

GIUSEPPE CESARI, CALLED IL CAVALIERE D'ARPINO

Arpino, 1568 – Rome, 1640

*Study of standing man*

c. 1590

Red chalk on paper.

Provenance: Madrid, private collection.



Cesari's father, Muzio Cesari, had been a native of Arpino, but Giuseppe himself was born in Rome. There, he was apprenticed to Niccolò Pomarancio. Cesari's first major work, done in his twenties, was the painting of the right counterfacade of San Lorenzo in Damaso, completed from 1588 to 1589. On 28 June 1589, he received the commission for the murals of the choir vault in the Certosa di San Martino in Naples. From 1591, he was again in Rome, where he painted the vault in the Contarelli Chapel within the church of San Luigi dei Francesi. He also completed murals in the Cappella Olgiate in Santa Prassede, and the vault of the Sacristy in the Certosa di San Martino.

He was a man of touchy and irascible character, and rose from penury to the height of opulence. His brother Bernardino Cesaria assisted in many of his works. Cesari became a member of the Accademia di San Luca in 1585. In 1607, he was briefly jailed by the new papal administration. He died in 1640, at the age of seventy-two, or perhaps of eighty, in Rome.

His only direct followers were his sons Muzio (1619–1676) and Bernardino (d. 1703). Pier Francesco Mola (1612–1666) apprenticed in his studio. His most notable, and perhaps surprising, pupil was Caravaggio. Towards 1593-94, Caravaggio was employed at Cesari's studio as a painter of flowers and fruit.

As Professor Hen Röttgen says after studying our drawing:

"The drawing of a nude man done in red chalk on paper, is certainly a study made by Giuseppe Cesari, known as Cavalier d'Arpino, a most celebrated painter around the year 1600, in Rome, and who was ennobled with the Knights of the Order of Jesus Christ by Pope Clement VIII Aldobrandini.

The work reflects the security of the study done not from a true model, but by the "mind", characteristic of academic

education at the end of the sixteenth century, based on the safety of drawing training, represented by the term "disegno", the essential term in education of designers at the Academy of Design, that is, of the Accademia di San Luca in Rome, founded by Federico Zuccaro.

Such a "mordacious" profile corresponds to other examples of Cesari drawings of the years 1585/90/92, but the study could also be a preparation for a drawing like the *Christ bearing the cross*, already in Chatsworth, currently in Anne Searle Bent Collection in Chicago, 1593/95 ca. (Röttgen, Cavalier Giuseppe Cesari d'Arpino, *Die Zeichnungen - The Drawings*, II, No. 214, Stuttgart 2013).

The drawing is a beautiful example of the sure drawing not only of the artists of the late sixteenth century but of the drawing arts especially of the Cavalier d'Arpino."

Our drawing is also related to the *Two men walking and talking* (Fig. 1) of the École nationale supérieure des Beaux-Arts in Paris of the same date and the same way of treating the face and the feet.



Fig. 1. Cavalier d'Arpino, *Two men walking and talking*. Paris, École nationale supérieure des Beaux-Arts.