



Gifts from George and Florence Blumenthal: A Renaissance Bronze

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THE GIOVANNI P. MOROSINI
COLLECTION

Beginning on Friday, December 9, and continuing through Sunday, January 8, 1933, the Giovanni P. Morosini Collection, bequeathed to the Museum by Giulia P. Morosini as a memorial to her father, will be shown in its entirety in Gallery D 13 on the first floor. Especially rich in arms and

armor, this collection includes also miniatures, paintings, prints, and various objects of European decorative art. After the special showing, the pieces, although distributed in the galleries, will continue to bear upon their labels the name of the collection as well as that of the donor.

GIFTS FROM GEORGE AND
FLORENCE BLUMENTHAL

A RENAISSANCE BRONZE

Among the few classical statues known in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries in Italy, none appears to have been more popular than the bronze Spinario which formed part of the donation of Pope Sixtus IV to the Conservatori in 1471. This life-size statue, as every visitor to Rome will recall, represents a nude boy, seated on a rock and bending forward as he examines the sole of his right foot as if to pluck out a thorn. The appeal of the statue in the Renaissance was twofold: first, as a "witness," clear and authoritative, of the ancient civilization to which the new culture was turning for direction; and, secondly, as a charming embodiment of that love and understanding of childhood which are so abundantly evident in the art of the Renaissance.

We may judge of the popularity of the Spinario from the numerous bronze statuettes of this subject that were made in Italy toward the end of the fifteenth century and in the first years of the sixteenth. These little bronzes, of which the Museum possesses two, are not so much faithful copies of the original as personal interpretations of the classical theme. In the later Renaissance, however, the attitude of the artist toward the monuments of the past was no longer as naive as we find it in these statuettes. Now, in copying or imitating the antique the effort was made to approach more closely to the original.

There is in the Louvre an interesting bronze copy of the Spinario, made in 1540, that illustrates this point. The copy is the work of Giovanni Fancelli and Jacopo Sansovino and was presented in 1540 to Francis I by Cardinal Ippolito II d'Este.

Another bronze copy of the Spinario (fig. 1), also Italian and of the sixteenth

century, has recently come to the Museum as a gift from George and Florence Blumenthal. The statue, which, like that in the Louvre, is approximately the size of the original, was at one time in the Pourtalès Collection. It still retains much of the gilding with which it was originally enriched. Although closer to the original than the

BOOKBINDINGS BY LEGRAIN

The death of Pierre Legrain in 1929 brought to an untimely end the career of a great craftsman. In the design and production of beautiful bookbindings Legrain was preëminent among his contemporaries. He created a style expressive of modern tendencies and unmistakably his own. In his work

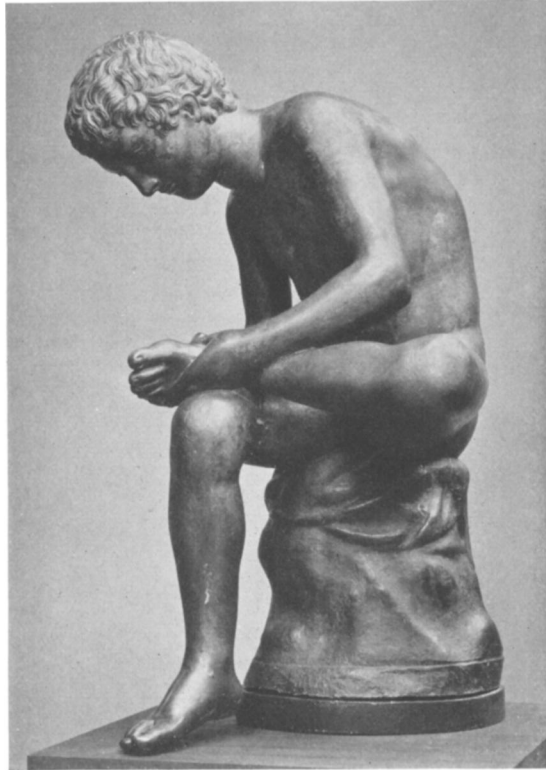


FIG. 1. THE SPINARIO, BRONZE
ITALIAN, XVI CENTURY

earlier statuettes, it is not an exact reproduction. The principal variation is in the head; the face is more idealized, and the head is covered with short locks instead of long waving hair. There are also differences in the modeling of the body, although the artist has succeeded admirably in rendering the smooth, rounded forms of the original. The statue, which is shown this month in the Room of Recent Accessions, is a most important and welcome addition to our collection of Renaissance bronzes.

the worn-out formulas of past styles play no part; his only bond with tradition is the sure sense of beauty that links him with the great bookbinders of all time.

