TWO JAPANESE BUDDHIST FIGURES OF THE KAMAKURA PERIOD.

Jizo Bosatsu. Japanese coloured wood statuette, height 24½ ins.; detail, Felton Bequest, 1957.

Although figures in clay were fashioned in Japan at an early date, sculpture as a fine art only commenced in the middle of the 6th century A.D., and then in the service of a new religion, Buddhism. Indeed most great Japanese sculpture at all periods has been essentially Buddhist.

In A.D. 552 the king of Paikche in Korea presented a gilt-bronze image of the Buddha to Kimmei, the emperor of Japan. So important was this event that it marks the first year of the Asuka period which was to last until 710. A struggle for the survival of Buddhism with the native Shintōism resulted in a compromise and a degree of amalgamation which still exists, a success largely due to a remarkable man, Shōtoku Taishi. This noble prince, who became regent in 593, gave Buddhism such influential and enlightened support that it rapidly gained power and prestige.

The forms of early Buddhist images were largely derived from Korean models; for Japan then held a territorial foothold in southern Korea, and many Koreans came to Japan as priests and artists. Yet the native Japanese sculpture did not slavishly follow the foreign models: just as China had modified central Asian versions of Indian Buddhist prototypes, so did Japan those of China and Korea. Much Asokan sculpture is strongly reminiscent of contemporary Korean models, which themselves mirror Chinese art of the Wei period, such as that of Yün Kang. It is a form with simplicity and great beauty that produces in

Jizo Bosatsu, Japanese coloured wood statuette, height 24½ ins.; detail; Felton Bequest, 1957.

the beholder the feeling of mystery and other-worldness which lies behind the appeal of great religious sculpture.

Towards the year 670 Japan lost its foothold in Korea. Thereafter Korean influence waned whereas that of the now unified and immensely powerful T'ang China exerted great influence as a model of artistic, social and political values. The style of the T'ang dynasty (618-907) represented the triumph of naturalism over stylization. Its influence appeared in Japan towards the end of the Asuka period, and predominated during that of Nara (710-784).

The 8th century was probably the greatest era of Japanese sculpture. The early Heian period (784-897) and the 9th century saw a continuation of the T'ang style, but with a drift backwards to idealization, and a solemn heaviness differing from the light vitality of the 8th century. In the later Heian period (898-1185), when the powerful Fujiwara family became dominant, court life in Heian (Kyōto) was elegant and sumptuous. The cultivation of the arts as a form of noble and gracious living affected even Buddhist sculpture.

Jizo Bosatsu, Japanese coloured wood statuette, height 24½ ins.; Felton Bequest, 1957.

A pursuit of naturalism and beauty displaced the heavier and awe-inspiring figures of the earlier period, and laid the ground work for a new form of sculpture to be developed in the Kamakura period (1185-1392).

In 1185 the great Minamoto clan had displaced the Taira family which had itself in 1159 caused the downfall of the Fujiwara courtiers, and become the military rulers of Japan. Leaving the emperor with his pleasure loving court at Kyōto, the Minamoto warriors moved the administrative capital eastwards to Kamakura from whence they exercised control for over two centuries. At an early date they rebuilt the two great monasteries of the Tōdaiji and the Kōfukuji at Nara, which had been destroyed by the Taira clan. Fortunately many accomplished artists were available including a distinguished line of sculptors descended through Jōchō of the late Heian period. Living representatives were his great-great grandson Kōkei, the father of Unkei and the teacher of Kaikei, both of whom developed the splendid Kamakura style of sculpture. Unkei's sons and grandsons also followed this style.

