



MICHELANGELO

SACRED AND PROFANE

Masterpiece Drawings from the Casa Buonarroti

Ingram Gallery

October 30, 2015–January 6, 2016



Born in Caprese, Italy, in 1475, Michelangelo di Lodovico Buonarroti Simoni—known to the world simply as Michelangelo—was a High Renaissance virtuoso who famously excelled at painting, sculpture, and architecture. *Disegno* (drawing, design) was central to his creativity and identity. Throughout his long career, which spanned from his apprenticeship in Florence in 1487 until his death in Rome in 1564, Michelangelo drew as a way of thinking. He emphasized its fundamental significance to his pupils. “Draw Antonio, draw Antonio, draw and don’t waste time” was the advice he gave his student Antonio Mini and took to heart himself.

This exhibition offers an intimate encounter with twenty-six sheets of Michelangelo’s drawings preserved by his descendants at the Casa Buonarroti, the artist’s family home in Florence. These extraordinary works span nearly sixty years, from when Michelangelo was a mature artist approaching thirty to just a few years before he died. Arranged roughly according to date, they allow us to see developments such as Michelangelo taking on his first major architectural commission in 1515–16; his foray into military engineering during the Siege of Florence in 1529–30; and his changing preference in drawing media through the decades. While his early drawings are in pen and ink, he began using red chalk around 1506 and then strongly favored black chalk during the last thirty years of his life. His most fascinating drawings are those such as the *Madonna and Child* and *Study for the Porta Pia in Rome*, which mix and overlay several different media in astonishing ways.

Although Michelangelo treated drawings roughly as tools, he understood their value. He offered some as gifts to friends and others as demonstrations of his abilities to his patrons. It is clear that he saw them as intellectual property. He wrote letters to his father instructing him not to let anyone see them, and he even burned many of them, including his cartoons (full-scale preparatory drawings) for the Sistine Chapel frescoes. Only a fraction of Michelangelo’s output on paper remains. Our knowledge of his life, career, and working methods is infinitely richer thanks to these fragile sheets that escaped his destruction and survived the past five centuries.

Trinita Kennedy, curator

FRONT: *Madonna and Child* (detail), ca. 1524. Black chalk, red chalk, red wash, white heightening, and ink. Casa Buonarroti, Florence, inv. 71F. INSIDE: *Study for the Porta Pia in Rome*, ca. 1561. Black chalk, pen and ink with brown wash, and white heightening. Casa Buonarroti, Florence, inv. 102A. BACK: *Plan for the Church of San Giovanni dei Fiorentini in Rome*, 1559–60. Black chalk, pen and ink, white heightening, and washes. Casa Buonarroti, Florence, inv. 124A

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