chemical-physical and mineralogical-petrographical analysis. It became clear from the very first results that the diagnosis confirmed our visual perception of the work's condition, namely that the marble surface was covered in plaster, deteriorated wax and wax mixed with soot.

* Direction of restoration Beatrice Agostini - Restorer Paola Rosa.
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MICHELANGELO'S PIETÀ IN FLORENCE Transformation of Place and Intent*

Jack Wasserman

The *Pietà* of Michelangelo "ist ein Fremdling in diesem Duomo". Wolfgang Braunfels wrote these words in 1964,[1] mindful that the statue was created in Rome in the middle of the Cinquecento and had entered the Cathedral nearly two centuries later, in 1721. Contrary to what the historian's remark might imply, that their relationship was without incident, the two interacted dynamically, if not always to their mutual benefit. However, I will examine only an aspect of this complex relationship: the effect the *Pietà* had on the Duomo. Cosimo III ordered the *Pietà* brought to the Santa Maria del Fiore directly from the Medici church of San Lorenzo on August 29, 1721,[2] where it had resided since its arrival in Florence in 1674. Michelangelo's statue substituted Baccio Bandinelli's *Adam and Eve*, which had occupied a site on a two-story marble choir enclosure he had built around the High Altar in the middle of the 16th century, while on the Altar itself he arranged a *Dead Christ* supported by an angel and a *God the Father* seated on a rise above them. He placed the *Adam and Eve* directly behind the altar, standing on the lower level of the enclosure, which was wider at that point to accommodate them.[3] The *Pietà* was installed in their place on July 13, 1722, following the removal of Bandinelli's group in response to complaints by "alcuni zelanti e scrupolosi" that their nudity was unbefitting the spiritual nature of the church.[4]

The *Pietà* began to attract a wide range of reactions soon after its installation. Giovanni Bottari's negative opinion, which he expressed in his 1759 edition of Vasari's *Lives*, is the most important for us to consider. He maintained that the statue "broke strangely the idea of Baccio, who, having represented on the rear the crime of Adam and Eve, on the front he represented the remedy of this, which was the death of Christ and the absolution God gave in this to mankind. Now the death of Christ is represented in front and rear of the altar".[5] Thus the *Pietà* created a redundancy with its lifeless Christ, thereby disrupting Bandinelli's program. I believe, instead, that the *Pietà* created a diversely nuanced and consistent iconography with the *Dead Christ* and *God the Father*, regardless of how they are interpreted. Timothy Verdon, with an eye on decrees issued by the Council of Trent, interprets Bandinelli's original sculpture complex as representing the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist, with God the Father engaged either in offering his Son for humankind's salvation or as expressing anger at the sin of Adam and Eve.[6] As I see it, the *Pietà* introduced a temporal component into the complex by shifting the balance from abstraction to narrative.

For the meaning of the *Dead Christ*, I rely on the Gospel of John, chapter 20. According to the Evangelist, Mary Magdalene looked into the cave and beheld two angels, one seated at the head, the other at the feet "where Christ had lain". The passage refers to Christ's Resurrection. For several reasons, also Bandinelli's *Dead Christ* is captured in this biblical moment.[7] First, the altar traditionally symbolizes Christ's tomb.[8] Second, the angel supporting Christ's head and upper torso is another. A third is a second angel Bandinelli planned but never executed, which, we can assume, he intended to place at Christ's feet.[9] Finally, Christ is represented as much astir as immobile and thus as undergoing spiritual awakening. This quality of transient mortality is reflected in His openmouthed physiognomy and in the angel's expression of ecstasy, its eyes directed heavenward, joyful at being witness to the supernatural mutation.[10] So, if it is accepted that Bandinelli represented an incipient Resurrection, then the *Pietà* relates to the Dead Christ in an abridged representation of the aftermath of the Passion, which progresses from his descent from the cross onto the lap of the Virgin, to his entombment, to the onset of his Resurrection. God the Father presides over these events, holding a book in his left hand, surely the New Testament, and trampling on a second book with his left foot, certainly the Old Testament. One other scholar mentioned the books: he characterized the one under God's foot as "a rather unfortunate idea, since He already holds another in his left hand".[11] On the contrary, the books and their treatments are fortunate enough to symbolize the supremacy of Grace over Law, which is God's gift of clemency to humanity and which he bestows actively with His blessing right hand. Therefore, if Bandinelli's original message was redemption, or absolution as Bottari wrote, then substituting the *Pietà* for the *Adam and Eve* did not change the doctrine but the means with which it is communicated. Now we are to understand, as Paul assured the Romans, that mankind's sins were buried with Christ at his death, but that salvation, eternal life, will come with belief in His resurrection: "for if thou shalt [...] believe in thine heart that God hath raised him [Christ] from the dead, thou shalt be saved".[12]

