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ST. JEROME IN HIS STUDIO
BY PETRUS CHRISTUS
FLEMISH 1410 (?) - 1473

SAINT JEROME BY PETRUS CHRISTUS

The recent purchase of a masterpiece of the early Flemish School, *St. Jerome in his Studio*, (h. 8¼; w. 5¼) by Petrus Christus, is of great importance for the collections from an art-historical as well as from an esthetic point of view. From an art-historical viewpoint it is an example of the early stages of panel painting in the countries north of the Alps, when artists were freeing themselves from the miniature painting of the Middle Ages and when painting with oil was coming into use for the first time. From the esthetic point of view it represents one of the great Flemish masters in a hitherto unknown work and one which may be classed among his most successful achievements.

Panel painting came into general use in the North much later than in the South. The early paintings from Siena, like those for instance which were recently acquired by the Institute, go back as far as 1300, while panel painting in the North (though there are exceptions) is usually conceded to start with the Ghent altarpiece of the Van Eycks about one hundred years later. The Southern paintings also seem to be more advanced in the arrangement of the composition and in broadness of style, which is due to the more frequent use of wall paintings, while in the North, where the Gothic churches did not leave so much wall space to be decorated, the art of painting kept to the miniature style of the manuscripts for a much longer period. On the other hand, in the North oil painting replaced painting in tempera earlier, and naturally so, as the climate required the use of a more lasting medium than was necessary in the drier atmosphere of the South.

It is generally accepted that oil painting originated in Flanders and was carried from there into Italy about the middle of the XV century. The name of Petrus Christus is closely connected with its development. Antonello da Messina, the great Sicilian painter who worked in

Venice for a long time, has since the earliest time been regarded as the artist who learned the technic of oil painting from Flemish artists and introduced it into Italy. It was formerly thought that he had either been in the North or that the Van Eycks, from whom he was supposed to have learned his technic, had visited Italy. Neither is likely, as Antonello da Messina was born in 1430 and could not have met Jan Van Eyck, who died in 1441. Nor had Jan Van Eyck been in Italy so far as we can make out from the records and from his paintings. However, a document has recently been found which says that in 1457 Antonello da Messina and a master called Piero de Bruges worked together in Milan, and it is generally believed that this Piero was no other than Petrus Christus of Bruges.

Petrus was the first and only direct pupil of the Van Eycks. He came from Baerle in Holland and worked for the greater part of the time in Bruges, probably first as a pupil in the studio of Jan Van Eyck before 1442. Here he became acquainted with several of the compositions of this great beginner of the early Flemish School, which he later used in some of his own paintings. From 1444 on he was a member of the Guild. His dated works range from 1446 to 1457, but several of his undated works seem to extend as far as 1465. He died in 1473. Since we know that he may have been in Italy, we can more easily understand why his works were so highly appreciated by Italian collectors as early as the XV and XVI centuries. We find, for instance, that Lorenzo de Medici owned one of his portraits. Dr. Friedländer, the best authority on the early Flemish School, lists twenty-one works by him, of which three are in American collections. Among them is the famous *St. Elegendius*, which is now in the collection of Philip Lehmann of New York, and which is reproduced in nearly every history of art as one of the most characteristic of early Flemish works.

The *Nativity* in the Henry Goldman collection, and *The Descent from the Cross* in the Metropolitan Museum, are both paintings of small size.

Our painting has been only recently discovered and is not mentioned in the literature. When found it was under the name of Jan Van Eyck and several authorities still believe in this attribution. How near Petrus Christus comes at times to Jan Van Eyck may be seen from the fact that the *Exeter Madonna* in the Berlin Museum was listed for a long time under the name of Jan Van Eyck. Dr. Friedländer, who has just published a book on Jan Van Eyck and Petrus Christus, is, however, undoubtedly right when he attributes our painting to Petrus Christus. All who have written on Petrus Christus agree—and this may be said of all the best early Flemish painters—that he is most successful in his smaller works, which seems quite natural when we remember that the art of this period was still so near to book painting and that it took several generations to develop the style of life-sized figures.

The subject of the painting, St. Jerome in his studio, is of a nature to bring out all the finest qualities of the artist, qualities which he had in common with the best artists of the Low Countries from the XV to the XVII Century—the intimacy, the thoughtfulness of expression, the pleasure in minor details, the *clair obscure*, and the deep color scheme of which the artists of the Netherlands have been so fond from the beginning to the time of Rembrandt.

