THE PRESENTATION OF WALL PAINTINGS

Views, Concepts, and Approaches

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THE PRESENTATION OF WALL PAINTINGS
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THE 2016 SYMPOSIUM:
RETOUCHING AND THE ISSUES
OF WALL PAINTING PRESENTATION

France Mihelič Gallery, Kašča, Škofja Loka, 27 Oct 2016
Organisers: Restoration Centre of the Institute for the Protection of Cultural Heritage of Slovenia (IPCHS),
Slovenian Society for Conservation-Restoration, the Association of Conservators of Cultural Heritage of Slovenia
Organisational board: Martina Lesar Kikelj, Anita Kavčič Klančar, Ajda Mladenovič, Robert Peskar, Ana Kocjančič,
Marija Ana Kranjc

Programme:
PART I
Session 1 (host: Martina Lesar Kikelj)
   Historical Overview of Different Approaches to the Retouching, Ajda Mladenovič, IPCHS Restoration Centre
   *The Spiritual Component of Medieval Wall Painting – the Issue of Presentation for the Comprehension
   of Medieval Religious Wall Paintings*, Simona Menoni, IPCHS Regional Office Maribor
   (Re)touch with the Painter. The Role of Understanding the Work of Art, Anita Kavčič Klančar,
   IPCHS Restoration Centre
   The Complex Comprehension of the Visual Field, Vlasta Čobal Sedmak, IPCHS Regional Office Maribor

Session 2 (host: Robert Peskar)
   Retouching and Presentation – Issues and Solutions, Andrej Jazbec, IPCHS Regional Office Nova Gorica
   Aesthetic Reintegration of a Work of Art. Fragments from Personal Practice, Ivan Bogovčič, professor
   emeritus
   The Problem of Presenting Decorative Wall Paintings, Damjana Pediček Terseglav, Tjaša Pristov,
   IPCHS Regional Office Ljubljana (paper not submitted)

PART II: Field trip to Rotovž, the Chapel of Škofja Loka Castle, and the Church of St Nicholas in Godešič near
   Škofja Loka (Anita Kavčič Klančar).

THE 2017 INTERNATIONAL SYMPOSIUM: THE AESTHETIC PRESENTATION OF WALL PAINTINGS – PROBLEMS AND SOLUTIONS

National Gallery, Ljubljana, 3 and 4 Oct 2017
Organisers: Restoration Centre of the Institute for the Protection of Cultural Heritage of Slovenia (IPCHS), Slovenian Society
for Conservation-Restoration, the Association of Conservators of Cultural Heritage of Slovenia
Organisational board: Ajda Mladenovič, Martina Lesar Kikelj, Robert Peskar, Anita Kavčič Klančar, Vlasta Čobal Sedmak, Andrej Jazbec,
Simona Menoni Muršič, Marta Bensa, Ana Kocjančič, Marija Ana Kranjc

Programme:
PART I: 3 Oct 2017; lectures, National Gallery, Ljubljana
Welcome and Introduction, Martina Lesar Kikelj, IPCHS Restoration Centre

Session 1 (host: Simona Menoni Muršič)
Practical Aspects of Restoring Wall Paintings
Issues Connected to Aesthetic Presentation of Wall Paintings that Arise between the Institute for the Protection of Cultural Heritage
of Slovenia and the Restorer Executing the Presentation, Marta Bensa and Minka Osojnik, IPCHS Regional Office Nova Gorica
The Aesthetic Presentation of the Stencilled Wall Paintings, Klavdij Zalar, entrepreneur
The Problems of Conservators and Their Tasks
The Representation of the Oldest Layers of Wall Paintings in Šmartno na Pohorju, Laško and Selo, Janez Balažic, University of Maribor,
Faculty of Education
On the Influence of Past Restoration Approaches, (Un)Successful Pair Work between Restorers and Art Historians, and the Approach
of the So-called Technical Art History Towards the Final Presentation of a Wall Painting, Mateja Neža Sitar, IPCHS Regional Office
Maribor

Session 2 (host: Ajda Mladenovič)
Practices and Approaches from Abroad
Retouch and/or (Re)Integration (A Few Notes On Terms), Ivan Srša, Hrvatski restauratorski zavod, Zagreb
The Retouching on Wall Paintings in Florence, Some Case Studies of the Opificio delle Pietre Dure, Alberto Felici,
Opificio delle Pietre Dure, Florence
Conservation-Restoration of Wall Paintings in Germany: Issues of Aesthetic Presentation and the Preservation of Historical
Authenticity, Ursula Schädler-Saub, Hochschule für Angewandte Wissenschaft und Kunst, Fakultät Bauen und Erhalten,
HAWK Hildesheim / Holzminden / Göttingen
Nearly 170 Years of Systematic Uncovering and Restoration of Wall Paintings in the Koroška Region. How to Preserve Heritage
in the Future? Gorazd Živkovič, Bundesdenkmalamt, Abteilung für Kärnten, Klagenfurt/Celovec

Session 3 (host: Robert Peskar): round table – discussion

PART II: 4 Oct 2017: Field trip to the Old Town of Radovljica and an assessment of the paintings on its facades (Nika Leben), a look
at the restored Gothic paintings in the presbytery of the Church of the Assumption of Mary on Bled Island (Jelka Kuret), and partly
restored Gothic paintings in the presbytery of the Church of St John the Baptist in Bohinj (Andrej Šebalj).

PROLOGUE

'The business of the restorer is the most thankless one imaginable. At best one sees and knows nothing of him. If, out of his own invention, he has provided something good he has got mixed up with the dubious company of the forgers; and with the despised one of the destroyers of art if what he has done is bad. His accomplishment remains out of sight, his deficiency leaps to the eye. Judgment regarding the performance of the restorers is even more unreliable than that regarding works of art. And that is saying something.'

Max J. Friedländer, *On art and connoisseurship*, Boston 1942, p. 267

Although remote in time, the introductory quote relevantly captures the problems of the elusive definition of quality restoration work of different periods, locations, and restoration trends. We were reminded of it by Guylaine Ruard, who used the same lines to address his readers in the interesting *Restauration, dérestauration en peinture murale: un problème entre histoire et actualité*. The research paper focused on the basic principles of restoration (in France) and the differences between theory and practice (Ruard 2007).

Max Jakob Friedländer was, surprisingly, not a restorer but an art historian, which illustrates the significance of a professional connection between an art historian and restorer for high-quality interventions. They are the two protagonists of the wall painting protection and preservation, i.e. the main topic of this publication. This issue focuses on one of the most delicate phases among conservation-restoration interventions – the final presentation, which reflects the conditions in Slovenian heritage protection. The current state of the Slovenian professional field mirrors its (unresearched) historical circumstances, structural, organisational, educational, and professional formation, and specific economic, political, and social past. Amidst these changing conditions, the Slovenian conservator-art historian and restorer have walked the over century-long path of heritage protection. At first, they were closely connected. Restorers followed the instructions of the only professionally trained entity for wall paintings – art historians. But as they began educating themselves and gathering experiences, the polarisation started to shift. The connection of the pair was weakening. Greater expertise in monument materials and technology made restorers independent and self-sufficient. In the end, art historians turned to restorers for approaches, while restorers (deliberately or not) made decisions on their own. The reasons for this closer or looser connection can be unveiled by the history of heritage protection. The employees of the Institute for the Protection of Cultural Heritage of Slovenia (IPCHS) are the heirs of the Slovenian heritage protection history, which is little known. The discrepancy between the two mentioned protagonists calls for change. The professional connection and the workflow between both experts currently results from their dedication and not from an organisationally and professionally formalised system. The latter has not designed standard approaches to the treatment of wall paintings, not even to those of the highest quality. Clear guidelines and professional standards are the backbones of the professional field. They could offer support and direction to the employees regardless of the changing socio-political and professional conditions. That said, standard guidelines have to be set both for the responsible conservator-art historian, preoccupied with administration, as for the conservator-restorer, burdened by the hastiness of execution. They need the guidelines for research and monument treatment and the interaction among themselves, the contractors, and owners.

The inadequate treatment of these problems (some highlighted in the publication) manifests itself in the work done on wall paintings – in interventions that are often carried out routinely, in short deadlines, and lacking a critical

opinion of a wall painting specialist. This is true also of retouching. Extremely popular in Slovenia, it is executed almost systematically as one of the procedures. It often lacks critical evaluation and reservation regarding its necessity and scope and disregards the question of whether a proper retouch can be executed well within the project time-limitations. Frequently, its implementation does not depend on the painting specifics, its problems, or diagnostics, but mostly on the established retouching practice. Additionally, it depends on the period, finances, and skilfulness and sensibility of the contractors.

All these concerns finally culminated in a constructive dialogue, the formation of the Workgroup for the protection and preservation of wall paintings of the Institute for the Protection of Cultural Heritage of Slovenia, in two symposia, and a publication. The seventh issue of the interdisciplinary, scientific periodical of the Restoration Centre of the IPCHS, called *RES.*, is dedicated to *The Presentation of Wall Paintings – Views, Concepts, and Approaches.* The monograph includes articles based on the papers presented or prepared for the symposia. The presenters (authors of the articles) from Slovenia and abroad are experts from different fields, art historians as well as conservator-restorers. Some are employed at heritage protection institutes, some are researchers or lecturers, and some private individuals. The articles from the first symposium multidimensionally deal with the final presentation of wall paintings, a topic complex in terms of defining and understanding of problems and solutions, and mostly its practical execution. The presenters of the second symposium approach the aesthetic aspect of the presentation, which is hard to define since it is culturally and temporally conditioned, dependent on many factors, on the preferences of an era, historical conditions, and on subjective experience.

The publication completes one of the first tasks of the Workgroup (of which others are dialogue acceleration, expert reading and educating, and the quality increase of expertise publications). The topic was introduced by the issue of *Konservator-restavrator* (*Conservator-restorer*) in which the plenary papers for the 2018 conservator-restorer session all revolved around the aesthetic presentation. This monograph is of immense value since the Slovenian heritage protection field has few critical, transparent, comparative theoretical writings, especially those co-written by art historians and restorers. Some most neglected yet sensitive topics are authenticity, multidimensional comprehension of the work of art, its expressiveness and meaning, authorial creativity, approaches to the preservation of and interference into the original, history of Slovenian conservation and restoration, foreign and national standards, influential trends and traditions, the visuality, and the aesthetics of the conserved and restored work of art. There is a deficiency of dialogue, meditation, publications, and discussions.

When preparing the publication, we encountered several problems we were unable to solve abruptly. The first was the weak cognisance of the writings of our ancestors, Slovenian conservators and restorers, but also of foreign expert literature. The second is the undefined terminology that makes clear critical theses impossible. Authors freely interpret some adopted and accepted terms (e.g. *tratteggio* is misused to mean any kind of retouching with short lines) and we are, therefore, still waiting for translations of the foreign expert canon and dictionaries of the field terminology. Given that accurate terminology with unambiguous meanings and definitions is the core of the expertise thesis, the Slovenian version (as in the last two issues of the RES. publication) includes a glossary of the key terms and their basic definitions. In the future, we will need to compile a Slovenian glossary of wall paintings and other sections of cultural heritage. Such a project will require careful work by a group of experts from different institutions and fields. Because

of Slovenian field specifics, they will have to further study the Slovenian heritage protection history, analyse the use and the development of different terms according to the individual approaches, treatments, and techniques through time and across different regions.

The hereby papers are, on the one hand, transparent, expert writings, and on the other, especially valuable reflections on professional practices because they reflect the current views and conditions in the field. The topic of the publication is divided into three parts and comprises altogether fifteen articles.

The introduction into the first part titled ***Historical and Theoretical Foundations*** is a comprehensive text that discusses the fundamental themes often unknown in Slovenia. The text is a European *historical overview of different approaches to the retouching of wall paintings* that presents the development of theoretical principles, key experts, and restoration literature.

The next, broader, article introduces *the influence of* some important but unresearched factors in Slovenia – *the restoration approaches*, *the cooperation between a restorer and an art historian, and of technical art history on the final presentation.*

What follows is a terminological text on *retouching and/or reintegration in the restoration of wall paintings (a few notes on terminology)* in which a Croatian colleague precisely determines the basic terms that help us correctly understand and interpret the conservation-restoration problems and their solutions – one of the basic tasks that still awaits the Slovenian heritage protection experts.

We continue with two art-historical texts that remind us of the importance of different connotations of the painting. In the first, the autho*r* describes *the spiritual component of medieval wall painting – the issue of presentation when conserving and restoring*. She stresses the delicacy of retouching Romanesque and Gothic paintings because the slightest stroke may mislead the expert when analysing a painted scene. As responsible conservator, she exposes the reality of her profession and describes it as increasingly bureaucratic and removed from its mission, i.e., the study of monuments as the necessary foundation for their protection and preservation.

The next article speaks of *the presentation of the oldest layers of the wall paintings in Šmartno na Pohorju, Laško, and Selo* through the author's in-depth humanistic and art-historical formulation of the visual, which is more or less successfully preserved or presented in conservation-restoration interventions.

Since the art-theoretical study is often neglected in art-historical and conservation-restoration texts on wall paintings, the first theoretical section deliberately concludes with the article on the *complex comprehension of the visual field (visual understanding of the restored work of art)*. Following the principles of art theory and colour theory, the author explores new ways of retouching that should be researched and developed.

The second part ***Theory and Practice Abroad*** contrasts the Slovenian conditions with international practice, which, although little known, has marked the development of the Slovenian professional field. It combines informative articles by eminent personas of heritage protection. Our Italian colleague makes use of *two case studies of the Opificio delle Pietre Dure* to write about *the retouching on Florentine wall paintings* and represent its *issues, materials, and techniques*. He presents Roman and Florentine approaches to retouching that have set the grounds of modern restoration in Europe and across the world.

Next is the article by a German colleague on *the conservation-restoration of wall paintings in Germany*. She focuses on *the issues of aesthetic presentation and the preservation of historical authenticity*. Through various approaches and examples from German restoration history, the author presents the well-known division among experts between the historical and aesthetic component of a work of art.

An Austrian colleague has written a text on the uncovering of *medieval wall paintings in Carinthia then and now* in which he comprehensively lists the approaches to protection and preservation that reflect the established heritage principles and theories of the 19th and 20th century (from the Vienna Central Commission, the influential Roman Central Institute to the current management of the heritage). He wonders *how to preserve this heritage in the future* and suggests the registering and monitoring of Carinthian medieval wall paintings – a solution that is also well suited for Slovenia.

The last, third part, dedicated to **Slovenian Experiences: the Problems and Solutions** opens with *an introduction to the protection and preservation of wall paintings in Slovenia* by an art historian, general conservator. It outlines an attempt of systematic registering, documentation, and conservation-restoration of medieval wall paintings in Slovenia. It exposes the pressing matter of inefficiently financed protection and preservation of cultural heritage in Slovenia and the evaluation of different approaches to retouching.

The next article discusses the *issues of wall painting presentation that emerge between the heritage preservation institute and the contracting conservator-restorer*. Its authors are an example of the most frequent professional pair in immovable heritage (that includes wall paintings) – a tandem of art historian-responsible conservator and a conservator-restorer (who is also an art historian). They present the reality of fieldwork and contact with the contractors as well as the owners.

Then follow the articles by Slovenian conservator-restorers. The author of the essayistic paper *on retouch – the touch with the painter* considers *the understanding of the work of art* through Brandi's 'oneness' and discusses its triple nature. She strolls across all the fundamental stages: from the making of the work of art to its conservation-restoration treatment.

The author of the paper on *retouching and presentation – issues and solutions* theoretically and practically draws from the Italian school of conservation as exemplified by the case studies of the retouched wall paintings (the Church of St Nicholas in Kred, the Church of St Brice in Volarje, the Vipolže Villa, and the Lanthieri Manor in Vipava).

In the following text, the conservator-restorer, now in the role of an independent contractor, examines *the aesthetic presentation of wall stencils* – a field of research, documentation, and presentation overlooked in Slovenia. He reveals that during interventions, construction work has priority and wall paintings come second, executed under deadlines and financial limitations. In light of non-professional interventions, many high-quality profane and sacral stencilled paintings are lost.

We conclude with *views on the aesthetic presentation of wall paintings, fragments from personal practice* by a professor emeritus and conservator-restorer, who lists various examples of aesthetic presentation. He reflects on the parameters of authenticity and the factors that alter it but which an incautious viewer can see as authenticity. He also touches upon *tratteggio*, its beginnings, development, and its practical use.

The substantial content and expressive photographs mirror the colourfulness of perspectives. As the final presentation is a demanding topic, the ideas concerning it are versatile and the solutions in practice subjectively various, since the restorer can envisage them differently from an art historian. Evidently, the delicate bond between different views is hard to maintain. The debate on the matter is far from simple. It requires personal maturity, tolerance towards different perspectives, and patience to find constructive solutions. The final presentation should not be decided solely by a restorer but (as abroad) by the responsible conservator in cooperation with the restorer. The responsible conservator should be experienced and educated in the field and should call a specific expert committee meeting when having to decide on the intervention in demanding cases. The main tasks should then be carried out by the main heritage protection institution. It has to state and define the problem, carefully register the wall paintings of the area, evaluate their importance and endangerment, establish clearer guidelines and suggestions of approaches to study and interference, set standards and a system of protection, preservation, and monitoring over procedures and the state of the paintings, and prepare a reference list of the top qualified independent contractors of research and interventions. The issue of the final presentation should be dealt with more wholesomely. We should start at the foundations and by improving and advancing the educational, scientific and, practical, execution level.

By presenting the conditions in the Slovenian conservation and restoration field, outlining the resultative circumstances, and by listing different views, we can discover where we are, what we want, and thus proceed onwards. If we have plenty of reliable information and theoretical and practical knowledge (from teamwork, experiences, and foreign examples), we may easily and accurately devise our own high-quality approaches. Ruard wrote on what these should be: 'Through history, restoration interventions on works of art led to changes of some of their aesthetic or physical characteristics, followed in turn by the disappearance or change of their true meaning. The restoration was based on the desire to restore the original /.../. Nowadays the general concept of restoration has changed. Restoration now includes conservation and so the work of a restorer is no longer limited to the direct interference in the work of art. In addition, he or she must know, evaluate, and consider all the parameters that contribute to the preservation of the work. Only then may he or she interfere with the painting with the utmost respect, careful not to harm its aesthetics, physical oneness and history, with the aim to bring back its original connotation and to make it easier to understand. On him or her there lies great responsibility to preserve the testimonies of culture – either classic canvas or wall paintings' (Ruard 2007, p. 110).

If we consider the activity of the Workgroup until now, and the unveiling of the Slovenian issues and the broader European view, we notice that we are a rarity in the European conservation-restoration field. We have openly discussed a very sensitive topic. We have been capable of self-criticism and, regardless of possible errors, brave enough to share our thoughts and ideas. We have attempted an equal and persistent search for constructive debates and solutions. To alter the mindsets among experts and the public, owners, caretakers, admirers, and researchers of wall paintings, persistent awareness, time, and maturity will be needed. We dare claim that the hereby publication will play a considerable part in raising that awareness.

Mateja Neža Sitar, PhD
editor of the RES. publications

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SLOVENIAN EXPERIENCES: THE PROBLEMS AND SOLUTIONS

MILES COVERED AND A LOOK INTO THE FUTURE

Retouching, its scope, and technique have been a pressing yet poorly covered matter that has divided art historian-conservators and the conservator-restorers. Even the simple questions of an art historian-conservator (such as why a conservator-restorer has chosen *tratteggio* for a certain painting and not, for example, tonal adjustment to the original, or some other way of retouching) have come to a standstill and opened up interesting dilemmas. In fact, they have set off essential, even sensitive, debates and thus re-awoken closer cooperation and interaction between art historians and restorers, but most of all influenced educational changes and an attempt to introduce a systemic and systematic professional approach to wall paintings.

Careful analysis of the issue has revealed a fairly simple, yet fundamental realisation: although the aesthetic presentation is the last of the conservation-restoration interventions, it has to be considered already at the first encounter with the damaged wall painting, since it represents merely the tip of the iceberg. The pursuit for answers to this burning retouching question has soon become a challenge for all experts in the field of aesthetic presentation of wall paintings. After numerous field inspections and hours of debates on what went wrong and where, a conclusion has been reached that understanding and perceiving the work of art are, along with the emphasis on its iconographic and spiritual context and its material authenticity, its inherent part that needs to be considered together with the interventions planned for it.

For that reason, there exists an active group which has for four years now concerned itself with questions of aesthetic presentation of wall paintings. It was officially founded in 2018 at the Institute for the Protection of Cultural Heritage of Slovenia (IPCHS) as a *Working group for the protection and preservation of wall paintings* and has thus acquired the support of the institution. Its members had high-flying plans and wished to lay down clear directives which would allow easier systematic planning of any complex project related to conservation and restoration of wall paintings. However, priority was given to field meetings and discussions. This was a step away from the initial idea of immediate formation of directives since first a careful agreement was needed regarding how the directives were to be set. Practice has shown that in the process of conservation-restoration of paintings the burden of the final presentation too often fell on the restorer. As there were no clear criteria and directives on approaches and interventions, one of the first tasks of the committee was to conduct two symposia on aesthetic presentation.[1] The first meeting exposed and equalised the aesthetic and spiritual aspect of work of art with the technological one. The second, international meeting enabled the exchange of views and practices of local and foreign experts. It emphasised the treatment of different theoretical approaches to presentations and questions regarding practical executions, decision-making protocols, and directives. We examined the state of affairs at the discussed field and stressed the importance of interdisciplinary cooperation as the prerequisite of successful intervention. Since when all the parties involved regard the work of art as a common meeting point, we may uniformly ensure its best chances of survival.

It is not merely the written directives that bring about the right action but also the close attention given to the issues at hand, continuous communication between all the experts, and the safeguarding of the interventions that

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[1] The first symposium on aesthetic presentation was held on 27 Oct 2016 at the Kašča Hall, Spodnji trg 1, Škofja Loka, whiles the second, international symposium, took place between 3 and 4 Oct 2017 at the Slovenian National Gallery in Ljubljana. The meetings were co-organised by the Slovenian Society for Conservation-Restoration, the Association of Conservators of Cultural Heritage of Slovenia, and the Institute for the Protection of Cultural Heritage of Slovenia.

influence and shape the final aesthetic presentation of the wall paintings. We bear witness both to good and bad past practices of our colleagues. We are aware that the set directives can only be superlative if they do not remain only words in written regulations or unread articles in expertise publications. They need to be regularly remodelled and tested in practice, which is only possible through active and enthusiastic participation of the experts, who are capable enough to constantly consider a certain idea and its issues, to adopt it, and install it sensibly for the good of the heritage. The solutions, supported by Cesare Brandi's important principles that are the basis of modern restoration practice, have to be preserved and passed down to younger generations, with relevant minor changes as time demands.

The workgroup proves its capability of all the enumerated, therefore the solutions may undoubtedly be even handier although its members have different views on the issues.

The results of the current work and contemplation are articles, discussions and, talks which, although they often spark disputes, even more frequently lead to targeted solutions that can be recorded as the articles in the hereby publication attest.

It is, however, important to bear in mind that the conservation-restoration process is mostly conditioned by time and funding. In the timeframe set for preservation works it is extremely difficult to follow all the prescribed rules, to consider the perfectly set directives, and to also please both the experts and the client. Precisely for that reason, a great amount of practice is needed so that the written guidelines will not present an additional burden but will be recognised among experts and the greater public as an important step towards a noble goal.

Martina Lesar Kikelj, M.F.A
Head of the Restoration Centre IPCHS
President of the Slovenian Society of Conservation-Restoration

THE WORK OF THE SLOVENIAN WALL PAINTING PRESERVATION GROUP

The extensive efforts to enhance professionalism in the field of wall painting conservation-restoration initially focused mostly on the use of modern technologies and materials but simultaneously also inspired the maturing in Slovene conservation-restoration. Close cooperation with foreign colleagues, advanced learning, and interest in professional development and progress spurred us to reflect on the past practices of wall painting restoration. A look into history revealed critical thinking and concrete ideas on the subject of final aesthetic presentation, which nowadays represents an important theoretical basis for further development. However, while the restorer was developing into an individual expert, the intense cooperation with art historian, the wall painting specialist, was dying. The importance of comprehending the work of art as material and expressive totality in conservation-restoration was fading, concurrently diminishing also the question of retouching or of the last hand in the restoration intervention. The reservation towards the necessity and suitability of retouch got lost.

Fig. 1: A highlight from the international conference *Aesthetic Presentation of Wall Paintings – Problems and Solutions* at the Ljubljana National Gallery in 2017.

Wall paintings are an inherent part of the architecture and are either active carriers of strong messages or passive witnesses to historical periods but they are rarely preserved intact. Due to their almost unmanageable multitude (numerous churches that adorn our lands), delicate nature of the source material (especially thin coats of paint layers), and exposure to human and environmental factors, they decay before our eyes. The damage erases the expressiveness of the scenes and hinders the viewer's understanding.

By retouching, restorers try to preserve the role of the painted surfaces, the presence of the painted scenes, and their expressiveness as far as possible but by doing so, interfere with the paint layer, a thin veil between the real and spiritual world. Therefore, to get credible results, the manner of approaching the retouch, the definition of its scope and intensity, the choice of suitable methods and materials, and superior practical execution are extremely important. A step towards in-depth research of the meaning, history, and problems of retouching has been made

Fig. 2: The indentations filled with light plaster in St Paul's Church in Podpeč pod Skalo overshadow the fragmented image, creating the snowstorm effect.
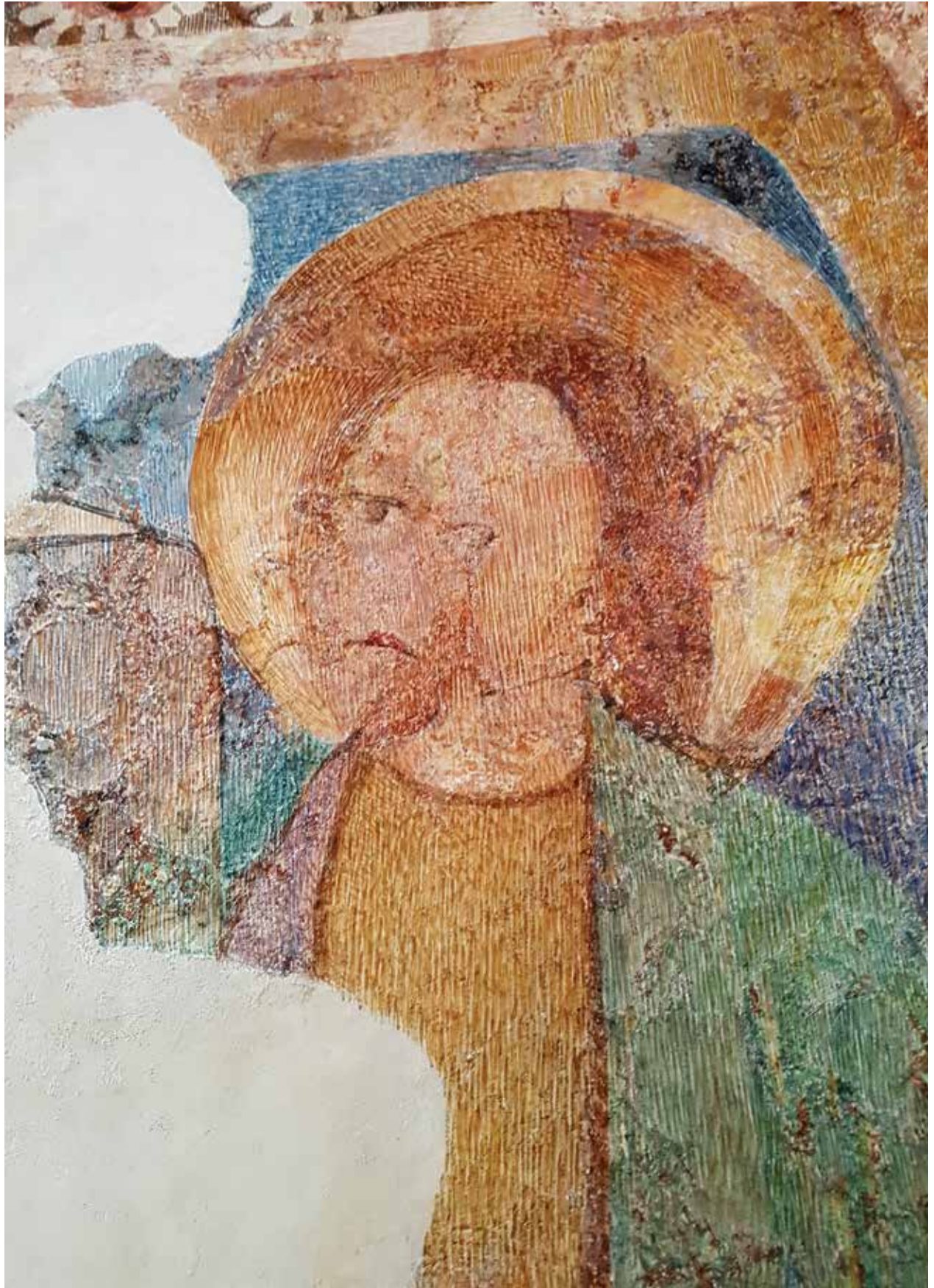
Fig. 3: The example from St Martin's Church in Šilentabor shows how the domineering retouch executed in hatching creates its own patterns on the painting.

Fig. 4: Visibly protruding saturated flat retouches in Lutheran Cellar in Sevnica.

Fig. 5: Grossly overpainted scene in the Church of St Peter and Paul in Spodnja Slivnica.

by the *Working Group for the Protection and Preservation of Wall Paintings* under the wing of The Institute for the Protection of Cultural Heritage of Slovenia.[1] The working group was born out of expert self-reflections and retouching questions that arose during practical fieldwork. It signalled that the time for critical thinking and constructive debate was at hand. Its core consists of a smaller group of experts from the field of wall painting – art historian-conservators and conservator-restorers[2] – but, wishing to expand the expert dialogue, attracts also other associates from the field concerned.

The main task, one that has sparked the group, is the operational fieldwork that includes the inspection of monuments and the solving of concrete cases. Group members, co-working with other experts, advise on complex cases of restoration and presentation, when needed or requested by the independent contractor. As a result, open questions are defined, possible solutions discussed, and the restoration overseen up to the final touches. Other tasks of the working group include the making of a priority list of Slovenian wall painting monuments that need to be wholly treated on a national level, the education of the experts from the field, and the formation of clear principles and protocols for approaching the questions regarding restoration of wall paintings and aesthetic presentation.

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[1] Although active already since November 2015, the *Working Group for the Protection and Preservation of Wall Paintings* was officially designated on 6 March 2018. The parent institution thus took on the role of establishing systematic solutions in the field of conservation and restoration of wall paintings.

[2] Marta Bensa, Vlasta Čobal Sedmak, Andrej Jazbec, Anita Kavčič Klančar, Martina Lesar Kikelj, Simona Menoni Muršič, Ajda Mladenovič, Robert Peskar, Mateja Neža Sitar.

Fig. 6: Because of the excessively retouched background, the figures from the poorly preserved scene from the cloister of the Cistercian Abbey in Stična come across as cutouts.

The group started out with expert consultations at various Slovenian monuments, which offered an opportunity to overview the good and bad aesthetic solutions of the past.[3] It revealed that retouching principles and procedures were usually chosen quite freely. The restorer was left with the decisions on the scope and execution since the art historian – the conservator in charge, was either undereducated on specifics of the field or even excluded from decision-making. Furthermore, expert practice, such as, for example, the call of the broader committee with wall painting specialists, has not yet been formalised. The inspection of cases revealed some very poor solutions (fabricated inpaintings, overpaintings, severely pronounced retouched areas, inappropriately toned puttied gaps, vast retouches that changed the appearance, character, and the expressive power of the scenes and even created caricatures out of figures) but also satisfactory ones. In addition, there were some exemplary solutions, which, with great sensitivity and feeling for the painted scenes, balanced the historical authenticity and the aesthetic effect.

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[3]   The monuments treated at the time were: the Church of St John the Baptist in Bohinj; the Church of Assumption on Bled Island; the Church of St Nicholas in Godešič near Škofja Loka; the Church of St Nicholas in Kred; the Loka Castle Chapel; the Church of St John the Baptist in Mirna in the Dolenjska region; the Church of Assumption in Muljava, the Church of the Nativity of the Virgin Mary in Police near Cerkno; the former Dominican Monastery in Ptuj; the Church of Mary the Protector at Ptujska gora; the old town of Radovljica; the rotunda of St Nicholas in Selo; the Lutheran Cellar in Sevnica; the monastery cloister in Stična; the Church of the Virgin Mary of the Rosary in Stopno; the Church of St Martin in Šmartno on Pohorje; the Town Hall in Škofja Loka; the Church of St Ulrich in Tolmin; the Church of Mary of the Assumption in Trebnje; the Church of Assumption in Turnišče; the Church of St Vitus and the Church of St John the Baptist in Videm near Ptuj; the Church of St Brice of Tours in Volarje. The working group has also visited a selected number of monuments in Italy and Austria with the help of foreign colleagues. Special thanks for reception and guidance, therefore, go to Alberto Felici, Claudia Ragazzoni, Markus Santner and Gorazd Živkovič.

Fig. 7: Retouch in monochromatic tones flattens the scene from the Church of St James in Ribno.

Figs. 8a, 8b: The Church of St Ulrich in Tolmin is an example where all the losses (from the fallen-off paint layer to indentations) are retouched, reconstructed, and equally toned.

Fig. 9: In St Jacob's Church in Urschalling the gap that could not be reconstructed was filled with toned plaster below the painting level.

During these inspections, the working group's art historian-conservators and conservator-restorers started to openly discuss retouching and the general approach to conservation-restoration of wall paintings, revealing diverse views, expectations, and understanding of the issue at hand. Despite numerous predicaments, disagreements, and sometimes-brutal honesty, which all required a lot of patience and consideration, the work of the group soon bore fruit. It has organised two meetings on the matter of retouch, which offered a look into the state of theory and practice in Slovenia and abroad, as well as given birth to this publication. In addition, the working group functions as an active advisory body with its frequent field inspections of wall painting restoration. Most importantly, retouching is now openly debated and is recognised as a problem. It can be dealt with and it enables us to draw comparisons with foreign colleagues on the advancement of the solutions in the field, the quality of the retouches and their possible improvements.

The discoveries made in the first years of activity can be narrowed down into a few rough conclusions that have been drawn inside the core of the group during its discussions and field visits to the monuments in Slovenia and abroad. It should firstly be noted that a restorer and an art historian need to work together to reach successful retouching solutions since decision-making should not fall purely to one of them. Simultaneously, greater emphasis should be given to the education of wall painting researchers of different periods and, in the desire to overcome the non-critical and low-proficient approaches to retouching, there should be a quick exchange of information regarding the solutions for presentations and other in-field issues in Slovenia and abroad. The endangered wall paintings across the country should be categorically recorded and we should maintain a system of constant monitoring of their state,

Fig. 10: Retouching by tonal adjustment with glazes on the wall paintings in the Basilica of the Assumption of the Virgin Mary and the Saints Hermagora and Fortunato in Aquileia (Oglej).

Figs. 11a, 11b: The abrasions on the paint layer in the chapel of St John the Baptist in Pürgg retouched in *aqua sporca*.

Fig. 12: The big losses in the Church of St Andrew in Thörl–Maglern (Vrata–Megvarje) are filled with toned plaster on which architectonic division is painted.

Fig. 13: The detail from the Church of Santa Maria Assunta in Muggia Vecchia (Stare Milje) shows the modification of the hatching.

Figs. 14a, 14b: The example from the Elevation of the Holy Cross in Križevci near Ljutomer shows a retouch that halts at the edge of an assumption, helps clarify the scene, and simultaneously maintains the authenticity of the original.

Fig. 15: The restrained retouch imitating the painted plaster on the losses and with colour glazes on abrasions represents the conservation approach in the Church of the Assumption on Bled Island.

observing the distribution of funds for the rescue of the most endangered monuments. All monuments regardless of their location (central or not) should be treated equally. There should be a formalised system of intervention surveillance resting upon constructive dialogues, as well as an exposure of good restoration practices and high-quality contractors. Retouching should not be merely one of the routinely executed procedures carried out as a finishing stage of a conservation-restoration project; pressure to quickly finalise all work should, therefore, be avoided. Naturally, the final presentation should be considered already before the intervention or whilst planning the whole project. However, it should be executed no sooner than a year after the finished conservation, after having had clearly premeditated the individual character of the monument, its significance, role, and function. Last but not least, we should follow the golden rule of testing a retouching method on the least preserved area of the painting and then apply it to the whole. When retouching, we must then head from a bigger and broader area of loss to the smaller or from the most damaged parts to the most preserved, and not vice versa.

The members and supporters of the working group strive for a professional, mature, and responsible approach to the monuments, and common professional growth. We take comfort in knowing that when weighing the accuracy of our decisions we are not alone since the aesthetic presentation is the bitter pill among all European experts. Successful solutions can only be attempted with a broad mind, sensitivity, and dialogue between different participants. Considering the points just established it seems we are on a good path.

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HISTORICAL OVERVIEW OF DIFFERENT APPROACHES TO THE RETOUCHING OF WALL PAINTINGS

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Keywords

retouching, aesthetic reintegration, wall paintings, conservation, restoration, historical overview, theoretical principles

Abstract

The history of retouching is a complex subject intertwined with the history of art restoration. The hereby paper, therefore, analyses the history of restoration, the question of art perception, and the co-dependent inpainting of losses. Thanks to Italian theoreticians, the restoration mindset that developed after the mid-20th century systematised the theoretical thoughts on the retouch of the damaged parts of a work of art and formed clear restoration guidelines that greatly influenced how artwork in Europe was treated. These theoretical foundations, strengthened by the ethical imperatives set by international agreements, offer basic guidelines to conservators and restorers when restoring cultural heritage. Stress is placed on reversibility and distinguishability of the inpainting applied to the damaged component by minimally interfering with the aesthetic and historical integrity of the original.

Introduction

European art has displayed the ambivalent attitude towards art restoration since the Renaissance.[1] This ambivalence stems from the issue of presenting artwork which in itself carries the duality of historical and aesthetic meaning. This is the main, still topical dilemma of conservation and restoration, linked with the opposing demands for future use of artwork by considering their narrative and symbolic value, as well as preserving their documentary side. We are aware that it is the aesthetic reintegration,[2] the last of the restoration procedures, that most strongly influences our perception of the work of art. As a final step in the restoration treatment, it returns its unity and communicative value, interferes with the sphere of its visuality, and can alter the artwork immensely, which then affects its value and appreciation, and (the attitude towards) further proceedings.[3]

Aesthetic reintegration presents the actual, multi-layered issue that has not been notably researched or published in our region for decades, although in practice we incessantly encounter it. We miss having a broader dialogue and scientific literature with quality material comparable to the international one, critical evaluation, and contemporary guidelines that would actualise the questions of ethics, theory, and methodology.

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[1] See Alessandro Conti, *History of the Restoration and Conservation of Works of Art*, Milano 2007 (CONTI 2007), who offers a condensed overview of the conservation-restoration practices and theories from the Middle Ages to the end of the 19th century, and Jukka Jokilehto, *A History of Architectural Conservation*, Oxford 1986 (JOKILEHTO 1986), with a study of development of the heritage protection based on architectural monuments.

[2] Aesthetic reintegration is a wider term encompassing different kinds of damage infills (from filling of damaged areas in plaster to various methodological executions of the retouch on paint layer). Clear terminological definitions are still being determined (cf. *EwaGlos,* 2016); in the past, the expression *retouch* was used for all kinds of reintegrations.

[3] ALTHÖFER 1962 a, p. 73.

Early restoration of wall paintings

The questions regarding the aesthetic treatment of losses distanced themselves from the work of art when this passed from its everyday role to the anonymity of collections and became the object of scientific research. The initially stressed aesthetic value of works of art important in the religious and private sphere was, based on historical and scientific approach, almost silenced by the demand for preservation of the authentic object as a historical document.[4] Reports on preservation and restoration of damaged works of art can be traced back to the classical antiquity and they reveal that up until the Baroque overpainting was the most common way of saving painted monuments. It renewed the colours, adapted the contents to the style and taste of the time, or covered the losses. If the early restoration work encompasses mostly anonymous painter-restorers (meaning painters who dealt in art restoration before the emergence of restoration studies), the later literary tradition mentions famous painters who restored the paintings. In the 18th century, there appear also restorers by trade although restoration remained a supplementary work of painters up until the middle of the 19th century.[5]

Different views on restoration between the 16th and the 18th century

The first occasional theoretical views on retouching were born in the 16th century. However, the literature on restoration in that time is scarce and the questions about restoration are dealt in treatises on painting. Numerous theoreticians, including the art historian Giorgio Vasari (1511–1574), describe their views on art restoration. In his work *Vitae* (first edition from 1550), Vasari discusses the problems and expectations related to the restoration and preservation of works of art. According to him, old paintings should not be falsified by overpainting since in the eyes of the experts the overpainted image loses quality and therefore also its value.[6]

In the 18th century, we come across discussions regarding the profession of the restorer that are based on the realisation that the person interfering in a work of art must adapt to various styles and have special skills to carry out the new methodologies and techniques. In France, conservation – a new term – emerges. Numerous classical archaeological finds and related ideas of beauty and authenticity of antique works lead to new aesthetic theories and criteria for evaluating the artwork. Great value is placed on the originality of a work of art and the preservation of its authenticity, which represents the true and unfalsified artist's idea.[7] The preservation of patina, the restriction of the intervention to the damaged areas, and the deliberate use of reversible materials are only a few indicators of greater respect towards the original. While the Baroque still held restoration as a skill pertaining to painting, the Classicism for the first time notes a restorer, who performs the job no longer impartially as an artist, but in service of the work of

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[4]   In recent times, the traditional concept of authenticity, whose prime expression of artistic desire is the moment of art creation, is frequently replaced by the idea of numerous authenticities of the object: MUŃOZ VIŇAS 2009, p. 93ss. We distinguish between the initial authenticity, which had been given by the author, and a historical one, which denotes the life of the object and its change in time. Gradually, the historical authenticity increases and the initial one lessens. Both intertwine in the object: VIŠNAR 1997, p. 25s. Let us explain also the difference between the original and authenticity. The first is matter and can be sensed by hand, while authenticity is a quality, a materialised idea, a message, a primary motif that gives birth to the original form. Ibid

[5]   In restoration, retouch denotes colour inpainting of the missing areas, whereas in painting it stands for corrections carried out in the form of overpainting by the artist. Because of the bond between painting and restoration, it is therefore not surprising that such difference in meaning was hardly noticed by the painter-restorers: NADOLNY 2012, p. 573.

[6]   CIATTI 2005, pp. 53–66.

[7]   STAVROULA KAPELOUZOU 2010, p. 17s.

art, whose documentary value[8] is recognised as special and needs to be preserved. Concurrently, a still topical question poses itself: what (not) to add and whether addition is necessary at all.

The 19th and 20th century and the development of the modern conservation-restoration theories

The rise of historical consciousness in the European countries and the development of nationalism and romanticism spurred the extensive attempts for the protection and preservation of national monuments, which became part of wider collective consciousness as markers of national history.[9] It was the nationalistic idea that fuelled the restoration of monuments in the 19th century. It first manifested itself in the attitude towards the restoration of (mostly) medieval architecture, where the restoring tendency leaned towards the re-creation of the ideal image of the monument in a certain historical era, based on comparisons with other monuments of the same style. This was a stylistic restoration which could mean the removal of all other later historical additions and the creation of the before non-existent parts. The most famous supporters of this idea were the architects Sir George Gilbert Scott (1811–1878) in England and Eugène Viollet-le-Duc (1814–1878) in France. As the most important theoretician in the history of French restoration, Viollet-le-Duc greatly influenced other European countries.[10] Opposing him were the English artist William Morris (1834–1896) and the critic John Ruskin (1819–1900) who defended the documentary value of the monuments and the authenticity of the sources, whereby the aesthetics of romantic historicism helped enthrone the concept of artistic creativeness as something individual, unique, and historically unrepeatable. The pair stressed the necessary distinction between the original and the restored additions and favoured the preservation in the form of a conservation approach.[11]

By the end of the 19th century, the conservation approach towards monument restoration was adopted also elsewhere in Europe and slowly demanded minimal interference and visible retouching.[12] In Austria, the main supporter of this movement was the Vienna School of Art History headed by the founders of the modern art history discipline and cultural heritage protection: Alois Riegl and Max Dvořák. Riegl (1857–1905) designed a conceptual argument for the preservation of heritage and in 1903, with his *Der moderne Denkmalkultus,*[13] set a comprehensible and philosophically-grounded system of heritage values that respects all aspects of monuments.[14] Due to his influence and methodological approach, many a painting, discovered at the beginning of the 20th century, was saved from overpainting.[15] His successor, Max Dvořák (1874–1921) summarised his mentor's theory and views and published them (revised) in the manual *Katechismus der Denkmalpflege* (1916, 1918), in which he advises on the practical

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[8] The documentary value concerns historical conveyance of the monument, which, as an authentic document of an era, represents a source of information about the shape, material, use, techniques, etc. The use of these sources permits the elaboration of the specific artistic, historic, social, and scientific dimensions of the cultural heritage being examined. (more in: *The Nara Document on Authenticity*, 1994).

[9] STAVROULA KAPELOUZOU 2010, pp. 6–9.

[10] Idem, p. 266ss.

[11] Idem, p. 304.

[12] LINDEMEIER 2009, p. 145.

[13] RIEGL 1903.

[14] Each of these aspects has its characteristics and, consequently, different protective measures. See Aloiz Riegl's System of Heritage-Protection Values; PIRKOVIČ 1993, pp. 12–16.

[15] KOLLER 2002, p. 110.

treatment of monuments. The conservation approach was first officially presented at the international congress in Athens in 1931 and documented in the Athens Charter. The Athens and, later on, the Venice Charter (1964) introduced the ethical standards, professional guidelines, and principles of restoration-conservation of archaeological and architectural monuments, which is why in that field the situation was more advanced than in the field of painted monuments. The main principles, such as the demand for the scientific approach, research and documentary methods, and, mostly, the respect for the authenticity of the original, were, however, pertinent to all fields of heritage.[16]

The conservation or archaeological approach is, in general, a way of presenting archaeological artefacts since it stresses their documentary value of historical documents; this is ultimately preserved when the original is authentic and contains no later additions. The transmission of this principle to the restoration of wall paintings means that in the name of authenticity and objective presentation, all later additions and overpaintings are removed, even if they already have their historical value (we are now in times of re-restoration of works of art restored in the past). By revealing the original state of the paintings, the results are archaeologically treated fragments, ones which we no longer try to connect or assemble back into an image (the restoration process does not allow additions, reconstructions or retouching). The damaged and missing parts remain empty (showing the underlayer or the support) or are filled in with a neutral tone. The idea of the historical document reveals traces of an era that found beauty in a fragment. Such archaeological restoration brought about the re-discovery of numerous works of art that had been covered by overpaintings, and this, in turn, resulted in new art history findings. Such an example of this is **the Bardi Chapel in the Church of Santa Croce in Florence.** Giotto's frescos from 1325 were whitewashed in Baroque and re-discovered in the middle of the 19th century, when they were, in the habit of the time, retouched with overpaintings and inpaintings. In the middle of the 20th century, the criticism of such an approach led to the second restoration of the paintings, carried out between 1958 and 1961, and headed by the then most distinguishable restorer in Italy, Leonetto Tintori. Following the then predominant purist principle, all the secondary interventions were removed, revealing the badly preserved surfaces covered with damages, which were, however, not retouched with respect to the authenticity of the original and the desire for objective presentation. All the losses were toned in the manner of neutral reintegration,[17] while bigger gaps were filled with rough plaster applied on the background, figuration, the painted architecture, and decoration. Their shapes and tonality, which is not especially adjusted to the whole, influence the aesthetic experience of Giotto's cycle since they force themselves to the forefront of the painted surface (Fig. 1). Tintori's solution is, nevertheless, considered acceptable and even today this is how we may approach greater losses. In the last renovation, carried out between 1983 and 1984 by the Florentine institute Opificio delle Pietre Dure, the paintings were cleaned, and Tintori's treatment mostly preserved.[18]

Although the severe resentment of self-willed additions in the past restorations was completely understandable, the objectivity of archaeological restoration was too rigid to maintain its role. With it, the damaged works of art were enforced with a new aesthetic value, which they have never held. The original artistic intentions and the iconography

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[16] International documents are accessible also in Slovenian: *Doktrina 1,* 2003; *Doktrina 2,* 2014.

[17] The principle of neutral reintegration, which is significantly flawed since 'neutral' shapes and colours do not exist. Brandi exposes the problem of comprehension of neutrally treated lacunae through the prism of Gestalt psychology. In our imagination, neutrally treated areas in paintings become, due to their autonomous form, a painting element which jumps forward and pushes the painted image into the background and thus degrades it: BRANDI 2005.

[18] BONSANTI 2002, pp. 77–90; SCHÄDLER-SAUB 1999, pp. 336–343.

Fig. 1: Scenes from the life of St Francis from the Bardi Chapel in the Church of Santa Croce in Florence after the archaeological restoration by Leonetto Tintori in the 1960s.

of images were overlooked, thus impoverishing the work of art.[19] Nevertheless, an important step was made in that era, one that increased the notion of the importance of the original.[20]

The fragment aesthetics advocated by such restoration was berated also by the Italian theoretician and founder of the Roman restoration institute Istituto Centrale del Restauro, Cesare Brandi (1906–1988). Having realised that the traditional restoration practice can only be stopped by clear theoretical foundations, he wrote his views on the essential restoration principles in a series of shorter essays and articles. In 1963, these were published in the *Teoria del Restauro,*[21] which became the most debated book in the field of restoration. It has remained the turning point in art restoration for it represents the convergence of a century-long development, a solid theoretical and scientific foundation that defines restoration, its purpose, subject (work of art), and the methods and treatments. It is a strongly philosophically marked literary work that influenced the attitude towards heritage on an international scale. Brandi's suppositions are based on the understanding of the work of art as a historical witness, which derives from older traditions (from Ruskin and Dehio), except that he takes a step further as he also stresses the aesthetic aspect.

