

Pio PANFILI (Porto San Giorgio 1723 - Bologna 1812)

a. Design for the Left Corner of a Decorative Scheme for a Ceiling b. Design for the Right Corner of a Decorative Scheme for a Ceiling

Pen and brown ink and brown wash, with blue gouache, over traces of an underdrawing in pencil, on blue-grey paper.

Each sheet laid down, with framing lines in brown ink.

Signed with initials PP at the lower left [a].

Signed or inscribed Pio Panfili at the lower right centre [b].

a. 183 x 148 mm. (7 1/4 x 5 7/8 in.)

b. 183 x 145 mm. (7 1/4 x 5 3/4 in.)

A stylistically comparable signed drawing of a ceiling design by Pio Panfili, in pen and brown ink and watercolour, was formerly in the collections of Alessandro Maggiori, Edmond Fatio and Lodewijk Houthakker. Also similar is a preparatory drawing for the ceiling of the Sala dell'Aquila in the Palazzo dei Priori in Fermo, signed and dated 1760, which was once in the collection of Richard Wunder, New York, and a drawing for part of the decoration of the cathedral of Fermo, in the Museo Civico d'Arte Industriale e Gallerie Davia Bargellini in Bologna.

Artist description:

Born near Fermo in the Marches and active mainly in Bologna, Pio Bernardino Panfili studied at the

Accademia Clementina in Bologna and established a successful career as a painter of ornament and perspectival decorations, and was also a prolific printmaker and an occasional set designer. He received one of his first important commissions when he was tasked with the fresco decoration of the ceiling vault of the Sala dell'Aquila in the Palazzo dei Priori in Fermo, executed between 1760 and 1762. Panfili had settled in Bologna by 1767, where he produced a series of large-scale engravings of urban views of the city, as well as numerous smaller city views published between 1770 and 1800. In 1774 he completed the ceiling decoration of the staircase of the Palazzo Comunale in Montegiorgio, and in 1783 published a series of ornamental prints under the title Frammenti d'ornati per li giovani principianti nel disegno. Elected a member of the Accademia Clementina in 1786, the following year Panfili began work on the illusionistic fresco decoration of the ceiling of the Duomo in Fermo, which was completed in 1788. At around the same time he decorated the chapel and several rooms of the Palazzo Guerrieri in Fermo. He died in 1812, aged almost ninety. A posthumous biography of the artist, entitled Memoria della vita di Pio Panfilj, was published by the Marchese Antonio Amorini Bolognini in 1835.

Architectural drawings by Pio Panfili are today in the Pierpont Morgan Library and the Cooper-Hewitt National Design Museum in New York, the Istituto Centrale per la Grafica in Rome and in several public collections in Bologna; notably an album of drawings and designs (including a self-portrait) in the Pinacoteca Nazionale in Bologna. Panfili also assembled a fine personal collection of drawings, including examples by Agostino Mitelli and Mauro Tesi.