

# Bulletin of the Rhode Island School of Design

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## XVII - XVIII<sup>TH</sup>-CENTURY LACE

Reticello with Genoese needle-point  
Italian - Venetian rose-point

Italian bobbin-lace  
Flemish or Italian bobbin-lace

## A GIFT OF LACE.

A RECENT gift to the School of Design of fifteen pieces of lace, added to the examples already owned by the School, makes a beautiful and representative collection, covering the period from the sixteenth to the nineteenth centuries. They are given by Miss Frances Morris of the Metropolitan Museum, Mrs. W. H. Bliss and Mr. Jacques Krakauer of New York; Mrs. H. K. Porter of Washington; Mrs. Gustav Radeke and an anonymous donor.

The earliest piece of lace is undoubtedly the example of Venetian reticello, a needle-point lace which was developed from cut-work. In cut-work, the pattern is worked with the needle on a linen foundation, but in reticello the linen has almost entirely disappeared, there remaining only a narrow strip at top and bottom. The designs are usually confined within a square, and threads are drawn diagonally and from the centre of each side, on which a more or less elaborate pattern is worked with the needle. In the example of seventeenth century reticello, illustrated on the first page, the pattern is formed of squares into which are introduced diagonal lines, circles and half circles. This particular kind is interesting in being the form from which all needle-point laces are derived.

In Venice, where much of the most beautiful lace was produced, the lace industry was at its height during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. One of the finest of all laces is the variety known as "Venetian Point," of which we have two beautiful examples, one called "Raised Venetian Point" or "Gros Point de Venise" and the other "Venetian Rose Point." The former is bolder in design, and although there is a distinct pattern, each motive is more or less varied. The *toilé* is made of close needle-stitches, outlined by a heavy "cordonnet" and held together by "brides" or connecting threads, which strengthen the lace. The "Rose Point" lace, a later modification of "Raised Venetian Point," is more delicate and in-

tricate. There is a continuity of design, as shown in the first illustration, which is less pronounced in the example of "Raised Point," and the connecting brides have become a more important element of the decoration. They no longer serve only to connect the big masses of the design, but have become a part of it. Throughout the pattern are numerous little rose-like motives, from which the name is undoubtedly derived.

Bobbin-lace was probably first made in Italy also, although it appeared at about the same time independently in Flanders. There are several pieces of Flemish and Italian bobbin-lace in the group, given by Mrs. Gustav Radeke, and one particularly beautiful piece, shown in the illustration, the gift of Mrs. W. H. Bliss of New York. This fragment is nearly seven inches wide, and is an openwork pattern designed in points. The chief difference between needle-point and bobbin-lace is that the "*toilé*," or substance of the pattern as contrasted with the groundwork, is made of looped or "buttonhole" stitches by the needle, while the "*toilé*" of the bobbin-lace is composed of threads which cross more or less at right angles, thus forming a mesh similar to that of cambric or other woven fabric. This form of "*toilé*" is made by the passing over and under, as in weaving, of the threads attached to the bobbins.

The name "point" is applied only to lace made with the needle, but many bobbin-laces are erroneously called "Punti" or point lace as is the example of "Punto di Milano" or Milanese pillow-lace, given by Mrs. Radeke. This belongs to the late seventeenth or early eighteenth century and is an example of the most beautiful as well as the best known of Italian bobbin-laces. Not infrequently, coats of arms were introduced, but in this specimen, there is a graceful, flowing pattern of vines and flowers, with here and there an insect or bird. The "réseau" or network in which the pattern is set is formed of four threads plaited in such a way as to make almost a diamond-shaped mesh.



