

The background of the cover is a reproduction of Michelangelo's famous fresco, 'The Fall of Man', from the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel. It depicts Adam reclining on the left, his body in a state of decay and weakness, while God on the right reaches across the vast space to breathe life into him. The composition is dynamic, with strong contrasts of light and shadow, emphasizing the physical forms of the figures.

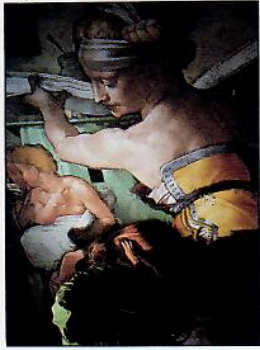
# art & man

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OF THE NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART

# MICHELANGELO

## WORKING WITH FIGURES





COVER: Restorer cleaning Michelangelo's Sistine Chapel ceiling. Copyright Nippon Television Network Corporation, Tokyo.

**art & man**

Maurice R. Robinson, founder of Scholastic, Inc., 1895-1982

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# THE WORLD'S MOST FAMOUS CEILING

The room pictured below left is one of the most famous places in the history of Western art. The entire ceiling and the wall in the back were painted

**Your first glimpse of the Sistine Chapel ceiling would look something like this.**

Michelangelo (1475-1564).  
The Sistine Chapel ceiling, 1508-12.  
Photo, Art Resource.

nearly 500 years ago by one man. In order to do this, the artist had to work bent over backwards while standing on a scaffold three stories above the ground. He worked alone, day and night, going without food and sleep for years until the ceiling was finished. Who was this artist and how did he get involved in such an overwhelming and demanding project?

During the 15th century in Europe, art and culture were going through a period of revival. This rebirth, known as the *Renaissance*, reached its height first in Italy. Pope Julius II wanted to make the city of Rome the art center of the world, so he began with his favorite chapel in the Vatican Palace. He had been hearing wonderful things about a young sculptor from the neighboring city of Florence, so in 1508 Julius sent for Michelangelo to deco-







rate the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel.

Many films, books, plays, and documentaries have been made about the way Pope Julius bullied and forced Michelangelo—who always insisted he was a sculptor and wasn't able to paint—to finish his ceiling. At one point Michelangelo was about to leave Rome. But when another artist said he was not able to paint *foreshortened* figures (like the one shown above) he decided to stay and prove he was also the greatest painter of the age. During the four years it took the artist to paint the nearly 350 giant figures that cover the ceiling, the chapel was locked and only the Pope was allowed inside. In the fall of 1512, the Sistine Chapel was opened and, as an eyewitness of the time said, "all Rome admired and crowded to see it." The sculptor who had said he couldn't paint had created one of the greatest paintings in the world.

***What is the man in the photo above doing and who is the painted figure?***

From the day it was finished, the Sistine Chapel was considered one of the greatest masterpieces in the world. However, the paintings were located not in a museum but on the walls and ceiling of a well-used room in a church. Over the centuries, they became covered with thick layers of dirt, smoke, and mold, and were further destroyed by bad "restorations." By 1980, many sections of the ceiling were so dark they couldn't be seen at all. For the past 10 years, restorers have carefully been removing every trace of grime, glue, varnish and paint, and uncovering the surprisingly brightly colored figures underneath. Today we can see the Sistine ceiling just as it appeared nearly five centuries ago, when Michelangelo painted his last figure. As one critic said when he first saw the completed restoration, "What they have done is to bring back a loved one whom you thought was gone forever."

**Restorers had to work just the way Michelangelo did.**

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**ART & MAN HAS RECEIVED THE 1991 GOLDEN LAMP AWARD, THE EDUCATIONAL PRESS ASSOCIATION'S HIGHEST AWARD FOR EXCELLENCE IN EDUCATIONAL PUBLISHING.**



**Michelangelo began all his paintings with figure sketches like these.**

Michelangelo (1475-1564). *Studies for the Libyan Sibyl*, 1511. Red chalk. Metropolitan Museum of Art, NY, NY.



# M CREATING A MASTERPIECE

Take a look at the ceiling up above you. Would it be hard to paint? What if it was four times as big, three stories higher and curved? And what if, instead of just painting it one basic flat color, you chose to cover the entire ceiling with figures and scenes?

