

JACOB MERZ'S PORTRAIT OF FRANČ CAUCIG/KAVČIČ

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Jacob Merz's portrait of the notable Yugoslav painter and academician Franc Caucig/Kavčič (1755—1828) is an excellent study. It is also of great interest as a document related to artists' training and careers at national academies during the early modern era (Fig. 23). The young Swiss portraitist was a student of Caucig at the Academy of Fine Arts in Vienna between 1801 and 1807.

Jacob Merz (1782—1807) had already been a much favored student in Zürich, showing great promise.¹ He had had the choice of studying in several great cultural centers, most notably at Dresden, with Anton Graff (1736—1813), and at Stuttgart, with the etcher Johann Gotthard von Müller (1747—1830). But with the advice of his protector he chose to go to Vienna and work under Heinrich Füger (1751—1818). Its faculty, outstanding among the Central European academies, was attracting students from many nations. Furthermore, Merz already had important liaisons with patrons and protectors of the Viennese academy. These advantages promised extraordinary success for him.

When Jacob Merz came to the Academy, in November 1801, Archduke Karl, a national hero, had been leading the Hapsburg court in a policy of seeking favor with the Helvetic Federation. The Swiss cantons buffered the frontier on which Austria faced the menacing and vengeful anti-monarchical expansion of Napoleonic France. Merz was a favored protégé of the cultural and political leaders of Zürich and its powerful canton. His life-long patron, pastor Johann Wilhelm Veith (1758—1833), member of an old and well-known Swiss family, was an avid patriot as well as an enterprising art collector, cultural entrepreneur, and man of letters. He had many influential friends in Central Europe. He had

¹ On the career of the artist and discussions of a representative sampling of his work, see Seymour Howard, *Jacob Merz (1783—1807)*, exhibition catalogue. Schweizerisches Institut für Kunstwissenschaft, Zürich, 1981 (bibl. p. 18).

The principal source on his life and work has been the biography, with extensive excerpts from contemporary correspondence, by Merz's patron Johann Wilhelm Veith (*Notizen aus dem Leben von Jacob Merz, Mahler und Kupferäzer*, Tübingen, 1810; 176 pp., with a nearly complete list of his prints, pp. 173—176).

written a eulogy to his parish of Andelfingen, praising its resistance to the French occupation. Archduke Karl's adjutant, Count Delmotte, had already met the young Merz in Switzerland, during a stay with Veith in 1797. Merz could expect extraordinary favors in Vienna, and, indeed, his fortunes waxed rapidly in the Hapsburg capital (Fig. 24). Archduke Karl, who received his cultural training from his aunt, Archduchess Maria Christina, and her husband Duke Albert (founder of the Albertina), had just been appointed a protector of the Academy, in 1801. Another protector was the wealthy art collector Count Moritz von Fries, an admirer of Merz's one-time mentor and protector Johann Caspar Lavater (1741—1801); von Fries became a patron of Merz in Vienna. Merz was admitted to the Academy on the basis of a large posthumous portrait of Lavater, executed in 1802 as an engraving, that was agreed upon with Füger as an acceptance piece. Lavater, the famous Swiss savant, enthusiast, and exponent of physiognomy, had been wounded by a French musketeer during the occupation of Zürich in 1800 and suffered a martyr's death. His memory rallied patriotic and anti-Jacobin sentiments. The making of a memorial portrait of him was a project clearly attractive to the Hapsburgs and to the Swiss for political as well as cultural reasons.

Merz came to Vienna, as did other Swiss men of arts and letters, to enjoy the patronage of the Hapsburg court. The great Swiss historian and religious convert Johannes von Müller of Schaffhausen (1752—1809), whose thought served as a model of nationalism and moral philosophy for Merz and Veith, had become director of the state library and archives. Johann Rudolph Füssli (1737—1806), a graphic artist and art historian, who was a member of the illustrious Zürich family of artists, writers, and publishers, was appointed keeper of the Academy library and collections, to which he introduced Merz. Füssli's assistant and successor was Jacob Egger of Gossau in St. Gall (1770—1842), later Merz's closest friend. Merz himself came to Vienna with another good friend, the military painter Georg Ott (1783—1807), scion of a Zürich family of artists; Ott also became a protégé of Archduke Karl. Their colleague Jacob Lorenz Billwiler (1779—1832) came to the Academy in the same year. It was Billwiler who made the etching of Merz's portrait of Caucig for the Academy (Fig. 25), after the untimely death of Merz at the age of 24.² At this time a Swiss man might do very well in Vienna with royal patronage.

