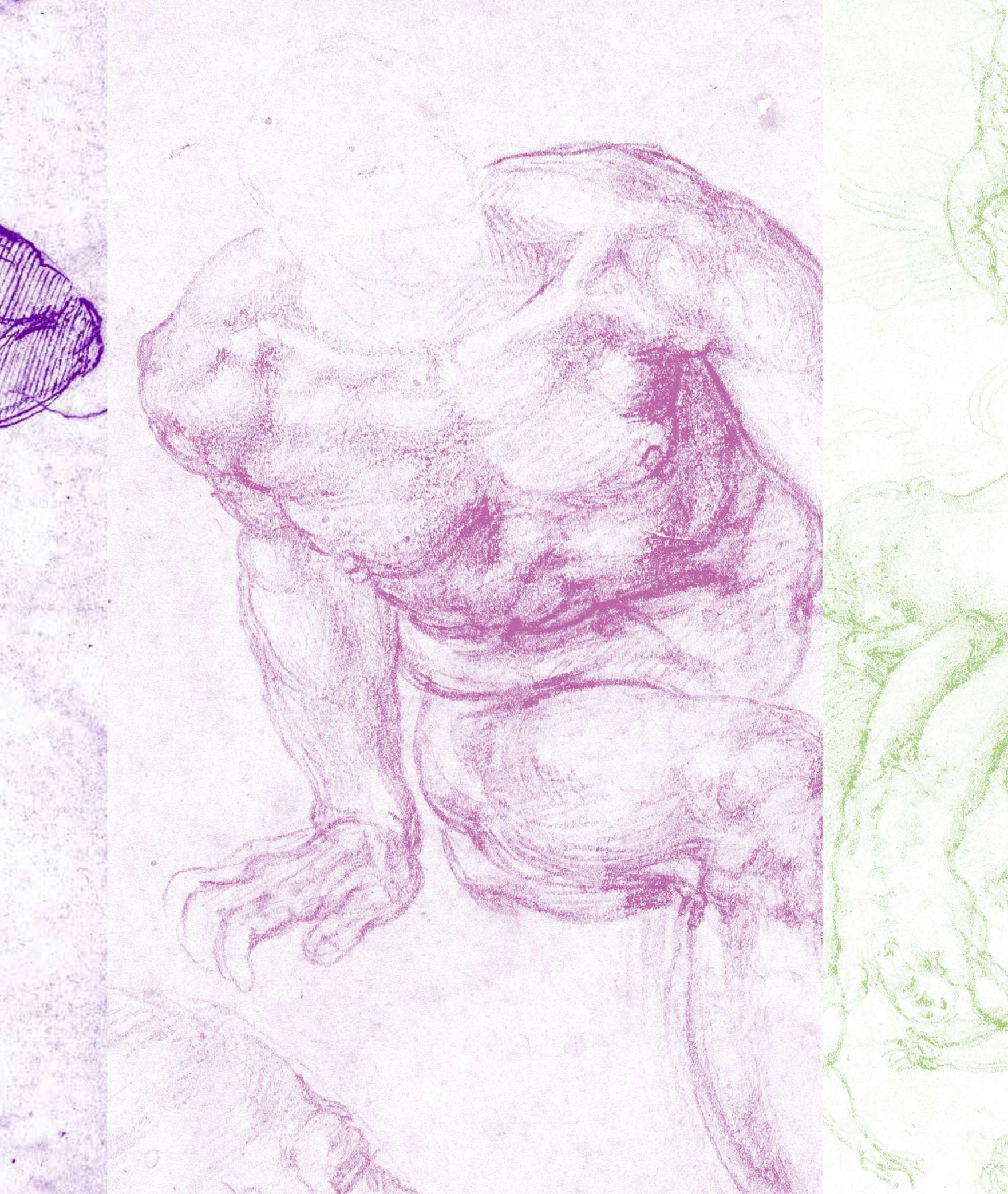
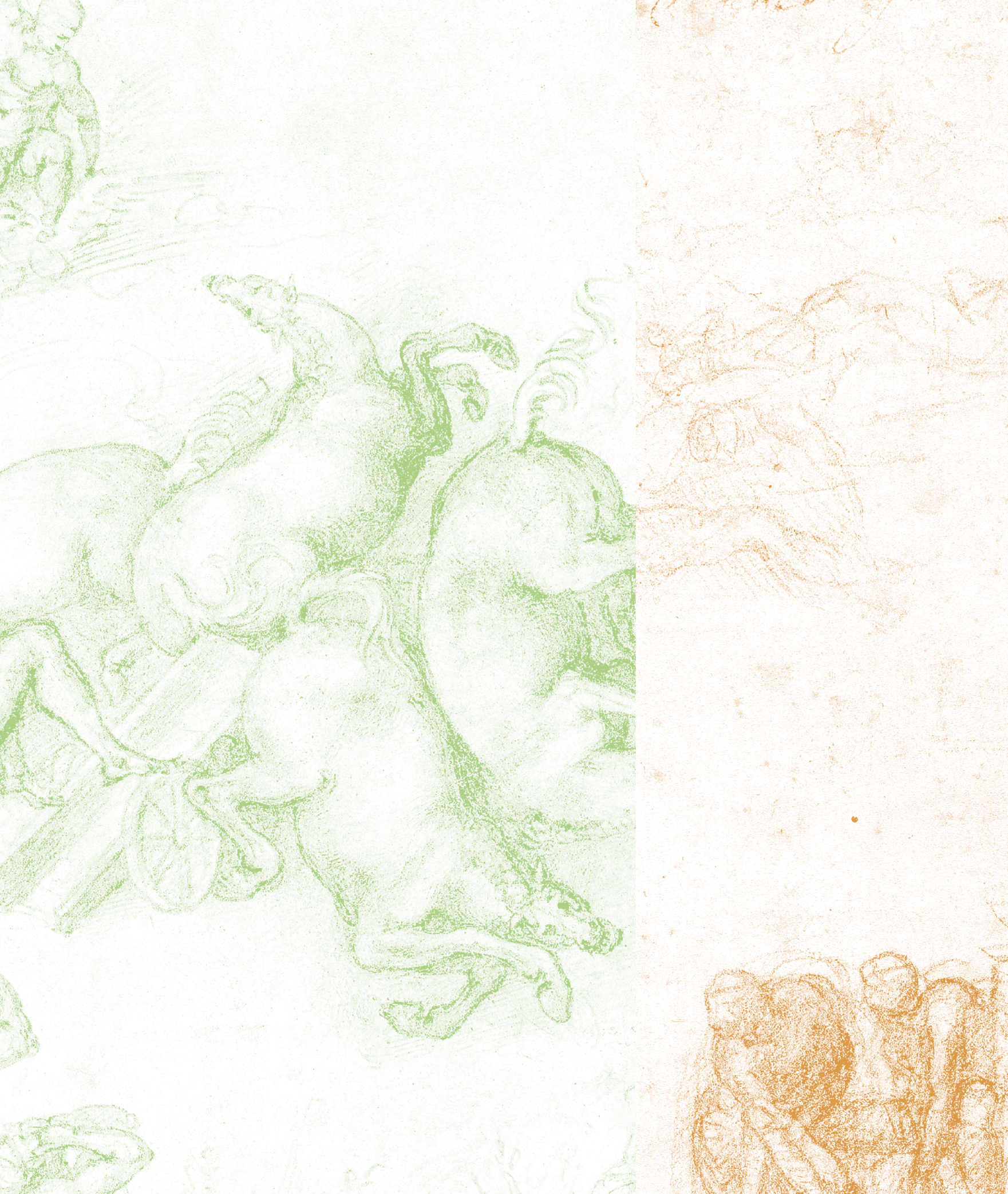
Michelangelo and Men

