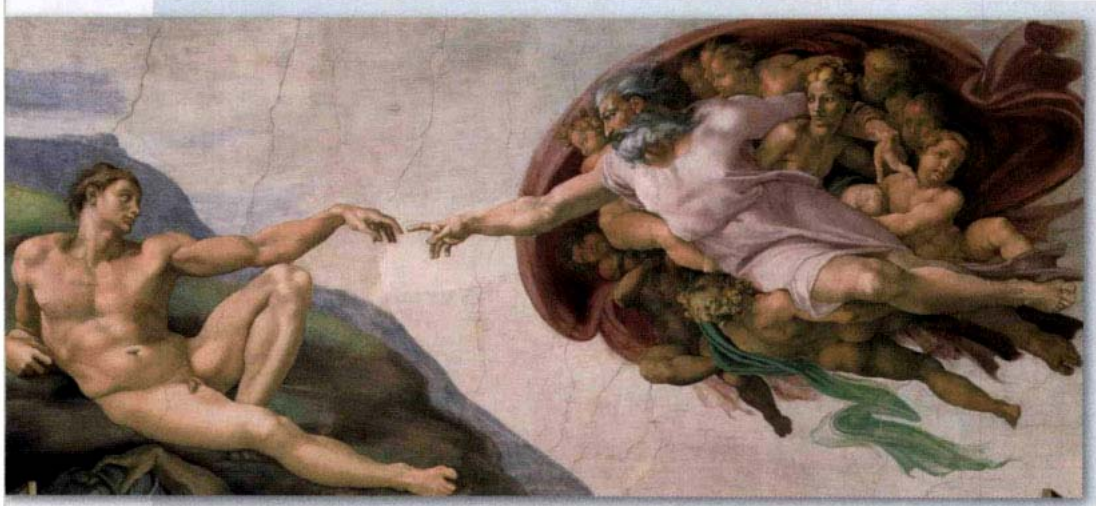


Reading Room



MASTERPIECES IN DETAIL

Rose-Marie and Rainer Hagen

Sometimes a book comes along that looks so good you abandon all childhood warnings about the perils of judgement by cover. Luckily, as well as style, there's a whole load of substance to these two volumes. The most famous paintings of all time are thoroughly investigated by Rose-Marie and Rainer Hagen, who unravel the secrets of their creation and meaning. Divided chronologically, Volume 1 tackles Antiquity to the Renaissance so, amongst others, Michelangelo's *The Creation of Adam* gets a good going over. Volume 2 then examines Rembrandt to Rivera, including a bevy of the Impressionist masterpieces.

The chapters have headline-style titles to draw the reader in – my favourite being 'Two cool beauties in the tub' for a double nude from the School of Fontainebleau. Although each painting is reproduced fully, they are also printed small-scale in sepia with sections highlighted in boxes of full colour, so you get a preview of what is to be detailed.

The class implications of a clog at the front of Van Eyck's *The Arnolfini Marriage* or the political symbolism of a proletariat male getting a head wound bathed in gin in William Hogarth's *An Election Entertainment*. MA

Taschen, £34.99HB

