

Scarlett Walsh (History of Art) – Italy, March 2016

At the end of Lent term myself and the five other members of my 'Art and Architecture in the Age of Giotto' course travelled to Florence. That day we met our course convenor at the Uffizi Gallery and spent most of the afternoon in the first room looking at the enthroned Madonnas by Cimabue, Duccio and Giotto. Following this, we looked at several of the altarpieces primarily refreshing lecture notes we had made at the beginning of Michaelmas term. That evening we visited to the Florence Duomo Museum to study the reconstructed medieval façade and sculptures by Arnolfo di Cambio.

Day two was spent in Siena as a large portion of our course focuses on the development of Sienese panel painting. We visited the Siena Gallery first followed by the Siena Duomo Museum. A particular highlight was the crypt frescoes from c1260-70 that were only recently unearthed. It was also incredible to study Duccio's Maesta close-up as the predella has been dismantled and displayed at eye-level. After lunch we went to the Palazzo Pubblico to see Simone Martini's Maesta and the Salla della Pace which houses frescoes depicting good and bad government by Ambrogio Lorenzetti.

Our trip to Assisi was, for me, by far the best part of the trip. Some other scholars and some PhD students joined us there and we all spent the morning looking at Lower Church frescoes. The 'Vele' images directly above St Francis's tomb were fantastic to study in detail, as they are difficult to capture in full in print. After lunch in a nearby café we continued on with the Upper Church, discussing problems of dating, attribution, and interpretation.

Our last morning was spent back in Florence studying two churches that are particularly important to our course: Santa Croce and Santa Maria Novella. Both have been significantly altered since the period we are focusing on but it was nice to see that certain aspects such as the individual chapels remain relatively well preserved. We discussed different theories regarding how and when both churches were built and the extent to which this affected their architecture. We also compared Duccio and Giotto's crucifixes discussing the stylistic development of such works over the course of the 13th and 14th centuries.