

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



MADONNA AND CHILD  
PAINTING BY JACOPO BASSANO  
GIFT OF THE DETROIT MUSEUM OF ART FOUNDERS SOCIETY

## A MADONNA BY JACOPO BASSANO

Thanks to the Founders Society the Museum has been able to acquire a well composed, brilliantly executed and altogether charming painting representing the Madonna and Child by Jacopo da Ponte, called Bassano, who is better known by his night scenes of shepherds and cattle which belong to the earliest genre paintings in Italy, and which were repeated over and over again by his sons and a whole group of imitators. These effectively lighted compositions with figures of smaller compass and prevailing landscape background belong to his later period and seem to have grown out of the soil of the little country town of Bassano which lies at the foot of the mountains outside of Venice, where he was active, (born about 1510, died in 1592) during his whole life.

Jacopo's earlier works—altarpieces of life-size figures representing the Madonna with Saints, the Adoration of the Kings, the Good Samaritan and other biblical subjects—show him in a different mood, in closer connection with the great artistic movement in Venice during the time of Titian, Tintoretto and Paolo Veronese. But already in these works we recognize the unusual coloristic tendencies which so attract the eyes of modern painters, tendencies which were followed later by El Greco, the Cretan artist, who was first a pupil of Titian before he went to Spain, but who was influenced strongly by the art of Jacopo Bassano. This influence was so pronounced that some of Bassano's earlier works have been wrongly attributed to El Greco's Venetian period which they precede by almost twenty years. It was the same

enthusiasm for the brilliant colours and light effects in El Greco's paintings, together with their modern technique, that revived the interest in the fascinating art of Jacopo Bassano.

Our painting representing the Madonna in half length is almost unique in Bassano's work. Through the more intimate form of such a composition we feel in the pose of the Virgin and the Child that the artist was accustomed to large devotional altar pictures. The connection, in this respect, with the Madonna of the two altarpieces in the Munich Pinakothek and of the "Rest on the Flight into Egypt" in the Ambrosiana in Milan is striking. Also the type is the same, only our composition seems to be nearer to reality, as if it were the first time that the artist used the charming model of the young woman with braided hair. It is remarkably fresh, and almost of modern character in sentiment and technique.

Yet the High Renaissance method of composition is obvious enough in the *contraposto* movement of Madonna and Child, both turning their heads in opposite directions and intertwining the bodies and arms in such a manner that in a comparatively small space the greatest variety of curves is attained. A large expanse of dark background and the horizontal lines at the top of the canvas and in the middle, indicated by the arms of the Madonna, give rest to the constantly changing plastic planes and curves of the centre part.

The *contraposto* of the two heads is well motivated by the different sentiment expressed in them. The

Child seems to look graciously down upon the spectator, while the Virgin turns her head aside in an elegiac mood as if she contemplated the future of the Child.

The most beautiful part, however, is the colour. The lambent white veil painted with a strong *impasto*, creating a relief for the well modelled forms of the head, melts into the white lights which flicker over the carmine shades of the Madonna's garments. The deeper tones surrounding this centre part form a perfect colour harmony—the dark green blue mantle in the lower part of the picture and the glowing copper red of the upper part. The technique has the freedom and broadness characteristic of this first great epoch of subjective handwriting in painting initiated by Titian.

The painting belongs to the artist's middle so-called-baroque period,<sup>1</sup> and must have been painted at the beginning of this epoch, about 1540-45, when he turned from the influences of his youth (Bonifazio and Titian) to Parmigianino, the follower of Correggio, whose elongated forms and precious poses appear behind the strong personal style which Jacopo Bassano always maintained. To the same period, slightly later, belong two of the best paintings by Bassano in this country, the "Adoration of the Kings" in the Fogg Art Museum, and the "Good Samaritan" in the Platt collection at Englewood, New Jersey, while the small allegorical picture, The Birth of Love, in our museum is a sketch of the later years of the artist.

W. R. VALENTINER



THIS SILVER STATUETTE OF THE MADONNA AND CHILD, MADE IN SICILY TOWARDS THE END OF THE FIFTEENTH CENTURY, HAS BEEN PRESENTED BY MR. ROBERT H. TANNAHILL FOR THE PERMANENT COLLECTION OF THE RUSSELL A. ALGER BRANCH MUSEUM IN GROSSE POINTE.

1. The best characterization of this period has been given by D. von Hadeln in *Jahrbuch der Preussischen Kunstsammlungen*, 1914 pp. 52-70. Compare also W. Suida, *Belvedere*, 1936.



