

Bulletin

OF THE DETROIT INSTITUTE OF ARTS

VOLUME XXXV • NUMBER 1 • 1955-56



A "FANCY PICTURE" by SIR JOSHUA REYNOLDS

Sir Joshua Reynolds, as is well known, gave English painting a new character by adapting the formal structure of Italian Renaissance and Baroque painting to the native English tradition of portrait painting. He spent two years in Italy (1750-1752) during which he studied the works of Raphael and Michelangelo and their successors and became fired with an ambition to equal them; but he knew that the English public would accept nothing from an English painter except portraits. His solution was to bring the grand scale and formal composition of Italian painting into his portraits, adapting poses or even whole compositions from earlier pictures, but giving to them his own (and peculiarly English) sentiment, grace of light and shade, and intimacy. Italian grandeur in composition, "softness and captivating sweetness" (to use the phrase of his pupil Northcote) in feeling—the one a product of study and artifice, the other springing naturally from his own character—these made the art of Reynolds an immense success in his own lifetime and give it its distinctive double flavor. Reynolds' art today appeals to two publics: one responds to his "captivating sweetness"; the other is composed of historians and learned minds who find a pleasure somewhat like that of a game of Double Acrostics in tracing the source of this pose, or that figure, to its origin in a faraway Italian picture of another subject altogether, or even a Roman sculpture. A happy few can combine both pleasures.

It is surprising, nonetheless, how few of these most ambitious and elaborate compositions are in America. The great collectors of a generation ago, who brought so many of Reynolds' works across the Atlantic, bought chiefly his portraits of a single figure, or at most an adult with a child, or a dog companion. The large composition of three life-size figures, called *The Cottagers* (or *The Gleaners*; also *The Macklin Family*) of 1788, which is the generous gift of Mrs. K. T. Keller to our museum, thus has not only its own qualities to offer, but brings to this country a phase of Reynolds' work rarely seen here.

The picture was painted for a London print seller, a Mr. Macklin, a rival of the Alderman Boydell whose name is more often remembered today. It represents Mrs. Macklin, her daughter and a friend, Miss Potts, in the guise of simple country people, in front of a cottage in the country. Mrs. Macklin spins; Miss Macklin (whose delicate grace shows Reynolds' art at its best) feeds the chickens; Miss Potts (who later married a Mr. Landseer and had a famous painter son) brings home a sheaf of wheat on her head. Sir Joshua's notebook shows that they sat for him in August, 1788; in September appeared a fourth sitter, "Mr. Macklin's dog."

In 1787 Macklin's rival, Boydell, had projected his famous *Shakespeare Gallery*, for which practically every English painter of note was engaged to paint



THE COTTAGERS

by SIR JOSHUA REYNOLDS

English (1723-1792)

Gift of Mrs. K. T. Keller, 1955

(A detail of this painting is reproduced in color on the cover)

pictures illustrative of the plays, with Boydell selling engravings after the pictures all over Europe. Macklin, in turn, projected two "galleries," *The Poets' Gallery* and *The Bible Gallery*. Our picture unquestionably formed part of the former. It represents the tale of "the lovely young Lavinia" in *Autumn*, of Thomson's *Seasons*. In old references, it was called a "fancy picture," a term that long ago vanished from use, but which Reynolds himself used, to describe a picture of rustic life, to which the artist gave (in Reynolds' words) "such grace, and such an elegance, as are more commonly found in cottages than in courts."

It thus belongs to the favorite dream of the eighteenth century — that true virtue and beauty belonged to simple country folk close to nature, not to towns and cities. In sentiment, at least, Mr. Macklin, choosing to have his pretty wife and sweet young daughter painted as *Cottagers*, shared the same thoughts as Rousseau, or Marie-Antoinette playing at the country life in her Hamlet at Versailles. The picture belongs also to one of Reynolds' best years; at the very close of his career, when he produced also the portrait of *Lord Heathfield* and *The Age of Innocence* (both in the National Gallery, London, and always thought two of his most successful works). In the following year, partial blindness struck him and his career was over.

E. P. RICHARDSON

Cat. no. 1205. Canvas. Height 95 inches; width 71 inches. Painted in 1788. Engraved by F. Bartolozzi (1788), by S. W. Reynolds (1835), by R. B. Parkes (1876). Exhibited: British Institution, 1813, no. 23; Grosvenor Gallery, 1814, no. 185; Royal Academy, 1873, no. 280; Grosvenor Gallery, 1883. References: Sir Walter Armstrong, *Sir Joshua Reynolds*, p. 218; Graves and Cronin, *A History of the Works of Sir Joshua Reynolds*, II, p. 603; E. W. Waterhouse, *Reynolds*, p. 80. Acc. No. 55.278. Gift of Mrs. K. T. Keller, 1955.

A NEW GIFT OF "APOSTLE" SPOONS

"Apostle" spoons are among the most charming manifestations of the aesthetic sensibility of the Tudor and Stuart craftsmen. As their name indicates these spoons, usually made of silver, but sometimes also of latten or pewter, are characterized by their terminal figures, each representing an apostle with his distinctive emblem — St. Peter with the key presented to him by Christ, St. Matthew, the tax collector, with a purse, St. John with a cup. Such spoons were made as christening gifts, the chosen apostle being either the patron saint of the child or, as has been suggested, perhaps the donor's patron. A few complete sets exist, executed by the same maker in the same year. But such sets, which include not only the twelve Apostles, but also the Master Himself, the orb and cross in the left hand with the right hand uplifted in Benediction, are extremely scarce — collectors' dreams which rarely come true. Yet it is within the realm of possibility — and a delightful pastime — to gather together complete sets, with spoons

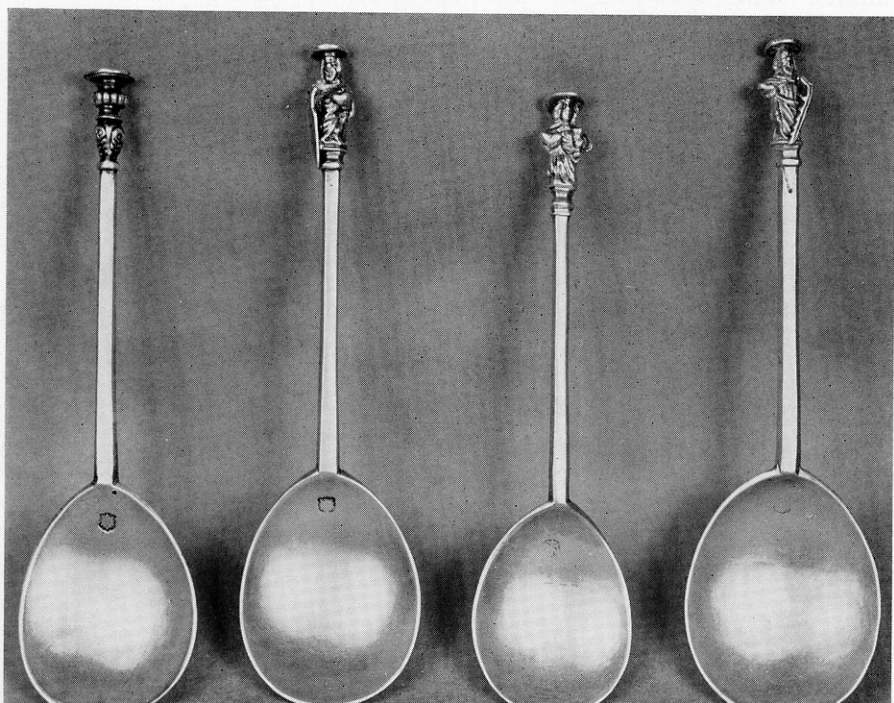


GROUP OF "APOSTLE" SPOONS SHOWING KNOBS
 Baluster seal, Apostles Bartholomew, John and Simon
 English, 17th century
 Gift of Mrs. Henry P. Williams, 1955

made within a short time of each other, to assure homogeneity, and this is what Mrs. Henry P. Williams, with much taste and patience, has attempted.

