



BULLETIN OF
THE DETROIT INSTITUTE OF ARTS
of the City of Detroit

Vol. IV

NOVEMBER, 1922

No. 2



*Ioannes Snellinx Pictor
Humanarum Figurarum in Aulais & Topetibus Antverpie.*

Ant. van Dyck fecit aqua forti

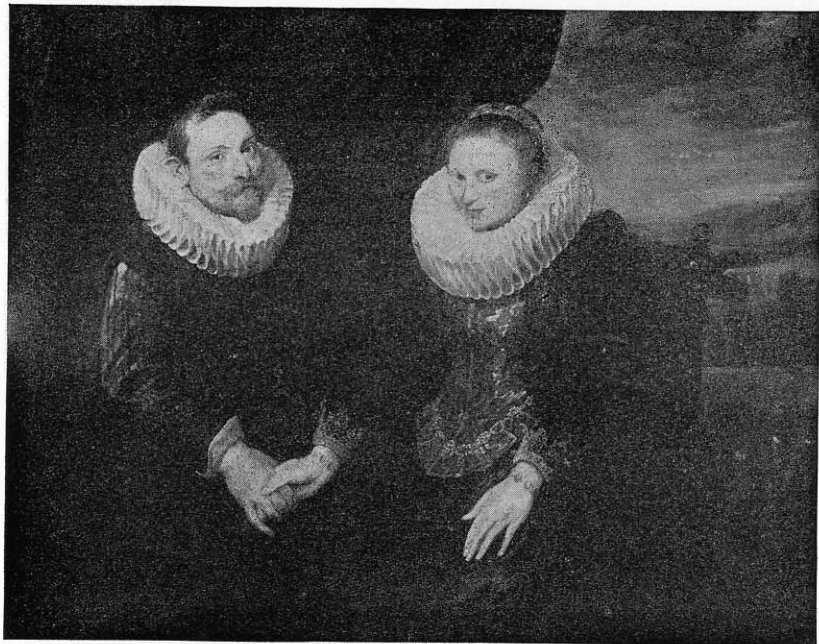
PORTRAIT OF JAN SNELLINX
ETCHING BY ANTHONY VAN DYCK (1599-1641)
A RECENT ADDITION TO THE PRINT COLLECTION

RUBENS and VAN DYCK IN THE DETROIT MUSEUM

The following excerpts are taken from an article by Dr. W. R. Valentiner which appeared in the August number of "Art in America."

"The Museum at Detroit is fortunate in having the art of Rubens represented among its collection by

collection at Berlin, of which there is also an engraving from the time of Rubens by Adrian Lommelin. This sketch is generally accepted as an original study by Rubens, but is more likely to be a workshop replica of the lost study of our picture, as



JAN WILDENS AND WIFE
BY SIR ANTHONY VAN DYCK

an important picture. . . . The picture in the possession of the museum shows the meeting of David and Abigail, a subject adapted to the energetic temperament of Rubens with his pleasure in movement of masses, and suitable for the expression of emotion by means of vivid gestures.

"A smaller version of the composition at Detroit exists in a private

the technique is not quite so brilliant and spirited as that of the master himself, and his studies have been copied frequently by pupils. However, it is very interesting to compare it with the large composition, which in its simplification is undoubtedly an improvement. Several figures of less importance are omitted, such as the old woman behind Abigail, one of the pages of David and

two of his warriors, as well as the bodies of his horses, the one in the right corner being less conspicuous, so that the main figures of the action stand out more prominently. Such an intelligent concentration as the first version could not have been done by any one else than Rubens

of this assumption, as it can be traced to the collection of Cardinal Richelieu, from whom de Piles received the picture. It does not seem likely that this great patron of art owned a work by Rubens which was not from his own hand. The picture must therefore be included



ABIGAIL MEETING DAVID WITH PRESENTS
BY PETER PAUL RUBENS

himself. In fact in the whole technique of the large canvas we can see his fine powerful pencil stroke. . . . All the characteristics of the brushwork of Rubens, which none of his pupils was able to imitate, we find in the execution of the main figures, especially in the details of armor, landscape, and animals, which latter show in outline and their glittering human-like eyes the strong spirit of the master. The splendid pedigree of the picture also speaks in favor

in the list of works by Rubens in America as one of his most important."

