



UFFIĊĊJU PARROKKJALI, PARROĊĊA MOSTA

15, TRIQ IL-KNISJA, MOSTA. MST 2015

TEL: 21433826

Sit uffiċċjali: www.mostachurch.com

Pagna ta' facebook: mostaparish

18 ta' Jannar 2024

Lill-Eċċellenza Tiegħu Reverendissima
Monsinjur Charles J. Scicluna
Arċisqof Metropolita ta' Malta.

40/2025

Rikors biex isir restawr tal-Via Sagra li tinsab fil-Bażilika tal-Mosta.

Eċċellenza,

Sa issa diġa' saru diversi proġetti ta' preservazzjoni u restawr ta' pitturi mportanti li jinsabu fil-Bażilika tal-Mosta. Nixtiequ li nkomplu dan il-proċess billi jsir tindif u restawr tal-Via Sagra tal-istess Bażilika. Dan is-sett jikkonsisti minn 14-il kwadru x'xeni tal-istazzjonijiet tradizzjonali tal-Via Sagra u żewġ gwarniċi simili li jinkwadraw relikwarju u l-post taż-żjut imqaddsa.

Il-ħsieb hu li nibdew billi nagħmlu talba lill-arts council Malta biex isiru iż-żewġ gwarniċi tar-relikwarju u ż-żjut imqaddsa, kif wkoll tnejn mis-set tal-Via Sagra. Jekk it-talba tiġi milqugħa nkunu nistgħu nibdew dan il-proġett. Jekk le, dan il-proġett jinbeda meta jinstabu l-fondi għalihom (bħal donazzjonijiet minn benefatturi). Bla dubju dan hu proċess li se jieħu ż-żmien, għall-fatt li d-daqs tagħhom hu ta' daqs konsiderevoli.

Hu stmat li se jiswew €4032 kull kwarniċ u €1357 kull pittura. Il-kunsilli pastorali u finanzjarju jaqblu li jinbeda dan ir-restawr u jsir tul is-snin li ġejjin.

Għaldaqstant qed nitlob li tiġi milqugħha din t-talba.

Filwaqt li nitlob il-barka tiegħek,
Nirringrazzjak ta' kollox.

Dun Sebastjan Caruana
Arċipriet



Prezentat fil-Kurja Arċiveskovili
lilum 20 ta' Jannar 2025

Charles Bugys, Kancellier



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17 ta' Jannar 2025

Lil min tikkonċerna,

Fil-laqgħa tal-Kunsill Pastoral Parrokkjali ta' nhar il-Ħamis 16 ta' Jannar 2025, gie diskuss il-proġett tat-tindif tal-Via sagra. Il-membri tal-kunsill qablu ma' dan il-proġett.

Michael Tanti
Segretarju tal-KPP



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15, TRIQ IL-KNISJA, MOSTA. MST 2015

TEL: 21433826

Sit uffiċċjali: www.mostachurch.com

Paġna ta' facebook: mostaparish

10 ta' Jannar 2019

Lil min tikkonċerna,

Il-membri tal-Kunsill Ekonomiku Parrokkjali approvaw il-proġett tat-tindif tal-Via Sagra fil-laqqha li saret il-Ħamis 9 ta' Jannar 2025. Il-membri jaqblu li ssir talba lill- 'Arts Council Malta' biex jgħinuna nibdew dan il-proġett. Il-membri jaqblu wkoll li nkomplu dan il-proġett bil-mod matul is-snin li ġejjin.

Gracianne Mifsud
Segretarja tal-KEP



**STATE OF CONSERVATION AND TREATMENT PROPOSAL
FOR THE IMPORTANT PAINTINGS AND FRAMES DEPICTING
THE VIA SAGRA LOCATED INSIDE THE BASILICA OF MOSTA
DEDICATED TO THE ASSUMPTION OF THE VIRGIN MARY**

10th January 2025

ATELIER DEL RESTAURO
CONSERVATION & SCIENTIFIC ANALYSIS OF WORKS OF ART



QUOTATION

Date: 10-01-2025

Quotation number: 25009

e-mail: info@atelierdelrestauro.com

VAT NUMBER MT 23561505

+356 79534766

Client's details

Name & Surname: Rev Archpriest Sebastian Caruana o.b.o Mosta Rotunda Foundation	
Home/ office number:	Contact number: 21 433 826 / 27 418 368
Address: Ufficcju Parrokkjali 15, Church Street, Mosta	e-mail: office@mostachurch.com , kppmosta@gmail.com
Other Information:	

Artifact's details:

Object: Oil on canvas painting and wood gilded frames	Title: The Via Sagra / The Stations of the Cross
Artist: 10 paintings by Rocco Buhagiar, 4 paintings by Antonio Scerri, 16 frames sculpted by Antonio Agius.	
Period: Painting done between 1791-1796 frames done between 1888-1963	Location: Mosta Basilica dedicated to the Assumption of the Virgin Mary
Dimensions: 187cm x 88cm each frame including the cross.	Inspected by: Valentina Lupo, Marzia Progetto, Francesca Giovagnola.
Notes: Light arrangement: Normal and raking light	Notes: Cleaning tests done on one of the frames on purpose for this quotation.

Introduction

The Via Sagra (*Via Crucis*) stems from the introduction of the devotion of the Via Dolorosa in Jerusalem in 1229, a processional route symbolising the actual path Jesus walked to Mount Calvary. Traditionally, the Via Sagra consists of the different episodes of the Passion of Christ and varies between seven and twenty two images. In 1726, Pope Benedict XIII gave all Franciscans the indulgences of the Stations of the Cross and set the number of Stations of the Cross to fourteen.

It was the Franciscan order who introduced the devotion to the Via Sagra on the Island and the first Via Sagra to appear in Malta was in the Franciscan church of St. Mary of Jesus (Ta' Giezu) in Rabat in 1727, followed by one in the Franciscan church of Ta' Giezu, Valletta, in 1731. The devotion

towards the Stations of the Cross was given particular importance during Lent and Good Friday. This tradition was introduced to Malta by many Pilgrims who were travelling from the Holy Land, bringing with them the devotional practice together with the *Via Sagra*.

About the Basilica of Mosta Via Sagra

The fourteen paintings of the Via Crucis are prominently displayed inside the Basilica of the Assumption of the Virgin Mary in Mosta. These works are of exceptional historical and artistic significance, as they originally belonged to the old parish church, constructed based on the designs of Tommaso Dingli. When the current Church was built, these highly ornate, gilded frames were commissioned to house these paintings, reflecting the intricate craftsmanship and decorative artistry of 19th-century Malta.

