FRIENDS of FLORENCE

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Friends of Florence Announces 2024 *Salone dell'Arte e del Restauro Di Firenze* Award Winner

14th century fresco in Church of Saint Ambrogio to be restored by Cristina Napolitano

Florence, Italy...The Friends of Florence Salone dell'Arte e del Restauro Award for 2024 has been presented to a project submitted by the conservator **Cristina Napolitano** to restore the **detached fresco depicting *The Madonna Suckling the Christ Child with St. Bartholomew and St. John the Baptist* by the Master of the Rinuccini Chapel** in the **church of S. Ambrogio in Florence**.

The 7th edition of the biannual competition, organized by Friends of Florence in conjunction with the secretariat of the Salone dell'Arte e del Restauro di Firenze, was launched in December 2023 and closed on March 14, 2024, with 70 projects submitted. The prize was established in 2012 to support the restoration, protection, and conservation of cultural assets in Florence. The projects are nominated and implemented by specialist firms with the award of € 20,000 inclusive of VAT. The 2024 edition offered each nominator the opportunity to submit up to two restoration projects for works situated in Florence and either currently on public display or to be placed on public view after restoration. Friends of Florence endeavors to seek support for additional nominated projects over time.

The jury noted the restorers' professionalism, their in-depth knowledge of Florence's cultural heritage, and the quality of their submissions. Projects covered a broad spectrum of specializations, objects, and materials including paintings, frescoes, ceramic, fabric, stone, bronze and metal, paper, wood, wax sculptures, cinema film, and multi-media.

Friends of Florence President **Simonetta Brandolini d'Adda** presented the award with 2024 Award Committee members **Cristina Acidini** and **Claudio Paolini** and by Salone dell'Arte e del Restauro di Firenze Director **Elena Amodei**.

"This award highlights the importance of our foundation's fruitful collaboration with the Salone dell'Arte e del Restauro and our commitment to the preservation of the city's historical and artistic legacy," said Brandolini d'Adda. "It was immensely satisfying to receive so many excellent submissions—each project meticulously researched and presented. I would like to thank all the restorers and institutions taking part. Our gratitude also goes to Elena Amodei and Salone Scholarly Advisory Board members Cristina Acidini, Claudio Paolini, Magnolia Scudieri, and Andrea Camilli for generously extending their expertise to assess the projects and

select the winner. Our heartfelt congratulations go to Cristina Napolitano, the 2024 winner. We also recognize the late Dr. Marco Ciatti, a former member of the Award committee, to whom we dedicate this 7th edition."

Winning Project and Rationale

The winning project concerns the restoration of a fresco in the Church of S. Ambrogio in Florence, that had been attributed to Andrea Orcagna and subsequently to Agnolo Gaddi, depicting the *Virgin Mary suckling the infant Christ flanked by St. Bartholomew and St. John the Baptist*. The figure of St. Ambrose occupies a panel below the main subject. This is one of the earliest depictions of St. Ambrose among those still on site. The church had been attached to a convent of Benedictine nuns who contributed significantly to the development of the area, particularly in the 14th century, fueling the expansion of the prosperous neighborhood established around the convent.

The fresco was whitewashed at some point, rediscovered in 1839, and subsequently restored before being damaged again in the flood of 1966 and then detached. Whereas these events impacted the painting's legibility, it is clear that this is a work of the highest quality and that it can be restored to a significant degree.

The Committee was also eager to show its gratitude for the work done by the parish and its community in safeguarding and preserving the church's rich artistic heritage.

With the proclamation of the winner, Friends of Florence gave the green light to start the restoration project, which must be completed before the end of 2026, when the next edition of the Salone dell'Arte e del Restauro di Firenze is due to be held.

Past Editions

Friends of Florence has received 245 projects since the prize was launched 2012. In addition to the six winning projects, Friends of Florence **has also found donors to complete 23 other projects** submitted involving works of critical importance for Florentine culture and the Western canon. Some **29 projects have been supported overall, for a total of € 580,000.00 inclusive of VAT**. (Attached please find a list of all the restoration projects completed).

Organizers

Established in the United States in 1998, the not-for-profit **Friends of Florence Foundation** is devoted to supporting the protection and conservation of cultural assets in Florence and Tuscany. The Foundation collaborates with public and private institutions, universities, schools, and cultural associations operating in the art and conservation fields. Through this award as well as publications, conferences, and events, Friends of Florence raises awareness of the projects it supports and institutions where they are on view. The essential role of expert conservation and ongoing stewardship inspires and guides Friends of Florence in selecting projects to support. Its partnership with the Salone dell'Arte e del Restauro di Firenze is rooted in those values.

The **Salone dell'Arte e del Restauro di Firenze** has proven once again, with this edition, that it is not only a major biannual showcase for firms and individuals operating in the restoration field but also an opportunity to share experience and know-how, to interact, and to optimize best practices applied to the protection, conservation, and enhancement of art and culture. In this edition, too, the Salone hosted a full program of events designed to offer its contribution to the consolidation of a system that is still very much alive in our country in producing works of art, in training young people, and in providing services and innovating products for conservation and restoration.

Use this link https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/19wN753xPhHUJcp5ve_GL1vJ5IWbEyfz5?usp=sharing to download a picture of the fresco, photographs of the award ceremony, the jury's rationale, and the lists of works supported by Friends of Florence in the past six editions.

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