

STEPHEN ONGPIN FINE ART



Giovanni Battista PIAZZETTA (Venice 1682 - Venice 1754)

A Youth with a Plumed Cap

Black chalk, with stumping and touches of white chalk, on buff paper, backed.

400 x 310 mm. (15 3/4 x 12 1/4 in.)

This is a particularly large and attractive example of Giambattista Piazzetta's independent drawings of heads. As Antonio Morassi has described this drawing, 'The young man is represented here as a page, with a feathered beret and a white ruff. He holds his left hand to his heart as if he were bowing.' Alice Binion has further noted of such teste di carattere as this that, 'In most of these drawings, made from life, Piazzetta dispensed with shadows. The extraordinary facility of the figures was obtained by his singular technique of modelling by smudging the chalk instead of using hatching.'

The model for this drawing may be tentatively identified as Piazzetta's eldest son Giacomo Giusto, who was born in December 1725. Giacomo appears in a number of his father's paintings and drawings from the 1730s onwards, notably in such finished genre drawings as Giacomo Feeding a Dog in the Art Institute of Chicago and a Head of a Youth with a Standard in the Ashmolean Museum in Oxford, as well as in drawings in the British Museum, the Cleveland Museum of Art, the National Gallery of Victoria in Melbourne, and elsewhere.

The present sheet was part of the superb collection of 18th century Venetian drawings assembled by Hélié de Talleyrand-Périgord, 7th Duc de Talleyrand and Duc de Dino (1882-1968). The collection, catalogued and published by the scholar Antonio Morassi in 1958, included four other drawings by Piazzetta, apart from the present sheet, as well as numerous studies by Giambattista and Domenico Tiepolo and Francesco Guardi, together with drawings by Bernardo Bellotto, Canaletto, Francesco

Fontebasso, Pietro Antonio Novelli, Giambattista Piranesi, Francesco Zuccarelli and Giuseppe Zais.

Exhibitions

London, Hazlitt, Gooden & Fox, Eighteenth Century Venetian Drawings, 1993-1994, no.1.

Literature:

Antonio Morassi, Dessins Vénitiens du Dix-huitième Siècle de la Collection du Duc de Talleyrand, Milan, 1958, p.14, no.2, pl.2.

Artist description:

Active as a painter, draughtsman, printmaker and book illustrator, Giambattista Piazzetta was first trained by his father, a sculptor, and later was a pupil of Antonio Molinari. A brief stay in Bologna between 1703 and 1705 introduced him to Giuseppe Maria Crespi, whose paintings, like those of Guercino and the Carracci, were to have a particular influence on Piazzetta's early work. Back in Venice by about 1705, Piazzetta was registered in the Fraglia, the Venetian painter's guild, by 1711. He worked in Venice for the remainder of his career, painting genre scenes, devotional representations of single saints, portraits and numerous altarpieces for local churches, as well as his only large-scale decoration; the ceiling of Saint Dominic in Glory for the church of SS. Giovanni e Paolo, completed in 1727. He also produced several hundred designs for book illustrations, many of which were commissioned for books issued by the publisher Giovanni Battista Albrizzi, notably an elaborate edition of Torquato Tasso's epic poem Gerusalemme Liberata that appeared in 1745. By the later part of his career Piazzetta enjoyed considerable renown, both within Venice and abroad, as a draughtsman and painter. In 1754, the year of his death, he was elected principe of the Accademia dei Pittori in Venice.