



LE TRE PIETÀ DI MICHELANGELO

*NON VI SI PENSA
QUANTO SANGUE COSTA*

PRESS RELEASE

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THE THREE PIETÀS OF MICHELANGELO

NO ONE THINKS OF HOW MUCH BLOOD IT COSTS

Exhibition curated by Barbara Jatta, Sergio Risaliti, Claudio Salsi and Timothy Verdon

Opera del Duomo Museum, Michelangelo's Tribune Room, Florence

24 February – 1 August 2022

Florence, February 23, 2022 - The exhibition LE TRE PIETÀ DI MICHELANGELO. Non vi si pensa quanto sangue costa (THE THREE PIETÀS BY MICHELANGELO. No one thinks of how much blood it costs) will open to the public at the Opera del Duomo Museum in Florence on the occasion of the “Mediterranean, Frontier of Peace 2022” meeting, which will bring together the Bishops and Mayors of the Mediterranean and will also be attended by Pope Francis.

*For the first time, an exhibition provides the opportunity to see together in Michelangelo's Tribune Room of the Museum, Michelangelo's newly-restored original **Bandini Pietà**, and the casts of the **Vatican Pietà** and the **Rondanini Pietà** from the Vatican Museums' collection. Curated by the museum directors **Barbara Jatta, Sergio Risaliti, Claudio Salsi** and **Timothy Verdon**, this exhibition is a project that exceptionally involves the **Vatican Museums**, the **Opera del Duomo Museum**, the **Museo Novecento in Florence**, the **Castello Sforzesco in Milan** and the institutions **Opera di Santa Maria del Fiore**, the **Municipality of Florence**, the **Municipality of Milan** and **Fabbrica di San Pietro**.*

Placed side by side, the three *Pietà*s will offer the chance to study the evolution of Michelangelo's art as well as his spiritual maturation from his early youth – when in Rome he sculpted for the Old St. Peter's, the work now in the north aisle of the Basilica – to his last season, when as an old man, he carved the *Pietà*s that are today in Florence and the *Rondanini Pietà* in Milan.

It is a journey of more than fifty years that leads us from the ambition of the young man who carved his name on chest of the Madonna in the Vatican version, to the personal identification of the elderly artist, who depicts himself in the figure of Nicodemus in the Opera del Duomo Museum's version. Close to his own death, Michelangelo meditated deeply on the Passion of Christ, understood from a coeval drawing of the *Pietà*, given to Vittoria Colonna, marchioness of Pescara, where he wrote the Dante verse: “No one thinks of how much blood it costs.” (Paradiso XXIX, 91). The sublime result of this spiritual meditation was the execution of the *Rondanini Pietà*.

Next autumn the three plaster casts of the original *Pietà* will be exhibited in a newly designed setting of the Sala delle Cariatidi of Palazzo Reale in Milan.

The exhibition in Florence revolves around the recent and delicate restoration of the *Bandini Pietà*, comparing it with two casts preserved in the Vatican Museums with diverse origins, but which reproduce Michelangelo's other two *Pietà* in an extraordinary and admirable way. “The casts that do not look out of place next to the Florentine original – explains **Barbara Jatta, Director of the Vatican Museums** – not only because they were carried out to perfection a few decades ago by master artisans, but above all because, in an time of much debate around NFT (*Non-Fungible Token*) and DOC.NFT (*Digital Original Copy NFT*) reproductions, they bear witness to the need for reproducing universal masterpieces of faith and art for their dissemination to a wider audience as extraordinary means of evangelization and transmission of spiritual values”.

For **Timothy Verdon, Director of Opera del Duomo Museum**, the comparison between these three works “allows us to measure the stylistic growth of Buonarroti in the fifty years that separate the youthful *Pietà* from the other two, and the much more concentrated but also dramatic evolution between the Florentine and the Milanese *Pietà*. It also helps us to grasp the maturation of Michelangelo's thoughts for the sacred subject between the end of the fifteenth century and the middle of the following century, focusing on the connection of life and art in the faithful sculptor who, for much of his career, was at the service of the popes and therefore privileged interpreter of the demands of a Church in dynamic change”.

Sergio Risaliti, Director of the Museo Novecento Firenze believes: “This exhibition is held in a time of exceptional historical value for the city of Florence, which at the end of February will host the peace and dialogue meeting between religious, spiritual and political authorities from all Mediterranean countries. An event of enormous importance, which will be enriched by the arrival to the city by His Holiness Pope Francis, to bring messages of hope and mercy in the days when the *mare nostrum* is at the center, as never before in recent decades, of geopolitical clashes between world powers. And how not to recognize the pain of others in the three *Pietà*s, who are looking for a safe haven, justice and brotherhood”.

“It is truly an extraordinary opportunity to be able to admire, next to the *Bandini Pietà*, the other two sculptures that Michelangelo Buonarroti created during his long life thinking about the theme of the *Pietà*; through the exhibition of two historic casts – says **Claudio Salsi, Director**

of the Department for the Superintendence of the Castle, Archaeology Museums and History Museums - the elements of continuity and discontinuity emerge clearly when, with an overall glance, we try to grasp the essence of the entire work of the great Tuscan sculptor”.

“The evangelical tradition focuses soberly on the figure of the Mother of the Lord. In popular religiosity and in art on the contrary, expressions and images about the Virgin multiplying”, writes **Cardinal Giuseppe Betori**. “Among the most significant images that have over the centuries shaped the figure of Mary in the hearts of believers is undoubtedly the *Pietà*, the body of Jesus taken down from the cross, welcomed by his Mother’s arms. There is no trace of this gesture in the stories of the Passion of the Christ that the Gospels offer us, and even the apocryphal literature does not mention it. However, from the Middle Ages onwards, starting from the Germanic regions, the *Pietà* became one of the most widespread Marian and at the same time Christological representations”.

“Among the events of the *Mediterranean Frontier of Peace* - explains **Dario Nardella, Mayor of Florence** - shines the extraordinary exhibition that brings together for the first time the three *Pietàs* sculpted by Michelangelo. In an age where art seems to be destined more and more to a virtual dimension, exhibitions like this provide us an important fragment for a direct experience to a sculpture also through the cast derived from the original. Perhaps it will seem an anachronistic way of approaching Michelangelo’s great masterpieces; however, I believe this may be extremely timely, precisely because of his virtuous immanence. Let’s allow ourselves to be moved by the possibility of comparing Michelangelo’s three *Pietàs*, sublime incarnations of his genius, his powerful imagination and profound spirituality. Seeing them next to each other, in a sort of ‘impossible’ dialogue, will be an unparalleled emotion”.

For **Luca Bagnoli, President of the Opera di Santa Maria del Fiore**: “The exhibition is a project of high spiritual and artistic value that has particular significance in the context in which Italy and the rest of the world find themselves now, forced to a prolonged period of suffering and isolation, due to the pandemic, from which we hope to be able to leave soon to regain a precious normality”.

Tommaso Sacchi, Councilor for Culture of the City of Milan states: “The city of Milan is pleased to offer its contribution to the great cultural event organized in Florence on the occasion of the meeting of Bishops and Mayors of the Mediterranean. The result of a fruitful collaboration between institutions, the project, which also involves Milan and Vatican City, will generate opportunities for discussion and dialogue, contributing to stimulate new insights for these works that represent an artistic and poetic heritage, which goes far beyond national borders”.

On the occasion of the exhibition, a catalogue with essays by the curators and other scholars will be published by Silvana Editoriale.



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