Art History

Caravaggios Galore! Scholars Trumpet 2 Finds in 2 Days

Discovered separately, the works are believed to be early paintings by the Baroque master.



Portrait of a young man was attributed to the 16th century Tuscan School when it sold at Dorotheum in 2017. Courtesy of Dorotheum.

Jo Lawson-Tancred • Nov 9, 2026 • **Share This Article**

It's the stuff of art-historical dreams. Over the weekend, two Italian researchers each announced the discovery of a long-lost **Caravaggio** painting.

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The first find came courtesy of historian **Gianni Papi**, who declared a dark portrait of a young man to be by the Baroque master. Previously attributed to the 16th-century Tuscan school, the canvas sold at **Dorotheum** auction house in Vienna in 2017 for €3,810 ($4,300).

Papi announced his hypothesis during a conference at the **Pinacoteca Civica** in Montepulciano on November 7, according to the Italian art news outlet *Finestre sull'Arte*. His findings will be made public when the conference proceedings are published.

The historian declined to comment further on his research until then.

Last year, Papi claimed to have identified the earliest known Caravaggio painting, a humble depiction of a boy peeling fruit that is thought to have been made in 1592–93, when the artist was around 20 years old.

The second discovery is of another early work, announced yesterday by **Maria Cristina Terzaghi**, a co-curator of the blockbuster Caravaggio exhibition held last year at Rome's **Palazzo Barberini**. The art historian told Italy's *La Repubblica* newspaper that Caravaggio's *Young Man with a Vase of Roses* had been traced to a private collection in France. The composition was previously known only via copies and a description by fellow painter **Giovanni Baglione**.



Caravaggio, *Boy Bitten by a Lizard* (1594–96). Fondazione Roberto Longhi, Florence, Italy. Photo: VCG Wilson/Corbis via Getty Images.

In the catalogue for the Barberini show, Terzaghi noted the composition bears similarities to another Caravaggio painting, *The Boy Bitten by a Green Lizard*, from 1593–94, of which there are two known versions that are believed to be authentic. Whereas in this painting the bitten boy recoils, a shocked expression on his face, the subject of *Young Man with a Vase of Roses* appears serene, perhaps even sorrowful, she said.

Terzaghi chanced upon the original at the back of a Paris gallery some years ago and immediately recognized it. What makes this version stand apart from the others, she told *La Repubblica*, is its "exceptional" quality, above all "in the boy's extraordinary face, his moist eyes, the iridescent whites of his shirt, and the marvelous still life." These features "leave no doubt as to the painting's authenticity," she said, now dating it to around 1596–97.

Records show that original painting had once belonged to **Cavalier d'Arpino**, a painter who worked in Caravaggio's workshop around 1596. His collection was seized in 1607, in exchange for his freedom during a criminal trial for grievous bodily harm. It was passed by **Pope Paul V** to his nephew, **Cardinal Scipione Borghese**, and remained in the Borghese collection until at least 1831. It was auctioned in Paris in 1909, but it is not known how or why it traveled from Italy to France.



Jo Lawson-Tancred
European News Editor

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