

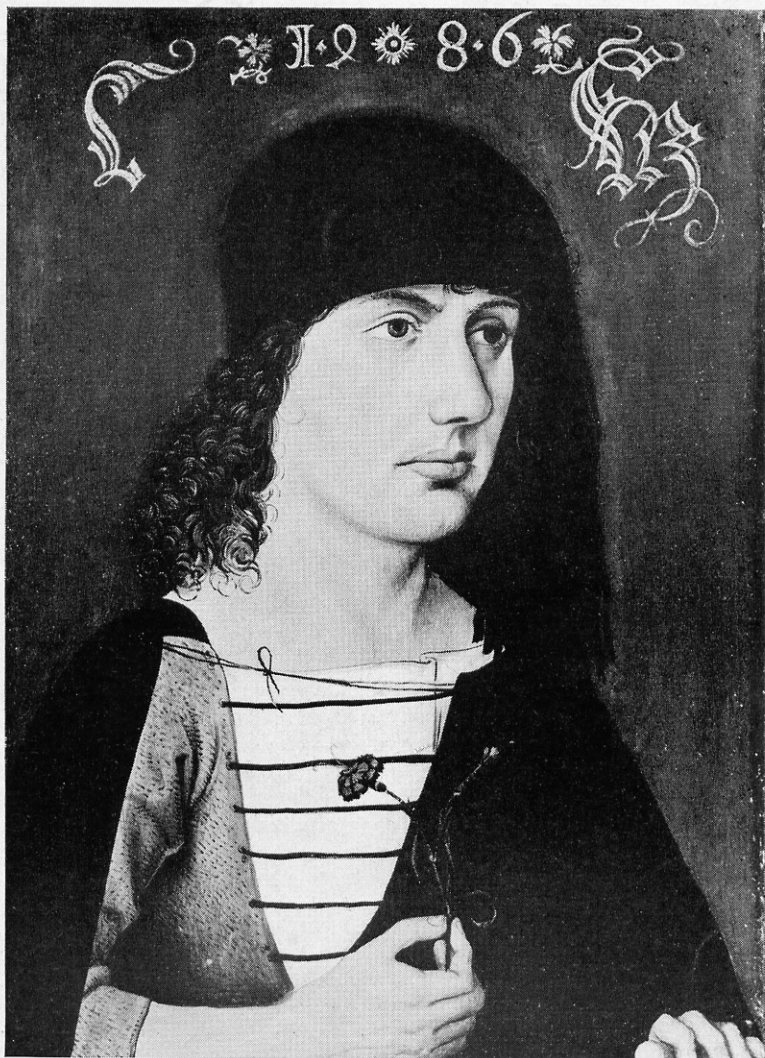
Bulletin

OF THE DETROIT INSTITUTE OF ARTS

VOLUME XX

• MARCH 1941

• NUMBER 6



PORTRAIT OF A YOUNG MAN
BY MICHAEL WOLGEMUT, GERMAN, 1434-1519

*Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Ernest Kanzler
in memory of Dr. and Mrs. Karl Kanzler, 1941*

A PORTRAIT BY DURER'S MASTER MICHAEL WOLGEMUT

WHEN Albrecht Dürer was fifteen years of age, he persuaded his father—who had trained him as a goldsmith—to let him become a painter. He became an apprentice of the most renowned painter of Nuremberg, Michael Wolgemut, (1434-1519) in the year 1486 and stayed with him three years. "God granted me industry," said Dürer in later years, "so that I learned much, though I had a good deal to bear from my fellow students."

He preserved a high regard for his teacher during his life, as is shown by the fact that he painted a portrait of him in 1516 (when Wolgemut was 82 years old) and kept it among his possessions.

Thanks to the generosity of Mr. and Mrs. Ernest Kanzler the museum has acquired a portrait painted by Wolgemut¹ in the very year Dürer entered his studio. It gives an excellent idea of what Dürer could learn from him, and particularly in the nervous long hands, has even something of Dürer's own characteristics. It is a most delightful example of late Gothic portrait painting, combining naive charm and expressive quality with clear design and intense coloring. As the picture is in excellent condition, it reveals the fine color scheme in its original beauty. The dark red carnation—referring probably to the marriage of the young man—stands out vividly from the white chemisette and forms an exquisite contrast to the gray coat visible under the black mantle. The cap with tassels at one side—its shape well known from Dürer's earliest self-portrait of 1484—is likewise black; the background is dark green.