Our readers will remember four spoons (illustrated in an earlier *Bulletin* note) which this ardent collector presented to the Institute some time ago. They were characterized – and this is rarer than one would imagine – by the delicacy and crispness of their details, the warm surface of their metal, the excellence of their preservation. Equally remarkable for their clearness and strength of modelling are four other spoons which Mrs. Williams has recently added to that group. Three of these represent Apostles, St. Bartholomew, St. John and St. Simon, with their respective symbols, and were executed within a few years of each other. St. Simon, still with traces of gilt, is the earliest: a London piece, it

"APOSTLE" SPOONS in same order as above, showing complete spoons



bears the date letter mark for 1600. The St. John spoon (1617) is the work of Chris Harrington of York, while the St. Bartholomew (1629) is the work of an unknown London silversmith, identified only by his mark, a D crossed with a bow. The finial of the fourth spoon, equal in charm to the others, is of the type known as baluster seal top, and has, even in its minute size, an architectural, Renaissance, quality which adds to the group of Apostles its own note of quiet dignity and restraint.¹

PAUL L. GRIGAUT

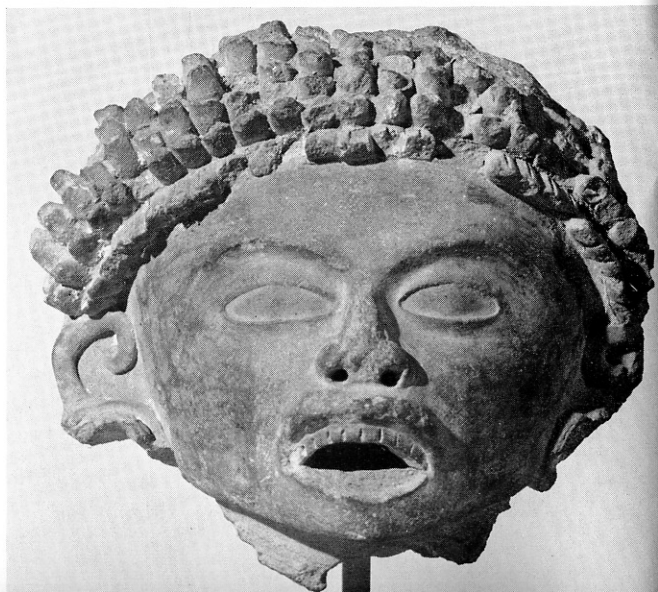
¹ The four spoons mentioned above represent:

- (a) *St. Simon*. London, 1600-01. Maker's mark: W in C. Engraved on back of the bowl: E.B. 1669 W.B. (55.449);
- (b) *St. John*. York, 1617. Maker's mark: CH (Chris Harrington) (55.448);
- (c) *St. Bartholomew*. London, 1629-30. Maker's mark: D crossed with bow (55.447);
- (d) *Seal Top spoon*. London, 1637-38. Maker's mark: T. H. (55.450). All four spoons are the gift of Mrs. Henry P. Williams, 1955.

A POTTERY HEAD FROM VERA CRUZ, MEXICO

Much attention has been given to the spectacular cultures of the Aztecs and the Maya. Other cultures, contemporary or even earlier, have only lately received the notice commensurate with their artistic quality, their aesthetic value, or their historical significance. The very names of these cultures are poetic and evocative: Tarascan, Zapotec, Huastec, Totonac, Olmec, and Mixtec. Lying, as they did, across Mexico from sea to sea and up and down the east coast in Vera Cruz, these cultures show features of their own while sometimes transmitting or employing traits of the neighboring Aztec (and antecedent Toltec) and Maya cultures. In time it may be clear just what role these people played in the story

POTTERY HEAD
from the State of
Vera Cruz, Mexico
Totonac or Olmec,
about 6th-7th century A.D.
Gift of Mrs. Lillian
Henkel Haass, 1955



of Middle American history, whether as independent creators or as middlemen between other cultures.

The chronological relations of these cultures are as yet by no means clear. The great day of the Maya had passed when the Spaniards came in the sixteenth century, and the invaders soon put an end to the cultural strength of the Aztecs. Other cultures were already defunct, awaiting present-day ethnologists, philologists, and archaeologists to study the surviving peoples, their linguistic relationships, and the existing remains, above or below ground.

It would appear that in Mexico and southward to the Isthmus of Panama, ceramic sculpture, that is modeled and moulded masks and figures in baked clay, preceded the great stone sculpture that is better preserved and generally better known. There seems no evidence that sculpture in wood preceded ceramic sculpture or taught the artist the methods and style used in stone sculpture, as can be shown to have been the case in Egypt and Greece.

Enigmatic and impressive are two words evoked by this terra-cotta head, almost a mask, which has recently come to the collection of the Detroit Institute of Arts as a gift from Mrs. Lillian Henkel Haass, long an appreciative connoisseur of aboriginal American art, and many times a donor to the collections of ancient American and European art in the Institute. Little is known about the head, nothing of its history, nothing of the artist who made it, nothing of the true purpose for which it was intended, yet for all its anonymity it exists as a work of creative art, a masterful handling of its medium, and a moving portrayal that arouses ideas in the mind of the present-day beholder.

The head is said to come from Vera Cruz, the modern Mexican state which lies along the Gulf Coast, rising from the shore to the highlands. Through this state Hernando Cortes and his Spanish conquistadors made their way in 1519, seeking the reported wealth of the Aztec king in the Valley of Mexico on its lofty plateau. As they passed, they may have seen the remains of cultures already ancient and decayed, pieces like the present terra-cotta head, which appears to have been part of a complete figure, whether standing or seated cannot be determined, or part of an elaborate anthropomorphic vase, such as is most characteristic of the Zapotec regions of southwestern Mexico.

Is this head a remnant of the Totonac culture of central Vera Cruz, celebrated for its stone carvings of palmate objects, yokes, and narrow masks, and for terra-cotta heads or masks of what appear to be smiling young people with slanting eyes that suggest Chinese types? Or is it the product of the mysterious Olmec people of southern Vera Cruz, ancient and almost forgotten? It is probable that it was already about 1000 years old when the Spaniards came. It has been dated in the sixth and seventh centuries.

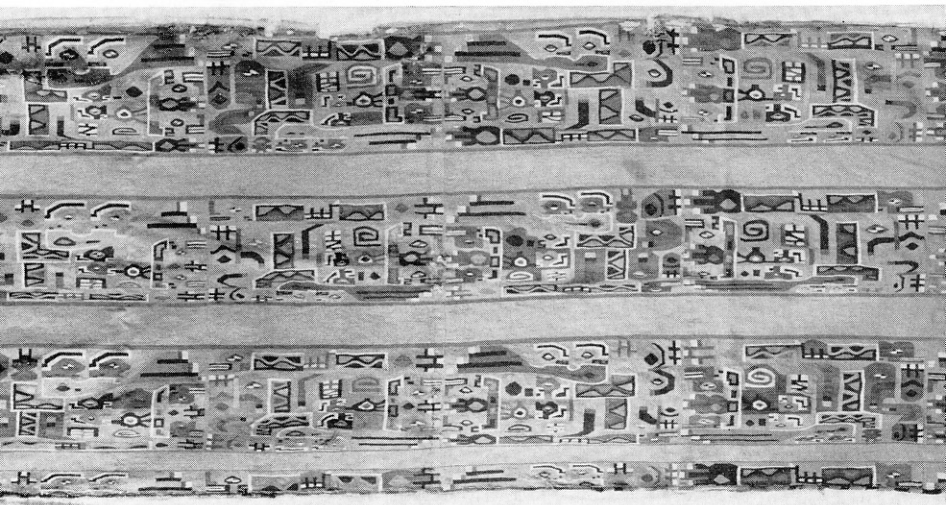
The head is broken off at the neck; the elaborate ear-plugs are only partially preserved, the nose and lower lip are missing; but much that is characteristic and unusual remains: the broad flat face (the head is actually flattened from front to back), the almond-shaped eyes (once probably enhanced in realism by painted pupils), and the bristling coiffure or headdress, made up of numerous

barbs of clay. At the back of the head is a small square opening (about 1½ inches on a side) which presumably was intended to prevent the explosion of the hollow ceramic sculpture when it was fired. There is, however, the added possibility that incense or smoke was introduced through this opening to pour out of the open mouth of the face with dramatic effect.

