

Base of the Column of Antonino Pio

Artist: unknown
Date: 161 A.D.
Dimensions: 2,47 x 3,38 m
Material: white marble with small crystals (*Junense*)
Inventory no: 5115

STATE OF PRESERVATION

The exposure to the elements over the years has greatly damaged the column base. The whole surface is coated with dirt and debris. Cracks and signs of erosion are noticeable on the exterior. Unfortunately, these fissures are extremely dangerous as they drive water inside the structure and cause inner separations. Some areas of the surface were restored with plaster and malta, but time has also damaged these attempts at solidifying the structure. The weather conditions are slowly wearing down the carved details of this magnificent work. In the latest inspection, it was noted that some of the smaller details have been lost forever because of abrasion and rain.

RESTORATION PROJECT

- Diagnosis of state and conditions
- 3D documentation with laser scanner
- Closed and roofed scaffolding
- Cleaning and consolidation of the surface
- Removal of previous restorations, integrations and consolidations
- Cleaning of the dark stains resulting from water and pollution
- Removal of iron nails located in the marble structure replaced with fibreglass or steel.
- Recreation of a chromatic balance on the entire surface
- Consolidation and repair of the portions which are flaking off
- Overall layout of protective layer
- Photographic documentation

Total Cost € 96.400,00



► This wonderful marble base was originally located under the red granite column of Antonio Pio. It is a unique piece of granite whose surface is engraved with the date of extraction 105-106 as well as names of the supervisors of the quarry, Dioskouros and Herakleides. This marvellous column and its base were erected by Marco Aurelio and Lucio Vero in honor of their step-father Antonino Pio (138-161 A.D.). Today the base of the monument is placed in one of the most visited areas of the Vatican Museums: the plaza (terrace) of the Pinacoteca, where visitors of the museums get an astounding view of the cupola of St. Peter's. Given the beauty of the spot, our Patron chapters enjoy having their evening cocktail on this terrace before going into the Museums for their gala dinner. Originally the complete monument was located in Campo Marzio, just across the Tiber river

from the Vatican, close to the ancient *Ustrinum Antoniorum* where the bodies of the Emperors were traditionally cremated. In 1703 the base was transferred to the square of Monte Citorio, in Rome, where it remained until 1790. The remains of the column were used to repair the hour hand of the monumental sun dial of Emperor Augusto in Campo Marzio.

On one side of the base there is the inscription of Marco Aurelio and Lucio Vero, Roman emperors, dedicating the monument to the memory of their step-father. Carved on the opposing side is the ascension into divinity (apotheosis) of the imperial couple. It shows Antonino Pio and his wife Faustina being carried up to the sky by a young winged man named Aion, who symbolizes eternity with a globe and a snake. The royalty of the couple is symbolized by the presence of two eagles. Rome, (in the shape of a woman seated on her



throne) and the Campo Marzio (symbolized by a young man lying on one side with the obelisk) are both looking on from afar. On either side is a *decursio*, or military parade and demonstration, with standard bearers and praetorians holding their coat of arms. The *decursio*, which was held only for the imperial family, usually took place when the dead were cremated.

This monument's unique representation of an imperial celebration is one of great interest from an artistic perspective as well. A frontal view of the imperial couple reveals the first symptoms of the crisis of Roman classical art wherein the classical standard forms of official Roman art become ever more mundane.

