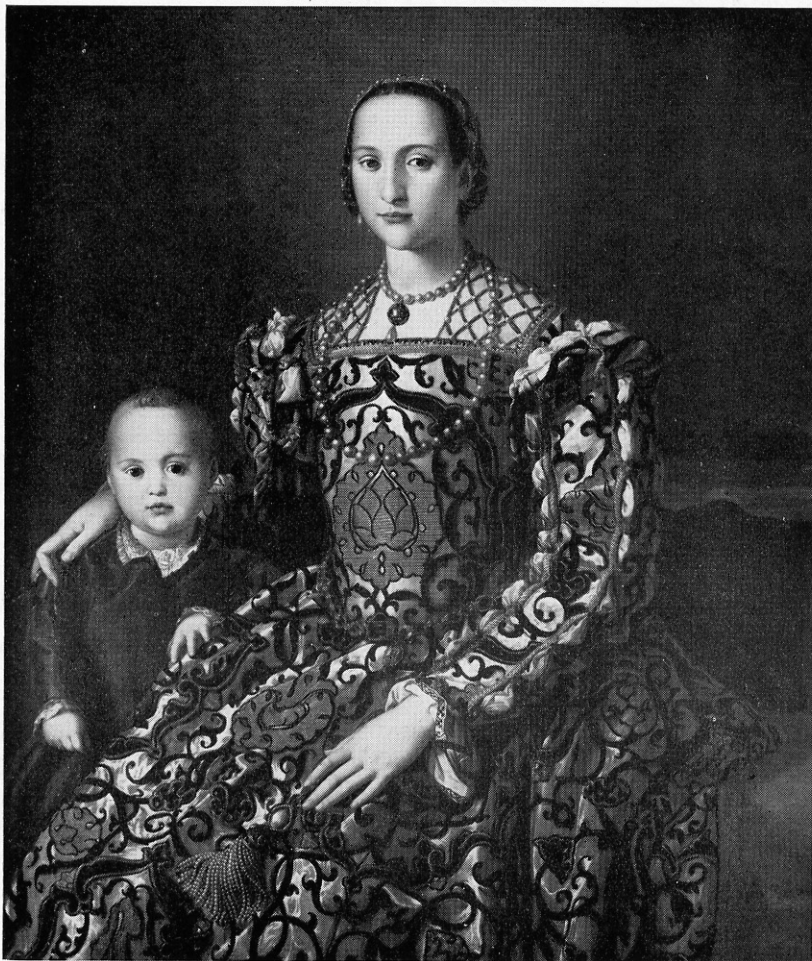


**THE DETROIT INSTITUTE OF ARTS
OF THE CITY OF DETROIT**

Bulletin

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PORTRAIT OF ELEANORA DA TOLEDO AND DON GARCIA BY AGNOLO BRONZINO, ITALIAN, 1503-1572. *Gift of Mrs. Ralph Harman Booth in memory of her husband, Ralph Harman Booth, 1942.*

ELEANORA DA TOLEDO BY BRONZINO

THE portrait of Eleanora da Toledo by Agnolo Bronzino (1503-1572),¹ one of the outstanding paintings of the Ralph H. Booth Collection and a gift of Mrs. Booth in memory of her husband, is a splendid addition to the gallery of the Florentine Renaissance. One could hardly imagine a more decorative and brilliant painting of the period when Florentine art was ruled by Michelangelo's powerful plastic formulas as despotically as Florence itself was ruled by the despotism of Cosimo I, the first Grand Duke of Tuscany. It was the Grand Duke Cosimo, the husband of Eleanora da Toledo, who, in conformity with the tendency towards absolute monarchy in other European countries, changed the Florentine republic into a monarchy by brutally suppressing his political enemies. But at the same time he raised Tuscany to the rank of the leading powers in European politics. He married Eleanora purely for political reasons. She was the only child of the influential Viceroy of Naples, Don Pedro da Toledo, Marques of Villafranca, and brought to Cosimo the wealth which the poor but ambitious Medici needed to build up his army for his protection. Eleanora also gave him six children during the first eight years of their marriage. She died at an early age, in 1562, shortly after she had lost the child who stands beside her in this portrait, her second son Garcia.

