

PAUL JOSEPH SACHS

Paul Jacks.









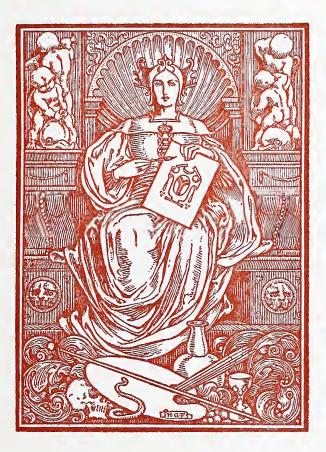
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FRONTISPIECE



THE SHOOTERS AT THE MARK (RED CHALK)



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THE DRAWINGS OF MICHAEL ANGELO BY E. BOROUGH JOHNSON, R.I.



O many excellent treatises have already appeared dealing with the life of Michael Angelo that to-day it is almost unnecessary to relate again the story of his wonderful career. This short essay will therefore be a brief commentary on the accompanying drawings, with only those biographical references which

will assist the reader to a greater appreciation of the works themselves.

With such a fascinating subject eulogy is unavoidable; and the present writer's enthusiasm may be excused, for, as a practising artist, he is able to appreciate to the fullest extent the technical value of the drawings as well as the genius displayed in every phase of the work of so supreme a master.

The temperament and personality of an artist are most vividly revealed in his drawings and preliminary studies. To the student and connoisseur, equipped with special training and knowledge, they form the most interesting portion of Michael Angelo's productions. The few essential lines are the first conceptions of his imagination, and the foundations upon which he builds up his finished idea. One is absorbed in dealing with the forceful studies of so masterly a hand, where consummate erudition, combined with veracity of statement, are the most notable characteristics. The criticism of the art of so colossal a genius can only be approached in a spirit of the deepest reverence and respect. By the outbursts of grandiloquent passion, expressed in the style of his drawings, Michael Angelo displays his extraordinary temperament. He is the creator of new types and attitudes, the realiser of fresh scientific truths. A zealous student of anatomy, he conceives effects of the most difficult foreshortenings in order that he may display his supreme knowledge of the human frame. His drawings give the draughtsman that same thrill which is felt by the musician when the organ pipes swell with the chords of a Bach fugue.

It must be remembered that the painters and sculptors of the fifteenth century—the Golden Age of the Renaissance—gave most careful consideration to human anatomy. There is a pen and bistre

sketch in the University Gallery at Oxford which shows Michael Angelo and another student dissecting a human body. In a manner suggestive of Rembrandt, the light and shade and the necessary lines being expressed with the utmost economy of means, it gives a vivid insight into the studies of the great anatomist. Strangely enough the artists of that period had but slight knowledge of the structure of animals, and the deficiency is very noticeable in several of the drawings by Michael Angelo. But his accuracy in depicting the human form, his passionate ardour in the pursuit of difficult anatomical problems, together with his supreme craftsmanship, are amazing. Every line is strenuously alive, and compels our attention by its keen observation. He overcomes all obstacles, apparently with the utmost facility, and thus proves his deep knowledge of anatomical construction. His method of drawing displays the perfection of style-a style which has been held up as an ideal by painters for centuries past from Raphael to our own poet-painter Watts.

The draughtsmanship of this great and solitary master was purely emotional, and this expression of his own thoughts had been doubtless influenced by the study of Dante and the preaching of his contemporary Savonarola. Among the artists who have come under the magic of his genius there have been many who have been little more than imitators; mannerists who have affected an emotion they were powerless to feel. Mind may create methods; it is the heart which stirs the emotions.

We are living in an age which is marred by a striving after mere Dexterity of handling in draughtsmanship, and techcleverness. nical merits in painting, are often mistaken for the chief objects in view. But the true foundations of great art, such as deep feeling, seriousness of purpose, and loftiness of aim, are sadly neglected. When we study the work of Michael Angelo our first thought is not of its cleverness. We do not comprehend its skill in our amazement at its profound emotional strength allied to a sense of unerring vision. What we call the "facts" of the drawing are apparent, but these "facts" have been noted in such a personal manner that they appear at once artistic and inspired. Drawings which lack personality may be correct in every detail, but they are dull and lifeless, and, being If mechanical productions at the best, are worthless as works of art. we compare the methods of this great master with those of many socalled clever but in reality vulgar and incompetent draughtsmen, who imagine that a feeble copy of the mere externalities is the shortest path to the "Grand Style," we cannot fail to be disgusted at their lack of knowledge and disregard of truth. Such shallowness is amusing to the earnest student, but at the same time it is a slur upon the name of one of the most sublime of artists, as well as the noblest draughtsman in the history of art.

Michael Angelo is said to have destroyed a vast quantity of his Those which remain are chiefly to be found in the drawings. principal galleries and museums of Europe. England is particularly fortunate in possessing good examples, the Royal Collection at Windsor being possibly the most complete. The British Museum and the University Gallery at Oxford are also very rich, and the selection made for this volume is mainly taken from these three representative collections. The Michael Angelo drawings at Oxford originally formed part of the celebrated collection belonging to Sir Thomas Lawrence, P.R.A., one of the most comprehensive gatherings of the drawings of the old Italian masters ever brought together. At the death of the President they were offered to the Government at less than half their cost, and it is ever to be regretted, that, owing to lack of appreciation, the offer was declined. Ultimately the collection was bought by Messrs. Woodburn, the picture-dealers, and from their hands the Michael Angelo drawings passed to the University.

