

Caravaggio, whose fiery masterpieces included "The Death of the Virgin" and "David with the Head of Goliath," and who inspired generations of artists, was born as Michelangelo Merisi da Caravaggio.

Plot[edit] Told in a segmented fashion, the film opens as Caravaggio Nigel Terry dies from lead poisoning while in exile, with only his long-time deaf-dumb companion Jerusalem Spencer Leigh who was given by his family to the artist as a boy by his side. Caravaggio thinks back to his life as a teenage street ruffian Dexter Fletcher who hustles and paints. As an adult, Caravaggio still lives under the roof and paints with the funding of Del Monte. Caravaggio is shown employing street people, drunks and prostitutes as models for his intense, usually religious paintings see the article on the painter for examples. He is depicted as frequently brawling, gambling, getting drunk and is implied to sleep with both male and female models. In the art world, Caravaggio is regarded as vulgar and entitled due to his Vatican connections. Ranuccio also introduces Caravaggio to his girlfriend Lena Tilda Swinton , who also becomes an object of attraction and a model to the artist. One day, Lena announces she is pregnant although she does not state who the father is and will become a mistress to the wealthy Scipione Borghese Robbie Coltrane. Soon, she is found murdered by drowning. Caravaggio is shown painting Lena after she dies and mournfully writhing with her nude body. Caravaggio pulls strings and goes to the Pope himself to free Ranuccio. When Ranuccio is freed, he tells Caravaggio he killed Lena so they could be together. Back on his deathbed, Caravaggio is shown having visions of himself as a boy and trying to refuse the last rites offered him by the priests. In one scene, Caravaggio is in a bar lit with electric lights. Another character is seen using an electronic calculator. Cigarette smoking, a motorbike, and the use of a manual typewriter also feature in the film. The cook Jennifer Paterson was an extra. The production designer was Christopher Hobbs who was also responsible for the copies of Caravaggio paintings seen in the film. The film was entered into the 36th Berlin International Film Festival where it won the Silver Bear for an outstanding single achievement. The DVD is compatible with all region codes and includes special features such as the trailer, a gallery of production designs and storyboards, feature commentary by Gabriel Berestain, an interview with Christopher Hobbs titled Italy of the Memory, and interviews with Tilda Swinton, Derek Jarman, Nigel Terry.

Chapter 2 : Caravaggio: a Biography Through His Paintings | Owlcation

Caravaggio (Michelangelo Merisi or Amerighi) was born in Milan, where his father, Fermo (Fermo Merisio), was a household administrator and architect-decorator to the Marchese of Caravaggio, a town not far from the city of Bergamo.

Biography of Caravaggio
Early life Caravaggio was born in Milan, where his father, Fermo Merisi, was a household administrator and architect-decorator to the Marchese of Caravaggio. His mother, Lucia Aratori, came from a propertied family of the same district. In the family moved to Caravaggio to escape a plague which ravaged Milan. In he was apprenticed for four years to the Lombard painter Simone Peterzano, described in the contract of apprenticeship as a pupil of Titian. Caravaggio appears to have stayed in the Milan-Caravaggio area after his apprenticeship ended, but it is possible that he visited Venice and saw the works of Giorgione, whom Federico Zuccaro later accused him of imitating, and Titian. Rome Caravaggio fled Milan for Rome in mid after "certain quarrels" and the wounding of a police officer. He arrived in Rome "naked and extremely needy Known works from this period include a small Boy Peeling a Fruit his earliest known painting , a Boy with a Basket of Fruit, and the Young Sick Bacchus, supposedly a self-portrait done during convalescence from a serious illness that ended his employment with Cesari. All three demonstrate the physical particularity - one aspect of his realism - for which Caravaggio was to become renowned: His fortunes were at their lowest ebb, yet it was now that he forged some extremely important friendships, with the painter Prospero Orsi, the architect Onorio Longhi, and the sixteen year old Sicilian artist Mario Minniti. Orsi, established in the profession, introduced him to influential collectors; Longhi, more balefully, introduced him to the world of Roman street-brawls; and Minniti served as a model and, years later, would be instrumental in helping Caravaggio to important commissions in Sicily. The Fortune Teller, his first composition with more than one figure, shows Mario being cheated by a gypsy girl. The theme was quite new for Rome, and proved immensely influential over the next century and beyond. This, however, was in the future: Like the Fortune Teller it was immensely popular, and over 50 copies survive. More importantly, it attracted the patronage of Cardinal Francesco Maria Del Monte, one of the leading connoisseurs in Rome. For Del Monte and his wealthy art-loving circle Caravaggio executed a number of intimate chamber-pieces - The Musicians, The Lute Player, a tipsy Bacchus, an allegorical but realistic Boy Bitten by a Lizard - featuring Minniti and other adolescent models. The first of these was the Penitent Magdalene, showing Mary Magdalene at the moment when she has turned from her life as a courtesan and sits weeping on the floor, her jewels scattered around her. Where was the repentance It was followed by others in the same style: But a true reputation would depend on public commissions, and for these it was necessary to look to the Church. Already evident was the intense realism or naturalism for which Caravaggio is now famous. He preferred to paint his subjects as the eye sees them, with all their natural flaws and defects instead of as idealised creations. This shift from accepted standard practice and the classical idealism of Michelangelo was very controversial at the time. Not only was his realism a noteworthy feature of his paintings during this period, he turned away from the lengthy preparations traditional in central Italy at the time. Instead, he preferred the Venetian practice of working in oils directly from the subject - half-length figures and still life. One of the characteristic paintings by Caravaggio at this time which gives a good demonstration his virtuoso talent was his work, Supper at Emmaus from c. The two works making up the commission, the Martyrdom of Saint Matthew and Calling of Saint Matthew, delivered in , were an immediate sensation. Some denounced him for various perceived failings, notably his insistence on painting from life, without drawings, but for the most part he was hailed as a great artistic visionary: For the most part each new painting increased his fame, but a few were rejected by the various bodies for whom they were intended, at least in their original forms, and had to be re-painted or find new buyers. His first version of Saint Matthew and the Angel, featured the saint as a bald peasant with dirty legs attended by a lightly-clad over-familiar boy-angel, was rejected and a second version had to be painted as The Inspiration of Saint Matthew. One would say it is a work made by a painter that can paint well, but of a dark spirit, and who has been for a lot of time far from God, from His adoration, and from any good thought In any case, the rejection did not mean that Caravaggio or his paintings were out of favour. The Death of the

