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The Guide to Essential Italy

Course Guidebook

Professor Kenneth R. Bartlett
University of Toronto



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Advancement at the university, a position he held until 2009.

Much of Professor Bartlett's career has been devoted to bringing Italian culture and history into the undergraduate and graduate classroom. He has taught regularly in the University of Toronto Summer Abroad Programs in Siena. He has been the recipient of numerous teaching awards, most notably the National 3M Teaching Fellowship, awarded by the Canadian Society for Teaching and Learning in Higher Education. And he won the inaugural President's Teaching Award from the University of Toronto. In 2007, Professor Bartlett was one of the 10 finalists in TVOntario's Best Lecturer competition, which pits students' favorite instructors against one another in a battle of charisma, clarity, passion, and conviction; that same year, he was recognized with an inaugural Leadership in Faculty Teaching Award by the government of Ontario.

Professor Bartlett is the author of *The English in Italy, 1525–1558: A Study in Culture and Politics* (1991); *Humanism and the Northern Renaissance* (with M. McGlynn, 2000); *The Civilization of the Italian Renaissance* (2nd ed. 2011); and, most recently, *A Short History of the Italian Renaissance* (2013). He is also co-editor or translator of four other books and author of more than 35 articles and chapters on European history and culture.

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Together with his wife, Gillian, who herself holds a Ph.D. and is author of seven books, Professor Bartlett regularly leads tours to Europe for major museums, universities, and cultural organizations. ■

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The Smithsonian Guide to Essential Italy, developed in collaboration with Smithsonian Journeys, surveys sites of historical importance and high cultural achievement in three of the most popular destinations in Italy: Rome, Florence, and Venice. A block of lectures is devoted to each of these cities, introducing the important sites to see, recounting the history to understand them, and divulging insider tips for getting the most from your visit. Also featured are brief stops in Pompeii, Arezzo, Perugia, Assisi, Siena, and San Gimignano. In highlighting the riches of ancient Rome, the medieval and Renaissance splendor of Florence, and the architectural wonders of Venice, the course traces the very foundations of the Western experience. It also serves as an essential guide for any visit to Italy, whether for active or armchair travelers. ■

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The Guide to Essential Italy

Scope:

This course is a tour of three of the most important, engaging, and romantic cities of Italy: Rome, Florence, and Venice. And to provide context and suggestions for intriguing side trips en route, we will also visit Pompeii, Arezzo, Perugia, Assisi, Siena, and San Gimignano. We will walk through the streets and monuments of these cities as if we were there, following the roads and exploring the buildings to discover the historical development of these pivotal centers of the Western experience.

Rome is a palimpsest of a city, with one layer constructed atop another, from the period of the city's foundation by the mythical Romulus and Remus through the glory of its role as capital of the Roman Empire and from the Middle Ages and Renaissance to modern times. The Colosseum and the Forum, including the Senate House and House of the Vestal Virgins, stand witness to the lives of ancient Romans. So, too, do the ruins of Pompeii, which we will visit for a day. The Capitoline, St. Peter's Basilica, and the Vatican evoke the splendor and majesty of the Roman Church. Great Renaissance and Baroque palaces, such as those of the Farnese, Barberini, and Doria Pamphilji, testify to the magnificence and power of the Roman nobility.

We will explore the grand piazzas centered on such evocative sites as the Pantheon, the Trevi Fountain, and the Victor Emmanuel Monument. We will walk through neighborhoods defined by statues, fountains, and churches by noted artists, including the Campidoglio (Michelangelo's masterpiece of urban planning) and the Piazza Navona (dominated by Bernini's spectacular Fountain of the Four Rivers). And we will enjoy modern Rome—a city defined in its historic center by the decisions of emperors and popes but also a living community where change is constant right up to the present day.

On our way to Florence, we will stop briefly in Orvieto, noted for its Etruscan caves; Siena, where we will enjoy the most beautiful piazza in all of Italy; and San Gimignano, with its celebrated medieval towers.

Florence is a living work of art that stands at the heart of the cultural unconscious of Western civilization. We will observe the development of the city-state, from the formation of the guild republic to the establishment of the Medici as the leading family, through our visits to the Orsanmichele, the Bargello, the Palazzo della Signoria, the Uffizi, and the Pitti Palace. We will see how the houses, churches, and civic buildings assumed a power of their own to reflect changes in the city's fortunes. And we will come to understand what it meant and means to be a Florentine as we explore the extraordinary expanse of the Duomo and admire Ghiberti's golden doors for the Baptistery. We will walk through history as we visit the pantheon of Florence—Santa Croce—and we will see the effects of the modern world on a city in which the name *Santa Maria Novella* simultaneously denotes a glorious Renaissance church and a modern railway station.

Our route to Venice takes us past Arezzo, Perugia, and Assisi, these gems offering such distinctive experiences as Vasari's house; a buried medieval city; and most important, a spectacular double church lavishly decorated by Giotto.

Venice is a world unto itself. Founded by hardy fisherman and local traders obsessively devoted to the idea of republican equality, the city grew rich from the Crusades and trade with the East. As we sail down the Grand Canal, we will see the monuments of the Baroque era—both huge, imposing palaces and spectacular churches constructed by merchants to advertise their power and ensure everlasting influence. The state and the church were almost seamlessly linked, with the offices of the state centralized in the ducal palace and the state's religious center situated in the adjoining basilica of St. Mark.

By the 18th century, the age of Casanova, Venice became a pleasure city, rife with gambling, courtesans, and risqué behavior. We will see where Casanova was interrogated and imprisoned and how he escaped from the complex of buildings that once held the men and officials that ruled over a substantial part of Italy, Dalmatia, and the East. The end of the republic brought a deeper decline, but the city was discovered by artists and writers in the 19th and 20th centuries, who kept its magical atmosphere alive. ■

Rome: The Eternal City

Lecture 1

Rome was the model of a republic, made great by senators and tribunes, by such heroes as Cincinnatus and Cicero. It was also a great empire, spreading its language, laws, and culture throughout the ancient world, with such figures as Julius Caesar, Augustus, and Constantine still capturing our imaginations. It is the center of the Roman Church and a place of romance and myth. As we begin this course, we will walk through the city of Rome itself to see the places where great events occurred and where the views are most evocative. And we'll learn that in Rome, the past, present, and future all still exist in a rather tense relationship.

The Tiber River

- The Tiber River gave life to the city of Rome and tells its story through the ages. The river also illustrates a theme we will return to throughout these lectures: Myth and history in Rome are one and the same. Ancient stories are believed because they are ancient; no matter how farfetched or absurd they might be, they have the force of truth.
- A heavily traveled road known as the Lungotevere, or “Tiber embankment,” runs on top of high retaining walls along the Tiber. The walls were built in the 19th century to tame the river. Previously, it would become engorged with rushing water in the spring and fall.
- The only original Roman bridge in the city that still functions is the Pons Fabricius, also known as the Ponte Quattro Capi, the “Four Heads Bridge.” It leads to an island called the Isola Tiberina, where we find that quintessential mixture of history and myth that characterizes Rome.
 - The island is linked with the last tyrannical king of Rome, Tarquin the Proud. He was violently overthrown around 500 B.C. According to legend, either his body or his huge private store of grain—or both—were tossed into the Tiber at this spot,

and the silt that gathered around them created the Isola Tiberina. The front of the island is shaped like the prow of a ship. In fact, in ancient times, it was made to look like a ship, with eyes painted on it and an obelisk erected to represent a mast.

- Early Romans dedicated this island to Aesculapius, the god of healing, whose symbol is a staff entwined with a snake. According to legend, a Greek statue of Aesculapius had been brought to Rome on the advice of the Sybil to end a plague. Supposedly, a snake that had journeyed on the ship settled on the island. This event was taken as a sign that the island should house Aesculapius and the sick. There are still hospitals on the Isola Tiberina, housed in part in buildings dating from the pontificate of Sixtus V.

The Jewish District of Rome

- Crossing back across the Tiber, we see the Jewish district of the city, including the Great Synagogue of Rome. Although it dates only from the turn of the 20th century, it is a remarkable building that anchors the traditional ghetto, whose main street is the Via del Portico d'Ottavia.
- This street follows the ancient Roman covered walkway built by Augustus for his sister, Octavia. Parts of the structure are still visible above the Jewish shop fronts and restaurants that focus on, ironically, a Christian church. The church is called Sant'Angelo in Pescheria—"St. Angelo in the Fish Market"—because from the Middle Ages until quite recently, this street was also home to the fish market of Rome.
- At the end of the portico is the Theatre of Marcellus, also called the Palazzo Savelli. This theater was begun by Caesar but finished by Augustus, who named it for Marcus Claudius Marcellus, his nephew. The building is in remarkable condition because it was turned into a fortress during the Middle Ages and eventually owned by the noble Savelli family. After the 1527 sack of Rome, this family asked the celebrated Siense architect Baldassare Peruzzi

to transform the ancient structure into a palace, which he did by building on top of the ruins.

The Capitoline Hill

- The Capitoline Hill was the seat of Roman government from the earliest of times. It is one of Rome's seven hills and a sacred space. There are actually three parts to the Capitoline, the first of which is Monte Caprino, or "Goat Hill."
- The steep ascent of the Via di Monte Caprino offers a bit of green space in the center of the city. At the southern end of that ascent, overlooking the Forum, is the famous Tarpeian Rock, from which traitors were thrown to their deaths in ancient republican Rome.
- Just north of the edge of Tarpeian Rock, one of the greatest of all ancient Roman temples was constructed, although little of it is now visible: the Temple of Jupiter Capitolinus. This structure was completed by the last of the Etruscan kings of Rome, Tarquin the Proud. This large temple was actually a triple complex: one with three *cellas* dedicated, respectively, to Jupiter, Minerva, and Jupiter's wife, Juno.
 - The Temple of Juno Moneta, as it was called, means "Juno Having Been Warned." According to one tradition, geese were kept at the temple because they were sacred to Juno.
 - During the assault of the Gauls under Brennus in 390 B.C., the Gauls stole up to the citadel. But the sleeping Romans were awakened by the cackling of the geese and were able to repel the attack.
- Looking up the Capitoline to the left, a steep staircase leads to the Franciscan church of Santa Maria in Aracoeli ("Our Lady of the Altar of Heaven"). Many believe that it was constructed on the site of the Temple of Juno, given the parallels between the pagan goddess and the Virgin Mary and because of yet another legend connecting the emperor Augustus with a prophecy of a virgin birth.

- Visitors can climb the Capitoline Hill by means of the *cordonata*, a sloping road that is similar to a flight of shallow steps. It was built according to Michelangelo's design for the Capitoline as commissioned by Pope Paul III in the 1540s. At the base are two Egyptian basalt sphinx fountains, and at the top are Rome's city hall and the Capitoline Museums.
- To the left as you climb is a bronze statue mounted on a plinth made of ancient fragments. This is Cola Di Rienzo, a tribune of Rome who was torn apart by a mob on a site near here in 1354. On the right is the walkway to the lovely terrace attached to the Caffarelli Palace, built in the 16th and early 17th centuries.
- At the top of the *cordonata*, visitors face the magnificent piazza that Michelangelo designed for Paul III. Every detail here was dictated by the master, from the buildings and their façades, to the statues and their placement, to the pavement and its striking design. We also see the monumental figures of Castor and Pollux, the divine twins who saved the Roman Republic from attack by the exiled Etruscan kings in 496 B.C.
- Also here is one of the greatest equestrian monuments of all time, dating from the 2nd century, the bronze statue of the emperor Marcus Aurelius.
 - The Marcus Aurelius statue is the only life-size equestrian bronze to survive from antiquity. Other ancient statues were melted down, but this statue was originally believed to represent the Roman emperor Constantine—and no one wanted to melt down the emperor who had recognized Christianity!
 - This statue is also known as *Il Gran Villano*, "The Great Peasant," a reference to a medieval legend about a peasant who saved Rome from Attila the Hun.
- Behind Marcus is the façade of the Palazzo Senatorio, the city hall of Rome. The basic design is by Michelangelo, but the structure was completed and altered somewhat by his pupil, Tommaso Cavalieri.

- On either side of the Piazza del Campidoglio are buildings either designed or renovated by Michelangelo: the Palazzo dei Conservatori and the Palazzo Nuovo. These elegant structures now house the Capitoline Museums.



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In addition to the *Lupa* and the *Dying Gaul*, the Capitoline Museums also houses the *Colossus of Constantine*.

- To the right of the Palazzo Senatorio are the offices of the guilds and corporations of Renaissance Rome. The purpose of the rebuilding of the Capitoline under Michelangelo was in part to indicate that the papacy had restored Roman grandeur after the 1527 sack. But it was also meant to demonstrate that the various civic bodies were under papal control; thus, the guilds moved their offices here.
- Beneath the piazza and the Palazzo dei Conservatori and the Palazzo Nuovo are the remnants of the famous Tabularium, the ancient record office of Rome.

The Church of the Aracoeli

- The Church of the Aracoeli is wonderfully decorated with aristocratic chapels and remarkable objects. The mismatched ancient columns used in the basilica were taken from important ancient buildings in the Forum and on the Capitoline. Throughout the church are works by Donatello, Michelangelo, and Benozzo Gozzoli, as well as one surviving fresco of an early Roman painter named Pietro Cavallini.
- The church also houses the Santo Bambino, “Holy Child.” The original of this work was a 17th-century olive-wood carving of the baby Jesus that was, according to tradition, made of wood taken from the Garden of Gethsemane in Jerusalem.

- The sculpture became a votive figure for sick and injured children around the world, and its small chapel is full of letters and gifts from children who believed that they had been cured by the intervention of the Santo Bambino.
- Then, in 1994, the Santo Bambino was stolen. The response was remarkable; even hardened criminals from Rome’s prison demanded its return. Miraculously, another Santo Bambino then appeared in the chapel. Although it is almost certainly a copy, no one will say for sure so as not to break the continuity of its power.

Base of the Capitoline Hill

- At the base of the Capitoline Hill are the ruins of an ancient Roman *insula*, or apartment house. This was probably a good address in ancient Rome, given that the residents lived right by the Forum and the temple complex on the Capitoline.
- In the early Middle Ages, the upper part of the building became the church of San Biagio del Mercato. The *mercato* (“market”) referred to was a small one that likely served the area of the Campidoglio, as

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From the Ponte Rotto, continue to the Ponte Palatino and see the outlet of the ancient Roman sewer system, the Cloaca Maxima. (You can also see the Cloaca Maxima online at the *Digital Roman Forum*, http://dlib.etc.ucla.edu/projects/Forum/resources/Richardson/Cloaca_Maxima). Walk a bit out onto the Ponte Palatino and look back toward the Forum Boarium to see the arches of the outlet in the Tiber embankment.

Visit the Capitoline Museums to see the sculpture and painting collections and to gain access to the late-republican Tabularium. From the gallery, the Roman Forum opens up before you.

well as the fish market on the Via Portico d'Ottavia and the butcher shops in the Theatre of Marcellus.

- The frescoes from this early church are still visible, as are the dark warrens of rooms of the ancient apartment house. These rooms were only uncovered in 1930, when Mussolini made his excavations in the Forum and the streets constructed over that ancient place were removed.

Suggested Reading

Barzini, *The Italians*.

Bussagli, ed., *Rome: Art and Architecture*.

Gabucci, *Guide to Ancient Rome*.

Hibbert, *Rome: Biography of a City*.

Kaplan, *Little Known Museums in and around Rome*.

McGregor, *Rome from the Ground Up*.

Pavia, *Guide to Underground Rome*.

Richards, *The New Italians*.

Severgnini, *La Bella Figura*.

Shetterly, *Rome Walks*.

Questions to Consider

1. What is it about Rome that still captures our imaginations so profoundly?
2. History and myth are deeply interconnected in Rome. Is this true of other places in your experience?

The Capitoline and the Colosseum

Lecture 2

We began our last tour in the heart of ancient Rome. We then walked to the Campidoglio, the most spectacular expression of the High Renaissance in Rome. We begin this lecture in the symbolic heart of 19th-century Rome, the Vittoriano. From there, we explore the Piazza Venezia and the forums of Rome, including those of Trajan, Augustus, and Nerva. We next visit the Roman Colosseum, a marvel of engineering and design, although with its gladiatorial combats and games involving the deaths of exotic animals, rather a sad place. Finally, we return to the Roman Forum, noting the Arch of Constantine and the famous “sweating cone” or Meta Sudans.

The Vittoriano

- The Vittoriano is an extraordinary monument to King Victor Emmanuel II. It is a most curious construction, but it tells us a great deal about Italy and Rome after the unification of the country in 1861 and the capture of Rome from the pope in 1870.
- In 1861, Victor Emmanuel II of the house of Savoy became the first king of a united Italy since the 6th century. After Italy was united, Rome and the Papal States refused to join with the rest of the peninsula. Thus, on September 20, 1870, the army of Italy broke through the defenses of Rome and captured the city, intent on making it the national capital.
- The victorious nationalists wanted to celebrate this new dispensation in Rome with a powerful monument, for which they chose the area around the Capitoline Hill and Forum. This ancient site of Roman civic authority was the obvious place to link Rome’s past greatness with its new liberal and secular government.
- The Vittoriano is a huge confection in white marble, 450 feet wide and 250 feet high. It was commissioned in 1885 but not inaugurated



The Vittoriano can be seen from almost anywhere in the historical center of Rome; indeed, these sight lines were partly the intent of those who designed it.

until 1911 and not completed until the Fascist period in 1925. It seems to incorporate every known classical architectural style and decoration and, consequently, lacks coherence as a structure.

- On either wing are two bronze figures of victory riding a *quadriga* (a four-horse chariot), and on the podium is a huge equestrian image of Victor Emmanuel. After World War I, the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier was added. Inside is a shrine of flags, where the colors of decommissioned warships and military units are kept. The Vittoriano also houses the Museum of the Risorgimento (the Italian unification movement).

The Palazzo and Piazza Venezia

- The Palazzo Venezia is an important if not terribly engaging building of the 1450s—the first Renaissance-style palace in Rome. The palazzo was begun by the Venetian cardinal Barbo, a nephew of Pope Eugene IV. The site was traditionally occupied by the cardinal of Venice because it was associated with the church of St. Mark, Venice’s patron saint. In order to enlarge the palace, the church was incorporated into the new structure.

- Cardinal Barbo built his palazzo as a public expression of his wealth and ambition, and this strategy must have worked because he was elected as Pope Paul II. Believing that his own palace provided better accommodation than the official papal residence, the pope stayed in his home. Consequently, the Palazzo Venezia became one of the early papal palaces of Rome, but it changed hands several times over the ensuing centuries.
 - In the 1560s, the pope gave the palace back to Venice as the residence for its ambassadors and the cardinal of St. Mark's. But when the republic of Venice was suppressed by Napoleon and then given to Austria, the palace became the residence of the Austrian ambassador. Consequently, after Italy entered World War I on the side of the Entente in 1916, the Palazzo Venezia was confiscated by the Italian government as enemy property.
 - Mussolini claimed the grand rooms on the *piano nobile* (“noble floor”) for his office, particularly the huge Room of the Map of the World, or Mappamondo. This led to his notorious appearances on the balcony that overlooked the piazza, from which he proclaimed the creation of the Italian Empire in 1936 and declared war on Britain and France in 1940.
- Looking to the left along the façade of the palace, at the corner of the building just beyond, is a damaged ancient statue of either an empress or the goddess Isis. She is universally known as Madama Lucrezia, the only female talking statue of Rome. The talking statues represent a sort of 16th-century version of Twitter; citizens would paste satirical verses or written notes on certain statues in the city to comment—usually scathingly—on current Roman life and politics.
- To the east of the piazza is a wide, busy street, constructed in 1933 to allow Mussolini to stage military parades. Two churches stand just beyond the piazza. The first is the lovely Renaissance masterpiece of Antonio da Sangallo, Santa Maria di Loreto, begun in 1507. The other has the unwieldy name of the Most Holy Name of Mary by the Forum of Trajan; it dates from the 18th century.

The Forums of Rome

- The site of the Forum of Trajan is marked by the huge column that still stands where the emperor Trajan had it erected in A.D. 113 to commemorate his victory over the Dacians. It is essentially a graphic novel, telling the story of Trajan's campaign in an unbroken sculptural band that spirals around and upward for almost 100 feet. Today, there is little else left of Trajan's Forum beyond the column.
 - The other portion of the site—the section that housed Trajan's Market—survives in good condition.
 - This complex was a kind of multilevel mall constructed on the slope of the Quirinal Hill. It contained shops on all levels and two streets, one at ground level behind the large hemicycle of the forum and another higher up on the hill.
- The Forum of Augustus includes the Temple of Mars the Avenger, of which little remains. Augustus was the nephew and adopted son of Julius Caesar, and it was he who defeated his uncle's assassins, Brutus and Cassius, at the Battle of Philippi. At the battle, he swore an oath to commission this great votive temple.
 - The thick stone wall that defines the end of the Forum of Augustus was, in fact, a firebreak.
 - It was necessary because the forum stood beside the Suburra, the low-rent district of Rome that was built almost entirely out of wood and, consequently, burned down with terrifying regularity.
- Just to the southwest was the earlier forum laid out by Julius Caesar. It held a temple dedicated to Venus Genetrix. This temple commemorated Caesar's divine origins—the descent of his family from Venus through Aeneas. Little remains of this temple, except three columns supporting an architrave.
- Despite its name, the Forum of Nerva was built by the emperor Domitian. But Domitian had the misfortune of dying before its completion and, thus, didn't earn the naming rights. In the Roman tradition of multiple names, it was also called the *forum transitorium*

because it was the connecting forum between the Forum Romanum and those of the emperors.

- Across the busy Via dei Fori Imperiali is a deep lookout over the Forum. Beside it is the basilica of Sts. Cosma and Damian. Although it is unimpressive from the outside, inside, it contains some of Rome's most wonderful early Christian mosaics, dating from the 6th century. On this site was once the great Temple of Peace, built by the emperor Vespasian in A.D. 75. In ancient times, it was considered to have been the most beautiful temple in Rome.

The Colosseum

- The Colosseum was the largest Roman amphitheater, seating about 50,000 spectators. Its construction was ordered by the emperor Vespasian in A.D. 70, and it opened under his son Titus in A.D. 80. It was largely paid for from the spoils of the war against the Jews and the looting of Jerusalem.
- The area now occupied by the Colosseum was originally a poorer, low-lying, and densely developed part of ancient Rome. However, it was destroyed in the great fire of A.D. 64. Nero took advantage of the fire and claimed the relatively flat valley to construct a private lake adjacent to his magnificent urban palace: Domus Aurea ("Golden House").
 - The Domus Aurea played a pivotal role in Roman architecture, owing to its creative use of Roman concrete faced with brick as a building medium. Using that medium, the architects Severus and Celer designed the domed octagon suite. This novel design was a stepping stone to the Pantheon and the large vaulted spaces of imperial baths, such as the Baths of Trajan and the Baths of Caracalla.
 - Nero was hated and despised during his reign, and after his death in A.D. 68, his Golden House was never used as an imperial residence. Similarly, Nero's statue was moved and repurposed by various emperors before being melted down in medieval times.

- As we walk around the Colosseum, notice the Roman numerals above all the gates but one. These entry gate numbers were inscribed on each spectator's ticket, along with the seat level and the seat number. Of course, certain sections were reserved for senators and other officials, and the emperor and imperial family had their own box and entrance, the only one without a number.
- The retractable awnings of the Colosseum, erected to protect spectators from the sun, are noteworthy. Stone standards pierced with holes once circled the entire amphitheater and held the pulleys that manipulated the ropes to operate the awnings. Sailors from the imperial fleet hauled these ropes as part of their training. Skilled in pulling on ropes with exactly the same tension, they ensured that the awnings moved at precisely the same rotation.
- The games that inaugurated the Colosseum witnessed the deaths of more than 9,000 wild animals, many of them rare. The Colosseum was also used for gladiatorial combat to the death until A.D. 404 and was the site of public executions. But pantomimes, poetry recitations, and performances of plays and music also took place here. It is said that there were even mock sea battles, made possible by the spur of the great Claudian aqueduct that Nero had used to fill his lake, funneling huge quantities of water into the arena.
- Once it ceased functioning as a place of entertainment, probably around the late 6th century, the Colosseum was variously repurposed,

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Visit “Rome from the Sky,” the Quadrighe Terrace at the Vittoriano Take the glass-walled elevator to the top of the monument to get great views of Rome, including a panoramic view of the fora. (You can also visit the Vittoriano virtually at the website of the president of the Italian Republic, http://www.quirinale.it/grnw/statico/simboli/vittoriano/Vittoriano_home-a.htm.)

including as a small district of the city. People lived and worked under the arches and in structures built underground, where animals, gladiators, and criminals had once been held. A church arose inside, and the arena became a cemetery. In about 1200, it became a fortress of the feudal Frangipani clan; after that, a monastery moved in for continuous occupation until the end of the 18th century.

Suggested Reading

Barzini, *The Italians*.

Bussagli, ed., *Rome: Art and Architecture*.

Gabucci, *Guide to Ancient Rome*.

Hibbert, *Rome: Biography of a City*.

Kaplan, *Little Known Museums in and around Rome*.

McGregor, *Rome from the Ground Up*.

Pavia, *Guide to Underground Rome*.

Richards, *The New Italians*.

Severgnini, *La Bella Figura*.

Shetterly, *Rome Walks*.

Questions to Consider

1. Was it appropriate to construct the Victor Emmanuel Monument (Vittoriano) over top of an ancient historic site?
2. Can you explain why most of the Forum was abandoned during the Middle Ages?

Imperial Palaces of the Palatine Hill

Lecture 3

The entrance to the Palatine Hill is on the Via di San Gregorio, just behind the Arch of Constantine. This entrance was originally commissioned by the Farnese and designed by a genius architect named Il Vignola. The name of the Palatine Hill is believed to have been derived from Pales, the Roman god of shepherds and flocks. His feast day was April 21, the date on which Rome was traditionally founded in 753 B.C. According to tradition, it was also on the Palatine that Rome began; Romulus and Remus were found in a cave here, known as the Lupercal, and suckled by a she wolf. In this lecture, we'll explore what can be seen on the Palatine Hill today.

The “Upper East Side” of Rome

- Beginning in republican times, the Palatine was the high-rent quarter of Rome, where the super-rich built their villas. Prominent orators, politicians, and statesmen, including Cicero, Crassus, and Hortensius, had their homes here.
- Looking to the left at the top of the hill, we see a part of the great Claudian aqueduct, which was built between A.D. 38 and 52. It was begun by the emperor Caligula and completed by Claudius. The aqueduct reliably carried water from a source that was more than 45 miles distant.
- Among some ruins on the hill, we also see the church of St. Bonaventura al Palatino. This church was built in 1675 by the Barberini family, the family of Pope Urban VIII, who had a small *vigna*, or rural retreat, on the Palatine.
 - The church and remnants of a Franciscan friary rise over a great cistern built by the emperor Domitian late in the 1st century. This extension of the Claudian aqueduct served all of the fountains, grottoes, baths, and palaces on the Palatine with fresh water.

- It's difficult to exaggerate the importance of water to ancient Romans; it was significant well beyond the practical aspects of nutrition and sanitation. Water was imbued with religious significance, was a ubiquitous aspect of architectural ornamentation, and provided an important source of social engagement.

The Circus Maximus

- The emperor Domitian, a keen fan of chariot races, constructed his own private racetrack as part of his huge palace complex. Domitian's circus was almost 500 feet long and decorated with fountains fed by the Claudian aqueduct. Domitian also had a grand box in his palace that permitted him to watch the chariot races in the Circus Maximus.
- In its prime, the Circus Maximus was more than 2,000 feet long and more than 400 feet wide. Its *spina*, the central spine or decorated boulevard, measured more than 1,000 feet. It remains the largest sports stadium ever constructed, easily capable of holding 150,000 fans. Its origins are almost as old as those of Rome itself; according to tradition, it was built in the 7th century B.C. by the first king of Rome.
- In Rome, games had religious significance. Many of the races and other events celebrated important days in the Roman calendar. Others were payment for vows made to the gods for specific favors, especially victory in battle. However, the decline and fall of Rome meant the end of the great triumphal games and races. The last great celebration recorded was held by the Ostrogothic king Totila in A.D. 549.

The Septizonium

- To the east and south of Domitian's private stadium, we can see the massive bath complex built by the emperor Septimius Severus. The ruins of the baths extend all the way to the slopes of the Palatine and beyond.

- The baths once ended in a monumental construction known as the Septizonium (or Septizodium), built in A.D. 203. The purpose of the Septizonium is uncertain. It might have functioned as a fountain or decorative wall associated with the baths. Given that it stands right at the beginning of the Appian Way, it may have been erected as a focal point to impress travelers to Rome.
- Whatever its purpose and origins, history tells us that the Septizonium was thought to be a wonder. Sadly, like many of the buildings on the Palatine, it was quarried for dressed stone during the Middle Ages.

Domitian's Palace

- Domitian's palace complex was so vast that it was divided into two parts: the Domus Flavia—the public, ceremonial part of the complex; and the Domus Augustana—the private residence of the emperor.
- In the peristyle (the interior colonnaded courtyard) of the Domus Augustana was a celebrated central fountain. The private rooms of the emperor occupied two floors overlooking this courtyard. The emperor lived on the second story in a warren of small, intimate spaces.
 - All the walls here were covered by highly polished marble from Cappadocia. Tradition suggests that this was a deliberate choice to accommodate Domitian's notorious paranoia. Because the marble was highly reflective, the emperor could see if an assassin was sneaking up behind him.
 - Also inside is the famous graffito of Alexamenos. This bit of ancient graffiti was found scratched on stucco near the *paedagogium*, the school and residence of imperial pageboys. The image, which dates before A.D. 300, shows a boy with a crucified figure that has a donkey's head. Beneath it is a caption that says: "Alexamenos worships his god." Found in 1857, the graffito illustrates the tension between early Christians and pagans.

- The Domus Flavia, the ceremonial palace of the emperors, was also built by Domitian and occupied by many of his successors until the 4th century. The palace was arranged around a large atrium decorated with 16 columns and 12 basalt statues. Official reception rooms were located around the atrium, in particular, the imperial throne room, or Aula Regia.
- Just off the throne room was the Basilica Jovis, a basilica consisting of a central nave and three aisles. This was probably an auditorium, but it might have been used for other imperial functions.
- On the east side of the Aula Regia is the *lararium*, the sacred space in a Roman patrician house where the images of ancestors were kept.
- At the southern end of the peristyle was the *triclinium*, the enormous Coenatio Jovis, that is, the gigantic imperial banqueting hall. This room also had an apse, set above the rest of the floor. It was here that the emperor ate, keeping his eye on all below and dominating the room with his presence.
- Behind the dining hall are the remains of two rooms with apses. These are believed to have been reconstructions of the Greek and Latin libraries that were once in the Temple of Apollo.

The Temple of Apollo and House of Augustus

- To the west of the palace of Domitian are the remains of the Temple of Apollo, built by Augustus and completed in about 28 B.C. The temple was famous in antiquity because of the huge image of the god that was once inside.
 - Here, too, the Sibylline Books were kept in golden cases. These prophecies of the Sibyls were probably Greek originally and, by tradition, were acquired for Rome by King Tarquinius Superbus.
 - Surrounding the temple was the portico of the Danaids, famously adorned with 50 statues of the daughters of the mythical King Danaus of Egypt. Sadly, little of it survives,

except some terracotta panels and fresco fragments now in the Palatine Museum.

- Almost nothing remains of the temple itself, but not long ago, a private corridor was uncovered that linked this temple to the House of Augustus.
- The House of Augustus was the private home of the founder of the Roman Empire. We know a great deal about the house because the Roman historian Suetonius describes it in detail.
 - The frescoes in the House of Augustus are among the most important in the city and date from 25 B.C. to about A.D. 25. The quality of the figure and landscape painting and the decorative architectural panels and garlands indicate the civilized lives led by wealthy Romans.
 - The elegant quality of life is also reflected in the rooms of the so-called House of Livia to the north. This house was uncovered in 1869, and an inscription in the building material led to its identification as the house of the first empress. However, it is now universally accepted to have been part of the House of Augustus itself.



The House of Augustus is one of the most well-preserved ancient houses in Rome and a marvelous example of domestic patrician architecture.

The Temple of Cybele and Roma Quadrata

- The remains of the Temple of Cybele are also on the Palatine. Cybele Magna Mater was the great mother of the gods, and the cult associated with her originated in Asia Minor. It became significant to Romans during the dangerous years of the Punic Wars, when Rome was engaged in a life-and-death struggle against Hannibal and the Carthaginians.
 - The earthly attribute of Cybele was a conical black rock, most likely a meteorite. An oracle had declared that Rome would be victorious over Carthage only if the sacred attributes of the great mother were transferred to the city; thus, the black rock was brought to Rome, and a temple was constructed to house it.
 - The temple was finished in 191 B.C., but it suffered from several fires and was frequently rebuilt, the last time being under Augustus in the year 3.
- Just beyond the temple, on the southern part of the site, is one of the most ancient survivals of the Palatine: the legendary heart of the ancient city of Rome. Here were believed to be the original walls of the first city—Roma Quadrata—which was, by tradition, built by Romulus. Up until the adoption of Christianity in the 4th century, Romans believed that this point on the Palatine was the site of the hut occupied by Romulus.

The Farnese Gardens

- In the mid-16th century, Pope Paul III Farnese gave his grandson, Cardinal Alessandro Farnese, a part of the Palatine on which to build a *villa urbana*, a pleasure house within the city. The construction of this villa required the destruction or burial of remnants of the palace built by Tiberius, the successor to Augustus.
- The creation of the gardens was entrusted to Vignola, a genius of both architecture and garden design. After his death, the plan was continued by Girolamo Rainaldi. The realization of the gardens required the leveling and filling in of the ruins of the palace of

Tiberius, but many of the sculptures and materials found on the site were absorbed into the collection of the Farnese.

- Undoubtedly, Vignola was inspired by the survivals of the old imperial palaces. He carved cool grottoes into the hillside or ruins and installed many “sweating” fountains. To house the Farnese’s collection of exotic birds, a double aviary was built. Rare plants and trees and beautiful vistas were combined to make this space one of the most pleasurable sites of Rome.

Smithsonian Journeys Travel Tips

Be sure to visit the Cryptoporticus of Nero, a long, dark, semi-subterranean tunnel softly illuminated by small upper windows. Walk into part of an underground passageway that connected the imperial palaces of the Palatine to Nero’s Domus Aurea.

Suggested Reading

Barzini, *The Italians*.

Bussagli, ed., *Rome: Art and Architecture*.

Gabucci, *Guide to Ancient Rome*.

Hibbert, *Rome: Biography of a City*.

Kaplan, *Little Known Museums in and around Rome*.

McGregor, *Rome from the Ground Up*.

Pavia, *Guide to Underground Rome*.

Richards, *The New Italians*.

Severgnini, *La Bella Figura*.

Shetterly, *Rome Walks*.

Questions to Consider

1. Augustus, the first emperor, lived quite simply on the Palatine, whereas his successors built huge palaces. Are there other situations you can identify in which the first leaders lived modestly but their successors chose opulent lifestyles? What forces do you think are at work here?
2. Why do you think the complex of imperial palaces was abandoned after the fall of Rome rather than continuously inhabited by powerful people in the Middle Ages?

Pompeii: A City Frozen in Time

Lecture 4

In this lecture, we leave Rome for a day trip to Pompeii, a once-vibrant city, with a wealthy population who took advantage of the climate, access to the bay, and easy transportation to Rome. Pompeii was also a significant trading city and an agricultural center, with rich volcanic soil that produced excellent crops. As we know, much of Pompeii was preserved for us by the eruption of Mount Vesuvius in A.D. 79, and in this lecture, we will walk through the city to view those ancient remains. We will also briefly explore Monte Cassino, Naples, Herculaneum, and the Amalfi Coast.

Monte Cassino and Naples

- The hilltop monastery of Monte Cassino is about 90 miles south of Rome. In 529, St. Benedict of Nursia chose this inhospitable site to establish a Christian community.
 - The abbey grew in size over the centuries, becoming an important center of learning and religious life. It was active up to the Napoleonic period, when it was secularized. In 1866, it was declared a national historical monument. Nevertheless, because of its strategic position on the road to Rome, the abbey was repeatedly bombed during World War II and was reduced to rubble in 1944.
 - After the war, the abbey was reconstructed by a team of specialists in mosaics, marble inlay, plaster, wood decoration, and the traditional genres of painting. It was finally reconsecrated in 1964, with even its celebrated library intact. Fortuitously, the precious books and manuscripts had been moved to Rome for safekeeping before the war.
- Some 40 miles beyond Monte Cassino lies Naples. The Bay of Naples, dominated by the volcano of Vesuvius, is one of the world's most beautiful vistas. An important site to visit in the city is the

National Museum of Archaeology (Museo Archeologico Nazionale di Napoli), which holds many artifacts from Pompeii.

- One of the highlights of the museum is the Alexander Mosaic, taken from the House of the Faun in Pompeii. Made about 100 B.C., the mosaic portrays the victory of Alexander the Great over Darius III of Persia in the 4th century B.C.
- The museum also houses many other mosaics, such as the charming Cave Canem (“Beware the Dog”), as well as frescoes, bronzes, and sculptures. A room called the Secret Cabinet holds many erotic images from Pompeii.

Eruption and Excavation at Pompeii

- Mount Vesuvius erupted on August 24 and 25, A.D. 79, expelling ash and pumice across a wide area. We know a great deal about this event because of two letters written by Pliny the Younger. His uncle, Pliny the Elder, was the admiral in command of the Roman fleet at nearby Misenum. This brave man died by sailing too close to the eruption in an attempt to rescue the citizens of Pompeii with his ships.
 - It is likely that most of the inhabitants died either in the first explosion or through the resulting heat and suffocating ash.
 - The burial of the city in ash took place over an extended period of time; in some places, 20 feet of volcanic material was deposited over the doomed town.
- The excavation of the city began in 1748, but it wasn’t until 1863 that an Italian archeologist, Giuseppe Fiorelli, realized that the hollows in the compacted ash had been created by decayed corpses. He filled the hollows with liquid plaster, thereby releasing poignant images of the unfortunate citizens of Pompeii in the agony of death. Archeological work continues to this day and has uncovered a significant part of the city.

The Pompeian Forum and Public Baths

- The forum of Pompeii is located where two major roads converged. It was the economic, religious, and political center from the earliest



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Some of the most famous survivals from Pompeii are its frescoes; they are both splendid in their workmanship and emotionally moving.

years of the town. Today, the forum is only a collection of ruined structures, some better preserved than others.

- At the north end of the forum are the remnants of the Temple of Jupiter. The imperial arches are just beside it. Next to the arch on the left is a market building and, to its south, the Temple of Apollo. Beyond that was the basilica.
- On the opposite side of the forum stand the remains of the so-called Eumachia, a large, arcaded building whose specific function is unknown. Next to it is the Sanctuary of Augustus, and next to that is the Imperial Cult building, once thought to be a shrine for the city's protective gods (the *Lares Publici*). Then, there was a large market for food, essentially a courtyard (known as a *macellum*), surrounded by vendor stalls.
- At the south end of the forum stood the municipal buildings. Here were the offices of the *duovirs*—the equivalent of joint mayors of the city—and the *aediles*, who were responsible for public works and what we now call infrastructure. Around three sides of the forum are the remains of the raised porticoes, a double-height arcaded sidewalk that provided access to the buildings behind.

- Just to the northwest of the forum, on the Via delle Terme, are the public baths. There were at least three baths in Pompeii: the Stabian, the Central, and these. Although these are the smallest, they were certainly the most elegant. Because they are so close to the forum, they were frequented by high officials and wealthy citizens.
 - As in Rome, the bath complex in Pompeii had not one but several baths. First, there was the cold bath room (*frigidarium*), followed by the *tepidarium* (warm bath room), and finally, the hot bath room (*calidarium*). This room was ingeniously heated with hot air circulated through hollows in the wall leading from the furnaces below.
 - The bath complex also included a changing room, lavatories, and a courtyard for doing exercises. There were separate men's and women's areas, each with its own entrance.

The House of the Faun and House of the Vettii

- On the Via di Nola, we find the House of the Faun, one of the most luxurious of the great houses in Pompeii. Owned by prominent Roman aristocrats, it was a huge mansion, with an overall footprint of about 30,000 square feet. As in modern Rome, the street front was not part of the domestic residence but rented out to shops.
 - The mansion had large, elegant courtyards and gardens, its own private baths, and some of Pompeii's finest artwork, including the Alexander Mosaic, the Sea or Fish Mosaic, and the highly erotic Nymph and Satyr.
 - The source for the name of this house can be found in the *impluvium*, the pool in the inner courtyard for collecting rainwater. There, we see a bronze figure of a dancing faun or satyr, a replica of the original that is now in Naples for safekeeping.
- Another example of Roman domestic architecture is the luxurious mansion owned by two brothers, Aulus Vettius Conviva and Aulus Vettius Restitutus. Unlike the aristocratic owners of the House of the

Faun, these were freedmen—emancipated slaves—who grew rich as merchants and built their house to symbolize their new status.

- The House of the Vettii is one of the most beautiful and evocative of the houses in Pompeii. It has been excavated in such a way as to preserve its remarkable decoration. The frescoes are rich in the typical reds, yellows, and blacks of Pompeian art, and fabulously preserved festoons, masks, and medallions enliven the various rooms.

- A charming narrative of paintings shows cupids engaged in various professions, such as perfume makers or goldsmiths. But brutality is also depicted, as we see in a fresco of Pentheus as he is being killed by the Maenads, an episode from the *Bacchae* by Euripides.

Commercial Establishments

- The city of Pompeii had a profusion of taverns, as well as several brothels, the most famous of which is the Lupanar. The erotic decorations and statues of Venus, the pictures showing the menu of services available, and the warren of tiny bedrooms all reflect a culture far more open than our own.

- The city also had numerous laundries, with large tubs for washing. For example, in the Via Dell'Abbondanza (the *decumanus maximus*, or “main street,” of the town) is the laundry of Stephanus. This laundry was installed in what had once been an upscale house, with lovely frescoes, but its commercial function is clear.

- Bread was the staple of the Italian diet, and Pompeii had more than 30 bakeries and pastry shops. The bakery of Modestus, near the corner of the Via Stabiana and Via degli Augustali, was a full-service shop; grain was ground and bread was baked on the premises.
 - Baking was clearly an important and lucrative profession; at least one baker was elected as *aedile*, that is, chief infrastructure official, of the town.

- In addition, Pompeii has a number of frescoes of bakeries and bread. Indeed, one of the most famous images from Pompeii, now in Naples, is often called *The Baker and His Wife*.

The Theater and Gymnasium of Pompeii

- The theater in Pompeii is in a remarkable state of preservation. Like the Colosseum, it had retractable awnings to protect the audience of up to 5,000 from the sun or rain. Next to it is a smaller concert hall—the Odeon—which sat about 1,500. Behind the theater was a covered portico that was the equivalent of a modern lobby. This *quadriporticus*, arranged around a central open space, was built during the 1st century B.C.
- Not far from the theater is the *palestra*, or outdoor gymnasium. It is a large, open space surrounded by a portico and wall. The sunken depression was used as a swimming pool and a site for mock sea battles and other aquatic sports. The field was used for wrestling and boxing matches and gymnastics.
- The amphitheater that is beside the *palestra* is the oldest stone amphitheater in the Roman Empire. It was built about 80 B.C. and could seat about 20,000 people. Its size indicates that it was not only for the citizens of Pompeii but also served spectators from nearby towns and villages.

The Villa of the Mysteries

- The Villa of the Mysteries is a suburban home of unparalleled beauty and importance. It is a classic *villa suburbana*, a pleasure house with attached agricultural functions.
- This luxurious house was built in what is called the Second Pompeian style and dates to sometime around 60 B.C. It contains a dozen rooms with spectacular and well-preserved frescoes; these feature dramatic use of optical illusions to give a sense of space and depth.
- The fresco in the large dining room (the *triclinium*), depicting the initiation of a young woman into a mystery cult, has given the villa

its name. By following the figure of the young woman from panel to panel, we see some of the elements of the initiation emerge, such as the role of the mother and priestess and mythological figures, including Bacchus.

Smithsonian Journeys Travel Tips

Check out the water tower that originally had a lead storage tank on top with a public water fountain; it's on the street on the south side of the Via dell'Abbondanza at the junction with the Via Stabiana. This water tower also distributed water to neighborhood fountains. (See the tower online at *Pompeii in Pictures*, <http://www.pompeiiinpictures.com/pompeiiinpictures/Fountains/Fountain%2010415.htm>).

Read about Eumachia, patron of the fullers and public priestess of Venus and Ceres. Her building is on the east side of the forum in Pompeii. Note the extant portico columns and the elegant marble cornice of the main entrance of the building. The delicate low relief of acanthus leaves and birds is a rare example of marble sculpture still attached to the original building.

Suggested Reading

Barzini, *The Italians*.

Bussagli, ed., *Rome: Art and Architecture*.

Gabucci, *Guide to Ancient Rome*.

Hibbert, *Rome: Biography of a City*.

Kaplan, *Little Known Museums in and around Rome*.

Lancaster, *In the Shadow of Vesuvius*.

McGregor, *Rome from the Ground Up*.

Moe, *The View from Vesuvius*.

Panetta, *Pompeii: The History, Life and Art of the Buried City*.

Pavia, *Guide to Underground Rome*.

Richards, *The New Italians*.

Severgnini, *La Bella Figura*.

Shetterly, *Rome Walks*.

Questions to Consider

1. Which aspects of daily life in Pompeii are most familiar to you and which are most alien?
2. Do you agree with the archeologist Giuseppe Fiorelli that pumping plaster into the cavities in the volcanic ash to see the death agony of so many people is acceptable in the search for knowledge?

The Roman Forum

Lecture 5

Our visit to Pompeii allowed us to experience the domestic lives of ordinary Romans in ancient times. This was in contrast to the lives of the nobles who inhabited the palaces of the Palatine. But the two groups came together, necessarily, in the Roman Forum. This was the religious, political, economic, legal, and even—to a degree—social center of the vast city and empire of Rome. We'll explore the Forum and its history in this lecture.

History of the Forum

- During its earliest history, the site of the Roman Forum was a cemetery, but the location grew in importance when the Romans of the Palatine began trading with the Sabines of the Capitoline.
- As the first Roman settlement expanded out of Roma Quadrata, more public space was needed. For this reason, the valley of the Forum was drained by diverting the river Velabro into the first great sewer of Rome—the Cloaca Maxima, constructed in the 7th century B.C.
- The Forum began with small shops selling food and other household goods, but these private commercial ventures were gradually displaced by grand public structures. This was especially true after the introduction of the basilica to the Forum, the first of which was commissioned by Marcus Porcius Cato in 185 B.C. The last was sponsored by Maxentius and his half-brother, Constantine the Great, in the early 4th century A.D.

The Temple of Venus and Arch of Titus

- The Temple of Venus was begun in A.D. 121 under the emperor Hadrian but was unfinished at the time of his death. The largest of Rome's temples, it faced the Colosseum and had two *cellas* back to back, one for the goddess Roma, the personification of the city, and the other for Venus, a divine ancestor of the Julio-Claudian dynasty. Today, the temple contains the church and one-time convent of

Santa Francesca Romana. The former convent building now holds a museum that displays material discovered in the Forum.

- The Arch of Titus was erected in A.D. 81 on the instructions of Domitian to celebrate the victory of Titus over the Jews in A.D. 70. This victory is illustrated in the small frieze above the single arch and much more grandly on the inside.
 - For example, above the architrave on the Colosseum side of the arch is the personification of the river Jordan being carried away.
 - The south side of the interior panel illustrates the Roman army carrying away the spoils of Jerusalem in triumph, including the sacred menorah and altar from the Temple of Solomon. The opposite panel shows Titus in his four-horse chariot, guided by the goddess Roma and attended by Victory.
 - The central panel above shows the apotheosis of the emperor, with Titus carried into heaven on an eagle.