What a joy it is to examine these original drawings ! Reproductions, however good, can never exactly render the beautiful qualities of the medium and the paper. Between the original and the facsimile the sensitive, æsthetic eye detects much the same difference which exists between the surfaces of antique sculpture and plaster casts.

In common with most artists I feel that drawings which are free and simple in their methods, and not over elaborated in tone or shading, generally display greater inspiration and vitality than more highly finished work. To me, therefore, the drawing which shows Michael Angelo as a delineator of the human form at his best is that entitled *The Bather*, a preliminary study for the central foreground figure in the monochrome study (now at Holkham Hall) for the cartoon at Pisa. High finish need not necessarily imply tedious elaboration. But more often than not an excess of minor detail wearies the eye, and weakens the effect of the constituent parts, thus detracting from the unity of the drawing as a whole. On the other hand, an insistence on line and contour more readily and effectively expresses an idea in a large manner by delineating a rapid impression of an actual fact.

The famous cartoon of Pisa no longer exists, and there is some mystery as to its disappearance. According to Vasari, Baccio Bandinelli destroyed the cartoon in 1512 out of hatred to Michael

Angelo. Another, and probably more reliable authority, Condivi, says, "I do not know by what evil fortune it afterwards came to ruin." The original composition was executed about 1504, in the prime of Michael Angelo's early manhood, and two engravings, by Marc Antonio and Veneziano respectively, are the only authentic records which have come down to us. The monochrome painting at Holkham Hall is assumed to be a copy by Bastiano di San Gallo. It shows a group of Florentine soldiers taken unaware by the enemy whilst bathing.

The beautifully free study of the centre figure, drawn with pen and bistre, the high lights heightened with white (a portion of the torso in the original being damaged unfortunately by corrosion) is a remarkable object-lesson to the student. Such wonderful realisation of actual movement, together with rapidity of manipulation, could only have been attempted by a hand which had been trained to the closest intimacy with anatomical science. The continuous line is not only thoroughly flexible but full of variety and interest. One can almost feel the structure of the bones beneath the flesh, yet the anatomy does not seem unduly forced, though showing a rigorous exactitude in its search for muscular and bony surfaces.

How admirably the limbs conjoin the trunk. Through the contour of the figure runs a fine decorative line showing how well the artist's eye has realised the principal curves, emphasising in the strength of his touch the various planes, and accentuating with the pressure of the pen the firmer portions. He is able to convey all that is necessary in the modelling with three tones only-shadow, half-tone, and light, the direction of the shading following the rotundity of the modulations. He is always searching for form, yet never losing sight of the figure in its entirety. Every variation of light or shade is expressed in its correct shape, and the result is as full of strength as a fine bronze. These qualities are to be found in the other examples. There is a pen-drawing of a man's left shoulder and arm, of such rugged power that it almost appears to have been carved out with a chisel. The head of a woman (in red chalk) wearing a headdress must also be classed amongst the work executed during the artist's early period. The shading follows a diagonal direction, and is distinctively characteristic of the master. Typically Michael Angelesque, this head cannot fail to arrest the attention by its majestic expression.

Another magnificent drawing in red chalk is that of a man's head, in profile to the right. The original is at Oxford, and dates from about 1509. It shows the same keen observation as regards construction and planes, and is modelled in a sweeping manner, the linework being free and open.

The Royal Collection at Windsor possesses the allegorical composition in red chalk, known as I Bersaglieri or The Shooters at the Mark. It represents the Gods who have descended from Heaven, and are shooting at a target fixed to a terminal statue of Mercury. On the reverse of the drawing has been inscribed "April 12, 1530," possibly the date of its execution. This is one of the most beautiful drawings ever made by ancient or modern master. Its conception is noble, its vitality intense, its unity of design perfect. It is a marvellously faithful represention of instantaneous movement. Like the Bacchanalia di Putti in the famous Cavalieri series, the craftsmanship of this drawing is of the plastic order. Each object takes its proper place, and recedes from the principal figure in the foreground upon which the light is vividly concentrated. The manipulation is noticeable for the exquisite delicacy of its point work, and, though refined in its treatment of the adolescent figures of the Gods, loses nothing of its vigour and impulse. Each line harmonises with its fellow in such gracefulness that the complete ensemble is one of exceeding strength. The action is most realistic. The figures are well poised in the correct attitudes for aiming or discharging the shafts. The bows are omitted. So many vertical lines would have disintegrated and ruined the unity of the design. The foremost kneeling figure serves as an excellent foil, a "halt" one might call it, to the onward rush of the remainder of the group. The target is brought into the composition simply to give an idea of the motive, for it is too near the archers to be natural. Exquisite gradations of tone fade into the background, so sensitive in the tenderness with which the artist has handled them, that they give the appearance of a fine cameo, or a highly finished bas-relief. Even Raphael, in his most inspired flights of fancy and seductive charm, never surpassed this drawing for sensuous grace and beauty of craft.

Perhaps at the time when he produced this work Michael Angelo may have had some wish to emulate Raphael, for he succeeded in catching precisely the same rhythmic spirit of his famous contemporary, whom he easily outstrips in virile force. In *I Bersaglieri* the master's austere temperament has become more suave. As a poetical rendering of an allegorical subject, this drawing is only comparable with the finest achievements of the best period of Greek art.

