

# BULLETIN OF THE MUSEUM OF FINE ARTS

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Danseuse

Edgar Degas (1834-1917)

Purchased

PUBLISHED BIMONTHLY

SUBSCRIPTION ONE DOLLAR

This plaque, but 11.8 centimeters wide and 16 centimeters high, presents the scene so often pictured in many media by the artists of Christian Europe and affords us the earliest example of it in our collections.

Its former owner, Prince Trivulzio, is a member of a family which has been important in the history of Milan since the fifteenth century. The greatest among them was Gian Giacomo, military genius who added Brescia, Bergamo, and Crema to Milanese territory and who was several times Governor of Milan. His portrait appears in company with



Hildesheim plaque

Twelfth century

other famous leaders throughout Italy in the frescoes of the Borgia apartments of the Vatican painted by Pinturicchio.

As a patron of the arts Milan had Don Carlo Trivulzio (1715-1789), an ascetic and studious man whose keenness and scholarship brought a private collection of the fine arts, books, and manuscripts to the position it held during the nineteenth century, when connoisseurs described it in glowing terms. M. Courajod, then Director of the Louvre, wrote: "Marchese Trivulzio . . . dont il faut toujours citer la collection quand on parle d'oeuvres d'élite." The collection was eventually divided, and when the granddaughter of Don Carlo, who married Prince Emile of Belgium, sold most of her portion some of the objects went to the Bargello, some to the Royal Mint, some to the Biblioteca Ambrosiana, and a few even returned to the Palazzo Trivulzio in the Piazza S. Alessandro where the collections are cared for to-day by Prince Luigi A. Trivulzio.

M. Valery writing in 1852 said the library contained thirty thousand volumes and about two hundred manuscripts, also that it was rich in early editions of Dante, Boccaccio, and Petrarch, manuscripts by

Tasso and others, and that there were some Leonardo drawings. Ella Noyes in *The Story of Milan* (1908) mentions a Gothic tomb of Azzo Visconti, and important paintings by Mantegna, Antonello da Messina, Sano di Pietro, Piero di Cosimo, and Boltraffio.

From this important collection the Museum of Fine Arts has acquired the ivory plaque illustrated herewith. M. Courajod in his article<sup>1</sup> on the Exposition Retrospective held at Milan in 1874 wrote, "The Marchese Trivulzio exhibits a group of ivories capable of rivaling the richest public collections . . . especially a *Descent from the Cross* (No. 7), an interesting work of the XII or XIII century."

Giovanni Seregini in his volume *Don Carlo Trivulzio e la Cultura Milanese*, which was published at Milan in 1927, mentions among the ivories of the collection but one *Descent from the Cross*, which, it seems fair to assume, is the one now in our Museum. EDWIN J. HIPKISS.

### Successive Installations of a Statue of King Mycerinus

THE great alabaster statue of King Mycerinus<sup>2</sup>, the first object seen on entering the main galleries of the Egyptian Department and one of its most treasured possessions, has been in the Museum slightly more than twenty-five years. During this time the figure has undergone various changes in installation and a progressive series of restorations which it seems appropriate to record in the Bulletin.

The scattered fragments of the statue were found during the excavation of the funerary temple of Mycerinus in front of the east face of the Third Pyramid at Giza. In January, 1907, the large fragment of the seat, including the knees with the two hands resting upon them and the upper part of the calves (Figure 1), came to light in a corridor of the temple, and in a hole in the floor of an adjoining store-room were discovered a number of fragments from the shoulder and torso. In March of the same year, in a plunderers' trench north of and close to this part of the temple, and only a few inches beneath the modern surface of the ground, were found the head, the greater part of the left shoulder, and further fragments from the torso (Figure 2). These fragments were retained at Expedition headquarters for two years in the hope that further parts of the great statue might be found. By the spring of 1909, however, it became clear, as the excavation of the temple was completed and the work moved to more distant areas, that no further pieces were to be hoped for, and the fragments were shipped to the Museum.

