

# COLNAGHI

Est. 1760



Massimo Stanzione

(Orta di Atella 1585 – 1656 Naples (?))

*Allegory of Geography*

oil on canvas

122 x 97 cm.;

48 x 38 1/4 in.

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## Provenance

Private collection, Palermo, since the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century;  
Art market, Palermo, 2022, where acquired by the present owners.

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LONDON

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## Technique and condition

The painting has been executed on a coarse canvas prepared with a thick plaster layer, as is typical of Neapolitan works executed in the first half of the 17<sup>th</sup> century; in particular, those datable within the third and fourth decade (fig. 1). Recent restoration has made possible a full reading of the condition, which appears to be good.

The technique of the *Geometry* is characteristic not only of Massimo Stanzione's early works – see, for example, the *Adoration of the Shepherds* in the Chapter of the Monks in the Chartreuse of San Martino, Naples, datable around 1626 – but also in the early production of such artists as Battistello Caracciolo, Andrea Vaccaro, Bartolomeo Bassante, Francesco Guarino, Bernardo Cavallino, etc. The materials used during this period by Neapolitan artists were quite cheap when compared with those in use in Venice, Rome or Florence. The need for faster execution times, dictated by the innovations imported into Naples by Caravaggio, stimulated new approaches for the achievement of strong contrasts of light and shadow that were typical of Caravaggism.

## Iconography

The literary source for the identification of the *Geometry* is Cesare Ripa's *Iconologia*:  
'GEOMETRIA: Donna, che tenga in vna mano vn perpendicolo, e con l'altra vn compasso: nel perpendicolo si rappresenta il moto, il tempo, e la grauezza de' corpi: nel compasso la linea, la superficie, & la profondit , nelle quali consiste il general soggetto della Geometria'.<sup>1</sup>

## Attribution

The painting is an autograph version of a *Geometry* en pendant with an *Allegory of Fame* (or *Glory*) that appeared recently on the art market (figs. 2-3).<sup>2</sup> In 1992 Sebastian Sch tze reproduced the *Fame* in black and white, and rightly related it to another version in the Galleria d'Arte Moderna in Milan, coming from the Grassi Donation (fig. 4).<sup>3</sup>

# COLNAGHI

Est. 1760

Schütze catalogued the ex-Grassi version of the *Fame* as autograph and considered the one on the market '*eseguita nella bottega dello Stanzione*' (executed in the Stanzione workshop). He also mentioned the *Geometry*, stating that '*Benché la esecuzione sia di qualità decisamente inferiore anche questo dipinto potrebbe riprodurre una composizione dello Stanzione*' (Although the execution is of decidedly lower quality, this painting could also reproduce a composition by Stanzione).

## Style and dating remarks

Schütze saw the *Fame* and the *Geometry* with Leone Antiquariato prior to 1992, long before the cleaning was done in 2019, and his cautiousness in attributing the works to Stanzione's workshop is therefore understandable. Nevertheless, the way the two paintings look now is considerably different. The *Fame* and the *Geometry* show the characters of the early autograph works of Stanzione. When comparing the brushwork and the palette of the two versions of the *Fame*, we see subtle, if significant, variants in the facial type of the woman (fig. 5: Leone Antiquariato; fig. 6: ex-Grassi version) and in the more complex structure of a number of the clothes' details (see, for example, the right-hand sleeve, (fig. 7: our version; fig. 8: ex-Grassi version). The *Fame* discussed here has the chance of being the prime version of a successful composition.

The *Fame* and the *Geometry* with Leone Antiquariato display the same technique and palette as that of *The Saints Cosmas and Damian*, signed, in a private collection, datable circa 1620-25 (fig. 9).<sup>4</sup>

Compositional affinities are also evident between the *Fame* and the later *Saint Catherine of Alexandria* (Rome, Fabrizio Lemme Collection) (fig. 10). Stanzione's attachment to the Classicist tendency, represented by Annibale Carracci and exponents of his school such as Domenichino and most of all Guido Reni, is also visible. Another comparison is possible between the *Fame* and the *Sybil* in the Doria Pamphilj Gallery, Rome (fig. 11).<sup>5</sup>



# COLNAGHI

Est. 1760

In fact, both the *Fame* and the *Geometry* share the measurements and the palette of the *Allegory of Eloquence* (fig. 12) and the *Allegory of Poetry* (fig. 13), formerly with the Galleria Napoli Nobilissima (Naples).<sup>6</sup>

In the catalogue entry of the *Eloquence* and the *Poetry*, formerly with Napoli Nobilissima, the relation with the version of the *Eloquence (ex-Medicine)* published by Ferdinando Bologna is noticed, the link with the version of the *Fame* in the Galleria d'Arte Moderna in Milan is understood, and it is supposed that these works may have formed part of a series of allegories by Stanzione. The existence of the *Geometry* strengthens this hypothesis. The *Allegory of Geometry* here discussed is of particular importance in the present reconstruction. When compared with the version with Leone Antiquariato, it demonstrates the use of higher quality pigments and a more subtle range of transitions. See, for example, the more extensive use of lapis lazuli in the globe (fig. 14: Leone Antiquariato; fig. 15: Colnaghi), and the transitions in the figure's clothes (fig. 16: Leone Antiquariato; fig. 17: Colnaghi).