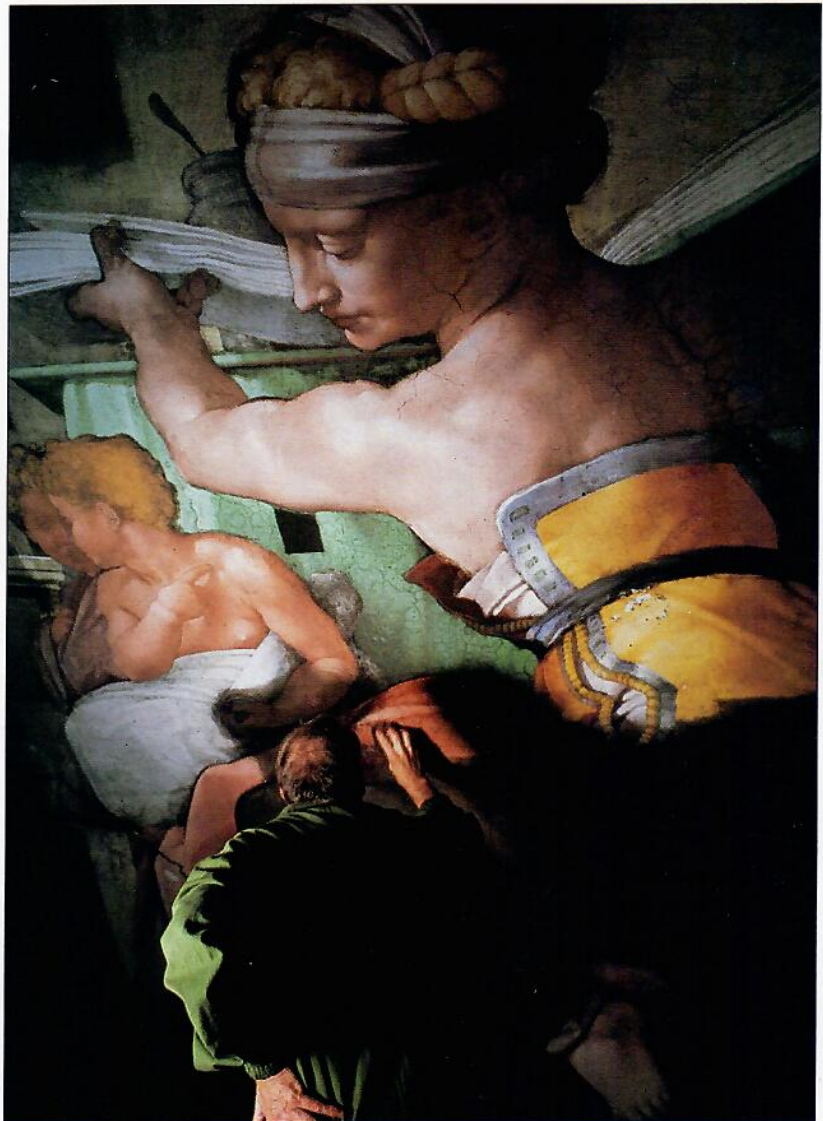
***How did Michelangelo create the Sistine Chapel ceiling?***

Renaissance artist Michelangelo was faced with these kinds of issues when he decided to paint the Sistine Chapel ceiling. First, he had to figure out how to deal with its unusual shape and the architectural features—doors, windows, arches—he would have to incorporate into his design. Much of the ceiling was broken up into smaller curved areas, so he decided to use each of these spaces to tell a separate Biblical story. While a huge scaffold was



The figure below is a *Sibyl*, a mythological being who could see into the future.

*The Libyan Sibyl*, 1511. Detail from the Sistine ceiling, The Vatican, Rome. Photo, Art Resource.



being built, the artist began to draw and plan. First he organized his **compositions**, then he filled his studio with models and drew them. He did quick, **action** drawings, **anatomical** drawings, **modeled** drawings (using shadows and highlights to make the figure look solid).

For example, in one part of the ceiling, Michelangelo wanted to have a figure turning away while holding a book in her hands. He posed models and made sketches (above, left). The toes and hands would become **focal points** of the composition, so he did details. The final, painted figure would be that of a woman, but Michelangelo was only able to get male models. In the detail of the head in the bottom left-hand corner of the drawing, you can see how the artist changed his model's face into that of a woman.

Since the ceiling was curved and would be seen from below, Michelangelo had to elongate the legs to compensate for the distortion. As you can see in the restored version (above,

right) he has exaggerated the **foreshortening** (the three-dimensional effect) of the figure. The **size** of the head "in front" is much larger than the small hand "in back."

Michelangelo painted the ceiling using *fresco*, a technique many Renaissance artists employed when decorating large interior areas. Once he had his overall plan, he began making large drawings to size. He climbed up the scaffolding, then covered an area of the ceiling above him with a thin layer of wet plaster. He pricked holes in one of the drawings and tapped charcoal dust through the holes to make guidelines. He then began painting on the wet plaster. As the paint and plaster dried, they became chemically bonded, and the final painting was almost indestructible. With *fresco*, Michelangelo had to judge how much wet plaster he would be able to paint that day. As he became used to the technique, he began painting figures directly on the plaster, without using any guidelines at all.

Compare the "new" restoration (above) with the "old" unrestored figure on the left.

