

Mannerists and Caravaggisti: Utrecht in the early 17th century



Dutch art in the modern imagination:
Naturalistic depictions of ordinary life ...



... but the first styles that flourished in the Dutch Republic were quite different.

Art in the New Dutch Republic

- Unlike Flanders, the northern provinces did not have a very rich artistic tradition
- Impact of the Eighty Years War:
 - Merchants, professionals, skilled laborers fleeing from Spanish rule in the south to the north; among them were artists and well-off people who bought art
 - Southern immigrants brought artistic expertise and a culture of collecting
- Artists in the northern provinces experimented with various styles derived from Flanders and Italy

First two distinctive styles emerging around the time of the Truce:
Mannerism and Caravaggism



Amsterdam

Utrecht



MODERN EUROPE

Utrecht



- A bit unusual among major Dutch cities: old nobility had more influence there, while other towns, e.g., Amsterdam, were dominated by merchants
- A Catholic stronghold in Protestant Dutch Republic
- Economy and art in Utrecht peaked in the first half of the 17th century, then declined

Joachim Wtewael (Utrecht), *Moses Striking the Rock*, 1624.

Oil on panel, 17 9/16 x 26 1/4 in

Wtewael was known as a Mannerist.



We have seen mannerist art at the court of Emperor Rudolf II

Bartholomeus Spranger (German),
Hercules and Omphale, c. 1585



Spranger, *Love is Cold without
Ceres and Bacchus*, c. 1590



Characteristics of Mannerism in Northern Europe

- Emphasis on the idealized human figure
 - Elongated to accentuate elegance
 - Exaggerated musculature
 - Complicated, contorted poses made to look effortless
- Pastel colors, bright palette
- Decorative details
- Main part of the story deliberately obscured

Joachim Wtewael (Utrecht), *Moses Striking the Rock*, 1624.

Oil on panel, 17 9/16 x 26 1/4 in



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1624. Oil on panel, 17 9/16 x 26 1/4 in

Biblical account
Numbers 20:8-12



- After escaping from enslavement in Egypt, the Israelites traveled through the desert under Moses' leadership.
- God told Moses to speak to a rock, from which water would pour.
- Moses struck the rock with his staff, and water gushes from it.
- Moses punished for striking instead of speaking to the rock as God commanded.

Joachim Wtewael, *Moses Striking the Rock*, 1624 (detail)



Joachim Wtewael, *Moses Striking the Rock*, 1624 (detail)





Wtewael, *Mars and Venus
Discovered by the Gods*,
c.1601-10. Oil on copper, 8 x
6 1/8 inches

Wtewael, *Mars and Venus*
Discovered by the Gods, c.1601-10.