I wonder if anyone at the time, clergy or otherwise, had approved the change the *Pietà* had brought to the meaning of Bandinelli's statuary. Or if they had noticed the change its presence occasioned to the architecture of the marble enclosure. According to Francesco Baldinucci,[13] a new base was provided for it by the court architect Giovanni Battista Foggini, and, according to Francesco Settimani, eyewitness to the event, it was built with variegated marbles (*marmi misti*).[14] Baldinucci's attribution is undocumented, but there survives an unpublished bill that Foggini submitted to the Opera del Duomo on July 11, 1722, for a plaque he had placed on the base under the statue.[15]

The plaque is still preserved and bears an inscription composed by Senator Filippo Buonarroti, a descendent of Michelangelo. On the other hand, the base was lost when the statue was moved from the site in recent times. However, early photographs show enough of its platform to indicate that the base had been superimposed onto the parapet and extended over the empty distance separating it from the altar behind. Together the base and *Pietà* gave the site a more distinctive appearance, with larger dimensions and a more precise articulation than when the *Adam and Eve* were *in situ*. Facing the eastern tribune, they formed also a more decisive axial link between the two chief sanctuaries of the Duomo: the High Altar, since the middle of the 15th century custodian of the Holy Cross reliquary,[16] and the tribune's central apse, which was dedicated to St. Zenobius, Florence's premier patron saint since remote times and since 1894 repository of the most Holy Sacrament.[17]

Beyond this, the co-habitation between the *Pietà* and the Duomo during the 18th and 19th centuries was uneventful. Not so in the 20th century. The first threat to the symbiotic relationship between the church and the statue occurred on February 9, 1918, when the Archbishop of Florence requested permission from the Opera di Santa Maria del Fiore to replace the *Pietà* with a permanent wooden pulpit for the "maggior decoro" of the temple.[18] By then Bandinelli's statues had been sent to Santa Croce and most of the choir architecture dismantled.[19] Permission was granted on November 8, 1919,[20] but no action was taken. The inertia may have been caused by a debate, described four years later in the minutes of March 6, 1923, over whether to relocate the *Pietà* within the Duomo itself, or, as Cosimo I had proposed, to move it to Santa Croce, where it would serve "as an expiatory image in a votive chapel".[21] Those advocating retention did so on the grounds that the *Pietà* is too great a work to be given away, while their adversaries argued that the statue had no intrinsic connection with the history of the Duomo and, as regards its artistic quality, this would not suffer were it displayed in the Franciscan church.

The debate was not resolved, but the danger to the relationship between the *Pietà* and Duomo remained. Indeed, six years later, in 1929, the French writer Camille Mallarmé revived the idea of donating the statue to Santa Croce.[22] However, the wooden pulpit was no longer the motive. Mallarmé introduced two new reasons to support the change in venue. One was predicated on Michelangelo's expressed intention, reported by Condivi and Vasari, to have the *Pietà* serve as his tomb monument.[23] Mallarmé went so far as to propose dismantling the tomb's structure that had been designed in 1565 for Santa Croce. Incredibly, this idea attracted wide support in the early 1930s, including the endorsement of Mussolini, who, according to the French writer, "dreams of remedying the situation" which keeps the *Pietà* from its rightful destination.[24]

Mallarmé's most compelling argument, however, was that the site behind the High Altar was not suitable for the statue, because it was immersed there in a darkness that left it nearly invisible.[25] Evidently, she was repeating a complaint that had been expressed in 1877 by Susan and Joanne Homer in *Walks in Florence* that the *Pietà* was "unfortunately in too obscure a position to be seen, except on a very bright day".[26] This criticism of the site more uncompromising as it became widespread in subsequent literature. However, Mallarmé's immediate source was probably Auguste Rodin, who wrote in 1910: "I remember being in the Duomo at Florence and requesting with profound emotion to the *Pietà* of Michelangelo. The masterpiece, which is ordinarily in shadow, was lighted at the moment by a candle in a silver candlestick, and a beautiful child, a chorister, approached the candlestick, which was as tall as himself, drew it toward him, and blew out the light. I could no longer see the marvelous sculpture".[27] I suspect that Rodin was romanticizing an experience he had decades earlier, and that his source was a remarkably similar experience Vasari records having had when he visited Michelangelo's studio and found him at work on this very *Pietà*. He recounts that Michelangelo dropped his lantern and engulfed the statue in total darkness to prevent the changes he was making to one of the legs from being observed.[28]

