HONOLULU ACADEMY OF ARTS

THE HORYUJI WALL PAINTINGS
The Horyuji Wall Paintings

The majestic murals guarded through more than twelve hundred years in the Kondo of the Horyuji near Nara had become for the surviving worshippers of classical beauty something like a Pala­dium, not only of Japan but of the entire Buddhist East. For them their pres­ervation throughout the perils of World War II seemed to be something like a miracle, their shocking loss right after the war portentous. Others, believers in distortion and collage, reacted differently, either with disregard or with a polite shrug of the shoulders. And thus the loss of the Kondo murals is apt to be symbolic, illuminating as it does the antagonism in taste that has entangled the art student of today.

In the sphere of Western Humanism a first attempt to break away from a sole belief in Winckelmann’s olympian max­ims of “noble simplicity and quiet gran­deur” was made by Nietzsche, who was haunted by his own irrational impulses. Yet it was left to this age to turn from the Parthenon to a Men’s House of the Sepik River, and to Picasso to shatter that very human countenance he himself knew so well. The Surrealists, finally, incorporated with triumph the debris of Goethe’s and Shelley’s broken Gods into their own weird compositions.

A similar reversal back to pristine re­ligiosity and primeval standards of beauty has occurred in the taste of some contemporary lovers of Far Eastern Art. Deities of the Mahayana pantheon, if cared for at all, are seen in the terms of Wei, as relatives of the mysterious Saints of Moissac. Or, even more often, they are discarded in toto, ceding their sway to that of the animistic monsters out­living with ferocious vitality in the bronzes of Shang, [1300-1028 B.C.].

The grief of those who still do admire a Bodhisattva of T’ang and Tempyo had been little mitigated by the existence of life-size collotype reproductions of the Horyuji murals given years ago to some leading museums but now almost inac­cessible. Recently, however, one of these has become the property of the Honolulu Academy of Arts.

All that can possibly be brought forth about the problems of authorship, style and date of the Horyuji’s murals is likely to have been said,¹ and these lines do not intend to bring anything new. Yet it might be interesting to think once more of the cultural significance of these im­ages. The late René Grousset, one of the great believers in Latin clarity and clas­sical beauty, connected the famous Avalokitesvara (Fig. 2) with a Hadda head of the Buddha, an inspired offspring of the appolinian Buddha type of Gand­hara. But even those who do not ac­knowledge such Hellenic connections are bound to observe, as visualized with the sweep and the grace of an Eastern brush, the ideals of a matured spiritual age here shown in the art of classic perfe­ction and harmony. These pictorial ideals had come by way of Central Asia² to China and from there had spread to Korea and Japan as a supra-national gift from Buddhist India.

The inward meaning of this classical Buddhist art of the Far East, its spiritual energies, is what really interests the stu­dent of this age. In a collection of essays recently published under the suggestive title “Satan,”³ one of the authors, Ger­main Bazin, devotes a special chapter to what he calls “The Devil in Art.” There we are informed that “the devil’s real

² Cf. Honolulu Academy of Arts Bulletin, April, 1952, fig. 3.
home is the East," especially China: "through the mists of ancient Chinese religion we can glimpse a humanity bent under the burden imposed by infernal powers." The ritual bronzes of Shang, so Bazin continues, display "a conception of the monstrous reaching a metaphysical height such as no other civilization has ever known." Quoting Grousset the author concludes that the visual symbols of this diabolic animism reveal the "omnipresence of a mystery always on the point of dissolving into terror." And although the art forms changed throughout the following centuries of Chou, although Confucius established standards of reason and social order, Bazin holds that an undertone of daemonic terror continued throughout the life and art of Ch'in and Han, when Buddhism eventually showed a possible way of liberation.

Early Christian art occasionally represents the Lord as Orpheus with the Lyre, taming with his tunes the daemonic passions of man as seen in the rapacious beasts that have now peacefully settled around the divine singer. In spiritual regeneration as brought to man by Christ, in the deliverance as taught by the Buddha, the secret of transformation may be found, a transformation so apparent in the growth of Chinese and Far Eastern Art. The metaphysical energies of the race survive throughout the millennia, prerequisites of all artistic creation. But what was once daemonic,—"diabolical," if one wishes to put it like that,—through the transforming forces of the Buddhist Law becomes divine. Hence the confrontation of our two plates. Figure 1 shows a nondescript anthropomorphic daemon of the Shang period,4 revealing the sinister powers haunting and possessing early Chinese man. Figure 2, the Horyuji Avalokitesvara, a celestial Saviour in the T'ang-Tempyo style, represents the divinity of Mahayana Buddhism, conjured with the same creative force of form, but now, after the transformation, in the spirit of harmony and celestial splendour. In the practice of Dharma salvation may be found, this is the message of the principal figures of the Kondo murals. Amitabha, the "Buddha of Boundless Light," subdues the Powers of Darkness. He turns the Wheel of the Law (cover) and thus shows the way to deliverance.

