*Medieval Sculpture
from the Van Horne
Collection*

Innovation in Stone

SAM FOGG

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26 April – 24 May, 2019

Contents

Foreword

As a collector, I think about the life of an object: why it was produced, what is truly innovative and interesting about its form, and how it retains, loses, and even regains relevance in different periods. The gargoyles and carvings surrounding medieval buildings have surprised and astonished for hundreds of years. However, the first medieval stone heads I encountered in London in the 1970s seemed to have been forgotten, appreciated as historical curiosities, but rarely esteemed in the context of the remarkable innovations they had represented in their times.

What makes any art modern? Certainly, it must be reflective of its time, but it must introduce new ways for people to see their world, themselves and others. The works in this exhibition represent rich creativity, and they remain resonant and inspiring centuries later. As someone who was around modern art from a young age, the best of these sculptures also speak to me because they employ a modernist visual language: abstraction, representation of beauty in its purest form, and exaggeration in the service of expression.

Indeed, it was not until the beginning of the 20th century that artists were again unfettered to experiment freely with forms of expression that became leading art movements in recent time. We know of the influence of different cultures and periods on Modernist art, and I find it intriguing to consider how the Middle Ages may have made an impact on at least some of it. It is fascinating to me that two of the sculptures in this collection came from Charles Ratton (Cat. 6 & 9), purveyor and taste-maker to many major artists of Paris between the World Wars. One could also imagine the possibility that Henry Moore, who paid attention to art of so many periods, would have come into John Hewitt's London gallery and seen the reclining figure which could easily have been a maquette for some of his finest sculptures (Cat. 19). Some art may be timeless, but collections are personal. Beyond the insights these objects provide about the Middle Ages, a whole topic in itself, I'll share some of the connections that resonated with me: the Cluny rosette, seen all along the many pilgrimage routes, was most certainly one of the first examples of 'branding' in modern Europe. Putting aside the quality of the carving and the historical impact of Cluny, however, the arch is as fine an example of timeless monumental art as one will find from any culture and any period. Just the same, the Bober head (Cat. 15) is innovative as an example of high Gothic and represents the workmanship of some of the finest sculptors of Gothic Europe, indeed the culmination of what the predecessor Romanesque sculptors had unleashed. And these features of medieval sculpture resonate continually across the centuries. The Antlered Man (Cat. 14) speaks to me the same way as Andy Warhol's self-portrait with streaky hair or Jean Basquiat's graffitied faces. The Beak Head (Cat. 4) is moulded in the same spirit as one of Brancusi's Birds or like his Danaïde. I could expound on these points, but I invite you to look through the catalogue before you to find your own connections.

We have here a group of unique objects that have stood the test of time. Perhaps a more important question is: Are these sculptures still alive? Of course, they inspired others in the 20th century, and I suspect they will 'speak' to generations to come. After all, I cannot say it better than Andre Breton: 'The marvellous is always beautiful.'

Charles van Horne

Introduction

The stone sculptures presented in this exhibition were gathered together over several decades by the New York collectors Charles and Alexandra van Horne. Included are works that were loaned to the ground-breaking Metropolitan Museum of Art exhibition, *Set in Stone: The Face in Medieval Sculpture*. Formerly occupying prominent places in other well-known collections, such as those of Joseph Altounian, Charles Ratton, and Harry Bober, the sculptures are a testament to van Horne's refined taste. More specifically, the works reflect his fascination with objects that bear a resemblance to modern art of the early 20th century. Accompanying the Romanesque 'Picassos', Celtic 'Modiglianis' and ancient 'Henry Moores' is a wealth of research material amassed by the collector to visualise the links between modernism and medieval art.

The spirit of modernism that is reflected in this exhibition is all the more interesting because most of the pieces date to the 12th century, a time when innovation and curiosity dominated the architectural and sculptural world. There was a tension with and an awareness of the classical past and an anticipation of change, which would be realised in the Gothic period. The changes to architecture and sculpture in the 12th century allowed the art of the Middle Ages to let go of its grip on the ancient past and confidently look forward to its own distinctive style. And it is within this dichotomy that the van Horne collection is situated. The sculpted heads and architectural fragments reproduced in this catalogue and presented together publicly for the first time in the accompanying exhibition originate in some of the most innovative and influential sites of 12th- and 13th-century Europe: Cluny, Toulouse, Parthenay and Bourges. Having been separated from their context, they invite us to imagine the extraordinary sites in which they were invented and the innovative sculptors who created them.

Jana Gajdošová

Celtic Head

England, Cirencester
3–4th century AD

Provenance
John Hewitt, London, before Nov. 1980s (the original base had an inscription that noted the head was found at Cirencester)
Maurice Braham, London, 1980s
Charles and Alexandra van Horne, Nov. 1982

19.5 × 16 × 16.5 cm

Condition
The head has general surface damage and is unfinished on the back. The losses to the right side of the face may be a result of being buried or being used as rubble in a building site.

A stone head with a downturned expression, imposing in its abstraction and simplicity. The head has a pronounced nose, large bulbous eyes and a sharp chin. The eyebrows and facial hair are modelled in smoothly raised fields. The short beard includes a patch in the centre of the chin that links the facial hair with the clown-like downturned mouth. A depression on the crown of the head is surrounded by two rings; the larger ring may be an abstract representation of a short fringe. The back of the head and the neck are unfinished.

This head was most probably a cult object, made in Celtic Britain. Its size, surface colouration and features are consistent with 3–4th century heads from this region, especially the Corbridge head now in the Museum of Antiquities of the University and Society of Antiquaries (fig.1). This dating is also suggested by the depiction of hair, which is more common in Romano-Celtic heads (see fig.2), whereas earlier examples usually have no hair at all.[1]

Celtic heads were usually integrated into more complex contexts – often set in a niche, painted and viewed from below. Others survive with the same type of hollow depression on the crown as our head. The best example of this feature is the Corbridge head, which possesses not only this hollow but also the ring used to demarcate it (fig.1). Such hollows have been suggested to be 'associated with offerings or libations' and used as small fonts or altars.[2] Since this depression is so characteristic of Celtic cult practice, it is another factor that helps us identify this head as Celtic.

The Celts' infatuation with heads was reflected not only in the number of stone heads that would have been in their sanctuaries but also in contemporary accounts that mention the decapitated heads that they preserved in cedar oil and set into oval recesses in sanctuary walls. These decapitated heads often co-existed with stone heads, and such ensembles were meant to pay homage to the guardian god of portals, patron of beginnings and endings.[3] Although the Celtic cult of the head is not entirely understood, the survival of such freestanding stone heads with font-like recesses on their crowns confirms its existence.[4]

Of those stone Celtic heads that survive in museums and private collections, all are sculpted abstractly and simply – keeping the focus only on the most necessary features. Amongst them, the presently discussed head represents a fine example, influenced most probably by the more naturalistic depictions of the human figure present in Roman Britain yet retaining its abstract Celtic character.

Literature:

Fliegel, Stephen. 'A Little-Known Stone Head.' In *The Bulletin of the Cleveland Museum of Art*. Vol. 77, No. 3 (March, 1990), pp.82–103.

1, Stephen Fliegel, 'A Little-Known Stone Head,' in *The Bulletin of the Cleveland Museum of Art*, Vol. 77, No. 3 (March, 1990), pp.86–87.
2, Ibid 94
3, Ibid 89–90
4, This is also mentioned by many contemporary Roman sources. Ibid. 82–83.

Celtic Head

Fig.1
Head of a Celtic God
Northern England, Corbridge
3rd century AD
Museum of Antiquities of
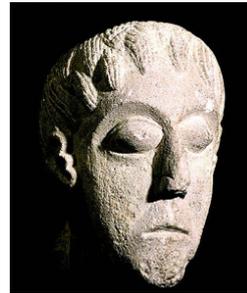the University and Society of
Antiquities, Newcastle upon
Tyne
17.6 cm

Fig.2
Romano-Celtic Head
England, Gloucester, Bon
Marche Site
1st century AD
Gloucester City Museum
Inv. No. A.2734
20.3 cm

Spandrel From Cluny III

France, Saône-et-Loire, Abbey of Cluny
1120–30

Provenance:
Altounian, Mâcon (1905–1947), Paris
Sam Fogg, London, 2005
Charles and Alexandra van Horne, May 2006

45 × 72.5 × 8cm
Condition
This is a fragment of an arcade with losses to the foliate ornament decorating the edge of the arch, and minor surface weathering.
Stone:
Limestone

Published
Neil Stratford, *Corpus de la sculpture de Cluny: Les parties orientales de la Grande Eglise Cluny III* (Vol. 2 (Paris 2011), pp.656–657.

This spandrel of an exceptionally high quality comes from the Benedictine monastery in Cluny, Saône-et-Loire, France - one of the most celebrated buildings of 12th century Europe (fig. 1).

The spandrel is carved in high relief with a rosette ornament on the front face of the piece. The rosette is framed by a round beaded moulding, the beading made with the use of a drill. Ovolo (egg- and dart-) ornament runs along the intrados (underside of the arch). Decorating the edge of the arch on the face of the stone is a frieze of protruding acanthus leaves that wraps around a thin roll moulding. A pattern of drill holes occupies the space above the roll moulding. This spandrel is uncarved on the back.

It is not clear where in the building this piece originated; however, the uncarved back suggests that it was probably against a wall. Neil Stratford has argued that although the spandrel is related to the choir screen of Cluny III, its size suggests that it was not a part of the choir screen but rather a piece of monumental furniture in the church.[1] The fragment has the same elevation, with a rosette decorating the spandrel of an arch, as the Cluny Choir pieces from the first program and it is extremely close stylistically. The overall carving as well as the style of the rosette and the acanthus leaf decoration can also be compared to the various fragments from Cluny III (see fig. 2). The fragment in figure 2, for example, has the same protruding acanthus that wraps around the edge of the spandrel as well as the ovolo decorating its underside. The surviving mouldings above the acanthus of this piece allow us to reconstruct the moulding that would have decorated this spandrel. Most of these surviving fragmentary pieces come from John Kenneth Connant's excavations from the 1930s.[2]

1, Neil Stratford, *Corpus de la sculpture de Cluny: Les parties orientales de la Grande Eglise Cluny III* Vol. 2 (Paris 2011), pp. 656 -657.
2, It has been suggested that the pieces may also come from the Cloister of Cluny III, dated to 1120 – 22. See Neil Stratford, 'The Cluny Cloister,' in *A Reservoir of Ideas: Essays in Honour of Paul Williamson* (London, 2017), pp. 83.

It has been noted, however, that the workshop responsible for the work on Cluny III was also active in other major churches in Burgundy and thus, the possibility that this fragment comes from those sites cannot be completely ruled out. Comparable fragments survive in Vézelay, Charité-sur-Loire, and Moutier-Saint-Jean.

Cluny History:

Cluny was founded in 909 by William of Aquitaine, who donated land in the Saône-et-Loire to the Benedictines in that year. Although the first church built by Abbot Berno of Baume was a modest building of wood, Cluny was blessed with 'a sequence of unusually capable abbots,' which allowed it to quickly become the most powerful and largest monastery in Europe.[3] The third great abbey church at Cluny was begun under Abbot Saint Hugh, who died in 1109 and who has been called by John Kenneth Conant 'one of the greatest men who ever wore an abbot's mitre'.[4] Saint Hugh had an enormous amount of political sway not only in France but throughout Europe, settling disputes between the papacy and Henry III, Philip of France and William the Conqueror (to name a few).[5] Since many of the popes in the 11th and 12th century were Cluniac monks, the links needed to settle these disputes were all that much easier to establish.

The Cluny monks built three churches on this site, known today as Cluny I, Cluny II and Cluny III. While little survives from Cluny I and Cluny II, it was Cluny III, built under Abbot Saint Hugh and begun in 1088, that was the most monumental of them all. This building, that was to influence many churches in France and further afield, took all of the most innovative developments of Burgundian Romanesque and merged them together to create the mothership church and a building that would define the great Romanesque style. The building process of Cluny III is mentioned in several documents and in the biographies of Monk Gilon and Hildebert of Lavardin.[6] Gilon's *Life of Hugh*, written in c. 1122, describes that when the church was finished, it was 'as if the monks had gone from prison to light.' Meanwhile, Hildebert of Lavardin, appropriately wrote: 'In this [basilica] a spaciousness of area revives the monks, freed as if from prison, [and the basilica] accommodated itself to monastic institutions so that it is not necessary to mix the groups of monks in the narrowness of the choir, nor to confuse positions, nor sometimes overflow outside.'[7] The church that Saint Hugh built was clearly one of the grandest churches in western Europe, decorated with frescoes and sculpted capitals and fashioned with elaborate candelabra. In terms of scale, it was also the largest church in the world until the Renaissance rebuilding of St Peter's basilica in Rome: 616 feet in length and carrying no less than six towers. The building became so elaborate that it came under the indictment of Bernard of Clairvaulx in the 12th century reform movement.[8]

The surviving accounts give us an idea of the spirit of the space but not much in the sense of a thorough architectural description. Since Cluny was demolished during the French Revolution and subsequently used as a quarry, we are only left with a part of one transept, the archaeological evidence and those surviving fragments that allow us to imagine the sumptuousness that must have once defined it. As John Kenneth Conant wrote in the conclusion of his 1929 article about the excavations at Cluny, the building's 'position in the history of architecture would be secure no matter when it was built, but, designed by 1088 and largely complete by 1109, it is entitled to take its place in the first rank as the major enterprise of the great period of Romanesque, an edifice richly endowed by the past, precocious in its time, and boldly anticipating the future.'[9]

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Literature:
Armi, Edson C. and Smith, Elizabeth B. 'The Choir Screen of Cluny III.' In *The Art Bulletin*. Vol. 66. No. 4. (December 1984), pp. 556 – 573.
Conant, *John K. Cluny: Les églises et la maison du chef d'ordre*, Mâcon, 1968.
Conant, John K. 'Medieval Academy Excavations at Cluny.' in *Speculum*, Vol. 4, No. 4 (Oct. 1929), pp. 443 – 450.
Evans, J. *Cluniac Art of the Romanesque Period*. Cambridge, 1950.
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Servières, G. 'Les jubés, origins, architecture, décoration, démolition.' In *Gazette des beaux-arts*, LX, 1918, pp. 355 – 80.
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Stratford, Neil. 'The Cluny Cloister,' in *A Reservoir of Ideas: Essays in Honour of Paul Williamson* (London, 2017), pp. 83.
Stratford, Neil. *Corpus de la sculpture de Cluny: Les parties orientales de la Grande Eglise Cluny III* Vol. 2 (Paris 2011).