The painting, donated in memory of the late Dr. and Mrs. Karl Kanzler of Saginaw, has been placed on exhibition in the small gallery containing early German paintings, together with two examples of the Cologne School, two religious compositions by the Saxon Lucas Cranach, and three portraits by South German artists, Hans Holbein and Jörg Breu. It is the only work thus far to represent the Nuremberg School, the strongest and most realistic of German schools at this period.

Wolgemut had a large workshop in which—as we learn from contemporary sources—during the years 1480 to 1490 no less than twenty-three altar shrines were produced. These altars consisted partly of carved wood statues, partly of paintings with elaborate gilded framework. He was moreover an industrious designer of woodcuts and raised to a high level the Nuremberg School of book illustration which had previously lagged behind the school of Ulm. The Hartmann Schedel "World Chronicle" of 1493, a copy of which is exhibited in the Gothic Hall of the museum, is one of the most famous books illustrated in Wolgemut's workshop.

In recent times Wolgemut has been overshadowed by his great pupil, especially since his work was confused with the inferior output of his many assistants. But since the Dürer exhibition of 1928 he has again come into his own. With the help of newly discovered documents the personal style of his art could be clearly traced in such important altars as the Hofer altar of 1465 in the Munich Pinakothek, the Strubing altar of 1475, the Zwickau altar of 1479 and two altarpieces in Nuremberg



PORTRAIT OF LEVINUS MEMMINGER
BY MICHAEL WOLGEMUT
Private Swiss Collection (fig. 1)



MEMMINGER ALTARPIECE (detail)
BY MICHAEL WOLGEMUT
Lorenzkirche, Nuremberg (fig. 2)

churches, one in the Kreuzkirche, executed about 1480-85, and the other in the Lorenzkirche of 1488-90. At the same time a number of characteristic portraits could be identified with the help of the portraits of donors in these altarpieces.

Wolgemut was a pupil of Hans Pleydenwurff, who had introduced the Flemish style into Nuremberg, but he developed in a reaction his own realistic style, hard but expressive in design and of a deeper, warmer color scheme in closer relation to the earlier German tradition. At the same time he introduced well observed landscape backgrounds behind his assemblages of the rough and strongly built Nuremberg types, whose costumes show the same angular folds as the wood carvings of his altarpieces.

Our portrait was hidden in an American private collection for many years and has never been published. That it is a work by Michael Wolgemut can easily be demonstrated. It is obviously by the same hand as the Levinus Memminger (fig. 1) in a Swiss private collection (this portrait also was once in an American private collection from which it passed to a collection in Paris and later to Lugano) which is almost a replica of the head of St. Levinus (fig. 2) in the documented altarpiece by Wolgemut in the Lorenzkirche at Nuremberg. Levinus Memminger and his family were the donors of this altarpiece and had themselves represented under the disguise of different saints surrounding the Madonna upon one of the wings.

The posture and design of our portrait are very much like that of the portrait in

Swiss possession and certain details like the ornamental flowers are repeated almost exactly. The types also in the two portraits are so much alike that we are inclined to believe that the young man in our portrait was related to and possibly was the son of the elder Levinus Memminger. This supposition is strengthened by the fact that the Gothic flourishes enframing the date 1486 seem to contain the same initials, L and M.

It is not often possible to connect definitely an artist's name and an exact date with one of the rare German portraits of this period. And as our portrait must have been executed under the very eyes of the young genius, Dürer, it combines a remarkable historic interest with its intrinsic aesthetic value, forming thus an important addition to our small collection of early German art.

W. R. VALENTINER

¹Accession number: 41.1. Height: 13 $\frac{3}{8}$ inches; width: 9 $\frac{1}{4}$ inches. Oil on panel. Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Ernest Kanzler in memory of the late Dr. and Mrs. Karl Kanzler, January 1941.

Literature:

Karl Koch, *Zeitschrift für bildende Kunst*, 1929-30.

