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## First Major Restoration of Michelangelo's Florentine Pietà Completed

Silvia Donati | Thu, 10/07/2021 - 00:00



Michelangelo tackled the theme of la pietà (the death of Christ) throughout his career and the so-called 'Bandini Pietà' was one of his last works, created between 1547 and 1555, and conceived as a monument for his tomb. It remains unfinished.

On display at the Florence's Opera Museum, the Bandini Pietà has just undergone a major restoration which has removed dust, plaster and wax accumulated on the surface that altered its exceptional plasticity, three-dimensionality and color.

The restoration revealed that the sculpture was made with defective marble due to the presence of numerous tiny cracks, in particular one on the base, which could be the reason why Michelangelo abandoned the work. This thesis is more plausible than the one that circulated before, that is, an

elderly Michelangelo, dissatisfied with the result, tried to destroy it with a hammer. There's no trace of such possible damage.

The restoration of the work also revealed that the huge block of marble on which Michelangelo carved what is one of his most intense and tormented masterpieces comes from the Medici quarries in Seravezza (Lucca), not in Carrara as previously thought.

The restoration, commissioned by the Opera del Duomo and made possible thanks to a donation by the Friends of Florence Foundation, began in November 2019 and was halted a few times due to Covid. It is the first real restoration of Michelangelo's Florentine Pietà in its more than 470 years of existence, excluding the one carried out shortly after the artist's death by Tiberio Calcagni.

The restoration was an open construction site - conservators restored the statue in full view of visitors; until March 30, 2022, the restoration site will remain open and visitors can see the restored Pietà up close and in a unique way through guided visits.

The Bandini Pietà depicts the dead body of Jesus lying in the arms of his mother Mary, supported by Nicodemus, one of the men who laid down Jesus from the cross, while Magdalene assists. It is believed that Nicodemus, represented as an old man, is a self-portrait of Michelangelo, who was 70 at the time.

This marble sculptural group first belonged to the Bandini family in Rome (hence the name), until it was purchased by the Grand Duke Cosimo III de' Medici in 1671. First placed in San Lorenzo, it was moved to the Duomo in 1722. It has been in the Opera Museum since 1981.

It is the third of Michelangelo's Pietà, the most famous being the one held in St. Peter's in Rome and the other Rondanini Pietà in the Sforza Castle of Milan.

**Topic:**CultureMichelangeloMuseo dell'Opera del DuomoPietàMuseumsSculptureArt

Location

Florence