Winckelmann has been called the father of modern history of art. In his *History of Ancient Art*, in his writings on the excavations at Herculaneum, and in the catalogue of engraved gems in the collection of Baron Stosch, he ranged from philosophical analysis to particularized description and identification, setting a model for future scholars. The translation of Winckelmann’s books into French spread his work throughout Europe and England, and it was commented on by such writers as Madame de Staël and Horace Walpole. He had a strong influence on literary men even during his lifetime; Goethe as a young man caught the enthusiasm in his writing and was the greatest genius to follow his lead.

Winckelmann was born in 1717, the son of a poor cobbler of Stendal in Prussia. He was a studious boy in school and his attendance in the choir of the Lutheran church gave him an unexpected opportunity for further study. At the time when he would have had to begin his apprenticeship under his father, the rector of the church, growing blind, asked the boy to be his reader. Here began his acquaintance with Greek texts and his desire for a wider education. His studies turned out to be sketchy and varied, seldom including his beloved classics: a year at a Berlin grammar school, two years at the university of Halle, where he took a degree in theology, a year at the University of Jena studying medicine and higher mathematics, a period of tutoring in Osterburg in the Altmark, where he taught himself French and modern history from the only available books, which happened to be in French. He went through a great deal of drudgery and near starvation to maintain himself during this period. There followed five miserable years as head of the town school of Sehausen, near his birthplace. As he was only good at teaching subjects which he himself enjoyed—Latin and Greek—and these were not considered essential for such a school, Winckelmann had a hard time and was passed over when better appointments were made in other schools.

Finally, at thirty-one, he thought he had a chance to pursue his classical studies in the great library of the Count von Bünau, who lived near Dresden. He secured the post of librarian to the count only to find that he was expected to do the research and writing of a monumental history of the German people. Four thick volumes had already been finished without reaching the year one thousand! But the next six years spent at this grubbing were not lost, for they brought him the acquaintance in Dresden of the painter and sculptor Adam Friedrich Oeser and of Cardinal Archinto, Papal Nuncio to Augustus III, King of Poland and Elector of Saxony. The one gave him ideas and encouraged him to write, the other helped him to reach Rome. Before he left the count’s employ Winckelmann became converted to the Catholic faith, with the hope that the church would facilitate a journey to Italy. This change was made with a good deal of pain and soul searching, for he was honest enough to realize that no form of Christian religion stirred him as much as the philosophy of the Greeks.

The way did not open up immediately, and, leaving the count in 1754, he attempted to get along in Dresden without employment. When his small savings were exhausted Adam Oeser befriended him. Winckelmann lived for two years in Oeser’s home and together they studied the paintings and antique sculpture in the royal collections in Dresden. Oeser had been taught by Donner in Pressburg to model from the antique, a method of instruction which seems routine to us but was then not usual.

When he had digested this teaching, Winck-
Portrait of Winckelmann in his thirties, painted in Rome by his friend Anton Raphael Mengs. He holds a copy of the "Iliad." Because of Winckelmann's influence on the study and appreciation of classical art this portrait, recently acquired by the Museum, is being shown in the special exhibition the Classical Contribution to Western Civilization. Dick Fund, 1948
elmann published a pamphlet, dedicated to the King of Poland, which he called *Thoughts on the Imitation of Greek Works in Painting and Sculpture*. His theme was that present-day artists could do no better than imitate antique works of art. In vivid prose he sang the praise of ancient Greece. The warm climate and national custom of athletic sports gave her artists daily opportunity to see beautiful nude bodies. From much observation they had created ideal beauty in forms of noble simplicity. He described with gusto the softly rippling lines of an athlete and the clinging draperies of the women. In his review of art treasures available to his readers Raphael alone, of all the artists since classical times, received approval. The Dutch realists were held up as examples of what happened when nature was observed too closely.

This pamphlet created a furor in baroque Dresden. Long-drawn-out discussions were held as to what constituted good taste and whether the Laocoön portrayed a calm, noble soul emitting a stifled sigh, as Winckelmann claimed, or whether he was crying to heaven in agony. It all served to make students really look at works of art as well as talk about them. The King of Poland was pleased to grant a pension to Winckelmann, and at the end of 1755 he accompanied Cardinal Archinto to Rome, thus ending years of frustration.

Once settled in Rome near the Villa Medici, Winckelmann formed a close friendship with Anton Raphael Mengs, another German from the court of Saxony. Mengs showed him the wonders of Rome, and they discussed theories of art far into the night. It was probably at this time that Mengs painted for himself the portrait of his friend here illustrated. Mengs’s wife, who had the beauty of a Raphael Madonna, remained his friend throughout his life, though the two men passed through a period of estrangement. In general, however, Winckelmann’s inclination and his scholastic mode of life held little place for women. Goethe wrote of him “We often find Winckelmann in the company of beautiful young men, and he never seems more animated and charming than in these often fleeting moments.”