To treat the losses on (wall) paintings, the institute developed a special distinguishing method in the 1940s, the technique called *tratteggio*[22] (strokes of short parallel lines or hatching), where vertical lines are placed one next to another. This method preserves the information on colour and shape inside the preserved, yet fragmented image. The technique of small delicate lines makes such an intervention easy to spot from proximity, yet enables it to coalesce into a whole from distance. The method was developed precisely to restore the paintings painted by Lorenzo da Viterbo between 1465 and 1470 in the Mazzatosta Chapel in the Santa Maria della Verita Church in Viterbo, severely affected by the 1944 bombing. The majority of the scenes were damaged and parts of the painted layer fell off the wall and crumbled into small pieces. After the war, the restoration of the important chapel frescos was the priority task of the Istituto. Wanting to achieve the historically correct and aesthetically persuasive presentation, Cesare Brandi desired to place the fragments into a structure (literally, *into a fabric*),[23] which would re-connect the pieces of the original by shape and colour.[24] Thus, an integration method was born which was based on clear criteria and which was onwards successfully used by the Roman institute for the restoration of wall paintings and later on, also of paintings.[25]

Shortly after the publication of Brandi's *Teoria,* there began appearing various theoretically based methods of treating losses on paintings. The first echo was the theory of Umberto Baldini, head of the Opificio delle Pietre Dure

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[19] CONTI 2007, p. xx; 435; ALTHÖFER 1962 a, pp. 73–84.

[20] SCHÄDLER-SAUB 1986, p. 28.

[21] BRANDI 1963. The Italian original was relatively late followed by translations; Spanish 1988, Romanian 1996, Czech 2000, French and Greek 2001, Portuguese 2004, English 2005. The centennial anniversary of Brandi's birth in 2006 gave rise to several translations; Japanese and German in the same year, Serbian 2007, later also Arabic, Persian and Korean. A Slovenian translation does not exist.

[22] Based on Brandi's theories, the method was developed at the Istituto by his students Paul Phillipot, Paulo and Laura Mora between 1945 and 1950, intended first for the retouching of wall paintings.

[23] Brandi described *tratteggio* in 1946 in a catalogue accompanying the exhibition of the restored frescoes in Viterbo: 'The technique comprises of a small, multi-layered net of parallel vertical lines executed in watercolours; the colours and shapes are designed as a weave on a tapestry': *La teoria del restauro*, 2006, p. 296.

[24] In 1946, the work of restorers and their most representative joined scenes were presented at the exhibition at the Civic Museum in Viterbo and in 1949, the re-joined scenes were put back onto the wall: BENTIVOGLIO 2008, *InStoria,* N. 1 - Gennaio 2008 (XXXII), <http://www.instoria.it/home/lorenzo_viterbo_istituto_centrale.htm> [accessed 19 Feb 2018]

[25] *Tratteggio* is suitable for infill of smaller losses, which can still be reconstructed. It is strictly limited to the surfaces of puttied lacunae, while the losses of paint layer should be treated with glazes. (MORA P., MORA L., PHILIPPOT 1996, p. 310).

Fig. 2: The missing part of the drapery from the painting in the Brancacci Chapel in the Santa Maria del Carmine Church in Florence was retouched in the *selezione cromatica* during the last restoration.

Institute in Florence. It was developed in the late 1960s, after the great flood in 1966, which damaged numerous precious works of art and thus imposed new challenges on restorers and theoreticians. The theory was published in 1978 as *Teoria del Restauro e unità di metodologia* (vol. 1, vol. 2 in 1981) and in it, Baldini developed a system of retouching different types of losses and painting techniques, maintaining the visibility of retouches and the increase of image readability as the main criteria. He initiated the use of watercolour glazes that do not imitate the original in colour but merely approximate it by tone. He also introduced a method of different retouchings based on the type of loss and the painting technique used: *selezione dell'oro* for retouching the gilded parts, *astrazione cromatica* – criss-crossed lines in four pure colours, and *selezione cromatica* – parallel lines with four pure colours, which differs from *tratteggio* mainly in the fact that the lines adjust to the shape.[26]

The 1983 to 1990 extensive restoration of the Renaissance frescoes by Masaccio, Masolino, and Filippino Lippi in **the Brancacci Chapel in the Santa Maria del Carmine Church in Florence**, headed by Umberto Baldini serves as a good example of the Florentine methods. The cycle was painted between 1424 and 1485. The frescoes had darkened immensely and their colourfulness was revealed only after they were cleaned and the older 18th century overpaints were removed. The retouching scheme adhered to the condition of the preserved parts of the chapel paintings. The

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[26] SCHÄDLER-SAUB 1986, 25ss. The Description of the Florentine Methodology and Principles of Retouching. For the summary of Baldini's method, see MORA P., MORA L., PHILIPPOT 1996, pp. 355–357.
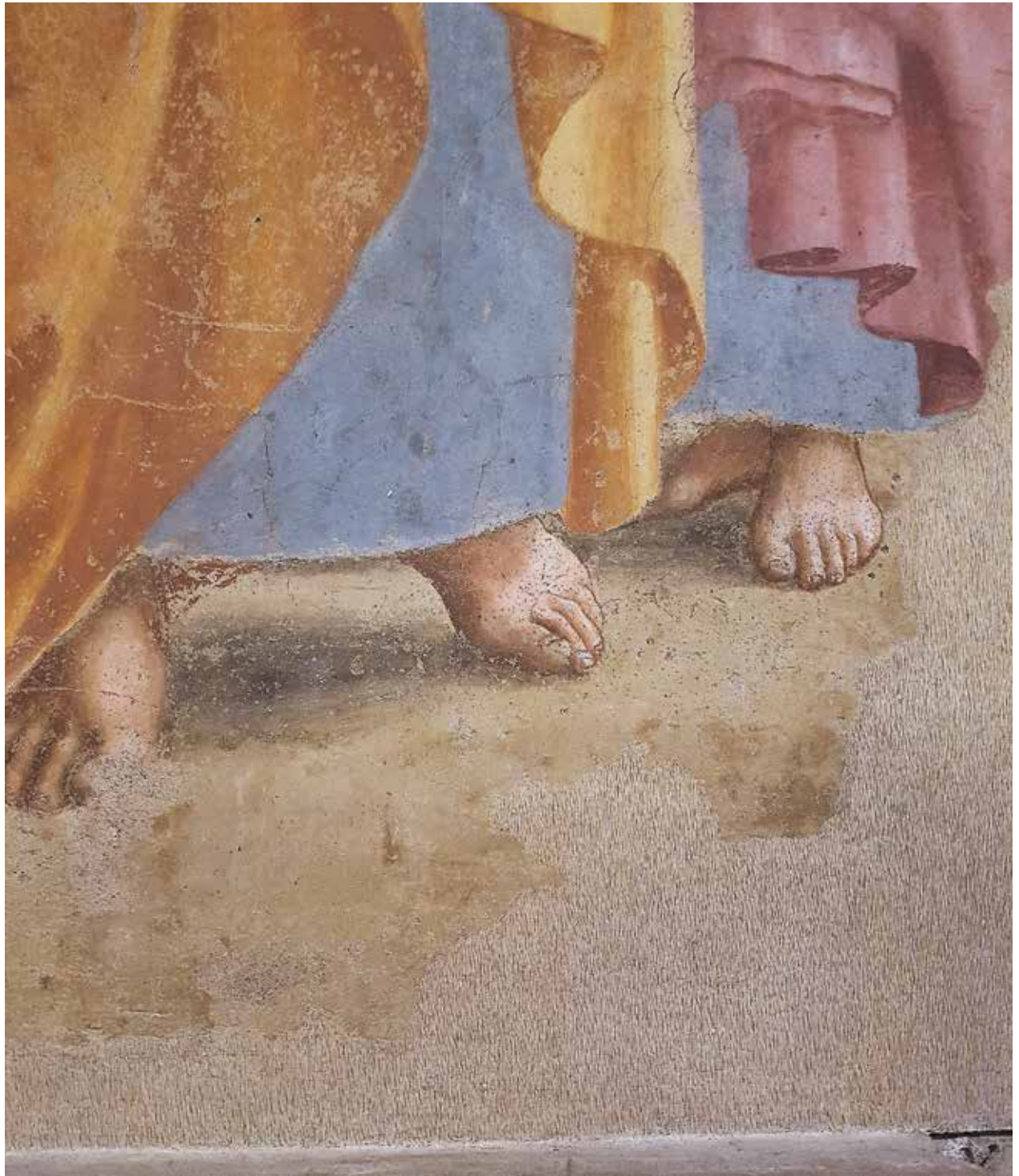
Fig. 3: Losses at the edges of the scene from the Brancacci Chapel in the Santa Maria del Carmine Church in Florence retouched in *astrazione cromatica*.

damage to the paint layer caused by ageing remained intact as evidence of the history of the work of art. Smaller losses were reconstructed following *selezione cromatica*. The same method was used on larger lacunae which previously had Baroque inpainting, and where reconstruction was possible based on the information induced from the preserved underdrawing. The severely damaged gilding on nimbi was retouched by the *selezione dell'oro* method. Only the bigger losses on the eastern wall that were caused by the removal of the Baroque altar were retouched in *astrazione cromatica* (Figs. 2 and 3).[27] Despite different retouches or precisely because these were adjusted to different losses, the result is a harmonious whole of the painted cycle.

The perception of Italian theories at home and abroad

The Italian restoration theories set the foundation for art restoration also in the broader European area. In Germany, the Roman method was accepted into practice soon after its creation but was without scientific discussions and knowledge of theoretical basics initially rarely used – this being the case also because of coexistence of older, classical approaches, such as total reintegration.

Kurt Wehlte, who for painting restoration recommends a complete retouch that cannot be discerned from the original by the naked eye and argues it by referring to the detection of restoration additions by scientific methods, considers the Roman method the appropriate solution for wall paintings. In his manual on painting techniques from 1967, Wehlte for the restoration of bigger lacunae, which may not be reconstructed, advises the use of hatching that adjusts to the surrounding colours and does not define shapes. For less important elements of the painting (decoration), where the lined texture can become disturbing, he suggests inpainting with tonally lighter glazes.[28] Some authors are reserved also when it comes to visible retouches, claiming that they inhibit the image of the work of art.[29] A reason to question the use of *tratteggio* is also its demanding execution since for good results the method must be technically well executed. It is often difficult to come close to the effect of the damaged and colour-varied original with the use of short lines in pure colours. In addition, wall paintings in the Alpine countries and north of them are different from the ones in Italy – we deal with rougher surfaces instead of polished plaster, thin layers of whitewash, and executions in lime or secco technique (paintings began in *a fresco* and finished in *a secco*). These circumstances, therefore, do not allow an optimum application of Italian methodologies, intended for polished, colourful paintings executed in the proper fresco technique.

In Germany, the Italian theories and the Roman method were first elaborately presented and substantiated with practical instructions for the wall painting restoration in 1975.[30] In practice, the method and its technical execution were then adapted to the needs and principles of northern painting and the term *tratteggio* remained in use for all kinds of line-based retouching. As a permanent feature, there remained the always-topical complete retouch, which

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[27] SCHÄDLER-SAUB 1999, pp. 526–531.
[28] WEHLTE 1967, pp. 373–374.
[29] SCHÄDLER-SAUB 2005, p. 107; summary of Rolf Straub, Das Technische und allzu technische in der Gemälderestaurierung, *Maltechnik*, 62, 1956, p. 70ss.
[30] MORA P., MORA L., PHILIPPOT 1996, pp. 343–354. The article was originally published as *Die Behandlung von Fehlstellen in der Wandmalerei, Beiträge zur Kunstgeschichte und Denkmalpflege, Festschrift für Walter Frodl zum 65. Geburtstag*, (ed. Walter Frodl), Wien-Stuttgart 1975, pp. 204–218.
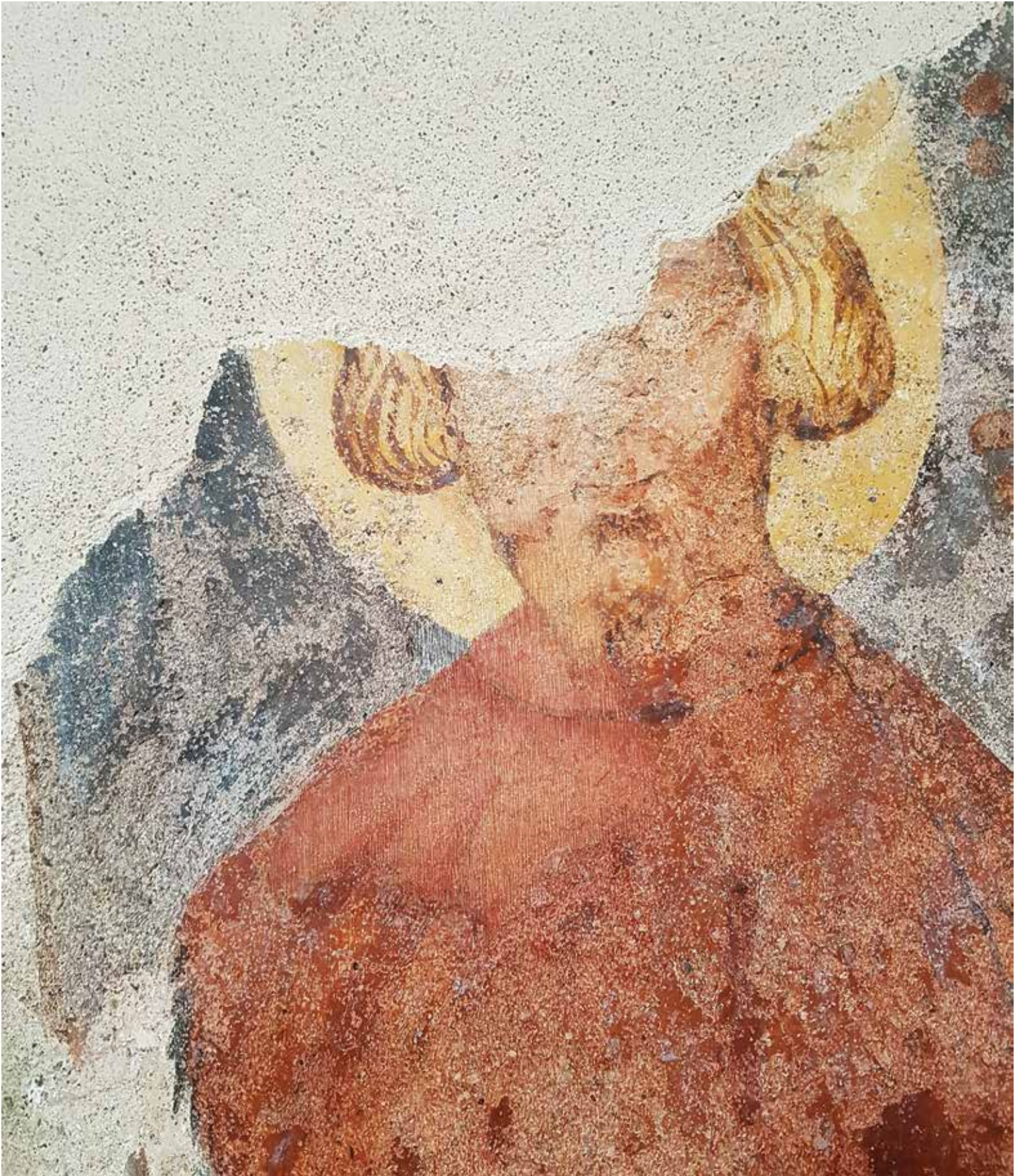
Fig. 4: The abraded paint layer from St James' Church in Urschalling is retouched with glazes, smaller losses are treated with hatching, while bigger losses are filled in plaster with added coloured aggregate.
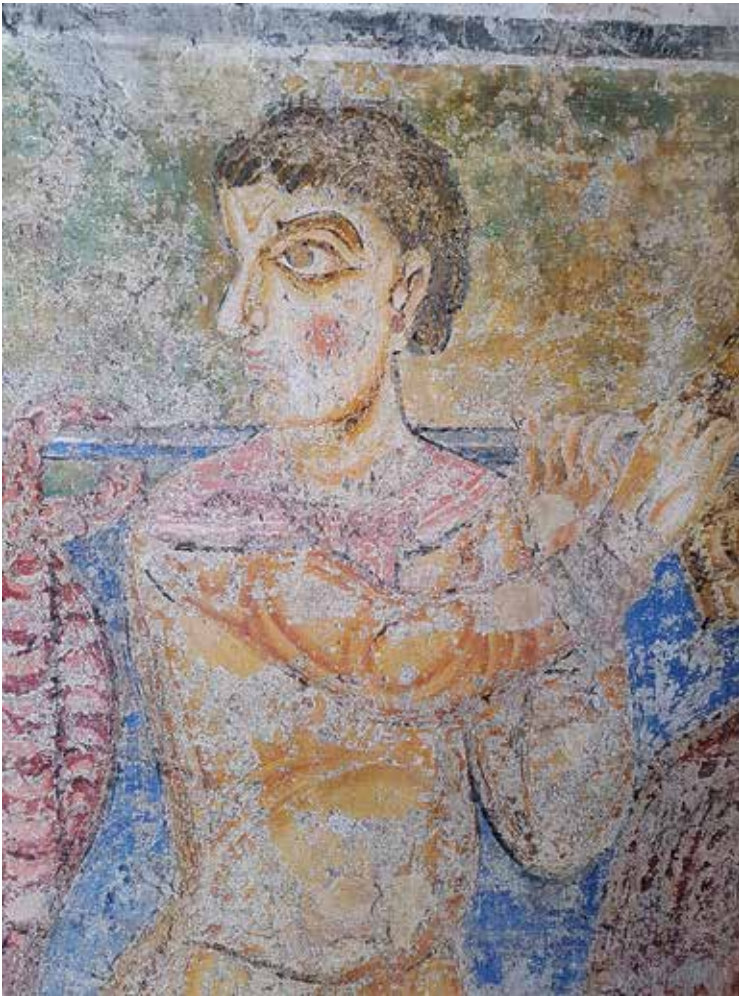
Fig. 5: The abrasions of paint layer from St John's Church in Pürgg are retouched with glazes in a grey tone, bigger lacunae with plaster that was surface treated with a sponge.

Fig. 6: Frescos in the presbytery of St Cantianus's Church in Vrzdenec were discovered by Matej Sternen and restored in 1925–1926; the retouch was carried out in the form of inpaintings.

stresses the aesthetic notion of the work of art and, in its modern version, differs from the historical overpaintings by being limited exclusively to the puttied areas of losses.[31]

A successful example of restoration based on the Italian theory is the preservation of the medieval frescos in **the Church of St James in Urschalling near Lake Chiemsee.** The painting made in the international gothic style of the 14th century was discovered and restored already in the 1940s. In the 1970s, the restorers then removed the overpaintings, which revealed numerous damages to the painted cycle. The treatment that followed in the 1980s was based on clear methodological distinction between the types of losses. Those that were too extensive for reconstruction were filled up to one millimetre below the level of the original with plaster with added coloured sand, thus achieving an imitation of slightly toned intonaco. This way the losses became less disturbing. The paint layer abrasions were retouched with glazes, while smaller losses were puttied and infilled with *tratteggio* (Fig. 4). The additions of restoration are thus clearly recognisable and the original, though fragmented, more readable.[32]

In Austria, the practice followed the scientifically-founded concept of the Vienna School of Art History up until the 1970s, as the strict conservation principles restricted the use of retouching methods. The 1970s brought a change spurred by close connections and expertise training in Italy. An overview of the Austrian wall painting restoration

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[31] ALTHÖFER 1962 b, pp. 144–170.
[32] PURSCHE 2000, pp. 143–160.

today reveals that the interventions were deliberated and mostly based on scientific approach and conservation. Since the majority of Austrian medieval wall paintings were discovered in the last 150 years and also repeatedly restored, the restores concern themselves mainly with the problems of the materials that had been added in the past, degradation of the material substance, and its conservation.[33] The retouches display minimal interventions and distinguishable treatments with the use of watercolour glazes and puttying of the bigger lacunae with different surface treatments of the plaster (as can be seen, for example, in **the Chapel of St John in Pürgg**; Fig. 5).

The development of Slovenian conservation-restoration is tied to the maturing of the heritage preservation doctrine in the Austro-Hungarian Empire. The modern principles, based on the Vienna School of Art History, were taken up by Dvořak's student, France Stele, and marked the Slovenian conservation field in the following decades. He praised the aesthetic values and allowed restoration interventions that preserve documentary values when mere conservation would not suffice.[34] Stele is also the initiator of the restoration practice since he had, even before his official position, inspired the painter Matej Sternen to collaborate with him. In his fifty-year-long practice, Sternen then restored over a hundred works of art, of which many were wall paintings.[35] His retouches on the paintings (such as those in **the presbytery of the St Cantianus's Church in Vrzdenec**) are often executed in quick painting gesture, limited to the puttied areas on the larger losses but covering the original on smaller ones. But they are a document of a period and reflect the limited time and funds for restoration (Fig. 6). Sternen taught many restorers, who joined him later on.[36]

Native artists with academic education were the headliners of the restoration until the foundation of the post-graduate study course of conservation and restoration of works of art at the Academy of Fine Arts and Design in 1954.[37] It was Mirko Šubic who played a crucial role in the establishment of this course. He specialised at institutes in Vienna and Brussels, did some study travelling across well-known restoration centres in Europe and, from 1951, he headed the newly founded restoration department of the Zavod za spomeniško varstvo.[38] From the 1950s onwards, the restorers regularly educated themselves at various European restoration centres with a long tradition (Brussels, London, Munich, Rome) and gained in-depth technological and theoretical knowledge as well as valuable experience from the field of retouching.[39] When reading the published papers of the Slovenian experts,[40] one sees that they followed the

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[33] BACHER 2000, pp. 91–112.

[34] KALČIĆ 2014, p. 66.

[35] Sternen's restoration, which remains a background topic when looking at his painting milieu, deserves a detailed inspection since it significantly aided the beginning and the development of the institutionalised restoration: SITAR 2016, p. 298ss.

[36] In the 1930s, the restoration team was joined by the painters Peter Železnik and Mirko Šubic. In addition, Stele thought highly of his close associate, Franjo Golob, who fell during the war: KOKALJ 1972, p. 34. The less known Peter Železnik was Stele's second most frequent associate, who restored numerous paintings and left a list of his actions from 1927 to 1968, being at the same time one of the rare restorers to thoroughly document his work: SITAR 2016, p. 330.

[37] The Academy was established right after World War II, in October 1945, and thus fulfilled the endeavours of the Slovenian artists, who were studying abroad (Vienna, Munich, Prague, Zagreb). Initially called the Akademija upodabljajočih umetnosti, it was renamed in 1961 into the Akademija likovnih umetnosti, and in 2002, into the Akademija za likovno umetnost in oblikovanje, <http://www.aluo.uni-lj.si/zgodovina/> [accessed 19 Feb 2018]
For many years, the specialised study was the only such programme of higher education in the then Yugoslavia, and it is here that the experts from Slovenia, former Yugoslavia, and even abroad have been trained. BOGOVČIČ 2004, p. 6.

[38] LENIČ 1990, p. 48.

[39] DEMŠAR 1972, p. 39.

[40] The greatest knowledge on restoration approaches and materials used can be acquired through the examination of the archive documentation, restoration reports on executed interventions, talks with restorers, and a look into the restoration practice.

Fig. 7: The 1463–1465 painting in the presbytery of St John the Baptist Church in Mirna was discovered at the beginning of the 1960 and restored in 1968. The retouchings are partially carried out as glazes in local tone and partially as painting reconstruction.

events abroad which enabled them to critically administer practice at home and that they were well-versed to be aware of the current dilemmas in theory, methodology, and application of different approaches. When Izidor Mole wrote about the practice of the Roman Istituto Centrale del Restauro (ICR) in 1965 and on their restoration of frescos, he already mentioned Brandi's theoretical principles, for which he claimed to be generally accepted, and 'retouches with lines that have', as he wrote, 'become a manner and are for that very reason not accepted elsewhere /…/.'[41] In 1966, he wrote about the problem of retouching wall paintings and exposed the pure conservation and locally limited retouch. He stressed that it was more difficult to decide on a manner and type of retouch than to execute it, since 'while we have objective measures for the execution, ones that are based on experience, the decision remains subjective and depends on the aesthetic sense and expertise of the conservator and restorer.'[42]

It is thus no wonder that we come across different approaches to retouching when we review Slovenian monuments. In the past, the puttied losses were infilled in total retouch by tonal adjustment with the original, application of glazes in local tones (as in **the presbytery of the parish Church of St John the Baptist in Mirna in the Dolenjska region**; Fig. 7), or by use of retouch with lines (hatching). In this case we do not speak of the Roman *tratteggio* (vertical hatching using three pure colours based on the local tone of the surrounding painting by which we construct tone and modulation), since, generally, the term has been (except in Italy) incorrectly taken up for all types of retouch with lines. Even though the process involves the application of about a centimetre long, thin and strictly vertical lines to white background of puttied surfaces, numerous modifications occur. Until recently, *tratteggio* was regularly applied using big and long lines which quickly displease the onlooker already at a greater distance.

Today, a combination of different methods of retouching is used on one painting. The guideline for the restorers is to distinguish between greater and smaller losses. In general, the complete losses are filled with plaster that comes close in colour to that of the original *intonaco* (here the choice of a suitable aggregate plays a significant role) or the plaster is painted with limewash. Smaller losses are adjusted to their surroundings, and are according to their importance in the visual field, treated with visual retouch (lines/dots) or more rarely, with glazes in tones adjusted to the original, only lighter and cooler. Slovenian experts used dots in retouching already in the 1980s, and even today this method is still frequently used by some restorers in the Goriška region, which proves that the choice of the method is often determined by the environment in which the restorer is educated and where (s)he works.

Conclusion

The overview of the examples of the restored wall paintings reflects on the changes of theoretical and philosophical guidelines of the heritage protection in different eras. Nowadays it is agreed that restoration must be based on objective and clear criteria. These were proposed by the Italian theories, which through practice evolved into a flexible approach that a conservator-restorer can adjust with his or her knowledge and technical skills to the state and the importance of the work of art.

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[41] MOLE 1965, p. 178.
[42] MOLE 1966, p. 18ss. In his articles, Mole draws from his experience and describes the technology of work with different materials, procedures, and approaches, which is particularly valuable since he offers a view into the restorers' minds and practices of the era (MOLE 1984, 1985, 1986, 1987). His articles are consistently equipped with foreign sources and bibliography, which shows his profound interest in contemporary guidelines abroad.

The important principles of Brandi's legacy – the foundation of the modern restoration practice – are the respect towards the original substance, the use of compatible and reversible materials, and the visual distinction between the retouch and the original. Despite rational principles, we should not forget that the answer to the aesthetic question always involves subjective decisions. It should be noted that these are not made solely by the restorers, art historians, and conservators but also by the users of the heritage, their owners, and the public concerned.

The Slovenian field of restoration is currently covered by a network of experts aiming for a wholesome approach to a work of art. Their interdisciplinary, cross-institutional, and international connections enable a wide scope of work and help them observe the current expertise development at home and abroad. Even if there are numerous articles on technological and methodological approaches and justifications for the use of certain cleaning or consolidating materials, there are few concrete texts on the aesthetic reintegration. It appears we much too frequently repeat the learned patterns without thorough deliberation, but most of all, too rarely debate the matter. The key ingredients for effective scientific work are the understanding of the aforementioned subject, its development and history, different approaches, and copious examples. And only armed with all of this can we responsibly undertake the question of aesthetic reintegration of each monument, bearing in mind that as experts we work on behalf of the monument and not vice versa.

THE INFLUENCE OF THE RESTORATION APPROACHES, THE COOPERATION BETWEEN A RESTORER AND AN ART HISTORIAN, AND OF TECHNICAL ART HISTORY ON FINAL PRESENTATION*

Mateja Neža Sitar

Keywords

heritage protection/conservation, conservation-restoration, history of restoration, technical art history, approach, presentation, intervention, retouch

Abstract

The hereby article highlights the unfamiliarity with wider origins, deeper reasons, and different circumstances that influence the current situation in the conservation-restoration of wall paintings in Slovenia. Although mostly neglected, the aforementioned factors are the building blocks of the professional field and influence our way of thinking, professionalism, and collective understanding (e.g., interpretation of aesthetics). The latter is rooted in our past and manifests itself when deciding on restoration approaches and manners of presentation. Since the subject is extensive, the article merely uncovers and lists different dilemmas as well as presents the lesser-known facts from the past, publishing some for the first time. We are at a point of discovering the development stage we are at, why, and what kind of path we are going to pave in the future. Therefore, it would be too rash to draw conclusions and summarize just yet. First, we need to ask the right questions to arrive at the right answers. We expose two main concerns. The first is the urgency to simultaneously comprehend both sides of the monument: material-technical and humanistic-symbolic, which is only possible by close interdisciplinary work, for example, via *technical art history* research strategy. The second is the up-to-now neglected but desperately needed research and record of the history of conservation and restoration in Slovenia. The article includes selected citations by some of the key figures of the past Slovenian heritage protection service since their thoughts are still relevant when we question the purpose, goals, and ethics of certain approaches and procedures.

The conservation-restoration experts constantly need to be aware that besides technical problems our decisions are determined also by philosophical, psychological, and ethical beliefs, as well as by cultural determinism and the established restoration practices or trends, which prescribe or at least influence the work of (Slovenian) restorers.[1] Although across Slovenian borders, literature by important restoration theoreticians abounds and international charters[2] have defined the norms and directives of wall painting restoration for decades, in practice every restorer understands and implements them subjectively. This is why we have to review our perception, basis, motives, and reasons for procedures and return to the past to understand restoration approaches suitably and objectively. All these are the essentials that need to be discussed at all levels of monument study: interpretation, conservation-restoration, and presentation. The misguided restoration procedures are the greatest culprit for the degradation and distortion of wall paintings. We realise that no simple answers exist, which is why the approaches and values that once influenced conservation and restoration need to be explored since many dilemmas and questions reoccur even if the circumstances change.

The article points out that the Slovene heritage protection service has been insufficiently studied. Theoretical writings on restoration are scarce and mostly without citations and bibliography. To obtain a wholesome insight into the history of restoration, its regression, and developmental turning points, we need to examine primary sources, documentation on restoration interventions, and broader circumstances with educational, social, cultural, political, and economic background.

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* This article emerged from the 2017 symposium paper, however it is now more comprehensive with the findings of the PhD thesis: SITAR 2016. I would like to thank my colleagues Ajda Mladenovič and Gorazd Živkovič for their help with revision.

[1] From online presentation *San Gemini Preservation Studies*: **Restoration: Theory, Ethics and Issues,** <http://sangeministudies.info/programs/list-of-programs/s2-1> [accessed 16 July 2018]: a summary of some key terms by categories: '**Transformation time and memory**: entropy and reorganization, time as a measure of entropy, present, past and future, memory and foresight, types of memory, cultural heritage as collective memory, restoration preserves memory, curators edits of collective memory; **What is the value of things we preserve**: aesthetics, historic, religious, symbolic, scientific, functional; /…/ **Types of restoration**: artistic, artistic in style, scientific; **Motivation behind restoration**: preservation of cultural heritage, commercial or economic interest, institutional policy, nationalism, religious motives, obsessive behavior; **Ethics of restoration**: veracity and transparency, reversibility, preserving multiple values of objects, cultural heritage as collective human property, owners as custodians of the collective property; **Wholeness**: 1. When is art or an object whole: Original intent of the artist, material, cultural, historical and contextual integrity, 2. Degradation of integrity, 3. Potential unity (Brandi 1963), 4. Fragmentation; **Phases of restoration**: consolidation, cleaning, preservative treatments, presentation and integration; **Cleaning**: evaluating necessity, does dirt have historical value, dirty patch, cleaning to the last layer of dirt; **Presentation and integration of art (retouching)**: 1. Modulation of lacunae's tonality: monochromatic, chromatic modulation, chromatic abstraction, 2. Integration: mimetic, semi-mimetic, 3. tratteggio (rigatino), 4. puntini, 5. cromatic selection, 6. Down toned or simplified retouching /…/; **Context**: spatial, cultural, historical, perception, psychology /…/'. The interpretation and Slovenian translation of the content need to be extensively studied and a unified Slovene terminology established.

[2] In 2014, the *Doctrine 2*, 2014, pp. 21–28 published *Načela za ohranjanje in konserviranje-restavriranje stenskih poslikav (Principles for preservation and conservation-restoration of wall paintings)*. Page 21: 'The Venice Charter (1964) set the general principles of cultural heritage conservation-restoration. The principles were expanded by the Amsterdam Declaration (1975), which introduced the concept of integrated conservation and the Nara Document on Authenticity (1994), which writes about cultural diversity. Taking into account these and additional relevant contributions, such as the ICOMCC Code of Ethics (1984), Document of Pavia (1997), and the E.C.C.O. Professional Guidelines (1997), the aim of this document is to provide more specific principles for the protection, preservation, and the conservation-restoration of wall paintings. This document, therefore, reflects basic and universally applicable principles and practices, and does not take into account particular regional or national problems, which can be supplemented at regional and national level by providing further recommendations where necessary.'

Scientific writing inadequately covers the subject of the final presentation[3] of wall paintings in Slovenia. It especially neglects the open questions about how to approach the final stage, i.e., retouching, which poses a lot of question in practice. When it comes to Slovenian restoration history, restoration of wall paintings, and, explicitly, retouching, we still lean on the main contributions by Izidor Mole,[4] Emil Pohl,[5] France Kokalj,[6] Ivan Komelj,[7] Tomaž Kvas,[8] Tone Demšar,[9] Miha Pirnat[10] and Ivan Bogovčič,[11] which frequently (if at all) contain incomplete references and bibliography that additionally obstructs further research. The 2016 and 2017 conferences sparked the first official critical discussion. Before, these were sporadic and occurred only during treatments of individual monuments. A critical debate about the final presentation (retouching) of wall paintings is crucial as it opens up a vast spectre of problems and question that Slovenian experts have not yet fully addressed.

It all begins with the first interference into the paint layer, with the uncovering of whitewashes of the wall painting, which can affect the final visuality, just as the removing of dirt and consolidation by various substances. During practical work, restorers encounter numerous delicate questions. What approach to choose when removing difficult-to-remove whitewashes, sintering, darkened coatings, and old retouches? To what extent should we remove the younger layers to approximate the original? Where does the original begin? Should we preserve 'patina' or simulate it? What to do if the monument is so 'unoriginal' that instead of de-restoration[12] or re-restoration[13] we should consider maintenance, preservation of the existing in terms of 'sustainability'[14] (see Salvador Muñoz Viñas and his *Contemporary Theory of Conservation*), rather than search for the original image, originality we do not know (for example, we do not know the colours of the wall painting at the time of creation) and which is, because of natural degradation and

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[3] In *Načela /.../ (Doctrine 2*, 2014, pp. 21–28) the term *presentation* is no longer used, replaced by *aesthetic reintegration* and once by *retouching*. We use *presentation* because it has a broader meaning in terms of presenting a wall painting; the term (aesthetic) *reintegration* is very definite and has a specific meaning. As defined on a now nonexistent website of the IPSCH 'Presentation [is] a treatment by which we extract and emphasise the protected characteristics of a building or site and make them available to general public, which is the basic cultural function of heritage /.../'. For explanation of basic terminology (restoration, conservation, reversibility, reconstruction, authenticity, copy, renewal etc.) i.a. see PETZET 2004.

[4] I.a. MOLE 1965, pp. 175–180, MOLE 1966, pp. 18–22, MOLE 1984, pp. 89–99, MOLE 1985, pp. 121–135, MOLE 1986, pp. 189–208, MOLE 1987, pp. 123–136.

[5] POHL 1966, pp. 103–109.

[6] KOKALJ 1972, pp. 33–34.

[7] KOMELJ 1966, pp. 39–76.

[8] KVAS 1972, pp. 95–101.

[9] DEMŠAR 1972, pp. 37–40.

[10] PIRNAT 1966, p. 124, PIRNAT 1972, pp. 51–56.

[11] I.a. BOGOVČIČ 1976, pp. 121–124, in particular see BOGOVČIČ 1987, pp. 116–122, where he mentions the possibilities of retouch: *chromatic integration with complete retouch, with local or neutral tone*; he speaks of the role of *emotions, inspirations* of those who make decisions on the final directives for presentation. See also: BOGOVČIČ 1988, pp. 5–11, BOGOVČIČ 1995, pp. 14–21, BOGOVČIČ 1998, 98–114, BOGOVČIČ 2002, BOGOVČIČ 2004 b, pp. 7–16.

[12] The establishment of the state before the last restoration or the removal of the traces of the last restoration: *ICCROM online portal*, <http://biblio.iccrom.org/cgi-bin/koha/opac-detail.pl?biblionumber=62853> [accessed 12 June 2018]

[13] Re-restoration of the work of art on which a considerate amount of the last restoration ingredients is still present. *Past restorations* of good quality can also be preserved: *Skupnost muzejev Slovenije*, p. 5, <http://www.sms-muzeji.si/udatoteke/publikacija/netpdf/3-2-1.pdf> [accessed 12 June 2018]
Let us also mention *anti-restoration*, a term used by TSCHUDI MADSEN 1976, p. 50, to simplify early heritage principles that object to any kind of addition, alteration, or renewal. For principles throughout heritage history, see: BELLANCA 2009, p. 49.

[14] MUÑOZ VIÑAS 2005. The author studied the development of the professional field in the last 25 years and the criticism of classical views, which according to restoration ethics leads him towards the formulation of a new paradigm, the so-called *sustainability*, the survival of the monument. He calls for openness, dialogue, flexibility, cooperation, and respect towards different answers to the same questions.

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numerous restorations, probably lost.[15] What materials should we choose so that they will not have negative effects later on? How to approach an extremely damaged paint layer, how to present pieces preserved in fragments, such as those essential for the whole image: eyes, part of the face or body, attributes, inscriptions? When to reconstruct if at all? Or as Mole wisely asked himself in 1966, 'When is the loss inconspicuous and when should we fill it in?'[16] How to retouch different paintings: Gothic, Baroque, and 20th-century artwork? What do we wish to achieve with the final retouch, what quality to present: artistic, aesthetic, religious, contextual, historical or documentary, scientific, functional? These are the eternally debatable and recurrent questions undertaken by several theoreticians: John Ruskin, Bernard Berenson, Cesare Brandi, Kenneth Clark, Erwin Panofsky, E. H. Gombrich, Marie Cl. Berducou, Paul Philippot, and others.[17] In Slovenia, the question of retouching and aesthetic presentation was most extensively covered by Mole. According to him, 'aesthetic restoration should be considered already at the stage of technical restoration.' However, he warned, 'Don't change the appearance or the character that imprinted itself into our mind through senses at the time of the discovery! Meaning, retouch as little as possible! If the fresco is well-preserved and has but a few minor damages, these can be retouched, as they will not significantly alter the totality. In case of great damages, we will not retouch at all since if we begin, we must carry on to the end. Such action would then drastically change the character of the newly-discovered fresco: it would acquire an appearance it had never had, not even when it was made. Such an appearance can neither be proven nor justified.'[18]

The visuality of a wall painting is most evidently defined by the manner of presentation, especially retouching, where we come across the controversial statement 'in the name of greater readability'.[19] In contemporary heritage protection that is one of the most frequent explanations, lucidly discussed also by James Beck and Michael Daley,[20] however questionable for the monument. It is also an excuse for the many interventions of pedantic cleaning, infilling, and reconstructions still popular in Slovenia. The authors find the reason for such actions in the materialistically conceptualised life that is based on the visual perception of everything around us. In Slovenia, especially, wall painting is still generally experienced from the likeable, aesthetic point of view. It is how the world is perceived by the art owners, clients, i.e., investors, to whom the heritage experts have to promise effective results to justify the cost of expensive restoration treatments. A typical publicity feature of the last decade is the most effective promise of 'increased readability', 'discovery of true authenticity', 'the return or disclosure of true colours', 'the reestablishment of the original work of art'.

Where to begin then? In order to understand a wall painting correctly, we must explore both its aspects, the material and the non-material. We are only able to make correct presentation decisions by awareness, then understanding, and only later by observing the mentioned duality when choosing the approach, between procedures, and in the final

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[15] Muñoz Viñas writes that the heritage experts a priori modify objects in the name of authenticity although that is in fact an error in classical theory of restoration. The modifications on objects executed to establish a desired state cannot make them more authentic or real than they actually are: MUŇOZ VIŇAS 2005, p. 95. Also on authenticity: Wilfried Lipp, The cult of authenticity in the age of fake in: *Conservation and Preservation*, 2010, pp. 267–277.

[16] MOLE 1966, pp. 18–22.

[17] I.a. see: *Readings in Conservation*, 1996.

[18] MOLE 1986, pp. 202–203.

[19] On 'readability' in restoration i.a.: MUŇOZ VIŇAS 2005 and SCHINZEL 2003, pp. 55–63. See articles in the *Kermes* Journal 44/2001, 47/2002, 50/2003.

[20] The authors criticise the *'insensitive restoration and false discoveries'* as written in the book recension: BECK, DALEY 1996. They question the role of the aesthetic, institutional, and commercial factors when it tcomes to deciding the approaches to restoration.

presentation.[21] But who decides the approach, who decides the manner of presentation? The reality of Slovenian heritage services is that the final presentation is most often decided by restorers pressured by timelines and the client. If no greater problems occur, they may not need detailed discussions or do not even ask for an opinion. It could be that they are poorly connected with the art historian-conservator in charge, mostly because of his or her lack of understanding of material problems and/or his or her rare presence at different stages of the restoration. In recent years, the awareness of this problem has grown and the conscious restorers venture on an interdisciplinary quest for solutions, trying to connect with art historians. In contrast, art historians-conservators are often not even informed about the on-going interventions or leave the decision-making to the restorer, either because of the bureaucracy of their work or unfamiliarity with the material, technical, and artistic nature of the monument. Where do the reasons for this lie?

Contemporary wall painting preservation in Slovenia originates both from the level of development, expertise, and work ethics of the heritage protection institute, as from our mindset, the degree of social responsibility and, finally yet importantly, our past that subconsciously determines and guides us.

Before we start looking for causes, consequences, and answers to numerous questions, we have to lay the foundations: we need to research and evaluate the history of Slovenian restoration theoretically and practically. The past hides the motives for today's state and attitude, including the reason for being so set by aestheticism. Why do the restorers strive towards complete retouch, even 'beautification'? Why does all responsibility generally fall on the restorer? Who was the one to decide the approach at the stage of final presentation?

To better comprehend the tendency towards 'beautification' and 'refreshment' in classic canvas painting and the murals of the 19th and 20th century, we are (because the topic is inadequately covered in Slovenia) going to examine the beginnings of the first official organised heritage protection and only skip through the next eras, stopping at trend-changing restoration milestones.

With the 1850 decree (ordered by Franz Joseph I, Emperor of Austria), Imperial Royal *Central Commission for the study and preservation of art and historical monuments* was established in Vienna,[22] making heritage care business of the state. Alongside regular publications, research, documentation, and rule-making, and the main fields divided into three sections: archaeology, art, and archive, restoration was born at the end of the 19th century.[23] In Austria, the restoration practice of the second half of the 19th century was greatly influenced by the historicism of the ecclesiastical art movements, which naturally left an impact also in Slovenia but the prevailing period of Gothic Revival started to lessen. Experts focused on Romanesque and Gothic wall paintings that were hastily uncovered and 'then in the name of reconstruction overpainted but first making aquarelle copies of the current state'[24] as standard heritage protection practice. The growing number of the uncovered wall paintings disclosed the poorly developed restoration

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[21] For reference: APPELBAUM 2009 sorts the methodology into 8 steps of object treatment: characterize the object, reconstruct a history of the object, determine the *ideal* state, the decide on the *realistic* goal of treatment, choose the treatment methods and materials, prepare pre-treatment documentation, carry out the treatment, finalize treatment documentation.

[22] BAŠ 1955, pp. 15–37. Originally: *k. k. Central-Commission zur Erforschung und Erhaltung von Baudenkmalen*, later: *K. K. Zentral-Commission für Erforschung und Erhaltung der Kunst- und historischen Denkmale*. Höfler alerts to 'the importance of both aspects of heritage protection, meaning scientific research and practice': HÖFLER, KLEMENČIČ 1999, 2006, p. 9.

[23] For an overview of restoration history in Austria, see, i.a.: KOLLER 1991, pp. 65–85, FRODL-KRAFT 1997, BRÜCKLER 2009, for medieval wall paintings in particular, see, i.a.: HARNONCOURT 1999, SANTNER 2015. For more information on the restoration history and approaches with sources and bibliography, see: SITAR 2016, pp. 283–329.

[24] KOLLER 1991, p. 80.

Fig. 1: Various restorers = various approaches (from top left to bottom right by manner of columns): Pavel Künl, Janez Borovski, Janez Wolf, Matija Koželj, Anton Jebačin, Janez Šubic, Ludvik Grilc, Simon Ogrin, Matija Bradaška, Matej Trpin, Matej Sternen, Franjo Golob, Peter Železnik, Mirko Šubic, Izidor Mole, Emil Pohl, Tomaž Kvas, Miha Pirnat Sr.

methodology. Due to limited knowledge, of, for example, secco technique, extensive paint layers were irreversibly lost.[25] John Ruskin severely criticised the work of the Central Commission already in 1849, stating that 'the so-called restoration is the worst kind of building destruction.'[26] But in 1858 the Commission still believed that suitably presented restoration works convey 'knowledge of the earlier art movements'.[27]

Who executed the works? In the 19th century and at the beginning of the 20th century, there were various executors active under patronage, following the requests of a client. They were more or less skilled **_renovators_**, named by the Commission the **_unqualified craftsmen_**,[28] who caused damage to the monuments. Inside the Central Commission, the conservators relied on their followers, most often the artists of the Vienna Academy of Fine Arts. The Austrian literature gives an example of the art history professor Matthias Trenkwald and Eduard Gerisch, a custodian at the Vienna Art Gallery.[29] For works on especially important monuments and topics, the Commission (renamed in 1911 to the Staatsdenkmalamt and in 1934 to the Bundesdenkmalamt) designated reliable interregional _independent contractors – practitioners_: Theophil Melicher, Hans Viertelberger and Franz Walliser.[30] They restored following the instructions and guidelines of the art history elite, the general conservators, the initially key personas: Alois Riegl and Max Dvořak. Because the interventions were low-quality, they decided that an expert opinion of the Central Commission had to be given on all the submitted restoration projects. Honourable conservators had to 'limit themselves to cleaning and removal of the unoriginal, harmful additions to continually preserve the existing state' (_Instruktion für die Konservatoren_ from 1853).[31] Official instructions for preservation or conservation that initially applied only to the removal of baroque paintwork, whitewashes on wall paintings, were presented by the Commission at the first international art history congress in 1873 in Vienna, where they explicitly demanded that 'education-wise measures should be taken to professionally and technically educate restorers'.[32] However, the first form of restoration education came sooner as a reaction to the state of affairs. Thus, in 1868, the Imperial Royal School of Restoration was founded at the Belvedere Gemaldelagerie under the curator, specialist restorer and custodian Erasmus Ritter von Engerth, however only for oil paintings.[33]

What were the approaches? The restorers followed different trends. First, there was the period of purism, the so-called typical **stylistic restoration**, purification of style, when inpaintings, when it came to the aesthetics of the whole, were radically declined and stigmatised.[34] Those were the rules of the late 19th century that was 'pathologically

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[25] Which is why well _fresco-calcined underdrawings_ were mostly preserved: KOLLER 1991, p. 81
[26] KOLLER 1991, p. 79 citing John Ruskin, _The seven lamps of architecture_, London 1849, p. 242.
[27] FRODL 1988, p. 184; KOLLER 1991, p. 79.
[28] KOLLER 2002, p. 114.
[29] THIEME, BECKER 1939, p. 376; KOLLER 2002, pp. 4, 104.
[30] The artists of the Vienna Academy who have thus obtained a monopoly, as written in: KOLLER 2002, p. 104.
[31] For more, see: KOLLER 2002, p. 103 in FRODL 1988.
[32] It was only in 1906 that they first tried to set up a restoration class at the Vienna Academy, but with little success. It was finally established in 1934 under the guidance of Professor Robert Eigenberger but it focused on wall painting only in 1980: KOLLER 2002, p. 104. There exists correspondence (12 April 1952) about the arrival of Professor Mirko Šubic to observe and learn for a couple of weeks from the aforementioned professor, the then rector of the Vienna Art Academy. The purpose of the visit was for Šubic to become acquainted with the modern restoration methods: Restavratorstvo (documentation inventory), Ministrstvo za kulturo, INDOK center / Ministry of Culture, the Heritage Information and Documentation Centre (hereafter: the INDOC Centre), archives, p. 26.
[33] The only educational programmes on wall paintings were Eduard Gerisch's restoration workshops conducted since 1907 in a private atelier: KOLLER 1991, p. 81 (for Gerisch i.a. see: OBERTHALER 1996, pp. 30–31; SANTNER 2015, p. 32).
[34] BRÜCKLER 2009, pp. 50–59.

