

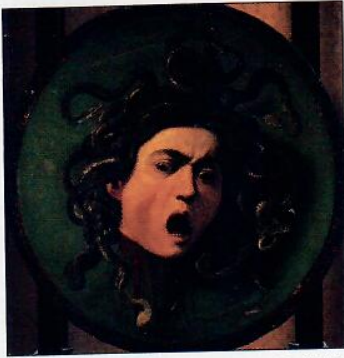


art & man[®]

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CARAVAGGIO

*Working with
Dark and Light*



COVER: Michelangelo Caravaggio (1571-1610).
Head of the Medusa, c. 1596-1598. Uffizi,
Florence. Photo, Art Resource.

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man**®

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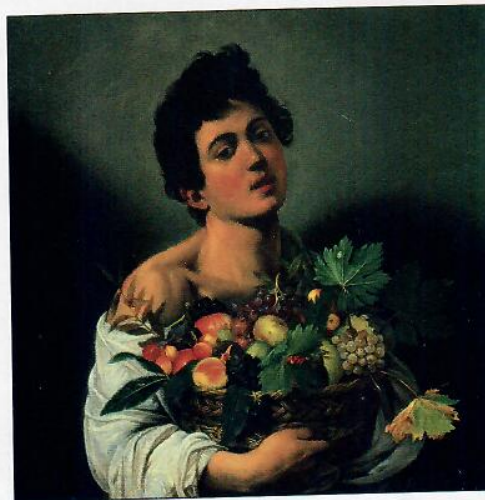
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Portrait of a REBEL

He was sued for not paying his rent, arrested for attack-
ing another artist, put in prison for insulting an officer,
taken to court for carrying illegal weapons. He fought
with everyone and was once sued for throwing hot soup in a waiter's face. He even
killed a man in an argument over a tennis match. And yet, the 16th-century
Italian painter Caravaggio was one of the greatest artists who ever lived.

Michelangelo Merisi was born in 1571 in the small northern Italian town of
Caravaggio (for which he later named himself). When he was 13, he was sent to
Milan to be apprenticed to a local painter. At 21, he went to Rome and moved



**Light is already an important
element in this early self-
portrait by Caravaggio.**

Boy With A Basket of Fruit, 1593-4.
Borghese Gallery, Rome. Photo, Art
Resource.

from workshop to workshop learning
to paint. The work on the left
is thought to be an idealized self-
portrait done during this period.
Finally the young artist found a
patron (a wealthy person to sup-
port his artistic career), the Cardinal
del Monte. Caravaggio did a
number of paintings for the cardinal,
including the one on the cover.
The head is that of Medusa
[Meh-DOO-sa], a creature from
ancient Greek mythology with
snakes for hair. Whoever looked at
Medusa's face turned to stone, so
she was used on soldiers' shields as

a protective charm. Caravaggio painted this
work on a round canvas and was thought to
have used his own face as a model.

Through the cardinal, Caravaggio re-
ceived his first important public commis-
sion — a large painting based on the life of
Saint Matthew (see pages 8-9). Up to this
time, religious scenes had been done in an



In this late self-portrait, **darkness** has taken over Caravaggio's art and his life. The painting tells the story of David and Goliath: Caravaggio painted himself as Goliath. Which one is he?

David With the Head of Goliath, c.1606. (Detail.) Borghese Gallery, Rome. Photo, Art Resource.

Which of the faces that you see on these two pages is that of the man who painted them — sixteenth-century artist Caravaggio?

idealized way — presenting a vision of heavenly perfection. In this work, Caravaggio depicted ordinary people in contemporary settings, and this offended many people.

Around this same time — 1600 — the artist began getting in trouble with the law. Over the next six years he was sued, arrested, and sent to prison many times. But he continued to paint one masterpiece after another. In 1606, in an argument over a game of tennis, Caravaggio lost his temper and killed a man. He fled to Naples where he tried to get a pardon. He did several paintings in Naples, including the one above based on the biblical story of David, who killed the evil giant Goliath. Does David look triumphant? Perhaps this painting reflects the way the artist felt at the

time. David's figure, half hidden in shadow, emerges from the darkness. He looks down, almost in sadness, at the head of the giant he has just killed. Caravaggio has used his own features for the head of Goliath.

Caravaggio spent his last years as a fugitive. His paintings became darker, his subjects more violent. In 1610, a papal pardon was arranged. But as he was returning to Rome, the artist became ill. He died of a fever a few days later at the age of 39. Today, despite his troubled life, Caravaggio is considered one of the most important painters of his time. In this issue, you'll see more of his work and discover other artists who use light and shade. Finally, you'll use some of Caravaggio's methods to create your own dramatic portrait.



YOU HAVE PROBABLY GUESSED THAT ALL THE FACES ARE CARAVAGGIO'S. . .

Shocking IMAGES



The painting above of Christ and his disciples is now considered one of the greatest examples of Baroque art.

The Supper at Emmaus, c. 1596. National Gallery, London. Photo, Art Resource.

