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MAJOLICA VASE WITH COAT OF ARMS
OF THE MEDICI AND ORSINI FAMILIES
FLORENCE, XV CENTURY
PRESENTED TO RUSSELL A. ALGER HOUSE
BY THE WOMEN'S COMMITTEE.

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THE FRUIT VENDOR BY CARAVAGGIO

At the beginning of the seventeenth century stands the figure of Caravaggio, a great painter in his own right and a figure essential to an understanding of that century. It was he who first formulated, in Italy, the twin motives of realism and light, which underlay the great outburst of creative energy in that century of great painters. Wherever one looks among the artists of first rank in the next generation, one finds his influence—upon the young Rubens and the young Velasquez, upon Honthorst from whom Rembrandt learned his chiaroscuro, upon de la Tour and the brothers LeNain in France. By the gift of Mr. Edsel B. Ford the museum has recently acquired an important painting, *The Fruit Vendor* (reproduced on the cover of last month's Bulletin), which we can attribute to the early period of this great figure.[1]

Caravaggio was an extraordinary and rather baffling character. To describe what he did—the revolution in style and the new motivation of painting which he introduced—is a simpler task than that of relating it to the riddle of his personality. He was born at Caravaggio near Bergamo in 1574, according to the latest revised chronology of his life.[2] Michelangelo Merisi da Caravaggio, to give him his full name, was the son of a Lombard stone mason. He began his study of art in Milan at the age of ten, under a pupil of Titian, Simone Petrazano. At sixteen he was in Rome, penniless, and forced for the sake of a living to be a studio assistant to Pandolfo Pucci; then he was an assistant, painting still life, in the studio of Giuseppi Cesari, Cavaliere D'Arpino, the last of the Manneristic painters whose style he was to replace. Before he was twenty-three he had attracted the attention of the Marchese Giustiniani and the Cardinal del Monte, two of the great art-loving princes of the Roman court whose activity made Rome the artistic capital of the seventeenth century. About 1597 the latter secured for him an important commission to decorate the Chapel of St. Matthew of the French church in Rome, S. Luigi dei Francesi. This commission brought him world-wide notoriety, for his picture of St. Matthew was rejected by the priests of the church. He had painted the Evangelist, writing his gospel under the guidance of an angel, with the rather brutal naturalism that distinguished his mature period. The saint was represented as a stupid, heavy peasant, who seems to have to work so hard at his writing that one almost expects to see him lick his pencil; this, together with a cross-legged pose that results in one great bare leg and foot sticking out at the spectator, seemed to the clergy neither devout nor proper. Nevertheless the rejected picture was bought by the Marchese Giustiniani (it is now in Berlin) and Caravaggio went on with his commission, initiating in the later panels that *tenebroso* or cellar lighting which was to influence half the great painters of Europe in the next fifty years.

Nonetheless, this man who initiated through a novel naturalism of detail (for that time) a new and powerful ideal of beauty, who aroused by his innovations the passionate loyalty of all the young painters and the equally angry dislike of the old, who had the gift of seeing as no one else had during his life time, was a quarrelsome bravo and a ruffian. Between the years

[1]Canvas, Height 51¼; Width 38½ inches. Accession No. 36.10. Purchased from the Edsel B. Ford Fund of the Founders Society.

[2]A. von Schneider: "Zur Stilbilding Caravaggios," *Pantheon*, Nov. 1936, p. 347.

1603 and 1606 he was involved in seven different fights, in five of which he was the aggressor.[3] He stabbed a rival in love, a waiter in an albergo, a friend with whom he quarreled after a tennis game; three times he had to get out of town until the affair blew over. After the third time (a murder charge) in 1606, he went to Naples, then to Malta (1608). His contemporaries say that he went there hoping to be made a Chevalier, in order to become the equal of Cavaliere d'Arpino, who had refused to fight a duel with him as a commoner. He achieved knighthood in the second class, becoming Cavaliere Michel Angelo Merisi da Caravaggio, with a collar of gold and slaves to attend him, in return for the altarpieces and the magnificent portrait of the *Grand Commander* (in the Louvre), which he did there. Then came a mysterious quarrel with another knight, who was to pursue him implacably for the rest of his life, and Caravaggio was thrown into prison. He escaped by ropes from his prison and found his way, perhaps by small boat, to Sicily. For this he was expelled from the order.[4] After painting in Syracuse, Messina and Palermo, he set out by felucca for Rome. The felucca landed at Port'Ercole, where he was seized by Spanish guards who mistook him for someone else. When he was released, the felucca had sailed with all his baggage, and he determined to set out for Rome on foot. But it was malaria season and fever ended his career in August, 1610, in his thirty-sixth year, bringing an abrupt and tragic genius to a dramatically appropriate close.

It is hard to reconcile this career of violence with the monumental, tragic altarpieces of these same years. Yet it was perhaps his passionate energy and freedom from intellectual control that enabled him to break away from the arid intellectualism into which Italian painting had fallen. His first achievement—that of the years 1590-97, during which we believe our picture to have been painted—was to restore a sense of life and a contact with nature. When he went to Rome, Italian art was academic, in our sense of the word, in that it was using second-hand emotions. Painters were doing monumental paintings with all the technical skill they had inherited from the Renaissance, but without emotions of their own to put into them. They either imitated the violent plastic movement of Michelangelo (the Mannerists) or were Eclectics, trying to combine the energy of Michelangelo with the harmonious proportions of Raphael, the movement and light and shadow of Titian with the color of Correggio—as Agostino Caracci expressed it.

