

# The Courtauld

## La Serenissima

### Drawing in Venice (1700–1790)

14 Oct 2023 – 11 Feb 2024

Gilbert and Ildiko Butler Drawings Gallery and Project Space

At the dawn of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, Venice was a magnet for visitors from across Europe, attracted by its art, architecture, history, cosmopolitan environment. Many of the artists featured in this exhibition produced works for an international clientele who avidly collected images of the city, its inhabitants, and its colourful traditions.

Selected from The Courtauld's collection, the drawings displayed here evoke the energy and creativity of Venice at a time when it flourished as one of the great cultural capitals of Europe, and shortly before Napoleon's conquest in 1797 brought an end to the Republic.

Landmarks such as the square of San Giacomo di Rialto set the stage for Canaletto's celebrated views of the city's vibrant streets and waterways. Giovanni Battista Piazzetta's evocative head studies and Giovanni Battista Tiepolo's playful caricatures depict a lively metropolis populated by a myriad of characters of different social backgrounds, while Francesco Guardi's panoramic *Feast of Ascension Day* records the formal splendour and ceremony of the city known as *La Serenissima* – the most serene.

*La Serenissima: Drawing in 18<sup>th</sup>-century Venice* is supported by The John Browne Charitable Trust.

The annual programme of displays in the Gilbert and Ildiko Butler Drawings Gallery is generously supported by the International Music and Art Foundation, with additional support from James Bartos.

This display was curated by Marco Mansi, PhD candidate and Print Room Assistant, under the supervision of Ketty Gottardo, Curator of Drawings



Francesco Guardi (1712–1793)

**The Feast of Ascension Day**

Around 1790

Pen and brown ink, brown and grey wash, over black chalk, on laid paper

The Courtauld, London (Samuel Courtauld Trust): Princes Gate bequest, 1978

D.1978.PG.138

The Marriage to the Sea was – and still is today – the most extraordinary spectacle in Venice. Established around the year 1000, it symbolised the city's maritime identity. On

# The Courtauld

	<p>Ascension Day, the Doge, head of the Republic, boarded the Bucintoro, his ceremonial barge, to reach the mouth of the harbour, where he tossed a blessed ring into the sea. Guardi portrayed this colourful ceremony more than any other Venetian artist. Here, the Bucintoro stands in Saint Mark's basin surrounded by a multitude of richly trimmed gondolas.</p> <p>The quick, nervous penwork is characteristic of Guardi's late style, with the contours dissolving in light and colour. Faint black chalk lines at the right of the composition delineate the domed profile of the church of Santa Maria della Salute. However, the artist then decided not to include the building in the final composition.</p>
--	---

# The Courtauld



Giovanni Antonio Canal, known as Canaletto (1697–1768)

***Piazza San Giacomo di Rialto***

Around 1765–68

Pen and brown ink, grey wash, over traces of graphite, on laid paper

The Courtauld, London (Samuel Courtauld Trust): Princes Gate bequest, 1978

D.1978.PG.132

The little square in front of the church of San Giacomo di Rialto was the centre of Venice's banking district. Canaletto painted and drew the picturesque location several times during his career; the style and technique of this work suggest a date in the late 1760s. However, the artist based the composition on earlier sketches. This is revealed by the design of the bell tower, shown here without the alterations carried out in 1747.

A myriad of busy *macchiette* (tiny, quickly sketched figures) populates this spirited view, revealing Canaletto's ability to capture daily life in Venice as if in a snapshot. At the side of the church, a group of workmen assemble wooden scaffolding, while under the porticoes at right, and on the steps of the Rialto Bridge in the background, business continues unabated.

# The Courtauld



Giacomo Guardi (1764–1835)

***Riva degli Schiavoni***

***The Lagoon with view of the San Lazzaro island, with a gondola in the foreground***

***Saint Mark's Square***

Brown and black ink, watercolour and opaque watercolour, on blue wove paper

The Courtauld, London (Samuel Courtauld Trust): Sir Robert Witt bequest, 1952

D.1952.RW.2538

D.1952.RW.2854

D.1952.RW.2539

Venice became a major destination of the 18th-century Grand Tour. Its buzzing life along the canals and picturesque cityscape enchanted northern European visitors, who often wished to buy souvenirs to keep the memory of their sojourn alive. This demand stimulated the production of little views of the city like these charming works by Giacomo Guardi. Their topographical accuracy and vivid colours greatly appealed to British tourists in particular.

On the back of his drawings (see illustration), Guardi often listed the portrayed buildings and meticulously recorded his address in hopes of encouraging repeat orders.



