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# Sommario

**ABSTRACT**

It is universally recognised that - on a personal level - Michelangelo and his entourage were deeply suspicious of Raphael, and this circumstance seems to have led to the widespread assumption that he must have been completely uninterested in his young rival's artistic achievements. This contribution seeks to demonstrate the contrary, principally through three specific instances where Michelangelo's drawings quote or adapt inventions by Raphael, all of which are in the form of prints after his designs executed by his favourite printmaker, Marcantonio Raimondi. These derivations have – so to speak – been hiding in plain sight and have presumably been overlooked because of the near-universal conviction that Michelangelo would have refused to allow himself to be inspired by his hated rival, Raphael.

*È universalmente riconosciuto che - a livello personale - Michelangelo e il suo entourage erano profondamente sospettosi nei confronti di Raffaello, e questa circostanza sembra aver portato alla diffusa supposizione che egli dovesse essere stato completamente disinteressato ai risultati artistici del suo giovane rivale. Questo contributo cerca di dimostrare il contrario, principalmente attraverso tre casi specifici, in cui i disegni di Michelangelo citano o adattano invenzioni di Raffaello, tutte sotto forma di stampe derivate dai suoi disegni ed eseguite dal suo incisore preferito, Marcantonio Raimondi. Queste derivazioni sono state nascoste in bella vista e, presumibilmente, sono state trascurate a causa della convinzione quasi universale che Michelangelo si sarebbe rifiutato di lasciarsi ispirare dal suo odiato rivale, Raffaello.*

**KEYWORDS** Michelangelo Buonarroti • Raphael • Marcantonio Raimondi • drawing • engraving • print • Renaissance • Italy

**PAROLE CHIAVE** *Michelangelo Buonarroti • Raffaello • Marcantonio Raimondi • disegno • incisione • stampa di traduzione • Rinascimento • Italia*

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# Michelangelo and Raphael

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The fundamental importance of the work of Michelangelo for Raphael's artistic development was in effect recognised from the very outset[1]. At the same time, there is extensive early documentary evidence that people in Michelangelo's immediate circle, and by implication the *maestro* himself, were violently personally opposed to Raphael[2]. In consequence, but for no very good reason, it seems to have become standard practice to take it for granted that Michelangelo had absolutely no interest in Raphael's art. The purpose of this short note is to follow the example of an article by Konrad Oberhuber published in 1967, and question that particular piece of received wisdom[3].

It goes without saying that in Rome – from the early 1510s to his death over half a century later in 1564 - Michelangelo could scarcely have avoided seeing works by Raphael, whether he wanted to or not. In the case of the Vatican Stanze and the Logge Vaticane, they would have been very near at hand when he came to paint the *Last Judgement* and the Cappella Paolina[4]. If he had set foot in the churches of Santa Maria in Aracoeli, San Pietro in Montorio, or Santa Maria della Pace, he would have encountered Raphael's *Madonna di Foligno* in the first, his *Transfiguration* in the second, and his frescoes for the Chigi chapel in the third[5]. Moreover, his close associate Sebastiano del Piombo was active in the last two of the three: in the former, he was responsible for the decoration of the Borgherini chapel, where the frescoed altarpiece was at least in part based upon drawings by Michelangelo himself; in the latter, Sebastiano executed the altarpiece of the Chigi Chapel itself[6].

Strictly speaking, however, none of this amounts to proof. Nevertheless, there are a goodly number of hitherto in the main ignored or overlooked pieces of visual evidence that do cumulatively suggest Michelangelo was rather more interested in Raphael's art than he might have wished the world to know. To start with, there is a double-sided sheet in the Istituto Centrale per la Grafica (formerly the Gabinetto Nazionale delle Stampe) in Rome, whose connection with Raphael has already been established and which is generally agreed to date from the early 1520s. Paul Joannides was the first to grasp that both its *recto* and *verso* include copies of details from three separate Marcantonio Raimondi engravings after inventions by Raphael[7]. The prints in question are the *Martyrdom of Saint Cecilia* (copied on the *recto*), and the *Parnassus* and the *Last Supper*[8] (copied on the *verso*). Moreover, as was originally pointed out by Caroline Elam, and has more recently been reasserted by Martin Sonnabend, the quality of the hatching of the figure of the Prefect in the study of that figure on the *recto* betrays the hand of Michelangelo correcting the work of a pupil, plausibly identified as Antonio Mini[9].