* * *

"While this work by Rubens has always been known under his name, a painting by his pupil, Van Dyck, in the Detroit Museum is concealed under the name of Cornelis de Vos, another pupil of Rubens, to whom it has been wrongly attributed. Both Cornelis de Vos and Van Dyck have painted somewhat similar com-

positions several times, where two figures are seen sitting next to each other at full or three-quarter length, but the depicting of character and the technique of the two artists is very different. Both imitate to a certain degree Rubens' loose, vivid, fervent technique, but de Vos has less temperament and is more bourgeois in character, so his technique becomes more even and his color, which is colder, less expressive; his types are less aristocratic, although his children's portraits are usually very pleasing. Van Dyck, on the other hand, is far more nervous than Rubens, his touch is even more rapid and uneven, sometimes more glowing, especially in the deep reds which he prefers, sometimes more superficial, and always very pointed and consciously brilliant. When comparing the technique and character of the two artists, there can be no doubt that the picture in Detroit is the work of Van Dyck, although a youthful one and one which is not in the very best of condition, as it has at some time been cleaned a little. This may be the reason why the picture has not as yet been recognized as the work of Van Dyck. De Vos never would have been able to paint such nervous, long fingers with so much delicacy, or to give so much cleverness to the expression of the faces, nor would he have dared to paint the costume or the land-

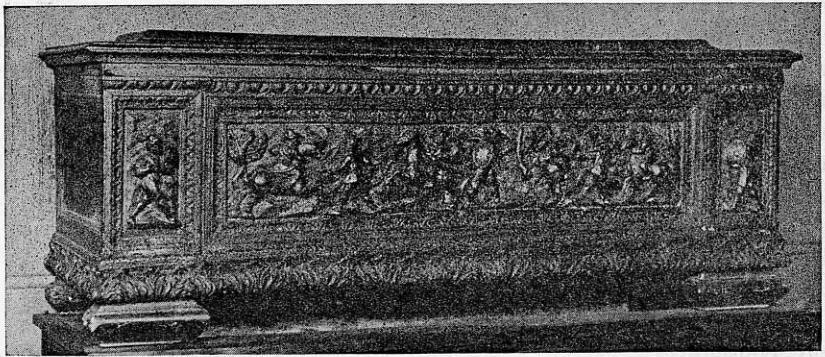
scape in the background with so few brilliant strokes. The portrait is called a portrait of Franz Snyders and his wife, but if compared with the several portraits of this artist by Van Dyck there can be no doubt that it does not represent him. As has been rightly pointed out, the characteristics of the man in our picture are the queer shaped mouth, the nose, which is strongly curved at the end, and the big outstanding ears. These we find in the portrait of Jan Wildens, the landscape painter, by Van Dyck in the Lichtenstein gallery at Vienna and the replica at Cassel. Although the different position of the head gives a somewhat different look to the face, it seems to me very likely that we recognize in the man in the group at Detroit the same person, especially if we consider that it may have been painted a little later. Jan Wildens was the artist who sometimes painted the landscape backgrounds in Rubens' paintings, a fact which we learn from Rubens' letters, in one of which, dated 1618, Wildens is mentioned. This date quite agrees with the style of the painting in Detroit, as it is an early work of Van Dyck, from a period when he was still working in Rubens' atelier, probably painted between 1618-20. It is thus an interesting testimony to the friendly relations between the pupils and companions of Rubens."

XVI CENTURY CASSONI

During the past year the funds of the Institute have been largely devoted to the purchase of objects of household or decorative art, and a number of interesting pieces of furniture have been acquired which will become a part of the period rooms planned for the new museum.

design by the most eminent craftsmen and artists of the day, and it was not unusual to find artists of note designing and executing pieces of furniture.

Artists and cabinet makers from other countries came to learn from the Italian masters, and the spirit



CARVED WALNUT CASSONE, ITALIAN XVI CENTURY

Beginning with the Italian Renaissance, that period which is the starting point and inspiration of all succeeding furniture styles, we have been fortunate in securing a number of typical pieces, among them three XVI Century cassoni—each one a splendid example of the craftsmanship of this century.

The outburst of intellectual energy that came with the Renaissance, and from which sprang discoveries, inventions and great art achievements, had its corresponding influence on the crafts. The liberal patronage bestowed on the decorative arts by the wealthy nobles of Florence, Milan, Rome and Venice, encouraged the development of furniture

and styles of the Italian Renaissance swept across the continent.

