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Rhode Island School of Design

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VIRGIN AND CHILD
Wood

Northern French, 16th Cen.
Gift of Mrs. GUSTAV RADEKE

WOODEN GROUP OF VIRGIN AND CHILD.

THE materials chosen by the sculptors of the Gothic and Renaissance periods were varied in character, both in their relative possibilities of expression, and the ease with which they lent themselves to treatment. It was inevitable in the days of the Gothic cathedrals that the artists should impress their artistic and religious fervor on inert stone, and make it live. At the same time the artists and craftsmen did not forget the traditions of their Byzantine forefathers in the use of ivory, especially for small figures for shrines and homes.

Parallel with the potent activities of the end of the fourteenth century, came a rather sudden introduction of wood as a medium worthy of attention. In Italy wood never received the attention in the Renaissance which it did in countries farther north, its chief use there being in the form of decorative panelling. But when we turn to France and Germany we find the use of wood in high favor by artists of all grades. While it remained for Germany to develop important schools and masters in woodcarving, such as those in Swabia and Franconia, or the cities of Nuremberg, Augsburg and Cologne, the artists of France also merit attention, because they so thoroughly expressed the peculiar spirit of their time. They are further of interest because the French were very susceptible to the Italian Renaissance, while the same could not be said with justice of all artists in Germany.

Because of this inherent quality in French sculpture, attention is directed to a recent gift to the Museum of the Rhode Island School of Design, from Mrs. Gustav Radeke. This is a wooden group of the Virgin and Child, of northern French workmanship, and dating from the early part of the sixteenth century. Like much of the wooden sculpture of the period, both in Germany and France, the group shows many evidences of the painting and gilding which supplemented the charm of the modeling.

The familiar subject which is represented recalls that peculiar religious expression which has been happily characterized by many authors as the "cult of the Virgin." This exerted greatest influence between the twelfth and fourteenth centuries, and during this period art expressed the universal feeling that the Virgin was a divine creature only to be worshipped. Then came a rapid change in feeling, so that before the century passed we find that the Virgin has become decidedly human, sympathetic and lovable. Whether this was in any degree due to the fact that art at that time was not especially reserved as an accomplishment to the monasteries, is not so easy to establish. It is sufficient that from the fifteenth century on, it was the Mother and Child who were enshrined in so many hearts, and graced so many altars.[1] The appeal of this subject to the artist has been well expressed by Alfred Stevens when he wrote, "All the masters have painted the Virgin and the Infant Jesus. It is always a mother and her son, and this will be an admirable subject for all eternity."

The sympathetic and humane feeling of our wooden group is, then, one source of its appeal. Moreover, the traces it shows of the influence of Italian style give it added interest, for France underwent the same loss of austere faith and sentiment. There is a rhythmic flow of line and studied freedom of drapery which hints at knowledge of Italian methods. The chair on which the Virgin is seated is of the type called "Florentine monastic."

The vision in the Apocalypse of the woman with the moon under her feet, which furnished a detail in the religious art of the Renaissance, finds another expression here, where the Virgin is so placed. This representation of the moon also is an instance of the debt of the Christian symbolism to the mythology of the Greek world, for it is adapted from the crescent represented in connection with Artemis, the Greek virgin goddess, and in like

[1] See "Religious Art in France of the 13th century," by Émile Malé, p. 231, sq.

manner is a symbol of perpetual chastity. The symbolism, however, is secondary to the deep interest of the mother and child. This is not the only example in which the Child is interested in an open book, but an unusual, naturalistic feature is introduced, for the Child is rumpling up the page in his effort to turn it.

In many ways it is better that one cannot attribute the group to any special sculptor, for there can be nothing to detract from the expression of the period, and from the delicacy and elegance of conception and workmanship. L. E. R.

LEGISLATION AND ART.

ONE of the more significant features of European progress before the present war was the ever increasing consideration of the governments, both civic and national, for the furtherance of art interests. Not only did they have in mind the conservation of works of art of yesterday, but there was an evident sympathy for art of the present day. It is not of moment to discuss the ways in which this was brought about, for it is sufficient for us to note that those responsible for the legislation realized the direct benefits to state, city and individual from such a course of action.

