# Bulletin

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THE MADONNA AND CHILD WITH ANGELS (detail) by FRA ANGELICO, Italian (ca. 1387-1455) Ralph H. Booth Fund, 1956



MADONNA AND CHILD WITH ANGELS by FRA ANGELICO, Italian, ca. 1387-1455 Ralph H. Booth Fund, 1956

#### A FRA ANGELICO MADONNA

Fra Angelico (ca. 1387-1455) is one of the great names in the story of European painting; yet most of his works have remained in Florence (where a whole museum is devoted to him) and are rare outside Italy and particularly so in America. We are happy to be able to add one more to this small list.

The Madonna and Child with Angels,¹ purchased with the income of the Ralph H. Booth Fund, has never been published before. It was in one of the jealously guarded collections of the Rothschild family in Paris, where it remained unknown to the specialists in Italian painting until it came upon the art market last year. Since then, both John Pope-Hennessy, author of the most recent monograph on Fra Angelico, and Professor Roberto Longhi have seen it; both date it (the one by letter to the present writer, the other in conversation) among his early works. It is somewhat earlier in style than his first dated work, the triptych of the Madonna Enthroned commissioned by the Arte dei Linaiuoli (the Guild of the Flax Workers) in 1433. It can be dated approximately in the 1420's. The gold background and shallow medieval composition which he is using have disappeared in the 1430's.

So pure, radiant and angelic in tone is the art of Fra Angelico that it gives the superficial observer an impression of sameness; yet it is a most complex and subtle creation whose nature and sources are the subject of lively discussion among scholars. Certainly he was not precocious. Born about 1387 at Vicchio in the Mugello, in 1407 he entered the Dominican friary of San Domenico at Fiesole as a novice and took his vows the next year. Although he is described as a good painter upon panels and walls before he entered the order, his training is unknown. His earliest extant works are probably of the 1420's; his first dated work, of 1433; his paintings in the friary of San Marco in Florence (which today

is a museum in his honor) come after 1436.

What he began with is the clear, lovely tone, and the limpid abstract, precious color we see here. Gradually, by slow labor and attention, he absorbed the perspective, relief and expression of the most advanced Florentine painting. But from beginning to end his works were transfigured by his unique spirit, making them always the ineffable expression of his angelic religious spirit. Vasari, who throws an indefinable charm about every artist, has given us a description I cannot improve upon and shall not attempt to paraphrase, of this artist whom he called "no less excellent as a painter and illuminator than as a monk of the highest character."

"Fra Giovanni was a simple and holy man in his habits, and it is a sign of his goodness that one morning when Pope Nicholas V wished him to dine with him, he excused himself from eating flesh without the permission of his prior, not thinking of the papal authority. He avoided all worldly intrigues, living in purity and holiness, and was as benign to the poor as I believe Heaven must now be to him. He was always busy with his painting, but would never do any but holy subjects. He might have become rich, but he cared nothing about it, for he used to say that true riches consist in being contented with little. He might have ruled many but would not, saying there was less trouble and error in obeying orders . . .

"He was most gentle and temperate, living chastely, removed from the cares of the world. He would often say that whoever practised art needed a quiet life and freedom from care, and that he who occupies himself with the things of Christ ought always to be with Christ. He was never seen in anger among the friars, which seems to me an extraordinary thing and almost impossible to believe; his habit was to smile and reprove his friends. To those who wished works of him he would gently say that they must first obtain the consent of the prior, and after that he would not fail. I cannot bestow too much praise on this holy father, who was so humble and modest in all his works and conversation, so facile and devout in his painting, the saints by his hand being more like those blessed beings than those of any other."

E. P. RICHARDSON

<sup>1</sup> Cat. No. 1215. Panel. Height 6¾ inches; width 3¹³/₁₀ inches. Collection: Baron Maurice de Rothschild, Paris. Ralph H. Booth Fund, 1956.