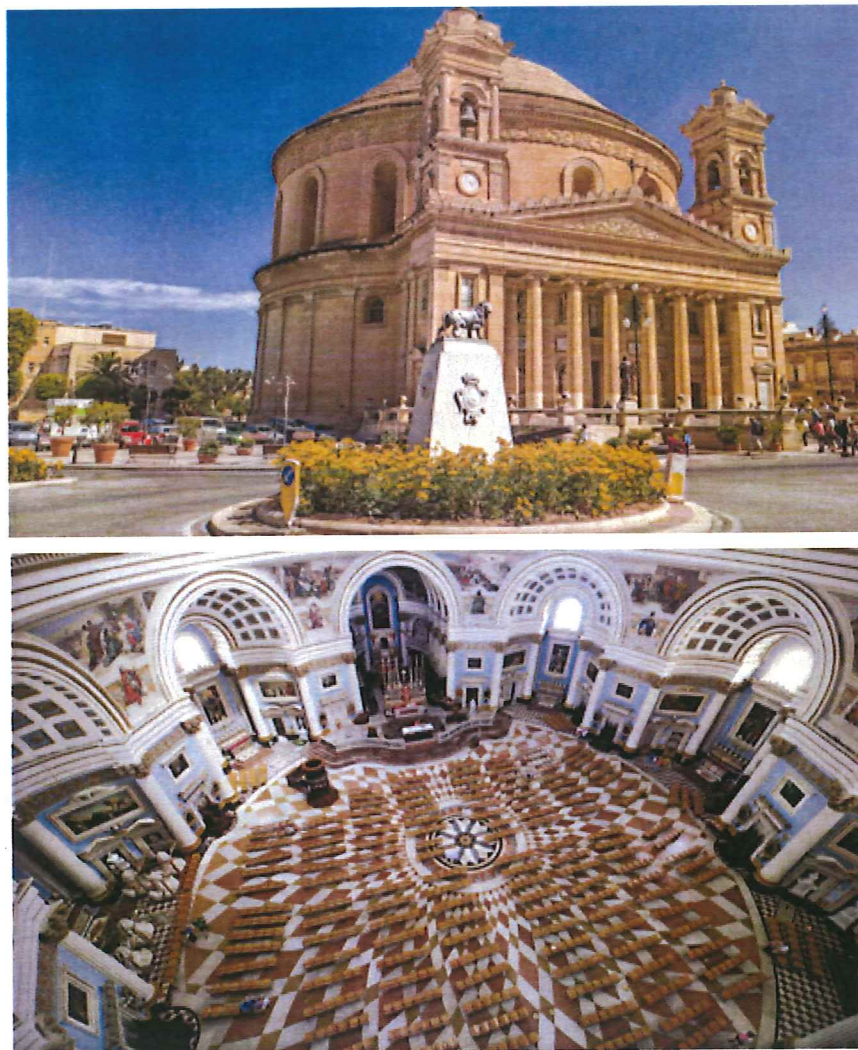


Figure 1 – The Stations of the Cross are displayed along the circumference of the Mosta Rotunda and are highly visible to visitors.



Figure 2 - The paintings and frames of the Via Sagra

The frames, sculpted by Antonio Agius (1888–1963), are masterpieces of Baroque-inspired design. Completed around 1923, **they are among the most elaborately decorated and gilded examples of their kind, making them a vital contribution to Malta's decorative arts heritage.**

The paintings themselves date back to the late 18th century and were painted by two different artists, resulting in a fascinating stylistic contrast. The first two stations and the last two (Stations I, II, XIII, and XIV) were painted by the lesser-known artist Antonio Scerri between 1791 and 1792. These works are characterised by a Baroque style that, while accomplished, reflects a more traditional approach that had begun to wane by the late 18th century.

The remaining ten stations (Stations III–XII) were executed by the renowned Maltese artist Rocco Buhagiar (1723–1805) between 1793 and 1796. Buhagiar's work leans towards the Neoclassical style, showcasing the influence of contemporary artistic trends that he likely encountered during his time in Rome.



According to Comm. Prof. George Cassar, the stylistic differences between the works of Scerri and Buhagiar are immediately apparent. While Scerri's paintings adhere to the Baroque tradition, Buhagiar's work reflects the Neoclassical movement that was gaining momentum across Europe during the late 18th century. It is believed that Scerri's commission may have been interrupted, as his style did not align with the emerging artistic trends of the time. Buhagiar, who had studied in Rome, brought a more modern approach to the project, which likely appealed to patrons seeking to embrace the evolving tastes of the period.

Today, the fourteen paintings, each housed in their opulent Baroque-style frames, are prominently displayed in the Basilica. They stand as a testament to the artistic transition between Baroque and Neoclassicism in Malta and the enduring craftsmanship of 19th-century gilded woodwork.

I. Details of the Paintings:

- **Stations I and II** – Antonio Scerri (1791–92), oil on canvas
- **Stations III to XII** – Rocco Buhagiar (1793–96), oil on canvas (signed)

- **Stations XIII and XIV** – Antonio Scerri (1791–92), oil on canvas
- **Two extra frames one conserved a number of Reliquaries and the other one the Enointment oil for the sick.**

State of Conservation of the paintings and frames

The ornate gilded and sculptured wooden frames have been decorated using the water gilding technique. During preliminary investigations the state of conservation of all the frames was assessed. In general the surface decoration of the frames was found in a bad state of conservation with the surfaces covered in dust and grime along with detachments, abrasions and losses of the gilding. Furthermore dust and grime are accumulated on the surface. The gold turned dark especially because in the past these were lit by oil lamps and therefore the soot has covered the gold gilded surface.

Some restoration interventions on different areas were done where the areas were regilded using the oil gilding technique.

Losses of the wooden support together with the losses of the overlying preparation and gilding were present in some small areas. These areas of the support will require consolidation and reconstruction.

Fissures and breaks in the wooden support were observed in various areas of the wooden elements, especially in vulnerable areas of the carved decorations. Cracks and detachments of the gilding and its preparatory layers were also observed in these areas as well as in other parts of the gilding.

Over time mechanical damage, handling and cleaning of the gilded elements have all contributed its current state of conservation.

Additionally cracks and detachments were also present at different levels of the decorative stratigraphy. The frames which are hung closer to the doors at the back have several flyspecks (small black dots) which cover the gilded surface. Where flyspecks accumulations are present due to their acidity the gold underneath is usually found abraded. Some of the frames have also evidence of a bio-film indicating the presence of mould.



For the purpose of this project specialised conservators in the conservation of wooden and gilded surface did a site- visit to carry out cleaning tests.