Caravaggio painted the two works on these pages for Roman churches. Both of the subjects are very traditional — in the painting above, Christ reveals his identity to his disciples. The work on the right depicts the death of Christ's mother, the Virgin Mary. Why was this painting rejected by Church officials who called it “unbelievably common and vulgar”?

Caravaggio lived and worked at a time during which all of Europe was going through tremendous changes. Earlier, during the **Renaissance** (a revival of classical culture that took place from the 14th through the 16th centuries), the Catholic Church had been dominant. Now a new religious group, the Protestants, were challenging the Church. This new movement, called the **Protestant Refor-**

mation forced the Church to try new methods to convince people to return to Catholicism. Artists working for the Church needed to find ways to further *involve* viewers in their religious scenes. Renaissance painters had painted **perfect, idealized** people in **calm, balanced** compositions. They had used **harmonious** colors, and **soft, even** lighting. Could any of these words describe the paintings shown in this issue?

To reach a wider audience, Italian **Baroque** artists [Bar-OAK] — the art movement that dominated Europe from about 1600-1740 — like Caravaggio had to reach people *emotionally*. It wasn't enough just to present the scene; they had to make the viewer feel that he or she was right there. Artists began to use new techniques. Their paintings were huge, and they seemed even bigger because of all the **restless movement** in them. The many figures in the paintings were crowded together and they often appeared to be bursting out of the frame. Bodies and arms were dramatically **foreshortened**, so they actually seemed to be coming out of the picture (like Christ's hand or the arm of the man on the right in the painting on the opposite page). The **exaggerated gestures** (like the surprise shown by the disciples or the weeping of the mourners on the right) and the **dramatic spotlighting** give both scenes a **theatrical** quality, almost as though they are dramas being presented on a stage. The meticulously rendered **textures** of the food, fruit, and tablecloth in the work on the left and the elegant fabrics and drapery in both paintings serve to further involve the viewer. But the visual device Caravaggio employs most effectively is his unique way of showing **light and dark** — the **highlights** and **deep shadows** that give an almost magical quality to these paintings.

Caravaggio used all these Baroque techniques, but he took them one step further. He presented sacred religious scenes as events that were taking place in the present, not in the distant past. He placed his



“Caravaggio shows the viewer that these sacred events happened exactly as they might have in the alleys of modern Rome.” — JACOB BURCKHARDT

scenes in actual locations — taverns, alleys, slums — and peopled them with models he found on the street. Viewers objected to Caravaggio's figures with their coarse features, dirty fingernails, and unwashed feet and clothing. In the painting above, the artist paints not a beautiful, heavenly vision of death, but an awkwardly sprawled, discolored, bloated corpse. This work, *The Death of the Virgin* was removed from the church for which it had been painted. However it was immediately bought by the Duke of Mantua who put it on public display, “so all Rome could see such a masterpiece.”

Caravaggio's version of the death of the Virgin Mary (above) outraged people because as his model he used a ragged beggar with dirty feet.

The Death of the Virgin, 1605-1606. Louvre, Paris.

**MASTERPIECE
OF THE MONTH**

Preview

The Light of EMOTION

“On this day, the 24th of September in the year 1600, Monsignor Tiberio Cerasi has commissioned two pictures to be painted by Michelangelo da Caravaggio. These paintings are to represent ‘the mystery of the conversion of St. Paul’ and

‘the martyrdom of St. Peter.’ The artist is to be given a free hand in the interpretation of the subject, but he is to submit specimens and drawings of the figures and other objects to the patron in advance. These works are to be completed eight months from this date.”



The contract above was drawn up between Caravaggio and a nobleman who had just purchased a small chapel in the church of Santa Maria del Popolo in Rome. He wanted to hire an artist to do two large paintings for it. Caravaggio had recently become interested in doing religious subjects. The stories of Saint Peter, who was crucified for his beliefs, and of Saint Paul, a Roman soldier who was converted to Christianity, appealed to him. He accepted the commission, choosing to paint the most dramatic moment in each story. The painting on the right shows the instant that a burst of light from heaven flashes down on Paul. In the

“Caravaggio transformed that which would be repulsive in reality into scenes of artistic beauty.” — Annibale Carracci

*The Crucifixion of St. Peter, 1600-1601.
Santa Maria del Popolo, Rome. Photo, Art Resource.*

*“Caravaggio’s light is like a flash of lightning —
seen only for an instant.”* — ANNIBALE CARRACCI

work on the left, Caravaggio has painted the moment that Peter’s cross is being raised and he realizes what is happening to him.

Caravaggio carefully planned his **compositions** in order to **emotionally involve** the viewers of these paintings. In Renaissance scenes, the lines and planes were **parallel** to the painting surface. This caused the viewer’s eye to move *across* the painting. Caravaggio wanted the viewer’s eye to move **in and out, forward and back**. To do this, he used **diagonals** running corner to corner as well as backward and forward. In the painting on the left, Saint Peter and the cross make up one diagonal, which is intersected by another diagonal formed by the three men and the rope on the left. Saint Paul’s arms and the horse’s legs create more diagonals in the work on the right. **Foreshortening** (making an object appear as if it’s coming right out at the viewer) is another way to bring the viewer into a painting. Can you find hands or feet or other objects that are foreshortened in these two paintings? Caravaggio designed these two paintings to be seen at an angle just as the viewer enters the chapel. The bodies of the two saints are so foreshortened that they appear to actually project out into space.

