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New Contexts for *The Entry of Christ into Jerusalem*

Two Embriachi Plaques in the Museum of Art and Archaeology*



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And they brought the ass and the colt and laid their garments upon them and made him sit thereon. And a very great multitude spread their garments in the way, and others cut down boughs from the trees and strewed them in the way. And the multitudes that went before and that followed cried, saying, “Hosanna to the son of David! Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest.” (Matthew 21:7-9)¹

Introduction

A few days before the Last Supper, Jesus sent two of his disciples on a mission. He instructed them to retrieve a donkey that would be tethered at a village near the site of Bethany, where Jesus had been staying. If the owner protested, he advised, they should simply state that it was “needed by the Lord.” Once the animal had been successfully obtained, the disciples laid their cloaks ceremoniously across her back, and Jesus sat astride, riding this humble creature toward the gates of Jerusalem. Eager to celebrate his arrival in the city, a crowd gathered along the road, its members spreading articles of clothing and palm branches reverently across Jesus’s path while chanting “blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord.”² This pivotal moment, known as the Triumphal Entry into Jerusalem, would mark the beginning of the Passion—or the final week of Jesus’s mortal life—inciting a series of events that would ultimately lead to his execution and divine resurrection three days later.

Two carved bone plaques in the permanent collection of the University of Missouri’s Museum of Art and Archaeology capture the intensity of this decisive event (Fig. 1).³ Jesus rides toward a throng of people who surge forward to greet him. He gazes peacefully toward the people and raises his hand in a gesture of blessing. A young man at the forefront prepares to lay his mantle at the donkey’s feet while others reach their hands toward Jesus or wave celebratory palm fronds. At the far right, one witness raises his hand in a gesture that mirrors the posture of Jesus’ disciple on the far left, their poses providing a frame for the action in the two panels. A forest and the tightly packed buildings of the fortified



Fig. 1. Workshop of Baldassare Embriachi, Venetian, 1390–1409. *The Entry of Christ into Jerusalem*, ca. 1400, bone. 11.00 × 4.2 cm (each); 11.00 × 8.4 cm (overall). Museum of Art and Archaeology, University of Missouri, Gift of Mr. J. Lionberger Davis, 67.59A-B. Image courtesy Museum of Art and Archaeology.

city perch on rocky outcroppings above, hinting more toward the artist’s medieval Italian surroundings than the landscape and architecture of biblical-era Jerusalem. The exacting detail of this finely carved scene is especially impressive given the modest size of the work surface—hardly larger than four by three inches.

While the plaques have long been on display in the Museum, they have attracted little scholarly attention. This may be due to their small size and unassuming material, or perhaps because in the six centuries since their creation they have become divorced from whatever framework originally held them. Nonetheless, clues garnered from the objects’ formal structure, their material and subject matter, and the artistic methods of the workshop where they were created provide valuable insight into the *Entry of Christ into Jerusalem* plaques, allowing me to argue that they most likely comprised one part of a larger cycle of Passion imagery that would have originally adorned a triptych.

The Embriachi Workshop

Shortly after the plaques were donated to the Museum by J. Lionberger Davis in 1967, Alan McNairn attributed *The Entry of Christ in Jerusalem* to the Embriachi workshop.⁴ This bone carving enterprise was active in late-fourteenth- and early-fifteenth-century Florence and Venice, producing an array of high-quality altarpieces, devotional triptychs, and containers (Figs. 2 and 3). The Embriachi’s significant output is evidenced by scores

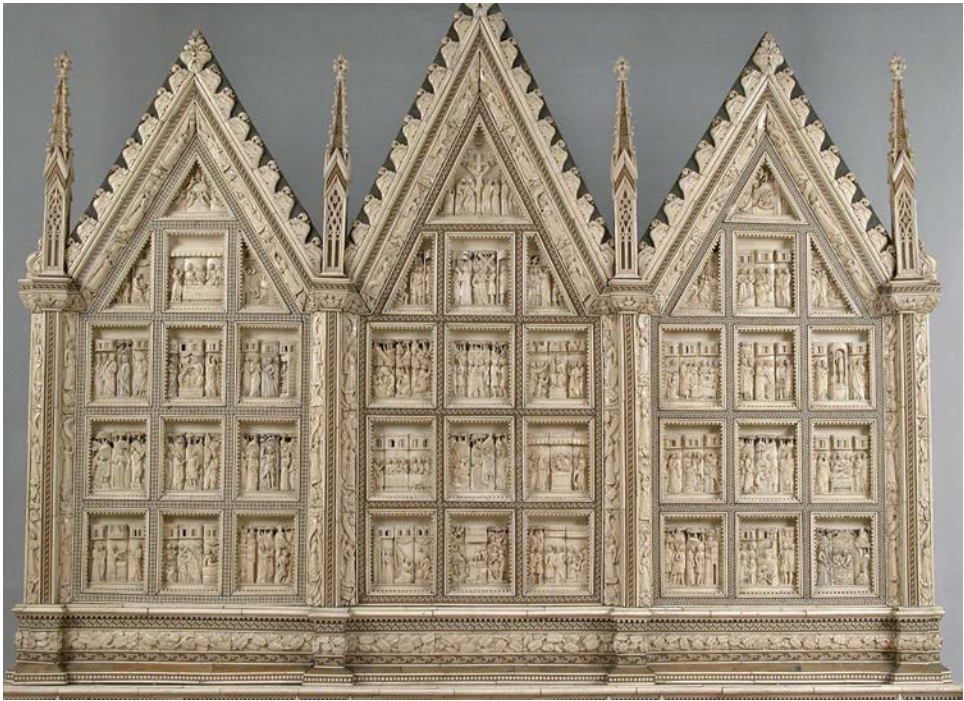


Fig. 2. Workshop of Baldassare Embriachi, Venetian, 1390–1409. Altarpiece, ca. 1390–1400, bone framed with intarsia and horn, traces of paint and gilding. 128.3 × 153.7 cm, not including wooden base. Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Gift of J. Pierpont Morgan, 1917. 17.190.489. www.metmuseum.org.



Fig. 3. Workshop of Baldassare Embriachi. Casket, ca. 1400, carved bone, stained horn, wood, pigment, gilt metal. 28.3 × 33 × 19.1 cm. Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Purchased with funds provided by the William Randolph Hearst Foundation (47.8.25). Photo © Museum Associates/Los Angeles County Museum of Art.