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addicted to the "original state" which was never fully available and hence impossible to reconstruct / …/'.[35] The Central Commission was the one to set the first standards of restoration (1853). Koller wrote that the debate on restoration methodology could be summarised under the motto **'the original is sacred',** which, alongside the new approach **'conserve, do not restore**', overtook the known maxim of Georg Dehio by thirty years.[36] To be concrete, the new directive meant reorganisation that strengthened the Commission's work, which included in its study also the artwork of architectural monuments, and founded a Restoration Committee formed by the representatives of the Central Commission, Imperial Gallery, University, and the Ministry of Culture.[37] The articles and reports of the Committee primarily focused on uncovering and documenting, at which point they criticised the inappropriately conducted uncovering.[38]

This trend started to shift at the end of the 19th century. How the wall paintings were uncovered and restored led to such consequences as white veil, salt coatings, and, consequently, to an unclear image of the painting, the Central Commission passed the **'konservierende Restaurierung'** approach.[39] It could be interpreted as the allowed restoration in the name of conservation, meaning visual interventions on wall paintings. What followed was a period of refreshment, beautification, overpainting, and excessive retouching. They developed the procedure of consolidation and the so-called regeneration. Since wall painting technology was underdeveloped and none of the methods had been tested, they used the methodology from oil painting restoration.[40] The biggest problem was the lack of training[41] with neither time nor money for development. A mass usage of unsuitable materials and methods on wall paintings began. According to Koller, wall paintings were impregnated with water in combination with other substances. Extremely popular was the so-called Pettenkofer's revolutionary method of regenerating 'blind' oil paintings (faded, yellowed layers of old varnishes) with alcohol vapours that greatly expanded the restoration of oil paintings across Europe.[42] His direct impregnation with copaiba balsam (natural resin)[43] was also used on wall paintings during consolidation (regeneration). They tested various combinations with oil-resinous varnish and wax, all of which brought about horrific results.[44] At the time, the official method for the final presentation was a retouch with thick casein tempera used also for overpainting. As a result, the paint layers of the wall paintings started to develop mould and fall off,

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[35] BRÜCKLER 2009, p. 50.
[36] KOLLER 2002, p. 104.
[37] Summarised Koller; more on that in the accompanying bibliography: KOLLER 2002, pp. 103–104 and 116–118.
[38] KOLLER 2002, p. 114.
[39] HARNONCOURT 1999, p. 93; pointed out by KOLLER 2002, p. 107.
[40] The curator and restorer Engerth from Gemäldegalerie was rather reserved: KOLLER 2002, p. 107.
[41] For further information, see: OBERTHALER 1996, pp. 26–33; KORTAN 1984, pp. 35–41.
[42] KOLLER 2002, p. 107. In 1870, the German chemist Max von Pettenkofer (1818–1901) published a booklet about his method called *Über Ölfarbe und Conservirung der Gemälde-Gallerien durch das Regenerations-Verfahren.* The restorer Willem Anthonij Hopman (1828–1910) translated it in 1871 and started to use the method immediately on paintings in Rijksmuseum. He used it on the famous *Night Watch* already in 1889 (the treatment was repeated 8 times but the degradation of the varnish kept repeating, hence it was removed in 1946 by H. H. Martens): Erma Hermens, Regenerating Rembrandt's *Night Watch*: a restoration method from the past; *Looking through art*, 26 Aug 2018, <https://lookingthroughartblog.wordpress.com/2018/09/26/regenerating-rembrandts-night-watch-a-restoration-method-from-the-past/> [accessed 2 July 2019]
Following that trend, wealthier churches in Slovenia also entrusted restoration of their paintings to the renowned foreign restorers: I. Ritsch restored Kremser-Schmidt's *Last Supper* and Tintoretto's *St Nicholas,* Josef Kastner Jelovšek's *Holy Family:* KOKALJ 1972, p. 34 (the data on Ritsch are identical in: BAŠ 1955, p. 27).
[43] KOLLER 2002, p. 107.
[44] KOLLER 2002, p. 107.

which accelerated decaying and posed new challenges for the heritage protection experts. In response, and as initiated by the heir to the throne, Franz Ferdinand (who became the patron of the Central Commission in 1910), new attempts of the systematic education of young restorers were made under the guidance of renowned painters and professional restorers.[45] Two publications relevant for practical heritage work were published. With his *Denkmalkultus* in 1903,[46] Riegl introduced the principle of ***surpassing historical re-creation***.[47] In his in-depth treatise, he also dealt with problems of retouching, i.e., inpainting, a pressing matter since the 1880s. For the first time, he challenged the three different points of interest: those of 'conservatives' (the Church), who rooted for inpainting (finishing), of 'the radicals' (influenced by Ruskin), who protected the pure *antiquity* of the artwork, and of the middle 'art historians', who wished to preserve the original but see the work of art as more than just a fragment – in its entire visuality.[48] Riegl's remarkably progressive ideas are worth a reread and reconsideration since the majority of what he wrote is premeditated and valuable for the present time. The other important publication is Dvořak's reformatory proposal of radical reform from 1910, which, among other things, demands a systematic formulation of restoration work plans[49] – an essential preparation for treatments even now.

In that time, a restorer developed from a ***craftsman*** into a not-yet-fully-qualified restorer, acting as a ***porter to the art historian***,[50] who in Slovenia (for a long time) was France Stele. As the president of the Heritage Protection Institute in Ljubljana, Stele (first as a regional then as a state conservator) adapted the basic Austrian doctrine to Slovenian needs.[51] Like the Central Commission, Stele chose a selected few for his restorers and so, the Slovenian restoration of the first half of the 20th century was particularly marked by Matej Sternen in tandem with Stele. Additionally, there exist the so-called famous pairs: Stele–Sternen, Stele–Golob, Stele–Železnik.[52]

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[45] Such as Hermann Ritschl, Melicher, Viertelberger and others at the expenses of the Central Commission, but unfortunately unsuccessful: BRÜCKLER 2009, pp. 241–242.

[46] RIEGL 1903; Alois Riegl, Zur Frage der Restaurierung von Wandmalereien, *Mitteilungen der kaiserlich–konigliche Zentralkommission*, III, 2, 1903, pp. 14–31 (RIEGL 1903 b); cf. BACHER 1995, p. 79.

[47] In his article for *Mitteilungen* (1903), Riegl rejected wax impregnation in conservations and protective coatings. He was open to debate when it came to *bare conservation*: cleaning with harmless agents, infilling of cracks and losses with mortar of appropriate tone to match the surroundings. He allowed the use of 'transparent protective agent to fight mechanical damages and chemical decomposition' that are inevitable with paintings but firmly rejected the use of, for example, the then highly popular wax: KOLLER 2002, p. 111.

[48] KOLLER 2002, p. 111. Riegl distinguished two levels of inpainting: first, of whole composition, and second, of separate parts in the form of one figure or a group. In the first case, the inevitable inpainting should not copy the old but has to, nevertheless, in contour and colour submit to the effect of the whole. The inpaintings on the original have to be limited to the essential. Riegl also expressed doubt about contour enhancing and colour refreshment, which he viewed as 'disturbance in the character of the original'. He questioned both the inpaintings in the manner of old patina as well as the original intensity. One example of how theory fails in practice is the painter restorer Florus Scheel, who, following Riegl's principle 'cleaning, protection, consolidation, no inpainting and overpainting' executed all these procedures on the outside wall in Vorarlberg near Feldkirch in 1911 and then completely overpainted the painting: KOLLER 2002, p. 111.

[49] BRÜCKLER 2009, p. 354.

[50] The pair art historian and restorer was first discussed in: SITAR 2016, pp. 283–329.

[51] In the 1930s, he adjusted it to the ideas of the Venice conservator Ferdinand Forlati in the spirit of *Carta di restauro* from 1932: STELE 1960 a, p. 13; cf. HOYER 1997, p. 33.

[52] Stele wrote that Matej Sternen was one of the most capable restorers already before 1910 when they met. He conducted uncoverings, cleanings, and painting restoration. Stele wrote that in the 1930s, Mirko Šubic was starting to leave his mark in the field. We, however, know that Šubic followed his own professional path. As highly perspective, Stele mentioned Franjo Golob, who received his first instructions from Sternen /.../ 'he acquired solid foundations from my travelling companion during the Tyrolean instruction travels in 1913, R. Eigenberger, PhD, at the Vienna Academy. Along these artistically qualified co-workers the almost indispensable Peter Železnik was gaining recognition by uncovering and cleaning of frescoes, restoring the interior etc.': STELE 1965, p. 22; on Železnik: SITAR 2016, pp. 104, 199–124, 304–311; in 1947 he is even mentioned as a *restorer of the Institute*: Restavratorstvo (documentation inventory), the INDOC Centre, archives, p. 7.

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Fig. 2: The professional tandem of a restorer and art historian: Sternen and Stele in front of the frescoes in the Church of the Ascension of Mary in Turnišče, 1929.

Art historians as the only professional authorities dictated the approach, procedures, and the presentation because *restorers* had no formal education or experience. Restoration of wall paintings was simply their source of livelihood. It was only possible to acquire education at private art schools, with masters during fieldwork, at foreign academies, and, since 1922, also at the Probuda Art School,[53] labelled by Golob as the pre-Ljubljana Academy.[54] It represented one of the first modest steps towards formal education in the field of technology and techniques of wall painting in Slovenia. One could still learn the most through practical work alongside experienced restorers.

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[53] *Probuda,* a society of Yugoslavian artists, industry owners, and traders was founded in 1921. The painter Franjo Sterle founded a school department, the so-called *Umetniško šolo Probuda (Probuda Art School),* which borrowed the classrooms (and professors) from the *Ljubljana Technical School – trade school for men.* Its professors in 1922 were: Plečnik, Sternen, Repič, Šantl, Gaspari, Berneker, Vesel etc. at the departments of: painting and sculpturing, graphic design, typography, national ornaments, fresco painting. The studies were financed by scholarships and donations and possible only until the Second World War. GOLOB 1986, pp. 160–162.

[54] GOLOB 1986, p. 161. It should have developed into the Higher School for Art and Industry. However, a separate Academy of Fine Arts was established in 1945, while the Trade Schools for men and women merged into a 5-year-course at High School of Arts Trade: GOLOB 1986, p. 169.

Fig. 3: Ažbe's school with three students from *c.* 1895.

Fig. 4: Sternen and Stele whilst taking off a wall painting in Crngrob; the third person being perhaps Franjo Golob or Peter Železnik, the fourth at the bottom an unknown assistant.

Figs. 5a, 5b: The final exhibition of *Probuda* 1922/23 (5a) and the frescoes by the participants of Ogrin's one-month workshop (1922) displayed in the hallway of the Ljubljana Technical School at Aškerčeva 1 painted in the 1980s (5b). The workshop participants were: Maksim Gaspari, G. R. Gašperin, Franjo Kopač, J. Kubert, Rudolf Marčič, Gašper Porenta, Mara Sajovic, Franc Škodlar (Čoro), Franjo Sterle, Saša Šantel (GOLOB 1986, pp. 162 and 163).

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The problems of acquiring qualified restorers, organising work, and supervising the execution of high-quality interventions were recorded in the little-known archive documentation.[55] The restorer's professional education and practical experience were the first necessary factor for quality intervention. But they knew already then that education does not ensure quality. In 1925, Stele wrote to the artist and president of the *Udruženje jugoslovanskih oblikujočih umetnikov, podr. za Slovenijo* (*The Yugoslav Society of Fine Arts, Slovenia branch*) Ivan Vavpotič about the qualification and competence of restorers, saying '/…/ how not every artist who masters the technique of his or her professional field is eo ipso a restorer since to be one, just as in any other technical field, systematic preparations are needed, and especially certain personal qualification that is the basis of respect towards the "wounded" artwork and extreme meticulousness and patience for performing such work.'[56] Stele's famous expertise and influence that imprinted on several generations of restorers are thoroughly explained by Mica Černigoj, 'To the restorers of our institute Stele's opinion is "ultima ratio". I hope I am not giving away any secret if I say that some of them even fear it. It is never hard and brutal but it can be unfavourable; it is not devastating but decisive, still fatherly, and, in all cases, strongly influential and clear – something not best suited to some.'[57] This explains why the second half of the 20th century saw a great division between the restorer and the art historian, the two main protagonists of heritage protection.

After the Second World War and its great damage to the monuments, the conservation principle was adjusted. Following Forlati's thesis '**do not make anew but restore**',[58] it allowed the restoration of monuments and not simply conservation. This contributed to the development of the restoration field (methodology, technology). When examining the manners of retouching in that period, it should be noted that Stele and Sternen '**were the first in our practice to opt for the so-called tratteggio,** promoted and widely used by Cesare Brandi in Rome after WW2 when

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[55] Restavratorstvo (documentation inventory), the INDOC Centre, archives, pp. 1–94. On pp. 1–4 we find intriguing correspondence from 1925 between the *Prosvetni oddelek (Educational Department)* and *Spomeniški urad (the Heritage Protection Office)* regarding the latter's opinion on the *Udruženja upodabljajočih umetnikov (Society of Fine Artists).* Stele asks the president Vavpotič for a list of names of the artists who 'would be capable and willing to execute works ordered or at least initiated by a heritage conservator', in which the works solely pertain to those with restoration preservation character. I.a. under Item 2: 'in fresco technique: restoration of such works on the spot, detaching them from the walls and transferring them onto a new support with a frame, uncovering of fresco paintings from underneath whitewashes or plasters, and consolidating the damaged parts on the wall.' Under Item 4: 'once in a while, but rarely, we may consider to take on a watercolour artist who is capable to precisely copy an old fresco or an atmosphere of the interior.' Čoro Škodlar, a secretary of the Society, sent Stele a list of members (letter no. 98/25) ready to accept such work: 'for oil and tempera technique: Tratnik, Porenta, Šantel, A. G. Kos, Vavpotič, Podrekar, Šantel, Mirko Šubic, both Kraljs, Jakac; for fresco technique: Gaspari, Marčič, Šantel, Porenta, Škodlar; for sculpturing: Zajec, T. Kos, Dolinar, Napotnik, Berneker, Sever, both Kraljs, Jurkovič; the watercolour artists capable of exact copying of an old fresco or an atmosphere of the interior: Potrata Rajko Šubic, Mirko Šubic, Šantel, Vavpotič, Justin. For the designs of old buildings and ruins: Rajko Šubic, Mirko Šubic, S. Šantel, Vavpotič, Justin, Jakac. For restoration works: Sternen and Jakopič in oil technique, Simon Ogrin in Vrhnika in fresco technique. The last mentioned is the only Slovenian who truly masters the fresco technique. These three are not our members.'
Stele responded in anger, 'Tratnik has experience, Porenta does not work in the field and has not been offered, Šantel?, G. A. Kos? Vavpotič has worked but stagnated at the same stage his knowledge allows without damage to paintings, Podrekar has failed, Šantel has ruined more than fixed; M. Šubic – examples seen at the portrait exhibition do not speak in his favour; both Kraljs have not dealt with such questions, as similarly Jakac hasn't. The frescoers found attended a fortnight-long course with Ogrin and lack any qualification for such work. For building design only painters are listed, none of them a technician or an architect. There is no ground to recommend them for such work. Vavpotič himself says that he has fallen into the category undeservedly.' In his response, Stele asked Vavpotič for names for which the Society can 'vouch for qualifications and capability.'

[56] The letter on the incomplete list of artists, 16 Sept 1925: Restavratorstvo (documentation inventory), the INDOC Centre, archives, p. 4. What follows is a series of heated letters on moral responsibility for the current low-quality restoration procedures by artistic dilettanti (pp. 4–6).

[57] ČERNIGOJ 1966, p. 5.

[58] HOYER 1997, p. 33.

reconstructing wall paintings destroyed by bombing'.[59] The retouch was used on the newly-discovered and severely damaged lower layers of the paintings in Vrzdenec.

Slovenian restorers acquired their first formal education either at the Academy of Fine Arts founded in 1945, working at the Institute restoration workshop from 1950 onwards[60] or through specialised postgraduate programme after 1954. The first independent restoration authority was Mirko Šubic,[61] who established the foundations of the professional field. The law prescribed 'scientific and popularizing' work for conservators (art historians) and 'artistic and technical' work for restorers.[62] The restorers increasingly relied on their restoration colleagues and worked more and more as independent heritage protection experts. In their atelier, where they set up their own laboratory, the development started first in the field of canvas painting restoration.[63] Already in the first year, they considered restoration courses (including those on wall paintings) which some would attend in Zagreb at the expense of the Institute. In the first decade of the atelier, in the 1960s, the restorers, who were increasingly more qualified and equipped with the knowledge they had gained at training abroad, were becoming **equal participants in the heritage protection tandem.**[64]

The first independent critical reviews from restorers emerged, such as Mole's on the aesthetic presentation from 1966, '/…/ the principle of aesthetic restoration is more complicated. It has to come before the historical whenever we are dealing with an object of artistic value. According to this principle, all later additions need to be removed and the original restored in such manner that its artistic value becomes yet more prominent. This opinion may be variously interpreted but Brandi thinks, "The work of art from its creation to the present represents a full circle into which we must not interfere. Therefore, all potential retouches should be made outside of this circle; they have to be structurally clearly discernible from the original." Based on that the Central Institute prescribed retouches with short lines that became a manner /…/.'[65] Mole's opinion that Brandi's thesis cannot hold is essential since 'the results show that the idea of different circles is non-viable because the circle of retouches invades the circle of the original also in such cases, sometimes almost violently.'[66] The fact that Mole published his ideas three years after Brandi's *Theory of Restoration* attests to him being a remarkably knowledgeable and analytical restorer.

He distinctly warned that 'every case should, therefore, be examined from both the historical and aesthetic side. The evaluation of the artwork merely by its greater or smaller authenticity, which is becoming increasingly more

[59] STELE 1965, p. 22. We should stress that this retouching technique is a very early case of application of the Roman Institute methodology outside of Italy. Colleague Živkovič kindly pointed out that the paintings in Vrata (Thörl) from 1969 are one of the first cases of *tratteggio* in Austria.

[60] The National Gallery let them the rooms, at first two: the former Mihelič atelier and the joiner's workshop of the gallery. The other rooms would be made available from 'physical culture' (15 March 1950): Restavratorstvo (documentation inventory), the INDOC Centre, archives, No. 74, p. 7.

[61] BOGOVČIČ 2009, pp. 224–225.

[62] BAŠ 1951, p. 275.

[63] For more information on, for example, supply of tools and materials (copaiba balsam, glycerine oil, dammar, mastic and sandarac resins, stove, iron, cardboard, particleboards and zinc boards, rye flour, pins etc.), see: Restavratorstvo (documentation inventory), the INDOC Centre, archives, pp. 8–9.

[64] Also 'in close connection with co-workers – conservators', art historians: DEMŠAR 1972, p. 38. For restorers between 1945–75 but only for the conservation atelier of the Ljubljana SRS Institute, see: KOMELJ 1972, p. 47; KOMELJ, FATUR 1976, pp. 141–158. For restorers across Slovenia, see: Restavratorstvo (documentation inventory), the INDOC Centre, archives.

[65] MOLE 1965, p. 178.

[66] MOLE 1965, p. 178, where he also wrote that even Brandi inconsistently exercised the principle of 'full circle'. For example, in cases of fragmentarily preserved artwork or when an essential part of the work of art is missing, he 'allows the reconstruction by Gestaltpsychologie, according to which the value of the whole means more than just a sum of its individual parts.'

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Fig. 6: Mirko Šubic – the first independent authority of Slovenian restoration.

Figs. 7a, 7b: Giotto's *The Death of St Francis* from the Basilica di Santa Croce in Florence before the intervention and after the failed final presentation (1958/61). Mole wrote that the convincing *Giottesque* overpaintings were removed following the approach of 'pure conservation in historical, not aesthetic sense'. The empty spaces were neutrally retouched. This action created 'a great rectangular caesura that does not work in favour of the aesthetic comprehension of the totality'. Mole asked himself, 'can the principles of the Roman Central Institute be taken up for Slovenian requirements without hesitation?' (MOLE 1965, pp. 178–179).

prominent in Italy and elsewhere, is nothing more than evaluation in terms of monetary value since the **beautiful must ask the authentic if it is beautiful.'**[67]

To better understand Slovenian collective memory and national attitude to heritage and aesthetics, a look into the post-war period is needed. The era signified a break from tradition, an eradication of identity linked to nobility and Catholicism.

The tradition was being belittled, the continuity of masterclasses and apprenticeship was interrupted, special skills and crafts, such as gilding, marbling, scagliola, girdling, silver-making, upholstery, carpentry, roofing of historical buildings, decorative painting (e.g., stencilled painting), façade engineering, interior painting were dying out as is still evident by today's scarcity of these skills and craftsmen.

Another example of eradication of the *unworthy past* is also the unfamiliarity with the *Probuda Art School.* In the post-war period, the cultural and once intensive heritage interconnection with the Austrians was denied. Consequently, the Austrian heritage service is nowadays little known in Slovenia although we share the beginnings. Few people know that Hans Viertelberger restored monuments in Slovenia or that the esteemed Styrian conservator Walter Semetkowski was born in Ptuj. The period was a deep cut into the collective mind, difficult to substitute or fill with genuine content, making the repeated search for roots and identity harder. Perhaps this is the source of Slovenian inferiority complex that can be found in all fields, including heritage protection, and the reason why the final presentation has to shine and satisfy viewers. We feel the need to incessantly compare and prove ourselves. To simply present the existing, the sometimes poorly preserved, is not good enough (for the client), not aesthetic enough or readable. Even restorers and art historians have succumbed to that. To illustrate where the source of Slovenian expert mentality originates from another excursus should be made. Stele's early professional principle inspired by the Central Commission was quite rigorous and was later transformed into the so-called *Stele's **creative conservation**.* In 1955, he wrote, '/…/ the restoration and conservation approaches should not serve to glorify solely both aspects, the documentary and aesthetic but should also consider the usability since monuments are in use. After all, they serve life that expects from heritage protection a compromise between usability, documentation, and aesthetics.'[68] Stele allowed restoration 'in terms of completion of the damaged artwork but limited so that the documentary value of the monument is not jeopardised. Most of all they must not disrupt the aesthetics or harmony of the whole visuality, which means certain artistic creation'[69] which is how Robert Peskar recently interpreted Stele in a paper valuable for the recording of Slovenian conservation history.

Such an opinion is perhaps also present daily in the field of wall paintings. The potential visual effect is still more important to us than the different original values of the monument and the connotations it bears. Could it be that we have not yet accepted our cultural heritage as it is – also modest and anonymous, so we feel the urge to beautify and glorify it, and appear more valuable? Perhaps this is where the popular extensive retouch finishing, colour refreshment and new gilding (e.g. in churches used for worship) are rooted. Or it could be because in Slovenia attention is mostly given to the *presentation that is based on Aestheticism.*

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[67] MOLE 1965, p. 179.
[68] STELE 1955, p. 8.
[69] PESKAR 2014, p. 238.

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The 1970s were characterised by the **scientific approach** although the conditions remained unchanged after more than twenty years since the establishment of the restoration department. They were still in need of suitable premises and a laboratory, equipment, tools, which is something already Šubic[70] wrote about and which Bogovčič[71] brought up again in 1975, adding to the list also the lack of human resources. This, however, did not affect the work and ideas of the erudite and pro-European restorers since important restoration projects were being carried out and crucial articles published. In 1972, in celebration of the 20th anniversary of the Institute's *conservation atelier*, the whole issue of the *Varstvo spomenikov* journal (*Protection of Monuments*) was dedicated to restoration. In the words of the important restorer Tone Demšar (deceased at the time of publication), 'The aesthetic and also the biggest problem of restoration is the degree to which a painting or a monument should be conserved or restored. Since restorers do not have the same sense of aesthetic treatment, they usually consult art historians on how to preserve the charm of the artistic value in a restored monument. European restorers are not of one mind about the final aesthetic presentation.'[72] Moreover, he discovered that 'The basic principle of retouching should be: **total submission to the original – regardless of the quality or charm of the artwork!**'[73] These ideas are the framework of the parent Institution, the restoration department established in 1950, which set the critical and quality-aimed foundation of the professional field, linked with the European restoration area. That too is part of today's professional identity that we know so little of.

At the end of the 20th century, restoration slowly evolved with the rise of natural sciences and the foundation of the Restoration Centre (1982). Restorers became more and more independent and **self-sufficient** and their ties with art historians loosened. These pressing questions inside the professional field that plainly portray the then conditions were described by Marijan Slabe.[74] He mentioned numerous problems, topical even today, that increased with the development of the society and professional field and stated the urgency of their indirect connection that dictates new standpoints, new approaches in which social interest and one's attitude towards heritage are crucial. He warned about the lack of training among experts and, i>n particular, mentioned the rarely discussed topic of the relationship between the Slovenian heritage protection institutes and the employees, 'The connection between the Restoration Centre and other institutes is anything but satisfactory, which may definitely have negative consequences for the future.'[75] And that is exactly what (has) happened. The responsible conservators from different regional units only rarely worked, for example, on wall paintings, together with restorers from the Restoration Centre. In the last thirty years of the 20th century, the restorers with their scientific approach used increasingly advanced technology and conservation science methods (as opposed to humanistic). In such cases, the art historian-conservator was often overlooked, lost in legal and formal procedures, and only rarely present at interventions. (S)he rarely succeeded to research heritage thoroughly. This is a great problem even

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[70] ŠUBIC 1953, pp. 110–114.
[71] BOGOVČIČ 1976, pp. 121–124. He mentions the treatise Problems of restoration in Slovenia with recommendations for improvements that was presented to the Educational and Cultural Council of the Socialist Republic of Slovenia Assembly in 1968 but without effect. The conditions improved only with the independence of the Restoration Centre in 1982, and especially when it moved to the joint, newly refurbished offices with a laboratory at Poljanska 40 in Ljubljana, in 2000.
[72] DEMŠAR 1972, p. 39. He wrote the text *c.* 1967–68.
[73] KVAS 1972, p. 97.
[74] SLABE 1987, pp. 9–19.
[75] SLABE 1987, p. 19.
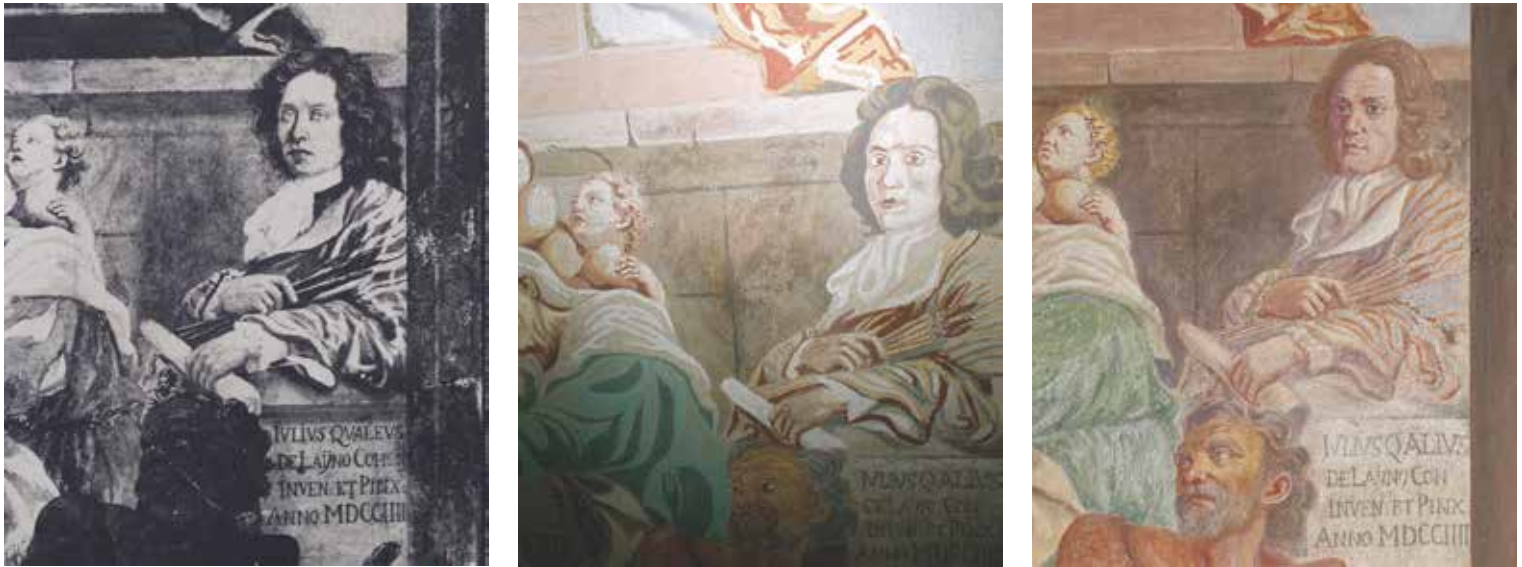
Figs. 8a, 8b, 8c: Quaglio's self-portrait from Kotar's photo (supposedly from 1898) published in 1903 was repeatedly restored. In 1979, the portrait was deformed by unsuitable retouch and right after de-restored into the now-familiar image.

today. Because of poor knowledge of materials and art-theoretical laws, (s)he leaves the decisions on final presentation to the restorer, who knows the materiality of the monument and who makes the decisions of its final presentation often by him or herself even without the responsible conservator being present or informed. The restorer thus finds himself or herself in the role of the conservator. The relationship polarises in the other direction. As an especially explicit example of self-willed restoration, we again mention Quaglio's self-portrait with evident past interventions and their after-effects.[76] The worst restoration in 1979 that deformed the painter's image was conducted unofficially. There was no notification of the responsible conservator and no prior study of the painting. Shockingly enough, this was carried out in such a frequented and significant national monument as the Ljubljana Cathedral.

Restoration practice (in particular its methodology and technology) most intensively developed in the first two decades of the 21st century. It was then that advanced and versatile science inquiry was started to be used, the level of trained experts rose as restoration became an academic study programme, and several national and international conferences were organised by the Restoration Centre of the IPCHS and the Department of Restoration of the Art and Design Academy. In conservation-restoration, we now increasingly opt for the **interdisciplinary approach** (established in particular through the restoration of Quaglio's wall painting in the Ljubljana Cathedral; 2002–06)[77] since the restorer works with a broader team of heritage protection experts and scientists and uses research results gathered from different fields. However, that is not a formalised type of research and conservation-restoration that all experts across the country use and strongly depends on the funds available and the initiative of the individuals.

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[76] Already published: SITAR 2008, pp. 86–106, SITAR 2012, pp. 80–85; cf. SITAR 2016, pp. 167–171. For comparison of the painter's self-portrait in oil, see: LUBEJ 2012, pp. 5–10.

[77] *RES. 5,* 2012.

THE INFLUENCE OF THE RESTORATION APPROACHES, THE COOPERATION BETWEEN A RESTORER
AND AN ART HISTORIAN, AND OF TECHNICAL ART HISTORY ON FINAL PRESENTATION

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Technological development of restoration does not necessarily equal quality. As proof, there exist some examples of restored wall paintings across the country that have kindled the current debate at two symposia and gave birth to the hereby publication. The parent institution is the one who has to maintain and ensure the expertise of its conservators and restorers, while they should in turn prepare, set, and maintain the criteria and directives of interventions for all the restorers of Slovenia.

In one century, the restorer grew into an autonomous, professional, confident, and worthy protagonist of heritage protection. It can be concluded that the interdisciplinary approach is the most suitable of all heritage protection approaches. It follows the model of *technical art history*[78] and enables us to better know, understand, restore, and present the monuments. Abroad it has been established as a new branch of art history in the study of oil paintings (*Technical Art History*[79] in English and American speaking environments). It all started in the 1920s when Edward Forbes as the director of the Fogg Art Museum at Harvard started with technical studies of oil paintings. By doing so, he promoted a new scientific discipline called *conservation science* that opened the era of scientific research in conservation-restoration. In 1920, when presenting his new technical research, Forbes prophetically stated that he hopes '/…/ that someday a technical school may be established, /…/ where painters, restorers, and museum officials may learn about the chemistry of paintings and their care on truly scientific principles'.[80] What followed was a quick scientific and technological development that allowed for an intensive and comprehensive research of the physical, and its results helped establish new recognition of artwork. Forbes's vision became reality since the technical art history approach is an official, well-running interdisciplinary work process at all the important international museums, galleries, conservation-restoration institutes and laboratories. The research findings from practical work are regularly published in the leading scientific publications. The term technical art history, however, is not typical of Central Europe although this approach is used precisely in heritage protection, combining conservation-restoration, art history, and natural sciences. The initial art history study comprises also of technical inquiry, which reveals the story about the creation and alteration of a work of art. With the help of scientific and historical methods, we discover the monument's core and matter, something we could call *diagnostica artistica*.[81] Because the classical methodology of art history research does not suffice for appropriate conservation-restoration, it has to broaden its field of research and its notions. For this reason, the historical, archival, stylistic, iconographic, iconological, and psychological study of the author and the work of art are in equal parts joined by the scientific-technical and restoration studies, including the study of the past restoration treatments.

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[78] For more information including sources, see: SITAR 2016, pp. 341–349; part of the article has already been published: SITAR 2018, p. 141. Nadja Ocepek pointed out this term, unknown in Slovenia, in 2010 when working on the ARRS interdisciplinary project (the Research Institute of the IPCHS; cf. SITAR 2014–2015).

[79] The introduction based on three online sources, accessed 2 July 2019:
Maryan W. Ainsworth, From Connoisseurship to Technical Art History: The Evolution of the Interdisciplinary Study of Art: *The Getty Conservation Institute*: <https://www.getty.edu/conservation/publications_resources/newsletters/20_1/feature.html (cont. AINSWORTH 2005)>;
The University of Glasgow, Art History: Technical Art History, Making & Meaning: <http://www.gla.ac.uk/postgraduate/taught/technicalarthistory/>;
Looking through art: <https://lookingthroughartblog.wordpress.com/2019/05/15/technical-art-history-unravelling-the-secrets-of-making/>

[80] AINSWORTH 2005.

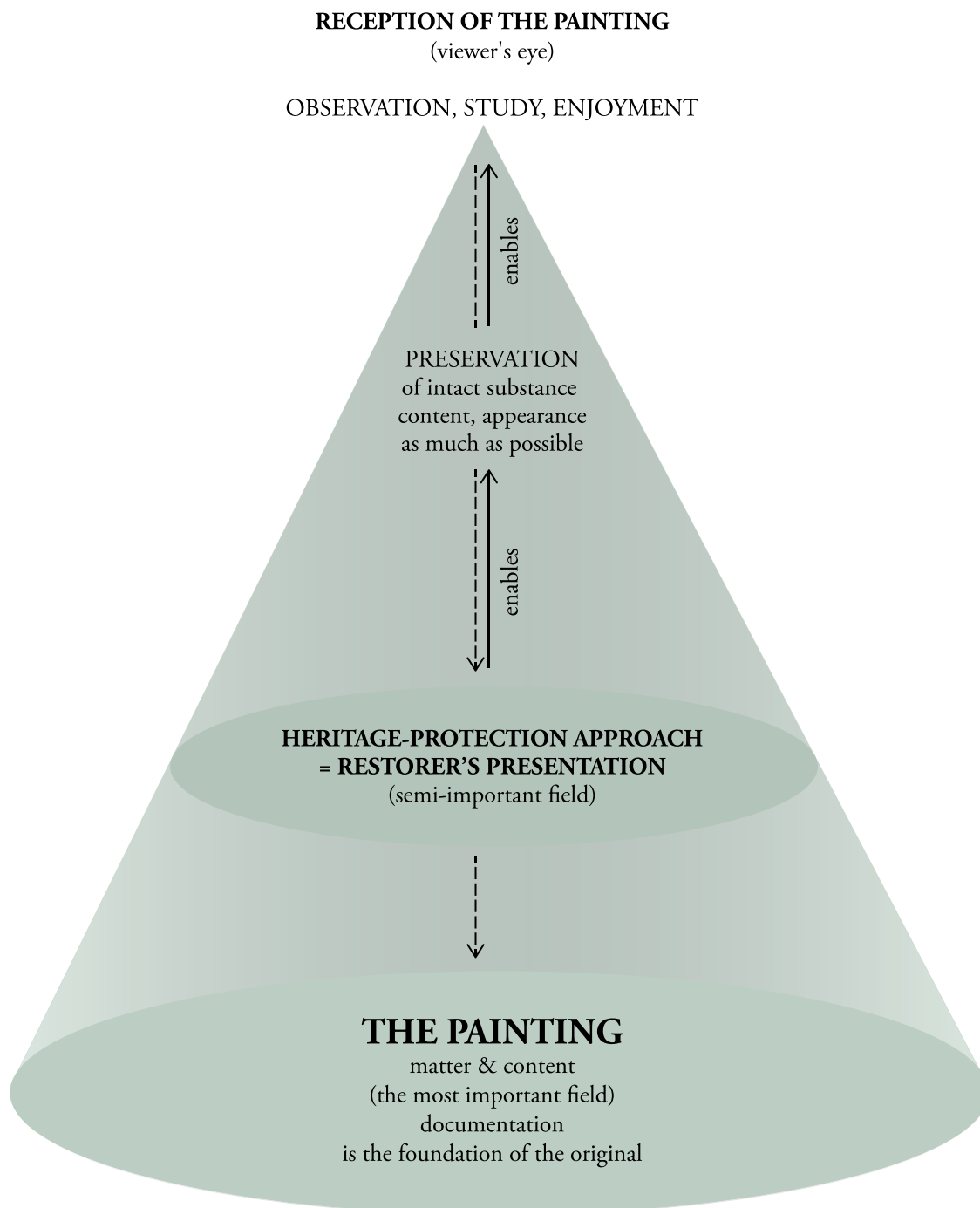[81] CARDINALI, DE RUGGIERI, FALCUCCI 2007.

But where can we educate ourselves? How do we establish this approach and way of thinking, encourage closer cooperation and communication between the restorer, art historian, and natural scientist?[82] In Slovenia, the term technical art history is unknown. One cannot learn about it, not even in study programmes or among the employees in conservation or art history fields. It is nevertheless daily present in heritage protection, during work with the art historian-conservator, custodian, conservator-restorer, chemist, physicist, architect, constructionist, structural engineer etc. Scientific analyses have been an integral part of restorer's study for decades. In Slovenia, too, technical art history has had the longest tradition at museums, where a custodian and restorer jointly discover a work of art by use of scientific inquiry. The lack of appropriate education and general knowledge is, as Ainsworth wrote, evident in the newly employed art historians, for example, curators in museums, conservators at heritage protection institutions, who mostly have no experience with objects and buildings and have difficulties describing them, evaluating their state and endangerment. Most often, they do not even know how to talk to restorers about these problems. A possible solution, as Ainsworth wrote, could be an undergraduate apprenticeship for the students to practice and 'intimately learn about interdisciplinary work'. This would mean cooperation with different team experts, so that they could allow the material component, apprehension of matter, the technique behind the work of art and its renewal, into their contextual and spiritual comprehension of the work of art. We wish to raise awareness about technical art history among art historians, conservators, and conservator-restorers but not merely in the field of oil paintings but also in restoration of wall paintings, wooden sculptures, stone, architecture, and other types of heritage. What is the purpose of technical art history? To search for the truth about the origin of artwork and buildings, to define the matter and content so we can understand them correctly and appropriately conserve and restore them. We research the truth, the essence, the story told by every work of art. We explore how it was made and what meaning it carries, materials chosen for the realisation of the artist's idea and its survival through time. The work of art thus tells a story of creation and change, a story of time, of people, and eras which it lived through.

In the final presentation, the restorers, intent on the artistic, technical, technological, and material aspect, often forget about the connotation, the meaning. Contrastively, art historians build their interpretation of a work of art on visuality which can be the result of older restoration interventions, natural degradation etc. and not of the changes of artistic style, of the assistant's hand, of a workshop. Art historians perceive, observe, and see a wall painting differently than restorers so their role during restoration is extremely important. The final presentation consists of restorer's individual decisions made at each phase through the process of his or her work. He or she should make them together with art historian-conservator and other heritage protection experts.

The following cone diagram illustrates three basic levels and relations towards a work of art that help us understand what we are looking at, and what meaning a complete comprehension of the monument has on the one hand and what the conservation-restoration treatments on the other.

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[82] *Art history – technical art history, making & meaning* exists as an MA programme at the University of Glasgow and as a specialization at the University of Amsterdam. The American Institute of Fine Arts in New York is one of the rare institutions where graduates of Art History have to complete a course of practical conservation-restoration and *conservation science,* and the restorers finish an MA in Art History (in AINSWORTH 2005).

RECEPTION OF THE PAINTING
(viewer's eye)

OBSERVATION, STUDY, ENJOYMENT

enables

PRESERVATION
of intact substance
content, appearance
as much as possible

enables

**HERITAGE-PROTECTION APPROACH
= RESTORER'S PRESENTATION**
(semi-important field)

THE PAINTING
matter & content
(the most important field)
documentation
is the foundation of the original

Fig. 9: Graphic illustration of the three levels in the shape of a cone: 1. reception of the painting (viewer's eye) 2. restoration presentation (a filter that we look through) and 3. the painting (the material, contextual, documentary aspect).

The most important is the biggest field of the diagram – the painting with all the information, including both the material and contextual aspect from its creation onwards, with all the records of its 'curriculum vitae'. In each wall painting, we come across a 'curriculum vitae' of the materialized artistic idea that relays a message of an artist, era, people, ideas, and innovations. In addition to the art-historical dimension and communicativeness, we also encounter the actual sum of the original and additions, the consequences of losses and older restoration approaches, the history of interventions, purely technical methodologies and technologies, as well as past principles, beliefs, and heritage protection directives that helped, for example, preserve a painting. To achieve a correct and objective perception,[83] we must be versed in the 'curriculum vitae' of the painting, i.e., reliable information, so that we can interpret it 'correctly'. The other, still important level is the heritage protection approach that determines a presentation. A restorer physically interferes with the painting. Therefore, if an art historian-conservator and a conservator-restorer work together closely and exhaustively study a monument, they can accurately interpret the data and create a scientifically and ethically correct presentation. The presentation helps the wall painting survive in its material, communicative, and documentary sense and also enables it to be observed, enjoyed, and studied, which is the third level in the hierarchy of relations at the top of the cone diagram. The latter imitates an eye that looks at the bottom at the most important field – the painting. The narrowest field of the cone is occupied by the degree of observation and study. Notice that the eye is looking through some sort of a *filter* (second level), i.e., the restoration presentation of the painting, and not indirectly at the painting in its bare original visuality and meaning.

In order to achieve a correct presentation, a balance between all the factors, evaluations, or values of the monument is mandatory. Before the intervention, we have to be aware of its scope, e.g., material, spiritual, religious connotation, important for the believer, and historical, documentary, and last but not least, aesthetic value by which the painted scene is perceived by every viewer. A restorer cannot conserve and restore correctly and present the work of art, if (s)he does not know it to the bone (of the matter and communicativeness). Similarly, an art historian cannot correctly evaluate artistic features, colours, styles, authorship if (s)he neglects the aspect of technical art history. First, we need to thoroughly understand and consider the author, era and iconography, and only then, approach the artwork practically, not based solely on aesthetics and most definitely not on aestheticism.

Contemporary Slovenian heritage protection is the fruit of knowledge, experiences, and development of the last hundred years. It is an account of the professional relationship between the restorer and the art historian-conservator, as once designed by the Vienna Central Commission. Concrete examples on monuments show how (un)successful their cooperation has been. If history is unknown to us, we lack critical insight. We also cannot consider it our own and cannot draw from it. Slovenian heritage is rich and extremely important since it fuels everything we are, including the way we think. The history of Slovenian restoration has a long tradition and conceals the foundation of Slovene restoration practice that we, as experts, need to first explore ourselves. We need to research the *restoration practices in wall painting and the expertise of restorers*, as well as write *the theory of restoring wall paintings*, all of which

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[83] We have borrowed the theatre term viewer's perception. It is a 'psychological process in which a viewer based on his or her intellectual, emotional, cultural, and social predispositions senses the stage act, transforms it in his or her own aesthetic experience and, so, co-creates the show' (in our case the interpretation of the painting): online source: Terminologišče, *ZRC SAZU*: <https://isjfr.zrc-sazu.si/sl/terminologisce/slovarji/gledaliski/iskalnik?iztocnica=gled%C3%A1l%C4%8Deva%20rec%C3%A9pcija#v> [accessed 27 June 2019]

are key chapters that Julia Feldtkeller covered in the history of wall painting restoration in Austria.[84] Such foundations can raise the confidence and empower the heritage protection experts to set the guidelines and directives for their work and enable them to fight off the biased interests of finances, politics, and clients. Or, as Mole wrote about the 'refreshing' of paintings in 1966, 'With overcoats, they are so retouched and "refreshed" that they significantly differ from the image they offered when discovered. Snobs and the uneducated prefer them "refreshed". This current state of affairs should not be our guideline. On the contrary, **we should educate the visitors in such a way that they value also the "unbeautified" beauty**.'[85]

We are at a stage where we are capable of critical assessment, however, still stuck in a developmental spasm other European nations have overcome, so they might have no need to concern themselves with beautification of reality and their past. German and Austrian heritage protection no longer opts for rigorous restoration treatments, for the reckless removal of overcoatings and patina. They rarely attempt a reconstruction, while a retouch is an exception, not a rule. What they do choose is conservation, maintenance, preservation of the existing, preventive conservation. Perhaps we stand on the verge of a new era that leads to greater awareness of our reality, of past heritage protection and its acceptance. Only thus will we be able to set a goal for the future with the decision to finally shift from the likeable and amiable to the unadorned truth, content, and meaning.

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[84] Julia Feldtkeller, *Wandmalereirestaurierung eine Geschichte ihrer Motive und Methoden*, Berlin, Münster, Vienna, Zürich 2010 (FELDTKELLER 2010).
[85] MOLE 1965, p. 180.

RETOUCHING AND/OR REINTEGRATION IN THE RESTORATION OF WALL PAINTINGS (A FEW NOTES ON TERMINOLOGY)

Ivan Srša

Keywords

wall paintings, restoration, retouching, reintegration, reconstruction, inpainting, overpainting

Abstract

In this article, the author draws attention to the unjustified avoidance of the term *retouching* in the restoration of wall paintings and its substitution with the term *reintegration*. The term *retouching* might be misunderstood and its use limited, but it is nevertheless still used and exists. This article also mentions the terms that are directly linked to *retouching*, e.g. *reconstruction*, *inpainting*, *overpainting*, *repainting*, that may be multifaceted and therefore also misinterpreted.

Retouching and reintegration

In the beginning, we should examine the terms from the title of the article: *retouching* and *reintegration*. It seems that they are not on the same level of meaning. The Latin prefix *re* preceding both words (*re*-touching[1] and *re*-integration[2]) indicates the repetition of actions.

The painter first 'touched' the painting during the very process of painting, which is why initially the term *retouching* probably indicated the author's finishing of the painting.[3] In time it received a new meaning: the noun *retouching* ('to touch again') represents the restoration procedure by which the restorer treats the damaged or missing parts of the paint surface in the painting.[4]

Paolo and Laura Mora and Paul Philippot briefly commented on *traditional retouching*[5] and mentioned the term *retouching* in the context of techniques (*Techniques de la retouche*,[6] *Retouching techniques*[7]). Further on they mentioned *retouching* when describing *reconstruction in tratteggio*, whose 'purpose is firstly to differentiate the retouching from the original'. In their description of the *tratteggio* method of vertical lines, they pointed out that the first lines 'indicate the basic tone of retouching' and described the whole procedure of using neat hatchings.[8]

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1   Retouch (fr. *retouche*): 'to restore, correct, or improve (a painting, make-up, etc) with new touches': *Dictionary.com*, <http://www.dictionary.com/browse/retouch> [accessed 14 Aug 2017]

2   Integration: 'the act of combining or adding parts to make a unified whole': *Dictionary.com*, <http://www.dictionary.com/browse/integration> [accessed 14 Aug 2017]
     Integratio, *integrationis* (lat. 3rd declension): *Latdict*, <http://www.latin-dictionary.net/search/latin/integratio> [accessed 14 Aug 2017]

3   MORA P., MORA L., PHILIPPOT 1984, p. 15: '/…/ a typical structure of a stratigraphic structure, from the ground towards the surface: the surface of the plaster receiving the paint; the preparatory drawing; the ground or base tone; the middle tone; the **retouching** of the drawings, shadows, and highlights.' Cf. *EwaGlos*, 2016, pp. 68–69 (*Painting stratigraphy*).

4   DOHERTY, WOOLLETT 2009, pp. 64–65.

5   MORA P., MORA L., PHILIPPOT 1984, p. 301: '**Traditional retouching**, which often entails re-inventing, is rarely limited to areas of loss, and can easily degenerate into overpainting. It is derived from the naive conviction that a work of art must be complete to be properly appreciated and that it can be remade so at will by a craftsman.'

6   MORA P., MORA L., PHILIPPOT 1977, pp 352–353.

7   MORA P., MORA L., PHILIPPOT 1984, pp. 305–306: 'It is not necessary to use the technique by which the original painting was executed for retouching during the re-integration of either mural or easel painting.'

8   MORA P., MORA L., PHILIPPOT 1984, pp. 309–310.

Figs. 1, 2: *The overpainted* dome in the Church of St Jerome in Štrigova (painted 1743/44) before and after the restoration treatment (*retouching*).

