

# Compartment of a Predella with Episodes from the Life of the Virgin, Flight into Egypt



**FINAL RESTORATION REPORT  
JULY 2025**

# State of Preservation and Restoration Procedures

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The work consists of a single poplar wood panel cut at an angle, and measures 33.2 x 49.7 cm with an average thickness of 5 mm **(photo 1)**. The plaster and animal glue preparation was presumably originally applied to the face of the board facing the core, later covered by a painting film. The board grain is horizontal to the pictorial representation. Along the entire perimeter of the recto of the painting, a portion of rough wood is visible, suggesting that the work was framed **(photo 2)**.

Analysis of archival documentation shows that the painting underwent several documented restorations between the 1960s and 1980s. An unsuitable containment system on the support, installed during an earlier, undated restoration between 1972 and 1973, was replaced. During this intervention, the artwork was thinned and reinforced with a framework, which caused it to warp and crack along its entire width. The result is a pictorial film lifting **(photo 3)**.

The ruler marks on the back of the board are still visible in this frame. During the restoration carried out in the 1970s by M. De Luca, the support was disinfected using formic aldehyde gas and chloronaphthalene, and then restored using wedges along the longitudinal cleft on the back. The previous framing was replaced with a parquetry made of four shaped aluminum movable rods attached to the support by alternating catches **(photo 4)**.

The support is currently in a fair state of preservation. The issues affecting the work are cracking and board buckling. Regarding the structural restoration of the longitudinal crack, the insufficient depth of the wedges did not prevent adhesion defects in the preparatory and pictorial layers from propagating. However, the 1970s restraint system no longer allows the wood to move naturally, as the movable aluminium bars are blocked, providing too rigid a constraint. Finally, the support is affected by slight, inactive entomological damage, evidenced by galleries and exit holes of wood-boring insects.



**Photos 1-2: Artwork back and front**



**Photo 3 - Archival photo of the framing before the 1972-73 intervention.**



**Photo 4 - Archival photo of the restoration parquetry performed in 1972-73**

Before working on the support, the restorer protected the pictor with a glaze made with 12% Klucel G, and, after the anoxic treatment, freed the artwork from the old parquetry **(photo 5)** and constrained using pressers on a shaped base to restrict its movement during the different restoration operations **(photo 6)**.

The previous structural restoration was then removed and replaced by inserting deeper wedges into the back. The restorer made the new wedge housings using chisels along the course of the longitudinal fissure **(photo 7)**.

Once shaped, the inserts were glued using a polyvinyl acetate-based adhesive (Vinavil® NPC White Star) mixed with wood powder, and then placed under appropriate pressers. Once the glue had set, the restorations were planed level and chromatically tuned by water-etching **(photos 8 - 9)**.

The restorer designed a spring restraint system to control the movements of the support, given the new display modes (climabox), consisting of a perimeter frame with a central crossbeam and support base **(photo 10)**, made from beech wood by assembling four laminates with a total thickness of 2 cm, following the embankment of the original support. The restorer finished the frame with a coat of dewaxed shellac and microcrystalline wax.

The restraining frame was secured to the painting with twenty disc springs and nylon threaded rods after obtaining the housings for the elastic restraints. These were then connected to the support using a small, circular wooden base glued on with polyvinyl acetate glue **(photo 11)**.

The newly implemented elastic system **(photo 12)** enables the support's natural hygroscopic movements related to changing thermo-igrometric parameters to be contained.



