

What's going on in the Brancacci Chapel?

A **scaffolding** – open to visitors since January 2022 – has been erected in the Chapel to allow experts to **study the condition** of the fresco cycle adorning its walls by Masaccio, Masolino and Filippino Lippi, an acknowledged masterpiece of Early Renaissance art. The current investigation will permit restorers to develop a plan for the fresco cycle's maintenance and preventive conservation.

Why is there a scaffolding in the Brancacci Chapel?

The Comune di Firenze erected a scaffolding in 2020 not only for ordinary maintenance work but also to enable a **close-up inspection** of the frescoes in order to assess their condition. The inspection, coordinated by the SABAP in conjunction with the CNR-ISPC, confirmed the frescoes' good overall condition but it also revealed the **presence of localised deterioration**, with scratches, the painted plaster coming away from the wall behind, and the paint film lifting or falling in certain areas. That's why it's necessary for us today to explore and understand the root causes of these forms of deterioration and to determine the correct procedure for dealing with them.

Why do we need another restoration project?

There's no such thing as restoration capable of preserving a work of art once and for all. Works of art require regular doses of TLC. Ageing is a natural process that affects every aspect of our heritage. To prevent changes to that heritage from turning into downright deterioration, we need to monitor it carefully and to intervene whenever necessary. That's why, thirty years after the last restoration, we now need to **evaluate the fresco cycle's condition** using **diagnostic instrumentation** which has become far more sophisticated in the meantime, allowing us to collect more detailed information not only about the **causes of deterioration** but also about the **techniques** the artists used to paint the frescoes in the first place. Restoration isn't just conservation, it's also finding out more about the work of art itself and the context in which it was produced.



Why do we take such care of the Brancacci Chapel?

Just as we take care of our own health and the health of our loved ones, we also need to take care of our cultural heritage, a heritage that belongs to all of us. That's why we devote time and energy to saving this heritage made of such simple materials as sand, lime and dust, which only man's genius has transformed into a work of art capable of crossing the centuries. It's only by preserving the material a work of art is made of that we can make sure it's immaterial message survives to be handed down to future generations.

What's going to happen once restoration is complete?

Restoration will allow us to create the right conditions for reducing the risk of further damage. We're going to have to **continue monitoring** the fresco cycle's condition in future because no restoration, however meticulous and however non-invasive, can ever halt the painted surfaces' natural ageing process. Alongside this project, the CNR is also putting together a **Digital Interactive System (VR)** for communicating with the public.

Who's working on the site and what are they doing?

Experts and scientists from a range of disciplines (chemists, physicists, architects, engineers, restorers) and institutions (Servizio Belle Arti del Comune di Firenze, Soprintendenza SABAP, CNR-ISPC, Opificio delle Pietre Dure), working in conjunction with universities and private-sector professionals, are currently monitoring the surfaces of the Chapel walls. Their work includes diagnostic investigation using **non-destructive techniques and portable instrumentation** to discover the nature and dynamics behind the frescoes' deterioration by studying the way they're changing over time; to use new technologies to increase our knowledge of the techniques used by the painters; and to verify the effectiveness and durability of earlier restoration, particularly with regard to the binding agents and pigments used to retouch the painted surfaces.



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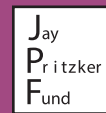
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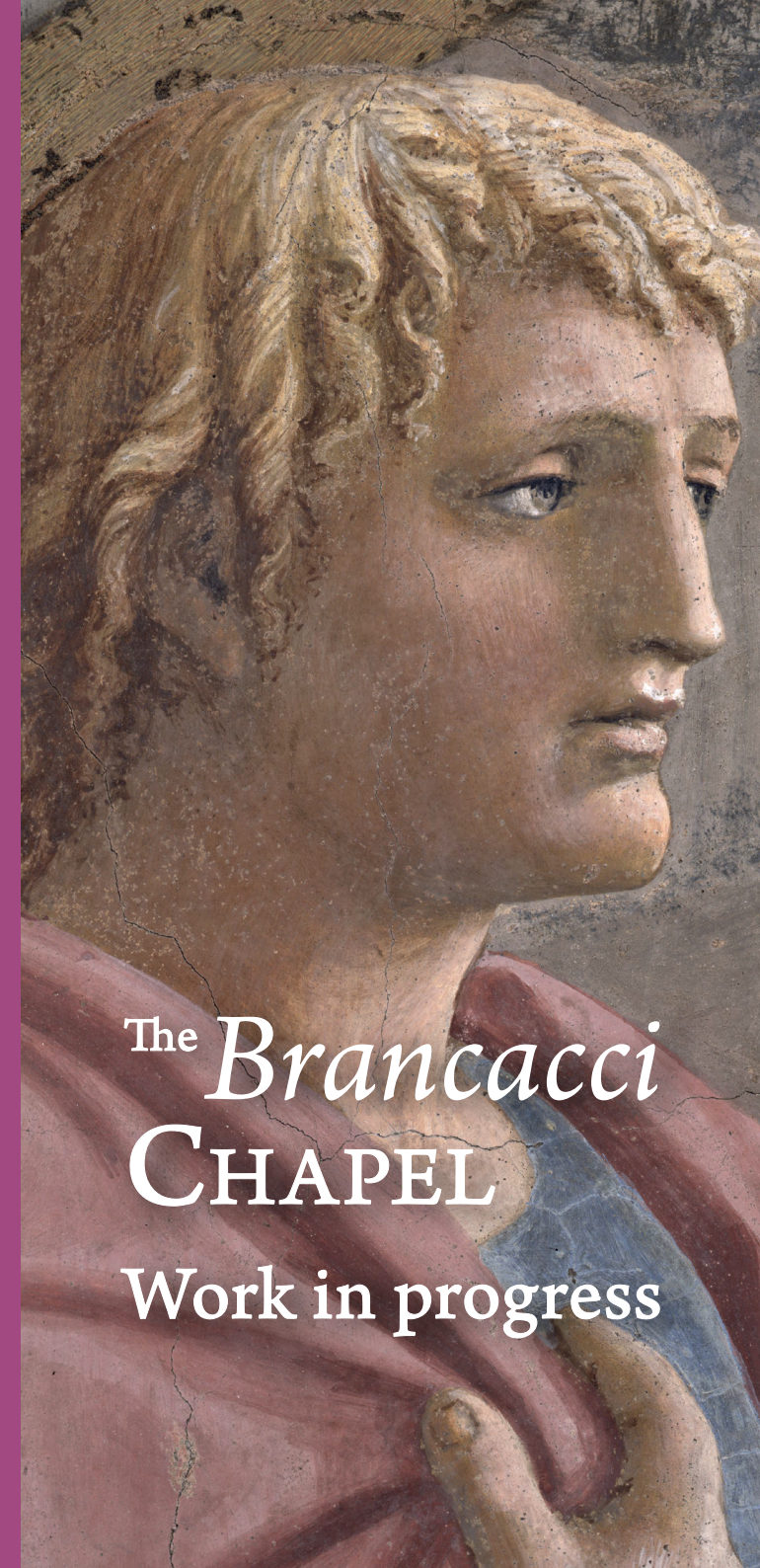
The restoration project is funded with a donation from the Friends of Florence and from the Jay Pritzker Fund



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The *Brancacci*
CHAPEL

Work in progress