The *Horrea*

- The Via Sacra (“Sacred Way”) was the route of ancient Roman triumphs through the Forum. Walking along it today, we see the foundations of ruined buildings that obviously were once quite large. These are all that remain of the *horrea*, that is, the warehouses that ran from the Arch of Titus to the House of the Vestal Virgins.
- The structure of these vast buildings is difficult to identify today, but we know a great deal about them and how they reflected the politics and economy of the ancient empire. The Domus Aurea, that enormous palace of Nero, once ran into the Forum. After the palace was abandoned, what had been its vestibule became a market for luxury goods imported from across the empire.
- The earliest warehouse was named for the pepper and other important spices that came from the east—the Horrea Piperataria. Unfortunately, it was eventually pulled down to make room for the basilica of Maxentius and Constantine in the early 4th century A.D.

- Farther along are remnants of the larger Horrea Vespasiani, which adjoined the Horrea Hadriani. These warehouses—each named for the emperor who built it—had multiple floors and contained numerous small stalls.

The Basilica of Maxentius and Constantine

- The basilica of Maxentius and Constantine was begun by the emperor Maxentius and worked on from about A.D. 306 to 310. It was completed by the emperor's half-brother, Constantine, after his victory at the Milvian Bridge in 312.
- The basilica is a huge rectangle covering some 63,000 square feet, or about an acre and a half. It is still visibly basilican in design, with a majestic central nave and two side aisles. The columns that decorated the piers supporting the vault were almost 50 feet high, but only one of these survives; it was moved in the 17th century by Pope Paul V Borghese to the piazza in front of Santa Maria Maggiore. Originally, there were bronze panels in the roof vaulting, but in the 7th century, Pope Honorius repurposed them to cover Old St. Peter's Basilica.
- There are two apses under the huge barrel vaults. The Colossus of Constantine (parts of which can be seen in the Capitoline Museum) was discovered in the 1480s on the western side of the building. This enormous image of the emperor filled an apse, but only the marble head, hands, and feet survive. It is likely that the rest of the huge statue was made of wood or bronze and later rotted or was melted down.

The Temple of Romulus

- Next to the basilica of Constantine is the Temple of Romulus, the deified son of Maxentius. It is circular, with the entrance decorated by two porphyry columns and the original bronze doors of the early 4th century. There is still a debate about whether this was a temple or the office of the prefect of Rome.
- Inside the temple (now the entrance to the church of Sts. Cosma and Damian) is a large room, behind which was once the library of Vespasian's Temple of Peace. Land registration documents

were kept here, as well as the *Forma Urbis Romae*. Part of this spectacular marble relief map of the ancient city still survives.

- Other treasures held here included the spoils of Titus's campaign in Jerusalem, such as the menorah from the Temple of Solomon and even—tradition has it—the Ark of the Covenant.

The House and Temple of the Vestal Virgins

- Opposite the Temple of Romulus is the House and Temple of the Vestal Virgins, one of the most sacred places in pagan Rome. The tradition is that the cult of Vesta and the sacred flame began with Aeneas, who carried the sacred fire all the way from Troy. More likely, it began with the second Roman king, Numa Pompilius.
- Six vestals were chosen from among the noblest patrician clans before they reached the age of 10. They then spent 30 years as



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One of the names on the statues in the courtyard of the House of the Vestal Virgins has been expunged; it's commonly believed that this vestal converted to Christianity.

vestals, the first 10 learning the complex skills and arts required of them, the next 10 performing those duties, and the final 10 teaching the next generation. Their essential task was to ensure that the sacred flame was never permitted to expire. If it were to go out, it would be the worst possible omen for the fate of Rome.

- The House of the Vestals was badly damaged, if not destroyed, in the great fire in A.D. 64. What we see today is the reconstruction done under Septimius Severus in A.D. 191. It is a huge structure; indeed, its size leads modern historians to believe that the *pontifex maximus*, the chief priest of Rome, also had quarters in the building.
- Just beyond and attached to the House of the Vestals are the remains of the Temple of Vesta, which featured 30 Corinthian columns around a central focus. Its circular shape derives from the earliest manifestation of the temple: a round, thatched hut with a central fire pit, much like the Iron Age ones discovered on the Palatine.
- Immediately to the west of the Temple of Vesta are the remains of the Lacus Juturnae (“Pool of Juturna”). After the Roman victory at Lake Regillus in 496 B.C., the legendary saviors of Rome, Castor and Pollux, were seen here watering their horses. The basin and altar are still visible. Around the edges are images of Castor and Pollux and their parents, Jupiter and Leda.

Other Sites in the Forum

- The most important Christian site in the Forum is Santa Maria Antiqua, which began its life as an imperial-age building.
 - It was repurposed in the 6th century as the exterior guardhouse of Byzantine soldiers, who guarded the entrance from the Forum to the palaces on the Palatine, where the Byzantine governor had his headquarters. By the beginning of the 8th century, the site was transformed into a church.
 - The church was rebuilt several times. Consequently, some of the earliest parts were obscured. This was especially so with

the construction of the last church erected on the site, the Baroque church of Santa Maria Liberatrice.

- The Temple of Castor and Pollux is one of the most iconic images of the Forum because of its three standing columns, supporting an elegant architrave. The temple we see today dates to A.D. 6, in the reign of Augustus, but it replaced a temple first inaugurated in 484 B.C.
- Also visible are the foundations of the now-lost Arch of Augustus, constructed in about 20 B.C., which once straddled the Via Sacra. It was large, with three openings, and some of its important monumental panels might have included the celebrated Fasti Capitolini. These are marble tablets inscribed with lists of triumphs and consuls that are kept today in the Capitoline Museum.
- At the end of the original, oldest Forum was the Temple of the Divine Julius. Almost nothing remains of this temple except the base of the podium and the altar. Augustus, Caesar's nephew and adopted son, ordered the construction of the temple in 29 B.C.
- To the east, almost attached to the temple of Julius Caesar, we find the Regia, one of the oldest and most significant sites in the Forum. This was the official office of the *pontifex maximus* and was believed to have been the location of the palace of Numa Pompilius. Excavations beneath have revealed structures dating from the 7th century B.C. The ruins we see today are from a reconstruction of the 1st century B.C. and improvements by Septimius Severus.
- Finally, the monumental structure on the northern side of the Via Sacra is the Temple of Antoninus Pius and Faustina, now containing the Baroque façade of the church of San Lorenzo in Miranda. The original temple was commissioned by the Senate to honor the empress Faustina in A.D. 141. When her husband, the emperor Antoninus Pius, died in A.D. 161, he was included in the dedication.

Smithsonian Journeys Travel Tips

Check out the platform under the Temple of Castor and Pollux, where shops and storage facilities were maintained. Extracted teeth discovered in the drains under the structure on the corner indicate that a dentist's office was likely located there.

Visit the church of Santa Francesca Romana to see the 5th-century Byzantine icon of Our Lady of Tenderness. The icon was rediscovered in 1950 underneath the overpainting of another image of the Madonna and Child.

Explore the area to the right of the Temple of Antoninus and Faustina, where an archaic cemetery was excavated at the beginning of the 20th century. The rectangular and circular beds of grass correspond to the Iron Age tombs below the ground. These burials occurred during the early years of the Forum, around the 10th and 9th centuries B.C.E.

Suggested Reading

Barzini, *The Italians*.

Bussagli, ed., *Rome: Art and Architecture*.

Gabucci, *Guide to Ancient Rome*.

Hibbert, *Rome: Biography of a City*.

Kaplan, *Little Known Museums in and around Rome*.

McGregor, *Rome from the Ground Up*.

Pavia, *Guide to Underground Rome*.

Richards, *The New Italians*.

Severgnini, *La Bella Figura*.

Shetterly, *Rome Walks*.

Questions to Consider

1. Explain why the Forum was so important to the ancient Romans.
2. Can you explain why Romans chose to deify their emperors, turning them into gods after their deaths?

Along the Via Sacra to the Capitoline

Lecture 6

It's easy to feel reverential in the Roman Forum, walking along ancient ground from which a vast empire was once ruled. But we must also remember that this was the bustling heart of a major city, crowded with officials, slaves, professionals, tourists—and shoppers. Thus, we begin this lecture in front of the remains of one of the many multipurpose malls of the Forum, the Basilica Aemilia. We'll then continue our trek along the Via Sacra and its environs, exploring the Curia, or Senate House; the Arch of Septimius Severus; the Temple of Saturn; the Temple of Jupiter; and the Mamertine Prison.

The Basilica Aemilia and the Basilica Julia

- The Basilica Aemilia was the smallest of the basilicas in the original Roman Forum. It derived its name from its builder, Marcus Aemilius Lepidus, who erected it in 179 B.C. The basilica was restored often under the empire but was ultimately destroyed by the fire that resulted from Alaric's sack of Rome in A.D. 410. On the Forum façade of the Basilica Aemilia, facing the Via Sacra, was a portico with shops and moneychangers' stalls.
- Opposite the Basilica Aemilia stood the Basilica Julia, named after the man who had it built, Julius Caesar. This was an important place for public officials, especially the civil magistrates of the *centumviri* ("100 men"). These officials ran the civil litigation courts and adjudicated private law. Like the Basilica Aemilia, the Basilica Julia suffered several fires and was ultimately destroyed by Alaric.
- In the space between the two basilicas are the remains of the bases that once held monumental bronze equestrian statues of Domitian and Constantine. The paving stones just beyond the plinth for Domitian's lost monument mark the location of the legendary Lacus Curtius.
 - The Lacus Curtius was the site where once, according to legend, a huge sinkhole open up in the ground.

- A prophecy had foretold that the hole would close only when the thing that “Rome held most dear” was thrown into the chasm. A young patrician, Marcus Curtius, dressed in full armor and mounted on his horse, vaulted into the opening, after which it miraculously sealed itself. Obviously, what Rome held most dear was the courage of its young men!

The Venus Cloacina and the Shrine to Janus

- Continuing west, we find the remains of two important pagan shrines. The first is that of Venus Cloacina. This is the place where the early kings of Rome placed the major entry into the Cloaca Maxima, the magnificent sewer built to drain the Forum.
- A little further along are the ruins of the shrine to Janus, the two-faced god of beginnings and endings and, consequently, of doorways. The massive bronze doors of the temple that was here had great significance. When they were closed, it was a sign that Rome was at peace. When they were open, Rome was at war. According to tradition, they were closed on only three occasions during Rome’s entire history!

The Rostra

- The Rostra took its name from the *rostra* (“beaks”) of enemy ships from the naval Battle of Antium in 338 B.C. These were the bronze battering-ram prows that were removed from captured enemy ships and placed here as trophies.
- This was the site of the speakers’ podium from about the 6th century B.C. until Julius Caesar reoriented the precinct of the Senate House and Comitium, the open space where the 30 districts of republican Rome met to vote and exercise their authority. The Rostra had great symbolic authority because the speaker addressed the assembled population by facing north, toward the Comitium.
- It was also here that the dictators Marius and Sulla displayed the severed heads of their enemies. And it was on this site that Brutus and Cassius spoke to the population, justifying the assassination

of Julius Caesar in 44 B.C. In addition, the head and hands of the orator and statesman Cicero were displayed here by Mark Antony in 43 B.C. in vengeance for the great orator's philippics against him.

The Curia

- The wonderfully preserved Curia, or Senate House, was the last of Julius Caesar's renovation projects. Although completed under Augustus, the structure that stands today dates from the time of Diocletian, who restored it after a fire. In 638, it was converted to a church, Sant'Adriano.
- The raised platforms here once held the seats of some 300 senators and the dais where the speaker sat. The small platform opposite once held the gold figure of Victory that was the gift of Augustus. The headless porphyry figure dates from the 2nd century and is likely an image of Trajan.
- The long reliefs displayed here are not part of the original Senate House but are the *Plutei Trajani* (or, more accurately, *Plutei Hadriani*, given that they have been recently re-dated). These *plutei*, or moveable stone panels, likely stood outside on the imperial Rostra. They consist of reliefs of sacrifices, the burning of debt roles, scenes of the Forum, and even thanks for an orphanage.
- When Caesar reconstructed the area around the Curia and Comitium, he required that the speakers' platform be moved and enlarged. Behind it, we find two objects that are significant for the geography of the empire and the topography of Rome.
 - The first, circular structure is the *umbilicus urbis*, the bellybutton, or center, of Rome. It is associated with the *milliarium aureum*, the milestone marking the terminus of all Roman roads.
 - Taken together, these two survivals constitute the *umbilicus mundi*: the navel of the world.

The Arch of Septimius Severus and Temple of Saturn

- The Arch of Septimius Severus dominates the west end of the Forum. It was erected in A.D. 203 by a decree of the Senate to commemorate the victories of the emperor over the Parthians in what is now eastern Iran and Iraq.
 - The arch is a magnificent structure, completely covered in marble. Originally, there was a huge bronze chariot on top, pulled by six horses.
 - The decorative frieze records the spoils carried to Rome by victorious soldiers. An image of Parthia itself is represented by the large seated figure, and at the base of the columns are Parthian prisoners.
- An equally impressive structure on the west end of the Forum was the Temple of Saturn, one of the oldest and most sacred spaces in the complex. The original temple was built in about 500 B.C. and rebuilt in 42 B.C., although the ruins seen today are from a later renovation.



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The Arch of Septimius Severus dominates the end of the Forum at the foot of the Capitoline Hill, where it witnessed triumphal processions by victorious generals.

Besides paying tribute to Saturn, the temple was also the treasury of Rome and the site of the festival in honor of Saturn, the Saturnalia.

Along the Clivus Capitolinus

- The Clivus Capitolinus is an ancient extension of the Via Sacra that ascends the Capitoline. It was the route of triumphs and processions that ended at the Temple of Jupiter. Along it, we find an extended portico, the Dei Consentes. This rather odd structure was the last pagan monument to be added to the Forum, built in A.D. 367 by the prefect Vettius Praetextatus.
 - The Dei Consentes were the most significant gods and goddesses of the Roman pantheon. There were six males (Apollo, Jupiter, Mars, Mercury, Neptune, and Vulcan) and six females (Ceres, Diana, Juno, Minerva, Venus, and Vesta).
 - The cubicles created between the original 12 columns each once held a golden image of one of these deities.
- To the right, beyond the portico of the Dei Consentes, are three monumental columns supporting an entablature. This is all that remains of the elegant Temple to Vespasian, erected by his sons Titus and Domitian in A.D. 79. Because of the restrictions of the site, the temple was narrow, but it was beautifully finished in rare marbles imported from the east.
- To the north is the ruin of another great temple, originally dedicated as the Temple of Concord in recognition of the reconciliation between the patricians and plebeians during the Roman Republic. The remains seen today largely date from its final reconstruction under the emperor Tiberius. He installed in it a large collection of famous Greek paintings and sculpture, making it, in effect, the public art museum of imperial Rome.

The Church of Sts. Luke and Martina

- The church of Sts. Luke and Martina stands just beyond the Arch of Septimius Severus. The site became sacred because of a legend that St. Martina was martyred on this spot in A.D. 228. By the 7th century,

there was a small church on the site, and in the 13th century, a larger building was constructed. What we see today is a beautiful Greek cross church with a dome designed by Pietro da Cortona in the 17th century.

- In 1577, the academy that united the artists, sculptors, and architects in Rome was founded. This guild needed a place to meet because the papacy was keen to establish a Roman tradition of art and to ensure that practitioners in the city would have the proper training.
- In 1588, the Accademia di San Luca was granted the church of St. Martina, which then became the church of Sts. Luke and Martina. But because the church was old, plans were almost immediately made for a new structure.
- In 1634, when Pietro da Cortona was elected president of the Accademia, he set about realizing the ambitions of the artists. By the time he died in 1669, the church was largely done, with only the interior and the dome incomplete.

The Mamertine Prison

- The 17th-century church San Giuseppe dei Falegnami (“St. Joseph of the Carpenters”) was built above the Tullianum, that is, the infamous Mamertine Prison. The prison was a deep, brick-lined pit, probably originally a cistern from the earliest days of Rome. A number of notable captives were kept there before trial or execution.
- The Mamertine was also the site of the incarceration of two Christian martyrs—Sts. Peter and Paul—before their execution under Nero. This explains why the Mamertine was consecrated under Christianity in the 4th century as an oratory (that is, a place of prayer) for St. Peter, the patron saint of Rome. Later, it was designated as a church: San Pietro in Carcere (“St. Peter in Prison”).

- In ancient times, the staircase to the left of the Mamertine was the infamous *Scalae Gemoniae*. These were called the Stairs of Mourning because the corpses of executed felons were publicly displayed here as examples of the fate awaiting those whose crimes were particularly heinous.

Smithsonian Journeys Travel Tips

The western end of the Roman Forum has two fine examples of *damnatio memoriae*, or “damnation of memory.” When the Roman Senate wished to erase the memory of someone—a traitor or disgraced leader—a sanction against the individual resulted in the seizure of property and the obliteration of any trace of existence. On both sides of the attic story of the Arch of Septimius Severus, the name Geta has been chiseled out and replaced by text that refers only to his brother, Caracalla, who became emperor after the death of his father, Septimius Severus. Caracalla killed his brother in A.D. 212, then had all references to Geta erased, as is evident in line 4 of the text on the Arch of Septimius Severus.

One hundred years later, Emperor Maxentius was killed by Constantine, who then attempted to thoroughly erase the former emperor’s memory. An example of this deletion is evident on a pedestal located in the area below the Arch of Septimius Severus and between the Lapis Niger and the Curia. On the base, which has a dedication to Mars and the founders of Rome, the name Maxentius has been chiseled off, although letters of the name are still faintly visible over the line “Invictus Aug.”

Suggested Reading

- Augias, *The Secrets of Rome*.
- Barzini, *The Italians*.
- Bussagli, ed., *Rome: Art and Architecture*.
- Hibbert, *Rome: Biography of a City*.
- Kaplan, *Little Known Museums in and around Rome*.
- McGregor, *Rome from the Ground Up*.
- Partner, *Renaissance Rome, 1500–1559*.
- Partridge, *The Art of Renaissance Rome*.
- Portoghesi, *Rome of the Renaissance*.
- Richards, *The New Italians*.
- Severgnini, *La Bella Figura*.
- Shetterly, *Rome Walks*.
- Stinger, *The Renaissance in Rome*.

Questions to Consider

1. The Senate House and the Rostra were important political sites of republican Rome. Can you suggest why the Roman emperors sustained these institutions in the imperial period?
2. The Forum and its environment have a great many Christian churches built in or on pagan sites. Why did this happen?

The Via del Corso and Princely Palaces

Lecture 7

The Via del Corso is one of the busiest streets in the center of Rome. A *corso* in Italian is a “racecourse,” and in fact, the name of this street derives from an important historical horserace that ran from the Piazza del Popolo at one end of the street all the way down to the Piazza Venezia at the other. As we’ll see in this lecture, however, this event was more than a horserace; it was part of the celebrated Roman carnival. In this lecture, we’ll also explore the Palazzo Doria Pamphilj, the Palazzo Odescalchi, and the Palazzo Colonna, which is still occupied by this ancient and distinguished family.

The Roman Carnival

- From at least the 11th century onward, the period leading up to Lent was one of organized—and many disorganized—festivities. The carnival in Rome was the most celebrated in Italy, far more so than its competitor in Venice.
- Some of the public festivities that took place during the carnival were charming. For example, a footrace was held in which young men attempted to extinguish candles held by pretty girls for the promise of a kiss. There were also parades with floats and costumes.
- But the carnival had a dark side, as well. Public executions were part of the tradition, and certain popes took the opportunity to punish the Jewish community, requiring old Jewish men to run footraces. In fact, the Jews were required to pay for the carnival.
- Unlike the Jews, the poor of Rome eagerly awaited the coming of the carnival because the papacy provided them with a number of live pigs. The animals were put in cages on wooden carts that were then released from the top of a hill, Testaccio, to smash against a wall below. The poor of Rome would then fight for the pigs, living or dead, to get some meat before Lent.

Lecture 7—The Via del Corso and Princely Palaces



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Although the traffic may seem formidable, for many years, only vehicles with special permits have been allowed to travel the Via del Corso, and on summer weekends, parts of the street become a pedestrian mall.

- Originally, races of various kinds took place throughout the city. But in 1466, Cardinal Barbo, who later became Pope Paul II, required that the finish line be near the balcony of his palace, the Palazzo Venezia. Thus, a race was run along what was then called Via Lata (“Wide Street”). Because it was so closely associated with the race, the street later became the Via del Corso.
- The race was run by riderless Barbary horses, a highly esteemed breed from North Africa. At the sound of a trumpet, they were released at the Piazza del Popolo and ran headlong to the Piazza Venezia. Young men showed off their bravery by rushing among the horses, grabbing at their bridles to stop them. In 1874, a young boy was trampled to death by the horses, and the king of Italy, Victor Emmanuel II, ordered an end to the event forever. When the horserace ended, so did the carnival itself.

The Palazzo Doria Pamphilj

- On the left side of the Corso, just in from the corner, we see the façade of an enormous Baroque palace: the Palazzo Doria Pamphilj. It’s the largest palace still occupied by the papal family that acquired it in the 17th century and for whom it is named. The 18th-century façade was designed by the architect Gabriele Valvassori.
- The palace is open to the public and houses one of the most important private art collections in the world. The first floor of the state apartments shows how a great aristocratic art collection was displayed in the 17th and 18th centuries, with pictures hung one above the other up to the ceiling. Here are paintings by Caravaggio, Raphael, Titian, Claude Lorrain, and the Carracci.
- The state apartments also give a wonderful impression of how Roman princes lived. The music room, the various salons, the private chapel, and the hall of mirrors—a standard feature of Baroque palaces—all reveal the grandeur of princely life in the past. Also on display are the actual liveries of the Doria-Pamphilj servants from the 18th and 19th centuries.

More Sites along the Corso

- Just beyond the palace, on the same side of the street, is the church of Santa Maria in Via Lata. Beneath it are the remains of a Roman building that, by tradition, once held St. Paul as a prisoner.

- Continuing on, to the left is a fountain attached to the wall of another large Baroque palace on the Corso. This is *Il Facchino* (“The Porter”), the only Renaissance example of Rome’s talking statues. It was probably carved about 1580 by Jacopo del Conte and portrays a man wearing the uniform of the *acquaroli*, or water sellers’ guild. These men were licensed to collect clean water for sale in the city—a necessity because drinking from the Tiber was fatal. Two legends are associated with this fountain.
 - According to one story, the model for the fountain was an *acquarolo* who had a drinking problem. Instead of making the journey to collect safe water to sell, he took the easy route and filled his barrel from the Tiber. All Romans knew to avoid him, but tourists and pilgrims did not.

 - The other legend explains the sad state of the figure of *Il Facchino* today. His soft cap and open-necked jerkin made him look like Martin Luther, the hated leader of the anti-Catholic Reformation. Thus, Roman mothers would instruct their children to hit the figure in the face with whatever they could find, including stones. This practice continued until recent times and explains the ravages the fountain has suffered.

- Until 1872, *Il Facchino* was attached to the façade of the Palazzo De Carolis, now the Bank of Rome. This Baroque palace was designed by Alessandro Specchi between 1714 and 1724. Its famous residents have included the powerful French ambassador under Louis XV, Cardinal de Bernis; René de Chateaubriand, the French Romantic writer and politician; and Prince Boncompagni-Ludovisi, one of the leaders of Italian intellectual society.

San Marcello al Corso

- The church of San Marcello al Corso marks one of the oldest Christian sites of the city. According to tradition, a church was constructed here to honor the place where Pope St. Marcellus I was incarcerated before his martyrdom in A.D. 309. His relics are under the altar. There certainly was a church recorded here by 418, when it was the site of a papal election.
- Unfortunately, the original church was destroyed by fire in 1519. All was lost except for the medieval wooden crucifix that hung over the altar. When the crucifix was discovered in the rubble after the fire, the people of Rome assumed it had miraculous powers—an assumption that was tested in 1522 when a devastating plague hit Rome. Remembering the crucifix, the population processed through the streets holding it high above them, and the plague ended.
- Funds were raised to rebuild the church, and the commission was given to the Florentine architect Jacopo Sansovino, but he fled Rome during the sack of 1527 and refused to return. Around the same time, money that had been earmarked for the rebuilding was used instead to ransom clerics who were being held by German mercenaries who had sacked the city.
- After the invaders had abandoned the city, Sansovino's work fell to Antonio da Sangallo. Then, the church was heavily damaged by a flood in 1530. As a result, it was not finished until 1587; the early Baroque façade by Carlo Fontana dates from that time.

The Piazza Santi Apostoli

- On one side of the Piazza Santi Apostoli is the Palazzo Odescalchi, the residence of numerous papal families. It was first built by the Colonna; it then passed to the Ludovisi, the family of Gregory XV, and to the Chigi, the family of Pope Alexander VII. This pope was a major patron of Bernini, who was asked to redesign the façade on Piazza Santi Apostoli in the 1660s.
 - Soon after, the palace was acquired by the Odescalchi, the papal family of Pope Innocent XI. In the 18th century, the

Odescalchi set out to enlarge the building. Their architect was Niccolò Salvi, the mind behind the Trevi Fountain.

- In 1887, however, a fire damaged the palace, and the façade facing Via del Corso was reconstructed in the then-fashionable neo-Renaissance style. Luckily, the Bernini façade was restored much as it had been.
- The church that gives this piazza its name is the Santi Apostoli, first built by Pope Pelagius in 560 in thanks for the Byzantine victory over the Goths. The defining characteristic of the façade is the 15th-century loggia by Baccio Pontelli—the architect who probably designed the Sistine Chapel. The Apostoli loggia has seen many reconstructions since then, but we can see memories of every period of the church’s history on its façade. Inside the church is the tomb of Raffaele della Rovere, the brother of Pope Sixtus IV and father of Pope Julius II.
- The vast Palazzo Colonna, which physically adjoins the church, has a long and distinguished history. In fact, the Colonna are one of Rome’s most ancient and distinguished families and still occupy the palace. They open their doors to the public on Saturday mornings, allowing visitors to view another of Rome’s great private art and object collections.
 - Once you climb the stairs to the *piano nobile*, look at the long gallery known as the Colonna basilica. Here, you can see a cannonball imbedded in the marble of the stairs; it was shot through the window during the siege of Rome in 1849.
 - The fresco on the ceiling depicts the apotheosis of Marcantonio Colonna, a hero of the Battle of Lepanto, which saw the defeat of the Turks in 1571. Also here are a number of portraits of the Colonna and works by the Carracci, Titian, Veronese, and others.
 - Before leaving the gallery, visit the throne room of Pope Martin V. All Roman princes keep a throne for papal

visits, and the Colonna are no exception. The throne is always turned to the wall to ensure that no one except a pope occupies it. Above the throne is a portrait of the Colonna Pope Martin V, who ended the Great Schism in 1417.

- Also on the Piazza Santi Apostoli is one of Rome's most neglected gems: the Galleria Sciarra. Entering this space, visitors find themselves in a kind of glass-covered courtyard that has been completely painted in the Art Nouveau style. From 1885 to 1888, Giuseppe Cellini painted the frescoes here. They are a narrative of the life cycle of a well-to-do Roman lady, from birth to old age, wearing appropriate fashions at each stage. It is one of the most interesting social history documents in the city.

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The Aqua Virgo is one of the 11 ancient aqueducts that served the city of Rome during the imperial period. It crossed the Via del Corso (then called the Via Lata) in front of the Palazzo Sciarra, just north of the Via Caravita intersection. Dating to the age of Augustus, the Aqua Virgo was constructed by Marcus Agrippa to provide water to the Campus Martius in general and to the public baths near the Pantheon in particular.

It is possible to see several of the original 139 aboveground travertine arches of the mostly subterranean aqueduct at the intersection of Via del Nazareno and Via del Tritone, just four blocks from the Via del Corso.

Suggested Reading

- Augias, *The Secrets of Rome*.
- Barzini, *The Italians*.
- Bussagli, ed., *Rome: Art and Architecture*.
- Hibbert, *Rome: Biography of a City*.
- Kaplan, *Little Known Museums in and around Rome*.
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- Partridge, *The Art of Renaissance Rome*.
- Portoghesi, *Rome of the Renaissance*.
- Richards, *The New Italians*.
- Severgnini, *La Bella Figura*.
- Shetterly, *Rome Walks*.
- Stinger, *The Renaissance in Rome*.

Questions to Consider

1. Rome was not the only city to hold a carnival. Where else in the world did and do such celebrations still exist? What is the impulse behind them?
2. Why did papal families, such as the Doria Pamphilij, Odescalchi, Barberini, and Colonna, construct such huge palaces in the city?

The Trevi Fountain and Baroque Rome

Lecture 8

It is impossible not to wonder at the Trevi Fountain. It stands at the convergence of three streets, or *tre vie* in Italian, hence, its name. It's one of the most photographed and iconic sites of Rome, not only because of its size but also because of the many legends, stories, and images associated with it. In this lecture, we will take a long look at the fountain before we explore several Baroque sites, including two of Bernini's beautiful churches: the Sant'Andrea al Quirinale and the Santa Maria della Vittoria.

A Celebration of Water

- The Trevi Fountain is nothing less than an exuberant celebration of water. At the center stands the sea god Oceanus, presiding over his watery kingdom from the vantage of his chariot—a fantasy of gigantic shells. Drawing the chariot are two mighty steeds; the one to the left represents the storm-tossed ocean, while the one on the right symbolizes calm seas.
- The figures on either side of Oceanus are representations of Abundance and Health. Abundance carries a cornucopia, and at her foot, a toppled jar carelessly overflows with water. Health, on the other hand, conserves the water in her cup, allowing a serpent—the snake that was sacred to Aesculapius—to drink.
- The bas-reliefs above Abundance and Health depict the legend long associated with the aqueduct: Marcus Vipsanius Agrippa, the brother-in-law of Augustus, set out to build the first public baths in ancient Rome and sent his soldiers in search of a source of water. When the soldiers became thirsty, they asked a young girl (*virgo* in Latin) where they might find clean water. She directed them to a spring from which Agrippa consequently built a channel to the city. This was the legendary Aqua Virgo, called Acqua Vergine in modern Italian or Virgin Spring in English.

Lecture 8—The Trevi Fountain and Baroque Rome



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The Trevi Fountain has entered the creative collective unconscious of modern times; it is featured in such well-known films as *La Dolce Vita* and *Roman Holiday*.

- By about A.D. 300, 11 distinct aqueducts brought more than 300 million gallons of water into Rome each day. The barbarian Goths in their various assaults on the city recognized that the easiest way to subdue Rome was to cut off its water supply; thus, by about 540, the aqueducts were all in disrepair. It wasn't until nearly 1,000 years later that this situation was remedied, when the great humanist pope Nicholas V determined to revive the city by reconstructing the Acqua Vergine.
- Pope Nicholas chose the Acqua Vergine for reconstruction because its source was the closest to the city, and he had the water flowing again by 1453. But an aqueduct requires a major fountain, or *mostra*, to distribute water to other sites. For this reason, Nicholas commissioned the great Florentine architect Leon Battista Alberti to build the first *mostra*. Years later, the decision was made to rebuild the fountain as a showpiece for Baroque papal power. The commission was given to the young Niccolò Salvi, who started construction in 1732.

The Piazza Quirinale

- The Piazza Quirinale is at the top of the Quirinal Hill, the highest of Rome's seven hills. According to legend, the name of the hill derives from the Sabines, who established an outpost here and a temple to their god Quirinus.
- The most striking thing about this large piazza is the obelisk with the monumental sculptures of the Dioscuri at its base and the large granite basin. The huge figures of Castor and Pollux are more than 18 feet high. They are Roman copies of Greek originals and were once in the last baths built in imperial Rome—the Baths of Constantine—which used to occupy this hill.
- The obelisk between the Dioscuri is Egyptian, one of a pair carried to Rome by Augustus in the early 1st century. Pope Pius VI had it restored and erected on the Quirinal in 1781. Similarly, the huge octagonal basin was once part of a large fountain that stood in the Forum. During the Middle Ages, it was used as a water trough

for cattle. Pius VII had it transported here to complete the central complex of the piazza.

The Palazzo della Consulta and the Palazzo del Quirinale

- The magnificent façade of the Palazzo della Consulta was built by Ferdinando Fuga in 1739. The structure is called the Consulta because it was constructed as the highest court in the papal dominions, the Santa Consulta. After Italian unification, it was used for various purposes until it became, as it is today, the Constitutional Court of the Italian Republic.
 - The profile of the building is explained by the fact that it was once the papal stables of Scuderie, also designed by Fuga and opened in 1732. These were restored at the end of the last century by the architect Gae Aulenti.
 - They were opened in 2000 for the millennial celebrations as the most exciting new exhibition space in Rome and continue to host blockbuster shows, such as exhibitions of works by Caravaggio and Titian.
- Dominating the piazza is the Palazzo del Quirinale. Now the official residence of the president of the Italian Republic, it was the palace of the kings of Italy from 1870 to 1946. Before that, it was the summer palace of the popes.
 - The site was considered attractive in the Renaissance because the height of the hill provided cooling breezes in the heat of summer. There was once a villa here owned by Cardinal d'Este, but when Pope Gregory XIII decided he wanted the site for his personal use, he acquired it and began building the palace in 1574.
 - Construction continued under Sixtus V, who died here, and was ongoing until the 18th century. As a result, there are contributions by a wealth of important architects, including Domenico Fontana; Carlo Maderno, who designed the monumental entrance on the piazza; and Gian Bernini, who

contributed the long sleeve (*manica lunga*) along the Via del Quirinale.

Sant'Andrea al Quirinale

- Sant'Andrea al Quirinale is one of Bernini's masterpieces and one of Rome's most digestible Baroque churches. The church is quite small because of the restrictions of its site, but what Bernini did within these restraints is remarkable.
- The elegant entrance with its portico and columns take us into an elliptical building surrounded by marble columns that break up the space and add an element of orderly, dignified grandeur. Looking up, however, the restraint disappears in a gilded frenzy of cherubs above the altar. Notice that the side altars are lit from above by natural light and that the gilded, coffered interior of the dome appears high but perfectly proportioned.
- The church was begun in 1658 as a chapel for the Jesuit seminary that was on the Quirinal, and it was completely finished by 1670. Bernini himself thought it was one of his greatest achievements.

San Carlo alle Quattro Fontane

- San Carlo alle Quattro Fontane is another Baroque church and, perhaps, even more imaginative than Sant'Andrea al Quirinale. The church is always called San Carlino, or "the little church of St. Charles." It was the first major commission for the imaginative if troubled genius Francesco Borromini. Begun in 1638, it was dedicated to St. Charles Borromeo and operated by the Trinitarian Order. That explains the almost mystical use of the symbol of the Trinity in the lantern above the geometric dome.
- The site of the church is so contained by two streets (the Via del Quirinale and Via delle Quattro Fontane) that it seems as if Borromini designed a much larger church, then held both sides of the façade and squeezed them together, creating an incredible theater of concave and convex shapes. The façade has a tripartite

design—again, invoking the Trinity—and above the door is a figure of St. Charles Borromeo himself.

- The interior is splendid, with perfect proportions and a design that carries the eye upward into the extremely complex geometry of the dome. The dome looks much larger than it really is because of the illusions caused by the decreasing size of the coffers.
- Borromini designed the cloisters to play with the geometry and restricted size of the space. The double height of the arcade and the inversion of every other baluster give the space a remarkable sense of movement.
- The crypt is largely empty, with small side chapels. Borromini intended the octagonal chapel on the southeast wall to be the site of his own tomb, but he committed suicide in 1667 and could not be buried in consecrated ground.
 - The story goes that Borromini, who suffered from manic depression, had fallen behind in his commissions. Just as he was entering a manic phase, he called his servant to bring a candle so that he could continue to work. Unfortunately, the servant was asleep and did not hear his master. In frustration, Borromini stabbed himself with his sword.
 - We are told that he did not die immediately but managed, heavily bandaged, to work for many hours, not only on his will but also on his incomplete architectural drawings. Eventually, he was buried in the church of San Giovanni dei Fiorentini on Via Giulia, sharing space with his relative Carlo Maderno.

The Piazza di San Bernardo

- The Piazza San Bernardo has two important churches. One is the eponymous church of St. Bernard. This is a round church because it is built into the ruins of the semicircular structures of the enormous Baths of Diocletian. Dating from the 16th century, it holds large statues of saints, carved from plaster to save money.

- On the northwest quadrant of the piazza is the ancient church of Santa Susanna. The façade is a masterpiece done by Carlo Maderno in 1603 and, arguably, the first truly Baroque church in Rome. It is ancient, originally founded in the 4th century and rebuilt many times until Maderno completed his iconic façade. This is now an American church and is an important center for Catholic life among expatriates from the United States in Rome.

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The Piazza di Trevi has served as a principal source of water for the Roman community for more than 1,000 years, and the relief panels here tell the story of its origins. On the right side, above the figure of Health, the relief illustrates the story of a maiden who showed the engineers a hidden source of fresh spring water, which led to the name of the Aqua Virgo aqueduct. On the left side, over the figure of Abundance, Marcus Agrippa oversees the construction of the aqueduct, looking at the plans while laborers build the structure in the background. In front of the fountain, water moves over and through figures and plants before the framework of the Palazzo Poli. This building has been given a false façade, as evidenced by the trompe l’oeil window on the right side of the structure, painted by Antonio Catalli in 1737.

When viewing Bernini’s Cornaro Chapel, pay attention to the location of the stained-glass window high above the figures of St. Teresa and the angel. Note, too, the mysterious radiant light that illuminates the golden rods behind the figures. Then, when exiting the church of Santa Maria della Vittoria, walk around to the side of the building. From the other side of the street, on the Largo Santa Susanna, you can see two windows that correspond to the Cornaro Chapel. The uppermost window directly illuminates the chapel from outside, while the second window, somewhat extended into space, allows for the hidden, “divine” light that highlights the drama on the interior.

- In the mid-1580s, the area of the piazza had been largely abandoned because of the dearth of water. Just as his predecessor, Nicholas V, restored the Acqua Vergine in the 15th century, Pope Sixtus V restored the Roman aqueduct that brought fresh water from the Alban Hills to this high part of Rome. The pope's birth name was Felice Peretti, and *felice* means “lucky or happy.” Thus, the pope celebrated himself and the joyous play of water by naming the aqueduct the Acqua Felice.
- Just across the street, on the Via XX Settembre, is one of Rome's most famous churches: Santa Maria della Vittoria, which contains the Cornaro Chapel and the *Ecstasy of St. Teresa* by Bernini. The chapel is built like a theater, and the figure of St. Teresa is so lifelike that she seems to be swooning. The gilded rods and the light source, as well as the gently beatific smile on the angel's face, make the sculpture truly theatrical.

Suggested Reading

- Augias, *The Secrets of Rome*.
- Barzini, *The Italians*.
- Bussagli, ed., *Rome: Art and Architecture*.
- Hibbert, *Rome: Biography of a City*.
- Kaplan, *Little Known Museums in and around Rome*.
- McGregor, *Rome from the Ground Up*.
- Partner, *Renaissance Rome, 1500–1559*.
- Partridge, *The Art of Renaissance Rome*.
- Portoghesi, *Rome of the Renaissance*.
- Richards, *The New Italians*.
- Severgnini, *La Bella Figura*.
- Shetterly, *Rome Walks*.
- Stinger, *The Renaissance in Rome*.

Questions to Consider

1. Such fountains as the Trevi are part of Rome's allure. Can you suggest why water plays such an important role in the city?
2. The Quirinal Palace is enormous. Is it appropriate for the president of a republic to have access to what was once a papal and royal palace? What message does this send to the citizens of Italy?

Above and Beyond the Spanish Steps

Lecture 9

We begin this lecture by walking along the Via Bissolati. Today, this street is occupied by various tourist agencies and airlines, but this space once constituted the gardens of Julius Caesar's urban villa. In this lecture, we'll learn the sad fate of this site. We'll then walk along the Via Veneto, perhaps Rome's most famous street, and see Bernini's magnificent Fontana Tritone. We'll also visit the Palazzo Barberini, the joint production of three of Rome's greatest Baroque architects, and the Palazzetto Zuccari, one of the city's strangest houses. As we close the lecture, we'll ascend the Spanish Steps and visit some other sites close by.

Caesar's Urban Villa

- Caesar lived in the area that is today the Via Bissolati until his assassination in 44 B.C. The property was then acquired by one of his strong supporters, Gaius Sallustius Crispus, more commonly known as Sallust. Sallust had amassed a large fortune as governor of Africa under Caesar's favor, and he used his wealth to transform the grounds of the villa into Rome's most famous private garden.
- After Sallust's death in A.D. 20, the property was sold to the emperor Tiberius, and it was maintained as an imperial garden until Alaric's sack of Rome in 410. The site was subsequently abandoned, in part because the aqueducts needed to irrigate the gardens had been destroyed.
- Not long after the reconstruction of the Acqua Felice, Cardinal Ludovico Ludovisi purchased the villa and restored it as one of the great urban villas of Baroque Rome. It boasted the largest collection of important classical statuary in the city, second only to that of the Vatican. Today, visitors can admire these statues in the Museum of Roman Sculpture in the Palazzo Altemps.

- The fate of this site took a sad turn in 1885, when the descendants of the Ludovisi, the Boncompagni-Ludovisi princes, ran out of money. They first rented the villa to the new king of Italy, Victor Emmanuel II. Later, the entire estate was sold to a property developer. The result was that the villa and gardens were destroyed, with only the beautiful Casino dell'Aurora saved. Today, the remains of the Villa Ludovisi can be seen from the Piazza Sallustio.
- In 1886, with his historic house gone, Prince Boncompagni-Ludovisi commissioned the celebrated architect Gaetano Koch to build another palace, often called the Palazzo Piombino. This was soon sold to the Italian kingdom. On the assassination of King Umberto I in 1900, his widow, the greatly beloved Queen Margherita, moved into the palace and lived there until her death in 1926. Then, in 1931, the palace was purchased by the U.S. government as its embassy.

The Via Veneto

- The Via Veneto is perhaps Rome's most famous street as a result of Fellini's film *La Dolce Vita*. Today, it is lined with luxury hotels, expensive restaurants, and office buildings. One site not to miss at the end of the Via Veneto is the macabre 17th-century Capuchin church of Santa Maria della Concezione. It was commissioned in 1624 by Cardinal Antonio Barberini, the brother of Pope Urban VIII. Most visitors to the church are attracted by the bizarre decoration in its crypt.
 - The entry to the crypt is through the staircase beside the church. Inside are five underground chambers containing the bones of more than 4,000 Capuchin monks, brought here on the cardinal's order from cemeteries elsewhere, including the Middle East.
 - Not content with simply interring the bones, the monks fashioned them into fanciful if unsettling designs. Written on the walls is a message that reads: "What you are now, we used to be; what we are now, you will be."

- Also at the end of the Via Veneto is one of Bernini's most famous fountains, the Fontana Tritone, commissioned in 1642 by Pope Urban VIII Barberini. Here, we see the mythological attendant of Neptune supported by dolphins and blowing on his conch shell. When it was first constructed, neighborhood women complained that the fountain's force made collecting water from it for domestic use almost impossible. For this reason, Pope Urban also had Bernini create a smaller fountain across the piazza, the Bee Fountain.

The Palazzo Barberini

- Through accidents of history, the Palazzo Barberini is actually the joint production of three of Rome's greatest Baroque architects: Maderno, Borromini, and Bernini. And it's truly difficult to determine who did what. Although Bernini probably designed the projecting triple-loggia façade, Borromini likely created the windows on either side. Bernini's folly of the ruined bridge is marvelous, as are the ancient statues in the gardens, such as the huge Apollo mounted against the wall.
- Inside, we see Pietro da Cortona's vault fresco, *The Triumph of Divine Providence*, painted in 1633–1639. This work is a celebration of the triumph of the Barberini papacy. If the Barberini apartments are open, visitors can also admire their original 18th-century decorations.
- The palace houses a huge collection of historical art, divided into two parts. One is here, while the other is in the Palazzo Corsini in Trastevere. The collection includes some amazing masterpieces, such as the portrait of *La Fornarina* by Raphael, Caravaggio's *Judith Beheading Holofernes*, El Greco's *Adoration of the Shepherds*, Quentin Matsys's portrait of Erasmus of Rotterdam, and Holbein's portrait of Henry VIII.

The Palazzetto Zuccari

- One of Rome's strangest houses is the Palazzetto Zuccari, designed and built by Federico Zuccari, a painter and architect who was the first president of the Accademia di San Luca.

- Zuccari purchased the site when the street was being built in 1590, and he designed a palace and studio whose openings to the street consist of three examples of the mouth of hell. Note especially the large carved central portal with its monstrous face and huge open mouth framing the door.
- The house almost bankrupted Zuccari, who nevertheless managed to hang on to it until his death in 1609. His family continued to live here until 1900. The little palace was then purchased by Henrichetta Herz who installed her vast library of books on art and culture and her own collection. On her death, it became a study center, the Bibliotheca Hertziana.

The Spanish Steps

- From the top of the Spanish Steps, we can see all of Rome stretched out before us. Note the obelisk here, which was originally installed



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The Spanish Steps are a wonderful piece of late-Baroque design, built between 1723 and 1726; despite their name, they were paid for by the French ambassador.

in the gardens of Sallust. Interestingly, it's an ancient fake. The actual granite obelisk was made in Egypt and brought to Rome by an emperor, but it didn't look authentic to the owners because there was no inscription. Thus, probably sometime in the 3rd century, they had copied onto it the hieroglyphs from Rome's first obelisk, that of Ramses II, now in the Piazza del Popolo.

- Behind the obelisk is Santa Trinità dei Monti. This is the other French church in Rome—besides San Luigi dei Francesi—and was founded by King Louis XII at the beginning of the 16th century. The elegant double staircase leading to the doors is by Domenico Fontana. Inside are frescoes by artists in the workshop of Raphael, especially Perin del Vaga and Giulio Romano.
- Nearby the Spanish Steps is the Villa Medici. This palatial villa was purchased by Cardinal Ferdinando de' Medici in 1576, before he exited the Sacred College to succeed his brother as grand duke of Tuscany. It was much altered by the Florentine architect Bartolommeo Ammannati to display the spectacular collection of ancient statuary the Medici had acquired in Rome, a collection that is now in the Uffizi in Florence.
 - If the villa is open, look at the interior façade and visit the gardens. They are laid out in the 16th-century fashion and decorated with some important ancient sculpture fragments and a wonderful fountain.
 - The villa is now owned by the French state, and it has served since 1801 as the site of the French Academy in Rome. In fact, the winners of the Prix de Rome are given the opportunity to live here and practice their art.
- As we descend the Spanish Steps, we see a lovely 18th-century house where the poet John Keats died in 1821. It is now a charming museum with autograph letters and drafts of poems, paintings, casts, and a good library on the English Romantics.

- At the bottom of the steps is the Fontana della Barcaccia. *Barcaccia* means “a ruined or damaged boat.” It was sculpted by Pietro Bernini in the late 1620s, but legend has it that his celebrated son, the young Gian Lorenzo, also had a hand in the work.

Other Sites near the Steps

- To the left at the bottom of the steps is the Piazza Mignanelli, dominated by the huge column of the Immaculate Conception, which dates from 1857. It celebrates the *ex cathedra* declaration of Pope Pius IX in 1853 that the Virgin Mary was born without original sin. Behind the column is the elegant Palazzo di Propaganda Fide, designed by Francesco Borromini in 1622. It was established to encourage and coordinate Catholic missionary activity.
- Along the Via della Fontella Borghese is the Palazzo Borghese. The first iteration of this building was from the late Renaissance,

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Pausing in the piazza called the Largo Carlo Goldoni, where the Via dei Condotti and the Via della Fontanella di Borghese intersect with the Via del Corso, a sweeping perspective comes into view. Looking north along the Corso, the imposing white façade of Il Vittoriano, the “wedding cake” monument, appears. Turning around to look south along the same straight street, you can see the obelisk at the center of the Palazzo del Popolo. The Spanish Steps are visible from the same spot when looking up the Via dei Condotti.

