

The significances of michelangelo's essay sample



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Michelangelo is largely acknowledged for being one of the greatest artist who ever lived. He was a master of many crafts such as sculpting, painting, architecture and engineering. He is widely known for his masterpiece that is The Sistine Ceiling. The ceiling is painted with decorative figures from particular Biblical stories. The most recognizable story is the nine scenes from Genesis that run from the altar to the entrance wall. What's interesting about these paintings are the twenty Ignudi that surround each individual scene. I will begin by discussing Michelangelo's ignudi poses and body structure. Then connecting Michelangelo's fascination with the study anatomy and how a Ignudo figure gives evidence to his interest. The twenty Ignudi figures are unknown, there is speculation about their meaning. Are the Ignudi merely just decorative elements or do they have a deeper significance? Are they Athletes of God, Symbols of Justice and Law or Symbols of beauty?

Over the countless master pieces that Michelangelo produced, he was fixated on the Male body and its youthful dominance. Most of many models that Michelangelo used were youthful men. He would accentuate muscular curvature in the biceps, Forearm, stomach, legs and neck line. Scholars would argue that Michelangelo was homosexual, do to the many nude male figures and sculptures he had created. He rarely showed women as feminine and would use the male figure, such as this Ignudo at the upper left corner of the Drunkenness of Noah (above the prophet Joel). As you can see the only distinction between man and women can be only seen by the breast, hair and genitalia.

Michelangelo was fascinated by the study of anatomy. He began dissections in his early teens, when he joined the court of Lorenzo de' Medici. By his late teens, he conducted his studies by dissecting corpses then later applying what he had learned to his work. This helped him a great deal to show the detail when painting the human male body. Michelangelo was so interested in anatomy, you can see in one of the scenes from The Sistine Ceiling showing

The Creation of Adam that the figure resembles the human Brian. I couldn't help but wonder did Michelangelo apply this to a Ignudo figure as well?

Eknoyan, discusses that Michelangelo may have used the same idea that is seen in the Separation of Earth and Waters showing a Ignudo sitting with two separate pillows. Both of theses pillows are seen under the Ignudo's right and left arm. When looking closely you see that the two pillow resemble Kidneys. The pillows are being held exactly where the human Kidneys are located. " The striking is the facial expression of this singular ignudo, which, in contrast to the serene, thoughtful, surprised, or peaceful facial expressions of the other ignudi, seems to be expressing pain. The uniqueness of the facial expression of this ignudo has been recognized and attributed to " an incoherent fear". "[1]

The twenty Ignudi in the Sistine are believed to be more Greek than Christian. On the other hand, some speculate that the Ignudi are more consider to be more Christian art. Most of Ignudi are grasping a huge garland of oak leaves. The reasoning behind the large garland is to represent Pope Julius, who commissioned the work who belong to della Rovere family, which Italian means oak leaf's.

There are many theories to who these Igundi figures are. The twenty Ignudi in the Sistine are believed to be more Greek than Christian and play no role in the Church's narrative. However, some speculate that the Ignudi are more consider to be more Christian art. Most of these Ignudi are grasping a huge garland of oak leaves. One reason for the large garland is that it representing Pope Julius, who commissioned the work who belong to della Rovere family, which Italian means oak leaf's.

Colin Eisler views on who he believes the Igundi might represent. In *The Athlete of Virtue The Iconography of Asceticism* by Colin Eisler provides examples throughout history that many male sculptures and paintings were based off stories that naked nudes were symbols of Athletes of God. Colin Eisler gives insight on how Michelangelo's history and connection to idea of ascesis on the fresco of *The Sistine Ceiling*, might be great Olympian athletes. He gives meaning to the word Virtue and applies it to the Olympic Greek games. "Virtue – Meaning manliness or courage along with fortitude and agility, was directly identified with the program necessary for triumph in the competition of the Olympic games." [2] The Olympic games consisted of athletic competition among representatives of various cities of ancient Greece. The games became a political tool used by city-states to assert dominance over their rivals.

Politicians would announce political alliances at the games, and in times of war, priests would offer sacrifices to the gods for victory. The Greek games were based off of war, athletic virtues was attributed also to the soldier, was called by Plato "the athlete of war." [3] Could Michelangelo's Ignudi figures be consider Greek Athletes of God?

