

Zeichnungsforschung

Around Michelangelo: Gleanings in the Kupferstich- Kabinett, Dresden

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I. Recent study of sixteenth-century Italian drawings at the Dresden Kupferstich-Kabinett, undertaken in the context of a research project that begun in 2017, with the aim of producing a collection catalogue (Metze et al., forthcoming), has unearthed no hitherto unrecognised masterpieces around Michelangelo, but has revealed a number of understudied copies of varying degrees of interest. Among the more noteworthy are a second replica in black chalk, attributable to Giulio Clovio, of the famous *Crucifixion* drawn by Michelangelo for Vittoria Colonna (inv. C 1989–106; for Michelangelo's original, cf. Wilde 1953, no. 67; Tolnay 1975–80, no. 411; for Clovio's other replica cf. Joannides 2007, 304–308; Salsi 2015, 250), as well as a – as yet – barely noticed same-size, same-medium copy, by a mid-16th cen-

tury Florentine hand, of Michelangelo's presentation drawing of *Samson and Delilah*, the first such to be found (inv. C 55; for the original cf. Joannides 2007, 191–193, no. 35; Tolnay 1975–80, no. 297). Further, there is a copy in black chalk or charcoal of Michelangelo's famous *Anima Dannata*, with overworking in pen that reveals awareness of the drapery style of the young Gian Lorenzo Bernini (inv. C 135; the original in the Uffizi, inv. 601 E, was previously catalogued as a copy in Barocchi 1962, 237–238, but is now universally accepted as autograph; cf. Tolnay 1975–80, no. 306). While these do not require extensive discussion here, two other sheets unexpectedly enlarge our knowledge of Michelangelo and his followers (invs. C 46 and C 1975-142; both so far unpublished except in the online collection on the website of the Staatli-

| Fig. 1 | Unidentified draughtsman after Michelangelo. Studies for nudes and for Saint Jerome, c.1510–20. Pen and brown ink over lead point and red chalk, all corners cut, 287 × 362 mm. Dresden, Staatliche Kunstsammlungen, Kupferstich-Kabinett, inv. C 46 recto. Foto: Andreas Diesend





Fig. 2 | Biagio Pupini after Michelangelo, Study for an Ignudo, 1520 (?). Pen and brown ink, 213 × 188 mm. Paris, Musée du Louvre, Département des arts graphiques, inv. 748 verso. Foto: Michel Urtado

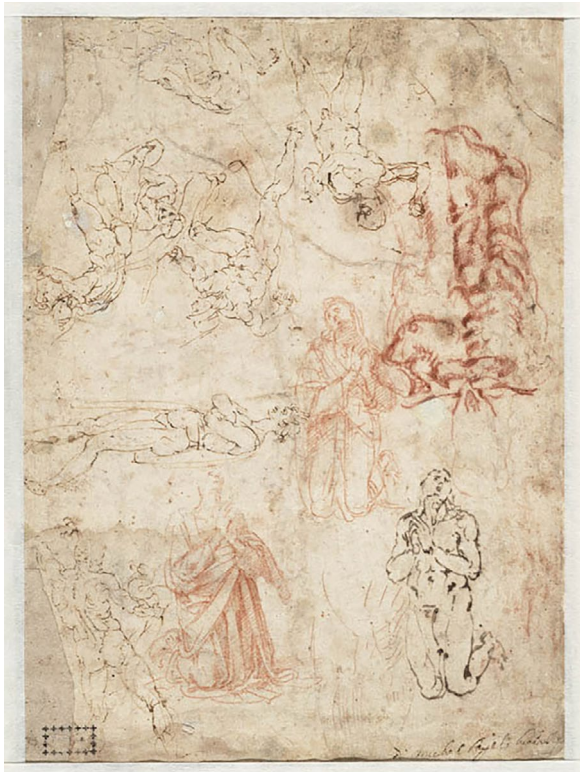
che Kunstsammlungen Dresden). One records several lost sketches by him and also throws a sidelight on his elder contemporary Andrea Sansovino (c.1467–1529); the second documents knowledge of his drawings in the circle of Daniele da Volterra (1509–1566). It is unclear how these drawings came to be acquired by the museum. C 46 is documented for the first time in the 1865 inventory of the Kupferstich-Kabinett, where it is listed under Michelangelo's name (Cat. 64 I, fols. 20v–21r, no. 46), and it is to be assumed that it was once part of the collection of William Gibson (c.1644–1703), as it bears an inscription apparently in his handwriting (Lugt 1921, nos. 2092–2094; Lugt 1956, no. 2885). As for C 1975-142, it was retrospectively inventoried in 1975 as Italian, 17th century, after Michelangelo (Acc./Retr. C 1973–80, 1975, no. 142). It had previously been part of Sir Thomas Lawrence's (1769–1830) collection: his dry stamp is impressed at the lower left of the recto (cf. Lugt 1921, no. 2445). This article is the result of three intensive study days (15–17 April 2024) spent in the collection of the

