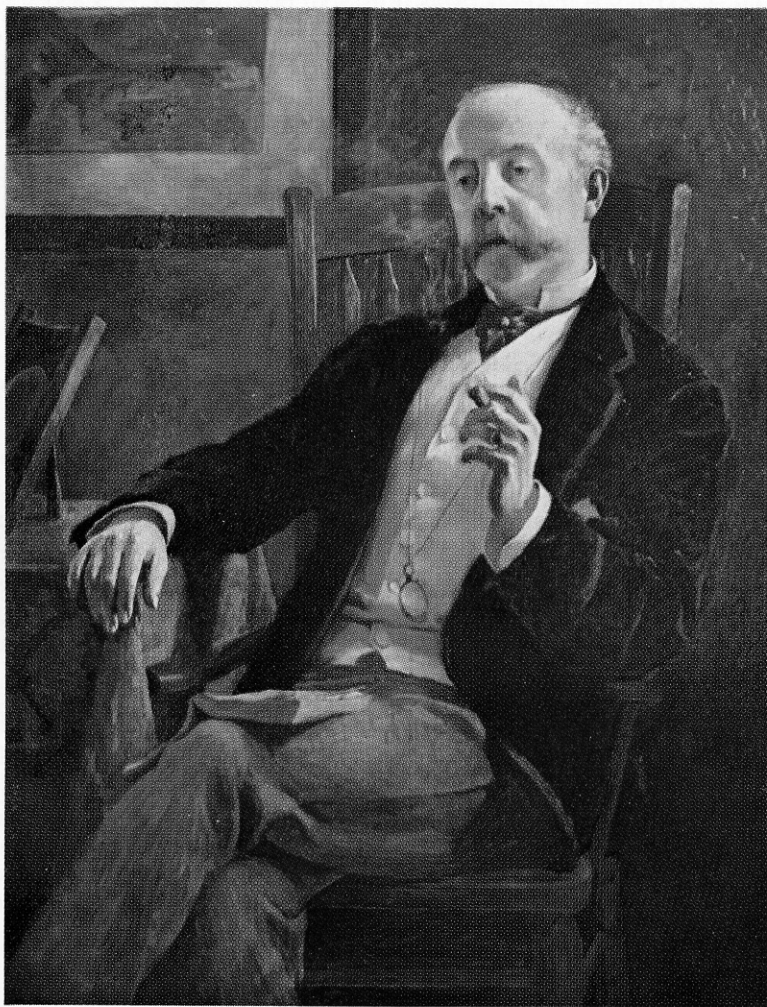


# Bulletin

OF THE DETROIT INSTITUTE OF ARTS

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THOMAS PITTS, 1841-1907

by GARI MELCHERS, American (1860-1932)

# THE DETROIT INSTITUTE OF ARTS

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## *A Fifteenth Century Altarpiece from Bruges*

THE RELIQUARY of St. Ursula in the Hôpital St. Jean at Bruges, by Hans Memling, is one of the best known works of art, perhaps in the world. Certainly every visitor to Bruges today makes his pilgrimage to the ancient hospital, where a group of Memling's works are preserved in the foundation for which they were painted five centuries ago. The *châsse*, shaped like a miniature Gothic chapel, carved and gilded, in which Memling's eight paintings of The Legend of St. Ursula are set like colored windows, is one of the sights of Bruges.

Few visitors, however, used to find their way to the Convent of the Soeurs Noires, to discover another, earlier series of paintings of The Legend of St. Ursula preserved there. These have recently been transferred to the Municipal Museum, where they can for the first time be widely appreciated, as they deserve. The artist who painted them and who has been, as it were, in eclipse behind the familiar figure of Memling, is a painter of notable talents. Although an attempt has been made to identify his name among the artists in the guild lists of Bruges (as Pieter de Casembroot, who became master in the painter's guild in 1459) he still remains anonymous, known from the pictures belonging to the Soeurs Noires as The Master of the Legend of St. Ursula. I cannot believe that such a gifted and attractive artist will not some day be identified by name. He is quite widely represented in America for he painted numerous small devotional altars, which have been dismembered in the course of time, their separate parts finding their way to half a dozen or more of our museums. The altar of the *Adoration of the Christ Child*,<sup>1</sup> which has been acquired for our museum from funds raised by the Founders Society's Committee for the Metropolitan Opera Benefit, is his first complete work in America, however, as it is the first complete fifteenth century triptych in our collection.

The *Adoration of the Christ Child* is a well known picture. For some sixty years it was in the collection of the Augustiner Museum<sup>2</sup> in Freiburg-im-Breisgau, West Germany. It was left to the Freiburg Museum in 1896 as a bequest from Mrs. Pauline C. Clarke of that city. Mrs. Clarke was the widow of William B. Clarke, an Englishman who retired to Freiburg and died there in 1865. His widow presented his entire collection to the museum. Since Mrs. Clarke did not add to the collection after her husband's death, the picture must have been acquired by him before 1865, whether in England or elsewhere is not known. In the nineteen fifties, however, the Freiburg Museum, noted for its works by Grünewald and Hans Baldung Grien, traded this work of the Netherlandish school in order to acquire some German work of special interest to them; and (thanks to the success of The Metropolitan Opera Benefit of last year) this triptych of The Master of St. Ursula came across the ocean to Detroit.

