

STEPHEN ONGPIN FINE ART

GIOVANNI ANTONIO CANAL, called CANALETTO

Venice 1697-1768 Venice

A Capriccio of a Colonnade Opening onto a Courtyard of a Palace

Pen and brown ink and brown and grey wash, with touches of watercolour, with double framing lines in black ink.

Laid down.

Inscribed *Ant^o Canale* in pencil in the lower right margin.

364 x 287 mm. (14 3/8 x 11 1/4 in.) [image]

379 x 302 mm. (14 7/8 x 11 7/8 in.) [sheet]

Provenance

Cav. Antonio Grandi, Milan and Bellagio, until 1919¹; Art market, Milan, in 1919, where acquired by Luigi Albertini, Rome²; Private collection.

Literature

Ettore Modigliani, 'Capolavori veneziani del '700 ritornati in Italia', *Dedalo*, 1924-1925, p.343

Ettore Modigliani, *La collezione di Luigi Albertini*, Rome, 1942, pl.XXV

Terisio Pignatti, *Il Museo Correr di Venezia: Dipinti del XVII e XVIII Secolo*, Venice, 1960, p.35

W. G. Constable, *Canaletto. Giovanni Antonio Canal 1697-1768*, Oxford, 1962, Vol.1, pl.155, Vol.II, no.822 and under no.509³

Lionello Puppi, *L'opera completa del Canaletto*, Milan, 1968, p.121, under no.355A

Terisio Pignatti, *Antonio Canal detto Il Canaletto*, Florence, 1976, p.208, note to pl.138

Alessandro Bettagno, ed., *Canaletto: Disegni – dipinti – incisioni*, exhibition catalogue, Venice, 1982, p.88, under no.116 (entry by Giovanna Nepi Scirè)

W. G. Constable and J. G. Links, *Canaletto. Giovanni Antonio Canal 1697-1768*, 2nd ed., Oxford, 1976, Vol.I, p.151, pl.155, no.822, Vol.II, p.466, under no.509, pp.607-608, no.822

André Corboz, *Canaletto: Una Venezia immaginaria*, Milan, 1985, Vol.II, pp.768-769, no.D233

Dario Succi, *Capricci Veneziani del Settecento*, exhibition catalogue, Gorizia, 1988, pp.428-429

Katherine Baetjer and J. G. Links, *Canaletto*, exhibition catalogue, New York, 1989-1990, p.276, under no.85

Jane Martineau and Andrew Robison, ed., *The Glory of Venice: Art in the Eighteenth Century*, exhibition catalogue, London and Washington, D.C., 1994-1995, p.439, under no.148 (entry by Ruth Bromberg)

Tomàs Llorens Serra et al, *El Viatge a Itàlia: Vedute Italianes del Segle XVIII de la Col·lecció Carmen Thyssen-Bornemisza*, exhibition catalogue, Barcelona, 1997-1998, p.66 (entry by Roberto Contini)

Roberto Contini, *The Thyssen-Bornemisza Collection: Seventeenth and Eighteenth Century Italian Painting*, London, 2002, p.283, fig.2

Bożena Anna Kowalczyk, ed., *Canaletto Guardi: Les deux maîtres de Venise*, exhibition

catalogue, Paris, 2012-2013, p.180, under no.48
Giovanna Nepi Scirè, *The Accademia Galleries in Venice*, Milan, 2015, p.157, under no.10
Bożena Anna Kowalczyk, *Canaletto 1697-1768*, exhibition catalogue, Rome, 2018, p.204, under no.63.

Exhibition

Paris, Petit Palais, Palais des Beaux-Arts, *Venise aux XVIII^e – XIX^e siècles / Venezia nei secoli XVIII e XIX*, April – May 1919, no.11 ('*Atrio e Scalone di un Palazzo veneziano / Péristyle et Escalier d'un Palais vénitien. Dessin pour le tableau de la Galerie de Venise... (Proprieta del Cav. Antonio Grandi – Milano)*').

