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FRAGMENT OF AN INDIAN CARPET

MUGHAL PERIOD. SECOND HALF XVI CENTURY

PURCHASED FROM THE EDSEL B. FORD FUND

A FRAGMENT OF A RARE INDIAN CARPET

Through the generosity of Mr. and Mrs. Edsel B. Ford, the Near Eastern Department of the Institute has come into the possession of a fragment of a remarkable Indian carpet of the late sixteenth century. It is interesting, not alone as an extraordinarily rare specimen of the carpet-knotting art of Mohammedan India, but also on account of its ornamental motive. This affords a convincing proof of how the non-Islamic native Indian art spirit could influence in a short space of time, along with the other branches of the minor arts, the art of carpet knotting, which was introduced into the country considerably later.

The fragment measures six feet by six feet and four inches and is well preserved. Upon a wine-red ground, characteristic of the Indian carpets, are strewn about in unusual, grotesque composition different kinds of and differently colored (dark blue, light blue, yellow, white, red, and green) animal and bird heads, in loose relation to one another. They are connected only in that they are devouring each other, or by forming, in inorganic combinations, remarkably decorative groups. Above, out of the head of a monster (only the half of which is here preserved), grow on either side symmetrically arranged lion heads, out of whose mouths spring out, here an ibex, there a parrot. Two other confronted animal heads with long necks complete the group, which is enclosed by a row of other animals forming a half circle, also very symmetrical. There are turtles, springing leopards and oxen heads swallowing geese. As is to be assumed from the second fragment in the Boston Museum (Fig. 1), these two cleverly composed groups are repeated, mirror-like, in the same arrangement, very probably in the form of a round medallion in the center of the carpet. The remaining surface of the inner field is taken by small, not always symmetrical groups consisting of elephant, camel, rhinoceros and other animal heads whose species is difficult to determine, and who devour in wild tumult foxes, rabbits and birds. Here and there between these are found delicate vases of flowers, flower stalks and individual leaves.

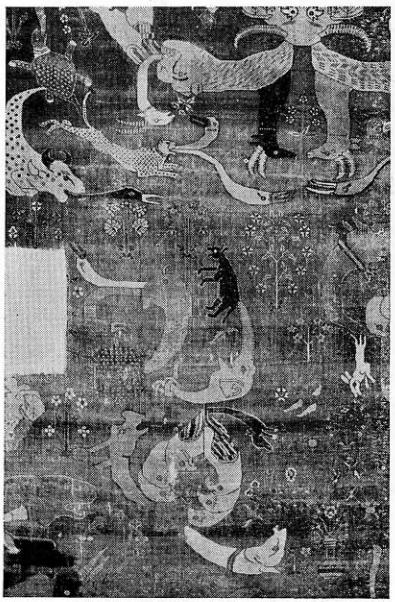

FIG. 1

To the question of how large the carpet may have been and what kind of a border enframed it, no satisfactory answer can be found until further pieces belonging to it are discovered. Just as difficult is its position in the series which make up the historical development of Indian carpets as they are known to us, for "as though originating out of the imagination of a Hell-Brueghel,"[1] its animal ornamentation has no parallel in the entire carpet weaving art of the Orient. An incorrect attempt has been

[1]Fr. Sarre, *Meisterwerke muhammedanischer Kunst*, pl. I, p. VI.

