



RIVALS in ROME

The 16th-century Italian drawings in a recent exhibition at The Morgan Library & Museum, in New York City, are beautiful working drawings that point toward grand final creations far beyond the edges of the paper and reveal the competing influences of Raphael and Michelangelo.

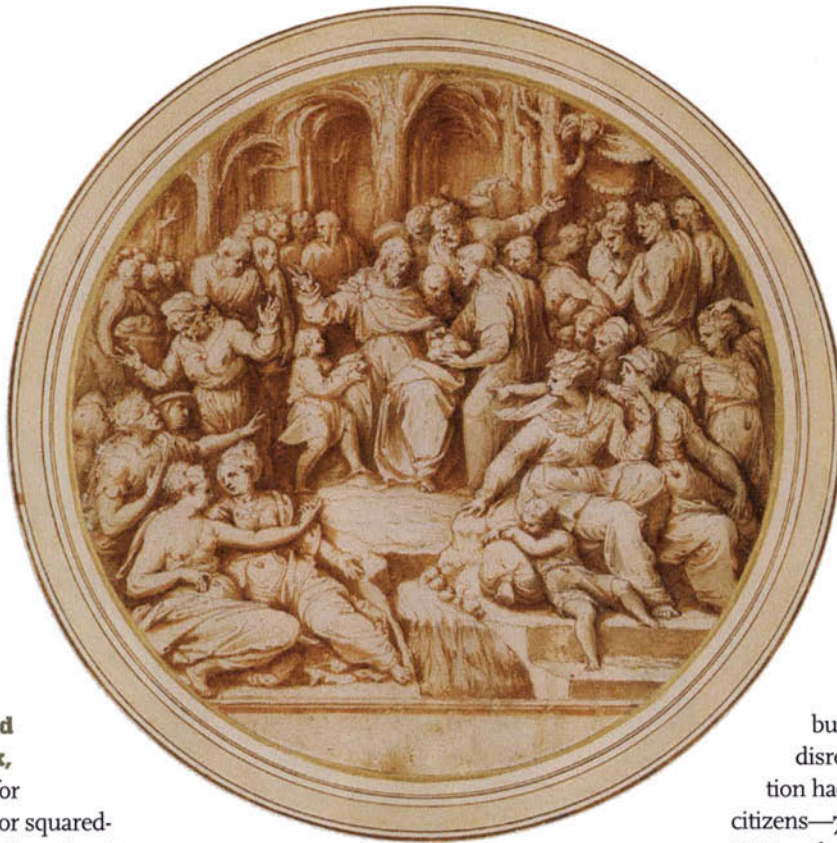
by **Ephraim Rubenstein**

OPPOSITE PAGE

Annunciation of the Virgin

by Michelangelo, 1550, black chalk, some stumping; traced with a stylus, 15½ x 11½.

All artwork this article collection The Morgan Library & Museum, New York, New York.



Splattered with ink, pricked for transfer, or squared-off for scaling, the pieces on display in the exhibition “Rome After Raphael,” are working drawings. They were passed from hand to hand within workshops as models for large-scale public projects and are distinctive in that, unlike presentation drawings, they serve to develop and communicate ideas—often to people other than the artist, and usually for execution in other media. Whereas later drawings have become valued for their own sake and there has evolved a distinct aesthetic of draftsmanship, these pieces were meant to provide information rather than be appreciated; they served a preliminary purpose in a larger process. Even though most are the work of a single artist’s hand, they nonetheless hum with the activity of the whole workshop. Pointing toward a final creation far beyond the edges of the paper, they vibrate with the papal energy that transformed Rome from a desolate backwater city into the artistic and cultural capital of the 16th century.

Visiting Rome today, it is hard to imagine just how derelict it had become by the end of the 15th century. In 1309, when the Papacy retreated to Avignon, in France, it left Rome behind to fester, unwanted and unattended. Rome became a mass of ruins, scattered with as much garbage as it was with forsaken ancient monuments. Pigs and sheep scavenged in the Forum,

buildings were in complete disrepair, and the population had fallen to only 50,000 citizens—7,000 of whom were prostitutes who serviced the unmarried and ostensibly celibate priests. Historian Peter

Partner cites a 15th-century Spanish traveler’s description of Rome as so empty that “there are parts within the walls which look like thick woods, and wild beasts, hares, foxes, deer, and even so it is said porcupines breed in caves.” Partner further describes Rome as “a desolate city, whose inhabitants lived in what could only be termed huts, and who had nothing but contempt and mockery for their classical ancestors.”