Each of these two images, the tellurian Daemon of Shang on the one side, the celestial Bodhisattva of T'ang and Tempyo on the other, displays a tremendous beauty of its own and, when compared with the other, reveals the secret of transformation. It is left to the beholder to make a choice, and this choice, after all, may still not be the same for the lover of truth and for the "lover of beauty."

G. E.

Programs for Members

Wednesday Morning Lectures

The first of three Wednesday morning programs planned for this month will be on March 11 at 10:30 o'clock, when Jean Charlot will give a second gallery lecture on the "Renaissance Masters," with particular reference to paintings in the Kress Collection.

Mr. Charlot will repeat this talk for members and the public at 8:00 p.m. Thursday, March 12.

Robert P. Griffing, Jr., the Academy's director, will speak at 10:30 a.m., March 18 on "The Triumph of Spirit." This will be the second of four monthly talks which he is giving on "Developments in Western Art."

4 Handle of a "Nao" bronze bell, J. Lionberger Davis Collection. Exhibited at the Honolulu Academy of Arts in August, 1950. (Now in the collection of the City Art Museum of St. Louis. Published by permission.)
This lecture will also be repeated the following evening, March 19 at 8:00 o'clock, for members and the public.

A lecture on "Hawaiian Sculpture," illustrated by artifacts and slides, will be given for members by J. Halley Cox at 10:30 a.m. March 25 and again at 8:00 p.m. Thursday, March 26 for members and the general public.

All Wednesday morning programs are for members only and no guest privileges are extended. There is no admission charge for Thursday evening public lectures.

**Orchid Show**

The spring show of the Pacific Orchid Society will be held at the Academy on Friday, Saturday and Sunday, March 6, 7 and 8, hours to be announced later.

**Elizabeth Young Rediviva**

When Sir Walter Armstrong wrote his book¹ on Sir Joshua Reynolds in 1900, the Academy's portrait of Miss Elizabeth Young illustrated on these pages was briefly described as follows: "Miss Elizabeth Young, afterwards Mrs. Pope (the actress). Half length; full face; dark dress open in front, with light mantle over shoulders. Right hand holds a mask. Bust of Shakespeare in background. Painted about 1770."

In 1927 the portrait entered the Academy collection as the gift of Mrs. Charles M. Cooke, and the description was reasonably accurate except for the fact that the bust could not be identified as Shakespeare's because it could be scarcely be seen at all. Only under certain conditions of a strong raking light could the eye discern any drawing under what appeared to be a uniformly brown background (Figure 3).

Within recent months, Mr. Willson Y. Stamper of the Academy staff, has completed the cleaning of the portrait which has restored it to its original brilliance. The bust mentioned by Armstrong has reappeared, set in a formerly invisible niche at the upper left-hand corner of the picture, and a pilaster set upon a pedestal, equally invisible before, may now be seen along the right-hand edge (Figure 4). With the removal of the old varnish and its accumulated dirt, an entirely new sense of space has entered the picture, and the details of execution of the figure and drapery, fortunately in mint condition, now assert themselves as typical of the technical mastery of Reynolds' delicate brushwork.

The old varnish had become so brown that Armstrong had no choice but to

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describe the dress as being "dark." In its present (as in its original) condition, however, the dress is actually a light pinkish-lavender, and the mantle nearly pure white. Like the dress, the mask had also appeared generally "dark." It appears now as a white face brightly rouged, and the combination of its sightlessness and theatrically contrasted coloring forms a striking contrast to the delicately modelled face of the actress herself. The total result is an extraordinarily successful transformation of what had been only a shadowy evocation of English eighteenth century painting into a bright and charming statement of Reynolds' art as it was about to enter its mature phase.

R. P. G., Jr.

**Members' Annual Exhibition**

"Intimate Gardens in Hawaii" will be the annual exhibition sponsored by the Membership of the Academy during April. It opens with a preview-reception for members and their guests from 8:00 to 10:00 o'clock Wednesday evening, April 1.

