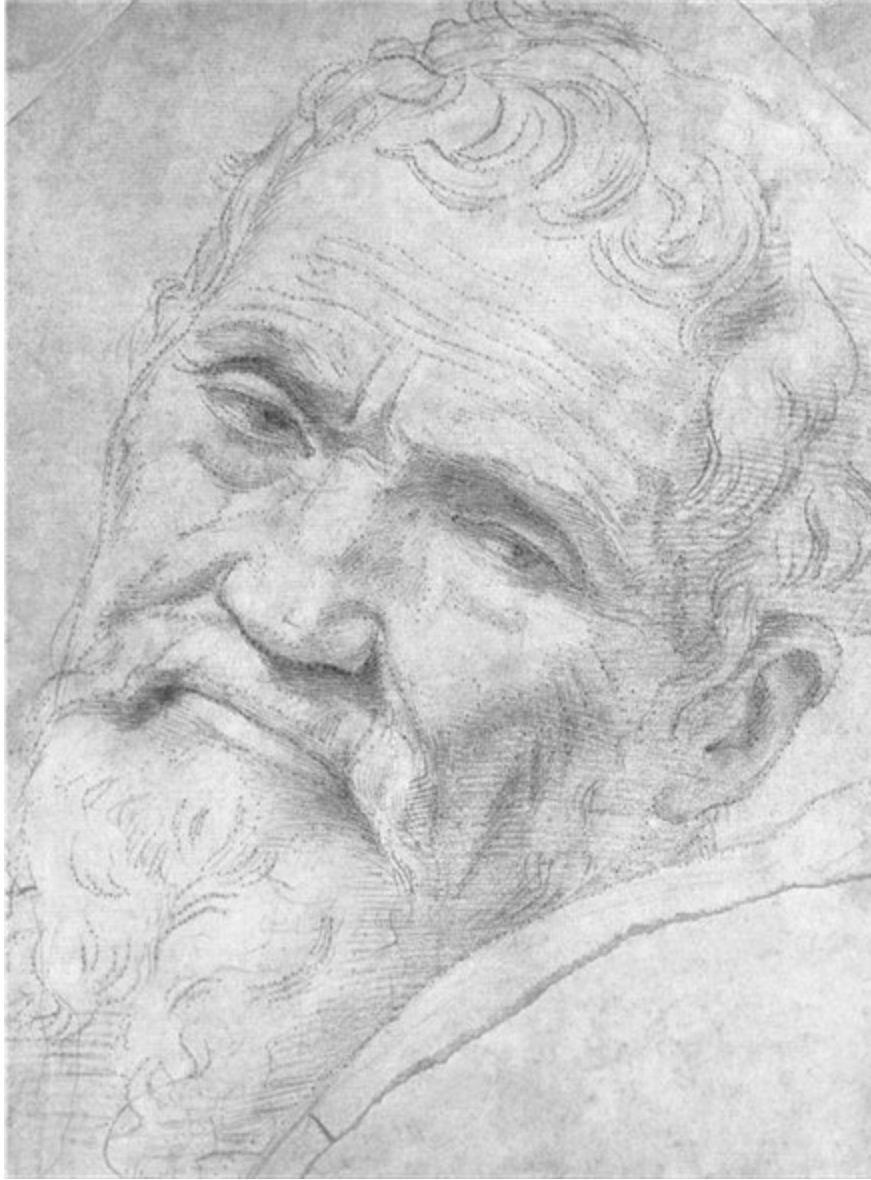
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Portrait of Michelangelo,