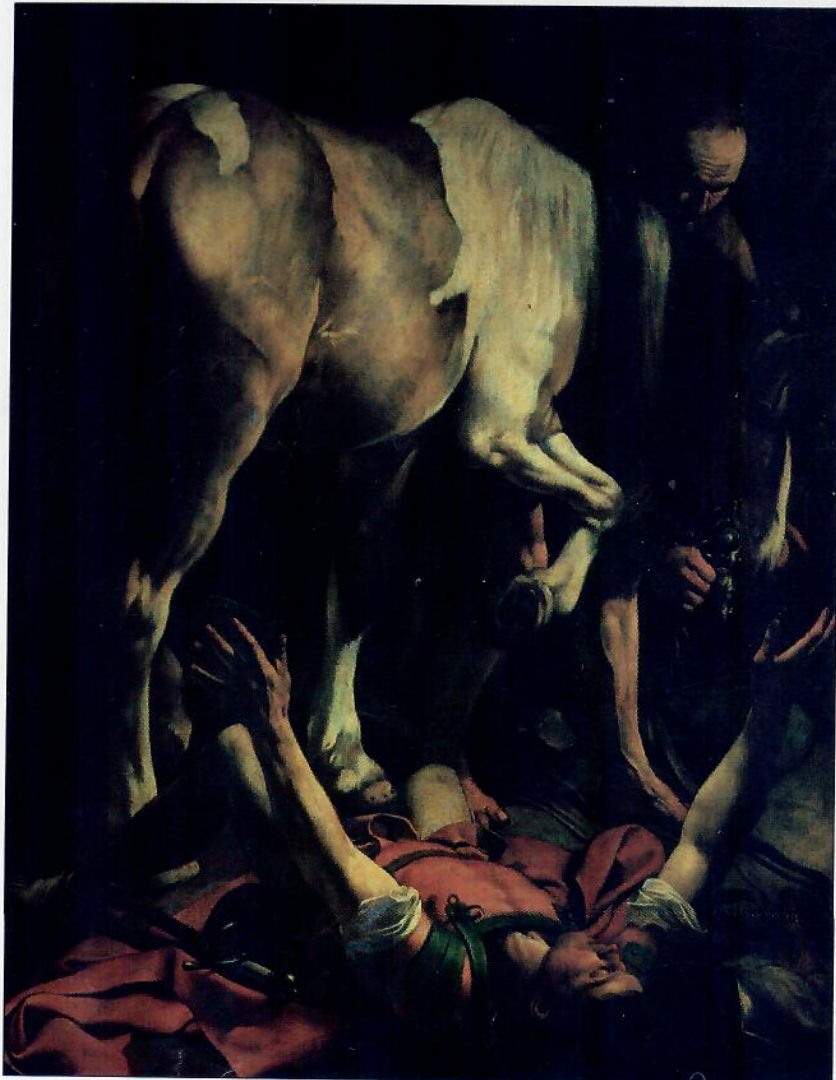
Caravaggio never did preparatory drawings, so it is unlikely that he “submitted drawings and other specimens to the patron in advance.” Working from models, he painted directly on the canvas, marking the key points in his composition with the handle of the brush. He constantly changed his compositions and repainted as he went along. He worked in a shuttered studio, lit by a single lantern hung from the ceiling to produce dark shadows and shafts of light. Look at both paintings on these pages. Why do you notice the figure on the cross in one, the horse and man in the other? Like a spotlight on a stage, Caravaggio’s **light** focuses your attention on the key points of the story. The light is very **selective**, causing only the most important forms to emerge from the darkness. The solid black background forces the viewer to pay attention to the spotlighted figures.

Light also plays a vital role in the paint-

ing on the next two pages, *The Calling of Saint Matthew*. Saint Matthew was a tax collector who became one of Christ’s most important disciples. Matthew, sitting in a tavern surrounded by his armed friends, crouches at the end of the table thinking of nothing but the money he has collected. Caravaggio has painted the instant just before Matthew realizes he has been chosen by God, symbolized by the heavenly light streaming in from the upper right-hand corner. He has also been summoned by the pointing finger of the mysterious man on the right. This figure, half hidden in the shadows, is meant to be Christ. In all these works, the simple, dark background makes the forms seem almost to pop out and gives a magical, spiritual quality to each scene.

3
How do you think some viewers might have felt about a religious work in which the horse seems to be more important than the man?

The Conversion of St. Paul, 1600-1601.
Santa Maria del Popolo, Rome. Photo, Art Resource.





“Jesus saw a man
named Matthew at
his seat in the
custom-house; and
he said to him,
‘Follow me.’ And
Matthew rose and
followed him.”

— MATTHEW,
CHAPTER 9, VERSE 9.

