



FROM HIDDEN TREASURE
TO FOUND JEWEL



THE ODDI CHAPEL AND SAN FRANCESCO AL PRATO

HISTORY

The monument, which includes the church, convent, oratory and meadow, stands in Perugia. in the homonymous square, next to the Renaissance oratory of San Bernardino and is part of the monastic complex of San Francesco. The complex of San Francesco al Prato, church-convent-oratory and lawn, is located in the ancient area of Perugia, near the Rione di Porta Santa Susanna, in the place known as “Campo dell’Orto”. The church was erected by the Franciscan friars, with the imposition of the foundation stone by Pope innocent IV, probably between 1227 and 1230.

The complex of the church of San Francesco al Prato is one of the most important historical and artistic monuments of the city of Perugia. The large central nave, airy and fascinating, allows you to imagine the historical and artistic importance that this place had to cover over the centuries. If you look carefully along the walls, you can also see the incredible overlapping of different structures, a sign of a complex and troubled history of construction. Since its inception, the building has been affected by numerous collapses and failures, due to the presence of groundwater and the slope of the land of the area on which it stands, called “Campo dell’Orto.

For that, From the end of the 14th century, the structure was the subject of various consolidation works, which changed its internal and external appearance. The most important intervention was undoubtedly the realization of the project by the architect Pietro Carattoli (1737-1748) that distorted the original Gothic structure, eliminating the pointed vaults and building a masonry superstructure, called “incamiciatura”.

The apse and the side walls of the central nave still bear the signs of this invasive operation that, however, failed to heal the structural fragility. By the end of the 19th century the church was in a state of complete degradation. Yet, over the centuries, the church of San Francesco al Prato has always remained in the memory and interest of the people of Perugia who, even when the building was neglected by the municipal authorities, have constantly looked to the Franciscan church as a reference point not only historical-artistic, but also religious and, above all, identity.

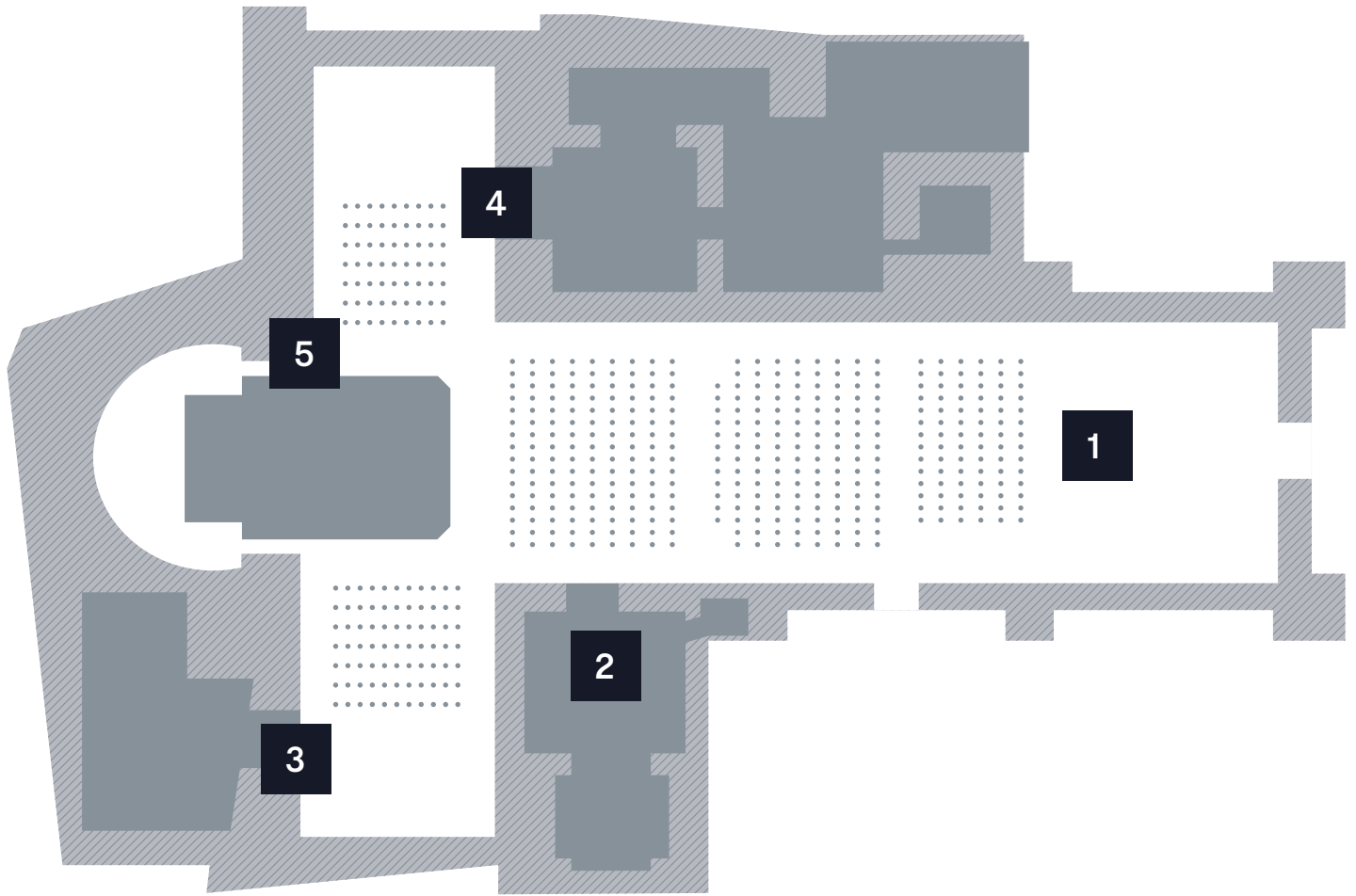
From the same spirit also originates the current arrangement, the result of the intense works that from 2001 to 2021 allowed the reopening of the church in a form similar, at least in part, to that of the 13th century.