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# MICHELANGELO REDISCOVERED

To

see how dramatic the recent restoration of the Sistine Chapel was, you only have to compare the “before” and “after” photos on the next page. Aside from the removal of the dirt, what is the major dif-

## MASTERPIECE OF THE MONTH

### Preview

ference? When they saw the restored ceiling for the first time, many people were surprised by the bright colors that the cleaning had revealed. As you can see in the large photo of the ceiling reproduced on the following two pages, the brilliant complementary (opposite) colors—pinks and greens, oranges and blues, golds and lavenders—can easily be seen from their height of four stories. The brightly clothed figures seated around the edges of the ceiling move the viewer’s eye into the composition’s focal point, the central panels.

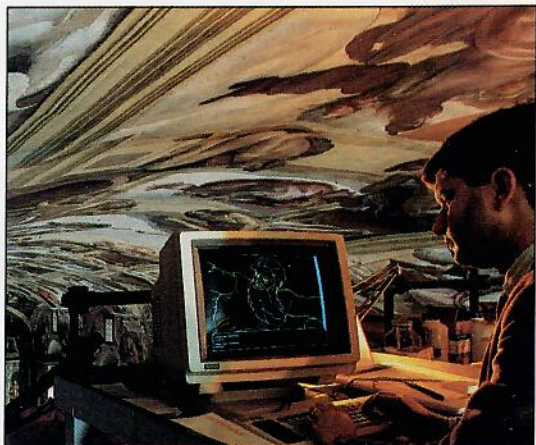
Michelangelo was most interested in depicting the human figure—all his sculptures are of single figures or groups. In the Sistine Chapel ceiling, he has used the human figure as a way to tell the Biblical story of the creation of the world. The artist told this story in nine panels, surrounded by a framework of individual figures from the Bible. These panels each tell a story and are set off visually from the outside figures by the bluish sky in the background.

When you look at pages 8-9, turn the magazine so the central scenes are right side up so you can “read” the story from bottom to top. Can you recognize the figure at the bottom? Compare him to the close-up photo on page 3 to get a sense of the scale of this work. In this panel, Michelangelo wanted to show God creating the world. (There are two more panels below this one, but they are covered by the restorers’ scaffold.) Now look at the panel directly above this one. Does it look familiar—especially the section that depicts two fingers

touching? The image of God (on the right) creating Adam, the first human being (on the left) has become one of the most famous in all art. In the panel above, Eve—the first woman—is created. And, above that scene, an angel banishes Adam and Eve from heaven. The next three panels have to do with Noah, the flood that covered the earth, and the boat Noah built to escape the flood.

If you look to the far right of the panel showing Adam and Eve being banished, you can see the two figures featured in the “before” and “after” photos on the right. Because they were located in the small, oddly shaped areas above the arched windows, Michelangelo had as much difficulty painting them as the restoration teams had restoring them. Before a section was cleaned, it was tested—infrared photos show the original painting while ultraviolet photos highlight only the brushstrokes done by later restorers. Cross sections of tiny samples of paint were magnified and dated to discover which layers were put on by Michelangelo and which by later painters. As the restoration progressed, computers recorded and mapped every piece of information. The actual cleaning process was relatively simple; it was done slowly and carefully by hand. A mild solvent was brushed onto a small area, let dry for three minutes, then washed away with a sponge. This process was so slow that it took a whole team of technicians more than twice as long to restore the Sistine ceiling as it took Michelangelo—working all alone—to paint it.





*How did modern computers help recreate an ancient masterpiece?*



The great contrast between the “before” photo on the right and the “after” photo of the same section, below, shows how centuries of dirt, soot, and varnish had hidden Michelangelo's Sistine ceiling.

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art & man

MASTERPIECE  
OF THE  
MONTH #1







Michelangelo (1475-1504), The Sistine Chapel ceiling (detail), 1508-12. Copyright Nippon Television Network Corporation, Tokyo.

# THE SISTINE CHAPEL CEILING BY MICHELANGELO

8-9 ART & MAN



# Painting People: Artists of different cultures painted people for a variety of reasons.



Many ancient Egyptian paintings told stories about gods and goddesses.

Egyptian wall painting—Theban tomb (detail). Dynasty 18 (1559-1320 B.C.) Metropolitan Museum of Art, NY, NY.

Some artists, like Charles White, have used their art to change social conditions.

Charles White (1918-1979), *The Contribution of the Negro to Democracy in America*, 1943. 11'9" x 17" Hampton Institute, VA.



## Ancient Stories

When you look at the Egyptian wall painting above, done more than 3,400 years ago, what is the first thing you notice about the people in it? The Egyptian king, or *Pharaoh*, was regarded as immortal and was considered to be the center of the universe. Since he was so much more important than everyone else shown in the painting, his figure—here seen spearing a fish—is much larger in scale.