A further connection with the related worlds of Marcantonio and Raphael is represented by the *verso* of a double-sided sheet in the Uffizi, whose *recto* features autograph sketches of putti by Michelangelo, together with two inscriptions – apparently of different dates - in his hand[10]. In this case, the seemingly hitherto unrecognised source for the *verso* is another Marcantonio engraving after Raphael, the *Dance of Cupids*, from which five of the total of nine putti have been precisely copied, albeit unevenly finished[11]. Once again, the idea that the copy is the work of one of Michelangelo's pupils seems uncontroversial, and

1 Vasari/Milanesi 1878-1885, IV, pp. 319-320, for the idea that Raphael's move to Florence was inspired by his desire to learn from the battle cartoons of Leonardo and Michelangelo.
2 Shearman 2003, I, p. 385, for a characteristic example in a letter of 1 January 1519 from Leonardo Sellaio in Rome to Michelangelo in Florence, and Liebert 1984, pp. 60-68, for a more general consideration of their rivalry.
3 Oberhuber 1967, pp. 156-164.
4 Dussler 1971, pp. 69-88, pl. 113-144, for the Stanze, and Davidson 1985.
5 See Meyer zur Capellen 2001-2008, II, pp. 98-106, no. 52, for the *Madonna di Foligno*, and pp. 195-209, no. 66, for the *Transfiguration*; and Dussler 1971, pp. 95-96, pl. 155-156, for the Chigi Chapel.
6 Hirst 1981, pp. 49-65, 127-128, and 139-144.
7 Joannides 1988, pp. 530-531, and Sonnabend 2009, pp. 54-57, no. 5, and figs. 7-8 (illustrated in colour). See also de Tolnay 1975-1980, II, no. 318.
8 See respectively *Raphaël* 1983, p. 355, no. 39, and Shoemaker-Broun 1981, pp. 155-157, no. 48, and pp. 116-117, no. 30. For borrowings from them by Garofalo, Lorenzo Leonbruno, and Cesare da Conegliano, see respectively Ekserdjian 2019; Gregori 1989, p. 119, fig. 61.
9 Joannides 1988, pp. 530-531, and Sonnabend 2009, pp. 55-56, no. 5.
10 de Tolnay 1975-1980, I, no. 70, where the drawing on the *verso* is attributed to Perini, and Barkan 2011, pp. 199-207, figs. 6.21-6.22, where he states that «the *verso*, with its feebly drawn quartet of cherubs, gives evidence that this page passed through the hands of one or more pupils».
11 Shoemaker-Broun 1981, p. 136, no. 39.

**Fig. 1** Michelangelo Buonarroti, *The Holy Family with a Kneeling Infant Saint John the Baptist*, red chalk, circa 1520, Inv. 692 *verso*. Paris, Musée du Louvre, Département des Arts graphiques/ © Grand PalaisRmn.

since the name «Perino» appears on the *recto*, it has not unreasonably been proposed that the *verso* may be the work of Gherardo Perini and likewise date from the 1520s[12].

