

Chapman University

Chapman University Digital Commons

Art Faculty Books and Book Chapters

Art

7-2015

Introduction. Stars, Water Wings, and Hairs. Bernini's Career in Metaphor

Claudia Lehmann
University of Bern

Karen J. Lloyd
Chapman University, lloyd@chapman.edu

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.chapman.edu/art_books



Part of the [Ancient, Medieval, Renaissance and Baroque Art and Architecture Commons](#), [European History Commons](#), and the [Other History of Art, Architecture, and Archaeology Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Lehmann, Claudia and Karen J. Lloyd. Introduction: Stars, Water Wings, and Hairs, Bernini's Career in Metaphor. In *A Transitory Star: The Late Bernini and his Reception*. Berlin, Boston: DE GRUYTER, 2015.

This Book is brought to you for free and open access by the Art at Chapman University Digital Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Art Faculty Books and Book Chapters by an authorized administrator of Chapman University Digital Commons. For more information, please contact laughtin@chapman.edu.

A Transitory Star

ARS ET SCIENTIA

Schriften zur Kunstwissenschaft

Volume 10

Edited by
Bénédicte Savoy,
Michael Thimann, and
Gregor Wedekind

Claudia Lehmann,
Karen J. Lloyd (Eds.)

A Transitory Star

The Late Bernini and his Reception

De Gruyter

This publication was made possible through the generous support of the Ellen J. Beer- Stiftung and the Wilkinson College of Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences, Chapman University.

ISBN 978-3-11-035999-2

ISBN (PDF) 978-3-11-036008-0

ISBN (EPUB) 978-3-11-038689-9

ISSN 2199-4161

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

A CIP catalog record for this book has been applied for at the Library of Congress.

Bibliografische Information der Deutschen Nationalbibliothek

The Deutsche Nationalbibliothek lists this publication in the Deutsche Nationalbibliografie; detailed bibliographic data are available on the Internet at <http://dnb.dnb.de>.

© 2015 Walter de Gruyter GmbH, Berlin/Boston

Typesetting: Werksatz Schmidt & Schulz, Gräfenhainichen

Cover Illustration: Gian Lorenzo Bernini, Design for a looking-glass for the Queen of Sweden, c. 1656,

Pen and brown wash over black chalk, RCIN 905586, Windsor Castle, Royal Collection Trust/© Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II 2015

Printing and Binding: Beltz Bad Langensalza GmbH, Bad Langensalza

☞ Printed on acid-free paper.

Printed in Germany

www.degruyter.com

Introduction. Stars, Water Wings, and Hairs. Bernini's Career in Metaphor

In Paul Fréart de Chantelou's diary of Bernini's time in Paris, the artist credits his success to a "star," which "secures him a certain respect during his lifetime; on his death, this ascendant will no longer act and thus his reputation will wane or all of a sudden tumble down."¹ To Charles Avery, Bernini's words were "an accurate premonition;" to Irving Lavin they would surely be an example of the artist's "false rhetoric of modesty."² 'False rhetoric' evokes the slippery skill of dissimulation, "the courtly art of saying what people want to hear," thus aligning Bernini's self-presentation in Paris with the broader trajectory of his persona as the skilled court architect of papal Rome.³ Yet, Bernini's fortunes in the 1660s and 1670s did face marked challenges, including the stillborn efforts of the trip to France and criticism of his work at St. Peter's and its *piazza*. 1665 – the year of the trip to France and of the artist's musings on fame and legacy – can be seen as a turning point in Bernini's career. At that time he was at the zenith of his success, the leading pan-European architect and sculptor. However, the slow decline of his eminence was on the horizon, the result of shifting receptions of his art.⁴ The genesis of the 'official' biography project, which would eventually emerge in the works of Filippo Baldinucci and Domenico Bernini, dates to these same years, as a corrective to bad press and, worse, to silence from critics such as Giovan Pietro Bellori.⁵ Perhaps Bernini's modesty was not entirely false after all, but rather a hint that the artist had a more troubled – and perceptive – understanding of the challenges facing his legacy.

- 1 Paul Fréart de Chantelou, *Journal de voyage de cavalier Bernin en France*, ed. Milovan Stanić (Paris: Macula, 2001), 86 (23 July): "qu'il devait toute sa réputation à son étoile [qui] le faisait estimer de son vivant; que, mort, cet ascendant n'agirait plus, et qu'ainsi sa réputation déchoirait ou tomberait tout à coup."
- 2 Charles Avery, *Bernini, Genius of the Baroque* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1997), 276; Irving Lavin, "Argan's Rhetoric and the history of style," in *Giulio Carlo Argan. Intellettuale e storico dell'arte*, ed. Claudio Gamba (Milan: Electa, 2012), 262.
- 3 Alexander Nagel, "In Praise of Power," *London Review of Books* 35 (2013): 29.
- 4 See e.g. the equivalent statements of Abbé Michel Marolles or of Claude and Charles Perrault.
- 5 Tomaso Montanari, "At the margins of the historiography of art. The 'Vite' of Bernini between autobiography and apologia," in *Bernini's Biographies. Critical Essays*, ed. Maarten Delbeke, Evonne Levy, and Steven Ostrow (University Park, Penn.: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2006), 74–77.

On the same day that he spoke of his “good star,” Bernini described his success to Jean-Jacques Charron, the Marquis of Ménars and Colbert’s brother-in-law, in terms that have not been as remarked on, perhaps because they invoke a less lofty image: water wings or floats. In his life, Bernini said, God had given him the grace that, despite his irascible character, he was not brought down and instead was saved “like a man who, not knowing how to swim, has floats made of pumpkins (*calebasses / galleggianti di zucca*) and, even though every so often he sinks to the bottom, he nevertheless resurfaces quickly.”⁶ In this instance Bernini acknowledges that his life has not been entirely smooth, that he has, at times, ‘touched bottom’. His water wings have been, he explains, theological works such as the sermons of Padre Oliva; he thus connects his success to his unwavering faith. In Chantelou’s recounting of the conversation the personal and the professional are seemingly interchangeable, and the interlocutors veer seamlessly from one to the other. Bernini begins by giving his judgment on the design of the Tuileries Palace, before advising Charron not to “abandon himself to pleasure” in his youth, and then compares himself to the man with the pumpkin water wings. Oliva, first mentioned as a spiritual authority, quickly becomes a professional advisor. According to Bernini, Oliva’s comment on the proposed trip to France was that: “[i]f an angel came to tell me that you should die on that trip, nonetheless I would tell you – go.”⁷ The fusion of the personal and the professional performed in Chantelou’s text surely also underlies Bernini’s aquatic analogy. In ‘touching bottom’, the artist could have been reflecting on anything from his peril after Urban VIII’s death or the scandal with Costanza Piccolomini Bonucelli (generally known as Costanza Bonarelli) to the disaster of the bell towers.⁸ From the anecdote we get an idea of the stakes Bernini felt to be at play in his career and in his artistic legacy: life or death, damnation to oblivion or salvation.

The decision to take roughly 1665 as the beginning of Bernini’s ‘later’ years is not stylistic so much as it is social and practical.⁹ The trip to France in that year marked the

6 Chantelou, *Journal*, 85 (23 July): “[...] que Dieu lui avait fait la grâce à lui, que quoiqu’il y eût un grand penchant dans sa jeunesse et qu’il fût d’un tempérament de feu, il ne s’y était pas laissé emporter, et qu’il s’en était sauvé, comme un homme qui a des calebasses, qui ne sachant pas nager, et allant quelquefois au fond de l’eau, revient pourtant dessus tout aussitôt [...].”

7 Chantelou, *Journal*, 85 (23 July): “Se un Angelo venisse a dirmi che voi dovreste morir in quel viaggio, io direi nondimeno: andatevi.” Cecil Gould argues that Oliva’s command was the definitive factor in Bernini’s decision to go to France. Cecil Gould, *Bernini in France: an Episode in Seventeenth-Century History* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1981), 21.

