

ATTRIBUTED TO JAN BORMAN I (ACTIVE CIRCA 1460 - CIRCA 1502),

Material: oak (with the Brussels mallet mark to the underside, see images below)

Height: 85cm

Provenance:

Guns van Aalst, Belgium;

Collection Hendrickx - Jacobs, Belgium

Note:

This figure of an Angel is one of the rare remaining sculptures coming from the Borman dynasty and has been executed by Jan Borman I. "*Aengesien oic dat hij veele andere zware wercke hadde, ende dat hij die beste meester beeddensydere es...*"; this is how Jan Borman II was described in his time in the state archive archives of Brussels in Belgium. The description to be "the best" however is not clear in relation to what. His work was in heavy demand among churchmen and townsmen of his time¹. This sculpture of an angel is a rare remainder by the founder of the dynasty, Jan Borman I, the father of Jan Borman II, and is a beautiful example of the quality of wood carving by his Brussels workshop in the duchy of Burgundy in the late 15th century.

The production of Jan Borman I falls into three periods: the early period in Leuven, the phase of maturity and the late period of masterpieces². This work of an angel can be identified as a work of the third period and thus be situated around 1480, confirmed by the comparisons stated below later in this study. The origin of this work by a Brussels workshop can be certified by the mallet mark on the underside, see fig. 6.

The son of Jan Borman I, Jan Borman II, was probably the most successful of the dynasty and responsible for the sculpting of the Saint George Altarpiece in the Art & History Museum in Brussels. One of the rare remaining masterpieces of medieval art in Belgium. Jan Borman I was already recognized as one of the most accomplished sculptors of his time and responsible for masterpieces such as the funerary monument of Isabella of Bourbon (1476-1478), the Arenberg

¹ M. Debaene (ed.), *Borman: A Family of Northern Renaissance Sculptors*, exh. cat. M-Museum Leuven, London and Turnhout, 2019, p. 9.

² M. Debaene (ed.), *Borman: A Family of Northern Renaissance Sculptors*, exh. cat. M-Museum Leuven, London and Turnhout, 2019, p. 67.

VASARI FINE ART

Lamentation (circa 1460-1470) and - probably together with his son - the Saint George Altarpiece of 1493.

This sculpture can be compared to the Arenberg Lamentation, housed in the Detroit Institute of Arts (inv. no. 61.164), which has provided the key to several attributions of individual works to Jan I from his earlier activity. The present Angel would have been part of an annunciation group and is similar to a pair of candle-bearing Angels in the Detroit Institute of Arts (inv. nos. 25.18-19), which have newly been attributed to Jan I. Compare the angular composition, facial features with heavy-lidded, almond-shaped eyes, straight noses and small mouths, and the long, tubular folds of the drapery. Another parallel can be stated with in the weightlessly suspended, abundant curls of hair, which also appear in the figure of Saint John from the Arenberg Lamentation, as well as an Angel formerly in the Baron de Decker collection and the Six Angels from a Calvary in the Museum Mayer van den Bergh in Antwerp (*see*; <https://search.museummayervandenbergh.be/search/simple>: nrs. MMB.0258.1-4, MMB.0258.3-4, MMB.0258.2-4, MMB.0258.4-4, MMB.0302.1-2 and MMB.0302.2-2), all now given to Jan Borman I.

Bibliography:

- M. Debaene (ed.), *Borman: A Family of Northern Renaissance Sculptors*, exh. cat. M-Museum Leuven, London and Turnhout, 2019, pp. 67-72 and pp. 194-197, nos. 39, 41, 42 and 45



Fig. 1. Jan Borman I, angel of the annunciation, front view.

VAT : 0798.650.785



Fig. 2. Jan Borman I, angel of the annunciation, back view.



Fig. 3. Jan Borman I, angel of the annunciation, side view.



Fig. 4. Jan Borman I, angel of the annunciation, detail.



Fig. 5. Jan Borman I, angel of the annunciation, side view.



Fig. 6. Jan Borman I, angel of the annunciation, detail.



Fig. 7. Arenberg lamentation. Detroit Institute of Art, inv. Nos. 25.18-19

VAT : 0798.650.785