While looking east up the Via dei Condotti, the curved façade of the church of Santissima Trinità degli Spagnoli interrupts the straight street and angles toward the Via del Corso. This is the Spanish church and convent of the *calced*, or “shoe-wearing,” Trinitarians, who rejected the reforms of the *discalced*, or “sandal-wearing,” Trinitarians. The latter built their more famous church and convent, San Carlo alle Quattro Fontane, at the intersection of the Via delle Quattro Fontane and the Via del Quirinale.

designed by Vignola about 1560. But the Borghese pope Paul V bought the property in 1605 and made it one of Rome's most lavish dwellings. The odd shape of this building gives it its nickname—the Harpsichord. The elegant garden houses monumental ancient Roman statues of two empresses and Ceres.

- Before closing this lecture, we stop briefly at the Piazza San Lorenzo in Lucina, where we see another of Rome's oldest churches. This lovely small building, dedicated to St. Lawrence and sponsored by the Roman patrician Lucina, dates from the 4th century. It is worth entering the church to see two of its treasures: the Guido Reni altarpiece of *Christ on the Cross* and the tomb of the great French painter Nicolas Poussin, complete with a monument by François-René de Chateaubriand.

Suggested Reading

Augias, *The Secrets of Rome*.

Barzini, *The Italians*.

Bussagli, ed., *Rome: Art and Architecture*.

Hibbert, *Rome: Biography of a City*.

Kaplan, *Little Known Museums in and around Rome*.

McGregor, *Rome from the Ground Up*.

Partner, *Renaissance Rome, 1500–1559*.

Partridge, *The Art of Renaissance Rome*.

Portoghesi, *Rome of the Renaissance*.

Richards, *The New Italians*.

Severgnini, *La Bella Figura*.

Shetterly, *Rome Walks*.

Stinger, *The Renaissance in Rome*.

Questions to Consider

1. The need for building lots in the 19th century resulted in the destruction of a great many historical villas, gardens, and sites. Should this have happened?
2. Which do you find more appealing—the exuberant decoration of the Baroque or the relative simplicity of the Renaissance?

At the Bend in the Tiber

Lecture 10

We begin this lecture at the Palace of Montecitorio, which now houses the Italian Parliament. This Baroque masterpiece was originally designed by Bernini in 1650 but completed later by Carlo Fontana. From there, we'll explore the Piazza Colonna, delving, in particular, into the fascinating history of the Palazzo Chigi. We'll also look at several sites in the *abitata*, the "inhabited part" of the city in the early Middle Ages, when much of the rest of Rome was abandoned.

The Piazza Montecitorio

- Standing on the north side of the Piazza Montecitorio is the vast palace that is now home to the Italian Chamber of Deputies. The palace was designed by Bernini in 1650 for the Ludovisi family, but when their fortunes fell, work stopped. The design was later completed by Carlo Fontana.
 - The palace was not permanently occupied until 1696, when Pope Innocent XII Pignatelli decided to install the papal law courts here. Later, the offices of the papal governor of Rome were moved in, as well, making this building the center of papal administration and justice in the capital.
 - With the unification of Italy under a constitutional monarchy, there suddenly arose the need for a proper meeting place for members of parliament. Thus, in 1871, it was decided to alter this palace to accommodate the Italian Chamber of Deputies. The actual chamber for the deputies to meet was created by covering the large interior courtyard with a glass roof. Offices were carved out of grand spaces, and the work of Italian democracy began.
 - However, the building never functioned well, and at the end of World War I, a large addition was constructed at the rear of the building, facing the newly planned Piazza del Parlamento.

The entry on Piazza del Parlamento is now the official point of entry to the Chamber of Deputies.

- The center of the piazza holds an enormous obelisk, which has been noticeably repaired. This was one of Rome's more famous obelisks and one of the tallest, at more than 70 feet. It was rediscovered in the 18th century, broken into several pieces. Pope Pius VI ordered it repaired and, in 1792, had it erected here at Piazza Montecitorio.
 - This obelisk had originally stood in Heliopolis, Egypt. But after his victory over Antony and Cleopatra at Actium in 31 B.C., Augustus had it moved to the Campus Martius. There, it served as the gnomon of a huge sundial that became the official timekeeper of the Roman Empire, the Solarium Augusti.
 - Like so many imperial public works, the obelisk was both a marvel and a piece of propaganda: On Augustus's birthday (September 23, right at the equinox), the obelisk cast a shadow on the Ara Pacis, the Altar of Augustan Peace.

The Piazza Colonna

- The piazza across from Piazza Montecitorio is the Piazza Colonna. The column that gives the piazza its name is that of Marcus Aurelius; its spiral relief records his victories against the tribes along



The column of Marcus Aurelius was clearly modeled on that of Trajan, with a spiral relief recording the victories of the emperor.

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the Danube. If you get close to the column, you can see long horizontal slits in the relief. These allowed natural light into the interior, which houses a circular staircase of about 200 steps. The view from the top must be spectacular, but the interior is closed to visitors.

- Behind the column on the Montecitorio side is a somewhat incongruous and rather inelegant building, the Palazzo Wedekind. It looks like—and largely is—a 19th-century attempt to build a Baroque palace.
 - The original structure dated from 1659 and was yet another Ludovisi palace that was lost to the family. At the beginning of the 19th century, the building became the directorate of the papal post office, resulting in its complete renovation.
 - The architect chosen for the renovation was the greatest of his time, Giuseppe Valadier. He used ancient Roman columns from Veii, as well as columns salvaged from the basilica of St. Paul outside the Walls after the fire of 1823 that destroyed most of the church.
 - The name of this palace comes from its owner in the mid-19th century, a fabulously rich German financier and oil importer named Karl Wedekind. In 1871, after the capture of Rome by Italy, it briefly housed the Royal Ministry of Education. Subsequently, it served as headquarters of the Fascist Party of Rome. Today, it's the head office of the Italian newspaper *Il Tempo*.

The Palazzo Chigi

- Adjoining the Palace of Montecitorio on the north side of Piazza Colonna is the Palazzo Chigi, now the office of the Italian prime minister. The palace is huge, running the entire length of the Piazza Colonna to Via del Corso, along which its eastern façade continues.
- Palazzo Chigi began as an attempt on the part of the Aldobrandini family to construct a Roman palace worthy of their status as the family of Pope Clement VIII. But in 1659, it was bought by the

Chigi, the family of Pope Alexander VII, along with 24 surrounding properties. This allowed them to extend the palace, making it as vast and opulent as any palace of any papal family.

- The decline of the Chigi family began with Prince Sigismondo Chigi, who inherited the palace in 1769. His home became a salon for liberal thinkers, artists, writers, and scholars. He was suspected of revolutionary sympathy and conspiracy against the church, as well as poisoning a cardinal who was apparently having an affair with his wife.
- Sigismondo was warned that he was in danger and fled Rome in 1790. His son continued his advanced ideas, supporting Jacobinism during the French Revolution and becoming an important figure under the Napoleonic occupation. In some ways, this protected him and the Chigi palace from the fury of the pope, who already had enough to fear from Napoleon and the French.
- The 19th century saw the literary and cultural interests of this remarkable family continue. Their salons were open to any learned visitor who wished to join them, which alienated them even further from papal rule.
- At the time, the Chigi also suffered from bad financial decisions. As a consequence, they began to rent out parts of the palace to foreign diplomatic missions. Most notably, it was rented as the residence of the Austro-Hungarian ambassador from 1878 to 1915.
- With the advent of World War I and the loss of the rent from Austria Hungary, the Chigi princes were forced to sell the palace to the Italian state. The wonderful library was taken by the Vatican, where it remains today. Mussolini had his first office in Palazzo Chigi and delivered his first public speech from one of its balconies. Since the early 1960s, the palace has been the office of the prime minister of Italy.

Other Sites around the Piazza Colonna

- Nearby the Piazza Colonna is the church of Santa Maria in Via. Although there was a church on this site from at least the 10th century, the current size of the structure results from a miracle in 1256.
 - As the story goes, a cardinal's residence was attached to the church. Late one night, the well in the courtyard overflowed, flooding the house and endangering the inhabitants. But the cardinal saw an image of the Virgin Mary floating on the rising waters. He picked it up, and the waters immediately subsided back into the well.
 - On hearing this, the pope declared the vision a miracle and ordered a chapel built over the courtyard. That chapel became part of Santa Maria in Via. The well still exists in the first chapel on the right of the entrance.
- On the south side of the Piazza Colonna is the tiny national church of the immigrant or pilgrim colony from Bergamo, a town in northern Italy. It was completed in 1735, and its rather unwieldy name is Santi Bartolomeo ed Alessandro dei Bergamaschi (St. Bartholomew and Alexander of Bergamo).
 - Every national group had its own church in Rome, as we've already seen with the French in Trinità dei Monti. And because Italy was not united as a nation until 1861, there were several churches for foreigners from other parts of what we now call Italy.
 - These churches and the confraternities associated with them gave mutual support and companionship to their compatriots in Rome. Rome was always a city of foreigners, and these institutions made their sense of exclusion a little less acute.

The *Abitata*

- After the barbarian incursions of the 5th and 6th centuries and the loss of the aqueducts, the population of Rome shrank dramatically. In the early Middle Ages, perhaps as few as 25,000 people lived

in the *abitata*, the “inhabited part” of the city. It was roughly the area in the bend in the Tiber opposite St. Peter’s. The rest of the huge imperial city was abandoned, left to go to ruin. But there are number of interesting sites in the *abitata*.

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Friar Andrea Pozzo (1642–1709) painted the nave, dome, transept chapels, and apse of Sant’Ignazio with illusionistic perspectives to create convincing three-dimensional appearances on two-dimensional surfaces. In the *Triumph of St. Ignatius*, a ray of light connects God the Father, Jesus Christ, and St. Ignatius, who ascends to heaven on a cloud. Joining the saint, the saved believers rise to the center of the fresco, while heretics spill downward. The figures’ dangling, foreshortened legs enhance the impression of the nave opening up to the heavens. Be sure to identify the personifications of the four continents of the known world where Jesuits maintained active missions: Europe with a horse, Asia with a camel, Africa with a crocodile, and America with a cougar. Other attributes contribute to the identification of specific territories. For example, the woman personifying America wears a feathered headdress, and a colorful parrot rests near her. The figure of Africa holds an elephant tusk. The powerful figure of Europe rests her hand on a globe and gestures with a scepter, indicating her authority over all the other locations.

While viewing the column of Marcus Aurelius, whose equestrian monument is in the Capitoline Museum, stand at the east side to examine three of the 116 scenes depicting the emperor’s campaigns against Germanic tribes threatening the Danube frontier. On the first winding, Roman soldiers cross the Danube on a boat bridge; on the second winding, the emperor is protected by his soldiers on one side of the river, while on the other side, barbarians with slings attack; and on the third winding, the rain miracle is depicted. Water streams from the outstretched arms of the rain god in a miraculous downpour that saved the Romans from thirst and destroyed the enemy with hail and lightning.

- One of the earliest Renaissance palaces in Rome can be found in the Piazza Capranica, built by Cardinal Capranica in the 1450s. The cardinal left part of it to his family and part of it to a school for poor boys who wanted to train for the clergy. The palace also once held a famous theater that opened in 1692 and was active until 1882.
- The Piazza di Pietra is dominated by the Temple of Hadrian, erected by Antoninus Pius in A.D. 145. Amazingly, the Corinthian colonnade and one wall of the *cella* still stand. The temple originally opened onto the Via Lata (that is, the Corso) through a triumphal arch that lasted until it was pulled down to widen the street. In 1879, the former papal customs house and the temple were converted into the stock exchange and Roman Chamber of Commerce, thus ensuring its survival.
- The Piazza di Sant’Ignazio is one of Rome’s most underappreciated, charming squares. It takes its name from the Baroque church of St. Ignatius of Loyola, built between 1626 and 1650. Inside is one of Rome’s most magnificent interiors. The painter of the large vault was a Jesuit lay brother, Andrea Pozzo, who was a master of *trompe l’oeil*. The vault celebrates St. Ignatius and revolves around his welcome into heaven by Christ and the Virgin.

Suggested Reading

Augias, *The Secrets of Rome*.

Barzini, *The Italians*.

Bussagli, ed., *Rome: Art and Architecture*.

Hibbert, *Rome: Biography of a City*.

Kaplan, *Little Known Museums in and around Rome*.

McGregor, *Rome from the Ground Up*.

Partner, *Renaissance Rome, 1500–1559*.

Partridge, *The Art of Renaissance Rome*.

Portoghesi, *Rome of the Renaissance*.

Richards, *The New Italians*.

Severgnini, *La Bella Figura*.

Shetterly, *Rome Walks*.

Stinger, *The Renaissance in Rome*.

Questions to Consider

1. Almost every national group and occupation had its own church and confraternity in Renaissance and Baroque Rome. What effect do you think this had on the city?
2. The center of Italian government is around Montecitorio, with the parliament and the office of the prime minister. Can you think of other cities where the offices of the state have taken over a complex of historic buildings?

The Pantheon to Campo dei Fiori

Lecture 11

We closed the last lecture in the Piazza della Rotonda, admiring the fountain and obelisk there. But the main attraction, of course, is the building for which the piazza is named: the Pantheon. This whole area was part of the complex given by Agrippa at the time of Augustus to the people of Rome. Of that huge complex, only this round temple—or *rotunda*—to all the gods remains. In addition to viewing the Pantheon, we'll visit many other sites in this lecture, including the church of Santa Maria Sopra Minerva and Bernini's Fountain of the Four Rivers, before ending our tour in the Campo dei Fiori.

The Pantheon

- The portico of the Pantheon is an icon of European architecture. It has eight solid granite columns across and four behind on each side. Walking under the portico gives us an idea of how high the surface of the city has risen in nearly 2,000 years.
- Until the 17th century, the plain wooden roof that we see today was covered with gilded bronze. But in the face of a metal shortage, Pope Urban VIII Barberini demanded that Bernini strip it off and use it to complete the baldacchino and papal throne in St. Peter's.
- The bronze doors, however, are original—the very ones through which visitors have passed for 2,000 years. The single source of light inside is through a circular opening in the dome—the *oculus* (“eye”). The dome itself is an engineering marvel; it remains the largest unreinforced concrete dome in the world to this day. Michelangelo used it as the model for St. Peter's.
- The coffering is illusionistic, growing smaller in perfect proportion as it rises to give an increased sense of depth. It was once covered in gilded bronze, but in the 6th century, this was removed by the

Byzantine general who tried to recapture Italy from the barbarians in order to pay his soldiers.

- The reason the Pantheon is in such wonderful condition is that it became a church in the 7th century, dedicated to the Virgin Mary and all the martyrs. And it is still a church; Raphael asked to be buried here because he thought it was the perfect place to join pagan perfection and Christian revelation. The epitaph on his tomb reads: “Nature, having grown jealous of his art, took him. But with his death, she herself half died.”
- Another monument not to be missed is dedicated to Italy’s first king, King Victor Emmanuel II. It’s a huge bronze, topped with an eagle and the arms of the Savoy. The lamp above it that is always burning is dedicated to his grandson, Victor Emmanuel III, who died in exile after the abolition of the monarchy in 1947.

The Church of Santa Maria Sopra Minerva

- The Dominican church of Santa Maria Sopra Minerva was built on the site where the ancient Temple of Isis and Serapis once stood. In the Middle Ages, the temple was mistakenly identified with the Roman goddess Minerva. Thus, the name is an error, but it stuck.
- The charming elephant with an obelisk on its back has its own story. For reasons no one can explain, the Romans call this elephant *il pulcino* (“the chick”). It was designed by Bernini, who took his inspiration from a popular illustrated book. But one of the Dominicans, Padre Paglia, was scandalized by the design and wanted the elephant’s private parts concealed. Bernini, however, did not suffer meddling fools easily. He changed the orientation of the elephant so that its rear end faced directly into the Dominican monastery and Paglia’s cell.
- We enter the church through a simple Renaissance façade, but once inside, we find ourselves in Gothic splendor. This is the only completely Gothic church in all of Rome. The stained glass,

vaulting, and high nave are reminiscent of northern churches, but the decoration is purely Italian.

- The last chapel on the south aisle is the Carafa Chapel, painted by the Florentine Filippino Lippi in 1489. The narrative is of St. Dominic refuting heretics, and there is a portrait of Cardinal Carafa in the center. The two young boys portrayed in the fresco are the future Medici popes Leo X and Clement VII, both of whom are buried in the apse of this church.
- Under the altar is the body of St. Catherine of Siena. She died in Rome after helping end the Babylonian Captivity, but the citizens of Siena wanted her remains returned there. Ultimately, Siena was sent her head, and the rest of her body is here.
- On the pillar facing the altar is the Bernini monument to the Blessed Maria Raggi. The church also has two other Bernini funerary monuments, including one in the north aisle dedicated to Giovanni Vigevano, carved when Bernini was just 19 years old.

Other Sites around the Pantheon

- On the Via di Santa Chiara, we find the church of Sant’Eustachio, dating from the 8th century. High on the right-hand side of the façade is a plaque that dates from 1495, the time of Pope Alexander VI Borgia. It marks the height the waters of the Tiber reached that year after terrible flooding.
- At the end of the Via della Dogana Vecchia is a wonderful Renaissance church, with statues of St. Louis IX of France and Charlemagne on the façade, as well as salamanders and fleurs de lis. This is San Luigi dei Francesi, the other French church in Rome, and it remains the heart of the French community. Inside, in the Contarelli Chapel, is Caravaggio’s *The Calling of St. Matthew*.
- Nearby, along the Corso del Rinascimento, we find the Palazzo Madama, completed in 1505 for the Medici cardinals.

- The palace takes its name from the illegitimate daughter of the emperor Charles V, Margaret of Austria. She was the widow of the assassinated Alessandro, duke of Florence, and later became duchess of Parma. She was always called Madame, or *Madama* in Italian, and the name stuck to this palace.
- The façade of the palace is 17th century, by Lodovico Cardi and Paolo Marucelli. The building was acquired by the papacy and used for a number of administrative functions until the conquest of Rome by Italy in 1870. Today, it serves as the meeting place of the Italian Senate.
- Continuing down the Corso del Rinascimento, we reach the courtyard of the Palazzo della Sapienza, the Palace of Wisdom, the old university of Rome. The school was established by Pope Boniface VIII in 1303 and was partly financed by a tax on wine.
 - The 16th-century courtyard is by Giacomo della Porta. At the end of it is the exquisite church of Sant'Ivo alla Sapienza by Borromini. As he did with San Carlino, Borromini used a restricted site to construct a most imaginative building. Here, he designed a concave façade to optimize the space.
 - The brilliant dome inside displays the symbols of the Barberini and Chigi popes—bees and mountains, respectively. The lantern is an extraordinarily elegant source of diffused light. From outside, the dome is a corkscrew, and the corkscrew lantern on the cupola is one of the landmarks of Rome.
- Crossing the Corso del Rinascimento and walking around the Palazzo Braschi, we reach the small Piazza di Pasquino. Here, we find Pasquino, the original, most famous, and still the most vocal of the talking statues of Rome. This damaged statue is actually of Menelaus holding Patroclus, but it is called Pasquino after a gossip and wit who lived in the neighborhood around 1500.



On top of the Fountain of the Four Rivers is the obelisk of Domitian, which once graced the central spine of the racecourse of Maxentius.

The Piazza Novana

- The Piazza Novana is one of the most popular piazzas in Rome. The long, elliptical piazza takes the exact shape of the 1st-century stadium of Domitian, with the surrounding buildings constructed on its foundations. Outside the extreme north of the piazza, on the Tor Sanguigna, you can see one of the excavated *vomitoria*, or main gates, of the 1st-century racecourse.
- Of the fountains here, the most famous is Bernini's Fountain of the Four Rivers (Quattro Fiumi) in the center. It was commissioned by Pope Innocent X Pamphilj and symbolizes the spread of the Catholic religion around the world, represented by the Danube, the Ganges, the River Plate, and the Nile.
- On the west side of the piazza is the Palazzo Pamphilj, which was the home of Innocent X and is now the Brazilian embassy. The palace adjoins the beautiful church of Sant'Agnese in Agone, which marks the place where St. Agnes was martyred. Many architects, such as Girolamo Rainaldi, contributed to the church, but the elegant and animated façade shouts Borromini.

Toward the Campo dei Fiori

- As we pass the rear of the Palazzo Massimo alle Colonne, note the single standing column, which comes from the Odeon of Domitian, the concert hall of ancient Rome. Above the stable entry of the palace, note the sgraffito decoration, made by layering two colors of plaster and scratching one to reveal the other. The sgraffito here is from the 16th century, with the best preserved at the top under the cornice.
- Crossing the Corso Vittorio Emanuele, we see an enormous white palace, the Palazzo della Cancelleria, one of the most important Renaissance buildings in Rome. It was built in the 1480s for Cardinal Riario, the nephew of Pope Sixtus IV. Although the architect is not known, it is likely that Bramante was involved in the courtyard, at least.

- Opposite the palace is the church of Sant'Andrea della Valle. This large church was mostly completed by 1650, from designs of Giacomo della Porta and Carlo Maderno, with the façade by Carlo Rainaldi. The huge dome, second only to St. Peter's in height, was finished in 1622.
- Around the east side of the church is another of Rome's talking statues, Abbate Luigi. This is really an ancient Roman statue of an unknown official, but the locals in the 14th century thought it looked like an ecclesiastic from the church.

Smithsonian Journeys Travel Tips

At Bernini's Fontana dei Quattro Fiumi, look carefully at the river personifications that represent the global extent of Christianity, just as their continental counterparts do in the church of St. Ignatius. Closest to Borromini's façade of Sant'Agnes in Agone, the figure of the Danube reaches up to touch the Pamphilj papal arms. Representing Asia, the figure of the Ganges holds an oar, referring to the navigability of the river. The Nile is represented by a figure who famously covers his head, indicating the unknown status of the river's origins. Finally, the Rio de la Plata in South America is surrounded by coins, symbolizing the riches of the New World. Animals, too, augment the associations: The armadillo is linked to the Americas; the camel, to Africa; the crocodile, to the Nile; and the horse, to the Danube.

Note how the face of the personification of the Rio de la Plata is repeated in the figure of *il Moro* ("the Moor") in another of Bernini's fountains in the Piazza Navona. At the southern end of the piazza, the depiction of the central figure was likely influenced by the visit to Rome of a Congolese ambassador, Emanuele Ne Vunda, who visited Pope Paul V in 1608.

The water erupting at the fountains of the Piazza Navona comes from the Aqua Virgo (Acqua Vergine), the same ancient aqueduct that feeds the Trevi Fountain.

- Nearby, along the Via di Grotta Pinta, notice the curvature of the medieval foundations of the buildings. The curve results from the ruins of the Theatre of Pompey, on which these houses are built. In this vicinity, you can also have lunch or dinner in the ruins of the theater in which Julius Caesar was assassinated.
- We'll end our tour in this lecture in the Campo dei Fiori. Every morning for centuries, a market has been held here, but this was also a place for public executions. In fact, the large bronze statue that looms in the center of the square is the great philosopher and astronomer Giordano Bruno, who was burned here in 1600 for challenging the church.

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Questions to Consider

1. The Pantheon has been used as a pagan temple, a Christian church, a historical monument, the burial place of artists, and the tomb for the kings of Italy. Can you think of any other building that has served so many purposes over time?
2. What is there about Piazza Navona that has made it a center of Roman social life for 300 years?

Piazza Farnese to the Ara Pacis

Lecture 12

Just south of the Campo dei Fiori is one of Rome's most majestic squares, the Piazza Farnese. This vast space was carved out of a jumble of medieval buildings to provide the appropriate context for one of the most magnificent Renaissance palaces in Rome: the Palazzo Farnese. In this lecture, we'll learn the history of this palace, and we'll visit the nearby Palazzo Spada. We'll then look at some sites near the Tiber before we reach the Villa Farnesina, commissioned as a pleasure house along the river by the rich banker Agostino Chigi. Finally, we'll walk toward the Piazza del Popolo, stopping briefly at the Chiesa Nuova and Oratorio, the Palazzo Altemps, and a number of other sites.

The Palazzo Farnese and Palazzo Spada

- The Palazzo Farnese was begun by Alessandro Farnese when he was still a cardinal. It became grander once he was elected as Pope Paul III.
 - His rise was unusual, because he owed his entry into the Sacred College to his teenaged sister, Giulia, who was the last mistress of Pope Alexander VI Borgia.
 - The palace was designed by Antonio da Sangallo, but he died in 1546 before the building was finished. Pope Paul chose Michelangelo to complete the structure. The wide, Tuscan-style cornice was his addition, as were the upper-story window frames and the balcony above the door. The rear façade, with its exquisite loggia, was the work of Giacomo della Porta and Giacomo da Vignola.
 - Since 1636, the palace has been the embassy of France and the ambassador's residence.
- A wonderful Mannerist palace nearby is the Palazzo Spada. Here, note the statues of eminent Romans on the second story and the symbols of the Spada family on the third. The cultivated and rich



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The deep basins on the façade of the Farnese Palace were originally from the Baths of Caracalla; the lily of the Farnese was added in 1626.

Cardinal Bernardino Spada purchased the palace in 1632 and asked his friend Borromini to modernize it.

- If you enter the courtyard and look to the left side through a large glass window, you can see Borromini's false-perspective colonnade, illustrating his geometrical genius. As you look down the colonnade to the statue at the end, it appears to be about 120 feet long, but in reality, it is only 25 feet. The statue itself is only 2 feet tall.
- The palace became the Italian Council of State in 1927, but the great Spada collection of pictures and sculpture was acquired with the house. These are now open as the Galleria Spada, with the entrance to the side.

Crossing the Tiber

- Leaving the Palazzo Spada, we walk south to the Via Giulia, one of Rome's most beautiful and evocative streets. It was laid out by

Pope Julius II della Rovere at the beginning of the 16th century to provide a straight route for pilgrims to or from St. Peter's.

- On this street, we find the church of Santa Maria dell'Orazione e Morte, once the home of a confraternity devoted to caring for the indigent dead. On the exterior is a carved marble slab with a figure of a skeleton; its inscription reads: "Today this is for me, tomorrow for you." Citizens put alms through the hole beneath to help pay for the Christian burial of unclaimed corpses.
- A lovely bridge by Michelangelo spans the Via Giulia. It was originally intended to cross the Tiber to connect with the Villa Farnesina.
 - To reach that site, we must climb up to the raised flood wall of the Lungotevere. When the places we're visiting were built, the level of the street was not far above the Tiber, which flooded regularly. When Rome became the capital of Italy, the decision was made to try to control the torrents of the Tiber.
 - Between 1876 and 1926, the entire urban length of the river was regulated to maintain a width of not more than 325 feet. High walls were constructed to stop the Tiber from breaching its banks, but this required the destruction of many buildings and cut the city off from the river.
- Another example of Rome's iconic bridges is the Ponte Sisto, built by Pope Sixtus IV from 1473 to 1479 to give pilgrims another means of accessing St. Peter's. This structure has elegant arches and a central hole that allows flood waters to rage without carrying away the bridge.
- Across the Tiber is the Piazza Trilussa, named after a popular Roman dialect poet who died in 1950 and whose statue is in the middle. The fountain at the far end of the piazza is the last extension of the Acqua Paola aqueduct, built in the 17th century.

The Villa Farnesina

- The original Villa Farnesina was commissioned as a pleasure house by the rich banker Agostino Chigi. The architect was Baldassare Peruzzi, who completed it in 1511. It was acquired by the Farnese in 1577. This elegant property was once surrounded by splendid gardens, but these are long gone.
- Inside is a famous long gallery, or loggia, decorated by Raphael and others. Here, we see Raphael's *Galatea*. She was a mythical sea nymph who was so beautiful that the Cyclops Polyphemus lusted after her. Because Raphael could not paint monsters, he asked his then friend Sebastiano del Piombo to paint the portrait of Polyphemus.
- On the ceiling is an astrological painting of the heavens at the moment of Agostino Chigi's birth, November 29, 1466. Originally, this room was a banqueting loggia fully open to the air. The story is told that Chigi would have his servants theatrically throw the gold and silver plates into the Tiber instead of washing them. He then hired fishermen to spread their nets across the river and retrieve the plates in the morning.
- The most splendid room on the ground floor is the Room of Amor and Psyche, whose story is painted on the ceilings and the lunettes. Of course, the narrative of the two is an allegory of Neoplatonic love, in which Psyche—that is, the soul—reaches heaven through love.
- Upstairs is the Room of the Perspectives by Peruzzi. Here, the end walls are decorated in false-perspective scenes that give the impression that there are no walls, only views of Rome.
- The adjoining room is the bedroom where Agostino Chigi met his mistress. Not by accident, the decorative program by Il Sodoma tells the story of Alexander the Great's marriage to Roxanne.
- The Farnesina is managed by the Accademia dei Lincei ("Academy of the Lynxes"), the Italian equivalent of the Royal Society in

London. The Accademia is housed on the opposite side of the street in the Palazzo Corsini, which was renovated and enlarged in the 1730s to a design probably by Ferdinando Fuga.

Toward the Piazza del Popolo

- To reach the Piazza del Popolo, we cross the Tiber on the Ponte Mazzini and continue straight until we reach the Corso Vittorio Emanuele II. Across from us is a huge religious complex, the Chiesa Nuova (“New Church”). Right next to it, on the left, is the Oratorio. Both buildings are associated with St. Philip Neri and the Oratorian Order.
 - Chiesa Nuova is actually a nickname. Officially, the church is called Santa Maria alla Navicella. The interior was decorated by Pietro da Cortona and boasts the only Rubens in a church in Rome—his *Madonna with Angels* in the sanctuary.
 - The 13th-century image of the Virgin above the altar is the miracle-working *Madonna of Navicella*. St. Philip Neri himself is buried beneath. Ironically, St. Philip intended the interior to be simple, but the Oratorians became enormously popular and wealthy because they took special responsibility for Rome’s poor.
 - Next to the church is the magnificent Oratorio, with a façade by Borromini. St. Philip used this space for his performances of sacred music.
- We continue north along the short Via degli Orsini until we reach the cross street, the Via di Monte Giordano. The Monte Giordano is not one of Rome’s famous seven hills but an artificial rise created by debris from the nearby river port. The height made Monte Giordano ideal for a castle; thus, in the 13th century, the powerful Orsini family constructed a fortress on the site and lived there until 1688.
- We next reach the Via dei Coronari. This street was another urban improvement, built by the papacy to offer quicker, safer, and easier

access to St. Peter’s for pilgrims. It proved so successful that rosary sellers set up their shops here, giving rise to its current name, the Street of the Rosaries (or *coronari*).

- In the opposite direction is the Piazza di Sant’Apollinare, and across that busy space is the Palazzo Altemps. This palace was begun in 1480 for the Riario relatives of Popes Sixtus IV and Julius II. It was then acquired by the wealthy Cardinal Sittico d’Altemps, who used it to house his spectacular collection of ancient statues. It is now the National Roman Museum and houses the Ludovisi throne.
- The Piazza di Sant’Agostino is dominated by a church of that name. Its façade is an early example of Renaissance architecture in Rome, built between 1479 and 1483. Inside is a Raphael fresco of the Prophet Isaiah and the *Madonna of Loreto* by Caravaggio.
- A charming corner at the Via dei Portoghesi marks the junction of three of Rome’s central *rioni*, or districts: Sant’Eustachio, Ponte, and Campo Marzio. Here, we see the doorway to the Palazzo Scapucci, built in the 16th century. The tower that surmounts it—the Torre Frangipane—is much older, dating from the early 13th century. It was named for a powerful Roman family during the Middle Ages, although it is commonly referred to as the Monkey Tower.
- To the right of the tower is the elegant Palazzo Cardelli, dating from the 16th century. Behind it is the Via di Pallacorda (“Street of the Tennis Court”). Here, Caravaggio killed an opponent after a heated tennis game and was forced to flee Rome.
- Finally, we walk past the Borghese Palace to a large square that encompasses two significant ancient sites: the Mausoleum of Augustus and the Ara Pacis (Altar of Augustan Peace).
 - The altar was commissioned by the Roman Senate to celebrate the victories of Augustus and was consecrated in 9 B.C. Its friezes depict members of the imperial family, high officials of Rome, and citizens engaging in religious and civil functions.

Smithsonian Journeys Travel Tips

The piazza of the Campo dei Fiori (named after the field of flowers found here in the 14th century) hosts a daily market where fruit, vegetables, and flowers are sold. The bustling activity provides tourists with a vivid sense of daily life in Rome and belies the centuries-long association of this location with executions (beginning around 1600 and ending only in the middle of the 19th century). Be sure to enjoy a coffee early in the day or a prosecco before dinner in one of the bars surrounding the piazza, then buy some apples, oranges, or for the more daring, a less familiar snack. The euro price is for an *etto* (1/10 of a kilo or 1/4 of a pound) or *etti* of produce. Sometimes, small boxes of berries are sold by the kilogram. The Campo dei Fiori is the perfect place to pick up *panini* (sandwiches), *pizza bianca* or *rosa*, drinks, and sweets for a lunchtime picnic that can be enjoyed in the nearby Piazza Benedetto Cairoli.

Keep track of works by Caravaggio in Rome. Some of the formal and thematic characteristics first seen in the three paintings showing events from the life of St. Matthew in the church of San Luigi dei Franceschi recur in other works by the master painter. For example, the dramatic, sharp contrast of light and shadow; clear, bright colors; diagonal placement of figures and objects; and foreshortened features, such as feet, hands, and elbows, that are evident in *The Calling of St. Matthew* reappear in the painting of the *Madonna di Loreto*, or the *Pilgrim's Madonna*, in Sant'Agostino. Caravaggio was well-known for eschewing idealization and, instead, depicting common, everyday people and settings, which is evident in the dirty bare feet and simple clothing of the kneeling pilgrims. All these features appear in the copy of Caravaggio's *Entombment of Christ* in the Chiesa Nuova. The original painting was removed from the church by Napoleon; at the time of its return to Italy in the beginning of the 19th century, the original work was moved to the Vatican Pinacoteca.

- Not much is left of the once-vast Mausoleum of Augustus. It was commissioned about 30 B.C. as the Etruscan-style burial place of the imperial family. It was a circle of brick, covered with earth on which cypresses were planted. On top was a statue of Augustus, as well as two Egyptian obelisks. These now stand at Santa Maria Maggiore and the Piazza Quirinale.

Suggested Reading

Augias, *The Secrets of Rome*.

Barzini, *The Italians*.

Bussagli, ed., *Rome: Art and Architecture*.

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Questions to Consider

1. Account for Raphael's program of decoration in the Villa Farnesina. What does the story of Amor and Psyche say about Agostino Chigi and his villa?
2. The Italian state has finally returned the obelisks taken by Mussolini from Ethiopia. Should Italy return to Egypt the obelisks taken in Roman times and set up again by Pope Sixtus V? What is the difference, if any?

Piazza del Popolo to San Clemente

Lecture 13

The Piazza del Popolo is one of the iconic spaces of Rome. Since ancient times, it has been the gateway for visitors from the north. The Roman road Via Flaminia enters through the Flaminian Gate—now called the Porta del Popolo—and continues into the city as the Via del Corso. What we see of the gate today is a redesign of the original ancient structure by two of Rome’s greatest sculptor-architects: Michelangelo and Bernini. We start this lecture in the Piazza del Popolo, touring one of Rome’s landmarks, the church of Santa Maria del Popolo. From there, we’ll visit the Villa Borghese and a number of other churches across the city.

Santa Maria del Popolo

- East of the Porta del Popolo is the lovely church of Santa Maria del Popolo. In ancient times, this was the site of the family tomb of the *gens* (“clan”) of the Domitia, the most notorious member of which was Nero. The emperor actively persecuted Christians, including St. Peter, and it was believed that his evil spirit continued to work in this part of the city even after his death. Santa Maria del Popolo was constructed in the 11th century to discourage evil spirits and to banish Nero to hell forever.
- Today, the church is one of Rome’s landmarks. The simple Renaissance façade is by Andrea Bregno; it was completed on the order of Sixtus IV della Rovere in the 1470s. Inside the church, the della Rovere family chapel is decorated with magnificent frescoes by Pinturicchio. In addition, the Cerasi Chapel contains two of Caravaggio’s most dramatic paintings, *The Conversion of St. Paul* and *The Crucifixion of St. Peter*.
- The Chigi Chapel was decorated between 1513 and 1516 by Raphael. It holds the funerary monuments of Agostino Chigi and his brother. In the following century, the chapel was completed by



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The large obelisk in the center of the Piazza del Popolo was the first one brought from Egypt by Augustus to celebrate his victory at Actium in 31 B.C.

Bernini, who carved the figure of Daniel in the den of lions. The altarpiece is by Sebastiano del Piombo.

The Villa Borghese

- The Villa Borghese was designed in 1618 by the Flemish artist and architect who is known by his Italianated name: Giovanni Vasanzio. But the design of the villa is not his alone; Cardinal Scipione

Borghese himself was also involved in the planning. Scipione was the cardinal-nephew of Pope Paul V Borghese and was one of Baroque Europe's most cultivated collectors of antiquities and Renaissance and contemporary paintings. His collection—enriched in later centuries—is housed in the villa.

- On the first floor, in the large central *salone*, is a 4th-century mosaic floor showing gladiatorial combats. Also on this level is a famous sculpture of Napoleon's sister, Pauline Bonaparte. She was portrayed as *Venus Victrix* (“*Victorious Venus*”) by Antonio Canova in 1805. Here, too, we find Bernini's *David* and his *Apollo and Daphne*.
- The second floor of the Villa Borghese is essentially devoted to paintings, including Titian's *Sacred and Profane Love*, Raphael's *Deposition*, and Raphael's *Lady with a Unicorn*, a portrait of Giulia Farnese. Look, too, for Correggio's *Danaë* and Caravaggio's *St. Jerome* and *Madonna of the Palafrenieri*.

Santa Maria degli Angeli

- The church of Santa Maria degli Angeli e dei Martiri (usually called Santa Maria degli Angeli) is located in the Piazza della Repubblica. This church was built directly into the vast ruins of the Baths of Diocletian. When they were completed in A.D. 306, these were the largest baths in the Roman world, capable of holding more than 3,000 people.
- In 1561, Michelangelo was commissioned by Pope Pius IV to convert the space into a church. Visitors enter through a door made through an apse wall of the former *calidarium*. Inside is an astoundingly large open space, the former *frigidarium* of the baths. The large octagonal hall, which Michelangelo transformed into the transept of the church, was the *tepidarium*.
- Michelangelo's brilliant renovation respected the ancient design. However, in 1749, Luigi Vanvitelli was commissioned to restructure the space. In so doing, he shifted the entrance and added much of the decoration, including a meridian clock built into the floor.

Santa Maria Maggiore

- As its name suggests, the basilica of Santa Maria Maggiore is the largest church in Rome of the 25 or so that are dedicated to the Virgin Mary. It was first built under Pope Liberius in the 4th century and is often called the Liberian Basilica.
- The church is also called Our Lady of the Snows in reference to a legend about how the basilica came to be. Apparently, a Roman nobleman wanted to use his fortune in honor of the Virgin Mary but was unsure how. She came to him in a vision, telling him to build a church on the site of a miracle. The next morning, which was August 5, a large patch of snow fell on the top of the Esquiline Hill, and Santa Maria Maggiore was built on the spot.
- The medieval bell tower of the church is the highest in Rome, at 246 feet. The Baroque façade by Ferdinando Fuga dates from the 1740s. Perhaps what is most interesting about the exterior is that it has both an obelisk and a column. The column with the figure of the Virgin Mary on top is from the basilica of Maxentius. At the apse end is the obelisk erected on the site by Sixtus V Peretti.
- The Lateran Treaty of 1929 declared Santa Maria Maggiore one of the four papal basilicas in Rome. It shares that honor with St. Peter's, St. John Lateran, and St. Paul outside the Walls. These basilicas are legally the extraterritorial property of the Vatican State.
- Inside, the size of the church is impressive. The nave is 280 feet long, with 36 ancient Roman columns dividing it from the side aisles. Another important part of the church that uses repurposed Roman objects is the chapel of Sixtus V. The marble for this chapel came from the ancient Septizonium at the Palatine Hill.
- The gilding of the splendid Renaissance ceiling of the basilica makes use of the first gold brought from America by Columbus. He originally gave the gold to his sponsors, Ferdinand and Isabella of Spain, who then passed it on to the Spanish pope Alexander VI Borgia.

Paleo-Christian Churches

- Nearby Santa Maria Maggiore are two paleo-Christian (early) churches. The first of these is Santa Prassede. In the apse and in the chapel of St. Zeno are some wonderful 9th-century mosaics. The church also houses the column against which Christ was said to endure the flagellation.
- The other paleo-Christian church is Santa Pudenziana, named in honor of the saint who was the sister of St. Prassede and daughter of St. Pudens. He was a Roman senator who was honored for having supported St. Peter. This church dates from A.D. 390, and inside are some mosaics from the 4th century.

St. John Lateran

- The façade of the immense church of St. John Lateran is 18th century, designed by Alessandro Galilei, a relation of Galileo. But the structure behind the façade is medieval, and the church's foundations take us back to the age of Constantine and the legalization of Christianity in 313.
- Once Christianity was made the official religion of the Roman Empire, it was necessary to have appropriate places for it to be practiced. Pagan temples would not work, but the Roman law courts and commercial structures, known as basilicas, were perfect. This church was the first Christian basilica, begun in A.D. 314. It was built on land owned by Constantine.
- The basilica was damaged on many occasions after its first construction; thus, the basic structure we see today is much later, dating from the 14th century. Sadly, the destruction has continued. In 1993, a terrorist bomb was exploded on the façade, doing considerable damage to the church.
- Until 1870 and the capture of Rome by Italy, this church was where the pope was crowned, and the church still has important liturgical and clerical importance. The pope blesses the populace from the benediction loggia each year on Maundy Thursday. And, like

St. Peter's, there is a holy door that is opened only during Jubilee Years. In fact, it was from this church that the first Jubilee was proclaimed by Boniface VIII in 1300.

- The 425-foot-long Baroque nave was built by Francesco Borromini from 1646 to 1649 on the orders of Pope Innocent X Pamphilj. The statues of the apostles between the piers are later, dating from the 18th century. However, along the walls and in some of the chapels are medieval tombs, including some of popes. The baldacchino of the papal altar dates from 1367. By tradition, inside the finials are the heads of St. Peter and St. Paul.
- The cloisters are from the 13th century and are among the most beautiful in Rome. Notice the varying shapes of the columns and the objects scattered around the walls, including the papal throne of Pope Nicholas IV and the tomb of Cardinal Annibaldi by Arnolfo di Cambio.
- Apart from the basilica, there are two other important buildings in the complex of St. John Lateran. The first of these is the baptistry, the oldest functional building in the complex. According to tradition, it took the place of a fountain that was in the Laterani gardens. The structure we see today dates from the 5th century. The small chapel of St. John the Baptist has doors from the Baths of Caracalla.
- The other site of note is the structure containing the Scala Santa ("Holy Stairs"). By tradition, these were brought from Jerusalem by Constantine's mother, St. Helena. They were believed to be the stairs in the palace of Pontius Pilate that Christ was forced to climb for judgment. At the summit of the Scala Santa is the Sancta Sanctorum, once the private chapel of the pope.

The Santi Quattro Coronati and San Clemente

- The Santi Quattro Coronati is named after the four early Christian martyrs who died rather than carve a statue of a pagan god. It is still a functioning cloistered convent. Inside is the 13th-century Chapel of St. Sylvester, with a wonderfully preserved fresco cycle commemorating his life.

- Across the street is San Clemente, a church constructed on three levels. The upper church was built after an earlier building was destroyed by the Normans in the 11th century. The Chapel of St. Catherine holds some of the earliest Renaissance work in Rome, painted by Masolino and, perhaps, Masaccio in the 1420s.
 - The lower church has a fresco of St. Clement from the 11th century and a 9th-century fresco of the Virgin. There is also

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The interior of Santa Maria Maggiore holds many visual surprises, including a remarkable bust of the Congolese ambassador Emanuele Ne Vunda, whose funeral occurred in the papal basilica in 1608. Based on a death mask, the carved marble monument was completed by Francesco Caporale in 1628; it provides a strikingly convincing representation of this contemporary black African. Find this rich wall memorial in the sacristy, located to the right of the main entrance of the church.

The 5th-century mosaics of Santa Maria Maggiore are also noteworthy. The triumphal arch that separates the nave from the apse is decorated with mosaics depicting New Testament scenes related to Christ's birth, and the mosaic panels below the clerestory windows in the nave show scenes from the Old Testament. Although some of these images have been restored, they reveal the formal and thematic interests of the early Christian church.

Notice the figure of Christ on a throne greeting the visiting Magi on the left side of the triumphal arch. The star of Bethlehem floats above his head.

In the nave, the mosaics on the left depict scenes from the lives of Abraham, Jacob, and Isaac, including Abraham blessing Jacob. The mosaics on the right show scenes from the lives of Moses and Joshua, including Moses parting the Red Sea. Even from the ground level, the painted restored sections that have replaced fallen tiles are obvious.

the tomb of St. Cyril, who along with his brother Methodius, invented the Cyrillic alphabet.

- The final level is a late-2nd- or early-3rd-century Mithraeum, a temple and school of the cult of Mithras. For a time, this cult threatened to overshadow Christianity in ancient Rome.

Suggested Reading

Augias, *The Secrets of Rome*.

Barzini, *The Italians*.

Bussagli, ed., *Rome: Art and Architecture*.

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Kaplan, *Little Known Museums in and around Rome*.

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Portoghesi, *Rome of the Renaissance*.

Richards, *The New Italians*.

Severgnini, *La Bella Figura*.

Shetterly, *Rome Walks*.

Stinger, *The Renaissance in Rome*.

Questions to Consider

1. Why would Cardinal Scipione Borghese build and decorate the wonderful Villa Borghese when he had no intention of living in it?
2. Most visitors to Rome think that St. Peter's Basilica is the cathedral of Rome, not St. John Lateran. Why? What makes these two huge and historic churches so different?

The Vatican and St. Peter's Basilica

Lecture 14

We begin our last lecture on Rome by visiting one of the most famous sites in the city: the Vatican. The Vatican is an independent city-state that was established by the Lateran Treaty in 1929. It's an absolute monarchy headed by the pope. Key buildings in Vatican City include St. Peter's Basilica and the Apostolic Palace. The palace is actually a collection of independent structures that have been united by walls and walkways. The papal apartments are here, for example, as are the Sistine Chapel and the Vatican Library. Together, these buildings house a vast collection of treasures and artifacts—one of the most important repositories of art in the Western world.

The Cortile della Pigna

- The first place to visit inside the Vatican is the Cortile della Pigna. The large *pigna* (“pinecone”) on the landing of the staircase gives this courtyard its name. It is one of Rome's ancient sweating fountains. On either side of the pinecone are two bronze peacocks. These were once gilded and placed, with other bronze animals, among the cypress trees that grew on top of the Mausoleum of Hadrian.
- This courtyard gives us a sense of just how immense the palace is. Notice the regular and elegant design of the parallel wings broken by a neoclassical façade. The wings form part of the vast structure ordered by Pope Julius II beginning in 1506, the same time during which he was rebuilding St. Peter's. And he used the same architect, Donato Bramante.
- Because Pope Julius had suffered greatly under his archenemy, Alexander VI Borgia, he refused to live in the Borgia apartments in the medieval papal palace next to St. Peter's. Instead, he ordered Bramante to link the medieval palace to the Belvedere, the villa that Pope Innocent VIII had previously constructed on the Vatican hill.

