

Bulletin of
The Detroit Institute of Arts
of the City of Detroit



MATTHEW PRATT
1734-1805
PORTRAIT OF AN ARTIST
GIFT OF DEXTER M. FERRY, JR.

A PORTRAIT BY MATTHEW PRATT

Through a recent gift of Dexter M. Ferry, Jr., another item of sturdy portraiture has been added to the collection of early American art to which Mr. Ferry has already been a large contributor. The painting¹ is by Matthew Pratt, an artist whose work is all too rarely known. Yet from his active practice in the field of painting, it would seem that there must exist in Philadelphia, where he long resided, many unidentified works from his brush.

Pratt is perhaps best known by the painting *American School in London* in the collection of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, a group picture made in the studio of Benjamin West, and by the companion portraits of Benjamin West and his bride, Miss Betsy Shewell, in the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts.

The subject of our picture, an artist in a green coat seated before an easel and holding palette and brushes in his hand, would indicate that the picture was painted in 1765-1766 in the years of Pratt's first visit to England and while he was living with his famous compatriot, Benjamin West. The sitter, unidentified, was probably one of the group of young painters who worked in West's studio during that period.

Matthew Pratt was born September 23rd, 1734. The autobiographical notes² left to his son Thomas Pratt enable us to follow the incidents and adventures of his interesting career. His mother was the daughter of Joseph Claypoole, a joiner and cabinet-maker in the city of Philadelphia, and her brother James Claypoole, to whom Pratt was apprenticed at the age of fifteen was a limner and painter. After six years of apprenticeship, Pratt, at the age of twenty-one, in company

with Francis Foster, opened a workshop, but after a brief period at his trade, he retired to go on a mercantile voyage to Jamaica, which was fraught with much adventure but little profit. On his return to Philadelphia, he again practised portrait painting with a good patronage, and soon after married the daughter of a successful merchant, Charles Moore, who set him up with "household furniture complete to begin housekeeping."

In 1764, he travelled to London with Miss Betsy Shewell, the betrothed of Benjamin West, who was a relative of his, and with John West, father of the noted artist. Pratt relates how a few weeks later he gave the bride away in the marriage ceremony at St. Martin's Church in the Strand. During the next two years he remained in England, living in the elegant house of Benjamin West, and he speaks of the unflinching kindness which he received at the hands of the famous painter. In 1766 Pratt returned to Philadelphia and here he remained until his death in 1805, except for a brief visit to Dublin, Ireland.

It is unfortunate that Pratt did not continue his autobiographical notes to the end of his life, for we should then know more about his work during the productive period of his last thirty years. He continued to practice his profession in Philadelphia and New York, and he condescended to paint signs which must have been skillfully designed and executed to have elicited the praise given them by John Neagle and other contemporaries. It is to be hoped that a clearer record of his accomplishment in the field of portraiture will in time be established.

CLYDE H. BURROUGHS

1. Oil on canvas, H. 30 inches, W. 25 inches. Reg. No. 38.14.

2. Published by Charles Henry Hart, "Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography," 1895.



LEONARDO DA VINCI
1452-1519
TWO HEADS
GIFT OF MR. EDWARD FOWLES

THE GROWTH OF THE COLLECTION OF DRAWINGS

Those who have perused the Annual Report Number of the Bulletin are aware of the efforts on the part of the museum to build up a collection of drawings as choice and comprehensive as its collection of paintings. Ever since the initial gift of James E. Scripps in 1894, the museum has possessed a fund of excellent drawings which is being constantly enlarged.

A drawing is often more subjectively and intensely realized than a painting, for it is the artist's shorthand method of recording prefatory ideas, speculations, and revisions which cannot well be put down in the more permanent, unwieldy paint, clay, or stone. A drawing betrays three things: an artist's technical mastery of accurate line, which is often subdued or disguised in his finished work; his methods of composition, whether from the general to the particular, or contrariwise; and above all, his creative impulses rather than the reconsidered, constant deliberation which goes into the completion of a painting or statue.