When we turn to the United States, there is little indication of this breadth of vision. Those who seek the expansion and elevation of taste and art appreciation have received little encouragement from the legislators at Washington. Occasionally, in fact, serious handicaps have been imposed, either accidentally or intentionally.

The encouragement to art interests which came through the late revision of the tariff has received a serious set-back through the passing on March 4, 1913, of the Hepburn Act, and the Cummins and Carmack Amendments of later date. In this case, the legislation was planned to correct certain abuses relative to interstate shipments from which the railroads had suffered. But the law in its application has over-reached its intention. According to its original purpose, interstate shipments quite undefined in character must have declaration of value, and penalties and fines were decreed for its evasion. Certain questions were brought to the attention of the Interstate Commerce Commision, who on May 7, 1915, made such a decision that the express companies have refused to receive oil-paintings or works of art even though insured, without declaration of actual value. If this action is not changed by legislation or influence, everyone interested directly or indirectly in art is certain to suffer.

So far as the museums are concerned, the new ruling creates serious handicaps. It is a universal practice in American museums to hold special exhibitions during the year, thus bringing to the attention of its visitors the latest expressions in art, and giving a constantly fresh interest to their galleries. If called upon to pay the excessive express charges on full valuation, the museums may be obliged to give up all travelling exhibitions of importance.

A like burden is imposed on the artist. The prices for his productions are placed as low as is compatible with his reputation and ability. This must be the case, for America has not yet learned that modern art, if of the highest grade, may command a good price. The artist's effort to approach his market will now be made more difficult, since he cannot avail himself of exhibition invitations at a distance without adding to his price the large amount for transportation.

As is usually the case where an unfortunate law has been passed, the public are the greatest losers. They are the ones whose funds support the museum activities; for them the museum brings the exhibitions, which are bound to be curtailed under the present ruling. The connoisseur, often of developed taste but limited means, finds such a substantial raise in prices for works of art that he foregoes possession with a sigh. Such a state of affairs reacts on the progress of art in

general, and especially on the museums, which must depend to a great extent on the continued interest of private collectors and their possible gifts and bequests to public collections.

It would seem therefore, that, unless this law is modified so as to be reasonable in its application, the only beneficiaries will be the express companies, who doubtless find much satisfaction in such a measure.

In previous shipments artists, dealers, connoisseurs and museums alike have usually taken outside insurance at a reasonable price, declared a nominal valuation, and paid the corresponding express rate without danger of loss to any one. Only by a return to this state of affairs can the best interests of the majority be protected, and progress be made in the cultivation of art appreciation. Such legislation will also in the end benefit the express companies, who will find that under the new law the shipments of works of art will be much lessened and the receipts from this source diminished.

Lastly, it should be borne in mind that a violation of the new law carries with it penalties and fines to be collected by the government. There are no museums, reputable dealers, collectors or artists who care to risk such violation. The only course is such presentation of the facts of the case to the Interstate Commerce Commission and the members of Congress, that proper adjustment of the troublesome ruling may be brought about, and an unintentional but certain injury to art interests be avoided.

A MINIATURE BY BENJAMIN TROTT.

WHILE the leadership in the field of American miniature-painting undoubtedly belongs to Edward Greene Malbone, there are several others of his time whose success in this branch of fine arts warrants high praise. Of these, one of refined technique and pronounced artistic achievement, is Benjamin Trott. No group of American miniatures may lay claim to completeness unless an excellent example by this noted painter is included. It is therefore of moment to call attention to the gift by Miss Ellen D. Sharpe to the Museum of an important miniature by Trott.

Miniature of JOHN WOODS POINIER
By Benjamin Trott
Gift of Miss E. D. Sharpe

The subject of this portrait is John Woods Poinier of Newark, N. J., a member of a distinguished family, and an energetic merchant and philanthropist. The miniature was painted in 1823, at the time of his marriage at the age of twenty-two, and has remained in the hands of his descendants until its purchase for the School of Design. It has, therefore, a pedigree not always found with such miniatures.