- Bramante's solution was brilliant. He constructed a series of terraces, linked by ramps and staircases to accommodate the steep grade. Unfortunately, he died in 1514 with this project incomplete. It was finished some 50 years later by the architect Pirro Ligorio. The result of the plan was an enormous palace.
- The beautiful and elegant symmetry of Bramante's design was compromised by Pope Sixtus V when he built the library wing across its central expanse. This was compounded in the early 19th century when Pope Pius VII ordered the architect Raphael Stern to construct the Braccio Nuovo ("New Wing") between Bramante's parallel extensions. That's what we see opposite the pinecone. The modern sphere in front of the Braccio Nuovo is by the contemporary Italian sculptor Arnaldo Pomodoro and was installed in 1990.

Highlights inside the Vatican

- The Belvedere is part of the original villa of Innocent VIII. It houses the Apollo Belvedere and the Laocoön.
 - To many connoisseurs, the Apollo represents the height of classical perfection. It is a 2nd-century Roman copy of a Greek original. The Apollo is godly, confident, and radiant with ideal beauty.
 - In a neighboring niche is the Laocoön, which tells a dramatic story of human struggle against invincible forces. It captures that moment when the Trojan priest Laocoön and his sons are being strangled by serpents sent by gods who favored the Greeks. The piece is likely from the 1st century, and there remains a debate as to whether this one is a copy or the original.
- The Pio-Clementino Museum was established in 1771 to bring together the Vatican's amazing collections of ancient marbles. The long gallery of statues has not only some truly great sculptures but also simpler objects, such as funerary inscriptions. Also here are the large porphyry sarcophagi of St. Helena, Constantine's mother, and his daughter, Costanza. In the center of the gallery is the Belvedere Torso.

- In the rotunda here is an enormous bronze of Hercules. Almost no large bronzes survive from antiquity, but this one was found buried in the center of Rome.
- After it was set in place, it was struck by lightning, which was considered a bad omen. But because figures of gods could not be destroyed, it was buried and, hence, saved from scavengers and vandals after the fall of Rome.

The Stanze of Raphael

- The four rooms known as the Stanze of Raphael were commissioned by Julius II as his private apartments. Raphael worked here from 1508 until his death in 1520; the rooms were then finished by his workshop, particularly Giulio Romano. Although Julius died in 1513, his successor, Leo X de' Medici, continued the project.
- The first and largest of the rooms is the Sala di Costantino (“Room of Constantine”). Although Raphael had made preliminary drawings for this room, it was painted after his death. It depicts moments in the life of Constantine the Great and functions as papal propaganda at a difficult time for the church: the period of the Protestant Reformation.
- The Room of Heliodorus depicts a story from the apocryphal Book of Maccabees. Heliodorus, intent on stealing the treasure of the temple, is driven off by a horseman sent by God. The message here is clear: The enemies of the church who try to take its property will be punished by God.
 - On the right wall is the *Mass of Bolsena*, representing another miracle. The fresco includes a portrait of Pope Julius, as well as one of his illegitimate daughter, Felice.
 - The other large wall illustrates Pope Leo I saving Rome by warning off Attila the Hun. Pope Leo X's portrait appears twice, as both a cardinal and pope, because he was elected as it was being painted.

- Finally, around the window opposite the *Mass of Bolsena* is the *Delivery of Peter*.
- The Stanza della Segnatura holds two of Europe's greatest frescoes: *The School of Athens* and *The Disputation over the Holy Sacrament*.
 - *The School of Athens* illustrates human wisdom. The philosophers of antiquity are represented by Raphael's contemporaries: Raphael himself is at the far right with the cap; Sodoma is beside him; Leonardo da Vinci is in the center; and Bramante and Michelangelo are in the foreground.
 - On the opposite wall is *The Disputation over the Holy Sacrament*, representing divine, or revealed, wisdom. On the first level, the doctors of the church, among others, are debating the true presence. Note the tripartite horizontal plan of the composition, reflecting the Trinity.
- The Stanza dell'Incendio di Borgo takes its name from the fresco on the left wall as you enter, *The Fire in the Borgo*. It depicts the miracle in which Pope Leo IV ordered a fire to stop. The image of Leo IV is actually another portrait of Leo X. On the left is Raphael's homage to Aeneas and the founding of Rome.

The Sistine Chapel

- The Sistine Chapel dates from the 1480s, when Pope Sixtus IV decided that the original chapel was too small. He also wanted to reinforce the connection between the Old and New Testaments and the role of the papacy. Symbolically, the measurements of the Sistine Chapel were to be identical to those of the Temple of Solomon in Jerusalem. This gave the architect, Baccio Pontelli, a difficult task because the site was marshy. The size of the new chapel thus required thick walls, supported by buttresses and lit only by small clerestory windows.
- The greatest painters of the age were involved in decorating the chapel, including Botticelli, Ghirlandaio, Perugino, Pinturicchio, Signorelli, and Cosimo Roselli. From its completion early in 1482,

the chapel became the liturgical center of the papacy, used for important church festivals and for the election of popes, as it is today.

- The original vault of the Sistine was decorated with gold stars on a blue ground. But in 1508, when the nephew of Sixtus, Julius II, wanted to honor his uncle appropriately, he demanded that Michelangelo paint the ceiling when the artist was in Rome planning the great tomb of the pope.
- Michelangelo eventually created a wonderful narrative from Genesis. He divided the huge vault into episodes, supported and extended by other images, such as prophets and sibyls. Also here are the ancestors of Christ and the *ignudi*, the nude young men representing perfect beauty and divine favor.
- Thirty years after the ceiling was finished, Pope Paul III Farnese commissioned Michelangelo to decorate the altar wall. Much tragedy had ensued in the intervening years: the Protestant Reformation, continual warfare in Italy, and the sack of Rome in 1527. As a consequence, the vision of *The Last Judgement* is utterly different in style from the vault—dark and brooding.

St. Peter's Basilica

- There has been a church on this site in honor of St. Peter ever since 318, when the first basilica was built by order of the emperor Constantine. By tradition, this was the site of St. Peter's burial after his crucifixion in A.D. 68.
- The Constantinian basilica, much expanded and decorated, stood until the 16th century. Julius II then ordered its replacement with a larger, more splendid church, again using Bramante as the architect. His original design of 1506 was a Greek plan church (with equal nave and transepts) surmounted by a great dome. It was to be a centrally planned structure because it was to hold, under the dome, the tomb of Julius II, carved by Michelangelo.



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In designing the dome of St. Peter's, Bramante had been inspired by the Pantheon, but Michelangelo later changed the shape of the dome and made it higher.

- The Constantinian basilica was dismantled in stages; indeed, the whole process of building the current St. Peter's took more than 120 years. Bramante died in 1514 and was succeeded by Antonio da Sangallo, Raphael, Michelangelo, and Carlo Maderno, all of whom made contributions. Michelangelo perfected the dome, making it higher and more elliptical than Bramante's, and Maderno created a Latin cross church, with the nave longer than the transepts.
- The altar is situated directly over St. Peter's tomb. Urban VIII Barberini commissioned Bernini to build the magnificent altar canopy. It is 65 feet high, and the solid bronze is made to look like fabric. The papal throne is also by Bernini.
- Surprisingly, there is almost no paint in the church; the decoration is micro-mosaic. And apart from Michelangelo's exquisite *Pietà*, the sculpture in the basilica is associated with numerous funeral monuments celebrating important figures.

- Finally, as we leave St. Peter's, we must admire the Piazza San Pietro in front of it. Bernini's serene colonnade forms a wonderfully theatrical setting for the basilica.

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Initial restorations of the Sistine Chapel began within decades of the completion of the ceiling frescoes by Michelangelo in 1512. Since then, bread and wine have been used to clean the surfaces, which were then covered by various oils, glues, and varnishes to enhance the painted areas. In 1979, the modern restoration of the entire chapel began. The work on the ceiling took place between 1980 and 1989; *The Last Judgment* was completed in 1994; and the conservation of the 15th-century wall frescoes lasted from 1994 to 1999.

Passages of the frescoes left untouched by the conservation teams remain a testament to the need for cleaning. Notice Jonah right above *The Last Judgment* to see a section of the original condition of the wall. The dark patch partially covering Jonah's name panel highlights the grime that had obscured the original colors of the entire ceiling. From this location, additional sections left for comparison are evident to the left and right, under the scene of Moses and the Brazen Serpent.

Suggested Reading

Augias, *The Secrets of Rome*.

Barzini, *The Italians*.

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Portoghesi, *Rome of the Renaissance*.

Richards, *The New Italians*.

Severgnini, *La Bella Figura*.

Shetterly, *Rome Walks*.

Stinger, *The Renaissance in Rome*.

Questions to Consider

1. The Vatican apostolic palace is one of the grandest palaces on earth. Is it appropriate for the head of a church to command such splendor?
2. St. Peter's Basilica is a wonderful building, but it contains very little from the earlier basilica, the central church of Western Christianity for more than 1,000 years. Can you suggest why?

Orvieto, Siena, and San Gimignano

Lecture 15

About 60 miles from Rome is the town of Orvieto, one of Italy's great gems. The site has been called an island because the town is built on a large plateau of volcanic rock (also called tufa) that rises above the landscape, giving it a panoramic view over the countryside. Orvieto is a very old foundation. Its position was perfect for the Etruscans who first settled it and turned it into an urban center. In fact, many of the oldest buildings in Orvieto have Etruscan foundations, with cellars carved from the tufa. We will begin this lecture by visiting the cathedral and a few other sites in Orvieto; we'll then continue on to Siena and San Gimignano.

The Cathedral of Orvieto

- The Cathedral of Orvieto was begun in 1290, a monument to the miracle of the Mass of Bolsena.
 - According to legend, in 1263, a Bohemian priest en route to Rome began to doubt the belief in transubstantiation. He questioned whether the wafer and wine used in the communion service became the actual body of Christ. As it happened, he stopped close to Lake Bolsena to say mass. Suddenly, the wafer in his hands began to bleed, staining the altar cloth, which then became an object of veneration.
 - Pope Urban IV was resident in Orvieto at the time and was greatly moved by this miracle. He established the Feast of Corpus Christi to celebrate the event and decided to build a church to hold the altar cloth. This shrine became the Cathedral of Orvieto.
- The façade of the cathedral is Gothic, decorated with rich carvings, bas reliefs of biblical stories, and statues. Covering much of the façade is a splendid program of golden mosaics. The three pointed gables and portals, the decorated spires, and the sheer size of the building all demonstrate the importance of the relic of the Mass of Bolsena.

- The interior of the cathedral is a testament to this miracle, as well. Inside is the Chapel of the Altar Cloth, painted by Gentile da Fabriano. The *Pietà* in the chapel, consisting of four life-size figures by Ippolito Scalza, dates from 1570 to 1579.
- Also here is one of Luca Signorelli's masterpieces, the San Brizio Chapel. Notice the two Gothic vaults painted by Fra Angelico. He began the frescoes in 1447; the work was completed in 1489 by Luca Signorelli. The unusual style and themes of his frescoes have served as an inspiration for many later artists.

Other Sites in Orvieto

- Beside the cathedral is a vast Gothic palace, the Palace of the Popes (or Palazzo Soliano). This one-time papal fortress was begun in 1297 by Pope Boniface VIII. It was enlarged and completed in 1443. The palace contains many frescoes taken from medieval churches and a lovely polyptych by Simone Martini.
- Nearby is the monumental palace of the Captain of the People (Capitano del Popolo). This one-time municipal government building, prison, and court was built during the 12th and 13th centuries, giving it its mixed Romanesque-Gothic character.
- San Giovenale is the oldest church in Orvieto. It was constructed in 1004 over an Etruscan temple on the highest point of the plateau. It was here in 1297 that Boniface VIII made King Louis IX of France a saint.
- The Pozzo della Cava is an underground well almost 200 feet deep. Because early Orvieto was a fortress city—from the time of the Etruscans until the age of Renaissance popes—secure access to water was absolutely necessary to withstand a siege.

Highlights of Siena

- Siena is on the Via Francigena, the pilgrims' route that took travelers from northern Europe to Rome or to the Holy Land. As a consequence, the town grew rich, and its public buildings, cathedral,

private palaces, and churches make it a wondrous example of medieval urban design.

- Siena's Piazza del Campo is one of the most beautiful of all the central squares in Italy. It is the site of the Palio, that famous bareback horse race that is run every July and August. To this day, it honors Siena's victory over its archrival, Florence, at the Battle of Montaperti.
- The Campo is dominated by the Palazzo Pubblico which was built at the end of the 13th century. Like most medieval communal palaces, it was the seat of collective civic authority, symbolized by its high tower. Inside, the splendid decoration includes Simone Martini's *Maestà* of 1315 in the Hall of the World Map (*Mappamondo*) and the allegorical fresco of *Good and Bad Government*, created by the brothers Ambrogio and Lorenzo Lorenzetti.
- Equally compelling, though not as famous, is the Piazza del Duomo, or Cathedral Square. There had been a church on this site since probably the 6th century, but the building we see here was begun, according to tradition, in 1179. The lovely lower façade was built in the Gothic style between about 1284 and 1333, while the more flamboyant upper façade was constructed in the last quarter of the 14th century.
 - The interior is decorated with the busts of popes under the vaulting, a magnificent rose window, and the most amazing floor in Europe. Altogether, there are 56 panels in marble depicting biblical, classical and even Platonic and mystical images. Among the marvels of the building is a Gothic pulpit by Niccolò Pisano, created between 1265 and 1268.
 - On the left aisle is the beautiful entry into the Piccolomini Library. This wonderful room celebrates the life of Pope Pius II through a fresco cycle by Pinturicchio.
- Across the Piazza del Duomo is another institution devoted to the Virgin Mary and one of the sources of Siena's medieval wealth and prominence: the Hospital of Santa Maria della Scala. This was a

pilgrims' hospice, a place to rest and recover from the barefoot walk down the Via Francigena en route to Rome or the Holy Land.

- Not surprisingly, Santa Maria della Scala benefited from gifts bestowed by the pious. Its wealth is evident in the wonderful frescoes decorating the Pilgrims' Hall and the chapels.
- Within the hospital is the cell used by St. Catherine of Siena, the patron saint of Europe. St. Catherine's original family house in Siena has also become the nucleus of a sanctuary dedicated to her.
- In the Piazza Tolomei is a column surmounted by a sculpture of two infants suckled by a she-wolf. This is a portrayal of Remus's sons, Senius and Aschius. According to legend, after Romulus killed Remus, Senius and Aschius fled here to found a town. The legend not only connects Siena to the mythical founding of Rome, Virgil's *Aeneid*, and the heroes of Troy, but it also makes the city ancient indeed, even older than its archenemy, Florence.
- The most common exit from the city for tourists is next to the Medici fortress—the Fortezza. In 1555, Siena was conquered by Florence and incorporated into the grand duchy of Tuscany. The Medici dukes built this massive fortress just outside the walls to secure their authority.

Highlights of San Gimignano

- The town of San Gimignano is almost exactly halfway between Siena and Florence. The 13th century was a rich period for this town because, like Siena, it straddles the Via Francigena, the pilgrims' and merchants' road from the north. But after the devastation of the Black Death in the 14th century, San Gimignano was, in effect, annexed by Florence. It became a kind of ghost town, frozen in time after the first half of the 14th century.
- The town is characterized by its towers. These huge structures are not only fine examples of medieval engineering but also served a number of purposes for the families that built them: emphasizing security, prestige, and neighborhood dominance.



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The medieval towers of San Gimignano give the city a unique appearance and allow us some insight into what almost all of Tuscany looked like during the Middle Ages.

- Many of the original towers survive, but what we see today is only a small sample; there were once more than 70 of them.
- This proliferation of towers is the consequence of that great ideological divide in the Italian peninsula during the Middle Ages: the struggle between the Guelfs, supporters of the papacy, and the Ghibellines, supporters of the Holy Roman Emperor. This factional division often led to violence; thus, constructing a tower on one's palace was a prudent decision. However, when political activity shifted to Florence, many of the towers were taken down or left to decay.
- We enter the town by the San Giovanni Gate, built in 1262. The fact that we are following the ancient pilgrims' route is evidenced by the façade of a tiny church with a Maltese cross above the central portal. The cross is the symbol of the Knights of Malta, a Christian order established to care for religious travelers.
- The center of both political and religious life in San Gimignano was the Piazza Duomo. Here are two civic towers, the Rognosa and the tower of the Palazzo del Comune ("city hall"). The city hall was

built beginning in 1288; today, it is both the seat of the municipal government and a museum.

- Inside is the Hall of the General Council, sometimes called Dante Hall because the great poet came here to speak in 1300. The huge space has an original coffered ceiling, as well as some amazing fresco cycles.
- Particularly interesting is the cycle of secular images, portraying the noble life of hunting, tournaments, hawking, and diplomacy. These were painted by a local artist named Azzo in the late 13th century to represent the rich variety of medieval aristocratic life.
- The duomo was founded in 1148 and, naturally, originally dedicated to San Gimignano, who had been the bishop of Modena. However, in 1575, the Medici grand duke changed this dedication to Santa Maria Assunta (“Virgin of the Assumption”). The exterior of the current building dates from 1239.
 - The architecture of the Chapel of Santa Fina, a local saint, is by a Florentine, Giuliano da Maiano, who finished it in 1468. The frescoes of *The Life of Santa Fina* are by Domenico Ghirlandaio and his assistants. Also worth seeing are the frescoes by Bartolo di Fredi, scenes from the Old Testament painted in 1375.
 - The two large images on the upper elevation of the nave at the entrance are by Taddeo di Bartolo. Dating from the late 14th century, they represent Christ in Judgment and Paradise. The right aisle has a cycle from the New Testament by Barna da Siena, painted in the mid-14th century.
- Our last stop is the church of Sant’Agostino, one of the wonders of rural Tuscany. It contains a cycle of 17 episodes from the life of St. Augustine by Benozzo Gozzoli, whom we will meet again in the Medici Chapel in Florence.

Smithsonian Journeys Travel Tips

In the early 14th century, architect and sculptor Lorenzo Maitani gathered a team to work on the bas relief sculptural pillars displaying scenes of the Old and New Testaments on the façade of the Orvieto Cathedral. On the first pier, note the delicacy of the carved ivy and the scenes featuring Adam and Eve. The varying levels of sculpted relief aid in creating a sense of depth. Old Testament prophets arranged along the Tree of Jesse are presented on the second pier. On the third pier, scenes from the life of Mary and Christ include the Nativity and the Adoration of the Magi. In these two scenes, Maitani and his workshop carved deeply for some figures, creating nearly three-dimensional faces and bodies, while merely drawing on the surface to indicate less important passages, such as a horse, shrubs, or trees. The fourth pier shows the Last Judgment, during which resurrected bodies rise up from their graves on the right side of the Tree of Life and the damned are thrust into hell on the left.

Visit the Crocifisso del Tufo necropolis, dating to the 6th century B.C.E., on the north side of Orvieto's cliff. Excavations have revealed the remarkable streets and chamber tombs of this city of the dead. The grave goods are exhibited in Orvieto's Claudio Faina Museum and Civic Archaeological Museum in the city center.

In the duomo in Siena, Niccolò Pisano's pulpit masterpiece includes eight high-relief sculpted panels that depict scenes from the life of Christ. The deeply carved images of the Nativity and the Adoration of the Magi reveal figural characteristics that likely influenced Lorenzo Maitani in Orvieto. Note the details in the setting, the rendering of the drapery, and the facial expressions and hairstyles that indicate Pisano's artistic education in southern Italy. There, he was able to study ancient public monuments, such as the column of Marcus Aurelius and the arches of Constantine, Titus, and Septimius Severus.

Smithsonian Journeys Travel Tips (*continued*)

The Siena Palio is a horseback race around the Campo that occurs twice every summer. Its beginnings date to the 13th century. Seventeen neighborhoods, called *contrade*, draw lots to determine which wards will compete each year. Each *contrada* has its own church, community center, museum, and flag with an animal symbol, such as an eagle, a snail, a dragon, or a unicorn. Banners with these animal emblems are commonly displayed on buildings throughout the neighborhood. The museums of the *contrade* explain the activities and victories of the local groups.

Climb to the top of the Torre Grosso, completed in 1311 and, at 177 feet, the tallest tower in San Gimignano. The spectacular views of the Valdelsa valley of the river Elsa and the distant Apennine mountains make climbing the steps of the interior metal staircase well worth the effort.

Suggested Reading

Adams, *Umbria*.

Barzini, *The Italians*.

Bentley and Ramsay, *The Most Beautiful Country Towns of Tuscany*.

Boardman, *Umbria: A Cultural History*.

Civai and Toti, *Siena*.

Mayes, *In Tuscany*.

Origo, *War in the Val D'Orcia*.

Powers, ed., *Tuscany in Mind*.

Richards, *The New Italians*.

Severgnini, *La Bella Figura*.

Strachan and Keeling, *Frommer's Florence, Tuscany and Umbria*.

Questions to Consider

1. Why would such small towns as Orvieto and San Gimignano have such large and important concentrations of art?
2. Siena's history and artistic development almost stopped in the 1550s with its conquest by Florence. Can you explain why this might have happened?

Florence: Politics in Art and Architecture

Lecture 16

After the vast and complex city of Rome, Florence seems much more compact and manageable. In fact, almost all of the important sites here are within a comfortable walk from the historic center of the city. Florence has often been called the cradle of the Italian Renaissance—and with good reason. But it's also a medieval city and one with important Baroque additions. What this means is that we cannot appreciate the wonderful efflorescence of art and culture in Florence during the Renaissance without understanding the full history of the city and the context that created that art. We'll learn about this history as we explore the Piazza della Signoria, the Uffizi, and the Palazzo Vecchio.

History of the Piazza della Signoria

- Florence was not an important city in ancient times, but by the 12th century, it produced the highest quality woolen cloth in Europe. The temperate climate and rich, flat fields of the Arno Valley were ideal for raising sheep, and the Florentines proved brilliant at preparing and coloring the finished fabric.
- The networks of merchants established to sell this cloth set the conditions for the second great industry of Florence: banking. The Florentine merchants required a secure place to invest their huge profits. In addition, the building of dynastic monarchies and the incessant wars of the late 12th and 13th centuries required vast sums of money.
- But the government in Florence was outside the control of the merchants, still under the influence of the feudal—and often feuding—noble families. Add to this the division between the Guelfs, supporters of the pope, and the Ghibellines, supporters of the emperor, and the stability of Florence was tenuous. Moreover, the magnates saw the newly rich merchants as their social inferiors, often treating them with contempt.

- All this changed in 1293 with a bourgeois coup d'état. The mercantile, professional middle class triumphed and passed the Ordinances of Justice to create a guild republic. The 21 merchant guilds of the city became the entrée into political life, now open to all adult male citizens with property. The nobles were humbled, the towers on their urban fortresses were lopped off, and they were denied political office.
- The Piazza della Signoria was once the site of the towers and fortresses of one of the most violent Ghibelline clans, the Uberti. Once defeated, their fortresses were pulled down, and the area was turned into public space. All adult male householders gathered in this large square in representation of the collective sovereignty of the state. The Parlamento, as it was called, was summoned by ringing the great bell in the tower of the palace.
- The new collective executive had to have a place to live together because their election required them to leave their families and businesses and concentrate only on public affairs. The various committees and councils of the republic also needed space to meet. As a result, the newly formed republic asked the great architect and sculptor Arnolfo di Cambio to construct a town hall. It was completed just after the turn of the 14th century.
 - The tower of the town hall was a deliberate advertisement of the collective power of the community. It symbolized public power in public hands, rather than the multiple towers of the nobility, which had represented public power in private hands.
 - The palazzo was fortified because politics were often tense and the city could be unstable. Note, for example, the *ringhiera*, the slightly raised area around the base of the palazzo where it meets the piazza. The *ringhiera* was actually part of the interior: a place where priors and other officials could perform public ceremonies in full view of the citizens in the piazza. The base used to be much higher and functioned as a speakers' rostrum, as well. This explains why the statues there are symbolic of republican ideals.

- Of course, the statue that everyone instantly recognizes is Michelangelo's *David*. For a century, this biblical character was a deliberate symbol of the republic. It was adopted after Florence stood alone against the powerful duke of Milan—a city that represented the degenerate tyrant Goliath in contrast



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The earliest of the symbolic statues in the *ringhiera* in Florence was a stone lion, or *Marzocco*, representing the defense of the Florentine Republic.

to Florence's virtuous David. Only the duke's death in 1402 saved the republic.

- Also in the Piazza della Signoria is the elegantly proportioned Loggia della Signoria, or Loggia dei Lanzi. It was originally constructed between 1376 and 1382 as outdoor ceremonial space for the communal government. It was here that priors were sworn to do their duty in the presence of the population, foreign delegations were occasionally received, and other public ceremonies were enacted.
 - Today, the loggia is an outdoor sculpture museum. Perhaps the most notable statue is the spectacular bronze of *Perseus with the Head of Medusa* by Benvenuto Cellini (1554).
 - The other great piece is the *Rape of the Sabine Women* by Giambologna, completed in 1583. It was carved from a single marble block, said to be the largest ever used in Florence.

The Uffizi

- Originally, the Uffizi was an ancient church, San Pier Scheraggio, which stood to the south of the Palazzo Vecchio. But the end of the republic in 1530 resulted in an ascendant Medici monarchy, and Grand Duke Cosimo I, who took power in 1537, wanted to centralize all the administrative functions of the territories and city of Florence in one place. He ordered his court architect, Giorgio Vasari, to pull down the buildings between the Palazzo Vecchio and the Arno and construct blocks of offices, or *uffizi* in 16th-century Italian.
- Today, Cosimo's offices are the major art museum of Florence and truly one of the greatest repositories of art in the world. The gallery function of the Uffizi began with Cosimo's eldest son, Francesco I of Tuscany. He moved many Medici masterpieces and classical statues into the building.
- Highlights of the galleries include a room devoted to works by Botticelli, where you'll find *Primavera*, *The Birth of Venus*, and *Pallas and the Centaur*; Leonardo da Vinci's *Adoration of the Magi*

and *Annunciation*; and *The Holy Family*, a round picture (*tondo*) by Michelangelo.

- The octagonal room called the Tribuna was commissioned by Francesco I, the second grand duke of Tuscany and a very strange man, given to alchemy and occult interests. He wanted this room to display the greatest treasures of his family, including the ancient Venus de' Medici. But because he was passionate about alchemy, he also wanted the room to symbolize the four elements of the universe. Thus, the floor is tile made from earth; the walls are red for fire; the domed ceiling is mother of pearl, representing water; and the roof lantern at the top lets in air.

The Palazzo Vecchio

- On entering the Palazzo Vecchio, we immediately come upon a courtyard with a fountain at the center topped by a Verrocchio putto and dolphin. The stucco decorations on the columns and the grotesques on the ceiling are fascinating, but what might seem odd are the views of the cities of the Habsburg Empire painted on the surrounding walls.
 - Almost all of what we will see in this palace dates from the period of the Medici monarchy after the 1530s. To symbolize the end of the Florentine Republic and the new authority of the monarchy, Cosimo left his private family palace to establish his court here.
 - With some exceptions, the republican rooms were destroyed, and grand palatial rooms were put in their place by Cosimo's architect, Vasari. And because Cosimo initially owed his security to the emperor Charles V, Vasari acknowledged Cosimo's allegiance to the Habsburg Empire in these paintings.
- Upstairs, the Sala dei Cinquecento ("Room of the Five Hundred") is a direct result of Girolamo Savonarola's constitution for Florence. During his short period in power in the city, the apocalyptic preacher recommended a constitution modeled on the republic of Venice, which had a Great Council of all adult patrician

males. Florence limited its council to 500 citizens, but there was no room in the city at the time large enough to host an assembly of that many men. Thus, Savonarola suggested that this one be built, with Cronaca as the architect.

- The fall of Savonarola in 1498 and his execution did not end the republic, nor did it end the work on this room, which wasn't finished until 1502. At the time, it contained frescoes by the two greatest Florentine painters, Michelangelo and Leonardo. However, when the Medici recaptured the city in 1530, Vasari redecorated the room as a celebration of Cosimo I and the Medici monarchy.
- Medici heraldic symbols are everywhere in the room, as are portraits or statues of the important members of the family, including Lorenzo the Magnificent's second son, Giovanni di Lorenzo de' Medici, Pope Leo X. The Medici glorification culminates in the ceiling, where Cosimo I enjoys his apotheosis in the central roundel.
- A passageway from the Sala dei Cinquecento leads to Francesco I's famous *studiolo*, a small, windowless laboratory large enough only for the duke. Here, he practiced his mixture of alchemy and the occult. The paintings around the walls are by a great many artists of the mid-16th century, and all have symbolic meaning. The lower sections of the walls open to reveal shelved cabinets where Francesco kept his collections of wonders: jewels, oddities, small ancient objects, and according to some, his poisons.
- What we've seen so far in this palazzo dates entirely from the Medici monarchy, but some notable spaces from the republican era also survive. These include the 15th-century Audience Hall, with a ceiling and carving by Benedetto da Maiano, and the Room of the Lilies, the flowers being another symbol of Florence. In the small room on the left side of the Room of the Lilies was the office of Niccolò Machiavelli when he was second chancellor of the republic until 1512.

Orsanmichele

- Orsanmichele was originally built on the monastery garden of St. Michael's church. The building began life as a market and granary, where the state stored grain in case of siege or famine. The ground floor was an open loggia for merchants to sell their wares.
- On one of the loggia's pillars was a late-13th-century image of the Virgin that was said to work miracles. In 1355, Andrea di Cione, or Orcagna, as he was known, was commissioned to make a shrine

Smithsonian Journeys Travel Tips

Visit the interior of Orsanmichele to see the structural evidence of the building's function as a granary and commercial center. Notice the columns where grain chutes are still visible and look above you to see the iron rings in the ceiling for hoisting heavy merchandise.

Visit the Mercato Nuovo, also known as the Mercato del Porcellino. A market was located here, close to the Arno, as early as the 11th century. In the past, vendors famously sold silk articles and straw hats; today, among the souvenirs, scarves and caps are still peddled. Be sure to rub the nose of the bronze boar, *Il Porcellino*, for good luck. The original bronze, sculpted and cast by Pietro Tacca in the 17th century, was based on an ancient Roman marble original owned by the Medici. The present-day market bronze is a copy that replaced Tacca's work in 2008.

If you happen to be in the area of the Mercato Nuovo when the stalls have been shut down, check out the *pietra dello scandalo*, the colored stone marker at the center of the market loggia. This marker, resembling a wheel, marked the location of the Florentine Carroccio ("war cart"), which was used as the focus of religious and political ceremonies prior to battle. Likely because of the growing commercial role of the location, the marker eventually came to designate the spot where disreputable businessmen and bankrupt debtors were publicly humiliated.

for the image. He created a remarkable tabernacle using marble, mosaic, gold, and lapis lazuli.

- The loggia was enclosed in 1380 to become the official chapel for the guilds of Florence, and each of the guilds paid for a great sculptor to install an image of its patron saint in the resulting niches. There are images here by Lorenzo Ghiberti, Donatello, and Verrocchio.

Suggested Reading

Barzini, *The Italians*.

Boorsook, *The Companion Guide to Florence*.

Brucker, *Renaissance Florence*.

Hibbert, *Florence: Biography of a City*.

Levey, *Florence: A Portrait*.

McCarthy, *The Stones of Florence*.

Origo, *The Merchant of Prato*.

Parks, *Medici Money*.

Richards, *The New Italians*.

Severgnini, *La Bella Figura*.

Strachan and Keeling, *Frommer's Florence, Tuscany and Umbria*.

Questions to Consider

1. Florence appears so different from Rome. Can you suggest why the Piazza della Signoria looks so different from the Campidoglio or St. Peter's Square?
2. Florence and San Gimignano, like all medieval Italian cities, had a great many towers. What role do towers play in modern architecture?

From the Piazza del Duomo to San Marco

Lecture 17

The Piazza del Duomo is a magical place, covering all of Florence's history from the period of its foundation to the present day. The cathedral of the city has stood here from earliest times, with the original dedicated to Santa Reparata. Like so many cathedrals in Italian cities, it is known as the Duomo, a word that's actually an Italian corruption of the Latin *Domus Dei*, or "God's House." We will explore the cathedral and the baptistery in detail in this lecture, and we'll tour the Palazzo Medici, designed for Cosimo de' Medici, the founder of the political dynasty that controlled Florence after 1434.

The Duomo of Florence

- As Florence grew in wealth and population during the Middle Ages, its original duomo seemed to become inadequate. Thus, the architect Arnolfo di Cambio was engaged to construct a vast new cathedral. Work began in 1296, but the job would take more than 140 years to complete. The Duomo wasn't consecrated until 1436, when it was dedicated to the Virgin as Santa Maria del Fiore (St. Mary of the Flower).
 - Although the church itself was finished structurally when it was consecrated, its façade was not. Only part of what Arnolfo had planned was ever built, and it was later dismantled because it was considered unfashionable. Over the centuries, there were many commissions for a new façade, but somehow, the plans were never realized.
 - Finally, when Florence was identified as the temporary capital of a united Italy in 1864, a competition was held to construct a new façade; it was won by the architect Emilio de Fabris. Clearly, Fabris tried to blend the heavily decorated façade into the elegance of Arnolfo's building, but he really didn't succeed. The Romantic neo-Gothic of his plan and the massing of sculptures and decorations make the façade less than pleasing.

- The freestanding bell tower, or *campanile*, to the right of the façade is the work of yet another hand, Giotto, who was appointed chief architect of the cathedral some years after Arnolfo's death.
- Inside, the vast size of the church is striking. Its soaring vaulted nave carries the eye upward to an undecorated ceiling, but the quality and vitality of the stained-glass windows more than make up for the plainness of the ceiling. There are 44 windows altogether, designed by some of the greatest artists of the Renaissance, including Ghiberti, Donatello, and Uccello.
- Also worth noting is a fresco by Uccello, painted in 1436, portraying a famous Englishman, Sir John Hawkwood, who was a ruthless mercenary captain. Further along the left wall, toward the altar, is the famous fresco of Dante painted in 1465 by Domenico di Michelino.
- The great dome of Brunelleschi is one of the wonders of Florence and, indeed, of the entire Renaissance. There had always been an intention to cover the crossing of the nave and transept with a dome, but how? In Italy, no one had constructed such a huge dome since the Pantheon.
 - After much study and debate, the project was sent to a competition in 1418. Brunelleschi who was given the commission in 1420, even though there were doubts about his plans. He did not include any buttresses or exterior supports, and he suggested that he could build the dome with only minimal scaffolding. Brunelleschi invented much of the equipment needed to bring the heavy stone and bricks to the top of the cathedral.
 - In the end, the dome took only 14 years to build. In that relatively short time, Brunelleschi created one of Europe's most astounding engineering and architectural structures: A diameter of 140 feet had been enclosed by the largest dome on the continent since the Pantheon. The lantern on top was completed by Michelozzo in 1461, and the gilded cross and orb

were finished by Verrocchio eight years later. Altogether, the total height of the dome is 375 feet.

- Brunelleschi's original plan was that the interior of the dome should be gilded. But the cost was so prohibitive that the plan was dropped after his death and the ceiling was painted plain white. The fresco depicting the Last Judgment that we see today was installed at the behest of Grand Duke Cosimo I in the 16th century. Vasari and Federico Zuccari were commissioned for this enormous undertaking.
- In the sacristy is the *Pietà* of Michelangelo, one of his last works. The sculpture is unfinished and has been broken and repaired. But more poignant is the fact that it was initially intended for Michelangelo's own tomb. The face of Nicodemus is a self-portrait of the artist.

The Pazzi Conspiracy

- A dramatic and tragic moment in history occurred before the altar of the Duomo on April 26, 1478. The ancient and rich Pazzi family of Florence were rivals of the Medici. Out of sheer jealousy, they made an arrangement to murder Lorenzo de' Medici and his brother Giuliano. But the only way they could imagine getting the two brothers together, unarmed and off their guard, was during mass at Easter. Thus, the plan was to kill them in front of the altar.
- The signal for the assassins was to be the ringing of the bell that indicated the elevation of the Host. At the appointed time, the Pazzi struck, killing Giuliano, but Lorenzo was only wounded. Friends threw his heavy cloak around him and carried him into the sacristy, bolting the doors behind them.
- Meanwhile the Pazzi tried to overthrow the Signoria and the priors while Pazzi confederates rode through the streets shouting, "Liberty!" But theirs was a futile cause. The population and the priors remained loyal to the Medici, and the conspirators were either killed or fled the city. Lorenzo remained in political control of Florence for the next 14 years.

The Baptistery

- The baptistery was first constructed in the 6th century and completely rebuilt as a Romanesque octagonal structure beginning in 1059. It, too, is decorated in the popular Tuscan style, with alternating white and deeply colored marble cladding. The style had its roots in Syria, brought to Italy by the Pisans during the First Crusade.
- Inside are wonderful Romanesque mosaics of Christ and the saved and of hell, occupied by demons and the damned. Begun in 1225, these are so splendidly executed that they might well have been the work of Venetian mosaic artists. The marble decoration in the apse dates from the same period, and the original floor, from about 1209.
- The exquisite tomb here is for Baldassare Cossa, who later became the antipope John XXIII. He was one of the last popes of the Great Schism, when there were no less than three men claiming the title. Interestingly, Cossa began his career as a brigand and pirate employed by the Medici to help secure their banking interests with the papacy. After he was deposed, he fled to Florence and died there in 1419.
- The baptistery doors are the great treasures of this building. Such doors were central elements to Florentine civic and religious functions. A child born into the city was merely an accident of geography and a soul doomed to limbo. He or she only became a citizen of the city and a Christian after being carried through the doors and to the font for baptism.
 - The first set of doors was commissioned in 1330. Designed by Andrea Pisano, they were decorated with quatrefoil lozenges containing rather static biblical scenes. The second doors were the result of a competition held in 1401, but competitors were required to mirror Andrea Pisano's format, with the biblical scenes in similar quatrefoil lozenges. Lorenzo Ghiberti won the contest and spent 21 years crafting the panels, finally installing them in 1424.
 - Ghiberti's work was so successful that he was asked to fashion the third set of doors. And this time, he was allowed full freedom



Ghiberti worked for 27 years on the doors for the Baptistery—the Gates of Paradise—and when they were finished, they were recognized as among Florence's greatest treasures.

to abandon the medieval quatrefoil frames. He devised 10 high-relief panels, almost pictorial in their narrative quality and marvelous in their technical skill and execution. When the doors were finished, Michelangelo declared that they were worthy to be the Gates of Paradise—and so they have been called ever since.

The Palazzo Medici

- The Palazzo Medici (now called the Palazzo Medici-Riccardi) was designed by Michelozzo for Cosimo de' Medici, the founder of the political dynasty that controlled Florence after 1434. Cosimo was a committed republican, holding office only when elected. But his faction controlled the city because he controlled the committee that determined who was eligible for election. Although he stage-managed the republic from behind the scenes, he was greatly admired. When he died in 1464, he was declared *Pater Patriae* ("Father of His Nation").
- We enter the palace through a beautifully proportioned courtyard, with an arcade running around the entire open court. In the spandrels of the colonnade are Medici symbols; these are the balls (*palle*) that decorate shields on buildings throughout the city. From the courtyard, we can look straight through to the garden that once held the Medici's collection of ancient statues.
- One of Florence's most celebrated rooms is the Medici Chapel, frescoed by Benozzo Gozzoli in 1459–1460. It represents the journey of the Magi, an appropriate theme because the Medici were supporters of the Confraternity of the Magi. But the painting also depicts a significant event in contemporary politics: the Council of Florence, called in 1439 to heal the schism between the Latin and Orthodox churches.

Sites nearby the Palace

- Along the Via de' Ginori, we find the Riccardi Library (Bibliotheca Riccardiana). This building housed one of the great private collections in Florence; today, its holdings include a 1481 copy of Dante's *Commedia* annotated by Lorenzo de' Medici.

- At the corner of Via XXVII Aprile is the former convent of St. Apollonia. Today, it is a small museum devoted to the works of Andrea del Castagno, located in what was the nun’s refectory. His *Last Supper* is splendid, as are his *Crucifixion* and *Resurrection*.
- The nearby site of the Piazza San Marco has been a religious center from the 13th century. In 1437, it was given to the Dominican Order, whose members appealed to Cosimo de’ Medici to assume the cost of renovating the space. The façade seen today is from the 18th century, but the church and monastery behind it are from the 15th, largely the work of Michelozzo.
 - Savonarola was the prior of San Marco, which served as his headquarters. In his cell, visitors can see his hair shirt, crucifix, and books.
 - The entire monastery is decorated with frescoes by Fra Angelico, who was a monk here. Visitors can also see an exquisitely frescoed double cell prepared for Cosimo de’ Medici, who took respite here in an attempt to find spiritual peace and quiet.

Smithsonian Journeys Travel Tips

Climb the 463 steps to the dome of the Florence Duomo. At the first stage of the ascent, walk the narrow balcony—called “a cricket cage” by Michelangelo—to view up close the Last Judgment frescoes of the dome interior. Continue climbing up between the two shells of Brunelleschi’s dome while noting the herringbone brick pattern, the ribs, the arches, and the wood and chain structural links. Arrive at the top of the dome to admire the lantern completed by Michelozzo in 1461 and appreciate the spectacular views of the city and countryside.

Or climb the 414 steps of the campanile of the Duomo, which includes several landings along the way and culminates at a graceful covered walkway at the top. Here, you’ll get a great bird’s-eye view of Florence and the Duomo next door.

Suggested Reading

Barzini, *The Italians*.

Boorsook, *The Companion Guide to Florence*.

Brucker, *Renaissance Florence*.

Hibbert, *Florence: Biography of a City*.

Levey, *Florence: A Portrait*.

Martines, *April Blood*.

McCarthy, *The Stones of Florence*.

Origo, *The Merchant of Prato*.

Parks, *Medici Money*.

Richards, *The New Italians*.

Severgnini, *La Bella Figura*.

Strachan and Keeling, *Frommer's Florence, Tuscany and Umbria*.

Walker, *The Feud That Sparked the Renaissance*.

Questions to Consider

1. Why is the dome of Brunelleschi such a point of pride for modern Florentines?
2. Why did Cosimo de' Medici pay for the rebuilding and decoration of the monastery of San Marco? Why do you think he kept a cell there for himself?

Santa Croce and the Pazzi Chapel

Lecture 18

In this lecture, we will visit Santa Croce, a magnificent preaching church where many famous Florentines and Italians are honored. From the moment we enter this church, we realize that it is not only a sacred place of the Roman confession but a monument to Florence and the collective pride of its citizens. It contains extremely important objects from the golden years of the Florentine Republic and tomb monuments to great Florentines throughout history. Before we make our way to Santa Croce, however, we will also visit the Accademia delle Belle Arti to see Michelangelo's *David*, and we'll pass by a couple of museums and theaters worth visiting in Florence.

The Accademia delle Belle Arti

- The Accademia delle Belle Arti is the art school and museum that holds the original of Michelangelo's *David*. From the 18th century on, this is where Florentine artists were trained. The museum also became an important repository of paintings and sculpture after the suppression of the monasteries and convents by Napoleon.
- In addition to *David*, the Accademia also houses Michelangelo's *Prisoners* or *Slaves*. These sculptures were intended for the tomb of Pope Julius II but were never completed. They were begun probably about 1506, and Michelangelo worked intermittently on them until perhaps as late as 1530. Of the six he started, two are in the Louvre, and the other four are here. Also here is a figure of St. Matthew by Michelangelo that was originally installed in the Duomo.

The Piazza della Santissima Annunziata

- The Piazza della Santissima Annunziata is one of Florence's most majestic squares. It features parallel loggias and a wonderful church at the far end. In the center is a life-size equestrian monument to the third grand duke, Ferdinando I, by Giambologna. Not only is it a wonderful piece of bronze casting, but it is also highly symbolic.

The bronze for the sculpture was from Turkish cannons captured at the Battle of Lepanto in 1571.

- Also in the square is one of the loveliest buildings in Florence: the Ospedale degli Innocenti (Foundling Hospital) by Filippo Brunelleschi, built from 1419 to 1426. The Luca della Robbia roundels of swaddled babies in the arches advertise the building's first purpose. In the loggia at the end nearest the church is a lazy-Susan opening, a device that allowed mothers to leave their babies at the orphanage anonymously and without fear of reprisal.
- The piazza is named for the church of the SS. Annunziata. This is an ancient foundation, begun in 1234 by pious Florentines. It is now the mother church of the Servite Order. The current church was constructed between 1444 and 1455 under Michelozzo's direction.
 - The name of the church comes from a miracle-working image of the Annunciation. The legend is that a 13th-century monk began painting the image but left it unfinished, and an angel descended to complete it for him.
 - The Little Cloister of the Votives features frescoes dedicated to the life of the Virgin Mary and to a founder of the Servites. These were painted by Andrea del Sarto, Pontormo, and Rosso Fiorentino between 1511 and 1517. The oldest is the *Annunciation* (1462) by Baldovinetti.
 - The church also has a number of other treasures, such as the *Trinity* by Andrea del Castagno over the altar in the Feroni Chapel; the Bronzino *Resurrection* near the choir; and in a niche, a 16th-century wooden figure of St. Roch, likely from Nuremberg, Germany.
- Back in the piazza, the loggia directly opposite the Innocenti is the Confraternity of the Servants of Mary. It was designed by Antonio da Sangallo in 1516 to complement Brunelleschi's loggia. The piazza itself was opened in 1519, and the structure was complete by

1525. The two fountains are by Pietro Tacca, Giambologna's pupil, and date from 1629.

Museums and Theaters in Florence

- The National Archaeological Museum of Florence has the most important collection of ancient sculptures north of Rome. One of its treasures is the Arringatore (“The Orator”), a 1st-century-B.C.E. bronze.
- Another of Florence's most interesting museums is the Opificio della Pietra Dura. It was founded in 1588 by Grand Duke Ferdinando to train craftsmen for the construction of the sumptuous Cappella dei Principi (“Chapel of the Princes”) at San Lorenzo.
 - These craftsmen studied the Florentine art of *pietra dura*—the practice of cutting, setting, and polishing semiprecious hard stone into decorative compositions. The museum has some wonderful examples of tabletops, boxes and reliquaries, wall panels, and other *objets de vertu* made in the traditional manner.
 - Attached to the museum are the restoration laboratories for repairing and conserving the masterpieces of Florentine stone and metal. It was here, for example, that Ghiberti's bronze doors were restored.
- The Teatro della Pergola is the oldest continuously operating theater in Italy, having offered performances for more than 350 years. The original structure was commissioned in 1656 and finished in 1661 by Cardinal Giancarlo de' Medici. Originally, it was the Medici court theater, but it became a public opera house in 1718.
- Another theater nearby is the Teatro Verdi, dating from 1854. This theater was built on the site of the medieval prison of Florence, known as the Stinche. It functioned for more than half a millennium, from 1304 until 1833, and was a terrifying place. At times, it housed such luminaries as Machiavelli and Cellini.

Santa Croce

- The Piazza Santa Croce is the largest piazza in Florence, designed to accommodate the large numbers of citizens who came to hear the popular preachers of Santa Croce. The piazza is also the site of the annual *calcio storico*, a violent game—part soccer and part rugby football—with late-medieval origins.
 - The four quarters of the city mount teams, and the winning two play in a match held on June 24, the day of the patron saint of Florence, John the Baptist.



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Santa Croce contains monuments to a number of great Florentines, as well as figures from elsewhere in Italy, including Leonardo da Vinci and Enrico Fermi.

