Rarely Loaned Victorian Sculptures Come to Yale Center for British Art

SCULPTURE VICTORIOUS: ART IN AN AGE OF INVENTION, 1837–1901
Yale Center for British Art: September 11–November 30, 2014
Tate Britain: February 25–May 25, 2015

NEW HAVEN—This fall, a major exhibition at the Yale Center for British Art will examine the making and viewing of sculpture in Britain and its empire during the reign of Queen Victoria. Sculpture Victorious: Art in an Age of Invention, 1837–1901 seeks to reveal not only sculpture’s inventiveness and ubiquity but also its cultural and political significance in the nineteenth century. As Britain became the first urban and industrial modern nation in the Victorian era, it witnessed an efflorescence of sculpture on an unprecedented scale, with the development of new markets, new forms of patronage, and new sites for display. Public monuments were raised across Britain and its empire, while ambitious sculptural programs were commissioned for public institutions. Exhibition spectacles, such as the Crystal Palace at Sydenham, brought thousands of sculptural objects before audiences of millions, while sculpted portraits of the monarch circulated the globe in the form of coins and medals. Sculpture Victorious will explore this extraordinary blossoming and examine the causes and structures behind it.

The exhibition will bring together a rich array of works, including figures and reliefs in marble, bronze, silver, and wood, as well as gems, cameos, and porcelain objects that highlight the imagination of Victorian sculptors and manufacturers, from Minton’s spectacular six-foot-high majolica elephant to intricate carvings in ivory and wood. Many of the objects are rarely, if ever, seen by a wider public, and most have never before left the UK. Key loans include George Frampton’s alabaster and bronze statue of Dame Alice Owen, which normally presides over the dining hall of the school she had founded in Potters Bar, outside London; and William Reynolds-Stephens’s remarkable Royal Game, depicting Queen Elizabeth and King Philip playing chess with the Spanish Armada, which the artist made as a new type of “national monument.” Also on loan is a magnificent electroplated zinc statue by James Sherwood Westmacott of the Earl of Winchester, one of the barons who led the rebellion against King John of England, resulting in the signing of Magna Carta. The statue normally resides in the Palace of Westminster, where it forms part of the sculptural program of the House of Lords. This is the first time the House of Lords has lent the statue.

George Frampton, Dame Alice Owen (detail), 1897, marble, alabaster, and bronze, Dame Alice Owen’s School, Potter’s Bar, Hertfordshire; Studio of Pietro Paolelli, Plaster cast medallions after Bertel Thorvaldsen from Opere di Thorwaldsen, ca. 1865, mounted on paper-lined tray and housed within faux bookbinding, Yale Center for British Art, Paul Mellon Fund; Tommaso Saulini and R. & S. Garrard, First Class Badge of the Order of Victoria and Albert, cameo 1862, mount 1864, sardonyx, white on brown, silver-gilt, enamel, diamonds, rubies, and emeralds, Royal Collection Trust, London/© Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II 2014
Sculpture Victorious: Art in an Age of Invention, 1837–1901

A generous grant from the Terra Foundation for American Art has supported the loan of Hiram Powers’s *Greek Slave* (1847) from the Newark Museum. Although made by an American artist, the work was first shown in London, at the Great Exhibition of 1851, where it became one of the most talked about and controversial sculptures of the age. *Sculpture Victorious* will offer a unique opportunity to reconsider this iconic American work in the context of Victorian Britain, where it became a contested symbol in debates about slavery and abolition. Juxtaposed with the *Greek Slave* will be a statue by the British sculptor John Bell, provocatively titled *The American Slave*, which was shown at the London International Exhibition of 1862. Made in bronze, and depicting an African woman awaiting transportation across the Atlantic, the work stood as a riposte to Powers’s white marble statue. The Terra Foundation will generously underwrite a study day at the Center which will explore these Anglo-American relationships in depth. The presence of these works at Yale connects to a range of programs on the study of slavery that will be explored by the university this fall. For more information, see britishart.yale.edu/Empire.

*Sculpture Victorious* is being co-organized by the Center and Tate Britain, where the exhibition will travel in spring 2015. The curators are Martina Droth, Associate Director of Research and Education, and Curator of Sculpture at the Center; Jason Edwards, Professor of History of Art at the University of York; and Michael Hatt, Professor of History of Art at the University of Warwick. The organizing curator at Tate Britain is Greg Sullivan, Curator, British Art 1750–1830.

A fully illustrated catalogue, published by the Center in association with Yale University Press, will accompany this exhibition.

OPENING LECTURE

The opening of *Sculpture Victorious* will be marked by a public conversation with the curators on September 10 at 5:30 pm.

YALE CENTER FOR BRITISH ART

The Yale Center for British Art houses the largest and most comprehensive collection of British art outside the United Kingdom. Presented to the university by Paul Mellon (Yale College Class of 1929), the collection of paintings, sculpture, drawings, prints, rare books, and manuscripts reflects the development of British art and culture from the Elizabethan period onward. Visit us online at britishart.yale.edu.

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