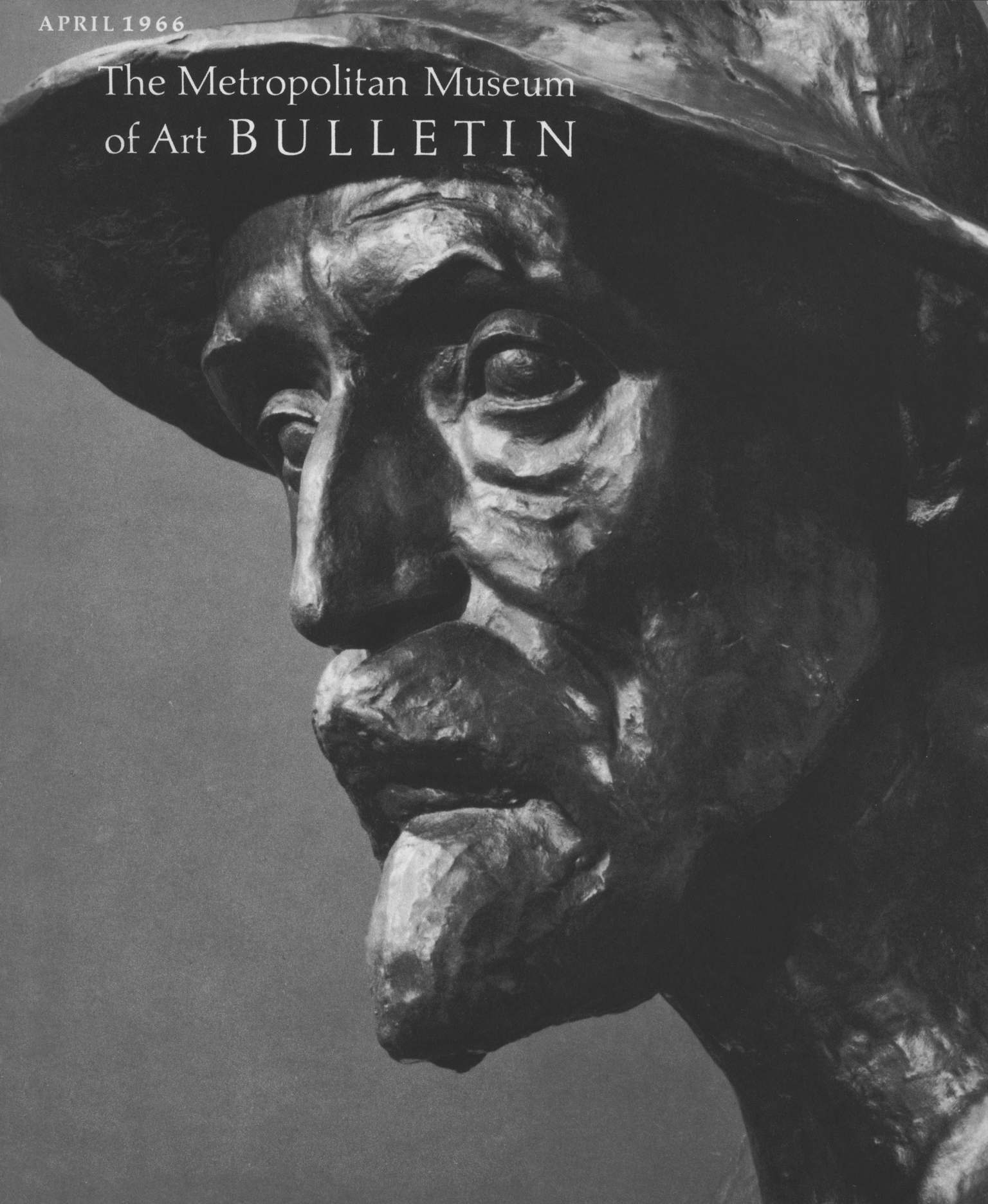


APRIL 1966

The Metropolitan Museum
of Art BULLETIN



*The left wing of the
Annunciation altarpiece
by Robert Campin,
showing the donors.
The Cloisters Collection*



The Man beside the Gate

HELMUT NICKEL *Associate Curator of Arms and Armor*

The iconography of the Campin altarpiece (Figure 9) has been called “something of a puzzle” by Margaret B. Freeman, former Curator of The Cloisters, who in the December 1957 issue of the *Bulletin* unraveled most of the skillfully interwoven tangle of symbols in this masterwork of early Flemish painting. The little man standing modestly in the background of the donor’s wing (Frontispiece and Figure 1) is one of the more puzzling figures in the intricate system.

Gaudily dressed, the man waits patiently, hat in hand, beside the open gate, at a respectful distance from the donors, his somber gaze fixed upon the door that leads to the room where the Annunciation is at that moment taking place. On his breast, attached to his wide cloak, he bears like a jewel a small shield in an elaborate silver frame, hanging by a short chain from a decorative button. The shield is emblazoned with three red pales (vertical stripes) on a golden field.

Several suggestions have been made about his significance in the painting: he was thought to be a self-portrait of the painter, a marriage-broker, or a varlet or servant. The two latter interpretations were given in order to connect him with the donors kneeling in the foreground, but none of the explanations is quite convincing. If it were a self-portrait, the painter would probably be looking straight at the spectator, as he would necessarily have been looking straight at himself in a glass. A marriage-broker would be most unusually dressed in a heavy rain-cloak, a woolen hood with shoulder collar, a broad-brimmed straw hat, and sturdy boots with wooden undersoles; the same goes for a painter. A varlet or servant might be expected to be dressed in the livery of his lord, and indeed the figure repeats the colors of the little shield on his breast in his yellow sleeves and red hose. Three red pales on gold have been borne, in Flanders, by the lords of Berthout; they were also the arms of the Flemish city of Mechelen (Malines

Contents

The Man beside the Gate

HELMUT NICKEL 237

In Search of a Likeness:

Some European Portrait Sculpture

CLARE VINCENT 245

ON THE COVER:

Detail of a bronze bust of Pierre Auguste Renoir by Aristide Maillol, discussed in the article beginning on page 245



in French) until 1488, when an inescutcheon with the eagle of the Empire was added. It is unlikely, however, that a servant of the noble lord of Berthout would be in a picture that was not commissioned by his master, and the donors' costumes show plainly that they are of the wealthy burgher class, and not of the aristocracy. Furthermore, two coats of arms are painted in the stained-glass windows in the central panel of the triptych – a not unusual way to identify the donor – and the arms are those of patrician families of Mechelen.

The solution of the puzzle must be sought in the interpretation of the small shield, if we consider it to be more than a purely personal ornament. Shields with armorial bearings were borne as badges of office by heralds when in "small dress" (on full-dress occasions they wore the poncho-like tabard fully emblazoned with their master's arms), by court jesters, by musicians of city bands, by professional messengers – even by licensed beggars. As is to be expected in the medieval world with its well-defined and rigid system of social classes, each kind of shield had a special and characteristic shape that made it readily distinguishable from the others. The plain, broochlike shields of heralds can be seen, for instance, on miniatures of the famous *Tournament Book* of King René of Anjou, written about 1460 to 1465. Musicians' badges were circular and had elaborate rosette-like frames; they and the similar ones of jesters can be found in the prints of Israhel van Meckenem and others. Those of beggars, issued by the magistrates of towns to keep the lowest classes of society under control, were of course made of some inferior material, such as painted wood or paper.

The shield of our man has a very distinct form, too, with its bulging front and flat top that has a tiny knob in the middle; the precious wrought silver frame and suspension chain indicate that its bearer was a man of some importance. This type of shield was generally worn in northern Europe by professional messengers in the days before the establishment of regular mail service. These messengers, because of their important and highly confidential task, were trustworthy and honorable men, employed and sworn into office by corporations such as cities or guilds that did not have either the means or the right to keep a herald of their own, but who found it necessary to entertain communications with officials and business partners in distant places.

1. *The man beside the gate, detail of the left wing of the Campin altarpiece*

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2. *Playing card from a xv century pack representing all members of feudal society. "Bott" means "messenger." Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna*

3. *St. Paul sending his Epistle to the Romans. Woodcut from the Cologne Bible, 1479. (From R. Nissen, in Westfalen XXXVI [1958], 185)*



4. *Henchin Hanauwe, messenger of the city of Frankfurt am Main. Drawing on the cover of the Botenbuch (Messengers' Ledger) of 1439. Stadtarchiv Frankfurt*

The hypothesis that the man is a professional messenger is supported by the fact, mentioned above, that he is clad for rugged outdoor service. Furthermore, this type of costume is found with remarkable uniformity in numerous representations of messengers in German, Flemish, and French sources (Figures 2, 3, 4, 7, 8, and 11). Finally, these messengers were often dressed in the "colors" of their employers, and the man is clad in the red and yellow of the city of Mechelen. Thus it seems safe to assume that the little man at the gate is the city messenger of Mechelen.