The impulse to relocate the statue had become a compulsion by 1931, and the idea that darkness impairs the *Pietà*'s visibility so deeply ingrained in the public psyche (despite the installation of an electrical system in the Duomo in about 1906) that it was well-nigh ordained that the statue would be given a new collocation.[29] But, as we all know, it was not to be Santa Croce. The Resident Deputy of the Opera del Duomo, while convinced of the statue's current "unhappy collocation", nevertheless put a damper on Mallarmé's hopes on October 26, 1931, by authorizing a search for a suitable location for the statue within the Duomo.[30] The Curia concurred and proposed the chapel of the Madonna della Neve as the statue's new site,[31] because it was well lighted from a window without stained glass. The transfer occurred in the first days of September of 1933[32] and was met with a chorus of approval, expressed mostly in terms of the improved lighting conditions.[33] Indeed, Pavel Pavlinov in 1965 reports having seen a Latin epitaph in the chapel, missing today, which in an English translation of his Italian rendition reads: "To give it, finally, a better illumination".[34]

Hitherto unpublished letters, dating from January 11, 1932, to September 5, 1933, relative to the *Pietà*'s installation in the chapel of the Madonna della Neve survive[35] One letter includes front and back outline drawings of the statue atop a new base that was designed by the architect in charge of the transfer, Giuseppe Castellucci.[36] The base is shown appended to the rear of an existing altar and was built in that manner.[37] Another letter includes a reference to "a life size model on paper" of an inscription that was to be placed under the *Pietà*,[38] but it is not found among the correspondence and has not survived. Therefore, it is unclear if the inscription is the one Pelunov recorded or the one Michelangelo's descendent composed in 1722, which, in fact, followed the *Pietà* to the Madonna della Neve chapel and was placed on the wall behind the statue. The installation of the *Pietà* made certain extractions from the chapel necessary: two cabinets along the side walls were taken away, and possibly an altarpiece as well, to make room for the statue.[39]

With Michelangelo's *Pietà* now within its confines, the Madonna della Neve chapel became the most famous in the Duomo. On the other hand, the area behind the choir, now divested of this powerful monument, became desolate, as it remains to this day. The axial link between the High Altar and the chapel of St. Zenobius was dissolved and the intervening space emptied of human presence generally and of spiritual aura and vibrancy.

The *Pietà* was comfortably ensconced in the Madonna della Neve chapel for nearly three decades when, in 1960, another attempt was made to dislodge it from the Duomo.[40] Now it was said to interfere with the liturgical services of the church. The President of the Opera del Duomo wrote to the Archbishop of Florence on 23 December calling attention to the fact that the *Pietà* was attracting many visitors to the Cathedral, especially foreigners, at the expense of "the tranquillity of the temple".[41] The disturbance remains, he stated, despite his most persistent efforts to impede the "chiacchierio profano" of the visitors and their guides. His prescription for eliminating the annoyance was to eliminate its cause by transferring the *Pietà* to the Museum of the Opera del Duomo, giving assurances that the *Pietà* would be displayed in a large and suitable room created during a recent remodeling of the museum. Michelangelo's great work had become a victim of its own fame.

The concern of the President of the Opera for the "tranquillity of the temple" found a sympathetic ally in the Archbishop of Florence,[42] while his ideas to relocate the *Pietà* to the museum went far enough for the Soprintendente alle Gallerie, Filippo Rossi, to write on January 9, 1961, that the statue should be exhibited on the first floor of the museum rather than on ground level.[43] But the smooth progress of transference which this alignment of officialdom seemed to presage was, in fact, impeded by the opposition of the Diocesan Commission for Sacred Art. The Commission argued on April 8, 1961, that parting with the statue, as was done with other masterpieces in the past, would deprive the Cathedral of an illustrious monument.[44] Moreover, the Commission bluntly stated that it "disapproves taking an art treasure from the Duomo in order to enrich the museum", cautioning that "Doing so would elicit unfavorable comments in the press".

One might have thought the matter closed. Yet, in April of 1981 the statue went on display in the Museum of the Opera del Duomo,[45] seemingly without opposition. Then, the officials of the Opera finally got their way, and they must have felt gratified for the foresight they displayed in preparing a special room for the statue six years earlier in 1974,[46] the same one in which it is exhibited today. Now work in progress on Brunelleschi's dome was the expressed reason for the transfer,[47] which seems conjured up for the occasion, since we hear of no other contemporaneous displacements of Cathedral statuary. Furthermore, it is hard to see how such restoration could have harmed the *Pietà* in the seclusion of the chapel of the Madonna della Neve. Indeed, another reason for the transfer is hinted at in an article in *La Nazione* of June 5, 1981: "it is with this work of art [the *Pietà*], which has attracted so much interest, that they want to relaunch a museum that has so much to offer".[48] Said less diplomatically, it was expected that the statue's fame would stimulate interest in the museum on the part of an apathetic public.