The Hapsburgs, like other political leaders of Europe, gave ever-increasing support to their art academies by the end of the eighteenth century, employing them as instruments of state policy in the arts. These institutions were meant to ensure appropriate artistic excellence in the products of burgeoning state-controlled industries, as well as in

² The print is noted and reproduced in Ksenija Rozman, *Franc Kavčič/Caucig 1755—1828*, exhibition catalogue. Narodna galerija, Ljubljana, 1978, p. 72; cf. also p. 16 for a copy (in lithograph) after the etching by the Serbian printmaker Anastas Jovanović (1717—1899).

expensive monuments and other artistic enterprises sponsored by the government.³

Füger, director of the Academy, had once been a child prodigy, like Merz. He was schooled in the great national academy at Dresden before coming to Vienna. Sponsored by the Hapsburgs, he completed a long training in Rome, where he worked under the direction of the painter Anton Raphael Mengs (1728—1779), who with his sometime colleague and fellow art theorist Johann Joachim Winckelmann (1719 to 1768) helped to establish the principles and imagery underlying the first style of modern aesthetics: Neo-Classicism. The state sponsors of the Viennese Academy, who had already published the work of Winckelmann, the father of art history and prophet of Neo-Classicism, intended for Füger to assimilate the new style, then sweeping all Europe. He did. He twice copied Mengs's classicistic ceiling painting *Pranassus* (1761), prominently set in the main salon of the famous and influential new villa of Winckelmann's patron, Cardinal Alessandro Albani. Albani, an enlightened anti-Jesuit antiquarian and diplomat, was the foremost champion of the new mode and was called the Hadrian of his time. Füger initiated in Vienna the strict academic regime and eclectic aesthetic precepts that he learned from Mengs and from his academicist brother-in-law Antonio Mengs-Marone (1733—1808). This was the schooling of Merz.

Caucig himself had also studied in Rome under the auspices of the Vienna academy, for even more years than did Füger. He, too, knew the leading artists of the time, then working in Rome. It was later that Paris, under the rule of Napoleon, began to usurp the position of Rome as the European capital of art, abducting her treasures and assuming her power and fame. Caucig became an accomplished Neo-Classic artist, one of the most austere practitioners of the style at the Academy. Like most of his fellow-professors, he was a citizen of the Austrian Empire and had studied at the Academy before going to Rome. After his return, he served as an instructor there. Eventually, he became the director of the Academy and helped to establish Neo-Classicism as the entrenched idiom of that institution and of the state.⁴ That paradigmatic idiom, of high moral tone, based upon lustrous inherited notions of excellence, illusionism, and individualism associated

³ On the history of European national academies and their growing socio-political and economic importance in early modern European nations, see especially Nicholas Pevsner, *Academies of Art*, Cambridge, 1940.

For the policies and history of the Vienna academy and the official activities of its members, see in particular Karl F. A. von Lützow, *Geschichte der kais. kön. Akademie der bildenden Künste*, Vienna, 1877, and Walter Wagner, *Die Geschichte der Akademie der bildenden Künste in Wien*, Vienna, 1967.