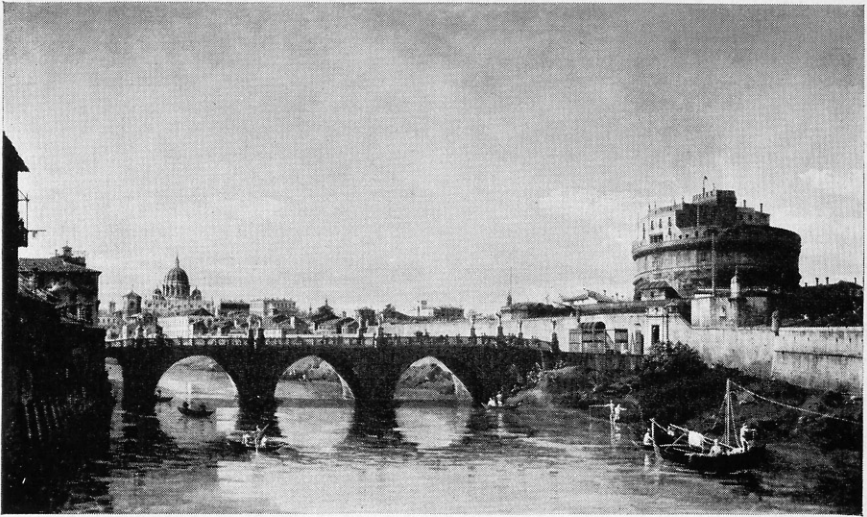
W. Wenke, *Anzeiger des Germanischen Museum, Nürnberg*, 1933.

Bernhard Lutze, *Pantheon*, 1934.

BELLOTTO'S VIEW OF THE TIBER WITH CASTEL S. ANGELO, ROME

THE eighteenth century saw the development in Venice of a school of landscape which was in its time, and still remains, one of the most pleasing and original creations of western landscape. The gift by Mr. and Mrs. Edgar B. Whitcomb of *A View of the Tiber with Castel S. Angelo, Rome*¹ by Bernardo Bellotto (1720-1780) brings into our collection for the first time an important example of this school which will prove, I suspect, one of the most popular as well as one of the most significant gifts made by these generous donors to our collection.

The eighteenth century was an age of topographic "views," which were produced by the artists of every civilized country. The views by the Venetian painters of city-scapes were so topographically exact that they form the perfection of these souvenirs of travel. But their creators were also the heirs to the magnificent Venetian tradition and brought to the solution of this new problem such gifts of style and observation as to create a new chapter in the history of landscape painting. Venice was then the pleasure city of the western world. Travelers from England, France, Germany, Poland and Russia frequented its carnivals, theatres and concerts and carried home views of the city as souvenirs. They did more. The traveled princes of northern Europe, who spread the taste for Italian opera and comedy, architecture and painting from Madrid to St. Petersburg, called Venetian painters to decorate their palaces and to record their own cities in landscape paintings. Thus Tiepolo painted in Wurzburg and Madrid, Canaleto painted views of the Thames, and Bellotto, the creator of our picture, left Italy at the age of twenty-five to spend the remainder of his life painting in Munich, Dresden, Vienna, St. Petersburg and Warsaw.



VIEW OF THE TIBER WITH CASTEL S. ANGELO, ROME
BY BERNARDO BELLOTTO, ITALIAN, 1720-1780

Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Edgar B. Whitcomb, 1940

Bellotto visited Rome in 1740, when he was twenty, just after completing his training under his uncle Canaletto. His Roman subjects are extremely rare. It is noteworthy that although this picture was done immediately after the young painter left Canaletto's studio, it is already in Bellotto's characteristic style. The light is duskier than in his uncle's pictures, the color deeper in tone, and the deep moss green, cold white, grey and warm buff color harmony is Bellotto's distinctive idiom.

Modern taste has confirmed the judgment of the eighteenth century connoisseurs. The Venetian city-scapes are as eagerly sought after and as widely prized today as when Augustus III of Saxony invited Bellotto to Dresden to become his court landscape painter. The *View of the Tiber* which we have acquired illustrates very happily the qualities of the school. A group of great landscape painters had worked in Rome during the preceding century, but so far as Claude, Poussin and Gaspard Dughet used the city itself as a subject, it was in very idealized form. Bellotto's aim was to reveal the character of the city itself—the sober grandeur of its architecture, the magnificent vistas afforded by its river and hills, its air of crumbling age and its serene charm, which all together make it one of the most interesting cities in the world. For him the problem was essentially one of portraiture, the portrait of a city rather than of a human being, and the qualities of his work are those of an exact but imaginative and sensitively painted portrait study. The view is taken from the south bank of the Tiber in the later afternoon, looking downstream past the castle and bridge of S. Angelo to the farther shore, where the great bulk of St. Peter's and the Corte della Pigna are visible rising above the mass of houses. The staffage is observed with an accurate and skilled eye, filling the wide view with an undertone of pleasant Roman life. A coach with scarlet wheels

