

# Carolyn's Guide to Florence and Its Art



“The real voyage of discovery consists not in seeking new landscapes but in having new eyes.”

Marcel Proust, *Remembrance of Things Past*

## Be selective



San Frediano Castello

See some things well rather than undertaking the impossible task of capturing it all. It is helpful, even if seeming compulsive, to create a day planner (day and hour grid) and map of what you want to see. Opening hours and days for churches and museums vary, and it's all too easy to miss something because of timing.

I make a special effort to see works by my favorite artists including Piero della Francesca, Masaccio, Titian, Raphael, Donatello, Filippo Lippi, Caravaggio, and Ghirlandaio. I anticipate that it won't be long before you start your own list.

Carolyn G. Sargent  
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For Tom, my partner on this voyage of discovery.



With special thanks to Professoressa d'arte Rosanna Barbiellini-Amidei.

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# Chapter 1

## Introduction

“The real voyage of discovery consists not in seeking new landscapes but in having new eyes.”

Marcel Proust, *Remembrance of Things Past*

You can look at a work of art, or a coin for that matter, from different angles. The eminent historian Michael Grant wrote a book describing Roman coins as pieces of propaganda stamped on metal coins. Emperors promoted the view of themselves that they wanted to transmit to their public and their posterities. Looking at coins in that way provided Grant with a treasure trove of evidence about the emperors, biased as it might be by their propagandistic intentions.

Michael Grant was operating much as art historians often do when they look at paintings, namely, as objects that were created partly or even mainly with the intention of communicating particular messages. This is a fruitful line to pursue especially when we recognize that, like those Roman coins, the artists were often told by their patrons what ideas to communicate and what “language” (or “iconography”) with which to express it. When we realize this, Renaissance paintings become not just collections of pleasant images and pretty colors but historical documents loaded with messages broadcast by Renaissance politicians and monied people.

Viewing works of art as political posters takes us into fascinating territories that break down any tidy boundaries we might have thought circumscribe visual art, literature, or politics. What would it signify about politics to 15th and 16th century Florentines when Old Testament imagery was widely used? And what did it mean when that imagery suddenly fell out of fashion and was replaced by references to classical myths? The affairs of church, citizen, and state were intertwined, as we shall see, and this is reflected in the works of art and how people would have viewed and understood them. Historians mine information from many sources – their own visual experience, scientific analysis, the writings of commentators such as Vasari, notary records, preparatory drawings, inscriptions, and knowledge of iconography and antiquity. Even a modest exposure to historical context en-

hances visual enjoyment. Florence invites us to share the pleasure that comes from greater understanding, and like Proust, the voyage of discovery in having new eyes.

### 1.1 The Quattrocento



*The Visitation* (detail), Ghirlandaio, SM Novella

I am fascinated by quattrocento<sup>1</sup> Florentine artists whose stylistic achievements continue to influence artists even today. Beyond style, there was a scientific dimension to their work. A rare confluence of political and economic conditions promoted their art. Quattrocento artists learned about form, proportion, and sculptural grace from the ancient Romans. They reinvented perspective, mastered mathematically correct space, and learned to convey the human form accurately. Masaccio, Piero della Francesca, Brunelleschi, Ghirlandaio, and Donatello provided foundations for the high Renaissance works of Raphael, Leonardo da Vinci, and Michelangelo, and for the marvelous art of Giambologna, Titian, Rubens, Caravaggio and others who followed.

In the fifteenth century, the best art was created for a paid commission. Painter and patron entered into a legal agreement specifying all aspects of the final product in great detail including the subject matter,

<sup>1</sup>The Italian designation for the 14th century (1300-1399) is trecento, the 15th century (1400 to 1499) is quattrocento, and the 16th century (1500-1599) is cinquecento.

amounts of lapis and gold, which figures were to be painted by the master himself, and which by his students. These paintings also recorded economic life. Many quattrocento and cinquecento paintings portray Persian carpets, jewelry, ornate fabrics and other manifestations of culture and wealth.



Piazza Signoria today



Masolino, Brancacci Chapel,  
1426

Today, we can still visit Renaissance Florence. True, the creators have gone, but their ideas are everywhere embodied in the artistic and scientific marvels that their minds and hands created. You will stand where the great Renaissance masters did and experience a medieval city. You can enjoy cappuccino or dinner at a trattoria while observing the creative and artistic experience of the Renaissance. As you look at the buildings surrounding the Piazza Signoria, you will see scenes like the ones captured in Masolino's frescoes in the Brancacci Chapel painted almost six hundred years ago.

## Florence's Outdoor Sculpture

Florence has gradually been moving its outdoor sculpture collection to protected museum spaces. The virtue of seeing art in situ must be balanced against wish to preserve works against further degradation. A replica of Michelangelo's David stands in front of the Palazzo Vecchio while the original is in the Accademia museum. The Orsanmichele prophet sculptures have been removed for conservation and are mostly housed in a museum within the Orsanmichele. Seeing a sculpture in a museum has its own advantages because the viewer can stand close to the statue. In the Duomo Museum, I always take time to examine Michelangelo's chisel marks on his Pieta, to look at the feet and hands of Donatello's prophets, and to observe the minute, exquisite cross hatching on Ghiberti's Baptistery panels.

## The Term "Renaissance"

"Ren-ais-sance" (stem of the French word *renaistre*, to be born again) refers to the revival of cultural awareness and learning in art, law, language, literature, philosophy, science, and mathematics in the 14th to the

16th centuries. In his 1550 book *Vite (Lives of the Artists)* Giorgio Vasari (1511-1574) coined the term Renaissance to describe artistic developments between the late 13th century and the second half of the 16th century, a period characterized by a renewed interest in classical antiquity with an emphasis on humanity and nature.

## The Humanists and the Dark Ages

The notion of the Middle Ages was a fourteenth century invention by the poet Francesco Petrarch (1304-1376). He used the term "Dark Ages" to refer to the barbarian invasions that destroyed Roman civilization by the 6th century. Cities were abandoned, the great Roman highways neglected, fundamental technologies forgotten, and large agricultural areas reverted to forest. Petrarch and the humanists believed that reviving the "light" of classical learning associated with ancient Rome would end the long era of cultural darkness. In his epic poem, *Scipio Africanus*, Petrarch reminded his contemporaries about their great Roman tradition. In the poem he expresses his ardent hope for the future. "My fate is to live amid varied and confusing storms. But for you perhaps, if as I hope and wish you will live long after me, there will follow a better age. This sleep of forgetfulness will not last for ever. When the darkness has been dispersed, our descendants can come again in the former pure radiance."<sup>2</sup>

Although the Dark Ages were never as dire as Petrarch and the humanists pictured them in the 14th century, by diminishing the achievements of their predecessors, the humanists amplified their own. They claimed that to end the Dark Ages, it was necessary to revive the classical ideals preserved in ancient poetry and philosophy. Petrarch preferred to read the clear classical Latin used by Cicero and Augustine, and other examples of the best ancient writers, both pagan and Christian. He found these ancient texts superior to those produced by scholars at contemporary universities. In the quattrocento, European culture embraced the idea of a "Middle Ages" that gave way to a "Renaissance".

The beliefs of Petrarch and his followers had far reaching consequences for the arts. Prior to the Renaissance, the subject matter of paintings was intended to inspire devotion and to stimulate the viewer's religious fervor. Important figures were often disproportionately larger than others of less consequence. A celestial gold background set off religious figures. Landscapes were rare. In contrast, Renaissance art refocused the viewer's attention. It portrayed human life naturally, conveyed perspective accurately, and presented objects realistically.

<sup>2</sup>"Petrarch's Conception of the 'Dark Ages'", Theodore E. Mommsen, *Speculum*, Vol. 17, No. 2. (Apr., 1942), p 240.

The Italian Renaissance further distinguished itself from the preceding era by its admiration of classical antiquity and the value it placed on intellectual growth. The search for the idealized form itself was a spiritual exercise where the painter or architect could provide the viewer with a metaphor for the perfection of God. Artisans looked to classical geometric shapes, ratios, and proportions to convey symbolic meaning. Strictly religious subject matter gave way to secular and even pagan images. As Renaissance Florence became enriched by expanded trade along with the banking profits of the Medici, skilled craftsmen flourished. The wealthy and powerful contracted with talented artists inspiring them to immortalize their patrons and the city of Florence.

## The Great Age of Architecture



View of the Palazzo Vecchio from the Cupola of the Duomo

In the duecento (13th century), Florence's developing wool industry made it one of the most prosperous cities in Europe. That wealth resulted in a building boom unprecedented since Roman times. Many of the city's enduring images date to a relatively short period in the duecento, and churches built in this period continue to define Florence's neighborhoods. In 1221, the Dominicans were given Santa Maria Novella, the Franciscans located at Santa Croce in 1226, and the Servite Order founded Santissima Annunziata in 1250. In 1268, the Carmelites settled in Santa Maria del Carmine, and the Augustines founded Santo Spirito in 1292. In the same period, Arnolfo di Cambio (c. 1245-1310), architect and sculptor, became Florence's most important master planner. Following the ancient Roman plan, he helped to shape the city within a circuit of walls.

## The Republic, Guilds, and Towers

In 1250, in the midst of this building boom, the Ghibelline nobles lost political power. In an attempt to establish democratic republican rule, local merchants and artisans organized themselves into guilds and proclaimed themselves as the *primo popolo* (people first).



Towers of the Bargello and Badia Fiorentina

A professional administrator (*Podestà*) was hired to run the city under the guidance of a council representing the guilds. To further limit the nobility, a new law declared architectural war against the palaces and fortified towers of the nobility. All private towers, there were more than one hundred averaging 225 feet, had to be cut down to a height of 50 braccia (90 feet). Soon after, the Popolo built its own civic home with a tower 185 feet high in what is now known as the Bargello. In 1299, the seat of municipal government moved from the Bargello to the Palazzo Vecchio. Arnolfo di Cambio is thought to be the architect of this wonderful structure that dominates the Piazza Signoria and serves as a backdrop to Michelangelo's David. Guild members gathered there to determine city issues. In the quattrocento, Florence was a self-governed, independent city-state.

Members of Florence's powerful wool, cloth and silk guilds held prominent positions in government. Superior Florentine fabric was sold throughout Europe. In 1338, the historian Giovanni Villani estimated that the wool industry supported 30,000 Florentines.<sup>3</sup> Profits from the cloth industries created the wealth that led to the development of a formidable banking industry. The gold florin introduced in 1252 contained 3.53 grams of pure gold. Its gold content remained stable for centuries making it an important international currency.



Gold Florin

<sup>3</sup>E.M. Postan and E. Miller, *Cambridge Economic History of Europe*, Cambridge University Press, 1952, p. 362.



Florence's guilds assumed a lead role in the city's artistic development, preservation, and sponsorship of important public monuments. The Wool Merchants' Guild funded the Baptistry doors, and the Silk Weavers' Guild sponsored the Ospedale degli Innocenti.

## 1.2 Reflections of Antiquity

Ancient Greece and Rome influenced Renaissance painting and architecture. No aspect of our adventure with Florence is more intriguing than retracing the steps back from the quattrocento to antiquities. The viewer only has to compare side by side Renaissance and Roman sculptures to witness the link. Seeing a classical image reflected in a Renaissance counterpart is a thrill.



Botticelli, *Judith*, Uffizi, detail  
 Woman of Crete, British Museum 200-100 BC

Ancient poses, gestures, and subjects occur often in Renaissance art. For example, many artists patterned their female figures after classical Aphrodite sculptures. Compare Botticelli's drape and flow of Judith's dress, her bent knee, and the forward thrust of her leg with the ancient Woman of Crete statue now in the British Museum. For other interesting examples, see Chapter 11, "Side by Side: Renaissance images and their sources of inspiration in classical antiquity."

### The Roman Heritage

At the end of the fourth century, Rome with a population of one million, was reputed to have more sculptures than people. Sadly, only a small fraction of the statues, public monuments, marble busts, sarcophagi and other objects survived destruction by barbarians, early Christians, the elements, and those seeking stones for building projects over the next ten centuries. Arresting this neglect and destruction was a slow process.



Roman relics scattered around the Forum

Fortunately, some quattrocento popes undertook a systematic effort to classify, identify, and protect antiquities scattered throughout the city. Pope Nicholas V wisely appointed Leon Battista Alberti, the 15th century humanist, as his architectural adviser. Like Brunelleschi and Donatello before him, Alberti explored Rome to learn how it had been built and recorded his findings in 1433 in his *Descriptio urbis Romae*. Later, Alberti was instrumental in designing projects to rebuild Rome. In 1444, Flavio Biondo, papal secretary and historian, wrote a carefully documented guide to Rome's antiquities called *De Roma instaurata*.

The interest in antiquities that blossomed in the quattrocento had its antecedents in the Middle Ages. As early as 1140, pilgrims were reading the guidebook written by the cantor of the basilica of S. Pietro. His *Mirabilia Urbis Romae*<sup>4</sup> contains statistics for pilgrims about the fortifications of Rome, lists of notable ancient ruins, as well as religious sites.

Dante Alighieri (1265-1321) aspired to reconcile the ideas of Greek and Roman philosophers with Christian doctrine. In the *Divine Comedy*, the ancient Roman poet Virgil leads Dante on his journey. The geography of the *Inferno* is a series of concentric circles, a geometric form of great interest to early Greek mathematicians and later to Christian theologians.

Early 14th century humanists studied Plato, Livy, Aristotle, Virgil, Cicero, and Ovid. They pursued a variety of disciplines including poetry, painting, history, rhetoric, and moral philosophy. The nineteenth century historian Jacob Burckhardt described how Petrarch and his friend Giovanni Colonna frequently climbed in the ruins of the Baths of Diocletian, and "there in the transparent air, amid the wide silence with the broad panorama stretching far around them, they spoke, not of business or political affairs, but of the history which the ruins beneath their feet suggested."<sup>5</sup>

<sup>4</sup> *The Marvels of Rome (Mirabilia Urbis Romae)*, Italcia Press, 1986.

<sup>5</sup> Jacob Burckhardt, *The Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy*, translated by Samuel Middlemore, Swan Sonnenschein & Co., 1904, p. 177.

The revival of interest in ancient culture energized both the humanist and the antiquary. Greek and Roman coins, vases, and statues became prized treasures. As Roman artifacts became valued collectibles, cardinals and nobles began decorating their palaces with ancient statues. According to Vasari, Donatello encouraged Cosimo de' Medici to collect antiquities. Lorenzo Ghiberti witnessed the discovery of a statue of a hermaphrodite during his visit to Rome in the 1420's. As a young man, Bernini spent three years studying the paintings and sculptures in the Vatican collection.

Michelangelo modeled Adam in the Sistine ceiling on the *Belvedere Torso*, a first century B.C. Greek sculpture discovered in 1500 during excavations initiated by Pope Alexander VI.



*Belvedere Torso*,  
Vatican Museum



Michelangelo, Adam, detail,  
Sistine ceiling 1508



Giambologna's terracotta  
male nude, c. 1572, in the  
style of the *Belvedere Torso*  
(Horne Museum)

Extraordinary finds continued under Pope Julius II (1503-1513) including the *Laocoön* and the *Vatican Venus*. In 1513, following instructions from Pope Leo X, Raphael undertook steps to restore the ancient city. Sadly, the papal brief to Raphael included only a modest directive to discontinue the outrageous practice of destroying ancient ruins by using them as stones quarries. Raphael was instructed to reduce transport costs by making use of the abundant ancient stones. Fortunately, he was at least empowered to preserve stones bearing inscriptions for classical studies.<sup>6</sup>

The destruction still continued. Marble statues were pulverized and burnt in ovens to make lime for new buildings. In a celebrated letter to the pope in 1518, Raphael complained bitterly about this devastation.

<sup>6</sup>Robert Klein and Henri Zerner, *Italian Art 1500-1600 Sources and Documents* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1966) p. 45.

He implored the Pope "to protect the few relics which were left to testify to the power and greatness of that divine soul of antiquity whose memory was inspiration to all who were capable of higher things."<sup>7</sup>

## Finding the Laocoön

Unearthing an antiquity hitherto known from ancient sources stirred great excitement. In 1506 Pope Julius II learned about a discovery of an ancient statue in a vineyard near San Pietro in Vincoli in Rome. Vasari reports that the Pope dispatched the papal architect Giuliano da Sangallo to see the statue. Michelangelo accepted with alacrity Sangallo's invitation to go with him. When they saw the sculpture, they agreed that it was the *Laocoön* described in the first century A.D. by the Roman author Pliny the Elder.<sup>8</sup> According to Pliny, the emperor Titus greatly admired the sculpture and kept it in his palace. The sculpture's anguish and expressive muscular movement had a profound influence on Michelangelo. The statue is now in the Vatican museum.

In Greek mythology, *Laocoön* was a Trojan priest of Poseidon whose story Virgil recounted in the *Aeneid*. Virgil describes the dramatic moment when the Trojans discover the enormous wooden horse outside of the gates of the city of Troy. *Laocoön* warned against bringing the horse into Troy:

"O my poor people, Men of Troy, what madness has come over you? . . . Have no faith in the horse! Whatever it is, even when Greeks bring gifts I fear them, gifts and all."

Virgil, *The Aeneid*, Book II, 59-70

The gods punished *Laocoön* for trying to interfere with fate. Two giant serpents emerge from the sea to envelop him and his twin sons. The wooden horse is brought into Troy sealing the city's fate.

## The *Laocoön's* right arm

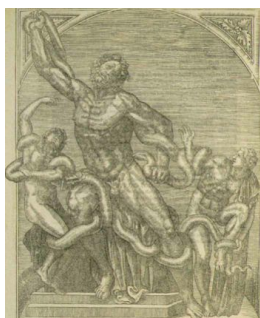
Engravings of antique sculptures like the 1541 engraving by Bartolomeo Marliani of the *Laocoön* were published and circulated throughout Europe contributing to a common aesthetic heritage.

<sup>7</sup>Jacob Burckhardt, *The Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy*, (New York: Phaidon, 1951) p. 112.

<sup>8</sup>Pliny, *Natural History*, xxxvi 37.



*Laocoön*, 1st century B.C.,  
Vatican



Marliani, engraving 1541

The Laocoön's right arm has its own story. When the statue was found, a portion of the right arm was missing. Renaissance restorers assumed the arm should thrust upward, as shown in Marliani's 1541 engraving. In 1905, a German archaeologist by chance found a fragment in a Roman antique store that he correctly concluded was the missing arm. The arm that we see on the statue today is the rediscovered original.

### 1.3 Perspective, A Tool Regained

In addition to studying antique monuments and sculptures, Renaissance artists obtained first hand information from ancient written sources. Manuscript hunters searched remote monasteries and in Byzantium. Ancient texts enabled quattrocento artisans to regain technologies forgotten during the middle ages. Numerous Greek manuscripts were imported from Constantinople in the period preceding the capture of Constantinople by the Turks in 1453.

Perspective was a central topic of medieval philosophical studies. The word is derived from the Latin *perspectiva* that means optics. Euclidian geometry made it possible to estimate the size of a distant object. Florentine engineers, artisans, and merchants learned these measurement techniques. The development and rapid acceptance of the mathematics of perspective exemplified the premium placed on intellectual growth in early quattrocento Florence. The rediscovered classical forms rendered the flat Gothic style obsolete.

Linear perspective, also called projection, is a system of drawing in which the artist creates an illusion of spatial depth by using geometric rules to represent objects as they appear to the human eye. Parallel lines of railroad tracks seem to converge in the distance although in reality they do not. At the vanishing point, parallel lines appear to meet. Understanding the optical principles of perspective gave artists tools for correctly rendering the natural appearance of objects. In his treatise on painting, *Trattato della Pittura*, Leonardo da Vinci called perspective the rein and rudder of painting.

A comparison of two paintings of the Annunciation brings to life the impact of the rediscovery of perspective. Because he lacked mathematical tools, Duccio had to resort to using architectural elements to suggest realistic space.



Duccio, *Annunciation*,  
1308, National Gallery  
London



Filippo Lippi,  
*Annunciation*, 1442, San  
Lorenzo

A little more than 100 years later, after the perspective revolution, Filippo Lippi's painting depicted 3-dimensional space accurately. The painting reveals the depth of the garden and the relative size of the building compared to the figures.

### 1.4 Creators of the New Art

#### Filippo Brunelleschi (1377-1446)

The artistic competition in 1401 for the design of the east Baptistery doors is often considered the beginning of the Renaissance. The two finalists for this major commission were the sculptors Lorenzo Ghiberti and Filippo Brunelleschi. The history of art may have been quite different had Brunelleschi won instead of Ghiberti. "What Petrarch had been to the revival of learning in letters and scholarship, that Filippo Brunelleschi was to the revolution in architecture."<sup>9 10</sup>

Brunelleschi's imprint remains on many of Florence's most important buildings including the Cupola of the Duomo, Piazza S.S. Annunziata, the Ospedale degli Innocenti, San Lorenzo, Santo Spirito, and the Pazzi Chapel in Santa Croce. His enthusiasm for classical art matched his curiosity about the adaptation of perspective from optics into pictorial space. Brunelleschi taught artists how to accurately represent a 3-dimensional physical space on a 2-dimensional plane.

#### Brunelleschi in Rome

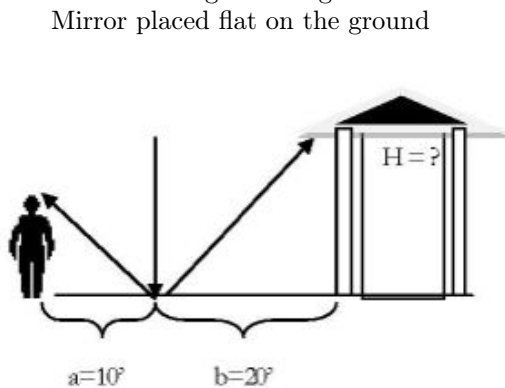
When Brunelleschi lost to Ghiberti, he packed his bags and went with his friend Donatello to Rome to study

<sup>9</sup>T.G. Jackson, *The Renaissance in Roman Architecture Part I Italy* (Cambridge: University Press, 1921), p. 27.

the architectural ruins and sculpture from the Roman period. Antonio Manetti (1423-1497) is our primary source of information about Brunelleschi's time in Rome. T.G. Jackson in his *The Renaissance of Roman Architecture*, describes how the "friends set to work to study and measure, sparing neither time nor money. No ancient work either in Rome or in the Campagna escaped them, and as Brunelleschi had no domestic ties, he gave himself entirely to study, caring neither for eating nor sleeping."<sup>11</sup>

They explored classical sites, scrutinized artifacts, and recorded the proportions of the Doric, Corinthian, and ionic styles. Manetti claims that Brunelleschi surveyed antiquities to measure their height. How Brunelleschi learned to take accurate measurements is not documented although it is possible that he was familiar with methods described in Leonardo Fibonacci's *Practica Geometriae* (1206) that contained collection of geometry theorems based on Euclid. One measuring technique described by Fibonacci involved the use of a mirror. The mirror is placed flat on the ground some distance in front of the object to be measured. The surveyor then backs away until he can see the top of the object reflected in the mirror. The rest is calculating a simple proportion. The height of the object equals the distance between the object and the mirror multiplied by the height of the observer divided by his own distance from the mirror.

In the example below, the man is 6' tall. After placing the mirror on the ground 20' from the building, he moves back until he can see the top of the building reflected in the mirror. He determines that the distance between himself and the mirror is 10'. He can then calculate that the building is 12' high.



$$\text{Height of building} = b * h/a$$

$$\text{Height of building} = (6 * 20)/10 = 12' \text{ high}$$

You can try this experiment yourself. Determine the height of a wall by placing a mirror flat on the floor between you and the wall. Adjust your position until you can see the top of the wall reflected in the mirror. The height of the wall will equal the distance from the mirror to the wall multiplied by your height divided by the distance between you and the mirror.

Brunelleschi also studied an important ancient work by Vitruvius, called *On Architecture*. His reading of Vitruvius inspired a series of optical experiments that led to a mathematical theory of perspective. When they returned to Florence more than ten years later, Brunelleschi ignited an artistic revolution. In his *Lives of the Artists*, Giorgio Vasari proclaims that Brunelleschi was heaven sent to give new form to architecture. "His genius was so commanding that we can surely say he was sent by heaven to renew the art of architecture. For hundreds of years men had neglected this art and had squandered their wealth on buildings without order, badly executed and poorly designed, which were full of strange inventions, shamefully devoid of grace and with worse ornament."<sup>12</sup>

### Leon Battista Alberti (1404-1472)

Leon Battista Alberti codified new rules for artists. A painting must be eloquent and hold the attention of the spectator. Alberti expected the artist to be skilled in rendering people, animals, landscape and buildings. The viewer should experience an instant of an idealized reality consistent with both nature and art. Alberti introduced the notion of an interlocutor where one figure in the painting faces outward as if he were addressing the viewer. The Albertian interlocutor, like the literary narrator, was meant to help the viewer relate to the painting.

In his celebrated 1435 book on the theory of art, *De Pictura (On Painting)*, Alberti refined Brunelleschi's perspective breakthrough. Alberti used his knowledge of optics and geometry to codify the rules of 2-point linear perspective into guidelines for artists practicing the new Renaissance style.<sup>13</sup> Alberti divided the challenge of making a painted version of a visual image into three parts: the viewer's distance away from the object; the position of the viewer's eye relative to the object; and the position of the light sources illuminating the object.

Albert taught artists how to construct perspective using a specific vanishing point. With single point perspective, the illusion works best when picture is viewed from a precise distance. When looking at early quattrocento paintings, it is important to stand the correct distance from the painting and to locate its center point.

### Piero della Francesca (1412-1492)

Piero della Francesca was a trained mathematician and one of the most important painters of the quattrocento. In 1474, 39 years after Alberti's *On Painting*,

<sup>12</sup>Giorgio Vasari, *Lives of the Artists* translated by George Bull, Volume I, (London: Penguin Books, 1987) p. 133.

<sup>13</sup>James S. Ackerman, *Distance Points*, MIT Press 1991, pp. 59-96.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid., p. 28.



Piero published his treatise *On Perspective for Painting*, a mathematically rigorous system of perspective. Piero refined and extended Alberti's theories.



Piero della Francesca,  
*Discovery of the True Cross*, Arezzo, 1466



Cezanne, *Gardanne* (detail),  
1885, Barnes Foundation

With his interest in systematic simplification of natural forms, Piero was an early forerunner of abstract artists. Cezanne, Seurat, De Kooning, Warhol, and Hockney make specific references to the influence of Piero. Cezanne was intrigued by the arrangement of geometric forms for Piero's city of Arezzo in the *Discovery of the True Cross*. Cezanne studied a copy of this scene painted by Charles Loyeux in Paris in 1874. It doesn't seem that four hundred years separate these paintings. Perhaps Cezanne and Cubism help us to appreciate Piero's special use of form and color.

## Leonardo da Vinci (1452-1519)

If perspective was rediscovered by Brunelleschi, and codified by Alberti and Piero della Francesca, Leonardo's paintings perfected it. Leonardo conveyed depth and perspective through the use of light and shadow, a technique known as *chiaroscuro*. The introduction of oil paint in Flanders about 1400 made *chiaroscuro* possible. Before oil paint was available, artists used tempera, a type of paint that used egg yolk to bind colored pigments. Artists could only work small areas at a given time because tempera dries quickly. Blending colors was difficult so shading was achieved by layering or delicate cross hatching. Unlike tempera, oil paint dries slowly. Artists like Leonardo were able to apply multiple flecks of color that conjured up features like trees, streams, and mountains. These details appear convincing if seen from a distance, but on close examination, they are impressionistic.