## AN AMERICAN LAKE SCENE by THOMAS COLE

Soon after the death of Thomas Cole, "the father of American landscape painting," Fenimore Cooper singled out for special praise the artist's smaller landscapes. They were, the novelist said, "perfect gems in their way," and even today they have greater appeal perhaps than Cole's ambitious allegorical series, such as The Course of Empire or The Voyage of Life. Thanks to the generosity of Mr. Douglas F. Roby, one of these unassuming works, a product of Cole's maturity, has entered our collections recently. This American Lake Scene is a welcome addition to our series of American nineteenth century paintings, which already includes an impressive and somber early landscape presented by Mr. Dexter M. Ferry, Jr., some ten years ago, as well as an extremely important group of documents — hundreds of sketches, poems and letters — which help us to understand Cole's delightful personality. But the grandeur of character and exquisite visual sensibility that make a great landscape painter, who takes of the realities of life only what he feels is noble — these qualities we can find at a glance in this lake scene.



AMERICAN LAKE SCENE by THOMAS COLE, American (1801-1848) Gift of Douglas F. Roby, 1956

Even among American painters of the first half of the nineteenth century, who in retrospect seem to have been the most congenial group of artists who ever worked together, Thomas Cole stands out. To those who knew him best he was "artless and unsophisticated," while to Cooper and their mutual friends, he was not only "one of the very first geniuses of the age—the highest genius this country has produced," but also a warm human being, "fair-minded, full of feeling for his art—just to others—modest and as enthusiastic as a well regulated temperament and a cool head would permit." Such sensitive artists and shrewd judges of men as John Trumbull, Dunlap and Durand were among the first to appreciate Cole's aspirations and to purchase his works; and the fact that William Cullen Bryant, the author of the *Thanatopsis* and a kindred soul indeed, remained throughout his life the artist's closest intimate, speaks well for the painter.

In the present landscape Cole endeavored to express the love and delight of nature which characterize the age of Lamartine and Wordsworth, of Bryant and Washington Irving. But this American Lake Scene (surely it will be identified?) is equally a hymn to what Bryant called "the wild grandeur peculiar to our country," and to "the eternal majesty, immutability and repose" which Cole, born in England but raised in the new Republic, felt so deeply in the scenery of the Catskills. More important still its purely esthetic qualities give it an independent value as a deliberate work of art. Few artists of Cole's day, even

Turner and Delacroix, have dared more lovely chords of color, with their resilience which can be compared only to the notes, alternately bitter and exquisitely sweet, of the flute which Cole played so well. Saffron yellow clouds merge into the lavender and rosy grays of distant hills; pale ochre and dull browns mingle, in subtle gradations of tone, with the pale blues of water and sky and the few sharp red accents dear to Romantic painters. Studying such a painting one cannot help but admire, and envy, the quality of the emotion responsible for such art.

PAUL L. GRIGAUT

Cat. No. 1211. Canvas. Height 18¼ inches width 24½ inches. Signed on rock: T. Cole 1844. Ex-coll: American Art Union, New York, 1844; Young Men's Mercantile Association, Cincinnati, Ohio; T. L. Ogden, New York; Ogden family; John J. Bowden, Long Island, N. Y. Exhibited at the American Art Union, 1844, No. 7. Ref. Bartlett Cowdrey, American Academy and American Art Union Exhibition Record, 1953, p. 81 (No. 7). Gift of Mr. Douglas F. Roby, 1956.

#### A TUSCAN HILLSIDE by ELIHU VEDDER

Until Mr. and Mrs. James S. Whitcomb presented to the Institute the striking landscape reproduced here, Elihu Vedder, one of the most talented American expatriates of the nineteenth century, was not represented in our museum. For this reason, but even more for the very high quality of the *Fiesole*, this small canvas, painted as it seems at first in tones of pale amber, is a welcome addition to our collections.

We know a great deal about Vedder, mostly through his volumes of reminiscences, which are rambling, a little repetitious, a little naive, and full of joie de vivre. Born in 1836 in Sherbourne, in upper New York State, he spent most of his life in Europe, first in Paris as a student under a forgotten mediocrity, Picot, and later in Italy where, quite fittingly, he is buried in the old Roman cemetery near Monte Testaccio. During his long life Vedder was best known for his "imaginative" pictures, story telling paintings or book illustrations for such art nouveau volumes as the Rubaiyat of Omar Khayam, which it is hard for us today to appreciate, but which our children will probably rediscover. The Fiesole (1859) is a work of Elihu Vedder's youth, unpretentious and unobtrusive, but painted with tenderness, deep feeling and admiration. Inevitably it reminds one of the early Corots, those luminous Italian landscapes which today are among the most prized of the French artist's work. And indeed the Fiesole has much of their compactness and feeling for solid form, much of the poetical tension which we admire in Corot; but in all probability Vedder saw few if any of the Frenchman's works. Where did young Vedder then get his primary inspiration? Certainly not from his stay in Picot's atelier; perhaps, in part at least, from the works of very talented Italian artists unfortunately almost completely unknown in this country, such as Guglielmo Ciardi or Odoardo Borraní, who often made use of



