

STEPHEN ONGPIN FINE ART



Ubaldo GANDOLFI (San Matteo della Decima 1728 - Rome 1781)

**Design for a Monument or Frontispiece, with a Male and Female Figure Flanking a Cartouche,
Three Putti Holding a Garland Above**

Pen and brown ink and brown wash, over an extensive underdrawing in red chalk.

Inscribed G on the verso, laid down.

Laid down on an 18th century Italian mount.

300 x 210 mm. (11 3/4 x 8 1/4 in.)

To judge by his annotation on a photograph of the present sheet in the Witt Library, James Byam Shaw may have been the first scholar to attribute this drawing to Ubaldo Gandolfi. The drawing may be compared stylistically with a handful of decorative designs by Ubaldo, such as three drawings of fountains; one in the Palazzo Rosso in Genoa and another in a private collection, as well as a third sold at auction in 1997. Also comparable in style and technique is a rather fantastical drawing of Figures Watching a Man Spout Water from his Mouth, probably also a design for a fountain, in the Museo del Prado in Madrid.

The putti at the top of the present sheet have their counterparts in a drawing of Three Putti with a Medallion, also in the Prado, a drawing of A Faun Bearing a Pair of Putti on a Tray on his Head in the Victoria and Albert Museum in London, and a Design for a Door Knocker, formerly in the Lodewijk Houthakker collection and recently acquired by the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam.

A fine copy of the present sheet by Domenico Pedrini (1728-1800), who was much influenced by Ubaldo Gandolfi, is in the collection of the Fondazione Giorgio Cini in Venice. The Cini drawing served as the cover of the catalogue of the Mostra di Settecento Bolognese, the seminal exhibition of Emilian art held in Bologna in 1935.

Provenance:

Antonio Certani, Bologna, in 1935
Possibly the Baronessa Emma Dantoni Camuccini, Rome
Anonymous sale, Florence, Sotheby's, 18 October 1969, lot D43 (as Gaetano Gandolfi)
Anonymous sale, New York, Sotheby's, 12 January 1990, lot 35.

Exhibitions

Bologna, Palazzo Comunale, Mostra del Settecento Bolognese, 1935, room 17, no.126 (as Filippo Pedrini).

Literature:

Armelle Baron, 'Au Palais de la Bourse, les incontournables du Salon du dessin', *L'Objet d'Art*, March 2012, p.76; Marco Riccòmini, *I Gandolfi: Disegni della raccolta Certani alla Fondazione Giorgio Cini*, Venice, 2018, p.82, fig.40.1.

Artist description:

Ubaldo Gandolfi entered the Accademia Clementina in Bologna at an early age, and by 1745 had already won a prize for figure drawing, earning two more in the next four years. Between 1749 and 1759, however, he does not appear in any records of the Accademia, and it may be supposed that he spent some of this period travelling around Italy. (His biographer Marcello Oretti notes that the artist 'vidde Firenze, Venezia ed altre famose scuole.') One of his first independent projects was the decoration of several rooms in the Palazzo Malvasia in Bologna, commissioned around 1758 by the Bolognese nobleman and art historian Carlo Cesare Malvasia.

Together with his younger brother Gaetano, Ubaldo visited Venice in 1760; a trip that was to have a significant impact on the artist's later work, with its vigorous brushwork and expressive treatment of colour. Throughout much of his career Ubaldo maintained close contacts with the Accademia Clementina, where in 1761 he was appointed one of four direttori di figura, or professors of life drawing. One of his most important patrons was the Marchese Gregorio Casali, a fellow member of the Accademia Clementina, who commissioned several works from the artist, notably two large paintings of Perseus and Andromeda and Selene and Endymion for the Palazzo Pubblico in Bologna. Apart from an Apotheosis of Hercules in the Palazzo Malvezzi in Bologna, relatively little of his large-scale mural decorations survive today. Over a career of some thirty years, Ubaldo Gandolfi was active as a painter of frescoes, altarpieces and mythological scenes, as well as a charming series of small, informal portraits of women and children that have the appearance of character studies. He also worked as a sculptor, and a handful of terracotta sculptures of saints are known today. However, he seems to have struggled to win commissions for significant religious pictures, and never achieved the level of success enjoyed by his brother Gaetano.

Like his brother, Ubaldo Gandolfi was highly regarded as a draughtsman in his lifetime, as is noted by Oretti, who adds that the artist continued to attend life drawing classes at the Accademia Clementina

well into his independent career. Many of Ubaldo's extant drawings remain unconnected to surviving paintings by the artist, and several have the appearance of being independent compositions. In fact, it has been suggested that, 'chronically lacking commissions, [he] often fulfilled his creative urges and "kept his hand in" by making drawings.'