- Before the game, the teams and other representatives parade in costume through the city. This is the annual *corteo storico* (“historic procession”). The weapons the marchers carry remind us that these quarters of the city were armed and trained by the guilds beginning in the 1280s as preparation for the 1293 coup that led to the Ordinances of Justice.
- The current structure of Santa Croce was begun in 1294; it replaced an older building of the 1220s. The large church took almost a century to complete, and it, like the Duomo, lacked a façade. It was not until 1863 that the façade was installed, very much in the same vein as the Duomo, with polychromatic marble.
- Inside the church, notice the Madonna on the column in front of the monument to Michelangelo. This was made by Rossellino following the Pazzi Conspiracy in 1478. The Madonna and inscription honor Francesco Nori, who was killed in the cathedral during the attack on the Medici as he intervened to help save Lorenzo’s life.
- Of course, Michelangelo was one of Florence’s most illustrious sons. Because the artist died in Rome in 1564, the pope wanted him interred there. But after some diplomatic and clandestine maneuvering, Michelangelo’s nephew, Leonardo Buonarroti, in effect stole the corpse and smuggled it to Florence. Following a solemn procession through the streets of Florence, it was buried here in a tomb hastily designed by Vasari.
- Also here is the tomb of Niccolò Machiavelli. It was the center of a good deal of nationalist interest around the years of the Risorgimento, the Italian unification movement in the mid-19th century. Because Machiavelli talked of Italy and ended *The Prince* with the “*Italia mia*” of Petrarch, he was seen as a harbinger of Italian unity. These traditions fell out of favor after World War II, however, given that Mussolini had claimed Machiavelli—absurdly—for the fascists.

- The handsome pulpit is from 1465 and is by Benedetto da Maiano. It stands next to one of the great treasures of the church: the *Annunciation* of Donatello. This exquisite relief sculpture was carved from grey Tuscan limestone called *pietra serena*.
- Past the entrance to the cloisters is Rossellino's funerary monument to the humanist chancellor Leonardo Bruni. He was chancellor of Florence from 1427 until his death in 1444. He is shown resting on his bier, as if asleep, holding his *History of Florence*. His epitaph is one of the most moving ever recorded: "*Historia luget, eloquentia muta est,*" "History herself is in mourning, and eloquence has been silenced."
- Several chapels in the church, including the Baroncelli Chapel and the Chapel of the Novitiate, hold great masterpieces. Of special note are two chapels to the right of the chancel, the Peruzzi and Bardi chapels, belonging to two of the great Florentine banking families of the 13th and 14th centuries.
 - The Peruzzi Chapel was commissioned when the family was at the height of its wealth and influence. Created by Giotto and his workshop from 1317 to 1320, the narrative tells the stories of St. John the Baptist and St. John the Evangelist. In the 18th century, these images were considered so unfashionable that Peruzzi descendants covered them with whitewash. They were only rediscovered and restored in 1841.
 - The Bardi Chapel was painted by Giotto around 1325. It focuses on six episodes in the life of St. Francis, the founder of the order responsible for Santa Croce. As with the Peruzzi Chapel, these wonderful images were whitewashed in the 18th century, and wall monuments and tombs were installed on the walls, with no knowledge of what lay beneath. When the whitewash was removed in the mid-19th century, the frescoes came alive again.
- The tomb of Galileo Galilei is also here in Santa Croce. Galileo died in Florence in 1642, still under house arrest after his encounter

with the Inquisition. Despite his difficulties with the established church, he was recognized as a genius, a Florentine patrician, and a loyal servant of the Medici grand duchy.

- The Pazzi Chapel was designed by Brunelleschi in 1429 as the chapter house for the monks and the burial place for the Pazzi family. Its proportions are perfect. The circular dome is raised on a square base, supported by curved triangular segments called *pendentives*. The terracotta representations of the four evangelists and the roundels of the apostles, together with the astrological symbols in the dome, are part of Brunelleschi's intricate program to link all knowledge: divine, human, and mystical.
- What was once the monk's refectory is now Santa Croce's museum. These rooms contain fragments taken from the church or recovered from earlier interventions. Also here is what remains of Cimabue's

Smithsonian Journeys Travel Tips

In the area of Sant'Ambrogio, north of the Piazza dei Ciompi, visit the Mercato delle Pulci, the Florence flea market. After looking around and/or buying some tchotchkes, admire Vasari's Loggia del Pesce, the fish market porch originally situated by the Ponte Vecchio and relocated here in the 1950s.

In Piazza Ghiberti and Piazza Sant'Ambrogio, visit the Mercato di Sant'Ambrogio to buy snacks and lunchtime treats, vegetables and fruits, and household items and clothing. Many Florentines shop here, and it's a super spot for people watching.

In the area of San Lorenzo, visit both the outdoor and indoor markets. Built of stone, iron, and glass by Giuseppe Monegoni and opened in 1874, the Mercato Centrale is the largest covered food hall in Europe and an excellent place to buy local food for carryout. The extensive outdoor market features stalls selling leather goods, clothing, scarves, and souvenirs.

magnificent crucifix, which once hung in the chancel and was almost completely destroyed by a flood in 1966.

Suggested Reading

Barzini, *The Italians*.

Boorsook, *The Companion Guide to Florence*.

Brucker, *Renaissance Florence*.

Hibbert, *Florence: Biography of a City*.

Levey, *Florence: A Portrait*.

Martines, *April Blood*.

McCarthy, *The Stones of Florence*.

Origo, *The Merchant of Prato*.

Parks, *Medici Money*.

Richards, *The New Italians*.

Severgnini, *La Bella Figura*.

Strachan and Keeling, *Frommer's Florence, Tuscany and Umbria*.

Questions to Consider

1. The church of Santa Croce has been called the Pantheon of Florence. In view of the Pantheon in Rome, what do you think this means and why was this name adopted?
2. The façade and bell tower of Santa Croce date only from the 19th century. Why was it important for Italians to finish this church centuries after it was built?

En Route to the Ponte Vecchio

Lecture 19

In this lecture, we'll take a street tour of Florence. Among our first stops is the Bargello, which was once a prison and place of execution; today, it is a sculpture museum and remains the oldest still-functioning public building in Florence. We'll also explore a number of residences on our route, including the Palazzo Nonfinito ("Unfinished Palace"), Casa di Dante, and the Palazzo Davanzati, which houses the fascinating Museum of the Old Florentine House. We'll then visit the Piazza Santa Trinità and the Piazza del Limbo, before ending our tour at the romantic Ponte Vecchio.

Onward from the Piazza Santa Croce

- We closed our last lecture at the Piazza Santa Croce, which we now exit by the southwest street, Borgo de' Greci. In Italian, *borgo* means "fortified village." In medieval Florence, a *borgo* was often a neighborhood that developed outside the walls. This *borgo*, for example, was outside the old Roman walls of the city. The street once ran to the site of the ancient Roman amphitheater, whose original shape is clearly visible in the Piazza Peruzzi.
- Rather than heading directly to the Palazzo Vecchio, we'll first turn into the Piazza San Firenze. The elegant Renaissance palace here is the Palazzo Gondi, designed by Giuliano da Sangallo in 1490 and still occupied by the Gondi family. It is a monumental statement of patrician power, comparable to the Medici or Strozzi palaces.
- At the far end of the piazza is the Via del Proconsolo, one of the most historic streets in the city. It more or less follows the path of the ancient Roman walls. Its name comes from one of the most powerful figures in the Florentine Republic, the proconsul of the Guild of Judges and Notaries. He was associated with the street because the guild palace is nearby, as we'll see.

- The Bargello is the oldest still-functioning public building in Florence. Constructed in 1255, it was the seat of the *podestà* or *capitano del popolo* (“captain of the people”). The *podestà* was always a foreigner who was hired for one year to be in charge of running military operations and keeping the peace. Because the Florentines didn’t trust one another enough to allow such a position to fall to a citizen, they employed a professional from outside.
 - The Bargello was kept as a prison and place of execution until capital punishment was abolished in 1786. Almost a century later, in 1865, it was repurposed as a public museum; today, it is the national museum of sculpture.
 - An early sculpture of Bacchus by Michelangelo is here, carved in 1497, along with one of Brutus, carved more than 40 years later. Donatello’s bronze *David* is on display, as is Verrocchio’s bronze of the same subject. Also notable is Benedetto da Maiano’s marble portrait bust of the Florentine apothecary Pietro Mellini. This piece resurrected the portrait bust, a genre that had been out of fashion for 1,000 years.
- Directly across the street from the Bargello is a large ecclesiastical structure, the Badia Fiorentina (“Abbey of Florence”). It is an ancient foundation, first endowed in 985 and rebuilt in 1285, with its elegant bell tower completed in 1330. The church interior was reconstructed in the 1620s, but a great many Renaissance objects remain in place, particularly the altarpiece by Filippino Lippi, the *Apparition of the Virgin to St. Bernard*.
- The Palace of the Guild of Judges and Notaries dates from the first decades of the 14th century but incorporated a tower house of the 11th century. In modern times, when the space was being renovated to become a restaurant, 14th-century frescoes were discovered, including one that shows what some scholars believe to be one of the earliest images of Dante.

Residences on Our Route

- The Palazzo Pazzi, designed by Giuliano da Sangallo, was the home of the family behind the Pazzi Conspiracy against the Medici. In fact, the palace was just completed in the year of the conspiracy, 1478. Today, the palace is called the Palazzo Pazzi-Quaratesi. It was confiscated after the failure of the conspiracy and later sold to the Quaratesi family.
- The Palazzo Nonfinito (“Unfinished Palace”) is the source of a great many legends. It was begun in 1593 by the rich nobleman Alessandro Strozzi, with Buontalenti as the architect. But a disagreement between Strozzi and Buontalenti resulted in a series of architects coming and going up until the 19th century. Today, the building is the Museum of Anthropology and Ethnography, with an important if eccentric collection of objects from other cultures.
- Although the Casa di Dante is a reconstruction, it is known that Dante lived in this area of Florence before his exile. This building houses a museum of Dante’s life, including images and documents that reflect the Florence of his time, as well as the story of his masterpiece, the *Divine Comedy*.
- The Palazzo Davanzati houses the Museo dell’Antica Casa Fiorentina (“Museum of the Old Florentine House”). This residence was built in the 14th century by the patrician Davizzi family but changed hands several times over the centuries; it was established as a state museum in 1956.
 - Notice that the façade of the home is right against the street. The reason for this is that property values in the city were always high, and space was severely limited by the circuit of the walls. Thus, building straight upward on the entire footprint of a site was the most economical solution.
 - The palace itself represents a transition between the closed, vertical structure of the medieval tower house and the more spacious Renaissance palazzo, arranged around a central courtyard. In this house, the courtyard had a well, which was

a sign of wealth and independence. The rooms on the ground floor would have been used for storage or leased to shops.

- Take note of the furnishings on the *piano nobile*. A few of the pieces are monumental, almost architectural, and in fact, they were never meant to be moved. The rest, such as folding chairs or benches, were built to be carried wherever they were needed, making the Renaissance home quite flexible. The wall decoration is fresco, essentially the equivalent of modern wallpaper.
- What amazes many modern visitors is the internal plumbing system. A small door in the wall of the *salone* reveals that the wall is hollow, with a bucket-and-pulley system to bring water to the four stories of the house.

The Piazza Santa Trinità

- The solid granite column in the center of the Piazza Santa Trinità is known as the Column of Justice. It came from the Baths of Caracalla in Rome, a gift from Pope Pius IV to Grand Duke Cosimo. The column was erected here in 1565 to mark the end of the Florentine Republic and the hegemony of the Medici. The figure of Justice at the top was deliberately placed with its back to the Palazzo Vecchio, the old republican seat of government. Instead, Justice gazes across the Arno to the Palazzo Pitti, occupied by the Medici.
- The gorgeous Renaissance palace in this square is the Palazzo Bartolini-Salimbeni. This was the first High Renaissance palace to be built in Florence, designed by the architect Baccio d’Agnolo in the Roman style.
- Here, too, is the lovely church of Santa Trinità (“Holy Trinity”). The façade is Renaissance, by Buontalenti, completed in 1594, but the church itself is medieval, dating from the early 13th to 15th centuries.
 - What draws most visitors here is the Sassetti Chapel, which features frescoes by Ghirlandaio from the 1480s. The narrative of the frescoes is ostensibly Pope Honorius granting the rule to St. Francis. But the scene has been moved to Florence, with the

Piazza della Signoria immediately identifiable, as well as the Loggia dei Lanzi. The upper register of the fresco shows what the Piazza Santa Trinità looked like in 1480.

- Francesco Sassetti was the chief manager of the Medici bank. Thus, his burial chapel is homage not only to his family and St. Francis but also to his boss, Lorenzo the Magnificent. There is a portrait from life of Sassetti and his son with Lorenzo.

The Piazza del Limbo

- The Piazza del Limbo takes its name from the cemetery that once was located here, a cemetery devoted to the burial of unbaptized infants. In Roman Catholic tradition, that meant their souls were destined for limbo.
- The church associated with the cemetery is the Santi Apostoli. The story behind the church is a wonderful legend that is sustained in one of Florence's most cherished annual rituals.
 - It was said that the bravest of the Florentine knights during the First Crusade was one Pazzino de' Pazzi. His family name, which means "crazy," apparently came about because of his insane heroics against the Muslims. He was reportedly the first over the walls of Jerusalem when the city was captured and, as a result, was given some shards from the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. When he returned home, he built Santi Apostoli to protect this precious relic.
 - In modern times, every Easter Sunday, a fire is struck using these shards from Jerusalem, and the flame is carried in procession from Santi Apostoli to the Duomo. There, the sacred flame is used to light a fuse on a mechanical dove that has been stuffed with gunpowder. The dove, in turn, sets off a fireworks display for Florentines to enjoy.

The Ponte Vecchio

- The Ponte Vecchio is the most famous bridge in Florence. It was called the "Old Bridge" to distinguish it from a newer one that was



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The Ponte Vecchio is the oldest crossing in Florence; there has been a bridge on this site since Roman times.

built across the Arno in 1220. The structure seen today, however, dates only from 1345, a replacement for the earlier one, which was destroyed by a flood.

- There have always been shops on the bridge. In 1564, Grand Duke Cosimo I had Vasari construct a private passage above them to link the government complex of the Uffizi with his residence in the Palazzo Pitti. Cosimo was still hated by many Florentines because of his destruction of the republic; thus, he didn't want to mingle with his subjects on the narrow streets.
- Given the easy access to water, the original businesses on the bridge were tanners and, later, butchers. However, Grand Duke Ferdinando didn't like the smell of these establishments and, in 1593, ordered them to vacate, replacing them with goldsmiths and jewelers.
- In the middle of the bridge is a 19th-century bronze bust of Benvenuto Cellini. It's the perfect place to honor this goldsmith, sculptor, autobiographer, scoundrel, and probably one of history's great liars. And it's also the perfect place to stop and admire the view down the Arno before we continue our journey to the other side.

Smithsonian Journeys Travel Tips

To the northwest of the basilica of Santa Croce, visit the Casa Buonarroti, the family home that Michelangelo purchased for the children of his favorite brother. Although he never lived there, Michelangelo's presence is clearly experienced during a tour of the location. Included in the collection are two early sculptural reliefs, *The Madonna of the Stairs* and the *Battle of the Centaurs*, completed by the sculptor when he was still a teenager. A model of the façade of San Lorenzo is also displayed. In addition, the museum often showcases drawings, letters, and other daily items associated with the High Renaissance sculptor. The history of the family, too, is clearly explained through room-by-room exhibitions and informative labels.

Suggested Reading

Barzini, *The Italians*.

Boorsook, *The Companion Guide to Florence*.

Brucker, *Renaissance Florence*.

Hibbert, *Florence: Biography of a City*.

Levey, *Florence: A Portrait*.

McCarthy, *The Stones of Florence*.

Origo, *The Merchant of Prato*.

Parks, *Medici Money*.

Richards, *The New Italians*.

Severgnini, *La Bella Figura*.

Strachan and Keeling, *Frommer's Florence, Tuscany and Umbria*.

Questions to Consider

1. The Bargello is the national museum of sculpture in Italy. Do you think it appropriate to separate out the various arts, that is, showing paintings in one museum and sculptures in another?
2. Could you imagine yourself moving into and living in the Palazzo Davanzati? If not, why not?

The Pitti Palace

Lecture 20

Crossing the Arno via the Ponte Vecchio, we find ourselves in the area of the city known as the Oltrarno, that is, “beyond the Arno.” We’ll first stop in at an ancient church here, Santa Felicità, before we move on to the Pitti Palace, home to the grand dukes of Tuscany and, later, the kings of Italy. At the time the palace was built, Florence was a republic, without a court or titles; thus, status had to be determined in other ways. Such palaces as the Pitti, the Medici, or Strozzi advertised the success of their owners. Today, the Pitti houses several museums, including one we’ll explore in-depth in this lecture, the Palatine Gallery.

Santa Felicità

- Santa Felicità is an ancient church, in fact, the second oldest in Florence. There was a permanent structure here from the 4th century, founded by Syrian merchants who helped bring Christianity to Tuscany.
- The church today is largely an 18th-century building, except for the Capponi Chapel, designed by Brunelleschi in the early 1420s. A century later, the Mannerist genius Pontormo finished his *Deposition* in fresco above the altar.
- The large opening in the loft was the Medici family box, connected directly to the Vasari corridor. Cosimo and his family could worship here without having to mingle with the congregation below; after mass, they could head swiftly home without interference.

History of the Pitti Palace

- Today, the Pitti Palace is vast and austere, but it didn’t always look like this. The plan for the palace was imagined about 1445 by the then immensely rich banker Luca Pitti. He engaged the most famous of the Florentine architects, Filippo Brunelleschi, to design a palace

that would celebrate his position in Florentine society. However, construction didn't begin until 1457, by which time, Brunelleschi was dead, and an unknown architect took over.

- The Pitti fortunes had also begun to decline dramatically. They were enemies of the Medici faction, and as the Medici gained influence, the Pitti found themselves excluded from the business of the state, ultimately to the point of bankruptcy. Then, in 1472, the project's prime mover, Luca Pitti, died. Work was halted and the palace sat semi-abandoned for the better part of a century.
- The project was revived in 1549 by Cosimo I, the first hereditary grand duke of Tuscany. He acquired the property using the dowry of his Spanish Neapolitan wife, Eleonora of Toledo. Large as it was, Cosimo wanted the palace even larger. He engaged Bartolomeo Ammannati to add the splendid courtyard, with its elegant grotto. The palace was expanded several times over the years, adding an enormous amount of interior space.
- After 1865, when Florence briefly became the capital of the kingdom of Italy, the Pitti served as the royal palace. King Victor Emmanuel III gave it back to the city of Florence in 1919 as a museum. Today, the Pitti houses several museums, and apart from the exquisite objects on display, the rooms themselves are a delight to visit.

The Palatine Gallery

- Of course, most visitors to the palace are interested in the collection known as the Palatine Gallery. The art displayed here is essentially the family collection of the Medici, started in the early 17th century by the grand dukes Cosimo II and Ferdinando II. The collection was enlarged by later rulers through purchase and inheritance, resulting in a treasury of Western culture.
- The Room of Venus takes its name from the large statue of a bashful Venus by the neoclassical sculptor Antonio Canova. This sculpture has an interesting history: Napoleon Bonaparte stole the

famous *Medici Venus* from the Tribuna in the Uffizi, taking it to Paris. But after the fall of Napoleon and the return of his looted art to Florence, the *Venus* was set up here, where it has been ever since.

- The Room of Apollo features decoration by Pietro da Cortona. The ceiling is a celebration of the Medici dynasty and its patronage, and around the walls are important Flemish paintings. Of the Italian paintings here, Titian's *Portrait of a Young Englishman* is an acute study in character, while Guido Reni's *Cleopatra* is a remarkable portrayal of sensuality.
- In the Room of Mars, Pietro da Cortona painted Victory crowned between Abundance and Peace. A rather startling picture here is Titian's portrait of Ippolito de' Medici in Hungarian dress. Also here is Murillo's *Virgin and Child*, painted in the 18th century.
- The vast and imposing Room of Jupiter once served as the audience chamber of the grand dukes of Tuscany. On the ceiling, Pietro da Cortona portrayed Cosimo I being crowned by Jupiter with Immortality. Also in this room, take note of Raphael's enigmatic *Veiled Lady (La Velata)* and an exquisite Madonna by Raphael's teacher, Perugino.
- We find the most Raphaels in the Room of Saturn, including a portrait of the artist's good friend Tommaso Inghirami. Also here is one of the West's most famous paintings: Raphael's *Madonna della Seggiola* ("*The Virgin of the Chair*"). Notice the tight, circular composition; the brilliant palette; and the expression of exquisite sweetness on the face of Mary.
- In the Room of the Iliad, the most remarkable painting is probably Artemisia Gentileschi's *Judith with the Head of Holofernes*. Artemisia was a contemporary of Caravaggio, and she returned to the narrative of Judith repeatedly, perhaps as a way of exorcizing personal demons—she had been raped by her father's apprentice when she was young. Like all of Artemisia's work, this image is darkly lit, dramatic, and powerful.

- The Room of Jupiter's Education is a treasury of pictures that you may have often seen in books. Here, you'll find Caravaggio's haunting painting of the *Sleeping Cupid*, as well as Bronzino's portraits of the children of Cosimo I and Eleonora of Toledo.
- Finally, the Room of Prometheus includes Botticelli's portrait of Simonetta Vespucci, the mistress of Giuliano de' Medici, who was the brother of Lorenzo the Magnificent. Also here are Botticelli's wonderful portrait of a youth and a splendid *tondo* by Filippo Lippi.

The Boboli Gardens

- The Boboli Gardens are among the most beautiful gardens in the world. Cosimo and Eleonora commissioned the landscape and garden genius Niccolò Tribolo to make the basic design, but he died just a year after he began his commission. The work was then entrusted to Ammannati and, increasingly, to Bernardo Buontalenti.
- A Renaissance garden served to control the forces of nature and harness them for human delight. Thus, the Boboli Gardens are like outdoor rooms, in which different places have different functions



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Bernardo Buontalenti was instrumental in turning the rather steep hillside of Boboli into a vision of a Renaissance and Baroque paradise.

and where sculpture, fountains, paths, grottoes, nymphaeums, and rare plants all conspire to engage the eye and mind. In addition, the Renaissance love of classical antiquity required that gardens explicitly reference figures from mythology and history.

- The amphitheater here was constructed as an outdoor extension to the garden front of the palace. It was built on a higher plane than the entrance court to take advantage of the slope and provide ground-level access from the state rooms on the second floor. Plays were regularly performed here from the time of the amphitheater's construction.
- As we ascend the steep hill, observe the carefully planned axis from the center of the amphitheater to the wonderful Fountain of Neptune, installed in 1571. The ascent then continues past Giambologna's statue of Abundance, before coming to the Garden of the Knight. The name derives from the fact that it was constructed on ramparts built by Michelangelo in 1529 to withstand the siege of Florence. Today, this space is dominated by a pavilion that has become the Museum of Porcelain.
- The Isolotto ("Large Island") features a large fountain of Oceanus by Giambologna, with the god standing in the Garden of the Hesperides and surrounded by the three great rivers over which he rules: the Nile, the Ganges, and the Euphrates.
- One of the most celebrated elements of the garden is the Grotto of Buontalenti, who constructed these three chambers between 1583 and 1588 for Grand Duke Francesco de' Medici. The central chamber is where Michelangelo's *Slaves* or *Prisoners* were installed in 1585, once it became obvious that they would never be finished and set on Pope Julius II's tomb. As we saw, the four originals are now in the Accademia; these are modern copies.
 - Flocks of sheep, shepherds, and other elements of the natural world emerge from the walls of the grotto, fashioned from colored pebbles and shells. The stalagmites and stalactites give the impression that visitors have uncovered a subterranean

world of wonder, one where nymphs, gods, and goddesses cavort in the shade for their pleasure.

- The other chambers are also fantasies. The second contains a sculpture of Helen and Paris, made in 1560 by Vincenzo de' Rossi. The third holds a Giambologna figure of Venus bathing in the pool.
- Before we leave the Boboli Gardens, we must meet one last member of the court of Eleonora of Toledo and Grand Duke Cosimo I: a chubby figure who sits naked astride a turtle. This is a portrait from life of the court dwarf of Eleonora of Toledo. He was popularly known as Bacco or Bacchino (“little Bacchus”), although his real name was Pietro Barbino. The turtle was the personal symbol of Eleonora.

The Casa Guidi

- Nearby the Pitti Palace, in the Piazza San Felice, is the Casa Guidi. Originally, this was two 15th-century structures. The corner palace was built by the Ridolfi family, who sold it to Count Camillo Guidi in 1618. The palace next door was acquired by Count Guidi's nephew in 1650, and the two were then combined in the late 18th century.
- In the early 1840s, the Guidi family subdivided the grand state rooms on the *piano nobile* into two apartments. Robert and Elizabeth Barrett Browning rented one of these apartments in 1847, less than a year after they eloped and went into exile in Italy. It became their home until Elizabeth's death here in 1861.
- The apartments were inspirational, as we're reminded by Elizabeth's poem *Casa Guidi Windows* and Robert's *Old Pictures in Florence*. Their only child, Pen, bought the old mansion in 1893 to establish a memorial for his parents. But on his death, his heirs sold it; in later years, it was acquired by the Browning Society, Eton College, and the Landmark Trust. Today, it is furnished as Robert and Elizabeth would have known it.

Smithsonian Journeys Travel Tips

Another garden option in the Oltrarno is the Giardino Bardini, with entrances on Via de' Bardi and Costa San Giorgio. This lovely English garden has been recently renovated. Much more modest than the Boboli Gardens, the Bardini Gardens offer a sweeping Baroque staircase, two grottoes, and a peaceful coffeehouse at the top of the hill with a wonderful view of the city of Florence.

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Barzini, *The Italians*.

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Cochrane, *Florence in the Forgotten Centuries, 1527–1800*.

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Levey, *Florence: A Portrait*.

McCarthy, *The Stones of Florence*.

Parks, *Medici Money*.

Richards, *The New Italians*.

Severgnini, *La Bella Figura*.

Strachan and Keeling, *Frommer's Florence, Tuscany and Umbria*.

Questions to Consider

1. The Boboli Gardens make a harmonious connection to the Pitti Palace. Can you give other examples where garden design and architecture are sympathetically fused?
2. The Pitti Palace was once a royal palace but is now an art museum. Can you give other examples of royal palaces turned into museums?

The Oltrarno

Lecture 21

We begin this lecture at the house of Bianca Cappello. Its façade represents one of the most striking examples in Italy of the decorative style known as sgraffito. The artist for this sgraffito was Bernardino Poccetti, and the palace was designed by Bernardo Buontalenti. Interestingly, Buontalenti lived on this same street, the Via Maggio, as have a number of other artists over the centuries, including the Baroque sculptor Giovanni Battista Foggini and the modern-day portraitist Pietro Annigoni. In this lecture, we'll learn some of the sad story of Bianca Cappello. We'll then explore the basilica of Santa Maria del Santo Spirito, the popular Piazza Santo Spirito, and the church of Santa Maria del Carmine.

The Story of Bianca Cappello

- Bianca Cappello was the daughter of a Venetian patrician family, but she fell in love with a poor man, a minor factor from a Florentine bank in Venice. In 1563, knowing that her family would never agree to the match, she eloped with this man, Piero Buonaventuri, although she was only 15. They were legally married and sought refuge in Florence.
- The republic of Venice itself requested that Bianca be sent back home because her powerful father had had her declared a fugitive. But the grand duke of Tuscany, Cosimo I, allowed the couple stay, in part because Bianca was spectacularly beautiful and because he thought she might prove useful in future diplomatic bargaining.
- Piero never amounted to much, but Bianca's extraordinary beauty caught the attention of Cosimo's son and heir, Francesco, who became completely infatuated with her. Soon, she became his mistress, and her husband was bought off with court sinecures. But the situation changed after Cosimo had a series of strokes and Francesco became, in effect, regent. Piero was killed in a mysterious

brawl, almost certainly murdered on the order of Francesco, who then moved Bianca into this palace.

- Francesco inherited the crown in 1574, which further complicated his relationship with Bianca. Francesco was married to Joanna of Austria. She had given him seven children, but of the four who survived, only one was male and able to inherit the throne—and he would die at age four. Joanna and Francesco didn't get along, and of course, she disapproved of Bianca, who by then had also produced a son by Francesco.
- In 1578, Joanna, pregnant with her eighth child, fell down the stairs at the palace and died, as did her child, who would have been another son. The superstitious Florentines blamed Bianca, calling her a witch and a murderer. Francesco made the situation worse by marrying Bianca just a few months later.
- Francesco himself was hardly popular. He was, as we saw earlier, a strange person: secretive, distrustful, and more devoted to his alchemical and magical experiments than to governing Tuscany. The couple found the hostile environment at the Palazzo Pitti and Florence so uncomfortable that they largely lived at the Medici villa of Poggio a Caiano, avoiding Florence altogether and neglecting their royal duties.
- Then, in 1587, after a dinner in honor of his younger brother, Cardinal Ferdinando de' Medici, Francesco fell ill and died, and Bianca followed him within hours. There were immediate suspicions that the new grand duke, Ferdinando, had poisoned the couple. These were dismissed by an autopsy and postmortem inquiry that attributed the deaths to fever.
- However, just recently, the hidden viscera of Bianca were discovered. She had been buried in secret, and the location of her grave remains unknown, but the viscera, removed for the autopsy, were found in terracotta jars in the convent church that served the villa as a chapel. These showed conclusive evidence of poison.

Francesco and Bianca had been murdered by Ferdinando, probably as much for the well-being of Tuscany as from ambition.

Santa Maria del Santo Spirito

- The basilica of Santa Maria del Santo Spirito, or as it's commonly known, Santo Spirito, was designed by Filippo Brunelleschi, the architect of the dome on the Duomo and the Pazzi Chapel. He accepted the commission in about 1428, and construction began in late 1438. Sadly, Brunelleschi died in 1446, but his dramatic plans were largely honored by his pupils who continued the work.
- Surprisingly, the façade of the church is simply faced with stucco. Brunelleschi had designed a lovely front, but it was never built. This was the result of a dispute after his death between his pupils and the architect Giuliano da Sangallo. Giorgio Vasari, who had seen Brunelleschi's plans, lamented that Florence lost the most perfect temple of Christendom by not fulfilling Brunelleschi's intentions.
- If we look from the nave down the length of this large church, we see the elegance and symmetry of Brunelleschi's design. The arcade of columns that separate the side aisles supports a clerestory with windows that provide a substantial amount of light. Above the central portal is a marvelous stained-glass window representing the Pentecost. It's by Perugino, installed about 1500.
- The spectacular baldacchino over the altar dates from 1601. Its multicolored marble provides a significant contrast with the almost austere elegance of Brunelleschi's off-white stucco and *pietra serena*, that gray limestone we saw in the Pazzi Chapel.
- There are 38 side chapels—19 on each side—opening off the vaulted side aisles. Each was once owned by a prominent family, and many hold ancestral tombs. The decoration of these chapels evolved over time. As a result, they serve almost as a history of Florentine patrician taste from the Renaissance until the 18th century.

- In the second chapel on the right is a 1549 copy of the *Pietà* of Michelangelo by Nanni di Baccio Bigio. In the 11th chapel—in the transept—is an altar and decoration by Buontalenti. Also here is a 14th-century crucifix that was once a ritual object of the Bianchi, an extreme religious confraternity in Florence, so-called because they dressed all in white. In chapel 15 is a moving altarpiece by Alessandro Allori of the 10,000 martyrs.
- The door to the sacristy is underneath the organ on the west side of the church. It leads first to a vestibule designed by Giuliano da Sangallo, then into an octagonal room that he modeled on the Florentine baptistery. Here is Michelangelo's beautiful and moving *Crucifix*, carved when the artist was just 17.
- The monastic refectory features the traditional decoration of such spaces—a Last Supper and a monumental Crucifixion. Although both are badly damaged, they are still marvelous examples of the Gothic genius of Andrea Orcagna, who painted these huge frescoes from 1360 to 1365. Distributed around the room are important sculptural works, as well, including one by Donatello and another by Jacopo della Quercia.

The Piazza Santo Spirito

- The Piazza Santo Spirito is one of Florence's favorite piazzas in the summer because of its trees. This quarter has traditionally been an artisan neighborhood, and you can spot the workers from the *botteghe* (artist workshops) as they take their lunch or enjoy an ice cream in the shade. In fact, according to Florentine legend, ice cream—*gelato*—was invented close to here by Bernardo Buontalenti, who concocted it for a feast held by Cosimo I. Each May, an annual festival in Florence is dedicated purely to celebrating *gelato*.
- The restaurants around the Piazza Santo Spirito are reasonably priced, popular, and patronized by locals. There is also still a daily market that sells clothing, plants, household goods, and other items. In addition, a high-end antique and craft market is held here twice a month.

- Because of the traditional artisan character of the square, we might not expect to find a great palace here, but there is one: the lovely Palazzo Guadagni, built in 1503 for the Dei family. Designed by the architect Simone del Pollaiuolo, it has beautiful proportions; the sgraffito decoration on the façade is by Andrea del Sarto.

Santa Maria del Carmine

- The full name of Santa Maria del Carmine in English is the Church of the Blessed Virgin Mary of Mount Carmel, because it's a Carmelite foundation. It was a monastic church from the beginning, and it still forms part of a Carmelite convent. The original structure was 13th century, and it was rebuilt in the 14th and 15th centuries, when the refectory and chapter house were added. In 1771, a fire destroyed almost the entire church. All that was saved was the miraculous Brancacci Chapel, sacristy, refectory, and chancel. Consequently, the rest of the building is in the late Baroque style.
- The Brancacci Chapel represents one of the most important moments in the development of Renaissance painting. The decoration was commissioned by Felice Brancacci in the 1420s. He engaged a young man, Masaccio, to fresco the chapel with the assistance of the older Masolino. They worked together on the chapel, with some interruptions, between 1423 and 1428.
- The narrative was to be scenes from the life of St. Peter. The young Masaccio was called to Rome in 1428, where he mysteriously died, and the Brancacci family found itself in serious political trouble that culminated in their exile in 1436. Thus, the chapel sat unfinished. It would be another half century before the cycle was completed by Filippino Lippi. Originally, Masolino had painted in the lunettes and on the ceiling, but when the church was rebuilt after the fire, his work was covered over by the 18th-century Baroque decoration seen today.
- Highlights here include Masaccio's *The Tribute Money*, a marvelous moment in early Renaissance painting. Notice the expressions on the faces of the figures, especially Christ, and the dramatic sense of tension. Also here is his *Expulsion from the Garden of Eden*. Note

the terror and horror on the faces of Adam and Eve as they attempt to conceal their nakedness. Notice, too, that the frescoes portray daily life in Florence as it was in the 1420s.

- The Corsini Chapel, dedicated to St. Andrew Corsini, was designed in the late 17th century, with no expense spared in hiring the best architects, sculptors, and painters. The vault is painted by the Neapolitan Baroque painter Luca Giordano. This 1682 fresco represents *Sant'Andrea Corsini in Glory*.
- The sacristy, which also survived the 1771 fire, was constructed in 1394, and the frescoes by the school of Agnolo Gaddi were painted at the beginning of the next century. The narrative is the *Life of St. Cecilia*, patron saint of music. We are fortunate that they survived, but they also strike a note of melancholy as they suggest all that must have been lost in that terrible fire.

Smithsonian Journeys Travel Tips

From the Piazza dei Pitti, head southwest and visit the Porta Romana, part of the southern walls that protected Florence. This gatehouse was built in 1326 and regulated traffic to and from Rome. Note the original iron doors, locks, and stone with the Medici coats of arms. It is now possible to visit the centuries-old walkway above the ancient gate. This is where Dan Brown's protagonist in the novel *Inferno*, Robert Langdon, began his adventures in Florence.

The *enoteca*, or regional wine shop, originated in Italy; the term now usually refers to a wine bar with dishes prepared to complement specific wines. At an *enoteca*, wine is generally served by the glass, allowing you to taste different vintages and varieties. Such an establishment is the perfect spot for an early evening aperitif or a leisurely dinner. Look online to find recent reviews of wine shops in Florence.

Suggested Reading

Barzini, *The Italians*.

Boorsook, *The Companion Guide to Florence*.

Brucker, *Renaissance Florence*.

Hibbert, *Florence: Biography of a City*.

Levey, *Florence: A Portrait*.

McCarthy, *The Stones of Florence*.

Parks, *Medici Money*.

Richards, *The New Italians*.

Severgnini, *La Bella Figura*.

Strachan and Keeling, *Frommer's Florence, Tuscany and Umbria*.

Questions to Consider

1. The house of Bianca Cappello reveals a curious element of Florentine history: the absence of powerful women. Why is it that there were so few influential women in Florence?
2. The decoration of the Brancacci Chapel, like the Ghirlandaio cycle in Santa Trinità, illustrates the anachronism of Florentine Renaissance painters; that is, they painted the present into the past, including the biblical past. Do you think it appropriate that Florentine artists used their contemporary world as part of an ancient narrative?

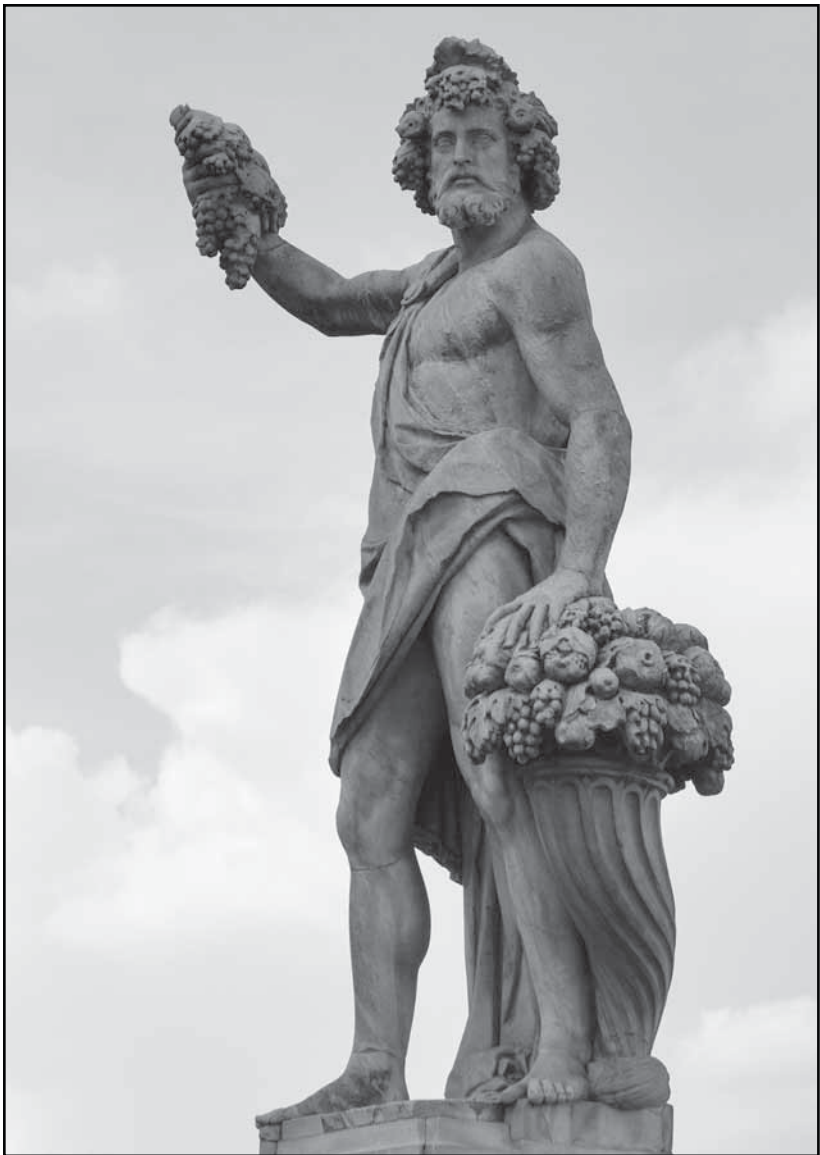
Walking to Santa Maria Novella

Lecture 22

The Ponte Vecchio is charming because of the medieval-looking shops on both sides, but the bridge itself is hardly the most elegant of structures. That crown goes to the Ponte Santa Trinità. It was designed to be the most handsome, and it represents not just a means of communication between the two banks of the river but a political and aesthetic statement as well. We begin this lecture with the Ponte Santa Trinità. From there, we'll walk along the Via Tornabuoni, one of the most fashionable streets in Florence and one that boasts a parade of palaces. Of course, we'll also visit some churches, including Santa Maria Novella, where Boccaccio's *Decameron* begins.

The Ponte Santa Trinità

- An earlier bridge on the site of Ponte Santa Trinità was destroyed by floods in the 1550s. Thus, Grand Duke Cosimo I seized the opportunity to build an appropriate approach to the Oltrarno, one that was in keeping with his new center of power and patronage, joining the old republican bank of the Arno with the new monarchical side.
- Cosimo entrusted his ambitions to Giorgio Vasari, who then subcontracted the construction to Bartolomeo Ammannati. From the beginning, the bridge was seen as a work of art, not merely a practical convenience. The arches, in the form of ellipses, are perfect in their proportions and incredibly strong, despite initial worries that the spans would be too wide.
- The bridge was a statement of urban design and intent. Now that power had shifted across the Arno, the means of accessing that power had to be institutionalized. The bridge was to be a processional way and a celebration of the new Medici monarchy. That explains the inscriptions recording the victories and glories of Cosimo I.



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The four statues at the corners of the Ponte Santa Trinita symbolize the four seasons, reinforcing the idea that Medici rule was eternal.

- The bridge was equally an instrument of civic renewal and Medici beneficence. The banks of the Arno were artificially raised to provide a coherent vista from both sides and to inhibit flooding. These 16th-century embankments stretched from the Ponte Vecchio to the Ponte alla Carraia, with the Ponte Santa Trinità at the center.
- Later in its history, the bridge witnessed the humiliation of Florence. It was across this bridge that the French entered the city at the time of Napoleon. Then, in 1944, the retreating Germans decided to destroy the bridge, and Ammannati's exquisite masterpiece was turned to rubble.
- What we see today is an exact reconstruction, using not only the original stone, but even the original plans, which were dug out of the archives. The Arno was dredged, and the original stone was salvaged and pieced together like a jigsaw puzzle in the cloister of a church. Only 16th-century tools were used. Any parts that had to be replaced were crafted from stone extracted from the original quarry in the Boboli Gardens. The bridge finally reopened in 1957.

The Palazzo Strozzi and Palazzo Rucellai

- The fashionable Via Tornabuoni is packed with high-end shops and luxury hotels, along with a number of palaces. Of these, the most important is the vast Palazzo Strozzi, owned by a wealthy banking family who rivaled the Medici in influence and riches.
 - The palace was commissioned by Filippo Strozzi in 1489 but not fully completed until 1538. Because one of the leaders of the anti-Medici opposition was a Strozzi, Cosimo I confiscated the palace just before it was finished, and it was not returned to the family for more than 30 years.
 - No expense was spared in the construction of the palazzo. Even the iron torch holders on the façade are works of art. The Strozzi did not leave the palace until 1937, after which it held a display space for art, some offices, a famous library called the Gabinetto Vieusseux, and a center for Renaissance studies.

- Nearby the Palazzo Strozzi is an even more famous palace, the Palazzo Rucellai. It was designed between about 1446 and 1451 by Leon Battista Alberti, a cutting-edge theorist on art and architecture.
 - A true man of the Renaissance, Alberti had made a thorough study of Roman structures. He had written the first theoretical book on architecture in the Renaissance and had translated the works of Vitruvius. Drawing on this extensive knowledge, Alberti created a façade that was to become extremely influential in the history of architecture. Notice the pilasters supporting the three stories of the elevation. The bottom is Tuscan, the equivalent of Doric. The second is a simplified Ionic, and the third is a simplified Corinthian. This order corresponds exactly to ancient practice and theory.
 - There is a wonderful regularity about the structure and a practicality. The first story is essentially windowless. Because the space was intended for commercial purposes, the lack of windows made it more secure. The state rooms were on the *piano nobile*, and the third floor was where day-to-day life took place. There is also a shallow fourth floor, which was a kind of garret for servants.
 - The small and irregularly shaped piazza in front of the palace also reflects the influence of the Rucellai in the neighborhood. It was almost an extension of their space. The large structure on the right across the street was built between 1464 and 1468. It's now glassed in, but originally, it was the open loggia of the palace, used for weddings and other family celebrations that could last as long as three days.

Santi Michele e Gaetano and Santa Maria Maggiore

- The large Baroque church Santi Michele e Gaetano seems almost out of place among the sober palaces and geometric Renaissance structures of Florence. This church was built between 1604 and 1648 for the Theatine Order. Buontalenti was originally charged with the design at the beginning of the 17th century, but other

Baroque Florentine architects completed the work. Inside, you can see an imposing *Martyrdom of St. Lawrence* by Pietro da Cortona, as well as a bronze crucifix by Giovanni Francesco Susini.

- Perhaps a more interesting church is Santa Maria Maggiore, which has an intriguing story behind it. The first documented evidence of this church comes from the early 11th century.
 - The exterior is essentially that of the original church, but it was reconstructed inside by the Cistercians, to whom the church passed in the 13th century. It had a great deal of competition in the area from other, more prestigious churches, and its fortunes declined until it was given to the Carmelites by Pope Leo X de' Medici in 1521.
 - The inside is quite simple, with a Gothic plan of simple groin vaults. The painted stucco relief in the chapel to the left in the transept is probably 12th century; it represents the Madonna of Mount Carmel. The frescoes in the vault are by Bernardino Poccetti. There are also some fragmentary frescoes by Spinello Aretino. The Baroque elements result from a renovation at the beginning of the 17th century.
 - Outside, on the original Romanesque bell tower is the head of a woman who is known to Florentines as Berta. A great many legends are told about this head. One holds that a cruel woman used to curse condemned convicts from the tower as they were marched to their place of execution. In retribution for her cruelty, God turned her to stone. According to another story, it is the head of a priest, turned to stone by an astrologer on the way to his execution.
 - Unfortunately, the reality is nowhere near as interesting. The head is from a late-classical statue, one that probably had been used as rubble for the building of the walls or was unearthed when the moat was dug. It was placed on the church as a decoration.

Santa Maria Novella

- The huge church of Santa Maria Novella was begun in 1246, when this part of Florence was on the outskirts of habitation. Originally, there had been a simple chapel on the site dedicated to the Virgin. When the property was given to the Dominicans in 1221, the order kept the dedication to Mary but added *Novella* (“New”) to distinguish it from what had been there previously.
- Santa Maria Novella was one of the many preaching churches that arose in response to the messages of St. Francis and St. Dominic. As with Santa Croce, the large piazza in front was designed for overflow crowds, elaborate processions, and alfresco liturgy. The Dominican preacher St. Peter Martyr drew such crowds that the piazza was expanded in 1245.
- The church was designed by Dominican monks and finished around 1360. The lower façade is essentially Gothic, decorated in the popular Tuscan design of dark green and white marble arranged in architectural patterns. But the upper façade, constructed by Alberti, is obviously quite different from the base. It features symmetrical patterns and large S-curve volutes in alternating colors.
- Inside, the nave is about 100 feet long, but it looks longer because the Dominicans were masters of geometry. As you approach the apse, you’ll see that the distances between the columns have been reduced, giving the impression of a much longer building. The transepts are also quite shallow, but the height of the vault is dizzying.
- As you walk down the nave, turn back and look at the stained glass on the façade. It’s from the 14th century and represents the coronation of the Virgin. The pulpit by Brunelleschi is also a fine work of art. It is burdened, however, with the sinister fact that this was the pulpit from which the first Dominican attack on Galileo was pronounced.
- On the left wall of the side aisle, about halfway down the nave, is Masaccio’s *Holy Trinity* of 1425. It represents Christ, God the Father, and the dove of the Holy Spirit surrounded by a classical

triumphal arch. Two saints are inside the composition, and the donors are outside praying. But these human figures are the same size as the saints and Christ, and the perspective employed not only brings viewers into the composition but gives it depth and reality. This was revolutionary in its time.

