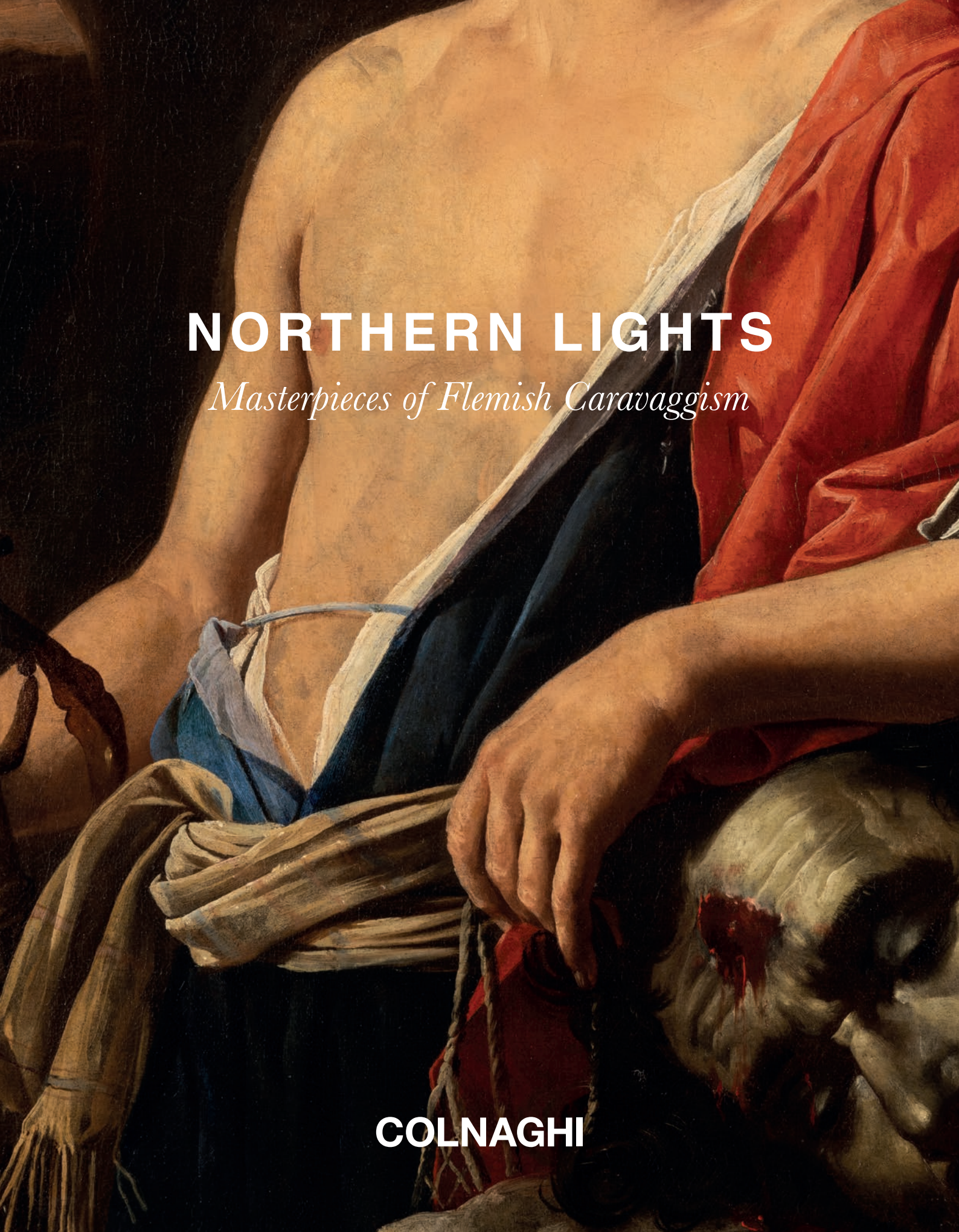

NORTHERN LIGHTS

Masterpieces of Flemish Caravaggism

COLNAGHI

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Colnaghi Brussels

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FOREWORD

Philippe Henricot

More than four hundred years after the death of the Italian painter Michelangelo Merisi da Caravaggio, his work continues to exert a remarkable influence. The recent exhibition at the Palazzo Barberini in Rome offered further proof of this enduring fascination, drawing large audiences and widespread acclaim.

During the first decades of the seventeenth century, artists from across Europe travelled to Italy – particularly to Rome and Naples – where Caravaggio's paintings could be studied firsthand. The visual force of his work, the inventiveness of his compositions, and the emotional intensity they convey profoundly shaped an entire generation of painters, including many from Flanders. Rubens was among the first to absorb elements of Caravaggio's pictorial language. Yet Caravaggio's art remained controversial, especially among more conservative circles.

The arrival of *The Madonna of the Rosary* in the Dominican Church in Antwerp (now Saint Paul's Church), facilitated by Rubens around 1619, marked a turning point. Its presence helped legitimise Caravaggio's dramatic style in the Spanish Netherlands. In the years that followed, numerous artists would engage with Caravaggesque vocabulary in their own distinctive ways, gradually making it not only acceptable but integral to the visual rhetoric of the Counter-Reformation.

Colnaghi has a tradition for bringing renewed attention to artists or artistic movements that deserve greater recognition. With this spirit in mind, we conceived this exhibition, assembling works for both their exceptional quality and their historical relevance. The exhibition gathers artworks by artists from Antwerp, Brussels and other Flemish cities, who travelled to Italy at the beginning of their artistic journey. Some remained there as their work met with success, while others returned to Flanders to meet the growing demand for Caravaggesque painting that was flourishing at the time.

It is therefore an honour for me to present this selection in our new Brussels gallery, where we are committed to offering the Belgian public Old Master paintings of the highest quality. Our presence in Belgium over the past several years has allowed us to collaborate with numerous institutions and private collectors, and this exhibition forms part of that ongoing development as well as of Colnaghi's long history.

INTRODUCTION

Joost Vander Auwera

During the first half of the seventeenth century a revolutionary artistic current spread over Europe from Italy. It is known as caravaggism after the name of the artist who inspired it. This was the painter Michelangelo Merisi da Caravaggio (Milan 1571 – Porto Ercole 1610), himself being named after the municipality east of Milan where he spent his early youth.[1] His radical choice for the expressive power of a coarse unidealized realism, using models taken from the lower classes which are occupying the foreground in a monumental, vehement, almost palpable way and rendered in haunting contrasts of light and shadow (*chiaroscuro*), caused among his contemporaries an almost immediate sensation.

In order to understand the proper nature of this influential phenomenon in the history of Western painting, it is important to take into account its specific historic context, in geographical, chronological and art-theoretical terms. Together with the simultaneous existence of other artistic currents and of strong pre-existing traditions, these factors would either stimulate or slow down the pace by which caravaggism was spreading. And this would result in many instances in a blend of caravaggist characteristics with other artistic influences. We will concentrate here on the impact of caravaggism north of the Alps, more in particular on those painters of Flemish or Dutch origin, whose works are shown in this exhibition.

Firstly, in geographical terms, the unified state of Italy which we take for granted today, did not yet exist during the seventeenth century. Its unification under the Royal House of Savoy at the

instigation of Garibaldi, came only into being in the 1860s. Instead, in Caravaggio's time, the Italian peninsula consisted of a patchwork of independent territories dominated by grand noble families. These included a Spanish kingdom of Naples (with Naples as its capital and seat of the Spanish viceroy, encompassing the whole southern half of "present-day" Italy, together with Sicily and Sardinia); a grand duchy (Florence under the Medici); several duchies (e.g. Milan under the Sforza; Mantua under the Gonzaga, Parma under the Farnese and Modena-Reggio under the Este); not to mention the republics of Venice and Genoa under their respective elected Doges chosen from prominent families. Even the Pope did not only rule in a spiritual way in his role as the Supreme Head of the Catholic Church: he was also the worldly ruler of the vast Papal States (with influential artistic centres like Bologna and of course Rome which housed a lot of art-loving cardinals and scions of grand noble families). This specific geographical situation can make us better understand the motivation behind Caravaggio's frequent moves between several of those territories during his tumultuous life and, even more importantly in this context, the specific way in which his artistic influence spread in all those different places, including its impact on the artists from the Southern or Northern Netherlands who either journeyed there temporarily or resided there permanently. In fact, during most of his life, Caravaggio was on the run – if he was not banned instead – from one territory to the other in order to escape the jurisdiction and condemnation of the local authorities, after having caused havoc several times or, even worse, having been convicted of murder.