Badges of messengers are preserved in many European city museums; the *Botenschild* of the Westphalian town of Soest may serve as a typical example (Figure 6). It is of silver, box-like, with a hinged lid that is to be opened by a knob. It corresponds exactly with the shield in our painting, which has a dot on the flat top indicating a similar knob, and thus, likewise, a hinged lid. In Germany and the Netherlands these badges were often called *Botenbüchsen* or *bodebossen* (messengers' boxes), and in France *boîtes de messagers*, names that suggest that they originally might have been designed not only as insignia of office, but as containers for the messages or perhaps credentials. The material of the badges in most cases being enameled silver, these messengers were often called *Silberboten* (silver messengers), and for the same reason this type of badge is called *émail* in French sources.

In our collection of badges there is one of triangular form with a flat top and a bulging front (Figure 5). It is of bronze, its right half enameled with an opaque vermilion, its left half silvered and engraved with foliation on a cross-hatched background (in heraldic descriptions the right and left are those of the bearer of the shield). Although there is no backplate to cover the hollow reverse side, and although the flat top is cast in one piece with the body, it is clear that this is a form developed from the container type.

Probably it once had a frame and perhaps a backplate of silver (there is a rivet hole in each corner), but this frame apparently went the way of most objects of precious metal—into the melting pot—and only the "worth-



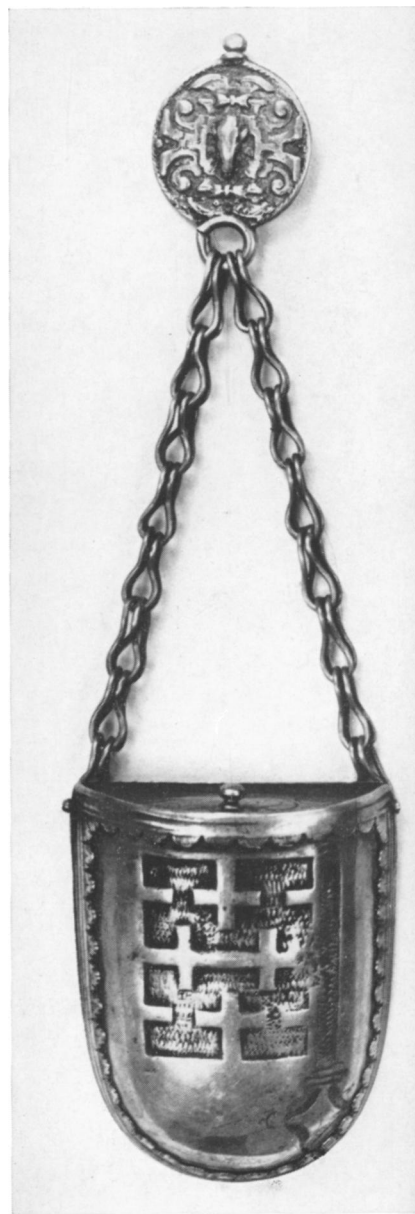
5. Messenger's badge, probably south German, xv century. Bronze, enameled, engraved, and silvered. Height 4½ inches. Rogers Fund, 04-3-302

less" bronze shield survived. There is a significant entry in the chronicle of the Archers' Guild in the north German town of Dülmen for the year 1641: "Because it was intended to present a silver beaker of 64 Lot [32 ounces] to the Hessian Steward [*Rentmeister*] Wilde, and the town could not raise the money to have it made by any means, therefore, by decision of the town council, there was taken for this purpose the old silver bird of the Archers [the pendant of the necklace that was worn by the best marksman in the annual archery contests], that weighed one half pound, together with a shield that was formerly worn by a messenger. . . ."

It is not known where the Museum's badge originally came from. The style of the engraving suggests southern Germany, and within the borders of the Holy Roman Empire there were many city-states with arms of similarly simple patterns. These often were derived from the designs of the banners of the towns' militia, which had to have striking patterns in order to be easily recognizable from afar in pre-uniform days, when they were the only mark of distinction between friend and foe. The arms of this shield, "party per pale gules and argent," were, for instance, borne by the rich and important Bishopric of Augsburg, and by the little Swiss town of Sursee. Because of the base material of the badge, one might favor the latter as its place of origin.

Besides the badge, the full equipment of a messenger on duty included a cloak, a hat, a hood, a letter purse, a pilgrim's bottle (usually slung over the back), and an especially important item, a sturdy spear. This weapon was not only needed as a defense against robbers, but was extremely useful as a walking stick, a support for jumping across ditches and other obstacles, and—as a sixteenth-century source expressly mentions—to fight off the onslaught of infuriated dogs in towns and villages. The mailman's problems are old indeed!

This spear was considered to be an insigne of office second only to the badge itself, and the messenger on duty was not supposed to let it out of his hand—except in closed rooms in the presence of a lady. Thus our little man, being in the presence not only of the wife of



6. Messenger's badge of the town of Soest, Westphalia, probably xv century (the knob is later). Burghofmuseum, Soest



7. Law court, frontispiece of *Gerichtsordnung* (Rules of the Court) (Strasbourg: Egenolff, 1530). (From R. Nissen, in *Westfalen* xxxvi [1958], 190)

8. "Rebecca gave Eleazar, the messenger of Abraham, to drink." Woodcut from *Spiegel der menschen behaltinis* (*Speculum humanae salvationis*) (Speyer: Peter Drach, 1479-1481), p. xii recto. Harris Brisbane Dick Fund, 31.53



the patrician donor, but confronted with the greatest Lady of all, the Virgin Mary herself, has respectfully left his spear somewhere outside the garden gate.

It is only natural that these messengers in the course of duty should have become closely connected with the courts of justice, for presumably a considerable number of the messages to be delivered by them would have been summonses for local courts (Figure 7). Thus the messengers, reliable men who were armed anyway and readily available—a German woodcut of 1530 gives us a representation of a messenger accompanied by a lengthy doggerel version of the famous motto "Neither snow, etc."—became entrusted with the maintenance of order during trials, and were even employed as a local police force. When, during the eighteenth century, the old messenger system was replaced by a regular mail service, and the city messengers lost their original work, they kept on their secondary jobs as policemen. Their cloaks and spears survived in the romantic garb of nineteenth-century night watchmen, and their shield badge is even today to be seen on the breasts of New York's Finest!

In the iconography of the Campin altarpiece the city messenger of Mechelen is apparently meant to be the worldly counterpart of the heavenly messenger, the Archangel Gabriel. He has entered the enclosed garden and is standing near the rosebush at the far wall (the garden, the gate, and the rose are all symbols of the Virgin), and thus he corresponds to the angel with Mary in the closed chamber. Perhaps he was put there to complete a unit of three figures, wife, husband, and messenger, to form in a secular way a deliberate and perhaps even slightly amusing contrast to the holy group of Mary, Joseph, and Gabriel—a contrast similar to that of the rustic shepherds and the elegant Three Wise Men in Adorations of the Child. A direct comparison of the angel of the Annunciation with a humble human messenger was perfectly legitimate in the eyes of fifteenth-century men, as can be seen from the prophecies of the Annunciation in the widely read book of devotion *Speculum humanae salvationis*: "This

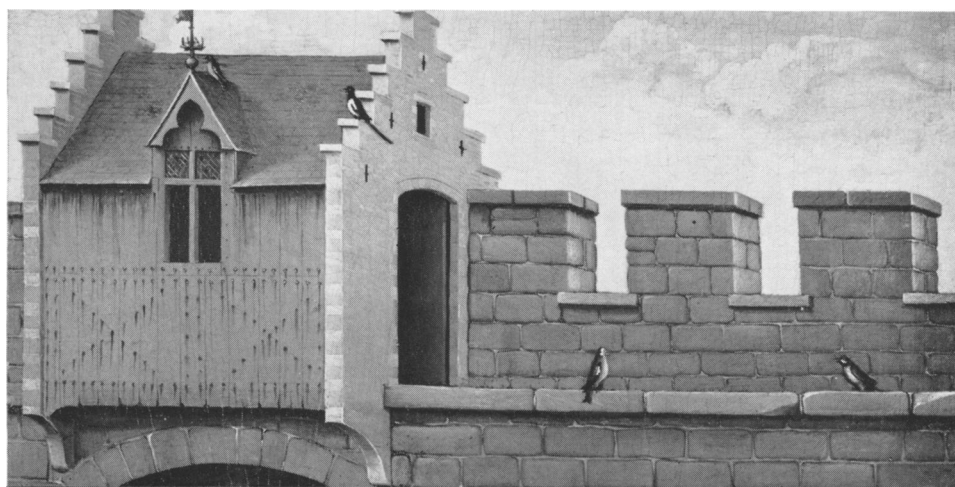


Annunciation of Mary was done by the Angel Gabriel, as it is betokened in Abraham's servant and in Rebecca, Batueli's daughter. Abraham sent Eleazar, his servant, to search for a maiden that might be well becoming as a spouse for his son Isaac. . . . In the same way the heavenly Father sent his messenger Gabriel into this world, that he might search for a maiden as a mother for his Son. . . . Rebecca had not only given water to the servant but to his camelbeast, too. In the same way has Mary given the well of eternal life to angels and men alike." Eleazar, the messenger of Abraham, is of course dressed as a contemporary messenger in the woodcut illustrating the episode (Figure 8).