Although their styles were in some ways different, Unkei and Kaikei had much in common; for both returned to the modes of representation of the great Nara period with its naturalism, and at times used living models. The two Niō in wood at the entrance gateway of the Tōdaiji were chiefly their work, although the strongly carved figures are more in the style of Unkei. It is, however, the style of Kaikei which concerns us more here, for our two figures are in his tradition, and one at least could have been from his hand. His carving was shallow, and he sought the gently beautiful. He displayed the new Japanese interest in Chinese sculpture of the Sung dynasty (960-1280), and it is to be observed that he was in close relationship with the high priest Shunjōbō Chōgen, who was in the main responsible for the reconstruction of the Tōdaiji, and who is recorded as having visited Sung China on three occasions beforehand.

The seated figure is that of the Dainichi Nyorai (Vairocana), the Great Illuminator or the Universal Buddha who represents the Absolute (cover design). He sits in the attitude of meditation, his eyes closed, the five fingers of the right hand grasping the forefinger of the left. This symbolises the five elements grasping the sixth, mind, and denotes wisdom. The figure, which is 24¾ ins. high, is shallowly carved in dark lacquer. It is of a young and gracious person, and its relation to Sung sculpture can be plainly seen if it is compared with the large seated Bodhisattva figure in the Gallery collection. It is strongly in the tradition of Kaikei.

The second figure (illus.) is that of Jizō Bosatsu (Ksitigarbha). This Bodhisattva, to use the Sanskrit term, was popular during the Kamakura period, and is the guardian of children. His head is clean-shaven, his face young, well fleshed and kindly. On his left palm is a Hōshu or magic jewel, shaped like a pointed ball. His right hand grasps a staff with rings. The figure, which is 24½ inches high, is in shallowly carved wood. The robe is darkly coloured and gilded, the head and hands are flesh coloured. The figure alone is of the Kamakura period, and is remarkably preserved: the base and halo are of later dates. The resemblance to the Jizō figure carved by Kaikei in the Tōdaiji is striking, although this figure is larger.

Both figures came to the National Gallery of Victoria through the generosity of the Felton Bequest committee. They represent the desire of the Gallery trustees to form a small Japanese collection of the highest quality.

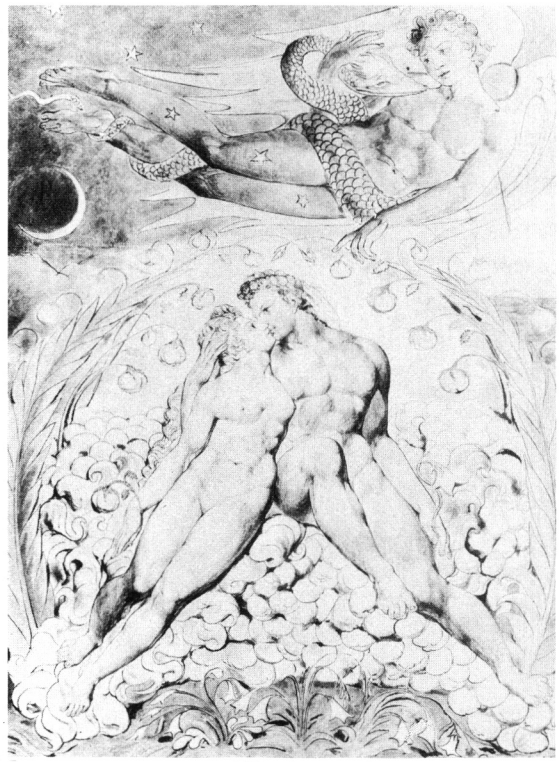
LEONARD B. COX

John Linnell (1792-1882). Portrait of Albin Martin, 1835; pencil and chalk, $19\frac{3}{4}$ ins. x $16\frac{1}{8}$ ins. By permission of Miss Nella Hickson, Auckland, N.Z.

THE BI-CENTENARY OF WILLIAM BLAKE 1857-1957

To mark the Bi-centenary of William Blake's birth (1757) the Gallery put on display thirty-six watercolours in illustration to Dante's Divine Comedy, two watercolours to Milton's Paradise Lost, two colour engravings to Europe and one to Jerusalem, all of which came to Melbourne from the descendants of Blake's last patron, John Linnell.