Between 1584 and 1588 he was apprenticed with the painter Simone Peterzano in his homeland of Lombardy. By its northern position on the Italian peninsula, this region was undergoing the influence of the realistic tendencies in the art north of the Alps. In this way Caravaggio's radical choice for an unembellished realism was already stimulated from the start. More importantly, this characteristic in turn may have made northern followers of Caravaggio more receptive to his art.[2]

But already in 1592 Caravaggio had to run away from his homeland to Rome after "certain quarrels" and the wounding of a police officer. Rome was another story, not just in scale but also in artistic terms. Not realism but the far more idealizing current of mannerism was en vogue in the Eternal City. The painter who dominated the artistic scene in that style was Giuseppe Cesare alias the Cavalier Arpino (Rome 1568 – 1640), a protégé of Pope Clement VIII.[3] Caravaggio entered his studio – probably for opportunistic reasons – in a subordinate role, offering his realistic talents in the humble genres of flower and fruit paintings. Rome, with its abundance of antique sculpture[4] and its many exemplary works of leading Renaissance artists like Raphael and Michelangelo,[5] also acted as an artistic magnet to many painters from the Southern and Northern Netherlands.[6] They travelled to Italy to complete their artistic training by studying these much-admired wonders of art. Some amongst them like the Antwerp-based Peter Paul Rubens (Siegen 1577 – Antwerp 1640) and Abraham I Janssen (Liège ? *c.* 1571/75 – Antwerp 1632) arrived already in Rome in the first years of the seventeenth century.[7]

Fig. 1 Michelangelo Merisi da Caravaggio known as Caravaggio, *The Madonna of the Rosary*, ca. 1605-1607, oil on canvas, 364.5 x 249.5 cm, Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna, Austria.

Therefore they could have been direct witnesses of Caravaggio's stunning breakthrough with his dramatic and radical novelties in Roman churches between 1600 and 1606.[8] As early as 1604 his reputation had already spread north of the Alps. In that year Carel van Mander, a Flemish-born protestant refugee in Haarlem, painter as well as author, devoted a lengthy paragraph to Caravaggio, his wonderful accomplishments in Rome and the praiseworthy realism of his art, in the first edition of his 'Painters Book', a famous textbook for young artists.[9]

But once again Caravaggio could not stay far longer in Rome. Already in 1606 he had to fly even more southward to the Spanish city of Naples, being condemned by the pope after having killed the young Ranuccio Tomassoni in a brawl. In Naples, Caravaggio's reputation as the coming man in Rome has already preceded him. And with the support of the mighty Colonna family who acted as Spanish Vice Kings and provided him with shelter, he quickly became the most famous artist on the Neapolitan scene, being offered several of the most prestigious commissions for altarpieces.[10] Moreover, as the Spanish Netherlands were part of the same Spanish kingdom as Naples, the city was home to several Flemish merchants and artists[11] like Aert Mijtens (Brussels *c.* 1541 – Rome 1602), Ludovicus (Louis) Finson(ius) (Bruges before 1580 – Amsterdam 1617)[12] and the painter and art dealer Abraham Vinck (Antwerp 1575 – Amsterdam 1619). Finson would become one of Caravaggio's earliest followers. He also copied Caravaggio of whom he owned several paintings. Together with business-partner Vinck he would sell the monumental *Madonna of the Rosary* (Fig. 1), with Rubens and Velvet Brueghel as enthusiast go-betweens, to the Dominican church of Antwerp (today's St Paul's church).[13]

A notable example amongst the followers of Caravaggio in Naples was the Lokeren-born Hendrick de Somer (1602-1656). He entered the studio of the Spanish but Naples-based painter José de Ribera (1591-1652), who was himself influenced by Caravaggio. Married to a Neapolitan woman, de Somer would become in turn one of the leading painters of this next generation of Flemish caravaggists in Naples. Not to mention the presence there of the strong caravaggesque personality of Mattheus Stom (*c.* 1600-1652). Although he may have been born in the Dutch Republic, he was possibly schooled in Flanders, showing a marked influence of Flemish art, although the hypothesis, often mentioned in modern literature, of an apprenticeship with Abraham I Janssen[14] misses ground. In fact, as to Flemish painting, his style seems rather near to that of the most important Ghent caravaggist Jan Janssens (1590-1650); whereas both Jan Janssen and Mattheus Stom show many stylistic parallels with the Utrecht caravaggists[15] like Hendrick ter Brugghen (probably The Hague 1588 – Utrecht 1629) and Dirck van Baburen (Wijk bij Duurstede 1595 – Utrecht 1624). Before his stay in Naples between 1632 and 1640, Stom was signaled in Rome. And from Naples he moved further on to Sicily,[16] just like Caravaggio had moved from Rome to Naples and then would travel to Sicily also more than two decades before. Albeit in the case of Stom not because of criminal incriminations, but to find new markets for his very personal but only slightly evolving style. Nevertheless, on the Naples scene Stom's art proved to be innovative, introducing new subjects and stylistic characteristics related to Rubens and the Utrecht school.[17]

Fig. 2 Michelangelo Merisi da Caravaggio known as Caravaggio, *The Death of the Virgin*, ca. 1604-1606, oil on canvas, 369 x 345 cm, Musée du Louvre, Paris, France.

Secondly some nuanced insight into the chronology of the spreading of Caravaggio's artistic language is quite relevant.[18] In fact several generations of Caravaggio-followers from the Netherlands are documented, each with its distinct character. To understand these differences in the reception of Caravaggio's artistic innovations better, we can learn from modern marketing insights: novelties -including cultural ones – know over time what is called a 'product-life-cycle', i.e. they go through an early phase of 'early adopters' in terms of first followers and first patrons, before becoming mainstream. And indeed Caravaggio's novelties were first only fully accepted by sophisticated noble art lovers and cardinals like the Del Monte and the Giustiniani. Those were the connoisseurs who went that far as to recover for their private collections those altarpieces by Caravaggio which the lower clergy of Roman churches and cloisters had refused for use in a religious context as being too shocking in their crude naturalism. The fact that Caravaggio's art caused such a stir, implies that it was not readily accepted by the general public. This is precisely what distinguishes the early adopters phase from the mainstream phase in a product-life-cycle. This may also explain why even northern artists who grasped the great artistic importance of Caravaggio's innovations early on, proved to be reluctant to stick more fully and more permanently to this new style in this premature phase of its reception. This is even the case with Rubens, notwithstanding his great appreciaton for Caravaggio: apart from being instrumental in bringing *The Madonna of the Rosary* to Antwerp in about 1619,[19] he also secured in 1607 he *Death of the Virgin* (Fig. 2) to become part of the collection of his Italian patron and fine art lover the Duke of Mantua.

Fig 3. Michelangelo Merisi da Caravaggio known as Caravaggio, *The Entombment of Christ*, ca. 1602-1604, oil on canvas, 300 x 203 cm, Pinacoteca Vaticana, Vatican City.

Fig. 4 Sir Peter Paul Rubens after Caravaggio, *The Entombment of Christ*, ca. 1612-1614, oil on panel, 88.3 x 66.5 cm, National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa, Canada.

That painting was also refused by its original patrons. The Discalced Carmelites considered it to be unacceptable for their church of Santa Maria della Scala in Trastevere, because of the rumour that Caravaggio has used a prostitute as a model for the Virgin and because they considered its crude naturalism to be a breach of decorum, given the solemnity of the religious subject.[20] In fact, truly caravaggeque paintings remained rare in Rubens's oeuvre and they did not appear either in the later phases of the career of this very famous and very decorum-conscious artist. It is telling that Rubens's only direct tribute to Caravaggio in painting is his own less vehement version of Caravaggio's *Entombment of Christ* (Fig. 3) in a picture from circa 1612/1615 (Fig. 4).[21]

Fig. 5 Abraham I Janssen, *Philemon and Baucis Entertaining Jupiter and Mercury*, ca. 1609-1612, oil on canvas, 154 x 231.5 cm, Davis Museum and Cultural Center, Wellesley College, Wellesly, USA.

