

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

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The Dore Vase

If you, our reader, are old enough you will remember when the huge Dore Vase stood within the De Young Museum in Golden Gate Park in San Francisco and then again will remember how in recent years the vase had been moved to the open plaza in front of the museum. Originally the large, beautiful bronze vase had been brought to San Francisco from France to be exhibited at the Midwinter Fair held there before the turn of the century.

Gustavo Dore sought to typify the "Vintage" When he designed his great vase, it is the story of the vine, from the base, where the quaint little cupids battle with the insects that would destroy the vine, up through the full luxuriness of rich fruit and swaying tendrils to the topmost group of cupids eagerly squeezing the juices from the rich grapes.

The massive nature of the great design takes on new emphasis when it is realized that the groups about the base are fourteen plump little cupids and half a dozen little insect foes; on the body of the vase among the tendrils of the vine, thirty-six cupids, seven Bacchantes, four Satyro and old Silenus himself; perched upon the topmost rim eight more cupids. And the tremendous task undertaken by Dore is appreciated in the study of the individuality of these figures. Each one, from the tiniest cupid to the jovial Silenus, was separately modeled, then placed in position on the vase and necessary adjustments of pose made to build it into the complete composition without losing its individual appeal.

From six different points of view the Dore vase presents a satisfying and harmonious picture. This is accomplished by festooning the heavy vine in three huge loops about the body of the vase, with a group of figures placed in each loop and at each point of attachment.

One loop holds Silenus and the cupids who make merry with him; one has the lazily graceful figure of a Bacchante, one arm outstretched to hold a roguish cupid up where he can squeeze a ripe grape cluster into his cup; one holds a Bacchante with a sly little attachment, a cupid nestling, a cupid nestling close to her ear to whisper secrets. At the point of attachment

are other groups - one a Satyr, evidently overcome by wine and helplessly defending himself against the merry assault of a band of cupids and Bacchantes; one, a Bacchante with upheld cup, and one a Satyr who has seized a Bacchant and is carrying his prize away through a route of cupids.

We hope that this description of this lovely, huge vase will send you to Golden Gate Park next time you can spare the time while in San Francisco, for you will see further details you probably have not noted as you hurry up the steps of the museum to see the exhibits in the interior.

You will note this piece of art work, entwined about the entire vase is the symbolic vine, hung thickly with clusters of grapes, and every cluster and every leaf an individual study in modelling and composition. The wee cupids at the base fight valiantly against an army of spiders, snakes and insect enemies almost as large as themselves, and on top perch more cupids, peering eagerly into the depths of the vase. Each figure is complete in its design and individual humor - the tiny cupid who has lost his balance and is slipping off the vine, quite obviously shrieking for help; the cupid who sits with both hands clutching an enormous fly; the impetuous Satyr and his not unwilling prize; Silenus old and fat; the slim Bacchantes and all the rest.

As far as is known this is the only copy of the Dore vase in existence. In the process of casting the original model was destroyed. For some time, the story went, another model, perhaps the clay study, was in Rheims, hut whatever this model may have been, it was destroyed in the German advance, and San Francisco now owns the only existing vase.

At the Midwinter Fair the vase was exhibited by the French foundry authorities; for the comparatively small sum of \$10,000 it was purchased by the De Young Memorial Museum where it now stands in its proper setting.

The Dore vase stands ten feet in height and weighs about 6,000 pounds, and this enormous bronze vase is at once a single artistic conception and a mass of careful detail that relays the closest study. We recommend that study.