The altarpiece tells its story with the medieval combination of supreme technical perfection and child-like innocence of spirit which is, to me, immensely touching. As a



THE ADORATION OF THE CHRIST CHILD  
by THE MASTER OF THE LEGEND OF ST. URSULA, Flemish, late 15th century  
*Gift of the Metropolitan Opera Benefit Committee, 1959*

work of art it is like a large jewel, glowing with colors like polished fruit, sprinkled with a thousand details that delight the eye, radiant as a bouquet of flowers.

In the left wing is the *Visitation*, while behind, in the landscape, an ancient pilgrim in black leaves the gate of a city and a young knight rides out hawking beside the pleasant water where two swans are swimming. In the right wing an Archangel presents a young man, the donor. Behind him, in the landscape, the Archangel tells the young Tobias to catch the magical fish; in the distance rise the spires of a city.

In the altarpiece itself are grouped the episodes of the Christmas story. The Madonna kneels in adoration of the Holy Child. The manger is a ruin, whose broken arches and Romanesque colonnet symbolize Antiquity. The ox and the ass look out on the scene from their stable, while Angels hover overhead and kneel in wonder. St. Joseph, carrying a lighted candle (to show that it is night) and a young woman (an unusual figure, possibly the midwife) hurry to the scene. On the green hills beyond, shepherds minding their sheep, gaze upward at the angel in a shining aureole in the sky. From the defiles between the vast rocks on the horizon come streaming the Three Kings of the East and their glittering trains of horsemen. It is hard to describe the scene except in the words of a Christmas carol: one seems to see a mystery play, as acted out by the citizens of Bruges, in all devotion and simplicity. And in the background, are the towers of Bruges itself, the belfry and the great shaft of Notre Dame, rising into the tranquil sky.

The towers give a clue as to when our picture was painted. In the *Virgin of the Rose Garden* by the Master of the St. Lucy Legend, in our museum, the belfry is shown with only two stages, as it was before 1483. Between 1483 and 1487 an octagonal third stage was added, capped by a conical roof. The roof burned in 1493. We see the tower here with its octagonal third stage but without the roof, as it was between the fire of 1493 and the construction of the spire in 1499-1501 (and much as it looks today, for the spire burned again in 1741). We can date the picture therefore between 1493 and 1499. I take these dates in the history of the Belfry from an interesting article by Mlle. Nicole Verhaegen in the Bulletin of the *Institut Royal du patrimoine Artistique*, Brussels, (Vol. II, 1959, pp. 74-82).

The school of Bruges in the later fifteenth century presents, as Mlle. Verhaegen observed in that same article, a vast mass of anonymous works, representing a great part of the artistic production of the city between 1460 and 1530. The study of this period represents one of the most interesting current problems of Flemish art history. Among the groups of pictures which can be recognized as the creation of a single hand, the group that we know as the work of the Master of the St. Ursula Legend is one of the most distinctive, pleasing and artistically rewarding. In the meantime, while historians search this problem, his altarpiece will speak its own message which needs no interpretation or commentary, to all who stand before it in the museum of Detroit: it is the story of Christmas.

E. P. RICHARDSON

<sup>1</sup> Cat. No. 1330. Panel. Center: height 25¾ inches; width 20¾ inches. Left wing: height 25¾ inches; width 9½ inches. Right wing: height 25% inches; width 9<sup>9</sup>/<sub>16</sub> inches. Gift of the Metropolitan Opera Benefit Committee, 1959.

References: Max J. Friedländer, "Die Leihausstellung in der Guildhall zu London," *Reper-*

*torium für Kunstwissenschaft*, Volume XXIX, Berlin 1906, page 577 under Number 38; Friedrich Winkler, *Der Meister von Flémalle und Rogier van der Weyden*, Strassburg, 1913, footnote number 4, pages 72, 73, and p. 80; Sir Martin Conway, *The Van Eycks and Their Followers*, New York 1921, page 249; Max J. Friedländer, *Die altniederländische Malerei*, Volume 6, Berlin 1928, page 136, Number 114; *Allgemeines Lexikon der bildenden Künstler*, (Thieme-Becker), Volume 37, Leipzig 1950, page 335.

*Collections*: William B. Clarke, Freiburg-im-Breisgau; Mrs. Pauline C. Clarke, Freiburg-im-Breisgau; Augustiner Kloster, Freiburg-im-Breisgau.

<sup>2</sup> Inventory number 2130, later number 11478.



*Left*: DONOR OF  
THE ADORATION OF  
THE CHRIST CHILD  
a detail from the  
right-hand panel  
of the triptych

*Right*: OUTER WINGS OF THE TRIPTYCH  
showing the Visitation, at left, and an  
archangel presenting the donor, at right



## “*Hebe, Goddess of Immortal Youth*” by *Adriaen de Vries*

FOR MORE THAN three hundred years the long-lived and complex artistic movement known as Mannerism was considered merely as a weak, impersonal link between the Renaissance of Michelangelo and Raphael and the Baroque of Rubens and Bernini. It is only in our generation that it has emerged as the fascinatingly creative and strongly individual movement it really is. “A revolution against the classical perfection and normality of the High Renaissance,” Walter Friedländer termed it; its brilliant fireworks, it has been rightly said, illuminated the whole of Europe in the latter part of the sixteenth century and the first decades of the century following. It brought a new order of excellence, imposed a new and valid vision of supreme elegance. Yet, rich as our museum is in sculpture of the Renaissance, it possessed until recently only a few outstanding works of that period. Thanks to Mr. and Mrs. Henry Ford II the Institute now owns a splendid and sensitive bronze, a figure of *Hebe, Goddess of Immortal Youth and Beauty*, by one of the greatest of Mannerists, the Dutchman Adriaen de Vries.<sup>1</sup>