8 See Karen Lloyd, “Bernini and the Vacant See,” *The Burlington Magazine* 150 (2008): 821–824; Sarah McPhee, *Bernini and the Bell Towers. Architecture and Politics at the Vatican* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002); Sarah McPhee, *Bernini’s Beloved. A Portrait of Costanza Piccolomini* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2012).

9 On Bernini and ‘old age style’ see: Catherine M. Sousloff, “Old age and old-age style in the ‘Lives’ of artists: Gianlorenzo Bernini,” *The Art Journal* 46 (1987): 115–121. A general study of the question of

apex of his success on a European scale, but he undertook it with great trepidation given his age (he was 67 at that point). He brought one son, Paolo, with him, likely hoping to launch the teenager's career as a sculptor at the French court, as his own father had done for him with Paul V many years before. Back in Rome, Bernini's projects increasingly involved large numbers of sculptors and the final products began to show some stylistic autonomy (think for example of the cohesion of the Tomb of Urban VIII versus the fragmentation of the tomb of Alexander VII, or the Four Rivers Fountain versus the Ponte Sant' Angelo). Although he worked for Clement IX (1667–69), Clement X (1670–76), and Innocent XI (1676–89) and retained the title of Architect of St. Peter's until his death in 1680, Bernini's works for Alexander VII also mark his last feverishly productive collaboration.

In France, Bernini's visual language would in fact survive in the art of Pierre Mignard and Antoine Coysevox, and even in designs made by Charles Le Brun. Yet it would also be challenged by the French court's ambitious efforts to establish a nationally defined art executed mainly by French artists. That aesthetic project aimed however not to be defined by the art of modern Rome, but rather to have direct recourse to the classical world. From Chantelou's *Journal* we know that the French king wished for a Louvre on the model of a Roman *palazzo*, but his courtiers and architects were clearly not in favor of such a plan.¹⁰ This 'lining up' under national signs is drawn through the entirety of the time Bernini spent in the French capital. Even while he was carving it, Bernini's bust of Louis XIV was faced with a French counterproposal.¹¹ The King's equestrian monument, which Bernini created in Rome after his stay in Paris, was perceived by the French as the last act of artistic decline performed by the man who was once the greatest artist in Europe.¹² While in Paris Bernini perceived the challenges that surrounded him. To Chantelou he recalled that Maffeo Barberini, while still a cardinal, had once warned him about working in the French capital. Barberini advised him against a proposed journey, arguing that only the artist who best manages intrigues and cabals will remain on top in France, even if he is incapable and talentless.¹³ At Louis XIV's court Bernini had to

old age style in sculpture, as Philip Sohm has produced for painting, is lacking. Philip Sohm, *The Artist Grows Old: The Aging of Art and Artists in Italy, 1500–1800* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007).

10 Chantelou, *Journal*, 149 and 150 (1 September).

11 Philipp Zitzlsperger, "Kontroversen um Berninis Königsbüste," in *Bernini in Paris: Das Tagebuch des Paul Fréart de Chantelou über den Aufenthalt Gianlorenzo Berninis am Hof Ludwigs XIV.*, ed. Pablo Schneider and Philipp Zitzlsperger (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 2006), 397–415; Dietrich Erben, *Paris und Rom. Die staatlich gelenkten Kunstbeziehungen unter Ludwig XIV.* (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 2004), 116.

12 Simone Hoog, *Le Bernin, Louis XIV, une statue 'déplacée'* (Paris: Adam Biro, 1989).

13 Chantelou, *Journal*, 83 (22 July): "[...] que celui qui y avait le plus d'intrigue et de cabale était toujours le plus habile, quoiqu'il fût sans capacité et sans talent [...]."

struggle for the supremacy that by that point he had experienced in Rome as a matter of course – in Paris it became fragile and far from self-evident. Even if the newly nationalistic institutions of French art experienced a brief flirtation with Roman trends at the time Bernini stayed in Paris, it was a short-lived affair that did not much outlast Bernini's departure for the Eternal City. Although the separation was gradual, by 1690 the divorce was complete.

This book presents articles focusing on designs and works produced during Bernini's stay in Paris in 1665 and in the subsequent decade after his return to Rome. They build on and contribute to a rich body of scholarship examining Bernini's time in France and later career, enriched in the last decade by an Italian edition of Chantelou's *Journal* edited by Daniela del Pesco and an edited collection of essays on Bernini's influence throughout Europe, as well as earlier literature by Cecil Gould, Irving Lavin, and others.¹⁴ Collectively, the essays gathered here demonstrate the wealth of material still to be drawn from close visual and material examination, archival research, and comparative literary analysis.

The first four essays of this collection deal with Bernini's works in Paris and their afterlife. Sabine Frommel looks at the project that ostensibly brought the artist to France, the expansion of the Louvre. She concentrates her study on the third palace design in relationship to competing proposals from Italian artists and argues that Bernini's ideas were indelibly shaped by those of his competitors. The resulting third design is therefore repositioned as a kind of composite production. Heiko Damm examines the only work entirely produced in the French capital, the bust of King Louis XIV. Damm examines the dialectically structured vision of the bust's head and drapery or collar as a defense of Italian stylistic grandeur and a *virtuoso* demonstration of Bernini's skill in all the arts, from the decorative to the monumental. Maarten Delbeke also focuses on the bust of Louis XIV, using it as an entry point and test case to trace developing conceptions of authorship and majesty in the representation of the French king in the writings of Pierre Cureau de La Chambre, François Lemée, and Dominique Bouhours. Claudia Lehmann studies the notion of *macchia* as it is used in Chantelou's *Journal*, suggesting that the term is best understood in the context of French art theory, and illuminates its significance in the context of the cultural transfer from Rome to Paris around 1665 in the field of monumental fresco painting. These four essays draw Rome and Paris closer together, establishing that Bernini kept a keen eye on the Italian scene while making his

14 Daniela del Pesco, *Bernini in Francia. Paul de Chantelou e il 'Journal de voyage du cavalier bernin en france'* (Naples: Electa, 2007); *Le Bernini et l'Europe. Du triomphant à l'âge romantique*, ed. Chantal Grell and Milovan Stanić (Paris: Presses de l'Université de Paris-Sorbonne, 2002); Schneider and Zitzlsperger, *Bernini in Paris*; Gould, *Bernini in France*; Irving Lavin, "Bernini's Image of the Sun King," in *Past-Present. Essays on Historicism in Art from Donatello to Picasso* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 139–202 (republished 2007).

designs for the French court. It is also clear that he acted and was instrumentalized – even much later by Chantelou – as an ambassador of Italian style and of the peninsula's hard-won ideal of the artistic persona, which would ultimately distance him from French aims and institutions.

The second part of this book is dedicated to Bernini's years in Rome after his return from France, and focuses on his preeminent place as the creator of inventive and authoritative papal imagery and monumental architecture. Karen Lloyd's text stands as a transition, examining the artist's response to his time in France after his return to Italy. Drawing out the connections between Bernini's completed equestrians – the *Constantine* and the *Louis XIV* – as well as long-standing papal projects, she argues that the French monument should be read as a work of diplomatic art, overtly intended to convey a reminder of papal authority to the wayward Louis XIV.

In other cases, a patron's exigencies outstripped the artist's presumed ideals. Based on a wealth of previously unexamined archival material and close material study, Maria Grazia D'Amelio and Tod Marder provide a new picture of the physical construction and history of the south colonnade of Piazza San Pietro. In doing so, they raise critical questions about the collaborative relationships between Bernini, Alexander VII, and Rome's largely under-studied building industry.

