

# THE ART of FRESCOES in FLORENCE

Jewels of Italy's  
Renaissance Capital





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Benozzo Gozzoli, *Procession of the Magi: left-hand wall with angels in adoration* (detail).

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# the Art of the FRESCO

Florence has been the cradle of arts and culture for centuries and from the Medici to the present day, power and people have made an indelible mark on this uniquely enchanting city.

Stepping back in time to the 14th century, Florence's monumental walls in jewel-like churches and convents were a blank canvas used by artists to communicate stories of humanity and faith. Through a revolutionary technique in the history of art – the art of the *fresco* – Florentine artists became the world's foremost exponents and experts. Standing the test of time over hundreds of years, *frescoes* in Florence are considered one of the city's greatest artistic signatures. The innovative centuries-old *fresco* technique — '*fresco*' meaning fresh, or wet – is a method of mural painting with water-based pigments on freshly applied plaster.

From the first prehistoric cave drawings to today's contemporary graffiti or street art, murals have continuously been a powerful medium to communicate a message, and the city is a treasure-trove of the most impressive *frescoes* just waiting to be discovered. Artists competed for, collaborated on, and created spectacular scenes of scintillating colours and mesmerising fine details which continue to astound and amaze viewers to this day.





Immerse yourself  
in the city's painted  
masterpieces.

Follow our exclusive  
guide for guests of  
The St. Regis Florence  
and join us on a walking  
trail of ten unique  
discoveries, each to be  
explored at your own  
pace, including some  
off-the-beaten-track gems.



# Welcome to FLORENCE







The St. Regis Florence's prestigious location in Piazza Ognissanti is the ideal start for exploring Florence's marvellous painted stories of saints and sinners, faith and freedom. In celebration of the city's unique cultural heritage, we invite you on a journey through our exclusively designed walking tour to discover the multitude of extraordinary *frescoes* right at your doorstep. Throughout our walk we shall encounter *frescoes* in churches and convents, some of which were commissioned by the most important and wealthy dynasties in Renaissance Florence; from bankers to merchants and traders, each with their own chapel to honour their families. We will also embark on a visit to a fresco housed in a former privately-owned Palazzo full of splendour and opulence.

Though we may perhaps be less familiar with the names of the grand Renaissance families that dominated the political and cultural scene of the time, their power now lost over centuries, we have been left with an immense cultural heritage executed by some of the most revered artists in the whole canon of art history including Giotto, Masaccio, Masolino, Fra Angelico, and Botticelli.



# Chiesa di San Salvatore in Ognissanti

Sandro Botticelli,  
*Sant'Agostino nello studio*  
*Saint Augustine in His Study*

Ghirlandaio,  
*San Girolamo nello studio*  
*Saint Jerome in His Study*

What better way to start our exploration of *frescoes* in Florence than with the family altar of an actual explorer!

Located on the same elegant piazza as St. Regis Florence, the graceful façade of Chiesa di San Salvatore in Ognissanti (All Saints Church) hides a remarkable number of Renaissance *frescoes* painted by the most celebrated names in art history; Ghirlandaio and Botticelli, both born and bred in the city and true Florentine masters. This altar honours the Vespucci family - their descendant Amerigo Vespucci, 15th century explorer, navigator, and cartographer was famed for his voyages into the Americas (hence the name).



As you enter the central nave, look either side of you to see two *frescoes* of thinkers seated in mirroring positions. Though seemingly similar, they are painted by two different artists and depict the two founding ‘fathers’ of the Catholic Church. Painted in 1480 in vividly brilliant colours, Ghirlandaio’s *Saint Jerome* sits on your left looking straight at you – almost as if you had interrupted him. He is

**Saint Jerome  
in His Study** (1480 ca)  
Ghirlandaio, Domenico  
(Bigordi, Domenico  
1449-1494)



**Saint Augustine  
in His Study** (1480)

Botticelli, Sandro  
(1445-1510)

known for translating the Bible into Latin and is the patron saint of translators and scholars. On your right is Botticelli's *Saint Augustine* – the philosopher and theologian lost in thought and unaware of your presence. This first stop is a powerful reminder to take your time and observe your surroundings – unexpected treasures are hidden in every nook and cranny of Florence!





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## DID YOU KNOW

Sandro Botticelli is buried in this Church!  
Can you find out where his tombstone lies?

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## DON'T MISS

The spectacular crucifix with a unique deep blue background. It was painted by none other than Giotto, whose rich-blue Scrovegni chapel in Padova paved the way for the *fresco* technique and is a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

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## THE RESTORER'S VOICE

Restoration had to take place after a major flood in 1966, but this led to a curious discovery! In the book behind St. Augustine's head with the geometric demonstrations (of Euclid's theorem), the inscription traced on the book's page reads, "Where is Friar Martin? He isn't here, he has gone outside Porta a Prato." Evidently this is a prank, on Botticelli's part, regarding a particularly "absent" friar he had noticed whilst at work on this *fresco*.

