



# Late Medieval Sculpture in the Metropolitan



1400 to 1530

WILLIAM D. WIXOM

THE METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART

## Director's Note

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Front cover: Claux de Werve (Netherlandish, ca. 1380–ca. 1439; active Burgundy 1396–ca. 1439), *Enthroned Virgin and Child*, 1415–17 (pp. 10–11)  
Back cover: *Pietà*, Northeastern French (Champagne?), ca. 1520 (p. 42)

“THE unsaid, for me, exerts great power,” the poet Louise Glück once wrote. “It is analogous to the unseen; for example, to the power of ruins, to works of art either damaged or incomplete. Such works inevitably allude to larger contexts; they haunt because they are not whole, though wholeness is implied; another time, a world in which they were whole, or were to have been whole, is implied.” In this issue of the *Bulletin* William D. Wixom, formerly Michel David-Weill Chairman and now curator emeritus of the Department of Medieval Art and The Cloisters, evokes the larger contexts of thirty-nine eloquent sculptures selected from the medieval galleries in the Museum’s main building on Fifth Avenue. This is the third and last in a series of *Bulletin* issues in which Wixom presents an overview of the medieval sculpture at the Metropolitan. The first (on works at The Cloisters) appeared in the winter of 1989 and the second (on earlier examples in the Fifth Avenue building), in the spring of 2005. Both publications are still in print.

The phenomenal efforts of a succession of pioneering American private collectors, museum directors, and curators are embodied in the medieval sculpture collections on display in the great museums of Baltimore, Boston, Cambridge, Chicago, Cleveland, Detroit, and New York. But the most extensive, wide-ranging, and varied assemblage resides in The Metropolitan Museum of Art, due in no small part to the acumen of financier J. Pierpont Morgan (1837–1913), the most prominent of those early collectors. The sustained quality and broad chronological and geographical range of the medieval sculpture Morgan acquired in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were unmatched in the United States. Morgan’s gifts, thirteen of which are illustrated and discussed here, were the foundation of the Museum’s collection, which has since been further and dramatically enhanced and enriched through the generosity of many other benefactors. Three of the objects featured here were bequeathed to the Metropolitan in 1941 by New York investment banker George Blumenthal (1848–1941), like Morgan an avid collector and also a trustee and president of the Museum. Michael Dreicer, Anthony and Lois Blumka, Ilse C. Hesslein, Gula V. Hirschland, Alastair B. Martin, Mrs. Russell C. Veit, and Kurt John Winter donated or bequeathed important pieces, and the purchase of other sculptures was made possible through the Rogers Fund, the Joseph Pulitzer Bequest, the Mrs. Stephen V. Harkness Fund, and The Cloisters Fund.

*Philippe de Montebello*  
*Director*



## Introduction

**T**HIS *Bulletin* completes a survey of selected sculptures in the galleries of medieval art in the main building of the Metropolitan Museum. The present group begins with works dated about 1400. These are followed by examples from subsequent decades, ending about 1530. All of the sculptures represent variations of the style found in northern Europe and Spain that scholars have usually designated as Late Gothic, which is independent of contemporary styles of the Italian Renaissance. Many of the works examined here are of historical importance with respect to context, function, liturgy, devotion, and the elusive concept of reception during the Middle Ages.

The materials and techniques of these sculptures are a culmination of earlier medieval practices and evolving guild or craft regulations for sculptors. With one exception, the works were carved in limestone, sandstone, alabaster, marble, or wood (walnut, oak, lindenwood, ash, boxwood, or pine). The exception is a hanging lamp of cast, gilt, and burnished copper alloy (p. 13). Many of the carved wood pieces and some in stone were originally fully painted and gilt, usually not by the carver but by a member of the painters' guild. This polychromy was applied to a gesso-like ground. Some works are only partly painted or gilt, as is the alabaster Saint Margaret (pp. 32–33).

The sculptures included here are lucky survivors of centuries of abuse and neglect; countless others have been destroyed. This is not to say that all damages to the Museum's medieval sculptures are entirely explicated in the texts that follow, for they are not. Even in discussing those pieces that have suffered the most, special effort has been directed to positive features in order to understand their original appearance and meaning.

Indeed, all of these sculptures are invitations to the modern observer to engage in a search for the intentions of their makers. This information can be achieved to a degree through comprehension of the interrelationships of formal elements such as mass, line, proportion, symmetry, texture, and color. An assessment of context is important in approximating how each work was viewed in medieval times. At best, tentative judgments can be made with regard to visual impact, as a kind of theater, and as to how the depictions of sacred personages and events intensified the church's liturgy, an individual's devotion, and an understanding of the Incarnation.

The following texts are arranged within several roughly chronological categories. The first, "Central European Beautiful Style and Burgundian Innovation, ca. 1400 to the Early 1430s" (pp. 8–14), includes sculptures created just before 1400 and in the decades immediately following. The period has been designated in art-historical literature under various headings: "Circa 1400 Style," "International Style," "Beautiful Style," and "Soft Style." The style has a dual emphasis, one with international common denominators and the other with



Fig. 1 *Cradle for the Christ Child*. Southern Netherlandish (Brabant), mid-15th century. Oak, polychromed and gilt, lead, silver gilt, painted parchment, and silk embroidered with seed pearls, gold thread, tinsel, and translucent enamels, h. 12½ in. (31.8 cm). Gift of Ruth Blumka, in memory of Leopold Blumka, 1974 (1974.121a–d)

regional flavor and, occasionally, the unmistakable imprint of a great master. Four areas have been selected to demonstrate this dual emphasis: Styria (in Austria), Burgundy, Venice, and Nuremberg.

The next section, "Narrative Sculptures of the First Half of the 15th Century in Northern Europe" (pp. 15–17), contains two examples of reliefs from dismantled retables or altarpieces. Each exemplifies an aspect of the Beautiful, or International Style. The empathic response of the medieval worshiper engendered by these works can also be assumed for the Museum's rare miniature cradle for the Christ Child, which includes narrative reliefs of the Nativity and the Adoration of the Magi on the end panels (fig. 1). This object, which once contained a small figure of the Child, was formerly in the Grand Béguinage in Louvain. Such miniature cradles were aids in celebrating the Christmas story as designated in the calendar and devotional texts. The Beguines' meditations were intended to lead to the belief that they were actually taking part in the sacred events: the Nativity and the mystery of the Incarnation.

Narrative scenes, such as those at the ends of the cradle, originated directly or indirectly from the Bible and other



sources: the apocryphal gospel of the Pseudo-Matthew; *The Golden Legend* (Legenda aurea) compiled about 1260 by Jacobus de Voragine of Genoa (ca. 1230–1298); the *Revelations* by Saint Bridget of Sweden (ca. 1303–1373; see p. 30); and the *Meditations on the Life of Christ* by Pseudo-Bonaventura of Tuscany (second half of the thirteenth century).

In recent years analysis of narration in medieval art has become of key art-historical interest. Based on the writings of Saint Gregory the Great (540–604, pope 590–604) and reaffirmed by the second ecumenical council of Nicaea of 787, artists were encouraged to portray the central figures of the Christian faith: Jesus Christ, the Virgin Mary, and the saints, as well as episodes of their lives. The fundamental purpose was to make tangible the teachings of the Church and to provide a clear and moving focus for prayer as a way to salvation. Sculptural works could also provide a useful yet not required setting for the eucharistic ritual, the culmination and center of medieval Christian worship. Medieval art was intended as a bridge to religious experience.

The extraordinary wealth of French fifteenth-century sculptures in the medieval department and at The Cloisters is without parallel outside of France. Such works are featured in the next section, “French Regional Styles of the Mid-15th Century” (pp. 18–20). Two areas have been selected for discussion: Burgundy/Franche-Comté and Berry. Both regions received their artistic patronage from the Valois dukes and their descendants.

The following section is “Naturalism in the Second Half of the 15th Century in Northern Europe” (pp. 21–29). As the century progressed beyond midpoint, independent sculptures tended to be more or less free from constraints of architecture, resulting in the easy stances of figures. Even within the complex structure of large altarpieces, sculptures seemed capable of moving freely. Both the figures in the central shrine and those in low relief on the wings (or shutters) were animated by illusionistic concepts. The polychromed wing panel with the Baptism of Christ from the workshop of Veit Stoss (p. 29) is a good example of the combination of low-relief carving and color aimed at achieving a convincing narrative. In various ways sculpture took on an increasingly subtle naturalism both in the overall conception of the human figure and in naturalistic details. Underlying all kinds of medieval sculpture is the fact that most examples were conceived as furnishings for a church or monastic chapel. Knowledge of the subjects represented, of the direction of the fall of light and its changing modulations, and of other aspects of the original positions occupied by the sculptures is essential for their appreciation.

Throughout the second half of the fifteenth century, the continuing influence of Netherlandish art in both painting and sculpture was maintained through the lasting impact of various masters, including Claus Sluter (see p. 5), his Burgundian followers (see pp. 18–19), and a major later innovator, Nicolaus Gerhaert von Leiden (see pp. 5–6). The eight sculptures in the section “Naturalism in the Second Half of the 15th Century in Northern Europe” enable examination of the aesthetic value of

individual works, while at the same time they touch upon some of the larger issues of context, stylistic influence, and change.

A crucial place in the religious life of the Middle Ages was occupied by individual saints, altars dedicated to them, their relics, and sculpted or painted images. Accordingly, “Sculptures of Saints of the Late 15th Century in Northern Europe and Spain” (pp. 30–35) presents three female and two warrior saints, all from different locales. Each saint represented is identified by attributes that refer to key events in his or her life that were readily recognized in the Middle Ages. One example, the Spanish Saint Catherine (p. 31), probably came from a large, complex retable. The others may have been intended to be seen independently in chapels or near side altars dedicated to the saint. Inspiration, solace, and assurance of salvation through prayer before such works assured the popularity of the images in all levels of medieval society. Smaller statuettes and house shrines were more often destined for the private devotion of princes of the Church, royalty, aristocrats, merchants, and others of higher social or economic status.

Occasionally, the statuette of a saint was the central focus of a small house shrine. A portable example at The Cloisters shows a standing Saint Anna (fig. 2) holding diminutive figures of the Virgin Mary and the Christ Child in a subject called the “Holy Kinship” (German, *Anna Selbdritt*), referring to the three generations of the Holy Family. Devotion to this subject was encouraged by clerics and dedicated brotherhoods, especially those active in Netherlandish and German regions.

A Netherlandish private devotional shrine, carved in fine-grained boxwood (fig. 3), serves to introduce the next section, “Narrative Art of the Late 15th and Early 16th Centuries in Northern Europe and Spain” (pp. 36–42). The carving, microscopically intricate, is an accomplished expression of medieval typology in which Old Testament episodes prefigure events in the New Testament. The central arch framing an elaborate scene of the Crucifixion is flanked by movable shutters with scenes depicting the Sacrifice of Isaac and Moses with the Brazen Serpent. Below, in an even smaller triptych, the narrative and typologies continue with the Resurrection of Christ in the center flanked by Samson Carrying the Doors of Gaza and Jonah Cast up by the Whale. The crowded and animated scenes share the precision, spatial devices, and imperfect perspective and steeply angled ground planes, as well as figures often in regional costumes, of larger contemporary Netherlandish altarpieces. They also display similar flamboyance in their architectural frames.