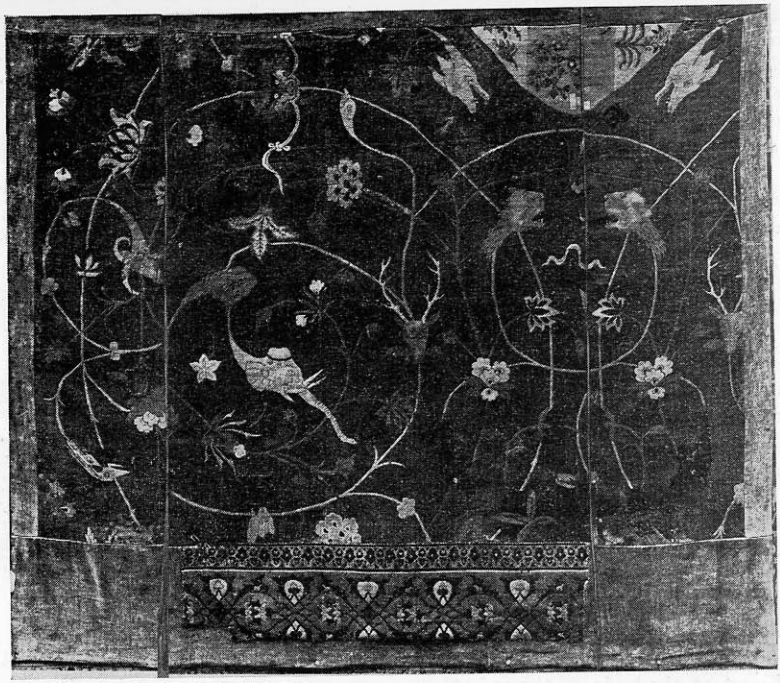

FIG. 2

made to connect it with the decoration of the Indian carpet fragment of the Musée des Arts Decoratifs in Paris (Fig. 2), whose center field is filled with so-called "grotesque" scroll work. This scroll work, with man and animal heads growing from it, was, as is well-known, spread out over the entire Islamic art world of the Middle Ages and goes back to the old Oriental conception of the talking tree of Wak-Wak, having fruits of human and animal heads,[2] which can have nothing to do with the decoration of our fragment.

The art of carpet knotting was introduced into India after the founding of the Mughal Empire in the sixteenth century, and was carried on exclusively in larger or smaller factories, never becoming a folk art as in Turkestan, Persia and Turkey. The first state carpet manufactory, according to the report of a contemporary historian,[3] was established by the Emperor Akbar (1556-1605) in the second half of the sixteenth century, in his capital city of Lahore, and the activity of this institution, where hundreds of selected craftsmen from Turkestan and Persia found employment, was probably decisive in the entire stylistic development of Indian carpets. Without doubt this carpet manufactory also stood in the closest relationship to the court school of miniature painting, from which it received the cartoons, so to speak, for the carpets. Only in this way can be explained, for example, the origin of the landscape carpet, which goes back to Persian models. We know, further, that in these

[2]F. R. Martin, *The Miniature Painting, etc.*, Vol. I, fig. 10; Sir T. W. Arnold, *Painting in Islam*, pls. XXVII and XXVIII.

[3]Abu'l Fadl, *Ain-i-Akbari*, Calcutta, 1873-1894.

miniature schools there were active, besides the foreign artists, a large number of native Hindu painters, to whom is chiefly due the working out of a peculiarly Indian style of painting. They introduced not only the Indian art feeling of the hereditary painting tradition, but also several native decorative elements which, on their side, could not have remained strange to the art of carpet weaving.[4]

One of the most popular motives of Indian Mughal painting of the sixteenth and following centuries, is the representation of magic animals of different kinds, whose bodies are made up of innumerable men and animals, and, particularly, of parts of the bodies of animals.[5] Upon one such miniature in the Kaiser Friedrich Museum with the representation of a camel,[6] one can see how the legs are formed out of different animal heads biting each other as in our fragment, with the difference that they are strewn over the carpet without connection, while in the miniature they form part of the body of the animal by means of clever composition. The idea which lies hidden behind such a grotesque motive must doubtlessly have a common mythological origin, into which we are not able to go within the confines of a bulletin article, but which will be treated in another place.

Besides our fragment there are known at the present time only two others. One of these was formerly in the collection of Jueniette and is now in the Louvre in Paris. It is considerably smaller than the Detroit one and consists of two parts put together (Fig. 3). The second, not yet published, is in the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston (Fig. 1).[7] Our fragment was first in the collection of Dr. Roden in Frankfort on the Main, later coming into the possession of Octave Homberg in Paris, from whom it was acquired for Detroit. It was exhibited, together with the Paris piece, in the Exhibition of Masterpieces of Mohammedan Art in Munich in 1910, and was published and reproduced for the first time by Dr. F. R. Martin in *A History of Oriental Carpets* (Vienna, 1908), Fig. 192; later by F. Sarre and F. R. Martin in *Meisterwerke Muhammedanischer Kunst* (Munich, 1912), p. VI, Pl. 84; in the official catalogue of the exhibition, p. 35, No. 180; by W. von Bode and E. Kühnel, *Vorderasiatische Knüpfteppiche aus älterer Zeit* (Leipsig, 1922), p. 29, Fig. 49; and in the sale catalogue of the collection of Oc-

