

**Michelangelo Merisi da Caravaggio (Caravaggio 1571–1610)**

-a revolutionary Italian painter, redefined 17th-century art with his intense realism and dramatic use of chiaroscuro. Moving to Rome in 1576 to escape the plague, he apprenticed with Simone Peterzano and absorbed the influences of Renaissance masters like Leonardo da Vinci and Michelangelo. Caravaggio's works, including *The Calling of Saint Matthew* and *The Crucifixion of Saint Peter*, depicted religious and mythological scenes with everyday models, breaking from idealized traditions to achieve a striking immediacy. Despite a tumultuous life marked by frequent brawls and exile from Rome in 1606, Caravaggio's innovative style profoundly influenced artists like Rubens, Rembrandt, and Velázquez, securing his legacy as a transformative figure in Western art.

**PAINTINGS**

**Saint Jerome Writing (Caravaggio, 1605)**

* Saint Jerome Writing, also referred to as Saint Jerome in His Study or simply Saint Jerome, is an oil painting by the Italian artist Caravaggio, typically dated between 1605 and 1606. It is displayed in the Galleria Borghese in Rome. The painting illustrates Saint Jerome, a Doctor of the Church in Roman Catholicism who has often been depicted by various artists, including Caravaggio. In this portrayal, Jerome is shown reading deeply, with one arm extended and resting on a quill. It has been suggested that he is engaged in the translation of the Vulgate, the Latin version of the Bible.

**Saint Francis of Assisi in Ecstasy (Caravaggio, 1595)**

* This painting marks Caravaggio's first foray into religious art and is believed to have been created around 1595, shortly after he joined the household of Cardinal Francesco Maria Del Monte. It depicts Saint Francis of Assisi (the Cardinal's namesake) at the moment he receives the wounds of the Stigmata, which are the same marks left on Christ's body during the Crucifixion. The narrative is recounted by one of Francis' companions, Brother Leo. In 1224, Francis withdrew to the wilderness with a small group of his followers to reflect on God.

**Cardsharps | Original Title: Bari (Caravaggio, 1594)**

* The artwork depicts a well-dressed but naive boy engaged in a card game with another boy. The second boy, a con artist, has concealed extra cards tucked into his belt, hidden from the unsuspecting player but visible to the audience. A menacing older man looms behind the gullible boy, discreetly signaling to his young partner in crime. The second boy also has a dagger at his side, hinting that danger may be imminent.

**Musicians or Concert of  Youths  | Original Title: Les Musiciens (Caravaggio, 1595)**

* The picture shows four boys in Classical-style costumes. Three of them are playing musical instruments or singing. The fourth boy is dressed as Cupid and reaching for a bunch of grapes. The manuscripts indicate that the boys are practicing songs about love. The lutenist, who is the main figure, has tears in his eyes, suggesting that the songs express the sadness of love instead of its joys. In the foreground, there is a violin that hints at a fifth participant, inviting the viewer to join in the scene. Musicians were a popular subject in art at the time. The Church supported a revival of music, and new styles were being explored, especially by educated and progressive church leaders like Del Monte. However, this scene is clearly secular and reflects the long tradition of “concert” pictures. This genre began in Venice and was earlier represented by Titian's work, Le concert champêtre.

**The Martyrdom of Saint Matthew | Original Title: Martirio di San Matteo (1599-1600)**

* Cardinal Contarelli specifically requested this scene before he passed away, detailing that the painting should depict three key elements: a soldier murdering the saint, spectators exhibiting shock and disgust, and some architectural features in the background. An x-ray analysis of the painting reveals that Caravaggio experimented with two different compositions before finalizing the one we observe today, ultimately removing the architectural component altogether.

**Rest on the Flight into Egypt (Caravaggio, 1597)**

* Caravaggio depicts Mary sleeping with the infant Jesus, while Joseph holds a manuscript for an angel who is serenading Mary with a hymn played on the viol. This scene is not based on a specific event from the Bible, but rather on a series of legends that developed in the early Middle Ages surrounding the story of the Holy Family's escape into Egypt after being warned about King Herod's intention to kill the Christ Child. According to the legend, during their journey, Joseph and Mary stopped in a grove of trees; the Holy Child commanded the trees to bend down so Joseph could gather fruit, and then made a spring of water flow from the roots to quench his parents' thirst.

**Narcissus | Original Title: Narciso (Caravaggio, 1599)**

* This is one of just two known Caravaggio works inspired by Classical mythology, though this rarity is more about historical circumstances than the artist's overall body of work. In Ovid's Metamorphoses, Narcissus is depicted as a beautiful young man who becomes infatuated with his own reflection. Unable to pull himself away, he ultimately perishes from this obsession, and even as he crosses the Styx, he remains fixated on his image.

**Crucifixition of Saint Peter | Original Title: Crocifissione di San Pietro (Caravaggio, 1601)**

* The artwork illustrates the martyrdom of St. Peter through crucifixion—Peter requested that his cross be positioned upside down to avoid mimicking his God, Jesus Christ, which is why he is shown in that manner. The large canvas portrays Ancient Romans, their faces obscured, as they struggle to raise the cross of the elderly yet muscular apostle. Despite his age, Peter's weight seems greater than expected, necessitating the efforts of three men, as if the gravity of their crime is already bearing down on them.

Conversion of Saint Paul (Caravaggio, 1600)

* The artwork depicts the martyrdom of St. Peter through his crucifixion. Peter asked for his cross to be turned upside down so as not to mirror the death of Jesus Christ, which is why he is portrayed in that position. On the large canvas, Ancient Romans with obscured faces are seen laboring to hoist the cross of the elderly yet muscular apostle. Despite his age, Peter's weight appears more substantial than one might expect, requiring the efforts of three men, as if the gravity of their actions weighs heavily upon them.

Entombment of Christ (Caravaggio, 1603)

* One of his most esteemed altarpieces, The Entombment of Christ, was created between 1603 and 1604 for the second chapel on the right in Santa Maria in Vallicella (known as the Chiesa Nuova), a church constructed for the Oratory of Saint Philip Neri. The painting was likely conceived and initiated around 1602 or 1603. The chapel designated for the Entombment was dedicated to the Pietà and was established by Pietro Vittrice, a friend of Pope Gregory XIII and a devoted follower of Filippo Neri. The Capella della Pietà held a 'privileged' status within the Chiesa Nuova, allowing Mass to be celebrated there and receiving special indulgences.

Boy with a Basket of Fruit (1593)

* The boy depicted in the painting was modeled after Mario Minniti, a close friend of Caravaggio, who was just 16 at the time. Minniti would go on to be one of Caravaggio’s models on numerous occasions. As a realist painter, Caravaggio did not seek to idealize his subjects; instead, he captured the true essence of what he observed on the canvas. This is particularly evident in his detailed representations of the fruits and leaves in the basket, which are so lifelike that horticultural scientists have analyzed them and successfully identified the specific cultivars.

Ecce Homo (1605)

* Pontius Pilate presents Christ to the crowd, exclaiming, "Ecce homo!" ("Behold the man"). The forms are highlighted through dramatic lighting in a close-up, lacking depth or background. The psychological realism of the torturer blends elements of sadism with a sense of pity. In line with tradition, Pilate is depicted as a somewhat neutral and even potentially sympathetic character.