THE PANTHEON OF PERUGIA



San Francesco al Prato soon became the city's Pantheon. The prominent families, in fact, not only made it the church and the shrine of the nobility, but also began to compete to obtain the patronage of the chapels and altars then enriched with numerous works of art. Inside were the works of major local painters such as Taddeo di Bartolo, Fiorenzo di Lorenzo, Benedetto Bonfigli, Domenico and Orazio Alfani, Dono Doni. The church underwent both the Napoleonic requisitions and the post-unitary ownership, losing a vast patrimony of paintings, which then went to various museums both national and foreign. Many illustrious people are buried in the church. Among them Bartolo da Sassoferrato, one of the most important European jurists of the 14th century, who taught, among other things, at the city university; the leader and lord of Perugia Braccio Fortebraccio died in 1424; the painter Fiorenzo di Lorenzo, working in the 15th century.





1 Auditorium

3 Baldeschi's
Chapel

5 The Franciscan
Order

2 Oddi's Chapel

4 Baglioni's
Chapel

THE ODDI'S CHAPEL

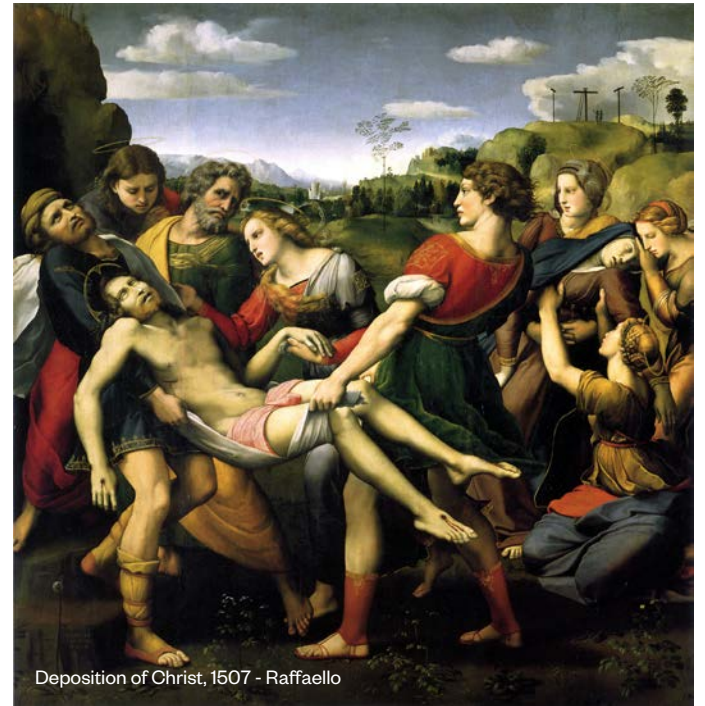
CAPPELLA DEL GONFALONE



Gonfalone, 1472- Benedetto Bonfigli

At the end of the left wall of the Church, through a very fine fifteenth-century gate, one enters the chapel of the Oddi family. On the right, recently relocated here, there is the Gonfalone of San Francesco al Prato attributed to Benedetto Bonfigli and painted on the occasion of the plague of 1464. At the back of the sacello, thanks to a projection, it is possible to see the Assumption of the Virgin, which Raphael executed between 1502 and 1504 for Leandra Baglioni degli Oddi, a masterpiece that later merged in the Vatican Museums. In this space you can also see several tomb slabs, the bust of Marquis Ascanio della Corgna and the urn with the bones of Braccio Fortebraccio.

THE BAGLIONI'S CHAPEL



Deposition of Christ, 1507 - Raffaello

The space that today gives access to the church corresponds to the former Baglioni chapel, the family that between the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries held power in Perugia. In 1507 Atalanta, mother of Grifonetto Baglioni, murdered in the infighting of the house, commissioned Raphael to create one of his most important masterpieces: The deposition of Christ. The painting sees Grifonetto himself reinforced in the role of the man in the foreground dressed in green and red, the heraldic colors of baglioneschi. The valuable painting was taken from Perugia in 1608 and became part of the famous collection of Scipione Borghese in Rome.

THE FRANCISCAN ORDER

