Utah Valley University | Department of Art & Design

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ARTEMISIA

An Undergraduate Journal for Art History Research and Criticism

UVU Department of ART & DESIGN
UTAH VALLEY UNIVERSITY

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Cover Design by Howard Fullmer

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SUBMISSION GUIDELINES

Content for Research Papers: If you wish to submit a research paper for a future edition, consider what is original to that paper. Research papers, done in the compressed time of an academic semester, tend to be critical summaries of what others have said on a topic—and that's perfectly fine. For *Artemisia*, however, papers should go a step or two beyond. Students submitting a research paper should ask themselves what they see as being *original* or in some way a *contribution* to what is known about the topic. "Original" and "contribution" do not necessarily imply brand new research; that type of originality is what would be expected for a thesis or dissertation at the graduate-school level. For this journal, originality should be thought of as perhaps applying a fresh methodological approach to a familiar topic, asking a new question, arguing a point, and so forth. Originality in research means what you are doing is from your own perspective although you are drawing arguments from other scholars' research to support your arguments.

Format: Papers should be 10–12 double-spaced pages in length, and should include footnotes and works cited page in correct Chicago Manual of Style format.

***Content for Exposés*:** Topics for exposés should be based on your personal engagement with the visual arts. We would welcome a formal analysis of a favorite painting, an anecdote about an experience you had during an internship or study abroad, a personal essay about how your life has been affected by art, a review of an art exhibition you attended, your response to current practices in museum work or art education, a review of a book or film on an art historical topic, an essay describing your observations about connections between art and other professions or fields of study, etc. There is no limit to the possible subjects for you to consider. We want to hear your voice, your opinions, and your experiences.

Format: Entries should be 1–4 double-spaced pages in length. If possible, include an image related to your experience.

FROM THE EDITORS — *DEAR READER*

The editors of *Artemisia* Spring 2021 would like to acknowledge the contributions of faculty, authors, and our fellow editors for making this first edition of *Artemisia* a success. Many thanks go out to our faculty advisors, Dr. Steven Bule and Dr. Charlotte Poulton, who offered constant support, expertise, and long hours of extra work for this project. Along with our Department Chair, Professor Courtney Davis, these faculty provided the enthusiasm, knowledge, and confidence crucial for the journal's development. We appreciate the support of all Art History faculty at UVU for letting us advertise to their classes, especially while acclimating to a virtual format this year. Among other benefits—such as honing writing, collaboration, and critical thinking skills—participating in *Artemisia* offers a wonderful opportunity to get to know and learn from faculty dedicated to student success and Art History at UVU.

We'd also like to thank those who submitted and worked with us as authors. Our authors put in many hours and worked patiently with us through every phase of the editing process to produce valuable contributions to this edition! For those interested in being editors: in addition to this fun, academically valuable experience, participation in *Artemisia* offers opportunities for main editors to receive university credit. The names of volunteer editors who put in a certain amount of work are listed in this publication as well.

Our aim from the start was to create more extracurricular and academically-rigorous opportunities for art history students at UVU, and to provide a taste of the editing and publishing process. Thanks to everyone involved, we believe we achieved our goals with this first edition! We hope that UVU students will continue to engage with the history and critical analysis of the arts we love! *Artemisia* proudly presents this original student content. Happy reading!

Sincerely,
Artemisia 2021 Student Editors
Sophie Stephens, Alex Coberly, Chelsea Davis, Chloe Hunter

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ART HISTORY AND UVU

Art history: the combining of a love for the art object with a passion to investigate the broader context in which it was produced. Art history is, without question, one of the most interdisciplinary pursuits in the academic world. It often involves digging deeply into the religious, political, philosophical, and cultural developments of a time and place. It may consider issues related to race, gender, and ethnicity. Considering the art object in terms of the artist's biography or when applying a psychoanalytical approach to better understand the artist are also avenues the art historian often pursues. Art history frequently connects with other art forms such as literature, dance, theater, and music. When analyzing a work of art, the art historian may analyze the work by focusing on its stylistic features or perhaps through the work's symbolism. In short, art history is thrilling!

We're happy to report that the Art History program at UVU is healthy and thriving. Dedicated faculty, varied course offerings, and enthusiastic students are appropriate descriptors for the program. It is exciting to introduce this inaugural volume of *Artemisia, An Undergraduate Journal for Art History Research and Criticism*. Many hours and a great deal of work have gone into preparing this journal. The idea for a journal featuring the writings of students was first expressed by one of our senior art history students, Sophie Stephens, in Fall semester 2020. Sophie's experiences with *Essais*, the English department's journal, inspired her to consider something similar for art history students. Two months of intense planning followed that initial proposal, during which time a preliminary timeline grew. By the beginning of Spring semester 2021, the timeline was in place and a main editing group of art history majors was formed. Our thanks to Sophie for her energy and dedication in seeing her idea become a reality. Those who have served as main editors, whose names are listed in this volume, have also put in a great deal of time and their efforts are very much appreciated. Also included in this volume are the names of students who volunteered to help with various editing duties. We extend our thanks to them and to all who have contributed to this first publication.

THE HISTORY OF ART HISTORY

While art history at UVU is in its infancy, the roots of art history go back over two millennia. The earliest known writing on art that can be considered art history are sections from Pliny the Elder's *Natural History* (c. AD 77–79). This work includes commentary on the development of Greek painting and sculpture, and, it has been noted by scholars, appears to have been influenced by the Greek sculptor and art critic Xenokrates of Sicyon (c. 280 BC), who is considered one of the first art historians. Pliny's impact on the Renaissance was immense, especially for Giorgio Vasari's multi-volume *Lives of the Most Excellent Painters, Sculptors, and Architects*, published in 1550 (enlarged and revised in 1568). Regarded as the first true history of art, Vasari's *Lives* was enormously influential and served as a model for many subsequent studies, including seminal art histories published in the seventeenth century by Italian and Northern European writers.

Increased interest in critical theories and the collecting of art as well as a renewed interest in classical antiquity—inspired by a number of archeological discoveries in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries—resulted in an explosion of art historical publications, most notably by Johann Winckelmann, Jacob Burckhardt, Heinrich Wölfflin, and John Ruskin. American universities and colleges reacted to these intellectual developments in Europe and soon added art history classes to their curriculum. Among the earliest institutions to offer courses in the history of art are Harvard (1874), Wellesley (1877), and Princeton (1883). Wellesley, a private women's liberal arts college outside Boston, created an Art History Department in 1887 and, in 1900, became the first American college or university to offer an Art History major.

ART AND ART HISTORY AT UVU

The emergence of a visual arts program at UVU is a fascinating story that begins very humbly more than four decades ago. Remarkably, from those modest beginnings, the art department has become the largest in Utah. Art history classes were first taught in the early 1980s at what was then Utah Technical College. These included one class in art appreciation and two survey classes of Western art and architecture. In 1987, Professor Bob deWitt, who began teaching studio and art

history classes part-time a few years earlier, became UTC's *only* full-time instructor of art. Bob's teaching load was very heavy with studio classes as well as classes in art appreciation and art history. Not long after, the administration decided to move the graphics and commercial art vocational program from the UTC Provo campus to the Orem campus and combine course offerings with classes taught in fine art and art history. Housed in the newly constructed Gunther Trades Building, the combined programs became the Department of Art and Visual Communications. As the department vigorously grew over the next decade, the number of full-time art faculty nearly quadrupled.

During this period of unprecedented growth, the institution transitioned from a community college to a four-year state college. In 1999, Dr. Steven Bule came to Utah Valley State College from BYU, and was given a split teaching assignment between the Philosophy/Humanities and Art Departments. When his assignment became full-time within the art department, in 2004, new art history courses were immediately added. The first upper-division classes taught were Italian Renaissance and Southern Baroque Art and Architecture.

With the addition of Professor Courtney Davis as a full-time lecturer, in 2007, art history experienced steady growth and increased popularity among students. A year later, when Utah Valley State College became Utah Valley University (2008), the time was right to expand the number of art history courses within the curriculum and consider offering two- and four-year degrees. The year 2013 proved to be a milestone for art history at UVU. Prof. Davis's position became permanent and she was appointed an assistant professor. Soon after, and with considerable preparation and planning, an art history minor was added. The popularity of the minor was a key in the creation of a BA degree in Art History, in 2015. At that time, the first upper-division art history seminars were offered: one dedicated to the art and life of Michelangelo and another focused on Caravaggio. Additional seminars, centered around the scholarly interests of the faculty, have provided variety to the expanding course offerings with topics such as "The Age of Napoleon," "Women in Art," and "Art and Music."

The Art History program's success is a product of excellent instructors added over the past few years. Dr. Travis Clark became a full-time instructor in 2018 and

offered the first non-Western art history courses to the program. In addition, dedicated adjunct faculty have contributed a great deal to art history at UVU; these include Dr. Charlotte Poulton, Dr. Rita Wright, and Professors Angela Wescott, Tonya Bassett, Kathleen Shaw, and Cheri Eppich Pitcher. Enrollments in art history courses each semester are robust with over 650 students taking survey and upper-division classes. Summer term enrollments bring that number, per year, to over 1,400. With the addition of Art 1010 (Introduction to Art), the total number of students enrolled jumps to over 2,300 in an academic year. These impressive numbers confirm that Art History at UVU is alive and well!

WE ARE ENGAGED

In support of Utah Valley University's emphasis on engaged and experiential teaching and learning, the art history program provides exciting and meaningful opportunities that engage students and faculty. One of those is the opportunity to travel. Years ago, in addition to his many teaching responsibilities, Professor deWitt offered an unofficial, art-history-based, summer travel-abroad opportunity for students. This continued until 2002 when Dr. Bule directed the department's first academic study abroad program, which included 14 students. Since that 2002 group, he has directed seventeen programs and taken over 300 students to study art and architecture in Italy. In addition, Professor Davis has directed three study abroad programs, which were centered in London and Paris. Other art history-sponsored activities include the biennial art history symposium created by Prof. Davis in 2010 (a forum for faculty and students to present their research), lectures by invited guest scholars, and, most recently, *Artemisia, An Undergraduate Journal for Art History Research and Criticism.*

We're happy to report that a growing number of students who have graduated in art history from UVU have gone on to graduate programs, internships in the arts, and museum/gallery jobs locally and out-of-state. We hope to add in the future an "Alumni" feature on the department's web page to highlight the activities of our graduated students. Additional exciting news we want to pass on is that two of our current art history students recently have had their research recognized. Alex Coberly's paper "Reimaging Saint Francis in Art: Caravaggio's *Saint Francis in Ecstasy*" and Sophie Stephens' paper "Canvas to Creator: The Aesthetic Ecology of

Early Female Land Artists" were accepted for presentation by the Utah Council of Undergraduate Research and by the National Council of Undergraduate Research. Congratulations to them both.