It has been rightly said that Petrus was most successful in the painting of still life, in which he was the predecessor of the great still life painters of the XVII century. The painting is also of interest for the study of the minor arts of the late Gothic period—the Gothic chair and the cupboard with the beautiful Gothic locks, the reading desk and all the other accessories, from the majolica and the hour-glass to the astronomical instruments and the different book bindings. The general color scheme keeps within the brown scale, from which stand out the reddish-brown of the coat of the saint, the blue curtain of the book-case and the green table cover. The few touches of brighter color, like the apple on one of the majolica vases, the red bindings of some of the books, and the few bits of colored glass in the windows, contrast pleasingly with the more sombre browns. The spacing of the room shows the first attempt at perspective—not successful from every point of view, but a great advance from the flat style of the period before Van Eyck and Petrus Christus. The motive of the thoughtful philosopher reading his books has been treated by some of the greatest artists of the North and South in the XV and early XVI century, and it may be useful to compare the enchanting composition in our work with that of the painting by Antonello da Messina in the National Gallery in London, which shows a decidedly Flemish influence, or with the famous engraving by Dürer.

W. R. V.

FOUNDERS SOCIETY BUYS GREEK SCULPTURE

Detroit, Michigan,
February 15th, 1925.

TO THE MEMBERS

DETROIT MUSEUM OF ART FOUNDERS SOCIETY:

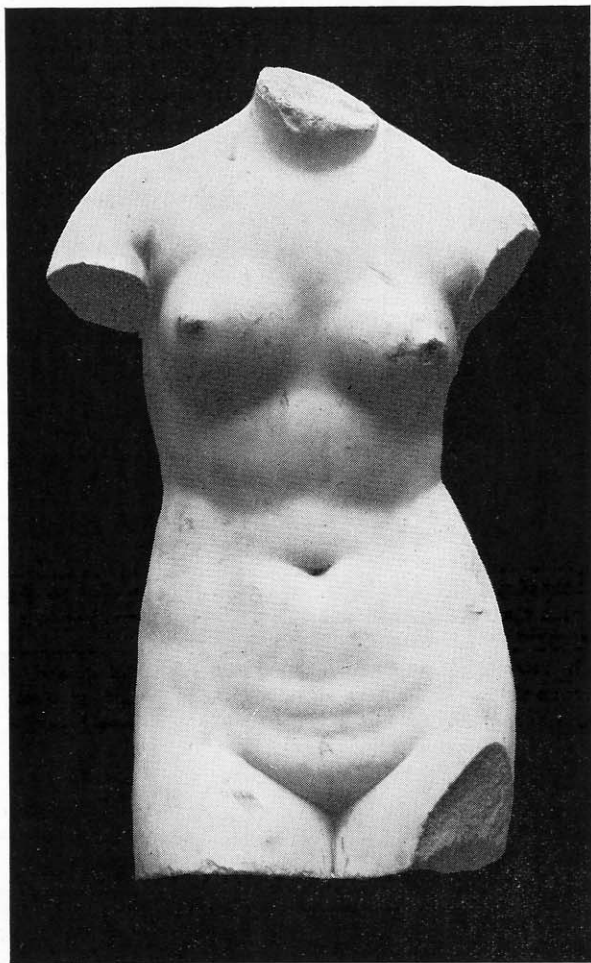
It will interest you to know that the Board of Trustees at their meeting of January 30th purchased from the funds of the society the Greek Torso of Aphrodite, illustrated herewith. In doing so they have attached the name of our Society to what I regard as the most beautiful and significant single object in the whole museum collection. This marble sculpture of the IV to III century B. C. is the personification in a most beautiful example of that meditative period of Greek plastic art which came with and reached its highest perfection in Praxiteles. It is very close to the master himself and will bear comparison with the great treasures of this period in the famous European Museums. That ideal of the Greeks—the perfection of the human form—is adequately shown in this portrayal of the goddess of love. The marble itself with its more than two thousand years has taken on a color and beauty of surface which only time can give.

See her as she stands as the *pièce de resistance* in the Classical Room! Note the delicacy of light and shade as it plays over the exquisitely modeled surface, and you will derive a great satisfaction in having assisted in the acquisition of so beautiful a work.

