

# THE BAROQUE

*Rome in the Seventeenth Century*





# OVERVIEW OF 17TH C. ROME

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- Rome had over *one million* inhabitants in the Imperial Age; now just 25,000
- Hughes singles out one person to know: Pope Sixtus V, who...
  - cleaned up the city with ruthless methods
  - Massively restructured the city (via Merulana)
  - Piazzas and fountains
  - Obelisks galore!
- Flourishing art, especially Caravaggio; Rome leaves a mark on all of Europe: Poussin, Velázquez, Rubens



“ [Sixtus] was elected pope in 1585, inheriting a chaotic city riddled with crime, close to bankruptcy, and dotted with half-abandoned ruins. In the apogee of its imperial years, Rome held over a million people. Now it had possibly twenty-five thousand, and probably fewer. The economic depression of the fourteenth century, forced on Rome by the Great Schism that drove the city into a plunge, had turned Rome into a veritable ghost town with monuments.



In 1566, Pope Pius V made him a bishop; in 1570, he took the cardinal's red hat. Fifteen years later, he was elected pope. He was said to have entered the chamber of the electoral conclave on crutches, feigning extreme infirmity. No doubt he hoped this would improve his chances of being elected as an interim, short-term pope. The instant his election was confirmed by the white smoke rising from the chimney, he flung the crutches away, to stand before the assembled cardinals erect and fairly bristling with vitality. The story is untrue, but "*se non è vero,*" as the Romans habitually say, "*è ben trovato,*"—"if it's not true, it ought to be."



“ This policy was so effective that before long the Papal States were considered the safest domain in Europe. Sixtus celebrated this achievement by having a medal struck with his face on one side and on the other a pilgrim sleeping beneath a tree, with the motto *Perfecta securitas*.





When the obelisk was vertical, Sixtus V could not contain his joy, crying in triumph, “*Ciò che era pagano ora è l’emblema della cristianità*”—“The thing that was pagan is now the emblem of Christianity.” And that was the point: to Sixtus, the moving or “translation” of this and other obelisks, achieved with such immense, concerted effort and determination, symbolized the work of the Counter-Reformation, the reunification of the Church, the defeat and pushing back of heresy.



# St. Peter's









# Piazza del Popolo













# Piazza Esquilino & S. Maria Maggiore





# S. Trinità dei Monti & Spanish Steps



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In fact, his (Pope Sixtus V's) accumulation took so much cash out of circulation that it created severe economic problems for the Roman economy; money could not circulate as before, and so business stagnated.



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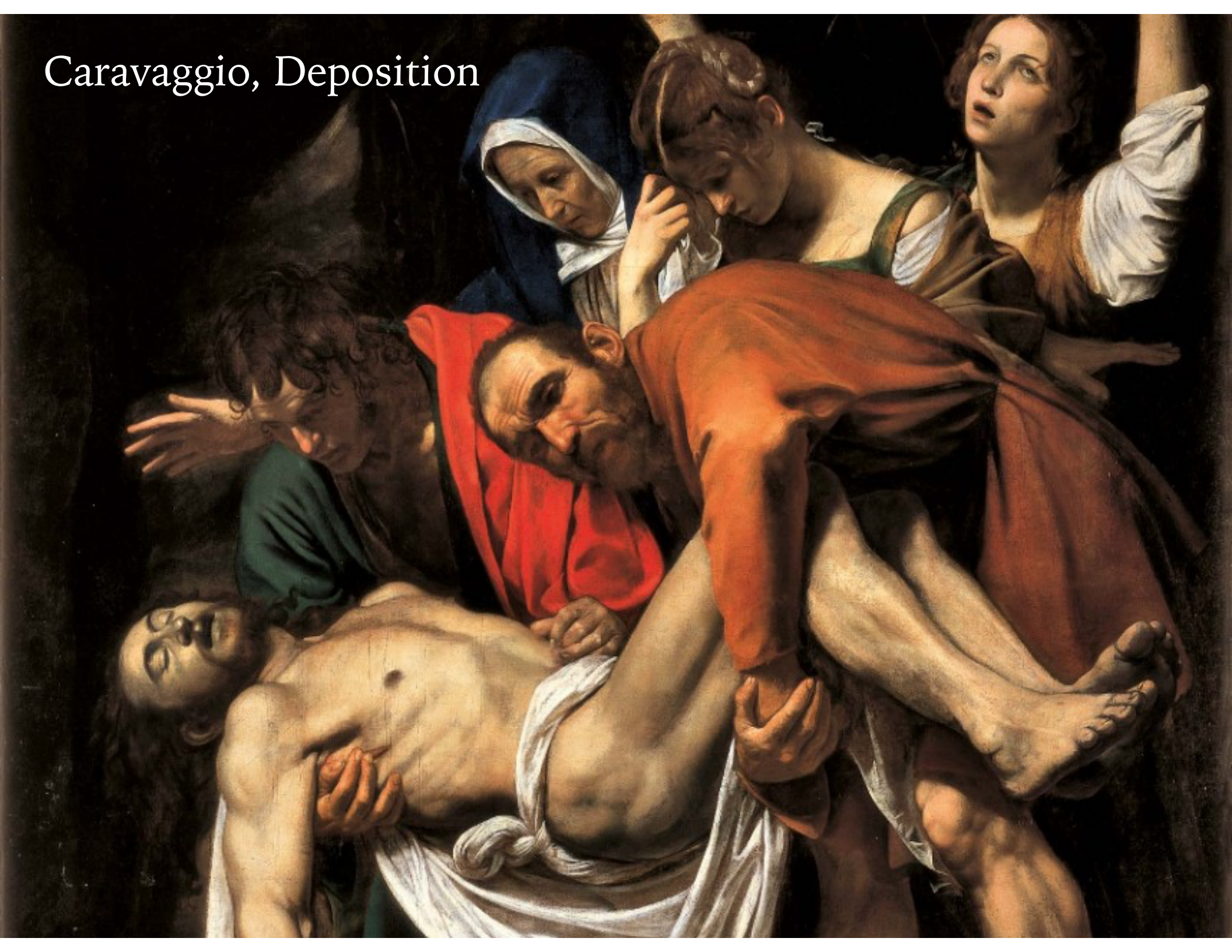
A visitor from Mantua, Angelo Grillo, reported, “Such is the newness of the edifices, the streets, piazzas, fountains, aqueducts, obelisks, and other stupendous marvels which Sixtus V of glorious memory embellished this old city” that he could hardly recognize the place he had left ten years before.

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The Council of Trent resolved to find ways of making the doctrines of Roman Catholicism more vivid and direct to an unsophisticated public. The object of art would be not to out-argue Luther, not to win theological debates, but to assure the faithful of the Truth by means of a superior intensity.



Caravaggio, Deposition





Caravaggio,  
Martyrdom of St. Peter

















Velázquez, Supper at Emmaus





Velázquez, Old Woman Cooking Eggs





Velázquez, The Rokeby Venus





Velázquez, The Rokeby Venus