3, James Snyder, *Medieval Art: Painting, Sculpture, Architecture, 4th-14th Century* (New York, 1989), pp. 274.
4, John Kenneth Conant, 'Medieval Excavations at Cluny,' in *Speculum, Vol. 4, No. 4 (Oct. 1929)*, pp. 448.
5, Snyder, pp. 274.
6, Neil Stratford, 'The documentary evidence for the building of Cluny III,' in *Studies in Burgundian Romanesque Sculpture* (London, 1998), pp. 41 – 63.
7, Saint Hugh, *Vita Sanctissimi Patris Hugonis Abbatis Cluniacensis*, taken from Armi, Edson, and Smith, 'The Choir Screen of Cluny III,' in *The Art Bulletin, Vol. 66. No. 4. (December 1984)* pp. 556.
8, Whether Bernard refers specifically to Cluny has been disputed because Bernard changes his mind about art in churches, sometimes approving and sometime disapproving of them. See Neil Stratford, 'St Bernard and the Visual Arts,' in *Studies in Burgundian Romanesque Sculpture* (London, 1998), pp. 415 – 432.
9, John Kenneth Conant, 'Medieval Academy Excavations at Cluny,' pp. 450.
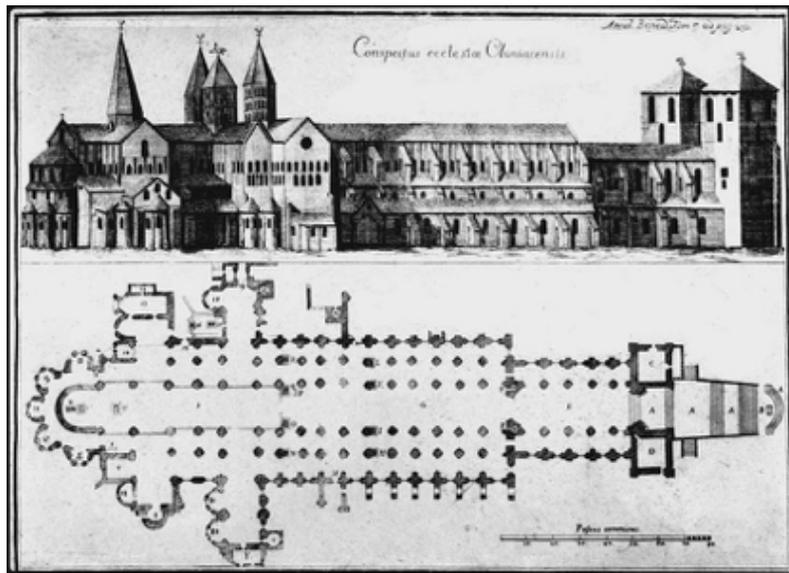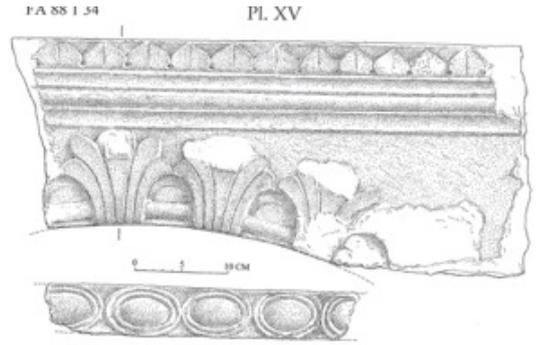
Sprandrel From Cluny III

Top to bottom

Fig.2
Fragment from Cluny III
Published in Neil Stratford,
Corpus de la sculpture de
Cluny: Les parties orientales
de la Grande Eglise Cluny III
Vol. 2 (Paris 2011), pp.656.

Fig. 3
Surviving Transept of Cluny
III

Fig.1
Plan and elevation of the
church of the abbey of Cluny
III (Burgundy, France) from
an engraving of 1754

Arch from the Choir Screen of Cluny III

France, Saône-et-Loire, Abbey of Cluny
1120–30

Provenance:
Altounian, Mâcon (1905–1947), Paris
Pierre Rouge, Mâcon, 1986
Monte Carlo Art Gallery
Collection of C. Edson Armi, 1987
Ward & Company Works of Art, 1998
Charles and Alexandra van Horne, New York,
25th November 1998

102 × 67 × 19 cm

Condition
A fracture along the central section of the
arch has been repaired. Metal bars have been
placed inside of the arch (behind the pilasters)
for support. A historic break exists at the lower
left corner of the front face.

Published
Neil Stratford, *Corpus de la sculpture de Cluny: Les parties
orientales de la Grande Eglise Cluny III* (Vol. 2 (Paris 2011),
pp.656–657.
Dietz, Paula. 'A 12th-Century Abbey Yields Its Secrets.' In The
New York Times (January 24, 1999).

Stone
Limestone; analysis completed at the Brookhaven Laboratory
and Metropolitan Museum of Art in 1999 determined
consistency with Cluny stone.[1]

The arch is the most monumental surviving section of the choir screen from the Benedictine monastery in Cluny, Saône-et-Loire, France. Its elaborate decoration suggests that it was a part of the focus of the screen – possibly at the site of the entrance. Although Cluny was demolished after the French Revolution, its reputation as the 'masterpiece of Romanesque architecture,'[2] emphasises the significance of this piece.

The arch is dominated by a heavy entablature featuring four bands of decoration on the front face. These include (top to bottom) a thick acanthus decoration, a pellet motif, a plain band and a billet motif. The right spandrel is decorated by a rosette with five petals set into a circle, and the spandrel on the left is decorated by a half rosette. A careful terminus to the decoration on the left side, with a rosette cut in half, signals that this was attached to another section (see fig. 1). The mouldings on the inner arch feature further elaborate decoration of an anthemion and an ornamental scrolling acanthus. The arch rests on two pilasters: the one on the right is decorated by a deeply carved alternating scallop ornament, while the one on the left is fluted. Both of these are topped by squat capitals with a ribbon-like undulating band. The back face of the arch is much simpler in nature. On this face, both of the pilasters are fluted and include the same ribbon-like squat capitals. The arch itself has three plain bands and the area above is without any decoration. The moulding at the top is lost. This decoration can be seen in other surviving fragments from the choir screen (fig. 4).

Through an analysis of the remaining fragments, it has been concluded that this part of the choir screen was approximately one meter high and about as long as the width of the nave in the monastery at Cluny (about ten meters).[3] There are eighty-five surviving fragments from the choir screen, with some belonging to the four arches of the screen that were more elaborately carved than the rest, suggesting that these were near the entrance to the enclosure or at least facing the west and acting like a façade to the enclosure. The presently discussed arch was one of these. Another well-known example is in the Cloisters of the Metropolitan Museum of Art (fig. 2). Although most of the arches were cut through, some were filled and decorated by ornament.

The screen is thought to have created a rectangular enclosure, much like those that still exist in early Christian churches in Rome (fig. 3).[4] Armi, Edson and Smith argued that this screen was a low enclosure and that these types of enclosures were also present at Saint Denis and Canterbury Cathedral, and would not have blocked the view of the laity. However, after a close study of all the fragments from the Cluny choir screen, David Walsh concluded that this was not the case and that the choir screen at Cluny was a high enclosure.[5] This arch therefore represents the top part of the screen.

Cluny History:

Cluny was founded in 909 by William of Aquitaine, who donated land in the Saône-et-Loire to the Benedictines in that year. Although the first church built by Abbot Berno of Baume was a modest building of wood, Cluny was blessed with 'a sequence of unusually capable abbots,' which allowed it to quickly become the most powerful and largest monastery in Europe.[6] The third great abbey church at Cluny was begun under Abbot Saint Hugh, who died in 1109 and who has been called by John Kenneth Conant 'one of the greatest men who ever wore an abbot's mitre'.[7] Saint Hugh had an enormous amount of political sway not only in France but throughout Europe, settling disputes between the papacy and Henry III, Philip of France and William the Conqueror (to name a few).[8] Since many of the popes in the 11th and 12th century were Cluniac monks, the links needed to settle these disputes were all that much easier to establish.

'In this [basilica] a spaciousness of area revives the monks, freed as if from prison, [and the basilica] accommodated itself to monastic institutions so that it is not necessary to mix the groups of monks in the narrowness of the choir, nor to confuse positions, nor sometimes overflow outside.'[6]
—*Hildebert of Lavadin, Vita* c.*1120*

1, Consistent with those attributed to the choir enclosure at Cluny III in the Musée Ochier and in American museum collections. The source of this stone may have been the La Cras quarry near Cluny.
2, John Kenneth Conant, 'Medieval Academy Excavations at Cluny,' in *Speculum*, Vol. 4, No. 4 (Oct. 1929), pp. 447-9.
3, Armi, Edson C. and Smith, Elizabeth B. 'The Choir Screen of Cluny III.' In *The Art Bulletin* Vol. 66. No. 4. (December 1984), pp. 557. Major excavations were begun at Cluny in 1928 by the Medieval Academy of America, led by John Kenneth Conant. See John Kenneth Conant, 'Medieval Academy Excavations at Cluny,' in *Speculum*, Vol. 4, No. 4 (Oct. 1929), pp. 443 – 450.
4, Armi, Edson and Smith, p. 561-3
5, David Walsh, *Corpus de la sculpture de Cluny: Les parties orientales de la Grande Eglise Cluny III* (Vol. 2 (Paris 2011), pp.45.
6, James Snyder, *Medieval Art: Painting, Sculpture, Architecture, 4th-14th Century* (New York, 1989), pp. 274.
7, John Kenneth Conant, 'Medieval Excavations at Cluny,' pp. 448.

The Cluny monks built three churches on this site, known today as Cluny I, Cluny II and Cluny III. While little survives from Cluny I and Cluny II, it was Cluny III, built under Abbot Saint Hugh and begun in 1088, that was the most monumental of them all. This building, that was to influence many churches in France and further afield, took all of the most innovative developments of Burgundian Romanesque and merged them together to create the mothership church and a building that would define the great Romanesque style. The building process of Cluny III is mentioned in several documents and in the biographies of Monk Gilon and Hildebert of Lavardin.[9] Gilon's *Life of Hugh*, written in c. 1122, describes that when the church was finished, it was 'as if the monks had gone from prison to light.' Meanwhile, Hildebert of Lavardin, appropriately wrote: 'In this [basilica] a spaciousness of area revives the monks, freed as if from prison, [and the basilica] accommodated itself to monastic institutions so that it is not necessary to mix the groups of monks in the narrowness of the choir, nor to confuse positions, nor sometimes overflow outside.'[10] The church that Saint Hugh built was clearly one of the grandest churches in western Europe, decorated with frescoes and sculpted capitals and fashioned with elaborate candelabra. In terms of scale, it was also the largest church in the world until the Renaissance rebuilding of St Peter's basilica in Rome: 616 feet in length and carrying no less than six towers. The building became so elaborate that it came under the indictment of Bernard of Clairvaulx in the 12th century reform movement.[11]

The surviving accounts give us an idea of the spirit of the space but not much in the sense of a thorough architectural description. Since Cluny was demolished during the French Revolution and subsequently used as a quarry, we are only left with a part of one transept, the archaeological evidence and those surviving fragments that allow us to imagine the sumptuousness that must have once defined it. As John Kenneth Conant wrote in the conclusion of his 1929 article about the excavations at Cluny, the building's 'position in the history of architecture would be secure no matter when it was built, but, designed by 1088 and largely complete by 1109, it is entitled to take its place in the first rank as the major enterprise of the great period of Romanesque, an edifice richly endowed by the past, precocious in its time, and boldly anticipating the future.'[12]

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8, Snyder, pp. 274.
9, Neil Stratford, 'The documentary evidence for the building of Cluny III,' in *Studies in Burgundian Romanesque Sculpture* (London, 1998), pp. 41 – 63.
10, Saint Hugh, *Vita Sanctissimi Patris Hugonis Abbatis Cluniacensis*, taken from Armi, Edson, and Smith, 'The Choir Screen of Cluny III,' pp. 556.

