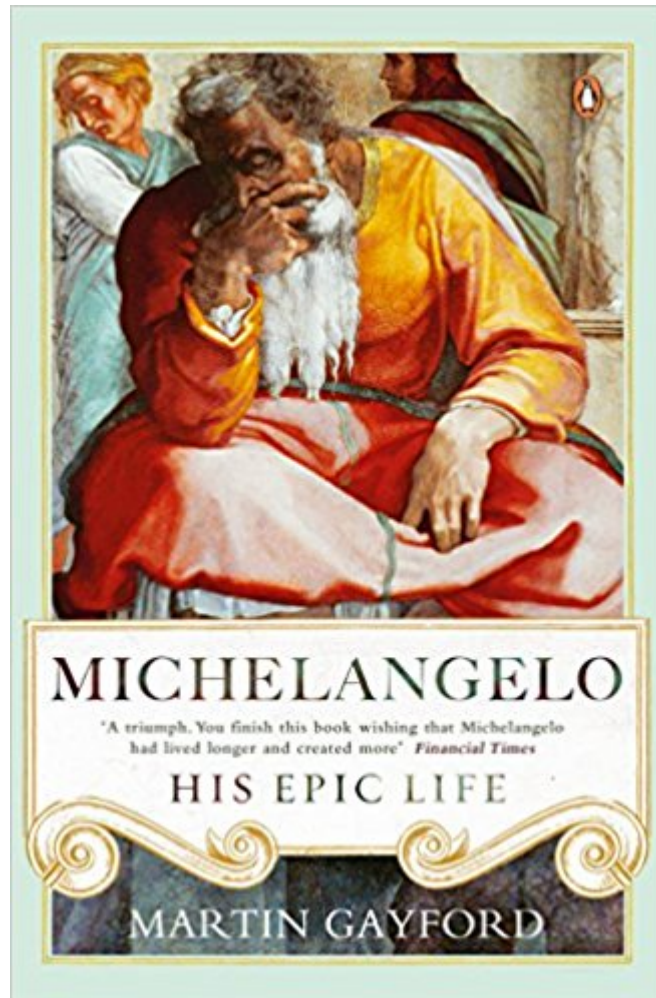




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Michelangelo: His Epic Life



Synopsis

There was an epic sweep to Michelangelo's life. At 31 he was considered the finest artist in Italy, perhaps the world; long before he died at almost 90 he was widely believed to be the greatest sculptor or painter who had ever lived (and, by his enemies, to be an arrogant, uncouth, swindling miser). For decade after decade, he worked near the dynamic center of events: the vortex at which European history was changing from Renaissance to Counter Reformation. Few of his works—including the huge frescoes of the Sistine Chapel Ceiling, the marble giant David and the Last Judgment—were small or easy to accomplish. Like a hero of classical mythology—such as Hercules, whose statue Michelangelo carved in his youth—he was subject to constant trials and labors. In Michelangelo, Martin Gayford describes what it felt like to be Michelangelo Buonarroti, and how he transformed forever our notion of what an artist could be.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

"An absorbing book, beautifully told and with the writer fully in command of a huge body of research." — Mail on Sunday

Martin Gayford is art critic for the Spectator. Among his publications are A Bigger Message, Man with a Blue Scarf, On Sitting for a Portrait by Lucian Freud, Constable in Love, and The Yellow House.

My review will be quite different than others although I agreed with most things written. It is well-written and extremely informative, especially if your knowledge of 15th-16th century Italy is as limited as mine was. What I wanted to add is how funny the book was. Michelangelo was a very difficult person; some might say pig-headed. He constantly would commit to works that he wouldn't finish; often had no intention of finishing (although he was generally not very quick at paying back any up-front fees). Fired almost every person he hired and he found it impossible to work with anyone near his equal for any length of time. Thought that everyone was out to cheat him. In almost every chapter, there would be an instant where I would think, "oh, no, what is he going to do now to make things more difficult than they had to be". It was like watching Larry David on Curb Your Enthusiasm. "No, Larry, don't do it. Back away!" In many ways he was the original Larry David. Of course, he did greater things, although LD has done some pretty goods by modern standards.

lovely, lovely piece of work. Gayford really has a way of transplanting you to the 15th and 16th Centuries before placing you almost square in the great man's shoes. You marvel along with Lorenzo de Medici at the early signs of genius, you feel his intensely reclusive and inscrutable nature so deeply you feel at one with him. You sympathize with his struggles with his piety and sexuality. You grow almost parallel to him and will be moved by his genius for lack of a better word. really it doesn't even come close to what he achieved. his pieta and Moses are awe inspiring, humbling, healing, and his frescoes are just brilliant. Martin calls the pieta almost hallucinatory in its presence and its power is almost overwhelming really. and I am not even a religious person. Tip: enjoy this book slowly, it's one to savor rather than devoured. what a towering piece.

If you are intrigued by the life and works of Michael Angelo include this book in your quest to learn. Gayford's research efforts are delivered to the reader in an academic yet personal style. He will take you to 16th century Italy and introduce you to Michael Angelo. A complex and very human artistic genius. I look forward to reading this book again with a notebook next to me. Enjoy this like you enjoyed your freshman European History class!

This is a remarkable book. It stands out as history, as biography, and in its analysis of the art of Michelangelo Buonarroti. I have visited Italy several times, touring its cities and its museums for the purpose of viewing his art and in order to place Michelangelo in relation to his contemporaries and his artistic peers. As long as the text is, one reads it slowly to be certain that one understands

Gayford's language and his intent. If I have any significant criticism it might be that the author shows respectful interest in his subject as architect, as sculptor, as painter, but perhaps slights him as a great poet. Curious.

Overall, this is an impressive book covering the life of Michelangelo. It is apparent that the author put a lot of effort into researching the artist, including reviewing letters between Michelangelo and his friends and family. Also, I thought the author did a good job of setting the story within the historical context and events that were happening during the time period. This was the first book I have read on Michelangelo and I enjoyed it.

Great book. Easy to read and full of interesting details on M's life. He was an amazing artist who made a good living from his art, but he was frustrated by always being under the control of one pope or another to finish their projects.

This book does a brilliant job of placing Michelangelo's life into the flow of political and religious history, which was often brutal. It is almost a novel, but with great psychological nuance. I noticed it was often for sale at the museum's in Florence, which I thought was a good sign. And it holds true.

I enjoyed this book because it recounts the history of Michelangelo's life through his artistic works. The book also deals with the complexities of Florentine politics, and, especially, the critical role of the Popes and the Vatican in the work of Michelangelo and the history of Italy.

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