Once the man is interpreted as a messenger,

the explanation may serve as a key to the solution of other puzzles. In a painting like the Campin altarpiece, where every small detail appears to have a meaning, it is highly probable that all the details are interrelated and mutually explanatory. It might be significant, for instance, that there are four birds sitting on the gatehouse and wall: a European robin, a magpie, a goldfinch, and a sparrow (Figure 10). The robin, with its blood-red breast, the goldfinch, which feeds on the thorny thistle, and the sparrow, lowliest of birds, which does not fall but for the will of God, are symbols of the Passion and Incarnation of Christ. The only one that has no direct relation to Christ is the magpie. According to the Bestiary, this bird is the talker and deliverer of messages,

9. *The Annunciation altarpiece, about 1425, by Robert Campin (active 1406-1444), Flemish. Oil on wood, height 25 $\frac{1}{8}$ inches. The Cloisters Collection*



10. *Detail of the left wing of the Campin altarpiece, showing four birds on the gatehouse and wall*

and it is certainly not by coincidence that it is perched directly above the head of the human messenger. Furthermore, the pattern in which the four birds are distributed repeats that of the four figures in the other sections of the triptych (Figure 9). Thus the robin, one of the smallest European birds, corresponds to the tiny Christ child on the sunbeam in the main panel; the magpie to the archangel; the goldfinch, which appears frequently in representations of the Madonna and Child, to Mary (even the fact that Mary is sitting on the ground is paralleled by the goldfinch's being perched on the wall, lower than the magpie); and the lowly sparrow to the humble carpenter Joseph.

The gate beside which the man is standing is, as already mentioned, a symbol of the Virgin. It was pointed out by Margaret Freeman that to be fully consistent with the symbolic idea, the painter should have closed it. When he decided to change the concept of the "closed gate" he must have had a good reason; it is not very likely that he did it for the sheer delight of painting the charming street scene beyond. If we look carefully, we see that the tall gate is indeed closed; it is only the small door within the gate that has just

been opened, by the messenger when entering, and his fingers are still touching the edge of the door, just as the tips of the angel's wings are still within the door of the chamber. This type of gate was designed to accommodate horse and rider – perhaps the horseman in the street was put there to hint at this fact – and with only the pedestrian door open, a horse could not enter. Now the horse in medieval iconography was a symbol of lust – "They were as fed horses in the morning: every one neighed after his neighbor's wife," Jeremiah 8:5 – which, of course, had to be barred from the garden of virginity. Only the human messenger was able to enter, as an equivalent to the archangel who penetrated the closed door of the chamber of the Annunciation.

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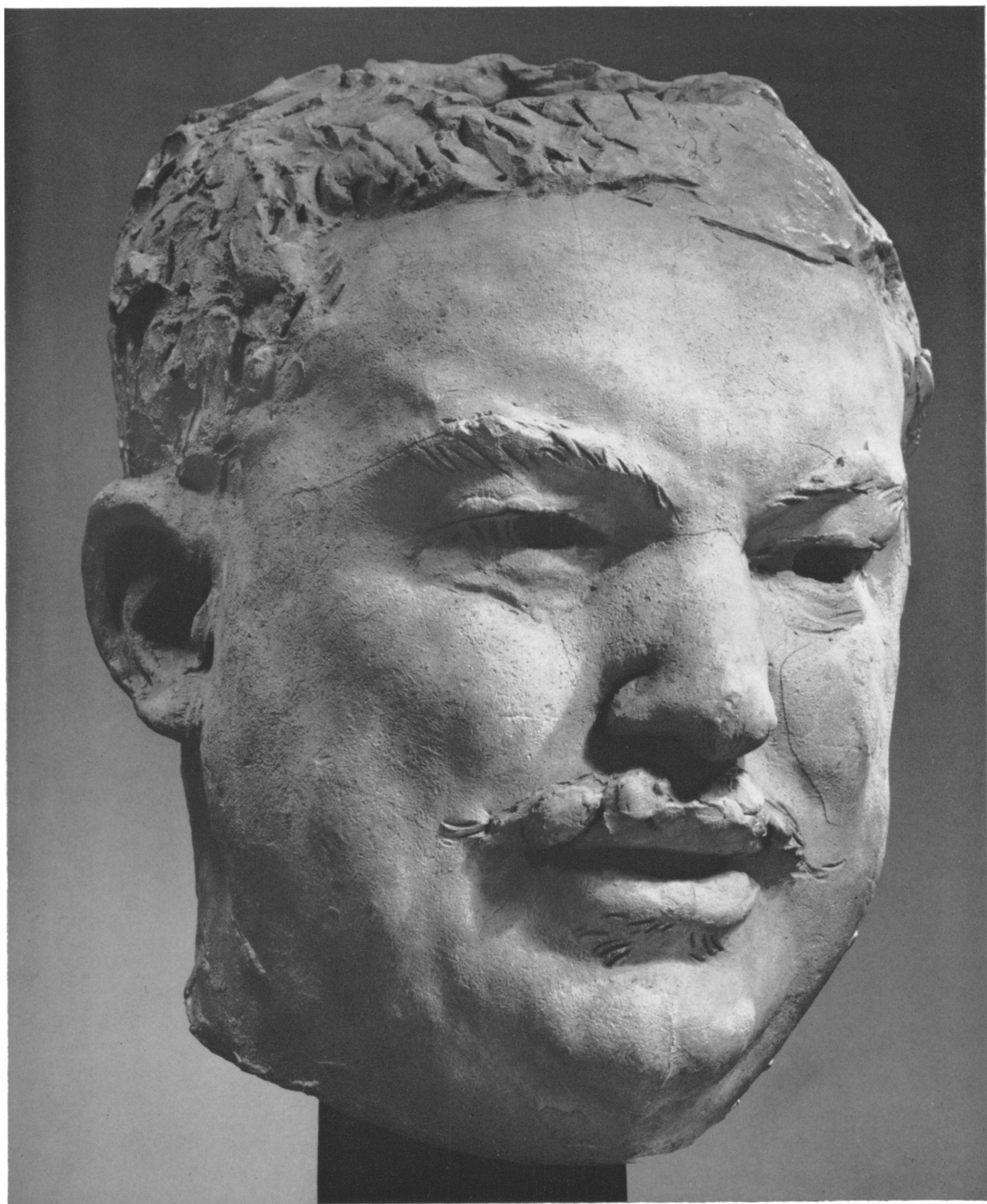
11. "How the messenger of Raimondin came to Geoffroy in Guérande." Woodcut from Jean d'Arras, *L'Histoire de la Belle Mélusine* (facsimile of the original edition of Geneva, A. Steinschaber, 1478; Berne: Société Suisse des Bibliophiles, 1923-1924), p. cxxxvii recto. Harris Brisbane Dick Fund, 40.55.2

In Search of a Likeness: Some European Portrait Sculpture

CLARE VINCENT *Curatorial Assistant, Department of Western European Arts*

In this age of sculptural renaissance, the traditional art of the portrait has gone, at least temporarily, into eclipse. It is a decline to be regretted, for the sculptural portrait is a venerable art, which flourished in places as disparate as Old Kingdom Egypt and Republican Rome, Renaissance Italy and eighteenth-century France. The reasons for its present decline need not be gone into: they would require a considerable study in themselves. The Metropolitan Museum's collection does, however, include the work of several brilliant European sculptors who in the late nineteenth and earlier twentieth century created a number of portraits that rank with the finest of the past. A great deal of material, both visual and biographical, which is available to aid us in examining these works, often is of further value in that it documents the sculptor's approach to the art of the portrait.

Among seven, in various media, by Auguste Rodin, the best is probably the terracotta study of the head of Honoré de Balzac (Figure 1) that Rodin made in preparation for the still controversial Monument to Balzac commissioned in 1891 by the Société des Gens de Lettres for the Palais-Royal in Paris, but never erected there. In contrast to the great craggy, masklike face of the final figure, which can be seen at The Museum of Modern Art (Figure 2), more a symbol than a portrait, the Metropolitan's terracotta head belongs to one in a large number of classes of studies that the sculptor carefully worked out in an attempt to recreate the personality as well as the features of the great French author who had died more than thirty years before. The extraordinary length to which Rodin went to capture the essence and spirit of the author of the *Comédie humaine*, including unearthing previous portraits of Balzac as well as reading Balzac's own work and the works of his biographers and critics, has been documented elsewhere. Well-marked copies of Lamartine's *Balzac et ses oeuvres* and Werdet's *Portrait intime de Balzac, sa vie, son humeur et son caractère* were in Rodin's library. He knew a number of the portraits made from life as well as at least one daguerreotype, and he made several trips to Tours, the city of Balzac's origin, on the theory that the study of similar facial types would help him put flesh to the recorded portraits.



1. *Study for the Monument to Honoré de Balzac, probably about 1891-1892, by Auguste Rodin (1840-1917). Terracotta, height 9¼ inches. Rogers Fund, 12.11.1*

On a manuscript checklist in the Museum's archives of the works under consideration in 1910 for purchase from Rodin, on which the sculptor himself made notes, the Museum's study is described as having been made from one such "man of Tours." Among the portraits used by Rodin as separate and distinct archetypes for some of the classes of his studies for the Balzac Monument, however, is a pastel made in 1842 by Gérard Seguin (Figure 3). The similarity of the pastel and the Museum's terracotta is such that the pastel must be regarded as the seminal idea. For if Rodin did not actually use the pastel as the model for the head, then it is almost certain that he did use it as the basis of his search for a living model. The impression created by the terracotta study is not that of a translation from a flat, essentially two-dimensional image. Rather, the evidence of some of Rodin's most exquisite modeling, especially around the eyes and mouth, indicates that he was indeed working from a live model.