⁴ On the career, works, and cultural ambiance of Caucig, see the thoroughgoing catalogue of Dr. Rozman cited above, and on his acquaintance with other Neo-Classic artists of Rome see also her study «The Roman Views of Felice Giani and Francesco Caucig,» *Master Drawings*, 18, 1980, 253—256. For Caucig's career at the Academy, see further von Lützow, *passim*, and Wagner, *passim* and p. 402: Korrektor of history of drawings, 1796—1798; Professor of painting, 1799—1820; Director of painting and sculpture, 1820—1828.

with Classical antiquity and the afterlife of its tradition, served as the official imagery sponsored by Western nations and their cultural satellites until well into the present century.⁵

Franc Caucig was perhaps the most austere and disciplined neoclassicist of the academy. Merz surely received considerable instruction in the new idiom from him, probably studying his many drawings after antiquities and classicistic masters made in Rome — much as he studied such works by Lips and Füger. For example, Merz drew many versions of the cast of the head of the classical Uffizi Niobe (e.g., Fig. 27), prominently shown in Josef Ziegler's (1785—1852) oil portrait of Caucig (Fig. 26, 1820). And certain of his studies after the antique, the life model (Fig. 28), and Raphael (Fig. 30) are especially close to those of Caucig (e.g., Figs. 29 and 31). Merz, like Caucig, also made various landscape studies on excursions with his friends.⁶

Caucig is represented by Merz as aging; he was about 48 years old at the time of this portrait. He is sensitively shown as benign, acute, comfortable, and phlegmatic, though not without traces on his shadowed side of the grumbling impatience noted by the Nazarenes. It is an excellent likeness, to judge from other portraits of Caucig. Descriptions of Caucig and the excellence of other portraits by Merz also support our faith in this one. Merz was apparently sympathetic to Caucig and to the other faculty members whom he depicted. He seems to have admired Caucig, as he did Füger, Johann Martin Fischer (1741—1820), and Franz Zauner (1746—1822), Caucig's predecessors as directors of the Academy, whom he also portrayed.

Merz had shown remarkable abilities in portraiture in Zürich, well before he was publicly favored by the Archduke. Füssli, who had become his mentor and protector at the Academy, arranged for him to make drawing portraits of the major professors at the Academy. The present portrait of Caucig is one of this series. (All the studies are in the Crocker Art Museum, Sacramento, California, among some 300 recently uncovered drawings and oil sketches by Merz, a folio that constitutes virtually the entire known original work of the artist.)⁷

Merz's portraits of the Academy faculty form a close-knit series that, in a flattering conceit, alludes to the *Iconography* series of portraits of famous academic artists of Flanders by Anthony Van Dyck. Van Dyck's portraits were then much in vogue, and Merz had admired and

⁵ On the history and importance of Neo-Classicism and studies on the subject, see the exemplary studies of Robert Rosenblum (*Transformations in Late Eighteenth Century Art*, Princeton, 1967) and Hugh Honour (*Neoclassicism*, Middlesex, 1968) and the Council of Europe exhibition catalogue *The Age of Neo Classicism*, London, 1972.

⁶ Ziegler's canvas is noted and reproduced in Rozman, *Kavčič/Caucig*, p. 73, as are various of Caucig's own studies from Classical casts, the model, and Renaissance masters and also landscape sketches made on his travels (pp. 162 ff., passim).

⁷ The Academy portraits have Crocker Art Gallery inventory numbers 806 (Beck), 808 (J. M. Fischer), 811 (Zauner), 815 (Caucig), 820 (Füger), 821 (Maurer), 822 (V. Fischer), 823 (Schmutzer), and 827 (Füger). Two are illustrated in Howard, *Merz*: no. 28, Jacob Matthias Schmutzer (1733—1811), Director of the school of prints and etching, and no. 29, Füger. All the faculty series are similar in size and material. The Caucig portrait may

copied them early in his career (Fig. 32). Merz's portrait of Füger, like Van Dyck's self-portrait, appears in two versions: one study of the head only (Fig. 33) and the other of bust size (Fig. 34), like the rest of the suite. Probably Merz intended to make prints after his drawings; Billwiler in fact made prints of all the sketches, shortly after Merz's death. Like the finished prints made after Van Dyck's sketches, Billwiler's etchings of Merz's studies are harsher and more mechanical-looking reproductions of the originals.⁸

