

# Bulletin of The Detroit Institute of Arts of the City of Detroit

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WOMAN IN AN ARMCHAIR

PABLO PICASSO

LENT BY MR. ROBERT H. TANNAHILL



THE CANOEIST  
ANDRE DUNOYER DE SEGONZAC

## MODERN PAINTINGS LENT BY MR. TANNAHILL

*L'art est une harmonie parallèle  
à la nature—Cezanne*

One of the most difficult of a museum's problems is that of representing contemporary work. There has never been a time when change has been more rapid or more continuous in every department of life than in the two generations between President Grant and President Hoover. In art the evolution of thought has been so swift and complex that it is hard to keep track of even the main tendencies. Yet the public should be able to look to the museum for at least a key to the vast, complicated array of contemporary effort. The Art Institute has been greatly aided in its representation of the most significant currents and personalities of today by a number of important loans from the collection of Mr. Robert H. Tannahill.

These pictures were all painted between 1919 and 1931, following two generations of what is now called modern

art. One of the most important accomplishments of these two generations has been the establishment of painting on a new basis that is not in competition with the camera. Before the development of photography, painting fulfilled three functions: decoration, a record of facts, an expression of ideas. In the 1870's a minute and careful rendering of facts formed the bulk of the activity of painters. This field has been taken over by the camera and factual reporting (such as family portraits, news events, views of foreign lands) is now overwhelmingly in the form of photographs. Painting, however, retaliated by leaving the copying of nature more and more out of its field of effort. The swing away from representation came to its climax about 1912, when Picasso and Braque, the leaders of Cubism, succeeded in eliminating every element of subject matter and made their paintings studies in pure design. Since that time representation has

returned to some extent, but French painting has remained primarily interested in decorative problems.

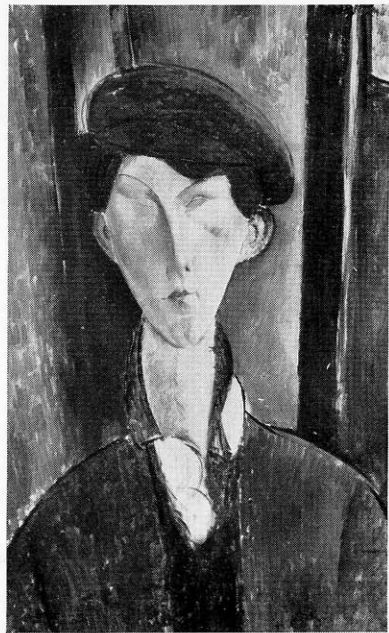
The most inventive leader in these changes of style is Picasso. Born in Malaga, Spain, in 1881, and first trained at Barcelona, he has worked since 1900 in Paris. He is an extraordinarily fertile experimenter, initiating and discarding in the course of his career half a dozen styles, each of which might have made the reputation of an artist. His Cubist style, in spite of its name, developed into arrangements of abstract shapes within the two dimensions of the picture plane, without solidity or depth. Picasso has continued to practise Cubism but he has also returned to some degree of representation and to effects of solidity and depth in his neo-classic style, of which the *Woman in an Armchair* (1922) loaned by Mr. Tannahill, is an important example.

This imposing canvas is still quite abstract. That is, its interest is in the monumental design composed by the form of the woman and chair. But while former neo-classic artists like Flaxman or Canova made grace the key to their placid arrangements, Picasso's interest (as in his Cubist designs) is a nervous, active balance. Picasso's one constant characteristic has been his inventive sense of design. With superlative cleverness he has dovetailed two effects in this painting, that of solidity and the flat effects of his Cubist period. In the face, for instance, the color is simplified to three tones—pink, blue and brown—which suggest the modeling of the head and at the same time constitute a flat design. Although the face is rather sweet, an attempt to suggest character does not really enter into the aim of the artist. It is the arrangement of forms and colors, the pure music of the eye, which has dignity and nobility.

Georges Braque practises abstract painting in a more quiet manner. *Pomona*, a drawing done in 1924 as a study for a wall painting, is, in

spite of a recognizable subject, an essay in refined decorative composition. The woman's form is arbitrarily reduced to a study in the harmonious spacing of sharp pencil lines and soft blurs of shading. Considered on the grounds on which it asks to be considered, this drawing is one of grave and lucid perfection.

