

Descrivedendo Duomo Museum

“Coat of Arms of the Veneranda Fabbrica of the Duomo of Milan”

The *Coat of Arms of the Veneranda Fabbrica of the Duomo of Milan* is engraved in bas-relief on a tablet in pink *Candoglia* marble. Created by an unknown sculptor in the second half of the fifteenth century, it is one of the Museum’s most important works from the point of view of identity affirmation since the composition of the coat of arms has remained the same until the present day. The work is exhibited in the room dedicated to the Duomo’s origins, on the right of a similar coat of arms.

The tablet is 65 centimetres high, 45.5 centimetres wide and 11 centimetres thick. It is therefore rectangular-shaped, with the vertical being the longest side.

The subject of the work is the figure of the *Madonna* who opens her cloak wide to embrace the façade of the ancient cathedral as a sign of protection of the new building under construction, as well as the entire city of Milan, identified by its Duomo. The upper half of the coat of arms features the Madonna, while the façade of the existing cathedral is depicted in the lower half.

The Madonna is at the centre of the upper half of the tablet: sculpted at half-length from a frontal perspective, she is depicted as a young woman with a round face and regular features who looks straight ahead with a serious expression. She holds out both arms with the palms of the hands turned to the observer in a gesture of embrace and protection. She is wearing a draped, long-sleeved dress under a large cloak fastened at the chest by a circular clasp

with a veil covering her head and outlining her face, leaving only a few locks of long, wavy hair with a central parting visible. On her head, Our Lady wears an enormous crown. The hems of the cloak are raised and extended by two cherubs, one on the left and one on the right behind the Madonna, partially visible and depicted as angels with outstretched wings and short, curly hair, dressed in simple tunics with sleeves down to the elbows. Both stretch their arms forward and hold the cloak open so wide that it reaches the sides of the scene.

In the lower half of the tablet, there is a sculpture of the façade of the ancient *Cathedral of Santa Maria Maggiore* which, for two centuries, remained the façade of the new cathedral and would only later become the Duomo of Milan with the appearance that we know today.

At that time, the Cathedral displayed a façade with two superimposed orders that ended in a cusp at the centre with rounded tops at the side and this is how it is sculpted on the tablet. There are also rose windows at the centre and the two sides, and three entrances, two smaller arched side entrances and a more imposing central entrance supported by tall, thin columns. Four putti are sculpted at the top of the façade, two on the left and two on the right, holding torches.

Saint John and Saint Peter are depicted at the bottom of the tablet, on the left and right of the Cathedral's façade respectively, reaching from the base to more than halfway up the façade of the cathedral. Both are depicted frontally at full length, with their heads turned three-quarters of the way around towards the Cathedral. Saint John is dressed in a simple short tunic while Saint Peter wears a longer tunic with a cloak and holds two large keys in his right hand and an open book in his left.

The light-coloured tablet is in a good state of preservation, although certain parts, such as the faces of the two saints or the edges of the tablet itself, display signs of deterioration of the marble.



The morphological description drawn up and validated between September and November 2023, **certified by DescriVedendo**, was created by Team DescriVedendo with the National Association of the Visually Impaired ETS, in collaboration with Veneranda Fabbrica del Duomo di Milano.