The late-fifteenth- and early-sixteenth-century narrative sculptures in this section are representative of the final era of the Late Gothic style and empirical naturalism. As in the boxwood triptych and in earlier works, each sculptor hoped to embody a moment in time, a memorable episode taken from a biblical narrative or other source. The order of the illustrations in this section follows the traditional Christian narrative beginning with the Meeting of Joachim and Anna at the Golden Gate (p. 36).

“Sculptures of Saints of the Early 16th Century in Northern Europe and Spain” (pp. 43–47) is the last section. These works



Fig. 2 *Private Devotional Shrine* (Hausaltärchen). German (Swabia), ca. 1490. Wood with polychromy, translucent glazes, and metal hardware, h. 13 1/4 in. (33.7 cm). The Cloisters Collection, 1991 (1991.10)



Fig. 3 *Portable Miniature Triptych*. Netherlandish, early 16th century. Boxwood, h. 5 7/8 in. (15 cm). Gift of J. Pierpont Morgan, 1917 (17.190.453)

come from different contexts, including a tomb complex and an altarpiece. Here it is important to stress again that the lives of the saints, their relics, and their images were the focus of prayerful devotion and a source of protection and the promise of salvation. As the Late Gothic period in northern Europe and Spain drew to a close, the use of images, the cults of the saints and their relics, and the doctrine of indulgences were often corrupted, a circumstance that led to the Reformation. For example, the images and cults of pre-Reformation devotion often became the means for excessive practices of charitable and crafts brotherhoods. Charges of idolatry were frequent.

This publication cites several sculptors whose known work is represented by a specific example in the collection or is exemplified by works influenced by the master under discussion. This is especially significant, for during the late Middle Ages more of the records and/or signatures of particular artists were preserved, and the anonymity of the earlier centuries was no longer the general rule.

Four major masters are selected here for special mention. The first is Claus Sluter (b. Haarlem ca. 1360–d. Dijon 1406), one of the most important and influential artists of his period and a giant in the history of world sculpture. Sluter's work in the waning years of the fourteenth century for the Burgundian Valois duke Philip the Bold (1342–1404) at the Chartreuse de Champmol, near Dijon, included the sculpture for the great

portal (fig. 4)—the duke's tomb on which Sluter worked from 1391 until his death—and the monumental sculpted hexagonal base (for a Calvary group) standing in a deep-water reservoir, the so-called Well of Moses, dating from 1395 to 1400. His figural sculptures are imposing and massive, naturalistic and humane in both detail and stance, and unrestrained by architecture. Sluter had a keen sense of the grandeur of his subjects. The influence of his style may be observed in the works on pages 9–12, 18–19, and 26–27.

Nicolaus Gerhaert von Leiden (active 1460–d. 1473) was the finest, most influential sculptor working in the third quarter of the fifteenth century in northern Europe—a pivotal period in the development of Late Gothic sculpture. He was a contemporary of the equally influential graphic artist Master E. S. (active ca. 1450–67), and they had similar approaches to the depiction of the draped figure. Both were seminal artists of the generation preceding that of Veit Stoss and Albrecht Dürer (1471–1528). Gerhaert was either born or trained in Leiden, as is suggested by his signature and his initials, which appear on three of his extant stoneworks: “nicola[us].gerardi.de.leyd[en],” “n.v.l.,” and “niclaus.von.ley[d]en.” In 1464 Gerhaert became a citizen of Strasbourg, where he was active from 1460 to 1467. His documented or signed works include the stone tomb effigy of Jakob von Sierck (archbishop of Trier; d. 1456) dated 1462, the stone sculptures (now in fragments,





Fig. 4 Claus Sluter (Northern Netherlandish, b. Haarlem ca. 1360–d. Dijon 1406). *Virgin and Child*, ca. 1391–93. Limestone, h. including octagonal base 66½ in. (169 cm). Chartreuse de Champmol, near Dijon



Fig. 5 Nicolaus Gerhaert von Leiden (Northern Netherlandish, active 1460–d. 1473). *Sybil*, fragment from the New Chancellery at Strasbourg (destroyed), 1463. Red sandstone, h. 9⅞ in. (23.2 cm). Liebieghaus, Frankfurt am Main

see fig. 5) for the portal of the New Chancellery in Strasbourg dated 1463, the destroyed wood altarpiece of 1466 for the high altar in the cathedral in Constance, the red sandstone crucifix dated 1467 in Baden-Baden, and the red Salzburg marble tomb of Emperor Friedrich III of about 1467–72 in Saint Stephen's Cathedral in Vienna. There are several undocumented additional works that can be attributed to Gerhaert on the basis of style. Included are the two polychromed busts (pp. 24–25) and the boxwood statuette of the Virgin and Child that is shown at intervals nearby in the Medieval Art Department galleries or at The Cloisters (pp. 26–27). The Museum's sculptures demonstrate key elements of the master's style: dynamic mass/space conception; dramatic use of pocket and breaking folds (in the boxwood statuette); nuanced modeling of the fleshy faces and oval heads; interest in naturalistic details, as in the small mouths with pursed lips; and use of strategic contrasts of textures.

Veit Stoss (?1447–1533), whose early training is unknown, came to Nuremberg before 1477. At that time he gave up his citizenship and traveled to Cracow, Poland, where he completed several important commissions, including the magnificent altarpiece (1477–89) for the high altar of the Marienkirche (fig. 6), a stone crucifix (1491) in the same church, and the red marble tomb monument for King Kasimir IV Jagiello (1492) in Wawel Cathedral. In 1496 he returned to Nuremberg, where he provided the stone reliefs and oak sculptures for the Volckamer Monument completed in 1499. After difficulties with the law and imprisonment, he created other major works, including the sublime Angelic Salutation (1517–18) for the Lorenzkirche in Nuremberg. The dramatic impact of Veit Stoss's individual works was an unmistakable feature from the beginning of his career, as can be seen in his early monumental *Death of the Virgin* in the center of the altarpiece in the Marienkirche in Cracow (see fig. 6). This altarpiece, visually powerful and on a large scale, is naturalistic in details, brilliant in polychromy, and robustly expressive in the inherent drama of the subject. Within a shallow space, the sculptor created an impressive sense of theater and illusion. The Cracow altarpiece presents a magical world, one vivid to the devout believers who have knelt in prayer before it. The Museum owns an



altarpiece relief from Stoss's early Cracow period that was created in the master's workshop for another altarpiece in a different church (p. 29).

The fourth and last major sculptor represented is Hans Leinberger (active Lower Bavaria 1510–ca. 1530). He lived in the vicinity of the Wittelsbach court, the seat of which was Landshut, and worked for churches in towns in the region, including Landshut, Moosburg, Polling, and Regensburg. He used a variety of materials: lindenwood (polychrome and monochrome), pearwood (for small reliefs), sandstone, and bronze. His works are outstanding examples of a Late Gothic Baroque, or Florid Gothic. Their scale ranges from small reliefs to mammoth over-lifesize figures. The only accepted work by his hand in America is the elegiac image of the dead Christ on the cross in the Cleveland Museum of Art (fig. 7). This work, in monochrome lindenwood, was probably carved about 1525–30.

Evolutionary and never stagnant, Leinberger developed stylistic and formal attributes notable for their heroic expression and occasionally melodramatic statement. His figures are characterized by elongated proportions and a play of light

and shadow in highly inventive drapery patterns often breaking out into space and alternating with shallow eddies of Y-shaped folds. A quieter representative of this style is the Museum's lindenwood relief of Saint Stephen of about 1525–30 (p. 47).

Although it is not evident in the group of sculptures discussed here, the early decades of the sixteenth century in northern Europe and Spain witnessed occasional influences of Italian Renaissance styles in conceptions of the human figure, costume, ornament, and architectural framing, more often than not based on classical prototypes. At the same time reflections of classical and humanistic subjects of the Renaissance began to appear. However, the sculptural embodiment of empirically perceived aspects of the human figure (mass, stance, movement, texture, emotional state) had already become a concern in northern Europe as early as the thirteenth century. This interest, a Christian pre-Renaissance humanism, was almost always enlisted into the service of the late medieval Church, its practice of the liturgy, and its advancement of pious devotion.



Fig. 6 Veit Stoss (German, ?1447–1533). *Altarpiece for the High Altar*, 1477–89. Wood with polychrome, h. of central shrine 23 ft. 9½ in. (7.25 m). Marienkirche, Cracow

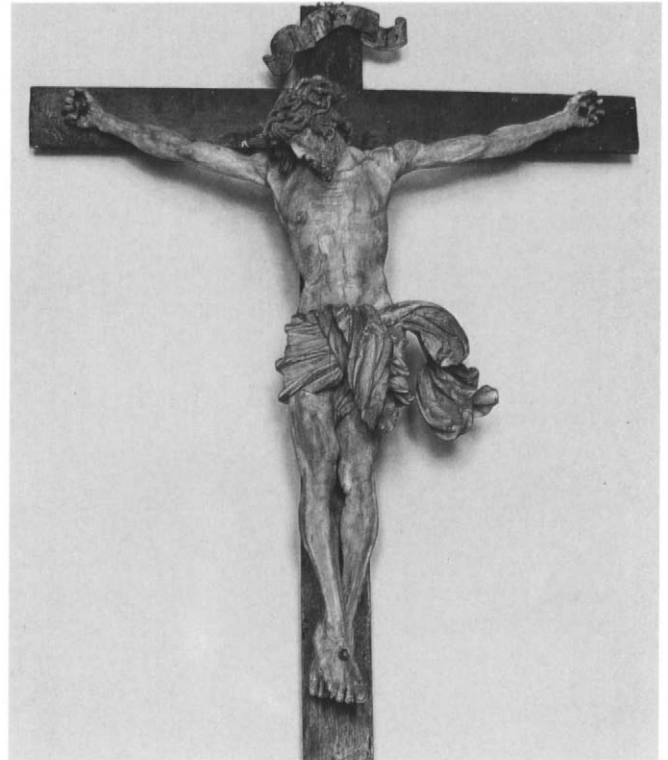


Fig. 7 Hans Leinberger (German, active 1510–ca. 1530). *Corpus of Christ*, 1525–30. Lindenwood, h. 46½ in. (118.1 cm). Cleveland Museum of Art, J. H. Wade Fund, 1938 (38.293)

## *Central European Beautiful Style and Burgundian Innovation, ca. 1400 to the Early 1430s*

### **Annunciation Group**

Austrian (Styrian), ca. 1390

Limestone with traces of polychromy; h. of angel  $30\frac{3}{4}$  in.

(78.1 cm), h. of Virgin  $40\frac{1}{4}$  in. (102.2 cm)

The Bequest of Michael Dreicer, 1921 (22.60.1, .2)

The Virgin Mary, head bowed and arms crossed, appears in a pose of submission and prayer. Her contrapposto stance is indicated by the slight S-curve created by the leftward direc-

tion of her head, left elbow, and lower torso, while her shoulders and right leg bend to the right. The Virgin's mantle, hanging loosely over her shoulders, is gathered in shallow clusters over her forearms and then falls in canted, cascading folds along her sides. The long lower folds break around her feet and over the rounded plinth, which is carved as part of the figure. Portions of the Virgin's long curly locks are held in place by a narrow jeweled crown. At the back, drapery folds and hair are only sketchily carved.