Caravaggio absorbed from the Mannerists a love for putting his figures in complicated and daring poses. But he had also absorbed the influence of Venetian painting, and especially that of Giorgione, through the paintings of Lotto, Romanino and Savoldo which he saw as a student in Milan. It had been Giorgione's achievement to found a new type of art, which was based not upon the illustration of Christian thought, nor upon any other abstract scheme of thought, but upon the pure pleasure of the eye in the contemplation of nature. Caravaggio, a century later, brought painting again back to nature, setting aside the learned and formal imitation of older art, which had become its motive in the weary close of the Florentine and Roman Renaissance. When he left the studio of the Cavaliere d'Arpino, Bellori says, "he gave himself to painting, following his own genius, having not

[3]Arthur McComb, *The Baroque Painters of Italy*, p. 40.
[4]Faith Ashford, "Caravaggio's Stay in Malta," *Burlington Magazine*, Vol. 67, p. 168 (1935).

CARAVAGGIO: BACCHUS
IN THE UFFIZI, FLORENCE

a bit of respect for, but rather despising, the most excellent marbles of the ancients and the celebrated pictures of Raphael; and he proposed to have nature alone the object of his pencil." When they showed him two famous statues that he should imitate, "he made no reply except to point to a crowd of people, meaning that he considered nature sufficient to produce masters. And to give authority to his words, he called a gypsy, who was passing in the street, and taking her to his lodging, represented her in the art of telling the future, as certain women of Egyptian race are wont to do; and he made a youth who put one gloved hand on his sword, and offered the other to the woman who takes it and looks upon it; and in these two half figures Michelangelo translated the truth so forcefully that his words were confirmed." *The Fortune Teller* now in the Louvre (a second version is in the Capitoline Museum, Rome), the *Bacchus* in the Uffizi, the *Young Roman Girl* in Berlin, are typical of the Giorgionesque works of his early period, as the *Still life* in the Ambrosiana, Milan, is of the still lifes which were his first original achievement. The figures are shown half length, in strong even light, against a dark background, as one finds them in so many paintings by Giorgione and his circle. And while these early pictures are done with a novel naturalism for that time, it was naturalism in the sense of being directly inspired by nature instead of an echo of older art; but it had not

SCHOOL OF CARAVAGGIO: THE DENIAL OF ST. PETER
IN THE VATICAN

yet achieved the rather brutal choice of heavy peasant models which characterized his mature work. The pictures done between 1590 and 1597, by their sudden enlargement of the mental horizon of their age to include a reality never before studied, by their exploration of light effects, and their simplification of the whole idiom of painting, remind one to an extraordinary degree of what Manet was to mean to the nineteenth century.

The Fruit Vendor represents an argument in the market place. An old peasant, his face a study of mingled craft and stupidity, agrees over the price of a melon with a young girl, who holds a market basket on her arm and extends a coin in one outstretched hand; on a table between them are two sliced melons and a basket of fruit.

Our picture is a well-known canvas which, with a *Denial of St. Peter* in the Vatican (No. 385) in which the same girl model appears, has been for some time included in the immediate orbit of Caravaggio. Both have many similarities with Caravaggio's early paintings but differ in a more atmospheric manner of painting the flesh. The latest catalog of the Vatican calls our picture "a youthful masterpiece" of Caravaggio, while giving the *Denial of St. Peter* to an unidentified pupil. Dr. Hermann Voss, the great German authority on baroque painting, has also recently attributed our picture to Caravaggio himself, rather than to a known or unknown pupil. It seems

CARAVAGGIO: STILL LIFE OF FRUIT
IN THE AMBROSIANA, MILAN

to us also that the similarities—to the *Bacchus* (Uffizi), the *Magdalen* (Doria), the *Supper at Emmaus* (National Gallery) in which Carravaggio re-used the still life and the male model at a later time—far outweigh the dissimilarities. The luscious still life of melons and fruit set in a basket among vine leaves, is closely related to the famous early *Still Life* in the Ambrosiana as well as to that of the *Bacchus*. The old peasant is a typical model, very like a figure in the *Supper at Emmaus*. The figure in the immediate foreground with its back to the spectator is characteristic of Caravaggio's method of achieving an effect of depth by a plastic rather than atmospheric means; for his backgrounds are so opaque and his lighting so sharp that one gains the impression of depth by the drawing rather than the lighting. Even such details as the method of painting the shadow of the melons upon the table, are distinctive.

It is notable also that the subject is rare. Among innumerable cardplayers, gamblers and rufflers in taverns, which were the standard genre subjects of the school, this market scene is most unusual. It is of interest therefore that in the 1690's John Evelyn saw in the collection of the Duke of Pembroke (June 11, 1696) a picture "by Michelangelo of a man gathering fruit to give to a woman." There is, at least, a seventeenth century tradition of a picture by our artist, of a subject which one does not find among his followers.

