In July 1528, William Vynyard, former master and major benefactor of the Armourers’ guild of London donated to his fellow guildsmen a polychromed oak sculpture of St George, patron saint of the company (figure 9). Standing at just under a metre high and clad in miniature iron armour which had been crafted in the workshop of Vynyard himself, the sculpture was set before the high table in the Armourers’ communal Hall, the highlight of a broader visual and material culture of devotion and memorialisation.¹ The Armourers’ model of St George, a virtuoso piece of craftsmanship, was retained by the guild throughout the early modern era. A rare pre-Reformation survival, this sculpture is still in situ within the institutional home of its maker.² As one of the Armourers’ most prized corporate possessions in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the sculpture played an active role in the rich ceremonial life of the guildsmen—within and outside the Armourers’ Hall—and became the founding piece in a large collection of miniaturised and full-sized suits, all of which were connected to the workshops and memory of significant makers and guildsmen.

Within the late-medieval craft fraternities and early modern guilds of London, the gifting of material culture for display in livery halls, and use in company rituals, was a significant means for guildsmen to establish reputations in life and uphold memory within the craft community after death. Though the Reformation swept away the intercessory value of material objects, physical things continued to act as significant prompts for the memorialisation of a guildsmen’s achievements, skills and qualities in life. In the following chapter, material gifts and bequests by craftsmen

¹ William Vynyard was master of the Armourers’ Company on three separate occasions: 1503–04, 1513–14 and 1531–32.
² For the devastating consequences of iconoclasm upon English sculpture survival, see: Richard Deacon and Phillip Lindley, Image and idol. Medieval sculpture (London: Tate, 2001).
Fig. 9. St George and the Dragon, c. 1528, polychromed oak, iron, leather and horse hair, Armourers’ Company, London.