FIG. 3

[4]Compare in this connection the motive of the winged lion with elephant head, carrying elephants in its claws, upon the celebrated Boston carpet, with the miniatures in A. K. Coomaraswamy's *Catalogue of the Indian Collection,* VI, Mughal Painting, p. 96, pl. LXXIII; also the leopard upon the carriage of the same carpet with the similar figure in a miniature published by F. R. Martin, Vol. II, pl. 179.

[5]E. Blochet, *Les enluminures des Manuscrits,* etc., Paris 1926, pl. CXIV.

[6]E. Kühnel, *Miniaturmalerei,* etc., fig. 106.

[7]I am greatly indebted to Dr. Ananda K. Coomaraswamy for the photograph and the permission to publish this fragment.

tave Homberg (Paris, 1931), p. 59, Pl. LIV. It is mentioned by G. Migeon, *Manuel d'art Musulman* (Paris, 1927), Vol. II, p. 385; by R. Koechlin and G. Migeon, *Cent planches en couleurs d'art Musulman* (Paris), description of plate XCIX.

MEHMET AGA-OGLU.

PORTRAIT OF AN OLD MAN BY DOMENICO GHIRLANDAIO

Until the recent gift from the Detroit Museum of Art Founders Society of a fresco portrait by Ghirlandaio, portraiture had not as yet been represented in the Institute's Early Renaissance gallery, although it is this branch of art which gives to this epoch one of its titles to fame. In the Middle Ages the isolated portrait was not known. It was a new creation of the individualistic spirit of the age of humanism. From the fifteenth century to our own day, portrait painting has developed with increasing realism, to be finally replaced by the photograph. In intensity and vivacity of expression, the portrait art of the fifteenth century has not been surpassed, a usual phenomenon in a new field, where the pleasure in discovery is wont to accelerate the power of embodiment to its highest pitch.

At the same time as in Italy, the portrait was finding the height of its development in the Netherlands also. As was natural, the artists of these so widely separated territories, after having unfolded their art independently for a time, became interested in related endeavours and were influenced the one by the other. Some of the Netherlandish masters journeyed to Italy and allowed the broad forms of Italian painting to have their effect upon them; on the other hand, the searching, realistic style of the Netherlandish masters aroused the greatest admiration on the part of the Italian artists. In Italy, Florence stood at the head of the art of portraiture, from Masaccio to Ghirlandaio. Domenico Ghirlandaio, who terminates the century, is famed first of all for his portrait painting, and was among those artists who were the greatest admirers of the realistic portrait art of the Netherlands, as is proved by the imitation, in his *Adoration of the Child* in the Academy in Florence, of the heads from the Portinari Altar of Hugo van der Goes, formerly in Santa Maria Nuova. His portraits no longer have the primitive strength of a Masaccio or Uccello, nor the sensitive, refined expression of a Botticelli, but form rather a sort of synthesis of the various tendencies of the preceding period, with which must be included the influence of the Netherlands, a synthesis resulting in a more popular conception at the end of a century of great performances. Indeed, even in his own day Domenico Ghirlandaio was among the most admired painters of Florence, as we learn from Vasari, who calls him "the greatest delight of the period," and deplores his untimely death as a misfortune which had befallen the entire city. And still today he is more easily understood and more popular than, for instance, his greater contemporary, Botticelli; his frescoes in Santa Maria Novella or his individual portraits, like those of Giovanna Tornabuoni in the collection of J. Pierpont Morgan, are among the most popular creations of the Renaissance.

