

## ABSTRACT

### MICHELANGELO MERISI DA CARAVAGGIO THE ITALIAN BAROQUE PAINTER

This thesis highlights the importance and uniqueness of the works by the Italian Baroque painter, Michelangelo Merisi da Caravaggio. The study of his paintings reveals the complexity of meanings in his work and gives us a deeper understanding of society in late sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century Rome. My discussion in this thesis includes a historiographical approach to Caravaggio's life and work, his early "boy-paintings" in relationship to the concept of *Homme Fatale*, his realism and technique, and his re-interpreted sacred female figures, including the Virgin Mary and St. Mary Magdalene. In order to explore Caravaggio in a historical context, addressing social, cultural, religious and gender issues of early modern Europe, the Counter Reformation and the notion of decorum are also discussed. This thesis proves that Caravaggio's revolutionary approach to his painterly practice is one of the most important contributions to the History of Art.

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May 2004