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ROMANESQUE RELIEF, FRENCH TWELFTH CENTURY
GIFT OF MR. G. J. DEMOTTE

NEW PERIOD ROOMS

Three newly arranged galleries were opened to the public at the Art Institute on December 10, showing the acquisitions made by the museum during the last two years. This exhibit will give, in a reduced

the Fourteenth to the Seventeenth Century.

While it is to be hoped that in the new building the exhibit of mediæval art will not begin as late as the Gothic period, but with the early



GOTHIC ROOM
XIV AND XV CENTURIES

scope, an idea of the intended arrangement in the new building where, in the European wing, a combined exhibition of the art of painting, sculpture and decorative arts will be shown in period rooms in chronological order. So far, only three periods are represented—the Gothic, the Italian Renaissance, and the Northern Baroque, covering the time from

Christian and Romanesque art, so far we have been able to show only a few scattered objects of these earlier periods in our first, the Gothic gallery. Several pieces of textiles found in Egyptian tombs show the art of the Christian Copts from the Fourth to the Sixth Century, partly Roman, partly Christian in motives. They belong to the earliest tapestry weav-

ings of the Middle Ages and are especially interesting to this country as they show a similarity in technic to the early weavings found in Peruvian tombs.

With the baptismal font from Venice made in the Thirteenth Century, which has been on exhibition

ones built into the walls of these palaces or in San Marco.

All the other works in the first gallery were executed in the main countries of the Gothic style—France, Germany, England and Italy—mostly during the Fourteenth and Fifteenth centuries, though several



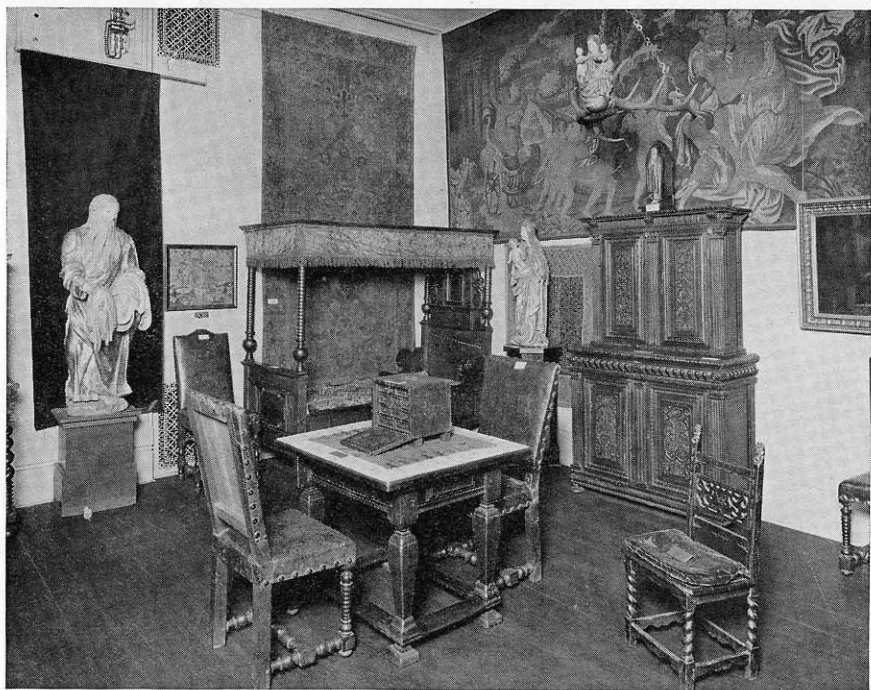
ITALIAN RENAISSANCE
XV AND XVI CENTURIES

at the Institute for some time, and the stone medallions of the same period representing grotesque animals, we advance to the Romanesque style. These medallions guide us back to the time when the first palaces rose from the Grand Canal in Venice, and visitors to that city may remember having seen similar

pieces of furniture are of a somewhat later date. They show how far into the Renaissance the Gothic tradition was kept, lasting even into the Baroque. Two Spanish cabinets, for instance, show in their decoration a curious mixture of Moorish geometrical patterns and Gothic motives combined with Italian Renais-

sance ornaments. They were manufactured as late as the second half of the Sixteenth Century, although the Moors had been driven out of Spain in the Fifteenth Century. So with the two tables, one from Italy, one from Germany, which show Gothic outlines on the stands, but

are even able to show some examples of the best Paris workmanship at its height in the Fourteenth Century: the two small consoles in the form of fantastic animals, and a third representing a most charming figure of a crouching angel, formerly on the outside of one of the old town



