

"the calling of st
matthew" by
caravaggio



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Michelangelo Merisi da Caravaggio (29 September 1571 – 18 July 1610) is Italian painter who is considered one of the greatest representatives of the Baroque era. He is one of the most enigmatic personalities in the Italian art who has gained his success very impetuously. Caravaggio lived relatively short but flagrant and dramatic enough life. This dramatic nature has echoed in his works that are marked with the dramatic use of lighting and dramatic plots of his canvases. Caravaggio's works have influenced the further development of the Baroque school of painting.

Baroque art is known to have stepped back from the traditional classical representation of the Renaissance period that lacked motion, emotional colouring and focused on the detail and idealistic, sometimes exaggerated portrayal. Baroque paintings were less complex but more concentrated on the motion and emotional complexity of the canvases. Caravaggio's innovation in art is in the theatrical use of colours, treatment of light and shade and distinctive naturalism of the motion and physical depiction.

I have chosen "The calling of St. Matthew", because to my mind this painting is a brilliant representation not only of Caravaggio's style, but of the whole Baroque era. The plot of the canvas is dramatic and intense. It depicts important Biblical event – the calling of the Levi, the tax collector, by God. The picture was painted for the Rome's French church and is a part of three interconnected paintings: "The calling of St. Matthew", "The Martyrdom of St. Matthew" and "The Inspiration of St. Matthew".

The thing that I like the most about this painting is that all the tension of what is going on is skilfully portrayed with the help of light and shadow. It

has very symbolic meaning in this picture: light represents God himself, divine calling and divine destination which concerns not only Matthew, but every person in this world. The light in this picture is opposed to the darkness and obscurity of the atmosphere of the tavern, where the tax collectors gathered to count money. This light pierces into the room and cuts this darkness. To my mind, this darkness represents materialistic, devoid of true sense of life atmosphere in the souls of the depicted people. I cannot help admiring this symbolism of the picture, so fascinatingly portrayed by Caravaggio. The surprise on Levi's face, the motions of his companions, two of which the light had not touched - everything is depicted truthfully and with deep sacred meaning. In Levi's hand, which he raised in surprise there is still a coin, as the reminder of where the Christ has taken him, and the reminder of the inner evil, that guides the person who lives without God, and that is not so easy to reject.

Looking at this picture I always find new deeper meanings which thrill my imagination and perception. The picture fascinates me not only with marvellous execution, but also with the plot, that has very ambiguous meaning to my mind. It can be seen as the representation of Biblical event that concerns only Levi's transformation into St. Matthew. To my mind it can be examined from another point of view as the picture portraying the calling of each one of us by God. The meaning of the picture is a matter of individual perception, but in any case this painting deserves attention and admiration.