

# David

Historical notes: In 1463, the Vestry Board of Florence's cathedral entrusted Agostino di Duccio with an enormous block of marble so that he could carve a giant figure, probably that of a prophet, to be placed on one of the spurs of the cathedral. Agostino never completed the work and the «badly roughcast» piece of marble was abandoned in the courtyard of the Opera, the seat of the Vestry Board.

In August 1501, the Arte della Lana, or Wool Guild, which was in charge of the Cathedral Vestry Board, decided to give the block to Michelangelo to carve a *David*. The sculptor began to work on it in September and had a *turata*, a wooden shelter, built so that he would not have to work in the open. By January 1504, the statue was nearly finished and, given the excellence of the work, a committee was set up to decide on its best location. Its members included Andrea della Robbia, Cosimo Rosselli, Simone del Pollaiuolo, Antonio and Giuliano da Sangallo, and several other artists, who decided, together with the representative of the Commune, to place the statue by the entrance to Palazzo Vecchio. So, on June 8th, 1504, the sculpture was set up in the place of Donatello's *Judith* (which was moved to a position under Orcagna's loggia) and placed on a marble base made by Simone del Pollaiuolo and Antonio da Sangallo. It remained there until 1873, when it was moved to the Galleria dell' Accademia and replaced by a copy.

Iconography and style: Michelangelo introduced a series of important innovations in this work. David is portrayed as a young man and not a boy and is completely naked. He is not represented at the moment of action or triumph, but in an attitude of intention. His strength is therefore not rendered in an explicit manner, but restrained within a potential vigor. His expression is one of challenge, and his head and hand are disproportionately large to convey the ideas of thought and action. Thus, Michelangelo deliberately infringed the classical canons of proportion while maintaining the classical contrast. The nudity and physical strength link the figure of David with that of Hercules, honored in Florence as a symbol of civic virtues. The expression of an iron-willed inner mastery of the passions makes this work a perfect incarnation of the physical and moral ideal of Renaissance man.