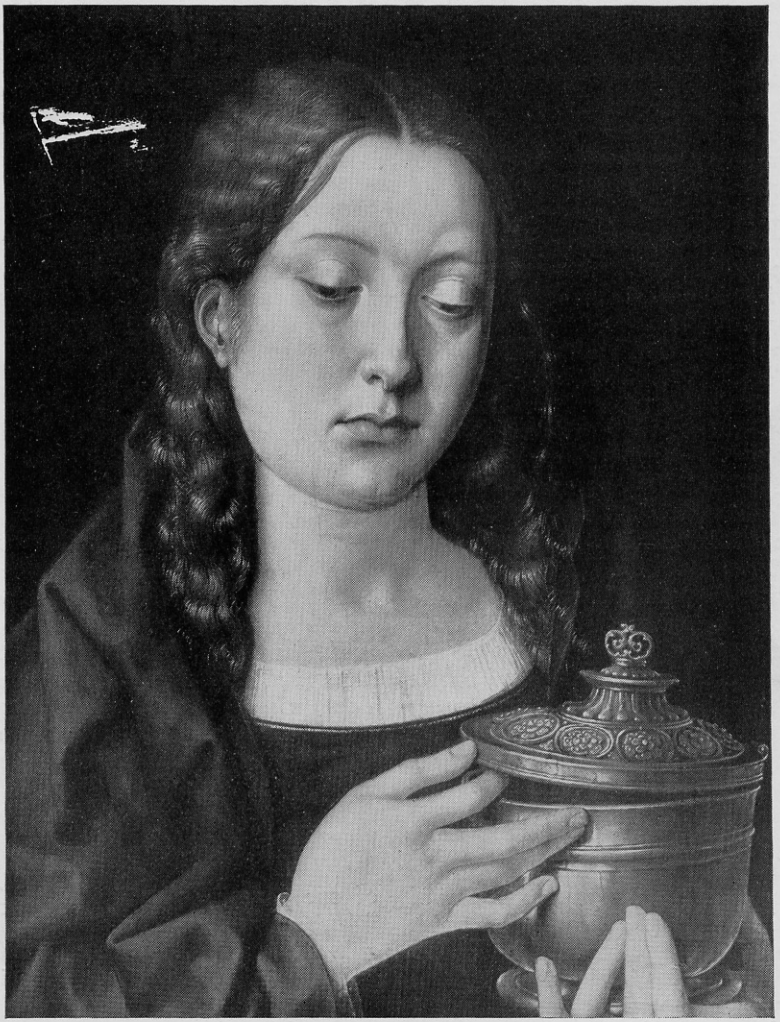
Bulletin of The Detroit Institute of Arts of the City of Detroit



CATHERINE OF ARAGON AS THE MAGDALEN
BY MASTER MICHIEL
FLEMISH, ACTIVE 1481-1520
GIFT OF THE FOUNDERS SOCIETY, 1940

Vol. XIX MAY, 1940 No. 8
In Two Parts: Part 1

CATHERINE OF ARAGON AS THE MAGDALEN BY MASTER MICHIEL

Early Flemish painting is not yet so thoroughly explored that all its important artists are well known. It is only since 1929 that Master Michiel, one of the most important Flemish painters of about the year 1500, has been identified and the works which were formerly scattered through the mass of anonymous paintings in old collections have gradually been assembled under his name. Master Michiel is thus a new name to most people. He can be best described as playing in the world of about 1500 somewhat the part that Van Dyck played around 1630. The museum has acquired as the gift of the Founders Society a portrait of *Catherine of Aragon as the Magdalen* which is a perfect example of the beauty of style and distinction of feeling that made him the foremost Flemish portrait painter of his day.[1]

