

Ancona (Section of a Predella) with the “Crucifixion and Passion Scenes”



**FINAL RESTORATION REPORT
JULY 2024**

Previous interventions and state of conservation

The restoration of the panel of the Crucifixion and Scenes from the Passion by Alesso D'Andrea had the purpose of repairing a conspicuous horizontal lesion. On closer inspection, the restorer found that the lesion ran through the entire thickness of the wooden support at the junction of the two axes that make it up.



Wooden support damage

On the reverse side, the restorer also noted that some catches supporting the brass crossbars had lost their adhesion, so the containment system was no longer functional.

The work had undergone a color transfer in the past, most likely in the early 20th century which caused a separation between the painted surface with the mestiza and the original support and applied with glue to a new mestiza placed on a new poplar panel.

The worst damage probably occurred during this transportation, with the loss of the original perimeter borders and surface finishes of the figures depicted. In particular, the modeling of most of the draperies has disappeared, reducing them to monochrome silhouettes without *chiaroscuro*. Subsequently, the scenes were extensively repainted to remedy the shortcomings, with the draperies, tree crowns, and even the perimeter punching repainted.



The repainting found before the 1968 restoration

However, the only documented intervention is that carried out in the Vatican in 1968 by the restorer G. Colalucci: he repaired the delicate film of paint, removed all the repainting to recover the remaining original surface, and, finally, reinstated the numerous gaps using vertical hatching in neutral colors, as was the practice in restorations at the time.

As a result of the retouches and the protective varnish of the latter restoration, as well as the original blue pigment of some of the drapery, which had now changed to black, the painted surface appeared chromatically altered; in addition to the structural problems already mentioned, there were also numerous lifts of the paint film in the lower register.



State of preservation and first cleaning tests



Lifting of paint film



Restoration Procedures

After fixing the lifts with a suitable opaque consolidant, the restorers from the Wood Laboratory restored the structure of the painting. Restorers tested various solutions and methods to remove the overlying layers while fully respecting the original layers.



Removal of oxidised paint

The varnish from the previous restoration, now oxidized, was therefore removed by patching with a solvent mixture called 'Taco 7' (ethyl alcohol 45%, acetone 21%, petroleum ether 34%).

A more thorough and localized cleaning was then carried out on only some of the paints by extraction with Japanese paper and application of a 10% solution of ammonia in water, which helped restore the original appearance of the blackened blue drapery.



Blue drapery cleaning

The rich punching of the gilding was also cleaned with various types of probes in each of the small recesses, thus recovering the original gilded surface of these recesses and restoring the brilliance of the work.



Punch cleaning

Restorers removed or lightened the retouches from the previous restoration as they were darker than the original colors after cleaning.

After a first coat of protective varnish, they filled the gaps in the preparatory layers with Gesso di Bologna and rabbit glue.

At this point, it was possible to begin the pictorial retouching using W&N watercolor glazes, which, in this case, was very complex due to the various gaps that needed treatments.

Restorers reintegrated the most extensive fillings with vertical tinting and mimetic hatching, which made it possible to restore several lost details in an acceptable manner, such as the rectangular mirrors of the sarcophagi depicted in the lower register and the Virgin's cloak in the lower right-hand corner.

In G. Colalucci's restoration, these latter reintegrations were carried out with a neutral and now modified outline so that these elements now appear completely flat; moreover, the removal of the old plaster on the left sarcophagus made it possible to bring to light a fragment of the original shadow of the lost mirror, so that several elements were available to proceed with the re-proposal.

Some lost chiaroscuro on the painted figures were also recovered, which was possible thanks to the careful visual examination through a powerful ultraviolet lamp that showed traces of various highlights and brushstrokes no longer perceptible in natural light, especially on the pink and red drapery: restorers, by chromatically accompanying these traces, some silhouettes were able to regain their three-dimensionality.



Execution of grouting once cleaning is complete

Using the ultraviolet lamp, restorers detected a tiny gap in correspondence with the pupil of the figure on the lower right, defined as the patron; retouching this has made it possible to restore the correct perception of this figure's gaze, which previously erroneously seemed to be directed at the spectator. Also noteworthy is the cleaning and subsequent subdued reintegration of the red flag: the original initials 'S.P.Q.R.' emerged, the letters of which were no longer visible.

Restorers slightly reintegrated some superficial color gaps that left the underlying gold visible with paint, such as part of the arms of Christ on the cross and part of the bird in the center of the lower register. Restorers also reintegrated the darker stains on the gold background with powdered pure gold and bound with rabbit glue to increase the image's readability without completely concealing the numerous abrasions on the metal sheet.

Finally, restorers treated the entire perimeter of the painted surface with great care, using a scalpel and fiberglass, leveling it below the thickness of the paint, and then reintegrating it with a neutral, vibrato tone that would stand out well against the gilded background and also the color of the wooden support. They then applied a light coat of glossy protective varnish to the surface, followed by a matte coat. The company Ott Art delivered and tested the assembly of the climax, which will house the painting for its next move to room 2 of the Art Gallery.





After restoration



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