

STUDY UNIT I

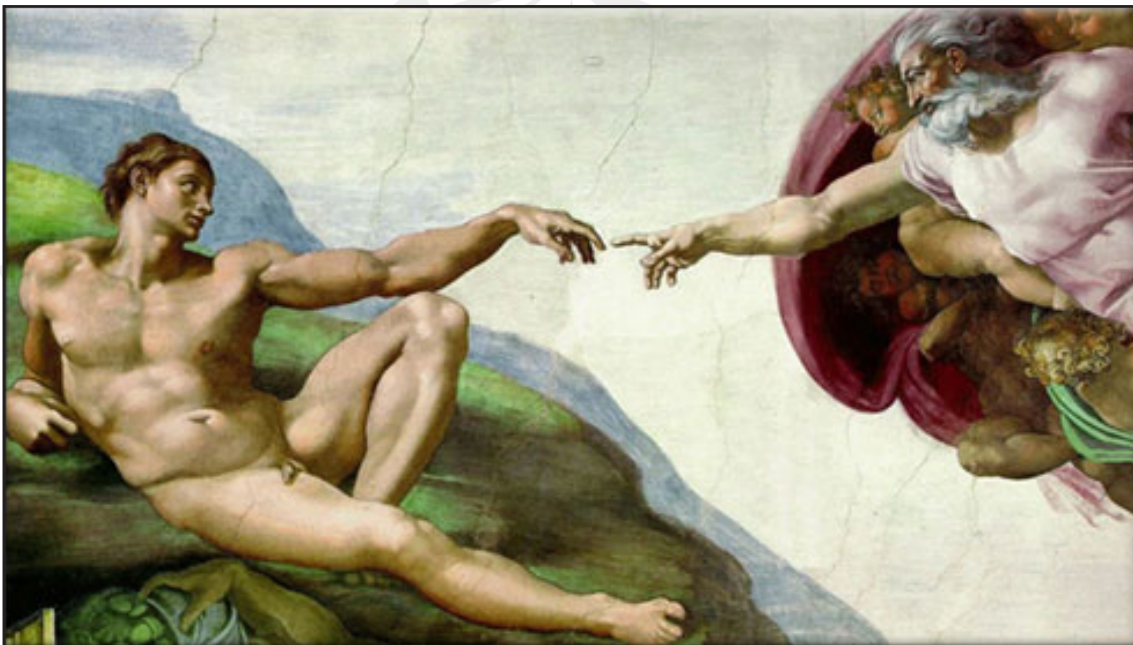
Introduction

Before we start on the practicalities of life drawing it is interesting to consider why the practice of life drawing has such a hold on European art. Some might say it almost has a stranglehold!

There are representations of animals going back to the time our ancestors lived in caves. For the last 2,500 years however it is the human figure, male or female, which has been the symbol of human greatness and beauty. The Greeks, regarded as the founders of European civilization, saw the human body as the embodiment of all the virtues, the epitome or centre of all that was beautiful.

Five hundred years ago the great artist Michelangelo was at the centre of what we call the 'Renaissance', the rebirth of arts and sciences after the Dark Ages.

