



MICHELANGELO

The Divine





MICHELANGELO

The Divine

ART EXHIBITION - INTERACTIVE

Proudly presented by

NICCOLAI - TEKNOART SNC (FIRENZE)

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I MURI DELL'ARTE FIRENZE



*"The greater danger for most of us lies not in setting our aim too high
and falling short; but in setting our aim too low,
and achieving our mark."*

...Michelangelo



The ITALIAN RENAISSANCE began the opening phase of the Renaissance, a period of great cultural change and achievement in Europe that spanned from the end of the 13th century to about 1600 AD and is best known for its cultural and artistic achievements.

The word renaissance (Rinascimento in Italian) literally means “rebirth”.

In the early Renaissance artists and architects were seen as craftsmen with little prestige or recognition. By the later Renaissance the top figures wielded great influence and could charge great fees. A flourishing trade in Renaissance art and architecture developed. While in the early Renaissance many of the leading artists were of lower or middle-class origins, increasingly they became aristocrats.

Amongst the great masters leading up to and during this historic phase were Giotto, Beato Angelico, Piero Della Francesca, Leonardo Da Vinci, Michelangelo Buonarroti and Raffaello. Of these, Michelangelo Buonarroti is recognised as the greatest artist of all time.

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Above: Map of Renaissance Italy, Vatican Museum Collection, Rome



MICHELANGELO BUONARROTI 1475-1564

MICHELANGELO BUONARROTI 1475-1564

Florentine painter, sculptor and architect

“Enlightened by what had been achieved by the renowned Giotto and his school, all artists of energy and distinction were striving to give the world proof of the talents with which fortune and their own happy temperaments had endowed them. They were all anxious (though their efforts were in vain) to reflect in their work the glories of nature and to attain, as far as possible, perfect artistic discernment or understanding. Meanwhile, the benign ruler of heaven graciously looked down to earth, saw the worthlessness of what was being done, the intense but utterly fruitless studies, and the presumption of men who were farther from true art than night is from day, and resolved to save us from our errors.

So he decided to send into the world an artist who would be skilled in each and every craft, whose work alone would teach us how to attain perfection in design (by correct drawing and by the use of contour and light and shadows, so as to obtain relief in painting) and how to use right judgement in sculpture and, in architecture, create buildings which would be comfortable and secure, healthy, pleasant to look at, well-proportioned and richly ornamented.

Moreover, he determined to give this artist the knowledge of true moral philosophy and the gift of poetic expression, so that everyone might admire and follow him as their perfect exemplar in life, work, and behaviour and in every endeavour, and he would be acclaimed as divine.

... And therefore he chose to have Michelangelo born a Florentine, so that one of her own citizens might bring to absolute perfection the achievements for which Florence was already justly renowned.”

Giorgio Vasari 1511-1574

‘Lives of the Artists’ Volume 1

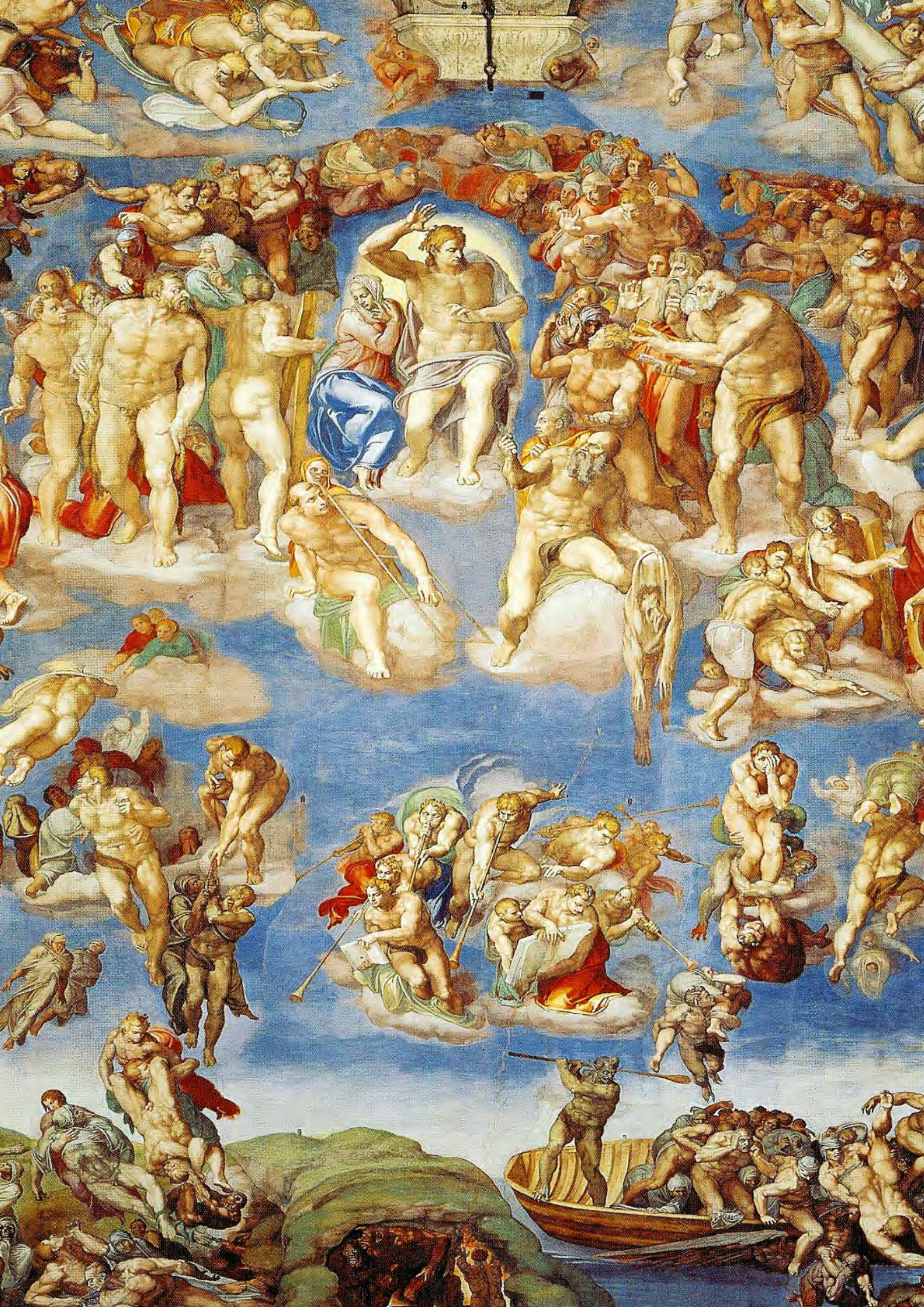
(A selection translated by George Bull, Penguin Books)



Above: *The Creation of Adam* (detail) 1508-1512, Michelangelo Buonarroti, Sistine Chapel ceiling, Vatican, Rome

Left: *Bust of Michelangelo* by Daniele da Volterra (replica)

Following page: *The Last Judgement* (detail) 1536-41, Michelangelo Buonarroti, Sistine Chapel altar wall, Vatican, Rome



ABOUT THE EXHIBITION

This Exhibition is about Michelangelo Buonarroti, his life, the seemingly eternal impact of his achievements in painting, sculpture and architecture and also, his starring role in one of the greatest events in the history of Italian Renaissance Art and Culture.

