



CLOISTER OF THE ACADEMY

The internal cloister of the monastery was built between 1553 and 1557 approximately, commissioned by Cardinal Clemente Dolera, Minister General of the Franciscan order. It is composed of four galleries spanned by groin vaults and open to a central courtyard through round arches supported by columns. The columns present Doric capitals and cylindrical shafts, in different materials and forms, probably recovered from some Roman construction. In the upper gallery, the arches are segmental and rest on quadrangular pillars. By the end of the 16th century, the monastery had two levels in most of the building, with a plan similar to the current one. From 1878, in order to adapt it to its new use as a Fine Arts academy, other levels were added at different moments, as well as the two towers on the northern façade.



THE LIFE OF ST FRANCIS OF ASSISI IN THE CLOISTERS OF THE MONUMENTAL ENSEMBLE OF SAN PIETRO IN MONTORIO

A medieval saint at the service of the Catholic Reformation

The cloisters in the former Franciscan monastery of San Pietro in Montorio are decorated with an important pictorial cycle devoted to the founder of the order, Saint Francis of Assisi.

Cardinal Constanzo Boccafuoco commissioned Nicolò Circignani, Pomarancio, and Giovan Battista Lombardelli to paint it in 1587. They executed a total of 51 scenes in collaboration with their respective assistants. In addition to their intrinsic artistic value, the paintings hold enormous interest in iconographic terms, as they are one of the first examples of the transformation of the image of Saint Francis promoted by the Church since the mid-16th century, as it saw in the figure of the saint an ideal instrument for disseminating Counter-Reformation doctrine.

The compositions are simple, although some of the paintings bring together more than one episode and some of the characters appear in extreme foreshortening. A marked narrative character prevails, reinforced by the presence of a biblical verse and some sentences in Latin and Italian explaining what is represented under every lunette. Nowadays these inscriptions have partially vanished. In some scenes we can still appreciate the coat of arms of the donor that paid for each one of them, as well as a flower frieze framing them.

Most of the episodes originate in writings of the saint's main biographers, such as Thomas of Celano and Saint Bonaventure. Nevertheless, as opposed to other well-known preceding cycles like Giotto's, this was created in the spiritual and doctrinal environment born of the Catholic Reformation. Rare or even unknown events are used -e.g., the baptism of Saint Francis, and others dedicated to underlining the value of faith, good deeds, penitence and forgiveness- and the iconography insists on depicting the saint as the reflection of Christ, from his birth in a stable to the reception of the stigmata, his death and glory.

This cycle was rapidly disseminated thanks to two series of prints that reproduced the scenes, one by Francesco Villamena (1594) and a later one by Philippe Thomassin (1604, 1608 and 1649). Thanks to them, we now know the total number of scenes decorating the two cloisters, as well as the subjects represented in the ones that were lost, and the explanatory texts that were not preserved.

REAL ACADEMIA DE ESPAÑA EN ROMA SAN PIETRO IN MONTORIO



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TEMPIETTO DEL BRAMANTE

In the beginning of the 16th century, the Catholic Monarchs commissioned the architect Donato Bramante to build St Peter's Crucifixion Chapel. Known as the Tempietto del Bramante, it is considered the first architectural example of High Renaissance style.

The tempietto presides over the cloister situated between the church of San Pietro in Montorio and the old monastery, home to the Real Academia de España en Roma.

33. Miracle of Francis on a boat on the sea of Gaeta [lost scene]



34. He heals a leper with a kiss [no access to the scene]



35. He heals a cripple in Orte



36. Called by a bishop, he heals a young invalid with the sign of the Cross



37. He heals a blind woman, giving her sight back to her



38. Francis tames the wolf of Gubbio



41. He resuscitates a young man that had drowned in Rieti by prayer



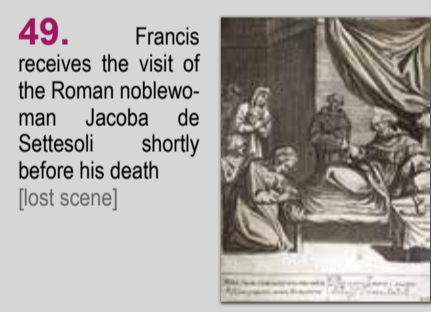
42. He heals a man with a deformed head by making the sign of the Cross