Master Michiel's life was spent as a court painter. He seems to have developed in Bruges in the circle of Memling, for his art shows the influence of Memling's portraits; but he was also inspired, it would seem, by the elegance of the portraits of Jean Perreal (the Master of Moulins), the contemporary French court painter to the Dukes of Bourbon and the Valois court. Like a number of other artists of Bruges, he was attracted to the Spanish court, as Queen Isabella of Castile was a great lover of Flemish painting. He painted Queen Isabella's portrait in 1481 and may have been in her service from that time (and certainly from 1492) until her death in 1504. Afterwards he returned to the Netherlands and entered the service of the regent Margaret of Austria and her nephew, the future Emperor Charles V. In 1514 he visited the Danish court and painted the portrait of King Christian, and he may also have visited England. He was active in the Netherlands until about 1520 but his exact birth and death dates are unknown.

The better part of his works are either portraits or paintings like our *Magdalen* which are portraits under a religious guise, but like Van Dyck he painted religious compositions as well. While in Spain he collaborated with Juan de Flandes, another Flemish painter, in making for Queen Isabella an elaborate altar telling the life of Christ and the Madonna, in forty-six small painted panels of which one is now in our museum: Juan de Flandes' *Christ Crowned with Thorns*. He did also a very beautiful *Adoration of the Shepherds by Night,* now in the Wilstach collection of the Philadelphia Museum.

The qualities of our new painting are typical of all his work. Its reserve, elegance and melancholy are the tone of both his religious paintings and portraits. Its fresh and pleasing color, its delicacy and clarity of form, its forceful plasticity that surpasses Memling, constitute both the appeal and the distinction of his art. The color of our portrait is simple. The Magdalen's cloak is blue, her dress dark red. The cool flesh tones of the face and the gold brown hair are light against a black background.

The face of this handsome, proud and melancholy young woman in the pose of the Magdalen could not but

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provoke curiosity. She appears in three paintings by Master Michiel—in a portrait in Vienna, which obviously represents a lady of high rank, as the Magdalen in our picture, and as the Madonna in a painting in Berlin which once formed a diptych with the *Portrait of a Calatrava Knight* in the National Gallery, Washington. In the Vienna portrait she wears a black velvet dress trimmed with pearls and gold, and a heavy gold necklace and chain. The necklace is formed of linked Tudor roses and the letter K, while on the center of her bodice is the letter C in gold. Friedländer[2] was the first to suggest that of the personages at the Spanish court, she must be Catherine of Aragon, the younger daughter of Queen Isabella, who married Arthur, the Prince of Wales, in 1501, and after his death, the future Henry VIII of England. A portrait of Catherine's first husband, Prince Arthur, in Windsor Castle, shows him wearing a necklace of linked white and red Tudor roses of related form.[3] Glück suggests that the portrait in Vienna was done in England after her marriage of 1501, of which the necklace would be a symbol. And although there is no documentary evidence that Master Michiel painted the princess, there does exist, preserved in a report of the Spanish ambassador in England to his king in 1505, a remark of Catherine that shows she knew and admired Master Michiel's work. The ambassador reports at the end of a long diplomatic communication that he showed the princess two portraits of the Princess of Savoy by Peter van Coninxloo and that the princess said Michiel would have made better portraits. So, although the resemblance of these three portraits to the old picture preserved in the National Portrait Gallery in London as Catherine of Aragon is not very striking, the best students have been led to agree with Friedländer's identification. The Vienna portrait must have been done first. The others may have been ordered by Catherine herself or by some member of her suite, who, like the Calatrava Knight would have been glad to have the princess's features preserved in a devotional picture.

E. P. RICHARDSON.

1 Accession Number: 40.50. Panel: Height: 12⅝ inches; Width: 9⅞ inches. Described by F. Winkler in *Pantheon,* Vol. VI (1931), p. 175 and *Art in America,* Vol. XIX (1930-31), p. 247; Gustav Glück, *Burlington Magazine,* Vol. LXII (1933), p. 100; L. Baldass, *Burlington Magazine,* Vol. LXVII (1935), p. 77; E. P. Richardson, *The Art Quarterly,* Vol. II (1939), p. 102.
Collections: August Berg, Portland, Oregon; Clendenin J. Ryan, New York (1940).