The exact sequence of the groups of studies for the Balzac Monument has not been firmly established. Rodin's first trips to Tours were made in 1891. He finished the final plaster version of the figure in 1898. It would seem, because of the relatively slight departure of the Museum's Balzac from the physical realism of the pastel, that the study is probably one of Rodin's earlier ideas, possibly dating from 1891 or 1892, but of this there is at present no available proof.

For all Rodin's painstaking efforts at recreating the features and psychology of Balzac, and for all the controversy surrounding the monument—it was rejected by the City of Paris and remained at Meudon until the end of Rodin's life—there was one problem with which the sculptor did not have to contend.

He did not have to please the subject. Balzac had not liked the pastel on which the Museum's terracotta is based. One can only speculate about what his reaction might have been to the Monument.

Rodin was not always so lucky. For with few exceptions, the art of portraiture is a joint venture between artist and sitter. The subject must be willing to trust the insight and artistic maturity of the painter or sculptor, and the artist who considers the portrait a respectable and important part of his output must make a genuine effort of involvement with the subject. This mutual covenant has often been subjected to severe strain, if not outright abrogation. Often the sitter is deeply hurt by what the artist has made of his features, and his position as a fellow artist or as a collector or sympathetic critic of the artist's earlier works may be no proof against the hurt.



2. *The Monument to Balzac, modeled in 1897, by Auguste Rodin. Bronze, height 9 feet 3 inches. The Museum of Modern Art, New York. Presented in memory of Curt Valentin by his friends*



3. *Honoré de Balzac, 1842, by Gérard Seguin (1805-1875). Pastel. Musée des Beaux-Arts, Tours*



To Rodin's dismay, Puvis de Chavannes and Dalou, both artists and friends, disliked their portraits. Bronze versions of both portraits were among the thirteen pieces of sculpture Thomas F. Ryan bought from Rodin to give to the Museum, the Dalou having been cast expressly for the gift. The Countess Anna-Elisabeth de Noailles, another old friend of Rodin's, is the subject of the Metropolitan's marble portrait of Madame X (Figure 4). We know from later complaints of the painter Vuillard that she was a difficult subject. She failed to keep numerous appointments with Rodin for sittings, and, when the marble was finally finished about 1907, she rejected it altogether. She did not like the nose.

A contemporary photograph of the Countess (Figure 5), an outstanding French writer belonging to the literary group known as the "Nouvelle Pléiade," shows her to have been an elegant lady with limpid eyes, high-piled hair, and a prominent nose. One sees that by suppressing the nose, Rodin could have made her look like the fashionable portraits by Helleu or the Gibson girls of the period. But Madame X was a noblewoman as well as a poet and intellectual, the daughter of a Rumanian princess and granddaughter of a diplomat and man of letters who had translated Dante into classical Greek. Her father was Prince Georges Bibesco de Brancovan, and her husband Count Mathieu de Noailles, scion of a French family who traced its noble lineage to the eleventh century. In the thrust of the nose, the tilt of the head, and the veiling of the eyes, Rodin has made of her portrait a symbol as well as a likeness. The Countess evidently saw only the nose, for the checklist accompanying the portrait when it entered the Museum in 1912 records her refusal to accept the marble together with Rodin's rather rueful comment that "otherwise she was a very intelligent person." Her refusal was the Museum's gain.

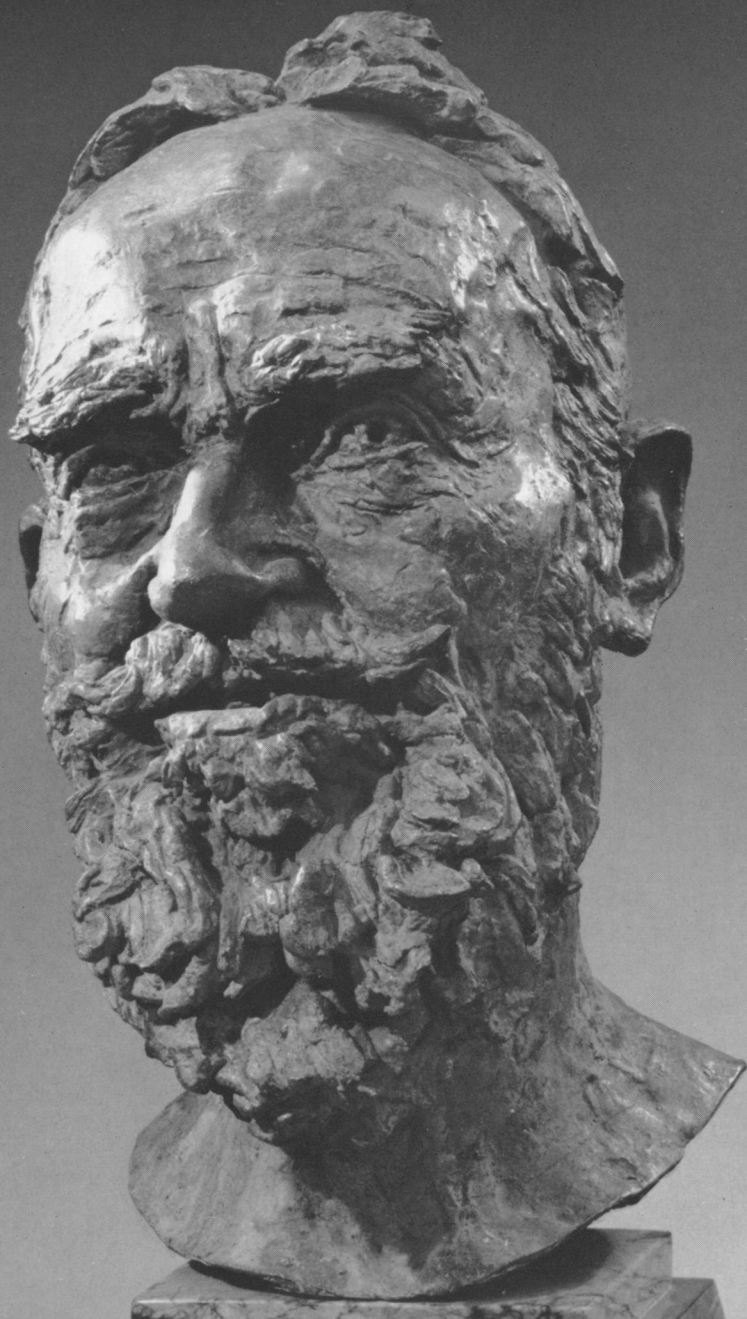
In George Bernard Shaw, Rodin had a more willing subject. A bronze version of the head of Shaw (Figure 7) in the Rodin Museum in Philadelphia presents a lively contrast to a head in the Metropolitan's collection, made

4. *Madame X, detail of the portrait bust of the Countess Anna-Elisabeth de Noailles, about 1907, by Auguste Rodin. Marble, height of bust 19½ inches. Gift of Thomas F. Ryan, 11.173.6*

5. *The Countess Anna-Elisabeth de Noailles (1876-1933), about 1908. (Frontispiece from Rene Gillouin, La Comtesse Mathieu de Noailles, Paris, 1908)*



6. *George Bernard Shaw*, 1934, by Sir Jacob Epstein (1880-1959). Bronze, height 20½ inches. Edith Perry Chapman Fund, 48.106

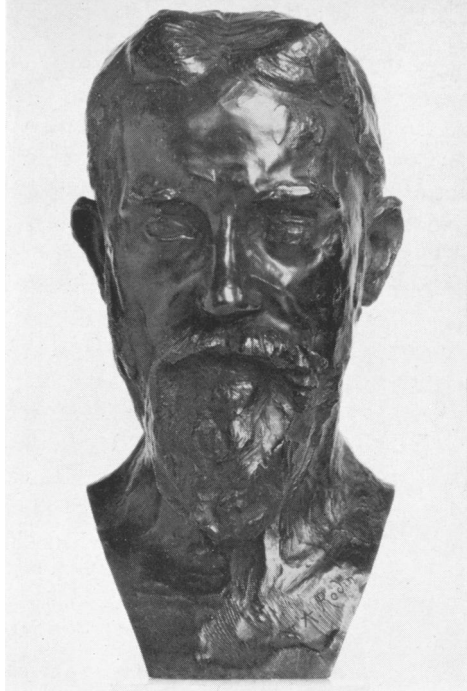


some twenty-five years later by the American-born Sir Jacob Epstein, who moved to London in 1905 and remained there until his death in 1959. The Epstein Shaw exists in two versions. The earlier, an arresting nude bust in bronze, was made in 1934. The second version, a reworking of the head alone, was made and twice cast in the same year. The Museum purchased the second of the two casts (Figure 6) in 1948.