14 portions of plaster called 'giornate' were allocated for Botticelli's work. 'Giornata' (literally 'a days work') refers to the amount of painting that could be done in a single day - before the plaster dried and no more pigment could be applied. The amount could vary depending on the artist's experience, speed and skill. This means Botticelli completed the *Saint Augustine fresco* in just a little over two weeks! Look closely beneath Saint Augustine's nose and you might spot a faint boundary line between two 'giornate'.





# Basilica di Santa Maria Novella

Ghirlandaio,  
*Nascita della Vergine*  
*Birth of the Virgin*

A 'who's who' of the Renaissance artworld, these *frescoes* by celebrated artists Masaccio, Ghirlandaio, Paolo Uccello and Filippino Lippi showcase unique, ground-breaking contributions to the *fresco* art form.

The birth of a new Renaissance style can be seen in Masaccio's *The Holy Trinity, with the Virgin and Saint John and donors*, one of his final works before his untimely death at only 26 years old. It is one of the first *frescoes* to introduce linear perspective in art – an innovation initially made by celebrated Renaissance architect Brunelleschi, who originally designed Palazzo Giuntini, the home of St. Regis Florence. In the Tornabuoni Chapel Domenico Ghirlandaio painted one of the vastest cycles of *frescoes* in the whole city - depicting scenes from the life of the Virgin Mary and the life of St. John the Baptist. For this laborious task he enlisted his workshop to help... most likely including a 13-year-old Michelangelo, who would go on to display his own mastery of the *fresco* technique in Rome's spectacular Sistine Chapel.





Ghirlandaio sets these biblical scenes in contemporary Florentine society – with incredibly accurate fashion and hairstyles from his time. Notice how each lady wears an entirely different robe, in brocade or plain fabric, in the scene of the *Nativity of the Virgin*. Ghirlandaio is conveying



### Birth of the Virgin

detail  
(Ludovica Tornabuoni and  
other noblewomen)  
Tornabuoni Chapel  
Ghirlandaio, Domenico  
(Bigordi, Domenico  
1449-1494)

the sacred into everyday life. Our final masterpiece is Paolo Uccello's 15th century *Chiostro Verde* (Green Cloister), considered a unique gem in Florence due to its revolutionary monochromatic colour scheme and elegance depicting stories from the book of Genesis.





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## DID YOU KNOW

The cycles of *frescoes* from the *Chiostro Verde* were severely damaged during a flood in Florence in 1966 and have painstakingly been restored by the celebrated Opificio delle Pietre Dure museum in Florence, originally founded as a restoration workshop in 1588 by the Grand Duke of Tuscany Ferdinando I de' Medici. It is due to this much needed restoration and safe-guarding that we are lucky enough to still be able to see them, sadly out of their original context, but in the safe climatic-controlled realm of the museum space.

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## DON'T MISS

Look closely at Masaccio's *fresco* and you will notice perfectly symmetrical arrangements of the figures and a background that seems to recede into space. It is said that he used a piece of string, fixed with a nail at the central vanishing point to create this effect - the marks from this are still visible to this day.

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## THE RESTORER'S VOICE

During its 1966 restoration, most of the mural paintings in the *Chiostro Verde* were torn from the walls of the cloister. Through an elaborate technique, only the superficial paint layer was removed and applied to a supporting canvas through the use of animal glues made of "lime and cacio": a secret recipe found in the famous *Libro dell'Arte* written by the Florentine painter Cennino Cennini between 1390 and 1437. This ancient tenacious glue is, to this day, entirely compatible with the *fresco* materials and helps maintain the brilliance of the *fresco* colours for today's viewers despite being torn off from a wall.





# Basilica di San Lorenzo

Bronzino,  
*Martirio di S. Lorenzo*  
*Martyrdom of Saint Lawrence*

With its raw and unfinished façade, the Basilica of San Lorenzo is one of the oldest and largest basilicas of Florence. It is also referred to as the Medici's Basilica, as it is the burial place of some of the most illustrious members of the iconic banking dynasty. Numerous masterpieces adorn San Lorenzo, however it is host to one of the most spectacular and scandalous *frescoes*. As you walk along the left side of the central nave, Bronzino's *Martyrdom of Saint Lawrence* reigns supreme. Commissioned by Cosimo I de' Medici, it is exemplary of the artist's characteristic Mannerist style. The *fresco* was so divisive it caused an uproar upon its completion, heavily criticised for its enthusiastic use of the nude figure. Through these nude depictions, Bronzino renders homage to Michelangelo's work and skill in portraying sculptural bodies in art. Bronzino's work can be understood to mark the end of an era for the mastery of the *fresco* technique, leading the way to the development of oil paint and its future predominance as an artistic medium.