Were the piece complete, it might indeed have the appearance of a dead person with staring eyes and open mouth. This would not be out of keeping with many of the cult ideas of the ancient peoples of Middle America. Among the Aztecs to the west of Vera Cruz and the Maya to the south and east, the God of Death had a prominent place in the pantheon.

FRANCIS W. ROBINSON

Acc. no. 55.182. Height 7¾ inches. Width 8 inches. *Gift of Mrs. Lillian Henkel Haass, 1955.*



TAPESTRY PANEL, Late Tiahuanaco II

Gift of Robert H. Tannahill, 1955

(Fig. 1)

PERUVIAN TEXTILES

Perhaps the most rewarding quality of Peruvian textiles rests in their assured, never disappointing high quality. Thus, even though our interest in their designs waxes and wanes with changing fashions, it will always be stimulated by them. Whenever the question arises of their decorative fitness for an ultra-modern livingroom, we point to the tapestry woven panels which were produced towards the end of the Tiahuanaco II period. Whether they were hangings or parts of

PLAIN COMPOUND CLOTH

brocaded, Late Chimu

Gift of Robert H. Tannahill, 1955

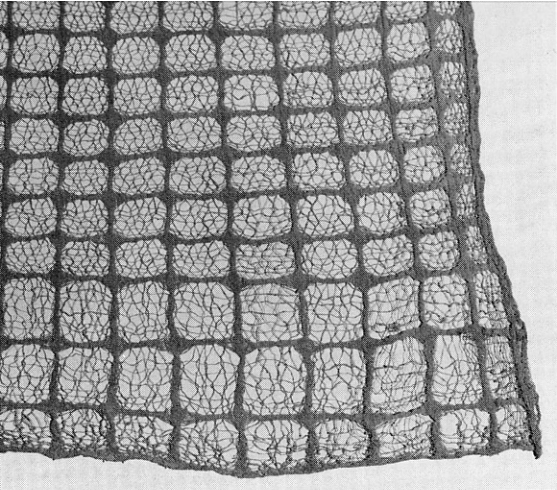
(Fig. 2)



a nobleman's attire does not matter. The outstanding characteristic of all of them is the design which, because of an excessive tendency to conventionalization, has lost its former coherence. The erstwhile relatively realistic human figures and animals are now dissolved into their component parts which seem to be arranged haphazard, till only their still magnificent colors make of them an interesting though chaotic picture.

A very handsome specimen of Peruvian textile art has been presented by Mr. Robert H. Tannahill.¹ It is an unusually large, splendidly polychromatic panel, a fine example of representational art changed to a decorative allover design. On a ground of mustard yellow three wide and one narrow bands, outlined with rich stripes, present their conglomeration of detached motifs in patches, lines and spirals of red, dark brown, blue and white. There is a jewel-like quality which baffles description. The panel, now incomplete with a seam down the center, may be the last surviving part of a shirt (fig. 1).

Another gift of Mr. Tannahill is a panel of plain compound cloth, loosely woven of tobacco brown cotton, with a design of stepped diamonds and borders of rectangles brocaded with heavy white cotton thread, in a kind of flying shuttle technique.² The nobly subdued color scheme marks the panel as belonging to the last great period, the art of the Inca empire; but it may have been woven



GAUZE PANEL

Late Chimu

Gift of Mrs. Lillian
Henkel Haass, 1955

(Fig. 3)

in a coastal center rather than at Cuzco. It is a complete panel with selvages on all four sides. The brown cotton warps are uneven, mostly rather coarse; the wefts are more regular, better twisted. The fairly even white thread is doubled for the brocading; on the reverse it lies loosely for longish spaces. It is difficult to construe the original use of such almost square panels. Were they curtains or, possibly, gift wrappings? In any case this panel represents a most unusual type of weaving that adds to the admiration we feel for the expertness of the weavers at their simple backstrap loom (fig. 2).

Another handsome specimen of cotton is a gift of Mrs. Lillian H. Haass.³ It is a gauze panel, golden brown, of very delicate texture. Between the areas of undecorated gauze there is a network of threads bunched together in leno weaves. The effect of this combination is like that of lace; its delicate rosewood hue makes of the panel an attractive and important document in the quest for change of taste, from the complicated patterning of the earliest gauzes, found in the Paracas Cavernas. This trend toward geometric simplicity is perhaps the most important contribution of the last period before the Spanish conquest (fig. 3).

We have long been proud of the featherwork in our collection. Now another specimen has been added as a gift from the Founders Society.⁴ It is a mantle of blue and yellow feathers arranged in opposite rectangles. It belongs to a group of feather cloaks which were found packed in seven polychrome jars, each about one meter high and two meters in circumference. These jars were discovered accidentally by some brick-makers who, in January 1943, were digging clay from an ancient mound near the village of La Victoria in the Rio Grande Valley, about ten leagues from the town of Andaray in the department of Arequipa. Later most of the mantles went to the National Museum in Lima, several of them found their way to this country.⁵ It is tempting to see in these mantles a costume reserved for a special body of men, a sort of uniform or vestment, worn at parade or in procession. In such group formation the rhythmic alternation of

the large patches of strongly contrasted colors would be very impressive (fig. 4).

The featherworkers were obviously proud of their craft and desirous to show their skill in the next world. From a mummy bundle found in the Ica valley there has come to us, again as a gift of Mr. Tannahill, a delightful little specimen which its owner called a "feather bobbin."⁶ On examination it proved to be a long string of beautiful blue feathers of even size, hooked on one thread and knotted together with a second, ready for being sewn onto a cloth. This long string was then wound around a bunch of reeds. And finally the little package was placed in the dead woman's workbasket as a last testimony of affectionate thoughtfulness.

ADELE C. WEIBEL

¹ Tapestry panel, Late coastal Tiahuanaco culture. Acc. no. 49.283. Length 51 inches; width 20¾ inches. *Gift of Robert H. Tannahill, 1949.*

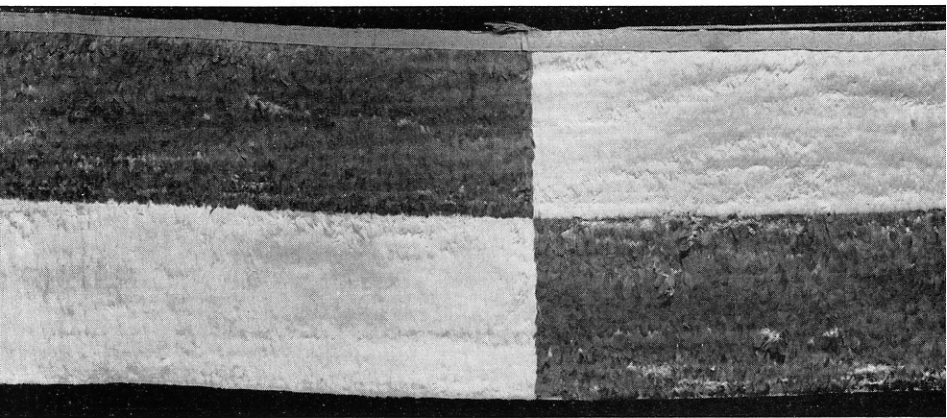
² Plain compound cloth, brocaded, Late Chimu or Inca. Acc. no. 51.99. Length 25 inches; width 23 inches. *Gift of Robert H. Tannahill, 1951.*

³ Gauze, complete panel, Late Chimu. Acc. no. 51.97. Length 32 inches; width 14 inches. *Gift of Mrs. Lillian H. Haass, 1951.*

⁴ Featherwork mantle, Late Nazca, Rukana culture. Acc. no. 51.100. Length 83 inches; width 26½ inches. *Gift of the Founders Society, Membership Fund, 1951.*

⁵ Information received and extracts from a letter of Mr. S. K. Lothrop to Mr. Richardson: "The late Dr. Julio C. Tello, then director of the National Museum at Lima, told me that a total of about eighty cloaks had been found. I know of six in this country; two in the American Museum of Natural History, two in the Peabody Museum, one you have, one my wife has."

