



# Touched by God

**Thomas Pöpper, Christof Thoenes, Frank Zöllner  
(Taschen, \$200)**

It is not often you get a coffee table book large enough to be a coffee table, but Michelangelo: The Complete Works from Taschen is one of those. Stick four bricks under each corner, and you've got a centerpiece for your living room. This amazing book not only is a foot and a half tall and a foot across, but more than 700 pages of some of the most stunning art produced during the Renaissance. Many

of the paintings and sculptures are reproduced on the full page or across two pages, with multiple views and close-up pictures. Taschen also included several fold-out pages, allowing the reader to see views of the Sistine Chapel ceiling at almost full size.

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Michelangelo Buonarriti (1475-1564) was recognized as a genius during one of the most creative times in the Renaissance, and Pöpper, Thoenes and Zöllner did a great job of not only surveying most of his creative work, but also included a detailed biography and timeline of his life. Born Michelangelo di Lodovico Buonarriti Simoni on March 6, 1475, he eventually was called Il Divino (the Divine One), due to his overwhelming skills across so many artistic lines. He was also the first Western artist to have his biography published while he was still alive; and not just one biography, but two. While the biography at the beginning of the *Michelangelo: The Complete Works* is probably one of the best done so far; it's the second half, with its extensive inventory, pictures and close-ups of many of his most famous works, where this volume really shines.

The photographic reproductions of David, Pieta and the Sistine Chapel are almost as good as seeing them in person (almost, but not quite.) Reproductions of the design work Michelangelo did for St. Peter's Basilica and other architectural works show his range as an artist beyond the paintings, sculptures and drawings. While Michelangelo probably

never meant for people to see the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel at the level of detail in the book, it stands up, not only to the closeness of inspection, but makes one realize the detail he did, when he probably never expected anyone to see it at that range.

The book breaks down his life by the major works he did and the time frames involved: The Sistine Ceiling (1508-1512), The Architect in Florence (1513-1539), The Sculptor (1513-1534).

At the "end" of the book are the catalogs of all known works, with 260 pages reproducing every known drawing of Michelangelo's. From sketches of Florence's walls and defenses, to sculpture sketches, you are introduced into another side of Michelangelo's creative genius. The only area missing is the many sonnets, madrigals, epigrams and other literary works Michelangelo wrote over his lifetime.

At \$200, *Michelangelo: The Complete Works* is not an impulse purchase. It is however, much cheaper than a trip to Italy. This is the book you use to center your art book collection. Preferably on a museum-quality book stand, and not on bricks.