



ICOROCLASMA

censorship, destruction and reuse in the European Middle Ages

3 November – 2 December



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Catalogue by Matthew Reeves
with an introduction by Isabella Schwarzer

SAM FOGG



Introduction

The word “iconoclasm” derives from the Greek *eikon* (image) and *klan* (to break).¹ It refers both to the historical events of image-breaking that occurred during 8-9th century Byzantium, and the destruction or alteration of images more generally. Acts of iconoclasm are typically characterised by the ideological motivations of their agents and the victims of iconoclasm tend to be images signifying power and authority (whether heavenly or earthly).²

Iconoclasm is frequently associated with the complete elimination of an object, even though the best witnesses to iconoclasm tend to be objects which survive in altered or dismembered states. This exhibition moves away from a restrictive understanding of the term and instead highlights a wider typology of damage, ranging from partial destruction to deliberate neglect, reuse, and re-appropriation. The objects in this exhibition range from altarpieces, free standing sculpture, architectural elements, and stained glass, to textiles and manuscripts, and were all created in medieval Europe between the 11th and 16th centuries. Individually, they highlight some of the many ways in which images were silenced through erasure or modification. Each object has its own story to tell and invites us to read the damage they suffered and to question how and why they were subjected to iconoclasm.

Although the phenomenon of breaking images is as old as their creation (going back, for instance, to the practice of *damnatio memoriae* in ancient Egypt and classical antiquity)³, the term was originally coined in relation to the dispute that erupted in Byzantium on the use and veneration of religious images, especially icons representing Christ.⁴ *Iconoclasts* argued that images were too closely related to pagan idols. The pro-image faction, known as *iconophiles*, defended the devotional use of icons based on Christological arguments and Neo-Platonic ideas about the nature of images, in particular God’s incarnation in Christ’s human form. They also pointed to the didactic usefulness of images as a medium of salvation.⁵ Lastly, they countered the charge of idolatry by distinguishing between the image/icon and what it represented, its *prototype*: when praying before an image of a saint, honour was directed by the viewer towards the saint itself rather than its physical representation.⁶

1 K. Kolrud, M. Prusac, ‘Introduction: Whose Iconoclasm?’ in ed. K. Kolrud, M. Prusac, *Iconoclasm from Antiquity to Modernity*, Burlington 2004, pp. 1-7 (1).

2 *Ibid.*, p. 2.

3 D. Freedberg, *The Power of Images: Studies in the History and Theory of Response*, Chicago 1989, p. 389.

4 H. Belting, *Likeness and Presence*, Chicago 1994, p. 159.

5 *Ibid.*, pp. 149-154.

6 See L. Brubaker, ‘Introduction: the Sacred Image’, in ed. R. Ousterhout, L.

After a century of debate, the conflict was eventually resolved in favour of images in 843, however the status and use of images has remained a contentious issue. Prompted by the supposed fusion between the image and what or whom it stands for, waves of iconoclasm have continued to flare up in Europe and beyond throughout ever since.⁷ Particularly noteworthy periods of iconoclasm include the Protestant Reformation, which commenced in early-16th century Germany and spread across Europe (leading to the Wars of Religion between the French Catholics and Protestants), as well as the French Revolution at the end of the 18th century. The charge of idolatry, initially voiced by the Byzantine *iconoclasts*, was taken up by the influential German theologian and Reformer Martin Luther (1483-1546), who considered the veneration of religious images contrary to the Old Testament. Pointing to prohibitions on image worship, he instead emphasized the superiority of written texts. Nonetheless Luther tolerated the use of didactic images and was against the hostility towards images that more austere Reformers such as Andreas Karlstadt (1486-1541) and Ulrich Zwingli (1484-1531) advocated.⁸ Similarly, the Byzantine idea of an image acting as proxy for a person resurfaced during the iconoclasm of the French Revolution; by destroying the images that were affiliated with the feudalism of the *Ancien Régime*, revolutionaries sought to attack the regime itself.⁹

The newer forms of iconoclasm of the 16th to 18th centuries differed from their Byzantine predecessor insofar as the rejection of images was paired with and sometimes even overshadowed by strong political and social motivations, a wish to replace whatever order these images symbolised.¹⁰ By rejecting religious images, the Reformers actively rejected the ‘Old Faith’. Similarly, the French revolutionaries sought to remove and pull-down imagery that symbolised the old order, whether associated with royalty or religion. Both forms of iconoclasm adopted a moralising tone that regarded images as corrupting and ultimately detrimental to the interests of the populace.

The various forms of damage sustained by medieval objects often help to highlight the varied and changing attitudes towards images that have exerted themselves over many centuries. The act of iconoclasm itself could involve the complete eradication of the object but could also consist of defacing and mutilating the parts of them that were considered to ‘embody their effectiveness’.¹¹ For example, the head and hands of a Northern French statue depicting Saint Nicholas (c. 1520-1530) included in this exhibition were brutally hacked off with chisels in an act that sought to deconsecrate

Brubaker, *The Sacred Image East and West*, Chicago 1995, pp. 2-14.

⁷ See D. Gamboni, *The Destruction of Art: Iconoclasm and Vandalism since the French Revolution*, London 1997.

D. Freedberg, *Iconoclasm*, London 2021, p. xii.

D. Freedberg, ‘The Structure of Byzantine and European Iconoclasm’ in ed. A. Bryer and J. Herrin, *Iconoclasm*, 1977 Birmingham, pp. 165–177 (165, 166).

⁸ A. Spicer, ‘Iconoclasm on the Frontier: Le Château-Cambrésis, 1566’ in ed. K. Kolrud, M. Prusac, *Iconoclasm from Antiquity to Modernity*, Burlington 2004, pp. 119-137 (122, 123).

⁹ Gamboni (as in no. 7), p. 31.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 29.

¹¹ Freedberg, (as in no. 3), p. 168. See also B. Latour, ‘What is Iconoclasm? Or is there a world beyond image wars?’ in ed. P. Weibel, B. Latour, *Iconoclasm: Beyond the Image-Wars in Science, Religion and Art*, Cambridge 2002, pp. 14-37.

and mute the holiness of the object (Cat. 25). Even the figures at his feet, representing the children Nicholas saved from being boiled alive in one of his many acts of charity, have suffered the same fate. Similarly, a fragmentary head of Christ from North-Eastern France (c. 1480-1500), which would most likely have been part of a Pietà or Entombment group, was savagely attacked with a sharp instrument directed at Christ’s neck in order to rid the statue of its perceived power (Cat. 20).

Some of the objects of this exhibition also highlight another aspect of iconoclasm, which is less clear in its intent; they were reused or reappropriated for new purposes. For instance, three sections from the finely chiselled tomb slab of an abbot, carved in Northern France in the early 1400s, were cut up and recycled in the 17th century to serve as paving stones (Cat. 13). The memorial function of the original slab was neutralized, while still making use of its durable and costly material. Another vivid case of iconoclastic reuse and subversion of the sacred is a Limoges roundel of c. 1200 which shows the lower half of a soldier outlined against what was once a champlevé enamelled background (Cat. 2). Originally, it is thought to have formed one of the sides of a grand enamelled reliquary chasse but was deconstructed and reused as a decorative mount.

By exploring the diversity of mutilation, salvage, and reuse, this catalogue and its accompanying exhibition attempt to question preconceived ideas about iconoclasm and reflect on the fate and survival of medieval objects. Their material testimonies afford us the opportunity to read the language of damage, and to reflect on the perpetrator’s intention. Although the confrontation with vandalised images might initially trigger feelings of collective regret and melancholy, this exhibition is also a celebration of the power of these objects, which have resisted the ravages of human intervention. In a way, every act of iconoclasm also indirectly credits the object with precisely what it seeks to diminish – its significance.

Isabella Schwarzer

1 A tall shaft section from Crowland Abbey



This tall shaft section, decorated with a loosely coiled cable of scrolling foliage, originally comprised part of a jamb on one of the portals of the now largely destroyed Benedictine abbey at Crowland in Lincolnshire. It was previously in the collection of Professor George Zarnecki, an eminent scholar of English Romanesque sculpture who owned several pieces from the abbey. In the 1980s, Zarnecki loaned his Crowland fragments both to the Sainsbury Centre for Visual Arts in Norwich and to the Lincolnshire City and County Museum, writing to the latter in 1982 to share some aspects of their history. They had, he noted, been built into the wall of a house at Crowland for a considerable time, a fate shared by several other sculptures from the site, most notably a 6-foot figure of Christ with an orb which now proudly surmounts the 14th-century Trinity Bridge at Crowland.

Begun in 1113, the abbey at Crowland was dedicated to Saint Guthlac, a hermit believed to have lived on the site. It quickly became an important pre-Conquest pilgrimage site and a highly influential institution in the economy and administration of the area. Under the Royal Supremacy act of 1534, the abbey was surrendered to the Crown and, passing into private hands, lost its institutional protection. The remains of the abbey were fortified by Royalists in 1643 but taken by Cromwell's troops in May of that year. Its fortunes dwindled over the next two centuries and much of its masonry carted off for reuse. By the early 19th century, the abbey was in ruins. In September 1804, during the first of several visits to Crowland, the watercolourist John Sell Cotman described what remained of the once towering Romanesque building to his patron Dawson Turner as 'most delicious... I feel my pen incapable of describing it 'tis so magnificent' (fig. 1). Remnants of the original structure still survive, but its Romanesque sculpture and architectural fragments have been dispersed, and are now preserved in the Lincolnshire Museum and in private collections.¹

England, Lincolnshire
c. 1140

92 x 13 x 16 cm; coarse-grained sandstone, surface considerably abraded as a result of weathering. One section broken and rejoined.

