

# The Frick Collection: Detail Report

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## Pair of Cassoni (One of a Pair)

Italian, Rome

**Date** Third quarter of the 16th century with nineteenth-century alterations, additions and restorations

**Medium** Walnut

**Dimensions** 28 × 65 1/2 × 23 1/4 in. (71.1 × 166.4 × 59.1 cm)

**Credit Line** Henry Clay Frick Bequest

**Accession Number** 1916.5.81

Currently On View

First Floor, Room 13, West Gallery

**Commentary** A cassone, or decorated marriage chest, was considered the most important piece of furniture in fifteenth- and sixteenth-century Italy. Commissioned especially for the occasion, cassoni were decorated with a central coat of arms and often made in pairs. Typically filled with the gifts the bride received from her parents, cassoni featured prominently in wedding festivities, particularly in the public ceremonial procession from the bride's residence to her new home. Often displayed together, the cassoni symbolized the two families' wealth and newly formed bond. These two examples are decorated with carved ornaments illustrating episodes from the life of Apollo, the god of sun and music, as depicted in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. This chest is decorated with two scenes on either side of an unidentified coat of arms. The scene on the left shows the satyr Marsyas challenging Apollo to a contest of music, which he would lose. The story continues on the right with Marsyas being flayed alive for having the arrogance to challenge a god. The pendant (1916.5.80) illustrates Apollo watching the nymph Daphne, who chooses to turn into a tree rather than succumb to the young god's advances. To the right of the coats of arms of the Roberti of Rome, Apollo plays a fiddle-like instrument called a *lira da braccio* among wild animals, including a camel and a lion. Source: Vignon, Charlotte. *The Frick Collection Decorative Arts Handbook*. New York: The Frick Collection/Scala, 2015.

**Collection History** Roberti (?). William Randolph Hearst. Duveen. Frick, 1916. Source: *Furniture in The Frick Collection: Italian and French Renaissance, French 18th and 19th Centuries (Pt. I)*. Volume V. New York: The Frick Collection, 1992.