The same reluctance and only ephemeral following of Caravaggio characterizes the oeuvre of that other early adopter, Abraham I Janssen. In art history he is still very often categorized as a caravaggist. In reality the only unmistakenly Caravaggesque works in his oeuvre are a *Supper at Emmaus* at the Church of the Discalced Carmelite nuns in Antwerp of about 1603 – which is indeed very early; the *Jupiter and Mercury in the House of Philemon and Baucis* (Fig. 5) from about 1609-1612; and the *Madonna and Child with the Infant Saint John the Baptist* from about 1619-1620, now in the Kremer Collection, which is a direct reaction to the arrival of Caravaggio's *Madonna of the Rosary* in Antwerp circa 1619.[22]

In contrast, the next generation of northern artists who stayed in Rome after Caravaggio's departure (1606) and even death (1610), did so when caravaggism has already become more mainstream. This was thanks to Bartholomeo Manfredi (Ostiano 1582 – Rome 1622),[23] one of the earliest Italian followers of Caravaggio. He succeeded to tune down the most shocking aspects of Caravaggio's art and to turn its daring inventions into the popular mould of a coherent and immediately recognizable 'format'. The result was known already by contemporaries as the more sweet and harmonious 'Manfrediana Methodus', typified by horizontal compositions with a sole or (more often) many half-lenght figure(s), rich in realistic detail and showing a less outspoken *chiaroscuro* and a more balanced colour scheme. This more 'civilised' type of caravaggism would resonate with the second generation of northern caravaggists in several cities in the catholic Spanish Netherlands and in the Dutch Republic mainly in

Utrecht where most caravaggist painters who went to Rome were catholic with the exception of Ter Brugghen. Apart from him we can cite especially Dirck van Baburen (Wijk bij Duurstede *c.* 1592/93 – Utrecht 1624)[24] or Gerard Honthorst[25] (Utrecht 1592 – 1656) as representing this second generation of caravaggists. Amongst their Flemish counterparts we may count the Ghent painters Jan Janssens (1590 – *c.* 1650);[26] Melchior de la Mars (Zoutleeuw c.1585 – after 1627) who was also active in Brussels;[27] the Mechelen- Antwerp painter Adam de Coster (Mechelen *c.* 1586 – Antwerp 1643); to some extent also Theodoor van Loon (Erkelenz 1581 – Maastricht 1649)[28] in Brussels and Jacob van Oost the Elder (1603 – 1671)[29] in Bruges; and, last but not least, in Antwerp artists Theodoor Rombouts (Antwerp 1597 – 1637)[30] and Gerard Seghers (Antwerp 1591 – 1651),[31] both of them with an oeuvre that was more coherently caravaggesque than that of their master Abraham I Janssen. Or later on Jan van Dalen or Dalem (Antwerp *c.* 1602 – Antwerp *c.* 1670), who only came back from Rome after 1630. All those northern artists had visited Italy later than Peter Paul Rubens and Abraham Janssen and on their return in the Netherlands they created the heyday of caravaggism in their homeland in the 1620s, 1630s and 1640s; as did Mattheus Stom and Hendrick de Somer at about the same time south of the Alps.

Thirdly, several other contemporary artistic conceptions and distinct traditions influenced Caravaggio and his followers. This is not only true for his northern followers with their strong tradition of realism of detail. As said, from the start Caravaggio himself was much influenced by this northern realism, especially during the start of his career in the 1590's.[32]

Later on, when he went his own stunning way in the years 1600-1606, he was confronted by the popularity and a fierce competition by the Carracci – Ludovico (1555 – 1619), Agostino (1557 – 1602) and Annibale (1560 – 1609). Those leading artists from Bologna (part of the Papal States) received important commissions in Rome with their more idealized style,[33] the most notable case being the ceiling frescoes by Annibale Carracci of the Villa (Galleria) Farnese.[34] These artworks earned them a lot of approval with influential Italian artists and art critics. In contrast Caravaggio's plea for a radical realism and to take only Nature as his master[35] was not only met by disapproval by the lower clergy, it was also criticised by his first Italian biographers and art theorists with their preference of ideal beauty in art. They saw this *'Idea del Bello'* exemplified by the Carracci in contrast with Caravaggio. This was also the case with Giovanni Baglione (Rome 1566 – 1643) in his *Le Vite de'Pittori, scultori architetti, ed intagliatori dal Pontificato di Gregorio XII del 1572. fino a'tempi de Papa Urbano VIII. Nel 1642*, Rome, 1642, notwithstanding the fact that as a painter he started his career in Caravaggio's studio and in his style. But there had risen some animosity between them when Caravaggio claimed that Baglione had plagiarized his *Amor vincit omnia* (Fig. 8) with Baglione's *Sacred and Profane Love* (Fig. 9).[36]

Baglione even sued Caravaggio for slander.[37] Baglione's critical stand about Caravaggio in writing would have a more longstanding negative impact on Caravaggio's reputation than his own caravaggesque experiments in painting. Worse was to come when Baglione's negative opinion was amplified by the influential art critic Gian Pietro Bellori in his *Le vite de'pittori, scultori et architetti moderni*, Rome 1672.

Fig. 8 Michelangelo Merisi da Caravaggio known as Caravaggio, *Amor Vincit Omnia*, ca. 1601-1602 oil on canvas, 156.5 x 113.3 cm, Gemäldegalerie, Berlin, Germany.

Fig. 9 Giovanni Baglione, *Sacred and Profane Love*, ca. 1602, Oil on canvas, 183.4 x 121.4 cm, Gemäldegalerie, Berlin, Germany.

Bellori heralded a noble classicism, most explicitly in his introduction on the ideal of noble beauty in art, which he saw once again exemplified by the Carracci and denied by Caravaggio's crude naturalism.[38] The biographer of the Bolognese school, Carlo Cesare Malvasia, *Felsina pittrice. Vite de'pittori bolognesi*, 2 vols., Bologna, 1678 was even more severe, and although he was clearly guided with an apologetic bias in favor of his fellow townsmen, this impacted even more the appreciation of Caravaggio in a negative sense.

All this proves that the Carracci were an artistic factor to be reckoned with and this explains also the combination of their style with that of Caravaggio in the oeuvre of northern artists like Theodoor van Loon and Jacob van Oost the Elder. Even the paintings of Hendrick de Somer in Naples would show some influence of the Bolognese school.[39]

One can also point to several direct echoes of the Carracci already in the paintings of Abraham I Janssen.[40] Telling examples are the central panel of his Triptych with *The Coronation of the Virgin* in the church of Sint Jacob (St James) in Antwerp of circa 1620 which takes direct inspiration from Annibale Carracci's painting with the same theme (Fig. 10) now in the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York but originally painted for cardinal Pietro Aldobrandini in Rome just after 1595;[41] a *Lamentation* from about 1603 in The Dayton Art Institute (USA)[42] (being a genuine Abraham I Janssen, not a copy as some older literature is often stating) Janssen painted after a print with the same theme by Agostino Carracci; and last but not least, there is that direct copy in paint of a print after Ludovico Carracci

Fig. 10 Annibale Carracci, *The Coronation of the Virgin*, after 1595, oil on canvas, 117.8 x 141.3 cm, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, USA.

with a *Madonna and Child and angels* from circa 1607.[43] Created more than a decade later, the *Madonna and Child with the Infant Saint John the Baptist*, exhibited here and apart from being engrained in the northern realist tradition and being marked by a strong caravaggesque *chiaroscuro*, is still showing the influence of the Bolognese school.

And of course there was the towering figure of Rubens in the Southern Netherlands which explains e.g. the combination of caravaggesque and rubenesque traits in the works of many Flemish painters and most prominently in the oeuvre of Jacob Jordaens (Antwerp 1593 – 1678), who was combining – even in the case of noble antique subjects[44] – caravaggesque lower-class figures with dirty feet and much naturalistic detail, with compositional schemes inspired by Rubens.[45]

The art of Caravaggio and his followers became even less in line with the dominant critical discourse of Winkelmann's neo-classicist ideal of 'noble simplicity and silent greatness' during the eighteenth century.[46] During the nineteenth century the nation state and the emerging discipline of art history went so far as to consider the *tenebrosi* style of the northern followers of Caravaggio as some sort of artistic betrayal to their national identity.[47] And the avant-garde of the first half of the twentieth century remained blind for the innovative character of Caravaggio's art.