11, Whether Bernard refers specifically to Cluny has been discussed and disputed, namely because Bernard changes his mind about art in the cloisters in several other writings where he approves of them. See Neil Stratford, 'St Bernard and the Visual Arts,' in Stu*dies in Burgundian Romanesque Sculpture* (London, 1998), pp. 415 – 432.
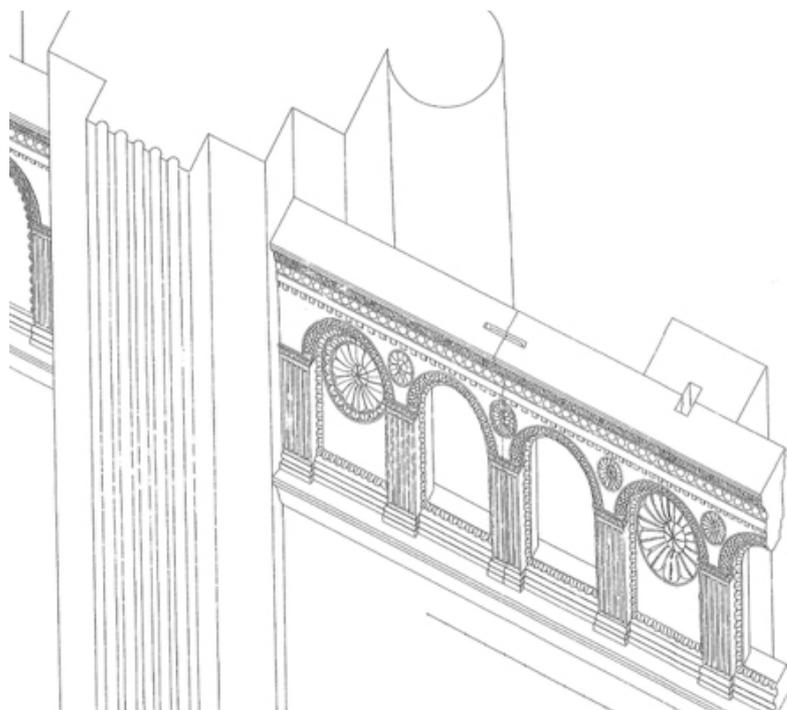12, John Kenneth Conant, 'Medieval Academy Excavations at Cluny,' pp. 450.

Fig.1
Reconstruction of the choir screen enclosure
Published in Neil Stratford, *Corpus de la sculpture de Cluny*

**Arch from the Choir Screen
of Cluny III**

Fig.2
Part of an arch of Cluny III
France, Cluny
*c.*1120–30
Metropolitan Museum of Art

Fig.3
Choir Enclosure of San
Clemente
Italy, Rome, San Clemente
1099–1119

Fig. 4
Fragment from Cluny III
Choir Screen
Musée Ochier

Beak Head

England, Oxfordshire
*c.*1120–1140

Provenance
Ward & Company Works of Art, New York,
before Feb. 2004
Charles and Alexandra van Horne, July 2004

25.8 x 16 x 17.3 cm

Condition
Fine condition with general surface wear
typical of sculpture of this age. The back of the
block has been cut down.

This distinctive sculpture of a bird with its beak wrapped around a roll moulding is one of the most characteristic features of Romanesque art. Carved probably in the early 12th century, this sculpture can be linked with the patronage of King Henry I, with whom the beginning of beak head decorative archivolts is most commonly linked.

The sculpture consists of a band of chip carving, saltire in shape, above an abstracted head of a bird that consists of a large beak, defined by a raised line down the centre. Two round eyes rest at the top of the beak with no interruption between the beak itself and any sort of indication of a head. The bird grips a roll moulding with its beak, which wraps around it elegantly. The beak head would have once been a part of an archivolt or voussoir that would have framed a portal of a Romanesque church. The precision of this particular piece and its decorative band suggests that it could have been a part of a grand church, and perhaps that this robust creamy stone may have come from Caen, a place where the Normans often imported stone from.

The beak head motif is predominantly English although some examples survive in Normandy, Anjou and Northern Spain. In England, most examples are concentrated around Yorkshire and Oxfordshire, with fifty-seven examples surviving in Yorkshire and over fourty examples surviving in and around Oxfordshire. It has been argued that the beakheads, most of which survive between Yorkshire and Oxfordshire,[1] were sculpted by one workshop, which was active during the reign of King Henry I. Henry founded Reading Abbey in 1121, supervised its decoration and is buried there. No expense was spared on the decoration of the abbey church and it was here that some of the earliest beakheads have been traced (fig.1).[2] During its building process many other local churches started employing this motif, previously unknown in England or France. It should also be noted that the land that Henry occupied in Normany was in the south and it is also here that we find a concentration of the beak head ornament – especially comparable to the English examples from Reading Abbey. It is difficult to localise this particular beakhead; however based on the creamy stone and on its simplified style, it has more of an affinity to those examples from Oxfordshire, such as those in Iffley church (fig. 3).

The origin and symbolism of the beakhead are speculations at best. Arches with heads seem to have existed in France and Spain very early in the 12th century; however it was in England that the motif was translated to a bird with a long beak that wraps around a moulding. George Zarnecki argued that the heads around arches may have derived from Anglo-Saxon illuminations of animals biting the frame of miniatures, and he saw the influence of pre-conquest art on the early beak heads from Reading.[3]

Literature:

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Salmon, J. 'Beakhead Ornament in Norman Architecture', *Yorkshire Archaeological Journal* XXXVI (1946), 349–57
Baxter R. & Harrison, S. 'The Decoration of the Cloister at Reading Abbey'. In L Keen & E Scar (eds), *Windsor: Medieval Archaeology, Art and Architecture of the Thames Valley (British Archaeological Association Conference Transactions* XXV, 2002), 302–12.
English Romanesque Art 1066–1200. Exhibition catalogue, Arts Council of Great Britain, Hayward Gallery, London, 1984, 174

1, George Zarnecki, *Studies in Romanesque Sculpture* (London, 1979), pp. 20.
2, Zarnecki 22
3, 26–31

Beak Head

Left to right

Fig.1
Reading Abbey Beak Head
c.1120–35

Fig.2
Reset Beakheads in Huntingdon
(Oxfordshire)

Fig.3
Iffley church Oxfordshire

A capital with Luxuria

France, South-western France
1100–50

Provenance
Private Collection, Geneva (purchased in Isle-sur-la-Sorgne, 1997)
Charles and Alexandra van Horne, 2002

32 x 22 x 21.5 cm

Condition
The capital survives in fine condition with surface damage consistent with sculpture of its age. It has breaks on the top corners as well as on one face.

Stone
Limestone; stone analysed by Annie Blanc, January 2019.

This early medieval capital represents the punishments of sin with several abstracted figures amongst stylised foliage. The largest figure on the capital is a naked woman, who stands with her right hand on her hip and her left hand holding a serpent. Her oval face is rendered by simple forms, including two circles for eyes, an outlined nose and a thin mouth. She has no expression as she stands proud with her round breasts being bitten by serpent like creatures. The serpent to her left is more prominent as she holds on to him. The creature can be followed around to the second face of the capital which is more difficult to interpret but seems to include a male figure, to whom the snake is attached – almost as if to represent his phallus. Two further serpents seem to slither out of the mouth of this fogure and towards the top of the now broken corners of the capital. This side of the capital is also surrounded by abstracted foliage and round shapes. Another small figure, perhaps an infant, occupies the upper right hand part of the capital.

Although the abstract nature of the carving makes for difficult interpretation, it almost definitely represents the the punishment of Luxuria. This is a common theme on numerous sites in this part of France, such as Moissac or St Pierre in Blesle (figs. 1). A capital on the exterior of St Pierre in Blesle features Luxuria on its corner holding on to two snakes, who clench onto her breasts. Both sides of the capital reveal male figures from whose mouths originate the two serpents. The depiction of the iconography on this building is therefore particularly comparable to the presently discussed capital.

Other possible interpretations of this figure cannot be ruled out. The iconography evolves on each side the capital and invites contemplation – while one side presents a proud naked woman, the other clearly spells out the kind of punishment associated with looking at her. Moreover, the serpent has long been associated with the personification of Lust, and capitals with such obscene imagery are common in medieval art and its margins. It is in these margins that certain traits and complexities of the medieval theology are revealed. Michael Camille famously wrote that 'there is a danger in separating the sacred and the profane as if these were two clearly distinct realms. Religious imagery itself is saturated with erotic metaphors from the Song of Songs, for example, and scholars of medieval spirituality are increasingly finding that forms and experiences that hardly seem "religious" at all to us today, were channels for devotion.'[1]

Iconography, however, is not the only evidence for the dating and localisation of this capital. Its style can be likened to other small parish churches from the late 11th and early 12th centuries – such as St Pierre in Rhedes and St Lizier Cathedral Cloister (figs. 2–3). Rhedes is a particularly interesting example because the figure on the exterior of its choir is carved in a very similar manner to the figures on our capital. It has a large oval shaped head, round eyes and simplified features. Analysis of the stone of the capital confirms a south French provenance.[2]

1, Camille, *The Gothic Idol: Ideology and Image-Making in Medieval Art* (Cambridge, 1989), pp. 311.
2, Annie Blanc analysis, Paris, January 2019.

A capital with Luxuria

Fig.1
St Pierre in Blesle
France, Auverge, Blesle
12th century

Fig.2
St Pierre in Rhedes
France, Southern France,
Rhedes
11th century

Fig.3
Capital in the Cloister
of St Lizier
France, Pyranees
Late 11th century

Head of an Apostle

France, Bourges
1140-60

Provenance
Galerie Charles Ratton - Guy Ladrière, Paris
Les Enluminures
Charles and Alexandra van Horne, 1997

21 × 12.5 × 14.5 cm

Condition
The sculpture is in good condition with
general surface damage common for stone
sculpture of its age.

Stone
Barthonian limestone; stone analysed by Annie
Blanc, January 2019.

This striking head of a bearded man is representative of the flowering
of late Romanesque sculpture in the regions south of Paris. The workshops
that sculpted such distinctive heads would have been employed to work in
the Ile-de-France, on sites such as the Abbey church of St Denis, Chartres
Cathedral, and Bourges Cathedral, all sites where the shift between
Romanesque and Gothic sculpture occurred.

The head is sculpted with stylised hair, which is defined by straight
lines. The same characteristics are true of the short yet thick beard and
moustache, both arranged in a linear manner. The hair is short and tucked
behind the ears, which are positioned low on the head. The corporeal
nature of the head is also emphasised by the round cheekbones and
bulging eyes. The large downward slanting eyes are probably the most
prominent feature of the sculpture, a fact especially highlighted by the
absence of eyebrows. They are outlined with thick almond shaped bands
and have small drill-marks to represent pupils. The head is unmoving with
a serious expression, as it stares into the distance.

This head is slightly smaller than life-size as it may have once been a
part of a larger scene on a tympanum or a figure on an archivolt. Although
the head is difficult to identify as it lacks any sort of attributes, it can be
speculated that it probably belonged to an apostle figure.

Stylistically, the head bears resemblance to sculpture from the middle
of the 12th century. Its bulging eyes, drilled pupils, stern expression and
stylised hair link it to those sites where the sculptors of St. Denis, Chartres
and many other transitional sites are thought to have originated. It has
long been argued that in the development of early Gothic sculpture, Paris
did not have its own Romanesque style and so sculptors from Burgundy
were employed to work there. The strong sculptural character of this
region is owed to the celebrated Burgundian Romanesque school, with
sites such as Autun Cathedral and Vézelay Abbey as two of the best
examples. When the facial features of this head are compared to those
sites, it is clear that certain characteristics persists even within this newly
developing style. The head of Saint Andrew from the Mausoleum of St
Lazare in Autun or the head of Christ from the tympanum of Vézelay both
serve as probable inspirations for our head (fig.1–2). Although the Vézelay
Christ is a predecessor of our head, the approach to sculpting the eyes is
particularly intriguing – they are carved as spheres with drilled pupils, yet
surrounded by downward turned sharply defined almond shaped outlines.
Another Burgundian head that has been linked to the mausoleum in
Autun is a head of a bearded man in the Museum of Fine Arts in Montreal
(fig.3). Again, the same striated hair, tucked behind the ear, the same large
eyes and facial structure exist here. The same style is also present on the
Collegiate Church in Avallon, which was linked to the bishopric of Autun in
the 12th century. Although the portal lost most of its heads, the figures of
the zodiac can be used as comparisons here (fig.6).

The stone use for this sculpture is a barthonian limestone, quarried
in the old quarries of Apremont, which was used at Bourges and its
surroundings, at Souvigny, Charite, and St Benoit-sur-Loire. When we
look at the early sculpture at Bourges, the figures on the north and south
transept portals of the cathedral have the same drilled pupils, large almond

Fig.1
Saint Andrew figure
France, Autun, St Lazare

Fig.2
Christ in Judgment Detail
France, Vézelay
First half of the 12th century

shaped eyes and striated hair types (fig.4). These portals are argued to have been sculpted in *c.*1160 for a Romanesque church on the same site. This church, however, suffered major damages during a fire, yet some sculptures survived and still decorate the Gothic building. This style is further exemplified by a small head in the Musée de la Ville de Bourges, which is comparable to our sculpture not only because of its style but also it is about the same size (fig.5). The sculpture has also been linked to the north and south portals of Bourges Cathedral.

