Timetable:
From March 16 to November 1: 09:00 am / 07:00 pm
From November 2 to March 15: 10:00 am / 04:30 pm

Closing:
Open every day except 01/01 and 25/12

Reservations:
Tel: +39 0588 87580

Ticket:
Single Pinacoteca: Euro 6.00
Reduced single Pinacoteca (adult groups of at least 20 units, over 60, students and teachers): Euro 4.50

The Art Gallery in Volterra

The civic Art gallery, the Pinacoteca Civica, was first established in 1905 by the eminent art historian Corrado Ricci and originally known as the Municipal Picture Gallery. Corrado Ricci was the one who proposed the idea of exhibiting a collection of works of art from suppressed churches and monasteries in Volterra to the local administration and public institutions.
Since 1982 the Art gallery has been housed in Palazzo Minucci Solaini, one of the finest and best preserved examples of Renaissance architecture in Volterra attributed by local historians to Antonio Sangallo, the Elder.
The building was commissioned by the Minucci family at the end of the 15th century. The three storey building, with a roofed terrace on the top floor, is organized around a simple elegant central courtyard, a place of assembly which also provides the upper rooms with light and allows the rain water to precipitate into the underground cisterns. The walls of the cloister were originally adorned with frescoes depicting plant festoons and coats of arms of which only a few traces are visible.

The visit begins on the first floor. The door on the left leads into the 1st Room which displays a collection of early medieval works of art found in Volterra.
There are several architectural decorations including a 12th century Marble Lunette depicting Actaeon being devoured by his own dogs, an artistic interpretation, typical of medieval symbolism. The Lunette comes from the church of Saint Giusto and was one of several decorations that adorned the façade of the church. It is interesting to note that the relief was sculptured in recycled stone, originally a Roman epigraph, a Latin inscription is still visible on the back.
There are two medieval reliquaries reusing ancient Etruscan urns, a few of the earliest examples of the recycling of ancient materials.
The urn on the left, preserving the relics of Saint Clement, one of the patron saints of Volterra, bears an inscription that states his body was exhumed in 1140. The other urn on the right contained the remains of the Volterran Saint Attinia.
The room is dominated by a 13th century painted Crucifix by an unknown Tuscan Master which is hung slightly tilted towards the viewer as was the custom in the Middle Ages. We do not know where the Crucifix was originally placed or the name of the artist who developed his own style distinguished by the elegant and linear composition typical of artists of that era.
The room also houses a small Head of a Prophet in Carrara marble attributed to Giovanni Pisano (1254-1317) which once belonged to the Fontana Maggiore in Perugia and purchased at the end of the 19th century. There is also a 13th century Crowned Head by an unknown artist.

Room II, divided into two sections by a glass showcase, exhibits two lateral panels of a polyptych portraying Saint Giusto and Saint Ugo by a Sienese painter known as Maestro di Monterotondo who was very active in the Volterra area from 1320 to 1340. The two local saints, both venerated in the city during the Middle Ages, are wearing lavish Episcopal vestments as they are presumed to have been bishops of Volterra and according to legend came from Africa hence the portrayal of their dark faces. The two panels were parts of a polyptych commissioned by the local administration and originally displayed in the chapel in the City Hall, the Palazzo dei Priori.
There is also a small altarpiece depicting The Virgin and Child crowned by the images of two Saints and the Crucifix with Saints, of which the central part has been attributed to the Duccio di Buoninsegna workshop.

On the wall next to the entrance of the chapel hangs a small wooden painted sculpture of the Madonna and Child highly reminiscent of the Madonna di Loreto. The artist is unknown and even the date is uncertain. Some historians have suggested a 13th century work of art while others have suggested it is an 18th century copy of a medieval sculpture.
The 18th century chapel with an altar surmounted by a painting depicting the Sacred Conversation attributed to Giandomenico Ferretti, leads into Room 111 also known as the Taddeo di Bartolo Room where the magnificent richly gilded polyptych portrays the Madonna and Child enthroned with Saints. This splendid work of art by the Sienese artist Taddeo di Bartolo, painted for the Cathedral in Volterra in 1411, has only been partly restored and is extremely well preserved.
The significantly larger size of the Madonna and Child against a gold surface in the central panel indicates that they are more important as they tower over the figures in the left and right panels depicting Saints Anthony Abbot, John the Baptist, Michael the Archangel and Francis of Assisi.
The predella beneath the panel painting shows five episodes relating to the life or miracles of the saints on the panels above: Saint Anthony tormented by demons, the dance of Salomé, the apparition of the bull on Mount Gargano and Saint Francis receiving the stigmata.
The cusp above the central panel depicts the Redemptive Blessing and the other two, the Annunciation. Below the cusps there are 3 medallions portraying Saint Nicola from Bari, the Holy Spirit and Saint Octavian. On the two spire shaped posts that frame the polyptych are Saint Biagio, Saint Christopher, Saint Mary Magdalene, Saint Jerome, Saint Victor and Saint Lucia. Directly below, there are two coats of arms, perhaps those of the Leostelli family, one of the patrons who donated this work of art to the Cathedral in Volterra. The ornate quality of the polyptych, the intarsia gilded wood decoration, most of which has been restored, the figures depicted in the accessory medallions render this work of art one of the richest and most elaborate masterpieces in Volterra.

