

The Frick Collection: Detail Report



Michelangelo (1475–1564)

Leone Leoni (Italian, 1509–1590)

Date 1560

Medium Copper alloy, cast

Dimensions Diam.: 2 5/16 in. (5.83 cm)

Credit Line Dr. Stephen K. and Janie Woo Scher Collection

Accession Number SCHER.2014.15.41

Currently On View

Second Floor, Room 32, Medals Room

Commentary As Emily Fenichel contends and as once mentioned by Vasari, this medal should be considered a collaboration between Leoni, the fabricator, and the great sculptor Michelangelo, the latter being the source of the complex imagery and personal meaning. The medal is the deeply moving statement of a great artist nearing the end of his life. On the obverse, Michelangelo presents himself as a kind of priest, the full implications of which are expounded on the reverse, where he is depicted as a blind pilgrim led by Fides (Faith, Fido, the dog). The entire image is an *impresa* in which the inscription (Michelangelo's motto) is a promise that through his art the artist, once cleansed of sin at the end of his pilgrimage, will be able to "teach transgressors Thy ways; and sinners shall be converted unto Thee." The wax model from life that Leoni carved in Rome was cast in Milan, and four examples (two in silver, two in bronze) were sent to the revered master on March 14, 1561, accompanied by the following note: "The medal which is in the box is chased and finished. I pray you to keep it for love of me and do with the other as you please. If it is ambition that has inspired me to send examples to Spain and Flanders, it is affection for you that has inspired me to send some to Rome and elsewhere." Source: Scher, Stephen K., et al. *The Scher Collection of Commemorative Medals*. New York and London, 2019.