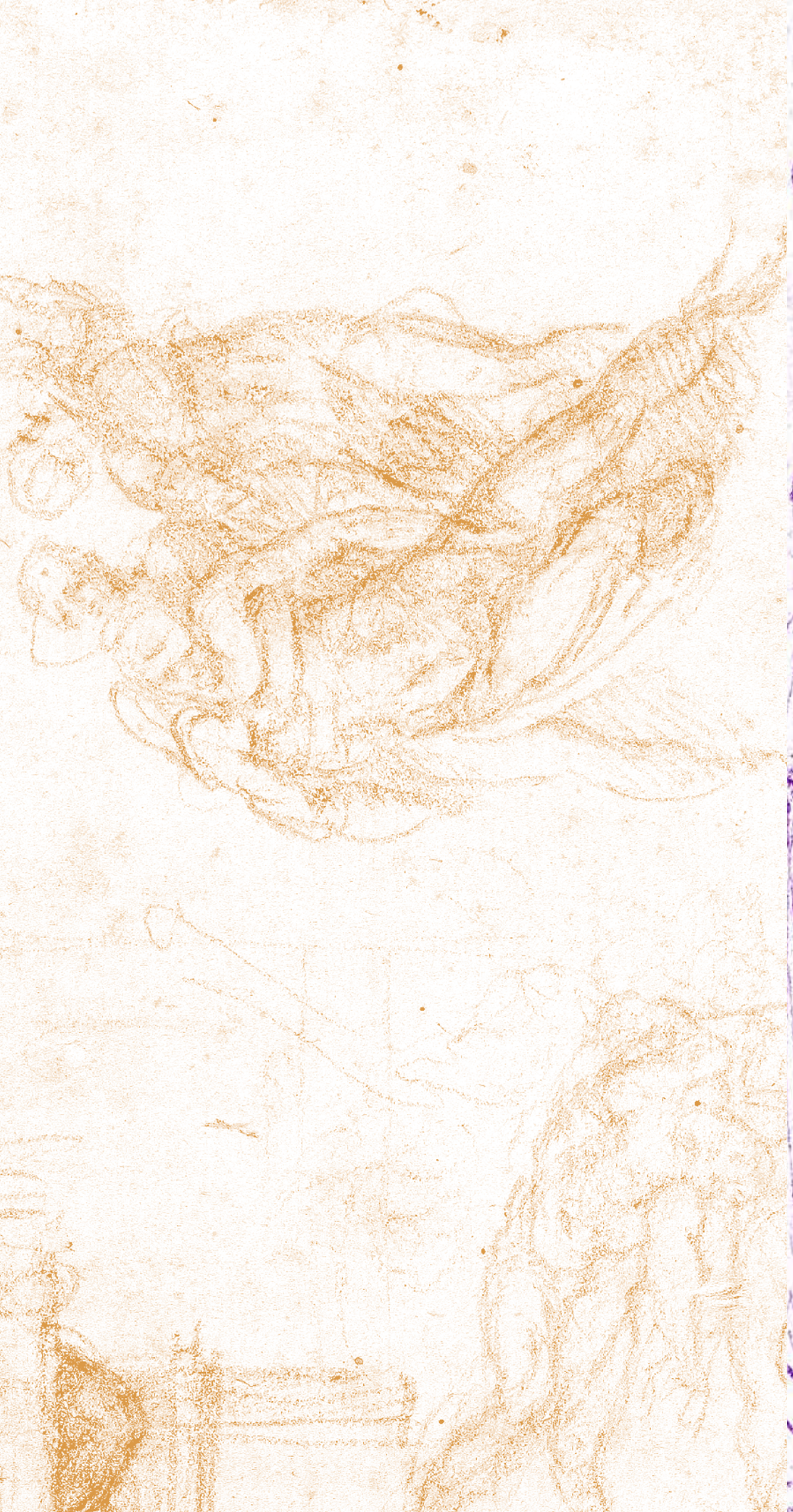
The Male Body in the Life and Work of Michelangelo

HANNIBAL

TEYLERS MUSEUM







Preface

Marc de Beyer
Director, Teylers Museum

In 1790, Teylers Museum acquired one of the greatest treasures in the institution's history. Some 1,700 drawings and several hundred prints were bought from the heirs of Roman nobleman Livio Odescalchi for a total of 10,000 guilders. A substantial proportion of the drawings had previously belonged to the celebrated art collection of Christina, former Queen of Sweden, and included sheets by the greatest Italian artists, such as Raphael, Bernini and Michelangelo. So at a stroke, the recently established museum purchased a large corpus of drawings that has inspired generations to this day.

There has been no end to that inspiration. In this book, and the exhibition it accompanies, we examine for the first time the central place occupied by the male physique in Michelangelo's work and life. Few representations of a man's body are as entrenched in the collective memory as his *David* or *The Creation of Adam*, and few have had a greater influence on the history of Western art. The heroic, frequently naked male figure is a recurring motif in Michelangelo's oeuvre: the *ignudi* (nudes) on the Sistine Chapel ceiling, the dead Christ on Mary's lap in St Peter's Basilica, or the dying and rebellious captives in the Louvre. The masculine body is omnipresent in his art, even when he was drawing, painting or sculpting women.

The authors who have contributed to this book explore the artistic and personal characteristics of the male bodies in Michelangelo's art: the place occupied by models and anatomy in his oeuvre, the examples he found in the art of his own time and that of classical antiquity, and the social context in which he created his work. They also examine theoretical and theological aspects, such as Neoplatonic ideas concerning the male body as the highest ideal of perfection and beauty.

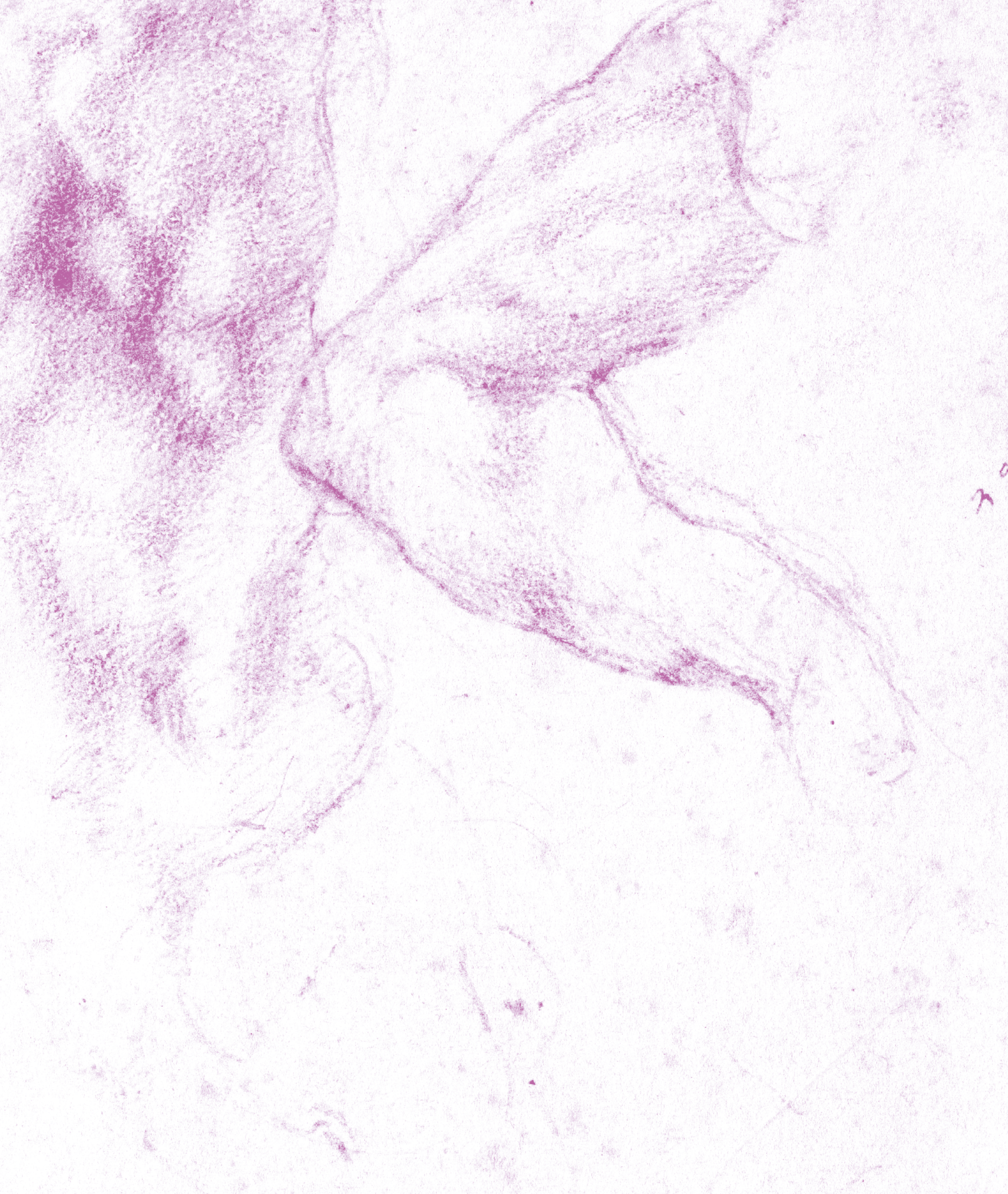
Men did not just play a central role in Michelangelo's art, however, but in his personal life too. There can be little doubt as to the artist's preference for (often younger) men. At the same time, he was a deeply religious man, which might have triggered an inner struggle for himself, and certainly for those who came after him. It is no coincidence that allusions to men in Michelangelo's love poems were altered shortly after his death to refer to women.

Each era poses questions of its own. While Michelangelo's preferences long remained taboo and unmentionable, it is now possible to address this subject in depth. This fresh perspective on Michelangelo's men is more than welcome and represents an important new contribution to the rich corpus of literature devoted to the artist. It not only affords a better understanding of the extraordinary power of his art, it also enables us to touch on a subject that is relevant to current discussions regarding ideals of beauty, gender and sexuality.