At home, Bernini could return to familiar terrain and long-standing projects. Christian Berndt interprets the *Elephant with the Obelisk* in front of Santa Maria sopra Minerva as a monumental poetic device celebrating Alexander VII Chigi as a promoter of the sciences and of the arts, and explores the literary and historical horizons within which the poetic devices of emblems and *imprese* were received. His article demonstrates that in his hometown Bernini could allow his taste for *concetti* to manifest itself without restraint, to an audience receptive to such visual and linguistic challenges. In Rome he also continued to find success even as a painter. Tomaso Montanari's article presents documentary evidence of two portraits of Pope Clement IX Rospigliosi painted by Bernini in the 1670s, thus answering in the affirmative the question of whether Bernini continued to paint in his later years and demonstrating the wiliness of Bernini's manipulation of the contemporary patronage system.

On the whole, and with varied approaches, the texts collected here deal with Bernini's fundamental role as the leading creator of portraits, direct and indirect, of some of the most powerful political players of his day. The studies of Bernini's time in France speak to the growing distance of Gallic absolutism from the fading dreams of papal hegemony over Europe, while those of his works on his return to Rome assume Bernini's continued preeminence over the Roman art scene. At a glance, the split can be jarring, begging the question of how best to situate the French interlude within the broader historiography of Bernini's later career. Perhaps we may take a cue from the artist himself, as reported by Domenico Bernini. As is well known, Bernini spelled out his *concetto* for the equestrian Louis XIV to a French visitor to his studio who was dissatisfied with

the work and in particular with the expression of joy on the monarch's face. Bernini explained that such an expression was appropriate to one whom, like the King, had already reached the peak of the mountain of glory and thus earned "a comely laugh on his lips."¹⁵ Later, Bernini allowed himself his own "comely laugh" at another visitor who surreptitiously risked criticizing some (the visitor felt) overly regular locks of the King's hair, for not corresponding to the movement indicated by the horse. Bernini turned to the speaker and said, laughing, "A V[ostro] S[ignore] in quest' Opera pare, che diano fastidio li peli (It seems that, in this work, your lordship is bothered by the hairs)."¹⁶ Eraldo Bellini has explained the pun as a reference to the proverb *cercare il pelo nell'uovo*, literally "to look for the crack in the egg," but meaning "to split hairs" or to be overly critical.¹⁷ Bellini's reading is sensible, but it is perhaps not the only one – the joke is ambiguous and there may be further significance to Bernini's pun on *peli*. The word can also mean "surface," as in *pelo d'acqua*, the water's surface. With the multivalent word, Bernini stressed that his visitor was led astray by a need to criticize surface details, and thus unable to see deeper and understand the full significance of the monument.¹⁸ The perfect coif to the King's curling hair, even while astride his bounding horse, suggests the possibility of the monarch's timeless perfection, his existence above the circumstances of the physical world. In his Roman studio, laughingly getting the better of impertinent visitors while sculpting an image of the Sun King that would outlive both patron and artist, Bernini too had earned the right to joviality. The texts gathered here demonstrate the value of looking beyond the surface, and to the substance of Bernini's later career as a still-formidable 'kingmaker'.

We owe thanks to the Wilkinson College of Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences, Chapman University, and to the Ellen J. Beer-Foundation, Bern, for supporting us; and to the staff and our colleagues from the Bibliotheca Hertziana, Rome. Above all, we wish to thank the colleagues who discussed, criticized, and engaged with us during our stay in Rome from 2006 to 2008 – they are too many to name, but we are ever grateful for their insights and company.

15 Domenico Bernini, *The Life of Gian Lorenzo Bernini*, trans. and ed. Franco Mormando (University Park, Penn.: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2011), 150: "[...] perché è qualità propria di chi gode la giovialità del volto, & un'avvenente riso della bocca, quindi è, che tale appunto haveva rappresentato quel Monarca."

16 Bernini, *The Life of Gian Lorenzo Bernini*, 149: "Avvenne una volta, ch'ei sentì un Tale, che con bassa voce ragionando col suo Compagno pareva, che non approvasse nella Capigliera del Rè una certa cascata uguale, impropria, com'egli diceva, al moto, che figurava il Cavallo: Onde graziosamente rivoltòssi a lui il Cavaliere, e come ridendo disse, *A V.S. in quest' Opera pare, che diano fastidio li peli.*"

17 Bernini, *The Life of Gian Lorenzo Bernini*, 400, note 6.

18 Thanks to Camilla Fiore, Paola Vitolo, and Walter Cupperi for their insightful thoughts on the possible permutations of *peli*.

All the King's Horses. Bernini's Equestrian Statues between Paris and Rome*

In 1670, at the age of 72, Bernini saw his equestrian statue of the Emperor Constantine unveiled after what he claimed to have been seven years of labour on the work (Fig. 1).¹ Just three years later, Bernini and his pupils finished another equestrian colossus, the *Louis XIV* (Fig. 2).² Bernini assured Jean-Baptiste Colbert that the statue of the French king would be distinct from its Roman predecessor, yet the *Louis XIV* repeats and even exaggerates many features of the *Constantine* that had received biting criticism from contemporaries.³ Specific details are not altered: Louis XIV does not hold reins, the horse is crouched low and its rider is proportionally too long, the horse's legs have a kind of knot in the joints, the belly has clearly articulated veins from end to end, the neck is too thin, and the head small. The *Louis XIV* even further exaggerates elements such as the large and expressive ears, the wig-like mane, the deep curvature of the horse's back, and the slumped, awkward pose of its rider.⁴ On top of that, the *Louis XIV* had its own particular problems, including a strange (to French viewers) smile, a conspicuously lacking crown, and a complex allegorical *concetto*.⁵ Why would Bernini repeat what was already

* My thanks go to Maarten Delbeke, Louise Rice, and Elena Napolitano for their critical commentary and insights. I am particularly indebted to Tod Marder; this essay builds on his work on the *Scala Regia*.

1 The original conception of the *Constantine* in fact went back much further, to the mid-1650's. Tod A. Marder, *Bernini's Scala Regia at the Vatican Palace* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 165. On the chronology and development of the statue see Marder, *Scala Regia*, 165–251. In 1669, Bernini told Girardon that he had worked on the *Constantine* unceasingly for seven years. Rudolf Wittkower, "The vicissitudes of a dynastic monument: Bernini's equestrian statue of Louis XIV," in *De artibus opuscula XL: essays in honor of Erwin Panofsky*, ed. Millard Meiss (New York: Univ. Press, 1961), 501, doc. 15.

2 Wittkower, "Bernini's equestrian," 511.

3 Stanislao Frascchetti, *Il Bernini: la sua vita, la sua opera, il suo tempo* (Milan: Hoepli, 1900), 321.

4 Notably, a bronze reproduction of the *Louis XIV* (transformed into Charles II of Spain) has reins; they were likely not added by Bernini. Tomaso Montanari, "Da Luigi XIV a Carlo II. Metamorfosi dell'ultimo capolavoro di Gian Lorenzo Bernini," in *Arte y Diplomacia de la Monarquía Hispánica en el siglo XVII*, ed. José Luis Colomer (Madrid: Fernando Villaverde Ediciones, 2003), 409, 412.

5 See Wittkower, "Bernini's equestrian."



Fig. 1 Gian Lorenzo Bernini, *Constantine*, Vatican Palace, Scala Regia

problematic, in a work that, by the time it was made, was clearly going to be his last chance to represent himself on French soil?⁶ Created after Bernini's return from France, the meaning of the *Louis XIV* should be sought in Alexander VII's Rome. Bernini's equestrians – executed and imagined – open rhetorical channels between France and the papacy and convey a pointed message about the supremacy of spiritual authority over temporal might. Much of the material reviewed here will be familiar to scholars of Bernini and papal Rome; my goal is to reiterate the continuity between Bernini's two completed equestrians as an essential component of their meaning.

Tod Marder's 1998 study of the *Constantine* in the context of the Scala Regia established the sculpture's significance as a proclamation of the rightful submission of secular to divine authority.⁷ In his consideration of Bernini's projects for the French

⁶ By the time he began work on the equestrian, the plans for the Louvre had already been abandoned.

⁷ Marder, *Scala Regia*.



