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

AMSTERDAM CHURCH DURING THE SERMON
EMANUEL DE WITTE
DUTCH. 1617-1692
GIFT OF EDSEL B. FORD

Vol. XVI. APRIL, 1937 No. 7

ARCHITECTURAL PAINTING IN THE NETHERLANDS

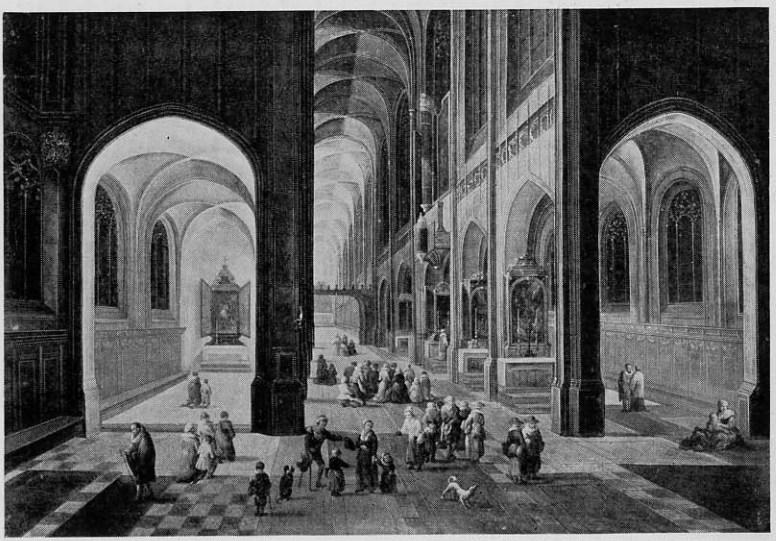
It is curious that, although this country is very rich in certain Dutch and Flemish artists, one cannot say that the Netherlands school as a whole is well represented. The interest of American museums and collectors has been confined to certain great figures and with rare exceptions has not extended to the less conspicuous phases of the school. The result is a magnificent wealth of pictures by the great portrait and landscape painters, while one looks almost in vain for the still life painters (as was pointed out in the *Bulletin* a year ago) or for the architectural painters. It may be said that these are lesser phases of Dutch and Flemish art, by-paths in the great map of seventeenth century painting. Yet as every one knows, there is a special pleasure in side roads; and side roads may also conduct one through fresh and delightful territory to the same destination as the main highway.

This is the case, certainly, with the Dutch and Flemish architectural painters. The painting of architectural subjects as a separate genre, the interiors of churches, imaginary palaces and the like, sprang up in the 1560's and flourished until the 1680's, forming an interest which began with the contemporaries of Pieter Bruegel and came to a climax with the great flowering of Dutch painting in the third quarter of the seventeenth century.

It is a theme which thus began simultaneously with a new period of European culture and lived through its entire length of development. It can happen, sometimes, that an age may find in a single subject something especially adapted to its tastes and to the solution of the esthetic problems it has set for itself. When this happens, generations of painters may devote their efforts to the same subject. Even the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, which are devoted to novelty, found such a theme in the still life. Courbet, Manet and Cézanne found compositions of flowers or fruits an opportunity for working out their interest in luminous color and in plastic volume; and for nearly a hundred years painters have gone on expressing variations of the same interests in the same subject matter, so that one could almost write the history of modern art in its still lifes. This is the case also with the Dutch architectural paintings. The seventeeth century had two great esthetic interests—the effect of space and the effect of light—which found in it a happy form of expression. It dealt with the effects upon which the landscape painters, the painters of interiors like de Hooch and Vermeer, and Rembrandt himself, constructed their art, although it acquired from its subject matter its own distinctive pleasure. Indeed, one can say that in the noble *Interior of an Amsterdam Church* by Emanuel de Witte, which is a recent gift of Mr. Edsel B. Ford, we have in a picture painted after all the other great voices in Dutch art were still, a kind of final statement of the Dutch esthetic consciousness.

The Art Institute has acquired through the Scripps Collection and through recent gifts a small but representative group of Dutch and Flemish architectural paintings. This article is a discussion of the group, the only one in this country that shows the development of a delightful though little understood phase of painting in the Netherlands.

The first phase of architectural painting derived from the architect. Hans Vredeman de Vries (1527-1604),



INTERIOR OF A GOTHIC CATHEDRAL
PEETER NEEFS THE ELDER
FLEMISH. 1578-1656
JAMES E. SCRIPPS COLLECTION

who founded the Dutch baroque style. The predilection of Dutch architects to design in long receding perspectives was as strong as that of their Latin contemporaries, who created the vistas of the great baroque gardens of France and Italy. But less fortunate than they, Vredeman de Vries found no such opportunity for actual construction and was forced to content himself with painted wall perspectives and with his books of engraved designs. From the interest aroused by the elaborate and fanciful perspectives in his books, the genre of architectural painting grew up among the Antwerp painters and flourished there in two generations of Steenwycks and Neefs.

