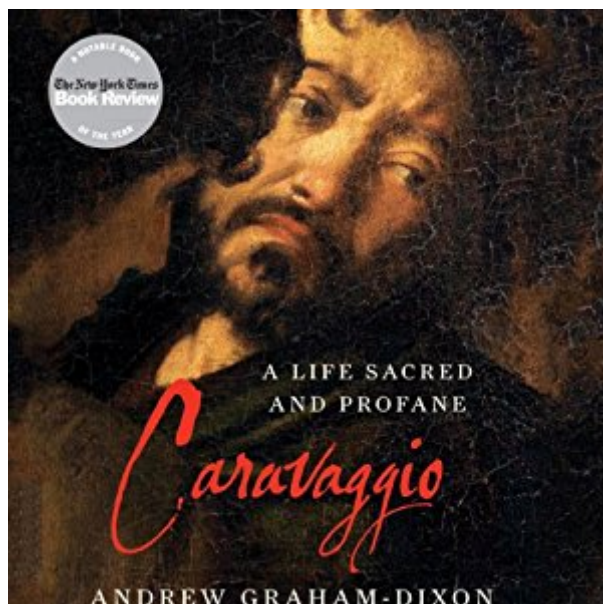


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Caravaggio: A Life Sacred And Profane



Synopsis

In the tradition of John Richardson's *Picasso*, a commanding new biography of the Italian master's tumultuous life and mysterious death. For four hundred years Caravaggio's (1571-1610) staggering artistic achievements have thrilled viewers, yet his volatile personal trajectory - the murder of Ranuccio Tomasini, the doubt surrounding Caravaggio's sexuality, the chain of events that began with his imprisonment on Malta and ended with his premature death - has long confounded historians. In a bravura performance, Andrew Graham-Dixon delves into the original Italian sources, presenting fresh details about Caravaggio's sex life, his many crimes and public brawls, and the most convincing account yet published of the painter's tragic death at the age of thirty-eight. With illuminating readings of Caravaggio's infamous religious paintings, which often depict prostitutes and poor people, Graham-Dixon immerses readers in the world of Italy at the height of the Counter-Reformation and creates a masterful profile of the mercurial painter's life and work.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Michelangelo Merisi da Caravaggio, born on 29 September 1571, died on 18 July 1610. In between, he created magnificent paintings and got himself into a lot of trouble with the law. Caravaggio was particularly renowned for his use of chiaroscuro, a technique which uses light and dark to achieve a three dimensional effect. Caravaggio received his early training in Milan where he specialised in still life. Around 1592 he moved to Rome, where he changed the subject matter of his painting to street life and young boys. In 1595, his extraordinary talent caught the attention of Cardinal Francesco del

Monte who subsequently became his first patron. Two of Caravaggio's three paintings about Saint Matthew: The Calling, and The Martyrdom (the third painting is The Inspiration) were his first public commissions and created a sensation. Their success meant that he never lacked commissions or patrons. His paintings in this period were realistic, direct and very intense and looked as though the events they depicted had taken place in the streets of Rome. But Caravaggio's personality was also direct and very intense and resulted in his being arrested on several occasions. In 1606, after Caravaggio stabbed and killed Ranuccio Tomassoni, he flees to Naples intending to return to Rome (where friends are lobbying on his behalf) via Malta and Sicily. Along the way, he produces several magnificent works - including the altarpiece 'The Beheading of St John the Baptist' (1607-1608) created for St John's Cathedral in Valletta, Malta. This altarpiece constituted Caravaggio's payment to the Knights of Malta for his investiture as a Knight of Magistral Obedience. Alas, Caravaggio was not to retain his knighthood for very long: his escape from Malta in 1608 saw him expelled from the Order.

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