The two portals at Bourges were influenced by sculptural traditions from the Nivernais and Burgundy, and may have been built by sculptors who previously worked on St Denis and Chartres, further linking all these sites and complicating the story.[1] Although not many 12th century sculptures survive from Bourges, it has been argued that the workshops at Bourges were familiar with the latest architectural advancements in the Ile-de-France. The travel of these sculptors is further highlighted by a recent exhibition in the Cluny Museum in Paris, which showed very clearly how closely linked these sites were.[2] The presently discussed example can also attest to these links with Paris as its style is analogous to the work at the abbey church of St. Denis (fig.6).

The localisation of the present example to Bourges, however, is also supported by a stone analysis, which confirmed that this particular stone is a Barthonian limestone quarried in the old quarries of Apremont, on the left bank of the Allier south of Nevers. This limestone was used for the sculptures of the monuments of Bourges and surroundings, Souvigny, Charity, and St-Benoit-sur-Loire.[3]

Head of an Apostle

1, Scher, Stephen K., *The Renaissance of the Twelfth Century* (Providence: 1969), pp. 164.
2, Williamson, Paul, *Gothic Sculpture 1140 - 1300* (New Haven, 1995), pp. 13.
3, Annie Blanc, *Stone Analysis* (January 2019).

Literature:

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Scher, Stephen K., *The Renaissance of the Twelfth Century*. Providence, 1969
Snyder, Janet E. *Early Gothic Column-figure Sculpture in France: Appearance, Materials, and Significance*. Ashgate, 2011.
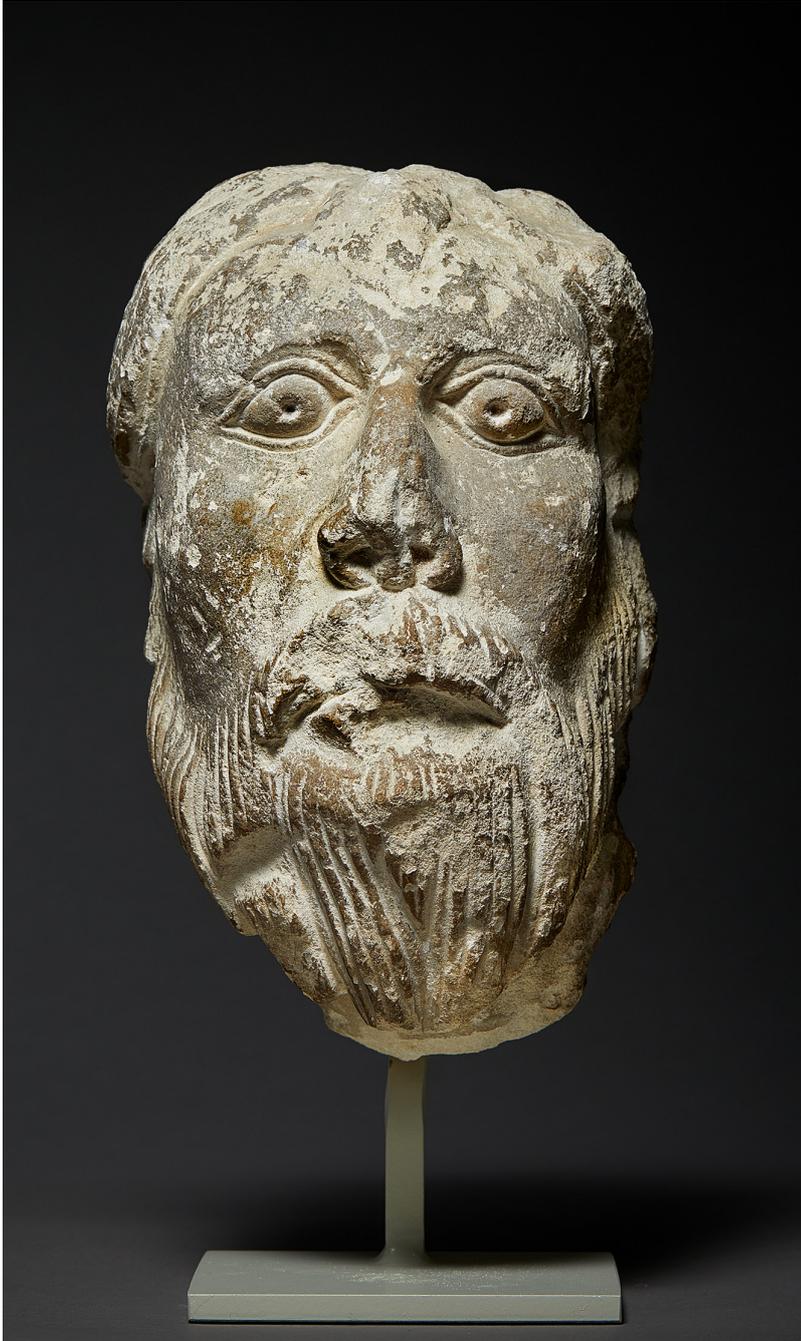Williamson, Paul, *Gothic Sculpture 1140 - 1300*. New Haven, 1995.

Fig.3
Head of an Apostle
France, Burgundy
3rd quarter of C12th.
23.2 x 14.8 x 16 cm
Museum of Fine Arts, Montreal, inv. 1950.51.Dv.10

Fig.4
Detail of Tympanum of the transept portal of Bourge Cathedral
France, Bourges
Mid 12th century

Head of an Apostle

Fig.5
Head of a King
France, Bourges
Mid 12th century
Now in the Museum of
Bourges (Hotel Kujas)

Fig.6
Detail of Sagittarius on the
Central Portal
France, Avallon, Potral of
Collégiale Saint-Lazar
12th century

Fig.7
Head from the west front of
St Denis
France, Paris, Abbey Church
of St Denis
c.1140–50
Louvre

Knotwork Capital

France, Toulouse, Notre Dame de la Daurade
1115–1130 (or 1150)

Provenance
Private Collection, France
Galerie Charles Ratton - Guy Ladrière, Paris
Charles and Alexandra van Horne, Sept. 2003

31 × 26.5 × 19.5 cm; limestone

Condition
Fine condition with minor general surface
damage, typical of architectural sculpture of
this age. Minor restoration on the knotwork
and consolidation of cracks done in the past.

This finely carved capital belongs to a group of Romanesque capitals kept in the Musée des Augustins in Toulouse, originally from the Romanesque church of Notre Dame de la Daurade. The capitals originate in one of the most famous sculpture workshops of Romanesque France.

The capital is composed of a roll astragal at the base of the capital, topped by a row of tightly and abstractly sculpted acanthus leaves. The dominant section of the capital is decorated by stylised knotwork, composed of flat stems decorated by zig-zag ornament that entwine and end in folded acanthus leaves. In between the entwined branches is more foliage as well as small birds that playfully animate the sculpture. This complex patterning is topped by an ornamented impost composed of a ribbon-like pattern, decorated by zig-zag at the edges, and folded into a Greek key pattern. This pattern is deeply undercut with a drill, producing a screen-like appearance.

The unique form and ornament of the capital is closely related to the two double capitals in the Musée des Augustins in Toulouse, which ome from the church of Notre Dame de la Daurade. The church is today covered by a neo-classical façade and its medieval history is almost completely overshadowed by later additions. However, in the 12th century, this institution was a thriving Cluniac Monastery, which was reconstructed between 1067 and 1080. Twenty-nine capitals from the Romanesque building still survive and have been kept in the Musée des Augustins since 1812. Two of the capitals in the Augustine museum (fig.1–2), as well as the presently discussed capital, most probably come from the cloister, which was built in two phases: the first phase occurred between 1067–1080, and the second between 1115–1130. More traditionally, the capitals in the museum have been dated to the second phase of building. However, more recently a study published by Kathryn Horste argued that these capitals should be seen as precursors for the Chapter-house in de la Daurade, which was not completed until the end of the 12th century, thus dating the capitals to the middle of the 12th century.[1]

The connection between the presently discussed capital and those in the museum has already been recognised by Richard Camber, who made the comparison to the two double-capitals in an unpublished study. His assessment of the capital's style notes: 'there can be no doubt that the present capital was carved by the same workshop and at the same period.'[2] When the capitals that belonged to Notre Dame de la Daurade are examined, it is clear that the style and the method used to create this capital is the same as those in the museum. Although there is some minor variation within the capitals from the building, the knotwork and well as the design of the impost are analogous. The method of carving, namely the deep undercutting on the Greek-key ornament of the impost as well as the carving of the impost and the capital from one piece of stone, also suggests the same place of origin.

Literature
Mesplé, Paul. *Toulouse, Les Sculptures Romanes.* Paris, 1961.
Horste, Kathryn. *Cloister Design and Monastic Reform in Toulouse: the Romanesque sculpture of La Daurade.* Oxford, 1992.

1, Kathryn Horste, *Cloister Design and Monastic Reform in Toulouse: the Romanesque sculpture of La Daurade* (Oxford, 1992), pp.198–99.
2, Richard Camber, 'A Romanesque Limestone Capital,' unpublished, 2003.

Knotwork Capital

Fig.1
Capital
France, Toulouse, Notre
Dame de la Daurade
*c.*1115–30; or 1150
Musée des Augustins in
Toulouse (Inv. 481)

Fig.2
Capital
France, Toulouse, Notre
Dame de la Daurade
*c.*1115–30; or 1150
Musée des Augustins in
Toulouse (Inv. 481)

Fig.3
Capital from the cloister
France, Toulouse, Notre
Dame de la Daurade
Mid 12th century
Musée des Augustins in
Toulouse

Relief with scrolling rinceaux

France, Poitou-Charantes
c. 1120-40

Provenance
Altounian-Rousset Collection, Mâcon,
until 2009
Sam Fogg, London, 2010
Charles and Alexandra van Horne,
from 2009

74 × 16 × 6 cm; limestone

Condition
Fine condition with minor general surface
damage, typical of architectural sculpture of
its age.

This crisply carved low relief is decorated with a pattern of scrolling rinceax ornament. The carving is characterised by a great vitality and a truly organic nature with which the tendril curls and uncurls, splitting into two in certain parts, and producing a particular type of furling half-palmettes which fill the necessary voids and add to the naturalism of the ornament. The pattern is tight and very well balanced. This is enhanced by the two crevices which divide the surface of the tendril into three veins, further highlighting the multiplicity of the winding scroll. This relief may have once decorated a lintel or acted as a part of a decorative band on the façade of a church.

The vitality and crispness of the carving recall contemporary metalwork and manuscript illumination. And whilst such scrolling rinceaux reliefs can be found throughout France, the most likely origin of this piece is in the Poitou-Charantes region of France. It is in this region that we find many examples of such veined tendrils in tight scrolling patterns, the particular half-palmette foliations and the flatness of the reliefs. Though not identical, scrolling veined tendrils can be found on a cornice at Annepont and another on a cornice at Rioux.[1] Comparable furling palmette ornament can also be found on the underside of the archivolt of the portals of the Cathedral of Saint-Pierre in Angoulême (fig.1). The experimentations and variations on this pattern often include small figures, who take the tendrils and attempt to unwind them, as seen flanking the east window of the church of Aulnay-de-Saintonge (fig.2–3).

The scrolling rinceaux pattern derives from classical ornament, thus illustrating the way that Romanesque artists are reinterpreting the art of the classical past. One famous example from a Roman building is the rinceaux from the Ara Pacis (fig.4). Moving away from naturalism, the Romanesque sculptors of reliefs like the presently discussed example focused on geometry and stylization, abstraction and flatness. The result were patterns that were inspired by Roman examples, yet they were clearly translated into a new language.

1, Published in René Crozet,
L'Art Roman en Saintonge,
Paris, 1971, p.109, pl XLI, B
and C

Literature
René Crozet, L'Art Roman en Saintonge, Paris, 1971, p.109, pl
XLI, B and C. Cahn, Walter. *Romanesque Sculpture in American
Collections*

Relief with scrolling rinceaux

Fig.1
Portals of Angoulême
Cathedral
France, Angouleme
*c.*1120–30

Relief with scrolling rinceaux

Fig.2
Detail of façade of church in Saintonge Romanesque France, Saintonge
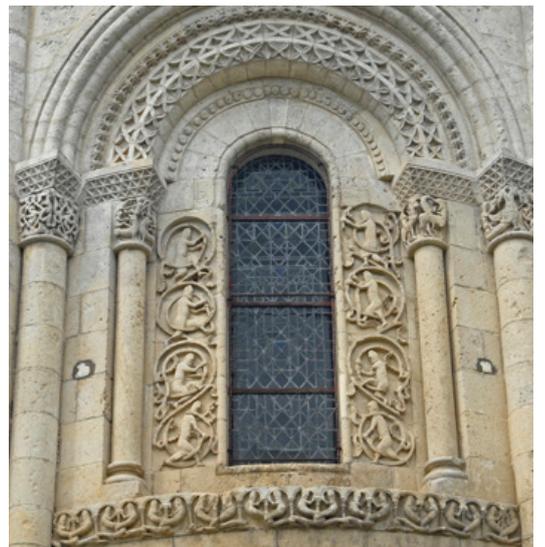

Fig.3
Window decoration in the east of the Church of St Peter Aulnay-de-Saintonge

Fig.4
Ara Pacis, Rome

Head of a Queen

France, Dijon (Chartres workshop)
*c.*1140–60

Provenance
Galerie Charles Ratton - Guy Ladrière, Paris,
until 1984
Les Enluminures
Charles and Alexandra van Horne, 1998

21 x 14.5 x 17.7 cm

Condition
Fine condition with general surface damage
typical for sculpture of this age. The tips of the
crown are lost.