Although *retouching* was mentioned along the term *reconstruction* in the 2003 ICOMOS principles,[9] *retouching* and *reconstruction* as separate terms were not included in the 2015 dictionary.[10] The term *retouching* was replaced by a comprehensive *reintegration* concept,[11] which is the 'umbrella term' for seven reintegration techniques: *neutral reintegration*,[12] *tratteggio*,[13] *pointillism*,[14] *tonal adjustment/glazing*,[15] *mimetic reintegration*,[16] *astrazione cromatica*,[17] and *selezione cromatica*.[18]

In his *Teoria,* Cesare Brandi used the word *integration*, for example, 'integration is a phenomenon' or 'supposed integration',[19] but later on he also used the term *reintegration* (*reintegrazione*).[20] Umberto Baldini used both terms, *integration* and *reintegration*,[21] while instead of the term *integration,* the Moras and Philippot introduced the term *reintegration*.[22]

Both these terms could lead to confusion.[23] A work of art, as Brandi said, is 'the oneness that refers to the *whole*, and not the *unity* reached by *the sum of its parts*' ('l'unità che spetta all' *intero*, e non *l'unità* che si raggiunge

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[9] ICOMOS Principles for the preservation and conservation-restoration of wall paintings (2003). Ratified by the ICOMOS 14th General Assembly in Victoria Falls, Zimbabwe, in 2003 (Article 5. Conservation-restoration treatments).
[10] *EwaGlos,* 2016, see note 3.
[11] *EwaGlos,* 2016, pp. 328–329 (*Reintegration*).
[12] *EwaGlos,* 2016, pp. 330–331 (*Neutral reintegration*).
[13] *EwaGlos,* 2016, pp. 332–333 (*Tratteggio*).
[14] *EwaGlos,* 2016, pp. 334–335 (*Pointillism*).
[15] *EwaGlos,* 2016, pp. 336–337 (*Tonal adjustment/glazing*).
[16] *EwaGlos,* 2016, pp. 338–339 (*Mimetic reintegration*).
[17] *EwaGlos,* 2016, pp. 340–341 (*Astrazione cromatica*).
[18] *EwaGlos,* 2016, pp. 342–343 (*Selezione cromatica*).
[19] BRANDI 1977, p. 74: *Appendice. 2. Postilla teorica al trattamento delle lacune*; BRANDI 2005, pp. 91–92: *Appendix: 2. Postscript to the treatment of Lacunae.*
[20] BRANDI 1999, pp. 270–273. The article was published in 1972 (*La mostra 'Firenze restaurò'*).
[21] BALDINI 1978, pp. 17–19.
[22] MORA P., MORA L., PHILIPPOT 1984, pp. 305–307.
[23] See the meaning of the word *integration* in note 2.

nel *totale*').[24] By adding the prefix *re* to the term *integration,* it can be interpreted as *re-connecting* the parts into a whole.[25]

The Moras and Philippot primarily used the terms *reintegration* (*Re-integration of the patina, Re-integration of wear in the paint layer*) and *reconstruction* (*Reconstruction of losses: filling and tratteggio, Losses which should not be reconstructed*).[26] Nevertheless, they still used the term *retouching* when they described *Reconstruction in tratteggio* and *Tratteggio limitations*.[27] The question then remains, why *retouching* as a term is gradually disappearing from the wall painting conservation language. The terms *integration* and *reintegration* cannot replace it because they are the final goal of a restoration procedure which includes *retouching* and/or *inpainting*.

Aesthetic reintegration

According to the ICOMOS *Principles of Preservation and Conservation-Restoration of Wall Paintings (2003),* '*aesthetic reintegration*' 'should primarily be carried out on **non-original materials**'.[28] In other words, this restoration procedure should be performed on a new plaster layer that has *infilled*[29] the losses (*lacunae*[30]). That means that the methods of '*aesthetic reintegration*' like *mimetic reintegration, pointillism* or *astrazione cromatica* (i. e. the methods which belong to the concept of *inpainting/reconstruction* and not *retouching*) can be applied onto the new plaster.

The Moras and Philippot described two practical restoration procedures belonging to the concept of *retouching* and undoubtedly to the '*aesthetic reintegration*'. Both should be executed on original materials, paint or plaster (*render*[31]) in the manner of *Re-integration of the patina* and *Re-integration of the wear of the paint layer*.[32] Technically, the *tonal adjustment/glazing* executed on the original plaster (*intonaco*[33]) is the closest term to the concept of *retouching*.

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[24] BRANDI 1977, pp. 13–20; BRANDI 2005, pp. 55–59.
[25] *Reintegration*: 'restoration to a unified state' (in medicine: 'restoration to a condition of integration or unity'): *www.Dictionary.com*, <http://www.dictionary.com/browse/reintegration?s=t> [accessed 2 Oct 2017]
[26] MORA P., MORA L., PHILIPPOT 1984, pp. 305–315.
[27] MORA P., MORA L., PHILIPPOT 1984, pp. 309–310.
[28] See note 9.
[29] *EwaGlos*, 2016, pp. 318–319 (*Infill*).
[30] *EwaGlos*, 2016, pp. 180–181 (*Lacuna*).
[31] See the difference between *plaster* and *render*: *EwaGlos*, 2016, pp. 50–51 (*Plaster*); pp. 52–53 (*Render*).
[32] MORA P., MORA L., PHILIPPOT 1984, p. 305: 'The term "wear" refers to the surface alterations in the patina or in the actual paint layer, due either to abrasion or to the loss of minute flakes of paint beneath which a part of the paint layer or at least the original rendering remains.' Continued on p. 307: 'Simple wear did not need any reconstruction of forms by drawing or modelling, but only, because of its infinitely small area, the re-establishment of continuity of tone.'
[33] *EwaGlos*, 2016, pp. 76–77 (*Intonaco*).

Fig. 3: The restoration treatment (*infilling*) in the Church of St Lawrence in Požega (painted *c.* 1380).

Fig. 4: The painting after restoration (*inpainting*).

Reconstruction and inpainting

The Moras and Philippot pointed out that 'the re-integration of a loss by reconstruction must be made at the level of the original'.[34] So, the filling of losses with new plaster (*render*) should be the first step. That is one of the main differences in the *reconstruction* restoration procedure between the concept of *retouching*, executed on the original plaster and/or the painted layer, and the concept which should be called *inpainting*, executed on the new plaster that had filled the losses.

The traditional term *retouching* was used conjunctly with the term *inpainting* which was considered more precise because *retouching* could also imply *overpainting* – a procedure in which the original was covered by an excessive layer of paint not applied by the artist.[35] The term *inpainting* is defined as a new coat of paint on the surfaces where the original was lost or damaged.[36]

However, unlike the term *retouching*, which should only refer to the *original plaster* and the *original paint layer* (Figs. 1, 2), the term *inpainting* is technically more acceptable for *lacunae* filled with new plaster (Figs. 3, 4) and much closer to the Moras and Philippot's concept of *reconstruction* (Figs. 5–7).

The concepts also differ in the method used to *re-establish* the continuity of forms by drawing and modelling as opposed to the reconstruction of simple deterioration. In the last half of the 20th century, such *reconstructions* were usually executed by applying *tratteggio* and *selezione cromatica* onto a small area, or *neutral reintegration*, *atrazione cromatica* or *pointillism* onto a larger area (Figs. 6, 7).

The Moras and Philippot used the above-mentioned terms *re-establish* and *re-establishing* in their description of *Re-integration of the patina* and *Reconstruction of losses: filling and tratteggio*. In comparison with Brandi's definition of a work of art, the term *re-establish (re-establishing)*[37] seems more suitable for the explanation of the aesthetic part of the restoration procedure than the term *re-integration*.

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[34] MORA P., MORA L., PHILIPPOT 1984, p. 308.

[35] Glossary of conservation terms, *Artrestorations.co.uk.*, <http://www.artrestorations.co.uk/glossary/> [accessed 14 Aug 2017]

[36] CONSTABLE 1954, p. 133: 'The modern practice is to limit this tinting out to the damaged area when the practice is known as in-painting.' *Inpainting*: 'Applying new paint on areas where original paint has been lost or abraded. Other term: Retouching': *Artrestorations.com.uk.*, <http://www.artrestorations.co.uk/glossary/> [accessed 14 Aug 2017]

[37] MORA P., MORA L., PHILIPPOT 1984, pp 306–307. *British Dictionary definitions* for *re-establish*: 'to establish (something) again', www. *Dictionary.com*, <http://www.dictionary.com/browse/re-establish> [accessed 14 Aug 2017]

Fig. 5: *Salle terrain* before the restoration treatments in the south auxiliary house of the castle Batthyány in Ludbreg (painted *c.* 1762).

Overpainting (overpaint)

It is rather unsuitable to use the term *retouch (retouching)* for the painter's finalisation of a painting. Another term should be used because the former can easily be mistaken with the concept of *retouching* in restoration procedure, which 'could imply *overpainting* – a procedure in which the original was covered by an excessive layer of paint not applied by the artist' (Fig. 1).

Retouching as the painter's final brush strokes in his or her painting (as mentioned by the Moras and Philippot) should by no means be confused with the artist's corrections (*pentimento*).[38] An altogether new and more suitable name should be invented for the author's finalisation of the painting. The term *retouching* should thus only be used for the *restoration* aesthetic procedure. Still, both terms already belong to the field of conservation of cultural heritage.

The term *overpainting* can mean: a) the repetition of the original painting (*repainting*);[39] b) the partial addition of the original motif; c) the introduction of new content and other. If an *overpainting* 'can be chronologically dated, it can become an intrinsic part of the artwork'.[40]

During restoration *overpainting* can be executed only during *retouching*. The *reconstructed* (*in-painted*) parts in the original painting cannot be considered *overpainted*. The only measure against *overpainting* during restoration is regular supervision.

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[38] *EwaGlos*, 2016, pp. 90–91 (*Pentimento*).
[39] CONSTABLE 1954, pp. 133–134: '*repainted*, a term now generally used whenever the original paint is covered to a greater or lesser extent.'
[40] *EwaGlos*, 2016, pp. 176–177 (*Overpaint*).

Fig. 6: The painting in *Salle terrain* in Ludbreg during the restoration (*reconstruction*).

Fig. 7: A detail of the reconstruction (*pointillism*) from *Salle terrain in* Ludbreg.

Conclusion

Aesthetic (re)integration in wall painting includes two basic methods: the *retouching* and the *inpainting (reconstruction).* It could be said that retouching is the *(re)integration* performed directly on the *original intonaco* or the damaged parts of the *original paint layer (reintegration of the patina; reintegration of wear in the paint layer).*

Contrary to this, the term *inpainting (reconstruction)* much better suits the interpretation of the *(re)integration* performed on the *lacuna* filled with new plaster (*non-original materials*).

Tonal adjustment/glazing is closer to *retouching,* while techniques similar to *neutral reintegration* and to those based on hatchings (*tratteggio, astrazione cromatica, selezione cromatica*) and dots (*pointillism*) are much closer to the concept of *inpainting (reconstruction).*

THE SPIRITUAL COMPONENT OF MEDIEVAL WALL PAINTING – THE ISSUE OF PRESENTATION WHEN CONSERVING AND RESTORING

Simona Menoni Muršič

Keywords

medieval wall painting, iconography, spiritual component of medieval wall paintings

Abstract

The article discusses the spiritual component of medieval sacred wall painting, whose ideational iconographic world surpasses the formal style and its comprehension. To a believer, medieval frescoes were mystical images with rich messages that he or she comprehended inside liturgical contexts. They awakened and addressed man's spiritual world, constructed the heavenly Jerusalem, and, as the Middle Ages advanced, incorporated more and more genre elements to connect common people with the lives of the Holy. The horror of the Passion became a potent expression of emotions, and by Reformation, the guilt of the medieval man and (through it) the power of the Church had increased. Hence, sacred wall paintings are *contemplative realms and spaces of meditation* for the medieval, but perhaps also the contemporary man. Therefore, the first condition for appropriate conservation-restoration intervention is the understanding of the spiritual tradition of the paintings. It must not be minimised, taken away, or deformed by artistic aestheticizing or falsification of the painting. Aided by some striking examples of medieval paintings with accentuated gazes, the hereby paper explains the connotation of the painted scenes and describes how the contemplative notion was lost because the conservation-restoration intervention had been executed without an opinion from different experts, who help us understand the material foundation and the spiritual context of the painting. It speaks in favour of interdisciplinary debates before the intervention and stresses cooperation with the art historian specialist to determine the presentation of the medieval wall paintings. Simultaneously, the article criticises the way interventions are determined, which is prevailingly through the prism of time and costs. As a result, the less-exposed heritage, the one that is not *in the eyes of all,* is ruined, despite it being a highly important part of the Slovenian heritage patrimony.

'Real art carries multiple meanings that are (on the recognition level) difficult to perceive in totality, in all the stages of creation and, therefore, in the all-embracing essence inside the final image. Complete comprehension of a work of art depends on each view and the ability to immerse in it; and, additionally, of course, also on analytical thinking, co-dependent with the degree of acceptance and the ability to perceive. Nevertheless, we recognise that we repeatedly come back to a work of art in search of new meanings.

What marvellous markedness marks the work of art!

Truly: no object lives and speaks in its material state in a livelier way than a true work of art. In fact, only human eyes are more conveying, therefore more abstract.'[1]

The introductory contemplation on the multitude of meanings inside a work of art could be described as art historical *haiku* of what we sense behind the visual of the art and of the subject of art historical disciplines of iconography and iconology. However, it seems, as the conservation-restoration consultant Martina Lesar Kikelj has written, that for the past years or even decades, conservation-restoration in majority only pursues the technological supremacy and the development of suitable, compatible materials. At which point the highly important spiritual and aesthetic components of the work of art have been somewhat pushed aside and in interventions, especially retouching, overshadowed by technological solutions.[2] Along with the content or spiritual component, as it is called in this paper, we should, next to all that has recently been lost, list originality or authenticity in its material as well as presentational, expressive and, last but not least, formal sense. On the other hand, it should be noted that a trained art historian-conservator does not possess the knowledge about technological and material aspects of a wall painting and its interventions. Overall, at the national art-historical professoriate the research of medieval art in Slovenia mainly encompassed the search for stylistic and formal movements. However, the spiritual presence of the medieval spiritual-liturgical context increasingly shone through the formal strokes of the painter's brush and the researchers of medieval paintings could glimpse it if during their studies, they were susceptible enough. The shifts towards the new or additional methodological approaches in medieval wall-painting studies that asserted themselves also at the Ljubljana professoriate, originate, for example, from the research on the stencilled brocade patterns in medieval wall painting in Slovenia by Alenka Vodnik.[3] By using textile patterns (thenceforth an additional method of stylistic analysis of medieval wall painting), she relevantly complemented the findings on how workshops connected individual monuments and their authors. For the humanistic art historian, an art tool such as a stencil thus became a narrative aid for analysing an artist's work. In the field of medieval architecture, Robert Peskar used a similar method by reading the masons' marks as important symbols for studying building workshops and their currents on the European scale.[4] But when art history mostly approached the themes of medieval wall paintings by their style and artistic links between individual works of art, artists, local and foreign art movements, and by looking for iconographic explanations, it was Anabelle Križnar who succeeded in her

[1] BALAŽIC 2002, p. 41.
[2] LESAR KIKELJ, KLANČAR KAVČIČ, MENONI MURŠIČ 2018, p. 43.
[3] VODNIK 1991; VODNIK 1998; VODNIK 2003, pp. 53–72.
[4] Although not having published a singular treatise on the matter, Robert Peskar, consistently uses the method in all papers on medieval architecture. For bibliography, see the Cobiss database.

understanding of medieval wall painting in Slovenia. She was the first Slovenian art historian to focus on style and technique, that is the technical aspect of creation: composition of plasters, choice of pigments, application of paint layers, the artist's work in progress,[5] all which co-design the material and content representation of the wall painting. This led to the acceptance of a new branch – the already globally established *technical art history*,[6] that treats a work of art as a physical object, researching it in terms of materials, techniques, and creative methods, as well as studying artist's reflection during the creative process. Conceptually, this is an inventive break from perceiving fine arts merely as an element of humanities and, at the same time, an inclusion of methodology and technology of creation and intervention into the understanding of an individual work of art. In the scope of art historical and conservation research during the 2002–2006 restoration of Quaglio's wall paintings on the naval arch and the western wall of the St Nicholas' Church in Ljubljana, Križnar's work was continued by Mateja Neža Sitar.[7] The work led to a PhD thesis in which Sitar thoroughly evaluated not only the relationship between the art historian and restorer, and the development of conservation and restoration in Slovenia but also the past changes in understanding, evaluating, and intervening on wall paintings.[8] In her research, the author exploited the art historian who merely relied on the archive date of the work of art and the aforementioned art historical methods, but not on the history of interventions into the materiality of the work of art, and with it its presence or its authentic and spiritual essence. It is a field other scientific writings have not touched upon. The visible aspect of the work of art has become the basis of its art historical analysis, which is why Sitar strives to ensure that the globally acknowledged technical aspect of the work of art becomes a part of art historical perception, something that can only be achieved by additional study.

The facts presented try to outline the reasons why through the development of conservation in Slovenia an art historian (a scientist and an art historian-conservator) was (also for bureaucratic reasons) increasingly less involved in the process of conservation and restoration of wall paintings and left the decisions to the technologically and methodologically trained restorer. All of this led to an acceptance of the notion of the material and spiritual unity of artwork on an academic level, but still restricted the intervention to the domain of a restoration team. There exist only a few cases where an investor, conservator-restorer, and an art historian who was an expert on medieval wall paintings actively and equally worked together through the planning, uncovering, conserving, and restoring, all at which they also had enough time to consider, analyse, and plan their work. Admittedly, an array of paintings crucial for understanding and evaluation of the development and quality judgement of medieval wall paintings in Slovenia had worse luck. Their faith often depended on the remoteness from the centre and the size of the regional subsidiary as well as the rush required and the funds used.

After having illustrated the experts that meet in the field of conservation and abstract mediation about the understanding and perception of the artwork, let us through one of the finer examples of medieval gazes approach the spiritual context of medieval wall painting. The gaze in question is a fragment of the once extensive wall painting

[5]   KRIŽNAR 2006.
[6]   SITAR 2016, pp. 341–349. For *technical art history,* see the author's article. The field was first presented inside the *Slovenian Society for Conservation-Restoration* in 2017, the *Slovenian Association of Art Historians*, and at the lecture held at ALUO UHO event in 2018.
[7]   SITAR 2012, pp. 50–98.
[8]   SITAR 2016.

Fig. 1: *Vera Icon* from the Studenice monastery.

Figs. 2a, 2b: The Fall of Christ under the Cross, discovered between the two world wars in St Urh chapel of ease in Tolmin before and after the intervention.

of **the hospice hall in the Studenice monastery complex**. In the building that, according to architectural elements, dates to the first third of the 13th century, a magnificent image of Christ's face (Fig. 1)[9] was discovered during the complete adaptation of the monastery – at the time intended to become a retirement home.[10]

A quick look may reveal the high quality of this work that was preserved only in fragments so that a complete iconographic concept of the extensive painting can probably never be construed. Located in the centre above a small rectangular window with a cut stone-frame, in a trapezoid there opens up the frontal face of Christ with a cruciform nimbus. The background is decorated with a densely distributed textile pattern, which – along with its partly visible soft ruches and wavy finish at the end of the border on the left – gives the impression of the iconographic image of *Vera icon*, that is, the Veil of Veronica with the imprint of Christ's face. The face is characterised by overproportioned eyes with their brown pupils placed too close together, which has a hypnotic effect on the observer. The extreme beauty of Christ's almost boyish face is enhanced by small pink lips with a merely indicated puffy moustache, while the softness of his round visage is concluded by pink cheeks surrounded by symmetrically arranged wavy hair. Judging by the preserved border fragments with a zigzag band on the walls under the image, we may assume that both window walls were fully painted. However, we do not mention this image to question the context of the entire painting in all its excellence, preserved from the time of creation (*c.* 1400) until this day. It was chosen because its spiritual component is the core ingredient for its creation. It was most probably intended for intimate meditation, perhaps for the abbess and her pious introspection, possible by the high-quality cult image and by the physical and then, in speculation and contemplation, spiritual eyes, 'as the vision comes to the eyes of the soul, heart or mind'.[11] It can be assumed that this is one of Slovenia's most beautiful, preserved medieval art realisations of the image of Christ and his mystical look. Its value lies in the symbolic component of medieval expressiveness, the intention of which is to see beyond the actual appearance of things. In other words, to experience mystical piety, introspection and ecstasy,[12] to touch the holiness through the look of spiritual eyes. A minor puzzle than the iconographic concept of the wall niche painting is the stylistic and temporal placement of its creation. When determining the style, we certainly recognise the softness of Christ's boyish visage and its aesthetic canon of beauty as a characteristic of the so-called soft or beautiful style, developed between 1380 and 1390 by the Czech painters headed by the Master of the Třeboň Altarpiece.

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[9] MENONI 2016, pp. 93–94.
[10] HORVAT 2009, pp. 160–172.
[11] MIKUŽ 2000, p. 154.
[12] MIKUŽ 2000, p. 153.

Figs. 3a, 3b: Christ's face from St Urh chapel of ease in Tolmin before the intervention and after the finished retouch.

As we try to immerse ourselves into the work of art (when we, as quoted in the introduction, *repeatedly come back to a work of art* not only when defining its formal laws but also when searching for new meanings to its spirituality), the modern intervention does not affect us since it has stopped at the level of conservation, and the painting survived to our days quite preserved. However, we can find exceptions to the above case. The following paintings were chosen for the enhanced emotiveness of their gazes as spiritual contexts and not solely for the polemical interventions. The purpose of this article is to use the chosen examples to expose the meaning of the medieval paintings as thoroughly as possible and thus the importance of their complete understanding before we interfere with their material substance.

Let us examine the look of Christ's eyes in the Fall of Christ under the Cross (Figs. 2a, 2b) in the late-medieval passion of the God-man. This is a 1472 quality painting of the presbytery in the current **St Urh chapel of ease in Tolmin**, which was, according to the records, the initial seat of the Tolmin parish that existed already in the 10th century (if not earlier).[13] As in previous cases, we notice remarkable spirituality that had increased during the Middle Ages in the formal style, the so-called late-medieval realism. The latter intensifies the menace of Christ's executioner to the utmost darkness of a man while trying to capture Christ's infinite sorrow towards man's weakness and the horrific suffering of human flesh onto a wall of a medieval sacral building. Inside it, a believer while participating in liturgy constantly internalizes the decision that (s)he will exit the church a better man and that Christ's tears will not be, because of his or her decision and salvation, so excruciatingly painful. And as the recognition that a man is *simul justus et peccator* (simultaneously righteous and a sinner) tormented the church reformer Martin Luther so that he found a solution out of the stated duality by faith alone, *sola fides*, so medieval men ensnared themselves into their feeling of guilt and whipped themselves while experiencing the Passion of Christ. What message were these sad, perhaps reproachful, eyes of Christ (Figs. 3a, 3b) trying to convey when, on the way to Calvary, he fell under the cross in his pain?

His eyes do not gaze in the distance, into the spiritual *infinity*, but are fixed on us, looking right into our burning hearts, asking us 'why' and 'why you as well?', 'do you feel my pain?', 'will you be able to look into your soul and do better?'. In short, this is not a matter of formal strokes, folding of draperies, and retouched lines of *tratteggio*, the attempt of total reconstruction of borders and rounding of draperies, inpainting of missing sections. This is a matter of capturing serious medieval spiritual context, the perception of which was assuredly lost for a long time by

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[13] HÖFLER 1997, pp. 136–138 et al.

Figs. 4a, 4b: Detail of a warrior from The Fall of Christ under the Cross before the intervention (4a) and after the retouch (4b).

a rash intervention, in which we were fortunate not to lose the materiality of the original since the intervention was reversible. A sensible question to ask is where we got lost in our chase after the most precise hatching of the missing, once painted, surfaces. What has happened with the nobleness and the extreme quality of the painting? Moreover, what has happened to the comprehension of painter's originality, if we, for example, look at Christ's face, disappearing amidst the sea of rough *tratteggio* lines, and the facial features concluded in a somewhat self-willed presentation norm (Fig. 3b)? The contemporary intervention prevents us from experiencing any mysticism and internalizing Christ's Calvary since it has stopped at the desired presentation of the artistically finalised scenes based on the technical perfection of contemporary wall painting comprehension (Figs. 4a, 4b).

It needs to be stressed that such a problematic presentation of the face is not an isolated one since we encounter similar cases in Slovenia and abroad.[14] We may, however, conclude that the current demand is that paintings are superbly 'pimped' (Figs. 5a, 5b), so they become likeable, almost beautiful. There is little left of their spiritual context and the comprehension of the time they were created in, let alone the artist's hand (Fig. 5c), so they leave us, despite their aesthetic agreeableness pursued in the intervention, empty and indifferent.

Or, if you will: 'Painting is the silence of thought and the music of sight' as Orhan Pamuk wrote in his brilliant novel *My Name Is Red*. We know that only quality artwork can uphold the silence of thought and the music of sight. This can then be the contemplative realm, a meditation space in which it immanently dwells as a constant need for discovering the purpose of existence, transience, duration, degree of testimony, eternity.'[15] That is the context of medieval wall paintings and not chasing realism in depiction. The norm of time is the idealistic[16] conception of the subject, which is to express the idea with a style.

This loss of the contemplative realm, of the mediation space, which is the inherent quality of sacral or secular works of art, occurred over a decade ago to the wall paintings in **the nave of the crusader Church of Holy Trinity in Velika Nedelja** (end of the 14th century).[17] As a young postgraduate, I came across them when searching for

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[14] See the example of a retouch done on a painting by Piero della Francesca in the presbytery of the Basilica of St Francis in Arezzo (Fig. 2) in the article *Complex Comprehension of the Visual Field (Visual Understanding of the Restored Works of Art).*

[15] BALAŽIC 2015, p. 77.

[16] 'When we speak of idealism in art, we think of the philosophy by which natural phenomena are comprehended particularly as expressions of immaterial ideas; the idealistic subject is, therefore, that which is not painted for its own sake but because of its connection with the sphere of ideas, whether mental or natural. The artistic value of the idealistic subjects does not lie in artistic reconstruction of things, persons, and events from nature but the expressiveness of ideas of the painted things, persons, or events. So much so that the idealistic subject is not a "correct" copy of something externally visible but its invisible, internal, only conceptually existing meaning.' CANKAR 1959, p. 66.

[17] MENONI 2003, pp. 25–57 (with an outline of the painting).

Figs. 5a, 5b: 'The pimped up' Tolmin apostles after the retouch. From the fairly well-preserved and unretouched face of the apostle Peter from the scene at the Mount of Olives in **Fig. 5c** (bottom right), we can see the fine work of a late gothic realism, whose exceptionality and also authenticity were greatly blurred out by the last intervention.

factual knowledge and analyses. Trying to understand them, I stumbled upon photographs that recorded the paintings during the uncovering, before the final intervention, and with their help, the true meaning and formal quality of the paintings was revealed. Restorer's self-willed finishes of the facial features, the shape of lips, strokes at the neck, which were, according to him, probably necessary because of the damage caused by the electric cables (Fig. 6a), hampered my (art historian's) judgement of the paintings' quality and their time placement. The reconstructed facial features, the ends of draperies, the made-up positions of hands, etc. speak of a completely different quality from the original one and hinder the experience of the outlined contemplative realm, time, and the high spiritual context of the paintings. The infinite, precious azurite background, which, by itself and together with the remains of blackened silver on bishop's staffs and headpieces, reveals the wealth of the client, in no way matches up with the bad execution (Fig. 6b). It was painful to realise that the painter was not at all bad, as confirmed by the photos from before the retouch and by investigating the work of the same artist in **the northern chapel of the now parish church of St James in Ormož** (Fig. 6c).[18] Despite clear contouring and specific design of the eyes, he is known for remarkable colour modulation

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[18] MENONI 2004, pp. 253–265.

Fig. 6a: Holly figures on the northern navel wall of the parish church of Holy Trinity in Velika Nedelja during the uncovering.

Fig. 6b: The face of the bishop from the Velika Nedelja as interpreted by the restorer.

on the face and draperies. The composition of the standing full-body figures, which in pairs turn to one another and silently interact with gestures and the positions of bishop's staffs or attributes, together with narrative scenes speak of spiritual context of the Teutonic order, of the fight for religion and charitable love. The emphasised looks of bishops and saints are like monolithic spiritual apparitions that mystically and piercingly look inside us as moral authorities and remind us to choose the right path.

The questions for the future remain how to proceed, what is a good presentation, and at which point to stop an intervention to accomplish both the accuracy of perception and comprehension of the work of art and technical accuracy. Let us conclude with a desire to shape a much needed scientific standard that would set the norms of interventions on medieval wall paintings in Slovenia. The norms would incorporate consideration before an intervention and an interdisciplinary team that should meet before the final presentation and include at least one art historian from the field in question. It is also sensible that the interventions on high-quality wall painting monuments would be carried out in phases: first conservation and then, only after an amount of time and after everything is thoroughly studied, retouching or possible reconstruction. This brings us to the criticism of the prevailing intervention evaluations that are done merely through the financial and temporal prism, by which we try to defend restorers who are often pressed for time, which of course has consequences. For all the above reasons, we lose the heritage that is less exposed and not in *everyone's sight*. But for those who understand and try to respect different artistic expressions, born

Fig. 6c: The detail from the Velika Nedelja painting compared with the bishop's face by the same painter but located in the northern chapel of the now parish church of St James in Ormož.

through history from different and for different social classes, for those who comprehend Slovenian national heritage as a whole and understand the excellence of Tolmin, Selo, Velika Nedelja, and many other medieval frescos, for those this is an extremely important part of Slovenian heritage patrimony that demands future treatment according to the highest expertise standards. In cooperation with restorers, we have to allow, or if you will, win the right to time and money for a sound scientific study.

THE PRESENTATION OF THE OLDEST LAYERS OF THE WALL PAINTINGS IN ŠMARTNO NA POHORJU, LAŠKO, AND SELO

Janez Balažic

Abstract

Sporadic conservation-restoration interventions have shown that in Slovenia there are no paintings of purely Romanesque provenance. In Šmartno, the presentation retains the high style and quality of a late-Romanesque painting but in Laško's bell tower with its excessively retouched women saints, the story is different. Similarly, the Selo painting, executed in Late-Gothic linear style, in places gives evidence of extremely artificial restoration. Since these monuments are all art-historically relevant, their presentation should be credible.

The selected presentations of the first layers of the wall paintings in the presbytery of the parish church of St Martin in Šmarno na Pohorju, below the bell tower of the parish church of St Martin in Laško, and on the rotunda walls of the chapel of ease of St Nicholas and the Holy Virgin in Selo are rarities among monuments of High Medieval craftsmanship and, as such, much more valuable. Because of their age and state of preservation, the presentation following the intervention has to be of particular quality if we wish to research their style and art-historical evaluation further.

The first example of good practice is the presentation of the wall painting from the **eastern bell tower of the parish church in** Šmatno **na Pohorju**. The church was first mentioned in 1252 but in its place, there stood probably an older, pre-parish house of worship. At the beginning of the 13th century, it was replaced by an aisleless church[1] with a bell tower at the east side.[2] On the ground floor, in a slightly wider square, a sanctuary was created, supported by strong rectangular ribs stretching traversely from the corbels. From underneath the paint of the Šmartno women saints, there still illuminates the light of the Pohorje grainy marble.

Since May 2000, the diligent conservator-restorers from the Institute for the Protection of Cultural Heritage of Slovenia (henceforth: the Institute), of the Maribor regional office,[3] have underneath the 19th-century painting on almost all the walls uncovered the layers of Baroque paintings from the beginning of the 18th century, a paint layer from the end of the 16th century, and finally, the oldest, a late-Romanesque and Early-Gothic painting.[4] This had on each side of the soffit of the sturdy, even gothic-pointed, stone chancel arch eight medallions preserved. They contain the waist-length figures of church patriarchs, bishops, and abbots (Figs. 1a, 1b).

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[1]   ZADNIKAR 1970, p. XXX, LXXXI; ZADNIKAR 1982, p. XXX, LXXXI; ZADNIKAR 1982, p. 367.
[2]   ZADNIKAR 1982, p. 370.
[3]   The works were headed by Bine Kovačič and his associates: Vlasta Čobal, Simona Šuc, Maja Lešnik and Tina Hartner.
[4]   BALAŽIC 2001, p. 139.

Figs. 1a, 1b: The medallions depicting Holy Fathers, patriarchs, archbishops (1220–1230) on the soffit in the parish church of St Martin in Šmartno before and after the intervention.

Figs. 2a, 2b: The women saints on the soffits of the ribs, earlier than the middle of the 13th century, in Šmartno. Figure 2a left: St Hilaria and St Regina before retouch and Figure 2b right, after the intervention.

Iconographically, the personas can be partly discerned by the chasubles or by the half preserved inscriptions above them.[5] The images of the church dignitaries are drawn onto a lime whitewash in red ochre and enclosed inside a double circle with trefoils and quatrefoils between them. They convey unique rigour both in posture and expression as well as in the attire painted in late-Romanesque manner. The figures are characterised by rigid gestuality, their right hand lifted in a blessing, their position of the crosier or left hand holding the missal. The painting manner is typically Romanesque and tells of a painter who developed his style following the Italian examples in the Alpine milieu, in the Friuli, South Tyrol, and Salzburg,[6] between 1220 and 1230.[7]

The presentation of the medallions exhibits a thoughtful approach by the restorers, as they have preserved the authentic, late-Romanesque art reception. During the intervention works, they only rarely opted for inpaintings or they executed them in a refined manner, thus retaining the authenticity and the stylistic placement of the painting. The medallions' stylistic elements, therefore, authentically reflect the late-Romanesque style, which will serve as an authentic comparative source for art historians in their additional research.

It appears that when painting the women saints onto all four soffits of the ribs, a slightly more skilful master in Šmartno looked to the contemporary monuments of the wider Eastern Alpine region. The saints are positioned into the semicircular Romanesque niches; their number (32) and the inclusion of St Hilaria raise the iconographic value of the paintings to the Central-European level.[8] The clothing and their facial features reveal high, noble spiritual lives of the women (Fig. 2b) and give an impression that they were painted by a skilful late-Romanesque master between 1230 and 1240.[9]

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[5] BALAŽIC 2001, pp. 143–144.
[6] HÖFLER 2004, p. 217.
[7] BALAŽIC 2001, p. 147.
[8] BALAŽIC, ibidem.
[9] BALAŽIC 2001, p. 148.

Figs. 3a, 3b: The paintings from the presbytery, the third quarter of the 13th century (?), the parish church of St Martin. Figure 3a, top: the apostles from the southern wall after conservation-restoration works. Figure 3b, bottom: apostles, *Imago pietatis, Arma Christi* on the southern wall, a prophet and an evangelist on the vault after the retouch.

Figs. 4a, 4b: The paintings of the presbytery's southern wall, the third quarter of the 13ᵗʰ century (?) before retouching; Figure 4a, left, the apostles, Figure 4b, right: *Imago pietatis, Arma Christi*.

The saints are designed in the lime *secco*, on a thin layer of plaster, partly revealing the splendid structure of the Šmartno grain marble. The restorers naturally faced many dilemmas. In particular, about how to preserve the original parts and the stylistic character but also how extensive the interventions to preserve the authentic late-Romanesque character should be so that it might be properly wholly presented. The incredibly difficult removal of the older layers and the scrupulous treatment of every authentic painted detail required additional endeavours. It is doubtful, whether the simply uncovered and conserved women saints would be clear enough, had the restorers and conservators not agreed to optimally present the visible retouches and tone adjustments. Perhaps some details could be highlighted further still but the post-intervention state is nevertheless good enough and offers a strong foundation for answering the still open stylistic-comparative and iconographic questions.

A couple of decades after the first (the exact date still undetermined), the second painting of the presbytery was painted. Above the ground floor walls (covered by a painted, stylized curtain), in the middle register of the wall, there are full-bodied apostles (Figs. 3a, 3b) painted onto a blue background and positioned into the Late-Gothic arcades. The signs above them reveal that they are Andrew, John, James the Less, Simon, and Matthias on the southern wall, and Nicholas and the fragments of the patron St Martin on the eastern side.

The walls of the reconstructed Romanesque window between them hint at a rich colour drapery of yet another two, unfortunately unknown, saints. On the northern walls, however, the scarcity of the paint layers entirely prevents a more accurate identification of the painted figures. The soffit of the chancel arch terminates with *The Sacrifice of Abel and Cain* and the central medallion showing *the Holly Lamb*, while on the opposite, eastern side, there is a monumental figure of *Christ Pantocrator*, whose mandorla is supported by kneeling angels. On the southern wall, there is a precious example of the then wall paintings, the iconographically complicated but typologically developed motif of the 'living'

Fig. 5a: Twelve women saints and the Holy Lamb, the last quarter of the 13th century (?) on the eastern soffit of the bell tower in the parish church of St Martin in Laško.

Suffering Christ with tools of martyrdom (Figs. 3b, 4b), the flanked crucified robbers, and other meaningful characters from the Passion. The question remains whether the four interspaces of the vault were at the time filled by the painted symbols of the evangelists (Fig. 3b), here accompanied by the prophets inside the medallions.

Fifteen years after the first publication, when the second painting was dated to the first quarter of the 14th century[10] and considered part of the vast influential spectre of the southern Tyrol and the Czech Republic, the problem remains insufficiently resolved. The analysis at that time was impeded, particularly due to partly uncovered and yet unrestored frescoes of the second layer (Figs. 4a, 4b).

In 2004, Janez Höfler[11] conducted a second analysis but the state of preservation of the second layer and the level of stylistic presence had changed. After all, the wall paintings in Šmartno were by then already conserved-restored. Höfler's arguments were both stylistically and iconographically different from the first assumptions. According to him, the second painting in Šmartno preserves the elements of the late Romanesque painting; therefore it was created much earlier – in the third quarter of the 13th century.[12] It follows, as the selected examples prior and after the retouch well show (Figs. 3a to 4b), that the master will have to be located more precisely and within the influential sphere of certain art workshops maintained by those central-European dynasties that were connected with the noble patrons in Šmartno.

This dilemma regarding the second Šmartno painting points to several issues and enables different interpretations by art historians.[13] But at the time of the intervention, it was the state of preservation and authenticity of the painting

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[10] BALAŽIC 2001, p. 154.
[11] HÖFLER 2004, pp. 7–8, 217–221.
[12] HÖFLER 2004, pp. 219–221.
[13] BALAŽIC 2001, pp. 148–154; HÖFLER 2004, pp. 8, 218–221; ŠERBELJ 2009, pp. 46–48.

Figs. 5b, 5c: St Afra before and after the retouch (first two pictures on the left) and St Kunigunde before and after the retouch (second two pictures on the right).

Fig. 6: *The Journey and the Adoration of the Magi* and a priest blessing the Queen from the first third of the 14th century (?), the Selo rotunda; 28 June 2019.

that posed quite specific art-historical questions. The last findings imperatively teach us that it is risky to conclude before the uncovering and the complete conservation-restoration of wall paintings. For the sake of objectivity and comprehension of stylistic features, it is key to achieve a clear presentation with predominantly original sediments of the painting. These criteria must be considered since they can arbitrarily aid in optimal presentation and deeper art-historical evaluation. In Šmartno, authentically presented details, stylized facial features, hairstyles, parts of eyes with

characteristic double rings, and blushes indeed come across as Romanesque, archetypal, and should, in that respect, be considered in the future.

The Romanesque **parish church of St Martin in Laško** is synchronous with the Šmartno church. Although the records mention it no sooner than 1267, it is certainly older[14] since its base with the eastern bell tower was built between 1220 and 1230.[15] The antique interior of the eastern bell tower was later, in the third or perhaps the last quarter of the 13th century, covered by a painting. This stretches across the eastern soffit of the bell tower and depicts twelve waist-length women saints with the Holy Lamb in the middle (Fig. 5a). The formal nature of the depicted saints is determined by linear style: they are facing the onlooker, characterised by long (shoulder-length or longer) curly hair, wearing sparingly pleated tunics with distinctive V-necks. They are holding stylized palm branches, identifying them as martyrs. In addition, the mainly discernible banderoles in gothic majuscule can further confirm their identity.

The Laško martyrs were last uncovered between June and August 2006 by the conservator-restorers from the Institute of the Celje regional office, who also conserved-restored and retouched them.[16] Since the painting has not yet been disclosed, we should not draw any conclusions. For now, we can say that the influence could be attributed to Koroška, the many successors of the bishop's chapel workshop from the western matroneum of the cathedral in Krka/Gurk,[17] and to the later (last quarter of the 13th century) painted Romanesque ossuary of St Lambert in Pisweg.[18] They could be analogous with the women saints from the presbytery arch in Šmartno, but selected comparative sources and additional analyses might prove that the saints from Laško were painted in the third quarter of the 13th century or perhaps *c.* 1300 as they are stylistically closer to Early-Gothic examples.[19]

The conservation-restoration approach apparently strove to visibly 'fix the painting' that, as we believe, displayed representative authenticity and stylistic presence (Figs. 5b, 5c). Such coarse retouches, driven to painful stylistic remake, were certainly unnecessary. Phenomenologically, this was done in the spirit of the good old Imperial and Royal Monarchy, which encouraged the stylistic adaptations at all costs and maintained the aesthetics of the pure stylistic and pseudo-Romanesque purism. In such manner, for example, the Sopron painter, architect, and restorer Ferenc Storno left behind in a nearly painful stylistic purity (*stilgerechte Restaurierung*)[20] the Tulln Romanesque paintings in the upper chapel of the Romanesque ossuary in Tulln. He was working on them in 1873, in a time of pseudo historicism and stylistic purism.

The question is what drives a restorer to deviate from the authentically preserved painting? Perhaps the desire Julia Feldtkeller[21] explains as the result of a specific relation between the owner, the clergyman or the church, and the conservator-restorer. In other words, the argument that the church is not a museum, and, therefore noncritically allows for the paintings to be retouched to the level of liturgical clarity. The issue that arises is that most often the results turn not into liturgical presence but instead into the projection of obstinate creative ambitions of the cleric.

Finally, the third example in the article is the presentation of the first layer of the wall painting in the **Selo rotunda church**. According to rich folklore, the rotunda was once under the patronage of the Templars,[22] the knights of the Holy Sepulchre, but also a monastic stronghold and such. All this spurs the imagination and predetermines that some objective answers will soon have to be found. The harmonious arrangement of the outer brick coat, the spiritually Romanesque interior with a dome, and a series of recognizable Romanesque elements make the Selo

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[14] HÖFLER 2016, pp. 352–353.
[15] ZADNIKAR 1982, pp. 343, 348.
[16] The intervention was carried out by Aleš Sotler. I would like to thank my esteemed colleagues, the conservation councillor Anka Aškerc and conservation consultant Nataša Podkrižnik for the information and photodocumentation of the uncovered wall paintings before retouching.
[17] KIRCHWEGER 2000, pp. 436–437.
[18] BRUCHER 2000, p. 18.
[19] By analogy with the blessing Christ from *c.* 1300 (?) in the glasswork in Steyr and by examples from the workshop of St Florian, e.g., the donor from the book of the foundation of the Zwettl monastery (Hs 3., f 8r); cf. FRODL KRAFT 1972, pp. XXXIV–XXXV.
[20] SANTNER 2016, pp. 38, 41–42, 49, 62, 79, 106, 140, 161, 218, 247, 255–257.
[21] FELDTKELLER 2010, passim.
[22] ZADNIKAR 1982, p. 452.

Fig. 7: On the left, the state of the Selo saint with the Queen (first third of the 14th century?) from 1967 and on the right, from 9 June 2017.

Fig. 8a: On the left, the Selo Mary with Jesus (first third of the 14th century?) from 1 Dec 2015 and on the right, from 9 June 2017.

rotunda church one of the main artistic achievements of its time across the Danubian lands.[23] As such, it could not have been built by the locals but only by an excellent masonry workshop part of the presumed monastic outpost or under the patronage of high nobility,[24] perhaps already in the last third of the 12th century.

Besides the remarkable architecture, the rotunda preserved two layers of wall painting. Of the first painting there remained the monumental composition of *The Journey and the Adoration of the Magi* (Figs. 6, 8a, 8b) on the northern interior walls. It is painted on whitewash without the base coat plaster, in the lime *secco* technique, and is characterised by a quality stylistic reception. In terms of time and space of its origin, the painting shows the early, so-called, cavalry type of journey[25] which means that the two, the cavalry journey and the adoration of the Magi, are happening simultaneously and continuously.

Marijan Zadnikar reports that the first layers of the painting on the left and right of the chancel arch were reserved for angels and that below an 'independent image of Mary with the child'[26] can be seen. This is, however, false because the image is that of a young queen (Fig. 7). She is without the nimbus and wears a three-point crown (as that seen on the heads and in the hands of the Magi in the above *The Journey of the Magi*). She is being blessed from the left by a young, beardless saint. Zadnikar also reports that in 1956 a restoration was conducted in Selo, in which the wall paintings were partly uncovered and restored by Izidor Mole.[27]

Janez Höfler deems the first layer of the wall painting *The Journey and the Adoration of the Magi* to be created in the middle of the 14th century and states that it '/…/ points to a certain noble conservative style in an almost Romanesque manner'[28] and that there are no '/…/ connections with the so-called High-Gothic linear style /…/'.[29] But most probably the creation of the painting greatly relied on the patrician donors, presumably the Amadé (Omode) noble family.[30] Based on the stylistic reception, additional analyses will have to be made.

The important conservation works at the end of the 1970s, with the removal of the bell tower and other adaptations from the first half of the 19th century, led to the reconstruction of the Romanesque rotunda. After its

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[23] ZADNIKAR 1982, pp. 455–457.
[24] BALAŽIC 2009, p. 206.
[25] STELE 1969, p. 52.
[26] ZADNIKAR 1967, pp. 16–17.
[27] ZADNIKAR 1967, p. ZADNIKAR 1982, p. 452, f.n. 956.
[28] HÖFLER 2004, p. 180.
[29] Ibidem.
[30] BALAŽIC 2009, p. 23.

Fig. 8b: On the left, the detail from *The Journey and Adoration of the Magi* (first third
of the 14th century) from 1977, and on the right, the same detail from after 1980.

architectural adjustments, a detailed conservation-restoration of the wall paintings took place.[31] To comprehend the
context of the uncovering of the oldest layer, we have to consider that the northern interior walls had been, before
the first layer of the painting was uncovered, covered by a vast composition of *The Journey and Adoration of the Magi*.
Its stylistic reception is evident from the extremely valuable aquarelle copies, made by the restorers of the National
Heritage Protection Centre.[32]

It was Izidor Mole who uncovered the first layer with *The Journey and the Adoration of the Magi* in total. The
conservation-restoration work continued in 1980.[33] The presentation revealed the main artistic qualities but also
flaws. These were evident in details, in rough retouches, excessive *tratteggio*, drastic fillings (Fig. 8a), even remakes of
parts of the figures, especially the clothing of the court pages (Fig. 8b), in particular, the fascinatingly invented shoe of
one of them, the point of which, in its artificiality, just continues and elongates into a deep, zigzag decorative belt (Fig.
8b). The interventions of the last two years[34] have shown that the initially problematic solutions of the presentation
can be fixed and that we can objectively bring the wall painting closer to authenticity.

Conclusion

The presentations of the first layers of wall paintings in Šmartno, Laško, and Selo help us realise that conservation-
restoration works and their results aesthetically greatly depend on the preferences of the heritage protection,
conservation, and style. However, we cannot easily consider the questionable interventions while uncovering, that is
the intensive cleaning, and rough retouching as signs of time.[35] Conservator-restorers and art historian-conservators
are not and cannot be of one mind despite their imminent need to achieve the authenticity of the uncovered and to
promote the aesthetic keys for quality and beauty. It is the endeavour for authenticity that often produces the 'double'
nature of the monument.[36]

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[31] BALAŽIC 2009, p. 207.
[32] BALAŽIC 2009, p. 101, fig. 436.
[33] HÖFLER 2004, p. 179.
[34] The work was conducted by Irena Čuk. Prior interventions were carried out by Bine Kovačič *c.* 1980.
[35] SANTNER 2016, p. 22.
[36] FELDTKELLER 2010, passim.

COMPLEX COMPREHENSION OF THE VISUAL FIELD (VISUAL UNDERSTANDING OF THE RESTORED WORK OF ART)

Vlasta Čobal Sedmak

Keywords

wall painting, visual field, visual perception, aesthetic presentation, theory of art, colour theory, simulative retouching

Abstract

Observation and the visual perception of a work of art is a complex process of understanding the observed. It is linked to experiences and social norms. A viewer's understanding of the painting depends on his or her prior knowledge. When presenting a restored work of art, a question arises as to how the damaged substance should be presented. Should it resemble the original in the time of its creation? Should the image be recreated with new elements (inpaintings) or should it be presented in the utmost recent state with the existing patina? Overall, it is highly imperative that conservator-restorers observe the artist's primary message, although it may not be, due to time lapse, understood and experienced in the same way as in the past. The conservator-restorer should conserve the painting but retouch it bearing in mind that even minimal paint reintegration could be a visual transgression, which could mislead the viewer to inaccurately comprehend the original image because of the restorer's (subjective) decision.

Introduction

The hereby paper is a reflection of numerous discussions on the aesthetic presentation of the restored wall paintings. The opinions of the experts and the public are at odds. The reception of information from the environment through sight is a complex process, something we can establish by observing everyday routines, such as movement. If spatial coordination and the use of objects are frivolously considered self-evident, an analysis quickly shows that this routine comprises of a series of complex and trained processes acquired already at an early age. Through years, several experiences, and the use of senses, we have learnt to recognise the impulses around us. Thus, we can use our sight, the most complex sense, to recognise and sensibly understand the perception of our surroundings. A quick look suffices to understand the sense of spatial depth and to recognise objects by their shape. In addition, the objects (without having to touch them) give rise to a range of feelings that we have learnt to discern through other senses – touch, smell, hearing, and taste. Experiences enable us to determine their characteristics, such as cold–hot, soft–hard, sharp–blunt, painful–pleasant, comfortable–uncomfortable, nice- or foul-smelling etc. Our mind is even capable of recalling the taste of familiar dishes in photographs. It can work up an appetite, cause disgust, and even evoke the sense of smell.

Just how much the perception of the visual world depends on experience can be proven by those who were born blind but regained their sight after an operation.[1] Although they were aware that they saw something, they

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[1] PEČJAK 2007, p. 50.

were unable to define it and discern the objects. They needed a lot of time to learn to recognise and discern the shapes, such as triangle, circle, and square (of which the last two some people mistook for years).

