

The Engravings of Giorgio Ghisi

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Catalogue raisonné by
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The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York

44 *The Prophet Joel*

After Michelangelo
Early 1570s

Platemark: 562/569 × 416/420 mm.

States:

i: Unfinished and before Ghisi's monogram. Architectural elements outlined only, or missing. The head of the reclining male figure at upper right, the feet of the child at bottom center, and the sphere on which he stands outlined only. On a tablet below Joel's feet: "IOEL".

We have seen six impressions in this state, all very fine and dark, at: the Albertina (It.I.30); the British Museum (C 54); Budapest; Chatsworth (vol. III, p. 58); the Teylers Museum, Haarlem; and the collection of Leo Steinberg.

Watermark: no. 18.

ii: Finished. Before Ghisi's monogram and the publisher's address.

Impressions are very fine and dark. Most impressions in this state are printed on two sheets joined horizontally.

Watermark: no. 33.

iii: Added on the sphere beneath the standing figure: ".G.MF. 1549/ Petrus Fachettus Mātua = / nus formis Romae".

We have seen only three impressions in this state, at the Bibliothèque Nationale (AA4, supp.); the Bibliothèque Royale, Brussels; and The Metropolitan Museum of Art.

Watermark: no. 55.

iv: Replacing Facchettus's address: "Nic^o uan aelst for." The "9" of the date changed to "o".

Impressions range from fine to late and worn.

Watermarks: nos. 21, 34, 57, 61, and 55 (?).

v: Fig leaves added to nude figures.

The fig leaves were added after May 1823 by order of Pope Leo XII, according to Massari.

The plate is in the Calcografia Nazionale, inventory no. 194.

References:

Bartsch 18, Heller-Andresen 7, Massari 185

For discussion of the series of Prophets and Sibyls, see pp. 164–65.



44. *The Prophet Joel*, state iii. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Gift of Dr. and Mrs. Goodwin M. Breinin, 1984. 1984.1107.1

45 *The Eritrean Sibyl*

After Michelangelo
Early 1570s

Platemark: 563/572 × 432/436 mm.

States:

i: Before all letters.

Impressions are fine and dark, with many scratches. Most impressions in this state are printed on two sheets joined horizontally.

Watermarks: nos. 33 and 55 (?).

ii: Added on the frieze at the bottom under the cornice:
"MICHAEL ANGELVS INVENT. ET PINXIT. GEORGIVS
MANTVANVS FECIT Nic^o Van alst formis Romae".

Impressions are usually light and unevenly printed, on one sheet.

Watermark: no. 57.

iii: Added, on the tablet under the Sibyl's feet: "IOANES
IACOBVS/ DE RVBEIS FORMIS ROMAE.:", then a space,
and at bottom of the tablet: "alla pace".

Impressions range from very good to worn.

Watermark: no. 61.

iv: The letters on the Sibyl's tablet have been changed to: "IOANES IACOBVS/ DE RVBEIS FORMIS ROMAE/ ad
Templum S^a.M^a de Pace cum/ Privil. Sum. Pont."

Impressions are light and worn.

Watermarks: nos. 21 and 34.

v: Fig leaves added to nude figures.

The fig leaves were added after May 1823 by order of Pope Leo XII, according to Massari.

The plate is in the Calcografia Nazionale, inventory no. 191.