The Founders Society's gift is, therefore, a most welcome one, for by it we have come into the possession of a portrait by this widely recognized master of the portrait art of Florence. It is a portrait which has only recently come to light from English private possession (the collection of Lord Grimthorpe),

PORTRAIT OF AN OLD MAN
DOMENICO GHIRLANDAIO
FLORENCE, 1449-1494
GIFT OF THE DETROIT MUSEUM OF ART
FOUNDERS SOCIETY

and was published for the first time by Dr. Alfred Scharf in *Cicerone,* 1930, p. 591. It is not, to be sure, one of those enchanting portraits of young women, nor has it the brilliance of color of most of the easel pictures of the master; but it is a typical, expressive portrait of a representative of the Florentine bourgeoisie, who, in his heavy features, in the energetic expression of his mouth and chin, and the penetrating glance of his heavily-lidded eyes, is excellently characterized. With what mastery are the soft, flowing outlines adapted to the rotund forms of the heavy-set figure with its phlegmatic walk, as we believe we are able to reconstruct it from the lines of the face. That it is a fresco instead of an easel picture appears to us to be rather an advantage. For Ghir-

landaio was above everything else a fresco painter. In the rapid execution which the technique of fresco painting entails, the certainty of his drawing, the simplified style of his composition, his sense for flat decoration are given their best expression, and the hard, harsh colors, which are frequently disturbing in his easel pictures, become, through the admixture of the plaster of the wall painting, agreeably tempered. In our picture, also, these advantages of fresco painting assert themselves. The warm red-brown tones of the face, in which the high lights, notably in the hair and the beard, are heightened with white, with the black costume and cap, stand out before the lilac-gray background in a pleasingly softened color harmony. Although it is executed in *fresco secco*—a technique which does not demand the completion of the painting while the plaster is still wet—it nevertheless shows the breadth of style to which the master had accustomed himself in fresco work and which differs so materially from the easel pictures of the day, which were worked out in minutest detail, so that often the individuality of the painter is lost sight of in the meticulous craftsmanship. Plainly visible is each brush stroke with which the forms are marked out with sure hand and in masterly fashion. With great cleverness is the form modeled plastically through deep shadows, in which the background is kept dark at the left, so that the planes of the face are brought into clear relief, while upon the right side it is lighted up, so that the head stands out dark against it. In contrast to the simplicity with which the main forms are rendered is the realistic treatment of the stubble of the beard and the veins of the forehead.

The portrait does not appear to be a fragment; it is painted upon a single brick, and shows a broad, reddish streak at its outer edge, which circumscribes the composition. It is altogether possible that the artist, for reasons of comfort for the model or for himself, executed the portrait in his atelier and subsequently had it walled into the church or private chapel of the donor. Because of its being assigned to the earlier period of the artist, when he executed the frescoes in San Gimignano, with whose donor portraits it accords well, it belongs to the period in which he worked most freely and most originally. For the farther we advance into Ghirlandaio's development, the drier and more academic becomes his style.

W. R. Valentiner.

A PAINTING BY BERNARD KARFIOL

When in 1930 the Museum of Modern Art singled out nineteen living Americans for exhibition, Bernard Karfiol was among the number, and his representation in that exhibit was universally acclaimed by the critics. In the same year he was selected a member of the jury of the Carnegie International Exhibition. These facts are of consequence only in showing with what regard this American artist is held among those who closely scrutinize and weigh the merits of our native painters. They do not exactly evidence his arrival, for since his "one man" exhibition at the Brummer Galleries in New York in 1925, and again in 1927, he has taken his place among the foremost painters of this country in the estimation of artist and connoisseur; these official honors may rather be regarded as the opening of the doors of public appreciation which always follows slowly in the recognition of the creative artist.

Bernard Karfiol has not arrived at his present eminence in American art in meteoric fashion. He has achieved his reputation after plodding for years

BABETTE
BERNARD KARFIOL
PURCHASED FROM THE EDSEL B. FORD FUND

along the solitary pathway the individualist must travel. The late Hamilton Easter Field first directed critical attention to the works of this artist, but his real debut was made only in 1925 when at the age of forty he had his first significant showing. His art made its first public appearance in full maturity; the landscape and figure subjects that comprised that exhibition revealed a personal style and an adequate technique that is hardly bettered by his subsequent efforts. His later works show a more roseate palette without a lessening of strength or sensitiveness of form, and without disturbing the tranquillity of his simple and unified compositions; and it is to be hoped that this fleeting thing called "fame," with its accompaniment of commercial demands, will lead him to no compromises which would diminish his vision or the ardour of his self-expression.

