

Lot 1046



Auction Fine Art

Date 19.11.2020, ca. 14:28

Preview 13.11.2020 - 10:00:00 bis
16.11.2020 - 18:00:00

CESARI, GIUSEPPE
(‘il Cavaliere d’Arpino’)
1568 Arpino - 1640 Rome

and workshop

Title: Perseus Frees Andromeda.

Date: 1635-1640.

Technique: Oil on wood.

Measurement: 52 x 37,5cm.

Frame/Pedestal: Framed.

Provenance:

Private ownership, Italy.

From the Renaissance to the modern age, artists have repeatedly chosen the pictorial motif of the liberation of Andromeda by Perseus for their works. On the one hand, they had to transpose the ancient text from Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, which in a Christian reading could also be seen as an example of the power of love (*Omnia vincit amor*). On the other hand, the story of the young naked princess presented as a victim of the sea monster Ketos offered artists, clients, and collectors a pretext to depict and enjoy the visual charms of a naked, young, beautiful woman.

In the series of the many realizations of this motif, the representation by Giuseppe Cesari, which we can offer here, takes a special status.

The Roman painter, who was a "megastar" of his time and is considered in art history as a pioneer and mediator between Mannerism and Baroque in Rome, was a patron and teacher of Guido Reni and Caravaggio. As the son of the painter Muzio di Polidoro from Arpino, he was perhaps promoted by him at an early age. Already at the age of 15 he was considered a trained painter, who was employed for a regular salary and was probably already a member of the painters' guild. Giuseppe Cesari's fame increased with each commission, mainly for frescoes in Roman churches and the palazzi of the most influential families. From a very young age he worked on the decoration of the loggias of the Vatican Palace with and under the pontificate of Pope Clement VIII. (1592 - 1605) he was considered the most important official painter of Rome, which was also reflected in his election as chairman of the Luke's Guild in 1599. In 1600, the Pope awarded Cesari the Order of the Knights of Christ after he completed the magnificent fresco of the Assumption of Christ in the Latrans Basilica. Now the Nobilitierte called himself also "Cavalier d'Arpino". In addition to

the great frescoes in the Conservatorial Palace on the Capitoline, on which Giuseppe Cesari worked for decades, the decoration of the dome of St. Peter's with mosaics is probably the crowning glory of his fame.

Besides these projects, in which the artist had to design gigantic surfaces, small-format paintings were perhaps a welcome change. The demand was enormous, since the 1990s Emperor Rudolf in Prague, the Spanish and French royal house, as well as European princes and art collectors, were all desirous of works by the "Cavalier". And Giuseppe Cesari, now the owner of a large, flourishing workshop, delivered. His refined religious but also mythological-erotic scenes, partly painted on unusual painting grounds such as slate, were particularly in demand. The fact that several versions of some of these paintings have been preserved in leading collections to this day shows how great the desire for the painter and especially for these motifs was.

For example, several versions of the present "Perseus and Andromeda" representation still exist today, the earliest of which is dated 1592/93 with a slightly different composition (today the Museum of Art of the Rhode Island School of Design, Providence). The oldest version (Gemäldegalerie Berlin), which is almost identical to our work, is probably only a few years younger, and thus dates from the time when the "Cavalier d'Arpino" had reached the zenith of his fame. The present painting, in which the landscape in the background was probably painted by the hand of a Nordic artist/worker, is dated in research to the last decade of Giuseppe Cesari's life. The fact that the subject and this particular execution were so sought after that they attracted interest over such a long period of time shows what a representative position this composition of Perseus and Andromeda occupied in Giuseppe Cesari's work. The theme, which was taken up again and again over a period of about 50 years, today provides insight into the changes in the artist's painting style up to his late phase.

We are grateful to Herwarth Röttgen, Stuttgart, and Riccardo Lattuada, Naples, who confirmed the attribution of the present painting based on high-resolution digital photography and for their kind support in cataloguing it.

Estimate: 15.000 € - 18.000 €