At all events, our new picture is an important painting. It is noteworthy enough, perhaps, to find the luminosity and the completely objective view of nature which we commonly claim as a discovery of the nineteenth cen-

tury realists, achieved two hundred and fifty years before Courbet and Manet. The subtle color harmony of the man's grey-brown clothes and the girl's white scarf and cream colored dress, relieved by touches of rust color and deep blue; the still life, which recalls Bellori's description of the "dewy freshness" of his flower paintings; the grandeur of these more than life size figures; all are extremely satisfying to the eye of today. One can look, moreover, all through the genre paintings of Caravaggio's followers without finding that peculiar quality which he alone has—and which I believe one finds here—a monumental and objective view of reality, quite free from any obvious romanticism. For this rioter and swaggerer, the first of the great Italian artists who had to fight against the critical standards of his day (as so many artists have had to do since), attained that grave and quiet mood, touched with a lingering melancholy, which is the oldest tradition of Italian art, for one finds it also in the poetry of Virgil.

E. P. Richardson.

MEDICI POTTERY OF THE FIFTEENTH CENTURY

Our knowledge today of Florentine pottery of the fifteenth century is chiefly the result of the meritorious researches of Dr. W. von Bode. The products of the famous manufactories of the sixteenth century in Faenza, Deruta, Castelduranté, and above all in Urbino, had always been appreciated and have been collected as long as private and public art collections have existed. The pottery of the fifteenth century, however, which is much more unpretentious, but which to the trained eye reveals itself as so much more organically built and decorated, was apparently not considered of any value compared with this highly decorated and colorful ware. Perhaps the acquaintance with the delicate and reserved pottery of the Near and Far East was necessary before western eyes began again to appreciate the more primitive beginnings of their own pottery. We are only now in process of coming to a complete appreciation of the very early, i. e. mediaeval pottery of Europe. Dr. Bode was one of the very first to grasp the historical and aesthetic importance of certain types of earlier Italian maiolica, and he succeeded very easily in proving Florence to be the place of their origin; herewith he reinstated a center of manufacture which had been more or less forgotten, as after scarcely more than a century's most brilliant production, it had been almost completely eclipsed by the younger manufactories in Umbria, the Marches and Romagna. Dr. Bode's publications[1] and his eagerness to buy examples of this early Florentine ware for the museums and private collections entrusted to his care, soon created a very lively market for them, so that nowadays it is no longer easy to find important pieces. Under these circumstances it is a bit of good luck that the Detroit Insti-

[1] W. v. Bode, *Jahrbuch der Preussischen Kunstsammlungen*, XIX, 1898, 206 ff; XXIX, 1908, 276 ff; XXXIV, 1913, 292 ff. W. v. Bode, *Anfänge der Majolikakunst in Italien*, Berlin, 1911. Bode had a predecessor in Henry Wallis, whom he quotes frequently.

[2] 15⅜ inches high. In good condition, except that half of the foot has been broken off and reconstructed. Under one of the handles is to be seen a mark in the shape of an N, which is similar to marks found by Bode on Florentine pottery of this time.

FIG. 1

tute of Arts could purchase for Alger House through the generosity of the Women's Committee, a vase[2] which belongs to one of the groups described by Dr. Bode and which moreover proves to be one of the most distinguished examples of this group, as its whole intimate history can be reconstructed. (Cover.)

More than any other specimen from this group, the vase in Detroit betrays the intention of the potter to imitate a piece of Hispano-Moresque ware. This famous half-Islamic, half-Spanish ware, which enjoyed so much favor in Italy throughout the fifteenth century, and which was imported there in large quantities, introduced oriental ceramic refinements and taste and so helped the originally rather limited Italian pottery to develop towards its height. Oriental is the whole shape of our vase: the comparatively high foot, the almost spheric small belly, and especially the two wing-like handles pierced with a number of odd small holes which are perhaps the residuum of a decoration peculiar to Hispano-Moresque prototypes. I reproduce here one of two Spanish vases in the Museo Civico in Bologna,[3] which has complete rows of such decorative holes (Fig. 1). Although these vases are of rather late date (sixteenth century) and show signs of a certain decadence, so that they could hardly be compared with our vase, they belong to the type of which the Alger House vase is a derivation. There still exist, however, a few earlier and better examples of this type, as we shall see later.[4] The pointed shoulders of the handles have a very similar counterpart in the second vase at Bologna. These are also of Moresque origin and not a possible Gothic adaptation of an oriental motif, as a superficial similarity of these angular outlines with certain Gothic forms[5] might lead one to think at first sight. One of the greatest ambitions of the earlier Italian potters had been to imitate the beautiful lustre of oriental pottery, especially that of Hispano-Moresque ware. Dr. Bode has tried to prove that in Florence and Siena a few attempts in this direction were completely successful. But it is an undeniable fact that the majority of potters were satisfied in reaching an approximate effect only, by substituting for the gold color of the lustre a corresponding shade of yellow, which

[3]A. del Vita, *Dedalo,* V. 1924, 42 ff.

[4]An example in the Victoria and Albert Museum might be mentioned here. C. Drury E. Fortnum, *Catalogue of the Maiolica in the South Kensington Museum,* London, 1873, p. 51. (No. 8968-63).

