



**Kunsthistorisches
Institut
in
Florenz**

Max-Planck-Institut

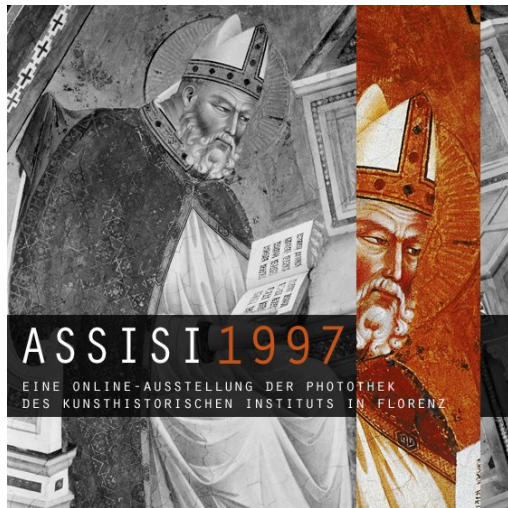
Press information

Assisi 1997

An online exhibition by the photo library at the Kunsthistorisches Institut in Florenz

26.09.2007 – 27.01.2008

<http://expo.khi.fi.it/>



The most violent tremor hit Assisi in the early hours of the morning of 26th September 1997 after Umbria and the Marche had already suffered several minor seismic shocks. It caused serious damage to the world-famous Basilica di San Francesco in Assisi, located a mere 20 kilometres from the earthquake's epicentre. The photo library at the Kunsthistorisches Institut in Florenz has organised its fourth online exhibition to mark the tenth anniversary of the earthquake which struck Assisi on 26th September 1997.



The arch of the front bay of S. San Francesco in Assisi, photographed by Ghigo Roli, 1997
© Photo archive of the Sacro Convento della Basilica di San Francesco in Assisi

At the time, the tremors caused approximately 200 square metres of frescoes to crash to the ground. Their reconstruction was partially enabled via the comprehensive photographic documentation archived by the Kunsthistorisches Institut in Florenz.

The exhibition bears impressive witness to the unique value of documentary photography, systematically compiled and scientifically recorded by the photographic library at the Kunsthistorisches Institut in Florenz for over a century now. These endeavours also include independently initiated photographic projects, such as those carried out by former Institute photographer Luigi Artini in Assisi in 1977, directly after the Basilica's last restoration prior to the earthquake.

The exhibition presents the resulting photographs of the frescoes in the Upper Church of San Francesco in their former entirety. They document the Evangelists' vault by Cimabue and his school, parts of which fell to their destruction during the earthquake, in addition to the vault of the Church Fathers and the pair of Saints on the front bay vault, attributed to Giotto and his school and completely destroyed in the quake.



Saint Francis and Saint Clara, front bay of San Francesco in Assisi, photographed by Luigi Artini, 1977
© Kunsthistorisches Institut in Florenz, Max Planck Institute, photo library

Other sections of the exhibition document the post-earthquake damage and the subsequent restoration works. Whilst only certain fragments of the likenesses of the evangelist Matthew and church father Saint Jerome were reconstructed and have not yet been returned to their original positions, the pair of Saints on the front bay vault have, in the meantime, been largely restored and have thus been made accessible to the public once more.

The productive collaboration with Father Gerhard Ruf of the photographic archive at the Sacro Convento of the Basilica di San Francesco in Assisi has resulted in the exhibition's inclusion of colour photographs from the extensive digital archives of www.assisi.de, for whose careful preparation we would also like to thank Stefan Diller.

The online exhibition was organised in collaboration with Professor Regine Scheffel from the media faculty at the Leipzig University of Applied Sciences for Technology, Economics and Culture (HTWK Leipzig FH). Within the context of this collaboration, Oliver Rymek and Carolin Voigt (HTWK Leipzig) carried out an interview with Father Gerhard Ruf, who witnessed the quake in the convent of San Francesco at first hand and who was thus in a position to provide an account of the dramatic situation after the most violent tremor on the morning of the 26th September 1997 as authentic as it was stirring.

Photo library curatorship: Dr. Costanza Caraffa

Exhibition co-ordination: Dr. Brigitte Reineke

A collaboration with the Leipzig University of Applied Sciences for Technology, Economics and Culture (HTWK Leipzig FH) and the photographic archive at the Sacro Convento of the Basilica di San Francesco in Assisi

Graphic material and further information:

Dr. Andrea Christine Bambi

Kunsthistorisches Institut in Florenz
Max Planck Institute
Research co-ordinator and public relations manager
Pubbliche Relazioni e Coordinamento delle Ricerche
Via Giuseppe Giusti 44
50121 Florence/Firenze
Italy
Tel.: 0039 (0)55 2491190
Fax: 0039 (0)55 2491166
E-mail: KHI-Press@khi.fi.it
www.khi.fi.it