No creative fervor can be held at its strongest for any length of time: a great painting or statue is made up of a series of climaxes in the artist's personality and vision, whose gist has been registered in drawings or sketches, which are then pondered and combined so the result will contain, at a consistently high level, the sum of his momentary inspirations. Thus, students of art, when they wish to reach deepest into an artist's spirit, turn to his drawings for their probe.

Two of the illustrated drawings are Italian, two are Dutch, and one is the work of a gallicized Spaniard. Taken chronologically, the first is a study of *Two Heads*¹ by Leonardo da Vinci (1452-1519), a gift of Mr. Edward Fowles. This category of Leonardo's work has been miscalled "caricature" by modern criticism, but there is in it little or none of that element of jocosity which the word implies. In these heads the artist has set down those examples of the bizarre in humankind which were more accessible to artists then than now, and



ISAAC VAN OSTADE
1621-1649
GROUP OF PEASANTS AND A VIOLINIST
BEFORE A TAVERN
WILLIAM H. MURPHY FUND

were, one suspects, more of a joy to Leonardo than the idealized types of his sacred paintings.

Completely different in spirit is a *Landscape with Figures*² by Annibale Carracci (1560-1609), a gift of James E. Scripps. The vigorous figures of the drawing take part in a kind of pageant in which the theme and its actors are manipulated for a striking literary or emotional effect.

The two Dutch drawings, one by Adrian Brouwer³ (1605-1638), whose work in this medium is rare, the

other by Isaac van Ostade⁴ (1621-1649), gifts of the Founders Society, show us the love of both these artists for the rustic, unstudied society from which they sprang.

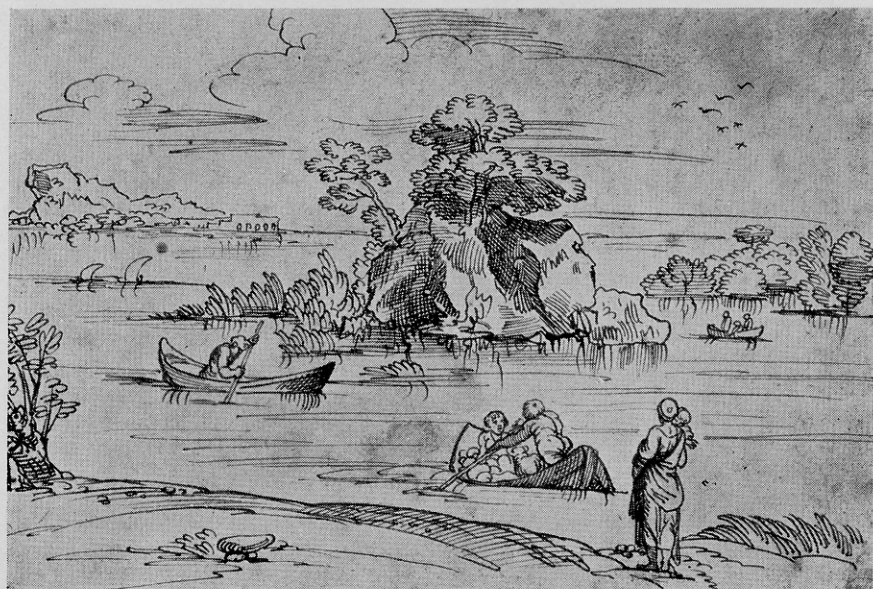
The last, a *Portrait of E. Forert*⁵, by Pablo Ruiz Picasso (1881-) a gift of D. M. Ferry, Jr., exemplifies Picasso's earliest period, before he left Spain for Paris in 1900, when his art was principally influenced by Toulouse-Lautrec.