There exist two designs for The Resurrection of Christ, one in the

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British Museum and the other at Windsor; and it is interesting to place them side by side. The first, pyramidal in composition, is simpler and more dignified than the second, and for these reasons to be preferred. The Windsor drawing, also pyramidal, includes a larger number of figures, and the action is more violent. Yet the expression of astonishment and the movement in the group of awakened guards are admirable.

Another study, in black chalk, for the *Resurrection*, also at Windsor, is characteristic of Michael Angelo's later style. It must be dated a few years after *The Shooters at the Mark*, and about the same time as the drawings previously referred to. It represents Christ soaring upwards from the tomb, the nude figure being elaborately modelled in stipple.

Amongst the drawings made for Tommasso Cavalieri in 1533 is the *Fall of Phaeton*, now in the Royal Collection at Windsor. It has been carried much further than the other version of the same subject in the British Museum. The anatomy of the falling horses is curiously incorrect, displaying a lack both of observation and of knowledge. Michael Angelo was wholly absorbed in his study of humanity. This mythological subject consists of three groups, Zeus seated on his eagle hurling the thunderbolt, Phaeton falling headlong from the clouds through space, and Eridanus bewailing with the three Heliades. In *Prometheus torn by the Vulture*, another drawing made for Cavalieri, a want of knowledge is again to be found in the drawing of the bird.

The Bacchanalia di Putti or Festival of the Children, is a highly finished drawing in red chalk, now in the Royal Collection. In the centre of the composition is a group of children conveying a strange beast to a cooking pot, which is being made ready for the feast. In the left upper corner a fire has been lighted. On the opposite side are more children gathered round a vat of wine, and underneath are two further groups apparently intended to represent Famine and Satiety. Both in method and design this drawing recalls I Bersaglieri, having the same marked plastic aspect.

The Albertina Collection at Vienna contains a splendid nude study of a seated male figure. Its firm and solid drawing is an example of Michael Angelo's most superb gifts, the delineation of the arm being particularly skilful.

One of the most wonderful studies reproduced in this volume is that for a *Pieta* originally drawn in black chalk. This drawing is generally ascribed to Michael Angelo, though some eminent critics have declared it to be the work of his friend and *protegé*, the

Speaking as an artist, I believe Venetian, Sebastiano del Piombo. that this study can have come from no other hand than that of the master. The design and the idea are purely his own. Here we have the great realist employing his divine gifts in the noblest motive. Who but Michael Angelo could have expressed such deep pathos combined with such tenderness! Studying the work from a strictly technical point of view, what other master could have rendered the modelling of the neck and torso of the Christ with such subtlety and learning! The style of the handling is clear evidence that the drawing is of a later period than those already referred to. Michael Angelo's method became looser and more tremulous in his later days. The Madonna, half-fainting, grieves over the death of her Divine Son. His relaxed body is extended across her knees. An eager group, half-pitying, half-wondering, has collected around and joins in lamenting.

Similar in treatment is the study, in black chalk, for the Virgin, Christ, and St. John, the original of which is in the British Museum. Beautifully composed and finished, this group, with its poetical grace and painter-like qualities, is reminiscent of Andrea del Sarto.

The two reproductions of Night and Dawn are the preliminary studies in black chalk for the famous marble figures in the Medici Chapel at Florence which Michael Angelo never quite completed. Evening, Dawn, Day and Night form the two groups above which are seated the statues of Giuliano and Lorenzo de Medici. Only the imagination of a genius could have conceived so deep and symbolical a monument. Michael Angelo seldom came under those soft moods which were so marked a feature in the work of Raphael. His appreciation was always keener for the masculine, rather than the feminine form, and here, as in all his undertakings, we have huge muscular female figures, largely drawn and original in attitude.

The subject of the *Crucifixion* must have appealed with considerable force to the dramatic side of this great Florentine. There are several studies extant, one in the British Museum, dating from his later period, having been carried out in black and white chalk. Unfortunately the ravages of time have left it in a sad condition, the white chalk has almost disappeared, and it is to be regretted that reproduction is an impossibility. The composition must be, however, shortly described. Our Lord is nailed to the Cross, His head drooping in death. The Holy Mother, overcome with grief, weeps and embraces His body. On the other side of the Cross, St John raises his face towards the sky. Michael Angelo, with his usual abhorrence of tradition, treats the subject in a boldly original fashion,

but, as in all his sacred work, with a profoundly religious teeling. The fact is manifest in the evidence of the efforts he made to reach perfection.

The Three Feats of Hercules is divided into three distinct groups. The first shows Hercules struggling with the Hydra. Then we have Hercules wrestling with Antæus, and finally Hercules tearing asunder the jaws of the lion. Above the last group is a note in the handwriting of Michael Angelo to the effect that this is the second lion Hercules had slain, as he has already one skin across his shoulders. The drawing is in red chalk, and the method dates it as of his later period.

The reproductions given in this volume are sufficient to show what a wide range Michael Angelo covered technically in his drawings. There is character in his slightest touch, and his spirit is always unmistakable. To the zealous student such reproductions should prove of incalculable benefit. In simple language they express every phase of human life, and form the highest model a student can endeavour to follow.

