

A NEWLY DISCOVERED DRAWING BY TADDEO ZUCCARO

This magnificent study of God is almost certainly a fragment of a drawing by Taddeo Zuccaro for the famous fresco of *God Creating Eve* in the Villa Farnese at Caprarola, argues **Gregory Muenzen**.

GOD CREATES EVE

A *Study of God* in a private collection in the USA was until recently thought to be by Innocenzo da Imola (1485-1548). Although evocative of the high renaissance of Michelangelo and Raphael, this drawing (Fig. 1) is in fact a mature work of another great Roman artist, Taddeo Zuccaro (1529-66). When Zuccaro died at the age of 37 he was engaged in the commission to decorate the Farnese family's villa at Caprarola, outside Rome. The *Study of God* is as a study for this large commission, one of the masterpieces of sixteenth-century decorative painting.

Like Francesco Salviati, Zuccaro embodied an overwrought late mannerism early in his development, but towards the end of his short career he demonstrates a classicism that coincides with the counter-reformation. This new austerity is evident in his drawings. The heroic scale of this drawing, the burnished folds of the drapery and atmospheric plasticity of the figure are typical of Zuccaro, one of the most graphically inventive artists of his day. It is not only a significant addition to his corpus of eclectic drawings, it is also among the last and finest.

In 1560 Zuccaro was granted the most important commission of his career, the decoration of the enormous villa that Alessandro Farnese was building in Caprarola. Vasari states that the contract stipulated that Zuccaro was not responsible for painting all of the rooms himself, yet he



1 *The Creation of Eve* by Federico Zuccaro (c. 1540-1609), c. 1566. Fresco, Chapel, Villa Farnese, Caprarola. Photo: giovannirinaldi.it

2 *Study of God* by Taddeo Zuccaro (1529-66), c. 1555-56. Brush and white gouache over pen and brown ink on paper, 23.9 x 10.2 cm. Private collection, New York

was required to complete all the designs and preparatory drawings for both frescoes and stucco-work. Zuccaro's talent was by then well recognised in Rome and he was paid quite generously by Cardinal Farnese – according to Vasari, more than any other artist on the Farnese payroll.¹ He had completed the decoration of the majority of the ground-floor rooms before he died in 1566.²

The villa, designed by Jacopo Barozzi da Vignola (1507-73), contains a circular chapel built in 1550. Its decoration was well under way at the time of Zuccaro's death, and he had completed its altarpiece, a *Pietà*.³ This was the first room to be completed by his younger brother, Federico Zuccaro (1540-1609), who had been in Venice for three years when he returned to pick up the Caprarola commission, with his brother's assistants and drawings to guide him. The chapel became something of an elegy to Taddeo, with figures reproduced from many of his paintings and drawings.⁴

The programme for the chapel features depictions of Old and New Testament subjects, including the Creation of Eve (Fig. 2). The Louvre possesses an autograph drawing by Federico for this fresco, but it lacks any of the *pentimenti* associated with an initial study (Fig. 3). The present *Study of God* differs from both the fresco and the Louvre drawing in the subtle proportions of the head, limbs and drapery. Federico was an inveterate copyist, and he continued reproducing his brother's as well as other artist's drawings and paintings throughout his career. He often used his brother's drawings for his own compositions, such as Taddeo's drawing of St Paul (Fig. 7), which Federico employed as the figure of

3 *Study for The Creation of Eve* by Federico Zuccaro (c. 1540-1609). Pen and brown ink and wash on paper, diam 25.6 cm. Musée du Louvre, Paris

4 *The Creation of Eve* by Cornelis Cort (1533-78), 1572. Engraving, 32.5 x 24 cm. Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco

1 Clare Robertson, 'Il Gran Cardinale' Alessandro Farnese, Patron of the Arts, New Haven, 1992, p. 90, note 116.

2 G. Vasari, *Le Vite de' più Eccellenti Pittori, Scultori ed Architettori...*, G. Milanesi (ed.), 8 vols., Florence, 1878-85 (hereafter Vasari-Milanesi), vol. VII, p. 83. John Gere, *Taddeo Zuccaro: His Development Studied in His Drawings*, London, 1969 pp. 107-108.