## Giorgio Vasari (1511-1574)



View of the Vasari Corridor from the Uffizi

Vasari was a painter, architect., and historian. His chronicles *Le Vite* (*Lives*) of artists remains an important source of information about paintings and artists from Cimabue to Michelangelo. Vasari was a member of the inner circle of Renaissance popes and patrons. Modern art historians like to correct his assertions but still frequently retell his stories. The design of the corridor linking the Uffizi with the Palazzo Pitti was one of his greatest architectural achievements.

### Private Patrons and Church Art

Religious orders sold chapels to wealthy families who could be relied upon to maintain and decorate them with frescoes and paintings by the finest contemporary artists. The donor enhanced his social standing and hoped to gain salvation. This arrangement transferred the cost to donors while insuring that the decorative program would honor the church and the resident monastic order. These chapels remained the property of the families. The chapels could be inherited or sold. The legacy of donor supported art can be enjoyed throughout Florentine churches. Chapter 2 highlights some of the finest examples of donor supported art including the Strozzi and Tornabuoni chapels in Santa Maria Novella, the Sassetti and Bartolini chapels in Santa Trinita, the Capponi chapel in Santa Felicita, and the Bardi, Peruzzi, Pazzi, and Baroncelli chapels in Santa Croce.



Giotto Frescoes for the Bardi and Peruzzi Chapels,  
Santa Croce, 1320's



## 1.5 Iconography and Icons

Some of us might be puzzled by contemporary paintings that eschew form like Robert Ryman's all white painting or Robert Rauschenberg's early all black works. If you are like that, then you are likely to appreciate even more the deliberate presentation of aesthetic, intellectual, scientific, and religious representations in Renaissance art. Iconography is the pictorial illustration of a subject. An icon is a symbolic image whose form conveys a special meaning to the viewer. Andy Warhol used a Campbell soup can in his paintings as an icon of American culture. When Michelangelo placed an owl on the tomb of Giuliano in the Medici Chapel, his viewer would have understood that an owl symbolized night and sleep.

Renaissance paintings are replete with symbols that were readily understood by contemporary viewers, many of whom were illiterate, but can be mysterious to highly educated viewers today. Artists had access to iconographic dictionaries from multiple sources. Most modern viewers need guides to interpret the symbols used by Renaissance artists. With effort, we too can decipher a painting's story. *Hall's Dictionary of Subjects & Symbols in Art*, by James Hall (John Murray Publishers, London, 1989) is an excellent resource.

### Saint Jerome



The painting of Saint Jerome who lived in the 4th century by Ghirlandaio for the Ognissanti is rich in symbols. Jerome was usually portrayed in one of three ways.

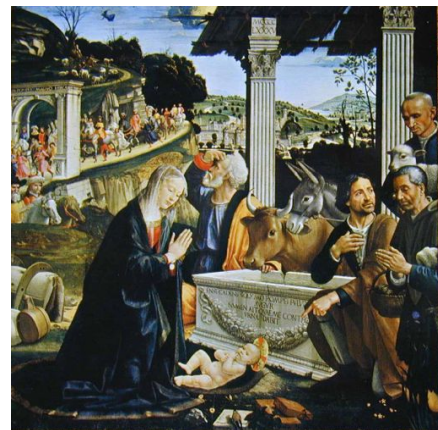
1. He is shown as doctor of the church in a cardinal's robe or with a cardinal's hat. Never mind that the institution of cardinals came hundreds of years after his death. He may be holding a model of the church to acknowledge his translation of the New Testament from the Hebrew.
2. He may be shown as a man of learning, seated in

his study with his books as in the Ognissanti *St. Jerome*.

3. Sometimes he is a penitent in the desert with a lion (he befriended a lion after pulling a thorn from its paw), a skull (symbol for death and the transitory nature of life), and a lizard (symbol of logic). The story of the lion is a linkage between Christian iconography and the classical story. In the 1st century Roman story, Androcles, a runaway slave, seeks shelter in a cave. He encounters a lion and removes a thorn from its paw. The lion becomes his protector.

### The Ox and the Ass

Most representations of the nativity include an ox and an ass. In the early Middle Ages, the ox came to represent the Old Testament and the ass the New Testament. The iconography can be loosely traced to a passage in Isaiah 1:3: "The ox knows its owner, and the ass its master's stall, but Israel my own people has no knowledge, no discernment". This in turn was interpreted as the Jews' refusal to acknowledge Christ as the Messiah. The presence of the ox and the ass is a reminder that the coming of Christ triumphs over human disbelief and disobedience.



Domenico Ghirlandaio, *Adoration of the Shepherds*, 1485, Sassetti Chapel, St. Trinita

## 1.6 The Golden Legend

In the 13th century, Jacobus de Voragine compiled a collection of traditional stories about the saints in a book known as the *Golden Legend* (*Aurea Legenda* in Latin). It remained a pastoral resource for the next three centuries. The stories aided priests who wanted a source of lively and even fanciful anecdotes to use for instruction and preaching. For Renaissance artists, the *Golden Legend* was a source of material for depicting the saints, their stories, and their attributes. From 1470 to 1530 it was the most often printed book in Europe.

Later Protestant reformers, who rejected medieval Christianity, saw the *Golden Legend* as a source of fables and superstition. Following the Council of Trent in 1545, Counter-Reformation Catholics reformed the cult of the saints and restrained religious imagery. Even Michelangelo's Sistine *Last Judgment* was criticized for its use of nudity.

## 1.7 Angels and Demons

### Angels

Angels were expedient representations of heaven in medieval and Renaissance art. Although we tend to think of angels in biblical terms, the motif of creatures with wings dates to ancient Sumeria. Winged gods and fanciful creatures are found in Greek and Roman mythology.



Roman sarcophagus, British Museum, 250 AD

Nike was the winged goddess of victory. Hermes was propelled with small wings attached to his boots. Aeschylus in *Prometheus Bound* describes a griffin with the head and wings of an eagle and the body of a lion. Hypnus, the Greek god of sleep, was depicted as a youth with wings on his shoulders. His Roman equivalent, Somnus, could be the figure represented on the Roman sarcophagus above.

The word angel comes from the Greek *angelos* or messenger. Mercury, with his winged helmet, was the messenger of Jupiter. Over time, theologians refined categories and roles for angels. Artists added wings, halos, and even musical instruments. Roman antiquities along with Biblical stories provided templates of how angels should look.

“I saw the Lord seated on a throne. Above him were seraphs, each with six wings: With two wings they covered their faces, with two they covered their feet, and with two they were flying.” (Isaiah 6:1-2).

Foremost, we recognize angels as beings who have wings. Important angels, like saints, were identified by their special attributes.

A 6th century Greek known as the Pseudo-Dionysius wrote a book called *The Celestial Hierarchy* that di-

vided angels into nine categories. The highest order are seraphim, cherubim, and thrones. Thrones surround God in perpetual adoration. Cherubim (cherubs) are angelic beings involved in the worship and praise of God. In the Bible, cherubim are first mentioned in Genesis 3:24.

“So he drove out the man; and he placed at the east of the garden of Eden Cherubims, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life.”

Seraphim and cherubim are often depicted with one, two or three pairs of wings. Seraphim are traditionally red and cherubim usually are blue. Sometimes angels appear as children's heads, but curiously, without bodies. With Christian imagery, angels are servants, caretakers, and worshipers who fulfill all of the ecclesiastical tasks assigned to them. In the Middle Ages, the notion of angels was closely intertwined with the miracles and relics associated with saints.



Botticelli, *Coronation of the Virgin*, c. 1488-1490, Uffizi

Botticelli, a master at creating exquisite angels, surrounds Christ and Mary with seraphim, cherubim, and thrones. These most honored angels are responsible for maintaining order in the cosmos.

### Demons and Limbo

Not all angels are benevolent. While images of devils are not as common as angels, some of my favorite characters in Renaissance art are the demons who remind the worshiper that failure to obey doctrine will have unwelcome consequences. These lively figures poke and prod the damned.

The name Satan is derived from the Hebrew *satan* (*ha-satan*) meaning ‘to oppose’ or act as an adversary. Satan makes few appearances in the Old Testament. In the Book of Job, Satan torments Job *with* God's

permission. The demonic Satan (the Devil) we see in Renaissance art is largely a New Testament creation.

## Limbo



Andrea da Firenze *Descent into Limbo* (detail), c. 1365

The story of Christ's descent into hell after his death gained popularity in the 4th century and was retold in the 13th century *Golden Legend*. In Andrea da Firenze's fresco in the Spanish Chapel (Cappellone degli Spagnoli), Christ overcomes Satan and offers salvation to virtuous pagans. Christ holds the banner of the Resurrection (a white flag with a red cross). Demons with horns, wings and tails lurk in darkness. Their efforts to carry the souls of sinners to hell have been thwarted.

## 1.8 The Medici

The Medici became the dominant political family in Florence in the early quattrocento. Lorenzo the Magnificent (1449-1492) and Cosimo I (1519-1537) were particularly known for their love of luxurious objects and their support of the arts. See Chapter 12, "Timeline, Medici milestones, historic events, and the arts". I also recommend Christopher Hibbert's book, *The Rise and Fall of the House of the Medici*.



# Chapter 2

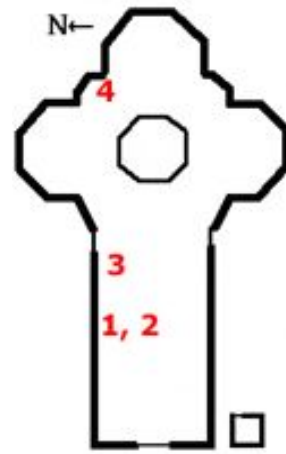
## Churches

### 2.1 Duomo (Santa Maria del Fiore)



When glimpsed from any point, the mass of the cupola of the Duomo next to Giotto's Campanile and the Baptistery is astounding. Many of Florence's greatest architects, sculptors, artisans, and painters participated in the cathedral's creation. To appreciate the remarkable story of how people built it, visit the Duomo Museum (Museo dell'Opera del Duomo). Construction of the Duomo began in 1296 under the direction of the architect Arnolfo di Cambio. Arnolfo died six years later and little progress was made in the next 30 years. In 1331, the powerful and wealthy Wool Merchants Guild (Arte della Lana) assumed control of the planning and construction of the cathedral. They selected artisans and managed operations well into the 18th century. It was generations of citizens and not the nobility or the church that created a monument befitting the city's artistic and civic aspirations.

### Church Interior



### 1, 2 Two Equestrian Frescoes



The spare interior contrasts with the multi colored stone exterior. The dominant decorative features are two grand equestrian frescoes dedicated to Florentine military heroes. Castagno's *Monument to Niccolò da Tolentino* (1456) is on the left above, and Paolo Uccello's *Monument to John Hawkwood* (1436) is on the right.

In the 1420's, the late International Gothic style represented by Lorenzo Monaco and Gentile da Fabriano encountered the revolutionary new naturalism



of Brunelleschi, Donatello and Masaccio that featured the study of proportion, perspective and classical art. The two frescoes were made in the middle of the transition between the two styles.

Paolo Uccello embraced the new ideas framed by Brunelleschi and Alberti.

Uccello's painting is of Sir John Hawkwood (called Giovanni Acuto in Italian) who died in 1394. Hawkwood was an English mercenary employed successively by Pisa, Milan, Pope Gregory XI, and lastly by Florence. His successful defense of Florence against Pisa in the battle of Cascina (1364) was a masterpiece of medieval warfare. The inscription includes a reference from Plutarch to the Roman general Fabius Maximus, who defeated Hannibal in the second Punic War, and to whom a bronze equestrian statue was dedicated in Rome. Uccello used monochrome terra verde (green earth) paint to mimic the color of bronze.

Vasari commented that the portrait of Hawkwood was grand even if flawed. "Unfortunately, Paolo's horse has been painted moving its legs on one side only, and this is something which horses cannot do without falling. Perhaps he made the mistake because he was not in the habit of riding and not as familiar with horses as with other animals."<sup>1</sup>

Andrea Castagno's fresco was a pendant (one of a pair) to Uccello's painted twenty years earlier. Florence and Siena were historic rivals. In 1432, the Siennese allied with the powerful Duke of Milan against Florence. The Siennese mercenary army won a number of early skirmishes, but the Florentines then selected Castagno's subject, Niccolò da Tolentino, as commander. He quickly turned the tables on the Siennese. Uccello's painting in the Uffizi, the *Battle of San Romano*, is another tribute to Tolentino. Castagno's painting was stylistically "modern". His figure is more animated than Uccello's. Castagno uses lines to emphasize details on the horse and rider. "All of these details reveal an artist who sees form in terms of sharp lines and who wields a brush as if it were a stylus. Alberti's first requirement for drawing was *circoscrizione*, or outlining, and Andrea embraced it as the center of his art."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Giorgio Vasari, *Lives of the Artists*, Volume 1, translated by George Bull, (London, England: Penguin Books, 1987), p. 101.

<sup>2</sup>Glenn Andres, *The Art of Florence*, (New York: Abbeville Press, 1988) p. 701.

### 3 Domenico di Michelino, *La Divina Commedia Illumina Firenze*, 1465



Michelino depicts Dante's journey through Hell, Purgatory and Paradise. Hell is on the left, and the seven terraces of Mount Purgatory are behind. City landmarks include the Duomo, the Bargello, and the Palazzo Vecchio.

The date of the painting coincides with the 200th anniversary of the birth of Florence's greatest poet, Dante Alighieri. By honoring the poet, the artist honored the city. Dante holds his *Divina Commedia* in his left hand. Golden rays shine towards Florence indicating how the comedy adds luster to the city. The inscription reads "the book illustrates the city."<sup>3</sup> The 19th century Renaissance historian Jacob Burckhardt asserts that it was Florence's Trecento political climate, with its veneration of the individual, that enabled Dante to write the *Divine Comedy*. The book enjoyed immediate success and began a literary tradition that helped create an Italian language and form an Italian nation.

### 4 Luca della Robbia, *Resurrection and Ascension*, 1442 (Above Sacristy door.)



Luca della Robbia's beautiful ceramics, and those of his workshop, are scattered throughout Florence. Luca initially trained as a goldsmith and sculptor. According to Vasari, Luca made an economic decision to abandon bronze and marble. Working with clay required far less time and effort. "He found that by giving his works a coating of glaze made with tin, litharge,

<sup>3</sup>Ernest H. Wilkins, "A Note on Domenico di Michelino's Dante", *Italica*, Vol. 21, No. 4 (Dec., 1944): 169.

antimony, and other minerals and mixtures fused in the fire of a special furnace, he could produce this effect splendidly and make works in clay that were almost everlasting.” The splendid terracotta and enamel *Resurrection and Ascension* above the Sacristy bronze doors he created with Michelozzo, was his first project using his “new” technology.<sup>4</sup>

The Roman and Byzantine world learned about glazing (*invetriatura* in Italian) from ancient Eastern civilizations. In the 1300’s, the Moors brought the technology to southern Spain and the island of Majorica. Luca, aided by Brunelleschi and Donatello’s experiments with tin based glazes, revived and applied the ancient technology to terracotta sculpture. Luca’s other commissions for the Duomo include his magnificent Cantoria and the hexagonal panels for Giotto’s Campanile. These objects are displayed in the Duomo Museum.

## Cupola (Dome) of the Duomo



The Florentine’s adopted a “cross that bridge when we come to it” approach to building the dome. Arnolfo’s original design for Santa Maria del Fiore, later enhanced by Francesco Talenti, left unsolved the daunting problem of how to close the chancel (the area around the altar) with a roof.

In 1367, Neri di Fioravante proposed an ambitious and untested design for the cupola with specifications for its height, width and octagonal shape. Citizens spent decades debating how to build a dome supported by its own weight during construction. The problem remained unsolved until the competition in 1417. In a rematch of the contest for the 1401 commission to design the east doors of the Baptistery, Brunelleschi and Ghiberti went head to head. This time Brunelleschi won. His design for the dome was selected.

<sup>4</sup>Giorgio Vasari, *Lives of the Artists*, Volume II, translated by George Bull, (London, England: Penguin Books, 1987), p. 27.

But to Brunelleschi’s annoyance, the directors of the Opera del Duomo stipulated that he should collaborate with Ghiberti whom he disliked. Worse yet, Ghiberti should oversee the work. Brunelleschi was so offended that he nearly destroyed his model (now in the Duomo Museum). He declined to collaborate with Ghiberti. In time, it became clear that Ghiberti did not understand the project, and Brunelleschi was able to proceed without Ghiberti’s unwanted “assistance”.



Interior walls of Brunelleschi’s double cupola

Building a roof over a vast open space was the most vexing problem. The cathedral’s interior was too large to employ traditional methods using fixed scaffolding. Solving the technical difficulties required ingenuity and knowledge of mathematics and mechanics. Brunelleschi drew inspiration from his careful study of the Pantheon in Rome built between AD 118 and 126. To support the Pantheon’s enormous interior, the Romans used a double wall instead of scaffolding. Following the Roman model, Brunelleschi proposed building a drum above the chancel. He planned to add an octagonal cupola to the drum that measured 46 meters (151 feet) in diameter at the base. The final structure consisted of a double cupola of brick, laid herringbone fashion 91 meters (300 feet) high and entirely self-supporting.

When Brunelleschi first presented his plan to the judges, other competitors jeered that his idea was impossible. Twice he was bodily hauled out of a meeting for “talking like a fool.” Nonetheless, he won the competition and proved the doubters wrong. Construction started in 1420 and was completed in 1434. Two years later, the lantern (the white cupola on the brick dome) was placed on top raising the height from 91 to 114 meters (374 feet). The decorations in the lantern were finished in 1446 before Brunelleschi died. The Cupola immediately became a symbol of Florence’s new, revolutionary architecture.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>5</sup>Ross King, *Brunelleschi’s Dome: How a Renaissance Genius Reinvented Architecture* (New York, NY: Penguin, 2000).

## Campanile di Giotto



Giotto commenced work on the tower's design in 1334. The Florentines showed their appreciation by making Giotto a citizen of Florence and paying him one hundred gold florins a year. There are 414 steps to the top but the climb is worth the effort to appreciate Arnolfo's plan for the city.

## Baptistery

### Ghiberti's *Gates of Paradise*, 1425-1450



Michelangelo admired the elegance and technical perfection of the panels and named them the *Gates of Paradise*. During the Renaissance, most Florentine babies were baptized in the Baptistery, one of Florence's oldest and most valued buildings. Lorenzo Ghiberti (1378-1455) beat Brunelleschi in the competition for the commission to create the panels for the east door. Ghiberti used a metal working technique developed by Donatello known as *rilievo stacciato* (low relief). Shallow cuts into the metal surface create the

The book is an intriguing account of the construction of the Dome.

appearance of depth. Careful attention to linear perspective adds to the illusion. Ghiberti cast the panels illustrating Old Testament stories in bronze and then fired them with gold.

### Left panels (from the top)

1. *Creation of Adam and Eve*
2. *Noah*
3. *Isaac (Jacob and Esau)*
4. *Moses*
5. *David and Saul*

### Right panels

1. *Cain and Abel*
2. *Abraham*
3. *Joseph*
4. *Joshua*
5. *Solomon*

### East Door Statuettes



Ghiberti self-portrait



Emperor Trajan, c. 100 AD

Twenty-four statuettes of prophets and sibyls surround the panels along with twenty-four portrait medallions. Ghiberti's self-portrait is fourth from the top, in the middle row on the left. The round format, with its protruding 3-dimensional head, is similar to the antique image of Trajan. Renaissance leaders and artists admired and imitated classical Roman portraits found on coins, medals, and shields.<sup>6</sup> Ghiberti's self portrait, like the antique bronze image of the Emperor Trajan, was intended to memorialize himself for posterity.

<sup>6</sup>Bronze portrait of the Emperor Trajan, c. 100 AD (Ankara Museum).



## 2.2 Orsanmichele



In 1290, Arnolfo di Cambio designed the Orsanmichele to serve as the city's grain market. The interior, with white and colored marble walls, the tabernacle by Andrea Orcagna, and Bernardo Daddi's Madonna, are exquisite.

### Exterior Sculptures

Arnolfo's original building, destroyed by a fire in 1304, was rebuilt in 1337. In 1380 Simone Talenti added two upper floors to provide additional storage. Later, the street level arcades were enclosed to transform the first floor into a church. The exterior decoration of the Orsanmichele is one of Florence's greatest sculptural displays. Guilds competed to create tributes to their patron saints. Commissions were given to leading artists including Donatello, Verrocchio, Ghiberti, and Giambologna.



*St. Eligius*, west façade

Starting on Via dei Calzaiuoli at the corner of Lamberti, and walking toward the Duomo:

#### East façade

1. Arte di Calimala (cloth and wool merchants): *St. John the Baptist* (1413) by Lorenzo Ghiberti in

a tabernacle designed by Donatello. The beautiful medallion above is by Luca della Robbia. The polychrome glazed earthenware shows the lily of Florence surrounded by a wreath of flowers (1463).

2. Tribunale di Mercanzia (merchants' court where guild matters were resolved): *Incredulity of St. Thomas* (1466) by Andrea del Verrocchio.
3. Giudici e Notai (magistrates and notaries): *St. Luke* (1601) by Giambologna.

#### North façade

1. Arte dei Beccai (butchers): *St. Peter*, (1425) attributed to Bernardo Ciuffagni.
2. Arte dei Calzaiuoli (shoemakers): *St. Philip* (1415) by Nanni di Banco.
3. Maestri di Pietra e Legname (stone masons & carpenters): *Four Soldier Saints (Quattro Santi Coronati)* by Nanni di Banco, c. 1415. The four saints were martyred soldiers who were killed by order of Emperor Diocletian for refusing to sacrifice to Aesculapius.
4. Armaiuoli (arms makers): *St. George* (c. 1415) by Donatello, original in the Bargello.

#### West façade

1. Arte del Cambio (bankers): *St. Matthew* (1419) by Ghiberti.
2. Arte della Lana (wool manufacturers): *St. Stephen* (1428) by Ghiberti.
3. Arte dei Maniscalchi (farriers): *St. Eligius* (1408) by Nanni di Banco.

#### South Façade, Via De Lamberti

1. Arte dei Linaiuoli e Rigattieri (linen-weavers and peddlers): *St. Mark* (1411) by Donatello (c. 1386-1466).
2. Arte dei Pellicciai (furriers): *St. James the Greater* by Niccolò Lamberti.
3. Arte dei Medici e Speziali (physicians and apothecaries): *Madonna and Child* (1399) by Piero di Giovanni Tedesco. Painters often obtained their pigments from an apothecary in this guild.
4. Silk weavers: *St. John the Evangelist* (1515) by Baccio da Montelupo.

## 2.3 Santa Maria Novella



### Exterior

Observing the difference between the old and the new is part of the Florence adventure. There is no better place than the Dominican S.M. Novella to witness the transition from Gothic to early Renaissance with the addition of Leon Battista Alberti's superb façade. In 1457 the merchant banker Giovanni Rucellai (1475-1525) hired Alberti to redesign the central portal and upper façade. The result blends Gothic elements with Renaissance ideals. Alberti applied ideas described in his treatise on architecture. Geometric shapes – triangles, circles, and rectangles – symbolized the perfection of God. Rucellai admired the outcome and observed that the project provided greatest pleasure because it served the glory of God, the honor of Florence, and his own memory.

### Cloister and Entrance



The tourist entrance is through the cloister to the right of the church.

### Interior



Many works of art were beautifully restored for the year 2000 celebrations. The cloister creates a serene transition from busy piazza to elegant interior. Alternating bands of gray and white emphasize the arches and direct an observer's eye to the main altar and the Crucifix by Giotto, (1288). The Crucifix is suspended in the center of the central nave to remind us of Christ's actual crucifixion on a wooden cross.

### New Strozzi Chapel, Filippino Lippi, *The Life of St. Philip*, 1502

This chapel is one of Santa Maria Novella's gems. Filippino Lippi (1457-1504) created the frescoes and beautiful stained glass windows. The frescoes illustrating the lives of Saint John the Evangelist and Saint Philip are in pristine condition after a recent restoration. Lippi creates an ancient world filled with archaeological elements. The references to classical antiquity celebrate Florence's inheritance of Roman glory. They also compliment the humanist interests and personal taste of Filippo Strozzi, patron of the chapel, who died in 1491.



*The Golden Legend*, compiled by Jacobus Voragine about 1260, was the source of stories illustrated in many Renaissance works including Filippino Lippi's Strozzi frescoes. The tales from the *Golden Legend* have become so familiar that many people assume they are biblical rather than fanciful medieval stories. In this legend, St. John the Evangelist enters the city of Ephesus where he encounters the funeral procession of Drusiana. John is told that Drusiana had longed to see him before her death. The saint restores her to life. This story makes an excellent marketing ploy to please a wealthy donor who is planning his own funerary chapel.



*Raising of Drusiana*

#### Right

1. Lunette, *Crucifixion of St. Philip the Apostle*. St. Philip, one of the twelve Apostles and a disciple of St. John the Evangelist, was supposedly buried in Hierapolis in Turkey.
2. *Miracle before the Temple of Mars*. St Philip conjures up a monster whose stench kills the king's son.

#### Left

1. Lunette, *Martyrdom of St. John*
2. *The Raising of Drusiana by St. John*

### Cappella Tornabuoni (1485-90)

Wealthy patrons supported church art. Funding church decoration was thought to guarantee eternal grace for the patron's soul, but this "charity" blurred the line between piety and vanity. The wealthy businessman Giovanni Tornabuoni paid Domenico Ghirlandaio to include portraits of himself and his family in frescoes decorating the three walls of the chancel (the area behind the main altar). Images of the donors are also integrated into individual scenes.

In the *Birth of the Virgin*, Ludovica Tornabuoni, shown in profile dressed in elegant brocade, waits on the newborn Mary. In another scene, the sacred birth

occurs in a room in the Tornabuoni house. In the *Birth of the Baptist*, the woman on the front right, with her hair wrapped in a white cloth, may be Lucrezia Tornabuoni, Lorenzo the Magnificent's mother. Unlike the didactic Dominican story in the Spanish Chapel (adjacent to Santa Maria Novella), or the severe message of the Old Strozzi altarpiece, these frescoes celebrate the pageantry of contemporary life in Florence. Ghirlandaio's frescoes are pristine after their recent restoration in honor of the Jubilee celebration in 2000.



*Birth of the Baptist*, right wall

#### Left, Life of the Virgin

1. *Death and Assumption of the Virgin*
2. *Adoration of the Magi*
3. *Presentation of the Virgin at the Temple*
4. *Expulsion of Joachim from the Temple*
5. *Massacre of the Innocents*
6. *Marriage of the Virgin*
7. *Birth of the Virgin*

#### Right, Life of St. John the Baptist

1. *Herod's Banquet*
2. *Baptism of Christ*
3. *Zacharias Writes John's Name*
4. *Visitation*
5. *Preaching of St. John the Baptist*
6. *Birth of St John*
7. *Angel Appearing to Zacharias*



Masaccio (1401-28), *La Trinita (The Trinity)*



*La Trinita* (1425) was the result of a partnership combining Brunelleschi's new sciences, Donatello's creative innovations, and Masaccio's extraordinary skill as a painter. Like Donatello's sculptures, figures are clothed nudes. Masaccio has complete command of Brunelleschi's scientific perspective. He creates spatial depth by using architectural elements and overlapping planes. Masaccio was the first early quattrocento artist to revive Giotto's sense of scale and careful arrangement of figures.

