

Michelangelo's 'David' in danger of collapse

5th May, 2014



Michelangelo's masterpiece statue "David" is in great danger of collapsing due to its weak ankles and the structure's 5.5-ton weight. Scientists have confirmed that cracks in the heels of the giant 5.17-metre-

tall iconic statue makes it susceptible to crumbling under its own weight. The cracks have become the statue's Achilles heel. Tests carried out by Italy's National Research Council and Florence University confirmed the existence of a whole series of "micro-fractures" that have weakened David's ankles. A number of factors have led to this weakening. These include the poor quality of marble and the fact that the statue has been leaning at an angle for centuries and vibrations from traffic and museum visitors.

The sculptor Michelangelo spent three years creating David between 1501 and 1504. He was just 26 when he embarked on the project. The statue depicts the biblical hero who killed the giant Goliath. It was commissioned by the rulers of Florence as a symbol of the city's commercial and military strength. It was unveiled to the public on the 8th of September, 1504 and remained on display outside in the Piazza della Signoria for 350 years. It was moved indoors in 1873 to protect it from the elements. Art lovers have been calling for years for the statue to be relocated to the safety of a purpose-built, earthquake proof museum to insulate it from the vibrations from traffic and road construction.

Sources: *rt.com / Telegraph / DailyTech.com / Wikipedia*

Writing

Compare and contrast paintings and statues. Which do you like better and why?

Chat

Talk about these words from the article.

masterpiece / great danger / iconic / Achilles heel / crumbling / poor quality / museum / sculptor / project / biblical / hero / symbol / on display / earthquake proof / traffic

True / False

- The statue's weak knees may cause it to collapse. T / F
- The statue is just over five metres tall. T / F
- Tests were carried out on the statue by the University of Rome. T / F
- The statue has been leaning at an angle for hundreds of years. T / F
- Michelangelo was 26 years old when he starting making David. T / F
- The statue was requested and paid for by a rich merchant from Milan. T / F
- David stood in the wind and rain for more than 350 years. T / F
- David is now housed in an earthquake proof museum. T / F

Synonym Match

- | | |
|-----------------|----------------|
| 1. collapsing | a. cracks |
| 2. confirmed | b. conducted |
| 3. carried out | c. the climate |
| 4. fractures | d. started |
| 5. quality | e. ordered |
| 6. embarked | f. crumbling |
| 7. depicts | g. safeguard |
| 8. commissioned | h. standard |
| 9. the elements | i. verified |
| 10. insulate | j. portrays |

Discussion – Student A

- What do you know about David (and his fight with Goliath)?
- Do you prefer paintings or statues?
- What do you think about when you look at a statue?
- What makes a statue great or rubbish?
- What do you know about Michelangelo?
- Which of the world's statues would you like to own (and why)?
- What are the arguments for and against moving "David"?
- What questions would you like to ask a Michelangelo expert?

Phrase Match

- | | |
|--|----------------------------|
| 1. make it susceptible | a. an angle for centuries |
| 2. The cracks have become the statue's | b. hero |
| 3. the poor quality | c. embarked on the project |
| 4. the statue has been leaning at | d. the elements |
| 5. vibrations | e. of marble |
| 6. He was just 26 when he | f. rulers of Florence |
| 7. the biblical | g. from traffic |
| 8. It was commissioned by the | h. proof museum |
| 9. protect it from | i. to crumbling |
| 10. a purpose-built, earthquake | j. Achilles heel |

Discussion – Student B

- What do you think of statues?
- What do you think of Michelangelo's 'David'?
- What do you think of the statues in your town?
- What is the best statue in the world?
- Are modern statues better than ones that are centuries old?
- How would you feel if "David" collapsed and crumbled?
- What kind of statue would you like in your garden?
- How would you like a statue of you to look?

Spelling

- Michelangelo's emsrteeicpa statue
- the csturetru's 5.5-ton weight
- makes it sbupeicelst to crumbling
- a whole series of "micro-urasferte"
- A number of tsfarco have led to this
- toibrinsav from traffic
- he statue depicts the ablcbili hero
- ionedmsmscoi by the rulers of Florence
- It was eiduvlne to the public
- protect it from the lemetsen
- a purpose-built, kateurqhea proof museum
- road oocnscnitrtu

Answers – Synonym Match

1. f	2. i	3. b	4. a	5. h
6. d	7. j	8. e	9. c	10. g

Role Play

Role A – Sculpture

You think sculpture is the greatest art form. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them things that aren't so great about their art forms. Also, tell the others which is the least inspiring of these (and why): painting, poetry or opera.

Role B – Painting

You think painting is the greatest art form. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them things that aren't so great about their art forms. Also, tell the others which is the least inspiring of these (and why): sculpture, poetry or opera.

Role C – Poetry

You think poetry is the greatest art form. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them things that aren't so great about their art forms. Also, tell the others which is the least inspiring of these (and why): painting, sculpture or opera.

Role D – Opera

You think opera is the greatest art form. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them things that aren't so great about their art forms. Also, tell the others which is the least inspiring of these (and why): painting, poetry or sculpture.

Speaking – Famous Statues

Rank these with your partner. Put the best at the top. Change partners often and share your rankings.

- Michelangelo's David
- Christ the Redeemer
- Venus de Milo
- Easter Island Moai
- The Thinker (Rodin)
- The Great Sphinx (Giza)
- Statue of Liberty
- The Mermaid (Copenhagen)

Answers – True False

a	F	b	T	c	F	d	T	e	T	f	F	g	T	h	F
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Answers to Phrase Match and Spelling are in the text.