IN 1997 THE Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, acquired an early seventeenth-century painting of the Denial of St Peter (Fig.26). Almost nothing was known about its provenance before it was sold as an anonymous work by an antiques dealer to Vincenzo Imparato Caracciolo of Naples shortly after the Second World War. Only after its restoration in 1959–64 was it attributed to Caravaggio, and solely on the basis of style. This attribution, first put forward by Roberto Longhi, is currently accepted by almost all art historians, who date it to 1609–10, the last two years of the artist’s life.¹ This article provides new archival evidence concerning a painting of the same subject by Caravaggio acquired by Guido Reni in 1613 which could be either the work in the Metropolitan or another painting of the same subject that is now lost.

In 1612 Guido Reni returned to his native city of Bologna after spending over ten years in Rome. His departure, up until now dated to the spring of that year or shortly afterwards,² must have occurred before 8th March, on which date he instructed an agent to collect on his behalf from the Reverenda Camera Apostolica the balance of his fee for the frescos Reni had painted

¹ On the recent vicissitudes of the painting, see exh. cat. Caravaggio. The final years, Naples (Capodimonte) and London (National Gallery) 2004–05, pp.140–43, no.17, entry by K. Christiansen; see also M. Canetti: Caravaggio, la vita e l’opera, Bergamo 1991, pp.380–81 and 227; and V. Pacelli: L’ultimo Caravaggio, dalla Maddalena a mezza figura ai due San Giovanni (1606–1610), Perugia 1994, pp.99–100 (who dates it to 1610, but also records that Cesare Brandi believed the painting was the work of a ‘caravagesco siracusano’).

CARAVAGGIO’S ‘DENIAL OF ST PETER’

in the Borghese Chapel in S. Maria Maggiore (1610–12). His representative was Luca Ciamberlano, an engraver from Urbino with whom Reni had collaborated in 1609–12 on a series of engravings after his designs of scenes from the life of Philip Neri, made on the occasion of the reopening of the second inquiry into Philip’s canonisation. On 12th September 1612, Ciamberlano again acted as his agent, charged with the task of collecting the money owed to Reni by some of his fellow Bolognese, debts that dated from the time of Reni’s Roman sojourn.5

Ciamberlano cannot have been very prompt in dispatching to Bologna the sums he had collected, for on 3rd May 1613 Reni appointed another agent to represent him, the painter Alessandro Albini (1568–1646), also from Bologna, who had collaborated with him on the frescos of the Annunciation chapel in the Quirinal Palace.6 The same day, 3rd May, Albini summoned Ciamberlano before the notary Simon Petrus Corillus in order to make ‘a final reckoning and balance’ of the amounts owed by Ciamberlano to Reni (see Appendix below). It is in this document that mention is made of a painting of the Denial of St Peter by Caravaggio; Ciamberlano owed Reni 350 scudi, but the deed adds that:

in fact, as far as the correct reckoning and reduction of the said sum is concerned, the above-mentioned master Alessandro [Albini] stated that he had been given and received from the said master Luca [Ciamberlano], here present, a picture, that is, a painting by the hand of the late master Michelangelo da Caravaggio, which they say portrays the denial of St Peter with a maid. The above picture, the said master Alessandro stated that he had been given and accepted from the said master Luca, here present, for the sum of two hundred and forty scudi in cash.

It is not clear if Reni was seeking through his agent Albini only to retrieve repayment from Ciamberlano of debts owed to him by other people that Ciamberlano was collecting on Reni’s behalf, or whether Ciamberlano himself owed Reni money. Nor do we know if the painting by Caravaggio was owned by Ciamberlano or acquired by him from one of Reni’s debtors. Ciamberlano’s residual debt amounted to 110 scudi (350 scudi minus the 240 scudi at which the painting was valued), which he paid back over the following seven years. He handed over the final instalment, 40 scudi, in 1620 to Reni’s cousin and future heir, the Bolognese painter Guido Signorini.7

