

Brunelleschi's Dome

Competition and the Early Florentine Architecture

HART 130 Renaissance Art

Professor Dasol Kim

September 03, 2026



Giotto in Fourteenth-Century Italy

Scrovegni Chapel (or Arena Chapel)

Giotto di Bondone, 1304-06, Fresco, Padua

Cycles of Virgin Mary and Christ



Last Judgment



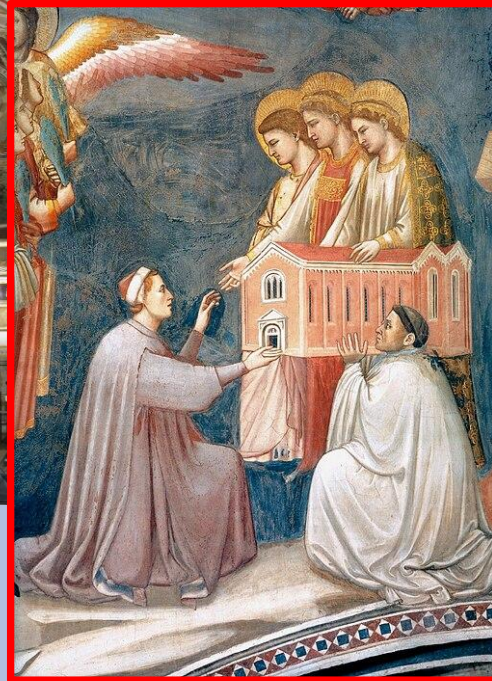
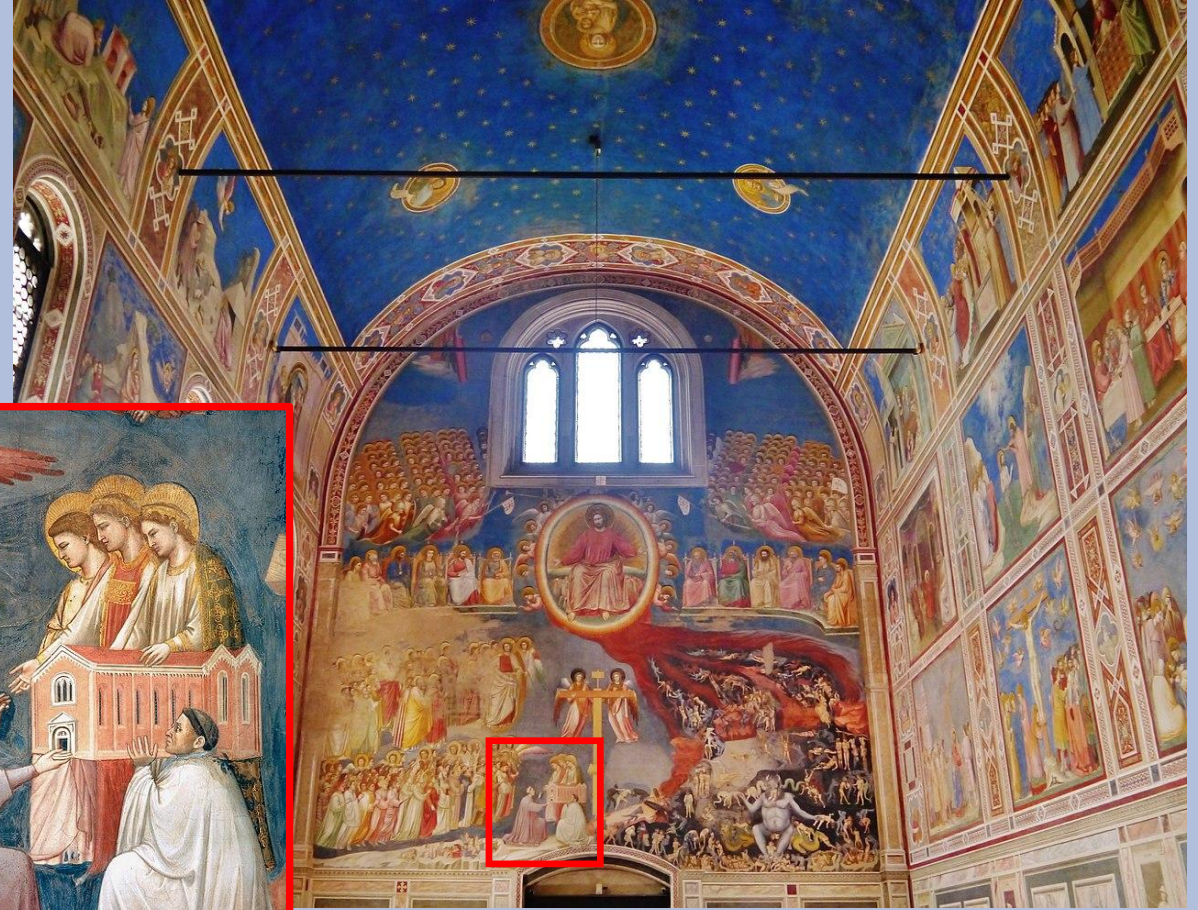
Scrovegni Chapel (or Arena Chapel)

Giotto di Bondone, 1304-06, Fresco, Padua

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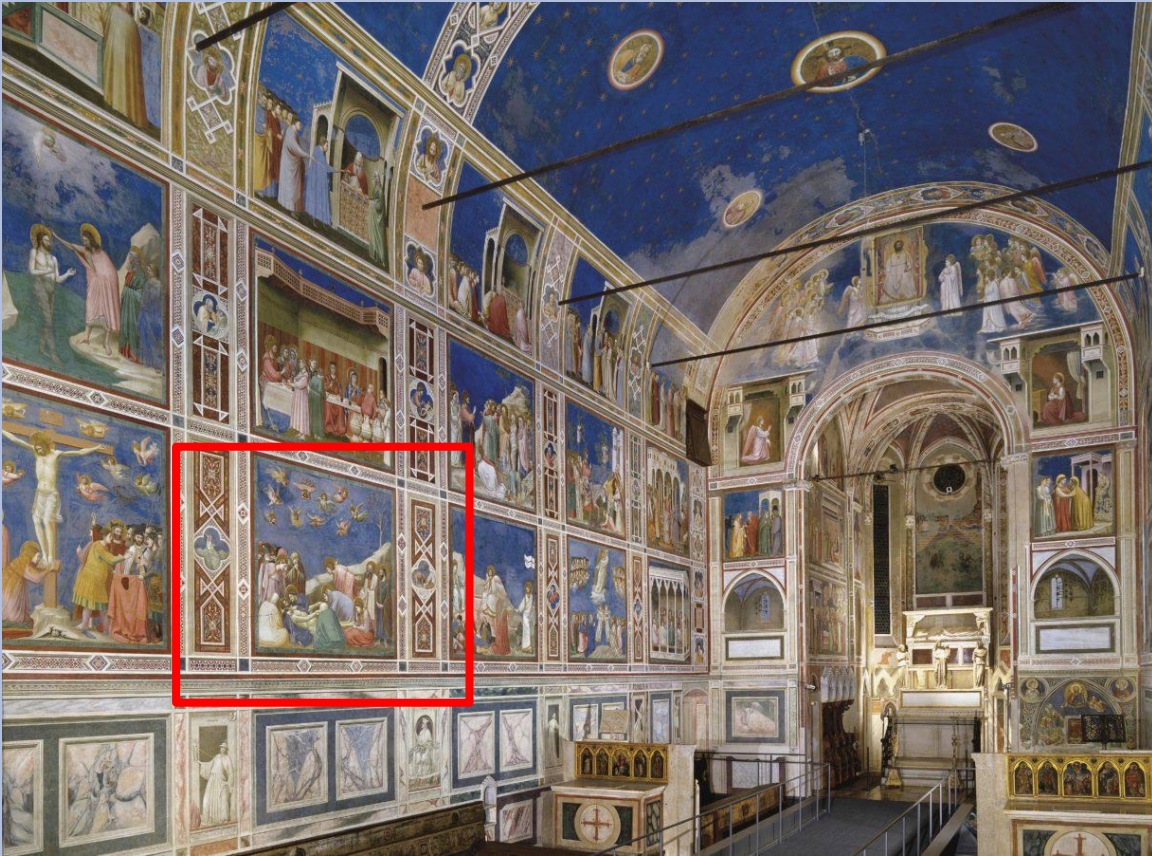


Donor and commissioner Enrico Scrovegni

Scrovegni Chapel (or Arena Chapel)

Giotto di Bondone, 1304-06, Fresco, Padua

Cycles of Virgin Mary and Christ



Lamentation of Christ's Death



Lamentation fresco, 1164, Saint Panteleimon, Nerezi,
today's North Macedonia



How would you compare the two works' similarity and differences? (space, figures, body, cloth drapery, etc.)