Stone
Limestone; stone analysed by Annie Blanc,
January 2019.

This delicately sculpted head of a queen epitomises the birth of Gothic sculpture that developed on the outskirts of the Ile-de-France in the middle of the 12th century. The workshop, or series of masons who were responsible for these developments, worked across large distances from Len Mans, Provins, Angers, Bourges and most famously Chartres.

The classicising character of this figure is enhanced by her composed expression and sharply defined features. She looks out onto the distance, with her lips pursed and her hair elegantly parted down the middle and tucked under her crown. Her hair is stylised into parallel strands that end abruptly behind her ears. Her refined features include elongated almond-shaped eyes with flat eyelids, a small nose and high cheekbones that define her plump face. The crown that she wears is particularly unusual as it is composed of four bands, without any indication of precious stones, while broken fragments of what were probably fleur-de-lis are visible at the top. The size of this head as well as the fact that her left ear is unfinished suggests that this figure would have originally been an archivolt figure, turned to her left, which is also suggested by the slight twist to her neck. She probably represented an old testament queen.

Stylistically, this sculpture can be compared quite closely to the heads of queens from the central portal of the west front of Chartres Cathedral, sculpted between 1140–1150 (fig.1). These queens can be further compared to other female jamb figures that can be studied on a number of other monuments linked with the Chartres workshop, such as Bourges Cathedral, Saint-Thibaut in Provins, and Notre-Dame de Corbeil.[1] The characteristic rendering of these queens includes stylised hair, parted down the centre, usually terminated by two long braids hanging down from the crown, and naturalistic faces with soft girlish features. The figures are identified as old testament queens although their headdress sometimes suggests that they may not necessarily be royal. The courtesan-like costumes of the figures as well as their headdresses have been discussed most densely by Janet E. Snyder, who commented on the fanciful crowns and turbans that these figures wear.[2] Although the headdress that the presently discussed queen wears is unusual, the fragmentary indication of nubs suggests that these were once fleur-de-lis and thus that this is a crown. A similarly styled crown can be studied in the drawing of the Queen of Sheba on the now lost portal of Notre Dame in Nesle-la-Reposte (Champagne) dated to 1160s, drawn in Bernard de Montfaucon's 18th century five volume set on the monuments of France (fig.2).[3]

The connection between this head and those sculptures that the Chartres workshop may have worked on south-east of Paris is also attested to by the similarities that this head possessed with Burgundian examples. The shape of the eyes and the soft waves of the centrally parted hair can be compared particularly to Burgundian Romanesque and early Gothic examples, such as the sculpture of Eve from Autun Cathedral (now in Musee Rolin, Autun) or some of the capital figures from Vézelay Abbey. Other contemporary examples are the sculptures in the abbey church of St Benigne in Dijon, which has also been associated with the Chartres workshop.[4] The head of St Benigne as well as the relief of the Last Supper, both now in the Archaeological Museum of Dijon are analogous to our
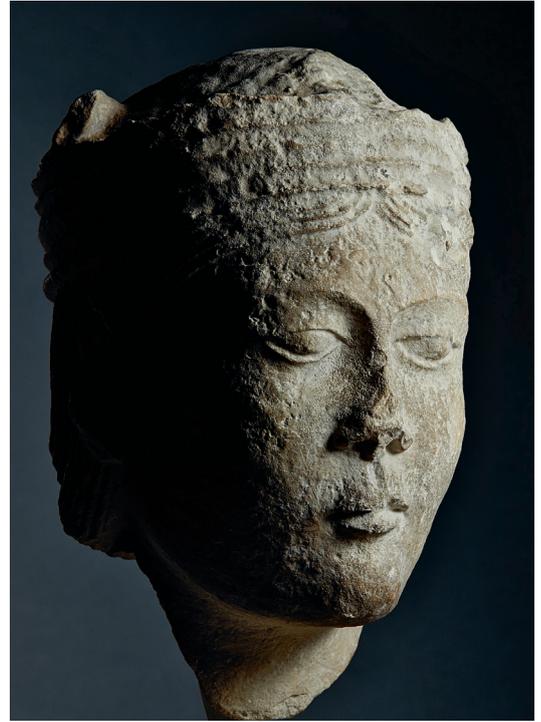

Fig.1
Old Testament Queens
France, Chartres Cathedral,
West Front
*c.*1140–50

1, All published in Pamela Blum, 'The Statue-Column of a Queen from Saint-Thibaut, Provins, in the Glencairn Museum,' in *Gesta*, Vol. 29, No. 2 (1990), pp.214–233. Connections previously made by Johanna Seasonwein, 'Analysis of Chartrain Female Crowned Head. Unpublished, 2007.

sculpture (figs.3 & 4). The head of St Benigne is particularly interesting because the sculpture possesses not only the same eastern look to his facial features but also a whimsical turban that embodies the creativity of those sculptors imagining the fashions of these long lost Biblical characters. The connection between this sculpture and those in Burgundy is further supported by a limestone analysis, which was completed in January 2019 by Annie Blanc.[5] The results highlighted that the stone used for this figure is a cream white limestone, consisting of micrite and very fine sparite, with some vacuoles with geometric contours but no fossil remains. This type of fine limestone was used in Auxerre, Avallon, Troyes and Dijon.

Burgundy has often been credited as the place of origin of those sculptors who worked on the celebrated early Gothic sites such as St Denis and Chartres, developing new concepts and stylistic variations. At the same time, the sculptures from these sites represent a move away from abstract exaggerated facial features to a more natural softness. The fleshy face of this queen and her fine facial features foreshadow the elegant Gothic style that is associated with Paris in later decades.

2, Janet E. Snyder, *Early Gothic Column-figure Sculpture in France: Appearance, Materials, and Significance* (Ashgate, 2011). Seasonwein, img. 20.
3, Bernard de Montfaucon, *Les monuments de la monarchie francoise*, vol 1 (Paris 1729), plate 15.
4, Willibald Sauerländer, *Gothic Sculpture in France, 1140 - 1270* (New York, 1973), pp. 246.
5, A previous stone analysis of the sculpture was done in 2007; however, the limestone project database at that time was incomplete and so the test was inconclusive.

Head of a Queen

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Williamson, Paul, *Gothic Sculpture 1140 - 1300*. New Haven, 1995.

Fig.2
Portal Sculpture of Nesle-le-Reposte in an engraving of Monfaucon. France, Champagne, Nesle-le-Reposte
Second half of the 12th century (portal). Engraving early 18th century

Head of a Queen

Fig.3
Head of St Benigne
France, Abbey church of St
Benigne, Dijon, *c*.1150.
Musee Archaeologique, Dijon

Fig.4
Typanum from Dijon
Cathedral
France, Dijon, 1150–1170.
Archaeological Museum,
Dijon

Head of an Apocalyptic Elder

France, Parthenay,
Notre Dame de la Couldre
c.1140–70

Provenance
Maurice Braham, London, 1980s (sculpture was originally on a base by Inagaki, active Paris 1930s)
Charles and Alexandra van Horne, 1993

22 x 14 x 18 cm

Condition
Detached from its original setting, the head has surface abrasion. Damages to nose, crown and beard.

Stone
Limestone analysis from 2005 concluded that the stone and its condition is consistent with those from Notre Dame de la Couldre.

Published
Maxwell, Robert A. et al. "The Dispersed Sculpture of Parthenay and the Contributions of Nuclear Science." Jounral of the Society for Medieval Archaeology (2005), pp.247–80, no.7, fig.7.
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Little, Charles T. (ed.). *Set in Stone: The Face in Medieval Sculpture*. Exh. cat. New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2007.
Maxwell, Robert A. et al. 'The Dispersed Sculpture of Parthenay and the Contributions of Nuclear Science.' *Jounral of the Society for Medieval Archaeology* (2005), pp.247–80, no.7, fig.7.
Maxwell, Robert A. *The Art of Medieval Urbanism: Parthenay in Romanesque Aquitaine* (Philadelphia, 2007), pp.147, 222–23, 229, 237, 244, 249, fig.222.
Maxwell, Robert A. 'Accounting for taste: American collectors and twelfth-century French sculpture.' *Journal of the History of Collections* (Feb. 2015).
Rorimer, James J. 'The Restored Twentieth Century Parthenay Sculptures.' *Technical Studies in the Field of the Fine Arts* (1942), pp.123–30, fig.1.

This head of an apocalyptic elder comes from Notre Dame de Couldre in Parthenay, one of the most celebrated sites of early Gothic Europe. The head has been tested, published and studied extensively to reveal its role amongst the other surviving sculptures from this innovative site.

Although the sculpture is worn, its elegant features and regal character are clearly visible. The king wears a large crown with several cusps. His hair is swept back and is rendered in straight stylised lines. He has almond shaped eyes that are outlined, a small nose and mouth, and a short pointy beard. It is difficult to accurately suggest which register of the west front this head may come from but considering the context and interpretation of the other sculptures from the site, it is most probable that it originates from the upper register of the façade, which no longer exists (fig.1). It has been suggested that this upper register may have had a blind arcade which was occupied by culptures of the apocalyptic elders.[1]

Partnenay was an extremely important town in Aquitaine already in the 11th century – it was both a military stronghold and an urban centre on the pilgrimage route to Santiago de Compostela. Even so, after the marriage of Henry II to Eleanor of Aquitaine and Parthenay's subsequent acquisition by Plantagenet England, it became an even more important player in Aquitaine's politics. By 1200, Parthenay was home to ten churches, which included three Benedictine and two Augustinian monasteries.[2] Notre-Dame-de-la-Couldre was Parthenay's most important church in the Middle Ages, as well as the seat of the archiprêtré, and thus received much patronage from the local lords. The construction of Notre-Dame-de-la-Couldre was probably finished by the 1170s. The church's importance, however, diminished by the late Middle Ages and by 1624, it became an Ursuline convent.[3] After the French Revolution, the Ursulines first sold their church in the late 18th century and then re-acquired it in 1834. By that point, however, the church had been 'reduced to a skeleton of outer walls'.[4] In the 1840s, it was declared a national heritage site; however much sculpture had left the site even after this point as it was still privately owned.

There has been much scholarly debate around the Parthenay sculptures over the last several decades by scholars. On the one hand, scholars have argued that the sculptural programme was completed in the 1140s, thus suggesting that these figures were proto-Gothic just as St Denis in Paris or Chartres Cathedral. On the other hand, it has been argued that these sculptures were following in the footsteps of those early Gothic sites completed in the north and should thus be dated to *c*.1170. Despite these disagreements, all scholarship recognises the refinement and expressiveness of the Notre Dame sculptures as the pinnacle of Aquitanian Romanesque.[5]

Apart from those sculptures that are still in situ, there are two reliefs in the Isabella Stewart Garder Museum and two in the Louvre, six heads in various museums, two capitals and some other carved elements.[6] The physiognomic character and the degree of abrasion of the presently

discussed head are identical to those sculptures that survive from this important site and those that have been attributed to it (fig.4). The NAA scientific analysis of the stone that was completed showed that the surviving sculptures have been sculpted using at least two varieties of stone, which accounts for their varying degrees of abrasion. The limestone used to sculpt the presently discussed head has the same properties as most of the sculptures still in situ and as several other pieces that are now in museums.[7]

Head of an Apocalyptic Elder

1, Cahn, Walter and Linda Seidel, *Romanesque Sculpture in American Collections* V.I (New York, 1979), pp. 78.
2, For more on Parthenay, see Robert Maxwell, *The Art of Medieval Urbanism: Parthenay in Romanesque Aquitaine* (Philadelphia, 2007), pp. 222–23.
3, Robert Maxwell, 'The Dispersed Sculpture of Parthenay and the Contributions of Nuclear Science,' in *Jounral of the Society for Medieval Archaeology* (2005), pp. 252.
4, Ibid. 252.
5, Ibid. 247.
6, Ibid. 258–9.
7, Ibid. 272.

Fig.1
The remaining part of the west front of Notre Dame de la Couldre
France, Parthenay
*c.*1140–70

Fig.2
Busts of Two Apocalyptic Elders
France, Parthenay, Notre Dame de la Couldre
*c.*1140–70
Musee du Louvre RF 1690
Wikipedia image

Head of an Apocalyptic Elder

Fig.3
Entry into Jerusalem
France, Parthenay, Notre
Dame de la Couldre
*c.*1140–70
Isabella Stewart Gardner
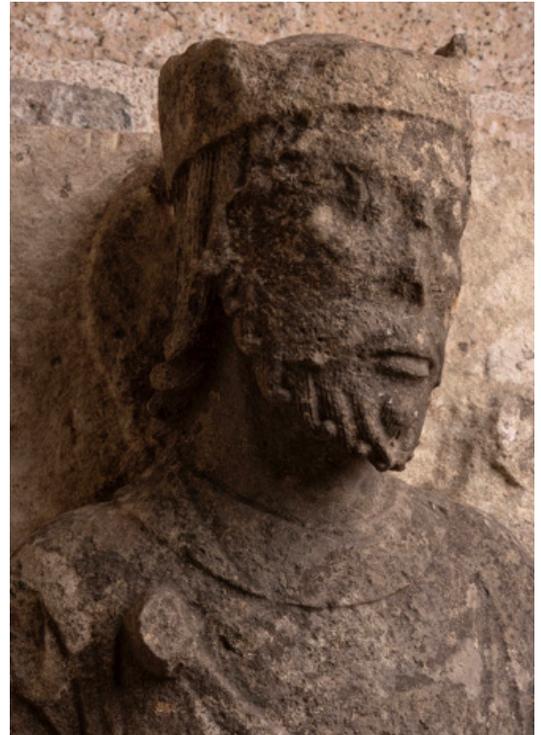Museum

Fig.4
Bust of an Apocalyptic Elder
France, Parthenay, Notre
Dame de la Couldre
*c.*1140–70
Glencairn Museum 09.SP.93

Head of a Lion

Master of San Huan de la Peña
Spain, Aragon, Huesca
1180–1200

Provenance
Louis Elvira, Castellón
Deborah Elvira, Castellón, 2008
Les Enluminures, 2010
Charles and Alexandra van Horne, 2010

7.5 x 17.5 x 12.5 cm

Condition
Detached from its original setting, the head has surface abrasion. Losses to the tip of the nose.