Its painter possessed the unusual distinction of being thoroughly American by training and experience. As a student under Gilbert Stuart, he enjoyed a period of careful preparation, and much of his later reputation is based on his practice of reproducing in the form of a portrait-miniature the larger work of Stuart. From this work, must have developed his thorough understanding of color-values. Trott

is known to have worked in Baltimore in 1796. He also worked with Thomas Sully in Philadelphia in 1808. In certain respects Trott shows affinity with Richard Cosway, especially in his use of clouds and blue sky for backgrounds. Such a treatment was exactly fitted to the subject, for it brought out the delicate treatment of the hair and the true values of the flesh.

As an example of Trott's style, the miniature of John Woods Poinier reveals his strength as an artist, his power of analysis of character, and the delicacy of his brush-stroke. The miniature is, therefore, a notable example of the sound quality of American miniature-painting at the height of its expression.

GRÆCO-SYRIAN GLASS.

IN the history of the arts of man, the use of glass does not approach in antiquity that of pottery, for glass in the form of dishes or vases hardly antedates 2000 B. C., while pottery is found in the earliest predynastic graves in Egypt. In this art as in many others, the ancient world was greatly indebted to the land of the Nile. Here in the middle Empire (2100–1700 B. C.), the workman, taking great delight in this new material, developed new forms and colors. His technique was hardly changed in the time of the New Empire (1700–1200 B. C.), for the process was entirely that of modelling by hand on a core. The archæologists of to-day are agreed that blown glass is not found earlier than Hellenistic or even Roman times. Through the centuries of constant effort, the glass-maker of Egypt developed his material from a rather coarse, granular one to the smoother, clearer glass which characterized Alexandrian wares.

The subject of ancient glass has not as yet received as thorough study as the importance of the subject warrants, but the debt of the Nearer East to Alexandria and the glass-workers of Egypt is receiving constant illustration as systematic excavations are conducted in Syria and the Greek world.

The fragile nature of glass and its tendency to disintegrate under certain conditions has caused the disappearance of much that would be of interest. However, three important sources of glass are left to us—Egypt, Syria and the Roman provinces in Gaul. Of these, Syria is perhaps of greatest interest at this time because of a recent gift to the Rhode Island School of Design by Mr. Manton B. Metcalf, of forty pieces of Græco-Syrian glass. The group is a very welcome one, illustrating varieties of shape, purpose and color.

This glass differs from the earlier glass in being decidedly homogeneous in character. It is uniformly smooth in surface, and, because of its nature and the exigencies of fortune and environment, has taken on most beautiful iridescence. It is also perfectly transparent and has a high surface lustre. A marked distinction from the European glass of later date is that it is "soda" rather than "flint" glass.

Almost the only careful study in English of ancient glass is that by James Fowler.[1] He finds that "in well-blown glass the innumerable imperfectly incorporated portions thin and spread out, and assume a position parallel to each other." To this parallelism of texture is due the rich iridescence incidental to the decay of the glass. The carefulness of Fowler's study may be noted in the following interesting quotation: "The films of glass vary in size from less than $\frac{1}{5000}$ of an inch to over $\frac{1}{100}$ of an inch in diameter. The greater the number of films of one color that overlie one another, the deeper is the color of the whole. When two films, or sets of films, of two different colors overlie, the tint produced is a mixture of the two; yellow and blue producing green; pink and blue, purple; yellow and red, orange; and so forth."

But interesting and beautiful as iridescence may be, we must remember that when the glass was in use, it was clear

[1] "On the Process of Decay in Glass, and incidentally, on the Composition and Texture of Glass of Different Periods, and the History of its Manufacture." Archæologia, vol. 41, pt. 1, 1880, p. 65, sq.

and uniform in color. Therefore its prime interest from an historical and artistic point of view lies in the technique there shown, the purpose for which it was made, and the part it played in the history of the art.

