

Lill-E.T. Mons. Charles J. Scicluna
Arċisqof ta' Malta

49/2025

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Nesponi bil-qima,

Illi nixtieq li jsir restawr tal-Ikona ta' San Pietru li tinsab fil-mużew tal parroċċa;

Illi ma' din it-talba qed nannetti r-*Restoration Method Statement* u l-istima;

Illi l-proġett se jkun iffinanzjat minn donazzjoni mogħtija lill-Għaqda Kulturali Wirt Naxxari;
għal skopijiet ta' restawr fil-mużew tal-Parroċċa.

Illi jekk ningħata l-account number inkun nista' niddepożita l-flus fil-Kurja.

Nitlob li ningħata permess għal dan ir-restawr.

Nitlob il-Barka Tieghek.

Fr David Gauci
Arċipriet

Prezentat fil-Kurja Arċiveskovili
lil 29 ta' Jannar 2025

Charles Bugaj, Kamrier

St Peter,
Oil and gilding on panel, 16th Century
Naxxar Parish Museum

Restoration Method Statement



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January 2025

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1. Introduction

The following report carried out by Restawr Arti provides a description of the required conservation and restoration treatments for the 16th Century Icon of St. Peter and it's Baroque style decorative frame at the Naxxar Parish Museum (Figure1.). All knowledge gathered regarding the present condition of the work of art understudy is based on a visual inspection. The proposed required conservation - restoration treatments are based both on professional experience, and published research, and may require slight changes in the process or methodology once the conservator/s carries out a close and thorough visual inspection.

The aim will be to present a conservative methodology for the conservation of the panel painting and wooden gilded frame, and hence preserving the original materials and colours. All conservation materials, and procedures stated will be compatible, reversible and respectful to the original materials in discussion.



2. The Painting- General Information

The work of art in discussion is an 16th Century panel painting representing St. Peter (Figure 1.). The structure consists of 2 vertical wood panels, held by 2 cross bars to hold the panels in place (Figure 2.). Canvas is adhered to the panel support, and is minimally exposed due to the damages and losses. This was probably carried out to support and close off the joint openings between the different panels and also to prepare a flat and homogeneous surface for the artist.

Additionally, a homogenous layer of gypsum is applied as a preparation for the painting and gilt surface. The gilding was carried out with the water gilding technique, while the pictorial surface was carried out using oil colours.

Although today the surface is covered with layers of organic coatings, there might still be the original coating, which has also oxidised as the other overlapping layers.

The painting is decorated with a Baroque style Mecca gilt frame.



Figure 2. The backside of the panel painting, showing 2 separate panels (green line marks the joint) and 2 horizontal cross bars to support the structure. Image, Restawr Arti, 2025.

3. Condition Assessment

A visual inspection to understand the present state of conservation was carried out at a close distance from front and back. This could help understand better the original materials, deterioration phenomena, damages, and previous restoration interventions.

3.1 The Painting

Initiating from the panel support, the wood is in a very good condition. No severe losses or expansions were noted. Additionally, no insect damage was identified. Although most of the gypsum preparatory layer seems to be in a good condition, minimal areas at the bottom right corner is suffering from gypsum detachments and losses. Most of the bottom part seems to be previously restored. The retouching and overpaint has discoloured by time (Figure 3.).

Different coatings or mixtures of coatings were applied by time, and can now be seen as dark orange and dark brown patches. Due to the thickness of the coatings and possibly fast drying, the thick layer shrunk and in some areas also affected the underlying paint and gold (Figure 4.). Overall, the painting has a dull appearance due to the thick oxidised coatings, dirt and grime that is present on the painted surface and gilt areas. This is reducing dimensionality and certain details of the portrait and background.



Figure 3. Detail showing the bottom area with patches of discoloured paint. Image, Restawr Arti, 2025.



Figure 4. Detail of the gilt background showing very thick and oxidised coatings. Image, Restawr Arti, 2025.

3.2 The Decorative Gilded Frame

Overall, structurally, the frame is in a good condition. No major cracks or missing parts were observed. However, it was noted that some areas are missing the gypsum layer, and hence also the bole and gilding (Figure 5.). Around these lacunae, the edges are detached from the wooden support and unstable.

By time, or due to inappropriate handling or dusting, some areas of the gilt surface is abraded. Most of the intricate details of the sculptural motifs and the luminosity is hindered by the dirt deposit attached to the surface (Figure 6.).

After thorough visual observations it was concluded that both the painting and the decorative gilded frame require a conservation and restoration methodology designed specifically for their requirements in order to preserve the original materials, and reduce further damage and deterioration.



Figure 5. Detached, and lost gypsum layers. Image, Restawr Arti, 2025.

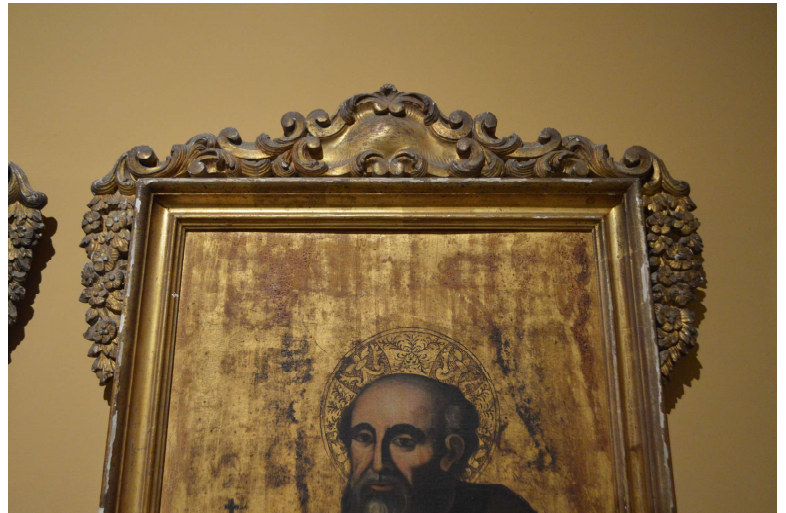


Figure 6. Dull and abraded sculptural motifs. Image, Restawr Arti, 2025.

