Portrait of Ingres as a Young Man, 1841-1851, revised before 1877. Oil on canvas. 34 x 27 1/4 inches

Bequest of Grace Rainey Rogers, 1943
A Portrait of Ingres as a Young Man

by LOUISE BURROUGHS

The portrait of Ingres as a young man in the collection of the Metropolitan Museum of Art presents some interesting problems which, in relation to two of that artist's self-portraits, form the subject of this study. The Metropolitan Museum's painting is a curious blend of Ingres's portrait of himself exhibited at the Salon of 1806 and of the well-known Self-Portrait at the Age of Twenty-four in the Musée Condé in Chantilly.

The painting under discussion (Frontispiece) was bequeathed to the Metropolitan Museum by Grace Rainey Rogers in 1943. Georges Wildenstein states in his catalogue of Ingres's paintings1 that it was formerly owned by Mme Ingres, Mme Albert Ramel, M. Emmanuel Riant, and Wildenstein respectively, and that it is "one of two pictures mentioned by Delaborde, p. 251, as replicas made by pupils and retouched by the master towards the end of his life."2 This statement gives us an unbroken history for the painting from Mme Ingres to the present time; the identity of the painter, however, remains unknown.

Before discussing this portrait it would be well to consider the two compositions to which it bears a close resemblance. In the Salon of 1806 Ingres exhibited, among other portraits, one of himself standing before an easel. The critics dealt harshly with it, wounding the young artist and arousing in him bitter resentment. "Ah! monsieur Forestier," he wrote from Rome, November 23, 1806, "I will never again exhibit in the Salon, tant que j'aurai de pareils juges. Cela fait trop souffrir, surtout quand on ne peut voir en face cette horde d'aboyeurs à gages. Mais il est peut-être heureux pour moi que je n'y soye pas, car j'aurais fait quelque sottise que ni votre amitié ni vos bons conseils n'eussent pu empêcher, car les scélérats m'assassinent bien à leur aise et bien lâchement."3 However, the jeering descriptions by the critics make possible the identification of Ingres's self-portrait with a copy painted by Julie Forestier (Figure 1) and with a photograph taken by Marville (Figure 2). Since the Salon portrait no longer exists, these two documents are important records.

The Forestier copy, made soon after the portrait itself, is the earliest visual witness to its appearance. The copyist, Marie Anne Julie For-
Fig. 1. Copy of Ingres self-portrait exhibited in the Salon of 1806, by Marie Anne Julie Forestier, 1807. 25 1/2 x 20 3/4 inches
Marquis d’Oncien de Chaffardon, Paris

estier, who was born in Paris in 1789, studied painting under Debret, a pupil of David, and was accomplished enough to exhibit in various Salons from 1804 to 1819. In Ingres’s early years in Paris he enjoyed an almost filial relationship with Julie’s father and in his drawing of the Forestier family, with Julie prominent as the central figure, he has left a charming souvenir of this friendship. In June 1806 Julie and Ingres became engaged to be married, an engagement that was broken off in July 1807. In the meantime Julie had made a copy of her fiancé’s portrait, and it had been sent to Montauban as a gift to Ingres’s father who wrote to M. Forestier on August 9, 1807: “I received in due time the box, about which you wrote me in your good letter of last month, containing a copy of the portrait of my son and two views of Rome. While I expected a great deal of talent in your daughter, I can say that it surpasses the estimate I had conceived of it. One who copies like this must certainly create with a genius that characterizes the great artists. Everything conspires to make this portrait dear to me, both the one that it represents and the hand that was kind enough to paint it. Please accept my thanks for it and be assured also of a gratitude equal to the pleasure this gift has brought me.” (J’ai reçu en son temps la caisse que vous m’avez annoncée par votre chère lettre du mois dernier, contenant une copie du portrait de mon fils et deux vues de Rome. Quoique j’attendisse beaucoup du talent de Mlle votre fille, je puis dire qu’il surpasse l’idée que j’en avais conçue. Qui copie de cette manière doit certainement composer avec ce génie qui caractérise les grands artistes. Tout concourt à me rendre cher ce portrait, et celui qu’il représente et la main qui a bien voulu le tracé. Recevez-en mes remerciements et soyez assuré d’une reconnaissance égale au plaisir que ce cadeau m’a fait éprouver.)