The Interior of a Gothic Cathedral by Peeter Neefs the Elder, is typical of the first phase of architectural painting. The observer has the impression of being a Gulliver looking into a Lilliputian cathedral, from which one wall has been removed. It offers a glimpse of a delightful toy world, but one which it would be impossible to enter. Neefs worked in a pleasant, somewhat dry color harmony of cool whites and warm pinks and browns. The light changes from darkness in the foreground to light in the distant choir, with interesting variations in the side aisles and chapels. But these are secondary: the effect of space is created by the meticulous drawing of the interior in straight-line perspective. Its architectural derivation is evident. The walls of the imagined cathedral are either at right angles to the picture plane or parallel to it, so that the whole building could be drawn receding to a single vanishing point at the high altar. The color, the light, the grace notes of movement in the line of people that winds casually inward, serve agreeably to break up the regularity of the effect. But it is a draughtsman's illusion: it was left for the next generation to find a painter's method of

creating the same effects in terms of light and air.

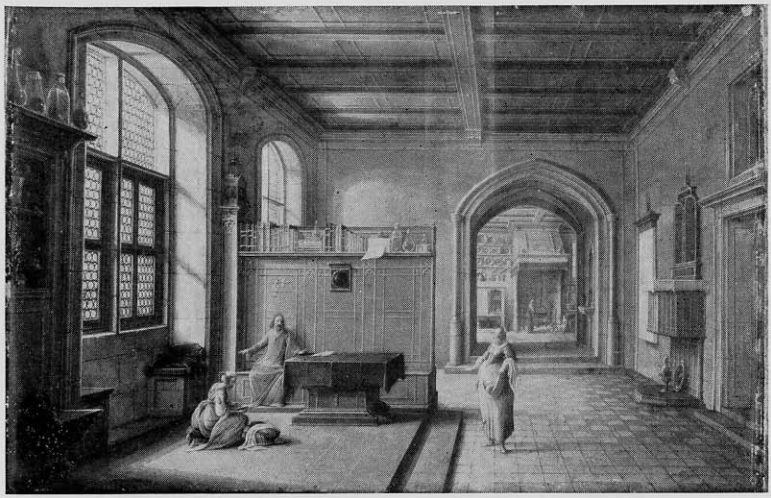
The second family of Antwerp painters is represented by *Christ in the House of Martha and Mary* by Hendrik Steenwyck the Younger, (c. 1580-1649). The elder Steenwyck, a pupil of Vredeman de Vries, fled during the religious troubles to Frankfort. His son was born in Germany but returned to Antwerp, where he became a friend of Van Dyck. By the latter's agency he was introduced to Charles I of England, in 1629, and spent the rest of his life in London.

The figures which give our picture its title are only staffage in an architectural perspective that is a most curious mélange of palace and house and church. The window seats and shelves of books, on the screen at the left, give that part of the room an intimate, domestic character, while on the wall opposite are a pulpit and tables of the Commandments. A vaulted Gothic room with a wall fountain gives a perspective into a kitchen with a huge Gothic fireplace and two figures busy with the preparations for a meal. The fantasy of the interior is increased by the pallor of the color and the inanimate, ghostly appearance of the figures. The transparency of the details, which are drawn in whitish outlines upon the flat tones of the walls, adds to the strange effect.

Steenwyck was a most popular painter in his day. Charles I gave him a pension and owned a picture of the same subject as ours. A picture in the Louvre (No. 2581), which comes from the collection of Louis XIV, is an exact repetition of ours on a slightly larger scale, with staffage by another hand.

The resources of Dutch painting were overwhelmingly enlarged and altered in the decades of 1630 to 1650, largely by Rembrandt's influence, and the straight-line perspective of Neefs and Steenwyck was replaced by new forms. The first new style was developed in Haarlem by an extraordinary genius, Saenredam, who broke away from the orthogonal construction of rooms within the picture, and painted vistas within the Utrecht or Haarlem churches with an increasing subtlety of color but without the chiaroscuro or the warmth of feeling which Rembrandt gave to Dutch art. The sharp, clear drawing and the coldness of his interiors make one think of the temperament of a modern abstract painter.

Job Berckheyde, who is the next in importance to Saenredam of the Haarlem architectural painters, had a warmer temperament. The Art Institute has just received one of his rare architectural paintings, signed and dated 1676, as the gift of Mr. N. Katz of Dieren, Holland. Neither Job Berckheyde nor his brother, Gerrit, (1638-98) was primarily a painter of architecture. Job was a genre and religious painter of the first rank, while Gerrit is known for the town landscapes or street views, of which his *View of the Groote Kerk, Haarlem* in our collection is a charming example. Job Berckheyde's view of the inside of the same building shows the side aisle and a glimpse of the choir through the transept arch to the left. The perspective is still a single long vista, carried out with an architectural exactness and a vast, cold, empty character (especially in the upper part) which reveals his connection with Saenredam. But the deep blues and grays of the stone, together with the chestnut browns of the woodwork and the memorial tablets, form an altogether original color harmony; and, more original still, the whole interior is wrapped in a veil of cool, transparent shadow. The afternoon sun streams across the silent upper spaces of the church to splash upon the planes of walls and the