Virgin was no sooner taken out of the church than it was purchased by the Duke of Mantua, on the advice of Rubens, and later acquired by Charles I of England before entering the French royal collection in 1625. The model was named in a memoir of the early 17th century as "Cecco", the diminutive for Francesco. The point, however, is the intense yet ambiguous reality of the work: Exile and death Caravaggio led a tumultuous life. He was notorious for brawling, even in a time and place when such behavior was commonplace, and the transcripts of his police records and trial proceedings fill several pages. On 29 May, he killed, possibly unintentionally, a young man named Ranuccio Tomassoni. Previously his high-placed patrons had protected him from the consequences of his escapades, but this time they could do nothing. Caravaggio, outlawed, fled to Naples. There, outside the jurisdiction of the Roman authorities and protected by the Colonna family, the most famous painter in Rome became the most famous in Naples. His connections with the Colonnas led to a stream of important church commissions, including the Madonna of the Rosary, and The Seven Works of Mercy. De Wignacourt proved so impressed at having the famous artist as official painter to the Order that he inducted him as a knight, and the early biographer Bellori records that the artist was well pleased with his success. Major works from his Malta period include a huge Beheading of Saint John the Baptist the only painting to which he put his signature and a Portrait of Alof de Wignacourt and his Page, as well as portraits of other leading knights. Yet by late August he was arrested and imprisoned. The circumstances surrounding this abrupt change of fortune have long been a matter of speculation, but recent investigation has revealed it to have been the result of yet another brawl, during which the door of a house was battered down and a knight seriously wounded. By December he had been expelled from the Order "as a foul and rotten member. Together they set off on what amounted to a triumphal tour from Syracuse to Messina and on to the island capital, Palermo. In each city Caravaggio continued to win prestigious and well-paid commissions. Among other works from this period are a Burial of St. His style continued to evolve, showing now friezes of figures isolated against vast empty backgrounds. After only nine months in Sicily Caravaggio returned to Naples. According to his earliest biographer he was being pursued by enemies while in Sicily and felt it safest to place himself under the protection of the Colonnas until he could secure his pardon from the pope now Paul V and return to Rome. His style continued to evolve - Saint Ursula is caught in a moment of highest action and drama, as the arrow fired by the king of the Huns strikes her in the breast, unlike earlier paintings which had all the immobility of the posed models. The brushwork was much freer and more impressionistic. Had Caravaggio lived, something new would have come. The Denial of Saint Peter, c. Oil on canvas, 94 x cm. Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. In the chiaroscuro a woman points two fingers at Peter while a soldier points a third. Caravaggio tells the story of Peter denying Christ three times with this symbolism. In Naples an attempt was made on his life, by persons unknown. At first it was reported in Rome that the "famous artist" Caravaggio was dead, but then it was learned that he was alive, but seriously disfigured in the face. He painted a Salome with the Head of John the Baptist Madrid, showing his own head on a platter, and sent it to de Wignacourt as a plea for forgiveness. This painting he may have sent to the unscrupulous art-loving cardinal-nephew Scipione Borghese, who had the power to grant or withhold pardons. In the summer of he took a boat northwards to receive the pardon, which seemed imminent thanks to his powerful Roman friends. With him were three last paintings, gifts for Cardinal Scipione. What happened next is the subject of much confusion and conjecture. The bare facts are that on 28 July an anonymous avviso private newsletter from Rome to the ducal court of Urbino reported that Caravaggio was dead. Three days later another avviso said that he had died of fever. These were the earliest, brief accounts of his death, which later underwent much elaboration. No body was found. A poet friend of the artist later gave 18 July as the date of death, and a recent researcher claims to have discovered a death notice showing that the artist died on that day of a fever in Porto Ercole, near Grosseto in Tuscany.

Chapter 3 : Caravaggio - Wikipedia

Caravaggio was born in Milan, where his father, Fermo Merisi, was a household administrator and architect-decorator to the Marchese of Caravaggio. His mother, Lucia Aratori, came from a propertied family of the same district.

