

Descrivedendo Duomo Museum

“Statue of the Madonnina”

The statue of the Madonnina exhibited in the courtyard of the Museum of the Duomo was created in 2015 by the *Fonderia Nolana del Giudice* and is a true, life-size copy of the one placed at the top of the cathedral's main spire in 1774. The original was designed and built by the sculptor and goldsmith Giuseppe Perego by applying 33 sheets of embossed and gilded copper on an iron frame.

The work is 4.16 metres high. This is a sculpture in the round made of bronze covered with 24-carat gold leaf. The style is realistic, that is, it presents shapes and proportions as they are normally perceived by the human eye. It was placed in an exterior courtyard on a low rectangular base in grey metal and so it is possible to walk around it.

The subject depicts the episode of *the Assumption of the Virgin Mary in Heaven* as was rendered with the Madonna at full length, standing on a cloud from which the heads of four cherubs emerge. The Madonna has the appearance of a young woman who turns her gentle, serene, but at the same time resolute face upwards to her right. Wavy hair emerges from the veil on her head and falls loosely to below the shoulders, while a circle of small stars form a halo around the head.

Her right arm hangs a little away from the body to the elbow, where it bends forward and outward, ending in a hand with the palm turned upwards at the level of the hip. The left arm hangs more laterally, also away from the body, slightly bent at the elbow,

and ends in an open hand with the palm diagonally facing forward and upward at the level of the hips.

The legs cannot be seen under the clothes but the left foot sticks out, while the right remains further back, invisible and covered with only the toes sticking out. Both feet are bare. The left leg stands straight on the ground, the right is bent slightly backwards.

The Madonna wears a long-draped tunic under a cloak that, as well as acting as a veil around her head, covers her left shoulder entirely while leaving the right uncovered. It hangs at her sides and forms a knot at the front with the opposite flap. In this way, complex, luxuriant drapery is created that wraps around part of the bust, the sides and the legs.

Under this female figure, in a pose in which the desire is clear to intercede with God for the purpose of obtaining protection for the cathedral and the entire city at her feet, a golden cloud almost completely conceals four cherubs, only the heads of whom and part of the wings can be seen. At the front, on the cloud under the Madonna's feet, an inscription reads: *1774 - Joseph Bini - Aurifex F.*

The bronze sculpture is entirely covered with gold leaf, which certainly enhances the composition but, in the Museum setting, it is the imposing size that strikes most of all, barely perceptible when looking at the original at a height of 108.5 metres from below.

Inside the Museum, in the room dedicated to the Madonnina, it is also possible to see the wrought iron frame that formed the load-bearing structure of the gilded copper sheets that make up the original. This structure, worn away over time, was replaced with a similar one in stainless steel.



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.