The same article in *La Nazione* describes the desire of the Opera officials to revive an old tradition of cultural artistic promotion with the goal of enhancing the museum's prestige. They decided to arrange a rather bizarre sculptural competition for a leg to replace the one that was missing from the *Pietà*, which is generally believed to have been severed by Michelangelo.[49] The submissions were to be displayed on a wall near the statue. But the competition turned into a hot potato, judging from the reply of "no comment" by the President of the Opera to inquiring reporters.[50] The goal experienced still another reversal, since opening day was rather a flop, despite extensive publicity in the press and the statue's fame. The public was too distracted by the Riace bronzes, the recently-discovered ancient Greek statues then still on display in Florence, to pay much heed even to a statue by Michelangelo. At least, that is what was reported in *La Nazione*.[51]

The *Pietà* is in the Museum of the Opera di Santa Maria del Fiore to stay, but its memorable association with the Duomo is still indelibly inscribed in the minds of some (those still innocent of the fact that the statue is no longer there), and in the hearts of others (who wish it were). To be sure, Antonio Paolucci, for one, advocates statue's return to the Duomo, for only in such an ambiance, he asserts, can it retain its significance as a testimony of Michelangelo's religiosity.[52]

Ideally, works of art are most favorably viewed in the sites for which they were commissioned, or in which their essential natures are best accommodated. But it is fruitless to hope that this might be the destiny of the *Pietà*, short of banning insensitive tourists from the Cathedral and eliminating those awesome and pervasive demons that today afflict the well-being of art. Still, for fantasy's sake, let us suppose the impossible, that the *Pietà*, as in 1721-1722, has again entered the Duomo's dusky and mystical atmosphere and been placed on a base behind the High Altar . In this way, we can recreate, if only in our mind's eye, the statue's original transforming effect on the interior of the Cathedral, for there it vitalized aesthetically and spiritually the anesthetized area between the choir and the chapel of St. Zenobius; there, together with Bandinelli's *Dead Christ* and *God the Father*, themselves miraculously restored to their original places on the High Altar, it initiated the progress of the postmortem Christ from the Deposition, to the imminent Resurrection, to the fully resurrected judge high above in Vasari's fresco in the dome; and there the immolated Christ sank into the embrace of his sorrowful mother, the requisite consequence oh Holy Mary receiving the angel bearing the lily and the message of the Child Incarnate, the biblical event which, briefly from 1415 to 1415, was celebrated at Santa Maria del Fiore.[53]