Already before 1226, the year of saint Francis' death, the revolutionary message of the poor man of Assisi had spread widely throughout Italy, reaching first and foremost the nearest cities, such as Perugia. The church of San Francesco al Prato, begun between 1251 and 1253, was one of the first settlements of the Franciscan order erected after the construction of the Basilica of Assisi, the main architectural prototype for the construction of the church of Perugia.

The Latin cross plan with a single large nave resembles the structure of the Upper Basilica, but the original roof with cross vaults was set on peducci, the hanging capitals visible at the top along the nave, thus creating an even more airy space and suitable for decorating the walls. The few remaining traces of frescoes allow one to imagine that the whole nave was decorated like that of the Upper Basilica. In 1262 a further similarity with the Assysian model was added to the architectural ones: The remains of Blessed Egidio, the third companion of Saint Francis, were translated into the crypt of the church. This underground space, once richly decorated and now no longer accessible, became the destination of numerous pilgrimages, just like the lower Basilica where the remains of st Francis are kept. After ten years, in 1272, the Franciscans of Perugia decided to further enrich the church with a majestic crucifix for the nave and a doorway for the high altar: these two works of extraordinary importance were made by the Master of San Francesco, an anonymous artist who was among the first to work in the Mother Church of the order.

If entering the Basilica of Assisi you have the impression of discovering an unchanged space, in San Francesco al Prato time has left deep traces of its inexorable passing: the high vaults have been lost, the remains of Blessed Egidio rest today in the nearby oratory of San Bernardino, the large cross and part of the doorway are in the National Gallery of Umbria and only a few fragments remain of the extensive 14th-century decoration of the walls. However, even today, this place fascinates and excites, arousing interest among scholars, curiosity among visitors and affection for its city in the Perugia. These are the most obvious signs of the profound significance of this place, which has cyclically collapsed and rebuilt, decorated and then stolen and yet never forgotten.



THE BALDESCHI'S CHAPEL

Adjacent to the left transept is the chapel of the Baldeschi family, now without cover. On the right you can see the lower part of the Gothic bell tower, demolished in the 700th century, while in front of it there is an exceptionally well-preserved mullioned window. In a niche, inside a sarcophagus dating back to Roman times, the remains of the jurist Bartolo da Sassoferrato are kept.