This finely carved corbel of a lion was very probably made by the workshop responsible for the capitals and corbels in the Abbey of St Peter the Old in Huesca. It consists of dogtooth ornament, flanked by thin bands, at the top.Just below this decorative band is a curved surface which supports the head of a feline creature which is flattened to conform to the shape of the architectural element that it decorates. It has pointy double ears and almond shaped eyes, defined by carved irises and pupils. The wide snout of the creature is decorated with stylised folds along both sides. Sharp teeth are carved inside the mouth which is stretched along the sides of the corbel and is terminated on both sides by a double crease.

This sculpture would have most probably once decorated a lintel or, more likely, the roof-line of a church. It would have been a part of a series of corbels that would have worked together to embellish but also to support the roof. The abstraction and flatness of the sculpture exemplify very clearly the Romanesque style, where the sculpture was understood to be subordinate to the architecture that it adorned. For this reason, the sculpture is stretched and abstracted in order to take the shape of the block of stone from which it is carved.

The close stylistic affinity between this corbel and the carving of the late 12th century workshop in St Peter's abbey in Huesca compels an identification of this capital as that of the same origin. The carving of the bulging eyes with very large pupils and defined irises is one of its most distinctive features. Simultaneously, the way that the mouth is carved with the double crease that is detailed with short lines can be compared to the way that the mouth is terminated on the dragons in the corbels of the cloister (fig.1). The detailed carving of these characteristic features is also comparable to the cloister capitals of San Pedro el Viejo, San Salvador in Ejea de los Cabelleros, Santiago in Aguero, and San Juan de la Pena, the earliest site in this group (fig.2). Although the sculptor responsible for these sites is anonymous, the affinities between these sites have compelled scholars to call him the Master of San Juan de la Pena.[1]

The most interesting comparison to this corbel is the interrupted corbel table along the roof-line of the entrance to the cloister of St Peter the Older (fig.3). These corbels vary in figurative ornament and decoration in that only a few included dogtooth. These corbels, however, are on a façade that has suffered much damage and restoration, and while the portal is completely neo-Romanesque, the corbels seem to have been inset into the roofline at a later date. A companion to this corbel is now in a private collection in Hong Kong (fig. 4).

Literature
Patton, Pamela A. 'The Capitals of San Juan de la Peña: Narrative Sequence and Monastic Spirituality in the Romanesque Cloister.' In *Studies in Iconography* vol. 20 (1999).
Peruta, Maria L. *El claustro de San Pedro el Viejo de huesca Restitucion y programa iconografico.* PhD Thesis, Barcelona, 2015.

1, Pamela A. Patton, 'The Capitals of San Juan de la Peña: Narrative Sequence and Monastic Spirituality in the Romanesque Cloister,' in *Studies in Iconography* vol. 20 (1999), pp.52.

Master of San Huan de la Pena

Fig.1
Details of Cloister Capitals
in St Peter the Older
Spain, Huesca
Late 12th century

Fig.3
Details of the inset corbels
of the Cloister Entrance of
St Peter in Huesca
Spain, Huesca

Fig.2
San Huan de la Pena

Fig.4
Corbel from Huesca
Private Collection, HK

Tree of Life Relief

South-western France
late 12th century

30.5 x 44 x 1.5 cm

Provenance
Private Collection, France
Benjamin Proust, London
Sotheby's, London, 2008
Charles and Alexandra van Horne, 2008

Condition
Fine condition with some general surface abrasion.

Stone
Limestone; analysed by Annie Blanc, January 2019.

A low relief with a curved moulded top, suggesting that this was once a part of a tympanum. Several branches bearing fruit intertwine and overlap onto the frame. One of the branches turns into the head of a bird, which grips a leaf with his beak. Another large bird weighs down the lower left branch, stretching his wings for balance while turning to nibble on the fruit behind him. The bird has a long beak with almond shaped eyes and drilled pupils. The relief was once probably a part of a Tree of Life tympanum, which was a common theme in early medieval and Romanesque art.

Stylistically, the relief is reminiscent of book illumination and architectural sculpture from the 12th century depicting the Tree of Life. It is also consistent with motifs on tympana, capitals and portals in southwestern France, a region that was enriched by the many pilgrims making their way to Santiago de Compostela in the 12th century. One example is a capital from Gascony, now in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, which is tightly decorated with foliage that entwine to create a regular abstract pattern. Small birds sit on the branches, stretching their necks to nibble on the foliage (fig. 1). The localisation to southwestern France is also confirmed by a stone analysis which determined that the limestone consists of sparite corresponding to remains of bivalve shells and of calcarenite consisting of fine debris of marine organisms. The probable source of this stone is southwestern France, perhaps Charente.

The Tree of Life motif draws on early Christian and Byzantine art, where such iconographies were commonly present. In the high Middle Ages, the Tree of Life was also debated to be the same as the Tree of Knowledge, also known to be the tree of good and bad. Biblical writings where the two trees appear, however, do not make clear whether this is one tree or two different trees. What is clear is that the Tree of Life is the tree of abundance, the tree that bears fruit to feed the children of God. In Biblical writings, we encounter the Tree of Life in both the Old and the New Testaments. In Genesis (3:22), it is noted that after the fall of man *lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life,* and eat, and live for ever. In the New Testament, this is taken to represent the eternal life that is granted after the sacrifice of Christ. This is made clear in Revelation (2:7), which reads: *to everyone who conquers, I will give permission to eat from the tree of life that is in the paradise of God*. This particular sculpture, with birds happily nibbling on the fruit seems to represent that more positive iconography which was often on tympana to represent the gift of eternal life that is given to those who follow the church.

Fig. 1
Double Capital with Birds
12thcentury
Southwest France, Gascony
MET 49.56.9

Face Corbel

Central France
Early 12th century

Provenance
Private Collection, France
Sotheby's, Paris, April 2010
Charles and Alexandra van Horne, April
2010

22.5 x 32 x 19.5 cm

Condition
The corbel is in good condition with surface
damage consistent with architectural sculpture
of its age. Restoration to the braided ornament
on one side.

Stone
Limestone; analysis of stone completed by
Annie Blanc, January 2019.

A corner corbel with a stylised face flanked by two spandrels of thickly braided ornament. A thick band runs along the top of the edge. The sharp corner of the corbel is decorated by a face with large almond shaped eyes and a simple triangulated nose. The mouth is defined by band like lips that create a smooth oval shape, encircling a round object held in the open mouth.

This abstracted face corbel once probably decorated the top of a column that stood in a corner on either the exterior or the interior of a religious building. The flatness of the two planes that meet at the corner and its particular physiognomy are consistent with 12th century sculpture from east-central France. Examples of an analogous style of carving are present in Alsace, where similarly flat faces with large staring eyes and small drilled pupils are present on sites such as at the abbey of Marmoutier. The exterior of the abbey church is decorated by several flat reliefs that posses these characteristics, such as the lion or the group of heads (figs. 1–2). This early abstracted style is also possessed by the 11th century capitals at Dijon Cathedral. The same staring eyes outlined in almond shapes and featuring small drilled pupils are present here (fig.3).

The iconography of this corbel can be grouped together with the vast amount of fantasy creatures and obscene acts that are found throughout Romanesque buildings. These types of sculptures blurred the lines between religious and profane, and warned the visitors of their fate should their actions or thoughts wander away from the preaching at the altar. The presently discussed corbel can be compared to sculpture at the abbey of Montmajour in southern France, where monstrous heads devour small figures throughout the building (fig.4). These sculptures are often identified as a terasque, a legendary monster featured in the 12th century Life of St Martha. The terasque was said to devour people in Provence and although people had tried to kill it, only the holy water of St Martha managed to vanquish the monster.[1] This example enables us to also speculate that the round object inside the mouth of the presently discussed corbel may have once also been a part of a figure of some sort. However, neither the round object nor the head give us enough evidence to firmly identify the creature.

The localisation of the figure to Central France is also supported by a limestone analysis that was undertaken in January 2019, illustrating that the stone comes from the Bathonian grounds north of Avallon – Massangis being the most representative localisation. This limestone was used on sites such as the abbey of Pontigny and the abbey of Fontenay.

Fig.1
Relief on the exterior
of Marmoutier Abbey
France, Marmoutier
*c.*1100

1, Jacobus de Voragine, 'Life
of St Martha,' in The Golden
Legend (New York, 1969),
pp. 396.

Face Corbel

Fig.2
Relief of a Lion
on the exterior of
Marmoutier Abbey
France, Marmountier
c.1100

Fig.3
Corbel in the Crypt
of Cathedral of Saint
Benignus in Dijon
France, Dijon
11th century

Fig.4
Corbel with a terasque
in the cloister
France, Montmajour Abbey
12th century

Head of an Antlered Man

Alsace
1150–1200

Provenance
Michael Dunn
Charles and Alexandra van Horne, Jan. 1993

31 x 18.5 x 21.5 cm; red sandstone

Condition
Fine condition with minor surface wear, typical for sculpture of this period, losses to the antlers on the left side. A hairline crack on the tip of the nose.

Published
Little, Charles. *Set in Stone*: *The Face in Medieval Sculpture*. New York, 2006.

This head of a human-animal hybrid with antlers, which is carved from a deep red sandstone, is characteristic of sculpture that would have adorned the many Romanesque foundations in Alsace – a region that blossomed in the second half of the 12th century when it was closely connected to Frederick Barbarossa. The head was a part of the celebrated exhibition *Set in Stone: The Face in Medieval Sculpture* in the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

The antlered man is carved in low relief with downturned almond-shaped eyes, short antlers and a goatee beard. The sunken cheeks and stylised wrinkles on the forehead give the creature an aged appearance. The head has a small flat nose and a dramatically downturned mouth. The hybrid identity of the creature is suggested not only by the antlers but also by the small animalistic ears that stick out at the top of the head.

The sculpture would have originally supported a vault rib, which would have sprung from the space between the antlers of the creature. The triangular base of the rib still survives on the statue. Although it is not possible to confidently say where in the church this corbel would have been, its pagan character and its support of a rib suggest a place either in a cloister or in a place far away from direct view. It is these marginal places that frequently concealed imagery that blurred the line between what was religious and what was profane.[1] The secular character of this corbel may point to links with pagan imagery that survived after the region was converted to Christianity. Past research on this sculpture has suggested links with imagery of the Greco-Roman deity, Pan (god of the woods) or the Celtic God, Cernunnos, who can be seen on the famous Gundestrup Cauldron in Denmark's National Museum (fig.1). Carnivals, festivals and an interest in hybrid creatures allowed certain images from the pagan world to survive through Christianity, and the antlered head is one example of this.[2]

The shallow style of the relief, its physiognomy and its stone type are consistent with architectural sculpture from Alsace, which flourished especially in the second half of the 12th century. This period was politically dominated by the second Schism, which involved tensions between the Pope and the Holy Roman Emperor. The emperor at this time, Frederick Barbarossa of the Hohenstaufen dynasty (1155 - 1190), wanted to strengthen his authority over the church in his empire, which led to a building boom in various regions. Alsace became important during these struggles because it was here that the Hohenstaufen dynasty originated and thus Barbarossa made many efforts to secure the support and loyalty of the region. Much of this exerted effort involved artistic patronage. As Gillian Elliott argued in her dissertation, the sculpted motifs here involved themes that promoted the authority of the emperor and that compared the emperor to Christ.[2] Simultaneously, the new imperial support allowed the churches and monasteries to be able to afford sculpted decoration throughout the church – on the roofs, in the cloisters and in more marginal spaces (see figs. 2–3). The same stylised physiognomy is present in sculpted heads surviving in Eschau, Murbach, Lautenbach, Alsbach, and Rouffach. The research done on this sculpture by the Metropolitan Museum of Art concluded that the close similarity between this sculpture and those surviving from the now destroyed Monastery of Eschau (currently in the Frauen Museum in Strasbourg) suggests a similar origin.[4]

Literature
Camille, Michael. *Image on the Edge: the Margins of Medieval Art.* London, 1992.
Rumpler, Marguerite. *L'art Roman en Alsace.* Strasbourg, 1965.

1, Michael Camille, *Image on the Edge: the Margins of Medieval Art* (London, 1992).
2, Little, Charles. *Set in Stone*: *The Face in Medieval Sculpture* (New York, 2006), pp. 119.
3, Gillian Elliott, *Regnum et sacerdotium* in Alsatian Romanesque Sculpture: Hohenstaufen Politics in the Aftermath of the Investiture Controversy (1130-1235),' PhD diss. University of Texas, 2005.
4, Little, pp. 119.