Fig. 2 François Girardon after Gian Lorenzo Bernini, *Equestrian statue of Louis XIV as Marcus Curtius* Versailles, Musée National du Château

crown, Irving Lavin argued that the *Louis XIV* carried a similar message, which he characterized as ‘subversive’ and an independent addition of Bernini’s; Lavin’s argument will be discussed in more depth later in this essay.⁸ In order to understand the *Louis XIV*, and why Bernini later commented that the French would “find little [in it],” it is necessary to return to the conception and development of the *Constantine*.⁹

8 Irving Lavin, “Bernini’s Image of the Sun King,” in *Past-Present. Essays on Historicism in Art from Donatello to Picasso* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 139–202 (published again 2007). Essential studies of the *Louis XIV* are: Wittkower, “Bernini’s equestrian;” Robert W. Berger, “Bernini’s *Louis XIV* equestrian, a closer examination of its fortunes at Versailles,” *The Art Bulletin* 63 (1981): 232–248; Michel Martin, *Les Monuments équestres de Louis XIV. Une grande entreprise de propagande monarchique* (Paris: Picard, 1986); Milovan Stanić, “*Louis XIV* et Bernin: le voyage du Bernin à la cour de France et sa place dans le décorum royal au début du règne personnel de *Louis XIV*,” in *Arte barroco e ideal clásico: aspectos del arte cortesano ed la segunda mitad del siglo XVII* (Rome: Sociedad Estatal para la Acción Cultural Exterior, 2004), 155–176.

9 Wittkower, “Bernini’s equestrian,” 528, doc. 63.

The earliest evidence for the *Constantine* indicates that it was to be installed in a pier between the first and second bays of the north side aisle of St. Peter's and that it was to be "in similitude of" the monument to the Countess Matilda, installed in the next pier to the west.¹⁰ Both the *Matilda* and the *Constantine* celebrate secular rulers who recognized the divine and omnipotent authority of the church, so they formed an apt pair. Later, around 1662, the decision was made to install the statue, instead, at the landing where the northern end of the narthex of St. Peter's intersects with the Scala Regia.¹¹ The move suggests the lingering influence of a sixteenth-century plan to install equestrian statues of Emperor Charles V and King Francis I in the narthex of St. Peter's, as 'Most Christian Kings' and "defenders of the faith" for having united against the Turks.¹² The project was never carried out, yet the idea of paired equestrian monuments to Christian kings in St. Peter's seems to have remained. As Marder has suggested, the memory of it likely lies behind Alexander VII's grandest plans for the completion of the decoration of St. Peter's.¹³ The Chigi pope intended to engage both ends of the narthex in a single decorative project, as evidenced by a small undated sketch found in Alexander's papers and by his hand: three points indicate a triangle, with 'Petri' labelled at the top, 'C. Magni' in the lower left and 'Const.' in the lower right.¹⁴ The references must be, respectively, to the high altar of St. Peter's, the north end of the narthex where the *Constantine* was to be placed, and the south end of the narthex as a site for a projected statue of Charlemagne.¹⁵ One of the written criticisms of Bernini's *Constantine*, dated by Marder to c. 1670–74, refers to a statue of Charlemagne to be placed across from the *Constantine* in the future, suggesting that the plan was generally known.¹⁶ Thus, from its inception the *Constantine* was always intended to form a pair with another monument to a notable Christian ruler, first the Countess Matilda, then a projected Charlemagne.

10 Fraschetti, *Il Bernini*, 318. Marder, *Scala Regia*, 167–169.

11 Marder, *Scala Regia*, 171.

12 Werner Gramberg, *Die Düsseldorfer Skizzenbücher des Guglielmo della Porta* (Berlin: Mann, 1964), 76–78, 81–84, 117–120. Marder, *Scala Regia*, 193. Sarah Blake McHam, "Giambologna's equestrian monument to Cosimo I: the monument makes the memory," in *Patronage and Italian Renaissance Sculpture*, ed. Kathleen Wren Christian and David J. Drogin (Farnham, Surrey, England; Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2010), 202–203.

13 Marder, *Scala Regia*, 193.

14 Marder, *Scala Regia*, 206–207. Carved Chigi stemma and angels were also placed over the south end of the narthex in 1671.

15 Fraschetti, *Il Bernini*, 321.

16 Fraschetti, *Il Bernini*, 321. Marder, *Scala Regia*, 294, notes 168, 169, 170.



Fig. 3 *Mosaics of the Triclinium of Leo III, Rome, Scala Santa*

Constantine and Charlemagne

The equivalence between Constantine and Charlemagne had already been given visual expression in seventeenth-century Rome, in the mosaics of the triclinium of Leo III at the Lateran.¹⁷ In a project sponsored by Francesco Barberini, the mosaics – located on the exterior of an apsidal structure just behind the building housing the Sancta Sanctorum (Fig. 3) – were ‘restored’ in 1624–5; the restoration included the wholesale recreation of the mosaic on the west side of the apse.¹⁸ There an enthroned Christ is flanked by kneeling figures of St. Sylvester and the Emperor Constantine, who accept the apostolic keys and a standard, respectively (Fig. 4). To the east of the apse is a similarly arranged grouping with, instead, St. Peter with Pope Leo III and Charlemagne;

17 Marder, *Scala Regia*, 206.

18 Ingo Herklotz, “Francesco Barberini, Nicolò Alemanni, and the Lateran Triclinium of Leo III: An Episode in Restoration and Seicento Medieval Studies,” *Memoirs of the American Academy in Rome* 40 (1995): 175, 176.



Fig. 4 *Triclinium mosaic, west.* From: *Lateranensibus parietinis dissertatio historica Nicolai Alemanni. Additis quae ad idem argumentum spectantia scripserunt ... Caesar Rasponus et Josephus Simonius Assemanus ...*



Fig. 5 *Triclinium mosaic, east.* From: *Lateranensibus parietinis dissertatio historica Nicolai Alemanni. Additis quae ad idem argumentum spectantia scripserunt ... Caesar Rasponus et Josephus Simonius Assemanus ... Apud haeredem Bartholomei*

Leo III receives a pallium from his papal predecessor while Charlemagne, like Constantine, receives a standard (Fig. 5). The presence of Constantine in the triclinium mosaics may have been wholly an invention of the seventeenth century.¹⁹ An epigraph, likely composed by Vatican librarian Niccolò Alemanni, stated that the mosaics celebrate the theory of the *translatio imperii* and the establishment of peace in Rome after an uprising against Leo III.²⁰ Francesco Barberini also paid for the publication of a book by Alemanni elaborating on the subject of the mosaics.²¹ Reiterated by Alemanni, the *translatio imperii* was a centuries-old argument for papal supremacy over imperial power based on the idea that Leo III had transferred the authority originally invested in Constantine in the East to Charlemagne in the West.²² Leo III having set the precedent, his successors had equal right to invest that authority where they wished. The *translatio imperii* foresaw the lawful interference of the pope in imperial elections.²³ The argument

19 Herklotz, "Francesco Barberini," 183.

20 Herklotz, "Francesco Barberini," 179, note 18.

21 Herklotz, "Francesco Barberini," 179–180. *De lateranensibus parietinis ab Illustriss. et Reverendiss. Domino D. Francisco Cardinale Barberino restitutis dissertatio historica*, 1625.