Lamentation fresco, 1164, Saint Panteleimon, Nerezi,
North Macedonia



Scrovegni Chapel (or Arena Chapel)
Giotto di Bondone, 1304-06, Fresco, Padua, Italy



12th c.



14th c.



12th c.



14th c.



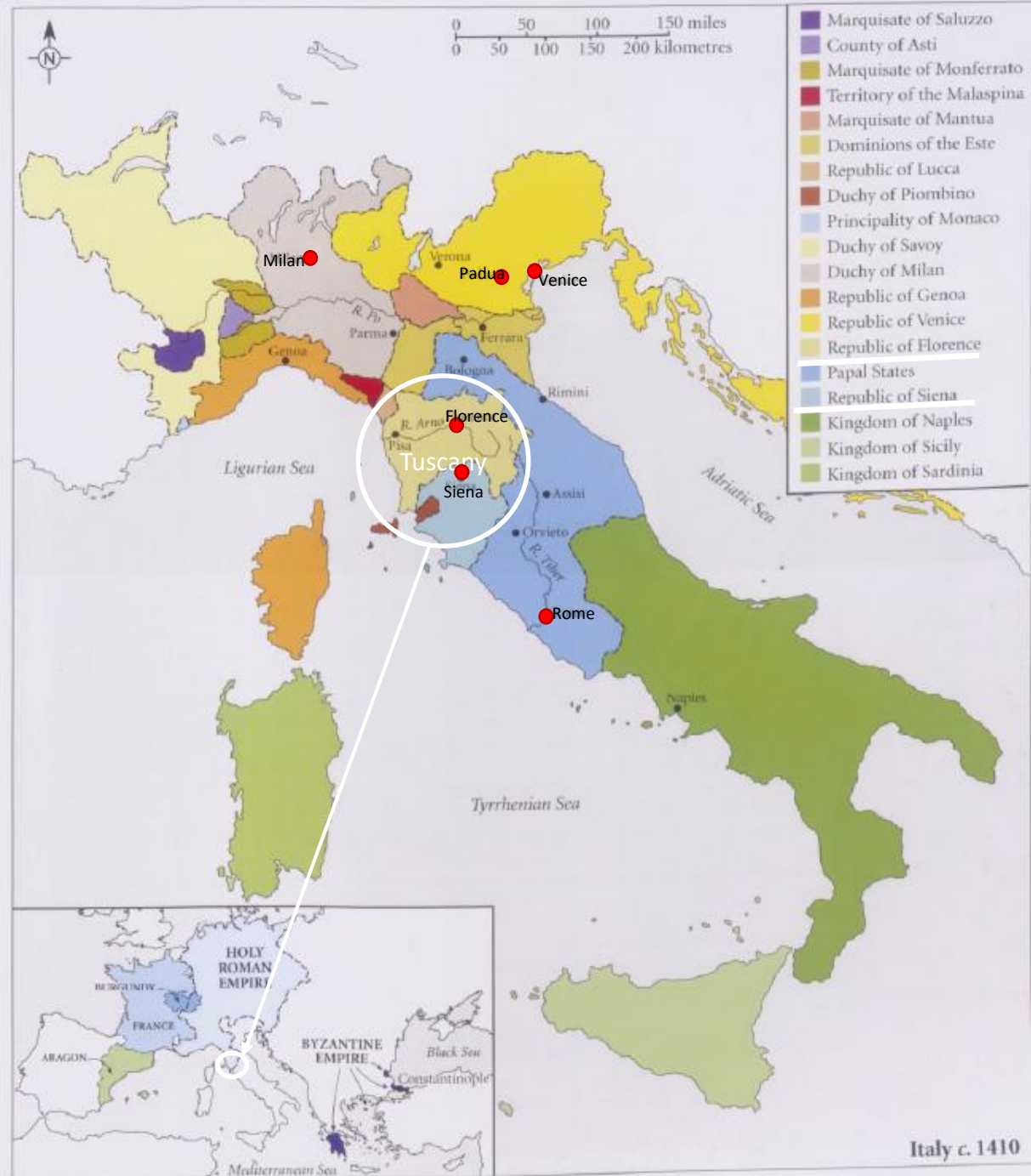
Foreshortening:

A way of depicting a body, emphasizing the illusion of depth extending back into space. Body looks compressed or shorter

The Competition Reliefs: Lorenzo Ghiberti & Filippo Brunelleschi

Early Fifteenth-Century Florence

Republic of Florence (1115-1569)