goes rattling over the bridge, followed by a slow and lumbering hay wagon. The houses overlooking the river have flowers growing in pots on their balconies, at one balcony a woman appears, hanging out her washing. Strollers on the bridge, boatmen on the river, travelers looking down the upper galleries of the Castel, a sentry mounting guard—the eye picks up one detail after another which enlivens the picture and fills it with the movement of the city's life.

But over and above all this interest of character in the portrait, the picture is an esthetic achievement by its mastery of light. The Venetians of the eighteenth century developed skill in painting effects of light which Impressionism itself never surpassed. In this picture the soft tranquil radiance of a Roman afternoon lies across the city and fills the peaceful sky. It bathes the sombre masonry of the Castel S. Angelo, floats like a limpid flood about the distant dome of St. Peter's, is reflected from a hundred points of roof tops, chimneys and statues, and transforms the old, brown, weathered stones of the city by its touch. Bellotto, the heir of the great tradition of Venetian luminosity, saw and did justice to the distinctive beauty of the Roman atmosphere, soft and tranquil as an October day in America, but without the October haze which in our country veils the distance. It is an effect, a moment of nature, which, as one tries to describe it in words, one realizes is distinctively a *painter's* opportunity. Yet how rarely is it found realized as it is here. It is Bellotto's distinction to paint with both a strong sense of the character of nature and an exceptional understanding of space and light, which put him in the small group of the really memorable landscapists.

E. P. RICHARDSON

¹Accession number: 40.166. Height, 34½ inches; width: 58½ inches. Oil on canvas. Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Edgar B. Whitcomb, 1940.

NOTE ON A RECENT ADDITION TO THE COLLECTION

CERTAIN periods in the past have been so rich in good painters that their number seems endless and their works, which would have entitled them to some degree of fame in ordinary times, bear today practically unheard of names. Our museum has a little *Still Life with Sea Shells and Insects* which is a case in point. It is the work of Pieter van der Venne, about whom almost nothing is known except that he was active in The Hague from 1618 to 1656. The one contemporary reference to him mentions him as the eldest son of the well known painter and poet, Adriaen Pietersz van der Venne of Delft, but his dates make it seem more probable that he was a brother. Our picture is one of a pair of still lifes exhibited some years since in Amsterdam; it is signed and dated 1656.¹

This little picture, for all the obscurity of the painter, is a striking example of the imagination which makes seventeenth century still life an inexhaustible field of interest. It consists of a handful of exotic sea shells, brought home by some Dutch seafarer from the tropics, white, coral colored, flecked with gold or dappled with black, or sea-green. They are grouped on a dark purple velvet cloth, and lighted by a single beam of light which falls across the dark sea-green background as if it came filtering down through the depths of the sea. The lustrous brilliant shells shining in the gloom, as if at the bottom of the ocean, is one idea in the

picture. The other is the delicately fantastic contrast afforded by a butterfly which flutters down the beam of light and by some kind of gossamer creature like a shad-fly that is poised wavering on one prong of a twisted shell. The contrast between the creatures of the air and of the sea bottom, between the hard, shining permanence of the shells and the fragile insects, is an idea that would occur only to an original and interesting mind. It gives one the impulse to salute the unknown, skilful, forgotten painter whose delicate imagination comes to us like a ghost across the centuries.

E. P. RICHARDSON

¹Gift of the Founders Society, General Membership and Donations Fund, 1939. Accession number: 39.671. Exhibited: P. de Boer, Amsterdam, *Helsche en Fluweelen Brueghel Tentoonstelling*, 1934, No. 339.