One cannot do better than quote the words of Jean François Millet, who possessed much of the spirit of Michael Angelo. Writing to a friend he describes the effect of his first visit to the Louvre. The letter will be found in the "Life of Millet" by Julia Cartwright. He says :-- "The great Italians fascinated me by their mastery and charm of composition. There were moments when the arrows of St. Sebastian seemed to pierce me, as I looked at the Martyr of Mantegna. The masters of that age have an incomparable power. They make you feel in turn the joys and the pains which thrill their souls. But when I saw that drawing by Michael Angelo representing a man in a swoon I felt 'that' was a different thing. The expression of the relaxed muscles, the planes and the modelling of that form exhausted by physical suffering gave me a whole series of impressions. I felt as if tormented by the same pains. I had compassion for him. I suffered in his body, with his limbs. I saw that the man who had done this was able in a single figure to represent all the good and evil of humanity. It was Michael Angelo! That explains all. I had already seen some bad engravings of his work at Cherbourg. But here I touched the heart and heard the voice of him who has haunted me with such power during my whole life."

ILLUSTRATIONS

STUDY OF FIGURE FOR "THE BATHERS " (PEN AND BISTRE)

British Museum





STUDY OF A MAN'S HEAD (RED CHALK)

Oxford



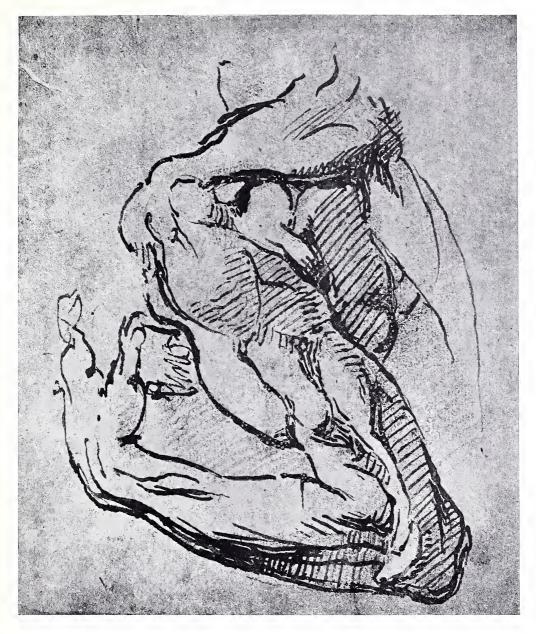
HEAD OF A WOMAN

Photo, Braun, Clément OXFORD



STUDY OF MALE TORSO (RED CHALK)

British Museum



STUDY OF A MAN'S LEFT SHOULDER AND ARM (PEN AND BISTRE) BRITISH MUSEUM



THE BACCHANALIA DI PUTTI

Photo, Nervice



THE FALL OF PHAETON (BLACK CHALK)

Photo, Brann, Clement WINDSOR



THREE FEATS OF HERCULES (RED CHALK)

Pholo, Braun, Clement WINDSOR





PROMETHEUS DEVOURED BY THE VULTURE (BLACK CHALK)



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STUDY FOR "THE RESURRECTION" (BLACK CHALK)

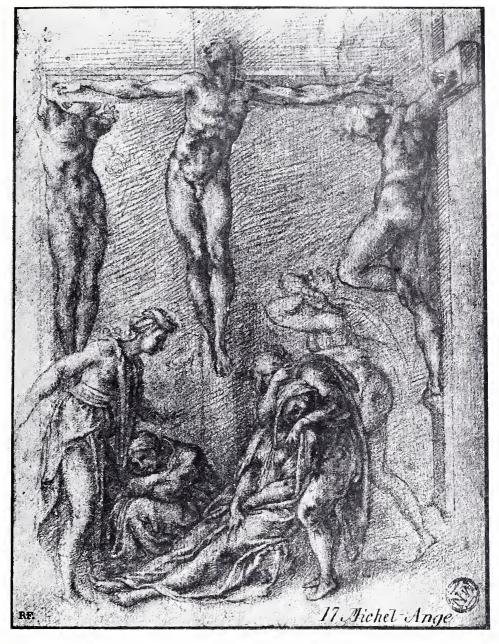
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THE SAVIOUR ASCENDING FROM THE TOMB (BLACK CHALK)

Photo, Autotype Co. British Museum



CHRIST ON THE CROSS

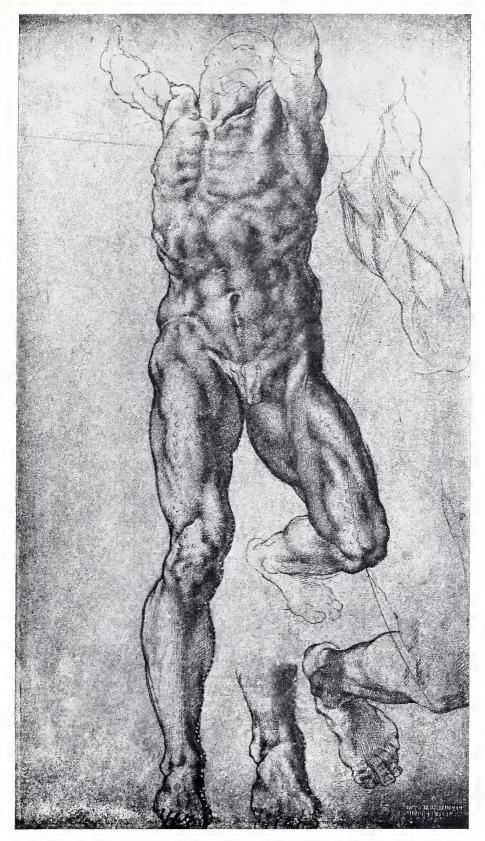
Photo, Mansell LOUVRE





THE DEAD CHRIST. STUDY MILAN FOR A "PIETA"

