



UFFIĊĊJU PARROKKJALI, PARROĊĊA MOSTA

15, TRIQ IL-KNISJA, MOSTA. MST 2015

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15 ta' Novembru 2024

Rikors għar-restawr tal-vari tal-Ġimgħa l-Kbira

315/2024

Eċċellenza,

Nhar l-14 ta' Frar 2018, kien ħareġ digriet (1/2018) għal rikors li kont għamilt biex jiġu restawrati l-vari tal-Ġimgħa l-Kbira. Dak inhar ġejt mitlub li nippreżenta rapport u stima għal kull vara li tkun se tiġi irrestawratha. Qed nibgħat r-rapport u l-istima għar-restawr tal-korp ta' Kristu mejjet (monument). L-ispiza għal dan ix-xogħol se tilhaq is-somma ta' €1604.80 u se titħallas mill-prokura tal-Ġimgħa l-Kbira.

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

Dun Sebastian Caruana
Arċipriet



Preżentat fil-Kurja Arċiveskovili

lilum 30 ta' Novembru 2024

Charles Buggej, Kancellier



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13 ta' Novembru 2024

Lil min tikkonċerna,

Fil-laqqgħa tal-Kunsill Ekonomiku Parrokkjali, ġie diskuss r-restawr tal-korp ta' Kristu mejjet tal-monument, parti mis-set tal-vari tal-Ġimgħa l-Kbira tal-Mosta. Il-membri tal-kunsill qablu ma' dan ir-restawr li se jsir mill-kumpanija Restawr Arti, u se jitħallas mill-prokura tal-Ġimgħa l-Kbira.

Gracianne Muscat
Segretarja tal-KEP



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11 ta' Novembru 2024

Lil min tikkonċerna,

Fil-Kunsill Pastoral Parrokkjali, ġie diskuss r-restawr tal-korp ta' Kristu mejjet tal-monument, li joħroġ fil-purċissjoni tal-Ġimgħa l-Kbira tal-Mosta. Il-membri tal-kunsill qablu ma' dan ir-restawr.

Michael Tanti
Segretarju tal-KPP

Lamentation of Christ

Papier- Mâché, 1924, Wistin Camilleri

Basilica of the Assumption of Our Lady, Mosta, Malta

Restoration Method Statement



Semira Gayle Bugeja (M.Sc., B.A. (Hons) (Melit.))

September 2024

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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 papier- mâché statue of the Lamented Body of Christ of the well known Good Friday monumental tomb at the Basilica of the Assumption of Our Lady, Mosta. All knowledge gathered regarding the present condition of the work of art under study is based on a visual inspection with the use of visible light, raking light, and ultraviolet light. 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 painting and wooden gilded frame, and hence preserving the original materials and colours. All conservation materials, and procedures stated will be compatible, and respectful to the original materials in discussion.

2. The Statue and Statuarian - General Information and Historical Overview

The statue in discussion represents the moment after crucifixion, and the lifeless body lies on the bed after deposition (figure 1.). This statue was produced by the well known Gozitan statuarian Wistin Camilleri (1885- 1979), and it is considered to be one of the most significant works of his artistic career.

The statue is produced in the papier- mâché technique, and painted with oil based colour. Realistic skin tones, body proportions, and the execution of pieta' in the face of Christ makes this statue more devotional and artistic.

During his long career, Wistin Camilleri specialised in papier- mâché, however he also experimented with various other materials. He started from a young age at the Gozo Seminary. Later he was a trainee of Giuseppe Cali who immediately recognised his artistic talents. Cali encouraged Camilleri to enrol at the Academy of San Luca in Rome, where he then was supervised by Pietro Canonica and Filippo Coppa.

After his few years in Rome, Camilleri started his first bottega in Victoria Gozo from where he continued to perfection his techniques and produced several art works not only for the Maltese and Gozitan churches, but also for immigrants in Australia, the United States and Tunisia.



Figure 1. The upper body of the Lamentation of Christ, Wistin Camilleri, 1924, Image Restawr Arti 2024.

3. Condition Assessment

During a close inspection carried out in March 2024, it was noted that the statue needed attention. The internal structure of the statue is in a good state of conservation, however cracks were visible around the pelvic area of the body (figure 2.). The gypsum layers cracked and detached from the papier- mâché support, suggesting that the pelvis area is the weakest and most stressed area of the statue. In the other areas, both the preparatory gypsum layer, and the paint layer are in good condition. However, the surface is characterised by accumulations of biological formation (figure 3, 4.). Apart from disrupting the visual appearance of the statue, biological deterioration feeds on the protein and fats found on the surface, and hence affects the colour, and possibly further into the stratigraphy. Although further analysis and laboratory tests must be carried out to verify the type/s of biological matter, it is known that the original fabric being based on acidic,

and organic materials; internal wood structure, cellulose and iron contaminants in paper, organic adhesives, oil based paint, and organic coatings, together with a humid and/ or moist climate, warm temperature, poor air circulation, dim light, and accumulated dirt may all provide the ideal situation for microbial colonization. Biodeterioration creates more porous surfaces that increase the risk of further deterioration due to easier absorption of air moisture.

The present paint layer is the original polychromy of Wistin Camilleri, however the feet soles are repainted. The colour of the repainted area does not match the original and the streaks of blood do not follow the same streaks of blood painted by Camilleri (figure 5.). Additionally, the surface is characterised by a fine layer of dirt and grime (figure 6.).

