

# National Gallery of Art

## NEWS RELEASE

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### EXTRAORDINARY DRAWINGS FROM WINDSOR CASTLE

### BY MICHELANGELO AND THOSE HE INFLUENCED,

### AT THE NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART, OCTOBER 27, 1996

WASHINGTON, D.C. -- Michelangelo's power as a draftsman and interpreter of the human form, and his profound impact on artists are illustrated in Michelangelo and His Influence: Drawings from Windsor Castle, on view at the National Gallery of Art, October 27, 1996 through January 5, 1997.

Drawings by Michelangelo are rare in the United States, where there are fewer than ten examples. This exhibition presents eighteen sheets -- a total of twenty-two drawings -- by Michelangelo, including supreme examples of his draftsmanship. Fifty-one drawings by his contemporaries and successors in his native Florence and in Rome reveal the master's impact on their technique, style, and imagery. Raphael, Sebastiano del Piombo, Perino del Vaga, Pordenone, and Annibale Carracci are among the artists represented in the show.

The drawings in the exhibition have been lent from the Royal Library by Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II and have been in the Royal Collection at Windsor Castle since the reign of King George III (1760-1820).

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The exhibition was organized by the Royal Library, Windsor Castle, in association with the National Gallery of Art, Washington; the Kimbell Art Museum, Fort Worth, where it will be on view from January 19 through March 30, 1997; and The Art Institute of Chicago, where it will be seen from April 12 through June 22, 1997. The exhibition is supported by an indemnity from the Federal Council on the Arts and Humanities.

"This exhibition reveals how artists both during and after Michelangelo's lifetime have attempted to emulate the grandeur, dynamism, and spiritual energy of the figures in his drawings," said Earl A. Powell III, director, National Gallery of Art. "We are grateful to Her Majesty for making it possible."

Michelangelo (1475-1564), whose active career as a painter, sculptor, architect, and poet lasted over three-quarters of a century, is universally acknowledged as one of the greatest artists of all time. He described drawing as the "fount and body of painting and sculpture and architecture...and the root of all sciences."

Michelangelo regularly dismissed assistants and never maintained a large workshop. Many of his most ambitious projects, such as his paintings for the Sistine Chapel in the Vatican, were not easily accessible to other artists. Therefore his influence initially spread largely through the drawings he gave to friends. By the 1540s, engravings after Michelangelo's paintings and drawings, as well as small plaster or wax copies of his marble sculpture, began to circulate. As the drawings in this exhibition from the sixteenth century and beginning of the seventeenth century demonstrate, some artists made sensitive, accurate copies of Michelangelo's work, while others freely adapted his

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designs for their own interpretive purposes. Before Michelangelo died, most of his presentation drawings, many of his works of sculpture, and The Last Judgment were reproduced and distributed widely as prints. They became valuable collectors' items and influenced artists for centuries.

Michelangelo's drawings selected for the show include quick sketches, studies related to painting or sculpture, and finished works of art that he presented as gifts to his friends. Prime examples of the master's influence are the drawings inspired by his complex studies for the ceiling and the altar wall (The Last Judgment) of the Sistine Chapel. Another example, by his rival Raphael, is Hercules and the Hydra (c. 1507), which reflects Raphael's early fascination with the muscularity and vigor of Michelangelo's figures in many drawings and works of sculpture. Bernardino Cesari's red chalk drawing The Archers (c. 1600?) is a copy of Michelangelo's drawing by the same name created some seventy years earlier.

The drawings are organized in nine sections: Ideal Heads; Presentation Drawings: Mythologies; Presentation Drawings: The Sacred; Pen Drawings; The Expressive Nude in Chalk; Studies after Michelangelo's Sculpture; The Effect of the Sistine Ceiling; The Last Judgment and Its Impact; and The Effect of the Pauline Chapel.

The coordinating curator for the exhibition in Washington is Andrew Robison, Andrew W. Mellon Senior Curator, National Gallery of Art. The fully illustrated 216-page catalogue, Michelangelo and His Influence: Drawings from Windsor Castle, was

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published by the National Gallery of Art, Washington, and Lund Humphries Publishers, London. It was written by Paul Joannides, fellow of Clare Hall and lecturer in the history of art at the University of Cambridge, with an essay on provenance by Martin Clayton, assistant curator of the Print Room at Windsor Castle. The exhibition catalogue is available at the National Gallery of Art Shops, through its mail order department by calling (301) 322-5900, or from Antique Collectors' Club of Wappingers Falls, N.Y.

The National Gallery of Art, located on Constitution Avenue between Third and Seventh Streets, NW, is open Monday through Saturday from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. and Sunday from 11 a.m. to 6 p.m. Admission is free of charge. For general information, call (202) 737-4215, or the Telecommunications Device for the Deaf (TDD), weekdays from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., at (202) 842-6176.

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