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The Postman Roulin

Vincent van Gogh

Gift of Robert Treat Paine, 2nd

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The outcome of van Gogh's endeavors to paint Roulin were five bust portraits and the Museum's splendid three-quarter length figure. Landscape had given him those fiery colors and a feverish excitement to set them down on canvas, but his interest in humanity inherited from the old days in Holland always led him back to portraiture. These portraits are less ecstatic, less explosive than his landscapes and have the greater regulation which we find in his later work. As Meier-Graefe says, they "made him realize that he owed much more to the ideas of Delacroix than to those of the Impressionists. His powerful colouring, his haphazard methods, his not at all haphazard sensibility and vision, were not like the Impressionists . . . The Impressionists used colour as a description for Nature . . . For Vincent colour was the spring-board from which he vaulted over Nature; local colour provided him with his start. He painted a head of somebody whom he liked, for instance, as true to Nature as possible, fair or brown as the case might be. Then comes the really important part, the wilful heightening of the colour scheme. Blond hair is raised to orange, then to chrome, or even pale lemon colour. Then the stupid wall behind the head is taken away and a simple background of rich blue extends to infinity. And with a simple combination of two rich colours it is possible to give luminosity to a head, as mysterious as a star in the azure sky."¹ The sharp silhouette of Roulin's figure against the cerulean blue background of the portrait reveals a quite conscious influence from the Japanese prints which he had seen in Père Tanguy's shop in Paris. The arbitrary use of color to intensify the emotional effect was a trick he had learned from his idol Delacroix.

The work is an extraordinarily penetrating piece of observation of character, a powerful statement of facts about the man. A face "ugly as a satyr" but with an alert and sympathetic expression, the kindly intelligence of his blue eyes, the gnarled hands of a peasant who has spent his life in manual labor, all of these are simply and lucidly set down. The breadth of design and the directness of execution reveal the fully developed powers of the artist.

This forceful portrait may justly claim its place beside the other great portrait-masterpieces in the Museum, El Greco's *Palavicino*, Velazquez' *Don Carlos and His Dwarf*, and Degas' dual portrait of the *Duke and Duchess of Morbilli*.

C. C. CUNNINGHAM.

The van Gogh Exhibition

THE van Gogh Exhibition organized by the Museum of Modern Art with the cooperation of the museums in Boston, Philadelphia, Cleveland, and San Francisco, will be shown at the Museum from February nineteenth through March fifteenth. The exhibition is composed of over one hundred paintings and drawings assembled principally from two of the greatest extant sources of the artist's work, the Kroeller-Mueller Foundation in Wassenaar,

Holland, and the Collection of the Engineer Vincent W. van Gogh of Amsterdam, nephew of the artist. The European group is supplemented by generous loans from American collections. Boston is thus afforded a unique opportunity to view this large and comprehensive group of the artist's work. The majority of canvases have never been seen before in this country and it is highly unlikely that many of them will come to America again for some time.

A Statuette of Two Egyptian Queens

IN April, 1927, the Egyptian Expedition, in clearing the mastaba tomb G 7530 + 7540, came upon a number of fragments of a shattered pair statuette in hard yellow limestone¹. The tomb with which this group was associated lay in the Eastern or Royal Cemetery at Giza and was built by Queen Hetep-heres II, a daughter of Cheops. Under its northern end was a large rock-cut offering-chamber made by Hetep-heres for her daughter Meresankh III². It was, therefore, to be expected that a statuette found in this tomb and depicting two women should represent these royal ladies. On the upper face of the base of this group, between the feet of the figures, are the remains of an incised inscription in two columns. Careful examination, after cleaning, revealed enough of the text to make possible a sure restoration, which is reproduced in the accompanying drawing. The dotted lines indicate restorations and the solid lines what is actually visible on the stone. The text reads, "She who sees Horus and Set, United to the 'Two Ladies,' Hetep-heres. Her daughter, the King's wife, her beloved, Meresankh." The first two titles are well known Old Kingdom designations of queens, and this inscription thus confirms the supposition drawn from the finding place, proves the date of the statuette to be the end of the Fourth Dynasty, and identifies the ladies represented.

The fragments of this group came to the Museum in 1930 and were put in storage, since they could not be exhibited without restoration. When, in the winter of 1935, it was decided to open an additional gallery for study material of the Old Kingdom, I re-examined the fragments and came to the conclusion that enough remained to warrant an attempt at reconstruction of the group.

