

# Assisi: Church of the Millennium

*Blog 17 Alexandria and Sheridan*



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As we all woke up to our last morning in Assisi, we were all excited to be going back to Rome and having a break from all the traveling in the past week, but we were also sad because we enjoyed our time in the breathtaking views and the relaxed feel Assisi has to offer. Morning breakfast was much like the rest we had in our time here, but because we were on a schedule to catch the bus it was an early start. We packed our luggage into the car and tracked up the hills of Assisi to our bus for the last time. Though many of us dislike the hills very much, the picturesque view is something all of us will miss.

Skipping ahead in our timeline from early Christianity and medieval to the 21st century; this church was a 21st century church built in 2000. The church's name is Church of the Millennium and was built in honor of John Paul the 2nd celebrating 2000 years of the Christian faith. They hired Fuksa's architect firm to build this modern church. You can find this church listed as Fuksa's home page picture along with the other many sites that they have designed and built.

Before entering the Church, we stood and discussed the facade and some of the architectural components that made up this structure. Vince pulled out his sketch book and began to draw us a sketch that illustrated what we were about to enter in context to what we have already seen. He also mentioned how the church represented this new modern style rather than recreating a church that looked something of the baroque period, example Saint Peter's Basilica in Rome. Something that Vince has said that

stuck to us was, "Church design should not be repeated but rather pushed to reflect the style of the time."

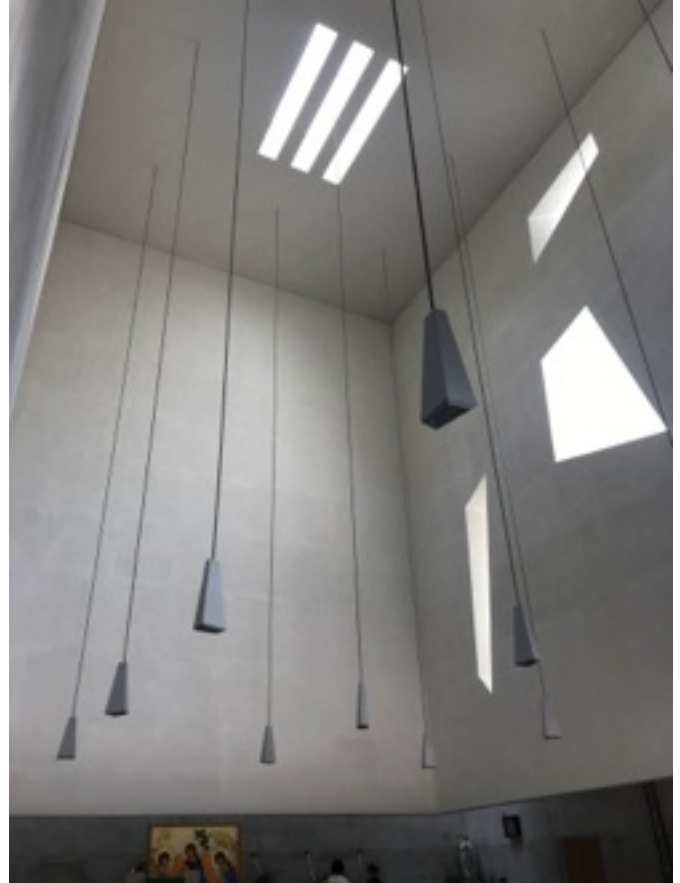
Upon entering the Church, a few of us got straight in to sketching and a few of us walked around to get a sense of the whole space. The floor plan was open into one big room, there were no side chapels and naves like we have seen before. The basilicas that we have already visited were highly decorative and contained many statues and frescos. In contrast, the church of the millennium had one altar and one statue of the virgin Mary. There were no paintings or frescos just cement and pews. The lights hung from the ceiling down to where the framing of the floating room sat. On the outside of the building it was



completely opposite of what we have been used to seeing when approaching the basilicas and other churches. Church of the Millennium had a very simple, cement, cube approach to the façade. There were no embellishments nor religious figures. The only thing that stood outside the church was a contemporary cross that matched the cement of the whole structure. When we were visiting the church, Vince discussed with us that it was a new, modern way of representing the previous styles floor plan. Even though the church was completely different from what we had seen before it still created a nave and the two side aisles. However, it created this form in a different way. The “floating cube” that was in the center of the church sectioned off the center of the church (nave) and the two sides in a very modern way. Also, there were few decorations, the only thing that lined the two outside isles where obscured sculptors of the cross. One thing that was interesting to us as a group was there was no sign of a crucifixion in sight. This was odd to us because being a catholic church and near Assisi you would expect to see at least one.