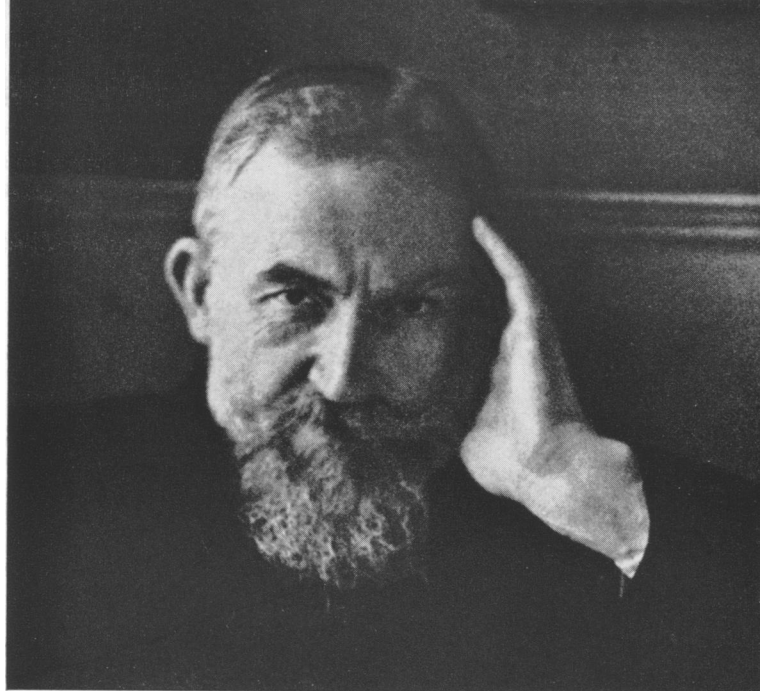
While Rodin's Shaw is not his best portrait – for, as Shaw himself has written, Rodin did not know him personally before the sittings, they could converse only in the most primitive fashion as neither knew the other's language well, and consequently Rodin utterly missed the important fact of Shaw's sense of humor – Shaw liked the portrait. He considered it otherwise true to nature, and he has left in a letter to Epstein a fascinating description of Rodin's method of working.

As an early defender of the controversial and often beleaguered Epstein, Shaw might have been expected to champion Sir Jacob's two portraits. He most emphatically did not; he and Epstein traded literary brickbats over them for years. Shaw, the professional critic, seems to have had the best of the battle, claiming that Epstein had portrayed "a barbarous joker, not a high comedian," a "Neanderthal Shaw." Epstein countered by disqualifying Shaw as a judge on the basis of his alleged ignorance of the plastic arts in general. It may well have been his experience with Shaw of which Epstein was thinking when he wrote in his autobiography: "The successful portrait sculptor or painter, for that matter, needs a front of brass, the back of a rhinoceros, and all the guile of a courtier. While I have done a certain number of portraits, the history of those portraits for the most part is a story of failure to please the sitters or their relatives."

The Shaw portrait belongs to the period of the late twenties and the thirties when Epstein was experimenting with the ways in which the surfaces of his bronzes could be made to reflect light and shade. In a series of interviews with the critic Arnold Haskell during this



7. *George Bernard Shaw*, 1906, by *Auguste Rodin*. Bronze, height 15 inches. The Rodin Museum, Philadelphia. Photograph: The Philadelphia Museum of Art

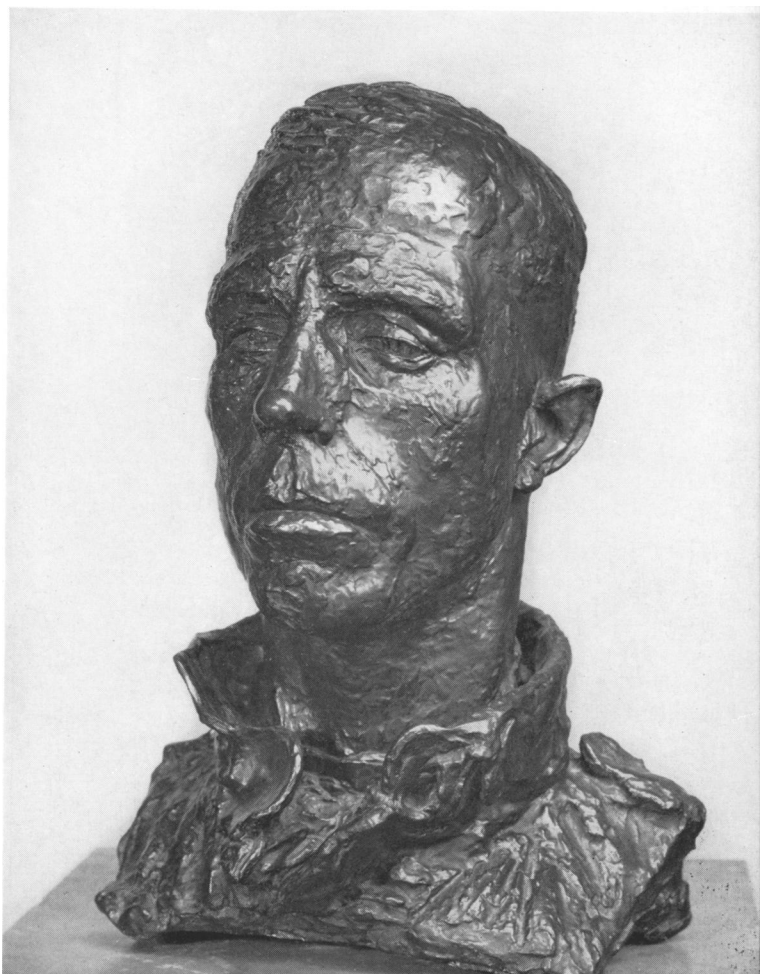


8. *George Bernard Shaw, London*, 1907, by *Edward Steichen* (born 1879). Photograph of a four-color, halftone reproduction of a *Lumière Autochrome*. Courtesy of the photographer. Photograph: The Museum of Modern Art, New York

9. *The American Soldier*, 1917, by *Sir Jacob Epstein*. Bronze, height 15¾ inches. Rogers Fund, 24.77

period, Epstein indicated the trend of his efforts by asserting, "It is the rough surface that gives both character and likeness to the face, not just the rough surface as such, but the particular individual treatment." His *Shaw*, one such experiment, with its deep hollows around the eyes and mouth, does record the wicked spirit of Shaw the satirist, but neither he nor Rodin saw the essence of Shaw's personality in the way another master portraitist, Edward Steichen, was able to do in his superb photograph of the English dramatist and critic (Figure 8).

Epstein was perhaps at his very best in *The American Soldier* (Figure 9), a masterful expression of the battle-hardened, war-weary "doughboy" returned from the trenches of World War I. The *American Soldier*, of which

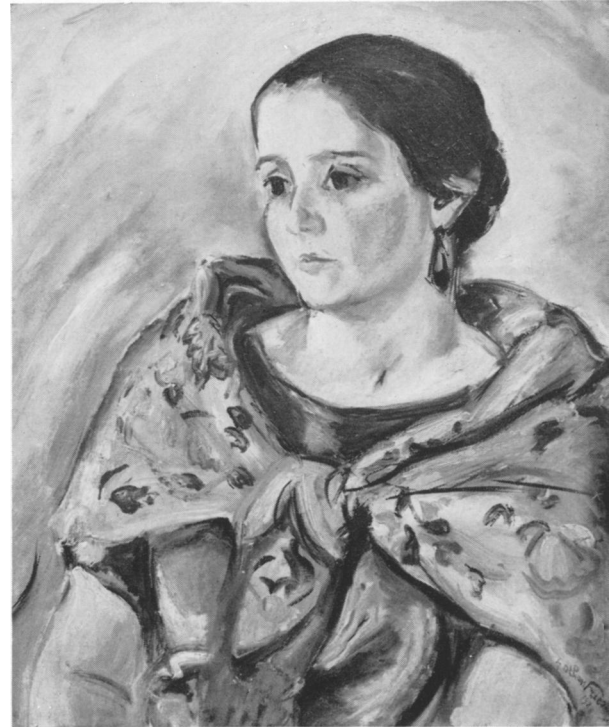


the Metropolitan has the only bronze cast, ranks with Epstein's best psychological portraits. It is a category of which the sculptor himself was extremely proud. For after completing such figures as the monumental Day and Night on the London Transport Headquarters (1928), the brutally primitive Adam (1938), the sinister Lucifer (1945), and the Lazarus at New College, Oxford, with its aura of Romanesque ancestry (1947), the author of *Let There Be Sculpture* still wished to declare: "I place my portrait work in as important a category as I place any other work of mine, and I am content to be judged by it."

