

Caravaggio: Painting a Macromarketing Framework in early 1600 Naples.

Anthony Samuel: Cardiff University Business School, Cardiff, Wales, UK.

Abstract

This abstract looks to inspire macromarketers to seek out novel conceptual frameworks from outside our traditional academic domains. It is suggested that this could help our community ignite macromarketings potential towards solving wicked problems (Kennedy 2015), improving our quality of life (Ganglmair- Wooliscroft and Wooliscroft 2019) and making the world fairer, safer, cleaner, greener and more just (Oyewole 2001). This paper subsequently presents a working example of this process by drawing upon the much-celebrated Renaissance work of art ‘The Seven Acts of Mercy’ painted by Michelangelo Merisi Caravaggio (Caravaggio) in 1607, (see Image 1: *The Seven Acts of Mercy*).



Image 1: *The Seven Acts of Mercy*

The painting is still proudly displayed in its original setting for all to experience; the high altar of the Church of the Pio Monte, Naples, Italy. Following a pilgrimage to see this work, I was taken by surprise to see a strong connection between the paintings subjects and the research conducted by many macromarketers. My macromarketing interpretation was reaffirmed upon reading the art historian Graham-Dixon's (2011. 344) passionate and definitively macro interpretation of the painting:

“The Seven Acts of Mercy is a picture that collapses time and space, drawing the whole world and all the world's histories into its dark centre. Classical antiquity, the Old Testament, the New Testament, the Middle Ages and the present day-every- every

epoch is symbolically represented in the different episodes that crowd the canvas. 'Naples is the whole world,' Capaccio wrote, and in Caravaggio's painting a corner of the city has been transformed into precisely that."

As can be seen in image 1, the painting depicts a Neapolitan street scene in the early 1600s. The painting through a biblical interpretation that follows the gospel, according to Matthew (25:36-7) shows seven acts of mercy taking place in one dark corner of the Naples, these being.

1. Feeding of the hungry
2. Providing water to thirsty
3. Clothing the naked
4. Housing the stranger/traveller
5. Visiting the sick
6. Visiting prisoners
7. Burial of the dead

This paper posits that each of the seven act of mercy and indeed, the macro place-based lens of Naples has contemporary value and an ability to influence and frame exciting new areas of macromarketing research. Indeed, each of the Seven Acts of Mercy has concrete and abstract relevance to many of the wicked problems and the fall out of aggressive neo-liberal economics that macromarketers seek to unpack and resolve. While Caravaggio's Naples can also become a macromarketing canvas for us to support the need for empirical work in the meso level systems (Peterson 2016) and economics of the places we occupy, construct and conform too (Samuel and Peattie 2015).

While Caravaggio's painting the 'Seven acts of Mercy' can act as both an inspiration and framework for future macromarketing studies. It is hoped this short paper will in some small way allow us to consider the potential for macromarketing inspiration and frameworks to emerge from beyond our typical academic community and perhaps embrace such areas as contemporary music, modern art, movies, novels, architecture etc, to help advance the field.

References

- Ganglmair-Wooliscroft, Alexandra., and Wooliscroft, Ben (2019), "Well-Being and Everyday Ethical Consumption," *Journal of Happiness Studies*, 20(1), 141-163.
- Graham-Dixon, Andrew (2011), "*Caravaggio A Life Sacred and Profane*", London, Penguin.
- Kennedy, Ann-Marie (2015), "Macro-social Marketing," *Journal of Macromarketing*, 36(3), 354-365.
- Oyewole, Philemon (2001), "Social Costs of Environmental Justice Associated with the Practice of Green Marketing," *Journal of Business Ethics*, 29, 239-251.
- Peterson, Mark (2016), "Think Macro," *Journal of Macromarketing*, 36(2), 124-125.

Samuel, Anthony and Ken Peattie (2016), "Grounded theory as a macromarketing methodology: critical insights from researching the marketing dynamics of Fairtrade Towns," *Journal of Macromarketing*, 36(1), 11-26.