**Martyrdom  
of Saint Lawrence** - detail

Bronzino  
(Agnolo di Cosimo Tori 1503-1572)

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## DID YOU KNOW

It remains a mystery as to why the marble façade, due to be completed by Michelangelo, was never finished - perhaps due to lack of funds or materials.

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## DON'T MISS

The simple elegance of the old Sacristy completed by Brunelleschi in 1428 as well as the Cappella Martelli with a celebrated Annunciation scene executed by Filippo Lippi.

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## THE RESTORER'S VOICE

Thanks to Bronzino and his collaborators, including, most famously, Alessandro Allori, oil painting was also employed on the wall support, with an oily preparation based on two pigments called "Biacca" and "Minio" that cannot be used in *fresco* on their own.





# Palazzo Medici Riccardi

Benozzo Gozzoli,  
*Corteo dei Magi*  
*Procession of the Magi*

As we walk through the city, our next stop brings us into what was once a private palazzo – the stunning Palazzo Medici Riccardi. The *frescoes* are part of a renowned cycle painted by Benozzo Gozzoli and are considered one of his absolute masterpieces. Gozzoli had trained under Fra Angelico, a familiar figure by now.

The *frescoes* are located in the Medici family's own private chapel – the first private chapel to be authorised in a Florentine Palazzo. The *frescoes* in the Chapel of the Procession of the Magi depict, starting from the eastern façade, the journey of three biblical kings (the Three Wise Men) to Bethlehem to visit the new-born Christ. It is a kaleidoscope of fine details, with a profusion of figures, animals, and landscapes. Gozzoli used the most expensive of materials to colour the scenes, such as Lapis Lazuli and gold leaf which would dazzle in the candlelight.





The procession of the Magi is depicted in a grand and elaborate manner; you can almost feel the solemnity of the scene. Some of the figures here are contemporary citizens, including members of the Medici family and other prominent heads of families such as the Piccolomini, Sforza and Malatesta. This not only illustrated the biblical narrative but also served as a celebration of the



**Procession of the Magi**  
 detail (pool with animals)  
 left-hand wall  
 with angels in adoration  
 Gozzoli, Benozzo  
 (1420-1497)

Medici's power and influence in Florence. Set against breathtaking landscapes and architectural backdrops, it exemplifies Gozzoli's skill in creating intricate details and a sense of depth, reflecting the exuberance and opulence of the Renaissance period. A true feast for the senses, Gozzoli's masterpiece is a testament to his captivating talent to this day.





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## DID YOU KNOW

Gozzoli inserted his own self-portrait in one of the frescoes — he is donning a red beret, can you see him?

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## DON'T MISS

Filippo Lippi's painting on panel depicting the *Madonna with Child*, one of the masterpieces of Florentine art dated circa 1460s. For many years it was deemed lost to history until it was finally rediscovered in 1907.

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## THE RESTORER'S VOICE

Embellishing this sumptuous pictorial cycle of the procession of the Magi are scintillating metal foils added to the walls. Gold leaf could also be used to obtain a dazzling effect, but there was an abundance of tin foils in the city as they were vastly employed for metal armour and weapons in Florence. The foils were applied to the wall "a missione", a technique involving an oil-resin mixture made from boiled linseed oil, white lead, verdigris, and sandarac.



# Cenacolo di Sant'Apollonia

Andrea del Castagno,  
*Cenacolo*  
*The Last Supper*

The Cenacolo di Sant'Apollonia in Florence is home to Andrea del Castagno's exceptional *The Last Supper*.

This *fresco* is located in what was the ancient and monumental dining-hall of the Benedictine nuns who worshipped Saint Apollonia. The nuns, being under strict vows of seclusion, with limited contact with the external world, meant that this *fresco* was barely seen for over 400 years! We are presented with the iconic biblical scene of Jesus Christ dining with his disciples and the moment of betrayal by Judas, whilst in the upper quadrant, as if time is accelerating, we witness the crucifixion. Examine the colours in the robes of the figures, their stark contrast makes your eye jump from one figure to the next. Castagno creates a visual rhythm of hues by placing contrasting marble slabs behind each disciple and employs the visual simplicity of a white decorated tablecloth just below.







**The Last Supper** (1450)  
detail (John sleeping)  
in the refectory,  
Convent of Sant'Apollonia

Andrea Del Castagno  
(1421-1457)



Castagno's interpretation of the scene showcases his understanding of perspective with architectural elements to create depth, almost elongating the very same room we are in. His ability to convey the emotional weight of the moment makes this *fresco* a significant work within the realm of *The Last Supper* depictions in the canon of art history.



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## DID YOU KNOW

Many are familiar with Leonardo da Vinci's *The Last Supper* in Milan's Santa Maria delle Grazie, yet this work was painted almost 50 years prior!

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## DON'T MISS

Castagno's preparatory black and white *frescoes* just opposite *The Last Supper* – they seem like incredibly bare sketches in comparison to his final masterpiece, giving you an important insight into the working methods of Renaissance artists.





