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Chapel of St. Luke in the Convent of the Santissima Annunziata Restored Thanks to Support from Friends of Florence



The Chapel of St. Luke in the Convent of the Santissima Annunziata, Florence, Italy.
After restoration supported by Friends of Florence, 2020-2022. Photograph by Ottaviano Caruso

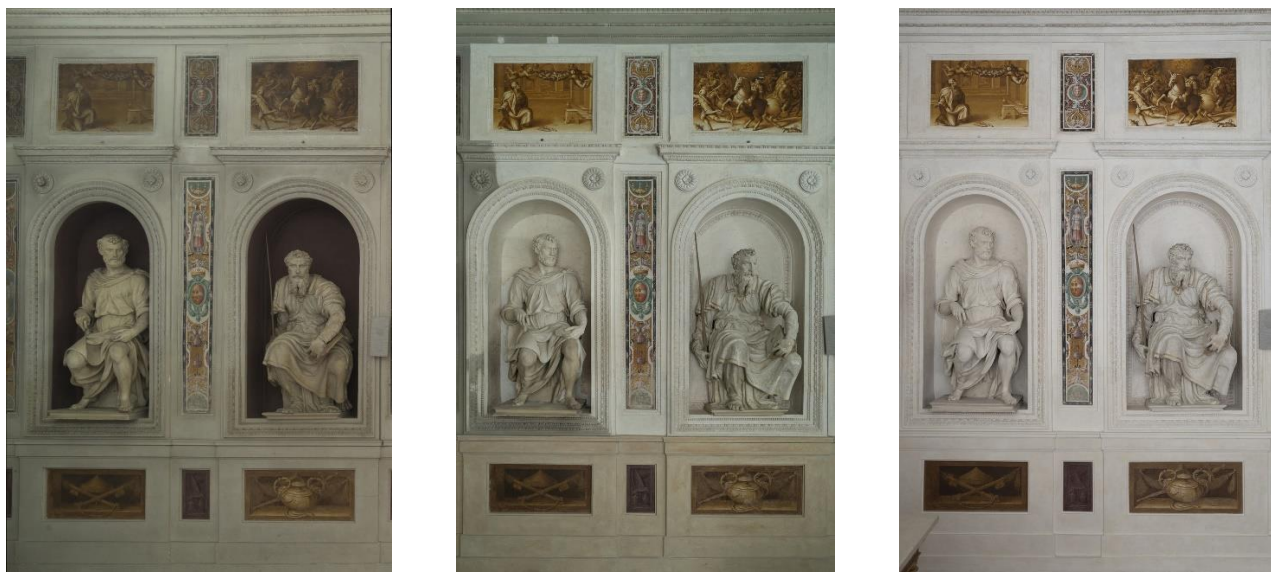
*Florence, Italy...*Restoration of the Accademia delle Arti del Disegno's Chapel of St. Luke (also known as the Chapel of the Painters) is complete. This uniquely designed space within the Convent of the Santissima Annunziata is known for its unusual combination of materials and techniques and the artworks adorning it.

The two-year restoration project was commissioned by the Accademia delle Arti del Disegno and conducted through the support of Friends of Florence under the supervision of the Soprintendenza Archeologia Belle Arti e Paesaggio per la Città Metropolitana di Firenze e le Province di Pistoia e Prato. The project provided an opportunity to both preserve and study one of Florence's most fascinating late Renaissance complexes.

Prior to this restoration, the Chapel suffered various forms of deterioration and ill-considered interventions such as the whitewashing and repainting of stucco decorations and

major damage from the 1966 flood that besieged Florence. Structural alterations over time also concealed the original aesthetic and layout.

The diagnostic campaign revealed the construction materials used and the nature of the various interventions the Chapel has undergone over time. A clearer understanding of the original materials also yielded important historical information. The first major impact occurred during the Napoleonic suppression when the Chapel was altered to serve the private use of Bishop Antoine Eustache d'Osmond. The original entrance was closed and the altar moved below the fresco by Giorgio Vasari. The second impact was the 1966 flood which caused extensive damage to small frescoes and lower parts of the sculptures.



