

Jacopo della Nave or Jacques Androuet Du Cerceau?

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A GROUP OF SEVEN ETCHINGS in the Réserve of the Cabinet des Estampes in the Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris, has for many years been attributed to Jacopo della Nave, and was published by Arthur M. Hind in his *Early Italian Engraving* as by an anonymous engraver of the sixteenth century.¹ It is the purpose of this note to suggest that, instead, the artist in question is the Frenchman Jacques Androuet Du Cerceau.

Jacopo della Nave is an extremely elusive creature; he appears in none of the obvious sources—neither in other museum and library print rooms nor in dictionaries of artists, with the exception of Zani,² who seems to have started the misnomer simply by naming the artist from the monogram on two of the prints, IA with a boat. The name Jacopo della Nave thereafter appears in the catalogue of the Bibliothèque Nationale's Réserve by Courboin,³ and although Hind was doubtful about it, he had nothing else to suggest. He thought that these seven prints were by the same hand as an Italian Virgin and Child (Figure 1). This seems to be an obvious mistake: the Virgin and Child is by one artist, an Italian, and will therefore not be mentioned here again, while the other seven (Figures 2–8) are by an entirely different artist, a Frenchman. If there is any question that this group is by a single artist, details of the cherub heads or of the shields, for instance, link the whole group irrevocably.

It seems highly unlikely that anyone with the name Jacopo (if we are to consider that name for a moment) would abbreviate it by capitalizing the first two letters of his first name only, IA. The more usual abbreviations of Jacopo are Iac. (or Jac.) and Io. (or Jo.), not I A (or J A)—I and J being interchangeable equivalents to all intents and purposes. It seems more probable that instead of being an abbreviation these are initials

and that the A stands for a second name (Figure 9). The della Nave, the name evidently invented by Zani, seems simply to refer to the little boat above the initials. Now a caravelle under sail is part of the coat of arms of the city of Paris.⁴ It was used as a symbol and emblem of Paris from time out of mind, for instance on coins and medals of the thirteenth century. In the temporary

1. Arthur M. Hind, *Early Italian Engraving* (London, 1948) Pt. II, Vol. V, p. 300, no. 29. A recent printed mention of Jacopo della Nave is that made by Jacques Thirion in "Les rapports entre la gravure internationale et le mobilier civil français de la renaissance," *Paris, École du Louvre, Positions des thèses* (Paris, 1959) p. 67, where he is listed with Androuet Du Cerceau and Vredeman de Vries as a designer of furniture styles.

2. Pietro Zani, *Enciclopedia Metodica Criticoragionata delle b. Arti*, second edition (Parma, 1817–1824).

3. Bibliothèque Nationale, Département des Estampes, *Catalogue Sommaire des Gravures et Lithographies Composant la Réserve*. Rédigé par François Courboin (Paris, 1900–1901). Vol. II, pp. 200–201, nos. 8804–8811.

4. Gilles Corrozet, *Les Antiquitez Croniques et Singularitez de Paris* (Paris, 1586) page ā v recto:

Le Blason des Armes de la Ville de Paris

Le chef d'azur de fleur de Lis semé
Monstre Paris estre ville Royale,
La Nef d'argent sur vn champ enflâmé
Note qu'elle est des autres capitale:
Le Roy est chef, & elle est principale,
Soubs tel patron pour faire & decider
Ce qui luy plaist, iustement commander
Donc au moyen de si haute puissance
Toutes luy font entiere obeysance,
Comme a leur dame, entédant la pratique
De gouverner, en ce pays de France.
La belle Nef d'vne grand Republique.

PLVS QVE MOINS

Complete documentation is to be found, of course, in *Histoire Générale de Paris, Les Armoiries de la Ville de Paris* . . . ouvrage commencé par feu le comte A. de Coëtlogon, refondu et complété par L. M. Tisserand (Paris, 1874).