Inscription at the back of the *Riva degli*

*Schiavoni* drawing

# The Courtauld



Giovanni Battista Piazzetta (1682–1754)

***Head of a boy and of an old man***

***Young woman with a basket***

***Head of a youth with a fur collar***

Around 1740

Black chalk with stumping, white chalk highlights, on blue laid paper, now discoloured

The Courtauld, London (Samuel Courtauld Trust): Sir Robert Witt bequest, 1952

D.1952.RW.1645

D.1952.RW.1511

D.1952.RW.2451

Piazzetta achieved international fame as a master draughtsman with a series of *teste di carattere*, or head studies. Their success with collectors stimulated a considerable workshop production, sometimes making it difficult to distinguish his works from those by his talented assistants.

The drawings' firm contours and delicate shading reflect Piazzetta's academic training in Bologna and his interest in the work of Rembrandt (1606–1669), and the Italian Baroque artist Guercino (1591–1666). The head studies convey a sense of psychological investigation and intimacy. However, they should not be understood as straightforward portraits, since Piazzetta frequently used members of his family and studio assistants as models for his paintings and drawings. The youth featured in The Courtauld's *Head of a boy and of an old man* also appears at the upper right of a *Pastoral Scene* (see illustration below), where he is shown wearing a hat.



Giovanni Battista Piazzetta, *Pastoral Scene* (detail), oil on canvas. The Art Institute of Chicago

# The Courtauld



Giovanni Domenico Tiepolo (1727–1804)

***A Ball at the Ridotto***

Around 1757

Pen and brown ink on laid paper

The Courtauld, London (Samuel Courtauld Trust): Princes Gate bequest, 1978

D.1978.PG.163



In 1683, the Venetian government converted a wing of Palazzo Dandolo into Europe's first public casino, the Ridotto. The name comes from the Italian verb for to 'make private' or 'close off,' as only a few could afford the expensive clothing required to play at the tables. Theatre foyers were also described as *ridotti*.

This drawing captures the lively atmosphere of these venues. A fashionable crowd wearing masks and fancy hats surrounds a couple of dancers. They may be performing the *Furlana*, a fast-paced dance popular at the time. The composition relates to a painting by Tiepolo called *A Dance in the Country* (illustrated below).



Giovanni Domenico Tiepolo, *A Dance in the Country*, oil on canvas. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York

# The Courtauld

	<p>Giovanni Battista Tiepolo (1696–1770)  <b><i>A head, looking up</i></b>            Around 1726            Black chalk on laid paper            The Courtauld, London (Samuel Courtauld Trust): Princes Gate bequest, 1978            D.1978.PG.376</p> <p>Tiepolo's head studies are a testament to his profound understanding of the human form and emotions. This striking drawing shows similarities with a group of early studies sketched around the time that the artist was working on the decoration of the Palazzo Patriarcale in Udine, in Northern Italy. By combining delicate chalk lines with subtle chiaroscuro, Tiepolo imbued the androgynous figure with a sense of depth and realism.</p>
	<p>Giovanni Battista Tiepolo (1696–1770)  <b><i>Satyr and satyress</i></b>            Around 1740            Pen and brown ink, brown wash, over black chalk, on laid paper            The Courtauld, London (Samuel Courtauld Trust): Princes Gate bequest, 1978            D.1978.PG.380</p> <p>This drawing belongs to a series of similar studies of satyrs. They were part of an extensive repertoire of motifs for ceiling decorations. Tiepolo first painted pairs of satyrs in grisailles (monochrome paintings) in the gallery of Palazzo Clerici in Milan, Italy, in 1740. The artist must have favoured the motif, as he employed it years later on the vaults of other decorated residences, such as Ca' Rezzonico in Venice.</p>



# The Courtauld



Giovanni Battista Tiepolo (1696–1770)

***Portrait of a youth (one of the artist's sons?)***

Around 1751–53

Red chalk with stumping, white chalk highlights, on blue laid paper

The Courtauld, London (Samuel Courtauld Trust): Princes Gate bequest, 1978

D.1978.PG.161

Tiepolo drew a series of head studies in preparation for the painted ceilings of the Würzburg Residence in Bavaria, where he worked assisted by his sons Giovanni Domenico and Lorenzo. The latter often modelled for his father and is traditionally thought to be the sitter for this striking head study.

Tiepolo's masterful handling of the red chalk exploits the tonal effects of light and shadow on the blue paper, which was much favoured by Venetian artists.



Francesco Guardi (1712–1793)

***Bull baiting***

1782

Pen and brown ink over red chalk, touches of brown opaque watercolour, on laid paper



The Courtauld, London (Samuel Courtauld Trust): Princes Gate bequest, 1978

D.1978.PG.140

This spirited vignette depicts a bull baiting staged in Saint Mark's Square during the visit of Archduke Paul Pavlovich and Archduchess Maria Feodorovna of Russia in January 1783. Guardi made at least three sketches of this colourful event, two of which are in The Courtauld's collection. They may be preparatory studies for a painting, even though no such work is now known. The immediacy of the drawing suggests that Guardi probably sketched the scene from life.