The kneeling Angel Gabriel is also enveloped in richly configured drapery falling over the shoulders, bent knee, and plinth. The clusters of folds end in canted, curvilinear edges similar to those of the Virgin's mantle. Framed by a mass of tight curls, the angel's face turns upward, and his lips are parted to suggest speech. The back is summarily carved with only a hint of drapery. The group was intended to be viewed by the worshiper either from the front or slightly from one side and was probably set high on a console or bracket against a chapel wall or pier.

The sculptures illustrate the biblical account of Gabriel's annunciation to Mary that she has been favored by God and would bear a child (Luke 1:26–38). In manuscript paintings the angel's words are often written on a scroll emanating from his mouth. Because Mary is not yet the mother of Jesus or the Queen of Heaven, she wears a coronet and not the high crown often seen on statues of the Virgin with the Child.

This group is an outstanding example of the so-called Beautiful Style found in German- and Polish-speaking areas of central Europe in the years around 1400. Particular aspects of the style relate the group to works carved in Styria, in Austria, especially to carvings of the Master of Grosslobming, whose sculptures from the church of Saint Lambert in Grosslobming may be seen in the Österreichischen Galerie, Vienna. An Annunciate Virgin in the Liebieghaus, Frankfurt am Main, is an especially relevant comparison.

### Standing Virgin and Child

French (Burgundy), early 15th century  
Limestone with traces of polychromy, h. 35 $\frac{5}{8}$  in. (90.5 cm)  
Gift of J. Pierpont Morgan, 1916 (16.32.163)

The quality of the preserved carving is of such high order that an earlier scholar believed that this Virgin and Child was the creation of Claus Sluter. The sculpture is now thought to be a very fine work by someone related to the master: it was partly inspired by Sluter's heroic Virgin and Child standing before the trumeau of the portal at the Chartreuse de Champmol (fig. 4). Here that composition is reversed, reduced, and somewhat simplified. The conception of the massive, deeply undercut draperies, the contrapposto stance of the Virgin, and the intimate response between the mother and child in the larger work are continued in the Museum's sculpture in a quieter yet authoritative way, and are not the creation of a mere copyist. It must have been carved by a very gifted close follower of Sluter.

The best-preserved portion of this sculpture is the Christ Child. The solid mass of the infant, the thick folds of his tunic, the gestures of his hands—stretching to touch the Virgin's shoulder or her collar—his upturned chubby face, and his



gently tangled long ringlets all are carved in a way that gives the figure naturalness and conviction. It is forceful and in balance with the backward-bending S-curve of the Virgin.

The Virgin's long mantle and gown envelop her with clustered, deeply recessed folds that fall to the base, almost covering her slipped feet. The boldness of the draperies is softened





by strategically placed decorative details such as the delicate floral crown and her buckled, nodulated belt.

The eloquence and power of this remarkable statuette, while sadly tempered by its condition, is conveyed primarily from the front. However, there is fully developed carving on all sides, indicating that the sculpture may have been intended to be seen at least partly from other viewpoints.

Claux de Werve (Netherlandish, ca. 1380–ca. 1439;  
active Burgundy 1396–ca. 1439)

### **Enthroned Virgin and Child**

1415–17

Limestone with polychromy and gilding, h. 53 $\frac{3}{8}$  in. (135.5 cm)

Rogers Fund, 1933 (33.23)

Beautifully described and analyzed by William H. Forsyth in 1986, this disarmingly simple but monumental image is one of the finest and largest Burgundian sculptures this side of the Atlantic. Its near perfect condition, including preservation of much of the original rich polychromy (now somewhat darkened), provides an opportunity to appreciate the look of a great Gothic devotional sculpture of the early fifteenth century. The sculpture is a natural and convincing work intended to evince an empathic response. The underlying theme, the representation of the Incarnation, is embodied in the Latin

text on the scroll hanging over the side of the throne: *Ab • ini / tio • et / ante • / secula / creata • / sum*+ (“From the beginning, and before the world, was I created,” Ecclesiasticus 24:14).

The boldly modeled masses and the thick drapery in heavy folds, creating a rich play of light and shadow, are characteristic of the work of the Netherlandish sculptor Claux de Werve, nephew and collaborator of the groundbreaking artist Claus Sluter, whose emphasis on monumentally conceived figures influenced Burgundian sculpture for several generations. The present sculpture was intended to be seen frontally or slightly from one side and not from the back, as indicated by the roughly tooled reverse of the throne and the rudimentary carving of the Virgin’s veil, hair, and cloak. The back may have been hidden originally by a cloth of honor suspended from two upright supports, which may have risen from two square holes in the top of the elongated seat, in a manner often seen in contemporary Parisian illustrated manuscripts.

The sculpture came from the Franciscan convent of the Poor Clares in the town of Poligny, at the foothills of the Jura Mountains in the Franche-Comté, once a stronghold of the dukes of Burgundy. It is thought that the work was commissioned for the Poor Clares by the duke of Burgundy, John the Fearless (d. 1419), and his wife, Margaret of Bavaria (d. 1424), patrons of the convent. The sculpture was probably installed in the cloistered area reserved for the devotions of the nuns. A modern full-scale copy has taken its place.









### Enthroned Virgin and Child

Southern Netherlandish or French (Burgundy), 1420–30  
Walnut with traces of polychromy, h. 5  $\frac{7}{8}$  in. (15 cm)  
Gift of George Blumenthal, 1941 (41.100.203)

Carved in the round, this sculpture may have been the centerpiece of a small tabernacle, shrine, or house altar. Although the moldings of the throne continue around the sculpture and the spreading folds of the Virgin's mantle extend across the back, a small iron attachment spike in one of the six vertically aligned holes at the back indicates that this diminutive work was viewed primarily from the front. Traces of blue and red pigment appear in the interstices of the drapery folds on the reverse just above the throne.

The separately carved right arm and hand of the Christ Child are original to the piece, as is confirmed by the stylistic

character of the carving, which is identical to that of the Virgin's hands and the Child's bare feet and toes.

The Virgin Mary nursing the blessing Christ Child is a frequent subject in northeastern France and the southern Netherlandish regions in large-scale stone sculptures, as well as in manuscript paintings. In both instances the Virgin is sometimes depicted seated, as she is here, on a low bench or throne. The firm, rounded modeling of the heads, the careful delineation of the features and hair, as well as the ample drapery folds, are stylistic characteristics found in a number of large stone works from these regions that date from the early fifteenth century, a prime example being the Virgin and Child from Poligny (pp. 10–11). The Museum's walnut group displays a distinctive painterly elegance in the drapery configurations, which are entirely in keeping with its intimate scale and ally the work with contemporary manuscript illustrations and panel paintings.



### Lantern

Northern Italian (Venice?), ca. 1400–1430  
Copper alloy, gilding, enamel, and crystal,  
h. 16 1/8 in. (41 cm)  
Gift of J. Pierpont Morgan, 1917 (17.190.827)

During the Gothic era, as in earlier periods, diminutive statuettes were used in the decoration of church furnishings. This hexagonal lantern, probably made to be suspended over or near an altar, exhibits a wealth of foliate and architectural ornamental details and a significant series of small figures. While the subjects are not entirely clear, mainly because of the loss of attributes, several of the larger standing examples placed before the tallest trefoil arches may be saints or Old Testament prophets. The intervening wingless angels originally may have held the instruments of the Passion, as is suggested by one holding the nails of the Crucifixion. The smallest figures, standing on foliated consoles mounted against the sloping roof panels, are also unidentified; two are crowned females.

The tentative attribution to Venice is based loosely on examples of metalwork in the treasuries of San Marco in Venice and in the Duomo in Lucca. The style of the statuettes on the Museum's lantern also bears a strong resemblance to that found to the north, such as in sculptures created in the dioceses of Salzburg and Prague. Indeed, there is a series of roughly contemporary nearly lifesize sculptures mounted above the choir stalls of San Marco that are by northern sculptors working in the Beautiful Style, or Soft Style, of central Europe (see pp. 3, 8–9).



### Standing Virgin and Child

German (Nuremberg), ca. 1425–30

Sandstone, h. 57½ in. (146.1 cm)

Gift of Ilse C. Hesslein, in memory of Hans G. Hesslein and the Hesslein family, 1986 (1986.340)

This large stone group is a superb late exponent of the Beautiful Style, which, although pervasive in central Europe about 1400, appeared only briefly among the evolving sculptural styles in the imperial free city of Nuremberg. The work comes from the exterior of a private house in Nuremberg, formerly at Josefsplatz 7. Sculptures of this kind were often found on the corners at the second-floor level of a building, protected from the elements by a canopy. Viewed from the square or street, such sculptures were believed to bestow protective blessings on the inhabitants of the house that extended as well to the immediate neighborhood.

The powerful style of this Virgin and Child is characterized by the heaviness of the deep cascading drapery folds, the boldness of the S-curve of the Virgin's stance, and the firmness of the rounded planes of the Virgin's face and the Child's head and body. This particular style, with its emphasis on massive monumentality, may be seen in two other Nuremberg works of a few years earlier, a large terracotta figure of Saint Andrew in the church of Saint Andrew at Ochsenfurt and the polychrome Virgin in Glory in the Sebalduskirche in Nuremberg.

This standing Virgin and Child is the first of its type to be acquired by a public institution outside Germany. The polychromy is not original.





## *Narrative Sculptures of the First Half of the 15th Century in Northern Europe*

### **Entombment of Christ**

German (Middle Rhine), 1420–40

Walnut with traces of polychromy, h. 18¼ in. (46.3 cm)

Gift of J. Pierpont Morgan, 1916 (16.32.220)

This powerful relief is dramatically simple yet elegant in its rhythmic surfaces and linear patterns. Represented are the bearded figures of Joseph of Arimathea, Nicodemus and

another elderly man lowering the partly shrouded body of Christ into the Holy Sepulchre, the mourning Saint John the Evangelist, and the Holy Women (the Virgin Mary is at the center). The expressions of anguish and pathos are conveyed not only in the sorrowful faces but also in the contrasts of the figures' poses and in the subtle drooping curves of the sculptural masses. The work's emotional intensity owes a debt to Netherlandish painting, as is suggested by a comparison with





the central panel of the Entombment (the Seilern Triptych) painted by Robert Campin (ca. 1375–1444) about 1415–20 that is in the Courtauld Institute Galleries, London.

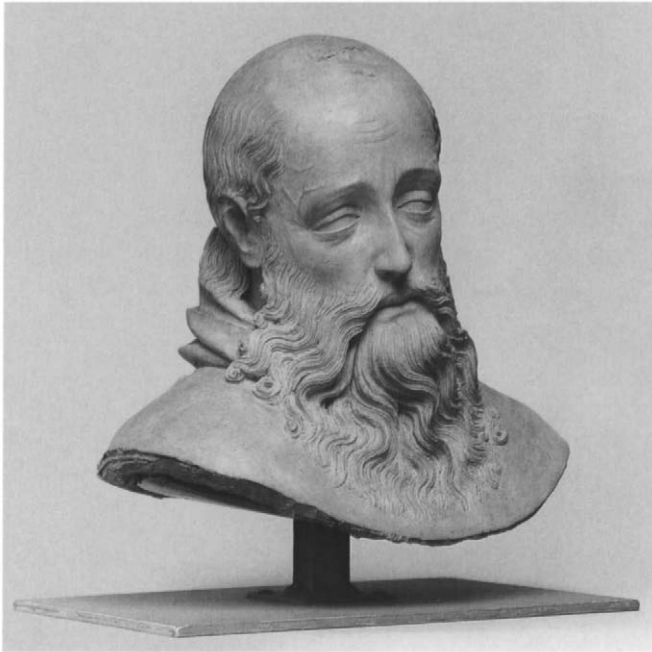


Fig. 8 Master of the Lorsch Way to Calvary (German [Middle Rhine]). *Joseph of Arimathea*, ca. 1420–25. Terracotta, h. 11⅞ in. (29.5 cm). Hessisches Landesmuseum, Darmstadt

Unlike the Seilern Triptych, the Museum's walnut relief shows all of the active figures almost entirely behind the sarcophagus. The Virgin kisses the left hand of the dead Christ, while Saint John appears behind her right shoulder. Iconographic parallels may be seen in Parisian enamels and manuscript illustrations, such as the Egerton Master's *Entombment* in the Hours of Charles Noble of about 1404 in the Cleveland Museum of Art.

