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

SECOND ONGOING RESTORATION REPORT
NOVEMBER 2024

Restoration Procedures

After the restoration of the work's support, the restoration of the painting's paint film began on 18 October 2024.

The restorer performed the first cleaning steps using methyl ethyl ketone (a solvent suitable for removing various types of varnish) and *coccocollagen* (composed of fatty acid esters of coconut oil with collagen). Paints, glues, and retouches from the restoration work carried out in the 1970s were removed.

This operation reveals the artist's rich palette and painting technique.

Sano di Pietro expresses all his skills as a miniaturist, spreading the paint with small brushstrokes that create the multitude of details of each element that make up the narrative and describe the depth of the landscapes.

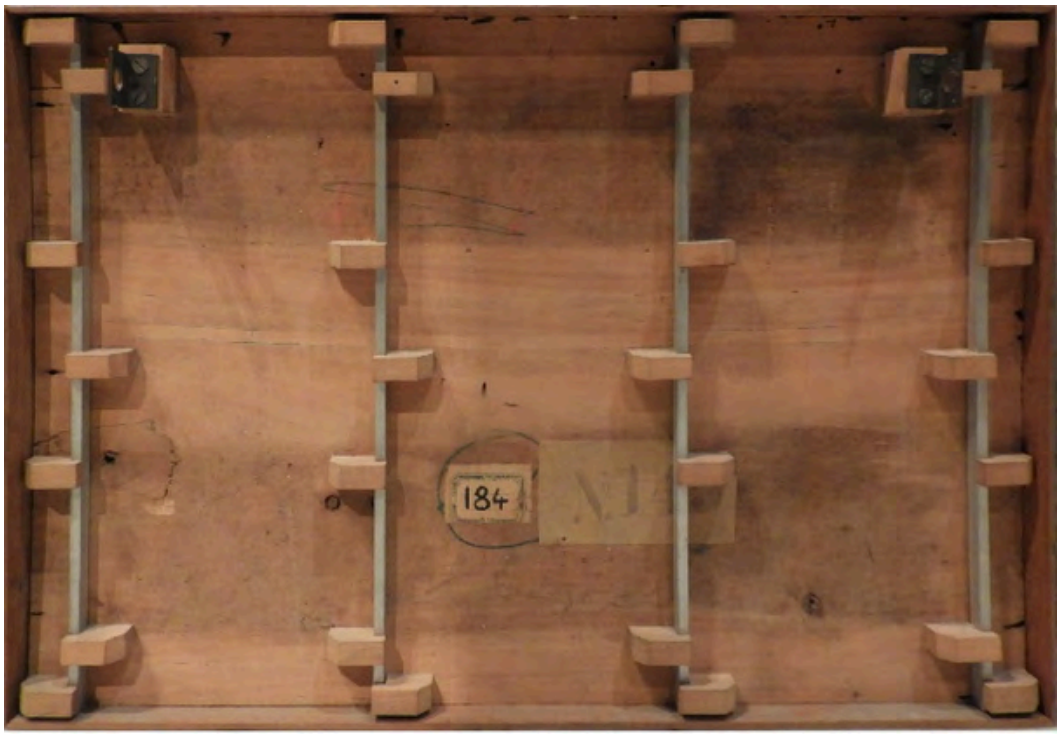
The Painting Laboratory will proceed with the total cleaning of the paint film.

Before restoration

During the first phase of the cleaning process

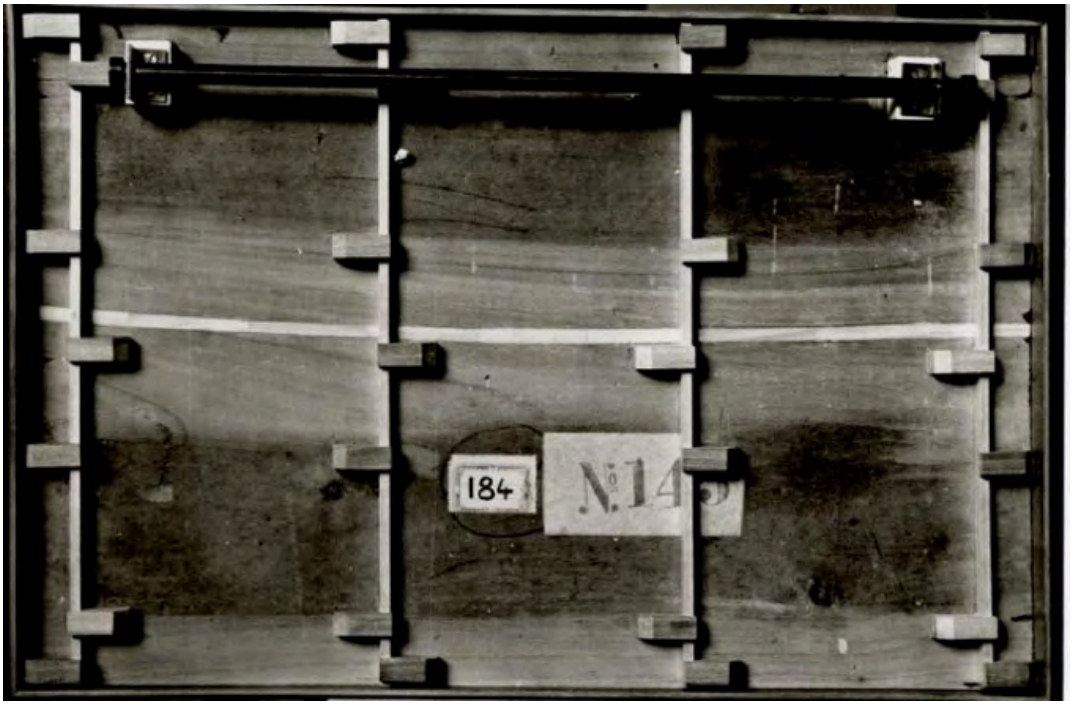
An analysis of the archival records shows that the painting had undergone several restorations between the 1960s and the 1980s. In 1972-73, the support underwent the replacement of an inappropriate containment system installed during an earlier, undated restoration.

