Studying abroad in Florence during the summer of 2013 has been the most enriching experience of my life.

I enrolled in a Renaissance art history class that filled each week with ten hours of monasteries, cathedrals, and museums. In my free time, I would return to the Bargello, the Uffizi, and the Galleria Palatina to sketch the works that caught my attention during class. Having the opportunity to be in their physical presence for an extended amount of time gave a new dimension to my understanding. I felt such an intense connection from recreating the contours of the figures’ faces that I felt the pieces practically coming to life. My most memorable experience was drawing Cristofono Allori’s Giuditta con la testa di Oloferne—the longer I made eye contact with the titular heroine, the more vitality the centuries-old assemblage of paint emitted.

I’ve transferred this electric engagement with masterpieces to my Stamps career by including bits of art I admire in each of my own paintings, especially in my IP project. The pieces I encountered in Italy continue to make their way into my work, along with architecture and plants I photographed during weekend excursions all over Tuscany.

On the last day of my art history class, our professor took us to the Capponi Chapel to see Jacopo Pontormo's Mannerist La Deposizione. She emotionally explained to us that she always liked to end with this painting because to her it answered the question posed by the end of the Renaissance: "Where do you go from perfection?" La Deposizione shows the possibilities of innovation after it seemed impossible to improve upon painting. It’s also astounding how much emotional impact a work of art from centuries ago can have today—this uniquely transcendent quality is why I pursue painting.
Window in a Fiesole church

Wildflowers in Cinque Terre

Fiori, Fall 2013
Oil on canvas
40” x 52”

Catherine Trowbridge
cathtrow
Angeles, Winter 2015
Oil on canvas
42" x 72"

Detail of fleur de lis and angel wing

Ceiling in Palazzo Vecchio

Window in Florence church

Catherine Trowbridge
cathtrow
Date Lab, Fall 2014
Oil on canvas
39” x 39” + 45” x 45”

Detail of statue in in-progress Date Lab

Statue in Pisa’s Camposanto

Catherine Trowbridge
cathtrow