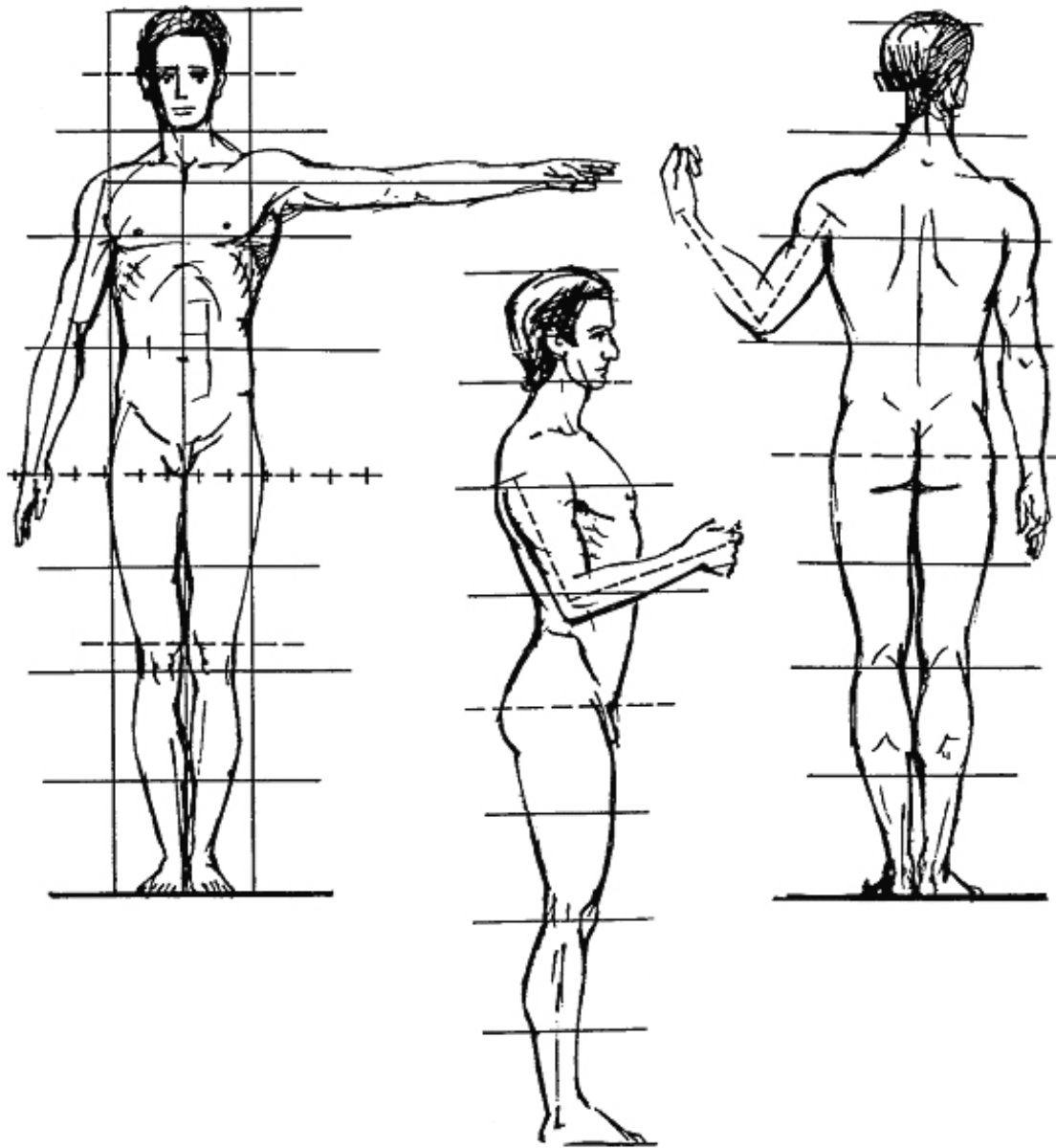
Michelangelo wholeheartedly absorbed this Greek philosophy. You will look in vain for works of landscape and other types of painting by him, instead for half a century he drew, painted and sculpted around the theme of the beauty of the body, especially the muscular athletic body of the male. He left behind a unique record of his perception and skill, culminating in the majesty of the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel in St Peter's, Vatican City. A detail of this painting, which depicts the creation of man, is shown on the next page.