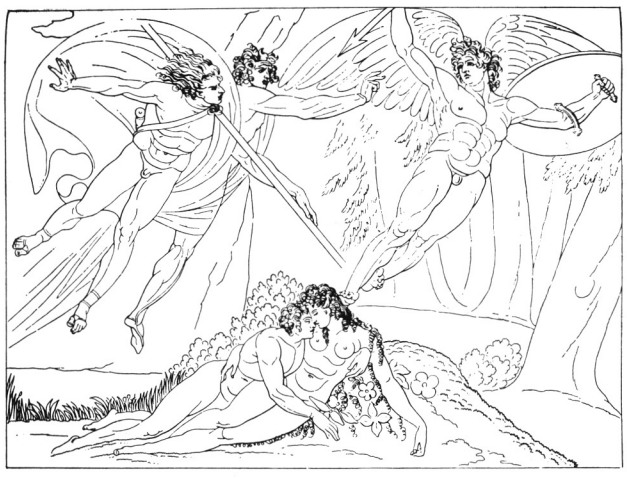
In addition, a documentary exhibition was arranged to show works of Blake's contemporaries. Examples by Fuseli, Flaxman, Stothard, Palmer, Linnell and Thornton, John and Alexander Runciman were assembled both from the permanent collection and from the City Art Gallery, Auckland, the Wellington Art Gallery and private owners in New Zealand. A photographic section was devoted to comparisons between the Melbourne Blakes and their sources of inspiration. The influence of works of classical sculpture on the Dante illustrations were revealed in photographs made available by Professor J. T. A. Burke, who will publish them in a forthcoming article on Blake. Photographs also elucidated the rela-



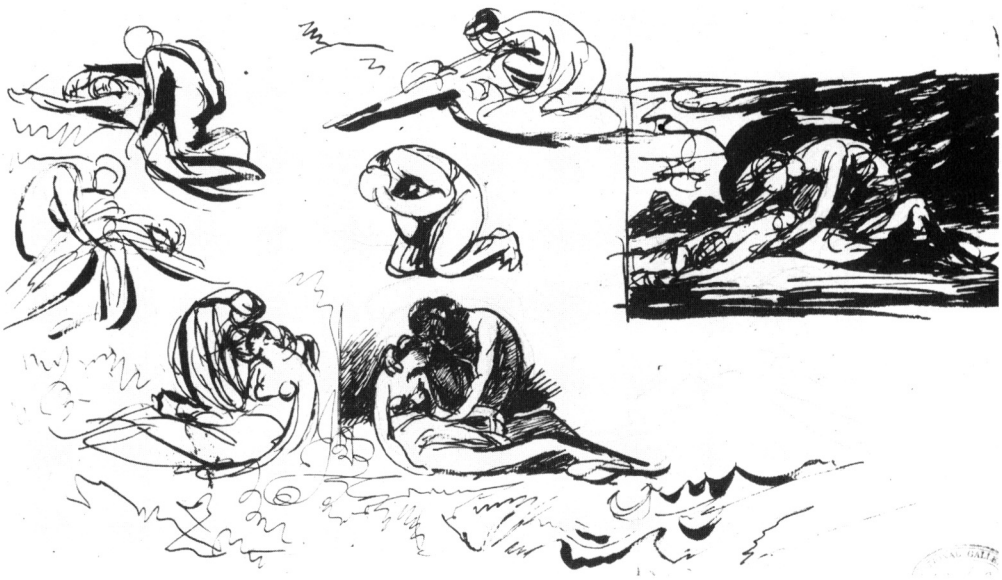
William Blake (1757-1827). Satan Watching the Endearments of Adam and Eve, watercolour drawing, 20¼ ins. x 14¼ ins.; Felton Bequest, 1920.

tion between Flaxman's and Blake's Dante series and Fuseli's and Blake's illustrations to Milton's Paradise Lost.