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1 W. BRAUNFELS, *Der Dom von Florenz*, Lausanne-Freiburg im Breisgau, 1964, p. 64.
2 C. MALLARMÉ, *L'ultima tragedia di Michelangelo*, Rome, 1929, p. 84. See also the French edition of MALLARMÉ's book, *Un drame ignoré de Michel-Ange*, Paris, 1930, p. 83. Camille Mallarmé is citing an unpublished 18th-century manuscript by Francesco Settimani, *Memorie fiorentine*, in the Archivio di Stato, Florence, Manoscritti 142, August 29, 1721, fol. 426v (henceforth ASF-Settimani).
3 For the history of Bandinelli's choir enclosure, begun in 1547, see D. HEIKAMP, "Baccio Bandinelli nel Duomo di Firenze", in *Paragone*, XV, no. 175, 1964, pp. 32-42. See also the several articles on the enclosure in *Sotto il cielo della cupola*, T. VERDON ed., Milan, 1997.
4 ASF-Settimani, fol. 84. The *Adam and Eve* were already condemned as "sporche figure di marmo" at the time of their installation in 1551, for which see A. COLASANTI, "Il memoriale di Baccio Bandinelli", in *Repertorium für Kunstwissenschaft*, XXXIII, Berlin, 1905, p. 25. Vasari was also critical of the *Adam and Eve*, stating that the two figures should be chased from the church, because "with their disobedience they railed at Paradise". For this, see G. VASARI, *Le vite de' più eccellenti pittori, scultori ed architettori*, G. MILANESI ed., Milan, 1878-1885, VI, p. 180 (henceforth VASARI-MILANESI). For the removal of the *Adam and Eve* on September 10, 1721, see A. LENSI, *Palazzo Vecchio*, Milan, 1929, p. 281.
5 G. VASARI, *Le vite dei più eccellenti pittori, scultori e architetti*, G.G. BOTTARI ed., Rome, 1759-1760, II, p. 603, note 1 (hereafter VASARI-BOTTARI). I wish to thank Louis Waldman for bringing this reference to my attention.
6 T. VERDON, *Il "Giudizio" ritrovato. Il restauro degli affreschi della cupola di Santa Maria del Fiore*, Florence, 1995, pp. 27-32. Similar ideas regarding the Dead Christ are expressed by F. PETRUCCI, "Le sculture dell'interno", in *La Cattedrale di Santa Maria del Fiore a Firenze*, C. ACIDINI LUCHINAT ed., Florence, 1995, II, pp. 188 ff., and F. VOSSILLA, "Dal coro alla cupola. Linee dei mecenatismo mediceo", in Cosimo I a Santa Maria del Fiore nell'epoca del Concilio di Trento", in *L'uomo in cielo*, Atti del simposio interdisciplinare promosso dallo Studio Teologico Fiorentino, T. VERDON ed., *Vivens Homo*, 7, 1996, pp. 41-56.
7 For an illustration of the marble Dead Christ, see *Vivens Homo* (see note 6), fig. 14.
8 There is a long bibliography on the altar as the tomb of Christ, but it is sufficient for our purposes to cite J. SHEARMAN, *Pontormo's Altarpiece in S. Felicita*, University of Newcastle Upon Tyne, 1971, p. 22.
9 See HEIKAMP, *op. cit.* (see note 3), pp. 33 and 37.
10 For an illustration of Christ's head, see *Vivens Homo* (see note 6), fig. 21.
11 J. POESCHKE, *Die Skulptur der Renaissance in Italien. Michelangelo und seine Zeit*, Munich, 1992, II, p. 176. See also the English edition of the volume, *Michelangelo and His World*, trans. R. STOCKMAN, New York, 1996, p. 176.
12 Paul 10:9.
13 F. BALDINUCCI, *Vita di G.B. Foggini*, cited in K. LANKHEIT, *Florentinische Barockplastik*, Munich, 1962, p. 237. I wish to thank Louis Waldman for calling my attention to Baldinucci's comment.
14 ASF-Settimani, fol. 492v.
15 Archivio dell'Opera di Santa Maria del Fiore, Florence (hereafter AOSMF), IV-2-93, fasc. 84.
16 G. POGGI, *Il Duomo di Firenze*, Berlin, 1909, p. CXXI; and the revised edition edited by M. HAINES, Florence, 1988, p. CXXI.
17 HAINES, *op. cit.* (see note 16), p. CXVIII.
18 AOSMF, XI-1-4, fols. 97v-98r and 100v.
19 The choir architecture was largely dismantled in 1842. For this, see W. and E. PAATZ, *Die Kirchen von Florenz*, Frankfurt am Main, 1952, III, p. 368.
20 AOSMF, XI-1-4, fol. 107v.
21 AOSMF, XI-1-4, fol. 117.
22 MALLARMÉ, *L'ultima tragedia* (see note 2), pp. 7 ff., and *Un drame ignoré* (see note 2), p. 2.
23 MALLARMÉ, *L'ultima tragedia* (see note 2); A. CONDIVI, *The Life of Michelangelo*, H. WOHL ed., Oxford, 1976, p. 90; and VASARI-MILANESI (see note 4), VII, p. 238.
24 MALLARMÉ, *Un drame ignoré* (see note 2). p. 2. Mallarmé's idea was endorsed by, among others, A. ERRICHELLI, *Michelangelo*, Città di Castello, 1930, p. 75, and A.M. BESSONE AURELI, "Per il cambiamento della tomba di Michelangelo", *Illustrazione Vaticana*, IV, n. 14, 1933, p. 545, who concluded that replacing Vasari's tomb with the *Pietà* "would render honor to that insuperable genius, and also to God, because all comes from the Creator, who would grant Italy, as Michelangelo himself said, 'the perfection of things'".
25 MALLARMÉ, *Un drame ignoré* (see note 2), p. 2.
26 S. and J. HORNER, *Walks in Florence*, London, 1877, I, pp. 75 and 78.
