

ART / RELIGION

Art historian reveals 'the real Michelangelo'

by Katy Doll
Staff writer

A love of pictures and history brought Professor Gary Radke to study art history, and a further love of Italy focused his work on the Italian Renaissance.

Radke will give an art history lecture titled "Michelangelo: The man and the myth" at 2 p.m. Sunday in the Hall of Christ.

Serving as a scholarly adviser to a new exhibition, Radke is working with original drawings by Michelangelo that will be on display at Syracuse University beginning Aug. 12.

"It's an exhibition that will include over a dozen original drawings and writings by Michelangelo on loan from a private foundation in Florence, Italy," he said.

Radke said he will use the materials from the exhibit to discuss the way Michelangelo has been viewed romantically or mythically.

"I'll spend most of my time taking these 12 works and explaining what they tell us about Michelangelo the real human being and the way he

interacted with other people and the kind of artistic practices with which he was involved," he said.

Radke, who is an art history professor at Syracuse University, is also known for his involvement with the restoration of Lorenzo Ghiberti's "Gates of Paradise," the doors to the Baptistery of San Giovanni in Florence.

Three panels of the golden door from the 1400s, featuring Adam and Eve, Jacob and Esau, and Saul and David, traveled to the United States, and Radke curated this exhibit.

His work takes him to Italy five or six times a year, as he travels there for programs through Syracuse and also to help curate any Italian Renaissance exhibits for the High Museum of Art in Atlanta.

Italy and its people first piqued his interest in the Italian Renaissance, which he said is the beginning of



Radke

the modern era.

Radke said he enjoys "the sense of history and that it's a living tradition — we still are the products of that period where people began to study the world around them more closely and where rational thought and modern business were invented.

"I'm particularly interested in the art because it's just so beautiful and because it is rooted in seeing the world, understanding, exploring and analyzing the actual physical structures of the world."

His position with the High Museum puts him in contact with Italian art and Italian art historians, and he then in turn brings these pieces and ideas to America. And this collaboration is very important to Radke.

"It's all about collaboration, international collaboration. And it's not a one-way street where people are only taking things. There's collaboration in the preparation and the study and that's why I so enjoy being involved in it," he said.

At Syracuse, Radke has two favorite courses, which

focus individually on Michelangelo and Leonardo da Vinci.

"Besides having usual classes, we all go to Europe for spring break, which is generally funded by the dean's office, so it's great because it's accessible for students who might not have the means to travel abroad," he said.

Students also get to see any exhibits he has worked on, even if it involves a long bus trip. He said one of his favorite parts of art history classes as a student was the idea of visual records of what people were doing and thinking in past centuries.

"I took art history as cultural history," Radke said. "What did it tell us about the values of the time and the struggles of people in the past?"

He began in general humanities, and was especially interested in English and history, but once taking art history, everything changed.

"Once I discovered I could do literature and politics and have pictures to go along with it, how could I resist?"