Odyssey Traveller offers a tour based on the life and work of Caravaggio. If you wish to research further, we have recommended a reading list of ten books on Caravaggio. We have several departures scheduled for and Early Life Michelangelo Merisi, known to us as Caravaggio, was probably born on the 29th of September, Lucia was from a well-known local Caravaggio family and it was possibly this, as much as the fact that Fermo worked for the Marquis, which took Francesco to the wedding. Michelangelo probably spent the first few years of his life mainly in Milan. But the outbreak of plague in caused the family to move out to the fortified hillside town of Caravaggio, where Fermo Merisi owned property and where they could expect to enjoy the protection of the Marquis. Unfortunately the move was too late for Fermo. In a very short space of time Michelangelo was to lose his father, uncle, grandmother and grandfather to the plague. Michelangelo, his mother, brother and sister went to live with his maternal grandparents on property they owned in Caravaggio. Here he remained until , when, aged 13, he moved to Milan and entered into an apprenticeship with the painter, Simone Peterzano. Peterzano, according to the contract details, had been a student of Titian but very little is known about the four years Caravaggio spent under his tutelage. There are no known works existing from this period. In fact, there are no authenticated works known up until the time Caravaggio reached Rome at the age of . At this point he sold the land that had been his inheritance and lived on the money. Not much is known about this period in his life. It is possible that he travelled in Northern Italy and absorbed some of the painting techniques of the local artists both past and present. It is even possible that he travelled as far as Venice where he would have seen, and perhaps been influenced by, works of Titian, Tintoretto and Jacopo Bassano. In Caravaggio, having spent his inheritance, set out for Rome. Despite a great deal of recent research no evidence for this murder has emerged. Caravaggio made little initial impression on the Roman art scene. Rome was full of painters and Caravaggio was just one more trying to make a name for himself. This, Caravaggio found far from exciting. Medusa, painted on a leather jousting shield Milan in the time of Caravaggio By the time Caravaggio was born in , Milan had lost its independence. Eventually the Spanish Habsburgs had made Milan part of their vast empire. When Caravaggio was born, Milan had a population of , and was full of noise, bustle, trade and industry. It was very different from the small town where he spent most of his childhood. Milan was a city of conspicuous opulence and luxury trades such as silk and sword making. It was also distinguished by its very large number of churches. Milan was built on a circular plan with the massive Castello Sforzesco at its centre. Built originally for the Sforza dynasty, by the time Caravaggio knew Milan, the Castello was the refuge of the Spanish governors. From the Castello they kept a watchful eye on the city and the surrounding countryside. He was a deeply pious man with a fierce sense of mission. Under his steely control the citizens of Milan were to be indoctrinated in the ways of his own brand of piety, whether they liked it or not. He had a bleak view of human nature, believing that man was tainted by original sin. He believed it was his duty to transform the life and habits of the men and women of Milan. Borromeo tried to ban dancing on feast days and Sundays. He attempted to kill off the pre-Lenten tradition of Carnival. He prohibited jousts, tournaments, plays and masquerades. A popular uprising following these prohibitions, however, forcing him to admit that there were some limits to his power. Despite his inflexibility Borromeo was a charismatic leader who changed his world. There is good reason to believe that his ideas would have had a profound influence on Caravaggio and his art. Borromeo seems to have preferred the more traditional, popular representations aimed squarely at the promotion of mass piety. Soldiers, labourers, priests and painters were all on the lookout for a living and Caravaggio revelled in the squalid, crowded and neglected conditions. When Caravaggio arrived in Rome, the city was in the midst of a great program of rebuilding. The sack of the city by the forces of Charles V in had left it in ruins and restoration was a long time coming. Then, in , a new pope, Sixtus V, was elected and he set out to rebuild Rome, spiritually and physically. Under Sixtus V and the popes who immediately followed, Rome was dramatically altered. Clement was determined to carry on the

work of his predecessors. Consequently, Rome began to fill with artists of all kinds as painters, sculptors and architects all flooded into the city. Rome became the artistic capital of Europe. Self-portrait as Bacchus At first Caravaggio made little impression in the overcrowded art world that was Rome. Although he found a position in the studio of Giuseppe Cesari in , he found the work and life far from congenial. Bored with the endless flowers and fruit that were his lot, Caravaggio began to experiment with a self-portrait depicting himself as Bacchus. Del Monte lived in the Palazzo Madama, owned by the Florentine Medici family, for whom he acted as a political agent and artistic advisor. Del Monte was described by his contemporaries as a philanthropist, patron and a generous, intelligent man. He was a busy and successful diplomat with an interest in art. His collections were varied and included sculptures, ceramics, antiquities and books as well as paintings. Caravaggio now had stability, wealthy patrons and an influential protector. And, a protector was something he needed increasingly as the years went on and his character remained tempestuous and his actions unrestrained. His paintings were bought by Del Monte and other members of his circle. Vincenzo Giustiniani, a wealthy friend and neighbour of Del Monte, went on to buy a total of 13 works from the artist. It was, however, some time before Caravaggio managed to break into the church scene where reputations could really be made. By Caravaggio had still not been offered even one public commission. This situation was about to change. A new sensation Caravaggio was put forward by Del Monte to paint two canvasses for the Contarelli Chapel in the church of San Luigi dei Francesi, just around the corner from the Palazzo Madama. The priests in charge of the chapel were desperate for the decorations to be completed before Jubilee celebrations of and decided to give Caravaggio the chance. People flocked to the chapel to view the paintings. Fortunately, not everyone agreed and Caravaggio was given a number of further commissions. Del Monte, however, remained a good friend to the young painter, helping him to get out of trouble a number of times when Caravaggio had problems with the police. Conflict with the Law Despite the fact that he was now settled into comfortable accommodation and making a name for himself as a painter, Caravaggio often found himself in trouble with the law. He was hot tempered and quick to retaliate if he felt himself to be insulted. A number of times he was arrested for carrying a sword through the streets after dark. In he got into trouble for engaging in a sword fight with a young mercenary whom he wounded. In the same year, he ambushed a painter called Girolamo Spampa, causing considerable damage but not killing him. Caravaggio was fortunate to have influential friends who were able to rescue him from the problems he was causing himself. Caravaggio had rich and influential patrons but he also had many friends from very different walks of life. Many of the young painters he socialised with were just as hot tempered as he was. In , Caravaggio and two of his friends found themselves in prison for writing insulting and libellous poetry. His trial did not go well but he was suddenly released on bail. It seems that his powerful patrons had come to the rescue once again. He left town for a while hoping that the trouble would blow over. He spent some time in the town of Loreto where the house of the Virgin Mary had been deposited by angels! Caravaggio was researching his next big altarpiece. On his return, a year later, he painted his revolutionary, barefoot virgin, The Madonna of Loreto. The model for his Madonna was a woman called Lena, one of the local prostitutes with whom he was friendly. In April he was arrested for throwing a plate of artichokes at a waiter. Later that year he was arrested again for throwing stones at a policeman. In , he was back in court for throwing rocks at the door of his ex-landlady. Each time he escaped serious punishment, probably through the influence of Del Monte and other friends in high places. Accusations of murder In May Caravaggio found himself in trouble too great for even his friends to rescue him. There is much dispute about what actually happened. Early biographies claimed that it was a fight over a tennis match. It was said that he had accused his opponent of cheating and that in the resulting sword fight, his opponent was killed. It now seems more likely that a duel had been arranged between the two men. There is evidence that Ranuccio Tomassoni, the murdered man, and Caravaggio had been in conflict for some time. There have even been suggestions that Tomassoni and Caravaggio were running rival prostitutes and that this was the cause of their quarrels. What is certain is that the fight took place. Each man appeared at the tennis court with three witnesses, which indicates that a duel had been planned.

Chapter 4 : Life of Caravaggio | Learn more - Odyssey Travellers.