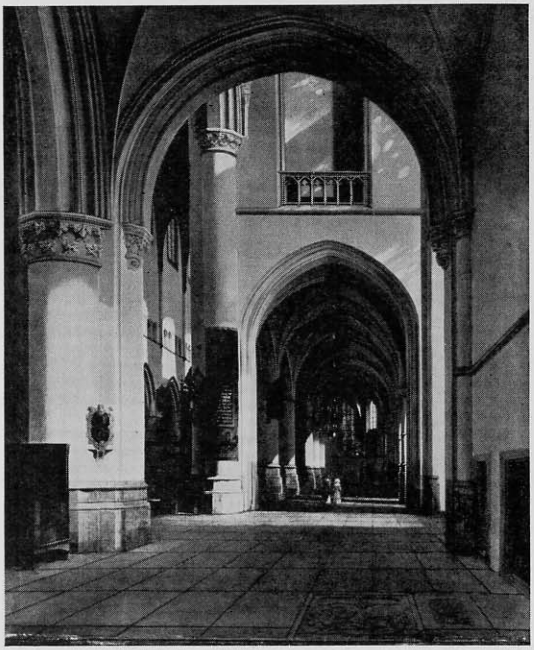


CHRIST IN THE HOUSE OF MARY AND MARTHA
HENDRIK VAN STEENWYCK THE YOUNGER
FLEMISH. C. 1580-1649
JAMES E. SCRIPPS COLLECTION

rounded surface of columns with that strangely poetic effect which we have all noticed. In the aisle beyond the transept the light is yellower. It shines between the pillars at the right and falls with a warm glow upon the opposite arcade, glinting here and there upon the great chandeliers that hang in a row down the long vista of vaults. Two women move silently down this corridor away from the spectator. It is in the painting of these figures and of the bands of light across the gathering darkness of the aisle that Berckheyde shows not only a new soft atmospheric touch but also his ability to catch the silent, mysterious impressiveness which lives in these beams of slanting light and the deserted perspectives of a great church.

The last great period of Dutch art, from 1650 to 1675, was the period of Vermeer, as the preceding decades had been dominated by Rembrandt. But although one finds the central character of this period in Vermeer's utter detachment, his cool, bright color and his sensitive use of pure white light, Vermeer was not the only great artist of Delft. Pieter de Hooch's contribution is familiar; but that of the architectural painters of Delft is not to be ignored. The revolt against Rembrandt's warm, dark chiaroscuro toward the transparent light of the Vermeer period occurred first, as a matter of fact, among the architectural painters of Delft, Gerard Houckgeest, Emanuel de Witte, and Hendrick Cornelisz van Vliet.

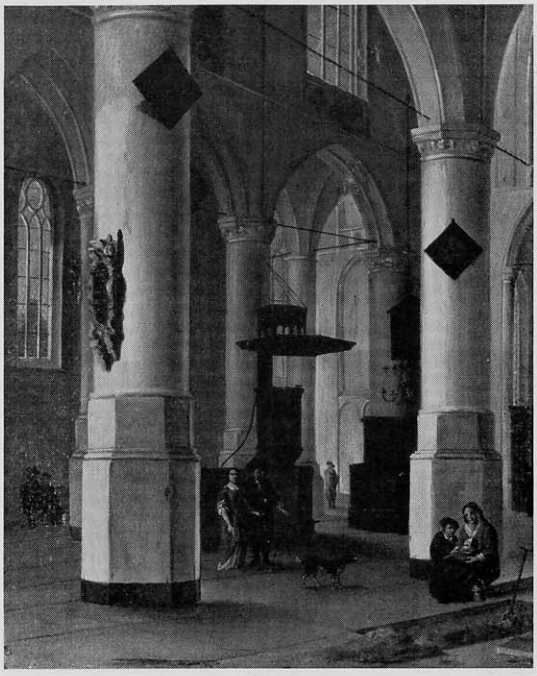
Van Vliet's *Interior of the Nieuwe Kerk in Delft* illustrates the revolution in the artist's understanding of space which these Delft painters carried out about 1650. No longer is one a Gulliver, looking from outside into a neatly arranged series of cubical rooms; the observer is within an actual church, looking diagonally across from the aisle through the columns of the nave. The oblique angle at which the church is seen, throws the vanishing point of the lines of perspective outside the frame of the picture. This diagonal angle of vision gives at



INTERIOR OF THE GROOTE KERK, HAARLEM
JOB BERCKHEYDE
DUTCH. 1630-1693
GIFT OF N. KATZ, DIEREN, HOLLAND

once an extraordinary richness and variety to the combinations of forms. The distance one sees is shorter than in the older formula, yet the effect of space is increased; for it opens out upon every side. There is no longer any suggestion of an architect's plan but instead the vivid effect of living experience. Distance is created less by the help of drawing than by the gradation of light in the white interior. The staffage, the dark spots of pulpit and funeral hatchments, become suddenly more interesting and more important in the design.