Legrain's first designs for bookbindings were made for the connoisseur and bibliophile Jacques Doucet. The success of these early productions led him to establish his own atelier. His ability was soon recognized by the award of a scholarship from the *Fondation américaine pour la pensée et l'art français*, created by Mrs. George

Blumenthal, who was one of Legrain's principal patrons. As a gift from George and Florence Blumenthal the Museum has lately received four books bound by Legrain for the private library of Mrs. Blumenthal that are among his finest works. The books are shown this month in the Room of Recent Accessions.

The binding for *Narcisse*, by Paul Valéry,¹ is characterized by great sobriety. The design is done in gold and platinum on light crimson levant. The decoration consists principally of the title in gold across the lower half of the cover with the lettering

the composition is asymmetrical, with daring oppositions of triangular forms inlaid in dark brown in light gray levant, combined with lettering and zigzag bands in gold and platinum.

Among the more elaborate designs by Legrain, the binding of *L'Âme et la danse*, by Paul Valéry,⁴ is of exceptional interest. The brown levant covers, inlaid with black and gray, are charged with an intricate decoration of geometric forms in blind tooling, enlivened with spirals and circles in gold and platinum.

JOSEPH BRECK.



FIG. 2. LION-HUNT SCARAB
OF KING AMEN-ḤOTPE III

repeated in platinum directly below, reversed as if reflected in water. The design thus recalls, without venturing into representation, the legend of Narcissus, who fell in love with his own image reflected in a pool. Legrain delighted, when he could do so without stressing the obvious, to suggest in some such way as this the nature of the book he was binding; but almost invariably the elements of his design are linear or purely geometric in character.

The title of the book is again the principal motive in the binding for *Lettre à un ami*, by Madame Émilie Teste (Paul Valéry).² Yellow levant is combined with inlays of brown and black and further enriched with an allover linear decoration in gold. Here the design is formally balanced, but in the binding for *Le Voyage d'Urien*, by André Gide,³

A SCARAB OF AMEN-ḤOTPE III

To the other gifts from George and Florence Blumenthal has been added a superb example of the "lion-hunt" scarab of King Amen-ḥotpe III of Egypt (fig. 2).⁵

An innovation of the middle of the Eighteenth Dynasty was the issuing of memorial scarabs which had much the same purpose as our commemorative medals. The inscriptions on some of those of Amen-ḥotpe III recount his marriage with Queen Teye and on others his marriage with the Asiatic princess Gilukhepa, the digging of his pleasure lake, and his hunting of wild cattle. The scarab which has now been presented to the Museum was made in honor of King Amen-ḥotpe's lion hunts, and the inscription, after setting forth his titles and those of his wife Teye, goes on to recount, "The number of lions brought in by His

¹ Stols. Antwerp, 1926.

² Ronald Davis. Paris, 1925.

³ The Halcyon Press. Maestricht, 1928.

⁴ Javal et Bourdeaux. Paris, 1926.

⁵ Acc. no. 32.7. L. 2½ in.

Majesty from his own shooting, between his first and tenth years (1411-1402 B.C.), was 102 fierce lions."

While the Museum already possessed examples of this scarab, none of them approaches this newest accession in the extraordinary perfection in which it is preserved.

H. E. WINLOCK.

A GIFT OF ORNAMENTAL WEDGWOOD

There are those who, like Emil Hannover, the Danish connoisseur and writer, criticize Wedgwood because they maintain that with a multiplicity of faultlessly wrought but mechanical productions he crowded out of the field the work of more haphazard but more spontaneous and artistic craftsmen. This complaint may with equal justice be urged against most of Wedgwood's contemporaries; he takes the brunt of the attack only because he was a singularly purposeful and dominant personality.

Wedgwood began his career at a time when fresh experiments in materials were widening the range of English pottery. He was indefatigable in his attempts to invent new bodies and glazes and he contributed more new and successful kinds of ware than has any other single potter. Coupled with his desire to perfect his materials was an instinct for commercial organization and for improved methods of manufacture. His efforts in this direction coincided with a general tendency toward large-scale production.

Wedgwood began his work in the field of useful domestic wares, attaining particular success with his creamware. In the course of time he devoted attention to fine stone-wares, developing and perfecting his basalt and jasper. The latter he himself considered his greatest achievement and so extensively was it manufactured that to many people it has now become practically synonymous with the name Wedgwood. Its fine grain and extremely smooth hard surface and the colors with which it can be tinted render it suitable for delicate and precise craftsmanship. Indeed the serious criticism of it is concerned with just this quality—that its manipulation is more

closely related to the art of the sculptor or the gem cutter than to the plastic art of the potter.

Whatever its potentialities or limitations, Wedgwood's jasper ware is peculiarly characteristic of his genius and expressive of the



VASE AND PEDESTAL, GREEN JASPER WARE

neo-classicism of his age. At this period the discovery of splendid examples of Greek and Roman art at Pompeii and Herculaneum had given a great impetus to a revival of classic themes in art, and Wedgwood, quickly responsive to the tendencies and fashions of his day, promptly turned for inspiration to these sources of design. Jasper ware lent itself admirably to the execution of refined detail, and its chaste