

North Carolina Museum of Art in Raleigh, NC, Offers Medieval Sculpture

The North Carolina Museum of Art in Raleigh, NC, is presenting *Object of Devotion: Medieval English Alabaster Sculpture from the Victoria and Albert Museum*, on view in East Building, Gallery 2, through May 26, 2013.

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.

The exhibition 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 this exhibition 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



The Holy Trinity with the Virgin, St. John, and Symbols of the Four Evangelists, circa 1450-1470, painted and gilded alabaster, 28 1/4 x 13 5/8 in., Victoria and Albert Museum, London

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.

Object of Devotion is organized by Art Services International.

Tickets for this special exhibit are \$5 for adults. It is free for children 6 and under and 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.

For further information check our NC Institutional Gallery listings, call the Museum at 919/839-6262 or visit (www.ncartmuseum.org).

North Carolina Museum of History in Raleigh, NC, Offers Exhibit of NC Earthenware

The North Carolina Museum of History in Raleigh, NC, is presenting *Art in Clay: Masterworks of North Carolina Earthenware*, on view through Sept. 1, 2013.

The exhibition will celebrate the achievements of earthenware potters during the 18th and 19th centuries. This landmark exhibition showcases nearly 200 objects made by Piedmont potters. The exhibit was organized by Old Salem Museums & Gardens

Among the most masterful items are slipware dishes created by Moravian potters at Salem and Bethabara (in present-day Forsyth County) and by contemporary Germanic and British craftspeople in other areas of the Piedmont region. *Art in Clay* features pottery from distinguished public and private collections.

During the last half of the 18th century, potters of European and British descent introduced a variety of Old World ceramic traditions to the Carolina backcountry. These highly skilled craftsmen transformed clay into slipware dishes with designs reminiscent of 17th-century flower paintings; into pots and jars with vibrant abstract motifs; and into a menagerie of sculptural forms depicting owls, foxes and other creatures familiar to early settlers.

In addition to the Moravian earthenware tradition, *Art in Clay* reveals the



Dish, probably made during Gottfried Aust's tenure as master of the pottery at Salem, North Carolina, 1775-1785. Lead-glazed earthenware. Image by Gavin Ashworth, courtesy of Old Salem Museums & Gardens.

contributions of Piedmont potters who worked outside the Moravian communities.

"For many years the Moravians who settled in what is now Forsyth County were credited with producing all of the slip-decorated ware made in the 18th and 19th centuries in the North Carolina backcountry," said Johanna M. Brown, Director of Collections and Curator of Moravian Decorative Arts, Old Salem Museums

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& Gardens. "However, the research of the team of scholars and archaeologists working on the *Art in Clay* project has shown definitively that, while the Moravians were important contributors to the North Carolina earthenware tradition, potters of Germanic descent working in the St. Asaph's district of what is now Alamance County (formerly part of Orange County) and Quaker potters working in Randolph County made equally significant contributions to this tradition."

For the younger set, *Art in Clay* will include a hands-on area with age-appropriate activities. Children will create their own designs, learn how pottery is made, and more.

A variety of educational programs for all ages will complement the exhibit. These offerings will include Artist at Work programs featuring North Carolina potters, a lecture and children's programs.

Art in Clay is sponsored by Old Salem Museums & Gardens, the Chipstone Foundation and the Caxambas Foundation. The NC Museum of History gratefully acknowledges the generous support of the following individuals and institutions: The Marion Stedman Covington Foundation, Mr. and Mrs. W. Trent Ragland Jr., Goodnight Educational Foundation, Ms. Nella P. Fulton, and Mr. and Mrs. C. Edward Pleasants.

Purchase tickets in the Museum Shop. Admission is \$10 for ages 18 and up; \$8 for senior citizens, active military personnel and college students with an ID. Tickets cost \$5 for school groups (per person) and children ages 5 to 17. Admission is free for children ages 4 and under and for Museum of History Associates members. To schedule tours for groups of 10 or more, sign up online at (www.nccapvisit.org).

Be sure to stop by the Exhibition Shop to purchase wonderful reproductions of slip-decorated pottery and other pottery crafted by North Carolinians. Pick up an *Art in Clay* booklet about the exhibit for \$5. For more in-depth information, purchase the 2009 and 2010 volumes of the award-winning journal *Ceram-*



Fish bottle, made in Salem, North Carolina, 1801-1830. Lead-glazed earthenware. Image by Gavin Ashworth, courtesy of Old Salem Museums & Gardens.

ics in America. In addition to illustrating hundreds of examples of North Carolina earthenware using the latest advances in digital photography, the journals present new research and insights by leading scholars from multiple disciplines.

The museum is located on E. Edenton Street, across from the State Capitol. Parking is available in the lot across Wilmington Street. The Museum of History, within the Division of State History Museums, is part of the NC Department of Cultural Resources.

The NC Department of Cultural Resources annually serves more than 19 million people through its 27 historic sites, seven history museums, two art museums, the nation's first state-supported symphony orchestra, the State Library, the NC Arts Council, and the State Archives. Cultural Resources champions North Carolina's creative industry, which employs nearly 300,000 North Carolinians and contributes more than \$41 billion to the state's economy. To learn more, visit (www.ncdcr.gov).

Old Salem Museums & Gardens in Winston-Salem, NC, is one of America's most comprehensive history attractions. Its museums — the Historic Town of Salem and the Museum of Early Southern Decorative Arts (MESDA), along with award-winning heirloom gardens — engage visitors in an educational and memorable historical experience about those

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