



# Michelangelo's Notebook

*Paul Christopher*

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**Michelangelo's Notebook** Paul Christopher

Life may imitate art...but death follows it.

While studying art history at New York University, brilliant and beautiful Finn Ryan makes a startling discovery: a Michelangelo drawing of a dissected corpse-supposedly from the artist's near-mythical notebook. But that very night, someone breaks into her apartment-murdering her boyfriend and stealing the sketches she made of the drawing. Fleeing for her life, Finn heads to the address her mother had given her for emergencies, where she finds the enigmatic antiquarian book dealer, Michael Valentine. Together, they embark on a desperate race through the city-and through the pages of history itself-to expose an electrifying secret from the final days of World War II-a secret that lies in the dark labyrinthine heart of the Vatican.

## Michelangelo's Notebook Details

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Author : Paul Christopher

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# From Reader Review Michelangelo's Notebook for online ebook

## Red Heaven says

Let me count the ways this book fails:

1. It's called Michaelangelo's Notebook, but Michaelangelo, and the page from said notebook, are dropped promptly from the book after the opening chapters. False advertising.
  2. The main character sits on her ass for most of the book. Where's the car chases, the rushing from one scene to another, the DANGER? Apparently this author resents Dan Brown - well, the problem is you're a pale imitator.
  3. The author's vaguely sexist approach to his female character - he introduces her while she is nude, describing her body in great detail. Later on he has her think "this doesn't happen to me, I'm a girl!" She also goes from sexually inexperienced to jumping in the sack with a guy she just met who's 20 years older than her.
  4. The author's writing is very bland and generic, and therefore uninteresting. He often fails the "show, don't tell" rule. Finn is at the computer and he tells us what she finds instead of showing her finding the results.
  5. Touching on 2, the lack of an actual plot. Finn and Valentine go through the book almost on cruise control. They go and ask somebody something, they find something out on a computer. Too much talking, too little action. So pedestrian. Dan Brown meanwhile has his hero go from one European city to another, being chased by bad guys. Formulaic, perhaps, but here Christopher fails to even live up to pure formula.
  6. It's all uninteresting. Looted art, American Nazis, a mysterious child.... yet Christopher spends most of the time having his heroes find out about the origin of a business and connections between names and people. I understand from other reviewers that the mystery of the child is never fully explained - I had lost interest long before and commenced skimming. If so, it's completely unacceptable not to give a proper accounting of what little plot elements you have laid out for us.
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## Mick says

The book is described as a "lightning-paced page-turner". The back cover also refers to a "desperate race." I really didn't think it was either of those. Overall, the first part of the book gets you interested, and the main part of the book was okay to read. Unfortunately, the ending left something to be desired. It just seemed like it left part of the storyline unresolved. Why did this piece of Michelangelo's missing notebook set off this chain of events? That, and other items are never fully explained. I thought this was better than Rembrandt's Ghost, and The Lucifer Gospel, but I've definitely lost interest in Paul Christopher.

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## Rachel says

Boobies boobies boobies dead body dead body boobies dead body boobies boobies.

There, I just summed up the first 100 or so pages for you. Moving on...

Basically this book follows Dan Brown's formula of attractive hero/heroine + art mystery = \$\$\$\$. Except this is an even lamer version of Dan Brown. As a matter of fact, a character in this book even comments on page 304 (of my copy at least) that this is "getting into Dan Brown territory" or some variation of that quote.

Which makes me wonder, first Brown wrote about a famous artist, and then went even further into religion with Angels and Demons. And Mr. Christopher's next book with Finn is titled The Lucifer Gospel...sounds like we're delving even more into religion! The parallels are uncanny!!!

In addition to this, well let's say there's "descriptive" and then there's "beating a dead horse". I would read pages and pages and forget what the heck the point was.

Add in little annoyances like the fire escape that led up to the roof (because in case a building's on fire, boy howdy I know I wanna climb to the roof!) and an object clicking "decisively to a stop like a cork in a bottle" (I always thought corks in bottles made "pop" or "pomp" sounds, but maybe I'm crazy, maybe they click and I just hear what I want)...\*sighs\* the lameness of this book doesn't even deserve my sarcasm.

That's about five hours of my life I'll never get back.

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## **Stephen says**

NOW THAT IS A SATISFYING STORY! This book takes WWII facts, art theft, Catholic history, and intrigue to a whole new level. I'd come across one of the Finn books by accident and enjoyed it, but I didn't realize it was part of a series. I finally took the time to look into it and am so glad I started from the beginning. If you liked the fast paced deep rooted intrigue of The Davinci Code, you just might enjoy this one. Personally, I thought it was better.

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## **LJ says**

MICHELANGELO'S NOTEBOOK (Amateur Sleuth-NYC/Germany-Cont/WWII) – NR

Christopher, Paul (aka Christopher Hyde) – 1st under pseudonym

Onyx, 2005-Paperback

Art history student, Finn Ryan, comes across a drawing she is certain came from the lost notebook of Michelangelo. When she confronts her boss, he fires her. She and her boyfriend are attacked in her apartment and he is murdered. Finn calls a number given to her by her mother for emergencies, and is brought to Michael Valentine, a mysterious book dealer with whom she joins forces.