Karfiol's first important award came in 1927 when, at the hands of an international jury, his "Two Figures" was given an Honorable Mention at the Carnegie Institute at Pittsburgh. This picture explains the art of Karfiol as well as any of his works. It is a classic idea

translated into Twentieth Century idiom —a composition showing the contrasting draped and undraped figure as Titian shows it in his *Sacred and Profane Love.*

In 1928, Karfiol received the First William A. Clark Prize and the Corcoran Gold Medal at the Exhibition of Contemporary American Oil Paintings in Washington, for his picture, "Summer." This picture is not so remote, for it deals with present-day people seated about a table, with the Maine Coast discernible as a background. In its approach, however, it is not unlike Greek art come to life. It is simple and impersonal and the fine relationship between the part and the whole, and the elimination of all non-essentials gives a strange poignancy to the conception. From a study of Karfiol's pictures one may infer that he has been taught as much by the great art of the museums as by the academies at which he may have enrolled. He is not an eclectic in the sense that he absorbs the material methods of the art of the past, but one does sense that he has assimilated its classic spirit.

From our recent Exhibition of American Art, Bernard Karfiol's painting, "Babette," was acquired for the permanent collection through the Edsel B. Ford Fund. It is a simple composition showing a statuesque young woman, nude to the waist, against a florid background. By the use of the cooler tones of the flesh against the roseate background, the artist secures a brilliant color effect, and the vitality of the young woman, the living quality of the flesh and the profound understanding and appreciation of form are a remarkable achievement.

A few other museums, notably the Phillips Memorial Gallery and the Corcoran Gallery of Art at Washington, and the Newark Museum, have also recognized the importance of this American painter by acquiring examples of his work for their permanent collections.

CLYDE H. BURROUGHS.

BROCADES OF THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

Several panels of brocade have been added lately to the textile department and are exhibited in the wall-cases.

Quite by itself stands a panel by Philippe de Lassalle, "The Partridges," here woven on a basket-weave ground of old rose (Fig. 1). A large wreath of summer flowers is loosely tied with a white ribbon to a sheaf of golden wheat, which forms a frame for a little idyllic scene, three partridges looking out from among poppies and cornflowers. The exquisite modeling of the birds, the softness of the plumage, which seems to invite the caress of a stroking hand, the bold color contrasts well illustrate the art of that prince of textile designers.

Philippe de Lassalle was born in 1723 and died in 1803; he studied painting with Sarabhat, Bachelier and Boucher, became a partner of the silk house of Pernon at Lyons, was knighted by Louis XVI and ruined by the French Revolution. He was equally great as designer and as weaver, as artist and as craftsman; the last fifteen years of his life he spent in poverty and retirement, inventing mechanical improvements for the brocading loom, working painstakingly in a room which the municipality of Lyons let him use, where he died. Today he is acclaimed as the greatest son of that city. Philippe de Lassalle brought the art of silk weaving to its highest pinnacle. His incomparable plastic effects he obtained by using three tones of every color, dark, light and medium, with strong accents of deepest black. He used only silk, never gold or silver thread; in his hand the brocade

FIG. 1

shuttle wound with chenille gives unexpected touches as of velvet. His most highly spirited work belongs to the latter years of Louis XV (d. 1774); compositions called "au panier fleuri," "au faisan," "aux perdrix," are triumphs of Rococo art. For Marie Antoinette's bedroom at Fontainebleau he created a composition of flowers, birds and musical instruments of exquisite grace and opulent splendor; for Catherine the Great, probably after the treaty of Kuchuk-Kainarji in 1774, hangings with the Russian eagle holding an olive branch in his talons over a war trophy with Turkish banners. Our own panel with the partridges formed originally part of the wall decoration in one of the bedrooms of Catherine's summer palace near St. Petersburg.

Philippe de Lassalle stands by himself. His contemporaries were unable to learn his lesson; they wove delightful small patterns, often inspired by the East India Company's oriental importations of ceramics and lacquerworks. Fig. 2 shows a detail of a panel of white taffeta with over-spun patterned stripes. Powdered over the field are small polychrome designs, tiny nosegays, cooing pigeons, dogs, landscapes with men and women, looking for all the world like porcelain paintings rather than textile designs.