The graphic and monochrome tradition was especially strong in Merz's Central European academic background, and in his own work. He learned to paint in oils only in 1803, shortly before his death. He was originally trained as a reproductive printmaker by his Zürich master, Heinrich Lips (1758—1817) (Fig. 36). Lips was once a teacher at the Weimar academy; he had studied in Italy and was a friend of Goethe. He was the principal illustrator of Lavater's *Physiognomische Fragmente* (Zürich, 1775—1778). Merz's portraits of the Academy professors resemble similarly literal studies by Lips and his fellow illustrators of Zürich, which however are harder and more linear. Their factual physiognomic and psychological appearance recalls the precepts of Lips, Lavater, Anton Graff (1736—1813), and Veith, expressed in letters to Merz. They repeated their ideals of scrupulous observation of nature and detail that echoed an objective scientific naturalism endorsed by Goethe.⁹ That tradition of objective observation and recording anticipated the development of the modern camera and accompanied the contemporary use of the camera lucida as well as the camera obscura. There is also a certain softness and sophisticated aplomb in the academy portraits that may reflect the study of French three-color crayon technique, like that used by the Swiss artist Jean Etienne Liotard (1702—1789) in his many royal portraits in Vienna. But more likely they reveal the influence of the eclectic and ingratiating cosmopolitan manner of Merz's academy instructors, especially Füger and Johann Baptist Lampi the elder (1751—1830), who used it in their private portrait commissions. It was a manner derived from contemporary English and continental portraits and miniatures. Merz's various sources, though informed by remnants of Baroque rhetorical outpourings and Rococo vivacity, adhere closely to beignly tempered interests in materialist versimilitude and academic discipline. These same elements character-

serve as an example: warm grey paper, black and red chalk with chalk heightening, remnants of a tissue-paper cover sheet, »P. Caucig x« in graphite, »Kunstler/D. Füger, Austrian« in graphite on mount, 258 × 194 mm. (10 1/8 × 7 5/8 inches), Crocker Art Museum inv. no. 815. Merz also made a study of Füssli in the same technique and format, but in a somewhat larger size, which apparently was retained by Füssli; it was recorded early in this century as on the Berlin art market (sale photo in Witt Library, London).

⁸ With the exception of the Merz portrait of Zauner, known to me only in a trial proof in the Albertina, Billwiler's etchings after Merz's studies of the Academy professors were first recorded in Johann R. Füssli, *Allgemeines Künstlerlexikon*, Zürich, 1809, p. 847.

⁹ These ideas are presented in great detail by Veith, especially in a letter to Merz with an accompanying commentary in Veith, *Notizen... Merz*, pp. 155—172.

ized the bourgeois realist-naturalist tradition of accurate and probing psychological portraiture that flourished during the nineteenth century. Over the years, Caucig recommended various of his students to Antonio Canova (1757—1822), whom he had known very well in Rome. Apparently it was he who introduced Merz to the famous sculptor, formerly director of the Academy of St. Luke in Rome, a model for the Vienna academy from the time of Mengs and his circle. Canova, the »Phidias of his age,« had come to Vienna to install his great funerary monument of Maria Christina at the Augustinerkirche. Canova befriended the younger artist and sat for a miniature portrait akin to those that Merz made of the Academy professors (Fig. 35). He also at that time commissioned Merz to make an etching in pure outline, à la Flaxman, of the Christina monument (cf. Fig. 37), to be used in a sumptuous Austrian publication about it. Duke Albert acquired various copies of the large print of it that Merz made. Merz also reproduced the design in a small tondo print, along with large and small print versions of the portrait of Canova. The Christina monument itself, Canova's supervision of his design for the print, and Canova's instruction and advice about his drawing profoundly influenced the young man's art. Even in his genre studies, Merz became increasingly attracted to the beautiful Neo-Classic style, already learned partly in Zürich from Lips and more thoroughly learned in Vienna from his professors at the Academy, especially Caucig.¹⁰

In that style, Merz illustrated the influential artists' anatomy book of Fischer, published by the Academy, with fine prints of a classicistic Meleager-like skeleton (1804). He also laboriously designed and executed the plate of Zauner's Marcus-Aurelius-like equestrian statue of Joseph II for the royal house, mainly at the urging of the Archduke (1807). His demonstrated ability, as much as his personal charm and influential friends, earned him the commissions for these great projects establishing the Neo-Classic style and academicism as the official support of reputation and power in Hapsburg Vienna.

