

Appendix-5: Restoration of a painting on wood (1960 -1967)

Restoration report¹⁹⁵

“Painting status before restoration

Under a thick brown varnish, there is flaking of the pictorial layer, preparation included, on the cross, on the black background, the robe, and small flakes of the paint of the entire surface of the Painting. Roof-shaped blisters, especially on the black background, on the cross and robe and hair. Many woodworm holes exist at the level of the pictorial layer. In the damaged parts of the paint we see the white preparation, made of a mixture of chalk and a water based liquid probably glue.

Wood

The wood, which seems to be lime tree, has been damaged by woodworm.

The panel, which measures 45.5cm x 60cm, is a vertical rectangle in shape, about 2cm thick, in one piece, crossed at the top and bottom by two cross bars inlaid in dovetail; the wood is coarsely planed; a frame of the thickness of the panel is fixed by wrought iron nails of large dimensions, so that they penetrate in some places, into the wood, along the edge, tearing off quite large pieces.

Varnish removal

The varnish, composed of a soft resin, yields very easily to alcohol, and does not seem to be very old (perhaps early 19th century).

After varnish removal the pictorial layer appears of different fragility in some places, more solid in the part of the character, very fragile in the black background, the brown of the cross and the green of the crown, which would suggest that these parts are later than the whole painting, although the part representing Christ shows curiously fine cracks that seem to be caused by a lack of adherence to the preparation base. The pictorial layer is thin and smooth, composed of an oily medium. Old repaints are removed by scraping in places where they encroach on the original paint.

Many plugs in good condition were left.

The very worn parts in the bottom and the upper part of the right cross, let us see a lighter background.

It would be desirable to make an X-ray of the Painting to check:

- *The reason for the fragility of a whole part that seems to have been repainted, including the cross, the black background, the crown of thorns.*
- *Whether it would be possible to find the underlying drawing of the Painting.*

Treatment¹⁹⁶

The small frame surrounding the panel, was not touched, due to the very advanced state of disintegration, since it was decided not to proceed with a transfer, as it would be necessary, because of the two signatures that are on the back of the panel, in the upper part: SALAINO, in the lower part LEONARDO. Salaino's signature is engraved in the wood, Leonardo, simply in ink.

After properly protecting the painting with a Japanese paper glued to the face of the painting, we started by treating the panel for woodworm, twice in two months.

To preserve the panel and give it back the aspect it had lost due to the woodworm, with holes 5mm wide in some places. It was impregnated with hot soda silicate twice in 10 days and then with wax and resin, silicate and zinc oxide.

Paint

After the removal of the protective paper, the refixing was carried out by means of wax and hot resin, and then the varnish was removed. The places where the preparation fell were filled with a mixture of wax-resin and zinc oxide, then passed to tempera and varnish of damar”.

195 : According to a note from the restorer, the painting of *Genevra de Benci* by Leonardo da Vinci had not yet been acquired (in 1967) by the National Gallery in Washington.

196 : We understand that this involves the treatment of the wood on the reverse side.