There, in December, 1909, the two principal pieces were placed on public exhibition in what was at that time the Old Kingdom gallery (Figure 3). With the head set on a bracket on the wall and the

<sup>1</sup>Courajod, L., "Exposition retrospective de Milan en 1874," *Gazette des Beaux-Arts*, April, 1875.

<sup>2</sup>Reg. No. 09.204. Published: Reisner, *Mycerinus*, p. 108; Plates 7 b, d; 8 c, d; 12; 13; 14; 15; 16 a.



Fig. 1. Knees as found



Fig. 2. Head and shoulder as found



Fig. 3. First installation, 1909

knees mounted on a pedestal below, an effort was made to suggest the relationship of the two parts to one another, but without any physical connection between them. The various minor fragments of shoulders and torso were not used and no restoration whatever was ventured upon. In 1911 an attempt was made to bring these pieces into more intimate relation to each other, and at the same time to incorporate the left shoulder and torso fragments (Figure 4). No effort at true restoration of the missing parts was made, however, but merely a very general suggestion of the forms in cement, primarily for physical support of the different original pieces in an approximation to their proper positions.

Despite the far from satisfactory appearance of the statue it remained in this condition for a number of years. The Museum's hesitation to go farther was due in part to the difficulty of making restorations which would harmonize with the magnificent modelling of the original, and in part to the prolonged absence of Professor Reisner, the Curator of the Department, who was obliged to remain in Egypt from 1912 to 1925 because of the war and the important activities of the Expedition in the field. In 1925, however, the Curator returned for a time to Boston, and in the same year additions to the Museum building made possible an expansion of the exhibition space at the disposal of the Egyptian Department. The large top-lighted gallery to the right of the Rotunda became available for the installation of our most important Old Kingdom sculptures, and the Mycerinus statue had to be moved to a prominent position in this room.

These circumstances led to the decision to attempt a partial restoration of the statue. Mr. Joseph Lindon Smith, long a student of Egyptian art, an intimate friend of the Department (now its Honorary Curator), and a distinguished painter of reproductions of the Egyptian tomb reliefs, undertook to model in plaster the right shoulder, the chest, and the lower part of the torso, and a reconstruction of the missing parts of the seat and of the base was also carried out (Figure 5). This, the third installation of the statue in the Museum, was a marked improvement and clearly demonstrated that judicious restoration could greatly enhance its effectiveness. For some years the Museum authorities were satisfied and no additional work was initiated, but long familiarity and study have led to a growing sense that further steps ought to be taken. The majestic dignity of the statue was marred by unsightly gaps which tended to falsify its proportions and to distract the attention of visitors. In the winter of 1933-1934 Mr. Smith and I paid a visit to Professor Reisner in Egypt, the problem was again discussed with him, and his consent was obtained to our undertaking further restoration of the figure in plaster, this material being selected since, if the work proved unsatisfactory, it could easily be removed.

In the spring of 1934 Mr. Smith himself took the first step by adding the lappets of the wig and the outline of the belt where it crosses the abdomen. The modelling of the arms and feet was then entrusted to Mr. Charles Muskavitch, a former student at the Museum School, and was executed by him