Provenance

Crowland Abbey, South Lincolnshire Fenlands
A private house at Crowland (from a letter dated 1982 from Professor George Zarnecki)
Collection of Professor George Zarnecki, London, until 2002;
Private collection, London

¹ 'Ruins and site of Crowland Abbey,' Historic England (accessed 20/10/2022); <https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1012410?section=official-list-entry>



Fig. 1
John Sell Cotman (1782-
1842)
Crowland Abbey
c. 1804
21.6 x 15.9 cm; Watercolour
on paper
London, Tate Gallery, inv.
N03667



2 A round plaque with the figure of a soldier, removed from a Limousin reliquary chasse, cut down, and reused as a decorative boss or repair



At the centre of this partially gilded copper roundel a man twists his torso and extends one arm straight out behind him, preparing to whip the figure whose hands can just be seen tied to a column at far left. Around him, a series of rosettes in roundels tumble across the background like game pieces. Though no other details survive, the now fragmented impression of a torturer abusing a bound man corresponds closely to imagery (popular among medieval artists in European contexts) of Christ's Flagellation at the column, a narrative moment drawn loosely from a passage in the Gospel of Matthew which describes the various stages of the Passion (27:26). It was originally part of a much larger square or rectangular plaque, of a type typical for metalwork made in the southern French town of Limoges during the years around 1200. The figure's elongated anatomy and the design of his draperies offer close parallels to more complete objects from this date (fig. 1), while the small drilled holes piercing the object in two places near its perimeter show where it would have been attached by way of nails to a wooden core on a reliquary chasse or shrine of what must clearly have been very grand proportions. Its background rosettes would also have been embellished with coloured enamels, which were laid and fired into the recesses gouged into the surface of the metal using a graver.

It is unclear precisely when our plaque was cut down, since the rest of the object it comes from has been lost and no others with its combination of scale and iconography seem to have survived anywhere. However, it is likely to have been during a period of great social upheaval such as the prolonged and tortuous Wars of Religion (1562-98), when the contents of church treasuries across western Europe were being emptied and dispersed. Certainly, the patterns of corrosion on the reverse suggest that its dismemberment happened many centuries ago. The unmistakable puncture wound of a single square nail driven through its centre from the reverse reveals that it only survived at all by being reused; it was evidently attached to something larger as a decorative boss or just an opportunistic repair, its imagery hidden from view until its chance rediscovery.



France, Limoges
c. 1200

14.8 x 14.2 cm; copper, cast, hammered, engraved, and gilded, with vestiges of champlevé enamel.

Provenance

With Pierre-Richard Royer, Paris, January 2011, acquired from a French private collection



Fig. 1
Reliquary chasse with the Beheading of Saint Thomas Becket
France, Limoges
c. 1195-1200
22.1 x 18 x 8 cm; gilded copper with champlevé enamel over a wooden core
Utrecht, Catharijneconvent, inv. ABM m907

3 The Head of an African King bearing the scars of iconoclastic attack



A large circular fissure across the temple of this grimacing head, the damage rippling outwards from the discernible impression of a pointed tool, marks the precise moment of its violent decapitation from a full-length Romanesque portal statue. A broken nose and deep losses to the cheeks and jaw diarise the subsequent damage sustained at the hands of its attackers, as they celebrated its toppling and humiliated its image.

Many of this enigmatic head's features, from its terrifying grimace, protruding eyes, and stylised ringlet beard, to its archaicising crown decorated by a band of zig-zags, suggest that it was intended to represent a man of non-European heritage - a possessed king harking from a strange, untamed and unknowable 'elsewhere'.¹ Its stylistic treatment corresponds closely to Southern French Romanesque sculpture from the first half of the 12th century (fig. 1), yet the almost grotesque distortion of its physiognomy is unusually pronounced, and reveals how European sculptors grappled and struggled with how best to codify otherness in their attempts to represent the antitype of a European - and crucially Christian - domain. As if mirroring that struggle, our figure was 'othered' once again during the process of its destruction, torn down and desecrated by iconoclasts who rejected the misguided language of imagery and cultural allegiances to which they saw it belonging. During the Reign of Terror (1793-94), French Revolutionary fervour reached its peak and despite being masterpiece of Romanesque sculpture, many such statues were beheaded violently in a vivid analogy to the use of the guillotine on human victims opposed by the cause.²

Southern France
c. 1120-1150

32 x 19 x 22cm; limestone, a large break at the left side of the forehead as well as losses to the tip of the nose and both cheeks.³

Provenance

Georges Joseph Demotte (1877-1923)¹;
Mounted on an oak base made in Paris by the Japanese cabinetmaker Kichizō Inagaki (1876-1951), incised with his monogram;

With Charles Rattou, Paris, 1949;
with Louis Manteau, Brussels, 1957;
Collection of Gustaaf Vanderhaegen, Ghent;
thence by descent in his family



Fig. 1
A demon from the
Temptation of Christ
French Pyrenées, from the
Collegiate Church of Saint-
Gaudens
Mid-12th century
102.7 x 29.8 x 17.2 cm;
marble
Bryn Athyn, The Glencairn
Museum, inv. 09.SP.25B

¹ Debra Higgs Strickland, *Saracens, Demons, and Jews: Making Monsters in Medieval Art*, Princeton, 2003.

² Stephen K. Scher, 'Iconoclasm: A Legacy of Violence', in Charles T. Little ed., *Set in Stone: The Face in Medieval Sculpture*, Exh. Cat., New York, 2006, pp. 19-20.

³ My thanks to Jana Gajdošová for her help in preparing this entry.





4 A composite stained-glass window panel with birds in flight amongst scrolling foliage



Records of iconoclastic attack on Europe's religious monuments detail how the figures of angels, saints and deities that once filled the grand window schemes of many of its most important sites, as well as more humble buildings and those at the level of the parish church, offered trigger-happy rioters and revolutionary groups the opportunity for some precision target practice. The most offending images in stained glass (such as representations of Christ or the Trinity) were often destroyed first, though illustrations of pantalooned soldiers staving in stained glass windows with clubs and pikes attest to the indiscriminate nature of their removal, and bring the calamitous sounds and sights of such devastation down to us through the centuries (fig. 1). Both in England and across the European continent, windows fortunate enough to have survived the last half-millennium of intermittent iconoclasm were put under strain once again during the 20th century, with many blown out by ordnance damage and fire.

France, Champagne or Essonne
c. 1220 - 1240

50 x 34.5 cm; clear, red, purple, yellow, green and blue pot-metal glass with silver stain and vitreous enamel. Stopgaps and modern quarries in the blue background. The lowermost right-hand bird modern.

Provenance

Private collection, England, purportedly acquired from the stock of an old glass restorer's workshop in Auxerre



Fig. 1

Frans Hogenberg (1535-1590)
Detail of Beeldenstorm, 20 Augustus 1566, from the *Kroniek van de opstand in de Lage Landen 1555-1609* Cologne c. 1566-1570
21 x 28 cm; etching on paper
Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum, inv. RP-P-OB-78.623-4

This composite rectangular panel incorporates a large group of French glass quarries created during the second quarter of the 13th century, and combines sinuous vine tendrils with doves turned in profile against a blue ground. They were originally produced to decorate the uppermost section of a Tree of Jesse window, closely analogous examples of which survive

both in museum collections and in situ (fig. 2).¹ Tree of Jesse imagery is first believed to have been developed in illuminated manuscripts during the second half of the 11th century, an attempt to give visual form to Christ's lineage and ancestry which melded a metaphorical passage found in the Book of Isaiah with the lists of Old testament names that appear in the Gospels of Luke and Matthew. The removal of our doves from a window depicting this imagery is likely to have occurred during the 19th century, when restorers swapped out darkened, damaged, and much-reconfigured medieval glass with brighter and sturdier replacements.



Fig. 2
Part of a Tree of Jesse
window, showing Christ
in Majesty, and the Virgin
between prophets
Varennes-Jarcy (Essonne),
Abbaye de Gerçay (?),
c.1230-40
Paris, musée de Cluny, inv.
Cl. D. 23674, D. 23675

¹ J. Hayward and Walter Cahn, *Radiance and Reflection: Medieval Art from the Raymond Pitcairn Collection*, New York, 1982, p. 148; M. Caviness and J. Hayward, *Stained Glass before 1700 in American Collections: Midwestern and Western States*, Studies in the History of Art Vol. 28, Corpus Vitrearum Checklist III, p. 82.





Frans Hogenberg (1535-1590).
 Detail of Beeldenstorm, 20 Augustus
 1566, from the *Kroniek van de opstand
 in de Lage Landen 1555-1609* —
 Cologne
 c. 1566-1570
 21 x 28 cm; etching on paper
 Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum, inv. RP-P-
 OB-78.623-4

Nach wenig Predication
 Die Caluinsche Religion

Das bildens furmen fiengen an
 Das nicht ein bildt dauon bleib stan

Kap Monstrantz, kilch, auch die altar
 Und wess sonst dort vor handen war.

Zerbrochen all in kurtzer 5 fundt
 Gleich gar vil leuten das ist kundt.

Anno Dñi. M. D. LXVI^{is} XX Augusti

5 Corbel of a winged putto with hacked marks to the face



The profusion of deep losses hacked into face of this finely-carved figure in flight, evidence its devastation at the hands of iconoclasts who clearly released their zeal in the direction of any image they came across, however peripheral to the cause. Only the feathers on its wings, each one carved with astonishing naturalism and individuated into rounded vanes projecting from a central rachis, were left untouched.

Engineered so as to project straight out from the wall of a building as a support for a larger figure, a wooden roof structure, or a springing stone vault rib, this limestone corbel served both a practical and a decorative purpose. Perhaps one of a series of such figures, all built into the masonry at a single level, the resultant effect must have been akin to a host of angelic beings flying into the building with wings unfurled (a scheme that can still be found among the so-called angel rooves of medieval churches in East Anglia, for instance). Its function most likely only came to an end with the destruction of the building for which it was carved, and yet it is clear from its pattern of damage that whoever attacked it did so when it was still in situ.

