

Due to copyright restrictions,
this image is only available in the print
version of *Christian Reflection*.

**Is the all-consuming fury, which is so powerfully expressed
in Vasari's *The Damned Soul*, the result or the cause of the
figure's eternal damnation?**

Consuming Fury

BY HEIDI J. HORNICK

Is the all-consuming fury so powerfully expressed in Vasari's *The Damned Soul* the result or cause of the soul's damnation? The figure is tense with open mouth, furrowed brow, and strained neck muscles; his hair and drapery, flying upwards, convey movement as well as the burning anger felt throughout his being.

Attributed to Giorgio Vasari on the basis of stylistic analysis, this drawing is a faithful copy of Michelangelo's *The Damned Soul* (Uffizi, inv 601 E), using the same black chalk technique.¹ Vasari, who is best known as the father of art history because he wrote the first set of biographies of artists, was also an influential painter and architect in the sixteenth century.

Like his good friend and colleague Michelangelo, Vasari stressed the importance of *le arti del disegno* (the art of drawing with accuracy, precision, and emotion). He and other Mannerist (Late Renaissance) artists looked to Michelangelo's drawings as the unsurpassable pinnacle of expressive form. "By copying his drawings, Vasari was able to understand intimately Michelangelo's vocabulary and to emulate it with astonishing accuracy," notes Annamaria Petrioli Tofani, former director of the Uffizi Gallery in Florence.² Vasari formed a committee of reformist painters (Michele Tosini, Agnolo Bronzino, and Pier Francesco di Foschi) and sculptors (Montorsoli and Francesco da Sangallo) to help him draft the constitution of the *Compagnia ed Accademia del Disegno*.³ This first "art institute" in Florence was established in 1563 by Cosimo de' Medici upon the suggestion of Vasari, and Michelangelo, although aging and absent, was named alongside Duke Cosimo as a *capo*, or head, of the Accademia.⁴

Michelangelo and Vasari approached drawing not only as an instrument of study (and elevation of artists' status out of the guild system for craftsman), but also as an autonomous expressive medium to create perfectly executed, finished works.⁵ *The Damned Soul* was part of a group of "Divine Heads" drawn by Michelangelo that was extremely influential in the history of art as artists became more observant of nature.

NOTES

1 Annamaria Petrioli Tofani, *Michelangelo, Vasari, and Their Contemporaries: Drawings from the Uffizi* (New York: The Morgan Library and Museum, 2008), 55.

2 Giorgio Vasari, *Le Vite de' più eccellenti pittori, scultori, e architettori da Cimabue insino a' tempi nostri* (Florence, 1568), edited by Gaetano Milanesi, 9 volumes (1878-1885).

3 Heidi J. Hornick, *Michele Tosini and the Ghirlandaio Workshop in Cinquecento Florence* (Eastbourne, UK and Portland, Oregon: Sussex Academic Press, 2009), 40.

4 Anthony Hughes, "'An Academy for Doing'. I: The Accademia del Disegno, the Guilds and the Principate in Sixteenth-Century Florence," *The Oxford Art Journal* 9:1 (1986), 3.

5 Tofani, 5.