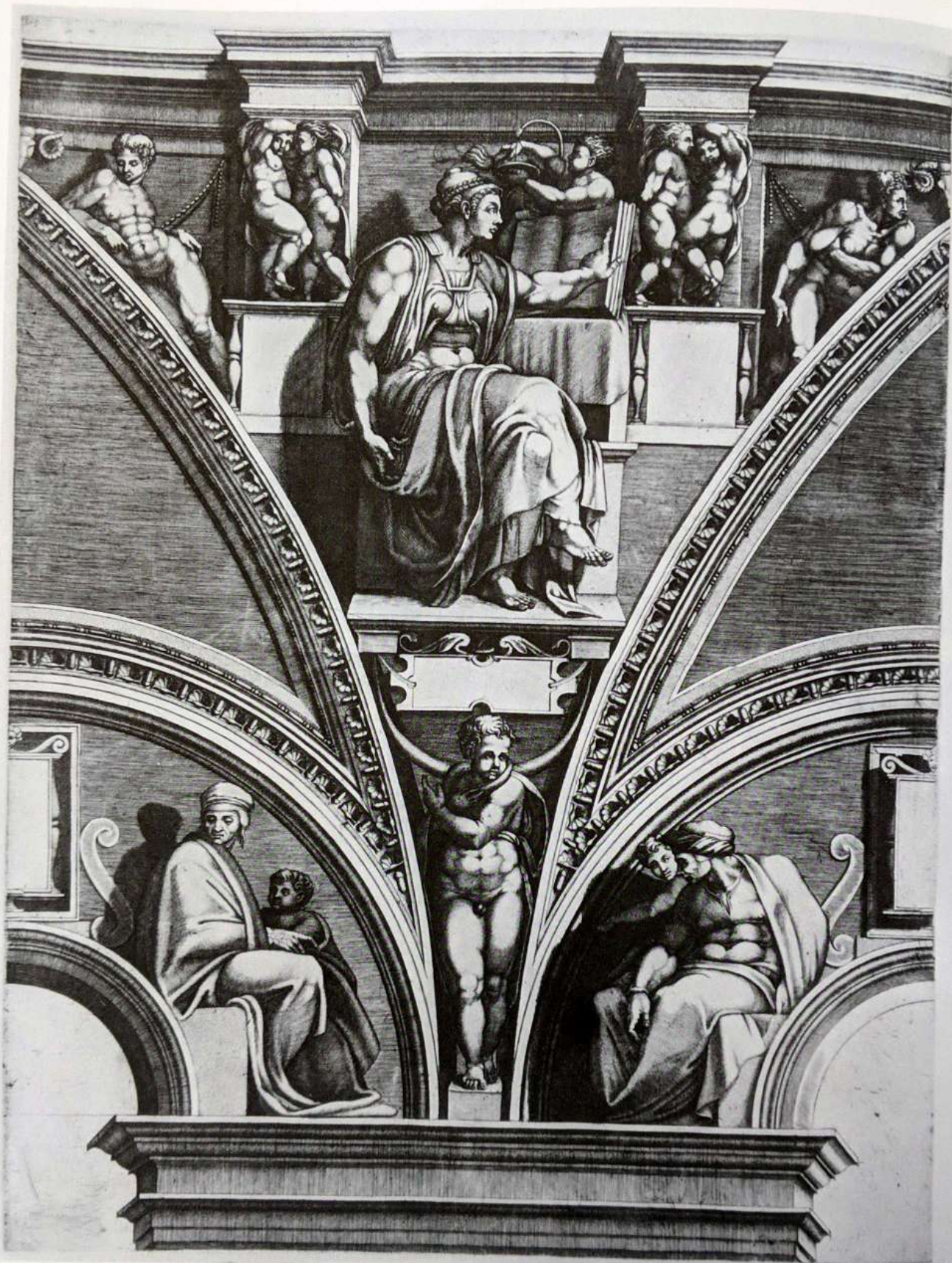
References:

Bartsch 21, Heller-Andresen 7, Massari 188



Fig. 64. *The Eritrean Sibyl*. Fresco by Michelangelo, Sistine Chapel, Vatican, Rome. Photo: Art Resource, New York

For discussion of the series of Prophets and Sibyls, see pp. 164–65.



45. *The Eritrean Sibyl, state i.* The British Museum, London

46 *The Prophet Ezekiel*

After Michelangelo
Early 1570s

Platemark: 558 × 442/445 mm.

States:

- i: Before all letters. At the top of the arch behind the woman with the standing child there is a horizontal crack in the plate, heavily inked, ca. 48 mm. long.

Impressions are fine and dark. Most impressions in this state are printed on two sheets joined horizontally.

Watermark: no. 33.

- ii: Added beneath the seated figure at lower left: ".G.MF. 1549/ Petrus fachettus/ Mantuanus formis".

We have seen only two impressions in this state, both very good to fine, at the Bibliothèque Royale, Brussels, and the Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam (printed in brown ink).

Watermark: no. 55 (?).

- iii: Replacing Facchettus's address: "Nic^o uan aelst/ for. Romae". The "9" of the date changed to "o".

Impressions range from fine and dark to good but light.

Watermark: no. 57.

