

Victory

Left in the master's study on via Mozza after his death, this statue was donated by his nephew Lionardo to Grand Duke Cosimo I, who placed it in the Salone del Cinquecento where it still stands today. The critics are now almost unanimous in assigning this group to the designs for the tomb of Julius II drawn up by Michelangelo around the end of the 1520s. Evidence for this link comes from the oak leaves around the head of the victorious young man, a heraldic symbol of the Della Rovere family to which the pope belonged. Stylistically, the statue is not very different from the ones carved for the Medici tombs in San Lorenzo. In fact, the figure of the youth resembles the statues of the dukes in its heroic tension, here even more manneristically accentuated, while the stylized and refined formal purity of the face recalls the *Madonna and Child*. The crushed old man, on the other hand, calls to mind the clouded face of *Dawn* on the sarcophagus of Lorenzo of Urbino. Various interpretations of the sculpture's meaning have been offered. The most convincing is the one that sees it as the victory of virtue over vice, in an autobiographical sense as well, with the artist identifying himself not only with the old man, who would be the earthly man, the «defeated old man,» but also, transfigured, with the young man standing over him, as a symbol of his spiritual dimension constantly striving for the Greatest Good.