ARTEMISIA

The name of the journal, *Artemisia*, is evocative for all of us who are students of art history, and pays homage to Artemisia Gentileschi (1593–c. 1656)—one of the great painters of the Italian Baroque. During a time when opportunities for women to receive artistic training or work as professional artists were few, Artemisia rose to international fame and was the first woman to become a member of the Florentine Accademia delle Arti del Disegno. Among her clients were King Philip IV of Spain and the Grand Duke of Tuscany. While not the only noteworthy female artist of her time, she remains one of the most highly regarded women artists in history. Artemisia represents more than superior artistic talent—she also exemplifies determination and fortitude. The choice of Artemisia for the name of this journal is an appropriate tribute to the artist and her legacy of courage and tenacity.

We've all experienced monumental changes in teaching and learning since the pandemic first hit last Spring 2020. *Artemisia* comes at a perfect time when we are missing connections and interactions we've enjoyed in the past. It is hoped the articles included in *Artemisia* will encourage feedback and discussion, and that the exposés, which allow students to share personal experiences, will likewise stimulate reflection and further engagement with the visual arts.

As we celebrate Art History at UVU through this first volume of *Artemisia*, it is important to note that the journal's future is based on student involvement. We encourage you to become involved in future volumes either as part of the editorial team or by submitting a paper or exposé for publication. Finally, we hope *Artemisia* the journal will be inspirational as Artemisia the artist continues to inspire.

Dr. Steven Bule
Dr. Charlotte Poulton

A WORD ABOUT THE FIRST EDITION

The call for submissions for this first edition of *Artemisia* came in January, only a few months before the April publication date. Consequently, students had little time to prepare papers and essays for submissions. Of the handful of items that were received, few were sufficiently ready for publication. Readers will notice that Alex Coberly is listed as one of the journal's main editors and his paper on Caravaggio's *St Francis in Ecstasy* is included in this publication. A last-second challenge required the editorial board to find an additional article that was sufficiently ready for publication. Since Alex's paper was original, polished, and has been presented at two conferences, it was able to fill that void. We appreciate his willingness to prepare his paper in quick order for publication here.

As we plan for the second edition, to be published in April 2022, we invite students who wish to submit a manuscript for possible inclusion to plan ahead and refine papers they are presently writing or will write next Fall semester. See "Submission Guidelines" listed above for specific requirements.

MICHELANGELO'S *LAST JUDGMENT* AS A DISPLAY OF PAPAL POWER

Nikkole Weber

The Sistine Chapel, located in Vatican City, stands as one of most important chapels in the Catholic Church. Officially referred to as a "Papal Chapel", the Sistine's primary function was that of a private chapel for the pope and his closest associates. Pope Sixtus IV, for whom the chapel is named, had the chapel built between 1473–1481 as a replacement for an earlier chapel that had fallen into disrepair. Shortly after the chapel's completion, frescoes were commissioned by the pope to decorate the chapel's side walls with scenes of the Life of Moses and the Life of Christ. Among the artists working on these frescoes were the leading painters of the time: Botticelli, Perugino, Ghirlandaio, and others. Pope Sixtus celebrated the first mass in the chapel on 15 August 1483, the Feast of the Assumption, and during this ceremony the chapel was consecrated and dedicated to the Virgin Mary. Presumably, Perugino's fresco of the *Assumption of the Virgin*, which adorned the wall behind the altar, was completed in time for the chapel's consecration. While the subject of Perugino's fresco was fitting for the chapel dedicated to the Virgin, this work and others were eventually removed to make way for Michelangelo's *Last Judgment.*

INTRODUCTION

Millions of visitors crowd into the Sistine Chapel each year and are overwhelmed by the richness of the frescoes, especially Michelangelo's massive fresco cycle on the ceiling and his colossal *Last Judgment* (Fig. 1) placed on the wall behind the altar. The *Last Judgment* is unexpected both for its powerful portrayal of the human figure as well as for the aggressive way in which Christ's final judgment is depicted.[1] Executed between the devastation of the Sack of Rome (1527) and the beginning of the Council of Trent (1545), Michelangelo's *Last Judgment* is unique in its location behind the altar and for the aggressive manner in which the subject is portrayed. This paper will discuss Michelangelo's *Last Judgment* within the

[1] For detailed studies on Michelangelo's *Last Judgment* see: James A. Connor, *The Last Judgment: Michelangelo and the Death of the Renaissance* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009); Marcia Hall, ed., *Michelangelo's Last Judgment* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005); Loren Partridge, *Michelangelo, The Last Judgment: A Glorious Restoration* (New York: Abrams, 1997).

broader context of the religious complexities of the period. The choice of subject and its depiction will be examined as a reaffirmation of Catholic doctrine and as a response to the turmoil brought on by the Reformation. In addition, the fresco will be discussed as a statement by the papacy to remind the world of the pope's power and role during the final judgment. Aspects of the fresco's iconography will also be reviewed to aid in understanding the complex composition while comparing the subject matter of Last Judgments in the past to Michelangelo's altar wall. Lastly, this paper will explore the reception of the fresco by Michelangelo's detractors as well as the Council of Trent's use of the work as an example of inappropriate depictions of sacred images.

The Last Judgment is an immense fresco with over three hundred barely clothed figures in varying poses and gestures. Christ, with rippling muscles and dynamic movement, appears more Herculean than the more traditional Lamb of God. Wingless angels float and glide through the composition while grotesque and menacing demons draw the viewer to the faces of pain and defeat of the damned. One can sense this is not a typical depiction of this subject. Its placement is also unexpected as Last Judgment scenes are traditionally reserved for the interior wall of a chapel's entrance. The sacred area behind the altar was reserved for images that focused on the mystery of Christ's death and resurrection, and whose symbolism was connected to the significance of the eucharist that was prepared and administered in front of the artwork on the altar table.

Over a five-year period, in the same chapel where twenty-five years earlier he had completed the frescoes on the ceiling, Michelangelo introduced a radical image in a location that was not at all typical. The Renaissance's optimistic vision of mankind that was prevalent when he painted the ceiling from 1508-1512 had been replaced with an atmosphere of contention and doubt that questioned papal authority and church doctrine. The changes that had taken place throughout Europe, especially in Italy, were catastrophic and cataclysmic. The outlook for the future during the 1530s seemed apocalyptic, and Michelangelo's *Last Judgment* portrays the extreme drama and pathos of the times.

THE COMMISSION

Michelangelo's talents were recognized by a number of popes, beginning with Pope Julius II, around 1506. Following the completion of the Sistine Chapel's ceiling, in 1512, successors of Julius II sought to retain the artist on an almost exclusive basis. In 1523, Giulio de Medici, a childhood friend of Michelangelo from Florence, was elected Pope Clement VII. Clement, while a cardinal, had earlier commissioned a number of works by Michelangelo in Florence, including the Old Sacristy in San Lorenzo. Around 1533, Pope Clement commissioned the artist to return to the Sistine Chapel for an additional project: that of replacing the altar's wall fresco with one of the Resurrection. When Clement died a year later, Alessandro Farnese was elected to the papacy and took the name Pope Paul III.[2] The new pope, a keen art patron who respected Michelangelo's genius, was determined to utilize Michelangelo's talents and skills. However, the drawn-out commission of the Tomb of Pope Julius II continued to plague Michelangelo during this period and the artist was obligated to work towards the tomb's completion. When Michelangelo explained his legal obligation to complete the tomb, Pope Paul responded angrily, "I shall tear the contract up, I'm determined to have you in my service, no matter what."[3] Although Paul III did not actually tear up the contract, he did renegotiate it, thereby expediting the tomb's completion that then allowed Michelangelo to focus on works for the new pontiff. Paul III was now able to turn his attention to the chapel and the completion of *The Last Judgment,* a project begun by his predecessors.[4]

The original altarpiece, *Assumption of Mary,* by Pietro Perugino (Fig. 2), was an appropriate subject due to the chapel's dedication to the Virgin Mary. To provide the space for Michelangelo's complex creation, however, Perugino's altarpiece would be destroyed.[5] In the years leading up to the commission, there had already

[2] William E. Wallace, *Michelangelo: The Artist, the Man and his Times* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 180.

[3] Giorgio Vasari, *The Lives of the Artists*, trans. Julia Conaway Bondanella and Peter Bondanella (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 460.

[4] For a detailed review of the commission for the altar wall, see Anne Leader, "Michelangelo's 'Last Judgment:' The Culmination of Papal Propaganda in the Sistine Chapel," *Studies in Iconography* 27 (2006): 103–56.

[5] Carlo Pietrangeli, *The Sistine Chapel: The Art, the History, and the Restoration* (New York: Harmony Books, 1986), 30.

been damage to portions of the chapel. A lintel of the door had collapsed, there had been a fire that damaged part of the altar wall, and ten years earlier the tapestries by Raphael had been lost during the plundering by the rogue troops of Emperor Charles V during the Sack of Rome.[6]

Early sources indicate that the original subject for this wall was a Resurrection. It is not certain what this means and scholars remain divided; however, it is likely this referred to a Resurrection of the Dead. For the commission to decorate the altar wall, Michelangelo sketched studies of the *Resurrected Christ,* sometime around 1532–33 (Fig. 3). It remains unclear as to the purpose of the sketches and whether they may have been part of the preliminary designs for the altar wall; their dating would suggest they were.[7] Ultimately, the choice of subject for the wall was decided by Pope Paul III. Scholars maintain that the pope, who found himself in the middle of the turbulence of the Reformation, revised the wall's subject from a somber scene of Resurrection to an aggressive Counter Reformation Last Judgment. It was not unusual for this subject to be depicted in chapels, and examples can be found in basilicas and chapels dating to centuries earlier. However, scenes of the Last Judgment were generally reserved for the interior of the main walls of a church's entrance and were meant to enlighten those who exited the chapel and remind the faithful of their actions.

