

Michelangelo's david

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Michelangelo's process of sculpting was very unique compared to the other artists of the Renaissance era. Some say that his greatest accomplishment was his statue of David which soars an astonishing 17 ft. Michelangelo took on this 4 year project, 1500-1504, at the age of 26. In the Renaissance time period, it was common for sculptors to make their works from many pieces such as carving the body from one piece of stone then the arms, legs and head from smaller ones. This was largely due to the veins that run through rocks. If a vein was carved into, there was a good possibility the statue would crack, rendering it useless. It was much easier to determine faults in smaller stones than bigger ones, hence the use of smaller stones to make larger sculptures. Michelangelo's David was an exception. It was estimated that the marble stone from which David was carved was 25 ft. tall. Michelangelo's logic was simple; he claimed that, " In every block of marble I see a statue as plain as though it stood before me, shaped and perfect in attitude and action. I have only to hew away the rough walls that imprison the lovely apparition to reveal it to the other eyes as mine see it." Michelangelo said that he was able to see a figure in the stone and all he had to do was chip the pieces away until it was revealed. Amazingly, Michelangelo was able to accomplish one of his greatest achievements with the use of basic tools. During this time, Michelangelo was considered to be a master of sculpting while also being correlated to other famous artists and sculptors. A concept that was commonly shared between artists was the idealized body, what and how a person should look. Michelangelo's idea of the idealized body is strong toned muscles. The statue of David shows clear definition of muscle in the arms, legs and abdominal regions. Whereas Da Vinci believed that

proportions were the idealized body. Many of his anatomical drawings, such as Vitruvian Man, depict the human body in the centre of a circle stretching in different motions, but remaining proportionally even. Although the image of the idealized body was very important to capture in these artists art works, there is much more meaning behind their motives. Religion was one of the main motives of Renaissance artwork. Michelangelo's David was a monument to a biblical story. David was a young man sent to the frontlines of the army to check on his brothers. While there, he heard of Goliath, the 9 ft. tall man. David was the only man to accept Goliath's challenge to one against one combat. David used his slingshot to bring the giant down and slew Goliath. Slung over his left shoulder, one can see David holding the slingshot. The statue of David was not only a symbol of religious views, but eventually came to symbolize the defense of civil liberties embodied in the Florentine Republic which was threatened by more powerful states. Though this magnificent statue came to be a very powerful symbol, it had a long journey to completion. Overseers of the Office of Works of the Duomo (Operai) originally commissioned 12 Old Testament sculptures to be made for the buttresses of the cathedral of Santa Maria Del Fiore. Two sculptors attempted to carve David but became diseased. After the large marble stone sat for 25 years, Michelangelo was given the contract to complete David after convincing the Operai to let him finish it over Da Vinci. Michelangelo did an extraordinary job at incorporating the elements and principals of design into his sculpture. He used the contra pasto pose, hips and shoulders are slanted at opposite angles of each other, to create perfect balance. The statue of David is also a little disproportional. The head and right hand look a

little larger than normal. This may be because the statue was originally intended to be on top of a cathedral where the little details needed to be enlarged to be seen correctly. Michelangelo was also able to capture the minutest details such as the vein patterns running through David's hands, skin textures, bone structures to the knuckles and folds of skin.

Michelangelo's mastery of stone is almost beyond comprehension. From the way he captured the smallest details to the way he portrayed perfect balance and movement. Michelangelo can truly be called a master of sculpting.