- iv: Added at lower left corner: "Gio Giacomo Rossi Formi Roma alla Pace". The crack now extends ca. 68 mm. to and along the inside edge of the arch.

Impressions show some to much wear.

Watermarks: nos. 21, 34, and 61.

- v: Fig leaves added to nude figures.

The fig leaves were added after May 1823 by order of Pope Leo XII, according to Massari.

The plate is in the Calcografia Nazionale, inventory no. 195.

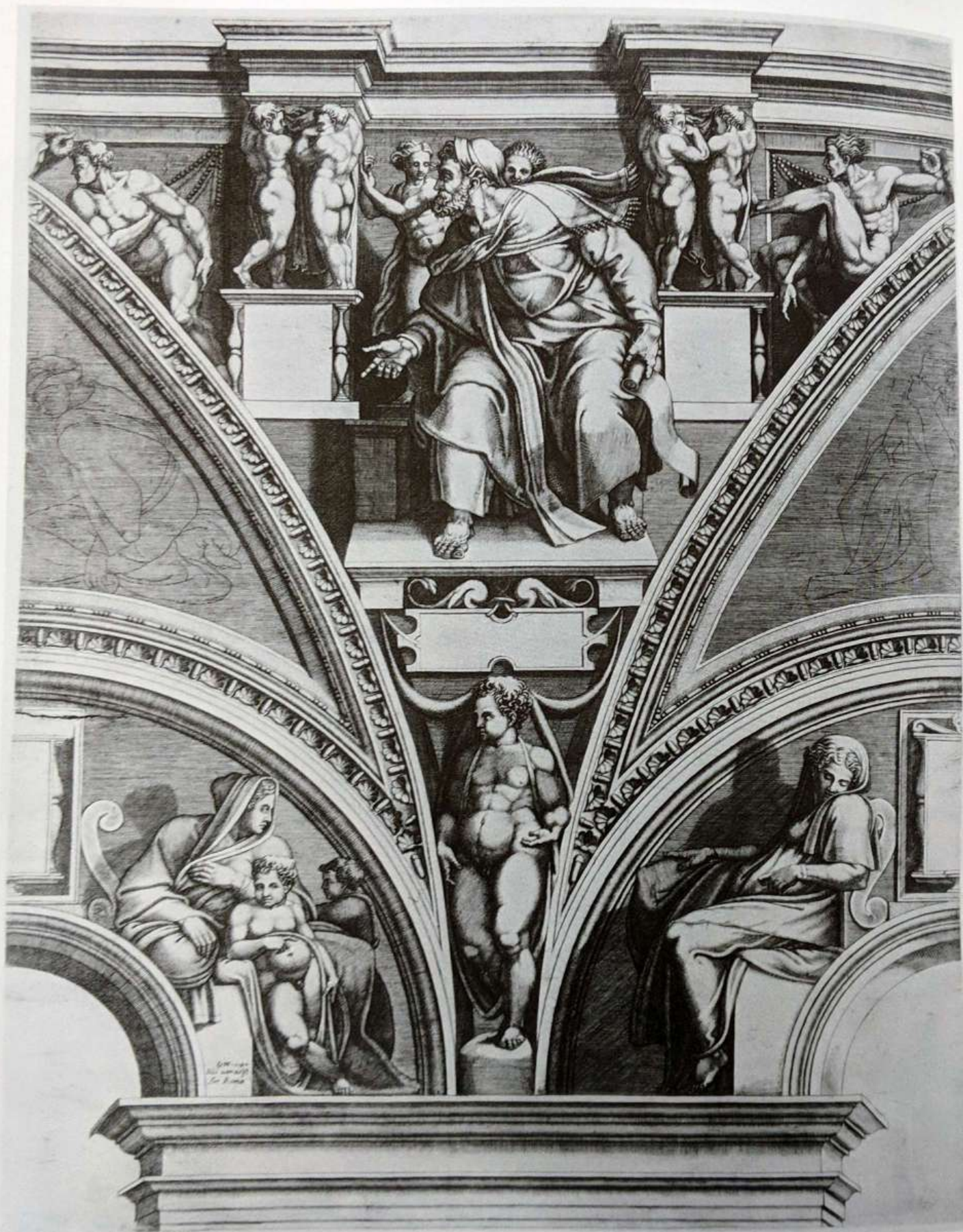
References:

Bartsch 22, Heller-Andresen 7, Massari 189



Fig. 65. *The Prophet Ezekiel*. Fresco by Michelangelo, Sistine Chapel, Vatican, Rome. Photo: Art Resource, New York

For discussion of the series of Prophets and Sibyls, see pp. 164–65.