The **MICHELANGELO The Divine Exhibition** is the culmination of years of dedicated research and planning by renowned Florentine Artisans, **THE NICCOLAI GROUP** and **I MURI DELL'ARTE FIRENZE**, in collaboration with the **FONDAZIONE CASA BUONARROTI**.

The aim of the exhibition is to provide visitors with an unparalleled experience, immersing them into the daily life of one of the greatest artists of all time, from the period of the Renaissance where extraordinary forces were flourishing.

The Exhibition is presented in five themes

- **THEME 1 MICHELANGELO'S LIFE STORY**

A time line spanning the years of a young Michelangelo until his death in 1564

- **THEME 2 SCULPTURE**

LIFE SIZE REPLICAS of Michelangelo's sculptures -CASTS FROM THE ORIGINAL MOULDS and in MARBLE

- **THEME 3 ARCHITECTURE**

Capturing the essence of Michelangelo's crowning achievements

- **THEME 4 THE CHALLENGE OF THE "BATTLES"**

The 'Challenge'- bringing Michelangelo and Leonardo Da Vinci in a 'head to head' battle

- **THEME 5 ART GAMES**

Revealing techniques and illusions

SPECIAL REQUEST

Michelangelo Buonarroti original artworks
BY APPOINTMENT



Theme 1

MICHELANGELO'S LIFE STORY



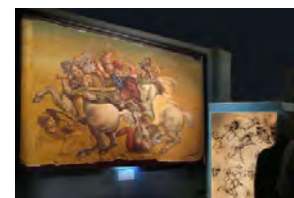
Theme 2

SCULPTURE



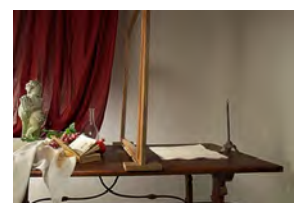
Theme 3

ARCHITECTURE



Theme 4

THE CHALLENGE OF THE "BATTLES"



Theme 5

ART GAMES





INTRODUCTION TO THEME I

INTRODUCTION

"Flakes of grey stone shot out to the rhythmic beat of mallets. The clang of metal on metal, answered by the dry sound of splitting rock, cradled the infant's sleep... The smell of stone dust that crept in houses and in quarry worker's clothes even mixed with the milk the baby sucked from his nurse's breast. This smell, sweet to him, and the rhythmic music of mallets accompanied the young Michelangelo all along his childhood years, together with the awareness of the beauty hidden in rough stone."

Michelangelo Buonarroti was the greatest sculptor of the 16th century. Shaping the cold stone he gave life to figures of ideal beauty, endowed with an almost supernatural power of expression. The whole of his sculpture work was enough to let him pass into the legend of Art, and a lifetime would not have been enough for an ordinary man to master carving to such an extent, but Michelangelo did more: he also created colossal works of very different genres of art. His paintings cover the immensity of the ceiling vault and altar wall of the Sistine Chapel, still taking viewer's breath away, and the graceful majesty of the enormous dome of St. Peter's, designed by Michelangelo, sends a shiver down the spine of bystanders.

Michelangelo was born *divine sculptor*, and he quickly became a painter of unrivalled power of expression for his time, and then architect of magnificent constructions, and finally, poet. His artistic fertility and genius could not but give him a place of honour in Art History. His outstanding personality is revealed by the fact that he was the first artist in history to have his biography written while he was still alive: even his contemporaries, very unusually, were aware that he was a man above normal humanity.

Truth often mingled with legend in the way Michelangelo's life was told over the centuries, but the seed of his creative power can be found in the early years of his life, those passed among the stone-cutters of Settignano. He himself attributed his talent as a sculptor to the milk he sucked from his nurse, herself a stone mason's daughter and wife: "I took from my nurse's milk the chisels and mallets with which I do the figures" (*Vasari*).

We can carry our thoughts even further... Harmony of beautifully carved stone should not overshadow the sculptor's terribly hard work. Confronted daily with the rugged toughness of rough rock, he chokes up with

marble dust, skin and hair covered with its white powder, deadly shards hurting eyes and hands. The harshness of this craft forged Michelangelo's tough personality, surly character, but also his unequalled courage. Only limitless boldness could support the great artistic talent of a single man in the most incredible challenges that Michelangelo deliberately took up. So it was not only physical value, but also iron will and courage he had when facing great and powerful personages of his time. He was able even to stand his ground against the Pope on several occasions, pursuing his ideals of perfection and freedom.

Many called him the "divine" Michelangelo for his talent but, as a faithful Christian, he also had big doubts, worries and pains in his intimate relationship with God. The tormented character that emerges from the stories of his life and works, especially in his old age, suggests that his great strength was also tempered by human weakness, distress, and expectations about his religious feeling. The greatness of the man coincided with the importance of the historical period in which he lived. It was Renaissance. A time in which the greatest masterpieces of art were born, years plagued by wars and struggles but also characterized by beauty and great changes in the way of understanding the nature of Man.

Michelangelo had a very long life, almost 90 years old and until a few days before his death, he was still working on a sculpture of the Pietà. He was the greatest artist of all time: sculptor, painter, architect and poet. As a man, he was sometimes surly and unsociable, but he knew also how to be faithful and sincere in his affections. He was courageous and proud of his art, but also humble and anxious. Between reality and myth, everyday life and artistic greatness, let's recall a few moments of Michelangelo's life, and through the study of his major works, let's find out who was

"The Divine Michelangelo"

THE DIVINE TIMELINE

- 1475 – Born in Caprese, small town in Tuscany. Short time after his birth, his family moves to Settignano, where a stone-cutter's wife wet-nurses him
- 1487 – Michelangelo attends the workshop of painter Domenico Ghirlandaio
- 1490 – Chosen to study sculpture in San Marco garden, he meets Lorenzo il Magnifico who welcomes him into his household. Carves *Madonna of the Steps* and *Battle of the Centaurs*
- 1492 – Death of Lorenzo il Magnifico, Michelangelo leaves Medici Palace
- 1494 – Michelangelo is in Bologna, where he carves *Saint Proculus* and *Candlestick-holder Angel* before returning to Florence
- 1496 – First trip to Rome, stays until 1501. He carves the *Bacchus* and the *Rome Pietà*
- 1501 – Returns to Florence, receives the commission for the statue of *David*
- 1503-1505 – In Florence, begins painting *Doni Tondo* and carving *Taddei Tondo*, *Pitti Tondo* and *Bruges Madonna*
- 1504 – Completes the *David*. Receives commission for the *Battle of Cascina*
- 1505 – 1508 Summoned to Rome by Pope Julius II, commissioned to create the Pope's tomb. The works for Julius II's tomb will last on and off for 40 years, in Rome and Florence, carving *Moses*, *Rebellious* and *Dying Slaves*, *Accademia Slaves*, *Rachel and Leah*. Julius II, bestows commission to paint the Sistine Chapel vault
- 1512 – Sistine Chapel vault is finished
- 1516 – Returns to Florence, receives commission for the façade of San Lorenzo Church
- 1516-1519 – Numerous trips to the marble quarries at Carrara for the façade project
- 1519 – 1521 Commission for the Medici Chapel of San Lorenzo Church in Florence which includes the carving of statues for the tombs in Medici Chapel
- 1524 – Commission to design the Laurentian Library in Florence
- 1527-1530 – Siege of Florence, Michelangelo designs and builds fortifications for his hometown
- 1530 – Trip to Rome where he meets Tommaso Cavalieri. Presents Cavalieri many gifts of drawings and poems
- 1534 – Michelangelo departs Florence, never to return. Spends remaining thirty years of his life in Rome
- 1536 – Begins *The Last Judgment* fresco in Sistine Chapel. Meets Vittoria Colonna
- 1538 – Commission for the Campidoglio
- 1541 – *The Last Judgment* is completed and unveiled
- 1545 – Julius II Tomb completed. Begins working on Pauline Chapel frescos
- 1546 – Michelangelo is appointed chief architect of Saint Peter's
- 1547 – Death of his great friend Vittoria Colonna. Michelangelo begins carving the *Florentine Pietà* for his own tomb (abandoned)
- 1550 – First publication of Michelangelo's biography by Vasari in his *Lives of the Artists*
- 1555 – Begins carving the *Rondanini Pietà*
- 1561 – Commission for Porta Pia and Santa Maria Degli Angeli in Rome
- 1564 – February 18, Michelangelo dies at home in Rome.

