

# Madonna and Child

## Medici Madonna

It is set on the altar of the Medici tomb, flanked by statues of *Saints Cosmas and Damian* carved by his assistants Montorsoli and Raffaello da Montelupo. Begun in 1521, work proceeded slowly and was left incomplete on Michelangelo's departure from Florence in 1534. Considered by everyone to be the vital center around which all the symbols in the chapel turned, its original iconography has been linked to some lines by Dante: «And like an infant to whom in truth the mother stretches out her arms so that he should suck milk.» In fact, the *Medici Madonna* is not exactly a nursing Madonna: with an athletic twisting of his body, the Child clings to her breast and, unusually, turns his back on the faithful. The contrast between the calm stillness of the Mother and the lively quivering of the Child is highly evocative.