[5]The Bargello has an albarello of quite independent Tuscan style, which has similar handles. But in this case also Dr. Bode speaks of the Hispano-Moresque shape of these handles. Cf. *Maiolikakunst,* Pl. XXX.

was not, like the lustre, added after the baking of the main layer, but was painted in at the same time as all the other colors. The effect is much plainer and differs from that of the Spanish ware perhaps as much as those very precious velvets of this period, which were woven in two thicknesses of pile, differ from the more ordinary velvets of one pile. The vase at Alger House is a very fine example of this procedure. The delicate bryony leaves and flowers, which had become such a favorite decoration in Spanish ware towards the middle of the fifteenth century, had often been painted in two shades of blue, to which other parts of the plants like the tendrils and also often the center of the flowers had been added in lustre. Here this whole decoration is carefully copied, leaves and flowers are painted in deep blue and manganese purple and the tendrils are added in a deep ochre. This translation of the original color scheme into color terms would not need much comment if it were not carried out here with a singular faithfulness to the original pattern and if the whole vase were not of such a pronounced oriental shape. Certainly its author had the original he imitated better in mind than other potters as revealed in most of the vases of the group. The imposing size and shape, the careful decoration, are sufficient to prove that the vase in the Museum was not an average commercial product; and the coat of arms which forms its main decoration on both sides confirms this in a most striking way. We see here the allied arms of the Medici and Orsini. From the arrangement of the arms in the shield, it is clear that the device of the Medici stands for the male, that of the Orsini for the female part of this alliance. So we can arrive at the conclusion that the vase comes from the possession of the Medici and was probably connected with one of the most brilliant events in the history of this family. Of marriages between the Medici and the Orsini there have been two, that of Lorenzo Magnifico with Clarice Orsini in 1469, and that of Piero, the eldest son of this union, with Alfonsina Orsini in 1487. The purpose of the vase is quite clear. It was not so much for practical use as for decoration and representation. Together with large plates and other vessels, probably all decorated in the same pattern, and with all kinds of precious metal vessels, it was meant to be put up in a decorative arrangement on one side or in the center of a room in which a great festive banquet was held.[6] And the banquet in this case was certainly held to celebrate one of the two above-mentioned weddings. There is nothing to prove definitely to which of the two we must refer our vase, but everything speaks in favor

FIG. 2

[6]Cf. the famous Cassone pictures with the story of Nastagio. Schubring, *Cassoni*, 1st ed. No. 400. Similar representations *ibid.*, No. 222 and No. 370.

of the earlier occasion. Lorenzo's marriage was celebrated in the most luxurious way and no expense was spared to give it splendor, while that of Piero took place when the melancholy shadows of adverse times were already falling upon the family. Besides, the marriage of Piero and Alphonsina took place by proxy, as the pair were still very young, and only a year later the bride arrived in Florence.

But whatever the exact date of this vase may be, we can here mark the important turning point in the history of Florentine pottery. Apparently the most important family of Florence had early favored the local workshops with commissions. Proof is a plate in the Bargello dating from the middle of the century with a beautiful vine-leaf decoration and the Medici coat of arms.[7] But they still seem to have relied on Hispano-Moresque ware for the more representative pottery, which was made to order in Spain in any shape desired, with any decoration or special features, as a coat-of-arms or other personal emblem. Among the many extant Spanish pieces bearing the heraldic emblems of Florentine families, there is one very similar to our vase (Fig. 2), with the coat of arms of the Medici.[8] The device of the diamond ring and feathers, which it bears on the other side, indicates that it belonged either to Piero il Gottoso, the father of Lorenzo Magnifico, or to the latter.[9] The fleur-de-lis on one of the pills of the coat of arms indicates that it must date after 1465, the year in which Louis XI granted to Piero the privilege of this addition to his arms. Certainly it was made before our vase, which copies it or other vases of the type.

Now, this copy would mark the moment when Florence began seriously to emancipate itself from dependence on Spanish potters. Spanish ideas in regard to shape and decoration were still considered as almost ideal. Hence the fact that the vase at Alger House is such a close copy. But, apparently, the local potters commenced to equal in skill their Spanish teachers, so that no longer was there any reluctance to entrust them even with the more important tasks formerly given to the latter. That such a change was not quite complete is understandable. Leo X, many years later, must again have ordered such a decorative set of pottery in Spain. Remains of it still exist in Bologna and in Arezzo, a plate (Fig. 3) and a pitcher.[10] They are not of very good quality, as the whole production in Spain in the sixteenth century is far inferior to that of the previous century. It may be that for the Pope resident in Rome it was easier and less expensive to have his table service shipped from Spain by sea instead of having it carted down from Caffagiolo, Faenza, or one of the other Italian manufactories, which certainly would have furnished him better merchandise. The superiority of the Italian ware over the Spanish product was no longer questioned.

Perhaps we do not do full justice to the vase at Alger House if we insist too much upon its being a copy after

[7]Bode, *Majolikakunst*, pl. XXIV.

