

**Standing Virgin and Child**  
**France, Paris**  
**c. 1260-70**



*10 x 3.4 x 2.5 cm; cast, chased, and gilded copper alloy. A large circular hollow in the underside, most likely for fixing to a larger structure or base. Rubbing and wear to the gilding, but a startling amount of the original surface well preserved.*

*Provenance*

Kofler-Truniger Collection, E 139, by 1965 at the latest;  
 Keir Collection, acquired directly from the above in 1971

*Exhibited and published*

H. Schnitzler, P. Bloch and C. Ratton, *Email Goldschmiede und Metallarbeiten: Europäisches Mittelalter Sammlung E. und M. Kofler-Truniger Luzern, II*, Exh. Cat., Lucerne/Stuttgart, 1965, E 139, pl. 80, p. 46

Marilyn Stokstad, *Medieval Enamels and Sculptures from the Keir Collection*, Exh. Cat., Kansas City, The Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, 1983, cat. 82, p. 60

An intimate, diminutive statuette depicting the Virgin standing at full length in a subtle *contrapposto*, holding the Christ Child on her left arm. She wears a crown (symbolic of her status as Queen of Heaven), which holds a delicate veil in place over her hair, and a long mantle pinned across the body and buckling into a series of swagged drapery folds from the torsion of her pose. In her right hand she holds what appears to be the hollow base of a rose bud or lily stem, perhaps once decorated with a gemstone or other precious attachment. The Christ Child, garbed in a simple full-length tunic, holds an apple in his left hand and raises his right in the sign of the Benediction. The toes of his exposed left foot emerge delicately from below the hemline of his robe. Following the casting process, both figures' facial features were reinforced by chasing and tooling the surface of the metal. Crisp, fine eyelids were introduced to delineate their almond-shaped eyes, and their waving locks of hair are communicated with a series of v-shaped grooves.

Finished fully in the round, and therefore offering a wide viewing angle, this miniature standing group is likely to have formed the central devotional focus of a lavish three-dimensional, micro-architectural tabernacle-like structure or shrine, which would have been displayed atop a private altar and used as an aid to contemplation during the Mass. Precious devotional apparatuses of this type found great currency among the nobility of northern France during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. This is due both to their physical and visual complexity, incorporating exquisitely wrought components that dazzled the eye with movement and engagement, and for their use of materials whose preciousness, expense and rarity were perceived as symbolically appropriate to the subject matter they represent. Many of the foremost goldsmiths of the age were employed to produce finely wrought figures like ours, some of which still retain their protective, movable structures (figs. 1-2).<sup>1</sup>

Thanks to the efforts of modern scholars, we are once again beginning to understand the role that scale played in the reception and agency of medieval works of art; some of the smallest objects of the age were counted among its most important, costly, and intensely-venerated. In a dramatic manipulation of scale, our miniature statuette was in fact modelled after over life-size sculptures decorating the facades of vast gothic churches and cathedrals. The c. 1250 Virgin and Child of the north transept portal at Notre-Dame in Paris (fig. 3), and the similarly-dated *Vierge Dorée* at Amiens Cathedral (fig. 4), both mirror our group's composition, *contrapposto* sway, and arrangement of drapery folds so closely that it must have been produced by an artist in direct contact with those sculptures. Several similar figural groups are also preserved in ivory, which Sarah Guérin has recently suggested may have been produced by the same artists responsible for the monumental portal sculptures of these royal church foundations.<sup>2</sup> These include an extraordinarily beautiful example now in the Taft Museum, Cincinnati, and two equally refined versions (one made for the Sainte-Chapelle of Paris) that are now preserved in the musée du Louvre in Paris (fig. 5). Whether our figure could have been produced for the same patrons as those who also boasted ownership of ivory statuettes such as these is unclear, but it seems beyond reasonable doubt that its owner would have been aware of its associations with these seminal works of art. Indeed, the possibility that a relationship

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<sup>1</sup> See also Françoise Baron, *Les Fastes du Gothique. Le siècle de Charles V*, Paris, 1981, cat. 187, pp. 233-4.

<sup>2</sup> Sarah Guérin, 'An ivory Virgin at the Metropolitan Museum, New York, in a Gothic sculptor's oeuvre', in *The Burlington Magazine*, No. 1311, Vol. CLIV (June 2012), pp. 394-402.

could have existed between not just monumental stone sculpture and smaller ivory carving, but a more intricate and complex community of objects incorporating precious metalwork alongside these other materials, is tantalising.

Certainly, a shared compositional source, one that proved popular in Paris during the third quarter of the thirteenth century, seems to have informed the production of smaller scale and more marketable objects. Copper alloy or bronze casting offered the perfect solution to the reproduction of a popular image in this manner. In this respect, the closest comparison for our Virgin and Child is a gilt bronze figure of comparable dimensions preserved in the Musée du Louvre - seemingly the only other contemporaneous version of our model to have come down to us (fig. 6). Such is the closeness of their drapery folds, pose, scale, and interaction between figures, that the two are without question taken from the same model, and must surely have been made within the same workshop, working from a shared mould. Although more worn in areas, our version of the group retains far more of its original gilding. Together, they represent an important and understudied aspect of the production of precious devotional imagery in late Medieval Paris, and their survival is all the more significant as a result.



Fig. 1  
Attributed to Jean de Touyl (d. 1349/50)  
Reliquary Shrine with the Virgin and Child accompanied by angels  
France, Paris  
c. 1325-50  
*25.4 x 40.6 x 9.2 cm (fully opened); gilded silver, translucent enamel, paint*  
New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art, inv. 62.96



Fig. 2  
The portable shrine of Thomas Basin  
France, Paris  
c. 1320-40  
*25.4 x 12.4 cm fully opened); gilded silver, translucent enamel, pearls and gemstones*  
New York, Pierpont Morgan Library, inv. AZ005



Fig. 3  
Virgin and Child  
France, Paris  
c. 1250  
*Approx. 200 cm high; limestone with traces of polychromy*  
Paris, Notre-Dame, north transept portal trumeau



Fig. 4  
Virgin and Child, the so-called *Vierge Dorée*  
c. 1250  
*Approx 230 cm high; limestone with traces of polychromy*  
Amiens Cathedral, south transept, formerly mounted on the south transept trumeau



Fig. 5  
Virgin and Child (The Timbal Virgin)  
France, Paris  
c. 1260  
*18.6 cm high (with original base) x 5.6 x 4.8 cm; ivory*  
Paris, musée du Louvre, inv. OA2583





Fig. 6  
Standing Virgin and Child  
France, Paris  
c. 1260-70  
*10 cm high; cast, chased, and gilded copper alloy*  
Paris, musée du Louvre, inv. OA6077