The Creation of Man (detail) - Michelangelo Buonarroti

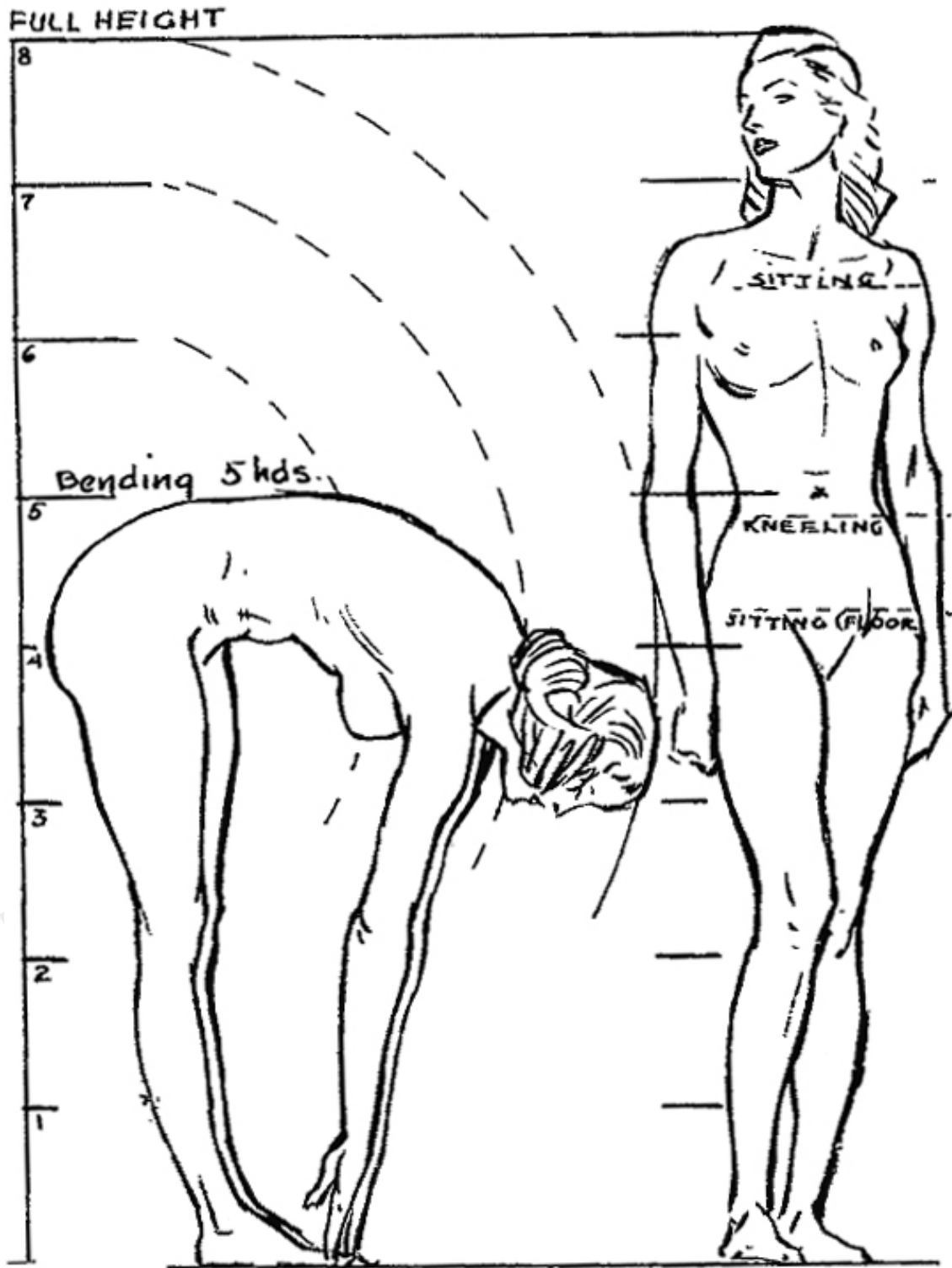
Do nothing to commit any of this to memory. Just be aware that these bones and muscles are there.

We want you now to consider the vital question of proportion - how the various components relate to each other in terms of size. The grid below will help you.



Draw the head first and then build your 'grid' around it. Once you have done this you will find you automatically make these kinds of relationships as you draw.

The proportions of the human body were so important to the ancient Greeks that they used them to determine the way their architecture was put together. The Romans, a more warlike and aggressive race, departed from the Greek 'module' and their architecture is considered less congenial - less 'human' in character.



See how elegantly the young woman sits on the park bench and how the old man slumps down with his chin on his chest as he dozes off to sleep.

SKETCHBOOK NOTES I.



The aged, shuffling step

the young, upright step



youth and age



This is the finished painting. The shaded areas on the back have been painted with violet grey. A thin round brush and dark brown colour were used to emphasize a few lines of contour and the line of the figure's spinal column. These lines were blended slightly with the layer below which was still wet. The background was finished by painting it with colours spontaneously. However more attention was given to the folds on the blue cloth.