Florence

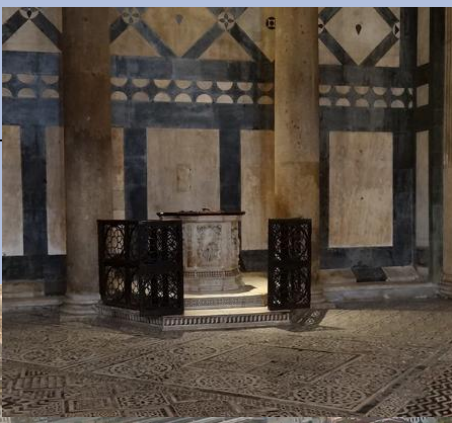


Duomo

Baptistry

Campanile

Florence



The part of a church used for baptism

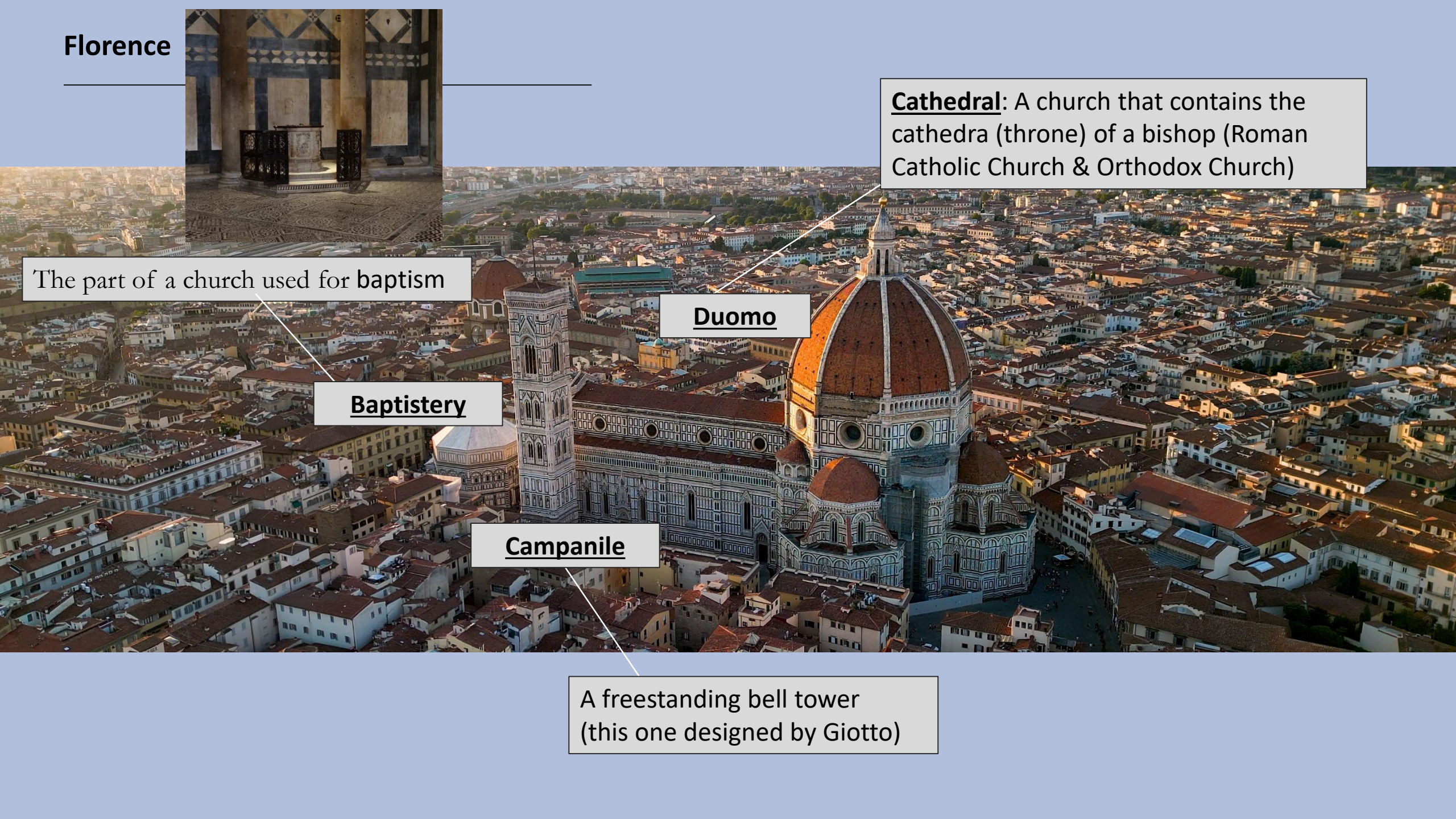
Baptistery

Campanile

A freestanding bell tower
(this one designed by Giotto)

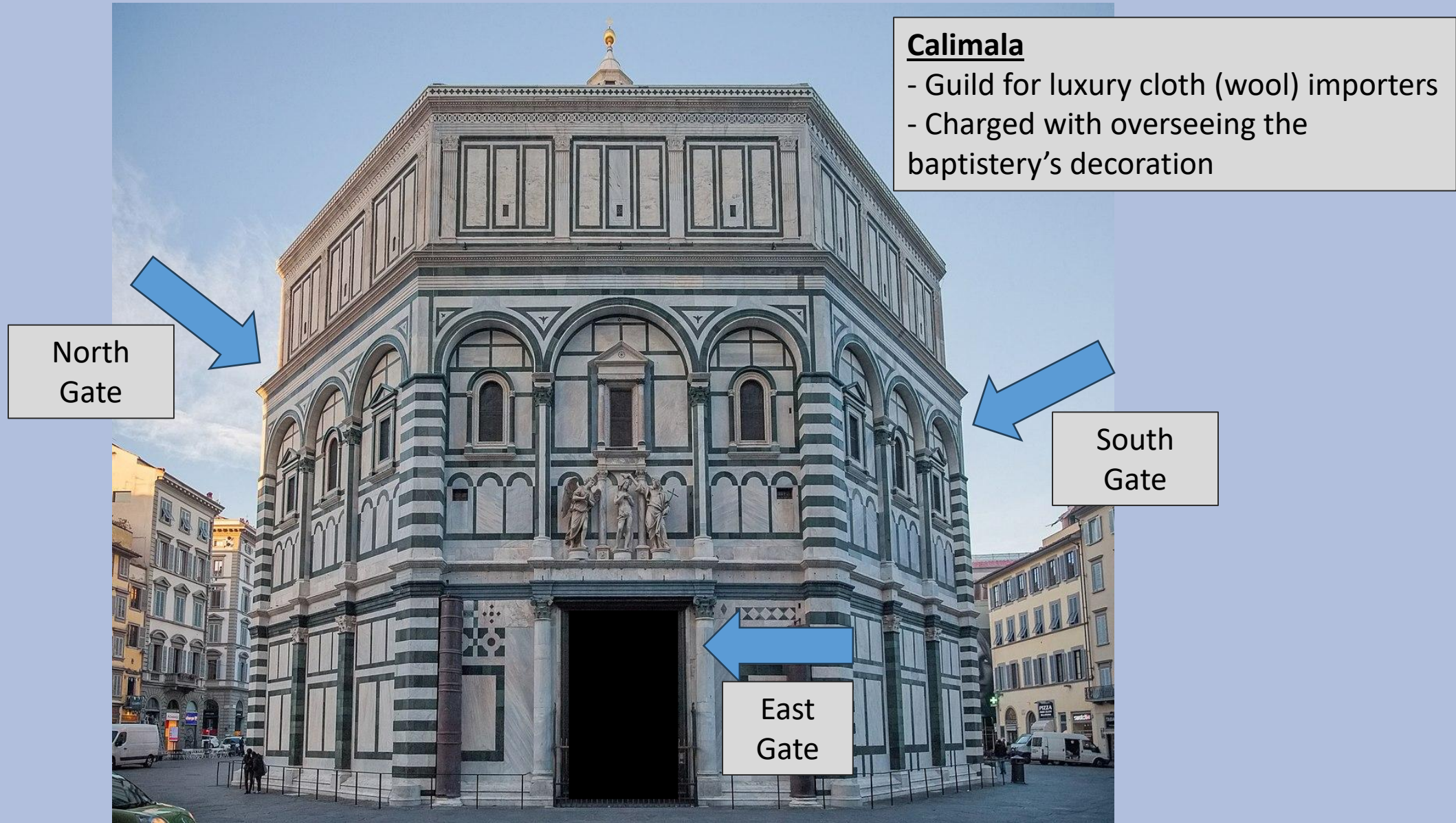
Duomo

Cathedral: A church that contains the cathedra (throne) of a bishop (Roman Catholic Church & Orthodox Church)