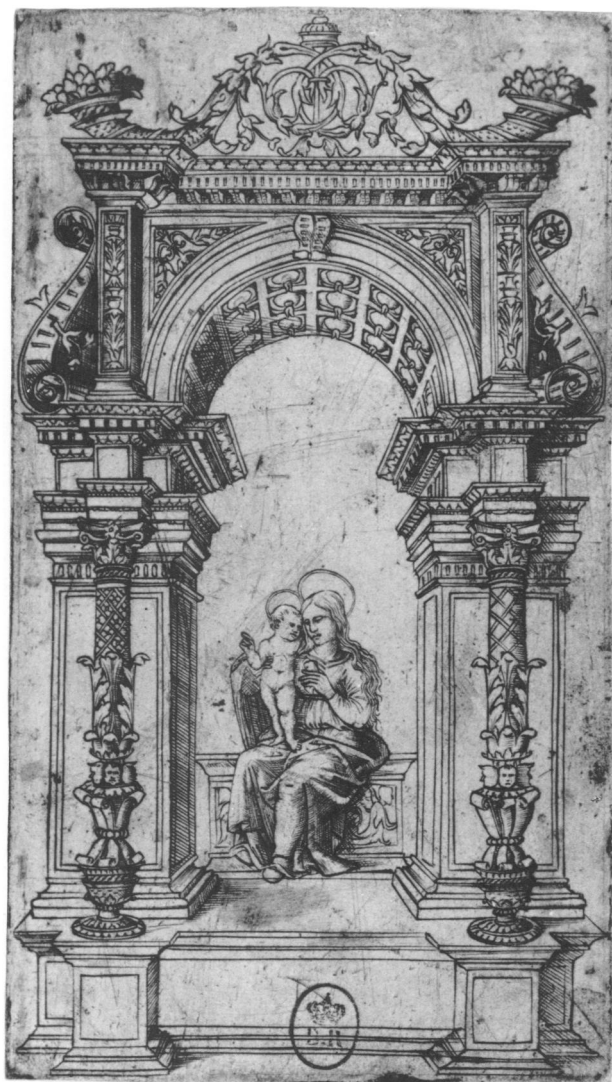


FIGURE 1
Virgin and Child enthroned beneath an arch, by an unknown Italian engraver, sixteenth century. Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, Département des Estampes, Réserve. Courboin 8804

