

# Works of masters bound to impress

**Books For Christmas** Choices For Art Lovers

Sixteenth-century Italian artist Michelangelo Merisi da Caravaggio may be our most misunderstood Old Master but, since his rediscovery at the start of the 20th century, few painters of his era have captured our modern imaginations so forcefully.

**Caravaggio: The Complete Works** (Taschen, £100) is a sumptuous, giant-sized survey of his work, whose gorgeous reproductions offer something very close to seeing a Caravaggio canvas in the flesh – that dramatic handling of light, the disconcerting mimetic quality of his painting and the sheer muscular presence of his subjects are thrillingly captured here. Sebastian Schutze offers sensible commentary on Caravaggio's oeuvre, setting it in context and emphasising its revolutionary inventiveness, profound contemporary impact and continuing influence.

There's more Taschen loveliness in **Henri Matisse: Cutouts** (£135). One volume of this boxset is a beautiful facsimile of 1947's *Jazz*, his seminal cut-out work, presented in original unbound form and even on similar paper. The other volume is an entertaining look at the old Fauvist's late invention of using gouache-painted cut-outs to create his exuberant works; a solution to his frailty in old age, which he cheerfully dubbed 'painting with scissors'. Lush descriptions of his 1930 trip to Tahiti, plus photographs, reproductions of other late works and texts by Matisse and others all add up to a spectacular treat.