

Giocondo ALBERTOLLI (Bedano 1742 - Milan 1839)

Design for a Decorative Wall Panel

Watercolour over an underdrawing in pencil.

1015 x 468 mm. (40 x 18 3/8 in.)

In some autobiographical notes written in 1830, near the end of his career, Giocondo Albertolli stated that, during his time in Milan, he had ‘the opportunity to make designs for works in stucco, painting, marble, bronze and for everything that concerns the decoration of princely habitations. The example of the court was followed by many of the leading signori of Milan, whence many of them renewed their palaces, decorating them with the new good taste. This also gave me the occasion to make many designs.’

The combination of paired deers and hares in this very large watercolour, which is almost certainly to be dated to Albertolli's Lombard period, would suggest that it may have been intended for a decoration in a hunting lodge. The drawing is stylistically and thematically similar to the first plate in Albertolli's Ornamenti diversi inventati e disegnati da Giacondo Albertolli professore di ornate nella Reale Accademia di Belle Arti in Milano; a collection of engravings after the artist's stucco designs, published in 1782.

As the decorative arts scholar Alvar Gonzalez-Palacios has observed, 'That Albertolli worked with meticulous care on every single detail will be clear to anyone who has examined [his] drawing and prints…Coming half-way between Piranesi and Percier and Fontaine, Giocondo Albertolli was not inferior to the best ornamenters of neo-classicism…He knew how to create new models, which although they re-echo forms beloved by the ancients, were neither slavish archeological exercises nor, as happened to other Italian ornamenters of the period…did he let himself be carried away excessively by the sixteenth-century classicism, though he too loved and understood it.'

Literature:

New York, Pandora Old Masters, ItalianOld Master Drawings and Oil Sketches, 1998, unpaginated, no.19; Adriano Cera, ed., Disegni, acquarelli, tempere di artisti italiani dal 1770 ca. al 1830 ca., Bologna, 2002, Vol.I, unpaginated, Albertolli no.4.

Artist description:

Active as an architect and decorator, Giocondo Albertolli was born near Lugano in Switzerland and received his training in Parma, where he studied with Giuseppe Peroni and was also much influenced by the work of the court architect to the Duke of Parma, Ennemond-Alexandre Petitot. Albertolli worked in Parma, Florence and Milan, where he was appointed Professor of design at the school of architectural ornament at the Accademia di Belle Arti di Brera, where he remained for over thirty years, until 1812. Established as one of the leading designers and architects in Lombardy, he published several volumes of engravings after his decorative designs which served to spread his influence well beyond Milan.