

Thumbs down on new pope statue

A newly installed, hulking statue of Blessed Pope John Paul II is getting big-time thumbs down in Italy. What do you think? Is it really that ugly? I haven't seen it in person, but the AP photos seem to confirm the criticisms.



A giant bronze sculpture portraying Pope John Paul II is displayed outside Rome's Termini train Station. (AP Photo/Marco Guerrieri)

A new, modernist sculpture of Pope John Paul II is turning into a monumental bust. The Vatican on Friday slammed the giant artwork outside Rome's Termini Train Station, saying it doesn't even resemble the late pontiff.

Some Romans and tourists say the bronze statue looks more like Italy's wartime dictator Benito Mussolini than the widely beloved pope.

"How could they have given such a kind pope the head of a Fascist?" said 71-year-old Antonio Lamonica.

As he pondered the statue in the bustling square, his wife muttered: "It's ugly. Really ugly. Very ugly."

The artist, Oliviero Rainaldi, depicted the pontiff as if he is opening his cloak to embrace the faithful. But the Vatican newspaper L'Osservatore Romano said the effect of the nearly 5-meter (16-foot) statue bears "only a distant resemblance to the pope."

Artistic intent aside, "we find ourselves in the piazza before a violent gash, like a bomb, that ends up assimilating a cloak that almost looks like a sentry box, topped by a head of a pope which comes off too roundish," critic Sandro Barbagallo wrote in Friday's L'Osservatore.

"Altogether, the result doesn't seem to reach the intent," the newspaper said, noting that it wasn't alone in its criticism.

Check out the rest here.