Neo-Classicism, as preached and practiced in the national academies and by Lips in Zürich, revered and incorporated not only the art of classical antiquity but also that of successive grand masters who admired it - especially Raphael, the model for the life as well as the art of Merz. Just as this style was becoming entrenched in Vienna, a counter-current arose, which, fresh, new, and strong, was to become even more influential in the avant-garde development of Central European artistic expression. The Nazarenes, a group of young Germanic artists nurtured by the eclectic academic and Neo-Classic training at the Vienna academy in the years just before Merz's death, openly repudiated its ideals after

¹⁰ On, Merz, Canova, the portrait, and the Christina monument plates, see Howard, *Merz*, p. 13 and nos. 31, 74; Selma Krasa, »Antonio Canova's Denkmal der Erzherzogin Marie Christine,« *Albertina Studien*, V/VI, 1967/68, 94 f., 106, n. 191, figs. 29—32; and Veith, *Notizen... Merz*, pp. 49—52, 76 f., 91, 142, 176, nos. 39—40, 42—43. On Caucig's friendship with Canova and his recommendations of students to the sculptor, see Rozman, *Kavčić/Caucig*, pp. 264, 306; on Caucig's introduction of Merz to Canova, see Veith, *Notizen... Merz*, p. 77, Herinn. Professor C**.*

the humiliating defeat of the Hapsburgs at Vienna by Napoleon, in 1809. As the Brotherhood of St. Luke, they condemned their professors and the Academy and championed instead a Neo-Gothic art and a system of guilds, then romantically associated with freshly rising German bourgeois ideals of nationalism and egalitarianism. Merz had been trained in this way before he left Switzerland, but he largely renounced this background at the academy in Vienna. The new movement had far-reaching consequences, but for all their radical break with tradition, the Nazarenes' work was always firmly grounded in the technical care and precision and respect for tradition and history that they had learned at the Academy.¹¹ Though waning and veiled, these academic ideals and modes have persisted in ambitious art to the present day. In Merz's studies after Caucig's models and in his portrait of Caucig, we find the tempered eclecticism and naturalism of the academic style that informed the subsequent art of the century.

MERZOV PORTRET FRANCA KAVČIČA

Risba Jacoba Merza (Hirslanden 1783 — Dunaj 1807), portret slikarjevega učitelja *Franca Kavčiča* (1755—1828), nas pouči o temeljnih načelih, o vlogi in pokroviteljstvu dunajske akademije v času, ko tej akademiji po pomenu za kulturno življenje Srednje Evrope ne najdemo primerjave.

Merz je bil spreten risar, grafik in portretist. Bil je zelo priljubljen v krogu vplivnih kulturnikov v rodnem züriškem kantonu. Heinrich F. Füger, ravnatelj dunajske c. kr. akademije, ga je povabil, naj vstopi v njegovo šolo prav v času, ko je mladi umetnik dokončal svoje začetno šolanje v Švici in ko so Habsburžani snubili Švicarje, naj se jim pridružijo v boju proti Napoleonovi Franciji. Prvo priznanje je Merz dosegel na Dunaju, ko ga je vzel pod zaščito nadvojvoda Karl. Nadvojvoda je zvedel za nadarjenega umetnika prek švicarskih znanstev adjutanta grofa Delmottea. Merz je bil priljubljen umetnik in cenili so ga tako ljudje iz bližine dvora kot tudi ugledni meščani, akademjski učitelji in šolski kolegi, med njimi še zlasti tisti, ki so bili povezani z rodno Švico.