⁶ String of feathers, Late Nazca. Acc. no. 51.98. *Gift of Robert H. Tannahill, 1951.*



FEATHERWORK MANTLE, Late Nazca
Gift of the Founders Society, General Membership Fund, 1955
(Fig. 4)

AMERICA AT LEISURE IN THE 1840's

A recently acquired genre scene, *The Card Players*¹ by Richard Caton Woodville (1825-1856), adds to the museum collection a work by one of America's extremely competent painters, whose stature has been rising steadily during recent years. Recognition was delayed in coming to Woodville for several reasons. He was only twenty years old when he left his native Baltimore to study in Düsseldorf; with only brief visits home, he resided in Paris and London, and died in the latter city at the early age of thirty-one. A further complicating factor was the confusing of Woodville's identity with that of his son, R. C. Woodville, Jr. (1856-1927), who won success as a painter in England.

Material gleaned from nineteenth century records on R. C. Woodville, Senior, is relatively sparse. A letter written by his brother, William, found at the New York Public Library, gives brief biographical data; Henry Tuckerman's *Book of the Artists* (1867) devotes several pages to him; and Bartlett Cowdrey published a study in the *American Collector* of April 1944. Further researches, however, may reveal even more clearly Woodville's place in American art annals. His pictorial delineations of American life during the 1840's, along with those by Bingham and William S. Mount, add much to our understanding of the era.

Using the sound technical training gained abroad, Woodville turned a sharp and observing eye upon his fellow Americans, revealing them in all the homely intimacy of their surroundings, and their sturdy independence of character. Emphasis upon the latter is expressed in every inch of the two card players, the one at the left staunchly assertive, the one at the right with straddled knees, leaning on a truculent elbow—even the angle of his cigar breathes defiance.

The swing in taste from the elegant, formally posed portrait to the humble interior with its casually disposed middle-class citizenry, was in line with a new concept. Until the 1820's, American culture had been developing along lines clearly marked out by the mid-eighteenth century. But new influences generated by the country's westward expansion had begun to affect the culture and character of the entire nation, even the conservative city of Baltimore, by the time Woodville was born. By the time he had turned five, in 1830, one-third of the American people were "men of the Western Waters." As the western trek continued, the unlimited opportunities opened to the pioneers brought out qualities of rugged independence of spirit. Anthony Trollope, more tolerant than his mother, was to notice in western Americans "an independence which sits gracefully on their shoulders, and teaches you at first glance that the man has a right to assume himself to be your equal."

The rising "man of affairs" began to overshadow, in one sense, the statesman, the churchman, the artist, the "gentleman." The modestly clad, democratic citizen, at work in the shop or on the farm, relaxing at sports or in the tavern, appeared in ever-increasing numbers in Currier and Ives' prints, and in the paintings of William Mount and Eastman Johnson, of Browere and Woodville.



THE CARD PLAYERS by RICHARD CATON WOODVILLE, American (1825-1856)

Gift of Dexter M. Ferry, Jr., 1955

Woodville's "literary" paintings, such as the *Cavalier's Return*, seem dull to us today, and lack the shrewd perception and sly humor of his contemporary themes in which he explored local American environment.

Perhaps because of his early acquaintance in Baltimore with the Dutch and Flemish old masters in the collection of Robert Gilmore, Woodville revelled in effects of light upon varied textures. The gleam of light reflected from the liquor glasses of his *Card Players*, the glint of silver coins and partly immersed spoon, the velvet coat-collar and play-bill upon the wall, are rendered with the smooth brushwork of a Ter Borch. From the lowly washbowl and spittoon, Woodville extracts a visual poetry as deftly as from shadows cast so softly upon the wall by clock and pendants. Character emerges strongly, as Woodville contrasts the timid, self-effacing slave in the background with the militant protagonists in center stage. A framed flier on the wall appears to advertise travel between Washington and Baltimore. A number of the same impedimenta employed in this painting appear in Woodville's *Scene in a Bar Room*, his first and only painting to be exhibited at the National Academy of Design (in 1845).

Woodville sent the *Card Players*, dated 1846, from Europe for exhibition at the American Art Union in New York in 1847. The *Transactions* of the Union list it as No. 180, *Interior, with Figures*, and as being distributed in December

of that year to a Thomas Foster of Utica, N. Y. Within a short time it was acquired by another member, W. J. Hoppin, in whose hands it remained for many years, being exhibited again and engraved for the Art Union members.

To the "old guard" of its day, the *Card Players* was thought to be a "low" form of expression, lacking in elevated moral significance. That general appreciation of such work was not lacking may be deduced from a statement in the records of the National Academy of Design, "It may be noted that Mount and Woodville were among the first American figure painters to achieve financial success in their profession, apart from portraiture." From our century-old perspective, we see the painting as an example by a brilliant, short-lived figure in American painting—as a work high in quality and interesting as a unique document of American life in the 1840's.

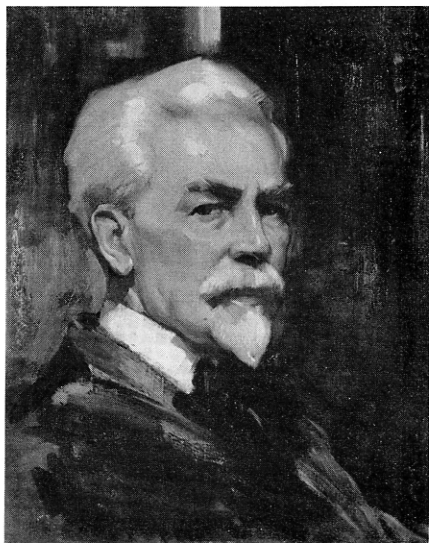
ELIZABETH H. PAYNE

¹ Cat. No. 1188. Oil on canvas. Height 18½ inches; width 25 inches. *Gift of Dexter M. Ferry, Jr., 1955.*

TWO PAINTINGS by JULIUS ROLSHOVEN

Two paintings have been presented to the Art Institute which will be of particular interest to Detroiters. They are the "Donna Tosca"¹ and "Self Portrait"² by Julius Rolshoven.

Born in the mid-nineteenth century of a Detroit family, Rolshoven was the son of a successful jeweler long established here. Still in his teens, Rolshoven left Detroit to study jewelry making and design at the Cooper Union in New



SELF PORTRAIT
by JULIUS ROLSHOVEN
Gift of Mrs. Julius Rolshoven, 1955



DONNA TOSCA
by JULIUS ROLSHOVEN
American (1858-1930)
Gift of Mrs. Julius
Rolshoven, 1955

York. But he had not been long at this pursuit when the opportunity for study in Düsseldorf arose. There, not far from Cologne where Rolshovens through centuries had been official goldsmiths, his own impressive career as an artist had its beginnings.

His meeting in Germany with the romantic realist painter Frank Duveneck was a most meaningful experience in terms of the whole future course of his career. He became one of that group of young artists known as the "Duveneck Boys," working in the style of bold sculptural strokes of pigment rich in textural quality which developed under the leadership of Duveneck.

Rolshoven went with Duveneck to Italy where he traveled and painted, and then on to Paris to study with the academic painter Robert Fleury. Here he established the Rolshoven Life Classes, attracting international attendance. The Paris salon in 1889 awarded him a medal of honor. Following this, his first award, came a succession of honors. Rolshoven early achieved recognition not only in his own country but throughout Europe as one of the favored portraitists of the élite. His canvases describe that elegant era near the turn of the century. He has been called "a leading romanticist in a romantic age." Faithful to the persuasions of his early training he was little influenced by the changing esthetic ideals culminating in the work of Cézanne and the Post-Impressionist group.