At his side were his friends Tommaso Cavallieri and Daniele da Volterra.



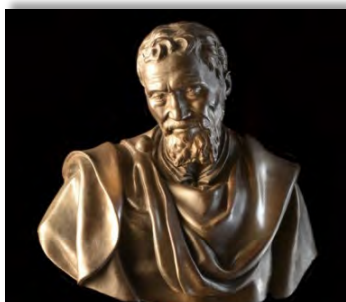
THEME 1 – MICHELANGELO'S LIFE STORY



THEME 1 – MICHELANGELO'S LIFE STORY

MICHELANGELO'S LIFE STORY

Michelangelo



An introductory timeline that commences with Michelangelo's birth in 1475 to the year of his death, presenting an overview of his life and his 'superhuman' achievements.

Upper left: Statue Michelangelo Buonarroti 1840-45 by Emilio Santarelli, Uffizi Gallery, Florence (panel)

Above: Bust of Michelangelo by Daniele da Volterra (replica) and Michelangelo's signature (panel)

Right: One the elements of the Bottega on display – where the artist worked

Painting below: By Tommaso Sebastiani Young Michelangelo meets Lorenzo il Magnifico (replica)

Sculpture inset: Faun's head, believed to be Michelangelo's first sculpture (replica)



In 1488 at the age of 13, Michelangelo was apprenticed to painter Domenico Ghirlandaio. Not long after he was to meet with Florence's leading citizen and art patron, Lorenzo de' Medici (*Lorenzo il Magnifico*), who extended an invitation to Michelangelo to live in his palatial home.



MICHELANGELO'S LIFE STORY

Although renowned throughout Italy as a sculptor, in 1508... as a painter... Michelangelo was virtually *an unknown*.

In 1508 he began working on the ceiling vault of the Sistine Chapel in Rome.

This gruelling endeavour - physically and emotionally, resulted in an intricate composition and narrative based on nine stories from the biblical Genesis. They included *The Creation of Adam and Eve*, seven figures of the prophets, five figures of mythical sibyls with many other Old Testament subjects filling in borders and spaces.



When the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel was revealed for the first time in 1512, there was no doubt then - just as there is no doubt exactly five centuries later. Michelangelo created some of the finest pictorial scenes and images in the history of world art.



In 1536, aged 61, Michelangelo returned to the Sistine Chapel to undertake the massive fresco measuring 17 x 13.3 metres, *The Last Judgement*, on the altar wall.

The fresco paintings in the exhibition, created by employing only traditional techniques, are the works of Florentine fresco master Antonio De Vito (below).



*"A beautiful thing never gives so much pain as does failing to hear and see it."
...Michelangelo*

THEME 1 – MICHELANGELO'S LIFE STORY



Michelangelo himself said
that his carving marble
*"did nothing but release the
shape trapped in the block ..."*



MICHELANGELO

SCULPTURE INTRODUCTION



INTRODUCTION TO THEME 2

Michelangelo's love for sculpture, stone and especially marble - *a material as hard as could be*, is generally connected by his biographers to childhood memories, to the years he spent among the stone-cutters in Settignano.

Michelangelo was a carver in the depths of his being and he never tired of proclaiming himself as such. When Pope Julius II urged him to paint the Sistine Chapel vault, Michelangelo's first response was to deny himself declaring "I am a carver and this is not my job." He was a sculptor.

Leon Battista Alberti in his book *de Statua* distinguishes between two different methods for creating statues. The first is called "modelling" ... the artist moulds the clay, adding material to obtain the form from which he will eventually obtain a bronze figure. The second is "carving" ... where instead of adding its continual taking away of material, removing layers of stone to achieve the desired shape. This is the method used by Michelangelo, and as he stated, leaving no room for error... "art that's done by taking off..."

Benvenuto Cellini, another famous artist, in describing Michelangelo's technique said "after having drawn the principal view on the block, he began to remove the marble from this side as if he were working a relief, and then, step by step, he brought to light the whole figure." This procedure is most recognizable in Michelangelo's unfinished statues such as "Prigioni – the Prisoners", in which figures seems to struggle to emerge from the marble block.

Vasari, in his book *Lives of the Artists* depicts a forceful image to describe the method, comparing the gradual emergence of the figure from the marble block to a model submerged under water that is slowly being raised, revealing first the topmost parts and then, part by part, the remainder. Michelangelo himself said that his carving marble "did nothing but release the shape trapped in the block ..."

These poetic considerations however, should not overshadow the intensely difficult aspect of the sculptor's labour. This physical pain of carving was in addition to the troubles and woes Michelangelo endured even before beginning his work, in fact, he insisted on overseeing all the preliminary stages. He personally went to marble quarries, often risking his life, to extract the best stone and then transport it together with the workers to its destination. He knew the importance of the marble selection and in this way, he was able to pick out the best material for the work he had in mind.

In this section of the Exhibition, we present a selection of Michelangelo's most beautiful statues with plaster copies which have been made from the antique casts collection¹ directly obtained from the original works as well as examples of Carrara marble works.²

As we enter into the world of Michelangelo's sculpture we discover both the grace and strength intimately linked in his work.

¹ THE HISTORY OF CASTING STATUES

The surviving casts of Michelangelo's work, like other great sculptures of the world, have been carried out mainly from the 19th century. The purpose of these casts was, then as now, to allow close and faithful study of the works, while ensuring the conservation and protection of the original, thus allowing art lovers etc... to get closer to a masterpiece without having to travel to the original location. It was in 1865 that the Ministry of Education of the Kingdom of Italy banned the practice of casts making from the originals. Now such practice is closely regulated and limited to conservation needs and restoration. Therefore the casts and dies made in the nineteenth century are an important patrimony of the world of art as they are the base of origins of all the casts that still circulate today.

The most important collection of original moulds in Italy is preserved in the *National Gipsoteca of Florence*. Other important repositories are the *Victoria and Albert Museum*, London, which displays a rich collection of plaster casts of Italian and French sculptures, and in more recent years Japanese art academies commissioned **Professor Andrea Chiesi** (Dec'd.) for a selection of casts of major Italian masterpieces. Casts of Michelangelo's works have been particularly fortunate, as can be imagined. The ORIGINS OF THE CASTS USED FOR THIS EXHIBITION AND PROF. CHIESI are on the following pages.²



THEME 2 - SCULPTURE

SCULPTURE

Michelangelo's life and creative period as a sculptor, painter and an architect, spans almost a century. His works are regarded among the greatest masterpieces of Western Art.