Three further dependencies upon models by Raphael are all less pedantically faithful to their respective prototypes, but arguably that only increases their interest. The first (Fig. 1) is a red chalk study of a *Holy Family with a Kneeling Infant Saint John the Baptist* on the *verso* of a double-sided sheet in the Louvre, whose *recto*, likewise executed in red chalk, represents the almost identical subject of the *Virgin and Child with the Infant Baptist*[13]. Datable to the late 1520s, the study on the *verso* has tended to be associated with the central group in Fra Bartolomeo's unfinished *Saint Anne Altarpiece* in the Galleria Palatina in Florence, a work intended for the Sala dei Cinquecento[14] in the Palazzo Vecchio, but it is actually far closer to an invention of Raphael's that must admittedly depend upon it. The more celebrated version of the basic figure group is found in the so-called *Madonna del Divino Amore*, now in Capodimonte in Naples, which Vasari records as having been commissioned by Lionello Pio, the lord of Meldola, but there also exists a variant of it, in all probability based upon an earlier conception of the design, in the form of an engraving by Marcantonio Raimondi known as the *Madonna della Palma*[15] (Fig. 2). It is not just the geographical remoteness of Meldola that makes it clear Michelangelo drew his inspiration from the print: the strict profile of the blessing Christ Child sitting on his mother's knees is the same in both solutions, but it was from the print that he adapted the attitude of the figure of Saint Elizabeth to arrive at the head of his Virgin, which is nearly frontal but at the same time shows her gazing down to her right. The second homage relates to a single figure within a composition, and involves a sex change, which may be the prime reason why it has been largely overlooked, for all that it was recognised by Oberhuber in the article cited above, and before him by Erwin Panofsky[16].

**Fig. 2** Marcantonio Raimondi (after Raphael), *The Virgin of the Palm Tree*, burin, Inv. 17.37.155. © New York, The Metropolitan Museum of Art

12 De Tolnay 1975-1980, I, no. 70, where the drawing on the *verso* is dated around 1517-1522, and Barkan 2011, p. 202, fig. 6.22, where reference is made to «the decade of the 1520s'».
13 De Tolnay 1975-1980, II, no. 246, where the drawing on the *verso* is associated with Leonardo da Vinci and Raphael. See also Joannides 2003, pp. 154-157, no. 32, and Hirst 1988, pp. 94-95, no. 39. For a borrowing of the two foremost putti - in reverse - by Benedetto Montagna in an altarpiece of 1533, see Barbieri 1981, pl. 105.
14 Joannides 2003, pp. 154-157, no. 32, and Elen - Fischer 2016, pp. 142-149, no. 9B, for the painting.
15 Meyer zur Cappellen 2001-2008, II, pp. 247-251, no. A8, for the painting, and . Dodds 2016, p. 212, no. 76, for the print. See also Ekserdjian 2006b, pp. 366-67, especially p. 367, for the connection. For an adapted borrowing of the *Madonna and Child and the Infant Baptist* in a *Holy Family* by Marco Palmezzano in the Pinacoteca Vaticana, see *Vaticani Online*, <https://catalogo.museivaticani.va> (last accessed 7 August 2024).
16 Panofsky 1927, pp. 25-58, especially p. 33, note 1, and Oberhuber 1967, pp. 160-161.

Fig. 3 Marcantonio Raimondi (after Raphael), *The Judgment of Paris*, burin, Inv. 19.74.1. © New York, The Metropolitan Museum of Art

Fig. 4 Michelangelo Buonarroti, *Venus and Cupid*, charcoal, Inv. 86654. © Napoli, Museo e Real Bosco di Capodimonte

Fig. 5 Michelangelo Buonarroti, *Pietà*, black chalk, 1540, Inv. 1.2.0.16. © Boston, Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum

Fig. 6 Marcantonio Raimondi (after Raphael), *The Virgin and the Cradle*, burin, Inv. 17.37.153. © New York, The Metropolitan Museum of Art

It concerns the reclining figure of the river-god at the right margin of what is arguably Marcantonio Raimondi's most celebrated engraving, the *Judgement of Paris* (Fig. 3), which Michelangelo has only minimally modified for the figure of the goddess in his cartoon of *Venus and Cupid* (Fig. 4), originally executed for Bartolomeo Bettini around 1532-34, and now in Capodimonte in Naples[17]. When the two figures are compared, it is clear that the basic pose is essentially unchanged, that the legs are remarkably literally copied, but that a number of changes – to Venus's right arm and especially her left one, as well as the turn of her head into a pure profile – have occurred in order to adapt the figure for its new narrative purpose. In this connection, it is worth underlining the fact that Raphael's river-god in the print is categorically not one of the elements of the composition directly derived from the Roman sarcophagus – now in the Villa Medici in Rome – that was indisputably his point of departure[18]. It should also be added that there also exists an engraving, generally agreed to be by Agostino Veneziano, which reverses the river-god and represents him in isolation[19].

