

# National Gallery of Art

## NEWS RELEASE

Information Officer, Deborah Ziska

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CONTACT: (202) 842-6353  
Nancy Starr, Publicist

### **"CARAVAGGIO'S 'THE TAKING OF CHRIST':**

### **SAINTS AND SINNERS IN BAROQUE PAINTING"**

**ON VIEW AT THE NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART, MAY 30 – JULY 18, 1999**

WASHINGTON, D.C. - Caravaggio's dramatic masterpiece The Taking of Christ (1602), rediscovered in Ireland in 1990, will be the centerpiece of a special exhibition at the National Gallery of Art, West Building, May 30 through July 18, 1999. The painting will be on view with eight outstanding Italian, French, and Spanish baroque paintings from the Gallery's permanent collection in Caravaggio's "The Taking of Christ": Saints and Sinners in Baroque Painting.

Its whereabouts unknown for approximately two hundred years, The Taking of Christ was recognized under an erroneous attribution in the dining room of the residence of the Society of Jesus (The Jesuits) in Dublin, Ireland. Subsequently cleaned and restored, this masterpiece depicting Judas' betrayal of Christ to Roman soldiers is representative of the innovative style of Michelangelo Merisi, called Caravaggio (Roman, 1571-1610), which is characterized by intense realism, bold contrasts of light and shade (*chiaroscuro*), and dramatic groupings of figures.

This exhibition derives from Saints and Sinners: Caravaggio and the Baroque Image, being shown at the McMullen Museum of Art, Boston College, through May 24, 1999. The painting is owned by the Society of Jesus, Ireland, and is on long-term loan to the National Gallery of Ireland.

The exhibition is made possible by a grant from EduCap Inc.

"Thanks to the generosity of Boston College, the Society of Jesus of Ireland,

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and the National Gallery of Ireland, we are privileged to exhibit this outstanding painting, which crossed the Atlantic for the first time earlier this year. I would also like to thank EduCap for making this exhibition possible," said Earl A. Powell III, director, National Gallery of Art.

### **CARAVAGGIO**

During the early years of the seventeenth century, Caravaggio developed his revolutionary style of painting, which had an immense impact on his contemporaries in Rome, as well as on successive generations of artists as far away as Spain and Northern Europe. Born in Lombardy, he went to Rome at age 21 and found immediate success and numerous public and private commissions for his innovative style. By the time of his death eighteen years later, his style of painting was among the most imitated and influential in Europe.

### **RELATED BAROQUE PAINTINGS IN THE EXHIBITION**

The artists whose religious and secular works are included in the exhibition were all influenced by Caravaggio. On view will be the Gallery's recently acquired Soldiers Playing Cards and Dice (The Cheats) (c. 1620/1622) by Caravaggio's French follower Valentin de Boulogne (c. 1591-1632) and two newly cleaned and restored works, Saint Jerome and the Angel (c. 1625) by Simon Vouet (French, 1590-1649), and Saint Sebastian (c. 1620/1630) by Tazio da Varallo (Italian, c. 1575-1633). Other popular saints during the early seventeenth century are represented in the Martyrdom of Saint Bartholomew (1634) by Jusepe de Ribera (Spanish, 1591-1652), The Repentant Magdalene (c. 1640) by Georges de La Tour (French, 1593-1652), and The Dream of Saint Catherine of Alexandria (c. 1593) by Lodovico Carracci (Italian, 1555-1619).

Imitations of Caravaggio's scenes of musicians include The Lute Player (c. 1612/1620) by Orazio Gentileschi (Italian, 1563-1639) and the patron saint of music, Saint Cecilia and an Angel (c. 1617/1618 and c. 1621/1627), by Orazio Gentileschi and Giovanni Lanfranco (Italian, 1582-1647).

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### **CURATOR**

Philip Conisbee, senior curator of European paintings, National Gallery of Art, is the coordinating curator for the exhibition in Washington.

### **BROCHURE AND PROGRAMS**

An illustrated brochure available at the exhibition will summarize the most significant aspects of Caravaggio's art and its impact on painters throughout baroque Europe. There will also be a lecture series with experts on June 20 and July 11, "The Power of Images - Caravaggio and Baroque Imagery;" a related film program in July; and a feature on the Gallery's Web site ([www.nga.gov](http://www.nga.gov)), which will include images of the works of art in the exhibition, the text of the accompanying brochure, and a listing of the associated programs mentioned above.

### **RELATED PUBLICATIONS**

Saints and Sinners: Caravaggio and The Baroque Image, edited by Franco Mormando, with essays by Noel Barber, Franco Mormando, John W. O'Malley, Pamela M. Jones, Thomas Worcester, Josephine von Henneberg, Gauvin Alexander Bailey, John Varriano, and Sergio Benedetti, McMullen Museum of Art, Boston College, is distributed by the University of Chicago Press, 1999 (catalogue of the exhibition at Boston College, February 1 - May 24, 1999) and available from the Gallery's Shops for \$40 (softcover). Caravaggio: The Master Revealed, written by Sergio Benedetti, is published by The National Gallery of Ireland, and available from the National Gallery of Art's Shops, for \$19.95 (softcover). To order these books by mail, call (800) 697-9350 or (301) 322-5900.

