



***Christ Child*, attributed to Anton Maria Maragliano**

Christ Child

Attributed to Anton Maria Maragliano
Italian, about 1700
Polychromed wood with glass eyes
H: 29 in.
96.SD.18



Questions for Teaching

What do you notice about the person depicted here?

Does the figure look realistic? Why, or why not?

How is the figure standing? Is this typical of how a toddler would stand? Why do you think the artist chose to sculpt the figure in this posture? (The gesture of the toddler is very theatrical, which is characteristic of baroque works of art. Although the realism of the sculpture emphasizes Christ's humanity, his exaggerated gesture is meant to inspire devotion.)

How does color contribute to the sculpture? Imagine that this sculpture was made in white marble. How would your experience of it be different?

How do you think this object was used at the time when it was made?

Background Information

With cherubic red cheeks, rich locks of curls, and folds of baby fat, the polychromed life-size wood statue of the nude Christ Child would have appealed to his audience. The child balances on a rocky landscape, his cape billowing around his shoulders. In his hand he may have once held either a globe, referring to his role as *Salvator Mundi*, the Savior of the World, or grapes, referring to his sacrifice on the cross. The nude Christ Child was a popular subject in European wood sculpture beginning in the 1300s. Theologians of this period understood Jesus's nudity as a sign of his human nature. During the 1500s and 1600s, Saints Ignatius Loyola and Anthony of Padua further encouraged devotion to the humanity of Christ. This figure is a high Baroque version of the popular theme, full of animation and theatricality.

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The fully carved-in-the-round statue was probably designed as a devotional image for an oratory, chapel, or church. It may also have been carried in religious processions or other spectacles of civic life.

About the Artist

Anton Maria Maragliano (Italian, 1664–1739)

Born to a poor Genoese family, Anton Maria Maragliano first found success working with the furniture maker Pietro Andrea Torre. Inspired by Torre, who produced wood sculptures and sculptural groups for Genoese confraternities, Maragliano found his calling.

The Genoese confraternities (lay religious associations) became Maragliano's principal patrons; for them he produced many naturalistically painted wood sculptures: crucifixes, figures of saints, and narrative scenes from the Bible or the lives of the saints that were affixed to floats or carried in processions on feast days. Maragliano's first documented work of his own invention was a two-figured group of Saint Michael and Lucifer. This piece was followed by innumerable sculptures produced by Maragliano and his workshop. His fame reached as far as Spain, and he even produced designs for the sterns of ships for the king of Spain, where many of his wood sculptures were exported.