

# The Metropolitan Museum of Art Bulletin

WINTER 1996/97





Domenico Tiepolo

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*Drawings, Prints, and Paintings*  
*in*  
*The Metropolitan Museum of Art*



LINDA WOLK-SIMON

THE METROPOLITAN MUSEUM  
OF ART

## DIRECTOR'S NOTE

Giambattista Tiepolo, the subject of a major exhibition that opens at the Metropolitan in January, was one of the most celebrated painters in Europe during the eighteenth century. His closest assistant and collaborator over the course of three decades was his son Giandomenico, among whose principal achievements were a consummate mastery of his father's style and the recording and dissemination of that style through technically accomplished etchings of Giambattista's paintings. But Domenico Tiepolo, as he typically inscribed his name on his drawings, was also a gifted artist in his own right, particularly admired for his witty and often brilliant draftsmanship.

As part of the Museum's Tiepolo celebration—held on the 300th anniversary of the birth of Giambattista—we are mounting an exhibition devoted to the works of Domenico, the first such overview ever held. Also opening in January, this show—and this *Bulletin* that accompanies it—surveys his entire career through a presentation of the singularly rich and extensive holdings of The Metropolitan Museum of Art. Special emphasis is placed on Domenico's drawings and prints (the combined holdings of the Department of Drawings and Prints and the Robert Lehman Collection make up one of the largest concentrations of his graphic works anywhere in the world), but the range of his activities

as a painter is also well represented by a select group of frescoes, oil sketches, and canvases of both religious and secular subjects. These provide the touchstones for a broader discussion of his major works and his contributions to the artistic culture of the Venetian *settecento*.

In the following pages Linda Wolk-Simon, assistant curator of the Robert Lehman Collection, takes us through Domenico's career, from his beginnings in the workshop of his more illustrious parent to his highly accomplished efforts as a successful printmaker and painter to his final flourishing as a draftsman that culminated in his extraordinary series of sheets devoted to the life of the commedia dell'arte character Punchinello. Although modest in scale, this publication is the first study to integrate fully all aspects of Domenico's artistic personality, examining in chronological sequence the highlights of his career as draftsman, painter, and printmaker. The *Bulletin* and the exhibition, organized by the author, will introduce Domenico Tiepolo to a broad audience and present a selection of his works, in all their diversity, so that they may be appreciated and assessed on their own merits.

Philippe de Montebello  
*Director*

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## INTRODUCTION

Venice during the eighteenth century became an attenuated reflection of its former self. The thousand-year-old Republic relinquished its once-powerful role on the political stage of Europe, adopting a strategically expedient neutrality in the face of French and Austrian aggression. Lucrative foreign trade dwindled, and rigid censorship laws stifled the flow of progressive ideas from outside and intellectual probity within. Archaic social conventions and symbolic trappings of past glory were staunchly upheld, as ceremonial pomp and pageantry disguised the hollow core of Venetian civic life. Theater—particularly the light, improvisational *commedia dell'arte*—music, masquerade, and Carnival fed the relentless appetites of the local populace and of the swarms of foreign visitors alike for diverting spectacles and frivolous pastimes of all sorts. The once-splendid *Serenissima* (The Most Serene Venetian Republic), as the city had long styled itself, was transformed into an insular and backward-looking never-never land, impervious to the sweeping cultural forces that elsewhere led Europe into the Age of Enlightenment.

It is an historical paradox that the moribund state that Venice had become produced one of the most admired and vital schools of painting of the entire eighteenth century. Its roll call included the view painters Canaletto and Guardi; the history painters Sebastiano Ricci, Giambattista Pittoni, Giovanni Antonio Pellegrini, and Jacopo Amigoni; the landscape painters Marco Ricci and Francesco Zuccarelli; the genre painter Pietro Longhi; and the portraitists Rosalba Carriera and Alessandro Longhi. Towering over all of his contemporaries was the preeminent artistic genius of the day, Giambattista Tiepolo (1696–1770), acclaimed not only in Venice but also famed and sought after by powerful patrons throughout Europe. Heir to the pictorial pageantry of Veronese and the golden age of sixteenth-century Venetian painting, Giambattista Tiepolo also signaled the culmination of the Grand Manner of Italian Baroque painting, the legacy of which—nobly posturing figures, expansive, operatic compositions, and soaring, light-drenched skies—he elevated to brilliant new heights. Something of his genius was inherited by his son Domenico, whose own muse ushered him into the pantheon of Venetian art.

It was the fate of Domenico Tiepolo (1727–1804) to be the gifted son of a more prodigiously gifted father (fig. 1). A dutiful offspring, he accepted this fate gracefully, the perpetual understudy content to stand in the spotlight's reflected glory while occasionally commanding it on his own. Domenico assumed this role early and with unwavering loyalty. Referring to the sixteen-year-old artist, whose paintings he would later collect, the worldly Venetian savant and dilettante Francesco Algarotti noted approv-



I \* GIAMBATTISTA TIEPOLO

**The Artist with Presumed Portrait of His Son Domenico, 1752–53.** Detail of *Apollo and the Four Continents* from the grand staircase of the Residenz, Würzburg (see fig. 10)

ingly in 1743 that Domenico was already “following in the footsteps of his father.” Nearly two decades later Alessandro Longhi (likewise the painter-son of a famous artist), in his *Compendio delle vite de’ pittori veneziani* (Venice, 1760), confined his discussion of Domenico to the observation that he was “the most diligent imitator of such a father.” In a contract drawn up with the Scuola di San Giovanni Evangelista the thirty-three-year-old artist, his own reputation by then well established, is called “Signor Domenico Tiepoletto, son of the celebrated professor.” And Domenico himself proclaimed his filial devotion in an etching after one of Giambattista’s paintings inscribed “Quas Pater pexit, Obsequissimo animo Filius incidens”—What is painted by the father is etched by the devoted son. As this varied testimony from his lifetime indicates, Domenico’s artistic identity was then, as it remains today, defined principally through his paternal lineage.

Domenico Tiepolo was endowed with a distinctive and independent artistic personality, however, and his own considerable accomplishments as a painter, printmaker, and particularly as a draftsman have been increasingly appreciated in recent years. Not surprisingly, it was in his autonomous works rather than in large-scale projects on which he collaborated with Giambattista Tiepolo (fig. 10) that this personality came into focus. Giambattista was foremost the purveyor of a grand, theatrical style, ideally suited to vast fresco decorations and monumental canvases populated by ancient heroes (fig. 2), mythological deities, and imperious saints. Domenico, although he could when called upon scale such Olympian heights, demonstrated instead a predilection for the private and intimate; and his preferred subject matter was drawn from the less rarefied and more immediately engaging realm of

genre—popular culture and everyday life. Even when that subject was overtly religious in content, the artist’s fascination with the quotidian and anecdotal and his affinity for the poignant and touching aspects of the human condition were never entirely absent. These currents found direct antecedents in certain of his father’s paintings and drawings, but what remained on the periphery of Giambattista’s art was accorded center stage by Domenico.

**2 \* GIAMBATTISTA TIEPOLO**  
**Meeting of Cleopatra and**  
**Antony, mid-1740s. Fresco.**  
Palazzo Labia, Venice



## THE EARLY YEARS OF DOMENICO TIEPOLO

Born in Venice on August 30, 1727, Giovanni Domenico Maria Antonio Tiepolo was baptized on the tenth of September in the parish church of San Ternita (Santissima Trinita). The fifth child and eldest surviving son of Giambattista Tiepolo and his wife, Cecilia Guardi, sister of the painters Gianantonio and Francesco Guardi, Domenico was named for his maternal and paternal grandfathers, Domenico Tiepolo and Domenico Guardi. In joining his father's business (as his younger brother Lorenzo was later to do), he followed the long-standing Venetian tradition of the family workshop, practiced in the fifteenth century by the Bellini, the Vivarini, and the Lombardo family of sculptors and architects, and perpetuated into the sixteenth century by Carpaccio, Tintoretto, Veronese, and Jacopo Bassano, all of whom collaborated with offspring of widely divergent abilities. Another family

enterprise existed in Venice in the eighteenth century, that of Domenico's Guardi uncles, Gianantonio, Francesco, and the now virtually unknown Nicolò; the genre painter Pietro Longhi's son Alessandro likewise became an artist of renown. In this climate Domenico's career path was not unpredictable, but unlike his talentless cousin Giacomo Guardi, who secured for himself only a meager footnote in the chronicles of Venetian art, he showed a natural aptitude for the job.

Domenico's artistic training in the Tiepolo workshop began in the early 1740s, a productive period in which Giambattista executed important frescoes, altarpieces, ceiling paintings, and mythological and allegorical canvases for distinguished patrons both Venetian and foreign. His initial activity consisted primarily of copying his father's drawings and paintings. The Metropolitan's *Three Angels Appearing to Abraham* (fig. 3) is an early copy by Domenico based on a sheet by Giambattista. In 1744 the fledgling artist began to experiment with printmaking, creating etchings after Giambattista's drawings. These



**3 • The Three Angels Appearing to Abraham by the Oaks of the Mamre.** Pen and brown ink, brown wash, over black chalk; 15¾ × 10⅞ in. (40 × 27.6 cm). Rogers Fund, 1937 (37.165.5)

A student exercise characterized by carefully drawn contours and meticulously applied wash, this highly finished sheet is Domenico's copy of a drawing by Giambattista now in the Museo Civico, Bassano.

*opposite, top*

**4 • Saint Matthew,** ca. 1744. Etching, 8⅞ × 7⅞ in. (22.5 × 20 cm). Rogers Fund, 1922 (22.81.28)

Domenico's image records one of Giambattista's monochrome frescoes in the Sagredo Chapel, San Francesco della Vigna, Venice. Executed ca. 1744, the chapel's decorative program included the Four Evangelists in the pendentives.



5 • **The Virgin Appearing to Saint Simon Stock**, 1749. Etching, 23<sup>13</sup>/<sub>16</sub> × 15<sup>9</sup>/<sub>16</sub> in. (60.4 × 39.5 cm). Rogers Fund, 1922 (22.81.85)

This masterful etching reproduces Giambattista's 1740 ceiling fresco in the Scuola dei Carmini, Venice.

early, somewhat tentative efforts by Domenico are, like his copy drawings, student exercises—products of his continuing artistic education—rather than accomplished works in their own right; but he quickly progressed to reproducing Giambattista's paintings (fig. 4) and, soon, his own compositions (figs. 6, 7). So rapid was his mastery of the medium that by the late 1740s Domenico could justly claim to rival in ability any professional printmaker working in Venice (fig. 5).

In taking up etching, Domenico was most immediately inspired by Giambattista Tiepolo's efforts of the early 1740s, particularly the series known as the *Capricci*, as well as by the works of contemporary and slightly earlier Venetian *peintres-graveurs* such as Luca Carlevaris, Marco Ricci, Canaletto, Michele Marieschi, and Francesco Fontebasso. Eighteenth-century Venice was home to a flourishing print and illustrated-book trade, and the technically accomplished, painterly etchings produced by these artists catered to this taste while proclaiming their creators' gifts in an increasingly competitive local market. Canaletto's etched *Vedute* (Views), published in all likelihood in 1744 (the year that Domenico took up printmaking), must have been of particular interest to the precocious young artist, for both their unsurpassed technical virtuosity and their purpose of promoting the reputation of their maker. As a recent entry in a crowded field, Domenico had no more instructive model to follow; and it is therefore significant that a complete early set of the *Vedute*, presumably acquired (given their rarity) at the time of publication, is recorded in the Tiepolos' collection of prints.

Domenico's activity as a printmaker is in fact more closely allied to that of Canaletto and the ranks of professional etchers than to Giambattista Tiepolo's efforts in this medium. Whereas Giambattista took up etching only intermittently and experimentally, creating images notable for their fundamental strangeness and poetic fantasy (one of his two famous series, the *Scherzi* [fig. 27], was not even circulated during his lifetime), Domenico devoted much energy to this pursuit over many years, producing more than 180 prints. With few exceptions, they are not private flights of fancy or ruminations on bizarre or esoteric themes but transcriptions into the print medium of paintings and drawings, his own and those of Giambattista.

Domenico Tiepolo's emergence in the late 1740s as a printmaker of the first rank coincided with his earliest independent work as a painter—a series of twenty-four canvases for the Oratory of the Crucifixion in San Polo, Venice. Commissioned in 1747 and completed two years later, this cycle includes a *Via Crucis* (Stations of the Cross), images inspired by a devotional cult, first promulgated in the late seventeenth century, that emphasized the worshiper's spiritual identification with the suffering of Christ on the road to Calvary (fig. 6). (In 1749 Domenico



**6 • Via Crucis, Station IV.  
The Meeting of Christ  
and His Most Holy Mother,  
1747-49. Oil on canvas.  
Oratory of the Crucifixion,  
San Polo, Venice**

**7 • Via Crucis, Station IV.  
The Meeting of Christ and  
His Most Holy Mother, 1749.  
Etching, 8 7/8 × 6 15/16 in. (21.9  
× 17.6 cm). Rogers Fund,  
1922 (22.81.6)**

Muscular seminude figures seen from behind, such as that in this print and in the related canvas, were favorite motifs of Giambattista Tiepolo (see fig. 27).

published a series of etchings of the fourteen scenes of the *Via Crucis* preceded by a dedication page and a title page [see figs. 7-9]; a full set is in the Museum's collection.) The figure types are patently derived from Giambattista's, as are certain landscape elements and architectural details. Indeed, at the time of their unveiling it was rumored that Domenico's paintings had been reworked by his father, so close at first glance are they in style and spirit to Giambattista's religious narratives. But certain idiosyncrasies typical of the son characterize this early ambitious effort, notably the rather stiffly posed figures, their lack of volume, and a preference for planar compositions that compensates for an inability to cast forms convincingly in space.

Whatever limitations they reveal, the San Polo canvases are nonetheless remarkably accomplished for a painter in his early twenties. Domenico's distinct artistic personality has surfaced in the crowds of Orientals and





**8 \* Detail of Via Crucis, Station X. Christ Stripped of His Clothes and Given Bile to Drink, 1749. Etching. Rogers Fund, 1922 (22.81.12)**

Several of Domenico's spectators, two of whom here look out and confront the viewer, wear contemporary 18th-century dress. Such anachronistic details heighten the immediacy of the *Via Crucis* scenes.

other exotic types (ubiquitous stock characters appropriated from Giambattista's figural staffage but accorded a greater, almost intrusive prominence by his son) whose purpose in the narrative is obscure (fig. 9). Even more typical of Domenico are the numerous witnesses and bystanders summoned from everyday life, their forceful presence imparting a decidedly and even disconcertingly contemporary note to the events of the Passion (fig. 8). This apparent disregard on Domenico's part for historically correct details, although an established tradition in Venetian art, met with immediate criticism: Writing of the *Via Crucis* in 1749, one detractor remarked disapprovingly that "all the figures were wearing different costumes—some Spanish, some Slav and some are just caricatures. And people say that in those days that sort of person was not found and that he has painted them in that way only out of personal whim."

Considered in a more favorable light, Domenico's insertion of figures from his own time who interact with the viewer invests these compositions with a novel directness and immediacy that heighten their affecting emotional content and dramatic impact. This desire to engage the viewer, through pathos or through humor, is a hallmark of his art from the beginning of his career to the end and the most salient feature distinguishing Domenico's approach to his subject from that of Giambattista Tiepolo, whose pictorial pageants depict an inaccessible, superhuman world.



**9 \* Via Crucis, Station III. Christ Falls under the Cross the First Time, 1749. Etching, 8 5/8 x 6 15/16 in. (21.9 x 17.6 cm). Rogers Fund, 1922 (22.81.5)**



## THE WÜRZBURG PERIOD, 1750–53

In 1750 Domenico Tiepolo and his younger brother Lorenzo accompanied their father to Würzburg in Franconia (now largely part of Bavaria). Giambattista, acclaimed throughout Europe as the greatest living fresco painter, had been summoned to decorate the Kaisersaal (the official state dining room) of the Residenz of the prince-bishop, Carl Philipp von Greiffenclau. Recently completed by the architect Balthasar Neumann (1687–1753), the sumptuous Baroque interior was embellished by Giambattista with equally sumptuous frescoes celebrating the venerable history, both secular and ecclesiastical, of the Franconian petty principality. Making an appearance was Domenico Tiepolo, who, working under his father's close tutelage, was responsible for the three overdoors, one of which prominently displays his signature.

