



THE QUARTERLY BULLETIN OF THE  
NATIONAL GALLERY OF VICTORIA

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EL GRECO'S "PORTRAIT OF A MAN," REPRODUCED ON THE COVER, COMES FROM the collection of Baron del Asilo which was formed in Madrid during the first half of the nineteenth century. The Gallery acquired it in April from Tomas Harris, of London, who says of it: "It is a Greco of the rarest type which I consider was painted during the last years of the master's life. Although many important Grecos have passed through my hands, I have never possessed anything more sensitive and beautiful than this canvas. It is for me one of the outstanding portraits in the history of Spanish painting."

The Spanish School was previously represented in the Gallery by only four works — two Riberas, Murillo's "Immaculate Conception" and the "Portrait of a Lady" by Goya. The Greco adds immeasurably to this group, and it forms also a link with the Byzantine works, especially the 12th Century "Christ Pantocrator," which we acquired last year.

Domenikos Theotokopoulos, generally known by his Spanish nickname of "El Greco," was, as readers are aware, born in Crete, then a Venetian dependency, in 1541; and it is likely that he began painting in the style of the Cretan ikon makers. He continued his education in the school of Tintoretto in Venice, and he is almost certainly the young Cretan, "a pupil of Titian," who is mentioned in 1570 by the miniaturist, Giulio Clovio, as having arrived in Rome. From Rome he went to Spain. In 1577 he signed and dated a painting in Toledo, and it appears that he remained in this city, producing works for churches and religious houses, until his death in 1614. His manner, developed under the Venetians, but still markedly Byzantinian, made him peculiarly able to interpret the Spanish spirit of the time, and gave to his painting a singularity which both provides a connection between the Byzantine and Western arts and distinguishes him from all other artists.

Charles Seltman says, in "Studio," April, 1946, that "El Greco, reared in the archaic strength of Byzantium, schooled in the humanism of classical Venice, gathered together the whole power of Greek art and flung it forward as a challenge to ourselves . . . This Cretan, El Greco, was the inventor of modern landscape painting, his elegant landscape manner was admired by Goya, who in his turn profoundly influenced Cézanne, and through Cézanne the whole splendid nineteenth-century tradition of French landscape art. Thus the long road of Greek art led to Paris; and the trail was apparent not in landscape alone."

The "Portrait of a Man" was acquired under the terms of the Felton Bequest. It is on canvas, and measures 22½ in. x 18 in.

## THE OLD OAK

Another painting so acquired is the Hobbema landscape which is reproduced on the opposite page.

It is always fascinating to trace the history of a name, a building, a picture. And Hobbema's "Old Oak" has a singularly interesting story. It is told by Charles Blanc in his "Histoire des Peintres."

Some of Hobbema's most beautiful pictures were painted in the neighbourhood of a chateau in the province of Groningen. Some were commissioned by the owners of the chateau, the family of Alberda Van Dyksterhuys. About 170 years later they were still hanging there, more or less ignored, when, in 1829, their existence was revealed by a curious incident.

The fine arts society of Groningen held a landscape competition. A young man named Pierre Aikens entered a painting which might have won the prize if its unusual merit had not made the judges wonder. He was questioned by the president of the academy, M. Van Arnhem, and confessed that he had copied it from an original by Hobbema in the chateau a few miles away.

Van Arnhem pricked up his ears. He presented himself at the chateau and was received by a charming and friendly old gentleman, who, finding that the president was interested in his pictures, insisted on showing him a series of no doubt highly worthy family portraits. M. Van Arnhem, however, couldn't take his eyes off the Hobbemas.

Charles Blanc says at this point: "Urbanity was an hereditary virtue in the house of Alberda Van Dyksterhuys, but not the love of paintings." The Jonkheer Alberda confessed that he



MEINDERT HOBBEEMA

THE OLD OAK

Oil on Canvas, 39½ in. x 56¾ in.

*Felton Bequest, 1950*

set little store by these pictures, although he knew they had belonged to his grandfather, had never been outside the chateau, and that they represented the most beautiful parts of the surrounding country. The president, while assuring him that he did not share this indifference, enquired as casually as he could whether they were for sale. The upshot was that he was offered the two paintings for 400 florins providing that he could supply a couple of pictures to take their place.

Not long after, while the president was hunting for some likely pictures, the old man died. Happily, he had told his heir of the deal. But in the meantime another amateur, M. Goekinga, had offered a bigger sum. However, both being reasonable gentlemen, Van Arnhem and Goekinga agreed to share the spoils. They took the pictures, sent them to Amsterdam, submitted them to public auction, and found that one was considered worth 3,225 florins, the other 4,000.

Twelve years later the same two paintings figured in an auction by M. Hérís, of Brussels. One was called "The Water Mill," the other "The Fallen Tree."

In the light of other evidence it is possible that Blanc's story is not quite accurate towards the end. According to Hofstede de Groot's Catalogue of Dutch Painters, the two pictures were first auctioned in Amsterdam in 1833 and again in Paris, by M. Hérís, in 1841; and it seems possible that M. Goekinga (or Gockinga as de Groot calls him) acquired his Hobbema after, rather than before, the Amsterdam sale.

