

George Washington Like We've Never Seen Him Before

Joelle Grosso (July 06, 2017)



A statue of George Washington created by one of the greatest Italian neoclassical sculptors of all time, Antonio Canova, will be displayed at the Frick Collection starting on May 22nd, 2018 and it provides an entirely new outlook on America's founding father.

Next year, a special exhibition dedicated to [Antonio Canova](#) [2] and [George Washington](#) [3] will open at the [Frick Collection](#) [4] which will not only bring Italian art rarities to the United States for the first time ever but expose the American public to a little known story that is full of intrigue.

Watch History Unfold

Back in 1816, as the United States were establishing their role as an independent nation after winning the war against the British, [Thomas Jefferson](#) [5] commissioned Antonio Canova to create a monument of George Washington dressed as an ancient Roman leader. Even though the sculptor never met or seen the first American President, Washington had already passed away by the time work on this piece began, Canova happily accepted and relied solely on a bust owned by an American diplomat who shipped it to his studio in Rome.

The state of North Carolina spent almost half of their annual budget on the funding of the sculpture and it finally arrived in its new home five years later. Unfortunately, the stunning piece was completely ruined a decade later after the tragic spread of a fire within the state's House.



Salvaging the Past

Even though Canova's original sculpture of Washington was destroyed, the artist still had a full-size plaster model of the monument in his studio which is what will be making its debut in New York next year. He had also made a 30-inch preliminary nude model for this project which no one ever knew about and obviously Washington wasn't the one who posed for it.

[Xavier F. Salomon](#) [6], the Peter Jay Sharp Chief Curator at the Frick says, "It is one of the four preliminary models, part of the preparatory work. Canova always did a nude model of his sculptures so he could understand how the body worked under the drapery. It was absolutely a standard practice starting with rough drawings and then moving onto three-dimensional plaster models."

Besides the full-size plaster copy of the original sculpture and the smaller nude model, the exhibition will also include Canova's draft sketches and related engravings and drawings borrowed by the [Museo Canova](#) [7] in [Possagno](#) [8], the town in which the artist was born.

Step back into the past and view the remarkable intertwining of Italian and American history right before your very own eyes. For those who are interested, Canova's George Washington will be on display at the Frick Collection from May 22nd, 2018 to September 23rd, 2018. More information can be found at [>>>](#) [9].

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