In the course of a short and violent life, Michelangelo Merisi da Caravaggio revolutionized painting, producing a style of shockingly immediate realism that swept through Europe and still resonates today.

See Article History Alternative Title: Becoming Caravaggio While most other Italian artists of his time slavishly followed the elegant balletic conventions of late Mannerist painting, Caravaggio painted the stories of the Bible as visceral and often bloody dramas. He staged the events of the distant sacred past as if they were taking place in the present day, often working from live models whom he depicted in starkly modern dress. He accentuated the poverty and common humanity of Christ and his followers, the Apostles, saints, and martyrs, by emphasizing their ragged clothing and dirty feet. He also developed a highly original form of chiaroscuro, using extreme contrasts of light and dark to emphasize details of gesture or facial expression: His influence on the course of Western art has been immense and has not been limited to the field of painting alone. His dramatic sense of staging and innovative treatment of light and shade have also directly inspired many leading figures in the medium of cinema, including Pier Paolo Pasolini and Martin Scorsese. He committed murder and violent assault while at the peak of his success in Rome and consequently spent much of his later career as a fugitive from justice. Since the mid-17th century his violent exploits and volatile character have enhanced his popular appeal as a perceived outsider and rebel against convention. His presumed but unproven homosexual tendencies, which have been inferred both from his paintings and from certain historical documents, have added greater intrigue to his legend. He might be described as the perfect Old Master for an age in love with the idea of celebrity and in thrall to the cult of a doomed self-destructive genius. In truth he was a more subtle, sensitive, and intellectually ambitious artist than the myths that have accumulated around him might suggest. He was also less of a hothead. Close inspection of the archival information concerning him, his friends, and his enemies—much expanded by late 20th-century research in the archives of Rome, Naples, and Malta—has revealed that even his most apparently impulsive acts were governed by a certain logic, even if it was often the logic of vendetta. He was a violent man, but he lived in violent times, and he was as much sinned against as sinning. Early life and training in Lombardy: He was born in the autumn of 1597, probably in the small town of Caravaggio in the diocese of Cremona, after which he would later come to be named. His Christian name of Michelangelo suggests that his exact birth date was September 29, the feast day of the Archangel Michael. Fermo Merisi was no architect but a simple stonemason who is referred to in documents of the time as a *mastro*: His maternal grandfather, Giovan Giacomo Aratori, was a land surveyor who acted directly as an agent for Francesco Sforza I, serving as a legal witness for the Sforza family and collecting rents on their behalf. The Sforza and Colonna were among the most powerful and influential dynasties in Italy. Costanza Colonna, in particular, would be a constant support during his most troubled years, giving him refuge and shielding him from justice when he was a wanted man. In the summer of 1600, Milan was struck by an outbreak of bubonic plague. By the autumn of the following year, and probably before then, they had moved back to Caravaggio to escape the plague, which had reached epidemic proportions, ultimately accounting for the lives of one-fifth of the local population. But they fled in vain. By age six, Caravaggio had lost almost every male member of his family to the plague. His unruly and fiery temperament and his deep sense of abandonment may well have their origins in those traumatic events of his early childhood. On April 6, 1606, at age 12, he signed a contract of apprenticeship with a minor Milanese master, Simone Peterzano. Such fragmentary evidence as there is suggests a misspent youth, during which the future painter most certainly mastered the art of swordsmanship—he would later prove himself an expert duelist—and got into trouble with the law. Early influences However sketchy a student he may have been, many of the traits that would define him as a painter were shaped by the milieu in which he spent his youth. Borromeo, whose preaching reached a fever pitch during and after the years of the great plague, believed that the Catholic world had fallen into an abyss of sin from which it could redeem itself only by returning to the most basic teachings of Jesus Christ. He placed strong emphasis on the poverty of Jesus and his disciples and believed that it was the sacrosanct duty of the

church to reach out to the poor, whom he regarded as the living images of Jesus Christ. He had little time for sophisticated, intellectually abstruse art in the High Renaissance or Mannerist vein. The vibrant vividly immediate traditions of art favoured by Borromeo, in turn, had a profound influence on Caravaggio. He translated their crude sculptural realism into his own far-subtler but no-less-immediate form of painting. His compositions are almost invariably conceived within enclosed confined spaces, where groups of figures play out a story as if on a stage. It is also possible that Caravaggio visited Venice at some stage during his formative years. Caravaggio left Lombardy in 1606. He would never return to the land of his birth. A series of legal documents from the late 1600s and record the sale, by Caravaggio, of a few small pieces of land that he had inherited from his family. So it seems that he began his career as he would end it, as a man in trouble with the law. Pucci, Cesari, and Petrigiani Caravaggio traveled to Rome, as many aspiring artists did, in search of work. The newly elected pope, Clement VIII, was determined to transform the city into the visible symbol of a revived and flourishing Catholic faith. New churches were being built and old churches remodeled, with altarpieces and sculptures commissioned in great numbers. At a rough estimate, about 2,000 artists lived and worked in the city, out of a total population of 100,000. They had their own quarter, an area of approximately two square miles between the Piazza del Popolo and the Piazza di Spagna, where they clustered in distinct communities according to their place of origin. Competition between the different groups, and between individual artists, was intense and frequently flared up into feuds and vendettas. Rome was a city of migrants—priests seeking preferment, pilgrims seeking salvation, mercenary soldiers seeking employment—as well as a place where social distinctions were more fluid than in other, more-feudal parts. Many hoping for fame and fortune in that opportunistic environment pretended to a higher social status than their birth merited and behaved according to a debased version of the old chivalric codes of honour, whereby the slightest perceived insult or injury was met with force. Cesari was responsible for a number of monumental altarpieces and decorative schemes but employed Caravaggio merely to paint decorative borders or embellishments to his work: Both were expropriated from Cesari by Scipione Borghese, the papal nephew, in the early 1600s and have remained in the Borghese collection ever since. They are subtle and bittersweet works, the first perhaps inspired by the divine longing of the Bridegroom in the Song of Songs, the second by the ancient association between art and the Roman god of wine and creative abandon. According to Mancini, at about the start of 1607, after eight months in the Cesari workshop, he lodged with another priest: It may have been intended as a parable of the punishments that attend the lascivious, with the snapping lizard symbolizing the pains of venereal disease. The patronage of Cardinal del Monte Caravaggio struggled to make ends meet throughout the 1600s, so he approached several picture dealers in Rome. He struck up a working relationship with Costantino Spata, who had a shop in the piazza bordering the church of San Luigi dei Francesi. It was through Spata that Caravaggio came to the attention of his most-important early patron, Francesco Cardinal Maria del Monte, who lived in the nearby Palazzo Madama. Caravaggio painted two pictures of a novel and unfamiliar kind, depicting scurrilous scenes drawn from the milieu of low everyday life: In each, a young man is being tricked out of his fortune by a colourful rogue, or pair of rogues. The Cardsharps, oil on canvas by Caravaggio, c. 1607. Not only was he protector of the Sistine Chapel Choir, but he was also at the forefront of the late Renaissance shift from medieval polyphony to monody. He favoured the single melodic line sung by the solo voice, as well as new forms of musical theatre: Four boys tune their instruments or leaf through their scores to prepare for their performance: That painting formed part of the collection of Federico Federigo Borromeo, who may have commissioned it from the artist. Del Monte was ambassador for the powerful Florentine family of the Medici, who supported the expense of his Roman residences. Encouraged by del Monte, Caravaggio painted two of his most teasingly original pictures of the mid-to-late 1600s for the Medici grand duke of Tuscany: Bacchus and Head of the Medusa. Painted on canvas and attached to a piece of wood in the shape of a shield with a strap on the back, it is a picture intended not merely to be looked at but actually worn. It turned its wearer by implication into the hero Perseus, at the moment when he slew the snake-haired Medusa. He is mentioned in testimony given in July by a barber named Luca, in connection with a murky and ultimately unsolved case involving a missing cloak and a dagger: This painter is a stocky young man—with a thin black beard, thick eyebrows and black eyes, who goes dressed all in black, in a rather

