



# Giuseppe Nogari

(Venice 1699-1763)

*Portrait of an Ottoman Dignitary (c. 1760)*

Black and white chalks on blue paper

Dimensions: 11 <sup>7</sup>/<sub>8</sub> X 9 <sup>3</sup>/<sub>8</sub> in. (301 x 238 mm) - Framed: 21 <sup>5</sup>/<sub>8</sub> x 17 <sup>3</sup>/<sub>8</sub> in. (55 x 44 cm)

Carved and gilded wood frame - 18th century Italy

Unidentified collector's mark lower left

Price on request

*We would like to thank Mrs. Bozena Anna Kowalczyk for confirming the attribution of this drawing to Giuseppe Nogari in a study (available in Italian) from which we have taken our inspiration for the presentation below.*

**A middle-aged man in a turban poses calmly before the artist. His magnetic, dreamy gaze is that of a sage. The use of black and white chalks delicately modulates his face on the perfectly preserved blue paper, revealing noble, delicate features: softly pursed lips, high cheekbones and fluffy white beard. The artist carefully describes the refinement of the turban, suggesting its precious, light muslin-like material, and lingers on the details of the oriental costume.**

**The great descriptive qualities, the softness of the modeling and the finesse of the psychological analysis lead us to Giuseppe Nogari, a Venetian painter sought after by the collectors of his time and highly esteemed by contemporary biographers for his heads of character.**

### **1. Giuseppe Nogari, "a good colorist and excellent portraitist"<sup>1</sup>**

Pietro Guarienti, a Veronese painter and inspector of the Royal Gallery in Dresden, begins his lengthy note on the artist as follows: "*Gioseffo Nogari, a famous Venetian painter, was at the school of Antonio Balestra, where, as long as he was there, he never gave any sign of that unique, tender, mellow and natural style, which he later developed*". He then mentions the most important events of his career, starting with his meeting with Marquis Ottaviano Casnedi, who "*having observed in Nogari a certain spirit and grace in the realization of half-figures, commissioned some from him.... and gave him some useful warnings, from which he profited so much, that in a short time, with his new singular manner, he rose to a distinguished reputation*"<sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> "He was a good colorist and an excellent portraitist; and he did heads quite well generally more than anything else". A.M. Zanetti, *Della Pittura Veneziana e delle Opere Pubbliche de' Veneziani Maestri*, Libri V, Venezia 1771, 435.

<sup>2</sup> Pellegrino Antonio Orlandi and Pietro Guarienti. *Abecedario del M.R.P. Pellegrino Antonio Orlandi Bolognese: contenente le notizie de professori di pittura, scoltura ed architettura in questa edizione corretto e notabilmente di nuove notizie accresciuto da Pietro Guarienti*. Venice: Giambattista Pasquali, 1753, 235.

This meeting and the stay in Milan, described by Alessandro Longhi in his *Compendium of 1762*<sup>3</sup>, must predate by a few years the year 1736, when Count Carl Gustaf Tessin (1695-1770) succeeded in obtaining four paintings by Nogari in Venice: an *Old Man with a Book*, an *Old Woman with a Spindle*, a *Young Girl with Turnips* and a *Young Girl in a brown Dress*, judging the artist, already established in this genre of painting, as "*admirable, exact, diligent, imitating nature like a Flemish artist*"<sup>4</sup>. These paintings, destined for the Royal Palace in Stockholm, are now in the National Museum.<sup>5</sup>

Guarienti also recalls Nogari's stay at the court of Turin, where the painter worked from 1740 to 1742, and the commission by Joseph Smith (c. 1674 -1770), consul to His Britannic Majesty, of "*various half-figures of excellent taste, naturally expressed and gracefully colored*"; he also mentions Augustus III, King of Poland and Elector of Saxony, as one of his collectors, to whom Francesco Algarotti procured four of Nogari's canvases in 1743, now in the Gemäldegalerie in Dresden. In his famous letter dated February 13, 1751, addressed from Potsdam to Pierre-Jean Mariette in Paris, the Venetian intellectual describes his purchase as follows: "*two half-figures in a very soft manner, lost in the contours, and all worked with halftones by Signor Giuseppe Nogari, a naturalist painter, who is inspired above all other schools by that of Flanders*"<sup>6</sup>.

Mariette, for his part, stresses the importance of Marquis Casnedi's advice to abandon history painting, and "*as he had a pleasant brush, he pleased and made himself a reputation that gave him a number of supporters*"<sup>7</sup>.

