

The Crucifixion as Seen in the Austrian Galleries



Christ on the Cross, by Altomonte



The Entombment of Christ, by Titian



Christ on the Cross, by L. Orbetto



The Crucifixion, by Heinz



Altar Piece of the 16th Century - The Crucifixion - by Claessens



Descent from the Cross, by Tintoretto



The Bewailing of Christ, by Van der Goes



The Bewailing of Christ, by Savoldo

A History of Some of the Noted Pictures of the Death of Christ Which Hang On the Walls of the Imperial Academy of Arts At Vienna and a Short Sketch of the Great Artists Whose Brushes Produced Them.

The celebrated painters of the world have differed in their conception of the scenes of the Crucifixion. Some have portrayed the facial expression of Christ as one of intense agony with a suggestion of angelic sweetness, whilst others have made the divine glory overshadow the human suffering. There have been differences in the relative prominence of those around the cross at the time of the crucifixion and at the time of the descent from the cross. The mother of Christ varies from a woman of youth to one of old age, although the general conception makes her much younger than she must have been at the time of His death, for she was probably sixty years of age when the crucifixion took place.

Mary Magdalen is sometimes given prominence next to Christ himself, and in some instances the Roman soldiers whilst present in nearly all are portrayed as fierce and indifferent and in others as interested and sympathetic. St. John, too, finds a place near the cross in many of the pictures, and in some of them he is given an almost feminine face. In the older ones the background plays a great part and hundreds of small figures are painted in to give an idea of the rabble which surrounded the cross. The greatest attention is paid to the coloring of the clothing of the people who followed Christ to Calvary and their facial expressions. The drawing of the old masters has never been excelled, and in the pictures of the Crucifixion it is seen at its best.

Each country boasts of its own particular art treasures of scenes in the

life of Christ, and each and every one has some especially famous picture of His death on the cross. A number of such paintings on this subject are to be seen in the Imperial Academy of Arts in Vienna. This splendid gallery was founded in 1692 by Leopold I., and frequently reorganized. The greatest part of this collection was presented by Count Anton Lamberg Sprinzenstein in 1821, and the remainder consists of purchases by Government and presentations by the Emperor Ferdinand in 1838. Almost every school of painting is represented in the big building and among them are a number of beautiful pictures depicting the Crucifixion.

Altomonte

A large canvas by Martin Hohenberg, known in the art world as Altomonte, is one of the most striking as well as beautiful pictures of the gallery. It hangs just where the soft rays of the sun fall upon two figures Christ shows peace and resignation, dazed at the foot of it. The face of Christ shows peace and resignation, while the faint halo and crown of thorns add even more softness to the delicate flesh tints of the face and body of the Man of Sorrows. The face of the Magdalen, half kneeling at the foot of the cross, is one of rare beauty and is regarded as perhaps the best female face ever put upon canvas by this artist. There is something fascinating about the loneliness of the picture, for the cross stands out against a cloudy sky with Jerusalem in the background, and only the two figures—the Magdalen in her sorrow and the crucified Saviour.

Altomonte was born of German parents in Naples in 1657. When he was about fifteen years of age he entered the studio of Baciccio at Rome and remained there for five years. Later he studied under Maratte and in the Roman Academy of Arts. In 1684 he Italianized his name and was

appointed painter to John III, King of Poland, where he painted at Warsaw pictures of the exploits of the Polish soldiers against the Turks. In 1708 he went to Vienna and four years later became a member of the Academy of Arts. He died at Linz in 1745.

is entirely different, for this artist gives Christ a Jewish cast of countenance, and groups the Virgin, Magdalen and St. John about the cross, which is rather dim with its black background. The figure of Christ has sagged and shows Him in a most painful posture. The Virgin is portrayed with hands clasped as if in

prayer, while the Magdalen has one arm about the foot of the cross with her other hand on a jar such as was used for sweet ointment in those days. The figure of St. John is rather awkward and the face even more feminine than the face of the mother of Christ. The coloring is rich, especially the robe of the Magdalen.

Joseph Heinz was born at Basle in 1565, and received his first instruction in art from Johann von Aachen and afterwards at the Basle Academy. From 1590 to 1594 he was the court painter to the Emperor Rudolph II at Prague, and was sent by that monarch to study in Italy. Heinz died at Prague in 1609. "The Crucifixion" in the gallery at Vienna is one of his best known works.

Savoldo

"The Bewailing of Christ" by Savoldo occupies a prominent place among the art treasures of Vienna. Gian Gerolamo Savoldo was born at Brescia in 1480, and seems to be one of the few painters who was wealthy enough to pursue the art for pleasure instead of gain. He was in Venice in 1521 (where he went from Treviso to finish an altar piece which had been left incomplete by another artist). He was especially fond of introducing night effects into pictures of sacred character, his "Bewailing of Christ" being one of the best examples of this. He painted under the influence of Titian and his coloring resembles that of the great Venetian artist. In the picture shown the face of Christ is peaceful. His body rests on the top stone of the grave and is held by Joseph of Arimathea. The Magdalen, who is wiping his left foot, is perhaps the weakest figure of the picture. The face of the mother of Christ shows her great sorrow and represents a woman of mature years. The figure of John is the mere shadow of a sad-faced young man. The picture is highly commended by art connoisseurs and is painted on poplar wood. At one time it belonged to the Archduke Leopold Wilhelm collection.

Tintoretto

Jacopo Robusti, known in art as Tintoretto, painted one picture after another with the greatest rapidity, and every gallery in Europe of any

ize has some example of his art. His "Descent from the Cross" in the Vienna gallery is one of his best. It shows the body of Christ lying on Mary's lap, who droops fainting; Magdalen is stretching out her arms; Joseph of Arimathea supports the body; Nicodemus is standing in the foreground to the right. This is one of the few pictures of the Crucifixion in which the figure of John does not appear. The coloring is flat but the drawing good. The picture is well hung and the light brings out its best points.

Jacopo Robusti, nicknamed "Tintoretto" from the fact that his father was a dyer, was born in 1512. He studied for a short time under Titian, but appears to have been for the most part self taught. His motto was "the design of Michael Angelo and the coloring of Titian," but he seems to have carried out neither, for he has not the coloring nor the design of these artists. His coloring is not bright, but cold and leaden, as one might expect from a man who might exchange "black and white." Some of the pictures painted by "Tintoretto" are immense, several of them being fifty feet high. His earlier pictures, of which the "Descent from the Cross" is one, are carefully finished, while the later canvases are hastily dashed off and not well colored. "Tintoretto" died in 1594, and his name has gone down in history as the most prolific of painters.

Peter Claessens

The Academy of Arts is especially rich in altar pieces with folding wings. The most notable of these is a piece by Peter Claessens, who was born at Burges in 1612. The piece is rare and is richly colored. It is what is known as a triptych. The center picture shows Christ on the cross with a stilled figure of the Magdalen.

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