One of the Greek words for statue was *agalma*, “a source of pleasure,” and perhaps that is the best description of the Detroit bronze. Everything about the figure of the daughter of Zeus and Hera is perfection. The softly luminous metal, one of the most satisfying materials developed by man, absorbs and reflects the light as only the highly polished bronzes of the Mannerist period do. The pose of the goddess, with one arm raised and the other lowered according to the canons of Mannerist *contrapposto*, is a triumph of rhythmic design. Executed at a time when the art of the sculptor seemed to have given way to that of the goldsmith, the *Hebe* is nevertheless monumental and austere; but the michelangelesque *forma serpentinata* as well as exquisite details soften that monumentality. The diadem and its complex hair arrangement, the ewer with its lip reminiscent of the “line of Beauty” so often found in sixteenth century vessels, the exquisitely chiseled drapery which plays so important a part in the silhouette, all these are the work of a delicate craftsman. Few female bodies in sixteenth century art have such easy, flowing lines, and the purposeful deformation which, as Kenneth Clark said, makes of the goddesses of Mannerism the eternal feminine of the fashion plate, becomes a convincing ideal of feminine beauty.

Adriaen de Vries is little appreciated today, perhaps because most of his more monumental works are preserved in Northern Europe and behind the Iron Curtain. Yet he is without doubt one of the most characteristic exponents of Mannerism in its long, creative Indian Summer. Born in The Hague about 1560, he was one of the many wandering Northern artists who studied and worked in Italy and who, without losing their individuality, absorbed all that the Latin spirit offered of grace and elegance and taste. In Florence, de Vries worked under Giovanni da Bologna, born in Douai in Flanders, and the main figure of Mannerist sculpture. Another influence, equally deep, shaped de Vries' vision, that of Hubert Gerhard who, active mostly in Augsburg and in Bavaria, was also in fact a compatriot of de Vries. Throughout his life de Vries seems to have been employed mainly by kings and princes: his most important groups and busts were executed for Emperor Rudolph II, and also for King Christian IV of Denmark, who ordered from him a huge fountain for his castle of Fredericksborg, now





HEBE

by ADRIAEN DE VRIES  
Dutch (ca. 1560-1626)

*Gift of Mr. and Mrs.  
Henry Ford, II, 1959*

in Sweden. When he died (in 1626 in Prague where he had been for twenty-five years "Kammerbildhauer" to Rudolph) he was probably, with the youthful Bernini, the best known sculptor of his time. By nature and by training, like Cellini, de Vries was a bronze sculptor, and that is the medium through which we know him. The groups he executed for his princely patrons in the latter part of his life are often complex and tasteless *tours de force*. He was at his best when modelling small single figures such as the Detroit *Hebe* or the graceful relaxed *Nude Youth* in Munich; like so many sensitive artists de Vries was better at monologues in an easy, flowing language than at inflated and overpowering dialogues. Roger Fry once described what he called "the logic of plastic evocations." Our *Hebe*, daughter of Hera and Zeus, Cupbearer to the Gods, and Goddess of Youth, is perhaps the most perfect personification of that logic.

PAUL L. GRIGAUT

<sup>1</sup> Acc. No. 59.123. Bronze. Height (with base), 30 inches. Ex-coll.: Samuel Boddington, sold London, 1866 (No. 53, p. 5 of catalogue); Lady Webster, London; William Salomon, sold New York, 1923, No. 423; Baron Rothschild, Vienna. According to an unpublished opinion of Georg Swarzenski, *Hebe* is "a relatively early work of the master, probably from the nineties of the 16th century," a date with which this writer agrees. R. Langton Douglas, in a written communication, stated that the *Hebe* "was not one of the earliest works of de Vries, since it recalls the figure of Psyche in the *Mercury and Psyche* in the Louvre." The Detroit *Hebe* is little known, perhaps because no replica seems to have been executed (none at least was known to Swarzenski); it is not listed either in Conrad Buchwald, *Adriaen de Vries*, 1899, or in the most recent study on the sculptor, Erich v. Strohmmer, "Bemerkungen zu den werken des Adriaen de Vries," *Nationalmuseum Arsboek*, Stockholm, 1947-48. The present writer has not seen H. R. Weihrauch, "Notizen zum Kreis des Adriaen de Vries" in *Zeitschr. d. Hist. Vereins f. Schwaben*, Bd. 54, 1941. Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Henry Ford II, 1959.



Detail of  
HEBE  
by ADRIAEN DE VRIES

THE YEAR 1960 marks the one hundredth anniversary of the birth of Gari Melchers, one of Detroit's foremost artists. During his lifetime (1860-1932), he acquired countless honors and awards both in Europe and America. To remind the people of Detroit of the distinguished place won by Gari Melchers in international art circles of his day, the Detroit Institute of Arts placed a group of his paintings on exhibition from February 16 to March 13 in Gallery 37.

Gari Melchers' work is broad in range. Among his large decorations are murals for the Detroit Public Library, the Missouri State Capitol, and the *War and Peace* painted for the Library of Congress. His infinitely varied figure studies and interiors have a charm and vitality all their own, but it is perhaps in his portraits that the artist reveals his greatest strength. Vigorous in brushstroke and spontaneous in execution, as in the portrait of *Thomas Pitts* reproduced on the front cover, Melchers' portraits are often superb.

Dated in the lower right, Melchers' portrait of *Thomas Pitts*,<sup>1</sup> shows him as an alert man of forty-six. His pose is casual; he looks directly at the spectator, holding a half-smoked cigar, and with opened book on his lap. There is subtlety in the momentary glance, despite the free and vigorous style of the whole. Thomas Pitts was a direct descendant of a family whose roots go back to the formation of our country.