Kupferstich-Kabinett in the context of the aforementioned research project. During these days, Gudula Metzke and Silvia Massa were active collaborators, whom I should have liked to cite as co-authors. The invitation to study the Italian drawings in the collection was made by Stephanie Buck whose policy of fostering dialogue between the museum's project team and international colleagues is wholly laudable. I am deeply grateful to her for allowing me this opportunity and for her active participation in our discussions, and I should also like to thank Alexander Röstel whose erudition and visual acumen made him a valuable interlocutor.



Fig. 3 | Piero d'Argenta (?) after Michelangelo, Study for an Ignudo, c.1510 (?). Pen and ink, 191 × 130 mm. Paris, Private Collection.

© Courtesy: Diederick Poncelin de Raucourt



| Fig. 4 | Michelangelo, Figure sketches, c.1506.
Pen and brown ink and black chalk, 285 × 187 mm.
Haarlem, Teylers Museum, inv. A 028 verso.
© Teylers Museum, Haarlem, Netherlands ↗



| Fig. 5 | Michelangelo, Study for Saint Jerome, c.1506.
Pen and brown ink over black chalk, 286 × 211 mm.
Paris, Musée du Louvre, Département des arts graphiques,
inv. 705 recto. Foto: Michel Urtado ↗

II. The recto of C 46 | Fig. 1 | probably dates from early in the second decade. It carries four pen drawings and a slight sketch in black chalk, and while the page does not preserve a plausibly Michelangelesque layout, all the drawings seem to reproduce drawings made by Michelangelo between c.1506 and c.1509. Whether or not the prototypes originated on one sheet is guesswork.

Reading from right to left, the seated figure facing left records a lost sketch for the *Ignudo* placed to the right above the Erythraean Sibyl and left below the *Drunkenness of Noah* in the first bay of the Sistine Ceiling, datable to 1508–09. For unknown reasons, this lost drawing was a focus of attention among copyists.

A version of it by Biagio Pupini is in the Louvre | Fig. 2 | (inv. 748 verso ↗; see Joannides 2003a, 127–128, no. 69; the recto is a copy of a lost study for the *Flood*); a third was seen by Joannides some 30 years ago on

an unpublished sheet of copies after lost sketches by Michelangelo in a French private collection; and a fourth, preserving Michelangelo's indicators, is on the verso of a sheet in a second French private collection | Fig. 3 | which has become quite well-known thanks to the recto sketches, which record Michelangelo's Manhattan *Cupid* or, more likely, a model for it (this drawing was of consequence in establishing the authorship of the marble whose rediscovery unleashed unnecessary – and unnecessarily poisonous – controversy, cf. Joannides 2003b). Finally, more distant from Michelangelo's lost original, is a rather loosely drawn copy of the same figure, on the verso of a sheet whose recto contains a copy after Andrea Mantegna (private collection; published in Feinberg 2005; while I do not find the attribution to Michelangelo convincing the sheet clearly deserves further investigation).



| Fig. 6 | Unidentified draughtsman after Andrea Sansovino, *Virgin and Child*, after 1505.

Black chalk or charcoal over stylus, 362 × 287 mm. Dresden, Staatliche Kunstsammlungen, Kupferstich-Kabinett, inv. C 46 verso. Foto: Caterina Micksch [↗](#)

The adjacent drawing of a male nude seen from the front is clearly Michelangelesque, but the original it records was not brought to the same level of finish as the major nude studies of 1504–05 (such as nos. 21–23 in: Tolnay 1975–80). It cannot be connected with a known project and our first thought, that it might record a preliminary sketch for a Julius Tomb *Prigione*, planning of which began in 1505, is not sustainable. The figure seems off-balance and lacks the compressed energy of the slave designs and this, plus the implied movement, suggests it was to play a role in a narrative. The flanks of the Tomb in both 1505 and 1513 versions were to carry large reliefs but no evidence has appeared to determine their subjects. However, the figure’s relative two-dimensionality suggests that it more probably prepared painting; our best guess is that it might be an undeveloped idea for a foreground figure in the *Flood*. The light black chalk sketch repeats the left knee of the large figure – knees were always a focus for Michelangelo’s plastic inventions. He may have recalled this drawing when he designed the Baptist, immediately to the viewer’s left of Christ, in the *Last Judgement*.