AN EARLY ITALIAN WRITING TABLE

AN Italian Renaissance writing table¹, recently purchased by the Detroit Institute of Arts, is a distinguished addition to the Alger House collection, not for its beauty alone, but for its rarity as a type, and for the remarkable high quality of the cabinet-making. Its exact date and origin are hard to determine. The simplicity and reticence of its form, the almost shy appearance of ornament, the light-toned walnut, the combined use of carving and *intarsia* (or inlay), all suggest the period of transition between the Early and High Renaissance, and approximately the year 1500. The ornamentation of Florentine furniture is always conceived on broad constructive lines, closely integrated with and expressive of the furniture form. The disre-



WRITING TABLE
ITALIAN, ABOUT 1500
Purchased by the Detroit Institute of Arts, 1939

gard of that principle in the design of our table and the absence of subtlety in the relation of carving to inlay suggests that it is of provincial origin, perhaps from North Italy. The influence of Florence, however, is apparent in the classic details of acanthus leaf and rosette volutes. Perhaps designed as a desk, the table offers one of the earliest examples of the use of drawers in European furniture. The great charm of the design lies in the integration of an almost primitively simple construction—two superimposed box-like compartments supported on runner-feet—and the extreme delicacy of the modest carving and the refined use of moldings.

PERRY T. RATHBONE

¹Accession number: 39.657. Length: 53¼ inches; Width: 34¼ inches; Height: 32¾ inches.

Calendar of Events for March

EXHIBITIONS

The Detroit Institute of Arts:

Through March 16—*Paintings from the Whitney Museum of American Art*. (Admission 10c, Thursdays free.)

Alger House:

March 7 through March 30—*The First Century of Print-Making, 1400-1500, Woodcuts and Metalcuts from the Collection of Mr. Lessing J. Rosenwald, Philadelphia*. (Admission free.)

TUESDAY EVENING LECTURES

Given by the Museum Staff in cooperation with the Archaeological Society of Detroit and the Detroit Chapter of the American Institute of Architects, Tuesday evenings at 8:30 in the lecture hall of the Art Institute. Admission free.

March 4: *Twentieth Century American Painters*, by Clyde H. Burroughs.

March 11: *Allston and the American Dreamers*, by E. P. Richardson.

March 18: *The Religious Focus of Spanish Painting*, by Harold E. Wethey, University of Michigan.

March 25: *Cathedrals in France*, by Clarence Ward, Oberlin College.

FRIDAY AFTERNOON COURSE

Given by Adèle Coulin Weibel on *Islamic Art* at 3:30 P. M.

March 7: *The Great Moguls of India*.

Given by Isabel Weadock on *Great Epochs of Print-Making* at 3:30 P. M. Admission charge for course of eight lectures, \$2.00; for Members of the Founders Society, \$1.00; single lectures, 50c; for Members, 25c. (Continued through April and May.)

March 14: *Popular Art from the Printing Press—The Rise of Print-Making*.

March 21: *Early Italian Print-Makers—Mantegna*.

March 28: *The Gothic Style in Prints—Schongauer and Dürer*.

SATURDAY AFTERNOON RADIO TALKS

Given by John D. Morse on *The Human Side of Art* each Saturday afternoon over Station WWJ at 1:15 P. M. throughout March.

SUNDAY AFTERNOON TALKS

Given at 2:30 P. M. in the galleries, where chairs are provided.

March 2: *Artists of the Andes*, by Marion Leland Heath.

March 9: *"The Wedding Dance" by Pieter Bruegel*, by Joyce Black Gnau.

March 16: *Homer and Eakins*, by John D. Morse.

March 23: *The Art of India*, by Marion Leland Heath.

March 30: *Rembrandt*, by Joyce Black Gnau.

HOURS OF ADMISSION

The Detroit Institute of Arts, 5200 Woodward Avenue at Kirby, is open free daily except Mondays and Christmas Day. Visiting hours: Tuesday, Thursday, and Friday, 1 to 5 and 7 to 10; Wednesday, 1 to 5; Saturday, 9 to 5; Sunday, 2 to 6. The Alger House Museum, 32 Lake Shore Road, Grosse Pointe Farms, a branch museum for Italian Renaissance Art and temporary exhibitions, is open free daily except Mondays from 1 to 5. Telephones: Detroit Institute of Arts, COLUMBIA 0360; Alger House Museum, TUXedo 2-3888; Detroit Museum of Art Founders Society, COLUMBIA 4274.