VELVET BROCADE DALMATIC  
FLORENTINE, XV CENTURY

GIFT OF MR. AND MRS. EDGAR B. WHITCOMB

## AN ITALIAN DALMATIC OF THE FIFTEENTH CENTURY

The textile collection has been enriched through the generosity of Mr. and Mrs. Edgar B. Whitcomb by a magnificent example of the weaver's and embroiderer's art, a XV century dalmatic from Florence.<sup>1</sup>

The dalmatic, a liturgical vestment worn by deacons, is an evolution of the Egypto-Roman tunic, a loose garment with long wide sleeves. Even the typical ornament of bands reaching from shoulder to hem was retained; but while in the civic tunic—of which so many specimens have been preserved in the dry soil of Egypt—these bands consist mostly of woolen tapestry, the dalmatic of

the Western Church is generally adorned with orphreys embroidered in gold and silk with figures of saints and scenes from the Scriptures, more rarely with woven figural orphreys.

The body of our dalmatic consists of fine red velvet brocaded in gold with a pomegranate pattern. The elegantly curved vertical stem is overlaid with acanthus leaves, and from it springs a bough ending in a large five-lobed leaf surrounding the artichoke-pomegranate. Two small floral motives, heraldic roses, fill the empty space. This costly velvet is cunningly cut so that the pattern is repeated along the outside and on the sleeves.

<sup>1</sup> Total length 82"; Width 43".

The chief beauty of the dalmatic rests, however, with the embroidered orphreys. For while the velvet still retains a strong Gothic feeling, the embroidery belongs to the early Renaissance. Vasari mentions repeatedly how famous artists, as for instance, Antonio Pollaiuolo, did not deem it beneath their dignity to make designs for embroidery, or, as was the case with Squarcione, were embroiderers as well as painters. It is rarely possible, however, to assign any embroidery to a definite artist; the technical limitation causes too great a change from the picture.

The narrow width of the orphreys calls for a simple type of composition. In our dalmatic the artist superimposed the separate arcades of an open loggia, tier after tier. Each arch is supported by slender twisted columns, and carries its segment of wall, with a central turret flanked by windows. Floors of red, blue and gold tiles and vaults with well moulded keystones prove that the embroidery belongs to that delightful period when the artists still struggled, not always successfully, with the problems of optical perspective.

Well framed by the arcade stand single figures, male and female saints, four on front and back of each orphrey, two on each sleeve: the apostle princes S. Peter and S. Paul, S. James Major clad in pilgrim's garb, S. Stephen the protomartyr, holy bishops, knights and hermits, noble ladies led by the princess S. Catherine. All these figures were worked separately on a linen base in stain stitch and brightly colored silks and were applied to the orphreys, generally outlined by one or two couched gold threads. The tooth of time has nibbled away many details, yet we are delighted with the marked individuality of each figurine.

As just one example we choose



DETAIL OF THE DALMATIC

S. Sebastian. It was impossible to represent the traditional naked youth, tied to a tree, pierced by arrows. We see instead an almost foppishly dressed young knight whose golden hose and gloves, whose tunic of rose, and mantle of many colors, would look very worldly were it not for his attribute, a huge arrow of gold.

Both velvet and embroidery place this fine dalmatic in the third quarter of the fifteenth century. The splendor of material is well matched by the high standard of workmanship.

ADELE COULIN WEIBEL

## ANNUAL EXHIBITION FOR MICHIGAN ARTISTS

The Annual Exhibition for Michigan Artists will open with a reception to the exhibitors given by the Founders Society on Tuesday evening, November 16, and the exhibition will continue through December 20. This exhibition, which is open to Michigan artists, including those living out of the state, has become during its many successive years an event of great interest to this locality.

More than \$1,500 in awards and prizes has been subscribed for the benefit of the exhibitors. These include the coveted Scarab Club Medal for the most important contribution to the exhibition, the Detroit Museum of Art Founders Society Prize for the best work by a resident Michigan artist, the Anna Scripps Whitcomb Prize for the best painting or sculpture exemplifying traditional or academic qualities, the Friends of Modern Art Prize given by Robert H. Tannahill for the best picture exemplifying modern tendencies, the Mrs. Standish Backus Prize for the best landscape, the Walter Piper Prize for the best figure subject, and the Mrs. Albert Kahn Prize for the best watercolor.

In addition to these awards of merit, purchase prizes have been contributed by W. J. Hartwig, E. Raymond Field, Mrs. George Kamperman, Mrs. Lillian Henkel Haass, Mrs. Ralph H. Booth, Mrs. Owen R. Skelton, Mr. Hal H. Smith and the Society of Art, Poetry and Music. These purchase prizes, together with the sales made in the galleries, will bring to the exhibitors a liberal patronage.

In order to insure a wider participation from other parts of the state, the jury this year, chosen by vote of the exhibitors, will consist

of James Calder, David Fredenthal, Carlos Lopez and Leon Makielski, representing the metropolitan area, including Ann Arbor, and John Davies and Dirk Van Dyke, of Flint, Michigan, and Mathias J. Alten, from Grand Rapids.

All works intended for the exhibition must be delivered to the Art Institute no later than Saturday, October 30. The jury will meet on November 1 and 2 to pass upon the entries submitted and to award prizes.