The elimination of the warmth and picturesqueness of nature from abstract painting is a barrier that cuts off many from its enjoyment. To those who have not trained their eye to appreciate its decorative effects, it seems arid. Nevertheless, abstract painting has had a profoundly liberating effect on all modern painting, for it proved that painting may eliminate a camera-like copying of nature without destroying itself. This discovery set artists free not only for that passionate research into every possible phase of design in shape or color, which plays so large a part in recent work, but for all sorts of other experi-



PORTRAIT OF A BOY  
AMADEO MODIGLIANI



POMONA  
GEORGES BRAQUE

ment also. The range of that experiment may be seen in the variety of style shown by the four other Parisian painters, Segonzac, Modigliani, Lurçat, and Mouillot, lent by Mr. Tannahill.

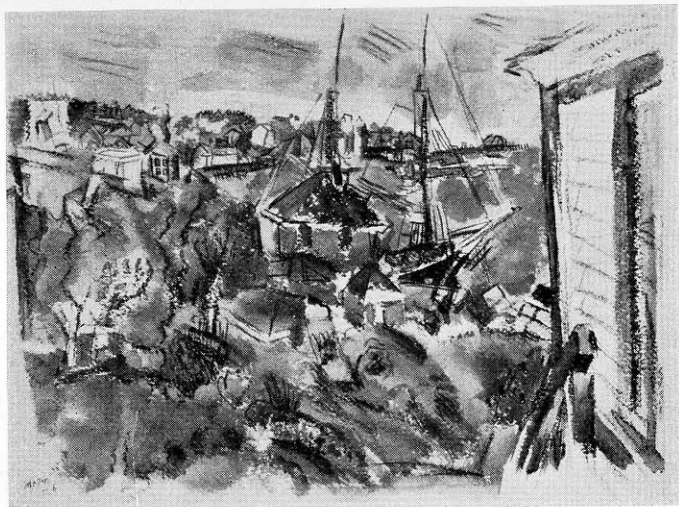
André Dunoyer de Segonzac is represented by one of the most important of his canvases in this country, *The Canoeist* (1922). He is of the generation of Picasso and Braque, yet has worked independently and is today one of the most important French painters. *The Canoeist* is not nearly so abstract as Picasso's or Braque's pictures. The figure of a man lying on the grass in a flood of summer sunlight is a subject that might have been chosen by an Impressionist. Yet the effect of light is gotten by an arbitrary color scheme of dusty grey, green, and brown, which Segonzac handles with superb knowledge. The fire in Segonzac's otherwise rigidly reined-in painting comes from his almost gluttonous delight in pigment, which he lays on so thickly and richly that his

canvases sometimes look as if they had been painted with a trowel. Aside from this extreme richness of surface quality, his painting is again an instance of the disciplined French mind taking its pleasure in restrained harmonies of spacing and color.

Modigliani, who is represented by an unusually fine *Portrait of a Boy* (1919), was one of the many modern artists influenced by the strong, clear cut designs of primitive art. The woman's head in the Art Institute's collection (painted in 1917) is an example of the remarkable stylization of the human form, which he worked out of the inspiration of Negro sculpture in his search for clarity of pattern. At another phase of his work he concentrated on color. In this *Portrait of a Boy* he combines the two researches, gaining both interesting design and a delicacy of color that is unique. But Modigliani is more than a decorator. He has a power of characterization which has never been better displayed than in this boy, whose gawky neck, protruding red ears, tousled hair and cap on the side of his head



MAN IN A BOAT  
JOHN CARROLL



PERTAINING TO STONINGTON HARBOR, MAINE  
JOHN MARIN

make him a perfect type of juvenile nonchalance.

Lurçat, who is represented by a characteristic composition of sails (1931) is one of the most successful of the Surrealists. Making a spring board of the Cubist position that a picture need not have a realistic subject, the Surrealist painters, Lurçat, Miro, Roy, Survage, have plunged off into pure fantasy.

Marcel Mouillot, painter of *The Port of Havre* (No. 244), only recently held his first exhibition in this country. His work belongs to a reaction from such bold, hasty ways of putting on paint as Segonzac's, toward a careful, clear-cut style. Mouillot and others like Jean Hugo who work in this way, seem influenced by the precision and neatness of Rousseau le douanier or the Italian primitives. This charming little study of a bleak grey Normandy day is very restrained in color, but painted with a touch which leaves no inch of line or spot of color without its air of nervous activity.

The French artists of today, trained by the austere discipline of abstract

painting, are content with a cool, dispassionate style which is concerned primarily with harmonies of design. There has been a swing away from abstraction, however, which has brought painting back to the expression of ideas and emotions also. The artist of this tendency does not copy nature, but he has a great deal to say about the significance of what he sees about him. This combination of free decorative style with expressive power is well represented by two Americans, Marin and Carroll, whose work Mr. Tannahill has lent.