FIESOLE by ELIHU VEDDER, American (1836-1923) Gift of Mr. and Mrs. James S. Whitcomb, 1956

similar themes and of the most satisfactory shape, long and narrow, which Vedder chose for most of his landscapes.

All that makes the Italian countryside unforgettable for those who love it is in this view of a Tuscan hillside. The cobbled lanes, the dried torrent bed, the crumbling walls of abandoned terraces, the pale olive trees and dark cypresses bathed in the exquisite clear soft light of the Florentine landscape, — all this in an effortless composition, produces a compact image of peace and quietude. Many artists have succeeded in expressing the noble and uncompromising beauty of Italy. Vedder, unjustly forgotten, in this *Fiesole* becomes their equal.

Cat. No. 1212. Canvas. Height 15 inches; width 29¼ inches. Signed lower right: Elihu Vedder, 1859. Ex-coll.: George Riddle, Cambridge, Mass.; Arunah S. A. Brady, Baltimore. Gift of Mr. and Mrs. James S. Whitcomb, 1956.

PAUL L. GRIGAUT

### A PUNCHINELLO DRAWING by DOMENICO TIEPOLO

A major acquisition of the past season — and one which sumptuously enriches the Museum's permanent collection of master drawings — is a characteristically elegant and lively composition in sepia ink and wash by Giovanni Domenico Tiepolo, representing *Punchinello Carried in a Triumphal Procession*,¹ purchased at the end of last year through the General Membership Fund and presented to the Museum by the Founders Society. By the very nature of its festive air, its monumental conception, and its execution in nervous but precise line, it is a drawing which is immediately certain to delight those who behold it for the first time, a drawing in which joyous music, gaiety, and color are so skillfully blended and conveyed in such details as blaring trumpets, a tambourine, a bell, a fluttering banner, and the costumes of the crowded group of figures that one senses at once, even in the monochrome technique, which is superbly handled, all of the bright colors so typical of Venice.

Prepared in various gradations of sepia wash and accented with pen and sepia ink over underlying traces of preliminary pencil, the drawing is signed by Domenico Tiepolo at the top of the masonry wall which dominates the left side of the composition. The high lights in the costumes of two of the most predominant figures in the picture, both seen from the back, that of the Venetian lady at the left and the gentleman in Turkish attire in the center, are emphasized by the clear, crisp white of the paper, still in pristine condition, which shines through the washes with great effectiveness. In the same way, the high lights are accentuated in the droll elongated caps and on the shoulders of the attendant punchinellos who support Punchinello himself, hoisted aloft in triumph upon an elaborate chair and rattling a bell, as well as in the folds of the dress and in the



PUNCHINELLO CARRIED IN A TRIUMPHAL PROCESSION by GIOVANNI DOMENICO TIEPOLO, Venetian, 1727-1804 Gift of the Founders Society, General Membership Fund, 1955

tambourine of the charming girl who dances ahead of the procession at the far right. The only touch of actual color in the drawing appears in the masks of four of the punchinellos, two of whom are almost full-face to the spectator and two of whom are drawn in profile.

Giovanni Domenico Tiepolo, painter, etcher, and graphic artist, was born in Venice in 1727, the son of an illustrious father, Giovanni Battista Tiepolo (1696-1770), who was his teacher. The younger Tiepolo is known for the frescoes which he painted in 1737 for the Villa Valmarana near Vicenza, where his father also worked in the same year. The two accompanied one another to Würzburg, where again they collaborated in 1751 and 1752. Beside commissions at Udine in 1759, in Spain from 1762 to 1771, and in Genoa in 1785, Domenico painted intermittently at the little country villa of Zianigo, near Mirano, which his father had acquired for the family with proceeds from the frescoes painted for the Prince-Bishop at Würzburg. The greater portion of Domenico's work, however, was produced in Venice up until the year 1788, when he retired permanently to the Villa Zianigo. There he died in 1804.