The Grand Duchess' wealth is shown by her costly dress of gold and black brocade as well as by the jewels about her neck, on her snood and even on the gold belt. The painting of this costume is a masterpiece of simplified design and plastic modelling. Compared to it, the faces mean little. How important the costume was to the Duchess is shown by the fact that she wished to wear it even in death. When the Medici tombs were opened in 1857, it was found that some of them had lost their name plates; but Eleanora da Toledo's tomb was identified by the fact that she wore the same dress that we see in our picture.

The composition radiates an impressive dignity but as it is a dignity intended to impress those who are fond of social discipline and glamour, it lacks human feeling. The Spanish temperament of Eleanora, her consort's pleasure in court ceremony, Bronzino's frozen style, all worked to the same end: to produce a work perfect in its unity of character, color and design. It is also a cold, hard and artificial art, but this Bronzino has in common with the other court painters of the late Renaissance, like Coello in Spain, the Clouets in France, and Antonio Mor in the Netherlands. Bronzino, however, paved the way for others. He was the first and perhaps the best among them and attained a grandeur of style which the others never quite reached.

The composition of our painting is well known from the similar painting in the Uffizi, mentioned by Vasari as a work which Bronzino executed for the ducal family. It was painted about 1555 after the artist had finished the chapel of Eleanora da Toledo in the Palazzo Vecchio. The present picture has been described in McComb's excellent biography of Bronzino as a good atelier copy.² It is no doubt a second version after the Uffizi painting. It lacks the ample use of the costly lapis lazuli employed in the Uffizi painting, in the blue costume of the boy and in the blue background, and which we also find in the other example of Bronzino owned

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by the museum, the portrait of Costanza da Sommaia. One cannot say, however, that this is a disadvantage. Our portrait is built up entirely in gray and brown tones (the boy's costume brown, the background gray) with a few spots of red forming a color harmony at least as pleasing as that in the Uffizi composition. These changes, as well as the differences in design from the Uffizi version—the back of the chair has a different outline, the corner of the table penetrates farther into the composition, more of the Grand Duchess' dress is visible in the lower part of the picture—indicate that Bronzino himself had a hand in the execution of the painting. That he had helpers in the execution of the detail is very likely. But this may be said also of most other court portraits which exist in more than one version, for they were ordered from the artist as gifts for other courts. No one in the sixteenth century would have questioned them as original works by Bronzino and only our critical age tries to differentiate between his work and that of the trained assistants who worked in his spirit, an almost impossible, and in our case useless, attempt; for a busy studio like Bronzino's undoubtedly employed the help of assistants to a considerable extent, even in the first versions of portraits. It is therefore better to enjoy the painting as it is in all its gorgeous splendour without going too deeply into these fruitless questions.

The painting comes from the collection of the Duke of Hamilton at Hamilton Palace and is mentioned by Waagen, who says: "This is in every respect one of the finest portraits I know by the master."³

W. R. VALENTINER

¹Accession Number 42.57. Panel; Height: 47½ inches; Width: 39¼ inches. Gift of Mrs. Ralph Harman Booth in memory of her husband, Ralph Harman Booth, 1942.

²Arthur McComb, *Agnolo Bronzino*, Cambridge, Mass., 1928, p. 90.

³Gustav F. Waagen, *Art Treasures in Great Britain*, 1857, Vol. III, p. 305.