- Behind the altar is one of Florence's masterpieces, the Tornabuoni Chapel, painted by Ghirlandaio between 1485 and 1490. The narrative of this cycle consists of scenes from the life of the Virgin and the life of John the Baptist. To the right of the chancel is the Strozzi Chapel, painted by Lippi with narratives of the lives of the apostles Philip and James. This chapel is also a sacred literary space for those who love Boccaccio. It is here that *The Decameron* begins, at the time of the Black Death, when the company decides to leave the city to seek safety in a villa.

Smithsonian Journeys Travel Tips

Take advantage of seeing the Cappella Rucellai in the former church of San Pancrazio, which is now a museum showing the sculpture and drawings of Marino Marini. After viewing the 20th-century works by Marini, enter the deconsecrated church to view the chapel tomb designed by Leon Battista Alberti for his patron, Giovanni Rucellai. The structure is a copy of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem. The work highlights classical architectural details and marble intarsia emblems, including the puffed-sail symbol of the Rucellai family. This monument allows for close study of features used by Alberti on the façades of the Palazzo Rucellai and Santa Maria Novella.

Suggested Reading

Barzini, *The Italians*.

Boorsook, *The Companion Guide to Florence*.

Brucker, *Renaissance Florence*.

Hibbert, *Florence: Biography of a City*.

———, *House of Medici*.

Levey, *Florence: A Portrait*.

McCarthy, *The Stones of Florence*.

Parks, *Medici Money*.

Richards, *The New Italians*.

Severgnini, *La Bella Figura*.

Strachan and Keeling, *Frommer's Florence, Tuscany and Umbria*.

Questions to Consider

1. The Ponte Vecchio is universally known. Can you identify other celebrated bridges and account for their fame?
2. Such fashion designers as Ferragamo and Gucci have located their offices in historical Florentine palaces. Why would they do this rather than build modern facilities?

From Santa Maria Novella to San Lorenzo

Lecture 23

We ended the last lecture by admiring the sculptures, art, and architecture of some of the many chapels in Santa Maria Novella. In this lecture, we'll explore the cloisters and some of the other parts of this vast church complex. We'll then turn to the Fortezza da Basso, built by the Medici to suppress any rebellion against their unpopular rule. Today, the fortress houses laboratories devoted to repairing and restoring Florentine art. We'll also stop by the Mercato Centrale and San Lorenzo Market before closing the lecture in the basilica of San Lorenzo.

More Treasures of Santa Maria Novella

- The Green Cloister in Santa Maria Novella is among the most beautiful surviving examples of the Florentine Gothic style. It was begun in 1340 and designed by Dominican monks. A wealthy Florentine left a large fortune to have the entire Old Testament painted on the walls, but the project wasn't begun until some 80 years after the donor's death. In the end, the lead artist was Paolo Uccello. Note especially his scenes of *The Flood* and *Noah's Sacrifice*.
- The Spanish Chapel, a large room at the northern end of the cloister, was originally conceived for a wealthy Florentine family. It was begun in 1343 and finished in 1355, after the donor's wife and many family members had succumbed to the Black Death. It subsequently became the chapter house of the monastery. Its current name—the Spanish Chapel—results from Grand Duke Cosimo I assigning it to the Spanish attendants of Eleonora of Toledo, his Spanish Neapolitan wife.
 - The frescoes in this room are among the most interesting mid-14th-century paintings in Florence. Andrea di Bonaiuto (also known as Andrea da Firenze) painted the walls with Dominican-inspired themes between 1365 and 1367.

- The right wall has *The Allegory of the Church Triumphant and the Dominican Order*. This crowded scene helps us understand what Florence might have looked like if original plans had been followed. For example, the large pink building in the background is obviously the Duomo, but it looks quite different from what is there now. It has been suggested that this was Arnolfo di Cambio's initial plan for his great church.
- Sadly, the frescoes on the wall of the entrance door are badly damaged because of later construction. But if you look carefully, you can still make out the narrative of the lives of Christ and St Peter. The left wall has a celebration of St. Thomas Aquinas and the *Allegory of Christian Learning*. The altar wall traces the story of Christ's last days on earth in the *Route to Calvary*, *The Crucifixion*, and *The Descent into Limbo*. And, fittingly, the vault has a representation of *The Resurrection*.
- Because the Dominicans were the Inquisitors, this large chapel was used as a church courtroom. Its most famous defendant was St. Catherine of Siena, called for questioning in 1374, in part because of her perceived criticism of the papacy.
- The Officina Profumo Farmaceutica di Santa Maria Novella is a perfume store, museum, and the oldest continuously operating pharmacy in Europe. The street entrance dates from the 18th century, but the exquisite suite of rooms beyond was originally part of the Dominican monastery. In fact, before the street entrance was built, the only access to these rooms was through the large cloister of Santa Maria Novella.
 - Pharmacies and monasteries have always been connected; think of Friar Laurence in *Romeo and Juliet*. In this case, the monastery's botanical garden was immediately behind the pharmacy. The garden was planted with what were called *simples*—species known to the Dominicans to have therapeutic properties. By 1381, the monks had begun selling some of their homeopathic potions to ordinary citizens. Many of these products, such as rosewater, were said to offer protection from the plague.

- The pharmacy became a perfume factory in 1612. Marie de' Medici, queen of France, sent for her perfumes from here, and its fame spread. Luckily, the *profumeria* survived the suppression of the monastery after the unification of Italy. In 1866, the city of Florence leased the space and the product line to a merchant whose family runs it to this day.
- The decoration in the impressive sales room dates from a renovation of the 1840s, but its architecture betrays the fact that it was once a chapel, one that was connected to the monastic infirmary. The Old Apothecary, today called the Room of Herbals, was once the entrance room into the pharmacy from the cloister. The Old Sacristy is now the study center and library. The frescoes are by Mariotto di Nardo and date from the early 15th century.
- Running beside the church is a massive building with Italian and European Union flags suspended over its entrance. This was the



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The church of Santa Maria Novella is a vast complex, housing such masterworks as Masaccio's *Holy Trinity* and a crucifix by Brunelleschi.

main part of the old Dominican monastery of Santa Maria Novella, but it was converted into a school for Carabinieri officers after the nationalization of church property following unification. The school has since been relocated, and this space is now destined to become a museum.

The Fortezza da Basso

- The Fortezza da Basso is the enduring symbol of the final suppression of the Florentine Republic until Napoleonic times. The siege of Florence from 1529 to 1530 resulted in the return of the Medici in the person of the psychotic Alessandro. He was set up as the first duke of Florence by the Medici pope Clement VII, who was probably Alessandro's father.
- The Medici had been expelled twice since 1494 and had no intention of letting it happen again. Thus, they built a fortress to accommodate soldiers who could instantly suppress any rebellion against their unpopular rule. It was begun in 1534 and, within a year, was sufficiently completed to house a garrison. Construction continued until 1537, by which time, the fortress was a military city within a city, containing barracks, powder magazines, and even a foundry for making cannonballs.
- The fortress was designed by a great architect, Antonio da Sangallo the Younger, who also proved to be one of the most innovative military engineers of his generation. It featured a pentagon design to withstand artillery barrages. The use of brick rather than stone meant that the fortress could be built quickly and cheaply, but Sangallo also chose brick because it absorbs cannonballs better than natural stone.
- Although it was a magnificent example of its kind, the *fortezza* naturally aroused hatred in the population. After all, it symbolized the end of Florentine liberty. Even the official name of the structure, the Fortress of St. John the Baptist, mocked the city's patron saint.

- Happily, this fortress no longer serves a military purpose. It's owned and operated by the Florence convention center. Also here are laboratories for the restoration and repair of Florence's vast artistic heritage.

The Mercato Centrale and San Lorenzo Market

- The Mercato Centrale is the glass-covered central market of Florence. The market is huge, covering two stories of a glass-and-stone building erected in 1874. Every possible kind of produce from Tuscany is available here: cheeses, meats and sausages, pasta, wine, truffles, mushrooms, vegetables, and fruit.
- The longstanding San Lorenzo Market is a large aggregation of merchants in individual stalls. Many are associated with the shops behind them, which are not easily accessible or even visible from the street. This market is a good place to purchase leather goods.
- When you shop at the markets, be sure to secure your valuables and pay cash if you can, which will usually get you a better price. The more you buy or the more expensive the object, the higher the discount you should receive. Aggressive bargaining is expected.
- Note, too, that Italian law requires that you get a receipt (known as a *scontrino*) for your purchases. Police can require you to produce your receipts up to about 100 feet from the stall, and failure to do so means a stiff fine. This regulation is part of the Italian government's attempt to suppress the underground economy rampant in the nation.

The Basilica of San Lorenzo

- The construction of the basilica of San Lorenzo was financed by Cosimo de' Medici (the Elder). In gratitude, the pope granted him the right to display his coat of arms. San Lorenzo then became the Medici church and place of burial.
- Inside, the basilica is rather austere, with a central nave and side aisles separated by an arcade of columns. It is a metaphor for the beginning of Renaissance architecture. Brunelleschi used the

classical principles of geometry and proportion to structure his design for this building.

- In the nave, the marvelous bronze pulpits on the right are mostly by Donatello. Note in particular the one depicting the martyrdom of St. Lawrence. On the floor in front of the altar is a richly decorated marble and porphyry installation that marks the tomb of Cosimo the Elder, who died in 1464; the tomb marker is by Andrea del Verrocchio.
- The Old Sacristy is the burial chamber of the early Medici and was commissioned by Giovanni di Bicci de' Medici, the father of Cosimo the Elder.
 - The overall harmony of the space is admirable here. Brunelleschi's use of perfect geometric forms gives a sense of complete and ideal proportions. The use of the basic geometric shapes reflects the Neoplatonic belief that geometry is the vocabulary of God in the creation of the universe. The simple decoration and the integration of *pietra serena* and off-white stucco impart a sense of serenity that renders the Old Sacristy a truly sacred space, both in terms of religion and of art.
 - The chapel in the Old Sacristy also celebrates the creative partnership of Brunelleschi and Donatello. The bronze doors are by Donatello and were made between 1437 and 1443. The panels represent martyrs disputing elements of faith. Their sense of energy and engagement is astounding. The reliefs above are also by Donatello, depicting the Medici patron saints, Cosmas and Damian, and the protomartyrs Stephen and Lawrence.
- The wooden crucifix above the altar is contemporaneous with the sacristy. Originally, there was a relief by Brunelleschi of the sacrifice of Isaac on the altar front, which is now in the Bargello. If you stand back and look at the altar as a unit, it is easy to see how the inspiration for its design came from the altar in the Duomo baptistery. This is a room that continues to inspire everyone who visits it.

Smithsonian Journeys Travel Tips

Near platform 8 at the Santa Maria Novella train station is a memorial plaque commemorating the Jewish people who were deported from Italy to Nazi concentration camps beginning in November 1943. Prior to World War II, nearly 3,000 Jews lived in Florence, while only one-third of that number inhabit the city today. To get a clearer picture of Jewish history in Florence, visit the spectacular Moorish-style synagogue of Florence, Beth Hakknesset Firenze, which is located at Via Farini 4. A museum with displays of Jewish religious objects and a picture history of the Florentine Jewish population is on the second floor. There is also a kosher vegetarian restaurant and a bookstore.

Suggested Reading

Barzini, *The Italians*.

Boorsook, *The Companion Guide to Florence*.

Brucker, *Renaissance Florence*.

Cardini, *The Medici Women*.

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———, *House of Medici*.

Levey, *Florence: A Portrait*.

McCarthy, *The Stones of Florence*.

Parks, *Medici Money*.

Richards, *The New Italians*.

Severgnini, *La Bella Figura*.

Strachan and Keeling, *Frommer's Florence, Tuscany and Umbria*.

Questions to Consider

1. Santa Maria Novella shows how old buildings can be repurposed while keeping their traditional roles. It remains a church, and the cloisters still have religious functions, but it is also a museum and a pharmacy. Is this preferable to our modern tendency to tear down and build new?
2. Why did Cosimo de' Medici want a church of his own in San Lorenzo when Florence is full of churches?

The Medici Legacy

Lecture 24

In this lecture, we'll visit one of Europe's most famous rooms: the New Sacristy, designed by Michelangelo. As we enter, it's immediately apparent that this is no ordinary sacristy; it's hardly a storage room for clerical vestments and sacred vessels. Despite its name, it is, in fact, a chapel. Michelangelo was given the commission for it in 1519 by Cardinal Giulio de' Medici, who later became Pope Clement VII. Also in this lecture, we'll visit the Cappella dei Principi, where the Medici monarchs are interred; the Laurentian Library, designed to house the book and manuscript collection of Cosimo the Elder; and the Old and New Markets of Florence.

The New Sacristy

- As mentioned, despite its name, the New Sacristy is a chapel; it was intended to hold the remains of four Medicis: the brothers Giuliano de' Medici and Lorenzo the Magnificent and two lesser-known cousins of Clement VII, Giuliano, duke of Nemours, and Lorenzo, duke of Urbino. Ironically, it is only for the less famous Giuliano and Lorenzo that Michelangelo actually finished the tombs.
- This chapel is Michelangelo's first attempt at architecture. It was never finished because the artist left for Rome in 1534, the year Pope Clement VII died. But by then, the chapel had been enclosed, and the major figures had been sculpted. Michelangelo's pupils completed those sculptures for which he had left models.
- The chapel is a harmonious integration of sculpture and architecture. Consider the figure of Giuliano, duke of Nemours. He died in 1516, at age 37, and is dressed in classically inspired armor. His statue is highly stylized rather than a portrait from life. Giuliano is resolute but at rest. Beneath him, reclining on a beautifully proportioned sarcophagus, are the figures of Night and Day.

- On the opposite wall is the figure of Lorenzo, duke of Urbino, who died in 1519 at age 26. He is also depicted in classically inspired armor, wearing a helmet, his chin resting on his hand. He is the intellectual warrior, the thoughtful ruler and soldier whose early death is implied to have taken away a potentially great man. Beneath his figure are representations of Dawn and Dusk.
- These sculptures are both part of the composition of the sarcophagi and significant in the overall interpretation of the room. They represent not only the times of the day but also the passage of time and the cycle of life. Further, the statues of Giuliano and Lorenzo symbolize the two parts of the human character: the active and the contemplative. For Michelangelo, the chapel was a kind of exploration of the nature and purpose of life—and death—and the relationship between human figures in stone and the space in which they are contained.
- As mentioned, Michelangelo never completed the monuments for Giuliano, murdered in the Pazzi Conspiracy, and Lorenzo the Magnificent. They, too, were originally to lie in elegant tombs, but the expulsion of the Medici from 1527 to 1530 and the death of Clement VII made it impossible to finish the grand scheme as first elaborated.
- During restoration of the church of San Lorenzo in 1976, workmen discovered a hidden space behind the New Sacristy. On the walls were quick sketches by Michelangelo. Scholars suggest that the artist may have used this space as a secure place of refuge during the 1529–1530 siege of Florence. Michelangelo had been appointed the military engineer to oversee the fortifications during the siege, and this was perhaps where he did some of that work.

The Cappella dei Principi

- The Cappella dei Principi is where the Medici monarchs are interred. Entering this theatrical domed room is to witness the chasm between the Medici of the republican period and those who ruled as grand dukes. In this space, almost all of the Medici princes,

from the first grand duke, Cosimo I, until the last, Gian Gastone, and their wives, children, and relations are interred. The only one not buried here is the second wife of Francesco I, Bianca Cappello, whom we met earlier.

- The competition for the design of this chapel was won by a member of the Medici family, the illegitimate son of Grand Duke Cosimo, Giovanni, who fancied himself an architect. The chapel was added to the old structure of San Lorenzo and decorated between 1604 and 1640. A professional architect, Matteo Nigetti, was engaged to turn Giovanni's sketches into something that could be built. These plans were later altered by Buontalenti.
- But Giovanni's symbolism held constant. The chapel is octagonal, like the baptistery. And it's surmounted by a huge dome, like the cathedral, whose proportions it mimics. This is, then, sacred Florentine space. Giovanni's design tells us that this is the site of the burial, not of saints and martyrs, but of God's anointed—his agents on earth—the Medici autocrats.
- The bodies of the Medici grand dukes actually rest in the crypts below; their sarcophagi set onto the walls are empty and merely symbolic. Originally, there were meant to be gilded bronze statues of each of the ruling grand dukes, but only two were made: those of Ferdinando I and Cosimo II, sculpted by Ferdinando and Pietro Tacca between 1626 and 1640. In the entrance space outside the chapel are monuments to and burial slabs of other, lesser Medici, all of whom are buried in the crypts below.

The Laurentian Library

- The Laurentian Library takes its name from the church of San Lorenzo and was one of the prides of the Medici. It was begun when Cosimo the Elder inherited the celebrated humanist library of the scholar Niccolò Niccoli and merged it with his own substantial collection. It passed by descent to Cardinal Giulio de' Medici, Pope Clement VII. And it was Clement who commissioned Michelangelo to design a dedicated space to house the manuscripts and books in 1523.

- Construction began in 1525, but Michelangelo was also at work on the New Sacristy. When he left Florence for Rome in 1534, the library was far from finished, although it existed both in his mind and in some plans. As they did for the New Sacristy, Niccolò Tribolo and Bartolommeo Ammannati finished the library, following Michelangelo's intentions as closely as possible. The library was opened to the citizens of Florence in 1571 and remains available to scholars.
- The reading room of the library is immense: 152 feet long and 35 feet wide. There are no central supports, and Michelangelo was seriously constrained by the original monastic building below. Its construction couldn't support a huge weight. He made an advantage of this by opening large windows so that each desk enjoyed considerable natural light. In the beginning, manuscripts and books were chained directly to the desks, making consultation easy while also preventing theft.

The Old and New Markets

- During the Middle Ages, the Piazza della Repubblica served as the marketplace of Florence. The market itself was a wooden complex of sheds forming an irregular oval, surmounted by a considerable overhang to protect both the shoppers and the produce from the sun or rain. There were also stalls in the center of the piazza, as well as a number of churches and shrines.
 - This Old Market, or Mercato Vecchio, was upstaged in the 16th century by the construction of the Mercato Nuovo under the order of Grand Duke Cosimo I. The New Market allowed the grand duke to create the first ghetto in Florence, requiring all the Jews of the city to live in the vicinity of the Old Market.
 - Although it was a hub of daily commerce, the Old Market was not an attractive place to live. Many of the poorest citizens were attracted to this area; more tenements and high, crowded structures arose, turning the space into an unpleasant slum in the eyes of many elite Florentines.



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Although its buildings are new, the Piazza della Repubblica itself is ancient in terms of the history of Florence; it was the site of the forum of the ancient Roman city of Florentia.

- It was this attitude, together with a misplaced sense of national pride and a belief in progress, that led to the redevelopment of the Mercato Vecchio in the 19th century. Beginning in the 1880s, the tenements and stalls of the Old Market were pulled down, together with the surrounding buildings. In their place arose a neo-Renaissance office building and the triumphal arch.
- However, the new buildings—with their large, airy rooms on the ground floor and an open piazza in front—attracted restaurant and café owners. The piazza became the drawing room of Florence, an atmosphere that pervades to this day.
- The loggia of the New Market is nearby. It was constructed between 1547 and 1551 by Giovanni Battista del Tasso. The niches with the statues were part of the original plan, but the three figures here now were chosen much later. They are interesting choices: Michele di Lando, the leader of the woolworkers during the Ciompi Revolt of 1378; Giovanni Villani, the medieval chronicler of Florence who died in the 1348 Black Death; and Bernardo Cennini, a goldsmith who produced the first printed book in Florence in the 15th century.
- At the south end of the loggia is the famous *Il Porcellino*, a statue of a wild boar. According to tradition, rubbing its nose will ensure a return to the city. This statue actually served a practical purpose when it was installed in 1612. Because the merchants in the New Market needed water, Cosimo II de' Medici commissioned Pietro Tacca to make a fountain. Tacca used for his model an ancient marble of a boar that was in the Medici collections.

The Palace of the Guelf Party

- The Palace of the Guelf Party, or Parte Guelfa, is a charming medieval building at the end of the Via Pellicceria. In the Middle Ages, the Guelfs were the party of the pope. They stood against the Ghibellines, the party of the Holy Roman Emperors.

- Florence became a Guelf city in the 1260s, exiling Ghibellines and, in fact, taking away their rights and property. The Guelf party became a kind of political machine, operating outside of the constitution but nevertheless wielding enormous power. In a sense, it was a factional club for influential men to affect government decisions in their favor and punish their enemies.
- This palace was the meeting place for the powerful Guelf party. It was originally built in the 13th century but heavily rebuilt between 1418 and 1458. The architect of the new structure, essentially the one seen today, was Filippo Brunelleschi. The only major change took place in the 16th century when Giorgio Vasari added an exterior staircase on the side and the loggia.

Smithsonian Journeys Travel Tips

The Piazza della Repubblica was originally called the Piazza Vittorio Emanuele II after the nation's first king. An equestrian statue of this leader, whose monument in Rome is more famously known, was originally placed in the center of the piazza in 1890, but it was moved to the Piazzale delle Cascine in 1932.

Giuseppe Poggi transformed both of these areas in order to create a suitable urban cityscape in Florence when it was the capital of the newly unified nation of Italy between 1865 and 1871. Poggi was responsible for replacing the medieval city with new open areas, such as the Piazza della Repubblica; tearing down the old city walls and leaving only a small number of city gates, such as the Porta Romana; and situating wide boulevards surrounding the expanding city.

Another example of this alteration is evident when visiting the English cemetery, which had been on the outside eastern edge of the city before Poggi's development of the area. He tore down the artists' studios that filled this neighborhood and planned the present Piazzale Donatello, which left the English cemetery as an island of land with traffic on all sides. Among the British buried here is Elizabeth Barrett Browning.

Suggested Reading

Acton, *The Last Medici*.

Barzini, *The Italians*.

Boorsook, *The Companion Guide to Florence*.

Brucker, *Renaissance Florence*.

Cardini, *The Medici Women*.

Cochrane, *Florence in the Forgotten Centuries, 1527–1800*.

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McCarthy, *The Stones of Florence*.

Parks, *Medici Money*.

Richards, *The New Italians*.

Severgnini, *La Bella Figura*.

Strachan and Keeling, *Frommer's Florence, Tuscany and Umbria*.

Questions to Consider

1. Can you suggest why the Medici grand dukes invested so much money on their burial chapel at San Lorenzo?
2. What function do European markets fulfill? How is this function served elsewhere?

The Ognissanti, Palaces, Parks, and Villas

Lecture 25

We begin this lecture in the Piazza Carlo Goldoni, near the statue of the great Venetian playwright for whom it is named. This dedication to a Venetian was a calculated act by the city of Florence to highlight its new role as the capital of a united Italy. It was sculpted in 1873 by Ulisse Cambi. From the piazza, we'll walk along the Borgo Ognissanti, once an important means of entry into the city. We'll spend some time in the monastery complex of the Ognissanti, admiring works by Ghirlandaio, Botticelli, and others, before we explore the Cascine and Arcetri, both of which offer a respite from the crowds of Florence in the tourist season.

The Borgo Ognissanti

- The Borgo Ognissanti originally ran outside an old gate in the 1284 circuit of walls around Florence, the Porta al Prato. It was an important means of access to and from the city, leading to the western part of Tuscany. It was also the communication route for the Umiliati monks, who were given a church and land here in 1250, both to pray for the community and to work their flocks for wool.
- This relatively straight street also formed part of the racecourse for the Palio dei Barberi, the Florentine equivalent of the Palio of Siena and the carnival race of the Barbary horses in Rome. The race in Florence had roots deep in the Middle Ages. It is even mentioned by Dante in the *Commedia*. It was run on June 24, the feast day of St. John the Baptist, Florence's patron saint, and it went from the Porta al Prato to the center of the city.
- The Borgo Ognissanti was also the site of a great many processions. The most famous of these was the formal entry of Eleonora of Toledo into Florence for her marriage with the first grand duke, Cosimo I de' Medici. For that event, Niccolò Tribolo created sumptuous decorations to welcome the future grand duchess. Triumphant arches, made of wood and papier-mâché, were painted

by renowned artists, and rich hangings and banners stretched across this street.

- Also on this street is the Old Hospice of St. John of God (Ospedale Vecchio di San Giovanni di Dio). This charitable institution was founded in the 1380s, and in 1588, it became the hospital of the Fatebenefratelli (“Do-Good Brothers”). The hospital served both religious pilgrims and commercial travelers. It was rebuilt in 1702 and is now one of the finest exemplars of the Florentine Baroque.
- Opposite the Ospedale is the palace of the *marescialla* (“lady marshal”). This was named for Leonora Dori Galigai, who was born into a noble Florentine family in 1568. She went to Paris as a lady-in-waiting to Marie de’ Medici, the second wife of King Henry IV of France.
 - Leonora became the queen’s closest confidante, especially after King Henry was assassinated in 1610. In fact, Leonora and her husband, Concino Concini, held enormous influence. Queen Marie awarded Concino the title of marshal d’Ancre, and he and Leonora together became the power behind the French throne.
 - Leonora was thought to be in the possession of demons because she suffered from debilitating depressions and spasms of paralysis. Added to this, she and Concino were venal in the extreme, selling offices, robbing the royal treasury, and advancing their clients, including Leonora’s brothers, one of whom became archbishop of Tours.
 - This abuse of power finally drove Louis XIII to action in 1617. The young king ordered the murder of Concino and the banishment of his mother, the queen. Left without protectors, Leonora was tried for witchcraft and decapitated in 1617.
- Farther down the street is the only example of Art Nouveau–style architecture (called Liberty style in Italy) in the historic center of Florence, La Casa-Galleria Vichi. This building was erected in 1911 by Giovanni Michelazzi. It is particularly noteworthy for its use of

cutting-edge materials, including artificial stone, steel, and glass. It was meant as an elegant shop with living quarters above for the Vichi family, but Michelazzi himself moved into this building in 1913, just seven years before his untimely death at the age of 41.

- On the Piazza Ognissanti is the Lenzi Palace, one of the best examples of 15th-century palace architecture in the city, dating from about 1470. Vasari attributed it to Brunelleschi, but that is unlikely. It is more probably the work of Michelozzo, the architect of the Palazzo Medici and the San Marco cloisters. The sgraffito decorations are probably by Andrea Feltrini, made in the 16th century.

The Church of the Ognissanti

- The monastery complex of the Ognissanti was first completed about 1256, but the only significant remaining element of that structure is the bell tower, which dates from the 13th and early 14th centuries.
 - The original occupants of the complex were the Umiliati. The members of this lay order were respected for their modesty and hard work and known for their cultivation of wool and their role in the textile industry in Florence.
 - However, the popularity of the order declined considerably by the 16th century; thus, the monastic buildings and church were given to the Franciscans in 1571. In 1637, a new Baroque façade was designed by Matteo Nigetti, the architect of the Cappella dei Principi.
- After you enter, the second chapel on the right is that of the Vespucci family, patrons of the church. It has a splendid fresco of the *Madonna of Mercy* by Ghirlandaio, from about 1473. In fact, this is a group portrait of the donor's family and includes the explorer Amerigo Vespucci as a child.
- The interior of the church today is a marvelous confection of Baroque exuberance and trompe l'oeil illusion in the vault. The vault painting, with its illusionistic cornices, dates from 1770. The splendid *pietra dura* main altar is by Jacopo Ligozzi.

- In the sacristy, we see a circa 1340 fresco by Taddeo Gaddi of *The Crucifixion*. The German wooden cross above the entrance door was carved by Veit Stoss, a famous Nuremberg sculptor of the 15th century. Also here is a 1369 *Annunciation of the Virgin* and a painted crucifix, probably by a close follower of Giotto.
- In the former refectory is another of Ghirlandaio's masterpieces: his fresco of the *Last Supper*, from 1480. The walls of the refectory show preparatory drawings (*sinopie*) by Ghirlandaio for this work. In addition, the refectory has frescoes of two doctors of the church: *St. Augustine in His Study* by Botticelli and *St. Jerome in His Study* by Ghirlandaio, both painted in 1480.
- From the early 19th century, the monastic complex of the Ognissanti has had a difficult history. The Franciscan monastery was suppressed by Napoleon in 1810, briefly restored after the return of the Habsburg-Lorraine dynasty, and finally closed in 1866 after Italian unification and the secularization of church property by the new Savoy monarchy.
 - In 1885, a few monks were permitted to return, and there is still a small community here. Despite this, in 1923, under the fascists, the large monastic buildings adjoining the church were converted to a barracks for the Carabinieri, the quasi-military national police.
 - Thus, like so many of the ecclesiastical structures in Italy, the fate of Ognissanti followed the needs, fashions, and political events of the nation itself, making such places living history.

The Cascine

- The Cascine is a large public park in Florence. Its name is the plural of the Italian word *cascina*, which means "dairy farm." In 1563, this land was annexed by Grand Duke Cosimo I as both a farm and a hunting preserve. Its role expanded during the 17th and 18th centuries, when pleasure pavilions were added, along with nurseries for exotic plants and herbs. The park follows the Arno for almost two miles and covers an area of some 395 acres.

- Until the end of the 18th century, the Cascine was a royal reserve. Members of the public were allowed access only on rare ceremonial occasions, such as celebrations of the birth or accession of a member of the grand ducal family. This period also saw the Romantic return to nature in the fashion of a less structured park. Thus, the Cascine includes groves of trees and open meadows.
- The park became a place for the ducal family to escape the city and live a less formal court life only a short ride from the Piazza della Signoria. The Palazzina Reale (“Little Royal Palace”) was built in the late 18th century for this purpose. The architect and landscape designer was Giuseppe Manetti. In addition to the palazzina, he constructed the pyramid-shaped ice houses, amphitheater, fountains, and peacock cages.
- The enlightened ruler of Tuscany at the end of the 18th century, Pietro Leopoldo I, established an experimental farm at the Palazzina Reale; this now belongs to the University of Florence’s Faculty of Agriculture. The park was made public by Elisa Baciocchi, Napoleon’s sister, who was installed by him as ruler of Tuscany. In 1869, ownership of the park was officially transferred to the city of Florence.

Arcetri

- If we walk up the hill from the park, we find ourselves in what seems to be open countryside, with villas and walled gardens that occasionally open to reveal wonderful views of Florence. This is the hill of Arcetri at the southern end of the city.
- Along this route, at Costa San Giorgio, is an entrance to the Bardini Gardens. This property is now open to the public for a small entrance fee, and it’s worth taking a break here to have a drink under the loggia and enjoy the superb views of the city. Walking around the villa and paths gives a sense of the quality of villa life that still exists just a short walk from the Ponte Vecchio.
- Also on this route is the Belvedere Fortress that we saw earlier, today used for temporary art exhibitions. Next to the fortress is the

Porta San Giorgio, the oldest standing gate in the city, built in 1324 as part of the fortifications.

- If we walk through the Porta San Giorgio, we find ourselves on the Via San Leonardo, an almost rural road of historic villas, olive groves, and gardens. Here is the ancient church of San Leonardo in Arcetri. It was built about the year 1000 and has seen both Dante and Boccaccio as speakers.
- Finally, crossing the busy Viale Galileo Galilei, we pass the Astronomical Observatory of Arcetri and another medieval structure, the 14th-century Torre del Gallo. Nearby is Villa il Gioiello (“Jewel Villa”), the residence of Galileo during his house arrest—his punishment after his abjuration before the Inquisition. From 1631 until his death in 1642, the great astronomer and mathematician lived here, still writing on mathematics and physics, although wisely avoiding cosmology.

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In the church of Ognissanti, notice the magnificent *Crucifix*, now dependably attributed to Giotto after seven years of cleaning and restoration. Giotto painted another work for this church, too. The large-scale Madonna and Child, called the *Ognissanti Madonna*, is now in the Uffizi but was once the main altarpiece in the church of the Umiliati.

Suggested Reading

Acton, *The Last Medici*.

Barzini, *The Italians*.

Boorsook, *The Companion Guide to Florence*.

Brucker, *Renaissance Florence*.

Cochrane, *Florence in the Forgotten Centuries, 1527–1800*.

Hibbert, *Florence: Biography of a City*.

Levey, *Florence: A Portrait*.

McCarthy, *The Stones of Florence*.

Richards, *The New Italians*.

Severgnini, *La Bella Figura*.

Strachan and Keeling, *Frommer's Florence, Tuscany and Umbria*.

Questions to Consider

1. The Cascine was transformed from a Medici grand ducal preserve to a public park. How many other examples can you think of where private pleasure grounds were transformed into recreation areas for the people of a city?
2. The distinction between the countryside and city is blurred at the outer edges of Florence. Is it fair that such beautiful space should remain in a few private hands?

Romantic Views: San Miniato and Fiesole

Lecture 26

San Miniato al Monte is one of Italy's most beautiful Romanesque churches. It can be seen from various parts of Florence because it sits on one of the highest points of the perimeter of hills that surrounds the city. In this lecture, we'll learn the history of this church, which served as a strategic defensive point for the republic during the siege of Florence by the Medici in 1529–1530. We'll also survey views of Florence from the Piazzale Michelangelo before we head to our last stop around Florence, the ancient town of Fiesole.

San Miniato al Monte

- San Miniato al Monte was built in recognition of the first martyr of Florence, St. Minias. According to legend, Minias was denounced as a Christian to the emperor Decius in A.D. 250. When Minias refused to make a sacrifice to the Roman gods, the emperor declared that he should be killed.
 - First, Minias was cast into a furnace, but he emerged unscathed. Then, he was stoned but was again unharmed. The emperor then ordered Minias thrown to wild animals in the amphitheater of Florence, but none of the animals would attack.
 - In a final act of frustration, Decius ordered that Minias be beheaded. After the order was carried out, Minias picked up his head, planted it firmly on his torso, crossed the Arno, and marched up to his retreat on the hilltop above Florence before succumbing to his decapitation. The place naturally became a site of veneration.
 - By the 8th century, a small church was built on the site, supported by a band of Benedictines. In 1373, it was passed to the Olivetan Order, the religious community that is there today.

- The building is approached by a rather daunting but exquisitely proportioned series of staircases. These were designed and built in 1869 by Giuseppe Poggi as part of the redevelopment of Florence during its period as the Italian capital.
- The foundation of the current church was commissioned by Bishop Hildebrand in 1013. Work on the magnificently designed marble façade was begun around 1090. Notice the handsomely structured arcade of black marble. The reason that such an elaborate and expensive program of decoration could be entertained at all is that the work was patronized by the guild of cloth merchants. Their symbol of the eagle is still visible on the façade. The mosaic of Christ between San Miniato and the Virgin Mary dates from 1260, although it has been much restored.
- The original bell tower collapsed in 1499 and had to be rebuilt beginning in 1523. But it was never completed because of the 1529–1530 siege of the city by the Medici. During the siege, the tower served as the place from which artillery officers directed cannon fire in defense of the republic. And Michelangelo, who had been appointed the republic’s military engineer, spent time here reviewing the city’s defenses.
- Next to the façade on the right is the fortified bishop’s palace, originally built in 1295. During the siege, Michelangelo recognized the value of this site, with its views over the city, and had a set of defensive walls constructed that are still visible. Later, Grand Duke Cosimo I, whose family was restored in 1530, enlarged this fortress, reserving it as a military barracks. Obviously, he, too, recognized that commanding the heights over the city was of great strategic importance.
- Inside the church, at the end of the nave is a Romanesque raised choir, with steps leading up to the altar and down to the crypt. Notice the seven inlaid panels in the floor made with small pieces of marble, a technique called *opus sectile*. These were completed by 1207; they are puzzling for a Christian church because they are

the astrological signs of the zodiac. These panels came by way of Constantinople to Italy.

- The latticed stonework of the transenna (the screen that separates the clergy from the laity) and the pulpit also dates from 1207. The apse mosaic, however, was completed almost a century later, in 1297. It was probably executed by the same craftsmen who completed the mosaic on the façade, and it, too, is in honor of Christ, the Virgin, and San Miniato. All but one of the capitals on the columns in the choir are from ancient Roman buildings.
- Taking the stairs into the crypt is an amazing experience because the structure of this part of the church remains almost exactly the way it was when built in the late 11th century. The altar is the original, as are the thin columns that carry ancient capitals. By tradition, the body of San Miniato is preserved beneath.
- The Chapel of the Crucifix, located almost freestanding in the center of the church, is named after an object that is no longer there. It was commissioned by Piero de' Medici (Lorenzo the Magnificent's father) to hold a crucifix that is now preserved in the church of Santa Trinità. The chapel dates from 1448 and was designed by Michelozzo. The painted panels were done by Agnolo Gaddi between 1394 and 1396.
- The Chapel of the Cardinal of Portugal is a memorial to a Portuguese noble, brother of the Holy Roman Empress and a prince of the church. The chapel and tomb are here by accident. The cardinal, James of Lusitania, was dispatched in 1458 by his cousin, the king of Portugal, to participate in a conclave in Rome. But en route, James died suddenly in Florence. His royal lineage and the tragedy of his death resulted in one of the most splendid funerary monuments in Italy.
 - The basic design of the tomb, on the nave wall of the church, was by Brunelleschi's pupil and successor, Antonio Manetti. The actual tomb was carved by the brothers Rossellino, Bernardo and Antonio, with Antonio sculpting the Madonna and Child in the roundel above.

- Pollaiuolo and Alesso Baldovinetti painted the wall. The latter artist's *Annunciation* is universally recognized as a masterpiece. Pollaiuolo also painted the angels holding back the carved stone drapery. Luca della Robbia created the five glazed terracotta medallions portraying the Holy Spirit and the cardinal virtues. Even the floor adds to the composition by rehearsing the palette of the painted surfaces.

The Piazzale Michelangelo

- The Piazzale Michelangelo was designed in the late 1860s by Giuseppe Poggi, who was, in many ways, the driving force behind the renovation of Florence in the last part of the 19th century. It was he who took down most of the city walls, leaving only the gates. This demolition permitted the construction of a wide, modern thoroughfare, the Viale dei Colli, stretching almost five miles around the city.
- The piazzale was intended as the forecourt of a vast new museum devoted to the work of Michelangelo. This explains the large copy of *David* and the bronze copies of the *Prisoners* that we saw in the Accademia. However, the museum was never built. All that was



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The promontory of the Piazzale Michelangelo overlooks Florence and offers a postcard view of the city and beyond.

constructed was a Beaux Arts loggia, which has been a restaurant since 1876.

- Before you leave the piazzale, you may want to look over the balustrade and follow the routes we have taken in these lectures. Look for Brunelleschi's dome on the Duomo, the bell tower of Giotto, and the dome of the Cappella dei Principi at San Lorenzo. Follow the Arno and note the position of the Uffizi, the Palazzo Vecchio, and the bridges we have crossed. From this vantage point, you'll be able to bring all these sites together into a coherent picture of the urban plan of this spectacular city.

Fiesole

- The area of Fiesole is our last stop around Florence; it can be reached via bus or taxi from the Piazzale Michelangelo. If you have time, there are many interesting things to see along the way, including the monastery of San Domenico, the Villa Palmieri, the Badia ("Abbey") Fiesolana, and the Villa Medici.
- Fiesole is only five miles from the center of Florence, and today, it functions as a kind of garden suburb of the city. But the relationship between Florence and Fiesole was not always that intimate. Florence is a Roman foundation, whereas Fiesole is Etruscan.
 - The Etruscans always built cities on hilltops for defense, and Fiesole is a classic example. It was a major partner in the Etruscan Confederacy and had a celebrated reputation for training augurs—tellers of the future.
 - Ancient Fiesole (known as Faesulae) was conquered by Rome in 283 B.C. and was later the scene of a number of important struggles between the barbarian tribes invading Italy and Roman defenders. The massive Etruscan walls still standing today are witness to the strength of the site and its defensive role in Tuscany.
 - Indeed, in the early Middle Ages, Fiesole was equal to Florence in size and power, resulting in a number of wars

fought between the two neighbors. Finally, in 1125, the town was captured by Florence and integrated into its Tuscan state. Social, political, and economic activity all moved to Florence, and Fiesole began its new life as kind of resort town populated by the villas of rich Florentine families.

- As we walk through Fiesole, it is clear that this was a significant Roman settlement. Ironically enough, its subsequent loss of autonomy and influence meant that many of the ancient structures in the city remain. Of these, the Roman theater is one of the most impressive and indicates how important Fiesole once was. It was built in the 1st century B.C. but enlarged in the imperial period. The same archeological zone also has traces of Roman baths.
- The main attraction in the center of Fiesole is the cathedral, dedicated to San Romolo (St. Romulus). Inside, to the right of the choir is the burial chapel of Bishop Leonardo Salutati, dating from the 1460s. The sculpture portrait of the bishop and his tomb are by Mino da Fiesole, done around 1464. This local boy proved so talented that he was summoned to Rome to carve the choir loft and choir screen for the Sistine Chapel.
- While in Fiesole, take time to visit the Bandini Museum, directly across the street from the archeological museum. It is a charming personal collection with antique furnishings; Renaissance maiolica; della Robbia glazed terracotta objects; and some superb pictures by Taddeo Gaddi, Bernardo Daddi, Jacopo del Sellaio, and Lorenzo Monaco.
- Our last stop in Fiesole is the monastery of San Francesco, which has some well-preserved 15th-century pictures by Neri di Bicci and Piero di Cosimo. But the real reason to climb this hill is to see the picturesque views over Florence and the Arno Valley—and to dine in one of the excellent restaurants there as you enjoy the vista over the city and valley below.

Smithsonian Journeys Travel Tips

At San Miniato al Monte, the Olivetan monks run a lovely gift shop that offers devotional cards and books, rosaries, honey, liquor, and herbal soaps. It is the perfect place to pick up small, inexpensive gifts for friends and family back home.

Suggested Reading

Barzini, *The Italians*.

Boorsook, *The Companion Guide to Florence*.

Brucker, *Renaissance Florence*.

Hibbert, *Florence: Biography of a City*.

Levey, *Florence: A Portrait*.

McCarthy, *The Stones of Florence*.

Origo, *Images and Shadows*.

Richards, *The New Italians*.

Severgnini, *La Bella Figura*.

Strachan and Keeling, *Frommer's Florence, Tuscany and Umbria*.

Questions to Consider

1. Late-19th-century planners and architects built the Piazzale Michelangelo with the intention that it would be the site of a large museum overlooking the city. Are you disappointed that this museum was not built? Are there other civic projects you know of that were not completed?
2. If you were an influential citizen of Fiesole, how would you feel about Florence?

Arezzo, Perugia, and Assisi

Lecture 27

Exploring the treasures of Florence is a remarkable experience. The city also provides the perfect base for day trips to some of the romantic hill towns that are dotted across Tuscany and its neighboring province of Umbria. In this lecture, we'll make our way toward Venice along the ancient Roman consular road, the Via Cassia, which will allow us to glimpse some of the gems near Florence. We'll stop in Arezzo and Perugia, two Etruscan foundations built on hilltops, and Assisi, with its massive complex devoted to St. Francis.

Arezzo

- Arezzo is an Etruscan foundation that was conquered by the Romans in the 1st century A.D. The city became a free commune in 1098, beginning a period of expansion and artistic experimentation. The town reached its zenith in the early 14th century under the leadership of Guido Tarlati. After his death in 1327, Arezzo gradually lost its independence. By 1384, it had yielded to Florence, but many memories of its years of glory remain.
- The duomo in Arezzo occupies the highest point in town. The earliest structure here was begun in 1277 with funds provided by the will of Pope Gregory X. Although it wasn't finished until the 20th century, the duomo remained Gothic in style. Inside, the apse features stained glass by the 16th-century French master Guillaume de Marcillat. Note, too, the cenotaph to Bishop Tarlati and the Mary Magdalene next to it, by Piero della Francesca.
- One of Arezzo's medieval architectural and artistic masterpieces is the church of Santa Maria della Pieve. The current Romanesque church dates from almost exactly when Arezzo achieved its independence in 1098. But there was also an earlier church here, and some of its decoration is preserved, such as the lunette above the Via di Seteria entrance.

- The Piazza Grande was developed in about 1200, but it remains the center of life in Arezzo. A famous monthly antiques market is held here, as is a medieval festival—the Giostra del Saracino (“Joust of the Saracens”)—which takes place in June and September. In the summer, the piazza hosts open-air concerts and a theater festival.
 - The higher end of the square is dominated by the elegant and refined Palazzo delle Logge, designed in the 1570s by one of Arezzo’s most famous sons, Giorgio Vasari.
 - Vasari’s Logge ends at the Palazzo Pretorio, begun in the 14th century and completed in the 16th. Note the medieval bas relief sculpture of a knight on horseback above the main entrance. This dates from the 13th century and probably decorated an early town hall.
- The greatest treasure in Arezzo is found in the church of San Francesco: *The Legend of the True Cross* by Piero della Francesca. Piero was a master of linear perspective, dynamic composition, and individualization of character, and he wielded a color palette that has remained remarkably fresh to this day. Completed in the years from 1453 to 1464, the fresco cycle is a signal moment in Western European painting.
 - The narrative of the cycle was one of the most popular in medieval Italy, derived largely from *The Golden Legend* of Jacobus de Voragine. It tells the history of the wood that was used to make the cross on which Jesus was crucified. The cycle traces the tree’s growth in the Garden of Eden until its recovery by St. Helena, mother of Emperor Constantine.
 - Look for the planting of the tree on Adam’s grave from a seed taken from the Tree of Knowledge. Note, too, the meeting of the queen of Sheba with Solomon, who buries the wood to protect the Jews. Examine carefully the battle scenes between the Persians and the Greeks, noting the headgear and costumes of the Greeks. It helps to remember that Constantinople fell to the Muslim Turks the year the fresco was commissioned.

Perugia

- Like Arezzo, Perugia is an Etruscan foundation built on a hilltop. Its name derives from the period of Roman conquest, when it was called Augusta Perusia. But the Etruscan walls and gates survive in the city, especially the so-called Arch of Augustus, which is really an Etruscan gate.
- Perugia achieved the status of a free commune in the late 11th century. Like most Italian towns of the time, it suffered periodic attacks by its neighbors and internal factionalism, but a crisis was reached in 1540. The citizens of Perugia refused to pay an oppressive tax the papacy had levied on salt. The resulting rebellion—the so-called Salt War—was callously suppressed by Pope Paul III. He ordered the palaces and houses of dissenting citizens to be filled with rubble. These then served as the foundation for his fortress: the Rocca Paolina.
- The main street of the historic town is the Corso Vannucci, named for Perugia's most well-known native son, the painter Pietro Vannucci (known as Perugino). The famous Perugino chocolates are proudly named after this great Renaissance painter.
- Perugia's Piazza IV Novembre is one of Italy's most elegant and well-preserved squares. Like many places in Italy, the piazza has changed its name periodically to reflect history. The date referred to here is the one on which World War I ended in Italy. The piazza is dominated by the Fontana Maggiore, dating from the 13th century. The rich carving is the work of Niccolò Pisano and his son, Giovanni.
- Directly behind the fountain is the unfinished façade of the Cathedral of San Lorenzo. The lower level of the elevation is a pleasing geometric arrangement of polished pink and white marble, but the upper register is incomplete. Ironically, the crucifix above the portal was installed to protect Perugia from the pope during the Salt War. The bronze statue is of Pope Julius III, who reinstated Perugia's city rights after they had been removed by Pope Paul III.