\*\*\* Fortunately, this book was published in paperback, so I only wasted \$8 on it. The plot is completely implausible with holes large enough to fly the shuttle through. There is no character development, the author's view toward women is sophomoric, and there are only about two pages of suspense at the end of the book. Take a pass on this one.

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## Ésa says

The book was surprisingly a good read and hard to put down. The plot was interesting and the way the chapters always jumped to another part of the story kept me turning the page.

However, I must say the ending was a disappointment. It got to 95% completed in my kindle, but the story, to me, was still about 60% completed only. So once it actually got to the end, it was a complete rush and a great big "oh! That's it?!".

After completing his second and third book, I started to think about why the stories were so unsatisfactory and decided to return to my first review. What I realised was that the connections between Finn finding the painting, to these people being gunned down and her being pursued to the lost cache of paintings back in WWII.

Was this painting a part of this cache?

Why on earth did Finn's discovery of this suddenly unravel this murder and chase trail? I did not think the reasoning was explained properly, if at all.

I'm hoping the others in the series would have improved somewhat. Looking forward.

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## Marcie says

There are reviews that sum this book up as boobs, boobs, dead body, boobs, etc...and they are correct. That's the formula in place. There are also some incredibly detailed descriptions which prove pretty unnecessary to the forward movement of the plot. I guess you could argue the scenery is a character of sorts, but it's just not that intriguing.

Overall, though, I read this with a brain-candy expectation and actually felt there was more depth to this book than many of those types of novels that I pick up. The writing style isn't flawless, but is redeemable. The story itself involves some Dan Brown-style tracking (with a nod to that author being directly pointed out), but without relaying the drama and trauma to quite the same caliber.

A good book. Not a particularly sophisticated one, but then that's not what I was looking for!

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## James Sorensen says

A young art student, Finn Ryan, is working at inventorying the stored collection of artwork at the Parker-Hale museum in New York City. While doing the job she stumbles across an apparent piece of art work torn from the mythical notebook of Michelangelo. She takes a photo of the piece on her phone before being discovered by the museum's curator, Alex Crawley. When confronted about finding the page Finn's internship is terminated after she disagrees with Crawley about who drew the picture.

Stunned and upset about losing her job she heads home to take care of another problem; getting rid of her live-in boyfriend whom she really doesn't care for. Upon arriving home she is attacked by someone tearing up her apartment and during the struggle her boyfriend come home and is attacked and killed. Not long after this event Alexander Ceawley is also found dead.

Finn will eventually meet up with antiquarian book dealer Michael Valentine and together they will work to find the mystery of Michelangelo's Notebook.

This book seems to have a wide range of ratings and I guess that is based upon the fact that Mr. Christopher is actually novelist Christopher Hyde and this book does not live up to his Hyde novels. Having never read any Christopher Hyde I did not have any preconceived expectations. Maybe that is why I enjoyed it. Is it a great book: No. Does he strain the plot some what: yes. But sometimes a book can just be fun to read, which I thought this book was. Choose for yourself, but I'm sure this book is a good foundation for his future Paul Christopher novels.

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### **Jamie says**

The novel wasn't bad. Certainly not as bad as some of the reviews, but there were a few cheesy lines and gratuitous sexual comments designed for cheap book promotion. Most of the novel was based on the simple thriller strategy of Eric Ambler of an ordinary main character in an extraordinary situation. Finn, a beautiful 24 year-old art student is the "ordinary" character from Ohio in this novel. She finds herself being hunted after discovering a sketch at the art gallery she works at that is not supposed to exist. After going to Michael Valentine (a friend of her Father's) for help they penetrate an art smuggling ring going back to the last days of WWII. The novel has a strong ending and is an easy read.

I would give this novel 3 and a half stars if Goodreads would allow half stars, which would be a far better rating system. The author did a fair amount of historical research despite some of the seemingly simple parts of the novel. This is my second Paul Christopher novel and I would be willing to read another.

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### **Jim says**

This is a fast and entertaining read. Although there are a number of twists and turns in the story line, it is overall an overly simplified plot.

Finn Ryan, an intern at a small but prestigious art gallery in New York City comes across a drawing in the archives that is, in her mind, clearly a work by Michelangelo. Just as she is examining it, the director of the museum accosts her, takes the drawing from her denying it is by Michelangelo and fires her on the spot.

Thus begins a series of murders. The story flips back and forth between a scene on the Swiss border in the last days of the Third Reich and the present day. The story involves the Vatican, artwork stolen by the Nazis during WWII, and the sale and purchase of precious pieces of art in the present day. Ryan contacts a man, Michael Valentine, who helps her elude the police, and, more importantly, almost with ease gradually opens the mystery behind the murders.