POINT DE MILAN LACE

Lace-making in France was encouraged by Colbert, minister under Louis XIV, who established factories at Alençon, to prevent the expenditure of such enormous sums on the importation of Italian laces. Point d'Alençon is the only French lace not made on a pillow. We are able to study this exquisite lace in a lappet of the period of Louis XVI, which is an anonymous gift to the School. The réseau is exceedingly delicate, and one needs the aid of a powerful magnifying glass to fully appreciate the beauty of the workmanship. The "cordonnet" or thick thread which outlines the pattern, is more pronounced than in other laces, due to the fact that it is worked over horse-hair.

Scattered over the network ground are conventional flower forms, and the border is a more or less continuous decoration of the same forms, appliquéd to the net.

Point d'Angleterre is a Flemish bobbin-lace made for export to England and France, when Flemish laces were forbidden by law to be carried into either country. The mesh is hexagonal and very fine, and the design consists of large conventional flowers and birds. A peculiarity is the cordonnet of plaited threads which marks the veins of the leaves and outlines the pattern.

A lace known as Blonde, from the flaxen color of the silk used, was made in certain districts in France, and later was produced in Spain, on account of the popularity of the black silk Blonde for Spanish mantillas. The toilé is very fine, but the réseau is made of broad, flat strands of silk, which give it an attractive lustre. Miss Morris of New York has kindly added such a piece to our collection.

Two specimens remain to be mentioned, one a Flemish bobbin-lace, produced in Binche, Flanders. The absence of any regular réseau places it among the earliest of Flemish laces. The other is an example of English Buckinghamshire, a bobbin-lace worked in one piece upon the pillow.

The industry of hand-made lace was seriously affected by the French Revolution. During the first years of the nineteenth century, a machine for making bobbin net was invented in England, and in 1837, a Jacquard attachment was added to the earlier machine which made it possible to reproduce almost every kind of hand-made lace.

M. S.



FLEMISH POINT D'ANGLETERRE LACE

## PICTURE-FRAMING.

**F**RAMING may be called the art or business of separating a painting from its surroundings.

Not without reason has there been considerable opposition to the picture-framing as exhibited in our museums or galleries. A person possessed of an orderly mind and keen sensibilities is naturally distressed at the wonderful mixture of Italian, Spanish, French and other forms of ornament upon the frames, defying classification and placed without consideration of the school to which the pictures may belong. This person of refinement and taste would like to see the different schools framed in the best manner of their particular period, since each century saw no small effort concentrated upon the designing and making of frames.

Now and then someone in a position to be heard insists that this confusion of styles should be ended by disposing of practically all frames in use and substituting a plain black moulding. This is neither a fair nor a reasonable solution of the difficulty, for although a few pictures might be benefited in this manner, the greater part would be unfairly treated and consequently would suffer. A crowded wall, which is often necessary in a museum, might easily be objectionable if the frames were black, while the result would be pleasant with gold reduced in tone. Gold forms the only really neutral surrounding for a colored picture. The modern system of painting with a full brush, leaving an uneven, lumpy surface, calls for a frame with a rich ornament to obtain a broken effect of light and shade, thus harmonizing with the picture and really making less apparent its uneven texture.

There have been several periods of refinement in the history of framing. In past centuries, characterized by "rule of thumb" craftsmanship, a degree of skill was reached as high as it is possible to achieve. The degree of excellence attained by the various crafts which are related to the arts has always kept pace with the arts

themselves. When architecture and painting were attaining a high point of development, the art of framing was merely reflecting that development. In this branch of work a man in the past or present who could produce original designs which might compare favorably with the best painters would, indeed, be a very great artist.

Beauty and proportion in the design, perfection of workmanship in the carving, gilding and lacquering, are shown in the frames of the golden age of painting. To-day our low standard asks only that there be a certain balance and proportion in the design, while thoroughly bad work in the execution is accepted in nine cases out of ten. So long as the demand for good work is lacking, there will not be developed any great school of skilled frame-designers.

It would seem that discriminating taste is the first essential for recognizing the hopelessness of our present status, to be followed by a real demand for better standards. These, however, cannot be created artificially, for they must grow naturally as a product of favorable conditions.

