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MADONNA BY GIOVANNI BELLINI.  
VENETIAN PAINTING, XVI CENTURY

## RALPH H. BOOTH LOAN COLLECTION

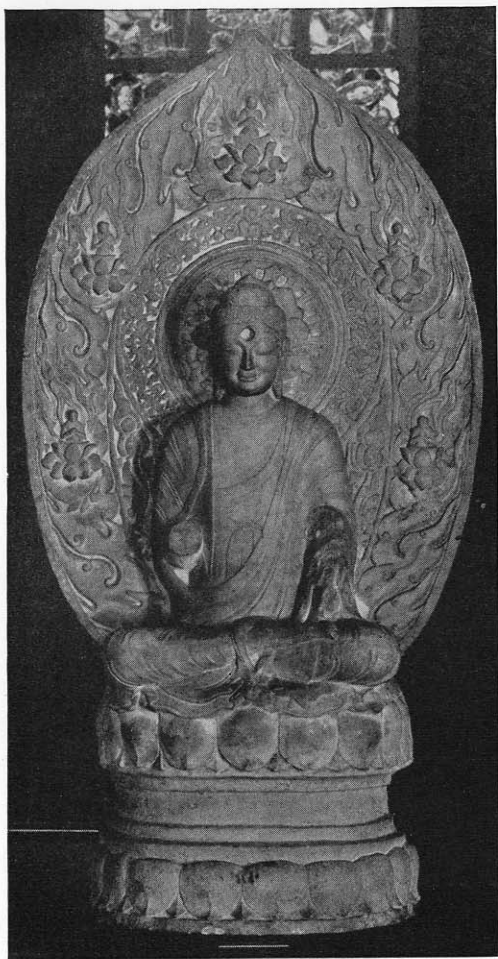
At the request of the Detroit Arts Commission, Mr. Ralph H. Booth has loaned to the Detroit Institute of Arts his collection of paintings, sculpture and decorative arts, and they are now on exhibition in Gallery V. This collection is the culmination of Mr. Booth's lifelong interest in art, which began during his residence in Chicago, and to which he has actively devoted himself since his removal to Detroit some years ago. During the past few years Mr. Booth has been able greatly to augment his collection by some objects of great rarity and importance which were brought into the market after the war, and, as now assembled and installed, it forms one of the most attractive exhibits at the museum.

Although the collection contains works of the French and English Eighteenth Century art, the main contents point back to the great period of Gothic and Renaissance. One large statue and several small ones placed at the end wall of the room go even as far back as the early Middle Ages and guide us to the Far East, where art had reached a high point much earlier than in Christian Europe. The wonderfully expressive marble statue of a seated Buddha was executed during the best period of Chinese sculpture, in the Wei dynasty of the Fifth or Sixth century A. D., and is the first important Far Eastern sculpture that has come to Detroit since the Charles L. Freer collection left the city. It is characterized by a great distinction and serene beauty, giving out an atmosphere of calmness and silence.

Its charm is enhanced by the large nimbus showing the remains of the old coloring and containing smaller figures of deities which in contrast make the main figure seem more monumental.

How different in feeling, technique and motive seem the sculptures of European Gothic, of which several fine examples from France, Italy, and Germany are found in Mr. Booth's collection. The intense, passionate sorrow of the Christian soul—so different from the Buddhistic mind—is expressed in the beautifully executed small marble group of the middle of Fifteenth Century from the lower Rhine, representing two types of the Pietà—Mary holding the dead Christ in her lap, and an angel holding His body. On the other hand the intimate homelike sentiment with which the Christian legend has surrounded the birth and youth of Christ—a sentiment likewise too personal and subjective to the Far Eastern mind—is shown in the Italian sculptures of the same period, the two Florentine terra cotta Madonnas, one of them in the style of Ghiberti, the famous creator of the bronze doors at the Baptistry of Florence.