The Marville photograph, on the other hand, must be dated as late as 1841, the earliest possible moment for a photograph, and thus supplies evidence that the portrait was at that time still exactly as we see it in Julie Forestier’s copy—except for one detail. This is the addition of a sketch of the face and form of François Gilibert, which in the photograph is clearly seen drawn upon the canvas before which the artist stands. The sketch of Gilibert, absent from the Forestier copy, must also have been absent from the Salon portrait judging from a description by the critic of the Mercure de France, October 1806, who wrote of the sitter: “He grasps in his hand a handkerchief which he holds, one does not know why, on a canvas still empty but undoubtedly
destined to represent the most frightful objects, to judge by the somber and savage expression on his face.” (Il tient à la main un mouchoir qu’il porte, on ne sait pourquoi, sur une toile encore blanche, mais destinée, sans doute, à représenter les objets les plus effrayants, si l’on juge par l’expression sombre et farouche de son visage.) It would seem, therefore, that Ingres, inspired perhaps by some such adverse criticism, added the sketch of Gilibert after Julie’s copy had been finished. In this connection it should be remembered that Ingres left France for Rome about the time of the opening of the Salon on September 15, 1806, and that Julie made her copy before he could have repossessed his painting. With the single exception of the sketch of Gilibert, the Forestier copy and the Marville photograph are so remarkably close, line for line, that Lapauze questioned whether the photograph might not represent the copy rather than Ingres’s original portrait. He evidently missed the discrepancy that reveals that it does not, but the extraordinary similarity between the two

Fig. 2. Photograph by Marville, believed to be of the self-portrait Ingres exhibited in the 1806 Salon Cabinet des Étampes, Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris

Fig. 3. Self-portrait at the Age of Twenty-four, by Jean Auguste Dominique Ingres (1780-1867). 30 3/4 x 24 inches Musée Condé, Chantilly

that prompted the query leaves little reason to doubt that both copy and photograph record the same portrait, although at different periods. The photograph was used as an illustration in a collection of Ingres’s works assembled for publication by his good friend Édouard Gatteaux, who considered it sufficiently important to be preserved in the Bibliothèque Nationale, to which institution he bequeathed it in 1881.

As to the fate of the original painting, the plausible and widely accepted theory is that Ingres revised it at a later date and that it is actually the foundation of the portrait at Chantilly (Figure 3). An engraving of this painting as we see it now was made by A. Réveil and published in 1851 while the portrait was still in the artist’s possession. In 1860 Ingres reluctantly parted with it, turning it over to Jérôme Bonaparte, Prince Napoleon, at the request of Frédéric
Reiset, in exchange for Ingres's painting The Turkish Bath. To Reiset Ingres wrote, April 7, 1860: “If I had not been bound by my promise to you to give my portrait to the prince, I would not have been able to keep it at the moment when I parted from that dear portrait which no longer forms a part of its family.” (Si je n’eusse été lié par mon engagement avec vous de donner au prince mon portrait, je n’aurais pu le tenir au moment où je me suis séparé de ce cher portrait qui ne fait plus partie de sa famille.)9 From this point on its history is well known.

The Chantilly canvas does not show the portrait as it was painted in 1804 but one considerably revised, and its identity with that portrait has yet to be conclusively proved. An X-ray shadowgraph would throw valuable light on this matter but even without it there is evidence to support the generally accepted hypothesis. The artist’s inscription on the painting, eff. J.A. INGRES P’ · · F16 PA18 1804, specifically identifies it with the early portrait, supplying the place and date of execution (Paris, 1804). If the revision had not been executed on the early painting itself it hardly seems likely that the artist would have composed an inscription so explicitly identifying it as such.