27 G. VASARI, *La vita di Michelangelo nelle redazioni del 1550 e del 1568*, P. BAROCCHI ed., Milan-Naples, 1962, III, p. 1442 (quoting Auguste Rodin's article in *La Revue*, 86, 1910, p. 14). Rodin made a trip to Italy in the winter of 1875-1876, according to R. ROSENBLUM and H.W. JANSON, *Art of the 19th Century. Painting and Sculpture*, London, 1984, p. 476.
28 VASARI-MILANESI (see note 4), VII, pp. 28 ff.
29 AOSMF, XI-1-4, fols. 21 and 38. The site was criticized for its darkness by, among others, R. SUTHERLAND GOWER, *Michael Angelo Buonarroti*, London, 1911, p. 56; E. KNAPP, *Michelangelo*, Stuttgart, 1916, p. 169; L.V. BERTARELLI, *Firenze e dintorni*, Milan, 1937, pp. 92 ff.
30 AOSMF, XI-1-4, fol. 141.
31 The Resident Deputy placed the Deputazione Secolare dell'Opera on record as opposing "with all its energy" the transfer of the *Pietà* to Santa Croce.
32 AOSMF, XI-2-93, 1933-1934, fasc. 8. The precise date of the installation is not forthcoming. For a plan of the Duomo in which the old and the new sites of the *Pietà* are indicated, see P. PAVLINOV, "La sistemazione della Pietà di S. Maria del Fiore e il metodo creativo di Michelangelo", in *Arte Lombarda*, X, 1965, p. 117, fig. 4.
33 Among them were: M. RIVOSECCHI, *Michelangelo e Roma*, Bologna, 1935, p. 125; BERTARELLI, *op. cit.* (see note 29), pp. 92 ff.; V. MARIANI, *Michelangelo*, Turin, 1945, p. 231. On the other hand, N. BACCETTI, *Spiriti e figure*, Milan, 1934, p. 127, took the paradoxical position that the lighting was not much better in the chapel than behind the High Altar. Nevertheless, he favored the move because the statue could now be seen from all sides.
34 PAVLINOV, *op. cit.* (see note 32), p. 116. The Latin text as Pavlinov recorded it reads: "Clariore in loco locatum volueret"; his Italian translation reads: "Per darle, infine, una illuminazione migliore".
35 AOSMF, XI-2-93, 1932-1933, fasc. 8.
36 *Ibid.* The letter was written by Giuseppe Castellucci to the Deputato Residente dell'Opera di Santa Maria del Fiore dated August 25, 1932. The design was approved by the Deputato in a letter dated August 31, 1932, and by the R. Soprintendenza all'Arte Medievale e Moderna della Toscana in a letter of June 17, 1933, which is included in the same folder.
37 For the removal of the closets, see AOSMF, XI-2-93, 1993-1934, fasc. 8. This letter is dated September 5, 1933. In 1840 a 14th-century altarpiece representing a Madonna and Child between St. John and St. Blaise was removed from the altar of this chapel and placed in the Museum of the Opera del Duomo, where it is still on display. For this, see E. SETTESOLDI, *The Museum of the Opera del Duomo of Florence*, Florence, 1982, p. 85.
38 The statue was removed from the chapel twice before 1960. It was taken to the "sotterraneo" during World War II to protect it from allied bombings. On May 22, 1946, it was transported to the Accademia delle Belle Arti for a general cleaning, according to newspaper reports, and returned to the Duomo about 1948. For this, and for a photograph of the actual removal of the statue from the Duomo in 1946, see PAVLINOV, *op. cit.* (see note 32), pp. 119 and 118, fig. 5.
39 AOSMF, Carteggio miscellaneo, 1960-1961. The document concerns the transfer of the *Pietà* at an unspecified date. The letter was addressed to the Archbishop of Florence and dated December 23, 1960.
40 *Ibid.*, letter dated December 31, 1960.
41 *Ibid.*
42 *Ibid.* The objection of the Commission appears in an "Estratto del verbale della adunanza del giorno 8 aprile 1961".
43 SETTESOLDI, *op. cit.* (see note 40), p. 44. The statue was first cleaned and included in an exhibition held in 1980 in Santo Stefano al Ponte. For information on the exhibition, see A. PAOLUCCI, "Le opere d'arte", in *Firenze e La Toscana dei Medici nell'Europa del Cinquecento. La comunità cristiana fiorentina e toscana nella dialettica religiosa del Cinquecento*, Florence, 1980, especially pp. 200-201.
44 SETTESOLDI, *op. cit.* (see note 40), p. 48. I have not located the document on which Settesoldi based his dating of the construction of the new room.
45 *Ibid.* See also *La Nazione*, June 5, 1981, p. 13.
46 *Ibid.*
47 The competition is mentioned by L. STEINBERG, "Animadversions", in *Art Bulletin*, 71, 1989, p. 485. See also A. PARRONCHI, "Toh, le manca una gamba", in *La Nazione*, July 21, 1981, p. 3.
48 *La Nazione*, June 5, 1981, p. 13.
49 *Ibid.*
50 A. PAOLUCCI, "Tesori d'arte dentro Santa Maria del Fiore", in *Alla riscoperta di Piazza del Duomo in Firenze, 2: La Cattedrale di Santa Maria del Fiore*, T. VERDON ed., Florence, 1993, pp. 100-101.
51 For the celebration of the Annunciation at the Duomo, see G. GUASTI, *Santa Maria del Fiore*, Florence, 1889, pp. CXIII ff., documents 464 and 465; and V. CRISPOLTI, *Santa Maria del Fiore alla luce dei documenti*, Florence, 1937, p. 314.