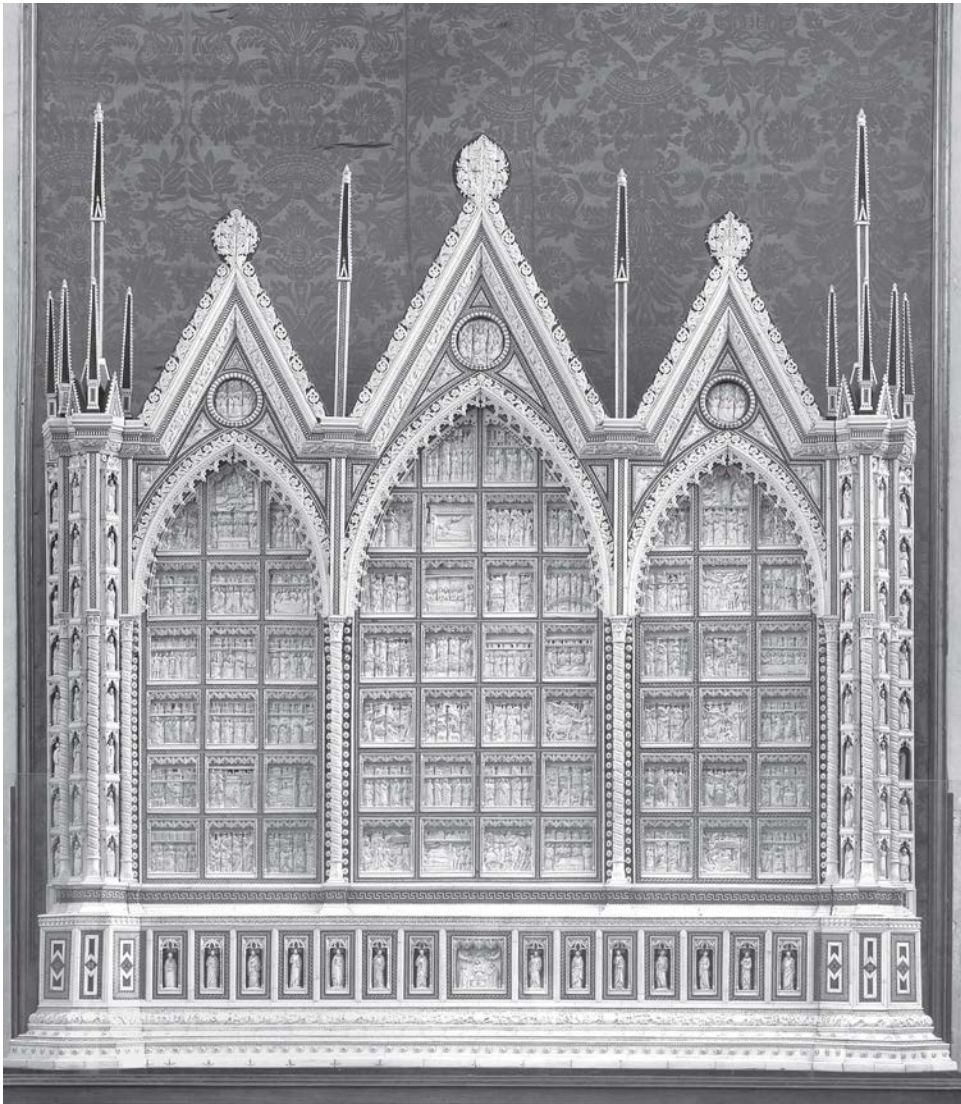


Fig. 4. Workshop of Baldassare Embriachi, Venetian, ca. 1390–1409. Altarpiece of the Certosa di Pavia with legends of the prophet Balaam and the Magi, the life of the Virgin, and the life of Christ, ca. 1396–1400, bone, ivory, remnants of polychrome; wood and poplar frame; decorative border of inlaid wood, horn, mother of pearl, and ivory. Approx. 260 × 243 cm (overall). Sacristy of the Certosa di Pavia. Scala / Mauro Ranzani / Art Resource, NY.

of works that survive today in institutions across Europe and North America.⁵ The surfaces of their products were decorated with configurations of distinctively carved bone or—less commonly—ivory plaques, with three or four plaques typically employed to represent a scene from a larger narrative, either a biblical account or an episode from a romance or classical tale. Details of the figures, such as eyes, mouths, and clothing, as well as landscape elements were sometimes accentuated with touches of polychrome or, more rarely, gold (Fig. 3). Each scene was generally bordered by delicate *certosina* work, which comprises colorful fragments of inlaid bone, wood, and horn fashioned into intricate geometric patterns.

McNairn's argument mainly concerned the attribution of the plaques to the Embriachi workshop based on stylistic similarities between them and the only three artworks that can be definitively attributed to the Embriachi through documentary records: two large chests and a monumental altarpiece produced for the Certosa di Pavia, an extravagant Carthusian monastery built and financed by the duke of Milan, Gian Galeazzo Visconti (1351–1402) (Fig. 4).⁶ The Missouri plaques, McNairn determined, exhibit hallmark characteristics of Embriachi carvings, including the three-layered “formalized mushroom-shaped Tuscan pines” at the upper left, elongated figures with slim waists and swelling chests, and a distinctive hairstyle marked by a tight curl around the ear.⁷ In comparing the Missouri plaques to some of the highest-quality objects ever created by the workshop, McNairn curtly concluded that they were likely once affixed to an altarpiece, comprised the entirety of the original scene, but were “clearly the work of a lesser craftsman, probably an apprentice.”⁸ Can advancements in the literature about the Embriachi and their late-medieval bone-carving endeavors help us revisit, confirm, and expand upon the conclusions McNairn drew when the scholarship on the Embriachi was still in its infancy nearly fifty years ago?

Although several late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century scholars laid the groundwork for a preliminary understanding of late-medieval bone carving workshops and their products, in the intervening decades since McNairn published his research on the Missouri plaques, a small but dedicated group of scholars has contributed immensely to our knowledge of how the Embriachi workshop was organized, its chronology and methods of production, its clientele, and its iconographic tendencies.⁹ What scholars describe as the “Embriachi workshop” was one of what appear to be several distinct ateliers that emerged in the latter decades of the fourteenth century in central and northern Italy, producing ecclesiastical, devotional, and secular objects decorated with configurations of carved bone plaques.¹⁰ The Embriachi atelier, however, is the only bone-carving enterprise that has been substantiated through documentary records. Surviving evidence includes the note of a considerable payment of one thousand gold florins made by the prior of the Certosa di Pavia to a “Baldesario de Ubriachis” for the aforementioned altarpiece and chests.¹¹ Additionally, wills were produced in Venice in both 1395 and 1406 by an individual with a strikingly similar name: Baldassare di Simone d’Aliotto degli Ubriachi.¹² The most crucial piece of evidence is contained within the earlier will, wherein Baldassare cited an individual named Giovanni di Jacopo as “master of my

works in bone.”¹³ Through this epithet, the two Baldassares were determined to be one and the same. In recent decades, scholars have been able to gain greater insight into this individual’s life and attribute a multitude of objects to the workshop that is associated with him, albeit through an erroneous transcription of his surname.¹⁴

In the late 1970s archival research by historian Richard Trexler uncovered many of the historical details of Baldassare’s life.¹⁵ An enterprising nobleman of Florentine origin, Baldassare spent a significant portion of his adolescence being educated in Avignon, France.¹⁶ During his mature years he traveled throughout much of western Europe, working at times as a dealer of precious jewels and illuminated maps, and as a diplomat to the courts of rulers such as Martin I of Aragon (r. 1396–1410) and Richard II of England (r. 1377–1399). It is not entirely clear when Baldassare founded his bone-carving workshop and when it ultimately ceased production. Elena Merlini has argued that the tightest time-frame possible for the workshop’s operation is approximately 1390–1405, while others such as Michele Tomasi have posited a more expansive range, from the 1370s until the mid-1410s.¹⁷ Since the workshop’s productions bear an “incontestably Florentine character,” most scholars agree on one detail: that the workshop was founded in Florence and that Baldassare moved it to Venice in the mid-1390s after he encountered political difficulties in his hometown.¹⁸

Although Trexler suggested that Baldassare was the head artist of the workshop, later researchers have argued that he was instead the financial backer of the atelier, with Giovanni di Jacopo serving as its leader for at least part of enterprise’s mature years.¹⁹ As Tomasi has noted, given his childhood spent abroad, his status as a member of the nobility, and his travels throughout Europe as an adult, Baldassare would have had little time to undertake the requisite training in a sculptor’s guild and practice this art on a commercial level. Likewise, his acknowledgment of Giovanni as “master of my works in bone” supports the consensus that he performed the role of proprietor rather than artisan. After all, workshops traditionally consisted of multiple individuals who purchased or prepared materials, designed or executed components of works, fitted them together into finished objects, and interacted with patrons and buyers.²⁰ While Luciana Martini has identified the hands of various sculptors within the workshop, the division of labor is still poorly understood.²¹ It is especially unclear if the woodworkers who prepared the boxes and altarpiece forms, plus the *certosina* borders, were employed by the workshop or were simply contracted to deliver the armatures in bulk or by commission.²²

Although the impetus for Baldassare’s establishment of the workshop is unknown, his social standing may have secured its success.²³ Through his peers at home in Italy and his travels through the courts of Europe, he likely developed a keen understanding of the types of luxury items that were desired by the mercantile and noble classes and ordered his workshop to craft products with these audiences in mind. Indeed, the Embriachi produced a number of boxes and chests depicting tales derived from popular vernacular literature that was enjoyed by the upper echelons of society, such as the legends of classical heroes Paris and Jason and the Old French romance *Mattabruna*.²⁴ In addition, Embriachi products were so refined as to attract some of the most illustrious figures of the day,

including the duke of Milan, whose patronage was described above, and Jean, duke of Berry, who commissioned a lavish large-scale altarpiece for the abbey of Poissy, northwest of Paris.²⁵ Baldassare's procurement of these expensive commissions suggests that he possessed an astute sense of business acumen and an intimate familiarity with the tastes of contemporary noble audiences.