Historians tell us Michelangelo was a passionate, angry, 'tortured artist' who lived simply and sparingly and that those in his circle considered him 'more divine than human.'

Some of the monumental projects and challenges he undertook were on a massive scale and he worked long hours, relentlessly and strenuously, almost wearing his body out.

Although Michelangelo expressed his genius through many mediums, he always regarded himself as a sculptor first.



Above left: Battle of the Centaurs c.1492

Above Right: Madonna of the Stairs c.1490-92



Above Left: Pitti Tondo c.1504-05

Above Right: Taddei Tondo c.1505

² ORIGIN OF THE CASTS

One of last of the great cast-makers of Italy was Andrea Chiesi, Professor of Applied Arts at the Institute of Art in Florence, from 1970 to 1992. He was also the Superintendent (Chief Curator) responsible for the production and care of all the casts of the Gipsoteca Nazionale di Firenze (Porta Romana). From 1993, after retirement from teaching, he devoted himself entirely to the restoration and moulding of copies of art. Professor Chiesi's casts are derived from those of the 19th century, directly obtained from the originals and still maintain some signs typical of the workmanship of the first moulders of the nineteenth century. In his production of plaster casts, Professor Chiesi has always been faithful to a simple philosophy: be faithful to the original. **All the casts presented in this Exhibition originate from the work of Professor Andrea Chiesi.**

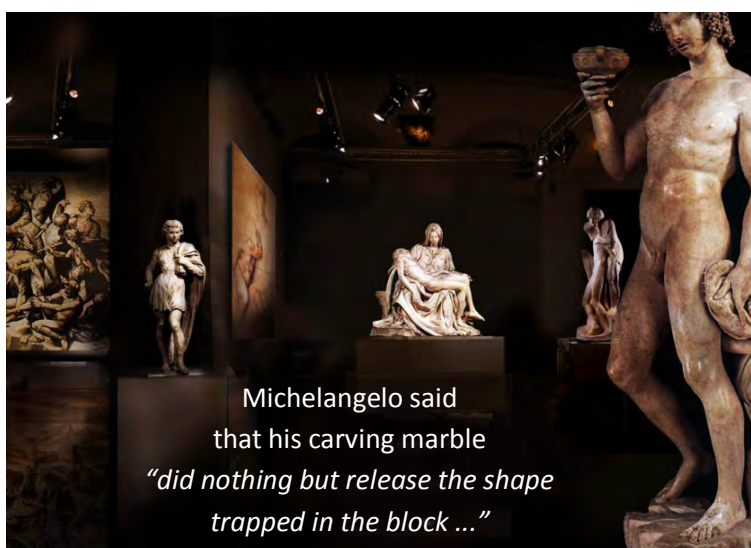
Below: The Pieta carved in 1498



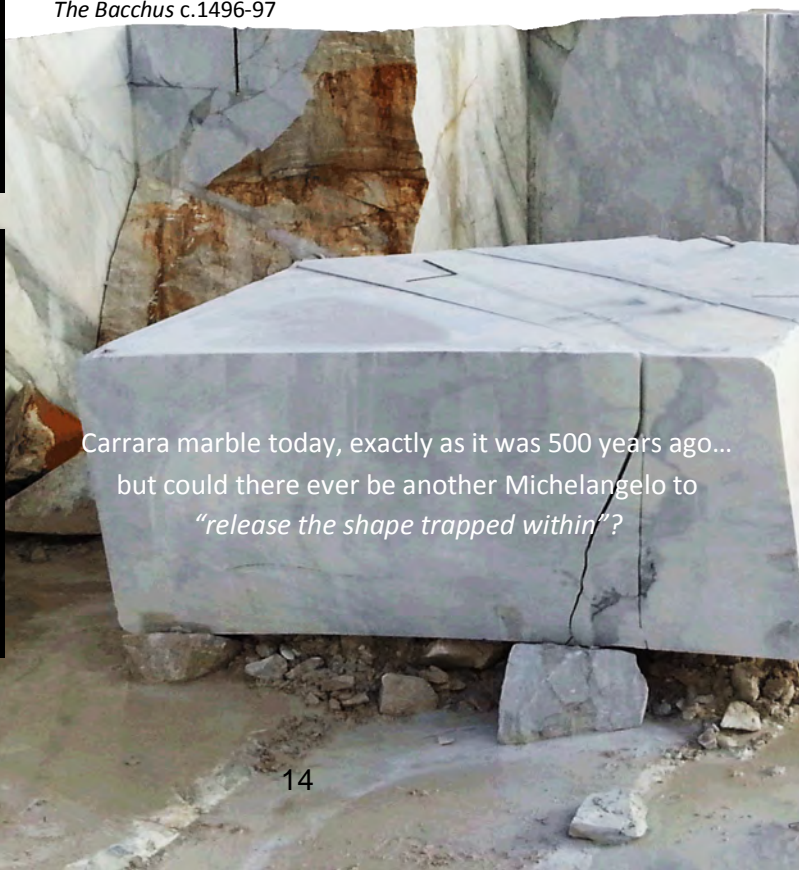
*"Carving is easy;
you just go down to
the skin and stop."
Michelangelo*



THEME 2 - SCULPTURE



From top left: *David (Head)* c.1501-04, *Saint Proculus* c.1494-95, *The Florence Pieta* c.1547-55, *Angel with Candlestick* c.1494-95, *The Bacchus* c.1496-97





INTRODUCTION THEME 3

MICHELANGELO ARCHITECTURE INTRODUCTION

"I have never felt salvation in nature. I love cities above all."

This quote by Michelangelo describes his attitude toward man's endeavours, and architecture in particular, extremely well.

During his career Michelangelo represented nature very few times and never as a protagonist. The human figure, male nude, was the nearest approach in which he embraced the concept of nature.

It was a typical attitude of humanism, which placed man at the centre of the world, and nature seen as man's dominion. It is thus natural to envision that Michelangelo would sooner or later appear in the world of architecture, with the idea that man can shape the nature to his use and enjoyment.

According to Michelangelo "architecture was not his craft" and continued defining himself a sculptor. As we know, Michelangelo was not a modest man, and his architectural achievements are noteworthy, that's why the real meaning of such a statement is to be found elsewhere, in particular in his revolutionary concept of architecture.

Although he had devoted himself to architecture much later compared to his beginnings in sculpture, Michelangelo never considered it as a sideline or a minor activity. In this respect, it is important to consider the artist's affinity with stone. According to Michelangelo in fact, the concept of *the work hides in the stone, and the artist has to free it*. He considered buildings just as large sculptures, and architectural elements, columns and pilasters, as concealed in marble - just like statues.

The sculptor didn't become an architect, but architecture became sculptural work and while his colleagues developed structures, Michelangelo invented forms. As he'd never had any specific training in architecture, he approached architectural design in a most unorthodox way. Convinced as he was, that deep knowledge of human body anatomy was as necessary in architecture as in painting or sculpture, he prepared his architectural projects exactly as he would have roughed out the sketches of a statue.