disorderly fashion, wearing black hose that is a little bit threadbare, and who has a thick head of hair, long over his forehead. I carry the sword by right because I am Painter to Cardinal del Monte. I am in his service and live in his house. I am entered on his household payroll. It was with those works, in which he placed sacred figures in a modern setting and in modern dress, using a live model posed before him, that Caravaggio perfected the method that would bring him both fame and notoriety. He also began at this time to develop his characteristically extreme technique of chiaroscuro, darkening his shadows to produce stark contrasts of light and dark, a method eloquently described by Bellori: He went so far in this style that he never showed any of his figures in open daylight, but instead found a way to place them in the darkness of a closed room, placing a lamp high so that the light would fall straight down, revealing the principal part of the body and leaving the rest in shadow. It was illegal for women to model for painters in Rome at the time, so employing a prostitute was a convenient way of getting around the legislation. Caravaggio would be linked to a number of other prostitutes during his time in Rome, and there is circumstantial evidence to suggest that he actually operated as a pimp in the time when he was not painting for Cardinal del Monte or his other patrons: In any case, the triangular relationship produced a simmering antagonism between the two men. Tomassoni was a dangerous man to have as an enemy, with powerful connections in the city: The commission was secured for him by his patron Cardinal del Monte, whose links to the Medici meant that he had close connections with the French community in Rome. Caravaggio responded to the challenge with mastery. The subjects prescribed were *The Calling of St. Matthew* and *The Martyrdom of St. Christ and Peter*, wearing timeless robes that symbolize eternal salvation, encounter Matthew and a group of taxpayers in gaudy modern dress. Christ beckons Matthew, as if to draw him away from the temptations of money toward redemption. One of the men, who has been merely feigning Christian devotion, leaps up to assassinate Matthew with a sword. Caravaggio included his own self-portrait in the picture, as a man looking back at the horror of the killing as he turns to flee. *The Calling of St. Matthew*
The Calling of St. More commissions followed, notably, in the autumn of , for the funerary chapel of Tiberio Cerasi in Santa Maria del Popolo. The subjects this time were *The Conversion of St. Paul* and *The Crucifixion of St. Caravaggio* treated both themes with extreme austerity and simplicity. He placed Paul on his back in a pool of light, just after having been struck from his horse by a divine thunderbolt. In the second picture he showed Peter being crucified upside down by a group of burly, poor assassins, grimly focused on the mechanics of murder. In each of the pictures, Caravaggio aggressively asserted the humility of the followers of Christ. Santa Maria del Popolo was one of the principal pilgrimage churches of Rome, placed as it was at the northernmost edge of the city.

Chapter 5 : Caravaggio Biography - Childhood, Life Achievements & Timeline

Uncovering Caravaggio. The following article picks up on, and extends, our general introduction to Caravaggio. Here, we delve further into the details of Caravaggio's early life and relationships, and use available evidence to piece together his career and events leading to his untimely death.

