

Example of michealangelo research paper

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Analysis of Michelangelo's Art

Michelangelo was an artist of tremendous talent and vision. Accounts left by his father, masters and friends undoubtedly confirm this statement. Through his work as a painter, an architect and above all, as a sculptor, Michelangelo managed to single out art as a vocation and an occupation in itself, separating the job of an artist from the job of an artisan. Michelangelo believed that an artist's duty was, above all, to reflect the beauty that universally resided in the natural world; primarily defining himself as a sculptor, he humbly proceed towards unlocking the images he thought were merely "blocked in the stone". Michelangelo dedicated his life to art, which gradually became a respectable and profitable way to earn his livelihood, but above all, it became the ultimate expression of the artist's raw and powerful emotions. It is these emotions – untamed, yet meaningful – that one can see reflected in David's ardent and concentrated look or across the beautiful, yet mournful face of the Holy Virgin represented in the Pieta. Michelangelo successfully "transferred his own doubts, frustrations, and passions into the great figures he created or planned", never serving the ideal of calm and contemplative beauty. This way, by looking at the artist's major creations in bass-relief, sculpture and painting, this paper attempts to prove that Michelangelo's works were consummate, impressive and ultimately, resided by the artist's powerful and energetic emotions.

Madonna of the steps was completed between years 1489 and 1492, when Michelangelo was living in the house of Lorenzo de Medici. He was most probably influenced by Donatello's work (who invented a new technique in

bass-relief), as well as ancient reliefs that were found in the Medici's art collection. That is why the bass-relief expresses a sort of " classic grandeur and harmonious profile" and impresses through its well balanced composition. Even if unfinished, this work is striking through the finesse and the precision of the lines, demonstrating Michelangelo's vibrant talent even at his early age. The cut of the stone gives shape and texture to the clothing in a natural way, that seems to fold and fall like the softest silk; the roundness of the curves shaping the garments and the people is well balanced by the rigidity of the stairs, as well as the stone cube on which Madonna rests with her child. The composition is dynamic and engaging: Madonna is represented in the foreground, with a sorrowful and thoughtful gaze, protecting young Jesus in the folds of her garment, while the children in the background move about at ease. Madonna of the Steps becomes an expression of Michelangelo's own sadness towards Christ's imminent sufferance and sacrifice, combining once again the artist's sincere self-expression with his " early virtuosity with marble" .

The Pieta, considered to be Michelangelo's first masterpiece, was commissioned by the French Cardinal Jean de Bilhères Lagraulas, depicting a theme that was very common in the works of French and German artists: Virgin Mary alone with the body of Christ after the Crucifixion. However, Michelangelo decided to interpret the theme in a personal and original manner, creating a piece that transmits powerful emotions about Christ's passions, as well as Virgin Mary's enduring devotion. The pyramidal composition creates a well balanced ensemble, along with the exquisitely carved drapery and luminosity of the marble: " Michelangelo transformed

marble into flesh, hair, and fabric with a sensitivity for texture that is almost without parallel". The face of Virgin Mary expresses calm and eternal beauty, associated with her timeless purity and dedication. The scene captures the gravity of the moment, rendering Christ's sacrifice as a dramatic, yet necessary event, bravely accepted by both the Mother and the Son.

Michelangelo demonstrates once again, through this sculpture, that his art is above all a means for sincere self-expression, a reflection of the ideas that an artist uncovers in the surrounding world.

David , another extraordinary example of Michelangelo's genius, depicts the biblical character preparing for his upcoming fight with Goliath, while standing his ground with a brave and concentrated demeanor. David's body is carved in precise anatomic details, as a result of Michelangelo's assiduous study of human anatomy. At the same time, the biblical hero, who stands on his asymmetrically arranged limbs, " with the weight mostly put on one leg", seems to have borrowed the heroic and determined posture from Greco-Roman statues – another example of Michelangelo's inspiration from classical art. It is fascinating that Michelangelo decided to depict David before his defining fight with Goliath, incorporating in his facial expression, gaze and posture all the built-up tension and emotions along with that ultimate psychological lull preceding a big confrontation. David doesn't denote a contemplative, absent and superior attitude; on the contrary, he almost stands out as a real human being, alive in front of the viewer, transmitting his pressing feelings of both turmoil and concentration.

When summoned to work on the ceiling of the Sixteenth Chapel, Michelangelo was uneasy to accept, since he considered himself to be a sculptor, not a painter. However, when he was finished with the marvelous work, everyone acclaimed his reputation as visionary painter as well. Not only was the painting of the ceiling in the Sixteenth Chapel hard and tedious work, it also unveiled Michelangelo's prolific creative force that brought an ambitious project to its completion. The paintings on the Sixteenth Chapel ceiling represent important scenes from the Genesis and the Old Testament, as well as important events that preceded the emergence of the Christian faith. Michelangelo's ability to interweave the depiction of several characters, each with specific body positions and facial expressions, is most impressive. After all, the ceiling of the chapel incorporates " more than 300 figures in an ultimate grand drama of the human race", demonstrating once again that Michelangelo was a master of beautiful lines of expression, aiming to portray beauty through the emotions of the human soul. One of the scenes, The Creation of Adam, presents the defining moment in the book of Genesis as a dramatic and dynamic moment, stretched along an invisible oblique axis that confers an impression of continuity and eternity to the scene. God is depicted here as an almighty, strong figure, floating in the sky and barely leaning down towards Adam – almost like a reflection of the grandeur of the old ancient gods. Adam, on the other hand, residing on his small piece of Earth, seems weak compared to his Creator, too weak to lean towards Him. However, even if there isn't a physical connection between the two (their hands do not touch at the finger tips), Michelangelo made use of their facial expressions to portray an unseen, yet eternal bond: their looks

are full of passionate and sincere emotions that create an invisible, yet powerful connection between the Creator and his creation.

Michelangelo was a dedicated artist that applied himself all his life, in order to better his technique and to perfect his tremendous talent. Even in his early age, he created beautiful works of art, as seen through the example of the Madonna of the Steps. However, his merit does not stand solely in his ability to sculpt and paint, which obviously surpassed the skills demonstrated by many of the artists during his time. Michelangelo was unique because of his constant desire to express powerful emotions through his work: passion, grandeur, joy, sorrow or oppression. He created “ a style of vast, expressive strength conveyed through complex, eccentric, and often titanic forms that loom before the viewer in tragic grandeur” . As seen in the works analyzed by this paper, Michelangelo always sought beauty in human passions and assiduously tried to uncover it in stone and paint.

Works Cited

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