Baptistery (San Giovanni), Florence

1059, Florence



South Doors of the Baptistry in Florence

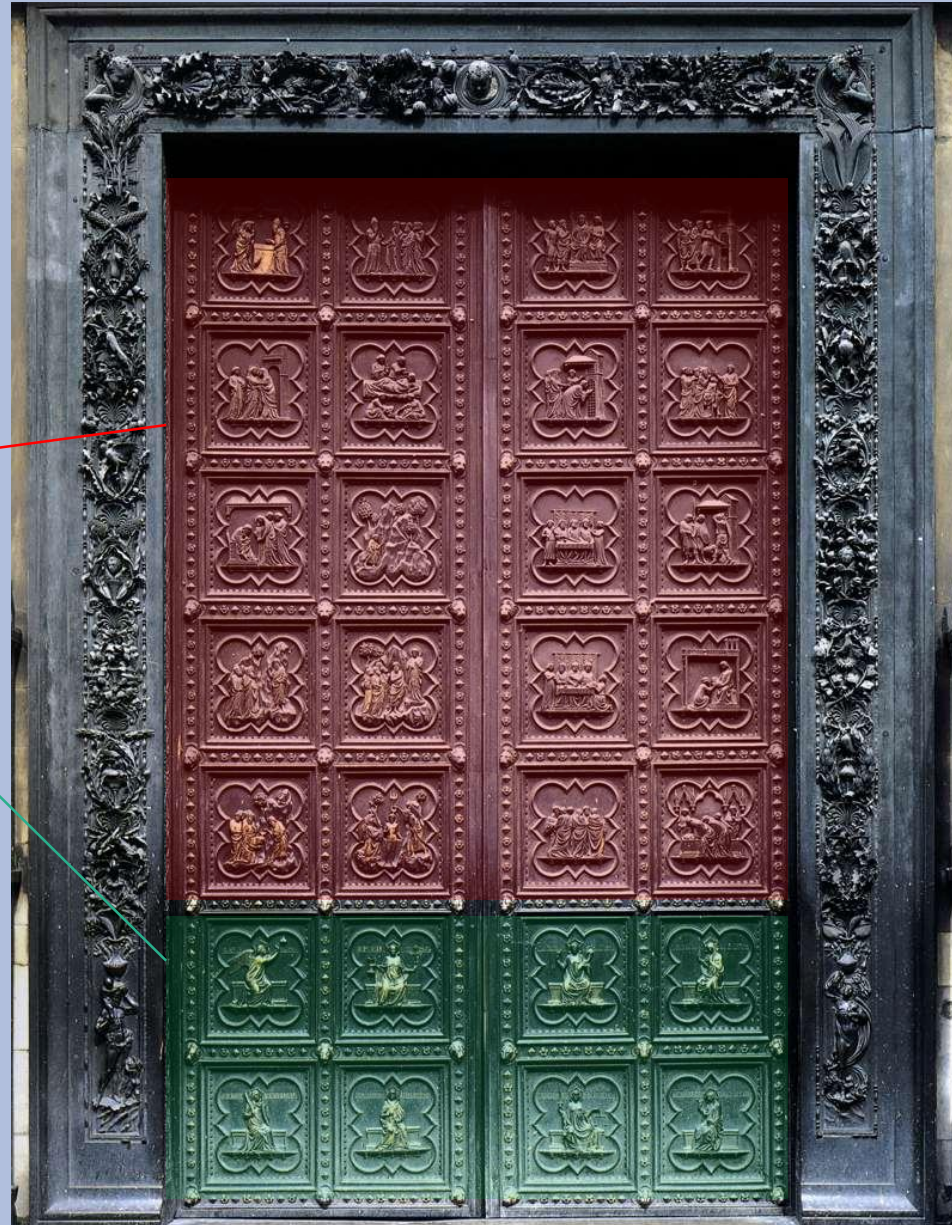
Andrea Pisano, 1330-36, Gilded Bronze, 486 x 280 cm (191.3 x 110.2 in.), Baptistry, Florence

Andrea Pisano (1290–1348)

- Italian goldsmith, architect,
and sculptor

Subject Matters

- Life of St. John the Baptist
- Allegories of the Virtues
(hope, faith, charity, humility,
fortitude, temperance, justice,
prudence)



Competition of 1401

Andrea Pisano, *Christ Baptized*, 1330-36, South Doors, Baptistery of Florence



- Artists asked to produce a single panel for the new doors of the Baptistery (Old Testament theme) on North and East.
- **Required subject: The Sacrifice of Isaac**
- Panel had to match the size and shape of Andrea Pisano's earlier panels on the South Doors
- Seven artists submitted entries

Sacrifice of Isaac (The Competition Panels)

Lorenzo Ghiberti (left) and Filippo Brunelleschi (right), 1401-02, Bronze, 53.3 x 43.2 cm, Museo Nazionale del Bargello, Florence



Sacrifice of Isaac (The Competition Panels)

Lorenzo Ghiberti and Filippo Brunelleschi, 1401-02, Bronze, 53.3 x 43.2 cm, Museo Nazionale del Bargello, Florence



Lorenzo Ghiberti (1378–1455)

- Italian sculptor active in Florence
- Came from a family of goldsmiths
- Trained in a late medieval sculptors' workshop

Sacrifice of Isaac (The Competition Panels)

Lorenzo Ghiberti and Filippo Brunelleschi, 1401-02, Bronze, 53.3 x 43.2 cm, Museo Nazionale del Bargello, Florence

Filippo Brunelleschi (1378–1455)

- Italian architect, sculptor, and goldsmith in Florence
- Son of a notary, not from an artist family
- Cast seven separate pieces, later attached to a bronze plate
- Stronger references to antiquity: classical altar and classical sculpture



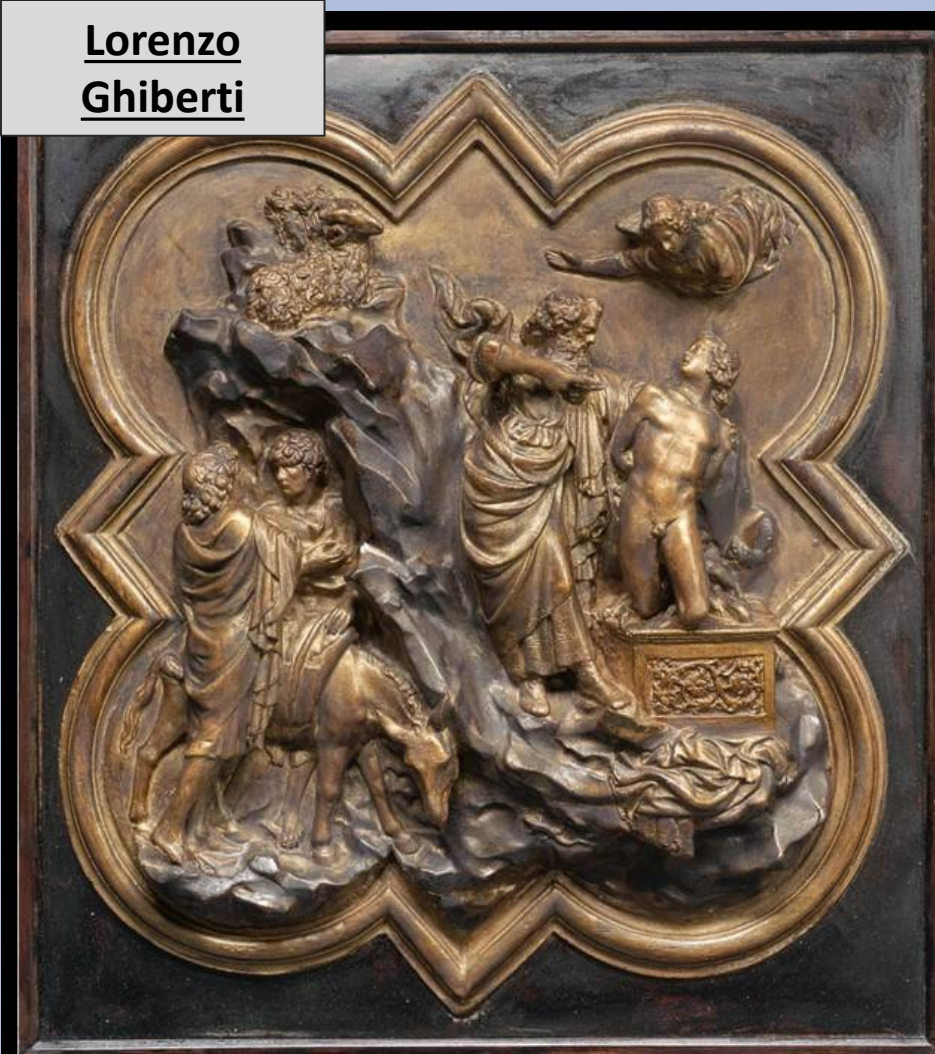
Spinario (The Thorn Puller), First century BCE, Bronze, 73 cm (28.8 in.), Musei Capitolini, Rome