4. Proposed Conservation and Restoration Treatments

This section will include the different treatments, processes, and methodologies thought to be required at this point based on visual inspection, knowledge from previous projects, and research of published literature. Prior and throughout the stages of the project, all steps and methodologies will be photographically documented with visible light, and some cases also with ultraviolet light. All the treatments, and methodologies will be documented in a final conservation report for future reference.

The management of the Naxxar Parish Museum and members of Għaqda Kulturali Wirt Naxxari are invited to visit Restawr Arti Studio whenever required and think fit, in order to view and follow the progress of works.

Both painting and frame will be taken down from the walls accordingly, packed properly and safely and transported to Restawr Arti Studio in Naxxar in an enclosed van. Eventually, once the works are finalised, the painting and frame will be repacked properly and safely, and returned back to the church in an enclosed transport van.

4.1 The Painting

The first step is to photographically document the painting from front and back using visible, raking, and ultraviolet light. A thorough inspection will be carried out at close distance in order to evaluate and design a precise methodology for the treatments required.

The focus will move to the lengthy and important treatments including the structural support. A temporary facing using Japanese paper will be applied to the pictorial layer to protect it from the handling that is required in the coming stages. Unstable gypsum layers and detachments will be adhered using a micro- emulsion adhesive diluted in alcohol. The adhesive will be injected under the layers, and eventually re-activated with a heat spatula in order to have similar properties as the original.

The next stage will be to determine the best possible cleaning methodology or methodologies to remove the oxidised varnish, and altered restoration colours without affecting or touching the original paint and gilt surface. Various cleaning tests will be carried out to determine the mixture of solvents in liquid or gel state, and the methodology of cleaning. Dirt, grime, and gypsum infills from the previous restoration will be softened and removed by fine scalpel blades. This process will be carried out to expose the artist's original colours once again.

Lacunae and losses in the paint layer, and preparation layer will be infilled with fine quality *gesso di Bologna* and rabbit glue, and eventually levelled to match the rest of the painting's surface. Lacunae in the gilded areas will be prepared with red bolo and gilded with authentic gold leaf 23.75Kt. The new applied gold leaf will be aged in order to match the appearance of the original gold using glazes and stable retouching colours.

Prior to re- integration of the pictorial layer, a low molecular weight retouching varnish will be applied to separate the original colours from the retouching restoration colours while saturating the original colours. Then, the pictorial re- integration of losses of the pictorial layer will be carried out using stable varnish based colours purposely designed for restoration. This phase will unify the appearance of the painting. As a final step, the surface will be given a synthetic coating with a satin finish. A synthetic varnish will be chosen over a natural varnish since it is proven to be more stable to high temperatures and humidity levels, does not discolour by time, and also has an ultraviolet filter

incorporated, hence it protects the tempera colours from the negative effects sunlight may have on the original materials.

4.2 Decorative Gilded Frame

Primarily, the unstable cracked, detached gypsum and gilded surfaces, will be re adhered back to their support with an acrylic micro emulsion, fine brushes, and needles. Once the structure is in a good state of conservation, the process will move to the cleaning of the gilded surfaces. Various cleaning tests will be carried out to determine the mixture of solvents in liquid or gel state, and the methodology of cleaning the oxidised shellac coating, dirt and grime without affecting the gilt surface.

Any minor lacunae or cracks in the wood support will be reconstructed using a two component resin, purposely designed for art restoration as a substitute for wood and timber. Lacunae in the gypsum layer are to be infilled with a mix of *gesso di Bologna* and animal glue, and levelled to the adjacent surface.

Black and red bole, according to the original, will be applied over the new infilled areas, and other areas of missing original bole. Authentic silver leaf will be used to cover only the areas of missing original silver, and eventually burnished using agate stone. In order to integrate the appearance of the new silver with that of the original silver, layers of shellac will be applied until the same level is reached. Finally, a layer of final protective varnish (UV filtered) will be applied all over the frame to reduce the risk of future abrasions.

5. Conclusion

From the observations carried out on site, Restawr Arti suggests that the Icon of St. Peter and its decorative frame *at the Naxxar Parish Museum* are preserved by following a conservation and restoration programme. All treatments carried out will be based on a methodological, and ethical approach in order to preserve the historical materials. Conservation treatments, and procedures must be carried out using established conservation products and tools.

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22/01/2025

Quotation #

020/24

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Conservation and Restoration –St. Peter, panel painting,
16th Century

DESCRIPTION OF TREATMENTS

PRICE (EURO)

Painting

-Adhesions of unstable gypsum layers	60.00
-Cleaning and removal of oxidised coatings and previous restoration interventions	1030.00
-Reconstructions and infills	150.00
-Gilding of lost areas (authentic gold leaf)	160.00
-Pictorial re- integration and final protective coating (UV filtered)	380.00

Decorative frame

- Consolidation and adhesions wood and unstable gypsum layers	150.00
- Reconstructions and infills	200.00
- Cleaning and removal of dirt and grime	310.00
- Gilding of lost areas (authentic silver leaf and <i>meccatura</i>)	300.00
- Restoration method statement and final conservation reports	180.00

Subtotal exc. VAT 2920.00

VAT 18% 525.60

Total (Euro) 3445.60

This quotation is valid for 6 months from date of issue.