While the two outermost figures of the Museum's relief are rendered almost in the round, the back is flat and, like the underside, without workshop marks. There are remnants of three old iron spikes at the back.

The relief must have come from a large retable representing scenes of the Passion. Each of them, with their clear narrative and compelling drama, must have provided a moving occasion for empathic prayers. The representation of Christ's wounds and the brutalizing crown of thorns must have elicited medieval worshippers' deeply pious responses.

The localization and date of the larger work—a major lost altarpiece—obviously depend on this isolated relief. An attribution to the Middle Rhine about 1420–40 is suggested by stylistic comparisons with sculptures created in that region about 1420–25, such as the terracotta bust fragment of the elegantly bearded Joseph of Arimathea in the Hessisches Landesmuseum in Darmstadt (fig. 8) and the polychromed wood altarpiece of 1440 with the Death of the Virgin in the Johanniskirche in Kronberg im Taunus.

Master of the Hakendover Altarpiece (active Brussels, 1st third of the 15th century)

### The Pentecost

Southern Netherlands (Brabant), ca. 1420–25  
Oak, 19½ x 12¾ in. (49.5 x 32.4 cm)  
Gift of J. Pierpont Morgan, 1916 (16.32.214)

The Pentecost (in Greek meaning the “fiftieth”) was important to both Jews and Christians. The early Jews called it the Feast of Weeks, of Harvest, or of First Fruits. For early Christians, the feast of the Pentecost commemorates the descent of the Holy Spirit fifty days after the Crucifixion (Acts 2:38). From the Byzantine era and the Romanesque period, the subject has traditionally shown the apostles seated with the rays or flames of the Holy Spirit coming down on their heads. This relief, from a large retable, shows the apostles standing in a tightly clustered group. Three of the central figures, their hands clasped in prayer, can be identified by their traditional appearances: the bald, long-bearded Saint Paul in the recessed center

is flanked by the beardless Saint John the Evangelist, who faces the curly-bearded Saint Peter. The usual descending flames of the Holy Spirit may have been painted on a back panel.

Long ignored, this eloquent fragment was recognized only in 1987 by Robert Didier for its high quality and as a work by the so-called Master of the Hakendover Altarpiece (church of Saint Sauveur, Hakendover, Belgium). John Steyaert described it in 1994 as a late work by this master and as a representative of “a stylistic bridge from the Soft Style to the Late Gothic.” He further noted “that the central spacious niche that accentuates three pairs of praying hands with a rich chiaroscuro, and the prominent triangular mantle of the aged St. John, which expands below into . . . fluid triangles, rank this small work among the finest creations of fifteenth-century Netherlandish art. . . . It also occupies a key place [in] stylistic transition. . . . A Late Gothic drapery vocabulary emerges. . . quite unobtrusively: the drapery gradually loses its fluid, curvilinear continuity, to fold and then break into separate, discontinuous, increasingly angular rhythms, without however abandoning the underlying amplitude of the Soft Style.”







## French Regional Styles of the Mid-15th Century

### Saint Paul

French (Burgundy [Franche-Comté]), ca. 1420–30  
Limestone with traces of polychromy, h. 47 in. (119.4 cm)  
Mrs. Stephen V. Harkness Fund, 1922 (22.31.1)

Saint Paul is identified by his customary canonical bald head, long beard, sword (the instrument of his martyrdom), and book containing his epistles to the Gentiles. This figure, notable for its easy contrapposto stance, is enveloped in heavy, deep drapery folds. The back, carved with additional suspended folds, suggests that the sculpture was intended to stand on a bracket or corbel rather than in a niche. The closest stylistic comparisons, all proposed by William Forsyth in 1987, are in works by or attributed to Claux de Werve, the nephew and collaborator of Claus Sluter (see pp. 10–11). The Museum's sculpture came from the de Plaine family chapel in the monastic church of the Jacobins in Poligny in the Franche-Comté, Jura. A modern copy is in the collegiate church of Saint-Hippolyte, Poligny.



### Saint James the Greater

French (Burgundy [Franche-Comté]), 3rd quarter of the 15th century  
Limestone with traces of polychromy, h. 62 in. (157.5 cm)  
The Cloisters Collection, 1947 (47.101.17)

Saint James the Greater is in his usual guise as a pilgrim, wearing a soft-brimmed hat decorated with a cockleshell and carrying a book and a staff (only partly preserved above the right arm). The saint's shrine at Santiago de Compostela, Spain, was the third most frequent medieval pilgrimage goal after Jerusalem and Rome.

As is obvious when it is seen from the side, the sculpture is cut from a narrow block of limestone. Viewed from the front, the figure is massive and monumental. The convoluted, deeply carved drapery folds appear to be in layers; the lowest has a diagonal edge. The interplay of textures enriches the overall effect: the loose strands of hair with the curly beard; the cockleshell with the smooth surfaces of the hat, cloak, and book. Saint James is shown stepping forward with his left foot; he gazes downward in the same direction to the open book held in his left hand. (Only the upper half is preserved; the lower half originally projected forward.) The back of the sculpture is carved with concentric loops of heavy folds. William Forsyth suggested in 1987 that the tilt of the head and the apparently shortened forward leg imply that the figure was placed on a corbel high above eye level.

The sense of arrested movement and the vivid configurations of the deep suspended folds suggest a later development of Burgundian sculpture than that represented by Claux de Werve (see p. 10). However, the work of the late 1440s by Juan de la Huerta (d. after 1462) provides some stylistic parallels. Huerta, a Spanish sculptor from Aragon, was engaged in 1443 to carve the tomb of John the Fearless at the Chartreuse de Champmol, near Dijon. According to Forsyth, Huerta's "series of pleurants on the tomb introduced a new dynamism into Burgundian sculpture." Huerta was active in the Franche-Comté and probably in Poligny. Perhaps the carver of the Saint James was a gifted associate. A modern copy is in the collegiate church of Saint-Hippolyte, Poligny.

### Saint John the Baptist

French (Burgundy [Franche-Comté]), 3rd quarter of the 15th century  
Limestone with traces of polychromy, h. 59½ in. (151 cm)  
Purchase, Pulitzer Bequest, 1934 (34.44)

Saint John the Baptist, the messenger of Christ (Mark 1:2, 3), presents a lamb upon an open book, references to both the fulfillment of the Old Testament prophecies and to Christ, whom John hailed as the Lamb of God (John 1:29, 36).

Although carved in the round, the figure was conceived to be seen primarily from the front. The long cloak, draped in multiple deep folds, contributes not only to the massiveness of the sculpture but also to the sense of sharply twisting movement. The saint extends his right foot, and his slightly thrown-back head is turned in the same direction, while his body bends in an opposing outward movement. Essential to the overall richness are the textural distinctions: the finely grooved strands of the hair and beard, the nodular wool of the lamb, the leather strapping and studs of the book cover, and the linear edges of the book pages.

This impressive sculpture exhibits a new interest in figural torsion, while continuing the Burgundian preference for

heavy drapery folds. It bears “the stamp of a great master,” according to Forsyth, who stopped short of attributing it to Juan de la Huerta for lack of secure evidence. This work and the *Saint James the Greater* (below left) are both thought to come from one of the churches in Poligny and to have been later transferred to the niches of a cemetery wall outside the town. The original placement of both sculptures was probably upon high brackets or consoles against a church’s piers or walls. The short lower legs and the massive upper portions of the figures tend to confirm that a foreshortened view was calculated by the sculptor. A modern copy of this *Saint John the Baptist* is in the collegiate church of Saint-Hippolyte, Poligny.







Étienne Bobillet (active mid-15th century) and Paul de Mosselman (d. 1467), both Franco-Netherlandish, active in Bourges

### Two Mourners

Ca. 1453

Alabaster, each h. 15 1/4 in. (38.6 cm)

Gift of J. Pierpont Morgan, 1917 (17.190.386, .389)

These loosely draped figures with *capuchons* enveloping their heads and shoulders are two of a group of forty that occupied the arcades visually supporting the black marble slab beneath the tomb effigy of Jean de France, duc de Berry (1340–1416). The tomb was originally in the choir of the duke's chapel at Bourges. The carver of the still-extant effigy, Jean de Cambrai (active 1375/76–d. Berry 1438), was also responsible for statuettes of several of the mourners. The other figures were made by Étienne Bobillet and Paul de Mosselman about 1453. The tomb was moved to the crypt of the cathedral at Bourges in 1756. When it was vandalized during the French Revolution many of the mourner statuettes were dispersed.

Most of the mourner figures represent secular members of the deceased duke's entourage, depicted as if they were following one another in a cortege. A momentarily halted procession of mourners within the arcades below the effigy of the deceased was a convention in direct emulation of the earlier tomb of the duke's brother, Philip the Bold, duc de Bourgogne, at the Chartreuse de Champmol. The mourners of the Burgundian tomb were carved between about 1402 and 1410 by two other sculptors from the Netherlands, Claus Sluter (see p. 5), who was responsible for only two of the figures, and his nephew, Claus de Werve (see p. 10), who completed the ensemble.

The mourners carved by Bobillet and Mosselman lack the fluid drapery folds, massive monumentality, theatricality, and expressions of intense grief seen in the Burgundian figures. The later mourners at Bourges, while still outstanding exponents of Late Gothic naturalism, are less anguished and more pensive in their expressions.

## *Naturalism in the Second Half of the 15th Century in Northern Europe*

### **Saint Bavo**

Northern Netherlandish, ca. 1460

Limestone with traces of polychromy, h. 44½ in.  
(113 cm)

The Bequest of Michael Dreicer, 1921 (22.60.4a)

The patron saint of Ghent and Haarlem, Saint Bavo (d. 657) was a wealthy landowner who led a life of abandon and luxury before the death of his wife. Afterward he distributed his possessions among the poor and took up missionary work throughout France and the Netherlands. As an old man he lived as a hermit. The costume details of this statue, all in mid-fifteenth-century style, allude to the two main aspects of the saint's life: his decorated cap, sword, short tunic, mail, and armor refer to his wealth and social standing; the girdle book in his right hand suggests his role as an itinerant missionary. A suspendable book bag of this kind may be seen in the Spencer Collection in the New York Public Library.

The easy contrapposto stance, furrowed brow, firm mouth, and overall naturalism of this appealing sculpture are its most original features. While the tunic and tasseled cap are carved at the back, the lower portion of the figure is a rough-cut mass of stone, which helps to stabilize it while giving the illusion that the armored legs are freestanding. A work such as this one was probably intended to be seen frontally on a high console against a church pier or wall.