**The Last Supper** (1450)  
in the refectory,  
Convent of Sant'Apollonia

Andrea Del Castagno  
(1421-1457)

## THE RESTORER'S VOICE

The preparatory drawings are made on what is known as "arriccio" and were used to show a patron or client the painter's composition before it was actually painted on the wall. These drawings also served as a working tool for the painter to estimate the nature and duration of the task. These drawings were generally made with a pigment called Sinopia, named after the city of Sinope on the Black Sea - where this colour originally came from.



# Chiostro dello Scalzo

Andrea del Sarto,  
*La carità*  
*Charity*



Let's move onto another cloister, slightly off the beaten track, where you might be only one of a handful of visitors. So far we have seen only one example of the use of a single colour in *frescoes*: the monochromatic style of the Chiostro Verde. A perfect example of new ways in Renaissance Florence of depicting religious scenes, monochromatic colour schemes allowed artists to challenge and freely explore their skills in modelling light and shadow (whilst saving money on extra colours!). Here lies another radical example of *fresco* style, almost like a black and white photograph.

As we enter the small portico of the Compagnia dei Disciplinati di San Giovanni Battista we arrive at the Chiostro dello Scalzo. Named *scalzo* (barefoot) this cloister refers to the monks of the Confraternity of St. John the Baptist, whose cross bearer was known to

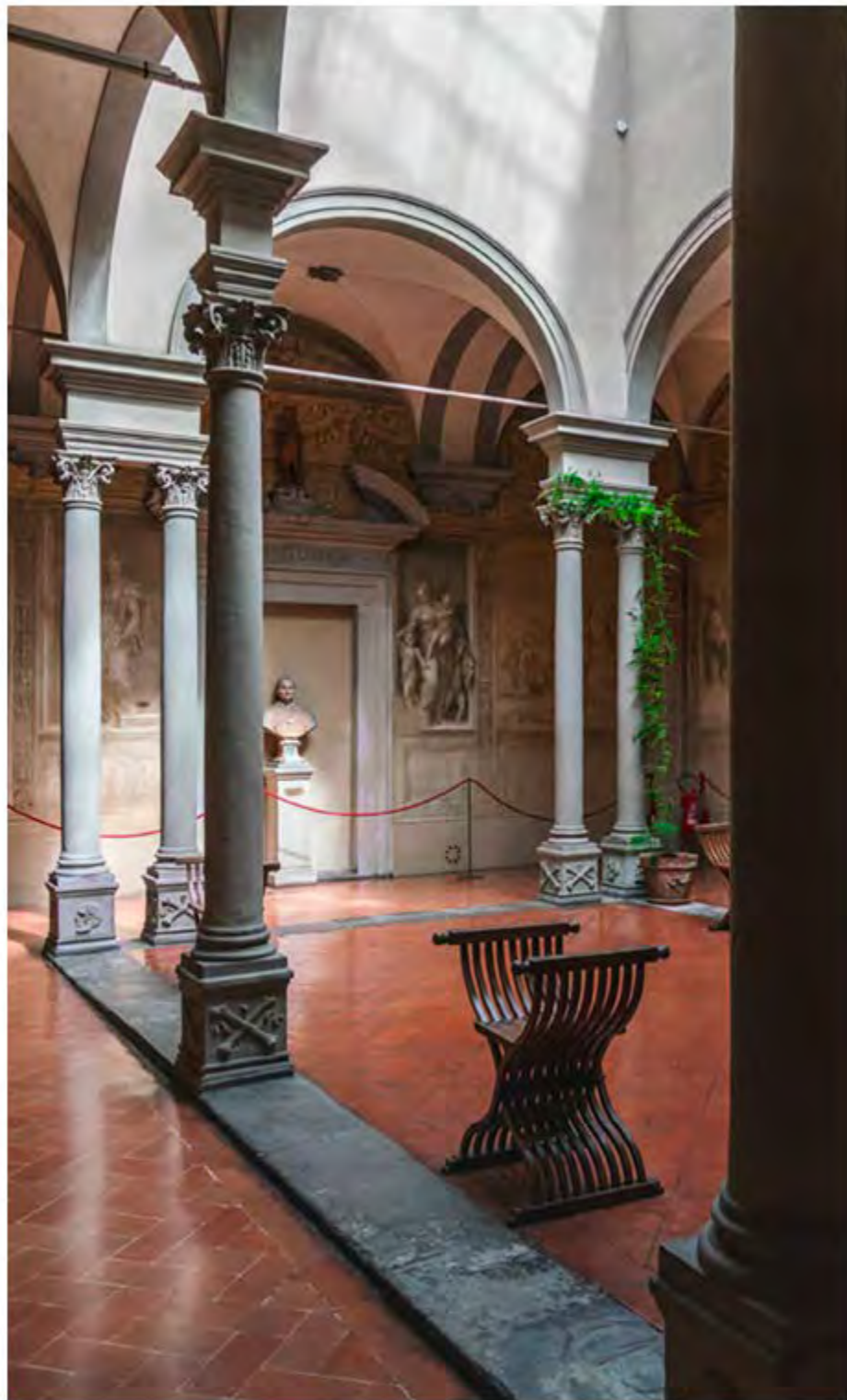




**Charity** (1513 ca.),  
 Andrea del Sarto  
 (1487 ca.-1530)

go barefoot at their regular processions through the city. Created by Andrea del Sarto with support from painter Franciabigio we are presented with a cycle of 12 scenes from the life of St. John the Baptist, Florence's patron saint. We can follow from his birth all the way to his execution, alongside images of the four virtues (Faith, Hope, Charity and Justice) in each corner.