46. *The Prophet Ezekiel, state iii*. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, The Elisha Whittelsey Collection, The Elisha Whittelsey Fund, 1984. 1984.1108.2

47 *The Persian Sibyl*

After Michelangelo
Early 1570s

Platemark: 570/573 × 432/434 mm. (bottom), 444 mm. (top).

States:

i: Before Ghisi's monogram, and before any publisher's address. On a tablet below the feet of the Sibyl: "PERSICHA". A tapered blank area beyond the printed surface at the right edge, ca. 10 mm. wide at top.

Impressions are fine and dark. Most impressions in this state are printed on two sheets joined horizontally.

Watermark: no. 33.

ii: Added before the seated figure at lower left: ".G.MF. 1540. / Nic^o uan aelst for. / Romae".

Impressions range from fine to late and worn.

Watermarks: nos. 21, 34, and 61.

iii: Fig leaves added to nude figures.

The fig leaves were added after May 1823 by order of Pope Leo XII, according to Massari.

The plate is in the Calcografia Nazionale, inventory no. 192.

References:

Bartsch 19, Heller-Andresen 7, Massari 186

For discussion of the series of Prophets and Sibyls, see pp. 164–65.



Fig. 66. *The Persian Sibyl*. Fresco by Michelangelo, Sistine Chapel, Vatican, Rome. Photo: Art Resource, New York



47. *The Persian Sibyl*, state i. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Gift of Dr. and Mrs. Goodwin M. Breinin, 1984. 1984.1107.2

48 *The Prophet Jeremiah*

After Michelangelo
Early 1570s

Platemark: 569/572 × 433/437 mm.

States:

- i: Before Ghisi's monogram, and before any publisher's address. On a tablet beneath the feet of the Prophet: "HIEREMIAS".

Impressions are fine and dark. Most impressions in this state are printed on two sheets joined horizontally.

Watermarks: nos. 18 and 33.

- ii: Added on the pedestal below the standing child at bottom: "G.M.F. / Petrus Fachettus Mantuan Formis Romae".

We have seen only one impression in this state, at the Bibliothèque Nationale (AA4, supp.). It is fine and dark, printed on one sheet.

- iii: Facchettus's address and Ghisi's monogram erased and replaced by "Nic^o Van aelst formis/Romae".

Impressions range from fine to late and worn.

Watermarks: nos. 21, 34, 57, and 61.

- iv: Fig leaves added to nude figures.

The fig leaves were added after May 1823 by order of Pope Leo XII, according to Massari.

The plate is in the Calcografia Nazionale, inventory no. 196.