The ancient Egyptians believed that the *soul* of a person existed within his/her artistic representation, endowing the image with everlasting life. All depictions of the figure had to be designed according to strict rules. Each figure had to be shown as fully as possible; a frontal view or a profile alone would not be enough. So Egyptian artists combined the two views and created a unique

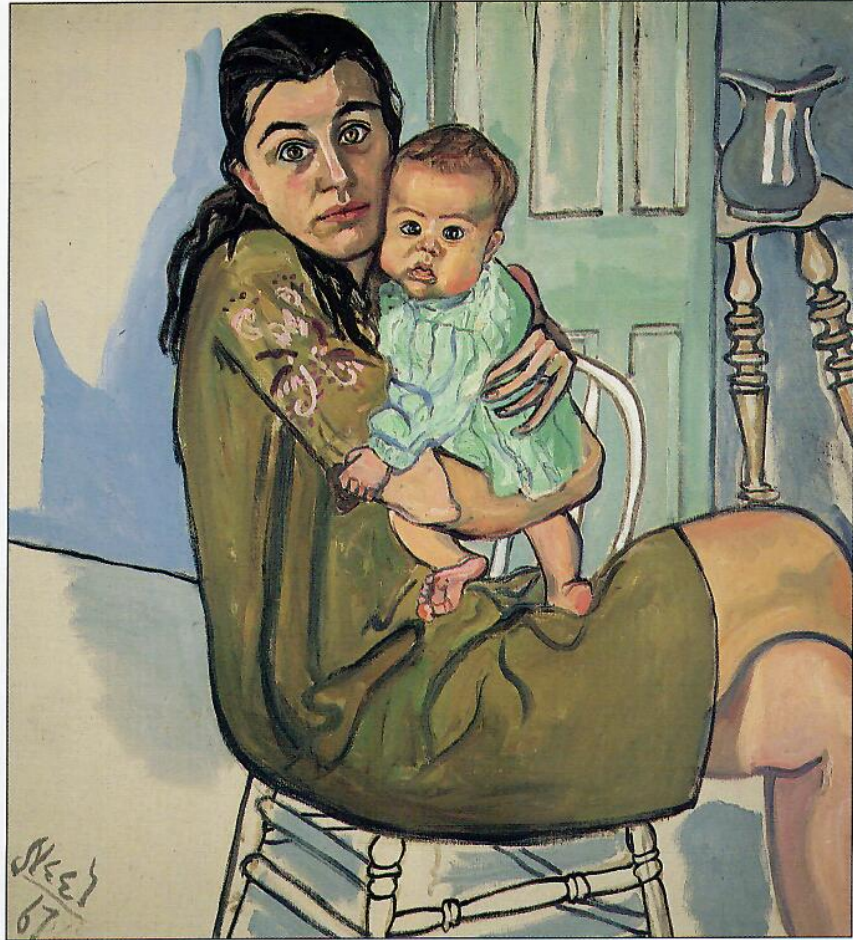
frontal style in which the shoulders and body are seen from the *front*, while the legs and feet are seen from the *side*. The head is shown in *profile* while the eye is drawn as it would look from the *front* (in order that the person might be able to “see”). The **simplified forms, flat or two-dimensional space, and the thin, even outlines** all give Egyptian art, like this watercolor painting, a very stylized appearance.



## Personalities in Paint

How do you think the young woman in the painting on the right is feeling about the baby she holds? Does she seem happy and confident? What clues does the artist give you?

This very emotional portrait, *Mother and Child*, was painted by modern American artist Alice Neel. Neel was more interested in revealing people's emotional states than in portraying the way they looked. This picture shows the artist's daughter-in-law huddled on one side of the canvas, clutching her squirming child. The quick, spontaneous brushwork as well as the subject's gestures and body language reveal her uncertainty. The unpainted areas of the canvas emphasize the woman's fragility. These areas also frame the focal point of the composition, the young mother's apprehensive eyes. Her placement, crammed to the right of the painting—in front of a cluttered room—may indicate that she feels trapped and overwhelmed with domestic details.



Why do you think Alice Neel, the artist who painted this picture, referred to herself as a “collector of souls”?

Alice Neel (1900-1984).  
*Mother and Child*, 1967. 42" x 34"  
Robert Miller Gallery NY, NY.