At the time of the intervention, the work had been thinned and reinforced with a frame, causing it to warp and crack across the entire width of the support, resulting in the lifting of the paint film.



Back of the painting

Archive photo of the framing prior to the 1972-73 intervention



Archive photo of the 1972-73 restoration

The ruler marks on the back of the panel are still visible from this frame. This frame was later replaced during the restoration work in the 1970s by a parquet of four molded aluminum moveable slats attached to the support by alternating cleats.

The support was in a good state of preservation. The main problems affecting the work were related to the presence of the crack and the buckling of the panel.

Concerning the structural restoration of the longitudinal crack, the insufficient depth of the wedges did not prevent the adhesion defects of the preparatory and pictorial layers from propagating over time.

On the other hand, the containment system of the 1970s no longer allowed the natural movement of the wood, as the movable aluminum rods were blocked and constituted too rigid a constraint. Finally, the support was affected by a slight, now inactive, attack by xylophagous insects, as evidenced by galleries and flickering holes.

Removal of previous insertions

Before proceeding with the support restoration, restorers protected the paint film with Japanese paper and a coating made of 12% Klucel G in an aqueous solution. After the anoxic treatment, the restorers removed the old insertions and bound the work with presses on a shaped base to contain its movement during the various restoration operations.

Support control via pressers and moulded base

The previous structural restoration was removed and replaced with deeper wedges, inserted following the course of the longitudinal crack.

Once the wedges had been shaped, they were glued using wood powder and an adhesive and then pressed into place. After bonding, the surfaces were planed flush and color-matched.

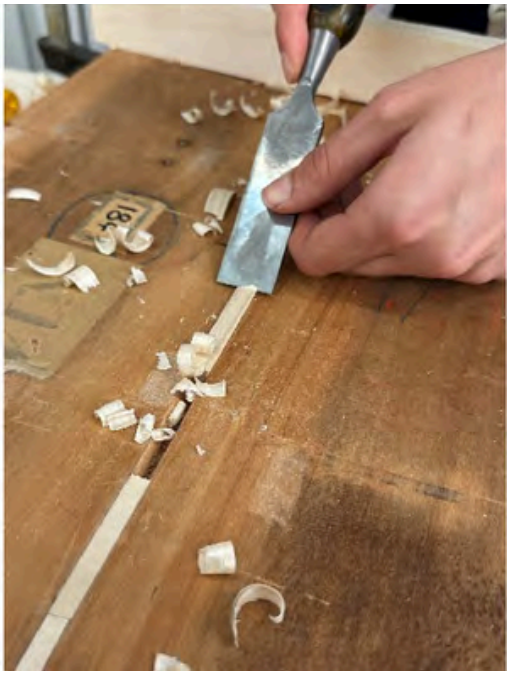
The restorers designed a spring-loaded containment system consisting of a perimeter frame with a central crossbeam and a support base to control the support movement, considering the new display mode within a Climabox.

This beechwood containment system was created by assembling four lamellar strips after the original support had been raised. The frame was finished with a layer of dewaxed shellac and microcrystalline wax.

Once the restorers obtained the housings for the elastic supports, the frame was anchored to the painting using disc springs and nylon threaded rods, the latter connected to the support by gluing a small circular wooden base.

The new elastic system allows it to contain the natural movements of the support.

Replacement of previous restoration

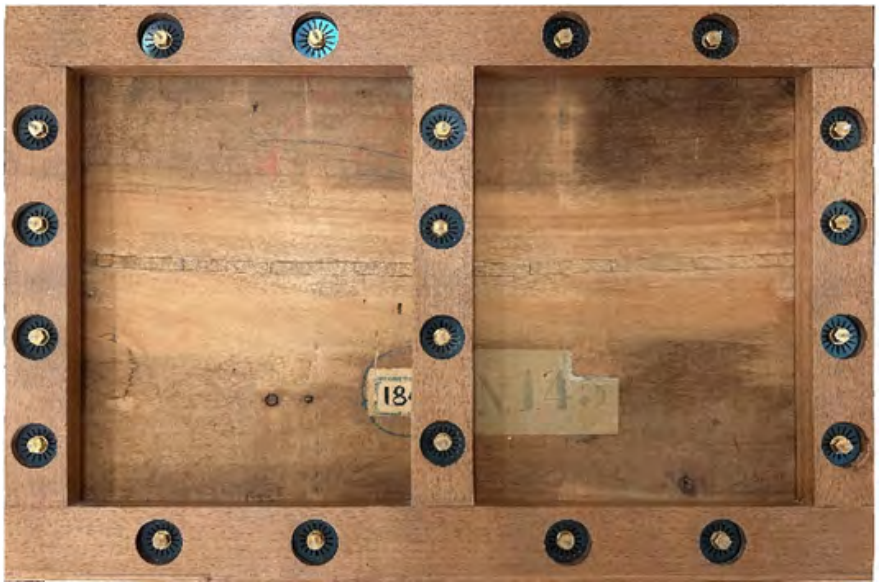


Preparation of the new wedges

Colouring the new wedges

Perimeter frame with central crossbar and support base for the new containment system

Bonding of wooden plinths with nylon threaded screws



Implementation of the elastic containment system

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

SECOND ONGOING RESTORATION REPORT
NOVEMBER 2024