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Caravaggio



Synopsis

Michelangelo Merisi da Caravaggio (1571-1610) was one of the most innovative painters of his time, and one of the most momentous artists of any era. Rescued from neglect, he has become a cultural icon in the late twentieth century, not only for his art but also because of his violent and tragic life. Catherine Puglisi's highly praised monograph, now available for the first time in paperback to extend its accessibility to a new audience, supersedes all previous studies of the artist by far. Making full use of the latest research and a series of dramatic recent discoveries, she has produced a concise, clear-headed and comprehensive work of scholarship that also provides a moving biography of the artist and an incisive deconstruction of the genius with which he absorbed and transformed the artistic tradition of his time. Altogether, Puglisi's work - a profound achievement in its own right - reveals a poignant aspect to Caravaggio's life and work, which offers a deeper insight into his function as an artist than has ever been made possible before. The entirety of Caravaggio's works are discussed with expertise and illustrated in colour, while the book also contains an appendix of documents dating back to the sixteenth century, full notes and a wide bibliography, a checklist of works and full indexes. This authoritative and beautifully produced monograph is the standard work on Caravaggio: it is now accessible to the broadest audience yet in a no less sophisticated but all the more user-friendly presentation.

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Customer Reviews

As Catherine Puglisi points out in the most beautiful Caravaggio book ever, the soulful, tormented, ethereally talented painter has become a pop icon, with a "full-blown industry of Caravaggio

publications." Puglisi's book is a standout in this crowded field. With remarkable evenhandedness, she sifted through the scholarship and discoveries--and the trash--of the past 20 years and wrote a Caravaggio book that does justice to the painter's glorious work. She doesn't skimp on the juicy parts of his life, however: she candidly but coolly recounts and appraises the bits of historical evidence for his sexuality (both hetero and homo), his use of whores and ruffians as models, and his many scrapes with the law. All the while, she focuses the reader on the paintings, aptly describing such naturalistic, groundbreaking works as *The Calling of St. Matthew*, of 1599. Gazing at the large, double-page color plates in Puglisi's book, it is easy to feel the erotic pull of the many early canvasses of supple youths that have been so widely reproduced in recent years. But the later religious pictures, in which the models for the saints and Madonnas still seem almost palpable in their reality, have the most dramatic magnetism. *Rest on the Flight into Egypt* is particularly moving. It may never be possible to unravel the tangled web of Caravaggio's life, but Puglisi manages to restore a welcome balance to our view of his art. --Peggy Moorman --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Neither the pedantic obscurantism nor the lurid biographical preoccupations that have marred recent studies of Caravaggio are present in this excellent opus. Puglisi's (art history, Rutgers Univ.) comprehensive overview covers what is known about the master with an unusually sensible and sensitive appreciation of the paintings and their place within his stylistic development. Caravaggio is insightfully situated in his art historical ambience, the paintings linked to a nexus of artistic influences. Refreshingly, the incisive iconographic explications of the paintings are articulated as expressions of the patrons' requirements and not as manifestations of the artist's psychological duress. A checklist of the master's oeuvre, an examination of his technique, and a selection of translated documents further enhance this exemplary study. Unusually fine and complete reproductions of the paintings and a plethora of comparative works complement the text. The elegant integration of biographical narrative, formal and intellectual characterization, and lavish illustration come together in what is now the best introduction to this pivotal figure. A Robert Cahn, Fashion Inst. of Technology, New York Copyright 1999 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Catherine Puglisi has put together a very informative and visually stunning book about a phenomenal artist who had been marginalized for many years, until his justified resurrection. Caravaggio has long been one of my top favorite artists, having had the good fortune of