The comparison between the two versions makes it possible to hypothesize that the Colnaghi painting could be the prime version, and that, having said that, the Leone version is also autograph; they both spring from the same cartoon, like the two versions of the *Fame* and the two versions of the *Eloquence (ex-Medicine)*. This practice is not unusual in Seicento painting.

During the third decade of the Seicento, Stanzione rapidly evolved his style by creating a very individualized blend between late Caravaggesque tendencies and the Classicist stream represented by Guido Reni. The *Geometry* in particular, and all of the paintings from Stanzione's series, which we guess included *The Liberal and Mechanical Arts* (of which some versions are yet to be traced), are marked by this evolution: on the one hand Stanzione was gradually less identifiable as a Caravaggesque master; on the other hand he was not yet the '*Guido partenopeo*', as he would later be called owing to his love for Reni's *oeuvre*.

# COLNAGHI

Est. 1760

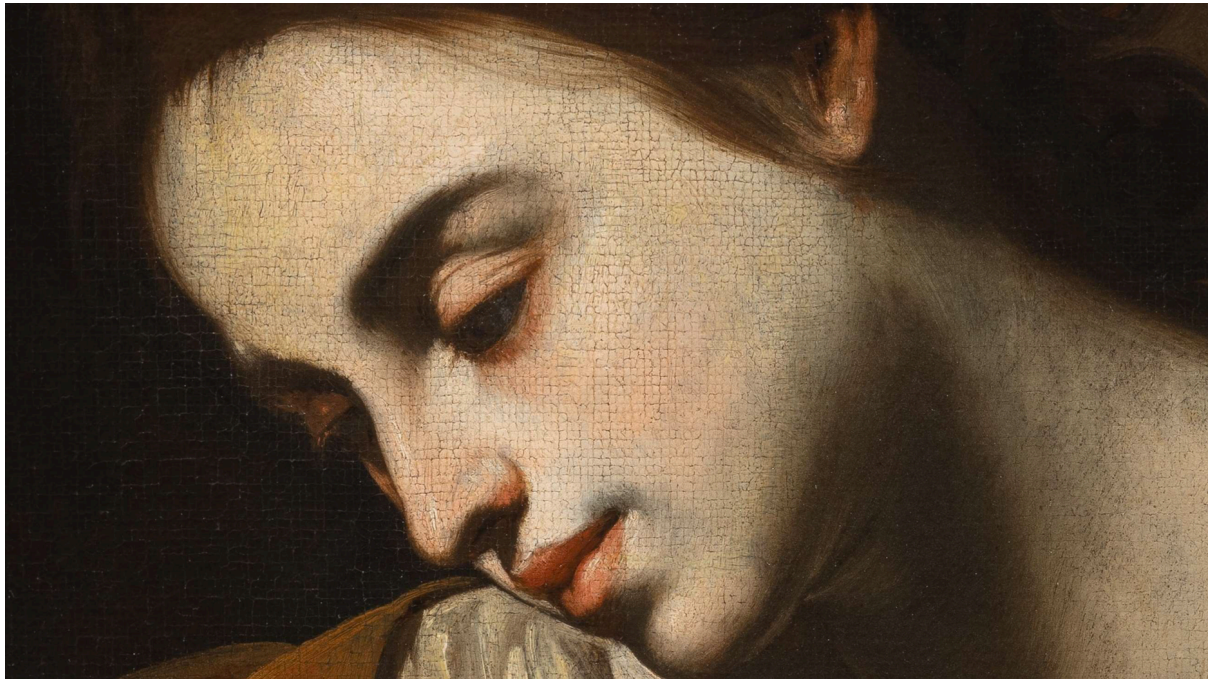
In fact, the female model and the pose of the *Geometry* (fig. 18, detail) were to be reused for the figure of Saint Catherine of Alexandria in the *Martyrdom of Saint Catherine of Alexandria*, a work executed probably slightly later (1627-30), attributed to Stanzione by the present writer in 2013 when it was with Silvano Lodi e Due in Milan (fig. 19).<sup>7</sup>

The *Allegory of Geometry* is a rare example of Massimo Stanzione's early production, which is still the object of an ongoing debate;<sup>8</sup> even more rare is the subject, being one of the very few cases of a non-religious image produced by one of the main masters of Neapolitan painting in the first half of the 17<sup>th</sup> century. It is the intention of the present writer to publish this important finding in a scientific essay in the future.