Another sculptor who was willing to rest his reputation upon his portraits is the Frenchman Charles Despiau. Despiau's portraits, the antithesis of Epstein's, are a series of continuous refinements on a concept that is basically

abstract. Despiau, whose early work shows the effects of his academic training at the École des Beaux-Arts, came into his own as the result of his contact, first, with Rodin and his circle and, later, with Aristide Maillol and the now neglected sculptor Lucien Schnegg. As early as 1904 the head of the Petite Fille des Landes, the plaster model of which is in the Museum's collection, exhibited the basic elements of Despiau's portrait style. Thereafter, until his death in 1946, the sculptor produced a series of smooth-surfaced images, often cast in fine lost-wax-process bronze, which catch and reflect the light in an extremely subtle fashion. His method of working was to model each of the features successively until he had eliminated all that he felt was secondary to the character of the face. Often, he modeled the same subject in two different versions, as in

10. *Madame Othon Friesz*, 1924, by Charles Despiau (1874-1946). Plaster, height without base 13 $\frac{3}{8}$ inches. Marquand Fund, 1951; from *The Museum of Modern Art*, gift of Mrs. John D. Rockefeller, Jr., 55.21.8



11. *Madame Othon Friesz*, 1923, by Othon Friesz (1879-1949). Oil on canvas. Musée National d'Art Moderne, Paris. Photograph: Réunion des Musées Nationaux

the instance of his Madame Stone. One version of this fine head is in the Metropolitan as the gift of Chester Dale in 1963.

Yet with all the refinement and idealization that went into his subjects, they do remain true portraits, records of personalities. The plaster model for the head of Andrée Friesz (Figure 10) exhibits the essence of Despiau's style. Madame Friesz, the daughter of a prominent family of Toulon and the wife of the School of Paris artist Othon Friesz, was painted several times by her husband. If we compare the Friesz portrait of 1923 (Figure 11) with the portrait of the following year by Despiau, a version of which occupied a place of honor in Friesz's studio in the Rue Notre-Dame-des-Champs in Paris, we see that both sculptor and painter have faithfully recorded her classic calm, but that Despiau has eliminated all

but the most salient features from the oval shape of her head.

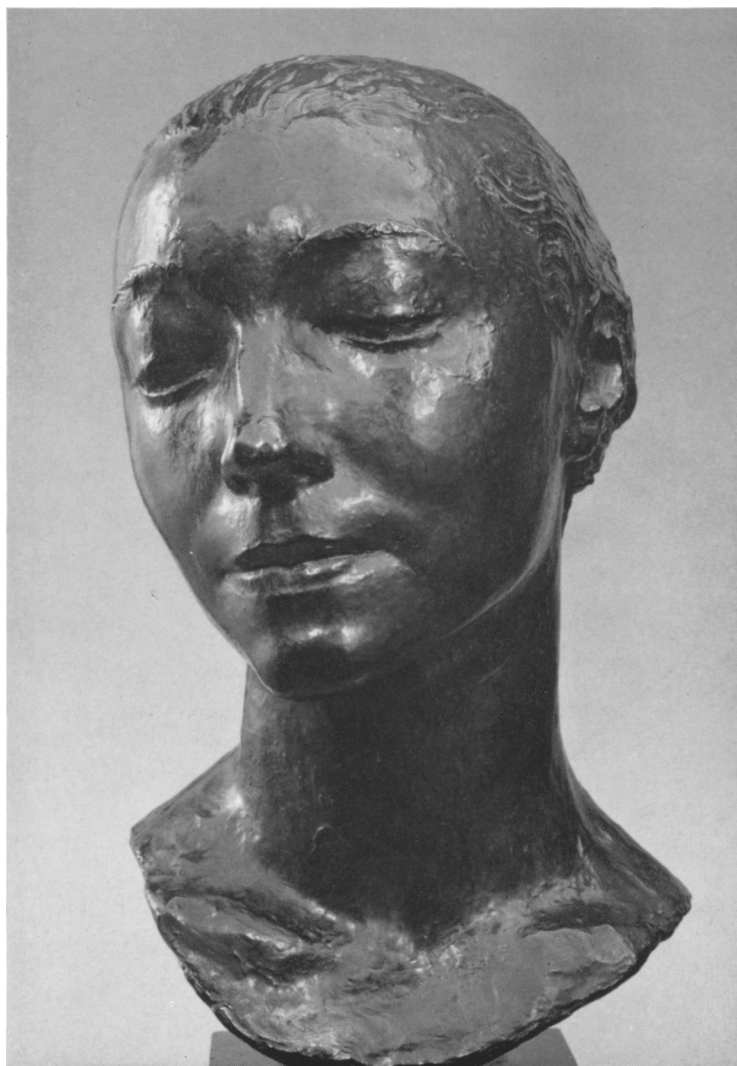
With the Polish actress and model Maria Lani (Figure 13), Despiau was faced with a more difficult problem. Born in Warsaw, trained in Max Reinhardt's School of Theater in Berlin, and a member of the Théâtre Gaston Baty in Paris, Madame Lani had a kind of endlessly changing beauty, which fascinated artists of the School of Paris. In 1929 a New York gallery invited fifty-one of them to portray the actress.

The handlist of the exhibition, from Bonnard to Zadkine, is a veritable Who's Who of French artists of the period, and it was for the exhibition that the Despiau portrait was commissioned. The plaster model actually included in the exhibition was a variant of the Museum's Maria Lani, with its downcast eyes.

13. *Maria Lani, 1929, by Charles Despiau. Bronze, cire perdue, height without base 14½ inches. Edith Perry Chapman Fund, 1951; from The Museum of Modern Art, gift of Lizzie P. Bliss, 55.21.9*



12. *Maria Lani, 1929, by André Derain (1880-1954). Oil on canvas. Formerly in the collection of the Brummer Gallery, New York. (From Art News, Nov. 2, 1929, p. 7)*





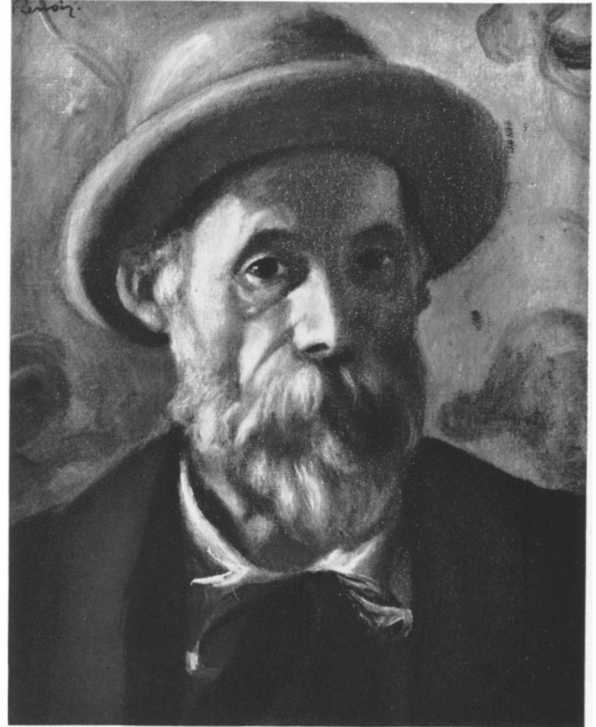
A glance through the picture book of the exhibition, *Maria Lani*, published in Paris in the same year, confirms a contemporary comment that the actress was perhaps beyond other women all things to all men. In the introduction to *Maria Lani*, Jean Cocteau expressed their predicament: "Every time you take your eyes off her she changes. You see her in turn as a young girl, a ravaged woman, a college girl, a cat with thin lips, thick lips, a slender neck, a herculean neck, vanquished shoulders, broad shoulders, with Chinese eyes, with the eyes of a dog. I have forgotten to tell you that she has three profiles. She turns round and you cannot recognize her."

The album is a visual record of her mercurial beauty: Chagall made of her an Egyptian princess; Matisse, a calligraphic exercise; Lurçat, a tapestry pattern; and Ozenfant, a sleek woman of the world, with helmet-like hair and dark-ringed eyes. André Derain recorded the mouth (Figure 12) that so disturbed Cocteau: "I ask Madame Lani to laugh. Perhaps that will make the mouth easier, and I can copy all those ogre's teeth, that terrible laugh of youth and a death's head. She laughs. I am mistaken. I begin all over again. . . ." But Despiau, with the utmost economy of means, alone managed to suggest the eternal mystery of her femininity.

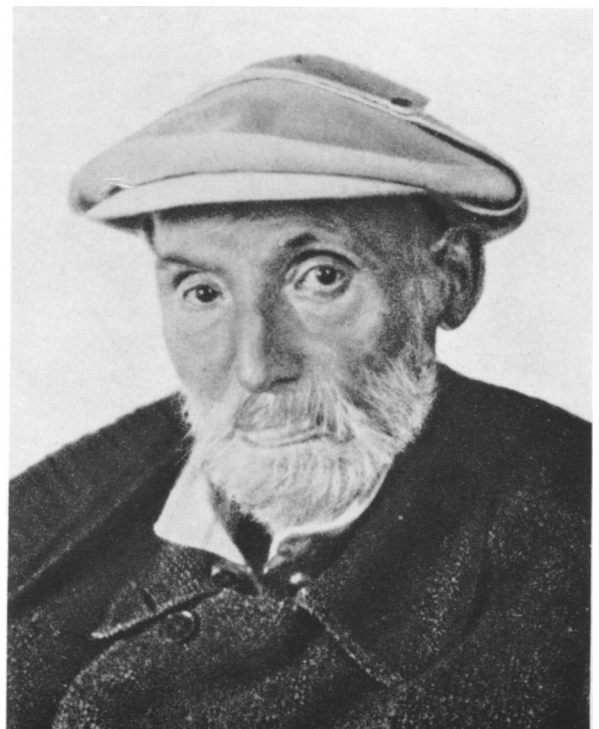
Despiau apparently learned a great deal from the classical method of sculptural construction, which Aristide Maillol had reinvented for himself about the turn of the century, but Despiau's portraits in no other way resemble those rare heads modeled by the elder master. Maillol's straightforward head of his friend Auguste Renoir (Figure 14) is perhaps the most deceptively simple of all. In the eye of the observer, Maillol's technique disappears completely into the characterization of the painter as an old man, wearing his favorite hat, an old one of white cloth, whose face records the ravages of the constant pain of incurable arthritis.