We should be free to admit that there are drawbacks to our arts and crafts, for confession is good for the soul. The business of copying a few rosettes from the Ghiberti gates or other sources, purloining a wreath or garland from the French Renaissance and having this cut on a frame in the modern axe or adze school of carving, so that the beholder may be sure to notice that it is a "hand carved" frame, does not produce a renaissance of framing likely to interfere seriously with the wonderfully designed and executed work seen in the old schools of carving.

It is a habit of the individual to compare himself and his works with those of the bygone ages, and emerge from the comparison filled with a profound pity for the poor people who died without coming under the influence of our modern institutions. Some, however, hold that there are certain limitations to modern effort

especially in the lines of sculpture, painting, and architecture with their several parallels of effort. Perhaps one of the indictments against modern art is the lack of sincerity and painstaking care in the effort itself.

The invention of machinery for producing pressed and cut work in imitation of carving has almost ruined the trade of the wood-carver, for the public will joyfully purchase an imitation of anything which is cheap in price, no matter how many other cheap qualities may be included. The high cost of skilled labor makes it a necessity for the manufacturer to rush the work with all possible speed and to economize on the material as much as possible. This is fatal to the production of real merit in any skilled trade. Anyone who tries to have a replica of one of the Revere frames which are often seen on Copley's works will be astonished at the price demanded for the carving alone.

Bronze powder has invaded the trade of the gilder because some of the very finely ground bronzes, skilfully laid and toned, may easily be mistaken for gold leaf, and the cost of doing a frame in bronze is much less than gold. A large amount of "gold powder" work on furniture and frames is nothing but bronze. This is unfortunate, as the lasting qualities of bronze are very poor.

Since the shadow-box and the frame make a necessary combination in the minds of many persons, it is fitting that some brief notice of the former should be taken. There are two legitimate excuses for shadow-boxes. First, as a protection for a picture and frame which is being shipped about the country to various exhibitions; and second, where a more or less air-tight box is needed to safeguard a fragile panel. The use to which they are frequently put by dealers, whereby there is secured an effect of splendor of stained and polished wood, red velvet, gold or near-gold frame and glass that obscures and bedazzles is not considered good taste by true artists and connoisseurs. A shadow-box on a picture in a private house

may be compared to a fifth wheel on a coach.

Our interest in art, therefore, should not be limited to the acquisition of works of art, but should be extended to a definite knowledge of the principles of proper framing, for it is an important factor in any attempt to show off the work of art to advantage.

H. E. T.

#### ANCIENT GREEK COINS.

WHILE the Greek coins on exhibition in the main gallery of the School of Design are enjoyed by its many visitors, their full archæological and artistic interest is not commonly appreciated.

Greek coins take us back to the beginning of coinage, and to the Lydians in Western Asia Minor early in the seventh century B. C., modern research has unhesitatingly given the credit of this invention. This was also the view of Herodotus. From there the issuing of coined money spread throughout European Greece, the Island of Ægina being the earliest European state to issue it, about 650-625 B. C. Eventually Greek coins were struck over a large area of the ancient world, as far east as India, and as far west as Spain.

With the Greeks, coins were regarded as the badge of freedom, and so general was this sense of independence that no town was too small to issue them. In bearing the arms of the State or Town, they reflected its changes, increasing in artistic merit and quantity with its rise, and disappearing with its fall. Sometimes an event which is barely mentioned by ancient historians receives considerable attention in the coinage. In this way we have a numismatic record of Greek history sometimes far more complete in detail than the record of historians. Greek coins are original works of art, and not copies, and many of them take rank among the finest examples of ancient art. In respect to originality, this can be said of a very small proportion of the works of Greek sculpture which have come down to us. Greek coins are to be regarded as



## GREEK COINS

From Ægina, Macedonia, Thourioi, Terina and Olynthos

monuments of the first importance in the study of epigraphy, art, religion and commerce. In some instances they are the sole surviving vestige of towns whose sites are even unknown.

