

Albrecht Dürer vs. Michelangelo

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Right: David by Michelangelo, 1507 (Galleria dell'Accademia, Florence). Left: Adam & Eve by Albrecht Dürer, 1504 (Museo Nacional Del Prado, Madrid)

'David' is an enthralling marble statue made by the master sculptor Michelangelo within the years 1501 and 1504 AD. Subject of this art work is David, the king of Israel, who is about to fight Goliath, the philistine warrior. Michelangelo, who was a strong believer in the Creation Myth, the

story that describes the beginning of the universe, is considering his marble portrait of David to be the highest form of art as it's the closest that an artist can come to create a God like figure. Michelangelo portrays David in the contrapposto style, giving him a dynamic appearance that

shows David's excitement and the tension in his body before entering the battlefield with Goliath.

In terms of form and the physical appearance, the classic contrapposto style gives the sculpture a slight curve as the body is leaning away from the observer. The fictional proportion of the statue in a comparison with the human body might be a result of Mannerism, which can be explained as an exaggerated adherence to a particular style and an excessive elongation to the human form. The statue of David was removed from its public place in 1910 and moved to the 'Accademia di Belle Arti Firenze' in Florence, where it was attacked by a man with a hammer in 1991 that cost the statue a toe from its left foot. But the cultural and iconic effect of the statue remains strong as many different copies have been produced and shown all around the world for its beauty and the symbolization of the defence and liberty.

'Fall of Man' is an engraving by the German artist Albrecht Dürer created in 1509 AD. Dürer, who was influenced by Italian theory of art, which is classified as the history of art through the 16th century AD, became interested in the perfect human form. He later published several books regarding the human measurements

and propitiations upon his much developed interest in human form. Dürer, who was strongly familiar with German humanists and Italian art, introduces the classical motifs into Northern art. His knowledge of mathematics, perspective and his vast understanding of the different art mediums make him the greatest artist of the Northern renaissance.

The Biblical scene of the Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden portrays a man and a woman in a symmetrical and idealized poses. This engraving was made from a drawing that Dürer saw prior to the year 1504 AD, the year he is believed to have become a master engraver. The classical story of the human sin is being engraved in a naturalistic landscape with a tone contrast, Gothic themes, iconic images and a humanistic style as part of the major characteristics of the Northern renaissance style. Dürer, who was a Roman Catholic, (it is clear from his writings that he was highly sympathetic to Martin Luther) manages to portrait a very detail picture of Adam and Eve as result of his serious human studies, published as 'Four Books on Measurement'. His Adam and Eve painting reflects his true character as being a theorist and a print maker and one of the greatest landscape designers throughout the history. From the symbolic point of view, four of the animals represent the

medieval idea of the four temperaments: 'the cat is choleric, the rabbit sanguine, the ox phlegmatic, and the elk melancholic'. Before the fall of Adam and Eve, these elements stay in place and in control by the innocence of man. Once Adam and Eve ate from the apple of knowledge, all four come to life and all innocence is lost.

Dürer's Adam and Eve are pictured in the contrapposto style similar to David by Michelangelo. Bent legs, slightly upward arms from the elbow and the body weight on one leg are much similar to David's symmetrical body shape, with his body weight dropped on one leg.

Dürer and Michelangelo were both fascinated and in a consistent search for the ultimate beauty and perfection in human form and proportions. Dürer's fascination by the renaissance art simply brings the two artists closer to one another in terms of style. The religious beliefs of both artists, drives them to work and explore the religious motives. Where Dürer chooses a biblical story, Michelangelo decides to sculpt David, the king of Israel, according to the same book, bible. Dürer's typical signature on the cartellino, where he uses Latin inscription for the first time, can be interpreted as him simply magnifying the fact that the picture is a direct projection of his personal

feelings and beliefs and not an outcome of a social practice. That approach brings him closer to Michelangelo, who portrays David as his own version of creation and beauty.

In terms of size and proportion both artists have an exaggerated view of the biblical characters. Michelangelo is portraying a handsome David with slightly bigger hands and a larger head than the natural human size, where Dürer pictures an Eve, who seems quite muscular. Dürer uses perspective in his making of Adam and Eve, where David of Michelangelo is also made in a certain perspective as if it was built for a certain location. Critics believe that since the statue was moved in 1873 AD, it will be difficult to identify the exact viewing angle that it was originally built for but apparently, David was crafted for a specific architectural location, perhaps to fit a buttress and to be viewed from the ground with.

Despite all similarities between the two art works, Dürer engraves the biblical story, where Michelangelo brings David to life as a sculpture. Dürer's symbolic and iconic look at the objects comes in contrast with Michelangelo's simplified yet glamorous portray of the human being. Dürer pays a consistent attention to proportions where Michelangelo is more considered with the

overall visual effect of the statue and its audience. David also is quite effeminate and it has a more romanticized posture than the masculine Adam or even Eve. And finally, where Dürer keeps his religious beliefs strong, Michelangelo has a distinct and erotic look at his own creation, David.