3 Philip Gere and John Pouncey, *Italian Drawing in the Department of Prints and Drawings in the British Museum: Artists working in Rome, 1550-1640*, London, 1983, under no. 295. Interestingly Venturi had attributed the whole chapel to Taddeo (Adolfo Venturi, *Storia dell'Arte Italiana*, Milan, 1932, pp. 856, 872).

Christ in his *Raising of Lazarus* in the Grimani Chapel in San Francesco della Vigna, Venice. The large Caprarola commission would have been no exception.

A link between the brothers is provided by an engraving by Cornelis Cort of *The Creation of Eve* composition (Fig. 4), dated 1572. Although Federico's name appears on the plate, there are at least two other precedents for him using his brother's drawings for engravings that were published under Federico's name.⁵ Importantly, the Cort engraving is different from Federico's compositions in both the fresco and the Louvre study. Adam's head looks down in the engraving but upwards in the fresco and Louvre study; his arm rests against his head in the engraving but is draped over a rock in Federico's versions. Because of these and other differences, John Gere deduced that the Cort engraving was not based on the fresco or Federico's study but was probably derived from an earlier source.⁶ Cristina Acidini noted that Federico's drawing was most likely based on an earlier rectangular drawing not yet found.⁷ The present *Study of God* can plausibly be seen as a fragment of this study. The hands of Eve and the feet of Adam are visible on the left of the drawing, indicating that it was part of a larger sheet. The figure in the drawing is the same size as the figure in the engraving and is incised, so was probably traced by Cort, as was common practice.

Cort, who had just come to Rome from Titian's studio in Venice, had translated other drawings by Zuccaro into popular engravings in 1567-68.⁸ The print's bushy landscape and sky have a moody Venetian flavour, comparable with previous compositions by Zuccaro, such as his *Rest on the*





Left
5 *The Flight into Egypt*
 by Taddeo Zuccaro
 (1529-66), 1558-59.
 Pen and brown wash,
 heightened with white,
 over black chalk on paper,
 57.3 x 35.1 cm. Musée du
 Louvre, Paris

Above
6 *St Paul* by Taddeo
 Zuccaro (1529-66),
 c. 1558. Brush drawing in
 brown wash on paper,
 squared in black chalk,
 36.2 x 21.8 cm.
 Musée du Louvre, Paris

Right
7 *St Paul* by Taddeo
 Zuccaro (1529-66),
 1558-66. Brush and
 red ink, red wash
 heightened with white
 on paper, 38.8 x 24 cm.
 Whereabouts unknown.
 Photo: Christie's



Flight into Egypt in S Maria del Orto, Rome, and corresponding preparatory drawings (Fig. 5).⁹ This may reflect the influence of his colleague Girolamo Muziano (1532-92), who, having moved from Venice to Rome in 1549, introduced bold ambient landscapes into Roman art.

For muscular grandeur of subjects, Cort found in Zuccaro a worthy successor to Titian. He replicates the treatment of the massive folds of the present *Study of God* more scrupulously than does Federico in either the fresco at Caprarola or his Louvre study. This explains why the Louvre drawing is rather schematic, as it is a copy after this more elaborate study by his brother. As the *Study of God* is closer to the Cort engraving than to the Federico drawing, it is best to compare it directly to the print.

In the *Study of God* drawing the drapery falls more naturally and is more fluid than in the Cort engraving. There can be no doubt these details were studied from a life model with arranged cloth and the drawing's confident technique indicates that it is not a copy. Although Cort closely replicates the drawing, there are significant differences. The muscular structure of Zuccaro's figure and its taut contours, which are lost in the engraving, indicate a master hand. One example of the drawing's originality is the sweep of the fabric that leads over the right shoulder of God and swells with folds that bunch over the