The figure's charming, deep-cornered smile offers a distant echo of carvings from the former abbey church of Saint-Sauveur at Charroux in western France, and makes use of a similar fine-grained, pale grey limestone.¹

France, perhaps Charroux or environs
c. 1250-1275

16 x 17 x 29.5 cm; fine-grained limestone.

Provenance
Altounian collection, Macon

¹ Willibald Sauerländer, *Gothic Sculpture in France 1140-1270*, London, 1970, pl. 301.



6 A group of micro-architectural fragments, perhaps salvaged from a destroyed jubé or portal frieze



These four smashed fragments make use of a pale limestone so riddled with flint inclusions that it must have been unbelievably frustrating to carve, and in several places the sculptor had to fight hard to negotiate their presence. Three sections from the group consist of micro-architectural structures that alternate pedimented archways with crenellated towers pierced by blind bar tracery, while the fourth shows the decapitated torso of a priest clothed in a chasuble and unfurling a scroll with both hands. The large vestiges of original polychromy peppering their surfaces suggest that once smashed from the ensemble they once decorated (most likely a jubé or screen situated within a church building, but perhaps also a portal frieze protected from weathering), they were buried or stowed away out of sight, a fate we know occurred with the famous jubé at Bourges following its removal in the 18th century. Their robust tracery designs are enlivened with crisp hawthorn leaves and scrolling crockets of a type that rippled through French masons' workshops during the middle years of the 13th century, and which can be seen entangled like a forest on the interior west wall and the portals at Rheims Cathedral (c. 1255-65) as well as other sites of its date.¹



Western France
c. 1260

- 1) 26.4 x 14.6 x 13.7 cm
- 2) 34 x 32 x 16.5 cm
- 3) 26.9 x 26 x 16 cm
- 4) 19.7 x 9 x 14.3 cm

Limestone with vestiges of polychromy.

Provenance
Private collection, Southwest France



¹ Cf. for instance the overlapping parsley leaves above the head of the Angel Annunciate on the west façade's central portal, illustrated in Paul Williamson, *Gothic Sculpture 1140-1300*, New Haven and London, 1995, p. 159, fig. 236.

7 A corbel section with the head of Christ, violently broken in half



Split in half and missing the tip of his nose, this bearded male head with long flowing hair is a precious survival from medieval England's once rich tradition of architectural sculpture, and a testament to a visual language all but silenced during the Reformation of the 16th century and the Civil War a hundred years hence. It would originally have functioned as a label stop or corbel; the quatrefoil-studded mouldings projecting outwards from the top of the figure's head were intended to serve the role of a support, and would have visually punctuated the terminus of a vault rib that once sprung from its profile and synthetically bound ceiling to wall.

Details including the rippling four-petalled foliage and the locks of hair fashioned into delicate fluting locate our fragment firmly in south-eastern England and date it to the years around 1300. It offers a descendant's echo of earlier developments at sites such as Westminster – the hair of the c. 1253 Archangel still preserved in the Chapter House was carved with undulating striations of a closely comparable nature (fig. 1) – but the rippling boss of foliage above our figure's head is more closely linked to carvings at Ely, and may well presage this pattern's more developed application around 1320 in the Lady Chapel there (fig. 2).¹ Our figure's one open eye and lips drawn into a subtle smile imbue this otherwise solemn, iconic head type with a remarkably bright and joyful demeanour. If he was indeed intended to represent Christ – the handsome, bearded and long-haired male archetype *par excellence* – then he would have been a benevolent and welcoming presence in the religious house for which he was carved.



Southeast England
c. 1300

31.1 x 13 x 14.2 cm; limestone, partially whitewashed.

Provenance
Collection of Professor Charles Reginald Dodwell (1922-1994), Pilkington Professor of History of Art and Director of Whitworth Gallery, Manchester University 1966-1989; Thence by descent

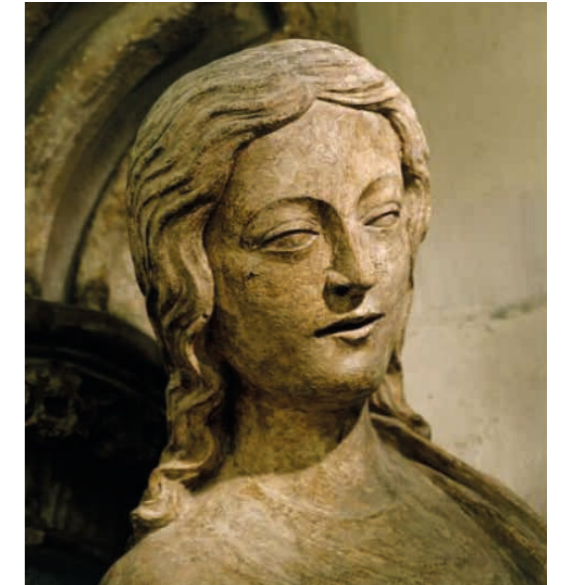


Fig. 1 (above)
Archangel Gabriel
c. 1253
Westminster Abbey, Chapter
House ex situ

Fig. 2 (below)
Frederick H. Evans (1853-
1943)
Ely Cathedral: Lady Chapel,
Details
c. 1891
8.2 x 8.2 cm; lantern slide
Chicago, Art Institute, inv.
2012.248.55



¹ I am grateful to Jana Gajdosova for her help reconstructing the origins of this sculpture in a south-eastern English context.

8 A micro-architectural relief showing a cleric holding a navette, cut from the tomb of an Abbot



A tonsured cleric, probably a deacon (one of the subministrators of the Mass in Catholic liturgy), stands beneath a sexpartite canopy in a narrow micro-architectural niche bordered on either side by billeted pilasters. He raises his right arm as if to present the ornate incense boat or navette that he holds in the fingers of his left hand, and draws his mouth into a subtle smile as he gazes directly out towards the viewer. Immediately around his upper body a backdrop of blind tracery suggests that he is standing before a slender window opening.

While this intimately scaled relief, the style of which can be dated firmly to the first two decades of the 14th century, was always intended to be as narrow in width as it is today, the evidence of saw marks on its uneven upper and lower edges indicates that it has been cut down from something much taller. Such reliefs, often incorporating figures inhabiting niches arranged over multiple storeys, were common components in the sculpted decoration of late-medieval funerary monuments, especially those associated with abbots and other members of the clergy. Our fragment is likely to have comprised just a small part of a program in which two matching 'pilasters' framed a central effigy on a large stone slab – a format typical of French funerary sculpture during the 13th and 14th centuries. Many such tombs were recorded by the French antiquarian Roger de Gaignières at the end of the 17th century before their destruction at the hands of Revolutionaries a hundred years later. Though none of his surviving drawings appear to match our relief precisely, examples of clerical tombs with small-scale representations of deacons and other subministrators performing their liturgical duties with the instruments of their office are recorded on several occasions among de Gaignières' precious census (fig. 1). Our figure of a cleric is overwhelmingly likely to have been carved for a tomb that had survived intact right up until the Revolution, when the French populace moved with force and speed to overthrow the *Ancien Régime* and the institutions aligned with it. Now, it may well be the only fragment of that lost monument to have come down to us.

France, Ile-de-France
c. 1300-1320

40 x 17.6 x 8.4 cm; fine grained limestone with traces of gilding and polychromy beneath a later, whitewash layer. A short section measuring 14cm of the outermost billeted moulding on the left-hand side has been restored with a patinated plaster infill. The tip of the leftmost hanging component on the projecting canopy likewise restored during the same campaign. A repaired break runs through the lower right-hand section of the relief. The figure's right hand, and the tips of his right foot and his nose broken and missing. An original lead plug set into the reverse.

Provenance and Markings

From a Southern Belgian private collection, and by inheritance;
With Jan Muller, Ghent;
With De Backker, Hoogstraten, 2011;
Private collection, Paris, until 2021

An old inventory number '5682' inscribed in red at the top right-hand corner on the reverse.

A fragmentary paper label of 19th- or early 20th-century date adhered to the reverse.



Fig. 1
Roger de Gaignières
Drawing of the tomb of
Pierre d'Auteuil, abbot of
Saint-Denis (died 1226),
from the cloister of the
abbey of Saint-Denis, Paris
Bibliothèque nationale
de France, BnF, Est.
RESERVE Pe-11a-Pet.
(Gaignières 4590)



Pierre Lafontaine
Alexandre Lenoir opposes
the destruction of the tomb
of Louis XII in Saint Denis
October 1793
Paris, Musée Carnavalet

9 A limestone relief showing saints John the Baptist, Michael, and Denis accompanied by an apostle



This large relief depicts four saints standing at full-length, their feet resting on a shallow ledge which cleverly doubles as the lower sill of an ogival frame enclosing the composition on all sides. Most likely caught up in the destructive fervor which blazed into life during the French Revolution (1789-1800), it was tragically and violently smashed into pieces; the physical evidence suggests that it was toppled with force from its original position either behind an altar (as a reredos) or in front of one (as a frontal).¹ Intriguingly, the now unidentifiable apostle positioned second from the right seems to have been singled out for further humiliation, his face and attribute carefully cut away with a level of concentration both uncharacteristic of the object's more dramatic devastation, and entirely absent from the intact features of his counterparts. Did these two very different types of damage occur at the same time, or might we be looking at an object affected by bouts of attack separated by years, or even centuries? Patterns of pitting to the surface of the stone suggest a long subsequent period spent exposed to weather, perhaps as a rejected monument cast aside in the grounds of the church for which it was made.