The picture is orderly and even diagrammatic. H.W. Janson notes that for the first time, we have all the data needed to measure the depth of the painted interior.<sup>7</sup> Christ's navel is in the center of the painting. The cross planted in a mound of earth is a link to Adam, represented by the skull. A dove symbolizes the Holy Ghost. Masaccio included the kneeling portraits of the donor Lorenzo Lenzi and his wife.

Experiment to find the "ideal" spot from which to view the fresco. Masaccio calculated the vanishing point based on where he thought the viewer would stand. Move back and forth until the perspective looks right to you.

<sup>7</sup>H.W. Janson, *History of Art*, (New York, NY: Abrams, 1991) p. 322.

## 2.4 Ognissanti

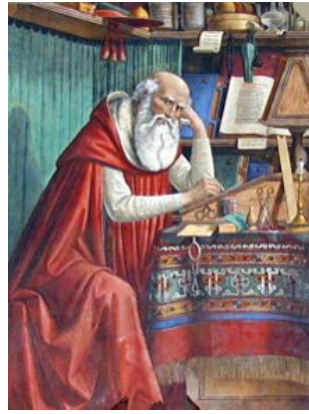


Ognissanti is a Franciscan church dedicated to saints and martyrs. Construction started in 1252. In the 17th century, the interior and exterior underwent a baroque remodel. Only the bell tower dates to the 13th century. Ognissanti was the parish church of the Vespucci family who were agents of the Medici bank in Seville. There is a prominent Medici coat of arms on the floor near the entrance. The Cenacolo del Ghirlandaio is adjacent to the church. The Cenacolo's opening hours are limited so time your visit so you can see both places.

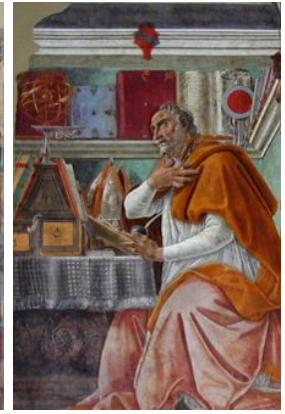


### Saints Jerome and Augustine

The Church of the Ognissanti houses magnificent works by Ghirlandaio and Botticelli, both of whom were members of the congregation. The frescoes are midway to the altar, past the Medici coat of arms. St Jerome is on the left and St Augustine is on the right. The paintings were designed as pendants. Both saints, portrayed in their studies, exemplify divine learning. They are caught in a moment of contemplation. The connection between the paintings is further demonstrated by the inscribed stone beam that runs across the top of their cells. During the sixteenth century, the portraits were moved from the monk's choir to their present locations.



*St. Jerome*, Domenico Ghirlandaio, 1480



*St. Augustine's Vision of St. Jerome*, Botticelli, 1480

St. Jerome is surrounded by an elaborate and realistic still life of scholarly attributes. Eusebius Hieronymus, (391-406 AD), known as St. Jerome, was largely responsible for translating the Bible from the original Hebrew and Aramaic into Latin. For a long time, his Vulgate translation served as the standard for the western Church.

*Saint Augustine* shows Botticelli at his best. "Here the exercise of his virtuosity is evident not only in the exact and vivid rendering of still-life objects but in such displays of illusionistic art as the open drawer on the side of the book rest."<sup>8</sup> The clock on the upper right marks the hours I to XXIV. According to the old Italian system, the one o'clock position indicates the time as dusk rather than the first hour after noon. "This ingenious way of telling us the hour, in an interior with no opening to exterior light, tells us the true subject of the fresco, which is Saint Augustine's first vision of Saint Jerome."<sup>9</sup> The legend of this vision dates to the end of the 13th century. Saint Augustine is meditating on the glory of the saints. A mystical light and a sweet odor permeates his cell. Just as he is about to write a letter to Saint Jerome to ask his opinion about an esoteric question, he looks up and has a vision of Saint Jerome's death in Jerusalem.

<sup>8</sup>Ronald Lightbown, *Botticelli Life and Work* (New York: Abbeville Press, 1989) p. 74.

<sup>9</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 76.

## 2.5 Santa Trinita



The church is near S. Trinita bridge, on Via Tornabuoni., at the Piazza S Trinita. The stone facade is by Bernardo Buontalenti (1593).

### Domenico Ghirlandaio, Sassetti Chapel

Vasari wrote that Ghirlandaio's chapel for Francesco Sassetti was an "admirable work, remarkable for its grace, finish and delicacy [that] must excite the wonder of every thinking man." Fortunately, the chapel's decorative scheme remains complete. A visitor can witness the interrelationship among patronage, iconography, and portraiture in the quattrocento Florence of the Medici.

In 1483, the merchant Francesco Sassetti, a loyal follower of the Medici, commissioned Ghirlandaio to paint frescoes of the *Life of Saint Francis* and the accompanying altarpiece, the *Adoration of the Shepherds*. As a reminder of the birth of his son Teodoro, the chapel was dedicated to St. Francis, Sassetti's namesake, and to the Nativity.



### Altarpiece, *Adoration of the Shepherds*

With its images of birth, barnyard animals, divine light, and the wonder of prophecy fulfilled, the story of the adoration of the shepherds appealed to Renaissance families. Artists represented narrative details found in the Gospel of St. Luke. The story begins with Joseph's journey to Bethlehem with his pregnant wife Mary. Shepherds are startled when an angel brings joyful news of the birth of the savior who rests in a nearby manger. The composition shows Ghirlandaio's familiarity with northern European landscape painting, and especially his awareness of Hugo van der Goes's *Portinari Altarpiece* (Uffizi) that had arrived in Florence a few years earlier.

### Frescoes, *The Life of St. Francis*



Ghirlandaio self portrait

### Back wall

Iconography presents both challenges and opportunities for the artistic sleuth. Elements of the familiar story of the life of St. Francis blend with recognizable cityscapes and portraits of known individuals.



*Raising of the Child*

1. The lunette illustrates the *Confirmation of Franciscan Rule* set in the Piazza della Signoria rather than in Rome where the Order was approved by Pope Innocent III early in the 13th century. The Palazzo Vecchio, Donatello's lion sculpture, the



*Marzocco*, and the Loggia dei Lanzi are clearly visible. Lorenzo de' Medici, Sassetti, and Sassetti's three sons are in the foreground. Lorenzo's young sons ascend the stairs accompanied by their tutors.

2. Ghirlandaio's self portrait is on the far right, middle section. He wears a blue tunic and a red shawl. His left hand is on his hip.
3. *The Raising of the [Dead] Child*. The miracle of the raising of the dead was a powerful Renaissance theme. This story may have been included as a reference to the tragic death of Sassetti's eldest son in 1479. *The Raising of the Child* is set in the Piazza Santa Trinita. The church is on the right, and the Ponte Santa Trinita is in the background. To see the same view today, look right towards the Ponte Santa Trinita when you exit the church.



View from S. Trinita toward Ponte S Trinita

### Right

1. *St. Francis's Trial by Fire*
2. *The Death of St. Francis*

### Left

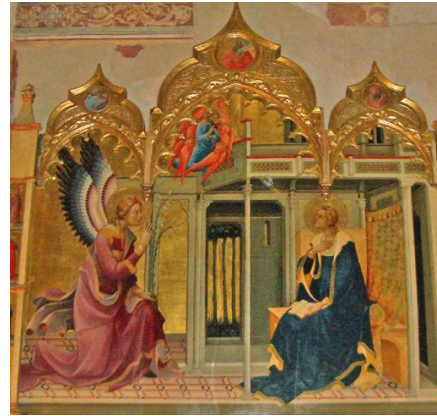
1. *Conversion of St. Francis*
2. *St. Francis renounces Worldly Goods*. This scene is set in Geneva where Sassetti made his fortune.

## Bartolini Chapel, Lorenzo Monaco

### *Annunciation*, c. 1422

Lorenzo Monaco (c. 1370-1424) was a devoted Camaldolese monk whose order in Santa Maria degli Angeli was one of the wealthiest in Florence. His early work incorporated Christian themes typically popular in late trecento Florence. He esteemed the innovations of Giotto and Agnolo Gaddi whose frescoes are in Santa Croce and wanted to continue their tradition. He became a leading figure in the transition from the

late Gothic to the early Renaissance style. He was major a influence on Fra Angelico.



One of Monaco's last works, the *Bartolini Annunciation*, is exquisite with luminous colors. Lorenzo Monaco seems unaware of the naturalistic achievements of the young Masaccio who was then working in the Brancacci Chapel. In addition to the celestial Gabriel, small red and blue angels are prominent. The red or flame color of the seraphim symbolized the spirit of holy love. The blue of the cherubim represented spiritual knowledge and contemplation.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>10</sup>Harry Morris, "Some Uses of Angel Iconography in English Literature"; *Comparative Literature*, Vol. 10, No. 1 (Winter, 1958): 36.

## 2.6 San Lorenzo



San Lorenzo and San Lorenzo the street market

San Lorenzo, the family church of the Medici, is a treasure with works by Filippo Lippi, Bronzino, and Donatello. Along with San Marco, San Lorenzo benefited from the Medici family's pious investment in the arts. Visual reminders of the Medici are incorporated into the church decor. Gold shields with red balls, the emblem of the Medici, are spaced at regular intervals in the ceiling. Gold shields are also prominent in the Old Sacristy. In 1513, Michelangelo won the commission for the exterior. The façade of rough hewn bricks remains unfinished. Michelangelo's wood model for the project is in the Casa Buonarroti.

### Interior



The Medici commissioned Brunelleschi to rebuild the interior of S. Lorenzo in 1425. The interior is a unified and rationalized spatial system with carefully calculated proportions. The Medici Chapel with Michelangelo's magnificent sculptures is accessed from the rear of the church.

Rosso Fiorentino (1494-1540) was a talented cinquecento artist and an early exponent of Mannerism. Rosso's unconventional style assimilated lessons learned from Leonardo, Michelangelo, Raphael, Pontormo, and Andrea del Sarto. The 13th century *Golden Legend*, and not the gospels, was the source

for the story of the marriage of Mary and Joseph. The marriage of the Virgin was a popular element in cycles illustrating the life of the Mary. Mary and Joseph stand at the top of the stairs on either side of the high priest. Although Joseph is often shown as an older man, Rosso chose to portray him as a handsome youth. Joseph was chosen as Mary's husband after the miraculous flowering of his rod. Here, he holds the rod in one hand and places a ring on Mary's finger with the other.

### Filippo Lippi, *Annunciation*,



The *Annunciation* (c. 1442) in the Martelli Chapel is in its original frame and setting. The double arch compartmentalizes the scene in the Gothic manner. The angel on the left functions as an Albertian interlocutor whose outward glance connects us to the painting. Sunlight and shadow help to make the long garden optically convincing. Lippi employs icons commonly associated with this story. On the day of the annunciation, Mary reads the Old Testament passage in Isaiah that predicts that a virgin will give birth to a son. The urn of lilies and the enclosed garden symbolize Mary's purity. The garden, or *hortus conclusus*, was associated with the Song of Songs, "A garden enclosed is my sister, my spouse; a spring enclosed, a fountain sealed". Following quattrocento precepts, symbols conveyed messages that were easily understood by Renaissance viewers. The figure of Mary is based on Donatello's *Annunciation Tabernacle* in Santa Croce.



**3** Bronzino, *The Martyrdom of St. Lawrence*, c. 1565



Bronzino was inspired by Michelangelo's drive to challenge artistic convention. Bronzino was a Mannerist painter. Entwined figures in the *Martyrdom* bend in exaggerated movement. Bronzino's debt to Michelangelo is also evident with the reclining figure of St. Lawrence who is modeled on Michelangelo's Adam in the Sistine Chapel. Opinions are mixed on whether this is 'good' or 'bad' art. Some critics find the painting cohesive, didactic, and aesthetically appealing. Others say Bronzino gave Mannerism a bad name. They characterize this painting as empty, elegant posturing.

**Old Sacristy**



The Old Sacristy was designed by Brunelleschi between 1418 and 1428. The sculptural decorations are by Donatello. The design of the Sacristy had personal and dynastic significance to the Medici led by Cosimo di Giovanni de' Medici, (also known as Cosimo il Vecchio). Cosimo used the wealth and power of the Medici bank to develop close relations with European princes and popes. Cosimo's residence became the center of Florentine political power and foreign relations. Pope Eugenius IV who lived in Florence between 1434 and 1443 was an influential supporter. Medici financial backing was exchanged for papal political favors.



The timing of the installation of the astronomical fresco coincided with Cosimo's efforts to consolidate his political power in Florence. The blue dome above the altar is an accurate celestial representation of the sky on July 6, 1439, the date the Council of Florence ratified the Articles of Union joining Eastern and Western Christendom. The Pope and the Patriarch of Constantinople, with their respective retinues, were received as Cosimo's personal guests. With Cosimo's assistance, Pope Eugenius was affirmed as the head of the Church Universal. Cosimo's political success was confirmed.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>11</sup>Patricia Fortini Brown, "Laetentur Caeli: The Council of Florence and the Astronomical Fresco in the Old Sacristy," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, Vol. 44. (1981): pp. 176-180.

## 2.7 San Marco

The Museum of San Marco is one Florence's special delights. The church itself was founded in 1299 and reconfigured in 1442 with the addition of the convent. Final modifications were made in 1588 under the direction of Giambologna. The Chiostro (cloister) St. Antoninus with its decorative flower beds and cedar tree is a typical example of Renaissance monastic architecture. The elegant columns supporting the arches surrounding the cloister were part of the 16th century redesign.

### Church Interior

#### Savonarola



The ghost of the monk Girolamo Savonarola seems to haunt the church of San Marco. He became monastic prior of San Marco in 1491, and from 1494 to 1498, he ruled the Republic of Florence. This brooding, dark sculpture is an eloquent testimony to his severity and his distaste for humanistic ideals. In 1498, the Inquisition Court found him guilty of heresy and had him burned at the stake in Piazza della Signoria. The atmosphere of the church and museum are welcoming despite his stern gaze.

#### Mosaic



The Madonna in Prayer is a beautiful 8th century mosaic brought to San Marco from Constantinople.

### Museum of San Marco



Fra Angelico's (1387-1435) finest paintings are in the Museum of San Marco (Pilgrim's Hospice). Cosimo de Medici (known as Cosimo il Vecchio) was the dominant political figure in Florence from 1434 to 1464. His support of the renovation of San Marco enabled him to reconcile his aspirations for wealth and fame with a desire to be known as a pious Christian. The saints surrounding Mary in the Coronation of the Virgin are the namesakes of the Medici. Fra Angelico combined the International Gothic style with the Siense-Florentine tradition of the trecento.

#### The Dormitory Frescoes by Fra Angelico



*Annunciation* c.1441

The dormitory frescoes offer a rare opportunity to see important works by Fra Angelico in their original location. The grim subject matter in most of the cells, appropriate for 15th century monks, may not appeal to all modern viewers. Two cells were allocated to San Marco's benefactor, Cosimo de' Medici. The fresco of the Crucifixion in the first cell includes images of Saints Cosmas and Peter, patron saints to Cosimo and his son Piero.

**The Chapter House, Domenico Ghirlandaio,  
*Last Supper*, c. 1486**



The San Marco *Last Supper* is nearly the twin of Ghirlandaio's fresco in the Ognissanti. San Marco's unusually small refectory conveys the atmosphere of an intimate chapel rather than a communal dining hall.



## 2.8 Santa Croce



Tanners, dyers, and weavers concentrated around Santa Croce. The leather shops and factories that line the piazza today are clearly ‘touristic’. Even the monks of Santa Croce sell their own leather goods in the cathedral store. Ignore the crowds, listen to the piped music, and slip into the atmosphere of E.M. Forester’s *Room With a View*. Santa Croce, a Franciscan church, is a fine example of Italian Gothic architecture. Construction took more than 150 years beginning in 1294 and continuing to 1442. The bell tower and façade are 19th century additions. The vast interior suggests an illusion of simplicity with its great timber ceiling. Its sculptures and tombs are monuments to notable Florentine citizens.

### Santa Croce Frescoes

#### Giotto, Cappella Bardi, c. 1320

Giotto di Bondone (1266-1337) is credited with beginning modern Italian painting. His innovative naturalism impressed early humanists including Dante and influenced generations of artists that followed. Vasari tells a fanciful story about when Giotto was a student in Cimabue’s workshop. One day Giotto painted a fly on the nose of one of the figures that was so lifelike that Cimabue tried several times to brush it away.



*Death of St. Francis*

The Cappella Bardi is the first chapel to the right of the main altar. The Bardi family controlled one of the most prominent banking houses in Europe until

the bank collapsed in 1346 when King Edward III of England defaulted on his loans. Giotto’s *Scenes from the Life of St. Francis* are among the most beautiful paintings in Santa Croce. Giotto used the width of the wall for a single story element. Episodes from the life of St Francis move from top to bottom and from left to right. Giotto’s modeled figures are approximately half the height of each scene. This compositional device helps emphasize the importance of the figures. The expression of grief on the face of the monk leaning over the dead saint is poignant.

#### Left

1. *Renunciation of Worldly Goods*
2. *Appearing to St. Anthony at Arles*
3. *Death of St. Francis*

#### Right

1. *Confirmation of the Rule of the Order*
2. *Trial by fire before the Sultan*
3. *Appearing to Brother Augustine and Bishop Guido of Assisi*

#### Giotto, Cappella Peruzzi

Donato di Arnolfo Peruzzi, scion of another banking family, left funds in his will to construct and decorate a chapel to commemorate his memory. The Cappella Peruzzi is the second chapel to the right of the main altar. The scenes on the left wall illustrate the lives of St. John the Baptist and St. John the Evangelist on the right. The frescoes were painted *a secco* (on dry plaster), a techniques that is less durable than *buon fresco* where paint is applied when the surface is still damp. As a result, much of the paint surface has flaked away. The remaining pastel colors are soft but pleasant. There is a marvelous jumble of architectural elements in scenes depicting the *Feast of Herod* and the *Raising of Drusiana*. The *Ascension of St John* illustrates a popular legend suggesting that he was the only apostle to defy death and avoid martyrdom by ascending to heaven while still alive.

#### Left

1. *John the Baptist*
2. *Annunciation to Zacharias*
3. *Birth St. John*
4. *Herod’s Banquet*

**Right**

1. *St. John the Evangelist*
2. *St. John on Patmos*
3. *Raising of Drusiana*
4. *St John's Ascension into Heaven*

**Taddeo Gaddi, Baroncelli Chapel, 1332**

Another banking family, the Baroncelli, commissioned Giotto's pupil, Taddeo Gaddi (1300-1366) to decorate their chapel. Gaddi successfully applied lessons learned from Giotto. His figures are both naturalistic and reverential. Because the Baroncelli Chapel is deeper than the Bardi and Peruzzi chapels, Taddeo divided the wall surface into separately framed scenes in the traditional manner rather than following Giotto's scheme that extended individual narratives the width of the wall. His series of twisted columns demonstrates his ability to transform a flat surface into architectural space.

The *Annunciation* is represented in the scenes to the left of the window and the *Visitation* to the right. In the *Annunciation to the Shepherds*, familiar Italian umbrella trees, rocky outcrops, and animals dot the landscape. Moonlight bathes the scene.



*Annunciation to the Shepherds* (left of window)

**Donatello, *Cavalcanti Tabernacle***

The Tabernacle is on the south wall, just before the exit to the Pazzi Chapel. The date of the *Annunciation* is not known although Vasari and others suggest that it is an early work of Donatello from the 1420's. The relief and the tabernacle were carved from local sandstone that was then partially gilded. The Madonna and angel are carved in high relief in contrast to the shallow relief of the interior scene. The Virgin is framed by a throne and two highly decorated panels. The closed doors may symbolize her virginity and refer to the closed gate mentioned in Ezekiel 44:2 (The Lord said "This gate is to remain shut. It must not be opened; no one may enter through it.").



The Madonna appears at the moment when the angel Gabriel has just conveyed a most important message from God. Mary has just risen and still holds the book she had been reading. The scene is serene and calm. The limited and careful application of gilding enhances the aesthetic impact. Vasari wrote "Donatello created a masterly flow of folds and curves in the draperies of the Madonna and the angel, suggesting the form of the nude figures and showing how he was striving to recover the beauty of the ancients, which had been lost for so many years."<sup>12</sup> In 1442, Filippo Lippi used Donatello's positioning of the angel and the Madonna as a model for his own painting of the annunciation in San Lorenzo.

<sup>12</sup>Op. cit, Vasari (Volume 1), p. 175

## Tomb Sculptures



Tomb of Machiavelli

Santa Croce's array of important tombs is a who's who of Italian history. It is the final resting place of Machiavelli, Michelangelo, Rossini, Ghiberti, Galileo, and many other luminaries.

## Pazzi Chapel



Access to the Pazzi Chapel (1430-45) is from the church. Some consider the chapel to be Brunelleschi's architectural apotheosis. A central square supports a dome. Fluted Corinthian pilasters appear to support the arches of the barrel. Each roundel is topped by a blue and white glazed terracotta of the twelve Apostles by Luca della Robbia. The larger terracotta roundels of the Four Evangelists are attributed to Brunelleschi.



## 2.9 Santa Felicita



Santa Felicita is on the south side of the Arno just after you cross the Ponte Vecchio. The church will be on the left after you cross Via de' Bardi. It only takes a few minutes to see, and it is one of the special places you will always remember. Entrance to the church is under the arches supporting Vasari's corridor.

### Pontormo, *Deposition*



Donors acquired property rights to chapels, and this Cappella Capponi was bought and sold several times. The banker Lodovico di Gino Capponi, a successful member of the Papal court of Leo X, acquired it in 1521. Jacopo Pontormo's *Deposition* (c. 1525) is one of the great works of the cinquecento. The dominant impression is the array of pink, blue and orange hues. Pontormo's choice of colors and brilliant white highlights help offset the chapel's limited natural light. There is a coin operated light.

The ground plane is unseen, and the cross itself while not depicted is understood. Stylistically, Pontormo is a Mannerist painter. Mannerist applies to artists who followed Raphael and Michelangelo including Pontormo, Parmigianino, and Bronzino. Bodies and limbs are elongated artificially. In the next generation, this style characterized the work of El Greco, and much later, that of his 20th century disciple, the

American painter Thomas Hart Benton. With respect to skin tones, the Italian artists eschewed naturalism in favor of sculptural, ivory smooth skin tones.

### Private Medici Chapel



Before leaving the church, look up above the entrance door to see the private chapel built for the Medici. The balcony enabled them to attend church services without having to go outside or mingle with 'ordinary' worshipers. Access to the gallery chapel is from the Vasari corridor that connects the Uffizi with the Palazzo Pitti.

## 2.10 San Miniato al Monte

San Miniato is located high on a hill above the Piazzale Michelangelo on Via del Monte alle Croci. Even if you take a taxi up to the church, consider walking back to enjoy the magnificent city views. It's a little over a kilometer to the Arno and Ponte alle Grazie. The church dates from the same period as the Baptistery.



The Arte di Calimala (wool merchants' guild) financed the marble façade. A bronze eagle holding a bale of wool crowns the façade. An intricate geometric pattern of inlaid green and white marble decorates the interior walls. For many, San Miniato is the most beautiful church in Florence. It is a place to explore nooks and crannies, from the crypt below to the ceiling details. The setting is unsurpassed.



The public is invited to listen to the Benedictine monks sing Gregorian chants during afternoon vespers. Listening to these ancient chants is memorable. Gregorian chants are beautiful, meditative music. The chants are named for Gregory the Great, a 6th century pope, who promoted the use of traditional songs during church services. In winter, vespers are sung at 16:30 and in summer at 17:30.

According to legend, the city's first martyr, the hermit St. Minias, came to Florence about 250. During anti-Christian persecutions, the Emperor Trajanus Decius ordered the beheading of Minias. Minias picked up his head, crossed the Arno, and climbed back up

the hill known as Mons Fiorentinus, to his hermitage. A shrine was erected on the site in the 8th century.

### Cappella del Crocifisso



Luca della Robbia's striking, colored enamel terracotta tiles decorate the ceiling of the Tabernacle of the Cappella del Crocifisso.



# Chapter 3

## Chapels

### 3.1 Brancacci Chapel (Santa Maria Del Carmine)



*St. Peter Distributing Alms and the Death of Ananias, detail, Masaccio*

Visiting the Brancacci Chapel should be one of your first stops. Here Masaccio eloquently recast pagan Venus as Biblical Eve. Here a young Michelangelo came to copy and learn from Masaccio's frescoes. Vasari reports that because of Masaccio's work, "the most renowned sculptures and painters who have lived from that time to this have become wonderfully proficient and famous by studying and working in the chapel." Annibale Caro, a 16th century poet, translator of classical literature, and iconographic advisor, wrote an epitaph expressing his sorrow at Masaccio's early death at 26.

"I painted, and my picture was like life; I gave my figures movement, passion, soul: They breathed."

Masaccio was a genius in applying single point perspective. Leonardo credits Masaccio as the prime proponent of *relievo*, the light and shadows through which we perceive forms and objects. A master of perspective taught by Brunelleschi and Donatello, Masaccio imparted grandeur and austerity to the human figure. He put diverse characters within a unified group and emphasized the range of emotional expression in heroic individuals. His originality and imagination earn him

a high place in the tradition extending from Giotto to Michelangelo.

#### Michelangelo and the feet of the Apostles

Vasari identified the feet of the apostles as Masaccio's key contribution to the Florentine conquest of the visible world. In 1492, Michelangelo was apprenticed to the Florentine artist Ghirlandaio. He went to the Brancacci Chapel to copy some of the figures in the *Life of St. Peter* that Masaccio had painted more than 60 years earlier. Adam Gopnik wrote the following for the *New Yorker*.

"They [St. Peter, et al] are the very first figures in Italian art who have, in every sense, both feet on the ground. Their soles rest flat on the earth, and the feet are correctly foreshortened according to the rules of perspective. This was harder to do than it sounds. We tend to think of perspective as a kind of technological gimmick that can be mechanically applied to every representation. In fact, foreshortening inevitably makes weird, difficult shapes, which have to be carefully negotiated in the process of picture-making so that they can appear correct within the system and still be recognizable as familiar objects. While Masaccio's partner, Masolino, was still making figures whose feet were articulated all the way up from toe to ankle, like those of dancers en pointe, Masaccio had found a way to plant his apostles on the ground without making their feet into mere ovoid stumps."<sup>1</sup>

#### The Quattrocento Nude

The sensual nude figures of Adam and Eve is an extraordinary feature of Masaccio's *Expulsion*. When you look at Adam, try to remember that you are in a Carmelite church and not a Medici bedroom. Of course, earlier quattrocento artists had known the classical nude. Kenneth Clark writes that realistic representations of the female nude disappeared from late antiquity long before the nude figure became the object

<sup>1</sup>Adam Gopnik, "St. Peter's Feet and Rembrandt's Fountain," *The New Yorker* (July 4, 1988): 61:65.

of moral reprobation.<sup>2</sup> According to Clark, it was successive generations of poor quality art that ultimately caused Venus to pass from “religion to entertainment, from entertainment to decoration: and then she disappeared.” Clark’s words remind me of the cheap replicas of art one finds in many tourist shops today. It took a millennium to restore Venus.

