THE BACHE COLLECTION ON LOAN

By HARRY B. WEHLE
Curator of Paintings

The famous Bache collection, consisting of sixty-three European paintings in addition to tapestries, sculptures, and other works of art, has been lent to the Museum for about three months beginning June 16. The house of Jules S. Bache, in which for the past few years the collection has been available to the public, is customarily closed during the summer months. Thus the temporary installation of the collection in the Metropolitan Museum makes it possible for visitors to see it at a season when normally they would be excluded. Furthermore, it may be assumed that many persons among the Museum’s large public will avail themselves of this opportunity to enjoy the collection who might have failed to see it in its usual setting at 814 Fifth Avenue.

In this connection may be made of the fact that the Museum’s setting for the collection is not indeed altogether different from that to which its admirers are accustomed, for Mr. Bache’s elegant French drawing room in the style of Louis XVI’s reign has been copied exactly in the central gallery of the Museum’s exhibition space (D 6). The flanking galleries before and beyond the French room and also a fourth gallery (J 8) a few steps up and beyond the third have been suitably redecorated in honor of this extraordinary occasion.

The Italian school has the most numerous representation in the Bache collection, and the first gallery is devoted to paintings and sculptures of that school. The Madonna and Child Enthroned by Fra Filippo Lippi, a lovely Florentine painting, gives impressive representation to the great generation of painters in the middle of the fifteenth century. Of about the same time is the delightfully quaint and precise Profile Portrait of a Girl given by current connoisseurship to Domenico Veneziano. Another Florentine picture, characterized again by clarity of presentation, is Ghirlandaio’s painting of Francesco Sassetti and his son Teodoro, in which the tenderly human relation between man and boy is a thing to enjoy and remember. The Madonna and Child by Crivelli is likewise of memorable quality. Though small the painting must be ranked among the artist’s great works, not only because of the abstracted loveliness of the Madonna but because of the delicate harmony of lilac combined with fresh peach and green tones. There are three notable works by Giovanni Bellini, representing a rather late period of his development. The Madonna and Child with Saints, grouped as a sacra conversazione, is full of quiet, lucent poetry. The Madonna and Child is conceived in the tender spirit of the expanding sixteenth century, and the Portrait of a Young Man with irreproachable coiffure is especially stimu-
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lating. The Madonna and Child shows Filippino Lippi at his best, not yet too far from the influence of Botticelli, and there are also an appealing Flight into Egypt by Cosimo Tura—caviar of the choicest quality—a simple and lovely Coronation of the Virgin by Botticelli, and a strangely impressive Madonna by Luca Signorelli, in which the divine mother, glowingly garbed, is seen with her healthy babe against a gold ground covered with a pattern of active putti.

The High Renaissance is represented in noble style by Raphael’s heroic Portrait of Giuliano de’ Medici, Duke of Nemours, and by three works of Titian. The earliest of the Titians is the Madonna and Child, a fresh-hued, full-bodied work close to the lyric style of Giorgione and probably painted during his lifetime. The Portrait of a Venetian Nobleman is evidently in the style of the artist’s middle years, while the passionate Venus and Adonis, similar to a version of the subject in the Widener collection, demonstrates the compact effectiveness and subdued tonality of his late period.

In this first gallery may also be seen a group of distinguished sculptures of the Renaissance. Outstanding among the larger pieces is a lovely relief of the Madonna and Child in glazed terracotta by Luca della Robbia. No less extraordinary in its way is the sensitive profile portrait in marble of a Young Patrician by Tullio Lombardo, a member of the most important family of Venetian fifteenth-century sculptors.

In small bronzes the quality of the collection again appears. Outstanding among the nine examples shown is the Self-Portrait by Peter Vischer. Vischer, the sturdy craftsman, stands with simple dignity, his hammer in one hand, his chisel in the other, a curiously impressive figure considering the small scale. The David with the Head of Goliath by Luca della Robbia is another of those rare Renaissance bronzes that reveal in small compass the genius of a great sculptor. The subject, the proud and conquering David, was a favorite in Florence during the quattrocento.

