This excellent bronze statuette of Hermes (or Mercury) recalls in its slender proportions an idealism that was first formulated by Lysippos in the fourth century B.C. It was made in the late Hellenistic or early Roman period. Though the type is common, there are no exact replicas; in drapery and pose this statuette is close to the Hermes found in the shipwreck off Mahdia (on the coast of North Africa).

Dietrich von Bothmer

Greek or Roman, late 1st century B.C. to late 1st century A.D. Height 11½ inches (29.1 cm.). Rogers Fund, 1971.11.11
This beautifully carved plaque, now on view in the Treasury at The Cloisters, is among the few representative remains of the later Metz school of the second half of the ninth century. The intense and moving interplay of the figures, the sense of rounded bodies beneath the drapery, the precision of carving, the decorative frame, and the richness of detail make this piece one of the most important in the Museum’s ivory collection.

On the left, Christ meets his disciples on their way to Emmaus, and on the right is the Supper at Emmaus. The abbreviation for Emmaus – the carefully constructed walls, gate, and towers – is not only an outstanding example of a medieval representation of a city, but also a remarkably successful early attempt at suggesting three-dimensional space.

Florens Deuchler

Part of a casket. Ivory, length 9 3/4 inches. The Cloisters Collection, 1970.324.1
The Coronation of the Virgin by Annibale Carracci (1560-1609) has a good claim to being the single most important Italian baroque painting in America. A work of great beauty and historical significance, it strengthens the Museum’s collections in an area where they are conspicuously weak. The picture was probably painted for Pope Clement VIII, a member of the Aldobrandini family, and passed to his relatives in the Pamphili and later the Borghese families. For centuries it was high on the list of things to see for visitors to Rome.

In the center of the painting, Christ and God the Father hold a gold crown of stars above the Virgin Mary’s head, and, together with the white dove, symbol of the Holy Ghost, proclaim her Queen of Heaven. The balanced symmetry of the composition and the noble gestures of the figures are typical of Annibale’s classical style, the antithesis of the bold naturalism found in Caravaggio’s works of the same period.

The picture was probably painted about 1596-1597, at the height of Carracci’s career and soon after he had moved from his native Bologna to Rome. Coming from North Italy, where his style was derived from Correggio and Tintoretto (among others), he was immediately impressed by the grandeur of ancient Rome and the classical perfection of the works of Raphael and Michelangelo. The Coronation of the Virgin shows the impact of this experience. A large preparatory drawing for the picture reveals that the artist originally intended a more spacious design in the North Italian tradition. But he altered this plan drastically, with the result that the structure of the painting is far more compact and solid. It has the cohesive unity of Raphael’s frescoes, combined with the glowing color of the North Italians.

Everett Fahy

Oil on canvas, 46 1/2 x 56 inches. Funds from various donors, 1971.55