Although most of the workshop's surviving products cannot be definitively linked with specific patrons, the periodic inclusion of episodes outside of a usual narrative formula or the depiction of uncommon saints suggest some level of personalization as might be requested by a buyer.²⁶ In addition to commissions, the workshop also created a number of boxes, chests, triptychs, and diptychs that were likely preconfigured and sold "as is," as well as objects that appear to have been produced "on demand" from an assemblage of pre-carved plaques, depending on the taste or needs of a prospective patron. In fact, Merlini has identified a number of small devotional triptychs with little or no variation in iconography, suggesting that they were sold preconfigured or nearly complete, with key figures or saints inserted around the time of purchase.²⁷ By shrewdly producing a combination of premade objects, compositions requiring minor input from the buyer, and more costly and effortful commissions, the Embriachi appear to have been able to guarantee different streams of income, lower their costs, and consolidate their workflow.

A Question of Material

Another facet of the Embriachi workshop that afforded them economy and expediency was their use of bone as a primary material. Easily obtained as butchers' castoffs, bone was ideal for its plentitude and low cost.²⁸ Perhaps more valuable to the Embriachi, however, were its physical properties: the bones, which likely came from the legs of large animals such as cattle or horses, could be sized into plaques of relatively uniform dimensions displaying little natural variance in color. This inherent standardization would have allowed the workshop to prepare in advance multiple versions of the same scene in predictable sizes and configurations, inserting them into a wooden armature whose shape could also be predetermined by the semi-regular dimensions of the plaques.²⁹ Working in a serial manner, made possible by the physical properties of bone, was a likely contributor to the success of the atelier.³⁰

The Embriachi's material proclivities have been at the forefront of scholarly discussion since art historians first started writing about the workshop. While it was generally acknowledged in the nineteenth century that the Embriachi employed bone as a work surface, confusion regarding their rate of ivory use abounded well into the twentieth century, as certain items were incorrectly assumed to have been made from the more valuable material.³¹ Prized for its lustrous surface and desired for its scarcity, ivory, or the bony tissue of tusks from animals such as elephants, walruses, or narwhals, has been valued as sculptural material across cultures for millennia.³² In the Middle Ages elephant ivory had to be transported to Europe at enormous expense, passing over thousands of miles of trade routes that began in African deserts and savannahs or in the tropics of India.³³ Although

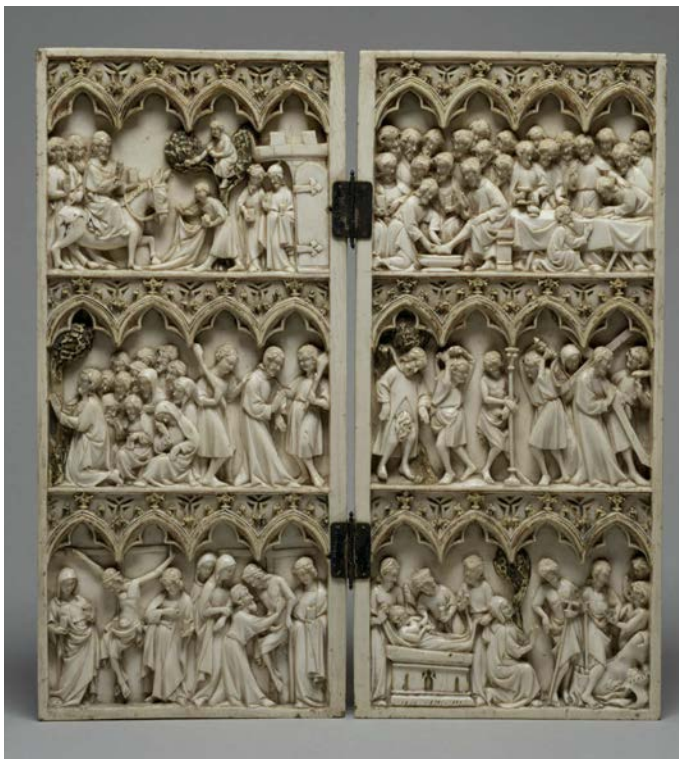


Fig. 5. French. Diptych with *Scenes from the Passion of Christ*, 1350–1365, ivory with traces of paint and gilding, 9 13/16 × 9 1/8 × 3/8 in. (25 × 23.2 × 1 cm). Walters Art Museum, acquired by Henry Walters, 71.179. www.thewalters.org, creative commons license.

the evidence indicates that it was probably carved in the same workshops as bone, ivory was often reserved for crafting precious objects for wealthy patrons, including manuscript covers, reliquary chests, or portable diptychs presenting images of holy figures or scenes of the Passion (Fig. 5).³⁴ Even today, art museum collections across the world are filled with thousands of examples attesting to ivory's significance in medieval Europe and beyond.³⁵

Bone, on the other hand, has a less venerable history. Although employed as a primary sculpting material since the dawn of humanity, bone has received notably less serious scholarly consideration by art historians, likely because, as Leslie Blake and Francine Corcione have noted, this ignoble substance has often been dismissed as a cheap substitute for its more prized counterpart.³⁶ Indeed, at first glance it can be difficult to distinguish between the two materials, which can exhibit similar off-white hues and shiny surfaces, depending on the level of polish. These characteristics have the potential to mislead collectors, cataloguers, and curators tasked with classifying and interpreting Italian bone carvings. McNairn described the Missouri plaques as ivory in his 1968 article.³⁷ Likewise, an art historian described the left plaque as ivory when visiting the Museum in the 1980s.³⁸ These ascriptions are upended, however, by a careful examination of the front and reverse surfaces.



Fig. 6. Reverse of Missouri plaques.

On a superficial level it appears possible that the left plaque is carved from the more precious material due to its slightly yellow hue, a characteristic assumed by ivory, especially as it ages.³⁹ However, as Blake and Corcione point out, bone may present a yellower color if the animal from which it is harvested has a higher body fat percentage.⁴⁰ Another misleading characteristic is the left plaque's smooth and glossy surface, which contrasts with the pitted surface of the right plaque.⁴¹ The quality of a bone, however, may vary because of an animal's diet or age, so it is possible that the bone used for the left plaque was simply extracted from a younger or sturdier animal while the right was obtained from an animal of less robust health.⁴² The best evidence for classifying these works as bone, however, comes from the reverse (Fig. 6). The plaques both exhibit a central vertical canal that once housed the animal's marrow. The distinctive outward flare at the tops, and most noticeably at the bottoms, suggests that the Museum's plaques were most likely carved from the cannon or metapodial bone of what a zooarchaeologist has described as a "cow-sized animal," rather than the tusk of a more exotic creature.⁴³

Why did bone emerge as a material for small-scale relief sculpture in Italy in the late fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries? This phenomenon has, predictably, been linked to trends in the ivory trade. Art historians have noted a dramatic increase in the amount of African ivory reaching western Europe in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries.⁴⁴ The establishment of bone-carving workshops such as the Embriachi atelier coincides with the peak in the availability and popularity of ivory in the mid-fourteenth century. The prominence of these types of carved-bone products extends into the fifteenth

century, when ivory was not as widely available because of shifting economic circumstances.⁴⁵

Are we to understand the use of bone plaques on these chests, boxes, triptychs, and altarpieces simply as an inexpensive substitute for a more fashionable material whose decline in availability rendered it increasingly out of reach for even wealthy consumers? This explanation, posited by a number of art historians and ivory specialists such as Richard Randall, in his influential *The Golden Age of Ivory: Gothic Carvings in North American Collections*, likely accounts for at least some of the business garnered by Italian bone-carving workshops in the late medieval and early Renaissance eras.⁴⁶ While the Embriachi did occasionally employ ivory, most notably in the monumental altarpiece at the Certosa di Pavia, it was typically reserved for the most important or highly symbolic episodes in a narrative, including Jesus's birth, his Triumphal Entry into Jerusalem, his crucifixion, and his ascension into heaven.⁴⁷ Dozens of their products employ solely bone, including other prestigious commissions, however, and Embriachi scholars have not often paused to consider the multiplicity of meanings this humble material might have carried for a late medieval viewer.