Del Sarto employs an exceptionally limited palette of greys, browns, and earthy tones executed in 'grisaille' (a French word standing for 'greyness'). His style is characterized by its simplicity, the scenes are as if they were executed in pencil, yet the emotional depth and expressiveness of the figures are remarkable - this intimate cloister is a must-see in the city.



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## DID YOU KNOW

Andrea del Sarto was part of the confraternity of St. John, and would have felt a deeply personal affinity in the creation of these *frescoes* over a period of 17 years. Celebrated Renaissance author and painter Giorgio Vasari, who wrote a book on the lives of the most famous painters of the time and famously painted the dome of the Florentine Duomo, regarded del Sarto as a 'flawless painter'.

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## DON'T MISS

The shadows and details on the robes in each scene, especially the crisp detail of Christ's robe in the 'Baptism' scene.

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## THE RESTORER'S VOICE

The monochrome technique was a painter's favourite in depicting religious subjects, perhaps as it was considered the most appropriate for dealing with abstract themes. As we have previously seen in Paolo Uccello's *Chiostro Verde*, a colour called "verdeterra", literally "green-ground", was normally used as a base layer. Cennino Cennini in his *Libro dell'Arte* identifies a number of settings where this pictorial genre could be used: internal chambers, loggias and external areas called "poggiuoli" - even though outdoor *frescoes* were not ideal as the pigments tend to degrade with humidity, losing their brilliance. Nonetheless, this "green ground" colour has always been preferred instead of the very expensive green from Malachite minerals because of its ease in execution and its affordable price.





# Convento di San Marco

Beato Angelico,  
*Annunciazione*  
*Annunciation*

This convent was home to a Dominican confraternity of friars, one of whom excelled as an artist: celebrated early Renaissance painter Fra (father) Angelico. As you enter the cloister, you will immediately notice his grand *fresco* in honour of the confraternity's own saint, St. Dominic, adoring the Crucifix. Your first window into the mastery of Fra Angelico's works is the realistic detail of the bulging blueish veins on St. Dominic's hands. As you make your way into the Sala Capitolare you will see a monumental scene of the crucifixion, Fra Angelico's largest *fresco*. Sit for a few minutes and observe the changing colours and contrasting hues, taking in the solemnity of the whole scene. Through the room dedicated to portraits is the Cenacolo (dining room) where Ghirlandaio depicted the *The Last Supper* in painstaking detail. Time to head into the dormitory upstairs, where Fra Angelico's *frescoes* adorn the 43 cells - where the friars lived - and corridors of the convent. The various religious scenes focusing on the life of Christ and the Virgin





Mary offer a unique spiritual experience for both the resident friars and today's visitors. Indeed, each *fresco* was tailored to create an atmosphere of contemplation and meditation, an invitation to reflect on faith and devotion in private rooms. Take a moment to observe the *Annunciation*

**Annunciation**  
 Beato Angelico  
 (1387-1455)



*fresco* in pride of place, get up close to the delicate brushwork and the serene depictions of the angel Gabriel and the Virgin Mary. Fra Angelico's work in San Marco is testament to his mastery and his dedication to infusing art with spiritual significance.





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## DID YOU KNOW

This convent is one of the rare instances to take a real step back in time and experience how friars lived in the 15th century.

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## DON'T MISS

The masterpiece *frescoes* in each cell. If you were a friar, which room would you pick? Can you spot the peacock, cat and birds flying into Ghirlandaio's *The Last Supper*? Have you noticed how the rim of the red wine glass has made a mark on the tablecloth? And did you notice the angel's wings in Fra Angelico's *Annuciation*? They are kaleidoscopic in colour, textural in feel, and almost feather-like. It is one of the most beautiful and celebrated details in the history of art.

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## THE RESTORER'S VOICE

As it is such an ancient technique, only colours found naturally in the form of minerals can be used in *frescoes*. Because of their mineral origin, the colours are also called 'terre', or earths, and are prepared by finely grinding specific rocks down to a powder called a pigment. Natural pigments can have different colours such as yellow, red, green, brown and black. The colour blue in *frescoes* is extremely rare because it could only be found in precious Lapis Lazuli and thus very expensive to use. Black shades came from Charcoal and whites were obtained from lime or by simply leaving the plaster base visible. The latter technique requires a perfect knowledge of the *fresco* material and was precisely the one used by Fra Angelico in these wonderful 'chiaroscuro' or light-dark scenes.