One had to wait till an evolution in the sensibilities of society and of modern art in the years following the Second World War to make Caravaggio's star rise again and quite spectacularly so. His rediscovery in the 1950's[48] shows telling parallels to the vehemence of modern abstract expressionism during those years following the cruel war experiences. In that context the raw nature of Caravaggio's idiom struck a sensitive chord and echoed the sensibility of modern society for disconcerting realities. Since that moment Caravaggio's haunting *chiaroscuro* compositions did not leave the spotlights anymore. And research on his followers followed suit. The impressive series of recent exhibitions devoted to Caravaggio and caravaggism – not to mention the evocation of his tumultuous life in film[49] – bear testimony to Caravaggio's lasting fame.[50]

NOTES

1. Caravaggio studies have exploded since his rediscovery by art history in the 1950's, both in Italy and abroad. An older but very good introduction in English is still H. Hibbard, *Caravaggio,* London, 1983. See also C; Puglisi, *Caravaggio*, London, 1998; S. Ebert-Schifferer, *Caravaggio: The Artist and His Work*, J. Paul Getty Museum, Malibu, 2012; and M. Cinotti and G.A. Dall'Acqua, *Michelangelo Merisi detto il Caravaggio, tutte le opere*, 1983 and plenty of exhibition catalogues on this master and his followers (cfr infra, footnotes 50).
2. As remarked already by J. Müller Hofstede, 'Abraham I Janssen, Zur Problematik des flämischen Caravaggismus', in *Jahrbuch der Berliner Museen, Jahrbuch der Preußischen Kunstsammlungen*, Neue Folge, Dreizehnter Band, 1971, pp. 208-303.
3. See H. Röttgen, 'Giuseppe Cesari, die Contarelli-Kapelle und Caravaggio', in *Zeitschrift für Kunstgeschichte*, 27 (3/4), pp. 201-227.
4. Antique sculptures were the object of a competition of acquisitions by famous and wealthy collectors, including the pope and constituted an influential artistic canon, e.g. the *Torso Belvedere*, the *Laocoon* or the *Hercules Farnese*. See Francis Haskell and Nicholas Penny, *Art and the Antique: The Lure of Classical Sculpture,* 1500 – 1900, New Haven, 1981; and Bober, P.P. & Rubinstein, R.O., *Renaissance Artists and Antique Sculpture, A Handbook of Sources*, with contributions by S. Woodford..., 1st ed. London, 1986; 2nd. ed. London-New York, 1987.
5. E.g. the frescoes by Michelangelo in the Sistine Chapel or the frescoes by Raphael in the Stanze of the Vatican and in the Villa Farnesina. It is also telling that Raphael and Michelangelo are the great heroes in the then most famous biographical overview of artists: Giorgio Vasari, *Le vite de piu eccellenti architetti, pittori, et scultori Italiani, da Cimabue a' tempi* nostri (…), Florence, 1st ed. 1550· 2nd. ed. 1568.
6. See the exhibition catalogue by Dacos, N. & Meijer, B., (eds.), *Fiamminghi a Roma, 1508/1608 Artistes des Pays-Bas et de la Principauté de Liège à Rome à la Renaissance,* Brussels, Palais des Beaux-Arts, 24.02. – 21.05.1995 – Rome, Palazzo delle Esposizioni, 07.06.-04.09.1995, Ghent, 1995.
7. The Italian journey of Rubens can be dated from the summer of 1600 till the autumn of 1608. Although being in the service of the Duke of Mantua, he stayed frequently in Rome where his brother Philip was librarian to a cardinal. As a painter Rubens received Roman commissions (e.g. for the Chiesa Nuova) during the second half of his Italian stay; but he copied antique sculpture in Rome early on. See the exhibition catalogue by Francesca Cappelletti and Lucia Simonato, *The Touch of Pygmalion. Rubens and sculpture in Rome,* Villa Borghese, 14.11.2023 – 18.02.2024, Rome, 2023. Abraham I Janssen is documented in Rome on 5 August 1598 in the Via del Babuino in Rome as godfather of an Italian boy; and on 26 March 1601 in the Via del Margutta as 'giovanno' of the Flemish painter Willem van Nieuwlandt the Elder fulfilling his Easter Duty i.e. to confess and to receive communion. His age is mentioned as already 27 years old, which indicates a status of 'giovanno' as a collaborator rather than as a mere pupil of Van Nieuwlandt. Janssen was back in Antwerp on 18 October 1601 at the latest, being registered there as free master. See the unpublished dissertation on Abraham Janssen by J. Vander Auwera, *Leven, Milieu en Oeuvre van Abraham Janssen van Nuyssen (ca. 1571/75-Antwerpen 1632), "een seer fameus meester ende schilder in syne levene*". *Bijdrage tot de studie van de historieschilderkunst in de Zuidelijke Nederlanden tijdens de eerste helft van de zeventiende eeuw*, Ghent University 2003.
8. Starting with the paintings in the Contarelli chapel in San Luigi dei Francesi (1599-1600) and in the Cerasi chapel of San Maria del Popolo (1600-1601).
9. "His belief is that all art is nothing but a bagatelle or children's work, whatever it is and whoever it is by; unless it is done after life, and that we can do no better than to follow Nature. Therefore he will not make a single brushstroke without the close study of life which he copies or paints". Carel Van Mander, *Het Schilder-Boeck*, Haarlem, first edition, 1604, folio 191 recto. English translation from the original Dutch text by Howard Hibbard, *Caravaggio*, London, 1981, pp. 343 ss. Also Van Mander's appreciation of Caravaggio's realism in contrast to the negative comments by his Italian colleagues (cfr. infra) may be explained by the fact that Van Mander's own practice as a painter was already rooted in a strong realist northern tradition, which Caravaggio himself was acquiainted with in his native norh-Italian Lombardy, and is clearly reflected in the first phase of his own work.
10. See Cl. Withfield and J. Martineau (eds.), , *Painting in Naples 1606 – 1705, from Caravaggio to Giordano*, London, Royal Academy, 1982; and more recently the exhibition catalogue by S. Bellenger and Chr. Terzagi, *Caravaggio Napoli,* Museo e Real Bosco di Capodimonte,12.04. – 14.07. 2019, Naples, 2019.
11. See for new insights on northern artists in Naples M. Osnabrugge, *The Neapolitan Lives and Careers of Netherlandish Immigrant Painters (1575-1655*), Amsterdam, 2019
12. For Finson see, apart from the recent study by Osnabrugge, the older monograph by D. Bodart, *Louis Finson:Bruges avant 1580 – Amsterdam 1617)*, Académie royale de Belgique, Classe des Beaux-Arts, Mémoires. Collection in 4°. Deuxième série. Tome XII, Fasc. 4 et dernier, Brussels, 1970.
13. W. Prohaska, 'Untersuchungen zur 'Rosenkransmadonna' Caravaggio's', in *Jahrbuch der Kunsthistorischen Sammlungen in Wien*, 76, (1980), pp.111 ss.
14. This claim goes probably back to Christiaan Kramm, *De leven en werken der Hollandsche en Vlaamsche kunstschilders, beeldhouwers, graveurs en bouwmeesters, van den vroegsten tot op onze tijd,* Amsterdam, 1857 – 1864.
15. See the exhibition catalogue by B. Ebert and L. Helmus (eds.), *Utrecht, Caravaggio en Europa/Utrecht, Caravaggio und Europa,/Utrecht, Caravaggio and Europe*, Utrecht, Centraal Museum;, 16.12.2018 – 24.03.2019/München, Bayerische Staatsgemäldesammlungen, Alte Pinakothek, 17.04. – 21.07.2019, München, 2018.
16. See W. Liedtke, *Dutch paintings in the Metropolitan Museum of Art*, New York, New Haven and London, 2007, p. 848.
17. As remarked by Osnabrugge.