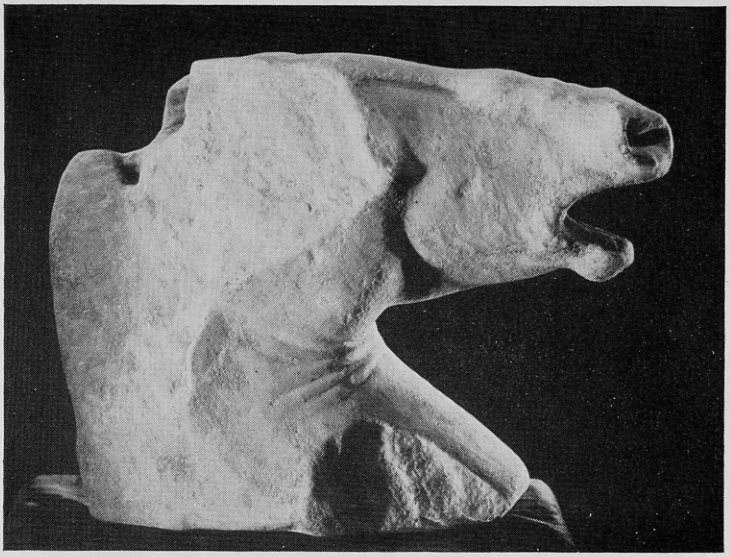
2 M. J. Friedländer, *Amtliche Berichte aus den . . . Kunstsammlungen,* Berlin, Vol. XXXVI (1915), p. 177.

3 Reproduced in the *Catalogue of an Exhibition of British Primitive Paintings,* Burlington House, London, 1923, No. 80, plate XXXV.

A GREEK MARBLE HEAD OF A HORSE

A fragmentary head of a horse[1] in Greek marble has recently been added to the collection of ancient sculpture in the Detroit Institute of Arts as a gift of the Founders Society. Its spirited vitality which immediately impresses the spectator brings to mind the words of Xenophon, written in the fourth century before Christ: "A prancing horse is a thing so graceful, terrible and astonishing that it rivets the gaze of all beholders, young and old alike. This is the attitude in which artists represent the horse on which gods and heroes ride."[2] The horse, from the time of its introduction from the East into Greece in the Minoan period, was a favorite subject with the Greek artist. It was hardly less popular with the Romans.

The new acquisition is executed in a fine-grained white marble, now tinged with a golden patina, probably



HEAD OF A HORSE
GREEK, FOURTH OR THIRD CENTURY B. C.
GIFT OF THE FOUNDERS SOCIETY, 1939

from the quarries on Mount Pentelicon near Athens. The surface of the oblique cut across the neck does not indicate clearly whether the head was once part of a complete figure of a horse or is in itself complete, intended for some special use. The latter seems most likely as the head is pierced by a circular opening through the neck and nose to allow the passage of water. It was undoubtedly used in ancient times as a fountain decoration and it is tempting to think that it once formed part of a large group, perhaps Poseidon rising from the water in his chariot drawn by sea horses spouting water. An alternative is that this head was placed in a somewhat similar group in the triangular pediment of a shrine or temple, after the manner of the Parthenon where the sun god, Helios, drives his horsedrawn chariot upward from the sea, and Selene, Goddess of the Moon, sinks into the sea with her horses, these groups filling the extremities of the triangular pedimental space. The original use of the head in a pedimental group does not actually exclude its later reuse in a fountain.

