The Metropolitan Museum of Art

Volume I

Bulletin

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Notes

On the Cover: A Detail from Bruegel’s Harvesters. Little is known of the life and personality of Pieter Bruegel the Elder, and that little is supplied by Carel van Mander in his Book of the Artists, written thirty years after Bruegel’s death. He says that Bruegel was born “not far from Breda, in a village called Bruegel, by which name he called himself and left it to his descendants.” The most widely accepted date of his birth is 1525.

Bruegel spent most of his life in Antwerp, one of the most important ports of that day. His first master was Pieter Coeck, with whom he studied four years. His curiosity having been stirred by travelers from Italy, he decided to make the hazardous journey to that country to see it for himself. Evidently it was a quest for enrichment of life rather than an aesthetic experience, for there is no evidence in his work of the influence of those Italian masters whose work he must have seen.

Early in his career he made numerous drawings for engravings, which showed the influence of Jerome Bosch but exceeded him in the invention of drolleries. Gradually he was to progress from these drawings with their fantastic content to a complete union in realism of subject and manner. It is in this direction that he attained genius, and in such paintings he is without a peer in the history of art.

Bruegel truly lived within his pictures, participating in the life and activities of the people he portrayed. He spanned the entire gamut of human emotions and behavior and presented them with a profound and deeply stirring conviction.

With his marriage to a daughter of Pieter Coeck in October 1563 he became the progenitor of a line of “Brueghels” who were also to paint but never to achieve the same eminence.

Charles Sheeler

Nineteenth-Century Shawls. The continuing interest in the Paisley and French shawls which were an essential part of the wardrobes of all women during the middle years of the nineteenth century has suggested a display of the Museum’s shawls of this type, to be seen in Gallery H 19 for an indefinite period.

At the time of Napoleon’s Egyptian campaign in 1798 French officers brought home as gifts shawls from India, Persia, and Turkey and so started a fashion that was to last for most of the following century. European weavers were quick to take advantage of the style’s popularity, and by 1820 Paisley in Scotland was making shawls which owed their inspiration to the Indian type and which had the advantage of being much lighter.

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less costly. The weavers of France and England soon followed suit, and many shawls were made in Lyons, Rheims, and Norwich. The British and French shawls we are showing illustrate the various types and materials popular from 1820 to 1870 and range from the early narrow shawl, through the very large one popular during the crinoline period, to a later one of printed silk.

MARION P. BOLLES

A Pre-Raphaelite Drawing. A drawing of the Pre-Raphaelite school has been given to the Museum by an anonymous donor. It was evidently intended for a calendar or to celebrate an anniversary at the end of March, for it shows a young girl standing against a flowering hedge with crocuses at her feet and holding in her left hand a small ram, the zodiac sign which governs the period beginning March 21.

In style and arrangement this drawing resembles one of the panels of the Saint George and the Dragon series which Burne-Jones painted for Birket Foster in 1865. Here the Princess Sabra walks in a garden reading a book, a rose hedge behind her and flowers along the path. Burne-Jones painted a number of single allegorical figures representing the Seasons, Day and Night, the Virtues, and similar subjects, but I have found no evidence that he undertook to illustrate the full calendar or the signs of the zodiac in this way. The Museum’s new drawing may then have been a chance thought that he tried and gave up, or it may have been occasioned by a friend’s birthday. The use of two different pencils gives variety to the work. The figure and draperies are done with a full, soft black line, while the flowery background is clear and precise.

JOSEPHINE L. ALLEN

A Head by Lipchitz. The Museum has recently received from an anonymous donor an interesting gift of modern sculpture—a terracotta head by Jacques Lipchitz, entitled Sketch for a Portrait of Marsden Hartley and dated 1942. The artist, who is now in the United States, is a naturalized Frenchman. He was born in 1891 in Lithuania, which was then part of Russian Poland. He began the study of sculpture in Paris in 1909 after having done some modeling under private instruction as a youth. Although he was thoroughly trained in the academic traditions at the Ecole des Beaux Arts and the Academy Julien, he became one of the leaders of the modern movement in sculpture, contributing works in the abstract style to the exhibitions of independent artists between 1912 and 1925.

Of his remarkable series of portrait studies, produced about 1920, Lipchitz is said to have made the following tantalizing remark: “I have always made complete organisms, entirely self-contained. I never did parts — heads, torsos, etc., which I consider heresy — except portraits, which I do not regard as sculpture.” The subject of our new portrait—Marsden Hartley—is a well-known American artist, whose painting Lobster Fishermen has recently come into the Museum’s collection, having been awarded a purchase prize in the current Artists for Victory exhibition.

ALBERT T. GARDNER

Guidebooks for the Government. In November of last year cards were sent out from the Director’s Office announcing a form of service in which the entire membership might participate. Various agencies of the United States Government were anxious to collect as many copies as possible of guidebooks, Baedekers, motoring maps, road maps, and travel books of the Mediterranean countries, also photographs of remote and unusual places in North Africa and the Near East. The Museum was pleased to act as collecting agent, and the Members’ response has been gratifying. Hundreds of maps and books were turned in from private libraries and these have been gratefully acknowledged by Captain R. A. MacFall, Intelligence Officer of the Third Naval District. The material which has been collected will be distributed and used in various ways; some will go to the Navy, another portion has been requested by the Army, and a certain amount is being held for agencies concerned with reconstruction and post-war planning. Although the initial demand for these contributions has been filled, there is still need for them. Further donations, not only from Members, but from anyone eager to aid the government with material of this sort, will be passed on to the proper agency. They may be left at the Appointment Office or sent by mail to the Director.