Winckelmann’s adoption of Rome as his spiritual and actual home was made complete in 1756 by the Seven Years’ War in Germany, which cut off his small pension from Dresden. Cardinal Archinto and Cardinal Albani welcomed his brilliant wit and scholarship. They facilitated his observation and publication of the excavations at Herculaneum and Naples. Under their protection he finished in 1763 *The History of Ancient Art*, the work on which his reputation rests. In it he laid down principles for the scientific study of a nation’s art. He considered the climatic, geographic, and political aspects which went into the development of that art as well as the art objects themselves, a method which has been followed ever since. Before the abrupt end of his career Winckelmann had been given a position in the Vatican Library and the title of President of Antiquities. He met all important foreign visitors to Rome and occupied an honored place in Cardinal Albani’s villa.
In 1768 Winckelmann started north on a visit to Germany at the insistent invitation of his friends. He was in the company of an Italian antiquarian, who recounted that as they approached Germany Winckelmann's characteristically cheerful mood changed to inexplicable melancholy. He turned aside to visit Vienna and would go no farther. There he was warmly received by the Empress Maria Theresa, who honored him with a gift of silver medals. In spite of all urgings to continue his journey Winckelmann returned to Italy. This he did alone and got as far as Trieste. If his mind had been less gloomy and despairing he might have been more suspicious of a stranger who hung around his inn pretending to assist him in getting passage to Venice. On the fourth day this man murdered him in his room for the silver medals given him by Maria Theresa.

Winckelmann sat for at least five painters; Canova drew a profile portrait, Angelica Kauffmann and Anton Maron painted him seated at his writing; and Mengs shows him holding a book. The fifth portrait, by a Dane, Peter Als, is mentioned in Winckelmann's letters, but the work itself is now lost. Of the five the Mengs, acquired by the Museum in 1948, is probably the earliest.

Raphael Mengs, son of a painter of miniatures and enamels, had had many of the artistic advantages denied to Winckelmann. He was taken to Rome in 1741 at the age of thirteen, and on this and many subsequent visits he had learned his art directly from the paintings of Raphael and from antique statues. His first works were in pastel, portraits of great charm and simplicity. Indeed, throughout his life when he painted himself or his family and friends his portraits never lost the direct liveliness of these early pastels. He soon learned, however, to follow the dictates of his sitters as the portrait of Frederick Christian of Saxony testifies—it might have come out of Largilière's workshop. This portrait secured him a pension and a commission to paint some church decorations. Pleading the need of more Italian study, he returned to Rome, where at the age of twenty he became a Catholic and married a beautiful Italian girl. It was in their home that Winckelmann found friendship and guidance when he arrived in Rome in 1755.

Mengs painted Winckelmann as he must have looked during the first year of their friendship. He holds an open volume of the Iliad, and his eyes are compelling; he has the expression of a man with a message. Later portraits of Winckelmann, especially the one by Maron painted in Winckelmann's last year, show him more urbane and assured, a man who has reached an honored position. There is no documentary proof of the date of our portrait. A small metal label on the frame, which, though it could have been added at any time, may nevertheless bear traditional information in giving an exact year. It reads: *Antoni Rafael Mengs (1728-1777): Jan Joachim Winckelmann R. 1756.* The *R.* must stand for Rome.

Mengs had been so well grounded in the renaissance paintings of his early study and the baroque point of view of his period that the classicism preached by Winckelmann revised
his subject matter rather than his technique. He did experiment with the new style in a ceiling panel for the Villa Albani. Apollo and the Muses are painted in direct imitation of Greek sculpture and Herculaneum frescoes, but they are in normal perspective, as though for a wall panel. Winckelmann was high in his praise of this decoration, but the lack of illusion which the eighteenth century had come to expect in ceiling paintings must have repelled many who saw it. In any case, his later ceilings painted in Spain have gods surmounting the walls and flying figures rising into the clouds in true Tiepolo fashion.

Mengs left for Spain in 1761 aboard a battle-ship at the invitation of Charles III. The king required a prodigious number of paintings—portraits of the royal family, religious subjects, and the decorations for his palaces in Madrid and Aranjuez. In 1767 Mengs was up against the stiff competition of the more brilliant and showy Gianbattista Tiepolo, but he appears to have held his own, and the death of Tiepolo in 1770 removed this threat to his position. Undoubtedly his strength in portraiture contributed to his popularity. His portraits manage to have a personal quality in spite of the rich brocades and elegant accessories, the ladies and children have charm, and even the ugly king looks human.

In following the history of the Winckelmann portrait we find that Don José Nicolás de Azara, the Spanish Ambassador to Rome and a good friend of Mengs, bought the portrait with several other paintings to help the nearly destitute family of the artist. The collection went with him to Paris in 1798 when he became Ambassador to the French court. At his death in 1804 the pictures were inherited by his nephew Cardinal Don Dionsio Bardaji y Azara in Rome. Three years later the French art dealer Lebrun went on a buying trip through Spain, the south of France, and Italy and acquired the Winckelmann with a number of other works from Bardaji. The portrait next appears in the Lebrun sale in Paris in March 1810. It then went into the collection of the Polish Princess Isabella Lubomirska and has belonged to that family until now. It was lent to the International Portrait Exhibition in the Palazzo Vecchio, Florence, in 1911—the year of the great Victor Emmanuel celebration—by Prince Casimir Lubomirski, whose son Sebastian sold it to the Museum last year.

Until the 1911 exhibition the Mengs portrait was known only through prints. It had been engraved for the French edition of the History of Ancient Art in 1795 after a drawing by Bonaventura Salesa which Azara had made for this purpose. Ten years later it was engraved by C. Senff, and again in 1815 by Maurice Blot in Paris when the painting belonged to Princess Lubomirski.

During the arrangements for the purchase of the portrait the Museum was given a good story. It appears that even Hitler had heard of Winckelmann the great German scholar and, wanting to add the portrait to his collection, sent an emissary to Prince Lubomirski in Poland. The prince said, “Of course Hitler should have the picture but unfortunately it is not here. He can, however, go and get it.”

“Well, where is the picture?”

“In London.”