seeing a number of his works firsthand at several museums here in America and in Europe. As an artist/author myself, I find many of Caravaggio's works to be major contributions to the history of Western art. His *Crucifixion of St. Peter*, for instance, was utterly groundbreaking on many levels. His composition was boldly unique and extreme, with its shocking viewpoint and perspective, and captures the tragic moment with emotional drama and sheer technical perfection. Naturally, there are numerous other pieces that I can expound upon, but suffice it to say, this robust edition on Caravaggio is a delight for any serious student of art or adult. For those interested in inspiring children with great role models, including Caravaggio, peruse the whimsical picture book *Meet My Famous Friends*. In closing, Puglisi's volume here is a treasure trove of historical information about Caravaggio's volatile life and times, and offers nicely reproduced artwork that's worth every penny and a lot more. Although some plates are spread across two pages, causing irritating seams in the artwork, I cannot fault Puglisi for that, as I'm sure Phaidon made those calls. And despite the small font size of the text, which at least the lines were spaced far enough apart to give the pages visual relief, this volume is highly recommended for Puglisi's well-researched and well-written text and, of course, for Caravaggio's beautiful artwork. Bravo!

Written by a researcher who has done her work! This book is an exquisite piece of art. Intelligent, interesting, and absolutely perfect images from beginning to end. I HIGHLY recommend all Art and Art History majors read this, as well as anyone who appreciates Caravaggio, and anyone who appreciates a brilliant author and Art Historian. So impressed. Thank you Dr. Catherine Puglisi!

Though the pictures and the presentation of the material is really first rate- everything I've read published by Phaidon is of that same high quality. Check out the book about Jacques Louis David, it's really worth it- the prose is academic. She makes a sexy subject limp with too many digressions and over elaborations of details that weren't needed. That doesn't mean don't buy, the pictures alone are worth the price. I will try another book for the biographical information.

I just purchased this book based on previous reviews. One disappointment I have with it is the cropped paintings or paintings with the seem slicing through them. It's frustrating as a student of the arts to try and copy the tiny details out of the bindings. Aside from that, I am glad I bought it. The works inside are fantastic.

I have been looking for recent books on Caravaggio for use in an art history class that I will give this Spring. I've done "spot" reading of this text, and found fascinating insights. However, it is hard for me to understand why such difficult to read silvery grey text was used. Perhaps younger eyes than mine would not have problems with this choice. However, my eyes rebelled rapidly, and although fascinated with the message, the medium proved exhausting. The font choice and size are also, in my opinion, poor ones. I suppose the aim was to produce a beautiful book, and it is that, but in my opinion the book's function of transmitting information is undercut by the odd typography design.

This is an excellent book. The pictures are amazing! and the explanation is precise. I give it 5 stars!

The lavish reproductions of Caravaggio's work here are reason enough to get this lovely book. The text is engrossing, and can be easily read in 1-2 weeks. Caravaggio's life and work are both dealt with very well by Catherine Puglisi, and the writing is quite good. On the other hand, the silvery text is pretty, but clearly not functional for people with less than good sight. The book is also on the smallish side (Phaidon does not seem to make the really huge books like Abbeville or Abrams).

Dr. Catherine Puglisi is not only a fine scholar, well informed about her subject, she is also a fine writer. CARAVAGGIO is a richly produced heavy volume (hardcover reviewed) that spreads the text throughout the course of the book as each of the points about the artist's life and technique and gifts to art history is explored. The color plates are reproduced with clarity and two-page extensions of the larger horizontal works aid the reader in gaining perspective. Multiple images of details offer close examination of Caravaggio's technique, a manner that continues to influence representational artists today. Puglisi gratefully does not shy away from the controversial aspects of Caravaggio's life and sexuality. She deals with the facts and presents them in context with his concurrent paintings. The volume includes an exceptionally fine body of appendices that offers a complete checklist of the paintings including small reproductions of some, a terse bibliography, and a series of extracts from the myriad sources from which Puglisi extracted information. The one criticism of this book, and it is a significant one, is the small type font in the pale gray ink selected by a designer who seems more concerned with 'making a pretty book' than in respecting the written word! But in the end this is a definitive volume about one of art history's more interesting and gifted painters. Grady Harp, December 05

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