The interest in naturalism in this work was not new. Earlier examples are the Old Testament figures on the Well of Moses by Claus Sluter (1395–1400, see p. 5) and also several of the armorial shield-bearing figures of 1427 to 1433 by Hans Multscher (German [Reichenhofen], active 1427–59) that flank the windows of the Rathaus in Ulm.





## Crèche

French (Burgundian), ca. 1465–70  
Limestone with polychromy, 17½ x 27½ in. (44.5 x 70 cm)  
Gift of J. Pierpont Morgan, 1916 (16.32.158)

The figures of this crèche are arranged in two sections: the upper focuses on the infant Christ lying in a wattled manger flanked by animated groups of small angels and shepherds; below, two angels fluff a pillow for the cradle, which is decorated with Flamboyant Gothic tracery. The large figure of the Virgin kneels in adoration, looking to the Christ Child above, and the seated Joseph, of a comparable size, holds a cloth wrap before the warming flames of the fire. The background of the upper section is mostly of wattle fencing; in the lower section it simulates mainly fine ashlar masonry. The composition is notable for its carefully balanced groupings, purposefully contrasted textures, and naturalistic details. This is an example of late medieval narrative art at its best.

The outer left and right sides of the crèche are carved and painted, suggesting that the relief was independent of any niche or retable recess. Because the flat back is smoothly carved with overall small chisel cuts, William Forsyth suspected in 1989 “that it must have been set directly against a wall, perhaps on a corbel or on a plinth resting on an altar.”

Forsyth related the figure style to certain Burgundian sculptures, especially selected examples by Antoine le Moiturier (Avignon 1425–Dijon 1497), who was brought to Dijon after 1462 to complete the tomb of John the Fearless at the Chartreuse de Champmol by John’s son, Philip the Good. Forsyth also pointed to a variety of sources for the anecdotal details, which include the Christmas liturgy, mystery plays, devotional literature, illustrated manuscripts, and Netherlandish paintings. Entirely convincing in its narrative, the work must be understood within a devotional context and as the focus of individual prayer.







### Head of a Cleric

Eastern France, ca. 1425  
Red sandstone, h. 9 in. (22.8 cm)  
Rogers Fund, 1947 (47.42)

This under-lifesize tonsured head came from an effigy of a deceased priest. The sides of the head, including the ears and several distended veins at the temples, are fully carved. Because the back of the skull is fully rounded and there is no indication of a pillow support, this portrait must have come from a vertical or standing monument or epitaph mounted against a pier or wall.

The work's unconfirmed provenance from the Benedictine abbey of Moyenmoutier in Vosges in eastern France raises the possibility that it was carved there or perhaps in the Upper Rhine. There is a related but larger head (fig. 9), carved after

Fig. 9 *Head of a Bishop*. Basel, after 1422. Red sandstone, h. 15 3/8 in. (39 cm). Museum Kleines Klingental, Basel (12289)



1422 in reddish sandstone, from the tomb monument of Bishop Hartmann III Münch (r. 1418–22), which was formerly installed in the chapel of Saint Nicholas next to Basel Cathedral. Despite the loss of the left cheek of the Basel head, it is clear that the two works are similar in the strong downward ellipses of the eyelids, the crow's feet extending from the outer corners of the eyes, the wrinkled brows, the bony structure of the low brows and high cheeks, and the small mouths. Both heads suggest the benign character and spirituality of the clerics portrayed. The naturalism initiated by the Netherlander Claus Sluter and evolved in the works of his Burgundian followers finds an eloquent echo in these heads, which seem to prefigure this trend as it is seen in certain sculptures by Hans Multscher and Niclaus Gerhaert von Leiden (see pp. 5–6).





Attributed to Nicolaus Gerhaert von Leiden (active 1460–d. 1473)

**Reliquary Busts of Saints Barbara and Catherine of Alexandria**

Strasbourg, ca. 1465

Ashwood (Barbara) and basswood (Catherine) with polychromy;

Barbara: h. 19 7/8 in. (50.5 cm), Catherine: h. 18 3/8 in. (47.3 cm)

Gift of J. Pierpont Morgan, 1917 (17.190.1735, .1734)

Four wood reliquary busts have been assigned to Nicolaus Gerhaert von Leiden or to his workshop in Strasbourg. One of these, a Saint Agnes, is known only from a plaster cast; the others are preserved in the Art Institute of Chicago and the Metropolitan Museum. A crowned Saint Margaret of Antioch in walnut in Chicago (fig. 10) and the New York examples illustrated here are thought to have come from an undocumented altarpiece for the high altar in the Benedictine abbey church of Saints Peter and Paul at Wissembourg, Bas-Rhin. The fact that the busts of Agnes and Margaret, with their slightly downcast eyes, seem to have been designed to be seen from below suggests that they may have been placed originally above the level of the predella, the probable location of the two New York examples. In any case, each of the four



Fig. 10 Attributed to Nicolaus Gerhaert von Leiden. *Reliquary Bust of Saint Margaret of Antioch*, ca. 1465. Walnut with traces of polychromy, h. 20 in. (50.8 cm). Art Institute of Chicago, Robert Alexander Waller Memorial Fund (1943.1001)

works has a cavity in the upper chest intended to hold a relic. The identity of each bust is determined by the attributes depicted. The Museum's Barbara holds a tower and Catherine a sword. That they are roughly hollowed out at the back indicates that they were intended to be seen from the front. The use of different woods suggests that the carver's choices of materials were limited to what was in the shop. The largely



medieval polychromy is remarkably similar on both of the Museum's works.

Scholars have grappled with the problems of precise attributions for Gerhaert's undocumented works. Current literature cites the stripped and scraped down Chicago bust as by Gerhaert, while assigning the polychromed New York busts to Gerhaert's Strasbourg workshop. Crucial to these arguments is the small, red sandstone head of a young woman, a sybil (fig. 5), from the destroyed portal of the New Chancellery in Strasbourg, which has been universally accepted as by Gerhaert's hand. Considered frontally and in profile (see fig. 11), many shared details, such as the smooth oval faces, rounded planes of the cheeks, upturned narrow noses, narrow eyes, dimpled chins, and pursed mouths with small full lips, lead to the conviction that not only the Saint Margaret but also the Saints Barbara and Catherine may be attributed to the same carver as the red sandstone head, namely Nicolaus Gerhaert himself. These carvings represent contemporary Upper Rhenish beauties. In the guise of renowned saints, the busts were intended to elicit spiritual feelings, even though two generations later, during the Reformation, such comeliness would be considered a distraction.



Fig. 11 Busts of Saints Barbara, Catherine of Alexandria, and Margaret (fig. 10), in profile, as seen in the exhibition "Set in Stone: The Face in Medieval Sculpture" (Metropolitan Museum, 2006–7)



Attributed to Nicolaus Gerhaert von Leiden (active 1460–d. 1473)

### Standing Virgin and Child

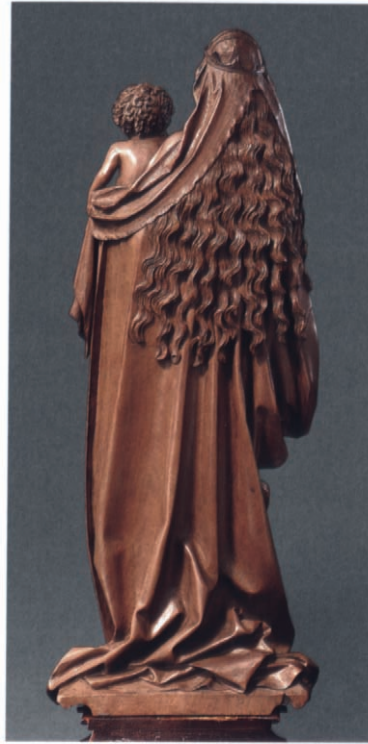
Vienna, ca. 1470

Boxwood, h. 13 1/4 in. (33.7 cm)

Purchase, The Cloisters Collection and Lila Acheson Wallace Gift, 1996 (1996.14)

This statuette is another undocumented work attributed to Gerhaert. The Virgin, depicted in a long gown with a simple rounded collar, is partly wrapped in the ample folds of a long mantle that is secured at the neck with a twisted double rope. The Virgin's veil is pulled tightly over the high dome of her head and is held in place by a thin crown. The crenate veil, enriched by fine parallel hatchings and divided at the back, hangs in a wide curve over her shoulders. Long, thick, wavy strands of hair cascade over the Virgin's right shoulder and down her back. The Child's hair, by contrast, is carved in a series of tight ringlets. The Virgin's mantle tumbles over the front and sides of the thin plinth, which is part of the statuette. The base, of a different and darker wood, is later.

Extraordinary for its sense of elegance and drama, its suggestion of monumentality, and its lyric unity, this small sculpture is indeed an accomplished carving that takes full advantage of the expressive possibilities of the material, fine-grained boxwood. The slim, high-waisted body of the Virgin serves as a pliant cylinder at the center of a lively helical envelope of drapery. While partly enclosing and obscuring the Virgin's body, the drapery loops away in places and takes on something of a life of its own in the form of curving, angular, fluted, and pocketlike folds. The squirming crosslegged Christ Child is another example of this breaking away in space from the figure of the Virgin. The rhythm and balance of these elements are counterpoised by the linear details and by such textural contrasts as that between the rich abundance of the waves of hair and the smooth concave valleys of the drapery at the back, or between the overall hatching of the veil and



the smooth polished planes of the Virgin's face and neck. Among the naturalistic details is the delicate manner in which the Virgin's fingertips press into the chubby flesh of the Child, a detail carried over from Central European and Rhenish sculpture of the late Beautiful Style, dating from the first quarter of the fifteenth century.

The condition of the present work is generally excellent, except for the loss and replacement of the Child's arms and a portion of drapery extending from his left hand.

This restoration dates from before 1866, when the statuette was in the collection of Baron Anselm Salomon von Rothschild, Vienna. The partly replaced tips of the Virgin's crown at the back and center front, as well as the molded dark wood base with its fictive Dürer monogram, also date from this period. The surfaces in their original unpolychromed state are intact, but the faces bear the remains of color on the lips and eyes, which were strengthened at a later date. As Museum conservator Jack Soultanian has observed, the small sequence of parallel notches below the Virgin's drapery at the back, which were created by the rocking motion of the sculptor's chisel, probably represent trial cuts made before he attempted the fine texture of the veil.

The statuette has several connections with earlier art. Netherlandish and Rhenish regions have been noted for a tradition of devotional works carved in boxwood, and the Burgundian territories may have provided stylistic inspiration such as the elegant proportions and exquisite textures seen in the paintings of the Virgin and Child by Jan van Eyck (active by 1422–d. 1441) and in the imposing naturalism and monumentality of sculptures by Claus Sluter and his followers. The boxwood statuette also finds a parallel in the refinement of the draped human figure in engravings by Gerhaert's contemporary the Master E. S. (German, active ca. 1450–67), who shared Gerhaert's Burgundian inheritance (see fig. 12).

Probably carved about 1470 in Vienna, perhaps as a prestigious object for the private devotion of a member of the Hapsburg court, the boxwood Virgin and Child is an important stylistic link to sculptures produced in Moravia, north of Vienna. These later works represent an evolution toward Late Gothic mannerism, in which Gerhaert's brilliant drapery configurations assumed an almost completely independent status.