Traditionally the head was found in the northeastern part of Rome between the Quirinal and Pincian hills where the more recent gardens and properties of the Villa Ludovisi and the Villa Massimo were the successors of the ancient gardens of Sallust, the *Hortus Sallustiani,* one of the great series of parks and gardens, public and private, which encircled the ancient city. From the first century of the Christian era the gardens of Sallust were crown property and a favorite residence of the emperors who embellished them with works of art and watered them with fountains. The sculptures of these gardens were in large part the spoils of Greece by conquest, theft, or purchase, although some were Roman copies after Greek originals or original works by Roman artists. Chance discovery rather than organized exca-

vation has recovered numerous noted sculptures in this locality. It is not too much to presume that the Detroit head of a horse, said to be from the same region, is a Greek work, brought to Rome in late Republican or early Imperial times when the spoliation of Greece was common and almost continuous, and although it may have once been part of a pedimental group, it alone or the whole group was adapted by the Romans for use as a fountain decoration in the public gardens.

The determination of the date of execution of this head might be easier and more certain where it less damaged.[3] Viewed in relation to representations of the horse of more or less certain dating, the Detroit acquisition appears to represent the type of horse found in the second half of the fifth century before Christ on the Parthenon, but it has the somewhat more slender proportions of the spirited horses on the Alexander Sarcophagus of the last third of the fourth century. If the head was originally a fountain piece, it is unlikely that it antedates the early years of the Hellenistic age when fountains in private houses and public places became more common and more elaborate.

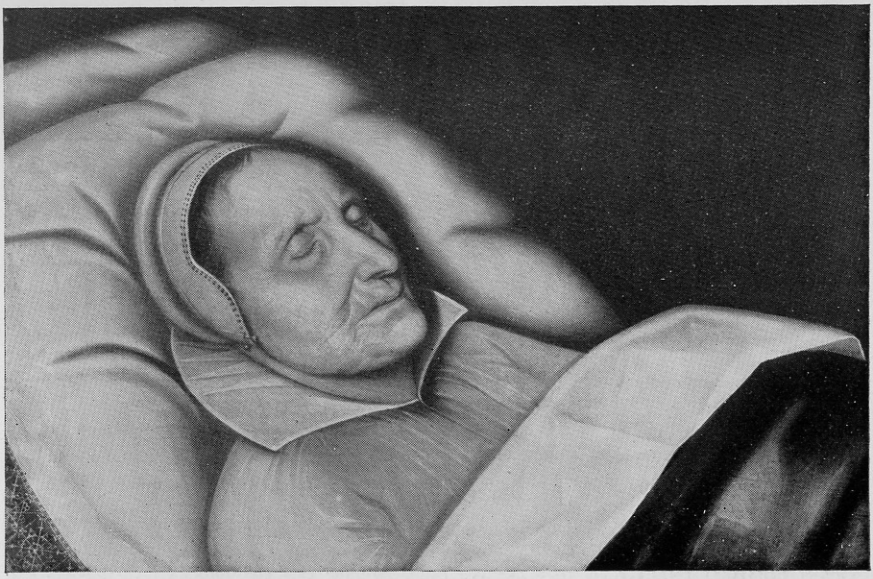
FRANCIS W. ROBINSON

1 Accession Number: 39.602. Marble. Height: 11⅝ inches; Length: 15¼ inches. Formerly Collection Giacomo Nunez, Rome.
2 Xenophon, *On the Art of Horsemanship,* xi, 8-9, in *Scripta Minora,* translated by E. C. Marchant, London, 1925, p. 355.
3 One eye, the ears, mane and forelock, as well as the metal bridle, are gone; the other eye and other parts of the surface are much worn. Apparently the ears and forelock were worked separately and attached as indicated by various cuttings and sockets in the crown of the head; these are perhaps the result of later restorations and reworkings.