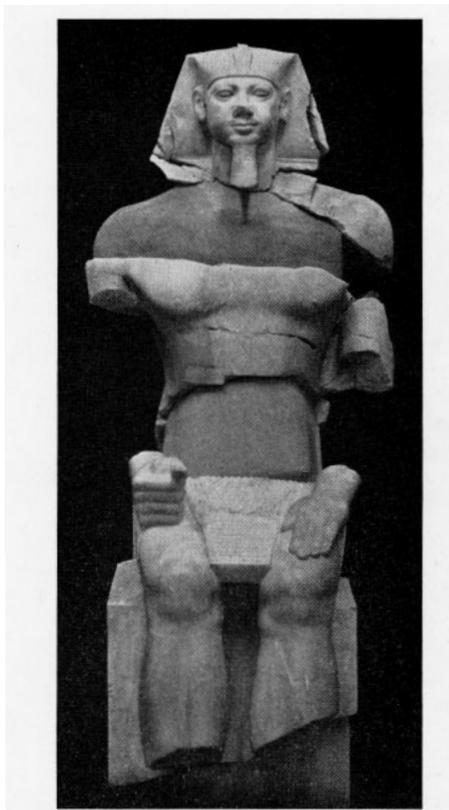


Fig. 4. Second installation, 1911

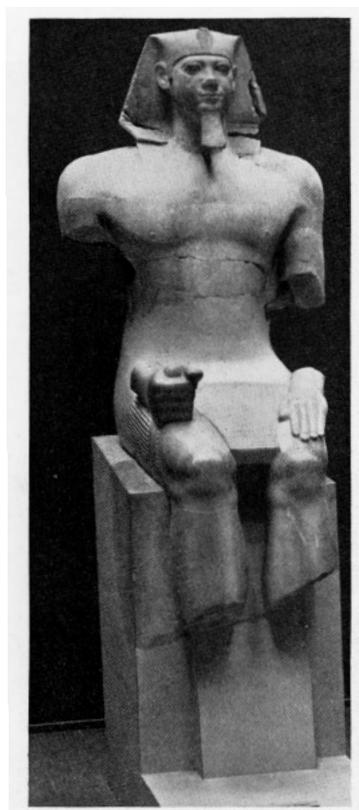


Fig. 5. Third installation, 1925



Fig. 6. Latest installation, 1935

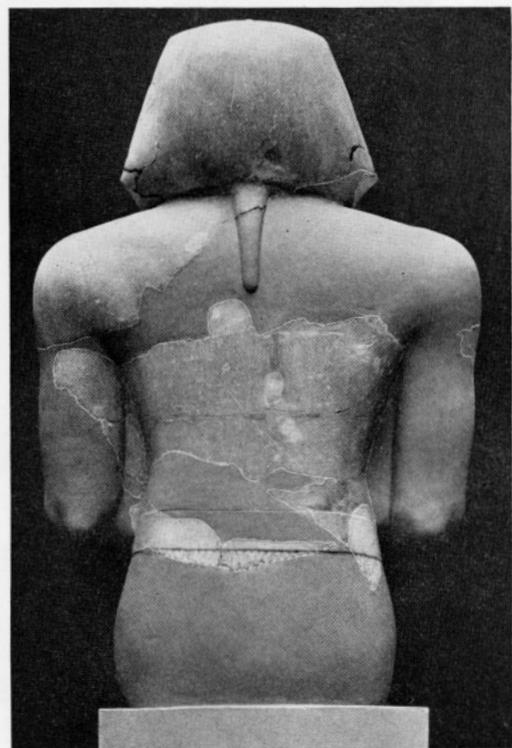


Fig. 7. Latest installation, 1935

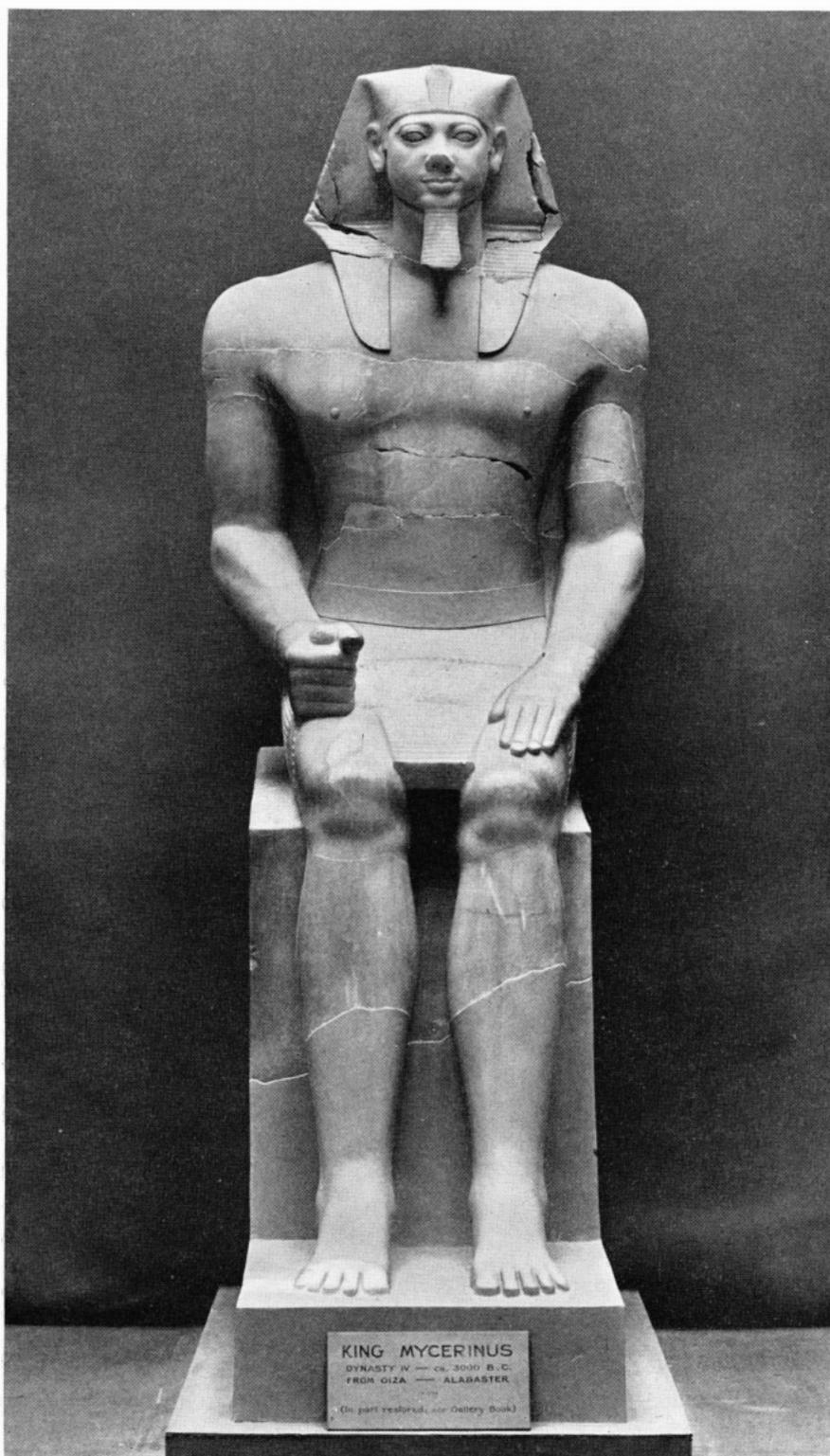


Fig. 8.

Alabaster statue of King Mycerinus as restored in 1935

under the supervision of myself and Mr. Smith (Figures 6 to 8). A preliminary study was made of the style and proportions of certain related royal sculptures of the period; the similar statue of Mycerinus from the same excavations now in Cairo, the diorite figure of Chephren also in Cairo, and the lower half of a seated statue of Mycerinus which stands in the same gallery in Boston. A small fragment of our statue, the toes of the right foot and a portion of the base, was incorporated into the new restoration, and was of great assistance in determining the scale and position of the feet. In restoring the legs and feet it was found that the base, as previously reconstructed, was too low, and when it was raised the proper proportion between seat and base was lost. This was corrected by placing a wooden plinth around the base of the figure. When completed, all the restored parts were given a coating of matt buff paint, harmonizing with the tone of the alabaster, but distinct from it in color and texture. Finally, lest there be any possible confusion between original and restoration, a fine white line was added bordering all restored portions and defining the limits of the original fragments.