18. See for a more in-depth analysis J. Vander Auwera, 'Le mouvement caravagesque dans les Pays-Bas méridionaux et sa relation avec le Caravage et ses suiveurs à l'étranger. Une question de chronologie et de diffusion'.With a full English translation (but without the images): 'The Caravaggesque mouvement in the Southern Netherlands and its relationship with Caravaggio and his followers abroad – a question of chronology and dissemination, in Liesbeth M. Helmus and Volker Manuth (eds.), *Utrecht, le mouvement caravagesque international / Uitrecht, the international Caravagesque Movement*, Paris Tableau, Paris, 2014, pp. 34-43.
19. I discussed this date at length in my dissertation on Abraham Janssen (see footnote 7).
20. See P. Askew, *Caravaggio's Death of the Virgin*, Princeton, 1990.
21. See Th Glen, 'Rubens after Caravaggio: The Entombment', in *RACAR: Revue d'art canadienne/ Canadian Art Review*, 15 (1), pp. 19-22.
22. Cfr. supra, footnote 7, the dissertation on Abraham I Janssen by Joost Vander Auwera.
23. See N. Hartje, *Bartolomeo Manfredi (1582 – 1622). Ein Nachfolger Caravaggios und seine europäische Wirkung Monographie und Werkverzeichnis*, Weimar, 2004.
24. See W. E. L. Franits, *The Paintings of Dirck van Baburen, ca. 1592/93 – 1624. Catalogue raisonné,* Amsterdam, 2013.
25. See R. J. Judson and R. E. O. Ekkart, *Gerrit van Honthorst, 1592 – 1656*, (Aetas Aurea, 14), Doornspijk, 1999.
26. See for Jan Janssens the excellent presentation by Bruno Fornari, *Dossiertentoonstelling Jan Janssens (1590 – na 1650)*, in the Museum of Fine arts of Ghent, 2009 with exhibition guide.
27. See H. Vlieghe, 'Melchior de la Mars: nieuw licht op het zogeheten Gentse caravaggisme', in *Florissant, Bijdragen tot de kunstgeschiedenis der Nederlanden (15de – 17de eeuw), Liber Amicorum Carl Van de Velde*, Brussels, 2005, pp. 347-356.
28. For Van Loon, see S. van Sprang, Theodoor van Loon. '*Pictor ingenius' et contemporain de Rubens,* (Cahier 10 des Musées Royaux des Beaux-Arts de Belgique, Bruxelles), Ghent, 2011 and the exhibition catalogue under her direction *Theodoor Van Loon: A Caravaggist Painter between Rome and Brussels*, BOZAR Brussels 10.10.2018 – 13.01.2019 – *Théodore van Loon. Peintre caravagesque entre Rome et Bruxelles*, Luxembourg, Musée national d'archéologie, d'histoire et d'art (MNAHA), 15.02. – 26.05.2019, Brussels, 2018. Van Loon is a special case because he stayed several times in Italy i.e. from 1602 till 1608 and from 1628 till 1629. Nevertheless his style remained the same throughout his career, without a marked influence of the evolution of Roman painting during his second stay.
29. For Jacob van Oost the Elder see the monograph by J L. Meulemeester, *Jacob van Oost de Oudere en het zeventiende-eeuwse Brugge*, Bruges, 1984.
30. For Rombouts see the catalogue of the recent exhibition by Fredrica Van Dam (ed.), *Theodoor Rombouts: Virtuoso of Flemish Caravaggism*, Museum of Fine Arts Ghent, 21.01. – 23.04.2023, Ghent, 2023.
31. For Gerard Seghers see D. Bieneck, *Gerard Seghers, 1591-1651, Leben und Werk des Antwerpener Historienmalers,* (Flämische Maler im Umkreis der grossen Meister, Band 6), Lingen, 1992 and the unpublished dissertation by Anne Delvingt, *Gérard Seghers (1591 – 1651) et le caravaggisme européen: entre les anciens Pays-Bas, l'Italie et l'Espagne*, , ULB University, Brussels, 2009,who, as a real connoisseur, is more selective than Bieneck in her attributions to the master.
32. E.g. the realism of detail in the *Luteplayer* now in the Hermitage Museum in Saint Petersburg.
33. See Sydney J. Freedberg, *Circa 1600, A Revolution of Style in Italian Painting*, Cambridge (Massachusetts) – London, 1983, Originally conceived for the Preston H. Thomas Memorial Lectures. Italian edition: *Circa 1600: Annibale Carracci, Caravaggio, Ludovico Carracci: una rivoluzione stilistica nella pittura italiana*, Bologna, 1984.
34. J. R. Martin, *The Farnese Gallery*, Princeton, 1965; G. Briganti, A. Chastel & R. Zapperi, *Gli amori degli dei. Nuove indagini sulla Galleria Farnese*, Rome, 1978.
35. Cfr: supra, footnote 9.
36. See the exhibition catalogue *Hommage to Caravaggio 1610/2010*, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, 12.11.2010. – 01.05.2011, Berlin, 2010.
37. See S. Schütze, *Caravaggism in Europe. His Followers in Rome*, New Haven, 2011.
38. See for the even more severe critique than Baglione's by Giovan Pietro Bellori, the exhibition catalogue by Evelina Borea and Carlo Gasparri (eds.), '*L' Idea del Bello. Viaggio per Roma nel Seicento con Giovanni Pietro Bellori*, 2 vols., Rome, Palazzo delle Esposizione, 2000.
39. See also the entry on the painting by De Somer in this exhibition.
40. See the dissertation on Abraham Janssen by Joost Vander Auwera, cited in footnote 7.
41. Object Number 1971.155, oil on canvas 11£7,8 x 141,3 cm.
42. Oil on panel 87 x 128 cm. Gift to the museum by Mr. Robert Badenhop.
43. Oil on panel, 119,1 x 94,6 cm. Sale Jackson Winter World Treasures, 2-3.12.2025, Lot 650. J. Müller Hofstede 1971 (as in footnote 2), ill. 18.
44. See the exhibition catalogue by J. Vander Auwera, I. Schaudies, J. Lange, *Jordaens and the Antique*, Brussels Royal Museums of Fine Arts of Belgium, 12.10. 2012 – 27.01.2013/Kassel, Museum Fridericianum Museumslandschaft Hessen Kassel, 01.03. – 16.06.2013, Brussels, 2012.
45. See I. Schaudies, 'Trimming Rubens's Shadow. New Light on the Mediation of Caravaggio in the Netherlands', in *Nederlands Kunsthistorisch Jaarboek*, 55, 2004, pp. 335-367.
46. For a comparable evolution as to the waning of the appreciation for Jordaens during the eighteenth century see the dissertation by Peter Capreau, *Oude meesters prijsgegeven. De prijsevolutie van 17de-eeuwse Noord- en Zuidnederlandse schilderijen(17de-20ste eeuw); een kwantitatieve en contextuele analyse van specificiyeit diversititeit en mqarktaandeel,* University of Leuven, 2008.
47. F.-J. Vanden Branden, *Geschiedenis van de Antwerpsche schildersschool*, Antwerp 1883, is full of this sort of reproaches to Flemish masters of the seventeenth century.
48. A determining role was played by the Italian art historian Roberto Longhi (Alba 1890 – Florence 1970), especially his exhibition *Mostra di Caravaggio e dei Caravaggeschi*, Milan, Royal Palace, 1951.
49. E.g. the biopic of Derek Jarman (1986) or The Soul and the Blood (2018) directed by Jesus Garces Lambert.
50. *Among Friends and Rivals; Caravaggio in Rome*, Chicago, The Art Institute of Chicago, 8 September – 31 December 2023; *The Brilliance of Caravaggio: Four Paintings in Focus*, Toledo (Ohio USA), Toledo Museum of Art, 20 January – 14 April 2024); *The Last Caravaggio*, London, National Gallery, (18 April – 21 July 2024 featuring "The Martyrdom of Saint Ursula" on loan from the Intesa Sanpaolo Collection, Galleria d'Italia – Napoli of Naples together with "Salome receives the Head of John the Baptist" from the London museum's own collection); *Caravaggio*, Rome, Palazzo Barberini (7 March – 6 July 2025, extended to 20 July); *Caravaggio's Cupid*, London, Wallace Collection (26 November 2025 – 12 April 2026.
This said, during the nineteenth century, the noble religious compositions of the Bolognese school eroded into over-sweet religious images of catholic 'bondieuserie' and got even more underappreciated by the rising interest in caravaggism. It needed museum curators like Sir Denis Mahon (National Gallery London) to get the great quality of the Bolognese school in the picture again. A recent exhibition catalogue on his influence on northern painters is G.J. van der Sman (ed.), *Caravaggio and the Painters of the North*, Madrid, Museo Thyssen-Bornemisza, 2016.

