

30. Repainting

It is essential to note that the numerous repaints have an influence not only on the current appearance of the work, but also on our understanding of its original state. A detailed analysis of the repaints is therefore necessary to any in-depth study.

1. Presentation of overpaints

In the adjacent illustration, the not repainted¹²⁵ parts, particularly the face, back and arm of Christ as well as the face of *'the Character'*, are highlighted by a light tint. These parts are well preserved, probably due to the bactericidal and anti-parasitic properties of the lead white used for the skin. Given its condition, it would appear that a large part of *'the Painting'* was most probably restored in the 16th century, as suggested by the results of the analyses¹²⁶ of the paint layer carried out by the University of Bologna and Professor Seracini's laboratories (cf. p 52).

For a detailed study of the repaints, please refer to [Appendix 21](#).



Figure 170 : Areas not repainted in lighter tone

2. The main phases of repainting

In his 2011 report, the Professor identified a major phase of overpainting dating back several centuries: *"The scientific investigation has clearly shown that the painting was subjected to a rather extensive repainting phase, which could be dated to centuries ago, given the evident aging process that the repainted areas have undergone"* (M.Seracini - Repainting p2).

Then, *'the Painting'* would have undergone a smudging phase (See third phase).

The expert's report does not clearly distinguish between the major restoration work and the repairs due to the action of woodworm¹²⁷ and additions or modifications to the pictorial elements. It notes that these overpaints have suffered the effects of time. At present, repaints and original paintwork appear to have merged, making it difficult to differentiate them with the naked eye.

Based on the technical data available, including expert reports and imagery, we set out to identify and classify the various phases of repainting observed on *'the Painting'*. These overpaints fall into several categories: additions and modifications to existing elements, colour retouching, restorations carried out after damage caused by woodworm, and the application of a layer of black paint that had covered *the Character* and the background. Based on careful observations, we propose a chronological classification of the main overpaintings into six phases.

First overpainting phase: additions and modifications

The repaints are indicated by the blue dots (numbered) in the figure below.

- Point N°1 - Adding a nimbus to a veil of paint concealing the veins in the wood of the cross ([Appendix 21-1](#)).
- Point N°2 - Addition of the frieze (median frieze¹²⁸) under the green band of *'the Character'* tunic and repainting of the tunic ([Appendix 21-2](#)).
- Point N°3 - Addition of corneal reflections, *Character's* eyes ([Appendix 21-3](#)).

125 : Some unpainted areas may have been smudged (see third repainting phase below). In this illustration, the layer of black paint that hid *the Character* and has been removed is not considered a repaint (see fifth phase of repainting).

126 : In fact, these analyses cover the whole and conclude that it was painted at the end of the 15th or 16th century.

127 : Woodworms are mainly active on the left-hand side of the panel.

128 : The pattern of this floral frieze is not consistent with that of the green headband above, which is geometric. A third frieze at the bottom of the tunic, apparently identical to the central frieze, is no longer visible to the naked eye.

- Point N°4 - Repainting Christ's beard and enlarging it ([Appendix 21-3](#)).
- Point N°5 - Repainting the hair of the two characters ([Appendix 21-5](#)).
- Point N°6 - Repainting of the button on the green band of the tunic of 'the Character' ([Appendix 21-6](#)).

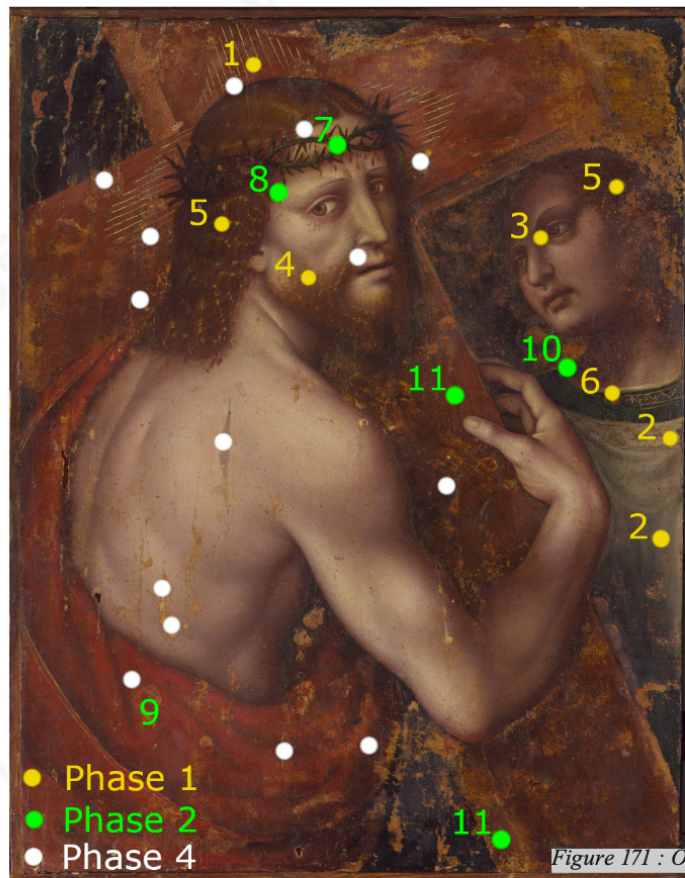


Figure 171 : Overpaint mapping

There are several arguments in favour of this first phase of repainting:

- It is unlikely that it was carried out in several separate stages.
- It was applied to areas that were in good condition at the time, suggesting an aesthetic rather than a corrective initiative.
- Observation of the repainted areas shows that the underlying original paint has continued to crack, confirming their age.
- Nimbus (Point N°1) and Christ's beard (Point N°4): overpaints cover cracks that are already present and that may have developed.
- Median frieze (Point N°2): this style of floral motif on an already cracked layer is not consistent with the geometric motif on the upper green band. To highlight this, the figure's tunic was repainted at the same time. There is evidence that it predates the overpainting of phase 2 ([Appendix 21-2](#)).
- Christ's hair (Point N°5): the overpainting of the drops of blood (Phase 2) covers that of Christ's hair (Phase 1).

Second phase: pictorial layer restoration

This phase, described as '*rather extensive*' by Professor Seracini, predates the overpainting caused by woodworm, which formed galleries that were filled in with gesso. This can be verified simply by looking at the paint layer.

The overpaints mentioned by the Professor are shown in green in the previous image:

- Point N°7 - Crown of thorns ([Appendix 21-7](#))
- Point N°8 - Drops of blood ([Appendix 21-8](#))
- Point N°9 - Christ's red robe, piping and other repaints ([Appendix 21-9](#))
- Point N°10 - Right shoulder, neck, and collar of the tunic of 'the Character' ([Appendix 21-10](#))
- Point N°11 - The cross, largely repainted ([Appendix 21-11](#))

Third phase: lead white smudging ([Appendix 21-12](#))

According to Professor Seracini, this repainting would have followed the previous phase. Smudging with lead white: the smudging technique involves manually applying a veil of lead white paint, often with the fingertips. This method has left several fingerprints.

Forth phase: gesso-based fillings and restoration of paint losses

The main fillings and other restorations of the pictorial layer are indicated by the white dots. The holes created by the action of woodworm were filled with gesso and repainted.

Fifth phase: concealment of 'the Character' and covering the background ([Appendix 21-13](#))

'The Character' and the black background were covered with a layer of bone black paint, probably to conceal his 'disturbing' attitude towards Christ ([cf. p 12](#)).

It's clear that the black layer was applied after the other repaints. In fact, it covers some of the repaints from phase 1 on *the Character's* tunic and phase 2 on *the Character's* right shoulder and neck, as well as the smudging from phase 4. In addition, in the upper left-hand corner, the background overpaint has run over a cross filling (phase 4).



Figure 172 : 'The Painting'
early 1960s

Sixth phase: removal of the previous layer of black paint (1960s) ([Appendix 21-13](#))

- During this restoration, which consisted in removing the layer of black paint that hid 'the Character' and covered the other parts of the background, 'the Painting' was first washed out with alcohol. Note that this layer was not removed from the upper left-hand corner. As a result of these operations, the paint layer has been damaged.
- Overpainting on the top of the hair dating from the same period: a comparative analysis of the images before and after restoration in the 1960s reveals that the top of the hair, which is particularly degraded, was repainted at this time (white arrow in the image on the left).
- The restorer also points out that some repaints have been previously scraped off.



Figure 173 : 'The painting'
after restoration 1960

Illustration of repainting in phases 1 to 5



Figure 174 : Repainting - Phase 1



Figure 175 : Repainting - Phase 2

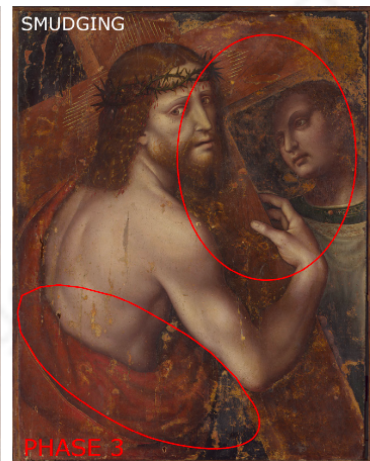


Figure 176 : Repainting - Phase 3

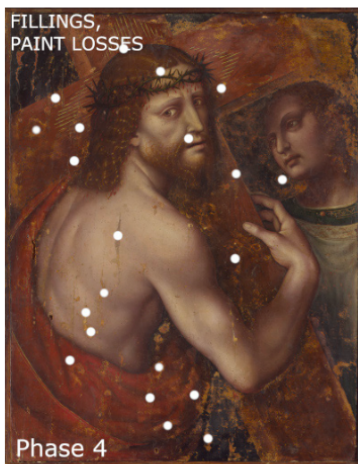


Figure 177 : Repainting - Phase 4



Figure 178 : Repainting - Phase 5



Figure 179 : Visible image

3. Conclusion

Thanks to the exploitation of previous expert appraisals and advanced imaging technologies, it has been possible to group the main repaints into six distinct phases, classified chronologically. Although the proposed chronology is the result of our observations and is therefore open to interpretation, it provides a solid basis for understanding *the Painting's* evolution. It is important to stress that these interventions have probably altered certain aspects of the original work, making its current attribution more complex.