The Calling of Saint Matthew

BY MICHELANGELO CARAVAGGIO

Figures in Shadow: Learn more about three artists of today who work with light and dark.

Shadows of the Mind

The work of contemporary German-born British painter Lucian Freud [FROID] is as controversial today as Caravaggio's was in the 16th century. One critic said, "Freud paints flesh that looks like badly carved ham." Another called him, "The greatest living Realist painter." Do you think the artist really looks like his self-portrait (below)?

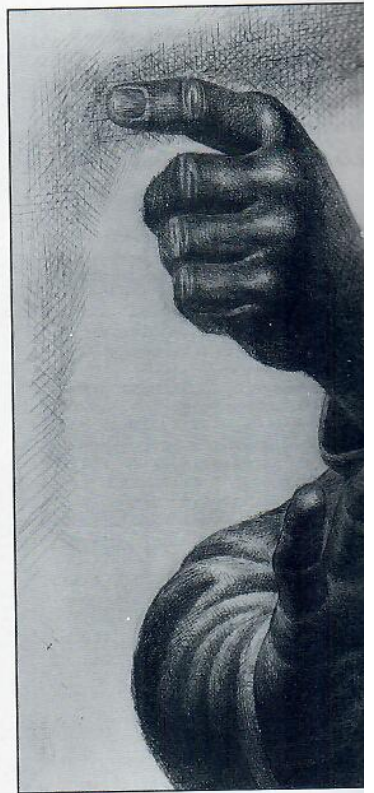
Like Caravaggio, Freud paints the unflattering "reality" that he sees. The picture shown here is one of his series of "night portraits," painted in a small, dark room lit only by one powerful light bulb. A strong, harsh light falls on each plane of the face, casting deep shadows and emphasizing every wrinkle, blemish, and scar. Freud uses worn

brushes and thick paint which gives the painting a heavy, sculptural look. His use of stark backgrounds adds to the bleak effect. He does many of his paintings (like the one reproduced here) from a mirror set on the floor. This changes the lighting and gives a slight foreshortening effect, as if the figure is looming out of the canvas.



Why does this self-portrait look so alarming?

Lucian Freud (b. 1922)
Reflection (Self-Portrait), 1985.
 Oil. British Council.





Powerful Contrasts

Modern American artist Charles White uses the **contrast** of black and white to convey the heroic qualities of the figures he creates. Many of his drawings and paintings are based on people he feels are representative of Afro-American culture. The bold, massive forms of the ink drawing *Preacher* (left) emphasize the power and strength of this minister's message. As in many of Caravaggio's paintings, White's figure seems to be coming right out of the frame. This is due to

the artist's use of **perspective** and **foreshortening**. He exaggerates the sizes of the parts of the figure. The large hands are closest to the viewer, so they appear to extend forward. The head is much smaller than it would normally be, so it seems to go back into space. He builds up deep **shadows** by **crosshatching** masses of thin lines; the areas of white paper uncovered by the lines become **highlights**. The dramatic **modeling** of the figure gives the work even more impact.

What makes the hands of this figure appear to be reaching out of the frame?

Charles White (1918-1979).
Preacher, 1952. Whitney
Museum of American Art, NY, NY.