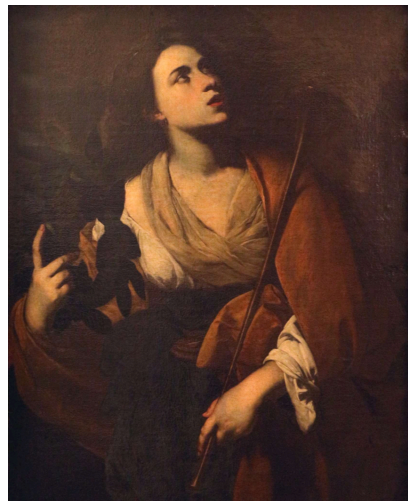
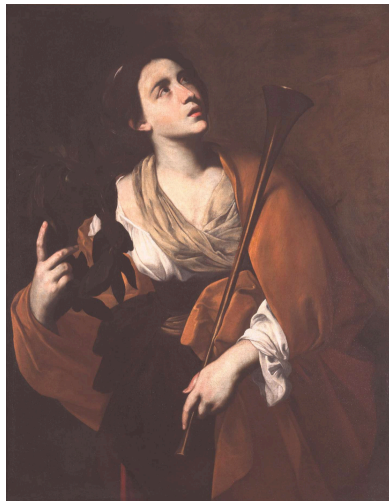
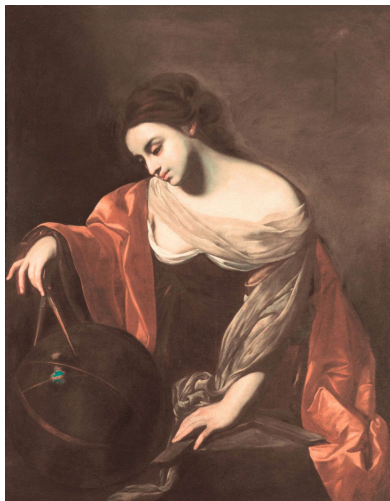
Riccardo Lattuada, 2 March 2023, Rome

# COLNAGHI

Est. 1760



**Figure 1.** Massimo Stanzione, *Allegory of Geometry* (detail).  
Colnaghi, London

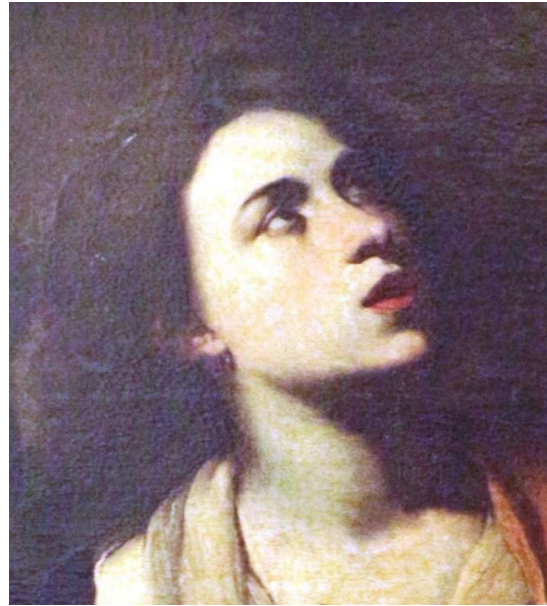
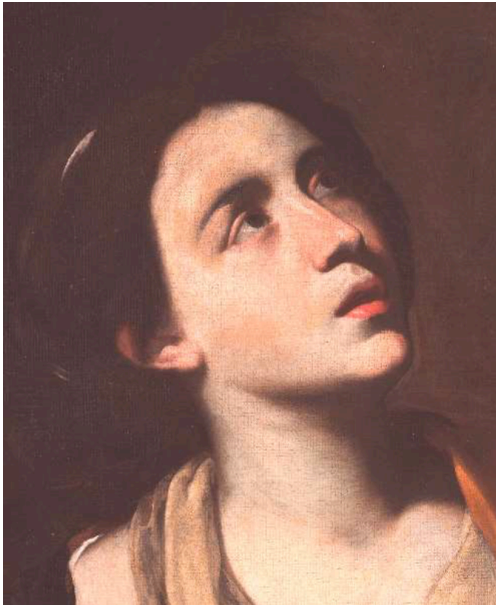


**Figures 2-4.** Massimo Stanzione, *Allegory of Geometry*. Leone Antiquariato, Naples;  
Massimo Stanzione, *Allegory of Fame (or Glory)*. Leone Antiquariato, Naples;  
Massimo Stanzione, *Allegory of Fame*. Galleria d'Arte Moderna, Milan