For the Sistine Chapel, the unusual subject matter for the altar wall speaks to the circumstances that impacted both the pope and Michelangelo. The pope found himself needing to remind those within his inner circle of the importance of papal authority after the legitimacy of the Catholic Church was questioned by the Reformation. For the artist, there was the added uniqueness of working beneath his previous tour de force completed two decades earlier. William Wallace imagines what the artist could have experienced:

> Few artists are forced to confront their work of twenty-five years earlier and, in a sense, asked to edit it . . . When Michelangelo mounted

[6] Frank Zöllner and Christof Thoenes, *Michelangelo: The Complete Paintings, Sculptures and Architecture* (Cologne, Germany: Taschen, 2017), 392.

[7] Linda Murray, *Michelangelo, His Life, Work and Times* (New York: Thames and Hudson, 1984), 157–59.

> the scaffold to paint the *Last Judgment,* he confronted his earlier labor. Beginning at the top of the wall in the normal manner of fresco painting, his new work directly abutted and partly obliterated the old . . . every day he worked in the shadow of his own earlier masterpiece, and he worked in a dramatically changed world: the once "universal" church now confronted the Protestant Reformation.[8]

Considering the massive changes in the political and religious climate of the 1530s allows us to better understand both the changes in style and the portrayal of the subject that characterize Michelangelo's fresco**.**

RELIGIOUS TENSIONS & THE CATHOLIC RESPONSE

There is no question that the Catholic Church's response to the Protestant movements helps explain why the subject matter may have changed from that of the Resurrection to the more intense Last Judgment. The Roman Catholic Church had dominated Europe for a millennium until Martin Luther, an Augustinian monk, spoke against various practices within the Church. He witnessed abuses among the clergy and practices that were contrary to scripture as he interpreted them. The sale of indulgences was a particularly evil practice that he criticized. Monies collected to liberate a loved one from sin and punishment were used to line the pockets of the clergy, who, Luther had observed, often lived lives of luxury and opulence. He was appalled by the material lifestyle of church leaders: a lifestyle that contradicted the very opulence the Catholic Church warned against. Further, Luther had come to believe that man's salvation would only be determined by faith. These issues, and others, caused him to publish his *Ninety-Five Theses* in 1517*.* This publication marked the beginning of the Reformation and the schism with the Catholic Church that quickly brought about profound social and political changes across Europe.[9] Following his excommunication, Luther would establish his own church, as would others as well, and Protestantism quickly spread throughout Central and

[8] Wallace, 184.

[9] The literature on Luther and the Reformation is extensive. Useful studies include: Scott C. Dixon, *The Reformation in Germany* (Malden, Massachusetts: Blackwell, 2002), and Scott H. Hendrix, *Luther: Visionary Reformer* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2015).

Northern Europe. This was a major blow to the monopoly the Catholic Church enjoyed for centuries.

Pope Paul III, having inherited a church that was in crisis, felt the need to address the abuses the church had been accused of and to reaffirm the legitimacy of the Catholic Church and its doctrine. In choosing the *Last Judgment* as the new theme for the altar wall, the pope would be issuing an admonition to not be swayed by the Protestant heresies. It is in this religious climate that Michelangelo spent the years 1534 through 1541 creating this intriguing and terrifying work of art. In using the Second Coming of Christ and his final judgment as the theme for this fresco, Pope Paul was stressing the "pope's unique role as temporal and spiritual ruler who provides the needed conduit to God and salvation."[10]

COMPOSITION

The composition of Michelangelo's *Last* Judgment is dynamic and complicated. The depiction of Christ is novel and curious. He is without a beard and is mostly unclothed with only a drapery twisted around him. His physique exudes power and is more similar to an Apollo figure from antique art than to a more traditional image of Christ. The lower proportion of Christ's body moves in a manner similar to that of Michelangelo's *Moses* created years before.[11] Christ's right arm is raised and his gaze is directed downward to those condemned to Hell. The Virgin Mary is seated beside him as saints and martyrs encircle the duo (Fig. 4). Mary recoils beside Christ with her head turned away from the damned and facing those being saved. With her pleading for the souls completed, she sits with her arms crossed in front of her, resigned to the outcome of Christ's Judgment. The inclusion of the Virgin next to Christ honors the original dedication of the chapel in 1483 during the Feast of the Assumption.[12]

Two figures, John the Baptist and St. Peter, are positioned next to Christ and stand out as being slightly larger than the other saints and martyrs. John the Baptist, on Christ's right, is identified with an animal hide cloak draped over his shoul-

[10] Leader, 106.
[11] Wallace, 185.
[12] Leader, 36.

ders. He represents the doctrine of baptism, which is the first step to one's salvation. St. Peter is located at Christ's left and is returning the keys of heaven to the Savior. The keys Peter holds are symbolic of the power to forgive sin, which were entrusted to him by Christ.[13] By extension, Peter represents not only the first pope but all subsequent popes, including Paul III, the contemporary pope. Both John and Peter are important figures in the fresco and help reinforce the Catholic belief that grace and works are needed in order for salvation to be achieved. Their inclusion here is a bold statement by the Vatican in response to a heated doctrinal debate between the Protestant reformers and the Catholic Church over matters of grace, faith, and works. John's and Peter's presence allude to the Catholic Church's singular importance related to salvation. The message is simple: baptism in the Church and the pope's role as God's vicar on earth are essential. This is to be seen as a powerful denouncement of Protestant heresies that questioned papal authority and Catholic doctrine.

A host of saints and martyrs surround them, some of which can be identified by their attributes of martyrdom. St. Paul is placed next to St. Peter and wears a red cloak, St. Catherine is viewed grasping a wheel, St. Simon is shown with a saw, St. Blaise holds two wool combs in his hands, and St. Sebastian grips arrows that symbolize his persecution.[14] The martyrs most identifiable in this composition are Saints Lawrence and Bartholomew who are seated at the feet of Christ. St. Lawrence holds the gridiron of his martyrdom while St. Bartholomew has in one hand a knife and in the other, he is clenching his own flayed skin.[15] In a powerful display of autobiography, Michelangelo represents himself in the folds of flesh that Bartholomew holds (Fig. 5). One scholar has observed that "perhaps conscious of the incredible hubris of imagining and representing eschatological things, Michelangelo portrays himself as a discardable bit of flesh, tenuously held over hell but in saintly hands."[16] At the time of working on the *Last Judgment*, Michelangelo was 67 years old. Throughout his life, the great artist was conscious of his standing with

[13] Ibid, 19.
[14] Zöllner and Thoenes, 433.
[15] Ibid.
[16] Wallace, 186.

God. In this image, he is expressing himself as a humble, penitent man who continues to fear God as he ages. He is also expressing that no one's salvation is sure, not even his own.

The upper tier of the fresco represents the Passion of Christ. In one of the lunettes, brawny angels come from all directions and lift the cross that Christ was crucified on (Fig. 6). In another smaller grouping, an angel gently holds the crown of thorns. In the complimenting lunette, angels twist as they hoist the Column of Flagellation (Fig.7). Vasari comments specifically on this segment of the painting:

> Michelangelo surpassed even himself, having imagined the terror of those days, in which he depicted, for the greater punishment of those who have not lived good lives, all of Christ's Passion; he has various naked figures in the air carrying the cross, the column, the lance, the sponge, the nails, and the crown in different and varied poses with a grace that can be executed only with great difficulty.[17]

Vasari believes Michelangelo included the instruments of the Passion not to just remind the viewer of the pains the Redeemer took upon himself, but to express that Christ acts as the judge for mortal man. These are not just the sacred instruments that represent Christ's triumph over death; they also represent the grace and mercy that are shown when disciples are judged.

The lower tier can be divided into three scenes depicting the process of the Judgment. On Christ's right, the dead are rising up and ascending to heaven while angels reach down to assist them (Fig. 8). Two souls can be seen gripping rosary beads as an angel pulls them toward him. Below Bartholomew, the viewer can see the struggle of those in limbo. The hair of a soul is pulled by the demons while an angel grasps his legs to bring him to heaven. To the Savior's lower left, the damned are being dragged down to the depths of Hell by demonic creatures while angels are pushing the damned away. The biblical character of Satan is never seen in this depiction, but Michelangelo, using inspiration from Dante, includes Charon, the ferryman (Fig. 9), standing on a boat wielding an oar to force the tortured souls from the boat to their ultimate fate.[18] Bernadine Barnes suggests that the inclusion of

[17] Vasari, 462.

[18] Bernadine Barnes, "Metaphorical Painting: Michelangelo, Dante, and the Last Judgment," *Art Bulletin* 77 (March 1995): 5.

Dante's characters was not to deny the existence of the biblical Hell, but possibly to "encourage the audience to work at finding the meaning of the scene through reference, association and contemplation."[19] The scene of Hell cues the viewer that while the gatekeepers are present and ready to receive all sinners, St. Peter is above the scene as a reminder that pain and suffering in Hell will occur only if Christians ignore the teachings of the Church and as a reminder of the pope's role in the final judgment.[20]

LAST JUDGMENTS IN ITALIAN ART

The placement of a graphic depiction of the *Last Judgment* as an altar wall is uncommon and is especially unexpected for the Sistine Chapel. As mentioned earlier, the traditional placement for scenes of the Last Judgment was on the inside wall at a church's main entrance. While Michelangelo's scene is violent and dramatic, artists for centuries had interpreted this subject in a dark and shocking way. It is clear that Michelangelo had seen these images or, at least, had heard descriptions of them. Among the many earlier works that influenced Michelangelo are Buffalmacco, *The Last Judgment* in Campo Santo, Pisa (Fig. 10); Giotto's *Last Judgment* in the Arena Chapel, in Padua (Fig. 11); and Luca Signorelli's *The Damned Cast into Hell* in the San Brizio Chapel, in Orvieto (Fig.12).