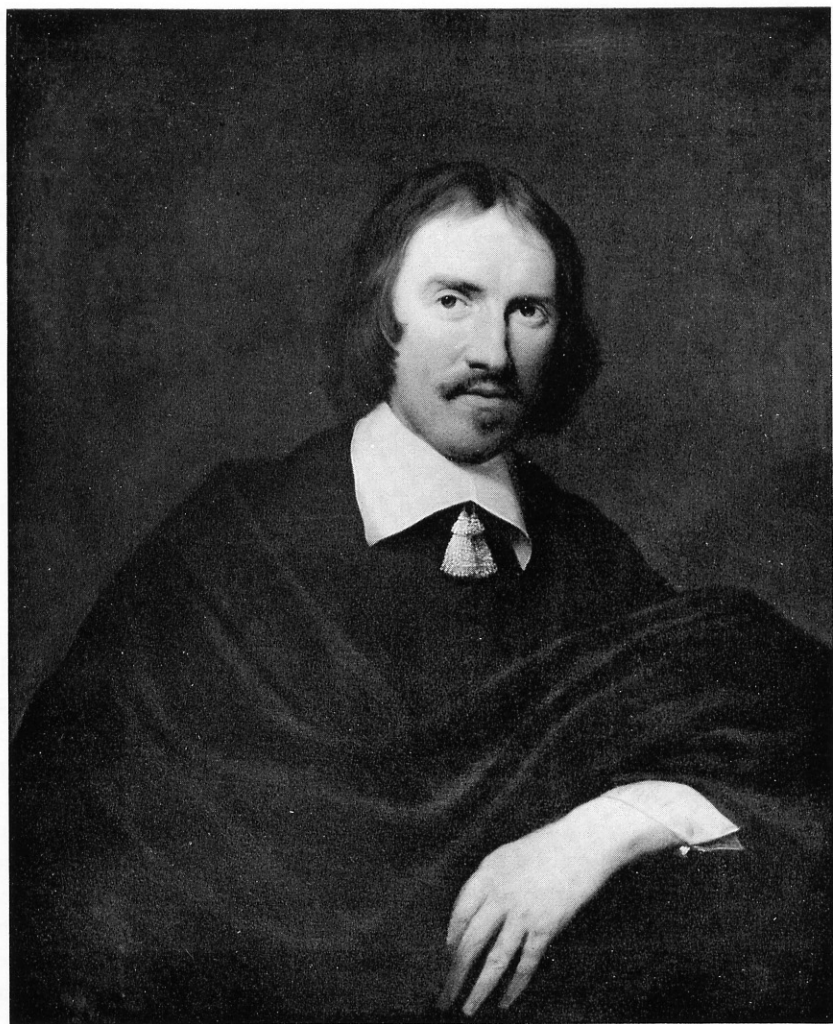
This portrait of him forms part of an important acquisition which was exhibited in toto at the Museum in the late fall of 1959. It consists of portraits of members of the Pitts family from 18th century ones by Smibert, Badger, Blackburn and Copley to early 20th century ones of the late Lendall Pitts, his wife and her sister. Supplementing the portraits are a few elegant 18th century costumes and textiles, and two splendid pieces of furniture, a clock and secretary. This visual record of a family, spanning eight generations, tells the story of our entire country: it portrays sturdy early settlers newly arrived here from England and France, their more elegant descendants of the Colonial and Revolutionary eras, followed by others who struck out from New England in the early 19th century to make new homes for themselves in the west. Thomas Pitts was the son of two of those transplanted New Englanders who settled in Detroit and became part of the fabric of the city.

In the early years of the 20th century, Thomas Pitts was active in the furthering of interest in art in the area. Under his presidency of the Detroit Museum of Art from 1904 to 1906, ground was broken for an addition to the old building which doubled its capacity. His portrait on the Bulletin serves a dual purpose. It symbolizes the recent acquisition of the entire group of Pitts portraits, an event of major importance. It serves, also, to re-focus attention on another native son, Gari Melchers, whose artistic career brought luster to Detroit as well as to himself.

E.H.P.

<sup>1</sup> Cat. No. 1310. Oil on canvas. Height 40½ inches; width 31½ inches. Signed and dated lower right: *Gari Melchers*. Gift of the Gibbs-Williams Fund, 1959.

*Detroit 1887*



PORTRAIT OF A JANSENIST  
by PHILIPPE DE CHAMPAIGNE, French (1602-1674)  
*Gift of Mrs. James B. Angell, 1959*

### *Portrait of a Jansenist*

AN IMPRESSIVE 17th Century portrait by the important French painter Philippe de Champaigne (1602-1674)<sup>1</sup> has been given recently to the Museum by Mrs. James B. Angell. Champaigne received his early art training in his native Brussels, came to Paris in 1621 and soon established himself as a painter of portraits and religious subjects. About 1628 he attracted the patronage of Louis XIII and Cardinal de Richelieu and became a court painter of the usual somewhat academic pattern. About 1643, however, he came in contact with the doctrines of Jansenism and the Monastery of

Port Royal near Paris. Although he continued to be a successful and popular painter, the austere Jansenist philosophy remained with him the rest of his life and affected his painting style in his later years.<sup>2</sup>

Jansenism is the name given to the doctrine originated by Cornelius Jansen (1585-1638), a Flemish bishop and theologian. It became a reform movement within the Catholic church, stressing a mystical and personal interpretation and observance of the ritual, opposed to the intellectualism and worldliness of the Jesuits. It first attracted attention in France with the foundation of Port Royal in 1643. It was finally declared heretical and its teachings suppressed, but throughout the 17th century the Jansenist movement attracted the support of many learned and powerful people, among them Madame de Longueville, cousin of Louis XIV.