The name Caravaggio comes from the small city, south of Bergamo, where he was thought to be born, but the discovery of his certificate of baptism has proven that he was born in Milano instead. His father, Fermo Merisi, was employed as an architect or an administrator for Francesco Sforza, exponent of a cadet branch of the powerful Milanese family and Marquis of Caravaggio. Francesco Sforza had married the young Costanza Colonna, who belonged to the most powerful Roman family her father Marcantonio was a protagonist of the Lepanto battle, named Viceroy of Sicily by Philip II in . Probably Costanza had an important role in the education of the young Caravaggio and in protecting and assisting him later, during his stay in Rome and the run to Naples after the death sentence. The father of Michelangelo died in the epidemic of plague that had hit Milano in , the mother Lucia, with her three children, took refuge in Caravaggio. At the age of 13, in , Michelangelo was sent to the workshop of the painter Simone Peterzano, in Milano, where he stayed four years. Peterzano was a careful administrator of himself and very attentive to the trends of the time. He transmitted to his pupil both the Lombard realism and the Venetian sense of the colour and the light. Lucia died in , Michelangelo divided the inheritance with his brother and his sister and went to seek his fortune in Rome. According to his biographers Mancini and Bellori, this is the first of his escapes due to criminal acts. Nevertheless, Caravaggio might have been led to Rome simply by his ambition. In that period, Rome had fully recovered after the sack of , it was a popular destination for the artists from all over Europe and surely could offer more opportunities than Milano. He leaves this accommodation soon and begins to work in the workshops of some obscure painters. Cesari put him to paint flowers and fruits. The Boy with a Basket of Fruits, one of the first known works of Caravaggio, dates back to this period and fully shows the Lombard roots of the artist. In Rome the still lifes were considered a genre of secondary importance, but in Lombardy, where Caravaggio had trained, they were searched and appreciated by collectors. The tax collectors of the Pope Paul V seized this canvas to Cesari, mercilessly, in The Fortune Teller Rome, a. In the Fortune Teller, a gypsy slips off the ring from the finger of a wayfarer while reading his hand, enchanting him with her words and more with her eyes. The Cardsharps represent two cheaters who deceive a boy. The subjects are dressed with the clothes of the people that Caravaggio could see in the streets of Rome, rendered with a splendid realism. The holes in the gloves of the cheater in the Cardsharps are equivalent to the bruising of the fruits in his still lifes: These two paintings represents a turning point in the life of Caravaggio. The Lute Player Rome, a. The road is replaced by an indoor environment, with boys dressed in ancient robes. Del Monte was a passionate musician: Caravaggio considered this painting, prised also by Baglione, the best one he had produced until then. The vertical still life of the carafe with flowers in front of the lute player, is completed by the horizontal still life of the fruits, the music sheets and the violin on the table. The painting was bought by a friend of Del Monte, the banker Vincenzo Giustiniani, one of the richest men in Rome, financier of the Pope and a future great estimator of Caravaggio. The model has been identified with Mario Minniti, the same person who appears in the Bacchus and in other paintings, friend and maybe lover of Caravaggio. Judith Beheading Holofernes Rome, Rome, National Gallery of Ancient Art, Palazzo Barberini Source Caravaggio had been able to obtain the appreciation of the rich private collectors and his name was beginning to be well known in Rome. Judith and Holofernes responds to this new ambition. The painting had been commissioned to him by a Genoan banker, Ottavio Costa, friend of Vincenzo Giustiniani. The model used for Judith is the courtesan Fillide Melandroni, lover of Giustiniani. Fillide had already been used in an earlier painting, with scandal, for the role of Saint Catherine. The Call of St. Luis of France, Contarelli Chapel Source marks another important turning point in the life of Caravaggio: The cardinal Contarelli, the French Mathieu Cointrel, had died in , giving exact instructions in his will for the decoration of the chapel he had bought two decades before in the Church of St. In the congregation of St. Luis of France begun to feel nervous in seeing

that the chapel risked to be unfinished for the holy year. The cardinal Del Monte obtained Caravaggio to be assigned the completion of the work. He honoured the commission with two enormous canvases. Two enormous canvases in the place of frescoes. Caravaggio made only one fresco in his life, in oil painting, for the Casino Del Monte was an absolute novelty for the Roman churches. And more was the representation of the subject. From this painting, the light becomes the fundamental means of expression for Caravaggio. The light enters the room of the tax collectors, it repeats and underlines the gesture of Christ, who indicates Matthew with his hand, reveals the avid faces of his companions. Conversion on the Way to Damascus, Rome, a. Paul and the crucifixion of St. For the decoration of the chapel, Cerasi had commissioned a painting also to Annibale Carracci, from Bologna, the other rising star of the time. Cerasi died before the paintings were completed. In both the Conversion and the Crucifixion, the representation is raw and realistic. Only the light, which fixes the instant of the action, is revelatory of a divine presence. Amor Vincit Omnia, Rome, a. Thirty years later its value was 10 or 15 times greater. The model for the painting was Cecco Boneri, the young apprentice of Caravaggio, who became in turn painter. Death of the Virgin is an eloquent example of this. The painting was destined to the chapel of Laerzio Cherubini in the church of Santa Maria della Scala, but it was removed as soon as it was placed in the chapel. The religious could not accept a Virgin figured with a swollen belly and livid feet. Furthermore, Caravaggio had used as model the well known courtesan Maddalena Antognetti, lover of many Roman VIPs the woman seems to be at the origin of the attack of Caravaggio to Pasqualoni, a notary of the papal state: So, the painting entered the great collection of the Gonzaga in Mantua, was after bought by the King of England Charles I Stuart and it is nowadays displayed at the Louvre Museum. The two brothers had supported him in his academic career and later during the process of the Inquisition. It is very probable that Caravaggio had met Galileo at the palace, so that someone sees the scientist portrayed as Pilato in the Ecce Homo, painted by Caravaggio in for the cardinal Massimo Massimi. This is the most challenging work by Caravaggio in his stay in Naples. It was commissioned by the Pio Monte della Misericordia, a congregation of aristocrats who wanted to represent the six works of mercy enounced by Christ plus the burial of the dead, which was a relevant problem for the city, due to recent famine. Caravaggio retakes the architecture of the Martyrdom of St. Matthew, in the Contarelli chapel and creates a vortex of characters, inspired by the street life. The figures form an unique group, but each one has its own part in the representation of the mercy works. From the top, the Madonna with the child and two angels project their own shadow on the scene. Caravaggio had to leave Rome after the death sentence issued in for the murder of Ranuccio Tomassoni in a brawl. The sentence stated that Michelangelo Merisi was condemned to beheading and that anyone who might meet him could execute the sentence. The reason of the brawl seems to have been a discussion for a foul in a ball game pallacorda, a kind of tennis. But probably the two had other reasons of disagreement: It was not the first trouble he had with the Roman justice. In he had been sued by the painter Baglione because of some defamatory sonnets. In he wounded an officer of the papal state, Pasqualoni, and escaped to Genoa, probably helped by the marquis Costanza Sforza Colonna, who had come back to Rome after the death of her husband. It seems that the Genoan prince Doria was so enthusiastic of Caravaggio art that he offered him the incredible amount of 6, scudi for the decoration of the loggia of one of his homes. However, Caravaggio returned to Rome and combined the mess of the Tomassoni murder. After the process, he stayed some while in the possessions of the Colonna, in the south of Rome, then escaped to Naples, where he was hosted by Luigi Carafa Colonna, nephew of Costanza. Naples was in those times one of the biggest cities in Europe, much bigger than Rome. There, Caravaggio obtained several commissions and worked hard for one year, before leaving for Malta in John the Baptist Source. With the probable help of the Colonna, Caravaggio found a way to escape the sentence hanging over his head. The second son of Costanza Colonna, Fabrizio, was the commander of the fleet of the order of the Knights of St. John of Jerusalem, based in Malta. This religious order was accepting the young aristocrats who had some trouble with the justice and gave them a sort of immunity. It was the perfect solution for Caravaggio too. The artist was welcomed by the Great Master of the order, Alof de Wignacourt and became Knight of the order in July. Apparently, his troubles had finished. Meanwhile, he had portrayed Alof de Wignacourt and another knight of the order, Antonio Martelli. The Beheading of St. John an immense canvas of 3. Caravaggio represents the fact just happened, with the