Through evolution, man developed a whole plethora of agreements, signs, and symbols linked to space and time. However, inside the current time and space frame, the meaning of a traffic sign is clear to us but means nothing to a member of some other civilisation – a phenomenon similar to that of understanding works of art.

Discerning the message of the work of art

Art is the visual reflection of activity in time and space. It is an interaction of several interconnected factors with two key figures: the artist and the viewer. A stream of information runs between them that the author wishes to convey through his or her work of art. The viewer needs to recognise and understand it or else the work of art is meaningless. The understanding of art from the viewpoint of creation and recognition is covered by Milan Butina in his treatise *On the Art of Painting* (*O slikarstvu)*.[2] According to him, creation is a complex process in which an artist and the image being created are connected through a dialogue between the artist's subjective idea and its objective materialisation (idea – work of art). During creation, the artist constantly communicates with the emerging work of art, at which point, his or her subjective notions vastly transform into an objectively independent reality. His or her purpose is fulfilled when the viewer and the work of art communicate in such a way that the artist's message is recognised. For that to happen, the artist and the viewer have to share the same fundamental human characteristics and needs[3] which are key for the viewer to discern the message. This means that the viewer must be knowledgeable about the circumstances and facts inherent in the work of art. Often these are the reflections on the established and popular emotional or social mindsets of a certain time. In other words, the viewer cannot read the work of art if he or she is unacquainted with the themes or motifs it contains. To do so, certain knowledge is needed.

Therefore, the restorer responsible for the conservation and restoration of the damaged work of art first has to assume the role of the viewer who needs to understand the artist's message and intention as well as possible. To achieve that, (s)he requires an in-depth knowledge of iconography.

Restorer – artist?

Every work of art is exposed to external influences and consequently to decay. Eventually, it shows signs of ageing and correlated damages, so to slow down this process it needs to be conserved. At that point, a conservator-restorer enters the discourse artist – work of art – viewer, and like the artist, directly interferes with the matter of the work of art, inevitably changing its image through conservation-restoration. But can the artist's message then be, despite our iconographic knowledge, understood and recognised in the same manner as when it was created or could the viewer (conservator-restorer) in another time dimension read the message differently,

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2 BUTINA 1997, p. 15.
3 BUTINA 1997, p. 16.
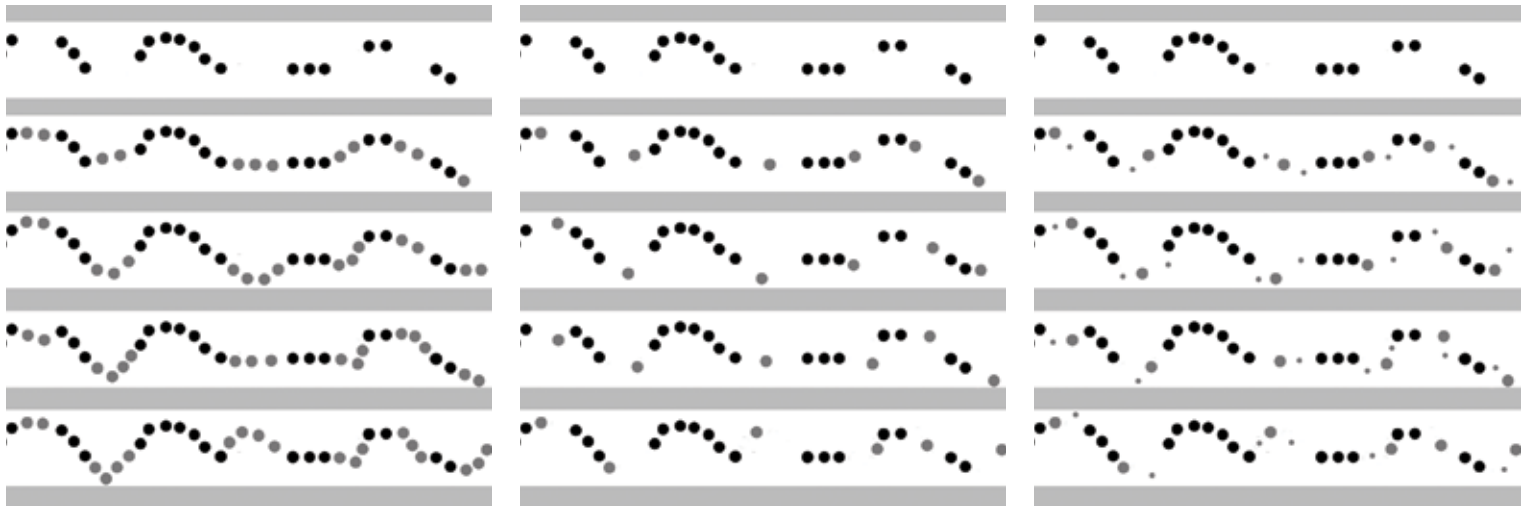
Figs. 1a, 1b, 1c: A line of points: an example of various interpretations of the missing area – the bigger gaps in the black point sequence, the same in all the rows – and of how the dynamics and character of the line can be altered by different inpaintings (grey dots). This resembles the retouching of wall painting losses. The restorer's perception, although minimal (a single dot), can change the appearance of the painting from the one it had when it was created.

in line with the current norms? Furthermore, what is the role of the conservator-restorer? Undoubtedly, it is to conserve the matter of the work of art and thus prevent and decelerate further decay. However, a dilemma occurs when the final aesthetic presentation includes retouching that greatly affects the image and the perception of the original. For the restorer to execute a proper retouch, (s)he has to assume the exact attitude towards the artwork as its creator. Is that possible? Based on sampling, a restorer can use the same pigments and technology and copies the original strokes in all craftsmanship, 'reenacts' (always according to his or her judgement) the author's role and zeitgeist of the original, and retouches the image. At that point, (s)he stands alongside the artist and recreates the original or creates some other image, since (s)he materialises one's perception of the original and hence marks it with his or her interpretation. The restorer performing a retouch co-creates the current state and image of the painting with the artist. The question then is not how to conduct a good retouch that would reveal to the viewer the majority of the image but whether it is at all appropriate to attempt it.

The schema (Figs. 1a, 1b, 1c) shows how a small intervention, such as a dot, can change the course of a line. The examples are simple. The lines are demonstrated by serried black points that are missing in places and implying an inpainting (similar to what happens with losses of paint layer in wall paintings). The upper row proves that despite gaps we can still imagine the flow of the line, while the lower rows display how differently the lines may be understood and retouched. Figure 1a: black dots remain unchanged, the grey ones represent the different interpretations of the missing sets. Figure 1b: an insertion of one single point can utterly change the course of the line. As can be seen by the inpaintings in Figure 1c, one miniature dot suffices. The same happens when retouching the missing areas of the wall painting as even minimal interventions can severely alter the look of the original and drastically affect the image.

The awareness that the work of art is eternal and that during our time we are but its caretakers means that the most appropriate action is to conserve it and slow down its further decay. Its image must be presented in the current state, de facto, with the patina of time, since that is the only authentic image in a given moment.

The relationship between the viewer (user) and the work of art restored

A critical and analytical look at the restored wall paintings in Slovenia (contrastively also elsewhere in Europe) reveals that a debate on the final presentation of a work of art has long been present among restorers and

Fig. 2: Brajer's *rainfall* and *smudge tool* on the restored wall painting by Piero della Francesca in the presbytery of the Basilica of St Francis in Arezzo.

art historians, although just recently constructive. Practice shows how hard it is to verbalise visual perceptions and how differently we view and comprehend works of art. If we analyse the opinions of restorers, art historians, and the public, we may soon discover that based on our prior knowledge and experiences the same visual image can be comprehended most diversely.

A layperson will first notice the damaged areas of the painting. (S)he needs an explanation about how the painting is conserved-restored and what the key guidelines of presentation are. Only when (s)he receives an explanation, for example, why certain lacunae and damages are executed only in plaster, can (s)he observe the totality from another perspective. The isolated colourless areas then no longer pose a disturbance, making it easier to focus on the original.

The restorer's perspective when looking at a restored wall painting is specific and depends on knowledge and experiences. A restorer does not read the information merely visually but knowing the topic and issues inside the restoration process, (s)he assumes the role of a conservator-restorer – the contractor of works. From that perspective (s)he ponders and understands the decisions needed to choose or execute a retouch. When reading the original, (s)he is undisturbed by perhaps unsuitable solutions. One such example is the retouching of losses by tonally adjusting them to the surrounding area. The public or researchers think such treatment is disturbing since it frequently strongly deforms the shapes. The retouched area changes into an undefined obscure field, 'a

cloud' that distorts the original appearance, a phenomenon the Danish conservator-restorer Isabelle Brajer calls *rainfall* and *smudge tool*.[4]

An art historian sees the matter differently. To him or her credibility and authenticity of the original are the most important and supersede aesthetic presentation of totality (the historical aspect). (S)he often finds the retouch misleading, as it impairs the discernment of the image of the original. Although restorers do not physically interfere with the original paint layer and work with reversible materials, it is vital to bear in mind that the smallest of retouches, such as finishing the implied 'clear' forms (lines, shapes), inevitably interferes with the visual appearance and influences the perception of the original (see Fig. 1). As a result, we forward our perception of the image to the individual, thus hindering his or her own perception.

The comprehension ('the reading') of the un-retouched and retouched scenes of the damaged wall paintings can be compared to how we experience a story while reading a book or while watching a book-inspired film. In the first instance, our imagination is free to roam and we can create the imagery in our own way, while in the second, the film concretely materialises and imposes the scenes and images onto the viewer. Imagination has been marred and if we read the book after watching the film, the film's characters influence the imagery and prohibit us from freely imagining the story.

When considering retouching, the experts should firmly support the work of art, from both material and visual standpoint. To oppose the claim that unretouched wall paintings lack expressiveness, we may lean on the initially mentioned Butina's explanation[5] by which the viewer may only comprehend the work of art when (s)he has enough insight. That said, it is then the task of the experts to educate the interested public on how to discern and understand the restored works of art. In that way, the viewer will be able to communicate with the work of art and discern its authenticity despite greater losses of paint layers, which will not be retouched since our mind, is capable of logically completing the missing sections.[6]

Retouch – the search for options based on colour theory

Let us now look at a thesis of solutions that focus on the original and visually minimise the retouch. It is based on the theory of art, various experiences from restoration practice, and analytical evaluation that has been spurred by numerous contemporary discussions on the final aesthetic presentation of damaged wall paintings.

In Slovenia, wall paintings often contain severely damaged images, which are, among other things, a result of plastering or painting of walls. When removing secondary plasters and whitewashes, the restorers most carefully unveil the painted parts and find a mine of information of mostly incomplete paintings with scenes missing. Inevitably, the moment the painting is discovered it requires a series of conservation-restoration treatments to prevent its further decay (in-depth and surface consolidation, mechanical and chemical surface cleaning, puttying, replacing the old plaster with the new, etc). These interventions consequently alter the wall painting and affect its final appearance.

One such after-effect is the areas filled in new plaster that take on autonomous shapes because the tone does not match the original. It was already Cesare Brandi[7] who warned of this disturbing phenomenon. He leaned on the Gestalt psychology and compared the relationship between the background and the shape (the

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[4] In her online article Isabelle Brajer writes about *The Simulative Retouching Method on Wall Paintings: Striving for Authenticity or Verisimilitude?* 2009, p. 102, 2nd paragraph (BRAJER 2009 a).
[5] BUTINA 1997, pp. 15–16.
[6] This is the subject of Gestalt psychology that helped establish the laws and principles that govern and organise perception – to be further discussed in the paper.
[7] BRANDI (1961) 1963, pp. 146–151.

Fig. 3: In Henry Matisse's painting, titled *Étude pour Pasiphaé, Chant de Minos (Les Crétois)* from *c.* 1943–1944, the following principles can be observed: proximity (the necklace and the band of stars in her hair that function as a joint element), similarity (the stars and the necklace are considered a unity), continuation (same as the description of proximity), closure (lines of the pearls are neither complete nor round yet we perceive and understand them as such).

background being the original painting and shapes the puttied damages). Due to their brightness and wholesome flat form, the shapes step into the foreground, muting the original and disturbing its readability. Brandi advised that the gaps should be tonally levelled and merged with their surroundings, but also stressed that the treatment has to be discernible from the original by the manner of applying the colour tones (using short lines – *tratteggio*). The treatment is thus visible from up close but from afar, it integrates into the whole.

A further look at other principles of Gestalt psychology reveals a thesis that a man can cope with the chaotic state of the surroundings and perceive it in an organised form.[8] Our mind perceives and organises totality by certain logical principles.[9] One of these is the principle of proximity that organises stimuli according to their distance. Two lines that are close together are perceived as a pair or a whole, while separate lines stay unconnected. The same applies to a row of points that are perceived as a line. By the principle of similarity, stimuli are organised by resemblance, and by the principle of continuity, we perceive elements that signal the initial direction, curve. By the principle of closure, we perceive the shape as complete although it may not be completely closed.

The aforementioned principles speak in favour of the damages to the painting (paint layers that have fallen off) since our mind fills in the missing shapes and can discern the scenes and logically finish the images despite the gaps. We must of course not forget the areas or gaps with greater loss of paint layer that take on an autonomous shape and step into the foreground, marring the homogenous appearance of the whole. We must not underestimate even the smallest losses of the paint layer. Their vivid colour contrast makes them very noticeable even at the level of separate dots, while in bigger numbers they can form a raster, which may suggest new shapes and lessen the readability and primary appearance.

Where to draw the line at how much the restorer can interfere with the visual appearance of the original to ensure easier readability of the whole is a question that will have to be discussed long into the future. We must ask ourselves whether the damages (such as the missing paint layer) urgently needs retouching through colour reintegration with the tones of the surrounding area or could it be retouched so that the damaged areas 'sink'

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8 PEČJAK 2007, p. 50.
9 PEČJAK 2007, p. 53.

into the background by using colour tones that distinctly differ from the original? Such an approach would help us clearly distinguish the areas retouched and would place the original into the foreground.

At this point, we can make use of the fundamentals of the colour theory by Johanes Itten.[10] An individual colour is defined by three dimensions: hue, value, and saturation.[11] Hue simply means colour (yellow, red, blue, green...). Itten placed them in a colour wheel in which the middle triangle is taken up by primary, basic, pure colours that are not mixed with any other colour (yellow, blue that is neither greenish nor purplish, and red that is neither orange-ish nor purplish).[12] Opposite each, there are secondary colours achieved by mixing two of the primary colours (green, orange, and purple). The third band of the wheel is taken by tertiary colours that are a mix of the primary and secondary (all the hues from yellow to orange, red, purple, blue, and green).

Value is the dimension that denotes the lightness of the colour and is determined by the colour itself (for example, yellow is the lightest, purple the darkest). Two colours may have the same hue but different value (for example, light blue and dark blue).

The third dimension – saturation or colour chroma – determines the amount of pure pigment in a certain colour. It changes or decreases by adding either complementary or achromatic, grey tones, and also black, and white. Colour chroma is also labelled as purity, chromatic strength, intensity, fullness.

The relationship between colours may be contrastive or harmonious. If contrast disturbs and draws attention, harmoniousness between colour tones creates no accentuated segments in the image.

The harmonious appearance of the whole is the aim of the final presentation of the restored wall paintings. However, during the intervention, the image of the original changes. In the process of puttying with lime mortar, the areas with their great tonal differences and values become disturbing or noticeable. Two contrasts are present: the light-dark and the contrast of quantity. The latter causes the smaller changes that stand out in the image field because of their colour character to act as points, which attract attention (Fig. 4).

This phenomenon can be avoided in several ways. The 'empty' areas may be retouched with the hue of the surrounding colours or by using different colours of the same value inside the colour scheme and thus achieving the harmonious whole.

If for inpainting of the damaged areas we use achromatic colours that are different from the original but of the same value, just in cooler hues, they will move to the background and visually allow the original to stand out. In that manner, the colour tones are harmonised in value, blended with the surroundings, and yet clearly distinguishable from the wall painting. The viewer consequently gets a chance to create his or her vision of the image, based on his or her perception (Figs. 5, 6).

The theory, for now only used digitally, will have to be put into practice and tested on an actual model. What may occur is simultaneous contrast,[13] a possible issue that causes one colour next to another to have a different effect. The achromatic field next to a chromatic colour prompts the perception of a complementary colour, which means that next to green, grey appears red (see Fig. 5, left example). This phenomenon is more noticeable with pure colours. If it appears on retouched surfaces in achromatic tones, a suitable colour pigment will have to be added to achieve neutrality. This addition will have to be minimal since the retouched areas should not give the impression of being tinged in a complementary colour.

[10] ITTEN 1973.
[11] ŠUŠTARŠIČ, BUTINA, ZORNIK, DE GLERIA, SKUBIN 2007, p. 161.
[12] ITTEN 1973, p. 35.
[13] ITTEN 1973, p. 61.

Fig. 4: *The Journey of the Magi* from *c.* 1370, discovered in 2011 underneath a whitewash on the southern wall of the former sacristy in Ptuj's Dominican Monastery. The photo shows the state of the wall painting after conservation. The white of the puttied damaged area stands out.

Simulative retouching – the presentation of an authentic image

When looking for solutions to typical damages on wall paintings in Slovenia, works of Isabelle Brajer, a conservator for wall paintings at the Danish National Museum, should not be overlooked.[14] Her articles contain numerous dilemmas and findings that could be useful in Slovenia since the state of the wall paintings and the issues in term of materials are comparable (whitewash and plaster covers and consequential keying). Brajer is the author of several articles on conservation and restoration of wall paintings, in which she focuses on theoretical, historical, and practical aspects both in general and through conservation-restoration practice. In her articles, she exposes issues[15] restorers face at the final presentation and issues that are the topic of the hereby publication – related, hence, also to the aesthetic presentation of wall paintings. Brajer warns that the final presentation has to be based on the social environment and spatial specifications of the works of art since there are differences between them (Italian, Central European etc). Besides, wall paintings carry narrative and historical value. The following is conveyed by

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[14] For more of her work, see (among others): NanoRestArt EU Project,: <http://www.nanorestart.eu/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=303&Itemid=76611> [accessed Oct 2018]

[15] What follows is a summary of Isabelle Brajer's deliberation based on the following works: *To retouch or not to retouch – Reflections on the aesthetic completion of wall paintings* (BRAJER 2015), *The Simulative Retouching Method on Wall Paintings: Striving for Authenticity or Verisimilitude?*, pp. 100–109 (BRAJER 2009 a), *Authenticity and restoration of wall paintings: issues of truth and beauty* (BRAJER 2009 b).
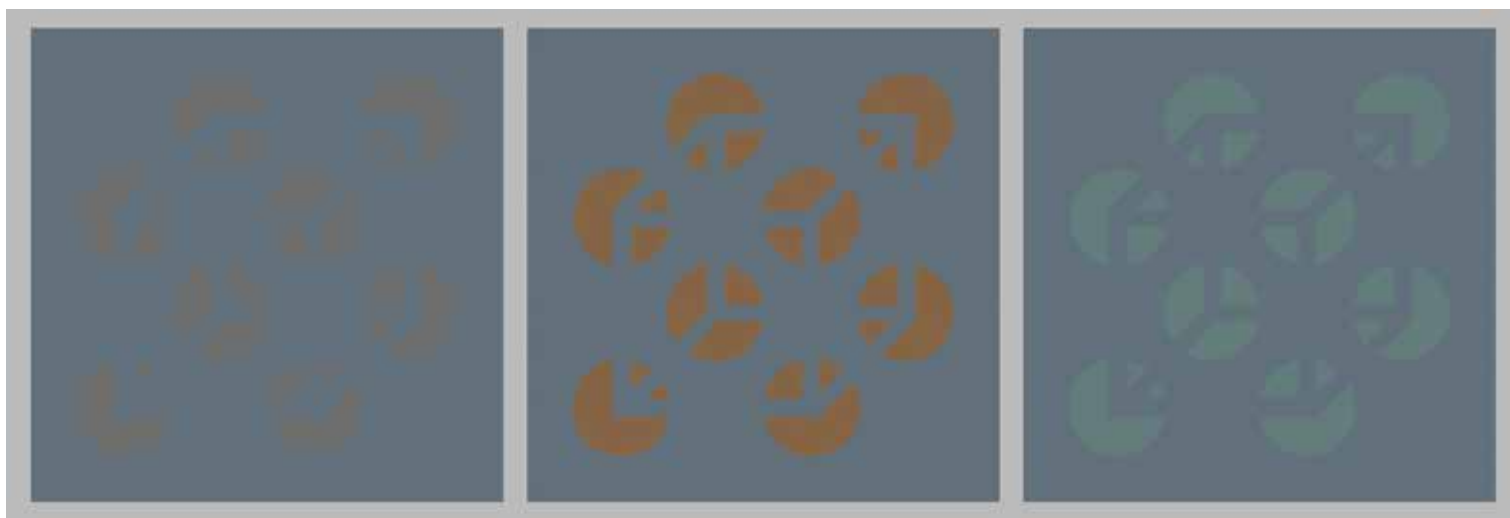
Fig. 5: The relationship between colour tones. Left: the relationship between the chromatic and achromatic (grey) colour of similar value. Middle: the warm and cold tone of similar value, where the warm-toned objects come forward because of the background. Right: the relationship between the warm and cold tone of similar value, where the objects of cold tones sink into the background.

the actual state of the wall painting with all its damages and patina and counts as the only authentic. The author is not in doubt whether to retouch or not but how to retouch so that the original is presented in its current authentic state and so that its iconographic readability is expressive enough. As said, during the conservation-restoration the initial image changes when, due to puttying and new plastering, the damaged parts become disturbing. A retouch is imperative to visually establish authenticity before restoration. Its choice, however, differs from case to case and cannot be generalised. Brajer stresses that it is unsuitable and impossible to consider retouch as a model rule and apply it to all wall paintings. She criticises the established practices and routines in executing certain interventions, such as the 'inside the box' learning during one's studies or the copying of mentors and the use of the methods learned without critical approach. All of which is probably 'safer' since such interventions are more defendable and explainable if they are supported by standards of regular, established practices. She also emphasises the lack of technological expertise of restorers who inappropriately carry out retouching (particularly *tratteggio*) – something we also encounter in Slovenia. She defends a wholesome approach to retouching, considering that the uniformed visual field is part of the architecture, and as such, it should be, along with all its damages, treated as a whole. With that in mind, details cannot be retouched to perfection as isolated images (as decorations) since they will stand out and appear disconnected. The post-retouching result must be a homogenous totality with the architecture and the result where the new plaster applied to damages does not disturb the perception and readability of the original.

One of the solutions is the so-called simulative retouch. It is a method used on puttied areas in which a retouch simulates the damage of the surrounding surfaces including abrasions, smaller cracks, patina, and similar.[16] Retouching is carried out in watercolours and gouache using different tools (brush, sponge, brushes tied together etc) and applying strokes and/or dots in all directions to copy the recent state of the painted area. This method allows us to avoid unclear details that *tratteggio* or *selezione cromatica* would convey as a field, cloud of 'rain' or an undefined, blurred area.

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16 In the scope of debates with workgroup colleagues for the restoration of wall paintings in Slovenia in 2018, I suggested and presented the execution of the simulative retouching method as a test of possible good solutions that restorers need in practice. It was carried out on the fragments of the wall painting of the presbytery in the Church of Elevation of the Holy Cross in Križevci and proved to be successful according to the committee. The work was excellently carried out by Nastja Nylaander, restorer, M.F.A.
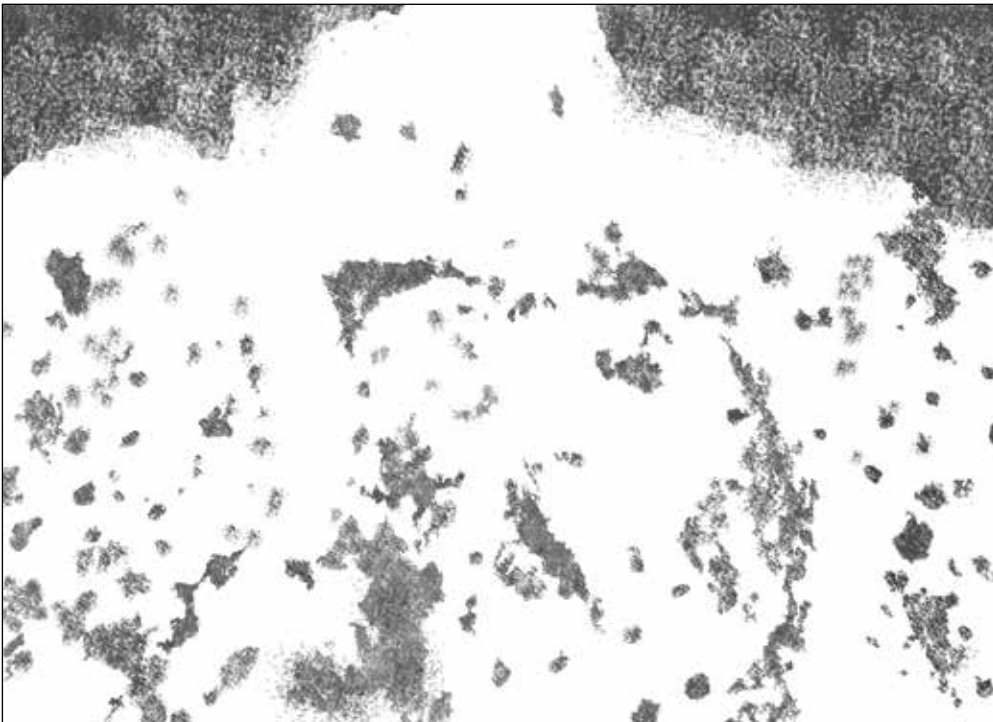
Figs. 6a, 6b: The detail of the *Journey of the Magi* from Ptuj shows a computer simulation of a retouch by grey, achromatic tones (6a). The disturbing puttied areas (Fig. 4) have become unobtrusive. The retouches are adjusted to the surroundings by value but differ by colour. Readability and discernment of the original from the retouches are, therefore, clearer and more expressive. Figure 6b, below, depicts individual retouches that show the use of colour tones without chroma, in grey.

Figs. 7a, 7b: The detail before retouching and after simulative retouching in the parish church of the Elevation of the Holy Cross in Križevci. The retouch has homogenous and connecting qualities. The original is in the foreground, easier to read and discernible from the retouched parts.

Conclusion

The final aesthetic presentation of the restored painting requires heavy consideration. Unfortunately, in Slovenia, the pace of works being finished, and of retouching, is frequently dictated by short deadlines. To avoid this, a professional standard should be set to prescribe that all the conservation work be done inside the required deadlines, while retouching would be carried out after consideration and over time (for example, after a year). That would give the experts sufficient time for contemplation to aid their decision for an appropriate final presentation based on the characteristics of an individual wall painting. The next standard needed and enabled by modern technology would be computer simulation (virtual retouch) by which we could test several possibilities and choose the best solution before physically interfering with the original.

This is a time when money sets the standards we observe. The offer is subject to demand and this affects the content, which should raise the awareness of the public as well as set general standards (for example, everyday news). The quality and the standard of the information conveyed are becoming critically low and trivial. Are the experts not responsible for setting and demanding standards by which knowledge and awareness of the public should be raised and not lowered? Such attitude prevails also in art restoration, where the investors dictate the guidelines and the final appearance of the restored work of art that most often demands a complete retouch.

If we realise that we are but temporary caretakers of the heritage, it is vital to prioritise their well-being, their material, and visual authentic image. What's more, we must use popularisation to equip the public with the necessary knowledge that will contribute to the recognition of monuments and the understanding of the presented images through their best qualities, which are part of the national identity of every one of us.

THE RETOUCHING ON WALL PAINTINGS IN FLORENCE, TWO CASE STUDIES OF THE OPIFICIO DELLE PIETRE DURE. ISSUES, MATERIALS, AND TECHNIQUES

Alberto Felici

Key words

selezione cromatica, *abbassamento di tono*, infilling, compatibility, recognisability, abrasion, paint loss, mortar loss

Abstract

After a brief introduction of the main theories that have characterized the historical imprint of the 'Florentine School', the article will provide an overview of the methodologies recently chosen by the Opificio delle Pietre Dure, through the description of two case studies in the Church of Santa Croce in Florence. The first is *The Ascension of the Virgin* painted by Maestro di Figline in the left transept *c.* 1330s and the second, *The Stigmata of St Francis* painted by Giotto in the right transept in the first or second decade of the 14th century.

This contribution describes a few inspiring principles that have influenced the recent retouching interventions undertaken by the Opificio delle Pietre Dure (OPD) on the wall paintings in the right and left transept of the Church of Santa Croce, in Florence. It further describes the methodological criteria of intervention and the main characteristics of the materials used. The retouching intervention at Santa Croce is a complex and representative case study that can effectively illustrate the guidelines and approaches of the Florentine Institute. Moreover, the two approaches undertaken on the transepts, illustrate two entirely different case studies that are ideal for the introduction of retouching.

In Italy and especially in Florence, the main theoretical point for retouching was outlined by Cesare Brandi, whose theoretical models represent the essence of contemporary conservation.[1] Before further analyzing the specifics of Brandi's theory, we should underline that Brandi created a broad and solid structure that embraces the theory of restoration in its general context.[2] Brandi investigated the essential aspects of art restoration, effectively blending his ideas in the definition of the potential unity of a work of art, both in terms of historical context and aesthetic appeal. This aspect of Brandi's theory has great theoretical depth and was practically applied in the so-called *Tratteggio Romano*, frequently adopted by restorers trained at the Istituto Centrale di Roma (ICR). However, in Florence, especially at the OPD, Umberto Baldini's ideas overtook Brandi's. Baldini's model set roots in Florence at the beginning of the 1970s when he, once an art critic, became the director of the OPD. Today, his model remains strong within Florentine practices and constitutes the core of the Florentine approach. Baldini's theory essentially derives from Brandi's general criteria and it evolved into the retouching model known as *selezione cromatica* for the reconstruction of missing elements and *astrazione cromatica* for those areas where it is impossible to establish an iconographic continuity formally. Both models aim to reduce the optical intrusiveness of lacunae and rest on the notion of reversibility.[3] Integrations are generally carried out using watercolours or pigments bound with water-soluble binders. The Florentine technique is

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[1] For a brief overview of the situation in Italy: CIATTI 2014, pp. 90–95.
[2] BRANDI 2005.
[3] BALDINI 1978; BALDINI 1981.

executed by applying a series of small dash-like brushstrokes that ensure good recognition from the original painting.[4] In Baldini's proposal, the brushstrokes follow a figurative plan rather than vertical rigidity, identifying a solution that is more pictorial than the Roman vertical-hatching system. Another distinguishable point between Baldini's model and the ICR technique is the size of the brushstrokes, decided according to the characteristics of the original paint layer and not by the distance from which the observer appreciates the work of art.

The Florentine technique aims to perform a perfectly identifiable integration based on the juxtaposition and overlapping of a series of paint layers made of pure colours and applied with small brushstrokes. These layers of colour are built one on top of the other until the missing iconographic element is reconstructed and/or a colour match is achieved. As far as *chromatic abstraction* is concerned, Baldini's model is built on an interweaving effect made from small brushstrokes using the primary colours yellow, red and blue with the addition of black. The aim is to achieve a colour hue that is a modulated average of the surrounding colours. Baldini's models are a source of great inspiration even today, as Florentine conservators still use them, albeit less rigidly. The third type of integration known as *abbassamento di tono* is customary in the Florentine practice. Although strictly not part of Baldini's model, this technique aims to reduce the visual disturbance provoked by the abrasions on the paint layer. The main criterion is to reduce the invasiveness of the abrasion without camouflaging it or 'hiding' the loss. It is important to note that these models must never be interpreted as immutable dogmas, but rather as theoretical guidelines and that it is equally important to respect these principles and to experiment with their technical application and refine it.[5]

Baldini's theory and practical models were grafted onto the practices of two great 1970s Florentine restorers, Dino Dini and Leonetto Tintori, whose 'knowhow' mainly derived from an artisan tradition. These two 'fathers' of Florentine practices then influenced the restorers Guido Botticelli and Sabino Giovannoni, who soon became responsible for the new wall painting department within the OPD. Through their teachings, Guido and Sabino guaranteed generational continuity and the establishment of the Florentine approach to wall painting conservation and restoration.[6]

Today, the abovementioned retouching methods begin already at the analysis of the chromatic values within the work of art and take into context the potential meaning of the existing lacunae.[7] Importance is given to the personal sensitivity of the contractor and to the respect, that (s)he has for the artistic expression in the work of art. The ultimate aim is to improve the legibility of both detailed work and holistic appreciation. To stress, in recent years the scientific community has focused their attention to themes related purely to conservation issues and not aesthetic ones. They have devoted attention to the choice of materials in terms of compatibility and risk. Notions such as the fact that treatments undertaken on lacunae must never inhibit the success of future interventions enforce core principles such as reversibility on grouting and retouching treatments. These precautions guarantee that future generations of conservators can easily intervene on a work of art if a better technique is discovered or if alteration and deterioration need to be reversed.

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[4] CASAZZA 1981.
[5] CIATTI 2010, pp. 121–123.
[6] PAOLUCCI 1986, pp. 92–95.
[7] *Lacuna*, 2004.

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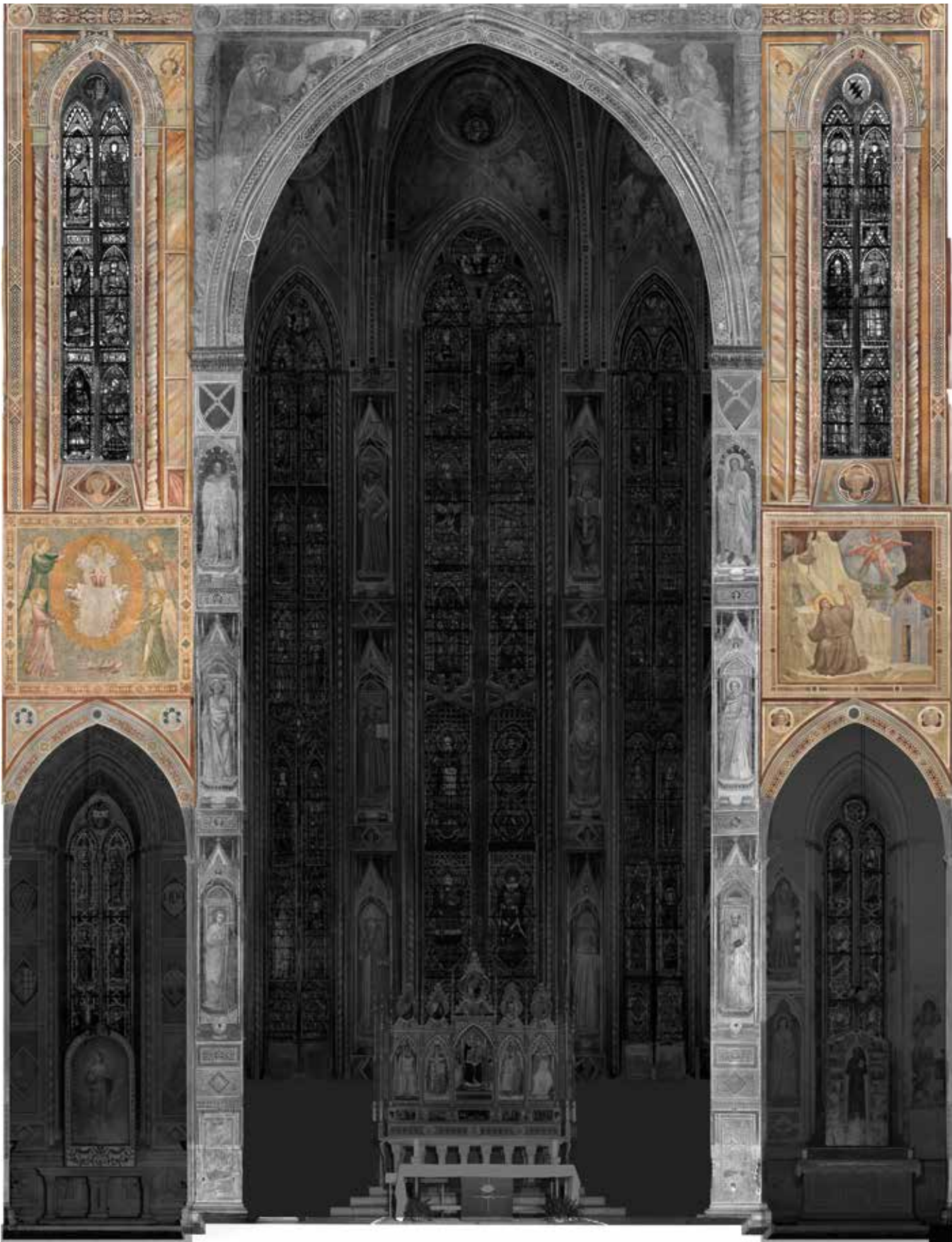
Fig. 1: General overview of the arched façade, the Church of Santa Croce, Florence.

Fig. 2: *The Stigmata of San Francesco*, by Giotto, before the intervention.

Fig. 3: *The Ascension of the Virgin*, by Maestro di Figline, before the intervention.

Before interventions, contractors must be united on a glossary of terms with which to identify the different types of lacunae:

- abrasion and wear of the paint layer,
- colour loss,
- mortar loss, both the painting mortar and the preparatory underlying mortar layer.

In the first two examples, the intervention required is exclusively pictorial, while in the last case, an infilling is needed. This is often performed casually, yet it is just as important as retouching because the surface texture of an infill will greatly influence the final effect. Infilling procedures have an aesthetic value as well as an important conservational function, as they 'close' the lacunae and confer stability to the constituting materials of a wall painting. The mortar used for infills should ideally be prepared by adding aggregates of appropriate colour and granulometry to an air-based lime.[8] The aim is to obtain a mortar-based infill with a porosity and textural surface similar to the original mortars. An aspect that must be carefully assessed before undertaking an infilling is the morphology of the original surface. The infilling material should easily blend with the surface texture of the painted surface, whether polished because it is well conserved, or rough because it has abraded. Consequently, the surface of the infill will be floated to create a rougher texture or smoothed with the tip of a trowel to achieve a polished finish.

Technical reports developed by the OPD describing the undertaken treatments on the wall paintings executed by Giotto and by the Maestro of Figline at the **Church of Santa Croce in Florence**, represent good case studies to define the principles discussed so far. The two wall paintings are symmetrically positioned on the arched façade of the altar chapel (Fig. 1).[9] On the right-hand side of the chapel, Giotto's scene depicts *The Stigmata of San Francesco* (Fig. 2), whilst to the left stands *The Ascension of the Virgin* by the Maestro of Figline (Fig. 3).

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[8] ALDROVANDI 2012, pp. 117–123.
[9] BANDINI 2014, pp. 268–290.

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Both scenes are footed by two clipei, the *Progenitors* on the right, and *two angels* on the left. The frames of the side windows are decorated with spiral columns and a series of small painted heads that probably date to a later period. They might have been executed by Agnolo Gaddi, chief painter of the decorative scheme within the chapel. The finished composition is, therefore, a collage of paintings executed in different periods with strong stylistic and technical differences. The decorative motifs around the windows are executed *a buon fresco*, Giotto's work is a *mixed technique*, whilst the scene depicted by the Maestro of Figline is almost entirely executed *a secco*. During the 18th century, the scheme was painted over with various coats of lime washes, concealing the wall paintings until the second half of the following century when they were rediscovered. Unfortunately, the uncovering of the painted scheme entailed the addition of large repainted sections and the application of fixatives, which have been partially removed in subsequent interventions. Archival sources have allowed us to identify two previous restorations: one performed by Gaetano Bianchi, who removed the lime wash to then haphazardly repaint the surface, and another executed by the workshop of Amedeo Benini, who was responsible for the application of an organic-based fixative, which darkened in time.[10] The cleaning and consolidation treatments by the OPD between 2010 and 2013 used the same methodological criteria for both wall paintings but alternated the technical procedures according to the varying painting techniques. The main aim of the cleaning procedures was to (partially) remove the fixative according to the risk it posed for the future conservation and preservation of the wall paintings.[11]

Retouching began with the infillings that used mortars with aggregates of various sizes. The mortars were chosen according to the state of conservation of the surrounding paint layer and according to the treatments undertaken on either the arriccio or intonaco layer.[12] Structural lesions provoked by the ongoing deterioration were left unfilled to allow for the natural movement of the wall structure and the overlaying original mortars. For purely aesthetical reasons, the edges of the lesion were infilled with a lime-base mortar to reduce the size of the crack and lessen its interference. The arms of *Christ-seraph* and the gilded rays, largely reworked in the 19th century, required a specific retouching protocol. After these sections were cleaned and consolidated, the original colours appeared better

Fig. 4: Detail of Christ's right hand from Giotto's *The Stigmata of San Francesco* before and after the retouching.

defined and more compact than the 19th-century repaints, which in comparison were too dark and rather undefined. After documenting the repaints, these were removed, substituting where necessary the 19th-century infills with new mortar-based infills that respected the surface texture of the surrounding paint layer. Before reconstructing those areas concealed by the 19th-century repaints, we studied the Ognissanti *Crucifix* by Giotto and mapped-out a possible iconographic match and modified it to fit the dimensions and perspectives of the Santa Croce scenes. The accuracy of our re-proposed integrations was facilitated by small original fragments of Giotto's paint layer, which we used as a guideline for our new reconstructions. The use of *selezione cromatica* to build the missing elements, allowed us to plot matching chromatic values whilst guaranteeing distinguishability from the original paint layer (Figs. 4, 5).

The 19th-century golden rays between *Christ-seraph* and the figure of St Francis were removed, except for the rays irradiating from the side of Christ. The removed rays were accurately re-proposed using glazes of Mica powder bound with arabic-gum which is easily reversible and capable of recreating the glow of gold without imitating the original gilding or overpowering the few original fragments still in sight. The large reconstructions around the window were retained because we were able to remove an artificial patina that had been applied to colour-match them with the surrounding original paint layer, but which at the time was darkened by accretions and atmospheric dust. The remaining retouching encompassed the toning-down of abrasions with glazes of colour and reconstructing informal elements that required infills using the '*selezione cromatica*' technique (Fig. 6).

The scene of the *Assumption* on the left transept shows the Virgin within a golden almond, supported by four full-length angels and emanating thin gilded rays. The scene is delimited by a simple painted cornice decorated with geometric motifs. The *Assumption* did not show serious signs of active deterioration; however, legibility was severely hampered by numerous previous interventions and relative pictorial interpretations. The original background was fragmented and concealed by repaints that varied in thickness and consistency, whilst the combination of an altered fixative and the presence of superficial atmospheric deposit contributed to hindered legibility.

Our general approach during the cleaning phase was to save the previous infills that matched the original surface texture and were compatible with the constituting materials. Those infills that did not respect the aforementioned criteria were replaced with new ones. A similar methodology was applied to the 19th-century repaints. Retouches that masked the original painting were lightened and those that altered the original iconography eliminated. In some cases, the hues of repaints that we wanted to keep were changed to a lighter tone to colour-match them with the now clean surrounding

Fig. 5: Detail of Christ's left hand from Giotto's *The Stigmata of San Francesco* before and after the retouching.

Fig. 6: *The Stigmata of San Francesco* by Giotto, after the intervention.

Fig. 7: Detail of the left angel from *The Ascension of the Virgin*, by Maestro di Figline, before and after the retouching.

original paint layer. This retouching model was undertaken on decorative motifs, i.e. the fake marbling and twisted columns, as well as on the decorative faces on window cornices. The guiding criteria were, therefore, to save integrations that did not alter the original painting or compromise the state of conservation of its constituting materials.

The adopted methodology focused on the tonal reduction of abrasions and the reconstruction of reinterpretable lacunae using *selezione cromatica*. The abrasions were toned down by watercolours glazes that were cooler in hue and duller in brilliancy when compared to the surrounding original paint layer. Reconstructions undertaken in *selezione cromatica* were performed using both watercolours and pigments bonded with ammonium caseinate (Figs. 6, 7).

Two different binders were necessary to obtain a chromatic value with the characteristics of the original painting. Were we to carry out a reconstruction using only watercolours, the finished effect would appear excessively bright. Vice versa, the use of pigments with ammonium caseinate would result in an opaque and dull effect. Under certain light conditions, or when observing the wall paintings from specific angles, the light refraction of a retouching executed solely in watercolour or pigments was particularly evident, negating the reconstructive effort intended through the execution of *selezione cromatica* (Fig. 8).

To summarize, the peculiarities of the retouching on wall paintings are the proportions of the work, in terms of time and resources; the difficulty to intervene in a controlled environment where the paintings are conserved, so it is particularly important to use materials compatible with the work of art and the state of conservation; the position of the observer in relation to the painting, the relationship between the whole and the detail, and finally the features of recognisability.

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Fig. 8: Detail of the frame from *The Ascension of the Virgin*, by Maestro di Figline, before and after the retouching.

Fig. 9: *The Ascension of the Virgin*, by Maestro di Figline, after the intervention.

CONSERVATION-RESTORATION OF WALL PAINTINGS IN GERMANY: ISSUES OF AESTHETIC PRESENTATION AND THE PRESERVATION OF HISTORICAL AUTHENTICITY

Ursula Schädler-Saub

Abstract

A well-founded aesthetic presentation of wall paintings is closely connected to a comprehensive understanding of their history of perception, use, transformation, and restoration. This article focuses on the dialectic challenge of meditation between the aesthetic presentation and the preservation of historical authenticity in the conservation-restoration of wall paintings. The question is how we can preserve historical authenticity without neglecting the artistic values of cultural monuments. Some central issues from Cesare Brandi's theory of restoration relate to meaningful examples of wall painting conservation-restoration in Germany. These historical and actual examples can impressively prove the importance of a scholarly study and respectful treatment of the history of restoration. However, they also illustrate the significance of the changing aesthetic perception and taste from the 19th century to the current times. Based on Brandi's idea that a concept of conservation-restoration needs to regard the historical as well as the aesthetic value, today the balance between these two demands is generally more geared towards the respect of historical authenticity. The well-founded ethical request for minimal intervention cannot deny that every kind of intervention has an aesthetic impact. In addition, we must not forget that other parties involved also rightly demand a convincing aesthetic presentation of the conserved wall paintings. With the historical and aesthetic value, Brandi gives us a dialectic instrument for developing well-balanced concepts of conservation-restoration. We can use it with our contemporary vision of conservation ethics and social requests.

The aesthetic presentation of wall paintings is much more than an issue of lacunae and reintegration methods and techniques. It is closely connected to a comprehensive understanding of the history of the perception, use, transformation, and restoration of wall paintings. Only with such understanding, can we decode the specific appearance and materiality of these historical paintings and develop appropriate conservation-restoration concepts.

This article focuses on the dialectic challenge of meditation between the issues of aesthetic presentation and the preservation of historical authenticity in the conservation-restoration of wall paintings, by referring to the sometimes-contradictory situation in Germany. The question is how we can preserve historical authenticity without neglecting the artistic value of cultural monuments. This is the well-known conflict between the mostly unreal desire to recover the original work of art and the duty to preserve its significance as a historical record. The latter means to preserve wall paintings in their inherited conditions, including former reintegrations, overpainting, and any other kind of historical re-interpretation. However, must we either 'take it or leave it', and decide in favour of either aesthetic or historical values?

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To address this question, we can turn to Cesare Brandi and quote a central issue of his theory of restoration: a concept of conservation-restoration needs to regard the historical as well as the aesthetic value.[1] In this spirit, Brandi evinced his second principle of restoration: 'Restoration should aim to re-establish the potential oneness of the work of art, if this is possible without committing artistic or historical forgery, and without erasing every trace of the time journey of the work of art.'[2] In fact, conservators first have to analyse the historical and aesthetic significance of a wall painting through applied philology or hermeneutics,[3] i.e. with complex investigations into the inherited materiality of a painting and related secondary sources if they want to be able to avoid any kind of artistic or historical forgery. They have to weigh the demands of the historical value against the demands of the aesthetic one to establish a well-balanced concept of conservation-restoration. For Brandi, this concept always implies a value judgement because it requires deciding on the conservation or removal of former additions and modifications.

Firstly, what are, according to Brandi, the most important demands of the aesthetic value? He claims that every kind of addition that damages the aesthetic perception of the original painting must be removed. However, this is not at all a green light for a general removal of historical additions. In cases where the removal of a historical addition can re-establish the original unity or at least the potential unity of a painting, Brandi requires it. But in other cases, the historical addition has transformed the painting with new artistic values. Such a transformation must be respected and preserved as an aesthetic and historical document. For Brandi, even drastic modifications of a work of art, such as an overpainting, must be preserved if their removal could reduce the painting to a ruin, without any artistic value.

Secondly, what are the most important demands of Brandi's historical value? Does it claim to preserve every addition and modification of the past as a sort of time capsule in the name of authenticity? For Brandi, the answer is clear: no, not at all, because the demands of the historical value are intrinsically tied to the quality of the former interventions. An act of vandalism or falsification cannot be considered at the same level as an empathic artistic interpretation or a historical restoration that respects the state of the art at its time. Like the artistic value, the historical demands a value judgment in deciding which of the additions and modifications of the past should be preserved and which should be removed. In fact, even for technical reasons of conservation, we cannot preserve the inherited preservation state of cultural heritage without any value judgment. Yet in the decisions concerning former additions and modifications, we are sometimes not as objective in our arguments as we would like to be. Therefore, there is a risk of a dilemma between scholarly well-founded reasons and the taste of our own time. An essential principle of Brandi can help us in this difficult situation: the conservation of an addition is the norm, removal the exception, and as such needs justification.[4]

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[1] See: BRANDI 1977, ch. 5, *Il restauro secondo l'istanza della storicità*, pp. 29–37; ch. 6, *Il restauro secondo l'istanza estetica*, pp. 39–47; BRANDI 2005 (English translation), chapters 5 and 6, pp. 65–69 and 71–75.