The paintings in general were found in a stable state of conservation. Some exhibit a craquelure pattern. This pattern is present throughout the painting due to the repeated expansion and contraction of the canvas support. This movement most probably happened because the painting absorbed humidity present in the air. Due to the expansion and contraction of the canvas support with changes in temperatures and humidity stresses are created on the paint layer and by time a loss in the painting's elastic properties takes place.

The varnish layer appears homogenous however it has oxidised in time and has therefore altered the original colours, resulting in an overall dark yellowish tone which hinders the full appreciation of the painting's intended tonality. Restoration intervention attempts seem to be present due to a number of overpaints observed in some of the paintings.



Figure 3 – General image of the 13th Station of the Cross



Figure 4 - During the cleaning tests carried out on the frames

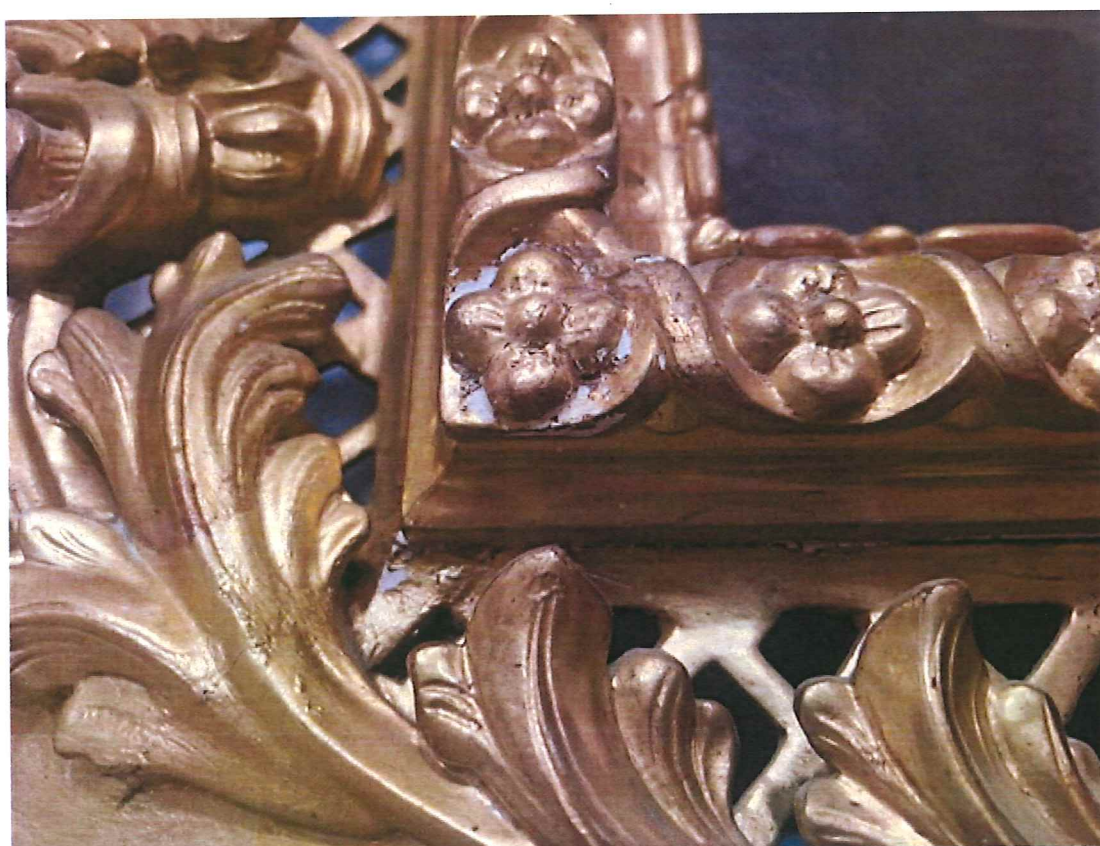
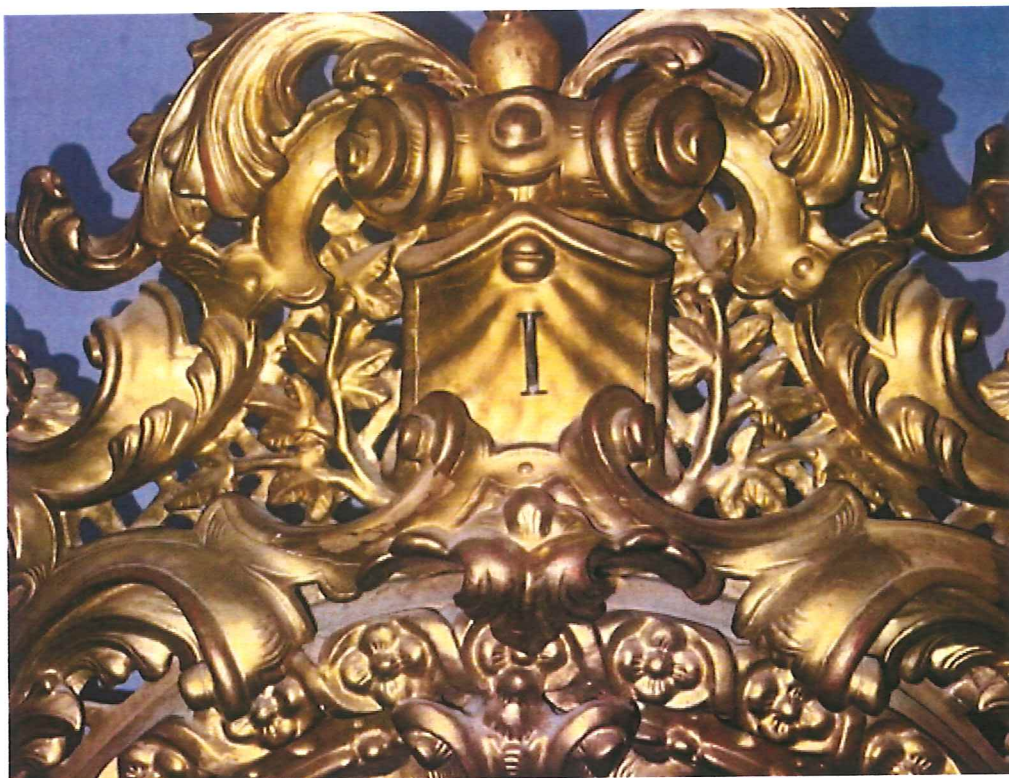


Figure 5 – Details showing a dirty gilded surface, with losses of the paint layer and restoration interventions done by the oil gilding technique.