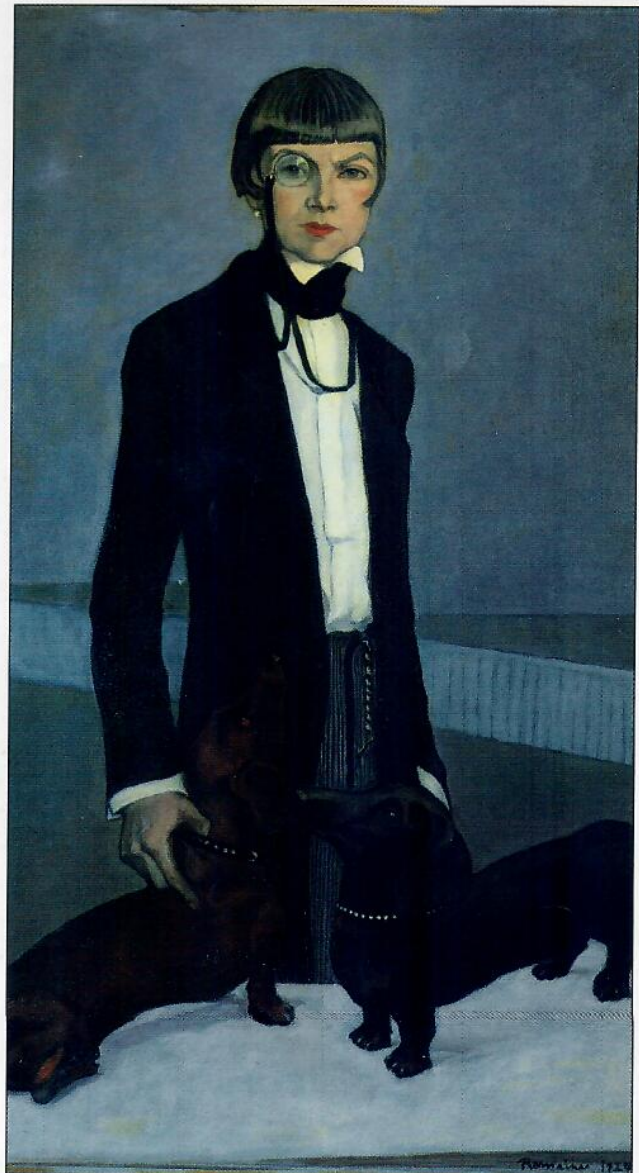
Haunting Images

Early 20th-century American painter Romaine Brooks has been called a "thief of souls" because her eerie portraits so accurately capture the personalities of her subjects. Do you think the artist liked or felt comfortable around the woman in the painting on the right? She has presented her subject wearing a tuxedo and a monocle, accompanied by her two pet dogs. Like those done by Caravaggio, Romaine Brooks' figures were ruthlessly honest — in fact, many sitters begged her not to exhibit their portraits. Unlike Caravag-

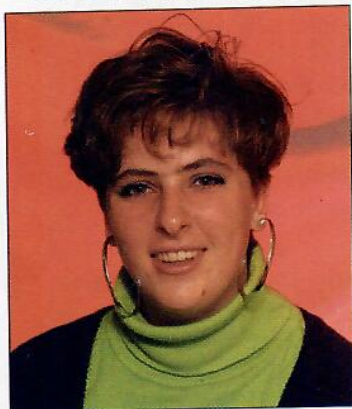
gio's, Brooks' figures are not highly **modeled**. Nor does she use definite shadows. As a result, her paintings don't look very three-dimensional. The haunting quality of her portraits comes from the **contrasts** created by her **flat, angular, black and white shapes**. The **strong, dark, imposing, vertical** of the figure **contrasts** with the many **diagonals** running through the work. A tense, anxious feeling is set up by the twisted diagonal of the mouth echoed by the diagonals found in the shoulders, the fence, and the dogs.

Does this woman look like someone you'd like to meet?

Romaine Brooks (1874-1970). *Una, Lady Troubridge*, 1924. Oil, 50 1/8" x 30 1/2"
National Museum of American Art,
Smithsonian.



Susan Freyer: CREATING IN BLACK AND WHITE



What do you see when you look at the drawing on the right? A girl waits in the darkness. You see very little of her face, but notice how strong her *presence* is, and how the bold wrinkles and creases in her clothes seem to say so much about her. The room is

also rich in character — with its cozy little lamp and statue and its deep, black shadows. The artist, 18-year-old Susan Freyer of Columbia, South Carolina, was a senior at Irmo High School when she created this Scholastic Art Award-winning drawing. Now a freshman at Pennsylvania State University, she's planning to major in art and minor in English. She'd like eventually to teach art at the college level. In her spare time, she enjoys drawing, reading, photography, and being with friends.



Susan also works in color, as you can see in the self-portrait above.

How long have you been doing art?

Since I was really young. I always drew for fun — mostly pictures of people. I'd draw my grandmother when we would visit her in Pennsylvania. She encouraged me to be a fashion designer because I liked to draw pictures of people in different kinds of outfits. I also drew rooms — each room in the house — with different colors and patterns.

When I got into high school, my teacher encouraged me to try out for Governor's School [a state-sponsored summer arts school in South Carolina], but I didn't make it the first time. Then when I was a junior, I finally got accepted. I'd always been very timid about my work. I was almost too concerned about making it look right. But after being at Governor's School, I got more confident. I learned different ways to express myself. And I enjoyed doing art more because I wasn't so concerned with the finished product.

When did you do this drawing?

I was in Art 4, an advanced art class, in which you can create your own assignments and work at your own pace. Actually, this was a class assignment — on creating depth. We were supposed to bring in photos that featured light and dark. I brought in one of my friend that I had taken for a photography class. It

wasn't a very good photo — it was really dark, but I thought I could do a lot with it. I liked her pose — that's just how she stands, with one bare foot in front of the other.

How did you begin?

