

Michelangelo and the angels

by [Kathleen L. Housley](#) in the [January 23, 2007](#) issue

The trouble is the halo. He's never dissected one, prying it open with a blade under cover of night to determine its component parts: seeking with his fingertips for the thin band of cartilage that holds it erect, or the branched nerves channeling light as coldly steady as foxfire on a rotting log. The same goes for wings. Without evidence from his cadavers, he dispenses with them, painting angels as fit as young quarrymen and pasta-loving cherubs to whom aerodynamic principles will never apply. Even God looks as if he climbs into bed each night stiff from a hard day's work but not ready for sleep, his brain crammed with thumbnail sketches of airy beings aglow with inexhaustible fuel flying by faith in unborn Bernoulli's constant.