

The Frick Collection: Detail Report



Angel

Jean (Jehan) Barbet (French, d. 1514)

Date 1475

Medium Bronze

Dimensions H.: 44 1/2 in. (113 cm)

Credit Line Purchased by The Frick Collection, 1943

Accession Number 1943.2.82

Currently On View

First Floor, Room 17, Garden Court

Commentary The inside of the Angel's left wing bears the highly unusual inscription: "Le xxvii^e jour de mars / l'an mil cccc lx + xv Jehan Barbet dit de Lion fist cest angelot" (on the 27th day of March in the year 1460 + 15 Jean Barbet, called of Lyon, made this angel). Barbet probably was not the artist who designed the Angel but the proud master craftsman who cast it so expertly that only minor flaws are visible in its beautifully burnished surface. Barbet's occupation had equipped him with the relevant skills, for after all, a founder who made defective cannons would not have had a brilliant career. Test cleaning patches suggest that the present dark patina of the sculpture veils a lighter, more golden hue, proper to the original bronze. The Angel's wings are attached by means of pins inserted through sockets, but the rest of the figure appears to have been cast as a single piece; the left hand may once have held a staff or cross. Neither the name of the Angel's designer, assuming it was not Barbet, nor its destination or purpose is known. Floods, war, and the destruction wreaked upon Lyon during the Revolution obliterated almost all of the city's early artistic heritage, leaving records with names of its many sculptors but little of their work for comparison. Perhaps the bronze survived only because it was made in or for some other location; no provenance earlier than the nineteenth century has been traced, although an unconfirmed report asserted that it came from the Sainte-Chapelle in Paris. The intended function of this benign creature is equally enigmatic. It may have formed part of an altar or fountain complex. But similar pointing figures were employed as weathervanes, and a Gabriel pointing toward the Virgin is found in Annunciation groups. The Angel's serene expression and the quiet, contained dignity of the columnar figure bring to mind the paintings of a Flemish contemporary; the Angel could almost be a Memling cast in bronze. Source: *Art in The Frick Collection: Paintings, Sculpture, Decorative Arts*, New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1996.

Collection History Marquis de Talhouet, Château du Lude, Sarthe. Félix Wildenstein. Georges Hoentschel, Paris. J. Pierpont Morgan, London and New York, 1906. Knoedler. Frick, 1943. Source: *Sculpture in The Frick Collection: German, Netherlandish, French and British. Volume IV*. New York: The Frick Collection, 1970.