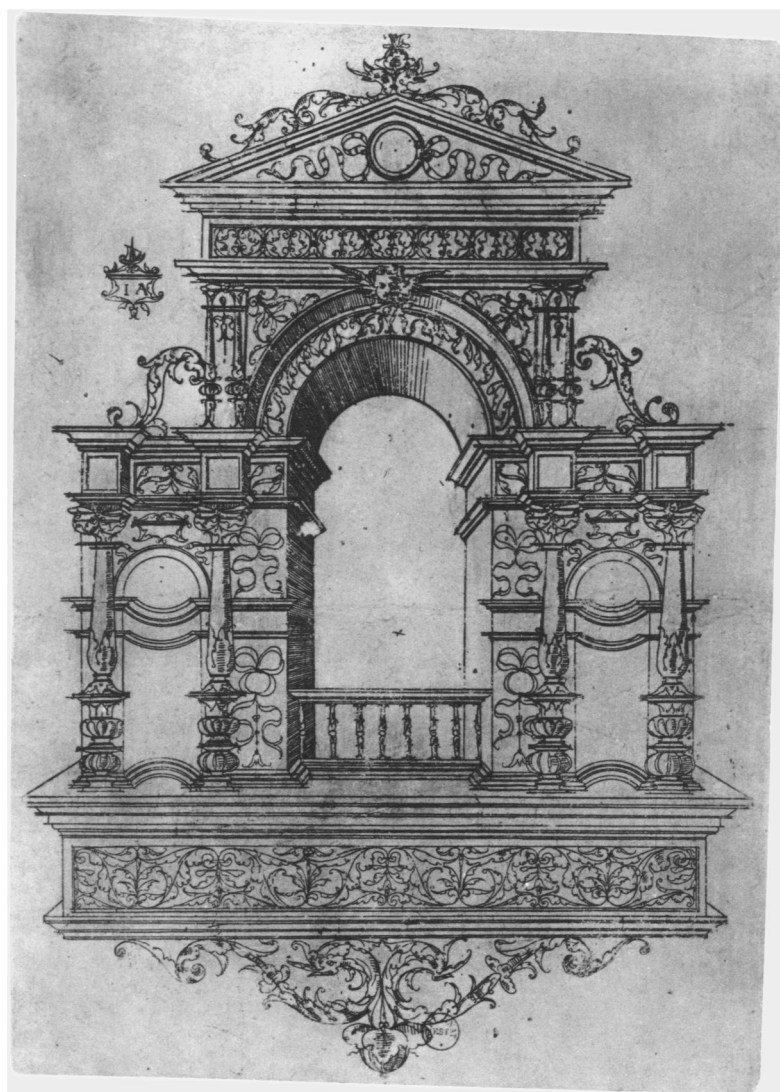


FIGURE 2
Design for a piece of church furniture. Signed IA with boat. This etching, Courboin 8806, and the six following (Figures 3–8) are in the Bibliothèque Nationale, Département des Estampes, Réserve

arches of triumph and on floats constructed for sixteenth-century triumphal entries and other festivals shown and described in sixteenth-century books, a boat appears in various guises, symbolizing Paris and the Ship of State. The Parisian publishing firm Compagnie de la Grand' Navire, a joint venture of at least four well-known Parisian printers, used a device between

1585 and 1641 (?) of a heavily armed man-of-war bristling with cannon, her sails sewn with fleurs-de-lys, bearing the arms of France. The ship is labeled LUTETIA, the name for Paris used by Julius Caesar.⁵ Thus it would seem that Master IA may have come from Paris.

5. Ph. Renouard, *Les Marques Typographiques Parisiennes des XV^e. et XVI^e. Siècles* (Paris, 1926) pp. 260–262, nos. 822–825.

