

Hercules and Antaeus

As early as 1508, Pier Soderini had decided that it was necessary to set another statue opposite *David* in front of the entrance to Palazzo Vecchio. The work was to represent *Hercules and Antaeus*: ever since the Middle Ages Hercules had been considered the patron of Florence, as a defender of liberty against tyranny. For the purpose Michelangelo made a clay model that is believed to be the one in Casa Buonarroti. With the return of the Medici, it was Clement VII who revived the idea of placing *Hercules* alongside *David*, but he entrusted the block of marble set aside for the work to Baccio Bandinelli. With the Medici sent into exile again, the commission was given back to Michelangelo, who continued with the rough carving of the marble. On Buonarroti's definitive departure from Florence, the sculpture was once again entrusted to Bandinelli, who completed the group with the powerful figures of *Hercules and Cacus* that can still be seen today in front of Palazzo Vecchio. The model in Casa Buonarroti is an interesting testimony to the way that Michelangelo worked, only starting to carve the marble after he had given the idea a visual form through drawings or clay models.