blood which flows on the ground and the gesture of despair of the woman on the left. The light fixes the inevitability of the event, the impossibility of coming back. This is the only known canvas signed by Caravaggio. He put his name on the blood of St. John, maybe thinking to his own death sentence. Because of a mysterious fact, he is arrested, imprisoned into the fortress of St. Angel in Malta and expelled from the order. The circumstances of the arrest and the nature of his crime are unknown. However, once again, he is able to escape he was an artist of the escape , probably with the complicity of the Colonna and to refuge in Sicily, to Syracuse, where he is welcomed by his old friend Mario Minniti, now a celebrated local painter.

Chapter 6 : Caravaggio - The Complete Works - www.nxgvision.com

Caravaggio, byname of Michelangelo Merisi, (born September 29, , Milan or Caravaggio [Italy]â€”died July 18/19, , Porto Ercole, Tuscany), leading Italian painter of the late 16th and early 17th centuries who became famous for the intense and unsettling realism of his large-scale religious works.

Basket of Fruit , c. Caravaggio appears to have stayed in the Milan-Caravaggio area after his apprenticeship ended, but it is possible that he visited Venice and saw the works of Giorgione , whom Federico Zuccari later accused him of imitating, and Titian. The young artist arrived in Rome "naked and extremely needy In Rome there was demand for paintings to fill the many huge new churches and palazzos being built at the time. It was also a period when the Church was searching for a stylistic alternative to Mannerism in religious art that was tasked to counter the threat of Protestantism. The Musicians , â€”, Metropolitan Museum of Art , New York Known works from this period include a small Boy Peeling a Fruit his earliest known painting , a Boy with a Basket of Fruit , and the Young Sick Bacchus , supposedly a self-portrait done during convalescence from a serious illness that ended his employment with Cesari. All three demonstrate the physical particularity for which Caravaggio was to become renowned: Orsi, established in the profession, introduced him to influential collectors; Longhi, more balefully, introduced him to the world of Roman street-brawls. Saint Francis of Assisi in Ecstasy c. The theme was quite new for Rome, and proved immensely influential over the next century and beyond. This, however, was in the future: Like The Fortune Teller, it was immensely popular, and over 50 copies survive. More importantly, it attracted the patronage of Cardinal Francesco Maria del Monte , one of the leading connoisseurs in Rome. For Del Monte and his wealthy art-loving circle, Caravaggio executed a number of intimate chamber-pieces â€” The Musicians , The Lute Player , a tipsy Bacchus , an allegorical but realistic Boy Bitten by a Lizard â€” featuring Minniti and other adolescent models. The first of these was the Penitent Magdalene , showing Mary Magdalene at the moment when she has turned from her life as a courtesan and sits weeping on the floor, her jewels scattered around her. Where was the repentance It was followed by others in the same style: But a true reputation would depend on public commissions, and for these it was necessary to look to the Church. Already evident was the intense realism or naturalism for which Caravaggio is now famous. He preferred to paint his subjects as the eye sees them, with all their natural flaws and defects instead of as idealised creations. This allowed a full display of his virtuosic talents. This shift from accepted standard practice and the classical idealism of Michelangelo was very controversial at the time. Caravaggio also dispensed with the lengthy preparations traditional in central Italy at the time. Instead, he preferred the Venetian practice of working in oils directly from the subject â€” half-length figures and still life. Supper at Emmaus , from c. The two works making up the commission, the Martyrdom of Saint Matthew and Calling of Saint Matthew , delivered in , were an immediate sensation. Thereafter he never lacked commissions or patrons. Without recourse to flying angels, parting clouds or other artifice, Caravaggio portrays the instant conversion of St Matthew, the moment on which his destiny will turn, by means of a beam of light and the pointing finger of Jesus. Opinion among his artist peers was polarized. Some denounced him for various perceived failings, notably his insistence on painting from life, without drawings, but for the most part he was hailed as a great artistic visionary: One would say it is a work made by a painter that can paint well, but of a dark spirit, and who has been for a lot of time far from God, from His adoration, and from any good thought Caravaggio shows Cupid prevailing over all human endeavors: The Death of the Virgin , commissioned in by a wealthy jurist for his private chapel in the new Carmelite church of Santa Maria della Scala, was rejected by the Carmelites in In any case, the rejection did not mean that Caravaggio or his paintings were out of favour. The Death of the Virgin was no sooner taken out of the church than it was purchased by the Duke of Mantua, on the advice of Rubens , and later acquired by Charles I of England before entering the French royal collection in The model was named in a memoir of the early 17th century as "Cecco", the diminutive for Francesco. The point, however, is the intense yet ambiguous reality of the work: A crime too many [edit] St. Jerome, â€”, Galleria Borghese , Rome. Caravaggio led a tumultuous life. He was notorious for brawling, even in a time and place when such behavior was commonplace, and the transcripts of

