

ABSTRACT

On Wings and a Prayer: Building the Mount for Archangel Michael

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Mountmaker

The Walters Museum, Baltimore, MD. USA

The Archangel Michael, a 17th Century ivory sculpture on a marble base, went on display at the Walters Art Museum in 2021. Saint Michael's large ivory wings could no longer be supported by the original mortises and a new mount was required to display the object intact.

The purpose of the new mount was to completely support the hefty wings in place on Michael's back. The mount also needed to stabilize existing movement in the joint between Saint Michael's feet and the marble base. The Archangel Michael's new case would have him viewed in the round so the mounting solution would be visible. The final mount would have to be as slim and unobtrusive as possible.

The new mount design leverages the weight of the marble base, providing additional strength to the armature that extends along Saint Michael's back. Using the base of the sculpture as a counterweight allows the mount to be slim enough to avoid visual distraction while remaining sturdy enough to hold the wings in position 38" off the deck. The armature acts like a climbing vine, creating a codependent relationship with the object. The act of holding and stabilizing the trunk of Saint Michael secures the mount as a strong attachment point for the two wing mounts. The result of this approach is a subtle contour mount that has ample support to achieve the desired display of the object.

BIO

Adam Franchino

Adam Franchino started mountmaking in 2012 while working at a small woodshop specializing in museum displays and installations. Building mounts was a rare occurrence at the woodshop but became a fascination for Adam who slowly pieced together a mount studio at his home. He joined the Walters Art Museum in 2019 and grew his mountmaking ability with access to a full mount shop and support from other mountmakers.

Adam enjoys the challenges that come working with the museum's diverse collection of objects. He has had the chance to mount modern jewelry, ancient carved bone, a metal celestial globe, and more. He lives in Baltimore City with his family and chickens.

