

FOREIGN ARTISTS IN DENMARK

By Merete Bodelsen, Charlottenlund/Denmark

When the weaver sets up his loom, he begins with the warp, the long empty, unconnected strands. Into these he weaves the weft, moving across them, binding them together, and creating the pattern. The Dictionary of Artists provides the art historian with his warp in the shape of its innumerable biographies, all of them subjected to the relentless discipline of the alphabet, and pursuing their invariable course in the dimension of time, from birth to death. Yet all these parallel threads of life which fill the pages of the dictionary tempt the student on to trace another and larger connection, not of artists but of art itself, connecting thread with thread and colour with colour till at last the pattern appears.

No Dictionary of Artists contains so much and so varied information as the *Allgemeines Lexikon der bildenden Künstler von der Antike bis zur Gegenwart*, Vols. I—XXXVII, 1907—50. Published in Leipzig by *E. A. Seemann*, begun by *dr. Ulrich Thieme* and *dr. Felix Becker*, it has been edited since 1923 by *dr. Hans Vollmer*, who had joined the editorial staff already at the start. Its original aim was a daring one: to assemble all artists from Classical Antiquity till the present time in one enormous work of reference, and this aim the editors and the publishers have succeeded in achieving in spite of two world wars. To-day its 37 thick volumes are to be found on the shelves of libraries and museums all the world over, a mine of condensed information, to which the student rarely applies in vain.

The great names are not, however, those about which the student most frequently consults such a dictionary, though one is often grateful to find the precise facts about them in such an accessible form. What one goes to Thieme & Becker for is perhaps principally the smaller fry, some of whom have found their sole refuge in these patient columns. It is the aggregate of all these humbler biographies which makes the work so valuable to the museum specialist and the art historian. The fact that Thieme & Becker treats the whole of Europe as one field has furthermore enabled it to deal with the activities of