22 Herklotz, "Francesco Barberini," 183.

23 Herklotz, "Francesco Barberini," 183.

was, unsurprisingly, contested outside the Papal States, and criticisms of Alemanni's book were raised in France although no formal refutation was immediately published.²⁴ Wishing to revive the sixteenth-century project for equestrian statues of secular rulers in St. Peter's, Alexander VII may have been inspired to transform their identities into Charlemagne and Constantine by the earlier seventeenth-century project for the tricladium, the central message of which was papal prerogative over imperial rule. Paired equestrians of Constantine and Charlemagne in the narthex of St. Peter's would have been a reminder to Louis XIV of papal pretensions to authority over the whole of the Christian world and of the French kings' historical role as defenders of the church.²⁵ It would have been a particularly meaningful message in years that saw repeated political and theological conflicts between the papacy and France, ranging from the Créqui affair to tension over Jansenism.²⁶ The potential of the idea lasted for decades: in the early 1690s there were rumours that a statue of Louis XIV, rather than Charlemagne, was to be placed in the narthex opposite Constantine.²⁷

Equestrian Pairs

Paired equestrian monuments were also part of Alexander VII's idea for a new palace complex on the Quirinal hill. Dorothy Metzger Habel has reconstructed a sketch plan, attributable to Bernini, for a regular piazza on the Quirinal. The piazza was to be shaped by the papal palace on the north side and, on the south, by stables.²⁸ Habel convincingly argues that Alexander intended to move the famed ancient *Dioscuri*, at that point positioned to frame the opening of the Via Pia, to either side of the stable entrance (Fig. 6).²⁹ The horsemen would have been visible from the palace entrance and from the Via Pia, and thus would have continued the tradition of placing equestrian statues in relation to imperial palace entrances, as can be seen for example with the original place-

24 Herklotz, "Francesco Barberini," 188–191. Dissent to Alemanni's argument about the *translatio imperii* smouldered throughout the seventeenth century; it was not fully refuted in print until 1689.

25 Louis XIV himself favoured titles – 'the Great' and 'Most Christian King' – that connected him back to Charlemagne. Lavin, "Bernini's Image," 595.

26 Marder, *Scala Regia*, 244–246.

27 Marder, *Scala Regia*, 202. The idea of erecting a second equestrian statue to a secular ruler in St. Peter's was realized with the installation of Agostino Cornacchini's (also ill-received) *Charlemagne* (1720–25). Lucia Simonato, "Ludovico Sergardi, Agostino Cornacchini e la statua vaticana del Carlo Magno," *Prospettiva* 119/120 (2006): 23–63.

28 Dorothy Metzger Habel, *The Urban Development of Rome in the age of Alexander VII* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 37–62, especially 42–50 and 55–58.

29 There had also been a previous plan, laid out by Ottaviano Mascarino, to move the horsemen to flank the entrance to the palace proper. Metzger Habel, *Urban Development*, 18.

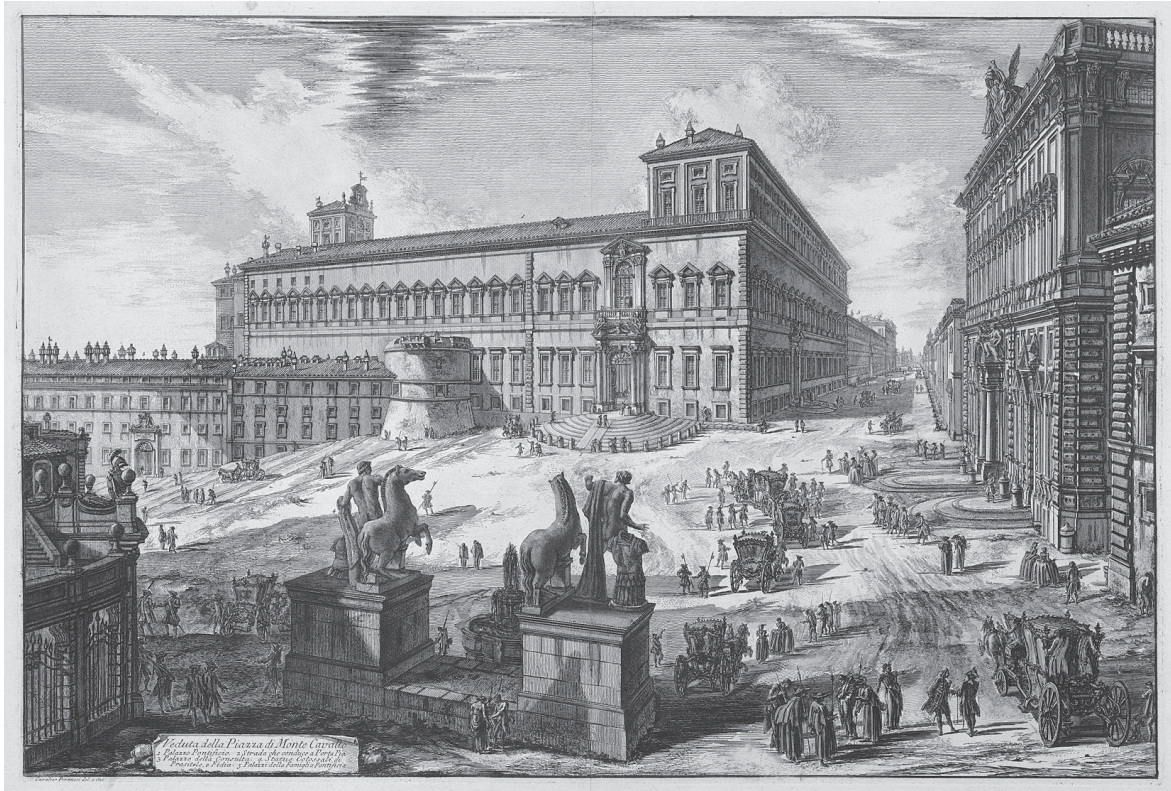


Fig. 6 Giovanni Battista Piranesi, *Fountain of the Dioscuri* (1748–1774)

ment of the *Marcus Aurelius* at the Lateran, the statue of Theodoric at Aachen, and many more.³⁰

In the seventeenth century the *Dioscuri* were given a number of different identifications. In his 1665 guidebook to Rome, dedicated to Alexander VII, Famiano Nardini identified both horses and masters as representations of Alexander the Great and his horse Bucephalus and suggested that they were brought to Rome by Constantine to decorate his baths on the hill.³¹ In Bernini's biographies the equestrian *Louis XIV* is referred to as a *colosso*, putting it on par, at least, with other colossal statues like the *Dioscuri*.³² Similarly, Pierre Cureau de La Chambre noted the size of the block of marble and of the horse and figure, both larger than life, and praised Bernini for having sculpted the pedestal, horse, and rider out of a single block of marble, a thing "never done in antiquity."³³ In its broadest parameters, perhaps Alexander VII's thinking extended to a

30 Marder, *Scala Regia*, 193–195.

31 Famiano Nardini, *Roma Antica*, 4th edition (Rome: De Romanis, 1818), vol. 2, book IV, chap. 5, 69, 82. Original edition Rome: Falco, 1665.

32 Kristina Hermann Fiore, "Luigi XIV a cavallo," in *Bernini scultore. La nascita del barocco in casa Borghese*, ed. Anna Coliva and Sebastian Schütze (Rome: De Luca, 1998), 313.

33 Frascchetti, *Il Bernini*, 360.

pair of pairs – the two Alexander the Greats on the Quirinal, and Constantine and Charlemagne at the Vatican. The statues at the Quirinal palace would have underscored the notion of the papacy as the rightful heirs of the authority of imperial power in Rome through Constantine, while the statues at the Vatican would have praised the secular heirs of that authority as defenders of the church, cognizant of their dependence on the pope.