[8]22 inches high. Van de Put, *Hispano-Moresque Ware of the Fifteenth Century*, London, 1904, p. 88, pl. XXVI; A. W. Frothingham, *Catalogue of Hispano-Moresque Pottery*, Hispanic Society of America, New York, 1936, p. LVII.

[9]The device on the back of this vase can already be referred to Piero dei Medici, who displayed it on his altar tabernacle in S. Miniato (1446 by Michelozzo). It is an error to assign it to Lorenzo Magnifico only. We have here the strange case of such a device being handed down from father to son. Leo X still used it occasionally.

[10]Frothingham, p. 212. *Dedalo*, V. 1924, 49. The device "GLOVIS" proves that the coat of arms is that of Leo X and not that of Clement VII or Pius IV.

FIG. 3

a Hispano-Moresque original. The objection might arise that this vase is an isolated Florentine example, a copy made to replace a broken piece in an original set. As every collector of pottery knows well, this has happened innumerable times and is sometimes a cause of bitter delusion. If it were true in our case most of the historical interest of the piece would be gone; but a close look at our vase can quickly dispel any doubts. It would never really fit into a set of Spanish vases as a substitute. Not only would the color scheme and the design of decoration show too much independence, not only would we look in vain in the whole of Spanish pottery for a wreath similar to that surrounding the coat of arms, which is the most common motif in Florence and Tuscany, but the whole shape has undergone a transformation which makes it look almost more Florentine than Spanish. None of the oriental vases of this type has such an almost architectural solidity. Their bodies are suspended between a very elongated foot and a similarly elongated neck in a very unstable way; their proportions are frail and exotic, while here we have a well-thought-out equilibrium, which gives predominance to the body of the vase and to the whole a quite rational and sensible proportion. The most remarkable change is perhaps that of the handles. In the oriental vases they are still very much like wings, so that the whole shape of the vase has still much of the outline and the proportions of a highly stylized, heraldic eagle. In our vase they are reduced to simple handles and all the zoomorphic associations have disappeared. The shape of the Alger House vase fits very well into the development of Tuscan pottery. The oakleaf ware of the first half of the fifteenth century had clumsier, more monumental shapes, just as its whole decoration was still simple and unsophisticated. In the second half of the fifteenth century we find a few examples—and they are always of the highest quality in decoration, color, and design—which compare well with our vase, for instance, a beautiful piece with a purely blue decoration in the Figdor Collection,[11] which might be perhaps a few years older than our vase, and a not less beautiful one in the Mortimer Schiff Collection[12] which looks a bit later. All of these examples seem to date from the years around 1460 to 1470, so that our suggestion that the vase at Alger House might have been made

[11]Bode, *Majolikakunst*, Pl. XXII.

[12]Seymour de Ricci, *Catalogue of Early Italian Maiolica*, New York, 1927. Pl. 33. Unfortunately the whole neck of this piece is lost, so that the vase now looks completely out of proportion.

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for the wedding of Lorenzo Magnifico finds support from this angle.[13] Aesthetically this vase is very satisfying, since the two different elements, the foreign motif and the domestic style in modelling and painting, are fused into a well-balanced unity. Again a proof that often the blending of two completely different ideas can produce the most beautiful results. The foreign element acts as a stimulus, which may keep the creative imagination from going stale in a set circle of traditions. And perhaps in this lies the main attraction which this whole group of Florentine maiolicas has for the observer who tries to penetrate into their inner structure.

ULRICH MIDDELDORF.

WOVEN ORPHREYS

Textile art, practiced by all peoples from the Neolithicum to our own days, requires the never ending building up of separate groups, to the end of forming an adequate collection. One of these groups, possibly of minor importance yet having the charm of a limited output during a limited period, consists of the orphreys woven at Florence during the fifteenth century, in competition with the far more costly embroidered orphreys, for which Florence has always been justly famous.

The group of woven orphreys in our collection has been added to by the welcome gift from Mr. A. Silberman of New York of a *Nativity*[1] (Fig. 1). The Christchild lies on the ground, propped up on the right elbow, the left hand touching his cheek. The very youthful Mother kneels beside him, gazing at him rapturously out of almond shaped eyes, her hands folded in prayer. At either side kneeling angels, looking down reverently at the Child, support poles of a baldachin which keeps out the draught. The baldachin is patterned with golden stars on red ground and has a golden lambrequin. The entire pattern is of gold thread, the flesh parts of white silk.

The looms of Lucca had used designs in which Islamic and Byzantine motives were happily blended. When Florence began weaving, these purely medieval designs were considered old-fashioned, and floral patterns were evolved, in keeping with the spirit of the Renaissance, and, incidentally, better suited to the exigencies and limitations of the drawloom.

Yet in one group of fabrics the medieval tradition survived: in borders, woven for the adornment of vestments, with scenes from the life of Christ and legends of saints. Owing to the limitation of size and the desire for clear design, scenes requiring few figures were given preference. Thus the *Annunciation* with its two actors—the Virgin and the archangel Gabriel—seems to have been a favourite one, for it is preserved in several distinct variations. The *Nativity,* even simplified, excluding all but the *dramatis personae,* is one of the larger compositions, while scenes such as the *Resurrection* and the *Assumption* lent themselves to a composition in height, the figures being arranged in tiers.

