

“The significance of Caravaggio’s encounter with the immense southern capital, more classically ancient than Rome itself, and at the same time Spanish and Oriental, is not hard to understand for one who has read at least some passages of Porta or Basile: immersion in a violent and mimic everyday reality, desperately popular”

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The **Museo e Real Bosco di Capodimonte** and the **Pio Monte della Misericordia**, with the production and organization by the publishing house **Electa**, is promoting an exhibition to explore the Caravaggio’s Neapolitan period and the legacy that he left to the city: *Caravaggio Naples*, curated by **Maria Cristina Terzaghi and Sylvain Bellenger**, from April 12 to July 14, 2019.

Caravaggio in Naples

Caravaggio lived in Naples for a total of 18 months, during his two stays: between October 1606 and June 1607 and in the autumn of 1609 for about a year until his death at Porto Ercole while traveling towards Rome, in July 1610. These were intense and fundamental months for his life and artistic output, which, yet they are less well known than the period he spent to Rome.

Caravaggio reached Naples fleeing from Rome, where he had been involved in the murder of Ranuccio Tomassoni. A marked man, he had been sentenced to death in Rome and was tormented by a sense of guilt. The drama of his Neapolitan works with their distinctive moral intensity seems to be very close to the contemporary vision of the great artist, an aspect that emerges in these works from national and international museum collections, with the exhibition opening in Capodimonte.

A unique encounter in the history of art

Caravaggio’s meeting with the city of Naples and his relations with the panorama of local art, definitely left their mark on his work. The intense rendering of passion and instinct in his Neapolitan paintings today, more than at any other time, identifies the Lombard artist’s image and personality.

Caravaggio’s ties with the region had a decisive impact on the Neapolitan school and in establishing the poetics of Neapolitan naturalism. Both the younger artists, such as Battistello Caracciolo, and those already active in Naples, like Fabrizio Santafede, could hardly remain immune to Caravaggio’s realism and they sought to adapt to his innovations, creating works unmistakably influenced by Caravaggio. This influence continued to affect their colleagues of the next generation, such as Jusepe de Ribera or Massimo Stanzione.

The exhibition layout

Starting from these considerations, *Caravaggio Naples*, with a strictly scientific approach, presents a comparison between 6 works by Caravaggio from Italian and international institutions with 21 paintings by Neapolitan artists, who immediately registered his innovations and were overwhelmed by them, with recurrent subjects in the Master's paintings. The visual comparison between the works brought together in Sala Causa allows immediate reflections and clarifications of the link between the artist and the city and is accompanied by a "diary", a detailed biographical timeline that reorders our literary and documentary sources (both published and unpublished) for the period.

The first, powerful dialogue on display is between *The Flagellation*, preserved in Capodimonte, which the artist painted for the Neapolitan church of San Domenico, and the exceptional loan of the *Flagellation* by the Musée des Beaux-Arts in Rouen, absent from Naples for 35 years and returning after restoration that has given the masterpiece new life. The comparison is enriched by the display of a copy of the painting in Rouen (which Mahon first attributed to the master with the endorsement of Longhi), together with some paintings closely inspired by it, such as the *Flagellation*, restored for the occasion, by Fabrizio Santafede from Palazzo Abatellis, which draws immediately on the work in France: a late Mannerist old master, who changes, seduced by the innovations of the Lombard master; the *Christ at the Column* by Battistello Caracciolo (Museum of Capodimonte) and one by Jusepe de Ribera (Monumento Nazionale dei Girolamini), both derived from Caravaggio's painting.

The profound impression made by Caravaggio on Neapolitan painting is brought out by the comparison between his *Salomé* from the National Gallery in London and that in the Palacio Real, Madrid with some outstanding interpretations of the subject by Battistello Caracciolo (Museo des Bellas Artes, Seville) and by Massimo Stanzione (private collection), now shown for the first time in Naples.