Eden glavnih Merzovih učiteljev je bil jugoslovanski (slovenski) slikar Franc Kavčič, poznejši direktor dunajske akademije. Kavčič je pomagal Merzu, da je izoblikoval lasten neoklasicistični slog in da je zavrgel svojo dotodanjo lokalno obarvano maniro. Merzov slikarski napredek je bil kaj kmalu zaznaven že pri akademjskih vajah, ki so se približale sorodnim Kavčičevim delom. Ko je Kavčič Merza predstavil kiparju Antoniju Canovu, se je Merz še bolj poglobljeno oprijel novoklasicističnega sloga — tistega sloga, ki sta ga tudi Kavčič in njegov prijatelj Canova utrjevala v Rimu in ki je postal priljubljena manira v zgodnjem času moderne Evrope.

Naročilo za slikanje dunajskih akademjskih profesorjev je 1804. leta prikrbel Merzu na Dunaju živeči Švicar, varuh akademjske knjižnice in zbirnik, grafik ter umetnostni pisec Johann Rudolf Füssli (1752—1809). Portret slikarja Kavčiča priča o novi slikarjevi navezanosti na akademijo in o njegovi risarski spretnosti; izpričuje tudi nepretrgano povezanost z romantičnim realizmom in zanimanje za upodabljanje fiziognomij, ki se jih je naučil risati že v Švici pri učiteljih in vzornikih, kot so bili Anton Graff, Caspar Lavater, Heinrich Lips in Johann Wilhelm Veith. Ti umetniki so objektivno upodabljali svet, reševali so vprašanja srednjega stanu in bistveno vplivali

¹¹ For the Nazarenes and the Academy, see, for example, K. Andrews, *The Nazarenes*, Oxford, 1964, Chap. 1, and Jens C. Jensen, »Überbecks Eintritt in die Wiener Akademie und ein Brief von Heinrich Friedrich Füger,« in *Romantik und Realismus in Österreich* exhibition catalogue, Schweinfurt, 1968, pp. 33—40.

na oblikovanje porajajočega se realizma. Merzov portret slikarja Kavčiča je primer skrbne risbe iz serije podob dunajskih akademijskih profesorjev — iz *suite*, ki spominja na tisto, ki jo je zasnoval Anthonis van Dyck in ki je z grafičnimi listi slavila velike akademijske učitelje tedanjega časa. Merzovi portreti so bili dobro sprejeti, vendar so bili zaradi slikarjeve zgodnje smrti šele postumno razmnoženi z grafičnimi listi. V letih 1807—09 jih je vrezal Švicar, dunajski akademijski učenec in Merzov prijatelj Jacob Lorenz Billwiler. Merz sam pa je še pred smrtjo za akademijo in za svoje dvorne naročnike zasnoval in vrezal mnoge pomembne grafike, med njimi na primer Zaunerjev spomenik Jožefa II., Canovov nagrobnik Marije Kristine, grafike za ilustracijo Fischerjeve knjige o umetniški anatomiji in drugo.

Merzovo obetavno in bleščeče, vendar tragično kratko življenje in delo je kmalu prekrila senca poznejših dogodkov. Brž ko je Napoleon leta 1809 zavzel Dunaj, so revolucionarni in vplivni mladi »Nazarenci« začeli odklanjati kakršnokoli pokroviteljstvo, trdo vodstvo in akademijski elektični pouk, kar vse je nekoč prevzelo in izoblikovalo mladega Merza in kar je vladalo na akademijah tudi še v 19. stoletju.



23 *Jacob Merz: Franc Caucig, 1803—1804, Sacramento, Crocker Art Museum*



24 *Jacob Merz: Self-Portrait, c. 1807, Sacramento, Crocker Art Museum*



25 Johann Lorenz Billwiler, after Jacob Merz: Franz Caucig, Teacher of History Painting, 1807—1809, Etching



26 *Josef Ziegler: Franc Caucig with the Bust of Niobe, c. 1820, Vienna, Historisches Museum der Stadt Wien*



27 *Jacob Merz: Head of Uffizi Niobe (from cast), c. 1803, Sacramento, Crocker Art Museum*