The fragments we had to work with were as follows: Of the taller figure—Hetep-heres; 1) head and left shoulder; 2) upper torso; 3) hips and upper part of left leg; 4) lower part of dress and legs to the ankles; 5) a fragment of the right upper arm. Of the shorter figure—Meresankh; 1) head and neck, including left elbow of Hetep-heres; 2) upper torso, including both shoulders and breasts, and the left hand of Hetep-heres; 3) knees and the tip of the left hand; 4) lower legs to the ankles; 5) part of the left fore-arm. In addition we had the

¹Museum No. 30.1456. The fragments were entered in the Expedition records under the numbers 27-4-963 and 964.

²Published in *Bulletin* XXV, No. 151, October 1927, p. 64 ff.

¹Meier-Graefe, Julius, *Vincent van Gogh*, New York, 1933, p. 125.



Restored Pair Statuette in Limestone of Queens Hetep-heres II and Meresankh III

From Giza

Fourth Dynasty

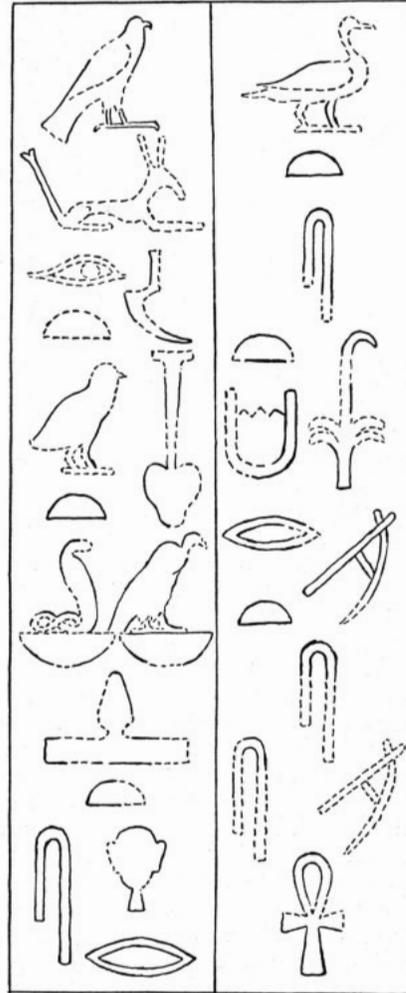
base with the lower parts of the two pairs of feet, including most of the toes. After restoration the group stands 59.3 cms. high. The two figures lean slightly backward and are supported by a heavy slab at the back, extending up to the shoulders of both figures. There is a subtle variation from true frontality,—the figures are turned very slightly toward each other so that the frontal planes of their chests and shoulders are not quite parallel, thus allowing the left arm of the mother to pass behind her daughter's neck without distortion. In the restoration of the missing parts we experienced some uncertainty as to the exact position of the right hand of the taller figure. Anatomically, in view of the greater height of Hetep-heres, the finger tips ought properly to come at a higher point than those of her shorter daughter. I have felt, however, that symmetry required a silhouette balanced in this respect, and confirmation of this view was found in the row of women in the northern chamber of the Tomb of Meresankh, where figures of

different heights have their fingers extending to a common level. This may be seen clearly in the cover illustration to the article on this tomb in the number of the BULLETIN already referred to.

In addition to the breakage suffered by this group, certain parts have been damaged by decay of the stone as it lay buried in the ground. The faces and figures were once beautifully finished, and still show in parts a smooth and polished surface, but large portions of the wig, face, and shoulder of Hetep-heres are now rough and pitted from decay. The base was never completely finished and still shows the characteristic pit-markings of the sculptor's tool. The natural color of the stone is a warm yellowish buff, and this may have been left exposed to represent the flesh-parts, regularly colored yellow in women by the Egyptians. In any case there remains no trace of yellow pigment, nor, be it added, of white or any other color on the clothing. The edges of the clothed areas, notably the shoulder pieces and the deep V-opening on the chest, are



Hetep-heres II and Meresankh III



Inscription on Base

carefully defined by incised lines, and it may be taken for granted that the dresses were intended to be colored, presumably white. The only pigment preserved is black; on the wig, the line of natural hair above the forehead¹, the eye-brows and pupils of Hetep-heres, and the hair, eye-brows, pupils, and nostrils of Meresankh.

This statuette, despite its damaged condition, is an important addition to the Egyptian collection. Its place of origin and date are accurately known, it represents historical personages, and it is unique in pose and grouping. In addition, the quality of its workmanship and the sensitiveness of its modeling, characteristic as they are of the work of the master sculptors of the Fourth Dynasty, give it the right to be ranked among the significant examples of Egyptian sculpture exhibited in Boston.

DOWS DUNHAM.

¹It is noteworthy that Hetep-heres II, here represented with her own hair black, is shown in one relief in the tomb of Meresankh III as being fair-haired. See the *Bulletin* article already referred to, p. 66.



Original Fragments before Restoration