Bartholomeus Spranger,
Hercules and Omphale, c. 1585



The Utrecht Caravaggisti

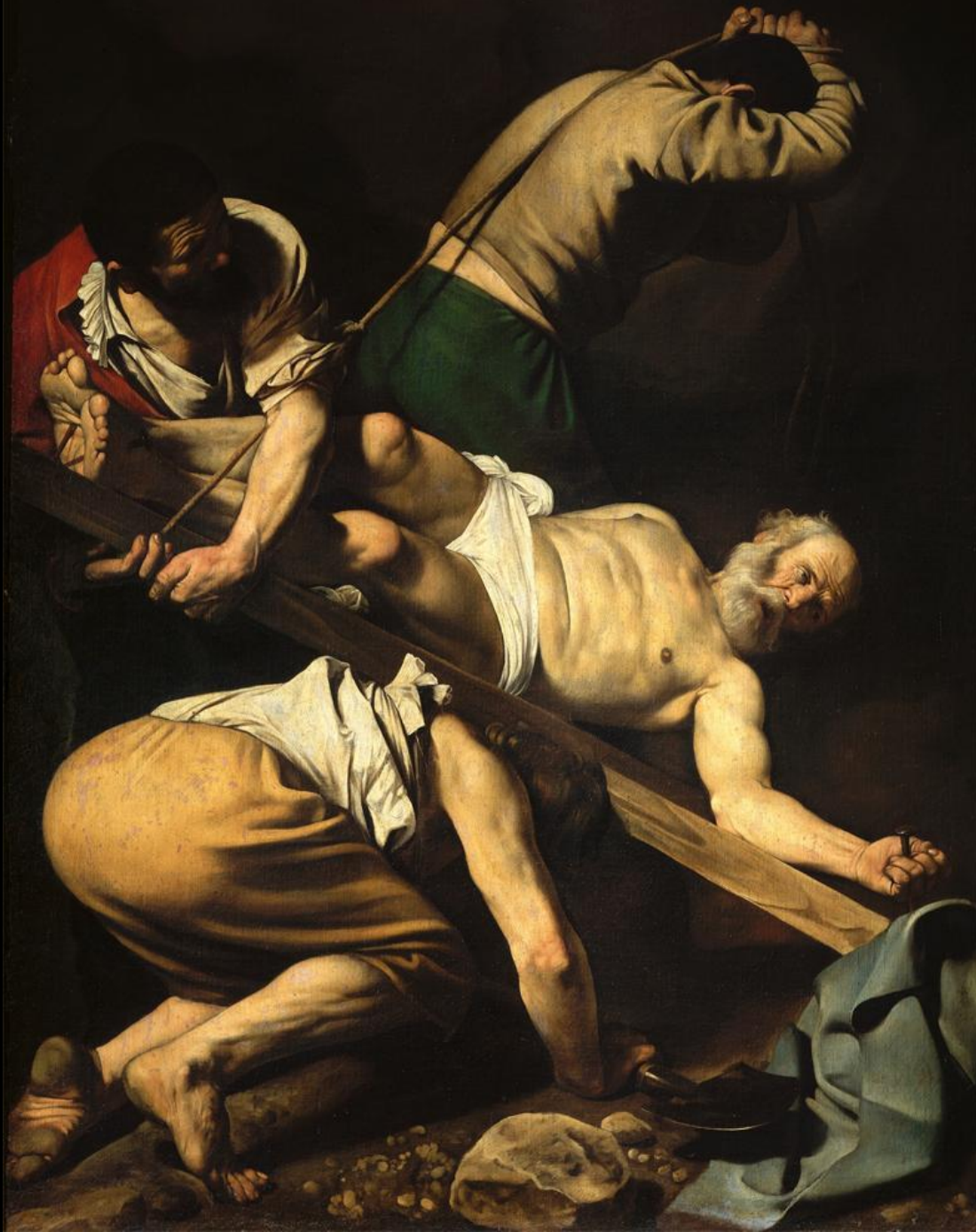
- A group of artists from Utrecht who traveled to Italy in the early 1600s; saw and admired the art of Caravaggio
- Appropriated Caravaggio's distinctive style in their own art
- We will look at Gerrit van Honthorst and Hendrick ter Brugghen

Michelangelo Merisi da
CARAVAGGIO (1571-1610)

- One of the most famous and influential Italian artists in the early 17th century
- Developed a novel, dramatic style of painting that became popular with some patrons
- Some younger artists from different parts of Europe were attracted to his distinctive style

Caravaggio, *David with the Head of Goliath*, c. 1609-10





What are some of the elements of Caravaggio's style?

- Strong tonal contrast to create illusions of three-dimensionality
- Large figures, expressive gestures

