

# A Drawing of Fame by the Cavaliere d'Arpino

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IN THE AUTUMN OF 1986, the collection of the Department of Drawings in the Metropolitan Museum was significantly enriched with the gift of a drawing by Giuseppe Cesari, known as the Cavaliere d'Arpino (1568–1640). An altogether typical example of the artist's graphic work, this fine sheet represents an allegorical figure of Fame (Figure 1).<sup>1</sup> It is executed in graphite and red chalk (a color combination often used by the artist), and is the first drawing by Cesari in this mixed medium to enter the Museum's collections.

Cesari d'Arpino was a highly visible presence in the Roman art world at the end of the sixteenth and the beginning of the seventeenth century. Stylistically a transitional figure, he can be seen as bridging the gap between the self-conscious Roman Mannerism of the previous generation and the "modern" art brought to Rome by the Carracci and Caravaggio (the latter, incidentally, spent some time in Cesari's workshop in 1593).

Cesari came to Rome as something of a prodigy in 1582 at the age of fourteen, and was immediately employed as one of the team of artists decorating the Logge in the Vatican Palace. Participation in subsequent projects at the palace (the Sala Vecchia degli Svizzeri and the Sala dei Palafrenieri) led to work in Roman churches and the Certosa di S. Martino in Naples. In 1587 he was commissioned to fresco the Olgiati Chapel in S. Prassede, Rome, although he did not execute the decorations until 1593–95. The Museum owns a pen and wash drawing of the Resurrection by Cesari that served as a preparatory study for a section of the fresco decoration in S. Prassede.<sup>2</sup>

Cesari received the title of Cavaliere di Cristo from Clement VIII in recognition of his work in S. Giovanni in Laterano, where he supervised the decora-

tion of the transept (1599–1601). Other major achievements included frescoes in the Palazzo dei Conservatori, designs for mosaics in the cupola of St. Peter's, and the direction of the decoration of the Cappella Paolina in S. Maria Maggiore (1610–12).

Between 1613 and 1615, when at the height of his power and influence, Cesari supervised the fresco decoration of the Palazzina Montalto, one of the twin casinos that stand in the terraced gardens of the Villa Lante at Bagnaia, north of Rome. The *palazzina*, designed by the architect Carlo Maderno, was constructed and decorated at a time when the villa was the property of Cardinal Alessandro Montalto, nephew of Pope Sixtus V.

In the center of the ceiling of a small room in the casino, Cesari painted in fresco an airborne figure of Fame (Figure 2), leaving to his assistants the execution of the six allegorical female figures that appear seated in irregular fields surrounding the central rectangle.<sup>3</sup> Cesari's painting and the Metropolitan Museum's new drawing are clearly related. The pose in each case is essentially the same, although in the fresco Fame does not sound her trumpet as she does in the drawing. Oddly enough, the artist has cropped

1. Gift of Mrs. Alfred H. Barr, Jr., 1986.318. The drawing was reproduced as no. 32 in *Centennial Loan Exhibition: Drawings and Watercolors from Alumnae and Their Families*, exh. cat. (Poughkeepsie, N.Y.: Vassar College, 1961), but its connection with Cesari's Villa Lante fresco was not mentioned.

2. Acc. no. 87.12.34; see Jacob Bean with the assistance of Lawrence Turčić, *15th and 16th Century Italian Drawings in The Metropolitan Museum of Art* (New York, 1982) no. 46, ill.

3. The whole ceiling, with subsidiary panels, is reproduced by Luigi Salerno, "Cavaliere d'Arpino, Tassi, Gentileschi and Their Assistants: A Study of Some Frescoes in the Villa Lante, Bagnaia," *Connoisseur* 146 (1960) p. 160, fig. 8.



off the flared ends of the trumpets in the painted version. Modifications have also been made in the position of the wings, the length of the hair, and the disposition of the drapery, which in the painting has been rearranged in such a way as to bare the figure's breasts. Despite the variations, it does not seem unreasonable to consider the drawing a preparatory study by Cesari for his ceiling fresco at the Villa Lante.

An impressive provenance enhances the interest of the drawing. It was once in the collection of the renowned eighteenth-century French connoisseur Pierre-Jean Mariette (1694–1774), whose collector's mark is visible at the lower left. The sheet is affixed to a beautifully preserved blue Mariette mount, complete with a cartouche that bears the identifying inscription: *EQUES JOSEPH / CESARI / ARPINATEN.* (Figure

3). In the posthumous sale of Mariette's collection (1775–76) the drawing was part of lot 126 and was described in the sale catalogue as "L'Etude d'une figure de Renommée, aux crayons, rouge et noir." Subsequently it belonged to the noted Viennese collector Count Moriz von Fries (1777–1826); his collector's mark—a blind stamp in the form of an encircled cross—appears next to Mariette's at the lower left.

The Cavaliere d'Arpino's drawing of Fame comes to the Museum from a source no less distinguished than these. It was presented by Mrs. Alfred H. Barr, Jr., whose late husband was one of the founders of the Museum of Modern Art in New York and for many years its director. Mrs. Barr recalls that they purchased the drawing at R. H. Macy and Company, New York, around 1936.

#### FACING PAGE:

1. Giuseppe Cesari (Cavaliere d'Arpino, 1568–1640), *Fame*, ca. 1613–15, inscribed in pen and brown ink at lower right: *giuseppe d'arpino*. Graphite and red chalk heightened with a little white (somewhat oxidized), lined;  $9\frac{1}{16} \times 6\frac{1}{4}$  in. (25.0 × 15.9 cm.). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Gift of Mrs. Alfred H. Barr, Jr., 1986.318

#### BELOW:

2. Cesari, *Fame*, ca. 1613–15. Fresco. Bagnaia, Villa Lante, Palazzina Montalto (photo: after *Lazio*, Milan, n.d., fig. 406)
3. Cesari's drawing of Fame on its Mariette mount

