

# Caravaggio

By: Ella  
Beyersdorf

3rd Even




# Birth

Michelangelo Merisi (Michele Angelo Merigi or Amerighi) da Caravaggio ([/ˌkærəˈvædʒioʊ/](#), US: [/-ˈvɑːdʒ\(i\)oʊ/](#), Italian pronunciation: [\[mikeˈlandʒelo meˈriːzi da kkaraˈvaddʒo\]](#) is Caravaggio's birth given name. Although his exact date of birth is not known, historians believe he was born around September 29, 1571 in Milan, Italy to his parents Fermo Merixio and Lucia Aratori.



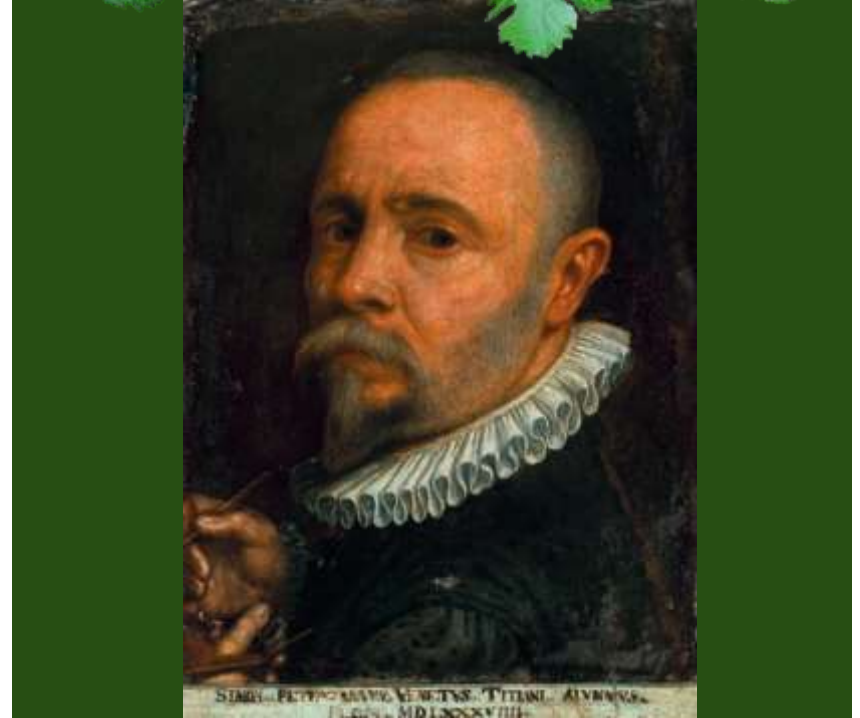


## \*Early Years\*

- We do not know much about Caravaggio's childhood, but historians believe he spent most of his time in Caravaggio, Lombardy; however, he also spent a lot of time in Milan where his father had a workshop.
  - Sadly, Caravaggio was orphaned at a young age due to the fact that his grandfather, grandmother, and father died in the span of 3 days due to the plague at just 6 years old. Then his mother also succumbed to the disease 4 years later.
- 

# Education

Caravaggio did not attend any school. Instead, he had a master named Simone Peterzano, a painter. In 1584, Peterzano and Caravaggio signed a contract that would give 13 year old Caravaggio board, lodging, and apprenticeship. Simone promised him that by the end of the apprenticeship Caravaggio would learn all the skills to paint on his own.



Simone Peterzano

# { Adult: Moving Out }

- After 4 years of being apprenticed by Simone, Caravaggio's whereabouts were not specifically documented, but people believe from the years 1588-1592 he visited Venice, Italy. However, in 1592, the 21-year-old artist decided to move to Rome without any money or fame that would help him get a job.
  - Some sources report that Caravaggio fled Milan due to "certain quarrels" and after being wounded by a police officer.
- Weirdly enough, people say the young painter arrived in Rome naked, extremely needy, and without provisions.

The Coliseum - A famous Rome tourist spot



Caravaggio's known friends are:

Painter, Pospero Orti

Architect,  
Onori  
Longhi

Sicilian artist,  
Mario  
Minniti

Friends  
& Influences



Caravaggio was probably heavily influenced by his mentor Simone Peterzano, and the art works that were being painted at the time. Such as:



# <Personal life>

Caravaggio was never reported to have a wife or any children, so the only family he ever had died due to the plague.