Long famous throughout Europe, Canaletto was elected on 11 September 1763 to the Venetian Accademia di Pittura, Scultura e Architettura, which had been founded in 1750. Required to provide a *morceau de reception*, the artist must have been aware that the resultant painting would be his legacy to his native city. Signed and dated 1765, the painting which served as his reception piece is now in the Galleria dell'Accademia in Venice⁴. Exhibited in the Piazza San Marco in Canaletto's honour during the Festa della Sensa in 1777, the painting was to remain for more than two centuries the only painting by the artist readily accessible in his native city, and it rapidly became his most celebrated work. Countless copies are known, derivative versions regularly being claimed to be autograph replicas⁵. Even Francesco Guardi used it as the basis for two drawings in pen and ink and wash, now in the Metropolitan Museum of Art and in the Pierpont Morgan Library in New York⁶, while elements of the composition also recur in a third *capriccio* drawing by Guardi in the collection of the Fondazione Giorgio Cini in Venice⁷.

The only other version in oil generally accepted as Canaletto's work is that which is first recorded in a sale at Sotheby's in London in 1981 and which has since been in the collection of Carmen Thyssen-Bornemisza⁸. At 42 x 32.5 cm., that painting is only slightly larger than the present sheet and has a pendant canvas showing the Scuola di San Marco⁹. The Thyssen version corresponds with that in the Gallerie dell'Accademia in its general composition, but there are numerous variations, particularly in the courtyard area, where the lower flight of stairs and the *oeil-de-boeuf* window are omitted and the door is moved to the garden wall, where a statue replaces the urn. The armorial achievement on the right wall is also lowered significantly.

It has been suggested that the composition of the Accademia canvas was inspired by the courtyard of the Venetian *palazzo* on the Grand Canal known as the Ca' d'Oro, and this has been argued forcefully by André Corboz¹⁰. While there are similarities in the disposition of the elements, those elements – the long flight of steps giving access to the upper storey, the covered loggia to one side, and the view seen at the far end of the portico – are ubiquitous architectural features in Venice. View painters were required to submit as their *morceau de reception* to the Venetian Academy a work of the imagination. Canaletto had a lifetime of experience in disguising his sources and, as Terisio Pignatti has observed, '*with splendid disregard for facts, Canaletto's capricci often combine the real with the fantastic.*'¹¹ A sketch by Canaletto, inscribed by the artist '*per la cademia*', is one of four architectural studies on a drawing in the Museo Correr, Venice¹². If its identification as connected with the 1765 painting is correct, it must represent a very early stage in the development of the composition, and has indeed been

dated by Corboz significantly earlier¹³. It shows, if anything, less similarity with the Ca' d'Oro than the painting does. Thus the present sheet is the only one known which is unquestionably related to the Accademia painting.

This large and highly finished drawing is first recorded in 1919, when it was exhibited at the Petit Palais in Paris, alongside the related canvas. It was subsequently published by Ettore Modigliani, the director of the Pinacoteca di Brera in Milan between 1908 and 1934¹⁴. Untraced for eighty years, the drawing has often been described as preparatory for the 1765 painting. Now that it has re-emerged, however, it is clear that it follows the painting, and was executed as a finished work of art in its own right. There are, however, numerous small variations from the oil, an almost infinite number of slight shifts of proportion and adjustments, that make it anything but a slavish copy. Thus, for instance, here the pendant lantern on the left hangs lower, as does the tassel hanging to the left of the velvet curtain thrown over the interior balustrade. Whereas in the painting the arch through which the upper storey is seen touches the nearer of the two pilasters beyond the windows, in the drawing there is a considerable gap, while the large armorial at the right is shorter and slightly higher up. In applying darker wash over the lighter, no attempt is made to replicate similar patterns in the painting, whether it be in the cloud patterns, on the underside of the wooden planks of the floor of the upper storey, the underside of the architrave supported by the columns, or the walls of the garden or the exterior of the palace. All areas of foliage differ noticeably, including at the lower left, the trees beyond the garden wall, and those seen through the distant arch, while the leaves in the urn on the garden wall are significantly increased in size (and also in number), making it more of a focal point. The present sheet being a work on a much smaller scale, a number of features of the painting are omitted here: the long stick held by the man leaning over the balustrade on the left, the basket on the ground between the running boy and the prominent gentleman wearing a blue cloak, the sticks next to the man seated by the next column, the tricorne hat of the man standing beyond and the nearby dog, and the second figure on the upper flight of stairs. Among other minor changes, a scallop shell replaces a sculpted bust above the doorway on the stairs.

