



FRIENDS *of* FLORENCE

Fall/Winter 2022 Newsletter

Dear Friends of Florence,

It is with great joy and appreciation that we close this year with the completion of 11 projects with 20 still in process. We are highlighting several here that show a range of artistic practices across several centuries. They also demonstrate the conservation and documentation processes using both age-old tools like brushes and putty and contemporary ones including lasers and x-rays. As always, we are ever grateful to you for your generous support and the dedicated restoration teams who bring these seminal expressions of devotion back to life.

As noted by news sources around the globe, archaeologists working at a site in **San Casciano dei Bagni**, a hilltop town in the Siena province home to important thermal waters, have uncovered more than two dozen beautifully preserved bronze statues, 6,000 coins, and numerous artifacts. About 100 miles north of Rome, the site features an ancient sacred pool active in Etruscan and then Roman times that archaeologists have been excavating since 2019. The remarkably preserved statues date back to between the second century B.C.E. and the first century C.E. It is a spectacular find reshaping historians' understanding of the transition from Etruscan to Roman rule in the region.

Friends of Florence is proud to be funding the Post Doctorate Fellowship for Research, and we are now looking to support other vital aspects of this fascinating find.





San Casciano dei Bagni archaeological site. Photos courtesy of the Italian Minister of Culture

COMPLETED PROJECTS

Giovanni Maria Butteri's *Coronation of the Virgin with St. Helen and St. Mary Magdalen*, Basilica of Santo Spirito

In the Basilica of Santo Spirito—a sublime example of Renaissance architecture designed by the great Filippo Brunelleschi—Giovanni Maria Butteri's stunning *Coronation of the Virgin with St. Helen and St. Mary Magdalen* (1583) has undergone complex conservation. The painting on wood depicting the Virgin with the two saints supported by cherubs was in fragile condition and beset by a recent infestation of wormwood.

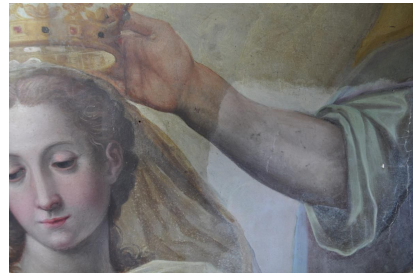
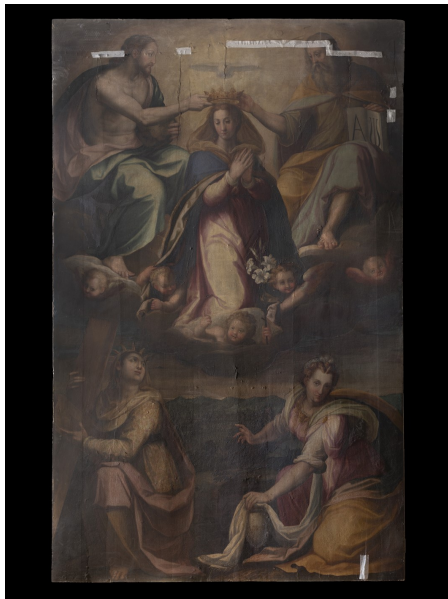
The exquisitely painted surface had lifted around the panel's joints and cracks were visible. Close examination showed the artist's brushwork was compact and substantial and revealed a light impasto. A layer of soot deposit had merged with animal glue to dim and darken the palette. For example, in the lighter part of the sky, the blue cobalt smalt-based pigment had changed over time into a grey-green hue.



Coronation of the Virgin with St. Helen and St. Mary Magdalen after restoration. Photo courtesy of Friends of Florence

After reviewing the available documentation on the painting and its history, analysis began. Prior to commencing the restoration, photography using grazing, visible, ultra-violet, and infra-red light enabled us to record the

painting's condition in minute detail and document the artist's technique.



Before and during restoration. Photos by Andrea and Lucia Dori

Cleaning revealed the paint film to be in excellent condition. Shades of blue range from the ultramarine of the Virgin's mantle to the azurite of the sky. Innovative blends and moiré effects produced unique color harmonies.

Expert support restorer Roberto Buda addressed cracks in the cross-pieces. Final varnish was applied with a spray gun to complete the restoration of another Renaissance masterpiece revived and shown as Butteri intended.

We are grateful to the William and Jeanne Bice and Family for their support of this important project.

IN-PROCESS PROJECT HIGHLIGHTS

Rosso Fiorentino's *Deposition*, Pinacoteca Civica Museum in Volterra



In our last newsletter, we reported on the multi-phase project to conserve Rosso Fiorentino's powerful *Deposition* which began in September 2021, 500 years after the painting was completed. The work was carried out on site enabling visitors to watch the meticulous work of the restorers. The work was also documented in photography and video. We are thrilled to note the restoration will be completed in April 2023. Familiar to art history students and scholars, the *Deposition* is a seminal example of early Mannerism popularized by Fiorentino and Pontormo, among some others of their contemporaries.

The 12-foot-high altarpiece is installed in the Pinacoteca Civica Museum in Volterra, a town southwest of Florence. Daniele Rossi and Roberto Buda led the restoration team. We are grateful for the support from Kathe and John Dyson and the Alexander Bodini Foundation for funding this special project.