Sacrifice of Isaac (The Competition Panels)

Lorenzo Ghiberti and Filippo Brunelleschi, 1401-02, Bronze, 53.3 x 43.2 cm, Museo Nazionale del Bargello, Florence

Lorenzo
Ghiberti



Filippo
Brunelleschi



Lorenzo Ghiberti (1378–1455)

- Cast most of the panel as one piece, with two small pieces added (Abraham's hand and the rock)
- Used less bronze → lighter, more economical

North Doors of the Baptistry in Florence

Lorenzo Ghiberti, 1403-24, Gilt bronze, 4.6 m (15 ft.), Baptistry, Florence

Subject matter included:

- [1] Old Testament → New Testament stories
- [2] Saints
- [3] Forty-seven heads of prophets, sibyls, and a portrait of Ghiberti himself



Brunelleschi's Dome and Early Renaissance Architecture

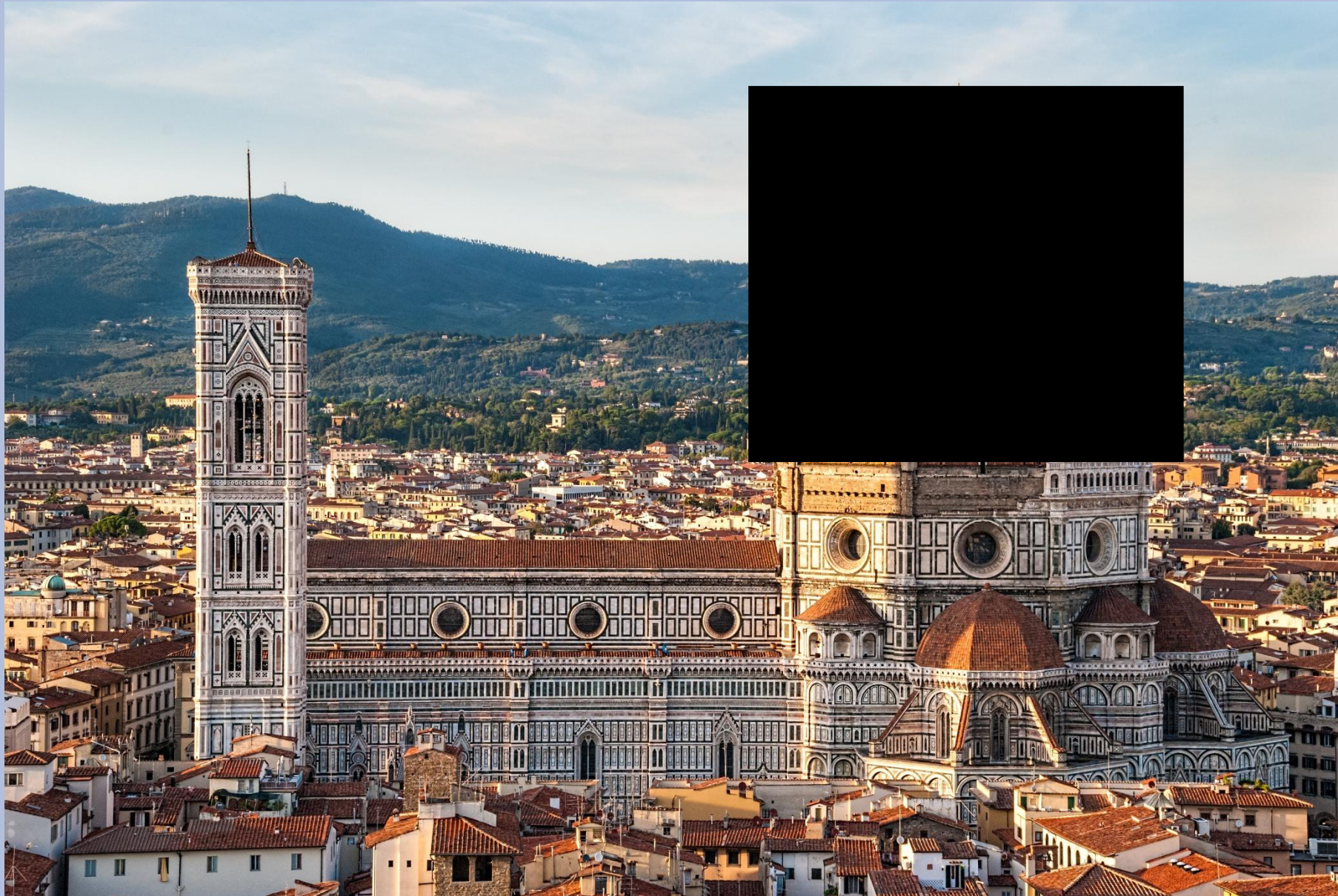
Dome of Florence Cathedral

Filippo Brunelleschi, 1420-36, Florence



Dome of Florence Cathedral

Filippo Brunelleschi, 1420-36, Florence

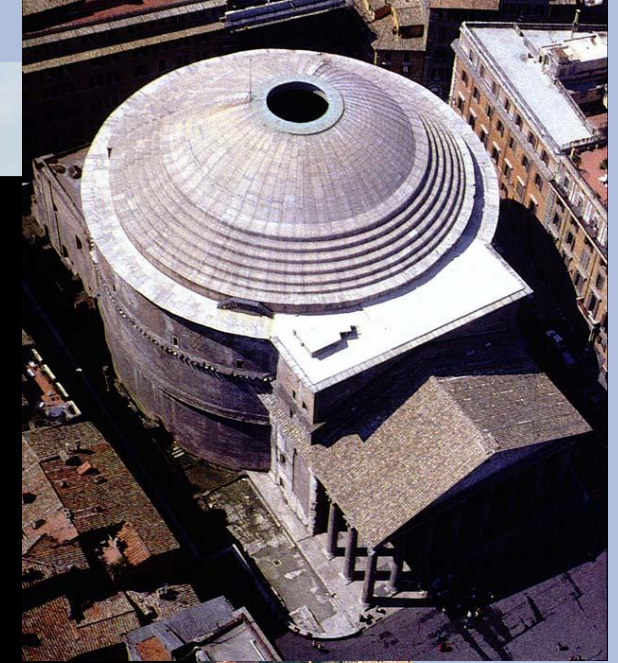


Dome of Florence Cathedral

Filippo Brunelleschi, 1420-36, Florence

- After 1401, Brunelleschi studied ancient Roman architecture in Rome
- By 1418: competition for the dome of Florence Cathedral
- Initially collaborated with Ghiberti → Ghiberti withdrew → Brunelleschi completed project