Soon after completing the decoration of the Kaisersaal, Giambattista was awarded the commission to paint the vast ceiling of the grand ceremonial staircase of the Residenz (fig. 10). Representing Apollo and the Four Continents (a *bozzetto* [painted sketch] for it is in the Metropolitan; fig. 63), this dazzling fresco ranks among the greatest masterpieces of his career. Its sheer expanse—some 6,000 square feet—made the task too daunting for a single artist, even one of Tiepolo's extraordinary facility, to carry out unaided, and significant parts of the decoration were delegated to the capable Domenico. So seamlessly does his contribution blend with Giambattista's that the precise contours of Domenico's intervention cannot be easily delineated, at least not without close scrutiny from an unintended vantage point atop a scaffold. What is remarkable about Domenico's role at Würzburg and what made him such a valued assistant until his father's death was, in the words of one scholar, his "stupefying mimetic capacity"—the unparalleled degree to which he fully absorbed Giambattista's artistic idiom and faithfully realized his ideas in paint. The presiding genius at the Residenz was Giambattista, but the ceiling was a collaborative effort, as acknowledged in the paired portraits of Tiepolo and his amanuensis-son, placed in a slightly deferential stance behind his father, the two immortalized in a discrete corner of the shimmering cosmos created by their brush (see fig. 1).

The lessons of Würzburg were to resonate throughout the younger Tiepolo's career. It was there that Domenico completed his artistic training and assumed the mantle of monumental fresco painter in the mode of Giambattista Tiepolo—an admittedly weighty mantle he would don with diminishing frequency in later years but which served him well when commissions for such works arose (see fig. 64). The staircase ceiling, like the Kaisersaal frescoes, also provided a storehouse of motifs that Domenico repeatedly



10 • GIAMBATTISTA TIEPOLO  
WITH THE ASSISTANCE OF  
DOMENICO TIEPOLO AND  
OTHERS. Staircase with ceiling  
fresco of *Apollo and the  
Four Continents*, 1752–53.  
Residenz, Würzburg



**11 • A Stag Lying Down (on a Base); The Head of a Crocodile,** after 1770. Pen and brown ink, brown wash, over traces of black chalk; 11¼ × 7⅞ in. (28.5 × 20 cm). Signed in brown ink on the base, center right: *Dom<sup>o</sup> Tiepolo.f.* Robert Lehman Collection, 1975 (1975.1.521)

Both the crocodile and the recumbent stag are later recollections of the America fresco at Würzburg (fig. 12).

plumbed for the next half-century. In the Robert Lehman Collection of the Metropolitan Museum, for example, is a drawing from the 1770s of a stag and a crocodile head that is based on corresponding details in the America fresco (figs. 11, 12).

Domenico's visual memory was facilitated by recourse to the large corpus of chalk drawings associated with the Residenz decorations that was maintained in the workshop as part of a vast graphic encyclopedia. This corpus consisted of studies by Giambattista; copy drawings by Domenico and Lorenzo after Giambattista's preparatory designs and after passages of the Kaisersaal and staircase frescoes; and Domenico's own preparatory studies, often based on preliminary ideas by Giambattista, in which he worked out details of pose and costume for his paintings. So closely did Domenico succeed in emulating Giambattista's graphic style in these chalk drawings that controversy persists in assigning certain sheets to one or the other artist.

No chalk drawings relating to the Würzburg frescoes are in the Metropolitan Museum, and so a consideration of the issue of attribution, although central to Tiepolo studies, falls largely outside the scope of this discussion. However, the nature of the debate and the fashion in which Domenico later reemployed such sheets to different ends, can be briefly summarized with reference to a study of three dogs in the Museum's collection (fig. 13). Not an original invention, the dogs' heads are copied from Paolo Veronese's *Family of Darius before Alexander* (late 1560s or 1570s; National Gallery, London). The sheet has been traditionally ascribed to Giambattista, who may have recorded the canines for future use in his own compositions or, as has been speculated, in preparation for painting a replica of Veronese's picture for Francesco Algarotti.



**12 • GIAMBATTISTA TIEPOLO AND ASSISTANTS**  
Detail of America fresco from *Apollo and the Four Continents* (see fig. 10)



**13 \* HERE ATTRIBUTED TO  
DOMENICO TIEPOLO**  
**Three Dogs, after Paolo Veronese,**  
ca. 1743. Black chalk, heightened with  
white, on blue paper; 13½ × 9½ in.  
(33.3 × 23.3 cm). Rogers Fund, 1937  
(37.165.53)

**14 \* Two Dwarfs, 1774. Etching,**  
7<sup>15</sup>/<sub>16</sub> × 11<sup>13</sup>/<sub>16</sub> in. (20.2 × 30 cm). Gift of  
Mrs. Herman Wunderlich, in memory of  
Herman Wunderlich, 1955 (55.555.1)

In addition to the two dogs derived from Veronese, this etching by Domenico Tiepolo reproduces details of Giambattista's fresco of the Reception of the Emperor Henry III at the Villa Contarini-Pisani, Mira, and now in the Musée Jacquemart-André, Paris) and of one of his paintings of the Banquet of Cleopatra (Museum, Arkangelskoye).





It is more likely, however, given its status as a careful copy from a painted model and the insistent contour, which is a recurring feature of his draftsmanship, that the drawing is by the young Domenico, whose artistic training consisted in copying not only his father's work but also that of earlier Venetian masters. Moreover, the weakly rendered hand supporting the dog in the center suggests a

**15 • Rinaldo Persuaded by Ubaldo and Guelfo to Abandon Armida.** Pen and brown ink, brown wash, over black chalk; 8¾ × 7¼ in. (22 × 18 cm). Robert Lehman Collection, 1975 (1975.I.511)

Giambattista's painting (Staatsgalerie im Schloss, Würzburg) on which this drawing is based includes the reclining Armida at its right (see fig. 16).

**16 • LORENZO TIEPOLO**  
**Rinaldo Persuaded by Ubaldo and Guelfo to Abandon Armida,** ca. 1753–54. Etching, 8¼ × 11¼ in. (20.9 × 28.2 cm). Rogers Fund, 1922 (22.81.46)

Giambattista's composition is reproduced in reverse in this print.



somewhat tentative and immature draftsman. In any event, the two spaniels were reproduced in reverse in a composite etching by Domenico of the mid-1770s (fig. 14), which also incorporates details from one of the Kaisersaal frescoes at Würzburg and from two other unrelated paintings by Giambattista. The inscription credits Giambattista Tiepolo with the invention of the paintings in which the figures and motifs appear and Domenico with the execution of the etching. Although there is no reference to the drawing, it is clear that Domenico here availed himself of a model made long ago and kept readily on hand.

Occurring throughout his entire career, this imitative practice became increasingly frequent during his last decades (and particularly in his series drawings produced after Giambattista's death in 1770, discussed below): A sheet in the Lehman Collection (fig. 15), the subject of which is taken from Tasso's epic poem *Gerusalemme liberata*, reprises a composition by Giambattista painted in Würzburg, but again through an intermediary—either a copy drawing made at the time by Domenico or the reproductive etching by Lorenzo (fig. 16).

Domenico's main function at Würzburg was that of assistant to Giambattista, but the young artist also produced a number of canvases of biblical and historical subjects for private patrons. A fine example is the Museum's *Sacrifice of Isaac* (fig. 17). Painted in a loose, fluid technique, the canvas has the character and size of a preliminary sketch but is in fact a finished work. The style and handling closely approach the manner of Giambattista Tiepolo, to whom *The Sacrifice of Isaac* was at one time attributed, but scholars now concur that the painting is by



**17 • The Sacrifice of Isaac, ca. 1753.** Oil on canvas, 15<sup>3</sup>/<sub>8</sub> × 21 in. (39.1 × 53.3 cm). Purchase, 1871 (71.28)

Abraham's willingness to sacrifice his son Isaac at God's command is told in Genesis 22: 1-13. Domenico's painting is striking for its virtuoso painterly technique, especially evident in the tree behind Abraham, and for its rich palette.



**18 • Detail of *The Separation of Abraham and Lot from Their People*, ca. 1752. Oil on canvas. Private Collection, Rome**

Domenico, whose own artistic sensibility was ideally suited to the production of these intimate, often small-scale images. The Tiepolos' clientele was presumably not deceived about the authorship of the paintings they purchased—some of Domenico's larger Würzburg canvases

are signed by him and there is no doubt that he had established his own artistic reputation at court—but a major source of their appeal was undoubtedly their “Tiepolesque” character, that Tiepolo being Giambattista.

Domenico's independent personality emerges more decisively in other narrative paintings produced during his Würzburg sojourn. *The Separation of Abraham and Lot from Their People* (fig. 18), reminiscent of the works of the seventeenth-century Genoese painter and etcher Giovanni Benedetto Castiglione (ca. 1600–1665)—an artist much admired by the Tiepolos—in the rustic, pastoral treatment of an Old Testament theme, could be easily mistaken for a genre painting; from here it was only a small step to Domenico's first pure essay in that mode, an engaging depiction of a Gypsy camp (fig. 19) datable to the Würzburg years. The playful dog, bearded Orientals, feasting peasants, acutely observed still-life details, and the incongruous well-heeled couple seen from the rear parading under a parasol are all harbingers of subjects and motifs that would intrigue Domenico for the following half-century.

Painting was the Tiepolos' primary occupation at Würzburg, but drawing also consumed much of their time during the three-year stay, particularly during the winter months when the cold, damp climate made fresco painting impossible. Ample evidence of this artistic pastime survives from Domenico's hand, not only in the large corpus of chalk drawings relating to the Residenz decorations already mentioned but also in a number of pen-and-ink sketches that show him working in a more experimental and inventive vein. In a drawing in the Lehman Collection, part of a larger group of similar studies, a dense crowd of antique and oriental figures gathers for a sacrifice (fig. 20). Domenico's tendency to organize forms along the

**19 • *The Gypsy Camp*, ca. 1753. Oil on canvas. Mittelrheinisches Landesmuseum, Mainz (inv. no. 266)**





**20 \* A Crowd of Ancient Warriors, Orientals, and Two Boys, Gathering for a Sacrifice, ca. 1750. Pen and brown ink, 7<sup>5</sup>/<sub>8</sub> × 11 in. (19.5 × 28 cm). Robert Lehman Collection, 1975 (1975.I.505)**



**21 \* GIAMBATTISTA TIEPOLO**  
**Detail of Sheet of Sketches Related to the Scherzi. Pen and ink over black chalk (?). Victoria and Albert Museum, London (D. 1825.237-1885)**

surface rather than in depth and the friezelike composition, evocative of relief sculpture, recall his paintings, particularly the monochrome frescoes in which he specialized upon his return to Venice (see figs. 30–33). The esoteric subject and the heterogeneous cast of characters that recurs so often in his work find parallels in Giambattista’s *Capricci* and even more so in the *Scherzi*, the preparatory studies for which served as Domenico’s point of departure here (fig. 21). The scratchy linear style and the unusual absence of wash invest this sheet with something of the character of an etching, and it is possible that Domenico intended to simulate the effects of this technique. (The same may be said of another drawing of roughly the same period, also in the Lehman Collection, representing Christ Crowned with Thorns [fig. 22].)

Very different in style, though related in subject matter to the *Crowd of Ancient Warriors* (fig. 20), is a brush-and-ink drawing of a standing man in oriental dress leaning on an altar (fig. 23), another image that testifies to Domenico’s fascination with the subject of “Orientals.” Here the figure has the aura of a magician or sorcerer akin to those who populate the *Scherzi*. The dark wash and fluid, painterly technique derive from Giambattista’s drawings of the first half of the 1750s, when Domenico was



22 • **Christ Crowned with Thorns**, mid-1750s. Pen and brown ink, 10½ × 8¾ in. (26.8 × 21.9 cm). Signed in brown ink, bottom right: *Dom. Tiepolo*. Robert Lehman Collection, 1975 (1975.1.481)

The faintly indicated framing lines and fully elaborated composition suggest that this powerful study may be a design for an unexecuted etching.

most closely imitating his father. This study, like the *Crowd of Ancient Warriors*, belongs to a larger, stylistically and thematically cohesive group of drawings. In these graphic works of the 1750s is the genesis of the series drawings that become an ongoing leitmotiv of Domenico's later career.

The masterpiece of Domenico Tiepolo's Würzburg period was neither a painting nor a drawing but rather his celebrated set of twenty-four etchings *Idee pittoresche sopra la fuga in Egitto di Giesu, Maria e Giuseppe* (Picturesque Ideas on the Flight into Egypt of Jesus, Mary and Joseph; figs. 24–26, 28). Treating this subject in a series of prints may have occurred to Domenico as the result of his familiarity with a suite of etchings of the Flight and Rest in Egypt by the seventeenth-century French artist Sébastien Bourdon (1616–1671), four plates of which were in the Tiepolos' print collection. Certainly the subject, with its limited dramatic potential, was a rather improbable vehicle for expansive pictorial investigation and Bourdon's series provided a relevant precedent.

An account from Domenico's own lifetime, recorded by

the eighteenth-century Venetian chronicler Giannantonio Moschini, states that the artist created these etchings to refute the charge that he suffered from a "povertà di fantasia," that is, that he was deficient in the power of invention, which during the eighteenth century was a requisite sign of artistic genius. The same source recounts that Domenico succeeded in vindicating his reputation with the Flight into Egypt series, which demonstrated that "his imagination was abundantly rich in ideas."

Some scholars have dismissed this report as a fabrication. However, Domenico's title—*Idee pittoresche*—fully corroborates Moschini's story that he took up the subject of the Flight into Egypt in order to display his facile imagination, since in the eighteenth century the idea of the "picturesque" was intertwined with notions of *invenzione* and *fantasia*—the very faculties he was accused of lacking. Domenico's emphatic declaration, included as part of the title, that the etchings were "inventata ed incisa da me" (invented and etched by me) further testifies to his preeminent motive of trumpeting his own creative prowess.



23 • **An Old Man in Oriental Dress, Standing by a Pagan Altar**, 1750s. Point of brush and brown ink, 9¾ × 7¾ in. (25 × 18 cm). Annotated with an erroneous attribution to Rembrandt in a late 18th- or early-19th-century hand. Robert Lehman Collection, 1975 (1975.1.506)



**24, 25 • The Flight into Egypt,**  
1750-53. Etchings. Each  
7 $\frac{3}{8}$  × 9 $\frac{5}{8}$  in. (18.9 × 24.5 cm).  
Purchase, Florance Waterbury  
Bequest, 1970 (1970.692.18,4)

This series of twenty-four prints (all of which are in the Museum's collection) was dedicated to the Tiepolos' Würzburg patron, Carl Philipp von Greiffenclau, and was accompanied by a frontispiece, dedication page, and title page. Domenico worked on the set during his three years in Würzburg, although the initial idea for the project may have originated prior to his departure from Venice.



Unlike the *Via Crucis* etchings, the Flight into Egypt series does not form a continuous narrative; despite the sequential numbering of the plates (presumably necessary for their publication) and an obvious beginning and end, there is in fact no narrative in the conventional sense. (Underscoring this lack of continuity is the depiction of Joseph in three different guises: a vigorous mature guardian, a bearded patriarch, and a stooped, rather frail old man.) Instead, Domenico composed twenty-four different “picturesque variations,” or “caprices” (*capricci*), on a single theme in an impressive demonstration of his limitless *invenzione* and *fantasia*. Ancillary figures and motifs having nothing to do with the accounts of the Flight recorded in the Gospel and the Apocrypha appear throughout, such as the old woman with a basket of eggs in plate 6 (fig. 25)—a motif derived from Titian’s *Presentation of the Virgin* (Accademia, Venice) and later reemployed by Domenico in one of the frescoes of the Foresteria (guesthouse) of the Villa Valmarana (see figs. 34, 36, 40); the vaguely sinister-looking shepherd tending a flock of sheep in plate 8 (fig. 26); the encroaching crowd of Orientals and the half-buried classical relief in plate 12 (fig. 28); and the truncated pyramid

**26 \* The Flight into Egypt**, 1750–53. Etching, 7<sup>11</sup>/<sub>16</sub> × 9<sup>5</sup>/<sub>16</sub> in. (18.7 × 24.5 cm). Purchase, Florance Waterbury Bequest, 1970 (1970.692.6)

*opposite, top*

**27 \* GIAMBATTISTA TIEPOLO**

**Scherzi di Fantasia: A Seated Shepherd, Three Magi, and a Youth**, ca. 1743–47. Etching, 8<sup>7</sup>/<sub>8</sub> × 6<sup>7</sup>/<sub>8</sub> in. (22.4 × 17.5 cm). Purchase, The Elisha Whittelsey Collection, The Elisha Whittelsey Fund; Dodge and Pfeiffer Funds; Joseph Pulitzer Bequest; Gift of Bertina Suida Manning and Robert L. Manning, 1976 (1976.537.8)

*opposite, bottom*

**28 \* The Flight into Egypt**, 1750–53. Etching, 7<sup>5</sup>/<sub>16</sub> × 9<sup>11</sup>/<sub>16</sub> in. (18.6 × 24.5 cm). Purchase, Florance Waterbury Bequest, 1970 (1970.692.10)



in plate 20 (fig. 24). The last two details occur in Giambattista's *Scherzi*, produced intermittently in the 1740s and 1750s (fig. 27 and see fig. 75). Such gratuitous pictorial motifs were introduced into the Flight into Egypt precisely for their "picturesque" qualities—as exercises in *fantasia*. To be sure, the posthumous title, *Scherzi di Fantasia*, given by Domenico to Giambattista's etchings at the time of their widespread distribution in the 1770s, has a suggestive relevance to his own roughly contemporaneous Flight into Egypt, which is essentially a series of musings on a sacred theme.