Rolshoven made his home in Italy for many years. He purchased an 11th century castle near Florence, the legendary home of Leonardo's Mona Lisa. After his restoration of it the Italian government added it to the list of national monuments, though it remained his home.

His wedding trip to the Southwest in 1916 was his first visit there. New Mexico was to become one of the greatest interests of the painter's life after the First World War caused his return to this country. He was prolific in his production of Indian portraits and infused into them his feeling of the nobility and dignity of that race. His study of Pueblo Indian costumes and types was extensive. Such records as his are invaluable to our present knowledge of the vanished west. He was one of the important contributors to the Southwestern regional art movement.

Mrs. Henrietta B. Rolshoven, on presenting the *Donna Tosca*, has revealed that she was the model for it. Conceived in the grand manner, this work compares well with the best figure portraits of the time, with its softly glowing ivory satin against a background of deep viridian. Nuances of muted color within a limited tonal range augment the atmosphere of dignity and grace with which the artist portrayed his wife. The *Self Portrait*, painted in 1924, six years before Rolshoven died, is the subject of an interesting story. It is said to have been painted for the Paris spring salon; Rolshoven having discovered that it was the last day for entries, he completed the large picture in one morning, had it framed at noon and by the same afternoon it had won the gold medal.

Our museum is fortunate in its excellent representation of Detroit artists of the past century. Gari Melchers, Robert Hopkin, and Lendall Pitts are artists of which Detroit is proud. Thanks to Mrs. Rolshoven's generosity and foresight we are now able to present these two excellent examples of the work of a noble and distinguished painter, Julius Rolshoven.

MARY JANE HEALEY

¹ Cat. No. 1193. Oil on canvas. Height 73½ inches; width 40 inches. *Gift of Mrs. Julius Rolshoven, 1955.*

² *Self Portrait.* Cat. No. 1192. Oil on canvas. Height 19¾ inches; width 15⅝ inches. *Gift of Mrs. Julius Rolshoven, 1955.*



SUNFLOWERS by EMIL NOLDE, German Contemporary
Gift of Robert H. Tannahill, 1955

A MASTERPIECE OF GERMAN EXPRESSIONIST PAINTING

Detroit's galleries of twentieth century painting, though not extensive, have for many years been distinguished by an extraordinary collection of German Expressionist painting. For three decades the works of Karl Schmidt-Rottluff, Ernst Ludwig Kirchner, Erich Heckel (the founders of *Die Brücke*) and those of Klee, Marc, Kandinsky, Nolde and Kokoschka have been before the Detroit public. The acquisition of Emil Nolde's *Sunflowers*, on loan to the Institute since 1940, marks the addition of another unquestioned masterpiece to the permanent collection.¹

Like his better known French counterparts, Rouault and Soutine, Nolde moved toward his intense, expressionist style in a highly personal way. Born in 1867 in the bleak moorlands of Schleswig, where he remained among peasant folk until he was 17, he was largely a self-taught painter. In 1905, when Expressionism first emerged as a movement among the young Dresden artists who formed *Die Brücke*, Nolde was already almost forty. Though he joined the group, he remained only two years, and has since continued on a course of solitary development.

The mystic intensity which enabled Nolde to create a modern religious art in such works as *The Last Supper* (originally in the State Museum, Halle) fills even his landscapes and still-lives with an almost animistic power. For the

expressionist, the entire world is alive with meaning: "Everything that passes before one's eyes awakens the whole gamut that lies between joy and suffering, happiness and unhappiness."²

In our painting of 1923, sunflowers exchange a merely decorative effect for the more compelling role of symbolic meaning. Seldom has Nolde used his direct oil medium with greater intensity than in the resonant colors and extraordinary textures of this painting. Shaggy yellow petals surrounding great black centers, the sunflowers raise their awesome heads in a dissonance of acid green and luminous blue. More like ritual images than a pleasant still life, they glow with the true primitivism of the 20th century—the rediscovery of elemental nature in the power and mystery of the subconscious mind.

VIRGINIA HARRIMAN

¹ Cat. No. 1180. Oil on canvas. Height 29 inches; width 35 inches. Acc. no. 54.460. *Gift of Robert H. Tannahill, 1954.*

² The letters of Emil Nolde as quoted in "Emil Nolde," by E. M. Benson, *Parnassus*, January 1933, p. 14.

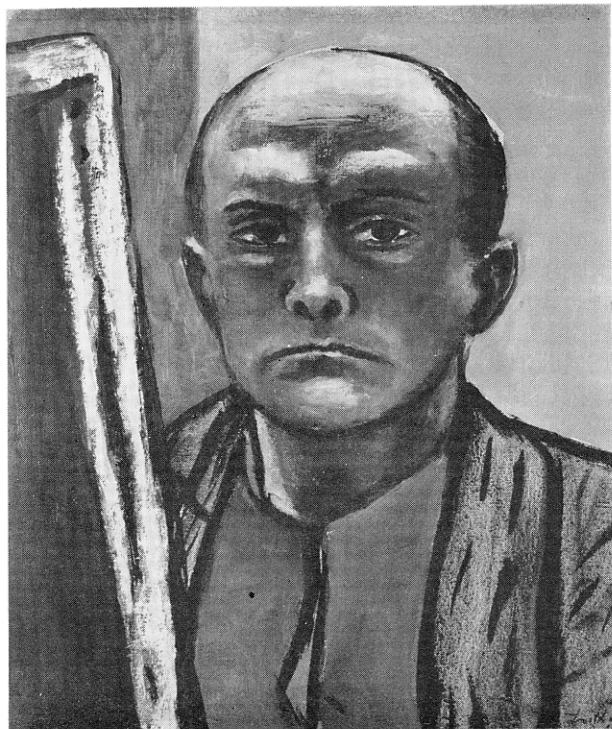
MAX BECKMANN — 1884-1950

Of the many self portraits that Max Beckmann painted, the one recently given to the Institute collection by Mr. Robert H. Tannahill is one of the most powerful as a painting and as a personal revelation. It has more of the stuff of reality than most other works in his mature style—reality in the sense of likeness and the illusion of tangible form.

Beckmann has been spoken of as a great artist rather than a great painter. His canvases often give the impression that he has had small concern for the full textural potential of paint as we have come to think of it, with the problems of light and atmosphere or the plasticity of the surface. Beyond the marvelous vibration of color that it allows him, the properties of oil paint as a medium have not misled him from the prime purpose of his picture. This is certainly a matter of choice. Beckmann was a philosopher in paint. His pictures preserve the raw, coarse material upon which the mind may work, unsoftened by sensual distractions. He preferred them to be sensually revolting if in this way they became intellectually more provocative.

Beckmann's mature painting style is an extension of the etching technique with which he began to work in 1914, and his painting afterwards followed the direct, incisive methods of the graphic arts.

In the face of these considerations our *Self Portrait* seems in many ways unique. It is startling to see such plastic modeling of the head in Beckmann's later work, and it has been seldom indeed that he has allowed himself to develop volumes so richly. It is a portrait that emphasizes externally cerebral qualities; the light that glints from the dome of his head provides a brilliant counterpoint to the smoldering shadows beneath. And how appropriate that the



SELF PORTRAIT
by MAX BECKMANN
German (1884-1950)
Gift of Robert H.
Tannahill, 1955

eyes should not glitter in the light but burn slowly through to the point under observation.

As all good self portraits should, this one betrays what one must assume were the guiding characteristics of his nature: an enormous mental capacity and what we might call a brooding disposition coupled with unusual interpretative powers. If one has any faith at all in one's powers as a physiognomist one would quickly say that the tightly closed mouth is an outward expression of inner discipline — for there is always the discipline of symbol and inexorable intention in the abandoned slashes of color and line that are characteristic of a good deal of his work.

If there is a quality that we might say is a continuous one throughout Beckmann's work, it is an astonishing virility of concept and method. He maintained this power to the very end. The portrait was painted in Amsterdam in 1945, when Beckmann was sixty-one years of age. He was never a flatterer in his portraits, least of all to himself; we may accept this painting as an accurate representation of the ever-youthful vigor that the man communicated to his pictures.

