

Case 1

Antoine-Louis Barye

French, 1796–1875

Charles VII, The Victorious, modeled ca. 1836–40

Bronze, presumed sand cast

Charles VII was king of France from 1422 to 1461. After his army defeated the English forces in the Hundred Years' War, he definitively asserted his legitimacy as sovereign over the French territory. The king devoted the final years of his reign to rebuilding the foundations of a kingdom that had long been divided by secular conflict.

King Louis-Philippe's patronage of Barye was likely an important inspiration for his choice of an earlier victorious sovereign as the subject of this sculpture. In the elaborate detail of the textiles and the medieval monarch's stark posture are stylistic references to the immense equestrian portraits of warlords that were made in the workshops of renowned Italian artists such as Donatello and Verrocchio to adorn the squares of Italian cities in the 15th century. Barye cleverly adapted the iconography of these public monuments to modestly sized bronzes intended to decorate the living spaces of the French bourgeoisie.

Copper: 86.4%, Zinc: 6.8%, Tin: 4.3%, Lead: 0.2%, additional trace elements

Gift of Mrs. Nelson L. St. Clair Jr., 2012.443

Play Audio