As Ittai Weinryb has recently argued, "We would like to think that material signification existed throughout the Middle Ages and was applied to all types of material, and that the selection of materials would be essential for the transmission of the significance that foregrounds the object."⁴⁸ Following this line of reasoning, it is worth considering how bone may have functioned not only in an economic context but also on a metaphorical level: while medieval audiences may have appreciated bone for its lower cost and its close physical resemblance to ivory, it may have also served as a signifier for religious meaning when employed in the production of devotional or ecclesiastical materials. In the Bible, bone is variably identified as a life-giving or life-affirming material. For example, God fashions Eve from Adam's rib bone in a gesture that the Book of Genesis describes as a testament to the unity of husband and wife (2:22–24). Additionally, when Jesus appeared to his disciples three days after his death, he cited bone as evidence of his divine resurrection: "See my hands and my feet, that it is I myself. Handle, and see, for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as you see me to have" (Luke 24:39).⁴⁹ Per John the Evangelist, this reflects the fulfillment of Old Testament verses, which predicted "You shall not break a bone of him" (Exodus 12:46, Numbers 9:12, and John 19:36).⁵⁰

Bone is the support that provides structure to living bodies, but it also remains as a signifier of the body long after the flesh decays. Human bones are linked to the medieval phenomenon of the relic trade, whereby the corporeal remains of saints were acquired by monastic orders, ecclesiastical institutions, and individuals. Ranging from a single tooth to a complete skeleton, these types of relics were venerated for their physical links to holy figures and their concomitant miraculous healing abilities.⁵¹ Relics were also highly symbolic. In the case of Jesus, they underscore the miracle of his divine ascension; since he was taken up into heaven whole, the only material remnants of his body were things shed during his life, such as his blood and deciduous teeth.⁵² While medieval audiences probably would have realized that the bone employed by the Embriachi was of animal

rather than human origin, it is entirely possible that worshipers would have understood the multivalent meanings inherent in the material and interpreted it through their personal beliefs and cultural experiences. The elevation of such a base material through the transformative potential of sculpture may have even amplified themes of rebirth, renewal, and resurrection for a viewer interacting with a devotional or ecclesiastical object fashioned from carved bone.

In sum, it may be helpful to consider not only the economic circumstances that led the Embriachi to employ bone but also the connotations of the material, especially as it could potentially relate to biblical themes. As scholars turn toward more expansive interpretations of the Embriachi workshop and its output, the preliminary comments postulated here may be further advanced and nuanced.

Iconography and Original Context for the Missouri Plaques

Although the Embriachi workshop produced dozens of objects bearing Passion imagery, scenes of the Triumphal Entry into Jerusalem are relatively rare among them. In fact, despite an extensive search, I have identified only six other published instances of this episode in their oeuvre:

1. The monumental altarpiece at the Certosa di Pavia, two plaques, the left being ivory and the right being either ivory or bone, both with polychrome and gilding (Fig. 7)⁵³
2. The monumental altarpiece produced for the abbey of Poissy, now in the collection of the Louvre, four plaques, bone⁵⁴
3. A large triptych sold to a private collection in Europe by Sotheby's in 2015, three plaques, bone (Fig. 8 and detail)⁵⁵
4. A smaller triptych in the collection of the Staatliche Museen, Berlin, two plaques, bone (Fig. 9 and detail)⁵⁶
5. A chest in the Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA), four plaques, polychrome bone and gilding (Fig. 10)⁵⁷
6. A single plaque which appears to depict the crowd gathering before Jesus, sold to a private collection in Europe by Sotheby's in 2003, bone⁵⁸

Unlike the works mentioned above (with the exception of the single Sotheby's plaque), the Missouri plaques are now divorced from whatever armature once held them, obscuring their original use. However, a comparison of the two plaques with the six other representations of the Triumphal Entry into Jerusalem yields important insight into two basic questions: First, do the works in the Museum's collection comprise the entirety of the original scene, or were there once additional plaques that have been lost in the intervening centuries? Second, what was their original context: did they decorate the surface of an altarpiece, triptych, or container? The narrative structure and physical form of the plaques allow us to piece together answers.



Fig. 7. Detail of Figure 4, the *Triumphal Entry into Jerusalem*. Scala / Mauro Ranzani / Art Resource, NY.

The Triumphal Entry episode is instantly recognizable to viewers through specific iconographic elements that the Embriachi incorporated into their designs. Chart 1 (pp. 50-51) tabulates these elements as they appear in the surviving representations. The first and most important is the figure of Jesus astride a donkey, which appears in every representation except the Sotheby's plaque, since the remainder of that scene is missing.⁵⁹ Jesus' pose is conventionalized, with his right arm extended in a gesture of blessing regardless of whether he enters the tableau from the left or the right side. Likewise, the form of his elegantly draped, classical-style robes deviates little between the six representations. The second key element—as stipulated by Scripture—is a throng of greeters, which ranges from three people in the Sotheby's triptych to as many as eight in the Louvre altarpiece. Predictably, nearly all of the examples include figures brandishing celebratory palm fronds and a young man laying his mantle in deference at the donkey's feet.⁶⁰ Finally, the city appears in every complete episode, either as a cluster of Italianate buildings perched on a cliff above the Jerusalemites or occupying the entirety of the left- or right-most plaque, depending on the orientation of the figures. While the seven compositions are similar to one another in a broad sense, their structure does not necessarily follow a distinct template as seen elsewhere in the Embriachi's output.⁶¹ Since the Triumphal Entry appears to have been uncommonly depicted in the workshop's products, it appears that the carvers shifted the composition to best fit the object that the plaques were destined to decorate.



Fig. 8 and detail. Workshop of Baldassare Embriachi, Venetian, ca. 1390–1409. Triptych with *Scenes from the Life of Christ*, certosina wood, bone and horn, with remnants of polychromy on the shutters. 113 × 64.5 cm (open). Private collection in Europe. Image courtesy of Sotheby's.



Fig. 9 and detail. Workshop of Baldassare Embriachi, Venetian, ca. 1390–1409. Triptych, bone and wood. 51.5 × 32 cm (open). Berlin, Staatliche Museen. Photo by Daderot; creative commons/public domain license.



Fig. 10. Detail of Figure 3 with depiction of the *Triumphal Entry into Jerusalem*. Photo © Museum Associates/Los Angeles County Museum of Art.

The Missouri plaques contain each of the essential iconographic conventions employed by the Embriachi to represent the Triumphal Entry, suggesting that the current configuration is original and complete. This aligns with McNairn's findings, although he based his conclusions on the symmetry of the scene and the identical poses of the outermost figures rather than through a comparative iconographic reading.⁶² Several additional details support my and McNairn's conclusions. The first is the figure of the disciple, who lingers close behind Jesus at far left and gazes straight at the viewer. Had the composition contained an additional plaque to the left, the disciple would most likely have been depicted on it, rather than being squeezed into the cramped space above the donkey's haunches. On the LACMA chest, for example, the artist placed the two disciples on the leftmost plaque, allowing the figure of Jesus to occupy his own individual space (Fig. 10). Second, the appearance of disciples in fewer than half of the complete Triumphal Entry scenes suggests that their presence is not necessarily requisite, but that it serves instead to further enrich and enliven the composition. Since the artist of the Missouri plaques included this nonessential element in a manner that suggests space was limited, it is likely that no other plaques were employed to represent this episode.

A final detail to support the conclusion that the Missouri plaques are a complete representation of the scene is the number of figures in the crowd, which totals six. Only the large-scale altarpieces at the Certosa di Pavia and in the Louvre depict a greater number of greeters present at the Triumphal Entry, totaling seven and eight, respectively. It is unlikely that the artist of the Missouri composition would have included more figures than appear in these two monumental works. If the carver did include an additional plaque to the right with several more greeters, the drive for visual balance would require another plaque to be placed to the left of Jesus, and as described above, this is highly unlikely given the position of the disciple. Every key element of the Triumphal Entry—and more—has been accounted for by the artist. Thus, the Missouri plaques likely present a complete rendering of this inaugural scene of the Passion.