However this may be, the painting we have now acquired under the title of "The Old Oak" is certainly the one described and engraved as "The Fallen Tree" in Blanc's work, and which, for the first 170 years of its life, hung in obscurity with its companion piece on the walls of a chateau in Groningen.

## FOUR CONTEMPORARY PAINTINGS

ALAN WARREN

FLOWERPIECE

Oil on glass, 20½ in. x 17¾ in.  
Purchased, 1949.

Alan Warren, who works chiefly in oils, water colours and gouache, is a talented Australian painter whose insistence on formal discipline enables him to give force to the natural poetry of his work.



This English painter's work is distinguished by his special colours — dark green, rose, black, and yellow-orange — and by an interest, not so much in broad, scenic landscape, as in the individual figurative detachment of its parts.

"My aim," he wrote in 1936, "is always to catch and pin down the essence of that aspect of reality which moves me — to fix and mark out the shape of my sensation."

GRAHAM SUTHERLAND

THE CLIFF ROAD

Oil on canvas, 46½ in. x 34 in.  
Felton Bequest, 1949.



MAURICE BRIANCHON

AUTEUIL RACECOURSE

Oil on canvas, 39 in. x 32 in.

*Felton Bequest, 1949*

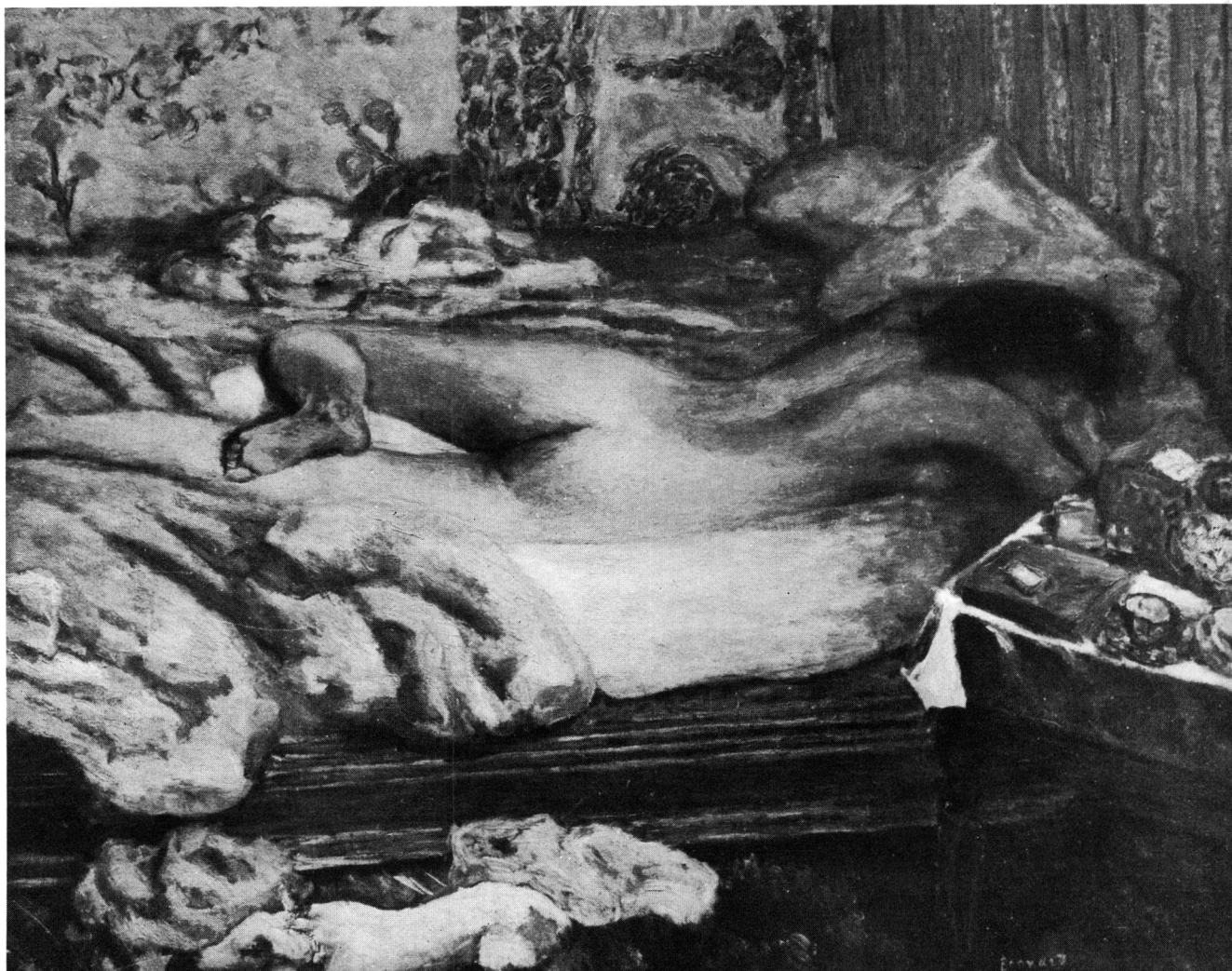
Brianchon, a contemporary artist of the French School, won the Blumenthal Prize in 1924. He is a painter of interiors, nudes and landscapes, and has been influenced by the work of Manet, and of Pierre Bonnard, who has been called "the last of the great Impressionists."