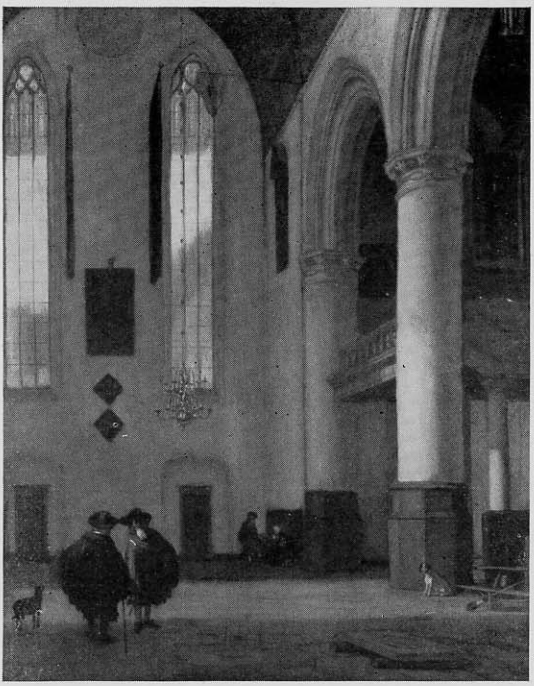
Van Vliet's diffused yellowish and silver light indicates that he, too, was working on the same problems of vision that occupied Vermeer and Pieter de Hooch at the same time. But his work remained somewhat dry and it was left for Emanuel de Witte (1617-92) to bring architectural painting to perfection. There are very few Dutch artists whose personal history is known to us. De Witte's biography is fairly complete but, curiously enough, it throws no light upon his work. He was an atheist in an age of deep religious faith, a lover of argument and wrangling, whose surly manners and bitter tongue earned him the dislike of artists and laymen alike. Poor, as were most of the great Dutch artists, and unable to manage money affairs, he put himself in the hands of a patron, who was to pay him his wage, and keep in return all the work he should produce. Yet his harsh disposition again and again shattered this arrangement and he went from one protector to another, pursued by quarrels and lawsuits. Yet the major part of his life work was



INTERIOR OF THE NIEUWE KERK, DELFT
HENDRIK VAN VLIET
DUTCH. C. 1611-1675
JAMES E. SCRIPPS COLLECTION

the painting of the interior of churches with a most sensitive eye for the pure esthetics of light and space, and an unsurpassed appreciation of the silence and religious calm to be found in these great Gothic buildings. He worked first in Delft in a manner close to Van Vliet's, but sometime between 1650 and 1654 moved to Amsterdam, where he spent the remainder of his life.

In the *Interior of the Oude Kerk,* Amsterdam, signed and dated 1677, he has advanced far beyond the Delft formula. The observer stands within the center of a wide interior, whose walls are present by suggestion although one sees only a corner of the church. The slanting light of afternoon strikes across the nave in a wide band, picking out the heads and shoulders of two men standing near the observer, and falling solemnly upon a huge round pier at the right. The light is dusky and golden, glinting warmly upon the brass of the chandelier and reflecting with indescribable charm all through the vast shadowy interior overhead. Through the lancet windows of the end wall one can see dimly the sun-bathed fronts of buildings outside, the dark mass of their slate roofs and the cold white reflection of the sky. De Witte is here a complete master of the study of light which he and Vermeer and de Hooch had begun in Delft a quarter of a century before, creating in this picture a harmony of the golden beam of late afternoon sun, the warm reflection from the floor upward on the whitewashed



INTERIOR OF THE OUDE KERK, AMSTERDAM
EMANUEL DE WITTE
DUTCH. 1617-1692
JAMES E. SCRIPPS COLLECTION

walls, and the cold light of the sky in the windows.

Jantzen in *Das Niederländische Architekturbild* lists four large pictures done between 1683 and 1685 as de Witte's supreme achievement and the climax of this form of art. They are his *Church Interior* in the Tritsch Collection, Vienna; the *Interior of a Protestant Church* in Antwerp; the *Interior of a Gothic Church* in Amsterdam, and the *Church Interior* in Brussels. To these must be added the *Interior of an Amsterdam Church During the Sermon* recently given to the Art Institute by Mr. Edsel B. Ford. It is de Witte's last known picture, signed and dated October 1, 1686. By this time every other great figure in Dutch art was dead or had ceased to paint; the great outburst of Dutch art was over.

DeWitte has given us in this picture a summary of his art. The elements of the composition he had used many times before. He has combined the huge round piers of the Oude Kerk with the windows and vaults of Nieuwe Kerk, as he did in the Antwerp and Amsterdam pictures. The cloaked cavalier standing in the foreground with his back to the spectator, reappears frequently in other pictures; here his cloak is a deep blue and brown. The breadth of De Witte's touch in these figures is astonishing: one would not expect of Manet a bolder simplification into strong, unmixed strokes of color.

