

THE MASTER OF THE HALF-LENGTH FIGURES

Flemish school, first quarter of sixteenth century

The "Master of the Half-Length Figures (in German Meister der Weiblichen Halbfiguren) is the name used to designate an unknown Flemish artist of the early sixteenth century, to whom a large group of works can be attributed, consisting mainly of figures of Saint Mary Magdalen in fashionable costume and Madonna and Child paintings with similar costuming and an equally impersonal type of facial expression. Also included amongst the attributions are a painting of Women Making Music (Harrach collection, Vienna) and a few mythological subjects.² These paintings, have a close affiliation to the work of Adrien Isenbrandt in Bruges (see below), behind which in turn lies the example of Gerard David; the landscapes suggest a dependance on those of Joachim Patinir (died 1524) and the figure style appears to draw on the work of Bernard van Orley of Brussels (died 1542). It appears probable that this artist was active in Antwerp, around 1525-35, and it has been suggested that he is to be identified as Hans Vereycke, who is mentioned by van Mander as the author of a triptych in Bruges, and whose name appears on a landscape drawing in the Louvre.⁽²⁾

Madonna and Child in a Landscape

oil on panel, 8x7 ins.

Condition

Somewhat rubbed.

Provenance

Acquired by Dr Clowes in 19 .

Exhibited

Ind., 1959, no. 39.

desk
archives

This painting was acquired with certificates from G. Gluck and W. Suida (1937) attributing it to the Master of the Half-Length Figures. It does bear some relation to that artist's work,⁽²⁾ but the background architecture and the method of painting the leaves, the informally winding roads and the neatly sawn-off tree stump all suggest, according to R. Koch (1967),⁽⁴⁾ that it should be attributed rather to the studio of Adrien Isenbrandt (active 1510-1551). The name of Ambrosius Benson (active in Bruges by 1519, died 1550), who appears to have been a follower of Isenbrandt, has in fact been suggested.

Notes.

1. See M.J. Friedländer, Die Altniederländische Malerei, 14 vols., Berlin, 1924-37, XII, 1935, pp.25ff., 171ff.
2. See O. Benesch. "The Name of the Master of the Half-Lengths", Gazette des Beaux Arts, 23, 1943, pp.269ff. The evidence presented there seems inadequate. There had been previous attempts to identify the artist as Jean Clouet as Lucas de Heere
3. Cf. especially the triptych of the Madonna and Child, Sts Jerome and Francis attrib. to this artist (Figdor sale, Cassirer, Berlin, Sept.29-30, 1930; Friedländer, op.cit., no.51)
4. Letter to the compiler, Feb.2, 1967, in which Prof. Koch stated that he felt quite definite on this point. One may compare, e.g., the right wing of the Nativity triptych in the Metropolitan Museum, New York, depicting the Flight into Egypt (13.32 A-C; H.B. Wehle - M. Salinger, Catalogue of Early Flemish, Dutch and German Paintings, New York, 1947. p.99, ill., as by Isenbrandt); and the Madonna and Child in the Musée des Beaux Arts, Ghent.
5. Note in Clowes archives.

* JAN BREUGHEL the Elder and HENDRIK VON BALEN, attrib. to

(See above for collaboration between these two artists.
Von Balen's dates are 1575-1632)

Rest on the Flight into Egypt

oil on canvas, 21 $\frac{1}{4}$ x 31 $\frac{1}{2}$ ins.

Condition

Fair

Provenance

x Acquired by Dr Clowes from Dawson, 19 .

Versions

Formerly in colln of Capt. E.G. Spencer-Churchill ; Leonard Koetser Gallery, London (~~advertised in Connoisseur, Nov. 1965,~~⁽¹⁹⁶⁵⁾ and attrib. there to J. Breughel). A variant of the present work.

As pointed out by J. Held¹⁾, there is no^{real} basis for attributing the figures here to von Balen ; Frans Francke II (1581-1642) has equally been suggested as the author of Madonnas in Jan Breughel's studio, but again there is no basis for attributing the figures here to him. This painting is therefore best ascribed to the studio of Jan Breughel the Elder, and dated to the late sixteenth, or more probably the early seventeenth century (Jan Breughel died in 1625). Held thought it possible that it might be by Jan Breughel the Younger (1601-1678).

Notes.

1. In a memorandum to Dr Clowes, 19 (Clowes archives)

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