Rather than start with a simple design first, and then develop it with other sketches while changes and improvements came, Michelangelo drew one initial sketch, and went on adding details and changing forms, always on the same sheet of paper, creating layer after layer of hatched lines as his ideas flew. Having then realized various superimposed drawings, and rather than choosing one or another, he would combine elements from several to create hybrid versions that might not have occurred to other architects. After having "modelled" the shape on paper, he sometimes realized clay and wax models, which, in turn, could be changed. This unconventional way of working produced

original and astounding results. In fact, his conception of "physical" architectural design, his way of applying methods typical of sculpture, allowed him to introduce new elements into the project like games of light and shades, and to break the rules, giving up for example the traditional division between the structure of the building and its decoration. All this instilled in his creations a new and exhilarating sense of freedom...

Renaissance architecture is well known today because we can find it everywhere in Western cities, but in Michelangelo's time this architecture, consisting of columns, loggias and arcades, was avant-garde and it was seen as a revolutionary break with the medieval traditions. In truth, it was based on the premise that the ancient Rome buildings had reached the highest perfection, and that a new kind of architecture should then start from the imitation of the ancients. As a result, architects of the 15th century measured the ruins, copied shapes, columns and arches, adapting them to suit modern needs. As he had done for the ancient statues, Michelangelo also copied the forms that emerged from the ruins of Rome, but while studying classical buildings and their decoration, his approach didn't tend to mere imitation: he wanted to discover the starting point for the creation of something totally new.

The tomb of Julius II, the frontage of San Lorenzo and the Medici Chapel were Michelangelo's first experiences of architecture, and each had brought its load of bitterness and disappointment. One project after another, they all had suffered from a lot of changes and interruptions, and not one was ever finished according to its original plans. Despite this bitter disappointment of not seeing the achievement of his grandiose projects, he never lost his passion for invention and design. He even became a military architect when he put his talent on the front line in the service of Florence, his hometown, in 1528, when he was appointed "governor and attorney of the fortifications of the walls," and commissioned to design new fortifications to withstand the siege of the enemies of the Florence Republic.

His architectural work took place, however, for the most part in Rome, in two phases. The first, between 1505 and 1516, was dominated by the harrowing tale of the tomb of Julius II, defined by the artist "the tragedy of the tomb." In the second phase, which began in 1534, his work as an architect became more intense, culminating in the great enterprises of the Piazza del Campidoglio, the Farnese Palace, the church of Santa Maria degli Angeli, Porta Pia, and the Basilica of St. Peter's that engaged him until his death in 1564.

ARCHITECTURE

This section of the Exhibition displays Michelangelo's architectural achievements through reproductions of his drawings together with large scale graphic panels and models.

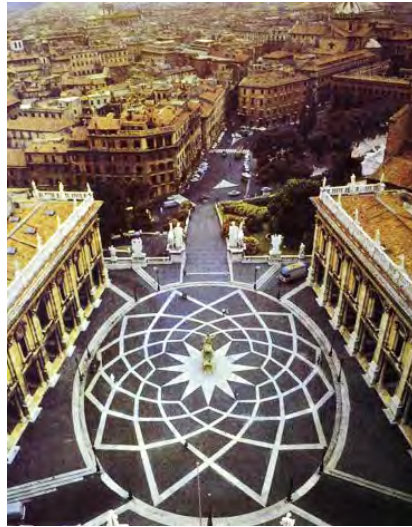


THEME 3 - ARCHITECTURE





THEME 3 - ARCHITECTURE



Above: Piazza Campidoglio, Rome

Right: Laurentian Library, Florence, 1534 design
Laurentian Library, San Lorenzo, Florence,
1534 staircase design

Below: Architecture Room, recreated pavement
of Michelangelo's design for the Piazza
Campidoglio with giant panel displays
including cross section of St Peter's dome

Below right: Cupola of Medici Chapel and tomb of
Lorenzo de' Medici, San Lorenzo, Florence



INTRODUCTION

“THE CHALLENGE OF THE BATTLES”

Michelangelo worked mainly in Florence and Rome, the two centres of an intense artistic ferment of which he was one of the main actors. There he had to face envy and artistic rivalry.

Let's think of the episode, we could call “prodigious” from our modern point of view, in which immense artists such as Michelangelo Buonarroti and Leonardo da Vinci met and defied each other in an extraordinary artistic challenge. Two different personalities, two ways of conceiving art, both bound to revolutionize: it is the story of the legendary “**Challenge of the Battles**”, forever lost in the depths of time...



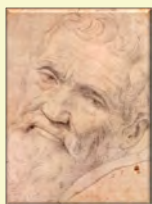
In 1503, two monumental frescos were commissioned to two Florentine painters for the main hall of Palazzo Vecchio in Florence. Commemorating Florentine battle victories, the first painting, the *Battle of Anghiari* was awarded to the renowned master Leonardo da Vinci. The second painting, the *Battle of Cascina*, was commissioned to the much younger, Michelangelo Buonarroti.

So began one of the most extraordinary events in the history of Italian Art, bringing together head-to-head, two of the greatest painters, and two of the biggest rivals of all time.

The stage was set... the main players were cast... the challenge was on...



INTRODUCTION TO THEME IV



THE CHALLENGE OF THE “BATTLES”

“THE BATTLE OF CASCINA” Michelangelo Buonarroti



Top left: Replica *Portrait of Michelangelo* (detail) after Daniele da Volterra, print on canvas by Antonio De Vito

Above: Replica preparatory cartoon for the *Battle of Cascina* fresco, print mounted on panel, 370x240 cm.
Inset: Fresco (*detail*) by Antonio De Vito

Right: Replica Michelangelo studies for *Battle of Cascina*, Michelangelo (detail) *School of Athens*, fresco Raffaello, by Antonio De Vito



The challenge unfolding... blow by blow...



THEME 4 – THE CHALLENGE OF THE “BATTLES”

THE CHALLENGE OF THE “BATTLES”



THEME 4 - THE CHALLENGE OF THE “BATTLES”



“THE BATTLE OF ANGHIARI” Leonardo da Vinci



Top right: Self Portrait Leonardo da Vinci, print on canvas

Inset: Fresco battle display

Main Image: fresco for the Battle of Anghiari, reconstructed by A. De Vito

Above: Leonardo studies for the Battle of Anghiari, prints on antique paper by A. De Vito

Historians recorded the outcome of the battle between these two giants of the Renaissance. Amazingly, neither work was finished and in the end, both artists ‘walked away’. What were destined to be the greatest of masterpieces were lost to the world forever... *or were they?*

The recreations on display in this section of the exhibition, executed by Florentine fresco master, Antonio De Vito, provide visitors with a glimpse into a time of one of the most extraordinary chapters in the history of art and passion.





THEME 5 – ART GAMES

ART GAMES

This final section of the exhibition invites visitors of all ages to participate in specially designed art games that in the first instance, demonstrate gadgets and devices typically used by artists centuries ago, and in the process revealing some of the old secrets and deceptive techniques.

Secondly, and importantly, aimed at our young, future artists and budding engineers, there are models, activities and games to stimulate the imagination, challenging them to stretch what they think they can do – rewarding... and fun.



‘Alberti’s Grid’

Leon Battista Alberti. B.1404 Genoa, D.1472 Rome. Educated at University of Bologna. Italian author, artist, architect, poet, priest, linguist, philosopher and cryptographer.

Leon Battista Alberti considered circumscription of the form on the canvas to be the primary of three elements essential to a good painting. In other words, he valued the accurate rendering of the outline of the figure or space to be of utter importance.