The light is coolly transparent and

of a delicate pearly tone in the shadow. Again one looks across an interior, filled with two different kinds of light, at windows which reflect the outer day; but the effect is here much more complicated. The windows have a band of stained glass, dull yellow and coral across their middle, and range from a white at the bottom to clear azure at their top. The interior is filled with soft, rich color notes—glossy dark browns and blacks in the crowd, black and dull gold and maroon in the banners and massive organ. Yet in spite of all this there is the same unity as in the smaller picture. The harmony of three different lights—morning sun, pearly shadow, and the reflection of blue sky—is more luminous and delightful when varied by so many contrasts. The light does not destroy the solidity of the forms, as it does in nineteenth century Impressionist pictures such as Monet's cathedrals. The great walls of the church rise firm and solid, the light floats dissolved in the still air within its vaults, in an extraordinary effect of nobility, silence and peace.

Six years later the painter, old and melancholy but savagely uncompromising as ever, was turned out of the house by his last patron, who swore a great oath that he would no longer endure his bitter temper. The artist went out, saying he had long thought on a matter that should save him the necessity of these words. Some bystanders, who saw the despair in his face, followed but lost him in the fog of a freezing night. He disappeared, to be found, seven weeks later when the ice melted, floating with a rope around his neck in a canal. Yet one can find no trace of that arrogant, scoffing, unhappy man in his work: he is rather the last representative of the detached, contemplative spirit and the mastery of pure esthetic effects of light and space, which form the final chapter of Dutch art.

E. P. Richardson.

"BLIND MAN'S BUFF" BY GEORGE MORLAND

A well-known painting by George Morland, entitled *Blind Man's Buff*,[1] has recently entered the Museum as the generous gift of Miss Elizabeth K. McMillan in memory of her sisters, Miss Mary Isabella McMillan and Miss Annie McMillan. This delightful picture, one of Morland's masterpieces, has been widely mentioned and reproduced in the majority of important monographs and articles dealing with the artist, and painted in his best style, represents Morland in a superb example of his work, which fills a particularly fitting place in the Museum's collection of eighteenth century English painting.

George Morland, who was born in London in 1763, came of an artistic family, and the son of Henry Morland, a distinguished painter in his own right, inherited his talent directly. The young Morland received his early training under the paternal eye, and already at the age of ten we find him exhibiting drawings of conspicuous merit in the London Academy. During the years to follow, he continued to study drawing and painting assiduously in the Academy schools, and after a period of apprenticeship with Philip Dawe, painter and mezzotint engraver, Morland embarked on a tour of France. On his return to England, he married Anne Ward, sister of the eminent engraver, William Ward, who was instrumental in spreading Morland's fame through his long series

[1]Oil on Canvas. 27½ inches by 35½ inches.

BLIND MAN'S BUFF
GEORGE MORLAND
ENGLISH. 1763-1804
GIFT OF ELIZABETH K. MC MILLAN
IN MEMORY OF HER SISTERS.
MARY ISABELLA MC MILLAN AND
ANNIE MCMILLAN

of mezzotints after the painter's work. 1799 found him living for a time on the Isle of Wight, where he painted his charming coast scenes. Again in London, the final years of Morland's life form a continuous story of various excesses and debtors' prisons, all of which eventually proved his undoing and brought about his premature death in 1804 at the age of forty-two.

So many lurid tales have been woven around Morland's name that he is oftentimes regarded as the most dissipated artist on record. It is true that he had a startling capacity for his favorite beverage, gin, that he kept rather dubious company, and that on more occasions than one he sold paintings only in order to drink, but on the other hand, he cannot have been the constantly debauched drunkard, as tradition pictures him, to have produced with such extraordinary regularity, throughout his career, the prodigious number of works accredited to him. The details of his paintings and published sketches are proof in themselves that Morland was a most painstaking artist, and judging from the quality of his enormous annual output, he must have been hard working, regardless of how much he indulged in the convivial tendencies of his day. The fact that four hundred and twenty of his paintings are known to have been engraved and given employment to seventy-four English engravers, as well as the fact, stated authentically by his brother that Morland completed seven hundred and

ninety-two paintings during the last eight years of his life establishes, certainly, an unusual record for enterprise in British art.

In connection with *Blind Man's Buff*, an amusing anecdote, which throws some light on Morland's character, has been handed down by one of his earliest biographers, George Dawe:[1] "The person who then managed the business of Mr. J. R. Smith[2] happened to call on Morland, and seeing the picture just mentioned in an unfinished state, he spoke of it to that gentleman in such terms as induced him to engage to purchase it, at the price of twelve guineas. This was much more than Morland expected, who was so overjoyed at the sudden prospect of such wealth, that he and Brooks made a strange resolution that, on receiving the cash, they would each drink twelve glasses of gin. Our artist applied himself sedulously to his task, finished it by the time appointed, and received the stipulated sum. Scarcely could the unruly joy of Morland wait till the person who brought the money had quitted the house, before he threw open the windows, and with his companion, Brooks, gave three cheers, then set off for the public house, where they piously performed their engagement."

