

ARCHITECTURE 151 LECTURE OUTLINES

THE RENAISSANCE IN ITALY: A LOOK AT FLORENCE

Florence Buildings, sites and projects:

Palazzo Vecchio 1284-99

Piazza della Signoria

Duomo – Cathedral of S. Maria del Fiore

Palazzo Davanzati 1350

Michelozzo di Bartolomeo: **Palazzo Medici-Riccardi** , 1444

Brunelleschi: **Dome of Duomo**, 1420-36

Foundling Hospital 1420-34

Pazzi Chapel 1429-61

Alberti: **Palazzo Rucellai** 1450-70

S. Maria Novella 1458-70

Florence (Italian *Firenze*) is considered the city that most represents the ideas of the Renaissance. Understanding the city and the character of its architecture illuminates the early Renaissance.

Florence was originally a Roman camp town, which is still visible at the heart of the city. At the end of the 13th century, during the prosperity of the wool guilds and banking interests, new fortifications were built, the **Palazzo Vecchio**—the city hall – was built, and the **Duomo – Cathedral of S. Maria del Fiore**—was begun. These late medieval landmarks are similar to the same institutions in Siena: the idea of the city as a common civic enterprise, with both church and secular institutions. The physical order of the city is established in its streets, civic buildings and city walls.

After setbacks of the early 14th century: fire, famine, flood and the Black Death, the city's leadership was gradually taken out of the hands of the prosperous guilds who had built much of the city, and taken over by the **Medici** family, a banking clan who were great art patrons. It was under Medici leadership that Renaissance –French for rebirth—emerged.

The **Renaissance** is most commonly understood as a rebirth of Classical ideals in art and architecture. Ancient Roman and Greek architectural orders, including proportion and symmetry, were adopted by early Renaissance architects for new Renaissance building types. Artists and patrons were fascinated with the idea of “perfect” geometry in architecture: the circle and the square. Artistic ideals included clarity, rationality and serenity.

Alberti and **Brunelleschi** were the most important early Renaissance Florentine architects. They experimented with and codified the reborn classical traditions. They were “Renaissance men” – imbued with the philosophy and faith of the Renaissance as well as the craft of several disciplines: mathematics, engineering, painting, sculpture and architecture.

Urban and Architectural elements:

piazza: Urban open space for civic gathering. In the Renaissance the piazza took on the formal aspects of the Renaissance and became figural. The piazza strengthens the urban impact of the palazzo.

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Use your book (glossary in the back), lecture, book chapters and notes to be familiar with the following terms:

Rustication
Perspective
Symmetry
Palazzo
Piazza
Dome
Cupola
(Architectural) orders
Arch
Apse
Classical

PEOPLE:

Brunelleschi
Alberti
Vitruvius
Palladio