# The Courtauld

	<p>Pietro Antonio Novelli (1729–1804)  <b>Seated lion</b>  Pen and brown ink, grey and black wash, white opaque watercolour, on pink-prepared paper  The Courtauld, London (Samuel Courtauld Trust): Princes Gate bequest, 1978  D.1978.PG.133.1</p> <p>The lion is traditionally associated with Mark the Evangelist, patron saint of Venice. Depictions of lions feature prominently on the city's monuments, such as the façade of Saint Mark's Basilica or the four statues guarding the entrance of the Arsenal. One of them, the Piraeus Lion, dates to around 360 BCE. It was brought to Venice in 1684 from its original location in the harbour of Athens. Novelli may have taken inspiration from this famous sculpture to draw the saint's celebrated animal companion.</p>
	<p>Francesco Guardi (1712–1793)  <b>Saint Mark</b>  Around 1773-77  Brush and brown ink, brown wash, white chalk highlights, over black chalk, on laid paper  The Courtauld, London (Samuel Courtauld Trust): Princes Gate bequest, 1978  D.1978.PG.135</p> <p>Guardi portrayed Mark, patron saint of Venice, in the midst of writing his Gospel, his eyes upturned in search of divine inspiration. The painterly application of the brown wash on the saint's eyes conveys a feeling of ecstatic rapture. The cursive lines and fluttering contours are typical of Guardi's late works.</p> <p>The drawing may have been conceived as part of a set of the Four Evangelists accompanied by their respective symbols, as the lion, sketchily drawn at the lower right, seems to suggest.</p>

# The Courtauld



Giovanni Battista Tiepolo (1696–1770)

**A bearded man**

Around 1740–45

Pen and dark brown ink, grey-brown wash, over black chalk, on laid paper

The Courtauld, London (Samuel Courtauld Trust): Princes Gate bequest, 1978

D.1978.PG.154

Throughout his long career, Tiepolo produced many fanciful head studies. They reveal his profound understanding of the human form and thorough investigation of the different socio-cultural contexts. This expressive drawing demonstrates Tiepolo's masterful ability to achieve painterly effects with the rapid application of the wash. The artist used the pale colour of the paper to suggest the play of light and shadow across the man's face. The heavier application of the wash around the eyes gives a sense of psychological introspection to the image.



Attributed to Francesco Guardi (1712–1793)

**Archway with figures**

Around 1775–80

Brown ink, brown wash, over red chalk, on laid paper

The Courtauld, London (Samuel Courtauld Trust): Princes Gate bequest, 1978

D.1978.PG.136

Guardi favoured the motif of a sunlit view framed by a dark arch. The composition of the present drawing appears, with minor variations, in other works by him. The artist was particularly sought after by international collectors for his capricci, whimsical creations that blended famous landmarks with fanciful architecture and vibrant atmospheres. The archway in the foreground of this drawing has been identified as that of the clock tower in Saint Mark's Square. While plausibly realistic, the landscape in the distance is fictional.

# The Courtauld



Giovanni Battista Tiepolo (1696–1770)

***Standing Punchinello***

Around 1740–49

Pen and brown ink, brown wash, over black chalk, on laid paper

The Courtauld, London (Samuel Courtauld Trust): Sir Robert Witt bequest, 1952

D.1952.RW.2475

Punchinello is a popular character of the *Commedia dell'arte* (Italian comedy), an early form of professional theatre. He is typically represented as a hunched man with a potbelly and a hooked nose in a white costume. Tiepolo devoted numerous sketches to this subject, humorously playing with his appearance. Here, Punchinello stands with his arms comfortably propped on his prominent belly. He wears a simple bonnet instead of his more typical tall hat. The corpulent figure seems barely contained within the edges of the sheet.



Pietro Antonio Novelli (1729–1804)

***Gnocchi seller***

1770s

Pen and light brown ink on laid paper

On loan from the Harry Cayton collection

Gnocchi Friday is celebrated on the last Friday before Lent during the Carnival in Verona, a city that in the 18th century was under Venetian rule. Historically, a parade of men in Punchinello-like costumes toured the streets before distributing flour dumplings – *gnocchi* – and wine to the townspeople.

18th-century Venetian artists often included dishes of gnocchi in their depictions of Punchinello. In this graceful drawing, Novelli drew a pot-bellied man dressed like this burlesque character and holding a long fork with gnocchi speared on the end.