Louis XIV

Domenico Bernini provides an extensive description of the *Louis XIV's concetto*, told in his father's voice: the work is said to show the King "in a state that he and he alone had been capable of reaching [...] by means of his glorious campaigns," with "a jubilant expression on his face and an attractive smile on his mouth," as a rider at the summit of the mountain of Glory where he will presumably be crowned for his achievements.³⁴ The allegorical conceit provided a convenient justification for the awkward mass of rock required to support the belly of the rearing marble horse. It also introduced a note of closure. On the whole the statue implies a sense of finality: the King has reached the top of the mountain of Glory, he is contented, and now he may rest. By retaining the same formal language as the *Constantine*, the *Louis XIV* translates the former's reactive theme – the recognition of divine power – into a proactive one. Unlike the first Christian emperor, who sees a sign and recognizes the limitations and source of his authority, Bernini's French king reaches his goal of earthly glory and voluntarily curbs his imperial and personal ambition. In its complex allegory the work breaks with the traditional model of a militaristic equestrian monument, which the French expected Bernini to follow. Cardinal d'Estrées wrote to Colbert in 1672 suggesting that ornaments and trophies be inserted at the foot of the monument to commemorate Louis' military conquests in Holland.³⁵ The request was incorporated into the final version of the work in an imaginative form, as curling flags that unfurl from where they are rolled and propped underneath the horse's belly (Fig. 7).³⁶ There was then a message of military triumph and

34 Domenico Bernini, *The Life of Gian Lorenzo Bernini*, trans. and ed. Franco Mormando (University Park, Penn.: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2011), 212. On the use of Gian Lorenzo's direct speech in Domenico's *Lives* see Steven F. Ostrow, "Bernini's voice: from Chantelou's 'Journal' to the 'Vite'," in *Bernini's Biographies: Critical Essays*, ed. Maarten Delbeke, Evonne Levy, and Steven F. Ostrow (University Park, Penn.: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2006), 111–141. Le Brun and Girardon subsequently picked up the triumphant theme for the plan for a fountain featuring an equestrian statue of Louis XIV for the Louvre. Martin, *Les Monuments équestres*, 56–58.

35 Wittkower, "Bernini's equestrian," 524, doc. 43.

36 Berger, "Bernini's Louis XIV," 242–243. Robert W. Berger, *In the garden of the Sun King: Studies on the park of Versailles under Louis XIV* (Washington/D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and



Fig. 7 Gian Lorenzo Bernini, *Study for the Equestrian Monument of Louis XIV*, Dis. Bass. 2.90.186, pencil, ink, and brown water-colour on paper applied to canvas, 390 × 275 mm, Musei Civici di Bassano del Grappa

national victory, but it seemed disconnected from the overall attitude of the horse and rider. Berger has argued that it was precisely this disconnect that both startled and angered the Sun King.³⁷

By the time that Bernini was working seriously on the *Louis XIV* the on-going conflict between France and Spain had erupted anew as a result of Louis XIV's campaigns in Holland. While the so-called Dutch War (1672–78) could be supported by the papacy, as it was ostensibly a battle against the Protestants to bring territory in the Low Countries back to the Christian fold, in practice the issue was trickier. Incursions into Holland brought the French into conflict with Spain through Habsburg holdings in the Netherlands. Outright war between the Christian kings once again became a real possibility. In 1672 the French invaded the Dutch Netherlands looking to regain territory and to incite a war with Spain.³⁸ In October 1673 first Spain, then France, declared war against the other.³⁹ Thus the message of the defeat of heresy, which was embedded in the

Collection, 1985), 102. They can be seen in Antonio Travani's medal recording the composition, in preparatory and later drawings, and in Mattia de' Rossi's proposal for an installation for Bernini's horse. For Travani's medal see Lavin, "Bernini's image," 587, fig. 56. For De Rossi's drawing see Lavin, "Bernini's image," 599, fig. 68.

37 Berger, "Bernini's Louis XIV," 243–247.

38 John A. Lynn, *The Wars of Louis XIV 1667–1714* (London and New York: Longman, 1999), 113, 117.

39 Lynn, *The Wars*, 122.

Louis XIV from the outset in its connections to the *Constantine*, became complicated.⁴⁰ How could the French king be praised for his victories over the Protestants and on behalf of the Church, while at the same time be reminded that those victories should have an overarching common goal, that of preserving peace in Christendom? Bernini's allegorical approach appears to be an attempt to strike that balance. The work praises the king for his virtue and, by representing him already at the peak of the mountain of glory thus obtained, implies that he could afford to cease the bloodshed.

In Domenico Bernini's *Life* he explains that his father had placed Louis XIV on the summit of the mountain of virtue "as the unchallenged proprietor of the glory that at the price of blood his name had acquired."⁴¹ Just a phrase before, Gian Lorenzo/Domenico Bernini refers to the "calamitous travails" that came with the ascent to glory and characterizes that ascent as "dolorous."⁴² Bernini may have had a particularly personal reason as well to emphasize the costs of King Louis XIV's ambitions, beyond lives lost in battle. In March of 1667, Colbert wrote to Bernini to pass on the King's regrets – and excuses – for why the artist's Louvre plans were being abandoned. Colbert wrote that "it would be difficult to embark on so considerable a project in the present state of war both by land and sea, whose duration, being uncertain, might necessitate suspension."⁴³ Toward the end of the same year Colbert reassured Bernini that the king will be willing "to have a building specially constructed to display [the equestrian *Louis XIV*] in all its beauty", but the promise must have rung hollow.⁴⁴ Bernini's much-bela-boured Louvre project was thus itself a victim of Louis' warmongering, and the equestrian project a less-than-welcome compensation.

Finally, the pacific intent of the sculpture is explained in a letter in praise of Bernini's equestrian *Louis XIV* written in 1673 by Padre Gian Paolo Oliva, the General of the Jesuit order and an acquaintance of Bernini's, to Padre Ferrier, Louis XIV's confessor.⁴⁵ In his letter, Oliva uses the lack of a crown, one of the suggested flaws of the *Louis XIV*, as the jumping off point for a discussion of three metaphorical crowns worn by the king. The typological similarity between Oliva's three crowns and the triple-tiered papal tiara ties the personal and political triumphs of the French king to the papacy. The first of the crowns, that of joy, was given to the king at birth, and it showed him to be the prince of

40 As can also be seen in Travani's medal, which features Victory and Religion triumphant over Heresy on the reverse with the motto *Victore rege victrix religio* 'victorious the king, victorious religion'. Lavin, "Bernini's image," 595.

41 Bernini, *The Life*, 212. Lavin 1993, 618, also noted the emphasis on blood in materials related to the equestrian project.

42 Bernini, *The Life*, 212.

43 Cecil Gould, *Bernini in France: an Episode in Seventeenth-century History* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1981), 117.

44 Gould, *Bernini in France*, 125.

45 Published in Frascchetti, *Il Bernini*, 360.

all states. The second, of laurel, was given to him by the “many heretical piazzas conquered by his sword.” This conceit once again ties the *Louis XIV* to the *Constantine*, suggesting that the aim in both was to represent the respective rulers as victors over heresy, thus carrying out their roles as protectors of the church. Oliva’s final crown, “the most glorious of all and by all yearned for,” is that of olive, which encircles His Majesty “with universal peace among faithful princes.” However, Oliva notes that such a crown cannot be made in iron, and that Bernini has not placed it on the temples of the king’s statue. In Oliva’s words, only a king who can surpass himself after having overcome the enemies of the faith can take up such a crown; having achieved glory the king must now find self-restraint and put the good of Christendom as a whole ahead of his personal ambition and the ambitions of the French monarchy. Oliva urges Ferrier to use all his spiritual counsel to offer to the king “the branches of a crown which, in the eyes of God and the side of good, precedes any other diadem ...”⁴⁶ Bernini’s equestrian statue of Louis XIV, in Oliva’s reading, was thus intentionally lacking. To satisfy the king, the statue commemorates Louis XIV’s past military prowess and victories, but hints of the ‘weary labour’ that went into the ascent to glory were meant to act as a reminder that, having reached the heights of glory, arms could be put to rest.

