

# Italian Baroque Masters

Paris Art Studies &ndash;  
Winter 2009 &ndash; Great masters of Western Art 3 &ndash; first Louvre visit

## Italian Baroque Masters

The  
Carracci

Agostino  
(1557-1602)

Annibale  
(1560-1609) - brothers

Lodovico  
(1555-1619) - cousin

At the  
beginning in Bologna  
they all have a common studio. After  
1582 they run a private &ldquo;academy&rdquo; with special emphasis on life drawing. It  
becomes a rallying point for progressive tendencies in Bologna. From 1585 all three develop  
differently.

Initially  
apprenticed in Milan  
to mediocre painter Simone Peterzano for four years.

Annibale revives along with Caravaggio  
time honoured values of Italian art at the opening of the 17c. His frescos at  
the Farnese gallery will be considered until the end of the 18c the greatest  
works of Italian art along with Michelangelo&rsquo;s Sistine ceiling and Raphael&rsquo;s  
stanze at the Vatican. His eclectic approach in his early works  
combines northern models (Corregio, Veronese) with Roman (Raphael), moving as

he progresses towards greater clarity, solidity and definition of attitudes and expressions.

Lodovico: more baroque, with dramatic light contrasts, intensely emotional with no Renaissance reserve. Remains in Bologna where after his cousins' departure his art regresses.

1595 –  
Annibale leaves for Rome,  
joined by Agostino two years later.

1595-1605  
– Annibale creates a grand manner, a dramatic style buttressed by the close study of nature, antiquity, Raphael and Michelangelo. He fuses Venetian colour and Roman design, a painterly approach with a classical severity of form.

The climax  
of his career is the ceiling for the Farnese palace gallery – Bacchus and Ariadne – begun in 1597. It is the first dynamic Roman ceiling (baroque) unlike the more static effect of Michelangelo's Sistine.

The Louvre  
'Lamentation' is a late picture with a measured heroic expression like classical tragedy. Annibale was always preoccupied with the Aristotelian problem of how to represent in appropriate and forceful form the affetti, the emotions of the human soul. He captured the rationalist spirit of his age by combining the rational medium of design with the emotive or irrational medium of color. The more romantic aspect of his sensibility also led him to landscape.

His first  
loosely constructed landscapes with hunters and fishermen (Louvre) give way to carefully constructed classical panoramas that will inspire Domenichino, Albani, Poussin and Claude.

In his  
more personal work a turn to caricature reveals a new dichotomy between his public, acceptable personality and a more private secretive one announcing future dualities in the history of art (Hogarth, Goya).

The Caravaggisti

His  
turbulent personality, his highly individual and improvisational style, his mystic experience of light meant that Caravaggio had no pupils, nor could his style be transmitted easily as a formula. However, his directness and power had a great 'hypnotic' effect on contemporary painters though it proved short lasting in most other artists' work.

Orazio  
Gentileschi  
(1563-1639)

In Rome since 1576, he falls under Caravaggio's influence in the early 1600's. He retains however a Tuscan quality reminiscent of Bronzino – clear, precise contours, cool colors, a certain restraint in his compositions. He ends up in England as court painter to Charles I in 1626 where his Caravaggism weakens.

Bartolomeo  
Manfredi  
(c.1587 – 1620)

Painting  
period: 1610-20. One of closest followers of Caravaggio whom he imitates in a rough style that future generations came to consider as characteristic of the great master. He specializes in coarse guard room and tavern scenes. Caravaggio's early subjects are painted by Manfredi using the master's late "tenebroso" style.

Giovanni  
Serodine  
(1600 -1630)

Arrives in Rome 1615.  
Greatest colourist in Caravaggist group. The loose handling and impasto in his late work looks forward to Rembrandt and leads away from Caravaggio's style.

By 1620 Caravaggism is spent out. It survives in "bambocciate" of Pieter van Laer a Haarlem artist painting in Rome 1625-1639.

The Bolognese in Rome

After 1600 they establish a new style by strengthening the rationalist and classical tendencies of Annibale's Farnese ceiling. Their stay in Rome is intermittent. From 1606-18 they execute a series of large and influential frescos still considered the superior medium in Italy in contrast to Caravaggio's easel painting on canvas.

Domenichino (1581-1641) is considered at the time the greatest artist working in Rome after the withdrawal of Annibale. His early classicism (Raphael through the eyes of Annibale) turns more Baroque (1622). In 1631 he leaves for Naples. In the neo-classical 18th century he was considered second only to Raphael.

#### St Cecilia

1617 &ndash;

Louvre &ndash; Brought up a Christian she takes a vow of chastity and convinces her husband Valerius to commit to sexual abstinence. She eventually became a martyr for her faith and was drowned, boiled in hot oil and struck three times with a sword in the neck. She survived this treatment for three days while distributing all her riches to the poor.

By the 15th century she becomes Saint patron of music &ndash; mention of musical instruments on her wedding day, in Latin &ldquo;organum&rdquo;; gave rise to her typical attribute the modern organ. Sometimes she is shown rejecting earthly instruments for heavenly music.

#### Albani ( 1578-1660)

##### Influenced

by Lodovico in Bologna.

In Rome he

turns more to Raphael developing a light and lyrical manner. A Domenichino classicist without the latter's precision and sense of style. His specialty are light-hearted and appealing representations of myth and allegory in landscape settings.

#### Guido Reni ( 1575-1642)

##### Eventually

returns to Bologna. He is a more subtle colorist than Domenichino. Too many standardized sentimental studio pictures produced in his last ten years by assistants have obscured his fame.

##### He quickly

moved away from Caravaggism to a more classical style that is, however, freer and more imaginative than Domenichino's.

He had by 1610 a great reputation and was much favoured by Cardinal Scipione Borghese who obtained for him major papal commissions.

He left Rome for Bologna in 1614 abandoning the Roman field to Domenichino.

His style  
represents a perfect balance between naturalism and classicism.

Lafranco ( 1582-1647)

Replaced  
Domenichino as foremost painter in Rome  
in the 1620's after being overshadowed for 20 years. Born in Parma,  
he worked there under Agostino before coming to Rome in 1602 after Agostino's death.

From  
beginning he is the antipode of Domenichino employing a Parmese painterly  
freedom (influenced by Correggio) that is very different from the classical  
discipline of Domenichino. He resurrects  
the old conflict between color and  
design, for a time resolved by Annibale.

By 1612 he  
develops a monumental and dynamic Baroque manner with a strong chiaroscuro  
which prevails in Rome  
by 1616 and is visible in the villa Borghese ceiling frescos.

Guercino (1591-1666)

Younger than others. From Cento. Baroque in style, he uses  
form-dissolving and glowing warm colours.  
His forceful contrapostos and intense emotion go beyond the early style  
of Lodovico whom he greatly admired. He  
arrives in Rome  
in 1621. His confidence ebbs, however, after the Casino Ludovisi Aurora  
frescos and his style is classicised by the impact of Rome.

Outside Rome

Bartolomeo Schedoni (1578-1615)

Born in Modena and worked  
mostly in Parma  
where he died. In the beginning a  
Mannerist and then greatly influenced by Corregio. A fluid painter who limits color to a few  
brilliant tones and borrows the low types in his paintings from Caravaggio.