It is not by chance only that the Italian sculptures in Mr. Booth's collection are representations of sweet-featured Madonnas, gaily painted in bright colors in accordance with the cheerfulness of the race and landscape where they were executed, while the northern sculptures show mainly scenes from the Passion of Christ, corresponding to the greater seriousness and somber earnestness with which the Chris-



BUDDHA. CHINESE, WEI DYNASTY, ABOUT V CENTURY

tian idea was taken over by the Teutonic race. We find a similar antithesis if we look at the paintings of the southern and northern Renaissance in Mr. Booth's exhibit. There happen to be three Madonnas by Italian artists, and one Madonna painted by a Flemish artist, Jan Gossaert, under Italian influence; on the other hand there

are four portraits, three of men, by northern artists, one by the great Cologne painter, Bartel Bruyn, one by Ambrosius Holbein, the brother of Hans Holbein the Younger, and portraits of a young married couple by a Suabian artist, Bernhard Strigel, the painter at the court of Emperor Maximilian I. and one of the finest colorists of the South

German school. Indeed already in the motif of these paintings, we find expressed in some degree the characteristics of this period in the north and south of Europe. When we speak of the Italian Renaissance, we think at once of this rare combination of harmonious forms and inner beauty which in no other theme of the Italian artists has come to life as clearly as in the representations of the Madonna



"MAN WITH FUR CAP"  
BY AMBROSIUS HOLBEIN.  
GERMAN, XVI CENTURY

and Child. If we imagine the same period in northern Europe, the time of the Reformation, the character portraits of men like Luther and Calvin are in our minds, men full of great ethical ideas and energy to carry these ideas through. The spirit of this period reflects its best in the male portraits of the Northern Renaissance, and so it has come that early German and Flemish portraits are especially sought after by collectors. Does it not seem as if the understanding for the great new problems of his epoch is just rising in the thoughtful mind of the fine young man depicted by Ambrosius Holbein of Basle? Has not the man in the somber costume with the black coat and cap something of the Reformation's spirit in the intensity of his look, in the expression of energy to which the hand firmly clasping a scroll corresponds? And so we feel even in the naive young couple painted by Bernhard Strigel, the aim for a truthful and firm character, and

for fine morality which characterizes the bourgeoisie connected with Luther's work in South Germany.

How different is the idea of portrait painting of the Italian artists compared with the Northerners, may be illustrated by the magnificent picture by Bronzino, representing the Grand Duchess of Tuscany with her son. Here the aim for decorative as well as illustrative beauty is much greater and

there is expressed in it a grandeur of style which a northern artist, with the greater intensity of characterization, was never able to express.

As strong and expressive as these portraits may be, we cannot help turning our eyes to the sublime beauty of Italian religious painting, to the most glorious work of art in the collection, which Mr. Booth may well be proud of possessing: the Madonna by Giovanni Bellini, with its mingled feeling for nature and deep religious sentiment. It shows a fine observation of nature and simplified architectural style, of subtlety of lines and richness of color.

It may be well to repeat here the words which the best living authority on Italian Renaissance painting, B. Berenson, expressed when he saw the picture last summer, soon after its discovery in England. "The quality of the Bellini Mr. Booth acquired is such as has scarcely ever been surpassed



ELEONORA OF TOLEDO, BY BRONZINO (1577-1621). ITALIAN.

by that genius, one of the greatest in the whole course of history. Indeed even he by no means always reached such perfection of illustrative and decorative achievement. I love the gravity of the Blessed Virgin's tenderness as she contemplates the Holy Child. I love the Wordsworthian sobriety of the landscape, and the inexhaustible beauty of the sky. I doubt whether any other Italian master has painted a sky less like a drop-scene, and more like the infinity of Nature itself. Among the moving yet subtle pleasures this masterpiece, as pure art, affords me, I cannot omit the unusual quality

of the mass, which I find has something of the grandeur of the great Pyramids looming against the sky. Finally, to turn to another side of the matter, let me say that it is very rare for a picture of 450 years ago to be in such a satisfactory state of preservation. Now let me add something about the period in Bellini's career when this Madonna was painted. It must have been some few years after the visit to Venice of Antonella Da Messina, that is to say, after 1476. This I infer from the way Bellini has in this panel assimilated the Sicilian's influence. You may be aware that I foretold the existence of this





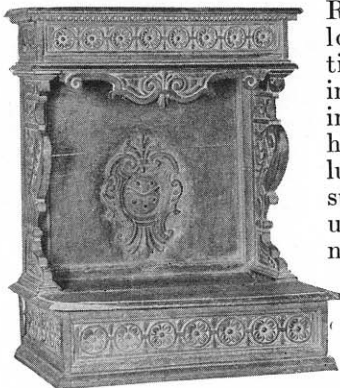
PORTRAITS BY BERNHARD STRIGEL. GERMAN, XVII CENTURY

picture several years ago, when I published the Galliccioli Madonna in my third volume of 'Study and Criticism of Italian Art' (p. 95-6). I can scarcely doubt but that yours is the very picture painted in the Teniers that I refer to. Your Madonna must have formed part of the marvelous collection of the Archduke Leopold Wilhelm."