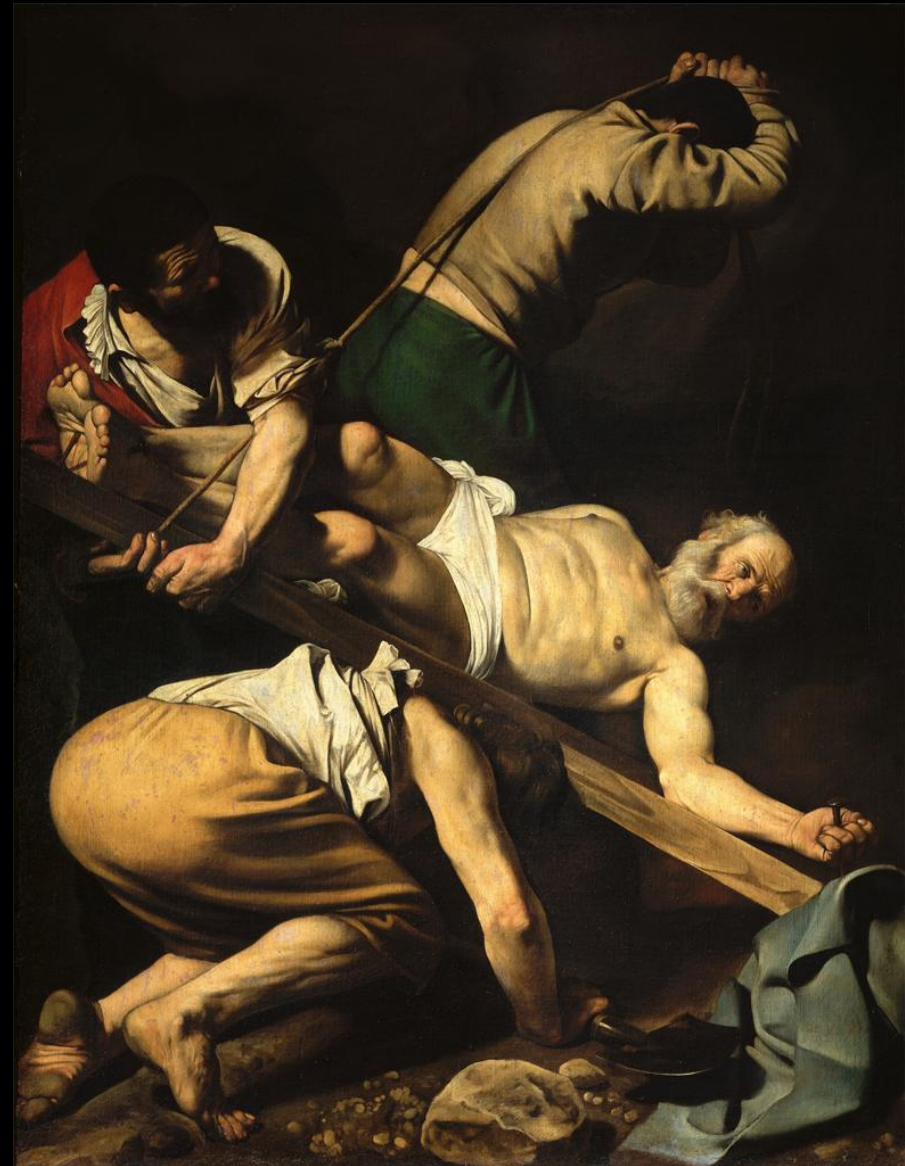
Caravaggio, *Martyrdom of St Peter*, 1601

Gerrit van Honthorst, *Saint Sebastian*, c. 1623

One of the Utrecht artists who studied Caravaggio's works in Italy



Caravaggio, *Martyrdom of St Peter*,
1601



Honthorst, *Saint Sebastian*, c. 1623



Paintings of Catholic subjects by the Caravaggisti

- Utrecht as a Catholic stronghold in Calvinist Dutch Republic
- Religious paintings produced for secret churches or personal collections



Example of a secret church (*schuilkerk*) in Amsterdam, originally built in 1663
Called “Our Lord in the Attic”; now a museum

Honthorst, *Denial of St. Peter*, c. 1620-25



Honthorst, *Denial of St. Peter*, c. 1620-25 (detail)
The candle-lit night scene became Honthorst's signature format.





Hendrick ter Brugghen was another Utrecht artist who appropriated Caravaggio's techniques.

Hendrick ter Brugghen, *Saint Sebastian Tended by Saint Irene*, 1625. Oil on canvas, 58 15/16 x 47 ¼ inches



Ter Brugghen, *The Concert*, 1626



Caravaggio, *Fortune Teller*, c. 1596



Ter Brugghen, *The Concert*, 1626
Ter Brugghen also used the candle as a lighting device.



Utrecht Mannerists and Caravaggisti

- Mannerists in Utrecht
 - Religious and mythological paintings for wealthy patrons
 - Characteristics of this style
- Caravaggisti in Utrecht
 - Younger generation of artists who saw the work of Caravaggio in Italy
 - Adopted Caravaggio dramatic, direct approach; note the characteristics of this style
 - Produced both religious paintings and genre scenes
 - Utrecht as a Catholic stronghold; a demand for paintings of saints and other Catholic subjects remained