As Lionello Puppi has written of Canaletto's mature pen and wash drawings, '*These were clearly intended for collectors of pure graphic work. He used a wide range of techniques in these finished products, some of them experimental. It is also obvious that they were not simply exercises demonstrating the drawing skills of a virtuoso performer. On the contrary, the artist was clearly trying new techniques here because he was looking for ways of expressing his ideas. He was traditional in his use of chalk or in working with black, and less commonly with red, pencil, but he often replaced these materials - or more usually heightened their effect - either by brushwork or more often by inking these finished drawings with a pen...Canaletto experimented with various kinds of pen, including quills, reeds and metal nibs, in search of the different effects that could be obtained with them. His use of techniques and implements was constantly developing, always complex. He used a variety of closely integrated techniques to produce a harmonious whole in the finished composition. He sometimes restricted himself to working simply with a pen or a pencil, which he carried to the very limit of its possibilities; he habitually used black pencil or sanguine only for his initial notation. After this first and provisional stage in the process of defining the image, he usually abandoned these materials in favour of the pen or occasionally the brush.*'¹⁵

The present sheet was previously only known from an old black and white photograph. Its re-emergence reveals that, while it has hitherto been recorded as monochrome, it is, in fact, embellished with small touches of watercolour, introduced with great restraint and evidently coeval with its execution. This is the only instance of the painter's use of the watercolour medium that has been identified. The Venetian connoisseur Francesco Algarotti is recorded as having owned '9 Vedute ad acquerello e penna' by Canaletto which were estimated highly in the posthumous inventory of his brother Bonomo, but it is not known for sure that they were true watercolours rather than wash drawings¹⁶. It should come as no surprise that Canaletto worked in watercolour, however, for, as Puppi has pointed out, he showed an inexhaustible interest in technical experimentation. While the majority of his paintings are executed in oil on canvas, he also used as support, on occasion, copper plates, canvas laid on panel and mahogany panels. Apart from painting in oil, he also made finished drawings and etchings. Watercolour must have been very familiar to him as a medium from his nine years in England, between 1746 and 1755, where it was particularly popular¹⁷.

Roberto Contini states that an etching of the composition by the 18th century German printmaker Joseph Wagner, published in 1779 with an inscription describing it as after the Accademia painting, is in fact after the present sheet¹⁸. While that is incorrect, it does correspond with the present watercolour in the relationship of the arch opening onto the upper storey with the windows and pilasters (as discussed above), in the man on the courtyard stairs being without a staff and in the standing man in the middle distance under the portico not wearing a tricorne hat.

Charles Beddington

1. The first owner of this drawing by Canaletto, Cavaliere Antonio Grandi (1857-1923), was an important figure in Milanese commercial and industrial circles, as well as a perceptive collector. He was a judge in the Commercial Court and for a long time a member of the administrative Council of the Banca Lombarda. He was several times President of the Upper Council of the Banca d'Italia in Rome and subsequently presided over the Regency Council of the Milan branch of the bank. Grandi lent the present sheet to the exhibition of 18th and 19th century Venetian art held at the Petit Palais in Paris in 1919, the only time it has previously been exhibited. Grandi also lent a handful of other works to the same exhibition, including a drawing by Francesco Guardi and a portrait painting by Sebastiano Ricci.

2. Senator Luigi Albertini (1871-1941), who may have acquired this drawing directly from Grandi, is known above all as the editor of the Milanese newspaper *Corriere della Sera* from 1900 until his removal in 1925 for his opposition to the Fascist government. Albertini also owned the magnificent pair of Venetian views by Canaletto of *The Molo looking West* and *The Riva degli Schiavoni looking East*, acquired in 1995 for the Museo d'Arte Antica del Castello Sforzesco in Milan (Constable, *op.cit.*, Vol.I, pls.27 and 29, Vol.II, nos.95 and 113), and a signed *Capriccio of Classical and Renaissance Buildings*, which entered the collection of the Banca Nazionale del Lavoro in Rome in 1985 (Constable, *op.cit.*, under no.479; Kowalczyk, *op.cit.*, 2018, pp.186-187, no.55). Among Albertini's other Venetian paintings were a pair of *capricci* by Francesco Guardi and a version of *The Confession* by Pietro Longhi. Albertini's enthusiasm for collecting

paintings by Canaletto anticipates that of his employer until 1925, the senator and industrialist Mario Crespi (1879-1962), who was the foremost Italian collector of Canaletto's work in the 20th century.

3. 'With the [Accademia] painting is connected a drawing of the subject in pen and wash (Albertini collection)...,which mutatis mutandis is similar in style. This may well have been used for the painting, and may be dated any time between Canaletto's return to Venice and 1765.'; Constable, *op.cit.*, Vol.I, p.151.