[13]Bode dates the specimens closest to our vase about 1460.

[1]Accession No. 36.70; height 7¾ inches; width 8½ inches.

FIG. 1

More rarely than scenes from Christ's life, we find single figures of saints, standing beneath a baldachin, or kneeling at an altar.

The designs for these figural fabrics must have been made by real artists; possibly the assistants and pupils of great masters used their frescoes and panel paintings and in simplifying the composition yet left some vestiges of the greater original in their less presumptuous designs. Often, no doubt, the woodcut illustrations of the early *incunabula* of Florence and Venice were used. In some cases, however, such patterns were designed directly by the artist for the weaver or embroiderer.

Referring to Vasari, we find the versatile Antonio Pollaiuolo making designs for "certain very rich vestments for San Giovanni in Florence . . . the ornaments being stories from the life of St. John," to be used by the embroiderer Paolo da Verona, "a man most eminent in his calling." Antonio Pollaiuolo also designed elaborate patterns for the master weavers of Florence, who translated them into fabrics of silk velvet, shimmering with gold and silver, for patrons such as Pope Sixtus IV, the archbishop Pedro Gonzales de Mendoza—surnamed the *tercer rey* of Castille—and Matthias Corvinus, king of Hungary.[2]

Another Florentine painter, Raffaelino del Garbo, "prepared drawings in chiaroscuro, to serve as patterns for decorating vestments . . . representing different saints or historical scenes . . . very beautiful designs and admirable fancies." Other vestments have been

[2]Otto von Falke, *Kunstgeschichte der Seidenweberei*, 1913; Vol. II, figs. 543 to 546.

FIG. 2

ascribed to Signorelli and Botticelli and the names of famous embroiderers have been preserved but, alas, no names of the craftsmen who produced the charming, yet far less costly, woven orphreys.

These were woven in normal loom width, not separately as narrow borders, like those of Cologne. They were cut lengthwise for the decoration of copes and chasubles, or the pictures were cut out one by one, for application on dalmatics.

In the early pieces, those belonging to the first half of the fifteenth century, the pattern is woven in gold thread on red, rarely green silk ground; the fleshparts are generally of white silk, small details of light blue silk. Of the specimens in our collection belonging to this class, we mention a fragment showing *Saint Peter Standing Beneath a Baldachin* and an *Assumption of the Virgin,* surrounded by angels and cherubs, very Sienese in feeling, the newly acquired *Nativity,* and an *Annunciation,* in which the very quiet late Gothic figures are set into the garden porch of an early Renaissance building.

In the latter part of the fifteenth century we find the orphreys woven in a different technique, brocatelle, a combination of silk warp and weft and an extra weft of gold thread, for the surface, backed and strengthened by a secondary warp and weft of linen. The pattern stands out in gold twill on a red satin ground; the red warp threads are used also for the inner lines of the design.

In these brocatelle orphreys the Renaissance has ousted the last vestiges of Gothic design. Even cherubs adoring the monogram of Christ now look like the *putti* of Donatello. We feel the spirit of such artists as Alessio Baldovinetti in the beautiful *Assumption,* an elaborate composition in three tiers: St. Thomas, kneeling in front

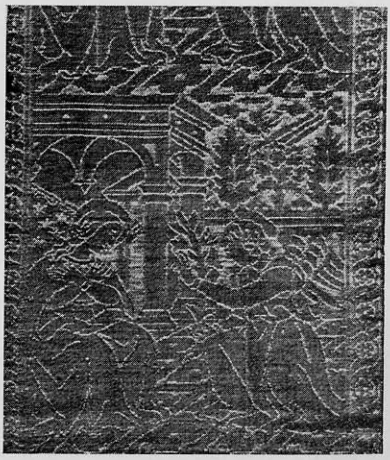

FIG. 3

FIG. 4

of the sarcophagus filled with lilies, receiving the *sacra cintola,* the girdle, from the hands of the Virgin, who, seated on a cloud, is borne heavenwards by angels where God Father is holding over her head the crown of the queen of heaven (Fig. 2).

A beautiful orphrey, an *Annunciation* (Fig. 3), may have been inspired by Andrea del Sarto, while yet others are clearly Verrocchiesque, not designed by the great artist himself, but possibly in his prolific workshop. Among these we rank a *Resurrection* (Fig. 4) and a *Christ Standing in His Tomb* (Fig. 5). The latter especially, with its elaborate framework of acanthus, may well have been designed by an artist specializing in metalwork.

It is difficult to assign these little masterpieces to any given artist with absolute certainty. For after all, it remained with the weaver to decide on changes and simplifications, and we know from the history of tapestries that the weavers, conservative craftsmen, did not always see eye to eye with the designers.

Today these unpretentious borders appeal perhaps more directly to our eclectic taste than the gorgeous velvets and embroideries for which Florence was justly famous.

ADELE WEIBEL.