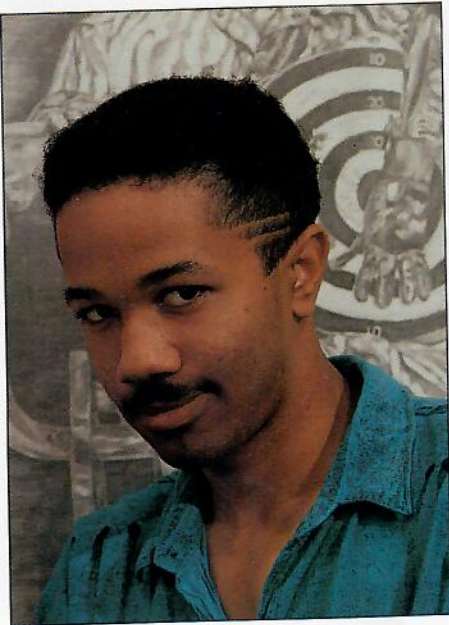
## Social Messages

Having grown up experiencing the loneliness and isolation of a black student in all-white schools, twentieth-century American artist Charles White wanted to visually express his feelings about African-American culture. As White put it, “Paint is the only weapon I have in which to fight what I resent. I am interested in creating a style of painting . . . that will say what I have to say.” The dominant theme running through the artist's work is the many contributions blacks have made to American culture. The painting at left, a large mural done for the Hampton Institute in Vir-

ginia, shows blacks in their various roles throughout American history—soldiers, workers, scientists, musicians, civic leaders. The overall collagelike pattern of simplified shapes in the painting sets up a visual rhythm. The repetition of oval heads, which change in scale, moves the viewer's eye around the multiple focal points. Organic (curved) shapes contrast and complement the geometric (straight) shapes. The crowded canvas filled with shapes, and the near-absence of rest areas, creates a sense of dynamic energy that seems almost to explode out of the frame.



# Keith Mason: PAINTING A PORTRAIT



Michelangelo painted life-size figures that reflected the people of his time. Sixteen-year-old Keith Mason has painted a self-portrait (right) of a modern teenager. What do you think is going on in this portrait? What mood is the artist trying to convey in this painting? What details tell you that the painting is contemporary?



Keith painted this Scholastic Art Award-winning work when he was a junior at Memphis Central High School in Memphis, Tennessee. Now a senior, Keith spends most of his time drawing, painting, studying, and running with his school's track and cross-country team. After he graduates, he plans to pursue a career in art or architecture.



■ **When did you first become involved in art?**

When I was in the fifth grade, I won first place in an art contest at school. I drew a flying owl in detail. Some people from a local college saw my work. They liked it so much they gave me a scholarship to take art courses that summer at their school. That inspired me and gave me confidence to get more serious about art.

■ **How did you happen to do this self-portrait?**

It was a project for art class. We had to go to the library and choose an artist we most admired. Then we had to do a self-portrait that would feature that artist's work in some way. I chose Monet (Mo-NAY: a nineteenth-century French painter). I love how he works with detail and composition.

■ **In this self-portrait, is the man in the book Monet?**

Yes, the picture is his self-portrait. In my self-portrait, I'm looking into a mirror in my room. I'm taking Monet's image and comparing it to my teenage image today. He had on his jacket, I wore my Nike jacket. He had his brush, I had my paint brush. He wore a hat, I wore my cap—sideways.

■ **Was there a mood you were trying to convey?**

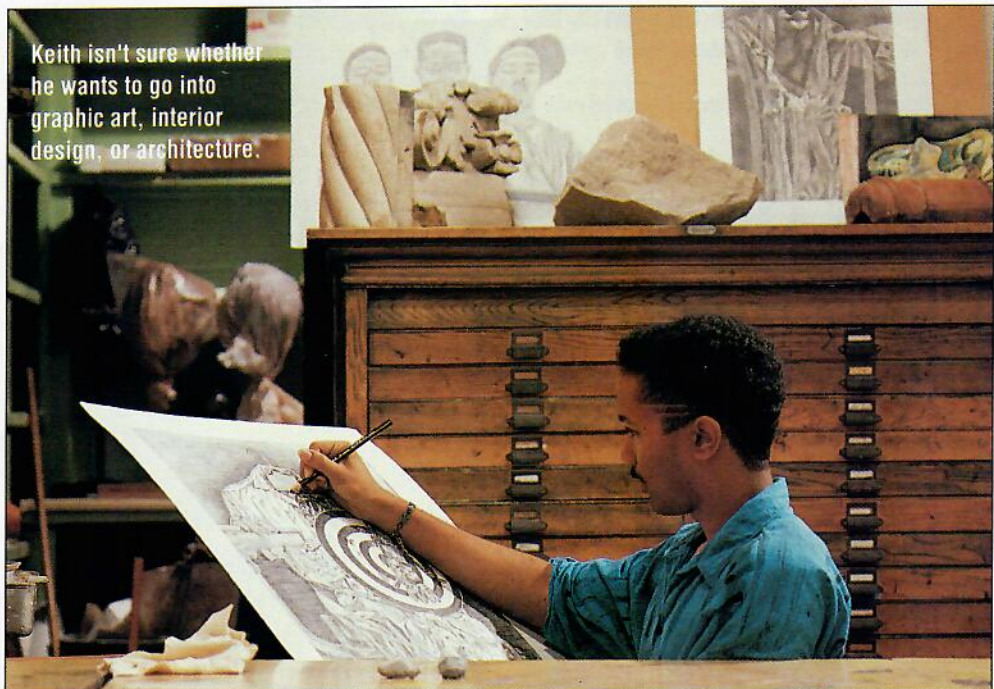
Monet in his self-portrait wasn't looking too happy. In my painting, I look disturbed. I wanted to show the physical side of Keith Mason. My tough side.