A JACOBEAN PORTRAIT BY GHEERAERTS

One of the great themes of European art was for centuries the Christian idea of death. The image of the dead represented as sleeping the serene sleep of the just who have gone to their reward, and treated in a mood of lofty calm, was one of the important subjects for sculpture from the Middle Ages until almost modern times; and everyone is familiar with the recumbent tomb figures which ornament European churches and cathedrals. The painter was less often called on to deal with the subject of the dead but in the seventeenth century it is found in a number of paintings by some of the greatest painters. Upon the imagination of the Baroque, acutely sensitive to ideas of grandeur and awe, it exerted a profound appeal and the great theme of Christian death ran as a solemn, deep, noble tone beneath all the splendors and pageantries of Baroque art. Much cultural and historical interest is therefore attached to one of these rare paintings of the theme, a *Dead Woman* by Marc Gheeraerts, the Younger, just acquired by the Museum as the gift of Mr. and Mrs. E. Raymond Field.[1]

Marc Gheeraerts, the Younger (1561-1635), was born in Bruges. His father, a painter of Bruges, migrated to England in 1568 during the religious troubles and spent the better part of his remaining years there. The son was, however, trained in his art at Bruges under Lucas de Heere. He settled in England in 1590 and was one of the important painters of England during the long period from the closing years of Elizabeth throughout the reign of King James into the early years of Charles I. His activity thus coincides with one of the great epochs of English culture; but English painting of this time is as rare as its



PORTRAIT OF A DEAD WOMAN
BY MARC GHEERAERTS THE YOUNGER
FLEMISH (ACTIVE IN ENGLAND), 1561-1635
GIFT OF MR. AND MRS. E. RAYMOND FIELD, 1939

poetry is abundant, and we are fortunate to be able to add an example to our collection.

The idea of death excited a great fascination upon the imagination of the great English poets of Gheeraert's lifetime. It occurs with great frequency in the plays of Shakespeare and Marlowe, for example. It was one of the chief themes of lyric poetry. It comes out in strong relief in the lyrics of John Donne (who had his portrait painted in his shroud). The last great English poem before the Civil War brought the era to a close was Milton's *Lycidas,* one of the greatest of all elegies. In English painting the subject was more rare but Van Dyck's beautiful portrait of *Lady Venetia Digby on her Death Bed* in Dulwich and Kneller's portrait of the *Duke of Monmouth* in the National Portrait Gallery will occur to all who know the London collections; and Manchester owns a very curious portrait by John Souch of *Sir Thomas Aston by the Death Bed of his Wife,* which is filled with all kinds of enigmatic symbolic details. The Detroit portrait is a simple and straightforward representation of an old woman on her death bed, painted as if to illustrate the Christian doctrine of resignation and calm, and quite free from any tinge of fear. It is unsigned but closely related to the portrait of a *Dead Man* by Gheeraerts, signed and dated 1607, in the Kröller-Müller Collection at The Hague.[2] It is safe to attribute it on grounds of style to the first decade of the seventeenth century.

E. P. RICHARDSON

1 Accession Number: 39.662. Oil on panel. Height: 15 inches. Width: 22¾ inches. At the time of purchase it was attributed to Jean Bellegambe, the Younger; the present attribution is that of Dr. Valentiner.

2 Reproduced in C. H. Collins Baker and W. G. Constable, *English Painting of the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries,* Pantheon Series, New York, (1930), plate 23.