The visitor next enters the Louis XVI salon by way of a vestibule with arched doorways. At the farther end of the salon, between the windows, is Pater’s celebrated Fair at Bezons, formerly in the collection of Lady Carnarvon. Near by at the left is Fragonard’s Billet Doux, the enchanting portrait of Boucher’s daintily coquettish daughter Marie Émilie. It was one of the first great paintings to enter the collection. By Fragonard also is a pair of choice little landscapes painted in his younger days during a visit to the Abbé de Saint-Non at Tivoli. In this salon too are Watteau’s famous French Comedians, formerly in the collection of the German emperors at Potsdam. Instead of the umbrageous landscapes in which he usually set his figures, Watteau chose here to place his actors in an open porch where their shimmering costumes combine with a fresh blue sky to create a cheerful blond harmony. Without the charming artificiality of Boucher’s pastoral scenes no gallery of the French rococo would be complete. In the Bache collection the Sleeping Shepherdess admirably fills this requirement, and there are in addition capital portraits by Drouais and Vigée-LeBrun.

Besides the paintings the Louis XVI salon contains other works of high quality. There is, for instance, the uniquely human and convincing marble bust of Mme de Pompadour, which Louis XV commissioned of the eminent sculptor Jean Baptiste Pigalle. Another fine portrait of the period, the plaster bust of Mlle Olivier of the Comédie Française, is a characteristically spirited and theatrical work by Houdon. Placed about the salon on various pieces of furniture are a number of extraordinary pieces of small decorative sculpture in marble, terracotta, and biscuit de Sévres, the work of such contemporary masters as Houdon, Clodion, Falconet, and Marin. Paneled into the wall opposite the mantelpiece is a brilliant example of French tapestry, L’Opérateur, from the celebrated series of Fêtes Italiennes designed by Boucher for the royal manufactory at Beauvais. The scene, set forth in sparkling colors which have lost nothing with the passage of time, is in Boucher’s most delightful and rollicking vein. Among the fur-
The Madonna and Child by Carlo Crivelli (died about 1495).
In the Jules S. Bache collection
niture in the salon the piece of foremost quality is the table by the celebrated ébéniste Jean Henri Riesener. It is lavishly decorated with ormolu of superb quality and its top is inlaid with marquetry of surpassing delicacy. Also worth noting is a graceful writing desk decorated with floral marquetry of great beauty and, according to tradition, originally owned by Marie Antoinette. A long writing table signed by J. F. Leleu is decorated on all four sides with gaily colored Sévres porcelain plaques framed in ormolu.

The third gallery is devoted principally to Flemish paintings of the fifteenth century and German paintings of the sixteenth. The earliest and perhaps most impressive work in the room is Petrus Christus's serious portrait, dated 1446, of a Carthusian monk. This small panel, completely satisfying in its clear statement of form and simple scheme of color and profoundly absorbing as a psychological study, is rivaled in quality by Dirk Bouts's equally small and perfect Madonna and Child with a background of rose and gold brocade. Gerard David is seen in his loveliest genre in his Madonna and Child. The holy pair, seated in a tender landscape, are evidently resting on the route to Egypt. A triptych representing the Nativity with Saints and Donors is by the same artist. Among the other Flemish paintings Memling's narrow, upright Portrait of a Lady of Quality is especially striking and picturesque. There exists a curious painting of the same dimensions by Memling showing horses beside a pool, and the two may be presumed to have formed parts of the same small portable altarpiece. The group of German paintings is especially remarkable for four portraits by Holbein. The somewhat stolid bourgeois Portrait of Dirk Berck of Cologne makes way for the smaller and more appealing Portrait of a Lady of the Court of Henry VIII and two remarkable little circular portraits. The Portrait of a Man, formerly in the Sachs collection, has a delicacy rare in Holbein, and the serious, profiled head of the six-year-old Edward VI is unique among the works of the master. Judging by the age of the sitter as stated in the inscription, the portrait must have been painted in the last year of the artist's life. The Portrait of a Lady by Dürer, in the same gallery, was painted during a visit to Italy, according to Max J. Friedländer, and, surprisingly, is based on a contemporary Italian print. Two portraits by Hals also find places in this gallery, the more interesting unquestionably being the one painted at the later date, which sets forth with the master's inimitable bravura and good-natured candor the fat swaggering brewer Claes Duyst van Voorhout.

