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THE DETROIT INSTITUTE OF ARTS OF THE CITY OF DETROIT

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ADORATION OF THE SHEPHERDS
BY LUCA GIORDANO, ITALIAN (NAPLES), 1632-1705
Gift of the Founders Society, 1944

THE ADORATION OF THE SHEPHERDS BY LUCA GIORDANO (1632-1705) given to the Museum by the Founders Society, is an interesting and attractive picture. By a curious chance it is the first painting of this subject which has come into our collection and it embodies the timeless Christmas story in a spirit of joy and poetry that will give pleasure, no doubt, to many who know nothing of the picture's more strictly esthetic and historical values.

Luca Giordano was a great figure in the seventeenth century painting of Naples. The important Neapolitan baroque school has not hitherto been represented in our collection. He was indeed one of the most prolific and many-sided painters of the whole Italian baroque. "He had extraordinary talent, inexhaustible imagination, spirit, temperament, masterly skill of hand, a gigantic creativity," to quote Posse, who was in happier days the director of the Dresden gallery and one of the great connoisseurs of the Italian baroque. "The unbelievable swiftness with which he covered great surfaces with his paintings (he completed the dome of the Treasury of S. Martino in forty-eight hours, the high altar of S. Francesco Saverio in a day) was already proverbial among his contemporaries—his nickname was 'Fa Presto' and people spoke of him as 'fulmine della pittura.'" He worked in oil and fresco, and on every scale; painted every conceivable subject and was so prolific that his contemporaries estimated his oil paintings alone to have numbered five thousand. One story is that he was painting a Last Supper when a member of his family came into the studio to call him to dinner. "I'll come in a moment," he replied, "I've finished the Christ and all I have to do is the twelve apostles." In addition he was trained by his father, a picture dealer, to be so skilful a copyist of old pictures that his imitations of older Italian or Flemish paintings were sold as originals. He is thus a culminating example of the prodigious virtuosity and creative energy of the Italian baroque, which is one of the most extraordinary outpourings of artistic skill in the history of art. His example was, however, unfortunate for Italian art afterward, when the imitation of his speed and virtuosity became a vice; but he was himself a great and interesting figure.

Nevertheless for modern taste his large, highly finished decorations are often less pleasing, because of their schematic repetition of types and colors, than such a small and unpretentious picture as ours. The poetry of its radiant light and graceful movement, the mood of joy and wondering delight, the freshness of the artist's touch and luminous color (seen especially in the flying figures of the angels) show the best side of the artist's gifts. It is an example of the baroque artist's ability to create a crowd of figures all in free movement in space and forming a rich harmony of light and color, yet all unified in focus on the tiny figure of the child Christ.

E. P. RICHARDSON.

Luca Giordano, *Adoration of the Shepherds*. Canvas, H. 27 $\frac{3}{8}$; W. 20 $\frac{7}{8}$ inches. Collection: Dr. Fritz Haussmann, Berlin. References: Herman Voss, *Zeitschrift für Bildende Kunst*, LXV (1931-32), 168; G. Delogu, *Rivista Mensile Illustrata d'Arte e di Cultura*, Dec. 1935; New York, Schaeffer Galleries, *Gems of Baroque Painting*, 1943, no. 18. Gift of the Founders Society, Acc. No. 44.3.

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THE ANNUNCIATION BY CIMA DA CONEGLIANO (c. 1459-1518) is part of a recent gift from Mrs. Ralph Harman Booth. Cima was a younger contemporary of Giovanni Bellini and one of the most attractive and original painters of the Venetian earlier Renaissance. He takes his name from the hill town of Conegliano in the foothills of the Alps north of Venice. The Museum has also a *Virgin and Child* by Cima from the Scripps Collection which was painted in the last decade of the fifteenth century and illustrates the quiet grace of his early Renaissance style. The Booth picture was painted in the opening years of the sixteenth century, when Venetian painting was developing into the more monumental style of the high Renaissance. Cima followed the trend of the times. The figures are larger and seem more massive than in the earlier picture. The walls and door of a severely plain room and a prie-dieu form the setting, whereas in the earlier picture the background is a curtain drawn to one side to give a glimpse of a charming hilly landscape. The new picture shows an artist of the early Renaissance adjusting himself to the more architectonic ideals of the new century. Something is lost and something is gained: the delicacy of the earlier style has given way to an austere and massive dignity. The color is clear, decorative, luminous and refined, the atmosphere one of grave and solemn repose, in both respects highly characteristic of the artist. (Acc. No. 43.478).

E. P. RICHARDSON.

Cima da Conegliano, *The Annunciation*. Panel: H. $35\frac{3}{4}$; W. $25\frac{5}{8}$ inches. The types recall those of an *Annunciation* dated 1495 in the Hermitage; but the broader, more plastic and atmospheric style places it in the artist's middle period, c.1500-05. A workshop picture in the Academy, Venice (Nos. 148 and 150), showing the two figures full length, appears to be based on the present picture. Reference: Berenson, *Picture*, p. 125. Gift of Mrs. Ralph Harman Booth, 1943. Acc. No. 43.478.