In the same room you can admire part of a central panel of another polyptych by Taddeo di Bartolo; Madonna and Child enthroned. This work of art, known as the Madonna of the Rose, was commissioned for the church of S. Michele in Volterra. The panel was cut into an oval at an unknown date to be placed next to the altar.
As you walk from Room III to Room IV you can admire another dismembered altarpiece by Taddeo di Bartolo depicting just the figures of Saint Peter and Nicholas from Tolentino. According to some scholars this fragment may have been one of the panels that flanked the Madonna of the Rose.

Room IV contains one of the numerous show cases displaying a collection of coins as well as a panel painting of the Madonna and Child with Saints Catherine and Lucia by the Pisan artist Jacopo di Michele, known as il Gera; a polyptych by the Florentine artist Cenni di Francesco di Ser Cenni and a Pietà by the Volterran artist Francesco di Neri which are all splendid examples of art produced in Volterra through the 14th and the beginning of the 15th centuries.
Francesco di Neri from Volterra is the only 14th century artist from the city itself to have a work of art displayed in the art gallery. His Pietà was probably painted in 1408, or thereabouts, for Saint Mary's hospital here in Volterra. The artist worked in several other cities in Tuscany including Pisa where he collaborated on the painting of the frescos in the Monumental Cemetery of Pisa.
The polyptych by Cenni di Francesco, painted in 1408 for the church of San Pietro in Selci in Volterra, depicts the Virgin and Child flanked by Saints Nicholas of Bari, James, Christopher and Anthony Abbot surmounted by two prophets. This Florentine artist, an apprentice of Agnolo Gaddi, developed his own more folkloristic style which can still be admired in his frescos that adorn the Crucifix Chapel in the Church of Saint Francis painted a few years later in 1410.
Last but not least, a Crucifixion by the Portuguese artist Alvaro Pirez d'Evora who lived in Tuscany from 1410 to 1440 where he learnt Italian painting techniques so that his works are a skilful fusion of Italian and Portuguese traditions.

On your right as you enter Room V there is another work of art by the same artist Alvaro Pirez, a polyptych depicting Madonna and Child with Saints Nicholas, John the Baptist, Christopher and Michael probably datable to 1430.
This polyptych is a little different from the styles of the other polyptychs displayed in the Art Gallery, not only in the techniques applied – the predella is enhanced with reliefs sculptured in wood- but also in the use of vibrant colours and strong lines.

On the left, a pair of wooden statues depicting The Annunciation by the Sienese artist Francesco di Domenico Valdambrino datable to the beginning of the 15th century or at least the first twenty years of that century. Painted for the cathedral in Volterra, the sculptures are particularly noteworthy for the vibrant colours tinged with gold.
As you leave the room there is a small painting of the Crucifixion with mourners by a 15th century Florentine artist.

RoomVI provides a short pause from the collection of paintings to admire a rich display of coins most of which are Tuscan and Italian medieval coins including a selection of papal coins.

Room VII exhibits a collection of works by 15th century artists that linger in forms and styles of earlier eras. The first is the Madonna and Child by Stefano di Antonio Vanni renamed ,the Madonna with a long neck" by the inhabitants of Volterra. The painting is opulently painted in gold and subsequently engraved to give the effect and texture of fabric.
There are two paintings by Priamo di Piero della Quercia: a Portrait of Saint Bernardino and a small altar piece depicting Madonna and Child with Saints Victor and Octavian.
The portrait of Saint Bernardino from Siena was commissioned by the priori of Volterra to commemorate the sermons given by the famous monk in Volterra.
The Madonna and Child, painted in 1450, was commissioned by the Volterran, Giusto di Iacopo, known as Grasellino as the inscription reads at the foot of the painting. In the lower left hand corner of the painting, Saint Octavian, one of the cities' patron saints, is offering up a small but accurate model of the city of Volterra. Some scholars have attributed this work of art to Sano di Pietro, an artist from Siena in whose circle Priamo della Quercia was educated.
The showcase, collocated between the windows, displays a selection of a large collection of medals belonging to the Art Gallery. Noteworthy are the two medals made by Pisanello and the medal bearing the portrait of Mario Guarnacci who donated the main nucleus of the Etruscan museum to the Comune of Volterra.

