



Smithsonian Associates

The Miracle of Brunelleschi's Dome

Ross King

Thursday, February 13, 2025 – 6:30 p.m. to 7:45 p.m. ET

Santa Maria del Fiore - Timeline

1294: the Florentines decide to build a new cathedral to replace their ancient cathedral of Santa Reparata. Arnolfo di Cambio becomes architect.

1296: the new cathedral, newly under construction, is christened Santa Maria del Fiore (Our Lady of the Flower)

c.1302: Arnolfo di Cambio dies and the project languishes

1334: Giotto di Bondone becomes architect; he works on the belltower

1337: Giotto dies

1367: a series of referenda are held to decide which model of the dome to build. The daring design of Neri di Fioravanti is selected

1377: birth of Filippo Brunelleschi

1401: competition for the Baptistry Doors of San Giovanni

1413: Brunelleschi is described as an 'ingenious man' and 'master of perspective'

1418: Brunelleschi presents his daring solution to the problem of the dome's construction

1420: Brunelleschi begins work on the dome

1436: the dome is completed apart from the lantern

1446: death of Brunelleschi

1471: Andrea del Verrocchio, with Leonardo da Vinci assisting, places the gilt copper ball on top of the lantern, bringing construction to an end

Books

Ross King, *Brunelleschi's Dome: How a Renaissance Genius Reinvented Architecture* (New York: Walker & Co, 2000).

What can I say? A brilliant and compelling look at Brunelleschi and his masterpiece. Unsurpassed!

Giorgio Vasari, *Lives of the Artists*, vol. 1, trans. George Bull (London: Penguin, 1987).
The fascinating book includes a long and fascinating biography of Brunelleschi.

Films

Great Cathedral Mystery (NOVA, 2014)

This documentary investigates the secrets Brunelleschi's innovative techniques. Available on YouTube.

Medici: Godfathers of the Renaissance (PBS, 2004)

While centered on the Medici family, this series provides valuable insights into the cultural and political environment of Renaissance Florence, highlighting figures like Brunelleschi.