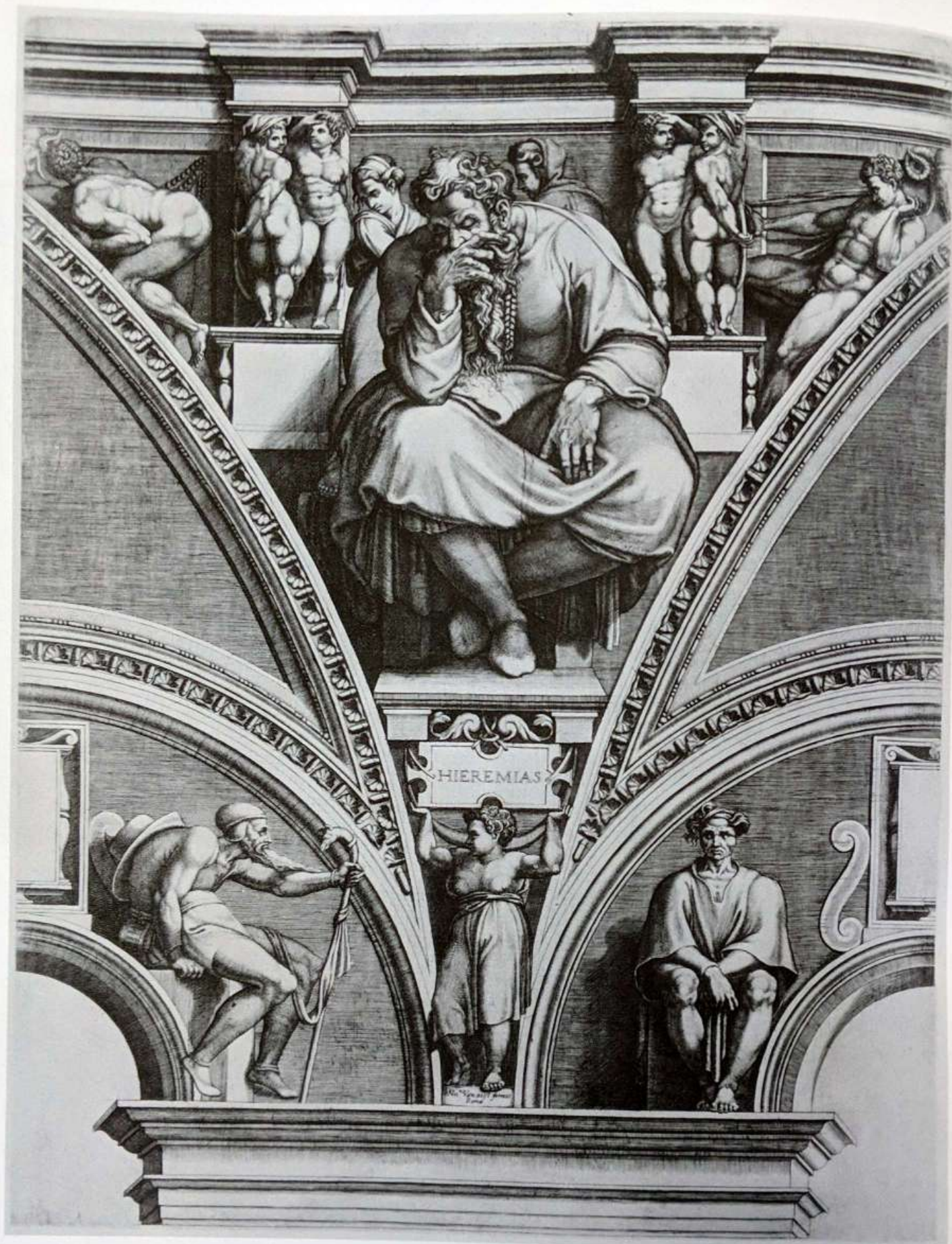
References:

Bartsch 17, Heller-Andresen 7, Massari 184

For discussion of the series of Prophets and Sibyls, see pp. 164–65.



Fig. 67. *The Prophet Jeremiah*. Fresco by Michelangelo, Sistine Chapel, Vatican, Rome. Photo: Art Resource, New York



48. *The Prophet Jeremiah*, state iii. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, The Elisha Whittelsey Collection, The Elisha Whittelsey Fund, 1984. 1984.1108.3

49 *The Delphic Sibyl*

After Michelangelo
Early 1570s

Platemark: 562/566 × 431/433 mm.

States:

- i: Before Ghisi's monogram, and before any publisher's address. On a tablet beneath the feet of the Sibyl: "DELPHICA".

Impressions are fine and dark. Most impressions in this state are printed on two sheets joined horizontally.

Watermark: no. 33.

- ii: Added beneath the seated figure at bottom right: ".G.MF 1549./ Petrus fachetus Mantuanus for./ Romae".

We have seen only one impression in this state, a fine, dark impression at the Bibliothèque Nationale (AA4, supp.).

- iiia: Replacing Facchetti's address: "Nic^o uan aelst/ for. Romae." The "9" of the date changed to "o".

Impressions are very good.

Watermarks: nos. 21, 57, and 61.

- iiib: The plate now cracked at left, with portions of the horizontal crack showing at the man's shoulder and neck and from the tip of the child's head.

Impressions range from very good to late.

- iv: Fig leaves added to nude figures.

The fig leaves were added after May 1823 by order of Pope Leo XII, according to Massari.

The plate is in the Calcografia Nazionale, inventory no. 193.