In the early phases of the Italian Renaissance, ancient Venus became Eve as artists revived the antique nude. Giovanni Pisano’s remarkable figure of *Temperance* carved for the pulpit of the Pisa Cathedral (c.1302) gives an early hint of the transformation of Venus to Eve. His version of a Venus pudica (modest or unclothed Venus) resembles antique figures like the 2nd century AD Roman figure from the British Museum, or the *Medici Venus* in the Uffizi which is a 1st century BC copy after Cleomenes of Athens (See Chapter 8, The Uffizi). It took another 100 years for this Christian Venus to break through the iconoclastic barriers in the form of Masaccio’s Eve. In early Renaissance Christian art, nudity was sanctioned only to convey the pathos of the Flagellation, the Entombment, the Pieta, or the Expulsion.



Venus, Roman 2nd century AD, British Museum



Pisano, *Temperance*, 1302, pulpit, Pisa

### Restoration of Masaccio’s Nudes

A fire destroyed much of the Church of Santa Maria del Carmine in 1771. Fortunately, the Brancacci Chapel in the church’s right transept survived the fire although the exposed paintings were damaged by smoke and heat. In the next two centuries, layers of grime were coated with varnish. Counter Reformation functionaries attached fig leaves covering places of special interest. The result was the dingy appearance you may recall from your art history textbook.

<sup>2</sup>Kenneth Clark, *The Nude – A Study in Ideal Form*, (New York, NY: Pantheon Books, 1953) pp. 93-140.



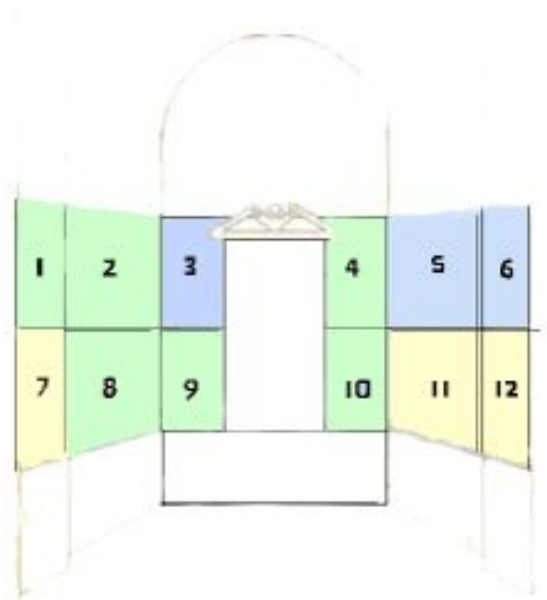
Before Restoration



After Restoration

In the late 1970’s, segments of the frescoed walls were discovered behind the Baroque marble altar. Because the altar was in place before the fire of 1771, these sections remained in pristine condition. This evidence of the original state of the frescoes inspired the restoration of the entire cycle with astounding results. The grimy appearance gave way to the brilliant color and light that emerged in the 1988 restoration.

### The Fresco Cycle of the Life of St. Peter



1. Green = Masaccio
2. Yellow = Filippino Lippi
3. Blue = Masolino

The frescoes on the chapel walls illustrate the life of St Peter. In 1424, the silk merchant Felice Brancacci selected Masolino to create the chapel frescoes. To create fresco, the wall was prepared with lime, sand and water, and then covered with a layer of plaster. Drawings (cartoons) were placed on the wall and images

were transferred by injecting chalk through holes poked along the outline of the drawing. The artist applied paint while the wall surface was still wet.

Masaccio and Masolino together painted the upper wall panels in 1425. When Masolino left later that year, Masaccio continued working on the lower panels until 1428, when he, in his turn, left for Rome and died there at the age of 26. Fifty years later, the frescoes were completed by Filippino Lippi. The frescoes cover three walls. Start with the two panels by Masaccio, *The Expulsion from Paradise* and *The Tribute Money* on the left as you face the chapel (1 and 2 in the diagram).

**1. Masaccio, *Expulsion of Adam and Eve*** God warned Adam not to eat the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, “because you shall be as gods”. Masaccio presents Adam and Eve’s distress and maybe their understanding that from then on they and their descendants will face difficult moral choices every day.

While there was no official dictionary to the Renaissance language of gesture, Michael Baxandall suggests that sign language developed by monastic orders for use during periods of silence also guided artists.<sup>3</sup> Complex meanings were encoded in icons, colors, and gestures.<sup>4</sup>

Examples of hand signals used by the Benedictine Order: 1. Affirmation: lift your arm gently so that the back of the hand faces the beholder. 2. Demonstration: something seen is noted by opening the palm of the hand in its direction. 3. Grief: pressing the breast with the palm of the hand. 4. Shame: covering the eyes with the fingers.<sup>5</sup>By decoding gestures, the viewer can read the *Expulsion from Paradise*: Adam expresses shame and Eve shows grief.

**2. Masaccio, *Rendering of Tribute Money*** The painting depicts events occurring at three different times. Earlier artists had struggled to present sequential events in a coherent space. Often, they used architectural and landscape elements to distinguish episodes that occur at different times. Without resorting to props, Masaccio conveys a narrative sequence in a natural way. The source of the narrative is the Gospel of Matthew 17:24-27. In the center, Christ refuses to pay the tax collector. To the left, Peter retrieves a coin from the mouth of a fish. On the right, Peter pays the tax.

<sup>3</sup>Michael Baxandall, *Painting and Experience in Fifteenth-century Italy*, (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1988) p. 61.

<sup>4</sup>For an excellent dictionary of symbols, see James Hall, *Hall’s Dictionary of Subjects and Symbols in Art* (London: John Murray, 1989).

<sup>5</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 61.



**3. Masolino, *St. Peter Preaching in Jerusalem*** The scene refers to Peter’s sermon in Jerusalem when he tells worshippers to repent and be baptized.

**4. Masaccio, *St. Peter Baptizing the Neophytes*** Vasari noted the extraordinary, shivering figure when he observed “a nude trembling because of the cold, amongst the other neophytes, executed with such fine relief and gentle manner, that it is highly praised and admired by all artists, ancient and modern.” The water appears to flow.

**5. Masolino, *Healing of the Cripple and the Raising of Tabitha*** The Acts of the Apostles tells the story the healing of a crippled person and the raising of Tabitha. Masolino sets these stories in an imaginary Florentine piazza. He uses linear perspective to enhance the visual narrative. The realistic cobblestones decrease in size as they recede.

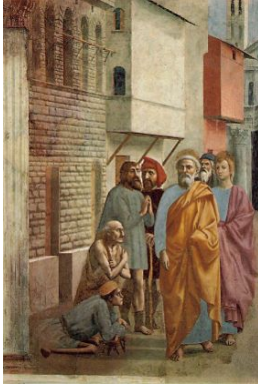
**6. Masolino, *The Temptation of Adam*** Masolino’s Adam and Eve are painted in the conservative International Gothic style. His elegant figures lack the naturalism achieved by Masaccio.

**7. Filippino Lippi, *St. Peter Freed From Prison*** according to the *Golden Legend*, Theophilus, Prefect of Antioch, imprisons St. Peter. The Apostle was released when St. Paul convinced Theophilus that Peter had the power to resurrect the dead.

**8. Masaccio and Filippino Lippi, *Raising of the Son of Theophilus*** After he was released from prison, Peter miraculously restored the son of Theophilus to life. Theophilus and the citizens of Antioch were inspired to convert to Christianity. The scene is set in front of a contemporary Florentine church among the Carmelite friars from Santa Maria del Carmine. The assembly includes Masaccio’s self-portrait and portraits of Brunelleschi, Masolino, and Leon Battista Alberti.

**9. Masaccio, *St. Peter Healing the Sick With His Shadow*** This story illustrates one of the miracles performed by the apostles: “They brought forth the sick into the streets, and laid them on beds and couches, that at the least the shadow of Peter passing

by might overshadow some of them” (Acts 5:15). The bearded figure standing on the left is thought to be Donatello. The street is lined with typical medieval Florentine houses depicted with accurate perspective.



**10. Masaccio, *Distribution of Alms and the Death of Ananias*** The episode is taken from the account in the Acts of the Apostles (4: 32-37 and 5:1-11). Masaccio presents two scenes: in one Peter distributes the donations that have been presented to the Apostles; in the other, he shows the death of Ananias who was confronted by Peter for withholding part of his donation.

**11. Filippino Lippi, *St. Peter in Dispute with the Magician Simon and the Crucifixion of St. Peter*** Acts 8:9-24 records Simon the Magician’s confrontation with St. Peter. Simon was often regarded as the source of all heresies.

**12. Filippino Lippi, *The Liberation of St. Peter from Prison*** This episode is recounted in the Acts of the Apostles (12: 1-6). An angel awoke Peter and takes him from his cell. The sleeping guard notices nothing.





## 3.2 Medici Chapel Tombs

The Medici Chapel, also known as the New Sacristy or Sagrestia Nuova, is a “must see”. Entrance is from an exterior door located at the back of the church. Michelangelo Buonarroti’s (1475-1564) sculptures here are among his greatest works. Michelangelo’s early training in Ghirlandaio’s workshop exposed him to classical antiquity and to the work of early Renaissance masters. Michelangelo made preparatory drawings before carving the sculptures. We know from his drawings that he rejected a free standing monument and experimented with a double wall tomb. Ultimately, he designed a single tomb for each of the Dukes.<sup>6</sup> He carved the sculptures between 1526 and 1531.



*River God (Nile), Vatican*

Before finalizing his design, Michelangelo considered placing two River Gods on either side of the sarcophagus plinth modeled after the antique Roman sculpture *Nile*. You can see this early plan and his clay model for a River God in Michelangelo’s home in Florence, the Casa Buonarroti.

The chapel was built to house the tombs of Cosimo il Vecchio’s two grandsons, Lorenzo the Magnificent and Giuliano. The Pazzi assassination plot in 1478 targeted the brothers. Lorenzo escaped, Giuliano did not. Their elevated family status required grandeur and dignity. Here, both dukes wear classical armor. They sit facing frontally. Giuliano projects enormous energy. With one foot behind the other, he appears about to stand. Lorenzo is more contemplative. His feet cross and his chin rests on a hand. Michelangelo took artistic liberty with their likeness. These are not accurate portraits of the two dukes physically or psychologically. “Giuliano’s alert and aggressive pose is alien to his personality as is Lorenzo’s pensive and contemplative demeanor.”<sup>7</sup> Michelangelo’s idealization of the figures is consistent with contemporary Medici values and aspirations.

### Lorenzo de’ Medici (1449-1492)

<sup>6</sup>For Michelangelo’s preparatory studies for the Medici Chapel, see Michael Chapman, *Michelangelo Drawings Closer to the Master* (London, British Museum Press, 2005).

<sup>7</sup>Glenn Andres, *The Art of Florence* (New York: Abbeville Press, 1988), p. 1017.



*Dusk and Dawn*

Lorenzo the Magnificent was effective ruler of the Florentine Republic during the flowering of the Italian Renaissance. He sits above reclining figures of Dusk and Dawn. *Dusk*, with his unfinished head, is less massive than *Day*, the male counterpart for Giuliano’s tomb. *Dawn* is more convincingly feminine compared to *Night*. The diadem that fastens her veil weighs heavily upon her. A band restrains her torso.

### Giuliano de’ Medici (1453-1478)



*Night and Day*

Giuliano de’ Medici sits between *Day and Night*. *Day* twists his body as he rolls over to face the spectator. *Night* alone has identifying symbols of night. She wears a tiara with a moon and a star. An owl nestles below her thigh while her left foot rests on poppies. No one knows the meaning of the carved mask. With *Night* we see a weary figure relaxing her limbs, as if in the evening of life.

*Madonna and Child between Saints Cosmas and Damian, 1521-31*



Cosmas and Damian, patron saints of the Medici, surround the Madonna. Assistants under Michelangelo's supervision carved the saints. According to legend, the saints were twin doctors who refused payment for their work. Their identifying attributes are a medical bag and a containers for pills or ointments. Andres writes that "this is one of his [Michelangelo's] most inspired and exalted compositions and 'grandeur' is the only word that seems sufficient to describe the effect it produces."<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>8</sup>Ibid., p. 1019.

### 3.3 Spanish Chapel

#### Cappellone degli Spagnoli, c. 1365

The Spanish Chapel is a delightful city museum (Museo di Santa Maria Novella) with frescoes by Andrea di Bonaiuto (1343-77). The entrance is to the left of Santa Maria Novella through the Gothic Chiostro Verde (Green Cloister) and then into the Large Cloister. There is an excellent description of the frescoes in English in the chapel.

Jacopo Passavanti's *Mirror of True Penitence*, Dante's *Paradiso* (Cantos 13-14), and the writings of St. Thomas Aquinas are the literary origins of the frescoes. The chapel glorifies the Dominican Order. The vaults and architectural features are integral parts of the decorative scheme.



*Limbo*, detail

**Back wall** The back wall shows the Passion of Christ with the Crucifixion, the Procession to Calvary, and the descent into Limbo. I particularly enjoy the devils on the right poised to torment souls in Limbo.

**Right wall** The *Church Militant and Triumphant*, warns the viewer that temporary pleasures impede the chance of eternal bliss. Dominican dogs, the *domini canes* (the Hounds of God, i.e., the Dominicans) protect the sheep (i.e., Christians). To the right, hounds attack wolves that threaten sheep. On the left, Arnolfo illustrates the Florence Duomo then under construction. This detail shows an imaginary Cathedral based on Arnolfo's design with an imaginary cupola. The vault contains the *Boat of the Apostles*.



**Left wall** *Triumph of St. Thomas Aquinas* features ancient figures who contributed to medieval church doctrine: Job, David, Paul, Mark and John; then Matthew, Luke, Moses, Isaiah and King Solomon. The great Arab philosopher Averroes is shown defeated below. Averroes, a Muslim, had the "distinction" of being excommunicated by two faiths, Islam and Christianity. The seven theological sciences appear in the choir stalls (civil law, canon law (Pope Clement IV), gospel law, theological faith, speculative theology, mystic theology, and polemic theology (St. Augustine). The seven liberal arts also appear: arithmetic (Pythagoras), geometry (Euclid), astronomy (Zoroaster), music, dialectic (Aristotle), rhetoric (Cicero), and grammar.

### 3.4 Il Chiostro dello Scalzo

I delight in lesser known nooks and crannies of Florence. Don't miss the Chiostro dello Scalzo frescoes by Andrea del Sarto located on Via Cavours 69, north of San Marco. Opening hours are limited to Monday, Thursday, and Saturday: 8.15 - 13.50.



*Salome*

Originally, the Chiostro dello Scalzo was the atrium of the chapel belonging to the Compagnia dei Disciplinati di San Giovanni Battista. It is called “dello Scalzo” (barefoot) because during ceremonial processions, the friars wore no shoes. Andrea del Sarto, a member of the Disciplinati, decorated the walls with scenes from the life of St. John.<sup>9</sup> He painted the frescoes in monochrome between 1514 and 1526. After the suppression of the Confraternity in 1786, the grand duke purchased the chapel. In 1891, a local decree required that the chapel be opened to the public. By that time, many of the frescoes had been covered with art student's drawings. Between 1963 and 1968, the frescoes were detached and fully restored. They were reinstalled in 1992. Andrea del Sarto trained under Piero de Cosimo but was most influenced by Masaccio and Michelangelo. He was one of the most popular painters in Florence at the time the frescoes were executed. His use of monochromatic sepia tones enables us to focus on his skillful rendering of the figures without being distracted by color. A small guide book, *The Cloister of the Scalzo in Florence* by Rosanna Caterina Proto Pisani, is available in the San Marco book store.

1. Andrea del Sarto, *Faith*
2. Andrea del Sarto, *Annunciation to Zacharias*
3. Andrea del Sarto, *Visitation*
4. Andrea del Sarto, *Birth of John the Baptist*
5. Franciabigio, *Blessing of St John Leaving for the Desert*
6. Franciabigio, *Meeting of Christ and St John the Baptist in the Desert*
7. Andrea del Sarto, *Baptism of Christ*

8. Andrea del Sarto, *Charity*
9. Andrea del Sarto, *Justice*
10. Andrea del Sarto, *Preaching of the Baptist to the Multitudes*
11. Andrea del Sarto, *Baptism of the People*
12. Andrea del Sarto, *Capture of St. John the Baptist*
13. Andrea del Sarto, *Dance of Salome*
14. Andrea del Sarto, *Beheading of St. John*
15. Andrea del Sarto, *Presentation of the Head of St. John*
16. Andrea del Sarto, *Hope*

<sup>9</sup>Two of the frescoes are by Franciabigio.



# Chapter 4

## Cenacoli

### Last Supper Frescoes

The last supper is associated with important religious beliefs such the bread and wine of the Eucharist (from the Greek eucharistia, thanksgiving). The story of the Last Supper shows thirteen first century Jews participating in the Jewish ritual dinner called Passover. The event is described in the Gospel of Matthew, XXVI, 21-24.

“When evening came, he sat down with his twelve disciples, and, while they were at table, he said: Believe me, one of you is to betray me. They were full of sorrow, and began to say, one after another, Lord, is it I? He answered, The man who has put his hand into the dish with me will betray me.”

In Italian, the word ‘cenacolo’ means refectory or place where nuns or monks ate their meals. In art, a Cenacolo means a fresco depicting the Last Supper (ultima cena) on a refectory wall. By the second half of the quattrocento in Florence, Last Supper paintings replaced the Crucifixion as a popular theme for decorating a refectory. Leonardo da Vinci’s *Last Supper* in Santa Maria delle Grazie in Milan is the most famous. The most enjoyable to visit, however, are those in Florence where we can quietly step into the shoes of a quattrocento or cinquecento Florentine. Often, you will have the Cenacolo and a great masterpiece to yourself. Last Supper paintings by Castagno and Andrea del Sarto dramatized the anticipated betrayal by Judas described in the Gospel. The frescoes by Perugino and Ghirlandaio portray gentile life in Florence.

#### 4.1 Sant’ Apollonia

The monastery of Sant’ Apollonia was founded by 1339. It is located two blocks from San Marco on Via degli Arazzieri (Arazzieri turns into Via XXVII Aprile). The decoration of the Cenacolo dates to about 1450. Andrea del Castagno (1423-57) was one of the great painters of the early Renaissance and a contemporary of Fra Filippo Lippi and Piero della Francesca. Castagno, inspired by Donatello’s sculpture, developed

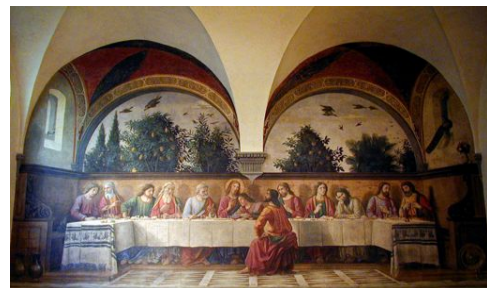
his own monumental style. Color bursts from the six painted marble squares that frame the figures. The illusion of 3-dimensional space is striking. The gold flecks in the disciples’ hair and the colors of the faux marble are sumptuous. Halos are depicted with perfect perspective. The placement of Judas was always a challenge in Last Supper paintings. Castagno uses the designs in the marble squares to focus the viewer’s eye on the central story. The stone behind Judas has a dramatic red and black pattern that highlights his role.



Cenacolo Sant’ Apollonia, 1450

There are very good sinopias (under painting for a fresco, usually in reddish brown) on the room’s side and rear walls. These preparatory drawings were discovered when the frescoes were removed for restoration.

#### 4.2 Cenacolo del Ghirlandaio



Cenacolo del Ghirlandaio, 1480

The Cenacolo is located in Borgo Ognissanti 42 in the Convent adjacent to the Church of Ognissanti (Entrance on the left). Opening times are quite limited: 9-12, Monday, Tuesday, and Saturday.

Domenico Ghirlandaio (1449-94) painted several Last Supper scenes between 1476 and 1486. The arrangement of figures in his 1480 Ognissanti fresco follows the composition Andrea del Castagno developed for the Cenacolo di Sant' Apollonia in 1450. The disciples sit at a long table in front of a rear wall that runs parallel to the picture plane. John, Christ's favorite disciple, leans against him. Peter is in the place of honor to his right. The traitor Judas sits on the opposite side of the table, apart from the others. The scene focuses on the celebration of the Passover feast and not on the pending betrayal. A white tablecloth with blue embroidery covers the table. The plates, decanters, glasses, salt cellars, and knives in front of each apostle are a carefully arranged still life. The birds and the trees behind the parapet wall create depth. Ghirlandaio solves the architectural challenges of a real column by moving the figure of Christ to left and Judas to the right.

## Chapter 5

# Piazza Signoria and the Palazzo Vecchio



Palazzo Vecchio and Piazza Signoria

*Marzocco*, Donatello, c. 1419



### 5.1 Lorenzo the Magnificent

Florence's artistic program owes much to Lorenzo de' Medici (1449-1492) who was a diplomat, politician, and great patron of the arts. He became ruler of Florence in 1469 in an era when the continuously squabbling Italian city-states were vulnerable to their northern neighbors. Florence's continuing prosperity depended on its successful trade, sound banking institutions, and the wisdom of Lorenzo's leadership.

### 5.2 Piazza Signoria

The Piazza, dominated by the Palazzo Vecchio, is the central hub of the city. The fight scene in E.M. Forester's *Room with a View* occurs near the Neptune Fountain. It is also where the Dominican monk and temporary political leader of Florence Girolamo Savonarola was hanged and then burned at the stake after he displeased the Inquisition led by a Borgia pope. Whether you are for or against Savonarola, I recommend taking the time to sit with a book or write a postcard in one of the Piazza's cafes.

Donatello's *Marzocco* named after Mars the Roman god of war, sits with his paw resting on the emblem of Florence. The statue has the place of honor in front of the Palazzo Vecchio. (The original *Marzocco* is in the Bargello.) In republican times, *Marzocco* was considered the ultimate symbol of Florentine power and independence. A hundred years after its installation, the Medici dukes chose to consider the *Marzocco* as confirmation that Florence was a sovereign state and that they were the legitimate rulers. For a time, *Marzocco* was crowned during civic celebrations and ceremonies.<sup>1</sup>

In many ancient cultures, the lion totem symbolized power, strength, and wealth. It is easy to understand why the lion was the civic representation of the independence and power of Florence and its citizens. Lions grace the base of the Loggia dei Lanzi's columns, feature in the Neptune Fountain, and decorate the ground floor of the Palazzo Vecchio.

<sup>1</sup>Henk Th. van Veen, "The Crown of the *Marzocco* and the Medici Dukes and Grand Dukes", *Mitteilungen des Kunsthistorischen Institutes in Florenz*. (1999), pp. 653.

## Neptune Fountain



Benvenuto Cellini lost the competition to carve the Neptune, twice. In his *Autobiography*, Cellini wrote that he had watched as the huge block of marble for the statue of Neptune was brought up the Arno and then transported by road to Florence.

“Now I knew very well that the Duchess [Eleonora of Toledo] by her special influence had managed to have it given to Bandinelli. No envy prompted me to dispute his [Bandinelli’s] claims, but rather pity for that poor unfortunate piece of marble.”<sup>2</sup> Although he anticipated that Bandinelli already had won the job, Cellini persisted in his efforts to persuade the duke to hire him. Winning the commission would have been a coup for any artist seeking the favor of Cosimo, the powerful Medici duke. The fountain would become the focal point of the Piazza della Signoria, and presented an opportunity for Cosimo to remind Florence’s citizens of the benefits of Medici rule.

Bandinelli died soon after he started carving the stone, but Cellini’s chances of getting his hands on that marble did not improve. The Duchess made it clear that she had protected Bandinelli in life and would protect him in death. Cosimo held a traditional competition to select a new artist. The young Giambologna, Bartolommeo Ammannati, and several others submitted entries. Even with his proven talent, Cellini could not overcome the enmity of the Duchess, and the architect Ammannati (1511-92) was awarded the commission. In the admittedly biased view of Cellini, Bandinelli was a poor choice, but he believed the selection of Ammannati was a hundred times worse.

<sup>2</sup>Benvenuto Cellini, *Autobiography of Benvenuto Cellini*, Translated by John Addington Symonds (Garden City, NY: Doubleday & co. 1948) pp. 394-395.

In 1560 when planning for the fountain was underway, Cosimo and his advisors understood the propaganda benefit of public art. Old Testament subjects such as Michelangelo’s *David* and Donatello’s *Judith* were powerful visual reminders of the republic that held sway from 1495 to 1512, a period when the Medici, now labeled tyrants, had been expelled from the city. In 1537 Cosimo I became the duke when the Medici, with the assistance of Charles V, returned to power. Cosimo avoided republican iconography of Old Testament heroes. Medici rule was celebrated with mythological heroes such as Perseus, Hercules, and Neptune.

Ammannati faced a difficult challenge with the design of the fountain because the project had to convey:

1. Neptune as a mythological Roman god of the sea and fresh water
2. Florence’s sea power, triumph over Pisa, and access to the Mediterranean
3. Cosimo’s bringing fresh spring water from the mountains
4. The glory of the rule of Cosimo I and the Medici.

The elements of the fountain are a mélange of symbolic references. Neptune stands on a chariot pulled by four sea horses. Scylla and Charybdis, Greek mythological sea monsters representing the power of the sea, are chained to the pedestal. A circle of reclining river gods and laughing satyrs decorate the fountain’s octagonal rim. In Roman mythology, Neptune was known for using his power to generate freshwater springs. Ammannati gave Neptune’s face the features of Cosimo, making certain that the public would remember that it was Cosimo who brought spring water from the mountains to the piazza for their benefit.



Neptune with the face of  
Cosimo I



Cosimo I (detail),  
Bronzino, Uffizi.

The Zodiac symbols of the seasons on the chariot wheels are a reminder that regardless of the season, Cosimo is providing for the city. The lion heads sculpted allude to Donatello’s *Marzocco*, an important symbol of the city of Florence. The Neptune was not an artistic success. Years later Michelangelo reportedly commented "Ammannato, Ammannato, You’ve ruined so much marble!" Cellini had the last word.



**Judith, Donatello, 1465**

The terrible and wonderful story of Judith comes from the fourth book of the Old Testament Apocrypha. Nebuchadnezzar, King of Nineveh, sends his general Holofernes to subdue the Jews whose will to resist has been undermined by famine. Judith, a widow, upbraids the Jews for their lack of courage and vows to deliver the city. She enters the Assyrian camp where she seduces Holofernes. When the general becomes intoxicated, she cuts off his head and returns home in triumph with his head as a trophy. Emboldened, the Jews expel the Assyrians.

Cosimo de' Medici commissioned Donatello to sculpt Judith to decorate his fountain in the garden of Palazzo Medici-Riccardi. In 1495, after the Medici were expelled from Florence, the republican government expropriated the statue and moved it to the Loggia dei Lanzi. The new leaders understood how to use art to propagandize and legitimize the change in regime. An inscription was added warning against tyrants. Vasari wrote that Donatello's *Judith* was a work of great excellence and mastery, and that Donatello was "so satisfied with the results that he decided, for the first time, to put his name on one of his works; and it is seen in these words: *Donatello Opus*."<sup>3</sup> The original *Judith* is in the Palazzo Vecchio, Sala dei Gigli.

<sup>3</sup>Op. Cit., Vasari Volume I, p.179.

