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WELL-TRAVELED "ST. CHRISTOPHER" RETURNS TO THE NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART

Severo Calzetta da Ravenna

Saint Christopher Carrying the Christ Child with the Globe of the World, c. 1500/1509

bronze/medium brown patina

Christ Child, 9.2 cm (3 5/8 in), Samuel H. Kress Collection, National Gallery of Art, Washington.

Saint Christopher, 27.2 cm (10 3/4 in), Musée du Louvre, Paris

Washington, DC--A bronze St. Christopher statuette whose travels constitute a classic tale of loss, mistaken identity, and reunion is currently on view in the new Sculpture Galleries of the National Gallery of Art, on loan from the Louvre. *Saint Christopher Carrying the Christ Child with the Globe of the World* (c. 1500/1509) by Severo Calzetta da Ravenna consists of two small Renaissance bronzes, a nearly eleven-inch Saint Christopher that belongs to the Louvre, and a three-and-five-eighths-inch Christ Child that belongs to the National Gallery of Art's Samuel H. Kress Collection, one of the world's great collections of Renaissance bronzes.

The two bronzes were 3,800 miles apart until 1970, when a young Louvre curator named Bertrand Jestaz became intrigued by a figure called "Boy with a Ball" while studying the Kress Collection at the National Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C. The boy's posture suggested he had been seated on something, and his distinctive drapery was similar to that of a statue thought to be an "Atlas" or "Hercules" at the Louvre. When Jestaz asked that the boy be removed from its base, a small prong was found whose measurements seemed to be a match for a threaded hole in the upraised palm of the "Atlas."

National Gallery of Art curator Douglas Lewis took the bronze boy to Paris in September 1970. To the delight of the art world, the figure fit right into his perch on "Atlas's" hand. In December 1970 both statues were brought to the U.S. for technical

testing at the Winterthur Museum in Delaware, where they were found to be cast from an identical alloy, unquestionably in the same workshop at the same time. The bronzes were probably separated during the dispersal of a later private collection.

Together, the pair are now recognized as a depiction of the story of the traditional patron of travelers, Saint Christopher, carrying Jesus across a river. According to the apocryphal legend, Christopher was a ferryman who agreed to carry a small boy across a river on his back. As he went further his burden grew heavier, until when he reached the other side his passenger revealed himself as the Christ Child, with his burden of the whole world. The pair are considered an anomaly in art history, because Saint Christopher is usually depicted carrying the Christ Child either on a shoulder or on his back, rather than balanced on a raised hand. The composition of this group allows the two to gaze intently into each other's faces, as the child blesses the ferryman.

Rechristened *Saint Christopher Carrying the Christ Child with the Globe of the World*, the statuette was exhibited briefly at the National Gallery of Art in 1971. The attribution of the statuette was also changed, from Bartolomeo Bellano (1434-1496-97) to Severo Calzetta da Ravenna, a slightly younger Paduan artist (active 1496-1525/1538). Since 1973 the two bronzes have been together at the Louvre, save for a brief visit back to the National Gallery of Art in 1985. This year's journey brings them back in celebration of the new *Sculpture Galleries in the West Building* (<http://www.nga.gov/collection/sculpture/index.htm>) , where they will be on view in Gallery 14 until April 2004.

Information about The Louvre can be found at www.louvre.fr

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General Information

The National Gallery of Art and its Sculpture Garden are at all times free to the public. They are located on the National Mall between 3rd and 9th Streets along Constitution Avenue NW and are open Monday through Saturday from 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. and Sunday from 11:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. The Gallery is closed on December 25 and January 1. With the exception of the atrium and library, the galleries in the East Building will be closing gradually beginning in July 2013 and will remain closed for approximately three years for Master Facilities Plan and renovations. For specific updates on gallery closings, visit www.nga.gov/renovation (<http://www.nga.gov/renovation>) .

For information call (202) 737-4215 or the Telecommunications Device for the Deaf (TDD) at (202) 842-6176, or visit the Gallery's website at www.nga.gov. Follow the Gallery on Facebook at www.facebook.com/NationalGalleryofArt and on Twitter at twitter.com/ngadc.

Visitors will be asked to present all carried items for inspection upon entering. Checkrooms are free of charge and located at each entrance. Luggage and other oversized bags must be presented at the 4th Street entrances to the East or West Building to permit x-ray screening and must be deposited in the checkrooms at those entrances. For the safety of visitors and the works of art, nothing may be carried into the Gallery on a visitor's back. Any bag or other items that cannot be carried reasonably and safely in some other manner must be left in the checkrooms. Items larger than 17 by 26 inches cannot be accepted by the Gallery or its checkrooms.

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