■ **How did you get the idea for your painting?**

I didn't have a lot of time to paint, so my idea was to do a simple straightforward portrait. I'm standing up with the art book, concentrating on getting it done. I didn't want to set up anything complicated.

■ **How did you proceed?**

First, I did a preliminary sketch



to make sure everything fit into place. I drew two lines to place my own figure, large, right in the center of the composition. And I drew two lines for the mirror plus a circle for my head, slightly cropped at the top to fill the page. Then I just began painting with my watercolors. I worked on my body from left to right. Usually, I start with the head. But my jacket was so colorful I started with that first. My head and face came last.

■ **What came next?**

I had no idea what the background was going to be until I got through with the figure. I decided fabric would be the best thing to use as a background, so the figure would stand out. I draped some cloth in back and put some more on the dresser. Then I put the open book on top. I chose a neutral shade. I didn't want anything to take away from the main focus of the painting—me. Last, I added detail to the jacket, the face, the book and the fabric behind. I love detail. That's my style. I think it makes my figures look more lifelike.

■ **How long did all this take?**

About two days. I started on

Sunday morning and finished late Monday night.

■ **Were you pleased with the finished product?**

I was pleased, since this was one of my first paintings. But I wasn't really amazed. Then I brought my family to look at it, and they really liked it. That boosted my ego. Sometimes you have to walk out of the room and then come back and look at your work with someone else. You'll see things differently.

■ **Do you do a lot of figure drawing?**

Yes, I do. I love drawing portraits of people or things that symbolize life—like hands, feet, clothing or animals. I've worked mainly with pencil because I can get more detail than you can with color. This year, I plan to work a lot with other things like paint and markers to get more variety in my portfolio.

■ **What makes you keep on doing art?**

It's fun to paint things, sketch out things as you see them. I find it fascinating to capture things on paper. Especially when it turns out exactly the way I want it to.

*I find it fascinating to capture things on paper. Especially when it turns out exactly the way I want it to.*

**We select our Artist of the Month only from among students who have won medals in the current Scholastic Art Awards Program. To enter, ask your teacher to write to the Scholastic Art Awards, 730 Broadway, New York, NY 10003 for entry deadlines and rules books.**



# DRAWING MOVING FIGURES

Create your own "Renaissance" figure drawing.