During 1788-89, Morland inaugurated his famous series of paintings depicting children at their favorite games and diversions. It is known that *Blind Man's Buff* was his initial attempt with a juvenile subject and apparently proved a popular one, for the painting was engraved in mezzotint by the artist's brother-in-law, William Ward, and published in 1788, the same year that our picture was finished. Incidentally, as a "Morland print," this particular example of Ward's work is considered aesthetically one of his finest accomplishments in mezzotint and, from a collector's point of view, today ranks high in value.

BLIND MAN'S BUFF (AFTER MORLAND)
WILLIAM WARD
ENGLISH, 1762-1826

Blind Man's Buff, preceding by three

[1] George Dawe, *The Life of George Morland*, p. 37.
[2] John Raphael Smith (1752-1812), the distinguished mezzotint engraver.

years Morland's masterpiece and most popular painting, *The Interior of a Stable,* of 1791, in the London National Gallery, is an excellent reflection of the artist's foremost characteristics at the peak of his career. In the first place, the three central figures of the girl blindfolded with outstretched arms, the boy dodging at her feet, and the girl holding a dog, show with what power, grace, and vivacity Morland was able to draw and paint children and with what facility he could compose a 'genre" subject of this variety. Looking beyond the figures, one sees a masterpiece of landscape painting of the romantic type which Morland took over from Wilson and Gainsborough and developed as a most successful setting for a great number of his own figure pieces. Certain technical elements, such as the suffused play of light and shade and the soft blond tone which bathes the whole painting, indicate that Morland was an admirer of the work of Adrian van Ostade, and at the same time, Chardin is suggested in the use of rich, fat pigment, and Greuze to some degree in the sentimentality of the children; but whatever Morland borrowed from other painters and schools of painting he consolidated so skillfully into his own personal style that at its best his manner of painting is fresh, individual, and characterized by the strength and directness which we find in our picture.

As a representative of the period in England during which George, as Prince of Wales, together with his brothers and Beau Brummell were setting the stage for the colorful social atmosphere which had its heyday and decline during the Regency, Morland has been fittingly described by Mr. Collins Baker in these words:[1] "Morland represents the *tempo* of his age at its weakest. If he had been steadier and less harassed perhaps he would have given us in paint what Rowlandson gave in line and wash: the more robust floridity of that generation . . . He falls between two stools—the romance of Wilson and Gainsborough on the one hand, and on the other the realism of the Dutch or Stubbs or Ben Marshall. His median position is on a sort of cushion stuffed with the rococo sentiment and exuberance of his disillusioned artificial age."

JOHN S. NEWBERRY, JR.

HIGH RENAISSANCE FURNITURE AT ALGER HOUSE

The taste for the sumptuous and the wonderful in the late sixteenth century is illustrated by an uncommonly fine writing cabinet[1] which has recently been added to the collection at Alger House through the generosity of Mr. and Mrs. Edgar B. Whitcomb. Here in all its rich display of carving and fine wood is the magnificence which drew testy comment from Michel de Montaigne when that great essayist for the first time felt the impact of High Renaissance taste during his sojourn at Rome in 1580. "But M. de Montaigne objected because the magnificence of this furniture was not only useless in itself, but liable to give great trouble in keeping it from hurt . . ."[2] Such was the displeasure his scribe recorded. With our elaborately carved cabinet in mind, it is easy to follow his objection that it is "liable to give great trouble in keeping it from hurt." Indeed, it is extraordi-

[1]C. H. Collins Baker, *British Painting,* 1933, pp.131-32.

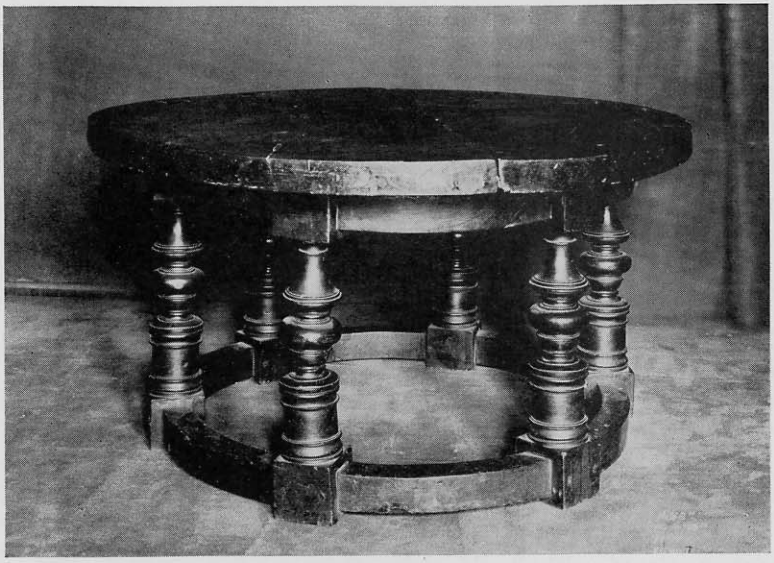
[1]Walnut. Height 5 feet. Very similar to one in the Museo Civico, Milan.