Fig. 12 Master E. S. (German, active ca. 1450–67). *Virgin and Child*, ca. 1465. Engraving. British Museum, London









### Head of Christ, from an Entombment Group

Netherlandish (Diocese of Utrecht or northern Brabant),  
last quarter of the 15th century  
Limestone with traces of wood thorns, h. 9½ in. (24.3 cm)  
Purchase, Rogers Fund; Gifts of J. Pierpont Morgan, George  
Blumenthal and Messrs. Duveen Brothers, by exchange;  
Bequests of George Blumenthal, Michael Dreicer, Theodore M. Davis  
and Anne D. Thomson, by exchange; and Mr. and Mrs. Maxime L.  
Hermanos Gift, 1983 (1983.406)

The carving of this head combines an idealized vision of the dead Christ with simplified naturalism in the details. The sense of spirituality is intensified by the furrowed brow punctured by sharp thorns, the taut cheeks, and the stiff parted lips. These elements reflect the same naturalistic trend in Netherlandish art seen in the Strasbourg works of Nicolaus Gerhaert von Leiden. The closest stylistic comparison, however, is found in the Netherlandish limestone head of an Ecce

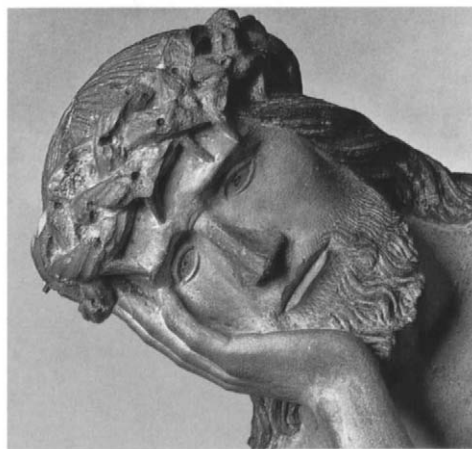


Fig. 13 *Christ Seated on the Cold Stone* (detail). Eastern Netherlandish, ca. 1500. Limestone with traces of polychromy. Museum Catharijneconvent, Utrecht (ABM bs 00692)

Homo of about 1500 that is preserved in the Museum Catharijneconvent in Utrecht (fig. 13).

The Metropolitan's head was exhibited during World War II in 's-Hertogenbosch, in northern Brabant, with information stating that it came from the cathedral of Saint John in that city, a claim verified by relatives of the former owner. When it was lent to a Hieronymus Bosch exhibition in Rotterdam in 2001, the head was described as being the sole surviving remnant of an Entombment of Christ in the same cathedral. Possibly the donation of a prominent merchant, Lodewijk Beys (d. 1519), the Entombment group may have been sculpted in the last quarter of the fifteenth century, the probable date of the preserved fragment. Whether the carver was a native of Utrecht or of nearby 's-Hertogenbosch is an open question.

Workshop of Veit Stoss (German, ?1447–1533)

### Baptism of Christ

Cracow, ca. 1480–90  
Lindenwood with polychromy, h. 48 in. (121.9 cm)  
Rogers Fund, 1912 (12.130.1)

The origin of this work as the folding wing relief of a large altarpiece is established by its size and proportions, the shallow carving, and the beveling of the lateral edges. Several details indicate features common to many Late Gothic altarpieces. For example, the construction is of several assembled planks of lindenwood, and the knot of Christ's loincloth was carved separately and attached with a nail. Furthermore, the polychromy, much of it original, is indicative of the intent of the painter (who was probably not the carver): the flesh tones, the tiny light reflections in the pupils, and the partly preserved shine in the water (produced by a greenish glaze over silver) are just a few instances of the rich yet naturalistic effect he was aiming for. The variations of textures in the surfaces of the gold are especially sumptuous, particularly the contrasting burnished, punched, and matte gilding in Christ's loincloth and robe and the angel's dalmatic and feathered wings.

All four Gospels tell of John the Baptist baptizing Jesus Christ in the river Jordan. John is shown standing on the



Fig. 14 Martin Schongauer (German, ca. 1445–1491). *Baptism of Christ*, ca. 1480. Engraving, 6¼ x 6¾ in. (15.6 x 16.2 cm). Harris Brisbane Dick Fund, 1928 (28.97.107)



bank, wearing the camel's hair cloak specified in the scriptures, his right hand raised in blessing over Christ. The angel holding Christ's garment is not mentioned in the Gospel accounts. The dove of the Holy Spirit and a figure of God the Father inferred in the Gospel of Mark (1:10–11), missing from the relief, were probably represented in the upper background.

The Museum's example is one of several German reliefs based on an engraving of about 1480 by Martin Schongauer (fig. 14). Here Schongauer's horizontal composition is compressed into a vertical format, probably to conform to the for-

mat of the altarpiece wings the relief once embellished. The attribution of this work depends upon the fact that it contains several elements that relate to some of the wing reliefs carved by assistants for Veit Stoss's altarpiece of 1477–89 for the high altar of the Marienkirche in Cracow (fig. 6). Although it is difficult to identify which assistant was responsible, one of Stoss's two sons may have participated. This Baptism of Christ is a rare example in an American museum of a polychrome low-relief carving designed for a movable wing of a large Late Gothic altarpiece.





## *Sculptures of Saints of the Late 15th Century in Northern Europe and Spain*

Master of Soeterbeeck (Southern Netherlandish  
[Brabant], active ca. 1470–80)

### **Saint Bridget of Sweden**

Ca. 1470

Walnut, h. 34 in. (86.4 cm)

Gift of J. Pierpont Morgan, 1916 (16.32.197)

Saint Bridget (ca. 1303–d. 1373) founded the order of the Holy Savior (the Bridgettines) and its mother house at Vadstena, Sweden. Prone to visions, she is said to have written her *Revelations* based on words spoken to her by Christ. Here she is shown seated, writing in a book that rests on a lectern attached to the side of a high-backed bench. The cap with its broad veils draped over her head and under her chin and the heavy mantle enveloping her body in intricate and angular folds probably represent the habit of her order.

The work is hollowed out in the back, indicating that it is essentially a high relief meant to be viewed from the front and from a three-quarter viewpoint. The rounded, fleshy face, drooping eyelids, and pursed lips are the main focus of this carving, which came from the cloister of Soeterbeeck in present-day Belgium.





### Saint Catherine of Alexandria

Central Spain, ca. 1475

Alabaster, h. 36 in. (91.4 cm)

Bequest of George Blumenthal, 1941 (41.190.470)

Seated within a shallow niche and beneath a canopy decorated with foliated ogee arches and Gothic tracery, the saint is depicted wearing a fashionable gown with a close-fitting and low-cut bodice. Fastened about her waist is a long belt or girdle. A heavy mantle hangs over her right shoulder and is draped in voluminous folds over her right knee and the right arm of her throne. It is edged with a passementerie border. The saint's hair falls in thick waves over her shoulders and down her left side. These details, as well as her thin crown, suggest a woman of the highest level of fifteenth-century society. The (now broken) sword grasped in her left hand originally rested on the head of the reclining figure of the emperor Maxentius.

According to *The Golden Legend*, compiled by Jacobus de Voragine about 1260, Catherine was a highborn and learned woman of Alexandria, Egypt. She is said to have publicly protested the worship of idols to the emperor of Rome, Maxentius (d. 312). For this act she was tortured on a spiked wheel and eventually beheaded; the wheel and the sword are her usual attributes.

It has been assumed that this relief formed part of a large and complex retable. Alternatively, it could have graced the front of a wall tomb such as that of Beatriz Pacheco in the monastery of El Parral, Segovia, which displays similar seated figures (of the church fathers) beneath elaborate tracery canopies. The style of both the Segovia tomb figures and the Saint Catherine displays a debt to contemporary Netherlandish sculpture, as is partially confirmed by a comparison with the physiognomy and heavy drapery of the Saint Bridget (opposite).



### Saint Margaret

Southern French (Languedoc [Toulouse?]), ca. 1475  
Alabaster with traces of gilding, h. 15 $\frac{3}{8}$  in. (39.1 cm)  
Gift of Anthony and Lois Blumka, in memory of Ruth and  
Victoria Blumka, 2000 (2000.641)

According to legend, Margaret, the early Christian saint also known as Marina, experienced many painful ordeals before her decapitation at Antioch during the reign of Emperor Diocletian (284–305). This sculpture expresses the meekness of this martyr, depicted here as emerging from the back of a dragon, the creature that became her symbol.

The saint's face and slightly swelling bodice are smooth and delicately rounded. Her eyes are crescent shaped, and her small mouth has a dimpled innocence. The tight, heavy curls

of her hair fall not only in front of her left shoulder, as in the Saint Catherine (p. 31), but also down her back and over her mantle, which is patterned to look like Italian velvet or brocade. The saint rises from the dragon as a flower developing from a bud, revealing her delicate form. Her belt with its circular clasps of feline heads and a chain is symbolic of her chastity. Her hair is held in place by a narrow diadem set with bits of red glass, which may be replacements for pearls.

This carving is a rare example of a stone Gothic sculpture carved in the round. To be fully appreciated, it must be seen from all sides. On the back the saint's long tresses and her textured mantle, as well as the dragon's broad webbed wing, scaly body, and granulated legs, are as interesting as these same features on the front. Perhaps the original setting for this intimate devotional image was on a small altar or piece of furniture in a domestic interior, where it could be viewed from several vantage points.

Despite significant losses, this charming work is clearly a masterpiece. It is remarkable for the contrast between the freshness and delicacy of the figure and the scaly and coarse textures of the dragon. Figure and dragon, with all of their intricate detail, combine in a compelling pyramidal composition. Stylistically relevant sculptures dating from the late fifteenth century in southern France, especially in the Languedoc region and in Toulouse, are the basis for the attribution of this fine work.









### Saint Michael

French (Touraine), ca. 1475

Limestone with traces of polychromy and gilding,  
h. 38¾ in. (98.4 cm)

Gift of J. Pierpont Morgan, 1917 (17.190.751)

Saint Michael, the winged warrior-archangel of heaven, is depicted as a youth battling the devil in the guise of a lizardlike dragon. The dominant compositional theme of this sculpture is the twisting action and dramatic contrapposto stance of the figure. Clad in a tunic of mail covered by a cuirass and leggings of plate armor, an ensemble characteristic of armor of about 1475, the saint was originally shown thrusting a spear into the dragon's gaping mouth, which contains the broken end of the weapon. The writhing creature attempts to overcome the saint with his tentacle-like tail, in keeping with the belief that dragons strangle their prey with their tails. The significance of the sun or multi-pointed star on the breastplate is uncertain; it may be an emblem of a chivalric order. The medallion at the center penetrated by a triangle may be a clue to an eventual identification. The sculpture was intended to be seen frontally and from below; the saint's round face is turned downward toward both the dragon and the spectator. The back is rough cut and has a thick stem of contiguous stone that stabilizes the work. The approximate date of the sculpture has been assigned based on the style and the date of the armor.



### Saint George

Southern German or Austrian (possibly Vienna), ca. 1475

Wood with polychromy and gilding,

h. 17 $\frac{3}{8}$  in. (44.1 cm)

Bequest of Kurt John Winter, 1979 (1979.379)

The legendary Saint George, thought to have lived in the late third or fourth century (his existence is disputed) and widely venerated, has had many dramatic episodes attributed to him. In the late Middle Ages the account in Jacobus de Voragine's *Golden Legend* (ca. 1260) gained popularity. De Voragine originated the episode of the saint's rescue of a young woman from a dragon, followed by the baptism of more than twenty thousand souls.