Resurrection of Christ, 1499 - Raffaello

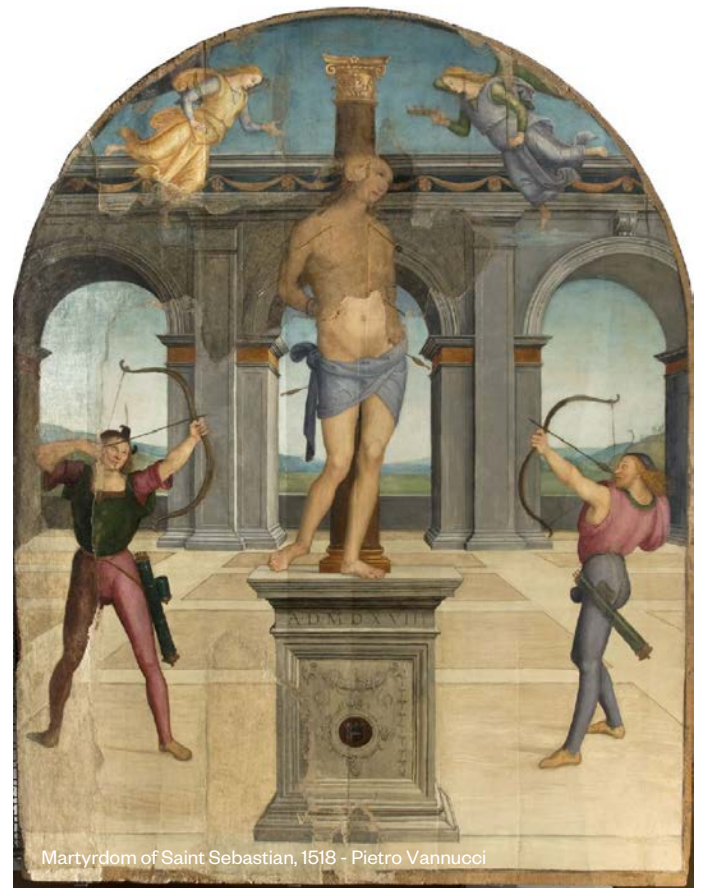
PERUGINO AND RAFFAELLO

In the Renaissance, the church was adorned with paintings by two of the greatest Italian painters, Perugino and Raffaello, recipients of commissions aimed at increasing the prestige of a religious complex beloved by the Perugians

On the left wall of the nave, on the sides of the side portal opened in the 18th century, there were two paintings by Pietro Vannucci.

To the left of the gate you can see the fragments of the 16th-century altar of san Giuseppe, near which was that of the Martinelli family, who commissioned the painter to paint the altarpiece with the Martyrdom of San Sebastiano dated 1518 and now exhibited in the Museum of the Chapter of San Lorenzo. On the right there was the wonderful Resurrection of Christ (1499), which, requisitioned by the French at the end of the eighteenth century, was later held back by the Papal States.

Currently the altarpiece is located inside the Library of the Holy Father.



Martyrdom of Saint Sebastian, 1518 - Pietro Vannucci



The Oddi Chapel before restoration

THE ODDI CHAPEL AND ITS TREASURES

VALENTINA BORGNINI

The chapel of the Oddi is one of the most important noble chapels in the church of S. Francesco al Prato in Perugia. It belonged to the Oddi family, an ancient family from Perugia, one of the most illustrious and influential of the Renaissance in Umbria. Over time the chapel has undergone various transformations and tampering that have made its reconstruction problematic. Despite this, it was possible to identify the most important architectural configurations of this structure and relocate the works of art that adorned it. From here comes one of Raphael's masterpieces, the Pala degli Oddi, a large oil table reinforcing the Coronation of

the Virgin with its predella with the Annunciation, the Adoration of the Magi and the Presentation to the Temple, probably finished in 1505. The work, seized by Napoleonic troops and subsequently returned, is now preserved in Rome at the Vatican Picture Gallery. The Gonfalone of San Francesco al Prato has been relocated to the chapel by Benedetto Bonfigli, on the altar that once housed the Pala degli Oddi, the Gothic altar and the sarcophagus with the bones of Braccio Fortebraccio da Montone.