Our present drawing is related to the final phase of Domenico Tiepolo's life after 1788, when he diverted himself by frescoing the walls of the Villa Zianigo with amusing and grotesque subjects, adopting for his theme scenes from the daily life and from the ancient but nevertheless contemporary legends of

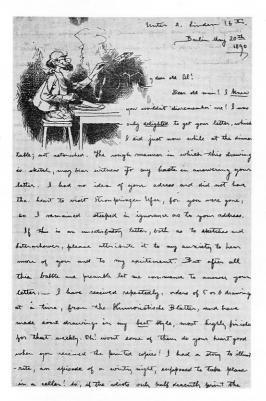
Pagliacci or Punch. These enchanting frescoes, partly painted in grisaille, are now reassembled and installed on the second floor of Robert Browning's last residence in Venice, the Cà Rezzonico on the Grand Canal, where the poet died in 1889. Some of the episodes in these frescoes are identical with those in a series of drawings entitled Divertimenti per li regazzi, apparently produced toward the beginning of the new century at the end of Domenico's career. Forming a record of the life of Punchinello from his birth to his ignominious demise and beyond, it has long been a matter of conjecture among scholars as to whether Domenico produced these fascinating drawings preparatory to an intended series of etchings or, as the title indicates, purely as diversion for young children. It has often been suggested, too, that the drawings were turned out by the artist simply to entertain himself during the waning years of his retirement. In any case, the exact folklore from which Domenico derived the story has now disappeared, though it seems to have been a favorite subject among 18th-Century Venetians in the tradition of the Commedia del'arte, which also was deeply rooted in the distant past of classical antiquity.

The characters of Pullicinella, of Brighella, Smeraldina, and of Columbina, become in the hands of the younger Tiepolo nothing more than unsophisticated peasant types, free of any disguise. Domenico's punchinellos, clownish and humpbacked, disporting themselves in somber masquerade with great beaked noses, cavort about in various attitudes of the dance, of love-making and sport, devising all the while entirely unexpected pranks and other infamies upon one another. Beneath this symbolic conglomeration of intrepid jocularity and satirical ardor, there constantly flows, as in our drawing, a readily detected element of wistfulness and a sympathetic understanding of the foibles of everyday human existence, particularly since the figures, masked though they are by incongruous trappings, are staged against familiar, realistic Venetian backgrounds.

Domenico Tiepolo was a more mundane personality than his spiritual father, but withal an exuberant imagination pervades the restricted areas in which his output is concerned. Whatever was touched by his witty pen or pencil or brush directly sprang into a life of freshness and originality. These qualities and characteristics of his style are all well exemplified in the powerful composition which one encounters in *Punchinello Carried in a Triumphal Procession*, which is No. 37 in the series of *Divertimenti per li regazzi* and which glitters as one of the most distinguished pages of descriptive illustration in the history of great drawings.

JOHN S. NEWBERRY, JR.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> Acc. no. 55.487. Height 11¾ in.; width 16½ in.; signed upper left: *Dom° Tiepolo*; ex-coll. of Countess Wachtmeister, sold at Sotheby's, London, Dec. 15, 1954, no. 109; purchased from Marianne Feilchenfeldt, Zurich, Switzerland. Gift of the Founders Society, General Membership Fund, 1955.



EXCERPT OF LETTER
FROM LYONEL FEININGER
to Alfred Vance Churchill

# FEININGER MATERIAL FOR THE ARCHIVES OF AMERICAN ART

Alfred Vance Churchill and Lyonel Feininger were youthful friends and fellow students on the Continent in the 1880's and 90's. Mr. Churchill's widow has presented to the Archives a group of material which sheds a great deal of light upon Feininger's career from 1890 to 1913. A series of thirty-two letters addressed "My dear old Al" and signed "Leo" were written between 1890 and 1899. These are illustrated with delightful cartoons; affectionate, gay and intimate, they show Feininger's exuberant boyish spirit. During this period he made his living by illustrating articles and drawing cartoons for magazines. He seemed very happy and busy but the work was closely prescribed and was not an expression of his own spirit. Unfortunately there is a gap during the very important period of his change from an illustrator to an independent expressive artist. But there are two extremely important letters, both dated 1913, which describe his change of career and the new design in his work. The letter dated February 3, 1913, expressed the change and is quoted in part below.