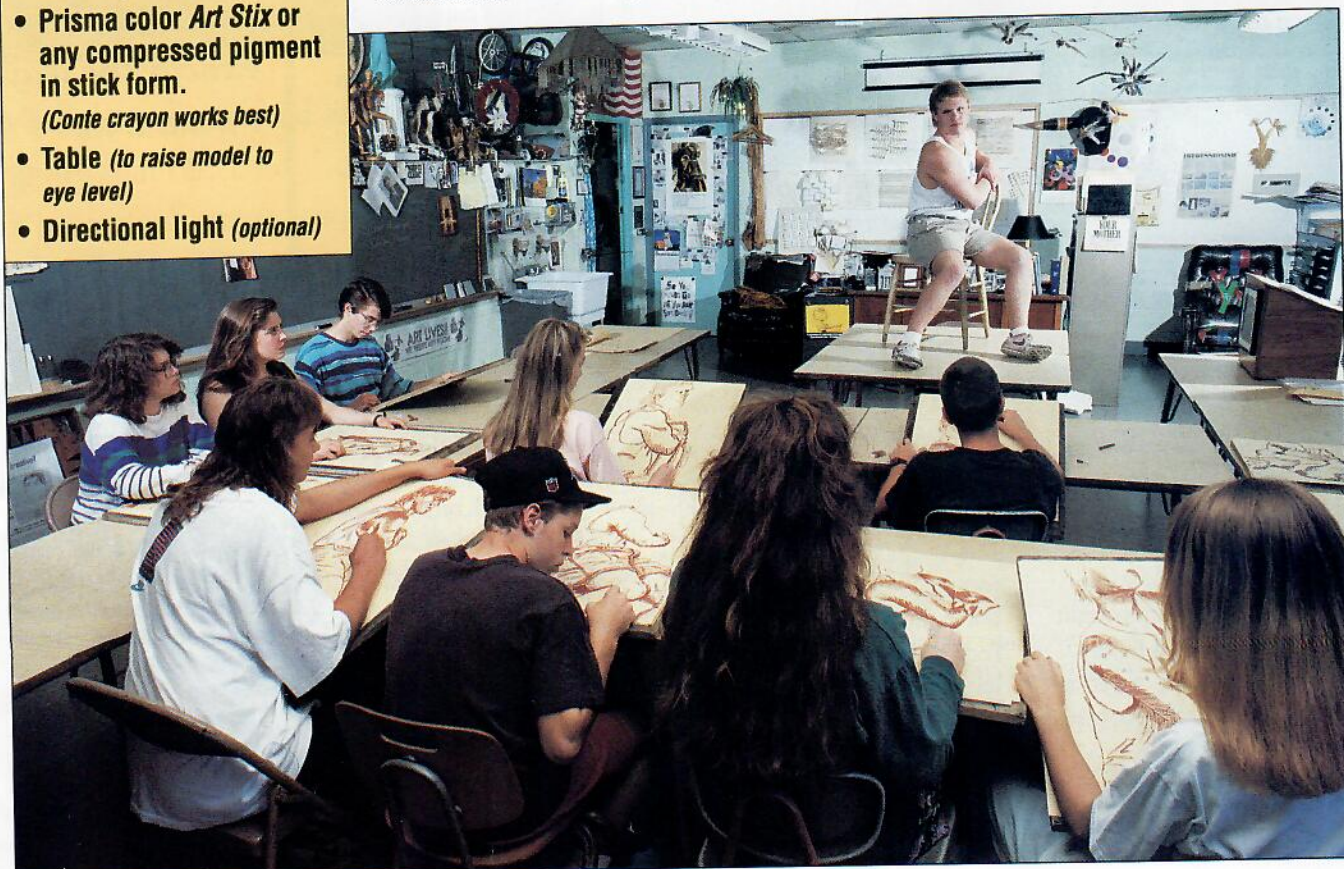
## Materials

- 18" x 24" 80lb manila paper
- Drawing board
- Prisma color Art Stix or any compressed pigment in stick form.  
(Conte crayon works best)
- Table (to raise model to eye level)
- Directional light (optional)

Earlier in the issue you saw how Renaissance artist Michelangelo used the human figure in his creation of the Sistine Chapel ceiling. No matter how complex the whole composition looks, every figure in this ceiling was based on sketches done from models. To achieve his dramatic effects, Michelangelo painted his figures in very active poses. The twisting, turning, and gesturing figures were shown from all angles and they symbolize nearly every human emotion. In this workshop, you'll learn several of the drawing techniques Michelangelo and other Renaissance artists used to capture their lifelike, very "real" looking figures.

To do this workshop, you'll need to select a model who can hold a pose for several minutes at a time.

Prepared by Ned J. Nesti Jr., Morrison (IL) High School.  
Assisted by Shad White. Photos by Larry Gregory.







Can you find a *gesture drawing*, a *contour drawing*, and a *modeled drawing*?

(1) Irene Feltes (2) Amanda Grove (3) Scott Pruis

### Starting Out

Step 1. Model, placed on platform set slightly above eye level, begins by taking 10 short, dramatic, active one-minute poses. (Model can take sports poses such as throwing, batting, boxing, bowling, kicking, etc.) Complete 10 **gesture drawings** of the full figure, quickly capturing the *overall movement*. Keep drawings free and loose. Use correct proportions. Can use flat side of crayon or stick.

### Step 2

Model takes a dynamic, expressive **foreshortened** (Part of the figure is coming toward or going away from the viewer.) two-to-five-minute pose. This time do a **contour drawing**, focusing on the *outside edges* of the figure. The parts of the figure that are closer are **larger, darker, and more detailed**; those that are farther away are **smaller, lighter, and simpler**.

### Step 3

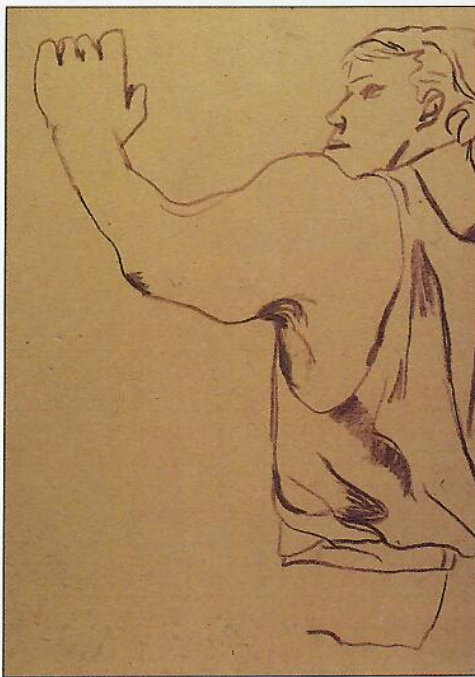
Model takes a more relaxed pose for a final 12-minute contour drawing. **Modeling** the light and dark areas by *shading, hatching, or crosshatching* will make your drawing seem more three-dimensional. Use **dark, thick lines** to show confidence or indicate areas that support weight.