In eschewing conventional narrative sequence in favor of a fluid and therefore potentially interchangeable ordering of images, Domenico in the Flight into Egypt anticipates his last great pictorial cycle, the 104 drawings of Punchinello known as *Divertimento per li regazzi* (Entertainment for Children; see pp. 59–67). As will be discussed below, a key to understanding that engaging if enigmatic series lies in the realization that, as in the Flight into Egypt (and in Giambattista Tiepolo's *Capricci* and *Scherzi* etchings), the constraints of sequential narrative were abandoned in favor of a less rigid and more inventive approach to storytelling.





29 • *The Stoning of Saint Stephen*, ca. 1754–55. Etching, 19<sup>3</sup>/<sub>8</sub> × 10<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> in. (49 × 26.6 cm). Rogers Fund, 1922 (22.81.28)

in 1779, derided the painting as merely “a youthful carica-

d a more favorable guise in choir of the church of Saints ia, completed in the mid-1750s by Giambattista; these paintings concern on Domenico’s part to le his father’s style, the son ttista’s physical absence from r ego. But this decade also saw is father’s partner—a partner ual status—who had developed e Tiepolo shop. This special-eas: the execution of mono- ontinuation of strides first iction of genre subjects— e, Gypsies, commedia dell’arte pursuits of the leisured oil painting.

talents as a painter in mono- ervice in several collaborative early 1760s. They included an

extensive cycle of mythological and allegorical subjects for the Villa Volpato-Panigai, Nervesa (1754); six scenes illustrating the history of the Porto family in the Palazzo Porto, Vicenza (1758–60); eight frescoes of Old and New Testament subjects in the Oratorio della Purità, Udine (1759); personifications of the Four Continents in the Palazzo Canossa, Verona (1761); and eight allegorical scenes in the Villa Pisani, Strà (1761–62).

This aspect of his activity is well represented in the Museum’s collection by four monochrome overdoor frescoes of the Continents (ca. 1757–60), possibly from the Palazzo Valle-Marchesini-Sala, Vicenza, where Giambattista had worked some years earlier. The personifications conform to the descriptions in Cesare Ripa’s *Iconologia*, an iconographic handbook widely used by artists since its first publication in the late sixteenth century: Europe is crowned and embraces a model of a church (fig. 30); Asia leans against a camel and holds palm fronds (fig. 31); Africa supports a jug and wears an elephant’s trunk on her head (fig. 32); and America, seated on a crocodile, is clad in a short skirt and feathered headdress (fig. 33). The figures are starkly silhouetted against flat, neutral backgrounds, from which they boldly project. Each recalls on a lesser scale the corresponding personification from the great ceiling at Würzburg (see fig. 10), but Giambattista’s superhuman allegories, engulfed in a sea of esoteric attributes and rendered in a panoply of brilliant colors and textures, are transformed in these more austere creations into simulated marble or stucco reliefs. Domenico’s tendency toward flat, planar compositions becomes an asset in the Museum’s monochrome paintings and in his other inventions of a similar vein.

Domenico Tiepolo's most singular and enduring artistic contribution lies in the realm of genre—as a chronicler of the contemporary scene, the fancies and foibles of which he captured in some of the most pleasingly seductive images of the entire eighteenth century. It has already been noted that a predilection for genre-like pictorial details and a fascination with the characters and costumes of his own day can be discerned in Domenico's oeuvre

from the very beginning of his career. This predilection achieved its most brilliant realization in his frescoes in the Foresteria of the Villa Valmarana ai Nani, outside Vicenza, and in the decorations that Domenico carried out over a protracted period in the Tiepolo family villa at Zianigo, near Mirano (these frescoes are now in the Ca' Rezzonico, Venice). A number of oil paintings, including the Metropolitan's charming *A Dance in the Country* (fig. 42), and a

**30 • Europe, ca. 1757–60.**  
One of four frescoes,  
transferred to canvas; each  
approx.  $32\frac{1}{4} \times 42\frac{3}{4}$  in.  
(81.9 × 108.6 cm). Bequest  
of Grace Rainey Rogers,  
1943 (43.85.19)

Domenico's four overdoor frescoes of the Continents were removed from their undocumented original setting in the early 20th century. They are believed to have come from the same palace (Palazzo Valle-Marchesini-Sala, Vicenza) as a group of monochrome frescoes of the late 1740s by Giambattista and his workshop, also in the Museum's collection. The figures are rendered in broad strokes that suggest light reflecting off a polished surface, thus enhancing their sculptural effect.



**31 • Asia.** Bequest of Grace  
Rainey Rogers, 1943  
(43.85.17)





**32 \* Africa. Bequest of Grace Rainey Rogers, 1943 (43.85.18)**

**33 \* America. Bequest of Grace Rainey Rogers, 1943 (43.85.20)**



series of drawings to be discussed below (see pp. 55–58) also reveal this highly engaging side of Domenico Tiepolo’s artistic personality.

The firm of Tiepolo *père et fils* worked at the Villa Valmarana in 1757. Giambattista painted scenes from the epic poetry of Homer, Virgil, Ariosto, and Tasso in the main villa (many of which were reproduced in etchings by

Domenico; fig. 37), and Domenico was entrusted with six of the seven rooms of the Foresteria (the seventh, known as the Sala dell’Olimpo, was decorated by Giambattista). Released from the distant elegiac world of gods and heroes, Domenico drew from his own resourceful imagination. The witty vignettes of the Stanza Cinese (Chinese Room) are a product of the same fanciful taste for things

*below*

**34 \* The Mandarin's Promenade, 1757.**  
Fresco. Foresteria, Villa Valmarana, Vicenza

*bottom, left*

**35 \* WENCESLAS HOLLAR**  
**The Winter Habit of an English Gentle-**  
**woman, 1644.** Etching, 6 1/2 x 4 5/16 in.  
(16.5 x 12.1 cm). Gift of Theodore De Witt,  
1923 (23.65.35)



*above*

**36 \* The Winter Promenade,**  
1757. Fresco. Foresteria,  
Villa Valmarana, Vicenza

*left*

**37 \* Mercury Appears to**  
**Aeneas in a Dream, 1757.**  
Etching, 9 1/2 x 7 1/8 in.  
(24.1 x 18.1 cm). The Elisha  
Whittelsey Collection, The  
Elisha Whittelsey Fund,  
1988 (1988.1035)

This print reproduces in  
reverse one of Giambattista's  
three frescoes in the Aeneid  
Room of the Villa Valmarana.



**38 • Three Peasants, 1757.** Fresco. Foresteria, Villa Valmarana, Vicenza

oriental that resulted in the contemporary craze for chinoiserie in France and England (fig. 34). Neo-Gothic confections in the Stanza del Padiglione Gotico (Room of the Gothic Pavilions), designed by Giambattista Tiepolo's frequent collaborator Gerolamo Mengozzi Colonna (ca. 1688–ca. 1772), frame Domenico's open-air scenes of elegant, mostly female figures, outfitted with fans, furs, and muffs (fig. 36); here the artist may have been inspired by Wenceslas Hollar's prints of women's costumes from different parts of the world (fig. 35), a large collection of which belonged to Domenico and his father.

Domenico also looked out at the countryside around him, creating in the Stanza delle Scene Campestri (Room of Rustic Scenes) some of the most touching and evocative images of peasant life ever produced, his bucolic vision set in a luminous, sun-dappled landscape. The artist was obviously not without sympathy for these coarse though well-scrubbed beings, but he also could not resist poking gentle fun at their stocky bearing and slightly preposterous costume (fig. 38). (Domenico had a special preference for figures seen from the rear, a point of view full of caricatural possibilities, as attested in a drawing in the Lehman Collection of two women [fig. 39; see also fig. 87].)

Domenico's wall paintings at the Villa Valmarana reveal the full wealth of his talents and rank among his masterpieces; yet such works apparently did not find a wide audience, and the artist was never again commissioned to produce frescoes of this type. Only in the family's own villa at Zianigo, in a private undertaking intended to please only himself, did he once more decorate the walls with scenes from contemporary life. (*The Peep Show*—a magic-lantern demonstration—repeats almost verbatim

**39 • Caricature of Two Women Seen from Behind, after 1790.** Pen and gray ink, brown and gray wash; 6 1/8 x 7 5/8 in. (15.6 x 19.5 cm). Signed in brown ink, lower right: *Dom<sup>o</sup> Tiepolo*. Robert Lehman Collection, 1975 (1975.I.508)

This drawing is an example of Domenico's late "ragged" style (see also fig. 61). The woman at the left reappears carrying an umbrella in the Punchinello sheet known as *The Spring Shower* (fig. 107).





40 \* The Peep Show, 1757.  
Fresco. Foresteria, Villa  
Valmarana, Vicenza

below

41 \* The Peep Show, signed  
and dated 1791. Fresco. Villa  
Tiepolo, Zianigo

The caped man holding  
a tricorne is based on a cari-  
cature by Giambattista  
Tiepolo, now in the  
Museum's collection (see  
fig. 92).

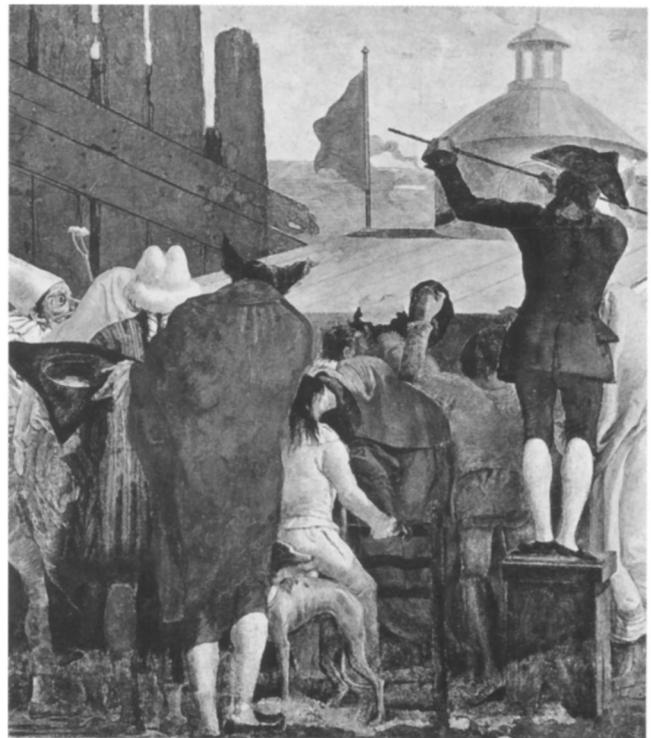
an earlier composition at the Foresteria [figs. 40, 41].) However, a market for small paintings of contemporary Venetian life did exist, and to gratify that taste Domenico turned out a number of canvases depicting Carnival, the commedia dell'arte, and the everyday world of the Venetian lagoon and mainland—peep shows, charlatans and quack dentists, acrobats and dancing dogs, richly costumed aristocrats, and Punchinello. These paintings reveal Domenico Tiepolo's sparkling powers of invention at their fullest and most appealing; but for all their storybook quality the subjects are not purely a product of his imagination. To the contrary, Domenico's inspiration was the "theater of life" presented by the contemporary Venetian scene.

The theatrical character of Venice captivated the German poet Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, who visited the city in 1786 (during Domenico Tiepolo's lifetime) and recorded his impressions in a copious journal. Reflecting on the convergence and reciprocity of reality and theater, he observed that

the basis of everything is the common people; the spectators join in the play and the crowd becomes part of the theater. During the daytime, squares, canals, gondolas and palazzi are full of life as the buyer and seller, the beggar and the boatman, the housewife and the lawyer offer something for sale, sing and gamble, shout and swear. In the evening these same people go to the theater to behold their actual life presented with greater economy as make-believe interwoven with fairy stories and removed from reality by masks, yet in its characters and manners, the life they know. . . . From sunset to sunset, from midnight to midnight, they are just the same.

What Goethe recorded in his journal, Domenico recorded on canvas.

One of the painter's most brilliant and captivating pictorial excursions into the world of eighteenth-century Venice is the Metropolitan's *A Dance in the Country* (fig. 42). The setting is the walled garden of a Venetian mainland villa, with a mountainous atmospheric landscape glimpsed in the distance. Surrounded by a crowd of elegant ladies, fashionable young men, musicians, and masked revelers, a sprightly couple dances. Among the



assembled onlookers are several stock characters of the *commedia dell'arte*. Recognizable by their conventional costumes and masks are Punchinello, the mountebank with tall hat and beaklike nose at the center (a second Punchinello hat is visible behind); Harlequin, climbing the tree; Columbine, the masked female behind the dancers; Coviello, sprouting tall feathers from his cap and wearing a mask with a large hooked nose, playing the bass at the right; and the Doctor, an academic pedant of Bolognese origin, attired in the black robe of a pedagogue and a large floppy hat. Another character, possibly the Captain, as his bearded visage, cape, gloves, and tricorne suggest, is behind him. Seated at the right, beside the woman sipping a fashionable cup of steaming chocolate, appears one more member of the troupe—perhaps Pasquariello—wearing a large ruff and close-fitting cap.

The handsome dancing couple, the object of the bystanders' collective gaze, also comes from the ranks of the *commedia dell'arte*. Although their names varied from troupe to troupe, the pair of lovers around whom the comic scenarios revolved were often known as Lelio and Isabella, after two early celebrated performers of such roles. Also commonly encountered as romantic leads were Octavio and Lucia. (The latter was depicted as an elegant unmasked lady by Jacques Callot [1592/93–1635], whose prints were collected by the Tiepolos.) Unlike the other characters of the *commedia*, the lovers seldom wore masks (although in Domenico's painting, as in some later engravings, Lelio dons a mask), and it was through costumes, as well as through gestures and actions, that their identities were communicated to the audience.

Neither a spontaneous rustic revelry nor a staid and staged minuet in which the dancers are stiffly posturing nobles (as commonly seen in images of the period), the subject of Domenico's painting is the entertainment of a group of aristocratic Venetians, gathered at a country estate for *villeggiatura* (country holiday), by an itinerant *commedia dell'arte* troupe. Acclaimed for their improvisational skills and expressive declamatory gestures, these masked actors presented comedic scenarios without the benefit of written scripts, relying on only a skeletal plot called the *canovaccio*. Such troupes flourished throughout Italy, especially in the north, from the sixteenth century through the end of the eighteenth century. They originally performed out of doors on portable stages and later in public theaters as well as on the private stages of Venetian palaces and villas. The great champion of this tradition of Italian impromptu theater and its masked actors was Domenico Tiepolo's contemporary the Venetian playwright Carlo Gozzi (1720–1806), who authored a number of *fiabe teatrali* (theatrical fables) for the *commedia*.

*Commedia dell'arte* troupes frequently enjoyed aristocratic patronage, and in the Veneto were often housed during the summer at the country estates of the nobles they



entertained. Like gaming, music making, gossiping and drinking chocolate upon rising at noon, outdoor strolls, and carriage rides, *commedia* performances were commonplace pastimes in the world of Venetian *villeggiatura* until the end of the eighteenth century. These diversions frequently took place in splendidly decorated gardens. Indeed, so closely did the *commedia dell'arte* come to be associated with villa life in the eighteenth century that the magnificent gardens of the Villa Conti Lampertico at Montegaldella, near Vicenza, were decorated with over one hundred sculptures by Orazio Marinali (1643–1720) and his workshop of the “masks,” or characters of the *commedia*.



42 • **A Dance in the Country**, mid-1750s. Oil on canvas, 29 <sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> × 47 <sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub> in. (75.6 × 120 cm). Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Charles Wrightsman, 1980 (1980.67)

The glowing, vibrant, and jewel-like palette; the dazzling, virtuoso technique and trembling brushstroke; the luminous atmosphere; and the brilliantly observed details of costume and setting combine to make this masterpiece a paradigmatic expression of Domenico's artistic genius. A similar painting known as *The Minuet*, once owned by Francesco Algarotti, is in the Musée du Louvre, Paris. A third variant (Museo de Arte, Barcelona), simpler in composition than both of these works, features as the dancing couple the commedia dell'arte characters Pantalone and Columbine.

