

Drawings

Florentine artists have always distinguished themselves from those of other Italian schools of painting by their constant use of drawings in the planning of their works. Michelangelo was no exception to this rule, and was indeed one of the greatest draftsmen of all time.

The folios of various kinds that have come down to us testify to his diversified use of the technique of drawing. They include interesting studies of works by other artists and from other periods, such as the two figures copied from a fresco by Giotto or the head of the Laocoön, showing that Michelangelo was always ready to study anything that attracted his attention and could provide him with ideas. Then, there is an important series of drawings, highly finished in their lines and finely shaded, which were created as independent works. The artist used to give them to his pupils for practice, or to his closest friends. Among the latter, it is worth mentioning the drawings he made for Tommaso Cavalieri depicting the classical myths of *Tityus*, *Phaethon*, and *Ganymede*, and those of a very different kind he produced for Vittoria Colonna, such as the beautiful *Pietà* in London and the numerous *Crucifixions*, drawn in the last years of his life. Among the preparatory drawings that Michelangelo made for a variety of works, the folio in the Uffizi appears to be particularly significant. In the middle we can see a naked figure, standing with its back turned, which was an early idea for the central group of the lost fresco of the *Battle of Cascina*. The clothed figure at top right is a study for one of the apostles that he was supposed to carve for Santa Maria del Fiore, although the only one he actually made was *Saint Matthew* (see entry). The folio also contains four small studies for a group with the Madonna and Child that may have been for the *Bruges Madonna and Child*. Finally the ornamental sketch with two fanciful birds and a mask may have been connected with the grandiose project for the tomb of Julius II that was already beginning to prey on the artist's mind.