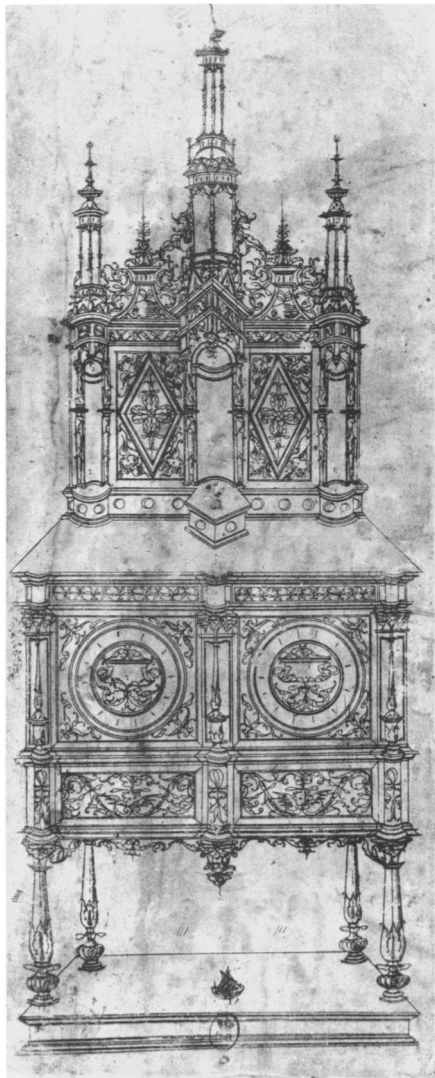


FIGURE 3
Design for a credence. Signed IA with boat.
Courboin 8805

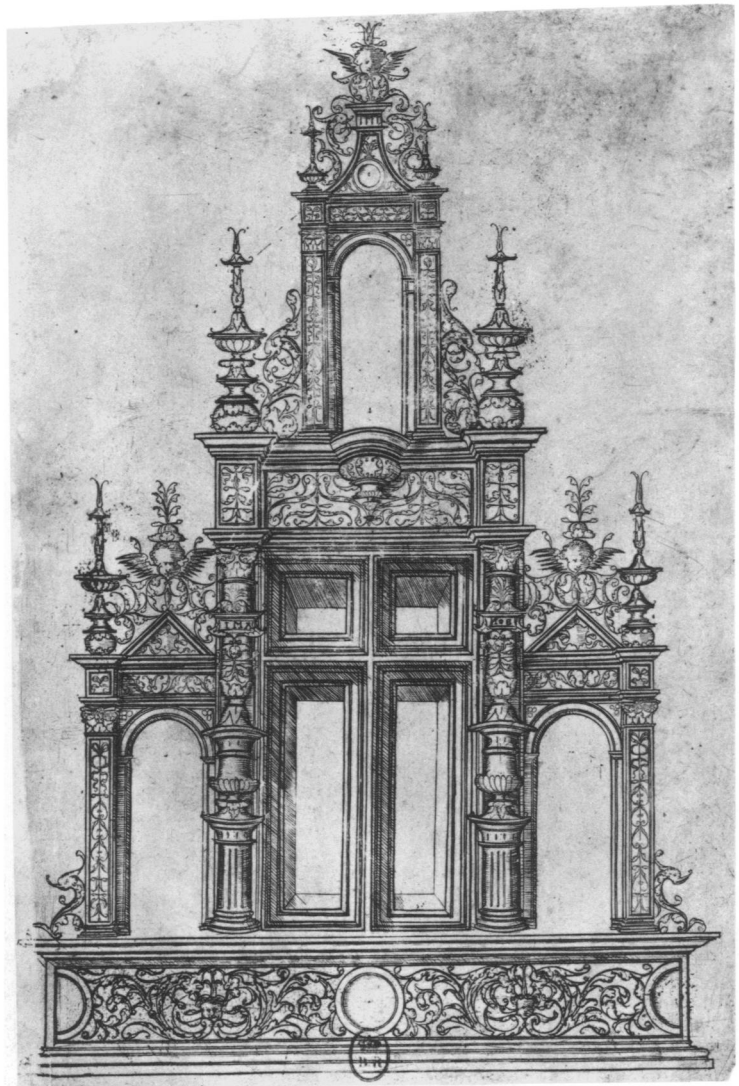


FIGURE 4
Design for a lucarne. Inscribed IMA and NOA.
Courboin 8808

Another piece of evidence for helping us determine the nationality of these prints is hidden in the decoration of the columns flanking the lucarne (Figure 4). At the left one finds the letters IMA, and at the right NOA. When taken together and reversed with a mirror to restore the reversal inherent in the printing of an etching, these read BON AMI,⁶ implying that the artist was French, not Italian. As Hind points out, there is little reason to force BON AMI into meaning “from Bologna”

6. My colleague Helmut Nickel observes that although the

BON AMI was not reversed so that it would be correct for the viewer, the monogram (Figure 9) was reversed: the right-hand stroke of the A is visibly wider and stronger, as it should be in Roman letters. If the I A had not been reversed, the artist's name would be A— I—, thus rendering this whole discussion pointless. Whether or not the boat has been reversed is open to question, since the boat in the coat of arms of Paris has been found sailing left, right, and center in spite of what may be heraldically correct. A search through the illustrations of Tisserand's *Armoiries de la Ville de Paris* shows such a variety of directions that one must conclude that variations occur legitimately, perhaps with special significance but also perhaps because a good many artists and craftsmen are not heraldry experts.