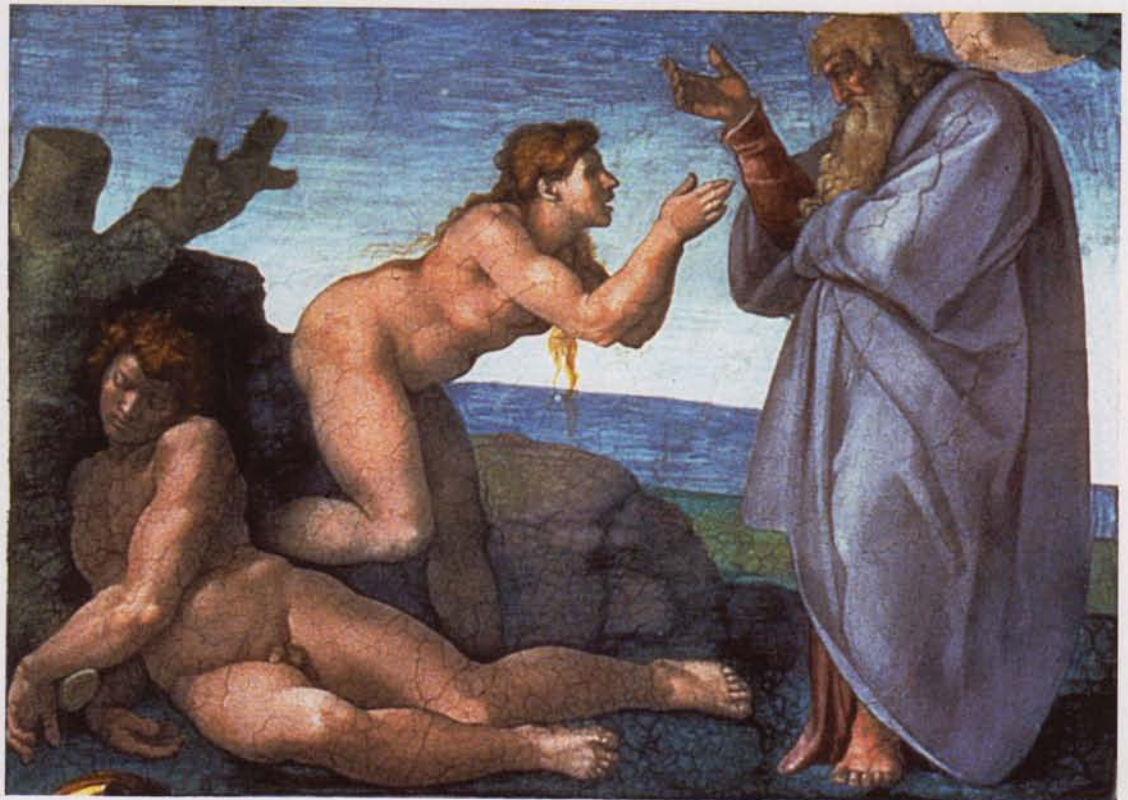
clasping left hand in a far more sculptural manner than either the engraving or fresco.

This drawing is wholly characteristic of Zuccaro's graphic works of the 1560s, especially his studies for prophets for the Frangipani Chapel, S Maria al Corso, Rome, which he was working on simultaneously with the Caprarola commission (Figs. 6 and 7).¹⁰ In these figures there is the same 'ribboning' of the fabric and the same use of white heightening. In addition, this drawing is made from the same model that Zuccaro used for the *Study of God*. This figure, who can be seen in other drawings of this period, was an older model used by Zuccaro on several occasions when he wished to give realism to his compositions.¹¹

A further technique of developing realism was the practice, evident in the drawing, of dipping cloth into hot clay or wax and allowing it to harden on an armature. These carefully arranged cascading folds were then studied with the crisp point of the brush, a technique unique to Zuccaro. The white highlights are made with hatching and cross-hatching with the brush point that build up the sculptural form. These graphic concerns, of burnished folds and atmospheric plasticity, are less evident in drawings by Federico. Taddeo's technique of using toned blue, yellow or brown prepared papers with heightening is a technique, like his use

⁴ Federico depicts his brother in one of the painted niches within the chapel, the others containing saints. Recently on the market was the drawing by the stucco artist and grotesque specialist Antinoor who had worked with Taddeo. In this document he offers his condolences and services with a decorative scheme to Federico for the chapel after his brother's death.

8 *The Creation of Eve* by Michelangelo Buonarroti (1475-1564), c. 1512. Fresco, the Sistine Chapel, Rome. Photo: Bridgeman Art Library



5 One is *The Coronation of the Virgin with Saints Sixtus and Lawrence*, Taddeo's drawings for which are in the Uffizi, Florence, and the Ashmolean, Oxford. Another is the *Moses and Aaron before the Pharaoh*, the Cort engraving of 1567. James Mundy, *Renaissance into Baroque: Italian Master Drawings by the Zuccari 1550-1600*, Milwaukee, 1989, p. 168 notes that no preparatory drawings had survived by Taddeo for this fresco of Moses completed by Federico when in fact a splendid drawing by Taddeo of a *Group of Soldiers* utilized by Federico for the fresco is in the British Museum and was noted in Gere 1969 op. cit., p. 161.