**Equestrian Monument Cosimo I**

Giambologna, 1596



The motif of the triumphant victor mounted on a splendid horse is one of the canons of art history. The antique bronze sculpture of the second century emperor Marcus Aurelius inspired Giambologna's *Cosimo I*. The *Marcus Aurelius* survived destruction by the early Church only because Aurelius was mistaken for Constantine, the first Christian emperor.<sup>4</sup>

After Ferdinando I awarded the commission for Cosimo to Giambologna, he provided the sculptor with a specially configured foundry. Because of the technical challenges associated with casting such a large statue, Giambologna made numerous preparatory studies before attempting the one we see today. Remarkably, the horse was cast as a single piece. The three bas-reliefs on the base illustrate Cosimo's election as duke in 1537, the conquest of Siena in 1555, and his ascendancy to Grand Duke 1569. Giambologna presents the duke as a monumental historical figure. The message is clear: Cosimo's stature was equal to that of the great Roman emperors.

**Loggia dei Lanzi, 1376-1382**

<sup>4</sup>Richard Jenkyns Ed., *The Legacy of Rome: A New Appraisal* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992) p. 299.

The Loggia dei Lanzi was first used for public ceremonies. “Lanzi” comes from the name of the German mercenary troops called Lansquenets housed there by Cosimo I. Its wide arches and spacious interior make it an ideal open air sculpture gallery. Masterpieces by Giambologna and Cellini were placed there in the 16th century.

#### Four Cardinal Virtues, 1383



*Temperance*

Angelo Gaddi (1333-96), created four roundels above the arches on the façade of the Loggia. The cardinal virtues symbolically link moral and civic life. Civic duty, justice, and respect for the citizen were important themes during the republican period. Starting from the left the virtues are:

1. Prudence looks at her mirror.
2. Justice (her sword and scales are lost).
3. Temperance pours water or wine from one vessel into another.
4. Fortitude is shown with her column, shield, and lion Sculptures

#### 1. *Perseus*, c. 1545, Benvenuto Cellini.



*Perseus* is Cellini's masterpiece. Perseus, holding the curved sword of Mercury stands on Medusa's body and proudly displays her severed head. In mythology, Medusa, a snake-haired Gorgon, was so ugly that anyone glancing at her turned to stone. Cellini's signature is on the strap that crosses Perseus's chest. The original *Perseus* is in the Bargello.

Duke Cosimo I's commission was an affirmation of his scientific and cultural prowess. The use of bronze

rather than marble signaled a revival of interest in a classic material that had lapsed from favor in the preceding fifty years.<sup>5</sup> The commission for the *Perseus* began with a meeting between the Duke and Cellini. Cosimo promised Cellini that “I will treat you in a way that will astonish you, provided the fruits of your labor give me satisfaction.”<sup>6</sup> Cellini created a model, one cubit high (18”) to show the Duke. When the Duke expressed “much pleasure” with model, in his *Autobiography*, Cellini accepts the compliment but adds that “I gathered some hope that he might really be a connoisseur of art.”<sup>7</sup>

Cellini eschewed a tame interpretation of the myth. Instead, he created a triumphant *Perseus* standing over Medusa's beautiful torso while gruesome streams of blood pour from her head and body. Modifying the compositional program to include the beheading was a clear statement of Cosimo's political position. It also ensured that the *Perseus* would a formidable companion to Donatello's *Judith* that stood nearby. Both sculptures are vivid interpretations of heroic stories. Cellini expected lasting fame for his success in casting the statue as a single piece. A more common practice, and the one used by Donatello, was to assemble pieces that had been cast in separate molds.

#### 2. *Hercules and the Centaur*, c.1594, Giambologna.



In Greek mythology, centaurs were half men and half horse. Centaurs usually represented as wild beasts. In Christian art, centaurs symbolized the animal nature of man. Hercules was the son of Zeus who had tremendous physical strength. In one story, Hercules saved his wife Deianeira from a centaur named Nessus, who tried to harm her.

<sup>5</sup>Michael Cole, “Cellini's Blood”, *The Art Bulletin*, Vol. 81, No. 2 (June 1999), p. 215.

<sup>6</sup>Op. Cit., Cellini, p. 326.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., p. 326.

### 3. *The Rape of the Sabine*, Giambologna, c. 1579.



Giambologna carved this remarkable vertical composition of three larger than life-sized figures from a single block of marble. His technical virtuosity compares to that of Michelangelo. The formulation of the figures is known as *contrapposto*, a stance in which the body is twisted. The pose was first used in classical statuary. It is characteristic of Michelangelo's sculpture and works by the Mannerist school.

## 5.3 Palazzo Vecchio

The main entrance is flanked by Michelangelo's *David* and Bandinelli's *Hercules and Cacus*.



Construction of the Palazzo Vecchio commenced about 1300 and continued until the end of the cinquecento. Arnolfo di Cambio, architect of the Duomo and Santa Croce, undertook the initial design. The Palazzo's fortress-like style is typical of secular Gothic architecture. The tall tower provided a lookout for enemies in periods of civil strife. The exterior rustication or rough stone was typical in Renaissance Florence.

In 1540, soon after Charles V installed Cosimo I de' Medici as duke and ruler of Florence, Cosimo moved his court from the Palazzo Medici-Riccardi to the Palazzo Vecchio. Cosimo's decision to relocate to the former seat of Republican authority was a shrewd demonstration of his absolute power. He commissioned Vasari to transform the interior from a republican palazzo into a residence suitable for a Medici prince. After his death in 1574, his son Francesco moved the family across the Arno to the Palazzo Pitti. It was then that the building then became known as the "old" palace or Palazzo Vecchio.

In addition to the grand rooms, art treasures, and beautiful views, the visitor walks through the same corridors once known to Florentine political luminaries and artistic giants. Both republican and Medici councils met in the Palazzo. Cosimo de' Medici the Elder in 1435, and later Girolamo Savonarola in 1498, were imprisoned in the tower. There are works of art by Michelangelo, Bronzino, Vasari, Donatello, Verrocchio, Benedetto da Maiano, Giambologna, and other less familiar artists. It was here that Machiavelli wrote *The Prince*.

### Entrance Courtyard and Fountain



The fountain and other decorations were added by Vasari in 1565 as part of a decorative program honoring the marriage of Cosimo's son Francesco and Joanna of Austria. A Hapsburg-Medici alliance was a political coup and a cause for celebration.



## First Floor, Salone dei Cinquecento



Michelangelo, *Victory*, c. 1532-34

Michelangelo's nephew gave *Victory* to Duke Cosimo I after the sculptor's death. The statue may commemorate Florence's triumph over Siena. The young figure of Victory tramples the vanquished enemy represented as an old man. A less conventional interpretation suggests that Victory "depicts a virile youth humbling a miserable old man identified as Michelangelo himself. The sublime statuary group may be seen as an allegory of the defeat of Old Age by Youth and, also as a confession of Michelangelo's romantic attachment to the young Tommaso Cavalieri, who, in conformity with the humanistic concept of love, is shown subduing his lover."<sup>8</sup> Regardless of meaning, later Mannerist artists including Rosso Fiorentino and Pontormo, admired Michelangelo's serpentine form.

## Second Floor

Chapel of Eleonora di Toledo, Agnolo Bronzino, 1540-46



Ceiling, Eleonora's chapel

Cosimo I and Eleonora of Toledo were married in 1539. Bronzino (1503-72) assisted with the decorations

<sup>8</sup>Avigdor W. G. Poseq, "Caravaggio and the Antique", *Artibus et Historiae*, Vol. 11, No. 21, (1990): 159.

for their wedding. Cosimo admired Bronzino's work and engaged him as the official Medici court painter.

Eleonora was allocated six rooms for her exclusive use when the Palazzo was converted to a Medici residence. The Chapel, reserved for Eleonora's private devotion, is one of the most beautiful spaces in the Palazzo. One wall tells the story of the Brazen Serpent, and the remaining walls recount episodes from the life of Moses. The patriarch Moses provided a source of ducal propaganda. Cosimo wanted to be associated with a divinely inspired and divinely assisted hero. The Crossing of the Red Sea could represent Christian and thereby Medici salvation. The ceiling fresco depicts Saints Michael, John the Evangelists, Jerome, and Francis.

## 5.4 The Vasari Corridor



The Vasari corridor connects the Uffizi with the Palazzo Pitti across the Arno. At this time, public tours are not available. But if you can arrange a private visit, you will see unforgettable views of the Ponte Vecchio, see portraits by great artists such as Van Dyck, Rembrandt, Chagall, Corot, Ingres and Delacroix, and experience how the Medici lived and worked. The corridor links the Uffizi with the Pitti Palace. When it reaches the church of Santa Felicità, a special balcony extends into the church so the Duke could attend services in seclusion and safety. From the church, the corridor passes over the house and the garden of the Guicciardini family until it reaches the Palazzo Pitti's Boboli gardens.



## Chapter 6

# Museo dell'Opera del Duomo

9 Piazza del Duomo



Room of the Old Façade

Since the trecento, the Opera del Duomo directed the design and construction of the Duomo. Members of the Arte della Lana (wool workers guild) were dedicated to commissioning and preserving art by the city's greatest craftsmen. The Duomo Museum showcases the finest early Florentine and Renaissance art and includes works by Michelangelo, Ghiberti, Brunelleschi and Donatello. The museum recently underwent elegant and extensive renovations. The lighting is excellent, labels are clear, and crowds are minimal.<sup>1</sup>

### 6.1 Ground Floor, Room of the Old Façade

The façade designed by Arnolfo di Cambio in the 13th century was left incomplete and ultimately dismantled in 1587. It took another 300 years and numerous competitions before agreement was reached about the design of the façade as we see it today. The final installation was completed in 1877. The sculptures in this room and the adjacent gallery decorated Arnolfo's original façade.

<sup>1</sup>For an excellent guide, I recommend *The Opera del Duomo Museum in Florence*, available in the museum bookstore. C. Montrésor (edited by A. Paoletti and M. Fintoni), Mandragora, 2000.

Arnolfo di Cambio, *Madonna and Child*,  
c. 1296



Because of her unusual colored eyes, the sculpture is known as the *Madonna of the Glass Eyes*. The Madonna was placed in the lunette over the central portal. Her massive body and the distinct folds of classical drapery synthesized the ancient with the modern. In the museum, the position of the lunette behind her corresponds to its placement on Arnolfo's original façade. We can see a sample of the intricate inlaid colored marble framed the Madonna. A sample of the original inlaid marble is on the wall behind the statue. The setting recreates the arrangement a trecento viewer would have seen as he entered the cathedral.

## Donatello, *St. John the Evangelist*, 1408



Donatello's colossal seated figure of St. John the Evangelist occupied a niche on the old cathedral façade until 1588. The collection of the Opera del Duomo covers the stages of Donatello's creative journey including the decoration of the façade, the prophet statues, the Cantoria, and culminating with his *Mary Magdalene*. *St. John* seems familiar since it was the inspiration for Michelangelo's famous *Moses* in Rome sculpted more than one hundred years later. The saint's penetrating expression and the realistic treatment of his open hand on the book suggest the naturalism achieved by Donatello's contemporary, Masaccio.

## 6.2 Room of the Paintings



A Church Doctor, 1404, Mariotto di Nardo

The six tempera on wood quatrefoils remind us how strands of the Byzantine tradition persisted even as the new Renaissance naturalism of Donatello and Masaccio was emerging. These panels in the Florentine Gothic style are painted with tempera on a gold ground. A quatrefoil is a decorative framework with either four overlapping circles or as with these panels, circles combined with a square.

The three paintings on the left are of the Evangelists John, Matthew, and Mark are by Lorenzo di Bicci (1350-1427). The ones on the right showing two

Doctors of the Church and Christ are by Mariotto di Nardo. Mariotto was born in 1394, four years after Masaccio. Although Mariotto was Masaccio's contemporary, he seems to have learned little from Masaccio's revolutionary realism. Masaccio's progressive realism appealed especially to the upper middle class. The economic decline of the middle classes in the early quattrocento was reflected in a partial return to Gothic formalism.<sup>2</sup>

## 6.3 Stairwell

### Michelangelo, *Pieta del Duomo*



Duomo *Pieta*,  
Michelangelo



Vatican *Pieta*,  
Michelangelo

In Italian, "pieta" means pity, compassion, and sorrow. Michelangelo sculpted this remarkable piece when was 80, although he left it unfinished. The old man's face is thought to be a self-portrait. His arrangement of the figures with the vertical Christ was a radical departure from the traditional formulation. More commonly as seen in his Vatican *Pieta*, the Christ figure rested in a horizontal plane across the lap of a seated Mary.

The *Pieta del Duomo* combines the deposition, lamentation, and entombment into a single grouping. Michelangelo carved the multi-figured sculpture from a single block of stone, a feat he knew had not been achieved since antiquity. There is tremendous power in the position of the figures. The Virgin Mary is on the right, Mary Magdalene is on the left, and Joseph of Arimathea stands behind. Michelangelo wanted this sculpture placed above his tomb.

## 6.4 First Floor

The first floor rooms showcase the original prophet sculptures, diamond panels, and hexagon panels that

<sup>2</sup>For a study of the relationship art and society, see Frederick Antal, *Florentine Painting and Its Social Background*, (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1986).

decorated each side of Giotto's tower. Because the niches are so high, it is impossible for the observer on the ground to gauge the size of statues or the details of the panels.

### Room of the Cantorie



Luca della Robbia, Cantoria.

Vasari praised Luca (1400-1482) for the discernible swelling of the singers' throats and the viewer's ability to share their delight in music. The Cantoria uses the classic Roman relief composition. Luca's figures seem to move with exquisite grace as they sing and dance. The motif of singing children had its counterpart in Roman sculpture. Ancient Etruscan and Roman sarcophagus and funerary urn reliefs survived in large numbers. Their designs influenced medieval sculptors and provided a rich source of classical images to Renaissance artists.<sup>3</sup>

### Decoration of the Campanile (Giotto's Tower)



This view of the mid section of Giotto's Tower shows the placement of the prophets, diamonds and hexagons. These original decorations are exhibited in

<sup>3</sup>See Chapter 11, "Side by Side: The Renaissance and Roman Antiquities".

the rooms on the first floor of the museum. It is possible to climb to the top of the tower. The view is well worth the effort.

### Donatello's Prophets

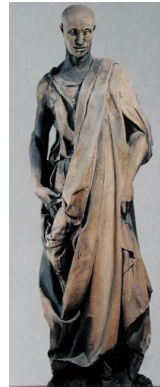
Donatello was unquestionably the greatest sculptor of the early Renaissance. His interest in Roman antiquity is well documented, and his debt to these antecedents can be seen most easily with his series of Prophets sculptured for the exterior of Giotto's Tower. Donatello, the son of a Florentine wool carder, learned stone carving from the sculptors working for the Duomo. Patrons thought him difficult since he insisted on a measure of artistic freedom, an unusual expectation in the quattrocento. He was a connoisseur of ancient art.



*Sacrifice of Isaac*



*Bearded Prophet*



*Habakkuk*



*Jeremiah*

Donatello's Jeremiah and Habakkuk, modeled after real people. Jeremiah was based on Francesco Soderini as a young man. Habakkuk, also called "Lo" or "Pumpkin Head" was a portrait of Giovanni di Barduccio Cherichini, an enemy of the Medici. There is nothing passive about these figures. Jeremiah's set mouth of conveys realism and an almost painful intensity.

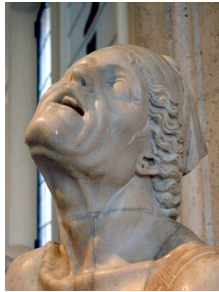


## 6.5 Silver Altar Room

Donatello, *Mary Magdalene*, wood, 1453-55



The *Mary Magdalene* is haunting and compelling. The sculpture is all the more memorable because Donatello chose to portray her in old age rather than as a young woman. Mary Magdalene is in her physical decline, yet her presence as she prays is dignified. During his time in Rome, Donatello may have seen examples of psychologically intense Roman portrait sculptures such as the head of the old woman from the Capitoline Museum below.



Detail, Roman, Capitoline Museum

This sculpture is a Roman copy of a third century BC Greek work executed in Smyrna. Donatello's rendering of the veins and the wrinkling of her skin is equally realistic.

## 6.6 The Campanile Panels



Two bands of panels decorated the Campanile below the prophet statues. The diamonds (lozenges) are marble reliefs set against a background of blue majolica. These allegorical representations are attributed to Andrea Pisano and his workshop. The hexagons below illustrate trecento daily life, intellectual values, and religious preferences. The attribution of the hexagons is not definitive although they may have been

the work of Andrea Pisano, Giotto, and Luca della Robbia.

### Hexagons



Medicine

Take time to look at each panel individually. They are beautiful illustrations of the creation of man, arts, and industries. Panels from the west side recount stories from Genesis. Jabal, sitting in his tent with his sheep and a dog, represents animal husbandry. Tubalcain, a blacksmith, works at his forge. In another, Noah is shown as the first farmer. This series continues with illustrations science and trades including astronomy, architecture, medicine, the liberal arts, music, poetry, geometry and arithmetic, and the fine arts.

### Diamonds



The diamond panels with marble figures set against blue majolica, are by Andrea Pisano or his school. The subjects include the planets, virtues, the liberal arts, and the sacraments.

## 6.7 Brunelleschi Rooms





Molds for bricks

Exhibits showing the architectural and design history of the Duomo are among the most interesting in the museum. Some aspects of the technical ingenuity of the Florentine builders remain a mystery. The Brunelleschi rooms display of the tools and models used to design and build the cupola and lantern including the wood molds used to form his special bricks. You will find your visit even more rewarding if you have read Ross King's *Brunelleschi's Dome* (Walker & Company 2000).

## 6.8 Courtyard



The *Baptism of Christ*, started in 1505, was mounted above the *Gates of Paradise* on the east side of the Baptistery. Andrea Sansovino completed the St. John. Vincenzo Danti sculpted Christ, and the Angel is by Innocenzo Spinazzi. The *Baptism* is placed among the original restored panels by Ghiberti.

### The Ghiberti Panels, Gates of Paradise, 1425-1452

Ghiberti's original panels, beautifully restored, are on display. In the future, all ten panels may be installed on a new door in the museum. While a restored door will be impressive, we will lose the extraordinary opportunity that now exists to examine the panels closely. The details are glorious. The panels should be viewed from the front, sides, and even the back, to appreciate fully the 3-dimensional figures and exquisite craftsmanship. Casting the panels was the first step in

the long and difficult process of engraving the finished design.

*Adam and Eve, Creation and Expulsion*

The cathedral of Santa Maria del Fiore, the Baptistery, and Giotto's tower formed the ritual core of the city. By the mid fifteenth century, a civic decree required every child born in the city had to be baptized there. The Calimala guild officials "assumed direct control of [this] important civic space, sponsoring the famous competition for the decoration of the Baptistery doors at the turn of the fifteenth century and ultimately paying for the very costly gilt bronze doors made by Lorenzo Ghiberti."<sup>4</sup>

*David and Goliath*

Each panel combines several Old Testament episodes into a single frame. Ghiberti used high and low relief to convey the story. The narrative of *David* includes slaying Goliath, a pitched battle, and a triumphal procession. Ghiberti's skill as a goldsmith is evidenced with the fine detailing - - from the cross hatching on the soldier's uniform to minute wires used for eyelashes.

<sup>4</sup>Roger J. Crum and John T. Paoletti Editors, *Renaissance Florence: A Social History* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2006) p. 141.



Detail, *David and Goliath*

# Chapter 7

## Bargello

### Museo Nazionale del Bargello

#### Piazza San Firenze



Florence's major collections are housed in historic buildings. The Museo Nazionale called the Bargello dates from the 1254. It became symbol of the Florentine state at the time of the popular revolt against the city's patrician leadership.<sup>1</sup> Florence was one of the few Italian states along with Venice, Lucca and Bologna to become a republic. In the 13th century, the city's Podesta (magistrate) used the Bargello as the town hall. Even today, in addition to being a museum, the palace is home to the mayor. The Bargello is one of the most important museums in the city. Its superb collection of Renaissance sculpture makes it an ideal place to get a comprehensive overview of the Florentine Renaissance. The collection includes numerous works by Donatello, the della Robbia family, Giambologna, Cellini, and Michelangelo.

<sup>1</sup>Michael Levey, *Florence A Portrait* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1996) p. 30.



Courtyard, stairs to first floor

The Gothic courtyard is surrounded on three sides by an arcade. The fourth side is an open staircase leading to the galleries on the upper floors. The walls are decorated with the coats of arms of officials and city districts. There octagonal fountain is near the site of the scaffold where prisoners were executed until 1786.

### 7.1 Ground Floor

Explore the wealth of sculptures in this room including splendid bronzes by Cellini, Michelangelo, and their contemporaries.

#### Michelangelo Buonarroti (1475-1564)

##### *Bacchus*, c. 1496



Michelangelo learned from the tradition of Florentine nudes as well as antique sources. Only the support of his faithful companion prevents the drunken Bacchus from falling. A nude Bacchus could refer to the purifying sacrament of wine, or even to the Biblical story of the drunken Noah. Bacchus's body is rationally understood flesh and bone. The figure tries to stand erect in a contrapposto pose, but his drunken state makes this impossible. The axis of his body appears out of kilter and consequently unbalanced.

## 2. *Madonna and Child (Tondo Pitti)*, c. 1503



Michelangelo's technique was a form of low relief developed by Donatello called *schacciato* ("flattened out"). Light and shadow help define the pictorial space. The Madonna's powerful shoulders, broad cheeks, and strong chin are characteristic of Michelangelo female figures. Her rather masculine appearance is similar to the Madonna in his *Holy Family (Doni Tondo)* in the Uffizi. His drawings reveal that his female figures were usually based on male models.

'The Madonna's head escapes the confines of the tondo. There is grandeur in the vertical pose. The motif of standing child, heading leaning on his mother, is new. Look closely to see marks on the surface resembling the cross-hatchings often found in his drawings. The marks were made with a claw tooth chisel, the tool Michelangelo preferred.

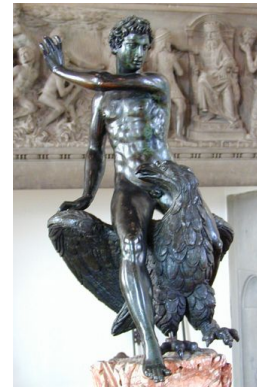
## Benvenuto Cellini (1500-1571)

### 1. *Cosimo I de' Medici (bronze)*, c. 1545



Renaissance artists looked to antique Roman portrait busts as models for cinquecento medals and statues. There is a striking similarity between Cellini's *Cosimo* and an ancient Roman portrait bust in the Vatican (see Chapter 11 "Side by Side" for a larger image). Cellini's early training as a goldsmith is evident with the delicate details on the armor. Cosimo apparently did not appreciate the accuracy of this likeness that shows a hairy wart on his left cheek. He consigned the sculpture to the island of Elba. Cosimo preferred a more benign marble bust by Baccio Bandinelli (also in the Bargello) that was displayed in the ducal quarters in the Palazzo Vecchio.

### 2. *Ganymede*, c. 1545



In mythology, Ganymede was a beautiful Trojan prince. In the *Iliad*, the Greek poet Homer writing in the 8th century BC described the godlike Ganymede as "the handsomest man among all mortal men, so beautiful [the] gods kidnapped him and made him cup bearer to Zeus himself." The Roman poet Ovid retold the story in his *Metamorphoses* written in the 1st century AD. In Ovid's version, Jupiter in the form of an eagle swoops down onto Mount Ida and carries the young Ganymede away. Jupiter was the king of heaven, earth, and all of the Olympian gods. Renaissance humanists recast the story as an allegory of the



progress of the human soul towards God. Ganymede is swept up to the gods mirroring Christ's ascension to the kingdom of heaven. Dante, followed by Petrarch, popularized the use of Ovid's myths, including stories of androgynous young men such as Ganymede. Ganymede can also be interpreted as a story of sacred and profane love or the power of male friendships.

### 3. Cellini, figures from the base for Perseus



The two of the statues in the niches of the base relate to the life of Perseus: his father, Jupiter who turned himself into a shower of gold to seduce Danaë; and his mother Danaë with the young Perseus. A third statue is of Minerva (Athena). According to the myth as relayed by Ovid, Poseidon (Neptune) makes love to Medusa in Minerva's temple. A jealous Minerva punishes Medusa by making her so ugly that anyone seeing her is turned to stone. She also transforms Medusa's hair into serpents. It is a terrible punishment exacted on the once beautiful Medusa. The fourth statue is of Hermes who, along with Minerva, helped Perseus slay Medusa.

## 7.2 First Floor

### Loggia



Giambologna's life size bronze birds were originally set among strange animals and shell mosaics in the grotto under the garden designed by Niccolò Tribolo

for the Villa di Castello of Cosimo de' Medici I. Giambologna captured the anatomy and the essential character of each bird. The turkey, kestrel, eagle, dove, dove with wings spread, and the thrush are by him. Giambologna spent most of his creative life in Florence working for the Medici Grand Dukes. He occupies a pivotal position in the history of High Renaissance sculpture along with the giants Michelangelo and Benvenuto Cellini.



*Turkey*, Giambologna, 1567

Giambologna's turkey, complete with grizzled head, ruffled feathers, and erect stance, is actually a *Meleagris Gallopavo* or American Wild Turkey. How did turkeys come to be known in cinquecento Florence? The art historian Sabine Seiche reports that Christopher Columbus saw turkeys when he landed at Cape Honduras in 1502. "The earliest evidence of turkeys in Europe is found in a letter of 1511, in which King Ferdinand of Spain ordered his chief-treasurer in the West Indies to send ten turkeys (five male and five female, for breeding) with every ship sailing to Seville."<sup>2</sup>

Private zoos with exotic animals were popular among the elite. In his *Itinerary*, Fynes Moryson, an English traveler to Florence in 1594, describes the fierce wild beasts including lions, wolves, eagles, tigers, and wild boars kept by the Great Duke of the House of Medici. "The Keeper told us that the Duke and Duchess, with many Gentlemen, came lately to behold them, (sitting in a gallery build round the yard)."<sup>3</sup> It is easy to image the fascination these animals would have had for artists of the time.

<sup>2</sup>Sabine Seiche, "Presenting the Turkey: The Fabulous Story of a Flamboyant and Flavorful Bird", *The Florentine*, Issue No. 20/2005.

<sup>3</sup>Google Book Search, *Fynes Moryson Itinerary*, p. 325.

## Donatello Room (Salone del Consiglio)

### *David*, 1430, bronze



Roman copy of resting satyr by Praxiteles



Donatello, *David*

Donatello's (1380-1466) *David* was the first life-sized, wholly free-standing nude since antiquity, and a sensuous one at that. Vasari wrote that Donatello "showed such excellent qualities of grace and design that it was considered nearer what was done by the ancient Greeks and Romans than that of any other artist."<sup>4</sup>

The great sculptors of the Renaissance, from Donatello to Michelangelo to Giambologna, mimicked the hip sitting pose learned from Roman copies after the Greek sculptor Praxiteles (400-330 BC). Cosimo de' Medici (Cosimo il Vecchio) commissioned the *David* as a work of art but also as a political statement. Like the biblical David who slew the giant Goliath, the Medici wanted to be seen as the protectors of Florence and not as tyrants who undermined Florence's republican institutions.