The whole school of Venetian painting had its greatest impetus in the art of Giovanni Bellini, the master of Giorgione and Titian. Also Tintoretto, the last great master of the Italian Renaissance, could not be imagined without him, although his art as shown in the fine example in Mr. Booth's collection seems far removed from the almost mediæval, impersonal art of Bellini. Tintoretto, this greatest of all wall and ceiling painters, who beautified the

Doges' Palace in Venice with his huge compositions, seldom devoted himself to pictures of smaller compass like this Madonna, the only picture of this type known by him. Even then he could not help showing the marvelous virtuosity of his draughtsmanship and brushwork as shown in the foreshortened hands of the Madonna and the position of the Child. The brushwork, so different from the surface of Bellini's work, has already the freedom and personal touch of modern technic, pointing

in this respect to Rembrandt as the follower of the Venetians. And not only in technic, but also in the golden flow of his color and the luminous atmosphere surrounding the figures, we feel the connection with the great Dutch genius, whose art was influenced in a similar way by the misty climate of his native city,



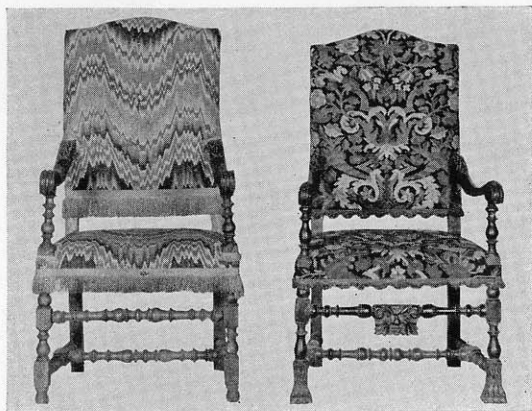
PRIE-DIEU. TUSCAN, ABOUT 1500

Amsterdam, as was the art of the Venetians by their lagoons.

It hardly seems necessary to point to the charm of the French and English Eighteenth Century art which is closely connected with the society of our days, and explains itself through our own surroundings. This light and decorative art is represented in Mr. Booth's collection by fine examples of Hoppner and Tocquet, the one showing the more restrained character of English art with its darker color scheme and its more natural portrayal of life, the other a most splendid work of the Louis XV period—exhibiting the highly decorative sense, the refined taste in composition, the easy touch and vivid coloring of the French Rococo artists.

It has been found that the beauty of the old masters is greatly enhanced by exhibiting them with pieces of furniture and other decorative arts of the period in which they were produced. Mr. Booth has been especially successful in acquiring works of this character, which seem to repeat the fine proportions, the rhythm of line and color expressed in the works of higher art with which they are installed, such as the chests, credenzas, tables, chairs of Italian workmanship of the Sixteenth Century, several fine pieces of majolica, and a beautifully embroidered Spanish altar hanging of the Sixteenth Century.

DR. WILHELM R. VALENTINER.



FLORENTINE, XVI CENTURY



MADONNA, BY TINTORETTO. VENETIAN PAINTING, XVI CENTURY

## ARTHUR WESLEY DOW

Arthur Wesley Dow, artist, teacher, and ever a tireless seeker for the truth in the realms of art, died Dec. 13th, 1922. He was known to many in Detroit through his lectures here. As professor of art in Teachers College, Columbia University, and as instructor at Pratt Institute and the Art Students League, he has had a strong and lasting influence on artists and teachers throughout America. He was also an author of several books on art, among which his book on Composition is regarded as a standard work on this subject. He had analyzed eastern art, gaining an

understanding of its principles under Fenellosa. He applied these principles in his own color prints and painting in oils, which exemplify the simplicity, the abstraction and the pure unshaded color of the Japanese.

A group of four paintings by Mr. Dow, two with refreshing cherry trees in full bloom, have been loaned to the Detroit Institute of Arts through the kindness of their owner, Mrs. Walter R. Parker. These pictures in their varied manner reveal a broad outlook that made Arthur Wesley Dow a leader in art.

R. P.