A RIZA-I-ABBASI SILK

WITH the renaissance in art of the Safavid dynasty in Persia, as a little earlier with the renaissance in Italy, the artists, especially the painters, emerge from the anonymity of long centuries. But they lack a Vasari and casual references give only scant information concerning the life and activity of the men whose names are mentioned here and there. Modern research has succeeded in elucidating the *oeuvre* of at least the leading spirits. Now we find at the side of the Shah, his court painter, surrounded by a bevy of assistants trying to emulate and imitate the master's slightest peculiarities. Three great artists lend their luster to the reign of the three greatest rulers of the dynasty. Bihzad, the "Marvel of the Age," enjoyed the patronage of Shah Ismail (1502-1524), its founder; Sultan Muhammad gave lessons in painting to Shah Tahmasp (1524-1576); and Riza-i-Abbasi became director of the academy of painting at Ispahan, founded by Shah Abbas (1587-1628).

The art of Riza-i-Abbasi is well represented in the Institute's collection. Several miniatures, lent by a Detroit private collection and Dr. W. R. Valentiner, show him as an amiable painter of portrait and genre. A pair of lacquer doors¹ said to come from the royal palace at Ispahan, and a lacquered mirror case,² painted on the outside with a genre scene, on the inside with flowers and a bird, account for the activity of at least one group of craftsmen in the workshops attached to the academy. Of these the most important were the shops of the weavers whose activities greatly impressed the visitors from Europe: Chardin, Tavernier, Barbaro.



Fig. 1. YOUNG MAN DRINKING WINE, SILK CLOTH, PERSIAN, SEVENTEENTH CENTURY A.D. *Gift of the Founders Society, Octavia Bates Fund. 1942.*



Fig. 4. YOUNG MAN WITH A BOUQUET OF FLOWERS, SIGNED AQA RIZA. *Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris.*

Through the acquisition of a rare silk fabric,³ Riza-i-Abbasi is shown as one of the truly great designers for the medium of the loom (Fig. 1).

Probably as a result of the coveted Chinese album leaves, single page miniatures became the outstanding fashion at the Safavid court. From the time of Shah Tahmasp and Sultan Muhammad onward portraits of elegant young men predominate; more and more the growing decadence is felt in these over-delicate beings, standing, or seated on a little knoll or a tabouret, and holding a falcon or a musical instrument, a flower or a cup of wine. This type of idealized conventional portrait was brought to an incredible refinement by Riza-i-Abbasi and his school. His influence dominates the entire seventeenth century and makes itself felt even in the last weak products of the eighteenth century. Sometimes his figures are inspired by the mannerisms of the young attachés of the European embassies. Most delightful of these is the portrait of a Portuguese youth⁴ in the collection of Dr. W. R. Valentiner (Fig. 2). Clad in a purple European jacket and green breeches, with high laced tan boots and wide beaver hat, he obviously apes the Persian elegants in details of costume—collar of cloth of gold and knotted sash—and in his attitude

of *insouciance*. His jug is a Ming blue and white gallipot, the cup from which the little dog laps wine is Chinese too; but for himself he prefers a European stem glass. He reclines against two cushions, one of russet silk with aquamarine clouds and phoenix, the other of dark blue silk with a young man in scarlet tunic leaning against a grey rock, the background filled with a golden cloud and a weeping willow. The cushion may be embroidered, for needlework at the Safavid court was highly accomplished, or it may be a gold brocade.

The cushion of the day-dreaming lady (Fig. 3) is certainly made from a woven silk; it might even be a pendant to the actual silk cloth of the Institute's collection for the young woman is certainly painted as a pendant to some male exquisite. This miniature⁵ is a masterpiece of color rhythm: a green jacket with aubergine lining is worn over a yellow tunic, open to show the very thin white chemise. From the green bonnet floats a long red scarf, the trousers are sage green, the golden slippers lined with red. Added to this is the dark blue and scarlet of the cushion, the dark red of the wine in the crystal flask and gold goblet and the light red of the pomegranates, set off against the aspen tree, the willow boughs and little plants, all painted in diverse tones of gold.

