

BLUMKA



Christ on the Road to Calvary

Germany, Augsburg or Nuremberg

Circa 1520-30

High relief, enameled, gold and silver

2.5 x 1.75 inches (6.4 x 4.5 cm)

Provenance:

Lord Francis Pelham Clinton Hope, 8. Herzog von Newcastle, (3.2.1866–20.4.1941),
London

L. Harris, London

Joseph Brummer, Auction Parke-Bernet, Part I, 20.-23. April 20-23, 1949, no. 705

Melvin Goodman, Auction Parke-Bernet, April 24, 1969

Collection Paul W. Doll jr., New York, until 2020

Exhibitions:

Decorative Arts of the Italian Renaissance 1400-1600. Detroit Institute of Arts, 1958-59,
Cat. no. 349

The Baltimore Museum of Art, 1962-68

Literature:

Burlington Fine Arts Club, Catalogue of European Enamels, 1897

The Baltimore Museum of Art, 1962-68

Decorative Arts of the Italian Renaissance 1400-1600, Detroit Institute of Arts, 1958/59,
cat. no. 349, ill. pp.142-143 (as Italian around 1500).

Erich STEINGRÄBER, "Süddeutsche Goldemailplastik der Frührenaissance", in:
Studien zur Geschichte der europäischen Plastik, Festschrift Theodor Müller on April
19, 1965, ed. by Kurt Martin, Halldor Soehner, Erich Steingraber, Hans R. Weihrauch,
Munich 1965, pp. 223-233, fig. 16

Comparative literature:

Theodor MÜLLER, Erich STEINGRÄBER, "Die französische Goldplastik um 1400", in:
Münchener Jahrbuch der bildenden Kunst, ed. From the Staatlichen Kunstsammlungen
und dem Zentralinstitut für Kunstgeschichte, Volume 3, Vol. V , pp. 29-79, Munich, 1954

The relief depicts Christ in a purple robe kneeling under the weight of the cross. He is just leaving the city of Jerusalem on the way to Mount Golgotha where the crucifixion is to take place. Two of the party on the far left are the Virgin Mary and St. John, standing below the arch of a building. They and three more companions are dressed in violet, blue, turquoise and green robes, all contributing to the color dynamics of the relief. In the background, there is a hill with a castle on top, as well as a translucent blue sky. The vegetation in the foreground is modelled in the round.

The relief is made using the technique of “ronde-bosse enameling.” In such works, a goldsmith carved the figures out of gold or silver (hammered or cast) and then coated them with a glass paste that is then melted into “enamel”. The figures would then be placed onto a silver or gold plate, on which the colored, mostly translucent glass forming the background, is melted between gold bars. The color palette for our relief ranges from transparent blue and green for the background, over opaque white for the faces, to turquoise, cobalt, purple and green for the robes. These precious shimmering colors give the small relief an incomparably noble character; even the curly hair is made of gold shavings.

The Carrying of the Cross is a traditional scene from the Passion of Christ. Our enamel plaque was originally part of a series comprising several scenes. Four other gold enamel works from this series belong to the collection of the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York (Fig. 2 - 5). Those plaques are the same size, with a round finish at the top, and are comparable in artistic execution. The character of the faces and robes, the treatment of the background with white, gold-ornamented architecture, right down to details such as the plants made of emerald-green as well as the small-scale leaves on gold wire in the foreground, speak to belonging to the same group. These Scenes from the Passion could have adorned a reliquary box or a case.

Yet another enamel plaque, also with an oval finish and depicting Christ in front of Pilate, also fits into this group. This email was attached to a pax board at a later date and was donated to the Louvre in Paris in 1901 by Adolph de Rothschild. (Fig 1.)



Fig. 1.

Pax with silver enamel relief, Christ in front of Pilate
South Germany, early 16th century

Gold and silver, enameled

14 x 26 cm

Musée du Louvre, Paris, Donation Adolphe de Rothschild, 1901, Inv. no. OA 5627



Fig. 2. – 5.

Four enamels at The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York
1520-30, German, Augsburg or Nuremberg
Silver, enamel, gold

6.2 x 4.4 cm

Metropolitan Museum, Anna-Maria and Stephen Kellen Acquisitions Fund, 2015
Inv. no. 2015.388.1-4

Provenance: Galerie J. Kugel, until 2000; Bernice and Jerome Zwanger, New York; Blumka
Gallery, New York, until 2015; sold to the Metropolitan Museum of Art



Fig. 2.
Christ in the Garden of Gethsemane
The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York
Inv. no. 2015.388.1



Fig. 3.
Capture of Christ
The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York
Inv. no. 2015.388.2



Fig. 4.
Crowning with Thorns
The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York
Inv. no. 2015.388.3



Fig. 5.
The Resurrection
The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York
Inv. no. 2015.388.4