Although Michelangelo's fresco is unique compared to these earlier examples, they can be used as helpful comparisons. In the *Last Judgment,* Michelangelo moved away from typical iconography and details. He produced a scene of activity and agitation with no rest in the subjects. There is a sense of movement and power that can be best understood as reflecting the broader issues of the time this paper discusses. Michelangelo's movement is not found in traditional compositions in which scenes are static with little movement or energy coming from the subjects. One exception that is perhaps a key source of inspiration is Signorelli's Orvieto *Last Judgment*, of 1501. In this scene, the artist includes mortals and demons in dynamic action with limbs moving in all directions and bodies contorted as they wrestle with each other. The bodies are depicted with incredibly detailed and realistic anatomy.

[19] Ibid.
[20] Leader, 139.

Michelangelo was aware of this mural and must have been impressed by the artist's exceptional grasp of the body and movement.[21]

The depiction of Christ in the Sistine Chapel's *Last Judgment* is another characteristic that sets Michelangelo's scene apart from previous works. The portrayal of Christ usually had him sitting upon a throne with an exaggerated size that made him much larger than any of the others in the composition. This can be seen in both Buffalmacco's and Giotto's versions in which both Christs are seated solidly on a throne with no suggestion of movement while they maintain a sense of decorum and reverence. The figure of Christ in Michelangelo's *Last Judgment,* while larger than figures around him, is not firmly seated. There is a cloud-like seat behind him; however, his knees are partially bent and his body is twisting as he moves forward. At first glance, Christ is difficult to see in the mass of figures around him, "Negating decorum and majesty, rather than elevated above mortals, Michelangelo made him remarkably human."[22] Michelangelo's Christ is so non-traditional that his identity is difficult as he is not wearing royal robes or a halo but is draped only in a cloth. While the Sistine Christ is markedly different from traditional images of him, the raised right hand recalls earlier images such as Buffalmacco's *Last Judgment,* in which Christ's right hand is raised as if in condemnation as he looks toward the damned.

Michelangelo presents a Christ that is dynamic and expressive in ways that make this image unique. Images of Christ in judgment, from Byzantine examples to images from the Renaissance, begin with a fierce and damning last judge (as in the Buffalmacco example cited above) and later portray the Savior as a reserved and less demonstrative figure (as in Giotto's example). Michelangelo's Christ is neither of these. His pose is dynamic, but his face is not agitated. He turns to the damned with a violent gesture, but his expression is not that of a menacing judge.

The dramatization of Hell is not as graphic in Michelangelo's fresco as can be seen in the works of earlier artists. Images of demons peering out of caves or grotesque creatures grabbing at the dead with the fires of hell glowing in the distance are the images Michelangelo used to depict where the damned go. He does not include scenes of actual torture as depicted in both Giotto's and Buffalmacco's

[21] Polzer, 55.
[22] Ibid, 58.

paintings. In both of their depictions it is a graphic and horrifying end for the damned with portrayals of human disembowelment, decapitations, bodies being sawed in half, and various other forms of torture. The Sistine Chapel mural clearly emphasizes the negativity of the Judgment and provides a clear understanding of what fates could await the damned; however, this is achieved without depicting the gruesome acts that two hundred years earlier seemed important.[23] Michelangelo's ability to express the fear and tension in the faces and gestures of the damned precludes the need to show a graphic depiction of tortures.

REACTIONS TO THE FRESCO

The fresco was completed in 1541 and received a mix of appreciation and abhorrence. It is alleged that Pope Paul III was so overcome that he fell to his knees when he first saw the completed work and exclaimed "O Lord, charge me not with my sins when you come on the day of Judgment."[24] While there were many who viewed the fresco and counted it as another masterpiece for the artist, others denounced it due to the amount of naked flesh depicted. The fresco consists of 390 figures, the majority of which were naked when Michelangelo originally painted the wall. By unclothing the bodies in the painting, the artist was conveying that in the end all are just bodies and souls—that the temporal things of life will be of no consequence at the judgment and man will be stripped of all the decoration and status and stand bare before Christ. Michelangelo, of course, was known for using nudes in his creations, but those who were negative to the fresco felt he was not depicting the human body in a more acceptable Renaissance fashion. A classical use of nudity as seen in Greek and Roman antiquity was thought as appropriate, but the use of nudity around Christ or the Virgin Mary was seen as unacceptable.

Gian Paolo Lomazzo, a contemporary painter and art theoretician, said of the nudity, "It is stressed that the male members and testicles that can be seen so clearly not only on the devils and spirits but also on the saints, are indecent; and that he allows them to appear near Christ."[25] This statement helps to explain where

[23] Ibid, 60.
[24] John W. O'Malley, "The Council of Trent (1545-63) and Michelangelo's Last Judgment (1541)," *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 156, no. 4 (December 2012): 388.
[25] Zöllner and Thoenes, 406.

the unspoken line was when it came to nudity in art. The finished painting depicted most of the characters completely nude with the exclusion of Christ and the Virgin Mary who were never exposed. Critics were also opposed to the configuration of both the figures of St. Catherine and St. Blaise seated to Christ's left. They believed "Catherine seemed to be looking warily over her shoulder as if intuiting that Blaise was contemplating something naughty regarding her."[26] These qualities were among the reasons critics were quick to oppose having this image above the altar where the holy sacrament was presented.

Another critic of the work was the papal master of ceremonies, Messer Biagio da Cesena, who had the opportunity to view the painting when it was three quarters completed. Pope Paul III asked Cesena his opinion of the painting and Cesena suggested to the pope that the painting was an "unseemly thing in such a venerable place to have painted so many nudes that so indecently display their shame" and that was better fit for a tavern and not for the chapel of the pope.[27] The comment so angered Michelangelo that he painted Cesena's likeness in that of the donkey-eared Minos who is standing in Hell with a serpent twisted around his legs and biting his genitals. Cesena asked the pope to request Michelangelo to change this offensive image. It is alleged that Pope Paul's lighthearted response was that he did not have jurisdiction over hell, so the painting would not be altered.

As mentioned, there were mixed reactions to the completed fresco: many were in awe of the master's depiction while there were those who remained opposed to the graphic and complex depictions of the *Last Judgment*. It is clear that Pope Paul III and the next two popes stood by the work and the message that Michelangelo's fresco provided at the time. All three holy men saw no need to remove or make changes to the fresco. Pope Paul IV was among the most vocal critics of the fresco along with Monsignor Sernini. Prior to his papacy, while still Cardinal Carafa, he led a movement to remove the frescoes and renounce them for their immortality and obscenity. Later as pope, his objections became louder regarding the fresco.

[26] O'Malley, 389.
[27] Vasari, 461.

The painting remained as Michelangelo originally created it for nearly twenty years. During those years, specifically 1545-1563, the Council of Trent was convened at the insistence of Emperor Charles V and met three times during the eighteen-year period. The council brought together the Catholic bishops of Europe in hopes of responding to the Protestant anti-Catholic teachings and of making the changes needed to restore confidence of the people in the Catholic Church. At the final session of the Council (1563), the role of art was a central point of debate, and part of the discussion revolved around Michelangelo's fresco: "[the] *Judgment* was discussed during the debate of sacred image . . . The fact that just after the council was concluded the 'revision' of *the Judgment* was ordered . . . shows that at Trent discussion of the painting was lively."[28] The portion of the decree that pertains to Michelangelo's *Last Judgment* reads:

> And they [the bishops] must also teach that images of Christ, the virgin Mary, and the other saints should be set up and kept, particularly in churches, and that due honor and reverence be shown to them, not because some divinity or power is believed to lie in them . . . but because honor showed to them is referred to the persons they represent . . . All superstition must be removed from the invocation of the saints, the veneration of relics, and the use of sacred images. All aiming at base profit must be eliminated. All lasciviousness must be avoided, so that images are not painted or adorned with seductive charm.[29]

It is remarkable that two decades after the fresco was completed, it was still so controversial that it was a topic of discussion at the Council and used as an example of inappropriate art.

There were many who wanted the fresco chipped away, but that suggestion was denied. A less drastic solution was reached, and it was decided that painting over the most offensive areas would suffice.[30] In 1564, Pope Pius IV commissioned Daniele da Volterra, a disciple of Michelangelo's, to address the problem of the interpreted lasciviousness and nudity many saw depicted in the *Last Judgment.*[31]

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[28] Romeo De Maio quoted in O'Malley, 391.
[29] Ibid, 395.
[30] Zöllner and Thoenes, 406.
[31] This job earned Daniele da Volterra the nickname *Il Braghettone*, the "breeches painter."

Volterra reconfigured the grouping of St. Catherine and St. Blaise while also covering the genitals of those that required greater modesty. While there were others through the next century who continued to paint over figures in the fresco, their additions were removed when cleaning and restorations of the painting were undertaken in the 1980's. This intervention helped bring most of Michelangelo's original composition back into the public's view and to convey the artist's intention.

CONCLUSION

Michelangelo's complex representation of the *Last Judgment* on the altar wall of one of the Catholic Church's holiest chapels might still appear inappropriate. It is important, however, to take into context the struggle the church was enduring during the sixteenth century in order to place this unique work into its proper context. The Catholic Church found itself trying to regain its stronghold on Europe after the words of Martin Luther and other reformers swayed many to consider other ways to worship Christ. Michelangelo's graphic warning of what could come to those who did not heed the Catholic Church was in plain view for those who needed to be reminded of the pope's power.

Despite the censorship that the work endured in the years following its creation, it remains an impassioned work of art. Michelangelo, working under the canopy of his portrayal of God's creation of man, had the unique experience to return to the Sistine Chapel to produce a painting whose symbolism, when added to the other paintings in the room, brought to full circle the room's iconographic program that culminates with man's mortality and the role the papacy plays in their judgment.[32] With this work, Michelangelo provided the viewer a distinctive and mesmerizing depiction of the *Last Judgment* while warning viewers of the implications to their salvation should they fall away from the church and believe the rhetoric of the Protestant Reformers. Michelangelo's *Last Judgment* stands as a powerful example of Counter Reformation art and achieves Pope Paul's intention of portraying Christ's return, the promise of salvation, and the supremacy of the papacy.