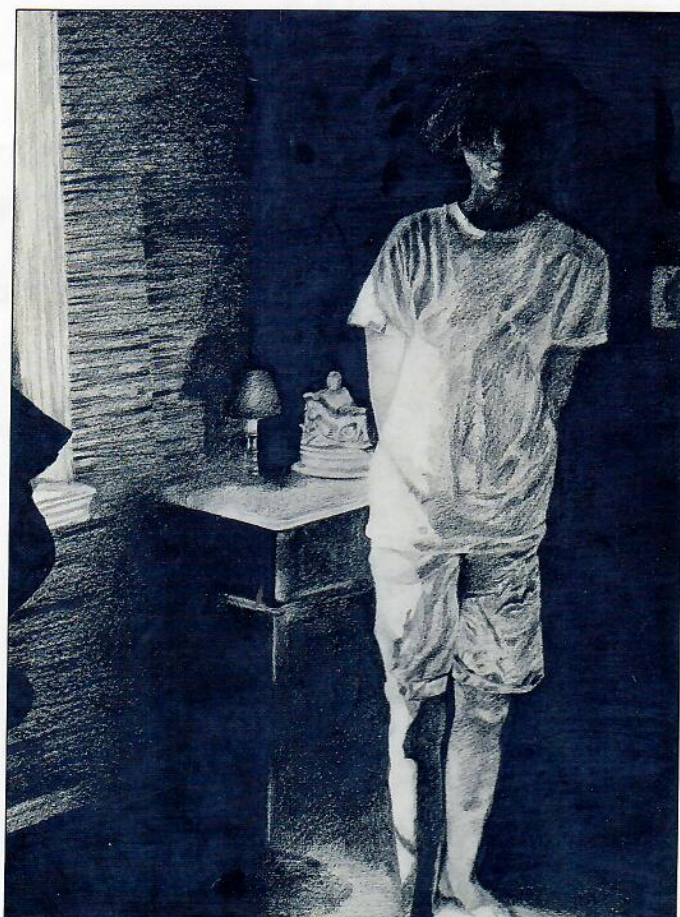
I did a contour drawing from the picture. Then I went back and began to darken everything, layer by layer. It started out very light, so I kept making parts of it darker, especially the background. Then I would have to darken the other areas because they would seem so gray and drab by comparison. The folds in the shirt were a special problem — they didn't seem to have enough power. I was working on the whole thing at the same time. I would finish and then I would go back over it again.

How long did it take?

About two weeks. In class, I was sitting beside a girl who works really fast. She inspired me to be less controlled. My hand was moving a mile a minute. I'm not a very patient person. If I'm really excited about something, I'll get going on it and I won't stop until my hand starts hurting. I have no concept of time when I'm doing a picture.

Did you ever get discouraged with it?

Probably I did. It was hard work; with that dark background, I really had to bear down. There were times when I felt I'd darkened too much and it would throw off the rest of the picture. It was tough to keep the feeling of the face with so little detail left. Her clothing was also tricky — to



have so much black and shadow on a white shirt. Shadows have such distorted shapes sometimes. It's hard to get the angle, shape, and just the right intensity. But shadows really make the picture dramatic. They add so much depth.

What is the dark shape on the left?

That's a rocking chair with a shirt over it. I left it out for the longest time. But I felt it needed more in the foreground and I wanted the shape to be subtle. I like the fact that you don't know what it is. It also balances the blacks on the other side.

There were a lot of neat things to draw in the picture — like the lamp and the little statue. A lot is hidden, though. I like that. It adds mystery and makes people use their imaginations.

Were you satisfied when you finished it?

In some ways. I like the composition better than the drawing technique. It's fun to put things in different places — making them more or less important — and to see the difference it makes. I also like the lights and darks in the picture. When I went to see this drawing in a show it really stood out, even compared to the bright, vividly colored pictures around it. Black and white can be powerful.

Is there any advice you could give about art?

Be bold. Don't be afraid to make the shadows dark. And try not to worry about making it perfect. You can always do another drawing. Confidence is a big factor; being confident enough to experiment. Being able to do what you want to do and feeling that it will be great.

When I went to see this drawing in a show, it really stood out, even compared to the bright, vividly colored pictures around it. Black and white can be powerful.

We select our Artist of the Month only from among students who have won medals in the current Scholastic Art Awards Program. To enter, ask your teacher to write to the Scholastic Art Awards, 730 Broadway, New York, NY 10003 for entry deadlines and rules book.

WORKING WITH CONTRAST

Create a haunting portrait using only black and white.



In this issue, you've seen how Caravaggio's dramatic figures seem almost to project beyond the flat canvases on which they were painted. Caravaggio wanted to involve the viewer in his work, so he made his figures **large and complex**; he **tilted and foreshortened** them. But the most effective device he used to make the viewer feel a part of his paintings was his use of **light and dark**. His highlighted figures seem to emerge from the darkness, giving them a haunting — almost sinister — quality. In this workshop, you'll work with light and dark, but in a slightly different way than you might have worked before. The drawings you create when you do this exercise may make you look at light and shadow a little differently.

Materials

- 18" x 24" 60 lb. Sulfite paper
- Drawing board
- Masking tape
- Compressed charcoal
- Vinyl eraser
- Kneaded eraser
- Paper stumps
- Paper toweling or wax paper
- Toilet paper
- Hair spray (or fixative)

Prepared by Ned J. Nesti, Jr., Morrison (IL) High School. Photos by Larry Gregory.



What kinds of effects can you produce by *drawing* with an eraser?

Starting Out

Step 1: Set up a model. Light his/her face with one or two spotlights arranged to emphasize highlights and shadows. Tape paper to drawing board and use compressed charcoal to cover entire page with a uniform dark coat of charcoal. Work charcoal horizontally, then vertically, but do not press down too much or surface will become hard, smooth, and difficult to work with. *Do not blow dust off paper.* Carefully tap it off onto newspaper placed on the floor.