Like the stone Saint Michael (opposite), this wood statuette of Saint George takes a contrapposto stance. Yet here the warrior saint is more relaxed, as if the action had been completed. The lance held vertically in his right hand rests on the ground. The dragon appears to be near death. The beast bears a bloodied wound on its back, its head turns upward in agony, and its mouth opens to receive the thrust of the shield the saint once held in his left hand.

Carmen Gómez-Moreno remarked in 1999 the "youthful and almost angelic" treatment of the saint's head, with its loose curls surmounted by a thin green wreath. She also observed the similarity of the details of the armor, once silvered, to actual aristocratic and imperial examples. Gómez-Moreno cited comparable sculptures in both southern Germany and Vienna; this Saint George may have come from either locale. Carved and polychromed in the round, this small sculpture may have been an independent object of devotion in a domestic interior or, perhaps, the focus of a house altarpiece.



## Narrative Art of the Late 15th and Early 16th Centuries in Northern Europe and Spain

Benedikt Dreyer (northern German, active Lübeck 1510–30)

### The Meeting of Joachim and Anna at the Golden Gate

Oak with polychromy and gilding, h. 22 $\frac{5}{8}$  in. (57.5 cm)

Gift of J. Pierpont Morgan, 1916 (16.32.213)

This relief depicts an episode from the second-century apocryphal Book of James, known as the *Protevangelium of James* (4:4), in which the childless and elderly couple Joachim and Anna embrace at the Golden Gate in Jerusalem in the knowledge that they will have a child, the future Virgin Mary. This sculpture comes from the altarpiece (ca. 1515) for the high

altar in the parish church of Saint Michael in Lendersdorf, near Düren, in the lower Rhineland. A relief illustrating the Feast at the House of Simon (Luke 7:36–50), now in the Rhode Island School of Design, Providence, that is also from this altarpiece shares the strong naturalism, rustic head types, and sharply sloping ground beneath the figures. Benedikt Dreyer's gifts as a storyteller and his interest in animated narrative combined with a rough, robust sculptural style are exemplified in Joachim and Anna's tender embrace and their humble expressions and in the dramatic flourishes of the angular drapery folds.





Niklaus Weckmann the Elder (Southern German,  
active Ulm 1481–1526)

### **The Holy Family**

Ca. 1515–21

Lindenwood with traces of polychromy and gilding,  
h. 32 in. (81.3 cm)

Gift of Alastair B. Martin, 1948 (48.154.1)

The Virgin, seated on a bench, balances the nude Christ Child on her right knee. Both look to the viewer's right to confront the figures that once completed the composition. The Child raises his right hand in blessing and holds an orb in his left

hand. (The orb symbolizes his role as spiritual ruler of the world.) Joseph, hat in hand, appears behind the bench; he turns his head to the left. The sculptor has employed a variety of textured and smooth surfaces, scalloped and ridged drapery folds, and recessed and projecting figural masses to create a duality of focus: the enobled head of the Virgin and the perky Child framed within his own shallow setting.

Fully hollowed out in the back, this relief was undoubtedly part of the center shrine of a large altarpiece. The bottom section of the work, which would have depicted the drapery folds around the Virgin's feet, is missing. The group was part of an Adoration of the Magi (Matthew 2:11), as evidenced by



the downward-looking Virgin and Child and by comparison with the central shrine devoted to the same subject in an altarpiece by Niklaus Weckmann and his workshop in the cathedral at Ulm. The Museum's Holy Family comes from the Cistercian convent in Gutenzell bei Biberach, Württemberg. Formerly assigned to various other masters in the imperial city of Ulm, the relief was attributed to Niklaus Weckmann the Elder by Alfred Schädler in 1992. According to archival entries in Ulm, Weckmann was an esteemed sculptor in that city. His known works date from 1490 to 1521.

### The Flight into Egypt and the Miracle of the Palm Tree

Spanish (Castile), ca. 1490–1510

Walnut with polychromy and gilding, h. 50 in. (127 cm)

Rogers Fund, 1938 (38.184)

This polychromed relief depicts the Virgin Mary seated on a donkey, carrying the Christ Child on her lap. With his raised left hand, the Child commands the palm tree to bend down, allowing Joseph to gather its fruit. The New Testament story



(Matthew 2:13–15) was greatly amplified in the eighth- or ninth-century apocryphal narrative of the Gospel of the Pseudo-Matthew, the source of the legend about the tree. In this relief two angels help to bend it.

The composition of the relief is partly based upon an engraving of about 1476 by the influential German master engraver and painter Martin Schongauer (fig. 15). The key differences between the engraving and the relief are in the position and attitude of the Child, who is sheltered and timid in the engraving and robust and assertive in the sculpture. In the print the setting is lush with flora and fauna, and five tiny angels tug at the tree rather than two hearty boys. The figure style of the relief and the treatment of the folds of the Virgin's mantle are ultimately based on Netherlandish sources that were also available to Schongauer. The full, rounded faces in the Museum's sculpture are characteristic of many Spanish works of this period, as well as earlier (see p. 31).

The sculpture has several particularly engaging naturalistic details, such as the flopping ear of the donkey and the Child's small right hand, with its articulated fingers gently resting in the Virgin's. The Virgin appears as the Queen of Heaven she was intended to become; her richly jeweled collar and the lower hem of her mantle are monogrammed with SM beneath a crown, for either *Sancta Maria* or the Santa Maria family of Burgos.

The narrative focus of this relief, its almost magically life-like animation, and its uncommon unity of composition, line, and color establish it as one of the great masterpieces of Spanish Late Gothic sculpture. It is said to have come from the cathedral of La Calahorra in Logroño, Castile. It may have been part of a large altar retablo, as is suggested by the beveled reverse, and as such it would have been placed well above eye level.

Fig. 15 Martin Schongauer (German, ca. 1445–1491). *Flight into Egypt*, ca. 1476. Engraving, 10 x 6 $\frac{3}{8}$  in. (25.4 x 16.8 cm). Harris Brisbane Dick Fund, 1929 (29.48.1)







### Descent from the Cross

Southern Netherlandish (Brabant [Brussels?]) or Northern French (Arras?), ca. 1490  
Wood with polychromy and gilding, h. 22 $\frac{5}{8}$  in. (57.5 cm)  
Gift of J. Pierpont Morgan, 1916 (16.32.217)

The Metropolitan possesses several relief fragments from Late Gothic southern Netherlandish and northern French altarpieces dating from the late fifteenth and the first decades of the sixteenth centuries. One of the finest of these works is the present example. There are no town marks or stamps on the reverse of the relief. It probably came from a large altarpiece with scenes of the Passion represented in sections, each topped with intricate openwork Gothic canopies.

This relief depicts the lowering of the body of Christ from the cross, an episode based largely on biblical accounts (Matthew 27:57–61, Mark 15:42–46, Luke 23:50–56, and John 19:38–40). The fashionably dressed Joseph of Arimathea gathers up Christ's feet in the lower end of a shroud. Above, Nicodemus supports Christ's head and shoulders with his right arm and raises his left, presumably to grasp the cross. The Virgin Mary collapses; her bent knees can be detected



beneath her voluminous skirt. She turns her face toward Christ's and attempts to embrace him, touching his chest with her extended hand. Aspects of this pose recall the figures of Rogier van der Weyden (Netherlandish [Tournai] 1399/1400–1464) and his immediate followers, such as the Virgin grasping the foot of the cross in the painting in the Gemaldegalerie in Berlin and the crouching Virgin in the astonishing oak relief known as the Arenberg Lamentation of about 1460–70 in the Detroit Institute of Arts. A second mourning woman stands above and behind the dead Christ, her hands clasped in prayer, and another woman wearing a turban and raising a handkerchief to her eyes can be glimpsed at the far left.

The polychromy is relatively well preserved on this wood relief; many other comparable examples have been stripped of all vestiges of color and gilding. The altarpiece that contained the Museum's relief undoubtedly once graced the high altar of an abbey or parish church in the southern Netherlands or northeastern France.

### The Entombment

French (Bourbonnais), ca. 1510  
Limestone with traces of polychromy and wood frame,  
h. of niche (a cast of the original) 74 in. (188 cm)  
Gift of J. Pierpont Morgan, 1916 (16.31.2a, b)

This solemn Entombment group came from a large niche in the Gontaut seigneurial upper chapel of the château of Biron. Five mourning figures stand behind the dead Christ lying on a shroud and about to be lowered into the tomb by Joseph of Arimathea, on the viewer's left, and Nicodemus, on the right. At the back, from left to right, are Saint John the Evangelist, holding the crown of thorns; the three Marys (the Virgin Mary at the center); and Mary Magdalen, with an ointment jar. Five grieving angels, three originally bearing coats of arms, flutter above, while low-relief panels of Jonah and the Whale and the Sacrifice of Isaac appear on the vertical face of the sarcophagus.

This work was given to the chapel by Armand de Gontaut (d. 1531), bishop of Sarlat and later archbishop of Nazareth. Placed on the main altar of the chapel was a Pietà (fig. 16), dating to about 1500, with kneeling portrait figures of Pons de Gontaut (d. 1524), seigneur of Biron and founder of the chapel, at the right, and his brother Armand at the left. Pons was the donor of the Pietà, which today is on the opposite side of the Museum's gallery.

William Forsyth related the dignified style of this relief to that of sculptures from the Bourbonnais in central France, especially those carved by Jean Guilhomet (known as Jean de Chartres) in about 1500–1503, and of sculptures by anonymous artists active in southern Bourbonnais. Forsyth postulated that the master who carved both the Entombment and the Pietà for the château in Biron, which is in the Dordogne, had formerly worked in the Bourbonnais.





Fig. 16 *Pietà*. French, Bourbonnais, ca. 1500. Limestone with traces of polychromy, h. 43¼ in. (110 cm). Gift of J. Pierpont Morgan, 1916 (16.31.1)

A wood frame, not illustrated here and of a slightly later date than the Entombment, bears evidence of the attachment of movable shutters. A screen originally separated the private transept space with the Entombment altar from the remainder of the chapel. Those who worshiped in this withdrawn precinct could identify with both the deceased patrons and Christ. Scenes on the front of the sarcophagus, based upon the Old Testament, prefigure Christ's sacrifice, death, and resurrection. Such typologies were popular in devotional treatises, such as the *Speculum humanae salvationis* translated into French by Jean Mielot in 1448.





## Pietà

Northeastern French (Champagne?), ca. 1520  
Pine with traces of polychromy and gilding, h. 63¾ in. (161.9 cm)  
Gift of two Trustees, 1905 (05.21)

The dominant feature of this relief is the pyramidal configuration of the Virgin with her hands clasped and the limp, contorted body of Christ stretched partly over her right knee. Within this composition, the sculptor carefully differentiated between deep and shallow relief and smooth and modeled surfaces. The heavy folds of the Virgin's mantle lose their drama in the shallow folds of her wimple; the muscular, bony structure of Christ's body contrasts with the smooth planes of the Virgin's face and hands.