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The lower basin of the Fontana Maggiore features bas relief depictions of the calendar months, astrological symbols, and the liberal arts, while the upper basin is decorated with biblical, ancient, and saintly personalities.

- The interior of the cathedral is Gothic. Its greatest treasure lies in a chapel on the left side of the nave. By tradition, it holds the reliquary of the holy ring—the ring by which Mary was said to have been betrothed to Joseph.
- According to legend, a Jewish merchant from the Holy Land sold the ring to a goldsmith from Chiusi in A.D. 985. But in 1473, the ring was purloined from Chiusi by a German friar who intended to bring it back to his native country. On his way home, the friar was stranded in Perugia by a storm. He gave the ring to the bishop of Perugia for safekeeping before journeying onward. Chiusi launched an army for the return of the sacred relic, but it was unsuccessful, and the ring has remained in Perugia ever since.
- Opposite San Lorenzo is one of Umbria's most imposing public buildings, the Palace of the Priors. It is a splendid example of Gothic design, built during the later 12th and early 13th centuries.

- The entrance to the palace is surmounted by two bronze images mounted on brackets. The lion is emblematic of Perugia's loyalty to the papacy, while the griffin is a longstanding symbol of the city. Inside is one of Italy's grandest rooms, the Hall of Notaries, which is still used for conferences and public meetings.
- A substantial portion of the rest of the palace is now occupied by the National Gallery of Umbria, which displays paintings from the region and elsewhere organized chronologically.
- Close to Perugia is a remarkably preserved Etruscan tomb from the 2nd century B.C.E. This hypogeum (underground burial complex) belonged to the wealthy Volumni family. It reproduces the typical plan of a Roman house because the Etruscans believed that the afterlife is similar to this one. Note in particular the room that would be the *tablinium*. Here is a monument to the head of the family, Arunte, and his children, all reclining on one elbow on their sarcophagi as if at dinner.
- Another nearby stop is Deruta, a tiny town that has produced the most celebrated Italian ceramics, called maiolica, since the Renaissance. This exacting craft has flourished here from the Middle Ages because of the quality of the clay and the wealthy clients living nearby.

Assisi

- Assisi was founded by the early inhabitants who gave the region of Umbria its name, the Umbri. It was later captured by the Romans. Like Arezzo and Perugia, it achieved the status of an independent commune in the Middle Ages. And like them, it fought the ambitions of its neighbors, fell prey to various tyrants, and was eventually incorporated into the States of the Church. But what made Assisi one of Italy's most visited cities, of course, was St. Francis.
- The heart of Assisi since ancient times has been the Piazza del Comune, which was the site of the Roman forum. Here, we see the perfectly preserved early-1st-century Temple of Minerva. Because

the temple was converted into a church, now called Santa Maria Sopra Minerva, it survived intact.

- Next to it is the Palace of the Captain of the People, built in the 13th century. Also in the town square, don't miss the 14th-century pulpit, used by visiting preachers who would fill the square. The remnants of the frescoes in the niche behind are by Simone Martini.
- On the southern flank of the piazza is another medieval civic building, the Palace of the Priors. Notice the frescoed vaulting under an arch of the façade, called the *Volta Pinta*. The meaning of this enigmatic collection of images has puzzled scholars with its mixture of ancient myths and grotesques.
- The church of St. Francis is one of the supreme monuments of European art, painted by the greatest of the late-medieval and early-Renaissance masters.
 - The bodies of St. Francis and his first disciples are buried in the crypt here. Also in the crypt is the Chapel of the Relics, which contains Francis's cowl, his sandals, and the cloth stained with his blood from the stigmata.
 - The basilica of St. Francis is, in effect, two churches, one atop the other. In the Lower Church, the Chapel of St. Martin features a narrative of the life of St. Martin of Tours by the Sieneese painter Simone Martini. In the transept are frescoes by another Sieneese, Pietro Lorenzetti, though it is likely that Giotto and his workshop contributed to them. The fresco to note most closely is *The Virgin in Majesty (Maestà) with St. Francis* by Cimabue, painted about 1280. The figure on the Virgin's left in a simple cowl is the earliest image of St. Francis.
 - The nave of the Upper Church was painted by Giotto, completed sometime between 1296 and 1304. The cycle depicts 28 scenes taken from St. Bonaventure's *Life of St. Francis*, including *Francis Preaching to the Birds* and *The Death of St. Francis*, each a masterpiece.

Smithsonian Journeys Travel Tips

For a break from the crowds surrounding the basilica of San Francesco in Assisi, visit the medieval castle called Rocca Maggiore, located on the hill above the town. You can reach the castle by following a series of steps leading to the top of the hill from the city center. Visit the castle itself or simply enjoy the stunning views of Assisi and the rolling hills and valleys of the surrounding landscape.

Suggested Reading

Adams, *Umbria*.

Barzini, *The Italians*.

Boardman, *Umbria: A Cultural History*.

Cianchetta, *Assisi*.

Richards, *The New Italians*.

Severgnini, *La Bella Figura*.

Questions to Consider

1. Why is Umbria called the land of soldiers and saints?
2. It is impossible to visit Assisi and not be moved. To what degree is it the art, the spirit of St. Francis, or the evocative natural landscape that has such an effect on visitors?

Venice: The Center of Power

Lecture 28

No matter how you approach the Piazza San Marco—the geographical heart and soul of Venice—you can't help but wonder why a city exists here amid the marshy lagoons. The explanation lies in the unusual circumstances of Venice's birth. In the 5th to 7th centuries, northern barbarians crossed the Alps to ravage the Roman settlements on the Lombard Plain. Roman refugees sought safety in the almost impenetrable lagoons and swamps of the delta of the river Po. There, they built foundations for a city by driving literally millions of wooden stakes into the sandbars. In this last section of our course, we will explore the wonderland they constructed, known as La Serenissima—the city of Venice.

The History and Layout of Venice

- This early history of Venice explains the peculiar kind of constitution developed by the city. The Roman refugees and their fisherman descendants were fiercely independent, self-governing freemen. Because their city was new, there was no established elite, nor a prince or bishop to be obeyed. At first, the Venetians lived under the protection of the Byzantine Empire, but by 726, a republic headed by a duke (*doge* in the Venetian dialect) had been firmly established, and the emperor at Constantinople no longer had any influence in his appointment.
- The election of the doge, however, remained Byzantine in its complexity and secrecy. In that way, the Venetians ensured that no one man or family could ever establish a hereditary monarchy. The doge was merely the first among equals, elected by his peers. However, as the city became richer, so did a number of the most important merchants and traders. Increasingly, then, the electors became a restrictive class. But until the end of the 13th century, that class was only loosely defined and open to new talent.

- Venice was praised as a model state, with an ideal constitution and a stability unknown elsewhere in Italy—and there is some truth in that reputation. The basic constitution of the republic lasted for 1,100 years, from 697 to 1797, when it was finally suppressed by Napoleon. During that time, there were only two significant attempts to overthrow the state, and both failed immediately. This helps to explain Venice’s appellation: La Serenissima, “the Most Serene Republic.”
- The heart of Venice is divided into three essential areas: (1) the Molo San Marco, the quayside that faces into the semi-enclosed part of the lagoon known as the Bacino di San Marco (“Basin of St. Mark”); (2) the Piazzetta San Marco (“Little Piazza St. Mark”), the rectangular space running north of the columns to roughly the southern façade of the Basilica San Marco; and (3) the Piazza San Marco, the large area that extends westward from the main façade of the basilica.

The Columns of the Molo

- What we first note in the Molo are two huge granite columns. These are Byzantine, dating from before the 13th century and set up on the piazza perhaps as late as the 1260s. Each column is surmounted by a statue honoring one of Venice’s two patron saints, St. Theodore and St. Mark. The evangelist St. Mark was adopted as Venice’s patron by the 9th century and is represented throughout the city by his symbol of the winged lion.
- The source of these two columns is uncertain, although it’s known that the monument of St. Theodore is a compilation of several ancient figures. The winged lion of St. Mark is probably Persian, made about 300 B.C.E. as a griffin for the temple of a god in Asia Minor.
- Why does Venice have two patron saints? St. Theodore was inextricably linked with the Eastern church, but as the Venetians established their independence from Constantinople, it became important to be represented by a less Byzantine patron. Equally, as Venice grew in wealth and power, it became desirable to adopt a saint of greater stature than Theodore.

- To this ambition, we must add the myth of the dream of St. Mark. The story is that he went on a voyage to preach the gospel in Italy. One night, his ship was sailing just off the barren coast where Venice would arise half a millennium later. On that night, St. Mark had a dream in which an angel said to him, “Peace be with you, Mark, my evangelist. This is where your body will rest.”
- The story is completely apocryphal, but the Venetians propagated this legend to the point of ensuring that the prophecy would be fulfilled. In 828, they sent two merchants, Rustico da Torcello and Bon da Malamocco, to Alexandria to steal St. Mark’s body. The pair smuggled the corpse of the saint past the Muslim guards by hiding the body in a barrel of pork.

The Doge’s Palace

- The glorious masterpiece of Gothic architecture to the east of the columns is the Doge’s Palace. It was constructed to house not just the doge but also the important offices of state. The first palace structure on this site arose in the 1170s, when the seat of government moved here from the Rialto. By the 14th century, the organs of the republic had grown so much that a larger space was needed.
- The current structure is made up of three wings, the oldest of which is the one that faces the Bacino. Work began in the 1320s, overseen by one Filippo Calendario, a stonemason or an architect.
 - Unfortunately, in 1355, Calendario was judged complicit in an attempted overthrow of the republic and executed; work on the palace halted for decades. A carved circular image of Venice dispensing justice marks the place where the 14th-century palace ended.
 - Calendario’s building was then extended to the basilica in 1424 under the supervision of Doge Foscari. It was considered essential for this wing to continue Calendario’s design, culminating in a ceremonial entrance gate into the palace.



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A living doge could only be portrayed kneeling, shown in humility before the winged lion, the Virgin Mary, or the female symbol of Venice.

- The covered arcade of the palace was, in effect, off limits to anyone except the merchant-patricians who formed the political class. It was here that deals were made. On one end, the arcade culminates in a florid Gothic arch, dating from 1438–1442 and designed by a pair of architect brothers, Giovanni and Bartolomeo Bon. The wonderfully articulated pediment of the arch is presided over by the image of Justice. It is known as the Foscari Arch, named for the doge who commissioned it.

Other Sites in the Piazzetta

- The two large rectangular pillars in front of the south wall of the basilica are known as the Pillars of Acre because they were long believed to have been spoils from the Levantine city of that name. It's now known that the columns are from a 6th-century church in Constantinople and were probably carried off during the Fourth Crusade. The Venetians convinced the other Christian Crusaders that sacking Constantinople would be far more profitable than fighting the infidels. The Piazza San Marco, the basilica, and the

piazzetta are encrusted with many of the looted treasures from that campaign.

- Among the most famous of those treasures are the four tetrarchs fixed to the corner of the south façade of the basilica. These figures are carved in porphyry, a hard Egyptian granite that was reserved for imperial images. They represent the rulers of the Roman Empire after Diocletian divided it in two in A.D. 285.
- The gallery on the south façade of the basilica features a mosaic of the Virgin Mary with Jesus between her open arms. Beneath the mosaic is a square window, on either side of which are two lamps that are always lit. They are kept as a reminder that even the fabled justice of the republic can sometimes make a mistake, as it did in 1507 when it executed the wrong man for the murder of a young noble. To make amends for its hasty judgment in the case, the government installed these lamps, ordering them never to be extinguished. Light would shine perpetually on the site where darkness had resulted in a miscarriage of justice.
- On the west side of the piazzetta opposite the Ducal Palace is the Marciana Library. Begun in 1537, it was designed by Sansovino, the architect responsible for Venetian public works. This beautiful structure was intended to hold the rich library of St. Mark, including the Greek manuscripts given by Cardinal Bessarion in the 15th century.
 - Sansovino's bold and innovative design included no internal supports in the great reading room. His plan might have been sound, but the extreme dampness of the location meant that the mortar did not set properly, and the ceiling of the reading room collapsed.
 - The Venetian government threw Sansovino in prison and refused to release him until he rebuilt the library at his own expense. Ultimately, such cultural stars as Titian and Pietro Aretino spoke on Sansovino's behalf and he was released.

The Basilica di San Marco

- Historically, the Basilica di San Marco was the private chapel of the doges—a shrine to Venetian power and the place where religious and political belief merged. The church seen today is the third on this site. The first was hastily constructed in 830 to receive the body of St. Mark, just taken from Alexandria. That church was destroyed by fire in 976 and was rebuilt exactly as it had been. But the growing wealth of the city and the desire for a symbol of its power resulted in the demolition of the second building in 1063. The current, Byzantine-style church was structurally finished at the end of the 11th century.
- Because the damp atmosphere in Venice is hazardous to all art forms, the mosaics on the external façade are all late, mostly 18th- and even 19th-century work or restorations. There is, however, a remarkable exception: The mosaic over the north portal dates from the 13th century and depicts the historic moment when the body of St. Mark was translated to the church.
- All five portals in the façade feature elaborate Gothic decoration made in the 14th and 15th centuries. The spaces are divided by Gothic covers for the statues of saints, breaking up the mass of this Gothic confection. Above the five doors in the façade is a gallery, and on it, above the main portal, sits the most famous of all the treasure looted by the Venetians from Constantinople in 1204. These are the Quadriga, the four bronze horses that once graced Constantine's Hippodrome in Constantinople.
- The façade of the basilica brings to mind a triumphal arch as much as it does a church. The symbolism of the decoration attests to Venetian glory and independence. This idea of the church as a triumphal monument is reinforced by the fact that it is encrusted with war booty: the horses, the tetrarchs, the Pillars of Acre, and so on, symbolically suggesting that St. Mark, the Virgin Mary, and God gave victory to the Venetians.

Smithsonian Journeys Travel Tips

Imagine the water of the Bacino overflowing and slowly making its way across the Riva degli Schiavoni, flooding the Molo and the Piazzetta and Piazza San Marco. Because this area is the lowest part of the city of Venice, it is the first place to flood during high tides, especially in November and December. Called *acqua alta*, or “high water,” the inundation of water from the lagoon can fill the area with several inches to three feet of water, causing inconvenience to citizens and visitors. However, the flooding that occurred in the fall of 2012—when people were swimming in the Piazza San Marco—is unusual. Generally, when *acqua alta* is forecast, elevated platforms or duckboards are set up to allow people to walk above the water, and vendors offer inexpensive galoshes for visitors to purchase. High water can also limit the services of the *vaporetti* (“water buses”) and *traghetti* (“gondola ferries”) because the high tide floods the canals and makes transportation dangerous.

Suggested Reading

Barzini, *The Italians*.

Brown, *Art and Life in Renaissance Venice*.

Chambers, *The Imperial Age of Venice, 1380–1580*.

Guy, *Building Renaissance Venice*.

Honour, *A Companion Guide to Venice*.

Horodowich, *A Brief History of Venice*.

Jonglez and Zoffoli, *Secret Venice*.

Manno, Venchierutti, and Codato, *The Treasures of Venice*.

Martin, *No Vulgar Hotel*.

Morris, *The World of Venice*.

———, *The Venetian Empire*.

Norwich, *Paradise of Cities*.

Richards, *The New Italians*.

Romanelli, ed., *Venice: Art and Architecture*.

Severgnini, *La Bella Figura*.

Valcanover, *Museums and Galleries of Venice*.

Wills, *Venice: Lion City*.

Questions to Consider

1. The approach to Venice by water is often likened to a theatrical stage set. Do you think this was the intention of the Venetians? Can you name other cities with similar grand approaches?
2. Why did the Venetians take trophies from around the Mediterranean to install in public places in the city? Would you approve of such action today?

The Drawing Room of Europe: Piazza San Marco

Lecture 29

In front of the Basilica di San Marco are three flagpoles, cast in bronze by Alessandro Leopardi in 1505. The silken flags of Venice—the red and gold banners of St. Mark—were continuously flown from here until that sad day in 1797 when Napoleon extinguished the 1,100-year-old republic of Venice. The three flagpoles represented the pillars of Venetian mercantile and naval power, the three parts of the so-called *Stato da Mar* (“Maritime Empire”): Cyprus, Candia (Crete), and Morea (the Peloponnese in Greece). In this lecture, we’ll learn more about this empire and explore the Piazza San Marco in greater detail.

The Campanile and Loggia

- The campanile of the Basilica di San Marco was begun in 902 and became much as it is today in the 1160s. Some decoration and renovation also date from 16th century, including the beautifully proportioned—although theatrical—loggia of Sansovino.
- This loggia was a kind of waiting room where foreign ambassadors and visitors assembled before parading across the top of the piazzetta through the Foscari Arch into the Ducal Palace. This dedicated space ensured that Venetian patricians were prevented from speaking privately or at length with foreign delegates. Venetian custom dictated that all discourse should take place only in front of entire committees or councils in the palace itself.
- A close look at the Sansovino loggia reveals a maze of cracks in the marble. These resulted from the collapse of the campanile in July 1902, almost exactly 1,000 years after the first campanile was begun on the site. Luckily, no one was hurt, but the disaster stimulated an interesting debate.
 - Venice in 1902 was hardly the great city of the Middle Ages and Renaissance, and it had lost its role as an important

port. Consequently, the bell tower, as well as other historic structures, had not been maintained.

- With the collapse of the campanile, publicists and artists argued that this was an opportunity to turn Venice into a modern city. Both the tower and much of the historic city should be pulled down to make way for a 20th-century Venice.
- Many of these journalists and artists were futurists, who promoted the new world of speed, machines, and technology, and many of them later became supporters of the fascists. Fortunately for history, none of their contemporaries paid much attention. The bell tower and the loggia were rebuilt by 1912 exactly as they had been, using as much of the original material as possible.

The Procuratie Nuove

- The long, elegant building that occupies the entire south side of the piazza is the Procuratie Nuove. The architect was Sansovino's pupil, Vincenzo Scamozzi, who began this lovely building in 1582. The style is the classical, orderly face of Renaissance Venice.
- It has been suggested that this self-confident and expensive reflection of Venetian wealth and power was a bold statement of hope and belief in Venice's future. It was built at a time when the mercantile foundations of the republic were severely threatened.
 - The Portuguese had circumnavigated Africa at the end of the 15th century, thus ending the Venetian monopoly on the Mediterranean luxury and spice trade. The Turks had expanded into the Aegean and Mediterranean, suffocating Venetian influence in that last outpost of Constantine's empire.
 - But Venice remained a rich and potent naval power. And these public buildings seem to be a statement of the republic's firm belief in its future and its empire on land and sea.
- The Procuratie Nuove housed the offices of the most prestigious officials of the republic. Originally established in the 9th century,

the procurators of St. Mark were responsible for the basilica and its treasury, including the purloined body of the saint. Later, they were also charged with administering wills, distributing charity, caring for orphans, and carrying out other duties. Interestingly, the office of procurator exists to this day, and these officials still care for the treasures and property of the basilica.

- Under the portico of the Procuratie Nuove is the celebrated Caffè Florian. It was first opened in 1720 by Floriano Francesconi, and it's the oldest café in Italy still in operation. After Napoleon suppressed the republic and handed Venice over to the Austrians in the late 18th century, the Florian became a meeting place for conspirators against the Austrians. When revolution broke out in the city in 1848, the café was used as an infirmary to treat the wounded.

Other Sites in the Piazza

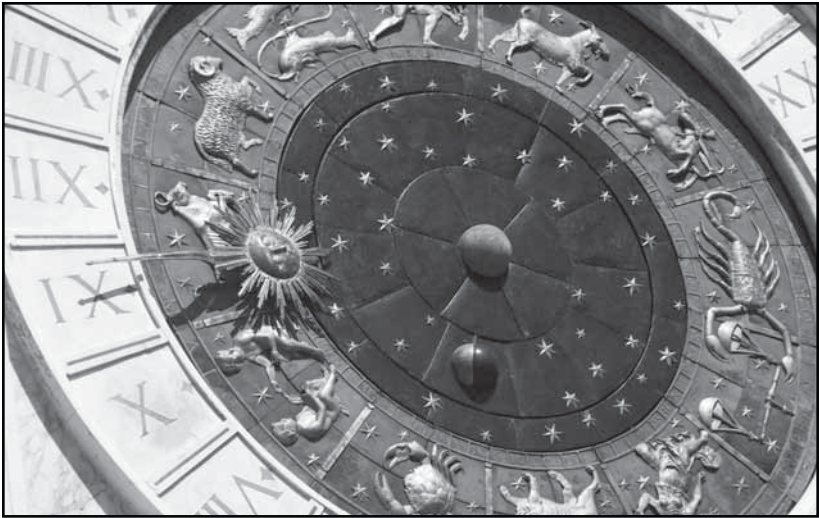
- The so-called Napoleonic Wing was constructed at the far end of the piazza on the orders of Napoleon after he declared himself king of Italy in 1805.
 - Venice was an important city in this artificial state, but when Napoleon was crowned, there was nowhere suitable for a royal court. Thus, in 1807—and to the great outrage of Venetians—Napoleon had the church of San Geminiano demolished, to be replaced by a palace. Neoclassical in style, the structure was designed by a talented Italian architect, Giuseppe Maria Soli.
 - Ironically, Napoleon never occupied the palace. The structure was unfinished when he fell in 1814. It wasn't until 1836 that the equally unpopular Austrians completed it. Today, the staircase and rooms form the entrance to the Correr Museum.
- The north side of the piazza constitutes the Procuratie Vecchie (“Old Procuracies”) of St. Mark. The original buildings here were constructed in the 12th century as both the offices and living quarters of the procurators. But this two-story structure burned down and had to be rebuilt in the 16th century, when a third floor was added.

As you walk under the portico to investigate the shops, look for the doors that led upstairs to the procurators' apartments and offices during the period of the republic.

- There are two caf es on the north side of the piazza: Gran Caff  Quadri and Lavena. The Quadri was established in 1725 and served as a gathering place for the Austrians when the Caff  Florian refused to serve them in the late 18th century. The Lavena dates from 1750; it, too, accommodated Austrians during their occupation of Venice and, indeed, has always attracted an almost exclusively foreign clientele.

The Piazza Clock Tower

- The clock tower is one of the most popular structures on the piazza. It was built between 1496 and 1499, and its architect was almost certainly Mauro Coducci (or Codussi). At the top of the tower are two large bronze figures holding hammers. They sound the hours by swinging from the waist to strike a bell. These figures were originally gilded, but as the gilding wore away, the dark bronze patina made them look as if they had dark complexions. Consequently, they became known as the Moors.
- Beneath the Moors, set on a background of blue studded with gold stars, is the lion of St. Mark. Also here is a gilded image of the Virgin and Child. Behind the numbers on this level is a complex mechanism that plays only twice a year, to celebrate the Feast of the Epiphany and the Feast of the Ascension. On those days, the numerals recede, the right side opens, and out comes a procession of the three wise men, led by an angel blowing a trumpet. They make a circuit around the Virgin, then bow and exit through the left side.
- On the next level of the clock is the huge blue face, on which the 24 hours of the day are inscribed in Roman numerals. The central disk has a single gold hand with the sun imposed on it. It revolves to point to the hour. The signs of the zodiac on the edge of the disk also rotate to indicate the appropriate astrological symbol.



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At the center of the San Marco clock face is the earth, thought to be the center of the universe until Copernicus and Galileo proved otherwise more than a century after the clock's construction.

- The lower two stories of the clock tower constitute a huge arch. Passing through that arch, we see the other face of the clock on the opposite side of the tower, a much less complex mechanism. Looking up and slightly to the left just beyond the clock tower, notice a marble relief of an old woman throwing a mortar. This was the site of the collapse of one of the two great conspiracies against the Venetian Republic, that of Bajamonte Tiepolo.
 - In 1310, a group of young patricians, led by Bajamonte Tiepolo, sought to overthrow the doge and the republic. On June 15, they launched their plan, but news of the plot had leaked and authorities had time to bar the piazza to the insurgents.
 - Still, the rebels were quite noisy, and a cantankerous old woman, Lucia Rossi, who lived in a building overlooking the action, became annoyed. She threw her marble mortar at the crowd and struck Tiepolo's standard bearer on the head, killing him instantly. The panicked rebels then fled back to their neighborhoods.

- In 1861, the carved relief of Lucia was attached to the building close to where her apartment had been located in 1310 to commemorate her act in defense of the republic.

A Last Look at the Piazza

- Returning to the piazza under the clock tower, on the left, we see the lovely façade of the deconsecrated church of San Basso. The first church here dated from 1079. A subsequent church was built to replace that one after a devastating fire. However, what we see is a building of 1661, designed by Baldassare Longhena, a masterful Venetian architect. In the 1890s, the church was converted into a concert hall and still serves that purpose today.
- Across from the former church of San Basso is the north side of the basilica. Here, too, are Byzantine treasures looted from Constantinople. In particular, notice the 7th-century carved relief of 12 sheep. They represent the 12 apostles surrounding a throne for Christ. This is one of the few important religious objects to escape the iconoclastic period in Byzantium.
 - But there is Venetian work here, as well. The 13th-century Door of the Flowers, with its exquisite pointed arches and Gothic image of the Nativity, is one of the treasures of the exterior of the basilica.
 - Notice, too, the shallow steps that are presided over by two crouching lions. These give this small extension of the piazza its name: Piazzetta dei Leoncini (“Little Square of the Little Lions”). These red marble lions were the gift of the doge Alvise Mocenigo in 1722.
- The neoclassical Palace of the Patriarchs forms the eastern perimeter of the Piazzetta dei Leoncini; it was begun in 1837 and completed in 1870. A popular patriarch of Venice, Cardinal Roncalli, was elected as Pope John XXIII in 1958, and subsequently, the square was renamed for him. But all Venetians still call it the Piazzetta dei Leoncini because, after all, the little lions are still here.

Smithsonian Journeys Travel Tips

From the Molo, head west along the Riva degli Schiavoni just beyond the Libreria Marciana to the Giardini ex Reali (“Royal Gardens”). Here, you can sit on a bench to catch your breath, enjoy views of the Bacino, and consider what you might purchase from the souvenir stands surrounding the San Marco-Giardinetti *vaporetto* stop.

Suggested Reading

Barzini, *The Italians*.

Brown, *Art and Life in Renaissance Venice*.

Chambers, *The Imperial Age of Venice, 1380–1580*.

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Honour, *A Companion Guide to Venice*.

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Valcanover, *Museums and Galleries of Venice*.

Wilde, *Venetian Art from Bellini to Titian*.

Wills, *Venice: Lion City*.

Questions to Consider

1. Napoleon referred to the Piazza San Marco as Europe's most elegant drawing room. Do you agree with his judgement? Why?
2. Unlike Rome, Siena, Florence, and many other cities, the political and religious centers of Venice share a single space: the piazza. Why do you think this happened? What does it say about Venice?

The Basilica of San Marco

Lecture 30

The Basilica of San Marco began as a kind of copy of the Church of the Holy Apostles in Constantinople, and it retains much of that Byzantine quality. For instance, it is a Greek cross church, in which the nave and transepts are of equal length, and it is surmounted by onion domes. But it also has pointed Gothic arches, late-Gothic decorated finials, and an almost dizzying concatenation of colors and materials. One author of the 19th century compared its façade in the sunlight to froth on the sea, while another writer likened it to a huge bug settled on the piazza. Regardless of which image you choose, there can be no doubt that the basilica is magical.

Atrium of the Basilica

- The entrance of the basilica takes us into the atrium. This is not just a passage but an integral part of the history of the basilica. Just inside the central door, notice a porphyry lozenge set in the floor. This marks the exact place where, on July 24, 1177, the Holy Roman Emperor Frederick Barbarossa was compelled to kneel before Pope Alexander III and ask for forgiveness after he had lost the war against the Guelfs the previous year.
- Along the walls of the atrium are the sarcophagi of very early doges. Later doges were not entombed here because the culture of Venice deemed them to be servants and symbols of the state, not men to be honored individually in this sacred place.
- The columns in dark gray and white veined marble around the entrance doors were popularly believed to have come from Jerusalem and the Temple of Solomon. This is certainly fanciful, but they obviously came from somewhere else—as did so many treasures in the basilica.
- The mosaics here are perhaps the finest in San Marco. They date from the 13th century and are likely the work of Byzantine

craftsmen. Even older are the mosaics on either side of the central, niched portal. These images of saints date from the 11th century. They are among the few elements that survive from the first iteration of the current basilica.

- The door on the right of the atrium that leads into the basilica was cast in Constantinople in the 11th century. It was a gift to San Marco from the Byzantine emperor Alexius I Comnenus.

Inside the Basilica

- The effect on first entering San Marco is almost beyond description. The play of the mosaics on the complex architectural form and the rich decoration of the floor all contribute to a sense of hypnotic magnificence.
- The geometric mosaics on the floor are not just decorative but are designed to reflect the perfect geometry of the universe. As an example, just inside the central portal is a dodecahedron. This



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The decoration in San Marco is designed not just to please the eye but to excite the mind, giving insights into theology and God's plan for man.

complex shape is one of the five Platonic solids. For Plato, it represented cosmic harmony, but by the 15th century, it had come to symbolize the power of God in nature. This particular dodecahedron is attributed to the Florentine painter Paolo Uccello, who was also a mathematician.

- The mosaics on the vaults and domes date from the early 12th to the 18th centuries. Clearly, the Venetians continued the practices and traditions of Byzantine decoration, even long after Venice had achieved political separation from Constantinople. Many of the mosaics have been restored and repaired, but that hardly interferes with our appreciation of the quality of their craftsmanship.
 - The individual tiles, or tesserae, are gilded; a layer of gold leaf is sandwiched between thin layers of glass.
 - The tesserae are not installed flat against the brick vaulting. Rather, they are carefully angled to catch the light, either from windows or candles. This gives a dynamic, shimmering quality to what otherwise might have been a static art form.
- The interior of the basilica celebrates the New Testament. In fact, looking down the nave, what catches the eye immediately is the large central dome with its 13th-century representation of the Ascension of Christ. The program on the nave walls depicts the gospels preached by the apostles. The domes and walls on either side in the transepts have their own narratives, celebrating the life of Mary, the miracles of Christ, and more. The apse is dominated by Christ Pantocrator, that is, Christ portrayed as ruler of the universe.
- The choir screen is from the 14th century. It is surmounted by 13 marble statues representing the apostles and the Virgin Mary. The two “pulpits” on either side of the screen are of the same date and incorporate materials from Byzantium.
 - It is unusual to have more than one pulpit, especially given that the pulpit on the left has two registers. The upper tier was for the reading of the gospel, and the lower one was for the reading of the epistle.

- The pulpit on the right was actually a political space, reserved for the doge alone. When the doge was elected, he was led to this platform to be recognized by the people.
- The baldacchino above the high altar was fashioned in the 13th century. It's supported on elegantly carved columns, two of which were said to have been taken from the palace of Pontius Pilate in Jerusalem. The high altar itself is announced by Sansovino's bronzes of the four evangelists and Girolamo Paliari's four doctors of the church. Under the altar is, of course, the body of St. Mark.
- Behind the altar, to the left as you face the apse, are the bronze doors of the sacristy, illustrated with scenes of Christ's entombment and resurrection. These doors were produced by Sansovino in 1546. Interestingly, they feature contemporary portraits: Sansovino, Titian, and the poet Pietro Aretino. All three men were famous residents of Venice in the mid-16th century, and their busts would have been immediately recognizable.
- Behind the iconostasis on the high altar is the justly famous Pala d'Oro ("Golden Altarpiece"). The original altarpiece was commissioned in Constantinople in the year 976 for the new San Marco. However, it was soon deemed not grand enough and was enlarged after 1102. In the 13th century, it was expanded yet again to incorporate some enamels and materials stolen from Byzantine altarpieces. Finally, the whole Pala d'Oro was dismantled, supplemented by some Venetian enamels, and reassembled and framed in 1345.

Other Highlights of San Marco

- During the period of the republic, important dignitaries and visitors to the city would be taken to view the treasury of San Marco. As we might expect, there are a great many reliquaries here; among the relics they hold are the linen cloth believed to have been used by Christ to wash his disciples' feet and what is believed to be a sacred vial of the Virgin's milk.

- Just beyond the entrance to the treasury is the baptistery. The mosaics in the dome here date from the 14th century and depict Christ surrounded by classical-looking angels. The death of John the Baptist in the lunette is highly dramatic, especially the elegant image of Salome. The granite slab that functions as the surface of the altar was taken from Tyre in 1126. It was said to be the stone on which Christ rested when he went to that city to escape the adoring throngs.
- Back in the basilica, on the left wall as you face the high altar is a Byzantine icon, the Madonna Nicopeia (“Our Lady of Victory”). This became a cult object in Venice because it was taken from the monastery of St. John the Theologian in Constantinople during the Fourth Crusade in 1204. It was especially sacred because it was carried into battle by Byzantine emperors; thus, the Venetians believed it brought victory. It is the work of Luke Canggellaris, a celebrated icon painter of the time.
- The Chapel of St. Isidore is dedicated to a Christian martyr from the 3rd century. He was beheaded on the Greek island of Chios, which the Venetians looted in 1125. Because the saint’s body was not immediately needed, it languished until Doge Andrea Dandolo decided to commission this chapel to him in the mid-14th century. The mosaics tell the story of Isidore, with the translation of his relics to Venice prominently featured.
- The Cappella dei Mascoli (“Chapel of the Males”) is related to a *scuola*, or confraternity. Note here the 15th-century mosaics of scenes from the life of the Virgin. Tradition has attributed these to designs by Andrea Mantegna, who worked nearby at Padua.
- Almost directly across from the chapel is a curious juxtaposition of objects: a 14th-century Veneto-Byzantine relief of the Virgin Mary and a 19th-century rifle (*schioppo* in Italian). Hence, the image is known as the Madonna dello Schioppo. The rifle is a votive, placed in the basilica in the 19th century by a young Venetian patriot who

had sworn to honor this image of the Virgin if his life should be spared in a revolt against the Austrians.

- The museum of the basilica gives access to the gallery where the horses from Constantinople's Hippodrome once stood. It is also possible to enter some of the upper galleries of the basilica from the museum, allowing visitors to get close to the mosaics.

Façades of the Ducal Palace

- We have already discussed the double arcade, the Broglio, and the loggia of the Ducal Palace, but we should now notice the exterior. Although the southern façade dates from the earlier 15th century and the piazzetta façade from later, the intended unity of design remains clearly visible. The façades are composed of patterned white-and-pink stone, Islamic in origin and inspiration. This is broken by large, Gothic-framed windows with small circular “portholes” and quatrefoil inserts above. At the top is an unusual crenellation, and in the center of the façades are marvelous balconies.
- The balcony facing the piazzetta was commissioned by Doge Andrea Gritti in about 1530. It was part of his reconstruction of the room that adjoins it, the Room of the Scrutiny. Four male Roman gods—Mars, Neptune, Jupiter, and Mercury—are displayed in niches carved into the tall columns on both sides of the balcony. Fittingly, Doge Gritti himself is portrayed kneeling before the lion of St. Mark. Venice—almost a goddess herself—crowns the pediment.
- The southern façade has a balcony by the Masegne brothers, dating from 1400 to 1404. Instead of a portrait of the doge, there is a roundel of the Virgin and Child above the Gothic opening. The top of the pediment supports the figure of Justice, with her scales and sword. The unity of these façades makes the palace seem a coherent whole, despite the long period required for its construction.

Smithsonian Journeys Travel Tips

The Basilica of San Marco contains the largest surviving areas of mosaic in the world. Dating from the 9th to the 11th centuries, the floors offer an extraordinary range of ornamentation. In the narthex and the nave, small triangles, squares, and circles of colored stone are arranged in patterns that create geometrical designs, biblical scenes, animals, and birds.

Suggested Reading

Barzini, *The Italians*.

Brown, *Art and Life in Renaissance Venice*.

Chambers, *The Imperial Age of Venice, 1380–1580*.

Guy, *Building Renaissance Venice*.

Honour, *A Companion Guide to Venice*.

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Severgnini, *La Bella Figura*.

Valcanover, *Museums and Galleries of Venice*.

Wilde, *Venetian Art from Bellini to Titian*.

Wills, *Venice: Lion City*.

Questions to Consider

1. What does the Basilica of San Marco tell us about the authority of the state?
2. Can you suggest why mosaics were used to decorate the Basilica of San Marco from its beginning right up to the 18th century?

The Ducal Palace

Lecture 31

We are fortunate that the Ducal Palace remains essentially intact. It survived in part because of its eccentricity: It was constructed over many centuries to serve as the political home for the unusual Venetian republican constitution. As we'll see on our tour, its odd distribution of space made it impractical for any other purpose. It was only with the absorption of Venice into the new Italian kingdom in 1866 that the decayed state of the palace became a concern. Beginning in 1876, a massive program of restoration and stabilization rescued this remarkable building. Today, it stands as a memorial of the glorious Venetian Republic.

Courtyard and Entrance to the Ducal Palace

- The entry into the courtyard of the Ducal Palace is one of the most impressive sights in all of Venice. Note that the far corner, where the palace meets San Marco, is the inside of the Foscari Arch. It is simpler than the other side facing the piazzetta. Nevertheless, it is a harmonious interplay of pink and white marble, with a gallery around its center, decorated finials, and a pediment topped by sculpture.
- The Staircase of the Giants, which dominates the Renaissance face of the palace, was built between 1484 and 1501 by Antonio Rizzo. The huge statues of Mars and Neptune, symbolizing Venice's dominion over the sea and power in war, date from 1554 to 1567 and are the work of Sansovino. It was between these two figures that the doge was ceremonially crowned.
- The façade that contains the Staircase of the Giants dates from the early 16th century. It was designed by Antonio Abbondi (known as Scarpagnino). The southern façade of the courtyard is earlier, dating from the medieval period. Its double loggia was the inspiration for Abbondi's façade. But the upper stories are of uniquely medieval composition: red brick with large windows surmounted by smaller

Gothic, ogival arched windows. The crenellation is Turkish in inspiration.

- The façade beside San Marco is the continuation of Scarpagnino's Renaissance work, overlooking the Courtyard of the Senators. Behind this courtyard is the small Chapel of St. Nicholas and two statues: a bronze of a squire holding a shield and a life-size marble statue of Francesco Maria della Rovere, duke of Urbino.
 - The duke's statue was carved by the Florentine sculptor Giovanni Bandini in 1587. It was intended to be displayed in Pesaro, part of the duchy of Urbino, but in 1625, it was given to Venice as a gift and installed in this courtyard.
 - The duke's presence here is perplexing, given that he was the nephew of Pope Julius II, Venice's greatest Italian enemy; an admitted murderer; and an infamously incompetent mercenary captain.
 - The presence of this statue may be a sign of Venice's decline. She had lost her eastern outposts to the Turks; the restrictions of Venetian custom had begun to fray; and money was scarce. But this superb piece of sculpture was available for free. Ever frugal, the Venetians accepted the gift and used it to decorate the palace façade.
- The 17th-century façade of the courtyard looks unusually austere compared to the earlier façades. It features classically modeled statues in aedicules (structural framing devices), built into the porticoes on both levels of the elevation. Under the portico is the original figure of St. Theodore with his dragon, which was removed from the column on the Molo and placed here for protection.
- When we climb to the second-floor loggia, we see on the wall a sculptured rectangle with a rather terrifying face and an open mouth that serves as a kind of letter box. This is one of the infamous lion's mouths, or *bocca di leone*. We can think of it as a kind of "suggestion box" used to inform on one's neighbors. These boxes

were everywhere around the city and much feared.

- After the aborted attempt at insurrection mentioned earlier, the republic became paranoid about any threat to its security. Thus, in 1310, a powerful security committee was established: the Council of Ten, which



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Venetian law required citizens to report any wrongdoing through the *bocca di leone*; the lion, of course, was the symbol of St. Mark, who in turn, was the symbol of the republic.

had the authority to examine anyone, remove officials from office, torture, and even execute. Because it met in secret, like most Venetian magistracies, it was terribly feared.

- All citizens were expected to report any wrongdoing through the *bocca di leone*, but such denunciations had to be signed, and any charges had to be substantiated by witnesses. Mostly, the Council of Ten looked for serious threats of treason, attempts to avoid taxation, or incidences of bribery.
- The Scala d’Oro (“Golden Staircase”) was conceived in the mid-16th century as the ceremonial entry to the palace. It was intended to impress visitors with the power, wealth, and majesty of the republic. Its realization was the cooperative work of four geniuses: Jacopo Sansovino and Michele Sammichele, who designed the basic architectural structure, and Alessandro Vittoria and Battista Franco, who were responsible for the decorative stuccowork and painting.

The Ducal Apartments

- Inside the 16th-century carved doors, we turn right to enter the apartments of the doge and dogaressa. These rooms were almost completely rebuilt after a fire in 1483. Although the basic design dates from the end of the 15th and the beginning of the 16th centuries,

what we see was continuously redecorated and reconfigured up to the 19th century.

- As we've said, the doge was a figurehead, with almost no power. The formal oath of office, codified in 1250, decreed that he only ratified the decisions of others. The most important governing body, the Great Council, did not require his presidency and worked around him.
 - The doge's personal life was difficult. He was often described as being a prisoner of the state. He could not live in his own palace, had to cease all business activity, and could not meet privately with foreigners; further, his every word had to be audible to his counselors. He was also required to furnish and equip these rooms at his own expense.
 - At his death, his family could collect his possessions, but a commission was immediately struck to investigate his finances and ensure that neither the doge nor his family had been enriched by his actions. In fact, the doge had an obligation to assist in the fiscal balance of the republic at his own expense. Still, the office symbolized the republic, and to be elected was a great honor.
- The largest room in the doge's apartments is the Sala dello Scudo, which was the formal reception room. In it are displayed two 18th-century globes: one representing the heavens, and the other, the earth. Maps painted on the walls from the 18th century reflect both the experience of famous Venetian travelers and the extent of the New World.
- The other rooms in the apartments are smaller but have some notable decoration. In the Room of the Scarlatti, notice the splendid carved-wood ceiling. The Erizzo Chamber is notable for the red silk that covers its walls. The room just beyond it is the Sala degli Stucchi, named for its 18th-century plasterwork. The Sala dei Ritratti ("Room of the Portraits") contains Giovanni Bellini's 1472 *Christ Supported by Mary and St. John*, one of the few pictures to have survived the fire of 1577.

The State Rooms

- Owing to the fires of 1574 and 1577, there is a remarkable unity to the decorative program of the state rooms. In a relatively short space of time, the great artists of late-16th-century Venice worked together to adorn these rooms with what amounts to a narrative of propaganda and myth. Veronese, Tintoretto, Titian, and many others used the opportunity to celebrate the invincibility of Venice on sea, on land, and in diplomacy. Venice is portrayed as the embodiment of justice, and devastating defeats are often reinterpreted as victory.
 - Throughout these rooms, look for kneeling figures of various doges, the Virgin Mary protecting and giving victory to Venice, and the lion of St. Mark, which represents not only the special role of the evangelist but also Venice's independence from the authority of the pope.
 - Finally, notice the image of Venice herself. She is a young blonde woman, wearing a tiara and richly dressed. Her ample form implies the comfort and largesse of the republic. She is seen with jewels, representing the riches and abundance of the sea and the land, and is often accompanied by the lion of St. Mark, Neptune, or some other deity.
- The magnificence of the Anticollegio was meant to impress foreign dignitaries. It was here that they had to wait for an audience, sometimes for several days. As they sat on the benches, these plenipotentiaries could marvel at the allegories of Tintoretto, the plasterwork, the fireplace, and other decorations, contemplating the wealth and power of the republic.
- The inner receiving room, the Collegio, was where the doge sat. He was encircled by his 6 official advisors and assisted by a kind of cabinet consisting of 25 men elected directly from the Great Council. Here, we see the celebration of history, myth, and power projected even more clearly. Above the dais with the doge's throne is one of Veronese's great works: a huge canvas of Doge Sebastiano Venier giving thanks to the Virgin, St. Mark, and Christ for the Christian victory at the naval Battle of Lepanto in 1571.

- From the Collegio, we pass into the Sala del Senato (“Hall of the Senate”). The Senate was the upper house of the Venetian Republic, with about 200 elected members. It was the more effective legislative branch because the Great Council had been 1,500 to 2,000 members, which meant that any kind of quick resolution or debate there was impossible.
- One of the most feared state rooms was the Sala della Bussola (“Room of the Compass”), used as the waiting room for those to be interrogated by the Council of Ten. Those under investigation then had to pass into the Room of the Capi dei Dieci, the three executive members of the council who determined which denunciations should be passed on for action. The three doors behind the joint desk of the triumvirate promised only terror: One led to the torture chambers, another to the prisons, and the third to the armory.
- The Room of the Elections is just off the Hall of the Great Council. Here, ballots were examined and counted, especially for the various committees established to elect the doge. Finally, we see the triumphal arch celebrating Doge Francesco Morosini; from here, we will enter the Hall of the Great Council at the beginning of our next lecture.

Smithsonian Journeys Travel Tips

Walk east along the Riva degli Schiavoni to the Rio de l’Arsenal to visit the Museo Storico Navale di Venezia (“Naval Historical Museum”). Here, survey an array of scale models of ships and boats from the period of the Venetian Republic. These kinds of vessels sailed from the lagoons of Venice to the Levant, engaging in commercial activity that enriched La Serenissima. The riches from trade provided the money to build and decorate such buildings as the Palazzo Ducale. The museum also features an extraordinary model of the *bucintoro*, the doge’s ceremonial ship, used during the Ascension Day ceremony of the “Marriage of the Sea.”

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Chambers, *The Imperial Age of Venice, 1380–1580*.

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Valcanover, *Museums and Galleries of Venice*.

Wilde, *Venetian Art from Bellini to Titian*.

Wills, *Venice: Lion City*.

Questions to Consider

1. Was it a good thing that the doge was a mere figurehead without power? Are there other governments, to your knowledge, that have the same structure?
2. The decoration of the Ducal Palace has been called the greatest cycle of propaganda art until modern times. Do you agree?

Venetian Civilization

Lecture 32

The Hall of the Great Council in the Ducal Palace in Venice has been called the most dramatic room in Europe. It is huge, capable of holding up to 2,000 patricians, and has no internal supports; instead, it uses a ship's keel design that carries the weight upward through beams in an engineering feat adapted from naval architecture, one of Venice's greatest skills. This room was the home of Venetian sovereignty, the symbolic center of the myth of Venice, and the site of some of Europe's defining moments. It is important, then, that we learn about this historic space and the nature of the Venetian constitution that took its authority from those who occupied this room.

History of the Great Council

- The republic of Venice had always been a place where jealousy among the citizens ensured that no one family or individual could ever establish a monarchy. For the first six centuries, the election of the doge included most citizens with property. But by the end of the 13th century, the city had grown so large and rich that the population began to divide into competing factions.
- Among these were the long and short families, named in reference to the length of time they had served the state. The long families tended to be conservative and more concerned with the traditional trading patterns in the East. Short families were often newly enriched and had different economic interests.
- The election of a doge from a short family, Pietro Gradenigo, led to the famous Serrata (“Closure”) of the Great Council in 1297. This law decreed that only those families who could prove that an ancestor had held significant office would be deemed patrician and that only members of patrician families were eligible to sit in the Great Council. This gave an advantage to the more numerous short

families and disqualified some long families that had not bothered to seek elected office.

- From the passing of the Serrata until the end of the republic in 1797, the Great Council was populated by males 25 years and older from patrician families. In effect, entry into the source of all Venetian authority was by birth alone, with no consideration for ability or property. The genealogy of the patricians was officially kept by the state in the Golden Book. These patricians of the Great Council elected all officials in Venice, including the doge.