It is now worth exploring the type of framework that may have originally held the plaques. While it is impossible to offer a definitive conclusion, some inferences may be drawn by comparing the Missouri plaques to the general output of the Embriachi workshop. As mentioned elsewhere, the atelier produced three main categories of items: monumental altarpieces, triptychs, and chests or boxes. Religious subject matter is largely confined to the former two types of objects; there are only three published examples of containers depicting religious imagery, with decorative schemes on these products typically reserved for classical tales and romances.⁶³ It is therefore statistically unlikely that the Missouri plaques were once affixed to a box or chest, leaving monumental altarpieces or triptychs as more likely possibilities.

Only the three monumental altarpieces at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Louvre, and the Certosa di Pavia have survived intact to the present day, but it is telling that their narrative episodes generally consist of three or more plaques, making it unlikely that the comparatively smaller Missouri works were destined for such a sizeable frame. In addition, almost all of the plaques covering the altarpieces' surfaces are level across the

top (see Figs. 2 and 7), in marked contrast to the curved form of the Missouri plaques.⁶⁴ Generally speaking, when the Embriachi arched the tops of their compositions, they were set into the workshop's smaller-scale items, such as triptychs and containers (see Figs. 3 and 8). Since the latter objects have been ruled out, it is therefore most likely that the Missouri plaques were once affixed to a narrative triptych, possibly one similar to or slightly smaller than the Sotheby's example (Fig. 8).

Triptychs and Devotional Circumstance

Serving variably as teaching devices, aids for prayer, prompts for contemplation or veneration, decoration, or some combination thereof, triptychs were integral components of elite devotional culture, whether placed in an ecclesiastical or monastic structure, or in a domestic space.⁶⁵ As instruments for imparting religious knowledge, these objects communicated meaning on many levels, not least of which was encouraging emotive responses to the tribulations of Jesus through detailed narrative episodes. In the early Middle Ages, church teachings and religious art tended to emphasize Jesus' divine and redemptive qualities.⁶⁶ In contrast, by later in the medieval era, liturgical, textual, and visual materials often centered on his physical qualities and human experiences.⁶⁷ Texts such as the widely consumed *Meditationes vitae Christi*, written in Tuscany in the mid-fourteenth century, encouraged devotees to imagine themselves as engaged witnesses to the events of Jesus' life. This was done by walking them through what Eugène Honée has referred to as a "richly tapestried biography of Christ," which elaborated on the comparatively drier and more terse account provided by the Gospels.⁶⁸ The most dramatic section of the text, which focuses on Jesus's final days, is told through the perspective of those closest to him: the Virgin Mary, Mary Magdalene, and the disciple John. This literary device magnifies the pain and suffering of all involved and prompts the reader not only to reflect on and internalize the simultaneously heartbreaking and uplifting message but also potentially to identify physically with Jesus.⁶⁹ As might be expected, this phenomenon, referred to by modern scholars as affective meditation, appears to have influenced—or have been influenced by—the visual arts, coinciding with changes to the narrative structure of religious imagery that favor emotional immediacy.⁷⁰

Art historians have long sought to illuminate the relationships between social and religious circumstances (such as affective meditation) and trends in the arts. In his influential *Painting and Experience in Fifteenth Century Italy: A Primer in the Social History of Pictorial Style*, Michael Baxandall argued that the visual and theological culture of an artist's day, such as the trend for a devotee to imagine their presence in Jesus' life, would necessarily manifest in pictorial style. In other words, paintings are cultural artifacts.⁷¹ For example, an artist producing a religious scene might paint figures whose features are generalized so that a viewer might be free to "impose his personal detail" onto the image, as was encouraged in the process of affective meditation.⁷² An artist might also depict people gesticulating expressively, which Baxandall associated with the system of communicative hand signs and body gestures co-opted by fifteenth-century preachers for dramatic and

emotive effect in public sermons.⁷³ These details do not only ground a work of art firmly in the time period in which it was created but also draw in the viewer based on a system of visual communication with which they were familiar, triggering memories and inviting close contemplation. Although developed for the genre of early Renaissance painting, Baxandall's ideas about how the style of works of art belie the social circumstances of their creation and their expressive goals may be applied to sculptural objects.

For example, through their physical form, narrative structure, and minute detail, triptychs like those produced by the Embriachi necessitate physical and emotional intimacy—key tenets an artist might rely on to evoke an affective response in a viewer. One can attempt to gain an understanding of these key traits by imagining how a medieval person might have experienced such objects. To access the carved imagery of an Embriachi triptych, its user would have needed to open the object's hinged doors to expose the interior, activating the work through a physical touch.⁷⁴ Perhaps the user would notice how the narrative episodes were framed by decorative archways with a scalloped lower edge and trefoil and quatrefoil perforations at the corners (see Fig. 8 and detail). Supported, as in the Sotheby's triptych, by delicately twisted colonnettes, these elegant details reference design elements such as gothic tracery and sculptural niches that were ubiquitous in medieval European ecclesiastical architecture. They enliven the surfaces of the Embriachi's products, while recalling the ecclesiastical surroundings with which a medieval viewer would have been intimately familiar. What better way to frame biblical accounts than through the visual language of church architecture? These borders also cleanly compartmentalize each narrative episode, in a technique that Patricia Lee Rubin has argued “correspond[s] to the focused process of contemplative viewing.”⁷⁵

After absorbing a triptych's decorative border, the user might then move on to carefully examine each narrative episode.⁷⁶ This would have required viewing from a close proximity, since the size of the bone plaques used by the Embriachi generally average around four and a half inches high by one and a half inches wide apiece; even if a scene comprised four or five plaques, it would hardly be larger than five by seven inches.⁷⁷ The minute details employed by the Embriachi carvers in the Museum's *The Entry of Christ into Jerusalem*, such as the two different types of leaves on the trees or the cinched waistband of Jesus's robe, reward this intimate encounter (see Figs. 1 and 11). So, too, do the strategies used by the artist to successfully achieve a lively and emotive composition in spite of a modest work surface. The arched tops of the plaques counterbalance the strong reliance on diagonals seen in the rocky outcroppings, in the pose of Jesus' arm, in the upturned heads of his greeters, and in the position of the mantle that a young man prepares to lay in the path of the donkey.

Complementing the fine details of the figures and landscape is a pleasant reliance on symmetry and echoing, a common tactic employed by sculptors of medieval narrative ivories to impart visual rhythm and energy to the composition.⁷⁸ These include Jerusalem's wall, which slopes upward to meet mountainous terrain that elegantly descends into a bucolic forest. The donkey's crooked fetlock and the bent knee of the young man with the mantle suggest collective movement, while a hand reaching out of the throng paral-



Fig. 11. Detail of Figure 1, landscape and city of Jerusalem.

lets Jesus' pointed finger.⁷⁹ Finally, the disciple and the man at far right share the same pose, not observing the dramatic event unfolding before them but looking directly at the viewer, as if inviting them into the composition. Imagined eye contact between a viewer and a sculpted or painted figure, Rubin has noted, "produces a sense of immediacy" that otherwise might be discouraged by the formal feeling of an "iconic, frontal" pose.⁸⁰ Although somewhat crudely executed, the men's are raised in a pious gesture associated by Baxandall with a "holy matter or devotion," or alternatively, welcome, with the palm raised and presented to the audience.⁸¹ Given the importance of the Triumphal Entry into Jerusalem as the beginning of the Passion, it is an apt moment to welcome the viewer into the composition and encourage them to embark on a contemplative journey, accompanying Jesus through his final mortal days.

Conclusions

At first glance, it may seem unlikely that we can gain a more complete understanding of what purpose the Missouri Embriachi plaques originally served because they have become completely decontextualized in the six centuries since their creation. Nevertheless, a careful examination of their form and an analysis of how the artist represented the scene provide critical insight into *The Entry of Christ into Jerusalem's* original function as a narrative episode in a larger Passion cycle, most likely once presented in the format of a triptych. The finely carved surfaces and expressive figuration invite the viewer to linger and internalize the jubilation and tumult of a key episode that would generate a series of events leading to Jesus's death and redemptive resurrection. While the findings presented in this article are necessarily preliminary, they may be updated as research on the Embriachi workshop grows more comprehensive, and especially as more examples of the Triumphal Entry and Passion cycles are published. What remains conclusive, however, is the plaques' steadfast ability to pique engagement and interest through delight in the intricate details that, in spite of their minute scale, indelibly express the magnitude of this key religious event.