Yet even more beautiful is the textile fragment lately acquired. We quote from Dr. Ackerman's perfect description: "One of the most remarkable of the Safavid personage textiles, for its combination of style and precision of drawing, beauty of plant accessories, and freshness and originality of color, is a rose-ground compound cloth with the figure of a seated young aristocrat, drinking. This charming dandy is even closer to the Bibliothèque Nationale drawing of an 'Adolescent' (Fig. 4) than the falconer on the velvet (of the Cleveland Museum of Art), though



Fig. 2. YOUNG PORTUGUESE WITH DOG. *Collection of Dr. W. R. Valentiner.*

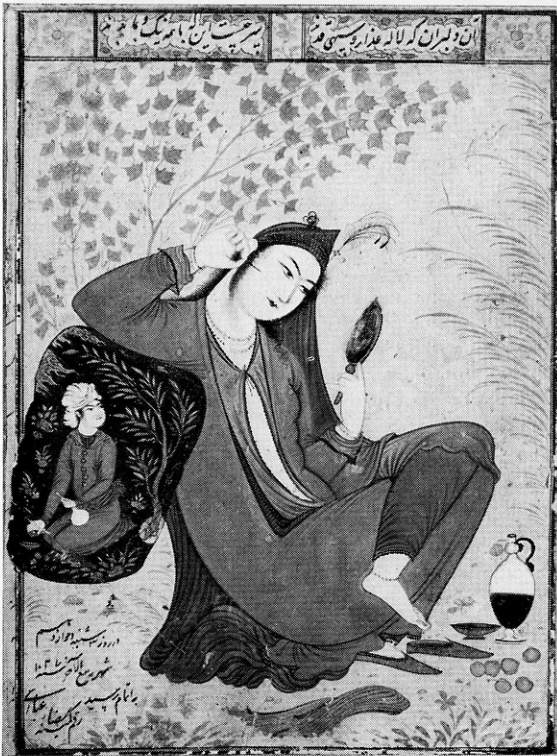


Fig. 3. LADY DAYDREAMING. *Private Collection, Detroit.*

all three may well represent the same individual. The cloth weave provides a smooth, even surface such as distinguishes the finest paper, and it is better adapted than any other to maintaining linear quality, so that the calligraphic character which was one of Riza's greatest assets is remarkably well conveyed, even to the spirited flicker of line at the ends of the sash. Similarly the fabric reproduces very successfully Riza's habit of interrupting his line, which, when properly controlled, reinforces energy in the same way that an unexpected dropped beat does in music.

"The aspen shrub with squared foliage, which was to Riza's school what the plane tree was to Bihzad's, retains far more of Riza's own combination of decorative delicacy and energy than do most of the many painted imitations executed by his followers. The elegantly designed floral spray between the figures represents a fuller development of Riza's interest in flower arrangement manifested in the bouquet held by the 'Adolescent' in the Bibliothèque Nationale drawing. Riza's tendency to an unpleasantly heavy color chord combining purple and a thick blue is reflected here in a happily modified tonality, a *rose du Barry* ground and, for the costume, the pure cerulean blue which was at that time available in silk. As a textile, the piece is one of the supreme accomplishments of all time in this genre, and even apart from its medium it is a significant addition to the art of the period."⁶

ADELE C. WEIBEL

¹Accession Number 26.7. Published by Alvan C. Eastman, *Bulletin of the Detroit Institute of Arts*, vol. VII, No. 5 (Feb., 1926), pp. 49-52.

²Accession Number 26.40. Published by Alvan C. Eastman, *Bulletin of the Detroit Institute of Arts*, vol. VII, No. 8 (May, 1926), pp. 90-92.

³Accession Number 42.15. Silk compound cloth; Length: 9½ inches; Width: 4⅝ inches. Gift of the Founders Society, Octavia Bates Fund, 1942.

Published: *Art Collection of the late Mrs. Christian R. Holmes*, Parke-Bernet Galleries Inc., New York, 1942, No. 713.

Exhibited: Exhibition of Persian Art, New York, 1940; catalogue, p. 186, number 64.