Michelangelo lived in a society different from ours; one in which men and women moved much more in separate spheres. Possibly as a result of this, sexual relationships between men were ubiquitous – behaviour that was at once common and hidden. Michelangelo's beautifully detailed drawings for Tommaso de' Cavalieri fit this picture: they were public masterpieces and intimate declarations of his love. It is interesting to compare the place homosexuality occupies in today's society with that in Michelangelo's era. Where it is now visible, it was then hidden. What was then normal – an older man's love for a teenage boy – is now unacceptable.

What about the perception of the ideal bodies Michelangelo depicted? Highly toned bodies are the norm online today. But what actually is the ideal? What is a normal body and what is not? Did such ideals only apply during the Florentine Renaissance or in our own time as well? Is this a Western ideal or a universal one? And what does all this mean for the position of women? If physical strength equates to power, do men automatically take precedence? Are Michelangelo's masculine women an expression of misogyny or, rather, one of empowerment?

Each of these questions is hard to answer, but Michelangelo's men and the culture from which they sprang can serve as a mirror for our time. I am immensely grateful therefore to everyone who has contributed to the creation of this book and the exhibition, whether substantively, practically or financially. Thanks to the efforts of so many, we can now fully enjoy the exceptional art we have inherited from Michelangelo and which, on occasion, holds up a mirror to us.



Concise Timeline

1475

Michelangelo is born on 6 March in Caprese, near Arezzo.

1487

First mention of Michelangelo as a pupil in the workshop of Domenico and Davide Ghirlandaio in Florence.

c. 1488–92

Michelangelo is taken into the household of Lorenzo de' Medici ('il Magnifico'), whose collection of antiquities he studies. It is here that he creates his first sculptures, including the *Battle of the Centaurs* (fig. 38).

1492

Lorenzo de' Medici dies and is succeeded by his son Piero.

1493

Michelangelo works for Piero de' Medici. He sculpts a marble *Hercules* (lost) and the wooden *Crucifix* for the Santo Spirito (fig. 123).

1494

The Medici are banished from Florence following the invasion of Charles VIII of France and the republic is re-established. The radical preacher Girolamo Savonarola gains significant influence. Michelangelo leaves Florence and works in Bologna on sculptures for the Arca di San Domenico.

1496–1500

Michelangelo is in Rome, where he creates works including *Bacchus* (fig. 40) and the Vatican *Pietà* (fig. 113).

1501

Michelangelo returns to Florence, where he is commissioned to sculpt the marble *David* (fig. 1).

1502

Michelangelo receives the commission for a bronze *David* (lost).

1504

The marble *David* is completed and installed in front of the Palazzo della Signoria. Michelangelo also receives the commission for the *Battle of Cascina* (fig. 133). He is working on two marble reliefs (the *Pitti Tondo* and the *Taddei Tondo*), on the *Bruges Madonna*, and probably on the *Doni Tondo* (fig. 34).

1505

Pope Julius II summons Michelangelo to Rome to design his tomb monument.

1506

Michelangelo returns to Florence without the pope's knowledge. He continues to work on the *Battle of Cascina*, among other things, but the fresco is left unfinished when Michelangelo goes to Bologna to make a bronze statue of Julius II (lost in 1511).

1508–12

Michelangelo paints the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel. The Medici return to Florence in 1512, reasserting power.

1513

Julius II dies and is succeeded by Leo X (Giovanni de' Medici). Michelangelo starts work on the *Rebellious Captive* and the *Dying Captive* (figs 33 and 86) and *Moses* (fig. 95) for Julius's tomb.

1516

Michelangelo returns to Florence, where Leo X commissions him to design a facade for San Lorenzo.

1519–20

The facade project is abandoned. Michelangelo is commissioned to design the Medici funerary chapel at San Lorenzo.

1521

Leo X dies. Michelangelo completes *The Risen Christ* for the Santa Maria Sopra Minerva in Rome.

1524

Michelangelo starts work on the sculptures for the Medici Chapel and is commissioned by Pope Clement VII to build the Laurentian Library.

1527

Rome is sacked; the Medici are once more banished from Florence. Michelangelo works for the new republic, including on the city's defences in 1529.

1530

Florence once again returns to Medici control. Michelangelo probably began work on the *Apollo-David* (fig. 44).

1531

Michelangelo completes *Leda and the Swan* (lost; fig. 22). Rather than to its commissioner, Alfonso d'Este, the painting goes to France, where King Francis I buys it.

1532

Michelangelo meets Tommaso de' Cavalieri in Rome.

1533

Michelangelo travels back and forth between Rome and Florence. He makes the presentation drawings for Tommaso and receives the commission for *The Last Judgement* (fig. 96) in November from Pope Clement VII.

1534

Michelangelo leaves Florence for good and settles in Rome.

1536–41

Michelangelo paints *The Last Judgement*. It is during these years that his friendship with Vittoria Colonna begins.

1542

Start of the frescoes in the Cappella Paolina in the Vatican (fig. 158).

1545

The tomb of Julius II is installed in the San Pietro in Vincoli in Rome.

1546

Michelangelo becomes the chief architect of St Peter's Basilica.

1547

Michelangelo starts work on a marble *Pietà* for his own tomb (fig. 120). Eight years later, he leaves the sculpture unfinished.

1550

The frescoes in the Cappella Paolina are completed. Vasari publishes the first edition of his *Lives*, in which Michelangelo is the only living artist to receive his own biography.

1552

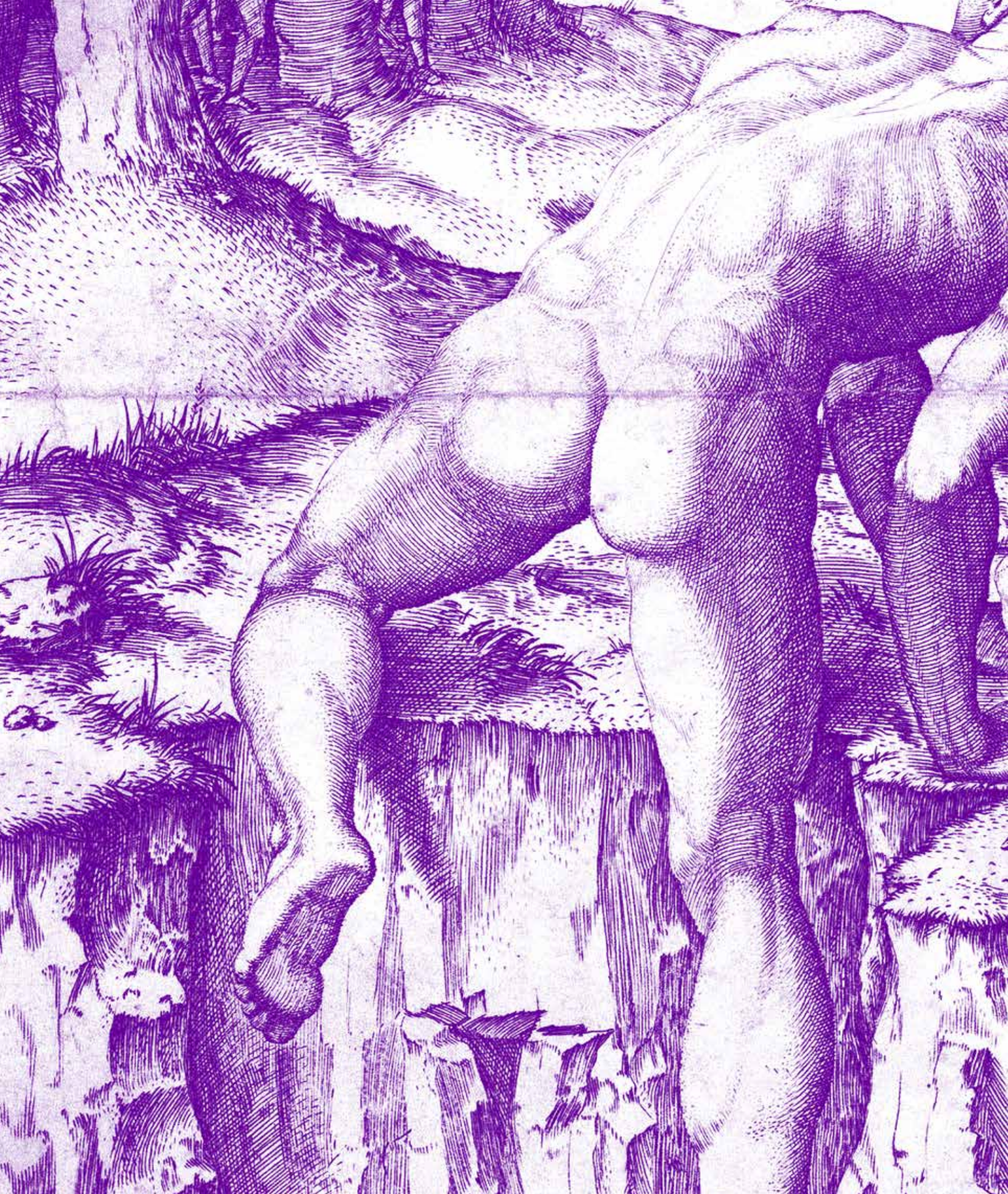
Michelangelo begins work on his final marble sculpture, the *Rondanini Pietà* (fig. 122). The work is unfinished at the time of his death.