Milan



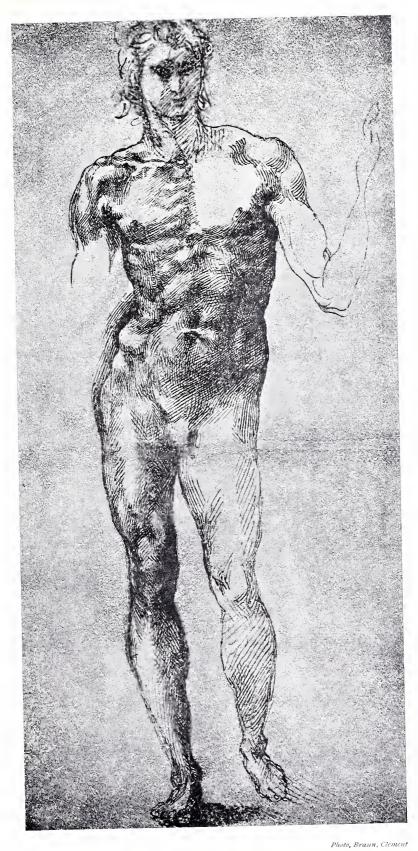
HAMAN DYING ON THE CROSS

Photo, Brann, Clement WINDSOR



STUDY OF CHRIST RISING FROM THE TOMB (BLACK CHALK)

WINDSOR



STUDY OF NUDE MAN GATTEAUX Collection (PEN AND BISTRE)





LAZARUS RISING FROM THE TOMB (RED CHALK)

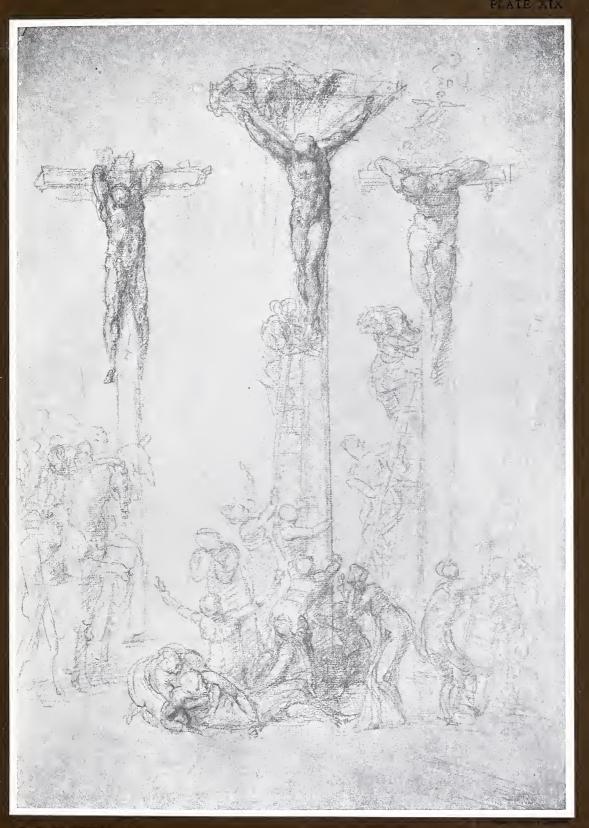
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STUDY FOR THE DEAD CHRIST (FEN AND BISTRE)





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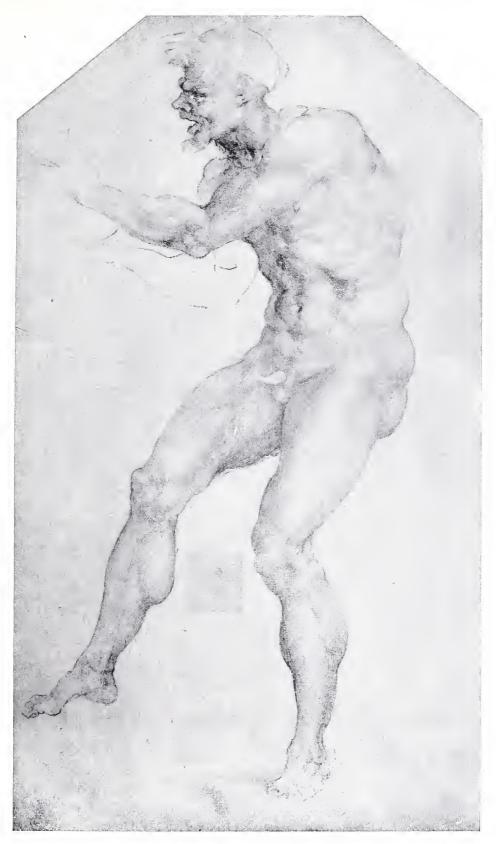
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STUDY OF "LAZARUS" (RED CHALK)

