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Valuable art collection for University

By Dr. Fern Rusk Shapley

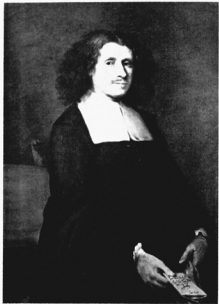
At the inauguration of the University's Museum of Art and Archaeology, on April 11th, fourteen paintings, ranging in date from the early fifteenth century to the mid-eighteenth, were presented to the University by the Samuel H. Kress Foundation. Half of these paintings come from the Kress Collection which was installed at the National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C., in 1941. The others also are connected in one way or another with the formation of the National Gallery's Kress Collection, which has undergone many changes in the past twenty years. Originally it was almost exclusively Italian, of the Renaissance and pre-Renaissance periods; but it has been gradually varied, largely through exchange, releasing many of the Italian paintings. With these, supplemented by new acquisitions, the Kress Foundation developed

a program of donations to other museums and to universities and colleges. Eighteen museums, chiefly in western and southern states, were given large Kress collections and about twenty universities and colleges are now receiving smaller donations, designed as study collections.

All but one of the paintings in our Kress Study Collection are Italian, but their chronological and regional range is wide. Earliest among them are two small panels (each 10 x 6½ in.) by the early fifteenth-century Bolognese artist Michele di Matteo. They represent *John the Evangelist* and *The Virgin* in half length and probably came originally from the left section of an altarpiece predella. The intense, tragic expression of the faces is typical of the early Bolognese school, as is the lovely translucent coloring.



Representing mythology in art is this painting (almost five feet square) of "Thetis and Hephaestus," painted by Paris Bordone about 1550.



"The Portrait of Giovanni Battista Silva," by Filippo Abbiati (1640-1715), was purchased by the Kress Foundation from a private collection in Milan.

Art collection continued

A small, but remarkably beautiful, *Processional Cross* (20 $\frac{1}{4}$ x 16 $\frac{1}{2}$ in.), in a style recalling Benozzo Gozzoli, to whom, as well as to an immediate follower, it was formerly attributed, is now classified as the work of Amedeo da Pistoia. Its iconography—the Virgin, John the Evangelist, and God the Father in quatrefoil terminations of the Cross on which Christ hangs; the pelican feeding her young from her own blood, above Christ; and the skull, below—is typical of the Crucifixes, large and small, that decorated early Renaissance churches or were used in their ceremonies.

The Siennese School is represented by Fungai's large panel (48 $\frac{3}{4}$ x 18 $\frac{3}{8}$ in.) of St. Louis of France, identified by his crown and his scepter tipped with fleurs-de-lis. The style of the work dates it about 1510, when Fungai was under the influence of Pintoricchio, who had a few years earlier painted the great series of frescoes in the Piccolomini Library in Siena.

One of the most charming pictures in the group is a small *Ex Voto* (11 $\frac{1}{2}$ x 13 $\frac{3}{8}$ in.), almost modernistic

in its daring color combinations. It is by the Ferrarese artist Maineri and is dated 1501 in the long Latin inscription which poetically expresses gratitude for the recovery of the elderly man shown lying in his canopied bed while a young man kneels near by and a servant leaves the room through an open door.

From about the same date, but unusual in composition and technique is the *Madonna and Ecce Homo* (13 $\frac{3}{8}$ x 8 $\frac{7}{8}$ in.) by a master of the School of Verona formerly identified by Berenson as Domenico Morone. The picture is painted directly on canvas, without any preparatory ground and probably served originally as a church standard. The composition is divided horizontally. In the upper section is Christ, standing in a marble sarcophagus; he wears the crown of thorns and is surrounded by other symbols of the Passion. In the lower section, beneath the inscription REGINA CELI, the Madonna, holding the Child, is seated in an open landscape against a red brocaded cloth.