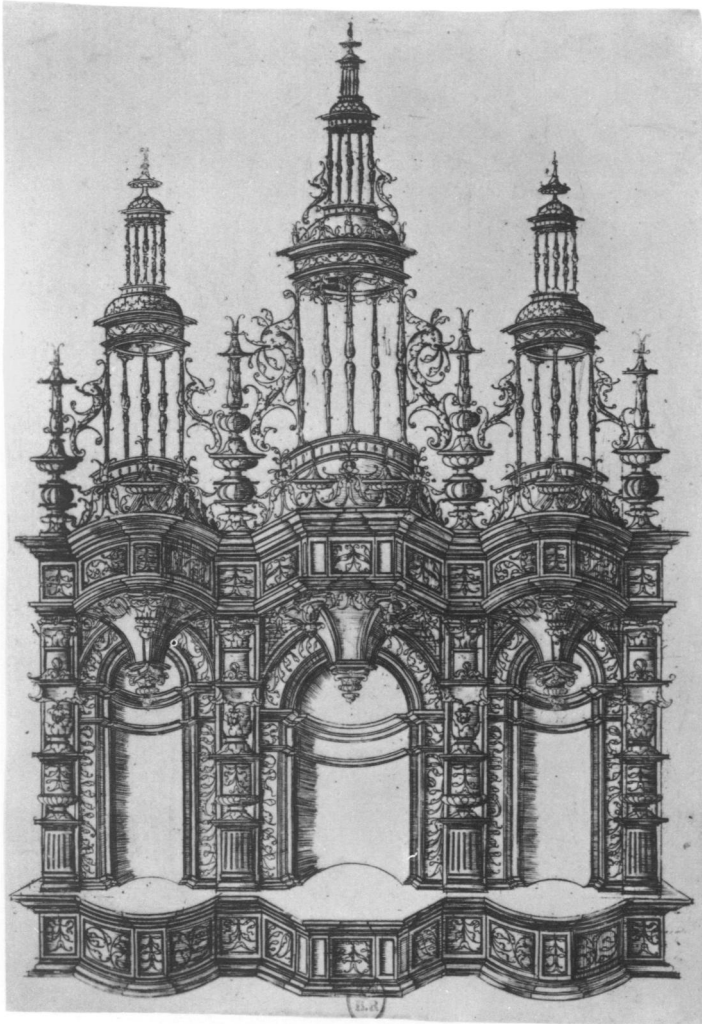


FIGURE 5
Design for three niches capped by tabernacles.
Courboin 8807

(the Bon then being an abbreviation of the Latin word Bononiensis) when as two French words they make a perfectly good device or emblematic motto, and even, perhaps, a dedication to a patron.⁷

That the Parisian Master IA could be Jacques Androuet Du Cerceau can be considered possible when it is remembered that Androuet was the family name

7. An untenable but interesting speculation about the use of BONAMI and its possible association with Georges d'Armagnac, from the region of Albi, is that there is some connection with the Albigensian use of *Bon* in names as an identification—Bonshomes, Bon, Bonamour, Bonfoy, Le Bon—a use that persisted into

