

Michelangelo Buonarroti Notes

From Wikipedia –

Personal life

In his personal life, Michelangelo was abstemious. He told his apprentice, Ascanio Condivi: "However rich I may have been, I have always lived like a poor man." Condivi said he was indifferent to food and drink, eating "more out of necessity than of pleasure" and that he "often slept in his clothes and ... boots." These habits may have made him unpopular. His biographer Paolo Giovio says, "His nature was so rough and uncouth that his domestic habits were incredibly squalid, and deprived posterity of any pupils who might have followed him." He may not have minded, since he was **by nature a solitary and melancholy person**, "*bizzarro e fantastico*", a man who "withdrew himself from the company of men."

Censorship always followed Michelangelo, once described as "inventor delle porcherie" ("inventor of obscenities" - in the original Italian language referring to "pork things"). The infamous "**fig-leaf campaign**" of the Counter-Reformation, aiming to cover all representations of human genitals in paintings and sculptures, started with Michelangelo's works. To give two examples, the marble statue of *Cristo della Minerva* (Church of Santa Maria sopra Minerva, Rome) was covered by added drapery, as it remains today, and the statue of the naked child Jesus in *Madonna of Bruges* (The Church of Our Lady in Bruges, Belgium) remained covered for several decades. Also, the plaster copy of the David in the Cast Courts (Victoria and Albert Museum) in London, has a fig leaf in a box at the back of the statue. It was there to be placed over the statue's genitals so that they would not upset visiting female royalty.

One of the qualities most admired by his contemporaries was his *terribilità*, a sense of **awe-inspiring grandeur**, and it was the attempts of subsequent artists to imitate Michelangelo's impassioned and highly personal style that resulted in **Mannerism**, the next major movement in Western art after the High Renaissance.

From Christianity Today Library.com: Much of what we know about the life of Michelangelo, as well as many other Renaissance artists, comes from the painter, architect, and **biographer Giorgio Vasari** (1511-74). Vasari's immensely popular *Lives of the Most Excellent Painters, Sculptors, and Architects*, first published in 1550 and expanded and revised in 1568, laid the foundation for centuries of art historians. It chronicles the development of Italian art from the 14th to the 16th centuries, climaxing in Michelangelo, whom Vasari idolized. Michelangelo, on the other hand, didn't have the same high opinion of Vasari's first edition. He had his pupil Ascanio Condivi write another account of his life to set the record straight.

Michelangelo's ceiling of the **Sistine Chapel** in the Vatican may be a feast for the eyes, but painting it was no picnic. The **cramped position** atop high scaffolding for four years caused him enormous discomfort. He spent so much time looking *up* while working that it was some time before his eyes could adjust to looking *down* again—for a while, he had to read things by holding them over his head. He described his misery in a poem: "My beard toward heaven, I feel the back

of my brain / Upon my neck ... / My brush, above my face continually, / Makes it a splendid floor by dripping down."

According to Vasari and other early biographers, while Michelangelo was an up-and-coming young sculptor in Rome he overheard some people discussing his new *Pietà* in St. Peter's Basilica and attributing it to another artist. Michelangelo was irritated that the praise for all of his hard work was wrongly going to someone else, so he returned at night and carved the words "Michelangelo Buonoratti, Florentine, made this" in a prominent place on the sash across Mary's chest. He never again **signed** any of his **work**.

Faith: Some historians have identified Michelangelo as part of a religious circle known as "Nicodemites" (a term used by John Calvin, alluding to the Pharisee who came to Jesus only by night for fear of being discovered in conversation with him). For the Genevan reformer, "Nicodemites" were those who concealed their Protestant beliefs behind an outward show of Catholic conformity—a kind of cowardice. However, for those who took the name for themselves, it could be a badge of honor. After all, Nicodemus showed up courageously and faithfully at the crucifixion.

Self-Portraits:

Head of John the Baptist – Sistine Chapel. Also: Jeremiah, Crucifixion of Christ – Lower right corner, walking away from scene. Conversion of St. Paul @ St. Paul.

In his old age, Michelangelo created a number of *Pietas*, including the *Victory*, but left unfinished. In this group, the youthful victor overcomes an older hooded figure, with the features of Michelangelo.

In the ***Florentine Pietà***, Michelangelo again depicts himself, this time as the aged Nicodemus lowering the body of Jesus from the cross into the arms of Mary his mother and Mary Magdalene.