The Paris and Barcelona canvases have as pendants *The Quack Dentist* (Louvre) and *The Charlatan* (Museo de Arte) respectively. It is possible that *A Dance in the Country*, too, was originally paired with a similar genre scene, although no such pendant is recorded or known today.



In his *Dance in the Country* Domenico captured not only the cultural aesthetic of *villeggiatura* but also the very essence of the commedia dell'arte tradition: its unstaged quality and the improvised naturalism of the action. This studied naturalism—the antithesis of French theater of the period—was widely noted by contemporary observers and chroniclers. Goethe (who was a great admirer of Carlo Gozzi's *fiabe* and whose friend Johann Heinrich Merck once owned *A Dance in the Country*), after attending the commedia at the Teatro San Luca in Venice, wrote that he “had never seen more natural acting than that of these masked players”; he further reflected that such art could be achieved only by “long practice.” A similar observation was offered by the eighteenth-century historian of the Italian theater Louis Riccoboni, who commented that “the actor who performs impromptu, performs in a more lively and natural manner than he who plays a role which he has learned by heart.”

Recognizing in this lack of theatrical artifice the fundamental distinction between French theater and the

Italian commedia dell'arte, the witty French traveler and letter writer Charles de Brosses remarked, in an account published in 1740, that in Italian impromptu theater

the gesture and the voice inflection are always wedded to the subject . . . ; the actors come and go, they speak and move as in their own homes. This action is natural in a very different sense and wears an air of truth very different from that which is seen when four or five French actors, arranged in a line, like a bas-relief, on the foreground of the stage, recite their dialogue each speaking in his turn.

That Domenico Tiepolo, too, fully appreciated this naturalism and spontaneity is vouched for by the subject of his painting—this improvised performance by masked players, which at first glance appears to be simply a dance in the country.

## SPAIN AND THE LATER CAREER OF DOMENICO TIEPOLO IN VENICE

In 1762 Giambattista Tiepolo, again accompanied by Domenico and Lorenzo, traveled to Madrid to enter the service of the Spanish king Charles III. He remained there until his death in 1770, carrying out a number of ceiling frescoes in the royal palace and a series of altarpieces for the monastic church of San Pascual at Aranjuez, outside the capital. Then over sixty-five years of age, Giambattista relied increasingly on the assistance of his sons, particularly Domenico, who had a greater participation in Giambattista's paintings produced in Spain than he did in those at Würzburg. (The ceiling painting of the Glorification of Spain in the antechamber to the queen's apartments is entirely by his hand.) Master of his father's style, Domenico functioned once more as the model executant whose own artistic personality obligingly disappeared from the stage. Attempts to discern the extent of his intervention in Giambattista's works of this period offer little new insight into their by now well-established pattern of collaboration other than to highlight the aging artist's increasing dependence on his more agile son.

In Madrid Domenico continued to produce genre paintings of the type exemplified by *A Dance in the Country*. The figures occasionally adopted elements of Spanish fashion, but the subjects—dancing dogs, Punchinello, the minuet, the departure of the gondola (fig. 45) and of the *burchiello* (canal barge)—were already familiar from his Venetian works. In Madrid he also painted *Teste di Fantasia*—imaginary portrait heads of bearded Orientals, patriarchs, philosophers, and beautiful women in fancy dress—types that Giambattista created in the 1740s (see fig. 48) and that Domenico himself later treated in the series of etchings known as the *Raccolta di Teste* (Collection of Heads [see figs. 44, 49–52]), published in 1774 after his return from Spain. Not surprisingly, many of Domenico's *Teste di Fantasia* are replicas of paintings by Giambattista (others are copies and variants by Lorenzo), and questions of attribution still cloud a number of these works.

Unlike Lorenzo, who elected to remain in Spain, Domenico returned to Venice immediately after Giambattista's sudden death in March 1770. He could not have been impervious to the profound shift in artistic taste then taking hold in Madrid (as elsewhere), where the late Baroque exuberance of Giambattista Tiepolo was eclipsed by the staid Neoclassicism of Anton Raphael Mengs (1728–1779), his rival at the Spanish court. Lorenzo Tiepolo weathered this changing aesthetic tide, becoming, in the mode of the famed Venetian artist Rosalba Carriera,

a specialist in intimate pastel portraits of members of the Spanish court and household. Domenico, however, remained allied to the tradition of the Grand Manner, which, though out of favor in Spain and on the verge of extinction throughout Europe, still flourished for a time in Venice.

The Venetian Republic to which Domenico returned in 1770 was a provincial backwater, where outside influences of all sorts were regarded as subversive by the government. Inexorable political and economic decay was masked, among other means, by a sustained pursuit of visual opulence. This phenomenon and the conservative taste of newly wealthy patrons who strove to emulate the trappings of the old nobility ensured a lingering market for all that Giambattista Tiepolo's art represented. In this climate Domenico Tiepolo, the son and heir, had no competition. The altarpieces and ceiling decorations he undertook in Venice after 1770 did not constitute an emancipation from or repudiation of Giambattista Tiepolo's art but rather its final flowering. Domenico in his public commissions never forgot his father's maxim that the painter



44 • *Raccolta di Teste: Portrait of Domenico Tiepolo*, 1774. Etching, 4 <sup>5</sup>/<sub>8</sub> × 3 <sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> in. (11.9 × 9.5 cm). The Elisha Whittelsey Collection, The Elisha Whittelsey Fund, 1977 (1977.586.2)

This image is not strictly a self-portrait, as it is based on a 1773 painting of Domenico by Franz Joseph Degle (Staatliche Museen Preussischer Kulturbesitz, Berlin).





above

45 • **Departure of the Gondola**, mid-1750s or 1760s.

Oil on canvas, 14 × 28 1/16 in. (35.5 × 72.5 cm).

Signed on placard attached to column: *Dom<sup>o</sup>/TIEPOLO.*

Private Collection

The suggestion has been made that this painting, once in a Spanish collection, was executed during the Tiepolos' residency in Madrid in the 1760s. The beautiful, pale silvery tonality and extremely refined, delicate handling of the brush distinguish it from *A Dance in the Country* and point to a later date for this work. The subject—aristocratic Carnival revelers descending from a *fondamenta* (quay) into a waiting gondola as interested bystanders and expressionless servants in livery look on—is so quintessentially Venetian, however, that a Venetian-period date cannot be ruled out. It is possible, given the rather small scale of this painting and its presumed pendant, *The Departure of the Burchiello* (the barge that shuttled passengers from Venice down the Brenta Canal to nearby Padua), now in the Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna, that these works were executed by Domenico in Venice and brought by him to Spain, either as “samples” to show prospective Spanish patrons or as nostalgic reminders of home. Regardless of where these particular Venetian genre scenes were

Painted, this type of image would have appealed to certain cultivated and cosmopolitan Spanish collectors.

Several of the figures in Domenico's painting are attired in the highly popular *bautta*—a mask (*volto*) worn with a hooded mantle of lace, silk, or velvet and topped with a hat, usually a tricorne. Much favored by Venetians and foreign visitors, masks were officially permitted during Carnival, which began on Saint Stephen's Day (December 26) and lasted until Lent, but were also allowed during other specified feast days and celebrations.

opposite, bottom, and below

46, 47 • **Details of Departure of the Gondola**





**48 • ATTRIBUTED TO GIAMBATTISTA TIEPOLO**  
**Philosopher**, mid- to late 1740s (?). Oil on canvas. Bob Jones University Gallery of Sacred Art and Bible Lands Museum, Greenville, South Carolina

A version of this painting (Art Institute of Chicago), an example of the *Teste di Fantasia*, has been attributed to Domenico.

**49 • Raccolta di Teste: Head of a Philosopher**, 1774. Etching, 5 5/8 × 4 1/4 in. (14.3 × 10.7 cm). Rogers Fund, 1922 (22.81.53)

The subjects of the *Raccolta di Teste* were not specific individuals but generic types. The long beard and closed book in this print and in the painted version on which it is based (fig. 48) identify the man as a philosopher.

must always strive “for the sublime, for the heroic, for perfection,” even if his own artistic calling inclined him down a less exalted path.

Resuming his activity as a printmaker, Domenico, in 1774, published the *Raccolta di Teste* as part of a complete edition of etchings by his father, himself, and Lorenzo. Begun in the late 1750s, the *Raccolta di Teste* appeared in two volumes, each containing thirty etchings and a title page. Volume 1 opens with a portrait of Giambattista and volume 2 with a portrait of Domenico (fig. 44). With the exception of these portraits, the heads in the *Raccolta*, according to the title pages, are based on paintings by Giambattista, primarily the *Teste di Fantasia* (fig. 48). Bearded and wearing turbans, many of the subjects are the familiar Tiepolo “Orientals” and “philosophers.” One head immediately calls to mind Rembrandt (fig. 52); another is the paradigmatic type who occurs repeatedly among the Tiepolos’ cast of observers and bystanders (fig. 51); and others, such as the heads of Turks represented in *profil perdu* (lost profile), are sheer virtuoso displays (fig. 50). Viewed as a whole, the *Raccolta* can be seen as yet another demonstration of Domenico’s facility for treating with infinite variety a subject of seemingly limited, and limiting, potential.





*above, left*

**50 • Raccolta di Teste: Head of a Turk, 1774. Etching, 4<sup>13</sup>/<sub>16</sub> × 3<sup>7</sup>/<sub>16</sub> in. (12.2 × 10.4 cm). Rogers Fund, 1922 (22.81.74)**

*above*

**51 • Raccolta di Teste: Head of an Old Man with a Hat, 1774. Etching, 9 × 4<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> in. (15.2 × 11.4 cm). Rogers Fund, 1922 (22.81.54)**

*left*

**52 • Raccolta di Teste: Head of an Old Man with a Hat, 1774. Etching, 5<sup>5</sup>/<sub>16</sub> × 4<sup>1</sup>/<sub>8</sub> in. (13.5 × 10.4 cm). Rogers Fund, 1922 (22.81.78)**





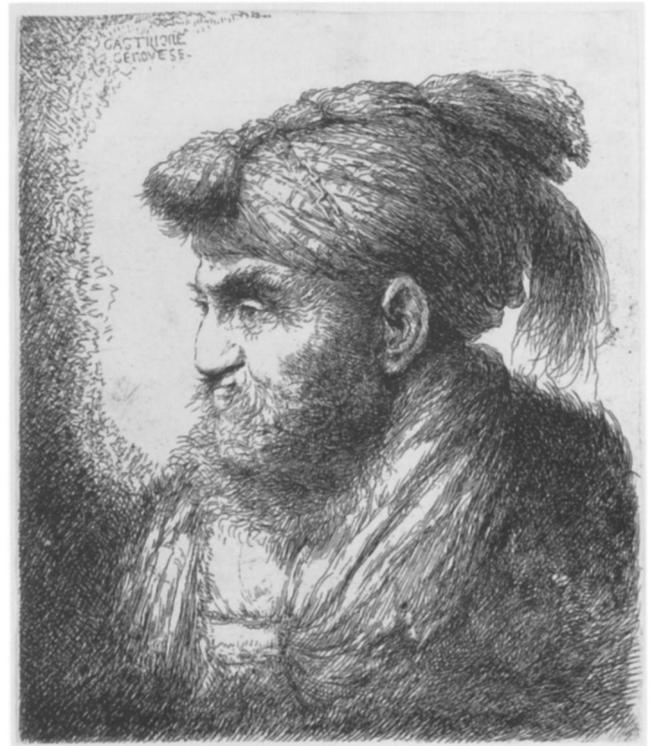
53 \* REMBRANDT VAN RIJN  
**Old Man with a Divided Fur Cap**, 1640. Etching and drypoint,  
 6 × 5<sup>3</sup>/<sub>8</sub> in. (15.2 × 13.7 cm). Gift of Douglas Dillon, 1983  
 (1983.1140.3)

54 \* JEAN-HONORÉ FRAGONARD  
**Head of an Oriental**, 1775. Bistre wash over black chalk,  
 13<sup>5</sup>/<sub>8</sub> × 10 in. (34.5 × 25.5 cm). Inscribed at center right: *frago*  
 1775. Musée du Louvre, Paris, Cabinet des Dessins (inv. 26645)



The *Raccolta di Teste* has as its most immediate proto-type two etched series of male heads in oriental headdress by Castiglione (fig. 55). The Genoese artist's importance for the Tiepolos has already been noted, and it is probable that among the fifty-two etchings by "diverse masters," including Castiglione, in the sale of Domenico's print collection were plates from these two series. Rembrandt's etchings of bust-length Orientals and bearded philosopher types (fig. 53), models for Castiglione, also provided a stimulus for Giambattista's and Domenico's pictorial investigations of the theme. It is no wonder that the Venetian publisher and print dealer A. M. Zanetti the Elder wrote in 1757 of the *Raccolta di Teste* that "there are some, among them, for which Rembrandt and Gio: Benedetto Castiglione, could they but rise from their graves, would embrace the man who made them."

A virtual genre of character and fantasy heads existed in eighteenth-century Venetian art, exemplified, among other works, by the painted heads of philosophers and old women by Giuseppe Nogari, the beautiful chalk *têtes des caractères* (character heads) of Piazzetta, and the marble busts of *bravi* (imaginary portraits of swaggering youths) and of old men in different guises by Orazio Marinalli. With



55 \* GIOVANNI BENEDETTO CASTIGLIONE  
**Head of an Oriental**, late 1640s. Etching, 7 × 5<sup>13</sup>/<sub>16</sub> in.  
 (17.8 × 14.9 cm). Purchase, Joseph Pulitzer Bequest, 1917  
 (17.50.17-5)

his *Teste di Fantasia* Giambattista Tiepolo also played to the audience for such images. Outside Venice, a practitioner of the genre was Jean-Honoré Fragonard, whose familiarity with the Tiepolos' ruminations on the theme is readily discerned in the painted heads of old men that he produced in the 1760s following his first trip to Italy. Fragonard had studied and copied Giambattista's work in Venice and Vicenza, and he also undoubtedly knew Domenico's *Raccolta* etchings, paraphrasing some in his own drawings of heads of Orientals (fig. 54). Tapping into the popularity of this genre with his prints, Domenico was also fundamental to its dissemination outside Venice, at the same time commemorating Giambattista's crucial contribution.

In a more carefully orchestrated nod to posterity, Domenico, in 1775, published another edition of Tiepolo

prints dedicated to Pope Pius VI and entitled "Catalogue of various works invented by the famous Giambattista Tiepolo at the court of H.C.M. [King Charles III], who died in Madrid on 27th of March 1770, with 25 plates engraved by himself, the others having been engraved by his sons Giandomenico and Lorenzo, owned by Giandomenico as well as other works of his" (fig. 56). Perhaps sensing that the nascent artistic revolution threatened to sweep from memory his father's great achievements, and long having recognized the valuable role prints played in making the works of their author widely and permanently known, Domenico produced this corpus as the final, crowning chapter of his printmaking activity and as a lasting tribute to Giambattista, whose style he doggedly perpetuated into the last days of the Venetian Republic.



**56 • The Arts Paying Homage to the Authority of Pope Pius VI, 1775.** Etching, 16<sup>7</sup>/<sub>8</sub> × 12<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> in. (43 × 31.6 cm). Rogers Fund, 1922 (22.81.43)

This print is the frontispiece to the 1775 edition of the complete prints of Giambattista, Domenico, and Lorenzo Tiepolo. The ornamental border was added to the plate by a later etcher.



**57 • The Holy Family with Saint Frances of Rome and Saint Eurosia**, 1777. Oil on canvas. San Nicolò, Padua

This altarpiece was originally painted for the now-deconsecrated church of Sant'Agnese, Padua.

**58 • The Holy Family with Saint Frances of Rome and Saint Eurosia**. Pen and black ink, gray wash, over traces of black chalk. Framing lines in pen and black ink. 13 1/8 x 6 5/8 in. (33.3 x 16.7 cm). Rogers Fund, 1937 (37.165.66)

Saint Eurosia, the elegantly garbed figure kneeling at the right, was invoked for protection against inclement weather. Here she is identified by the lightning bolt piercing her breast. This attribute floats above her head in the painting (see fig. 57).