Philippe de Champaigne painted the portraits of a number of his Jansenist friends, all of them distinguished by this austere, almost cold style which is in direct contrast to the Baroque aggrandizement so popular in the period, particularly at the French court. The treatment is highly personal; the sharp observation and severe naturalism are Champaigne's original innovation. In color one can almost state that these portraits are Jansenist in their extreme restraint. The sitters usually wear black, and there is little to relieve the severity of the whole, since they are shown against a gray background. In pose they are as classical as possible, with the head and body almost frontal, and no suggestion of movement or contrapposto.<sup>3</sup>

An old label on the back of the stretcher identifies the sitter as Louis-Isaac Le Maistre de Saci, director of Port Royal from about 1650 until his death in 1684. The painting is not signed, but it is dated in the upper left-hand corner: 1655/f. *aetat.* 42. This would agree with the dates of Le Maistre de Saci (he was born in 1613 and would have therefore been forty-two in 1655), but a comparison with other portraits of the same man shows a completely different set of features.<sup>4</sup> The identification of our portrait is therefore problematical. Furthermore, it has been suggested with good reason that the majority of Philippe de Champaigne's "Jansenist" portraits do not, in fact, portray members of the movement, who were personally austere and reluctant to sit for portraits.<sup>5</sup> This style adapted to secular patrons would therefore represent not so much the personality and tastes of the sitter as those of the artist. Thus Philippe de Champaigne's physical ties with Port Royal may have been overemphasized, although his spiritual ones certainly have not.

CURTIS G. COLEY

<sup>1</sup> Cat. No. 1319. Canvas. Height 31½ inches; width 25 inches. Gift of Mrs. James B. Angell, 1959.

<sup>2</sup> The literature on Philippe de Champaigne and Port Royal is quite extensive. The most recent volume incorporating previous scholarship and bibliography, is by Bernard Dorival, *Philippe de Champaigne et Port-Royal*, Musée National des Granges de Port-Royal, 1957.

<sup>3</sup> This estimate of Philippe de Champaigne's portrait style is taken from Anthony Blunt, *Art and Architecture in France, 1500 to 1700*, London, 1953, p. 175.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. the example in the Louvre, No. 1939 A, dated 1658.

<sup>5</sup> Dorival, *op. cit.*, 63-64, 68-69. See also Dorival, "Recherches sur l'iconographie de Pascal: I) Le prétendu portrait de Philippe de Champaigne," *Revue des Arts*, Oct. 1956, pp. 167 ff; "II) Le portrait de François II Quesnel," *ibid.*, Dec. 1956, pp. 231 ff.



FERDINAND ORDERS REBUILDING OF THE EMBANKMENTS OF PISA

by JACQUES CALLOT, French (1592-1635)

Gift of John S. Newberry, 1959

### *The Life of Ferdinand De' Medici by Jacques Callot*

THROUGH THE generosity of John S. Newberry, an important groups of prints<sup>1</sup> by the seventeenth century master of intaglio, Jacques Callot of Lorraine (1592-1635), has been added to our print collection. One of this artist's first important commissions, the work of executing sixteen images describing the great moments in the life of Grand Duke Ferdinand I de' Medici of Tuscany was ordered by Ferdinand's son and successor, Cosimo II.

This was a truly monumental undertaking to entrust to a young man of twenty-three years and Callot devoted three years to the executing of the plates and another full year to the printing of an edition of 300. The set which we now have is from an early printing; *The Rebuilding of the Embankments of Pisa* is reproduced above. Included also in the set is the excessively rare sixteenth plate *The Coronation of the Grand Duchess* in an unfinished state. This print is most revealing in respect to the technique and pictorial sensibilities of the artist. The outlines which form the basis for his descriptive and dramatic shading do not have the inflexible hardness characteristic of the work of many engravers of the time. Stippled and broken lines suggest the tentative character of the outline while at the same time they permit of considerable flexibility in the later building up of light and atmospheric effects. Further, the plate is worked

in all areas in an all-over building up of effects. Callot, though guided by the designs of the masters Tempesta, Rosselli and Poccetti, was much more than a mere copyist. With the black wiry lines of his burin he played area against area in the creation of total images that satisfy the special demands of his medium and his art.

As engravings, these works have a compelling force of their own quite apart from their association with the more personal and flexible calligraphy of the artist's more famous etched work; and this set of engravings by Callot was a strong influence in guiding another member of the Medici family, Marie, Queen of France, to commission the magnificent commemorative cycle by Peter Paul Rubens for her Luxembourg Palace.

NICHOLAS SNOW

<sup>1</sup> Acc. No. 59.286. Set of sixteen engravings commemorating great events in the reign of Ferdinand I of Tuscany. Gift of John S. Newberry, 1959.

### *Two Watercolors by Charles Burchfield*

**M**OOD AND EVOCATIVE call of nature have played a dominant role in the watercolors of Charles Burchfield. Having been raised in a small town in rural Ohio, the artist has a close affinity with the countryside. Burchfield goes beyond mere realistic portrayal however, to infuse his works often with a singular romantic or expressionistic feeling.

