

# Galerie Canesso

Tableaux anciens

GIACOMO FRANCESCO CIPPER, CALLED IL TODESCHINI

*Peasants' Banquet with Young Flute Player*

Oil on canvas. 56 11/16 x 44 7/8 in (144 x 114 cm)



## PROVENANCE

Private collection.

## LITERATURE

-Véronique Damian, in *Un Euclide retrouvé de Domenico Maroli et figures de la réalité en Italie du Nord*, Paris, Galerie Canesso, pp. 26-31 ;

-Véronique Damian, in *The Master of the Blue Jeans. A New Painter of Reality in Late 17<sup>th</sup> Century Europe*, Paris, Galerie Canesso, pp. 52-53, no. 13.

## EXHIBITIONS

-*The Master of the Blue Jeans. A New Painter of Reality in Late 17<sup>th</sup> Century Europe*, Paris, Galerie Canesso, 16 September – 6 November 2010.

-Giacomo Francesco Cipper detto il Todeschini. *Cronaca e Commedia tra Austria e Italia nel Settecento*, Trento, Castello del Buonconsiglio, 12 April 2025 – 14 September 2025.

Historiography has recently begun devoting more attention to the works of this Austrian-born artist who became one of the outstanding genre painters in Lombardy<sup>1</sup>. His presence in the area is documented as of 1696, that is ten years before Lombardy came under Austrian domination, and he worked there until his death in 1736. The dates of his Lombard sojourn coincide with the period of lively interest, in the painting of reality, between 1670 and 1740. It was a current that our painter followed along with other artists such as Pietro Bellotti (1625-1700), the Dane, Eberhart Keilhau, known as Monsù Bernardo (1624-1687) and Giacomo Ceruti (1698-1767).

Cipper, too, specialized in scenes portraying humble people, and also devoted himself to the still-life that he raised to its highest level. He painted autonomously as we can see from a signed and dated composition now in a private collection; a work that implies he was indeed a prolific author of still-lives<sup>2</sup>. There is also clear evidence of this in our painting. The table has a pale, heavy tablecloth laden with simple fare: a loaf of bread, cheeses, a half unwrapped salami and boiled chestnuts. All of these items, as well as the pitcher of wine or the bowl and spoon in the girl's hands are depicted with utmost realism and without hesitation, so that, in spite of its simplicity, the meal seems appetizing and worthy of the girl's having donned her best clothes, as we can see from the large bows on her shoulders.

The old woman in the background seems to be enjoying the flirting between the young couple, while the girl on the right, probably a beggar because of her shabby clothes, and the stick on her lap, contentedly consumes a bowl of broth. Indeed we can almost see the joy in her eyes that look directly at the beholder.

It is difficult, however, to understand whether the scene is set indoors or outside. Or perhaps in the courtyard of an inn?

A frequent element in Cipper's paintings is a pillar that divides the scene vertically. Here the device that breaks up the space is the roughly hewn stone in the foreground that serves as a seat.

This painting, executed with extraordinary skill, has its stylistic equivalent in one of Cipper's late works, the *Peasants' Meal with a Young Beggar* (location unknown). Maria Silvia Proni has dated this canvas around 1725-30, nearly the final period of the painter's career and we can see the same female model he used for the girl in our painting<sup>3</sup>. In any event, we may assume that our painting can be dated after 1720, a chronology with which Gerlinde Gruber concurs.

The parts in the foreground are painted with a lively, light palette, and quick brushstrokes; the background figures are monochrome against the ground and show a lighter and more sparing use of colour.

These last two figures are highlighted, with tiny white accents added with the tip of the paintbrush. These luminous touches create a hiatus in the almost overly monochrome harmony.

If the genre paintings of this period also contain hidden, symbolic meanings, perhaps in this composition the three female figures allude to the three ages of life, and the picture as a whole is a hymn to life, with the music coming from the young flutist in the background. The half-amused, half mocking expression on the young woman's face – who is being openly courted by her male counterpart – seems to encourage the observer to follow the dictum of *carpe diem* coined by the epicurean poet, Horace, who urged his readers to seize the present without worrying about the future. The insistent gaze of the young woman – like that of the girl eating the soup – directed resolutely towards the observer conveys the moral meaning that the artist has given the scene, making the viewer a witness. It is precisely through this play of intersecting gazes, which represent just as many silent questions, that the painting reveals its ties with the works of Giacomo Ceruti (1698-1767), another protagonist of Lombard genre painting, who lived in the same neighbourhood in Milan as Cipper around 1713<sup>4</sup>. With this composition, Cipper succeeds in going beyond purely anecdotal content, and muting the “noise of life” (to paraphrase Maria

Silvia Proni). Here he achieves the silent timelessness of Ceruti's scenes, where even the expressions seem to involve the spectator in a dialogue without expecting any compassion, and where the actions are described with great clarity, such as in the *Embroiderers* (private collection).

Notes:

1 – See Gerlinde Gruber, « Vie et œuvre de Giacomo Francesco Cipper, » in *Autour de Giacomo Cipper. Gens d'Italie aux XVII<sup>e</sup> et XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècles*, exhibition catalogue, Chambéry, Musée des Beaux-Arts, 19 March – 13 June 2005; Le Havre, Musée Malraux, 25 June – 18 September 2005; Reims, Musée des Beaux-Arts, 5 October – 8 January 2006, pp. 29-37 ; and see note 2 especially for earlier literature.

2-Maria Silvia Proni, *Giacomo Francesco Cipper detto il "Todeschini"*, Soncino, 1994, pp. 38-39, n° 1; the painting is dated 1700.

3-Maria Silvia Proni, *Ibid.*, 1994, p. 124-125.

4- Maria Silvia Proni, *Ibid.*, 1994, p. 20-21.