Cammy Brothers. *Michelangelo, Drawing, and the Invention of Architecture*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008. index. illus. bibl. $65. ISBN: 978–0–300–12489–7.

Michelangelo's fame as an architect, as the author of this truly original book astutely observes, has eclipsed his influence. Even today, in the age of interdisciplinary study of the arts, scholars pay little attention to the relations between his activities as a painter, sculptor, architect, and poet. The aim of *Michelangelo, Drawing, and the Invention of Architecture* is to gain a better understanding of Michelangelo's architectural designs by relating them to his work as a draughtsman, painter, and sculptor, and by using his figurative drawing practice as a key to his development from a sculptor and painter to a designer of tombs, altar frames, chapels, and ultimately free-standing independent buildings.

In four substantial chapters Brothers discusses Michelangelo's drawing technique and strategies to invent compositions; his application of the techniques learned in drawing the human figure to generate multi-figure compositions to architectural composition; the evolution from a conception of architecture as a frame surrounding figures to its inversion, considering the figure as the frame, resulting ultimately in a dissolution of the boundaries between them; and finally Michelangelo's first independent architectural project, the Laurentian Library.

The thread that connects Michelangelo's earliest designs for tombs and altar pieces with the Sistine Chapel ceiling and the Laurentian Library is that of transformation. In a series of very acute analyses of Michelangelo's drawings the author shows how Michelangelo transformed forms largely drawn from Roman antiquities or earlier projects through a series of maneuvers he first developed in his drawings for the *Battle of the Centaurs*, the *Battle of Anghiari*, the *Slaves* and the *Ignudi*: inversion, reversal, scale shift and displacement of attitudes, body members, or compositional schemes, whether these be human bodies or remains of classical buildings. In his early sketches after the Codex Coner he consistently ignored the

aspects Vitruvian architects focused on for analytical and reconstruction purposes: measurements, nomenclature, and origins of the details. Instead he used the classical fragments creatively, copying for instance two bases from the Codex, but reversing them just as he had done in his figure studies for the Sistine *ignudi*, and employing them as a kit of parts to be assembled and reassembled at will.

Michelangelo moved from a conception of architecture as a *quadro* or framing device for figural sculpture to a more volumetric conception in which the architectural elements have become an aniconic, asymbolical language that nonetheless forces the viewer to look because they represent, and act on, the physical experience of seeing and walking through a building. This approach is both new and very rewarding. By applying the methods Michelangelo used to draw human figures and figural composition to his architectural work, Brothers succeeds in staying very close to his working methods and the way he expressed himself occasionally about the creative process. But above all, the author really makes the reader look with fresh eyes at buildings that have always puzzled and troubled historians and critics. Her treatment of the Laurentian Library is exemplary. Coming at the end of her book, it integrates her analysis of Michelangelo's design as a series of transformations of elements, showing how he changed elements of the classical orders into forms balancing between geometry and abstraction from bodily form. In a brilliant interpretive tour de force integrating Wölfflin's *Prolegomena to a Psychology of Architecture* with her own view of the development of his work as a gradual dissolution of the boundaries between frames and figures, she offers a new interpretation of the vestibule as a stage for the viewing experience of the visitor that refuses to remain a passive background but acts in such a way on viewers that they becomes active participants in the drama of architecture presented here. This book is one of the most important to have appeared on Michelangelo since James Ackerman's *The Architecture of Michelangelo* of 1961. It is beautifully written, crisp, astute, and witty, its felicities and insights are too numerous to enumerate here, and it should be included in every course on Renaissance architecture.

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