1553

Condivi's *Life of Michelangelo* is published.

1564

Michelangelo dies on 18 February. Daniele da Volterra and Tommaso de' Cavalieri are among those present.



Introduction. Michelangelo's Men

Klazina Botke, Terry van Druten and Martin Gayford

Il gigante, as Michelangelo's *David* was known, is probably the most famous nude man in the history of art (fig. 1). Michelangelo was commissioned to sculpt the immense marble statue by the Opera del Duomo (the office of works at the Cathedral of Santa Maria del Fiore in Florence) in 1501, the year he returned to Florence from Rome.[1] The city he came back to was different from the one he had left several years earlier: the Medici – its long-standing de facto rulers – had been banished and the Florentine republic restored under Francesco Valori.[2] For over two years, Michelangelo worked on the marble block. When David was nearing completion, and hugely impressing the first people who saw it, a momentous decision was taken. Having originally been intended for one of the buttresses around the *tribuna* of the Santa Maria del Fiore, it was decided that *Il gigante* should instead be installed in the square in front of the Palazzo della Signoria, the seat of the republican government.[3] The biblical David – the shepherd boy who defeated the giant Goliath – had long been a symbol for Florence, a small city-state that saw itself consistently beating the greater powers around it. Michelangelo now placed the young David – grand, idealised and magisterially naked – at the centre of the city's political power. The blatant display of his penis, however, was seen as going just that bit too far,[4] and so within a month of the statue's installation, a garland of twenty-eight gilded leaves was placed over its genitals[5] – an act of censorship similar to the one that years later would befall Michelangelo's figures in *The Last Judgement* (fig. 96).

In all his majestic nudity, *David* is still as intriguing as ever. The sculpture is a spectacular culmination of the Renaissance desire to revive classical antiquity, a period at which ideal bodies were represented in the nude, yet at the same time it seems to express a new kind of self-confident masculinity within Florentine society and politics.[6] The Medici set a precedent for displaying the male nude with the installation of Donatello's bronze *David* in the garden of the Palazzo Medici around 1469 (fig. 2). When the family was banished in 1492, the statue was moved to the Palazzo della Signoria, albeit to a slightly less accessible interior space rather than the square in front. It was in this same period that Antonio Pollaiuolo made his famous engraving of nude, fighting men – a work that was widely disseminated through the medium of print (fig. 3).[7]

Masculinity of this kind seems to have been enshrined as the public ideal with the new government of Piero Soderini (who was elected *gonfaloniere* for life in 1502) and the installation of Michelangelo's *David* in 1504.[8] That same year, the artist was commissioned to paint the *Battle of Cascina* for the Salone dei Cinquecento, the large council chamber in the Palazzo della Signoria. Paul Joannides's essay in this book offers fresh insights into this unexecuted yet highly influential project for a fresco. Although Michelangelo did not get any further than the cartoon for the central part of the painting, here too the nude male body is the chief focus in the depiction of this Florentine victory (see figs 133/cat. 51 and 141/cat. 13). With their muscular, monumental, idealised and almost superhuman appearance, Michelangelo's men undeniably transformed the representation of the body in European art. Both his *David* and the expressive bodies in the *Cascina* cartoon were frequently imitated and remained the model for other artists for many years (fig. 4/cat. 49).[9]

The powerful and robust masculinity of Michelangelo's figures is frequently linked these days to his 'homosexuality' – a modern term which, as Michael Rocke demonstrates in this book, cannot be directly applied to the artist. Michelangelo's much-discussed affection for Andrea Quaratesi and Tommaso de' Cavalieri related to a love for very young men. Rocke poses an intriguing question: how can we reconcile this fascination for very muscular men's bodies that are so far removed from any adolescent physique? Michelangelo's almost hyper-virile male figures raise even more questions: what role did models, anatomical studies and examples from antiquity play in his work? How did prevailing philosophical ideas and the

fig. 1 Michelangelo, *David*, 1501–1504. Marble, height 517 cm. Florence, Galleria dell'Accademia, inv. Sculture 1076

artist's profound religiosity influence the way he represented men? And how were his figures received by his clients and other contemporaries? Precisely who, in other words, were 'Michelangelo's men'? While this book does not pretend to answer all these questions, its nine essays nevertheless set out to achieve a better understanding of the male body in the master's oeuvre, not least by considering his relationships with and attitudes towards the actual men in his life.

Drawn Men

The human body seems to have been Michelangelo's primary interest from the outset. His earliest known pen-and-ink drawings show human figures copied from famous fresco paintings by Giotto and Masaccio. The individuals in these studies are isolated from their surroundings; the central figure is powerfully worked out while those around it are rendered more freely and loosely. The sheet in Teylers Museum in Haarlem (figs 5 and 6/cat. 9) is a good example of this. The three men with their folded hands and the two standing figures on the verso are all likely to have been taken from a narrative representation. By lifting them out of that story, Michelangelo refocused attention firmly onto their posture and movements. The same applies to a recently rediscovered sheet from the same period, the central figure of which is a young, nude man copied from Masaccio's fresco of the *Baptism of the Neophytes* in the Brancacci Chapel in Florence (fig. 51/cat. 8).[10] It is Michelangelo's earliest surviving drawing of a nude.

Drawing formed the practical and theoretical foundation for the arts in the Florentine Renaissance and is the principal focus of this book; the Italian word *disegno* meant not only drawing, but also the intellectual ability to design. The nude – much more so than the clothed – male was a key element of this *disegno*.[11] Artists created figures by drawing living, and frequently nude, models, as Terry van Druten shows in his essay. Each fresh artistic assignment began with this practice: the (largely) unclothed body was drawn first, with clothes added to the figures at a later stage. It is striking in Michelangelo's case that many of the nude bodies remain in the final work, whether in marble, fresco or oil paint.[12]

The renewed interest in antiquity prompted artists to look back at the ancient sculptures that were steadily being unearthed in Rome. Michelangelo too borrowed poses and forms from these historical statues, many of which had 'ideal', fixed proportions, as Martin Gayford discusses in this book. Furthermore, the artist had an exceptional knowledge of human anatomy, for the time. In his essay, Eric Boot describes Michelangelo's thorough

fig. 2 Donatello, *David,* c. 1435–1440. Bronze, height 158 cm. Florence, Museo Nazionale del Bargello, inv. Bronzi 95

Giorgio Vasari's influential biography, which held him out as the greatest artist of all. Michelangelo's depiction of the male body is fixed in our collective imagination and his fame remains undiminished. He himself once commented on the subject of fame, in connection with the tomb monument in the Medici Chapel: 'Fame holds the epitaphs in position; it goes neither forward nor backward for they are dead and their work is still.'[29] In that respect, at least, we have to disagree with him. Our society's shifting perception of masculinity, beauty, gender and sexuality means that we can continually pose new questions concerning the master's work and life, and consider Michelangelo's men in a different light.

fig. 12 (cat. 1) Andrea Alciato, *Emblemata* (Guliel Rouilium, 1551), p. 10. The Hague, RKD – Netherlands Institute for Art History, inv. 201402142