Photo, Braun, Clément BRITISH MUSEUM

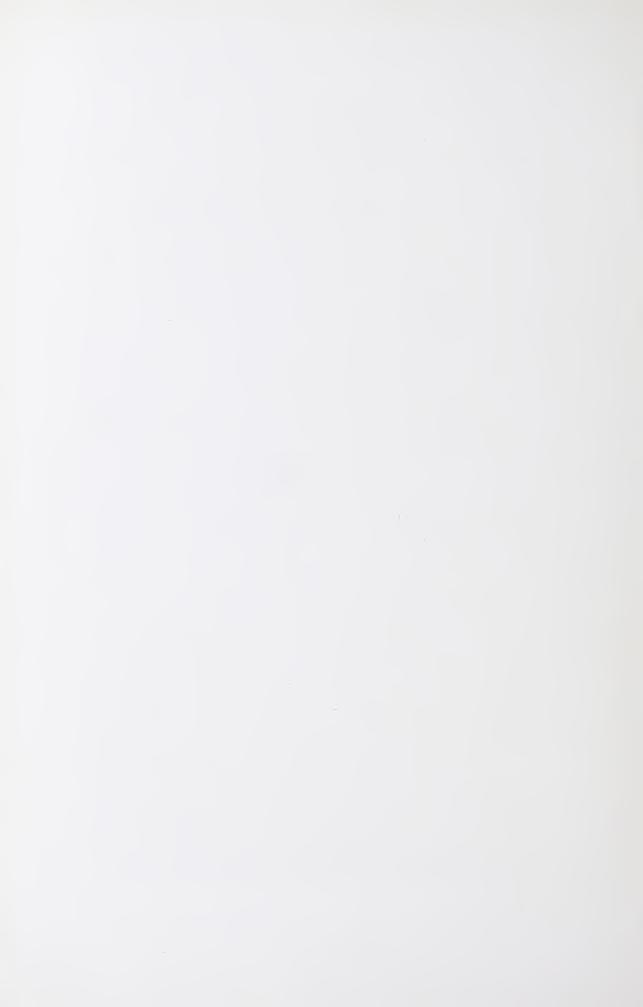


DANCING FAUN (BLACK CHALK) Photo, Brann, Clement WINDSOR



STUDY FOR A SEATED FIGURE (SISTINE CHAPEL) (RED CHALK)

Photo, Braun, Clement CHATSWORTH





STUDY OF A NUDE MALE FIGURE SEATED (SISTINE CHAPEL (RED CHALK)

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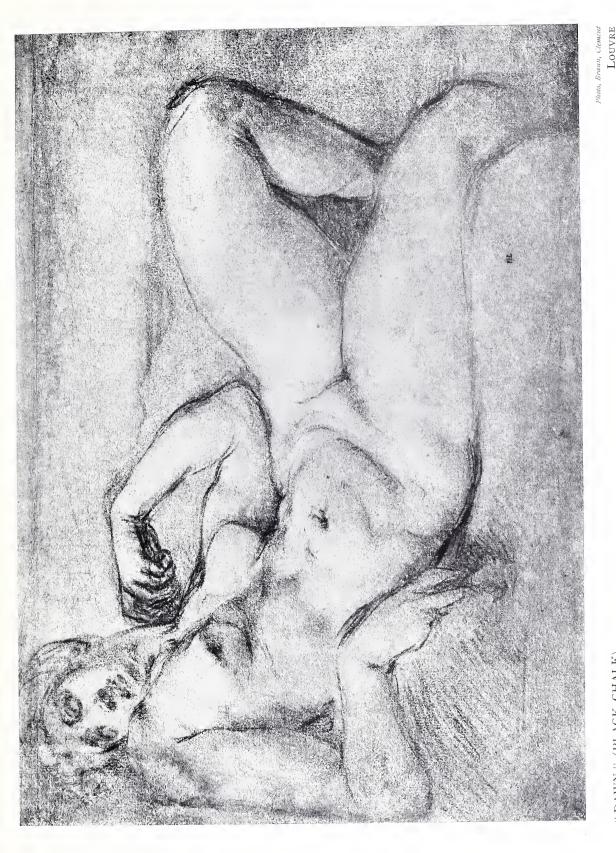