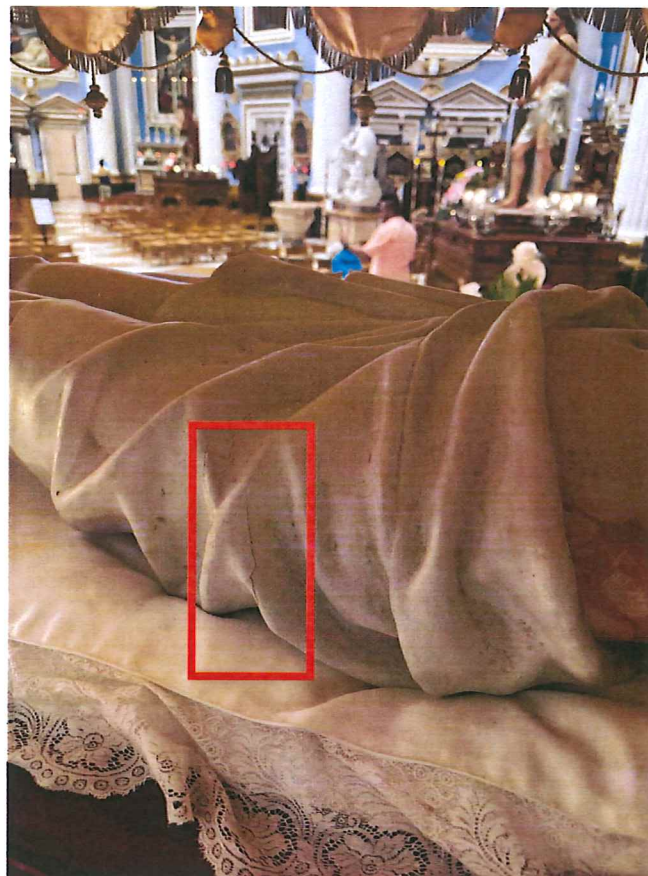


Figure 2. Detail showing a crack around the pelvic area of the body, Image Restawr Arti 2024.



Figure 3. Detail of the upper body showing biological formation and accumulations around the neck and shoulder, Image, Restawr Arti 2024.



Figure 4. Detail of the upper body showing biological formation and accumulations around the torso, Image, Restawr Arti 2024.



Figure 5. Detail of the overpainted feet soles, Image, Restawr Arti 2024.



Figure 6. Detail of the face showing fine white surface dust, Image, Restawr Arti 2024.

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.

It would be ideal that before any works commence, a biologist is consulted in order to expand the knowledge regarding the present biodeterioration phenomenon present on the statue. This consultation might also require laboratory analysis for further assurance, which will provide a clear way forward in choosing the best method for the treatment of mould. Nonetheless, this step should be decided together with the Archpriest Rev. Sebastian Caruana, and the Grupp Organizzattiv Ġimgħa l- Kbira of the Mosta Parish Church.

Dirt deposits on the statue surface will be brushed and vacuumed off. In order to control the mould from the primary stages, and to not infect areas that are presently not effected, a trial patch using enzymes will be carried out to review whether this method is sufficient both for the removal of superficial mould stains, and for the removal of the organic coating/s. Additionally, a biocide will be applied all over the statue. Since the biocide is a liquid, this should supposedly infiltrate deeper beneath the surface in the different layers of the statue.

If enzymes do not prove sufficient, biocide will be applied to control the mould present on the organic coating, and later several cleaning tests to remove organic matter, dirt and grime will be carried out on all the colours to attain the proper design of reagents and/ or chemicals without effecting the original colours. This step will expose brighter colours, while providing easier access to treat the mould deeper, since some of the stains are on or in the thickness of the polychromy. Additionally other tests will be performed to safely remove the overpaint on the feet soles in order to recover the original polychromy of Camilleri.

Once the mould infestation is treated, and surface is cleaned, a compatible adhesive will be injected in all the cracks in order to re- strengthen the damaged areas. Due to the fine cracks, a low viscosity acrylic micro- emulsion will be used diluted in alcohol to aid

penetration while not effecting the gypsum layers and the papier- mâché, which are both susceptible to water. A pure aqueous acrylic resin dispersion will be used for the thick gypsum detachments as a stronger adhesive power is required. Once dry, the cracks and losses will be infilled with a mix of fine quality gesso di Bologna and rabbit glue, and eventually levelled to the rest of the surface by using fine scalpel blades.

The statue will then be given a layer of retouching varnish which is meant to saturate the original polychromy while separating it from the pictorial re- integration of the restoration intervention. Easily reversible varnish based colours will be used to re- integrate any losses in colour, gesso infills, and stains from the previous mould infestation. This phase will unify the appearance of the statue. As a final step, the statues 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 statue and colours from the negative effects sunlight may have on the original materials.

5. Conclusion

From the observations carried out on site, Restawr Arti suggests that the papier- mâché statue of the Lamented Body of Christ is 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. Any issues, and change in treatments that might occur during the works will be discussed with the Archpriest Sebastian Caruana and the Grupp Organizzattiv Ġimgha l- Kbira of the Mosta Parish Church.

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05/09/2024

Quotation #

037/24

Rev. Sebastian Caruana

Basilica of The Assumption of Our Lady, Mosta

Email

Conservation and Restoration – Lamented body of Christ (part of The Monument),
Wistin Camilleri, papier mache, 1924

DESCRIPTION OF TREATMENTS

PRICE (EURO)

Structural intervention including the adhesion and consolidation of detached and cracked areas	100.00
Removal and cleaning of moulding organic matter, dirt, and grime	500.00
Superficial biological disinfestation	200.00
Gypsum infills	80.00
Pictorial re- integration and final protective coating (UV filtered)	300.00
Preliminary and final conservation reports	180.00

Subtotal exc. VAT 1360.00

VAT 18% 244.80

Total (Euro) 1604.80

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