With respect to Caravaggio's influence on European art, the exhibition layout presents works never before exhibited in Italy by the painter Louis Finson, such as the *Martyrdom of St. Sebastian*. Known as the author of the copies of the *Magdalene in Ecstasy*, also present in the exhibition, Finson was among Caravaggio's first friends, followers and copyists in Naples. We now understand more clearly the first steps he took in Naples made in Finson's workshop and that of the Flemish artist Abraham Vinck, whom the sources record as the "close friend of Caravaggio". The two artists welcomed him as soon as he reached the city and probably also provided the implements with which he worked. They also entered into possession of works by the painter that they took to Amsterdam, in this way exporting Caravaggio's artistic vocabulary to the heart of Europe.

Beside Finson's *Martyrdom of St. Sebastian*, appear the paintings by Battistello (*Crucifixion*), Stanzione (*Martyrdom of St. Agatha*) and Hendrik De Somer (*St. Sebastian*) from the collection of the Museum of Capodimonte, which undoubtedly had as their common model Caravaggio's *Crucifixion of St. Andrew*, today in Cleveland.

The exhibition is also an opportunity to retrace the activities of the most gifted of the Caravaggeschi active in Naples, such as Tanzio da Varallo, who spent a whole decade in Naples at the same time as Caravaggio. A masterpiece by this gifted artist will be exhibited for the first time ever worldwide: the *St. John the Baptist* in a private collection, inspired by Caravaggio's *St. John the Baptist* in the Borghese collection, with the two works being placed side by side in the exhibition.

The exhibition layout closes with the last work Caravaggio painted in the city, the *Martyrdom of St. Ursula*, today in Naples at the Gallerie d'Italia in Palazzo Zevallos, side by side with an interpretation of it by Giovanni Bernardino Azzolino, the author of several replicas of Caravaggio's work, of which one of the most naturalistic is exhibited at Capodimonte, brought from the Pinacoteca Nazionale di Siena. The late versions of the *St. Ursula* are also drawn on in Caracciolo's *Baptism of Christ* (Monumento Nazionale dei Girolamini, Naples) and, from a private collection, the *Martyrdom of St. Sebastian* by Filippo Vitale, an artist whose youthful phase has been reconstructed in recent years.

Shortly before the *St. Ursula*, Caravaggio had painted three works for the Fenaroli chapel in Sant'Anna dei Lombardi, today lost. A rare visual record of them is probably the *St. Francis* by Carlo Sellitto, a painter who hailed from Lucania and arrived in Naples in first decade of the 17th century, where he began to model his own artistic language in a rapid and decided way on the innovations introduced by Caravaggio.

The plan of the exhibition includes the reconstruction of a documented path through the city that takes in the places that Caravaggio frequented and where he lived.

They include the Pio Monte della Misericordia, which contains his extraordinary masterpiece of *The Seven Works of Mercy*, painted by Caravaggio for the chapel of the religious complex in 1607. The great altarpiece (390 x 260 cm) is recognized today as one of the most significant representations of the alleys of the city and its inhabitants, expressing the powerful and almost anthropological bond between Caravaggio's paintings and the Neapolitan character.

Caravaggio Napoli has been realized with the contribution of **Regione Campania**, in collaboration with **Comune di Napoli** e with the support of **Aeroporto Internazionale di Napoli**.

Crédit Agricole Italia has contributed to the exhibition with the restoration of 4 art works continuing on its tradition of supporting the world of art, since the exhibition on Caravaggio in Rome, 2010.

For this exhibition, **Google Arts & Culture** partners with the Museum and Royal Park of Capodimonte to capture, in super high resolution, three Neapolitan paintings by Caravaggio using the Art Camera technology. Art Camera is a robotic camera, custom-built to create gigapixel images.

Flagellation of Christ, from the collection of the Museum and Royal Park of Capodimonte, *Seven works of Mercy*, from the collection of Pio Monte della Misericordia, *Martyrdom of St. Ursula*, from the collection of Banca Intesa Sanpaolo, Le Gallerie d'Italia, Palazzo Zevallos Stigliano, Naples, are now accessible to users around the world on Google Arts & Culture. Visitors to the exhibition can zoom into the details of the paintings, through interactive touch screens available in the museum