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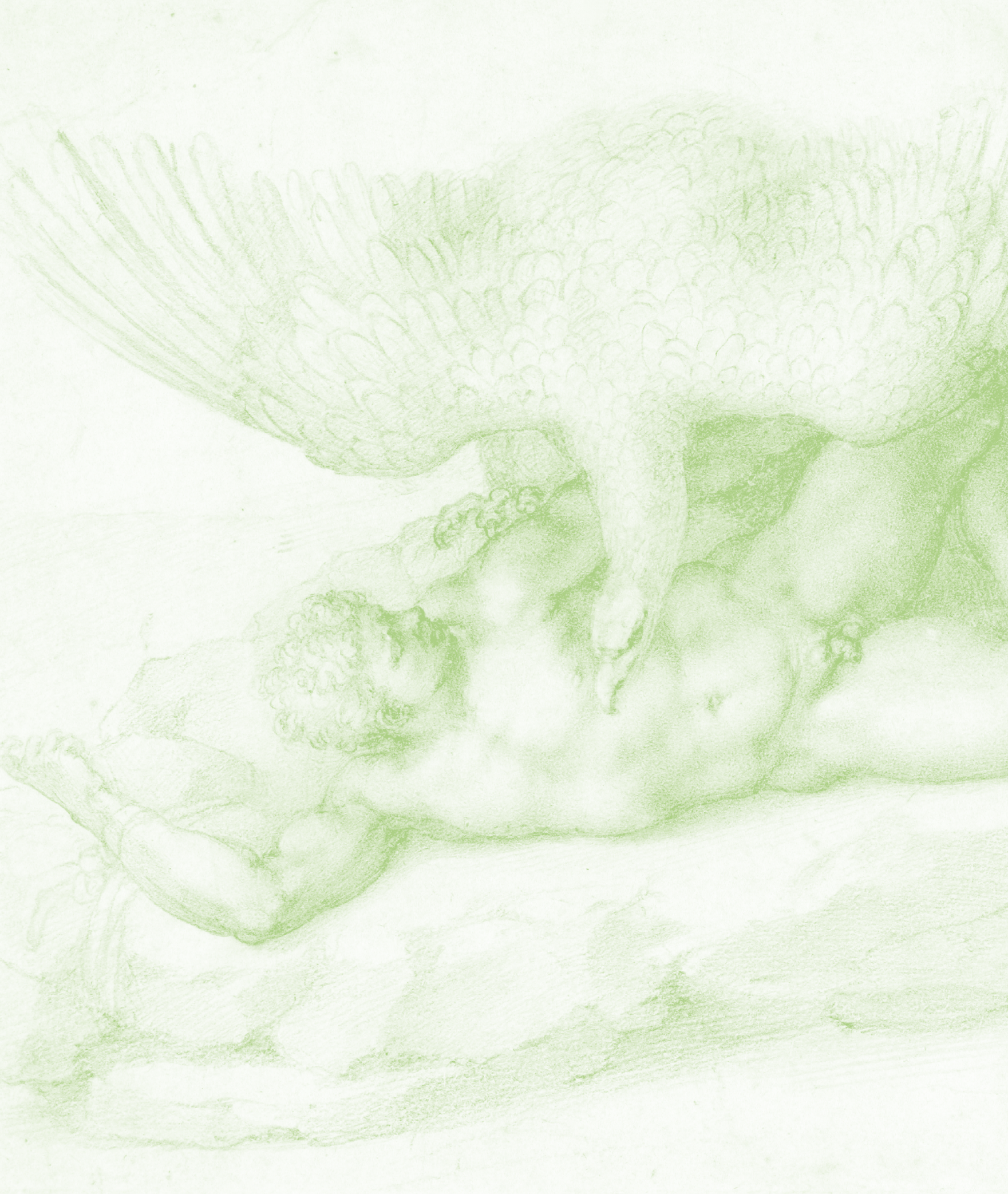


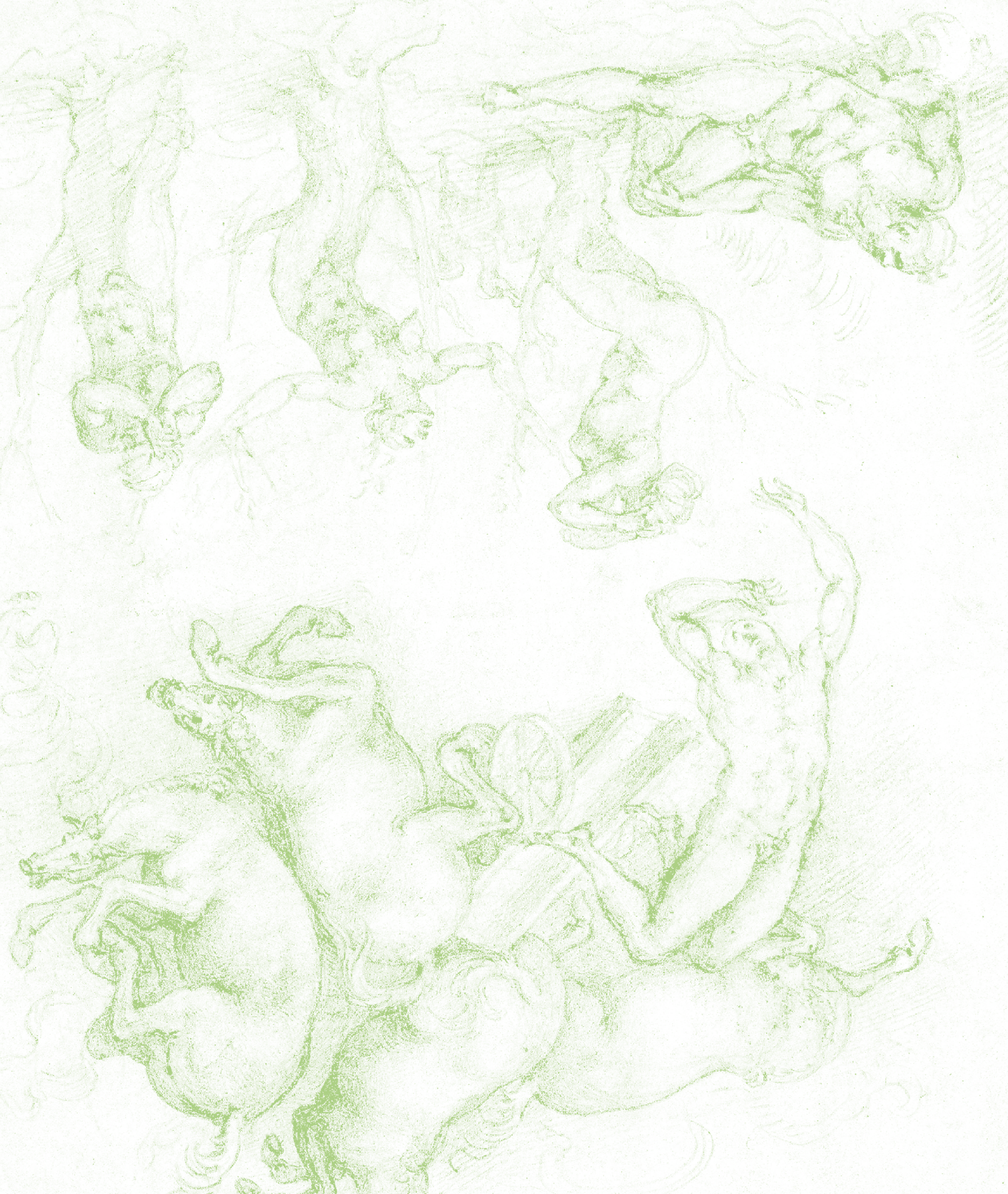
Love

“Nel voler vostro è sol la voglia mia,
i miei pensier nel vostro cor si fanno,
nel vostro fiato son le mie parole.

Come luna da sé sol par ch’io sia
ché gli occhi nostri in ciel veder non sanno
se non quel tanto che n’accende il sole.”

‘Within your will alone is my desire,
my thoughts are created in your heart,
and within your breath are my own words.

Alone, I seem as the moon is by itself:
for our eyes are only able to see in heaven
as much of it as the sun illuminates.’



Poems and Letters. How Michelangelo Wrote the Unseeable and Drew the Unsayable

Raymond Carlson

The man Michelangelo loved had a beautiful body.

So announced the humanist Benedetto Varchi before a public audience on 6 March 1547. Speaking to a crowd assembled at a weekly gathering of the Accademia Fiorentina (Florentine Academy), Varchi embedded this pronouncement within his scholarly exposition of Michelangelo's poetry.[1] Towards the end of his lecture, Varchi cited two of the famed artist's sonnets after noting that Michelangelo had dedicated the first of them to Tommaso de' Cavalieri, the young Roman nobleman whom the artist had met nearly 15 years earlier.[2] About Cavalieri, Varchi added this prefatory remark: 'Beyond the incomparable beauty of his body, in Rome I already saw in him such elegant habits, excellent ingenuity and graceful manners that he much deserved – as he does still – to be increasingly loved the more one knew him.'[3]

By attesting to the unmatched beauty of Cavalieri's body, Varchi linked physical comeliness with traits expected of his noble rank: elegance, ingenuity and grace. This equivalence had established precedent. In his famed *Il Cortegiano* (Book of the Courtier) published less than two decades earlier, Baldassare Castiglione listed similar properties of a noblewoman as incitements for a courtier's virtuous love.[4] But Cavalieri was not a noblewoman. One of Michelangelo's accomplishments as a writer was to redirect an established courtly paradigm of vernacular lyric poetry toward a male rather than a female beloved. This required careful navigation of poetic forms and period norms. The sonnet cited by Varchi makes no explicit mention of Cavalieri's beauty, indicative of Michelangelo's authorial strategy to foreground his subjective experience as a narrator.[5] Indeed, the sonnet closes with Michelangelo wallowing in his amorous torment: 'naked and alone / I remain the prisoner of an armed knight', the Italian word for knight (*cavalier*) being a pun on Cavalieri's surname. By publicising this sonnet for Cavalieri, Varchi injected a biographical detail into his lecture, locating Michelangelo's creativity in a lived context.