Pantheon, ?-126 CE, Rome



Dome of Florence Cathedral

Filippo Brunelleschi, 1420-36, Florence



Dome of Florence Cathedral

Filippo Brunelleschi, 1420-36, Florence

[1] Ribs

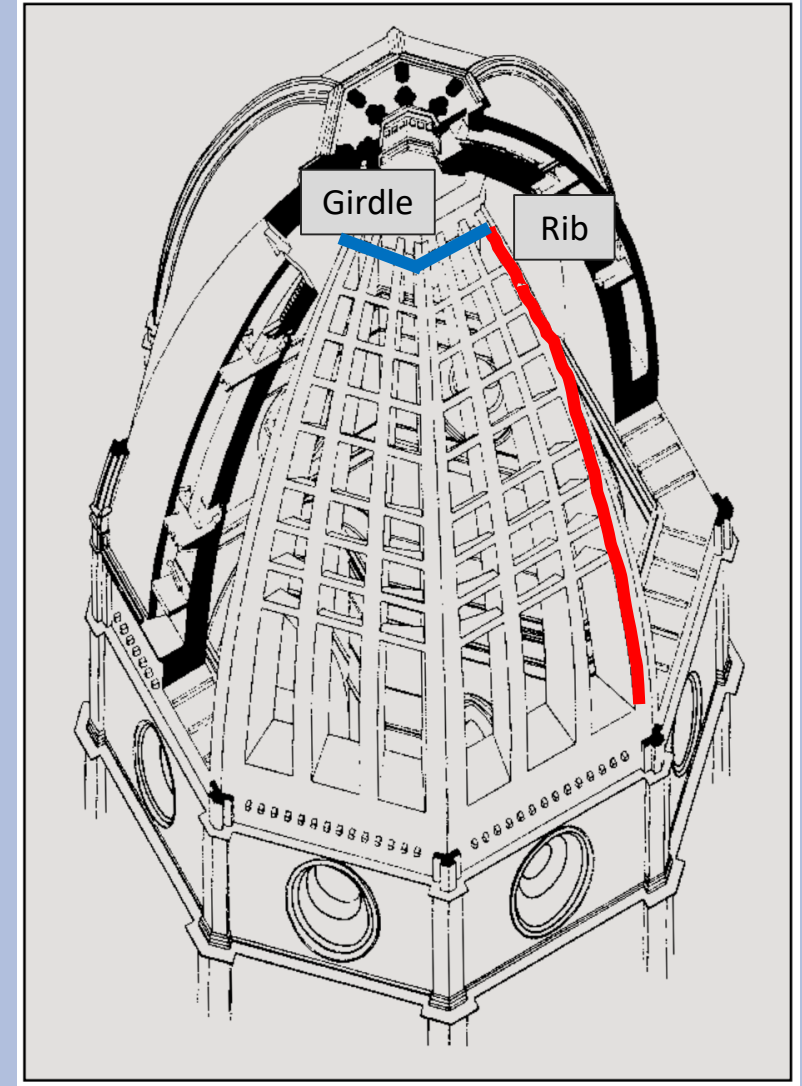
- Eight large ribs from the corners of the octagon, with smaller ribs between
- Distributed the weight of the lantern evenly to the drum below
- Wooden/iron “girdle” bands held the structure inward

[2] Double-Shell

- Inner shell of bricks bore the weight
- Outer shell of terracotta tiles concealed structure
- Marble ribs on the exterior revealed the inner rib system

[3] Combined Visual Effect

- External ribs alluded to the hidden inner structure
- Medieval pointed-arch system merged with classical references



Dome of Florence Cathedral

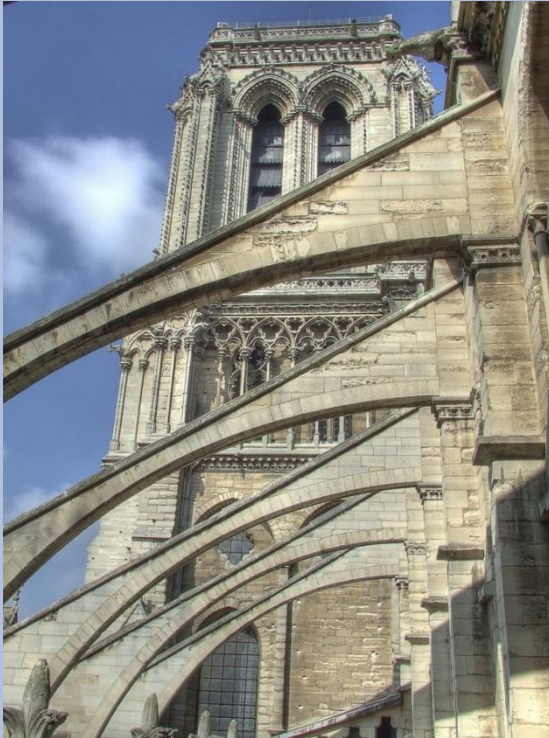
Filippo Brunelleschi, 1420-36, Florence

[4] Lantern (* completed after Brunelleschi(1377-1446)'s death in 1460s)

- Medieval inspiration
- Gothic church's flying buttresses or Gothic architecture-shaped liturgical metalwork

Left: Flying buttresses of Notre Dame in Paris (c. 1230)

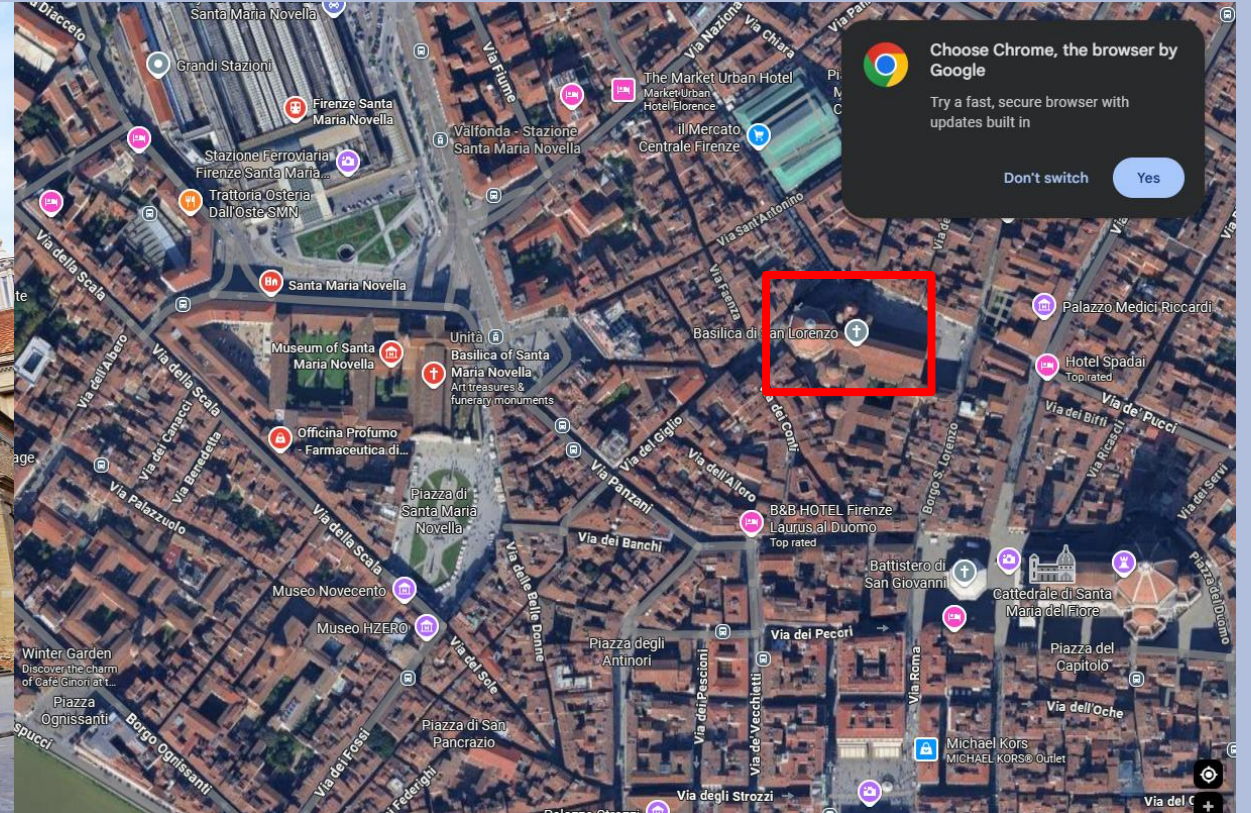
Right: German monstrance c. 1450



Sagresita Vecchia di San Lorenzo (Old Sacristy of San Lorenzo) in the Basilica of San Lorenzo

Filippo Brunelleschi, 1421-40, Florence

Patronized by the Medici family (in the fourteenth century)