# Basilica di Santa Croce

Giotto,  
*Banchetto di Erode*  
*Herod's Feast*



We are now in one of the most significant Franciscan churches in Italy. A prominent landmark of the city, the Basilica of Santa Croce hosts some of the most famous *frescoes* by Giotto.

He is widely considered to be the father of Renaissance art, reigning supreme and adorning two chapels named after two wealthy Renaissance banking families: the Cappella Peruzzi and the Cappella Bardi. They had been considered masterpieces for so long that even Michelangelo came to study them! Sadly, the Bardi Chapel, which took Giotto eight years to complete, is undergoing a much-needed restoration over a period of three years; you may just be able to spot some restorers in action!



Scenes from the Life of  
**Saint John the Baptist: Herod's Feast**  
detail (violinist)

Giotto  
(Giotto di Bondone 1266-1336)



The Peruzzi chapel is dedicated to St. John the Baptist, whose scenes you see on the left wall, and St. John the Evangelist, on the right wall. These scenes were actually painted in a slightly different technique than the traditional *fresco* – they were executed ‘a secco’ (dry). This meant that the paint was added onto a completely dry wall rather than a ‘wet’ base as we have seen so far. This is much quicker to execute, however since the paint is not immediately absorbed by the supporting wall, it becomes rather fragile over centuries. Giotto achieves a remarkable sense of movement with a masterful use of colour, yet the figures remain monumental and classical. These are entirely characteristic of the painter’s style, helping him showcase human emotion and religious devotion.



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## DID YOU KNOW

The *frescoes* in the Cappella Peruzzi were only discovered in 1840... the whole wall had been covered in white paint in 1714 due to a plague outbreak! It was thought that covering the walls and their *frescoes* would sanitise the area, making the work of restorers so crucial in cultural heritage.

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## DON'T MISS

Michelangelo, Galileo and Machiavelli's tombs.

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## THE RESTORER'S VOICE

Unfortunately, the removal of the white paint over the *frescoes* damaged the Peruzzi Chapel. However, Giotto's paintings in the Bardi Chapel are much better preserved due to an interesting chemical technique. The pigment is incorporated into a crystalline veil during the process of "carbonation" of the lime, when it is chemically transformed on contact with carbon dioxide, from lime hydroxide (soluble) to lime carbonate (insoluble).





# Basilica di Santa Trinita

Ghirlandaio,  
*Stimate di San Francesco*  
*The Stigmata of Saint Francis*

St. Francis was a hugely admired saint in Florence and even in the Basilica of Santa Trinita do we find an homage to his life. Numerous chapels dedicated to some of the most important Florentine families can be seen. The last one on your right is the Sassetti Chapel, built for the eponymous powerful family with *frescoes* painted by Domenico Ghirlandaio. Celebrated for their intricate detail and vivid colours, Ghirlandaio's *frescoes* depict scenes from the life of St. Francis of Assisi. However, they are not just religious narratives but serve as a window into daily life in Florence during the 15th century. Amongst the portraits of contemporary figures you can spot the wealthy Sassetti banking dynasty who commissioned the *frescoes*. Spearheaded by Francesco Sassetti and his wife Nera, they are portrayed in a kneeling praying position to the lower left and right of the altarpiece, the central panel depicting Ghirlandaio's own *Adoration of the Shepherds*. This exceptional glimpse into Florentine life and society is considered Ghirlandaio's masterwork.





**The Stigmata of Saint Francis**  
 detail (imaginary view of Pisa),

Ghirlandaio, Domenico  
 (Bigordi, Domenico 1449-1494)

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## DID YOU KNOW

Ghirlandaio excelled in both oil paint and *frescoes*. You can find some of his most famous paintings at the Metropolitan Museum in New York, the Louvre in Paris, The Thyssen-Bornemisza Museum in Madrid and Florence's very own Uffizi Museum.

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## DON'T MISS

Ghirlandaio's cameo, hidden in plain sight. There is a scene depicting the legend of the resurrection of a young child who had died falling off from a Florentine Palazzo, Palazzo Spini Feroni, which is still visible just across the street from the church. If you look closely to the right, you will find a rather elegant man sporting a red hat and proudly looking straight at you... this is none other than Ghirlandaio himself, adding his self-portrait into the scene!

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## THE RESTORER'S VOICE

The richly painted scene in the lower right, the *Funeral of Saint Francis*, was executed in only 28 days! We can see a beautiful blanket in the scene, deep blue in colour with a gilded decoration. The pigment used is the very expensive Azurite, a natural mineral consisting of basic copper carbonate from the copper mines of Silesia and Bohemia, referred to as "Alemannic blue". It cannot be used on its own in *fresco* painting, as direct contact with lime can cause it to turn brown in colour. To counteract this reaction, a special pigment called Morellone was invented. This mixture of red ochre and carbon black was used as a preparatory base on which Azurite was then added in order to keep its brilliant blue visible to this day.