Figure 6 – Details showing cracks and an oil gilding intervention on the water gilded layer



Figure 7 – other cracks and oil gilding interventions.



Figure 8 – Large black circular dots are a bio-film indicating the presence of mould on the top part of the inscription smaller dots are acidic flyspecks.



Figure 9 – Abrasions of the gilded layer show the exposed red bole



Figure 10 - Abrasions of the gilded layer show the exposed red bole



Figure 11 – Wax residues found on some of the frames

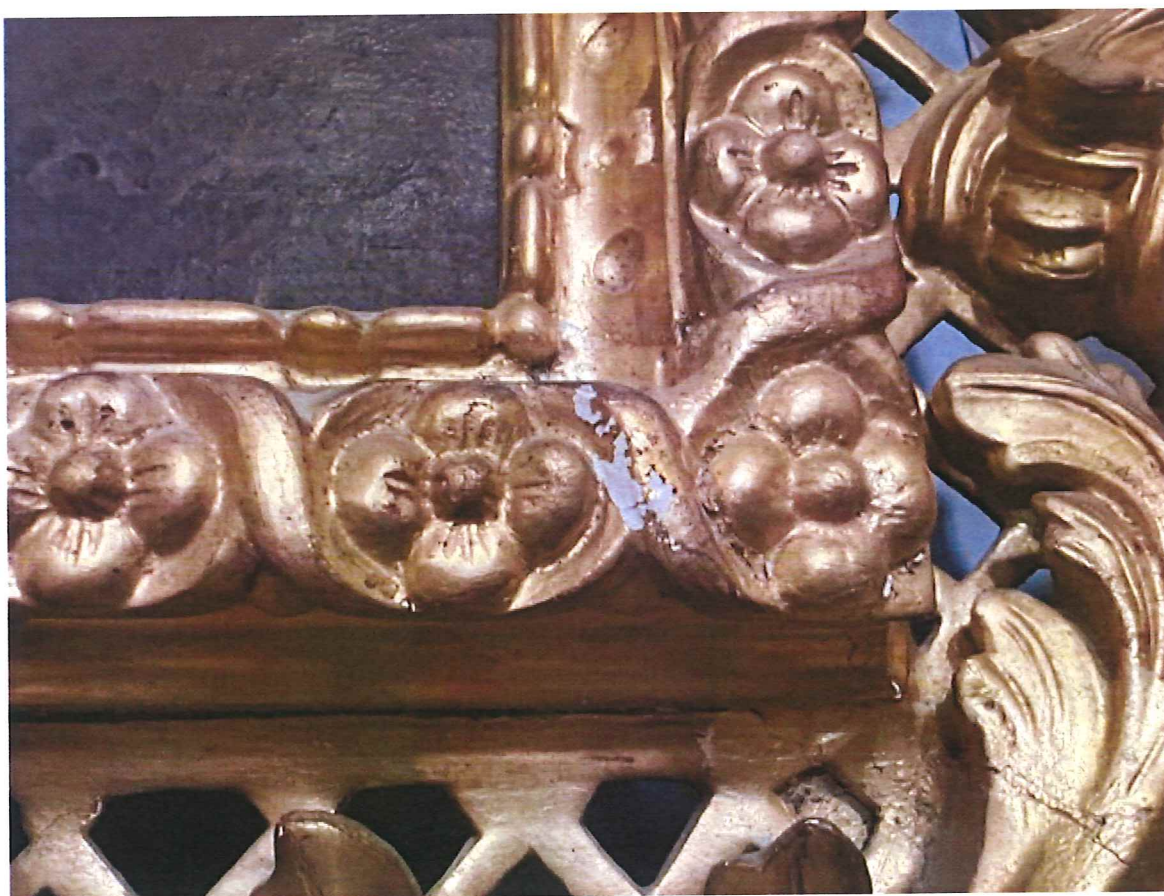


Figure 12 – Several flyspecks abraded the gilded surface due to their acidity

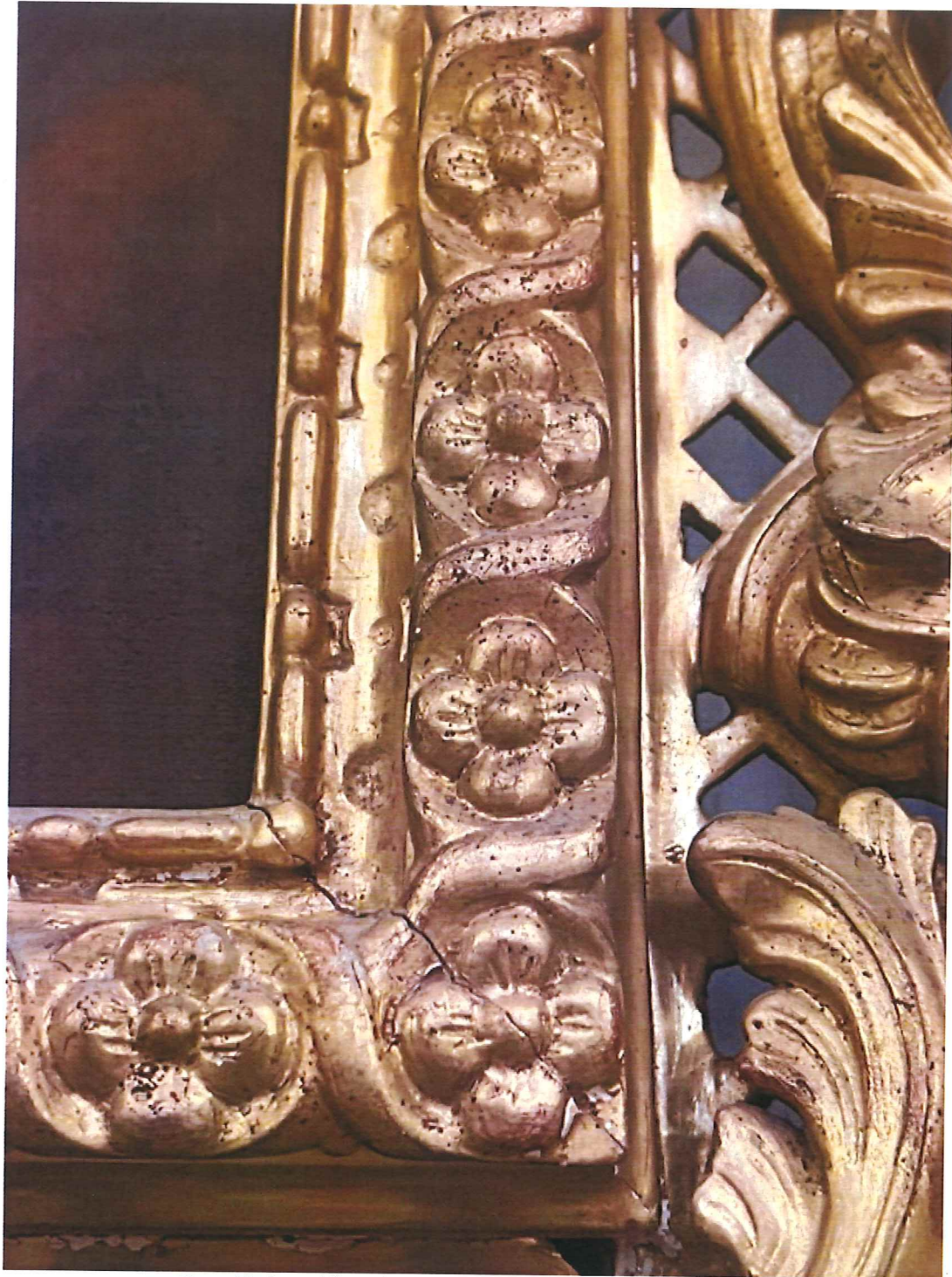


Figure 13 - Several flyspecks abraded the gilded surface due to their acidity



Figure 14 – A whitish layer is visible on this painting indicating blooming (trapped humidity on underneath the varnish)

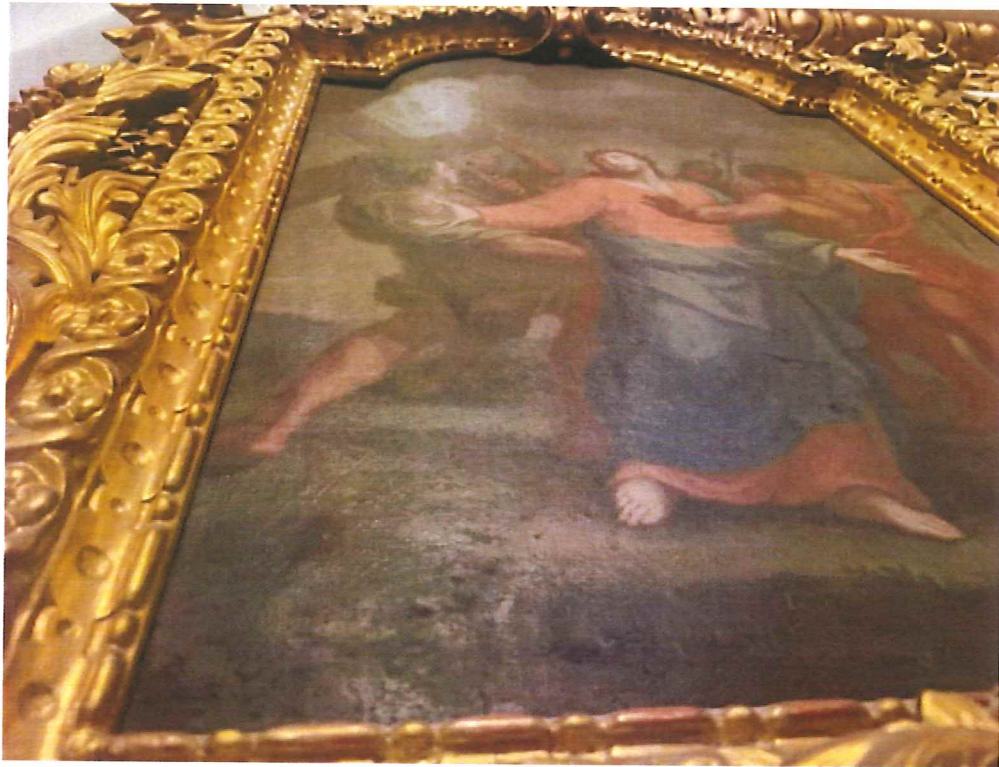


Figure 15 – General photos of two of the Stations showing a highly oxidized varnish



Figure 16 -the highly ornate cross found on top of the frames, having an abraded gilded surface exposing the red bolo.

QUOTE FOR THE PROFESSIONAL CONSERVATION AND RESTORATION OF THE CANVAS PAINTINGS

Treatments
1. Documentation
2. Removal of the decorative gilded frame
3. Low suction cleaning of the back
4. Cleaning of overpaintings
5. Cleaning of oxidized varnish
6. Cleaning of flyspecks using mechanical methods
7. Facing
8. Humidity tests front and back
9. Treatment of the deformation
10. Removal of the past lining
11. Cleaning of the old glue
1. Consolidation of the canvas support
2. Adhesion of paint layer under vacuum
3. Tear repair and patches
4. Canvas inlays
5. Sizing of the new canvas
6. STRIP LININ or LINING intervention using a conservation standard adhesive under vacuum
7. Removal of facing
8. Mounting the painting on the stretcher frame*
9. Infilling of Lacunae with Gesso di Bologna
10. Infilling of cracks with micro-crystalline wax
11. Leveling and imitation of the pictorials surface
12. Reintegration of losses in the paint layer using gouache
