

Design Drawings from High Renaissance Italy

A special display of rarely seen Italian sixteenth-century design drawings from The Courtauld Gallery's extensive drawings collection will coincide with the exhibition ***Love and Marriage in Renaissance Florence: The Courtauld Wedding Chests***, on view from **12 February to 17 May 2009**. These drawings, some of which have never been on public view, have been chosen to explore the range of objects which a Renaissance artist might be called upon to design, such as furniture, household objects and architectural ornaments.

The selection shows the rich variety of sources artists could draw upon to create such functional or decorative objects. Technical drawings for pieces of furniture like *cassoni*



Giulio Romano (c. 1499-1546)
Design for an ornamental tureen
©Samuel Courtauld Trust, Witt Bequest, 1952

will be shown alongside elaborate designs for goldsmiths' work, such as Giulio Romano's exquisite *Design for an ornamental tureen*, abundantly embellished with dolphins, acanthus leaves and other classically-inspired motifs. Another highlight is the lively sketch of a satyr in the form of a herm by Parmigianino. Such statues were placed in gardens and grottos by wealthy Renaissance patrons, for whom satyrs referred to the half-tamed wildness of nature.



Parmigianino Girolamo
Francesco Maria Mazzola
(1503-1540)
A Satyr in the form of a herm
©Samuel Courtauld Trust,
Princes Gate Bequest, 1978

The drawings on display bear witness to the increasing use of classical motifs to enrich household objects and fittings. They also testify to the increasing professionalism of design in the High Renaissance, when the artist who was commissioned to design an object was often a different person from the craftsman who executed the design. This tradition of collaborative design has particular relevance in today's artistic climate, where the line between functional object and work of art has become ever less marked.

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