CATALOGUE

ABRAHAM I JANSSEN

(Liège 1571/1575 – 1632 Antwerp)

Madonna and Child with the Infant Saint John the Baptist

1622-1623

Oil on panel, oval, in an elaborate carved and gilt wood frame

86.3 x 69 cm

34 x 27 ¼ in

PROVENANCE

Anonymous sale, Sotheby's London, 15 April 1999, Lot 38;

European private collection.

The Virgin Mary tenderly supports the Christ Child on her lap, as the infant St John the Baptist approaches in adoration, offering Jesus a handful of red cherries, a common prefiguration of the Passion. Mary's gaze is gentle and contemplative, directed toward Saint John, who kneels at lower right.

The present painting exemplifies Abraham Janssen's mature aesthetic at the apex of his career, situated at the intersection of Flemish tradition and the revolutionary Caravaggesque idiom. The oval format, a configuration particularly favoured by the artist for intimate religious subjects, structures a pyramidal composition of hierarchical clarity, in which the three figures occupy the pictorial plane with characteristic sculptural weight.

Janssen treated this subject in at least three autograph versions during the mid-1610s. Besides the present oval panel (formerly in the 1999 Sotheby's sale), a larger version on canvas (fig. 1) was documented with Galleria Caretto in Turin, whilst another related version survives in the Koninklijk Museum voor Schone Kunsten, Antwerp (fig. 2). That museum version presents notable compositional variations: the architectural backdrop drapery is absent, whilst the column positioned to the right of the composition does not appear; furthermore, the Saint John's attribute cross is positioned behind rather than distanced from his figure, and the Virgin's left hand rests on the Baptist's shoulder in a noticeably different caress.

Following his apprenticeship to the rather mediocre painter Jan Snellinck the Elder (1548-1638), Janssen continued his studies in Italy. According to surviving documents he was in Rome in 1598 and again in the spring of 1601, when he is recorded as a collaborator of his compatriot Willem van Nieuwlandt the Elder (1561?-1626).[1]

Fig. 1. Abraham I Janssen, *Madonna and Child with the Infant Saint John the Baptist*, *c.* 1615, oil on canvas, 98 x 122,5 cm. Previously with Galleria Luigi Caretto, Turin.

Fig. 2. Abraham Janssen and workshop,[4] *Madonna and Child with the Infant Saint John the Baptist*, oil on canvas, 112,8 x 81,2 cm. Antwerpen, Koninklijk Museum voor Schone Kunsten, inv. 211.

Fig. 3. Abraham Janssen, *Scaldis and Antwerpia*, 1609, oil on canvas, 174 x 308 cm. Antwerpen, Koninklijk Museum voor Schone Kunsten, inv. 212.

Janssen became one of the first Flemish painters to absorb Caravaggio's naturalistic idiom. With his return to Antwerp in 1601 (or at the latest 1602) Janssen joined the local painters' guild, taking over several administrative functions as of 1606. In the years up to 1610 – in this period he was undoubtedly the most important painter of large-scale history pieces in the city – Janssen received many important commissions, among others for the decoration of the town hall. By 1615, Janssen's position within the Antwerp artistic establishment had undergone significant transformation. Rubens' triumphant return to the city in 1608 had gradually eclipsed the pre-eminence Janssen had enjoyed as the leading history painter of the Low Countries; nevertheless, the continuing demand for devotional half-length figures sustained his productive engagement throughout the second and third decades of the century. During the period in question, Janssen had abandoned the more overtly Caravaggesque idiom that had characterised his production between approximately 1606 and 1612 – a phase marked by dramatic chiaroscuro and pronounced narrative intensity exemplified in his monumental *Scaldis and Antwerpia* (1609, fig. 3). By 1615, his engagement with Caravaggio's innovations had matured into a more classicising synthesis.[2]

In the present work, the strong lateral illumination characteristic emphasises volumetric form rather than to generate dramatic pictorial tension; the light coalesces upon flesh and drapery in passages of luminous, controlled tonality, rendering the figures with that calculated plasticity which distinguished Janssen's approach from the more effusive naturalism of his contemporaries in Utrecht and Rome. This subordination of Caravaggist chiaroscuro to the imperatives of sculptural rendering, reflects the influence of Bolognese Baroque classicism, the Carracci school and Domenichino, upon Janssen's later development.[3]

The figures, arranged in a compact pyramidal grouping, are constrained within the shallow pictorial depth characteristic of Janssen's Madonna compositions (see *The Virgin and Child with the Infant Saint John the Baptist* in the Kremer Collection, fig. 4); the background provides minimal recession, instead functioning as a unified surface against which the sacred figures assert their tangible presence. The tonal harmonies, dominated by the warm incarnation tones of the Virgin and Child, the rich crimson of the Madonna's garment, and the cooler greys and ochres of the drapery, establish a chromatic equilibrium that eschews the violent luministic contrasts of the earlier Caravaggesque phase.

NOTES

1. P. van der Ploeg et al, *Dutch and Flemish Old Masters from the Kremer Collection*, 2002, pp. 88-90.
2. See J. Müller Hofstede, "Abraham I Janssen. Zur Problematik des flämischen Caravaggismus," *Jahrbuch der Berliner Museen*, XIII (1971), pp. 208-303.
3. W. A. Liedtke, *Flemish Paintings in The Metropolitan Museum of Art,* The Metropolitan Museum of Art 1984, p. 108-110.
4. Attribution suggested by Dr. Joost Vander Auwera.

Fig. 4. Abraham I Janssen, *Madonna and Child with the Infant Saint John the Baptist,* 1619-1620, oil on canvas, 142 × 121,2 cm. Kremer Collection, Stedelijk Museum Alkmaar.


ECCE
AGN

MATTHIAS STOM

(Flanders, *c.* 1600 – After 1650, Italy)

The Mocking of Christ

Oil on canvas

135 x 90 cm.

53 ⅛ x 35 ½ in.

PROVENANCE

European private collection

The composition is dominated by the striking figure of Christ, crowned with thorns and wrapped in a scarlet cloak. Seated on a small wooden bench, he is mocked by a mercenary who crouches beside him and offers a bamboo cane. Christ's sorrowful, contemplative face is defined by his upward gaze, while a shaft of light bathes his body, isolating him within the scene.

As for when this hitherto unpublished painting entered the present collection, the only secure fact is that it was acquired on the art market; no further information is available regarding date or place of purchase. At this stage, therefore, the work can only be approached through stylistic analysis.

The painting bears unmistakable hallmarks of one of the most original practitioners of northern European naturalism, Matthias Stom. Although his surviving oeuvre is large – around 250 paintings – biographical evidence remains scant. Even his birthplace and date are uncertain, though it was probably in Flanders around 1600, since historical documents consistently describe him as "fiamengo", that is, Flemish.[1]

Stom's artistic training took shape in the cultural centres of northern Europe, likely between Utrecht and Antwerp. He is securely documented in Rome in 1630, when he was about thirty. His surname, long read as "Stomer", has been correctly established as "Stom" on the basis of the artist's own signatures on four works (*Tobias and the Angel*, Museum Bredius, The Hague; *Supper at Emmaus*, Museo Thyssen-Bornemisza, Madrid; *Miracle of Saint Isidore Agricola*, cathedral church of Caccamo, dated 1641; and the lost Martyrdom of Saint Cecilia, formerly in the Cappuccini church in Messina, signed in Latin as "Stomus"), as well as in contemporary archival sources. The painter is certainly recorded in Rome (1630 – 1632), Naples (1635 – 1638), and Palermo from January 1640. Between 1643 and 1645 he is known to have been in Venice; thereafter, despite suggestions of a move to Lombardy, all trace of him disappears. Concerning this supposed Lombard period, it should be noted that a masterpiece by Stom is preserved in the parish church of Santa Maria dell'Assunta in Chiuduno, in the province of Bergamo, but was probably sent there from Rome after 1650.[2]

In compositional structure, typology, and above all lighting, the present work finds close analogies with other paintings attributed to Stom. His production throughout reveals the influence of the Utrecht school: artists who, after spending time in Rome and encountering Caravaggio's art at first hand, adopted the Lombard master's idiom and reinterpreted it personally, disseminating this Caravaggesque manner on their return to Flanders and Holland. Among these painters (Gerrit van Honthorst, Dirck van Baburen, Hendrick ter Brugghen), the one nearest to Stom is Honthorst, known in Italy as Gherardo delle Notti. From Honthorst, Stom drew especially the use of chiaroscuro, a predilection for nocturnal scenes animated by artificial light – frequently candlelight – and the taste for certain subjects. Honthorst himself painted several versions of the Crowning with Thorns or Christ Mocked, one of Stom's most recurrent themes, and the present work stands as an important and original example within that tradition.

Among Stom's many treatments of this Evangelical subject, three are securely connected with Naples and one probably with Catania. In compositional terms, however, these are more elaborate than the painting discussed here.[3]

In seeking to identify an early provenance, inventories from Neapolitan and Catanese contexts were examined, but without significant results: the only Stom-like work of comparable theme recorded in an important Neapolitan collection – the inventory of Pompeo D'Anna (1676) – depicts the Crowning with Thorns with multiple figures.[4]

Benedict Nicolson, among the first scholars to investigate Stom's œuvre systematically, lists several paintings titled Christ Mocked. Almost all are horizontal in format, except for one of particular relevance here, since it treats a closely related subject, though with more figures (fig. 1).[5] Even when compared to Stom's horizontal compositions, the present work appears as a markedly simplified meditation on the theme, likely intended for private devotion. The comparison with the Madrid painting reproduced by Nicolson further underscores the concentrated, contemplative force of the picture under consideration.