13. Application of retouching varnishing
14. Retouching using Maimeri® varnish colours including reconstruction of areas where a complete loss of colour and form is present.
15. Application of final protective varnish with a UV filter.
16. Mounting inside the frame and packing
TOTAL EXCL. 18% VAT for one painting 1,150 euros x 14 paintings = 16,100 euros
18% VAT 2,898 euros
TOTAL INCL. 18% VAT for 14 paintings =18, 998 euros

QUOTE FOR THE PROFESSIONAL CONSERVATION AND RESTORATION OF DECORATIVE FRAMES
THE QUOTATION INCLUDES TREATMENTS USING CONSERVATIVE APPROACH THAT IS WITHOUT
REGILDING THE WHOLE FRAMES

1. Photographic and graphic documentation
2. Report writing
3. Removal of the altar from the site and installation once completed
4. Tests for adhesion
Adhesion of Gold
5. Treatment of cracks using a special flexible material for the consolidation of wood
6. Treatment of mould
7. Cleaning Tests
8. Cleaning Dust, Grime and Altered Coating
9. Mechanical cleaning of wax droppings
10. Removal of purpurin
11. Removal of oil gilding
12. Cleaning of oxidised varnishes to reveal the original brilliance of the gilded goldleaf
13. Infilling with resin wax over capillary cracks
14. Infilling Lacunae with gesso di Bologna
15. Reconstruction of lost forms/carvings using Balsite, Ex-novo decorations using bas-relief or incisions according to the lost decorative motifs.
16. Application of bolo layers on lacunae and abrasions were the reddish layer of bolo shows
17. Water gilding with 23.75ct gold leaf* on lacunae and abrasions were the reddish layer of bolo shows
18. Application of bolo layers on lacunae and abrasions were the reddish layer of bolo shows
19. Integration of the new gilded surface
20. Retouching of losses in the inscription
21. Ageing of the newly integrated areas
22. Final Coating

TOTAL EXCL. 18% VAT for one frame 3,560 euros x 16 frames = 56,960 euros

Whole project discounted to 54, 681 euros

18% VAT 9,842.58

TOTAL INCL. 18% VAT 16 frames = 64, 523 euros

Conservation standard materials except gold leaf are include in the price.

