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Visits to Florence Duomo Museum open on September 21

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FLORENCE - The restoration of Michelangelo's Pietà, known as Pietà Bandini, which started last November at the Museo dell'Opera del Duomo in Florence, resumed after a break due to

Covid-19. It is one of the three executed by Buonarroti and unfinished by the great artist who portrayed himself as Nicodemo but also tried to destroy it. And for the first time, as of Monday, September 21, it will be possible to visit the restoration site thanks to special guided tours of five people maximum, with the restorers and experts of the Opera di Santa Maria del Fiore.

Meanwhile the first phase of cleaning the surface, which ended at the back of the sculpture but is at the beginning in the front, is bringing to light colors that came from previous interventions on the marble. Unknown details emerged from the restoration, traces that were hidden by deposits accumulated over the oeuvre's 470 years of life, restorers said.

Ongoing diagnostic surveys have provided information considered to be fundamental for the knowledge of the work and its restoration: there is no historic patina with the exception of traces found at the base of the sculpture, something that is still being investigated. The presence of elevated quantities of chalk from the cast executed in the 1800s has instead been confirmed. These results have led to cleaning operations first and then to start the intervention at the back. The waxes present on the surface, including those from candles that were used on the main altar of Florence's cathedral where the sculpture was kept for over 220 years, were removed with a scalpel.

The restoration - which was commissioned by the Opera di Santa Maria del Fiore, funded by Friends of Florence, and entrusted to Paola Rosa under the superintendency - must be considered as the first executed on the Pietà: the sources, said sources at the Opera del Duomo, don't reveal specific interventions in the past apart from the one carried out by Tiberio Calcagni by 1565 to repair the damage inflicted by Buonarroti. The artist attempted to destroy his artwork which he had sculpted on a huge white Carrara marble block between approximately 1547 and 1555, when he was nearly 80. Over more than 470 years of life it presumably underwent restoration work, which however has not been documented.

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