Two themes repeatedly appear in his paintings, the intense heat of a summer afternoon, and the autumn scene. *Autumn* is the subject of a watercolor recently given to the Institute by Mrs. Lillian Henkel Haass.<sup>1</sup> It is an important work due in part to its large scale (2 feet 8½ inches wide by 3 feet 11¾ inches) and also because it represents one of the few "nature compositions" Burchfield executed during the thirties—the middle period of his artistic career. Paintings of that period usually focused on the portrayal of the industrial scene or views of small towns, rather than showing much interest in nature study. Our watercolor thus reveals a lingering affinity with nature from Burchfield's early maturity.

This seasonal presentation is softened with a mood of quiet reverie reflected both in the trees and sky, and the stillness of the horses gazing at the distant land. The broad expanse of the countryside contributes to the feeling of the majesty in nature, while the brown and green tonal composition foretells the coming of winter. Burchfield has often stated that he is conveying a particular mood, rather than portraying a definite place. In *Autumn* the feeling of rapid change which occurs in the fall is contrasted with the temporary quiet of animals and landscape. Several fallen limbs in the foreground underline both the spirit of change and stillness within the composition, while the use of light contributes further to these transitions. Through such subtle means the beauty and melancholy of autumn are captured.



### AUTUMN

by CHARLES BURCHFIELD, American contemporary  
Gift of Mrs. Lillian Henkel Haass, 1959

The second water color, *In a Deserted House*, conveys the romantic mood of desolation, desolation and decay.<sup>2</sup> It is an example of his early work begun in 1918 and left unfinished until 1939, showing that the house theme occupied the artist's thoughts early in his career, as well as during the thirties. Here the sense of abandonment is tragic, through the house's loss of its service as a human shelter. Only emptiness remains and eventual ruin. How often the neglected house or rows of tenement houses serve as highly expressive vehicles of mood for Burchfield. They are treated almost as human, with their windows as facial features, either reflecting the warm glow of humanity or fear of the storm and wind, or as in this example, as signposts of ultimate decay.

Few other American artists have been so expressive in the watercolor medium. Preferring watercolor to oil, Burchfield has seized upon the spontaneity and immediacy which watercolor provides, using these elements to heighten the mood of his work. In his hand it finds a highly expressive master.

RALPH GLOWACKI

<sup>1</sup> Cat. No. 1331. Watercolor on paper fastened to board. Height 32½ inches; width 47¾ inches. Signed: CB. Gift of Mrs. Lillian Henkel Haass, 1959.  
1931

<sup>2</sup> Cat. No. 1336. Watercolor. Height 22½ inches; width 28½ inches sight. Signed: Chas. Burchfield/1919-1939. Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Lawrence A. Fleischman, 1958.



THE INCOME from the Paul McPharlin Memorial Fund, established in 1952 by the late W. H. McPharlin in memory of his son, has enabled the museum from time to time to make some outstanding purchases for the puppet collection. Among these have been the large group of puppets of Walter Deaves (active 1876-1919), Daniel Meader (active 1874-1898), and the Victorian Puppet Theatre. Recently the fund has made possible the purchase of a truly remarkable collection of the works of the late Remo Bufano<sup>1</sup> (1894-1948).

It was in 1914 that Remo Bufano, a youngster with vivid impressions of the Paladin puppets of his native Italy, presented his own version of *Orlando Furioso* in Richmond Hill House, New York. This was the production which was to start him on his career in the American theatre and make him one of the leading forces in the artistic revival in this country of the puppet theatre.

Bufano was connected with all the major experiments in the puppet field during his lifetime. As a professional puppeteer, he was not content to present the items which tradition held as strictly puppet fare. He, perhaps more than any other puppeteer of his time, felt that the puppet theatre was not a highly specialized and individual art, but an integral part of the theatrical world which included music, drama and the dance. His early productions included pieces by Alfred Kreymborg, Edna St. Vincent Millay, Arthur Schnitzler and other contemporary dramatists of his day. Leopold Stokowski, Willem Mengelberg, Pierre Monteux and Rudolph Ganz were among those who sought his aid in undertakings which interested the entire theatrical and musical world.

Remo Bufano collaborated on most of the early experiments of combining live actors with those of the puppet stage. He created the special puppets needed in such plays as Rostand's *Last Night of Don Juan*, the immortal Mrs. Fiske's production of *Wake Up Jonathan*, the Max Reinhardt-Norman Bel Geddes production of *The Miracle*, and Brock Pemberton's *The Knife in the Wall*. He built the masks of the Mammoth and Dinosaur and played the part of the latter in Thornton Wilder's *The Skin of Our Teeth*. Eva Le Gallienne's production of *Alice in Wonderland* included both the puppets of the Walrus and the Carpenter and the masks of the two characters used by the live actors designed and constructed by Bufano. The masks which are six or eight times larger than life size are included in the recent purchase. The costumes used in the production designed by Irene Sharaff were given to the collection by the Museum of the Arts of Decoration of the Cooper Union, New York in 1954.

His first major production in the music world was De Falla's *El Retablo de Maese Pedro*. This is a modern Spanish opera with a theme similar to Pirandello's fantasies on identity. Its libretto is based on the marionette episode in *Don Quixote* and the score was especially written for the marionettes. Some half dozen life-sized marionettes were constructed by Bufano and one of these, The Boy Announcer, was a gift to the museum's collection by Mr. and Mrs. Cedric Head. The remainder of the puppets

# remo bufano new york



DON GRAYFEROS AND DON ROLDON FROM EL RETABLO DE MAESE PEDRO  
designed by REMO BUFANO  
Gift of the Paul McPharlin Memorial Fund, 1959

from the cast are three feet in height and include Don Grayferos, Don Roldon, Charlemagne, King Marsilius, The Enamored Moor, Melisandra, two Executioners, and a Soldier. These puppets which are a part of the recent purchase are in excellent condition and represent an important contribution of the artist to the world of the puppet theatre.