Presented in an era when the physical enactment of same-sex eros could lead to punishments including torture, exile and death, Varchi's publicised praise of Michelangelo's amorous verses for Cavalieri can seem imprudent today.[6] But this is not how Michelangelo reacted. An intermediary sent a copy of Varchi's lecture from Florence to Michelangelo in Rome, and the famed artist responded with effusive praise, adding that he shared the text with other men.[7] He tasked the intermediary with thanking Varchi for him: 'I ask that, on my behalf, you share suitable words for him as appropriate to such love, affection, and courtesies.'[8] In Renaissance Italy, love necessitated repayment. Michelangelo's letter thereby requited Varchi's lecture about his own poetry and capacities as a lover, enacting the Neoplatonic ideals that Varchi had upheld as a guiding source of Michelangelo's verse. When Varchi's lecture was published in 1550, Michelangelo redoubled this gratitude, asking another mutual friend to thank Varchi on behalf of Cavalieri for the honours bestowed upon them both.[9]

Varchi's lecture and the responses it elicited offer a window onto the material strategies of amorous reciprocation in Michelangelo's poetry, letters and artworks. Scholars have long sought to define the emergence of love in Michelangelo's life and work through interrelated intellectual traditions and social realities.[10] Yet the writing of poems and letters held separate conventions in this period that conditioned how love was approached in each, a fact similarly true for art making. Michelangelo's poetry could not delimit each comely contour of the male body with the explicitness of his graphic line, but it could convey his personal experience in words unavailable through art. Michelangelo made his poems, drawings and letters for Cavalieri with awareness of how these three entities were exchanged together. Rather than treat such creations discretely, they should be addressed together as

Ho receuuta una uostra littera quanto piu non sperata da me Tanto piu
grata non sperata dico reputādomi io indegno che un uostro pari si
degnasse scriuermi: circa di quello che pierantonio in mia laude
ui a detto e quelle opre mie che cō uostri occhi hauete uiste pēr le
quali mōstrate di mostrarmi nō poca affectione ui rispondo che nō
erano bastanti fare che u huomo eccellentissimo come uoi e senza secōdo
non che senza pari in terra, desiderasse scriuere a un giouane appena
nato al mondo e p questo quanto si puō essere ingnorante. Ne uoglio
anchora dire che uoi siate bugiardo. Penso bene anzi son certo che
dela affettione che mi portate la causa sia questa che essendo uoi uir
tuosissimo o p dirmeglio essa uirtu. sete forzato amar coloro che di
essa son seguaci, e che lamano, tra li quali son io et i questo secōdo
le mie forze nō cedo a molti vi prometto bene che, ramēto receuutte uguale
è forse maior cambio che mai portai amore ad huomo piu che ad uoi
ne mai desiderai amicitia piu che la uostra e ~~ne uedreste~~ se nō l altro
almāco in questo o bonissimo iudicio e ne uedreste lo effetto se non
che la fortuna in questo solo a me cōtraria uuole che hora che mi
potrei godere di uoi stia poco sano spero bene se ella nō mi uuole ch̄uouo
nciare a tormentare tra pochi giorni esser guarito et uenire a fare
il mio debito in uostraui se a quella piacera: In questo mezo mi
pigliaro almanco doi hore del giorno piacere in cōtemplare doi uostri
desegni che pierātonio me a portati quali quanto piu li miro tāto piu
mi piaccino et appagere i gran parte il mio male pensando alla sper
ranza chel detto pierātonio mi a data di farmi uedere altre cose de
lle uostre: Per non esser fastidioso nō scriuero piu a lungo: solo ui
ricarco accascādo ui seruiate di me: et ad uoi di continuo mi racomāde

Di V s affettionatissimo
Seruo Thōmao caualiere

fig. 17 (cat. 5) Tommaso de' Cavalieri, *Letter to Michelangelo,* 1 January 1533. Pen and brown ink, 300 x 220 mm. Florence, Casa Buonarroti, Archivio Buonarroti, VII, 143

the erotic potential associated with the sensuous dimensions of Michelangelo's drawings of Ganymede and Tityus for Cavalieri, artworks that were mentioned in their correspondence (fig. 14/cat. 6 and fig. 18).[31] Just as Cavalieri delighted in the hours he spent looking at these drawings, Michelangelo would have revelled in making them. Vasari wrote of the enjoyment that Michelangelo derived from the time spent drawing, a commonplace that is nonetheless applicable to his lifelong impulse toward graphic elaboration.[32]

When Cavalieri received drawings from Michelangelo, he would thereby have understood the double fulfilment that the artist gained from making the work, and from knowing how Cavalieri used it. Such language of pleasure reappears in the first iteration of his drawing of *The Fall of Phaeton* for Cavalieri (fig. 19/cat. 43), at the bottom of which he wrote a note that rendered the drawing an epistle: 'Messer Tommaso, if this sketch does not please you, tell Urbino so that I have time to make you another tomorrow night, as I promised you, and if it pleases you and you wish me to finish it, return it to me'.[33] The assured immediacy of Michelangelo's response, as well as the fact that he went on to redesign the sheet multiple times, indicates his studied attunement to maximising Cavalieri's pleasure. This was a courtly *piacere* that Cavalieri would have been expected to cultivate, given his noble station, a fact underlined by Michelangelo's epistolary addresses of him – a young man several decades his junior – with the formal title 'Your Lordship'.[34] But pleasure was not an end unto itself. Poems that Michelangelo gave to Cavalieri could have offered a lesson in *how* to experience this feeling, specifically through his drawings. This possibility is distilled in one of the subsequent sonnets that Varchi cited in his original lecture, the second stanza of which reads:

> 'And if [my soul] were not made equal to God,
> it would not want more than external beauty,
> which pleases [*piace*] the eyes;
> but because such beauty is so fallacious,
> my soul transcends to the universal form.'[35]

In these verses Varchi rightly recognised a strong debt to Neoplatonism through an uplifting of Socratic love that

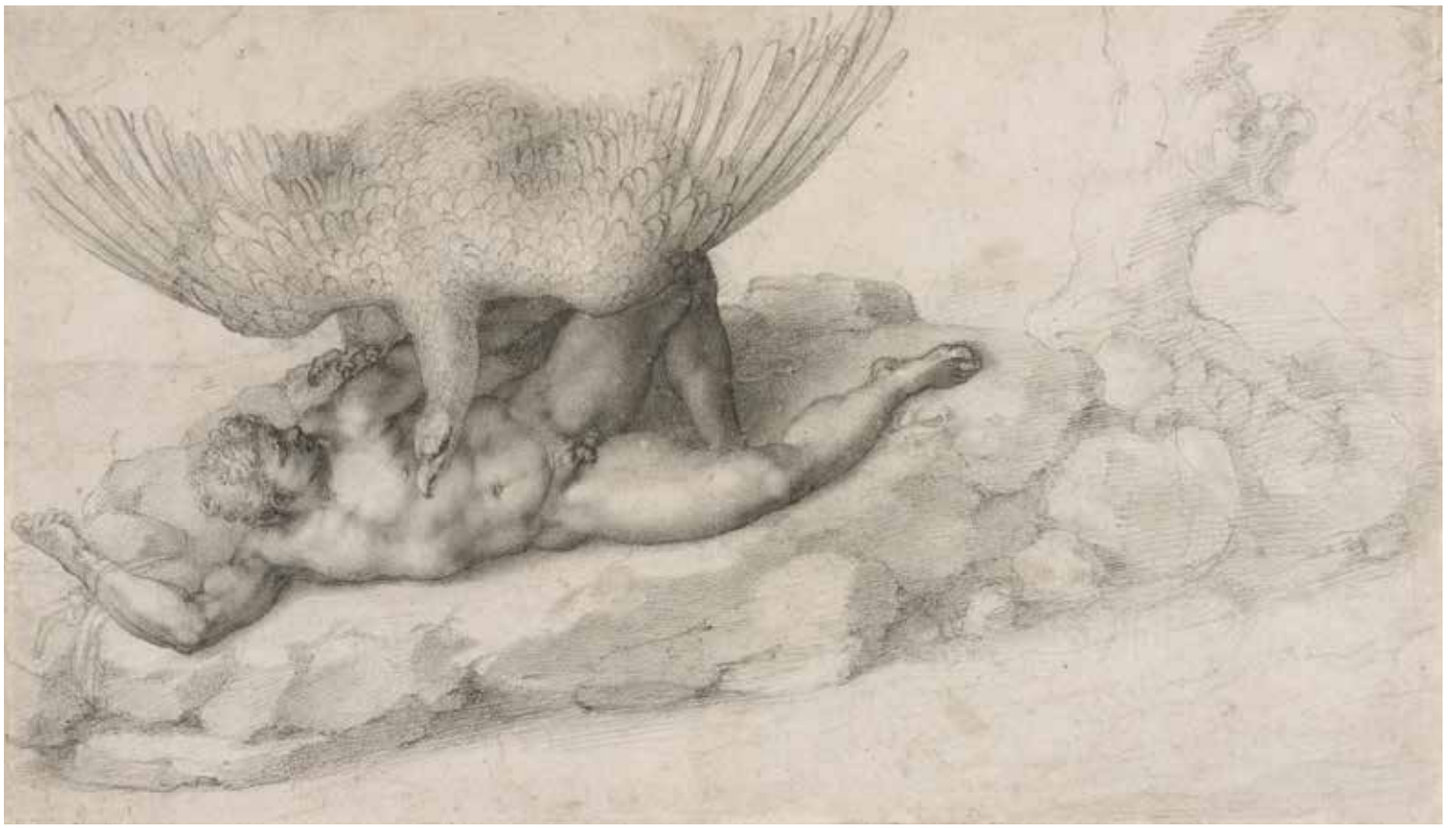


fig. 18 Michelangelo, *Tityus*, 1532. Black chalk, 190 x 330 mm. Windsor, Royal Collection Trust, inv. RCIN 912771

