
Caravaggio exhibition reveals master of dark and light

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An exhibition celebrating the work of the Italian renaissance painter Michelangelo Merisi da Caravaggio, who was hailed as the master of dark and light, opened on Thursday at the National Gallery in London.

The exhibition, titled "Beyond Caravaggio," consists of 49 paintings, exploring the work and influence of Caravaggio (1571-1610), who is regarded as one of the most revolutionary figures in Western art.

His original, emotionally charged paintings, with their intense naturalism, dramatic lighting and powerful storytelling, had a lasting impact on his successors.

Caravaggio did not have pupils or travel extensively, and he died at the relatively young age of 39, and yet his influence was widespread.

From 1600, artists from across Europe flocked to Rome to see his work, and many went on to imitate his naturalism and dramatic lighting effects. These included artists such as Orazio Gentileschi, Jusepe de Ribera and Gerrit van Honthorst.

Paintings by Caravaggio and his followers were sought after in the decades after his death, but fell out of favor by the middle of the 17th century.

Letizia Treves, exhibition curator, told Xinhua: "Caravaggio breathed fresh life into familiar subjects and so was totally new. In his own day, his manner of painting was revolutionary. His novel aspect is his use of light, and his very particular use of light chiaroscuro."

"He used real models and painted real people. So, this combination of dramatizing scenes with strong lighting effects and painting real people in historical and biblical subjects made these pictures come alive," he added.

The exhibition runs at the Sainsbury Wing of the National Gallery in Trafalgar Square until Jan. 17 next year.