**Photo 5 - Removal of previous parquetry**



**Photo 6 - Checking the substrate using pressers and shaped base**



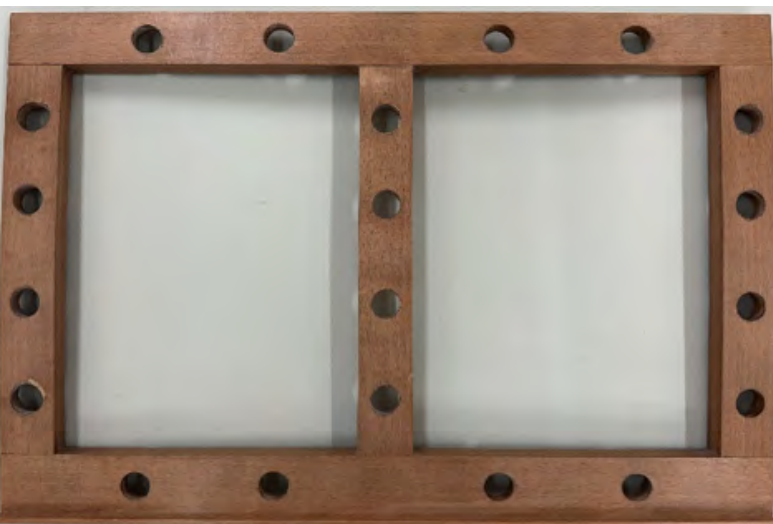
**Photo 7 - Replacing the previous restoration**



**Photo 8 - Machining of the restoration wedges**



**Photo 9 - Etching the wedges**



**Photo 10 - Perimeter frame with center crossbeam and support base for the new containment system**



**Photo 11 - Bonding the wooden bases with nylon threaded screws**



**Photo 12 - implementation of the elastic containment system**

Following initial cleaning tests, the restorer proceeded to completely remove the paints, glues, and old retouches dating back to the 1970s using mixtures suitable for the overlying substances. These included Taco 8 (used to remove various types of varnish) and Coccocollagen, which has a cleansing action and an intense impact on protein materials such as animal glues. Next, the restorer removed the fillers from the paint film and wooden support.

Afterward, the restorer gave a light varnish (Retoucher varnish dissolved in Petroleum at a ratio of 1:1) to protect it from the subsequent repair work on the gaps in the painted surface, using a mestica composed of Bologna chalk and rabbit glue.

After smoothing the new grout, the restorer applied a second coat of diluted retoucher varnish to create homogeneous color fields ready for retouching with watercolor paints and varnish.

The woodworm holes and wood injuries have been repaired using solid wax.



**Before restoration**



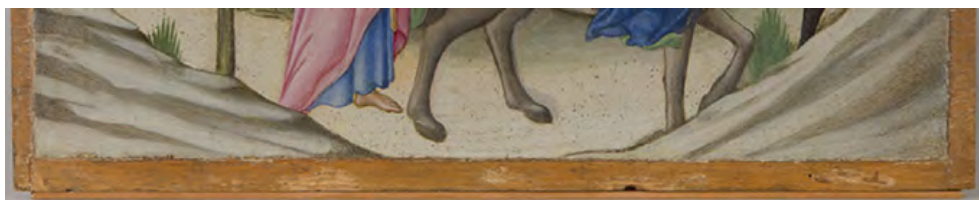
**Cleaning and removal of old grout**



**New grout**



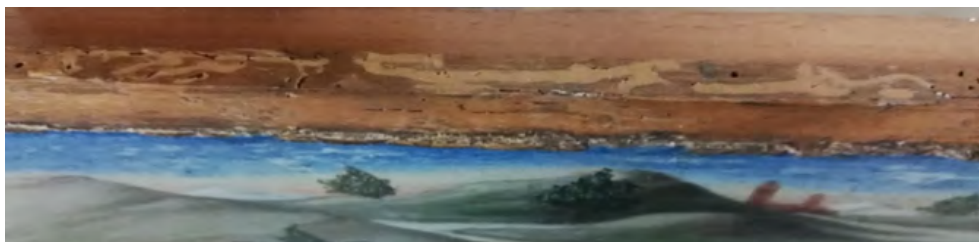
**Retouched board**



**support injury**



**Detail of restoring with wax**



**Repair woodworm holes with wax**









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