

Bulletin

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RUNNING YOUTH

BY FRANCESCO DA SANT' AGATA, ITALIAN, EARLY 16TH CENTURY

Gift of Mrs. Edsel B. Ford, 1937

A BRONZE STATUETTE BY FRANCESCO DA SANT' AGATA

IN THE gallery of Venetian High Renaissance painting at the museum stands a superb bronze statuette of a running youth, labeled a *Niobid*¹, scarcely more than a foot in height, remarkable for its grace and elegance, for the freedom yet certainty of its execution, and for a breadth of taste which only a great master could have as an endowment. The figure, generously presented to the museum by Mrs. Edsel B. Ford a short time ago, is a rare work by the Paduan sculptor, Francesco da Sant' Agata, one of the most interesting artists of the Renaissance in the small scale bronzes and boxwood figurines for which he is known.

Our sole documentary knowledge of Francesco da Sant' Agata, the dates of whose birth and death are mysteries, is based on a reference by a contemporary writer of the early sixteenth century, P. Bernardino Scardenone, who in his work entitled *De antiquitate urbis Patavii*, published in 1560, describes as a masterpiece a "Herculeum buxum Francisci argentarii Patavini" and mentions that it was carved from life by Francesco da Santagata in 1520, the only definite date which we have in connection with the artist's life or work. This small boxwood figure of Hercules² is now preserved in the Wallace Collection in London and is also the only signed work by the artist so far known; on the plinth appears the signature OPUS FRANCISCI AVRIFICIS P., which would indicate that the artist, like so many other sculptors of the period, was a gold- or silversmith by training.

The Detroit bronze is particularly interesting since it is related to a number of similar and well authenticated works by Francesco da Sant' Agata. The Wallace Collection in London, the Louvre, and the Brunswick Museum each possess versions in bronze of a naked youth striding forward with arms upraised in an attitude of grief, the torso essentially the same as in our figure which, by contrast, is represented as running with his left leg bent upward and the position of the arms somewhat altered. The figure in Detroit is identical in pose with another replica also in the Brunswick Museum. Bode in his monumental work on Italian bronzes³ reproduces both the striding and the running versions of the figure and points out that the example in Brunswick of the running youth—which applies likewise to the hitherto unpublished bronze in Detroit—is the same figure as that of Antaeus which appears in Francesco da Sant' Agata's celebrated bronze group representing the struggle of Hercules with the young giant and now in the Widener Collection in Philadelphia. Bode suggests that this group is an earlier work by the master in view of the rather undeveloped modelling and attenuation of the muscles, which, in the boxwood figure of Hercules of 1520, are maturely modelled and more powerfully realized. It is therefore likely that the bronze donated by Mrs. Ford was most probably executed prior to 1520 and sometime during the first two decades of the sixteenth century, for it corresponds so exactly with the earlier figure of Antaeus in the Widener group.

One may account for the number of replicas among Francesco's work by the fact that he was less interested in subject matter than he was in idealizing nude types in a series of repeated incidental poses. As in our beautiful bronze, the

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motive of the naked youth merely constitutes an excuse for representing the body in an interesting and graceful attitude and it is of little importance to know whether the figure was intended to hold imaginarily in his upraised hands a horn or a flute, or whether the artist had in mind a Satyr or a Niobid based on some classical model.

Francesco da Sant' Agata in such a distinguished example of his work as the *Naked Youth Running* embodies the most arresting qualities of Renaissance sculpture. In his conscious definiteness of purpose and sensitive feeling for form, he has selected an appropriate action to convey with full freedom and mastery the first blossoming of man's physical power. The unbroken flow of delicate, slender outlines is partly achieved by the arms, hands, and leg, which are lithely upraised away from the body, and also by avoiding wherever possible the interruption of intersecting contours. The separate portions of the whole are so treated that the figure, enhanced by a rich dark greenish patina, may be viewed as an entity with equal pleasure and to best advantage from any angle, which is indeed one of the true signs of a masterpiece in the realm of bronze sculpture in the round and on a reduced scale.