PIERRE BONNARD

THE ARTIST'S STUDIO

Oil on canvas, 43 in. x 51½ in.

*Felton Bequest, 1949*





Gems from  
the Art Museum  
No. XIV

### PERSIAN DISH

This 12th century dish, of polychrome "lakabi" (painted) ware, is said to be the supreme example of its kind. References to it may be found in most reputable works on Persian ceramics. It is reproduced in colour in Hobson's Catalogue of the Eumorfopoulos Collection (Vol. 6, plate 59), in Sir Arthur Upham Pope's monumental "Survey of Persian Art" (Plate 603), and in Arthur Lane's "Early Islamic Pottery" (Plate B) where it also appears in colour on the dust jacket.

It is the most important example of a rare technique which was abandoned after a short while because of its difficulty. This was, as Lane points out, an attempt "to use glazes of different colours side by side in the ornament of a single vessel. The designs were carved

in a kind of *cloisonné* manner, with grooved or raised outlines to segregate the coloured glazes in their appropriate areas." On upright jars it was not very successful because the colours tended to run. It had, however, a passing success on open dishes fired face upwards.

The dish is not only successful technically. Its design is the work of an unusually talented artist. Some other dishes of this kind show static heraldic designs; but this is marked by the most fluid movement.

It shows three court entertainers, a dancer with her drummer (left) and harpist (right), playing on a raised platform, and two hyenas moving rhythmically, as though they were performing animals, in the foreground. Pope makes what seems to be a mistake in saying that the platform is "supported on the backs" of these "peculiar animals that look Chinese but have no Far Eastern prototype and seem to be a combination of the hyena and a misunderstood Foo dog." He may be right, however, in claiming that the design as a whole betrays the influence of some Chinese painting. The appearance of the dancer's face, her head-dress, and the whole movement of line in her dangling, billowing sleeves do suggest Chinese influence. Lane, on the other hand, believes this to be a mistaken view on the grounds that "all details, including the head-dress, can be paralleled elsewhere in Islamic art of Saljuq times."

Both agree that the design itself is an inspired one. The lively rhythms of the dancer and her attendants are emphasized by the swerving incisions made in the garments, and over the bodies of the animals; and the lines cut with rapid improvisations around the rim form no mere repetitive pattern but run in swift rhythms which, as Pope says, "seem to call the tune to the dancers."

#### PRINT ROOM COLLECTION

A recent acquisition is this charming drawing from the world-famous collection of Sir Thomas Barlow, who presented it to the gallery as a memento of his visit.



LANDSCAPE STUDY, Pen and Wash

THOMAS GAINSBOROUGH

RECENT ACQUISITIONS TO THE ART GALLERY INCLUDE:

OILS

Portrait Group, Giacomo Amiconi .....	Felton Bequest
The Old Oak, Meindert Hobbema .....	Felton Bequest
Portrait of a Man, El Greco .....	Felton Bequest
Repatriation Hospital, Heidelberg, Ludmilla Meilerts .....	Purchased
Foggy Day on the Thames, Ena Joyce .....	Purchased
Central Australia, Sidney Nolan .....	Purchased
Night Flowers, Francis Lyburner .....	Purchased
Sea-Studio, Winter, Mary Cecil Allen .....	Purchased

WATER-COLOURS

Eight watercolours by Conrad Martens .....	Felton Bequest
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MISCELLANEOUS

Coloured drawing, T. S. Eliot, by Wyndham Lewis .....	Felton Bequest
Three pen and wash drawings by Kenneth Jack .....	Purchased
Ten etchings by Callot .....	Purchased
Watercolour drawing, Hardenbergia Monophylla, by Margaret Stones .....	Purchased

ART MUSEUM

Six pieces of Orrefors Glass .....	Felton Bequest
Persian dish of polychrome lakabi ware, XI-XII Century .....	Felton Bequest
Chippendale tea table, mahogany, rococo style, c. 1750 .....	Purchased
Libation ladle, bronze, Han Dynasty .....	Purchased

GENEROUS DONATIONS TO THE NATIONAL GALLERY AND ART MUSEUM INCLUDE:

Drawing, Landscape Study, by Gainsborough .....	Presented by Sir Thomas Barlow
Oil painting, Spring Scene, by Rupert Bunny .....	Presented by G. R. Nicholas, Esq.

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**Assistant Drawing and Painting Master, Alan Sumner**  
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*National Gallery lunch-time talks are given on the second and fifth Thursdays of each month. (There is, however, a lecture or films EVERY Thursday – some arranged by the Public Library and others by the museums.)*