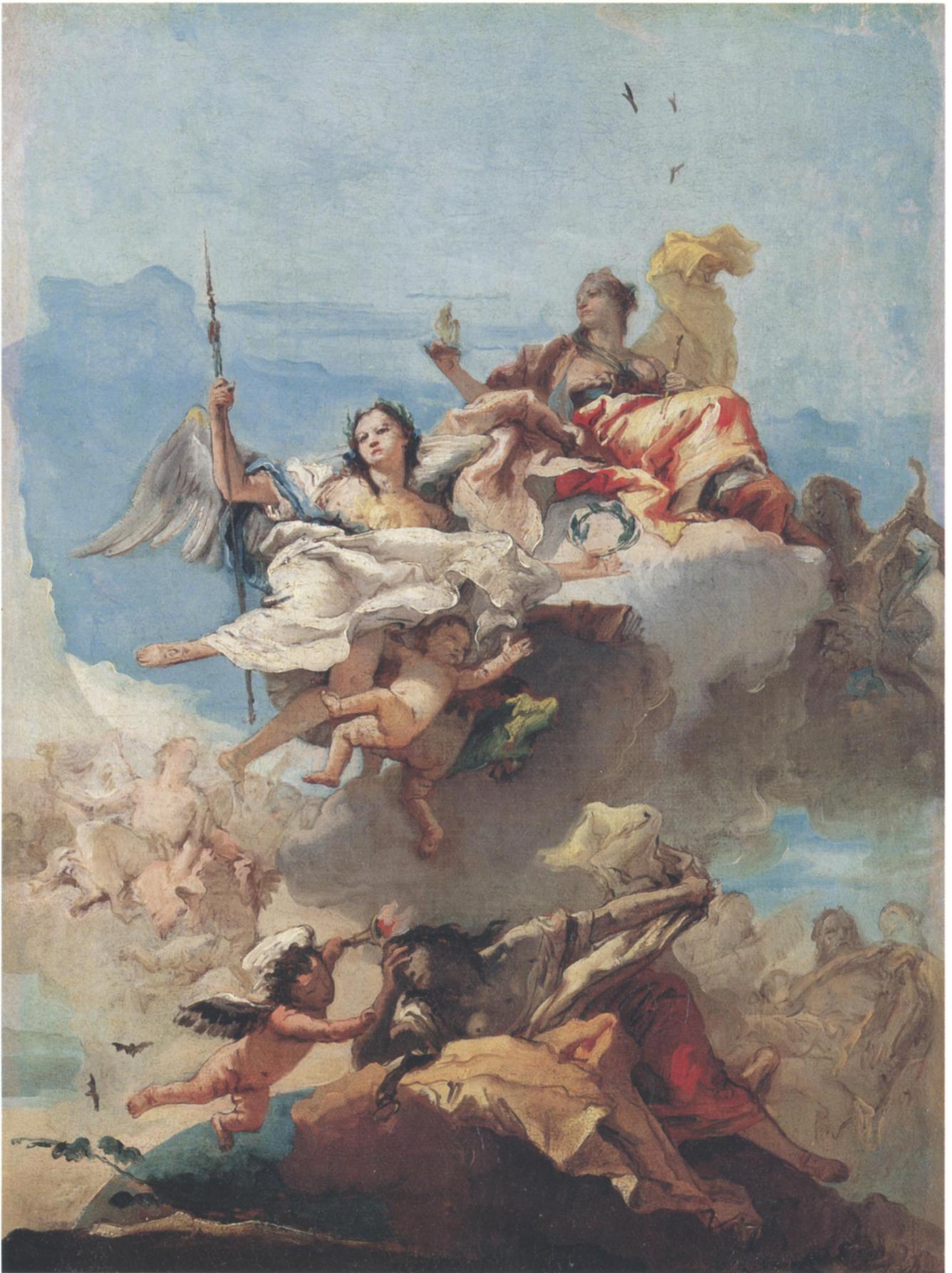
*opposite*

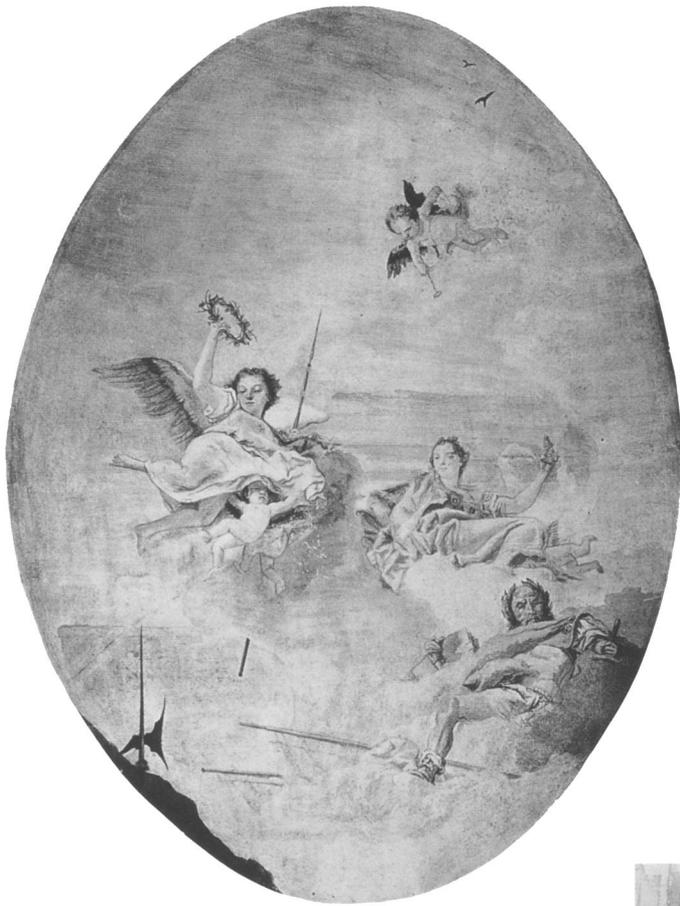
**59 • Virtue and Nobility**, 1780s. Oil on canvas, 21 x 15 3/4 in. (39.1 x 53.3 cm). Gift of J. Pierpont Morgan, 1906 (07.225.297)

With the exception of Ignorance (shielding her eyes), the principal figures in this sketch recur, in a slightly different arrangement, in Domenico's ceiling fresco in the Palazzo Caragiani, Venice (see fig. 60).

An altarpiece representing the Holy Family with Saint Frances of Rome and Saint Eurosia (fig. 57), which is signed and dated 1777, recalls Giambattista's monumental religious paintings in its compositional format, figure types, and costumes, although the sweet, gentle expression of the Virgin invests her with an accessible human quality that his father's aloof Madonnas typically lacked. Domenico produced a careful drawing after his painting (fig. 58); now in the Metropolitan Museum, this attractive sheet is of particular interest in recording the original appearance of the altarpiece before the addition of the kneeling angel at the lower left by the obscure Neoclassical painter Giambattista Mengardi (1738-1789).







**60 \* Allegory of Nobility, Wisdom, and Fortitude,** ca. 1790–95. Fresco. Palazzo Caragiani, Venice

**61 \* Sketch for a Ceiling with an Allegory of Wisdom, Nobility, and Fortitude,** ca. 1780–85. Pen and brown ink, brown wash, over black chalk; 10 × 7<sup>3</sup>/<sub>8</sub> in. (25.5 × 18.9 cm). Robert Lehman Collection, 1975 (1975.I.482)

The very ragged penwork indicates a late date for this drawing.

The Museum's oil sketch of *Virtue and Nobility* (fig. 59), possibly a study for a ceiling decoration (fig. 60) in the Palazzo Caragiani, Venice, painted some twenty years after Domenico's return from Madrid (ca. 1790–95), or for some other late work, again shows his staunch adherence to his father's style, here in a secular mode. The disposition of the figures and the allegorical subject relate closely to a number of variations on the theme of *Fortitude and Wisdom* painted by Giambattista in the 1740s, particularly a ceiling decoration from the Palazzo Manin, Venice (now in the Contini-Bonacossi Collection, Florence, it was reproduced by Domenico in an etching [fig. 62]), that likewise includes the figure of *Ignorance* surrounded by bats, creatures of darkness. Domenico again treated the subject in a late pen-and-ink study in the Lehman Collection (fig. 61) that is conceivably also connected with the Palazzo Caragiani ceiling. The composition of the painting is vastly simplified in comparison, but the allegorical figures of *Wisdom*, *Nobility*, and *Fortitude*, as well as a winged trumpeting angel signifying *Fame*, recur in the drawing, and the round pictorial field indicated at the lower edge of the sheet echoes the oval format of that late work.

Like so many other paintings now ascribed to the younger Tiepolo, the *Virtue and Nobility bozzetto* has in



**62 • Triumph of Virtue and Nobility, 1749–50. Etching, 15 7/8 × 19 in. (40.4 × 48.3 cm). Rogers Fund, 1922 (22.81.89)**

Domenico's etching, to which he later gave the title *Triumph of Virtue and Nobility*, reproduces Giambattista Tiepolo's ceiling painting, executed in the 1740s (Contini-Bonacossi Collection, Florence).



the past been attributed to Giambattista. Domenico's emulation of his father's artistic idiom, as well as his adherence to Giambattista's practice of producing preparatory oil sketches for large-scale paintings, is manifest once again. Emulation here takes on an almost formulaic character, however, and it must be acknowledged that in such late works Domenico's limited resourcefulness when working on a monumental scale, constrained by the equally limited imagination of his patrons, becomes ever more apparent.

In no other campaign of Domenico's late career did his standing as Giambattista Tiepolo's artistic heir serve him so well as in that for the grand ceiling of the main council chamber of the ducal palace at Genoa, one of the artist's most complex and ambitious works. Representing the Glorification of the Giustiniani Family, this fresco, now lost, replaced an elaborate Baroque decorative cycle by the Bolognese painter Marcantonio Franceschini (1648–1729) that was executed in 1702–4 and consumed by fire on November 3, 1777. Domenico was awarded this commission as the result of a competition announced on August 31, 1783, to which fifteen painters submitted sketches. Now in the Metropolitan Museum, his contribution (fig. 64) was judged "rich in ideas, of daring foreshortening, full of contrasts, and effortless in the handling of the brush" and was proclaimed the winning entry on August 23, 1784. Even this late in his career, Domenico's artistic and paternal lineage carried considerable authority, as the judges weighed in his favor "the glorious pictorial heritage of his father."

In a deferential but chatty letter sent to Amadeo

Swayer, a wealthy patron in Venice, the artist reported on his arrival in Genoa on March 3, 1785, and on his warm reception by an official delegation of the Giustiniani family. Equally solicitous, he recounted, was the Genoese doge, who "had me sit at his side, although he was occupied with various senators, and honored me with a coffee." Domenico's description of this encounter reflects not only the high esteem in which he was held by his Genoese employers but also the great significance they attached to the vast ceiling fresco he was about to begin.

Aside from protracted visits to Würzburg and Madrid in the company of his father, the trip to Genoa was one of the rare occasions when Domenico ventured outside his native Venice. Such a prestigious public commission—one that would afford him the opportunity to work on the monumental scale of Giambattista Tiepolo's great fresco cycles—and his fee of 18,000 Genoese lire made for a suitably tempting offer to lure him from home. As the choice of Domenico indicates, his patrons intended that the new ceiling be executed in the Grand Manner of Franceschini's destroyed frescoes, and in this the artist did not disappoint. His allegorical pageant, which conforms to the specified iconographic scheme, unfolds in an infinite light-filled sky framed by a stepped balustrade. The space is populated by putti, Victories, and a dense assemblage of animated figures deployed among architectural elements in a series of tableaux alluding to the historical triumphs of the Giustiniani family. The design and conception are fully indebted to Giambattista's inventions of this type (fig. 63), but Domenico's figures are even more audaciously foreshortened.



opposite

**64 • The Glorification of the Giustiniani Family, 1784.**

Oil on canvas, 46 × 32 ½ in. (116.8 × 82.6 cm). Inscribed: (on log) MZ; (on bale)  $\frac{T}{MA}$ ; (on box)  $\frac{I}{B.T}$ ; (on banner suspended from trumpet) VIRTUS (virtue); (on scroll) CIVITAS CHY (city of Chios)/ V.I. (VINCENTO GIUSTINIANI) /1562. John Stewart Kennedy Fund, 1913 (13.2)

Attended by a Victory figure, Jacopo Giustiniani, a 15th-century naval hero, is seen at the top of the stairs presenting a sword to a personification of the Ligurian Republic. Two banners bear the coats of arms of the Giustiniani family and of the city of Genoa. The turbaned female figure in Greek dress at the left represents the Greek island of Chios. The inscriptions on her scroll, v.i. and 1562, refer to Vincenzo Giustiniani, Genoese governor of the island before its fall to the Turks in 1566. At the upper left are eighteen Giustiniani martyrs massacred by Turkish invaders. An allegory of Christian faith—the figure holding a cross and chalice at the left—refers to the Catholic conquest of Chios before the Turkish invasion. The figures in oriental garb on the right allude to the commercial activities of the Giustiniani in the Greek Islands and Asia Minor. Finally, personifications of Justice, Commerce, and Fortitude surrounding the two-headed god, Janus, symbol of Genoa, appear at the upper right, where Neptune presents the riches of the sea to the city.

Like Giambattista at Würzburg and Madrid, Domenico based his imagery on an abstruse written program, and his work progressed exactly according to his father's artistic process, moving from preparatory drawings to full-scale cartoons (their existence is mentioned by Domenico in the letter of March 3 cited above) and envisioned in its chromatic and compositional totality in the painted *bozzetto*. Although the result, insofar as it can be judged from the Museum's oil sketch, may have lacked Giambattista Tiepolo's poetry, it was nonetheless one that no other painter of the day could have rivaled.

Unveiled on November 14, 1785, Domenico's ceiling was roundly praised, but its acclaim was short-lived. By the early nineteenth century, with Neoclassicism fully ascendant, the

**63 • GIAMBATTISTA TIEPOLO Allegory of the Planets and Continents, 1752.** Oil on canvas, 73 × 54 7/8 in. (185.4 × 139.4 cm). Inscribed on the sides: EVROPA /AFRICÆ / AMERICA /ASIA. Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Charles Wrightsman, 1977 (1977.1.3)

This splendid sketch is a study for the *Apollo and the Four Continents* fresco in Würzburg (see fig. 10).





**65 • Saint Anthony of Padua with the Christ Child, in an Interior, after 1770.** Pen and brown ink, brown wash; 9 5/8 × 7 in. (24.4 × 17.7 cm). Signed in brown ink, bottom center: *Dom. Tiepolo f.* Numbered in brown ink, top left: 74. Robert Lehman Collection, 1975 (1975.T.480)

The series to which this drawing belongs numbered at least 125 sheets. Most show the saint in glory surrounded by angels, but a few have as the setting a chapel or, as in the present example, a sparse monastic cell. Domenico executed a red and white chalk record drawing of Giambattista's painting of Saint Anthony of Padua with the Christ Child (Museo del Prado, Madrid). That late work, completed shortly before his father's death in Madrid, became the point of departure for Domenico's many painted and drawn variations.

work was judged old-fashioned, and its obscure allegory and facile perspective were singled out for harsh criticism. A victim of neglect, the fresco was allowed to fall into an irretrievable state of disrepair and was finally destroyed in 1866, less than a century after its creation.

Notwithstanding a handful of important public commissions of his later career, such as the Genoa ceiling and the *Glory of Pope Leo IX* (1783) in San Lio, Venice, the publication of the collected prints, and a term as president of the Venetian Academy (1880–83), Domenico Tiepolo became an increasingly private artist in the last decades of his life. His diminishing energies as a painter were channeled into the production of small-scale devotional images of tender, intimate themes, especially Joseph and the Christ Child, the Madonna, and Saint Anthony of Padua. Domenico's depictions of Saint Anthony were inspired by a late painting by Giambattista, one of the last works completed before his death. The subject is also found in

Domenico's late drawings; a particularly charming example is in the Lehman Collection (fig. 65).

A man of means who no longer needed to work for a living, Domenico, by 1790, had all but abandoned painting and retreated into the fantasy world of his own imagination, concentrating his efforts on the decoration of his villa at Zianigo and the extensive masterful series of drawings for which he is most appreciated today. These drawings, in which his native gifts for storytelling and inventiveness shine and his witty observations of the nuances of Venetian life abound, are the focus of the remainder of this essay.

## DOMENICO TIEPOLO'S LATE DRAWINGS

Domenico Tiepolo began and ended his professional life as a draftsman. In 1743, at sixteen, he undertook at the behest of Francesco Algarotti his earliest documented artistic efforts, copy drawings of paintings by Titian and Palma Vecchio. Over sixty-five years later, at the turn of the new century when he was an old man, he produced his brilliant series of drawings of the *commedia dell'arte* character Punchinello (see pp. 59–67). Indeed, long before his gifts as a painter were acclaimed in recent decades, Domenico's prolific talents as a draftsman were widely celebrated. An apt and sympathetic characterization was offered a century ago by the marquis de Chennevières, who, in an early monograph on the Tiepolos, described Domenico as a "chatterbox of drawing, the most seductive and inexhaustible of chatterboxes."

