

Visit to the “Opera del Duomo Museum” and “The Three Pietàs of Michelangelo” exceptionally together in a temporary exhibition

Meeting at 16.30 at the Borsa Valori Room with the guides and walk along the river bank with a view of the Ponte Vecchio. We will retrace the ancient first Roman walls along via del Proconsolo to reach the Opera Duomo Museum, located right in front of the Cathedral of Santa Maria del Fiore. We will visit the Museum and proceed to the main cathedral complex to visit the interior of the Baptistery. The tour will end at 19.30.

The Opera del Duomo Museum was founded in 1891 but in 2015 it was radically renovated. It is conceived as an educational path to discover the places and artists who gave life to the monumental complex of the Opera, that includes the Cathedral, the Baptistery, the Tower, the cradle of the Renaissance. This is today one of the most important museums in the world, both for the value and the number of works of art kept inside, as well as for the architectural and technological avant-garde of its environments and its museographic equipment. Here are preserved the original masterpieces of art that over the course of seven centuries have decorated its monuments: from Michelangelo, to Donatello, Brunelleschi, Ghiberti and countless others.

For the first time, the three Pietàs (image of the Virgin Mary mourning the dead body of Christ) by Michelangelo are on display together in the Tribune Room at the Opera del Duomo Museum). The display offers the chance to study the evolution of Michelangelo’s art as well as his spiritual maturation.

Curated by the museum directors Barbara Jatta (Vatican Museums), Sergio Risaliti (Museo Novecento), Claudio Salsi (Superintendent of the Castle Area, Archaeological Museum and Historical Museums) and Timothy Verdon (Opera del Duomo Museum), the project involves the Vatican Museums, Opera del Duomo Museum, Museo Novecento in Florence, Castello Sforzesco in Milan, Opera di Santa Maria del Fiore, the Municipality of Florence, Municipality of Milan and Fabbrica di San Pietro in a large-scale collaboration between Florence, Rome and Milan.

The three pietàs of Michelangelo

Timothy Verdon, director of the Opera del Duomo Museum, commented on how the comparison between these three works “allows us to measure the stylistic growth of Buonarroti in the 50 years that separate the youthful Pietà from the other two...it also helps us to grasp the maturation of



Michelangelo's thoughts for the sacred subject between the late 15th century and the mid 16th century, focusing on the connection between life and art in the faithful sculptor who, for much of his career, was at the service of the popes and therefore a privileged interpreter of the demands of a Church in dynamic change".

Vatican Pietà

Cardinal Jean Bilhères de Lagrulas commissioned the young Buonarroti to depict "the Virgin Mary, dressed, with the Dead Christ naked in her arms", completed close to the Jubilee of 1500. The Florentine sculptor devoted himself to the theme of maternal pain and to the mystery of the Incarnation, making an impression at the time for the beauty of the work, but also prompting criticism for portraying Mary as so youthful that it was deemed unsuitable. The masterpiece was placed in the chapel of Santa Petronilla shortly before 1500 and was later moved to St. Peter's before being moved to the right of the nave in the 18th century, where it can still be admired today.

Pietà Bandini 1547

From the time of the first Pietà to when Michelangelo next revisited the subject, Rome was sacked, the Republic of Florence collapsed and the Medici returned to the city. Michelangelo left Florence in 1534 and settled in Rome, becoming increasingly focused on human destiny, death and the resurrection of Christ. He began work on the marble block around 1547, but it was completed by his main assistant, Tiberio Calgani, before being sold to Francesco Bandini in 1561. Michelangelo intended that the work would be used for his own funerary monument in Santa Croce in Florence, but the work remained in the Bandini Villa in Montecavallo and was purchased by Cosimo III de' Medici in 1674, who had it placed in the basement of San Lorenzo. In 1722, the Florentine Pietà was transferred to Santa Maria del Fiore and it has been housed in the Opera del Duomo Museum since 1981.

Pietà Rondanini 1552

Dating to 1552 and 1553, Michelangelo is said to have worked on this piece until the final days of his life. The work can be interpreted as the result of a long journey through art and faith that culminates in this ghostly representation of Jesus and Mary, with the two figures appearing almost detached from the ground and reaching upwards, seeming to reflect on the Resurrection and the Assumption. In 1744, the Pietà was purchased from the Marquis Giuseppe Rondinini and arrived in Milan, where it has been kept in Castello Sforzesco since 1952.