In general the style of the furniture of this period was palatial rather than domestic in character. It was a period of spacious dimensions, of dignified splendor, and of intense virility and vigor. Most of the furniture was highly ornamentative, and carving, painting, gilding, veneering, gesso work, intarsia and *pietra dura* were all employed. The chief pieces were chests, cabinets, tables, and the curule and high-backed chairs, with an occasional credenza or buffet.

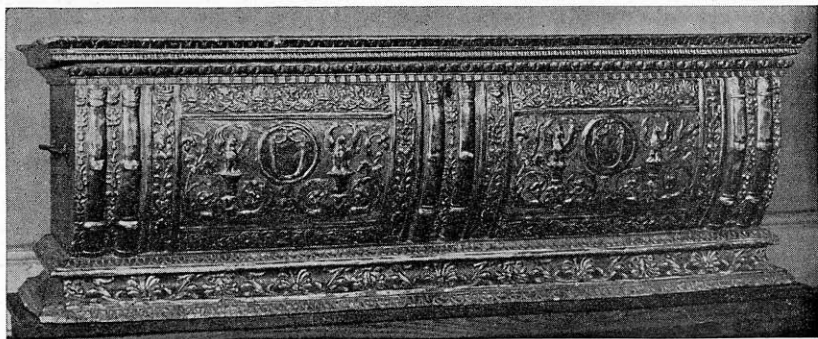
The chests or cassoni, which were conspicuous and highly significant pieces of furniture in Italian fur-

nishing schemes, placed along the walls in halls and corridors or salons, were used to preserve tapestries, clothes, plate and other valuables, or served as marriage chests.

The three pieces which have been acquired for the Institute's collection illustrate some of the chief methods of ornamentation—carving, intarsia, and polychrome.

depicted is full of vitality and vigor

The polychrome chest, in the form of a sarcophagus, is made of one of the finer woods and the surface coated with gesso to give a smooth and suitable ground for the application of the pigment and gold. The design on the front is evidently the family armorial bearings.



POLYCHROME CHEST, ITALIAN XVI CENTURY

When carving began to assume so much importance, the coarse-grained oak was abandoned, and walnut, chestnut and the finer woods took its place. The lives of saints came to play a less prominent part, and mythological, allegorical and historical subjects became popular, and we find in our chest that combination of purely decorative scroll work and pictorial form which we have come to associate with the Renaissance style. The tournament scene

Ivory and bone inlay, which had been popular in Venice for more than a century, was now partially superseded by inlays of natural or dyed woods, scorched or etched with hot sand or iron and polished with oils. This form, known as intarsia, is well illustrated in the third chest. The early geometrical and floral patterns have here given way to arabesques with their fantastic dragons and playful, half-human figures—motives much used during this period.

J. W.



MODEL OF THE NEW BUILDING

has been chronologically arranged and there is an interesting introductory note by S. R. Koehler on the art of this great German master.

MODEL OF NEW BUILDING.—A plaster model of the new building for the Detroit Institute of Arts, together with the grounds, made to three-sixteenths scale, will be placed in the architectural exhibition of the Thumb Tack Club and will then remain on view at the Institute continuously. The model, after the design by Paul P. Cret, has been tinted to show the actual color of the building when completed.

PAINTING BY SONNTAG PRESENTED.—A landscape by William Louis Sonntag has been presented to the Institute by Dr. Charles W. Hitchcock. Sonntag, a contemporary of Bierstadt, Cole and Church, was one of the well known exponents of the Hudson River School of painting,

the outgrowth of the movement following the War of 1812 that broke away from old world traditions and endeavored to develop a national style.

MARINE BY ROBERT HOPKIN.—Through the bequest of Mrs. Mary R. Coyl a marine painting entitled "*Three Bells of Glasgow*," has been added to the permanent collection. It is an early work of the painter, Robert Hopkin, having been painted in 1871.

RECREATION COMMISSION SKETCH CLASS.—The Recreation Commission has begun its free sketch class which will be continued through the winter months as heretofore. The class will be graded this year into three groups, according to the experience and ability of the pupils. It is conducted at the Institute on Friday evenings from 7:30 to 9 o'clock.