Sarcophagus containing the remains of Braccio Fortebraccio da Montone



STEFANO BARCACCIA

ARCHITECT MUNICIPALITY OF PERUGIA

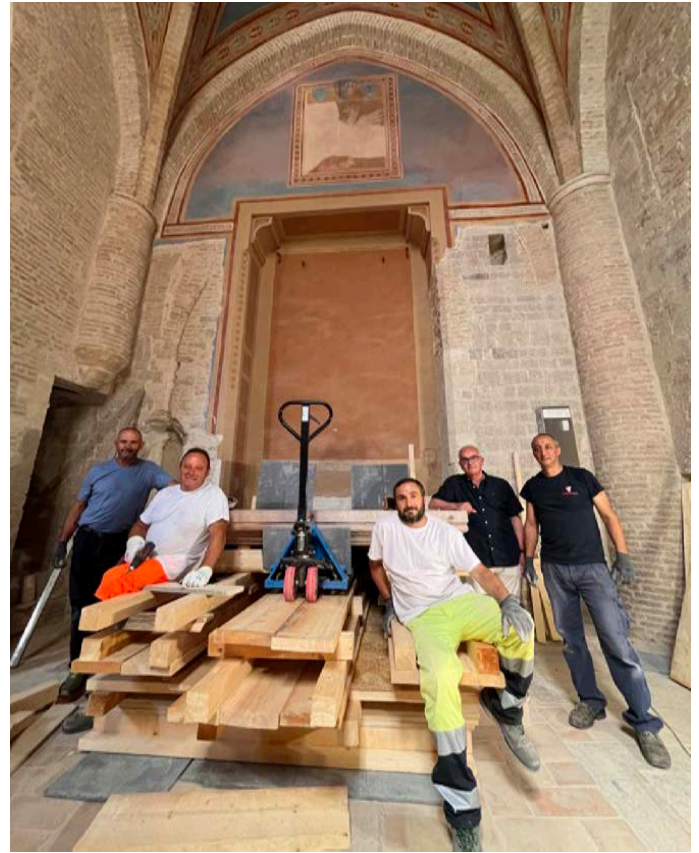


THE REBIRTH OF THE ODDI'S CHAPEL

The intervention consisted in the relocation of the remains and artifacts found inside the former church of San Francesco al Prato, which since its construction has been a privileged place for the burial of the main families in Perugia.

During the redevelopment of the entire complex, it was decided to ensure a definitive arrangement of the artifacts containing the remains of Braccio Fortebraccio and those of the members of the Della Corgna family. In addition, other works of art, including digitally reproduced works, historically present on the site, have been relocated on the basis of historical, photographic and most recent studies.

There are six more detailed actions.



1- Restoration and reconstruction (anastylosis) of the altar in the Gonfalone Chapel, made with the recovery of the surviving elements, and relocation of the Gonfalone of our Lady of the Plague by Bonfigli, currently in the adjacent Oratory of San Bernardino;

2- Restoration of the sarcophagus of Bartolo di Sassoferrato, located in the former Baldeschi Chapel;

3- relocation on a special support in the Chapel of the Trinity of the sarcophagus of Braccio da Fortebraccio, already restored by the FAI in 2013;

4- realization of a new sarcophagus to be placed in the Trinity Chapel containing the remains of the Della Corgna family,

Found in San Francesco al Prato in 1967 and preserved in zinc boxes at the sacristy of the adjacent convent; restoration and relocation of the bust of Ascanio della Corgna, previously preserved in Palazzo dei Priori;

5- Virtual relocation in the Chapel of the Trinity of the Coronation of the Virgin by Raphael with laser projection through video mapping and realization below the image of a new artifact.

