

Piazzetta, Giovanni Battista

Venice 1682 – 1754 Venice

Portraits of the painter Giovanni Battista Piazzetta and of the printmaker Marco Alvisè Pitteri, both etched by Pitteri after models by Piazzetta

Venice circa 1754

TWO ETCHINGS (platemarks 455 × 352 mm, 460 × 357 mm, on sheets uniformly 740 × 500 mm). Only states.

- Self-portrait, at about seventy years of age, engraved by Marco Pitteri, lettered: Ioannes Baptista Piazzetta Venetus Pinxit | Marcus Pitteri Venetus Sculpsit C. [um] P. [rivilegio] | [centred] | Ioannis Baptistae Piazzetta Pictoris eximii nuper fato functi | Effigiem hanc Immortalitati dicat Marcus Pitteri
- Portrait of Marco Pitteri, at about fifty years of age, engraved by Marco Pitteri, lettered: Ioannes Baptista Piazzetta Venetus Pinxit | Marcus Pitteri Venetus Sculpsit C.[um] P.[rivilegio] E.[ccellentissimo] S. [enato] | [centred] | Marcus Pitteri Venetus in aere Incisor

WATERMARK letters FV (designating the paper manufacturers Fratelli Vezzoli di Toscolano)

PROVENANCE Christie's, 'Important old master prints from a German family of title', London, 10 December 1991, lots 151-152 (£1100 and £850 + premiums) — Private collection, Dublin

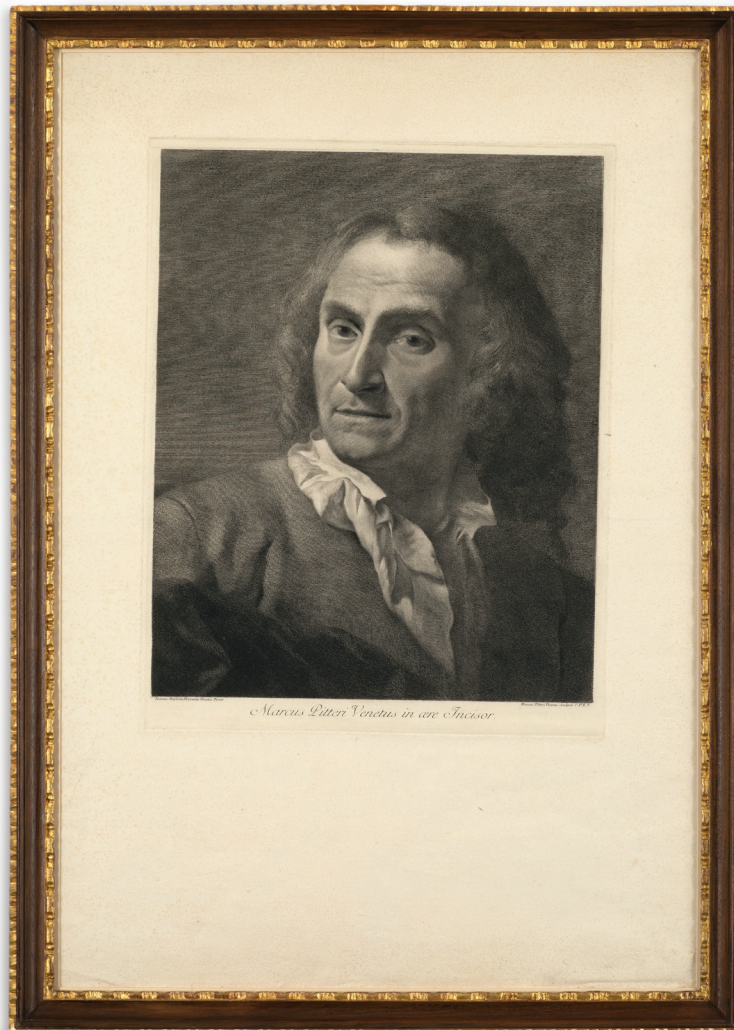
CONDITION fine impressions with very large margins (deckle edges at left and bottom), a tiny surface loss towards the bottom (of Piazzetta portrait), minor surface dirt in the margins.

Uniformly framed by Paul Levi, 1992.

SUPERB MATCHING IMPRESSIONS of Pitteri's famous etched portrait of Piazzetta, probably made from a painted self-portrait shortly after the death of the artist (28 April 1754); and of Pitteri's etched portrait of himself, also modelled (according to the legend on the print) after a painting or oil sketch by Piazzetta, and presumably conceived around the same date.