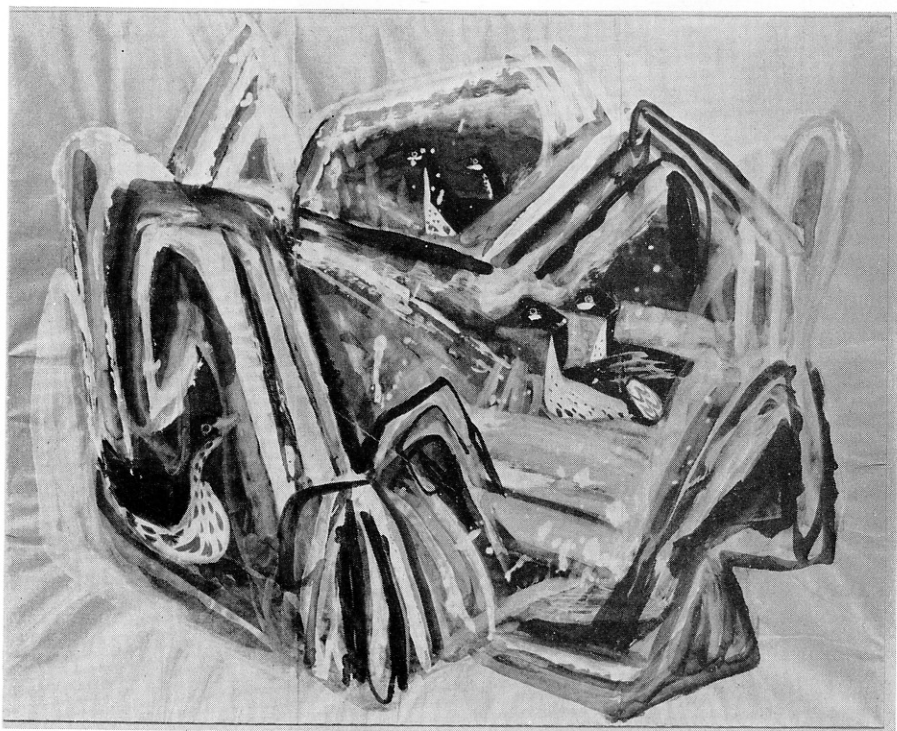
A. FRANKLIN PAGE

Cat. no. 1206. Height 23¾ inches; width 19⅞ inches. Acc. no. 55.410. Gift of Robert H. Tannahill, 1955.

SURF BIRDS by **MORRIS GRAVES**

A painting of *Surf Birds*^t by Morris Graves has been presented to the Institute by Robert H. Tannahill. Together with the group of studies of *Chalices*, given in 1952 by the same donor, it provides an opportunity to study the highly personal style of this American mystic from the Pacific Northwest. Morris Graves' family moved to Washington within a year or two after his birth in Fox Valley, Oregon, in 1910; although widely-travelled, the artist has spent most of his life in the Puget Sound area. Its snow-capped mountains, towering firs and sea-washed shoreline all made a profound impression upon him, as did its numerous links with the Orient.

The world Morris Graves paints is one of familiar objects, whether surf birds, chalices or Chinese ceremonial objects, yet Graves expresses himself in terms of deep-felt, inner emotions. We respond to the abstract pattern of movement surging through his *Surf Birds* before we recognize the entities composing it. Broad strokes of white and black gouache, applied in bold diagonals, convey the driving force of breakers; subtle tonalities of greenish-blue, white-dappled, play against one another with the short, staccato rhythms of flashing foam.



SURF BIRDS by **MORRIS GRAVES**, American Contemporary
Gift of Robert H. Tannahill, 1955

Abstract shapes and forms are not descriptions of the individual, speckle-breasted birds so much as expressions of bird qualities and habits. We sense the fleetness, the sureness of movement, the tough resistance to nature's forces stored within their tiny frames. Here is no stark tragedy as in the *Blind Bird* or *Wounded Gulls*, already marked for death and oblivion. There is a poignance, however, about the *Surf Birds*. We read in the delicate bodies and ephemeral foam something of the fragile impermanence of earthly life, a feeling heightened by the tissue-thin and crinkled paper employed by Graves.

Surf Birds was painted in 1940. Three years later, while in the collection of Frank Crowninshield, it formed part of the Morris Graves Exhibition shown at the Detroit Institute of Arts and the Arts Club of Chicago. When several paintings by Graves were shown at the New York World's Fair in 1939, they attracted scant attention from either critics or public. National prominence came when the Museum of Modern Art in New York included Graves' work in their exhibition of "Americans, 1942." Since then, Graves' paintings and more recently, his sculpture, have been exhibited widely, and his style has undergone changes in development. Basically, Morris Graves' paintings continue to be a summing up of many intensive observations, translated into visual terms of haunting beauty and symbolic imagery.

Graves' drawing is broad and powerful; his feeling for design and placement in space is Oriental in its sensitivity. Like the Oriental, Graves has concerned himself with cosmic forces. He wrote, "We need art to guide our journey from partial to full consciousness. I have attained to the conviction that it is my purpose through creative painting to convey to man that he has the ability for instantaneous as well as for his usual evolutionary knowledge of his cosmic significance. I seek for painting that miraculous union where the Seer and Seen are one."² Duncan Phillips put it more simply when he said of Graves, "he is most undeniably a citizen of that inner world of mysticism which, through the centuries, draws together a universal brotherhood."³

ELIZABETH H. PAYNE

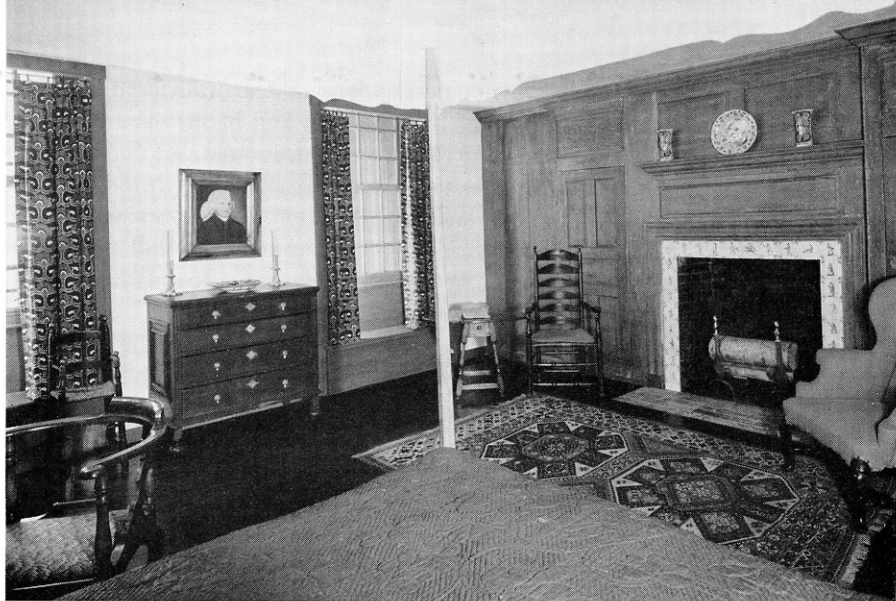
¹ Gouache on paper. Height 21¾ inches; width 27¼ inches. Cat. no. 1188. *Gift of Robert H. Tannahill, 1955.*

² Quoted by Duncan Phillips in "Morris Graves," *Magazine of Art*, Dec. 1947, p. 308.