One of the Milton illustrations in the Melbourne collection reveals an affinity to a design by Fuseli. Blake rendered the scene in several different versions. The first design of 1806, now in the Fogg Art Museum, Harvard, showed an upright sitting group of Adam and Eve with Satan floating overhead towards the left and the Serpent of Evil under the foot of Adam. A small pencil sketch (reproduced by G. Keynes "Blake's Pencil Drawings II", 1956, plate 13) resembles the figure group of the Fogg design. A second sketch (G. Keynes ibid.) connected with the version in the Huntington Library, California, accentuates the pyramidal form of the figure group and introduces the Sun and the Moon. Satan still floats towards the left, but holds the Serpent in his hand. The Huntington version of 1807 precedes the larger Boston design dated 1808, which was made for Thomas Butts. The Melbourne drawing (dated 1822 by Rossetti) and commissioned by John Linnell, repeats in all essentials the design of 1808. All these drawings show a marked family likeness to a drawing by Fuseli made for the Milton Gallery pictures exhibited in 1799 (reproduced here from an illustration in A. Federmann "J. H. Fuessli", Leipzig, 1927, page 72). Here the figures of Satan and his followers have wings and Adam and Eve are set against a rising hillock. While Fuseli's design is naturalistic and theatrical, Blake's is heraldic and symbolic. Fuseli's figures, disposed as if on a stage, reveal their purpose by facial expression and gestures. Blake stylized his group into a pattern closely related to the flat picture plane and added a symbolic element, the snake of evil which, endearingly encircling Satan, reveals that the scene does not represent a mere passing dispute but a fundamental conflict between good and evil.



Henry Fuseli (1741-1825). Satan and his Emissaries watching Adam and Eve (engraved by Lips after Fuseli in 1807).



George Romney (1734-1802), sketchbook leaf, pencil, pen and brush and bistre, 8 ins. x 15 ins.; Felton Bequest, 1923.

George Romney (1734-1802), sketchbook, leaf, pencil, pen and brush and bistre, 7 ins. x 10 ins.; Felton Bequest, 1923.

The poetic and illustrative trend which characterises Blake's work found earlier expression in the paintings of Shakespearian subjects commissioned by Alderman Boydell in the 1780's from such artists as Reynolds, West, Romney, Fuseli and Stothard and others. Some hitherto unpublished sketches by George Romney (1743-1802) for an unidentified literary subject bear a marked resemblance to the simplified form, the expressive gestures which we find in Blake's art. The reclining figure with the ecstatically thrown back arm recalls motifs employed by Blake, for example, in his Elohim creating Adam (1795) and Jacob's Ladder (about 1800).

URSULA HOFF

RECENT ACQUISITIONS TO THE ART GALLERY INCLUDE:

OIL PAINTINGS—		
PORTRAIT OF A LADY	Tom Roberts	Purchased
LIVING IN BETWEEN	F. G. Hodgkinson	Purchased
THE TIRED MAN	Bob Dickerson	Purchased
DRAWINGS—		
CHILDREN, SHANGHAI	Charles Bush	Purchased
STUDY FOR THE WHEEL OF FORTUNE	E. Burne Jones	Purchased
HEAD OF A DANCER	James Wigley	Purchased
HEAD STUDY	John Brack	Purchased
STUDIO INTERIOR	Anthony Underhill	Purchased

The following publications and reproductions are on sale at the Swanston Street Entrance:

Catalogue of the Gallery (5/-); Catalogue of Selected Masterpieces, with 30 illustrations (1/6); Thirteen large reproductions (25/- each). A selection of small reproductions, including Christmas cards.

THEATRETTE:

ART FILMS: on the third Tuesday of each month.
DOCUMENTARY FILMS: on Tuesday, excepting each third Tuesday.
MUSICAL RECORDINGS: on the second and fourth Thursday.
All these activities are held at 1.15 p.m.

The cover design in this issue is the Dainichi Nyorai, Japanese lacquer statuette, Felton Bequest, 1955. Height — 24¾ ins.

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