The left-most section of the relief (perhaps too damaged to be saved) is now lost but would very likely have displayed a further saint, placing Michael with his elaborate unfurled wings and dynamic, twisting silhouette at the visual and symbolic centre of the group. Evidently carved for a patron or patrons with devotional ties to the archangel, its inclusion too of Saint Denis holding his decapitated head in his hands at far right, suggests a close link to Paris and even, perhaps, to a figure associated with the Abbey of Saint-Denis itself. Further evidence in support of such a localization is provided by its material; it was carved from a fossil-rich Lutetian limestone favoured by sculptors and masons throughout the capital and the surrounding region of the Île-de-France during the Middle Ages. Of these, a group of sculpted programs commissioned during the 1320s at sites including Mantes-la-Jolie, Jumièges, and Saint-Jacques-de-l'Hôpital in Paris, popularized a new drapery style in which figures' mantles cling to one shoulder and are drawn across the midriff in swags of fabric.² It is a style our sculptor knew intimately, since precisely the same arrangement informs the draperies of our now unidentified apostle, and helps us date the commission to the same decade accordingly.



France, Île-de-France
c. 1325

62.1 x 144.5 x 10.7 cm; Lutetian limestone broken with traces of gilding and polychromy in three sections and rejoined.

Provenance
Private collection, Île-de-France until;
Their sale, Paris, 27th June 2015;
With Galerie Chenel, Paris

¹ For the most thorough examination of carved stone altarpieces in France during the period, see Pierre-Yves le Pogam, *Les Premiers Retables: Une mise en scène du sacré*, Exh. Cat., Paris, 2009.

² Markus Schlicht 'Bemerkungen zur Porte des Flèches der Kathedrale von Bordeaux', in Michael Grandmontagne and Tobias Kunz eds, *Skulptur um 1300 zwischen Paris und Köln*, Berlin, 2016, p. 219.



10 An illuminated bifolium from a Latin Psalter, broken up from its parent manuscript and reused as a flyleaf at a later date



This 14th-century illuminated bifolium (a double page removed from a larger manuscript) is a delicate and masterful testament to the skill and sensitivity of English illuminators. Its large initial 'D', delineated in pink on a blue ground with white, lacelike tracery infilled with an elaborate swirling pattern of multicoloured leaves, heralds the beginning of Psalm 109 as it begins the words 'Dixit dominus...'. From four-petalled flowerheads that burst into life at each end of the initial's downstroke, two borders grow like vines across the surrounding vellum, their blue stems infilled with repeated coloured trefoils and acorns between pairs of oak leaves.

When still functioning in its original guise as a book of psalms, a sixteenth-century hand left a scribble in the inner margin - an annotation which, however carefree, brought the presence of new life to an inherited object. But while interventions like these marks of ownership offer an addition to a book's identity, another more violent intrusion broke up the manuscript from which our bifolium was taken, and what could not be usefully reused for other purposes was almost certainly discarded as carelessly as we might throw a dated paperback into a wastebin. Having been separated from the rest of its leaves, our bifolium only survived at all because it was turned into a flyleaf, covering and protecting the inside covers of another book altogether. The discoloured folds and rubbed-through lines of wear running vertically down both of its outer margins afford us a vivid point of contact with an afterlife of reuse that its illuminator never dreamt might occur when first setting pigments to its surface.

England
c. 1340

A bifolium on vellum, each leaf 22.3 x 17.6 cm, written space 19.2 x 12 cm, in gothic liturgical script, versal initials, paragraph marks and line-fillers in red and blue, 2-line initials in red and blue with contrasting penwork (openings of Psalms 110 and 111), a single very large initial 7 lines high with two-sided painted border, the initial 6.8 x 7.2 cm. Squared up with modern vellum and reinforced along the right-hand edge with fine silk Crepeline. Some stains and rubbing. Tearing and wear to the fold lines at each side.

Provenance
Sotheby's London, Western Manuscripts and Miniatures, 7th December 1999, lot 9
Their sale, Paris, 27th June 2015;
With Galerie Chenel, Paris



reverse

11 Corbel of an angelot holding a scroll, the face cleaved from its head



A single well-judged downstroke from a sharpened hatchet travelling with force in the hands of an iconoclast, cleaved the face of this scroll-bearing angelot ('little angel') clean from its head. Nothing remains except the open wound of its defacement, a voided witness to intense destructive endeavour. The figure is carved from a single block of limestone with a flat console above its head and a large amount of material projecting outwards to the rear, indicating that it was originally set into the stonework of a surrounding wall and used as a corbel, its upper ledge most likely supporting a larger, perhaps full-length figure of a saint or patron. Figurative corbels of this type were common features of buildings erected under the patronage of the French monarchy during the years around 1400, and survive in situ on the façade of the otherwise demolished Chartreuse de Champmol (Philip the Bold's personally endowed chapel outside the walls of his duchy's capital, Dijon), as well as in the Church of Notre-Dame at Écouis (northwest of Paris), to which our angelot with its ringlets of hair offers a fitting parallel (fig. 1). Appearing in flowing robes with its knees brought up into a crouching position, its mantle is pinned together at the centre of the chest with a delicate diamond-shaped morse in a manner typical of liturgically charged angel imagery from the period. More specifically, however, the pronounced grey hue of the limestone from which it was carved and the design of its draperies are both characteristics shared by a group of sculpted figures attributed on the basis of style and provenance to an atelier of artists situated in the central-French town of Bourges and led by André Beauneveu (c. 1335-1402), who worked as the chief court artist to Jean de Berry (1340-1416) for much of the last two decades of his life (fig. 2).¹ We know that hundreds of kneeling angel figures peppered the stained-glass windows of his now destroyed Sainte-Chapelle, as well as the masonry of many of his two dozen sumptuously decorated chateaux, which makes it tantalising to imagine what role our angelot might have played in a scheme of this importance.²



North-central France, Berry
c. 1400

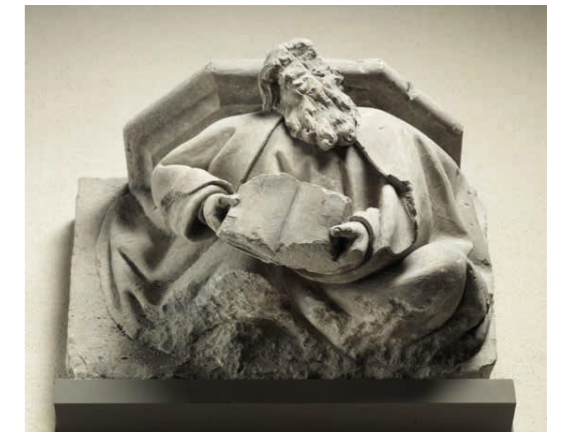
30 x 40 x 56.5 cm; pale-grey limestone, the surface heavily weathered and with losses to the architectural mouldings and the angel's scroll.

Provenance
With Antoine Boccador-Lieveux, Paris, November 2005



Fig. 1 (above)
A corbel with three angels
reading from an open book
France, Eure, Écouis
Last quarter 14th century

Fig. 2 (below)
A corbel with a bearded
figure holding a book
France, Berry (Bourges)
c. 1400-1415
34 x 51 x 32.5 cm; grey
limestone
Paris, musée du Louvre, inv.
RF 1447



1 Cf. also a pair of corbels with bearded
2 Béatrice de Chancel-Bardelot and Clémence Raynaud, *La Sainte-Chapelle de Bourges. Une fondation disparue de Jean de France, duc de Berry*, Exh. Cat., Paris, 2004.

12 A coffered chest, made from the canopy of the dismembered altarpiece of Saint Michael by Pere Lembrí (active 1399-1421, Tortosa)



A large coffered chest constructed from the framing elements of a dismembered altarpiece dedicated to Saint Michael, painted by Pere Lembrí in the first decade of the 15th century. Each section is formed from panels that are gilded, punched, and tooled with foliate motifs around raised quadrilobed circles, within which appear coats of arms and para-heraldic devices on raised and painted lozenges.

Common to retablos (altarpieces) across the Iberian Peninsula during the later Middle Ages, but particularly characteristic of those from the Crown of Aragon, were large *guardapolvos* - literally 'dust guards' - formed of ornately carved, painted, and gilded panels nailed to the outer edges of the altarpiece once it was installed. The primary function of such elements was visual - they helped to frame and unify the imagery of altarpieces whose scenes were often arranged over several stepped levels. However, they simultaneously aided in the preservation of the painted surfaces by shading them from the threat of falling masonry or plaster, as well as dust or guano.¹ A third feature of *guardapolvos* frames was naturally their surface, which could be decorated so as to pick up on visual or (as with our panels) heraldic threads in the retablo proper. They would have projected outwards at a steep angle from the upper and lateral sections of the retablo, creating a visually dramatic, three-dimensional structure harmonising the scenes below.

c. 1400-1410
Reconstituted in the early 20th century for the Capmany collection, Barcelona

54 x 89 x 38 cm; Gilding and tempera on softwood panels. Some retouching to the paint surfaces and gilding where abrasion or flake loss has occurred.

Provenance
Capmany Collection, Barcelona, by c. 1910;
Segharra Collection, Barcelona, until 2016

Published
Antoni José i Pitarch, *Una memoria concreta, Pere Lembrí pintor de Morella y Tortosa (1399-1421)*, Exh. Cat., Museu de Belles Arts de Castelló, 2004, p. 210, ill.



Fig. 1 (left)
Reconstruction by Professor José I Pitarch of the retablo of Saint Michael by Pere Lembrí, c. 1400-1410

¹ For the spread and development of the *guardapolvos* in Iberian painting see in particular Judith Berg Sobrè *Behind the Altar Table: The Development of the Painted Retable in Spain, 1350-1500* (University of Missouri Press, 1989).

The origins of the guardapolvos panels on this antiquarian's chest had fallen into obscurity until research undertaken in 2004 by Professor Antoni José i Pitarch identified two of the same para-heraldic emblems on two large fragments painted by the Tortosa-based artist Pere Lembri for an otherwise lost altarpiece now split between the Hispanic Society of America in New York and the Historisches Museum Aargau in Lenzburg (see figs. 1-2).² They follow a format common to Lembri's work of the early 1400s, with tall, multi-figural narrative scenes bordered by much thinner pilaster sections on which single standing saint figures appear. The scale of the lozenges and the rounded bead-moulding of each of the chest panels accords perfectly with the corresponding elements of the retable.



