

Italian Paintings of the 15th and 16th Centuries in the Thorvaldsen Museum

Thorvaldsen's collection of paintings, which now forms part of his museum, mainly consists of pictures by artists contemporary with him, but also contains a small number of older paintings, most of which are of the Italian school, including a few examples of fifteenth and sixteenth century art. The oldest picture in the collection is a predella (fig. 1) by Taddeo di Bartolo (Note 4) showing three scenes from the Passion (Christ in Gethsemane (Note 4a), the Crucifixion, and the Resurrection) flanked by two saints, St. Mary Magdalene and St. Catherine of Alexandria. Of a not much later date is Lorenzo Monaco's small Virgin and Child (fig. 2), a version of the Madonna of Humility (Note 5) which is dated shortly after 1415 (Note 6) and which may be compared in style with a closely similar painting of the same size, St. Jerome in the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam (Note 7); they may have formed a diptych similar to the one by Tommaso da Modena at Philadelphia (Notes 8 & 8a). This picture is by far the most important example of fifteenth century Italian painting in the Thorvaldsen Museum. A copy, with only slight variations, of the Virgin and Child with two Cherubs by Alesso Baldovinetti (Note 12) has points in common with the group of craftsmanlike pictures which Berenson classified under the title "Pseudo Pier Francesco Fiorentino". Of considerably more interest are two saints, St. John the Baptist and St. Eligius (?) painted by Fiorenzo di Lorenzo (Notes 13, 14), which may have formed the two panels of an altar-piece or perhaps the doors of a small cupboard; painted on the reverse of the two panels and treated as a whole is a geometrical design with tools, two axes, a hammer, and a knife, in the corners (figs. 3, 4). The collection also includes a copy of the Virgin and Child by Pintoricchio, the original being in the National Gallery in Washington (Note 15), and copies of paintings by Perugino, Raphael, Sebastiano del Piombo, Titian, Correggio, and Pontormo. A picture of the Virgin with her Family (fig. 5), possible Ferrarese, has a certain iconographical interest (Note 24). A small portrait of a young woman (fig. 6), attributed to Sofonisba Anguissola, probably dates from about 1550 (Note 26). Dated just before 1600 is the Ecstasy of St. Francis (fig. 7) by a Flemish painter, Frans van de Kastele, who called himself Francesco da Castello in Italy (Note 27). In the style of Bassano the Younger

is a painting entitled "Domestic Evening Tasks" (fig. 8), which combines a genre piece in the foreground with a religious motif (Christ in Gethsemane?) as chiaroscuro studies in the background (Note 30). The picture is signed BASS.^s F., and, according to E. Arslan, is the one of several versions which is most typical of Francesco Bassano (Note 32).

Harald Olsen