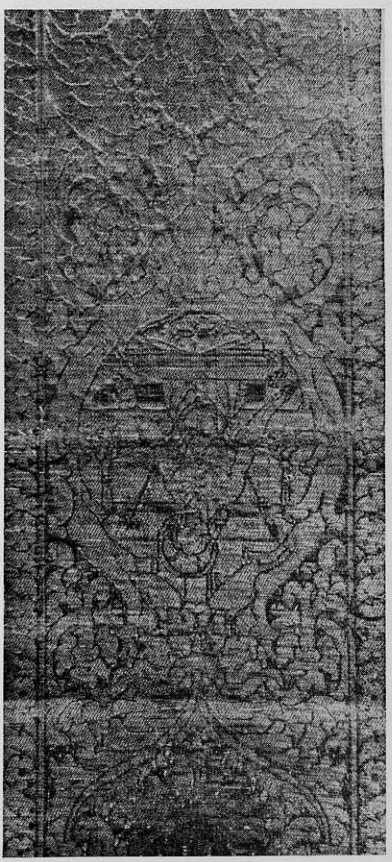

FIG. 5

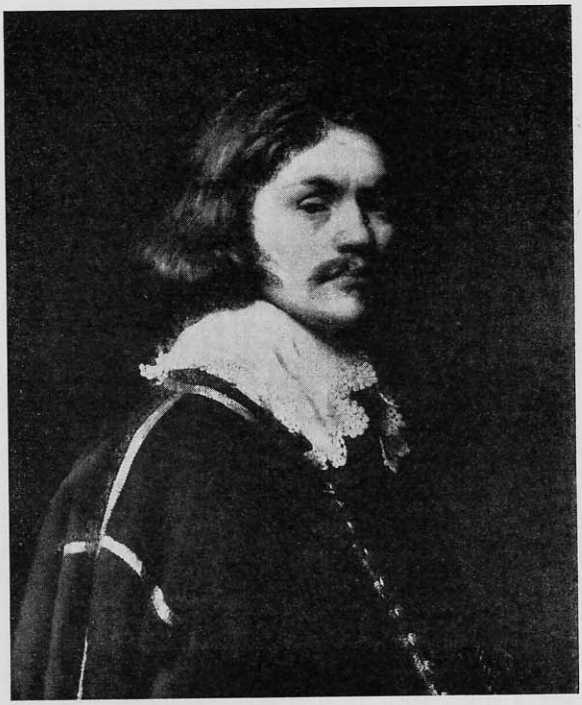

FIG. 1

PORTRAITS BY JACQUES BLANCHARD

In the Exhibition of XVII Century French Painting held at the Institute during February, the visitor was attracted by an anonymous portrait of a young cavalier (Fig. 1), with its convincing characterization, its fine color composition and its delicate execution. The red-haired model, seemingly combining a wild, sensuous nature with a melancholy temperament, wears a becoming pale green mantle with silver braid and buttons. His white lace collar brings out the pale flesh tones typical of red haired people, with blue veins visible around the slightly reddened eyes.

The painting, which belongs to Mrs. John S. Newberry, has been attributed at various times to the Flemish, Italian, and even Spanish schools. Since it seemed more probable that it belonged to the school situated in the middle of the ones mentioned,—the French,—which in earlier periods was influenced at one time or another by the art of its neighboring countries, it was included in our exhibition. It proved to fit in perfectly, combining the realism characteristic of masters like the Le Nains or Valentin, with the elegance and decorative quality of the painters of the "grand style" like Philippe de Champaigne. Remembering the portrait of the sculptor Duquesnoy by Jacques Blanchard in the Czernin collection in Vienna (Fig. 2), and its similarity in style to the present one, I had some years ago suggested the name of this painter as author of the Detroit portrait. Dur-

ing the course of the exhibition Blanchard's signature and the date 1631 were found on the picture by Mr. E. P. Richardson.

Blanchard, called the French Titian, had a great reputation during his life time, yet with the exception of a few religious and allegorical compositions, little seems to remain of the many important orders he received. Best known are the *Pentecost* in the sacristy of Notre Dame, Paris, the *Charity* in the Louvre, and in this country the charming painting in the Metropolitan Museum, *Angélique and Mador,* which shows him under the influence of Titian and Tintoretto. The two portraits in Vienna and Detroit, however, are more closely connected with Van Dyck, with whom the French painter was contemporary (Blanchard, born in 1600, died in 1638; Van Dyck, born in 1599, died in 1641) and whom he could have met in Italy.

Blanchard, who was born in Paris, studied first with his uncle Nicolas Bollery; on the way to Italy in 1621 he stopped at Lyons with the painter Horace Leblanc, who worked for the Duke of Angoulême. He stayed with

FIG. 2

FIG. 3

him until 1624, then traveled to Venice, where he executed decorations for the country place of a Venetian nobleman. After two years he went to Turin, where he received new orders, and from there back to Lyons. Returning to Paris in 1628 he had much success with large compositions and decorative paintings, as well as smaller Madonna compositions and portraits.

At first glance his larger compositions do not seem to differ much from those of his French contemporaries, like the classicists Vouet and Le Sueur. However, Blanchard has been rightly praised as being somewhat nearer to nature and of a greater sensuality, in his nude figures reminding one of Rubens' style. H. Lemonnier says of him: "Blanchard n'est pas innocent; il s'est plu (presque seul à cette epoche) à une interpretation sensuelle de la beauté feminine. On pretend, du reste, qu'il aime trop les femmes (les deux siennes) et qu'il en mourut."