Colin Eisler suggests that Michelangelo's represented these dominate and youthful figures as Athletes of God. When learning about Michelangelo, you notice that his work always served a purpose and had a great significant meaning. For example Michelangelo's David, this sculpture is an excellent example when connecting Michelangelo's Igundi figures. When viewing the David you see great importance by his stance and undeniable powerful gaze. The David represents the Biblical story of David and Goliath. David, who was a young boy that bravely fought Goliath and was known to be twice his size and stronger. It is told that David was wearing no armor and only had a sling weapon. David defeated Goliath and saved his people from invasion. As for the Ignudi, you see the same distinction with their powerful body structure and facial expression. However, was there a deeper meaning that Michelangelo was trying to portray, such as a representation of Justice and Law of the Golden age?

Joost-Gaugier mentions the twenty Ignudi and how they hold a significant meaning " they might be captives of ancient ignorance, symbols of the beauty of the human body, genii, slaves, Atlantean strong men, angels, adolescent heroes, symbols of eternal life, acolytes of the Christ, athletes of God, supporters of medallions, celestial victory images, or some other sort of secondary figures." [4] During the unveiling of the Ceiling which took place in 1512 right around All Saint's Day Joost-Gaugier feels this is connected to the Ignudi. That since they were placed around such a Biblical scene they must hold an important purpose and perhaps show a metamorphoses to what Michelangelo accomplished of the Ceiling. Which Sydney Freedberg characterizes them

“‘Childish’ in that they attend like uncomprehending innocent at play, the historical scenes which constitute for him (as for others) the principal subjects of the Ceiling.”[5]

Joost-Gaugier purposes that the ignudi represent Justice and Law. The Ignudi show “ Golden Age of Men and the Justice of the primordial God.”[6] This connects to the scenes subjects and the overall layout. The Golden Age of man, meaning the creation of Adam. When at a time when man lived to be happy and in a state of youthfulness and in the moment of weakness man disobeyed his creator leading his God to create Cosmos. Cosmos being the fall of man, who then discovered greed and sin and the Law of God. Justice takes form to Noah and his obedience to God during the great flood. Noah obeying God by building the ark and became the savior of humankind. The Golden Age suggests from my reading “ All Saints’Day would have constituted yet one more ‘ triumph. Surely this was well understood by Vasari in commenting that the oak leaves and acorns Ignudi signified that at this time and under government of Julius was and an Age of Gold.”[7] Julius being suggested as God’s law here on earth.

The Ignudi are also suggested to be symbols of beauty. In The Sistine Ceiling some suggest that Michelangelo’s Intent was a tribute to God and his creation of the human body. We see countless beautiful Ignudi figures where his attention to detail is undeniable. Michelangelo understanding of the human body and the sculptural power of his configuration has without a doubt had an impact on many artist and followers of his time.

Does this in itself show its significances? I believe so, Michelangelo always had a purpose and meaning behind all of his master pieces. Michelangelo's Ignudi ranges from spiritual significance and beauty. Beauty was to him divine, one of the ways God signified himself to humanity. As you can see Michelangelo captures all essentials to many Biblical stories also giving more meaning to who these Ignudi figures are and what they represent.

So are the Ignudi merely just decorative elements or do they have a deeper significance? Are they Athletes of God, Symbols of Justice and Law or Symbols of beauty? I believe all these signify Michelangelo's Ignudi. Each one gives evidence in more ways than one. The figures show youthfulness and dominance such as an athlete of God. Also, Symbols of Justice and Law from the time of the Golden Age when man was created then was punished by banishment by Law and then given Justice. Lastly, Michelangelo's Ignudi ranges from spiritual significance and beauty. Beauty was to him divine, one of the ways God signified himself to humanity.

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[1] Garabed Eknayan: *Michelangelo: Art, anatomy, and the kidney*. [2] C.

Eisler, " Virtue" pp. 82 The Athlete of Virtue The Iconography of Asceticism.

[3] The Republic, Book III, 13, 404 refers to the athletes of war. [4] Joost-

Gaugier, *Artibus et Historiae*

[5] Freedberg, *op. cit.*, 95-97.

[6] [7] Joost-Gaugier, *Artibus et Historiae* pg 28

[8] [9] Joost-Gaugier, *Artibus et Historiae* pg 28