

Michelangelo's Secret

Presenter Emily Warren, Art Education major

Mentored by Dr. Nathan Rees

The Greeks and Romans had a very open view of sexuality, allowing and encouraging homoerotic acts among their philosophers and artists. Both cultures idolized the perfect form of a man because it represented a divine being closest to human perfection, which should be celebrated not shied away from. Michelangelo believed in a form of renaissance Humanism and the ultimate form of beauty was the nude male. I believe that he took this aseptic from classical antiquity and let it influence his work and style of art further along in his career. No matter the gender the figures he painted or sculptured they all had this same muscular tendency; with wide shoulders, and rectangular torsos. Even the women he created to represent pure beauty illustrated very masculine features as well, except for the occasions when he depicts the Virgin Mary, a holy figure that should not be sexualized. They all represented the ideal form of a man much like the figure in the Rape of Ganymede which was supposed to be a drawing depicting his male love interest as a gift. The drawing was set in a mythical tale so it would be viewed as appropriate to the catholic church who had a complete rule. By placing the story in classical antiquity Michelangelo was allowed to live out a forbidden fantasy. It also allowed for a religious exception to homosexuality which was extremely frowned upon in society during Michelangelo's time. While the Greeks not only excepted homosexuality but celebrated it. With the parallels between the church and classical antiquity so intertwined the different views on homosexuality more than likely deeply bothered him. Michelangelo being so intensely moved by the perfection of classical antiquity and his attracted to men very likely influenced how he saw the ideal body of women, because to him ideal beauty was in fact the body of a man.