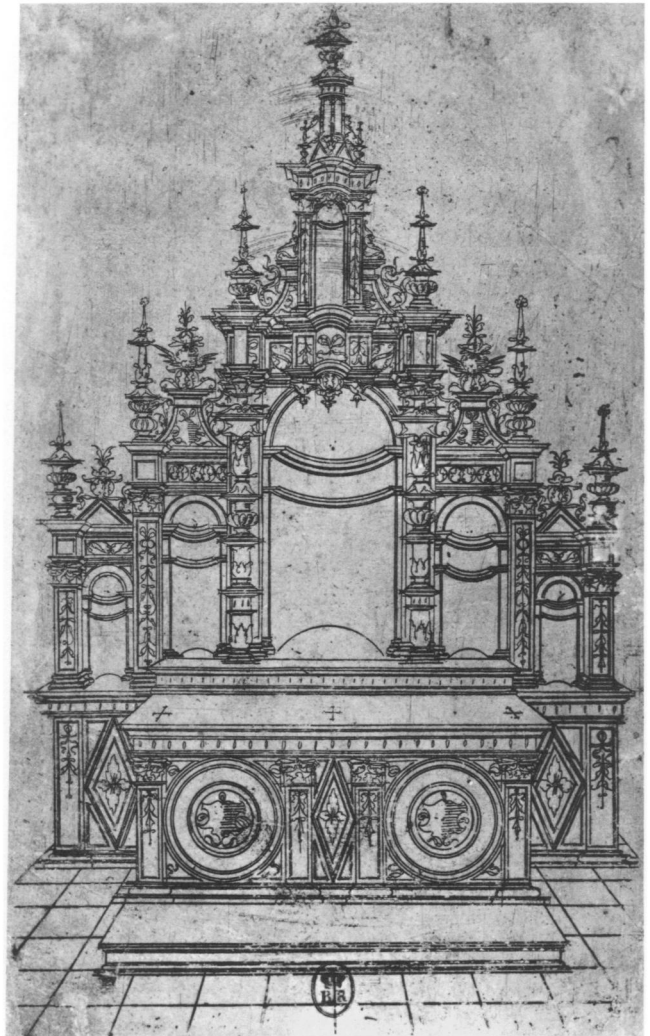


FIGURE 6
Design for an altar. Courboin 8809

and that Du Cerceau was really an address, derived from the family shop sign (At the Sign of the Hoop, or Circle).⁸ As a name for the Androuet family Du Cerceau must have been gradually arrived at with usage. To determine the moment when the Androuets became the Du Cerceaux is probably not possible, but it seems safe to assume that until Jacques Androuet went

the eighteenth century in spite of the suppression of the Albigenses in the thirteenth century. See Harold Bayley, *A New Light on the Renaissance Displayed in Contemporary Emblems* (London, 1909) pp. 11–13.

8. Henry De Geymüller, *Les Du Cerceau* (Paris, 1887) p. 3.

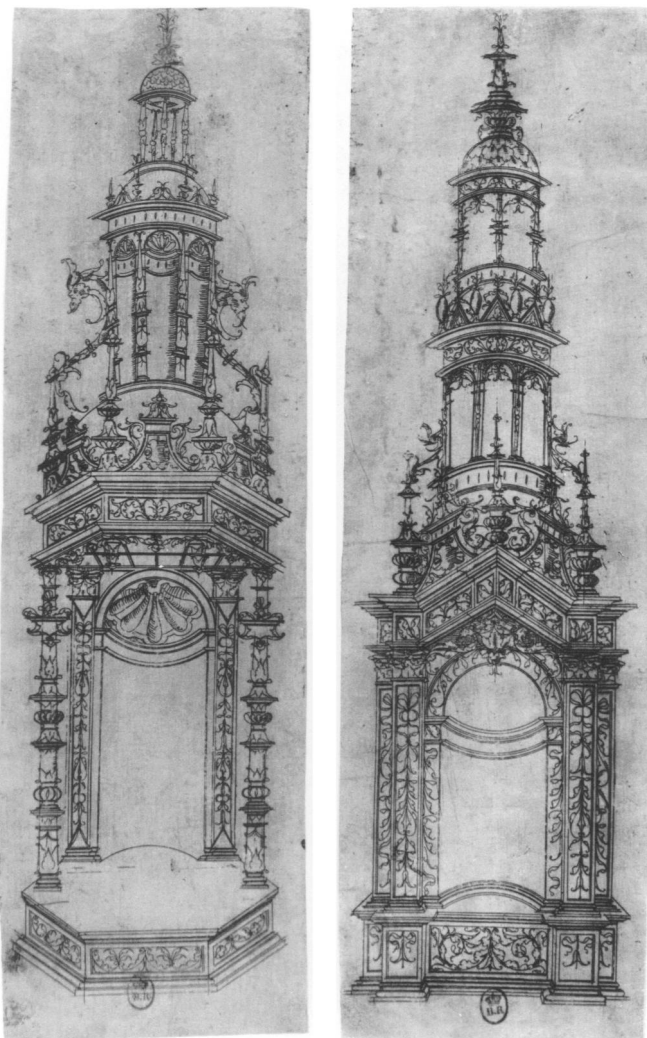


FIGURE 7
Design for a tabernacle with a niche. Courboin 8810

FIGURE 8
Design for a tabernacle with a niche. Courboin 8811



FIGURE 9
Monogram on Courboin 8806 (Figure 2)

