



The members of the Confraternity of Saint Martha commissioned the work to the master Jacopo de Zoppo of Albo (hamlet of the nearby village of Mergozzo). It is the most recent example of the groups of statues dedicated to the theme of the Lamentation over the Dead Christ founded in the diocese of Novara. These groups of statues, inspired by the themes of the Counter-Reformation, were aimed to involve the believers in the religious experience through the emotional identification with the scene represented, which unifies the moments of deposition and burial of Jesus.

Eight hollow statues compose the "Lamentation". They used to be carried around the streets of the town during the celebrations of Good Friday by the members of the Confraternity of St. Martha.

The contract signed in 1611 between the members of the confraternity and the master Jacopo de Zoppo is kept in the parish archive. The contract established that the work had to be completed within nineteen months, upon payment of 64 "scudi", and that the statues had to measure "at least two and a half arms" and to be made of poplar wood supplied by the client. The contract also mentions the painter Angelo Porta, author of the drawings and of the finishing.

The body of Christ is watched over by seven characters that are arranged in a semicircle. At the center there is the figure of Virgin Mary kneeling down, on the left you can see a female figure caught in the act of wiping away her tears. This figure is Mary of Salome, wife of Zebedee, mother of James the Greater and John the Apostle. John is depicted as a beardless young man, with a golden halo and two darts over his head; next to John, in the foreground, there is the statue of Joseph of Arimathea, the one who brought the shroud to wrap the body of Jesus and place him in the sepulcher.

On the right side, starting from the center, we find Mary wife of Clopas (St. Joseph' brother) praying and a male figure identified as Nicodemus who seems to hold an object in his arms. The object is missing but we can imagine that it could have been a pincer with the nails of the cross or a jar of ointments.

The scene includes also a female statue in the foreground kneeling with loose golden hair that could be either Mary Magdalene or Mary of Magdala. The theatrical setting of the figures, the chromatic richness and the precise lines of the garments make the scene very convincing and the painful expressions of the faces make the believers participate at the drama of Christ's death.

Notes on the author: Giacomo Gianino known as "Del Zoppo" (which means lame) was born in Albo (hamlet of Mergozzo); he began his career as an apprentice carver at the workshop of Merzagora brothers in 1588. He moved to Ornavasso in 1612 and carved the statuary group of the "Lamentation over the dead Christ" and, probably later, the altar of the Church of "Madonna del Bosco". Among his most important works, we can find the tabernacle and the ciborium of the church of St. Mary in Viganella and the altarpiece of Saint Martha Oratory in the church of Saint Ambrose in Seppiana.