The late Barclay V. Head, D.C.L., of the British Museum has said, "It has been often and truly said that Greek coins are the grammar of Greek art, for it is only by means of coins, that we can trace the whole course of art from its very beginning to its latest decline." Prof. Percy Gardner of Oxford University says, "Of all classes of Greek remains, coins are the most trustworthy, give us the most precise information, introduce us to the greatest variety of facts." When Professor Brunn produced his noted theory of a Northern Greek School of Art, the most trustworthy section of his evidence was that dealing with the numismatics, and he has stated in a letter to Professor Gardner, that the question of the date and extent of the archaizing tendency in later Greek art would be finally settled only by an appeal to coins. In the determination of place, coins from their types or inscriptions give a great advan-

tage over other antiquities, where the place of discovery is usually most important, but where it is frequently to the interest of the finder to conceal this, hence the provenance of the object is as a rule quite unknown. In this particular, then, the value of the testimony of coins is such as can scarcely be overrated. We have instances on coins of Athens and Miletus in which valuable copies of celebrated works of sculpture of the archaic period are preserved to us. Of the Athene Parthenos of Pheidias we have some slight numismatic record. On certain late bronze coins of Elis, we have the head and the figure enthroned, of the renowned Olympian Zeus by Pheidias, and there can be no doubt that these coins give copies of the head and of the entire statue. Moreover, they are the most faithful copies of this masterpiece which have been handed down to us. A few of the statues of the Praxitelian age are also probably represented in faithful detail on coins. On one from Cnidus is the entire figure of the most celebrated Aphrodites — that at Cnidus by Praxiteles. Very many more such instances can be cited. The only

copies of many of the statues mentioned by Pausanias are those upon coins.

In the special study of ancient portraiture, a branch of archæology, the most trustworthy evidence is that of numismatics. Coins give us portraits of nearly all the kings and rulers of Asia and Greece from the time of Alexander the Great onwards. Coins regarded as works of art follow in their designs the laws of balance and symmetry, of relief and perspective. Thus coins have helped reconstruct, at least, the general schemes of many great works of art wholly lost, and so furnished very important material for recovering the history of much of Greek art. Inasmuch as Greek coins, from a technical point of view, are such superb examples of appropriate die-work, and surface treatment, they easily set a high standard for the coins and medals of the present and future.

H. A. G.

NOTE.—The Museum is privileged to show Mr. Henry A. Green's choice collection of Greek coins as a loan. These represent years of effort and discrimination, and the collection contains examples of a high standard of quality and rarity.

Editor.

#### NOTES.

NEWARK POSTER EXHIBITION.—The intimate relation between commercial and fine arts is sometimes difficult to establish. Modern conditions, however, have developed the poster to an extraordinary degree, especially in Europe. America also has realized that she has much to learn in this direction, and the advertising world has learned from France, Germany and England that the making of a poster can interest the most serious artist. The results of such realization were seen in the exhibition in the special galleries from November 24th to December 8th. This brought to public attention sixty-four posters made as a result of a competition in Newark, N. J. The size of the money-prizes was large enough to insure the interest of the artistic world. The subject was the coming 250th Anniversary Celebration of the Founding of Newark. Among the artists who submitted work

were Edward Penfield, Adolph Treidler and Helen Dryden.

It should also be noted that Newark, with characteristic initiative and enterprise, has shown a road to success to those in America who are interested in civic advertising. There is hardly an art-gallery in the country which could not to advantage bring work of such merit to the attention of their visitors. As a result, there are many who will learn of the coming celebration in a way not possible through the investment of the same amount of money in the ordinary advertising channels. The School of Design was privileged to exhibit the posters for the first time outside of Newark and New York.

