

The enclosed is a miserable newspaper clipping of Audie's new "Picta" in Santa Cruz. Maybe it will give you a bit of an idea of his work. He's a big man, we think.

By the "Stupa" in the Studio -
Florence

The last day of January - '27 -

Laurie Darling:

As long as there's a nice cozy corner here in the studio, why should I trot home to my large cold bedroom to write to you? Much better snatch half an hour here, while Eva dashes off to get that curly mop of hers shampooed at some place down by the river. (We'll hope they won't use river water!).

A splendid long newsworthy letter from you a few days ago, written Jan 7th. So much in it I don't know where to begin. All that you write about poor Frederick does sound so pathetically tragic. I do hope the Library will have a complete collection of his MSS. Trust you to be putting that through, bless you!

I'm terribly sorry Marjorie's marriage didn't work out. What was the trouble? Of course he never seemed to either of us a big enough man for her, but I thought they knew each other well enough beforehand to make a go of it. Too bad, too bad. Is Anne Gregory staying out west? Is she with Mrs. Ritter in Denver, I wonder? Maybe we miss a lot,

not marrying, but we certainly escape a lot too.

I shall be thrilled to see the report of the Gilpin Publishing Company. All your decisions in that line seem to me most wise — inclusion of hotels, etc. What do you think will be the subjects of the other projected booklets? Grand Canyon one of them? And have the railroads or the Harvey people taken any further interest in them?

Of course I quite realize that your job lies at home, or near it. Never mind, we'll have this together some day. And do it all the better for my having nosed about a bit first and found out more or less what we'd want most to see & do. Only hope we can repeat an experience Eva & I had the other day with two friends of mine — Miss Hegman from Washington, & her friend Cateressa Ludolf — The Cateressa's brother, Sigis Fabbri is an architect, and has purchased a lovely old 14th - 16th century villa, built by the Medicis, on one of the hills beyond Florence — back of Settignano. We motored out to the foot of the hill, and then the road became too steep & stony for the car, so we were transferred to a wicker basket on runners (long rough poles with steel bands underneath), and drawn by two huge creamy oxen! The lovely, slow, dignified creatures, their

The villa is a delight - so old & strong and simple. Great rafters along the ceilings, huge fireplaces, quaint old wooden doors with lovely iron-work, and walls about four feet thick. And beyond the tiny formal garden below the loggia, was a double avenue of cypress leading to a tiny chapel, half hidden in the trees. Disfigured somewhat, E. & I thought, by decidedly 16th century reliefs of cupids & what-nots all over the pale pink facade. The rough brick would have been so much more in keeping with the 14th cent. spirit of the place! But even the most broadminded of these Italians fall for the baroque touch in one way or another. They just can't help admiring the elegant. It's in their blood. Simplicity, to them, is something barren. They've a craving for ornamentation. And, especially in sculpture, for the grandiose & the dramatic. Hence their worship of Michael Angelo, and their neglect & scorn of the very early masters like Giotto. Why, in the big church of Santa Croce here, they haven't hesitated to erect huge 18th century marble tombs (hideous) right on top of Giotto's frescoes, calmly scraping off the stucco, painting & all, where they wanted to cement in the new tomb! I believe that if we

muscles rippling in the sunlight, dragged us up the steep slope to the villa. And O the view. Of course, you & I've seen a-plenty down in Southern Colorado - grander in many ways, but none so unutterably lovely - The Arno twisting & turning way below, the nearby hills bathed in mist so they lay layer after layer of blue mystery, and the great snow-covered masses of the Apennines piling up to the East & South. The hills are all sparsely covered with trees - mostly olive - groves, pale silvery-green, with occasional groups of straight spining black cypress - so beautifully planted, as they always are, in just the right place. Way up in the thick of the most massive snow-peaks, they told us, lay La Verma, where St Francis received the Stygmata. And between it & us lay Vallombrosa, deep in snow.

No snow where we were - indeed it was so warm we stretched on the ground & basked in the sun, and ate picnic lunch out on the old loggia. Mr. Tabbi is away, & the place is care of a farmer & his wife, who welcomed us with beaming smiles & much scunning to & fro.

"foreigners" didn't seek out these things, and bring in a considerable revenue through paying admission to cloisters, galleries and other places where these lovely old things are - they'd be even more neglected and mistreated than they are already.

This sounds like an awfully snobbish thing to say, and undoubtedly most Italians would get up on their hind legs if I made any such statement here, but the longer I stay and the more I see of modern stuff & the ^{degeneration} ~~degradation~~ of its artistic taste, the more firmly convinced I am of it.