PARKER LESLEY

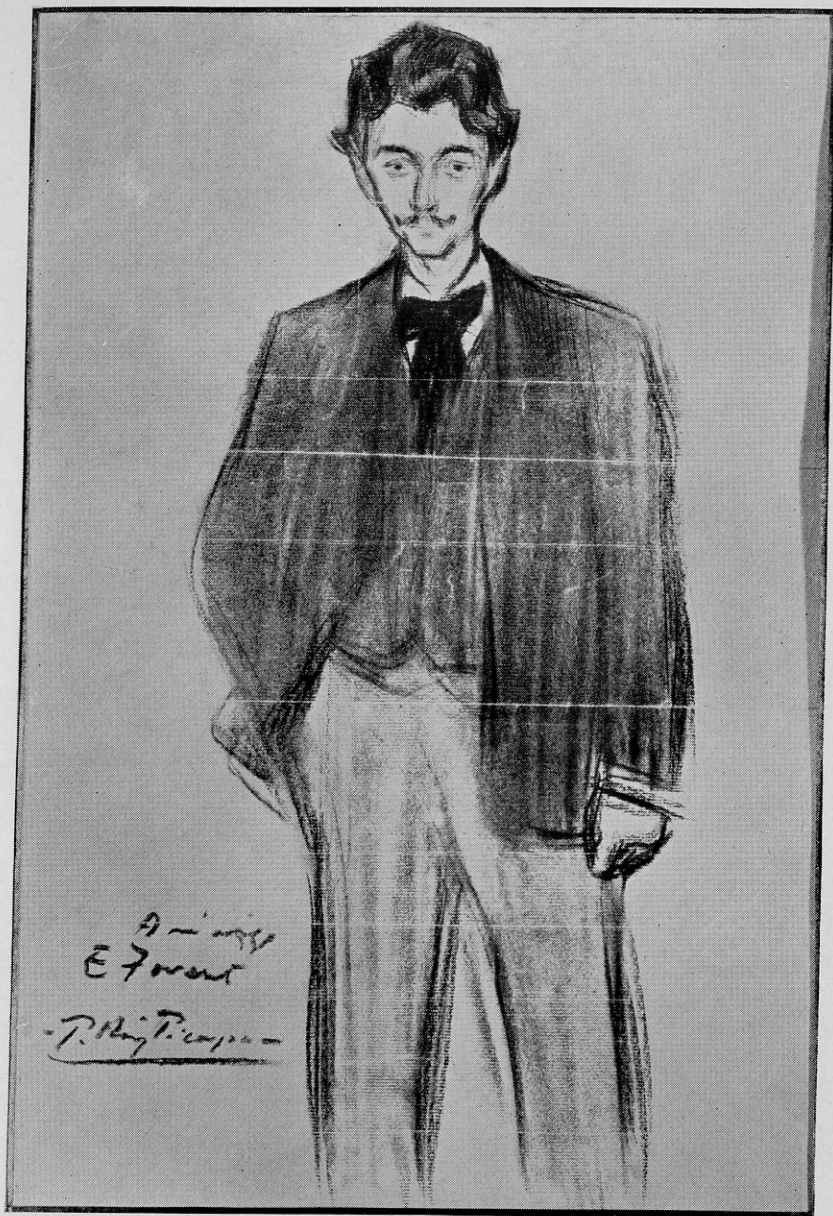
1. Pen. H. 1 5/8 inches, W. 3 3/4 inches. Reg. No. 38.61.
2. Pen. H. 14 7/8 inches, W. 9 3/4 inches. Reg. No. 94.3.
3. Pen and wash. H. 5 3/4 inches, W. 8 1/2 inches. Reg. No. 38.17.
4. Pen, blue paper. H. 9 3/4 inches, W. 7 inches. Reg. No. 38.16.
5. Charcoal. H. 19 1/4 inches, W. 12 3/4 inches. Reg. No. 38.34.



ADRIAN BROUWER
1605-1638
GROUP OF SEVEN PEASANTS
WILLIAM H. MURPHY FUND



ANNIBALE CARRACCI
1560-1609
LANDSCAPE WITH FIGURES
GIFT OF JAMES E. SCRIPPS



PABLO RUIZ PICASSO
1881—
PORTRAIT OF E. FORST
GIFT OF DEXTER M. FERRY, JR.

THE EIGHTH DETROIT INTERNATIONAL SALON OF PHOTOGRAPHY

This year, which is the one hundredth anniversary of the presentation of photography to the world, finds photographic exhibitions keeping pace with the amazing growth and popularity of camera work. In America alone, there are now some thirty annual photographic salons, all of national or international scope, jury-selected and open to both amateur and professional workers. In many cases these exhibitions are housed in well-known galleries, including the Carnegie Institute in Pittsburgh, the Minneapolis Institute of Arts, the Witte Museum, San Antonio, the American Museum of Natural History, New York, the Art Institute of Chicago, the National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa, the Philadelphia Art Alliance and the Franklin Institute, Philadelphia.