# COLNAGHI

Est. 1760



**Figures 5 & 6.** Massimo Stanzione, *Allegory of Fame* (detail). Leone Antiquariato, Naples; Massimo Stanzione, *Allegory of Fame* (detail). Galleria d'Arte Moderna, Milan



**Figures 7 & 8.** Massimo Stanzione, *Allegory of Fame (or Glory)* (detail). Leone Antiquariato, Naples; Massimo Stanzione, *Allegory of Fame (or Glory)* (detail). Galleria d'Arte Moderna, Milan



# COLNAGHI

Est. 1760



**Figure 9.** Massimo Stanzione, *The Saints Cosmas and Damian*. Private collection



**Figures 10 & 11.** Massimo Stanzione, *Saint Catherine of Alexandria*. Lemme Collection, Rome; Massimo Stanzione, *Sybil*. Doria Pamphilj Gallery, Rome

# COLNAGHI

Est. 1760



**Figures 12 & 13.** Massimo Stanzione, *Allegory of Eloquence*. Formerly Galleria Napoli Nobilissima, Naples; Massimo Stanzione, *Allegory of Poetry*. Formerly Galleria Napoli Nobilissima, Naples



**Figures 14 & 15.** Massimo Stanzione, *Allegory of Geometry* (detail). Leone Antiquariato, Naples; Massimo Stanzione, *Allegory of Geometry* (detail). Colnaghi, London



# COLNAGHI

Est. 1760



**Figures 16 & 17.** Massimo Stanzione, *Allegory of Geometry* (detail). Leone Antiquariato, Naples; Massimo Stanzione, *Allegory of Geometry* (detail). Colnaghi, London



**Figures 18 & 19.** Massimo Stanzione, *Allegory of Geometry* (detail). Colnaghi, London; Massimo Stanzione, *Martyrdom of Saint Catherine of Alexandria*. Formerly Silvano Lodi e Due, Milan

# COLNAGHI

Est. 1760

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## Footnotes

<sup>1</sup> See C. Ripa, *Iconologia di Cesare Ripa Perugino, Cavaliere de' Sti. Mavritio, e Lazzaro (etc.)*, in Siena, appresso gli Heredi di Matteo Floridi, 1613, p. cit., 1613, p. 290.

<sup>2</sup> *Allegory of Fame (or Allegory of Glory)*, oil on canvas, 127.5 x 102 cm. *Allegory of Geometry*, oil on canvas, 129 x 102 cm. Naples, with Leone Antiquariato.

<sup>3</sup> See S. Schütze in S. Schütze & T. C. Willette, *Massimo Stanzione. L'opera completa*, Naples 1992, pp. 192-193, A10a (either the *Allegory of Fame* and the *Allegory of Geometry* ascribed to Stanzione's workshop; p. 276, fig. 107: b/w image of the *Allegory of Fame*. Provenance: Naples, the Collection of the General Raffaele Carrascosa (died in 1866); Rome, Alessandro D'Urso Collection, within 1992. Exhibitions: Florence, Palazzo Corsini, 2019, Biennale Internazionale di Antiquariato, Stand Leone.

<sup>4</sup> See Schütze in Schütze & Willette 1992, *cit.*, p. 191, A6; p. 271, fig. 99; see also Christie's, Rome, 15-VI-2005, lot 691.

<sup>5</sup> See Schütze in Schütze & Willette 1992, *cit.*, p. 194, A16; p. 280, fig. 116. Schütze dates the work *circa* 1630.

<sup>6</sup> See *Quattro stanze, quattro pittori*, exh. cat., (ed.) G. Porzio, (Naples, Galleria Napoli Nobilissima, 28-II-2008 / 12-IV-2008), Naples 2008, pp. 67-74. Another version of the *Eloquence*, called *Allegory of Medicine*, was published by F. Bologna, in *Battistello Caracciolo e il primo naturalismo a Napoli*, exh. cat., (ed.) F. Bologna, Naples 1991, p. 126; p. 149, fig. 126. See also Schütze in Schütze & Willette 1992, *cit.*, p. 190-191, A4, p. 272, fig. 10.

<sup>7</sup> See R. Lattuada, 'Massimo Stanzione, Martyrdom of Saint Catherine of Alexandria', oil on canvas, 108 x 134 cm., in *La libertà del segno: nuove proposte di pittura antica*, exh. cat., The European Fine Art Fair (TEFAF), Maastricht, 15 – 24 March 2013, stand 366, Milan, Galleria Silvano Lodi e Due, pp. 24-33.

<sup>8</sup> See, for example, a controversial essay by V. Farina, 'Nuove prospettive per la gioventù di Massimo Stanzione', in *Artemisia e i pittori del Conte. La collezione di Giangirolamo II Acquaviva d'Aragona*, exh. cat., (ed.) V. Farina, Cava de' Tirreni 2018, pp. 110-139.