



Friends of Florence

Celebrates Two Decades of Supporting Cultural Heritage Preservation in Tuscany

This year, Friends of Florence (FoF) celebrates its 20th anniversary. The U.S. non-profit organisation based in Florence, Italy, is supported by individuals from around the world who are dedicated to preserving and enhancing the cultural and historical integrity of the arts in Florence and the Tuscan region. Since its founding by Renée Gardner and Simonetta Brandolini d'Adda, the organisation has raised and donated more than \$10 million for conservation projects. FoF works directly with Florence's famed conservators to ensure restoration is done at the highest level and with the approval of the City of Florence and the Italian Ministry of Art.

An essential part of FoF's work is supporting research and advancing the public's understanding of and appreciation for conservation practices and preserving cultural heritage. With the just completed cleaning of a statue in Florence's national archaeological museum, for example, the project was carried out in full view of visitors and resulted in the true identity of the statue being discovered. Cleaning away years of grime, the white marble figure that was revealed was the Greek goddess Aphrodite rather than the Spartan queen Leda as was thought.

In addition to projects, FoF also contributes to the maintenance of Michelangelo's iconic David at the Galleria dell'Accademia following its restoration in 2004, with regular monitoring and marble stability checks.

Highlights of recent projects include:



Alessandro Allori (Florence 1535-1607). *Christ and the Adulteress*, 1577. Oil on panel, 380 x 263.5cm. Florence, Basilica of Santo Spirito. Photo by Foto Giusti Claudio

Chapel of the Crucifix, Basilica of San Miniato al Monte

The Basilica of San Miniato al Monte has been described as among the most beautiful Romanesque structures in Tuscany and one of the most beautiful churches in Italy. The Basilica was founded in 1018 and celebrates its 1000th anniversary this year. Coinciding with FoF's 20th anniversary, work included the restoration various elements from the Basilica's interior and work on the exquisite Chapel of the Crucifix was completed this spring.

Cappella Capponi, Church of Santa Felicita

The Capponi Chapel was designed by Filippo Brunelleschi for the Barbadori family. The Capponi family took it over in 1525 and Lodovico Capponi commissioned Jacopo Pontormo to decorate it in 1526. The restoration project comprised the dome destroyed in the 18th century; the four Evangelists painted beneath the dome with the aid of a young Agnolo Bronzino; the Annunciation frescoes on the façade and a large painting by Pontormo depicting the Deposition from the Cross, set in a gilded wooden frame carved by Baccio d'Agnolo on the altar. The restoration project was approved by the Soprintendenza Archeologia Belle Arti e Paesaggio per la Città Metropolitana di Firenze e le Province di Pistoia e Prato and also completed in spring 2018.

Botticelli Room, Uffizi Gallery

The internationally recognised Botticelli Room in the Uffizi Gallery reopened to the public in fall 2016, following a series of upgrades and retrofitting thanks to a significant grant by FoF. The 19 paintings by Sandro Botticelli, among the most widely recognised in the canon of Western art, remained on view during the process.

Among the most popular in the Uffizi Gallery's collection, masterworks like *The Birth of Venus* (c. 1482-85) and *Primavera* (c. 1482) were seen by some two million visitors in their temporary space over the course of the 16-month restoration of the Botticelli Room.

Features of the restored and newly installed galleries include improved lighting, extensive systems upgrades, new alarm system, and the replacement of discoloured glass framing the artworks with state-of-the-art glass that is more protective and technologically advanced. Several of the paintings

not on view during the upgrade were examined and, when needed, underwent conservation as part of the project.

Other recently completed projects include the restoration of six Italian Renaissance masterpieces featured in a major exhibition at the Palazzo Strozzi in Florence this past winter titled *The Cinquecento in Florence from Michelangelo and Pontormo to Giambologna*; the restoration of 12 superb lunette frescoes, architectural elements, and marble



Giambologna (Douai 1529-Florence 1608) *Crucifix*, c. 1598. Bronze, 200 x 170 x 53 cm. Florence, Basilica of Santissima Annunziata. Photo by Antonio Quattrone

statues in the Cloister of the Vows at the Basilica of the Santissima Annunziata; and restoration of Michelangelo's magnificent wooden crucifix (made when the artist was 18 and thought lost) and reinstallation in Santo Spirito, the church for which it was created.

For more information about Friends of Florence and their work, visit www.friendsofflorence.org.