

Sisters in Liberty, a 200-Year Journey

Laura Pace (October 17, 2019)



More than a simple exhibition, a journey between Florence and New York rooted in the love of art and the historical ideals of the 1800s. Its core focus: Liberty.

October 16, 2019 the Italian [Consulate in New York](#) [2] held a press conference for the “Sisters in Liberty” exhibition. An innovative and engaging project at Ellis Island’s National Museum of Immigration, celebrating the historical bond between Italy and the United States. Its focus? The Statue of Liberty. Or rather, “the two statues of liberty.” Two sisters located 7000 km apart.

Inside the Santa Croce Basilica in Florence, in a corner of the counterfacade, you can see a draped female figure in the distance, crowned by eight rays, her right arm lifted and holding a broken chain. Meanwhile, her left hand grasps a laurel garland, a symbol for poetry. In passing it, many tourists may



for a second believe to have chanced upon the Statue of Liberty. In reality, what they are seeing is The Liberty of Poetry by Pio Fedi, an 1884 funerary monument for Giovan Battista Nicolini.

These two statues, and the similarity of their posture and details, have been at the center of intense critical debate. It is generally believed that the statue by Pio Fedi served as a source of inspiration for French artist Bartholdi, who built the Statue of Liberty between 1877 and 1886. This theory was based on the fact that during that period, Bartholdi often traveled to Italy and Florence. However, the true nature of the connection between the two works remains uncertain to this day. What's certain is that they are both the product of the same historical period, of the same ideals of liberty, "risorgimento," beauty, and spirituality.

These two "Sisters in Liberty" will be the focus of an interactive exhibition launched by the [Opera di Santa Croce Museum](#) [3], which will be held at the Ellis Island Museum of Immigration in New York. This is also the perfect occasion to celebrate the 200 year anniversary of the American Consulate in Florence and the diplomatic relations between the US and Italy.

Museum visitors will follow a series of panels that graphically reconstruct, through parallel paths, the history of the pursuit of political freedom in Italy and the United States. They will learn about the great historical figures who have built bridges of ideas between people. Starting from Dante and Galileo and arriving to Machiavelli, Garibaldi, and Abraham Lincoln, analyzing the symbols of freedom that characterize each of them.

One of the exhibition's main gems is undoubtedly the "listening wall," one of the digital instruments that will allow each visitor to record his or her own definition of freedom.

Finally, the journey will end with the 3D printed replica of Pio Fedi's "Liberty of Poetry." The product of a high-resolution scanning and printing process realized by [Kent State University in Florence](#) [4] using technology normally reserved for conducting brain analyses.

For more information [click here](#). [5]

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