The Hall of the Great Council

- The Hall of the Great Council was the distillation of the sovereignty of the republic for the last half millennium of its existence. Consequently, it had to be appropriately decorated and arranged.
- Behind the throne of the doge and his six counselors is the largest oil painting on canvas in the world: *The Glory of Paradise* by



The Ducal Palace, which houses the Hall of the Great Council, has survived in part because of its eccentricity; it was constructed to accommodate the unusual form of government in the Venetian Republic.

Tintoretto, painted between 1588 and 1594. Notice how the structure of the light from heaven in the painting descends to the physical throne of the doge. It appears that Venetian authority is delegated from heaven itself!

- Other important canvases on the walls include Veronese's portrayal of the return of Doge Contarini after his victory over Genoa in the War of Chioggia (1585–1586); Francesco Bassano's depiction of Doge Ziani granted the sword of office by the pope; Tintoretto's *Capture of Constantinople* (1598–1605); and Palma il Giovane's *The Taking of Constantinople* (1587).
- Around the cornice of this vast room are portraits of the first 76 doges, mostly painted by Domenico Tintoretto, son of Jacopo. The next 42 doges—up to Ludovico Manin in 1797—are in the Room of the Election.
- Sadly, this hall witnessed the end of the Venetian Republic in May 1797, when Napoleon besieged the city and demanded that the republic surrender. The last doge, Ludovico Manin, urged by terrified patricians, put the extinction of the republic to a vote, and the resolution passed. Manin took off his distinctive crown, the *corono*, and gave it to a servant, remarking that he would no longer need it. Thus, the 1,000-year-old republic of Venice came to an end.

The Palace Prisons

- We reach the palace prisons via a small door on the side of the Hall of the Great Council. This leads us to the famous Bridge of Sighs. Dating from the beginning of the 17th century, the bridge was a sophisticated link to both the tribunals and the cells. A partition within the bridge ensured that those exiting an interrogation could not communicate with those on their way in.
- The prisons are terrible to our modern minds, but we need to imagine them in the context of the first decade of the 17th century. Before that, prisoners were held in unused and insalubrious corners of the Ducal Palace. These not only became seriously overcrowded but

endangered the health and integrity of the magistrates working in the palace. As a consequence, Antonio da Ponte was commissioned to construct the first freestanding, purpose-built prison in Europe.

- Da Ponte’s plan included two categories of cells: the *pozzi* (“wells”) at the bottom and the *piombi* (“leads”) beneath the lead sheathing on the roof.
 - Though they were frigid in winter and stifling in summer, the leads were preferred. These cells were reserved for those who had committed minor infractions or for the better born or wealthy. Prisoners were permitted to buy their own food, have servants, and even enjoy the ministrations of prostitutes.
 - In contrast, the *pozzi* were often below water during the flooding of the lagoon and were generally infested with rats, fleas, and other vermin. Here, cells originally designed for 3 prisoners often held 10 or 12. The dead might not be removed for days, and the sick were not quarantined, despite Venetian law, resulting in severe illness or death for others.

Other Highlights of the Palace

- The Chancery was the suite of rooms occupied by the highest position in the republic not filled by a patrician: that of chancellor. This position was held by a member of the *cittadini originari* (“original citizens”), the wealthy non-noble class of Venetian citizens. In the offices here, senior bureaucrats turned the decrees of the aristocratic councils into workable policy.
- The examination or torture room, accessible from the Room of the Compass, is remarkably intact. The torture used was called “giving the rope.” That meant tying a prisoner’s arms behind his back and hoisting him into the air before letting him drop, dislocating his shoulders.
- Another fascinating room is the cell of Giacomo Casanova, the only prisoner ever to escape from the leads. Famously charming, Casanova struck up a friendship with his jailer over the years of

his incarceration. This led to less vigilant surveillance that allowed Casanova to smuggle in tools. With the collusion of another prisoner, he managed to cut through the ceiling and iron bars to escape over the rooftops of Venice.

- The Sala dei Censori (“Censors’ Hall”) was where the Golden Books were kept. The guardians of these books were the 16th- and 17th-century gentlemen portrayed around the walls by Tintoretto and others.
- To leave the Palazzo Ducale, visitors walk through the bookshop. Centuries ago, this out-of-the-way space held the laundry and kitchens—vital service rooms of the palace, needed just as much as grand chambers for official business.

Other Official Buildings and the Correr Museum

- The Zecca (“Mint”) was designed by Sansovino between 1537 and 1545. This structure is quite severe, but money is serious and not subject to architectural playfulness and imagination. Further, the activities of minting coins required extremely hot furnaces; thus, the building had to be constructed completely of hard-wearing Istrian stone, making lightness difficult.
- Next to the mint is a public garden, created at the beginning of the 19th century. Previously on this site stood the state granaries, dating from the 14th century. These were used to store grain to assist the population in times of famine or siege. But Napoleon had the granaries pulled down because he wanted to turn the Procuratie Nuove into a palace. He wanted more light to enter the building, and he craved a view over the Bacino, as well as a garden.
- Napoleon’s Procuratie Nuove is now the home of the Museo Correr (“Correr Museum”). The name honors a Venetian patrician, Teodoro Correr, who was an obsessive collector of objects, pictures, and books relating to the history of Venice. He had witnessed the end of the republic, and he went about saving articles that could record its institutions, customs, arts, trades, and interests.

- The first set of rooms in the museum was designed as the vestibule, throne room, dining room, and ballroom of the Napoleonic palace. Because these rooms are neoclassical in decoration, they make a perfect home for the works of the greatest Italian neoclassical sculptor Antonio Canova.
- Rooms 6 and 7 begin a marvelous commentary on the old republic, containing artifacts relating to the office of the doge and objects used in state elections. In particular, notice the large painting by Aliense of the reception in Venice of Caterina Cornaro, queen of Cyprus, and a 1559 woodcut of the official procession of the doge and his train into the piazza.
- The next room celebrates the doge's commissions, several of which are on display, and the following two rooms depict the high offices of state, with 17th- and 18th-century portraits of patricians in their robes of office. Coins, medals, and related paraphernalia are displayed in the next room.
- The Room of Venice and the Sea illustrates the importance of the fleet to Venetian policy and defense. And the next room holds information about the Arsenal, the incredible state shipyards and munitions works in Venice. The colored drawing here gives an indication of the size and scale of these shipyards.
- Rooms 45 through 53 are among the most engaging in the museum because they record daily life in Venice. The first displays what is left of the last *bucintoro*, the doge's state barge, which Napoleon ordered destroyed. Then, there are rooms of trades and professions and space dedicated to festivals and games.
- As we move to exit the museum, we walk through the Marciana Library. This leads directly into the Archeological Museum, which is essentially the collection of various members of the patrician Grimani family. They purchased the sculpture here mostly in Rome. Such a collection of ancient marbles is unusual

in Venice because Venice was a city of the sea, one that celebrated its link with its own empire. In our next lecture, we will embark on the water to see how the sea remains the essence of Venetian life to this day.

Smithsonian Journeys Travel Tips

Consider purchasing the single pass for the Museums of Piazza San Marco, which includes visits to the Palazzo Ducale, Museo Correr, Museo Archeologico, and Biblioteca Marciana. (Note that tickets for the guided Secret Itinerary tour of the Palazzo Ducale must be purchased separately.) Be sure to check out the historical collections at the Museo Correr to learn about the Venetian Republic through art and objects. At the Archaeological Museum, the Greek and Roman collections are excellent.

If you are a fan of Commissario Guido Brunetti, the Venetian detective created by Donna Leon, visit some of the sites associated with his cases. Among Brunetti's favorite hangouts is the Campo San Luca, where you can enjoy a spritz at a local bar. The spritz is prosecco with a dash of Campari or other bitter liqueur; it originated in Venice when it was part of the Austrian Empire.

Suggested Reading

Barzini, *The Italians*.

Brown, *Art and Life in Renaissance Venice*.

Chambers, *The Imperial Age of Venice, 1380–1580*.

Guy, *Building Renaissance Venice*.

Honour, *A Companion Guide to Venice*.

Horodowich, *A Brief History of Venice*.

Jonglez and Zoffoli, *Secret Venice*.

Manno, Venchierutti, and Codato, *The Treasures of Venice*.

Martin, *No Vulgar Hotel*.

Morris, *The World of Venice*.

———, *The Venetian Empire*.

Norwich, *Paradise of Cities*.

Richards, *The New Italians*.

Romanelli, ed., *Venice: Art and Architecture*.

Severgnini, *La Bella Figura*.

Valcanover, *Museums and Galleries of Venice*.

Wilde, *Venetian Art from Bellini to Titian*.

Wills, *Venice: Lion City*.

Questions to Consider

1. Why was the republic of Venice so secretive and afraid of sedition?
2. Venice boasted 1,100 years of continuous republican government, yet it was a closed political system in which only patricians could hold office. Why do you think the republic was so successful? And why do you think there was not more hostility to it?

Along the Giudecca and Grand Canals

Lecture 33

The symbolic marriage of Venice to the sea was one of the most important of the rituals that characterized the Venetian Republic. In about 997, Doge Pietro Orseolo moored his galley in the Basin of St. Mark to be blessed by the patriarch before he set out to subdue the Dalmatian coast of what is now Croatia. The success of this event established the foundations for the great maritime empire of Venice. It also inspired a ceremony that matured into the lavish Festa della Sensa, a celebration of Ascension Day in which Venice was wedded to the sea. In honor of that relationship, we will explore sites along the waterways of Venice in this lecture.

Churches along the Canals

- The Riva degli Schiavoni is the wide embankment that faces the Bacino di San Marco. Along here is the San Zaccaria station, a major hub for the *vaporetti* that serve as public transport for the city.
 - The hub is named after one of Venice's most historic churches, founded by Doge Giustiniano Parteciaco soon after the government of the lagoon moved to Venice in the 9th century. The church is named for Zacharias, John the Baptist's father, whose body is believed to be interred here.
 - The current church was begun in 1458 by Antonio Gambello. His Gothic style is more evident in the interior, where the three naves lead to a series of radiating chapels from the pentagonal apse. The exterior façade is Venetian Renaissance by Mauro Coducci (or Codussi), built between 1481 and 1515. Inside is the altarpiece of the *Sacra Conversazione* by Giovanni Bellini.
- We'll next visit three churches by Andrea Palladio, beginning with San Giorgio Maggiore. There had been a church and Benedictine monastery on this island from the 9th century. Indeed, the early history of the island and its religious complex is a story in itself.

- The island was originally named after the Memmo family, who owned it during the first years of the republic. Tribuno Memmo was elected doge, but at the time, Venice was riven by faction and threatened from without, and Doge Memmo was unable to manage it himself. He gave the island to the Benedictines and, in 991, was either forced or chose to abdicate his crown and become a monk there, dying soon after.
- During the Middle Ages, the complex suffered various destructions by fire and an earthquake. Then, in 1566, Palladio won the commission to rebuild it. It wasn't finished until 1610—30 years after his death—but is faithful to his meticulous plans. The blind façade, with its classical columns and pediment, derive from the design of Roman temples superimposed on a Christian basilica.
- Inside, massive windows flood the vast interior with light to reveal beautiful details in the stonework and decorative masterpieces by Bassano and Tintoretto. The bell tower, which is not Palladio's, attracts tourists because it offers spectacular postcard views of Venice.
- Our next stop is the Giudecca—the long island that sits across from the main body of Venice. Actually, the Giudecca is a collection of eight islands linked by canals and bridges. The church here is Santa Maria della Presentazione, one of Palladio's late plans.
 - This structure has a muscular exterior, with a triangular pediment on the central block of the building. There is a dome with a high lantern and two flanking towers. The effect in white marble is rather austere but elegant and radiant as it reflects the water of the Giudecca Canal.
 - The church is generally known as the Zitelle. It was the church of a hospice for well-born and virtuous ladies who lacked sufficient dowries to marry honorably. (In Italian, *zitelle* means “old maid.”) The ladies entered this convent-like arrangement, where they practiced lacemaking, embroidery, and singing.

- From here, we can walk along the embankment to see the Redentore (“Church of the Redeemer”), constructed between 1577 and 1592. It is a votive church; that is, it was built as an act of official thanksgiving—in this case, for the lifting of the plague of 1576, in which at least a quarter of the Venetian population had died.
- The enormous structure that dominates the Bacino at the point where the Giudecca and Grand canals meet is Santa Maria della Salute. This church was commissioned by the Senate of the republic as thanks to the Virgin for arresting another devastating plague in 1630.
 - The site defines an area visible from the Bacino and forms a triangle with San Giorgio Maggiore and the Redentore. It was



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Every November, in the Festival of the Salute, Venetians give thanks for their deliverance from the plague of 1630 by visiting the church of Santa Maria della Salute.

also prominent from the piazzetta, linking this huge structure with the complex of political and religious buildings that dominated that part of the city. But the potentially unstable nature of the ground and the incredible pressure of the enormous church required more than a million oak piles to be driven into the marshy soil to support its weight.

- The architect was the celebrated Baldassare Longhena. He animated the façade with elaborate architectural details, particularly the massive volutes, the niches inhabited by theatrically posed statues, and an assembly of angels surrounding the dome. By raising the octagonal church on a pedestal and finishing it with a huge dome, Longhena conjured the crown of the Virgin Mary.

Landmarks along the Grand Canal

- From the water, the Peggy Guggenheim Collection, a museum of 20th-century art, appears to be a bungalow, with a classic Marino Marini horseman facing the canal.
 - The official name of this building is the Palazzo Venier dei Leoni. The name comes from one branch of the Venier family that was said to keep live lions in cages in their garden. The palace was begun in 1749 from a design by the architect Lorenzo Boschetti, but it was never completed.
 - The property was acquired by Peggy Guggenheim in 1948, and she lived here until her death in 1979. From 1951 on, Guggenheim made her art collection available to the public. Since 1993, the entire house has been a museum operated by the Guggenheim Foundation.
- As we travel up the canal toward the Accademia Bridge, we pass, on the right bank, the Palazzi Barbaro. These are two adjoining palaces, one a fine example of Gothic style and the second a masterpiece of the Baroque. The older palace has been owned by the American Curtis family since the 1880s and was made famous by the paintings of their relative, John Singer Sargent. For a time, it

was the center of American life in Venice, visited by such luminaries as Henry James, James Whistler, and Edith Wharton.

- The Accademia is the first of the four bridges that span the Grand Canal. During the period of the republic, the only way to cross the Grand Canal on foot was the Rialto. The Austrians, however, demanded another crossing, and an iron bridge designed by an English engineer arose. It was replaced in 1933 under Mussolini by this ingenious wooden bridge, designed by the Italian Eugenio Miozzi. That structure was replaced for safety reasons by an exact replica in the early 1980s.
- The Galleria dell'Accademia is considered the greatest repository of Venetian art in the world. The gallery began in 1750 under the republic as an art academy, but in 1879, the school separated from the art museum. Among the highlights in the gallery today are Carpaccio's *Legend of St. Ursula* sequence, Giovanni Bellini's Madonnas, Giorgione's *Tempest*, Leonardo's *Vitruvian Man* drawing, and Veronese's *Feast in the House of Levi*.

The Ca' Rezzonico

- Our last stop in this lecture is Ca' Rezzonico, one of the grandest palaces in Venice. The Rezzonicos bought their way into the Venetian nobility in 1687, and their palace has always been considered rather ostentatious. But in fact, this palace was begun much earlier, by Filippo Bon, a member of a venerable patrician family. The original architect was Baldassare Longhena. When they acquired the palace in 1751, the Rezzonicos engaged the later Baroque architect Giorgio Massari to complete it.
- In 1758, Cardinal Carlo Rezzonico was elected Pope Clement XIII. This new power and access to even more wealth cemented the family deeply into Venetian society. The palace became the center of lavish entertaining, and the furnishings, pictures, and treasures of this papal family were recognized as among the finest in the city. But their preeminence was transient. The Rezzonico line became

extinct in 1810, and the palace, together with the family's sumptuous possessions, was sold.

- The palace took on new luster in the 1880s when it became the home of Robert and Elizabeth Barrett Browning's son, Pen. During a family visit in 1889, Robert Browning became ill and died in what had been the private apartments of Pope Clement XIII. Pen himself passed away in 1912. In 1934, the palace was acquired by the city to become a museum dedicated to 18th-century Venice.
- Inside, the palace has one of the grandest reception rooms in Venice. It is double height and seems to reach into the heavens because of the frescoes by Giovanni Battista Crosato. These celebrate the fame of the Rezzonicos over the four continents, joined by the chariot of Apollo. The enormous gilt-wood chandeliers are original. The trompe l'oeil frescoes on the walls by Pietro Visconti also enlarge the impression of the space, which seems more the size of a piazza than a room in a house.
- Other, equally glorious frescos include those by Tiepolo, Diziani, and Guarana. But it's difficult to single out one decorative element for commentary. The entire palace is a treasure trove of 18th-century Venetian art and design. There is splendid furniture by Andrea Brustolon, an amazing woodcarver and furniture designer. Elsewhere, there are genre pictures by Pietro Longhi—all giving intimate insight into Venetian life of the day.

Smithsonian Journeys Travel Tips

Visit the campanile at the church of San Giorgio Maggiore to enjoy spectacular views of the city of Venice. An elevator takes visitors to the top of the bell tower, where a walkway circles the structure and provides a panoramic outlook back toward the Palazzo Ducale and the Molo and Piazzetta San Marco.

Suggested Reading

Barzini, *The Italians*.

Brown, *Art and Life in Renaissance Venice*.

Chambers, *The Imperial Age of Venice, 1380–1580*.

Guy, *Building Renaissance Venice*.

Honour, *A Companion Guide to Venice*.

Horodowich, *A Brief History of Venice*.

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Richards, *The New Italians*.

Romanelli, ed., *Venice: Art and Architecture*.

Severgnini, *La Bella Figura*.

Valcanover, *Museums and Galleries of Venice*.

Wilde, *Venetian Art from Bellini to Titian*.

Wills, *Venice: Lion City*.

Questions to Consider

1. Why are Palladio's buildings so appealing to this day?
2. Venice has attracted many remarkable foreigners who chose to live and work there. Why did such women as Peggy Guggenheim decide to spend their lives and fortunes in Venice, founding museums and adding to an already lustrous city?

The Upper Grand Canal and San Marco on Foot

Lecture 34

The Grand Canal cuts through five of the districts (*sestieri*) into which Venice is divided. The historical center of the city—the piazza with the Doge’s Palace and Basilica San Marco—is in Sestiere San Marco. In our last lecture, we visited landmarks in the Dorsoduro, such as the Guggenheim collection, the Accademia, and Ca’ Rezzonico. In this lecture, we’ll pass quickly through San Polo, then spend some time in Sestiere Cannaregio to the north. To the immediate south is Sestiere Santa Croce, and the last district is Sestiere Castello. As we’ll see in our final lecture, it’s filled with treasures and is the gateway to the outer islands.

Traveling toward the Rialto

- Almost directly opposite the Ca’ Rezzonico that we saw in the last lecture is the Palazzo Grassi, another massive 18th-century palace by Giorgio Massari. It’s notable because it’s now a museum of modern art, displaying the impressive collection of the Pinault Foundation.
- More romantic is the Palazzo Mocenigo, owned by one of Venice’s most prestigious families. Active in political and military life from about the year 1000, the Mocenigo produced no fewer than seven doges. This palace is also where Lord Byron resided while he was in Venice.
- On the opposite bank and a little farther along is Ca’ Foscari, the palace of the ill-fated 15th-century doge Francesco Foscari. This Gothic palace has been repurposed as the administrative offices of the University of Venice.
- The first landmark of note once we’re under the Rialto Bridge is the former Fondaco dei Tedeschi, a German warehouse constructed in the first decade of the 16th century.
 - As we know, Venice became rich by managing the wholesale primary trade from the luxury markets of the East to Europe. But

the city also grew wealthy by increasing its share of the secondary retail trade over the Alps into Central and Western Europe.

- Because German traders were important in these transactions, they were granted their own *fondaco*, that is, a bonded warehouse, communal residence, and commercial center. In the 16th century, at the height of Venetian wealth and influence, this building was grand indeed, with frescoes by Giorgione and Titian on the façade.
- The sweep of commercial buildings on the opposite bank has the collective name Le Fabbriche Nuove (“New Buildings”). These were built in 1554 after a fire had destroyed this part of the Rialto in 1514. These structures housed the offices of the officials responsible for setting and collecting customs duties. Today, they house the law courts of Venice.

Museums along the Grand Canal

- Around another bend is the Ca’ d’Oro, built by the Bon family of architects for the Contarini in the 15th century.
 - The name of the Ca’ d’Oro derived from the gilding that once graced its tracery. Unfortunately, in the mid-19th century, the palace was occupied by the retired Marie Taglioni. She had been a celebrated ballerina, but she vandalized the historic structure by removing and selling some of the original architectural elements.
 - At the end of the century, however, the building was purchased by a wealthy collector, Baron Giorgio Franchetti, who restored the palace as much as possible to serve as a private museum for his superb collection of art. He gave the palace and his collection to Venice in 1922, and it is now known as the Galleria Giorgio Franchetti.
- The Palazzo Mocenigo at San Stae represents a typical home of an ancient family; its structure is quite traditional. Rooms radiate from the central *pòrtego*, which traverses the entire structure, grandly on the *piano nobile* and more chastely on the third.

- The palace was refurbished in the 18th century, and nothing much has changed since then. Realizing the importance of the time capsule that he had inherited, the last member of the family, Alvise Mocenigo, left it and its contents to the city in 1954. The palace contained furniture, paintings, papers and archives, and even the clothing of patricians.
- The palace was opened as a museum in 1985 and was completely refurbished in 2013 as a museum of Venetian costume and textiles. Twenty rooms are open, and each explores a different experience of a patrician of the 17th or 18th century.

The Jewish Ghetto of Venice

- Perhaps the most important site in Sestiere Cannaregio is the Jewish ghetto. Indeed, the ghetto in Venice is the original: The word *ghetto* comes from the Italian for “foundry.” In the beginning, this was the site where the bronze cannons and ship fittings were cast. In 1516, all Jews in Venice were required to relocate in this confined area, which was enclosed by walls that were sealed at night.
- In many ways, the ghetto was a microcosm of the city itself. The various national groups of Jews never fused into a single community; instead, they maintained their own traditions and practices. This is why today visitors can see both an Eastern and a Western synagogue. Moreover, the four wealthiest families in the ghetto had their own synagogue, separating them by their privilege from the rest of the community.
- The ghetto in Venice was a complex concept. Certainly, the Jews were at disadvantage: They had to live in one area that became increasingly crowded over time and were required to pay more and higher taxes. However, this separation also permitted the community to live according to Jewish law and custom and to avoid the recurrent persecution and harassment that existed elsewhere in Europe.
- Napoleon’s conquest of the republic resulted in the tearing down of the walls of the ghetto and the provision of full civil rights to

the Jews. One of the consequences of this is that few Jews live in the old ghetto today, and the beautifully decorated synagogues essentially serve as tourist destinations.

Sestiere San Marco

- We begin our walk in Sestiere San Marco by heading directly to the Campo San Moisè to view the church of San Moisè (“St. Moses”—an honorific for the prophet that is unique to Venice). Although there was a church on the site from the 7th century, the current one dates from 1665. It was rebuilt as a monument to a rich family of merchants, the Fini, and every bit of their lives seems to be recorded on the outside. Many funerary portrait busts dress the façade, which itself is busy with annulated columns, articulated cornices, and pediments.
- Continuing on our walk, we reach another large campo dominated by a magnificent church, Santa Maria del Giglio or Santa Maria Zobenigo. It has two names because it was dedicated to Our Lady of the Lily, one of the attributes of Mary. But it was paid for by



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Gondolas are uniquely Venetian, and until the mid-19th century, they offered the only way to travel around the city.

a rich Dalmatian Slav family whose name in Venetian dialect became Zobenigo.

- Although the church was founded in the 10th century, what we see today is a complete rebuilding done in the 1680s by a powerful patrician, Antonio Barbaro. The architect was Giuseppe Sardi, who created what is generally accepted as the most theatrical Baroque church façade in Venice.
- Notice the urban-plan friezes on the base of the façade. These constitute a 17th-century map of the cities where Barbaro held office. Some are in the Venetian maritime empire, such as Spalato (Split) and Zara (Zadar) in Dalmatia, but there also friezes of Padua and Rome in Italy.
- We next head west through Campo San Maurizio to Campo Santo Stefano, officially known as Campo Francesco Morosini. This is a lively space, pleasant for sitting on a sunny day or visiting one of the many open-air restaurants and bars. The campo gets its popular name from the magnificent Augustinian church on its northern flank.
 - Santo Stefano is one of the finest Gothic structures in the city. Its rather austere red brick façade is punctuated by a 15th-century portal by Bartolomeo Bon, in which a floral leaf decoration leads the eye to an image of God. The rather simple but elegant vertical and horizontal decorations break up the large mass of the building.
 - The interior is an inverted ship's keel design, with its wooden ceiling elaborately decorated. The huge windows in the apse illuminate the high altar. Highlights here include the bronze tomb cover of the hero doge Francesco Morosini, the Canova monument to Giovanni Falier, and three of Tintoretto's finest paintings: *The Last Supper*, *Christ Washing the Feet of His Disciples*, and *Christ in the Garden of Gethsemane*.
- Also in the campo is the Renaissance Palazzo Loredan. Since 1810, this has been the Venetian Institute of Science, Letters and Art. In the

foyer is the famous Pantheon, a large collection of marble portrait busts of men who have contributed to Venice in scholarly fields.

- A little farther south and to the left is a monumental gate that serves as the entrance to the Palazzo Pisani, one of the largest Baroque palaces in Venice. Today, it is the music conservatory of the city, where vocalists and musicians can often be heard rehearsing.
- If we walk toward the Accademia Bridge, we find ourselves beside the gardens and extension of the Palazzo Cavalli-Franchetti. Also here is the deconsecrated church of San Vidal. Founded originally in the 11th century, it was rebuilt in an elegant classical style at the beginning of the 18th to commemorate the victories in Greece over the Turks by Doge Francesco Morosini. Its treasure is the Carpaccio altarpiece of *San Vidal (Vitale) on Horseback*.
- Next, we turn our backs to the Grand Canal and wind our way through Campo Santo Stefano northward to Campo Manin. This campo is dominated by a heroic statue of Daniele Manin, the leader of a revolt against the Austrians in 1848.

Smithsonian Journeys Travel Tips

Visit the Ghetto Novo, the first area in Venice to enclose the residential, commercial, and religious activities of the Jewish people. You can access the Old and New Ghettos from the Fondamenta di Cannaregio by walking through the *sottoportico* with Hebrew written across the top beam. The heart of the old Venetian Jewish ghetto is the Campo del Ghetto Novo, where three synagogues, a museum, and a monument to the Holocaust are found. The Holocaust monument commemorates the deportations of 246 Jews between 1943 and 1944. Be sure to visit at least one of the synagogues (the Scuola Grande Tedesca, Scuola Italiana, or Scuola Canton) and the museum, which is housed in the Scuola Grande Tedesca, where there is also a bookstore and cafeteria.

- Finally, from Campo Manin, we zigzag our way north through Campo San Luca, across the Calle dei Fabbri, and over the bridge to reach the church of San Salvatore (Salvador in Venetian dialect). This church dates from 1507 to 1534, replacing earlier versions, the first of which was built in the 7th century. According to tradition, the site was chosen by St. Magnus after the Savior appeared to him in a dream and gave him a sign—hence, the name *Salvador*, or “Savior.”

Suggested Reading

Barzini, *The Italians*.

Brown, *Art and Life in Renaissance Venice*.

Chambers, *The Imperial Age of Venice, 1380–1580*.

Guy, *Building Renaissance Venice*.

Honour, *A Companion Guide to Venice*.

Horodowich, *A Brief History of Venice*.

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Valcanover, *Museums and Galleries of Venice*.

Wilde, *Venetian Art from Bellini to Titian*.

Wills, *Venice: Lion City*.

Questions to Consider

1. What benefits might traders of a foreign nation gain from living and working in a *fondaco*? What benefits might such an arrangement have for the city of Venice?
2. What advantages and disadvantages did confinement to the ghetto provide for the Jews of Venice?

The Rialto and Sestiere San Polo

Lecture 35

The name *Rialto* comes from the Latin phrase *rivus altus*, meaning “stream of high water.” In fact, at this point in the Grand Canal, there is a natural channel deep enough for fair-sized vessels, but it was only in 1181 that a fixed crossing was first erected. That makeshift affair was replaced in 1255 by an actual bridge, a steeply sloped wooden structure. In 1524, the bridge suffered a catastrophic collapse; thus, it was decided to build a more permanent structure out of stone. A design by Antonio da Ponte was selected, and construction was finished in 1591. Since then, the Rialto Bridge has come to define Venice; we’ll explore the district of the Rialto in this lecture.

The Church of San Giacometto

- The Campo of San Giacomo is near where the current city of Venice was founded. It is named for a small church that is almost always called San Giacometto to distinguish it from the much larger church of San Giacomo dell’Orto in the sestiere of Santa Croce.



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In the early 15th century, the Venetians expanded the Rialto Bridge by constructing shops on both sides; the rents from these shops were then designated for bridge maintenance.

- It is a predominant Venetian legend that San Giacometto was founded in A.D. 421 and, thus, is the oldest site in the city. However, that legend is not accurate. As we saw so often in our tour of Rome, it's not always easy to separate fact from legend. And although it's true that the current city of Venice was founded in this area, that happened somewhat later.
- Originally, Venice began as a community of traders and fishermen under the control of the Byzantine exarchs. They first established a government in the lagoon at Eraclea on the Adriatic coast and on the islands of Torcello and Malamocco. But it was only in the early 9th century that Doge Agnello Parteciaco (d. 827) moved the seat of government to this side of the Rialto. By doing so, he formally established Venice in this location.
- The church of San Giacometto dates mostly from the 12th century, but it is clear that it has always been associated with trade. The inscription on the apse façade admonishes all merchants to use honest weights and measures. They are also told to keep their word, uphold contracts, and deal honestly with others. Should those written warnings not be enough, until 1542, a wooden pulpit was set up in front of the church for the purpose of delivering sermons to the assembled merchants.
- The façade of the church was much altered in the 17th century, particularly with the enlargement of the windows. But the clock is the original, set high above the Gothic portico. One of the few to have survived on a Venetian church, the clock dates from 1394 to 1401. Its role was to establish the official time and schedule for mercantile meetings and activities.
- Inside San Giacometto, we are immediately captivated by the three aisles that carry the eye down to the triple apse. Unfortunately, the original decoration of the church was largely destroyed in a 17th-century renovation, although there are still decorative materials dating from the 11th century. What is most admirable today is the

early Baroque altar by Scamozzi, crafted for the guild of goldsmiths and silversmiths.

The Gobbo di Rialto

- Opposite the church is a public proclamation pedestal, the famous Gobbo di Rialto. The pedestal is in the shape of a crouching figure. (*Gobbo* in Italian means “hunchback.”) It was from this pedestal that official pronouncements were broadcast. Decrees were proclaimed simultaneously here and in the piazza, that is, in both the commercial center and the political and religious heart of the republic.
- The figure was carved in 1541 by Pietro da Salò. It is in poor condition today because it served as the end of the gauntlet historically run to punish small-scale economic malefactors. Dealers who had been caught cheating were required to run almost naked from the Pietra del Bando in the piazza all the way to the Gobbo. Citizens would line the route and mete out contempt and blows to collectively punish the merchants. Unfortunately, too many of their blows struck the sculpted figure of the Gobbo. For this reason, he was restored in 1836 and surrounded by a protective metal grill.
- The Gobbo was also the closest thing that Venice had to a talking statue. During the period of extreme hostility between the papacy and Venice in the early 17th century, a correspondence began between Pasquino in Rome and the Gobbo in Venice. In those perilous years, the dialogue was supported by Venetian authorities. But when the crisis was over, the Gobbo was silenced.

Nearby the Fabbriche Nuove

- The neighborhood around the Fabbriche Nuove—the huge complex of official buildings we saw earlier—was traditionally the clearinghouse for all kinds of imported goods, as we can tell by the names of the various campos.
- For example, if we walk a few yards back along the Ruga degli Orefici, we find the Naranzaria. In Venetian, *naranja* means orange, and this space was once the depot for fresh produce, especially

fruit, brought from Sicily. Very close is the Campo dell'Erberia, or fresh produce market.

- Also nearby is the Campo della Cordaria, whose name derives from the rope-making shops that were once here. After that is the cheese market, or Campo della Caseria, and the fish market, the Campo della Pescheria. As a rule, these products are not usually available in the campos today.

Santa Maria Gloriosa dei Frari

- Sestiere San Polo is defined by more than trade and commodities. It is dominated by a Franciscan church that is one of the largest and most important in Venice. Its full name is Santa Maria Gloriosa dei Frari, but most refer to it simply as the Frari.
- When the Franciscans first arrived in Venice in 1222, they had no building, nor did they want one. They slept wherever they could and lived by begging, as is appropriate for a mendicant order. But by the middle of the 13th century, there were so many of them and they had established enough of a reputation that Doge Jacopo Tiepolo gave them this parcel of land for a church. The first building soon proved too small for all those who wanted to hear the sermons of the celebrated Franciscan preachers, and a much larger church was built.
- Completed in the mid-15th century, the resulting structure is brick with very little decoration on the exterior. Only the Gothic decoration of the portal and the three small towers punctuate the façade. The campanile is one of the highest in Venice, completed in 1396. But if the exterior is simple and restrained, the interior is a treasure house of art and a kind of collective mausoleum of many doges.
- The sense of space inside is overwhelming. The Latin cross structure is divided into three naves by Gothic arches. The choir has marvelously decorated stalls designed by Marco Cozzi. They are on three levels and able to accommodate 146 monks. Separating the choir from the nave is the only rood screen surviving in Venice.

- The 15th-century choir boasts one of Venice's greatest masterpieces: Titian's *Assumption of the Virgin*, painted in 1518 and the largest altarpiece in Venice. Also by Titian, begun the year after he completed the *Assumption*, is the *Pesaro Madonna*, on the north wall. This masterpiece shows members of the noble Pesaro family worshipping the Virgin through the intercession of St. Peter, who sits below her, while St. Francis stands at the feet of the Christ child.
- In the chapel in the south choir is Donatello's *John the Baptist*, the artist's first work in Venice. Other important works in the church include Giovanni Bellini's 1488 *Madonna and Child with Saints*; Paolo Veneziano's *Doge and Dogressa Dandolo Presented to the Virgin*; and Alvise Vivarini's last work, *St. Ambrose with Saints*.
- The Frari also holds a large assembly of funerary monuments, including one to Francesco Foscari and one to the mercenary captain Paolo Savelli, which is the first equestrian effigy in Venice. The tomb of Canova was made by his studio after his death, based on his design for the tomb of Titian. Finally, any lover of music should visit the simple tomb marker for Claudio Monteverdi.

The *Scuole* of Venice

- *Scuole* were lay confraternities, service clubs that brought together well-off citizens and nobles to do charitable work. They might also be clubs of foreigners from the same geographical region or mutual assistance associations of specific occupations. In many ways, these organizations carried out the social service work of the city. They required yearly dues and often received rich legacies. Thus, they became quite wealthy and their "clubhouses" were imposing structures.
- The *scuole* held honored places in the ceremonial and ritual life of the community. And here, rank did not prevail. Simple citizens and patricians from great families could come together for sociability and good works. Consequently, they served as a kind of social safety valve. Those excluded from political life during the republic did not need to rebel because they, too, could play

a public role. In this way, the *scuole* were essential to Venetian social and economic stability.

- The Scuola Grande di San Rocco was formed in 1478 and dedicated to helping the victims of plague. The façade of its headquarters is unique in its complex decoration. It was constructed over a long period of time, from 1515 to 1560, by many architects. The white marble exterior is broken with classical ornament, porphyry roundels, and green marble squares. Elephants and other exotic creatures support the exterior columns.
 - The interior is structured like most *scuole*, with two large rooms, one on the ground floor and another above, with smaller rooms for specific functions radiating from these. The ground-floor room (*sala terra*) features a grand staircase, leading to the upper chamber (*sala superiore*), where the members actually met. The decorative cycle of art here, by Tintoretto and his workshop, is among the most famous in Europe.
 - Note, too, the series of wooden panels by the Venetian carver Francesco Pianta. These panels are bizarre, wonderfully carved, and exceptionally imaginative.
- Another *scuola* in this sestiere is the Scuola Grande di San Giovanni Evangelista (St. John the Evangelist). This is a very old *scuola*, founded in the 13th century as a confraternity of *battuti*. The *battuti* were flagellants who walked in procession, scourging themselves to atone for mankind's sins.
- One last *scuola* in this area is the Scuola dei Calegheri (“Confraternity of the Shoemakers”). It's no longer a public building, but on the façade, notice the carving of the shoemaker Ananias, converted by St. Mark, now the patron saint of cobblers, and a lovely relief of the Virgin protecting the community of shoemakers.

Smithsonian Journeys Travel Tips

To experience a gondola ride across the Grand Canal, ride a *traghetto* for only €2, just as the locals do to get around the city. These passenger boats are large gondolas that cross the canal at seven stops. The two oarsmen stand in the traditional manner and ferry a small number of passengers back and forth across the water. Look online to find the locations of the stops.

Visit the Antica Drogheria Mascari, the oldest food specialty store in Venice, at the Rialto market, to pick up some treats, such as balsamic vinegar, dried porcini, and of course, truffles, to take home.

Suggested Reading

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Brown, *Art and Life in Renaissance Venice*.

Chambers, *The Imperial Age of Venice, 1380–1580*.

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Valcanover, *Museums and Galleries of Venice*.

Wilde, *Venetian Art from Bellini to Titian*.

Wills, *Venice: Lion City*.

Questions to Consider

1. It has been suggested that the Rialto is the real heart of Venice, more so than Piazza San Marco. Why would people think so?
2. Would you compare the Venetian *scuole* with modern service clubs, such as the Shriners or Elks?

Sestiere Castello and the Outer Islands

Lecture 36

In our last lecture, we will visit the Sestiere Castello, which forms the tail of the fish that is Venice. Because much of the area toward the eastward end was dedicated to the medieval shipyards and arsenal where the Venetian fleets were built, we'll stay closer to the western side of Castello. We'll begin in Campo Santa Maria Formosa, the largest domestic campo in this part of the city. From there, we'll explore in depth the Dominican church of Santi Giovanni e Paolo. We will then close our course with a visit to the outer islands of the lagoon: Isola di San Michele, Murano, Burano, and Torcello.

Santa Maria Formosa

- The church of Santa Maria Formosa has existed since medieval times, although the structure seen today dates from 1492. The distinctive campanile and façade were added later, but the interior was designed by Mauro Coducci and can be seen as a distillation of the early Renaissance in Venice.
- The cubic volumes of the interior are rendered in soft grays and off-white reminiscent of Brunelleschi's work in Florence. The altar, which is surmounted by an impressive triumphal arch, is decorated with a superb polyptych by Bartolomeo Vivarini. This painting, executed on multiple hinged panels, depicts the *Madonna of the Misericord* (1473) protecting the priest of the church and his congregation.
- This church is intimately linked with a key element of the doge's regalia and a story that goes back to the year 944.
 - A group of young girls in a wedding party were walking to San Marco when they were abducted by Slav pirates. With them were the *casselleri*, the makers of wedding chests, who managed to rescue the girls. The doge was grateful and asked what the *casselleri* wanted for their reward.

- The *casselleri* asked the doge to visit their chapel every year on Candlemas, but the doge tried various excuses to avoid the obligation: What if it rains? What if I need a drink? In response, the *casselleri* promised the doge a straw hat and a jug of wine. Thus, from that year until 1797, the doge and the officials of the republic made a procession here to receive a straw hat and a jug of wine.

Santi Giovanni e Paolo

- A few minutes' walk to the north of Campo Santa Maria Formosa is the huge complex of buildings around the Dominican church of Santi Giovanni e Paolo, known to locals as San Zanipolo. Like the Franciscans, the Dominicans entered Venice in the 13th century. And in 1246, they, too, received a site to build a church from Doge Jacopo Tiepolo.
- The first church soon proved too small for the growing congregation and was pulled down in 1333 to make room for the huge church we see today. This structure took a century to build and was not consecrated until 1430. The design is in the Venetian Gothic tradition and, not unlike the Frari, adorned with minimal decoration. The façade remains unfinished, with unpolished brickwork on the first story and structural elements still exposed above the portal. There is not even a substantial bell tower.
- But what is here is remarkable. The high nave is surmounted by three spires with internal statues. The lovely portal by Bartolomeo Bon, dating from 1459, traces the movement from the Gothic to the Renaissance style in Venice.
- Beside the portal are two Byzantine sculptures of the 13th century representing the Virgin of the Annunciation. The bas reliefs with the Greek inscriptions date from the 6th century. Between the arches on the façade are late-classical and Gothic sarcophagi, mounted by way of decoration. The tombs of the donor, Jacopo Tiepolo, and his son are also here.

- The interior of the church is overwhelming in its size and design. The nave is almost 330 feet long, and the high, cross-vaulted ceiling is almost 140 feet high. The enormous pillars that carry the weight of the vault divide the space into a nave and two side aisles, leading to a polygonal apse. The wooden tie beams, set to join the width of the nave, add elegance, even if their real purpose is to stabilize the structure during earthquakes or shifts in the foundation.
- The sense of light here is unusual for a Venetian Gothic church. The windows allow both sunlight and colored light, filtered through stained glass, to enter the nave. The stained glass itself is extremely rare—among the few examples of Gothic Murano glass to have survived in their original place.
- The most celebrated work of art in the church is Giovanni Bellini's 15th-century polyptych over the second altar on the right. Painted on nine poplar panels, the images celebrate the life of St. Vincent Ferrer. Other important paintings can be found in the chapels, including a 17th-century copy of Titian's *St. Peter Martyr* and Giovanni Battista Piazzetta's *St. Dominic in Glory*. Those who love art should also visit the tombs of Giovanni and Gentile Bellini and Palma il Giovane (Palma the Younger).
- The great glory of San Zanipolo is its collection of magnificent funerary monuments. Twenty-five doges are buried here. Hence, the church is often called the Pantheon of Venice. The ducal tombs represent the history of the republic from the coming of the Dominicans to near its end. The earliest tomb is that of Doge Jacopo Tiepolo (d. 1296) and the latest contains the remains of Doge Silvestro Valier, who died in 1700.
 - In the left side of the choir is the tomb of Doge Marco Cornaro, who died in 1368. It is a bit of a pastiche—the statues in the Gothic niches above the doge were carved in Pisa in the 1360s. But it has been suggested that the splendid image of the Virgin in the center is the apogee of Gothic sculpture in Venice.

- Another dramatic Gothic monument is the tomb of Doge Michele Morosini, who died in 1382. It is almost like the gable of a Gothic church, with its pediment and decorated finials. Inside the pediment is a mosaic of the doge and his wife at prayer before Christ on the cross.
- We can then see the transformation of the Venetian Gothic style to early Renaissance design in the monument to Doge Pasquale Malipiero (d. 1462). This tomb is by Pietro Lombardo, a genius of Venetian sculpture. Note the naturalistic image of the dead Christ with angels and the classical architectural frame.
- The monument to Doge Pietro Mocenigo (d. 1476) by Pietro and Tullio Lombardo is an amazing artistic exercise, uniting architecture and sculpture in a fitting memorial to a great doge, one of Venice's naval heroes. The sarcophagus is held by powerful soldiers, with saints surrounding the central opening; the image of Christ is a Renaissance masterpiece. As is appropriate for the commander who carried on his city's struggles against the Turks, the bas reliefs below represent the labors of Hercules.

The Scuola Grande di San Marco

- The Scuola Grande di San Marco is one of the oldest in the city, founded in 1260 for the relief of the sick and poor. In 1485, the original *scuola* burned down, and in 1488, Pietro Lombardo was commissioned to rebuild it grandly. Traces of gold leaf have been discovered on the façade, indicating that the architectural elements were once gilded. The building, completed in 1495, was paid for through an assessment of its wealthy members.
- The complex façade of this building has an almost illusionistic effect, created by the riot of rounded gables. It's actually the work of two different architects, with the ground floor designed by Pietro Lombardo and the upper story by Mauro Coducci. The white marble and the decorative statuary on the gables, mostly by Tullio Lombardo, Pietro's son, give the structure a theatrical appearance.

- In 1819, the Austrians converted the *scuola* into their military hospital, and it has served as the general hospital of Venice ever since. Nothing of the original interior survives, but some of the greatest pictures by Tintoretto, including his *Miracle of St. Mark* (1548) and *St. Mark's Body Brought to Venice* (1562–1566), once graced its sumptuous halls.

Outer Islands in the Lagoon

- Isola di San Michele is the cemetery island of Venice. Because Napoleon closed all the cemeteries in Venice and forbade future burials, Venetian graves are located here. A great many famous inhabitants have permanent tombs on Isola di San Michele, including the composer Igor Stravinsky. Simple citizens rent their resting places for a fixed number of years, after which their bones are deposited further out onto an ossuary island.
- Not far beyond is the island of Murano, famous for its glassmaking factories and showrooms. Glassmaking was established in Venice as early as the 10th century, and the secrets of the characteristic colored and decorated glass were closely guarded by the state. If any craftsman left the city to practice his trade elsewhere, he was hunted



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The heat of the furnaces used in glassmaking in Venice resulted in so many fires that all the glass works were ordered to move to the island of Murano in 1291.

down by professional assassins in the employ of the republic, and his family was prosecuted.

- Farther out is Burano, the quiet lacemaking island. This ancient art had fallen on hard times by the middle of the 19th century because of industrial mechanization and changes in fashion. However, in 1872, the future queen of Italy, Margherita of Savoy, worked to reestablish this art as a useful occupation for poor girls and women. The Burano School of Lacemaking was founded in that year and operated for a century. It is now a museum with wonderful examples of the lacemaker's art.
- Beyond Burano is the large island of Torcello, which once had about 20,000 inhabitants and a large cathedral, the church of Santa Maria Assunta, a glorious example of early church architecture. Close by is the elegant Byzantine-style church of Santa Fosca, dating from the 11th century.
- If you set out early enough, it's possible to visit these islands in a single day, but it is here that we must bring to an end our journey. We've traveled from the heart of ancient Rome and Pompeii;

Smithsonian Journeys Travel Tips

With its expansive green fields, walkways, and canals, the island of Torcello will not disappoint the visitor seeking refuge from the busy *calli* of Venice. The 7th-century Basilica of Santa Maria Assunta is older than the Basilica of San Marco, and the 11th- and 12th-century mosaics, especially the Last Judgment, are world-renowned. As in the mainland basilica, be sure to look down because the floor mosaics are remarkable. The church of Santa Fosca and the island's museum are located next door. At the Piazza Santa Fosca, visit the famous Locanda Cipriani, the inn and restaurant where celebrities stay and dine. Make reservations to enjoy lunch or dinner on the patio.

through Orvieto, Siena, and San Gimignano to Florence; and through Arezzo, Perugia, and Assisi before arriving in Venice. As we've seen, Italy represents a never-ceasing dialogue of art and life that nourishes the spirit and excites the imagination.

Suggested Reading

Barzini, *The Italians*.

Brown, *Art and Life in Renaissance Venice*.

Chambers, *The Imperial Age of Venice, 1380–1580*.

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Severgnini, *La Bella Figura*.

Valcanover, *Museums and Galleries of Venice*.

Wilde, *Venetian Art from Bellini to Titian*.

Wills, *Venice: Lion City*.

Questions to Consider

1. Santi Giovanni e Paolo (San Zanipolo), the Pantheon in Rome, and Santa Croce in Florence all contain the remains of famous citizens. Can you suggest modern equivalents of such structures?
2. Can such a city as Venice continue to work its magic? Does the entire world have the responsibility to preserve it?

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Credit

The “Smithsonian Journeys Travel Tips” featured in this course were written by Valerie Hedquist, Professor of Art History, School of Art, University of Montana.