"... it takes years and years of strenuous, unremitting and critical work and self-disciplining to put forth a new form. And for my considera-



LANDSCAPE SKETCH
by LYONEL FEININGER

tion, Art is ever *new*, being Creation . . . My work for the 'papers' is at an end—There is no place for me there! The moment one goes one's own way, one is an outlaw . . . Well, I had about 14 years of it, and never dreaming that there was for *me* such a thing in the world as *art*; that was something quite outside of my treadmill existence. The awakening came like a wonder, to me. It is now some 5 years since I commenced to work for myself. I wish I could send you something to give you an idea, at least, of my line of development . . . Above all, never, old Al, think me a 'fadist'! I possessed (!) the elements of so-called *cubism* before I had ever heard of such a thing or seen a cubistic painting—My work of 5 and more years ago shows already the tendency towards a new and absolutely *personal perspective* . . ."

The last letter in this collection was written in 1920 and contains only comments on the difficulties of life in Germany after the First World War. Although descriptions of Feininger's artistic life stop in 1913, the collection is an important contribution to a study of his training, his early experience and the first growth of his personal expression. Feininger was eighty-four when he died January 13, 1956. His career was successful and showed constant growth in the use of color and expression. In addition to the letters, Mrs. Churchill presented us with a scrapbook of Feininger's sketches which illustrate the change in his technique up through 1913. The letters and the sketch book combine to form a very interesting and revealing unit of Lyonel Feininger's career.

ARLINE CUSTER

#### A VICTORIAN HAND PUPPET THEATRE

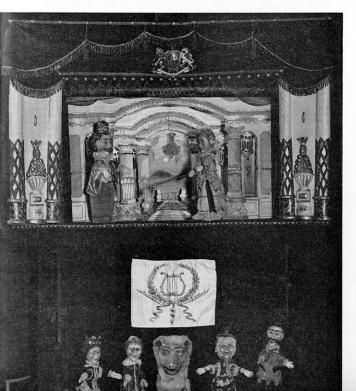
The McPharlin Collection of Puppetry has been enriched by the recent acquisition of an English Hand Puppet Theatre. This splendid example of a Victorian puppet theatre came to the attention of Mr. Adolph S. Cavallo, former Curator of Theatre Arts, through Mr. Gerald Morice, an English puppeteer, and the gift of the theatre was made possible through the Paul McPharlin Memorial Fund.

This theatre, complete with its original seven hand puppets, stock of twenty-two pieces of scenery and one script, comes from the estate of A. C. Eyton of Eyton Hall, Shropshire, and can be traced back to W. C. C. Eyton of Walford Manor for whose children it was probably constructed around 1870. The proscenium has white papier-mache columns, with turquoise ornamentation and imitation green marble bases. A coat of arms placed above the proscenium is of painted metal and the whole is surmounted by draped red velvet with gold fringe and tassels. The playboard or shelf in front of the stage is covered in green felt with brass studs, and the booth is surrounded in moquette.

The puppets represent stock characters which could be used in various plays. Their elaborate bright colored costumes of silks and satins are ornamented with lace, gold and silver braid, and paste stones. The heads are papier-mache and

the hands are carved of wood.

The scenery which may be used in almost endless combinations is suspended from above by an ingenious system of hooks and wires, the settings quickly



HAND PUPPET THEATRE English, about 1870 Paul McPharlin Memorial Fund, 1956

converted from one subject to another. There is a forest scene which folds over and back to reveal the palace setting as seen in the illustration. A weird fairy-like grotto suddenly becomes a moonlit garden. Other settings show a waterfall in a woodland glen, a floral bower and various architectural settings, all of which is a striking example, in reduced replica, of the human theatre of the later Victorian period.

This puppet theatre is unique in this country and as an important document in the history of puppetry adds great interest and importance to our evergrowing collection of theatre arts.