Fig. 2a (above)
Pere Lembri
The Apparition of the
Archangel to Bishop
Comba, and the Prophet
Ezekiel, from the retable of
Saint Michael
c. 1400-1410
226.5 x 93 cm, tempera and
gilding on softwood panels
New York, Hispanic Society
of America

Fig. 2b (below)
Pere Lembri
The Apparition of the
Archangel to Bishop
Comba, and the Prophet
Ezekiel, from the retable of
Saint Michael
c. 1400-1410
226.5 x 93 cm, tempera and
gilding on softwood panels
New York, Hispanic Society
of America



² Antoni José i Pitarch, *Una memoria concreta, Pere Lembri pintor de Morella y Tortosa (1399-1421)*, Exh. Cat., Museu de Belles Arts de Castelló, 2004, pp. 206-213.

13 Three incised fragments from an Abbot's tomb slab, cut down and reused as paving slabs in the 17th century



These three fragments, carved from a limestone so dense that it is often described as marble and purported to have been discovered in Arras, once formed part of a tomb slab of monumental proportions (likely over 2.5 m in length). Though the name of their patron is lost, inscriptions on all three sections commemorate an Abbot who is described as having ‘piously ruled for twenty years’.¹ But as fashions changed over time, and the collective memories and rituals surrounding medieval funerary monuments like ours waned, epitaphic slabs were broken up in large numbers and reused for their materials, which had become costly and difficult to source. Architects of the 17th century found the perfect application for these precious resources, creating a vogue both in religious and secular buildings for floors of beautiful contrasting marbles polished to a high shine. So widespread was this new style that squares of stone set on the diamond enliven many of the most famous scenes of wealthy mercantile life captured and popularized by Dutch genre painters of the period (fig. 1).

Arras
c. 1400-1425

*29.1 x 29.7 x 7cm; 29.4 x 21 x 7.9 cm; 29 x 26 x 7 cm:
polished blue-black carboniferous limestone, decorated with
white pigment.*

Provenance
Purportedly discovered in Arras;
With Pierre-Richard Royer, Paris, 2003;
McCarthy collection, London

Our three fragments evidently share this fate having been cut down into rectangular blocks for reuse. Paradoxically, the dismemberment of the tomb slab from which they originate, and their adaptation for new contexts played a crucial role in their survival; once laid face-down into the floor, their delicate engraved details were preserved completely from further wear. They even retain traces of a white pigment rubbed into the grooves to create contrast with the surrounding stone – a feature that would likely have been lost had they remained exposed to air or the compulsion of touching hands and cleaning cloths.

¹ “... Abbas qui p[ius] Regimine an[n]is viginti...” (“...Abbot who [piously] ruled for twenty years...”)



Fig. 1
Jacob Ochtervelt (Dutch,
1634-1682)
A Nurse and a Child in an
Elegant Foyer
1663
81.5 x 66.8 cm; oil on
canvas
Washington, National
Gallery of Art, inv.
2015.68.1





14 A fragment of liturgical furniture depicting the Virgin and Child, with hatchet marks through the figures



The choice of imagery and the continuation of the paint surface around all four sides of this tall post section suggest that it was cut out of a pierced, freestanding church screen or related liturgical furnishings intended to be seen from multiple angles. Its removal from the larger structure to which it belonged may have occurred at a time when the church building which housed it was remodelled, very possibly in the Baroque era when medieval decorative schemes were broken up and disposed of *en masse*. Despite having been saved from destruction, the sharp, parallel incisions puncturing the figure of the Virgin in multiple places forcefully attest to iconoclastic attack, undoubtedly sustained while still in situ, and so most likely during the great religious upheavals of the 16th century. The angled cuts on its upper and lower edges suggest a further stage in its turbulent history, apparently reused as a strut for another object or structure.

The Virgin is depicted at full-length, clothed in a long blue gown with a red mantle lined in white, and wearing on her head an ornate crown that allows her loose hair to fall freely over both shoulders. She supports her infant son high on her right hip as he holds an open book with his right hand whilst turning his head towards his mother. The playful nature of the iconography here, with the child manipulating the Virgin's prayerbook in his own hands, suggests a less sombre context for the painting to examples which can be found in the Vrouwkerk in Bruges c. 1330-1420, otherwise comparable in their restrained use of colour.¹ Stronger comparisons can be made with the few works of Swedish painting that have survived the extreme iconoclasm of the Protestant wars. The attenuated anatomy of the Virgin, her robes enlivened by complex folds, can be found on other extant examples of Swedish painting and painted wooden sculpture of the early 15th century; particularly close comparison can be drawn to the Mary Shrine at Skällvik.²

Sweden
c. 1400-1420

64 x 11 x 6.5cm (hwxwd), softwood (pine?) painted with red, blue and flesh-toned pigments on a gesso ground. Abrasion to the pigment layers in place, with extensive damage from iconoclastic axe blows.

Provenance

Private collection, acquired at Sotheby's London in the early 1990s;
McCarthy Collection, Hong Kong, 2003-2022

¹ Michael A. Michael, 'Destruction, Reconstruction and Invention', in *English Manuscript Studies*, vol.2, 1990, p. 77 pl. 35.

² Peter Tångeberg, *Mittelalterliche Holzskulpturen und Altarschreine in Schweden*, Stockholm, 1986, p. 148, fig. 103.

15 Blasco de Grañén (c. 1400-1459) The Coronation of the Virgin



The pattern of damage to the lower right-corner of this panel painting suggests that it was narrowly saved from a fire to which it had already partially succumbed. It was painted in the Aragonese town of Zaragoza by Blasco de Grañén, a figure who first appears in records in 1422 and who rose to prominence as the court artist to Juan II of Aragon. Contracts or payments survive for at least 24 *retablos* (altarpieces), many of enormous scale, as well as painted coffins, curtains and other draperies used in funeral processions. His career was first reconstructed by Chandler Rathfon Post, who grouped together a number of surviving works under the provisional name of the ‘Master of Lanaja’ before later art historians unearthed his true identity.¹ He is known to have produced Marian *retablos* for sites right across all three of the Aragonese provinces (Teruel, Huesca and Zaragoza), in which the scene of the Coronation of the Virgin surrounded by a company of angels features prominently.² Our panel must come from just such a commission.

In 1835, Isabel II’s Liberal prime minister, Juan Álvaro Mendizábal published a proclamation of *desamortización*, the secularization and dispersal of monasteries and convents with fewer than twelve members in a bid to raise funds for the wars against the Carlist pretenders to the throne. It was during this turbulent period in Spain’s modern history that Aragon’s smaller religious houses fell into desuetude and ruin, with many monastic *retablos* confiscated, cut up and sold on the open market. It is very likely that our panel, which survives in excellent condition despite the loss of its lower corner, originated on a *retablo* dispersed at or shortly after this date.

Spain, Zaragoza
c. 1440

70.4 x 56.5 x 2 cm; oil and gilding on softwood panel with applied framing elements.

Provenance

Collection of Madame de Bacri, France, according to a paper label pasted to the reverse;
Private collection, Barcelona

1 María Carmen Lacarra Ducay, *Blasco de Grañén, pintor de retablos (1422-1459)*, Zaragoza, Institución ‘Fernando el Católico’, 2004.

2 Carmen M. Zavala Arnal, “‘Los ángeles se regocijan’: La música en la pintura mariana de Blasco de Grañén (1422-1459)”, in *Revista Internacional de Ciencias Humanas*, 6 (2), 2017.

16&17 A pair of massive choir stalls brutally defaced with chisels and axes



These massive carvings were commissioned for a wealthy religious house in the late 15th century, and originally decorated the two eastern ends of a pair of monumental choir stalls. They both take the form of upright rectangular panels composed from multiple planks of thickly cut oak, and whose upper and outer edges are softened by way of slender columns and curved mouldings. Their front faces are dominated by full-length figures standing within arched niche-like spaces. One shows the first pope of the Catholic Church, Saint Peter, wearing a three-tiered papal tiara and holding his traditional attribute of a key. His counterpart appears in the robes of the Dominican order, and may represent the Order's founder, Saint Dominic (1170-1221). Smaller figures grouped into pairs straddle the horizontal mouldings which cap both panels' upper edges. Both panels are carved on their reverse faces with a pattern of rebated grooves originally used to join them to the timbers of a long run of stalls, which would have included rows of hinged seats (of a type known for their often mischievously-decorated misericords), sloped back rests and bracing, structural rails.

Because choir stalls are typically positioned on the boundary of a choir space, physically bracketing its entrances and framing its central area, the primary faces of our carvings would have been clearly visible to anyone entering from the nave or aisles, and would have acted as symbolic guardians as well as didactic tools. Their prominent placement and central role in the liturgical life of the building meant that many such stalls were singled out during periods of iconoclasm and brutally disfigured. Our stalls stand as startling and vivid witnesses to the iconoclasts' passion; all six figures had their faces chiselled off in a bitter echo of the carver's art.

Central France
c. 1475

Each stall approx. 119.5 x 72.5 x 10 cm: Oak. Some splitting to the timber along its grain on both stalls. A modern (19th-century) fillet runs vertically along one edge of the stall with a Dominican monk.

Provenance
Private collection, England, by 2011



reverse





18 A female saint standing in a traceried niche, cut down from a dismembered Roodscreen and reused as the lid of a chest



This large painted panel almost certainly originates in an English context, and yet it is believed to have been executed by a painter who learnt their trade in Northern France. Early in its history it was cut out of a Roodscreen, a large and heavily-decorated wooden structure used to separate the nave of a church from the choir beyond. Often supporting a large central Crucifix above painted figures of the saints, Roods were among the most important components of the visual and physical apparatuses that structured the spaces of medieval church buildings. They were crucial in bringing the unchallengeable tenets of the Christian tradition into focus before congregations whose engagement and education would have been structured by the didactic power of images as much as by the written word.