45. He resuscitates a young man that had been buried by a wall falling on him [lost scene]



46. Francis of Assisi receives the stigmata [lost scene]



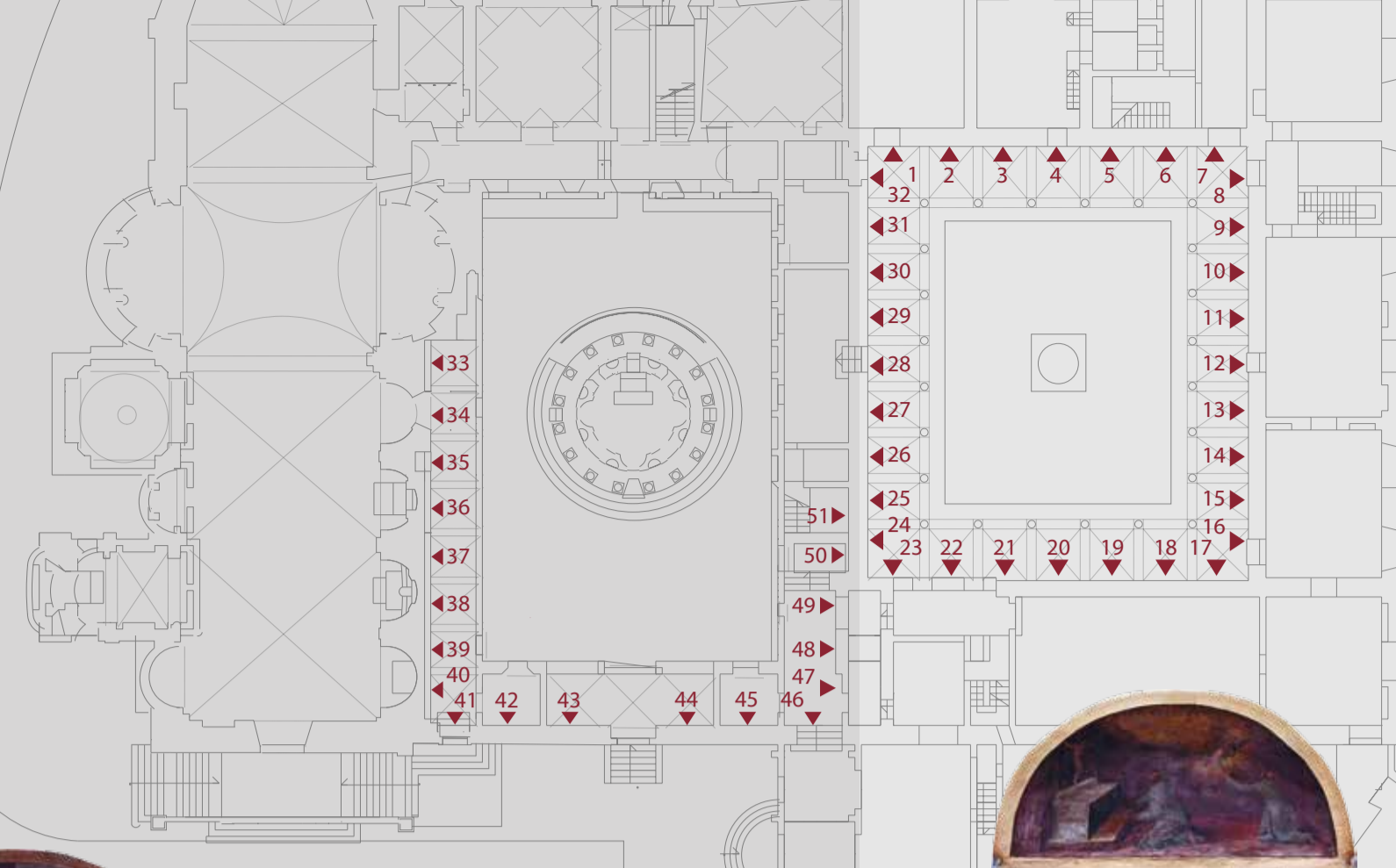
49. Francis receives the visit of the Roman noblewoman Jacoba de Settesoli shortly before his death [lost scene]