Of the sittings, which most probably took place in 1908 after Maillol returned from a trip to Greece rather than in 1907 as is usually supposed, the painter's son Jean Renoir has

14. *Pierre Auguste Renoir, probably 1908, by Aristide Maillol (1861-1944). Bronze, height 15 $\frac{7}{8}$ inches. Edith Perry Chapman Fund, 1951; from The Museum of Modern Art, gift of Mrs. Cornelius J. Sullivan, in memory of Cornelius J. Sullivan, 53.140.8*

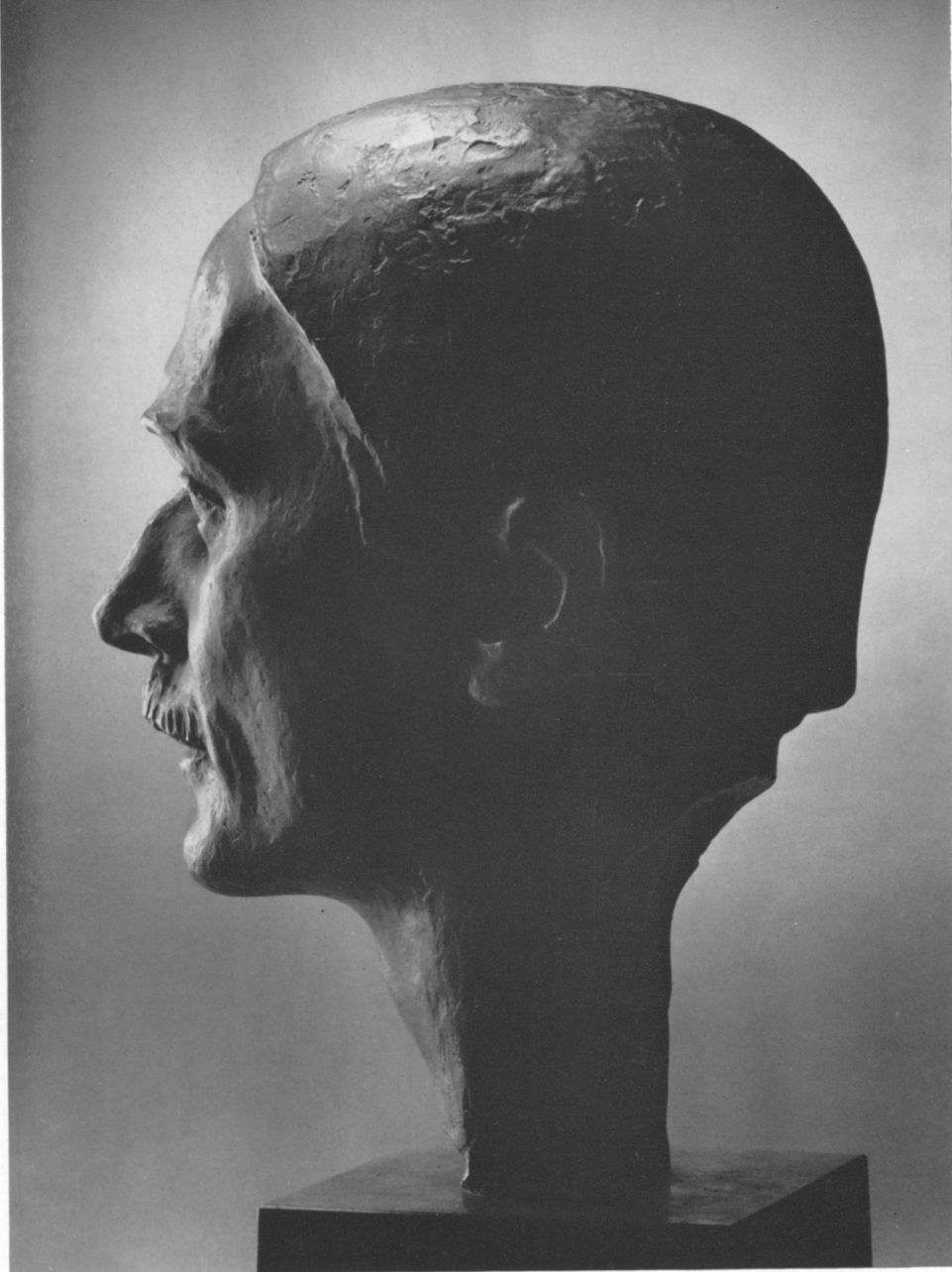


15. *Self-portrait, 1897, by Pierre Auguste Renoir (1841-1919). Oil on canvas, 16 $\frac{1}{4}$ x 13 $\frac{1}{4}$ inches. The Sterling and Francine Clark Institute, Williamstown, Massachusetts*



16. *Pierre Auguste Renoir, 1914. Photograph: The Bettmann Archive, Inc.*

17. *W. R. Valentiner, 1920, by Georg Kolbe (1877-1947). Bronze, height without base 11¾ inches. Edith Perry Chapman Fund, 1951; from The Museum of Modern Art, gift of Mrs. John D. Rockefeller, Jr., 55.21.12*



18. *W. R. Valentiner, 1933, detail from a mural in the Detroit Institute of Arts, by Diego Rivera (1886-1957). Photograph: Detroit Institute of Arts*



written an engaging account in his *Renoir: My Father*. Maillol had left his studio at Marly and had come to stay at Renoir's summer home at Essoyes in the Champagne region. "Maillol was slender, wore a beard, and had a strong Midi accent. He made us think of Henry IV. He was finishing a bust of my father. He worked on it in the studio while my father painted. He never asked Renoir to pose. He was so imbued with his subject that

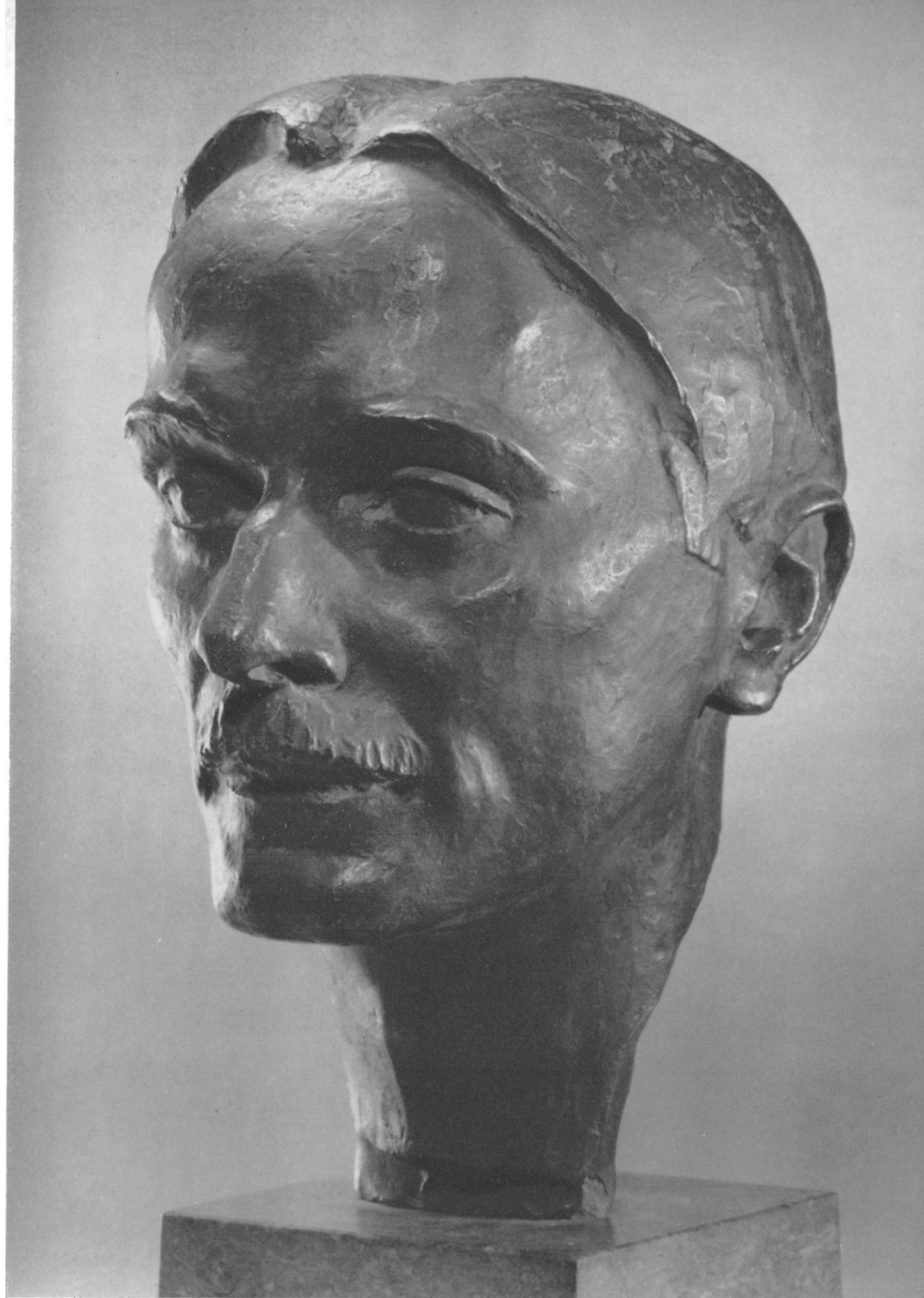
the likeness seemed to grow more and more apparent with every touch he put on his material."