Your Trustees feel that it is better to buy one thing each year as perfect in its way as this Greek marble than a larger number of less significant objects. The importance of this purchase is on a par with the pair of Flemish Tapestries which we secured for the Institute last year with membership funds, and fixes the name of the Detroit Museum of Art Founders Society to objects of first quality in the Institute collections.

Respectfully,

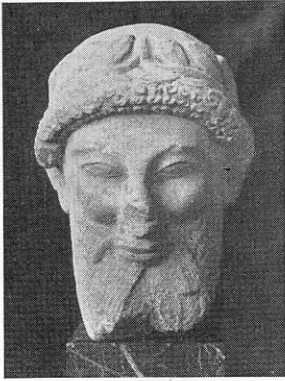
CLYDE H. BURROUGHS,
Secretary.



TORSO OF APHRODITE
GREEK. IV CENTURY B. C.

Gift of the Detroit Museum of Art Founders Society

CLASSICAL BUSTS ACQUIRED



KORÉ—VI CENTURY B. C.

It has been well said that sculpture should represent only the living. The Greeks best understood this and knew that the human form is as beautiful as anything in the world, or may be, when the master mind of the great artist can imagine its perfection and can visualize this ideal. The classical pagan artists were really most concerned with humanity. Even the Olympian cycle of divinities was interpreted in the guise of mankind.

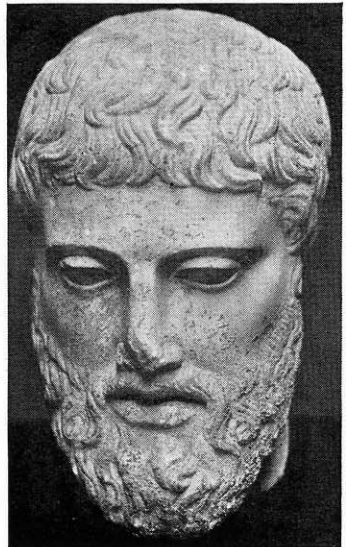
The perfect blossoming of this Greek ideal evolved from a stock which had been imperfect at first. Scarcely was it purified when like a too tenderly nurtured flower, it declined, too delicate to endure in the imperfection of this world.

The Detroit Institute of Arts has recently purchased a series of busts dating from the Greek Sixth Century B. C., to the Roman Second Century A. D. In them one sees the changes with the passing of time.

The earliest example is a bearded, male head of the Sixth Century B. C., which is said to have come from Cyprus. This was the epoch when both marble and bronze sculpture was growing in popularity. It represents Koré, carved in warm, cream-colored limestone. The head is bound with laurel, beneath which the hair is curled somewhat conventionally. The features have hard outlines and rather

sharp planes, suggesting probably the less facile medium of bronze and the archaisms of still earlier days as well as of the Sixth Century. Thus the eyebrows and eyelids are emphasized, protruding like the eyeball itself, while the cheek-bones and ears are very high. The moustache droops, but as if made of metal like the beard. The archaic smile attracts at once.

This Koré possibly personifies the Greek chorus. It is now believed that the dance and the drama, with its principals and chorus, influenced the beginnings of sculpture. Curiously enough there is a Koré from Corinth mentioned in connection with mythical stories of the invention of sculpture. The Phoenicians settled in Cyprus as early as 1100 B. C., and seem to have brought the influence of Assyria to Cyprus and to Corinth. Certainly this head is Eastern, suggesting Sixth Century Ionic work. The slanting ears and eyes as well as the conventionalization of the hair suggest this. It was during the same century that Cyprus became part of the



PORTRAIT—V CENTURY B. C.



AUGUSTUS CAESAR— I CENTURY A. D.

Persian empire. A comparison with work from that great Eastern power would, therefore, not be illogical.

The smiling Apollos and the "Ladies of the Acropolis" come to mind, but perhaps even more so a carving such as the stele of Aristion, even though it be an Attic work. For it was after this time particularly that a more definitely Hellenic mark was stamped upon the Cypriote sculpture. This head is delightful, one of the most fascinating in the collection, crisp, sure, yet sensitive and clearly defined in form.