# The Courtauld



Antonio Visentini (1688–1782)

***Interior of the Redentore church with figures***

Around 1746–66

Pen and brown ink, blue-grey wash, white opaque watercolour, on laid paper

The Courtauld, London (Samuel Courtauld Trust): Sir Robert Witt bequest, 1952

D.1952.RW.1503

This large, austere drawing reflects the revived interest during the 18<sup>th</sup> century in the work of the Renaissance architect Andrea Palladio (1508–1580). Visentini's meticulously detailed interior of the Venetian Redentore church, designed by Palladio, is a scaled-down version of an earlier painted composition. The two men in the centre foreground inspecting a plan are thought to be Visentini himself and the British Consul in Venice, Joseph Smith, a patron of Canaletto and one of the most enthusiastic collectors of 18th-century Venetian art of his time.



Giovanni Battista Tiepolo (1696–1770)

***Apotheosis of a Venetian hero***

Around 1757–60

Pen and light brown ink, brown wash, over black chalk, on laid paper

The Courtauld, London (Samuel Courtauld Trust):

Princes Gate bequest, 1978

D.1978.PG.157

This drawing is probably a preliminary study for a ceiling at Palazzo Porto in Vicenza, designed by Renaissance architect Andrea Palladio (1508–1580) for the Porto family. The man seated at the centre may be Orazio, the head of the Porto family in Tiepolo's lifetime. The composition draws on the tradition of representing the glorification of historical and mythological figures to a divine status. The painterly use of wash is characteristic of Tiepolo's late style. Underlying chalk lines reveal the artist's first thoughts for the composition.

# The Courtauld



Giovanni Battista Tiepolo (1696–1770)

***Three river gods***

Around 1740

Pen and brown ink, brown wash, over black chalk, on laid paper

The Courtauld, London (Samuel Courtauld Trust): Princes Gate bequest, 1978

D.1978.PG.381

In 1740, Tiepolo painted the ceiling of Palazzo Clerici's main gallery in Milan. For this commission, he made a series of preparatory studies featuring river gods sitting or reclining on urns.

Tiepolo first established the composition in this drawing with light chalk lines, and then traced the figures' fluid contours using the quill pen. Layers of brown wash define the light and shadow on the bodies of the deities, whose dishevelled hair and beards seem to flow as if they were underwater.



Jacopo Amigoni (around 1685–1752)

***Man in fetters wearing a turban (Farinelli in the role of Arbace?)***

Around 1734

Pen and brown ink, light red wash, white opaque watercolour, on blue laid paper

The Courtauld, London (Samuel Courtauld Trust): Sir Robert Witt bequest, 1952

D.1952.RW.2441

Amigoni moved to London in 1729 and soon became associated with the city's fashionable society. He befriended the famous *castrato* Farinelli, who may be the sitter of this drawing. The *castrati* were male opera singers castrated before puberty to prevent their voice range from changing.

Farinelli's debut performance in the role of the Persian hero Arbace at the Haymarket Theatre in 1734 resulted in a sensational success. A certain Mrs Fox-Lane was so overcome with emotion that she stood up and shouted, "One God, one Farinelli!"



# The Courtauld



Attributed to Bernardo Bellotto (1721–1780)

**A standing man viewed from the front** (recto);

**A standing man viewed from the back** (verso)

Around 1743

Graphite, pen and brown ink on laid paper

The Courtauld, London (Samuel Courtauld Trust): Sir

Robert Witt bequest, 1952

D.1952.RW.346

Bellotto drew this flamboyant image imitating the style of his uncle Canaletto, who had included this figure in one of his paintings. The hammer in the man's apron suggests he is an artisan, possibly a cobbler.

The Italian word *volta* at the upper right of the sheet is probably an instruction to turn over the page, as it appears on similar figure studies drawn on both sides of the paper, such as this one.

On the back of the same sheet he drew a figure seen from behind. The prominent cloak suggests that the figure may not be the same as the one drawn on the other side. The man wears fashionable clothes, such as elegant slippers and a bauta. This type of hat was a distinctive element of Venetian masquerade costume in the 18th century. During the carnival season, it was often combined with a mask to conceal the identity of the wearer.

# The Courtauld



Giovanni Domenico Tiepolo (1727–1804)

***Hercules and Antaeus***

Around 1780-90

Brown and grey ink, brown, grey and black wash, over black chalk, on laid paper

The Courtauld, London (Samuel Courtauld Trust): Sir Robert Witt bequest, 1952

D.1952.RW.3111

This drawing depicts a mythological episode from the Twelve Labours of Hercules. The giant Antaeus challenged everyone crossing his path to wrestling matches, remaining invincible for as long as he was in contact with his mother Gaia, the earth. Hercules lifted him off the ground, thus breaking that bond, and crushed him to death.

The figures in this drawing stand on a pedestal resembling a sculpted group. Tiepolo drew a series of similar figures and animals on pedestals for his family villa at Zianigo, near Venice.