Bufano considered his second venture in the world of music his most important. This was Stravinsky's oratorio, *Oedipus Rex*. Three of the twelve-foot heroic puppets, the Blinded Oedipus, Shepherd, Messenger, which he constructed after Robert Edmond Jones' designs were given to the collection in 1954 by Mr. and Mrs. Cedric Head; two others (Creon, and Tiresias) are on permanent loan to the Institute and the remaining two (Jocasta and Oedipus) are a part of the collection of the Brander Matthews Museum of Columbia University.

Although Remo Bufano confined his work primarily to New York City, the range of that work was far wider. He was always attempting the experimental. Perhaps one of his most unusual efforts was the production of Em Jo Basshe's *Fantasy in Flutes*, in which he used marionettes representing algebraic symbols, together with live actors. As a result of his scholarly work in the field, and his contributions to the theatre, Bufano was awarded a Guggenheim fellowship to study the puppet theatre in Europe and write a comprehensive volume on marionettes. His publications included *Be a Puppet Showman*, *Magic Strings*, *The Show Book of Remo Bufano* and *Pinocchio for the Stage*.

Forty-two marionettes and hand puppets, seven masks, two backdrops and the hangings for Bufano's *Punch and Judy* booth are included in the purchase. The puppets cover the entire period in which the artist was active as a puppeteer and are representative of the many experiments and styles with which he worked. The puppets are in unusually good condition considering Bufano's attitude toward his work. In the construction of his puppets he did not strive for the polish and finish usually the goal of professional puppeteers. The figures were dashed off, designed for specific effects and seldom used long enough to warrant painstaking craftsmanship. He rarely built a show to remain in repertory, although he often revised and recreated the production, using an entirely different approach from the original production.

From *Orlando Furioso*, a sturdy and interminable epic, to the adventures of *Alice in Wonderland*, Remo Bufano devoted his efforts to opening the doors of the world of the puppet theatre to audiences of all ages. He worked toward the creation of a truly American puppet theatre and his contributions toward that end were many. Mordecai Gorelik, writing in *The Arts* of the artist, said "Noisy and sure-fire successes are so characteristic of the theatre that much may be said for artists like Remo Bufano whose naïve interest is in his work. Usually what he produces is good; but whether he succeeds or fails in any particular instance, the work is always a product of sincerity and always worth attention." Bufano's puppets express and possess a definite purpose, they had a vital function and were seeking a direction toward a definite goal. The purchase of these works of one of America's great puppet showmen is a rich addition to the Institute's already enviable collection.

GIL ODEN

<sup>1</sup> Acc. Nos. 59.342 to 59.393. Gift of the Paul McPharlin Memorial Fund, 1959.

## *An Old Peasant Woman Praying* by Paula Modersohn-Becker

INFUSED WITH a strange and haunting poetry is a canvas of *An Old Peasant Woman Praying*<sup>1</sup> which was recently given to the Detroit Institute of Arts by Robert H. Tannahill. It is from the hand of Paula Modersohn-Becker, one of the few women artists to achieve fame in her native Germany in the early 20th century. Her expression in visual terms of a deep sympathy for humanity, particularly for mothers and children, was to be continued by her compatriot Kaethe Kollwitz. Coupled with Paula Modersohn-Becker's sympathy however, was a mysticism, a romantic quality; her pioneer efforts to create a harmony between man and nature in symbolic terms were to be explored further by a number of other artists, particularly Franz Marc, Emil Nolde and Ernst Barlach. Her work preceded theirs for the most part, however, and her death in 1907 at the age of thirty-one brought her to the end of a road which she had traveled alone.

Born in Dresden in 1876, Paula Becker moved with her family first to Bremen then to Berlin for study. She spent the summer of 1897 at Worpswede, an art colony in a lovely rural setting with broad meadows and quiet canals. Here she was to find much stimulus from other artists, among them the landscape painter, Otto Modersohn, whom she was to marry in 1901. In Worpswede, the peasants and the older folk of the nearby home for the aged, who lived so simply, symbolized for Paula Becker a closeness to nature, of which they seemed to be so much a part; she painted them with a rough and earthy quality.

The *Old Peasant Woman Praying* of 1906 has been painted with honesty, but the earlier coarseness and roughness of Worpswede have been tempered into a more stylized and poetic interpretation, as a result of contacts in Paris with the art of Asia and the Near East, of Gauguin, Cezanne and van Gogh.

The decorative flatness of Gauguin and the simplified still life arrangements of Cezanne struck a responsive chord in Paula Modersohn-Becker. She was among the first of the German artists to discover the values of the Post-Impressionists, values which she assimilated and made her own. The extremely handsome decorative patterning of the large color areas in the green foliate background of the *Old Peasant*, the deep blue of her dress and the brown flesh tones remind us of Gauguin, while the overlarge hands and strong linear emphasis are akin to work by van Gogh. It is in this tendency to stylize, in this strong reaction against late 19th century naturalism, that the importance of Paula Modersohn lies in great measure.

Equally significant is the fact that she infused her work with a feeling of mystery, of tenderness, of her own peculiarly German mood quality. The face of the *Old Peasant Woman*, with its wide unfocused eyes, above her crossed arms, emerges from the background with almost barbaric intensity; with its mood of loneliness and longing, it transports us into a sphere far removed from our mundane one of everyday.

