Relief - The Creation of the Birds and the Fish

Metalwork Collection

Accession Nr.:	18858
Date of production:	1080-1084
Place of production:	Southern Italy;
Inscription:	nincs
Materials:	ivory
Techniques:	carved
Dimensions:	height: 10,6 cm width: 10,4 cm thickness: 0,7 cm

This small ivory panel represents the fifth day of Creation, from the Old Testament book of Genesis. God stands to the right, a scroll in his left hand and reaching out his right to his blessed creations. At the right edge there is cut-off a spiral pilaster which was separated from its other half and from the following scene, a panel of the creation of the animals of the earth, now in the New York Metropolitan Museum of Art. A German inscription on the back of the Budapest panel tells of its origin: “Am 23-ten Sept. 1820 in der Kirche von Salerno, welche Statt nach Neapel die älteste ist”. Presumably put there by its original owner, it proves that the relief of the fifth and sixth days of Creation came from Salerno at that time with several other pieces, and ended up in various collections. The relief belongs to an Old Testament series of furnishings for Salerno Cathedral, consecrated by Pope Gregory VII (1073–1085) in 1084. The intended purpose of the ivory reliefs, which survive in various collections and in the Museo Diocesano in Salerno itself, is still unknown. Researchers dispute whether they are the remains of an antependium, a reliquary, and ambo, a door or a throne, but whatever it may have been, the large object decorated by reliefs of scenes from the Old and New Testaments, apostle- and donator-medallions and ornamental frames, was certainly dismantled before 1575.

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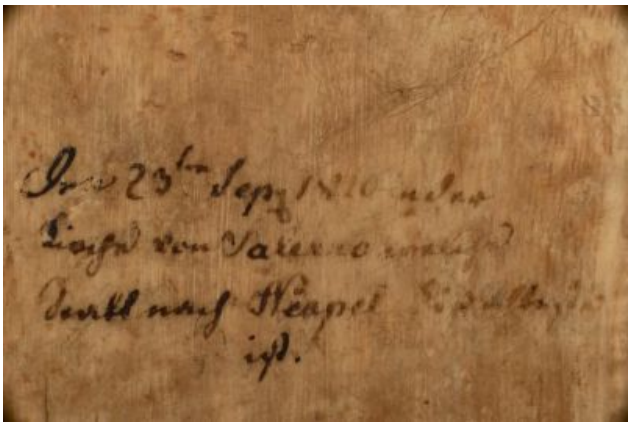





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