### 2. *Amore*, c. 1440



Donatello's exuberant *Amore* shares features with an ancient Roman Cupid or Eros (see Chapter 11 "Side

by Side"). However the modern viewer chooses to interpret the statue, given quattrocento mores, it is unlikely that the *Amore*, or even Donatello's *David*, intended to convey a homoerotic message. Donatello tells us the age of figure with details like gentle bend of his childish fingers and his joyful smile. At the same time, the the iconography of the youth's wings, his unusual leggings, his decorated belt, and the snake coils around his feet is uncertain.

### 3. *Niccolo' da Uzzano*, c. 1430



This remarkable bust is usually attributed to Donatello. In the quattrocento, the arts documented an increasing interest in the individual. During Donatello's lifetime, portraits of identifiable figures began to emerge. Masaccio included a portrait of the donor Lorenzo Lenzi in his *Trinita* of 1425 in Santa Maria Novella. Portraiture as an art form continued to blossom among the finest artists including Ghirlandaio, Botticelli, Bronzino, Raphael and Titian. In sculpture, "The [first] full flame of verisimilitude came in three-dimensional form, perhaps first in a famous bust of a famous person, Niccolo' da Uzzano."<sup>5</sup> The figure is polychrome terracotta created by using a technique learned from classical antiquity. Niccolo is uncannily life like. We can see his cropped hair, wrinkled skin, and the wart near his mouth. The drapery of his clothes recalls ancient Rome. It took another generation for portrait painters to approach Donatello's realism. The subject, Niccolo' da Uzzano, was a wealthy Florentine banker who was highly regarded for his integrity and moral authority.

<sup>5</sup>Michael Levey, *Florence A Portrait* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1996) pp. 99-102. Michel Levey was director of the National Gallery, London, from 1973 to 1986.

<sup>4</sup>Op. cit., Vasari, Volume 1, p. 174.

4. *Marzocco*

In 1418, Donatello received a commission to sculpt a great lion statue. With one paw, the Marzocco holds the shield decorated with the lily symbol of the 15th century Florentine republic. As a civic monument, Donatello's lion was placed in front of the Palazzo Vecchio. Its location was recorded by Ghirlandaio in his fresco of the *Confirmation of the Franciscan Order* in the Sassetti Chapel in Santa Trinita.

### Panels for the competition to sculpt the Baptistery doors, 1401

Ghiberti and Brunelleschi were the finalists in a heated competition for the contract to create the east Baptistery doors. The biblical story of the Sacrifice of Isaac is dramatic and enigmatic. The subject proved to be a worthy test for this important commission. How each artist interpreted the story revealed their different visions and allowed the judges to make a choice that best suited their religious and cultural sensibilities.



Ghiberti, *Sacrifice of Isaac*

Ghiberti seems sensitive to the constraints of panel's shape. The story is presented as a symbolic ritual that leaves no doubt about the happy outcome. Only a minimal intervention is required by the angel.



Brunelleschi, *Sacrifice of Isaac*

Brunelleschi's interpretation is profoundly different. Abraham's hand forces Isaac's head back as he positions the knife on the boy's neck. The angel forcibly restrains Abraham, and only just in time. The scene is brutal. Perhaps it was Brunelleschi's harsh naturalism that caused the judges to favor Ghiberti. Brunelleschi modeled the figure on the lower right after a Greek Hellenic Spinario (boy removing a thorn from his foot) similar to this Roman copy from the Medici collection in the Uffizi.



### Luca della Robbia

#### Lunette, *Madonna Between Angels*



Luca's tympanum relief of the *Madonna between two Angels* is a work of exquisite beauty. Originally, it was placed in the tympanum in the Mercato Vecchio.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>6</sup>Tympanum is architectural element located within the arch over a door or within a pediment.



## 7.3 Second Floor

### Sala dei Andrea del Verrocchio

*David*, c. 1473



Andrea del Verrocchio (1435-1488) was one of the premier early Renaissance sculptors who is also remembered as Leonardo da Vinci's teacher. The figure of David became a symbol of republican Florence. Donatello, Verrocchio, and Michelangelo produced very different interpretations for the Medici and eventual placement in and around the Palazzo Vecchio.

Verrocchio's David is lithe, refined, and graceful. His stance is defiant. A recent restoration revealed the statue's exquisite patina and delicate gold leaf details on the hair, boots, and clothing. Verrocchio used a technique called "lost wax" to cast David. With this process, the artists sculpts a figure in wax. Then, the wax is covered with plaster to make a mold, the wax is melted and drained, and molten metal is poured into the mold. This time honored practice is still in use today.

Compared to Donatello's, Verrocchio's *David* is less complex and lacks his sensuousness. Donatello's *David* is nude and vulnerable while Verrocchio's is elegantly clothed.

*Woman With Flowers*, 1475-80



The *Woman with Flowers* is a real, clothed woman. Verrocchio embellished the classical Roman portrait style with a Renaissance naturalism. While her head and neck were typical of antique Roman portrait sculptures, Verrocchio's extended her torso and added hands. These changes transform and enliven the statue. Verrocchio's pupil, Leonardo da Vinci, observed this innovation and exploited its potential in his painted portraits including the *Mona Lisa*.

**Benedetto da Maiano, 1442-97**

**Bust of Pietro Mellini, 1474**



Benedetto da Maiano was an early Renaissance sculptor. In addition to this bust, his best know works in Florence include the pulpit in Santa Croce (commissioned by Pietro Mellini), the framework for a door in the Palazzo Vecchio, and the design of the Strozzi Palace.

Images preserved in medals and sculptures memorialized illustrious individuals. The art form provided a symbolic link to Roman customs and art forms. We can assume that the bust is a realistic portrayal of Pietro Mellini in old age. Every wrinkle is detailed. Pietro Mellini was a poet, humanist, and supporter of the arts. Mellini's carefully rendered brocade cloak signifies his wealth and membership in the ruling merchant class.



## 7.4 Sala di Andrea della Robbia

### Andrea della Robbia



*Fanciullo (Young Boy)*

Andrea (1437-1528) was Luca's nephew and the most important of his successors. He was trained by his uncle in both marble and ceramics. His best known works are the ten tondos depicting swaddled infants on the facade of Ospedale degli Innocenti in the Piazza SS Annunziata.

### Luca della Robbia



*Fanciulla (Portrait of a Girl), 1465*

Luca (1400-1482) created beautiful glazed terracotta bas-reliefs. He initially worked in white and blue but later added glazes of many colors including green and yellow. The girl in this portrait is dressed in the latest fashion, with a high, shaved, forehead and wispy hair cascading from a jeweled headdress.



# Chapter 8

## Uffizi

(Note: paintings in some cases are in different locations).



Uffizi corridors toward the Palazzo Vecchio

Reserve tickets in advance. As a museum, the Uffizi is extraordinary, but it is also a visual challenge. Standing in line for an hour or more is not the best preparation.

The entrance is guarded by two 1st century AD antique sculptures, Cane Molosso. The Neapolitan Mastiff dog is a direct descendent of the great Molossus war dog of antiquity, a breed thought to have been developed by Alexander the Great. The building is U shaped starting from the Piazza Signoria to the Arno. The corridors are lined with antique sculptures. There are wonderful views at both ends of the long corridors. The café offers a welcome respite if you need a break.

### Ceiling Frescoes, East Corridor



The ceiling frescoes by Alessandro Allori and Antonio Tempesta are elaborate grotesques inspired by ancient Roman motifs uncovered in the ruins of Emperor Nero's 1st century palace. Grotesques are decorative images that combine fantastic human, animal, and plant forms.

### Room 2

Room 2 showcases three great altarpieces by the artists who were the major precursors of the quattrocento revolution. The Madonnas introduce the first steps in the evolution from the Byzantine decorative style to the new naturalism. Byzantine icons used schematic, static figures to depict holy images. The tradition avoided references to earthly events. A fundamental shift occurred in 13th century Italy when religious painting assumed an instructional role in response to changes in church liturgy. The new monastic orders, especially the Franciscans, preached to ordinary people in villages and towns. Artists were encouraged to capture the world of every day life to help people relate to church rites.

While the innovations of these early artists may seem subtle, it is satisfying to observe and decode the stylistic stepping stones that led to the quattrocento achievements. The Byzantine emphasis on line

and pattern transforms into an interest in depicting nature and three dimensional space. These seemingly small changes are in fact reflections of significant artistic progress.



Early Roman seated woman, Vatican

The mother-child image suited perfectly the Church's interest in reaching out to ordinary people. The format was already part of the Roman heritage, the mapping to the Madonna and Christ child was obvious, and nothing could have broader appeal than the of veneration of mother and child.

### Cimabue (Ceni di Peppi)



*Santa Trinita Madonna*, tempera on wood, c. 1285

Vasari described Cimabue (c. 1240-1302) as the person destined to lead the art of painting away from the Greek-Byzantine formulaic style. Cimabue's role as Giotto's teacher may have been an even greater contribution.

Cimabue's Madonna was painted for Santa Trinita. The severe design recalls the Byzantine, but its large size introduced a new format in devotional art. How the Virgin holds the child, her position centered between the two rows of angels, and the expressiveness

of the four prophets at the base of the picture were innovative.

### Duccio di Buoninsegna



*Rucellai Madonna*, tempera on wood, c. 1285

Duccio, c. 1255-1319, was born in Siena. The Confraternity of the Laudesi of Santa Maria Novella selected Duccio to paint a Madonna because he was considered the best artist of his time. The detailed contract between Duccio and the Laudesi specifies that he is to paint "the most beautiful picture, a certain large panel ordered to be made for the aforesaid Society in honor of the blessed and glorious Virgin Mary."<sup>1</sup>

The following excerpt from John White's book *Duccio* helps the modern viewer to appreciate and enjoy a painting that may otherwise be inaccessible.

"The handling of the drapery gives new impact to the easy naturalism of the Christ Child's complex pose and to the softness of the modeling of the Virgin's head. . . . There can be no doubt that Duccio's angels are indeed angelic apparitions, kneeling on the insubstantial, golden air. They are not simply holding on to the throne. They are holding it up and the seriousness of this intended meaning is particularly clearly indicated in the position of the further hand of the angel on the upper left. It is also tellingly revealed by the way in which the lower hand is placed in front of the foreshortened left side of the throne, and the apparently unfore-shortened setting of his right arm, as he holds the rearmost vertical support; such things are no more than the incidental ambiguities, the residual, left-hand angel's can be seen, like four steel hooks, clamped to the underside of the supporting arch of the left side-arm of

<sup>1</sup> John White, *Duccio* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1979) p. 35.



the throne from behind which they emerge. The anatomical near disaster which ensues if the prosaic mind inquires about the arm to which those fingers and that unseen hand belong; the spatial warping which is evident if one asks about the relationship between the angel's right foot, unsolved problems, which attend on great endeavors."<sup>2</sup>

With Duccio, the Greek manner relaxes. An undulating softness replaced rigid draperies. You can imagine a real woman under the robes. The gold embellishments are typical of the Sienese style.

### Giotto (Giotto di Bondone)



*Ognissanti Madonna*, c. 1310

Dante, a contemporary of Giotto, muses in *Purgatorio 11* about the fleeting nature of artistic reputation.

"Cimabue once thought that he held the field in painting, and now Giotto has the praise, so much so that the other's fame is obscured."

Giotto (1267-1337) was the most important artist in the transition from the medieval Byzantine tradition to the new classical art. Compared to Duccio and Cimabue, Giotto's painting has far greater naturalism. Bernard Berenson compared Giotto to his teacher, Cimabue. "The difference is striking, but it does not consist so much in a difference of pattern and types, as of realization. The Cimabue requires patient deciphering of lines and coloring. It is with effort that we recognize the representations of angels, a seated woman, men. . . . With what sense of relief we turn to Giotto. We realize immediately that the throne occupies real space, the Virgin satisfactorily seated, the angels grouped in rows. But how does Giotto accomplish this miracle? With the simplest means, with almost rudimentary light and shade, and functional line."<sup>3</sup>

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., pp. 37-38.

<sup>3</sup>Bernard Berenson, *The Italian Painters of the Renaissance* (London: Phaidon, 1952) p. 45.

The figures on the side direct our eyes to the unit formed by the Virgin and child. The Gothic throne is open on two sides, allowing the heads of two saints to be seen. The Virgin is stately and calm. The kneeling angels create a perspectival hierarchy relative to the angels above. The scene takes place in the foreground making it appear that the viewer is standing on the same plane as the painted figures. H.W. Janson in his *History of Art* claims this choice of viewpoint is epoch-making since Giotto created a relationship between the viewer and the painting.

## Room 3. Trecento Sienese Art

### Simone Martini



*Annunciation with Saints Ansano and Massima*, c. 1329

Simone Martini (1284-1344) continued the Sienese tradition of line and color rather than the plasticity developed by Giotto.<sup>4</sup> The Gothic artistic style art prevailed from the middle ages up to the beginning of the Renaissance. Typically religious in nature, it is known for the distinctive arched design of its churches, its stained glass, and its illuminated manuscripts. Simone Martini is thought to have been a student of Duccio. He may have also worked with Giotto in Rome on the old St. Peter's Basilica.

Martini uses *sgraffito* (from past participle of sgrafire to scratch), a technique for incising fine details in halos, ornate robes, and other decorative elements in Sienese and International Gothic paintings. First, the area is gilded. Simone then defined the fabric folds using delicate pinks shadowed with darker tones. After tracing the outlines of the brocade, he scraped away the paint in the patterned area to reveal the gilding below. The delicate texture is made with a sharp tool pressed onto the surface.

This altarpiece was executed for the chapel of Sant'Ansano in the Siena Cathedral. Martini painted the Annunciation. The two lateral saints are attributed to his brother-in-law, Lippo Memmi.

<sup>4</sup>Plasticity in art is the ability to depict space and form so that they appear three-dimensional.

Mary lacks substantial form. As she clutches her cloak, she projects her shock at the angel's announcement. But the written words and the presence of the dove provide a clear message. The text is from the biblical account of the annunciation in the Gospel of Luke (1:28-29): "Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with thee". The placement of the words along a line projecting from Gabriel's mouth to the Virgin lets us witness the encounter between the angel and the Virgin.

## Rooms 5-6 International Gothic

### Gentile da Fabriano



*Adoration of the Magi*, tempera on wood

Before coming to Florence in 1420, Gentile (c. 1370-1427), worked in Venice and central Italy. Palla di Noferi Strozzi commissioned this altarpiece for his family's chapel in the church of Santa Trinita. The painting is signed and dated 1423 on the frame. The lavish use of gold, the pomp of the Magi procession, and the display of exotic animals such as leopards and monkeys reflect the donor's taste for wealth and culture. Gentile paints in the traditional International Gothic style. He ignores or is unaware of the advances in perspective and naturalism used by Masaccio who was working in Florence at the same time.

Conveying multiple events occurring over time presented a difficult problem for artists. Gentile used landscape artifacts as well as the frame itself to divide story elements. An event that preceded the arrival of the Magi is depicted in each arch. While the main picture reflects the persistence of International Gothic at the beginning of the quattrocento, the predella's scenes (Nativity, Flight into Egypt and Presentation in the Temple) incorporate one of the basic innovations of Renaissance art: a blue sky has replaced the traditional gold background.

### Lorenzo Monaco, c. 1370-1425

Monaco was a Camaldolite monk trained in the art of illuminated manuscripts. He was a master of the International Gothic tradition characteristic of trecento art in Siena and Florence. His use of luminous colors is especially striking.

#### 1. *Adoration of the Magi*, tempera on wood, c. 1421



The altarpiece, commissioned for the church of Sant'Egidio in Florence, was repainted in the second half of the 15th century by Cosimo Rosselli who added the annunciation and prophets above the three cusps. Although this painting dates after Masaccio, Monaco shows no mastery of the new perspective. The figures in the foreground are equal in size to those in back. The emphasis is on pomp and wealth.

#### 2. *Coronation of the Virgin*, 1414



This striking altarpiece, with its extraordinary frame, is a superb example of the International Gothic style. It is also Monaco's crowning artistic achieve-



ment.<sup>5</sup> Originally, the painting was placed in the high altar of Santa Maria degli Angeli. The frame serves as a fictive cathedral to memorialize the story of the Virgin's coronation. The viewer's eye follows a rainbow in hues of blue to the celestial throne where Christ is crowning the Virgin. She is serene and pale in comparison to the brilliant blue of his robe.

## Room 7

**Paolo Uccello, 1396-1475**

*Battle of San Romano, tempera on wood, 1435*



This painting is one of three panels by Uccello illustrating different phases of the battle of San Romano. The other panels are in the National Gallery in London and the Louvre in Paris. Lorenzo the Magnificent admired the paintings and included them in his personal collection. The Uffizi panel celebrates a skirmish between Florence and its arch rival Siena in 1432. The central figure is Niccolo da Tolentino on his white charger. The Sienese leader Bernardino della Ciarda is shown unseated from his horse. The fresco in the Duomo by Castagno also honors Niccolo.

Vasari thought the painting was an exercise in overdone perspective. He laments that Uccello would have been the most imaginative painter since Giotto had he not wasted so much time on the finer points of perspective. "His work was challenging and attractive, but if he had spent the same amount of time on the study of figures, which he could in fact draw well enough, he would eventually have come to do them perfectly."<sup>6</sup> The angles of the lances emphasize the steep foreshortening, but the result is a somewhat confusing jumble of weapons, knights and horses seen from every angle. Near objects are oversized compared to the background figures. The distant animals and people seem unaware of the fighting.

**Domenico Veneziano, 1404-61**

*Saint Lucy Altarpiece, 1445*

<sup>5</sup>George R. Bent, "A Patron for Lorenzo Monaco's Uffizi Coronation of the Virgin", *The Art Bulletin*, Vol. 82, No. 2. (June 2000), pp. 348-354.

<sup>6</sup>Op. Cit., Vasari, Vol. I, p. 96.



The *Saint Lucy Altarpiece* was one of the first Florentine paintings to apply Alberti's theories from his 1434 treatise, *On Painting*. Alberti believed that successful painting must conform to rules governing composition, harmonious colors, natural light, and accurate geometric perspective. Each of Veneziano's saints is a still life confined by an architectural element. St. Lucy holds the martyr's palm. Veneziano shows the Madonna enthroned with Child among the saints (left to right) Francis, John the Baptist whose face is the self-portrait of the artist, Zenobius and Lucy. Unfortunately, Veneziano's original colors are partially lost. The green tones seen today are the result of centuries of oxidation. Domenico Veneziano learned naturalism from Masaccio. His important students included Piero della Francesca and Andrea del Castagno. The altar was created for the Florentine church of Santa Lucia dei Magnoli.

## Room 8.

**Piero della Francesca, (1412-1492)**

Piero della Francesca is one of my favorite artists although his best work is not in Florence. He is known as the great mathematical painter who followed in the tradition of Masaccio and Uccello. He was also an accomplished theorist who wrote important treatises on perspective. Many of his paintings were organized according to geometric principles replete with a symbolic significance. Piero might position figures at the points of an imaginary equilateral triangle to symbolize the Trinity. At times, he placed story elements at the corners of an imaginary rectangle whose sides formed the golden ratio.<sup>7</sup> Modern mathematicians have written books and computer programs trying to decode Piero's

<sup>7</sup>The Golden Ratio is the unique positive real number whose reciprocal equals 1 + itself. The ancient Greeks believed this ratio created the ideal aesthetic proportion. The formula is:  $1/x = 1 + x$  when  $x$  is greater than 0. The solution is  $x = 1.612$ . If one side of a rectangle is 4 feet, the longer side will be 6.448 feet.

hidden text.<sup>8</sup>

It is with some irony that in the centuries following his death, he was better known for his writings on geometry than for his painting. Piero's clarity and absence of sentimentality produced images of enduring appeal.



*The Duke and Duchess of Urbino, c. 1465*

Federico da Montefeltro and his wife, Battista Sforza, were painted in profile, a pose commonly used for antique medals. Portraits of Federico always show his left profile because he lost his right eye in a tournament. The background borrows from detailed Flemish landscapes. The hills near Urbino are a similar shade of pale brown. Look carefully at such carefully rendered details as the fringe that forms the Duke's hairline. Battista's portrait is thought to have been posthumous since she died childbirth in 1472.

### Fra Filippo Lippi, c. 1406-69

Filippo Lippi, an orphan, was raised in the Carmelite convent of Santa Maria in Florence. He would have been able to see and learn from Masaccio and Masolino as they worked on the frescoes in the Brancacci Chapel. Filippo Lippi's work shows the influences of Gentile da Fabriano, Fra Angelico and Masaccio. He was a link with the 'perspective generation' of the first half of the century as well as with Botticelli in the second half.

In his personal life, Fra Filippo Lippi was something of a rogue. Although he took vows, he proved to be unsuited to religious life. His name surfaces often in court documents. He was tried for embezzling convent funds and lived openly with a Carmelite nun, Lucrezia Buti, who was his model and with whom he had a son, the painter Filippino Lippi. His patron, Cosimo de' Medici, sequestered Filippo in "protective custody" at the Medici palace in a failed effort to motivate him to finish overdue commissions. Eventually he was allowed to leave his order and marry Lucretia although

<sup>8</sup>See Marilyn Aronberg Lavin's, *Piero della Francesca's Baptism of Christ*, with an appendix by Bar Carter (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981).

he continued to wear a monk's habit and sign his works Fra ("brother") Filippo.

### 1. *Madonna and Child with Angel, c. 1460*



The painting reflects an understanding of Masaccio's 3-dimensional forms and perspective. The overlapping figures enhance the strength of their relationship. The emotional connection between mother and child is immediate and unequivocal. I particularly like the expression on the face of the angel who functions as an Albertian interlocutor as he looks toward the viewer with his memorable smile.

### 2. *Coronation of the Virgin, c. 1441*



The *Coronation of the Virgin* was commissioned in 1441 for the church of Sant'Ambrogio by Francesco Maringhi who is shown kneeling on the lower right. The placement of his portrait relative to the picture plane acknowledges his importance as the donor. The banner in front of him reads "I made it".

Saint Ambrogio, the patron of the church, and Saint John the Baptist, the patron saint of Florence, anchor the sides of the composition. Mary is crowned not by Christ, but by God the Father in an expanded lunette, top center. The picture evokes a joyous, decorative appearance calibrated by strong colors which are highlighted by the white lilies. The *Coronation* is a visual treat since a recent cleaning unveiled a wealth

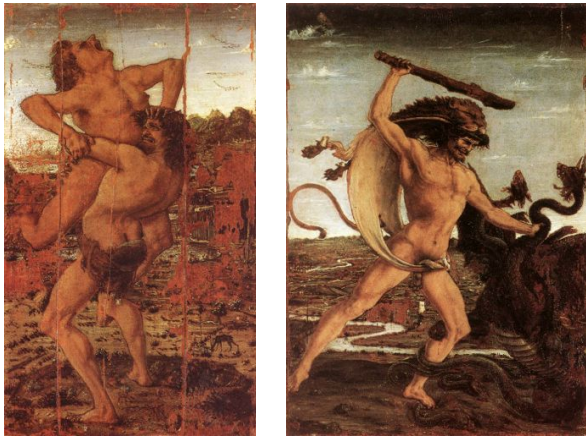


of vibrant color. His world is sumptuous and lacking in conflict; the participants are untroubled, heavenly creatures.

## Room 9

### Antonio Pollaiuolo, 1429-1498

*Hercules and Antaeus* and *Hercules and the Hydra*, tempera on wood, 1475.



Antonio Pollaiuolo's two small paintings, 6" x 8", are in the display case. Hercules throws himself furiously at the Hydra. His body is sculpted with precision. The tension of his muscles is palpable. Pollaiuolo used anatomical form to create dynamic, realistic movement. Nothing remains of the decorative Gothic in his work.

*Portrait of a Lady*, tempera on wood, 1475.



Antonio painted a number of beautiful portraits of women in profile. The figure is outlined clearly to distinguish her from the lapis blue background. Her warm complexion and fashionable hairstyle evoke a real person. Antonio paid particular attention to the materials and texture of her dress and to the barely perceptible

veil covering her hair. These fine details reflect skills he acquired with his early training as a goldsmith.

## Rooms 10-14. The Botticelli Rooms

Most Florence guides rightly place the *Birth of Venus* and *Primavera* on their 'Do not miss list'. But Botticelli's popularity is a relatively recent phenomenon dating to the last century. Prior generations thought him old fashioned compared to Michelangelo, Raphael, and Leonardo da Vinci, masters of the High Renaissance. Botticelli's paintings provide a glimpse of the taste of the wealthy merchant oligarchy in Florence at the time of Lorenzo de' Medici. This was a period when the study of Greek and Latin philosophy flourished side by side with the rich vernacular traditions of Dante, Petrarch, and Boccaccio.<sup>9</sup> Botticelli painted only four allegories, three of which are in the Uffizi.

### Botticelli (Sandro Filipepi), 1445-1510

*The Discovery of the Body of Holofernes* and *Judith Returns from the Enemy Camp at Bethulia*, c. 1472.



In the quattrocento, painting narrative was meant to instruct as well as to provide aesthetic satisfaction. The biblical story of Judith tells how the beautiful Israelite saved her people by pretending to defect to the Assyrians. The Assyrian general Holofernes intends to seduce her but instead falls asleep after drinking too much wine. Judith used his sword to behead him. In the first panel, Botticelli captures the awful revelation of the death of Holofernes, even as it is discovered by his men. The contrast between the youthful body in a sensual pose and the pained expressions of his men is intentionally shocking. The chaos in the tent projects the disarray of the Assyrian army.

In the sequel, Judith calmly returns to her people, sword in hand. Her maid follows behind with the

<sup>9</sup>Ronald Lightbown, *Botticelli Life and Work* (New York: Abbeville Press, 1989) p. 16.

bloody head. The stories would have been understood by the Renaissance viewer as a warning against lust. Giving way to temptation can lead to ruin.

*Madonna the Magnificent, c. 1481.*



The title of this painting is from the Gospel of St Luke (1:46-55) opened to the text, “my soul doth magnify the Lord”. The Virgin supports the child with her left hand in which she also holds a pomegranate. A rainbow and a dove representing the Holy Ghost are at the top of the painting. She is surrounded by five wingless angels, two of whom may have been portraits of the young Medici sons, Lorenzo and Gianfranco. Botticelli’s portrayal of the Virgin as a writer is one of the most interesting features of the painting. The angel on the lower left holds an ink well.

The Virgin readies her pen to begin writing the Magnificent, the song of praise and thanks to God that Mary sings during her visit to her relative Elizabeth.

*Birth of Venus, tempera on canvas, 1485.*



While some scholars see this as a purely secular painting, other believe Botticelli meant to fuse Christian faith with ancient mythology. H.W. Janson writes that the “Neo-Platonists could invoke the ‘celestial Venus’ (that is, the nude Venus born of the sea) interchangeably with the Virgin Mary, as the source of

‘divine love’ (meaning the cognition of divine beauty). This celestial Venus dwells purely in the sphere of Mind, while her twin, the ordinary Venus, engenders human love.”<sup>10</sup> In mythology, the Roman Venus was equivalent to the ancient Greek Aphrodite, the goddess of love, desire, beauty, and reproduction. Stories of her birth, liaisons, and exploits provided rich source material for artists. As early as the 7th century BC, the poet Hesiod told the story of Venus’s birth. Homer wrote a hymn dedicated to her, and she is featured in Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*. The source of Botticelli’s iconography is not known but his symbolic representations are the subject of much speculation.