[2] BRANDI 1977, cap. 1, *Il concetto di restauro*, p. 8; BRANDI 2005, p. 50.

[3] These terms often used by Brandi, refer to the classical philological critique and its methodological approach in the analysis and interpretation of a fragmentary text or a work of art, with clearly discernible proposals for reintegration of the missing parts. Brandi applied this methodology to the fragmentary work of art and defined the conservator as an art critic directly acting on the material of the work of art. See: BASILE 2007, SCHÄDLER-SAUB 2006, pp. 21–36.

[4] BRANDI 1977, p. 35; BRANDI 2005, p. 68. A longer quotation can explain the concept better: '/…/ an addition to a work of art /…/ is part of history /…/ removal, although also the result of human action and thus also part of history, in reality destroys a record and does not record itself. By doing this, it leads to the negation and destruction of a historical process and the falsification of evidence. Therefore, in historical terms, only the conservation of an addition is unconditionally legitimate, whereas its removal always needs justification, or should at least be carried out in a manner that will leave a trace both in records and on the work of art itself. Consequently, the conservation of an addition is the norm, removal the exception.'

Fig. 1: Main Apse with wall paintings dated *c.* 1107–10 (?) in the former Benedictine monastery church of St Peter in Petersberg, restored and overpainted, respectively re-created in neo-medieval style, by the academic painter and restorer Franz Haggenmiller, 1906/07; last conservation 2006/07, with reintegration in *tratteggio*.

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How can we in today's practice of conservation-restoration balance the dialectic conflict between the historical and the aesthetic value and find a sound compromise between their opposing demands? Let us by selected German examples illustrate the current issues of the conservation-restoration of wall paintings and the challenge of preserving them in their historical and aesthetic authenticity.

To begin with, a brief look back to the historical situation from the 19th to the early 20th century can be helpful to understand the source of many present-day problems. At this time, the rediscovery of the art of the Middle Ages brought about an enthusiastic appreciation of medieval wall paintings, closely linked with speedy and unscrupulous uncoverings. The outcome resulted in harmful damages and losses due to a lack of ethical awareness and technical skills. Academic painters who were specialized in restoration tried to re-establish a medieval appearance of the damaged original fragments with extensive retouching and mostly overpainting.[5]

In the little Bavarian **church of Saint Peter in Petersberg** near Munich (Upper Bavaria), an impressive example of such a neo-medieval interpretation based on very poor findings from the 12th century is preserved to this day (Fig. 1).[6] After they were uncovered in the early 20th century, the little fragments of the original wall paintings in the main apse and lateral northern and southern apses were completely overpainted. In the parts of the apses without discoveries, the wall paintings were re-created in a neo-medieval style by the academic painter and restorer Franz Haggenmiller. In all reference books on medieval art in Bavaria, these paintings are presented as an example of Romanesque art, but even today it is uncertain if something of Romanesque is visible, or if it is, in fact, a neo-Romanesque wall painting cycle. The most recent conservation carried out in the early 21st century preserved the wall paintings in the inherited conditions, without any sort of de-restoration. Lacunae were integrated with extensive *tratteggio* retouching, an undoubtedly correct method, regardless of whether we are dealing with Romanesque or neo-Romanesque wall paintings. With reference to Brandi's historical and aesthetic values, the overpainting and re-creation of the early 20th century are certainly historical records as well a work of art to preserve for future generations.

Another example, the famous Romanesque wall painting cycle in the **presbytery of the former Benedictine Monastery Church of St George in Prüfening** near Regensburg, can exemplify how the history of restoration can determine the appearance and conservation status of wall paintings.[7] After various stages of uncovering from the late 19th to the early 20th century, the fragments in the main chancel were completely overpainted by the academic painter and restorer Friedrich Pfleiderer (Fig. 2a). His artistic re-creation was inspired by a Romanesque book illumination of Regensburg and not the discoveries in the presbytery of St George. However, in the lateral chancels, the wall paintings uncovered in 1897 were not overpainted[8] (Figs. 2b, 2c). To this day, they reveal the heavy damage caused by the uncovering, but also some well-preserved parts of the impressive early 12th-century painting without any restoration.

Now we must briefly consider a fundamental paradigm shift that occurred in German heritage preservation *c.* 1900, thanks to a basic principle set by the art historian and conservator Georg Dehio. Protesting against the *vandalisme restaurateur* of conservators in the 19th century, which was the cause of the deplorable falsification and

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[5] For the history of conservation-restoration of wall paintings in Germany, see: SCHÄDLER-SAUB 2000; FELDTKELLER 2007 et al.
[6] For further information on St Peter in Petersberg and its wall paintings, see: ZEHETER et al., 2014.
[7] See: HALLINGER 2008.
[8] Only a few parts in the southern chancel were overpainted but the most important parts of the southern chancel and the entire northern chancel are preserved without any overpainting.

Fig. 2a: Partial view of the main chancel in the presbytery, with parts of the Romanesque wall painting cycle in the former Benedictine Monastery Church of St George in Prüfening, uncovered in 1897 and completely over-painted in *c.* 1901 by Friedrich Pfleiderer.

Fig. 2b: A detail of the wall paintings in the north chancel of the presbytery, uncovered in 1897, not restored yet heavily damaged by uncovering.

Fig. 2c: A detail of the well-preserved wall paintings in the reveal of the arch between the main and the northern chancel in presbytery can give us an idea of the high artistic quality of the original, because the arch light was bricked when the paintings were whitewashed in Baroque, uncovered in 1897 and overpainted by the restorers active *c.* 1900. The bricks were removed only after the 1950s.

destruction of monuments, Dehio emphasised the multi-layered historical evidence of cultural heritage as its core value. For Dehio, the historical authenticity of monuments could only be preserved by respecting the principle of 'conservation not restoration'.[9] Based on this principle, the Bavarian department for the preservation of historical monuments in the early 20th century stopped the traditional methods of restoration and overpainting in Prüfening and demanded the mere conservation of the wall painting fragments. It was possible to assert this concept in the lateral chancels due to their minor liturgical importance. This event is considered a crucial moment for the modern theory and practice of conservation in Germany. For this reason, the inherited and contradictory presentation of the wall paintings in Prüfening is preserved to this day as a historical document because it bears witness both to Romanesque art and to the history of restoration. Today, in the spirit of this complex historical authenticity, the majority of experts refuse any sort of retouching on the never-restored wall paintings in the northern chancel, even though the perception of their high artistic quality is compromised by scratches and other mechanical damages due to their uncovering. In the same way, the preservation of the neo-Romanesque overpainting in the main chancel is considered mandatory. Thanks to non-invasive investigations with UV-fluorescence, it was possible to gain knowledge about the hidden Romanesque finds. By studying the UV-fluorescence photos, the responsible conservator asserted some remarkable differences between the Romanesque and neo-Romanesque paintings, e.g. in the distribution of the figures on the walls.[10] With reference to Brandi's theory of restoration, the historical value in Prüfening is of extreme relevance and clearly precedes the aesthetic value. According to this, aesthetic demands must take the back seat.

Since the 1930s, the critical reactions of conservators and art historians towards the re-creations of medieval wall paintings in the spirit of historicism by overpainting gave rise to a series of de-restorations, which reached its peak in the 1950s and 1960s. This concept was closely linked with the prevailing taste of that time, especially with the aesthetic appreciation of fragmentary works of art.[11] The Romanesque wall paintings in the **chapter house of the former Benedictine Monastery of Brauweiler** (Rhineland-Palatinate) can illustrate the development from overpainting to de-restoration and the wilful presentation of fragmentary wall paintings without any retouching.[12] The example depicting *Daniel in the Lion's Den* shows the result of the intervention in figurative parts of the painting cycle (Figs. 3a, 3b).

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[9] DEHIO 1905.
[10] The wall painting conservator Peter Turek, Forchheim, carried out these investigations and records in *c.* 2012–14.
[11] For this issue, see i.a.: SCHÄDLER-SAUB 2008 and 2014.
[12] See: BESELER 1960.

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Figs. 3a, 3b: A detail from the Wall Painting Cycle, *c.* 1150, depicting *Daniel in the Lion's Den* (on the vault) from the Chapter House in the former Benedictine Monastery in Brauweiler. Left, the over-paintings of 1862 and 1930 and right, after the de-restoration by the conservator Wolfhart Glaise in 1957–59.

This is a loss of aesthetic and iconographic perceptibility, but for the then persons in charge, the increase of authenticity legitimised this dramatic intervention. Their decision could be justified by Brandi's explanation of the difference between a historical addition and a historical modification (in this case a complete overpainting); the former has its own aesthetic and historical values, while the latter is only a historical falsification without its own artistic claim, but with the intention to erase the time span between the old and the new. For Brandi, the action of philological critique can in such a case demand that the overpainting be removed and the fragmentary original painting uncovered.[13] Today, we respect the de-restoration of 1958–59 carried out in Brauweiler as a historical intervention, and we know that there is no way back to the former appearance. However, if we needed to decide whether to remove or to preserve the overpainting of historicism, we would probably tend to preserve it. This reveals how the balance between the historical and the aesthetic value is always influenced by the taste of our own time. The value judgment about what is damaging to the aesthetic perception and the historical truthfulness of a wall painting changes from generation to generation. In studying the history of restoration, we are becoming very cautious with irreversible interventions. Thus, Brandi's principle that 'The conservation of an addition is the norm, removal the exception', is widening out to include several historical modifications of questionable aesthetic quality. Why can we legitimate such an opinion? Precisely because also historical overpainting of poor aesthetic quality can bear witness to some aspects of

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[13] BRANDI 1977, p. 37; BRANDI 2005, p. 69.

Fig. 4a: View of the church interior of the sanctuary in the former Benedictine Monastery Church of St George in Reichenau-Oberzell. The wall painting cycle from the end of the 10th century, depicting *The Life and Miracles of Christ*. Photo after the conservation in 1982–88 (conservator Helmut F. Reichwald).

the original paintings we wish not to lose, e.g. the interrelation between architecture and the distribution of figurative and ornamental painting on the architectural surfaces.

In some cases, the preservation of the historical restorations can cause conservation problems for the original wall paintings, due for example to the use of inappropriate restoration materials. But these problems in most cases need not result in drastic de-restorations and a consequential sprucing-up of the monument and its paintings. With a premeditated concept, historical authenticity can be preserved, and the aesthetic appearance increased with minimal interventions.[14] A good example of such an approach is the wall painting cycle of the late 10th century in the **former Benedictine Monastery Church of St George in Reichenau-Oberzell** (Lake of Constance), depicting *The Life and Miracles of Christ* on the nave walls.[15] It will suffice to give a few short notes about the complex restoration history. The wall paintings were uncovered in 1851–81 and were first preserved without any retouching. A comprehensive

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[14] For this issue, see i.a.: SCHÄDLER-SAUB 2015.
[15] For history of art and restoration and for all conservation issues, see JAKOBS 1999.

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Fig. 4b: A detail of the southern nave wall, depicting the scene *Healing of the Leper* after the conservation-restoration and **Fig. 4c** after the reintegration of lacunae by pointillism (conservator Dörthe Jakobs, 1982–88).

restoration with partial over-painting followed in 1921–22, carried out by the painter and conservator Victor Mezger, whose goal was a homogeneous appearance of the church interior. Due to urgent conservation needs, the last conservation was carried out in 1982–88. The conservation approach explicitly wanted to preserve the inherited appearance of the wall painting cycle, respecting the historical authenticity of the monument with its additive iconography (Fig. 4a).

In a few cases, however, a replacement of 1920s gypsum infills was necessary, which consequently also involved some new retouching. To retouch the lacunae on infills renewed with lime and sand mortar, the responsible conservators applied the method of pointillism. With it, the colour – and not necessarily the shape – of the lacuna is reconstructed using a dense application of dots, wherever possible in pure colours. This method is an upgrade of the 'impressionistic' retouching very popular in Germany since the 1950s but based on the principles of the Italian *tratteggio*. Due to the shapes and the distribution of the lacunae, it was in this specific case more suitable than a classic *tratteggio*. As the detail of the scene *Healing of the Leper* can document, this reintegration facilitates an optimal embedding in the historical restoration (Figs. 4b, 4c). When implementing into contemporary practice Brandi's second principle of restoration with its goal 'to re-establish the potential oneness of a work of art', this cannot be a mechanical transfer of Italian reintegration methods and techniques, but first an ethical understanding of this principle linked to the specific needs of a monument.

Fig. 5a: Interior with the eastern sanctuary of the Augsburg Cathedral, with the reconstructed ashlars' pattern on the architectural surfaces, after the conservation and whitewashing of the original discoveries.

Fig. 5b: Partial view of the nave with the Ottonian frieze under the clerestory, dated before 1065, uncovered and partially re-integrated.

Since the 1980s, in Germany, the improvement of scientific conservation-restoration in the field of built heritage preservation has led to a holistic understanding of wall paintings and architectural surfaces as integral parts of a historical building. It furthered the awareness that historical plasters, white washes, and architectural polychromy are worth being documented and preserved at the same level of wall paintings.[16] Due to the requirements of the current use of historical buildings, after the intervention experts often decide to protect fragile architectural surfaces with new layers of plaster, whitewash or reconstructed polychromy.[17] The knowledge about ancient decorations on architectural surfaces is therefore often transmitted not by their direct perception but by studying the documentation and looking at reconstructions in situ. The interior of **Augsburg Cathedral** (Fig. 5a) is a good example for such a proceeding. The last conservation-restoration in the 1980s was based on a restoration concept of 1934.[18]

It is pertinent to briefly outline the history of the building. The Ottonian cathedral, consecrated in 1065, was reconfigured in a Gothic manner between 1326 and 1431. The mid-17th-century Baroque interior renovation was removed in the mid-19th century with the re-creation of a Gothic interior. The 1934 de-restoration uncovered medieval wall paintings and architectural polychromy of various periods. The step that followed was to present figurative and decorative wall paintings and architectural polychromy of various building phases and decoration phases of the monument. From the beginning, an artistic value judgment was necessary. It concluded that sophisticated

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[16] See e.g. the research and conservation-restoration projects on medieval buildings and architectural surfaces in Regensburg in: *Arbeitshefte,* 1984.

[17] See PETZET, MADER 1993.

[18] For the complex history of the monument, see: CHEVALLEY 1996; for the conservation-restoration of 1934, see: RITZ 1934/35.

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paintings were retouched, while 'simple' ornamental decoration was reconstructed. Thus, the Ottonian frieze under the clerestory and the leafage painting around the keystones in the vaults created *c.* 1340, remained visible after the uncovering, with some reintegration (Fig. 5b). However, the ashlars' pattern on the architectural surfaces – the first painted architectural decoration from the Gothic building phase terminated in 1431 – was reconstructed after the conservation and whitewashing of the original finds. This 'simple' ashlars' pattern importantly unifies the various building phases and artistic interpretations of the cathedral into a harmonious historical interior, based on the latest medieval presentation. The well-founded concept of the 1930s was completely respected and preserved during the conservation-restoration of the interior in the 1980s, with a careful conservation of the visible wall painting and again a reconstruction of the ashlars' pattern on the preserved former paint layers. This combination of conservation-restoration and reconstruction of decorated architectural surfaces is still very typical in Germany. As it is always associated with the conservation of the historical finds, it represents a perhaps unusual but persuasive example of a good balance between Brandi's historical and aesthetic value.

Today, when the research of historical church interiors reveals fragmentary wall paintings, especially with figurative elements that cannot be reconstructed, church councils and conservators in Germany often decide not to present but to document, conserve, and cover these finds with a protective reversible layer. In 2010, very fragmentary wall paintings of the late 16th century were uncovered in the **Catholic Church of St Klara in Nuremberg** (Figs. 6a, 6b).

They presented a rare but hardly discernible Protestant iconography depicting the *Prophet Elias in the Valley of Bones*.[19] Should these fragments be presented in a Catholic church interior of today? The church council decided: not at all! The responsible conservator carried out a digital reconstruction for the documentation and at least virtual perception of these very interesting fragmentary wall paintings, on behalf of the Bavarian State Department for the preservation of cultural heritage, in the hope that the persons in charge of the monument will not forget these discoveries. In the church, the fragments were covered with a protective lime plaster and then whitewashed together with the entire church interior – a purist modern interpretation very *en vogue* in Germany. Certainly, this is a loss of historical and artistic information in situ, so this treatment does not perfectly fit the demands of Brandi's historical and aesthetic value. But from an ethical point of view, it is a temporary intervention with a reversible material on the painting fragments, closely connected to the commitment to keep in mind their invisible presence and to avoid any damage. Future generations are free to decide on other presentation options.

Finally, back to the real world and real reintegration through retouching. In the digitalized world, the direct sensual experience of cultural heritage in its materiality is necessary more than ever. A virtual reconstruction can certainly be very instructive and can reduce material intervention because of minimal interference, but can by no means completely replace it.

This consideration is confirmed by the presentation of the wall paintings in the so-called **Zodiac Hall**, a part of the Renaissance Art Cabinets of the mid-16th century in the **Fugger Palace in Augsburg**. During World War II, the palace was mostly destroyed, but the Zodiac Hall with its beautiful vault and the rich grotesque decoration,

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[19] See: EXNER 2008.

Fig. 6a: Partial view of the late 16th-century fragmentary wall paintings in the Catholic Church of St Clara in Nuremberg, after the uncovering and conservation: a rare but hardly discernible protestant iconography depicting the *Prophet Elias in the Valley of Bones*.

directly inspired by the Italian Renaissance, was mainly preserved.[20] In this article, we cannot make an extensive analysis of the difficult history of use, preservation status, and former restoration of this hall. However, a look at the 1890 and 2007 photos, from before the beginning of the last conservation-restoration (concluded in 2012), can present the conservation and presentation problems of this Renaissance interior (Figs. 7a, 7b, 7c).

It is remarkable that the paintings on the vault are well preserved while the paintings on the walls are damaged by the rising damp and soluble salts – an old problem, as the photo of 1890 can document, but which dramatically increased after the damages of World War II. Thus, after the complex investigation and conservation treatments, a great challenge of the last conservation-restoration in the Fugger Art Cabinets was the aesthetic presentation of the interiors.[21] In the Zodiac Hall, there was a striking optical disequilibrium between the well-preserved paintings on the vault and the damaged paintings on the walls. This compromised the original artistic idea of an illusionistic architecture with prospects in imaginary landscapes. Moreover, it caused a loss of artistic unity between the walls and the vault, optically supported by the illusionistic architecture painted on the walls. The responsible conservators, therefore, decided to adopt a free variation of the Italian *tratteggio* and to reconstruct, based on historical photos, the extensive lacunae in the painted architecture and landscapes as far as possible. Today, the equilibrium between the paintings on the vault and the walls is improved, with perhaps some historical and aesthetic compromise

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[20] See HAGEN, PURSCHE, WENDLER 2012.
[21] See PURSCHE 2012.

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Fig. 6b: Digital reconstruction for the documentation of the fragmentary wall paintings. In the church, the fragmentary original was covered with a protective lime plaster and then whitewashed together with the whole church interior.

concerning the interpretation of the mainly poor original fragments on the walls and the black and white photos of 1890. But the observer at close range can clearly distinguish between the original paintings and the *tratteggio* reintegration carried out with watercolours. Thus, the discernibility and reversibility of the reintegration is given – it is not more than a helpful contemporary suggestion for a better aesthetic understanding of the wall paintings. This presentation certainly agrees with Brandi's second principle of restoration, thanks to the re-establishment of the potential oneness between the real architecture of the hall and the illusionistic spaces of the wall paintings. The original interaction between architecture and the paintings is now comprehensible to experts and the public.

A short conclusion

As the examples have shown, we cannot turn back the clock and return to a supposed original status of cultural heritage. The appearance and the material of the majority of the historical wall paintings today are determined by older and younger historical additions, modifications, and restorations. These interventions have their own cultural and social values because they are a part of the historical perception, appreciation, and interpretation of wall paintings. In some cases, they can also demonstrate the lost original elements. Let us, therefore, try to stop a continuous renewing of aesthetic interpretations. By studying the history of restoration in the 20th century, we can learn that every new treatment necessarily implicated losses of the historical, often also of the original, material. Therefore, let us act with caution in the presentation of historical wall paintings, respecting the values of historical interpretations and thereby preserving historical authenticity.

Fig. 7a: Renaissance Art Cabinets of the mid-16th century called 'Badstuben' in the Fugger Palace in Augsburg. A historical photo, from *c.* 1890 showing the south-eastern side of the Zodiac Hall.

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Fig. 7b shows the eastern wall of the Zodiac Hall, as preserved in 2007.

Fig. 7c: After the 2012 conservation-restoration, with the reintegration of the framed landscape in *tratteggio*.

This does not at all mean that we can or must freeze the inherited preservation status of wall paintings. This is impossible even using a scientifically well-founded contemporary conservation of wall paintings' material. Today interventions are mostly generated by urgent needs of conservation, sometimes connected with inappropriate restoration materials and techniques of the past. In any case, cleaning and consolidating can for example aesthetically divide original parts from later additions and reintegrations and demand a removal or re-restoration of historical interventions. Therefore, a fair-minded evaluation of the multi-layered values and risks of historical restoration is necessary, but without using the potential risks they could pose to the original wall painting as pretence for their removal. In many cases, minimal interventions and a programme of continuous preservation and care are the best choices because they do not preclude future interventions that may employ better knowledge of the specific demands of a wall painting and better methods and techniques of investigation and conservation.

A careful proceeding in conservation issues, respecting restoration history and learning from mistakes of former interventions, does not at all mean that today's aesthetic considerations are obsolete. With reference to Cesare Brandi, a well-balanced concept of conservation-restoration requires respect for both the historical and the aesthetic value, yet sometimes this is impossible without any value judgment. Fortunately, most contemporary conservators have more empathy for the values of restoration history than their precursors. Discussions on aesthetic values have often moved to the background. But we must not forget that other involved parties (art historians, the owners of a monument, and the public) also rightly demand a convincing aesthetic presentation of the conserved wall paintings. With the historical and the aesthetic value, Brandi gives us a dialectic instrument for developing well-balanced concepts of conservation-restoration, and we can use this instrument as a sort of democratic tool for establishing transparent and comprehensible concepts in dialogue with all other stakeholders.

MEDIEVAL WALL PAINTINGS IN CARINTHIA THEN AND NOW. HOW TO PRESERVE THIS HERITAGE IN THE FUTURE?

Gorazd Živkovič

Abstract

In comparison with other Austrian states, Carinthia, with its over thousand churches, abounds in medieval wall paintings and stands out particularly for the number and quality of the late-Gothic painting. At the start of the recording of works of arts and historical monuments in 1874, only a few of these wall paintings were known. In the first Austrian art topography from 1889 (that covers the area of Carinthian duchy), such an example is even presented with colour aquarelle. By now, approximately 1500 to 2000 wall paintings have been uncovered. However, every past uncovering and restoration intervention increasingly caused a division between the artistic image and substance. Although signs of ageing ensure the authenticity of the preserved work of art, the well-intended but often inappropriate treatments led to alteration, reduction, and sometimes even fragmentation of the wall paintings.

The conservation and restoration of these paintings in their actual condition meanders between the document and monument – between the historical and aesthetic characteristics, something that Georg Dehio established when talking about the double nature of monuments. According to Alois Riegl, each intervention should strive to coordinate the values of a monument based on his *systematisation of heritage values*.

Mutual dependency and harmony between the heritage preservation values, art historical notions, and the state of restoration development have always been crucial for quality intervention. In concordance with this, and because of a colossal amount of material, the experts in Carinthia recently decided to launch multiyear monitoring of medieval wall paintings. A year later, this initiated the idea for a project called *The Corpus of Medieval Wall Paintings in Carinthia* (*Corpus mittelalterliche Wandmalerei Kärnten*).

The paradigm change

The 19th-century restoration practice adjusted its goals to the style and taste of the time. They favoured imitation and the restoration of the initial image. The overpainting of the damaged, reduced or even untouched areas was intended to update the medieval style as much as possible. The then restorers only gradually emerged from a group of artists and are nowadays called 'artistic restorers'.

It was Eduard von Sacken, a conservator of Lower Austria, in 1873, who first advocated the preservation and not the addition of new figures or the overpainting of the existing art.[1] He demanded a positive attitude towards the

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[1]   Bundesdenkmalamt (henceforth BDA) Archive, Vienna, the Tulln-karner Act, P.N.146 CC, 10. 7. 1873; SANTNER 2016, p. 255f.

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Fig. 1: St Augustine of Hippo and St George from the northern wall of the episcopal chapel in the Gurk Cathedral. The detailed photo, taken before Viertelberger executed the protective intervention in 1899, shows the name of the visitor 'Lorenz F.' above the left medallion. The name is not visible on the photos from the 20th century.

ruinous character of wall paintings, the preservation of the physical tradition, and its past appearance. 'Conservation and not restoration' is a guideline exposed by Georg Dehio in 1905 as one of the leading notions in the history of heritage care.[2] The criticism of historism thus brought about fresh approaches and paved the way to the 'modern heritage care'. At the Vienna School of Art History, founded by Franz Wickhoff, one of the most active members was Alois Riegl. In his endeavours, Riegl became the spokesperson for the novel approach in Austrian heritage care. His successors, Max Dvořák and Julius von Schlosser belong to the circle of scientists who notably influenced the education of young art historians and later 'heritage protectors'. When the Central Commission was reorganised in 1903, Riegl was named general conservator. In just three years of his commitment (and until his death), he inspected the possibilities and limitations of heritage care, concerned himself with methodological questions, and synchronised the organisational structure and the heritage protection law.[3] Dvořák as his successor appended Riegl's ideas and in 1911 successfully advocated the establishment of the national institute for heritage protection. The fact that Archduke Franz Ferdinand held an immense interest in the matter greatly benefitted the cultural heritage protection. Professional state conservators for individual states were named on 1st October 1912[4] and until 1920 Carinthia was co-managed by a Styrian conservator.

In addition, in 1902 the Ministry of Culture and Education already urged the Academy of Fine Arts to organise a professional training course for restorers. Since 1909 Eduard Gerisch held private courses in his atelier but only for a few years.[5] Dvořák saw the need for institutionalisation and demanded that a permanent restorer in

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[2] See KOLLER 2002, p. 104.
     In Austria the law protects or guards, hence the term 'care' is taken from medicine. Perhaps the most suitable term would be 'maintenance' but since the tools, such as scalpel and laser that help uncover wall paintings, also derive from surgery, we think it is therefore obligatory to use the term 'care' when talking about cultural heritage. Research, protection, care, and intervention are four corners of preserving Austrian cultural heritage.

[3] SANTNER 2016, p. 89.

[4] FRODL KRAFT 1997, p. 115.

[5] KOLLER 2008, p. 12.

the Central Commission be named, one who would be responsible for educating professional restorers. The reason lay in the late and time-consuming inclusion of experts through Central Commission into the interventions, the dissatisfaction of local agents, and their lack of cooperation. He urged the drafting of new technical instructions and retouching guidelines and wished to strengthen the art historical supervision over current projects.[6] According to him, modern heritage care could be established if the authorities that determined the restoration goals were replaced. If formerly those were people with art education, in the future they should be art historians.

There was a particular pioneer work in Carinthia that helped establish these new guidelines. Its speciality lay in the fact that it came from a time before the publication of the programme set by Georg Dehio or Alois Riegl. In 1899, the Central Commission authorised the restorer Hans Viertelberger to protect the extremely dirty and damaged wall paintings inside the **episcopal chapel of the Gurk (Krka) Cathedral** (Fig. 1).[7] The source of their poor condition was the installation of the Baroque organ bellows (*c.* 1780) and the roof fire (1808). Viertelberger used 'fine white lime mortar to putty' the great cracks, and he consolidated loose plaster with casein.[8] The correspondent Paul Grueber further mentioned an especially careful manner of work because the edges of the cracks had remained untouched and had not been covered. The novelty of Vierterberger's approach was that he did not, apart from some minor exceptions, retouch the puttying. For the greatly reduced parts of wall paintings, he initially suggested a colour reconstruction on one medallion of the frieze, which the Commission granted. Later he changed his mind and suggested that a copy be made and set in the interior to enable the viewers to relive the original colourfulness. He named two reasons for the solution, claiming that the preserved appearance of the interior would not be hindered and that the viewer would still gain the impression of the initial beauty.[9] Viertelberger was convinced that even partial reconstruction could later evoke the desire to reconstruct greater surfaces. All in all, with this approach he certainly overtook Riegl, who suggested the making of copies for the sake of the preservation of the original only in 1903.[10] These purely preservative actions correspond with the demand of Camillo Sitte, who in 1892 requested an overall prohibition of wall painting restoration in the Gurk cathedral because such actions were 'generally always destructive'.[11]

Three years after Gurk, Viertelberger was asked to research the wall paintings in **St Rupert's Chapel in Petersberg in Friesach (Breže)**. Following the collapse of the roof, an arch demolished in 1830, leaving the wall paintings exposed to weather until the roof was repaired in 1893. The artists painted the state of the chapel and the wall paintings on several occasions but the drawings and aquarelles were enhanced (Fig. 2).

Viertelberger confirmed that the wall paintings were in danger. He suggested the protection of the hollow areas of the plaster and the strengthening of the edges and unstable paint surfaces. He was commissioned for conservation twenty years after his research. He explicitly stressed that he had forgone additions and retouches. The treatments were similar in the ossuary in Metnitz (Motnica),[12] where the ministry offered financial aid if Viertelberger executed the work.[13]

In 1907, partly following Dvořák's instructions, Viertelberger experimented with different retouching techniques in Aquileia. Some years later, he started uncovering the wall paintings in the **parish church in Thörl (Vrata)**[14] (Fig. 3), reporting on different neutral reintegration techniques that enabled downtoning and, concurrently, better readability of the image. As expected, he declined the reconstruction of the missing figures.[15]

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[6] Max Dvořák, file from 30 Nov 1910, the National Archive of Austria, military archive, chart 155, K1–140.

[7] *Mitteilungen*, 1898, p. 58f.

[8] BDA archive Vienna, Carinthia, the Gurk Act, P. Nr. 1703/1899 or *Mitteilungen der k. k. Zentralkommission* (henceforth *MZK*, N.F. XXVI, 1900, s. 111 (the correspondent Paul Grueber writes: "Mit 'Käseleim' konsolidiert").

[9] SANTNER 2016, p. 99.

[10] Zur Frage der Restaurierung von Wandmalerei, RIEGL 1903, pp. 14–31.

[11] SITTE 1892, pp. 75–80.

[12] 1907 and 1910.

[13] BDA Archive Vienna, Carinthia, the Metnitz Act, GZ. 1472/1909.

[14] Five generations of restorers worked in Thörl. The wall paintings were discovered by painters in 1886. Berthold Winder worked from 1887 to 1889, Theophil Melicher in 1890, Hans Viertelberger in 1906. In 1938 Franz Walliser started derestoring, while Johan Anders and Sebastian Enzinger corrected the presentation of the missing areas between 1969 and 1972.

[15] BDA Archive Vienna, Carinthia, the Thörl Act, GZ. 697/1912.

Fig. 2: The aquarelle of the southern wall of St Rupert's Chapel in the bergfried of Conrad I. in Friesach was painted by Josef Tendler after 1880.

The advanced debate on the treatment of the missing areas reveals the then tendency towards the balance between the original and the aesthetic-oriented unity of the painting.[16] The work of art was understood as a historical document in the sense of the original. The unified artistic impression played a substantial part but the distinction between the 'document' and its additions was the prerequisite.[17] Thus, new standards were set in the field of wall painting treatment. In the following years, the expert field increasingly developed in the direction of the documentary value of the passed down condition and the conservational preservation of substance. The scientific methodology of the integrated retouch, described in detail by Riegl in 1903, was further developed by Dvořák and Viertelberger, for example by filling the interrupted contour lines, by integrating the surfaces in uniform tone, by enhancing the linear contour lines without toning the surfaces, by using the grisaille technique or dark retouch.

Viertelberger was succeeded by Franz Walliser, who became prominent in Carinthia in 1927, and was aided by Otto Demus, who was named state conservator in 1929.[18] Their first joint project – the uncovering of the wall paintings on the arch of the transept in the Maria Saal (Gospa Sveta) – already carries his signature mark. Demus was the first conservator to monitor an individual project from start to finish. The use of mixed terms in reports, however, shows that the methodology was not yet as established as after 1945.[19] Demus and Walliser were responsible for a few de-restorations (for example in 1934 in Thörl[20]) until the mid-1930s when Walter Frodl took the management of the Carinthian Department for Heritage Protection. The organisational change during occupation did not alter the focus

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[16] See SANTNER 2016, p. 126
[17] SCHUBERT SOLDERN 1915, pp.1–14.
[18] Karl Ginhart, a correspondent between 1923 and 1929, did not prove himself progressive in the field of wall painting treatment, as he was an advocate of creative restoration.
[19] DEMUS 1931, p. 66: 'in neutral tones, adapted to the surroundings'.
[20] Thörl is one of the examples where the state of the previous wall paintings is unknown because of the many interventions.
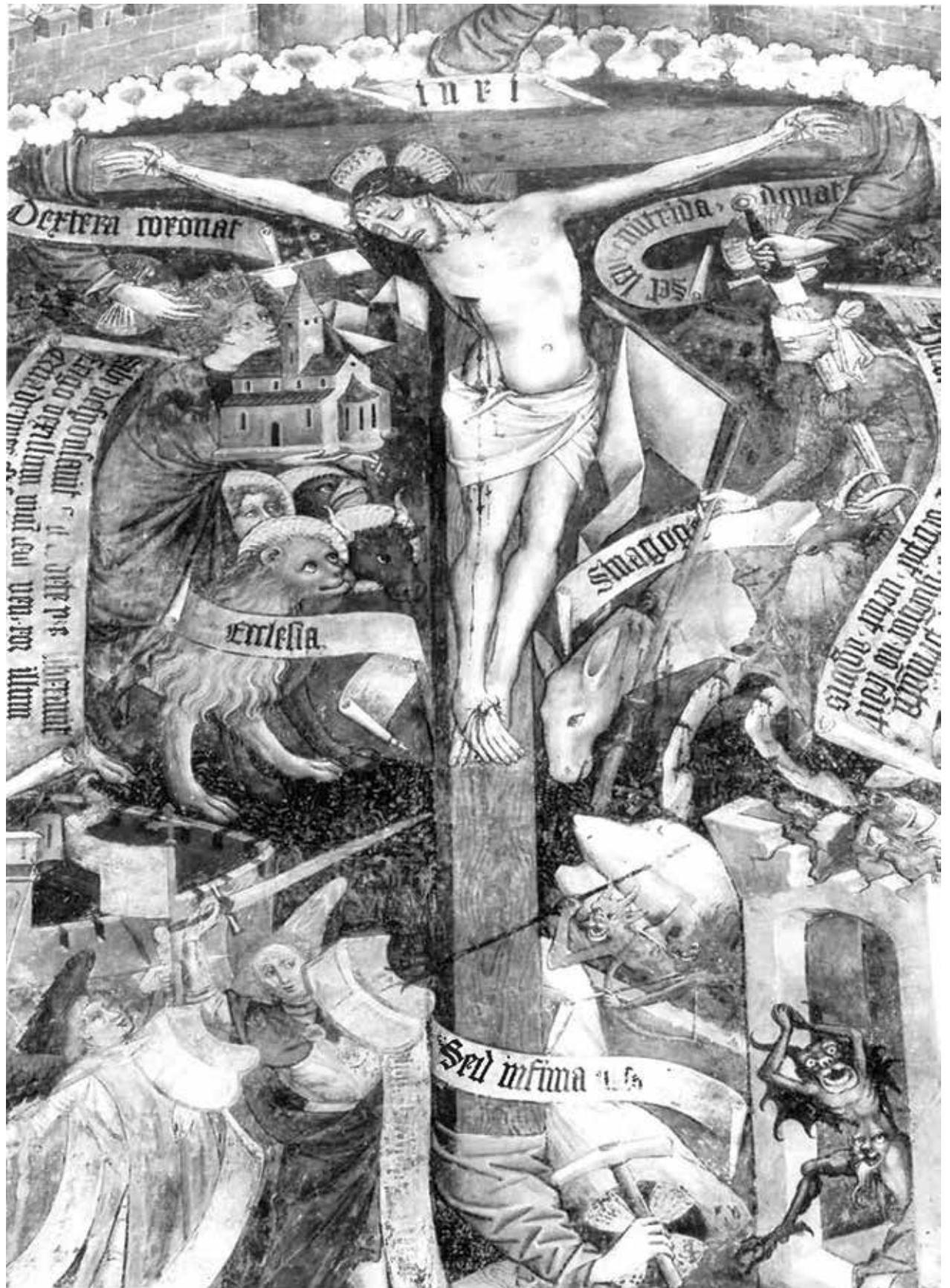
Fig. 3: Symbolic crucifixion of Thomas von Villach from Thörl on a 1969 photo after the cleaning of the upper half of the scene, executed by the restorer John Anders.

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since one of the priorities was still the restoration of medieval wall paintings.[21] Frodl followed Demus and similarly organised work projects mostly for Walliser to execute. He kept a register of (eleven) restorers of decent credibility and qualification. Carinthian undertakings by Demus and Frodl influenced all of Austria and the art-historically supervised restoration projects were an inspiration to all other states.[22]

International exchange after 1945 and the church painters

After the Second World War international exchanges, mostly with Italy, increased. New possibilities arose in the field of technology and natural sciences. The most important one was still the iconographic analysis. Numerous newly uncovered wall paintings were published in articles and catalogues,[23] and even the paintings of average quality became challenging, especially if their condition was poor.

Siegfried Hartwagner took charge of the Department in Carinthia in 1946 and held it until his retirement in 1982. In these 'financially benevolent post-war years'[24] nearly fifty church interiors were restored. Despite the lack of experts and construction material, many wall paintings were uncovered. Walliser, as one of the most desired restorers during the war, played the pivotal role until the mid-sixties. He researched, uncovered, and restored around fifty wall paintings.[25] One of his first interventions led him to Pisweg to uncover a late-Romanesque wall painting with iconography based on the episcopal chapel in Gurk. As a retouching technique, he mentioned the strengthening/connecting of the interrupted contours and the 'muted' toning of optically disturbing elements in the background.[26] Such a methodological approach was typical of the post-1945 era. The treatment of the damaged surface by use of distinction shows that minimal means suffice for the shapes to connect in viewers' perception.[27]

Because experts were scarce, church painters were increasingly called to work on the wall paintings. Two such companies in Carinthia were Campidell and Arnold. The first was commissioned already by Frodl for wall paintings of average quality. In some cases, the Institute for the Heritage Protection appointed Walliser to monitor their work, and he reported it as 'failed attempts'.[28] In 1946, the Arnold Company began with the uncovering of wall paintings in the Church of the Teutonic Order in Friesach without the permission of the Institute. When Walliser got the commission for the repair, the state of the nearly finished work was extremely deformed. The Gothic wall painting was almost entirely destroyed, the Romanesque partly visible. Arnold puttied the damaged areas to such an extent that the original wall painting was covered by two or more centimetres.[29]

In 1951, Arnold started pro bono amateur uncovering of the wall paintings in the **chancel tower of the parish church in Steuerberg** (Fig. 4). This was Hartwagner's way of testing Arnold's 'technical capacity'.[30] Works

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[21] FRODL KRAFT 1997, pp. 397–399.
[22] KOLLER 2002, p. 112; KOLLER 2003, p. 16.
[23] DEMUS 1968, pp. 202–216 and BACHER 1969, pp. 120–155.
[24] HARTWAGNER 1952, p. 3.
[25] SANTNER 2016, p. 191 and Table 4 on p. 302.
[26] BDA Archive Klagenfurt, Pisweg, Zl. 169/46, the 1946 report.
[27] SANTNER 2016, p. 193.
[28] Heritage – Walliser, the Carinthia Act, the Church of Teutonic Order in Friesach 1947 (Arnold), parish church in Metnitz 1950–53 (Campidell), parish church in Völkermarkt 1949, 1953 and 1954 (Arnold, Campidell), Maria Rojach 1947 (Campidell), and the church in Sankt Kanzian am Kanzianiberg (Škocjan in Zagoriče) 1951, 1952.
[29] BDA Archive Klagenfurt, Friesach, letter from 13 Sept 1947.
[30] BDA Archive Klagenfurt, Steuerberg, Zl.888/1947, 10 Sept 1951.

Fig. 4: The several times restored, endangered and, (because of dirt) hard to discern *Nebuchadnezzar's Dream* from Steuerberg was stabilised, cleaned, and minimally retouched in 2016, following the research of its condition during monitoring.

Fig. 5: After the transfer of St Christopher to the outer wall of the presbytery of Sankt Peter in Holz an inscription was added: 'In the Holy Year of 1980 I was transferred from the tower by Walliser Franz.'

were terminated due to brittle plaster. A year later they were taken up by Walliser, who was aided by an inexperienced restorer Josefine Kreuzer. In 1987, the painter and restorer Campidell was again appointed to restore the wall paintings. Demus (by then the director of the Institute) rebuked Walliser for the work on the scene *Nebuchadnezzar's Dream* from the beginning of the 14th century. Walliser was accused of incorrect colour inpainting (the figure with bowed head), which then turned out to be correct. Demus's reaction speaks of the then sensibility when it came to interpreting the retouch.[31] The documentary value and the character of the wall painting were extremely important.

Hartwagner mentioned over three hundred and fifty newly uncovered wall paintings in 1948. In 1958, Demus talks about one hundred and fifty places and Bacher about over a hundred discoveries between 1959 and 1969 in forty-five churches.[32] As tools, they still used scrapers, hammers, and putty spatulas. Often the wall painting was damaged because of the hasty uncovering. Most of the medieval wall paintings were made in combined techniques; the fresco was complemented by the secco. Of the once colourful paintings, only underdrawings or sinopias were preserved in some places. Until the seventies, neither art historians nor conservators or restorers were aware of that. In the mid-fifties, the prospects of long-term protection of medieval wall paintings were quite pessimistic. Following the French example,[33] the Ministry of Education planned to copy the wall paintings to fill the fresco department in one of the museums. In 1954, the restorer Dina Kerciku attempted the first interventions on two fragmented wall paintings in bergfried in Petersberg in Friesach. To perfect her technique, she had been sent to Yugoslavia and France. In 1958, she made a full-size copy of the *Throne of Salomon* from the episcopal chapel in Gurk.[34]

The fashion of detachment spread from Italy to Carinthia after the Second World War, placing in the foreground the discoveries of older wall paintings and sinopias. It was Walliser who was the preferred choice for these works throughout Austria. The first example was in 1950 in **Sankt Peter in Holz (Sveti Peter v Lesu)**, when the wall painting of St Christopher (Fig. 5), covered until the rebuilding of the tower in the 15th century, was transferred to the northern side of the presbytery.[35] Walliser executed the work in his spare time in the *stacco* technique, meaning along with the plaster. According to him, that was the first time in Austria that such a grand surface was detached in one piece.

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[31] SANTNER 2016, p. 198.
[32] HARTWAGNER 1948, p. 352 f.; DEMUS 1958, p. 157; ÖZKD, 2005, p. 7f.
[33] FRODL 1964, p. 77.
[34] The 1965 exhibition called *Romanik in Österreich* in Stein at Krems presented also all the other copies of the representative wall paintings from across Austria.
[35] Heritage – Walliser, Carinthia, report from 6 Nov 1950.

Fig. 6: In 1963, *the Last Judgement* was transferred to the inside of the parish church in Millstatt.

In Wachsenberg in 1953, he detached the image of Madonna in *strappo*, which meant the removal of three paint layers without the plaster in a single procedure.[36] The detachment of medieval wall paintings in the parish church in Sankt Veit an der Glan (Šentvid ob Glini) in 1959 proved very difficult and finally resulted in a need for restoration at the Vienna Institute workshops.[37] The Institute for Heritage Protection succumbed to the great public pressure in 1963 and decided to detach the over 20m² tall *Last Judgement* from the exterior of the **Millstatt church** (Figs. 6, 7).[38] The Roman Central Institute for Restoration intervened, and the work was carried out by Lucian Maranzi. He was aided by the young Austrian restorer John Anders, who acquired invaluable experience with his participation. The case is highly notorious inside the expert field and was all but unquestionable. The discovered sinopia (Fig. 7) even today relays the artistry of Urban Görtschacher. The original wall painting from *c.* 1517 now hangs inside the church, on the southern side of the presbytery (Fig. 6).

Manfred Koller, from 1965 a restorer at the Austrian Institute for Heritage Protection and the head of its restoration workshops from 1980 to 2005, took a very critical stance towards the detachment of wall paintings.[39] As the loss of the material is inevitable in this type of intervention, it should be attempted only in rare cases. Despite the

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[36] Heritage – Walliser, Carinthia, report from 28 May 1953.
[37] SANTNER 2016, p. 206f.
[38] BDA Vienna, the Millstatt Act, PK 1948–1978; SANTNER 2016, p. 2077ff.
[39] KOLLER 1968, pp. 48–50.

Fig. 7: The detail of the uncovered sinopia of *the Last Judgement* in 1963 from the exterior of the Millstatt church.

negative consequences, detachments increased. There exist uncountable attempts of the detachment of younger wall paintings to uncover the older ones and their transfers to other positions that have failed.[40]

In the mid-1950s, Italy played an important role with the aforementioned types of retouching. Between 1945 and 1950, Brandi, Laura and Paolo Mora developed an alternative method called *tratteggio* applied purely in watercolours. From the proximity, the 'lines' are visible, while from distance they create the illusion of a once aesthetic unity of the image. Their use is restricted to recently puttied surfaces, the lines have to be parallel, and the whole method reversible.

One of the first instances of the *tratteggio* technique was the derestoration of the parish church in Thörl (see Fig. 3). The intervention was entrusted to John Anders in 1969, and he, in contrast with the previous restorers, acted much more arbitrarily. The records show a severe quarrel between him and Hartwagner.[41] The state conservator agreed to supervise the works and determine the manner of execution. After the greater, older surfaces of inappropriately restored plaster were restored, they debated three options of presentation: a) to keep the natural colour of the plaster, meaning no further treatment, b) to use *tratteggio*, c) to deepen the plaster in comparison with the original and paint it in neutral lighter tones.[42] On smaller areas the choice of *tratteggio* was convincing and the artistic unity was achieved. The greater areas, however, were too protruding; therefore the plaster was removed and executed slightly below the level of the original.[43] For the final evaluation, the Institute, following the intervention in Millstatt, again invited the experts from Rome.[44] They suggested: the use of *rigatino* on new plasters, while on the reduced surfaces merely glazing in grey tones = *velature* or *acqua sporca*. The works on the lower register were finished in 1972 by the restorer Enzinger (former Anders's assistant) upon his return from his training in Rome.

The search for solutions for the treatment of greater losses and fundamental architectural areas was problematic also when restoring the wall paintings in the Romanesque church in Maria Wörth (Otok). While Anders promoted nearly white walls to contrast the medieval paintings, Hartwagner leaned towards a greater tonal harmony of the

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[40] HARTWAGNER 1952, p. 50f.
[41] BDA Archive Vienna, Carinthia, the Thörl Act, Zl. 1142/69, AV 22 Aug 1969.
[42] BDA Archive Vienna, Carinthia, the Thörl Act, report from 15 Dec 1969.
[43] SANTNER 2016, p. 220ff.
[44] Istituto Centrale per il Restauro.