The Detroit Salon, which will be held this year from June 6 to June 30, in the principal exhibition gallery of the Detroit Institute of Arts, is the Eighth Detroit International Salon of Photography. From present indications a record breaking entry may be expected. Last year 942 prints were received from 256 photographers. Of these but 161 prints from 102 contributors were chosen for hanging by the jury of selection. The prints came from twenty-four of the United States and from Canada, Germany, Hungary, Italy, England, France, Roumania, Jugoslavia, Belgium, China and India.

The forthcoming Detroit Salon will be held under the auspices of a new

organization known as the Photographic Salon Society of Detroit. This society represents the same groups which informally supervised the previous Detroit salons. It was formed to insure a continuity of policy and proper coordination of effort in the conduct of the annual exhibition. The member groups of the Salon Society are the Blue Bell Camera Club (of the Michigan Bell Telephone Company), the Detroit Camera Club, the Detroit Edison Camera Club, the Miniature Camera Club of Detroit, the Scarab Club and the Detroit Museum of Art Founders Society. The routine work of the Salon is carried on by the staff of the Detroit Institute of Arts.

Since the first of this year some 2000 entry forms have been mailed to a carefully selected group of the leading photographic exhibitors of the world. A competent jury of selection has been chosen to judge the entries. Four of the jury members are photographers and five are painters. However, four of the five painters also practice photography.

The Photographic Salon Society of Detroit confidently expects to present in June one of America's foremost international photographic exhibitions. It cordially invites the attendance and support of the camera enthusiasts and art lovers of Detroit and the neighboring communities of Michigan and Ontario.

C. B. PHELPS, JR.

CALENDAR FOR APRIL

EXHIBITIONS

- Mar. 17—Apr. 2: Paintings by Carl Hofer and Xaver Fuhr. Apr. 4—Apr. 26: Paintings by Artists of the Great Lakes Region.
 Alger House: Mar. 15—Apr. 16: Paintings and Drawings by Angna Enters.
 Apr. 22—May 7: Grosse Pointe Artists Exhibition.

TUESDAY EVENING LECTURES

Given by the museum staff in cooperation with the Archaeological Society of Detroit, Tuesday evenings at 8:30 in the lecture hall.

- Apr. 4: *The Holy Sepulchre*, by Prof. Kenneth Conant, Harvard University.
 Apr. 11: *Landscape Etching*, by Isabel Weadock.
 Apr. 18: *Christ in Medieval Art*, by Parker Lesley.
 Apr. 25: *Cloth and Wine, the Joyous Crafts of Roman Gaul*, by Adele Coulin Weibel.

LECTURES IN THE GALLERIES

(chairs provided)

- A Survey of the Collections, Thursday afternoons at 3:00; Sundays at 2:30.
 Apr. 6—9: (Easter. No gallery talks.)
 Apr. 13—16: *The Great French Painters of the Nineteenth Century*.
 Apr. 20—23: *Twentieth Century Painting*.
 Apr. 27—30: *Twentieth Century Frescoes and Sculpture*.

SPECIAL TALKS BY THE CURATORS

Friday afternoons at 3:00

- Apr. 7: Good Friday — no lecture.
 Apr. 14: *Painting in the Great Lakes Region*, by E. P. Richardson.
 Apr. 21: *Romanticism in European Art*, by Parker Lesley.
 Apr. 28: *How to Understand and Judge Prints*, by Isabel Weadock.

WHAT TO SEE IN AMERICAN MUSEUMS

A special series of four Tuesday evening lectures for summer travelers in America, given in the lecture hall at 8:30 by John D. Morse.

- May 2: *New England and the Atlantic Cities*.
 May 9: *New York City*.
 May 16: *The Great Lakes*.
 May 23: *The Western Cities*.

Admission to the building and to all lectures and exhibitions is free.