Then, too, the statement of Émile Galichon in the Gazette des Beaux-Arts, March 15, 1861, is without meaning unless the two versions are incorporated on one canvas. Galichon writes: “The features of M. Ingres are already known to us from a portrait which he made of himself in 1804 and which is reproduced in Réveil’s collection. Of this portrait, now owned by Prince Napoleon, there is an exact repetition made by a distinguished pupil, in which M. Ingres represented himself wiping with a cloth the sketch drawn by him on a canvas. The copy conforms to the first idea of the master, later modified, as one can see in the engraving of Réveil.” (Les traits de M. Ingres sont encore connus par un portrait qu’il fit de lui-même en 1804 et qu’on trouve reproduit dans le recueil de Réveil. De ce tableau, actuellement possédé par le prince Napoléon, il existe une répétition très exacte faite par un élève distingué, dans laquelle M. Ingres s’est représenté essuyant avec un linge l’ébauche tracée par lui sur une toile. Cette copie est conforme à la première pensée du maître, modifiée par la suite, ainsi qu’on peut voir dans la gravure de Réveil.)10 The engraving by Réveil records the Chantilly portrait and not the painting made in 1804. Since the copy could not repeat the Chantilly portrait exactly and at the same time show the artist wiping a canvas with a cloth, Galichon’s remarks can only be understood to refer to a single painting which had had an early aspect preserved in a pupil’s copy and a modified later one reproduced in Réveil’s engraving.

It is not precisely known when Ingres made the changes in his early composition that culminated in the Chantilly portrait. However, the period of the major revisions can be contained within the decade between the earliest possible date for the photograph, 1841, and the date 1851 when Réveil’s engraving was published. These revisions are momentous, transforming an awkward, unprepossessing painting into a masterpiece of portraiture, and offer in themselves a fascinating study of Ingres’s artistic growth. All that remains of the early portrait is the basic
conception and the original pose of the figure—the artist, his body shown in profile, head turned three-quarters toward the spectator, right hand grasping a piece of chalk arrested in the act of sketching upon a canvas. Everything else has been more or less changed. Gone entirely are the extended left arm with its pudgy hand, the expanse of white canvas forming a vertical line that almost cuts the composition in two, and the heavy coat hung precariously over the artist’s shoulder and pinning down his arm. This garment has been replaced by an entirely different type of overcoat and the arm is defined by being shown in a sleeve. A new left hand has been placed lightly against the breast, the right hand has been redrawn with the angle of the chalk lowered, the easel and the canvas resting on it have been turned so that their edges face the spectator, and the artist’s palette has been suspended from a peg. These are the more conspicuous changes, but the whole painting has been subtly altered: the mouth and chin revised; the collar raised, eliminating a bulge at the back of the neck; and most importantly, the face transformed from a staring, almost petulant countenance into that of a strong, alert, magnetic personality.

These changes all bear on the Metropolitan Museum’s portrait, which contains elements of both the original and the Chantilly versions as well as details to be found in neither. The most conspicuous features of the early version are the left arm, hand, and handkerchief, and the large canvas. But the hand lacks the finger ring seen
in the early version and the initial I is missing from the corner of the handkerchief. The canvas on which the artist is working displays the sketch of Gilibert; is no longer vertical but slants to the right; and is not supported by the easel, which is empty. Less noticeable details from the early version may be seen in the lower line of the collar, the bulge at the back of the neck, and the upward tilt of the chalk. The easel, like the one in the Chantilly portrait, is here turned side-wise and a palette hangs from its peg. The greatcoat has been transformed into a cloak similar to that seen in the Chantilly version, but here it is draped around the artist's right arm and the short cape at the back falls in almost vertical folds from beneath the collar; whereas in the Chantilly painting the arm is in a sleeve and the cape flares out obliquely at the back. As we can see in studies for this cloak (Figures 4, 5), preserved in the Musée Ingres, Ingres did not at once reach a satisfactory design for it. He has solved in the drawings the problem of the sleeve, but the cape is shown falling down in straight folds as it does in the Metropolitan Museum's painting. The significant difference in the draping of the cloak saves the Metropolitan's portrait from being a pastiche of the two known versions and argues for the existence at one time of an intermediate state of which this is a copy.