The *Old Peasant Woman* formerly formed part of the collection of the Kunsthalle of Hamburg.<sup>2</sup> Following Paula Modersohn's death, the poet Rainer Maria Rilke honored her memory in a poem "Requiem for a Friend." In 1927, a permanent museum of her paintings was opened in Bremen. Upon the cornerstone was engraved her motto (freely translated), "There burns in myself a desire to grow big in simplicity."

<sup>1</sup> Cat. No. 1294. Canvas. Height 29¾ inches; width 22¾ inches. Ex-collection: Kunsthalle, Hamburg; Buchholz, New York. Acc. No. 58.385. Gift of Robert H. Tannahill, 1958.

<sup>2</sup> See Pauli, Gustav, *Führer durch die Galerie der Kunsthalle zu Hamburg*, Hamburg, 1924, pp. 200-202.



OLD PEASANT WOMAN PRAYING  
by PAULA MODERSOHN-BECKER, German (1876-1907)  
Gift of Robert H. Tannahill, 1958



PORTRAIT OF MME. GABRIEL COTTÉ

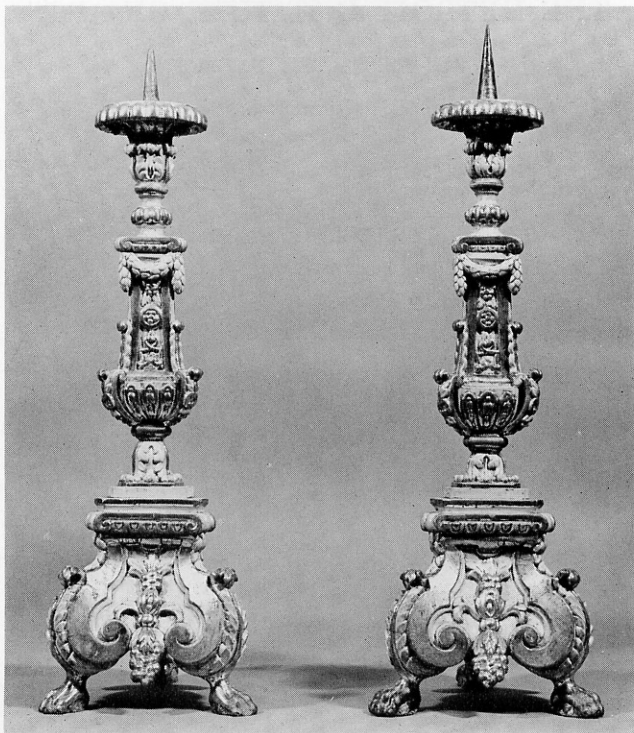
*Attributed to LOUIS CHRÉTIEN DE HEER, active in Canada (ca. 1784-1808)  
Gift of the Founders Society, The Director's Fund, 1959*

The close link between early Detroit and French Canada gives this recently acquired painting <sup>1</sup> an importance which goes beyond its unassuming charm as a provincial eighteenth century portrait. An old inscription on the back of the canvas identifies the sitter as the second wife of Gabriel Côté (1742-1795), a wealthy merchant who apparently settled in Montreal in 1784. During the earlier part of his life, Côté spent several years in Michillimackinac (in the region of present-day St. Ignace) where in 1766 or 1767 he married Agathe Desjardins, his first wife. In 1783, some years after her death (the date is unknown), he was remarried in Montreal—to Angélique Blondeau, daughter of a line of French Canadian traders, who at this time had family connections both in Montreal and in Detroit (Louis-Charles Blondeau, originally of Montreal, became a merchant in Detroit in the 1750's and in 1755 served as Aide-Major of the Militia of this city.) The date of the portrait, judged from the style of the head-gear, appears to be about 1795. The manner in which it is painted suggests the work of Louis-Chrétien de Heer, an Alsatian painter active in Montreal during the last quarter of the eighteenth century.<sup>2</sup>

V.H.

<sup>1</sup> Cat. No. 1337. Height 25 $\frac{1}{8}$  inches; width 19 $\frac{3}{4}$  inches. Gift of the Founders Society, The Director's Fund, 1959.

<sup>2</sup> We are indebted to M. Gérard Morisset, Curator of the Musée de la Province, Quebec, for this information concerning the subject and painter of this portrait.



PAIR OF ALTAR CANDLESTICKS

French Canadian, late 18th Century

*Gift of the Founders Society, The Elizabeth and Allan Shelden Fund, 1957*

The impressive candlesticks illustrated above, which some time ago joined the many other fine examples of French Canadian woodcarving in our galleries, originally adorned the altar of Saint Isidore de Laprairie, a village church near Montreal. Although they were made late in the 1700's or perhaps even in the early years of the nineteenth century, they repeat the patterns of an earlier age—that of Louis XIV. Particularly after 1759, when the English victory cut off their avenues of fresh inspiration from France, French Canadian craftsmen fell back upon the earlier traditions of their art; our candlesticks are latter-day examples of the massive baroque style which native French craftsmen had taught their New World apprentices at the first school of Canadian woodcarving, established at Cap Tourmente in the second half of the seventeenth century. When these candlesticks were acquired by the museum, their original design and ornament were obscured beneath heavy layers of crude gold paint applied in the more recent past; happily, it was possible to remove these later "renovations" and reveal the handsome original surfaces of Spanish white and silver leaf.

<sup>1</sup> Acc. No. 57.171 a, b. Pair of wooden candlesticks. Height 34 inches. Gift of the Founders Society, The Elizabeth and Allan Shelden Fund, 1957.

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