

The Frick Collection: Detail Report



The Resurrection

Vecchietta (Lorenzo di Pietro) (Italian, 1410–1480)

Date 1472

Medium Bronze

Dimensions 21 3/8 x 16 1/4 in. (54.3 x 41.3 cm)

Credit Line Henry Clay Frick Bequest

Accession Number 1916.2.02

Currently On View

First Floor, Room 4, Octagon Room

Commentary Small bronzes almost always present problems of attribution. A bronze is rarely signed, dated, or otherwise documented—for example by a provenance leading directly back to an early inventory, by accounts of payments identifying it, or by contemporary letters describing the work. Most attributions rest on tradition, on close parallels with other, authenticated, sculpture by the artist, or simply on the eye and experience of the connoisseur attaching a name to the piece. Only two works in The Frick Collection belong to the unusual genus of bronzes that are both signed and dated: the Barbet Angel is one, the Vecchietta Resurrection the other. The original function of the Resurrection relief is unknown, although it may have served as the door to a tabernacle. Whatever its destination, the artist clearly took pride in his achievement, for he inscribed his name and the date prominently on Christ's tomb: "OPVS. LAVR / ENTII.PETRI.P / ITTORIS.AL / VECHIETTA. / DE SENIS. M. / CCCC.LXXII." (The work of Lorenzo di Piero painter called Vechietta of Siena 1472). In this late work Vecchietta demonstrates his awareness of the humanist currents of the day by the classicizing style of the sarcophagus and the antiquarian details of the Roman soldiers' armor. But the arbitrary scale of his figures and the tomb's skewed perspective look back to medieval conventions, seen, for example, in the Frick Temptation of Christ, painted by Duccio in Siena more than 150 years earlier. This blending of selected elements from the new style that was spreading from nearby Florence with local late Gothic traditions is characteristic of Sienese artists well into the sixteenth century. For his composition Vecchietta seems to have studied a work executed over half a century earlier: Lorenzo Ghiberti's Resurrection on the North Door of the Florence Baptistry. But he modified the linear suavity of that still partially medieval bronze with a more dramatic, expressive sharpness and tension derived from Donatello. Vecchietta's career as a painter, referred to in the inscription, is suggested as well through the pictorial complexity of the bronze and its abundance of detail. Within the shallow recession of the relief he creates a surprising illusion of depth, moving back from the protruding, harshly angular crush of soldiers in the foreground to the low-relief angels swimming peacefully among the clouds. Realistic touches throughout help to place convincingly within the physical world an intensely spiritual apparition. Source: Art in The Frick Collection: Paintings, Sculpture, Decorative Arts, New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1996.

Collection History Prince Chigi, Rome. Rodolphe Kann, Paris. J. Pierpont Morgan, London and New York. Duveen. Frick, 1916. Source: Sculpture in The Frick Collection: Italian. Volume III. New York: The Frick Collection, 1970.