



Medieval Art from The Metropolitan Museum of Art

Beginning February 7 the Elvehjem will display 13 objects from the Department of Medieval Art of The Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City. To permit visitors to take full advantage of objects of this age and rarity, the Elvehjem has organized several educational programs: four slide-lectures, a summer mini course, and tours led by docents (see end of narrative for particulars). These works will remain on view at the Elvehjem through December of 2003.

The display of these works in Brittingham Galleries I and II supplements the Elvehjem's collection of medieval art and gives visitors the opportunity to examine the diverse artistic production of the Middle Ages. Ranging in date from the 6th century to the 15th, the works include examples of metalwork designed for personal adornment such as jewelry, liturgical and devotional objects, Romanesque stone sculpture, and Gothic ivories.

The art of the Middle Ages in western Europe spans the period in history between the reign of the Roman Emperor Constantine (311–337) and the advent of the Renaissance (about 1500 in northern Europe). The contemporary viewer confronting art of the medieval world will glimpse aspects of early medieval costume, the role of monstrous imagery in church decoration, the chivalric ideals of courtly love, and the devotional world of the Christian worshiper. While taken from their original liturgical and historical settings, these objects will, nevertheless, illustrate some of their original functions and meanings.

Amongst the earliest works are examples of the arts of the early medieval period in northern Europe dating from the 6th to the 8th centuries, a period that bridges antiquity and the Middle Ages and is characterized by political turmoil from extensive migrations of Germanic and other peoples across Europe. Five objects reflect the culture of the Frankish Empire, in particular the Merovingian dynasty in the 6th and 7th centuries.

Included are four outstanding examples of the sixth- and seventh-century jewels:
a pair of cloisonné gilt silver-and-garnet disk brooches, a gold filigree bossed disk brooch with garnet, mother-of-pearl and colored glass, and a copper-alloy belt buckle with silver inlay. Also included in the Merovingian

General Information

Calendar

News

Virtual Tour

Collection

Exhibitions

Programs & Services

Events

Publications

Museum Shop

Membership/

Donations

Staff

Volunteers

LVM Home

UW Home

Comments?

objects is a 7th or early 8th-century light green-blue free-blown glass palm cup that comes from a gravesite at Niederbreisig in the Rhine valley.

Two examples of 12th-century Romanesque stone sculpture, a seated figure holding a book and a column capital from Toulouse with monstrous basilisks and serpents, represent the stylistic boldness of this dynamic period of medieval art known for its great campaigns of church decoration in France.

By the 13th century the town of Limoges in southwest France had become the primary place of production of *champlevé* enamel reliquaries (shrines for displaying remains from saints or martyrs). Characteristic of this type of liturgical object is a casket (*châsse*) made to contain holy relics, decorated with angel medallions. A second reliquary in the shape of a statuette of the enthroned Virgin and Child was made around 1300.

Ivory carvings of the 14th century reflect both the religious and the secular worlds of the Gothic age of the great cathedrals and of chivalric romances. A small-scale diptych (two hinged panels) containing scenes from the Life of Christ would have been used in a domestic context as an aid to private prayer. From a secular daily life setting is one valve of a mirror case showing a pairs of lovers in each quadrant and a fantastic beast at each of the four corners. Designed principally for courtiers or merchants, ivory mirror cases would have originally contained a disk of polished metal, a true forerunner of the modern compact.

Alabaster plaques carved in high relief with scenes of the life of Christ are generally thought to have originated in Nottingham, England, in the mid 15th century. Originally part of separate multi-paneled altarpieces, a relief of the Flagellation of Christ and one of the Ascension are represented in this group of loans from The Metropolitan Museum of Art. They complement the relief of the Lamentation with Donors that is in the Elvehjem's permanent collection.

The Elvehjem Museum of Art is open Tuesdays-Fridays 9-5 pm; Saturdays and Sundays 11-5 pm; closed Mondays and major holidays. Admission to galleries and educational events is free. The museum is located at 800 University Avenue on the campus of the University of Wisconsin-Madison and is accessible to wheelchairs from the Murray Street (north) entrance. Parking is available at the city of Madison's Lake Street and Frances Street ramps, university lot 46 on Lake Street between Johnson and University Avenue, university lot 47 on Johnson Street between Park and Lake streets. Evening and weekend parking is also available under Grainger Hall with entrance on Brooks Street between University Avenue and Johnson streets. The Elvehjem Museum of Art will provide sign language interpreters for associated programs by three-week advance request to Anne Lambert, Curator of Education, weekdays, 608 263-4421 (voice).