



FACTVM
FOVNDATION
FOR DIGITAL TECHNOLOGY
IN CONSERVATION

Tourist damage

01/04/2013



Last week I was in Florence and one of the things that is immediately noticeable there is, yes, the numbers of tourists - we all know that and it can be very distracting. But I thought as I walked through the paved streets that this also added a dimension to a visitor's appreciation as Florence - like Genoa and Venice - must have been host to every language (nationality was, agreeably, less of an issue then) during the period of their absolute and extraordinary dominance of world trade and exchange which brought the ideas and thoughts - and money - to launch and sustain the renaissance; listening to all those tongues passing by made the bustle just a little more acceptable.

It is this bustle that is something that we need to concentrate on - the moving, breathing, sweating, talking - and increasing - mass of visitors at the various heritage sites around the world. Last week in the darkened Botticelli room at the Uffizi the air conditioners hummed ceaselessly, cooling and drying as the crowds, ten deep, passed in waves by La Primavera and then soundlessly shuffled on to the next room on the itinerary. This reminds us of many places - the most vivid in our minds this month perhaps is the Sistine Chapel - where the conclave that resulted in Pope Francis' election gave a desperately needed but short respite from the damage to the fabric of the interior brought about by 20,000 visitors a day.

While we are on the subject of visitors causing unintended damage - we heard this week that we are making good progress on the eventual installation of the exact facsimile of the Tomb of Tutankhamun we gave to the Republic of Egypt at the end of last year. We gave it for this very reason - to allow visitors the experience of the tomb without directly damaging the original. We desperately hope it can be installed at the Carter House soon.