



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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N.C. Museum of Art Presents Alabaster Reliefs from Victoria and Albert Museum, London

Exhibition explores the culture, commerce of medieval Christendom

Raleigh, N.C.—This spring the North Carolina Museum of Art (NCMA) presents *Object of Devotion: Medieval English Alabaster Sculpture from the Victoria and Albert Museum*, a robust collection of alabaster reliefs and independent figures drawn from the V&A's unparalleled collection. The exhibition features 59 works spanning three centuries, including a set of panels from a single altarpiece.

Object of Devotion explores the history, meaning, and function of the alabaster sculptures and allows visitors the opportunity to study the role of art in the spiritual culture of medieval Europe, England in particular.

The works in *Object of Devotion* highlight the value and power of the visual



narrative for a broad range of viewers, most of whom were illiterate. The objects were originally displayed in homes, chapels, and churches at all levels of Christian society. Depicting the virtuous examples of Christ, the Virgin Mary, and numerous Christian saints and martyrs, these works were created to inspire faith and devotion in viewers or to console them as they suffered their own personal hardships. The objects, exported throughout the European continent, offer insight into the deeply personal hopes, fears, and core beliefs of medieval Christians.

The presentation of *Object of Devotion* was carefully constructed with the visitor experience in mind. "The exhibition is presented in an intimate setting. Low light levels and choral music from the period serve to create a reverential atmosphere," says David Steel, curator of European art at the NCMA. "These elements should enhance the viewing experience for our visitors, helping them imagine that they have been transported to a different place and time as they enjoy these remarkable works."

In the wake of England's King Henry VIII's cataclysmic break with the Catholic Church in 1534 and the advent of the Reformation, monasteries and convents were closed and their properties confiscated. During the latter part of his reign and that of his son and successor, Edward VI, religious art was ruthlessly targeted in a state-sponsored program aimed at purging the land of Catholic "idols." The iconoclasm (literally, "image-breaking") brought about the systematic destruction of religious art—sculpture, metalwork, glass, textiles, wall paintings, and alabaster panels—in public places, private homes, and monasteries. That these fragile works survived at all testifies to how they were cherished and valued by their owners, even in the face of persecution.

NEWS RELEASE

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TICKETS

\$5 Adults
Free for children 6 and under
Free for college students Friday nights

Exhibition tickets may be purchased online at www.ncartmuseum.org, by phone at (919) 715-5923, or in person at the Museum Box Office in East Building.

Admission to the Museum's permanent collection and Museum Park is free.

HOURS

Tuesday–Thursday 10 am–5 pm
Friday 10 am–9 pm
Saturday–Sunday 10 am–5 pm
Closed Monday

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(from previous page) *The Holy Trinity with the Virgin, St. John, and Symbols of the Four Evangelists*, circa 1450–1470, painted and gilded alabaster, 28 ¼ x 13 5/8 in., Victoria and Albert Museum, London

Object of Devotion is organized by Art Services International.

Object of Devotion: Medieval English Alabaster Sculpture from the Victoria and Albert Museum

March 3–May 26, 2013
East Building, Gallery 2

Exhibition Catalogue

A 224-page, fully illustrated catalogue, *Object of Devotion: Medieval English Alabaster Sculpture from the Victoria and Albert Museum*, accompanies the exhibition.

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About the North Carolina Museum of Art

The North Carolina Museum of Art's permanent collection spans more than 5,000 years, from ancient Egypt to the present, making the institution one of the premier art museums in the South. The Museum's collection provides educational, aesthetic, intellectual, and cultural experiences for the citizens of North Carolina and beyond. The 164-acre Museum Park showcases the connection between art and nature through site-specific works of environmental art. The Museum offers changing national touring exhibitions, classes, lectures, family activities, films, and concerts.

The Museum opened West Building, home to the permanent collection, in 2010. The North Carolina Museum of Art, Lawrence J. Wheeler, director, is located at 2110 Blue Ridge Road in Raleigh. It is the art museum of the State of North Carolina, Pat McCrory, governor, and an agency of the Department of Cultural Resources, Susan W. Kluttz, secretary.



The Annunciation, circa 1470–1500, painted and gilded alabaster, 16 7/8 x 11 3/8 in., Victoria and Albert Museum, London



Head of St. John the Baptist, circa 1470–1500, painted and gilded alabaster, 10 5/8 x 8 1/8 in., Victoria and Albert Museum, London

ABOUT THE EXHIBITION

Object of Devotion is organized and circulated by Art Services International, Alexandria, Virginia, and supported by a grant from the Samuel H. Kress Foundation. In Raleigh generous support is provided by the Ron and Jeanette Doggett Fund. The exhibition is also made possible, in part, by the North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources; the North Carolina Museum of Art Foundation, Inc.; and the William R. Kenan Jr. Endowment for Educational Exhibitions.