The works discussed in the remaining pages all date from the period after Domenico's return from Spain in 1770, and many are from the last fifteen years of his life. They were produced in large series, most numbering over 100 sheets, and some ranging as high as 250 or more examples. These series fall into four classifications, all of which are represented by fine examples in the Metropolitan Museum: sacred themes, profane subjects, the contemporary scene, and Punchinello. Domenico's favored medium was pen and ink with wash (the tone varying from dark ocher to rich sepia), and sketchy black-chalk underdrawing frequently occurs (see fig. 71). Drawings of a series are in the same format and of roughly comparable dimensions. Many bear numerical annotations in Domenico's hand, and almost every sheet is signed.

In these late graphic works Domenico derived inspiration and borrowed motifs freely from a number of sources, including Giambattista's paintings and drawings, his own earlier designs, and the vast collection of prints assembled during his father's lifetime, which he possessed until his death. The purpose of the drawings is elusive. While some correspond to Domenico's paintings, they are almost certainly not preparatory studies in the traditional sense; the points of correspondence seem instead to constitute instances of his well-established penchant for self-quotation and his recycling of stock characters from the Tiepolo repertoire. A number are fully worked-up designs executed in a richly pictorial graphic style and therefore have the character of independent inventions.

It is possible that some of these sheets were produced as gifts or for sale on the art market in Venice, where a long-standing taste for finished presentation drawings endured well into the eighteenth century—as demonstrated by Giambattista's elaborate large-scale drawings of the 1730s (fig. 66) and by Piazzetta's highly finished chalk

portraits, or *têtes des caractères*, of the 1740s. However, there is no contemporary evidence that Domenico's late drawings were widely dispersed in his lifetime. Moreover, that so many of the sheets were numbered—quite possibly by the artist when he added his signature—and that large concentrations of thematically related drawings remained together in subsequent collections long after his death suggest that he retained them, as he did the albums of his father's drawings. In the absence of another compelling explanation, the one proposed by James Byam Shaw, in his pioneering 1962 study of Domenico's drawings, seems the most likely: that the semiretired painter and consummate storyteller produced these works chiefly for his own pleasure.



66 • GIAMBATTISTA TIEPOLO

**Beheading of Two Male Saints.** Pen and brown ink, brown wash, heightened with white, over black chalk; traces of red chalk at upper and lower right. 19¾ × 14½ in. (50 × 36.8 cm). Rogers Fund, 1937 (37.165.14)

### *Sacred Themes*

God the Father with Angels, Saint Anthony of Padua with the Christ Child (fig. 65), and the Baptism of Christ (fig. 67) were the most frequent religious subjects in Domenico's late drawings. Cherubs, who could assume a sacred or a profane guise, also populate many of his late pen studies (fig. 68). Like his variations on secular motifs, these suites constituted graphic reflections on a single theme, repeated with seemingly endless invention in a manner reminiscent of his early Flight into Egypt series and analogous to the *Raccolta di Teste* etchings.

One highly important concentration of drawings of sacred themes stands out in being a circumscribed series but comprising many different subjects. This is the extraordinary group of large-scale, painterly drawings,

originally numbering as many as 250 sheets, known as the Large Biblical series. Produced in the last years of the eighteenth century, near the end of Domenico's career, they have been characterized by Byam Shaw as "essentially 'album drawings,' intended not as studies for painting or etching, but as works of art in their own right." A bound album of 138 such sheets, the *Recueil Fayet*, is in the Musée du Louvre, Paris, and others exist in numerous public and private collections. A few represent Old Testament subjects but most are drawn from the Gospels and the Acts of the Apostles, as well as from fragmentary apocryphal gospels that seem to have been well known to artists in the eighteenth century.

Two fine examples of Domenico's Large Biblical drawings are in the Lehman Collection (figs. 69, 70).



**67 • The Baptism of Christ (with Three Angels Attending Him), after 1770.** Pen and brown gray ink, brown gray wash; 11 $\frac{1}{8}$  × 7 $\frac{5}{8}$  in. (28.3 × 19.4 cm). Signed in brown ink, bottom left: *Dom. Tiepolo f.* Robert Lehman Collection, 1975 (1975.I.478)

Domenico is believed to have executed over ninety drawings of this subject, seven of which are in the Museum's collection. A lost painting by Giambattista, known through an etching by Domenico, may have provided the inspiration for the series. Domenico's own painting of the Baptism (Museo Stibbert, Florence), datable to the 1770s, contains numerous similarities to various drawings from this group.

Representing the Rest on the Flight into Egypt and the Betrothal of the Virgin, they typify the entire series in their upright format, dense compositions, elaborate architectural and landscape settings, high degree of finish, and the relatively diminutive scale of the figures in proportion to the overall design. A graded range of tonal washes covering the whole sheet and the brilliant use of isolated areas of untouched paper to suggest projecting volumes and highlights contribute to the pictorially rich character and atmospheric effect of these graphic masterpieces. And, as usual, unabashed quotations from his earlier inventions, as well as from those of Giambattista Tiepolo, routinely crop up, as Domenico freely indulged in the art of paraphrase that he had perfected over the past half-century.



**68 \* Cupid Blindfolded, on a Cloud Supported by Two Attendant Putti, after 1770.** Pen and two shades of brown ink, brownish gray wash; 7¼ × 9⅝ in. (18.5 × 24.5 cm). Robert Lehman Collection, 1975 (1975.I.485)



**69 \* The Rest on the Flight into Egypt (with a Truncated Pyramid on the Right).** Pen and brown ink, brown wash, over black chalk; 18½ × 14⅞ in. (47 × 37.9 cm). Signed in brown ink, bottom left: *Dom? Tiepolo f.* Robert Lehman Collection, 1975 (1975.I.474)

The seated Virgin is based on the same figure in the first plate of the Flight into Egypt etchings, although the pose of the Christ Child has been altered slightly. A truncated pyramid, a favorite motif of both Giambattista and Domenico, occurs in another plate from that series (see figs. 24, 75).



70 • **The Betrothal of the Virgin**, after 1770. Pen and brown ink, brown wash, over black chalk; 19 × 15 ¼ in. (48.3 × 38.6 cm). Signed in brown ink on a paper attached to column at right: *Dom° Tiepolo f.* Robert Lehman Collection, 1975 (1975.I.514)

### *Mythological Figures*

Scholars have observed that Domenico's drawings of pagan and mythological figures recall monumental sculpture both in their subject and in the plastic treatment of forms. In his numerous studies of Hercules battling the earth giant Antaeus (fig. 71), the protagonists are on a base or ledge reminiscent of the pedestals of garden sculptures or of the balustrades of Venetian villas, which were usually adorned with statues of deities, allegorical personifications, and rustic figures. The summarily rendered landscape, conspicuously lacking the descriptive detail on which Domenico lavished much attention in his other series drawings, also seems to evoke a garden setting. Hercules was a favorite subject for Venetian garden sculpture, occurring frequently in the work of Domenico's contemporary Marinali (fig. 72) and in that of other sculptors of the period. Although it has been suggested that Domenico's inspiration for the Hercules drawings may have been a statuette of Hercules and Antaeus by the Renaissance goldsmith Antico (ca. 1460–1528), or, more remotely, an antique marble known in Florence since the late sixteenth century, an immediate and relevant model undoubtedly presented itself in these ubiquitous Venetian *settecento* villa garden sculptures.

Highly sculptural in conception are the standing pagan deities and heroes in a large series that originally consisted of roughly one hundred or more sheets, of which six are in the Metropolitan (see figs. 73, 74). Isolated on pedestal-like bases against neutral backdrops and outfitted with supporting struts disguised as draperies or rocks, these figures, with their hard contours and surfaces akin to polished marble, are even more evocative of sculpture. Parallels again exist in the work of Marinali, whose vast repertoire of garden figures included Leda, the subject of two of Domenico's drawings in the Museum's collection and of a villa garden sculpture depicted in a scene from his *Punchinello* series. Although no works based on these standing deities and heroines are known, it is not implausible that the drawings were conceived with garden statuary in mind, Domenico here following in the tracks of Giambattista Tiepolo, who designed sculptures for the gardens at Villa Cordelina, near Vicenza.

**71 \* Hercules and Antaeus (with a Ledge Below), after 1780.** Pen and brown ink, gray wash, over black chalk;  $7\frac{7}{8} \times 5\frac{1}{2}$  in. (20 x 14 cm). Signed in brown ink, bottom right: *Dom<sup>o</sup> Tiepolo f.* Robert Lehman Collection, 1975 (1975.I.491)

**72 \* ORAZIO MARINALI AND WORKSHOP**  
**Hercules and the Nemean Lion, mid-18th century.**  
Villa Trissino, Marzotto (Vicenza)



73 \* **Meleager, Turning to the Right**, after 1770. Pen and brown ink, gray wash, over black chalk; 10 7/8 x 6 3/4 in. (27.6 x 17.2 cm). Signed in brown ink, bottom right: *Dom<sup>o</sup> Tiepolo f.* Numbered in brown ink, upper left: 30. Robert Lehman Collection, 1975 (1975.I.490)



*right, above*

74 \* **Leda**, after 1770. Pen and brown ink, brown wash, over traces of black chalk; 10 x 5 3/8 in (25.5 x 13.6 cm). Signed in pen and brown ink, bottom center: *Dom<sup>o</sup> Tiepolo f.* Gift of Robert Lehman, 1941 (41.187.5)

*right*

75 \* GIAMBATTISTA TIEPOLO  
**Scherzi di Fantasia: A Satyr Family**. Etching, 8 7/8 x 7 in. (22.4 x 17.7 cm). Purchase, The Elisha Whittelsey Collection, The Elisha Whittelsey Fund, Dodge and Pfeiffer Funds, and Joseph Pulitzer Bequest; and Gift of Bertina Suida Manning and Robert L. Manning, 1976 (1976.537.2)





76 \* Satyr Leading a Centauress Who Holds a Satyr Child, after 1770. Pen and dark brown ink, dark brown wash; 7½ × 10¾ in. (19 × 27.3 cm). Signed in brown ink, lower left: *Dom<sup>o</sup> Tiepolo f.* Rogers Fund, 1937 (37.165.61)

### *Satyrs and Centaurs*

Satyrs and centaurs provided Domenico with subjects for one of his most engaging large series of drawings. Satyrs, satyresses, and their faun offspring had long been part of Giambattista's repertoire, appearing in an early group of paintings (Horne Museum, Florence) and in three of the *Scherzi* (see fig. 75). Domenico added centaurs to the cast

and portrayed the two groups, both separately and together, in atmospheric landscapes. Often they playfully and peacefully interact (fig. 76), but in some of the drawings the bestial nature of the centaurs is allowed to go unbridled (fig. 77). Hunting and warfare are primary occupations of the centaurs, signaled by the weapons they carry in many of the compositions, while the satyrs engage in

77 \* Centaur Abducting a Nymph, after 1770. Pen and brown ink, brown wash, over traces of black chalk; 7⅝ × 9⅛ in. (19.5 × 23.1 cm). Signed in brown ink, lower center: *Dom<sup>o</sup> Tiepolo f.* Rogers Fund, 1937 (37.165.57)

The satyr and centaur series originally numbered over one hundred sheets. Fifteen are in the Metropolitan. One of the rooms of Domenico's villa at Zianigo was decorated with frescoes of centaurs (1791), and another, satyrs (completed 1771).





**78 • Satyrs Carrying Baskets of Provisions for Their Families,** after 1770. Pen and brown and gray brown ink, gray brown wash; 7<sup>5</sup>/<sub>8</sub> × 10<sup>7</sup>/<sub>8</sub> in. (19.4 × 27.6 cm). Signed in brown ink, bottom left: *Dom. Tiepolo*. Robert Lehman Collection, 1975 (1975.I.497)

The fortress in the distance at the right occurs in many of Domenico's compositions and is reminiscent of the citadel of Brescia, near Venice, where the artist worked in the mid-1750s.

less bellicose acts of gathering provisions and merrymaking (fig. 78).

All these activities recall the pastoral diversions of *villeggiatura* (many Venetian villas functioned nominally as working farms), while the mythical creatures had, since the Renaissance, carried allusions to a vanished arcadian golden age that villa life was meant to evoke. When decorating his own villa, Domenico chose satyrs and centaurs as the subject for two of the rooms, and satyrs appeared earlier as feigned marble or stucco overdoors in the Stanza delle Scene Campestri in the Foresteria at Villa Valmarana. As in *A Dance in the Country* and the Valmarana frescoes, some reference to the rustic culture of *villeggiatura*, with its overtones of a golden age, should thus perhaps be recognized in the satyr and centaur drawings. That this lost age could be recaptured through the virtues of a simple life was enunciated by the eighteenth-century Venetian writer and journalist Gaspare Gozzi, who reflected in the *Gazzetta Veneta* about 1760 that “the golden age, which some believe never took place, not only existed, but is still to be found in the present in some places. Wherever there is simplicity of costume, a rustic quality, . . . and milk and fruit instead of other provisions— *there* is the golden age.”



### *Oriental Horsemen and Horses*

Domenico's drawings of oriental horsemen and horses reflect the contemporary fascination with tales of exotic Eastern romance, a taste that also informed Gianantonio Guardi's small paintings of Turkish subjects and some of Carlo Gozzi's *fiabe*, among numerous other pictorial and literary works of the period. As already observed, Orientals appeared in Domenico's art from the very beginning and were also omnipresent in Giambattista Tiepolo's paintings, drawings, and etchings. But in contrast to those

robed, classical, magus types, whose turbans suggest Zoroaster and other ancient Eastern philosophers, Domenico's horsemen assume a more modern guise. Their long mustaches and feathered turbans identify them as Turkish warriors or pashas. In some of the drawings a Moorish groom is present (fig. 79); and the horses, described by Byam Shaw as "heavy in neck and shoulder, but with a small head and absurdly long, stiff forelegs," are of a distinctly Arab type.



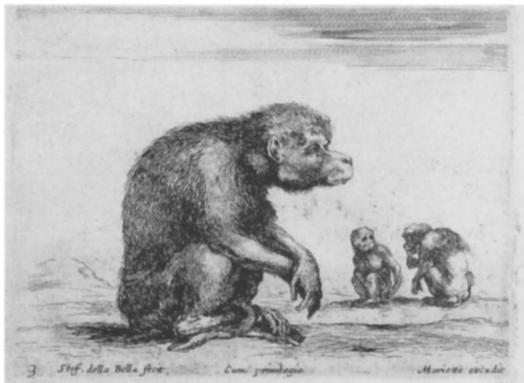
**79 • An Oriental Chieftain Resting**, after 1770. Pen and brown ink, pale brown wash, over black chalk;  $7\frac{7}{8} \times 10\frac{1}{2}$  in. (19.9 × 26.8 cm). Signed in pen and brown ink, lower right: *Dom? Tie* (the rest cut away). Numbered in pen and brown ink, upper left: 69 (? , partly cut away). Fletcher Fund, 1935 (35.42.1)

**80 • Oriental Lancer Approaching a Town**, after 1770. Pen and brown ink, pale brown wash, over traces of black chalk. Framing lines in pen and brown ink.  $11\frac{1}{4} \times 16\frac{1}{8}$  in. (28.6 × 41.1 cm). Signed in brown ink, lower left: *Dom? Tiepolo*. Rogers Fund, 1937 (37.165.67)



**81 • Elephant in a Landscape, after 1770.** Pen and brown ink, brown wash, over black chalk;  $7\frac{1}{8} \times 9\frac{5}{8}$  in. (18.1 × 24.3 cm). Bequest of Eva B. Gebhard Gourgaud, 1959 (60.12)

The subject may have been prompted by the presence of an elephant (immortalized in a painting by Pietro Longhi) in Venice during Carnival in 1774. This is not a life drawing, however, but an adaptation of a print by the Florentine artist Stefano della Bella (1610–1664).



**82 • STEFANO DELLA BELLA**  
**Monkey, 1641.** Etching from *Diversi Animali*,  $3\frac{3}{8} \times 4\frac{5}{16}$  in. (8.6 × 10.8 cm). Purchase, Joseph Pulitzer Bequest, 1917 (17.50.17–252)



**83 • Eight Monkeys, a Dead Goose, and a Cormorant, after 1770.** Pen and brown ink, brown wash, over black chalk;  $7\frac{1}{8} \times 11\frac{1}{8}$  in. (18.2 × 28.3 cm). Signed in brown ink, bottom right: *Dom<sup>o</sup> Tiepolo f.* Robert Lehman Collection, 1975 (1975.1.528)

Three monkeys correspond to those in the etching by della Bella (fig. 82).