As we may see, Francesco da Sant' Agata furthermore succeeds in capturing through the medium of the human body, deeply perceived and sincerely appreciated as a vehicle of beauty, something of the calm repose of ancient sculpture. On the other hand, his work in general is independent of outside influences and, unlike Pollaiuolo, he does not exaggerate the muscular development of the body, preferring to idealize and establish more quietly in his bronze figures a canon of perfection comparable to the reserve of Greek sculpture in the finest tradition.

JOHN S. NEWBERRY

¹Accession number: 37.148. Height: 13½ inches. Gift of Mrs. Edsel B. Ford, 1937. Formerly in the collection of the Marquis de Pompidan, Paris.

²Of this figure there exist two replicas in bronze, one in the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford, and another in the Louvre in Paris. Similarly, there are bronze replicas in the Morgan Library and Frick collection, New York, of another boxwood figure by Francesco da Sant' Agata of a *St. Sebastian* in the Kaiser-Friedrich Museum, Berlin.

³W. Bode, *The Italian Bronze Statuettes of the Renaissance*, 1907-8, vol. I, p. 40, pl. LXXVIII-LXXXI.

EVENING BY CLAUDE LORRAIN

THE landscape of *Evening* by Claude Lorraine (1600-1682) given to the museum by Mr. and Mrs. Edsel B. Ford is the second important addition to our baroque gallery this year and (like the Bellotto which was published last month) it also is a landscape of exceptional quality and historic interest. It is the subtlest and most poetic example we have acquired of the great seventeenth century school of classic landscape (one of the greatest our civilization has produced), and is in addition the earliest signed and dated painting known by Claude Lorraine. The signature *CLAUDIO IV 1631* antedates by eight years any dated painting by him hitherto known and offers welcome information upon Claude's rather obscure early years.¹

This picture is the first of those hymns to the beauty and splendor of the sun which Claude was to create and it is already upon the true line of his development. But its simple, direct and lyric note is very different from his later work. There is none of the splendor of his pictures of the '40's, the harbor scenes crowded with temples and palaces lit by the setting sun, which were the impression upon Claude's imagination of the grandeurs and the pomps of ancient Rome whose



EVENING

BY CLAUDE LORRAIN, FRENCH, 1600-1682

Purchased by the Founders Society, Edsel B. Ford Fund, 1941

ghost still haunted the silent plains and shores he knew. Neither is there the serene and often elegiac note of the landscapes of his late years, filled with reveries upon the past and inhabited by people from the vanished worlds of history or myth. This picture is a record of the young artist's delight in the beauty of the countryside near Rome, in whose soft sunlight and noble perspectives of river and mountain he was discovering the purpose of his life. If the past is in this picture, it is in the form of the timeless simplicities of the pastoral life of the Italian peasant and in its actual presence before him in the ruined stonework under his feet and the ancient tower which met his eyes upon the hilltop. Later his imagination called up the palace from those stones, re-erected a Roman temple where that Gothic tower now stands, and made an ideal antiquity again inhabit its old scenes.

Claude Lorrain was born of humble origin in an obscure village, Chamagne, near Mirecourt, in Lorraine. His family name was Gellée but the nickname "Lorraine" was already attached to him when he first appears at nineteen in a Roman document and it has long since displaced the family name. Left an orphan in his early 'teens, Claude worked for a year with an elder brother who was a wood engraver in Freiburg on the other side of the Rhine, and then went to Italy in the company of another relative, a lace merchant.

He studied in Rome under the painter, Agostino Tassi, who was a pupil of Paul Bril and of whom we know little except that he did decorative landscape frescoes in the manner of Bril. A well-to-do young German painter named Sandrart, who came to Rome in 1628, met Claude when they were both sketching at Tivoli and became an intimate friend. He is authority for the statement that Claude had been apprenticed as a pastry cook and took service with Tassi in that capacity.

It is not impossible that the penniless art student performed household duties of this sort in return for board and lodging. It was not uncommon at that day for the French art students in Rome to do so, as some American art students at the Academy in our time get restaurant jobs for their board. But at nineteen Claude appears in a document as Tassi's assistant in painting the walls of the villa of Cardinal Montalto at Bagnaia, near Viterbo. Another biographer says he also studied with a German painter of perspectives and views, Gottfried Walls, in Naples, but that is all that is known of this episode.