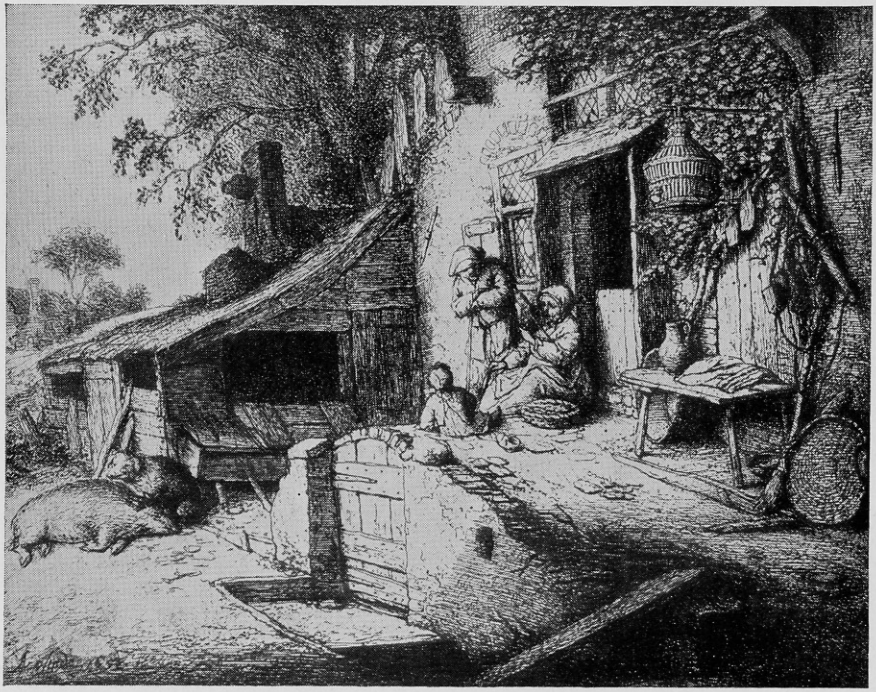
GERMAN, FLEMISH AND DUTCH PRINTS

A generous gift from Albert Kahn has added to the print collection of the Detroit Institute of Arts a group of sixteen engravings and etchings by early German, Flemish and Dutch masters. Related in character to Mr. Kahn's gift is the purchase by the Founders Society, from the Elizabeth P. Kirby and William H. Murphy Funds, of eleven other etchings by Flemish and Dutch masters of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. These acquisitions are of great importance to the Print Department, augmenting its collections and adding fine works, particularly in the field of seventeenth century Dutch genre, previously not well represented.

The new accessions include engraved portraits by Daniel and Jerome Hopfer, who worked in Augsburg in the sixteenth century. There is an etching by the sixteenth century Flemish artist, Jerome Cock, of the Antwerp publishing house which issued the engravings of Pieter Bruegel, the Elder (*c.* 1525-1569), two examples of which were given by Mr. Kahn. Six engravings represent Hendrick Goltzius and Hendrick Goudt, two Dutch artists of the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. The other etchings just acquired are all by Dutch masters of the seventeenth century: Pieter Molyn, the Elder, Adriaen van Ostade, Nicolaes Berchem, Karel du Jardin, Paul Potter, Jan and Adriaen van de Velde.

ISABEL WEADOCK

WOMAN SPINNING (ETCHING)
BY ADRIAEN VAN OSTADE
DUTCH, 1610-1685
GIFT OF ALBERT KAHN, 1940



CALENDAR FOR MAY AND JUNE

EXHIBITIONS

May 3 through June 2: The Age of Impressionism and Objective Realism.
May 28 through June 7: Annual Exhibition of the Art Department of Wayne University.
June 4 through June 30: Ninth Detroit International Salon of Photography.
June 11 through June 21: Work Done in the Art Department of the Detroit Public Schools.
Alger House, May 16 through June 23: Exhibition of Flower Paintings.

HOURS OF ADMISSION

The Detroit Institute of Arts, 5200 Woodward Avenue at Kirby, is open free daily except Mondays and Christmas Day Visiting hours are: Tuesday, Thursday, and Friday, 1 to 5 and 7 to 10; Wednesday, 1 to 5; Saturday, 9 to 5; Sunday, 2 to 6. The Russell A. Alger House, a branch museum for Italian Renaissance art and current exhibitions, at 32 Lake Shore Road, Grosse Pointe, is open free daily except Mondays from 1 to 5; Sunday, 2 to 6. Telephones: Detroit Institute of Arts, COlumbia 0360; Alger House, TUxedo 2-3888; Detroit Museum of Art Founders Society, COlumbia 4274.

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