NOTES

*I would like to extend my sincere gratitude to the individuals who supported my research on *The Entry of Christ into Jerusalem*: Alex W. Barker, Jane Biers, Cathy Callaway, and Jeffrey B. Wilcox. My thanks also go to R. Lee Lyman, Kathleen Slane, Anne Rudloff Stanton, Elizabeth Graff Wolfson, and my anonymous peer reviewer for their insightful comments at various stages along the way.

1. Swift Edgar and Angela M. Kinney, *The Vulgate Bible: Douay-Rheims Translation*, vol. 6 (Cambridge MA, 2010) p. 117.
2. The Triumphal Entry into Jerusalem is described in Matthew 21:1–11, Mark 11:1–11, Luke 19:28–44, and John 12:12–19.
3. Workshop of Baldassare Embriachi, Venetian, 1390–1409. *The Entry of Christ into Jerusalem*, ca. 1400, bone. 11 × 4.2 cm (each); 11 × 8.4 cm (overall). Museum of Art and Archaeology, University of Missouri, Gift of Mr. J. Lionberger Davis, 67.59 A and B.
4. Alan McNairn, “*The Entry of Christ into Jerusalem: A Gothic Ivory*,” *Muse* 2 (1968) pp. 25–32.
5. These include the Art Institute of Chicago, Princeton University Art Museum, Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Musée du Louvre, Musée de Cluny/Musée national du Moyen Âge, Museo Civico d’Arte Antica in Turin, the Staatliche Museen in Berlin, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, and the Walters Art Gallery, among others.
6. The altarpiece is still housed in the old sacristy at the Certosa di Pavia, but the chests were eventually dismantled and remounted on a wooden armature, currently in the collection of the Metropolitan Museum in New York (accession no. 17.190.490a, b).
7. McNairn, “*The Entry of Christ into Jerusalem*,” pp. 27–29.
8. *Ibid.*, p. 32.
9. Early sources on the Embriachi include Diego Sant’Ambrogio, “Il trittico in denti d’ippopotamo e le due arche o cofani d’avorio della Certosa di Pavia,” *Archivio storico Lombardo* 3, no. 4 (1895) pp. 417–468; Diego Sant’Ambrogio, “Un trittico fiorentino del XIV secolo ascrivibile a Baldassare degli Embriachi,” *Archivio storico dell’arte* 2 (1896) pp. 25–32; Diego Sant’Ambrogio, “Il grande trittico d’osso scolpito dell’abbazia di Poissy e il suo raffronto col trittico della certosa di Pavia,” *Archivio storico dell’arte* 2, no. 2 (1896) pp. 288–305; Diego Sant’Ambrogio, “Le due arche o cofani d’avorio della Certosa di Pavia,” *Il Politecnico: Giornale dell’ingegnere architetto civile ed industriale* 44 (August/September 1896) pp. 502–513, 525–536; Diego Sant’Ambrogio, “Un Trittico del Museo Civico di Torino,” *Arte e Storia* 8, no. 1 (January 10, 1897) pp. 2–3; Julius von Schlosser, “Die Werkstatt der Embriachi in Venedig,” *Jahrbuch der Kunsthistorischen Sammlungen des Allerhöchsten Kaiserhauses* 20, no. 68 (1899) pp. 220–282; Hans Semper, “Über ein italienisches Beintriptychon des XIV. Jahrhunderts im Ferdinandeum und diesem verwandte Kunsterwerke,” *Zeitschrift des Ferdinandeums für Tirol und Vorarlberg* ser. 3, no. 40 (1896) pp. 145–178. The most comprehensive modern source on the Embriachi is Michele Tomasi’s authoritative monograph on the workshop, *Monumenti d’avorio: I dossali degli Embriachi e i loro committenti* (Pisa, 2010). While there is little literature available in English, for a helpful summary of the workshop and catalog entries of objects in the Victoria and Albert Museum see Paul Williamson and Glyn Davies, “The Embriachi Workshops,” in *Medieval Ivory Carvings, 1200–1550*, vol. 2, Paul Williamson and Glyn Davies, eds. (London, 2014) pp. 749–861. For the workshop’s production of triptychs see Elena Merlini, “I trittici portatili della Bottega degli Embriachi,” *Jahrbuch der Berliner Museen* 33 (1991) pp. 47–62. For the workshop’s production of marriage chests see Luciana Martini, “*Bottega degli Embriachi*: cofanetti e cassetine tra Gotico e Rinascimento (Brescia, 2001); Michele Tomasi, “Miti antichi e riti nuziali: sull’iconografia e la funzione dei cofanetti degli Embriachi *Iconographica*,” *Iconographica* 2 (2003) pp. 126–145; and Elena Martini and Antoni José i Pitarch, *Cofres de Amor*

(Castelló, Spain, 2007). For an in-depth examination of the altarpiece at the Certosa di Pavia see Gian Alberto Dell'Acqua, *Embriachi: il Trittico di Pavia* (Milan, 1982).

10. Martini has proposed that there were at least four such workshops in operation. See Martini, *Bottega degli Embriachi*, pp. 10–20. The emergence of workshops producing items faced with carved-bone plaques may be linked to the rising popularity of the decorated chests and boxes, called *forzieri* and *forzierini*, that were given to a bride before marriage to hold her trousseau or precious gifts presented to her by her fiancé. The use of bone may have allowed buyers to evade sumptuary laws since it was less expensive than ivory. See Paula Nuttall, “Dancing, Love and the ‘Beautiful Game’: a New Interpretation of a Group of Fifteenth Century ‘Gaming’ Boxes,” *Journal of the Society for Renaissance Studies* 24, no. 1 (February, 2010) pp. 119–141, and Brucia Witthoft, “Marriage Rituals and Marriage Chests in Quattrocento Florence,” *Artibus et Historiae* 3, no. 5 (1982) pp. 43–59.

11. Williamson, “The Embriachi Workshops,” p. 751.

12. Richard C. Trexler, “The Magi Enter Florence: The Ubriachi of Florence and Venice,” *Studies in Medieval and Renaissance History* 1 (1978) pp. 195–206 (for a transcription of the 1395 will) and 184–185 (for information on the 1406 will).

13. Trexler, “The Magi Enter Florence,” p. 163.

14. Williamson, “The Embriachi Workshops,” p. 751.

15. See Trexler, “The Magi Enter Florence,” pp. 129–219.

16. *Ibid.*, pp. 135–136.

17. See Williamson, “The Embriachi Workshops,” p. 751 for an excellent summary of the various dating schemes posited by scholars.

18. *Ibid.*, p. 751. Tomasi has also argued that the Embriachi works take the form of Tuscan polyptychs popular in the fourteenth century, which, he has argued, further supports the claims that the workshop emerged in Tuscany. See Tomasi, *Monumenti d’Avorio*, pp. 178–179.

19. Trexler, “The Magi Enter Florence,” p. 181; Tomasi, *Monumenti d’Avorio*, pp. 73–74.

20. See Tomasi, *Monumenti d’Avorio*, pp. 230–31 for a description of how this process might have been carried out within the Embriachi workshop.

21. Martini, *Bottega degli Embriachi*, p. 16.

22. Williamson, “The Embriachi Workshops,” p. 752.

23. Tomasi, *Monumenti d’Avorio*, pp. 55–62.

24. Martini, *Bottega degli Embriachi*, p. 15.

25. The altarpiece is now housed in the Louvre Museum (accession no. INV. MR. 379). For a detailed analysis of this work see Tomasi, *Monumenti d’Avorio*, pp. 107–128, 239–245.