Room VIII exhibits15th century Florentine and Sienese works of art .
The first is a wood panel of Saint Sabastian flanked by Saints Bartholomew and Nicholas of Bari painted by the Florentine artist Neri di Bicci. Although in the high Renaissance, the artist skilfully uses the static quality of much earlier works of art to achieve an archaic feel to the painting. The scroll at the base of the painting informs us that it was executed in 1477 and commissioned by the medieval district of Pratomarzio in Volterra.
Next to the painting of Saint Sabastian there is a sculpture of Christ in Mercy by Pier Francesco Fiorentino. Recent restoration work has returned the original base of the figure of Christ rising from his tomb. There is also the Nativity, a 15th century painting by an unknown Florentine artist and a terracotta polychrome statue of the Madonna also executed in the 15th century.

The next room Room IX also houses a terracotta sculpture of Christ in Mercy by the great sculptor Zaccaria Zacchi who left many of his works here in Volterra. Only a few traces of the original colours remain on this recently restored sculpture commissioned by Monte Pio of Volterra at the beginning of the 15th century.
In this very same room there is another Nativity and a predella showing episodes from the life of the Virgin Mary – her birth, her presentation to the temple, her marriage and Assumption- by the Sienese artist Benvenuto di Giovanni del Guasta dated 1478. Below the Nativity a predella by an artist from Volterra, Mariotto di Andrea.
The predella by Benvenuto di Giovanni has always been particularly admired amongst the works of art in Volterra. The wealth of detail in the Renaissance scenes, animated by a multitude of figures set in vividly articulated architectural surroundings, have always fascinated both scholars and visitors.

Room X is dominated by a magnificent panel painting Christ in Glory by Domenico Bigordi known as Ghirlandaio.
This exceptionally high quality work of art was executed by Ghirlandaio, or his apprentices, in 1492 specifically for the San Giusto abbey hence the portrayal of Saints Benedict and Romualdo and in the foreground the two Volterran saints, the martyrs Attinia and Greciniana. In the lower right hand corner of the painting, the figure of a monk in contemplation is the patron who commissioned this work of art, the abbot of the San Giusto abbey, Giusto Bonvicini
The painting is an eloquent example of this Florentine painter's skill to rely on his own narrative and prolific talent to faithfully document aspects of life and society during his own time. The wealth of rich detail, particularly enhanced in the delicacy and refinement of the Saints' hairstyles, are distinctive characteristics of this work of art.
The landscape in the background, framed by the figures of the Saints and Christ in Glory, was probably inspired by the landscape surrounding the abbey as many of the features resemble the precipitous cliffs Le Balze here in Volterra.
In the same room there are two more panel paintings: Madonna enthroned with Saints Bartholomew and Anthony Abbot whose attribution is rather controversial, some scholars attribute the painting to the so- called ,Maestro di S. Spirito" others tend towards believing the painting was produced in the Ghirlandaio workshop and the Madonna and Child enthroned with Saints Sebastian, Stephen, Lawrence and Nicholas of Bari by Leonardo Malatesta from Pistoia, a creative copy of Raphael's painting the Madonna of the Baldachin.

Room XI contains two panel paintings by Luca Signorelli Madonna and Child enthroned with Saints and The Annunciation, both dated in the same year 1491, as the inscriptions on the paintings attest.
Luca Signorelli, considered to be one of the Masters of the Renaissance, worked for long periods in Volterra at the end of the 15th century where he produced several paintings, some of which have been lost.
The figures in the Madonna and Child enthroned with Saints are specifically arranged to form an inverted pyramidal composition where the six saints – John the Baptist, Francis, Anthony, Peter, Bonaventura, Jerome and the two angels in the background – leave space for the contemplative figure of the Virgin holding Jesus in the act of conversing with the Saints.
The Annunciation, on the other hand, has long been recognised as one of the artist's great works: the architecture of the colonnaded portico projected in perspective where the sudden arrival of the angel emphasized by the undulating drapery is counterbalanced by the gesture of the Madonna in the act of withdrawing. The elegance of the figures in poses reminiscent of Greek and Roman statues, the elaborate perspective, which seems to enlarge the size of the image, references to classical antiquity to be observed in the details on the columns and the temples in the background, are all distinguishing features of this painter from Cortona.
And here finally the masterpiece and boasted treasure of the Art Gallery: the panel painting of The Deposition from the Cross by Giambattista di Jacopo known as Rosso Fiorentino signed and dated 1521.

