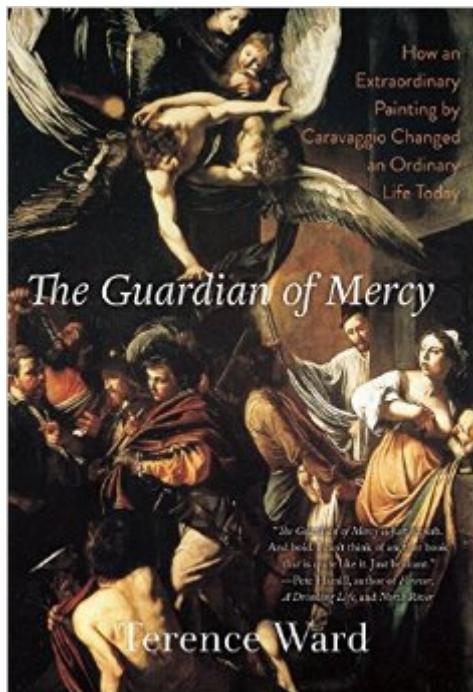


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The Guardian Of Mercy: How An Extraordinary Painting By Caravaggio Changed An Ordinary Life Today



Synopsis

Now celebrated as one of the great painters of the Renaissance, Michelangelo Merisi da Caravaggio fled Rome in 1606 to escape retribution for killing a man in a brawl. Three years later he was in Naples, where he painted *The Seven Acts of Mercy*. A year later he died at the age of thirty-eight under mysterious circumstances. Exploring Caravaggio's singular masterwork, in *The Guardian of Mercy* Terence Ward offers an incredible narrative journey into the heart of his artistry and his metamorphosis from fugitive to visionary. Ward's guide in this journey is a contemporary artist whose own life was transformed by the painting, a simple man named Angelo who shows him where it still hangs in a small church in Naples and whose story helps him see its many layers. As Ward unfolds the structure of the painting, he explains each of the seven mercies and its influence on Caravaggio's troubled existence. Caravaggio encountered the whole range of Naples' vertical social layers, from the lowest ranks of poverty to lofty gilded aristocratic circles, and Ward reveals the old city behind today's metropolis. Fusing elements of history, biography, memoir, travelogue, and journalism, his narrative maps the movement from estrangement to grace, as we witness Caravaggio's bruised life gradually redeemed by art.

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Customer Reviews

Terence Ward's book "the Guardian of Mercy" is a "treasure trove" that enriches your spirit and understanding of Italian culture, traditions, and, of course, Caravaggio. His colorful and insightful writing is a "rapier" to the soul. As a result of the warm descriptions and imagery there are moments

when you feel like you are enjoying cinema ("seeing the book.") Ward's book actually contains at least a dozen stories and each with an "O'Henry" quality of surprise and wonderment. How do you find models so you can paint the scenes in the "the Acts of Mercy?"how do you choose and mix paints ?.....how do you escape death ?..... or how do you enthrall the aristocracy? We know that Caravaggio's paintings and technique established a new dynamic that altered the future of Italian and European art. Ward calls it a "wind of change - authenticity not dreamscapes." Nonetheless, Caravaggio suggests, at the apex of his vulnerability, that "in the end I was the only one who gave and never asked for anything." He was almost like an unwanted baby, an Italian Esposito - exposed to the elements and working in the "shadows" (literally) with his constant flight from powerful sources who wanted him dispatched by whatever means possible. Reading "the Guardian" Ward underscores the Italian passion for "arrangiarsi" or "the art of making do." More importantly, that Caravaggio was a master of this lifestyle art form. In fact, much of his success and happiness came from "fate".....a roll of the dice or what could be referred to as "life's game of 5 card stud." One must play the hand your dealt. There are no options and extra cards.

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