50. The death of Francis of Assisi [lost scene]

THE TEMPIETTO CLOISTER

Lombardelli executed the 19 scenes, of which 11 are preserved, between 1587 and 1588. The appearance of the cloister has changed greatly since: the decorated parts of the galleries, open to the central court, were closed gradually on undetermined dates. In addition to that, in the 17th century 8 of the scenes disappeared. In spite of that, we still can imagine how the ensemble looked in the 16th century if we look at the two lunettes on the portico to the square. The episodes in this cloister start in the southern gallery, adjacent to the church (33 to 40). All the scenes depict other miracles and acts of healing, except for the last one, the only one with a different subject, maybe due to the fact that it was located near an entrance gate, which is decorated with an important moment in the life of the Order: the Papal confirmation of the Rule in 1223. The scenes in the eastern gallery (41 to 46) also depict miracles, concluding with the important moment of Saint Francis receiving the stigmata of the Passion. Image 42 shows, again, a building with a centralized floor plan. The scenes in the northern gallery (47 to 51) had the death of the saint as their main subject, and the cycle closed with the Glory of Saint Francis.



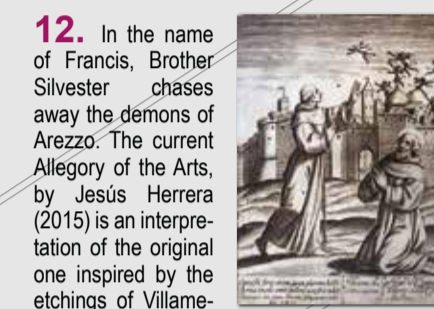
1. Birth of Saint Francis of Assisi in a stable



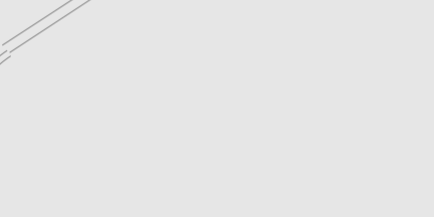
6. Revelation of the Christ of San Damiano, who talks to Francis and commands him to restore his ruined Church



11. While Francis is praying, an angel shows Brother Pacificus the throne and celestial chairs destined to the Saint and his brethren



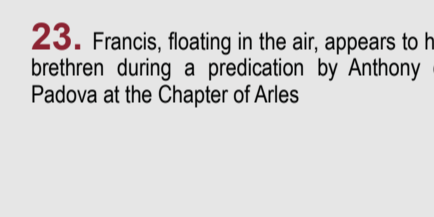
12. In the name of Francis, Brother Silvester chases away the demons of Arezzo. The current Allegory of the Arts, by Jesús Herrera (2015) is an interpretation of the original one inspired by the etchings of Villamena and Thomassin [lost scene]



17. Francis washes and heals a leper. Timoteo Pérez Rubio (1928) painted the current scene without taking the original subject into account [lost scene]



22. Francis heals the canon Gideon of Rieti, who suffers from arthritis, but warns him of greater evils if he persists in sinning



23. Francis, floating in the air, appears to his brethren during a predication by Anthony of Padova at the Chapter of Arles



27. Pope Honorius III accepts the roses that Francis offers him, born of his blood, and promises to write to the bishops in the region of Assisi



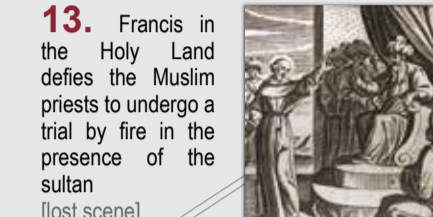
28. The bishops of Assisi, Perugia, Todi, Spoleto, Foligno, Nocera and Gubbio authorize Francis to promote the indulgence, but only for 10 years. Instead, he promulgates it as perpetual



2. Baptism of Saint Francis of Assisi in the presence of the pilgrim that came to see his birth



7. Forced by his father to return the money for the restoration of the church of San Damiano in front of the bishop of Assisi, Francis renounces wealth and sheds his clothes



13. Francis in the Holy Land defies the Muslim priests to undergo a trial by fire in the presence of the sultan [lost scene]



