

CARAVAGGIO

Gilles Lambert



TASCHEN

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CARAVAGGIO (GB) #BASICART

Gilles Néret, Gilles Lambert

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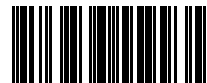
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Un genio che trascende il suo tempo

Arte ribelle dell'epoca barocca

Enfant terrible della pittura barocca italiana, Caravaggio (1571–1610) sta finalmente ottenendo il riconoscimento che merita. Per quanto il suo nome sia ben noto, la sua opera è stata a lungo avversata e tenuta nell'oscurità. Non era solo il suo realismo teatrale a essere fuori moda per la sua epoca: violente critiche suscitavano anche i suoi soggetti ritratti in maniera anticonvenzionale e l'abitudine di impiegare come modelli persone appartenenti ai ceti popolari. L'eccezionale opera di Caravaggio ha dovuto superare secoli di discredito ed è stata riscoperta, ormai postuma, solo nel XIX secolo, quando al pittore è stato finalmente riconosciuto lo status di maestro. Caravaggio è oggi considerato il più importante pittore del primo Barocco, senza il quale non ci sarebbero stati Ribera, Zurbarán, Velázquez, Vermeer o Georges de La Tour. E le opere di Frans Hals, Rembrandt, Delacroix e Manet sarebbero certo state diverse.

In questo libro troverete oltre 50 tra i migliori dipinti di Caravaggio, testimonianza di un genio che ha saputo trascendere la sua epoca.

La collana:

Ciascun volume della collana Basic Art di TASCHEN comprende:

- Una sintesi dettagliata che ripercorre cronologicamente la vita e l'opera dell'artista, soffermandosi sulla sua importanza a livello storico e culturale
- Una biografia concisa
- Circa 100 illustrazioni a colori con didascalie esplicative

Il curatore:

Gilles Néret (1933–2005) è stato storico dell'arte, giornalista, scrittore e critico d'arte. Ha organizzato numerose rassegne d'arte in Giappone e ha fondato il museo SEIBU e la Galleria Wildenstein di Tokyo. Ha diretto riviste d'arte come *L'Œil* e *Connaissance des Arts* e ha ricevuto il premio Élie Faure nel 1981 per le sue pubblicazioni. Per TASCHEN ha curato, tra gli altri, *Salvador Dalí: I dipinti*, *Matisse* ed *Erotica Universalis*.

L'autore:

Gilles Lambert è nato a Parigi nel 1928. Innamorato dell'Italia, ha vissuto dividendosi tra le due capitali Parigi e Roma, e ha tradotto dall'italiano svariati studi sul Seicento. Insieme ad André Labarthe, negli anni '50 ha fondato la rivista *Constellation* e in seguito ha lavorato per *Le Figaro Littéraire* e *Paris Match*. È autore di opere monografiche su Auguste Mariette e Caravaggio.

#BasicArt



The Death of the Virgin found no taker. It was eventually bought for the collection of Vicenzo Gonzaga, Duke of Mantua, on the advice of Rubens, who had stayed in Venice on his way from Antwerp to Rome. Rubens was fascinated by the power, audacity and chiaroscuro of Caravaggio, though he thought it a failing that Caravaggio did not make preparatory drawings. In 1628, the painting was sold to Charles I of England, along with the majority of the Duke of Mantua's collection. At the death of the King, it was briefly in the possession of the Parisian banker Jahuch, before being acquired by Louis XIV.

Caravaggio, meanwhile, did little or nothing in fulfilment of his Santa Maria del Popolo contract. Valentin was alarmed to find that Caravaggio had returned to his friends from the Roman underworld, was again quarrelling and drinking, and occasionally disappeared without trace. He nevertheless agreed to paint a *Crown of Thorns* in portrait format for Marchese Giustiniani, who was increasingly prosperous. The original, which was mistaken for a contemporary copy, was identified in 1974; it is now in the Palazzo degli Alberti at Prato. The expression and pained gaze of Christ are heart-rending. The executioner was drawn from a well-known model and drinking-partner of Caravaggio's. He also painted, in a remarkably short time, an *Estovoisment* (1602/03, ill. p. 71), a superlative painting in which the treatment of light is remarkable and the very bright colours continue to surprise. This was the only religious work of Caravaggio to be immediately and without reservation accepted by his patrons, the heirs of Cardinal Vitrici, who commissioned it for the church of the "Chiesa Nova" of Santa Maria in Vallicella. Rubens made a copy (ill. p. 71), though for some reason he left out the figure of "Mary called Cleopas."

Valentin eventually finalized the contract for Santa Maria del Popolo; it was rediscovered in 1920 by Denis Mahon and published in the *Burlington Magazine*. The four hundred écus it was worth enabled Caravaggio to settle his debts and live quite comfortably. It specified two paintings, as at San Luigi dei Francesi, though slightly smaller; they were originally to have been painted on cypress panel, but were finally executed on canvas. The subjects imposed by Cardinal Cerasi were the *Crucifixion of Saint Peter* (1602, ill. p. 63) and *The Conversion of Saint Paul* (1602, ill. p. 60). It is easy to imagine Caravaggio bridling at these very conventional subjects. Nevertheless, he set to work. Today, the paintings can still be seen (dimly lit) in Santa Maria del Popolo, amid the restaurants and cafes of fashionable Rome, just as they were hung by Caravaggio.

But things did not go smoothly. Caravaggio himself perhaps withdrew the first versions of the paintings since he saw artistic-conceptual problems in the spatial arrangement of the chapel. The first *Crucifixion of Saint Peter* is perhaps the one in the Hermitage, and the first *Conversion of Saint Paul* is in the Odescalchi collection (1600/01, ill. p. 56). The second *Crucifixion* (ill. p. 63) was delivered late, and is so realistic that the Carmelites of Santa Maria were quite alarmed: the executioners are labouring to raise the heavy cross to which the Saint is nailed. The Saint himself was modelled by one of Caravaggio's usual models, who also appears in the San Luigi dei Francesi painting, and in the *Rest on the Flight into Egypt*. Berenson pitilessly describes it as "a study in how a heavy weight can be raised without a machine." After many doubts and hesitations, the work was accepted.

As with the *Death of the Virgin*, Caravaggio's interpretation of the *Conversion of Saint Paul* was intensely provocative. The horse occupies almost the entire space of the picture. A Prolate of Santa Maria is said to have asked in exasperation:



Georges de La Tour
Saint Joseph-as Carpenter, c. 1642
Oil on canvas, 137 x 100 cm (54 x 40 1/8 in.)
Paris, Musée du Louvre

"Caravaggio and La Tour are intimately linked by their genius." (André Malraux)

1602-60
The Conversion of Saint Paul, 1602
(second version)
Oil on canvas, 130 x 125 cm (51 1/8 x 49 in.)
Rome, right-hand wall of Cerasi Chapel in Santa Maria del Popolo

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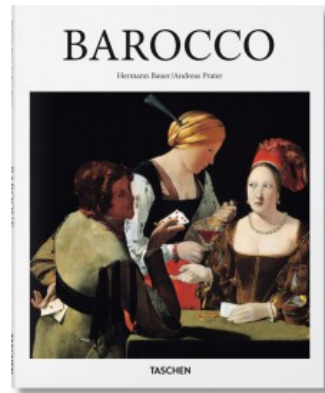


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