*Cost of 23.75 k real Gold leaf bought on purpose for the project according to today's price
of gold = approximate 4,500-6,800 euros for a conservative intervention

This quotation is valid for a period of 4 months from the date of issue.

The following costs will be included:

1. Documentation photography carried out before during and after treatments
2. Specialized professional work carried out by experienced conservator-restorers
3. All the equipment and materials to carry out the treatments such as solvents, consolidants, adhesives, retouching colours, varnishes etc... are conservation-standard materials bought from specialized conservation and restoration material suppliers namely C.T.S.srl Italy, AntaRes Italy, Conservation by Design (CXD) England.
4. Preliminary state of conservation report and treatment proposal

We would like to thank you for your trust and interest in our work. Please do not hesitate to contact us if you have any questions regarding the proposed treatments and quotes.

- We will be more than pleased to invite you over at our laboratory to see the work in progress at different stages of the conservation and restoration treatments.

- Please note that insurance cover for artefacts held at Atelier del Restauro's laboratory is applicable on a limit per item of Eur 10,000 (fire and theft). Insurance cover in excess of this amount is the sole responsibility of the client. The client may make use of our insurance, in which case an estimated price of the artefact has to be provided by the client as required by our insurance policy. Extra charges are payable by the client



METHOD STATEMENT

**FOR THE IMPORTANT PAINTINGS AND FRAMES DEPICTING
THE VIA SAGRA LOCATED INSIDE THE BASILICA OF MOSTA
DEDICATED TO THE ASSUMPTION OF THE VIRGIN MARY**

10th January 2025

ATELIER DEL RESTAURO
CONSERVATION & SCIENTIFIC ANALYSIS OF WORKS OF ART

METHOD STATEMENT FOR THE CONSERVATION AND RESTORATION OF THE 'VIA SAGRA' - MOSTA BASILICA

The conservation and restoration project will involve the treatment of each individual canvas painting and frame comprising the 'Via Sagra' pertaining to the Basilica of Mosta dedicated to the Assumption of the Virgin Mary. Closer investigation of each painting will allow for a better understanding of the paintings' state of conservation and therefore a treatment plan can be devised specifically for each individual painting and frame.

METHOD STATEMENT

The aims and objectives for the conservation and restoration project will include:

- Providing an accurate record of the present condition of the painting
- Developing a methodology, following standard conservation and restoration practices to conserve the painting by:

-Documenting the painting before, during and after conservation and by providing photographs of the entire conservation process.

-Understanding the causes and nature of the mechanisms of deterioration through research and investigation

- To implement preventive conservation measures to inhibit further deterioration
- To make available a detailed report of all the restoration and conservation interventions carried out.

The conservation and restoration program will consist of interventions according to current conservation ethics and principles which include recognizability, reversibility, compatibility and minimal intervention.

PAINTINGS

1. PHOTOGRAPHIC AND GRAPHIC DOCUMENTATION

1.1 Photographic documentation

Before, during and after, general and detailed shots will be taken in diffused and raking light using an SLR digital camera. The photos will be taken both in RAW and JPEG format.

1.1.1 Optical investigations of portions of surfaces

1. Shots in raking light chosen on the basis of representativeness.
2. Non-invasive optical investigations - photographic shots in UV-Fluorescence

2. HUMIDITY TESTS

Tests will be carried out to understand whether the canvas support is sensitive to heat and water based substances, so as to identify the appropriate procedures for the treatments.

3. CLEANING

Different cleaning tests will be carried out to devise an appropriate cleaning methodology for each painting:

Mechanical methods – will be effective to remove surface deposits such as dust, grime, fly specks and wax from candles

Chemical methods – which involve the dissolution of chemical mechanisms for the removal of oxidized varnish from painted surface - The removal of overpainting where present will be preceded by tests to determine the overpainting resistance to the cleaning solution and the response of the original painted surface. Once the identification of the materials to be cleaned is made, it will be possible to formulate a cleaning method which is tailor-made to a particular problem. Both water based methods and solvent-based cleaning will be tested. The approach will be carried out using the WALBERS AND OR CREMONESI CLEANING methods through different tests by respecting the pH of the pictorial surface using different organic solvents (ACETONE, ETHANOL, LIGROIN®), water based solutions with different concentrations of acids (CITRIC ACID salts) and bases (TRIETANOLAMINE®) will also be tested.

Following the above preliminary tests it will also be identified the supporting agents and/or thickeners that will help to create the solvent or reactant system. An organic solvent gel system intended to have a very specific solvency parameter will be preferred as the rate of evaporation is reduced and the flow is restricted. This has the advantage that less polar solvents can be applied to the surface. The risk of swelling a vulnerable oil paint is reduced and health and safety aspects for the conservator are considerably improved. A high molecular weight polyacrylic acid CARBOPOL ® can be used as a gelling agent.

4. REMOVAL OF OLD INFILLS

In the case that old infills are present, mechanical cleaning of the infills will be carried out using a surgical blade, following the softening of the infills using distilled water.

5. CONSOLIDATION OF THE PICTORIAL LAYERS AND CANVAS SUPPORT

For the adhesion of the detachments between the painted surface and the canvas a conservation standard adhesive will be selected after different tests will be carried out.

The adhesive will be applied to the back of the painting. The consolidation treatment will be carried out under vacuum. *Adhesive test will be carried out with the possible use of the following: Beva 371 or Plexisol*

6. FACING

Facing will be applied to the painting in-situ, in order to protect the painting during transportation. Additionally, facing will also be applied to protect the pictorial layer from any flaking or lifting of paint during handling and the conservation treatments on the verso. The facing will be applied in large pieces of square shaped Japanese paper slightly overlapping each other. A cellulosic adhesive will be used due to its easy reversibility.

7. REMOVAL OF OLD AUXILIARY FRAME

Following further investigations of the painting's back, a better understanding of the state of conservation of the painting's support and auxiliary support could be had. This will determine the procedures and treatments to be carried out on the painting's support.

