Michelangelo As A Sculptor: Analysing Pieta, Moses And Slaves

Michelangelo Buonarroti was a painter, sculptor, architect and poet widely considered one of the most brilliant artists of the Italian renaissance. Who exerted an unparalleled influence on the development of western artworks. His work demonstrated a blend of psychological insight, physical realism and intensity never before seen. Michelangelo contemporaries recognized his extraordinary talent within his artworks Pieta, Moses and Slaves. These sculptures changed the way that people look at sculptor work.

One of the most famous sculptors in the world, Michelangelo di Lodovico Buonarroti Simoni, was born on March 6, 1475 in Caprese Italy. Michelangelo is one of the greatest Renaissance artists who has created statues and paintings that have been marvelled at for centuries. He is well-known for his extraordinary talent in sculpturing which is shown in his artworks Pieta which is a sculpture made out of marble that was made in 1498-1499. It depicts the body of Jesus in the lap of his mother after the Crucifixion. This particular scene is one of the seven sorrows of Mary used in Catholic devotional prayers and depicts a key moment in her life foretold by the prophet, Simeon. Another famous work done by Michelangelo is called Moses which is made of marble sculpture created in 1513 - 1516. This is one of his artworks that made it into the Italian renaissance which is a period of time where Italian artists declared that they were living in a new age. This pose represented by Michelangelo is the one which follows the delivery of the Seven Commandments on Mount Sinai, when Moses finds the Israelites intent in worshiping a golden calf, a sign of worship of other gods. His sculpture Slaves it is a collection of 4 sculptures they are popular due to their unfinished state. These sculptures have been interpreted in many ways. As we see them, in various stages of completion, they evoke the enormous strength of the creative concept as they try to free themselves from the bonds and physical weight of the marble.

Michelangelo’s Pietà was the first depiction of this Christian theme executed in marble. Its heightened sense of realism, along with its aesthetic beauty, makes it both a contemporary and present-day masterpiece. It promotes the highly religious subject matter in a new medium, which in this case changes the appreciation of the sculpture from a solely devotional function to also being considered for its craftsmanship. The subject matter of Pietà was not new: the theme was quite popular during the Renaissance in Northern European sculpture and was also present in Italian paintings. The size of the sculpture was considerably big pyramid shape with the measurements of 174 cm × 195 cm (68.5 in × 76.8 in). The proportions are not symmetrical and natural causing Mary to tower over her Son if she stood up and her head is out of proportion to the rest of her body. Michelangelo, in all his creative genius, hides this enlargement with exquisite, lifelike folds of a full-length drapery. The folds set the sculpture into motion and enhance its alternation of light and shadow. The top of Mary's head is small with a delicate face with pretty feature. The sculpture expands out to Mary's wide legs, the ruffling pleats are covering her legs highlight Michelangelo’s excellent virtuosity and his skill to shape marble pieces into deeply cut works of art. Mary is sat swathed in robes and cradling a lifeless Jesus. His head is flopped back against her shoulder and his legs are supported by his mother's arms. Set after the time when Jesus had been crucified, the two figures are disproportionately sized. Mary is extremely large in comparison to the muscular yet small figure of Jesus. The

reason that Mary and Jesus are out of proportion is because of the technical difficulties of having a woman cradle a fully-grown man. This disproportionate use of sizing was common in Renaissance art and thus Michelangelo's Pieta was not considered bizarre.

The Moses by Michelangelo can be dated from 1513-1515 and was to be part of the tomb of Pope Julius II. The statue of Moses was placed on a tier about 3.74 meters high. It is represented by Michelangelo is the one which follows the delivery of the Commandments on Mount Sinai, when Moses finds the Israelites intent in worshiping a golden calf, a sign of worship of other gods. Moses is angry and seems to be on the verge of getting up and destroying everything. An anger which is perfectly expressed by the swollen veins and tensed muscles that appear to give life to the marble. The posture is that of a prophet, posed on a marble chair, between two decorated marble columns. His long beard descends to his lap and is set aside by his right hand, which also leans on the plates. This depicts a majestic Moses sitting with the Tablets of the Law under his arm, while his other hand fondles his long beard, which according to Vasari was carved with such perfection that it seems more a 'work of brush than chisel'. Moses is an imposing figure; he is nearly eight feet high sitting down. He has enormous muscular arms and an angry, intense look in his eyes. Under his arms he carries the tablets of the law, the stones inscribed with the Ten Commandments that he has just received from God on Mt. Sinai.

In 1505, Michelangelo was commissioned by Pope Julius II to design his huge, free-standing tomb standing at the height of 2.15 meters tall called the slaves. The artist went straight to work, traveling to the marble quarries of Carrara, in central Italy. To hand select the pieces that he would use to create statues for the tomb. The two chained slaves express entirely different emotions. The one known as the Dying Slave is superbly young and handsome, and apparently in a deep (perhaps eternal) sleep. The other, called the Rebellious Slave, is a coarser figure whose whole body seems engaged in a violent struggle. Michelangelo intended both statues for the splendid funerary monument originally planned for and by Pope Julius II. The project which was repeatedly modified during forty years of successive programs. The unfinished state of the grain of the marble on the Rebellious Slave's face and the thinness of the base beneath the figures' lower feet no doubt explain that the works were abandoned. However, non-finito was a recurrent theme with Michelangelo, who played on the opposition between the shine on the smooth, impeccable body of the Dying Slave, and the rough surface of raw marble.

The artworks Pieta, Moses and Slaves by Michelangelo shows how much work it is to be able to make such large scales of sculptures and to have the religious theme throughout all of them.