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surfaces. The contrasting suited the modern approach of the time. The fragments protrude as a historical document and as an object from another time.[45]

Recent discoveries

Since 1990 there have been over forty new discoveries of medieval wall paintings, mainly of smaller dimensions or fragments. Here follows the never-before-published list:[46]

Altersberg (the Trebesing municipality), a former chapel of ease of St George, the Last Judgement (?), Pantocrator and the Symbols of the Evangelists, Saints, St George: 14th century (1995/96: W. Campidell)

Berg in the Drava valley, parish church, Madonna and Child with an Angel and a Benefactor, the martyrdom scene: second half of the 15th century (1990/91: W. Campidell)

Buchholz (Treffen), chapel of ease of St Lambert's Church, St Christopher: the beginning of the 15th century (2003?: uncovered by Wiedergut, restored by Deskoski)

Dröschitz/Trešiče, Velden/Vrba, chapel of ease of St Giles, St Christopher: the 13th century (1993: Deskoski)

Feldkirchen/Trg, parish church, the scenes from the life of Jesus: *c.* 1450 (1989 and 2005)

Gatschach, Weißensee, parish church, Maria lactans: the beginning of the 15th century (1995: Wiedergut)

Glanhofen, Feldkirchen/Trg, parish church, a fragment of the Passion: the first half of the 14th century (1984 and 1993/94: Campidell/Wiedergut)

Glantschach, Liebenfels, parish church, The Crucifixion, St Mary the Protectoress, Archangel Michael: *c.* 1350 (2006)

Glödnitz, parish church, the death of Mary and the Mount of Olives (2004: Deskoski)

Gnesau, parish church, the Evangelists: the second half of the 15th century (2003)

Göltschach/Golšovo, Maria Rain**/**Žihpolje, St Christopher and the Crucifixion: the first half of the 15th century (2001: Wiedergut)

Greifenburg, parish church, a late-Gothic fragment of the Last Judgement (1998)

Gurk/Krka, provost's house, chapel (2013: Eder)

Hart ob Glanegg, Feldkirchen/Trg, chapel of ease of St Lambert, a fragment of St Christopher: the first half of the 15th century (2005: Wiedergut)

Irschen, parish church, 4 angels in the arch: *c.* 1400 (1992: Campidell)

Karnberg, Sankt Veit/Šentvid, chapel of ease of St Martin, a late-Gothic fragment of St Christopher (1998)

Längdorf/Velika vas, Sankt Jakob/Šentjakob, St Florian, Madonna and Child, St Christopher: the first quarter of the 16th century (1996: Deskoski)

Lölling, parish church, late-Gothic sinopia of St Christopher (1994: Campidell)

Lorenziberg, Frauenstein, chapel of ease of St Lawrence, late-Gothic St Christopher (1953 and 1998)

Malta, ossuary, Archangel Michael: the first half of the 14th century, a fragment of a martyr: the first half of the 15th century

Malta, parish church, Christmas scene: the first half of the 14th century (1999 or 2002), St Christopher: *c.* 1300 (1987 and 2002), a fragment of the Last Judgement (?): *c.* 1300 (2003: Wiedergut)

Meiselding, Mölbling, parish church, a fragment of St Christopher: 1500 (1997)

Mellweg/Melviče, Hermagor/Šmohor, Crucifixion: *c.* 1400 (1987 and 1998: Deskoski)

Oberschütt, Villach, chapel of ease of Mary Magdalene, St Christopher: the first half of the 14th century, Crucifixion: the second half of the 14th century (1997)

Oberwöllan, Arriach, chapel of ease, St Christopher: '1439', Gothic fragments of Christ and the Last Judgement (?), the Mount of Olives: '1494' (1993: Wiedergut)

Oberwollanig, Villach, chapel of ease of St Lawrence, St Christopher: *c.* 1300 (1992: W. Campidell)

Prebl, Wolfsberg/Volšperk, a fragment of an angel: the first half of the 13th century (2001: Arnold and Wiedergut)

Pribelsdorf/Priblja vas, Eberndorf/Dobrla vas, church of ease of St Nicholas, the scene of Jesus with the Apostles: *c.* 1430 (1994: L. Arnold younger)

Radendorf, Arnoldstein/Podklošter, Mary at the Seven Fountains, Salvator mundi: end of the 15th century (1998/99)

Radsberg/Radiše, Ebenthal/Žrelec, parish church, a saint uncovered next to the restored St Christoph (2002: Wiedergut)

Sankt Peter am Wallersberg/Šentpeter na Vašinjah, Völkermarkt/Velikovec, parish church, late-Gothic St George (1992: W. Campidell)

Sankt Peter im Katschtal, Rennweg, parish church, fragments of the Passion: *c.* 1500, a fragment of the death of Mary: the first half of the 15th century, the scene with saints: the 14th century (2003: Wiedergut)

Sankt Stefan/Šent Štefan, Völkermarkt/Velikovec, Christ, fragments of the apostles: *c.* 1425 (1996: Campidell)

Srajach/Sreje, Sankt Jakob im Rosental/Šentjakob v Rožu, St Gertraud chapel of ease, St Christopher: the 16th century (2018: uncovered by Brandstätter; 2019: scheduled restoration)

St Gandolf, Glanegg, parish church, Mary with the Saints and the Benefactor: '1499' (1999)

St Stefan am Krappfeld, Mölbling, The Mount of Olives: the second half of the 15th century (1993/94: Campidell)

Sternberg/Strmec, Wernberg, parish church, Benefactor with Saints: the second quarter of the 15th century (1994: W. Campidell)

Stocklitz, Feldkirchen/Trg, a fragment of the Magi: *c.* 1420 (1994: Campidell/Wiedergut)

Tiffen, Steindorf, chapel of ease of Margaret the Virgin, St Margaret the Virgin and St Catherine: the first half of the 15th century (2008: Rachlé)

Tiffen, Steindorf, parish church, a fragment of St Christopher: the second half of the 15th century (1994: Campidell)

Vorderberg/Blače, Sankt Stefan im Gailtal/Šent Štefan na Zilji, chapel of ease of Maria im Graben, numerous wall paintings (?): *c.* 1480 (1997)

Wölfnitz/Golovica, Klagenfurt, three women saints: the beginning of the 14th century, St Barbara and the Benefactor: the first half of the 15th century (1998/99: K. Eder [Marija (?): the 13th century], 1998: L. Arnold)

Würmlach/Bumlje, Kötschach-Mauthen, parish church, a fragment of Christ Crucified: the second half of the 13th century (2004: Wiedergut)

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45 SANTNER 2016, p. 224.
46 Source: BDA Archive Klagenfurt.

Fig. 8: A detail of the grotesque, late-Gothic wall painting after the uncovering, unretouched, from Bernard's Chapel of the monastery in Viktring.

Fig. 9: Chancel arch with the *Last Judgement* in the pilgrimage church of Maria Waitschach, uncovered in 2016.

One of the exceptional projects took place between 1992 and 2001 in **Bernard's Chapel of the former monastery in Viktring (Vetrinj)** (Fig. 8). There the ceiling wall paintings from the end of the 15th century, divided into forty-six interspaces, cover 64 m² and are noteworthy because of their technical and artistic quality. Altogether ninety-five invoices were issued, each with a detailed description [of works]. The final documentation is nonexistent. In one of the interspaces, the wall paintings were first inappropriately uncovered by the church painter and restorer Arnold via 'scraping'.

Then an academic painter was commissioned to uncover a sample of another interspace and fix the edges of Arnold's intervention.[47] At the time the use of a scalpel, micro chisels, and ultrasonic devices was self-explanatory. The careful detachment of nine paint layers was time-consuming but brought excellent results. Some areas had considerably fewer paint layers from which we can assume that those were the detachment attempts of the past interior restorations. Greater damage was found in the vicinity of the bell tower.

2016 saw the restoration of the interior of a Gothic **pilgrimage church of Maria Waitschach** (Fig. 9). The wall paintings were uncovered above the chancel arch and on the presbytery walls. After probing, a specialist report was drafted, and a decision was made that two bigger probes be restored and that floral decorations in one of the interspaces of the vault and the complete chancel arch wall painting be uncovered. The probing was carried out on the western side of the northern presbytery wall and on one part of the *secco* painting of the cycle of apostles from *c.* 1600

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[47] BDA Archive Klagenfurt, Viktring, AV Harb 14. 10. 1991 – GZ 1533/1/1991.

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or the beginning of the 17th century, measuring 6.5 m x 2.7 m. Because of poor consistency and the risk of damage, uncovering was not planned. The appearance of the wall paintings was toned down by tonally adjusting the brighter damaged areas, making it more discernible. Approximately 6 m^2 of the uncovered wall paintings above the arch are part of the original interior from the first half of the 16th century and depict *the Last Judgement*.

Particularly the left side is scraped nearly to the underdrawing[48] but also displays very intensive colours (greens). The orange-red or yellow areas are altered and now black and brown. The metal coatings of the nimbus, fibula, sword, key, and other sections are also interesting. The detailed description and systematic documentation on forty-three pages comply with the present standards of heritage care.[49]

Object investigation and monitoring

Nowadays we try to avoid wall painting uncoverings since in Carinthia there are supposedly over five hundred churches which contain several medieval paintings. Our primary task is to investigate the state of preservation and to establish long-term strategies. In 2012, the Institute together with the Department for Conservation and Restoration and other research departments of Viennese universities[50] developed a project for systematic recording and research of wall paintings.[51] The main content of the system was set out to be subject-specific. Tools as these enable active control over the condition, as opposed to the general reactive approach. The system suits the present need for prevention and guides everyone responsible. It also offers the owners an overview of the preventive measures they should commission and the costs of the monitoring. It is user-friendly and modifiable. The upgrade consists of stages, and each stage of work phases (blocks). Based on the question, the problem, the goal or the financial capacities, elements of the first (research) or the second stage (monitoring) are chosen.

This is how in 2014 we decided to realise a two-week pilot project of medieval wall painting research conducted in Carinthia. The concept was designed by Markus Santner, the adviser for wall painting at the Department for Conservation and Restoration in Vienna.[52] Among the chosen churches were also Sankt Peter in Holz and the Millstatt church (see Figs. 5 to 7). We predicted that research would take approximately 10 hours, which was quite realistic for Sankt Peter with its four wall paintings. Millstatt with its fourteen wall paintings, however, required more time. Such an approach enables a quick complete review and is financially doable. For the first research stage, the study of the past interventions is crucial. The Institute itself took over the data collection. The decision that two restorers research the wall paintings was an opportunity for direct specialist exchange. It certainly simplifies the evaluation of the working hours required for the second stage (monitoring), which is needed to issue a call for necessary interventions. For each wall painting the degree of urgent action is indicated by a four-colour traffic light: red denotes the immediate danger

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[48] The standard damage that appears when preparing the wall for another painting.

[49] Probing and restoration documentation: Josef Voithofer, Wallfahrtskirche Maria Waitschach, Sondierung/Freilegung verschiedener Wandmalereien im Innenraum. Dokumentation, January 2017, Restaurierung/Voithofer.

[50] The Academy of Fine Arts in Vienna (the Institute for Conservation-Restoration), the University of Natural Science/Bodenkultur (the Institute for Meteorology), and the University of Fine Arts, Natural Science, and Conservation.

[51] Leitfaden – Zustandserhebung und Monitoring an Wandmalerei und Architekturoberfläche, Bundesdenkmalamt, 1. Fassung, <https://bda. gv.at/fileadmin/Medien/bda.gv.at/SERVICE_RECHT_DOWNLOAD/Leitfaden_Zustandserhebung_und_Monitoring_an_Wandmalerei_ und_Architekturoberflaeche.pdf> [accessed 6 March 2012]

[52] SANTNER 2017, p. 135ff.

Fig. 10: Protective works on the southern presbytery walls of the parish church in Hermagor (Šmohor) in the scope of the July 2018 monitoring.

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of substance loss, while green signifies a well-preserved substance that requires no intervention. Any minimal yet urgent protection measures are, if need be, carried out by the restorers themselves.

In the last few years, the research continued with the same team. By now, there have been around one hundred and eighty wall paintings researched in fifty-four monuments.[53] In seventeen cases the monitoring – the protective measure – is concluded. The expenses are divided among the Gurk diocese and the Institute. For organisational and time reasons we decided to decline parish co-financing. Only exceptionally, as in Steuerberg, a parish opts for a more intensive approach at its own cost, which means that cleaning and additional retouching give better discernability of wall paintings. In any case, the interventions are executed according to modern standards and under the surveillance of the Institute. The experience shows that the system of two stages advances well. With it, we will be able to make up for the long-needed supervision and care for the many endangered medieval wall paintings in Carinthia, all in a reasonable time. The realisation that there will be a need for periodical supervision is growing. The individual newly discovered paintings already remind us that this (the discovering) is only the beginning.

The Corpus of medieval wall paintings

The systematic art historical recording of medieval wall paintings is in Vienna, Lower Austria (1983), and in Styria (2002) known in the form of books called *Corpus*.[54] The extensiveness of these publications required a decade of work. Such an approach in the increasingly fast-driven world is no longer contemporary. In the scope of inventorisation and preventive measures, the Institute decided to continue the recording and cover Carinthia in a new manner. The concept conceived gives room to the contextualisation of the wall paintings along with architecture and the site and thus enables a more intense integration of building survey.[55] Art historical, style-historical, and iconographic research should be limited to the basic elements: characterisation, placement, and evaluation. Object investigation and the monitoring of wall paintings list the techniques of intervention and materials and so contribute to the establishment of the state of the work of art as a basis for new preservation strategies. This interdisciplinarity should enable the synergy between the inventorisation and the preservation strategies. The first volume (2016) presented the Hermagor county and its twenty-three churches with around forty medieval wall paintings. The scientific treatise is divided into two categories: A with extensive and B with condense treatise. The publication was planned for 2018. Both projects, '*Object Investigation and Monitoring*' and '*The Corpus of Medieval Wall Paintings*' continue the long tradition of Austrian heritage care in a changing form.

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[53] Urgent intervention is needed on 51 paintings (14 indicated in red, 36 in orange) with an estimate of 1700 working hours. In individual buildings 4 to 290 hours of conservation work is estimated. Still, we are pleased to know that over two thirds of wall paintings are well-preserved. In 2018 there was a research planned in five churches.

[54] Elga Lanc, Die mittelalterlichen Wandmalereien in Wien und Niederösterreich, Reihe: Corpus der mittelalterlichen Wandmalereien Österreich, Band 1, 1983 (LANC 1983) and, Die mittelalterlichen Wandmalereien in der Steiermark, Reihe: Corpus der mittelalterlichen Wandmalereien Österreich, Band 2, 2002 (LANC 2002).

[55] SANTNER 2017, p. 138.

SLOVENIAN EXPERIENCES: THE PROBLEMS AND SOLUTIONS

INTRODUCTION TO THE PROTECTION AND PRESERVATION OF WALL PAINTINGS IN SLOVENIA

Robert Peskar

Keywords

Gothic frescoes, retouching, conservation, history of restoration, aesthetic presentation, documentary value of wall paintings

Abstract

The article discusses the role of studying, conserving, and restoring (particularly) medieval wall paintings inside the Slovenian system of cultural heritage protection. The author presents some classic issues and examples that have characterised the restoration and conservation practice. He notes that when it comes to restoring Gothic frescoes, the approaches to aesthetic presentation differ because even though the frescoes are well researched and socially immensely relevant, conservation analyses rarely support them. The interventions and restoration usually aim for the documentary value of the paintings. Therefore, because of different retouching and other techniques, the restored frescoes are only rarely aesthetically integrated into the presented oneness, which means they do not hold their former values, meanings, and functions. These issues are even more pressing because of the general state of the Slovenian cultural heritage preservation, which is still without systemic solutions for heritage protection. Since the conservators of the Institute for the Protection of Cultural Heritage in Slovenia are well aware of these problems, they appointed a special working group for wall paintings to solve these kinds of issues. It will dedicate itself to the formation of special conservational and theoretical, as well as practical stances for the future protection, preservation, and suitable presentation of wall paintings.

Since the beginning of the organised cultural heritage services, the study, conservation and restoration of (medieval) wall painting has held a special place inside the conservation field. In Slovenia, the chief promoter of the three aforementioned activities was mostly France Stele, who delved into this theme not only as a researcher but also as a conservator.[1] It was similar in the neighbouring countries where this tempting artistic creativity was meaningfully called the favourite child of cultural heritage. Thus, the heritage services and their individuals quite early undertook some important tasks that focused on documentation and study, as well as the preservation of wall paintings. France Stele, for example, encouraged the copying of Gothic paintings (although for museum purposes) already in the 20th century. This action later grew into a period of systematic copying and, because of the accuracy and the multitude, resulted in an incredible oeuvre with remarkable documentary value.[2] Stele is also responsible for the first attempts of aesthetic and artistic integration of the newly discovered paintings. These attempts already displayed the solutions and

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[1] STELE 1965, p. 28 et al; ŽELEZNIK 1960, pp. 72–88. For Stele's bibliography, see: *ZUZ*, 1959, pp. 20–40.
[2] JENKO 2007, pp. 19–44.

Fig. 1: The state of the wall painting from the eastern wall of the Chapel of St Cross (*c.* 1425) in the Church of Virgin of Mercy on Ptujska Gora in 2009. The interventions by the restorer Peter Železnik (1948–1950) are still visible.

approaches (for example, *aqua sporca*) which were much later theoretically established by Cesare Brandi.[3] What we have in mind is the close cooperation of France Stele as conservator and Matej Sternen as painter and restorer from the 1920s onwards. The first such examples were the restoration of frescoes by Johannes de Laybaco (Janez Ljubljanski) from 1456 in Muljava and the scene of *Annunciation* in the cloister of the Dominican Monastery in Ptuj.[4] Such approach was in fashion also with the followers, as can be seen in the restored frescoes inside the **Chapel of St Cross on Ptujska Gora** (Fig. 1) restored by Peter Železnik in the late 1940s.[5] But this subject has not yet been researched in the history of Slovenian restoration.

　　　　Soon after the Second World War, the then Institute for heritage protection set as one of its primary tasks also the systematic recording, documentation, and restoration of Gothic frescoes, the results of which were briefly published by Ivan Komelj.[6] Later, individual conservators made a few similar attempts to create a register with brief

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[3]　For a general outline of this subject, see: SCHÄDLER-SAUB 2005, pp. 105–121.
[4]　ŽELEZNIK 1998, p. 10.
[5]　ZADNIKAR 1950, pp. 24–27; VELEPIČ 1950, p. 177.
[6]　KOMELJ 1966, pp. 39–76.

Fig. 2: Gothic frescoes on the western façade of the Church of St John the Baptist in Spodnji Otok after the restoration.

Fig. 3: The painting of the eastern side of the Mary Chapel from the 14ᵗʰ century in St Martin's Church in Laško after the intervention.

descriptions of the newly discovered paintings[7] but these attempts were spurred more by a personal interest in the subject and were not systemic tasks of the Slovenian heritage protection service.

Nevertheless, medieval frescoes are the most researched chapter in the Slovenian heritage patrimony, mainly thanks to art history and the prominent research by the professor Janez Höfler. Besides numerous detailed studies and analyses of art forms in the mentioned discipline, Janez Höfler also compiled a detailed register with stylistic analyses, a sort of corpus of medieval frescoes in Slovenia. Published in four books, the corpus was divided by lands and fitted with precise art historical definitions.[8] Understandably, the frequent discoveries made the list incomplete[9] but the endeavours of younger researchers expanded the study of paintings, which helped bring the knowledge of medieval and partly younger wall paintings in Slovenia to an enviable international level.

If art historical research in Slovenia may have reached a decent level, this could not be said of the protection and preservation of wall paintings since the conservation aspect, despite numerous interventions, remained almost neglected in the last decades. The only exception might have been the solutions to individual technical problems but then these were usually not appropriately published.[10] The Slovenian heritage protection practice namely notes incredibly diverse conservation-restoration approaches in preserving wall paintings that brought about unique solutions at interventions and aesthetic presentation. In the presentations of the last decades (in Slovenia and elsewhere), the documentary value of paintings was too often more decisive than their aesthetic and functional components.[11] Some representations of this are the frescoes on the **façade of the church in Spodnji Otok near Radovljica** (Fig. 2), the presentation of the painting in Pijava Gorica, the restoration of frescoes in the **Mary Chapel in the parish church in Laško** (Fig. 3) or the painting of the **St James's presbytery in Ribno near Bled** (Fig. 4).

Yet another extreme is the interventions that aimed to emphasise the documentary value of the original paintings: to present the discovered fragments as they were found, in the then shape and size. To them, the artistic values of the whole or the reconstructed parts, usually conducted in lines or points (*tratteggio, punteggiato*), were of secondary importance. Two such disputable examples are the restoration of frescoes in **Moste near Žirovnica** (Fig. 5) and of the painting in the Stična cloister, which did not achieve the aesthetic level or artistic oneness expected before the restoration.

Sometimes it is, of course, difficult to draw the border between the documentary value of the paintings, their function, and the art-aesthetic and symbolic value they (will) carry after the interventions for the space or the monument, the owner, and the public. An extensive debate could be held on this matter, connected to the conservation doctrine and ethic or to the traceability of interventions or even reconstructions. But if we compare the conservation-restoration interventions on wall paintings with those on canvas paintings, there are some key differences.

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[7] ZUPAN 1986, pp. 209–212; KOMELJ 1972, pp. 41–50; VAVKEN 1982, p. 88; PESKAR 1997, pp. 69–96; MENONI 2016, pp. 91–115.
[8] For detailed bibliography of Janez Höfler, see: Bibliography between 1964 and 2012, *Historia artis magistra: amicorum discipulorumque munuscula Johanni Höfler*, Ljubljana 2012, pp. 13–24.
[9] PESKAR 2002, pp. 43–51 (on Book III: *Okolica Ljubljane z Notranjsko, Dolenjsko in Belo krajino*: HÖFLER 2001).
[10] Despite witnessing great technical achievements and solutions to difficult technical problems in the last two decades – such as detachment of large wall paintings (Kamna Gorica) or the consolidation of the ceiling paintings on demanding architectural construction systems (Brežice) – the selection of bibliography or technological description from the field is scarce.
[11] The value of monuments is based on Stele's division, which reduces Riegl's value system to three basic values: documentary, aesthetic, and functional (STELE 1955, pp. 5–12).

Fig. 4: A detail of the painting in St James's presbytery (*c.* 1500) in Ribno after the intervention.

Fig. 5: The detail of the frescoes by the Žirovnica master from the middle of the 15th century in St Martin in Moste after the retouch.

Figs. 6a, 6b: The scene of St George battling the dragon from St John the Baptist in Ribčev Laz before and after the retouch.

The interventions differ at least in the original expression or better still, character since in the mentioned painting techniques the use of artistic means is essential. While it is quite normal that in many works of art original techniques are used for retouches and partial reconstructions, this is not true of wall paintings. Here, the original fresco or *secco* technique cannot be used for infills, retouches, and reconstructions so instead we make use of a supplementary technique (with various, more or less reversible binders) that only rarely suitably integrates the optical representation of the added parts into an intact unity. This is not (always) the goal of the interventions but in certain cases, when we are dealing with a demanding client or an incredibly well-preserved monument, such an approach can become the basic starting point and the ultimate goal. What we have in mind is the restoration of wall paintings in the **presbytery of the Church St John the Baptist near the Bohinj Lake** (Figs. 6a, 6b) which is problematic in terms of documentary expression or authenticity. Much more so, if we have no insight into the photo documentation of the state before the intervention or if there are no special technical means (UV lights) available with which the traceability of interventions or retouches on the monument could be achieved. From the point of art-aesthetics and the original character of the expressively painted presbytery, one could not find a flaw, except for the problematic interventions by Bartholomew of Lack (Jernej from Loka) in the 16th century. The artistic, optical, and technical impression is unified and comparable with the one usually achieved in canvas or wood paintings with the final lacquering of the entire surface.

Such and other examples show that the interventions have to be carried out by an experienced conservator-restorer who is well-acquainted with artistic, stylistic, and technological features of the wall paintings and historical techniques and characteristics of the materials used. On the other hand, Slovenian practice abounds in amateur restoration as exemplified by St Christopher on the southern exterior wall of the church in Breg near Kranj or of St Peter's Church in Gabrovica near Komen.[12] These are the result of inappropriately funded cultural heritage protection and preservation or of the often insufficient recognition of its importance. The state of cultural heritage protection in Slovenia is generally critical. Besides the unsuitable education and legislation, the primary culprit is the poor understanding of the cultural, symbolical, and economical potential of the cultural heritage, which is why on the country scale its preservation is always cut off from the main financial surges. And since, additionally, wall paintings are mostly an essential element of church architecture – the preservation of which is not properly maintained because of ideological restraints – the financing of interventions in this segment has even fewer systemic solutions.

Regardless of the circumstances (of which only some of the commonest were mentioned), individual conservators and restorers are aware of the broad complexity and relevance of the wall painting conservation and preservation. Therefore, in 2016, the Association of Conservators of Cultural Heritage of Slovenia, the Slovenian Society for Conservation-Restoration, and the IPCHS organised the first conference on this matter, followed by another one in 2017. This gave birth to an international symposium, the results of which are collected in the hereby publication, along with the papers of the first conference. The IPCHS also formed another special working group for the presentation of wall paintings to ensure that experts' work concerning the protection and preservation of wall paintings would be more unified. At the same time, the working group would offer better expertise to conservators

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12 OSOJNIK 2017, pp. 64–65.

and conservator-restorers when conceptualising their restoration work and presentations. These are merely some of its primary goals, while its ambitions are undoubtedly greater. One of the chief tasks will be to draw up a priority register of wall painting in Slovenia, based on several criteria such as the meaning, the state of preservation, endangerment, wholeness, and such. From the register, it should be discernible which monuments are crucial and need to be treated on the national level, wholesomely and promptly. The working group is to have a more operational and concrete role as well. It is to inspect the interventions in the scope of the regular programme of the IPCHS (frescoes in the rotunda in Selo, the painting of the Lutheran cellar in Sevnica) or to conceptualise the presentations of newly discovered frescoes (frescoes in the parish church in Trebnje). More importantly, it should shape the general conservation-theoretical grounds or guidelines for the protection and preservation of wall paintings that would include the sections of intervention (conservation, restoration, maintenance) as well as their symbolic and aesthetic or cultural heritage context. Because even though Milan Železnik and Ivan Bogovčič have already awhile back warned of the issues of the protection and preservation of frescoes on the exterior surfaces,[13] we are still no closer to the systemic approaches when it comes to their presentations, either with a documentary or an aesthetic value. In addition, the frescoes on the exterior walls because of their state and certain practices (such as unprofessional uncovering without further conservation-restoration and amateur overpainting of the original paint layers) pose also ethical questions (Fig. 7).

In the brief introduction, we have outlined only a few of the basic issues concerning the protection and preservation of wall paintings in Slovenia that have greatly influenced the selection of speakers or participants at the aforementioned conferences. As discerned from the table of contents, the topics are versatile. What is more, on the one hand, they encompass the overview and analysis of the past practices and on the other, present individual modern approaches to restoration and aesthetic presentation of wall painting in Slovenia, Austria, Italy, Germany, and Croatia. The authors not only bring up some issues partly mentioned already in this article but also suggest, considering the contemporary conservation doctrine, many (partial) solutions to a few key questions. Of these, especially important is the realisation that emphasising the documentary value of paintings after the interventions is not crucial since according to the contemporary conservation theory the presentation of monumental truth is not the goal of the conservation-restoration interventions. The utmost goal is to maintain and increase the scientific importance of the monuments and their values for the society.[14] This then makes the aesthetic integration of the paintings inside the monumental oneness a priority task. Because painting is the beloved branch of art whose language is discernible by individuals and the society, it seems that the future protection and preservation of wall paintings will not be governed entirely by existential problems but more by professional challenges. The publication before you partly reveals just that.

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[13] ŽELEZNIK 1960, p. 74; BOGOVČIČ 1985, pp. 93–98.
[14] MUŃOZ VIŃAS 2005, p. 171ff.

Fig. 7: The frescoes from the beginning of the 15th century from the southern exterior wall of St Leonard's Church in Jama near Sava. After the discovery, over three decades ago, they have still not been subjected to conservation-restoration treatment.

THE ISSUES OF WALL PAINTING PRESENTATION THAT EMERGE BETWEEN THE HERITAGE PRESERVATION INSTITUTE AND THE CONTRACTING CONSERVATOR-RESTORER

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Keywords

conservation, conservation-restoration, cooperation between experts, professional education and training

Abstract

The paper exposes some frequents issues of restoration-conservation intervention. It focuses on cases related to aesthetic presentation of wall paintings in which issues or rather disagreements arise between the heritage preservation institute (in particular their representatives: the responsible conservator and conservator-restorer) and the conservator-restorer. The reasons behind frequent complications have been sorted into three groups: a different degree of prior knowledge, administrative issues, and the navigation of the conservator-restorer/contractor between the demands of the heritage protection services on one side and the expectations of the owner/investor on the other. With individual cases of good and bad practices, we want to encourage a dialogue between the experts and a search for suitable solutions which would bring better cooperation and consequently better preservation of cultural heritage.

The hereby paper was born out of a lecture from the 2017 meeting. Its topic was initiated by fieldwork experience and issues since this is when the responsible conservator and conservator-restorers of the Institute for the Protection of Cultural Heritage of Slovenia (hereinafter: the Institute) come in contact with the contracting conservator-restorers as independent external associates (hereinafter: contractors). Our cooperation is mostly satisfactory as we deal with the issues along the way and with many discussions. Through it, we have recognised the recurring disagreements between the Institute and the contractors as well as between the conservators and conservator-restorers in general. The conflicts frequently involve retouching but in truth have deeper roots – they are almost historically renowned in the profession, determine many relationships inside our service and so on. More or less everyone is familiar with this issue, however, most are reluctant to talk about it. As a result, we keep encountering similar, often unnecessary disagreements in the field.

The article will, therefore, present some of the commonest issues that emerge between the contractors and the responsible conservators or the conservator-restorers of the Institute. It will do so with the examples from work experiences of the conservator and the conservator-restorer of the Institute's regional office in Nova Gorica. Additionally, most are supported by opinions and commentaries of the contractors who often work in the Nova Gorica regional office. Based on these examples, the paper will try to establish why such issues initially arise and, particularly how best to avoid them. The purpose of the paper is, furthermore, to encourage a dialogue between the conservators and conservator-restorers which could improve their relationships and work processes and in turn enable better preservation of cultural heritage.

The issues and cases mentioned do not relate only to retouching and aesthetic presentation of wall paintings. But since the final aesthetic presentation is a certain finish of every successful restoration, we think a discussion on (the improvement of) cooperation is vital for productive work.

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The first issue: the difference in prior knowledge of the conservator (art historian, ethnologist, architect, archaeologist etc.) and a conservator-restorer

The first issue is that conservators know very little about restoration. In the field, conservator-restores come into contact with other responsible conservators who are not necessarily art historians but ethnologists, architects, historians etc. During their studies, most of these have heard 'little to nothing' about restoration. For the final expertise exam in conservation studies, the basic literature had to be studied but it was just that: basic. In fact, we learn to understand restoration only through practice. It may be that our jobs are specialised and there is no need for everyone to know everything but what happens in practice is that conservators who are not well versed in restoration fundaments and techniques encounter problems communicating with restorers.

Thus, conservators are frequently limited in conceiving the possibilities of the work on an object, meaning, in knowing if a treatment is feasible. An even greater issue is visualising what something may look like. In addition, we have to admit that currently our work is organised in such a way that conservators cover immense fields, have fewer associates, and are expected to be well-versed in all types of heritage, all techniques, all periods, a multitude of laws, photography, documentation etc. It is no surprise then that in the field the conservator-restorers complain about how they cannot get proper support and directions from the responsible conservator.

On the other hand, the conservator-restorers have plenty of technical knowledge but often focus only on the object they are restoring with no heed of other objects in the room, as well as the ambience and the architecture, itself. That is why teamwork is so essential. Close cooperation between the conservator-restorer and an art historian-conservator is especially important when restoring wall paintings and when aiming for the optimum presentation to ensure greater readability of the painting and less noticeable damage. It is also vital when we wish to restore the feeling of a special unified ambience to the painted space.

The mentioned differences in prior knowledge can cause different people to see an object from very different angles. This may present a problem but one that can be turned into an asset. Here are some solutions:

a) Constant and honest **dialogue** between the responsible conservator, responsible conservator-restorer and the contractor in all phases of the intervention.

b) The important **role of the responsible conservator-restorer** at the regional offices of the Institute who constantly supervises the intervention, is familiar with the broader heritage fund, and keeps records of finished interventions. He or she also functions as an interpreter between the conservator and the contractor, as well as the owner. This is because practice shows that often the owner needs to be made fully aware of all the criteria and ethics/codes of conservation and restoration so he or she may more readily accept the expert decisions.

c) **Simulations**: non-restorers sometimes have significant problems visualising the suggestions and solutions described by conservator-restorers, so a computer simulation can help them (frequently a mere sketch is enough). That indeed requires extra time and effort on behalf of the contractor but many times such solution is the fastest. Simulations are also of great help to the owner/user as they enable him or her to imagine what the heritage will look like after the intervention, which makes it more acceptable. An example of such simulation is the suggestion of the colouring of the wall in **St James's Church in Ledine** (Figs. 1a, 1b). The presentation of different phases of the colour coating was made by a contractor after probing, intended for easier visualisation, and discussions on the possibilities of presenting the interior.

Figs. 1a, 1b: An example of a suggested painting of walls with the presentation of different phases of colour coating in St James's Church in Ledine.

d) **Education and training:** Art History studies include the course *Art Techniques and Restoration*, meaning that art historians learn the basics already as students. This builds a solid foundation which has to be, however, upgraded later on. Unfortunately, conservators or conservator-restorers have few opportunities for additional training in their work. Therefore, workshops and excursions organised by the Slovenian Conservation Society and the Association of Slovene Restorers are of utmost importance and represent a kind of lifeline.

The second issue: the discrepancy between the demands of the Institute regarding the final aesthetic presentation and the tender that secured the restorer's job

This issue is mostly bureaucratic and can be divided into several similar subgroups:

a) Cases in which the intervention is carried out without the Institute's consent

As we know, the interventions on monuments or cultural heritage require a cultural heritage protection consensus of the competent unit of the Institute according to the *Cultural Heritage Protection Act*.[1] Before the consensus, the Institute usually issues cultural heritage protection conditions. Several examples exist in which academically-trained conservator-restorers with a proficiency examination certificate work without the knowledge of the Institute, without their consensus, and supervision. The results are often (but not always) bad. Consequently, the Institute, which should keep a record on the executed interventions, has no documentation, which is unacceptable. Unfortunately, still,

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[1] Zakon o varstvu kulturne dediščine (Cultural Heritage Protection Act) (Uradni list RS, št. 16/08, 123/08, 8/11 – ORZVKD39, 90/12, 111/13, 32/16 in 21/18 – ZNOrg).

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Fig. 2: The 'piercing' look of the Matthew the Apostle on the ceiling of St Peter's Church in Gabrovica near Komen after the reconstruction by a local.

a greater number of cases exist that involve non-restorers who are even more drastic (however not part of the present discussion) (Fig. 2). Ethnological colleagues warn that the issue is more widespread in ethnological heritage.

b) Cases in which the contractors submit tenders that are too low

Conservator-restorers have to compete in the labour market which is, especially nowadays, an uneasy situation. In their endeavours to gain a certain job, they often offer underpriced services, which causes difficulties in execution. When the Institute states its demands, the intervention sometimes becomes practically impossible. The Institute is not concerned with the estimates or the agreement between the contractor and the owner regarding the payment. It can only interfere in cases when a discovery during the intervention demands a different approach to restoration, which then causes higher or lower expenses.

c) Cases of solely restorer–owner agreement, while cultural heritage protection sets other conditions

A restorer **has to** read the cultural heritage protection conditions before issuing the official estimate to the client since he or she can agree with the owner to do something in a certain way while the cultural heritage protection conditions require something else entirely. Such issues usually result from a stagnant procedure of acquiring the cultural heritage protection consensus. Let us mention the **decorative paintings from one of the Brkini churches**, the presbytery of which is covered in multi-coloured marmorino and the ceiling decorated with a stencilled pattern of small white crosses and flowers on a blue background. The cultural heritage protection conditions stated that the decorations were to be preserved and reconstructed in the areas where they had been destroyed. But the client arranged with the contractor to execute the wall painting without the decorations, although in the contract the contractor consented to follow the conditions of the responsible Institute, which he or she had not read.

Fig. 3: An example of a decoratively painted presbytery of one of the Brkini churches.

Fig. 4: An example of the cheapest retouch of tonal adjustment of the consecration crosses in St Cantianus's Church in Reka near Cerkno.

d) Cases in which the cultural heritage protection conditions insufficiently prescribe the manner of retouching and final presentation

Aesthetic presentation is a wide term and has to be at least loosely planned already at the beginning of the intervention. Ideally, the responsible conservator should with each restoration firstly study and evaluate the object (through archive and literature research). The responsible conservator-restorer should prepare a suggestion of the restoration treatments, including the first practical tests in the field (consolidation, cleaning, puttying, photodocumentation, etc.) that help determine a suitable work methodology and different ways of presentation. Afterwards, well-defined conditions for the intervention could be set, including obligatory research which would have to be carried out before the intervention. Unfortunately, it is impossible to always be meticulous, especially due to the vastness of the field covered. In practice, the heritage protection conditions usually state that the exact retouch is to be determined as the work progresses. This is problematic as different manners of retouching are differently priced. The cheapest retouch, for example, is the colour toning of extensive gaps in a wall painting – a process where pure colours of the painting are applied in several layers (Fig. 4), while a *puntino*[2] (Fig. 5) is more expensive.

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[2]   The goal is to create a vibrating, optical, intertwinement that is harmonious with the surrounding colours on the work of art. GIANNINI, ROANI 2000, p. 167.

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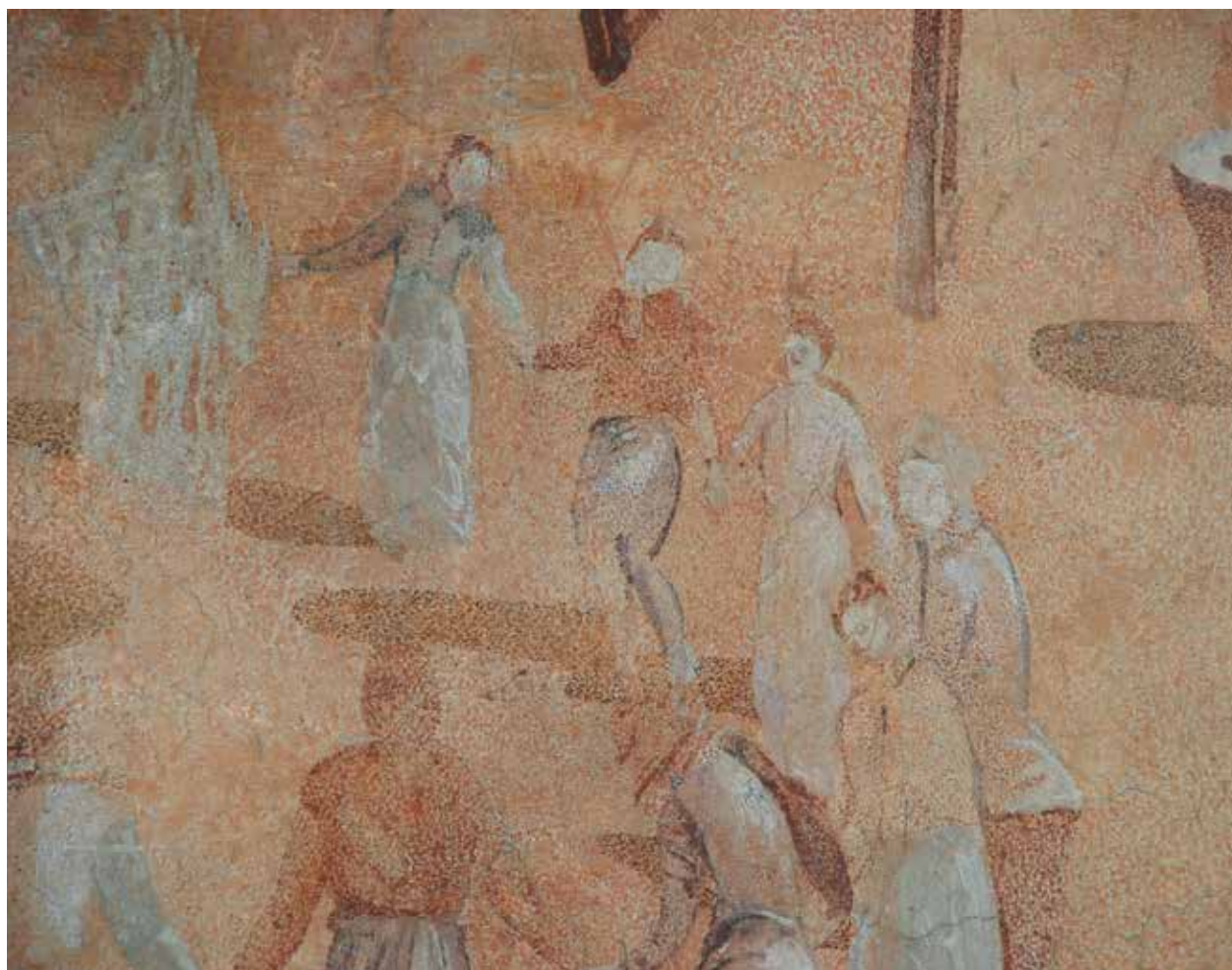
Fig. 5: In the Vipolže Villa the wall painting was retouched in a more expensive technique, *a puntino*.

The contractors complained that it is hard to prepare a realistic estimate if the heritage protection conditions are unclear. Whenever, based on the meaning and content of the object of restoration, a retouch can be determined already in the heritage protection conditions, that is of tremendous help to the contractors. However, this is not always possible.

e) Cases in which the final goal is unclear and cannot be determined ahead; its determination is possible only after a preliminary research and analysis, and sometimes only after the initial stages of intervention (cleaning, removal of the overpainting and previous retouches…)

The *Cultural Heritage Protection Act* with its *Rules on Conservation Plans*[3] offers a solution for such conservation-restoration interventions. It allows us to compose a conservation plan or Folder 3 (that includes the conservation-restoration project) prior to an intervention. When dealing with demanding restoration treatments and extensive reconstructions this is the only reasonable solution which proves especially useful when we know that an intervention will be executed in several phases over several years, with different contractors inside the phases. Still, not every intervention needs a preliminary conservation plan. After all, it is an additional financial burden for the owner who is restoring the cultural heritage with his or her funds. Therefore, such projects should be carried out only when they are necessary and reasonable.

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[3] Pravilnik o konservatorskem načrtu (Rules on Conservation Plans) (Uradni list RS, št. 66/2009).

The other solution is that the contractor leaves a safety valve in his or her estimate: either in the form of 'contingencies' or by diving the estimate into two stages, at which point he or she agrees with the owner that the retouch will be decided upon with the Institute after the first intervention phase. Of course, it is still necessary to estimate the costs of the owner in the second phase.

The third issue: the navigation of the contractor between the demands of the Institute and the expectations of the owner/investor.

Before delving into this issue, we should acknowledge that cultural heritage is not restored only by conservator-restorers or conservators but owners as well. After all, they are the ones who finance the interventions. The reconstruction and the quality of its execution greatly depend on the owners, since both (particularly the quality) revolve around the owners' general knowledge, sense for preservation and, naturally, their finances. Our professional advice and awareness-raising also help but are easier to practice if conservator-restorers and conservators work together.

When it comes to the final presentation, the owner's demands and ideas generally differ from the ones of the Institute, which causes conflicts between the owner and the conservator. The first would like the aesthetic presentation to return the work of art to an 'original' state, while the conservators desire greater respect for the authenticity of substance and materials of the work of art, which shows its historical life together with all its damage, interventions, patina etc. Contractors thus find themselves caught between two opposing sides – the opposing demands of the Institute and the owner.[4]

When conflicts arise, it is necessary to discuss the dilemmas first with the experts to establish common ground and then with the owner. This does not mean that the owner's arguments and demands are disregarded but that an expert view is taken up first. At the same time, we have to keep in mind that the restored work of art is not part of a museum collection nor an exhibit but an artwork with its own life, symbolic function, and still a bearer of different meanings, not solely scientific or cultural ones. In practice, we should also consider the 'users of the work of art' – they are the ones who view it as a bearer of religious values, of collectiveness, even as a tourist attraction. This aspect has to be respected for it is essential that the connection between the work of art and the people is not severed.

Let us illustrate this with an example of sensitive believers who responded negatively to the intervention on their own church which was greatly altered and 'cleansed' of all the elements we, the experts, deemed inappropriate. The restoration of **St Lambert's Church in Rut in Baška grapa** began already in the previous century. Underneath Clement Del Neri's wall paintings from 1893, medieval frescoes by Jernej of Loka (Figs. 6a, 6b) were discovered in the presbytery and Lukas Scharf's Baroque wall paintings in one of the side chapels.[5] Del Neri's wall paintings, in a rather poor material state, were taken off and preserved and exhibited in the Tolmin Museum. Then the 'half-naked'

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[4] In Slovenia, the basic prior knowledge and consequently the manners of final presentation of wall paintings indicate that in different interventions through time different retouches that led in the direction of complete reconstruction were used and taught. For further explanation, the role of the Slovenian restoration in Europe should be researched and defined. In comparison with, for example, the Venetian-Julian-Friulian region in Italy where the presentation or the retouch evidently differs from the original and does not overshadow it (BRANDI 1977), the retouch in Slovenia comes closer to the original more boldly (STELE 1955, pp. 5–13). The reason for such attitude lies in different studies and partly also in the general culture and the owners' demands that the art in question should be restored to some 'original' state. Thus, for example, patina can be highly praised in one culture, while in the other considered a sort of damage that needs repair or restoration.

[5] KOKALJ 2000.

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Figs. 6a, 6b: The wall paintings from St Lambert's Church in Rut. Left, shows the northern wall of the presbytery after the intervention with the presented medieval painting by Jernej of Loka. Right, shows the fresco of St Florian by Clemente Del Neri from 1893, today exhibited in the Tolmin Museum.

church interior waited for restoration for several years. The contractor who executed the conservation-restoration in the interior in 2012 (as part of the post-earthquake restoration of Posočje) was highly professional, followed all the scientific criteria, and in all phases admirably cooperated with the Institute, which regularly supervised.[6] Yet, the people missed their saints from the end of the 19th century. The uncovered medieval frescoes that were presented in 'neutral tone' in greater losses were rejected for quite some time since the public considered them unfinished. On the other hand, we could not reconstruct them since our expert criteria do not allow reconstruction when data is missing.

There is no recipe for correct solutions since they differ from case to case, however, the basic criteria, such as reversibility, recognition, the prohibition of causing damage to the original, and prohibition of imitation and falsification, need to be respected at all times. Still, huge contrasts between the missing parts or highly evident retouching are not always positive since they overshadow the original or oppose it. A retouch or an aesthetic presentation of the work of art has to resemble the original and differ from it in such a way that it is not visible – that it does not modify or replace the value of the original image.[7] On the other hand, a more daring decision to reconstruct the missing parts could sometimes restore the lost eros to a work of art. In any case, we have to know that our intervention will

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[6]   ZALAR 2014, pp. 236–239.
[7]   BALDINI 1981, pp. 40–41.

Figs. 7a: The right part of the wall painting in the lunette on the chancel arch wall of the Kostanjevica Church in Nova Gorica. The figural group before the intervention.

not restore the work of art to its original state, which is always unique, but will merely be one of the possible critical interpretations of a work of art.[8]

A case of good practice – the restoration of the **Church of Annunciation in Kostanjevica in Nova Gorica**[9] – testifies of superb cooperation between the Institute, contractor, and the owner. The most problematic part of the intervention was the painted lunette above the chancel arch (Figs. 7a, 7b) which was painted between 1884 and 1886 by Leonardo Rigo.[10] During the First World War, the wall painting was damaged and then restored. In 1976, a third of its right side fell off because of an earthquake and was later highly unaesthetically recreated.

From the Institute's prior research at the Kostanjevica archive, we had some well-preserved photodocumentation and also the written records that the responsible conservator-restorer had gathered in her MA paper.[11] The responsible conservator called an expert committee and they set out the basic guidelines for reconstruction. At the same time, the Institute continued searching for photodocumentation from before the First World War. With the help of the contractors and by direct intervention on behalf of the owner, the desired photograph[12] was acquired from Rome and enabled an even more precise reconstruction. The lunette paint layer suffered diverse damage so the treatment[13] of losses and similar damage differed.

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[8] BALDINI 1981, p. 51.
[9] The conservation-restoration project took place between July and October 2017 under supervision of the IPCHS Nova Gorica Regional Office. See: QUERINI 2017.
[10] BRECELJ 1983, p. 19.
[11] BENSA 2013.
[12] The digital copy of the photograph of the church interior from the time before WW1 was sent to us by the Museo Centrale del Risorgimento Italiano from Rome.
[13] CASAZZA 2007.

**THE ISSUES OF WALL PAINTING PRESENTATION THAT EMERGE BETWEEN
THE HERITAGE PRESERVATION INSTITUTE AND THE CONTRACTING CONSERVATOR-RESTORER**

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Fig. 7b: The figural group during the reconstruction.

1) On the parts of the fresco with the abrasions, losses, and the newly puttied areas of paint layers the retouch was carried out in relaxed *puntino*, with pigments bound by methyl hydroxyethyl cellulose so that the retouch is reversible and differs from the original.

2) In the areas of complete reconstruction, the retouch was carried out mimetically, approximating the colour tones of the original. To ensure great permanence, silicate colours were used. The reconstruction is discernible from graphic- and photodocumentation but from distance, it matches perfectly with the original. The manner of the reconstruction justifies the goal that the figural composition should serve users since the figure is the contextual and iconographic centre of the entire sacred place.

Conclusion

The described examples illustrate that in operational reality the suggested final aesthetic presentations often stem from the opinion and personal sensibility of the conservator and conservator-restorer. The decision on the presentation must however also be accepted by the owner and user of the heritage. Here we would again like to stress that our common endeavours are directed at owners, their education, and awareness-raising, to enable them to learn about our work and thus increase the level of general culture in the field. A long-term goal.

RETOUCH – THE TOUCH WITH THE PAINTER.
THE UNDERSTANDING OF THE WORK OF ART

Anita Klančar Kavčič

Keywords

wall paintings, aesthetic presentation, understanding of works of art, different aspects of the work of art, potential oneness of the work of art

Abstract

Any intervention affecting the material state of the work of art simultaneously denotes interfering with its conceptual, contentual, aesthetic, and historical field. When reintegrating damage, we, therefore, have to be mindful of different aspects interlaced inside the 'oneness' of the work of art. Besides knowing its material and technical aspects and ageing processes, a restorer should thoroughly understand the idea behind the painting, the colours, the composition, and placement in the environment, which are all closely linked to the content or iconography of the painting. These are connected with the main message of the painting or its essential representation. It is of the utmost importance that the restorer with his or her activity does not alter any of the aspects of a work of art since that would deplete its wholeness and uniqueness. At the same time, the restorer must respect the time offset, which calls for the logical implementation of ageing, damage, and previous retouches into its whole.

Introduction

'The work of a paintings conservator involves intimate contact with works of art. The work is based upon a deep commitment to aesthetic values and understanding, and proceeds in partnership with the most advanced scientific tools and concepts.'[1]

Each work of art is complex and unique; it is a child of its time and space. It was born out of an idea, a spirit, and it took shape in the artistic language and materialised in the matter. During an intervention, a restorer thus also touches its delicate artistically aesthetic and spiritually conceptual body (Fig. 1). A mere technical and functional approach without wholesome understanding can lead to rash, one-sided decisions on the final aesthetic presentation of the paintings. Besides conserving, the conservation-restoration interventions and the reintegration of damage also pursue wholesome and more comprehensible readability of a work of art both in its aesthetic (spiritual) and documentary value. Decisions about final presentations are therefore necessarily connected with the understanding of the work of art as a whole and with regard to its different aspects.