Other examples are in the collections of Mrs. William H. Moore and M. C. S. Gulbenkian. The former has been published with a colorplate by Arthur Upham Pope in *The Illustrated London News*, October 21, 1933; by Phyllis Ackerman in *A Survey of Persian Art*, 1939, p. 2118, colorplate 1058; mentioned by Ernst Kühnel in *Ars Islamica*, vol. VIII (1941), p. 117.

⁴Young Portuguese with a Dog. Collection Dr. W. R. Valentiner. Signed and dated 1634.

Published erroneously as belonging to the Metropolitan Museum of Art by Sarre-Mittwoch, *Zeichnungen von Riza Abbasi*, Munich, 1914; Sakisian, *La Miniature Persane*, Paris, 1929, plate 178; Kühnel, in *A Survey of Persian Art*, London, 1939, page 1887.

⁵A Woman Daydreaming. Private collection, Detroit. Signed and dated 1627. Published "owner unknown; formerly in Tehran" by Kühnel, *op. cit.* p. 1886.

⁶Phyllis Ackerman, "Islamic Textiles; History," in *A Survey of Persian Art*, London, 1939, p. 2118.

NEW EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM

Through the courtesy and cooperation of the Detroit Public Library, members of the staff of the Art Institute are now beginning several series of lecture courses at the Main and Branch Libraries. This has been undertaken to extend the museum facilities and so serve the public in outlying districts now transportation has become so difficult. The following courses have been planned for this fall.

DR. SHERMAN E. LEE

Main Library—Monday evenings at 8:30 p.m., Oct. 5—Nov. 9. *The Art of Eastern Asia*, Six lectures on the art of India, China and related countries.

JOYCE BLACK GNAU

Lothrop Branch—Monday evenings at 8:00 p.m., Oct. 19—Nov. 9. *American Art*. Four lectures on the public buildings, houses and furnishings, paintings and sculpture of North America.

Redford Branch—Tuesday evenings at 7:30 p.m., Oct. 6—Nov. 10. *An Approach to Painting*. Six lectures designed to present the fundamentals of painting.

Parkman Branch—Wednesday afternoons at 2:00 p.m., Oct. 7—Nov. 11. *Houses and Their Furnishings*. Six lectures on houses and furniture, past and present.

Monnier Branch—Thursday evenings at 7:15 p.m., Oct. 15—Nov. 1. *Houses and Their Furnishings*.

MARION LELAND HEATH

Monteith Branch—Monday evenings at 7:30 p.m., Oct. 5—Nov. 9. *Old Civilizations of the New World*. American Indian Art in Mexico, Guatemala, and Peru.

Parkman Branch—Tuesday evenings at 7:30 p.m., Oct. 6—Nov. 10. *Old Civilizations of the New World*.

ELIZABETH H. PAYNE

Utley Branch—Monday evenings at 7:30 p.m., Oct. 19—Nov. 16. *An Approach to Art Appreciation*. Five lectures dealing with the raw materials and principles of design, and with the possible extension of our "way of seeing."

Walker Branch—Tuesday evenings at 8:00 p.m., Oct. 20—Nov. 17. *An Approach to Art Appreciation*.

HOURS OF ADMISSION

The Detroit Institute of Arts, 5200 Woodward Avenue, is open free daily except Mondays and Christmas Day. Visiting hours: Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday and Friday afternoon, 1 to 6; Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday and Friday evenings, 7 to 10; Saturday, 9 to 5; Sunday, 2 to 6. The grounds of the Russell A. Alger Branch Museum for Italian Renaissance Art are open daily. The Museum is open Saturday, 10 to 6; Sundays, 2 to 6.



BUDDHA CALLING THE EARTH TO WITNESS INDIAN, NINTH CENTURY A.D. Lent by the Cleveland Museum of Art to the TWENTY-FOURTH LOAN EXHIBITION: BUDDHIST ART; OCTOBER, 1942.