The well-known Milanese artist Bramantino is the author of a half-length *Madonna and Child* (18 $\frac{5}{8}$ x 14 $\frac{1}{4}$ in.) dating from about 1520. The delicate gradations of light and shade and the slight smile on the Virgin's lips bear witness to the influence of Leonardo on the Milanese School.

Disputed by scholars as to its precise authorship, but clearly North Italian of about 1520 and usually attributed to the Brescian artist Romanino, is the half-length figure of *Christ Blessing* (21 $\frac{3}{4}$ x 16 in.). Its rich colors and poetic expression relate it to Giorgione and it was, in fact, shown in an exhibition of "Giorgione and His Circle" in 1942.

One of the most beautiful paintings in the collection and the richest in color, an enthroned *Madonna and Child* (44 x 18 $\frac{3}{4}$ in.), was attributed to the same artist, Romanino, when in the Kress Collection at the National Gallery of Art. A few years ago it was recognized as the middle panel of a triptych, the two wings of which, representing *St. Helena* and *Tobias with the Angel*, are now in the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford. In 1872 the triptych was described as it had hung intact in the Galleria delle Torri de' Picenardi before it was sold in Milan in 1869 to an English antiquarian. At that time all three panels were ascribed to an artist from Cremona, Altobello



"Madonna and Child," painted some time between 1510 and 1520 by Altobello Melone. A middle panel of a triptych, it is 44 by 19 inches in size.

Melone, the attribution accepted for them today.

The small predella painting (11 x 14½ in.) of *The Temptation of St. Anthony* has been published by Borenius as possibly part, originally, of the altarpiece which Bartolommeo Montagna painted in 1517 for a church near the artist's home, Vicenza.

The large canvas (55¾ x 51 in.) painted by Paris Bordone about 1550 was catalogued when in the National Gallery of Art as *Minerva at the Forge of Vulcan* but is perhaps more convincingly identified as *Thetis and Hephaestus* (Vulcan), representing, therefore, the mother of Achilles procuring armor for her son from the god of metalworking. The lightness and buoyancy of the figures suggest that this painting may originally have been an over-door decoration and may have been associated with two other mythological paintings by Bordone, one in the museum at Göteborg, the other in the National Gallery, London.

There are two portraits in the collection. In one (42½ x 30¾ in.), dating probably about 1680, the sitter is identified, by an inscribed letter in his hand, as Giovanni Battista Silva, member of a Milanese family. But the artist, although consistently recognized as Milanese, has been disputed. Suida, comparing the work with a portrait in the Ospedale Maggiore, Milan, attributes it to Filippo Abbiati, Magnasco's master in Milan.

The other portrait (18 x 15¼ in.) is Pietro Rotari's delightful interpretation of his young wife. It comes from the collection which Catherine the Great formed at St. Petersburg, where she employed Rotari to paint for her a large number of his characteristic heads of pretty girls; two of them are now in the Kress Collection at the National Gallery of Art.

More in the vein of genre than of portraiture is *The Laughing Man* (30 x 24¼ in.) by the Mantuan painter Bazzani, whose brilliant brushwork attests the admiration he felt for such artists as Rubens and Crespì.

Finally, the one non-Italian painting in the collection is also the only one which is a copy. It is the large canvas (72 x 52½ in.) of *The Sacrifice of Isaac*, after Rembrandt's famous version of the theme in the Hermitage Museum, Leningrad. The copy is probably contemporary—or nearly so—and can afford the art student profitable exercise in determining whether it is by Bol, as one scholar has suggested, or by some other pupil or follower of the great Dutch master.

The Kress Study Collection now hangs in a new gallery specially prepared for it on the fourth floor of the new Library addition, a gallery open to all yet integrated here with the reading room, the books, the seminar room and the studies for art and archaeology. With such a location the paintings will serve best as a true study collection and they are already being used in a variety of ways for the teaching of art history. At the same time, they furnish a substantial nucleus about which the painting collections of the Museum of Art and Archaeology will be built.