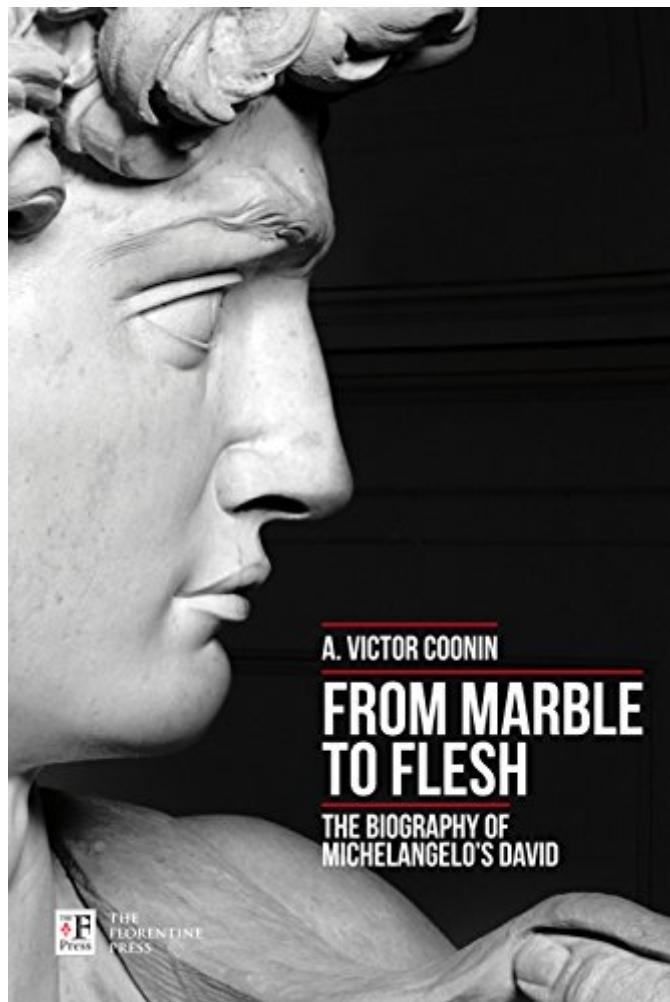


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From Marble To Flesh. The Biography Of Michelangelo's David



Synopsis

Michelangelo's David is the world's most famous statue, a universal symbol of Florence and of Italy. Hailed as the epitome of Renaissance art, the David has inspired contemporary artists from Warhol to Banksy and has been reproduced in life-size copies all over the globe. Why does a 500-year-old statue of a religious figure continue to resonate so deeply today? The answer lies in the captivating story of Michelangelo's David. It is a tale rich in conflict, tension, controversy and cultural meaning. Author Victor Coonin tells this story not as ancient history but as a centuries-long biography right up to the present day. What started simply as a monumental block of Carrara marble took on new vigour in Michelangelo's gifted hands. The statue is both life-like and larger than life: an embodiment of human accomplishment, of perfection, magnificence and beauty. The David has a life of his own, and this life succeeds in telling us something about ourselves.

Book Information

File Size: 6822 KB

Print Length: 272 pages

Publisher: The Florentine Press; 1 edition (June 3, 2014)

Publication Date: June 3, 2014

Sold by: Digital Services LLC

Language: English

ASIN: B00LB8AWD0

Text-to-Speech: Enabled

X-Ray: Not Enabled

Word Wise: Not Enabled

Lending: Enabled

Enhanced Typesetting: Enabled

Best Sellers Rank: #359,312 Paid in Kindle Store (See Top 100 Paid in Kindle Store) #39 in Kindle Store > Kindle eBooks > Arts & Photography > Art > Art History > Schools, Periods & Styles > Renaissance #57 in Books > Arts & Photography > Individual Artists > Essays #138 in Kindle Store > Kindle eBooks > Arts & Photography > Individual Artists

Customer Reviews

I had long hoped and dreamed a book like this would one day be written - and now it has! In keeping with the book's promissory subtitle - THE BIOGRAPHY OF MICHELANGELO'S DAVID - Professor Coonin takes us through the marble statue's life as if it/he were, indeed, a "real" person that through