Sculptures of St. Peter by Domenico Poggini and St. Paul by Giovan Angiolo Montorsoli in the Chapel of St. Luke, Convent of the Santissima Annunziata, Florence, Italy. Before, during, and after restoration supported by Friends of Florence, 2020-2022. Photograph by Ottaviano Caruso

Simonetta Brandolini d'Adda, President of Friends of Florence, said, "Supporting the restoration of this key art historical site is a source of immense pride for Friends of Florence. I express my sincere gratitude to Cristina Acidini, President of the Accademia delle Arti del Disegno, and its Secretary General Giorgio Bonsanti. Our thanks also to Jennifer Celani, the area official in charge of supervising the site on behalf of the Soprintendenza ABAP per la Città Metropolitana di Firenze e le Province di Pistoia e Prato, and, of course, the dedicated restoration team who conducted the process with such care during the pandemic. My heartfelt thanks to the Giorgi Family Foundation, the single donor who supported this important project. The Santissima Annunziata holds a special place in our hearts. Since 2010, we have supported numerous restoration projects both in the basilica and the convent including the Chapel of St.

Nicholas which is currently undergoing restoration and which we aim to complete in the near future.”

Cristina Acidini, President of the Accademia delle Arti del Disegno, said, "We are deeply grateful to the decisive and generous support of Friends of Florence, our Secretary General Giorgio Bonsanti, and the skillful restoration conducted by Goia Germani, Cristiana Conti, and Alessandra Popple. The 500-year-old chapel where Accademia delle Arti del Disegno held its first meetings under the guiding hand of Giorgio Vasari is whole again.”



Santi di Tito (1536-1603). *Building of the Temple of Solomon*, 1571. Fresco, 240 x 240 cm. The Chapel of St. Luke, Convent of the Santissima Annunziata, Florence, Italy. Before, during, and after restoration 2020-2022 supported by Friends of Florence. Photograph by Ottaviano Caruso

Chapel of St. Luke

The Chapel of St. Luke, or Chapel of the Painters, in the convent of the Santissima Annunziata has been one of the most symbolic sites for Florence’s artistic life since 1565. It was built on the site of the Santissima Annunziata’s former Chapter House thanks to Fra Giovannangelo Montorsoli, a friar and sculptor who persuaded Prior General Fra Zaccaria Faldossi initially to host the newly established Accademia in certain areas of the convent and subsequently to donate the space to that body outright. The Accademia del Disegno had been founded two years earlier, in 1563, thanks to Grand Duke Cosimo I and his two closest advisers, Vasari and Vincenzo Borghini. Members included the greatest artists of the Florentine Renaissance including Leonardo da Vinci and Michelangelo Buonarroti.

The Chapel hosted many eminent artists who would meet to witness the academy’s solemn oath-taking ceremonies and take part in lively academic debates. It also accommodated celebrations for the Four Crowned Saints, the patron saints of architecture, and for the feast of St. Luke, which eventually eclipsed all the others.

The Chapel was 'reconsecrated' to St. Luke the Evangelist, the patron saint of painters. It also became the designated burial site for artists wishing their remains to be interred there to ensure their association with the Accademia for eternity. These include Lorenzo Bartolini, Benvenuto Cellini, Jacopo Pontormo, and Rodolfo Siviero.

Today it is used by professors of the Accademia delle Arti del Disegno to celebrate solemn mass on October 18, the feast of St. Luke, and for other religious services associated with the Accademia and its members.

About Friends of Florence

Friends of Florence is a non-profit foundation supported by individuals from around the world who are dedicated to preserving and enhancing the rich cultural heritage of Florence and Tuscany and conserving irreplaceable artistic and cultural treasures. Friends of Florence identifies significant projects spanning centuries in need of restoration, secures funding, and works in collaboration with local authorities to complete projects.

Since its founding in 1998, the Foundation has raised and donated \$10 million for conservation projects in the region. Friends of Florence works directly with Florence's famed conservation laboratories to ensure restoration is done at the highest level, has the approval of the City of Florence and the Italian Ministry of Art, and is completed on time and on budget.

Through its work, Friends of Florence creates opportunities for the study and appreciation of paintings, sculptures, architectural elements, places of worship, and collections at the Uffizi Gallery, the Accademia, the Baptistery, the Piazza della Signoria, the Museum of San Marco, and dozens of other museums, churches, and public sites.

A model of high-impact, low-overhead philanthropy, Friends of Florence is the primary source of funding for the city's conservators, a respected partner with museums and cultural authorities in Italy and the U.S., and a publisher/producer of publications, multimedia offerings, seminars, lectures, and cultural travel opportunities. For more information, visit its newly designed website at www.friendsofflorence.org.

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