

# LACMA FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

EXHIBITION: BODIES AND SHADOWS: CARAVAGGIO AND HIS LEGACY  
ON VIEW: NOVEMBER 11, 2012-FEBRUARY 10, 2013  
LOCATION: RESNICK PAVILION

## LACMA PRESENTS THE U.S. PREMIERE OF BODIES AND SHADOWS: CARAVAGGIO AND HIS LEGACY

AN UNPRECEDENTED EIGHT CARAVAGGIO PAINTINGS WILL BE ON VIEW TOGETHER FOR THE FIRST TIME IN CALIFORNIA



(IMAGE CAPTIONS ON PAGE 6)

(Los Angeles—October 26, 2012)—The Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA) is pleased to present *Bodies and Shadows: Caravaggio and His Legacy*, an exhibition devoted to the legacy of Michelangelo Merisi da Caravaggio (1571 – 1610), one of the most influential painters in European history. The exhibition was co-organized by LACMA, the Musée Fabre, Montpellier, the Musée des Augustins, Toulouse, and the Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art, under the auspices of FRAME (French Regional American Museum Exchange), an international consortium to which all four museums belong.

Caravaggio's striking realism, violent contrasts of light and darkness, and ability to express powerful emotions were as surprising to his contemporaries as they are to us today. In this exhibition many of the innovations introduced by Caravaggio were adopted by painters from different countries, backgrounds, and influences. In this exhibition an

unprecedented eight paintings by Caravaggio himself will be shown together for the first time in California. Fifty more paintings document his influence on a host of painters from France, Spain, and the Netherlands, including Georges de La Tour, Gerrit van Honthorst, Velázquez, and Simon Vouet.

"The four-hundredth anniversary of Caravaggio's death in 2010 triggered many exhibitions throughout the world. These have generated new scholarship, reattributions of paintings and an ongoing fascination with Caravaggio and the Caravaggesque painters," says J. Patrice Marandel, the Robert H. Ahmanson Chief Curator of European Art at LACMA, "Our exhibition has benefited from this new research and will present to the public unexpected aspects of the subject."

*Bodies and Shadows: Caravaggio and His Legacy* first opened simultaneously in two French venues, the Musée Fabre in Montpellier and the Musée des Augustins, Toulouse (both on view June 23–October 14, 2012). Following LACMA's presentation, an edited version of the exhibition will travel to the Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art (March 8–June 15, 2013).

### **About Caravaggio**

Michelangelo Merisi was born in the small town of Caravaggio, near Milan, in 1573. He first studied with Simone Peterzano (1540–1596), an artist trained in Venice and an able painter of fresco decorations in Milan. In 1592, Caravaggio moved to Rome, attracted by the many opportunities the city offered: besides the Church itself, many aristocrats offered their patronage to talented and ambitious painters. Among these, the young Caravaggio quickly established himself as one of the deftest at securing the support of some of the most affluent and sophisticated patrons. His compositions, at first modest in size and subject, were kept and protected by their owners, who rarely traded them but made them nonetheless accessible to a wide audience. In *Bodies and Shadows* a seldom exhibited early portrait of Maffeo Barberini, one of Caravaggio's patrons upon his arrival in Rome, illustrates the variety of the artist's subjects that included portrait, genre-scenes, and – increasingly – religious compositions.

Caravaggio's rebellious nature and difficult - indeed violent - temperament were notorious. Conscious of his original talent and protective of his own success, Caravaggio entertained ambiguous relationships with other artists. Unlike many artists of his generation, Caravaggio did not have proper pupils but many artists gravitated around him with various success. Giovanni Baglione's (1566-1643) *Ecstasy of Saint Francis* shows how a gifted artist could get stylistically too close to the master. This may have exasperated Caravaggio who replied by posting libelous statements about Baglione, leading to a celebrated lawsuit. In 1606, Caravaggio's murdering of a young man over either a woman or a game of tennis forced him to leave Rome where he was wanted by the police. He subsequently spent time in Naples, Malta, and Sicily - still receiving protection and commissions both from old and new patrons. Trying to return to Rome where he expected pardon from the Pope, Caravaggio died of malignant fever in Porto Ercole in 1610 at the age of thirty-nine.