Head of an Antlered Man

Fig.1
Gundestrup Cauldron
Denmark, Himmerland (found)
National Museum in Copenhagen
*c.*150 BC–1BC

Fig.2
Corbel of a Man
Germany, Alsace, Eschau Convent
Second half of the 12th century
Strasbourg Museum

Fig.3
Man pulling his beard on the
roof of the church of St Peter
and Paul
Germany, Rosheim
mid 12th century

Monumental Head

South-western France
*c.*1260–1300

Provenance
Private collection, Switzerland
Prof. Harry Bober, New York 1970s
Bruce Ferrini, Ohio
Braham and McAlpine, London
Charles and Alexandra van Horne, March 1991

25.4 × 17 × 16 cm

Condition
General surface wear with some losses to the
nose, the left ear and the beard; more dramatic
marks on the left side of its forehead, possibly
due to iconoclasm.

Exhibited
Little, Charles. *Set in Stone: The Face in
Medieval Sculpture.* New York, 2006.

Stone
Limestone analysis completed by Annie Blanc,
January 2019.

An elegantly sculpted head of a man which is comparable in style and quality to the finest high Gothic sculptures of 13th century France, such as Amiens Cathedral and Reims Cathedral. This head was a part of the well known Metropolitan Museum of Art exhibition, *Set in Stone: The Face in Medieval Sculpture.*

The large ears of this head are framed by smooth waves that fall in tight S-shaped curls at the bottom. Separated down the centre and complemented by a ringlet on the forehead, the back of the hair is sculpted with loose waves that are unfinished. The rough nature of the back and the unfinished left ear suggests that the figure once stood in a niche or against a wall, and that he turned to speak to a figure on his right. The face of the man is elongated and features almond shaped eyes, sharply defined eyebrows and puffy eyelids. His mouth is slightly open as if to speak, exposing delicately sculpted teeth along his lower jaw. His beard is gathered along his chin, and although the details have been lost due to damage, it is clear that the beard would have been defined by two large curls in the centre, flanked by two smaller curls on either side.

The refined nature of this sculpture illustrates its prominence as a work that would have once decorated an important institution - one that had the capacity to hire the finest courtly sculptors in late 13th century France. This head finds close parallels with those high Gothic sculptures present on the Amiens choir screen fragment now in the Metropolitan Museum of Art (fig. 1). The large ears, smooth waves framing the faces and the elegantly sculpted features of the figures in this relief are all analogous. However, the refined carving, the modelling of the face and the tight S-shape curls of our head are clearly a mature version of this style.

Stylistically, the sculpture is closer to late 13th and early 14th century example from south-western French cathedrals such as Poitiers and Bordeaux in Aquitaine (fig. 2). Both of these powerful institutions had direct knowledge of the architecture and sculpture in and around Paris, and may have even been modelled on buildings such as Amiens and Reims Cathedrals. When the cathedral of Bordeaux was being built at the end of the 13th century, the bishop spent a large amount of time in Reims. It has been suggested that upon seeing the cathedrals of Reims, and perhaps also Amiens, he may have brought sculptors back with him to Bordeaux to work on his church. Paul Williamson has also argued for a connection between some of the sculpture in Aquitaine and Amiens, specifically pointing to the affinities between the sculptures of Charroux and Poitiers, noting that 'there can be no doubt that both [Poitiers and Charroux] are products of the same workshop, active probably around 1250–60.'[1]

This south-western connection is also supported by a stone analysis, completed in January 2019 by Annie Blanc. The analysis showed that the stone used to carve this sculpture is a greyish white limestone, with debris of sparitic shells of bivalves in calcarenite consisting of debris of marine organisms. This limestone was quarried in the southwest of France.

Literature
Little, Charles. *Set in Stone*: *The face in Medieval Sculpture*.
New York, 2006.
Sauerländer, Willibald. *Gothic Sculpture in France, 1140 - 1270*. New York, 1973.
Williamson, Paul. *Gothic Sculpture 1140 - 1300*. New Haven, 1995.

1, Paul Williamson, *Gothic
Sculpture 1140 - 1300* (New
Haven, 1995), pp. 164.

Monumental Head

Fig.1
Detail of the Betrayal and
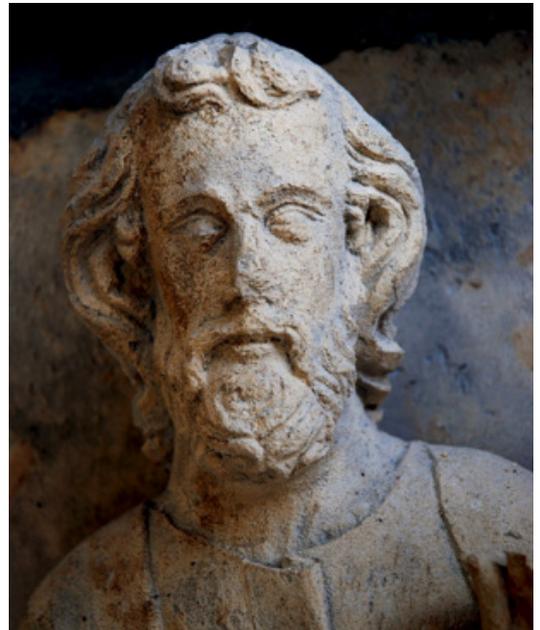Arrest of Christ
France, Amiens
1264–88
MET 17.120.5

Fig. 2
Apostle
France, Bordeaux Cathedral,
South Transept portal
c.1315

Mouth of Hell

England
*c.*1250–1350

Provenance
Private Collection, UK
Michael Dunn
Charles & Alexandra van Horne, 1993

21 x 23 x 12.7 cm

Condition
Fine condition with minor surface wear, typical for sculpture of this period, losses to the mouth of the sculpture.

This sculpture represents one of the most popular and distinctive medieval images – the mouth of hell. The piece encompasses only the upper part of a face, which terminates by the top lip and large teeth of what was once a large open mouth. The wide nose, with large nostrils, the wide-eyed stare and the flame-like hair typify the features of a devil-like creature. The face has a short sloping forehead, deeply furrowed brows and large almond shaped eyes with carved irises and drilled pupils. Two large teeth can be seen just below the lip, which extends to either side of the face. The flatness of the sculpture suggests that it was once a part of a relief – perhaps a scene of the last judgment or the harrowing of hell.

Depictions of the mouth of hell emerged in Britain in the 10th century in the wake of monastic reforms, when focus shifted from a practical life to one of silence and prayer. Hell was imagined as a monstrous head, dominated by a large open mouth and its iconography was 'one of the most popular conceptions of medieval times.'[1] Although the mouth of hell appeared in manuscripts as early as the Anglo-Saxon period, in sculpture, it gained momentum with the development of large tympana illustrating the Last Judgment in the 13th century. The development of this iconography was rooted in biblical writings, with Isaiah describing that *Sheol [the underworld] has enlarged its appetite and opened its mouth beyond measure, and the nobility of Jerusalem and her multitude go down, her throng and he who exults in her* (Isaiah 5:14). This was supported by the psalms and by many 12th century writers, who also compared entering hell to the act of being swallowed.

The rendering of the mouth of hell in sculpture and painting was either horizontal or vertical. The vertical mode was the most common in early depictions, where the mouth of hell occupied a corner of the tympanum or manuscript page while figures in profile marched into it. By the 13th century, the mouth of hell also began being depicted horizontally – usually at the bottom of a scene. Schmidt argued that this mode was first developed in the workshop of William de Brailes at Oxford, and can be seen in the Fitzwilliam Museum (MS 330), where the mouth of hell is depicted twice in this way.[2] This mode gained popularity and was even replicated in the Hours of Blanche of Castile, where the upside down mouth of hell ccupies the bottom of the scene (fig.1). Such depictions are probably just reappropriations of the Romanesque monsters that often occupied the tops or bottoms of initials. In sculpture, however, this was relatively new.

Some of the earliest sculpted depictions of the mouth of hell survive in England, especially in the North. Two depictions can be found at Lincoln Cathedral – both on the Romanesque part of the west façade and on the Gothic south portal (fig.2–3). By the mid-13th century, the iconography of the mouth of hell becomes standard and proliferates across England and France – especially as sculpted portals become popular. In France the portals at Bourges Cathedral and at the church of St. Yverd at

Literature
Schmidt, G. D. *The Iconography of the Mouth of Hell: Eighth-Century Britain to the Fifteenth Century*. Selinsgrove, 1995.
Wildridge, Thomas. *The Grotesque in Church Art*. London 1899.

1, Thomas Wildridge, *The Grotesque in Church Art* (London 1899), pp.60
2, G. D. Schmidt, *The Iconography of the Mouth of Hell: Eighth-Century Britain to the Fifteenth Century*. Selinsgrove, 1995), pp. 136.

Braine include the mouth of hell as a part of the Last Judgment, closely resembling the presently discussed sculpture, (fig.4–5). This particular piece, with its almond shaped eyes, its drilled pupils and its naturalistic physiognomy can best be situated in late 13th–early 14th century. This dating is also supported by the fact that the iconography of the mouth of hell does not last beyond the 15th century and late 14th century examples of complex biblical stories in sculpture are rare.

Mouth of Hell
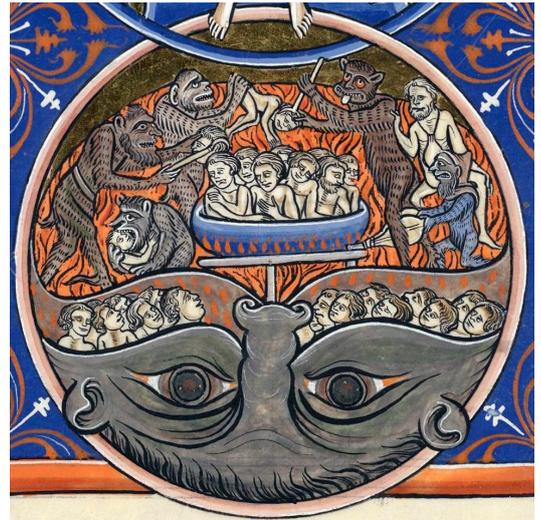
Fig. 1
Mouth of Hell from The Psalter of Blanche of Castille
France, Paris
Bib. de l'Arsenal MS. lat. 1186, fol. 171
c. 1223 - 1230

Fig. 2
West facade detail of
restored sculpture
England, Lincoln Cathedral
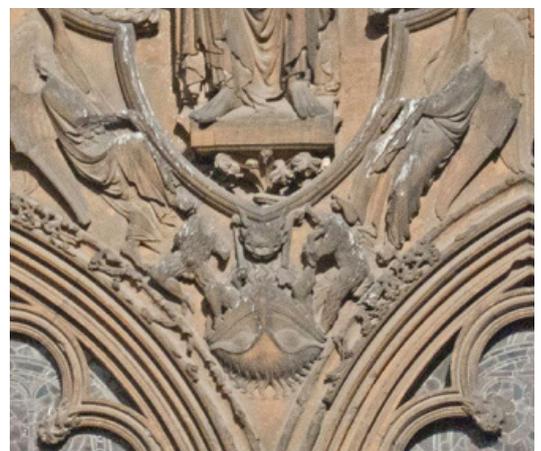
Fig. 3
South Transept Detail,
showing the Last Judgement
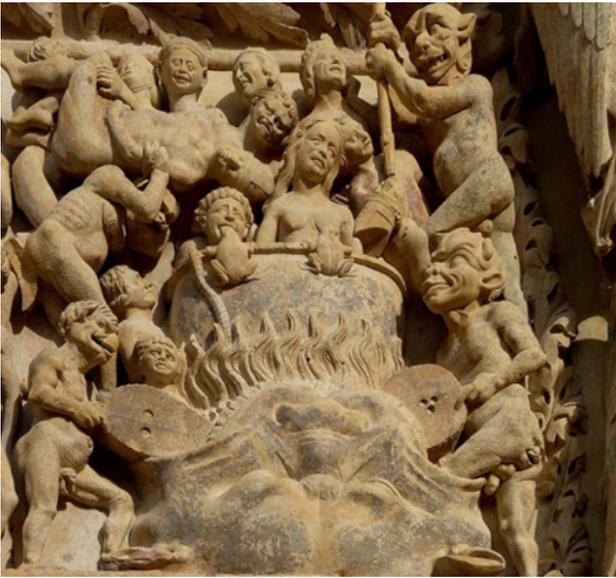England, Lincoln Cathedral
13th century

Fig. 4
Last Judgment Detail
France, Bourges Cathedral
13th century

Fig. 5
Fragment from the abbey
church of Saint-Yverd
France, Braine
1205 - 15

Head of a Smiling Man

Northern England
13th century

Provenance
Maurice Braham, London
Charles and Alexandra van Horne, July, 1982

16 × 14.5 × 16 cm

Condition
In fine condition with general surface wear, typical for stone of this age. Discoloration to the stone, probably as a result of smoke.

A label stop of a smiling man with his tongue sticking out. The face has a flat top with a short regular fringe that runs across his forehead and continues below his round ears and under the chin. He has a short forehead with continuous eyebrows that run severely straight across from ear to ear. His nose joins the eyebrows, framing his almond shaped eyes which have inserted black stones. A few lines above his upper lip indicate the intention of a moustache. His mouth is open to suggest a jovial expression while his tongue sticks out below his lower lip. The sculpture has round abstracted ears. The dark colour of the stone is probably a result of smoke exposure, noted from the light colour of the stone on the back, which has a fresh break. The small size, extended back and flat top of the sculpture is evidence that the sculpture would have originally been a label stop, supporting a blind arcade or an arch moulding (fig. 1).

