

## **Art Story: The *Shaw Memorial* by Augustus Saint-Gaudens**

Read by Julie Carmean

### **Are you wondering how the Shaw Memorial came to be?**

Shortly after the Battle of Fort Wagner, the surviving soldiers of the 54<sup>th</sup> expressed their desire to create a memorial to their fallen commander. A committee later commissioned renowned American sculptor Augustus Saint-Gaudens to create a monument. Saint-Gaudens first draft of the sculpture showed only Shaw on horseback. When Colonel Shaw's abolitionist parents saw the model, they insisted that the men of the 54<sup>th</sup> Regiment be memorialized along with him. Look carefully at each individual face. Saint-Gaudens made small portrait busts, sculpted in clay from live models, to represent each soldier, and studied photographs of Shaw.

He called the Shaw Memorial "a labor of love" and created two versions – a bronze version, which stands permanently outdoors in Boston Common, and a painted plaster version, seen here.

Do you notice what looks like an angel at the top of the sculpture? She is meant to be an allegorical or symbolic figure. She holds an olive branch, a symbol of peace, and poppies—symbols of death, sleep, and remembrance. The Latin words below her state: "He left behind everything to preserve the Republic."