Michelangelo's miraculous magic and the mysterious powers of Myth truly did the reverse of a Medusa victim and transfigured over the centuries FROM MARBLE TO FLESH, as the book title so poetically proclaims. The Chapter titles are clever and cogent signposts for the stages of the statue's "life." Readers are witness to the "Conception" and "Adolescence" onward to "Maturity," "Midlife Crisis" and David's "Golden Years" - but, of course, no "Death." Yes, covered in these last pages is the threat of Thanatos' terminal touch whether by an Act of God such as an earthquake or a terrorist attack - and the book's Prologue is entitled "The Attack" and details a madman's 1991 hammer attack on The Giant. Blessedly, a broken toe was all - and still enough! I'd known about the hammer attack on the Pieta in the early seventies - but not about the attack on David. So right from the shockingly informative Prologue I just knew I was in for a gripping, illuminating read. Flipping through the pages of the handsomely designed and profusely illustrated book just whetted my appetite all the more. But back to the unthinkable Death of David, well, even though the original may one day crumble to dust, the statue has thankfully been cloned innumerable times and in many different ways. There are painstakingly precise copies all over the globe: some in plaster, some bronze, some made of the stuff of the original.

Art Historian and author A. Victor Coonin, the James F. Ruffin Professor of Art History at Rhodes College, written extensively on Italian Renaissance Art. His educational training is from Oberlin College, Syracuse University and Rutgers University: his art history immersion is evident in his other books - Old Masters in Context: Romanino's Mystic Marriage of Saint Catherine; and A Scarlet Renaissance: Essays in Honor of Sarah McHam. As a teacher, speaker, and writer he is at the top of his league and this formidably complete new book focusing on the truths of Michelangelo's David, dispelling the myths around it and the relationship of the marble statue to the time in which it was created up to the present when it is hailed as the icon of gay art and copied in all forms throughout the world is a journey in edification and entertainment. What Coonin has accomplished here is an examination of a single work of art and in doing so introduces his audience to the travails and victories of the most celebrated statue in the world. It is a book that will form now on serve scholars, students of art history, teachers of the Renaissance movement, and yet at the same time it is so sensitively written that it reads like a historical novel, a book that will appeal to the general reader as well as those in the Ivory Tower. Or as the author states in his Preface, 'Writing a monograph on Michelangelo's David has been a thrilling and humbling experience. Over my career I have studied Michelangelo with special interest and taught several seminars on the artist to both undergraduates and adults. Discussion of the David has always been a highlight but also a cause of consternation

as audiences try to better understand a sculpture that already seems so familiar.

One of my fondest memories of my first trip to Italy as a teenager was the day I visited the Accademia in Florence and stood in line to view Michelangelo's David. I'd already seen Davids by Donatello and other Renaissance artists, but I knew that the statue I was about to see was considered one of the greatest in history. I was not disappointed, as is so often the case when viewing something you've been told is the greatest. David's majesty was so apparent that it awed even some of the most jaded and world-weary of the adolescents in my tour group. Dr. A. Victor Coonin, Professor of Art History at Rhodes College, excellent biography of David and his life and times recaptured some of that awe-filled feeling for me. From Marble to Flesh is indeed a biography of the statue. Divided into sections called Origins, Adolescence, Maturity, Midlife Crisis, and Golden Years, this biography traces David's beginnings in the flower of the Italian Renaissance in Florence, where the Biblical account of the young shepherd who slew the great giant had enormous resonance. Coonin describes the milieu in which David was created as a time of great artistic and cultural ferment in Florence, when several artists vied with each other to create the best depiction of David, Hercules, or some other Biblical or mythological subject. In the middle of this period a large chunk of marble was clumsily excavated and hauled into Florence, where it suffered further damage at the hands of other sculptors. It had been abandoned and had lain in a corner near Florence's cathedral for years when the young Michelangelo was allowed to work on it.

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