[32] For a detailed discussion of the chapel's rich symbolism, see Leader, note 4 above, 138.

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Fig. 1. Michelangelo, *Last Judgment*, 1536–1541. Fresco, 45’ x 39.3’. Sistine Chapel, Vatican City. Photo: Wikimedia Commons

Fig. 2. Circle of Pinturicchio after Pietro Perugino, *Assumption of Mary*, c. 1481. Metalpoint, pen wash, with white heightening, 10.7” x 8.2”. Albertina, Vienna. Photo: Wikimedia Commons.

Fig. 3. Michelangelo, *The Risen Christ*, c. 1532. Black chalk. 14.6” x 8.7”. Royal Collection, Windsor Castle, London. Photo: Wikimedia Commons.

Fig. 4. Detail of Fig. 1, Christ and Virgin Mary encircled by Saints and Martyred.
Photo: Wikimedia Commons.

Fig. 5. Detail of Figure 4, Saint Bartholomew gripping his own flayed skin.
Photo: Wikimedia Commons.

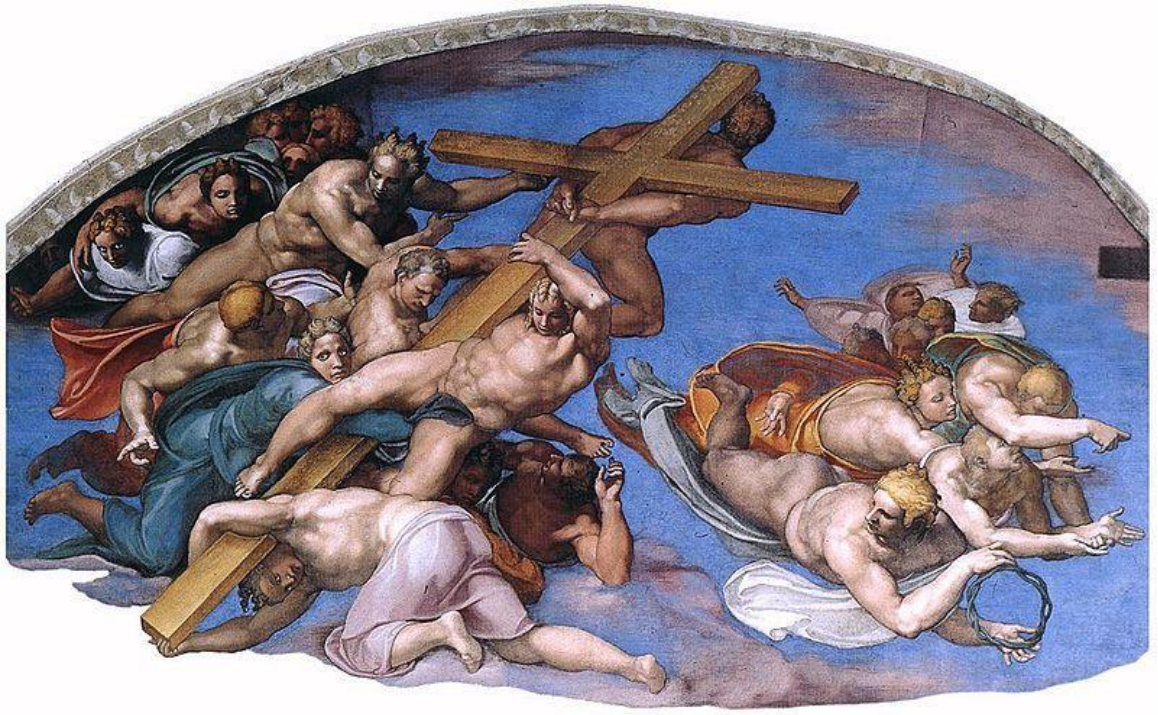

Fig. 6. Detail of Figure 1, Lunette with Instruments of the Passion. Photo: Wikimedia Commons.

Fig. 7. Detail of Figure 1, Lunette with Instruments of the Passion. Photo: Web Gallery of Art.

Fig. 8. Detail of Figure 1, The elect being raised and guided by angels. Photo: Wikimedia Commons.

Fig. 9. Detail of Figure 1, Charon forcing the damned off the boat. Photo: Wikimedia Commons.

Fig. 10. Buonamico Buffalmacco, *The Last Judgment and Hell*, 1335-1340. Fresco, 19.6' x 28.21'. Campo Santo, Pisa. Photo: "Last-judgment after restoration" by Federico Federighi licensed under CC BY-SA 4.0.

Fig. 11. Giotto, *Last Judgment*, 1306. Fresco, 32.8' x 27.5'. Arena Chapel, Padua. Photo: Wikimedia Commons.

Fig. 12. Luca Signorelli, *Damned Cast into Hell*, 1499-1593. Fresco, 32’ x 27’.
Brizio Chapel, Orvieto.
Photo: Cropped photo of “Signorelli Fall of the Damned” by Steven Zucker
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REIMAGINING ST. FRANCIS IN ART: CARAVAGGIO'S *SAINT FRANCIS IN ECSTASY*

Alexander Coberly

The form, function, and content of art changed for Italian artists in the sixteenth century after the Council of Trent established the role of the artist and what they ought to deliver to their Christian viewers. Nearly three decades after the Council's recommendations for art, Caravaggio, a product of the reformed Catholic faith, adopted an unprecedented approach to style and subject in his art. He takes the stage in a production founded upon an artistic tradition of refinement. Some of Caravaggio's contemporaries claimed his innovative role derailed this production, while many scholars today would see it as a plot twist in the story of Italian art. *Saint Francis in Ecstasy* (c. 1595–96) is among Caravaggio's first religious paintings and is a prelude to his approach to art throughout his career (Fig. 1). The purpose of this paper is to analyze Caravaggio as an avant-garde artist who applied mystical themes towards the subject of St. Francis and who produced a composition that had never been seen before. The unique qualities of *Saint Francis in Ecstasy* will be identified by comparing it to previous traditional paintings of the saint. Various interpretations will be considered to explain exactly what Caravaggio is attempting to convey to his viewers. By exploring the ideas of artists, patrons, and theologians contemporary to Caravaggio, *Saint Francis in Ecstasy* can be situated within the historical context of post-Tridentine Rome, thus allowing viewers to comprehend the significance of the painting and of Caravaggio's ingenuity.

Images of St. Francis appeared shortly after the saint's death in 1226 and canonization two years later in 1228. Among the earliest of these depictions is that by Bonaventura Berlinghieri, who created a Byzantine style icon of St. Francis, in 1235. Flanking the image of the saint are six apron scenes that narrate major events in Francis' life (Fig. 2). The scene on the top left shows St. Francis on his knees with his arms outstretched toward a seraph that has appeared above him (Fig. 3). This is the moment when the divinely favored St. Francis received the stigmata at Mount La Verna. The nail wounds from Christ's crucifixion are visible on the saint's hands and feet. Berlinghieri's painting of this iconic moment in St. Francis' life is the start

of an artistic tradition that will continue for centuries. Several Gothic and Renaissance artists painted a similar subject using the same iconography. A few noticeable examples are those by Giotto, Gentile da Fabriano, and Titian.[1]

Berlinghieri's painting of the stigmata reflects the earliest written accounts of the event by Thomas of Celano, in 1230, in which he writes that St. Francis, "saw himself regarded by the seraph, whose beauty was indescribable; yet he was alarmed by the fact that the seraph was affixed to the cross and was suffering terribly. Thus Francis rose, one might say, sad and happy, joy and grief alternating in him."[2] Celano continues to tell how Francis was perplexed and tried to understand what this vision meant. He then describes the appearance of the stigmata writing, "the marks of nails began to appear in his hands and feet, just as he had seen them slightly earlier in the crucified man above him . . . his right side had a large wound as if it had been pierced with a spear, and it often bled so that his tunic and trousers were soaked with his sacred blood."[3] Celano's retelling of this visionary event is closely reflected in Berlinghieri's panel painting that captures the crucial details of the seraph and the marks of the stigmata.

Later images of St. Francis receiving the stigmata include a follower named Brother Leo as a witness of the event. This addition became popular after the text, *I Fioretti*, came about in the late fourteenth century and included this follower in the narrative of St. Francis.[4] In the 1590s, Federico Barocci painted such an image with Brother Leo gazing at a scene of St. Francis that is visually reminiscent of Giotto's approach to the subject painted around 1295–30 (Fig. 4). While there are earlier examples of stigmatization images that include Brother Leo, Barocci's painting is especially comparable to Caravaggio's because, like Caravaggio's *Saint Francis in Ecstasy*, Barocci includes figures in the background who surround a fire while

[1] These include Giotto, *Saint Francis Receiving the Stigmata*, 1295–1300, The Louvre Museum; Gentile da Fabriano, *Saint Francis Receiving the Stigmata,* c. 1420, The Getty Center; Titian, *Saint Francis Receiving the Stigmata*, 16th century, Museo regionale Agostino Pepoli.

[2] Thomas of Celano, *First and Second Lives of Saint Francis*, trans. David Burr (1996) https://sourcebooks.fordham.edu/source/stfran-lives.asp

[3] Ibid.

[4] Robert Kiely, "Further Considerations of the Holy Stigmata of St. Francis: Where Was Brother Leo?" *Religion and the Arts* 3, no. 1 (1999): 20–40. Brother Leo is not explicitly mentioned as being present during St. Francis' vision in Celano's text nor in the biography written later by St. Bonaventure. *I Fioretti* is one of the first texts that clearly includes Brother Leo in the narrative.

marveling at the sky. This connection will be considered in greater detail later in this paper.

