

A Madonna by Neri di Bicci

Source: *The Burlington Magazine for Connoisseurs*, Feb., 1923, Vol. 42, No. 239 (Feb., 1923), pp. 92+96-97

Published by: (PUB) Burlington Magazine Publications Ltd.

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.com/stable/861689>

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but postponed till February, 1757. He may have been making preparations and disposing of his models during 1756, and this piece may have been signed before the day in that year when Foullet became master. On the other hand the commode and the table (as M. Founès, its purchaser, was good enough to ascertain) both bear a second stamp, a large *fleur-de-lys*. In the prospectus of the Comte de Salvert's forthcoming work the extract about "Joseph" (i.e., Joseph Baumhauer) explains that the tiny *fleurs-de-lys* each side of his stamp mean that he was employed by Royalty: he was, therefore, privileged and never became master. Foullet was probably in the same position originally, and on that account permission may have been obtained for him to reproduce Cressent's design for a royal palace. It has 47A in ink or paint at the back, possibly a Revolution sale number, and indicating one of a pair.

The same moral is to be drawn from the corner-piece [PLATE II, B]. It is one of a pair, never exhibited or catalogued, which has remained in the offices at Hertford House. They have a rather botched appearance, the central feature having been set in at a different level from the rest, the straight fillets of bronze rudely cut off, and the small interstices not filled in with marquetry. But examination proves it to bear the stamp of that chameleon, Jacques Dubois.<sup>5</sup> We have seen him turning aside to produce a piece of "Boulle": here he is bagging Cressent's mounts and carelessly sticking them together. The mount in the upper corners is to be found on the Chappey-Castellane-Hodgkins armoire: the straight fillets with a diamond kink on that piece and on the Schlichting commode; the ivy-sprays, so unpardonably twined round a straight fillet, on the last. The mask, which seems to represent what the mythologists call a "contamination" of Diana and Ceres, is of the Cressent type, but I have not run her to earth elsewhere.<sup>6</sup> I may add that those ivy-sprays, twined round curved mounts, occur on a cabinet by Dubois said to have been executed from a drawing by Nicolas Pineau (reproduced in Molinier, p. 146, from the collection of Baron

<sup>5</sup> IDUBOIS ME. This item should be added to the list of signatures in my first article; also another uncatalogued piece, an upright clock-case stamped N PETIT ME.

<sup>6</sup> Cressent may have been attracted to Diana by the pun upon his name in her crescent.

Nathaniel de Rothschild at Vienna). This goes to strengthen my suggestion of Pineau as a designer for Cressent.

I am anxious in these papers to avoid conjectural attributions, of which there have been too many; and I should lengthen out the present study unduly if I dealt with all the pieces, furniture, clocks, fire-dogs, at Hertford House, that exhibit a kindred design to Cressent's or might be assigned to his hand. But I will indulge myself with one example for which his name has been put forward. I am not going to call it Cressent's until I know; but this handsome bureau [PLATE II, F] is interesting because it is on the exact border-line between the Boulle and Cressent styles, a moment through which Cressent must have passed. Compare it with the bureau in "Boulle" work of the Cabinet du Conseil at Versailles, or with that in the collection of M. Edmund Foulc. The Versailles table has a bolder fling in curvature and a more generous overlap of the top. But the general design, the shape and mounts of the drawers are the same, and the terminal busts at Versailles are elder sisters of ours: the mother is on Boulle's Mazarine commode, also the key-hole mount: the mask on the central drawer is on Boulle's cabinet-bureau for the Elector of Bavaria. On the other hand our keyhole scutcheon [PLATE II, G] is a variation on the double-eagle-head device of the Boulle atelier, and the Bacchante's mask [PLATE II, E] is to be found on a bureau in the Louvre ascribed to Cressent<sup>7</sup> and is undoubtedly in his manner. In that bureau the prim ladies at the corner have forgotten their architectural rectitude of office; they have turned their heads coquettishly on one shoulder, and they sport a raking plume-aigrette like that on the mask of Cressent's dragon-commode. We may say, then, that our bureau marks the change from the Boulle marquetry of metal and shell to the *placage* of *bois des îles*, that the old shapes and features are being tentatively transformed, and that one of those features occurs on a piece generally accepted as by Cressent.

<sup>7</sup> *Portefeuille des Arts Décoratifs*, pl. 561, and Lady Dilke, p. 150.

<sup>8</sup> *Portefeuille des Arts Décoratifs*, pl. 485, and elsewhere. Described by Mlle. Ballot, p. 134. She quotes in support of Cressent's authorship the description in his *scellé*, "Quatre termes de moyenne grandeur, avec des testes de femmes coiffées de plumes et aigrettes, dont le buste est en console . . . plus un terme en console représentant une femme coiffée ornée d'une aigrette de plumes."