While it shows the certain uniformity of character discussed above, there is the freedom of form, and the accident of conception which awaits the blower of glass. The simple, practical forms are in striking contrast with many of those created by the Romans, and often far more artistic than many created by those famous craftsmen of later date, the glass-workers of Venice.

The recent gift contains objects for varied uses. Among the examples shown is a superb patera, or shallow dish, a child's nursing-bottle, a lady's unguentarium or kohl-pot, with the bronze rod still in the vase which was used in the application of the antimony, numerous vases of the type called tear-bottles, ointment vases, bowls, cups, beads and oil-bottles. One shows a raised design on the shoulder, while another is of a purple glass which is quite unusual.

It is not fitting that a museum of art should neglect any of the arts of man which are indicative of his progress in artistic expression, and so the School of Design especially welcomes this gift which calls attention to an expression of ancient civilization which is indeed of great interest. L. E. R.

NOTES.

The Humphreys Exhibition.

THE Museum was privileged to show for its summer exhibition a selected group of seventy-nine paintings from the collection of Dr. Alexander C. Humphreys of Newark, N. J. In arranging for this exhibition it was deemed wise to divide the entire collection into two parts, each of which was to occupy the special galleries for two months. The recent legislation, discussed elsewhere in this Bulletin, rendered a change of plan very necessary, and the exhibition of the first half was continued through the summer. While the Museum and its friends were much disappointed that they were not able to see and study the entire collection, they were most grateful to Dr. Humphreys for his generous courtesy in allowing the exhibition to remain for four months in the Museum.

Dr. Humphreys belongs to that important group of collectors who have appreciated the art expression of America, whose catholicity of taste begins with the work of George Inness, and recognizes merit down to the present day. In the wide range of subject open to the American artist, there are two which have received especial attention. While portraiture has found its devoted exponents, it is the study of landscape which has received greater attention. It is this interest which finds expression in Dr. Humphreys' collection. The opportunity was therefore an exceptional one to see in a single collection the representative work of so many who have done their share in moulding the artistic expression of America.

Previous to their exhibition in Providence, the paintings had been shown to the public at the Lotos Club in New York, and the Carnegie Institute in Pittsburg.

Loan of Egyptian Objects.—Through the courtesy of the Boston Museum of Fine Arts, the Rhode Island School of Design has been privileged to borrow from the Egyptian study-series an important group of Egyptian objects. These have recently been installed in the Museum. While all of them are of small size, they are of great interest and importance. This loan includes flint fish arrowheads of 3400 B. C.; scarabs of various periods and kinds, ranging in date from 1400 to 400 B. C.; examples of blue-glaze for which the Egyptians were famous about 1350 B. C.; an ostrich-feather fan, made about 1650 B. C.; and parts of furni-

ture. These come from many sites, among them Naukratis, Abydos, Sheik Farag, Gizeh and Kerma. This loan adds greatly to the interest in the Egyptian objects already in the permanent collections.

Sunday Docent Service.— The Museum is to continue its series of free Sunday docent services for the season of December 1st to April 1st. There is a wealth of interest in the galleries which awaits such sympathetic treatment as has been given by speakers in the past years. All who are interested should avail themselves of the service thus provided so as to become as conversant as possible with the importance of the collections.

Recent Bequests. — From the bequest of Mrs. Abby Greene Harris Ames the Rhode Island School of Design has received a painting, "Portrait of the Duchess of Marlborough," attributed to Sir Godfrey Kneller. A similar gift by bequest has also been received from Miss Sarah C. Durfee. This includes two paintings, "Portrait of Pamela Andrews" by Robert Feke and "Portrait of Sanford Durfee" by James S. Lincoln. The painting by Robert Feke will be published in a later number of the Bulletin.

Brangwyn Posters.— The recent gift of Mrs. Jesse H. Metcalf to the Museum of three of the latest posters by Frank Brangwyn has afforded visitors an excellent opportunity to study some of the artist's best characteristics. All three deal with scenes in Belgium which have been adapted to war-posters. Apart from their connection with the war, they have great distinction as representative of the best in English poster art.