A second new addition is the marble bust somewhat less than life size. It seems to be a portrait of a philosopher or statesman. It appears to be of the transitional epoch between 500 and 450 B. C. These are the days of Myron, the first of Greece's greatest sculptors, the artist of the Discobolos. The Fifth Century was the greatest of all in prosperity of state and in culture. The Persian war being at an end, a flowering of art beautified the renewed life of Athens.

This head is somewhat undeveloped in the division of the hair by almost metallic looking masses and wiry individual hairs as in the early Fifth Century bronze "Charioteer of Delphi." The primitive smile has vanished, however. The face in general is no longer archaic, with the

exception of the coldly carved eyes. The provenance of this portrait is not known. It has a purity that is distinguished, even though it may not be of the Phidian perfection.

There are three examples from the Roman era. The artists who had inherited from the Greeks leaned in two directions; on the one hand toward the ideal which, however, was often a visual perfection of form without the inner, living idea. At other times it tended toward a realism of the physical. Unfortunately the artists did not concern themselves so much with fine quality. One of the busts represents the head of Bacchus. It seems to be of the Second Century and represents the head of the youth whose curly hair is bound by a fillet which is entwined by pine-cones and grape leaves. His somewhat polished features are coarse, fat and rounded, appropriate for this rather bloated, oily god of license.

The use of the bore and the inclusion of the neck with the head are typical features of the epoch. This bust is about one-half life size, and originally may have been used as a "Herm" or terminal for a post along the road.



HERM— I CENTURY A. D.

Decidedly better is the double portrait bust of Jupiter Ammon and a youth carved from a single block of marble, the backs of the two heads being somewhat merged. The former is carved with horns protruding through the ruffled hair. The hair, beard and features generally are more naturalistic than in the preceding heads. The nose has been partially restored, as is the case also on the face of the youth. This double bust is of good quality and interesting, evidently a guidepost looking towards different towns.

The last of the new collection of busts is a heroic portrait of Augustus Caesar found in Rome and dating from the greatest days of Roman sculpture, the First Century A. D., at the end or just after the Emperor's reign, which extended from 28 B. C. to 14 A. D. This was the beginning of the Imperial Days of peace and prosperity. Greeks had come to Rome to instill the spirit of the ideal in the classic form. As Horace said, "Captive Greece o'ercame her savage conqueror and introduced the Arts to rustic Latium." The sculpture at this time is much more ideal than is ordinarily true of the Roman.

There were many busts and reliefs such

as the altars carved in a poetic spirit in those days, including the famous "Ara Pacis" which commemorated victories of Caesar. The work was often as fine as the Greek in quality of form, plane, and texture. At this time the bust was usually carved as far as the shoulders.

There are many other Augustinian portraits of equally fine quality, including the full length figures. Of the latter the "Prima Porta" figure in the Vatican Museum is perhaps the best known, but like a number of other busts not so soft in its modeling as the one in Detroit.

The Augustinian Age is called the "Golden Age." The emperor had high ideals. The Hellenic idealistic viewpoint is especially appropriate in this case. The sensitive modeling of the broad brow and fine, big cranium suggests the finest, the immortal Roman portraiture.

These busts add significance to the Classical Department which has recently sprung into brilliant prominence with its Fifth Century kneeling fountain figure and Corinthian bronze helmet, with its Fourth Century Venus and draped goddess and with its representative vases.

R. P.

A GRAECO-ROMAN PAINTING FROM FAYUM

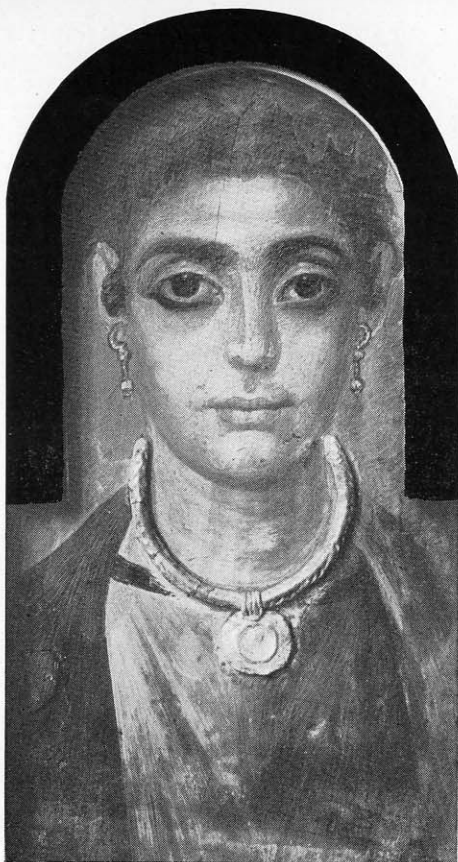
A remarkably fresh and lifelike portrait from the Fayum district is a recent gift to the Institute from Mr. Julius H. Haass.