Throughout the 1540s England underwent tumultuous fallout following its split from the Catholic Church. In the wake of the reforms of Henry VIII (1491-1547), iconoclasm reached its height, and was stoked further by his son Edward VI (1537-1553) who sought to purge churches of their 'idols and devils'.¹ Painted objects like this panel, its depiction of a female saint holding a cross (Helena? Margaret?) cut off at the chest, were easy targets for iconoclasts who believed that their destruction offered the greatest disproof of the supernatural significance with which local communities imbued figurative images. In May 1547, the Tudor statesman, lawyer and Bishop of Winchester Stephen Gardiner recorded how 'images of Christ and his saintes have ben most contemptuously pulled downe' at Portsmouth, and six months later even the Rood at St. Paul's Cathedral in London was being taken down along with all its images.² Since Roods were burnt *en masse* in what was to become a systematic campaign of total destruction, our fragment is a rare survival outside of a church context. It owes its preservation to having been cut down and recycled into the lid of a chest. Once closed, its imagery would have been hidden completely from view, saving it from the fate suffered by its counterpart panels and so many others of its type during the waves of iconoclasm that passed through England over the subsequent years.

England, painted by a French artist active in England c. 1500

105.5 x 44.3 x 2.8 cm; oil on chestnut panels over a white ground.

Provenance
Private collection, France, by 2011;
Private collection, England

1 Phillip Lindley, in Phillip Lindley and Richard Deacon, *Image and Idol: Medieval Sculpture*, Ex. Cat., London, 2001, p. 34.
2 *Ibid.*, p. 33.

19 The head of a Magus, decapitated and spited by the removal of its nose



Depictions of turbaned figures proliferated during the later Middle Ages as a result of increased trade and contact with non-European communities, a process further galvanised by events such as the conquest of Constantinople in 1453. Ruth Mellinkoff notes that the turban ‘appears as a multivalent headdress in the visual arts to characterise the exotic foreigner...distant in time, distant in place, or distant in customs or religious beliefs.’¹ Evidently it was capitalised upon as a form of visual shorthand, one which could with only minimal refashioning be variously made to represent otherness, a distant threat, or the antique. On account of his cleanshaven face and exotic headgear, our turbaned head is likely to have been carved to represent the figure of Balthazar in a larger sculpted tableau of the Adoration of the Magi, depicting the moment when, having reached Bethlehem, the three men paid tribute to the new-born Christ Child. Very few large-scale ensembles depicting this moment in the Biblical narrative of Christ’s infancy have survived, making our head a rare testament of its type.

In an act of pointed iconoclastic attack, the figure’s nose was smashed from the centre of his face and the head itself decapitated from its body. This was among the most common forms of dismemberment meted out to medieval statuary during the French Revolution, since it created a conceptual and symbolic parallel to the decapitation of human victims murdered with the guillotine for their allegiance to the *Ancien Régime*.

Northern France
c. 1480

28 x 25 x 25.5 cm; grey limestone sourced from quarries north of Paris. The head is hollowed out from the rear and has been partially filled in a later restoration campaign. The nose is lost and partially restored.

Provenance
Private Collection, UK



¹ Ruth Mellinkoff, *Outcasts: Signs of Otherness in Northern European Art of the Late Middle Ages* (California Studies in the History of Art, University of California Press, 1994, pp. 60-61).

20 The Head of Christ, from a Pietà group



This fragmentary head of Christ, its forehead ringed by a crown of thorns that pierces the skin in several places, and its eyelids drawn down dramatically at their outer edges to suggest his moribund state, was carved from a pale, creamy-hued and dense-grained sandstone popular among the medieval sculptors and masons of Alsace, in what is today north-eastern France. Though it has darkened considerably with time and handling and survives only as a tiny fragment, having been brutally cleft through the mouth and separated from its body, it provides enough evidence for us to reconstruct its origins as part of a larger sculpted group known as the *Pietà*, or Lamentation. Both terms describe an image type developed in Germany in the years around 1300, in which the Virgin is depicted supporting the dead body of her son after he was removed from the Cross. It is a non-biblical subject borne out of the increasing emphasis given, in late medieval piety, to Christ's suffering. The precedent of much earlier Byzantine depictions of the *Threnos* (in which the Virgin mourns over the dead body of her son) merged with the growth of Marian devotion across Northern Europe and a corresponding rise in a movement called *Devotio Moderna*, the core tenet of which was the encouragement of devotees' emotional engagement with the themes and lessons of the Passion.

The elision of the mouth in a curving line that follows the upper lip serves to humiliate the figure in what can only be interpreted as a very deliberate and pointed act of desecration. And yet, while it was clearly one individual's aim to silence the image, and to stop it speaking out against its attacker, its very survival suggests that it was carefully rescued following the iconoclast's visit by a devotee to whom it offered what it still does today - an intense combination of succour and pathos.

North-Eastern France, Alsace
c. 1460-1480

18.1 x 13.8 x 15cm; Alsatian sandstone.

Provenance
Private collection, France





Iconoclasts before the church of Saint-Jean, Lyons, from *De Tristibus Galliae, Carmen in Quator Libros* (after 1572)
Bibliothèque municipale de Lyon, Ms 156, f. 3

21 Gilded cross shaft, from a lost processional cross



Processional crosses were so central to the liturgical texture of pre-Reformation England that they were known as ‘Dallye’ (daily) crosses.¹ It has been estimated that some tens of thousands were made by London metalworkers and sent to parish churches right across England, but today fewer than forty intact examples are thought to have survived the destruction wrought upon church objects during the Reformation of the 16th century. Most of those known to us today were discovered by chance, bricked up in church buildings or excavated from pits, having been secreted away to protect them from attack.

This engraved shaft is the only surviving fragment of a lost ‘Dallye’ cross that may well have been destroyed during England’s religious upheavals. The extensive wear to its gilding is vivid evidence of regular use as an object at the heart of liturgical rituals during the years before its dismemberment. Its decorative knob supports three rectangular projections, the surfaces of which are engraved with a free and spirited design of grids, hatched boxes, and simplified heads of wheat. They originally acted as locating points for a central crucifix and two ancillary figures (typically the Virgin and Saint John) standing on branches (fig. 1). The hollowed lower stem is also engraved, this time with a design of stylised daisy flowers, and would have secured it onto a wooden staff so that the cross it supported could be held above the heads of the congregation during processions – a reconstruction supported by the few more intact examples now in museum collections.²



England, London (?)
c. 1480

22.2 x 8.5 x 8 cm; Engraved and gilded copper alloy with cast and hammered elements.

Provenance
Art market, London;
Acquired from the above July 2020



Fig. 1
Processional cross, said to have been found at Glastonbury
England, London?
c. 1485-1490
53 x 28.4 cm; gilded copper alloy
London, British Museum,
inv. 1853.09.02.1

Fig. 2
Liturgical scene showing the celebration of Mass
c. 1280-1290
London, British Library,
Yates Thompson MS 11,
Miscellany, fol 6v



¹ Colum Hourihane, *The Processional Cross in Late Medieval England: ‘The Dallye Cross’*, London, 2005; see also Michael Carter, ‘A Late Fifteenth-Century Processional Cross from Norfolk’, in *Norfolk Archaeology*, XLV (2009), pp. 523-8.

² Hourihane, 2005, p. 111.

22 A funerary relief depicting Saint John the Evangelist



As with the three fragments from the tomb of an abbot in this catalogue (cat.13) this fragmentary relief makes use of a dense black limestone (so dense in fact that it is often equated in early records with marble) admired during the Middle Ages for its colour and sheen, which could be brought up only with lengthy and painstaking polishing.¹ It depicts the figure of Saint John the Evangelist standing in a shallow, arch-topped niche. He holds his traditional attribute of a chalice from which a writhing serpent emerges, a reference to a story recounted in the Golden Legend in which, to prove his faith, John drinks a cup of poison without being harmed.² The large symbol carved above his head is known as a 'house mark', a class of personalised glyph commonly used by merchants, artisans and burghers during the Middle Ages.³ Its prominence suggests that whoever commissioned our relief was not shy of emphasizing his investment.

The mass of conchoidal fissures gouging their way along the lower and lefthand edges of the relief as it appears today provide forceful evidence of its dismemberment by human hands. Originally carved as the upper righthand corner of a much larger altarpiece or wall-mounted monument at the end of the 15th century, it was at some point in its history – very likely in the 1600s – broken up, cut into a rectangular block, and reused as a doorstep. By necessity, only its undecorated reverse needed to be given a crisp, rectangular outline so its medieval carving was afforded little care and almost completely obliterated along the lefthand edge. Nonetheless, by dint of being protected face down for hundreds of years, most of its surviving details are in almost untouched, original condition.

After the death of the masons responsible for this evocative fragment's spoliation, the subsequent multitudes whose feet smoothed and wore down its exposed surfaces (before its chance rediscovery in the modern period) must have been completely oblivious to what lay hidden from sight for centuries.

Southern Netherlands, Tournai
c. 1480-1490

63.5 x 26 x 10 cm: black carboniferous limestone with the remnants of iron fixings embedded in the reverse. A repair to the tip of the figure's nose.

Provenance
Private collection, Belgium

1 Ludovic Nys, *La pierre de Tournai: Son exploitation et son usage aux XIIIème, XIVème et XVème siècles*, Tournai, 1993.

2 Jacobus de Voragine, *The Golden Legend: Readings on the Saints*, trans. by William Granger Ryan, Princeton, 1993, p. 53.

3 For a general discussion of the use of merchants' marks in the period, see F.W. Kuhlicke, 'Merchant Marks and the like—their origin and use' *Transaction of the Monumental Brass Society* Vol IX, Part II, No. LXXII (October 1952), 60-71. Useful surveys of merchants' marks include E.M. Elmhirst, *Merchants' Marks*, London, 1959, and F.A. Girling, *Merchants' Marks: A Field Survey Made By Tradesmen in England Between 1400 and 1700*, London, 1962.