NORTHERN RENAISSANCE
XVI AND XVII CENTURIES

classic profiles on the upper part; and some of the chests, which are decorated with purely Gothic hinges and locks, and with carved ornaments that show the influence of the Renaissance.

The art of Gothic sculpture is well represented by several fine pieces of French and German origin. We

halls in Paris. They are not less refined in execution than some of the famous gargoyles on Notre Dame.

In the heavier forms of the two stone statues, one a Madonna, the other representing St. Paul, we already feel the beginning of the realistic style of the last phase of Gothic art. They come from Bur-

gundy and are derived in style from the art of the greatest genius of this period, Claus Sluter, the creator of the Moses Fountain at Dijon.

Just as the use of soft stone was characteristic of the French sculpture of this period as a material in which the artists could bring out the delicate beauty of line and coloring they were aiming for, so the carving of statues in wood is typical of the German sculptors of the late Gothic period. The stately

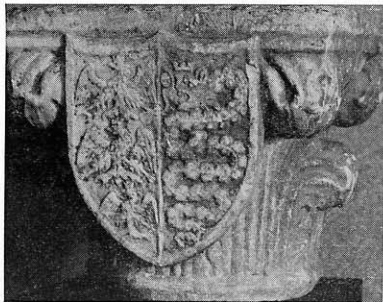
Madonna by Gregor Erhardt of Augsburg, presented by the Detroit Museum of Art Founders Society, and the naively posed St. Michael from the workshop of Veit Stoss, the best Nuremberg carver, may explain

how well this material was suited to the interest of these artists in an intensely individual and intimate expression as well as a rich and elaborate execution of well observed details.

The one large picture in the room, on the other hand, with its brilliant color effect and strong, clear outlines, gives an idea of the aims of Gothic painters, to whom the decorative value of a picture and its religious content were more important than a superficial imitation of nature. It is interesting to know that this painting, representing the

Crucifixion, was executed in the Fifteenth Century in Bavaria, not far from Oberammergau, where in the Passion plays we find a survival of a similar intense religious sentiment and, in the staging, a similar clear mountain atmosphere from which richly costumed figures stand out in sharp outlines as in this picture, which Mr. Ralph H. Booth, President of the Art Commission, has presented.

The spiritual and religious atmosphere which all mediaeval art gives out, changes when we enter the room of the Italian Renaissance. Although here, also, most of the subjects of the paintings and sculptures have been taken from the story of Christ



GOTHIC CAPITAL
VERONA XV CENTURY

—the impressive figure of the preaching St. John the Baptist, the statue of the Christ Child holding in one hand the crown of thorns and giving His blessing with the other, the painted and sculptured representations of the Madonna—these figures no longer have the unreal, transcendental character of Gothic art, but have come down to earth and except for their entrancing beauty, are human beings like ourselves. The Madonna theme especially has been conceived in such a worldly homelike spirit that we accept it more as a scene depict-



THE CRUCIFIXION, BY RUELAND FRUEAUF
GIFT OF MR. RALPH H. BOOTH

ing the love of a charming mother for her child than as a story from another world.

The more we advance from the Early Renaissance of the Fifteenth

Century to the High Renaissance of the Sixteenth Century, the more we find the worldly tendency prevailing in the motives. There are two pieces of sculpture by followers

of Michelangelo, both representing other than religious subjects: the "Rape of the Sabine Women," by Giovanni da Bologna, a workshop replica of the famous large bronze group in the Loggia dei Lanzi in Florence (of which another one with the original base is in Detroit in the collection of Mr. Julius Haas); and the "River God," by Tribolo, one of the models which was executed by this pupil of Michelangelo, intended to be placed, together with a companion piece, at the foot of the Medici tombs.