As its date (about the I century B. C.) falls within the period when this part of Egypt was inhabited by the Greeks and by natives who had adopted Greek culture, the picture is probably of Graeco-Roman origin. The physiognomy is Greek rather than Egyptian, as are the details of coiffure and jewelry; and the person represented, who is undoubtedly a lady of high position, is either a Hellenized Egyptian or actually of Greek origin.

Like most of the portraits which have come from this district, including the fine series in the National Gallery in London, our painting is done in encaustic—the finely ground colors having been mixed

with wax and then fused by exposure to heat. It is painted on a wooden panel which was probably first prepared by a priming of distemper and a background of some neutral tint, after which the pigment, which was in a more or less creamy state, was applied with a cestrum, an instrument shaped somewhat like a surgical spatula.

The panel portrait, which was fitted into the mummy case to preserve the likeness of the deceased person, probably grew out of the older painted and gilded masks, although for a time we find the two fashions contemporary. The quality which charms us most of all in these portraits, and which compels our unqualified admiration, is the remarkable vividness and convincing power of the character



GRAECO-ROMAN PAINTING FROM FAYUM
I CENTURY B. C.

Gift of Mr. Julius H. Haass

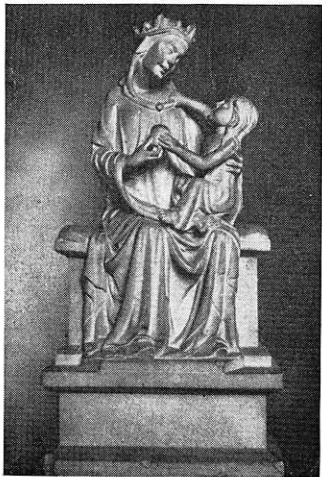
representation. They are a startling proof of how much may be done in the way of portraiture with the simplest of means. Though no attempt is made at rendering niceties of modeling or detail, we can scarcely think of anything in the whole history of painting which gives us a more vivid revelation of the character of the person portrayed. And when we consider that the work was done by artisan-workmen, probably undertakers' assistants, we marvel still more at their remarkably life-like quality. It would seem that the very swiftness of the execution aided in the

seizing of the salient points of a face, which after all is what portraiture really is. We know that it is only rarely that the highly finished portrait succeeds in retaining the vigor and vivid accent of a sketch or study, and it is this desire on the part of so many of our modern men to do away with the unessentials that painting has picked up along the way of its development that has caused so many present-day artists to go back to early art for inspiration. It is for this reason that our painting seems so modern and that we find it hard to realize that it was executed twenty centuries ago.

J. W.

A MADONNA STATUETTE BY ANDRIOLO DE SANCTIS

In the chapel of the Cluny Museum in Paris there stands upon the altar a much admired Madonna statuette of XIV century Italian origin, a rather rare feature among French sculptures, with its naive, sincere character forming a curious contrast to the courtly and elegant style of the French Gothic. It is attributed to the



MADONNA STATUETTE
LOMBARD SCHOOL, XIV CENTURY
In the Cluny Museum.

the Lombard school of sculpture, to which the Cluny Madonna belongs, with its interest in genre motives, its lyrical sentiment and its pictorial treatment, differ from the dramatic, forceful and ascetic art of Giovanni Pisano. Indeed if we look around at the monuments of Trecento sculpture in Milan, Verona and Padua, it



STANDING MADONNA
BY ANDRIOLO DE SANCTIS
In the Chiesa degli Eremitani, Padua

Pisan school, as are so many of the Trecento sculptures in public and private collections for which no certain attribution has as yet been found. As Giovanni Pisano has been and will always be regarded as the most prominent figure of the beginning of the XIV century in Italy, it seems natural that so long as the knowledge of Trecento sculpture is limited, the influence of his personality will be felt more strongly than the characteristics of the other schools which existed at the same time in Italy, transforming the style of Giovanni Pisano and his followers into their own ideals.