## NOTES ON VARIOUS WORKS OF ART

A MADONNA BY NERI DI BICCI.—A survey of the career and production of Neri di Bicci is unfortunately still rendered difficult by the fact that as yet this painter has not been made the subject of an up-to-date monograph. In the preparation of such a volume one would have the rare

advantage of the minute information about the Neri di Bicci's life and work, contained in his own *Libro di Ricordi* kept between 1453 and 1475 and now in the library of the Uffizi at Florence—a source of the most important information concerning the conditions under which a



A—*Madonna*, by Neri di Bicci. Panel, 83.8 cm. by 54.6 cm.  
(Mr. Annesley Gore)



B—*Virgin and Child, with the Magdalen (?) and St. Catherine*, by Marcellus Koffermans. Panel, 38.1 cm. by 33 cm.  
(Messrs. Arthur Tooth and Sons)



Florentine quattrocento painter worked, and yet to this day generally accessible only in Milanesi's excerpts in his edition of Vasari.<sup>1</sup>

A work, hitherto unpublished, and which in an account of Neri di Bicci's production undoubtedly would occupy a place of exceptional distinction, is the *Madonna and Child* in the possession of Mr. Annesley Gore, here reproduced [PLATE A]. As a design it is extraordinarily happy, the figure of the Madonna making a simple and easily flowing silhouette against the pale blue of the sky, the head of the Infant Christ, emerging over the dark blue of the Virgin's mantle, effectively counterbalancing the inclined profile of His Mother. Across the top of the picture is suspended a garland, the severely symmetrical disposition of which is agreeably broken by the gay arabesques of the scrolls tied round it and capriciously fluttering in the wind. The diagonal placing of the Madonna, with her bent head in contrasted direction, points, I think, beyond the possibility of a doubt, to an inspiration from Botticelli's early *Chigi Madonna* (now in Mrs. J. L. Gardiner's collection), and as in that picture the mystical note is struck by the grapes and ears of wheat presented by the angel, so it is here by the pomegranate held by the Infant Christ.

As the *Chigi Madonna* may be dated slightly later than Botticelli's *St. Sebastian* of 1473, now in the Berlin Gallery,<sup>2</sup> the picture by Neri di Bicci here published may as a corollary be assigned to the closing stage of his long life. (1419-1491).

A SIGNED WORK BY MARCELLUS KOFFERMANS.—We are all familiar with a tendency in art criticism to go to exaggerated lengths in ascribing works to artists who were notoriously recep-

tive and frequently varied their style. Among Flemish painters, for instance, one to whom it has become customary loosely to attribute a number of pictures of very disparate character, is that curious and interesting *retardataire*, Marcellus Koffermans, who, although living in the second half of the sixteenth century (the records of him date from 1549-70), harks back in his art to much earlier periods. In view of the tendency now referred to, a signed work by this artist is a particularly valuable document, and I am glad to have this opportunity of publishing one such example, all the more so as the other ones which exist—I have seen some nine of them enumerated<sup>3</sup>—have in many cases not been reproduced and are not very accessible. The picture in question [PLATE B] is a small panel, belonging to Mr. Arthur Tooth, and previously in the Burdett-Coutts collection. It shows on the left the Virgin, seated, and holding in her arms the Infant Christ, who receives a wreath of flowers from St. Catherine; another female saint, perhaps the Magdalen, stands between the Virgin and St. Catherine, watching the Child to whom she is about to offer a flower. In the background is seen a landscape, with a city by a river at the foot of a range of hills, above which some birds are circling in the air—a note this which brings in a touch of modernity rather contrasting with the neo-primitiveness which is characteristic of the group of figures, among which that of the Madonna achieves considerable charm in its archaistic revival of the formula of an earlier age. The picture is very pleasing in colour, with two shades of positive red—in the drapery on the left and in the dress of St. Catherine—enclosing the dark blue of the Madonna's and the Magdalen's cloaks. Below, on the right, is the signature in full—"Marcellus Koffermans fecit."

T. B.

<sup>1</sup> Vasari, *Le vite*, ed. Milanesi (Florence, Sansoni), ii, 69, etc.

<sup>2</sup> Compare Horne, *Botticelli*, p. 37.

<sup>3</sup> Compare W. Cohen's article on Koffermans in Thieme-Becker's dictionary, *ad litt.* (under Coffermans, the alternative way of spelling his name).

## LARGILLIERE'S *LOUIS XIV AND HIS FAMILY* BY W. G. CONSTABLE

THE publication in the BURLINGTON MAGAZINE for September, 1922, of an iconographical note on this picture in the Wallace Collection, has brought to my knowledge new and valuable evidence on the points discussed. M. Emile Dacier, of the Bibliothèque Nationale, working on an allied problem with independent material, agrees with my conclusion that the child in the picture is the Duke of Brittany, the second son of the Duke of Burgundy; but holds that the governess is not Madame de la Mothe-Houdancourt, but her daughter, the

Duchesse de Ventadour. Let me say at once that I consider his the better opinion, though I do not regard his reasoning as conclusive. His researches are published in the *Bulletin de la Société de l'Histoire de l'Art Français*, 1920 and 1922; and by his kindness I am permitted to summarize them here. The well-known 18th Century Collection of L-J. Gagnat in the Hôtel de la Ferté (now No. 12, Rue Richelieu, Paris), included on the first floor a set of six decorative paintings representing various members of the royal family of France from Louis XIII to Louis XV, with their governesses. At the end of