28 *Jacob Merz: Standing Male Model Holding Rod, c. 1804—1806, Sacramento, Crocker Art Museum*



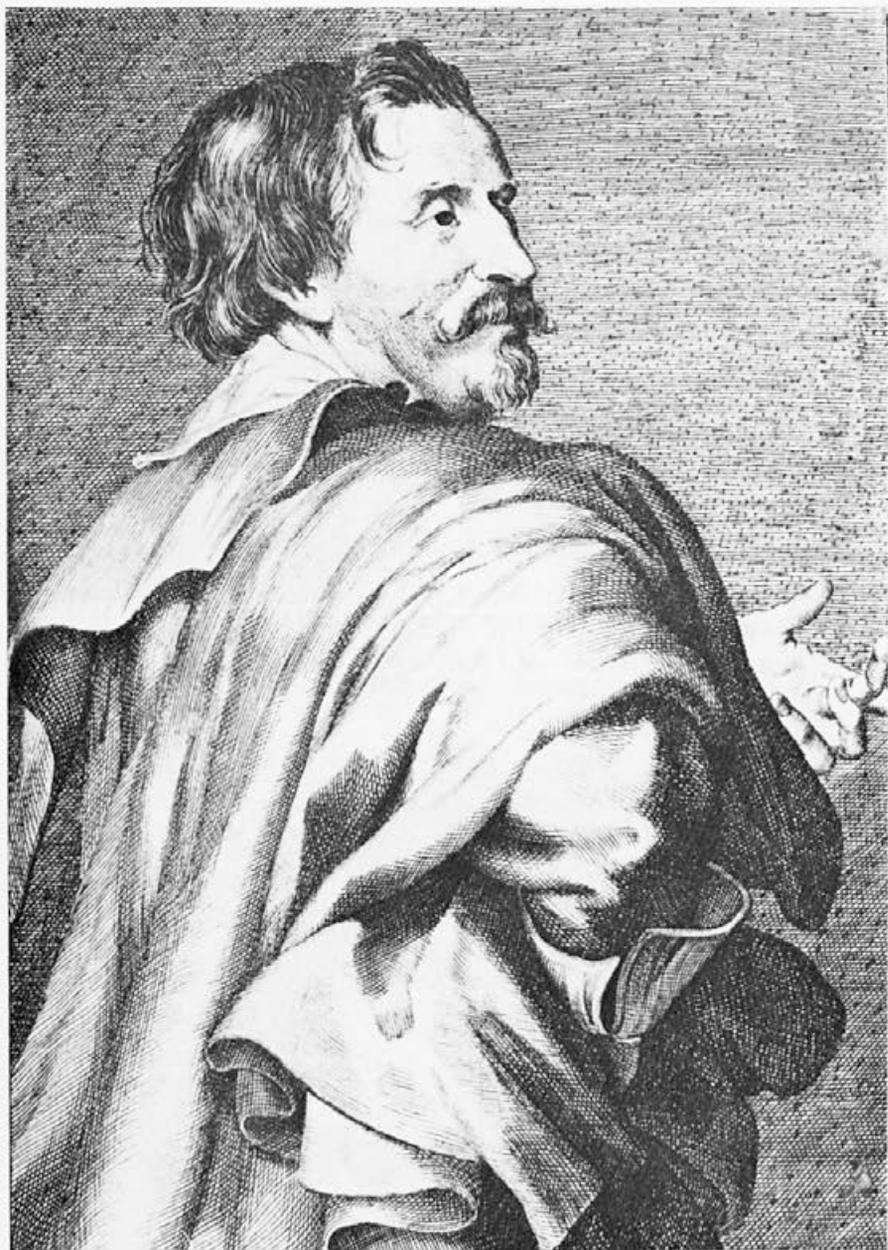
29 *Franc Caucig: Bust of the »Pseudo Vitellius«, 1781(?), Vienna, Kupferstichkabinett*



- 30 *Jacob Merz*: Detail of Raphael's *Expulsion of Heliodorus* in the Vatican Stanze, c. 1802—1805, Sacramento, Crocker Art Museum



