

**Antonio BASOLI (Castelguelfo 1744 - Bologna 1848)**

**Design for the Walls and Ceiling of a Room**

Pen and brown ink and watercolour, over traces of a pencil underdrawing, with framing lines in brown ink.

368 x 486 mm. (14 1/2 x 19 1/8 in.)

This large sheet is a very fine example of Antonio Basoli's designs for interior spaces. A number of similar projects for wall and ceiling decorations are contained in several albums of finished watercolours by Basoli, compiled by the artist himself, that are today in the collection of the Accademia di Belle Arti in Bologna. One of these albums, inventoried as 'Libro 105', contains various decorative schemes, datable between 1797 and 1809, for the interiors of such Bolognese palazzi as the Casa Monti, the Casa Muratori, the Palazzo Aldini, the Palazzo Levi and the Palazzo Albergati, while another volume, 'Libro 82', includes watercolours executed between 1806 and 1808 for the interiors of, among others, the Casa Torri, the Casa Belvederi and the Casa Michelini, all in Bologna. Basoli also included several similar designs for walls and compartmented ceilings in his Compartimenti di camere, published in Bologna in 1827.

The present sheet has been dated to c.1820. Among several comparable works by Antonio Basoli is a large design for a coffered ceiling and walls in the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York and a watercolour of a stage design of an interior, in the Cooper-Hewitt, National Design Museum in New York.

**Exhibitions**

London, Victoria and Albert Museum, *The Age of Neo-classicism*, 1972, no.1564 (lent by John Harris).

**Literature:**

London, Royal Academy and Victoria and Albert Museum, *The Age of Neo-classicism*, exhibition catalogue, 1972, p.728, no.1564 (entry by William Rieder).

**Artist description:**

Much of what we know of the life and work of Antonio Giuseppe Basoli is derived from an autobiographical manuscript, written in 1821 and today in the Accademia di Belle Arti in Bologna. A painter, decorator and scenographer, Basoli is best known for his stage designs and drawings of

architectural interiors; indeed, he described himself as a ‘pittore di decorazioni da teatro, da camera e quadri di tal genere’. He received his early training, between 1786 and 1794, at the Accademia Clementina in Bologna, where he was particularly influenced by the work of the Gandolfis and the Bibiena family. Basoli was active in and around Bologna for his entire career, during the early part of which he worked as a figure painter on a number of decorative projects in collaboration with the theatrical designer Pelagio Palagi. Basoli decorated the Teatro Comunale in 1809 and worked at various palaces in Bologna, including the Palazzo Rosselli del Turco, Palazzo Sanguinetti and Palazzo Hercolani, as well as several villas in the surrounding province. He served as a professor of ornamental design (‘direttore di disegni e ornamenti’) at the Accademia di Belle Arti from 1804 to 1826, and succeeded Antonio Sanquirico as the principal designer at the Teatro alla Scala in Milan. His numerous designs for the stage, including many intended for performances at La Scala, were engraved in two publications; the Raccolta di prospettive serie, rustiche e di paesaggio, published in 1810, and the Collezione di varie scene teatrali, which appeared in 1821. Basoli also produced a number of designs for furniture, lamps and other household objects.