Caravaggio's *Saint Francis* is often compared to these traditional stigmata compositions because Caravaggio seems to be most inspired by the iconography of stigmata imagery. Upon first glance, it might even be misattributed as such. However, there are key differences between these previous compositions and Caravaggio's approach. Rather than encountering a seraph with arms outstretched, St. Francis lies back on an angel supporting him within a dark and obscure landscape. Most previous stigmatization scenes include a visible seraph, which Caravaggio omitted. Furthermore, the inclusion of an angel is not characteristic of traditional stigmata imagery. The lance wound to St. Francis' torso is the only visible manifestation of the stigmata. There are no nail wounds in his hands, and the top of his left foot is covered by his robe while the other foot is not visible at all. Above his feet in the shadow is a figure dressed in capuchin attire resting his head on his hand. This figure is reminiscent of Brother Leo, but his presence is subtle and his mien is not of an attentive witness. All these differences between traditional stigmatizations and Caravaggio's painting indicate that Caravaggio is expressing a new theme related to St. Francis.

Howard Hibbard acknowledged these unique features in Caravaggio's painting as a revolutionary approach. He compared *Saint Francis in Ecstasy* with Giovanni Bellini's *Saint Francis in the Desert,* painted around 1480 (Fig. 5), claiming Bellini's approach is like Caravaggio's because both subjects are not explicitly defined.[5] Bellini strays from traditional Franciscan imagery in the same categories that Caravaggio changes, yet Caravaggio departed even further from the established iconography. Both artists are selective in which wounds are shown, both place St. Francis in an uncharacteristic position, both depict the landscape in an untraditional manner, and while Caravaggio changes the role of Brother Leo, Bellini omits the disciple entirely. Despite their shared unique approach, Caravaggio's finished product differs dramatically from Bellini's. Hibbard notes, "Caravaggio, who probably did not know Bellini's painting, has seemingly reinvented the theme."[6] Know-

[5] Howard Hibbard, *Caravaggio* (New York: Harper & Row, 1983), 56–58.
[6] Ibid, 58.

ing Caravaggio would not have been influenced by Bellini places even greater emphasis on Caravaggio's game-changing approach towards Franciscan imagery as being entirely original.

Considering that Caravaggio belongs to a different era of art, it can be expected that there would be stylistic changes between his work and the works previously examined. However, it is the extremity of these changes that makes Caravaggio's approach so profound. It could be argued that *Saint Francis in Ecstasy* is simply a product of the time and culture it belongs to. However, this discounts Caravaggio's invention of a new artistic theme. *Saint Francis in Ecstasy* is a piece that established a new visual type that inspired succeeding artists, and Caravaggio's brilliance was recognized by his contemporaries.

The first owner of the painting was Ottavio Costa, a Genoese banker working in Rome. Costa had formed connections with ecclesiastical authorities that were important to his bank's success. Helen Langdon observed that Costa's art collection was small but contained many significant works by popular contemporary artists. She writes of Costa, "In Rome his main interest seems to have been his pictures, and his taste was close to that of Giustiniani; he had works by Caravaggio, Lanfranco and Guido Reni."[7] Costa's collection was a symbol of his wealth and prestige. It is interesting to note that within his library, Costa collected over one thousand volumes on a wide array of subjects, but the only text he had regarding art was *De Architectura* by Vitruvius.[8] This may indicate that his appreciation of art was more about social and aesthetic purposes, and less about artistic theory and practice.

It is not clear if Costa commissioned *Saint Francis in Ecstasy* or if he purchased the completed work. In either scenario, Costa recognized Caravaggio's talents while the artist was only known to a small group of amateurs and collectors. Maria Cristina Terzaghi wrote that he was a fashionable client with an interest in avant-garde artists.[9] Costa's interest in Caravaggio suggests that the artist was recognized early in his career as an experimental painter, and his style was accommodating to Costa's collection. Despite being an up-and-coming artist, Caravaggio was

[7] Helen Langdon, *Caravaggio: a life* (New York, NY: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1999), 102.
[8] Maria Cristina Terzaghi, *Caravaggio, Annibale Carracci, Guido Reni tra le ricevute del banco Herrera & Costa* (Rome: 'L'erma' di Bretchneider, 2007), 98–99.
[9] Ibid, 120; "Nella Roma a cavallo tra Cinque e Seicento, egli appare infatti senza dubbio un committente tra i più aggiornati, e decisamente sensibile alle avanguardie."

empirical in his art—a risk that paid off. His success with this painting is evident in the fact that Costa purchased more paintings by Caravaggio in the following years. His collection included *Judith Beheading Holofernes*, *Saint John the Baptist in the Wilderness*, and *Martha and Mary Magdalene*.

Costa would have recognized *Saint Francis in Ecstasy* as a unique composition, but whether or not he understood the message behind this stylistic shift is nearly impossible to determine. Differences in Caravaggio's composition compared to earlier Franciscan imagery accompanied theological changes. By analyzing the cultural transformations that were taking place, connections can be made between the theological aims of the time and the themes depicted in *Saint Francis in Ecstasy*. The following evidence and interpretation provide a description of what Caravaggio intended to communicate to his viewers.

Working at the end of the sixteenth century, Caravaggio was surrounded by religious reform that affected art and theology. During the Counter Reformation, the Catholic church defined unique characteristics of Catholic practice in contrast to Protestant practice. Saints played a prominent role in authenticating the Catholic identity because they personified devotion and piety, traits attributed to followers of Christ. During the last session of the Council of Trent, the purpose of sacred art was articulated:

> . . . that great profit is derived from all sacred images, not only because the people are thereby admonished of the benefits and gifts bestowed upon them by Christ, but also because the miracles which God has performed by means of the saints, and their salutary examples, are set before the eyes of the faithful; that so they may give God thanks for those things; may order their own lives and manners in imitation of the saints; and may be excited to adore and love God, and to cultivate piety.[10]

The religious and artistic circumstances Caravaggio was operating within explains why he might have chosen St. Francis as the subject for his painting. It was a subject

[10] Council of Trent, Session 25, "On the Invocation, Veneration, and Relics, of Saints, and on Sacred Images, 4 December, 1563," https://www.papalencyclicals.net/councils/trent/twenty-fifth-session.htm

that was conducive to the devotional taste of a post-Tridentine Catholic patron and audience.

The artistic themes of saints during the Counter Reformation were more than guidelines Caravaggio was expected to abide by. The poetic composition of *Saint Francis in Ecstasy* indicates that Caravaggio was inspired by St. Francis. Rather than retelling the story of St. Francis, Caravaggio paints a metaphorical rendering of the saint's faith.[11] Since some traditional iconography is included while other common symbols are overlooked, it is clear that Caravaggio is highlighting certain aspects of the saint's life to communicate ideas that transcend the stories of Saint Francis.

In her article, "The Angelic Consolation of St. Francis of Assisi in Post-Tridentine Italian Painting," Pamela Askew explores the role of St. Francis after the Council of Trent according to writers and artists. Using Caravaggio's *Saint Francis in Ecstasy*, she explains what this painting would have meant to contemporary viewers. She writes, "Caravaggio's intention [is] to make visually lucid the mystical rather than the literal meaning of the seraphic miracle."[12] Askew's interpretation echoes the explanation that Andrew Graham-Dixon provides in his biography of Caravaggio. He believes *Saint Francis in Ecstasy* "displays for the first time Caravaggio's lifelong fascination for the strongest and most intense strains of Counter-Reformation Catholic spirituality. It expresses the idea of a transfiguring love of Christ, a love so deep that it becomes a form of mystic self-annihilation."[13] Both scholars recognize the implicated comparisons within the painting and the mystic quality those metaphors represent.

In the painting, the figure of St. Francis swoons insensately. He is suspended between consciousness and unconsciousness, which is suggested by one eye cracked open in the sunlight while the other remains closed in the shadow. His right

[11] Bert Treffers, "Il Francesco Hartford del Caravaggio e la spiritualità francescana alla fine del XVI. sec.," *Mitteilungen des Kuntsthistorischen Institutes in Florenz* 32 (1988): 146. Treffers discussed Pamela Askew's research and wrote, "L'opera per lei non è affatto una narrazione oggettiva, bensì la visualizzazione di un processo psichico."

[12] Pamela Askew, "The Angelic Consolation of St. Francis of Assisi in Post-Tridentine Italian Painting," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 32 (1969): 285.

[13] Andrew Graham-Dixon, *Caravaggio: A Life Sacred and Profane* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2011), 144.

hand gestures to the lance wound at his side, encouraging the viewer to consider the cause of this miraculous event. By having the saint display the wound closest to his heart, Caravaggio is claiming that the ecstatic state of St. Francis comes from within. It was St. Francis' pondering the disposition of Christ, or the "transfiguring love of Christ," according to Andrew Graham-Dixon, that resulted in his visionary experience.[14] The overwhelming nature of this divine love caused the saint's paralyzing reaction.

Askew draws upon the ideas of St. Francis de Sales, who wrote *Traite de L'Amour de Dieu* about two decades after *Saint Francis in Ecstasy* was painted. In this treaty, St. Francis de Sales wrote that it was love that brought about St. Francis of Assisi's seraphic vision, which resulted in the stigmata. Askew explains, "Though the wounds are administered by the seraph, they had already been imprinted internally on St. Francis' soul."[15] Although Caravaggio's painting was completed before the treatise was written, it can be assumed that the idea of spiritual stigmatization was a product of the post-Tridentine Catholic church. It is visually apparent that Caravaggio's message is the same as that of St. Francis de Sales.

In the same chapter in which St. Francis de Sales describes how love related to St. Francis of Assisi's stigmata, he also explains the love of Christ on the night of his betrayal:

> When I see my Savior on the Mount of Olives with his soul sorrowful even unto death: Ah! Lord Jesus, say I, what can have brought the sorrows of death into the soul of life except love, which, exciting commiseration, drew thereby our miseries into thy sovereign heart? Now a devout soul, seeing this abyss of heaviness and distress in this divine lover, how can she be without a holily loving sorrow? So that she cries: I am black with sorrow by compassion, but beautiful with love by complacency; the anguish of my well-beloved has changed my colour: for how could a faithful lover behold such torments in him whom she

[14] Ibid.
[15] Askew, 283.

> loves more than her life, without swooning away and becoming all wan and wasted with grief.[16]

The soul described by St. Francis de Sales epitomizes the saint Caravaggio painted. St. Francis of Assisi, who occupies a dark space, dwells on the sorrows of death and the passion of Christ, yet he is illuminated by the love of his Savior just as the soul told of by St. Francis de Sales changed color in contemplation of Christ. Both the soul and St. Francis of Assisi swoon as a result.