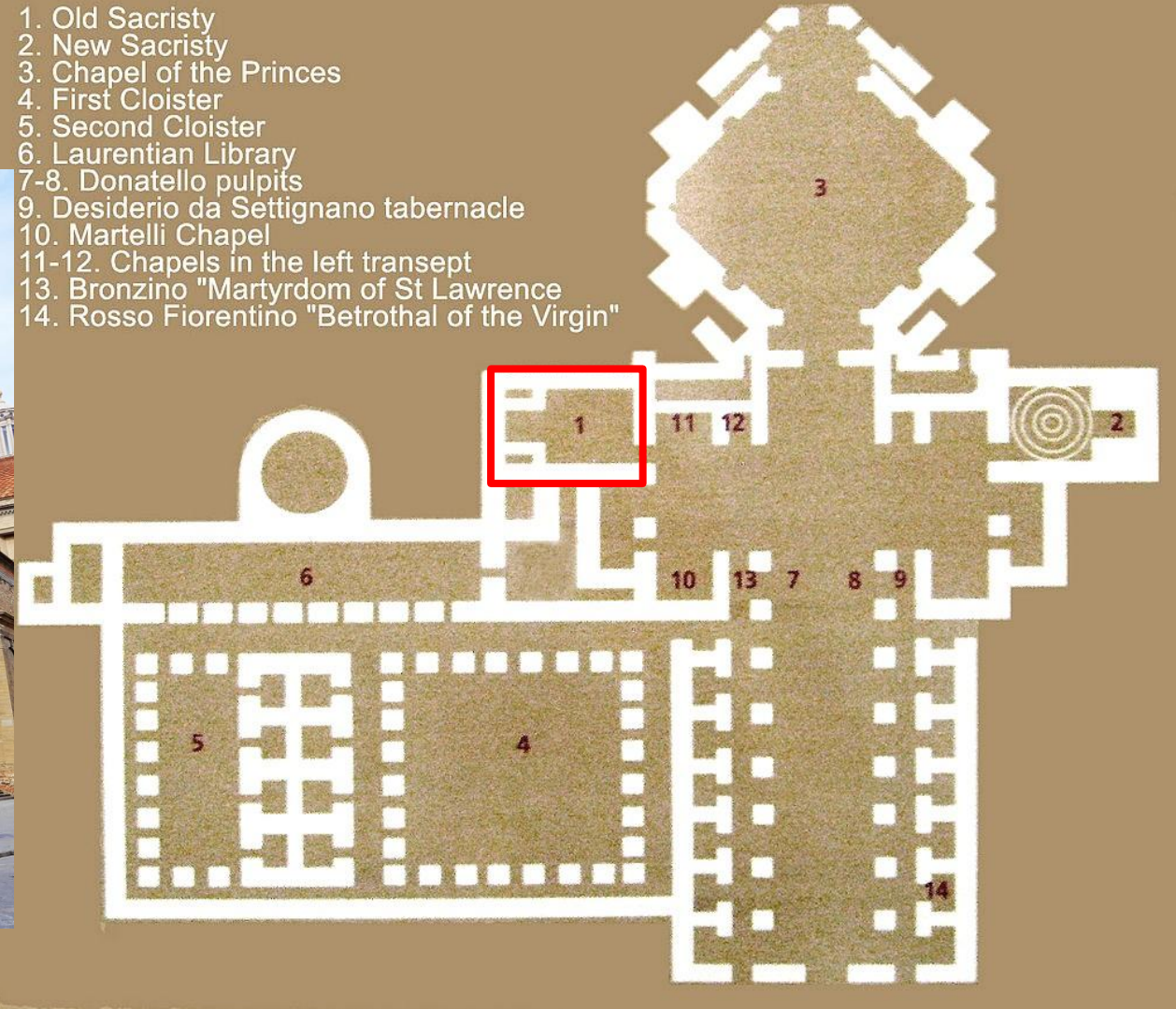
Sagresita Vecchia di San Lorenzo (Old Sacristy of San Lorenzo)

Filippo Brunelleschi, 1421-40, Florence

Sacristy: Room for priests to prepare liturgy;
storage of vestments and ritual objects

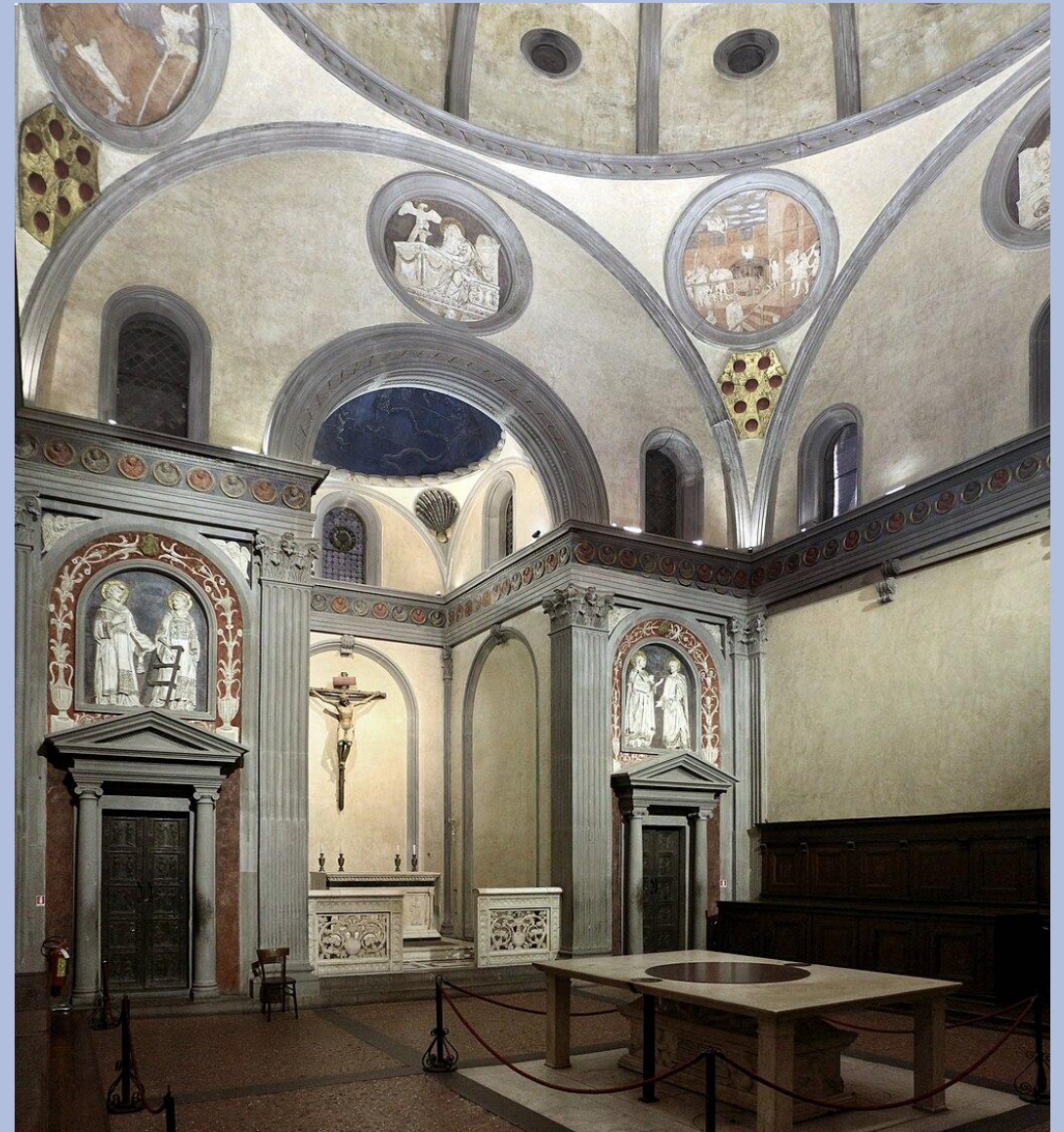
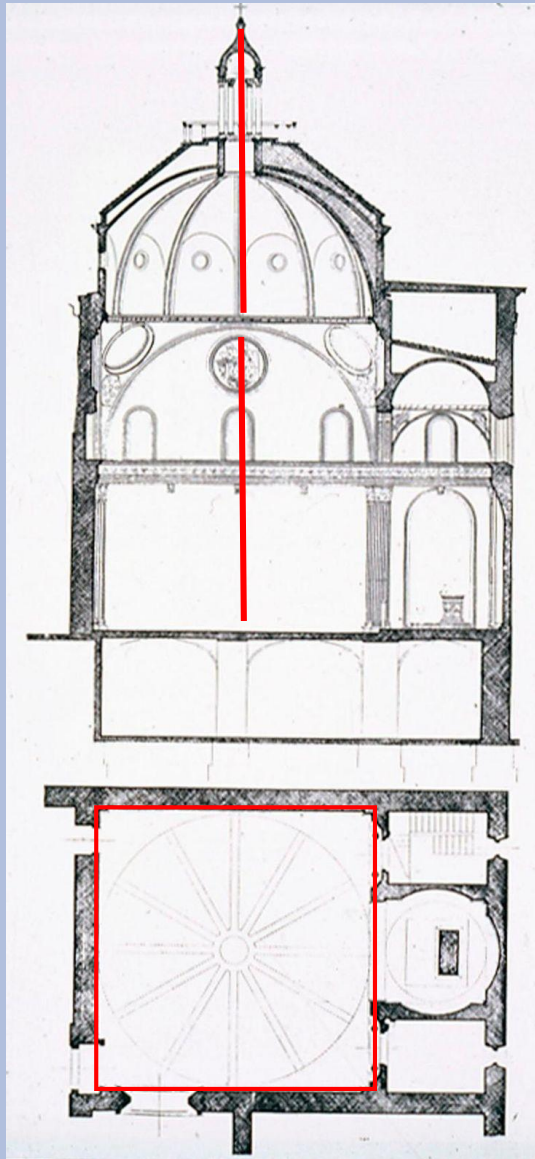