Marin's principal medium is watercolor, of which he is one of the great practitioners. No one has used the fugitive hues, the fluidity and directness of transparent watercolor with greater distinction than he. But he is not content with merely an effect of fresh and charming color: he says a great deal about his subject, *Pertaining to Stonington Harbor, Maine* (1926). Nothing is more revealing of the modern search for the significant rather than the merely charming than Marin's attitude toward his subject, which he hints at in



this unusual title. Anyone who has ever seen Stonington on a summer day will remember, perhaps not any particular view of the place, but a host of vivid impressions. In this watercolor it is as if Marin were summing up the significant qualities that linger in the memory of that bleakly picturesque spot—the heaving granite earth covered with thin grass, the box-like wooden houses facing in every imaginable direction wherever they can find level support, the docks and the schooner in the harbor, the blue sea and the dark fringe of spruce woods in the background. Having put down enough to call those impressions to mind, the artist says no more, for his concern is with poetry, not prose.

Painting of this sort rests upon two bases—decorative style and the power to suggest thought or feeling, but the lit-

eral recording of appearances is left out. John Carroll is to Detroiters a more familiar representative of this tendency than is a Marin. The fine head of a sailor loaned by Mr. Tannahill has already been reproduced in the Bulletin of November, 1931. A larger canvas, *Man in the Boat* (1931) shows the quiet, powerful use of color and extremely interesting design of Carroll's style. The flesh of the girl's figure, in particular, is painted with a pearly radiance which is an extraordinarily sensitive rendering of the form and glow of life. Yet the relation between the two figures is not merely one of decorative arrangement. There is a subtle inner relation, a kind of deep and sad attraction, which is the picture's psychological theme.

E. P. RICHARDSON.

## MING LADY

As, with the coming of April, we welcome the spring, we may find ourselves in a most appropriate mood to appreciate the Chinese painting of a young woman and her cat, one of the four paintings presented to the museum by Mrs. Walter R. Parker.

Professor Giles, in his *Introduction to the History of Chinese Pictorial Art* (second edition, Shanghai, 1918, p. 58), quotes a story to the effect that "the great historian, philosopher, poet, and statesman of the 11th century, Ou-yang Hsiu, 'picked up an old picture of a cluster of peonies with a cat sitting near by. He was quite at a loss to make out its inner meaning, until a friend who lived next door came in to see it. "Oh," exclaimed the latter, "the subject is Noon"; and he proceeded to explain as follows: "You notice, said he, that the flowers are wide open and dulled in hue, just as flowers are at midday. Then again, the pupils of the cat's eyes are like a black thread, as they always are at that hour. When flowers have dew on them the calyx is contracted and the

hue is fresh; and in the morning and evening the pupils in a cat's eyes are always round." "Thus skilfully," adds the editor, "is it possible to ferret out the underlying intentions of the men of old."

Without pretending to possess the critical acumen of this unknown observer, we may still see something in this picture besides the obvious. The young woman is dressed in a rather heavy and stiff brocade coat, and her feet are drawn up under her as if the brick floor of her room might be cold. She seems to be bored, or at least uninterested; and she takes no pleasure in the playfulness of her cat, but rather holds it back, restraining its exuberant demonstration. Her beautiful face shows no spark of animation, and her posture expresses the listlessness that is emphasized by the droop of her right hand, holding a useless fan. Before her divan is a large blue and white porcelain pot full of narcissus, one of the flowers symbolic of winter. On the fan is painted a branch of the *mei-hua* or prunus, the



## MING LADY

CHINESE. XV CENTURY (?)

GIFT OF MRS. WALTER R. PARKER

other common flower of the cold season.

So we may imagine a day toward the end of a long winter. Tired of the chill and of confinement to her house, dreaming of warm and cheerful days to come, the aristocratic lady has picked up a fan, from which she derives no comfort. Winter must be waning, but spring has not yet come.

The picture, which is on silk and measures 57 by 37 $\frac{3}{4}$  inches, is admirably painted. Darkening of the silk has

modified the color scheme somewhat, but not unpleasantly. Thus, the creamy pigment used in the pattern of the outer garment was probably once a shade darker than the ground color, while now it is much lighter. Similarly, the blue and white of the porcelain bowl, with its everted rim decorated with dragons and clouds and with a broad peony-scroll band around its body, is now blue and brown. The ivory pigment of the flesh is well preserved, and the indi-

viduality of the face is realized with the utmost economy of line. The divan is of carved lacquer showing red and black layers, with borders of gold on black. The brocade mat has a diaper and medallion pattern of cream and red, and a polychrome border of four-clawed dragons and little clouds. The girl's underskirt has a wide border of blue clouds, and a black hem, while her coat has polychrome collar and cuffs. Her spherical cushion, on which she rests her right elbow, was green and black with a scarlet top, but the green is almost entirely rubbed off. Scarlet also are the handle of the fan and the lady's lips, and these three bright red spots are most effectively located.