Planned by the Exhibition Committee of the Membership, under the chairmanship of Thomas D. Perkins, this series of six gardens will be executed by landscape architects and designers, horticulturists and architects of Honolulu to illustrate ways of successfully relating a small outside area to a house or to specific rooms in a house. Gardens of the following types will be created in the central court to carry out this idea: Hawaiian, Chinese and Japanese (reflecting Oriental designs adaptable to Hawaii), modern patio and lath house. Special arrangements will be designed for the central court stage and for the Chinese and Spanish Courts, where the reception will be held.

**New Members**

TRANSFER TO LIFE—Mrs. Zadoc W. Brown, Mrs. Katherine F. Johnson.

TRANSFER TO SUSTAINING—Mrs. Clarence H. Cooke.

CONTRIBUTING—Mrs. Robert T. Lee.

ANNUAL—Mrs. John W. Anderson, Lieutenant and Mrs. Donald L. Arvidson, Miss Valerie Barbul, Mr. Richard C. Berg, Mrs. Edward A. Berlin, Mrs. Lyman H. Bigelow, Mrs. Edward B. Billingsley, Mrs. R. S. Bratton, Miss Joan Carroll, Mr. Albert C. Chock, Mrs. Ernest W. Cook, Mrs. Lewis C. Cooksey, Miss Gladys Corsbie, Mrs. Richard S. Dodge, Mrs. Richard H. Fletcher, Mrs. Frederic V. Guinzburg, Mr. Frank A. Hecht, Mrs. William H. Jewell, Mrs. Edward E. Johnston, Mrs. Richard T. Kainuma, Mrs. David T. W. Kang, Miss K. Douglas Lander, Mr. Manuel M. Liodas, Mrs. William H. Livingston, Miss Florence Matsui, Mrs. Kenneth O. Miller, Mrs. Francis J. Moore, Mrs. Stuart S. Murray, Mrs. Madison Nichols, Mrs. Joe S. Pearson, Dr. Serge G. Ross, Mrs. Angelo J. Rossi, Mrs. Harold C. Schnack, Mrs. Grier R. Smiley,

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**Figure 4**
March and April Activities

March

Public Programs:
1—4:00 p.m.—String Quartet program by members of the Honolulu Symphony Orchestra.
12—8:00 p.m.—“Renaissance Masters,” gallery lecture by Jean Charlot. (Second on Kress Collection.)
19—8:00 p.m.—“The Triumph of Spirit,” second in series of four lectures on “Developments in Western Art,” by Robert P. Griffing, Jr.
21—2:00 to 4:00 p.m.—Tea, opening exhibition of work by children in Academy’s spring term art classes.
26—8:00 p.m.—“Hawaiian Sculpture,” lecture by J. Halley Cox.

For Members Only:
11—10:30 a.m.—“Renaissance Masters,” second gallery lecture by Jean Charlot on Kress Collection.
18—10:30 a.m.—“The Triumph of Spirit,” second lecture by Robert P. Griffing, Jr., in series of four on “Developments in Western Art.”
25—10:30 a.m.—“Hawaiian Sculpture,” lecture by J. Halley Cox.

April

Public Programs:
30—2:30 to 5:00 p.m.—Tea opening Annual School Art Show.

For Members Only:
1—8:00 to 10:00 p.m.—Preview-reception, Members’ exhibition, “Intimate Gardens in Hawaii.”

March and April Exhibitions

To March 4—The Indians of the Americas.
To March 22—The German Print.
March 12 to April 18—The Horyuji Wall-Paintings.
March 11 to April 24—Art in Modern America.

HOURS OF ADMISSION—Free at all times: Open Tuesday, Wednesday, Friday and Saturday from 10 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Thursday from 10 a.m. to 9:30 p.m. Sunday from 3 to 6 p.m. EDUCATIONAL DEPARTMENT—The lending collection of objects, framed color reproductions and slides, is available to all teachers. Schools wishing appointments for visiting the Academy for talks by staff members may make them by calling the Educational Office. PRINT ROOM, REFERENCE LIBRARY AND MEMBERSHIP OFFICE—Open during Academy hours. Mrs. Arthur E. Restarick, Memberships Secretary.

R. P. GRIFFING, JR., Director   J. FEHER, Designer   MARVELLA A. HART, Editor