FEMALE HEAD (BLACK CHALK) Photo, Braun, Clement WINDSOR



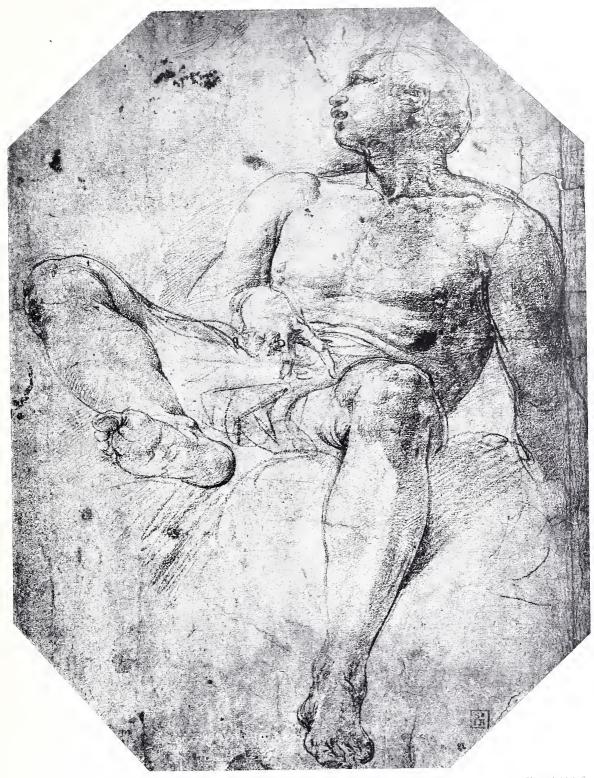
PLATE XXVI











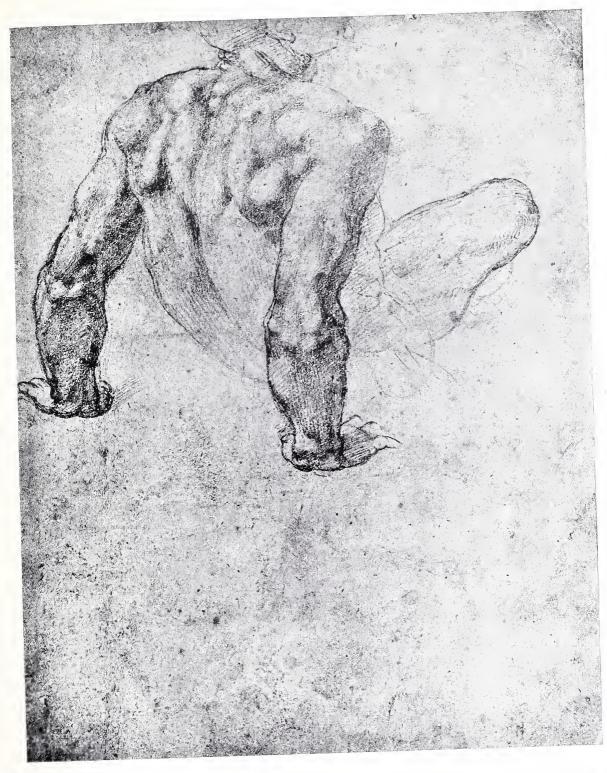
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STUDY OF A MALE FIGURE (BLACK CHALK)



STUDY FOR A "PIETA" (SISTINE CHAPEL) (BLACK CHALK)

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STUDY OF BACK AND ARMS (BLACK CHALK)

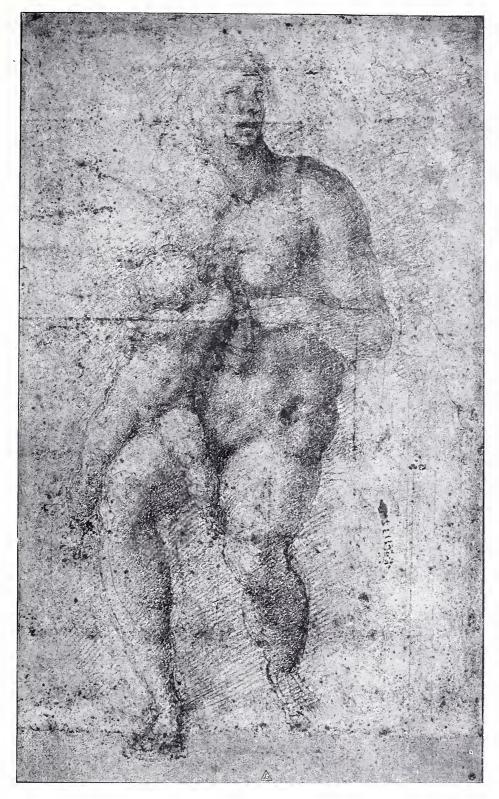
BRITISH MUSEUM



(BLACK CHALK)

BRITISH MUSEUM





FEMALE FIGURE AND CHILD (BLACK CHALK)

British Museum





STUDY FOR VIRGIN, CHRIST AND ST. JOHN BLACK CHALK) Photo, Autotype Co. British Museum