Mr. Brangwyn easily stands as leader of applied pictorial decorative design in England. His training under William Morris laid the solid foundation of his success; his years of travel and observation gave him largeness of view; and his mixture of Welsh and English blood is probably responsible in a measure for the natural expression of vigor, strength, daring, and realization of the true principles of decorative art, features not always present in English art.

His versatility is shown by the number of mediums in which he is successful. Apart from his inventive genius in choice of subject, he has shown his mastery of drawing and painting, of etching and lithography. This last medium was chosen for the posters under discussion.

Brangwyn ranks with the best of the world's artists who have given visions of the mighty power of concerted human effort, who have felt a keen sympathy for their fellow men, and who have expressed their appreciation of industry and commerce of the present day as subjects worthy of study.

The School.— The opening of the school on September 25 for its thirty-ninth year finds that important part of the institution entering upon a still greater period of service. It is seen in the registration, which on October 4 had reached 823. This is larger than at any corresponding time in previous years, and bids fair to exceed all records for the total of the year. The increased facilities due to the near completion of the new textile-building, and the addition of new equipment there, the new power-house soon to be ready for service, the addition of another floor of class-rooms in the Mechanical Building, and the installation of the machine-shop on the street floor, the addition of much-needed space to the Jewelry Department, and increased facilities in the carpenter-shop — all these point to continued growth.

Changes and additions in our teaching staff have brought several new teachers, among these being Mr. Henry S. Pitts in the Beaux-Arts Architects Class, Mr. A. W. Heintzelman in the Freehand Drawing and Painting Department, Messrs. H. H. Crowell and Chester L. Knowles in Chemistry, J. P. Burdick in Mathematics, Miss Florence Minard in the Illustration Class, and a number of assistants in other branches of the school work.

The Bulletin of the
Rhode Island School of Design
Providence

All communications should be addressed to the General Editor, Mr. L. Earle Rowe.

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Term expiring 1919
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Term expiring 1918
Howard L. Clark, Theodore Francis Green
Term expiring 1917
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Term expiring 1916
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Governing Members for Life, who pay at one time $100.00
Annual Governing Members, who pay annual dues of $10.00
Annual Members, who pay annual dues of $3.00

ADMISSIONS.

Hours of Opening.— The galleries are open to the public on every day of the year, with the exception of Thanksgiving Day, Christmas Day, and the Fourth of July. From July 1st to September 15th the hours are from 1 to 5 P. M. on week days and from 2 to 5 P. M. Sundays; from September 15th to July 1st the hours are from 10 A. M. to 5 P. M. week days and from 2 to 5 P. M. Sundays. The Pendleton Collection is open from 2 to 5 P. M. daily.

Twenty-five cents admission to the museum is charged on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays and the museum is free on Tuesdays, Thursdays, Saturdays and Sundays.

Free transferable tickets admitting four persons on pay-days are sent to all members of the corporation. Art students and artists, on application to the authorities, may obtain free tickets of admission for any pay-day. Teachers with pupils of both public and private schools will be admitted without payment upon application.

PHOTOGRAPHS ON SALE.

Photographic copies of many of the objects belonging to the museum, including photographs of the Pendleton Collection of furniture, are on sale at the entrance to the museum.

PUBLICATIONS.

Four quarterly bulletins are issued and are sent free of charge to the members, and, on written request, to alumni of the institution.

The year-book of the school containing detailed information regarding its many activities, and presenting conditions of admission and a list of the courses given in its several departments, will be forwarded free of charge to prospective students and others who are interested in the institution and its work.

COPYING.

Permission to copy or photograph in the galleries of the museum may be obtained in the office. Such permits will not be issued for Sundays or legal holidays.

LIBRARY.

The Library contains 2,679 volumes, 14,660 mounted photographs and reproductions, 1,480 lantern slides, and about 1,159 postcards. During the months of June, July and August the library is closed.