#### **About the exhibition**

By the time of his death, Caravaggio was arguably the most renowned artist in Rome. His style had changed drastically in his later years, becoming even darker and more brutal than before; his reputation had reached artists well beyond the Italian peninsula. This exhibition brings together a large group of artists who worked predominantly after Caravaggio's death, carrying his legacy in different directions. While united under Caravaggio's aesthetic influence, these artists are nonetheless highly original in their own rights and were known by their contemporaries not so much for being "Caravaggesque" as for being artists of immense talent and individuality. These include artists who are known to have been close to Caravaggio himself, such as Orazio Gentileschi, Giovanni Baglione, and Carlo Saraceni in particular.

Attention is devoted to Bartolomeo Manfredi, who, developing subjects and compositional devices typical of Caravaggio, elaborated a style that became particularly seminal with French painters in Rome. Simon Vouet is the most famous of those artists, who kept working in the light of Caravaggio until his return from Rome to Paris in 1627. Night scenes, brilliantly illuminated, were the specialty of Dutch Caravaggesque artists Gerrit van Honthorst and Matthias Stomer. Caravaggio's stay in Naples left important works, admired by many artists, in the city, which resulted in a

typically Neapolitan Caravaggist school fed by the example of Jusepe de Ribera, a Spaniard based in Naples whose role in disseminating Caravaggio's style was as important in Naples as Manfredi's had been in Rome. Paintings by both Zurbarán and Velázquez, two of the greatest Spanish painters of the seventeenth century, demonstrate that even in far-away Seville the lesson of the master was not ignored.

The case of Georges de La Tour is a mysterious one. Included at the end of this exhibition, the enigmatic artist from Lorraine developed in his works subjects and elements that seem to suggest an inevitable encounter with the work of Caravaggio. Yet, as far as we know, the painter never went to Italy and how he could have known of Caravaggio's works in his native Lorraine remains conjectural. The two painters may have more in common and share a coincidental fate: after years of neglect, both Caravaggio and Georges de La Tour were rediscovered in the early part of the twentieth century, and both embody at best the attractiveness of a school whose affordability speaks directly to our modern sensibility.

#### **Exhibition Publication**

The exhibition is accompanied by a 176 page catalogue published in collaboration with DelMonico Books/Prestel. The volume includes 100 color illustrations with essays by exhibition curator, J. Patrice Marandel and art historian and Caravaggio scholar, Gianni Papi, as well as contributions by Benjamin Couilleaux, Axel Hémerly, Michel Hilaire, Dominique Jacquot, Judith W. Mann, Lynn Federle Orr, Amy Walsh, Eric M. Zafran, and Olivier Zeder.

#### **Public Programs:**

##### **Caravaggio: A Life Sacred and Profane**

Sunday, November 11, 2012 | 1 pm

Bing Theater | Free, no reservations

Acclaimed writer and historian Andrew Graham-Dixon presents a look at the life of Michelangelo Merisi da Caravaggio, whose early seventeenth-century work profoundly changed painting, creating scenes of drama and immediacy that completely departed from the conventions of his time. For four hundred years, Caravaggio's tumultuous life and mysterious death have been surrounded by speculation. Graham-Dixon presents new evidence and sheds new light on the artist and his tumultuous times. The lecture marks the release in the United States of the paperback edition of the author's prize-winning biography, *Caravaggio: A Life Sacred and Profane*. A book signing follows the lecture.

This lecture is made possible by the Brotman Special Exhibitions lecture fund.

