

SCULPTURE: HOW IT'S DONE

<http://www.vam.ac.uk/content/articles/y/michelangelo-wax-model/>

Go to the website at the top of the page; here you will find two audio files and one text.

Task 1: Before you listen, read the text, where an explanation of the origin of the piece is given. Answer the following questions.



1. What was the figurine created for?

This small wax figure is a sketch model for the unfinished marble of the Young Slave in the Accademia in Florence, designed for the 1516 scheme for the tomb of Pope Julius II, who died in 1513.

2. Why was the project problematic? Look for information on the Internet and write a small paragraph (50 words).

This scheme was the third of six produced for the problematic project, which, when it was commissioned in 1505, was planned as a large free-standing structure with more than 40 life-size or larger statues, and was intended for St Peter's in Rome

3. Did Michelangelo create his pieces directly on canvas or marble?

No he did not, Michelangelo made a large number of drawings and models in wax, clay and terracotta in connection with both his painting and his sculpture

Wax model of a slave, by Michelangelo, Florence, Italy, about 1516–19. Museum no. 4117-1854 © Victoria and Albert Museum, London. This credit line represents the 'Trustees of the Victoria and Albert Museum' (a non-departmental public body established by the National Heritage Act 1983).

4. Why were people interested in Michelangelo's models?

The growing interest in the creative process and his extraordinary celebrity led several of his contemporaries to collect his drawings and models.

Task 2: Now listen to the first audio file, which is a description of the figure and answer the questions.

1. How many statues did Michelangelo plan? What was their purpose?

It was made as a study for a figure of a slave - one of 40 large marble statues that were planned to decorate the tomb of Pope Julius II

2. Why did Michelangelo never finished the work?

Michelangelo, who received the commission in 1505, was kept so busy by the Pope and his successors that he never completed the tomb.

3. What do the works in this part of the gallery show?

Many of the objects in this part of the gallery are models, rather than finished works of art. They show the early stages in the creative process when an artist is exploring and developing ideas.

4. Why did artists create wax models?

Models helped a sculptor to finalise a design before carving in marble or other expensive materials. Wax was an ideal material to make quick sketches as it becomes supple when warm and can be shaped and re-worked as an idea changes.

Listen again and complete the gaps in the transcript:

Male Narrator:

In one of the cases in front of this audio point, there is a small reddish wax model showing the contorted figure of a male nude. It was made by Michelangelo, arguably the greatest artist of the sixteenth century. It was made as a study for a figure of a slave - one of 40 large marble statues that were planned to decorate the tomb of Pope Julius II. But

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Michelangelo destroyed many of his preparatory models. But his fame - as well as a growing interest in the creative process - led collectors to acquire and preserve some of his drawings and models. Thanks to generations of collectors who treasured this fragile wax model, it has survived for more than 500 years.

Task 3: The second audio file is a description of the process followed to create a wax model. Listen to the audio file and fill in the gaps in these extracts from the transcript.
What tenses are used?

Female narrator:

Models would often have been kept in the sculptor's studio after the design was finalised. According to the sixteenth century artist and writer, Giorgio Vasari, in his 'Life of Michelangelo', sculptors also used models during the marble carving process.

Male voice:

'One must take a figure of wax or some other material and lay it horizontally in a vessel of water; then, as the water is, of course, flat and level, when the figure is raised little by little above the surface the most salient parts are revealed first,

while the lower parts (on the underside of the figure) remain submerged, until eventually it all comes into view. In the same way figures must be carved out of marble by the chisel; the parts in highest relief must be revealed first and then little by little the lower parts. And this method can be seen to have been followed by Michelangelo in his statues of the prisoners.'

WRITING FOLDER 3: Listen again, as many times as you need, to the last audio file, on the process of creating a wax model. Order these student's notes on the process and write a short text (150-180 words) summarising the steps in the process; use the notes as a guide. Use the appropriate tenses and sequencing words.

Add/colour

Cool/wax

Create/shape of the model.

Grind/pigment (red earth or
vermillion)

Heat/wax

Mix/wax and animal fat

Stir/mixture

Work/wax/a central support