References:

Bartsch 20, Heller-Andresen 7, Massari 187



Fig. 68. *The Delphic Sibyl*. Fresco by Michelangelo, Sistine Chapel, Vatican, Rome. Photo: Art Resource, New York



49. *The Delphic Sibyl*, state i. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Gift of Dr. and Mrs. Goodwin M. Breinin, 1984. 1984.1107.3

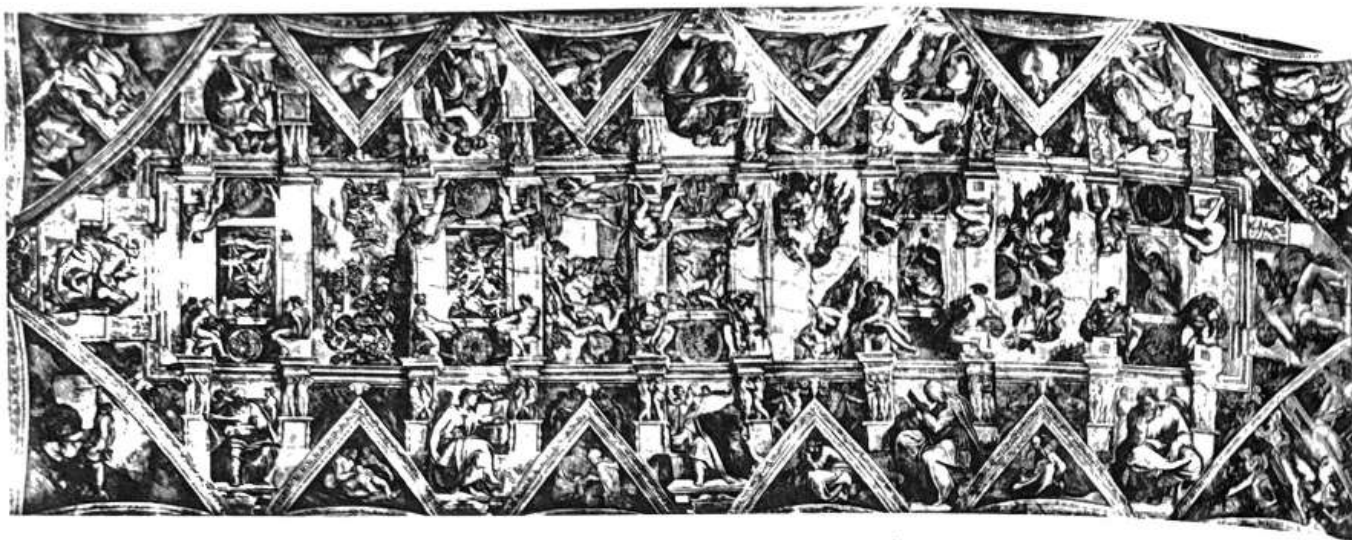


Fig. 69. *The Ceiling of the Sistine Chapel*. Fresco by Michelangelo, Vatican, Rome. Photo: Art Resource, New York

This series of prints reproduces, with great fidelity, six of the twelve Seers (seven Prophets and five Sibyls) in pendentives at the lower edges of the Sistine Chapel ceiling, painted by Michelangelo between 1508 and 1512. The ceiling shows five Seers along each side, as well as Zachariah at the entrance end and Jonah at the altar end (fig. 69).¹ Ghisi's series shows the five along the left, that is, the south, wall—Joel, the Eritrean Sibyl, Ezekiel, the Persian Sibyl, and Jeremiah—and the figure closest to the entrance on the north wall, the Delphic Sibyl.

The dating of these prints is particularly problematic, perhaps more so than for any of Ghisi's other compositions. The date of 1540 that appeared on four of the plates (*The Prophet Joel*, *The Prophet Ezekiel*, *The Persian Sibyl*, and *The Delphic Sibyl*) in the van Aelst edition—and which remains there—is clearly spurious. At that date Ghisi's engraving style had not developed to the level evident in these prints, as can be seen by comparing these to his earliest works (see nos. 1–6). Furthermore, van Aelst was not active as a publisher until the 1570s (see Publishers). Finally, the van Aelst edition is obviously later than the Facchettus edition, which is dated 1549—although that date, too, is false.