back to France from Italy and had a shop or a house where he could hang his sign, he was simply Jacques Androuet. He is thought to have returned to Paris in 1549 from his second trip to Italy, and although many of the dates in Du Cerceau's life are in question, it is known that he was in Italy with his patron, the ambassador to Venice and Rome, Cardinal Georges d'Armagnac. It is worth noting that the group of prints by Master IA with the boat are all of either ecclesiastical or architectural subjects.

As for the signature of Jacques Androuet Du Cerceau (and by signature I mean the name, the mark, the monogram, or the initials in the copper plate), it almost never occurs. Out of hundreds of plates, on only three separate plates does the name appear, and it is

written out in full: either in Latin, *Jacobvs Androuetivs DvCerceav*, or in French, *Jacques Androuet duCerceau*. Although the plates are not signed, they were often published in sets or books, with a title page (either type-set or etched on a plate) with the name printed out. More often than not it appears with the Jacques Androuet clearly separated from the Du Cerceau either by comma or by being on another line, implying that the important part of the name was Androuet, although there is no instance in which the Androuet appears without the Du Cerceau. In the case of the set of small grotesques of 1562,⁹ his initials appear as IADC with all four letters given equal importance. Of the seven prints we are investigating here only two, as noted at the outset, are signed. If the group once had a title page, if it once formed a set of ecclesiastical furniture and architecture designs like other sets by Du Cerceau, no such set is known today. Indeed, the Bibliothèque Nationale's seven prints are the only impressions known, although others may be hiding under various names or attributions.

To consider the prints themselves, a glance at the designs makes it certain in my mind that they were not designed by an Italian but by somebody whose memory of northern Gothic is still strong enough to make him draw a piece of furniture like the credence (Figure 3).

9. *Lectori en nostrvm tibi denvo prodit opvs de lvdicro pictvrae genere . . . grotescam vvlgo dicvnt . . . Lvtetiae Anno Domini 1562 IADC.* (Geymüller, *Les Du Cerceau*, p. 316.)

Even if the printmaker was not the designer, there is still no reason to think him Italian, since the date suggested for the prints by Zani and accepted by Hind, about 1525, would mean that all but one, the “meuble d’église” (Figure 2), represented with non-Italian taste objects in a style so out of date that it would have been considered old-fashioned in Italy long before 1525. The credence, as well as the altar, appears to be a Gothic piece until the ornamental detail is studied, and then its Renaissance character is apparent; it must come from a transitional period. It is well known that the transition from Gothic to Renaissance occurred later in France than in Italy, and that it went on into the sixteenth century. It does not seem contradictory to assume that Jacques Androuet Du Cerceau could have made such a group of prints as a young man working in Italy, his eye filled with ravishing Italian Renaissance ornamental details like dolphins, cherub heads, ribbons, and tablets, yet with a vivid memory of Gothic forms. The two signed prints show the designer thinking in terms of northern (if not specifically French) Gothic furniture at the same time he thinks of Roman triumphal arches. He uses the same columns, rather like candlesticks, on both, and although they are bearable when applied to the triumphal arch, they do very badly as legs for the cabinet. Nor did he understand the use of his triumphal arch design: although the form and the niches indicate an applied wall tablet or tabernacle, he has pierced the center with a barrel vault and then blocked the passage with a balustrade in the middle of the resulting floorspace. This kind of muddle cannot be explained by saying that the designer wanted the object to appeal to a variety of craftsmen and was ambiguous on purpose. Rather, the designer was inexpert and probably young, and this last adjective applies as well to the overabundance of surface ornament. These designs are filled with the sort of penmanship flourishes that an older designer omits because he knows they cannot be carried out; in any case the older man hasn’t the time to do more than suggest possibilities for the

carvers, goldsmiths, cabinetmakers, architects, and sculptors who actually make the objects.