The Deposition is certainly one of Rosso Fiorentino's most well known works of art; this enormous altar piece marks a significant moment in the history of Italian painting. Scholars consider this masterpiece to be one of the landmarks of Mannerist paintings, an artistic style at the beginning of the 16th century that led to the emergence of modern art in Italy.

The painting does in fact contain innovative stylistic components that break away from the artistic conventions in the Middle Ages and Renaissance although some elements are clearly inspired by the artist's predecessors .
The prevailing component is the rigorous geometry of the composition specifically used to guide the viewer's reading of the painting. The composition of the painting, built around the cross and the three ladders that lean against it, direct the eye to follow the perspective lines towards the vanishing point positioned at the foot of the cross where the light is more intense.
The composition is divided into two distinctive parts each expressing different emotions and yet locked as a whole: from the unnailing of Christ at the top of the painting to the group of mourners weeping for the death of the Saviour below. The static immobility of the group of mourners in the lower part of the painting strongly contrasts with the dynamic and frenzied movements of the figures surrounding the body of Christ in the upper part of the painting.
Highly charged with emotional energy, two different emotions are being expressed: sadness and restless turmoil.
The figures on the ladders are wearing only a few light coloured garments, their body parts exposed to reveal and highlight their taut muscles and angular limbs. The Virgin is being held up by two female figures, fully clothed and partly veiled in vibrantly coloured drapery, their heads lowered in a gesture of suffering. Mary Magdalene, portrayed with bold iconographic imagery, is throwing herself with open arms at the Virgin's feet instead of embracing the cross while Saint John turns away from the group covering his face with his hands in desperation.

As you come out of the room known as The Rosso Fiorentino Room climb the flight of stairs to Room XII dedicated to the Mannerist painters. Here there are two noteworthy paintings by Pieter De Witte The Nativity 1580 and The Mourners of the Dead Christ 1586.
An evocative canvas painting of the Nativity of the Virgin painted by Donato Mascagni in 1599 especially for the setting in semi darkness lit only by the light of the two high windows covered with waxed canvas nailed to the window frames instead of glass.
The two paintings by Niccolò Cercignani from Pomarance usually housed in the church of Saint Peter here in Volterra are temporarily being hosted by the Art gallery while the church is being restored.
The room is dominated by a large fresco Justice by Daniele Ricciarelli known as Daniele da Volterra painted for the Palazzo Pretorio in 1532. The fresco was removed in 1844 during restoration work on the building. This is one of the early works of an artist who later became renowned in Rome where he lived and made friends with Michael Angelo the reason why he was asked to paint the drapery on Michael Angelo's nude figures on the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel.

Room XIII known as 'the room of the paintings' houses works of particular historical and documentary interest such as: The adoration of the Shepherds, The Resurrection, Pentecost, The Assumption and Saints Justus and Victor – six paintings created in the workshops of Michele Tosini and Francesco del Brina which belong to a single illustrative group of paintings relating the ecclesiastical liturgy at the end of the 16th century.
The only four remaining fragments of a large panel painting, possibly depicting the Assumption Mary, painted a little before 1530 by Giuliano Bugiardini for the City hall, the Palazzo dei Priori and most of which was destroyed in a fire.

There is also a Saint Joseph painted by Giovanni Antonio Sogliani at the beginning of the 16th century and numerous paintings from the German and Flemish schools characterized by their ornate frames.
Just before the door that leads into the next room hangs a small panel painting depicting
The Deposition executed in the first half of the 16th century by a Sienese /Umbrian artist who may have belonged to the Sodoma workshop.

This same room also houses a terracotta bust of the Grand Duke Cosimo II by an unknown 17th century Tuscan sculptor. Local historians have attributed the work to Giovanni Gonnelli from Gambassi known as ,the Blind man from Gambassi" as at some point in his life he did in fact loose his sight.
The last room Room XIV contains the 17th century masterpiece painted by an artist from Volterra Baldassarre Franceschini depicting the Madonna and Child with Saints in which the colour tones are suffused with silver grey hues and the influences of Correggio, Caracci, Pietro from Cortona and Cigoli are clearly apparent especially in the rich detail on the wide sleeved vestment worn by Saint Stephen .
In the same room there are two paintings by Cosimo Daddi depicting the Latin poet originally from Volterra Aulus Persius Flaccus and Madonna and Child both dated at the end of the 16th century. Just opposite are works of art donated by the Bianchi family from Volterra.