Michelangelo and Antiquity. Ongoing Training

Martin Gayford

Still Going to School

One winter's day, Cardinal Alessandro Farnese encountered the aged Michelangelo trudging through the snow towards the Colosseum. The cardinal asked the great artist, by then in old age, what he was doing in such weather; Michelangelo replied, '*Io vado ancora alla scuola per imparare*' ('I'm still going to school to learn').[1]

Since adolescence he had been immersed in the Græco-Roman past, studying and meditating on monuments of architecture such as the Colosseum, sculpture of both large and small scale, carved stones, and the scraps of information about the visual arts which were embedded in classical literature. This training set him apart from most of his contemporaries; furthermore, the high level of connoisseurship and intellectual understanding of his teachers was unique. Michelangelo himself was at pains to make this point clear for posterity.

In March 1550, he celebrated his seventy-fifth birthday. That same spring, the first edition of Vasari's *Le vite de' più eccellenti pittori, scultori, e architettori* (The Lives of the Most Excellent Painters, Sculptors and Artists) appeared, containing a long and fulsome account of his career. But Vasari's biography, flattering though it was, left out vital information, was sometimes inaccurate and emphasised points that Michelangelo did not wish to be stressed. Reading his own biography in Vasari's words might well have raised the question of how he would be remembered. Three years later, in 1553, another volume appeared: the *Vita di Michelagnolo Buonarroti* by Ascanio Condivi. The author was an assistant in Michelangelo's workshop, who had apparently taken notes of the artist's recollections, which were then put into a more polished literary form by an anonymous ghostwriter. Although somewhat garbled by this process, the result is close to a modern 'as-told-to' autobiography. One of the first points Michelangelo corrected, via his amanuensis, concerned his early schooling as an artist. Vasari stated, accurately, that Michelangelo had been apprenticed to the Florentine painter Domenico Ghirlandaio. Condivi brings this up only to deny its importance.

> 'I wanted to make mention of this, because I have been told that the son of Domenico used to attribute the divine excellence of Michelangelo in great part to the teaching of his father, who in reality gave him no assistance at all.'[2]

This passage is often regarded as an example of Michelangelo's economy with the truth – which in some respects it is. There is documentary evidence that Michelangelo was indeed apprenticed to Ghirlandaio. But the point that Condivi made, admittedly disingenuously, was different: that Ghirlandaio 'gave him no assistance at all'. That statement was not strictly accurate either. But what Michelangelo learnt from Ghirlandaio was essentially practical. In Ghirlandaio's workshop he was schooled in 'methodical and efficient techniques of painting in fresco and tempera', as Carmen Bambach put it,[3] plus other methods such as the use of cross-hatching to create form and depth in drawing.

This was an excellent grounding in the methods of Florentine art, perhaps the best he could have gained in any workshop in the city during the 1480s. The point that Condivi wanted to make, however, was that 'the divine excellence of Michelangelo' – what made him the most revered and influential artist of his age – was not the result of training by Ghirlandaio: his unique artistic development was the result of what came *after* his apprenticeship. And there Michelangelo and his mouthpiece Condivi had an important truth on their side. From the age of 15 to 19 he was quite literally living inside one of the greatest collections of antiquities of the age and learning from several of the most renowned scholars of classical literature and philosophy then living.

fig. 42 Roman, *Apollo Belvedere*, 2nd century CE copy, possibly of a 4th century BCE Greek original by Leochares. Marble, height 224 cm. Vatican City, Vatican Museums, inv. M.V.1015.0.0

fig. 43 (cat. 10) Michelangelo, *A Male Nude*, c. 1501–1502. Pen and brown ink, black chalk, 374 x 228 mm. London, British Museum, inv. 1887,0502.117

Mind

“L’un tira al cielo, e l’altro in terra tira;
nell’alma l’un, l’altr’abita ne’ sensi,
e l’arco tira a cose basse e vile.”

‘One [love] draws towards heaven, the other draws down to earth;
one dwells in the soul, the other in the senses,
and draws its bow at base and vile things.’

Michelangelo and the Divine Body. Between Crucifixion and Resurrection

Jennifer Sliwka

Michelangelo's deeply held Christian faith informed his profound engagement, preoccupation even, with depicting the body of Christ throughout his long and celebrated career.[1] As his later spiritual sonnets affirm, the artist believed that a new life in heaven awaited him after his earthly death and that this salvation was promised through Jesus Christ's own sacrificial death on the cross.[2] Over the course of his career, Michelangelo repeatedly addressed the subject of the dead Christ in various contexts: on the cross at the Crucifixion, being lowered at the Deposition, cradled in his mother's arms in a Lamentation (or Pietà), carried to the tomb and then reanimated at the Resurrection. These subjects seemed to take on a particularly powerful and personal meaning for the artist in the last three decades of his life, when Christian beliefs around death and resurrection became increasingly important to him as he confronted his own mortality. Michelangelo explored these subjects across various media – in drawing, sculpture and paint – and often used the artistic solutions he devised in one medium to inform his work in another. He is perhaps best known for his treatments of the Pietà, creating at least three sculptures on the subject at key points throughout his career: in 1499, in around 1547–55 and in the year of his death in 1564. What his paintings and especially his drawings reveal, however, is that he continued to rethink and interrogate his ideas about the representation of Christ's dead body in the long periods between these better-known sculpted works.

The Lamented Body

Although he had already completed several sculptures for prestigious patrons by the age of 25, it was the marble *Pietà* that Michelangelo carved for the French cardinal, Jean de Bilhères-Lagraulas, that effectively established his fame as a sculptor (fig. 113). Cardinal of the Basilica of Santa Sabina on the Aventine, Bilhères-Lagraulas commissioned Michelangelo in 1497 to carve the sculpture for his future funerary chapel in Santa Petronilla, a mausoleum with longstanding associations with French royalty. The *Pietà* was installed in the chapel in 1500, a year after the cardinal's death, and remained there until the mausoleum was demolished to make way for the new basilica of St Peter's in around 1517, where it is housed to this day. The surviving contract between the cardinal and the artist specifies that the sculpture was to be a life-size Pietà, an Italian term often translated into English as a Lamentation, but which can also refer to an emotional state such as piety and pity or be applied to other devotional images of the suffering or dead Christ, for example the Man of Sorrows or Christ supported by angels. Curiously, the Pietà as a subject is not described in the gospel accounts but is actually an artistic invention that visualises an unspecified moment following Jesus's Crucifixion and between his Deposition and Entombment. This visual tradition seems to have originated in late thirteenth-century Dominican mysticism in the area around the Rhine valley that had a particular interest in the *Compassio Mariae* or empathy with the sorrow and suffering of the Virgin during Christ's Passion. At the centre of this early meditative practice was the visualisation of Christ and the Virgin in the mind of the worshipper. Over time, however, these ephemeral images of the mind developed into a more concrete visual iconography in the form of a wooden sculpture known as a '*Vesperbild*' or 'image of the vespers (evening prayers)' destined for altars as aids to devotion.[3]

Michelangelo's first interpretation of this *Vesperbild* type, however, is far removed from the aged and grief-stricken Madonnas shown cradling Christ's battered and emaciated body more commonly found in the North. Instead, the Italian artist renders his idealised bodies in highly polished white Carrara marble and represents a serene and unusually youthful Virgin Mary, perhaps to underscore her purity and to evoke images of her cradling the Christ Child in her arms. The Virgin's impossibly wide

fig. 113 Michelangelo, *Pietà*, c. 1497–1500. Marble, 174 x 195 x 69 cm. Vatican City, St Peter's Basilica

fig. 114 Michelangelo, *The Entombment*, c. 1500–1501. Oil on wood, 162 x 150 cm. London, National Gallery, inv. NG790

of the Sweet Kiss.' In these images, the Virgin and Christ Child are shown cheek to cheek or even kissing, demonstrating their particularly close and tender relationship. While some early Italian Renaissance artists adopted this Eastern visual tradition, few represented the Virgin pressing her face to that of her dead adult son instead of to her living child. In transposing this motif to the mourning Virgin Mother, Michelangelo may have been drawing on a second association between mother and son, one derived from the *Song of Songs*, a book of the Hebrew Bible containing an anthology of love poems. Since about the twelfth century, Christians interpreted the bride and bridegroom described in the poems as the Virgin and Christ, likening their love to a kind of spiritual marriage in which they are simultaneously mother and son and betrothed lovers. If read through this theological lens, the intimate embrace between mother and son in Michelangelo's drawing suggests Mary's longing for her 'bridegroom'/son and her fervent desire for their ecstatic reunion in heaven.

