

Rhine-Maas region

Standing Virgin and Child ca. 1340

Carrara Marble. Inv. Nr. 2301

No event has had as great an impact on the Sculpture Collection and the Museum of Byzantine Art as the war-related loss of approximately 2700 works that still today are considered missing. At the beginning of May 1945, numerous works of art were burned in two catastrophic fires in the main tower of the Berlin-Friedrichshain flak bunker. Hundreds of them were irreversibly damaged. Almost everything that survived the fire was taken by the Soviet trophy brigades to the USSR.



The Madonna in its condition before the 2015 restoration
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Skulpturensammlung und
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Kunst / Antje Voigt

This Madonna serves as a prime example of the fate of quite a few works. After the museums were closed at the beginning of the war, this work was packed in Crate 334 around 1940 and in 1942 made it to the third floor of the bunker. Around May 15, 1945, temperatures up to 1000°C caused the marble to splinter and break into hundreds of pieces. Just seven days later, it was considered destroyed.

However, the fragmented and charred remains ended up in

Leningrad (today St. Petersburg) in 1946. The work, which was registered under the new inventory number 3C-676, underwent a makeshift conservation in 1957 and in 1958 was given back to the then German Democratic Republic (GDR).

In the 1960s and 1970s, discussions took place in East Berlin about whether and how these damaged objects could be integrated into the permanent exhibition as both works of art and historical documents. In the

opinion of many scholars, the damages were too severe, the memory of a destroyed Germany too fresh. And thus the Madonna went into storage until the re-opening of the Bode Museum in 2006. The sculpture is also of great art historical importance. In the 14th century the travel and trade routes between Northern and Southern Europe changed dramatically; newly opened water routes facilitated the transport of large quantities of raw material and stone sculptures. An important sculptor from the Rhine-Maas region, whose name has been lost to history, created the Madonna. He probably worked for a short time near the quarry of Carrara in Italy, where some of his sculptures survive and where the Madonna was acquired for Berlin in 1896. The sculptor, who was schooled in Parisian court art, and the background of his creative work in Italy are among the most puzzling questions in medieval art history.

This Madonna serves as a prime example of the fate of many other works in the Sculpture Collection. After the most recent restoration, it should now be better able to convey its eventful history.

We invite you to the special exhibition *Plain Talk: About the History of the Bode Museum* in the lower floor under the Small Dome. Who are the people behind the scenes, how did our collections come to be? Join us also for a critical look at sometimes-fraught times. Share in our reflection on our own history throughout the ages. Because after all, the visitors and their perception of our vibrant museum always take centre stage.

Welcome!