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The Lost Painting: A Caravaggio Found

John Bailey · Thursday, July 14th, 2011

When cinematographers talk about their craft, many are keen to reference paintings as a window into their work. Some of them cite specific artists: Rembrandt (Gordon Willis), Georges de la Tour (Nestor Almendros), Edward Hopper (Laszlo Kovacs), Vittore Carpaccio (Vittorio Storaro)— of course, Vermeer for all of them. However, no painter has so universally been a lodestone for cinematographers as the early 17th century Italian, Michelangelo Merissi, born in Milan, but whose early childhood was spent in the Lombardy town that is the source of his name—Caravaggio.

For art historians as well as for the general public, the dramatic details of Caravaggio's life command center stage. Shakespeare himself could not have created a more compellingly complex character: part devil—prey to street fights and sordid sexual encounters; part angel—a master of deeply emotive characters and religious ecstasy captured in dramas on painted canvas.

Read the rest of this extensive, illuminating essay, plus more Caravaggio's paintings and select videos...

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