In this gallery also is to be seen the collection of Limoges enamel plaques of the late Middle Ages and the early Renaissance. Space permits enumeration of only a few of these treasures, such as the masterly triptych with the Mourning over the Dead Christ by Nardon Pénicaud and the triptych by Jean Pénicaud with the Entombment in the principal panel. Mention finally may be made of a plaque containing a vigorously drawn portrait of François I, from the atelier of Léonard Limousin.

The large fourth gallery a few steps up is devoted to paintings of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries—Dutch, Flemish, Spanish, and English. Here hang two important portraits by Van Dyck—one of himself as an eager young man, the other of the Earl of Warwick, a particularly emphatic and elegant work of his English period. Among the Dutch pictures is an exceptionally brilliant work, Curiosity, by Terborch. There are three Rembrandts; especially impressive is the large Standard Bearer of 1654, which once belonged to Sir Joshua Reynolds. The benign Christ with a Pilgrim's Staff (1661) is another Rembrandt of outstanding quality, while the painting A Young Man with a Black Cap (1659), though small, is perhaps the most interesting of the three, not only by reason of its dashing composition, rich color, and brilliant handling, but also because of the complex characterization of the sitter. Attempts on the part of scholars to establish a chronology for Vermeer's paintings have never been entirely convincing, yet the Bache collection's Head of a Young Boy and also the Young Woman Read-
Portrait of a Carthusian monk by Petrus Christus, dated 1446.

In the Bache collection
ing reveal such an obvious relationship to the style of Vermeer's master Carel Fabritius as strongly to suggest that Vermeer, when he painted them, could not have long been separated from his teacher.

Of the Spanish paintings Goya's portrait of the boy Don Manuel Osorio de Zuñiga—the distraught child with the captive magpie and the watchful cats—is so popular among American art lovers as to require no comment. Only a little less familiar and beloved is Velazquez's dainty Portrait of the Infanta Maria Teresa, which, before Mr. Bache lent it to the New York World's Fair of 1939, was lent to the Museum for several years by its former owner. Velazquez's fascinatingly introspective Self-Portrait also has been previously shown in the Museum as well as at the World's Fair.

The collection reaches its chronological termination in the English school of the eighteenth century. Gainsborough is represented by such typical works as the Portraits of Mrs. William Tennant and Queen Charlotte and by the small but stylish Portrait of Lady Mulgrave. Raeburn's genius for expressing the calm self-assurance of British childhood is seen in the portrait of young William Scott-Elliot, while his talent for expressing robust masculinity appears to good advantage in the likeness of William Miller. In his Portrait of Nancy Parsons, Reynolds reveals an unaccustomed mood of thoughtful reverie. Three excellent Romneys complete the list. Especially appealing is the portrait of the beautiful Elizabeth, Countess of Derby, who sits in a dreamy attitude out of doors.

The Bache collection includes a group of very impressive examples of English silver by such famous craftsmen as Augustine Courtauld, Thomas Heming, and Paul Lamerie, and some of these are shown in this gallery. Lamerie's highly fanciful designs are admirably presented in two pairs of candlesticks, in a great gilt charger, and in a massive soup tureen. The tureen is one of the most imposing examples of the rococo style in English silverwork. In addition to these English pieces, a silver-gilt tazza embossed with scenes commemorating the exploits of the Emperor Otho, one of a series celebrating the lives of the Roman Caesars, bears witness to the skill of Augsburg silversmiths.

In 1929 there was published a fully illustrated Catalogue of Paintings in the Bache Collection, since revised more than once. Copies of the latest edition are on sale at the Information Desk, and these should give welcome assistance to visitors studying the pictures in this great collection.