

“Michelangelo’s Slaves” video transcription

We are in Michelangelo’s studio, in Renaissance Italy. The room has many arches and two arcades overlooking a garden with Cyprus trees. The studio is full of carving tools and in the middle of the room there is a large block of white marble. Michelangelo is middle-aged; he has a coarse beard and wears a blue shirt, and is speaking to a young apprentice in the foreground.

[Narrator]

Michelangelo was not just an artist of genius—he was also a man of great modesty.

[Apprentice]

- Master, how do you create such beautiful works of art? Do you have a secret?

[Michelangelo]

- To tell the truth, I don't create a thing! Look, what do you see there? A block of marble. Come back in a few days' time...

Michelangelo spends hours looking at the block of marble in the center of the room, studying and touching it night and day but never making a move.

Then, finally, one morning he takes his tools, gets on the stepladder and begins carving. Pieces fall to the floor and, bit by bit, a male figure is revealed. He is naked, standing with his arms constrained behind his back, as if trying to break free.

Michelangelo shows the artwork to the apprentice.

[Michelangelo]

- What do you see now?

[Apprentice]

- A slave—he's magnificent!

[Michelangelo]

- That's my secret: when I look at a block of marble, I see the sculpture inside. I just chip away the surplus stone. I don't create; I simply reveal what was already there.