This document is important for two reasons; it is the first mention of a painting of a Denial of St Peter by Caravaggio. The second and last mention of such a work dates from 1650 when, in an inventory of paintings belonging to the Savelli family in Rome is listed: ‘Un’Ancella con S. Pietro negante, et una altra meza figura per traverso, p.65, e 4 del Caravaggio, D. 250’.8 In another inventory of 1650, the same picture is listed simply as a ‘S. Pietro negante del Caravagio’.9 Since this is the only work by Caravaggio ever mentioned in the family’s collection, both Laura Testa and Keith Christiansen infer that this must be the same picture that is listed, without attribution, in a 1624 inventory of the Savelli palace at Arcidia and again in 1631, in Palazzo Savelli, Rome, as ‘Un S. Pietro con l’ancella cornice dorata’.10 This is clearly the same painting in the inventory of 1650, but it is worth noting that in the last document, like the one relating to Ciamberlano’s painting, only two figures are mentioned: St Peter and the maid. Two possible hypotheses can be advanced: that the painting referred to in the 1613 document is the same one that later belonged to the Savelli family, now in the Metropolitan Museum, or that it showed only two figures and has subsequently been lost. Some paintings of the same subject with only two figures attributed to Pensionante del Saraceni could reflect a lost painting of the subject by Caravaggio.11 The first hypothesis seems to be the more probable, given that all three figures are not always mentioned in documents, even when they were known to be present.

The second point of importance is that the document shows that Reni owned a work by Caravaggio. During the years
Obituaries

Allan Braham (1937–2011)

Allan Braham, who died in March 2011 aged seventy-three, spent his career on the curatorial staff of the National Gallery, London (1962–92). He rose steadily to become Keeper and Deputy Director under Michael Levey, with whom he had a notably successful working relationship. Among the staff he had a reputation for his wide and thorough knowledge of the Gallery’s collections and he worked fruitfully with its conservators, who valued his precise and meticulous approach. He was appointed Curator of Spanish paintings, publishing the revised second edition of the Catalogue of Spanish Paintings in 1970, and was the author of essays on Velázquez and also Rubens in the Themes and Painters series published in 1972. His contribution to the Painting in Focus series (1976), on the Rokey Venus, was memorable for its attempt to test the artist’s realism with the aid of live models, his four-year-old daughter playing the part of Cupid. The climax of this phase of Allan’s career was the major loan exhibition from British collections El Greco to Goya in 1981. By that time, however, he had been given responsibility for Italian cinquecento paintings, of which the revised catalogue appeared in 1985. He also curated the Moroni exhibition in 1978. His involvement in all aspects of the Gallery’s activities perfectly qualified him to write The Working of the National Gallery (1974).

Throughout these years, however, Allan was pursuing his love of French classical architecture of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. While still an undergraduate at the Courtauld Institute of Art, his identification of a drawing by François Mansart had so impressed his tutor, Anthony Blunt, that he had been encouraged to write a full-scale article for publication in the Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes, where it appeared in 1960, shortly before Allan’s graduation. He then embarked on a Ph.D. thesis under Blunt’s supervision on Mansart’s drawings for the Louvre, completing it in 1967. Although he listed ‘architecture’ merely as his hobby in Who’s Who, this was a passion pursued purposefully, and resulted in three major publications, two of them collaborative. With Peter Smith, he wrote the two-volume monograph François Mansart (1973), which was hailed by Robert Berger in the Art Bulletin as ‘an absolute treasure’ for its new documents, its many appendices and its nearly six hundred illustrations. The text, Berger predicted, would make it ‘the definitive study of Mansart for many decades to come’. His second collaboration, with Helmut Hager, Carlo Fontana: the drawings at Windsor Castle (1977), was a more technical work. This was intended to lead to further collaborative catalogues of Italian Baroque architectural drawings. However, by the later 1980s he was beginning to falter, so that none of these plans came to fruition.

Allan’s most wide-ranging architectural publication developed from a series of lectures and classes given at the Courtauld Institute. Here he moved forward further into the eighteenth century, examining the achievements of the last generation ofancien régimearchitects, of whom J.-G. Soufflot is the most celebrated and Charles de Wailly probably the one closest to Allan’s heart. The Architecture of the French Enlightenment (1980) was immediately recognised as a groundbreaking achievement: The Society of Architectural Historians of Great Britain awarded it the Alice Davis Hitchcock medallion for 1980, and it also received the Banister Fletcher Award, recognising its status as the first balanced and comprehensive account in any language of a