Just as great as is the difference in character and style between the higher arts of the Renaissance and the Middle Ages, is that in the decorative arts. The Gothic furniture impresses us by its simplicity of outline and strength of construction. The few ornamental details which develop from the constructive points were usually taken from the church architecture which, with its beautifully uplifting influences, rules throughout the arts and crafts of this period. The Renaissance furniture is less connected with the church style but follows closely the architecture of the palaces for whose fittings it was destined. Of course we still find some pieces made for use in churches, like the choir stalls, but their decoration has been taken from pagan Roman art, and their mouldings and arches are like those on the doors or windows of the Florentine palazzi. We also find as the most typical piece of furniture in the homes of this period, the

chest or cassone, used for keeping clothes, or plate. But the rich decorations, covering sometimes the whole surface with painted or gilded stucco ornaments or with inlaid work, tell of the purely aesthetic aims and worldly pleasures of generations who have given up the simplicity of living which was characteristic of the previous period of stronger religious sentiment. And how the chairs with their spacious seats and velvet and leather coverings speak of the beginning of a comfort and luxury unknown to the Middle Ages!

The works of decorative arts from the Northern Renaissance and Baroque of the late Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries which are shown in the third gallery, explain themselves through their connection with the well-known interior decorating of the last generations of the Nineteenth Century which often followed their principles. Nowadays this style is less popular, partly on account of the weakness of these modern imitations, partly on account of the bourgeois-like character of the Seventeenth Century arts, which lacks the elegance and prettiness of that of the Eighteenth Century, now more in vogue. It should not be forgotten, however, that a good deal of the comfortable furniture of modern times has been invented and developed by this period, e. g. the sofa and chaise lounge, the high chairs with curved arms and soft seats and backs, the different types of wardrobes, cabi-

nets and chests of drawers which— as can be seen from our exhibit— developed from the Italian cassone; and the tile stove which in continental Europe preceded the modern heating system. In like manner the American Colonial style, which can be studied in the adjoining gallery, has been derived from the Baroque of Holland, England and Germany.

And as the admiration for Rembrandt is growing constantly in this country, it should be remembered that his expressive, sombre style, the strong contrast of light and shade in his works, is in close relationship to the principles of the Baroque style, whose greatest exponent he has been.

DR. WILHELM R. VALENTINER

EXHIBITIONS AND LECTURES

JANUARY

- 7th, 3:30 P. M. Lecture, "Japan of Today," by Mrs. H. J. M. Grylls.
- 14th, 3:30 P. M. Lecture, "The Art of the Low Countries," by Clyde H. Burroughs.
- 16th, 8:15 P. M. Lecture, "Pictorial Applications of the Invisible Spectral Difference of Color," by Charles Bittinger.
- 17th, 2:30 P. M. Lecture, "The Trend of French Art," by R. Poland, for the Federation of Women's Clubs.
- 21st, 3:30 P. M. Lecture, "Ancient and Modern Athens," by Professor John Garrett Winter of the University of Michigan.
- 23rd, 8:15 P. M. Lecture, "Personality in Buildings," by David Varon.
- 28th, 3:30 P. M. Lecture, "The Pageantry of Old Siena and Her Annual Races," by R. Poland.
- 30th, 8:15 P. M. Lecture, "The Genius of American Art," by Royal Cortissoz.
- Saturdays at 3:00 P. M. Story hours for children, in Children's Museum Room.
- Jan. 1st to 30th Exhibition of Paintings by Frederick Ballard Williams.
- Jan. 14th to Feb. 11th Exhibition of Paintings by Nicolas Roerich.
- Jan. 14th to Feb. 15th Dutch Pictures, XV to XVII Century, from Goudstickker Collection, Amsterdam.