When the papacy returned to Rome in 1378, each succeeding Pope took it upon himself to outdo his predecessor in restoring Rome to its former artistic grandeur. This energy fueled an ambitious program that commissioned every conceivable kind of project, from funerary monuments and elaborate fresco cycles for city palaces to decorative objects such as lamps and dishes. This amount of attention and funding attracted artists from all over Italy. Mixing and interweaving visual traditions from across Europe, these artists created thousands of drawings. Those that survive today serve as invaluable witnesses to this era of vibrant and unprecedented artistic activity.

The title of the exhibition “Rome After Raphael,” which was recently on view at The Morgan Library and Museum, in New York City, is testament to the importance and influence of Raphael



OPPOSITE PAGE

Miracle of the Loaves and Fishes

by Perino del Vaga, ca. 1530s, pen-and-brown-ink and brown wash heightened with gouache over black chalk, cut to a circle, 8 $\frac{3}{8}$ " diameter.

Drawings from this period went from plans for large-scale public frescoes to the smallest of decorative objects. This particular drawing is one of a series of six circular plaques that were to be engraved in rock crystal and mounted on a pair of silver candelabra.

ABOVE

Male Figure Symbolizing an Earthquake

by Raphael, 1515–1516, metalpoint heightened with white on gray prepared paper, 4 $\frac{1}{4}$ " diameter.

This drawing is for one of the figures on a tapestry that still hangs in the Sistine Chapel. When this drawing was executed, the naked or draped human figure was still the form through which all the passions and ideas of the century were funneled. Even abstract ideas and forces of nature were visualized as figures. As Kenneth Clark notes in his book *The Nude*, elements such as woods, rivers, and even echoes (or in this case, earthquakes) are shown in painting as bodily presences that are as solid as—and sometimes more prominent than—the human protagonists.



both during his lifetime and after his death in 1520. Raphael was at the center of a workshop teeming with students who assimilated much of their master's grace and beauty. Summoned to Rome in 1508 by Julius II, Raphael began work on frescoes for the papal apartments in the Vatican. But he enjoyed such immediate success in Rome that he found it all but impossible to keep up with the commissions that flooded his workshop. He therefore took on and trained artists such as Polidoro da Caravaggio, Perino del Vaga, and Giulio Romano, all of whom went on to develop successful workshops of their own and all of whom are represented in the exhibition.

But alongside Raphael, Rome could not avoid the colossal influence of Michelangelo, who cast a larger, deeper shadow than almost any other artist in history. His feeling for the naked human body—for the anatomical expressiveness of the figure and the drama of the muscular landscape—affected everyone who saw his artwork. Like no one since the Greek sculptors of the 5th century B.C., Michelangelo forced people to love and accept the nude male form. Artists began to bulk up their figures—not always successfully—with more muscle and twisting movement. Daniele da Volterra, Giulio Clovio, and Pellegrino Tibaldi were among the artists who were deeply influenced by Michelangelo, even though the master did not keep as large a workshop as Raphael did.

"Rome After Raphael" features drawings created between 1500 and 1600, bearing witness to the transformation from the High Renaissance to Mannerism and then to the Baroque. The

ABOVE

**Two Seated
Barbarian Captives**

by Pellegrino Tibaldi, pen-and-brown-ink and brown wash heightened with white gouache over black chalk, 10 $\frac{1}{16}$ x 15 $\frac{1}{16}$.

OPPOSITE PAGE

Diogenes

by Parmigianino, ca. 1524–1527, red chalk heightened with white, 10 $\frac{1}{16}$ x 7 $\frac{1}{16}$.

Look at the cape that drapes Parmigianino's Diogenes—one of the few nudes in the exhibition. The drapery, as much as his powerful musculature, is responsible for the sense of grandeur in the figure. The robe billows out behind him like a superhero's cape, letting the viewer know that for all of Diogenes' massive weight, he is not static.

show should rightly be called "Rivals in Rome," because Michelangelo and Raphael together were the towering influences of the period. They not only dominated all other artists but also influenced each other, passing ideas back and forth—with the younger Raphael, in particular, trying to incorporate the power that he saw in Michelangelo's work. The competing influences of these two men had a profound impact on subsequent generations of Roman artwork and drawing.

A perfect example of an artist who was influenced by both Michelangelo and Raphael is Parmigianino, who came to Rome in 1524, four years after Raphael's death, seeking papal patronage. Although he never worked with either master, he so assimilated and expanded upon Raphael's virtues in particular that Vasari labeled him "Raphael reborn." But he clearly was not impervious to the potency of Michelangelo, as witnessed by his magnificent red-chalk drawing *Diogenes*. After seeing Michelangelo's heroic figures in the papal chapel, Parmigianino built up





OPPOSITE PAGE

Pietà (after Michelangelo)

by Parmigianino, pen-and-dark-brown-ink and gray-brown wash over black chalk with some red chalk, 11 $\frac{1}{16}$ x 8 $\frac{1}{2}$.



