

Passion and Commerce
Art in Venice in the 17th
and 18th centuries



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TRANSLATIONS
Sue Brownbridge

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Giandomenico Tiepolo. *The Charlatan* (detail)
MNAC, Museu Nacional d'Art de Catalunya, Barcelona

81 **Sebastiano Bombelli** (Udine, 1635-Venice, 1719)

Portrait of Polo Querini

Oil on canvas
199 x 128 cm
FONDAZIONE QUERINI STAMPALLA, Venice
inv. no. 194/255

From the closing decades of the 17th century onwards, Sebastiano Bombelli was called on to work for members of the wealthy families of Venice on many occasions, above all for the brothers Girolamo and Polo Querini. This portrait of Polo Querini, shown as if declaiming a speech, though not without a certain theatricality, is difficult to date. With regard to the style, the canvas is similar to the large portrait of Girolamo dressed as the procurator of St. Mark's, which dates from 1669, but which relates to the noble's election to the post of magistrate on 7 January 1685. The comparison with the official engraving done for the occasion by Isabella Piccini and with the portrait done for private use painted at around the same time as a companion piece to another portrait of the brother would seem to refute such a hypothesis. The work, regarded as one of the finest pieces by this artist from Udine, has, apart from one dissenting voice, been unanimously attributed to Bombelli. The exception is Martini (1982), who suggested the name of Vittore Ghislandi due to the colouristic approach and the Baroque gesturality, its similarity with the tradition of portraiture in Venice, from Tiberio Tinelli to Bernardo Strozzi, and to its adoption of the style of the *Tenebristi*. The figure, who stands out against a brown background in the half darkness, is picked out by a ray of light that bursts into the painting, heightening the submissive or kindly expression on the subject's face, with its gentle smile, and the beautiful colouring of the clothes that were then in fashion, the full tabard decorated with elegant ribbons at the ends of the sleeves, all done in a blend of reds, indigos and golden hues that produce an extremely attractive effect.

P.D.

Bibliography: *Mostra del Bombelli* 1964, p. 22, no. 8; *Dizionario* 1979, p. 71, no. 105 (with preceding bibliography); MARTINI 1982, p. 498, note 145; *I Querini Stampalla* 1987, p. 161, no. 3.