³ *Ibid.*

WHITBY HALL, 1956

The collections of American furniture and decorative arts of the Institute, ranging from the late seventeenth century through the Victorian era, are comprehensive and of high quality. Most of the furnishings of the early Colonial period — roughly until 1720 — and the nineteenth century furniture on exhibi-



WHITBY Hall. Room from Vauxhall Gardens, built about 1725 in Greenwich, New Jersey
Gibbs-Williams Fund, 1955

tion are displayed throughout the galleries of American art, along with paintings and sculpture related in style and in date. On the other hand the majority of the eighteenth century *objets d'art*, in which the museum is particularly rich, are shown against a different background, in panelled rooms which provide an ideal setting for these delicate objects. For many years now, many of these have been housed in "Whitby Hall," the splendid mansion built in the middle of the eighteenth century near Philadelphia, by Colonel Coultas and re-erected in 1927 in Detroit. As time passed it became evident that "Whitby Hall" as many of us had known it was no longer adequate. Many pieces of furniture had been added to our collections, and, more important, changes in taste had taken place: our conception of period rooms had changed, becoming perhaps more scientific and more exacting. The staff of the Institute felt that the time has come for more or less radical alterations. The results of their efforts are now to be seen in a renovated "Whitby Hall," of which Detroiters may be proud.

The first floor rooms, whose beautiful and historically important panelling has long been familiar to our visitors, have remained on the whole as they were, it is true, although a few pieces of furniture, in particular a rare mantelpiece mirror, have been added. The principal changes were made on the second floor, where two panelled rooms, illustrated here, have replaced rather colorless and awkward galleries.

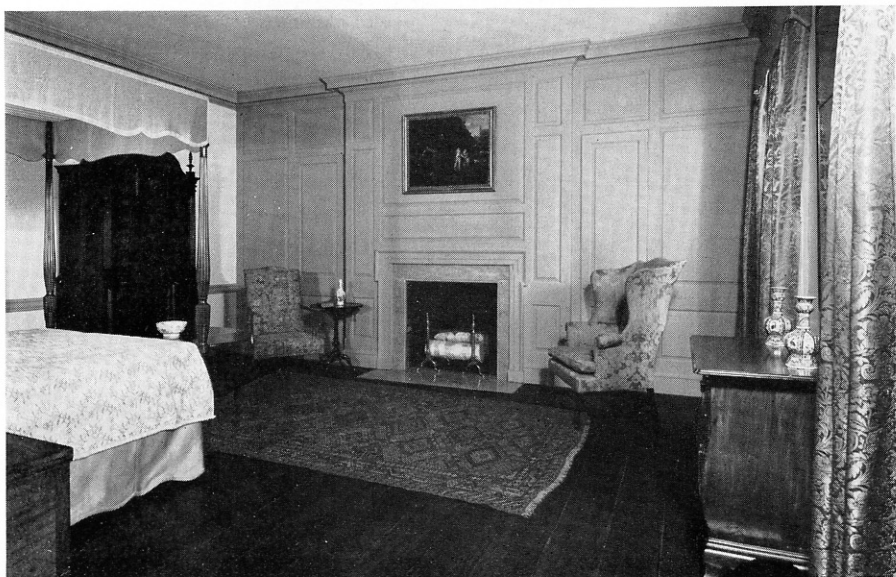
The earlier of these two rooms is the Vauxhall Gardens Room, which provides an excellent background for the Institute's Queen Anne furniture. Its panelling, which by some miracle escaped destruction, was brought to Detroit from the house of that name whose red and blue brick walls still stand in Greenwich,

New Jersey, some forty miles from Philadelphia. Like the panelling of a companion room, now in the Dupont Museum in Winterthur, it comes probably from a section of the house built around 1725. It is in any case a characteristic example of early eighteenth century craftsmanship, and has preserved the delicate beauty of its original color, a rich dark stain made of Indian red and milk, which forms a wonderful contrast with the white plaster of the unpanelled walls, and the deep blues and reds of the curtains and rugs.

While the Vauxhall Gardens Room may help us to recreate the atmosphere of the early years of the century, the other room, opened to the public on the same floor, epitomizes the elegance and classical flavor of life during the first years of the Republic. Its panelling comes from a well-known mansion, Spring Garden, built about 1770 near New Castle, Delaware, for Richard McWilliam, a magistrate of that city, who died in 1781. Formal grace and dignity are its main characteristics, and its soft blue-green color supplied the basis of a subtle color scheme successfully carried out.

The Whitby Hall renovation, financed from the Gibbs-Williams Fund, is the result of the efforts, not only of the museum staff, in particular Mr. Robert H. Tannahill, Honorary Curator of American Art, but also of Mr. Hugh Keyes, Mr. H. H. Micou, and Mrs. John C. Jessup of New York and Palm Beach, for whom decorating the new rooms has been a patient labor of love. Thanks to Mrs. Jessup, and her assistant Mr. Carl Bretz, the flavor of the epoch, its serenity and pleasant way of life, have been recreated in Detroit.

PAUL L. GRIGAUT



WHITBY HALL. Room from Spring Garden, built about 1770 near New Castle, Delaware
Gibbs-Williams Fund, 1955

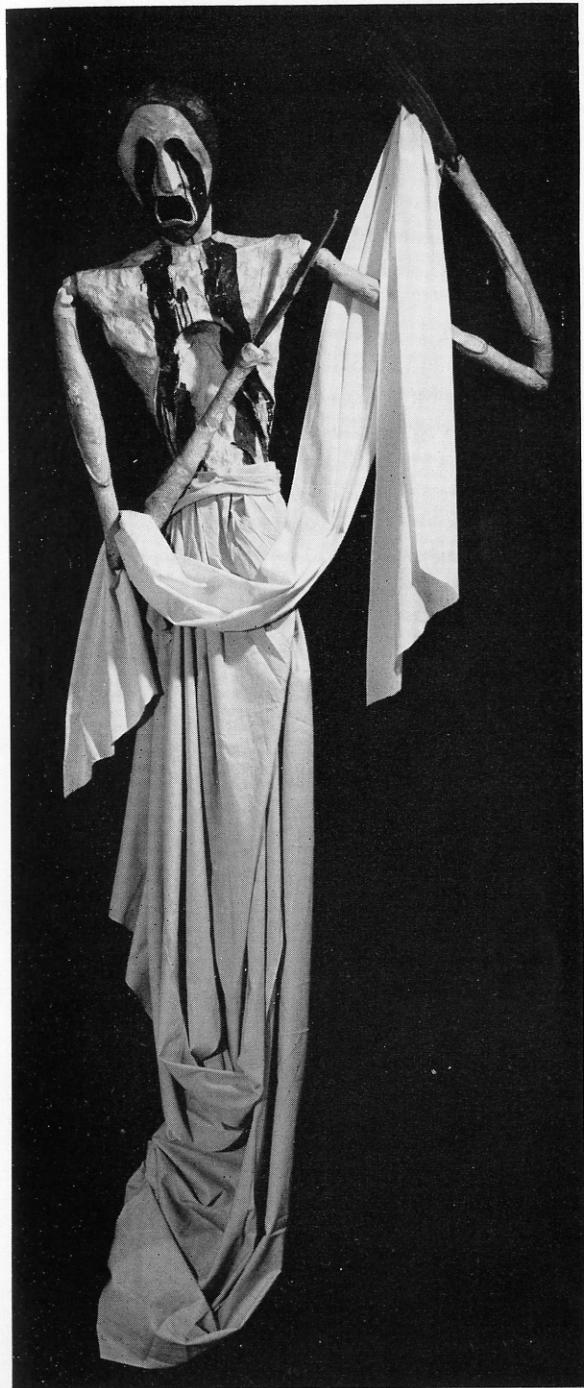
HEROIC PUPPETS FROM OEDIPUS REX

Recently, three particularly important puppets were acquired as the gift of Mr. and Mrs. Cedric Head, in memory of Mabel Kingsland Head. The figures, which stand between nine and ten feet tall when fully costumed, are made of paper over wooden armatures. The hands are of carved wood. Though the original costumes have been almost entirely lost—the figure of the Messenger retains part of its costume—the majestic scale and awesome beauty of the heads and torsos give the puppets as impressive an aspect as they must have had originally.