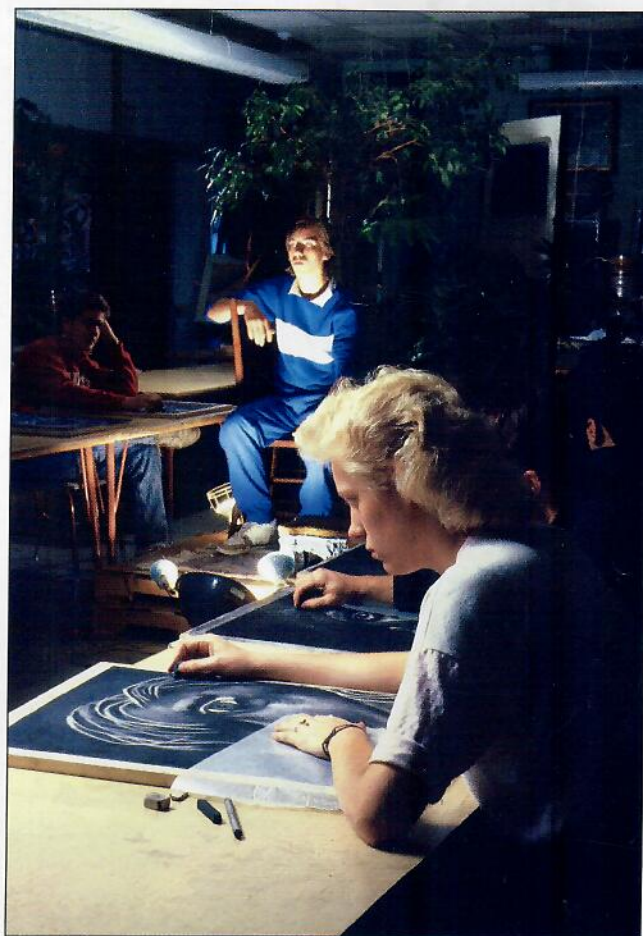
Step 2

You will depict only the face of the model. Plan your composition. Will you fill the page, cropping parts of the face; cen-

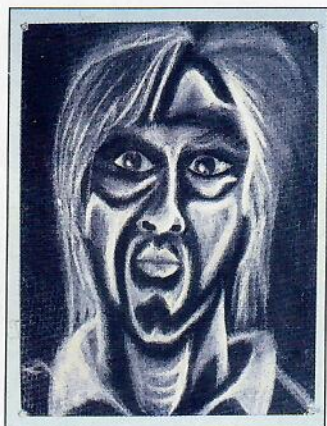
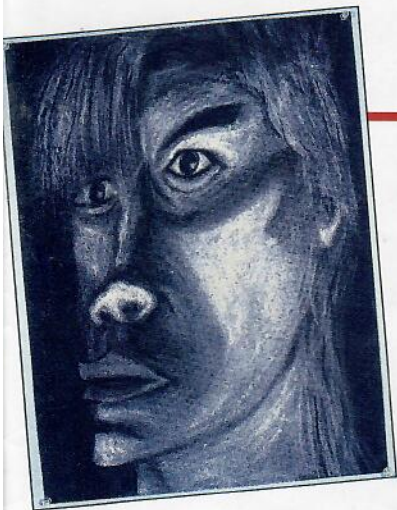
ter it in a black background; or place the face in one corner? Will the negative space be as important as the shapes of the face? Will your drawing be full-face, a three-quarter view, or a profile? What will be your angle of vision — will you look up, down, or at eye-level?

Step 3

You will be erasing the black charcoal to create the highlights, so start using the kneaded eraser on the areas you wish to be the lightest. Slowly and gradually erase to create the highlights; use wax paper to protect arms and work from smearing. Keep kneading eraser when it gets covered with charcoal. Darken with charcoal if some areas get too light. Be aware of facial contours, but concentrate on the large, basic masses.



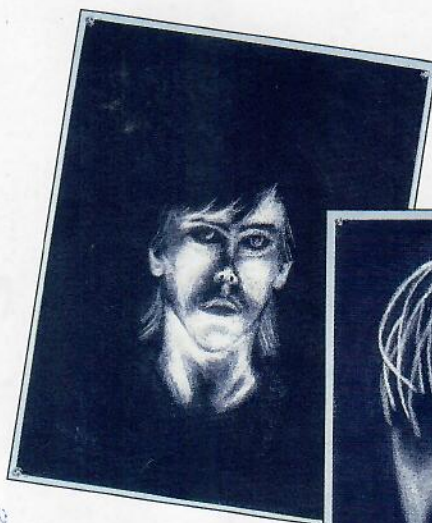
Compare the lighting and pose of this model to Caravaggio's figures in this issue.



Some Solutions

Working from dark to light — erasing the black — gives a different effect when compared with drawing with black charcoal on white paper. As in Caravaggio's work, the highlighted areas seem to emerge from the dark, shadowy background. The forms look strong and solid. When doing your drawing, will you concentrate more on lines or shapes? Will you gradually

model your forms or will each highlight and shadow have a sharp edge? Will you emphasize the shades of gray or concentrate on the more stark contrast of black and white? Will you emphasize a focal point (eye, nose, hair) by making it darker, lighter, smaller, or bigger? Or will you focus on a single center of interest by exaggerating or foreshortening it?