We spent about an hour and a half sketching the façade and interior. All of us enjoyed sketching at this site because it was a new scene that was unlike everything we’ve seen up until this point. The drawings are more geometric and have straight lines through them rather than organic figures and shapes. When sketching, some of the students took different approaches to convey their experience in the church. Some focused on specific components such as the light fixtures, the windows, and the pews, while others focused on sketching the





whole interior from different angles and taking a more abstract approach to represent the interior.

We all depart from the church to the bus excited to go to the train station and being our journey home. We were also happy because the trip to the station was very short, which meant less time in the cramped and humid bus. When we arrived to the station many of us were hungry so we ventured over to the cafe across the street where we were able to get some of our favorite snacks like suppli, mozzarella bites, and fried chicken. After getting the meals to go, we enjoyed our snacks on the platform in anticipation of our train. Because of all the time we spent at the church earlier, we did not have to wait at the station long for our train, which we were all excited about. Most of us have traveled by train now a few times and can agree that the process is much simpler than we imagined. Having to travel by train was a new concept to many of us but now as our last trip in the program comes to a close we can agree that we enjoy the means of transportation. As we boarded our train back to Roma Termini with all of our bags and truffles in hand we sadly realized we were leaving beautiful Umbria, the region where Foligno and Assisi lie. On our travel back to home, some of us once again met with Vince and Ahn to go over our sketches thus far. We have these meetings because once we are out in the field, especially in the numerous churches, we don't really have time do individually talk about our personal drawings. This also give Vince and Ahn a time to look where we are strong and where we are weak and give us techniques to get us to where we need to be regarding our final projects after we return to the US.

As we arrive in Rome we are instantly thrown into the bustle of the busy rush that is usually found in Rome. Though the trip was not very long our snack which we had before the train ride was not enough to hold us over so we decided to make a connivence stop at the McDonald's in the train station. Regrettably we decided to eat there because we all have been eating so much authentic Italian food we were craving



a little bit of something from home. After our little pit stop we made our way to the Metro, which is an alternate option to our normal bus route. It turns out that today was Italy's Republic Day, also known as Festa Della Repubblica (Festival of the Republic), which is a national holiday in Italy. Each year on June second the Italian celebrate the day their country voted to abolish the monarch and become a republic in 1946. Just like any other national holiday many businesses like government offices, schools, and banks are closed. Our decision to take the metro this time was include to the parade and festivities that happen around the Colosseum each year and happen to be in the middle our bus route. In attempt to avoid the chaos and the long alternate bus route we ended up catching the metro to another bus that would take us home. The beginning of our trip on the metro was a crowded one. Surprisingly for it being a national holiday, the train station was still packed like it normally is and therefore the metro was also very busy, even for it only being 3 in the afternoon. As we reached the Colosseum stop on the metro, floods of people pour out onto the platform, validating our decision to avoid the crowds in the area. The rest of the trip home was relatively easy. As we arrived to us stop from the metro we took a tram to our bus stop and then on to our apartment. Thankfully the tram and bus were not extremely full so we were able to move around, especially because it was a hot, cloudless day in Rome.

In conclusion, our three nights in Assisi sadly came to an end. The beautiful town upon a hill was calling us to stay for longer and is a place none of us will ever forget. From the beautiful views, to the sketching of the landscape and finally to the bottles of wine and Euchre tournaments, Assisi was one of our top travels of the trip. Thank you to all who has followed along with so far! We (sadly) only have two more weeks left so stay tuned to hear about the rest of our journeys in Rome!

Arrivederci!