**84 • A Bull Lying Down, and Two Donkeys, in a Landscape, after 1770.** Pen and brown ink, brown wash, over black chalk;  $7\frac{3}{8} \times 11\frac{1}{8}$  in. (18.7 × 28.2 cm). Signed in brown ink, bottom right: *Dom<sup>o</sup> Tiepolo f.* Robert Lehman Collection, 1975 (1975.1.519)

One of the donkeys is copied from the *Beesteboeckje* (Book of Animals) by the German Johann Heinrich Roos (1631–1686).

### *Animals*

Domenico took great delight in his animal drawings (opposite; see also fig. 11). In these he quoted liberally and shamelessly from a wide range of sources, primarily prints in his collection by artists such as Stefano della Bella (fig. 82), Castiglione, and the Germans Johann Elias Ridinger and Johann Heinrich Roos, both of whose works he may have acquired in Würzburg. Animal prints evidently held a particular fascination for Domenico: his collection also included prints of sheep and an ass, as well as other animals in landscapes, by Carl Dujardin; animals and a dog by Jan Fyt; twenty-seven prints of different animals by Nicolas Berghem; and several after Paulus Potter. Some members of Domenico's bestiary inhabit landscapes, and others are silhouetted on ledges or pedestal-like bases (see fig. 11), recalling the porcelain figurines that gained widespread popularity in the eighteenth century. Animals in landscapes were painted by the artist in one of the rooms of his villa at Zianigo. Once again, however, his drawings were not preparatory studies for the frescoes but parallel graphic creations.

### *Scenes of Contemporary Life*

Peasants and Gypsies, nobles and *petits bourgeois*, shopkeepers, schoolmasters, and tradesmen; the entertainments, diversions, occupations, and social posturings of the inhabitants of the lagoon and the mainland—these are the subjects of Domenico Tiepolo's vastly appealing drawings of the contemporary scene. Numerous written sources of the period—letters, poems, journalistic accounts, diaries, memoirs—vividly describe the amusing, ribald, and frivolous interludes of Venetian life in the last decades



of the Republic. These provide a revealing and informative backdrop to Domenico's colorful images and attest to the veracity of his pictorial chronicle.

The genre of popular imagery in eighteenth-century Venice was not one that Domenico invented. Pietro Longhi's career was devoted to the production of small cabinet paintings, or "conversation pieces," many of



**85 • A Flirtation**, ca. 1795.  
Pen and brown ink, brown wash, over black chalk; 11 ¼ × 8 ¾ in. (28.6 × 22.2 cm).  
Robert Lehman Collection, 1975 (1975.I.513)

**86 • The Leopards' Cage at the Menagerie**. Pen and brown ink, brown wash, over black chalk; 11 ¾ × 16 ¾ in. (28.8 × 41.5 cm).  
Signed in brown ink, bottom left: *Dom<sup>o</sup> Tiepolo f.* Robert Lehman Collection, 1975 (1975.I.516)



**87 • The School, 1791.** Pen and brown ink, gray wash, over black chalk; 14 3/8 × 19 3/4 in. (37.1 × 50.3 cm). Signed and dated faintly in brown ink on a paper attached to wall, upper right: *Tiepolo 1791*. Signed again in dark brown ink, above first signature: *Dom<sup>o</sup> Tiepolo f.* Robert Lehman Collection, 1975 (1975.1.512)

*opposite*

**88 • “In Piazza,” ca. 1791.** Pen and brown ink, brown wash, over black chalk; 14 3/8 × 19 3/4 in. (36.5 × 50.1 cm). Signed in brown ink, top center: *Dom<sup>o</sup> Tiepolo f.* Robert Lehman Collection, 1975 (1975.1.510)

which show the intimate, rather mundane, and often claustrophobic interior world of the Venetian leisured classes; Piazzetta’s designs for book illustrations included small vignettes of pastoral genre scenes; Pietro Novelli’s etchings accompanying the complete literary works of the eighteenth-century playwright Carlo Goldoni presented lively glimpses of everyday Venetian life that paralleled the bourgeois realism of Goldoni’s theater and of Longhi’s paintings; and the now-obscure Gaetano Zompini, in his *Arti che vanno per via nella Città di Venezia* (Street Occupations in the City of Venice), first published in 1753, treated with an unwavering directness and objectivity the trades and commercial activities of the lower strata of Venetian society. But the sparkling wit and gentle humor with which Domenico scrutinized the world around him distinguished his contributions from those of his contemporaries, and his inventions rank at the forefront of the genre as it existed in Venice in his day.

A number of the Contemporary Life drawings are inscribed with the date 1791 (see fig. 87), and the group as a whole can be confidently assigned to the last decade of the eighteenth century. Like the Large Biblical series, these sheets are highly worked-up compositions executed in a rich range of limpid washes and populated by numerous figures of rather diminutive scale, although the format is horizontal rather than vertical. The scenes are all bordered by framing lines that serve to underscore their character as autonomous works.

Five Contemporary Life drawings are in the Museum’s collection. From the lower ranks of the social order comes the motley crowd gazing into the leopards’ cage at a menagerie (fig. 86). In another sheet the interior of a

schoolroom, where one hapless pupil wears the donkey ears of a dunce, is minutely described (fig. 87). The image known as “*In Piazza*” (fig. 88) captures a chance encounter (witnessed by Domenico’s ever-present canines) under the arcades of the Procuratie Nuove on the Piazza San Marco—the “drawing room for one and all,” according to the nineteenth-century Venetian historian Pompeo Molmenti. A pair of fashionably attired threesomes, each consisting of a gentleman accompanying two elegantly accessorized ladies, meets outside a café. The drawing records a fact of life in late-eighteenth-century Venice: Ladies did not venture out alone into the Piazza because it was deemed socially indecorous and also because of the perils posed by swarms of raucous merrymakers, transvestites, prostitutes, and other sordid types. The French painter Élisabeth Vigée-Lebrun was made aware of this reality in 1792 by her friend Mme Marini, who chastised her for proposing to take coffee on the Piazza without a male escort, devising as a solution the “loan of M. Denon [Baron Dominique Vivant Denon], who will give you his arm . . . because one cannot go there without a companion.”

The costumes of the figures assembled here are relatively restrained and sober, but fashion excess was by no means unknown in eighteenth-century Venice, where such absurd spectacles as “patrician ladies . . . in slippers, corset, and high-kilted petticoats” were routinely observed in public despite the prohibitions of Venetian sumptuary laws. The comic aspects of Venetian couture were gleefully recorded for posterity by that seasoned people-watcher Domenico Tiepolo, who provided a glimpse of the toilette of one such lady (fig. 89). Hairstyles and headgear in particular offered ample targets for satirical comment: The



**89 • Lady Dressing, ca. 1780 or 1790s. Pen and brown ink, brown wash. Signed, lower right: *Dom° Tiepolo*. Museum of Art, Rhode Island School of Design, Anonymous Gift (57.139)**

**90 • The Presentation of the Fiancé, ca. 1791. Pen and gray brown ink, gray wash, over black chalk. Thaw Collection, The Pierpont Morgan Library**



**91 • Caricature of a Gentleman and Other Studies.** Pen and brown ink, brown wash, over black chalk; 10 5/8 × 7 1/4 in. (27.1 × 18.5 cm). Signed in pen and brown ink, lower right: *Dom. Tiepolo f.* Rogers Fund, 1937 (37.165.68)

journalist Gaspare Gozzi ridiculed hats resembling baskets of cabbages, an accessory that frequently makes an appearance in Domenico's Contemporary Life drawings (fig. 90) and in the frescoes in the villa at Zianigo. Even less fetching was the feminine fashion of the *tupè*—a tower of elaborately dressed and pomaded hair constructed around a frame, shaped into a fan or a pyramid, then ornamented with flowers, baskets, hammers, portraits, and other baubles, and which was frequently insect-infested and foul-smelling from mildew. Undeterred by such inconveniences, Domenico's lady at her toilette (see fig. 89) prepares to erect such a monument, the iron armature of the *tupè* already perched on her head.

Among the most engaging of the Museum's Contemporary Life drawings is the scene of acrobats performing (fig. 93). Their buffoonery and slapstick antics were highly popular forms of entertainment in eighteenth-century Venice (especially during Carnival), where saltimbanques and *zanni* (clowns) were routinely encountered in the Piazza San Marco and on the Riva degli Schiavoni. Puppet

shows, charlatans and quack dentists purveying their dubious wares, flirtations, improvised musical recitals witnessed by exotic foreigners—the “Turks, Greeks, Dalmatians, and Levantines,” described by Charles de Brosses, who thronged the Piazza (“the most beautiful and curious place on earth,” in the estimation of that seasoned French traveler)—the unique color of Venice in all its splendor and decadence was captured by Domenico's indefatigable pen.

There are throughout the Contemporary Life series figures based on Giambattista Tiepolo's caricatures (fig. 92). Like the chalk drawings referred to above, these studies, produced in great numbers and pasted into albums, were retained by Domenico after his father's death, providing a convenient and—given the humorous and gently satirical vein of the series—relevant repertoire to draw upon. Domenico's own efforts in this genre are similar in spirit and remarkably close in style to Giambattista's (fig. 91). As caricaturists, the Tiepolos departed from the practice of artists like the Roman painter and draftsman Pier Leone Ghezzi (1674–1755) in depicting comically exaggerated but generic types, rather than specific and recognizable individuals, and in favoring light humor over biting social commentary. Both Giambattista's and Domenico's caricatures express what Tiepolo scholar Michael Levey has described as an “uncomplicated belief that people, and the clothes they wear, are funny.”



**92 • GIAMBATTISTA TIEPOLO**  
**Caricature of a Man Holding a Tricorne, Seen from Behind.** Pen and black ink, gray wash; 7 3/4 × 4 3/4 in. (19.7 × 12.2 cm). Robert Lehman Collection, 1975 (1975.1.456)



### *Punchinello*

Domenico Tiepolo is perhaps best known today for his celebrated suite of 104 drawings devoted to the commedia dell'arte character Punchinello. Produced at the very end of his life, this series is his crowning achievement as a draftsman. Analogous in many respects to his other late series drawings, particularly in the repeated but endlessly varied treatment of a single subject, the Punchinello drawings are unique in Domenico's graphic oeuvre in having been designated by the artist with a title, *Divertimento per li regazzi* (Entertainment for Children), and provided with a frontispiece (fig. 94), a practice otherwise reserved for his etched *Flight into Egypt* and *Raccolta di Teste*. Vexing questions concerning the *Divertimento* include the possible literary source or sources of Domenico's imagery; the original order of the sheets within the series; and the intent of the series as a whole. Can the drawings be arranged in a loose narrative sequence—as James Byam Shaw has suggested and most subsequent scholars have concurred—beginning with Punchinello's ancestry and childhood and proceeding through his trades and occupations, his adventures in foreign lands, and his social and official life to conclude with his final illness and death? And are the Punchinello drawings satirical and ironic, or were they intended literally, as the



93 • **The Acrobats.** Pen and brown ink, brown wash, over black chalk; 11 $\frac{3}{8}$  × 16 $\frac{1}{4}$  in. (29 × 41.3 cm). Rogers Fund, 1968 (68.54.4)

94 • **Frontispiece to the Punchinello Series, ca. 1800.** Pen and brown ink, brown wash, over black chalk. Signed, lower right: *Dom<sup>o</sup> Tiepolo f.* The Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, Kansas City, Missouri, Purchase: Nelson Trust, 32-193/9

Surrounded by props—cooking pots, basket, faggots, a plate of gnocchi—seen throughout the series, Punchinello contemplates a slab that at once evokes an altar, a tomb, and a stage. Deliberately ambiguous, this motif alludes to the malleability that is the essence of the character.



**95 • Punchinello's Mother (?) Sick in Pregnancy, ca. 1800.** Pen and brown ink, brown wash, over black chalk; 11 5/8 × 16 1/4 in. (29.5 × 41.4 cm). Signed in brown ink, bottom left: *Dom? Tiepolo f.* Numbered in brown ink, upper left margin: 15. Robert Lehman Collection, 1975 (1975.I.470)



**96 • GIAMBATTISTA TIEPOLO**  
**A Group of Punchinellos Seated, 1750s.** Pen and brown ink, brown wash, over black chalk; 7 5/8 × 11 1/4 in. (19.5 × 28.5 cm). Robert Lehman Collection, 1975 (1975.I.438)

artist announces on the title page, as “entertainment for children”?

Punchinello (also Pulcinella or Policinelle) was one of the oldest stock characters of the commedia dell’arte. His origins, according to early histories of the Italian theater, were purported to extend back to ancient Roman times. Like the other masks of the commedia, he acquired a fixed set of physical and sartorial attributes: clownlike and thus evoking comic associations, Punchinello always sported a large hump, potbelly, tall conical hat, and beaklike proboscis, the last attribute thought to allude, like the etymology of his name and his chirping voice, to his mythical descent from a chicken (*pollo*). His costume was the baggy white tunic and breeches of a peasant laborer from the Neapolitan countryside, the character’s regional birthplace. Befitting his lowly social status, Punchinello was coarse and vulgar—a rascal, lecher, glutton, and trickster, who embodied the baser instincts of human nature and for whom feasting, lounging, quarreling, and relieving himself were major preoccupations.

A character of long standing in the Tiepolo artistic repertoire, Punchinello appears in Giambattista’s drawings of the 1730s and 1750s (fig. 96) and in two of the *Scherzi*; as the subject of a number of canvases variously ascribed to Giambattista or Domenico; and in Domenico’s



paintings and drawings of contemporary life, including the Metropolitan's *A Dance in the Country* (fig. 42). Punchinellos also found a prominent place in Domenico's frescoes in the villa at Zianigo, the decorations of which almost always reprise or anticipate themes taken up in his late series drawings. The character thus exercised a certain fascination for both Tiepolos, but never before, either in their work or that of other eighteenth-century Italian artists, had he received such exhaustive coverage. (And although other commedia dell'arte characters had occasionally been singled out for preferred treatment—Harlequin, for example, appeared in a variety of guises in a series of canvases by the eighteenth-century Florentine painter Domenico Feretti that anticipated the *Divertimento*—none had enjoyed the sustained and affectionate focus that Domenico lavished on Punchinello.)

In Domenico's Venice Punchinello assumed a life independent of the theater. A fixture in the Piazza San Marco and on the Riva degli Schiavoni, he was routinely encountered as a hawker for charlatans; a buffoon street entertainer quick to amuse with a witty quip or song; a mean-spirited puppet (in this incarnation, the ancestor of

**97 \* The Infant Punchinello in Bed with His Parents, ca. 1800.** Pen and brown ink, two shades of brown wash, over black chalk; 11½ × 16⅛ in. (29.3 × 41.1 cm). Numbered in brown ink, upper left margin: 8. Robert Lehman Collection, 1975 (1975.1.465)

the nasty Punch of Punch and Judy fame); and a Carnival mask donned by licentious revelers. Punchinello's omnipresence in Venice's urban landscape is attested by any number of eighteenth-century witnesses, among them the French encyclopedist Denis Diderot, who, in a letter of 1762, related that "in a single square you can see on one side a stage with mountebanks performing merry, but monstrously indecent farces, and on the other another stage with priests performing farces of a different complexion and shouting out: 'Take no notice of these wretches, gentlemen, the Pulcinello you are flocking to is a feeble fool; here (displaying the crucifix) is the genuine Pulcinello, the great Pulcinello.'" So unwieldy did their numbers become that in 1760 the procurator Marco Foscarini contemplated prohibiting all Punchinellos in the Piazza San Marco. Such a ban was never issued, however, perhaps because, as one anonymous satirist cynically



98 \* **Punchinello as a Dressmaker**, ca. 1800. Pen and brown ink, brown wash, over black chalk; 13 <sup>7</sup>/<sub>8</sub> × 18 <sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> in. (35.4 × 47 cm). Numbered in brown ink, upper left margin: 12. Robert Lehman Collection, 1975 (1975.1.466)

99 \* **The Marriage of Punchinello**, ca. 1800. Pen and brown ink, gray brown and golden wash, over black chalk. Signed on column: *Dom<sup>o</sup> Tiepolo f.* Numbered in brown ink, upper left margin: 3. The Art Institute, Chicago (inv. no. 1968.312)



noted, were all the buffoons to be banished from the Piazza, its population would diminish by nearly half.

Through Punchinello's very ubiquity in eighteenth-century Venetian popular culture—the theater of life that provided Domenico with so much of his imagery—the character must have insinuated himself indelibly into the artist's imagination. Moreover, the malleable nature of this mask made him the ideal protagonist for the wide-ranging excursus of the *Divertimento*: Just as Punchinello in the scenarios of the commedia assumed a chameleon-like variety of guises (including the unsavory incarnations of the Venetian street-performing mountebanks), so in the *Divertimento* is he cast in a whole gamut of roles—tradesman, merchant, criminal, laborer, badminton player, lover, bridegroom, adventurer, cook, artist, barber, entertainer, hunter, scoundrel, victim, executioner, and corpse.