## HUMAN SIDE OF ART RADIO PROGRAM

The Sunday afternoon radio talks on The Human Side of Art, presented by Mr. Morse, began at 2:30 Sunday afternoon, October 24, over station CBW (formerly CRCW), and will continue over that station each Sunday at the same time. CBW, the official station of the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, has been the only station in the Detroit area to broadcast the full program of the New York Philharmonic Symphony, beginning at 3:00 each Sunday, and so the Institute is both pleased and grateful to have its art talks accepted for release when a good audience is assured.

Instead of choosing his subjects at random for the collections and special exhibitions as in former years, Mr. Morse will offer in a series of talks before Christmas a survey of art history from its beginnings up to the Renaissance, correlating the radio with the regular weekly talks in the galleries, for which the Human Side of Art program will serve as general and historical background. As formerly, illustrated resumes of the radio talks will be mailed to anyone sending a stamped return envelope to Mr. Morse, in care of the Institute.

## CALENDAR FOR NOVEMBER

## EXHIBITIONS

Annual Exhibition for Michigan Artists November 16 to December 20  
 Facsimile Prints of Old Master Drawings (Alger House) until November 15

## EVENTS

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|-----------|----|---------------|---|
| October   | 31 | 2:30          | Radio Talk, Station CBW (Formerly CRCW): <i>The Practical Romans as Artists</i> , Mr. Morse.    |
| November  | 2  | 2:00          | Pageant of History for Schools: <i>An Egyptian Mummy</i> , Mrs. Heath.                          |
|           |    | 8:30          | Lecture: (Survey of Textiles series) <i>Silk Trade in the Roman Empire</i> , Mrs. Weibel.       |
| Wednesday | 3  | 3:30          | Gallery Talk: <i>The Practical Romans as Artists</i> , Mr. Morse.                               |
| Thursday  | 4  | 7:45          | Gallery Talk: Repeated.   |
|           |    | 8:30          | Organ Recital, Mr. Danby.   |
| Friday    | 5  | 7:00          | Department of Recreation drawing class.   |
| Saturday  | 6  | 10:15         | Motion Picture for Schools (Chronicles of America Series): <i>Peter Stuyvesant</i> .            |
| Sunday    | 7  | 2:30          | Radio Talk: <i>Omar Khayyam's Public</i> , Mr. Morse.   |
| Tuesday   | 9  | 8:30          | Lecture: <i>The Fabrics of the Sasanian and Roman Empires</i> , Mrs. Weibel.                    |
| Wednesday | 10 | 3:30          | Gallery Talk: <i>The Art of the Islamic East</i> , Mr. Morse.                                   |
| Thursday  | 11 | 7:45          | Gallery Talk: Repeated.   |
|           |    | 8:30          | Organ Recital: Mr. Danby.   |
| Friday    | 12 | 7:00          | Department of Recreation drawing class.   |
| Saturday  | 13 | 10:15         | Motion Picture for Schools: <i>Gateway to the West</i> .  |
| Sunday    | 14 | 2:30          | Radio Talk: <i>Chinese Realism</i> , Mr. Morse.   |
| Tuesday   | 16 | 2:00          | Pageant of History for Schools: <i>Daily Life of the Greeks</i> , Mrs. Heath.                   |
|           |    | 8:00 to 11:00 | Michigan Artists Exhibition: Formal Opening for members of the Founders Society.                |
| Wednesday | 17 | 3:30          | Gallery Talk: <i>Forty Centuries of Chinese Art</i> , Mr. Morse.                                |
| Thursday  | 18 | 7:45          | Gallery Talk: Repeated.   |
|           |    | 8:30          | Organ Recital: Mr. Danby.   |
| Friday    | 19 | 7:00          | Department of Recreation drawing class.   |
| Saturday  | 20 | 10:15         | Motion Picture for Schools: <i>Wolfe and Montcalm</i> .   |
| Sunday    | 21 | 2:30          | Radio Talk: <i>Japanese Temples and Houses</i> , Mr. Morse.                                     |
| Tuesday   | 23 | 8:30          | Lecture: <i>Early Islamic Textiles and the Beginning of Textile Art in Italy</i> , Mrs. Weibel. |
| Wednesday | 24 | 3:30          | Gallery Talk: <i>Japanese Temples and Houses</i> , Mr. Morse.                                   |
| Thursday  | 25 |               | Thanksgiving. Museum open 1-5 P.M.  |
| Saturday  | 27 | 10:15         | Motion Picture for Schools: <i>The Eve of the Revolution</i> .                                  |
| Sunday    | 28 | 2:30          | Radio Talk: <i>American Art Before Columbus</i> , Mr. Morse.                                    |
| Tuesday   | 30 | 2:00          | Pageant of History for Schools: <i>The Romans Build an Empire</i> , Mrs. Heath.                 |
|           |    | 8:30          | Lecture: <i>The Pomegranate Pattern</i> , Mrs. Weibel.  |

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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.