He recommended the use of a veil, a grid through which one could peer and align the paints and curves of the subject to boxes on the veil, and by proxy, to the grid on the canvas. He defended the use of the veil explaining that it was not in any way lessening the mastery of the painter or cheapening the artistic process... it wasn’t cheating, but rather making use of a tool.



‘Self Portrait’

The ‘takeaway’ do-it-yourself version.



‘Restoration’

To repair and make ‘good as new’

ART GAMES

Designed for emerging young artists, to provide a basic understanding of various elements of art in an interesting and captivating way. Exploring different mediums, practising with simple tools and learning techniques, it's an opportunity for young talent to discover their inner creativity.



‘Fresco Master Experience’ – School of fresco to practice techniques of traditional fresco painting ‘pricking – dabbing – tracing’

‘Marble Experience’

See, touch and try your hand at carving Carrara marble with sculpting tools similar to those used by Michelangelo way back in the 16th century....



Antonio De Vito – Fresco Master

‘Clay Experience’

Modelling clay - one of the earliest and most favourite creative mediums for children



‘Architecture Experience’

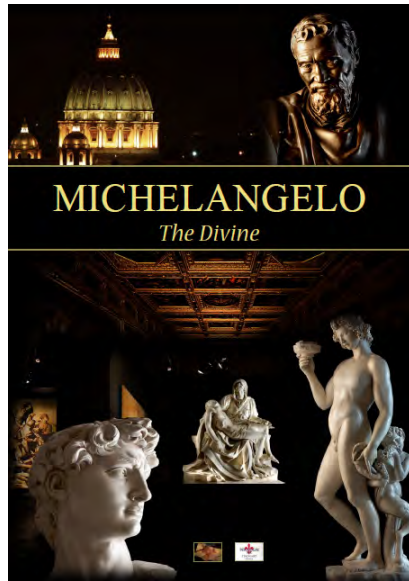
The basics starting with an idea, to designing, to building.....

‘The Last Judgement Experience’

Even the very young enjoy piecing together a masterpiece...



THEME 5 – ART GAMES



CREATORS OF THE EXHIBITION

The **MICHELANGELO *The Divine*** Exhibition is the culmination of years of dedicated research, planning and countless hours of hard work by renowned Florentine Artisans from the **NICCOLAI GROUP** and **I MURI DELL'ARTE FIRENZE**, in collaboration with **Fondazione Casa Buonarroti**.



Gabriele Niccolai
Director of Projects
Head of Research
& Development
Niccolai Group (Firenze)
"Chief Artisan"



Antonio De Vito
Art Director
Fresco Master
I Muri Dell'Arte Firenze
"Artisan"



Elisabeth (Lisa) Bouvier
Art Historian
I Muri Dell'Arte Firenze
"Artisan"



Luigi Rizzo
Director & CEO
Niccolai Group (Firenze)
Artisans of Florence
Pty Ltd (Australia)
"Artisan"

The Artisan History

WESTERN ART and its mass market practitioners, the Artisans, originated within the work ethics of the Roman Empire.

THE ROMAN EMPIRE was a highly structured operation and its inhabitants; slaves, *liberati* (freed slaves) or citizens, wherever they came from, found strength and interest in groups of common labour - carpenters, cooks, builders, stonecutters, glassmakers - *the so called 'Artisan Corporations'* (similar to today's unions.) By the end of the Empire, a process lasting over hundreds of years, Institutions and social order were disrupted by repetitive barbaric invasions and artisans found themselves more and more isolated. Nonetheless groups maintained their technical knowledge and their skilled work continued.

IN THE MIDDLE AGES (7th century onwards), the only institutions still functioning were the Church and monasticism where some form of education and scholarly research was still practiced, however mainly to do with religion and not 'worldly' matters. Artisans by contrast, continued their work handing down their skills and tradition from father to son. *So while the scholar prayed the craftsman built churches.*

Great Gothic cathedrals of the 12th century were initiated by Artisans, who living with their families in yards, handing down their skill and charges to the next generation.

BY THE 15TH CENTURY, the period we now call the Renaissance, it was the Artisans who found themselves the only practitioners with all the technical knowledge of Ancient Rome. TUSCANY, in particular, was the cradle of the Renaissance, and it is here that the Artisan, under the encouragement and funding of the 'new rich' (like the Medici family), became the modern artists, engineers, architects and scientists. In the mass markets the 20th century, they developed into the big names of fashion – Gucci – Ferragamo – Cavalli and so on.

TODAY a very small core of Tuscan Artisans still practice the highest form of the traditional way of the Artisans, a practice the rest of the world has lost, succumbing to the pressures of specialisation.

The Niccolai family, Florentine Artisans for generations, have gathered around them a select and tight-knit group of Artisans that include **Antonio de Vito** and **Elisabeth (Lisa) Bouvier** from **I Muri Dell'arte Firenze**, who together with moulders and sculptors and in collaboration with historians, scholars and curators have created the new and visually brilliant **MICHELANGELO *The Divine*** Exhibition.

The Niccolai Group - Producers



In 1995 the Niccolai firm of father and sons, in co-operation with noted academics and working in close collaboration with *Professor Carlo Pedretti*, enriched the study of Leonardo Da Vinci's mechanics by creating a series of interactive models using materials from the time such as wood, cotton, brass, iron and cord and presented each exhibit with a replica code page of the recently rediscovered Codex Madrid, from which its design was taken.

In 2001 the Italian Government recognised the high quality and skill achieved by the Niccolai family by conferring upon them the special award "Italia che Lavora" (Italy at Work).

In 2005 the Niccolai-Teknoart Group expanded with new partners, Mirko Marina (Architect) for animations, Antonio De Vito (Fresco Master/Artisan), Lisa Bouvier (Art Historian & Artisan), Sara Tagliagambara (Historian) and Luigi Rizzo (Physicist for Science/Education) and undertook new projects.

In 2009/10 the new Exhibition *Da Vinci Secrets "Anatomy to Robots"* was launched in Melbourne, then Sydney and Seoul making headlines for its 15th century 'working robots' – never seen before. The discoveries are the subject of the book titled

Leonardo da Vinci: Automations and Robotics, CB Editions.

In 2009/10 the new Exhibition *Machina Technologia Dell'antica Roma* staged at the Museo Della Civiltà Romana, Rome, was awarded the 'Gold Medal' of the President of the Italian Republic. It has also featured in TV documentaries in Italy and international magazines such as *Focus*, *Newton*, *National Geographic* and *Scientific America*.

In 2012 the Group launched a brand new exhibition based on historical and scientific data titled *Julius Caesar Military Genius and Mighty Machines*. Launched in Melbourne, Australia it then opened at the Seoul War Museum in Korea, the South Australian Museum and the Hong Kong Science Museum.

In 2013, the Niccolai Group will launch a series of exhibitions based on the life and achievements of Michelangelo Buonarroti and will feature life size replicas of his sculptures in marble and cast from the original moulds.

To date, exhibitions created by Niccolai Group have toured to major cities all around the world entertaining in excess of 6 million visitors.

I Muri Dell'Arte Firenze – Artistic Production



I MURI DELL'ARTE FIRENZE established several years ago, is a workshop within the walls of a 14th century villa, in the hills above Florence and was born from Antonio's De Vito's passion for fresco painting. It is here, that he creates unique works using the purest fresco technique, *the same technique used by the great Masters, from Giotto to Michelangelo*.