26. Tomasi, *Monumenti d’Avorio*, pp. 94–95.

27. Merlini, “I trittici portatili,” pp. 47–62.

28. See Leslie Blake and Francine Corcione, “Bone,” in *The Carver’s Art: Medieval Sculpture in Ivory, Bone, and Horn*, ed. Archer Saint Clair (New Brunswick NJ, 1989), pp. 7–10; Tomasi, *Monumenti d’Avorio*, p. 220.

29. Tomasi, *Monumenti d’Avorio*, pp. 220–226.

30. *Ibid.*, pp. 220, 230. For a brief overview of the economic benefits of working in a serial manner with low-cost materials, see Vibeke Olson, “The Significance of Sameness: An Overview of Standardization and Imitation in Medieval Art,” *Visual Resources* 20, nos. 2–3 (March 2004) pp. 169–173.

31. For instance, Mary Alice Weyman identified the plaques that originally decorated the two caskets produced for the Certosa di Pavia, but which were inserted onto a wooden backing and eventually donated to the Metropolitan Museum in 1917 by J. Pierpont Morgan, as largely consisting of ivory. This ascription has since been modified to reflect that they are crafted from bone. See Mary

Alice Wyman, “The Helyas Legend as Represented on the Embriachi Ivories at the Metropolitan Museum of Art,” *The Art Bulletin* 18, no. 1 (March, 1936) pp. 5–24.

32. Kathleen Enz Finken, Karen Loaiza, and Melissa Levin Saunders, “Ivory,” in *The Carver’s Art: Medieval Sculpture in Ivory, Bone, and Horn*, Archer Saint Clair, ed. (New Brunswick NJ, 1989), 1–6.

33. Research by ivory specialist Sarah Guérin has contributed immensely to our understanding of these trade routes, especially in regards to medieval Africa. See Sarah M. Guérin, “Avorio d’ogni ragione: The Supply of Elephant Ivory to Northern Europe in the Gothic Era,” *Journal of Medieval History* 36, no. 2 (2010) pp. 156–174; Sarah M. Guérin, “Forgotten Routes: Italy, Ifriqiya, and the trans-Saharan Ivory Trade,” *Al-Mas q: Islam and the Medieval Mediterranean* 25, no. 1 (April 2013) pp. 71–92; Sarah M. Guérin, “Exchange of Sacrifices: West Africa in the Medieval World of Goods,” *The Medieval Globe* 3, no. 2 (2017) pp. 97–124; and Sarah M. Guérin, “Gold, Ivory, and Copper: Materials and Arts of Trans-Saharan Trade,” in *Caravans of Gold, Fragments in Time: Art, Culture, and Exchange across Medieval Saharan Africa*, Kathleen Bickford Berzock, ed. (Evanston IL, 2019) pp. 174–201.

34. For medieval techniques in ivory and bone carving see Theophilus, “Chapter 93: Carving Ivory,” in *On Divers Arts: The Treatise of Theophilus*, John G. Hawthorne and Cyril Stanley Smith, trans. (Chicago, 1963) pp. 187–88. Theophilus, writing in the early twelfth century, uses the words “ivory” and “bone” interchangeably, occluding our understanding of any differences in how these materials were treated. For more information on Theophilus see Peter Barnet, “Gothic Sculpture in Ivory: An Introduction,” in *Images in Ivory: Precious Objects of the Gothic Age*, Peter Barnet, ed. (Detroit MI and Princeton NJ, 1997) pp. 6–7.

35. Institutions with particularly robust collections of ivory include the Metropolitan Museum, Walters Art Museum, Victoria and Albert Museum, and the British Museum, which in 2018 received a major gift of more than five hundred Chinese ivory carvings. Mark Brown, “British Museum Given More Than 500 ‘Exquisite’ Ivory Figures,” *The Guardian*, June 27, 2018, accessed June 11, 2019. <https://www.theguardian.com/culture/2018/jun/27/british-museum-ivory-figures-sir-victor-sassoon>.

36. Blake and Corcione, “Bone,” p. 7.

37. McNairn, “*The Entry of Christ into Jerusalem*,” p. 25.

38. This is noted in the object file for the Missouri plaques.

39. The change in color as ivory ages was noted even in antiquity. See Cutler, *The Craft of Ivory*, p. 51. Per Paul the Silentiary, ivory “tinged by the passage of long years, turns its silvery color to quince-yellow.”

40. Blake and Corcione, “Bone,” p. 8.

41. The tiny pits visible on the right plaque are likely the remnants of the blood vessels that once traversed the bone.

42. Blake and Corcione, “Bone,” p. 8.

43. I am indebted to R. Lee Lyman for examining the Missouri Embriachi plaques and sharing his observations with me. While Lyman noted there are no anatomical markers that indicate from what species of animal the bones were harvested, given the thickness of the bone and its apparent diameter, a cow, or less likely a horse, is the best contender. The red and brownish substances on the back of the plaques are most likely remnants of adhesives used to affix them to some kind of backing.

44. Guérin, “Avorio d’ogni ragione,” p. 156.

45. Products faced with carved bone appear to have been available until around 1430, after which the phenomenon seems to wane (Martini, “Bottega degli Embriachi,” p. 9). Richard Randall has argued that the perceived decline in the production of ivory products is not necessarily related to the

availability of the material through trade with Africa but rather, to a relocation of carving centers from Paris to the Low Countries, altering the trade routes. See Richard H. Randall Jr., “Dutch Ivories of the Fifteenth Century,” *Nederlands Kunsthistorisch Jaarboek / Netherlands Yearbook for History of Art* 45 (1994) pp. 126–139.

46. Randall, “Gothic Ivories,” in *Masterpieces of Ivory*, p. 185.

47. For images of the episodes in the Certosai di Pavia altarpiece carved in ivory, see Dell’Acqua, *Embriachi*, p. 80 (nativity), p. 86 (triumphal entry), p. 91 (crucifixion), and pp. 92–93 (resurrection, noli me tangere, and ascension).

48. Ittai Weinryb, “Living Matter: Materiality, Maker, and Ornament in the Middle Ages,” *Gesta* 52, no. 2 (Fall 2013) p. 115.

49. Edgar and Kinney, *The Vulgate Bible*, p. 467.

50. *The Holy Bible: Douay Rheims Version* (Rockford IL, 1899), I.75 (Exodus), I.151 (Numbers), and II.130 (John).

51. For an overview of relics and their importance in medieval religious life, see Patrick Geary, “Relics and Saints in the Central Middle Ages,” in *Futura Sacra: Thefts of Relics in the Central Middle Ages* (Princeton NJ, 1990) pp. 3–27.

52. I would like to express my gratitude to Anne Rudloff Stanton, who provided invaluable insight for this section.

53. Workshop of Baldassare Embriachi, Venetian, ca. 1390–1409. Altarpiece of the church of Certosa di Pavia with legends of the prophet Balaam and the Magi, the life of the Virgin, and the life of Christ, ca. 1396–1400, bone, ivory, remnants of polychrome; wood and poplar frame; decorative border of inlaid wood, horn, mother of pearl, and ivory. Approx. 260 × 243 cm (overall). Old sacristy of the Certosa di Pavia.

54. Workshop of Baldassare Embriachi, Venetian, ca. 1390–1409. Altarpiece of the abbey of Poissy, ca. 1397, bone, traces of polychrome, and gold; certosina borders. Approx. 276 × 236 cm (overall). Paris: Louvre Museum INV. MR. 379. For an image, see Tomasi, *Monumenti d’Avorio*, p. 458, fig. 73 (bottom left scene).

55. Workshop of Baldassare Embriachi, Venetian, ca. 1390–1410. Triptych with *Scenes from the Life of Christ*, certosina wood, bone and horn, with remnants of polychromy on the shutters. 113 × 64.5 cm (open). Sold to a private collection in Europe as lot 34 of *Old Master Sculpture and Works of Art*, July 9, 2015, Sotheby’s London.

56. Workshop of Baldassare Embriachi, Venetian, ca. 1390–1409. Triptych, bone and wood. 51.5 × 32 cm (open). Berlin, Staatliche Museen.

57. Workshop of Baldassare Embriachi, Venetian, active circa 1393–1409. Casket, ca. 1400, carved bone, stained horn, wood, pigment, gilt metal. 28.3 × 33 × 19.1 cm. Los Angeles County Museum of Art, 47.8.25.