Stom adapts from Honthorst the motif of Christ seated on a small bench and illuminated by a focused light, confronted by a kneeling mocking soldier (fig. 2). Yet where Gherardo's figure carries a torch, Stom replaces it – wholly originally, and in a manner that feels decisively more modern – with a bamboo cane. This alteration signals the degree to which Stom personalised Flemish Caravaggism: the torches in Honthorst's versions contribute to a theatrical display of lighting that Stom no longer deemed necessary. His language develops in an almost Baroque direction and, beyond Caravaggism, clearly registers the impact of another great Flemish traveller to Italy, Peter Paul Rubens. It is precisely this synthesis – Rubensian

Fig. 1 Matthias Stom, *Mocking of Christ*, oil on canvas, private collection, Madrid.

vitality allied to the Utrecht school's Caravaggesque inheritance – that emerges with surprising clarity in the present canvas. The work therefore plausibly belongs to the later phase of Stom's career, standing as a remarkable example of northern naturalism shaped between Italy and northern Europe.

NOTES

1. For a recent summary of the documents related to Stom, see M. Osnabrugge, *The Neapolitan lives and careers of Netherlandish Immigrant Painters* (1575-1655), Amsterdam 2019, pp. 175-219.
2. A. Zalapi, in *Dipinti caravaggeschi nelle raccolte bergamasche*, exhibition catalogue (Bergamo, Accademia Carrara), E. De Pascale and F. Rossi (eds), Bergamo 2000, pp. 48-79, 83-88.
3. Osnabrugge 2019, pp. 188-190.
4. Osnabrugge 2019, pp. 188 believes that it is a *Christ mocked.* However, the inventory published by Labrot 1992, inv. 25, and available on the site of the Getty Provenance Index, states, "Un Quadro con l'Incoronazione di spine di Monsù Matteo Stoma".
5. Nicolson published this picture two years after his major anthology of Caravaggesque painting, noting its presence in an anonymous private collection in Madrid. B. Nicolson, *The International Caravaggesque Movement*, Oxford 1979, p. 177.

Fig. 2 Gerrit Van Honthorst, *The Mocking of Christ*, Church of the Conception, Rome,

HENDRICK DE SOMER

(Lokeren 1602 – 1655/56 (?) Naples)

David with the Head of Goliath

c. 1640

Oil on canvas

101.5 x 75 cm.

40 x 29 ½ in.

PROVENANCE

Property of The World Museum, Tulsa, Oklahoma;

Anonymous sale, Christie's, New York, 12 June 1981, lot 9 as *Circle of Matheus Stomer*;

Private collection, Naples.

LITERATURE

N. Spinosa, "Aggiunte a Hendrick van Somer, "alias" Enrico Fiammingo", in *Napoli, l'Europa: Ricerche di storia dell'arte in onore di Ferdinando Bologna*, (eds.) F. Abbate & F. Sricchia Santoro, Catanzaro 1995, p. 226, fig. 180.

N. Spinosa, *Grazia e tenerezza "in posa". Bernardo Cavallino e il suo tempo 1616-1656*, Rome 2013, p. 243, fig. 205.

G. Porzio, *La scuola di Ribera. Giovanni Do, Bartolomeo Passante, Enrico Fiammingo*, Napoli 2014, pp. 97, 106, fig. 84, no. 31.

N. Spinosa, *Caravaggio e i caravaggeschi. La pittura di realtà*, (ed.) V. Sgarbi, Sassari 2015, pp. 137-138, no. 23.

N. Spinosa, *Artemisia Gentileschi e il suo tempo, Skira*, Milano 2016, p. 258, no. 84.

EXHIBITIONS

Sassari, Palazzo Ducale, *Caravaggio e i caravaggeschi. La pittura di realtà*, 26 June – 30 October 2015.

Roma, Museo di Roma at Palazzo Braschi, *Artemisia Gentileschi e il suo tempo*, 30 November 2016 – 7 May 2017.

This beautifully painted and arresting *David with the Head of Goliath* was first published and restituted to the oeuvre of the Flemish baroque master Hendrick de Somer by Nicola Spinosa in 1995.[1] One of the most gifted artists associated with the circle of Ribera in Naples, "Enrico Fiammingo", as he was also referred to in contemporary local sources, fell into obscurity at an early date: by the mid-18th century, Bernardo de Dominici's account of the artist inaccurately described him as a pupil of Ribera, alongside the equally little-known Giovanni Dó and Bartolomeo Passante. It is only in recent years that de Somer's work and his importance have been properly redefined through archival research and the reassessment of his corpus. The definitive attribution of the present work to the Flemish artist relies on its close stylistic and thematic concordance with the *David* in the Musée des Beaux-Arts in Nice (fig. 1) and the antecedent version of the same subject in a private Roman collection, of identical size and signed with the initials 'HS'.[2]

Fig. 1. Hendrick de Somer, *David with the Head of Goliath*, *c.* 1640, oil on canvas, 100 x 74 cm, Musée des Beaux-Arts, Nice.

Fig. 2. Massimo Stanzione, *David with the Head of Goliath, c.* 1642-1643, oil on canvas, 128.27 x 97.97 cm, The San Diego Museum of Art, San Diego.

The handsome biblical hero, portrayed in three-quarter view against a darkened background of rocks and crepuscular landscape, is depicted wearing a feathered hat and a fur vest, while holding the sword taken from the Philistine giant in his right hand and leaning on his severed head. Previously variously ascribed to Battistello Caracciolo and Matthias Stomer, the present canvas shares the luminous intensity, detailed surface textures, and refined chromatic values of the Nice version.[3] The fundamental originality of this work, however, lies in the intimate attitude of the young protagonist: no longer fierce and complacent, he now eschews the viewer's direct gaze and appears somewhere between disenchanted and melancholic, as if the immediate sense of pride for his legendary deed has been overtaken by a more meditative disposition.

Given the exquisite quality of the chromatic effect of the sword hilt and the fine anatomical rendering of Goliath's head, still based on famous Caravaggesque models, Spinosa regarded it as a typical work of the early 1640s. In the wake of past naturalistic research, typical of his master Jusepe de Ribera, de Somer was moving towards more fashionable 'neo-Venetian' painterly solutions, parallel to the artistic developments introduced by Massimo Stanzione, Bernardo Cavallino and Francesco Guarino (with whom he has been regularly confused) in those same years. A comparison with Stanzione's own rendition of the same subject, today at the San Diego Museum of Art (fig. 2), highlights the evolving pictorial language within the Neapolitan artistic milieu

Fig. 3. Hendrick de Somer, *The Baptism of Christ,* 1641, oil on canvas, 310 x 167 cm, Church of Santa Maria della Sapienza, Naples.

of the time. Based on analogous stylistic considerations, the present David can be compared to Somer's only known public commission: the *Baptism of Christ* (1641) painted by the Flemish artist for the Dominican church of Santa Maria della Sapienza in Naples, where he worked together with other *Ribereschi* as Cesare Fracanzano and Giovanni Ricca (fig. 3).[4] Other significant works can be situated in this same mature phase of Somer's artistic career, as the *Lot and his Daughters* (*c.* 1645) at the Thyssen-Bornemisza collection (fig. 4).

NOTES

1. Spinosa, 1995, p. 226, footnote 14.
2. A third version of the same subject, which had appeared at auction at Christie's, New York on 7 June 2002 (lot 39), with an attribution to the school of Nicolas Toumier, was appropriately returned to Somer by Giuseppe Porzio in 2012 (see Spinosa 2015, p. 138).
3. See Spinosa 2013, p. 484, for a detailed comparison between the two versions.
4. D. Veronique & C. Naldi, *Massimo Stanzione, Guercino, Hendrick de Somer et Fra' Galgario,* Paris 2016, pp. 20-25.

Fig. 4. Hendrick de Somer, *Lot and his Daughters*, *c.* 1645, oil on canvas, 148.5 x 194.5 cm, Collection Thyssen-Bornemisza, Lugano.

JAN VAN DALEM

(Brussels, before 1610 – after 1662)

Bacchus

c. 1645

Oil on canvas

72 x 61 cm.

28 ⅓ x 24 in.

PROVENANCE

Private collection, Belgium.

LITERATURE

A. Crispo, "*Il Maestro della morte di Didone alias Jan van Dalen. Un artista italianizzante nei Paesi Bassi del Seicento, Parma per l'Arte*, 2018, p.266, fig. 6.