6 John Gere, *Drawings by the Zuccari in the Louvre*, Paris, 1966, fig. 65 (no page numbers).

7 Cristina Acidini Luchinat, *Taddeo e Federico Zuccari Fratelli. Fratelli pittori del Cinquecento*, Milan, 1999, vol. II, p. 40.

8 A drawing of the *Adoration of the Shepherds* (Uffizi, no. 11208f) became a celebrated Cort engraving dated 1567: Gere 1969, op. cit., p. 151. An engraving dated 1568 is based on a drawing in Chatsworth (no. 191) of *The Birth of the Virgin*: Gere 1969, op. cit., p. 136.

9 *Ibid.*, figs. 112 and 113.

10 *Ibid.*, figs. 88, 89, 91, 100, 101, 106a, 106b.

11 Other drawings of him are in Baltimore, the Albertina, Berlin and Stockholm: see Gere 1969, op. cit., figs. 100, 101, 106a and 106b.

12 Musée des Beaux Arts et d'Archéologie de Besançon, no. N.1423.

13 Michelangelo's clear inspiration for his own *Creation of Eve* was the Jacopo della Quercia relief sculpture of the birth of Eve in the Basilica of S. Petronio Bologna. His figure of God is indebted to the grand robed figures of Massaccio that he copied in his youth.

14 Gere 1969, op. cit., p. 28.

of landscape, that most likely had Venetian origins.

This *Study of God* was most probably the primary drawing that Cort and in turn Federico utilised, the latter introducing variations of his own into the fresco and related drawing. No doubt this was a celebrated drawing, as its publication in Cort's engraving six years posthumously testifies. An engraving by Cort after Taddeo of *The Presentation at the Temple*, which has the same compositional arrangement as *The Creation of Eve*, is also based on a drawing by Zuccaro, and, like *The Creation of Eve*, was not engraved until after his death.¹²

The inspiration for the design was Michelangelo's Sistine Chapel fresco of the same subject (Fig. 8).¹³ Zuccaro's work was dominated by a continuous dialogue with Michelangelo. One of the tenderly observed drawings of Taddeo's early life by Federico Zuccaro, now in the J. Paul Getty Museum, shows a very youthful Taddeo in the Sistine Chapel, copying the frescos. Taddeo built upon Michelangelo's version of God, working from both a studio model and arranged cloth and ultimately placing this figure into a more lush vision of the Garden of Eden. His achievement was to instill the monumentality of Michelangelo with a unique sense of observed realism that anticipates the Carracci and Caravaggio.

In the drawing, the carefully rendered folds of God in their rhythmic flow are almost abstract in their interplay, and yet the artist does not lose sight of the ultimate poetic aim of the drawing, which is to have all of this defer to the subtlety of God's delicate

fingers, gesturing to summon forth life, the creating of Eve. This internalising of sentiment and quiet classicising demonstrates the shift from Zuccaro's high mannerism to the counter-reformation tendencies that looked back to the art of the early renaissance. Although the 'end' of mannerism tends to be perceived as a trend exerted by outside forces, such as the Church, it seems that Zuccaro's initiation of it reflects an internal evolution in his style. One needs only compare his early energetic drawings to those reproduced here to see this bold shift in sentiment. They recall Raphael, for example, more than such contemporaries as Salviati and Vasari.

In its balance of power and *delicatezza*, aspects of Raphael's genius are evident in this *Study of God*. Zuccaro was born in Urbino, like Raphael, and when he arrived in Rome at the age of 14, he lived with a mediocre artist named Giovanni Piero, who had a collection of Raphael drawings.¹⁴ During his lifetime Taddeo was considered by many to be Raphael incarnate and after dying at the same age as Raphael at 37, just two years after Michelangelo's passing he was given a grand funeral and buried close to Raphael in the Pantheon as a tribute. He had an immense influence upon artists of the next generation in Rome, thanks to the inventiveness of his drawings and the dissemination of his compositions by Cort, his brother Federico and others.

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