58. Workshop of Baldassare Embriachi, Venetian, ca. 1390–1409. Plaque depicting the triumphal entry into Jerusalem, fifteenth century, bone. Sold to a private collection in Europe as part of lot 9 of *European Sculpture and Works of Art*, April 9, 2003, Sotheby’s London. For an image of this work, see the Sotheby’s webpage for the lot: <https://www.sothebys.com/en/auctions/ecatalogue/2003/european-sculpture-works-of-art-900-1900-103230/lot.6.html?locale=en> (accessed December 4, 2019). The plaque is in the second row from the bottom, third from the right.

59. As an indispensable part of the iconography of the triumphal entry, the Sotheby’s plaque undoubtedly included a depiction of Jesus riding the donkey.

60. The Sotheby’s triptych is the only example that does not depict a young man laying down a mantle or figures waving palm fronds. Furthermore, the depiction of Jesus being greeted by three women is odd. Though women are present in paintings of the subject in medieval and early Renaissance art (see the depiction of this scene by Giotto at the Arena Chapel of Padua, ca. 1304–06,

for a well-known example), the Embriachi tend to depict only men present during the Triumphal Entry. In fact, the composition of this plaque is strikingly similar to the plaque depicting the three Marys at the Crucifixion, in the top-center scene of the triptych. There are congruences between the poses of the women in these two scenes. Additionally, the conical hat just visible in the background of the three female greeters is identical to those worn by the Roman soldiers in the Crucifixion scene. It appears that the plaque employed in the Triumphal Entry scene was originally intended to be included in a Crucifixion scene and was refashioned into a depiction of greeters at the gates of Jerusalem.

61. See Merlini, “I trittici portali,” pp. 47–62 for an informative study of templated scenes, especially as they relate to small, portable triptychs.

62. McNairn, “The Entry of Christ into Jerusalem,” p. 29.

63. Tomasi, *Monumenti d’Avorio*, p. 167. The two other examples of containers featuring religious imagery include the LACMA chest (accession no. 47.8.25), one in the Museo nazionale del Palazzo di Venezia that appears to depict Old Testament scenes, and one depicting the legend of Saints Cosmas and Damian used as a reliquary container in the treasury of Amalfi Cathedral (<http://museodiocesanoamalfi.it/app/it/la-basilica-del-crocifisso/cassetta-rel/>). There are also a number of boxes that depict the story of Susannah and the Elders. While this is technically religious subject matter, I exclude it from the present study because it was commonly depicted on *forzieri* and *forzierini* in a romantic context.

64. The Louvre altarpiece does include two three-panel scenes with arched tops at bottom left and right, which depict the donor, Jean de Berry, and his wife, Jeanne de Boulogne, accompanied by saints and praying. This is the only instance among the three monumental altarpieces where plaques bear arched tops but level bottoms. See Tomasi, *Monumenti d’Avorio*, p. 412, figs. 35 and 36. It is possible that the Embriachi produced additional altarpieces with differing shapes of plaques, but these works have not survived to the present. Unless further monumental altarpieces with arched plaques are located, a triptych remains the most likely original framework for the Missouri plaques.

65. David G. Wilkins, “Opening the Doors to Devotion: Trecento Triptychs and Suggestions concerning Images and Domestic Practice in Florence,” *Studies in the History of Art* 61 (2002) pp. 370–393; Lynn F. Jacobs, *Opening Doors: The Early Netherlandish Triptych Reinterpreted* (University Park PA, 2012) pp. 15–20.

66. Eugène Honée, “Image and Imagination in the Medieval Culture of Prayer: A Historical Perspective,” in *The Art of Devotion in the Late Middle Ages and Europe, 1300–1500*, Henk van Os, ed. (Princeton NJ, 1994) p. 164.

67. Anne Derbes has argued that in Italy this phenomenon begins to occur in the mid-thirteenth century, with images of Jesus and events from the Passion appearing to be “reinvented” specifically to elicit sympathy from the viewer. See Anne Derbes, *Picturing the Passion in Late Medieval Italy: Narrative Painting, Franciscan Ideologies, and the Levant* (Cambridge, 1996).

68. Honée, “Image and Imagination,” p. 165. For an authoritative overview of the text and an English translation of the *Meditationes vitae Christi*, see Sarah McNamer, *Meditations on the Life of Christ: The Short Italian Text* (South Bend IN, 2018). For an in-depth analysis of the phenomenon of affective meditation in medieval Europe, see Sarah McNamer, *Affective Meditation and the Invention of Medieval Compassion* (Philadelphia PA, 2010).

69. Honée, “Image and Imagination,” p. 165.

70. Derbes, *Picturing the Passion*, pp. 2, 10–11.

71. Michael Baxandall, *Painting and Experience in Fifteenth Century Italy* (Oxford, 1972).

72. Michael Baxandall, *Painting and Experience in Fifteenth Century Italy*, 2nd ed. (Oxford, 1988) pp. 46–47.

73. Baxandall, *Painting and Experience* (1988) pp. 64–66.

74. Wilkins, “Opening the Doors to Devotion,” p. 376. For an analysis of the spiritual connotations of doors as they relate to triptychs, plus a discussion of how often triptychs were opened, to what degree the wings were angled, and the various functions triptychs fulfilled in late medieval and early modern religious life, see Jacobs, *Opening Doors*, pp. 8–20.

75. Patricia Lee Rubin, *Images and Identity in Fifteenth-Century Florence* (New Haven CT, 2007) p. 183.

76. For a description of the various ways in which ivory carvings can be “read,” see Harvey Stahl, “Narrative Structure and Content in Some Gothic Ivories of the Life of Christ,” in *Images in Ivory: Precious Objects of the Gothic Age*, ed. Peter Barnet (Detroit MI and Princeton NJ, 1997) pp. 95–114.

77. Dimensions of Embriachi products are generally given for the overall object, rather than

Chart 1: Comparison of Embriachi Triumphal Entries

Collection	Number of Plaques	Material	Landscape	Direction Jesus faces
Missouri plaques (Fig. 1)	2	Bone	Above Jesus	Right
Certosa di Pavia altarpiece (Fig. 7)	2	Ivory (left) and bone (right)	Above Jesus, with shepherd and animals	Right
Louvre altarpiece	4	Bone	Above Jesus and crowd	Left
Sotheby’s triptych (Fig. 8, detail)	3	Bone	Above Jesus and crowd	Left
Staatliche Museen, Berlin triptych (Fig. 9, detail)	2	Bone	Above Jesus	Right
LACMA chest (Fig. 10)	4	Bone	Above Jesus and crowd	Right
Sotheby’s plaque	1	Bone	Above crowd (unclear if the trees would have extended onto other plaques)	(Right)

ⁱ Because one of the figures’ hands have been broken off, it is impossible to tell if additional palm fronds were once represented in this plaque.

ⁱⁱ See endnote 60.

individual episodes comprising two or more plaques. I have calculated the dimensions mentioned in the text above by looking at other examples of single plaques preserved in collections such as the Princeton University Art Museum (see accession nos. y1929-16, y1959-41, and y1959-42, for example).

78. Stahl, "Narrative Structure and Content," p. 96.

79. At some point in its lifetime, the right plaque was broken in half. As a result, the left hand of the figure raising a palm frond is missing. The damage is especially evident on the reverse (see Fig. 6), although the plaque has since been repaired.

80. Rubin, *Images and Identity*, p. 184.

81. Baxandall, *Painting and Experience* (1988) p. 66.

Donkey	Disciples	City of Jerusalem	Boy with Mantle	Palm Fronds	Greeters
✓	1	Above crowd	✓	1 ⁱ	6
✓	2	Above crowd	✓	3	7
✓	0	Leftmost plaque, with person breaking off branch or climbing tree	✓	3	7 (or 8, including figure at far left)
✓	0	Leftmost plaque	×	— ⁱⁱ	3
✓	0	Above crowd	✓	1	6
✓	3	Rightmost plaque	✓	1	4
—	—	(Might have once been represented on a now-lost plaque to the right of the crowd)	✓	At least 2	At least 4

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