Restoration by Paola Rosa
with the collaboration of Emanuela Peiretti
Photos of the restoration: Alena Fialová
Video: Giovanni De Stefano 3dSign
Diagnostic analysis: ADARTE by Francesca Bziani and Azzurra Macherelli
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THE MICHELANGELO'S LAST RUSH

Roberto Barni

I will start with Michelangelo on foot, barefoot I suppose, in the mud of via Macel de' Corvi in Rome, in the morning of February 14, 1564. Was it so, was this the eternity you imagined and earned, Michelangelo? It is raining and cold, Calcagni tells us he went to see him as soon as he heard that the night before Michelangelo could not get on his horse, a little horse he used to keep in the yard among hens. Had he been working the whole night with candles lit upon his head in a pitiful state? Calcagni takes him back and says: "But what are you doing?" Michelangelo replies that he has no other place to stay. He was lovingly brought back home dried and put to bed, he was feverish. He did nothing but work all the time, he had done nothing but work.

Michelangelo had understood where God had hidden time, inside minerals, stone and marble and feverish Michelangelo worked to free the time from under there and from inside there. To make out of it the masterpiece that it is up to us men to make. But by goodness, with each blow of the hammer the chisel made the marble scatter and hid what it showed.

There it was, the shape to show everyone and what it showed, it hid. Michelangelo, you have all boundaries, nothing is delimited anymore and the form hides the formless and the formless hides the form and it wasn't the unfinished – it was the infinite. So you jumped among us and you left all the sculptors and everyone polishing the details and looking out there for the form where things seem distinct, precise, clear-cut bordering on the madness of all objects and of every day and of all the beautiful days to forget and those already forgotten.

You see Michelangelo, the objects want to avenge the offense, they have no nobility and want to be repeated and repeated. In Florence they said that you were smelling of lily of the valley there in the chapels of the church of San Piero and some of those chapels still exist and are an inn. Of course you were a saint! You were desperate. You had a love that could do more than you could. We all expect more from life. And you had a short time. In your youth at Lorenzo's home you must have heard that God told man that he could know everything, absolutely everything from the point where God himself had placed him. And that his nature was neither moral nor immoral and that God needed to share his own work with him. You, Michelangelo, shared the divine beauty with all of us but everyone must be able to take it with their own hands and you have placed it in the way you discovered it but not at our height – we have to get up a bit on tiptoe. What it shows hides and what it hides shows. This is sacrednes. It is in you, us men. Men, you will find everything but not in supermarkets, everything is too close at hand. Men, Michelangelo asks us to go part of the way not together but his way is like ours. We always forget beauty. It is time and space but we keep looking for it and it is always for us forever. Without beauty we would be monsters and we are fantasies. Those form crime news, just looking for it makes us better people.

Now God has hidden it in the darkest parts of ourselves and we must become the sculptors of ourselves and we will see what we don't see. I don't remember the name of the man who visited you from Val d'Arno and brightened your days, you gave him the drawings for the *Marginine* (the Madonnas in the tabernacles on the streets) and he made you laugh like crazy! I'll ask Vasari. And it was you at the Cardiere who cleaned of Lorenzo scolding his son Piero, and it was he or you who went and told it to Piero. However, quickly and maybe on your way back from Venice you found a stormy shelter in Bologna and an Aldrovandi who saved you from prison and gave you the opportunity to make the three wonders of the Angel of San Petronio and San Procolo, a self-portrait with a cloak on the shoulders? Every single day we can realize how many treasures you have available to us. I love your poems. From the highest stars / a splendor descends / that desire pulls to those / and here it is called love. / A gentle heart has nothing else…

Now Adolfo Natalini found a larger space for the *Pietà* in the new museum and Simonetta Brandolini cared to have the varnishes removed (and they were many) from the marble. The marble that had several problems. It is a bitter encounter with nature that is opposed to your design but nearby you can see Donatello's *Maddalena* perhaps even more bitter, a cello sonata with strings continuously beating on the wood that certainly cannot console you. I saw that he warmed wax in his last bronzes too much and his faces melted in tears. Who made Donatello so embrittered? You loved him very much and yet you never stopped following the form. The harsh form that affirms and denies before reason and our senses. Never, not even in the most hidden part of your sculpture but which you did not neglect at all, you saw the chance triumphing over your obstinacy. Without a cry or melancholy Michelangelo you carried on everything miraculously, absolutely everything including St. Peter's and the Campidoglio.