This exploration between the intimacy of the two figures was a subject Michelangelo would return to in his second marble *Pietà* (known as the *Florentine Pietà*) of around 1547–55 (fig. 120), which he intended for his own tomb in Santa Maria Maggiore in Rome.[8] Now in his seventies, Michelangelo worked on the block of marble for eight years, and would ultimately leave the work both unfinished and partially destroyed after taking a hammer to it and severing Christ's left arm (now repaired) and leg (now absent). The precise reasons for his frustration with the work remain obscure. Some believe the marble was flawed and the sculpture could not be completed, while others have hypothesised over Michelangelo's dissatisfaction with a composition which had already preoccupied him for decades.[9] Here, the artist distils the number of figures down to four, and presents Christ's twisting dead body upright and supported on the lap of the Virgin, who threads her hand under his left arm and presses her hand to his chest. She also presses her face to his own following the *Glykophilousa* type. Above them, the hooded figure of Nicodemus (or possibly Joseph of Arimathea) stands at the top of this pyramidal composition, his left arm wrapped around the Virgin and his right under Christ's right arm supporting his weight as the figure slumps into a zigzag of folded limbs. As Giorgio Vasari noted, the hooded figure, even in its roughly hewn and unfinished state, reveals the features of the artist who therefore takes on the role of bearer and burier of Christ himself.[10] Touchingly, Christ's right arm seems to enfold the kneeling figure of Mary Magdalene at his side, his hand gently resting on her shoulder while she, in turn, supports his bent right leg. The central figure of Christ is the only one that seems to have been relatively

fig. 117 Anonymous, after Michelangelo, *The Deposition,* second half of the sixteenth century. Relief in gilded gesso on a slate ground, 38.1 x 27.9 cm. London, Victoria and Albert Museum, inv. A.1:1-1941

fig. 118 (cat. 39) Michelangelo, *The Descent from the Cross*, c. 1530–1532. Red chalk, 375 x 280 mm. Oxford, Ashmolean Museum, inv. WA1846.88

Friend and Enemy. The Men in Michelangelo's Life

Klazina Botke

Friendship

Direct visual representations of friendship are scarce in the Renaissance; as well as Raphael's famous self-portrait with a male friend, the most revealing is probably Jacopo Pontormo's double portrait of 1523–24.[1] Two men, dressed in black, their bodies turned towards one another, gaze at us out of the panel. The one in front points towards a sheet of paper he is holding, the white of which contrasts strongly with their dark clothing. It appears to be a letter containing a passage from Cicero's *Laelius de amicitia*: 'friendship embraces innumerable ends; turn where you will it is ever at your side; no barrier shuts it out; it is never untimely and never in the way.'[2] While we no longer know who the depicted men are, the text leaves us in no doubt that the two were true friends. To the celebrated Roman orator, the notion of *amicitia* (friendship) was 'nothing else than an accord in all things, human and divine, conjoined with mutual goodwill and affection', and more important to a person than wealth, power, pleasure or even good health.[3] According to Cicero, true friendship was a deep form of connection in which two people, who were not seeking their own advantage, could identify with each other. This Ciceronian idea clearly drew fresh attention in the Renaissance, as it aligned with the humanist emphasis on the autonomous individual.

Aristotle's views on the subject of *philia* (friendship) likewise played a role in early modern society. In his *Nicomachean Ethics*, the Greek philosopher – like Cicero – described friendship as a bond, but now as part of the pursuit of a common social life.[4] Personal friendships, he stressed, require a community of citizens and vice versa. Aristotle further distinguished between three types of *philia*: friendship that arises from pleasure, from utility, and from moral goodness or virtue.[5] His ideas were developed in the thirteenth century by the influential Dominican theologian Thomas Aquinas, who sought in his commentaries on the *Ethics* to connect them with Christian theology. In Aquinas's view, there are indeed three types of love: a person can 'be loved for the sake of the good, for the sake of pleasure or because it is useful. As the act of friendship is a loving one, it follows that there are also three types of friendship.'[6] All the same, humankind's true goal, to his mind, remained the all-transcending 'friendship' with God.

By Michelangelo's time, this classical notion of friendship had become embedded in a Christian context and was deeply intertwined with Florentine society. In her book *Friendship, Love and Trust*, Dale Kent shows that in practice there was mainly a difference between the ideal friendship (based on mutual affection and trust), and patronage relationships. The latter were useful and functional friendships on which most artists relied for protection and support.[7] The two were not, however, mutually exclusive: a beneficial friendship could also be a pleasant or even loving relationship. At any rate, as far as artists in Florence were concerned, the ties with patrons and with friends who depended on them were an indispensable form of friendship.[8]

Like all artists during the Renaissance, Michelangelo belonged to a network of family, friends and work relationships. But who were his friends, what kind of relationships did he keep up, and what did they mean to him? Did he have enemies too? The biographies written during the artist's lifetime by Paolo Giovio, Giorgio Vasari and Ascanio Condivi give us some idea, allowing for their somewhat biased character. Our knowledge of the artist's personal relationships has been greatly enriched, moreover, by his 538 or so surviving letters in which he corresponded with relatives, friends, fellow artists, lovers, employees and patrons.[9] His work too – including the drawings and sonnets he gave to his friends – is likewise full of deep, personal feelings for another. This is taken to an extreme in the works he made for Tommaso de' Cavalieri (fig. 14/cat. 6) and Vittoria Colonna, but also in the few rare portraits he drew, such as that of Andrea Quaratesi (fig. 13/cat. 36). The drawing in Teylers Museum

Michelangelo Buonarroti the Younger, the master's great-nephew, was largely responsible for the expansion of Michelangelo's reputation in the century that followed. The extensive decoration of the additions to the Casa Buonarroti in Florence between 1615 and 1637 was intended to contribute to this.[61] The biographies of Filippo Baldinucci (published in 1682) and Domenico Bernini (published in 1713) and the diary of Paul Fréart de Chantelou (published in 1665) offer further important documentary evidence regarding the fate of Michelangelo's art and reputation in the subsequent period.[62]

His drawings, too, continued to inspire artists over the course of those centuries, as the following modest but illustrative example demonstrates. Teylers Museum holds some of Michelangelo's studies in red chalk for the figures in the later part of the Sistine Chapel ceiling. The preliminary study for the hand of God (figs 163 and 164/cat. 18) – perhaps Michelangelo's most famous work after *David* – was cut out at some stage and pasted to a sheet with preliminary studies for his Haman, possibly because it was mistaken for that figure's hand. The fragment was returned to its original place during restoration in 1952.[63] The expressive face of one of the *ignudi* on the other side of the sheet was fortunately spared when the hand of God was cut out. A second study for the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel shows the famous *ignudo* viewed from the back, with preliminary studies for Eve and for God's arms on the other side (fig. 165/cat. 19v). The separate studies on the two sheets were copied by an unknown artist in around 1600–50 and combined in a single sheet now in Windsor (fig. 166). It appears that either Michelangelo gave these drawings away at a very early stage or that they were taken from his studio, and that they have been inseparable for more than 500 years.

The fact that Michelangelo's fame has extended as far as our own twenty-first century reflects the power of his work, to which his friendships and relationships also contributed. Thanks to the wealth of information we now possess regarding the artist's personal life, not only have we gained a deeper insight into his art and methods, we also seem to be getting steadily closer to the artist himself. Almost as if Michelangelo had become a friend of ours.

fig. 165 (cat. 19v) Michelangelo, *Figure Studies for the Sistine Chapel Ceiling*, c. 1511. Red chalk, 279 x 214 mm. Haarlem, Teylers Museum, A 027v

fig. 166 Unidentified draughtsman, *Copies after Michelangelo's Studies for the Sistine Chapel Ceiling*, c. 1600–1650. Red chalk, 390 x 235 mm. Windsor, Royal Collection Trust, inv. RCIN 990441

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Michelangelo, *Studies for Saint Lawrence for the Last Judgement*, c. 1534–1538. Haarlem, Teylers Museum, inv. A 023

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Michelangelo, *Studies for Haman for the Sistine Chapel Ceiling*, c. 1511. Haarlem, Teylers Museum, inv. A 016

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