GIL ODEN

Accession Number 56.67. Height 8 feet; width 5 feet; depth 3 feet, 6 inches. England, Shropshire, ca. 1870. Gift of Paul McPharlin Memorial Fund, 1956.

The following issues of *The Art Quarterly* are now out of print. The Editors of the magazine would therefore greatly appreciate it if subscribers would return to The Detroit Institute of Arts any of these numbers which they do not wish to keep:

Index, 1938

Vol. I, no. 4, 1938 (Autumn)

Vol. II, nos. 1, 2, 3, 1938 (Winter, Spring, Summer)

Vol. III, no. 1, 1940 (Winter)

Vol. VIII, no. 2, 1945 (Spring)

Vol. IX, nos. 1, 2, 3, 1946 (Winter, Spring, Summer)

Vol. XV, nos. 3, 4, 1952 (Autumn, Winter)

Vol. XVIII, nos. 2, 3, 4, 1955 (Summer, Autumn, Winter)

#### FOUR EUROPEAN PHOTOGRAPHERS

Within the past year a group of twelve photographs by four contemporary European photographers has been given to The Detroit Institute of Arts following an exhibition of their work here. Each photographer has worked in Paris, but only Robert Doisneau is a native Parisian. The others, Brassai, Izis Bidermanas, and Sabine Weiss are from Transylvania, Lithuania and Switzerland respectively. All four photographers have gained considerable reputation in the periodicals and salons of Europe, but aside from books produced by each, and from special assignments done for "Harper's Bazaar" by Brassai, their photographs are not yet well known in America.

Dean of the documentary photographers in Europe, Brassai has made his originality and unique vision felt throughout the younger generation of European cameramen. Until the age of thirty he never made a photograph, and it was only to pin down certain aspects of Paris after dark that he borrowed a camera. He haunted the streets, seeing things as few did; every bridge, every person he met in his wanderings, took on special meaning to him and his lens. Since the appearance of his first book, "Paris at Night," Brassai's photographs have been reproduced in the best magazines of European photography. In America he is a regular contributor to "Harper's Bazaar."

Robert Doisneau is quite unique as a cameraman. His photographs are amusing, humorous, satirical, but rarely caustic or malicious portraits of people and places—taken mostly in his native France. His pictures range from a goose farmer who resembles his force-fed geese to grotesque monuments found in the boulevards of Paris. It is these entertaining things in daily life which invariably go unobserved that Doisneau consciously records. Doisneau has had two books of photographs published, "Banlieue de Paris" and only recently "Les Parisiens tel qu'ils sont."

Izis Bidermanas (professionally he uses only his first name) is a cameraman famous throughout Europe for his books of photographs to which the great poets of France, including Jacques Prévert and Colette have been inspired to write accompanying text. Izis became known in Paris after his first exhibition in 1946 when he was discovered and hired by the leading French picture magazine PARIS-MATCH. For it, as a free-lance reporter-photographer, he has since roamed all through Europe and the Mid-East, returning with photographs that are not so much documentary as they are lyrical, poetic, and essentially designed pictures of the zestful, humane and exciting vision he selects carefully for his subjects. His sensitive work is unique in the pictorial school of photography.

The youngest member of the group, twenty-nine year old Sabine Weiss, is married to the American artist Hugh Weiss. Her apprenticeship was served during the war with a well-known fashion photographer in her home town of Geneva, Switzerland. She moved on to Paris, and free-lanced as a photographer for eight years. Only those subjects which excite her and to which she can impart a marked degree of personalized excitement does she seek to capture, and the whole range of her pictures reflects this purpose. It does not matter whether it is a gang of kids in the slum suburbs outside of Paris, a great conductor with his orchestra or howling cats in the streets and alleys of Paris. Mrs. Weiss' eye is sharp and perceptive, but she views her subjects with sympathy and understanding.

WILLIAM A. MC GONAGLE

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> Acc. nos. 55.490-55.501. Gift of The Charles L. Freer, Elliott T. Slocum and Hal H. Smith Funds, 1955.

The writer is indebted for much of this material to Mr. Peter Pollack of the Art Institute of Chicago.



BEJEWELED LADY IN CAFE by BRASSAI

CAFE BAR, LA TARTINE by ROBERT DOISNEAU