23 A panel of red velvet embroidered with opus anglicanum, salvaged from a cope



This opulently decorated fragment consists of a crimson silk velvet mounted with colourful orphrey panels of a type and style typical of English embroideries (also known as opus anglicanum) produced in the closing years of the fifteenth century. A many-winged seraphim clasping its hands together over its chest appears among sprays of gold thread, accompanied below by large flowerheads thickly embroidered with green and yellow silks.

England, London
c.1490

68.5 x 26.5 cm; red silk velvet with orphreys embroidered with coloured silks and gold metal-wrapped threads mounted on linen

Provenance
Private collection, England

The luminously-coloured orphreys on our fragment relate closely in format, design and technique to a group of vestments made for the Archbishop of Canterbury John Morton (c. 1420-1500) before his elevation to the cardinalate in 1493, as well as to others all dated to the years around 1490 and now preserved in Stockholm, the Victoria & Albert Museum, Arundel Castle, Écouen and elsewhere.¹ Together, these precious survivals represent the last great manifestation of English church embroidery before the Reformation; Henry VIII's conflict with the Church of Rome, and the subsequent reforms imposed upon the Church of England, led to the widespread destruction of ecclesiastical furnishings and liturgical textiles. Surviving accounts detailing the removal of vestments, altar cloths and other textiles from their treasuries, to be sold off and cut up for reuse, or worse, burnt for their precious metal-wrapped threads, make for heartbreaking reading.² Recent studies have revealed that during the period in which our panel was produced, the workshops responsible for opus anglicanum were mainly located in London, and it is very likely that our embroidered panel was made by a vestment maker living and working in the capital.³ The process by which such vestments were made, with figures cut from linen templates and embroidered with silks before being applied on to velvet supports, meant that they could be produced at a commercial scale, yet few have survived the ravages of time or the iconoclastic zeal of King Henry's Reformers.

1 Clare Browne, Glyn Davies and Michael A. Michael eds, *English Medieval Embroidery: Opus Anglicanum*, New Haven and London, 2016, p. 84 ff. Cf. also Colum Hourihane, 'The Development of the Medieval English Pall', in Michael A. Michael, ed., *The Age of Opus Anglicanum*, London and Turnout 2016, pp. 146-85.

2 Kay Staniland, *Medieval Craftsmen: Embroiderers*, London, 1991, pp. 68-69.

3 Kate Heard, 'Still "verais, popres e beaus"? English Ecclesiastical Embroidery from the Wars of the Roses to the Early Reformation', in Michael 2016, p. 135.

24 The Adoration of the Magi

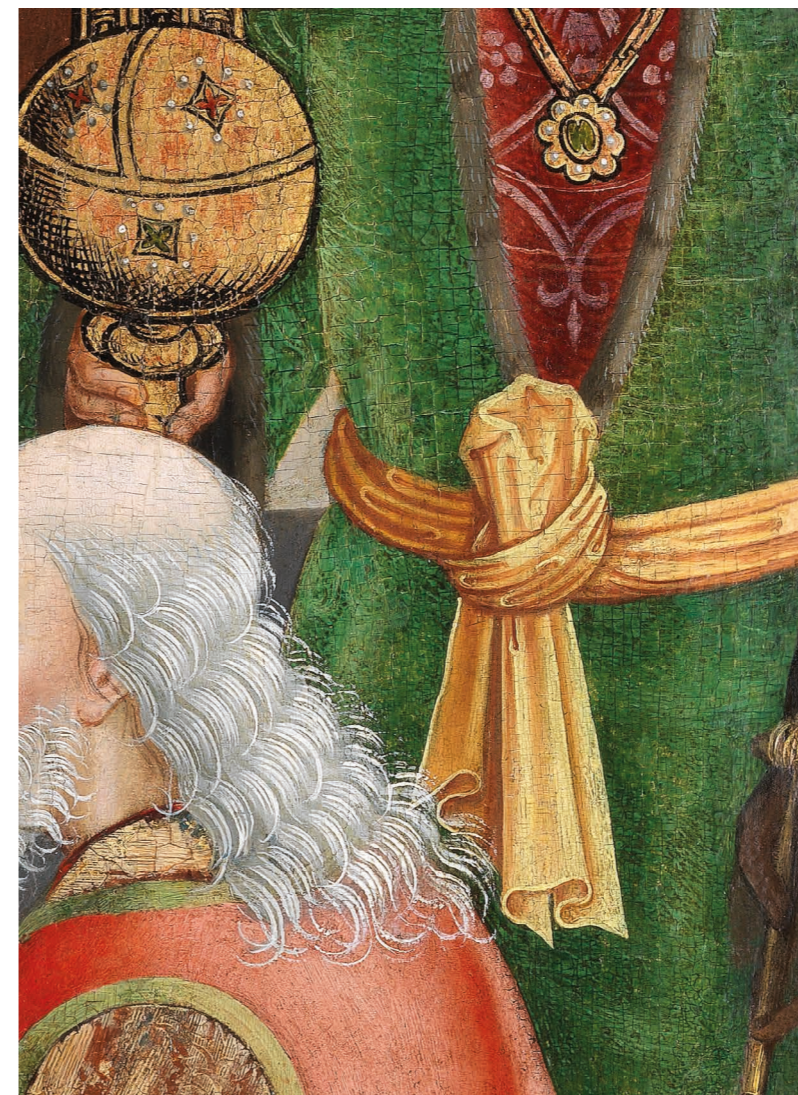


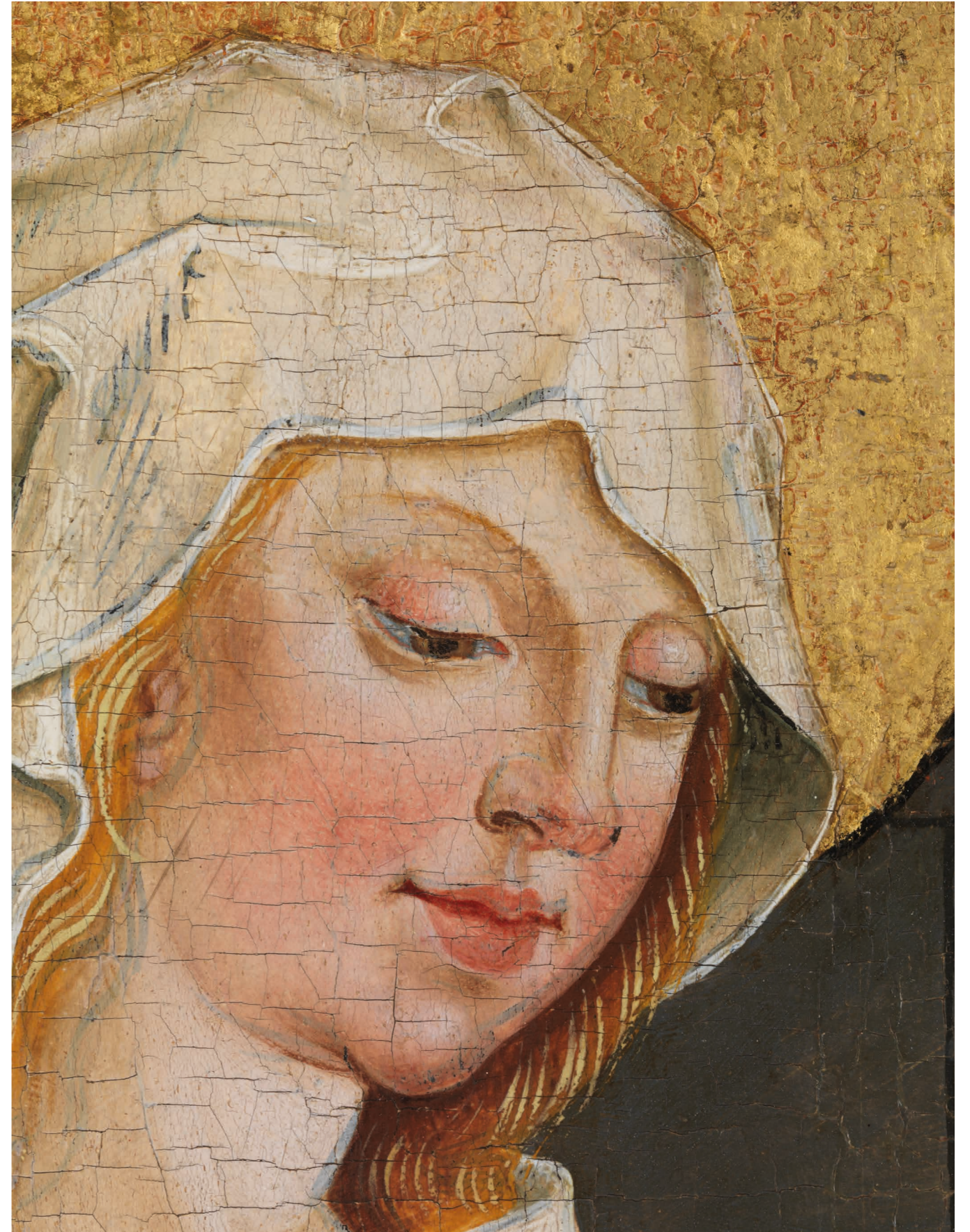
Within the walls of a dilapidated stable building, two Magi greet the seated figures of the Virgin and Child with lavish gifts of coins and gold plate. Melchior, commonly depicted as the eldest of the three Magi, kneels before Christ with the fingers of his hands placed together in a gesture of supplication. Ostensibly a fragment of a larger, folding altarpiece painted by an artist active in Austria during the years around 1500, the disturbing nature of this painting's alteration was only recently unearthed, when overpaint that had been used to completely obscure a detail on the right-hand edge of the composition was removed. It revealed parts of the hands and sceptre belonging to the black king Balthazar, who has otherwise been totally excised from the image in an act that may very well have been carried out with malicious and sinister intent. One of the three Magi who were believed to have travelled from far corners of the known world and whose journey to Bethlehem was recounted in the narratives of the New Testament, Balthazar's image proliferated across the arts of the later Middle Ages with the development of trade routes, diplomatic missions, and increased contact between Europe and Africa in the period. Quite what motive drove the individual (or individuals) responsible for Balthazar's removal remains unclear, though it cannot fail to conjure alarming racial overtones.