In the interest of economy, Maillol insisted on using an available old piece of wire for the armature, against Renoir's better judgment. As Jean Renoir tells it: "One morning we were all awakened by a frightful outcry. Maillol was tearing around the garden like a lunatic. He kept repeating at the top of his voice:

'Renoir's fallen down! Renoir's fallen down!' The rusty old wire had given way; the bust he was working on had fallen, and a shapeless little mass of clay lay on the studio floor." A few days later Maillol modeled a second bust, which everyone agreed had not quite the quality of the first.

One has only to compare the bust with a photograph of Renoir (Figure 16) made in 1914 to appreciate the accuracy of Maillol's portrait. One might speculate, however, that the superiority of the lost bust may have been in the eyes, for throughout his years of illness, Renoir's eyes kept their intelligent sparkle. It is the sparkle that Renoir captured in his Self-Portrait of 1897 (Figure 15), and that still shines through the illness-lined face in the 1914 photograph.

German art in the earlier part of the twentieth century followed a very different path from that of the French. It is not surprising then that two German portraits in the Museum's collection stand in sharp contrast to the French group. The first is the Georg Kolbe portrait of Wilhelm R. Valentiner (Figures 17 and 19), the German-born scholar and art historian who in 1908 became this Museum's first Curator of Decorative Arts. The department, as he later recalled, consisted at the time of whatever would not fit into the collections of paintings, archaeological objects, and plaster casts, but it was soon to be enriched by Dr. Valentiner's installation of the first great J. Pierpont Morgan gift. He subsequently became director of the Detroit Insti-



tute of Arts, where he is depicted in a mural by the Mexican artist Diego Rivera (Figure 18).

Dr. Valentiner, an early and understanding admirer of modern sculpture and author of a monograph on Kolbe, published two years after the portrait was made in 1920, has indicated the relationship of the work of certain German sculptors to the ideas laid down by the nineteenth-century German theorist and sculptor, Adolf Hildebrand. Briefly, Hilde-

19. *W. R. Valentiner by Georg Kolbe. Front view*

20. *Self-portrait, 1901, by W. R. Valentiner (1880-1958). Colored ink drawing. Private collection. Photograph: The North Carolina Museum of Art, Raleigh*



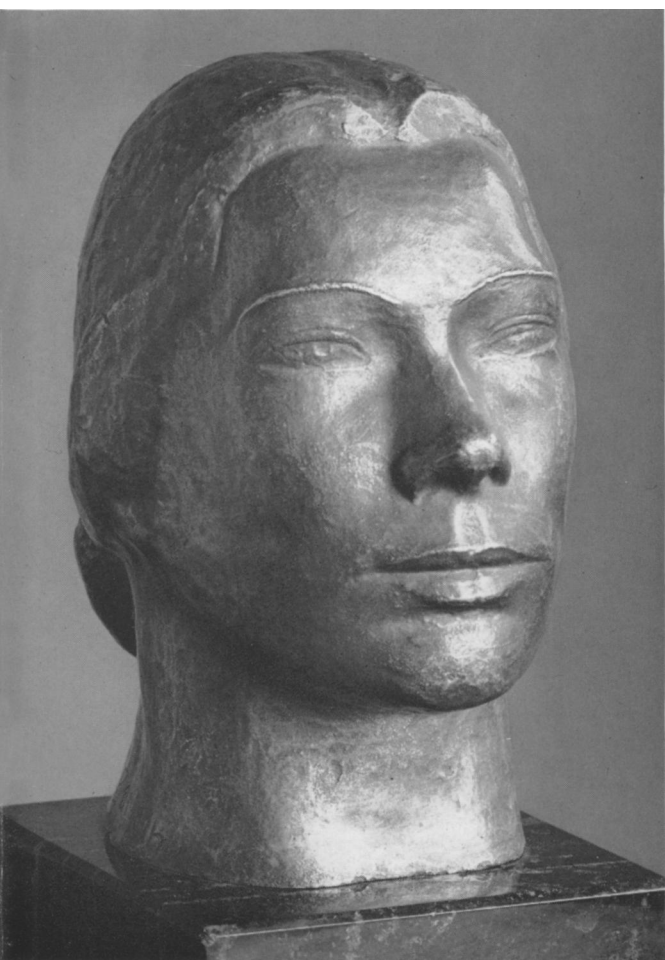
21. *Brigitte*, 1934, by Gerhard Marcks (born 1889). Bronze, height 12½ inches. Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Samuel C. Dretzin, 64.290

brand advocated the superiority of the carver to the modeler in the approach to the plastic arts. Kolbe's work was subject to a number of artistic currents, but the bronze *Valentiner* has exactly the look of having been cast from carved stone rather than from clay or plaster. Although more a study of the face than a finished head – the back obviously held little interest for the sculptor – the characterization is that of a sensitive intellectual, older, but not unlike the image Dr. Valentiner had made of himself nineteen years earlier (Figure 20).

Brigitte (Figure 21), the work of Gerhard Marcks, represents a very different strain in twentieth-century German sculpture. Marcks's years as director of the pottery workshops of the Bauhaus in Dornburg from 1919 until 1925 undoubtedly helped channel his interest toward modeling, although he himself has said that the main Bauhaus School at Dessau was "rigidly two-dimensional and meant nothing for the plastic arts." After 1925, as a teacher at the art school at Burg Giebichenstein, near Halle, he turned his energies more exclusively to sculpture. *Brigitte* is a portrait of the artist's daughter, made in 1934, the year after official Nazi policies forced Marcks into retirement. In the portrait, he combined simplification tending toward abstraction with an emotional intensity that indicates his acquaintance with the portraiture of such contemporary German expressionists as Max Beckmann, George Grosz, or Käthe Kollwitz.

But Marcks's work was never touched with the prevailing spirit of bitterness and angry satire, and for this reason he belongs more directly to the tradition of the most original German sculptors of the early twentieth century, Wilhelm Lehmbruck and, especially, Ernst Barlach. If we look at a rare Barlach portrait, the *Tilla Durieux III* (Figure 22) of 1912, we see the sculptural ancestor of *Brigitte*. To complete the circle, we might compare the Barlach with an oil portrait of Madame Durieux in the Metropolitan Museum (Figure 23), painted in 1914 and one of Renoir's best, for a visual summation of the contrast in viewpoint between the French portraitist and the German.

22. *Tilla Durieux III*, 1912,
by Ernst Barlach (1870-1938).
Bronze. The Ernst Barlach Haus,
Hamburg



23. *Madame Tilla Durieux*, 1914, by
Pierre Auguste Renoir (1841-1919).
Oil on canvas, 36¼ x 29 inches.
Bequest of Stephen C. Clark, 61.101.31



NOTES

I should like to thank Justus Bier, Director of the North Carolina Museum of Art, and Brigitta Valentiner Bertoia for their kindness in helping me locate the Valentiner portraits, as well as Jean Renoir for permission to quote his memoir of the Renoir sittings and most especially for his aid in dating the Maillol portrait.

The material concerning the portraits used by Rodin in preparing the models for his Monument to Balzac was published by Cécile Goldscheider in "La Genèse d'une oeuvre: le Balzac de Rodin," *La Revue des Arts* (Paris, 1952), 11, 37-44.

Jacob Epstein's comments appear in his autobiography *Let There Be Sculpture* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1940), p. 61, and *The Sculptor Speaks: Jacob Epstein to Arnold L. Haskell* (New York: Doubleday Doran and Company, Inc., 1932), p. 75; Shaw's letter to Epstein is in

Hesketh Pearson, *G.B.S.: A Full Length Portrait* (New York: Harper and Row, 1942, 1950), pp. 271-275.

Jean Cocteau's comments on Maria Lani are included in the introduction to *Maria Lani* (Paris: Editions des Quatre Chemins, 1929).

Jean Renoir's are taken from *Renoir: My Father* (Boston: Little Brown and Company, 1958), pp. 363-364.

The remarks from W. R. Valentiner's incomplete autobiography were published in the catalogue, *Masterpieces of Art*, for the memorial exhibition to Dr. Valentiner held at the North Carolina Museum of Art, Raleigh, April 6 - May 17, 1959.

Gerhard Marcks's comments were included in an autobiographical note published in the catalogue, *Gerhard Marcks*, for the exhibition at the Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, October 11 - November 14, 1953.

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