Lavin argues that “[t]he restrained intensity of the equestrian portrait and the bust of Louis expressed the radical political idea that the true basis of just rule lay in individual virtue and self-control rather than in inherited rank and unbridled power.”⁴⁷ In Lavin’s estimation the equestrian project was ‘subversive’, ironic, and radical, as Bernini created his *Louis XIV* in the image of a new kind of ideal moral ruler.⁴⁸ If we consider the equestrian monument not as part of a unified trio of Parisian projects (problematic given the haphazard development of Bernini’s works for the French) but on its own terms, the spirit of the message begins to look quite different. Produced in Rome after the failure of the Louvre project and in bellicose circumstances that threatened the Western Christian world, the message of the Louis XIV equestrian does not appear subversive or ironic. It is, rather, an overt reminder, an admonishment from the papacy to a wayward Christian monarch. The message of the Louis XIV equestrian is a reflection of traditional papal imagery and politics, which proclaimed that temporal power should be limited by spiritual power, and that supreme spiritual power is, ultimately, held by the papacy.⁴⁹

46 Fraschetti, *Il Bernini*, 360.

47 Lavin, “Bernini’s image,” 629.

48 Lavin, “Bernini’s image,” 628.

49 See Marder, *Scala Regia*, chap. 8 with further bibliography.

An Altieri Equestrian

The significance of the *Louis XIV* and the *Constantine* in political relations between France and the papacy surfaces in a Roman *avviso* of 1670. On 11 October 1670, less than six months after the election of Cardinal Emilio Altieri to the throne as Pope Clement X and just two weeks before the unveiling of the *Constantine*, an anonymous *avviso* narrated that:

Thursday after lunch His Holiness went in a litter to see the construction of the new palace at the Gesù. There in the courtyard he expected to see the statue of Don Gaspare, his nephew, on horseback, as had been ordered of Cavaliere Bernini along with an advance on the payment, but he did not have this satisfaction. Turning to the Cavaliere, who was there with him, he lamented with him over this delay, at which Bernini tried to humbly apologize, but the Pope continued on, smiling [and saying], ‘We believe that with these horses of yours, the King of France will not come to Rome, nor will my nephew be taken to Paris’.⁵⁰

The *avviso* writer uses the occasion to make a joke, in the pope’s voice, at Bernini’s expense. Clement X was about to unveil Bernini’s long-awaited *Constantine* (on October 29), and it would have been well known that the marble for the *Louis XIV* had already been sitting in Bernini’s studio for over a year; to Romans, talk of a third equestrian must have seemed improbable at best.⁵¹

There is no further evidence for an Altieri equestrian project, although such an audacious commission does not seem beyond the notably grasping Gaspare Altieri.⁵² Whether the project for an Altieri equestrian ever existed, the *avviso* indicates that in Rome Bernini’s equestrians were seen as objects involved in diplomatic exchange. The

50 “Si porto Sua Santità giovedì doppio pranzo in lettica a vedere la propria fabrica del nuovo Palazzo al Gesu, dove pensando veder nel Cortile di esso la statua di D. Gasparo suo Nepote a Cavallo, conforma di già era stata ordinata al Cavaliere Bernini con lo sborso un pezzo prima del danaro, no hebbe questa sodisfattione, e voltatosi al Cavaliere, che costì si trovava, si dolse con esso di questa tardanza, quale volendo humilmente scusarsi, prosegui sorridendo il Papa = Crediamo che con questi vostri Cavalli, ne il Re di Francia verrà a Roma, ne mio Nepote si porterà a Parigi.” Barb. lat. 6405. October 11, 1670. 289v. My thanks to Louise Rice for correcting and improving my translation.

51 Wittkower, “Bernini’s equestrian,” 521 docs. 20 and 21.

52 He was fond of displays of military training and had Carlo Maratti portray him as the personification of Strength in the famed *Triumph of Clemency* fresco in Palazzo Altieri. Giovan Pietro Bellori, *The lives of the modern painters, sculptors, and architects: a new translation and critical edition*, trans. Alice Sedgwick Wohl (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 407. An unpublished *avviso* from 12 August 1670 reports that Gaspare was frequenting a school for horsemanship opened by a superb ‘cavallerizza’ under the Temple of Peace in the Forum. “Sotto il Tempio della Pace in Campo vaccina apertasi la scuola d’una superbissima Cavallerizza ivi compare continuamente con molti Cav.ri Romani D. Gasparo Altieri, che disciplinandosi S. E. nel cavalcare, e giocare, da presaggio, che nel secolo della Pace vuol’che ne segua in conseguenza le giostre, che feste.” Barb. lat. 6405. August 12, 1670, 26r.

Louis XIV connected the French king to Rome, opening channels of negotiation and reminding the king of his responsibilities toward the papacy and the larger Christian world. The exchange implied in the *avviso* can be related to continuing papal concerns over the French king's loyalty to the larger Catholic cause and over his willingness to submit to the authority of St. Peter. In June of 1670, in one of the first acts of his papacy and in response to an attempt by Louis XIV to take over rights traditionally held by the Roman Church, Clement X published the *Superna magni Patris familias*, which dealt with disputes over the sacrament of confession and reaffirmed the papacy's central and sole ability to decide on ecclesiastical disputes in France.⁵³ Clement was also fixated on the dream of another crusade. In 1670 he was trying to encourage an alliance between the Holy Roman Emperor and Poland in order to stop the Turks, and making military preparations himself. Louis XIV, on the contrary, sent an envoy to Constantinople at the beginning of the same year with the mission of re-establishing good relations between the French and the east, a worrying indication that he was not interested in papal plans.⁵⁴ What emerges from the 1670 *avviso* is that Bernini's *Louis XIV* was thought of in a binary relationship with a Roman project representing the papacy. The constellation of works – a hypothetical Gaspare, the *Louis XIV*, and the *Constantine* – create a series of openings for discussions intended to bring Louis XIV back in line with the papal ideal of a unified Christian world.⁵⁵

Rumors

In 1673 there is an abrupt break in the epistolary record related to Bernini's *Louis XIV* equestrian, as Colbert cut off communication with the artist about the statue. Daniela del Pesco has suggested that this break was tied to Elpidio Benedetti's machinations to have the statue set up on the Spanish steps rather than sent to France.⁵⁶ As Bernini's pension was no longer paid out after 1673, Wittkower argued that the statue was finished, thus there was no need to continue the communication.⁵⁷ Wittkower also acknow-

53 Luciano Osbat, "Clemente X," *Dizionario biografico degli italiani*, [http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/Papa-clemente-x_\(Dizionario-Biografico\)/](http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/Papa-clemente-x_(Dizionario-Biografico)/) accessed November 1, 2011. Ludwig von Pastor, *Storia dei Papi: Dalla fine del medio evo*, vol. 14.1 (Rome: Desclée, 1961), 652.

54 Pastor, *Storia dei Papi*, vol. 14.1, 671.

55 On a proposed criteria of diplomatic art see Anthony Colantuono, "The Mute Diplomat: Theorizing the Role of Images in Seventeenth-Century Political Negotiations," in *The Diplomacy of Art. Artistic Creation and Politics in Seicento Italy. Papers from a Colloquium held at the Villa Spelman, Florence, 1998*, ed. Elizabeth Cropper (Milan: Nuova Alfa, 2000), 51–76.

56 Daniela del Pesco, *Bernini in Francia. Paul de Chantelou e il 'Journal de voyage du cavalier bernin en france'* (Naples: Electa, 2007), 196.