BELOW

Christ on the Mount of Olives

by Polidoro da Caravaggio, ca. 1520, pen-and-brown-ink and brown wash heightened with white gouache over black chalk on blue paper faded to gray-green, squared for transfer in black chalk, 15 $\frac{1}{16}$ x 10 $\frac{1}{4}$.

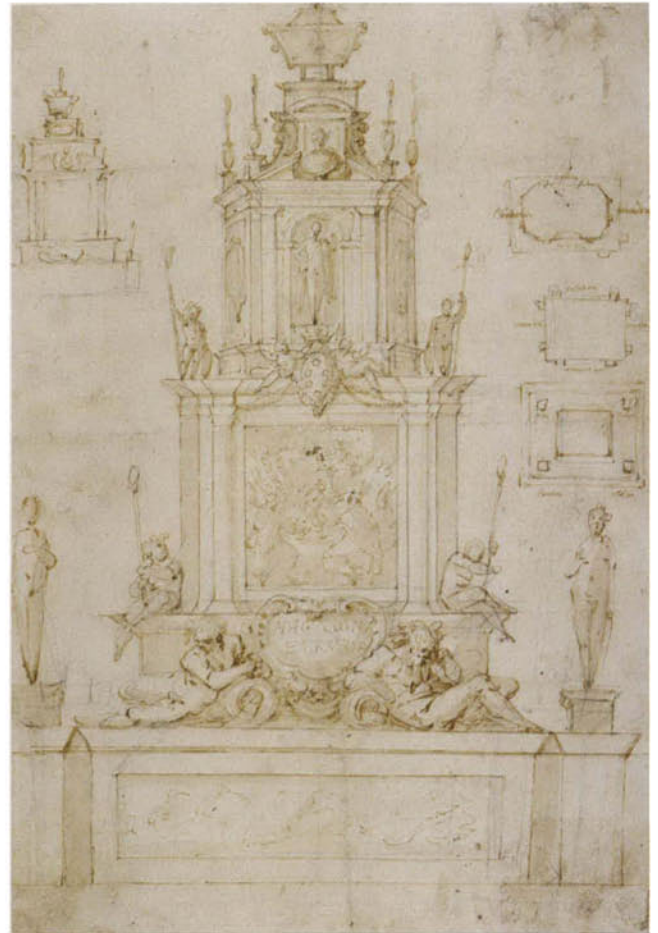
This drawing demonstrates much of what Polidoro learned from Raphael about situating figures into the landscape. There is a beautifully sinuous line that weaves its way from the sleeping figures in the foreground through Christ in the middle ground and then to the angel in the distance.

BELOW

Design for the Catafalque of Grand Duke Cosimo I

by Jacopo Zucchi, 1574, pen-and-brown-ink and brown wash over black chalk, 14 $\frac{1}{4}$ x 10 $\frac{3}{16}$.

Following the death of Cosimo I de' Medici in 1574, designs for ceremonial catafalques sprung up all over Italy. These were elaborate monuments on which the body itself was often laid out in state. Zucchi's is particularly elaborate, with three tiers, a portrait bust, and allegorical figures describing Cosimo's virtues. The drawing is quite wonderful, not only in the swift and sure execution of the figures but also in the way in which Zucchi's mind went from plan to elevation with perfect ease.



the musculature of his ascetic Diogenes so much that the figure is closer to a figure from the Sistine ceiling than to the world that gave birth to Parmigianino's famous Mannerist oil painting *Madonna With the Long Neck* [not shown].

Parmigianino was too great a talent to merely imitate other artists, so he incorporated the best that both Raphael and Michelangelo had to offer and went on to develop his own personal vision. One of the most striking drawings in the exhibition is a magnificent free copy that he made of Michelangelo's sculpture Pietà. In the wall text for Parmigianino's Pietà drawing, the exhibition's curators explain, "In vivid contrast to Michelangelo's sculpture, Parmigianino transformed the Virgin Mary's passive acceptance of her son's death into a passionate and very physical grieving; she stares intently at her son and thrusts out her arms in anguish at her loss."

Because the drawings of this era were usually made in preparation for large-scale public projects, artists tried to outdo the others with increasingly grandiose undertakings. Merely reading the exhibition checklist clues you in to the somewhat bombastic concerns of the period. There are the requisite depictions of the Crucifixion and Adam and Eve, but patrons also dug deeper into their sacred and profane texts and sent their artists on missions to cover such esoteric subjects as *Saint Susanna Refusing to Sacrifice to a Pagan God*; *Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego Saved From the Fiery Furnace*; and *Justice and Fortitude Flanking the Arms of Pope Clement VIII Aldobrandini*. But no matter how recondite, the events portrayed were of profound importance; to look around the gallery is to see a silent world of men and women gathered, gesticulating, commanding. In these drawings, we sense a time of miraculous events and gathering urgency.

