



10 THINGS YOU MAY WANT TO KNOW ABOUT CASSONI

1: *Cassoni* (*cassone*: singular) is the name given to Italian Renaissance painted chests.

2: In fifteenth-century Italy pairs of *cassoni* were often commissioned at the time of marriage.

3: *Cassoni* were made throughout Italy. However, they were particularly associated with Tuscany and Florence.



Above:
Jacopo del Sellaio and Biagio di Antonio
The Nerli Chest (side view) 1472.

Right:
Jacopo del Sellaio and Biagio di Antonio
The Morelli Chest (front view with lid open) 1472.
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4: Painted chests were sometimes part of the procession which a bride made from her father's house to her new home with her husband and his family. They would contain her trousseau (dowry).

5: *Cassoni* were valuable possessions. They were generally displayed in a man's *camera* (chamber), one of the most important rooms in a house.

6: These chests were decorated with paintings of popular stories. These were drawn from the most familiar literature of the day: including the works of the Italian poets Boccaccio, Petrarch and Dante, the Old Testament, and ancient Greek and Roman history.

7: Paintings of ancient heroes like Scipio – who returned a beautiful female captive to her fiancé - told young husbands how to behave towards their wives. They were to treat them with respect, but the men were to remember that they were ultimately in control.

8: Painted chests often stayed in families for generations. They were not just precious in themselves, but symbolised important marriage alliances.

Top:
The Master of Marradi *The Reconciliation of the Romans and the Sabines* (detail) c. 1480.
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9: Children could take their first lessons from *cassoni*. The pictures on their fronts were close to the ground – a perfect viewing height for children.

10: The Courtauld owns one of the few surviving pairs of wedding chests which can be connected with a particular marriage. These chests were made for the 1472 marriage of Lorenzo Morelli to Vaggia Nerli. This was a happy and successful match. Their son Leonardo inherited the wedding chests from his father and also used them to decorate his chamber.



LOVE AND MARRIAGE IN
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