his police records and trial proceedings fill several pages. On 29 May, he killed, possibly unintentionally, a young man named Ranuccio Tomassoni from Terni Umbria. The circumstances of the brawl and the death of Ranuccio Tomassoni remain mysterious. Several contemporary avvisi referred to a quarrel over a gambling debt and a tennis game, and this explanation has become established in the popular imagination. A theory relating the death to Renaissance notions of honour and symbolic wounding has been advanced by art historian Andrew Graham-Dixon. Caravaggio, outlawed, fled to Naples. In Naples, outside the jurisdiction of the Roman authorities and protected by the Colonna family, the most famous painter in Rome became the most famous in Naples. His connections with the Colonnas led to a stream of important church commissions, including the Madonna of the Rosary, and The Seven Works of Mercy. The painting was made for, and is still housed in, the church of Pio Monte della Misericordia in Naples. By December, he had been expelled from the Order "as a foul and rotten member", a formal phrase used in all such cases. Together they set off on what amounted to a triumphal tour from Syracuse to Messina and, maybe, on to the island capital, Palermo. In Syracuse and Messina Caravaggio continued to win prestigious and well-paid commissions. Among other works from this period are Burial of St. His style continued to evolve, showing now friezes of figures isolated against vast empty backgrounds. Caravaggio displayed bizarre behaviour from very early in his career. The strangeness seems to have increased after Malta. Baglione says Caravaggio was being "chased by his enemy", but like Bellori does not say who this enemy was. According to his earliest biographer he was being pursued by enemies while in Sicily and felt it safest to place himself under the protection of the Colonnas until he could secure his pardon from the pope now Paul V and return to Rome. His style continued to evolve

Saint Ursula is caught in a moment of highest action and drama, as the arrow fired by the king of the Huns strikes her in the breast, unlike earlier paintings that had all the immobility of the posed models. The brushwork was also much freer and more impressionistic. David with the Head of Goliath, Galleria Borghese, Rome In October he was involved in a violent clash, an attempt on his life, perhaps ambushed by men in the pay of the knight he had wounded in Malta or some other faction of the Order. His face was seriously disfigured and rumours circulated in Rome that he was dead. He painted a Salome with the Head of John the Baptist Madrid, showing his own head on a platter, and sent it to de Wignacourt as a plea for forgiveness. Perhaps at this time, he painted also a David with the Head of Goliath, showing the young David with a strangely sorrowful expression gazing on the severed head of the giant, which is again Caravaggio. This painting he may have sent to his patron, the unscrupulous art-loving Cardinal Scipione Borghese, nephew of the pope, who had the power to grant or withhold pardons. News from Rome encouraged Caravaggio, and in the summer of he took a boat northwards to receive the pardon, which seemed imminent thanks to his powerful Roman friends. With him were three last paintings, the gifts for Cardinal Scipione. The bare facts seem to be that on 28 July an anonymous avviso private newsletter from Rome to the ducal court of Urbino reported that Caravaggio was dead. Three days later another avviso said that he had died of fever on his way from Naples to Rome. A poet friend of the artist later gave 18 July as the date of death, and a recent researcher claims to have discovered a death notice showing that the artist died on that day of a fever in Porto Ercole, near Grosseto in Tuscany. Death[edit] Caravaggio had a fever at the time of his death, and what killed him has been a matter of historical debate and study. Cecco stayed with Caravaggio even after he was obliged to leave Rome in, and the two may have been lovers. Writing in, Mirabeau contrasted the personal life of Caravaggio directly with the writings of St Paul in the Book of Romans, [62] arguing that "Romans" excessively practice sodomy or homosexuality. The twenty-sixth verse of the first chapter [63] contains the Latin phrase: Burton also identifies both St. Rosario and this painting with the practices of Tiberius mentioned by Seneca the Younger. Aside from the paintings, evidence also comes from the libel trial brought against Caravaggio by Giovanni Baglione in Caravaggio denied knowing any young boy of that name, and the allegation was not followed up. Even though the authorities were unlikely to investigate such a well-connected person as Caravaggio, "Once an artist had been smeared as a pederast, his work was smeared too. Susino presents it as a misunderstanding, but Caravaggio may indeed have been seeking sexual solace; and the incident could explain one of his most homoerotic paintings: There is no absolute proof of it, only strong circumstantial evidence and much rumour. The balance of probability suggests that Caravaggio did indeed

have sexual relations with men. But he certainly had female lovers. Throughout the years that he spent in Rome he kept close company with a number of prostitutes. The truth is that Caravaggio was as uneasy in his relationships as he was in most other aspects of life. He likely slept with men. He did sleep with women. He settled with no one. The figure on the extreme right is a self-portrait. Caravaggio included himself as the figure at the top left. Caravaggio "put the oscuro shadows into chiaroscuro. With this came the acute observation of physical and psychological reality that formed the ground both for his immense popularity and for his frequent problems with his religious commissions. The approach was anathema to the skilled artists of his day, who decried his refusal to work from drawings and to idealise his figures. Yet the models were basic to his realism. Some have been identified, including Mario Minniti and Francesco Boneri , both fellow artists, Minniti appearing as various figures in the early secular works, the young Boneri as a succession of angels, Baptists and Davids in the later canvasses. The Supper at Emmaus depicts the recognition of Christ by his disciples: In The Calling of St Matthew , the hand of the Saint points to himself as if he were saying "who, me? With The Resurrection of Lazarus , he goes a step further, giving us a glimpse of the actual physical process of resurrection. The body of Lazarus is still in the throes of rigor mortis, but his hand, facing and recognizing that of Christ, is alive.

Chapter 7 : Caravaggio: The Soul and the Blood () - IMDb

The Lives of Caravaggio is comprised of the earliest three biographies of the Italian Baroque master, revealing how his revolutionary painting and tempestuous character fascinated and appalled his contemporaries. With 20 color reproductions.

Chapter 8 : Caravaggio (film) - Wikipedia

The Lives of Caravaggio is introduced by Helen Langdon, the leading expert on the painter, who elucidates the historical and artistic context of these biographies.

Chapter 9 : The Lives of Caravaggio by Giorgio Mancini

Caravaggio was a renowned painter of the Sixteenth century who painted using contrasting effects between light and darkness. This biography provides detailed information about his childhood, profile, career and timeline.