- 31 *Franc Caucig*: Detail of Raphael's *Expulsion of Heliodorus*, Ljubljana, Narodna galerija



32 *Jacob Merz*, after Paul Pontius's print after Anthony Van Dyck: Theodore Rombouts, from *Icons of Artists*, 1798, Sacramento, Crocker Art Museum



33 *Jacob Merz*: Heinrich Füger, 1803—1804, Sacramento, Crocker Art Museum



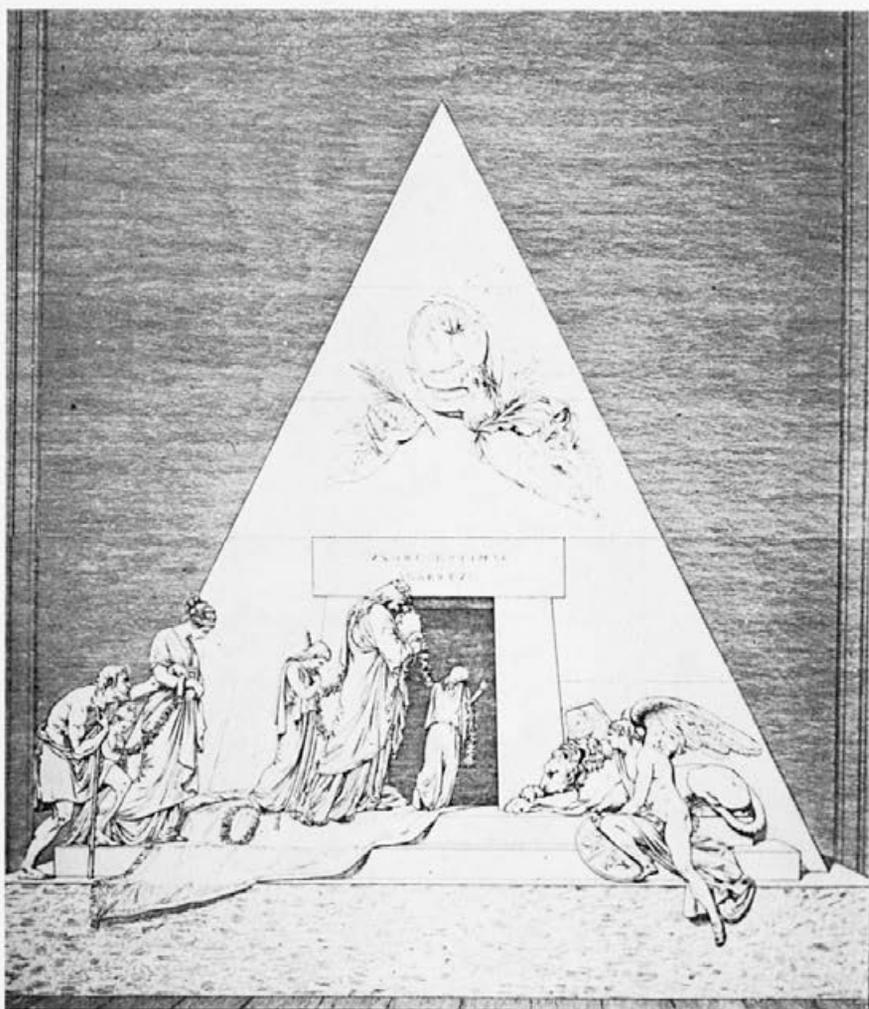
34 *Jacob Merz*: Heinrich Füger, 1803—1804, Sacramento, Crocker Art Museum



35 *Jacob Merz*: Antonio Canova, 1805, Sacramento, Crocker Art Museum



36 *Heinrich Lips*: Self-portrait, in *J. C. Lavater, Physiognomische Fragmente...*, Leipzig 1755, Etching



37 *Jacob Merz: The Tomb of Archduchess Maria Christina by Canova, 1805, Vienna, Augustinerkirche, Etching*