c. 1533
Black chalk
Teyler Museum, Haarlem

Biography

- 1475 : Born on March 6th in Caprese, Tuscany, second child to Lodovico di Leonardo Buonarroti Simoni and Francesca di Neri di Miniato del Sera.
- 1481 : Enrollment Francesco da Urbino's Latin school following his mother's death.
- 1483 : Birth of rival Raphael Sanzio in Urbino.
- 1484 : Start of a three-year apprenticeship under Domenico Ghirlandaio.
- 1485 : Stays with Bertoldo in the Medici gardens near San Marco, where he studies its ancient and contemporary works of sculpture.
- 1486 : Death of Lorenzo de Medici; completion of Battle of the (Lapiths and) Centaurs, Madonna of the Stairs (a.k.a. Madonna of the Steps), and a wooden crucifix for Santo Spirito in Florence.
- 1487 : Flight to Venice and Bologna as the armies of Charles VIII threaten to take over Florence and rumours predict the imminent fall of the Medici.
- 1488 : Arrival in Rome to become a protégé of Jacopo Galli, who commissions his Bacchus; completion of Sleeping Cupid, now lost.
- 1489 : Commission from Cardinal Jean de la Grolaye de Villiers for the Rome Pietà.
- 1490 : Death of Cardinal Bilhères shortly after completion of the Rome Pietà.
- 1491 : Altarpiece for Sant'Agostino in Rome, as King Louis XII of France invades Italy.
- 1492 : Return to Florence and commission for David in marble.
- 1493 : Commission for statues of the Twelve Apostles slated for the Cathedral Dome in

Florence - only sketches for St. Matthew were ever completed; death of the 25-day Pope Pius III; election of Pope Julius II; commission for the Bruges Madonna; completion of Taddei Tondo and Pitti Tondo.

1494 : Completion and inauguration of David at Piazza dei Signori; portfolio work for Battle of Cascina.

- 1495 : Commission from Pope Julius II for his tomb in Rome and the start of stormy relations with the Vatican; subsequent stay in Carrara to secure the marble needed.
- 1496 : Return to Florence.
- 1497 : Execution of Doni Tondo for Agnolo Doni (possibly completed within 1503 to 1505).
- 1498 : Arrival in Rome to paint the Sistine ceiling.
- 1499 : Start of decoration work for the Stanze of the Vatican, concurrent with the Sistine worksite.
- 1512 : Unveiling of the new Sistine ceiling.
- 1513 : Death of Pope Julius II and election of Pope Leo X, son of Lorenzo de Medici; renegotiation of the contract for the tomb of Pope Julius II.
- 1515 : Pope Leo X dubs Michelangelo Count Palatino.
- 1516 : Return to Florence; commission from Pope Leo X for the façade of San Lorenzo there.
- 1520 : First drawings for the Medici Chapel.
- 1521 : Death of Pope Leo X (Giovanni de Medici) and election of Pope Hadrian VI; Michelangelo receives no Vatican commissions and works on the Medici family tombs.
- 1523 : Election of Pope Clement VII (Giulio de Medici).
- 1524 : Start of Dusk and Dawn for the tomb of Lorenzo de Medici, and a commission for the Laurentian Library.
- 1527 : Sacking of Rome; flight of the Medici.
- 1528 : Almost one year of army engineering, urban planning and architecture to defend Florence from the Medici.
- 1529 : Appointment as army engineer in the Nove della Milizia, the nine-man military leadership of

the Florentine armed forces.

1530 : The Medici retake Florence; commission from the Duke of Ferrara for Leda and the Swan - highly acclaimed and now lost; execution work on the Medici chapel.

1531 : Noli me Tangere portfolio.

Vo stro mizhi by mo G

- 1534 : Final goodbye to Florence; death of Pope Clement VII and election of Pope Paul III who commissions Last Judgment; permanent residence in Rome.
- 1536 : Start of Last Judgment for the Sistine Chapel.
- 1538 : Completion of working drawings to install the statue of Marcus Aurelius in Campidoglio.
- 1541 : Inauguration of the Last Judgment.
- 1542 : Worksite start-up for the Pauline Chapel.
- 1545 : Completion of the tomb for Pope Julius II, one of Michelangelo's most time-consuming achievements.
- 1546 : Appointment as chief architect to St. Peter's in Rome; work on St. Peter's and the Farnese Palace.
- 1547 : Death of Vittoria Colonna, longtime friend and accomplished poetess, whom he met while working on the Last Judgment.
- 1549 : Death of Pope Paul III and election of Pope Julius III; reconfirmation of the artist's commissions.
- 1550 : Completion of the Pauline Chapel frescoes; start of the Florentine Pietà.
- 1552 : Completion of the Capitoline stair.
- 1555 : Death of Pope Julius III, followed by Pope Marcel II and Pope Paul IV; reconfirmation of his appointment as chief architect of St. Peter's.
- 1556 : Flight to Spoleto from Rome, now under threat from the Spanish Army.
- 1560 : Drawings commissioned by Catherine de Medici to glorify her husband, King Henry II of France; design of a tomb for Giangiaco­mo de Medici di Marignano and drawings for the Porta Pia - a hectic year.

