

Chapel of the Cardinal of Portugal restored with a donation from the Friends of Florence

The Chapel of the Cardinal of Portugal in the Basilica of San Miniato al Monte, one of the milestones in the development of Florentine Renaissance art, was reopened on 28 July 2021 after being restored under the supervision of Dr. Maria Maugeri with the Direzione Lavori della Soprintendenza Archeologia Belle Arti per la Città Metropolitana di Firenze e le Province di Pistoia e Prato. The restoration, performed by a team of expert restorers, was made possible thanks to a donation from the Friends of Florence.

"San Miniato al Monte as a site is much cherished by the Friends of Florence. Three years ago we contributed to the restoration of the ciborium to mark the abbey's first millenary in 2018. Today, with the presentation of the Chapel of the Cardinal of Portugal we are further bolstering our commitment to the basilica's vast heritage," Friends of Florence President Simonetta Brandolini d'Adda remarked, adding: "I would like to thank the Soprintendenza which supervised the work on this occasion, Abbot Bernardo Gianni for his amenability in agreeing to the restoration and all the restorers and skilled craftsmen who have worked on this fascinating project. Above all, I would like to thank Professor Jon Cherubini for his generous bequest which has allowed us to restore this magnificent chapel. We are immensely sad never to have been able to meet this great benefactor who was so enamoured of Florence and of this church, but we are thrilled to have executed his will in restoring this magnificent jewel casket of sheer beauty."

"The recently concluded restoration of the Chapel of the Cardinal of Portugal," added Florence Director General for Fine Arts Andrea Pessina, "is an outstanding operation which, without a shadow of a doubt, we can truly call *teamwork* thanks to the many professional skills involved and to the knowledge that it has been necessary to share. Our heartfelt thanks go to the Friends of Florence, and to Professor Jon Cherubini whose boundless love of art and of Florence has made all of this possible."

Abbot Bernardo Giani, for his part, said: "The community of San Miniato al Monte is deeply grateful to the Friends of Florence and to the donors who have made this superb restoration venture possible, restoring to its original beauty one of the loftiest monuments in the whole of Renaissance art and architecture and indeed in the 1,000-year history of San Miniato al Monte, thus helping to turn beauty and its conservation into a wonderful instrument of consolation and hope in the face of the mystery of death and of evil."

"The Chapel of the Cardinal of Portugal, broadly acknowledged as one of the loftiest examples of Florentine Renaissance art, has now been restored to the community thanks to the generosity of the Cherubini family and to the unflagging commitment to the conservation of Florence's heritage shown by the Friends of Florence Foundation which has promoted this exemplary restoration," explained Maria Maugeri who supervised the restoration project, adding: "My personal gratitude must also go to the substantial team of

restorers and their assistants with whom it has been a pleasure to work thanks to their temperament and to their professionalism: Daniele Angellotto, Bartolomeo Ciccone, Alessandro Gianni, Anna Medori, Nicola Savioli, Filippo Tattini and Andrea Vigna, and a host of skilled professionals whom it would take too long to list on this occasion but without whose contribution we would never have achieved this outstanding result. And lastly, I would like to express my sincere thanks to my colleague Alberto Felici, an experienced restorer thanks to whom we were able to experiment with applying the laser method to polychrome terracotta with superb results. And indeed in that connection we owe a debt of gratitude to the El.En group's *Light for Art* which provided us with the necessary instrumentation completely free of charge and to Alessandro Zanini for his assistance during the operation."

THE CHAPEL, ITS CONDITION AND ITS RESTORATION

The Chapel of the Cardinal of Portugal is one of the most important Renaissance chapels in Florence. Situated in the church of San Miniato al Monte, it was built in the middle decades of the 15th century in accordance with the last will and testament of Cardinal James of Lusitania, a member of the Portuguese royal house who died in Florence in 1459. Its execution was entrusted to a group of artists whose number included Luca della Robbia, Antonio Manetti (a pupil of Brunelleschi), Antonio and Piero del Pollaiuolo, Antonio and Bernardo Rossellino and Alesso Baldovinetti. The work of this outstanding team of artists resulted in the creation of a masterpiece where glazed terracotta, marble and precious stones, gilding, painting and inlay come together to produce a jewel of inestimable value.

Teamwork has once again been the name of the game in the much-needed maintenance and restoration project made possible thanks to a generous contribution from the Friends of Florence Foundation. The chapel is a composite work, its sophisticated decoration consisting of wall paintings, elements in *pietra serena* stone, marble, glazed terracotta, panel paintings and items in bronze, thus requiring the involvement of a variety of skilled craftsmen, each one an expert in handling the different materials present in the chapel so as to guarantee not only a state-of-the-art restoration but also respect for the chapel as a whole. Each one of the professionals involved in restoring this rich and complex monument has been guided first and foremost by the principle of intervening only where strictly necessary, of ensuring the stringent compatibility of the materials used with the original materials, and of developing innovative methodologies to resolve a number of issues associated with cleansing the surfaces. For a more detailed explanation of the work performed on each of the chapel's components, kindly refer to the restoration report attached.

Attached to this press release please find the in-depth art history factsheet and the restoration report.

All the above information may be freely used by the media

Contacts:

Friends of Florence: Elisa Bonini elisaboniniitaly@friendsofflorence.org + 39 333 6729563