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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.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

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

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.

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).

I ordered this book sight unseen, eager for a new work on Caravaggio and excited by the description of color plates on double-page spreads. The book arrived this week, and the color is just grand. Unfortunately I can say nothing about the text, because the designers at Phaidon Press were allowed to specify small sans-serif type, printed in silver grey on fairly glossy paper, so that the text is not really readable, at least by me and the colleagues who've also seen the book. Given

Catherine Puglisi's previous work, I am sure the text is excellent, and I'm terribly disappointed that it's almost illegible. Shame on Phaidon Press--they've done the book and the author, and their would-be readers, a genuine disservice.

I did so look forward to receiving this book greedily unwrapping it as soon as it arrived. I'm a huge fan of Caravaggio and having seen many of his paintings in situ I was eager for any new information. Unfortunately I'm one of the people who can't read the small silver text on glossy white paper. When I say "can't read" I mean that within about two minutes all of the little silver words on the page just dissolve into whiteness. I agree it looks pretty but perhaps that combination of ink and paper might best be reserved for an invitation to a Winter Solstice dinner and not used in an obviously superb book such as this one. Catherine Puglisi was done a terrible dis-service in the design of this book. The quality of the photographs of the paintings (and the quantity) are fantastic and I have enjoyed them immensely. Maybe the paper version is black on white but I sure don't like to have buy the same book twice. I'm giving two stars to what is probably a five star book.

Anything showing photos of this fellow's incredible oeuvre would probably deserve the highest praise even without editorial guidance. But just browsing thru this one will stun anyone not familiar with Caravaggio, which is probably 98% of the populace. Ms. Puglisi interweaves the artist's life and times around the glorious color photos. The print may be a tad small, but the fact that there's around two spaces between each line of text makes it, IMHO, even easier to read than otherwise. The raw, harrowing originality of this artist are beyond description, and his life is a near match. He died violently before the age of 40...Especially recommended for those (mainly males) who may think that Art and Art History are less than manly pursuits!! (Yes there are plenty of guys out there who think like this.) Give this book, the author, publisher, and the artist way more than five stars!!

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