At twenty-five Claude returned to France by way of Venice and Bavaria. But he found Lorraine uncongenial and returned in 1627 to Rome to spend there the remainder of his genial and peaceful life. The only important episode of his two years in the north was that he came into contact at Nancy with Callot and was apparently inspired by him to take up etching. An etching of 1630 is Claude's first dated work.

When Claude arrived in Rome the second time in 1627 he continued the practice of decorative painting and is known to have done landscape wall paintings in two Roman palaces. But in the meantime he discovered his own vein of landscape painting and within ten years he had attracted the patronage not only of the French Ambassador, Monsieur de Béthune but the great Italian churchmen whose taste was at this age making Rome over into the beautiful city we know. Cardinal Bentivoglio, who had been Van Dyck's patron, was so impressed by his work that he purchased two pictures and induced the great Barberini Pope, Urban VIII, to commission four works. One of these, *The Village Dance*, now in Louvre, signed and dated 1639, has hitherto been the earliest dated painting. But five years before this, in 1634, Claude was apparently already famous. Sebastian Bourdon, his adventurous fellow countryman, arrived at Rome in this year and in order to support himself, made for a Roman picture seller copies of well known paintings in which task he was remarkably skilful. He one day visited Claude, who showed him a landscape on which he was then working. Bourdon returned home and produced so perfect a copy from memory that Claude was enraged by the deception. It was probably the possibility of similar episodes that led Claude later (c.1648) to begin the unique record of his compositions, the *Liber Veritatis*, now in the collection of the Duke of Devonshire.

The Detroit painting, signed and dated 1631, shows what kind of work it was that first began to attract attention to Claude. It is at once more lyrical and more realistic than the later works we are familiar with. Although the tone of reverie and pastorale and the highly conscious composition of light are already there, there is a simplicity about the picture that has the quality of direct personal experience. We know from Claude's sketches and from the literary records that he spent these early years in an eager study of nature, setting out before daybreak and returning after dark with his sketches of the landscape about Rome. Sandart says that at this time he was most interested in the light of early morning and in twilight. He lived in what is still the artists' and tourists' quarter of the city near the Piazza di Spagna. From here the road through the Porta del Popolo up the left bank of the Tiber took him quickly into country that offered the long perspectives of river and mountain that appear in this view and which became a constant element in his work. One of his favorite nearby sketching grounds was also just across the river in the grounds of the Villa Madama, where he is known to have done a large painting full of studies of tree forms which he kept in his studio all his life. It is tempting to connect with this garden a drawing in the Teyler Museum, Haarlem, of a woodland path in which stands a statue of the three graces, on the back of

which are four quick studies of a landscape composition that appear to be preliminary studies for our picture.²

The realism of the landscape in our picture and the genre-like quality of the figures are related in character to the early etchings of 1630-35³ and to the two paintings in the Louvre, the *Harbor* and the *Campo Vaccino*, which Claude did somewhere about this time for Monsieur de Béthune. These early works show that Claude's art (unlike Poussin's which sprang from the Italian tradition of heroic landscape) sprang from nature. But its stately quality, its note of reverly and splendor, was also the tone of the conscious and thoughtful taste of the seventeenth century Roman atmosphere. What Claude's relation was to this Roman atmosphere—not only to the landscapists of the preceding generation like Elsheimer (d.1610) and Paul Bril (d.1627)—but to the young artists of about his own age who were in Rome, is a question I cannot go into here. But it is one of the most interesting historical questions upon which our picture may shed some light. Claude's fellow countryman, Poussin (in Rome from 1624), and a group of Dutch and Flemish artists, Poelenburgh (in Rome 1617-22), Bartolomeus Breenbergh (in Rome 1620-22), Herman van Swanevelt (in Rome 1624-37), Pieter van Laer (in Rome 1623-39), were all there with Claude, each playing some part in the formation of a new conception of landscape.