Just as the paintings by Altichiero and Avanzo in the Lombard school differ from the works of Giotto, in the same way does

is not difficult to find analogies to the style in which the Cluny statuette has been executed. The nearest analogy I find is the Madonna of the monument of Stefano Visconti in S. Eustorgio, Milan, a work which in my opinion is by no other than Bonino di Campione, the master of the great Cansignorio tomb at Verona (completed in 1374).

The motive of the Madonna is repeated in two other sculptures of slightly different style,—in the standing Madonna in the area of Jacopo da Carrara in the Chiesa degli Eremitani, Padua, and in a sitting Madonna which the Detroit Art Institute has recently acquired. The Padua Madonna is, according to documents (Venturi IV, p. 759 ff) executed by Andriolo de



SITTING MADONNA BY ANDRIOLO DE SANCTIS
Recent Purchase.

The common origin of our sculpture and those at Padua
and in the Cluny is quite apparent.

Sanctis, a Venetian artist who worked on the arca of Jacopo da Carrara from 1350 to 1352 (he died in 1377), and I have no hesitation in giving the Detroit Madonna to the same artist. Not only is the type of the Madonna and Child similar, but the folds of the dresses and the details, even to the points of the crown, are identical in both sculptures. The statuette, when in the hands of an Italian dealer, was attributed to Giovanni Pisano, but de Nicola classified it quite correctly in the catalogue of the Paolini sale as belonging to the Lombard School, adding the following remarks to his attribution: "The style calls to

mind also the contemporary Venetian sculptures, but the greater Gothic flexibility in the drapery and a more intimate sentiment would suggest its origin as Lombardy." These considerations agree well with the attribution to Andriolo de Sanctis, who was of Venetian origin and worked at Verona and Padua.

Considering the importance of the Trecento masters in the development of the plastic arts in Italy, and the charm and beauty as well as the rarity of their works, the Madonna by Andriolo de Sanctis is a welcome addition to our growing collection of early Italian art.

W. R. V.

MARCH EVENTS 1925

CALENDAR OF EXHIBITS

- March 22nd to April 11th.* Exhibition of sculpture of Ivan Mestrovic.
- April 14th to May 31st.* Eleventh Annual Exhibition of Paintings by American Artists.
- March 1st to March 31st.* Children's Museum—Japanese Exhibit.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

- March 1st, Sunday, 3:30 p. m.* Lecture, "The Making of a Woodblock Print in Color," supplementing a special exhibit in the Print Galleries.
- March 3rd, Tuesday, 2:30 p. m.* Lecture, "American Painting," by Mrs. Neville Walker.
- March 6th, Friday, 8:15 p. m.* Lecture, "A Survey of French Art," by Reginald Poland.
- March 8th, Sunday, 3:30 p. m.* Lecture, "English Sources for American Furniture," by Mrs. Charles Whitmore.
- March 9th, Monday, 8:00 p. m.* Meeting of the Print Club of Detroit.
- March 10th, Tuesday, 8:15 p. m.* Lecture, "The Late Works of Rembrandt," by Dr. W. R. Valentiner, Art Director.
- March 13th, Friday, 8:15 p. m.* Lecture, "American Art I—The Early Development," by Reginald Poland.
- March 14th, Saturday, 10 a. m.* Motion picture and musical program for children of Platoon and Intermediate schools.
- March 15th, Sunday, 3:30 p. m.* Lecture, "Among English Cathedrals," by Dr. Augustus P. Reccord.
- March 20th, Friday, 8:15 p. m.* Lecture, "American Art II—Contemporary," by Reginald Poland.
- March 21st, Saturday, 10 a. m.* Motion picture and musical program for children of Platoon and Intermediate schools.
- March 22nd, Sunday, 3:30 p. m.* Gallery Talk on Exhibition by Ivan Mestrovic.
- March 29th, Sunday, 3:30 p. m.* Lecture, "Good Taste in the Home," by Rachel de Wolfe Raseman.
- April 5th, Sunday, 3:30 p. m.* Lecture, "The Art and Life of Spain," by Dudley Crafts Watson.
- April 7th, Tuesday, 8:15 p. m.* Lecture, "The Late Years of Michelangelo," by Dr. W. R. Valentiner, Art Director.