Reproduced opposite

Self-portrait of the artist, engraved by Marco Pitteri
Brilliant impression on the complete, untrimmed sheet



The painter Piazzetta (1682-1754), one of the leading artists of the eighteenth century Venetian school, enjoyed a long professional and personal relationship with Pitteri (1703-1786), one of the most able and popular printmakers working in Venice. The son of a fisherman, Pitteri had attended Piazzetta's life-drawing classes from an early age,¹ and afterwards learnt printmaking in the studio of Giuseppe Baroni. His earliest dated print is 'La Chiesa che abbatte l'eresia' after a drawing by Piazzetta, the frontispiece to Antonio da Venezia's *La chiesa di Gesù Cristo vendicata*, published in 1724.² In the late 1730s, Pitteri engraved a series of prints after Piazzetta for a small-format *Beatae Mariae Virginis Officium*, published by Pasquali in 1740,³ and in 1742, he requested a privilege for engraving fifteen of Piazzetta's 'heads'.⁴ Thereafter, their collaboration became intense, with Pitteri eventually producing more than 140 prints after paintings or drawings by Piazzetta (out of a total *oeuvre* of about 450 prints).⁵ Their close personal relationship is documented by Piazzetta's presence at Pitteri's wedding to Prudenza Astori, in 1735, and his service as godfather to Pitteri's oldest daughter.⁶

The two prints are often considered a pair, produced by Pitteri to commemorate his long and close collaboration with the artist. As neither print was issued within a set or suite, opportunities to obtain matching impressions are rare, especially impressions in superb state of preservation with extraordinary margins like those offered here.

According to the legend *Ioannes Baptista Piazzetta Venetus Pinxit* beneath the portrait of Piazzetta, its prototype was a painted self-portrait. Like other reproductive printmakers, Pitteri used the terms *pinxit* and *delineavit* loosely, so his model conceivably was a drawing. A drawing in an album of studies made by Piazzetta in the last years of his life (the Kress album, now in the Pierpont Morgan Library) is similar (although Piazzetta is wearing an elaborate lace collar of Dutch style).⁷ That drawing was later etched by Pitteri

¹ Cf. Antonio Morassi, 'A "Scuola del Nudo" by Tiepolo' in *Master Drawings* 9 (1971), pp.43-50, on Piazzetta's private academy.

² The book was published by Recurti, probably in association with Giambattista Albrizzi, who had Piazzetta under contract; see Dorigato, *op. cit.*, no. 101.

³ Knox, *op. cit.*, no. 68.

⁴ Generally linked with the series of the 'Twelve Apostles', together with God the Father, The Redeemer, and The Virgin; at later dates, Pitteri etched some secular subjects of Piazzetta. The printmaker's technique was well-suited to reproducing the subtle nuances of Piazzetta's chalk drawings of 'heads'; see Boorsch, *op. cit.*, p.20.

⁵ Dario Succi, 'Marco Pitteri' in *Dictionary of Art* 24 (New York & London 1996), p.894.

⁶ Rodolfo Pallucchini, *op. cit.*, p.94; Fabio Mauroner, *op. cit.*, p.5.

⁷ Knox, *op. cit.*, no. 96; see also *G.B. Piazzetta. Disegni - Incisioni - Libri - Manoscritti*, catalogue of an exhibition sponsored by Istituto di storia dell'arte, Fondazione Giorgio Cini, edited by Alessandro Bettagno (Vicenza 1983), p.46 no. 90.

for the frontispiece of the Piazzetta-Pitteri *Studi di pittura*, published by Albrizzi in 1760. Opinion is divided about whether an oval painted 'Ritratto di Giambattista Piazzetta' (640 × 500 mm) in the Museo del Settecento Veneziano (Ca' Rezzonico, Venice) served as Pitteri's model. Some critics consider the painting unrelated, or at best a copy after the print, and the prototype instead a lost painting by Piazzetta.⁸

No prototype for the engraved portrait of Pitteri has yet been unidentified.

Other impressions of the prints include

■ *Portrait of Piazzetta* Boston, Museum of Fine Arts, 2008.685 (sheet 483 × 376 mm, [image](#)); Chicago, Art Institute, Harold Joachim Purchase Fund, 1972.783 ('trimmed within plate mark', [image](#)); New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art, Elisha Whittelsey Fund, 1979.619.11 (sheet 456 × 352 mm, [record](#)); Paris, École nationale supérieure des beaux-arts, NUM EST 6484 ([image](#), [image](#)). Unlocated: London art market (2007–2008);⁹ New York art market (1981)¹⁰

■ *Portrait of Pitteri* Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum, RP-P-OB-36.926 ([record](#)); Cambridge, MA, Harvard Art Museums, R2934 ([image](#)); London, Victoria & Albert Museum, 26748 ([image](#)); New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art, Rogers Fund, 66.549.3 (sheet 465 × 357 mm, [record](#)); Paris, École nationale supérieure des beaux-arts, NUM EST 6509 ([image](#)); Reggio Emilia, Biblioteca Panizzi, Raccolta di Stampe 'Angelo Davoli', 26079 (sheet 460 × 356 mm, [record](#)); Rome, Istituto Nazionale della Grafica, Fondo Corsini, FC70757 ([image](#)); San Francisco, Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco, 1969.61 ([image](#)); Williamstown, MA, Clark Art Institute, 1990.40 (sheet 610 × 368 mm, [image](#)). Unlocated: New York art market¹¹