1. Old Sacristy
2. New Sacristy
3. Chapel of the Princes
4. First Cloister
5. Second Cloister
6. Laurentian Library
- 7-8. Donatello pulpits
9. Desiderio da Settignano tabernacle
10. Martelli Chapel
- 11-12. Chapels in the left transept
13. Bronzino "Martyrdom of St Lawrence"
14. Rosso Fiorentino "Betrothal of the Virgin"



Sagresita Vecchia di San Lorenzo (Old Sacristy of San Lorenzo)

Filippo Brunelleschi, 1421-40,



Ospedale degli Innocenti (Hospital of the Innocents)

Filippo Brunelleschi, 1417-36, Florence

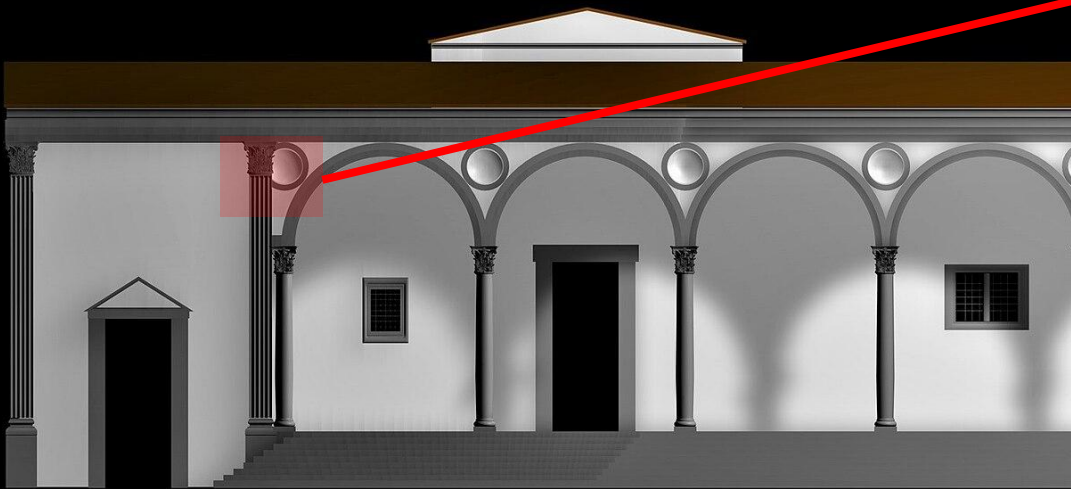


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Ospedale degli Innocenti (Hospital of the Innocents)

Filippo Brunelleschi, 1417-36, Florence

Ospedale: hospital; a charity institute as children's orphanage



Andrea della Robbia's glazed terracotta

Fra Angelico, *Massacre of the Innocents*, 1451-52, tempera on wood, 38,5 x 37 cm, museo di San Marco, Florence



*Also look up the same subject painted by Matteo di Giovanni (1482, Siena)

Summary

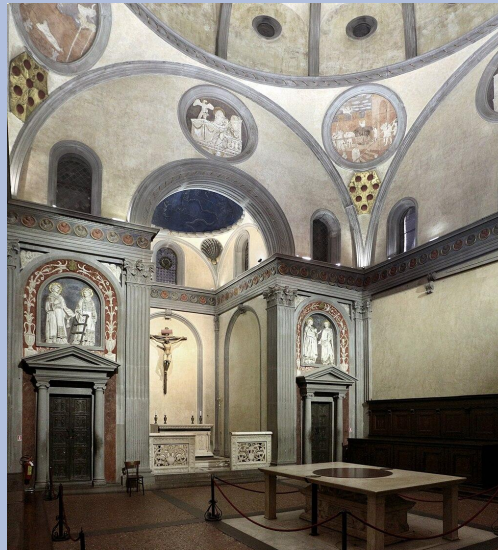
Competition & Early Renaissance Architecture in Italy

1. Artistic Competition & Civic Wealth

- Florence's guilds, Medici family, and civic committees
- Panel & dome competition: rivalry stimulated artistic innovation.

2. Antiquity reinterpreted for Christianity and Humanism

- Florentine architecture sought harmony through simple proportion and human-centered design



Legacy of Brunelleschi

From left to right:

Brunelleschi's dome in Florence, Italy (1423-38)

Michelangelo's dome for St. Peter's in Rome, Italy (1588-1590)

Joseph Miller Huston's Pennsylvania State Capitol in Harrisburg, PA, US (1902-1906)

- **What remains recognizable?**
- **What changes?**



...



Neoclassical
mid 18th to 19th centuries

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- **How does the meaning change or persist?**



...



Brunelleschi's dome was influential in establishing the Renaissance dome as a symbol of architectural, technological, and civic ambition.

From left to right:

Brunelleschi's dome in Florence, Italy (1423-38)

Michelangelo's dome for St. Peter's in Rome, Italy (1588-1590)

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- **How does the meaning change or persist?**



...



Which Italian or Mediterranean past did architects choose to revive?

From left to right:

Brunelleschi's dome (1423-38) built above the medieval Tuscan cathedral surrounded by medieval houses

Ralph Adams Cram's Rice University main campus buildings (1912, Houston TX, US)



Which Italian or Mediterranean past did architects choose to revive?

From left to right:

Brunelleschi's dome (1423-38)

Ralph Adams Cram's Rice University main campus (1912, Houston TX, US)



Ancient Roman architecture

Main points of reference:



Medieval Mediterranean architecture (Byzantine and Romanesque)

Swiss architect Karamuk Kuo's William T. Cannaday Hall for Architecture (officially opened December 5, 2024)