In the case that the painting's auxiliary support (strainer/stretcher frame) is in a poor state of conservation and is no longer adequate to support the canvas painting and/or treatments of the canvas support need to be carried out, the painting will be detached from their current auxiliary frame. Mechanical detachment of the painting will be carried out by carefully removing the nails/tacks from the painting's tacking margins.

8. REMOVAL OF OLD LINING CANVAS

In order to minimize the physical strains on the painting it is suggested that only necessary interventions are carried out, therefore if the lining canvas present is found to be in a stable condition it is suggested that it will be kept. If on the other hand the lining canvas is found to present signs of deterioration it will be replaced.

Any surface dust and deposits will be removed from the surface using low suction. The old lining canvas present on the reverse of the painting will be mechanically and systematically removed. Following this the deformations of the canvas support will then be treated under vacuum. A combination of humidity, heat and pressure will be used as deemed necessary, in order to result in a flat homogenous surface.

9. MENDING OF TEARS AND INLAYS

In the case that tears are present these will be dampened and brought into position under light weights. The tears will then be individually aligned using weights and bridged with threads of a polyamide adhesive. The threads will be fixed by using a heating spatula in order to melt the adhesive by means of a thermoplastic stable polymer with high elasticity (POLYAMIDE®) melted using a heating spatula at the edges of the tear. This will provide strength during the stretching process work as well as long-term stability decreasing the risk of future deformations of the canvas support.

If lacunae of the canvas support are present, **canvas inlays** will be prepared having a compatible material with the original fabric. Canvas inlays will support the in-fills to be executed from the front of the painting. The outline of each lacuna will be drawn on a piece of Melinex following with the weft and warp of the original canvas. The drawing will be then transferred on the new canvas and traced by means of a pencil keeping the warp and weft in line with those of the prepared canvas, the shape will be then cut out. The inlays then will be transferred to their respective lacunae and will be adhered using a synthetic adhesive, *polyamide*, using a heating spatula.

We propose that **patches** made of a very thin and elastic synthetic fibre are adhered to the back of the painting using a conservation standard adhesive, *Beva Film*, to support the infills and tear repairs made.

10. RE-LINING OR STRIP-LINING

If the painting is detached from its strainer frame, a re-lining or strip-lining intervention will be required to re-stretch the painting to its auxiliary frame. The treatment selected will be determined by the state of conservation of the original canvas support.

A **re-lining** intervention is considered necessary to give the painting a stable support in the case the canvas support has become frail and deteriorated with time. Lining a painting refers to applying a new canvas support to the back of a stretched canvas painting. The reasons for this type of treatment mainly included: the weakness of the canvas and the high humidity experienced locally.

A lining canvas, having a similar weave and properties as the original canvas, will be treated by wetting with water and sizing with glue. Once dry it will be stretched and tensed well over the stretcher frame.

The lining canvas will be adhered to the back of the original canvas, using a synthetic adhesive which is of a stable nature and reversible, in the case that in the future a new lining intervention would be required. Synthetic adhesives also avoids the risk of insect infestation and fungal growth. (PLEXISOL B550® or BEVA OF GEL ®). The choice of adhesive will be made once the back of the painting will be inspected and also according to the results of the humidity tests.

Alternatively, if the painting' support is found to be in a stable condition, **Strip-lining** will be implemented in order to extend the painting' tacking margins, making the stronger and aiding in the process of re-stretching the painting onto their stretcher frame.

The treatment consists in adhering strips of canvas to the perimeter of the painting from the back. The chosen canvas will be of a similar weave to the original. The treatment will be carried out methodically by means of a synthetic conservation standard adhesive, which will be applied to both the original and to the strips of canvas. The adhesion of the strips of canvas to the painting will be carried out using the *sottovuoto* technique, by placing the painting under light vacuum for a few minutes.

The canvas for either the lining or the strip lining will be chosen out of these high quality linen canvases supplied by CTS: 2297 tela lino, 2297 tela patina, 1111 tela lino, tela lipari.

The Atelier del Restauro team was selected to participate in the first virtual course related to *Structural Treatments of Paintings: Reinforcement with the Mist-lining System*, a course supported by the Getty Foundation's Conserving Canvas Initiative, hosted and organized by SRAL to provide theoretical and practical sessions related to the 'Mist-Lining' technique.

The mist-lining technique involves:

- The minimal use of adhesive to achieve the required bond and shear strengths
- The regeneration of the adhesive using solvent vapours
- The elimination of moisture through the use of a dry adhesive layer
- The application of low pressure to create the desired bond

When carrying out structural interventions on canvas paintings, we propose the use of the mist-lining methodology, which is the latest methodology in the conservation of canvas paintings applying minimum intervention principles.

11. RE-STRETCHING OF THE PAINTING

Following the treatment of the painting' support, the painting will be re-stretched onto the auxiliary frame using stainless steel staples. An assessment of the current stretcher/strainer frames will determine whether the current frames could be used or whether new auxiliary frames will need to be constructed.

In the case that the original frame is not expandable or its physical structure is not in a good state of conservation to maintain the painting in good tension, it will be advised to change the auxiliary frame to a new one, to ascertain the prolonged conservation of the canvas.

Stretcher frame specifications

Wood: Spruce or Tulipwood (Spruce Picea sp. / (Liriodendron tulipifera)).

Frame section: Approximately 10.0 x 4.5cm (or as requested). The frame is made from 2 - 3 laminations.

Frame joint: Corners - Mitre bridle joint, cross members and circular pieces - mortice and tenon.

Frame front: Bevelled. In the case of circular parts a tapered wood strip will be attached to the front perimeter (1.0 cm width, 0.6 cm thickness)

Expandable system: Stainless steel studs, washers and nuts.

Surface finish: Sanded (abrasive paper grade 220)

Stained: On request

Varnished/waxed: On request

12. INFILLS OF LOSSES

After resolving all the physical issues of the painting, the aesthetic problem resulting from lacunae of the pictorial layers will be treated. Infilling of the losses will be required to obtain a homogenous surface layer.

Primarily the painting will be viewed in raking light and the micro lacunae will be filled with Gesso di Bologna and using a small brush. The lacunae containing the inlays will be stuccoed with gesso di Bologna and animal glue (*rabbit skin glue*) to compensate for the low edge present. When dry, the infills are levelled to the surface of the painting using a fixed blade, the edges and excess of gesso will be then cleaned with a cotton swab dampened in water.

