

A review of the Lincoln statue model by the progressive art promoter Miner Kellogg appeared in the local newspapers.

“The plaster model of the statue of President Lincoln, executed by Miss Vinnie Ream, by order of Congress, is now being exhibited in her studio to the members of Congress. There is a lively interest excited to learn in what manner the sculptress has accomplished a work of more than ordinary difficulty in sculpture, even to those of experience and artistic cultivation in the schools of art. To model a life size figure of a subject lacking many of the qualities which make a portrait statue attractive and impressive, and yet to meet the reasonable expectations of the many who knew the original personally so well, is to achieve a greater success than is usual in art. We can conceive few subjects more trying to the abilities of a novice in sculpture; and yet upon this single work will depend in a measure the estimate which is to be formed of the talents of Miss Ream, and consequently her chances of future success. It is an ordeal requiring courage and the faith of genius to meet, and especially so under the circumstances which have lately attracted so much public attention to the artist and to the work she now submits to the criticisms of those who commissioned it.

The features of Mr. Lincoln are admirably rendered; and it was this faithful delineation of character which obtained for Miss Ream the Commission for this statue over many able competitors. The head and features are forcibly, yet truthfully, modeled; the hair boldly managed in flowing masses as by the skill of experience; and the expression of sadness mingled with benevolence is touchingly portrayed, well conceived and appropriate to the expression and meaning of the statue. The head bending slightly forward and downward seems to regard with anxious solicitude the multitude of a newly-liberated people to whom is presented by the right hand the ‘proclamation’ of their emancipation. A long circular cloak covers the right shoulder and arm, falls backward off the left, being held partially under the forearm and caught up by the left hand, which grasps its ample folds as if in readiness to cover with the protecting mantle of the Government the defenseless beings who are to receive the inestimable boon of freedom. A beautiful thought of the artist aptly and ingeniously symbolized. The cloak is happily arranged to give breadth, as well as dignity to a very tall and meager figure; it plays also a useful part in aiding to support, where it touches the ground, the weight of the statue. The proportions of the figure are very exact, an extraordinary merit which well repays the years of silent and laborious study given by Miss Ream to modeling the entire anatomy of the figure before casting the drapery upon it. Well would it be were all aspirants for excellence to take the same rugged path so wisely and perseveringly pursued by this young lady.

The figure is well poised, standing firmly and naturally; its action is in perfect harmony with the idea represented. There are no unnecessary or trivial details in the drapery to mar the grandeur of effect, large and varied masses being introduced with such artistic knowledge and feeling as to give manliness and dignity to the subject. Indeed there seems a unity of design expressed throughout the work, and absence of those conventionalities which are so often visible in the productions of those who have derived their ideas of art principally from the schools in which they study. I shall wait with no little impatience to view this statue in pure and translucent marble, and believe that it will then be favorably received by the public, and fully sustain the hopes and judgments of those members who had the courage to order from so youthful and inexperienced a candidate a statue of the Martyr President. I sincerely hope it may yet do more than this in giving additional illustration of the fact that the genius of woman is not less in the severe art of sculpture than it has been in the sister art of painting, in which many of the gentler sex have won a high and lasting renown.”

-Miner Kilbourne Kellogg, February, 1869.