

Descrivedendo Duomo Museum

“God the Father”

“God the Father” is the title of this work produced between 1416 and 1425 by the master goldsmith *Beltramino de Zutti*.

It is 122 centimetres high, 88 centimetres wide and 71.5 centimetres deep.

This is the work of a goldsmith, made of embossed silvered and gilded copper, in a realistic style. It was the craftsman's intent to enhance the normal perception of the human eye by producing an extremely detailed work and reproducing those details in large dimensions, further exploiting the brilliance and plays of light of the metals, in particular with the gilded colour that emphasises their preciousness.

The subject is the head and face of God the Father, surrounded by a fiery tangle of hair and beard.

The point of view from which this work can be observed in the Museum of the Duomo is frontal: the sculpture, attached invisibly at the back, against a background of two dark panels, can be found in the Room dedicated to the art of the *Visconti* era. It should be remembered that the work, now replaced by a copy, was located in the cathedral until 1964 at the intersection of the vaults of the apse, at a height many metres above ground, which also explains the work's recourse to such an imposing size. The entire sculpture displays the extreme definition of the details and the avid search for naturalism of the somatic features.

God the Father has the face of a mature man, with skin marked with various expression lines, not deep but sufficient to emphasise his age. The forehead is high and crossed by horizontal lines. Beneath is a pair of thin eyebrows, slightly arched and furrowed at the junction with the nose. The artist even makes the hairs that make them up visible.

The large and slightly protruding eyes, rather far apart, reveal well-defined irises and pupils, diverging slightly towards the outside, that convey an intense, penetrating gaze.

Bags can be seen under the lower eyelids. The regular-shaped nose separates the slightly protruding cheekbones. The mouth emerges between the moustache and beard, with full, slightly parted lips.

Like a thick mane, the meticulously reproduced hair and beard surround the face, increasing its prominence and expressive power. Starting from the top, the hair, divided by a central parting, is twisted firmly upwards and to the side, with careful symmetry and definition, falling down to the ears, the curls almost entirely covering them. The flowing hair from the back of the head also surrounds the face at the sides with a series of elegant curls and expands in width, protruding from the outlines of the face seen from the front. In the lower half, the beard appears tightly twisted into snake-like shapes, although the length is less than the hair. It combines with the two sides of the thick moustache over the mouth and covers the lips, reaching beneath the chin and opening into two triangular extensions with diverging tips.

The highly evocative ensemble created by the artist, obtained by combining the vivid, almost frowning face with hair and beard that seem to have a life of their own, is amplified by the gilding and brilliance of the metal.



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



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