The third and final quotation relates to Michelangelo's presentation drawing of the *Pietà*, which was made for Vittoria Colonna in the early 1540s (Giulio Bonasone's print after it is dated 1546), and is now in the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum in Boston (Fig. 5)[20]. In this case, the borrowing is yet again connected with a single figure as opposed to a group, and the source is an engraving by Marcantonio Raimondi usually called the *Virgin and the Cradle* (Fig. 6), where the Madonna and Child are flanked by an older female figure, generally identified as Saint Elizabeth,

17 Shoemaker-Broun 1981, pp. 146-147, no. 43, and de Tolnay 1975-1980, II, p. 87. See also Spinosa 1997, p. 305; Bambach 2017, pp. 144-146 and p. 301, no. 121, and above all Katz Nelson 2002. For a borrowing of the river-god – in reverse – in a painting of the *Tree of Jesse* by an anonymous mid-sixteenth-century Spanish artist, see *Inmaculada* 2005, pp. 96-97.

18 Jones-Penny 1983, p. 174, pl. 186-187, for both works juxtaposed, and Katz Nelson 2002, pp. 160-161, no. 10, where the connection between Michelangelo's *Venus* and ancient river-gods is underlined, but there is no suggestion of a direct connection with the print.

19 Cordellier-Py 1992, p. 162, for a recent reference to this engraving (Bartsch 1803-1821, XIV, p. 176, no. 214), and *British Museum Online*, <www.britishmuseum.org>, Inv. 1863,0725.1745, for an image (last accessed 30 May 2024).

20 de Tolnay 1975-1980, III, no. 426, and Bambach 2017, pp. 194-199 and pp. 306-307, no. 170.