nary that some three hundred and fifty years have dealt with it no more severely; it is remarkably preserved. But one cannot dismiss this kind of magnificence, as Montaigne did, "as useless in itself." Furniture like our cabinet was designed for interior backgrounds far different from those of the Early Renaissance. These rooms, with their broad expanses of painted plaster walls, undisguised timber ceilings, and floors paved with red tile, were enhancing to the ponderous and tranquil beauty of quattrocento furniture, patterned with reticent intarsia arabesques, and reservedly carved in low relief. But the demand for splendour and luxury advanced with the Renaissance. Walls were extravagantly covered with patterned damasks and velvets of rich positive colors. Floors were paved with marble in place of tile, and the ceilings, now deeply coffered in designs of antique inspiration, glowed with burnished gold leaf and warm colors. In these settings, only the dark gleaming walnut furniture of the High Renaissance could be effective. To enrich their work, furniture craftsmen relied almost exclusively upon high relief and the ever satisfying practice of using wood of beautiful grain.

Our cabinet fits perfectly into this category. Divided into two parts, the upper half has a front panel of wonderfully grained walnut which drops to form the writing surface, and reveals within an ingenious architectural arrangement of drawers and compartments divided by panels, pilasters, and Roman military figures garbed in cuirass and greaves. Three small doors are adorned with deep niches, each occupied by a nude figure with a child. Keyhole and side catches have handsome brass escutcheons. The four corners of the upper part are embellished with tiers of high relief figures, repeating the types of the inner compartment, while the deep cornice is carved with a row of ten ungainly *putti* bearing fruit. Double doors, whose arched panels are filled with more burl walnut, give access to the lower part of the cabinet. Tiers of Roman soldiers in high relief flank the doors on which carved turbaned heads serve as knobs. The whole piece rests upon carved lions couchant. An abundance of *putti* or naked cherubs lend their support throughout the carved embellishment of the cabinet. The Italians with their penchant for nicknames have called them *bambocci*, "the ugly little boys," which has given this type of furniture its name, the *bambocci* cabinet. True to its type, the cabinet in construction is a complex of whimsical surprises. The cornice breaks into two unexpected drawers. Likewise, the interior has a

BAMBOCCI WRITING CABINET
ITALIAN. XVI CENTURY
GIFT OF MR. AND MRS. EDGAR B. WHITCOMB

[2] *Journal of Montaigne's Travels* translated and edited by W. G. Waters, Vol. II, p. 74.



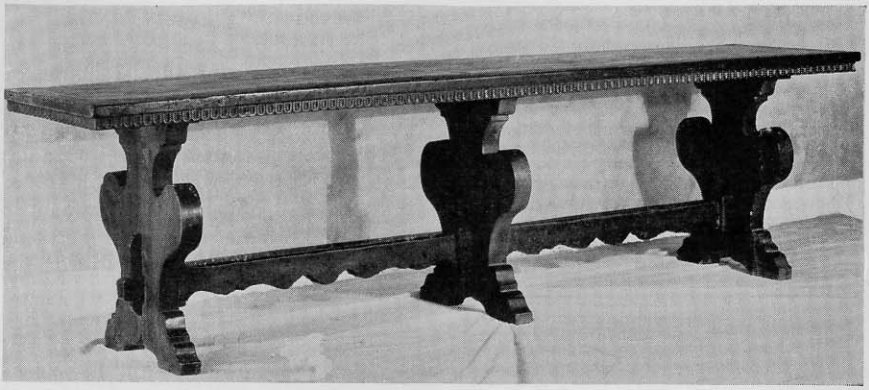
WALNUT CIRCULAR TABLE
BOLOGNA. LATE XVI CENTURY
GIFT OF ROBERT H. TANNAHILL

false drawer, and two others are concealed behind architectural fronts. Most intriguing, however, are six secret box compartments hidden neatly away in the drawer channels of the interior.

The *bambocci* cabinet made its appearance late in the sixteenth century, probably at Florence:[3] Since early in the century the sculpture of the High Renaissance had been exerting an ever increasing influence upon cabinet makers. Most especially were the Medici tombs of Michelangelo a source of inspiration. The *bambocci* cabinet with its wealth of carving marked the pinnacle of this development.