The carving of this sculpture suggests a style that sits firmly between Romanesque and Gothic in England. Its round abstracted ears and sharp carving reveals influences from the past, yet the carving of the eyes and the corporeal nature of the face shows awareness of the Gothic style. The most analogous examples to this label stop are those from Yorkshire – especially the label stops in St. Michael's, Eastrington (fig. 1). Another example, which is dated slightly later than our piece, are the carvings in the chapter-house of York Minster (fig. 2). The general form of the flat, round faces in York as well as the carving of the eyes with drilled pupils have a very similar oeuvre. Both of these sites also reveal the same sort of sharp carving that characterises the presently discussed piece.

Head of a Smiling Man

Fig. 1
Label stop St Michael's
Parish Church
England, Yorkshire,
Eastrington
13th century

Fig. 2
Marginal sculpture in the
chapter house of York
Minster
England, York
c. 1300

Bust of a Harpy

Northern England
Late 14th – early 15th century

Provenance
Richard Trescott, London
Charles and Alexandra van Horne, before
1983

31 × 30.5 × 21cm

Condition
Good condition with general surface wear and
discoloration.

A bust of a harpy with a grimacing face. Her hair is carefully pulled back
to reveal a deeply wrinkled forehead. Her almond shaped eyes are outlined
and have drilled pupils, while her flat nose sits atop her open mouth. She
has rounded cheeks and large prominent ears. The harpy is wearing a ruff
collar and a dress with billowy sleeves. Her short wings are outstretched
to frame the architectural element that she would have supported. The
sculpture would have probably carried a shaft, and although it is diffcult
to determine where in the building this corbel would have been, the
discoloration and weathering of the stone suggest that it adorned an
exterior feature of a building.

The style of the carving of the bust draws on the sculpture in the nave
of Beverley Minster. The flatness of the face, the exaggerated facial features
and the general form is comparable to the marginal sculpture in the nave,
especially the famous musicians, dated to the mid-14th century (figs. 1 – 2).
The costume of this figure, featuring a small flat ruff and billowy sleeves,
suggest a slightly later date. Small ruffs like this example are present from
around 1400, such as those on the depiction of the narrator in a copy of
the Roman de la Rose (Paris, Bib. Nat. ms. Fr. 12595, folio 1).

The sculpture of a harpy is also closely comparable to a label stop,
linked with Beverly Minster and dated to the 14th century that came from
a family of builders (fig. 3). The weathering on the figure as well as its
facial features and its hair are analogous to the presently discussed figure.

The harpy originated in ancient mythology but remained a popular
image throughout the Middle Ages – appearing as marginalia in buildings,
manuscripts or as a symbolic image on coats of arms. Harpies even
featured in Dante's Inferno, which described them as such: 'They have
broad wings, with razor sharp talons and a human neck and face, Clawed
feet and swollen, feathered bellies; they caw their lamentations in the eerie
trees.' This sculpture fits this description and illustrates the late medieval
fascination with mythology and mythological creatures.
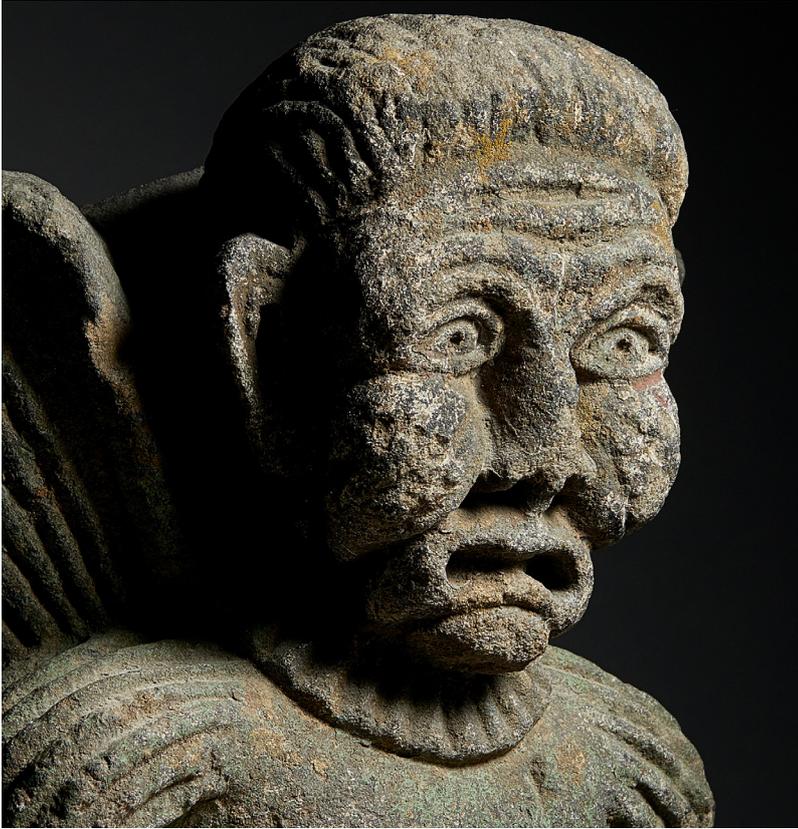
Bust of a Harpy

Fig.1
Female Musician
England, Beverley, Beverley
Minster
14th century

Fig.2
Label Stop
England, Beverley, Beverley
Minster
14th century

Fig.3
Label stop
England, Beverley
c.1320–40
Private Collection, England

A Soul in Torment

Northern England
*c.*1500–1550

Provenance
John Hewitt, London
Maurice Braham, London
Charles and Alexandra van Horne, 2006

18 x 29.5 x 14.5 cm

Condition
The sculpture has a break below its belly separating the statue in two. This break has been joined in the past with a metal joint.

A reclining or perhaps kneeling figure of an elderly woman. The sculpture has been displayed as a reclining figure with its large hands near its sides and its knees up above its belly. The small head of the figure twists to look up. It wears a cap and has flatly carved facial features and an open mouth. The voluptuous nature of the figure is accentuated by the large arms and legs, overhanging breasts and rolls on the stomach. If reclining, the figure supports itself on its elbow.

John Hewitt, who owned this object several decades ago, believed this mystery object to be a soul in torment from the 13th century. Although the figure's voluptuous body does not conform to 13th century sculpture, the general form can be compared to medieval chimeras and gargoyles along the roofs of medieval churches, which have their mouths open to scream. A good comparison is the chimera of a naked woman from Troyes (fig. 1), who also has a voluptuous body and an open mouth. However, the style of the presently discussed figure suggests that it is probably from much later date than the high Middle Ages – perhaps a late medieval marginal figure from an English parish church. Simultaneously, the most striking comparisons that this object has made are those modernist sculpture of reclining figures by Henry Moore (fig. 2). The simplified forms of Moore's figures, their small heads and the way that they support themselves on their elbows with their knees bent is analogous. The general surface wear of the stone of this figure, however, is consistent with sculptures that are several centuries old. Nevertheless, the fact that the sculpture's provenance leads us to London, a city where Henry Moore found much inspiration and studied in the 1920s, also allows us to imagine that sculptures such as this may have been in Moore's environment when he was first inspired to create his series of reclining figures. This, however, may just be a coincidence.

Fig. 1
Chimera of a Naked Woman
France, Troyes, St Urbain
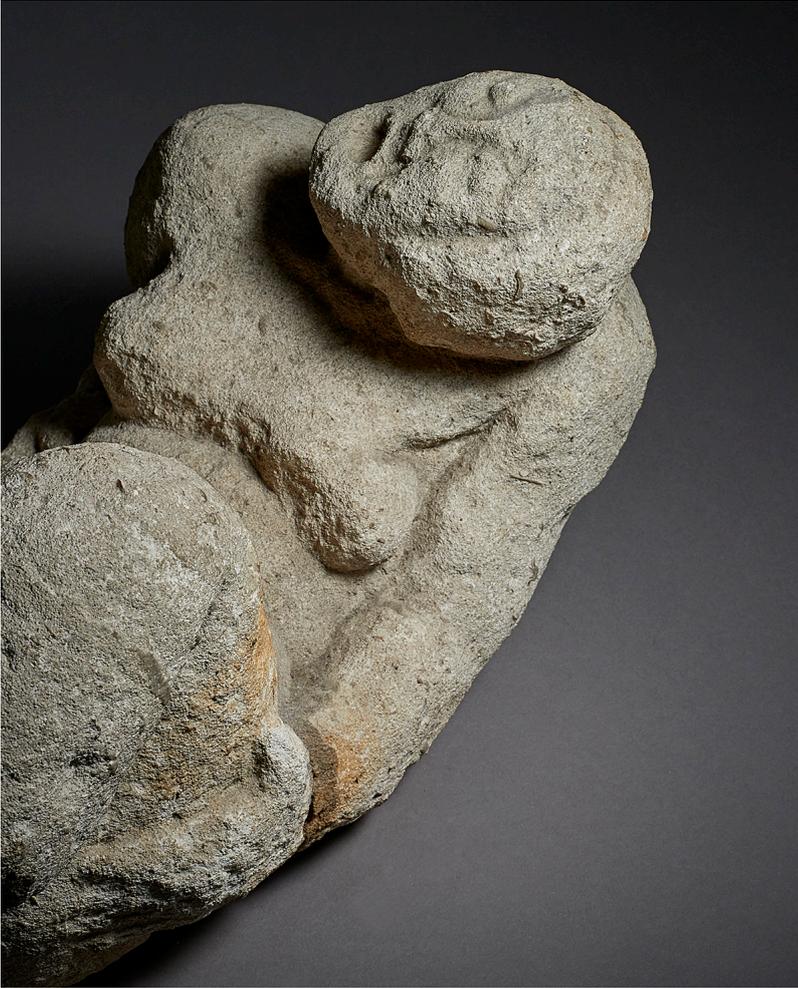13th century

Reclining Nude

Fig. 2
Henry Moore (1898–1986)
Reclining Nude
1930, cast 1963
Henry Moore Foundation LH
85 cast 0

Head of a Bearded King

France, Burgundy
17th century

Provenance
Joanna Booth, London
Charles and Alexandra van Horne, 2002

34 × 28 × 33 cm

Condition
Losses to the nose and lips. General surface wear typical for an outdoor stone sculpture of its age.

Stone
Jurassic limestone from Burgundy or Bulcy (near La Charité). Analysis completed by Annie Blanc, January 2019.

This head of a bearded king is defined by deeply undercut luscious curls of hair and a concerned expression. The crown that sits on the head of the king is decorated by a narrow band of carved stones below and triangular tips above. The crown is nestled in the thick curls of the king, which form a kind of crown of their own. The tight curls are defined by drill marks, which create deep pockets of shadow throughout the surface of the sculpture. His long beard complements his hair, as it too is composed of tight curls accentuated with a drill. The facial expression of the king is one of concern, which is clearly pointed to by his furrowed brow. His large eyes are carved with irises, pupils and heavy eyelids. His mouth is slightly open as if to speak or to clench his teeth.

The size of the head and the fact that it is cut in the round suggests that this sculpture would have been a part of a monumental setting, perhaps a fountain. The style of the head with its heavy crown of hair and its triton-like triangulated crown places it in the 17th century, when mythological sculptures were common in the gardens of wealthy patrons (fig. 1). The deep carving of the tight curls and the use of a drill suggest that the sculptor may have been trained in Italy, where the drill continued to be used. The style of the face with the large eyes, exaggerated expression and drill marks is suggestive of someone who may have known the sculptures by Gianbologna, such as his famous Rape of the Sabine Women (fig. 2). Its stylistic similarity to French sculpture and the stone analysis completed in January 2019, however, clearly determine the Burgundian provenance of the sculpture.
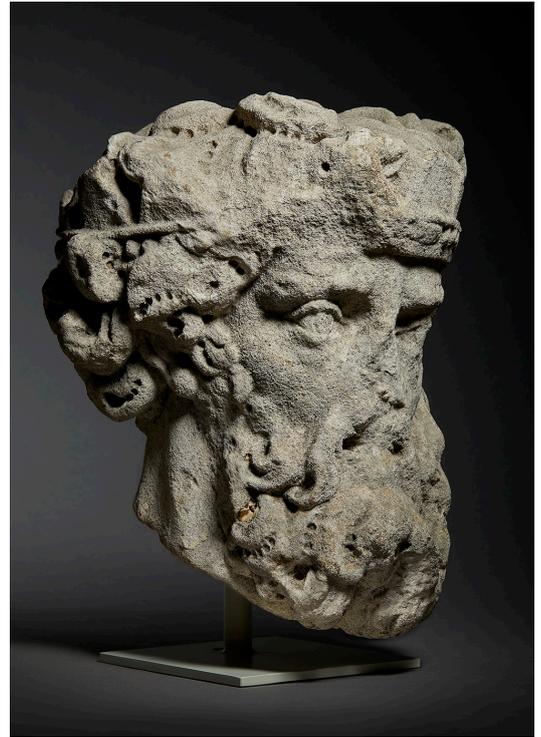
Head of a Bearded King

Fig. 1
Jean-Baptiste Tuby
The Rhone
France, Versailles
1685-1688

Fig. 2
Rape of the Sabine Women
Jean de Bologna
Italy, Florence
1579-82