The small male figure in a complex pose, immediately to the left of the large drawing, also lacks firm connection. Its linear structure is characteristic of Michelangelo’s *concetti*, but their translation in this copy is weak when compared with autograph examples, such as those for the *Ancestors of Christ* in the Ashmolean Museum (Joannides 2007, 92–117, nos. 9–16; Tolnay 1975–80, nos. 166–173). The pose shares features with the Sistine *Ignudi* but is not appropriate to any of them; it also has links with the *Haman*, painted in 1512, at the end of Michelangelo’s work on the ceiling, but rather in the figure’s innate strength and energy than in any detail. Finally, the kneeling figure at the left is clearly a penitent Saint Jerome. This



| Fig. 7 | Andrea Sansovino, *Virgin and Child*, c.1505.

Terracotta, 41 × 23 cm. Florence, Museo Nazionale del Bargello, inv. 451. *Catalogo Generale dei Beni Culturali* (Codice di catalogo nazionale 0900286645), CC BY 4.0 [↗](#)

small sketch bears some resemblance to another, of a kneeling, praying figure on the verso of a page in the Teylers Museum, Haarlem | Fig. 4 |, of which the recto contains studies for the *Dying Slave* (A 028 recto; cf. Tuyll van Serooskerken 2000, 108–111, no. 51; Tolnay 1975–80, no. 108). The conception is very different from a much more elaborate drawing of the same Saint, of c.1506–07, in the Louvre | Fig. 5 | (inv. 705 recto ↗), in which Jerome's body is developed from the Belvedere Torso (Joannides 2003a, 217, no. 18; Tolnay 1975–80, no. 77). Whether both were made in connection with the same project is conjectural.

These copies were presumably made by a draughtsman familiar with Michelangelo's studio and at this period, it is a natural to think of his friend and assistant Piero d'Argenta, who may be responsible for a number of copies and derivations of Michelangelo's drawings. However, the handling seems simultaneously looser and less constrained, more careless yet more confident, than drawings probably by him, and it remains an open question whether they were drawn by Piero at a later moment, or whether they are by some other associate of Michelangelo (for hypotheses in favour of Piero d'Argenta cf. Joannides 2003a, 187–190). The Virgin and Child on the verso is a drawing of a very different type, but it may be by the same hand. | Fig. 6 | Although at first sight un-Michelangelesque, the loose handling of chalk – or maybe charcoal – and the swirls of preliminary stylus indentation recall the technique of a drawing in the Louvre of two figures supporting a third (inv. 718 recto ↗; cf. Joannides 2003a, 82–85, no. 9; Tolnay 1975–80, no. 47). But that drawing, whose relative weakness has caused doubts, is far superior to the present one, which is surely by a different hand. Rather than the draughtsman's own invention, the drawing likely records a work by another artist. The old inscription, below Gibson's (later cancelled) "M. Angelo Buonaroti", reads "Sansovino" and the style of the figure and the probable date of the sheet favour Andrea over his more famous pupil Jacopo. The drawing may copy some now-lost model created by Andrea Sansovino following his transfer to Rome



| Fig. 8 | Follower of Daniele da Volterra after Michelangelo, Study of a right leg and sketch of wrestling figures (copy of Fig. 9), c.1560–70. Black chalk, framing line in pen and brown ink, 364 × 204 mm. Dresden, Staatliche Kunstsammlungen, Kupferstich-Kabinett, inv. C 1975-142. Foto: Andreas Diesend ↗

in 1505; the design seems more advanced than the small terracotta group in the Bargello which is generally dated shortly after 1500 | Fig. 7 | (cf. Huntley 1935, 43–44, fig. 27). Michelangelo and Andrea appear to have been on reasonably friendly terms and an associate of one could well have had access to the studio of the other.