# Chiesa di Santa Maria del Carmine

Filippo Lippi,  
*Liberazione di S. Pietro dal Carcere*  
*Saint Peter Freed from Prison*



The Church of Santa Maria del Carmine in Florence is renowned for hosting one of the masterpieces of early Renaissance art: the Brancacci Chapel. Home to the work of Masaccio and Masolino this is an example of collaborative work - both artists helped each other in the completion of this incredible cycle. These scenes from the life of St. Peter and St. Paul showcase a revolutionary approach to depicting space and human form in an almost sculptural way – the figures seem entirely three-dimensional. The commission was originally given to Masolino. However, he had to leave for Hungary, where he was painter to the King, and the task was handed to a 21-year-old Masaccio. By the time Masolino returned he found he had much to learn from his talented former student.

Compare Masaccio's *Expulsion from the Garden of Eden* on your left, famous for its desperate portrayal of *Adam and Eve*, with Masolino's *Original Sin* on your right.



Masaccio worked further with another contemporary artist, Filippino Lippi, on *St. Peter at his chair*.

Masaccio included contemporary artists in these religious depictions and grouped to the right of the chapel you can see his own self-portrait along with those

View of the  
right wall of the  
Brancacci Chapel

of the celebrated Masolino, Alberti and Brunelleschi. The *frescoes* exemplify the mastery of both artists' collaboration, showcasing the transition from the late Gothic style to the early Renaissance and setting the stage for the artistic advancements of the period.





## Saint Peter Freed from Prison

Lippi, Filippino (1457-1504)

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### DID YOU KNOW

Masaccio and Masolino's collaboration and individual contributions marked a true turning point in Renaissance art. Their use of light, perspective, and naturalistic portrayal of figures influenced subsequent generations of artists such as Leonardo da Vinci and Michelangelo who, according to Renaissance author Vasari, made a pilgrimage to these *frescoes* in order to study and be inspired from them.

Unfortunately, due to a fire in the 18th century, some parts of the original *frescoes* were damaged, but extensive restoration work has preserved much of their magnificence.

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### DON'T MISS

The other self-portrait by Filippino Lippi to the right of *The Dispute with Simon Mago*. He is the only figure looking out to you – can you spot him?

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### THE RESTORER'S VOICE

In 1670 changes were made to adapt the chapel to a late Baroque taste. Shortly afterwards in 1674 "censorship" interventions led to the covering, through painted leaves, of the nudity of Adam and Eve, probably at the behest of Cosimo III de' Medici, Grand Duke of Tuscany, whose attention to morality and decency is well documented. During the most recent restoration in 1981, the decision was made to remove the leaves, preferring the original creation of Masaccio and Masolino.

# outside the city's walls

## Badia a Passignano

Ghirlandaio,  
*Ultima cena*  
*The Last Supper*

The spectacular *Cenacolo* (*The Last Supper*) *fresco* painted by brothers Domenico and Davide Ghirlandaio can be discovered in one of the most enchanting locations along Tuscany's rolling hills. A mere 30 kilometres from Florence, the *fresco* can be admired in an exquisite home where spirituality, art, and nature converge.

The Badia di Passignano (Abbey of Passignano) is nestled amidst the church bells and picturesque vineyards of the Chianti region. Dating back to the 11th century, this complex was founded by the Vallombrosan monks and has played a crucial role in the cultural, religious, and agricultural life of the region. The complex was celebrated for its academic excellence for centuries, so much so that soon-to-be explorer Amerigo Vespucci studied at Passignano's own college in the 1400s. Completed in under four months in the summer of 1476, it is located in the monk's

refectory, acting as a poignant reminder of Christian theology's most significant events. It depicts the final meal Jesus shared with his disciples before his crucifixion as he announces that one of them will betray him. The striking wine-red hues allow tones of greens and white to burst from the scene. Examine the rich repertoire of facial expressions and details along the table – paper-thin glass vases and spectacular marble flooring offer a sense of perspective. You are standing where the monks would have quietly contemplated this scene as they ate. To this day, Ghirlandaio's masterpiece and the tranquil beauty of the complex's surroundings continues to charm its visitors and offer a moment of meditation and beauty.

Panorama with  
Badia a Passignano





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## DID YOU KNOW

This was a wedding location fit for a ruler: Lorenzo de Medici, known as Lorenzo the Magnificent, chose the abbey's site as a location for his daughter Maddalena's wedding in 1487.

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## DON'T MISS

The picturesque beauty of the surrounding vineyards produce the high-quality grapes used for making Chianti wine. Some of which are owned by the Antinori family, one of Italy's oldest and most prestigious wine-producing families who have contributed to the restoration of the site and its winemaking tradition. Discover the secrets of winemaking, a testament to the region's viticultural heritage as well as Passignano's own heritage.