The four stages in the installation of the alabaster statue of Mycerinus illustrate an interesting problem in Museum practice. We have felt that, from one point of view, restoration of missing parts was undesirable; that it was hardly compatible with the scholarly obligations of a scientific institution to substitute modern approximations for parts, the precise forms of which we could not know. On the other hand it became increasingly obvious that without restoration the general public received an entirely false impression from such a work of art as our figure; glaring lacunae in a subject as familiar as the human body cannot fail to be both distressing and distracting to the observer, whose attention tends to become focussed on the gaps rather than on the qualities of what is preserved. In the treatment of the Mycerinus statue the Department has endeavored to meet both the obligations of scholarship and the interests of the lay visitor by a compromise between these two points of view. DOWS DUNHAM.

#### Gifts by Mrs. Charles Gaston Smith's Group

FOR three weeks in March and early April, an Exhibition of gifts to the Museum by Mrs. Charles Gaston Smith's Group was held in the Museum. It was an attractive and significant selection including contributions to every Department in the Museum. One of the earliest gifts was toward the purchase of the very fine T'ang horse, which is one of the most important examples of T'ang pottery in the collection of Chinese art. Another gift comprises a large selection of contemporary prints, thereby helping to meet the Museum's need for representative examples by living American artists. The most recent gift shown was the *Portrait of a Professor* by Alexander James, presented by the Group this year.

#### A Gift of Two Ship Models

OUR Museum's collection of ship models has just received the gift of two important and distinctive models from Mr. Frederick C. Fletcher which he had deposited as loans when the marine gallery was installed at the opening of the new wing in 1928. This was probably the first time that such a collection was included with others on a permanent basis in a Museum of Fine Arts in this country, although an established practice in a number of European museums where, as works of art, they were deemed worthy of honorable place.

It has been asked if a model of a full rigged ship could be considered a work of art! The best ones so testify; and if John Ruskin could rightly say that "The mind of man never conceived and the hand of man never contrived a work of more exquisite beauty than that wonderful creation of oak and hemp known as a Ship of the Line," it may also be rightly claimed that the models from which these old ships were built are, in beauty of design and of craftsmanship, indeed works of art. They are the prototypes of actual vessels and have survived to tell their story, while the ships from which they were built have disappeared fifty, a hundred, or over two hundred years ago.

In those days the model maker filled an important place in European ship building. After years of apprenticeship, he was employed to do this work alone for admiralities and dockyards, a work which demanded great skill and exact scale, for every feature of construction, even to the carved figures on the quarter galleries, had to be accurately reproduced in the building of the actual ship, while sculptors of distinction were often employed to carve these figures and other ornaments.

The contemporary model of the "Royal George," one of Mr. Fletcher's gifts, is a noble example of a British admiralty model of 1715, one of the finest extant, and serves to illustrate what has been said above. It is interesting to note how certain planks in its construction were left out in order to take measurements which were to be enlarged to full scale. This hundred gun British warship began her career as the "Royal Charles" of 1673, rebuilt and renamed "Queen" in 1692, and again rebuilt to become the "Royal George" of 1715 as shown in the model.

The second gift, the model of the "Flying Cloud," shows in scale one of the best known as well as one of the fastest of Donald McKay's clipper ships, listed to a light breeze, with all sails set. This highly finished work of a modern model maker, Mr. H. E. Boucher of New York, was made from original plans and data under the supervision of Captain Arthur H. Clark of clipper ship renown, and so thoroughly carried out in detail that each bellying sail was shaped to its particular curves in a separate mould. The "Flying Cloud," one of the handsomest clippers afloat, was fitted out in almost yacht-like style with large central and after cabins finished in rosewood, satinwood, and mahogany set off by