

## Saint Matthew

The commission, received in 1503, was for twelve statues of apostles, to be set in the chapels or in the pillars of the choir of Florence's cathedral. Michelangelo was supposed to carve one a year for twelve years. The only one he actually worked on was *Saint Matthew* and even this was never completed. It remained in the Opera of the cathedral until 1834, when it was moved to the Accademia. The extremely flattened statue was intended to be viewed only from the front, and is therefore more of a relief than a sculpture in the round. The technique adopted in this work started out from a parallel hatching similar to that used in drawing, while chisel blows that removed large concave flakes of marble are clearly visible on the flank. The dramatic agitation of the saint's figure is striking and communicates his great inner torment. The left leg emerges from the block and is twisted in the opposite direction to the bust. This statue has been seen as the direct forerunner of all Mannerist sculpture, with its exaggerated contortions and serpentine forms. Yet, no other artist was able to convey the drama of the human condition in such a deeply felt way.