According to the most common myth, Uranus and Gaia were the parents of the first generation of Titans. In the story, their son Cronus castrated his father, Uranus. Venus was conceived when his genitals fell into the sea. In Botticelli’s painting, Venus is shown not at her birth but as she is transported on a scallop shell and blown ashore by Zephyr. Zephyr was the god of the west wind who interceded between those on earth and the underworld.

*4. Pallas and the Centaur, c. 1488.*



The painting is recorded in the Medici inventory of 1516. A woman holds a halberd (a staff with an axe blade) in her left hand. Her dress is decorated with the three interlaced rings that were the emblems of the Medici. She holds a resigned-looking, bearded centaur by his hair as a sign of her dominance. The painting may commemorate the triumph of the Medici over the Pazzi.

<sup>10</sup>H.W. Janson, *History of Art* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1964) p. 345.



*Calumny*, c. 1495

Renaissance painters were encouraged to be knowledgeable about the writers from antiquity. Alberti knew these narrative themes would appeal to the enlightened humanist patron. *Calumny* is the title of a lost allegorical painting by the 4th-century BC Greek painter Apelles. Alberti included a description of the Apelles painting in his treatise, *On Painting*. For Alberti, the *Calumny* as described by Lucian, exemplified an essential quality painters would need if they were to elevate medieval handicrafts to an intellectual art form.

King Midas on the right wears ass's ears symbolic of the corrupt judge. He listens to the mendacious words of Suspicion and Ignorance while holding out his hands to Malice. Malice leads *Calumny* who is being dressed by Peril and Deceit. *Calumny* drags naked Innocence along. The scene is completed by an aged hooded figure representing Penitence and by the naked Truth. The background marble arcades with sculptures and bas reliefs reflect Botticelli's admiration for the antique.

This painting reminds us of the darker side of beliefs in the Renaissance during the time of Savonarola, prior of the Dominican church of San Marco and briefly, effective ruler of Florence after the Medici were expelled in 1494. He preached that the wrath of God was poised to strike. The city could only be saved by moral regeneration. He condemned such luxury items as musical instruments, sensual paintings, books, and statues. Ultimately, Savonarola was excommunicated by the Church and condemned to death in Florence in 1498.

*Birth of Spring (Primavera)*, tempera on wood, c. 1477.

While it is uncertain if Botticelli had a humanist advisor, he is known to have had a serious interest in Dante. The inspiration for the subject is not known. It may be from a poem called *La Giostra* by Angelo Poliziano that describes a meadow where grasses and plants grew, and where winds blew.<sup>11</sup> Or perhaps it is from Ovid who described the story of the spring festival of Floralia at Rome. The scholar Max Marmor writing about the influence of Dante on Botticelli suggests that "Seeing the *Primavera* as a visual allegory of the soul's passage from the vita voluptuous, through the vita activa, to the vita contemplativa . . . allows us to see the *Primavera* not as sui generis (a class of its own) but as resonating with a central theme in quattrocento moral philosophy."<sup>12</sup>

Botticelli's softens the precise draftsmanship of a goldsmith with contoured forms and sinuous lines. On the right, the wind Zephyr pursues Chloris who he transforms into Flora, the goddess of spring. Venus stands in the middle of an orange-grove. A blindfolded Cupid shoots arrows implying that there is no safeguard against pain or disappointment. Numerous plant species are depicted accurately.

Mercury on the left was known in antiquity as the leader of the Three Graces who symbolized charm, beauty, and goodwill in ancient Greek and Roman art. Botticelli's representation of the Three Graces is faithful to the classical tradition of Ovid.

<sup>11</sup>James Hall, *History of Ideas and Images in Italian Art* (New York: Harper & Row, 1983) p. 265.

<sup>12</sup>From Purgatory to the "Primavera": Some Observations on Botticelli and Dante Author: Max C. Marmor Source: *Artibus et Historiae*, Vol. 24, No. 48, (2003), p. 206.



1st century AD Roman mirror, Kunsthistorische, Vienna

Artists had ample sources to inform them how to portray the Three Graces. In Book I, *On Benefits*, the Roman philosopher Lucius Annaeus Seneca (4 BC to 65 AD) describes the three graces as young women, who stand hand in hand wearing loose and transparent dresses.

### *Annunciation*, 1489



Composition and balance are defined in part by the starkly vertical tree, the door frame, and the white lines separating the red floor tiles. The Annunciation is a serious and elegant work painted for the church of Santa Maria Maddalena de' Pazzi. An especially beautiful landscape is visible in the background, complete with a fairy tale castle. Mary is confined by the wood bookstand. The angel and Mary do not touch, but the proximity of their hands is electric. Botticelli does not need the symbolic dove to convey his message.

## Room 15

### Leonardo da Vinci, 1452-1519

#### *Annunciation*, c. 1472



Unlike Botticelli's *Annunciation*, the distance between the Virgin and the Angel suggests two separate scenes. Unity is provided by the intersecting gaze of the two figures, and by the light that touches the divine messenger, and highlights the face of the Virgin. The grassy meadow is covered with flowers, each depicted in minute detail. Leonardo believed that an artist should act as a scrupulous observer.

#### *Adoration of the Magi*, tempera mixed with oil, 1480.



Leonardo introduced numerous innovations. The Madonna sits apart, emphasizing her importance. This formulation is different from that of other early quattrocento painters such as Gentile da Fabriano or Lorenzo Monaco whose paintings were dense with figures. Leonardo achieved spatial depth by contrasting areas of light and dark. The receding landscape seems to fade into an impressionistic haze. Leonardo was a superb draftsman. The Madonna is shown in an easy, feminine pose. Later painters copied this arrangement. The twist of her body, combined with sideways movement of child, form a powerful bond.

### Verrocchio with Leonardo da Vinci

#### *Baptism*, 1480





The painting is believed to be a joint effort of Leonardo and his master, Andrea di Cione, called Verrocchio. Verrocchio painted St. John the Baptist and the figure of Christ. The angel in profile on the left, with its sweet contemplative expression, and the landscape with its characteristic chiaroscuro and softened outlines, are attributed to Leonardo. This is a quattrocento painting. Gestures are restrained compared to the cinquecento. Christ seems to have just arrived. He is a poor teacher who stands shakily in the stream with water swirling around his thin legs.

## Room 18. The Tribuna



Francesco de' Medici had the room built in 1584 to house treasures in his collection. The Tribuna, meaning domed space, was designed by Bernardo Buontalenti who was also responsible for the façade of Santa Trinita.

## *Medici Venus*



The *Medici Venus* is a copy of the Aphrodite of Cnidus from the Villa Medici in Rome. It was considered an unsurpassed model of ideal female beauty and was copied widely, perhaps more than any other antique statue.

## Pontormo (Jacopo Carucci), 1494-1556

### *Cosimo Il Vecchio*



This is a posthumous portrait of Cosimo il Vecchio, founder of the Medici dynasty and the preeminent citizen of Florence during much the city's cultural expansion in the 15th century. Cosimo's knurled, clasped hands add to the interest of the portrait as does Pontormo's use of *contrapposto*. Cosimo's head is in profile while his arms face forward. The impact would be entirely different if his hands rested on his knees. Even the tilt of his head helps to convey his character. The somber green leaves and the dark background contrast with the rich reds in his robe. The white banderole with a quotation from the *Aeneid* affirms Cosimo's commitment to classical learning.

## Agnolo Bronzino, 1503-1572

Bronzino was the portraitist for the Medici court of Cosimo I. It is through Bronzino's eyes that we visualize the Medici. The portraits in the Tribuna record the likeness of his subjects and document their preferences for worldly goods.

### *Lucrezia and Bartolomeo Panciatichi, tempera, 1540*



In addition to the Medici, Bronzino painted portraits of members of Florentine aristocracy. Bronzino, a Mannerist, perfected marble-like skin tones. The artist approached his subjects as if they were a still life. Lucrezia di Gismundo Pucci married Bartolomeo Panciatichi in 1528. Bronzino uses the beauty and richness of her dress to enhance her aristocratic dignity. She wears a gold necklace inscribed *Amour Dure Sans Fin* (Love lasts forever). Her hand rests on a book of daily offices turned to prayers to the Virgin. The texture of each surface is presented with great care. The brush strokes blend evenly in a style that foreshadows that of Jean Auguste Dominique Ingres in the 19th century. She manifests piety and fidelity.

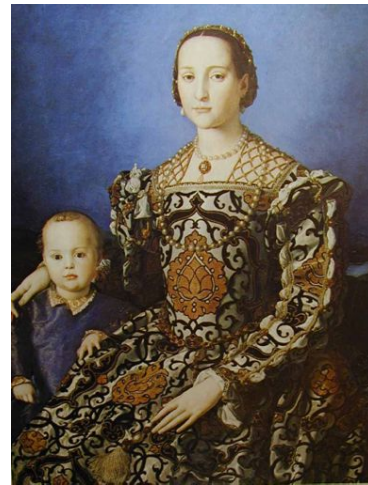
Bartolomeo Panciatichi was born in 1507 and died in 1582. He is shown at about age thirty, serious and proud, standing in front of his family palace, whose coat of arms appears on the right. He was known in literary circles for his poetry and scholarship. Cosimo I rewarded him with an ambassadorship to France. In time, he was recalled because of his increasing sympathy with the Huguenots. After returning to Florence, he was tried in secret by the Inquisition. Cosimo was able to protect Panciatichi from being killed by the Inquisition, but Bartolomeo was still forced to do public penance. It is to Cosimo's credit that he ignored the ecclesiastical displeasure.

### *Giovanni de' Medici as a Child, c. 1545*



Giovanni was the fourth son of the Grand Duke Cosimo I de' Medici and Eleonora di Toledo. Most Bronzino subjects are formal and devoid of facial expressions. This happy youngster, age 18 months, exudes warmth and a palpable pleasure in the bird he is holding.

### *Eleonora of Toledo with her son Giovanni, c. 1545*



Eleonora of Toledo was the Spanish wife of Cosimo de' Medici I. While elegant and self-possessed, the intimate relationship with her son is clear. She loved pearls and lavish clothing. Although it is not easy to see, the portrait was set on a terrace, perhaps at the Medici villa outside of Florence.

### *Duke Cosimo I, 1545*

The Duke Cosimo I was impressed by Bronzino's work in Eleonora's chapel in the Palazzo Vecchio. Vasari wrote that Cosimo I "seeing from these and other paintings the artist's excellence, and especially that he could draw from nature with the most diligence

imaginable, had himself painted in white armor with his hand on a helmet".<sup>13</sup> Cosimo I dei Medici became duke of Florence in 1537. He is portrayed at age 25 wearing glittering armor to remind us of his political power.



## Room 23

### Andrea Mantegna, 1431-1506

Mantegna was profoundly influenced by the sculpture of Donatello. Like Donatello, he was passionately interested in antiquity and the artistic achievements of the Romans. He was very much his own man in a period when most artists were subject to their patron's dictates. Mantegna's patrons learned to tolerate his whims. Mantegna expected artistic freedom and in return, he created glorious art. Much of his best work was done for the Gonzaga, the Duke of Mantua. Mantegna was the dominant influence on northern Italian painting for 50 years. It was also through him that German artists, notably Albrecht Dürer, learned about the artistic discoveries of the Italian Renaissance. These three panels were first placed in a single frame in 1827.

<sup>13</sup>John Pope-Hennessy, *The Portrait in the Renaissance* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1966) p. 182.

### *The Adoration of the Magi, Circumcision and Ascension, c. 1470*



*Adoration of the Magi*



*Circumcision*



*Ascension*

The *Circumcision* is one of Mantegna's most enigmatic and influential works. Mantegna incorporated one of the precepts in Alberti's *On Painting* which said moral truths should be presented in painting in the guise of plausible human actions. The scene takes place in what could have been a Roman temple decorated with sumptuous marble. His *Circumcision* remained faithful to the narrative structure as well as the theological content of the biblical account. The Old Testament scene of Abraham's sacrifice Isaac is shown in the top left lunette of the *Circumcision*. Moses with the tablet is on the top right.

## Room 25

### Michelangelo Buonarroti, 1475-1564

#### *Holy Family (Tondo Doni), c. 1505-1507*





The wooden frame, with its protruding heads, is by Domenico di Francesco del Tasso. This work was painted for the wedding of Agnolo Doni and Madalena Strozzi. The lounging figures in the background resemble classical Greek youths. The rounded limbs of the family members have a sculptural quality. The picture is uncluttered yet it is rich with careful details, even to the blades of grass. Iconographic speculations suggest that the nudes were based on studies for the Battle of Cascina and the Sistine Chapel.

Michelangelo's solved the technical problem of coordinating the compressed tangle of figures without losing of clarity. The contours of the limbs are precise. Figures are united by bright light and crossing of their glances. The twisting figures and the pastel fabric hues are also reminiscent of the Sistine Chapel. With the Madonna, movement is introduced by her reaching over her shoulder to take child. Her out-reached arm shows each muscle. With her bare feet and arms, she evokes a mannish heroine more than a doting mother.

## Room 26

### Raphael, 1483-1520

Raphael (Raffaello Sanzio) was born in Urbino. His prodigious talent was evident at an early age. His father, Giovanni Santi, court artist to the dukes of Urbino, guided his early training. From Urbino, he moved to other towns in central Italy where he encountered local artists like Luca Signorelli in Città di Castello and Pietro Vannucci (known as Perugino) in Perugia. He studied their technique, absorbed what they could teach, and then surpassed their achievements. Raphael learned to imitate Perugino's rich color palate, his mastery of painterly techniques, and his success with landscapes. Commissions that would have once gone to Perugino were offered to him. In Città di Castello, he became more popular than Signorelli.

In 1508 Raphael won the commission for an ambitious project decorating the Pope's apartments in the Vatican. Raphael began work at the same time that his arch rival Michelangelo was working in the Sistine Chapel. Contrary to Michelangelo's wishes, Raphael managed to view the older artist's work. While Raphael was not an innovator equal to Michelangelo and Leonardo, he was a master of observation. His figures began to assimilate lessons from the genius of Michelangelo's Sistine frescoes.

For centuries, critics venerated Raphael as the ideal Renaissance artist. His mature paintings are not contrived or formulaic. In addition to their intrinsic beauty and harmonious composition, figures like the ones in the portraits of Pope Leo X and Julius II reveal the sitters' character.

### *Pope Leo X with Cardinals, c. 1517*



Leo X, second son of Lorenzo the Magnificent, has a commanding presence. He sits between his nephews Giulio de' Medici, the future Clement VII, on his left and Luigi de' Rossi on his right. This is a masterpiece of Renaissance portraiture. Raphael reveals the character of his figures while respecting the traditional dictates of group representation. Astutely, he minimizes Leo's thick fleshy face by using light to suggest spirituality. This was artistically brilliant and politically wise. Leo is glancing up from manuscript.

*Raphael, Portrait of Julius II, c. 1512*



Raphael's portraits were innovative. The Pope's three quarter position became the norm for future court portraits. His preparatory drawings show that he often started with the skeleton. Muscle, features, and clothing followed. His formulation was absorbed by Titian and emulated by Rembrandt.

Julius II patronized the arts and supported rebuilding St Peter's in Rome. He was considered a tyrant to his enemies and a beneficent ruler to his supporters. When he became Pope in 1503, Cardinal Giuliano della Rovere chose to name himself after Julius Caesar. He believed the papacy should govern Italy and made clear his intention to rid the Italian states of foreign invaders.<sup>14</sup>

One of the most recognizable features of Raphael's portrait is the Pope's beard. According to official decree, the clergy was supposed to be clean shaven since long hair symbolized vices and sins while shaving was a form of purification. The Pope's grew the beard after a failed attempt in 1510 to eject the French from Italian soil. "Julius's decision to retain the beard grown during his illness was a symbolic act. Like the Mariner's albatross, the Pope's beard would serve him as a constant reminder of his plight, and he vowed to go unshaven – to mortify his flesh, as it were – until the hated French should be driven out of his country."<sup>15</sup> Vasari wrote that the painting was so "true and lifelike that everyone who saw [the portrait] trembled as if the Pope were standing there in person."<sup>16</sup>

<sup>14</sup>Marcia B. Hall, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Raphael* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004) p. 61.

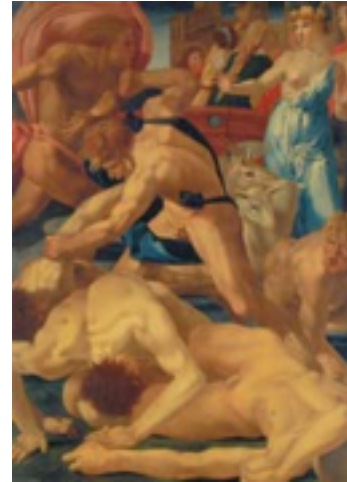
<sup>15</sup>Mark J. Zucker "Raphael and the Beard of Pope Julius II", *The Art Bulletin*, Vol. 59, No. 4, (Dec., 1977), pp. 524-533.

<sup>16</sup>Giorgio Vasari, *Lives of the Artists, Volume I*, translated by George Bull (London: Penguin Books 1987) p. 297.

## Room 27

### Rosso Fiorentino (1494-1540)

*Moses Defends the Daughters of Jethro (Mosè difende le figlie di Jetro)*, oil, c. 1523.



Moses is striking the shepherds who have driven the daughters of his father-in-law Jethro away from the well. Rosso along with Pontormo helped define the Italian Mannerist style. His choreography includes twisted, contorted figures.

### Bronzino

*Sacred Family Panciatichi (Holy Family with St. John)*, c. 1535.



You have already met the Panciatichi family in the Tribune. The Panciatichi are identified by their coat-of-arms on the banner in the upper left hand corner. This is a typical holy family or 'sacred conversation' format. However, it is the Panciatichi family, and not Mary and Joseph who are portrayed with the Christ child and the young St. John. Portraits of patrons

were frequently substituted for holy images to memorialize the donors' piety. Stylistically, the Virgin's (Lucrezia's) head has the appearance of a classical Greek Venus. The rocky background accentuates the figures.

Bronzino was the adopted son and student of Jacopo da Pontormo. Bronzino's figures are polished and elegant reflecting the influence of Pontormo's early Mannerist expressive style. Here, his figures are off center and elongated. The organizing principles of early Renaissance harmony and extreme naturalism are absent. In 1546, Bronzino responded to an enquiry from Benedetto Varchi asking artists to comment on the various art forms. Bronzino wrote that he considered painting to be finer than sculpture since painting could evoke the plasticity of sculpture and was able to recreate all the facets of nature absent in sculpture.<sup>17</sup>

## Room 28. Titan

### Tiziano Vecellio called Titian, 1485-1576

The prominence Titian attained during his lengthy career remains undiminished today. He was the first Venetian painter to achieve European fame during his lifetime. Vasari wrote that Titian was a student of Giovanni Bellini and an admirer of Giorgione and Raphael. Titian relied on light, shadow, harmonized color, and vigorous brush strokes to define forms. He rarely used outlines. He was a master of individualized, dramatic portraits.

#### *Flora*, oil on canvas, c. 1515



Titian painted *Flora* when he was about 30. She is a sensuous, alluring creature created with soft light and subtly modeled forms. She is wearing a *camicia*, a garment in fashion in Titian's era. The *camicia*, worn by both sexes, was a full length, long sleeved undergarment that was gathered at the neck. Flora is a superb

<sup>17</sup>See *Bronzino* (Chaucer Press, London, 2005) by Charles McCorquodale for a translation of Bronzino's letter to Varchi.

example of the early 16th century secular genre known as "belle donne" or beautiful women. Flora is neither wife nor saint. We do not know if Titian's intended an allegorical reference, but I am satisfied with the notion of beauty for its own sake. Rembrandt, who saw *Flora* in 1640 in the house of a Portuguese collector in Amsterdam, adopted the motif in his portrait of *Saskia with Red Flower* at Dresden.

#### *Francesco Maria della Rovere*, 1538



Francesco Maria della Rovere, a nephew of Pope Julius II, was the Duke of Urbino from 1530 to 1538 and one of Italy's most important military leaders. He served as a successful condottiere or mercenary serving various city-states including Venice. Machiavelli praised his military prowess.

The portrait is a prime example of his extraordinary talent as a portrait artist. Titian has given us a complete description of Francesco. The Duke's position in front of red velvet contrasts with the light reflected on the polished surface of his armor. The thick beard and dark hair framing his face intensify his expression. The helmet with white dragon crest and white plume identify Francesco's rank and family history. On his right, the golden baton of the Papacy and the silver one of Florence are separated by the forked oak branch of the della Rovere.<sup>18</sup>

The portrait received publicity prior to its completion when the contemporary poet Pietro Aretino in 1536 wrote a sonnet praising the painting:

"In gazing upon it I called Nature to witness, making her confess that Art was positively metamorphosed into herself. The Vermillion hue of that velvet drapery behind him is reflected in the lustrous armor he wears. How fine the effect of his casquet-plumes, repro-

<sup>18</sup>Alice Sunderland Wethey and Harold E. Wethey, "Titian: Two Portraits of Noblemen in Armor and Their Heraldry", *The Art Bulletin*, Vol. 62, No. 1, (Mar., 1980), p.79.



duced on the burnished cuirass (breastplate) of the mighty general!”<sup>19</sup>

Armor was a common emblem of military prowess. Since Francesco did not sit for the portrait, he sent his favorite suit of armor to Titian in Venice so it would be represented accurately.

### *Eleonora Gonzaga della Rovere*



The portrait of Francesco’s wife Eleonora Gonzaga della Rovere was painted as a pendant to her husband’s. Titian’s landscape demonstrates his virtuosity with color and light. The moving clouds contrast to Eleonora’s formal pose and the fine detail of her jewelry, clothing, and the lace.

### *Venus of Urbino, oil on canvas, 1538*



This is one of the most beautiful and influential nudes ever painted. The small dog symbolizes fidelity. Like Flora, Venus holds flowers. The dramatic impact is heightened by Titian’s use of light and shade. Venus’s pale body resting pale sheet contrasts with the dark wall.

<sup>19</sup>Alice Sunderland Wethey and Harold E. Wethey, “Titian: Two Portraits of Noblemen in Armor and Their Heraldry”, *The Art Bulletin*, Vol. 62, No. 1, (Mar., 1980), p.77.

## Room 35. Tintoretto, 1518-94

### *Leda and the Swan. Oil on canvas, c. 1555*



Tintoretto (Jacopo Robusti), an innovative artist with a flair for the dramatic, provided new and unique interpretations of familiar stories. Vasari criticized Tintoretto for his extravagant and bizarre style that departed from his Tuscan predecessors. It is this very lack of conformity that makes Tintoretto one of most intriguing of the late Renaissance painters. He has been labeled a “maverick individualist” who remained an entirely Venetian painter.

Tintoretto was an accomplished draughtsman. He developed his compositions by experimenting with small mannequins that he placed in various arrangements until he was satisfied with the composition. He even illuminated these sets with candles to create shadows. Tintoretto power expressed itself “in the immense energy, in the glowing health of the figures he painted, and still more in his effects of light, which he rendered as if he had it in his hands to brighten or darken the heavens at will and subdue them to his own will.”<sup>20</sup>

In the myth, Zeus (Jupiter) masquerading as a swan, makes love to Leda. Tintoretto’s version of the story differs from the formulation of Michelangelo, Leonardo, and other artists of the time. Tintoretto’s exaggerated secondary details (the two bird cages) distract from the viewer’s visual absorption of Leda’s idealized beauty. “We must assume that the ungainly swan. . . has just been released by Leda’s servant from his crude wooden cage. He waddles across to Leda’s side, where his response to her caress is to wriggle his phallic head and neck toward her reclining body. Ignoring the central Italian models for the subject (in which woman and bird already embrace), Tintoretto selects an earlier moment, as if he wished to avoid too explicit a depiction of an unnatural union. The swan-Jupiter must first overcome the challenge of a small (but jealous) lapdog before finally arriving at

<sup>20</sup>Bernard Berenson, *The Italian Painters of the Renaissance*, (London: Phaidon, 1952) p. 24.

his destination.”<sup>21</sup>

## Caravaggio - - Location?

On recent visits, I found the Caravaggio paintings on the first floor, as you exit the Museum.

### *Bacchus*, oil on canvas, 1596



This is an early work painted when he was starting to experiment with naturalism and light. Bacchus, the god of wine, is a well-built young boy rather than as a god. The draperies, still life, and transparent glass are painted with a surprising freshness.

### *Medusa*, c. 1590



### 3. *Sacrifice of Isaac*, oil on canvas, 1603.

<sup>21</sup>Tom Nicholas, *Tintoretto Tradition and Identity* (London: Reaktion Books, 1999) pp. 87-88.



The light illuminating the terror on Isaac's face is dramatic. Viewers often were shocked and even offended by his treatment of religious subjects.

## Chapter 9

# Palazzo Pitti



Sala di Marti

The museum has an outstanding collection of the work of Titian, Tintoretto, and Raphael as well as important 17th century European paintings by Rubens, Van Dyck, Caravaggio, and Velázquez. Its rooms display about one thousand paintings formerly owned by the Medici. Unlike most museums, paintings in the museum are not arranged chronologically, by school, or by artist. Instead their presentation reflects the personal taste of the grand dukes and rulers of Florence who occupied the palace for four centuries before it was acquired by the state in 1911.

Selectivity is key if one is to gain more than an impression of sumptuous rooms filled floor to ceiling with paintings displayed in the style of a 17th-century picture gallery. My Guide's "short list" aims to convert your visit from daunting to manageable, and indeed one of pleasure. Experts can help us understand what is great and why, but the ultimate test remains our personal reaction to a work of art. As an experiment, walk into a room, and before reading anything, survey the walls to see which paintings stand out. You may be pleasantly surprised at your own expertise.

## Sala di Prometto

Filippo Lippi, 1406-1469



*Madonna and Child (Pitti Tondo)*, 1452.

This painting of scenes from the life of St. Anne taken from the *Golden Legend* is one of Lippi's most celebrated works. Lippi demonstrates his command of scientific perspective and his ability to use architectural elements to convey multiple stories. The child holds a pomegranate seed, the Christian symbol of the Resurrection, adapted in turn from the classical story of Proserpine who returned each spring to regenerate the earth. The Virgin's parents, Anne and Joachim, meet at the Golden Gate in Jerusalem when they learn they will have a child. Church doctrine said that Anne, like Mary, was a virgin whose conception was Immaculate. The Golden Gate symbolized the closed gate (*porta clausa*) that was the symbol of Mary's virginity. Anne gives birth to Mary on the left. On the lower right, people bring gifts to Anne.



## Sala dell' Educazione di Giove

Caravaggio (Michelangelo Merisi), 1571-1610



Sleeping Cupid,  
Caravaggio, 1608



Eros Sleeping,  
Greek, 3rd century  
B.C., Metropolitan  
museum of Art

Renaissance artists were familiar with Roman statuary. Vasari described a marble sleeping cupid given to Lorenzo de' Medici by the King of Naples.<sup>1</sup> Duke Cosimo I owned two or more versions.<sup>2</sup> Cupid (Greek, Eros) was the son of Venus and god of love. A bow, arrow, and quiver were typical attributes. In the Renaissance, he was often depicted as a youth or a chubby child with wings. Sometimes he wears a blindfold telling us that love is blind. In classical times, people associated the sleeping Cupid with Hypnos, the Roman god of sleep. For Renaissance artists, a sleeping cupid meant the abandonment of earthly pleasures: sleep provided a respite from temptation. While Caravaggio borrowed the motif of the sleeping cupid from antiquity, his figure lacks their childish innocence. Cupid's bow remains by his side and his left hand rests on an arrow reminding us of his power and potential for mischief. The contrast between light and shade is striking. Caravaggio reveals Cupid's wings with the merest suggestion of light.