E. P. RICHARDSON

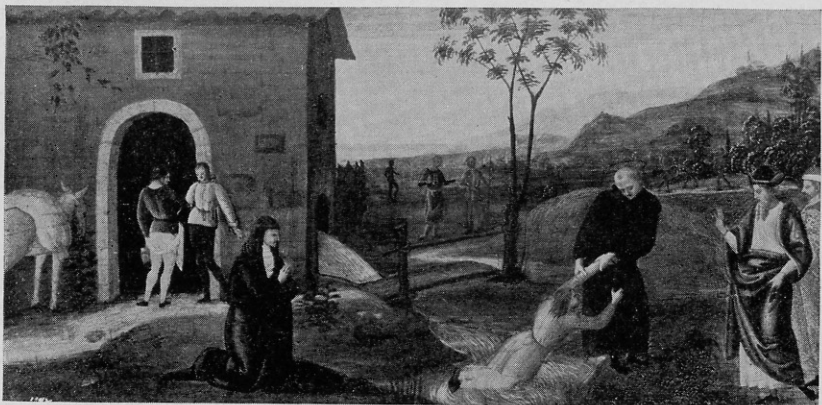
¹Accession number: 41.10. Canvas: Height: 30¾ inches; width: 45½ inches. Signed in the center foreground, *CLAUDIO IV 1631*. Collection: Lord Grenville, Dropmore, Bucks. Gift of Mr. Edsel B. Ford, 1941. An early drawing in the Teyler Museum, Haarlem, of a woodland path in which stands a statue of the three graces [S.10] has on the reverse four sketches for a landscape composition which appear to be preliminary studies for this picture. The drawing, No. 12, in the *Liber Veritatis* is also related to our composition but is octagonal in shape. It may be the record of another similar composition now lost. Or it may be that, since Claude only began to put this record together about 1648, his memory of this early picture was inexact, or that he used for the record an old study in which he had adapted the same composition for one of the wall decorations he was still doing at that time. Smith in his *Catalogue Raisonné* (Vol. VIII, p. 200) is apparently describing the drawing in the *Liber Veritatis* rather than a picture he had seen, and I think borrowed the measurements from the preceding No. 11 on the assumption that these two octagonal compositions must have formed a pair. On the basis of his knowledge, that was not an unreasonable assumption, for the octagonal picture from No. 11 was actually then in the collection of the poet Samuel Rogers in London. It does not help us, however, in determining the relationship of our picture to No. 12.

²Reproduced in A. M. Hind, *The Drawings of Claude Lorraine*, 1925, plates 3 and 22. Hind's suggestion that these drawings are for a later composition, No. 38 in the *Liber Veritatis*, was made before our picture was known. But I do not wish to mention this admirable study only to disagree with it, for all lovers of Claude, and especially myself, are much indebted to it.

³Cf. the early etchings, *The Flight into Egypt* (RD.1), *Rape of Europa* (RD.22), and *Campo Vaccino* (RD.23).

A NOTE ON THE TWO RAPHAEL PREDELLA PANELS

IN a recent number of *L'Arte*¹ Professor A. Venturi published under the name of Raphael the two predella panels in our museum representing scenes from the legend of St. Nicholas of Tolentino². The famous Italian scholar has found in a private collection at Rome two other panels of the same size which seem to complete the predella from which our panels came. These newly discovered panels contain episodes from the life of St. Augustine, one his baptism by St. Ambrose, the other his dispute with the doctors. Signore Venturi believes that the predella belonged to a lost altarpiece by Raphael representing the *Madonna Enthroned with*



AN INCIDENT FROM THE LIFE OF ST. NICHOLAS OF TOLENTINO
BY RAPHAEL, ITALIAN, 1483-1520
Gift of Ralph H. Booth, 1927

Saints among whom St. Augustine and St. Nicholas of Tolentino would have taken a most prominent place.

The history of our two small paintings is a curious one. The first was acquired under the name of Perugino, Raphael's master, in an Italian private collection. It represents the amusing story of St. Nicholas, who was a vegetarian, lying sick in bed and bringing to life two chickens from a chicken pie which the monks had brought him. The brethren had thought that it would do him good to eat something substantial during his illness, but the Saint smelled the meat, blessed the dish and the chickens became alive and flew away.

