

B2-C1 Worksheet: A Michelangelo Bust Returns to the Spotlight - 07

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Article

For centuries, a marble bust of Christ stood quietly inside the Basilica of Sant'Agnese fuori le mura in Rome. This week, however, it moved back into the spotlight after independent researcher Valentina Salerno argued that the sculpture should once again be linked to Michelangelo. Her claim does not rest on visual style alone. Instead, it is built on years of archival work, drawing on inventories, notarial records and correspondence connected to the artist's final years in the city.

According to Salerno, the surviving documents point to a careful plan for protecting Michelangelo's late works after his death. Rather than allowing powerful collectors to seize everything, people in his circle may have set aside drawings and sculptures and transferred some of them through discreet channels. One striking reference describes a room locked away behind several keys, apparently created to safeguard valuable material. The Christ bust, she says, ties in with that paper trail and may explain how a once-recognised work later lost its name.

Not everyone in the art world will immediately sign off on the new attribution, and further debate is expected. Even so, the finding has brought to light a more complex picture of Michelangelo's final years. It may also change the way visitors think about religious spaces, where major works can still turn up in plain sight rather than in private collections. For people entering the basilica today, the sculpture stands as both an object of devotion and a reminder that history can still surprise us.

True/False

Decide if each statement is True (T) or False (F).

1. The bust has been displayed in a Roman basilica for hundreds of years.
2. Salerno based her argument only on the sculpture's appearance.
3. Her research drew on archival documents connected to Michelangelo's later life.
4. The documents suggest that all of Michelangelo's late works were sold immediately.
5. One record mentioned a room protected by several keys.
6. The article says the new attribution has been accepted by everyone already.
7. The discovery may affect how people view art in religious buildings.
8. The bust was found in a private collection.

Phrase Match

Match the phrases (1-10) to the correct definitions (A-J).

Phrases (1-10)	Definitions (A-J)
1. back into the spotlight	A. to be based on something
2. rest on	B. to match or connect with something
3. built on	C. to appear unexpectedly
4. draw on	D. hidden and kept secure
5. point to	E. to make something known or discovered
6. set aside	F. to use information or experience
7. locked away	G. receiving public attention again
8. tie in with	H. to indicate or suggest
9. brought to light	I. developed from a particular foundation
10. turn up	J. to keep something for a special purpose

Synonym Match

Match the words (1-10) to the correct synonyms (A-J).

Words (1-10)	Synonyms (A-J)
1. archival	A. a detailed list of items
2. correspondence	B. protection from harm or loss
3. attribution	C. no longer well known or recognised
4. discreet	D. letters or written communication
5. safeguard	E. still existing after time has passed
6. devotion	F. a large and important church
7. obscurity	G. the act of deciding who created something
8. inventory	H. careful and not attracting attention
9. surviving	I. relating to historical records
10. basilica	J. deep religious respect or loyalty

Use the new language

Please choose 5 words or phrases and make your own sentence using the new word or phrase.

Discussion Questions

Student A

1. Have you ever seen a work of art that really stood out to you?
2. Do you enjoy visiting churches, museums or historical buildings? Why or why not?
3. What kinds of places in your country might still hold hidden historical surprises?
4. Do you prefer art in museums or art in public or religious spaces?
5. How much do you know about Michelangelo or Renaissance art?
6. Would you be more interested in a sculpture if its story were mysterious?
7. What makes a discovery feel exciting to ordinary visitors, not only experts?
8. Do you think old buildings should be restored, left unchanged or adapted for modern use?

Student B

1. How important is documentary evidence when deciding who created a work of art?
2. Should independent researchers be taken as seriously as university experts?
3. Why do some historical works fade into obscurity while others remain famous?
4. Can debate in the art world be useful, or does it only create confusion?
5. Should important art remain in religious spaces, or be moved to museums for protection?
6. What responsibilities do institutions have when new evidence changes an old attribution?
7. How far should governments invest in preserving cultural heritage?
8. Does discovering a famous artist behind a work change its value, or only its publicity?

Answer Key

True/False: 1=T, 2=F, 3=T, 4=F, 5=T, 6=F, 7=T, 8=F

Phrase Match: 1=G, 2=A, 3=I, 4=F, 5=H, 6=J, 7=D, 8=B, 9=E, 10=C

Synonym Match: 1=I, 2=D, 3=G, 4=H, 5=B, 6=J, 7=C, 8=A, 9=E, 10=F