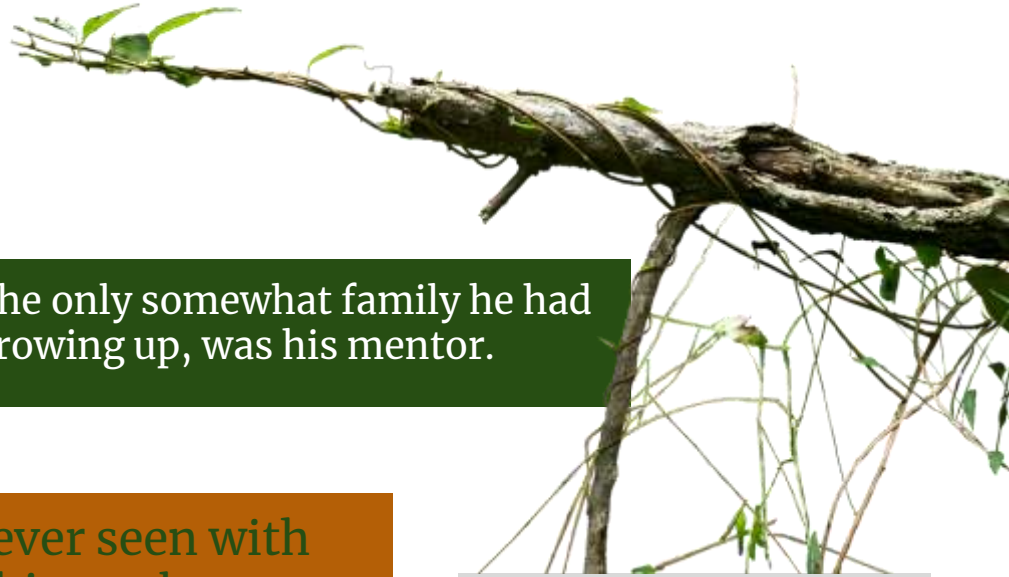


Because he was never seen with any partners and his works were mostly of sensual young men, many people have been led to question his sexuality.



The only somewhat family he had growing up, was his mentor.

Because he didn't fully know his family, and he never created one himself, his artwork was not really affected by these factors.



# First Works of Art



Boy Peeling  
Fruit: 1592-1593

Cardshippers  
: 1594



Fortune Teller:  
1594



Young Sick  
Bacchus: 1593

These works made Caravaggio somewhat known, but he made little profit. Not all of the little attention he was getting was good.. Many people thought his art was quite terrible because they were not part of the normal art in that time period.



# \*Style\*

Caravaggio was most famous for the movement: baroque. Baroque is a style of painting, among other recreational activities such as dancing, that flourished in European culture in the 17th century.

His works focused on effeminate young men and religious scenes.

Unlike other popular artists like Michelangelo and da Vinci, Caravaggio did not paint frescos. He painted with ground oils on linen canvas.

Caravaggio was known for his naturalism and he also employed close physical observation with a dramatic use of chiaroscuro. He used the technique by darkening shadows and transfixing main characters in a bright light.



His works:



# Style Continued

As previously stated in the past slide, Caravaggio was known for his involvement in the baroque movement. This movement style is defined by exaggerated motion and clear detail. This was used to produce drama and grandeur in sculpture, painting, architecture, literature, dance, and music. This movement was popular from around 1600–1750. Some other famous artists that were known for this style are Rubens and Rembrandt.



Rubens: pictured left  
Rembrandt: pictured right



## Most Famous Work

- This is *The Calling Of St. Matthew*.



- Currently this artwork is at the Contarelli Chapel, and has been there since 1600.

## Famous Works continued

Dimensions: 127 in by  
130 in(322 cm by 340  
cm)