6- in order to give place to the remains of the Della Corgna, preserved in nine zinc boxes, and to Annex the bust of Ascanio in an attempt to “reconfigure” the ancient unity between work of art and burial that characterized the Chapel of the Della Corgna in San Francesco al Prato, a modern “sarcophagus” has been built, on which the restored bust has been placed.

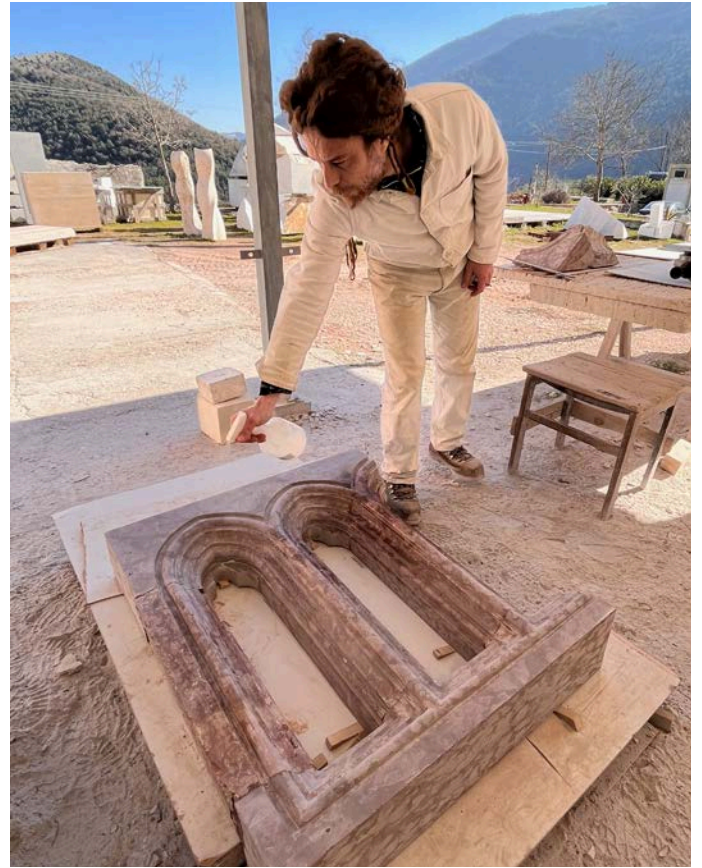
MATTEO PEDUCCI

SCULPTOR ARTIST

ODDI'S CHAPEL ALTAR

The work carried out inside the Cappella degli Oddi, in addition to including the creation of new sculptural elements, such as a new sarcophagus to contain the remains of the Della Corgna family, focused on the reconstruction of the altar in ammonite red stone, about 50% of which had been lost. This involved a preliminary phase of historical and geological research to identify the original material. The ammonite red was thus identified, probably extracted from Mount Subasio, where small quarries were already active in Roman times. Fortunately, some blocks extracted from these long-abandoned quarries have made it possible to use the same material used for the construction of the original altar. In addition to material research, a study was carried out on 12th-century processing techniques, based on historical knowledge and analysis of the surfaces of existing elements, where chisel marks and sanding graphs are still visible.

This analysis has revealed an exceptional refinement that suggests the intervention of renowned shops of the time. The entire reconstruction work was carried out manually, following traditional techniques, and the new pieces were assembled together with the existing ones using reversible mounting methods in accordance with the principles of contemporary restoration. After completion, the entire altar was cleaned and protected with natural wax.





Sarcophagus of Corogna

LAURA ZAMPERONI

RESTORER

BUST OF ASCANIO DELLA CORGNA (16TH CENTURY)

Ascanio della Corgna, one of the most illustrious figures of the 16th century, distinguished himself in many fields, becoming known as a captain of fortune, master of arms and excellent Tournista. Prior to the restoration, the bust that strengthens it was in substantial good condition, but covered by a layer of deposits that obscured its natural color. It has therefore undergone a conservative restoration to remove surface deposits and improve its readability. In particular, solvents and synthetic saliva were used to remove dirt without damaging the stone surface.

The bust has also been treated with microcrystalline wax to protect it from future damage.