EXHIBITION OF AMERICAN SOCIETY OF ILLUSTRATORS.—From December 11th to 29th, the exhibition of the American Society of Illustrators was held in the special gallery. The constant demand of the reading public has aided in developing illustration along many lines. The exhibition clearly showed this varied character, and, as has been said by critics, proves how great the difficulty is to preserve a sharp dividing line between the painter and the illustrator. In fact, certain illustrators, overcome by the temptation, have entered the painter's field. Like the poster, the illustration must tell its story simply, clearly and directly. Any divergence from this detracts from the value of the illustration. The sound basis of technical ability was in evidence in the work as shown, while the influence of the English desire for story-telling with a wealth of detail was also felt. Perhaps the most striking feature was seen in the marked difference between the illustrators who followed the old tradition, and those who have found the new expression. The comprehensiveness of the exhibition is shown when it is remembered that work by eighty-four illustrators was brought to the attention of the student and the visiting public.

FALL EXHIBITION OF AMERICAN PAINTING.—An important feature of the

schedule of the Museum each year is the Annual Fall Exhibition of American Painting. From the beginning, the School of Design has sought to present an exhibition which is illustrative of the latest expression in this field of artistic endeavor. In this respect the exhibition in the galleries from October 12th to November 9th was up to the standard, and was distinguished for quality. Among the artists whose work was shown, were F. W. Benson, E. C. Tarbell, Bruce Crane, Gifford Beal, Philip Little, Leslie Thompson, Gari Melchers, Cecilia Beaux, Robert Vonnah, R. Haley-Lever, Ben Foster, W. J. Glackens, Martha Walter, and Jane Peterson.

Two special features were introduced which brought added attention to the work of two artists. By the courtesy of the artist, the Museum was privileged to show a group of portraits by George W. Bellows. These were painted in his latest manner, with boldness of conception, strength of color, and freedom of brush-stroke. He was especially interested in developing the decorative value of the problem before him. One of his paintings, the "Portrait of Walter Littlefield," was bought by a friend for the School of Design.

The second feature was a notable group of water-colors by Dodge MacKnight, shown through the courtesy of Mr. Desmond FitzGerald of Brookline, Mass. Rhode Island can claim in this artist, a man of exceptional genius. His work is of the best, clearly showing mastery of technical difficulties, boldness in color, surety of observation, and a freedom from conventional representation which is truly refreshing.

It is of interest to note that several of the canvases shown in the exhibition came from Providence owners. The painting by Ben Foster was loaned by Mr. F. L. Pierce, while the institution is indebted to Mr. R. H. I. Goddard for the portrait of himself by Gari Melchers, and that of R. H. I. Goddard III, by Cecilia Beaux.

TEXTILE LOAN TO PATERSON, N. J.—Attention was called to the importance of

the textiles in the permanent collection of the Rhode Island School of Design, through a loan by the Museum of a number of valuable examples to the Historical Exhibition of Textiles. This was held at the time of the first National Silk Convention in Paterson, N. J., October 12th to 31st. The Museum is glad to be one of six institutions from which a loan was made.

JOSEPH PENNELL LECTURE.—A large number of members and friends of the Rhode Island School of Design enjoyed an illustrated lecture by Mr. Joseph Pennell on "Artistic Lithography." This was given in Memorial Hall on December 1st. The speaker brought to his audience an expert's knowledge of the subject, the point of view of the artist, and repeated emphasis on the opportunity which the medium afforded to those who were expert draughtsmen. His frequent pointed criticism of certain tendencies in modern art, and the attitude of the general public introduced a decided personal element into the lecture.

HENRY MACCARTER LECTURE.—In order that every possible advantage might be enjoyed by the students in the School, the institution has arranged for a series of informal lectures by well-known teachers and illustrators who discuss the subject of illustration in its many phases. The first of these was given by Mr. Henry MacCarter, on November 10th. The speaker is the head of the Department of Design in the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts in Philadelphia, and a well-known artist. The lecture proved of very great interest to a large body of students.

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