

EVALUATIVE CONCLUSION

The three texts have different approaches to the role and place of sculpture in the Renaissance. Firstly, Leonardo was very vocal in his opinion that sculpture doesn't even come close to comparing with painting. He maintains that painting is the noblest form of art as it is more intellectual than any other, and because it gives the artist the "god-like" authority to render life on a two-dimensional plane. "[The sculptor's] face is pasted and smeared all over with marble powder, making him look like a baker, and his dwelling is dirty, and filled with dust and chips of stone... The painter sits in front of his work at perfect ease. He is arrayed in the garments he fancies, and his home is clean and filled with delightful pictures." Leonardo carries on what can only be called a stubborn dismissal of any form of art that entails great physical work and less intellectual effort as merely the work of a labourer and not that of a dignified and renowned artist. He almost likens the painter to a god, because the painter has the ability "and the authority" to create that which he so pleases. Sculpture to Leonardo is the art of the intellectually challenged.

Quote one

Michelangelo, on the other hands, thinks the complete opposite. For him, if only because sculpture requires a lot more physical effort in addition to all the skills that any artist must have – a thorough knowledge of his subject matter, the aim to move the viewer through the stories and emotions expressed visually instead of through word of mouth, etc – he used to think that sculpture was the lantern of painting. This means that he used to think that it is the process of sculpture that paved ways for innovations in painting, because anything a painter does to improve his work is leading to the goal of creating the effect of relief. But in the text, he writes to Benedetto Varchi that because both painting and sculpture lead toward the same end, which is to render something life-like from what is not alive, they are one and the same thing. "I now consider that painting and sculpture are one and the same thing, unless greater nobility be imparted by the necessity for a better judgement, greater difficulties of execution, stricter limitations and harder work." In the letters, he writes about the hardships that sculptors have to go through in order to produce a work of art that is worthy of being displayed in tombs of Popes and leaders of men to show their nobility and strength of character. The tone with which he writes shows his distress and shows that the whole process is not at all easy, especially with demanding patrons breathing down your neck. Most importantly, he mentions that the Pope, after having been endlessly nagged by him, gave him free reign over the design for the vault of the Sistine Chapel and all other projects he was working on at the time. This is important because it says a lot about the role of the sculptor. Because his job is to extract the life out of marble, something which Michelangelo believes is already present within the block, he can't be dictated. Since then, sculptors and artists have had some authority over their designs and how they want to portray their subject. "As soon as I had begun this work I realised that it would be but a poor thing, and I told the Pope how, in my opinion, the placing of the Apostles there alone would have a poor effect... He left me free to do as I thought best." The belief may have come from his idea that the process of creating a sculpture is in a way an expression of the sculptor's spiritual turmoil. This is different from what Leonardo says in his notebooks, where he says that the most important thing a painter should be thinking of is to be recognised for his art – "O painter, take care lest the greed to gain prove a stronger incentive than renown in art, for to gain this renown is a far greater thing than is the renown of riches." Towards the end of Michelangelo's life, his spirituality became more and more important for him, and this is shown through the anguish and internal struggle expressed through his last two works – the Florentine Pieta and the Rondanini Pieta.

Quote two

Quote three