**The Art of Wine: The Wine of Caravaggio's Italy**

Saturday, December 1, 2012 | 6 pm

BP Grand Entrance | \$95 general admission, \$85 members

The great—and notorious—painter Caravaggio spent his life and career in Italy, ranging from the north, where he was born and first worked, to Rome, where he skyrocketed to fame and became the bad boy, rock-star artist of his day. In this event, you'll enjoy an evening that combines art and wine, beginning with a tour of the exhibition, introduced by LACMA educator and art historian Mary Lenihan, followed by a tasting of five Italian wines that mirror Caravaggio's Italian journey from north to south. Wine historian Barbara Baxter provides engaging and humorous commentary. Each of the five wines will be paired with a specially prepared amuse bouche.

The event is made possible by these winemakers: Bisol, Damilano, and Colosi.

**Credit**

This exhibition was organized by the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, the Musée Fabre de Montpellier Agglomération, the Musée des Augustins, Toulouse, and the Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art, under the auspices of FRAME (French Regional American Museum Exchange).

The Los Angeles presentation was made possible by The Ahmanson Foundation. With support from FRAME, the national tour was made possible in part by Sotheby's, the Annenberg Foundation/GRoW Annenberg, the Robert Lehman Foundation, and the Samuel H. Kress Foundation, and is supported by an indemnity from the Federal Council on the Arts and the Humanities.



This exhibition is presented under the auspices of "2013: Year of Italian Culture."



The installation was designed by Frederick Fisher and Partners Architects.

**About LACMA**

Since its inception in 1965, LACMA has been devoted to collecting works of art that span both history and geography and represent Los Angeles's uniquely diverse population. Today, the museum features particularly strong collections of Asian, Latin American, European, and American art, as well as a contemporary museum on its campus. With this expanded space for contemporary art, innovative collaborations with artists, and an ongoing *Transformation* project, LACMA is creating a truly modern lens through which to view its rich encyclopedic collection.

**Location and Contact:** 5905 Wilshire Boulevard (at Fairfax Avenue), Los Angeles, CA, 90036 | 323 857-6000 | lacma.org

**Hours:** Monday, Tuesday, Thursday: 11 am-5 pm; Friday: 11 am-8 pm; Saturday, Sunday: 10 am-7 pm; closed Wednesday

**General Admission:** Adults: \$15; students 18+ with ID and senior citizens 62+: \$10

**Free General Admission:** Members; children 17 and under; after 3 pm weekdays for L.A. County residents; second Tuesday of every month; Target Free Holiday Mondays

**About FRAME ((French Regional American Museum Exchange)**

FRAME was founded in 1999 by Elizabeth Rohatyn, Co-President and Chairman of the Board of Trustees. The late Françoise Cachin was Founding Co-President of FRAME in France. FRAME (a non-profit organization) is a consortium 26 museums in France and North America that promotes cultural exchange in the context of museum collaborations. FRAME fosters partnerships among its member museums to develop innovative exhibitions, educational and public programs, and professional exchange, and maintains a bi-lingual website to reach global audiences. In France, FRAME is overseen by Co-President and Chairman of the Executive Committee, Marie-Christine Labourdette, Director, Service des Musées de France. The organization's directors are Dr. Charlotte N. Eyerman in North America and Mr. Pierre Provoyeur in France. FRAME's offices are in Los Angeles, California and Paris, France.  
www.framemuseums.org

**Images** (page 1): left to right

Left: Michelangelo Merisi da Caravaggio, *Martha and Mary Magdalen*, circa 1595-96, oil and tempera on canvas, Detroit Institute of Arts, Gift of the Kresge Foundation and Mrs. Edsel B. Ford, photo © 2012 Detroit Institute of Arts. All rights reserved.

Center: Gerrit van Honthorst, *Christ Crowned with Thorns*, circa 1617, oil on canvas, Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Gift of The Ahmanson Foundation, photo © 2012 Museum Associates/LACMA

Right: Orazio Gentileschi, *Judith and Her Maidservant with the Head of Holofernes*, circa 1621-1624, Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art, Hartford, Connecticut, The Ella Gallup Sumner and Mary Catlin Sumner Collection Fund, photo © Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art

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