LA SCUOLA DEL COSE IV

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In this issue they wrote
NINO SOTTILE ZUMBO
PAOLO PIANIGIANI
ANTONIO NATALI
BEATRICE AGOSTINI
AND PAOLA ROSA
JACK WASSERMAN
ROBERTO BARNI

- LIFE OF MICHELAGNOLO
- INTERVIEW WITH SIMONETTA BRANDOLINI D'ADDA
- MICHELANGELO'S PIETÀ, THE DEAD CHRIST TYPE AND A HELLENISTIC MARBLE TORSO
- RESTORING MICHELANGELO'S PIETÀ
- MICHELANGELO'S PIETÀ IN FLORENCE
- THE MICHELANGELO'S LAST RUSH

LIFE OF MICHELAGNOLO, with care and study collected by a Sicilian Anonymous, to be published by Antonio Blado Stampatore Camerale

Nino Sottile Zumbo

"Nothing the best of artists can conceive but lies, potential, in a block of stone, superfluous matter round it. The best alone can free it that has intelligence for guide". (Michelagnolo Buonarroti, *Lyrical and amorous rhymes*, sonnet 57, rv.1-4; trans. John Frederick Nims)

Ides of March, Anno Domini MDLXXVI

Notice for readers
While looking forward for A. Blado to print the entire Life of M. in Rome, we will give an account here of only a few apocryphal passages, handwritten on just found loose and worn out sheets of paper. We simply expunged, as the pure philological canon commands, the extremely obscure or mutilated phrases, impossible to restore without an excess of interpolations that would corrupt their meaning.

Prologue
We will write about Maestro Michelagnolo Buonarroti, a peculiar painter and sculptor, poet of precious and stony *Rime*, some of which have been set to music by Bartolomeo Tromboncino and Jacob Arcadelt.
Considerately, and with pride, we innovate what we read in the *Vita di Michelagnolo Buonarroti*, collected and published by Asanio Condivi from Ripartransone, in Anno Domini MDLIII.
To the world we present, and permit to publish, his wonderful and memorable teachings, sentences, acts and facts […]

Chapter I
§ I – Among the admirers of his verses, Francesco Berni thus lashes out at the radical Renaissance Petrarchists: "Yes, he is the new Apollo and the new Apelles: / silence a little, pale violets, / and liquid crystals and splendor fairs; / he says things, and you say words" (*Chapter to Fra Bastian Dal Piombo*, vv. 28-31, MDXXXIV).
Among the critics, one, very malevolent, insinuates: "Rhymes, grins, or concepts without discipline?".
§ II – We refute that Maestro Michelagnolo ignores our Latin mother language.
In his house of Via Macel de' Corvi in Rome, on the large table of solid walnut wood, next to his tools (chisel, scalpel and others) he keeps, woodcut also with drawings, the *Naturalis Historia* (books I-XXXVII) by Gaius Plinius Secundus (Pliny the Elder).
He sometimes consults: the thirty-fifth book (*Mineral Colors*), for the stories of the ancient masters of art; the thirty-sixth, in full (*About stones, and particularly marble*).
He enjoys: the anecdotes about Apelles of Cos, of the Sicyonia School, the greatest among the ancient painters; the dissertations on the qualities of marbles, such as the "Parian marble" chosen by the supreme Phidias to sculpt the Aphrodite, then moved to Rome, at the Portico d'Ottavia, by Emperor Augustus.
As Pliny relates (book XXXV, § 84), Apelles does not let a day go by without practicing ("*nulla dies sine linea*", as the proverb you know); but before the surplus of zeal suffocates the result ("*nocere saepe nimiam diligentiam*"), he knows how to get his hand out of the work (*ibid.*, § 80).
Pliny (*ibid.*, §§ 81-83) also tells of a challenge. Apelles, having landed in Rhodes, goes to the study of the well known Protogenes. He doesn't find him; an old woman, who keeps a virgin canvas of considerable size, welcomes him asking who he is.
"This" he replies, and very quickly, with a brush, he traces an extremely thin, simple colored line on the canvas.
Once back home, Protogenes realizes that this is Apelle's work. In fact, no one else could ever have painted such a perfect line. Then, inside that, he traces a thinner line in a different color. He orders the old woman: if he comes back, tell Apelles that "that" is the painter he is looking for, and he goes away.
Apelles arriving too, he intersects the two lines with a third color, leaving no space for a thinner stroke. Protogene gives up.
Those fleeting lines excite everyone's imagination like magnets. That almost empty work ("*inani similem*"), which looks unfinished (imperfect), expresses the whole (perfection).
For such reasons, which are obvious to all of you,

LA
SCUOLA
DELLE
COSE
IV



Michelangelo Buonarroti, *Bandini Pietà*, circa 1547–1555. Detail of Nicodemus' head. Museo dell'Opera del Duomo, Firenze. Photo © Alena Fialová