TWO RELIEFS from the parapet of a pulpit, which were found built into a villa at Massa Lubrense, near Sorrento, in Italy. They are striking and vigorous examples of the Italo-Byzantine style (probably late ninth or early tenth century), which is the opening phase of Italian medieval sculpture in southern Italy. They are about two centuries earlier than the well-known pulpits in Salerno and Ravello. The animals have some symbolic connection with the sermon. Gift of the Founders Society (Acc. No. 43.447-8).

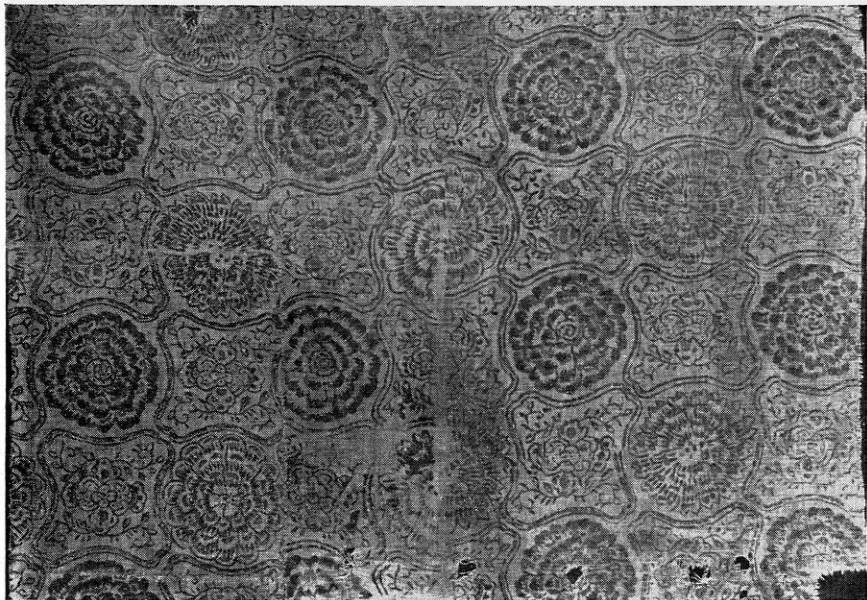
F. W. R.



AN IVORY DIPTYCH, French, early fourteenth century, given to the medieval collection by Mr. Robert H. Tannahill, is a typical example of the important Paris school of ivory carvers which flourished in the fourteenth century and reflected in the smaller medium of ivory the styles of the cathedral sculptors. The quatrefoil frames around the four scenes are a motive derived from architectural sculpture (Acc. No. 43.455).

F. W. R.





TWO PRINTED TEXTILES recently added to the textile collection, both of the twelfth century, represent the oldest type of textile ornament, printing. Above, a panel of fine linen from Egypt, printed with two blocks, in black and red. Gold leaf is splashed irregularly all over the printed pattern. Fatimid or Ayyubid period. William C. Yawkey Fund (Acc. No. 43.450). Below, a panel of cotton from Peru, Late Chimú, the pattern reserved white on a brown ground. Alternate bands with designs of puma, fish, birds and antlered animals seem to be printed with stamps while the connecting narrow bands of zigzags and broken waves may be roller printed. Gift of the Heermanek Galleries, New York (Acc. No. 42.152).

A. C. W.



A PORTRAIT OF A LADY BY WILLIAM M. CHASE (1849-1916), the gift of Mr. Henry Munroe Campbell (Acc. No. 43.486), is a fine example of the full length standing portrait which was one of the great themes of American painting in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. Whistler, Sargent and Chase all painted famous examples. Velasquez's portraits of the slender, elegant figure of King Philip IV of Spain, dressed all in black, standing before a green-covered table, were admired by the American Impressionists as the ultimate in portraiture, and the influence upon Chase is evident in this composition in black, flesh tones, green and gold. The name of the subject is unknown. Her dress is in the style of about 1895, which places the picture in Chase's best period.

E. P. R.



THE PORTRAIT OF THE FRENCH PAINTER JULES BASTIEN-LEPAGE BY AUGUSTUS SAINT-GAUDENS (1849-1907) is a fine example of the low relief sculpture, vividly observed and executed in a subtle, atmospheric style, which is one of the most original developments of Saint-Gaudens' art. This fine bronze, covered with a black lacquer and dated 1880, is the gift of Mr. Carl F. Clarke (Acc. No. 44.2).

E. P. R.

AN APOLOGY TO OUR READERS. The delays in the appearance of our bulletin are caused by war-time conditions beyond our control. We wish to apologize, however, to those of our readers who are troubled by the irregularity with which the bulletin appears.