While I'm on this subject of criticism of the country where I'm living, and which I really love very much indeed, I may as well answer your Mother's query. You remember, you said she asked you if I ever said anything about a certain person here? Well - I don't - not in letters. It just won't do. No criticism, even of the most humble kind between friends goes out of this country if the P.O. authorities can stop it. Private letters are often held up because of reckless remarks. However, I can tell you this much - for the most part, and in the

biggest things that will matter most in the long run, "Archibald" has our most hearty approval. He's done some wonderful things for the country as a whole - things of course individuals suffer in consequence. Free speech is not in evidence, but solidarity is - which is a great thing - So much for Archie -

I haven't yet told you the good news about Eva. You know, she thought she'd have to return to England the first of March, as her scholarship year would be over then. But her friend Litchley, who watches over her bank-account for her, says it's perfectly possible for her to stay another three months if she wants to. So she will, and I'm naturally delighted. She's decided to divide up her time between our little studio and the nearby Art Institute, where Andreotti is instructor. You see, she's never had the chance, in her crowded three years of study, to make things just for practice - to be destroyed as soon as done. As her whole student-career was one scholarship after another, everything she did one year must be saved & cast to show to the jury when she tried for

the next. So here at the school she's just going to "burst loose" slinging things up & knocking them down again whenever she feels like it. It will be a fine thing for her - for her work - though fine and broad in intention is apt to be rather tight & cleaned up before she's through with it. This work will limber her up.

I can't remember if I've written you since she started on a burst of me. I think I must have, for it was a month ago, at least. Well - it has come out wonderfully. It's now ready for photographs tomorrow, & casted at the end of the week. She's conventionalized it somewhat, especially the hair, which is delightfully simple & decorative. It's an extremely good likeness, though not "photographic" (Do I see you wither? You know what I mean, old dear.) In fact when I look at it I feel "If I have to look the way I do, I'm glad I look like that." Not idealized, but bringing out the best that's to be found there. I'm frightfully proud of it, and believe me I've "worked" hard, trying to be a "model" model. She's worked long & hard on it, but the result is worth it. I'm so keen to have you see it! She insists that she is going to give

me a cast to take home with me. I'm equally firm in intending (through Lithely) to buy it. I know my dear dotting family will want to own it. And so shall I. So that's that.

As for my own work - am ashamed to say I've practically nothing to show for my three months here. No, I'm not ashamed, either, if you get me. I've produced too much & too hurriedly in the past few years. It's time I lay fallow and get things - ideals & such - more fixed in my mind. And I'm learning - O, learning such heaps of things. Some things that you've known for years. Design, pure form, simplicity; all these things are becoming more & more significant to me, and I shudder at the memory of much work I've perpetrated in the past - restless, superficial, and un-rhythmic so much of it is. I must begin all over again.

The bust of Bauer has finally arrived, but I've had to give up my idea of cutting him in stone. It will have to be marble, tinted a warm yellow-brown. The stone here is soft enough - in fact, too soft. It has a powdery & cheezy look when worked

way to reach me: I'll be a picture here for the next two months, anyway. and I don't get on to the Am. Express every day. My dearest love, always - Brigidie -

laudatory. I'm too much the other way. So I guess we're both good for each other. We do get on famously, but I do long so for just you at times, Laurie darling. Never mind, when I get back, we'll eat together somehow, and Mm! Won't we talk?

The Laurentian Library will be our next objective, when we take the day off for browsing & looking. It will be a treat, I know. And I've now applied for, & received, my artists "Tessera" which gives me free access to all the museums & galleries, and I shall make good use of it in the near future. I'm beginning to want to visit galleries again. I didn't want to at first.

The colored print of the Annunciation? Of course you shall have it, darling, and many more brides. I'm going to go into Alinari's & Andersons soon & have a real splurge - just buy them up. And you're to have a whole batch of Francescas, too. Eva & I are going to Ravenna in the early Spring, & probably to Arezzo, too, where there are lots of his loveliest frescoes -

Mother's still South - in Sicily now, with Mrs. Perkins. She insists that she's coming back here in February, but I hope she'll stay away until after the cold weather departs. As you see, plans for future are very vague. But keep on addressing me to the Pensione Fiorenza, & Via del Cresto di San Martino, for that's the quickest

up, and is also very untrustworthy - sand pockets, & cracks, & hard streaks, & dark streaks where you least want 'em. I can't risk having him come out with a "black" eye or a sandy tip to his nose, or a cracked lip! So wobble it is. The chum's already at the studio, but Mercatelli, who's supposed to do the roughing-out for me, is so busy working for Andreotti, he has only given me two hours during the past week - so goodness knows when the thing will be done. And I won't stay in Florence after the hot weather begins, around the end of May. The country will be too heavenly to miss. I want to bump around from one little town to another, and draw, & draw, & draw. No chance for drawing here since mid-November. Too beastly cold. You can't draw with fur-lined gloves on, you know. And there's no temptation to stand around on cold pavements getting chilblains.

I have done quite a bit of carving & pointed up a whole bas-relief by myself. But the past month has been mostly sitting for Eva, & chewing the rag over Art with a capital A. She's very down-right in her opinions, both condemnatory and