III. This page | Fig. 8 | (inv. C 1975-142 ↗) is a same-sized copy of a black chalk drawing by Michelangelo in the *École nationale supérieure des beaux-arts* (EBA), Paris, which is on the verso of a red chalk sketch, made around the middle of the second dec-



| Fig. 9 | Michelangelo, Study of a right thigh; memory sketches after Botticelli, c.1514. Black chalk, 327 × 200 mm. Paris, École nationale supérieure des beaux-arts, inv. EBA 197 verso. © Beaux-Arts de Paris, Dist. GrandPalaisRmn / image Beaux-arts de Paris ↗



| Fig. 10 | Michelangelo, Study for a Prigione, c. 1514. Red chalk, 327 × 200 mm. Paris, École nationale supérieure des beaux-arts, inv. EBA 197 recto. © Beaux-Arts de Paris, Dist. GrandPalaisRmn / image Beaux-arts de Paris ↗

ade, for a slave for the Julius Tomb **| Fig. 9 | | Fig. 10 |** (inv. EBA 197; Tolnay 1975–80, no. 62, cf. Brugerolles 1981, 50–53, no. 25). Presumably the draughtsman copied the recto as well, but, if so, his copy has not been found. **Fig. 9** probably preparing the expressive thigh of another slave, also contains three small pairs of wrestling figures, which depend from those at the bottom of Botticelli's *Mystic Nativity*. Brugerolles records that the connection with Botticelli was made by Charles de Tolnay, no doubt after 1975. One of the figures is repeated faintly and slightly enlarged, on the present page, as was first noticed by Mauro Mussolin and Leonardo Pili (verbal communication to the staff of the Kupferstich-Kabinett Dresden, 2024). The drawing's technique reinterprets rather than replicates that of the original. Chalk is applied in sep-

arated, unstressed lines, in the manner of Daniele da Volterra who copied Michelangelo's work widely although not, so far as I can determine at present, his drawings. The present copy, although close to Daniele in style, seems likely to be by one of his followers such as Michele degli Alberti or Michele's collaborator Jacomo Rocchetti, who made the well-known copy after Michelangelo's design for the Julius Tomb (Berlin, Kupferstichkabinett, inv. KdZ 15306 ↗). They inherited Daniele's collection of Michelangelo drawings and numerous sheets, including the EBA verso (and the present copy) were inscribed by one or another "Michelangelo da Bona Rota", or similarly. And many, although not the EBA drawing, also carry irregularly placed italic numberings which run to over a hundred. Like Daniele, in the San Pietro in

Montorio *Baptism*, which quotes two of Michelangelo's greatest drawings for the *Battle of Cascina*, Jacomo and Michele made use of his drawings in their own schemes (e. g. Teylers Museum, invs. A19 recto and A18 recto; Tolnay 1975–80, nos. 50 and 51. Discussion of this matter, initiated by Joannides 2007, 29–30; further developed in Sickel 2013).

The topic of early copies after Michelangelo's drawings requires further study. In some cases, copies were made by an assistant or a close friend, of drawings which Michelangelo himself later re-worked, and so must have followed the originals rather soon (Joannides 2018). In other cases, such as Rocchetti's copy of Michelangelo's *modello* for the Julius Tomb, there were obvious reasons for preserving a record. But why the verso of the EBA sheet should have been thought worthy of copy is conjectural. A copy at Windsor bears a similar inscription (RCIN 990441; Joannides 1997, 148–149, no. 46). It reproduces elements from two once-joined sheets now at Haarlem (Teylers Museum, invs. A 027 and A 020; Tolnay 1975–80, nos. 135 and 136) and was probably made by the same hand at the same time; it is not, as mistakenly presumed by Joannides, a work of the 17th century. This page, like C 46, passed through the hands of William Gibson.

Perhaps these examples indicate a programme of copying of Michelangelo's drawings, made with historical or archaeological intent: it would have been of little use in a composition. In any case such attentively loyal copies are a moving testimony to the reverence felt for Michelangelo's drawings in his immediate circle in the closing decades of his life.

IV. Can any conclusion be drawn from this investigation? Certainly nothing neat. The two sheets of drawings considered here provide information of very different kinds: the first about some lost pen sketches by Michelangelo, and a possible link with Andrea Sansovino; the second about the reverent copying of drawings by Michelangelo, even ones of small significance, in the circle of the friend and associate of his last years, Daniele da Volterra. The only general

observation that might be made is that if we study drawings, especially relatively disregarded ones in old collections, for the evidence they provide rather than in the hope of finding autograph wonders, we can sometimes encounter unanticipated pools of light.

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