The most satisfactory explanation, therefore, is that the artist who made the Metropolitan Museum's painting was copying Ingres's portrait while it was in transition from its early to its ultimate state. The tempting thought that he had copied the early version, and that Ingres himself had made revisions on it which bring it closer to his final composition, must unfortunately be dismissed, for the areas that show a difference in technique, and thus imply a second hand at work on the canvas, are the very ones that follow the early version and are, moreover, superimposed on a composition already close to the Chantilly portrait. Careful inspection of the Metropolitan's portrait discloses discrepancies in workmanship between the two hands of the painted figure, the firm modeling of the right hand contrasting sharply with the lack of construction in the left. Microscopic examination further reveals a difference in the texture of the paint and in the brushwork in the area of the left arm and hand from the smooth flowing handling of the paint not only of the right hand but of the face and figure as a whole. These discrepancies were confirmed by X-ray shadowgraphs which clearly show the artist's left hand against his breast in the same position that it assumes in the Chantilly painting and reveal no trace of the present left arm, hand, handkerchief, or canvas. Therefore the composition as originally executed was already closer to the Chantilly portrait than to the early version, and the conspicuous features of the early version now to be seen must have been added, and the hand against the breast suppressed, at a later time. The reason for this regression remains obscure but these changes cannot be attributed to Ingres himself. Even if it were reasonable to believe that he would have imposed on this copy the very features he had so satisfactorily eliminated from his final portrait, the inferior quality of the painting
of these parts would preclude such an assumption.

Before leaving the subject of these revisions it should be noted that they are repeated exactly in a painting by Armand Cambon (Figure 6) in the Musée Ingres which, except for its oval form, and the absence of the chalk sketch of Gilibert, is a faithful reproduction of the Metropolitan Museum's portrait. Interesting information about Cambon's copy has recently been brought to light by Marie Jeanne Ternois who cites in an unpublished thesis\textsuperscript{11} a letter, dated 1874, to the Mayor of Montauban in which Cambon proposes to copy two self-portraits by Ingres: “one of these portraits made at the age of twenty years has passed into the hands of a jealous owner who will not allow it to be copied; we shall still be permitted, I hope, to copy the other made at the age of eighty years which remained in the hands of Mme Ingres as well as a reproduction of the one that has escaped us.” (l'un des portraits fait à l'âge de vingt [sic] ans est passé entre les mains d'un propriétaire jaloux qui ne le laissera pas copier; il nous est encore permis, je l'espère, de copier l'autre fait à l'âge de 80 ans resté entre les mains de Mme Ingres ainsi qu'une reproduction de celui qui nous a échappé.) Presumably the portrait of the artist as a young man was the portrait given by Ingres to Prince Napoleon—the one now at Chantilly. But lacking the original, Cambon hoped to copy a reproduction of it still in Mme Ingres's possession. The copy he subsequently made appears in the catalogue of paintings in the Musée Ingres, 1877. This information, together with the provenance of the Metropolitan Museum's portrait and the fact that Cambon's copy repeats the details peculiar to it, points to our painting as the very one that served as Cambon's model. If this is so then the changes in the composition of the Metropolitan's portrait were made before Cambon copied it. But the sketch of Gilibert, which Cambon did not record, is in all probability a more recent addition.

The Metropolitan Museum's painting, then seems almost certainly to record a step in the progress of Ingres's youthful portrait from his first conception shown in the Salon of 1806 to his brilliant achievement in the painting at Chantilly. Thus it must have been produced between 1841 and 1851 and revised by a less accomplished hand before 1877. The execution of the painting indicates that it was made by an artist familiar with Ingres's methods, in all probability a pupil. As a copy it repeats an aspect of the original portrait that is now lost to view and does so in a work the major part of which is painted with a high degree of skill and authority not unworthy of Ingres himself.

NOTES

6. ———, ibid., p. 46.
8. Albert Magimel, Oeuvres de J. A. D. Ingres ... gravées au trait et sur acier par A. Réveil, Paris, 1851. Réveil's engraving faithfully records the Chantilly painting with the exception of one minor detail, the low line of the collar, which still corresponds to the early version.
11. The writer is indebted to M. Daniel Ternois, Curator of the Musée Ingres, for bringing the material about Cambon's copy to her attention and to Mme Marie Jeanne Ternois for her generous permission to use it.