Medium: oil on canvas

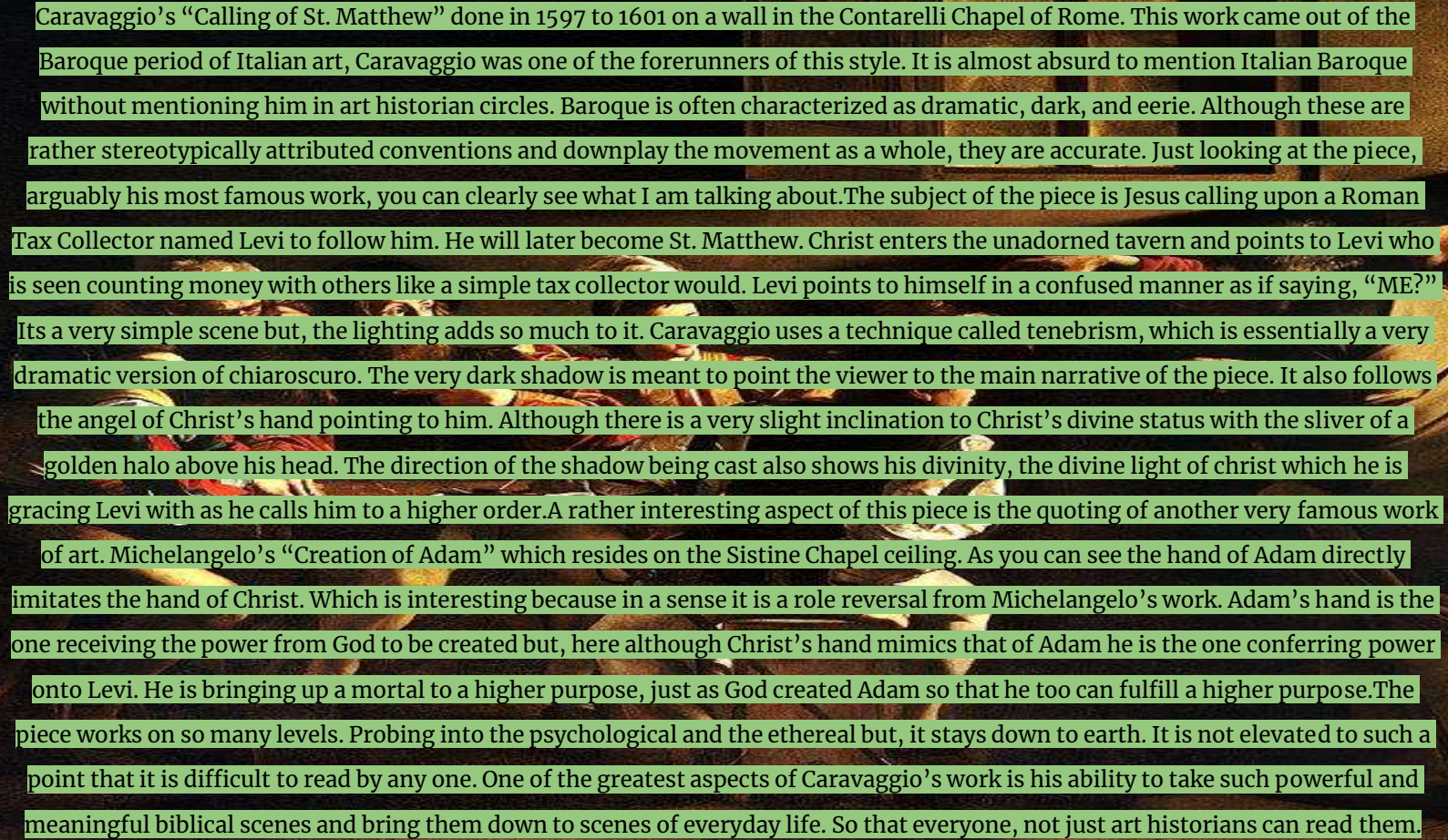
Movement: Baroque

The Calling of Saint Matthew is a masterpiece by Caravaggio depicting the moment at which Jesus Christ inspires Matthew to follow him. It was completed in 1599-1600 for the Contarelli Chapel in Rome where it remains today.



# Critique

<https://sites.psu.edu/rclandrewmarshall/2015/02/26/calling-of-st-matthew/>

The background of the page is a reproduction of the painting 'Calling of St. Matthew' by Michelangelo Merisi da Caravaggio. The painting depicts Jesus, dressed in a simple brown robe, sitting at a table in a tavern. He is pointing towards a man named Levi, who is seated at the table with other men, counting money. The scene is dimly lit, with a strong light source from the right, creating deep shadows and highlighting the figures. The composition is dynamic, with figures leaning over the table. The overall mood is dramatic and intimate.