It is here also, Lisa Bouvier, born in Lyon (France) and graduate of the University Lumiere-Lyon II in Classics and Art History, specialising in the Art of the Italian Renaissance, pursues her career by researching and studying the restoration of the artworks of Florence – *the cradle of the Renaissance*.

It was pursuing this course that brought her into contact with the master of fresco, Antonio De Vito. Thus 'I MURI DELL'ARTE FIRENZE – Walls of Art' was created. The workshop now sees them working together, creating frescoes and developing the specialised techniques that allow these works to be safely removed from the wall on which they were painted and displayed to art lovers all around the world.

The faithfully reproduced replicas of Michelangelo's drawings and paintings displayed in this exhibition are the works of Florentine Fresco Master, Antonio De Vito.



ABOUT THE SCULPTURES IN THIS EXHIBITION

THE HISTORY OF CASTING STATUES

The surviving casts of Michelangelo's work, like other great sculptures of the world, have been carried out mainly from the 19th century. The purpose of these casts was, then as now, to allow close and faithful study of the works, while ensuring the conservation and protection of the original, thus allowing art lovers, etc... to get closer to a masterpiece without having to travel to the original location.

It was in 1865 that the Ministry of Education of the Kingdom of Italy banned the practice of casts making from the originals. Now such practice is closely regulated and limited to conservation needs and restoration. Therefore the casts and

dies made in the nineteenth century are an important patrimony of the world of art as they are the base of origins of all the casts that still circulate today.

The most important collection of original moulds in Italy is preserved in the *National Gipsoteca of Florence* with other important repositories at the *Victoria and Albert Museum, London*. Apart from being beautiful forms of art in their own right, the casts are necessary to enable to artisan sculptor to reproduce identical copies to the original works – in marble - as seen in the workshop of Master Massimo Galeni, Carrara, Italy.



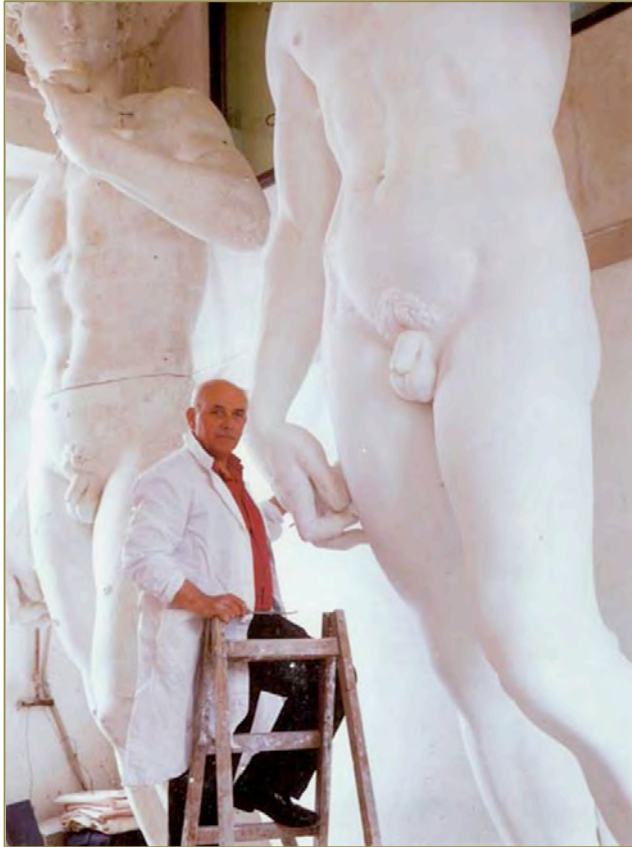
ORIGIN OF THE CASTS

One of last of the great cast-makers of Italy was Andrea Chiesi (Dec'd.), Professor of Applied Arts at the Institute of Art in Florence, from 1970 to 1992. He was also Director (Chief Curator) responsible for the production and care of all the casts of the *Gipsoteca Nazionale di Firenze* (Porta Romana). From 1993, after retirement from teaching, he devoted himself entirely to the restoration and moulding of copies of art.

Professor Chiesi's casts were derived from those of the nineteenth century, directly obtained from

the originals and still maintain some signs typical of the workmanship of the first moulders of the nineteenth century. In his production of plaster casts, Professor Chiesi has always been faithful to a simple philosophy: **be faithful to the original**.

One does not find in his work reductions or adaptations. His plaster copy "works" because it achieves the emotion of the original. The skill of the master-caster is to be able to understand, grasp and imitate the technique of the artist being copied.



ANDREA CHIESI

Professor Chiesi continued his artistic passion until his death in 2012.

Today, his work can be appreciated all over the world.

This Exhibition of works by Michelangelo Buonarroti, to be premiered at the National Museum of History of Taiwan (Taipei) is a particular tribute to his legacy.

All the casts presented in the
MICHELANGELO *The Divine* EXHIBITION
originate from the work of
Professor Andrea Chiesi

... To his memory

HOW TO CREATE A PLASTER CAST

Before the advent of silicone whole months were spent to build a mould in "pieces" called *tasselli*, which consist of various pieces of plaster connected like a puzzle, alternatively animal *gelatin* was used. Today silicone moulds are favoured, a malleable paste with the consistency of gum. To be able to dry, the silicon mould needs a catalyst, which is mixed in varying proportions depending on the work to be performed and urgency. Large size works may also require the application of two or three coats of silicone. After 24 hours of rest, the mould is covered in with chalk to create the framework, i.e. the solid support.

Once released from the mould the model is ready to become the copy. Gypsum, a kind of chalk, is mixed with the right amount of water creates a special mixture, liquid enough to enter the interstices of the negative mould, created earlier.

gypsum = chalk = plaster

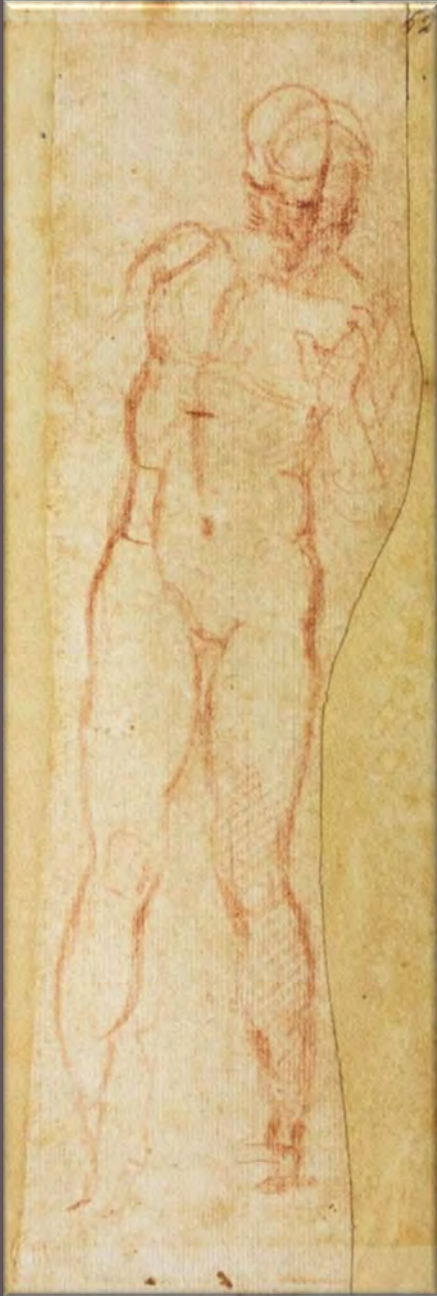
The first application or "priming" is done by brushing the negative with a soft brush in a circular motion to prevent gaps or air bubbles. Then, in the case of large-scale works one inserts a layer of jute in between the layers of plaster to make the structure more resistant. In fact, virtually unobtainable, is now replaced by filaments arising from the cactus plant called Manila.

