

# ART HISTORY PROGRAM

## Lecture Series

**UC DAVIS**  
UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA

<http://arthistory.ucdavis.edu>



## FALL QUARTER 2009

### “Temporality in Form: Elements of Michelangelo’s Theory on Human Proportion in Three of his Early Sculptures”

LAURA HUTCHISON

Michelangelo’s human figures have thus far been studied through one of three approaches: proportion, anatomy, or posture. A study of his use of proportion commonly begins with a comparison to Polykleitos, or discussion of how Michelangelo differs from the ancient master. A study of the hyper-muscular anatomy often results in a legitimizing of his scientific knowledge or unproductive anecdotes about his own personal preoccupation with the male figure. A study of the various postures frequently culminates in a predictably iconographical reading of emotions made manifest in form. All three approaches to Michelangelo’s figures have both strengths and weaknesses. Although the artist’s human figures may generally be categorized as bearing exaggerated proportions of a monumental scale and unrealistic features, it is the constant inconsistencies that define Michelangelo’s idiosyncratic approach. I will argue that three of the artist’s earliest sculptural renderings of the nude male form, as seen in his *Bacchus*, *Christ of the Pietà*, and *David*, stand as evidence of a much broader interest in human emotion through an extension of rational human proportions and features.

Laura Hutchison is a second-year MA candidate in the Art History Program at UC Davis.

**Tuesday, November 3rd • 4:10 pm in ART 210D**