The artist devoted himself to portraits at various stages of his career. The first documented portrait is the *Equestrian Portrait of Field Marshal Johann Matthias von der Schulenburg*, executed in collaboration with Francesco Simonini, recorded on May 5, 1737 in the inventories of German soldiers in the service of the Serenissima, now in a private collection<sup>8</sup>. An engraving by Giovanni Cattini bears witness to the fine half-length *Portrait of Francesco Zuccarelli, a Tuscan painter*, probably from the 1740s<sup>9</sup>. The two traditional full-length portraits of Giambattista

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<sup>3</sup> *Compendio delle vite de' pittori veneziani storici più rinomati del presente secolo con sue ritratti tratti dal naturale delineati ed incisi da Alessandro Longhi veneziano*, critical edition edited by Paolo Delorenzi, Verona, Scripta Edizioni, p. 92.

<sup>4</sup> O. Sirèn, *Dessins et tableaux de la Renaissance italienne dans les collections de Suède*, Stockholm 1902, p. 108.

<sup>5</sup> Rodolfo Pallucchini, *La pittura nel Veneto. Il Settecento*, I, Milan, Electa, 1995, p. 571, fig. 939-942.

<sup>6</sup> Francesco Algarotti, *Raccolta di Lettere sopra la Pittura ed Architettura*, in *Opere*, tomo VI, Livorno 1765, pp. 28-29.

<sup>7</sup> *Abecedario de P. J. Mariette et autres notes inédites de cet amateur sur les arts et les artistes. Ouvrage publié d'après les manuscrits autographes, conservés au cabinet des estampes de la Bibliothèque Impériale, et annoté par MM. Ph. De Chennevières et A. de Montaiglon*, tome quatrième, Paris, J.-B. Dumoulin, 1857-1858, pp. 54-55.

<sup>8</sup> Alice Binion, *La galerie disparue du maréchal von der Schulenburg. Un mécénat nella Venezia del Settecento*, Milan, Electa, 1990, p. 122, note 18.

<sup>9</sup> Bergamo, Accademia Carrara, 1958 / 00215.



Leoni and Doge Marco Foscarini, mentioned by the Venetian aristocrat Pietro Gradenigo in his *Notatori* on August 31, 1762, have now disappeared.<sup>10</sup>

## 2. The Ottoman presence in Venice

From the fall of Constantinople in 1453 until the end of the Republic, Venice maintained diplomatic contacts with the Ottoman Empire. These were entrusted to a *bailo*, a special envoy chosen among the Venetian patricians.



Giovanni Grevembroch, the "Bailo," Venetian ambassador to Constantinople, received by the city's ministers, 1754-1759

Pencil and watercolor on paper, 28 x 20 cm. Page from the volume *Gli abiti de' veneziani di quasi ogni età con diligenza raccolti e dipinti nel secolo XVIII* (The Clothes of Venetians of Almost Every Age, Diligently Collected and Painted in the 18th Century), Venice, Fondazione Musei Civici Veneziani, Museo Correr, MS Gradenigo-Dolfen 49.

In Venice, from the early 17th century, a Venetian palace on the Grand Canal was intended by the Serenissima to serve as a warehouse for the Ottomans, a function it retained until the 19th century.

Orientals populated the imagination of 18th-century Venetian artists, stimulated by the prints of Rembrandt and Giovanni Benedetto Castiglione. First of all, the two Tiepolos tirelessly came up with various types and costumes with which to animate historical and mythological scenes, specializing in the invention of turbaned male heads, both in painting and engraving. In 1740-1746, Giovanni Battista painted two full-length Ottomans for the Palazzo Cornaro in Campo San Polo, with turbans and costumes similar to those in this drawing (NG 6305 The National Gallery, London).

<sup>10</sup> Lina Livan, *Notizie d'arte tratte dai Notatori e dagli Annali del N.H. Pietro Gradenigo*, Venice, La Reale Deputazione Editrice, 1942, p. 91.



Giovanni Battista Tiepolo – *Two Orientals* (detail) – NG 6305 The National Gallery, London

