

# STEPHEN ONGPIN FINE ART



**Cherubino ALBERTI (Borgo San Sepolcro 1553 - Rome 1615)**

**A Design for a Wall Decoration or Fountain, with a Nymph (Venus?) Flanked by Satyrs**

Pen and brown ink and brown wash, over an underdrawing in black chalk.  
Inscribed Cristofano Rosa detto / Dal Vasari / Il Bresciano at the lower left.  
429 x 243 mm. (16 7/8 x 9 1/2 in.)

This large and impressive drawing is unrelated to any surviving work by Cherubino Alberti. The coat of arms at the top of the sheet, which would presumably be those of the patron, incorporates stars similar to those found on the arms of the noble Aldobrandini family, for whom Cherubino worked extensively. The helmet at the top of the coat of arms would seem to identify the patron as a cavaliere, or knight.

Among stylistically and thematically comparable drawings by Cherubino Alberti is a design for the wall decoration of the Farnese Gallery of the Palazzo Farnese in Rome, in the Kupferstichkabinett in Berlin, and a project for the decoration of a loggia, in the Museo di Capodimonte in Naples. Both drawings share a similar handing of pen and wash with the present sheet, and incorporate analogous figures flanking coats of arms.

The satyrs in this drawing are also stylistically very similar to those in a pen study of Two Satyrs, formerly part of the collection assembled by Don Gaspar Mendéz de Haro y Guzman, Marqués del Carpio, while serving as Viceroy of Naples in the 1680's, and more recently in the collection of the late Alfred Moir of Santa Barbara, California. Although the Moir drawing bears an old attribution to the Cavaliere d'Arpino, and has indeed been published as an early work by that artist by Herwarth Röttgen, it has recently been

removed from the corpus of Arpino's drawings by Marco Bolzoni, who has suggested instead a tentative attribution to Cherubino or Giovanni Alberti.

The inscription at the lower left of the sheet refers to the obscure Brescian artist Cristofano Rosa (d.1576), of whom Vasari writes, 'The brothers Cristofano and Stefano, painters of Brescia, have a great name among craftsmen for their facility in drawing in perspective.' The present sheet would, however, appear to be later in date.

**Provenance:**

Michel Gaud, Saint-Tropez (Lugt 3482), his stamp at the lower right.

**Artist description:**

A painter and engraver, Cherubino Alberti was born into a family of artists in the Tuscan town of Borgo San Sepolcro (today Sansepolcro) that included his father Alberto, his brothers Giovanni and Alessandro and his cousin Durante. He was in Rome by 1571, when he engraved a painting by Federico Zuccaro in the church of the Trinità dei Monti. It was also in Rome that he learned the art of engraving, in the studio of Cornelis Cort. Alberti produced some 180 prints, mostly reproductive works after Michelangelo, Raphael, Polidoro da Caravaggio, the Zuccari and other artists. Most of his prints date from the 1570's and early 1580's, after which he seems to have devoted himself mainly to painting.

Alberti's earliest documented work as a painter is a fresco decoration on the rear facade of the Vatican Library, painted in 1587. Together with his brother Giovanni, Cherubino Alberti was particularly admired for his skills as a painter of di sotto in su ceiling decorations, a talent he employed in several Roman churches. The two brothers worked together frequently, and were engaged by Pope Clement VIII on the decoration of the Sala Clementina, the largest room in the Vatican, between 1596 and 1604, and again in the sacristy of San Giovanni in Laterano, completed in 1602. The brothers also collaborated on the fresco decoration of the Oratorio del Crocifisso in the church of San Rocco in their native town of Sansepolcro. A number of other joint projects by Cherubino and Giovanni Alberti are now lost, such as the decoration of the interior of the Summer Palace on the Quirinal Hill, painted for Pope Gregory XIII between 1584 and 1585. Cherubino's last major papal commission was the decoration of the vault of the Aldobrandini chapel in Santa Maria sopra Minerva in Rome, completed in 1610. Three years later, in 1613, he was elected principe of the Accademia di San Luca.