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Hill Art Foundation

*Lion Devouring a Doe* made by Barthelemy Prieur was created in Paris before 1583. The piece is made out of bronze and is 4.75 inches high and 10 inches wide. The piece contains so many different mixed emotions. This work of art made me question why something so graphic is so small and why Prieur made it out of bronze. When I look at the sculpture the emotions and feelings it stirs are empathy and sadness but also relief.

Barthelemy Prieur was a French sculptor who was born into a poor Huguenots family northeast of France in a small commune called Berzieux. Prieur travelled a lot and while in France he started concentrating more on small bronze pieces. I had the privilege of looking at his piece *Lion Devouring a Doe* and observing and examining it with my own eyes. - “Barthélémy Prieur also introduced and developed in France the craft of making small bronzes. Multiple copies were produced with the considerable help of his son-in-law, Guillaume Dupré. The subjects were varied, as shown by the inventory done after he died.”<sup>1</sup> Prieur and his son in law did a lot of work with bronze for their sculptures and the more I read about him the more I think that he also sent messages through the material. Bronze was mostly used to show classical antiquity and Prieur wanted his work to be remembered as a memorable antique. The object is

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<sup>1</sup> Musee Protestant, “Barthélemy Prieur (1536-1611),” Musee Protestant, Accessed Feb. 17, 2020, <https://www.museeprotestant.org/en/notice/barthelemy-prieur-1536-1611/>

graphic and the material adds so much more emotion as if it were something you would want to remember.

The object gives people many emotions that Prieur didn't intentionally want to give and it sparked many questions as to why it is such a graphic object. Even though we can see the lion feeding which is something most people wouldn't want to see, it makes one feel pitiful for the doe which are below the food chain of carnivores so it gives me a slap on the face that the artwork shows reality and the lion was just doing what it had to do to survive "The Lion Devouring a Doe is Prieur's interpretation of famous statuettes by Giambologna and his followers that depict a lion attacking a stallion. By substituting the fighting horse with a fragile doe, Prieur transforms a violent battle into a tragic scene that elicits the viewer's empathy for the victim."<sup>2</sup> The tragic scene made me feel pity for the lion and the doe. I feel bad the doe has to be eaten and that it's a main source of food for so many carnivorous animals but I also felt bad for the lion because of the hunger that drives them to kill for food. Prieur's process changed when he moved back to France to make small sculptures for the king. Prieur reconsidered the intention that sculpture was made for and the emotion it displays.

The sculpture *Lion Devouring a Doe*'s meaning has changed over time. Back when it was recent and new to people, the sculpture was seen as this tragic scene where people felt bad for the doe. Now, viewers are feeling-bad for the lion. Overtime, the predator has become the victim in many people's eyes because it's the circle of life and the lion had to eat. According to the Frick, "Prieur transforms a violent battle into a tragic scene that elicits the viewer's empathy for

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<sup>2</sup> Frick Collection, "Lion Devouring Doe," Barthélemy Prieur (Berzieux, France 1536?–1611 Paris) Accessed Feb. 17, 2020. <https://www.frick.org/exhibitions/hill/28>

the victim.”<sup>3</sup> This violent battle was seen as a scary sculpture and now it’s viewed as a representation of the real world and survival. In some ways the sculptures' meaning changed to society but to as individuals it's possible they could have gotten the same idea in emotion back it was first made.

The sculpture to me generates the emotion of pity when I see it. I feel bad for the lion because it is hungry. This sculpture is also a way to understand that these things are normal, and that the lion is acting as nature intended, and that the lion is not evil, just hungry. Knowing the history of the sculptor Barthélemy Prieur and why he focused so much on bronze and small pieces also adds more emotion because bronze was used as memorable material. This shows that Prieur wanted his work to be remembered even though it was a graphic scene because he was proud of his work and the message he sent through it. Prieur made a lot of great sculptures and wanted them all to be remembered, which is why he did them mostly out of bronze. The fact that he did most of his pieces with his son gives it another emotion point where when you see a sculpture of his you can also feel the emotion that was put to it. This is similar to saying you can taste the love someone put on the food they cooked. When you look at his work, you can feel the love and effort Prieur put into his pieces.

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<sup>3</sup> Frick Collection, “Lion Devouring Doe,” Barthélemy Prieur (Berzieux, France 1536?–1611 Paris) Accessed Feb. 17, 2020. <https://www.frick.org/exhibitions/hill/28>

## Bibliography

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