The two figures framing the central group are balanced in mass and action. The heavily robed Saint John holds up Christ's head. At the right the Magdalen calmly lifts the lid of her cylindrical ointment jar. The visual balance of Christ's head and the jar is subtly echoed in that of the crown of thorns and Christ's feet on opposite sides of the foreground.

Remnants of color give an idea of the original polychromy. In keeping with tradition, the Virgin's mantle was blue, her gown red, and the wimple white; the Magdalen's elegant gown was gilt. The color has been lost from Saint John's robe. All of the faces and hands and the body of Christ were painted in flesh tones. Fragments of a painted landscape and an outline of the cross can be detected in the background.

A tentative localization to the province of Champagne is proposed on the basis of stylistic comparisons to nearly three-dimensional stone sculptures originating within this region: an Entombment of 1515 in the church of Saint-Jean-Baptist, Chaource, Aube, and a Pietà of about 1520 in the church of Saint-Martin, Bayel, Aube. These comparable groups have been assigned to the master and workshop responsible for the often-reproduced large sculpture of Saint Martha in Troyes, Champagne.

Images of the Pietà were intended to have a profound empathic effect on those who knelt and prayed before them. The Pietà, being dogmatic and partly historical, made poignant allusion not only to the passion of Christ but also to the suffering of the Virgin.

## *Sculptures of Saints of the Early 16th Century in Northern Europe and Spain*

Attributed to Jan Crocq (active Lorraine, ca. 1486–1510)

### **Saint Catherine of Alexandria**

Eastern French (Lorraine), ca. 1500

Limestone with traces of polychromy, h. 61 1/8 in. (155.2 cm)

Rogers Fund, 1907 (07.197)

Saint Catherine of Alexandria is identified by her attributes: the crown, the sword (only the hilt in her right hand remains), and the figure of Emperor Maxentius. Her costume and crown stress her highborn status. The details and variegated textures of her costume and that of the emperor give this work a commanding richness. The jeweled crowns, the textured linings of the saint's mantle and the emperor's buttoned jacket, the intricately embroidered and jeweled border of the saint's heavy mantle, the flowing strands of the saint's hair, and the emperor's tight curly locks are all part of an opulent effect originally enhanced by pervasive polychromy. The sculpture, with shallow hollowing out at the back, was intended to be viewed from below, frontally or slightly from the sides.

Little studied since its acquisition and rarely exhibited, this Saint Catherine was recognized only in 1989 by Dany Sandron as probably coming from the Lorraine workshop of Jan Crocq, one of the most important sculptors thought to have originated in Antwerp in the southern Netherlands. Crocq was active in Lorraine, where he is cited in documents dating from 1486 to 1510. Several wood and stone sculptures have been attributed to him; most recently John Steyaert proposed a stone standing Virgin and Child that has been in the Museum's collection since 1922 (fig. 17). Characteristic of both this statue and the Saint Catherine is their imposing mass. They also share the stiff, angular folds of drapery spread across their fronts and the broad rounded faces, high foreheads, heavy eyelids, and small pursed lips. Saint Catherine, with a proportionally smaller head and a more attenuated figure, presents a more courtly and elegant impression.

All of the elements common to the Virgin and Child and Saint Catherine may be observed in Crocq's Virgin of the Annunciation in the Musée Historique Lorrain, Nancy. The concurrence of style and costume details suggests that Saint Catherine is a prime candidate for attribution to the master himself.



Fig. 17 Attributed to Jan Crocq (active Lorraine, ca. 1486–1510). *Standing Virgin and Child*. Limestone with traces of polychromy, h. 55 3/4 in. (141.6 cm). Gift of G. J. Demotte, 1922 (22.214.1)





Workshop of Gil de Siloé (active 1475–1505)

**Saint James the Lesser**

Northern Spanish (Castile [Burgos]), 1500–1505

Alabaster, h. 29 in. (73.6 cm)

Gift of J. Pierpont Morgan, 1916 (16.32.153)

Listed as one of the twelve apostles, Saint James the Lesser may have been a relative, perhaps a brother, of Jesus Christ. He was also the first bishop of Jerusalem. After he survived being hurled from the roof of the temple, James was beaten to death with a club, or fuller's bat, which became the symbol of his martyrdom. Here he holds an open book with both hands, and a long-stemmed club rests in the crook of his right arm.

This Saint James and four other statuettes of male saints—one (of an unidentified saint; fig. 18) in the Metropolitan and three (representing Judas Thaddaeus, John the Evangelist, and Bartholomew) in the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston—came from five of the seven uppermost canopied niches of the architectural tomb of Juan de Padilla (d. 1491) that was originally in the monastic church of Fresdelval and is now in the Museo Arqueológico Provincial, Burgos. The statuettes, all of semitranslucent alabaster, should be considered as high reliefs. The back of the Saint James is rough cut and more or less flat. Its carving is comparable to one of the finest figures on the tomb, that of Saint James the Greater. Especially simi-



Fig. 18 Workshop of Gil de Siloé. *Saint*. Northern Spain (Castile [Burgos]), 1500–1505. Alabaster, h. 26½ in. (67.5 cm). Gift of J. Pierpont Morgan, 1916 (16.32.154)

lar are the heavy brows, long nose, high cheekbones, parted lips, and curly hair and beard. The contrapposto stance of Saint James the Greater is difficult to read clearly because of the many objects he carries and the narrow setting. Being free of such encumbrances, Saint James the Lesser assumes a looser contrapposto position, with his right knee pressing forward against his tunic and his bare foot projecting over the base. The ample drapery falls heavily in deep, mostly vertical folds unlike the V-shaped and diagonal folds of the pier sculpture. This statuette has a dignity and somberness, expressed through soft line and smooth, fluted masses, that is lacking in its companion figure (fig. 18). Saint James's features, particularly his almost-closed eyes and partly opened mouth, suggest a deeply devout ascetic.

An earlier alabaster statuette of Saint James the Greater in The Cloisters Collection (69.88) that came from the tomb of Juan II of Castile and Isabel of Portugal is probably by Gil de Siloé himself.

### Saint Ursula and Four Virgin Martyrs

Southern Netherlandish (Brabant), Malines, ca. 1500  
Oak with polychromy and gilding, h. 14¼ in. (36.2 cm)  
Gift of George Blumenthal, 1941 (41.100.149)

According to legend, Saint Ursula was a great beauty who lived in the fifth century. A Christian princess and daughter of a British king, she traveled to the Continent to avoid an unwanted marriage, accompanied by eleven thousand virgins. Returning from Rome, she and her companions were said to have been slaughtered by the Huns in the vicinity of Cologne. A large Roman cemetery uncovered in the region in the late Middle Ages was assumed to have been their burial site. Many of the recovered skeletal remains were accepted as holy relics of the presumed martyrs, each of whom was piously and extravagantly assigned a name. The relics are now mostly housed in the Golden Room (Goldene Kammer) adjacent to the twelfth-century church dedicated to Saint Ursula in Cologne.

The four small virgin martyrs are the only attributes identifying this statuette as Saint Ursula. She may have held a martyr's palm in one of her hands and arrows associated with her death by the Huns in the other. The rounded, relatively smooth dome of the head suggests that the figure once wore a crown signifying royal birth.

This statuette is one of the finest of the many produced in Malines, Mechlin, in the southern Netherlandish region. These works, depicting various saints and the Virgin and Child, are all about the same size, and most were carved in walnut and polychromed. Some bear the Malines shield mark, consisting of three stripes, or *pales*. They date from the late fifteenth century to about 1530, and, except for the latest examples, they tend to have a consistent Late Gothic figure style. Roughly worked, more or less flat, and unpainted on the backs, these sculptures were intended as high reliefs. As devotional images, they could be viewed alone, grouped in a garden tableau (*hortus conclusus*), or set into a domestic altarpiece.







### Saint Martin of Tours and a Bishop Saint

Southern German (Swabia, Ulm), 1510–15  
Lindenwood with polychromy and gilding, h. 45¼ in. (114.9 cm)  
Gift of Mrs. Russell C. Veit, in memory of her father, Maurice Bompard, 1950 (50.233.2, .1)

Saint Martin was born in 315 in Pannonia (Hungary) during the reign of Constantine the Great (r. 306–37). As a young officer in the Roman cavalry in Gaul, he is said to have divided his cloak with a naked beggar. He subsequently recognized the beggar as Christ. This event was followed by many other acts of charity. In 370 or 371 he became the bishop of Tours, and he spent the remainder of his life as a missionary, preaching and fostering monasticism in France. He was one of the first saints who was not a martyr. He died near Tours in 397. Saint Martin appears in art as a Roman cavalryman and sometimes as a bishop with a crosier and ecclesiastical vestments. In this sculpture the crosier is not depicted. The beggar kneels at the feet of the saint, who seems ready to protect him with the

lower portion of his cope. Saint Martin wears a bishop's mitre with lappets, as does the companion figure, who holds a book. The identification of this second sculpture is uncertain. The raised right hand with the lifted index finger may be a gesture of speech or instruction.

The two works, hollowed out in the back, came from one of the many large polychromed sculptural altarpieces found in southern Germany during the fifteenth and the first decades of the sixteenth centuries. Sophie Guillot de Suduiraut has proposed that these two bishop saints originally flanked the Virgin and Child belonging to the Fondation Siegfried in the château at Langeais in France. She suggested that the wing reliefs of this reconstructed altarpiece are the low-relief saints now in the Musée de Picardie, Amiens, and that the entire ensemble can be attributed to the circle of Daniel Mauch (1477–1540). Mauch, a native of Ulm, produced altarpieces in the region until he left for Liège in the southern Netherlands in 1529. He did not return to Ulm because of the adoption of Lutheranism there in 1531.

Attributed to Hans Leinberger (southern German  
[Lower Bavaria], active 1510–30)

### Saint Stephen

Ca. 1525–30

Lindenwood with traces of polychromy, h. 33 in. (83.8 cm)

Bequest of Gula V. Hirschland, 1980 (1981.57.2)

Saint Stephen, revered as the first Christian martyr, is shown seated upon a low, partly draped, backless bench. He wears a dalmatic over a long tunic, indicating that he was a deacon. In his right hand he holds an open book supporting three rocks, the instruments of his martyrdom, which is recounted in the Acts of the Apostles (7:57–60).

This work is carved from three pieces of wood, one for the saint and the other two for the lateral extensions of the seat. Curvilinear locks of hair frame the saint's high forehead and smoothly modeled, youthful face and hang down almost to his shoulders. The modeling of the relief is so convincing that

when viewed from the front the figure appears to be in the round, although it is only a few inches thick.

Attributed to one of the foremost Late Gothic sculptors of Lower Bavaria, Hans Leinberger of Landshut, this portrayal of Saint Stephen is the Museum's only representative of Leinberger's style. It is particularly notable for the animated execution of the drapery, which seems to have an internal life of its own in the combination of deeply scalloped recesses, doughlike thickening of the outer ridges, broken connecting folds, and inexplicably swirling edges. This visual drama, a kind of Late Gothic Baroque, contrasts with the young saint's benign expression.

The relief was probably once part of a series of seated saints that may have included Lawrence, another deacon-saint often depicted with Stephen in Late Gothic art. The late Alfred Schädler, in a letter dated June 5, 1998, described the Museum's sculpture as a mature work by Leinberger after comparing it to figures from an altarpiece of about 1526–28 preserved in Polling.





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Dealers are enclosed in brackets. Biblical citations are from the Vulgate Bible.

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