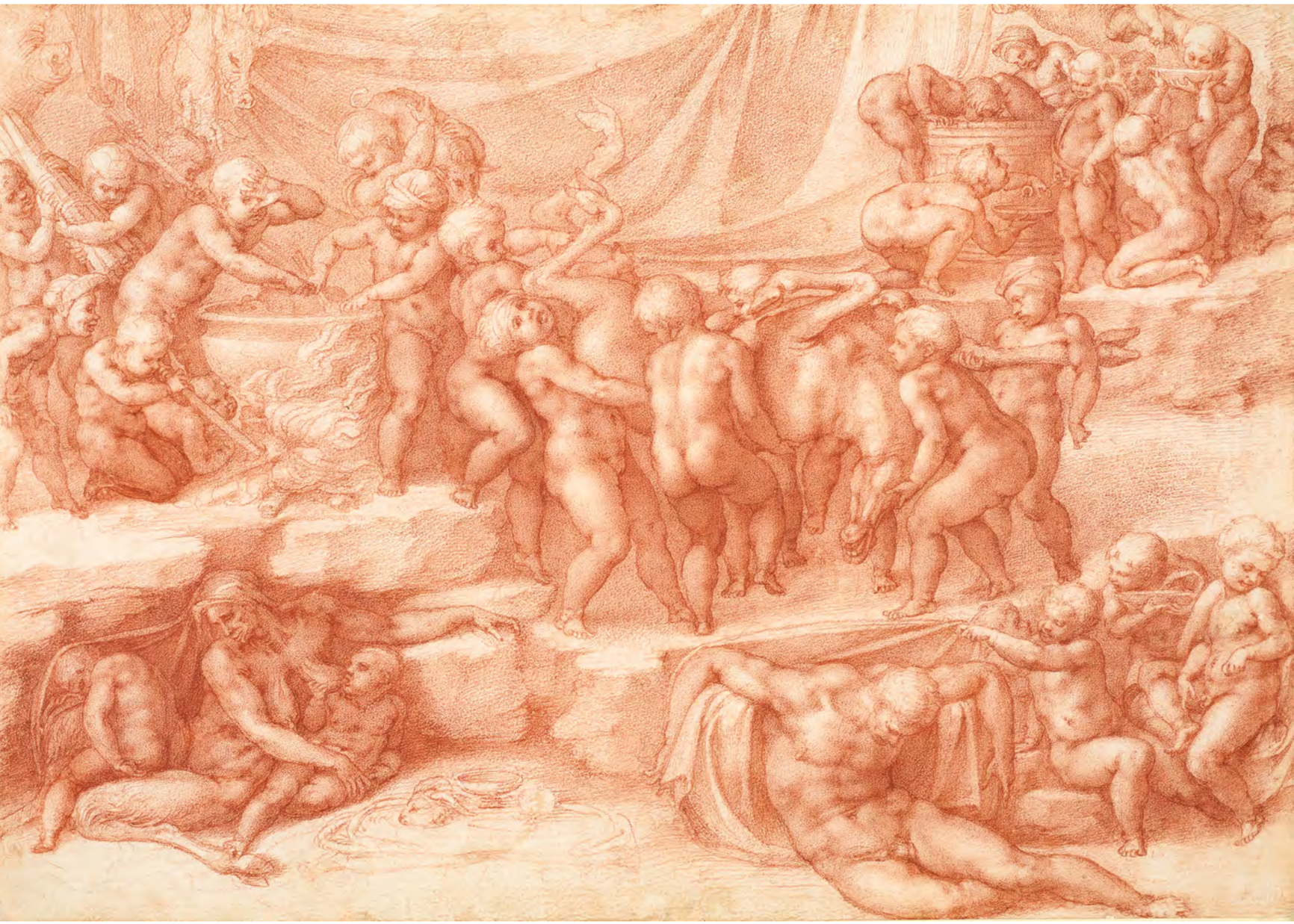

**Fig. 7** Michelangelo Buonarroti, *A Bacchanal of Children*, red chalk, 1533, Inv. 86654. Royal Collection Trust/ © His Majesty King Charles III 2022

and by a putto-angel with a ewer, but also surmounted by a second older female figure, who must logically be Saint Anne[21]. She is shown looking downwards and with her arms outstretched, and it is this highly individual attitude as well as the angle of her head that are both echoed by the Virgin in Michelangelo's design, where, however, she looks up to heaven as opposed to down to earth, and where her head is tilted to her right, not her left.

The fact that Michelangelo's *bottega* should have contained prints by other artists should not come as a surprise, since it was absolutely standard practice at the time, as is plain from the example of Parmigianino, among others[22]. Indeed, and regardless of the status of the painting of the *Temptation of Saint Anthony* in the Kimbell Art Museum in Fort Worth, there is no reason to question the account given by both Vasari and Condivi of a very early picture by Michelangelo directly copied from Martin Schongauer's engraving of the subject[23]. Moreover, the wide reach of prints both northern and home-grown in sixteenth-century Italy is strikingly apparent, and the

21 Shoemaker-Broun 1981, pp. 158-159, no. 49. For a borrowing from it by Perino del Vaga, see Parma 2001, pp. 148-149, no. 45.
22 Ekserdjian 2006a, pp. 213-214, for prints recorded in the Baiardo Inventory, which may well have belonged to Parmigianino, and *ibid.*, pp. 32-37, for Parmigianino and prints more generally.
23 Christiansen-Gallagher 2009.

Fig. 8 Raphael, *The Entombment of Jesus*, oil on panel, 1507, Inv. 369. © Roma, Galleria Borghese

notes to the present article register further - in the main unacknowledged - derivations from all the engravings Michelangelo appears to have known.