William E. Wallace draws another connection between St. Francis and Christ on the Mount of Olives. In his analysis of *Saint Francis in Ecstasy*, he writes, "Does that flaring torch belong to the Romans who have come to arrest Christ? Suddenly, the sleeping figure suggests a disciple, one incapable of maintaining vigil with Christ."[17] Wallace is referring to the figures who surround the fire in the background and Brother Leo who resides in the shadows. He continues with his allegory stating, "While an angel is sometimes represented comforting Francis, the motif is more often associated with the biblical passage (Luke 22:43) in which an angel supports the swooning Christ in the Garden of Gethsemane. Indeed, the moment depicted is precisely that in which Francis, in imitation of Christ, becomes most like him."[18] Wallace's view of *Saint Francis in Ecstasy* as an allusion to the suffering of Christ is supported by the inspirational role of art after the Counter-Reformation. Just as St. Francis imitated Christ, the viewers must also follow the example set by Saint Francis, which, in turn, leads the viewers to Christ.

Pamela Askew suggests an additional allusion that might be identified by other viewers. She relates the small crowd by the fire in Caravaggio's composition to traditional images of shepherds receiving the news of Christ's birth. The group points up to the sky where there are supernaturally illuminated clouds indicating they are witnessing a divine and mystical occurrence. Askew writes, "by means of this analogy Caravaggio conveys the idea that the mystical vision which transforms St. Francis into the image of the Lord Christ is a spiritual birth whereby Francis no

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[16] St. Francis de Sales, *Treatise on the Love of God*, trans. Henry Benedict Mackey (Grand Rapids: Christian Classics Ethereal Library, 2000), 220.
[17] William E. Wallace, "Caravaggio's Saint Francis," *Source* 22, no. 3 (2003), https:// doi.org/10.1086/sou.22.3.23206721.
[18] Ibid.

longer lives by, for, or in his own natural condition, but in and for Christ."[19] This allusion is supported by the description of St. Francis receiving the stigmata in *I Fioretti* that "when the shepherds that were watching in that country saw the mountain aflame and so much brightness round about, they were sore afraid."[20] This line uses wording similar to that in the Gospel of Luke, which states, "and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sore afraid."[21] Both the account of St. Francis and the annunciation to the shepherds can be recognized in the vignette Caravaggio placed in the background.

It should be noted that while Askew relates the group surrounding the fire in *Saint Francis in Ecstasy* to the shepherds described in the Gospel of Luke, this scene is not unique to Caravaggio. Barocci's *Saint Francis Receiving the Stigmata* also contains a figure by a fire who points upward toward the sky. However, Barocci's inclusion of this figure is more relevant to the stigmatization narrative of his painting than to the metaphoric qualities Caravaggio explores. Only a few years after Caravaggio completed *Saint Francis in Ecstasy*, Giovanni Baglione painted an image of the same subject (Fig. 6). Baglione shows St. Francis in a dark tenebristic space swooning after being presented the instruments of the passion of Christ, while an angel supports the saint by his arms. According to Larry Feinberg, this is the first Caravaggesque painting, in fact, the painting was originally misattributed to Caravaggio and placed in the Borghese collection as such.[22] Orazio Gentileschi, who was most directly influenced by Caravaggio, painted several variations of *St. Francis Supported by an Angel* in which he also focuses on the emotional and spiritual state of St. Francis (Fig. 7).

As the evidence presented here has demonstrated, Caravaggio transformed the traditional iconography of Franciscan imagery into a visual metaphor of the saint's Christ-like lifestyle. The overwhelming nature of Christ's love and the exemplary life of the saint are two themes that Caravaggio probes in *Saint Francis in*

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[19] Askew, 285.

[20] *The Little Flowers & The Life of St. Francis, with the Mirror of Perfection* (London: J. M. Dent & Sons LTD; New York: E. P. Dutton & Co., 1927), 114.

[21] Luke. 2:9 NRSVCE.

[22] Larry J. Feinberg, "The Ecstasy of Saint Francis," *Art Institute of Chicago Museum Studies* 30, no. 1 (2004): 56. It should be noted that after a chain of events, Caravaggio accused Baglione of plagiarism resulting in legal battles between the two artists.

Ecstasy. The subject was meaningful to his contemporaries and it is clear he inspired other artists with this new composition. It is widely understood that Caravaggio often took a unique approach towards traditional subjects in his art and produced revolutionary compositions that influenced artists across Europe. The painting of *Saint Francis in Ecstasy* demonstrates just how early in his career Caravaggio was inventing new approaches to complex spiritual themes. By understanding the stylistic revolution and theological aim of *Saint Francis in Ecstasy*, one can recognize the beginnings of the artistic innovations of Caravaggio's career.

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Fig. 1. Caravaggio, *Saint Francis in Ecstasy*, 1595-96. Oil on canvas, 51" x 37", Wadsworth Antheneum Museum of Art, Hartford.
Photo: "Caravaggio in Ecstasy, 1595" by carulmare is licensed under CC BY 2.0.

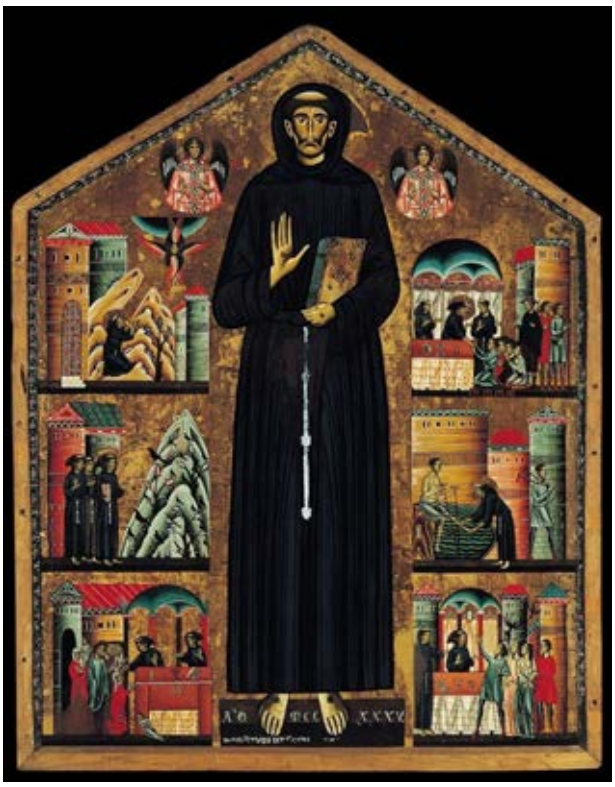

Fig. 2. Bonaventura Berlinghieri, *Saint Francis Altarpiece*, 1235. Tempera on wood, 63” x 48”. San Francesco, Pescia. Photo: Wikimedia Commons.

Fig. 3. Detail of Figure 2, showing the stigmatization of St. Francis. Photo: Wikimedia Commons.

Fig. 4. Francesco Villamena, after Federico Barocci, *Saint Francis Receiving the Stigmata*, 1597. Engraving on laid paper. Photo: The National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC.

Fig. 5. Giovanni Bellini, *Saint Francis in the Desert*, c. 1480. Oil and tempera on poplar panel, 49" x 55". The Frick Collection, New York.

Fig. 6. Giovanni Baglione, *The Ecstasy of Saint Francis*, 1601. Oil on canvas, 61” x 46”.
Photo: The Art Institute of Chicago, Chicago.

Fig. 7. Orazio Gentileschi, *Saint Francis Supported by an Angel*, c. 1607. Oil on canvas, 50” x 39”. Museo Nacional del Prado, Madrid.
Photo: “Saint Francis held by and angel by Orazio Gentileschi”
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HOW ART HISTORY IMPACTED MY LIFE

Zachary Nielsen

I will forever be grateful for the role that art and art history have played in my life. I am fortunate to have been raised in a creative family, and it was in such an environment that I thrived as an artist. My father is a professional pianist and organist, and for the past twenty years has been building pipe organs across the United States. During my childhood, he used our basement or dining room to house his own personal passion project: an organ built completely from scratch that he rebuilt every time we moved. I would often wake to the sound of Bach, Mozart, Debussy, or Rachmaninov reverberating throughout the house. My mother always encouraged creativity in any project that my siblings and I had for school. She helped us make some rather impressive posters and dioramas, and I came to expect of myself a higher standard when it came to similar projects throughout my time in school. Perhaps most importantly, she took us to art museums and nurtured a love of art in our home.

I grew up in a small town about an hour from Kansas City, Missouri. We were fortunate enough to have access to the illustrious Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, which we visited at least twice a year from the time that I was five until my freshman year of high school. Outside of visiting museums, my mother also constantly spoke of her favorite painters and had their artworks on display throughout the house. This early exposure instilled in me a deep-seated appreciation and reverence for art history that is incomparable to any other feeling or experience that I had in my youth. I could have walked the halls of that museum for days without tiring of seeing the beautiful artifacts of human heritage. Of course, this often made me the odd one out of my classmates when we visited the Nelson and similar museums for field trips. I would lag behind the group, gazing intently at the brushstrokes of a Monet or staring transfixed at an Egyptian death mask, while my friends complained about their sore feet and couldn't wait to return to the bus to exchange Pokémon cards.

I was very different from my peers, a fact which they constantly reminded me. However, this did not go unnoticed by my teachers, and soon I was enrolled in a special "gifted" education class beginning in fourth grade. My incredible teacher, a wonderfully eccentric woman with a rather extensive collection of animal print stilettos, filled our days with activities to nurture our creative and curious minds. Each year, she had the class vote to choose a topic of study, usually involving a certain historical period. Medieval and Roman history were the periods chosen for my time in her class, which I enjoyed immensely. We studied everything from castle architecture to coats of arms, rose windows to reliquaries, and Augustus to aqueducts. This was supplemented by further visits to the Nelson-Atkins Museum to view exhibitions relevant to our studies. My first foray into art history research came in the form of a ten-page end-of-year project, a tall order for a ten-year-old, but perhaps one of the most influential elements of this class. I read several books and articles on my chosen research topics and spent hours creating visual aids to accompany my report. I credit these opportunities for my current passion for art and for my desire to continue my education in this field throughout my life.