57 Wittkower, "Bernini's equestrian," 512.

ledged however that Colbert may have simply given in to pressure to abandon Bernini's project, and turned his focus to Charles Le Brun.⁵⁸ There is a further, not necessarily mutually exclusive, explanation: an alternative project for an equestrian statue drew French attention away from Bernini. In the late fall of 1673 two *avvisi* notices reported that a bronze statue of King Louis XIV was underway in Rome. The first, dated October 28, reported that: "A very beautiful statue in bronze representing the Most Christian King, armed on horseback, is being made here on the orders of that King to send to Paris."⁵⁹ In November another *avviso* surfaced, reporting that:

Essendo poi stato veduto il disegno del Gran piedestallo, sopra il quale da sedere la scritta statua di bronzo, che fa qui fabbricare il Xmo, vi è stato chi ha detto, che servirà quanto di terrore a suoi nemici per esser fondato sopra formidabili cannoni. (The design of the great pedestal, on which the aforementioned statue in bronze that the Christian king is having made here will sit, has been seen; there were those who said that it will serve as much to terrorize his enemies, as it is set up on formidable cannons).⁶⁰

The *avviso* contains a play-on-words around *fondato*, from *fondare*, to establish or set up. The suggestion is that the pedestal is to be decorated with military imagery – particularly cannons. The statue will thus rest on serious armoury, as Louis XIV's power rests on military might. Cannons were almost synonymous with Louis XIV's military ambitions in these years: the French cannon used in the Dutch War in the late 1660's were marked with the motto 'Ultima Ratio Regis', "the final argument of the king."⁶¹ In a more indirect way, *fondato* evokes *fondere*, to cast, as in to cast a bronze. The idea of bronze casting as representative of military might was standard at the time, as the technical process was the same as creating cannon.⁶²

It is not surprising that the French would consider an alternative equestrian project in 1672/1673. In the summer and early fall of 1672 Bernini fell seriously ill, and his marble *Louis XIV* was in an uncertain state of development.⁶³ It was only at the end of that year that he finished the head of the king, leaving the body of the horse largely to students at the French Academy in Rome. In the fall of 1673 Colbert was still negotiating for more marble to create a stone base for the work.⁶⁴ The situation may have begun to appear hopeless.

58 Wittkower, "Bernini's equestrian," 512. Gould also suggests that Colbert's attention was drawn away by a rival project by Le Brun and Girardon. Gould, *Bernini in France*, 127.

59 "Si lavora qui una statua bellissima di bronzo rappresentante il Re Xmo a[r]mato a Cavallo da mandare a Parigi fatta d'ordine di detto Re." BAV, Barb. lat. 6410, October 28, 1673, 320v.

60 BAV, Barb. lat. 6410, 343v. November 11, 1673.

61 Lynn, *The Wars*, 109.

62 Richard L. Cleary, *The Place Royale and Urban Design in the Ancien Régime* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 56.

63 Simone Hoog, *Le Bernini, Louis XIV, une statue 'déplacée'* (Paris: Adam Biro, 1989), 36.

64 Wittkower, "Bernini's equestrian," 527, doc. 58.

At the same time Elpidio Benedetti, formerly Mazarin's agent in Rome and a fierce protector of French interests, began once again to make noise about realizing a monumental staircase at Trinità dei Monti featuring a bronze equestrian of the French king, a project first mentioned in 1660.⁶⁵ The original project, as envisioned by Cardinal Mazarin, was to be "in memory of the Peace [of the Pyrenees]," thus that equestrian was also conceived of in terms of the tense relationship between the French and the Spanish.⁶⁶ In the summer of 1672 the Duke d'Estrées reported to the French king that Benedetti was considering selling his villa on the Janiculum hill in order to finance the stairs.⁶⁷ Benedetti's plan called for a bronze equestrian statue of Louis XIV; the statue was anticipated to be the most expensive element of the project.⁶⁸ The whole idea was unlikely to have ever found papal support, and the equestrian statue was a particular sticking point.⁶⁹ In the end the plan came to nothing.

The drawings mentioned in the 1673 *avviso* do not however appear to relate to Benedetti's plan. The equestrian in question was to go to France, not to remain in Rome. Benedetti's project is recorded in two drawings; the pedestal shown in both is substantial, but does not have any symbols of military victory, no cannons or trophies.⁷⁰ Instead the pedestal is entirely covered with text, a characteristic that can be related to Benedetti's own logomaniacal taste in architectural decoration.⁷¹ The military references of this mystery equestrian are entirely likely for a project conceived circa 1672–73. In 1672, in the lead up to the Dutch War, Louis XIV was preparing to invade the Spanish territory

65 Tod A. Marder, "Bernini and Benedetti at Trinità dei Monti," *The Art Bulletin* 62 (1980): 286.

66 Tod A. Marder, "The decision to build the Spanish Steps: from project to monument," in *Projects and monuments in the period of the Roman baroque*, ed. Hellmut Hager and Susan Scott Munshower (University Park, Penn.: The Pennsylvania State University, 1984), 85.

67 Wittkower, "Bernini's equestrian," 525, doc. 45. On the villa see: Carla Benocci, *Villa Il Vascello* (Rome: Erasma Edizioni, 2007) and John Varriano, "Plautilla Bricci 'architetrice' and the Villa Benedetti in Rome," in *An architectural progress in the Renaissance and Baroque: sojourns in and out of Italy; essays in architectural history presented to Hellmut Hager on his sixty-sixth birthday*, ed. Henry A. Millon and Susan Scott Munshower (University Park, Penn.: The Pennsylvania State University, 1992), 266–279.

68 Madeleine Laurain-Portemer, "Fortuna e sfortuna di Bernini nella Francia di Mazzarino," *Gian Lorenzo Bernini e le arti visive*, ed. Marcello Fagiolo (Rome: Istituto della Enciclopedia Italiana, 1987), 135.

69 Benedetti knew that the statue would be a problem and tried to anticipate it, explaining: "Non crederai che si dovesse incontrare difficoltà per l'esposizione della statua del Re in publico poiché essendo se può dire in casa di S. M.tà et in una piazza di suo sito, pare che sia l'istesso come che si esponesse in un cortile d'un palazzo d'un imbasciatore che non haverebbe eccezione alcuna." Laurain-Portemer, "Fortuna," 293, n. 84. On Alexander's response to this plan in the form of the Vatican *Constantine*, see Marder, *Scala Regia*, 206.

70 Marder "Bernini and Benedetti," 286–289; figs. 1 and 2.

71 Benedetti had what could be generously described as a fixation with text on buildings. Matteo Mayer, *Villa benedetta* (Rome: Mascardi, 1677).

of Franche-Comté; by 1673 a declaration of war had been drafted against Spain, and in the same year the Spanish in turn declared war on the French as a result of intrusions into the Spanish Netherlands.⁷² This was an intensification of the perpetually strained relationship between the two ‘Most Christian’ crowns, a strain that was often felt on the streets of Rome. The friction appears, only somewhat in jest, in another *avviso*. In January 1672 it was reported that: “A footman of the Marquis Astora, wanting to take down from a wall an image of St. Dominic belonging to the noble Guzman family of Spain, caused the image to fall on another of St. Louis, King of France, shattering the latter, and it was said that even the saints of these two nations want to smash each other’s heads in.”⁷³ The tone is satirical, the substance serious – despite the 1659 Peace of the Pyrenees theoretically establishing a truce between the two nations, France and Spain continued to challenge each other throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Renewed rumours of an equestrian monument of Louis XIV in 1673, explicitly intended to ‘terrorize’ the French king’s enemies, reflect the renewed tensions between the two nations in those years over the French war in Holland.

Conclusion

Geographically separated yet ideologically linked, Bernini’s completed equestrians, the *Constantine* and the *Louis XIV*, express similar messages of the limits placed on secular power by divine authority. Examples of paired equestrians in Rome have been discussed here, but such pairs are of course also markers of Medicean Florence, Farnese Piacenza, and Hapsburg Madrid. Yet, Bernini’s *Louis XIV* and the marble *Constantine* from which it springs are fundamentally unlike the majority of bronze equestrian statues made in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries by Italian artists for foreign rulers, all of which are essentially in the tradition of equestrian portraits as images of martial authority. Bernini’s horses and their riders inhabit abstract narrative and allegorical universes and cannot be read as straightforward glorifications of military prowess. His equestrian statues attempt to push the type in new directions of storytelling and signification, but their joint meaning is to be sought in deep-rooted traditions of papal imagery.

72 Lynn, *The Wars*, 113–122.

73 BAV, Barb lat 6408, Jan 30, 1672, 90v. “Volendo un lacchè del Marchese Astora distaccare da un muro un quadro di S. Domenico della nobile famiglia Guzman di Spagna cade questo sopra un altro di S. Lodovico Re di Francia, che lo fraccasso, e vi fu chi disse, che anco i Santi di questi nationi si vogliono romper la testa.”