In spite of a late annotation in the upper left corner assigning the date 1304 to the painting, it is obviously Ming, probably of the fifteenth century. The costume, hairdress, brocades, lacquer, and porcelain are all in harmony with such an attribution.

Three especially unusual features are yet to be noted. The first has to do with the cat. It has tawny long hair with areas of black on the head and cheeks, and a bushy tail. Such cats are known in China as "lion cats," or "Persian cats." But the cat is not as unusual as is the fact that one is here represented with a human, as a familiar pet. Pictures of cats with flowers and insects are common, but such a representation as this is so rare that memory fails to reveal another.

The second and third of the notable features which help to make this picture extraordinary are the youth of the subject and the informality of the portrait. That it is a portrait there can be no doubt, but of whom it was painted or why it was painted we have no grounds for conjecture. There are some portraits of artists and poets in natural

surroundings, and number of scenes in which the eighteenth century Emperor Ch'ien Lung is shown in various sports and daily pursuits, but they are primarily records and seldom more. Likewise there are numerous paintings of young ladies in various surroundings and occupations, but they are not for the most part highly individualized portraits. It is hardly necessary to say that the pictures of famous beauties are typically creations of the imagination.

The ordinary Chinese portrait of the "ancestral" class characteristically represents a man at the summit of his attainment, or his wife at the same time. Consequently it is the rule to find older subjects, men and women well advanced in years, clothed in official robes and veiled in dignity. But here is a young woman with no marks of rank beyond her aristocratic bearing and the luxurious richness of her garments and her surroundings. The painter's attention is concentrated immediately upon her. The drawing is large in scale, and there is no wall, no room, nothing but space behind her. She is most casually posed, as we cannot imagine her sitting except in the privacy of her own quarters. It is evident that she is a definite individual, not merely a typical beauty. It is equally evident that the artist has created something more than the record of an individual.

This is a portrait with a pictorial intention beyond portraiture. It is a picture that widens the scope of our knowledge of Chinese figure painting. It is a work of art as charming as it is unusual. And although we publicly gaze on her in her private apartment, the modesty of a well-bred Chinese lady is preserved forever by her anonymity.

BENJAMIN MARCH.





THE LOVERS  
EUGENE DELACROIX

## A DRAWING BY DELACROIX

The small but rather illustrative group of French drawings which is permanently exhibited in the large gallery of nineteenth century European art, has recently been enriched by a typical example of the draftsmanship of one of France's outstanding artists of this period, Eugène Delacroix. The drawing, done in black and sepia wash heightened with white, represents a pair of lovers seated by a stone wall in what appears to be a secluded spot in a park or garden. From their somewhat fantastic Renaissance costume we may conclude that the two are meant to be figures of an historical or literary subject. They may represent Romeo and Juliet, a supposition which is all the more convincing as Delacroix has dealt with the theme of the unfortunate lovers from Verona in several oil paintings done in

different periods of his career. Though to my knowledge none of these corresponds in composition to our drawing, still it may have originated in connection with one of the paintings as a first thought which was later given up.

The Romantic School of France has thus far found a very scanty representation in the Institute. We have, to be sure, Géricault's magnificent portrait of an artist and among the drawings a fine sheet with studies by this master, who may be regarded as the instigator of the Romantic movement and Delacroix's direct predecessor. Of the Romantic school proper, however, only such modest, though quite respectable performances as the two canvases by Eugène Isabey, give the visitor a certain, rather limited idea. The lack of any work by its great leader Delacroix is undoubtedly

one of the serious gaps in our collection.

Delacroix is one of the very greatest figures of French painting of the nineteenth century, this golden age of French art, with its amazing wealth of creative talent of every rank. And if the great vogue for impressionism and post-impressionism has perhaps obscured—to some people—the aspect of his work, they should at least be able to recognize the enormous significance this man had for the development of those very phases of French art. Even the greatest of the painters of the latter part of the century, Manet, Renoir, Cézanne, are all indebted to him in one way or another. It was, indeed, Delacroix more perhaps than any other individual artist, who through the boldness of his art, its independence from all academic fetters as well as through his own vital and enthusiastic personality, set an example to his younger confrères, opening avenues in many artistic directions, which were later to be successfully followed by them.