⁸ Formerly attributed to Piazzetta, this painting was relegated to Piazzetta's studio by Terisio Pignatti, who supposed it was 'una pittura incompleta che passo per le mani di un allievo della bottega dopo la morte del maestro' (*Il Museo Correr di Venezia. Dipinti dal XVII al XVIII secolo*, Venice 1960, pp.289-290); the painting was expunged from the catalogue of Piazzetta's authentic works by Adriano Mariuz, *L'opera completa di Piazzetta* (Milan 1982), A-144, and is now variously attributed to Giuseppe Angeli (Ugo Ruggeri, in *Giambattista Piazzetta: il suo tempo, la sua scuola*, catalogue of an exhibition, Venice 1983, p.111 note 40) or to Alessandro Longhi, who replaced Piazzetta as Pitteri's principal source of inspiration (Egidio Martini, 'Quattro ritratti ritrovati di Alessandro Longhi e altri inediti' in *Arte Illustrata*, 1971, pp.29–30, dated circa 1760; Filippo Pedrocchi, 'Opere inedite o poco note di Alessandro Longhi' in *Venezia Arti* 7, 1993, pp.182-185). Whoever painted it, the portrait 'is clearly related to this engraving and indeed has some claim to be considered the original model' (George Knox, *Piazzetta. A tercentenary exhibition of drawings, prints, and books*, catalogue of an exhibition, Washington, DC 1983, p.90).

⁹ P. & D. Colnaghi & Co. in association with Emanuel von Baeyer, *The artist in art: 26th November 2007–1st February 2008* (London 2007), no. 49 (stated dimensions 20 ¾ × 16 ½ in, 51.8 × 41 cm).

¹⁰ David Tunick, Inc., *Italian Prints of the Eighteenth Century* [catalogue 11] (New York 1981), no. 189 ('Fine impression with large margins', \$1250).

¹¹ Tunick, *op. cit.*, no. 190 ('Fine impression with large margins', \$1250).

REFERENCES Aldo Ravà, *Marco Pitteri. Incisore Veneziano* (Florence 1922), nos. 220 (Piazzetta portrait), 226 (Pitteri portrait); Rodolfo Pallucchini, *Mostra degli incisori veneti del Settecento. Catalogo* (Venice 1941), no. 445 (Piazzetta portrait, lent by Giuseppe Saccardo, Venice); Fabio Mauroner, *Incisioni del Pitteri* (Bergamo 1944), nos. 12 (Piazzetta portrait), 1 (Pitteri portrait); Adriano Mariuz, *L'Opera completa del Piazzetta* (Milan 1982), p.113 no. 185 (Pitteri portrait); Attilia Dorigato, 'Giambattista Piazzetta e l'incisione veneziana del Settecento' in *Giambattista Piazzetta: il suo tempo, la sua scuola*, catalogue of an exhibition (Venice 1983), no. 82 (Piazzetta portrait), no. 85 (Pitteri portrait, both lent by Museo Correr); Adriano Mariuz, "'Questi xe visi... Nu depensemo delle maschere": Giambattista Piazzetta e gli incisori delle sue "mezze figure"' in *G.B. Piazzetta. Disegni – Incisioni – Libri – Manoscritti*, catalogue of an exhibition, edited by Alessandro Bettagno (Vicenza 1983), p.53, no. 166 fig. 166 (Piazzetta portrait, lent by Fondazione Querini Stampalia); George Knox, *Piazzetta. A tercentenary exhibition of drawings, prints, and books*, catalogue of an exhibition (Washington, DC 1983), no. 27 (Piazzetta portrait, lent by New York Public Library); Dario Succi, *Da Carlevarijs ai Tiepolo. Incisori veneti e friulani del Settecento*, catalogue of an exhibition (Venice 1983), no. 392 (Piazzetta portrait, lent by Fondazione Querini Stampalia); Brigitte Buberl, '...Un occhio e mezzo'. *Kupferstiche nach Vorlagen von Giovanni Battista Piazzetta (1683-1754)* (Münster 1987), p.11 Abb. 1 (Piazzetta portrait), Abb. 3 (Pitteri portrait, both impressions lent by Museo Correr); Maria Agnese Chiari Moretto Wiel, *L'eredità di Piazzetta. Volti e figure nell' incisione del Settecento*, catalogue of an exhibition (Venice 1996), nos. 138-139 (both impressions in a private collection, Venice); Suzanne Boorsch, *Venetian prints and books in the age of Tiepolo*, catalogue of an exhibition (New York 1997), nos. 101-102 (both impressions in Metropolitan Museum of Art)