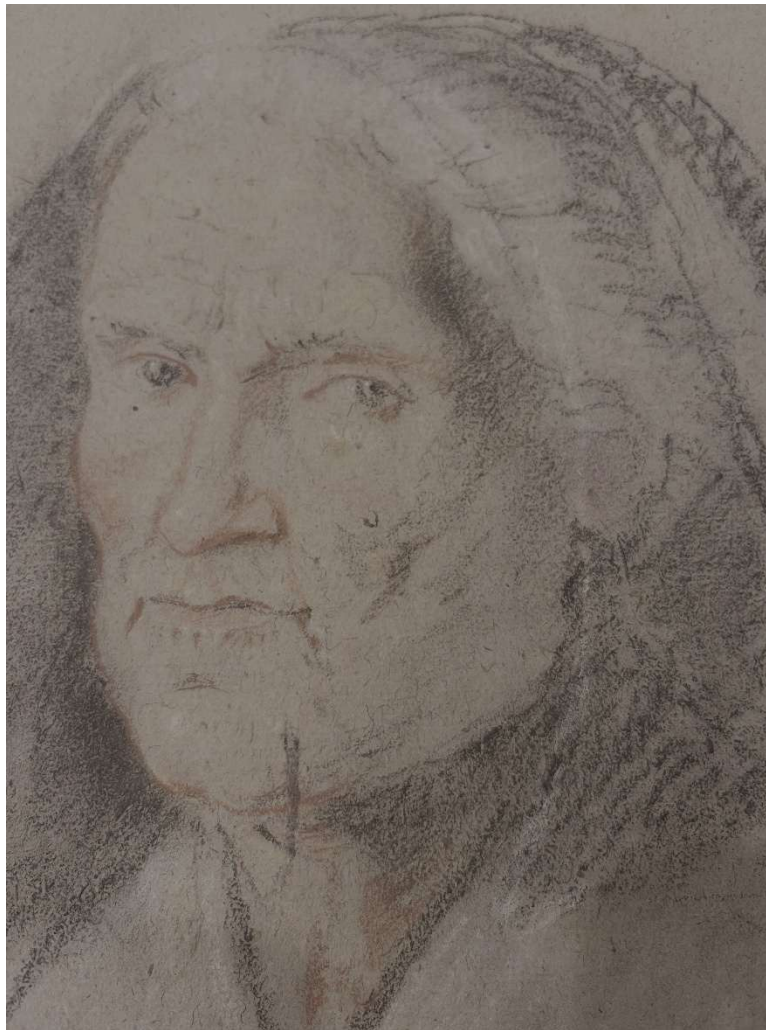
Several oriental figures can also be found in Nogari paintings, such as the one of a turbaned geographer, formerly in the Christian Ludwig von Hagedorn collection, known from the mezzotint print by Johann Jakob Haid (1885,1212.13 - British Museum, London). In contrast to this allegorical figure, the drawing we propose is a portrait of an Ottoman dignitary, probably executed in Venice since Nogari never visited Turkey, and not a fantasy figure like those imagined by the Tiepolos.



Johan Jakob Haid after Giuseppe Nogari – *The Geographer* - 1885,1212.13 @ The Trustees of the British Museum

### 3. Comparable artworks

Very few drawings have yet been attributed to Giuseppe Nogari. Most of his drawings may have disappeared due to the conservation difficulties of the technique used, characterized by a fragile surface layer, as illustrated by the condition of the *Elderly Woman with a striped Shawl* in Venice's Museo Correr. Also executed on blue paper - a medium commonly used in Venetian circles, from Tiepolo to Jacopo Amigoni - this drawing comes from the collection of Alessandro Longhi, a pupil of the artist. The charcoal and colored chalks are softly shaded, but the support has almost completely lost its original coloring and tends towards gray, which detracts from the naturalistic rendering the artist sought for this type of preparatory study. The stern gaze is turned towards the viewer, and the description insists on rendering the hollow cheeks and wrinkles around the mouth.



Giuseppe Nogari – *Old Woman with Striped Shawl* – circa 1740.

Charcoal, red chalk, pink chalk, yellow white, with white lead highlights on faded blue paper, 238 x 172 mm;

Venice, Museo Correr, Gabinetto di Disegni e Stampe, 742 (detail)



The pastel in the National Gallery of Art, Washington (1984.69.1), depicts another expressive *Elderly Woman with a striped Shawl*, "a specific person recognizable from other works"<sup>11</sup>. Giuseppe Nogari, who also practiced this technique<sup>12</sup>, compares himself here to Rosalba Carriera by depicting a face marked by old age with extreme realism, achieving a realistic effect of great elegance in the rendering of the various materials: the flamboyant silk shawl, the soft fur trim, the rough brown fabric of the dress. In the magnetic gaze she addresses us, we find that of our Ottoman dignitary, the result of the same quest to translate the model's expressiveness through meticulous examination of detail.



Giuseppe Nogari, *Elderly Woman with Striped Shawl*, 1740/1743.

Pastel and watercolor on two sheets of blue paper joined, 515 × 405 mm.

Washington, National Gallery of Art, 1984.69.1

<sup>11</sup> See Andrew Robison, *Elderly Woman with striped Shawl*, in *Poetry of Light. The Poetry of Light*, exhibition catalog edited by Andrew Robison (Museo Correr, Venice), Venice, Marsilio, 2014, pp. 224-225, no. 80.

<sup>12</sup> Neil Jeffares, *Dictionary of Pastellists before 1800*, online edition <http://www.pastellists.com/>.

#### 4. Framing

Our drawing is presented in a large 18th-century Italian gilded and carved wood frame, which accentuates the majesty of this portrait.



Giuseppe Nogari - *Portrait of an Ottoman Dignitary* (c. 1760)