The two portraits described here

give, I believe, a clue to the authorship of a puzzle in the Munich Pinakothek, the portrait of a cavalier with a dog (Fig. 3), which remains in the mind of visitors to this splendid gallery on account of the proud expression of the gentleman's countenance and the brilliant red of his costume. It is now attributed to a Flemish artist of about 1630, since none of the various names which had been suggested seemed convincing. It was first given to the Spaniard Antonio Pereda, then to the Brussels painter Luigi Gentile (1606-1667), who worked in Italy, and then to Rubens' pupil Erasmus Quellinus (1607-1678). Compared with the works of the last two painters, both suggested by good authorities, the portrait seems of superior quality and somewhat earlier in date. Most of the portraits we know by Erasmus Quellinus belong to the fifties of the seventeenth century, while the present one shows the costume of about 1630. The composition, with its flowing diagonal lines, can be well compared with the Czernin picture, while the execution of the costume, in such details as the collar and the braid, is so similar to the Detroit painting that it can scarcely be doubted that we have to do with the same artist.

Blanchard's portraits are hardly inferior to Van Dyck's in quality. While less suave and enchanting, they have a solidity of structure, a forcefulness of expression and a strong local color scheme that are typically French and gives them a special place among the portraits of the seventeenth century, a century which, with its individualistic tendencies, is richer than any other period in portrait painting.

W. R. VALENTINER.

ANNUAL EXHIBITION OF AMERICAN ART

It has been decided to re-establish our Annual Exhibition of American Art, which for seventeen years up to 1931 was held in the spring of each year. The opening view of the exhibition will be held Friday evening, April 2, and the exhibit will remain on view through Sunday, May 2. The entire exhibition suite, consisting of three galleries, will be given over to the purpose.

As a special feature of this year's exhibit, a selected group of paintings by Thomas Eakins, that sturdy realist of the nineteenth century who left a marked influence on American art, will be held in the first small gallery, while in the second small room will be shown some of the more important paintings by Winslow Homer, the centenary of whose birth is now being celebrated. Pictures for these special exhibits will be drawn largely from the collections of other important museums. The large exhibition gallery will be devoted to a selected exhibition of forty to fifty paintings by the best contemporary American artists, including such important exponents of American painting as Gifford Beal, Thomas Hart Benton, Alexander Brook, Charles Burchfield, John Carroll, John Steuart Curry, Leon Kroll, Walt Kuhn, Yasuo Kuniyoshi, Reginald Marsh, Charles Rosen and John Sloan.

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When the contributions of any member shall reach a sum total of $1,000 in money or property he or she shall become ipso facto a governing member of the corporation.

The Founders Society is a potent force in the affairs of The Detroit Institute of Arts. Its membership funds and the income from its endowments have been an important factor in keeping the Art Institute services unimpaired during the past few years. In addition to this, its funds, used for the purchase of significant art objects, have added to the collections some of their greatest treasures, which are a perpetual memorial to the Founders Society.

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CALENDAR OF EXHIBITIONS AND LECTURES FOR MARCH, 1937

EXHIBITIONS

March 1-28. Paintings, Watercolors, Drawings and Etchings by Lyonel Feininger.
March 1-28. Watercolors by John Marin.
March 1-31. Engravings by Albrecht Dürer.

RUSSELL A. ALGER HOUSE

March 16-31. French Prints of the XVII and XVIII Centuries.

GALLERY TALKS

(Tuesdays at 8 p. m. and Wednesdays at 2:30)

March 9-10. "The Far East."
March 16-17. "The Practical Romans as Artists."
March 23-24. "The Greek Ideal."
March 30-31. "An Egyptian Mummy and a Babylonian Dragon."

RADIO TALKS

(Sundays at 1:05 over WWJ, by John D. Morse)

March 7. "Lyonel Feininger."
March 14. "John Marin."
March 21. "English Genre Painters."
March 28. "Caravaggio."

MOTION PICTURE PROGRAMS FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

(Wednesdays at 4:00 p. m.)

March 10. "Declaration of Independence."
March 17. "Yorktown."
March 24. "Vincennes."
March 31. "Daniel Boone."

WORLD ADVENTURE SERIES

(Illustrated lectures)

March 14, 3:30. "The 1936 Martin Johnson Borneo Expedition"—by Osa Johnson (at the Cass Tech.).
March 14, 8:30. Repeating the lecture of the afternoon (at the Cass Tech.).
March 16, 8:30. "The Joys of Japan—Today and Yesterday"—by Burton Holmes.
March 21, 3:30. "Modern Turkey"—by Julian Bryan.
March 23, 8:30. "England, Scotland, Wales"—by Burton Holmes.
March 28, 3:30. "Can the Dead Communicate with the Living?"—by Dr. Howard Higgins (demonstration).
March 28, 8:30. Repeating the lecture of the afternoon.

DETROIT GARDEN CENTER

(Russell A. Alger House)

March 4, 3:00 p. m. "Perennials for the Small Garden," by Gerald Wallace, of Batavia, New York.
March 18, 3:00 p. m. "The Imperial Gardens of Old Russia," by Irena Khradross.