Which emotions do each of these drawings remind you of — fear, anger, loneliness, arrogance, apprehension, shyness? Are any joyful, confident, funny? Do they remind you of any other emotion?

Drawings by (1) Michael Rapson, (2) Don Seydel, (3) Brandon Renkes, (4) Jamie Le Nice.

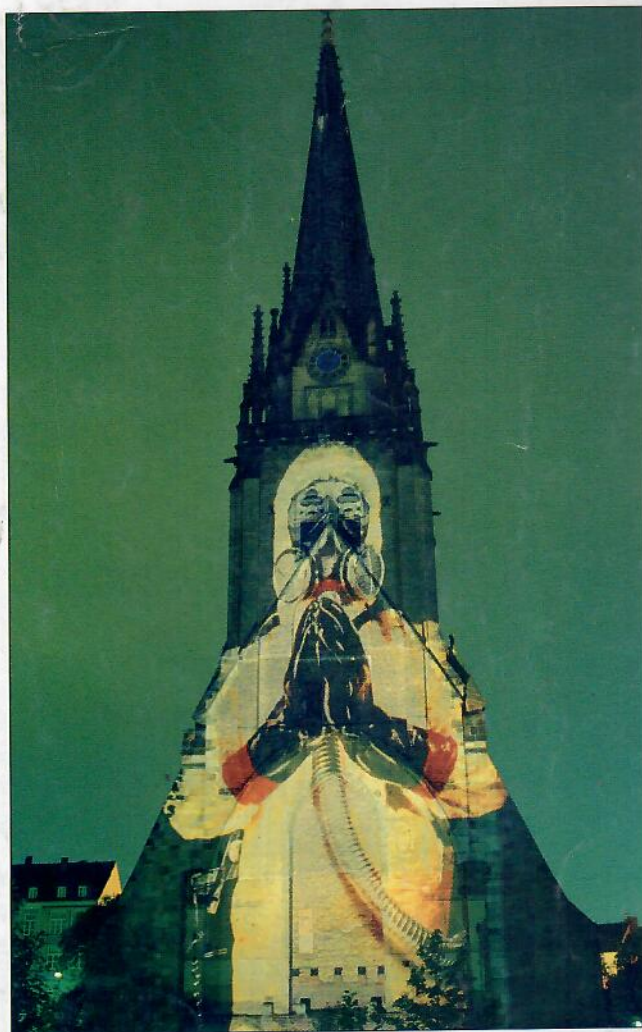
ARTS ALIVE

See how two contemporary American artists bring dramatic contrasts of light and shadow to public spaces.

Images of Light

What would you think if you looked up at a church steeple at night and saw the eerie figure shown on the right? Like Caravaggio, contemporary artist Krzysztof Wodiczko [KRIS-toff Vo-DISH-ko] makes a dramatic impact by having a **brightly lit** figure emerge from a **dark background**. Wodiczko projects slides of large images onto public buildings and monuments. He temporarily changes the appearance of a structure in order to comment on how he feels it is put to use. Why has the artist chosen a church for the projec-

tion he has used? The figure is dressed in a radiation-proof suit. Its pose echoes that seen in many religious works; the folded hands point toward the steeple and follow the architectural form of the church. The figure's eyes appear serene. Might the artist be suggesting someone who is surveying the aftermath of a nuclear disaster and saying a prayer for the casualties? Perhaps Wodiczko feels that religious institutions and beliefs can never make us feel completely free from the ever-present threat of a nuclear holocaust.



Has this figure managed to survive a nuclear disaster?
Projection on Martin Luther Church, Kassel, West Germany, 1987. Photo, Hal Bromm Gallery, New York, NY.



Annual Ring was designed to alter the viewer's perception of inside and outside. It also serves as a solar calendar.

Annual Ring, 1980. 14' high x 30' in diameter. Photo by Nancy Holt.

Shadows of Nature

Contemporary American artist Nancy Holt uses **contrasts of light and shadow** to change the way the viewer perceives space. She says, "I always want to have a kind of meditative space. Even in the middle of a city . . . I find a place that is somewhat removed." Holt's *Annual Ring* (left) is located in a small park on top of the Federal Building in Saganaw, Michigan. Viewers entering the sculpture can feel the protection of being inside while experiencing the freedom of being outdoors. The spokes of the large, steel "cage" the artist has created cast interesting shadows on the ground. Their pattern shades the inside of the

structure, except where sunlight shines through the round holes. This dramatic lighting is similar to the "spotlight" effect in many of Caravaggio's paintings. Nancy Holt has constructed *Annual Ring* so that it can serve as a solar calendar. Only on the first day of summer does the black ring set into the grass line up with the circle cast by the top opening. The east-west holes are carefully placed so that they will align with sunrise and sunset on the first days of spring and fall. A fourth hole is centered on the North Star. These features contribute to *Annual Ring's* sense of mysticism and harmonize with the forces of nature. —S.B.