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### **Sarah says**

Finn Ryan is studying art history and scraping by in New York City when she stumbles upon a long-lost

mythical Michelangelo drawing. Immediately after finding it, her life changes forever. People around her are murdered violently and someone is after Finn herself – for no reason she can see. She heads to her last resort for safety – a mysterious man named Michael Valentine who she is only supposed to contact in extreme emergencies. Together, they attempt to find out who is behind the murders and how it is tied to a child raised in a convent in Italy during Hitler's reign, and a tight circle of art enthusiasts who have a suspicious link to rare and thought-to-be-lost works of art.

I pictured this book being one of those novels which tried to feed off of the Da Vinci Code frenzy, but possibly cooler because it didn't involve the Catholic Church and did involve one of my favorite artists – Michelangelo. Unfortunately, what I discovered was one of the worst books I've read in a great while. It DOES include the Catholic Church and hardly involves Michelangelo at all.

The entire book feels piecemeal in plot. As if the author picked three big plotlines and attempted to find ways to connect them only after they had started writing. Finn herself isn't bad as a character, although we hear way too much about how pretty she is (including an entire chapter describing her nude – uhhh, no thank you!) Unfortunately, she is the only interesting person in the entire book. The chapters jump back and forth in time – and we have no way of determining if we are in World War II, at the end or the beginning of that war, or in the present day – or somewhere else entirely.

I struggled through most of this, to keep my attention focused on what was going on. And past the first three or four chapters, I stopped caring about anything but finishing the book. I never thought I would praise Dan Brown's writing, but this author tries and fails so spectacularly to mimic it that I almost wished I had picked up "Angels and Demons" instead.

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## **Ed says**

I have to say I liked the story as a whole. It is a great premise. I was kept wondering about the connections between everything throughout the story. Paul Christopher writes in a very descriptive style. He makes it easy to picture what is happening.

Now for the criticisms (and they contain spoilers).

First off, I think the relationship between Finn and Valentine came to a head way too quick. I feel the sexual tension should have been drawn out longer. Really, he simply touches her leg while they are questioning someone, and that is enough that she shows up in his room half-naked that night? The end of the story just seems to trail off, the entire resolution seems forced. The "child" being linked to the art also is very forced. Why would the Vatican faction that wanted his existence hidden even worry about it? There is no proof of the connection, and the "child" is not out there trying to make a claim about his parentage. In addition, Michelangelo's notebook barely even features in the story. Finn finds a single page and the reader has to assume that the page was part of the art cache. Beyond that, it has no relevance to the story. It could have easily been any missing art work, the fact that it is from the lost notebook does not matter.

As I said, I enjoyed the premise and Mr. Christopher's writing is fun to read, even if his plot structure needs some help at times. I do intend to read more of this series. I am hoping some of the mistakes made in this book do not continue.

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## **Lisa Lap says**

I liked the quick pace style of this book, however I found the chapter changes between past and present to be a bit confusing. I think the point was to reveal to the reader the origin of the mystery that is being discovered in present day by introducing us to the characters that started it all but there wasn't any kind of date or time referenced at the beginning of those "jump back in time" chapters that it sometimes fell flat. There was also a big build up of this boy child that the Vatican was determined to keep quiet and yet the final reveal of this boy child (now an old man) was so anticlimatic that it undermined all the suspense up to that point. I also felt that the sudden end that dropped off into an author's note was choppy and unfinished.

This had great potential but I felt it was rushed and a bit sloppy making it hard to get invested in Finn for further installments.

Until next time

~Lisa

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## **Marti says**

I debated whether or not to give this book four stars, but decided that three would be enough. It had some intersecting chapters that went back to WWII--so it would have been a shorter book without them. Finn Ryan, an attractive red haired grad student, discovers a page from Michelangelo's Notebook, and shortly thereafter, her boyfriend and boss are killed. She teams up with another art expert to find out why. There are several other deaths, and much excitement before the end. Interesting, and enjoyable.

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## **Melissa says**

Nazis, Stolen Art, SS, OSS, New York City Present, Vivid Sex oh and there was also a mystery child, and murders so many murders...

As a College Graduate, with a Germany History background I somehow keep winding up with books like this. I thought it was about Michelangelo, ha fooled was I. Here come the Nazis again.

I actually did enjoy this book, to an extent. It had an overload of characters. I found myself having to go back and re-read sections to figure out who was whom.

Funny I kept telling myself it had a Dan Brown twist to it hidden somewhere and one of the characters goes and name drops him on p.304 "...it sounds like we're moving into Dan Brown territory here: weird cults, Catholic Conspiracies, Leonardo da Vinci painting in code."

I also definitely have a new Metaphor for World War 2. From p. 151, "The Ruskies were east, the Allies were to the west and they were being squeezed like a pimple." A pimple, the Nazis got squeezed like a pimple! I love it.



Finn Ryan is also a pretty believable character, I feel like I might actually have known her in some other life.

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