<sup>1</sup>Phyllis Pray Bober, *Renaissance Artists and Antique Sculpture: a Handbook of Sources*, London & New York, Harvey Miller Publications, 1991, p. 89.

<sup>2</sup>Laurie Fusco and Gino Corti, *Lorenzo de' Medici Collector and Antiquarian*, Cambridge University Press, 2006, pp. 41-52.

## Sala dell'Iliade

Raphael Sanzio, 1483-1520



*Pregnant Woman (Il Gravida)*, c. 1506.

Raphael was at the height of his career when he died at the early age of 37. As Perugia's most gifted student, Raphael's early paintings resemble the overly sweet style of his master. Raphael's Florentine Madonnas emerge from his early training in Umbria under Perugino to the more broadly conceived Renaissance styles invented in Florence. In the last fifteen years of his life, Raphael revolutionized historical narrative painting. His genius combines innate skill as a draftsman with an uncanny ability to assimilate and reformulate lessons he drew from the sculpture of Donatello and the paintings of Pollaiuolo, Michelangelo and Leonardo.

Diego Velazquez, 1599-1660



*Philip IV of Spain*, c. 1635

Diego Velázquez, court Painter for Philip IV, was Spain's greatest and most influential artist. In 1629 he traveled to Italy where he spent two years visiting Milan, Venice, Florence, Naples, and Rome. His decision to visit Italy may have been prompted by meeting Rubens when Rubens was on a diplomatic mission to the Spanish court in 1628. Velázquez's work reflects

the influence of Flemish and Italian realism, and especially of Rubens and Caravaggio whose works were well known and admired in Spain.

## Sala di Saturno

Raphael, 1483-1520

*Vision of Ezekiel*, c. 1518



Napoleon esteemed this small painting and ordered his army to bring it to Paris (it was returned in 1815). The *Vision of Ezekiel* was on the recommended viewing list of popular 19th century traveler's handbooks including Karl Baedeker's 1868 edition. Giorgio Vasari, a 16th century admirer, noted that "The earth beneath exhibits a small landscape, and this work, in its minuteness – all the figures being very small – is no less beautiful than are the others in their grandeur of extent."

The iconography comes from Verse 25 of the Book of the Prophet Ezekiel: "And there was a voice from the firmament that was over their heads, when they stood, and had let down their wings." God with cherubim is borne aloft on a throne supported by an angel, an ox, an eagle, and a lion, the traditional symbols of the Evangelists Matthew, Luke, John and Mark. Ezekiel, a small figure, barely visible, on the lower left of the painting, is connected to the vision by a beam of light. The amber light surrounding God is filled with delicate outlines of the faces of cherubim.

*Tommaso Inghirami*, 1510.



Tommaso Inghirami was born in Volterra in 1470. He was rewarded for his family's support of the Medici with a position in the Vatican Library. He was a favorite of Pope Leo X and worked with Raphael on the design for the Stanza della Segnatura in the Vatican. Raphael's painting of Tommaso Inghirami is an early example of a Renaissance portrait that is not "self contained". Inghirami's attention appears to be drawn to an unseen visitor.<sup>3</sup> Or perhaps the upward glance was a clever device to conceal his unfortunate walleye. Inghirami is shown in the red robes of a canon while he works, pen in hand, at a writing desk.

*Madonna of the Chair (Madonna Seggiola or Sedia)*, c. 1512



The *Madonna Seggiola* is far more interesting and complex than Raphael's earlier painting, the *Madonna del Granduca*. The tondo format is well suited to the curving forms and closely linked figures. This scene of domestic intimacy must have resonated with the cinquecento viewer who could relate both to it as a religious icon and as a family metaphor.

<sup>3</sup>J. Pope-Hennessy, p. 117.

*Cardinal Bernardo Dovizi da Bibbiena, c. 1514*

Bernardo Dovizi earned a cardinal's hat as a reward for his supporting the election of Giovanni de' Medici as Pope Leo X.

**Sala di Giove****Raphael**

*Donna Velata*, c. 1516

Because of its influence on later artists, the *Donna Velata* became a world famous picture. Raphael's female portraits embodied the Renaissance ideals of beauty and grace that were the visual equivalent of Petrarch's sonnets on the ideal. The position of her hands recalls the attitude of the antique Venus Pudica. Placing a hand over her heart signals fidelity

Raphael's *Donna Velata* was inspired by Leonardo da Vinci's *Mona Lisa*. Her graceful pose, and even her facial type, inspired artists from Guido Reni in the 17th century to Ingres in the 19th century.

Raphael used chiaroscuro to suggest depth and mass. Her warm flesh contrasts with the neutral background. The luminous glow of her skin was achieved by multiple layers of translucent glaze. Her elaborate dress is countered by the sweep of her simple head cloth.

**Sala di Marte****Titian (Tiziano Vecellio), 1488-1576***Cardinal Ippolito, c. 1533.*

Titian's portraits approached life size. He favored dim interiors and often chose settings with a window open to a landscape. Both Veronese and Tintoretto learned from his example. Ippolito de' Medici (1511-1535) was the illegitimate son of Giuliano, Duke of Nemours. He was raised by his uncle Giovanni de' Medici who became Pope Leo X. Pope Clement VII who succeeded Leo X made Ippolito a cardinal in 1529. He joined Charles V's military expedition against the Turks in Hungary in 1532. Ippolito chose to wear a Hungarian costume for his portrait rather than his clerical dress. The badge on his hat pledges his love to Giulia Gonzaga.

**Peter Paul Rubens, 1577-1640**

*Consequences of War*, oil on canvas, c. 1638.



*Guernica*, Picasso (detail, image reversed)



Rubens's painting reflects his despair over the systematic destructiveness of the Thirty Years War where the rule was for each passing army to destroy the countryside. Picasso's *Guernica* painted three hundred years later borrowed the image of a frantic, grieving Europe (the woman in black on the left) with her arms flung in the air. In the *Consequences of War*, Venus restrains Mars, whose sword is already bloodied. Mars's right boot tramples Literature and Harmony, with Harmony represented by a woman with a broken lute. The voluptuous allure of the women and the complement of cupids do not conceal Ruben's powerful anti war sentiments.

### Anthony Van Dyck, 1599-1641

*Cardinal Guido Bentivoglio*, oil on canvas, c. 1622.



In 1623, Van Dyck traveled to Rome from the Netherlands. His patron, Cardinal Guido Bentivoglio, shown in sumptuous attire, was the Papal Nuncio to the Low Countries. Van Dyck became an assistant to Peter Paul Rubens in 1617. Like all foreign artists visiting Italy, Van Dyck studied the masters including Tintoretto and Titian.

### Paolo Veronese, 1528-1588

*Portrait of a Gentleman in a Fur*, 1565

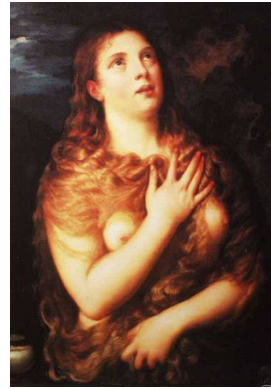


This portrait shows a bearded figure with ermine cloak and a notably intense expression. Veronese introduced an architectural element in the form of a

classical column that became his trademark. According to John Pope-Hennessy, portraits by Veronese are relatively rare because unlike Tintoretto or Titian, Veronese did not specialize in faces. Veronese's primary focus was on extensive decorative commissions.

## Sala di Apollo

### 1. Titian, *Mary Magdalen*, c. 1530-35



*Mary Magdalen*



*Venus*, Roman 2nd century AD, British Museum

Titian's luscious Magdalen was painted nearly 500 years ago, not long after Luther posted his 95 Theses in 1517 and at a time when pressure mounted for the church reform that culminated in the 1545 Council of Trent. Art historians have long debated whether Titian's painting of Mary Magdalen is erotic or religious. A convincing resolution to the question relies on the cinquecento notion that a male viewer who resists temptation is more virtuous than one who has not been tempted. "It is against this background that we should understand Titian's *Mary Magdalen*, as a moralizing work for male viewers who could gain merit by overcoming the temptation of the sensuous depiction."<sup>4</sup> Images of penitent or reformed saints such as Mary Magdalen and Jerome were popular during the cinquecento because the Reformation re-emphasized penance. Because contrition was essential to the sacrament of penitence, Mary Magdalen was usually portrayed with tears symbolizing her regret.

We recognize Saint Mary Magdalen, the converted sinner and former prostitute, by the ointment jar on her left and her long, flowing hair. Her sensual figure epitomizes Titian's Venetian ideal of feminine beauty. Her pose follows the classical *Venus pudica* or modest Venus whose hands both cover and reveal.

<sup>4</sup>Bernard Aikema, "Titian's Mary Magdalen in the Palazzo Pitti: An Ambiguous Painting and Its Critics", *The Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, Vol. 57, (1994), p. 54. Aikema's scholarly article is especially informative.

## Sala di Venere (Venus)

### Titian

#### 1. *Pope Julius II*



Titian's *Pope Julius II* was inspired by Raphael's earlier version in the Uffizi. Perhaps Titian made the copy because the original was thought to be one of Raphael's finest portraits. Before the advent of museums and art dealers, copies were not usually considered forgeries.

The tradition of the Byzantine icon expected images to be duplicated. If done accurately, the replica was another representation of the original prototype in the same way that a Mozart sonata is meant to be played many times. Greek sculptures were copied multiple times by the ancient Romans. Making a copy was a way for one artist to learn from another. Reproduction was also a form of cultural transmission. Today, multiple versions of the same painting confound experts and museums. The National Gallery in London has a version of the *Pope Julius II* that is attributed to Raphael, and the debate continues about which came first, the Uffizi painting or the one in London.

#### 2. *Pietro Aretino, c. 1545*



I wish I had met Pietro Aretino (1492-1556). He was a successful poet, playwright, and satirist who initially enjoyed the patronage in Rome of Agostino

Chigi, a wealthy banker and patron of artists including Raphael. At first, his interest in political and clerical gossip was acceptable to Pope Leo X and later to Clement VII. However, by 1525, his risqué sonnets and pointed satire made it impossible for him to remain in Rome.

He eventually moved to Venice where he became Titian's friend and promoter. He sent this portrait of himself to Cosimo I de' Medici in a failed attempt to interest the Florentine court in Venetian art. Florence was not ready to abandon Bronzino's smooth faces for Titian's skillful, loose painterly style.<sup>5</sup>

### Antonio Canova, 1757-1822

#### *Venus Italica, c. 1812*



Canova's *Venus Italica* was commissioned to replace the antique *Medici Venus* (now in the Tribune Room in the Uffizi) that was removed in 1802 by the occupying French. The Florentines were dismayed at the loss and Canova was asked to create a replacement. The *Medici Venus* was returned after the Napoleon's defeat in 1815. In the nineteenth century, Canova's *Venus* was a model of ideal feminine beauty.

<sup>5</sup> *Titian Essays* by Charles Hope, et al, National Gallery Company, London, 2003, "Titian in the 1540's".

## Appartamenti Reali, Sala Verde II

Caravaggio (Michelangelo Merisi), 1571-1610

*Knight of Malta, c. 1609*



Caravaggio was a baroque painter whose style is distinguished by striking realism and a dramatic use of light. Caravaggio's turbulent life was marked by arrests and periods of imprisonment. The Knights of Malta were a charitable organization founded in Jerusalem in 1050 to provide care for poor and sick pilgrims in the Holy Land. After the loss of Christian territory in the Holy Land, the Order relocated first to Rhodes, and then to Malta in 1530.

After fleeing Rome, Caravaggio took refuge in Malta where he met the Grand Master of the Knights of Malta. In this painting, Caravaggio reconciled conflicting aspects of the Knights of Malta who were both charitable and militant. Caravaggio conveys this duality by portraying the Grand Master resting his left hand on his sword while holding his rosary in his right hand. His subject is elderly – he was in his mid seventies in 1609, and yet his rigid stance projects control and leadership.

*Tooth Puller, 1637*



Caravaggio often chose models from the lower classes. This image is excruciatingly uncomfortable. One can only speculate about his reason for choosing this subject.

## Sala delle Nicchie

Peter Paul Rubens, 1577-1640



*Four Philosophers, c. 1611*

The group portrait commemorates the humanist Justus Lipsius, Ruben's brother Philip, and the lawyer Johannes Woverius. A self portrait of Rubens is on the left. The central figures are Lipsius and Philip. Woverius is on the right. Lipsius's pet dog Mopsus may have been included as a symbol of loyalty and affection.<sup>6</sup> His affection for his dogs was well known. Lipsius was a renown classicist who believed that "philosophizing was a common lived experience engaging and uniting student and teacher personally."<sup>7</sup>

Rubens learned about classical antiquity and Italian Renaissance art during his extended stay in Italy from 1600 to 1608. While in Italy, he obtained a contemporary copy of a Roman portrait bust believed to represent the Stoic philosopher Seneca. Rubens brought the bust back to Antwerp and used it as a model for the bust in the upper right corner of the *Four Philosophers*.

<sup>6</sup>"A Second Self-Portrait in Rubens's 'Four Philosophers'" Nico van Hout: *The Burlington Magazine*, Vol. 142, No. 1172 (Nov., 2000), pp. 694-697.

<sup>7</sup>"Stoics and Neostoics: Rubens and the Circle of Lipsius" by Mark Morford, *The Journal of Modern History*, The University of Chicago Press, Vol. 66, No. 3 (Sep., 1994), p. 577.





# Chapter 10

## Special Places



View from the Kaffee House in the Boboli Gardens

Florence invites the visitor to wander. Chapter 10 suggests a selection of small museums, sites of special interest, and places to take a coffee break.

### 10.1 Mercato Centrale

Lunch at Nerbone on Via Dell'Ariento, near San Lorenzo.



Nerbone is a great place for lunch.

The Mercato Centrale is the 'super market' for Florence's housewives and chefs with beautifully displayed produce and gourmet foods. Shops sell sandwiches, wonderful cheese, and other delicacies. The cheese can be shrink wrapped to keep it fresh until you return home. Cheese can be imported into the U.S. but meat

and fruits products are not allowed. If your accommodation provides a kitchen, try the shop that sells fresh pasta on the ground floor. When buying fruits and vegetables, ask the grocer to select the item for you. In most places, customers are expected not to touch the produce. Check for the markets opening hours.

### 10.2 Palazzo Medici-Riccardi

Entrance on 3, Via Cavour



Benozzo Gozzoli, *Procession of the Magi*, south wall

Gozzoli's frescoes illustrate the journey of the Magi. Michelozzo designed the Chapel of the Magi for Cosimo il Vecchio to commemorate the Council of Churches held in 1430.<sup>1</sup> Cosimo subsidized the Council and insisted that the meeting be held in Florence. The Medici as quintessential businessmen recognized that financial favors for those with power and influence would yield high returns for his family. Emperor John VIII Palaiologos hoped that during his state visit to Italy, he could convince the two branches of Christianity to merge and form united front to the building threat of the Ottoman Turks. The procession on the east wall is set against a landscape. Viewers would

<sup>1</sup>The magi were Persian astrologers associated with the cult of Mithras during the Roman Empire. In the 2nd Century, the early Christian philosopher Tertullian redefined the magi as kings. This iconography was carried forward in portrayals of the story of the birth of Christ.

have understood that showing Cosimo il Vecchio riding on a brown mule referred to another peacemaker, Christ, who entered Jerusalem on a donkey.

### 10.3 Cappuccino Breaks



Boboli Garden, Kaffee Haus

Along with cups of traditional espresso, macchiato, or cappuccino, many coffee bars offer decaffeinated coffee. The Italian word is decaffeinato (cappuccino, bevande, caffè, tè). Table service is more expensive than standing at the bar. For the best view with your coffee, try the Kaffee Haus in the Boboli Garden. It's a great Sunday destination.



Cantinetta dei Verrazzano

There are numerous places to buy pizza, sandwiches, and spectacular baked goods. One of my favorites for cappuccino, pastry, or lunch is Cantinetta dei Verrazzano, Via dei Tavolini 18/20.



# Chapter 11

## Side by Side

Renaissance Images and their sources of inspiration in classical antiquity.

### Bacchus



Bacchus, Roman  
AD 150-200,  
British Museum



Bacchus,  
Michelangelo,  
1496, Bargello

### Seated Mother and Child



Roman, Vatican



Arnolfo, Madonna with  
Glass Eyes, 1296, Duomo  
Museum

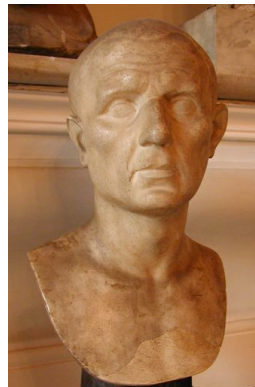
### Portrait Bust



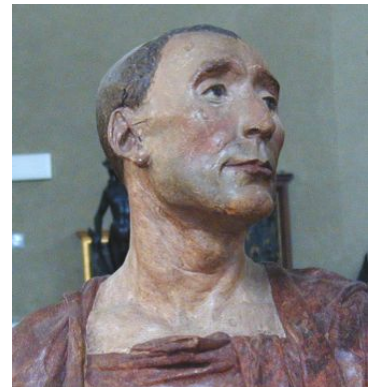
Portrait Bust Roman,  
Vatican



Cellini, *Cosimo I de  
Medici*, Bargello, c. 1545



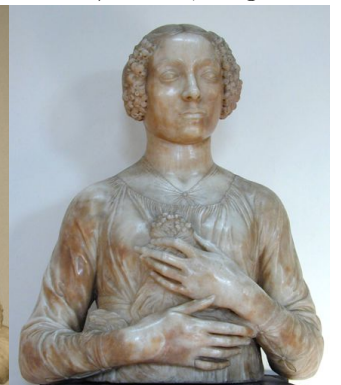
Roman, Capitoline



Donatello, *Niccolo' da  
Uzzano*, c. 1430, Bargello



Antonia, Roman AD  
40-50, British Museum



Verrocchio, *Woman With  
Flowers*, 1475, Bargello

## Reclining Figures



*Dying Gaul*, Roman copy of 3rd century BC Greek sculpture, Capitoline, Rome



Michelangelo, *Night*, c. 1526, Medici Chapel

## Musical Children



Roman, Capitoline Museum, Rome



Luca della Robbia, Cantoria, c. 1431, Duomo Museum

## Classical Heads



Apollo, 1st c Roman copy of 5th c BC Greek, British Museum



Michelangelo, *David*, 1501

## Statesmen



Roman, Man in Toga, 4th c AD, British Museum



Donatello, *Jeremiah*, 1423, Duomo Museum



## Influence of Praxiteles, Greek, 4th century BC



Roman, Vatican Museum



Donatello, David, 1408, Bargello

## Bronze Equestrian Monuments



Marcus Aurelius (replica), 161-180 AD, Rome



Giambologna, *Cosimo I*, 1595, Piazza Signoria

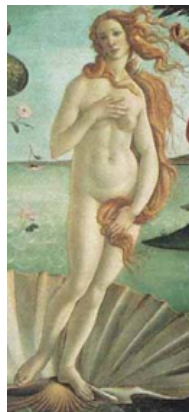


Giambologna and Pietro Tacca, *Grand Duke Ferdinando I*, 1608, Piazza Annunziata

## From Venus to Eve



*Capitoline Venus*, 2nd century AD, Capitoline Museum, Rome



*Birth of Venus*, Botticelli, detail, 1485, Uffizi





# Chapter 12

## Practical Hints for Florence Adventures



Jennifer and Richard Greenfield

### 12.1 The Basics

#### 12.1.1 Advance Museum Tickets

Make a reservation for the Uffizi and Palazzo Pitti well in advance to avoid long lines and also to ensure a time slot of your choice. Most hotels will make museum reservations for you.

#### 12.1.2 Plan Your Day

You may be the sort of visitor who likes to meander in a relaxed fashion without an agenda. But if you are like me, you will want to organize your time to ensure that you don't miss something of special interest. For example, the cloister of the Badia Fiorentina is only open briefly Monday afternoons. The Ghirlandaio cenacolo has limited morning hours. Most churches close mid day. You can make the most of your visit to Florence if you plan ahead. Pay attention to location and opening hours and create your own itinerary. I like to balance museums with smaller sites. Leaving time for

cappuccino or gelato is a must. I suggest creating a daily planner for each day of your visit.

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## 12.3 Artists Dates

Artist	From	To
Alberti, Leon Battista	1404	1472
Ammannati, Bartolommeo	1511	1592
Andrea da Firenze	1343	1377
Angelico, Fra	1400	1455
Arnolfo di Cambio	1245	1302
Bandinelli, Baccio	1493	1560
Bartolomeo, Fra	1475	1517
Beccafumi, Domenico	1485	1551
Bellini, Giovanni	1433	1516
Benedetto da Maiano	1442	1497
Bernini, Gian Lorenzo	1598	1680
Botticelli, Sandro	1445	1510
Bronzino, Agnolo	1503	1572
Brunelleschi, Filippo	1377	1446
Canova, Antonio	1757	1822
Caravaggio (Michelangelo Merisi)	1571	1610
Carracci, Annibale	1560	1609
Castagno, Andrea del	1421	1457
Cellini, Benevenuto	1500	1571
Cimabue	1240	1302
Cranach, Lucas Elder	1472	1553
Daddi, Bernardo	1312	1348
Dante Alighieri	1265	1321
Donatello	1380	1466
Duccio, di Buoninsegna	1255	1319
Dyck, Anthony Van	1599	1641
Fiorentino, Rosso	1494	1540
Gaddi, Agnolo	1369	1396
Gaddi, Taddeo	1300	1427
Gentile da Fabriano	1370	1455
Ghiberti, Lorenzo	1379	1494
Ghirlandaio, Domenico	1449	1494
Giambologna (Jean Boulogne)	1529	1705
Giordano, Luca	1632	1510
Giorgione	1476	1337
Giotto di Bondone	1267	1482
Goes, Hugo van der	1440	1497
Gozzoli, Benozzo	1420	1519
Leonardo da Vinci	1452	1519
Lippi, Filippino	1457	1504
Lippi, Fra' Filippo	1406	1469

Artist	From	To
Lorenzo the Magnificent	1449	1492
Machiavelli, Niccolò	1469	1527
Mantegna, Andrea	1431	1506
Martini, Simone	1284	1344
Masaccio	1401	1428
Masolino	1383	1440
Memling, Hans	1330	1394
Memmi, Lippo	1317	1347
Michelangelo, Buonarroti	1475	1564
Michelino, Domenico	1417	1491
Monaco, Lorenzo	1370	1425
Nanni di Banco	1384	1421
Orcagna (Andrea di Cione)	1344	1368
Parmigianino	1503	1540
Passavanti, Fra' Jacopo	1300	1357
Perugino (Pietro Vanucci)	1450	1523
Petrarch, Francesco	1304	1376
Piero della Francesca	1416	1492
Pisanello	1377	1455
Pisano, Giovanni	1245	1320
Pisano, Nicola	1200	1278
Pollaiuolo, Antonio	1432	1498
Pollaiuolo, Piero	1441	1496
Pontormo, Jacopo	1494	1556
Raphael, Sanzio	1483	1520
Robbia, Andrea della	1435	1525
Robbia, Luca della	1399	1482
Rosa, Salvatore	1615	1673
Rosso Fiorentino	1494	1541
Rubens, Peter Paul	1577	1640
Ruysdael, Jacob van	1628	1682
Sansovino, Andrea	1470	1529
Sarto, Andrea del	1486	1530
Signorelli, Luca	1441	1523
Tintoretto (Jacopo Robusti)	1518	1594
Titian (Tiziano Vecellio)	1488	1576
Uccello, Paolo	1397	1475
Vasari, Giorgio	1511	1574
Velazquez, Diego	1559	1660
Veneziano, Domenico	1410	1431
Veronese, Paolo	1528	1588
Verrocchio, Andrea del	1435	1488

## 12.4 Medici Timeline

### Milestones, historic events, and the arts

Dates in red = rule of one of the Medici begins

Medici Ruler	Event	Milestone
1252		Gold "fiorino" (Florin) first minted in Florence
<b>1360</b>		Giovanni di Bicci de' Medici (d. 1429) creates family wealth.
	1401	Competition for <i>Gates of Paradise</i>
	1417	Brunelleschi begins design for Cupola of Cathedral
	1425	Masaccio begins painting Brancacci Chapel
<b>1434</b>		Cosimo il Vecchio (1389-1464), establishes family political dynasty. Supports charities, literature, arts. Creates largest library in Europe, with Greek sources, including works of Plato, from Constantinople. Supports Ghiberti, Brunelleschi, Donatello, Alberti, Fra Angelico, Uccello
	1435	Donatello's sculpts bronze <i>David</i>
	1438	Fra Angelico paints <i>Annunciation</i> for S. Marco
	1442	Filippo Lippi paints <i>Annunciation</i> for San Lorenzo
<b>1464</b>		Piero (1416-1469), son of Cosimo il Vecchio. Brief, popular rule
<b>1469</b>		Lorenzo the Magnificent (1449-1492), son of Piero. He and Giuliano rule as tyrants. City exceeds past cultural achievements. High Florentine Renaissance. Time of Botticelli, Ghirlandaio, Michelangelo, Raphael
1478		Giuliano (1453-1478), son of Piero, assassinated in Duomo during Pazzi revolt
	1483	Ghirlandaio decorates Sassetti Chapel for Santa Trinita
	1484	Botticelli paints <i>Birth of Venus</i>
<b>1492</b>		Piero (1472 -1503), son of Lorenzo, rules for 2 years
	1494	Charles VIII of France invades Florence. Medici exiled until 1512.

Medici Ruler	Event	Milestone
	1494	Savonarola emerges as leader of Florence
	1498	Savonarola killed by Inquisition
	1504	Michelangelo's <i>David</i> installed in front of Palazzo Vecchio
<b>1512</b>		Giuliano (1479-1516), son of Lorenzo returned to power by Spanish after defeating French
	1513	Machiavelli starts writing <i>The Prince</i>
<b>1516</b>		Lorenzo (1492-1519), son of Piero, named Duke of Urbino by Pope Leo X. Leo X is a Medici pope and son of Lorenzo the Magnificent.
1519		Giulio (1478-1534), illegitimate son of Giuliano, becomes Pope Clement VII after abdicating in favor of his own illegitimate son, Alessandro
<b>1523</b>		Allesandro (1510-1537) becomes hereditary Duke of Florence.
	1526	Michelangelo working on sculptures in Medici Chapel
	1538	Titian paints Uffizi's <i>Venus Urbino</i>
	1545	Cellini begins <i>Perseus</i>
	1560	Ammannati sculpts Neptune Fountain
<b>1569</b>		Cosimo I (1519-1574), descendant of Cosimo il Vecchio's brother, becomes Grand Duke in 1569. Absolute ruler who promotes arts as well as Tuscan economy and navy. Concentrates administration in a new Uffizi office building. Begins a small museum. Builds "Vasari" corridor connecting Pitti Palace and Palazzo Vecchio
<b>1574</b>		Francesco Medici (1541-1587), an ineffectual ruler
<b>1587</b>		Ferdinand (1549-1609), cardinal at age of 15, becomes Grand Duke. Tuscany flourishes
	1596	Giambologna sculpts equestrian monument of Cosimo I for Piazza Signoria