Details and verso during restoration. Photos by Daniel Rossi

As with all projects, they began with meticulous, non-invasive diagnostic inspections and analyses to allow conservators to virtually penetrate the layers of paint to reveal secrets concealed beneath Rosso's pigments and binding agents. For a period, the room housing the painting was turned into an open worksite visible to visitors through glass.

Like many of our conversation projects, the process revealed new insights about the artist's technique and choice of materials.

Chancel in the Basilica of San Miniato al Monte

Conservation of the chancel in the Basilica of San Miniato al Monte—including a sculpted marble pulpit, choir screen, and mosaic in the apse dating from the 12th and 13th centuries—is almost complete. The restoration of a glazed terracotta *Crucifix* attributed to the Buglioni workshop was also part of the project.

This is the culmination of a five-year project, with the support of various donors, involving conservation and monitoring of the Basilica, one of Florence's most recognized and celebrated Christian complexes. The larger project included the Chapel of the Crucifix, the Chapel of the Cardinal of Portugal, and the reliquary bust of St. Miniatus



attributed to Nanni di Banco, winner of the fifth edition of the Friends of Florence Salone dell'Arte e del Restauro di Firenze prize.

Interior of Basilica of San Miniato with view of apse and chancel at end of the aisle. Photo courtesy of Friends of Florence



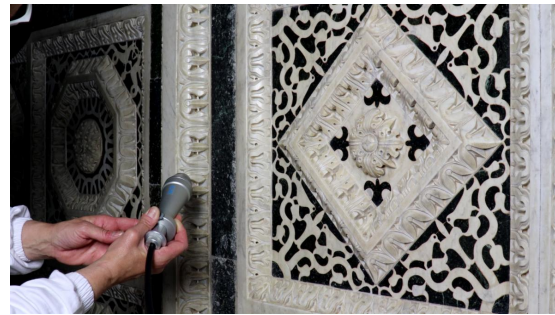
Mosaic in the apse in the Basilica of San Miniato. Before restoration. Photo by Antonio Quattrone

The Abbey of San Miniato al Monte is very dear to Friends of Florence, and we've been committed to its ongoing preservation since 2017. We are extremely grateful to Abbot Bernardo Gianni for his unflagging amenability to all our projects and to restorer Andrea Vigna with his colleagues Bartolomeo Ciccone, Daniela Manna and Marina Vincenti.

Our deeply heartfelt thanks to our Board member Stacy Simon who is supporting the restoration of the Apse and Transept in loving memory of her late husband Bruce, stalwart supporters of Friends of Florence.

The project, initially limited to cleaning the marble choir screen with its magnificent 13th century pulpit, is now completed. However, the operation was extended to embrace the entire raised area of the Basilica, which was not in poor condition in terms of its conservation but its marble surfaces were dirty and dull due to inappropriate wax used in earlier restoration attempts.

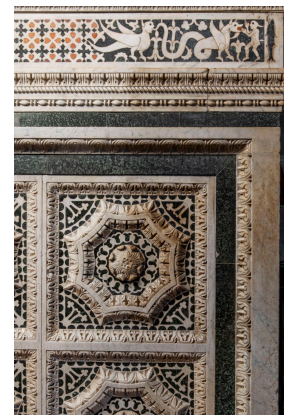




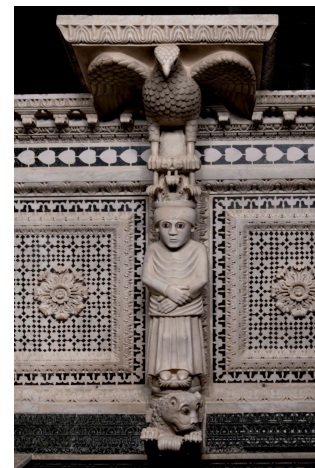
Pulpit and choir screen during restoration. Photos by Antonio Quattrone and Daniela Manna



Choir screen before restoration.



Choir screen during restoration.





Pulpit in the Chancel of the Basilica of San Miniato after restoration.
Photos by Antonio Quattrone

The pulpit, resting on the far end of the inlaid marble screen, is one of the loftiest examples of Florentine Romanesque art with figures that appear at first to represent the symbols of three of the evangelists: St. Matthew the man, St. Mark the lion, and St. John the eagle. The absence of the bull usually associated with St. Luke, however, suggests a different interpretation of the group in which the human figure may be seen as a pillar of the Christian faith resting his feet on the lion below in memory of Christ's death on the cross and supporting the eagle above as a herald of the resurrection.

Tomb of Hugh, Margrave of Tuscany, Badia Fiorentina

The tomb of Hugh, Margrave of Tuscany, carved by Mino da Fiesole in 1481, is currently undergoing restoration in the Badia Fiorentina. Restoration is due to be completed by December 21, 2022, the day on which a solemn procession has been held since 1001 AD to mark the anniversary of the Margrave's death. Work is proceeding apace through the major gift from The Houston Family Foundation and Board member Boniface Zaino and his wife Alison.



Tomb of Hugh, Margrave of Tuscany during restoration. Photos courtesy of Friends of Florence

THANK YOU AND GRAZIE MILLE

In closing, we wish you a joyful Holiday Season and a peaceful New Year!

Saluti,

Simonetta

Simonetta Brandolini d'Adda
President, Friends of Florence

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