13. RE-INTEGRATION OF LOSSES

The chosen integration method will establish the former unity of the painting, using reversible colours, which will not alter in time preferably using water colours (Windsor & Newton) and completing the work using glazes of Maimeri ® varnish colours. A layer of retouching varnish is first applied. Varnishing

will be carried out using conservation retouching Le Franc and Bourgeois Varnish. The varnish will be applied in order to:

- Saturate the colours of the painting before starting the reintegration phase.
- Seal the in-fills in place.
- Create an intermediate layer between the retouching to be carried out and the original paint layer.

RETOUCHING VARNISH - RETOUCHER LE FRANC & BOURGEOIS	
<p>RETOUCHING VARNISH</p> <p>Before starting the retouching with the maireri varnish colours, the painting must be coated with a retouching varnish. Normally one / two coats are applied with a brush, depending on the absorption. Then, after the retouching phase the final layer of varnish will be applied.</p>	
VERNICE RITOCO SOPRAFFINE ART. 1188	To be applied by brush

14. APPLICATION OF PROTECTIVE COATING / VARNISH

A final reversible and non-yellowing varnish layer will be applied to seal off the retouching, saturate the original colours and to protect the painting's surface from deteriorated agents. The coating applied will be of a stable nature and it will re-establish the richness of the paint layer allowing a proper tone. It will also keep dirt and dust particles including polluting agents off the picture layer. A layer of gloss varnish followed a matt varnish will be applied, a preferred varnish brand will be the high quality varnish brand of Le Franc & Bourgeois®.

CHOSEN FINAL VARNISH - TABLEAUX LE FRANC & BOURGEOIS

FINAL VARNISH

Once the retouching is completed, one will proceed with the final varnishing, which, based on the desired effect, bright or satin or matt, will involve the spray application of one of the following varnish.

THE CHOSEN SURFACE FINISH WILL BE DECIDED AFTER VARNISH TESTS ARE CARRIED OUT.

VERNICE FINALE BRILLANTE SOPRAFFINE ART. 1186	For slightly shiny effect and spray applications
VERNICE FINALE BRILLANTE J. G. VIBERT ART. 1251	For a brilliant effect and spray applications
VERNICE FINALE OPACA ART. 1188 (SATINE)	For an opaque/matt effect and spray applications
VERNICE FINALE OPACA ART. 828	For an opaque/ matt shiny effect and spray applications
VERNICE FINALE OPACA ART. 159 (SPRAY)	For opaque effect on single portions

TREATMENT OF DECORATIVE FRAMES

The treatment of the decorative frame will include the cleaning of superficial dust which has accumulated on the surface and indentations of the decorative frame. Following a series of cleaning tests the surface of the frame will be cleaned using a low molecular weight solvent applied to the surface using a cotton swab.

This will be followed by the re-adhesion of any cracks or detachments of the gilding from the underlying support using a heat-seal adhesive, applied using a syringe. The adhesive will then be reactivated using a heating spatula, which also pushes any detachments back into place. The losses of the preparatory layer will be infilled using gesso di Bologna and animal glue.

Re-integration of the losses of gilding will be carried out using 23.75kt gold leaf, applied to the losses using modern conservation methods together with the technique originally used on the decorative frame. Glazes of varnish colours will be used to age the newly applied infills and a final protective coating of non-yellowing varnish will be applied to the frame.

1. ADHESION AND CONSOLIDATION OF THE DETACHED GILDED LAYER

The state of conservation of the pictorial layer of the altar is not good due to the large amount of overpainting present. Areas of the painted surface were found to be cracked.

For the adhesion of the detachments between the painted surface and the preparatory layer a conservation standard adhesive will be used. This will involve injecting the adhesive using insulin needles under every detached paint film, a piece of Melinex will be applied over a very small area where by means of a heating spatula the detachment will be lowered and adhered to the plaster support using heat and pressure.

2. CLEANING OF THE GILDING

The gilded layer exhibits deposits of dust and grime all over. Different tests will be carried out for the safe removal of the purpurin and oil gilding.

Mechanical methods – which involve the use of a soft dry brush and a scalpel blade, to remove thick surface deposits of grime.

Chemical methods – which involve chemical gels and solvents, for the removal of surface deposits, dust and grime. The approach will be carried out through different tests by respecting the pH of the pictorial surface using different concentrations of acids and bases using water based solutions, emulsions and solvent gels. For the cleaning of gilded areas a non-aqueous cleaning method will be used because of the water sensitivity of the bolo preparatory layer. Tests will be carried out using dense mixtures.

After the cleaning tests are carried out the most effective and safe cleaning solutions are selected. In each case it is important that the chosen solution provides: controllability, clearance, minimal surface change, minimal effects on original materials and no activation of deterioration mechanisms.

3. WOOD CONSOLIDATION

Preliminary investigation has revealed that the wooden fabric underwent some movement due to the open joints present on both the façade and platform of the altar/

A conservation standard resin will be used to consolidate these areas. The application of the product in different concentrations will ensure a good permeation in the wood fibres.

4. TREATMENT OF METAL ELEMENTS

Where corrosion on the metal elements is present the corrosion will be mechanically removed and the elements treated with corrosion inhibitors.

5. INFILLING

Infilling of missing plaster, cracks and lacunae will be carried out in order to obtain a homogenous surface. A plaster, which is compatible with the supporting materials of the altar, will be devised. The surface will be leveled down to the surface according to the reliefs.

6. GILDING INTEGRATION

Gilding will be carried out using 23.75 carat double gold and silver where appropriate. It will only be carried out in areas where lacunae of the original gilded layer are found. This process requires greater preparation of the surface onto which the gilding is to be applied in order to achieve a superior finish can be produced. Before water gilding is applied a number of coats of gesso need to be built up on the substrate to produce a smooth surface. This is followed by several coats of bole. Bole is coloured clay mixed with size. The surface is then wetted with a mixture of water and alcohol and the gold leaf will be applied instantly. As the water soaks into the gesso it draws the gold firmly onto the surface. The gilded layers are then polished using agate (a form of hard quartz like stone) burnishers. Judging when the surface can be burnished is critical. If the correct degree of dryness has not been achieved the leaf can be easily damaged. The burnished gilded layers can, if required, be toned down using oil based varnishes and pigments in order to match with the surrounding original gilded layer.

5. PICTORIAL INTEGRATION

The chosen integration method will establish the former aesthetical unity of the predella and altar, using an ageing technique where the new reconstructions where done.

6. PROTECTIVE COATING

A final reversible and non-yellowing protective layer will be applied to seal off the retouching, saturate the original colours and to protect the polychrome surface and the paintings from deteriorated agents. The coating applied will be of a stable nature and it will reestablish the richness of the paint layer allowing a proper tone.