With my love of art and museums firmly established, I was overjoyed when I learned that my family had the opportunity to move to Manhattan for five months while my father worked on the restoration of the pipe organ at the Cathedral of Saint John the Divine. New York City seems to have a museum for everything, but we spent most of our free time visiting the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the MoMA, and the Museum of Natural History. I found the classical and medieval artworks and artifacts at the Met and the Cloisters particularly interesting. I had never really drawn much or kept a sketchbook before living in New York City, but the constant artistic immersion proved to be the catalyst that I needed to fully pursue my journey as an artist. I started bringing paper to the Met in order to sketch the sculptures surrounding the Temple of Dendur, and in time, my exposure to medieval manuscripts prompted me to purchase my own calligraphy set. I continued to teach myself calligraphy and drawing after my return to Missouri, which led me to pursue other mediums like ceramics and oil painting. My life as an artist has been incredibly fulfilling, but perhaps I have never truly acknowledged just how much of that I owe to my childhood experiences with art history.

My journey with art has not only been fulfilling in a creative sense: it has also acted as an emotional outlet and essential support when dealing with mental health issues. As a child, I was often bullied by my peers for my lack of athletic prowess or knowledge of “boyish” things, but I am thankful to my parents for the constant encouragement I received in my home to pursue my artistic ambitions. The realm of creativity and art history became a safe haven for me when I struggled with low self-esteem and felt alone in other aspects of my life. As I moved into my adolescent phase, I needed this escape more than ever before. Around the same time that I lived in Manhattan, I realized that I was gay. Navigating my emotions as a closeted gay teenager proved to be extremely traumatic due to the difficult position in which I found myself in regards to my upbringing in a tight-knit Mormon community. This has been a common theme in my life for the past twelve years, but I have always managed to find relief through art. In the past, this was often an act of escapism, but has now evolved to become my primary outlet of personal expression. I have found comfort in learning about artists who have been through similar trials to my own, using their art as a way to navigate a sea of complicated emotions and to understand who they truly are. Indeed, this has caused me to have moments of intense emotional connections while viewing artworks by painters such as Vincent van Gogh, as well as when faced with the countless number of artifacts that artists from different cultures have imbued with the very essence of their lives and passions across the centuries of human existence.

This connection to artists through time and the insight that it provides into the human experience is perhaps one of the most important aspects of art history, and is the very reason that it is preserved. Connecting with art has directed my life and influenced me more than any other earthly force, inspiring my own art and providing therapy along the way. The value of art history is not only relevant to artists: it has a life-changing power that enriches and deepens perspectives. My hope is that society will prioritize art and its history, along with the lessons that it teaches, for future generations to help others who, like me, have struggled with the pitfalls of humanity.

RESEARCH AND REFLECTION

Aleena Anderson

Over the past year, I have had the amazing privilege to be working with the independent Art Historian, Michael Sullivan on his project to write a catalog raisonné on American painter, Francis Davis Millet (1848–1912). I cannot begin to explain how much this has enhanced my progress in my study of art history, specifically in the field of research. This experience has given me the chance to get my hands on exclusive, fascinating, personal documents about an artist I never knew before, and it has made research feel relevant and dynamic again.

Before this opportunity was extended to me, research felt like a chore. As an art history major, research was a daunting task that I knew I was obligated to take part in each semester. Then, last spring I enrolled in Dr. Charlotte Poulton's Research and Methodology class. She invited Michael to come in and provide a guest lecture on the topic of his current research project. I was immediately intrigued. I had told myself that I was going to take advantage of this class and learn to like and understand the process of researching. Dr. Poulton and Michael had asked the class if we would be willing to help with any sort of research on the project. Part of the coursework was to help Michael with his research, the benefit for me was staying on after the semester was over to help Michael specifically with his article in preparation for publication. I jumped on the opportunity to help him; at first, I didn't realize what exactly I was getting myself into. Michael eventually contacted me and asked me to help him, not only with valuable research, on the side but fact-checking, authenticating, and copy-editing his citations and making sure that they matched up his research correctly. Now, I know that doesn't sound very exciting, but as time went on and I went through the work, I found I absolutely loved it!

Correcting the citations meant I had to double-check that every reference or quote was exact; this led to me re-reading the special documents/letters/books

written by close family members, historians, and friends. Then to finish up my corrections and double-check the citations one more time, I was able to listen to Michael's stories of these people who had these documents and what they knew of Frank Millet. It was so fascinating to see this one artist touch the lives so many peoples, and I was able to be a part of this incredible story. Passion is always infectious and that's what I have been surrounded by through this whole project; so, naturally I felt and still feel like I have been a part of something special.

I grew to actually know this artist. I knew nearly every documented piece of his life, and even some aspects that weren't documents but told by his family members or close friends. Some of these documents were letters or books/journals written by the family members, very personal and not pieces you could find in any library or scholarly resource. I learned how to navigate in research, how to find certain archived sources, how to search through different scholarly databases, and how one piece of a historical document can lead to something you've been looking for, for months. I learned that you have to put yourself in the artist's shoes and understand what could have influenced them. Researching is almost like being a detective. You have to dig deep, really think about who this person was. By getting into that mindset, you open so many doors to what you can research and uncover about that person.

We are not yet done with the project, and I cannot wait to see the final product. With this amazing opportunity, I have learned that I can practically cite and research with my eyes closed; it is no longer a daunting task. Research is something I truly enjoy, something that is so much easier to navigate than it was before. If any one of you has the chance to be a part of something like this, take it! It is worth getting out of your comfort zone. Not only do you get to know these artists and gain true love and respect for them, but you get to actually meet amazing people along the way. Art history is so much more than just learning about these artists, it is understanding them and knowing them, it is getting involved with the community that we have the great privilege to be a part of.

LAS MENINAS AND THE NOBILITY OF ART

Sydney Bennett

In Diego Velazquez's famous work, *Las Meninas*, displayed in the Prado, there lies a mystery and legend that go beyond the painting itself and touch on the painter's relationship with the King of Spain. Velazquez furthered the transition for artists from low-level craftsman to professionals of genius and nobility. My husband and I had an opportunity to live abroad in Spain for the spring semester of 2020. He was studying business with BYU's sister school, Alcalá De Henares, located northeast of Madrid. I was mostly just tagging along, but I jumped on the opportunity to independently research and study as much art as I could. That March, I had the opportunity to engage in a private tour of the Prado Museum in Madrid with a group of BYU students and their professor, Dr. John Rosenberg, an expert in Spanish literature and history.

Before this museum tour, I was asked a rather particular question about *Las Meninas*, by another BYU professor who was travelling abroad with a group of English-teaching students. The question was, "I've heard there is a myth behind the meaning of the red cross on Velazquez's chest. I've heard it was painted on by the King after it was displayed. What is the story behind it?" The question had come up naturally as we had discussed my background in art history and enthusiasm for Velasquez's work.

At the time, I did not know the answer; however, this rather specific question had me pondering for some time, and this tour of the Museo del Prado was a perfect opportunity to receive an answer. The tour was several hours long. We discussed in great detail and depth paintings that I only had quickly looked over in the past. The tour took so long that when we arrived at Velasquez's *Las Meninas,* the museum was already closing, and I briefly thought that I had missed my chance to ask Dr. Rosenberg about the painting. He then graciously offered to take us all to dinner. Shortly after the meal commenced I asked the question that had been on

my mind for several weeks: “I have a question about *Las Meninas*, someone mentioned that the red cross on his chest was painted by King Phillip IV after the fact. Is that true?” Dr. Rosenberg laughed at my question, which had nothing to do with the current conversation, and responded, “Do you want the short answer or the long answer?” I replied, “Long, I think?”

I knew that time would not be a problem as Spanish dinners last hours, and it was only 9:00 pm, still early for the typical Spanish meal. Dr. Rosenberg then dove right into the history of Baroque Spain. He explained that Spanish artists were not formally recognized as having a noble profession, unlike Italian artists, who had been recognized for their genius since the Renaissance. Velazquez desperately wanted to gain that same level of recognition as well as a status of nobility. At the time, he was climbing quickly through the ranks of the Spanish upper-class. He had already attained the high recognition of First Painter to the King, yet he was still only seen by many as a common craftsman. He then began the long and arduous process of becoming a Knight of the Order of Santiago, the highest rank possible for a civilian at that time in Spain. For Velazquez to receive this high honor would mean his passion for art would no longer be just a trade or craft: he would be a high-ranking noble with status.

To attain this honorable goal, one must prove three things: proof of nobility; no evidence of Jewish or Moorish blood; no evidence of working with one’s hands. Velazquez was turned down two times until evidence surfaced in favor of his case that his grandmother was at one point exempt from tax, proving that he, Velasquez, had noble blood. To fully ensure that he would be welcomed into the Order, the King personally confronted the pope, asking why Velazquez was not being allowed into the Order. The King had always been a strong advocate for the arts, and he felt strongly that Velazquez deserved this title of nobility. The pope agreed with the King and, as the legend says, the King personally added to the painting the Cruz de Santiago onto the chest of Velazquez, signaling the artist’s rise into nobility and power within Spain and European society.

This legend and my museum experience provided an answer to a question as well as insight into the historical struggle of artists to be recognized for their talent and genius. This struggle continues to this day, as contemporary art is often misunderstood, maligned, and dismissed as being “pointless” or “too obscure.” The

struggle of the arts has always been about recognition for their true genius; the same recognition that is often given to the sciences and mathematics yet is so often overlooked when considering the creativity in artistic genius. In his masterpiece, Velazquez shows us that continual struggle to be recognized, to be heard, and to be appreciated. This fight to be recognized has fueled artists throughout history and continues to empower the arts today. My passion for art and my desire to address the underappreciation of art were the deciding factors in my choice to major in art history. Learning about the genius behind the artists and behind *Las Meninas* has only increased my desire to promote the value that the fine arts have in our society today. A museum tour, a question about *Las Meninas*, and a professor's response emphasized to me the importance of education in the humanities and the arts in my life.