Austria
c. 1490-1510

107.1 x 63.5 cm; oil and gilding on softwood panel, the reverse cradled.

Provenance
Swiss private collection, until;
Their sale, Christie's London, 3rd July 2013, lot 106





25 The bared legs of Christ from a *Christ de Pitié*, cut down and reused as masonry



The action of a mallet hitting a claw chisel with repeated force and precision has successfully reduced a pair of delicate portrait busts in profile to fields of furrowed lines on both sides of this large limestone relief. On its front, a large, seated figure almost certainly identifiable as Christ (appearing in his guise as the *Christ de Pitié*, or Christ on the Cold Stone, in the moments prior to his Crucifixion) wears a cloth around its upper thighs. It has also succumbed to erasure, having been cut through completely at the level of the waist to leave only a pair of bared legs intact, their knees and toes lopped from view. The unmistakable visibility of its fate seems almost indiscriminately and thoughtlessly violent, and yet this French Renaissance relief has been quite carefully and deliberately squared off for reuse, its lavishly polychromed enthroned figure refashioned into an even-sided building block that could be turned around and mortared into place to hide any vestiges of its imagery. It is unclear today how or when it was rediscovered – certainly this would have been by chance since nothing on its reverse gives its true identity away – but the survival of its original polychromy owes much to having been concealed within a wall for hundreds of years. The embossed fleur-de-lis motifs peppering the surface of the blue throne on which our (now half-length) figure sits, suggests that it was originally carved as part of a royal commission or one that perhaps sought to associate Christ with the Crown of France (a theme common in late-medieval French patronage), and it would either have been for this reason or because it proved too irresistible and incendiary a target for 16th-century Reformers that it was unable to survive intact. Despite its dramatic disfiguration however, the quality of its treatment remains as vivid and refined today as it would have been when first carved in the 1520s.

Northern France
c. 1520-1530

46.5 x 40 x 26 cm; fine-grained cream-hued limestone with large vestiges of original polychromy.

Provenance
Private collection, France





26 Saint Nicholas saving three children from death, their heads and hands hacked away with chisels



Saint Nicholas of Myra (A.D. 270-343) was a Christian bishop saint in what is now modern-day Turkey. The story of his life, popularised by the Golden Legend of Jacobus de Voragine, tells how during a terrible famine, a malicious butcher lured three children into his house before killing them and placing their bodies in a barrel to cure, planning to sell them off as meat. Nicholas, visiting the region to care for the hungry, exposed the butcher's crime and resurrected the three boys from the barrel through prayer. Veneration of the saint, seen as a symbol of charity, was widespread across Europe during the Middle Ages, and he became especially popular as a patron of hospitals, especially in France. Images of Nicholas standing alongside the three children shown emerging from the barrel found great currency and numerous examples have survived from the early sixteenth century (figs. 1-2).

Decapitated at the neck and amputated at the wrists, this disfigured statue was only allowed to survive at all because it could serve as a warning and an example for devotees at risk of imbuing graven images with too much significance. Not content with defacing the saint alone, the statue's iconoclastic attackers took umbrage too against the figures of the boys in the barrel at his feet, lopping off their heads and limbs with impunity. It remains a forceful witness of society's destructive capacity at times when values shift with gathering momentum.



Northern France
c. 1530

78 x 29 x 22 cm; walnut with traces of polychromy.

Provenance
French private collection



Fig. 1
Saint Nicholas
Northern France
Early 16th century
Oak
Lille, Palais des Beaux-Arts,
Inv. A. 141



Fig. 2
Pietà with Saint Nicholas
and Saint James the Great
(details)
France, Burgundy
c. 1500-1525
28.6 x 30.2 x 13 cm;
limestone
New York, Metropolitan
Museum of Art, Inv.
26.63.36a



27 An Angel holding a shield with the Arms of the Willemaers¹ family



A single pebble would have been enough to shatter this grisaille stained-glass roundel into the network of many fragments it now survives in. A spider's web of almost impossibly thin repair leads akin in weight and delicacy to the Japanese technique of Kintsugi were painstakingly applied by its restorer in an attempt to piece back together what was clearly, and thankfully, too precious to dispose of. Its composition is dominated by the figure of an angel, shown standing on a tiled floor that gives on to an open landscape, a large armorial shield strung with ribbons supported in his hands. Its field is emblazoned with the arms of the Willemaers family of Louvain (*argent three pales azure on a chief gules an ox's head cabosed or*), and must therefore have been commissioned by them, perhaps to decorate the upper windows of a secular glazing scheme in their Brabant home. Although originally a family of butchers (hence the presence of the ox's head) the Willemaers are recorded in the accounts of the city of Louvain from at least the 14th century, and its members appear to have risen to some social standing in the metropolis.



The style of the glass painting is typical of Louvain glass painters during the first third of the sixteenth century, and the rendering of the angel's hair, facial features, wings and draperies are of breathtaking quality. Its non-original border of foliate scrolls separated by smaller red and blue quarries is typical of the conservation and mounting techniques employed by Roy Grosvenor Thomas, who owned our roundel by 1913 (fig. 1).¹

Low Countries, Duchy of Brabant, Louvain
c. 1530

29.9 cm diameter (with border); c. 22.7cm diameter (without border); clear, red, and blue glass with silver stain and vitreous paint framed in a lead matrix. Repair leads to the roundel with one small stopgap.

Provenance
Collection of Roy Grosvenor Thomas, London;
The Grosvenor Thomas Collection of Ancient Stained Glass, Charles Gallery, New York, 1913;
Collection of James W. Newton, San Antonio, Texas;
Collection of Victoria and Eric Steinberg, Westchester, New York;
With George Wigley, *The Monastery Stained Glass*, February 2002;
Private collection, London

¹ We are grateful to Marc Van de Cruys for his help identifying the arms.

¹ *The Grosvenor Thomas Collection of Ancient Stained Glass, Part II*, Charles Gallery, New York 1913, cat. no. 61.

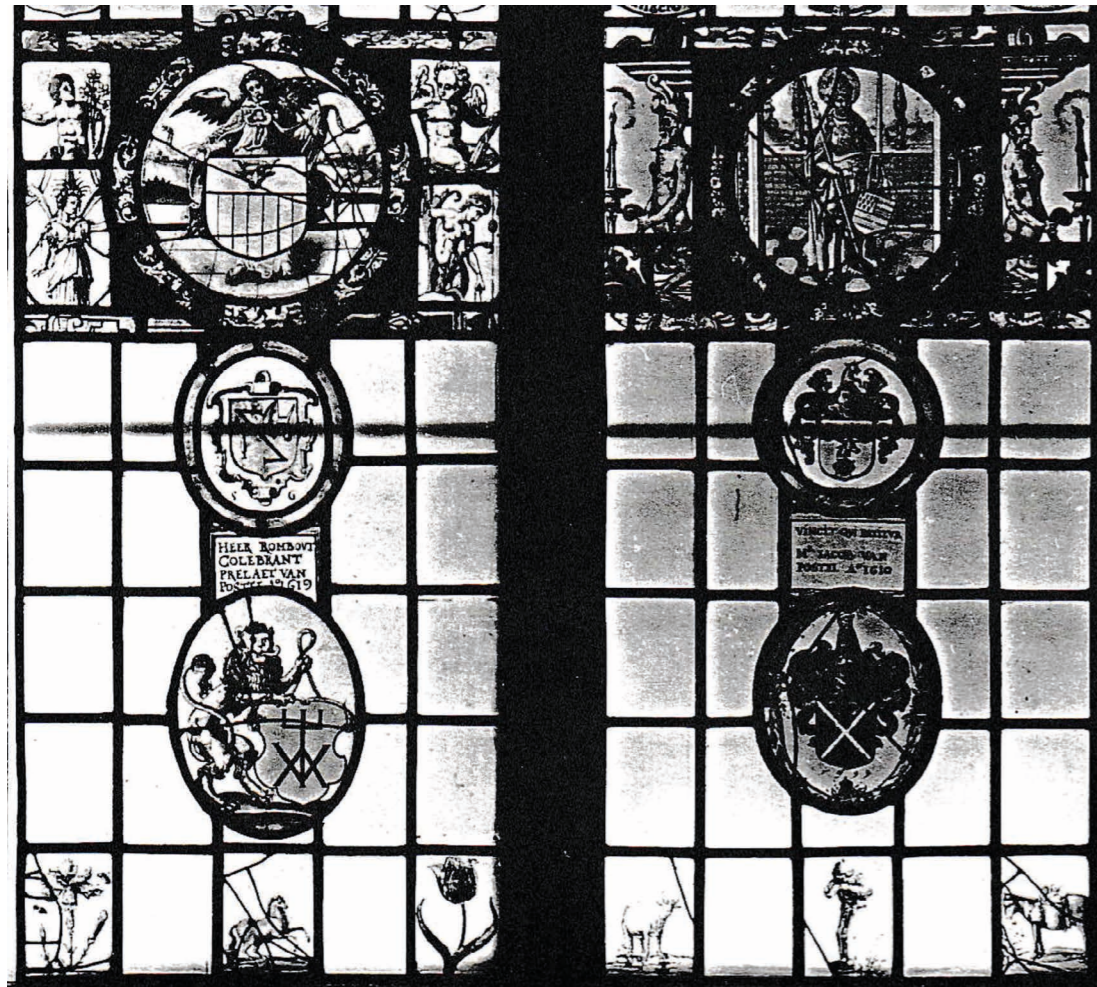


Fig. 1
The Willemaers roundel on
display at No. 1, Holland
Park Road, London
photo: RKD, The Hague





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