Professor Chiesi however, was of the old school; the instruments he used were no different from those of a Sculptor of marble, iron callipers for measurement, scrapers and brushes and an endless array of scalpels for the finishing touches.

For the necessary adjustments and finishes the plaster should be wet locally. For the final touch a patina, wax or tempera mixtures are applied. Occasionally simple dirty water with colours made from earth or other material, such as walnut, wax and shellac have been used to create that perfect look.

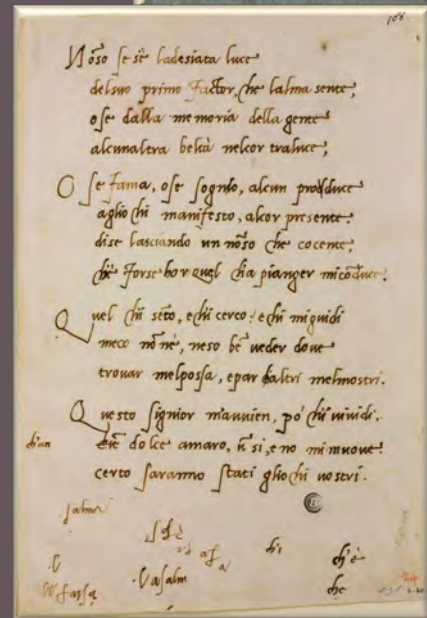
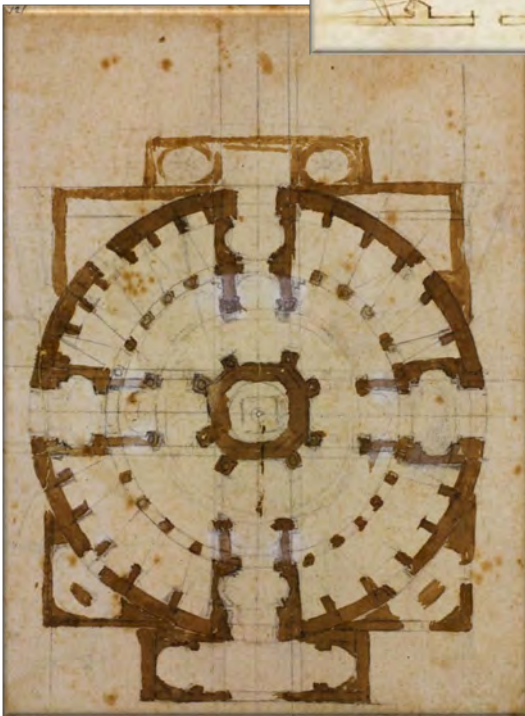
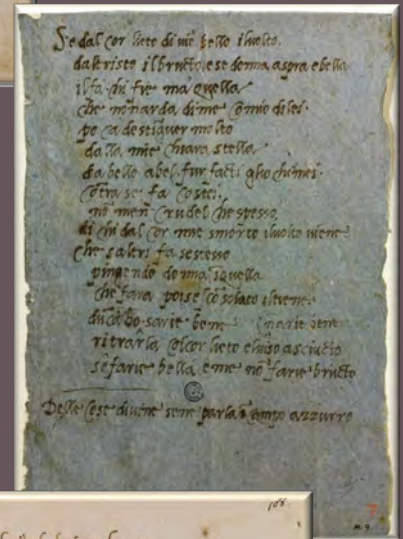
Back cover: Rome Pieta (from the Exhibition)

CASA BUONARROTI



Original Michelangelo drawings exhibited at
NATIONAL HISTORY MUSEUM TAIPEI – JANUARY 2013

A large, faint, and heavily worn drawing of a seated figure, possibly a woman, on aged paper. The figure is depicted in a three-quarter view, with long hair and a draped garment. The drawing is very light and appears to be a study or a very light sketch. The paper is yellowed and shows signs of age and wear.



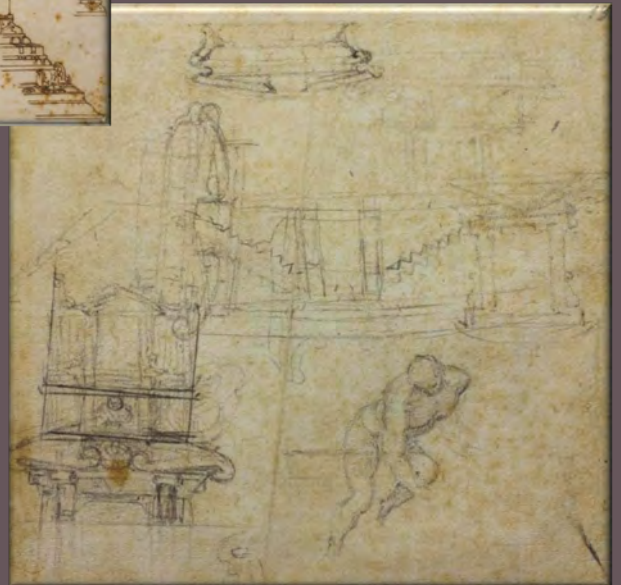
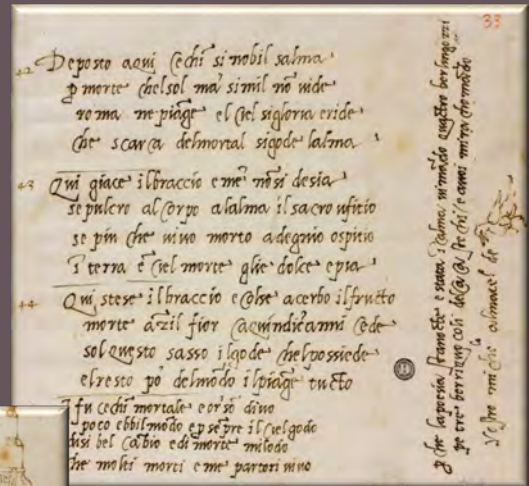
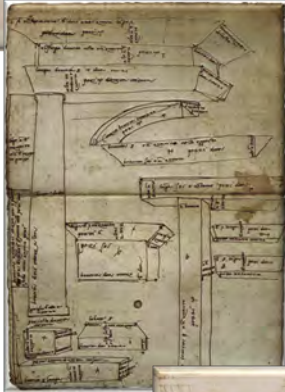
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CASA BUONARROTI



Original Michelangelo drawings exhibited at
KAOSHIUNG FINE ARTS MUSEUM – SEPTEMBER 2013

A photograph of a manuscript page from the Voynich manuscript. The page is divided into two columns of text written in an unknown script. The ink is a reddish-brown color, and the paper is heavily stained and discolored, showing significant signs of age. A small, dark, rectangular object, possibly a bookmark or a piece of tape, is visible at the bottom center of the page.



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