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HIGHLIGHTED WORKS OF ART

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MUSEUM OF FINE ARTS — COLLECTION OF ANTIQUITIES

ART FROM TEANO

Until the 19th century the art of ancient Italy meant the art of Rome and Etruria. The concept of ancient art comprising the whole of Italy is contemporaneous with the strengthening of Italian unification movements. In the 20th century, between the wars, scholarly debate centred around the common characteristics of this hypothetically unified Italian art. Later, however, there appeared an ever increasing effort to determine the individual artistic characteristics of certain peoples and regions, and to identify what separates them from each other within this unity. Afterwards, the typical character of larger centers (such as Tarentum, Capua, or Canosa, besides the Etruscan cities) slowly began to be observed, and it is certainly worthwhile to analyze the remains of smaller cities from this aspect, even if they found themselves bypassed by the march of politics and history. One of these cities is Teano. Located on the northern border of modern Campania, the settlement of Teano — ancient Teanum Sidicinum — lies on the southern slope of the volcanic Rocca Monfina, and today has about thirteen thousand inhabitants. It is generally known only for a single scene which entered the political mythology of modern Italy: the "Handshake of Teano". It was here that in October, 1860 Garibaldi, marching north after having overthrown the Kingdom of Naples, met Victor Emanuel II, and abandoning his republican dreams, hailed the latter as king of a new, unified Italy. Ancient written sources and archaeological records, however, have more to say.

As excavations attest, the environs of Teano were inhabited as early as the Bronze Age. They were occupied by the Sidicini, an Oscan-speaking Italic people, around the middle of the 6th century BC, and the city of Teanum emerged as a centre for their sporadic settlements around the middle of the 4th century. The heyday of its independent life came between the last third of the 4th, and the beginning of the 3rd centuries, a period of decisive battles between Rome and the Italic peoples. Later Teanum went on to become a Roman city, although the inhabitants kept their Oscan language until the first century BC. Little remains of the ancient city and its architecture. One can still see the ruins of a theatre rebuilt in the Roman imperial period and of the Roman baths. But our knowledge

of its art prior to the Roman occupation is increasing, thanks mainly to the exploration of one of its cemeteries at the beginning of the 20th century, followed by excavations at urban and neighbouring extra-urban sanctuaries from the 1960s onwards. Of these places, two stand out for the wealth and variety of their finds. These are the sanctuary of Loreto within the city, and another sanctuary site a small distance away in Fondo Ruozzo. Both sanctuaries are still anonymous, and they may possibly have served as cult places for a number of deities, among whom Hercules is the most significant in Loreto, while Demeter and Populona, who was identified with Juno, are prominent at the other site. The series of votive objects unearthed at the two sanctuaries begins in the 6th century and continues, after a break of several decades, into the heyday of Teanum. The city lay near the junction of roads connecting the northern and southern part of the peninsula, and close to Capua (today S. Maria Capua Vetere), the largest town in inner Campania. It is no wonder, then, that Etruscan, south Italian, and above all, Capuan production exercised a decisive influence over Teanese art from the very

beginning, and that objects imported from these places — especially from Capua — were also unearthed among the finds. The nearest town, Cales (today Calvi), which was separated from Teanum only by two sanctuaries of Fortuna-Tyche which remain unexplored to this day, was in artistic terms its twin city. In all probability several local workshops produced goods for both markets, which makes it rather difficult to determine their real location. These different influences, however, do not obscure the independent characteristics of the art of Teanum, which are conspicuous from the very beginning, manifesting themselves both in genre and style without ever losing their more generally Italic character. The Collection of Classical Antiquities preserves representative examples of three typical genres from Teanum, two of which are recent acquisitions. The head of a youth in a pointed cap with elaborately detailed locks of hair comes from the sanctuary of



Loreto; the series of which it is an important piece belonged to the period of the sanctuary before the foundation of the city, and the Budapest piece was created as early as the 5th century BC. These heads cannot be associated with the worship of any single deity, but as they come exclusively from the sanctuary of Loreto, they



were certainly made in a local workshop, together with a number of other large-scale terracotta statues.

The same is only probably true of one of the cups on display. The middle of the black-glazed "Arethusa cup" has the head of a young girl in relief: it is this which accounts for its name.

The group now numbers about sixty pieces. The head was created from an impression of a Syracusan coin made a hundred years earlier by Euainetos, one of the greatest ancient engravers, or from an impression of the Greek version thereof. As tradition had it, the nymph Arethusa, fleeing the amorous intentions of the river-god Alpheios (a river in Southern Greece), dived beneath the sea and emerged on the Syracusan island of Ortygia, where she became the pure spring which bears her name to the present day.

We do not know why this — and only this — image appears on the cups from Teanum. She might have been identified with one of the deities worshiped in the local sanctuaries.

The fact that a coin from Syracuse was used is hardly surprising, for a cup found in a grave in Teanum bears the signature of a master who claims to be of Sicilian origin.

The other cup on display is undoubtedly a local product. It belongs to a group of vases known quite correctly as "Teano cups", not only because of their findspot, but also because quite a few bear the name of the Berii, a family of local workshop-owners, and an indication of Teanum as a place of their activity incised on the inner rim of the cups. The Teano cups, whose influence reached as far as Rome, show a recognizable connection to the so-called Gnathia-ware produced at the time in Apulia, especially in the Greek coastal cities of the region. Not only are many of their decorative motifs identical, but, more importantly, the technique of their decoration as well. Red-figure decoration, predominant in earlier times, was now succeeded by concentric series of floral and geometric motifs applied with a variety of techniques — added colour on the black ground, incision, stamping, and rolling. Similarly, the Arethusa-cups also attest the turn away from figural decoration. As in their case, the connection with Apulian pottery-workshops may have been established not only through imports, but also by travelling masters. This hypothesis is justified by a Teano cup which bears the signature of an Apulian master.

Still, besides a few mediocre craftsmen, even the last period of South Italian red-figure vase painting at the turn of the 4th and 3rd centuries had its outstanding master in Teanum. He is called the Vitulazio-painter, after a nearby findspot of one of his works. Lacking an original, we can only illustrate here the work of this artist with photographs. He is easily recognised by his unique artistic outlook and the technique of his drawing. His vase paintings — as is so often the case with the last representatives of a disappearing genre — have something touching and new to say to the artists and viewers of our time as well.

