

NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART

NEWS RELEASE

FOURTH STREET AT CONSTITUTION AVENUE NW WASHINGTON DC 20565 • 737-4215/842-6353

FOR RELEASE:
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CARAVAGGIO'S DEPOSITION ON VIEW AT NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART

WASHINGTON, D.C. February 23, 1984. Caravaggio's monumental painting of The Deposition, considered by many to be his masterpiece, goes on view in Lobby A of the National Gallery of Art's West Building from March 4 through April 29, 1984. This special showing in Washington coincides with the Lenten and Easter seasons.

The Deposition was created as an altarpiece for the Church of Santa Maria in Vallicella, known as the Chiesa Nuova, in Rome at the time of its reconstruction in the first decade of the seventeenth century. The painting entered the collection of Pope Pius VII in 1817 and was included in the recent touring exhibition of the Vatican Collections.

The scene that the painting depicts is not strictly a Deposition, nor is it the imminent Entombment but a moment when the mourners bearing Christ's body have paused between the two. The body is held before the viewer (in its original place, above the altar in the chapel) like a real and visible equivalent of the Eucharist.

The Deposition reflects the influence of Raphael as well as the classicizing style of Caravaggio's contemporary, Annibale Carracci. The dramatic lighting, powerfully individualized figures and diagonal

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composition, however, typify the mature style of Caravaggio, whose revolutionary brand of realism and drama changed the course of Western painting.

An illustrated brochure which discusses the painting's history, iconography and importance has been prepared by Sheldon Grossman, curator of Later and Northern Italian Painting at the National Gallery. It is available for a nominal fee.

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FOR FURTHER INFORMATION and photographs contact Katherine Warwick, Assistant to the Director, (Public Information) or Marla Price, Information Office, National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C. 20565 (202) 842-6353.