Little is to be said about Delacroix's life, which, outwardly speaking, ran a rather quiet course. All the eruptions of his volcanic spirit occurred within the four walls of his atelier. He was born in Charenton-Saint Maurice, near Paris, in 1798, as son of a high official of the Directory. Recent researches seem to prove that the artist was actually an "enfant naturel" of the famous Marquis de Talleyrand, who had conquered the heart of Victoire Delacroix while her husband was abroad as French ambassador to the court of Holland. He spent his childhood in Bordeaux, where father Delacroix was prefect. When he was seven years old his father died, leaving the family in rather meager circumstances. Young Delacroix entered in 1815 the atelier of Guérin, one of the members of the classical school of David. Guérin's teaching seems to have had little effect on the pupil. His real models were some of the old masters whose works he found in the Louvre, above all Rubens and Paolo Veronese. Moreover,

he was greatly impressed and influenced by his six-year-older friend Géricault, who at that time stirred the art world with his *Raft of the Medusa* and other works. It was Géricault who helped him to his first professional success by transferring to Delacroix the commission for a large altarpiece which he himself had received. At about the same time (1822) the young artist exhibited his first picture in the Salon, the famous *Dante's Bark*. The painting, whose subject is based on Dante's *Divina Commedia*, showing Dante and Virgil in a boat crossing a lake in the infernal regions, in which the bodies of the damned writhe in torment, caused a tremendous sensation. While violently criticized by some, it was enthusiastically praised by others. It was finally acquired by the State, in spite of the fierce attacks which were made against it by some of the most prominent critics.

Antagonism of the wildest nature accompanied Delacroix throughout his life; Ingres in particular was his deadly enemy. Nevertheless Delacroix's career was very rich in outward success. He was given several important commissions by the State, such as the decoration of the Salon du Roi (1834) and of the Library (1838-1847) in the Palais Bourbon (Chambre des Députés), and the Library of the Palais Luxembourg (finished 1846). In 1832 the artist took an extensive trip through the French colonies in North Africa, an event whose colorful impressions had a profound influence on the further development of his art. Delacroix never married and led a rather solitary life, enjoying, however, the intimate friendship of men like Baudelaire, Thiers, Chopin and others. He died in Paris in 1863.

Only the utter self-discipline of this man, who concentrated all his glowing energies upon his work, explains the tremendous amount of his artistic output. In this way he may be compared to Rubens, with whom in other respects, too, he had much in common. He re-

sembles the great Flemish master in his predilection for dramatic and passionate themes, and in the boundless wealth of his imagination. He, too, possesses that rare gift of grasping and rendering all living creatures, man as well as animal, in the physical functions of their bodies and in the full range of their psychic expression; and like Rubens, he combines with unflinching draftsmanship a most

highly developed sense for the intrinsic power of color.

Although our recently acquired drawing is far from giving any comprehensive insight into Delacroix's art, it might yet serve as an introduction to it, stimulating some who may care to devote more interest to one of France's greatest masters.

WALTER HEIL.

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# CALENDAR OF EVENTS FOR APRIL

## EXHIBITIONS

March 22-April 4. Detroit Architecture, under the auspices Detroit Chapter, American Institute of Architects.

April 4-April 10. Homelands Exhibit, under auspices Cosmopolitan Women's Club.

## LECTURES

(Tuesday Evenings at 8:30)

April 19. "The Lure of the Great Northwest," by Frank Branch Riley.

(Sunday Afternoons at 3:30)

Concerts by Chamber Music Society of Detroit to April 3

(Saturday Afternoons at 3:30)

"Art and Culture of the Middle Ages," by Adèle Coulin Weibel, Curator of Textiles.

April 9. English Romanesque and Gothic Architecture.

April 16. Italian Gothic Painting and Sculpture.

April 23. German Gothic Painting and Sculpture.

April 30. French Gothic Painting and Sculpture.

May 7. Flemish Gothic Painting and Sculpture.

## MUSICALES

(Auditorium, Friday Evenings at 8:30)

April 1. Program sponsored by Mary Linsky, pianist, and John Wummer, flutist.

April 8. Little Symphony, Valbert P. Coffey, conductor.

April 15. Laurel Singers, under the direction of Jason Moore.

April 22. Gilbert and Sullivan's "Pinafore," sponsored by the Detroit Institute of Musical Art.

April 28. Program sponsored by the Bohemians.