The address of Pietro Facchettus appears on only four of the prints (*Joel*, *Ezekiel*, *The Prophet Jeremiah*, and *The Delphic Sibyl*), but he surely published all six. The date 1549 appears on three of the prints with his address. Although it is tempting to trust this date and posit that these are the prints that led Hieronymus Cock to invite Ghisi to Antwerp (see Introduction),² and also to speculate that the death of Paul III was the reason the series was not completed,³ the masterful style of the series, compared with the prints of the early 1550s (see nos. 11–16), compels us to date them still later. Moreover, Facchettus was only fourteen in 1549, and it is impossi-

ble that he would have been established as a publisher by then (see Publishers). The reason for the false dating on the prints published by Facchettus and van Aelst can only be conjectured. It may have to do with rivalry among publishers and a desire to add value to the prints by claiming that they were the earliest prints made after Michelangelo's Sistine ceiling.

Vasari, in his 1568 edition, writes: "... the four Prophets of the Chapel and other scenes and drawings have been engraved and published, but executed so badly, that I think it well to be silent as to the names of those engravers and printers."⁴ It seems unlikely, given their quality, that he would have described Ghisi's prints in this way, and much more probable that he was referring to Adamo Scultori's series of seventy-three prints of the prophets, sibyls, ancestors, and ignudi, which are crudely rendered and have lost all monumentality.⁵ Just a few lines earlier, Vasari mentions Ghisi's *Last Judgment* (see no. 9), and it seems probable that he would have also mentioned Ghisi's majestic prints of the Seers if they had existed.⁶

Another puzzling circumstance concerning these prints is that there was an edition, presumably published by Giorgio himself, that does not have his name or monogram. These are not simply working proofs; we have seen from four to six impressions of each of them. It is not unusual to find an edition of Ghisi's prints before any publisher's address, but this appears to be the only edition of any prints without the engraver's name or monogram.

Finally, the watermarks strongly indicate that the prints were made in Italy in the last third of the sixteenth century. It seems clear from all the evidence that Ghisi made these prints after his return to Italy, and we date them in the early 1570s.

Vasari writes that Leonardo Cungi made drawings of these figures, which passed into the hands of Perino del Vaga, and which, at Perino's death, were sold by his heirs.⁷ Zani quotes a *Descrizione delle cappelle pontificie e cardinalizie* as stating that "a good part [of these drawings by Cungi] were engraved by Giorgio Mantovano."⁸ Perino died in Rome in 1547, and it is possible that these drawings came into Ghisi's hands a quarter of a century later, but without more evidence this question cannot be resolved.⁹

Other versions:

1. *The Prophet Ezekiel*. By Cherubino Alberti. Engraving, 427 × 272 mm. Bartsch xvii.77.77.
2. *The Persian Sibyl*. By Cherubino Alberti. Engraving, 427 × 272 mm. Bartsch xvii.77.74.
3. *The Prophet Jeremiah*. Anonymous. Engraving, 295 × 224 mm. With "HIEREMIAS/ROMAE ANT^O LAFRERII" on a shield at bottom center. This version does not include the figures below the Prophet.
4. *The Delphic Sibyl*. By Cherubino Alberti. Engraving, 427 × 272 mm. Bartsch xvii.77.75.

Notes:

1. Of the voluminous literature on the Sistine Chapel, Salvini et al., *The Sistine Chapel*, has both a thorough summary of the scholarship to date and lavish illustrations, including details, drawings, diagrams, and related material.
2. See Zerner, "Ghisi et la gravure maniériste," p. 32, and Massari, p. 128.
3. See L. Price Amerson, Jr., ed., *The Fortuna of Michelangelo*, exhib. cat. (Sacramento, Calif.: The E. B. Crocker Art Gallery, 1975), p. 13.
4. Vasari, *Lives* (de Vere), p. 1,259; (Milanesi) v, p. 431.
5. Bartsch xv.426.27-98; Passavant vi, p. 140.
6. See note 4.
7. Vasari, *Lives* (de Vere), p. 1,352; (Milanesi) v, p. 632.
8. Zani, *Enciclopedia metodico-critico-ragionata*, pt. 2, iv, p. 164.
9. Massari (p. 128) dismisses the possibility, citing Zanetti's reasoning (in *Le premier siècle de la calcographie*, p. 487, no. 1322) that the name of the draughtsman does not appear on the prints, but this does not seem conclusive to us.