Italian experts present Archimedes as a Caravaggio painting later completed by Mario Minniti

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During a scholarly symposium in Monte Carlo on May 16, a team of Italian art historians led by Dr. Roberta Lapucci, Conservation Professor and Department Head at Istituto Lorenzo de' Medici in Florence, presented research concerning the painting Archimedes (1608–1610).

Video: https://youtu.be/1DzUfnZCoIc

Dr. Roberta Lapucci's research suggests Caravaggio employed photographic-like techniques long before photography's invention, explaining the extraordinary precision, realism, and lack of preliminary sketches in his works. Dr. Lapucci, Conservation Professor and Department Head at Istituto Lorenzo de' Medici in Florence, catalogued and conserved numerous Florentine artworks.

The experts argued that the Archimedes was largely painted by Caravaggio and completed by his student and friend Mario Minniti during Caravaggio's stay in Syracuse. According to the researchers, collaborative completion of paintings was a practice frequently employed within Caravaggio's circle between 1605 and 1610.

The privately owned painting had not previously been publicly exhibited. It was shown for the first time to a private audience during the scholarly symposium in Monaco. Co-organizer Katharina Rubin emphasized its value as one of the most fascinating newly rediscovered paintings connected with this historical period.

During the authentication process, the work underwent comprehensive testing, including X-ray and hyperspectral imaging, EDS paint analysis, infrared, ultraviolet, and XRF analysis, as well as digital microscopy.

Based on these results, Dr. Lapucci prepared a technical report and an art-historical analysis confirming Caravaggio's authorship for the initial painted layers.

Dr. Alessandra Gregori provided additional confirmation and a valuation, while Professor Hassan Ugail of the University of Bradford conducted an AI deep learning algorithm analysis.

The findings and artistic context were presented by Dr. Lapucci, Dr. Fabio Scaletti, and Dr. Barbara Savina at the symposium, which was moderated by Dr. Gregori.

The 75-by-61-centimeter oil painting depicts Archimedes and features a compass and convex mirror, attributes associated with the Greek philosopher and mathematician.

Dr. Lapucci, author of „Caravaggio and Optics", noted that concave and convex mirrors were used by Archimedes to defend Syracuse against Roman attacks and were also closely connected with Caravaggio's naturalistic optical methods. She further explored the hypothesis that the artist employed an early form of the camera obscura.

Archimedes is closely associated with Syracuse, where Caravaggio, fleeing a death sentence for murder in 1608, found refuge with Minniti.

While there, Caravaggio met Vincenzo Mirabella, who was building a telescope associated with Galileo and who showed him archaeological findings near Archimedes' tomb.

Dr. Lapucci noted this must have led to the creation of a portrait of Archimedes, a figure devoted to optics and closely associated with Syracuse.

Additionally, specialized radiographic (X-ray) examinations revealed an underlying image depicting the face of Medusa within the spherical object, alongside quartz particles characteristic of Caravaggio's technique within the paint layer and hidden numerical markings beneath the surface, constituting a significant point of reference for comparative and technical research.

Her final assessment is that Caravaggio sketched and applied the first layers, and Minniti completed the work. This is evidenced by the very high quality of the final layer, which is lower than Caravaggio's but

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significantly higher than that of Sicilian artists of the time.

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