RIGHT
**Girl Seated on the
Ground Beside a Chair**

by Parmigianino, 1524,
pen-and-brown-ink and brown
wash, 5 $\frac{1}{8}$ x 5 $\frac{3}{16}$.

BELOW
**Head and Shoulders
of Two Boys and
Separate Studies of a
Right and Left Arm**

by Federico Zuccaro, ca.
1568–1570, black and red
chalk, 5 $\frac{1}{8}$ x 8 $\frac{1}{8}$.

OPPOSITE PAGE
**Child Looking Over Its
Shoulder**

by Giuseppe Cesari, ca.
1589–1601, black and red
chalk, 12 x 8 $\frac{1}{8}$.





BELOW

Prisoner Brought Before a Judge

by Polidoro da Caravaggio, ca. 1520s, pen-and-brown ink and brown wash heightened with white gouache over black chalk on light-brown paper, 6½ x 9¾.



The belief in the body expressed by the artists of the Renaissance, however, suffered major setbacks during this period. The current religious beliefs, fueled by the Counter-Reformation, insisted on draping the heretofore heroic nude figures. Some years after Michelangelo painted his imposing figures of the Last Judgment on the altar wall of the Sistine Chapel, the Council of Trent ordered them covered with loincloths. A sorrowful commission if ever there was one, Daniele da Volterra, one of Michelangelo's most loyal followers, did an extremely sensitive job in covering them over.

Because of this recurring prudery, art became an occasion to draw and paint drapery—seas of flowing robes and billowing sheets. Assembled figures were draped in massive folds that expressed not only weight and gravity but also the forms underneath and their intended movement—Polidoro da Caravaggio's *Prisoner Brought Before a Judge* is one outstanding example of this effect. This drapery provided artists with a

whole vocabulary of shapes that could tie together a composition and move the viewer's eye from one place to another. There was nothing inert about this drapery; it expressed movement and intent. We see from looking at a man's robes where he is going and what he is thinking.

In the midst of this grand world of large assemblies, formal gatherings, and public pomp and circumstance, modest moments of poignant domesticity sometimes break through. Parmigianino's beautiful study of a young girl kneeling in front of a chair expresses a Chardin-like moment of interior quiet and revelation. Giuseppe Cesari's study of a young child walking with its mother and turning to look back at us is similarly marvelous. And the Federico Zuccaro study in black and red chalk of two young boys gives us a magical glimpse into the delight of children and also points us beyond "Rome After Raphael" to the *trois crayons* drawings of the French Rococo 200 years later. ❖



ABOVE

Dream of Human Life (after Michelangelo)

by Giulio Clovio, ca. 1540, black chalk, some stumping, 14 $\frac{1}{16}$ x 10 $\frac{3}{4}$.

This is a version of a famous presentation drawing of Michelangelo's that was copied often during the master's lifetime. It is an allegory depicting the angel of Fame awakening the soul of man to the dangers of the deadly sins—gluttony, lust, greed, wrath, and sloth—represented by the tormented figures in the background.

ABOVE RIGHT

St. Jerome and St. Augustine

by Giulio Romano, ca. 1524, pen-and-brown-ink and brown wash heightened with white gouache on pink toned paper, squared in red chalk, 10 $\frac{3}{4}$ x 7 $\frac{1}{2}$.

This drawing is particularly intriguing because it is clearly squared-off for transfer to another surface, but there are no extant works by Romano that correspond to this drawing. The massive central figures of the two saints gaze in wonder with gestures appropriate to the center of an altarpiece, but none with these figures exist.

In this drawing, Romano combines broad, simple brush washes of only three or four values with extremely delicate linear work done with a pen to search out and describe the contours. He then uses sparse but perfectly placed opaque white gouache to beef-up the light planes and to indicate the highlights. Elements of both Raphael's grace and Michelangelo's solidity are at work.

RIGHT

Kneeling Figure Seen From Behind

by Daniele da Volterra, ca. 1550, black chalk, 12 $\frac{1}{2}$ x 9 $\frac{1}{2}$.

Volterra was one of Michelangelo's most intimate Roman collaborators. This drawing, a study for the apostle in the right foreground of the *Assumption of the Virgin* fresco, displays Michelangelo's massive conception of the figure but with Volterra's own feeling for delicate light. Note the dynamic placement of the figure on the page and how its diagonal thrust activates the rectangle.



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