### The Last Supper

Ghirlandaio, Domenico  
(Bigordi, Domenico 1449-1494)

## THE RESTORER'S VOICE

In order to create works with a sense of depth or perspective, painters used a series of techniques to carry over the preparatory drawing, previously made on paper, by tracing marks when the plaster was still fresh. Painters could use a cord soaked in Sinopia colour to create such tracings or direct engravings, made with a pointed metal instrument. They could also use a technique called squaring, using a grid made on paper (which itself only started being used in Europe in 1276) and placed onto the wall. Small holes were then drilled on the paper which was placed onto the wall, and with a gauze bag filled with black pigment, it was tapped along the perforated lines. The powder that penetrated through the holes thus left a dotted tracing line where painters could commence their work and create a perspectival effect.

## 1 CHIESA DI SAN SALVATORE IN OGNISSANTI

**Saint Augustine in His Study**, 1480,  
Botticelli, Sandro (1445-1510),  
2024©Foto Scala

**Saint Jerome in His Study**, 1480 ca.,  
Ghirlandaio, Domenico (Bigordi, Domenico 1449-1494),  
2024©Foto Scala



## 2 BASILICA DI SANTA MARIA NOVELLA

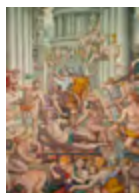
**Birth of the Virgin**

detail (Ludovica Tornabuoni and other noblewomen),  
Tornabuoni Chapel  
Ghirlandaio, Domenico (Bigordi, Domenico 1449-1494),  
2024©Foto Scala, Fondo Edifici di Culto - Ministero  
dell'Interno



## 3 BASILICA DI SAN LORENZO

**Martyrdom of Saint Lawrence** - detail,  
Bronzino (Agnolo di Cosimo Tori 1503-1572),  
2024©Foto Scala



## 4 PALAZZO MEDICI RICCARDI

**Corteo dei Magi:**  
**left-hand wall with angels in adoration**

detail (pool with animals),  
Gozzoli, Benozzo (1420-1497),  
2024©Foto Scala, courtesy of the Ministero Beni  
e Attività Culturali e del Turismo



## 5 CENACOLO DI SANT'APOLLONIA

**Last Supper**, 1450

detail (John sleeping),  
in the refectory, Convent of Sant'Apollonia,  
Andrea Del Castagno (1421-1457)  
DeAgostini Picture Library/2024©Foto Scala



## 6 CHIOSTRO DELLO SCALZO

**Charity**, 1513 ca.,  
Andrea del Sarto (1487 ca.-1530),  
2024©Foto Scala, courtesy of the Ministero Beni  
e Attività Culturali e del Turismo

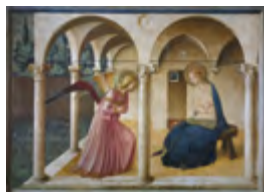


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## 7 CONVENTO DI SAN MARCO

### Annunciation

Beato Angelico (1387-1455),  
2024@Foto Scala, courtesy of the Ministero Beni  
e Attività Culturali e del Turismo



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## 8 BASILICA DI SANTA CROCE

### Scenes from the Life of Saint John the Baptist: Herod's Feast

detail (violinist)  
Giotto (Giotto di Bondone 1266-1336),  
2024@Foto Scala



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## 9 BASILICA DI SANTA TRINITA'

### The Stigmata of Saint Francis

detail (imaginary view of Pisa),  
Ghirlandaio, Domenico (Bigordi, Domenico 1449-1494),  
2024@Foto Scala



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## 10 CHIESA DI SANTA MARIA DEL CARMINE

### Saint Peter Freed from Prison

Lippi, Filippino (1457-1504),  
2024@Foto Scala, Fondo Edifici di Culto  
Ministero dell'Interno



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## 11 BADIA A PASSIGNANO

### Last Supper

Ghirlandaio, Domenico  
(Bigordi, Domenico 1449-1494),  
2024@Foto Scala



Please note that opening times and availability are subject to change.  
Please contact our Concierge Team for more details and support.



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## WITH THANKS TO Dr ANNA MEDORI

[faberestauro.com](http://faberestauro.com)

Florentine-native Anna Medori qualified as a Restorer of Cultural Heritage at the Opificio delle Pietre Dure in Florence, and is a specialist in the field of Wall Paintings and Frescoes. As an expert in the field of conservation and restoration of wall paintings, stucco works and stone artifacts, she has worked on and directed restorations of international renown, being part of the team working on the restoration of Leonardo da Vinci's pictorial decorations in Milan's Castello Sforzesco and on the restoration of Giotto's Stigmata of St. Francis in the Basilica of Santa Croce in Florence. She has been collaborating with the Department of Architecture of the University of Florence since 2009 and has been partner and Technical Director of the restoration team Faberestauro since 2018.

*design by*  
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