### **GENERAL INFORMATION**

The National Gallery of Art, located on the National Mall at Fourth Street and Constitution Avenue, N.W., is open Monday through Saturday from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. and Sunday from 11 a.m. to 6 p.m. The Gallery is closed on December 25 and January 1. Admission is free. For general information, call (202) 737-4215, the Telecommunications Device for the Deaf (TDD) at (202) 842-6176, or visit the National Gallery of Art's Web site at [www.nga.gov](http://www.nga.gov). To receive the Gallery's free bimonthly Calendar of Events, call (202) 842-6662.

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# National Gallery of Art

Washington, D.C.

National Gallery of Art

## Caravaggio's *The Taking of Christ* Saints and Sinners in Baroque Painting Checklist

May 30 – July 18, 1999

- Black & White Prints available
- Slides available
- Color Transparencies available

1. Lodovico Carracci  
 Bolognese, 1555 - 1619  
 *The Dream of Saint Catherine of Alexandria*, c. 1593  
 oil on canvas  
138.8 x 110.5 cm (54 5/8 x 43 1/2)  
National Gallery of Art, Washington, Samuel H. Kress Collection

2. Orazio Gentileschi  
 Florentine, 1563 - 1639  
 *The Lute Player*, c. 1612/1620  
 oil on canvas  
143.5 x 129 cm (56 1/2 x 50 3/4)  
National Gallery of Art, Washington, Ailsa Mellon Bruce Fund

3. Orazio Gentileschi and Giovanni Lanfranco  
 Florentine, 1563 - 1639; Italian, 1582 - 1647  
 *Saint Cecilia and an Angel*, c. 1617/1618 and c. 1621/1627  
 oil on canvas  
87.5 x 108 cm (34 5/8 x 42 1/2)  
National Gallery of Art, Washington, Samuel H. Kress Collection

4. Georges de La Tour  
 French, 1593 - 1652  
 *The Repentant Magdalene*, c. 1640  
 oil on canvas  
113 x 92.7 cm (44 1/2 x 36 1/2)  
National Gallery of Art, Washington, Ailsa Mellon Bruce Fund

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5. Jusepe de Ribera  
 Spanish, 1591 - 1652  
● *The Martyrdom of Saint Bartholomew*, 1634  
■ oil on canvas  
104 x 113 cm (41 x 44 1/2)  
National Gallery of Art, Washington, Gift of the 50th Anniversary Gift Committee
6. Tazio da Varallo  
 Piedmontese, c. 1575 - 1633  
● *Saint Sebastian*, c. 1620/1630  
■ oil on canvas  
117.3 x 93.7 cm (46 3/8 x 36 7/8)  
National Gallery of Art, Washington, Samuel H. Kress Collection
7. Valentin de Boulogne  
 French, c. 1591 - 1632  
● *Soldiers Playing Cards and Dice (The Cheats)*, c. 1620/1622  
■ oil on canvas  
121 x 152 cm (47 5/8 x 59 13/16)  
National Gallery of Art, Washington, Patrons' Permanent Fund
8. Simon Vouet  
 French, 1590 - 1649  
● *Saint Jerome and the Angel*, c. 1625  
■ oil on canvas  
144.8 x 179.8 cm (57 x 70 3/4)  
National Gallery of Art, Washington, Samuel H. Kress Collection
9. Caravaggio  
 Roman, 1571 - 1610  
● *The Taking of Christ*, 1602  
oil on canvas  
134.6 x 170.2 cm (53 x 67)  
Society of Jesus, Ireland, on loan to the National Gallery of Ireland



**EduCap Inc.**

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May 1999

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T E L .  
F A X .

EduCap Inc. is privileged to sponsor the first exhibition of Michelangelo Merisi da Caravaggio's lost masterpiece, *The Taking of Christ*, in our nation's capital.

A pioneer in the private-loan student industry since 1986, EduCap Inc. is a Washington, D.C.-based nonprofit organization whose mission is to create and provide initiatives and programs that promote an educated citizenry. EduCap fulfills this mission through a wide range of education loans, scholarships, education-related services, philanthropic efforts, and collaborative endeavors with both corporate and academic institutions. As the nation's largest provider of privately-funded, credit-based education loans, EduCap has helped to enrich the lives of literally hundreds of thousands of families.

Often, an individual's level of education is measured in terms of academic degrees and credits earned, and EduCap is of course pleased to continue to facilitate the attainment of these time-honored goals through its loan and scholarship programs. In a broader sense, however, education does not, and indeed, cannot, stop at the classroom door. It is a life-long process, knowing no boundaries, and is constantly revitalized by our exposure to, and assimilation of, history, science, culture, and art.

It is in this spirit that EduCap is grateful for the opportunity to bring Caravaggio's magnificent work to the National Gallery of Art for the cultural enrichment of residents and visitors in our nation's capital.

  
Catherine B. Dunlevy