The story is rarely represented in early art, for Saint Nicholas was canonized only a short time before Raphael's birth. One of the first altarpieces devoted to the story of his life was that ordered of Raphael in 1500, when the artist was seventeen years of age. This altar, representing the coronation of Saint Nicholas of Tolentino was destroyed by an earthquake in 1789, but fragments of it are preserved in the galleries in Naples (half length figure of God-the-Father and the Virgin) and Brescia (an angel). The style and technique of these fragments agree perfectly with the panels in our museum, the second one of which was found in a New York auction a few years later for a small price under the name of Eusebio di San Giorgio, an unimportant follower of Perugino and Raphael. The curiously strong green underpaint, especially in this panel, and the vivid cinnabar in the lighter part reminds one very much of the colors of the Naples fragments.

The second panel represents Saint Nicholas saving the life of a child who fell into the brook near a mill. Venturi points out, as very Raphaellesque, the charming scene to the left where two miller boys are in conversation in the dark doorway of the mill, in front of which a donkey loaded with a sack of grain is waiting.

Our two predella panels, after they were published as probably belonging to Raphael's early altarpiece (Friedländer *Festschrift* 1926) were exhibited under the name of Raphael. While some scholars were in favor of the attribution, others were skeptical about it, so that the labels were changed again and read for some time "attributed to Raphael"; then, "Raphael's workshop." After Venturi's publication, the question seems to be now decided in favor of Raphael.

I believe, however, that even if two of the predella panels contain stories from the life of Saint Augustine and not of Saint Nicholas of Tolentino, there is no

reason why they should belong to an unknown altarpiece of a *Madonna Enthroned with Saints* rather than to the destroyed altarpiece of 1500. In the first place, the predella might well have survived the shock of the earthquake which threw down the tall free-standing altarpiece; for the panels were set into the strong oblong box or foundation block upon which the retable stood. They were not only closest to the ground but surrounded by stout reinforced panelling. Secondly, St. Augustine actually appeared in this altarpiece of 1500. From the original drawings of Raphael for this altarpiece (which are preserved) we know the composition well: in the center stood Saint Nicholas of Tolentino upon the figure of Satan, accompanied by angels at both sides. Above him in the clouds appeared three half-length figures holding crowns above his head; in the center, God-the-Father; to the left, the Virgin; to the right, Saint Augustine.

This last figure, therefore, is the only Saint who appeared in the composition besides Saint Nicholas himself. It was quite consistent that the stories of the predella should be divided between the legends of these two Saints, especially as the church for which the altarpiece was ordered was dedicated to Saint Augustine (S. Agostino at Citta di Castello).

W. R. VALENTINER

¹A. Venturi, *l'Arte*, Vol. XLIII, p. 134, 1940.

²Described: W. R. Valentiner in *Bulletin of the Detroit Institute of Arts*, Vol. VII, December 1925; *idem* in *Festschrift für Max J. Friedländer*, Leipzig, 1927, p. 224. Accession numbers: 25.146 and 27.10. Height: 10¼ inches; width: 20½ inches. Oil on panel.

Calendar of Events for April

EXHIBITIONS

The Detroit Institute of Arts:

April 1 through May 31—*Masterpieces of Art from Two World's Fairs*. (Admission 25c, Thursdays free.)

Alger House:

April 12 through April 27—*Work by the Grosse Pointe Art Association*. (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. Three illustrated lectures will be presented in April on *Great Artists in the Exhibition of Masterpieces of Art*. Admission free. (Continued in May.)

April 8: *Masterpieces of the Early Flemish and German Schools*, by Adèle Coulin Weibel.

April 15: *Dutch Painting—Hals and His Circle*, by E. P. Richardson.

April 22: *Dutch Painting—Rembrandt and His Circle*, by Isabel Weadock.

FRIDAY AFTERNOON COURSE

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 in May.)

April 4: *The Renaissance—The Little Masters*.

April 18: *The Eighteenth Century—French Portrait Engravers*.

April 25: *Rembrandt—The Master Etcher*.

GALLERY TALKS

Given daily (except Monday) at 2:30 P. M. in the galleries, where chairs are provided; also Thursday and Friday evenings at 8:30; for Members of the Founders Society on Monday, April 7 and 21, at 11 A. M. (Admission by Membership Card, north entrance.)

SATURDAY AFTERNOON RADIO TALKS

Given by John D. Morse on the *Masterpieces of Art Exhibition* each Saturday afternoon over Station WWJ at 1:15 P. M. throughout April.

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.