

OLLI @Berkeley
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Firenze: From Pre-Renaissance to Contemporary Architecture
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Syllabus

The historic center of Florence is a UNESCO Heritage site. Founded in 59 BC, its ascent in the world scene is connected to the painting revolution that Giotto headed and the literary achievements that Dante Alighieri created in the late Medieval period. From that time, Florence offered unique conditions for the rebirth of the classical heritage largely founded on a nascent economy of a then modern banking systems. This class will cover the triangulation between its history, economy, and urban form from its origins to today, touching on the milestones in architecture and the arts.

Lesson 1. FIRENZE: FROM ROME TO MIDDLE AGES

The historic center of Florence is a UNESCO Heritage site. Although the foundation of the city dates back to 59 BC, its ascent in the world scene is connected to the painting revolution that Giotto headed and the literary achievements that Dante Alighieri created in the late Medieval period. From that time, Florence offered unique conditions for the rebirth of the classical heritage largely founded on a nascent economy of a then modern banking systems. The Medici, Strozzi, and Peruzzi, all families of bankers among the wealthiest in Europe, became the patrons of the arts in an unrepeatable era in world history. This class will cover the triangulation between its history, economy, and urban form from its origins to today, touching on the milestones in architecture and the arts.

Lesson 2. THE RENAISSANCE AND BEYOND

There was a time that Firenze and art and architecture became synonyms: it was the Renaissance. The parade of giants that produces a deluge of masterpieces in each field is incomprehensible to this day. From the invention of the perspective and a new architecture by Filippo Brunelleschi, to the invention of the architecture treatise by Leon Battista Alberti, to the inventions and creations of Leonardo da Vinci, to the heights in painting, sculpture, and architecture by Michelangelo and his disciples, this enormous body of works set the standards for what concrete human endeavors could develop. This talk focuses on the places, events, and personalities that created the legend of Firenze across time.

Lesson 3. MODERN ARCHITECTURE IN FIRENZE

The definitive Renaissance heritage associated with Firenze dominates the contribution that this city made throughout the 20th century. Any visitors arriving to the city by train encounters the railway station completed in 1935 by Giovanni Michelucci, possibly Firenze's most renown modernist architect. His Chiesa dell'Autostrada (Church on the

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Freeway) visited by Le Corbusier when under construction in 1963 was met with global acclaim and included in the seminal book *Complexity and Contradictions in Architecture* by Robert Venturi. Other figures of profound significance in the field will be discussed. Among them, Leonardo Ricci, whose influence in the United States was felt in the 1960s and 70s; Leonardo Savioli as well inserted Modernism in the historical city. Landscape architect Pietro Porcinai based in Fiesole, a small town nearby Firenze, was a leading creative who brought outdoor architecture to new heights throughout Italy. The three massive exhibits on Frank Lloyd Wright, Le Corbusier, and Alvar Aalto, held between the mid-fifties to the mid-sixties in Palazzo Vecchio in Firenze will be part of this delivery.

Lesson 4. FIRENZE TODAY: RECENT TRENDS IN ARCHITECTURE

Firenze went through a radical architecture phase in the 1970s evident in the highly regarded work of the collective SUPERSTUDIO, whose visionary unbuilt projects exerted great influence on the Anglo-Saxon architectural world. The two leading personalities of the group were Adolfo Natalini and Cristiano Toraldo di Francia, who realized several residential and institutional designs throughout the region. Contemporary practices in Florence are currently concerned with projects dealing with adaptive reuse. Studio Benaim, Archea Associati, and Archiloop are a few of the firms exemplary in generating works that merge history and modernity into a cohesive spatial fusion.