



Christian Jorhan the Elder, *Saint Joseph and the Christ Child*, ca. 1780–90, polychrome wood, 121 x 70 x 57 cm, Montreal Museum of Fine Arts.

This wood carving portraying Saint Joseph carrying the Christ Child was found in an antique shop in Montreal and has since been attributed to Christian Jorhan the Elder (1727–1804), a German sculptor active mainly in Lower Bavaria and known for his individual sculptures and altars. His *Saint Joseph and the Christ Child* (ca. 1780–90) embodies the late Baroque style. The fluid and rhythmic movement of the figures and of their garments, the diagonal axis and the attention paid to their facial expressions are reminiscent of Italian sculptor Gianlorenzo Bernini's

(1598–1680) *Ecstasy of Saint Teresa* (1647–52), which is often cited as the epitome of Baroque style. The carving of this sculpture, particularly of the garment on Joseph's left shoulder and leg, as well as the Christ Child's right shoulder, generates a strong contrast between light and shadow on its surface and contours. This contrast—termed *chiaroscuro*—is a defining characteristic of Baroque painting, but is skillfully applied to this sculpture as a means of enhancing the theatrical and emotional overtones of the scene. Because the sculpture was most likely placed above eye level, the Christ Child and Saint Joseph would have stared into the viewer's eyes during prayer, thus creating a deep, intense relationship with the devout, soliciting emotional responses and encouraging devotion. The emotional effect of the sculpture conforms to the decrees of the Council of Trent (1545–63), which dictated that art of the Catholic Counter-Reformation ought to remind people of the tenets of Catholicism. Reflecting the artistic and spiritual trends of its time, this sculpture illustrates the popularity of Josephine devotion during this period.

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