1563 : Appointment by Cosimo de Medici as “head” of his newly-founded Accademia in Florence.

1564 : Council of Trent orders moralistic touch-ups to the Last Judgment; dies at home in Macel de Corvi three weeks later on February 18, 1564 of a “slow fever”, as Vasari tells us.



The name “Michelangelo” has come to mean “genius”. Firstly, because his talents spanned sculpture, painting, architecture, army engineering and even poetry, to the extent that he became the personification of original thinking and avant-garde aesthetics. Secondly, he is the artist through whom Humanism found full expression.



Self Portrait with Turban

Quill, 36.5 x 25 cm
Musée du Louvre, Paris





In the Renaissance, humanism was more an attitude and style of thinking than a doctrine. The focus was on man, not abstract intellectual ideas. The key issues were: What does man come from? Where does he belong in the universe? What, indeed, is man? Is perfection of this world?



Madonna of the Stairs

c. 1490

Marble, 55.5 x 44 cm

Casa Buonarroti, Florence





The answers were never final or dogmatic but open to analysis, debate and investigation. Humanism could mutate from Christian to pagan, from secular to whatever. Humanism took first root in Florence under leading Neoplatonists such as Marsilio Ficino, Pico della Mirandola and Leonardo da Vinci.

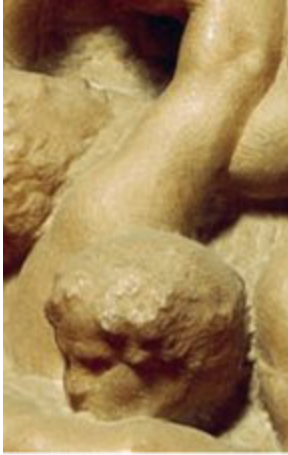


Crucifix

1492-1494

Wood polychrome, 142 x 135 cm
Santo Spirito, Florence





From there it spread throughout Europe. The powerful creativity, expressiveness and intensity of Michelangelo's works beautifully illustrate the humanist conception of the world. To best understand the artist, we must begin with a look at his life.



Battle of the Centaurs

1490-1492

Marble, 80.5 x 88 cm

Casa Buonarroti, Florence





Childhood

The close of the 15th century marked the start of a new era. Decades of plague, war and famine had thrown Europe into a period of radical change. Mindsets were changing. Medieval values were rejected as people with a deep need for social change looked to their flourishing economies and a range of new technologies.



Angel Holding a Candelabra

1495

Marble, h: 51.5 cm

Church of San Domenico, Bologna





Lorenzo de Medici, François I and other great Europeans maintained that the arts were as important as war. Moreover, the printing press made culture more accessible to greater numbers of people. It was in these revolutionary times that a minor civil servant from the petty nobility of Florence was appointed local governor (podestà) of the diocese of Arezzo.



St Proculus

1495

Marble, h: 58.5 cm (with base)
Church of San Domenico, Bologna





His name was Lodovico di Leonardo Buonarroti Simoni and he settled in the town of Caprese. His second child, Michelangelo, was born on Sunday, March 6, 1475. After two terms as local governor, he moved the family back to their homestead in Settignano just outside Florence.



The Virgin and Child with St
John and Angels
(The Manchester Madonna)

c. 1495-1497

Egg tempera on wood,
104.5 x 77 cm

The National Gallery, London