Finally, a comparison of the prints by Master IA with several that, although unsigned, have always been thought to be by Jacques Androuet Du Cerceau in his youth (Figures 10–12) leads me to the conclusion that Jacopo della Nave does not exist, and that Master IA with the boat is indeed Jacques Androuet Du Cerceau as a young man, probably in Italy, signing himself as a Parisian by using a well-known emblem of Paris. Furthermore, it may well be that the BON AMI is a device that refers to Cardinal d’Armagnac.

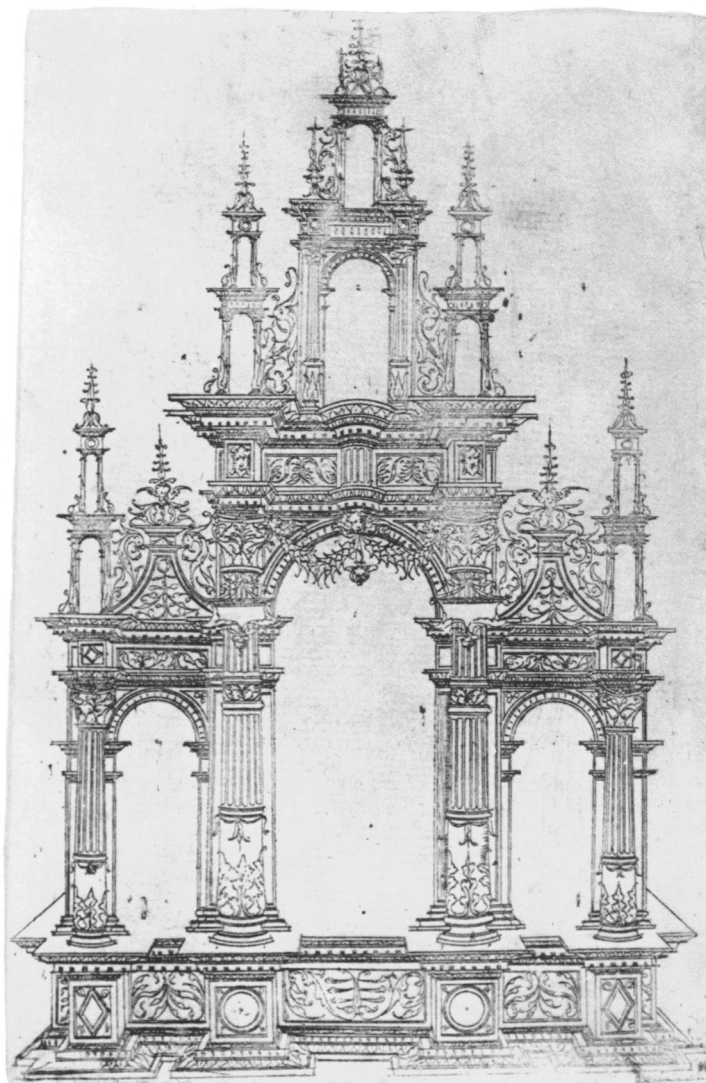


FIGURE 10

Design for a retable, etching by Jacques Androuet Du Cerceau. Inventaire 4692, Collection Edmond de Rothschild, Musée du Louvre (photo: Musées Nationaux)

FIGURES 11, 12

Designs for mirror frames, etchings by Jacques Androuet Du Cerceau. Inv. X.1480.71, X.1480.83, Kupferstichkabinett der Öffentlichen Kunstsammlung, Basel