4. Inv. 463; Puppi, *op.cit.*, p.121, no.355A, illustrated pl.LXIII; Constable and Links, *op.cit.*, Vol.I, pl.93, no.509, Vol.II, pp.465-467, no.509; Baetjer and Links, *op.cit.*, pp.276-277, no.85; J. G. Links, *Canaletto*, London, 1994, p.215, pl.188; Martineau and Robison, ed., *op.cit.*, p.439, no.148, illustrated p.241, fig.148; Kowalczyk, ed., *op.cit.*, 2012-2013, pp.180-181, no.48; Nepi Scirè, *op.cit.*, pp.156-157, no.10; Rosie Razzall and Lucy Whitaker, *Canaletto & The Art of Venice*, exhibition catalogue, London, 2017, illustrated p.134, fig.56; Kowalczyk, *op.cit.*, 2018, pp.204-205, no.63. The dimensions of the canvas are 131 x 93 cm.

5. Nine are listed by Constable, *op.cit.*, nos.509(a)-509(i), to which a tenth was added by J. G. Links in later editions (no.509(j)). Some versions have been discussed more recently by Roberto Contini, *op.cit.*, 2002, pp.283-285.

6. Inv. 37.165.76 and 1987.70, respectively; Antonio Morassi, *Guardi: Tutti i disegni di Antonio, Francesco e Giacomo Guardi*, Venice, 1975, p.176, nos.560-561, figs.551 and 554, respectively.

7. Inv. 30.073; Morassi, *ibid.*, p.175, no.559, fig.552.

8. Inv. CTB.1981.39; Anonymous sale ('*The Property of a Lady*'), London, Sotheby's, 8 July 1981, part of lot 10 (with the pendant); J. G. Links, *A Supplement to W. G. Constable's Canaletto: Giovanni Antonio Canal 1697-1768*, London, 1998, p.45, no.509(k); Llorens Serra et al, *op.cit.*, 1997, pp.61-66; Contini, *op.cit.*, 2002, pp.280-285, no.59.

9. Inv. CTB.1981.38; Links, *ibid.*, p.32, no.326*; Llorens Serra et al, *op.cit.*, 1997, pp.61-66; Contini, *op.cit.*, 2002, pp.276-279, no.58.

10. Corboz, *op.cit.*, Vol.I, p.329; see figs.397-398 for comparative photographs of the courtyard of the Ca d'Oro. J. G. Links also noted of the Accademia painting that '*The baroque design is wildly capricious, slightly reminiscent of the gothic courtyard of the Ca' d'Oro...*'; J. G. Links, 'Canaletto', in Martineau and Robison, ed., *op.cit.*, p.240.

11. Terisio Pignatti, *Venetian Drawings from American Collections*, exhibition catalogue, Washington and elsewhere, 1974-1975, p.49, under no.101.

12. Inv. 1785; Constable, *op.cit.*, Vol.I, pl.114, Vol.II, no.626(c); Terisio Pignatti, *Disegni antichi del Museo Correr di Venezia*, Vol.I, Venice, 1980, pp.84-85, no.57; Kowalczyk, *op.cit.*, 2018, pp.206-207, no.64.

13. Corboz, *op.cit.*, Vol.II, p.690, no.D64, among '*Disegni 1731-1746*'.

14. Modigliani was responsible for the purchase by the Brera of its magnificent pair of Venetian views by Canaletto sold from the Seeley collection at Christie's in London in 1928 (Constable, *op.cit.*, Vol.I, pl.28, and pl.197 in later editions; Vol.II, nos.107 and 191).

15. Lionello Puppi, 'The Drawings of Antonio Canaletto', in Giandomenico Romanelli et al, *Masterpieces of Eighteenth-Century Venetian Drawing*, London, 1983, p.134.

16. Kowalczyk, *op.cit.*, 2018, p.142.

17. Francesco Zuccarelli (1702-1788), the leading landscape painter among Canaletto's contemporaries in Venice, also adopted watercolour as a medium after his move to London in Canaletto's footsteps in 1752.

18. Contini, *op.cit.*, 2002, p.285. Impressions of the etching are in the British Museum (Inv. 1871,0429.631), the Museo Correr (Inv. FSR cart. 1/0043), and elsewhere.