Daniel Katz Gallery

ANTIQUITY TO THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

Henri de Triqueti (Conflans-sur-Loing 1803 - Paris 1874)

Pair of Kneeling Angels with Censers

Circa: 1852

1852
Polychrome Terracotta
26 x 15 x 11 cm (10 ¹/₂ x 5 ⁷/₂ x 4 ³/₂ inches)
Signed ‘H. T.’ and dated ‘1852’

Baron Henri-Joseph-François de Triqueti (1803-1874) was one of the major French sculptors of the nineteenth century, eminent both in France and England. Born in Conflans-sur-Loiret, close to Orléans, he was the son of a Piedmontese industrialist and diplomat and had a privileged, cultured upbringing. His artistic inclinations were encouraged by the family's neighbour and friend, the Romantic painter Anne-Louis Girodet. Triqueti went on to study under Louis Hersent, and exhibited at the Paris Salon from 1831 onwards, winning a medal for sculpture. This marked the start of an illustrious career as one of a new generation of Romantic sculptors who rejected the Neoclassical teachings of the École des Beaux-Arts in favour of learning from medieval and early Renaissance examples.

It was particularly because of Triqueti’s great admiration for Renaissance art as well as his deep religious sentiment that first attracted him to the divine. As Lemaistre points out, "If he has developed a motif that moves him, Triqueti reuses it throughout his career". This is the case for the present terracotta angels dated "1852" that appear in the decor of the Wolsey Chapel at Windsor Castle. The two angels are inscribed in four-lobed marble medallions framing a large panel depicting David dictating the psalms, located in the lower part of the north wall of the nave. On the death of her husband, Prince Albert of Saxe-Coburg-Gotha (1819-1861), Queen Victoria decided that the Wolsey Chapel at Windsor Castle would house her late husband's mausoleum, and that Triqueti would design the decorative scheme.

The sculptor had met the Windsors in 1852 and had been a frequent visitor ever since. The Queen's eldest daughter recommended him for the project, and in 1864 received him in Berlin to discuss the commission. After many setbacks and a series of conflicts with the project's architect, George Gilbert Scott (1811-1878), Triqueti was finally able to tackle the colossal project, which would occupy him for ten long years. The main décor is composed of panels depicting scenes from the Old Testament,

allegorically evoking the prince's deeds and virtues. These panels, both fresco and sculpture, are in marble tarsia. This is a type of mosaic made of marble slabs of different colors, juxtaposed and sealed with coloured cement. Triqueti drew his inspiration from the slabs of Siena Cathedral, which he verticalised with the idea of making these frescoes unalterable to the damp British climate. Each of the fifteen large paintings are framed by borders decorated with eighty sculpted medallions.

The present terracottas are part of the long, skilful and conscientious creative process developed by the sculptor to accompany the many practitioners who surround him on the prestigious site. A great connoisseur and enthusiast of Italian Renaissance art, the erudite Triqueti was most likely inspired by Donatello and Luca Della Robbia, from whom he borrowed his attempts at polychromy. Dated 1852, these angels were conceived while he was working on the religious decor of Sainte-Clotilde in Paris, as were another pair of angels, one with a trumpet, the other with a harp (Orléans, Musée des Beaux-Arts, inv. 1883 and inv. 1884). Two preparatory drawings kept at the École des Beaux-Arts in Paris (inv. EBA 5045 and inv. EBA 5046) show that he took up these models, inscribing them in the medallions of the Wolsey chapel. In the same vein, we find the two angels with harp and trumpet in the Musée d'Orléans, as well as the angels accompanied by lions in the borders of the same panel illustrating David dictating the psalms (inv. no. 1894, inv. no. 1893, inv. no. 1883). Their polychromy is explained by the re-use of models originally intended for the Sainte-Clotilde project and was eventually transposed to white marble in Wolsey. Here, as with so many of his works, the sculptor demonstrates his great knowledge of Italian culture and his unrivalled talent for adapting the lessons of the old masters to his own art.

Provenance

Château de Perthuis, to 2026

Literature:

Isabelle Lemaistre (2000), Entry on Triqueti. From Monet to Cézanne (The Grove History of Art), ed. Jane Turner. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000. pp 416-17.

New York Times Obituary ("Baron Triqueti, Sculptor"). 18 May 1874. Web. 23 May 2016.

Jane and Maragret Davison (1876), The Triqueti Marbles in the Albert Memorial Chapel, Windsor, Chapman & Hall, London.