Little known today, Jan van Dalem is considered one of the best kept secrets of 17th century Flemish painting. Together with very different painters such as Gérard Douffet, Jan Miel and Michael Sweerts, he managed to stay independent from the overwhelming influence Rubens had on monumental figure painting during the 17th century and beyond. Today about a dozen paintings can be firmly attributed to Van Dalem and therefore this newly discovered Bacchus is a significant and important addition to the small body of work by the master.

Jan van Dalem had a strong penchant for the subject of the drunken Bacchus. He gave the deity a mischievous and challenging expression which appears to invite the viewer to enjoy a glass of wine with him. Arguably his best known painting is an unsigned Bacchus preserved in the Palazzo Pitti in Florence (fig. 1).

The Florentine painting, which measures 59 x 48 cm, shows the head of Bacchus close to the picture surface, his head askew and no glass of wine included in the composition. A latter rendition of the subject, showing a Bacchus holding a bottle, measuring 76 x 67 cm, is preserved in the Museum of Fine Arts in Budapest (fig. 2)

The present painting is stylistically closely related to another Bacchus by Van Dalem in the Kunsthistorisches Museum in Vienna (fig. 3).

The Vienna picture, measuring 68 x 59 cm, is signed and dated J.v.d. F 1648. It shares many stylistic characteristics with the present painting and therefore there can be no room for doubt that they are painted by the very same hand. Very typical indeed is the way the hair, the ivy around the head and the complexion of the head and

Fig. 1 Jan van Dalem, *Bacchus*, oil on canvas, Uffizi Gallery, Florence.

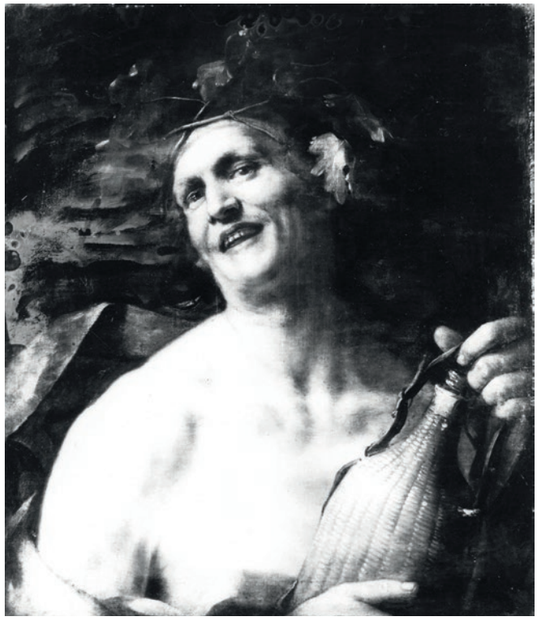

Fig. 2 Jan van Dalem, *Laughing Bacchus*, oil on canvas, 76 x 67 cm, Museum of Fine Arts, Budapest.

Fig. 3 Jan van Dalem, *Bacchus*, 1648, oil on canvas, 72 x 58.2 cm, Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna.

naked shoulder of the figure is rendered in both paintings. Moreover, the glass of wine in the right hand is identical in both works. The Vienna painting is executed slightly more polished and it seems most likely it post-dates the present Bacchus. A date during the early 1640's is certainly feasible for the newly discovered work.

Several paintings by Van Dalem can be found in 17th century inventories. The Vienna Bacchus was already during the lifetime of the painter recorded in the collection of Leopold Wilhelm. In 1682 the Antwerp banker, jeweler and art dealer Diego Duarte owed four paintings by the master. One is listed as 'Een droncken Bacchus van Van Dalem' (G. Dogaer, 'De inventaris der schilderijen van Diego Duarte', Jaarboek van het Koninklijk Museum voor Schone Kunsten, Antwerp 1971, pp. 195-221, no. 53). Unfortunately, it is impossible to say which of the extant versions with the Bacchus subject by Van Dalem was owned by the banker.

Jan van Dalem was, in all likelihood, the son of the eponymous Brussels goldsmith and born before 1610. He had several namesakes (Van Dealen, Van Daele, Van Dael), which make establishing his biography a difficult task. Facts about his life are still confused with those by similar named masters. It has turned out that he is not identical with the Jan van Dalem, who was registered as a pupil of David de Middelaer in 1632. In fact he was a pupil of a certain Jacques Fyderbe in Brussels in 1621. Ten years later, in 1631, he was present in Rome and from that date on he signed his paintings 'J. van Dalem fecit in Roma. Two genre scenes formerly in the collection of the Princes of Liechtenstein are signed this way. At this time Jan van Dalem was associated in Rome with the influential painter from Haarlem, Pieter van Laer, called Bamboccio.

The work of Caravaggio and his followers had a more lasting impact on his work during the following decades. Especially, the paintings by Valentin de Boulogne must have made a powerful impression on Van Dalem. A large, multi-figured, painting from the 1640s representing the Four Ages of Man shows the Valentin influence very strongly. (figs. 4 & 5).

However, Van Dalem's different renderings of Bacchus are stylistically independent from the work of Caravaggio and his circle. These are highly original works and the newly discovered painting is an important addition to Flemish 17th-century figure painting.

Fig. 4 Valentin de Boulogne, *The Four Ages of Men*, *c.* 1629, oil on canvas, 96.5 x 134 cm, The National Gallery, London.

Fig 5 Jan van Dalem, *The Four Ages of Men*, *c.* 1640, oil on canvas, 121 x 152 cm, Private collection.

NICOLAS LAUWERS

(1600 – 1652)

AFTER GERARD SEGHERS

(1591 – 1651)

Saint Cecilia with Three Angels Making Music

c. 1645

Engraving on laid paper.

Plate: 317 x 371 mm. 12 ¼ x 14 ⅝ in.

Sheet: 338 x 385 mm. 13 ¼ x 15 ⅛ in.

Signed in the plate “Nicol. Lauwers sculp.” lower right; “Gerardus Seghers inven.” lower left.

Inscribed in the plate “Cæcilis alterno luditque canitque susurro. Respondet parili picta Juuenta choro. En ut tacta fides, melos ut dent ora puella; Angelicum ut resones, viue etiam angelicè.”.

Unidentified letter B watermark.

PROVENANCE

H.F. de la Motte-Fouquet (1795-1874, Germany), Lugt 778;

Private collection, New York, 1980;

With David Tunick, Inc.

REFERENCE

Wurzbach 8, first state of two, before the address of Meyssens; Hollstein 13.

The present engraving is by the Flemish print-maker Nicolas Lauwers (Antwerp 1600 – 1652). Lauwers was admitted to the Guild of Saint Luke in Antwerp in 1619, and shortly thereafter established his workshop on the Lombardenvest under the name *In de scryvende Hand (In the writing hand)*. He became deacon of the guild in 1635.[1] He is well-known as a reproductive engraver and publisher of designs by leading Flemish painters such as Peter Paul Rubens and Jacob Jordaens. The source design of the present etching is a painting by Gerard Seghers (1591-1651), a key figure of the early Flemish Baroque and one of the Antwerp Caravaggisti (fig. 1).

Saint Cecilia, martyr and patroness of music, became increasingly popular in post-Tridentine Catholic Europe, aligned with the Jesuit-inspired arts of music-devotion and the new prominence of musical iconography in Counter-Reformation imagery.

Here, Saint Cecilia is depicted seated at a table, her head haloed, gazing upward, while three angels accompany her musically: one plays a flute and another a lute. The table also holds a violin and bow. Through the dramatic projected lighting the scene evokes a heavenly concert. The Latin couplets underline the theme: Cecilia alternately plays and sings ("luditque canitque"), the youthful chorus respond, and the faithful girl's voice gives melody, so that the angelic chorus may resound and the saint live even angelically. The upward glance of the saint, the halo, the flying drapery, the candle (or light source) at the table's edge, and the strong modelling of form in dark and light all reflect Seghers' indebtedness to Caravaggist compositional devices.

Fig. 1. Gerard Seghers, *Saint Cecilia with Three Angels Making Music*, *c.* 1610-1620, oil on canvas, 121.9 x 152.4 cm. Recorded in the Scheidwimmer Collection, Munich.

Impressions of this engraving are held in several major public collections, including the National Gallery of Art, Washington, the Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam, and Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen, Rotterdam.

NOTES

1. See H. Hymans, 'Lauwers (Nicolas)', in *Biographie nationale de Belgique*, vol. XXI, Académie royale des sciences, des lettres et des beaux-arts de Belgique, Brussels, 1911 – 1913.

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