Brumidi employed an artistic technique known as trompe l'oeil (fool the eye) in the corridors. This process is designed to make the images appear three-dimensional rather than flat.

Since they were first painted in the 1850s, the wall and ceiling decorations of the Brumidi Corridors have been repaired many times. In the past, such repair work included repeated retouching, repainting, and varnishing. Over time, these treatments camouflaged the decorations’ original appearance and presented a darker, flatter version of Brumidi’s inspired work.

In the past few years, however, professional conservators have begun to restore the corridor decoration to its original appearance. Each of the lunette paintings with historical scenes painted by 20th century artists.

In the recently completed Patent Corridor, the visitor is now able to see, for the first time in a hundred years, the delicacy and vibrance of the original wall decoration.
The Brumidi Corridors

Where To Begin Your Self-Guided Tour
The Brumidi Corridors are composed of five different hallways, known as the main, west, inner, north, and Patent corridors. Your self-guided tour will begin at the Senate Gift Shop desk, located in the main corridor (see map).

When you tour the Brumidi Corridors, remember that the walls are works of fine art. For their safety and preservation, we ask that you look closely, but do not touch.

Where you stand now, within the main and inner corridors, the hallways are painted with plants, fruits, and small animals. You will notice that the larger murals and portraits included in the other areas are not part of the design in the main and inner corridors. To view some of the fuller treatments, turn west at the Senate Gift Shop desk and walk through the inner corridor towards the Appropriations Committee Room.

West Corridor
Above room S–128 is the fresco titled Bellona, the Roman Goddess of War (A). Brumidi often related his art to the use of a room, and S–128 was first occupied by the Committee on Military Affairs. Throughout the west corridor are medallion portraits of signers of the Declaration of Independence including John Jay, Roger Sherman, and Robert Morris. Also represented in this corridor are the twelve signs of the zodiac (B) and more than 40 American bird species. See how many you can identify.

North Corridor
As you head east, into the north corridor, notice the many images of American fauna such as squirrels, snakes, and chipmunks, as well as representations of American culture such as agricultural implements and modern inventions. In the 19th century, room S–124 housed the Committee on Territories; above the doorway is the fresco The Cession of Louisiana (C). In this painting, Robert Livingston, James Monroe, and the Marquis Barbe-Marbois are depicted negotiating the Louisiana Purchase.

Mid-way through the north corridor is the intersection with the north entrance. This small hallway contains several Brumidi portraits including Chancellor James Kent (E), Chancellor Robert Livingston (F), and Justice Joseph Story (G). The tempera ceiling in this area is original, and shows how all the ceilings of the Brumidi Corridors were once decorated.

As you continue through the north corridor, past the north entrance, you will see two areas recently completed by 20th century artists. In 1975 Allyn Cox painted The Moon Landing (H), and in 1987 Charles Schmidt completed the space shuttle Challenger and its crew (I). These artists did not use fresco, but painted with oil paint on canvas, which was later applied to the wall. Above room S–118 is the fresco titled The Signing of the First Treaty of Peace with Great Britain (J). This Brumidi mural depicts the 1782 peace negotiations between John Adams, Benjamin Franklin, John Jay, Henry Laurens, and British representative Richard Oswald.

Patent Corridor
At the east end of the north corridor lies the Patent Corridor. This large, open area contains three Brumidi frescoes, all of inventors. Above room S–116, formerly the Committee on Patents, is an image of Robert Fulton with his steamboat, the Clermont, on the Hudson River (K). Also portrayed in this corridor are Benjamin Franklin (L) and John Fitch (M). To the left of the Fitch painting is a marble bust of Constantino Brumidi (N), sculpted by American artist Jimilu Mason in 1967.

The Moon Landing (H), painted by Allyn Cox in 1975, and the space shuttle Challenger and its crew (I), painted by Charles Schmidt in 1987, are examples of 20th century art in the Brumidi Corridors. These paintings were created with oil paint on canvas, which was later applied to the wall. Above room S–118 is the fresco titled The Signing of the First Treaty of Peace with Great Britain (J), painted by Robert Brumidi in the 19th century. The mural depicts the signing of the treaty between John Adams, Benjamin Franklin, John Jay, Henry Laurens, and British representative Richard Oswald.