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In this engaging and handsome book, Cammy Brothers takes an unusual approach to Michelangelo's architectural designs, arguing that they are best understood in terms of his experience as a painter and sculptor. Unlike previous studies, which have focused on the built projects and considered the drawings only insofar as they illuminate those buildings, this book analyses his designs as an independent source of insight into the mechanisms of Michelangelo's imagination. Brothers gives equal weight to the unbuilt designs, and suggests that some of Michelangelo's most radical ideas remained on paper.

Brothers explores the idea of drawing as a mode of thinking, using its evidence to reconstruct the process by which Michelangelo arrived at new ideas. By turning the flexibility and fluidity of his figurative drawing methods to the subject of architecture, Michelangelo demonstrated how it could match the expressive possibilities of painting and sculpture.