Caravaggio's "Calling of St. Matthew" done in 1597 to 1601 on a wall in the Contarelli Chapel of Rome. This work came out of the Baroque period of Italian art, Caravaggio was one of the forerunners of this style. It is almost absurd to mention Italian Baroque without mentioning him in art historian circles. Baroque is often characterized as dramatic, dark, and eerie. Although these are rather stereotypically attributed conventions and downplay the movement as a whole, they are accurate. Just looking at the piece, arguably his most famous work, you can clearly see what I am talking about. The subject of the piece is Jesus calling upon a Roman Tax Collector named Levi to follow him. He will later become St. Matthew. Christ enters the unadorned tavern and points to Levi who is seen counting money with others like a simple tax collector would. Levi points to himself in a confused manner as if saying, "ME?" Its a very simple scene but, the lighting adds so much to it. Caravaggio uses a technique called tenebrism, which is essentially a very dramatic version of chiaroscuro. The very dark shadow is meant to point the viewer to the main narrative of the piece. It also follows the angel of Christ's hand pointing to him. Although there is a very slight inclination to Christ's divine status with the sliver of a golden halo above his head. The direction of the shadow being cast also shows his divinity, the divine light of Christ which he is gracing Levi with as he calls him to a higher order. A rather interesting aspect of this piece is the quoting of another very famous work of art. Michelangelo's "Creation of Adam" which resides on the Sistine Chapel ceiling. As you can see the hand of Adam directly imitates the hand of Christ. Which is interesting because in a sense it is a role reversal from Michelangelo's work. Adam's hand is the one receiving the power from God to be created but, here although Christ's hand mimics that of Adam he is the one conferring power onto Levi. He is bringing up a mortal to a higher purpose, just as God created Adam so that he too can fulfill a higher purpose. The piece works on so many levels. Probing into the psychological and the ethereal but, it stays down to earth. It is not elevated to such a point that it is difficult to read by any one. One of the greatest aspects of Caravaggio's work is his ability to take such powerful and meaningful biblical scenes and bring them down to scenes of everyday life. So that everyone, not just art historians can read them.

# My Critique

I believe this artwork is very beautiful. The realism and detail is extraordinary. Many people like myself believe this to be one of his greatest paintings. The use of lightness heavily contrasting against the darkness is a very good representation of the artworks of the time it was painted in. I do, however, think this is one of the very few paintings by Caravaggio that isn't extremely controversial. This in total is an amazing piece of art that is still looked upon today as one of the most important paintings in history.



# Other works

This is “Basket of Fruit”

This was created in the late 16th century.



The medium is oil on canvas

The dimensions are :18 in by 24.5 in (46 cm by 64.5 cm)

It is currently in: Biblioteca Ambrosiana, Milan

# Importance

Caravaggio is very important. He was one of the most influential and notorious artists of the baroque period. Caravaggio's lasting legacy is that of a person who developed a style that combined dramatic lighting and a great use of realism. Caravaggio has left a very strong impact on many artist that came after him such as: Rubens, Hals, Rembrandt, Vermeer, Velazquez and Bernini. His artwork will be forever known as disturbing but beautiful.





# Caravaggio's death

Caravaggio's death is rather interesting. He died at some point of July 1610, at just 38 years old. No one quite knows exactly what killed him, but some speculate that he was murdered. Some say this because the “certain quarrel” mentioned in slide 5, the reason he fled Milan, is a reference to when he killed someone. Caravaggio was known to be hot headed and short tempered, so when Ranuccio Tomassoni was insulting a prostitute that Caravaggio favored they dueled, and Tomassoni was killed. Therefore, people say someone killed Caravaggio to avenge Tomassoni. However some historians also believe that he simply died of syphilis, malaria or brucellosis. Even though there are many theories, we probably will never know what actually killed Caravaggio.



## 5 Interesting Facts

- He was in prison and escaped by assaulting a high-ranking knight.
- The artists who he influenced were called Caravaggisti.
- The Italian mafia may have stolen a Caravaggio painting worth 20 million dollars.
- Pope Francis is a big fan of Caravaggio.
- His paintings sell for record high prices.
- A painting of his was found in a French attic in 2014, which sold for approximately 170 million dollars.

# Resources

- <https://www.widewalls.ch/magazine/caravaggio-paintings>
- <https://courses.lumenlearning.com/suny-arthistory2/chapter/caravaggios-calling-of-st-matthew/#:~:text=Caravaggio%2C%20Calling%20of%20St.,and%20everything%20is%20forever%20changed.>
- <https://www.artble.com/artists/caravaggio>
- [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Basket\\_of\\_Fruit\\_\(Caravaggio\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Basket_of_Fruit_(Caravaggio))
- <https://theculturetrip.com/europe/italy/articles/10-artworks-by-caravaggio-you-should-know/>
- <https://artsandculture.google.com/theme/an-introduction-to-caravaggio-in-5-paintings/EAKy2JhhzdgWlQ?hl=en>
- <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Caravaggio/Early-influences>
- <https://www.sothebys.com/en/articles/21-facts-about-caravaggio>
- <https://www.biography.com/artist/caravaggio>