In addition to the more general craving for prints in the period, there is a very simple reason why it is virtually inconceivable that Michelangelo could have failed to own prints by Raphael's favourite print-maker - namely that there exist no fewer than five Marcantonio engravings after designs by Michelangelo himself. The first three comprise figures from the cartoon for the projected fresco of the *Battle of Cascina* for the Sala dei Cinquecento in the Palazzo Vecchio in Florence. Two are of single figures, while the third includes a trio of them, and has come to be known as *The Climbers*[24]. The two others are respectively of the *Expulsion of Adam and Eve*,

24 Barnes 2010, p. 13, fig. 1.2, p. 14, fig. 1.3, and p. 16, fig. 1.4.

and of *Two Sons of Noah*, both from frescoes on the Sistine Chapel ceiling, the latter in reverse[25]. A sixth print derived from a Michelangelo invention is of less secure authorship, but must at the very least be from Marcantonio's circle, and has most recently been designated 'Agostino Veneziano (?)'[26]. It too – for all that this has never been understood – is connected with the Sistine Chapel ceiling, and represents one of the ancestors of Christ extracted from the lost *Abraham, Isaac, Jacob* lunette, which was destroyed to make way for Michelangelo's own *Last Judgement*, but whose appearance is known via later prints[27].

It is by no means clear how these prints came to be made, and in the scholarly literature it often seems to be implied that they were derived from copy drawings made from the various originals[28]. At least in the case of the three based upon elements from the Sistine Chapel ceiling, another possibility has to be that Michelangelo furnished Marcantonio with his own highly finished drawings for the relevant figures, for all that no such drawings for these particular figures have survived. Even if that were not to be the case, it does not seem unreasonable to presume that Marcantonio would not have dared make the engravings without seeking Michelangelo's approval.

Were it not for the evidence presented up to this point, it might seem to be stretching a point to posit an association between Michelangelo's *Bacchanal of Children* (**Fig. 7**) and Raphael's Borghese *Entombment* (**Fig. 8**), not least since that altarpiece was not only executed for Perugia in 1507, before its creator had reached Rome, but was in addition not engraved in the sixteenth century[29]. In fact, however, the connection was proposed by Panofsky as long ago as 1939, supported by Oberhuber, and has more recently been convincingly reasserted by Alexander Nagel, admittedly without any consideration of how Michelangelo might have known the work in question[30].

The notion that at least one other element of the *Bacchanal of Children* – and not just the 'entombment' of a dead deer in a cooking pot – might represent a further ingenious play on traditional Christian iconography was also argued by Nagel, who rightly observed that Battista Franco repurposed the male figure in the bottom right-hand corner of the *Bacchanal* to turn him into the dead Christ in his *Lamentation* (Museo Nazionale di Villa Mansi, Lucca)[31].

Piquantly, Domenico Buti had exactly the same idea, and included the figure in his *Pietà*[32] (Raccolta di Arte Sacra di Sant'Agata in the Mugello).

25 Rose 2016, p. 153, no. 20, and Barnes 2010, p. 22, fig. 1.7.
26 Bartsch 1803-1821, XIV, p. 433, no. 327, and <www.britishmuseum.org>, Inv. 1841,0809.91, for an image.
27 Pietrangeli 1986, p. 178, for engravings of the two lost lunettes from William Young Ottley's *Italian School of Design* (Ottley 1823), and de Tolnay 1975-1980, I, no. 173*r*, for a preliminary drawing in black chalk for the same figure.
28 Barnes 2010, p. 21, for the idea that «they were certainly made from drawings (perhaps copies by Raphael) or Michelangelo's cartoons».
29 See respectively de Tolnay 1975-1980, II, no. 338, and Meyer zur Cappellen 2001-2008, I, pp. 233-246, no. 31.
30 Oberhuber 1967, pp. 158-159, and Nagel 2000, pp. 161-162.
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