DRAPED WARRIOR

Fhoto, Brann, Clément UFFIZI

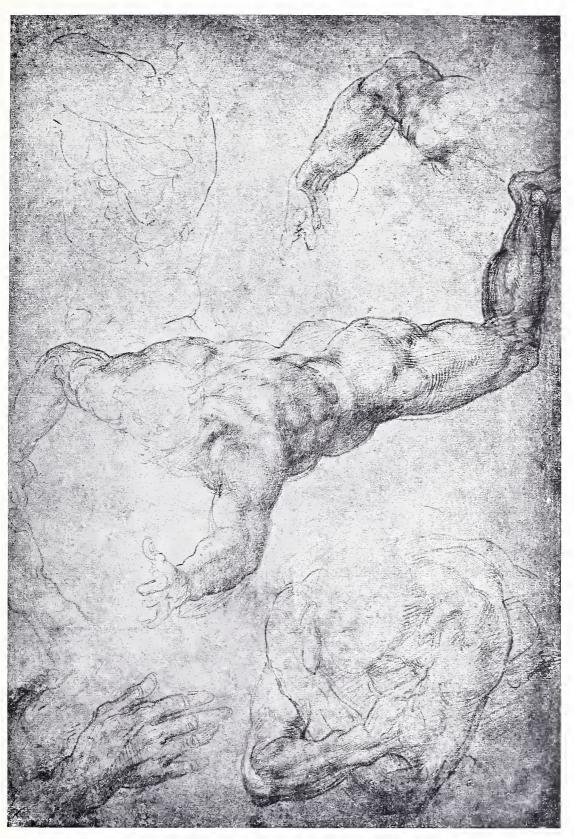




THE PROPHET ISAIAH

Photo, Braun, Clément VIENNA





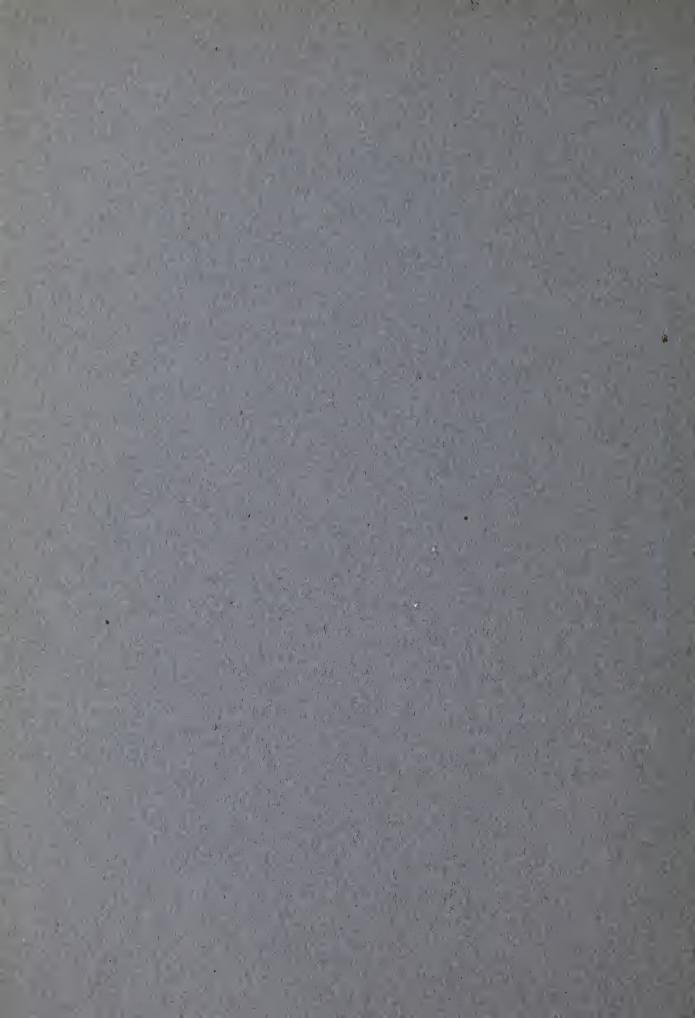
STUDIES OF DESCENDING FIGURES FOR "THE LAST JUDGMENT" (BLACK CHALK) Photo, Autotype Co. British Museum



STUDY FOR DECORATIVE FIGURE ABOVE THE PROPHET DANIEL (SISTINE CHAPEL) (BLACK CHALK) Photo, Mansell UFF121



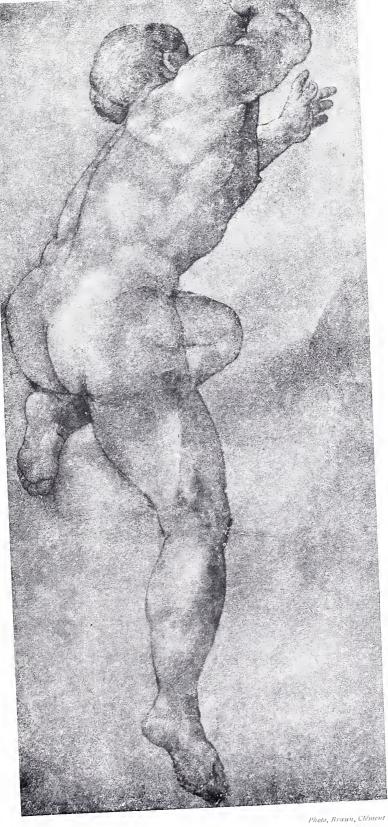
STUDY OF MALE TORSO (RED CHALK) Photo, Brann, Clement. VENICE





STUDIES OF MEN FOR "THE LAST JUDGMENT"

CHATSWORTH



STUDY OF FIGURE FOR "THE LAST JUDGMENT" n, Braun, Clément MILAN





THE SCRIBE

Photo, Braun, Clement OXFORD





Phote Manye'' Uffizi

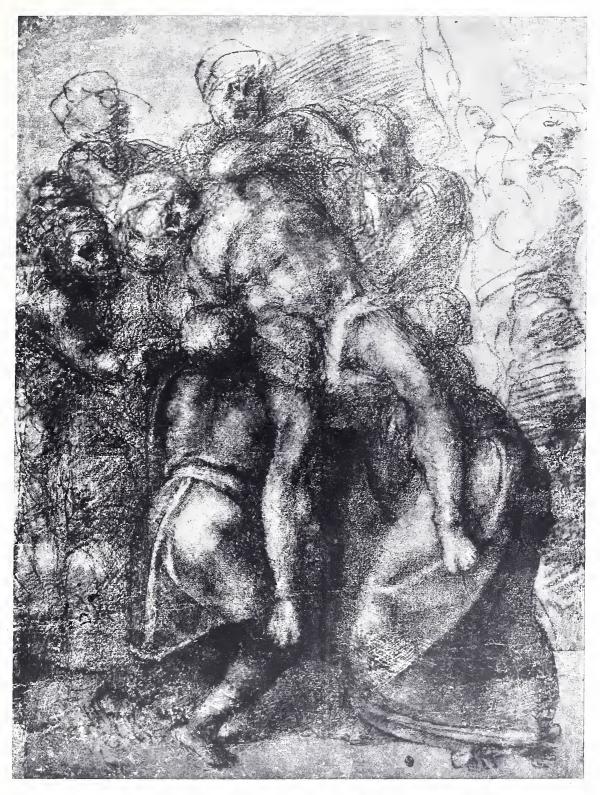




PRUDENCE (PEN AND BISTRE)

Vioto, Mansel

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DESCENT FROM THE CROSS

Photo, Brann, Clément OXFORD





