

# Rediscovered sculpture attributed to Michelangelo Buonarroti causes international excitement

*A colorful linden wood sculpture depicting Pope Julius II enthroned and attributed to Michelangelo returns – but where does it belong? Bologna or a safe?*

FRANKFURT, GERMANY, May 15, 2025 /EINPresswire.com/ -- A colorful linden wood sculpture depicting [Pope Julius II](#) enthroned and attributed to [Michelangelo](#) Buonarroti is causing international excitement. It is suspected that the sculpture is the lost model of the monumental bronze statue that Michelangelo created in 1508 on behalf of the Pope – a work approximately four to five meters high that adorned the portal of the [Basilica of San Petronio](#) in Bologna, was destroyed by insurgents just three years later and turned into cannonballs, and has since been considered a legend in art history.



Sculpture of Pope Julius II, may actually be by Michelangelo (photo: Robert Schittko, <https://michelangelo-lost-masterpiece.com>)

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*Klaus Rössler*

Now, a renowned English auction house has submitted a purchase offer in the tens of millions – on behalf of an anonymous private collector. The owners have made their decision. “It is a cultural heritage of Italy and should be made accessible to the public,” emphasizes Klaus Rössler, spokesperson for the collecting couple who discovered the figure at an antiques fair in France in 2023, originally listed as a simple depiction of Saint Peter. “For the owners, this

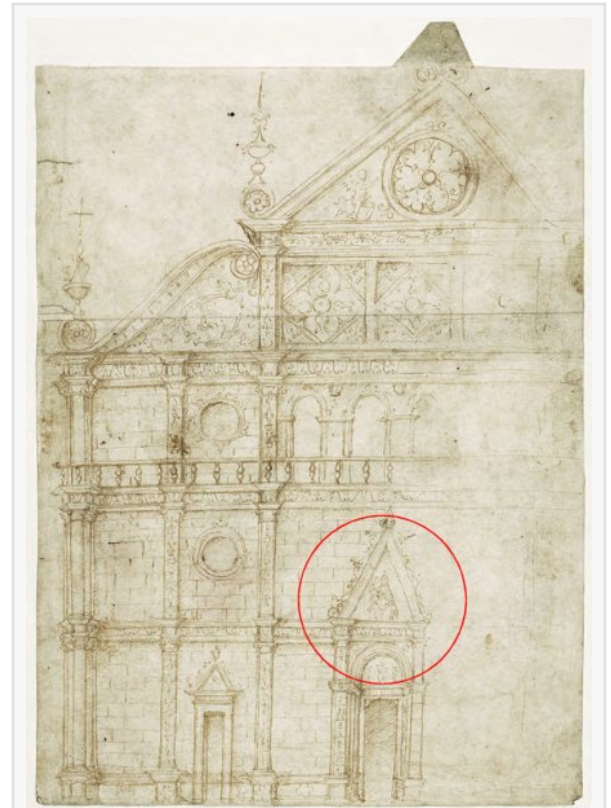
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The sculpture depicts Pope Julius II in a blessing pose, with his mouth slightly open and a facial expression that conveys both dominion and contemplation. The posture, the gestures, the folds

of the robes – all this corresponds to contemporary descriptions of the lost bronze statue above the portal of the Basilica of San Petronio in Bologna from 1508. Stylistically, the figure also fits seamlessly into Michelangelo's early work. The same characteristic tension between inner dynamism and external monumentality already characterized his "David."

It is unusual that such a significant object should remain in private ownership, to be made accessible to the public at a later date. "There are strong indications of a connection to Michelangelo," says Rössler, "but we clearly prefer a transfer to a public institution. A work like this belongs in a museum context." The owners see themselves not as dealers, but as cultural custodians of a potential masterpiece.

Although the attribution to Michelangelo is not yet considered conclusive, art historical and material-technical investigations are in full swing. Comparison with surviving drawings – such as those in the Louvre in Paris – provides strong evidence of a direct connection to Michelangelo's workshop.



Drawing of the facade of basilica San Petronio in Bologna (Rothschild Album I, p.12, Paris, Musée de Louvre, Département des arts graphiques)

The discovery comes at a time of increased public and market attention for Old Masters. Just a few weeks ago, a Michelangelo drawing was auctioned at Sotheby's in London for around 23 million pounds – a record price that underscores the demand for museum-quality works of the High Renaissance.

The owners' decision to refuse to sell the work into the secluded confines of a private collection seems all the more logical. Their goal: to facilitate research, engage the public, and, in the long term, transfer it to state custody.

The website [michelangelo-lost-masterpiece.com](http://michelangelo-lost-masterpiece.com) documents the discovery, the current state of knowledge, and offers access to further analyses.

The possible rediscovery of this work will fill a gap in art history in Michelangelo's sculptural works.

Klaus Rössler  
Roessler ProResult  
069514461  
[kr@roesslerpr.de](mailto:kr@roesslerpr.de)  
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