The gift of two High Renaissance tables brings to Alger House superior examples of this important furniture form. With the advent of the High Rennaissance, Bologna came to occupy a place of singular importance for the making of distinctive tables. Without reliance upon the universal vogue for sculptured ornament, these tables, either circular, or rectangular in form, depend entirely for their effect upon robust massiveness, and beauty of proportion. A remarkably fine example of the very rare circular type has been presented by Robert H. Tannahill.[4] The table is constructed of six baluster-turned legs which are connected at the base by circular stretchers, and which support a top of solid walnut, two and a half inches thick. The strength and solidity of the design, and the robust masculinity of its proportions are admirable. And these qualities are enhanced by the keen and subtle sense of proportion which has governed the turning of the legs; a rhythmical contrast of great beauty is established between the broad flat surfaces of the table and the well articu-

[3]W. von Bode, *Italian Renaissance Furniture*, p. 18.
[4]Walnut. Diameter, 4′ 9″; height, 2′ 8″. Ex coll. Stanford White, Charles Adams Platt.



WALNUT REFECTORY TABLE
TUSCAN (?). XVI CENTURY
GIFT OF MRS. ALLAN SHELDON

lated and quickly changing profiles of the turnings. And the rhythm is sustained by the round form of the table and the repetition of its round baluster supports.[5] Built of the best quality walnut, the table has acquired with age a deep-toned patina which is gleaming to the eye and soft to the touch. Such a piece served as a library or center table and was used for ornaments and objects of occasional use. Our table is difficult to date accurately. Most Bolognese tables of this type were made after 1600, but they also have ornamental details which stamp them as Baroque. For instance, small reverse curve brackets are fitted under the top, and the square sections of the legs are decorated with raised panels. The absence of applied ornament would reasonably indicate that our table represents the genesis of the type, and so a date in the the last decades of the sixteenth century seems plausible.

Of corresponding date, but very different in form and function is a long table of the refectory type, which, as the gift of Mrs. Allan Sheldon, was the first contribution to the permanent collection of Alger House.[6] The table is of walnut, the top resting upon three vase-shaped supports which are trussed together with shaped stretchers and held secure by wooden pins. A far cry from the carved marble tables of the Romans after which it is patterned, the piece is nevertheless an interesting functional translation into wood of the classic model which enjoyed such favor in the High Renaissance. The new material has demanded the use of stretchers to make the table secure. These have been shaped with gently undulating curves which echo faintly the vigorous outline of the three supports. A simple ornament of wide channelling has been carved under the top. The table is probably Tuscan in origin.

Compared with the dining tables of the quattrocento, this example of the High Rennaissance is very imposing. For centuries it had been the custom to eat at tables which consisted merely of a board laid upon saw-horse supports. To be sure, these had the advantage of being easily taken down and moved out of the way when not

[5]Similar tables exist in the collection of the Kaiser Friedrich Museum, Berlin, but in none of them is the danger of clumsiness so skillfully avoided.

[6]Walnut. Length, 10½ feet; width, 23 inches.

in use, but the very simplicity of their structure hardly permitted an elegant and sophisticated treatment in keeping with the taste of the mature Renaissance. So the more primitive type disappeared and the monumental tables of antiquity furnished the models for the new banquet board. These unusually long narrow tables are more understandable to us when we realize that, quite contrary to our custom, those at table were seated along only one side, with their backs to the wall, while the food was easily served from the unoccupied side. A dining table of the Renaissance may be for us a more living thing of the past if we turn once more to the pages of Montaigne's journal and read his first-hand account of an Italian dinner party at Rome on the last day of December, 1580. He was the guest of M. le Cardinal de Sens. "Both before and after dinner they all washed their hands, and to each one a napkin was served for use at table. Before the guests who sat beside or facing the host—as a mark of special honour—they placed the large silver trays with salt cellars, made like those which are put before guests of worship in France. Upon these trays was a napkin folded in four, and on the napkin was laid bread, a knife, a fork, and a spoon, and over all another napkin for use at table, the one first-named being left undisturbed. After the guests had seated themselves another plate of silver or earthenware would be placed beside the silver tray aforesaid, and this the guest would use during the repast. The carver gives a portion of whatever is served at table to all those seated, who never touch the dishes with their hands. Moreover, the dish set before the host is rarely shared by any of the guests."

PERRY T. RATHBONE.

CALENDAR OF EXHIBITIONS AND LECTURES

April 2–31. Annual Exhibition of American Art.
April 2–31. Paintings by Thomas Eakins and Winslow Homer.
April 20–May 8. Posters by Detroit High School Students in the Saturday Morning Art Class at the Detroit Institute of Arts.

RUSSEL A. ALGER HOUSE

April 5–May 9. Contemporary American and European Sculpture, and Sculptors' drawings.

SPECIAL LECTURES

April 9, 16, 23, and 30—8:30 p. m. "An Analysis of Modern Taste"—by Edgar P. Richardson.

RADIO TALKS

(Sundays at 1:05, over WWJ by John D. Morse)
April 4, 11, 18 and 25. American Art Exhibition.

MOTION PICTURE PROGRAMS FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

(Wednesdays at 4:00)

April 7. "Frontier Woman."
April 14. "Alexander Hamilton."
April 21. "Dixie."