18. The crèche in Greccio: Francis holds the Christ Child in his arms



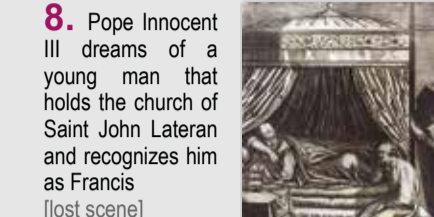
24. Francis overcomes the temptation of lust by brethren during a predication by Anthony of Padova



29. One of the bishops steps on the pulpit to amend Francis, but, by divine inspiration, confirms the full indulgence. In the right corner, self-portrait of Pomarancio



3. Homage to the child Francis by a common man that lay his cape at his feet



8. Pope Innocent III dreams of a young man that holds the church of Saint John Lateran and recognizes him as Francis [lost scene]



14. The brethren see Francis transfigured and talking to Jesus Christ



19. Francis miraculously makes water spring out of a rock so that the poor man carrying him on his donkey can quench his thirst



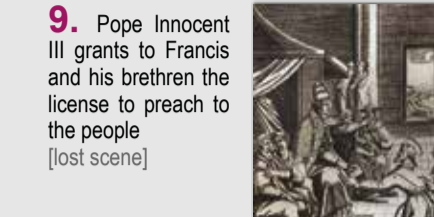
25. By divine command, two angels escort Francis to deliver the roses that sprouted from his blood to Pope Honorius III, from whom he asks for the Portiuncula Indulgence



30. The seven bishops make the full and perpetual indulgence public after realizing the miracle witnessed



4. Francis practises the virtue of charity giving his coat to a poor man



9. Pope Innocent III grants to Francis and his brethren the license to preach to the people [lost scene]



15. Invited by a lord of Celano to share his table, Francis foresees his imminent death and urges him to confess; the lord of Celano dies soon after



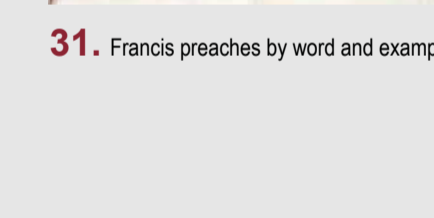
20. An angel announces to Francis that his Order has been confirmed in Heaven. The scene by Eugenio Laferlante Castelli (1920), which, like the lunette 17, doesn't respect the original subject, pictures Saint Francis talking to the birds [lost scene]



21. Repentance of the miser of Spoleto, who refused to help the brethren



26. The Pardon of Assisi: Jesus Christ and the Virgin inform Francis that the Indulgence will take place on the 1st of August, the festivity of the Liberation of Saint Peter



31. Francis preaches by word and example



5. Francis' dream of Jesus Christ, who promises him a castle with a cross as a banner



10. Francis' companions see him crossing the skies in a chariot of fire, like the prophet Elijah



16. Appearance of Francis to two missionaries in Egypt and baptism of the dying sultan



21. Repentance of the miser of Spoleto, who refused to help the brethren



26. The Pardon of Assisi: Jesus Christ and the Virgin inform Francis that the Indulgence will take place on the 1st of August, the festivity of the Liberation of Saint Peter



32. Francis draws a seraph with his cord as the emblem of the Sarnano fortress

All prints are by Ph. Thomassin and have been reproduced by courtesy of the Museo Francescano di Roma, Istituto Storico dei Cappuccini

CLOISTER OF THE ACADEMY

Its 32 lunettes were painted by N. Circignani, who executed them between 1587 and 1590. 26 of the original scenes have been preserved to the present day, to which three new ones were added by resident artists at the Academy in 1926, 1928 and 2015 (numbers 20, 17 and 12 respectively). The cycle starts in the western gallery with the birth of Saint Francis and continues through his childhood and youth (1 to 7). Number 5 depicts a building with a centralized floor plan that recalls the Tempietto in the other cloister. The northern (8 to 16) and eastern (17 to 23) galleries explain the founding of the Order and several of the saint's adventures and miracles. The southern gallery (24 to 32) refers mostly to the miracles related to the "Great Pardon" known as the Portiuncula Indulgence, promoted by Honorius III, and also to the importance of preaching. In the 29th scene we can observe a self-portrait of Pomarancio (the elder figure on the right of the composition). The subject of the last lunette is very rare, since it relates to the figure of Cardinal Bocciafuoco, from Sarnano.

