

STEPHEN ONGPIN FINE ART



Francesco ALBERTI

Design for an Elaborate Decorative Scheme, with an Armed Male Figure Holding a Laurel Wreath Above an Allegorical Female Figure of Flora(?) Surrounded by Winged Putti

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

Faint traces of an erased figure of a flying putto at the upper centre of the composition.

Inscribed *DE FRANCESCO ALBERTI* at the bottom.

Laid down on a backing sheet.

383 x 246 mm. (15 1/8 x 9 3/4 in)

The present sheet was inserted, in place of a missing engraved title page, into a copy of the first edition of the 16th century architect Giacomo Barozzi da Vignola's *Le due regole della prospettiva pratica*, posthumously published, with commentary by Ignazio Danti, in Rome in 1583. Vignola's treatise, filtered through Danti's commentary, was a great success, and the book was reprinted at least ten times over the next two hundred years. The most striking feature of the richly illustrated publication of 1583 was the use of two different techniques, woodcuts and copperplate engravings, to visually translate Vignola's original theories.

The author of this fine and interesting drawing, which is boldly signed or inscribed 'DE FRANCESCO ALBERTI', may be the 16th century painter Francesco Alberti, known as Fiumana, about whom,

however, almost nothing is known. Alberti was active in Bologna in the 1550s, working at the cathedral of San Petronio and the church of San Giovanni in Monte. According to the 17th century Bolognese art historian and biographer Carlo Cesare Malvasia, Fiumana also worked in Venice.

Another possible author of the present sheet is the early 17th century painter and engraver Pietro Francesco Alberti (1584-1638), who was born into a family of artists from the town of Sansepolcro in Tuscany. The son of the artist Durante Alberti, whose two daughters are also documented as painters,

Pier Francesco Alberti is best known for his illustrations in the first printed edition of Leonardo da Vinci's treatise on painting, the *Trattato della pittura*, published in 1651, long after the master's death.

It is interesting to note that the same 1583 first edition of Vignola's *Le due regole della prospettiva pratica* included an engraved title page, depicting a portrait bust of Vignola set within an arcaded loggia, by Cherubino Alberti (1553-1615), an older member of the Alberti family of artists of Sansepolcro and a cousin of Durante Alberti. As noted above, the present sheet was bound into a copy of Vignola's 1583 treatise in place of the printed frontispiece by Cherubino Alberti.