### Some Solutions

Which of the drawings shown on these two pages is a quick-gesture drawing that captures the movement, pose, position, and proportions of the figure? Which is a simple **contour drawing**, **cropped** and slightly **foreshortened** to emphasize the movement of one arm? Which is a more finished **modeled con-**



1



2

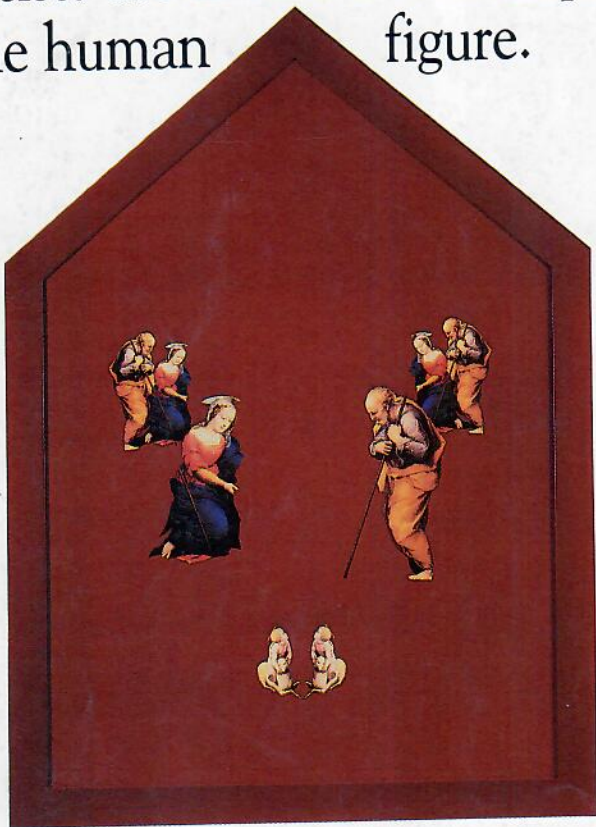
3



**tour drawing**, slightly **foreshortened**? In this work, the **solid dark areas** and **white highlights** emphasize the part of the figure that appears to project toward the viewer. Which of these artists has used **thick** or **thin, light** or **heavy lines**? Have any used **hatching** or **cross-hatching** to indicate volume?



These two contemporary American artists use modern techniques to portray the human figure.



### Figures Transformed

Contemporary artist Sarah Charlesworth uses Renaissance figures in new ways. She enlarges, cuts, isolates, regroups, and repeats her images to give them an entirely different meaning from the originals.

In *Ego Altar*, her photo-collage on the left, Charlesworth uses images from a Renaissance painting of The Holy Family. She has repeated and flopped these images. The title of this work is a play on words. If *ego* means one's self, *alterego* means another self, and an *altar* is a sacred place, then what might *Ego Altar* (spelled with an A) mean? The mother and father's attention is totally focused on the child, while the child at the bottom—whose mirror-im-

ages gaze at each other—is totally focused on him/herself. The symmetrical composition (the same on each side, but mirrored), the triangular frame, and the solid red background all give this work a Renaissance sense of harmony. Sarah Charlesworth's use of perfect idealized Renaissance figures contrasts with her message about modern self-involvement.

**In her collages, Sarah Charlesworth uses Renaissance images to make statements about contemporary life.**

Sarah Charlesworth, *Ego Altar*, 1991. Laminated cibachrome. 63" x 45 1/4" Jay Gorney Modern Art, NY, NY.

### Unexpected Art

Los Angeles, noted for its miles of roads called freeways, is an ideal setting for elaborate, hand-painted billboards. The painting on the right, located beside a freeway near the Los Angeles airport, is seen by every motorist who drives by. Like Michelangelo's frescos, this art is public—it is meant for everyone. And, although at first it appears to be a pitch for running gear or a quick-energy sports drink, *Marathon Runners* is not an ad. It is an enormous outdoor mural done by contemporary American artist Kent Twitchell.

Twitchell specializes in large, superrealistic paintings of human figures. These runners



were painted on huge acrylic sheets, which were then bonded to a concrete wall. Although Twitchell is not a commercial billboard painter, his works resemble eye-catching billboard art. Like Michelangelo's figures,

the huge scale, bold colors, and monumentalized, lifelike figures in *Marathon Runners* can easily be seen from a great distance. The runners appear to burst out of the 236x18-foot wall right onto the freeway.

**Compare the figures in the mural above with those you saw earlier in the issue.**

Kent Twitchell, *Marathon Runners*, 1990. Photo by Rob Lewine.