During the restoration, carvings and gypsum residues have emerged suggesting a past intervention of copying by means of a cast. Some busts exhibited elsewhere could be linked to the same prototype, opening up new perspectives of research into its history and the artistic techniques employed in its creation.





STONE SARCOPHAGUS OF BARTOLO DA SASSOFERRATO

The stone sarcophagus in the church of San Francesco al Prato in Perugia houses the remains of Bartolo da Sassoferrato, an important lawyer of the 14th century. The sarcophagus is in white marble with low and high relief decorations and has a heraldic coat of arms in the center and decorative motifs on the sides. After various movements over the centuries, in 1971 it was placed in its current location and on it was laid the ancient style roof made of travertine.

Prior to the intervention, the sarcophagus had several signs of degradation, including surface deposits, biological patina, cracks and erosions. The restoration has been divided into several phases. Firstly, the removal of deposits, chemical cleaning, micro-filling of cracks and painting of damaged areas were carried out.

Subsequently, a breathable water repellent was applied to protect the sarcophagus to preserve its integrity. These interventions will allow the preservation of the structure and aesthetics of the monument in the long term.







VALENTINA BORGNINI

PROFESSOR OF ART HISTORY

THE ALTARPIECE OF THE ODDI BY RAPHAEL IN SAN FRANCESCO AL PRATO IN PERUGIA

I took care of the realization of a video mapping dedicated to the virtual relocation of Raphael's Oddi Altarpiece not only to give back to the public the emotion of seeing the work in his original context, but also to meet the need to communicate, in the simplest possible way, the results of many researches carried out to understand the evolution of this altar and its conservative events. I thought of this project as a visual storytelling to reconstruct the adventurous history of the chapel and the painting, thereby folding visual technology to the service of historical-artistic dissemination.

Through this immersive narrative, I intend to enhance the cultural heritage and make accessible to all the history of a masterpiece that has marked it deeply the history of art.



STERLING

SIMONE FERLIN



For Sterling, the restoration of the Oddi Chapel in San Francesco al Prato represented much more than just a conservative intervention: It is a gesture of profound social and cultural responsibility. For a company like ours, engaging in initiatives of this kind means actively participating in the protection of Italian cultural heritage, helping to preserve works that embody the history and collective identity of our country.

Despite the challenges encountered along the way, including the pandemic and other technical unforeseen events, the project was completed with determination and competence. This experience has strengthened our conviction that the success of a company is not only measured in economic terms, but also through the ability to leave a lasting imprint on society: the restoration of the Oddi Chapel is a tangible example of how patronage can be a powerful tool for enhancing our cultural heritage. It strengthens ties with the territory and demonstrates a real commitment to the community, returning part of the value generated by the business.

"It is a source of great pride for us at Sterling to have contributed to the restoration of the Chapel of the Odds, an artistic jewel that enriches the heritage culture of our city. Supporting the conservation and enhancement of such significant works of art is for us an investment in the future of our community and in safeguarding its historical-artistic identity."

STERLING

THE COMPANY

Sterling was founded in 1976 in Umbria as S.N.I.F.F. Italy by Gianluigi Ferlin who, originally from Rovigo, in the early seventies, was called to Perugia by Gianni Spagnoli to produce aromas for his company. Early days, S.N.I.F.F. Italy produced flavorings for food and pharmaceuticals, a production still active at its Como site.

A few years later, the highly technological and cutting-edge know-how developed over time has allowed the differentiation of production lines. Today the company has expanded its scope and operates in the production of active pharmaceutical ingredients with a wide range of therapeutic applications, both in humans and animals: Antineoplasty, anti-inflammatory, contraceptive, topical and inhalation. For more than 40 years, Sterling has worked with passion, expertise, determination, and respect, continuing to invest in the most advanced technologies, focusing its efforts and attention on the sustainability of its actions, the high quality of its products, and the value of its people.

Today, we are global leaders in pharmaceutical excellence, providing high-quality active ingredients that help improve society's health and well-being. We have a holistic approach to business management that focuses on respect for the rules and the environment around us, the fascination for innovation, the elegance of human relationships, the enhancement of individuals and governance