Fig. 3 (purchased) and Fig. 4 (gift of Mrs. Willard Barbour) are products of the Spitalsfields looms. Shortly after the revocation of the Edict of Nantes in 1685, a group of French Huguenot refugees had settled at Spitalsfields, then a small town just east of London. Here for over a hundred years the little French colony wove silks, satins and velvets and their products were at times dangerous rivals of the imported Lyons silks. In the nineteenth century, with the introduction of the power loom, this little industrial center lost its importance "until in the middle of the nineteenth century only a small group of weavers remained, who eked out a miserable existence in squalid homes, where

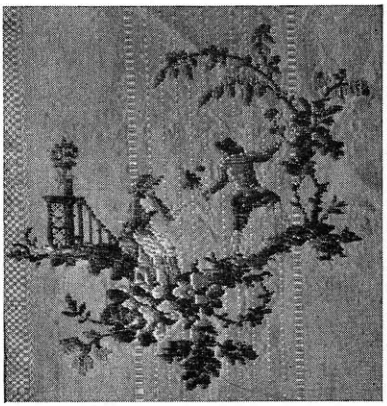

FIG. 2

FIG. 3

by working twelve hours a day they could earn a wage amounting to perhaps a shilling or less" (Frances Morris, *Bulletin of the Metropolitan Museum of Art,* April, 1925). The Spitalsfields silks bore strange-sounding trade names, such as "brocade tabby," "tobine lutstring"; they differ from the contemporary Lyons silks in a greater simplicity of pattern, more restricted color range, with a reddish plum shade obviously much in vogue, and more elaborate over-spun patterns in the ground caused by the wider spacing of the brocaded motives.

An entirely different type of brocade is represented by a group of Polish sashes. In the seventeenth century the Poles adopted a national costume which included rich sashes of silk, gold and silver. Many of these were imported from Persia or were plunder gained in the long wars against the Turks, especially after the great victory of King John III Sobieski at Vienna in 1683. Others were woven in Poland itself, in close imitation of the Persian sashes. Many factories sprang up; the first and most famous was founded at Sluck by Prince M. K. Radziwill and directed by a Pole of Armenian origin, John Madzarski. This factory signed its products with the mark "Sluck" woven into the border, sometimes also with the director's name or initials. The factory at

FIG. 4

Sluck wove sashes up to 1831, until the time when the Russian government forbade the use of the national costume. In 1844 the factory ceased to exist.

In design and technique the sashes woven in Poland are closely related to their Persian prototypes, but, unlike these, which show at both ends a panel with three or more large floral ornaments, display only two large bouquets of flowers, mostly roses and carnations. The specimens in our collection show both types.

ADELE COULIN WEIBEL.

CALENDAR OF LECTURES AND EXHIBITIONS

EXHIBITIONS

October 6-November 15. Sculpture of Carl Milles.

October 10-November 14. Fine Prints from Detroit Collections.

LECTURES

(Tuesday evenings at 8:30)

October 6. "Impressions and Comments," by Carl Milles.

October 13. "The Pleasures of Prints," by Isabel Weadock, Curator of Prints.

October 20. "Folke Filbyter and Viking Art," by Adèle Coulin Weibel, Curator of Textiles.

October 27. "How a Sculptor Works," by Clyde H. Burroughs, Curator of American Art.

(Sunday afternoons at 3:30)

Concerts by the Chamber Music Society of Detroit, followed by lectures by members of the staff.

October 4. "A Dragon from Babylon," by E. P. Richardson, Educational Secretary.

October 11. "The Queen of Heaven," by Marion Leland, Museum Instructor.

October 18. "Detroit-owned Masterpieces," by Florence Davies, Art Editor of *The Detroit News*.

October 25. "Egyptian Gods," by E. P. Richardson, Educational Secretary.

(Saturday afternoons at 4:00)

"ART AND CULTURE OF THE MIDDLE AGES," BY ADELE COULIN WEIBEL.

September 26. Introduction: Hellenistic and Roman Art.

October 3. The New Horizon: Christian Rome.

October 10. Ravenna and Alexandria.

October 17. The Christian East: I. Syria and Armenia.

October 24. The Christian East: II. The East-Roman Empire.

October 31. The Sassanian Empire.

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