Seven giant puppets were designed by Robert Edmond Jones (1887-1954) and constructed by Remo Bufano (1894-1948) for the first American stage production of Igor Stravinsky's opera-oratorio *Oedipus Rex* with libretto by Jean Cocteau (in a Latin translation by J. Danielou). The production was presented by the Philadelphia Orchestra Association and the League of Composers. The premiere performance was given on Friday afternoon, April 10, 1931, in the Metropolitan Opera House, Philadelphia. The program, which also included a performance of Serge Prokofieff's ballet *Le Pas d'Acier*, was repeated in the same hall on Saturday evening, April 11, and again on Monday evening, April 13. Performances were given in New York at the Metropolitan Opera House on April 21 and 22, 1931. For these stage productions of *Oedipus Rex*, the chorus and soloists were dressed in dark blue draperies and seated in tiers on a bare stage draped in deep blue. Behind and above them, the stylized puppets told, in pantomime, the story of the unfortunate King of Thebes.

Stravinsky's program notes specify seven main characters: *Oedipus*, King of Thebes; *Jocasta*, his Queen; *Creon*, her brother; *Tiresias*, an old, blind seer; a *Messenger*; a *Shepherd*; and a *Narrator*. In this production, the Narrator was invisible; he was merely an amplified voice explaining, in English, the action of the drama at various intervals. Nevertheless, the production still required seven puppets since Oedipus had to be shown in two guises, before and after the blinding. Our three figures represent this Blinded Oedipus (fig. 1), the Messenger (fig. 2) and the Shepherd. Miraculously, the other figures are also preserved: such material is notoriously fugitive. Mr. and Mrs. Head retain the Creon and Tiresias. The first Oedipus and the Jocasta are in the collection of the Brander Matthews Dramatic Museum of Columbia University.

After one has recovered from the truly stunning effect of a first glance at these figures when properly installed, one wonders how such enormous puppets could have been manipulated, particularly on a stage designed for the production of human opera. Remo Bufano described the technique in an article written shortly after the premiere performance (*Puppetry, A Yearbook*, Detroit, 1931, pp. 22-24). "With the many stage problems involved it was necessary to hang a bridge from which the figures could be worked forty feet above the stage. Weight and leverage were terrific from that height, and so I worked out the controllers from both above and below to solve the problem . . . The costume



THE BLINDED OEDIPUS
Puppet designed by
ROBERT EDMOND JONES
constructed by Remo Bufano
for performance
of *Oedipus Rex*, April 1931
Gift of Mr. and Mrs.
Cedric Head in memory of
Mabel Kingsland Head,
1954
(Fig. 1)

designs were cleverly contrived by Mr. Jones so that the masked manipulators in black below might stay behind the figures and out of view of the audience . . . The mechanism to control movements from below consisted of slender steel rods . . . In the *Oedipus Rex* production, on the bridge above we used in some cases just single sticks independent of each other." Neither the wooden controllers nor the strings or wires which connected them to the figures have been preserved.

Bufano also comments on the manipulation of the final (blinded) Oedipus, which was controlled from above by means of "a very complicated wooden controller with many independent pieces, that could be pulled from opposite sides of the bridge and from below . . ." He says, "The final Oedipus was worked by practically the entire staff. His movements had to be so carefully timed that it was necessary to use every man available, each taking one string or another. This resulted in absolute precision of movement and the desired effect was consistently attained. This happens to be the final bit of action in which Oedipus, who has just blinded himself, is the sole actor. He stands in the light, blinded, covered with blood, tall, gaunt, and emaciated. He raises his blackened eyes. Slowly his hands go up as far as they can, without reaching anything, only to come down just as slowly. There is nothing but the earth left for him, toward which he now sinks in despair."

The reactions of the public and critics varied. Some were deeply impressed with the figures. Some complained that they were too static. Others felt that the puppets and in fact the entire staging was distracting; they complained that the music suffered from the competing visual aspects of the production. Most critics



THE MESSENGER

Puppet designed
and constructed for
performance of
Oedipus Rex, April 1931
Gift of Mr. and Mrs.
Cedric Head, 1954
(Fig. 2)

praised the puppets but condemned the idea of a stage presentation for Stravinsky's music which they felt would be better produced in the concert hall.

Whatever the effect was at the time of the production, these figures must now stand on their own as idols, effigies, pieces of sculpture, soberly handsome in their immobility, of primary importance in the history of modern stage design and drama. These figures were conceived, in fact, not as puppets in the ordinary sense, for they did not speak. They functioned basically as a visual aid to the comprehension and interpretation of the music and libretto. Were they actors? Super-actors, perhaps, deliberately expressing or fortuitously paralleling Edward Gordon Craig's ideal of the über-marionette.

Craig wrote (*The Mask*, Vol. 1, No. 2, April, 1908, p. 12), "May we not look forward with hope to that day which shall bring back to us once more the figure, or symbolic creature, made also by the cunning of the artist, so that we can regain once more the 'noble artificiality' which the old writer speaks of. Then shall we no longer be under the cruel influence of the emotional confessions of weakness which are nightly witnessed by the people and which in their turn create in the beholders the very weaknesses which are exhibited. To that end we must study to remake these images — no longer content with a puppet, we must create an über-marionette. The über-marionette will not compete with Life — but will rather go beyond it. Its ideal will not be the flesh and blood but rather the body in Trance — it will aim to clothe itself with a death-like Beauty while exhaling a living spirit."

In retrospect, Robert Edmond Jones saw in this production and certain others of the period an important step forward toward a new theater. "[Audiences'] delighted acceptance of the imaginative conventions employed gives proof — if proof be needed — that the unrealistic idea has come into the theater to stay. Whether the particular devices I have noted are to be adopted in [the] future or not is a matter of no importance. We may take courage from them to move forward boldly and with confidence." (*The Dramatic Imagination*, New York, 1941, p. 142).

Remo Bufano wrote to Paul McPharlin in 1938, "I believe you already have a great many photographs and programs of such things as 'El Retablo de Maese Pedro,' 'Oedipus Rex' and the clown used in 'Jumbo' and the 'Alice in Wonderland' figures. Any of these I consider my most important contribution to marionettes." Our collection of Bufano material at present includes not only the three *Oedipus* figures but also the costumes for the Walrus and the Carpenter (by Irene Sharff) from Bufano's marionettes in the Eva Le Gallienne production of "Alice in Wonderland" (1932). These came as a gift of the Museum for the Arts of Decoration of the Cooper Union (Acc. Nos. 54.325, 326). Mr. and Mrs. Cedric Head gave, in memory of Mabel Kingsland Head, the Boy (1925) from the de Falla "El Retablo de Maese Pedro" (Acc. No. 54.09) and one of the giant Bufano figures from the Hall of Pharmacy (1939) at the New York World's Fair (Acc. No. 54.10).

THE ARCHIVES OF AMERICAN ART

The Archives of American Art, in addition to their program of microfilming documents, has received by purchase and gift a variety of useful original manuscripts, letters, scrapbooks, sketches and drawings. We were pleased recently to be able to celebrate Charles E. Feinberg's birthday by receiving from him 55 ALS and 26 sketches and drawings. The autograph signed letters cover a long period of American artists from Sully and West, Cassatt, Whistler and others to Neysa McMein and Kenyon Cox. There are 20 John Singer Sargent letters all addressed to Miss Louisa Loring which form a unit of interest for Sargent. The drawings are the work of Kemble, Dan Beard, Edward, R. Bruce Horsefall and a group of 17 sketches and drawings by F. O. C. Darley.

The sketches and drawings are particularly useful in studying the growth of an artist's work. In the group of drawings by Darley there are two preliminary sketches as well as an engraved print of "Major Washington on his Mission to the French Commander." The sculpturing of the figure on the horse (as shown in the illustration) is actually more realistic and fulsome than the more stylized, stiff and neat appearance of the finished product. The second drawing shows the artist's trimming and tightening of the first one. It would be interesting to know how many sketches were made before the final form was adopted. As the Archives continues its collecting it may find more examples which will give the scholar the full picture of Darley's style.

ARLINE CUSTER



MAJOR WASHINGTON ON HIS MISSION TO THE FRENCH COMMANDER

by F. O. C. DARLEY, American (1822-1888)

Gift of Mr. Charles E. Feinberg, 1955