The *Divertimento* includes a number of original compositions. The scene of a flogging, for example (fig. 105), is not based on any immediately recognizable prototype, a testimonial to the aging artist's still-fertile imagination. But it should come as no surprise to discover that, when composing the Punchinello scenes, Domenico turned to the Tiepolo encyclopedia for inspiration, once again liberally quoting from his father's paintings and drawings.

No prototype was too exalted to exempt it from appropriation into the bawdy, low-life Punchinello universe. Accordingly, Giambattista's fresco of the Marriage of Frederick Barbarossa and Beatrice of Burgundy from the Kaisersaal at Würzburg is paraphrased in the drawing of a Punchinello marriage (fig. 99), and his various renditions of the Banquet of Cleopatra co-opted as the models for a Punchinello nuptial feast of equal splendor (fig. 101). Domenico also reprised some favorite motifs of his own devising. Thus, dancing dogs, peasant revelers, grazing cows, rambunctious centaurs, mythological gods and heroes on pedestals, and strolling figures sporting umbrellas and parasols crop up throughout the series.

Punchinello occasionally ventures into exotic, vaguely Eastern locales (as in the scene of a caravan replete with camels and palm trees), but the backdrop for much of the

action is the Venetian lagoon and mainland of Domenico's day—its civic buildings, quays, domestic interiors, shops and markets, villa gardens and countryside—already familiar from his Contemporary Life and other late drawings. The thematic overlap with the scenes of Contemporary Life is in fact considerable: Domenico's Punchinello occupies the same milieu and engages in the same activities as the artist's peasants and dandies, industrious laborers and idle aristocrats. In an ironic inversion, many of these now-familiar characters reappear in the *Divertimento* but as supporting players to Punchinello's starring role.

The hero of the *Divertimento* is not a single Punchinello but rather a whole society of punchinellos. Rendered indistinguishable by their identical masks and costumes, they occur in multiples in every scene. Anonymous and



**100 • Punchinello as a Tailor's Assistant, ca. 1800.** Pen and brown ink, light brown wash, over black chalk;  $13\frac{7}{8} \times 18\frac{1}{2}$  in. (35.3 × 47 cm). Signed in brown ink, bottom left: *Dom° Tiepolo f.* Numbered in brown ink, upper left margin: 55. Robert Lehman Collection, 1975 (1975.I.472)

The extensive black-chalk underdrawing evident here occurs in a number of sheets from the series. Frequently, as in this example, the pen and wash depart from the preliminary indications in chalk.

**101 • The Wedding Banquet, ca. 1800.** Pen and brown ink, brown and ocher wash, over black chalk. Signed, lower right: *Dom° Tiepolo f.* Numbered in brown ink, upper left margin: 5. Thaw Collection, The Pierpont Morgan Library, New York



ubiquitous, Domenico's Punchinello is everyman and no man in particular. In a world that parallels and parodies that of the Contemporary Life drawings, similar scenarios are reenacted. Now, however, the main actors are masks.

In the commedia dell'arte tradition, the mask was the theatrical convention through which the humor and pathos of life were extracted from reality, infused with elements of the fantastic, and reflected back to the audience in the form of "fairy stories"—as the commedia's scenarios were often called to indicate their essentially fanciful, imaginary content. This term aptly describes Domenico's Punchinello universe. Goethe astutely observed that the audience of Venetian comic theater enjoyed nothing more than to watch itself, but as presented through the masks of the commedia—an entertainment in which they "delighted, like children." Thus it is that Domenico, in the frontispiece of the *Divertimento*, summons *ragazzi*, children, those lovers of the commedia's "fairy stories," as his audience.

Like Domenico himself, as the creator of the drawings of the contemporary scene, Punchinello in the commedia assumed the role of highlighting life's farce and offering a mirror through which his audience could see, and laugh at, itself. "Yes, my children! Here I am! I, Punchinello," he announces at the opening of a performance recorded by the nineteenth-century theater historian Maurice Sand. "I come to amuse you, as pleasantly as I can, for certain someones have told me that you are sad. Now, why should you be sad? Is not life a pleasant thing, an idle jest, a veritable farce, in which all the world is the theater and where there is plenty to excite your laughter if you will but take the trouble to look?" Through the speech of this Punchinello of the theater the mission of Domenico's *Divertimento*—the amusement of "children" of all ages—is revealed.

Attempts to unearth a textual source for Domenico's Punchinello imagery in the work of Carlo Gozzi or other contemporary playwrights have yielded no discoveries.



**102 • Punchinellos Felling a Tree**, ca. 1800. Pen and brown ink, brown wash, over black chalk; 13 $\frac{7}{8}$  × 18 $\frac{5}{8}$  in. (35.3 × 47.3 cm). Signed in brown ink, lower left: *Dom° Tiepolo f.* Numbered in brown ink, upper left margin: 40. Robert Lehman Collection, 1975 (1975.I.468)

The drum at right, which may connote a ceremony, has prompted the sugges-

tion that this superb drawing alludes to the "Tree of Liberty" erected by Napoleonic troops throughout the Veneto in 1797 as a symbol of French "liberation." However, a similar drum occurs in *Christ Crowned with Thorns* (fig. 22), a fact that cautions against an overly symbolic interpretation of this prop.

*opposite, top*  
**103 • Punchinellos Outside a Circus**, ca. 1800. Pen and brown ink, brown wash, over black chalk; 13 $\frac{3}{4}$  × 18 $\frac{1}{4}$  in. (34.9 × 46.4 cm). Signed in brown ink on a paper attached to fence, center right: *Dom° Tiepolo f.* Numbered in brown ink, upper left margin: 50. Robert Lehman Collection, 1975 (1975.I.469)

The elephant on the poster indicates the attraction inside. Collapsed in a heap on a hillock in the foreground, the Punchinellos, one of whom relieves himself at right, are isolated from the other circusgoers. Domenico here exposes their idle and vulgar nature.

*opposite, bottom*  
**104 • Punchinello Retrieving Dead Fowls from a Well**, ca. 1800. Pen and brown ink, brown wash, over black chalk; 11 $\frac{3}{8}$  × 16 $\frac{1}{4}$  in. (29 × 41.3 cm). Signed in brown ink, bottom right: *Dom° Tiepolo f.* Numbered in brown ink, upper left margin: 83. Robert Lehman Collection, 1975 (1975.I.469)

This enigmatic scene may depict a childish prank, as is indicated by the squirming young Punchinello being unceremoniously carried off by one of his elders.





Thus, it has been reasonably concluded that the *Divertimento* is a creation of the artist's imagination rather than the illustrated companion to a literary or theatrical PUNCHINELLO biography. Nonetheless, some of the episodes undoubtedly reflect Domenico's deep familiarity with both the PUNCHINELLO character and with the scenarios of the *commedia dell'arte*.

Moreover, that a kinship exists with the *commedia* tradition is true not only of the subject matter but also of the fundamental role that improvisation and the closely allied faculty of artistic invention play in the series as a whole. Domenico's PUNCHINELLO drawings are the pictorial and spiritual counterparts of Carlo Gozzi's *fiabe*: improvised scenarios enacted by the masks of the *commedia* that venture from the burlesque and comic (see fig. 103) to the dramatic and poignant (see fig. 106). Both the PUNCHINELLO drawings and the *fiabe* give voice to the author's fanciful imagination. Gozzi described his *fiabe* as "teatrale divertimento"; Domenico entitled his PUNCHINELLO series *Divertimento*. And, in referring ironically to his *fiabe* as "nursery tales," Gozzi, like Domenico on the title page of the *Divertimento*, Goethe in his account of a *commedia* performance, and PUNCHINELLO in the scenario quoted above, invoked an audience of children, not in a literal sense, as has been generally maintained of these drawings, but as an

allusion to the childlike innocence required to appreciate the fabulous and fantastic elements of the tales he tells.

Although the PUNCHINELLO drawings were numbered, it is unlikely that this fixed order was envisioned from the outset, particularly since the numeration is probably posthumous. Additionally, some of the numerically contiguous drawings depart from a coherent or unified story line, and certain subjects are repeated for no logical reason. Far more plausible is that the dozens of sheets of the *Divertimento* originally conformed to no fixed sequence, thereby lending themselves to a reinvented narrative each time they were viewed. Basic plot lines—PUNCHINELLO as a tailor (fig. 100), PUNCHINELLO at the circus (fig. 103), PUNCHINELLO being flogged (fig. 105)—were reprised; but, as in the improvised performances of the *commedia*, an element of novelty and spontaneity accompanied each retelling of PUNCHINELLO's adventures, depending on the ordering of the images. At the heart of the infinitely varied, extemporized versions of the narrative lies the artistic imagination of Domenico Tiepolo, the consummate storyteller. His last work, the *Divertimento* is the ultimate vindication of Domenico's abundant powers of invention.

Attempts have been made to impute to the *Divertimento* a satirical purpose or an autobiographical subtext—a criticism of Venetian society or a veiled expression of the



aging artist's isolation and disaffection in the wake of the Republic's demise. Domenico Tiepolo was not given to bouts of artistic introspection, however, nor was he Goya or Daumier, and it is improbable that this fundamentally apolitical artist, having reached old age, would suddenly become a partisan commentator or an outspoken critic of the city and culture that had for so long afforded him fame and success. To the contrary, the drawings—with the quintessentially eighteenth-century Venetian character Punchinello as their protagonist—stand as his final tribute to that society and way of life in all its splendor and folly.

Domenico Tiepolo died of fever at seventy-seven years of age on March 4, 1804, and was buried in his parish church of Saints Armagora and Fortunato. He survived the Venetian Republic by seven years and outlived the era of history into which he was born, witnessing the end of the old order that his art served but partaking of none of the Revolutionary fervor that swept Europe and inflamed the creative spirit of Canova or David. It is the culture of that vanished world that Domenico, with nostalgia and gentle humor, mythologized and immortalized in the *Divertimento*.

*opposite*

**105 \* The Flogging of Punchinello**, ca. 1800. Pen and brown ink, brown wash, over black chalk; 11 <sup>5</sup>/<sub>8</sub> × 17 <sup>3</sup>/<sub>8</sub> in. (29.5 × 41.2 cm). Signed in brown ink, bottom right: *Dom? Tiepolo f.* Numbered in brown ink, upper left margin: 85. Robert Lehman Collection, 1975 (1975.I.467)

The crime committed by Punchinello is a mystery, but his punishment has attracted the scrutiny of a bespectacled bystander (based on a caricature by Giambattista). The head of the standing Turk recalls a plate in volume 2 of the *Raccolta di Teste* (see fig. 50), and the Punchinello at right is nearly identical to the corresponding figure in *Punchinellos Outside a Circus* (fig. 103).

**106 \* The Burial of Punchinello**. Pen and brown ink, brown and yellow wash, over black chalk; 11 <sup>5</sup>/<sub>8</sub> × 16 <sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub> in. (29.5 × 41.3 cm). Signed in brown ink, bottom left: *Dom? Tiepolo f.* Numbered in brown ink, upper left margin: 103. Robert Lehman Collection, 1975 (1975.I.473)

The crowd of onlookers witnessing the burial and the woman holding her cloak to her nose recall the conventional iconography of the Raising of Lazarus. Appropriated from Crucifixion imagery is the ladder rising behind the figures, a prop seen in the series frontispiece (see fig. 94). Through these allusions Domenico imparts sacred overtones to the scene, thereby highlighting Punchinello's universal humanity rather than his coarse, comedic nature.

## NOTES

### Introduction

p. 4, “in the footsteps of his father”: Algarotti’s letter to Count Bruhl, quoted in Levey, *Tiepolo*, p. 134. “son of the celebrated professor”: Contract quoted in Levey, *Tiepolo*, p. 221. “What is painted by the father” is inscribed on Domenico’s etching of Giambattista’s *The Patron Saints of the Crotta Family* (Stadelsches Kunstinstitut, Frankfurt).

### The Early Years

p. 9, “only out of personal whim”: Pietro Visconti’s letter to Gian Pietro Ligari, December 19, 1749; quoted in Haskell, *Patrons and Painters*, p. 323.

### The Würzburg Period

p. 11, “stupefying mimetic capacity”: Mariuz, *Giandomenico Tiepolo*, p. 31. p. 18, “abundantly rich in ideas”: Moschini’s account related in *Dell’Incisione in Venezia* (Venice, 1924), p. 162.

### Artistic Maturity

p. 22, “caricature of his father’s style”: Critical response of Johann Georg Meusel, a follower of Mengs, quoted in Adriano Mariuz, “La ‘Lapidazione di Santo Stefano’ di Giandomenico Tiepolo ritrovata,” *Arte veneta* 32, pp. 414–16. p. 27, “from midnight to midnight, they are just the same”: Journal entry for October 4, 1786, in J. W. von Goethe, *Italian Journey (1786–1788)*, trans. W. H. Auden and Elizabeth Mayer (Harmondsworth, Middlesex, England, 1962; repr. 1982), p. 86. p. 30, “more natural acting than that of these masked players”: Goethe, *Italian Journey*, p. 86. “the actor who performs impromptu”: Riccoboni, *Théâtre Italien*, p. 61. “each speaking in his turn”: Charles de Brosses, quoted in Sand, *Harlequinade*, vol. 1, p. 32.

### Spain and the Later Career

p. 34, “for the sublime, for the heroic, for perfection”: Giambattista Tiepolo, before his departure for Spain, quoted in *Nuova Veneta Gazzetta*, March 1762; cited in Haskell, *Patrons and Painters*, p. 253. p. 36, Zanetti’s letter to Mariette, transcribed in Russell, *Rare Etchings*, p. 33. p. 41, “rich in ideas, of daring foreshortening, full of contrasts”; “the glorious pictorial heritage of his father”: Federigo Alizeri, *Notizie dei Professori del disegno in Liguria della fondazione dell’Accademia* (Genoa, 1864), vol. 1, p. 380. “honored me with a coffee”: Domenico’s letter of March 13, 1785, transcribed in G. M. Urbani de Gheltof, *Tiepolo e la sua famiglia* (Venice, 1879), p. 33 (erroneously dated 1783).

### Domenico Tiepolo’s Late Drawings

p. 45, “inexhaustible of chatterboxes”: Henri de Chenevières, *Les Tiepolo*, Paris, 1898, p. 149. p. 46, “essentially ‘album drawings’”: Byam Shaw, *Domenico Tiepolo*, p. 37. p. 52, “there is the golden



107 • The Spring Shower, ca. 1800. Pen and brown ink, brown wash, over black chalk. Signed, lower right: *Dom<sup>o</sup> Tiepolof.* The Cleveland Museum of Art, Purchase from the J. H. Wade Fund, 1937.573.

age”: Gaspare Gozzi in *Gazzetta Veneta*; transcribed in Adriano Mariuz, “Giandomenico Tiepolo e la civiltà veneta di villa,” in *Atti del Congresso internazionale di studi sul Tiepolo* (Milan, n.d. [ca. 1971]), p. 17. p. 53, “absurdly long, stiff forelegs”: Byam Shaw, in *Lehman Collection*, p. 174. p. 56, “drawing room for one and all”: Molmenti, *Venice*, pt. 3, p. 139. “one cannot go there without a companion”: Élisabeth Vigée-Lebrun, *Mémoires d’un portraitiste, 1755–1842*, ed. Jean Chalon (Paris, 1989), p. 115. “patrician ladies in . . . petticoats”: Report of Ambassador Andrea Dolfin’s agent in Venice, May 1771; quoted in Molmenti, *Venice*, pt. 3, vol. 1, p. 140. p. 58, “baskets of cabbages”: Gozzi quoted in Molmenti, *Venice*, pt. 3, vol. 1, p. 220. “Turks, Greeks, Dalmatians, and Levantines”: Charles de Brosses, letter to A. M. de Blancey, August 13, 1739; in *Lettres d’Italie du Président de Brosses*, ed. Frédéric d’Agay (Paris, 1986), vol. 1, p. 190. “the most beautiful and curious place on earth”: *Lettres d’Italie du Président de Brosses*, p. 190. “people, and the clothes they wear, are funny”: Levey, *Venice*, p. 162. p. 61, “in a single square you can see. . . ‘the great Pulcinello.’”: Diderot’s letter and Foscarini’s contemplated ban cited by Vetrocq, in *Punchinello Drawings*, p. 24. p. 64, “Here I am! I, Punchinello”: Quoted in Sand, *Harlequinade*, vol. 1, p. 103. p. 66, Gozzi’s description of his *fiabe* as “nursery tales”: Sand, *Harlequinade*, vol. 2, p. 283.

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