The work of art as a whole and its fundamental aspects

Scientific publications[2] on the issues of aesthetic presentation most often expose the aesthetic and documentary aspect of a work of art. Certain approaches also mention other aspects such as cultural, historical, art-historical, material,

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[1]   LEONARD 2001, p. viii.
[2]   The aesthetic and documentary aspect of a work of art as a fundamental aspect are mentioned in the *Theory of Restoration* by Cesare Brandi, as well as in the *Conservation of Wall Paintings* by Paolo and Laura Mora and Paul Philippot: BRANDI 2005, pp. 65–75, MORA P., MORA L., PHILIPPOT 1984, pp. 301–304.

Fig. 1: Physical touching of the work of art and understanding of its spiritual, aesthetic, and historical value are two interlaced companions in wall painting conservation-restoration. Intervention on the *Last Judgement* in the Church of St Nicholas in Godešič.

THE SPIRITUAL and CONCEPTUAL ORIGIN
OF A WORK OF ART = SPIRITUAL-CONCEPTUAL ASPECT
The emergence of an idea or a concept of a work of art, the artist's intention

THE FORMULATION OF AN IDEA THROUGH
ARTISTIC LANGUAGE = ARTISTIC-AESTHETIC ASPECT
The choice of the iconographic motif, style, composition

MATERIAL EXECUTION = MATERIAL-TECHNICAL ASPECT
The technique and manner of painting, brush strokes, paint application…

THE AGEING OF A WORK OF ART = DOCUMENTARY-HISTORICAL ASPECT
Damage and reconstruction of a work of art through time

THE PROCESSES OF RESTORATION AND UNDERSTANDING OF A WORK OF ART

THE CREATION OF A WORK OF ART

THE AGEING OF A WORK OF ART

Fig. 2: The fundamental aspect of a work of art during the creation. In a way, this division is new since the contemporary restoration publications usually mention the pair aesthetic-documentary but also old since it speaks of the fundamental source of a work of art. Much too often does a restorer comprehend a work of art as a matter, a mere physical presence, and establishes the relation aesthetic-material. But if we comprehend it as a voice of spirit, an idea, then the aesthetic and the documentary aspect take the second place, as a logical consequence of the spiritual origin.

technical, functional, religious, social etc. However, their quantity is not as important as the inseparable connection between them and their appurtenance to a work of art as a whole. The accompanying scheme shows the fundamental aspects: **spiritual, aesthetic, material, and documentary,** that reveal themselves during the creation and ageing of a work of art, capturing their connection within the work of art as a whole (Fig. 2).

Each work of art is born out of an **idea** or **spirit**. Thus, we may claim that it is already the ideas and concepts that are 'Baroque', 'medieval' or 'Nazarene'. The concept of how a saint, a story, or a landscape appears in the visual, presentational field comes from the conceptual, spiritual understanding of the people of that time. The idea then begins to take form in the **artistic language** (the second fundamental aspect), in composition, colour relations, balance, rhythms, and is presented through selected iconography. What follows is the **material, painting-technical execution** (third aspect) of the idea and the art-iconographic design. The matter is at the same time an expression of an idea and its formation. The medieval idea on the existence of the holy and sacred was best realised in pure and flat colours, in fresco technique, on a smooth lime plaster. The Baroque idea of movement, spectacle, and yet the presence of earthly suffering and heavenly glory manifests in a different formulation and composition and is better conveyed in a broader scope of colours, the impasto technique, in contrasts, and in coarser plaster that does not reflect the smoothness of a medieval space. Examples of Nazarene painting from the 19th century show that to realise their ideas, individual painters of the era used tempera and lime techniques separately for figural and architectural motifs. This description of painting formation in various stylistic eras proves the inseparable connection between the conceptual, artistic, and material-functional dimensions of a work of art.
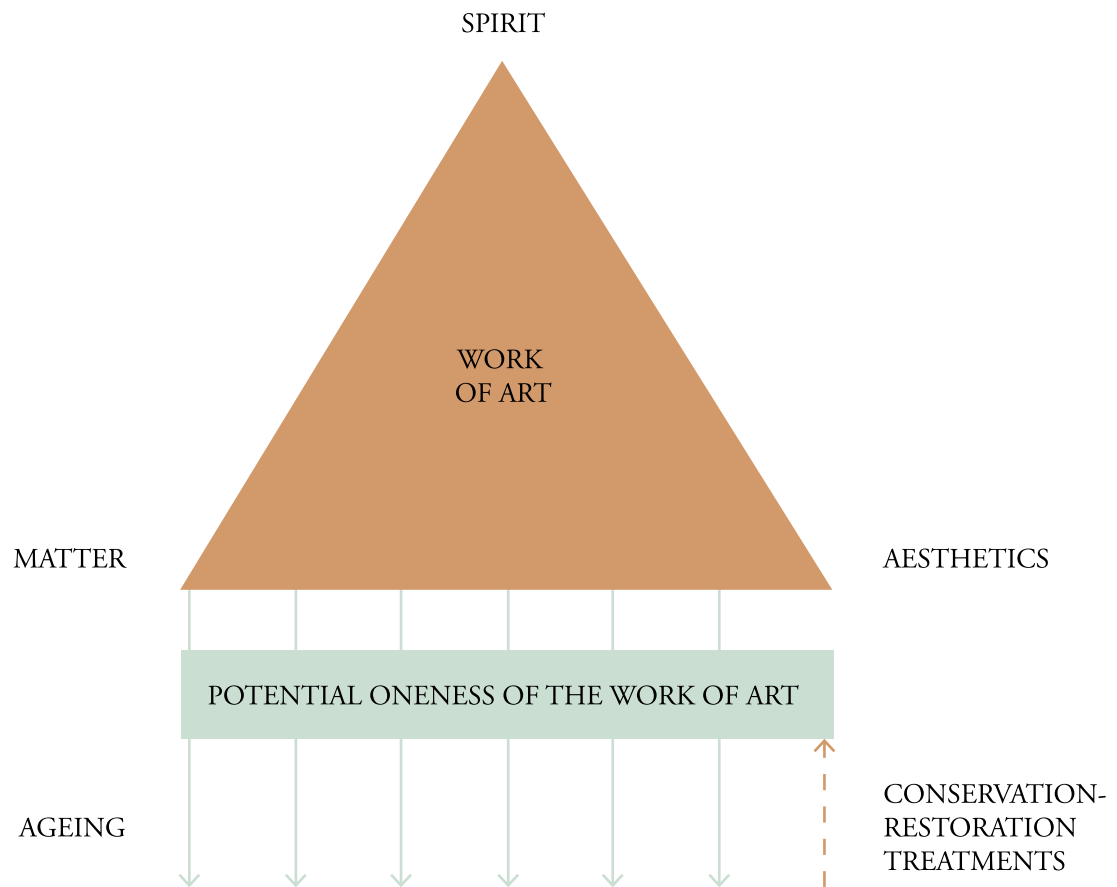
After the creation, the last, **documentary aspect** is born through ageing, damage, overpaintings, and reconstructions. It carries valid information on the journey through history and time and its presentation offers a historical reading of a work of art. The decision to reintegrate the past damage, reconstructions, and overpaintings into the final presentation intersects all the different approaches that need to be rationally harmonised to secure the unity of a work of art.

The painter and the restorer approach a work of art from opposing sides (Fig. 2). At one point, when retouching and reintegrating the damage into a unity, they physically, mentally, and conceptually meet and touch. When devising a work of art, a painter begins with an idea, formulates it through an artistic language and selected iconography and 'materialises' all of it in the artistic and technological execution of the painting. Because of the damage, ageing, reconstruction, and overpainting, a conservator-restorer approaches the work of art from the other side. Through work and research there reveal to him or her firstly the material composition of the work of art, technological execution, the nature of the damage, and ageing processes, then laws of painting, iconographic and stylistic interpretations, observations by fellow experts, and also spiritual and conceptual orientation. This process is slow and develops during extended contact with the work of art. It strengthens and grows from various angles and aspects that gradually build a wholesomer image and create a territory for more suitable and rational decision-making about the reintegration of the damage into the whole.

All the above-mentioned aspects of a work of art organically flow from one another and finally form a unified circle, named the 'oneness of a work of art' by Cesare Brandi or the so-called **unity, wholeness of a work of art**.[3] Brandi

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3 BRANDI 2005, pp. 55–59 (*The potential oneness of a work of art*).

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                          SPIRIT


                        WORK
                       OF ART


   MATTER                                    AESTHETICS


        POTENTIAL ONENESS OF THE WORK OF ART


                                        CONSERVATION-
   AGEING                               RESTORATION
                                        TREATMENTS
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Fig. 3: Despite ageing and damage, the restorer has to recognise the internal composition of a work of art (triple nature) and its potential oneness, which is based on the relations between the matter, spirit, and aesthetics.

stresses that a work of art is not a sum of individual parts, a sort of 'assemblage'.[4] The characteristics of a work of art are not a series of individual parts, a quantity, but the relation between the individual parts, a quality. This shift from the first viewpoint to the second is crucial for solving many not merely aesthetic issues in conservation-restoration and reintegration of damage into the whole. This would mean that the restorer should not focus so much on an individual colour or detail but search for the connection between the colours and the role of details towards the whole. Aesthetic presentation hence denotes not so much the preservation of the individual parts, colours, details, but the preservation and maintenance of the qualitative relations between them and their relation towards the whole. A broader and more complex view may reveal that it is not just the matter of preserving artistic relations but the 'establishment' of relations inside the 'material-artistic-spiritual' sphere of the work of art, naturally taking into account the time since its creation.

    The next scheme shows the triple nature and the **potential oneness** of a work of art (Fig. 3). Despite its damage and ageing, a work of art possesses a potential oneness, a charge, a unity, and uniqueness that reveal themselves in the established colour, painting, and content relations. When a restorer regards a damaged work of art as a potential unit(y), with its internal relativeness, he or she can begin (within the borders of conservation studies and its ethics) to carefully intervene, striving for better and easier comprehension of the wholeness of the work of art. A restorer does hence not fix a work of art but recognises and reads its potential value that lies covered under damage and that he or she brings forth for the audience. How (far) this is achieved, which losses are to be integrated and presented and which not, is a junction of various views, aspects, and professional experiences. At the same time, all this depends also on the quality of the

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[4]   Assembly, montage.

Figs. 4a, 4b, 4c: A look at a worksite and typical working conditions of the wall painting conservator-restorers. Fig. 4a, top, shows a scaffold inside the Church of St Vitus in Preserje, while Figs. 4b and 4c, below, show a team of restorers in the Loka Castle chapel in Škofja Loka.

executed intervention. Bigger decisions call for several experts: art historians, conservators, architects, and other restorers. Successful execution depends on the art knowledge of individual restorers, their aesthetic sensibility, expertise, painting artistry, as well as quality leadership and management of conservation-restoration interventions.

The nature and particularities of wall paintings and their treatment

When considering aesthetic presentation, one must first understand the nature and particularities of wall paintings and, consequently, the particularities of their treatment. In their article on the reintegration of wall paintings,[5] Stephen Rickerby and Lisa Shekede observe that the degree of reintegration on all (national and international) levels greatly varies despite methodological standards outlined in the past. This is partly the result of the different types of paintings, their number, size, location, importance, as well as the use of different materials, ageing, and the physical state of a work of art. The diverse nature of wall paintings makes it hard or impossible to achieve consistency in integration, especially in comparison to other types of paintings, such as canvas. We must, therefore, understand their nature to be aware that the concepts of reintegration, which are valid for the works of art in museums, usually 'shatter' when restoring wall paintings 'in situ'.

The first characteristic of wall paintings is their **material diversity**. The support of wall paintings can be stone, brick, clay, or wood. The plaster that can be either visible on invisible in the final presentation includes different materials such as lime, clay, gypsum, cement, and different aggregates: sand, fine sand, and additions. A wall painting can be

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[5] RICKERBY, SHEKEDE 2003, pp. 81–89.

executed in *fresco*, lime, *secco* or mixed techniques. When treating and reintegrating the paintings, we must consider their material diversity, technology, and their physical condition.

In contrast with canvas paintings or wooden and stone statues, wall paintings are **part of the immovable heritage**, architecture with which they are inseparably bound technologically and contentually. This highlights the religious or cultural role of the painted space, points to the historical and cultural context of the wall paintings and, simultaneously, to the fixed connection between the technological state of the paintings and the state of the whole building. The treatment of wall paintings is therefore complex and interdisciplinary. It is carried out in cooperation with natural sciences and art history experts, architects, building engineers, structural engineers, and also clients or the owners of the monument. The practical work of restorers mixes with that of builders, electricians, house painters, pavers, scaffolders, all of which requires a lot of professional and organisational adjusting by the responsible conservator and the team.

The scope and the spatial, three-dimensional vastness of the wall paintings are best illustrated if compared to the canvas paintings. In their article on the reintegration of wall paintings, Rickerby and Shekede[6] compare the wall paintings in Mogao Caves in China with the art in the London National Gallery. The surface area of the wall paintings in the Mogao Caves is in total ten times larger than the surface area of all the National Gallery paintings combined. The way of treating the first and second group of artwork certainly differs. The damage reintegration on a wall painting measuring 300 m^2 and on a small canvas painting measuring 1 m^2 demands different artistic, restorative, and organisational approaches. The wall painting with its size and three-dimensionality envelops the viewers and actually 'watches' them. Apart from that, the articulation and composition of paintings in a building strongly connect with the conceptual-spiritual world. In his art-theoretical writings on medieval painting, Milan Butina writes that 'the church architecture is the epitome of the densest and most organised structure of the medieval religious world, stretching from the articulation of its building to the articulation of its paintings and sculptures inside. And so through art, the Christian world has become sensuously present, a clear proof of true existence of the Christian real world, Heaven.'[7] Therefore, we need to treat the damage by respecting these qualities.

The spaciousness and extensiveness of the paintings demand the use of multi-levelled scaffolding that obstructs the view of the whole during work. This is especially problematic when the paintings are hidden under the whitewashes before the scaffolding is set-up and are then visible only at the end of the treatment when it is removed. In such cases, the responsible conservator has to have a remarkable artistic, spatial, and temporal perception, as well as organisational skills and logistics when planning and executing the intervention. These obstacles also demand a greater number of restorers, which means the one responsible for the intervention has to adjust, delegate, instruct, and unify drastically. Practice shows that after their studies, restorers are not yet trained to deal with larger painted surfaces, so that part of the training and critical thinking falls on persons responsible for interventions in the field. Note that the restorers often lack aesthetic taste, artistic sensibility, painting artistry, and wholesome understanding of the work of art. Whether this indicates a lack of in-depth work with the works of art or insufficient drawing, painting, and, consequently, restoration study practice is open for collective discussion and is the responsibility of the Slovenian educational and scientific institutions.

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[6] RICKERBY, SHEKEDE 2003, p. 82.
[7] BUTINA 1997, p. 222.

Fig. 5: Various manners and degrees of removing whitewashes and dirt leave different traces and are in themselves a type of aesthetic presentation. An example from the painting of the Loka Castle chapel in Škofja Loka.

The aesthetic presentation starts with uncovering

A work of art is not a sum of individual parts but a unified, homogenous composition with a message. All interventions have to respect this unity. Since it is made of a singular part that has its aesthetic laws and distinctions, conveyance and spirit, all the interventions have to be devised in relation to this unity. Only when comprehending the oneness of a work of art do the interventions gain their meaning.

It would be a mistake to assume that an aesthetic presentation starts at retouching. For a restorer, the problem of presentation arises already when **uncovering** the paintings or when removing the whitewashes and renders since an appropriate degree and manner of removal has to be chosen. Some paintings uncover easily, with a scalpel, and their whitewashes simply peel off. In other cases, the hardened layers have to be treated with ultrasonic hammers in combination with different chemical methods of removal or softening. Every intervention leaves a trace on the painting, thus becoming a part of the presentation (Fig. 5). Sometimes the intervention leaves a transparent layer of calcareous sinter on the paintings. It is very difficult to remove and already implies the final presentation of the wall painting – from documentary and technological point of view, the sinter has become part of the painting, which can be, after a certain time, read also past this damage.

The removal of dirt presents similar issues. In their work, restorers decide upon the manners and degrees of removal, sometimes combining different ways of cleaning in a single painting. Because of moisture, damage, and dirt deposits on the paint layer, the northern wall demands a different methodology of cleaning than the southern. Similarly, due to sensitivity, dust, and loss of cohesion certain pigments are treated differently from the stable ones. The issue in cleaning greater painted surfaces is that restorers often attempt to find partial solutions, merely through a technological approach and less from the point of artistic sensibility. Although such decisions are not materially damaging to the work of art, they can ruin its sensitive artistic relations. In the introduction to *The Historical and Philosophical Issues in the Conservation of Cultural Heritage,* an interpretation of Gombrich's idea explains that the: '/…/ Tonal relationships in paintings are delicate and can be influenced by several factors. /…/ Since tonal relationships are responsible for the creation of depth in the painting, any disturbance of them results in a correlative alteration of spatial focus. /…/ (Quite rightly, Gombrich says) that restorers should be aware of more than technical matters. They must also take the "psychology of perception" into serious consideration. Their primary concern should be with the "light of Art" and the preservation of tonal relationships. /…/ a restoration policy towards cleaning must embody a system of aesthetics.'[8]

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[8]   KIRBY TALLEY 1996, pp. 27–28.

Fig. 6: Different levels and treatments of the plaster relay the historical sequence of the paintings, reconstructions, and damage as can be seen in the orthophoto of the painting from the presbytery of St Cantianus in Vrzdenec with the outline and the markings of the damage and reconstructions.

The original plaster with the fragmented wall painting from the first half of the 15th century
The painted niche of 1539
The former Baroque windows
The damage on Gothic wall paintings caused by installation of Baroque windows
Reconstruction of the Gothic windows (2004)

Fig. 7: If the painting is preserved in fragments, plasters connect the individual parts into an aesthetic whole that provides the information (a document) about the original size of the painting. An example with a fragment of the *Last Judgement* from the Church of St Nicholas in Godešič before and after the intervention.

An important part of the aesthetic presentation is also **the treatment of the plaster and its damage**. It is a field restorers have neglected in the past. The plaster levels, its composition, volume, surface structure, and hue are important to achieve the execution of quality. If the painting is preserved in fragments, plasters can be used to outline its basic form and frame, thus connecting individual elements into a whole. Plasters stabilise, conserve, and say a lot about the documentary and aesthetic aspect, which have to be harmonious. Different plaster levels speak of the historical sequence, the period of the creation or alteration of paintings. Furthermore, the limitations in the extent of the decorative plaster can signify the scope of the original wall paintings. The manners of plaster presentation, which can be executed below the level, rough, toned etc., are important both aesthetically- and documentary-wise.

Each reintegration of the damaged plaster has to be executed in line with the historical authenticity and aesthetic unity of a work of art. Its purpose is not correction or addition but clearer and wider aesthetic and documentary comprehension of a painting preserved in fragments (Fig. 7).

Retouching is the last of the interventions on a work of art and is the most visible in terms of damage reintegration. It should be noted that it completely depends on the execution of the previous treatments. In *Conservation of Wall Paintings*,[9] Paolo Mora claims that aesthetic reality lies in the appearance of the work of art so its comprehension cannot be separated from its presentation. The influence the damaged part has on the whole needs to be considered since otherwise the entire work of art would be limited solely to the archaeological and documentary approach. Likewise, the absence of intervention also influences the appearance and readability of the image and signifies a form of presentation that avoids aesthetic questions. Paolo Mora mentions two degrees of visual interferences damage causes. Firstly, it hinders the comprehension of the image since, if we recall Brandi's theory and the Gestalt psychology, the damage tends to come forth and become a pattern, while the image sinks into the background. Secondly, damage functions as a disruption of continuity in form. The minimising of this disruption by restoring the image in its maximal presence, by respecting the authenticity of the work of art and the historical document, is a serious issue when reintegrating the damaged parts into the whole.

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[9] MORA P., MORA L., PHILIPPOT 1984, p. 302 (*Problems of presentation*).

Fig. 8: Detail from the painting of the Loka Castle chapel during and after the retouch.

To conduct a retouch (Fig. 8), a restorer should be trained to read the work of art artistically, similarly as a musician is trained to read music. The difference is only that in restoration, reading concerns the understanding of the visual field, painting style, layering, colour sequencing, understanding of the whole, of the composition, paint structure, texture, in other words, the artistic comprehension of the painting.

Visual art can be compared to music, except that musical compositions are written in time and wall paintings in space. Monumental paintings might also be understood as symphonies. The first are formed in space, boasting with art composition (below, above, in the centre), contrasts, balance, and colour accords, while the second are formed in time, and are marked by dynamics, concord, musical composition, and harmony. Similar to music, visual arts have colour accords that match inside the composition. A singular colour accord always sounds only in concord with the others. When we add to a work of art or touch it, our action must be heard in the slightest detail and in harmony that serves the whole composition. The retouch must not intersect or stop the flow, the painter's strokes, and the vivacity of a work of art. For this to be achieved, the restorer has to know how to manipulate the paint or its materiality. Through different types of application and hues (glazing, pointillism or tratteggio) a restorer must 'sink' the damage into the flow of a work of art and its appearance, leaving them at the same time visible and discernible. A retouch is not an artefact or a work of art. Artistically speaking, its value lies only in its belonging to the work of art and its homogeneity. Bearing in mind the authenticity of the work of art and distinguishability from the original, the retouch is integrated into the whole of the painting.

Conclusion

The conservation-restoration of a work of art and its aesthetic presentation is a field with complex issues, one we have been insufficiently aware of until now. It is defined by a specific but also versatile nature of wall paintings and their historical, functional, and technological connection with the building or a larger heritage unit. All these factors require broader, interdisciplinary consideration regarding different ways of wall painting presentation, in addition to profound knowledge and understanding of a work of art by the contractor – the conservator-restorer. As a start, expert conferences, views of the restored paintings, productive debates, and scientific publications will help us expose and consider this issue, which will in turn undoubtedly produce premeditated approaches that benefit the works of art.

RETOUCHING AND PRESENTATION – ISSUES AND SOLUTIONS

Andrej Jazbec

Keywords

wall painting, fresco, aesthetic presentation, retouching, losses, damage, potential unity

Abstract

The Italian conservators provided an invaluable theoretical and practical base for conservation-restoration interventions, useful especially when treating damage and losses and aesthetically presenting the works of art. Brandi determines an intervention as a critical interpretation of the work of art, in which one has to consider its aesthetic and historical aspect, of which the aesthetic one is more important because we are dealing with art and not documents. Aesthetic presentation is an important part of the restoration treatment and crucially influences the future appearance and perception of the work of art. It is more noticeable in works that have been damaged or partly destroyed, remade or have encountered a change of their surroundings (phenomena frequent with wall paintings that had been uncovered from under plasters or whitewashes). The goal of an aesthetic presentation is to present the work of art and its qualities as best as possible. If the work of art has been mutilated, we should indicate its original size and environment and minimise the influence of the damage and losses on perception and understanding. The paper presents the basic terms and criteria of the Italian conservation-restoration doctrine and the author's solutions to specific issues of the wall paintings in the Church of St Nicholas in Kred, the Church of St Brice in Volarje, the Vipolže Villa, and the Lanthieri Manor in Vipava.

The aesthetic presentation, of which the final component is retouch, is that part of the restoration process that determines the final appearance of the work of art. At least partly, it has to be planned at the beginning of the intervention. Its purpose is to evaluate the work of art, its constituents, and their importance, as well as the changes that the work of art and its environment have undergone. The evaluation results help decide what is important, what should be presented and how, but also what should be deemed less important and hindering, and thus removed, covered or moved into the background. Such demanding decisions that greatly influence future perception and comprehension require a certain amount of sensibility and an appropriate theoretical background.

When conserving and restoring wall paintings, we lean on the theories of the Italian conservators Cesare Brandi, Umberto Baldini, and the Italian presentational practice described in the Ornella Casazza's *Restauro pittorico*.[1] The following paragraphs contain summaries of the basic theoretical terms and objectives by the Italian theoreticians, and certain issues and solutions acquired through practice.

According to Cesare Brandi,[2] a contemporary intervention has to treat a historical work of art using 'critical interpretation'. The work of art has dual value: historical and aesthetic. Its historical or documentary value derives

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[1]   The thoughts and views on the issue of retouching are based on personal experiences in restoration practice.
[2]   Cesare Brandi, *Teoria del restauro*, Edizioni di storia e letteratura, Rome 1963 (BRANDI 1963). Abridged and translated by the author from the original Italian text.

from the uniqueness of the situation in which it was made, as well as from the time span from its creation to the present.[3] While the aesthetic value[4] originates from the work of art as an aesthetic, artistic product.

Brandi claims that the work of art is a special 'unity' that prevents us from treating it as a sum of individual parts and dictates that it has to function as a 'potential oneness' even if it shatters into fragments.[5] The form of each work of art is indivisible. Losses hinder the perception of the work of art since they interrupt its form and, even more disturbingly, force themselves into the foreground, pushing the work of art backwards.[6]

Umberto Baldini comprehends the work of art in three ways: bios, thanatos and eros (life, destruction, and eros). For him, it is not enough to prolong the physical existence of the damaged work of art but to return to it its eros. He believes that the aim of restoration is not the mere prolonging of the physical existence of the works of art but more precisely the renovation of their presentation and their preservation as unique aesthetic and historical goods.[7] When deciding upon the integration of the damage, several factors influence the decision:

– the extent of the damage(s),
– uniqueness or re-creation of the lost parts,
– the importance, conveyance, significance of the missing details,
– the role of the wall painting in the building or its surroundings, and its symbolism.

We decide on a retouching manner based on the size of the loss and the context. Smaller damage (scratches, abrasions) can be retouched by one glazed layer that chromatically corresponds to the surrounding original, generally in a slightly lighter tone. To integrate bigger losses, several methods are possible.

Neutral tone (it. *neutro*) is a method in which the damaged parts of the wall painting are treated in only one colour and without any reconstruction of the original colours.[8] It must correspond to the colours of the original and it can be carried out by retouching or with coloured mortar. The entire work of art can be of one neutral tone or lighter and darker areas can be treated separately.

Astrazione cromatica (it.) is a method of retouching that tries to minimise the visual invasion of the losses on wall paintings. It is used on bigger losses when continuity of form with the surrounding painting is not possible. It can be carried out in hatched lines or dots (it. *punteggiato*[9]) using basic colours (blue, red, and yellow, with black) or in the original colours of the painting. The intersecting small lines in different colours form a grid. This structure optically merges with the original. Its goal is to create a vibrating visual intertwinement, harmonious with the surrounding colours of the work of art.[10]

Reconstruction (it. *riconstruzione*) is a restoration procedure that integrates the losses. It strives to restore the look of the unity of the wall painting by reconstructing the missing parts and preventing fragmentation. The method of hatching or pointillism ensures that the original is not imitated.

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[3] BRANDI 1963, pp. 29–37.
[4] BRANDI 1963, pp. 39–47.
[5] BRANDI 1963, pp. 13–20. The Italian *unita' potenziale* literally translates as *potential unity/oneness or a whole*.
[6] BRANDI 1963, p. 18.
[7] Umberto Baldini, *Teoria del restauro*, Nardini editore, Firenze 1978, pp. 9–21 (BALDINI 1987). Abridged after the original Italian text.
[8] GIANNINI, ROANI 2000, p. 119.
[9] In English *pointillism*. See: *EwaGloss*, 2016, p. 335.
[10] GIANNINI, ROANI 2000, p. 32.

Several manners of retouching exist:

- **Reconstruction with hatching** *(it. tratteggio)* where the retouching is achieved with a dense grid of short coloured lines. The grid has to be noticeable from proximity and has to blend in with the original wall painting from afar. It can be used for reconstruction and *astrazione cromatica* on paint losses, less frequently for neutral background.[11] In tratteggio, basic colours from the wall painting may be used. There exist several types of hatching.
- *Selezione cromatica* (it.) is a method of treating the losses with hatching and which, by use of abstract strokes and basic colours of the painting, avoids imitating and competing with the original. It treats the losses with hatches (it. *tratteggio*) in several layers by separate use of basic colours. The intersecting small lines of different colours form a grid and by disciplined stroke, the integrated areas are recognisable when observed from proximity. The hatching can be vertical, circular, horizontal or can follow the image composition. The method was developed by Umberto Baldini at the Opificio delle Pietre Dure in Florence.[12]
- **Pointillism** (it. *punteggiato*) is a method of retouching with a dense grid of coloured dots. As in hatching, the grid has to be noticeable from proximity but from afar, it has to blend with the original wall painting. It can also be used for the neutral tone.
- **Mimetic reintegration** (it. *riconstruizone mimetica*) is a retouch that imitates the original wall painting.[13] After the application, it is difficult to distinguish between the original and the treated parts, which is why this method is avoided in contemporary restoration.

The next section presents the issues that arose during some completed restoration projects.

The Church of St Nicholas, Kred

There are three layers of a wall painting preserved on the Gothic walls of the presbytery of St Nicholas's Church, greatly altered in the late Baroque. The Gothic wall painting from the late 15th century is of the best quality and its author is the artist known for his work in St Justus's Church in Koseč near Drežnica. By height, it could be divided into three levels: the decorative curtain at the bottom, above it the *Passion of Christ* stretching across the whole of the presbytery, and topmost, the once painted apostles on the northern and southern wall. Above the main window at the end of the presbytery, you can see Christ and above the side windows, two angels. The window reveals are painted with decorative marble. The Passion, the apostles on the southern wall, and the decoration around the windows are fragmented. The second, Baroque layer encompassed four scenes from the life of St Nicholas and a decorative layer below them. Only one scene is preserved in total, the others are in fragments. From the younger, Baroque layer, remains the scene of *Madonna and Child* and the decoration on the reveals of the newer window in the southern wall. Due to later overcoating, all the layers were indented.

Because in the upper part of the northern wall the original high-quality wall painting was poorly preserved, we opted for a combined presentation of all three layers, depending on how preserved individual parts were. All three

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[11] GIANNINI, ROANI 2000, p. 167.
[12] GIANNINI, ROANI 2000, p. 198, CASAZZA 1981 (the entire book focuses on *selezione cromatica* and its advantages).
[13] GIANNINI, ROANI 2000, p. 153.

Fig. 1a: The wall painting and the outline of the angel in the presbytery of the St Nicholas's Church in Kred are reconstructed in short lines to present the original extent of the Gothic presbytery walls and their optical conclusion at the top. The fragment of the head of the Baroque angel is retouched and included in the Gothic layer. Because of the intertwinement of the three layers, this solution was deemed best out of all the possible (detachment, covering or division of layers by levels or in another optical manner), since the face placed inside the Gothic painting is the least obtrusive.

Fig. 1b: The trial treatment of St Bartholomew shows the retouch of an eye with dots without a clear representation. The face appears whole from the distance, the retouch is lighter and does not compete with the original but differs from it.

wall paintings have a joint size corresponding with the walls of the former Gothic presbytery. The key component of each is its physical extent. If we wished to establish a potential whole, we needed to present its original size or the wall painting would have remained an unfinished sum of fragments. The original size of the wall painting had to be established and then incorporated into the more recent Baroque architecture. We removed the inessential architectural elements of lesser quality (the arch at the altar, the two half pillars) to visually enhance the wall paintings.

The original size of the wall paintings is indicated by a reconstruction of Gothic ribs in a raised and protruding plaster with the repeated colours of the Gothic ribs. We decided to retouch with short lines and to apply paint by sponges onto bigger reconstructed monochromatic surfaces. The angel above the right Gothic window is only fragmentarily preserved. Because of its role and spotlight – he concludes the wall at the top – we decided to reconstruct him in contours. Above the angel's head, a fragment of an angel's face from a later Baroque layer was preserved. We decided not to remove it. Aesthetically, the best solution was to include him into the Gothic painting without any indicated contours or division between layers. These would have further highlighted the Baroque painting and disturbed the shapes and lines of the Gothic painting. The solution was acceptable also since the three layers intertwined.

On the southern wall, we attempted to solve the loss of the Gothic painting by retouching a fragment of the Bartholomew the Apostle. The retouch was carried out in short lines, while the missing eye (a small and an especially delicate detail) was reconstructed with dots in a lighter tone. With it, the retouch does not imitate the wall painting. Because of the lighter tone, it is easily discernible from the original. From the distance, it appears as if it were a slightly more damaged original. Because the loss is unobtrusive, one looks past it and perceives the face as a whole.

Fig. 1c: The *Madonna and Child* on the northern presbytery wall of St Nicholas's Church in Kred before and after the presentation. The retouch extends into the loss and so optically lessens it. The preserved wall painting is in the foreground. The decorative frame of the scene is reconstructed.

The Baroque scene from the life of St Nicholas on the northern presbytery wall was greatly dented, with the extensive losses on the left side and at the bottom of the wall painting. There, individual preserved fragments still offered enough information to enable us to retouch the entire scene. The entire ornament on the left side is reconstructed. The top left loss is toned in the colour of the background (the architecture) by the use of short lines. The preserved fragments enabled the inpainting of the lower section of St Nicholas and the figure with a staff standing in front of him. The child's missing legs are indicated in colour tone but not drawn. Similarly, the legs of the figure standing on the left in the scene almost blend with the background after the retouch.

In the *Madonna and Child,* nearly the entire decorative frame is reconstructed. The extensive losses were coloured off-white, matching the background of the scene by applying the paint with sponges. The edges of the losses were softly smoothed out and the wall painting elongated into the area of the loss by colour. Thus, we lessened the aggressiveness of the empty space and moved the wall painting into the foreground.

The intervention began in 2004 is not finished. We still need to uncover the Gothic painting in the lower section of the northern wall and at the end of the presbytery, carry out the conservation treatment, and prepare the final presentation. The work so far has been financed by the post-earthquake static repair of the church. The work was finished in 2012, so the intervention is at a standstill. In our last interventions, wishing to leave the church as orderly as possible and realising that the continuation of the treatment was uncertain, we hurried the presentation on the sections of wall paintings that are of lesser quality but are crucial for the presentation and the unity of the work of art. To return the form and unity of the wall painting, we dared to be bold in retouching and reconstruction. We left the high-quality Gothic painting, the conservation of which is more demanding, for future interventions.
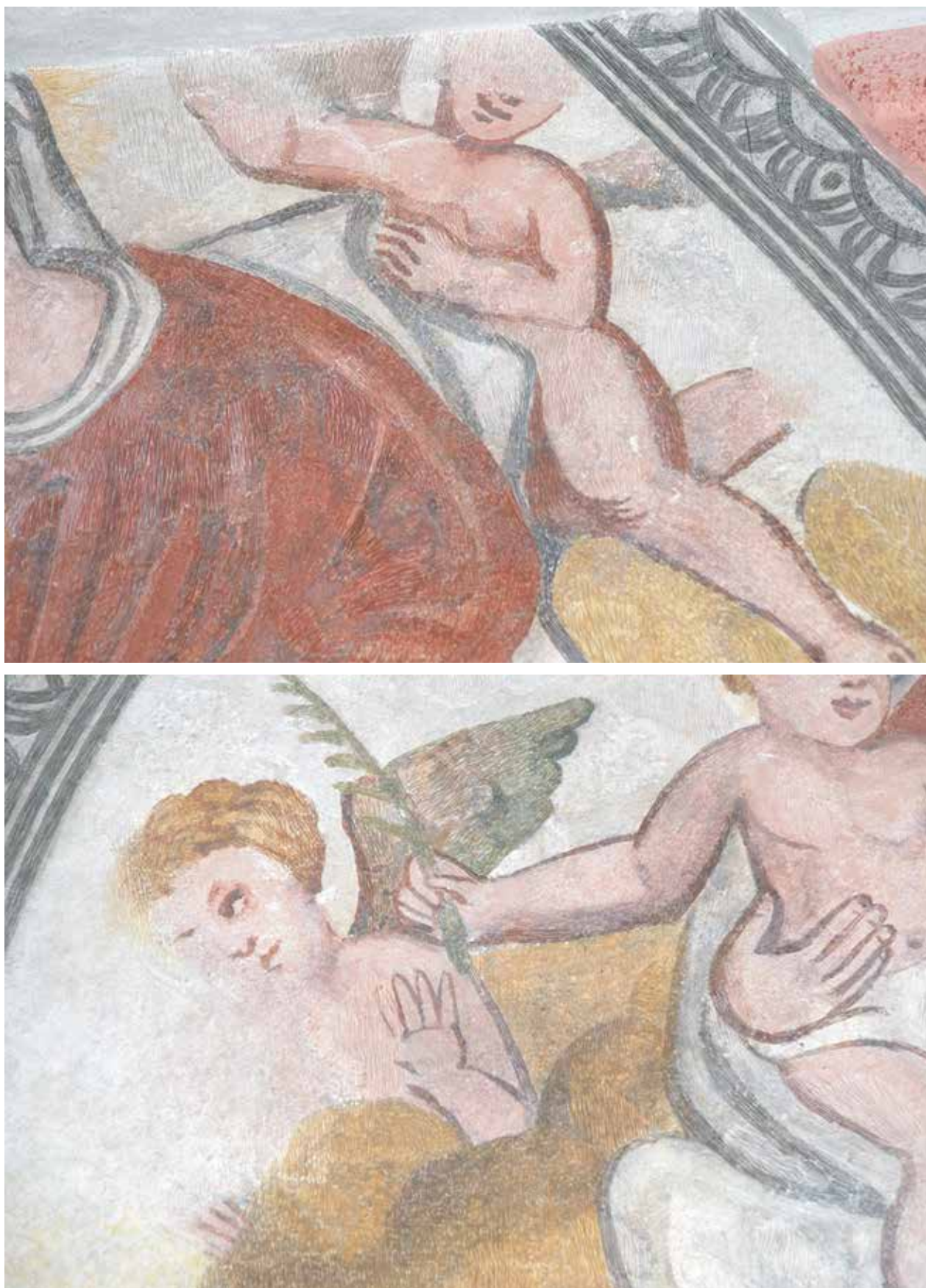
Fig. 1d: The detail of the left- and right-side angel. The expansion of the retouch in the area of loss has made the figures whole.

The Church of St Brice, Volarje

At one point in history, a wall painting by Bartholomew of Lack (Jernej from Loka) was discovered and presented in the presbytery and on the chancel arch of the Church of St Brice. The original Gothic windows of the presbytery were uncovered and the tracery was reconstructed. A wooden Baroque altarpiece was removed and replaced by the reconstructed Gothic altar. Smaller damage on the wall painting was retouched with watercolour glazes, but the greater ones remained white and raw. They were too bright, domineering, and were especially disturbing on the chancel arch, where nearly all the architectural decoration was missing, as well as some divisions between the scenes.

In places where the arch was bare and without its painted construction, it did not perform its visual architectural function as the entrance to the presbytery. Considering the uniform Gothic interior, the general preservation of the wall painting, and sufficient information, during the 2012 intervention a decision was made to reconstruct the complete decorative painting of the chancel arch. We chose hatching because it is discernible, adjusts in colour to the original, and is quick. The only exception was the almost entirely destroyed section on the left side of the arch that once depicted a saint-knight, which was treated in a neutral tone to match the background by using sponges soaked in paint. In the *Annunciation* at the top of the arch, the edging of the buildings that divides the scene into three parts and the ambo in front of Mary have been reconstructed.

The reconstruction encompasses the outline of the angel using stencilled patterns, the upper section of the Holy Father's face, and the left side of Mary's head and body. Mary's left side was damaged by a 10-centimetre crack that destroyed a part of her head and a great deal of her aureole, which was later visually incorporated with hatching in a lighter tone. We also treated the voids in the scene of St Florian. However, a slightly different approach was undertaken in the scenes with St George and with the devil tempting the sleeping monk. For the bigger void in the lower section, *astrazione cromatica* with hatching[14] was used, in which the pure colour areas were reconstructed without the contours and details as we had no preserved information on them.

From afar, the treated areas blend in with the original and appear as if they were its more damaged parts but the scene still functions as a whole. The look glides past the damage and stops at the preserved parts of the painting. For different issues, different solutions were found.

The greatest quality of the wall painting and the Volarje Church interior was their unity and decorativeness. Without the extensive retouch and reconstruction (of especially the architectural elements of the wall painting), the aforementioned unity would be unnoticeable and so this greatest quality of the wall painting would remain obstructed.

The wall painting in the Vipolže Villa

The wall painting in the Vipolže Villa suffered considerable damage. High temperatures during fires changed the colours of the pigments, which resulted in unusual colouration. The green pigments became brown or brick red, depending on the temperature to which they had been exposed. The main issues we were faced with when attempting the presentation were:

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[14] *Astrazione cromatica* could also be carried out in dots when working with smaller works of art. However, for wall paintings hatching is typically used.
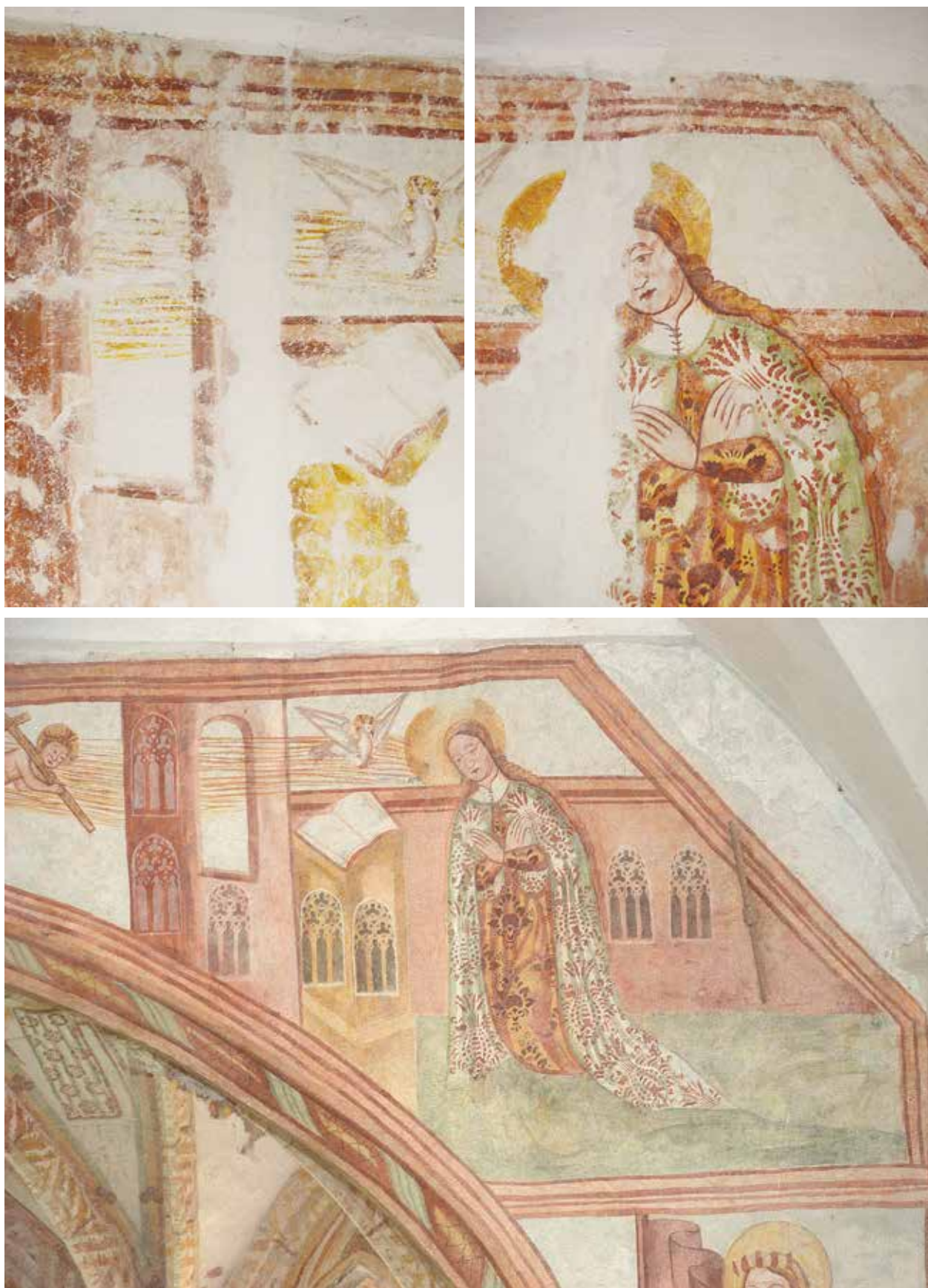
Fig. 2a, 2b, 2c: The *Annunciation* on the chancel arch wall of the Church of St Brice in Volarje underwent the reconstruction of the disturbing vertical losses, divisional edging of the architecture, and the left side of Mary. The details (2a, 2b above) before the retouch and the scene (2c below) after the intervention.

Fig. 3a, 3b, 3c: The unity in the scene with St George was regained by reconstructing smaller and easier kinds of damage (3a top left). On the greater gap below (3b left), *astrazione cromatica* was applied by merely indicating the areas of pure colour (3c right).

- the architectural elements were destroyed or damaged. The missing ceiling, portion of the floor, entry bordering wall, the upper section of the longitudinal wall, and window sills had to be reconstructed or indicated;
- major losses with the originally painted plasters missing;
- an extremely damaged surface of the paint layer (sections of the wall painting were severely dusted and washed out);
- numerous minor surface injuries, including scratches, surface abrasions of the paint layer, several signatures from various periods.

The goal of the presentation was to ensure better readability of the wall painting, to lessen the visual disturbance of the damage, and to restore the sense of the painted space to that of a unique room.

The presentation work began by reconstructing the missing architectural elements: the upper section of the wall on the left, the ceiling, and the windowsill. Unfortunately, the roof construction disabled us from reconstructing the once uniformly flat ceiling. We enhanced the remains of the missing architectural elements that were part of the original location in the wall painting. In the protruding roughcast that suggests damage or breakage, we indicated the connection between the now missing entry wall with the two remaining walls. Furthermore, by adding some bricks, we highlighted the remains of the missing arch above the stairs that formed the floor of the room. The longitudinal wall was built in its original height and the windowsill reconstructed. Since the difference in the plaster level would hinder the perception of unity, we filled the losses with lime mortar to match the level of the plaster of the wall painting.

The retouching began by treating smaller damage and surface abrasions of the paint layer with glazes in a lighter tone. For bigger kinds of damage, we used pointillism since the direction of lines in hatching on a wall painting with such a damaged and fragile paint layer could be disturbing. We focused particularly on the removal of the losses, vandalism, and historically uninteresting signatures, paying special attention that the retouch would not overshadow the original wall painting. The deeply engraved vandalisms and signatures of more recent times were puttied and retouched. The signatures that were mostly shallowly engraved on plaster remained either visible or were retouched, depending on their date, location, and the quality of execution.

In the third scene that was almost entirely washed out, we treated the man-inflicted vandalisms and damage. What remained was the damage caused by the washing of the paint layer. Since the wall painting was differently preserved, it would have been impossible to find a unified neutral tone when treating greater losses. In some areas, it was preserved in its almost original intensity, while in others almost completely washed out. With their colour monotony, these extensive and numerous injuries could easily prevail over the wall painting with its poorly preserved paint layer. Therefore, a decision was reached that all the infills would be treated with a colour using *astrazione cromatica*, which was achieved by applying the paint with sponges. The process used several colours that were present in the wall painting itself and so a vibrating coloured surface was created in a slightly lighter tone that matches the preserved wall painting. The edges of the losses were additionally dotted using brushes on the passages between both surfaces. This softened their aggressiveness and they became less disturbing. The soft passage created between the wall painting and the neutral background pushed the losses in the painting to the back.

Fig. 4a, 4b: The painted space in the Vipolže Villa before and after the intervention. The losses in the plaster were puttied in level with the painting and toned with light-toned paints applied with sponges resembling the surrounding painting to make them less noticeable and disturbing.

Fig. 5a, 5b: The main part of the second scene before and after the retouch. Smaller damage was retouched with glazed layers of paint and bigger losses integrated with dots, always in a lighter tone. At the top, the scene softly traverses into the losses treated with *astrazione cromatica*.

The Lanthieri Manor, Vipava

The wall painting is located in a small room in the rear, yard-facing part of the manor, which was probably used as an anteroom. Two layers of the wall painting are preserved. The older layer that depicts the veduta of the town is located in the southeastern corner and shows a painted drawing, simple in its execution, in three colours, with buildings and trees depicted schematically. The fortress on the hill above the town and the town wall convey slightly more character. The veduta is suspected to be that of Brescia in Lombardy, the home of the Lanthieri.[15] Half on the eastern wall was perforated by doors in the same period the other layer of the painting dates from. This second layer is decorative and consists of a base with profiles and marble inserts on which round columns covered in plaited plants stand. The columns supported the now destroyed stucco frame, which finalised the walls below the unpreserved ceiling. Between the columns, red bows were painted.

The wall painting was preserved in fragments, meaning that the presentation of merely these would not be sensible, since it would leave the remains of the painted architectural elements to hang in the air with no architectural order or sense of unity. To retouch the fragments and reconstruct the missing sections, two different approaches and techniques were used. The fragments were retouched with glazes and dots, whereas the missing sections of the decorative painting were reconstructed in limewash. First, we painted the outline in pure colour and used stencils for the column bases and capitals, and for the floral plaits. The reconstructed sections were tonally adjusted to the original by a raster of dots in a darker and lighter tone applied by sea sponges. The outlines of the plants, flowers, capitals, and the column bases were further shaped by brush strokes.

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[15] A similar wall painting can be found in Dobrovo Castle in Goriška Brda. According to Herko Saksida of the Nova Gorica Museum, it depicts the veduta of Genova. There is high certainty that both wall paintings were created by the same painter.

Fig. 6: The lower left section of the painted column from the Lanthieri Manor in Vipava is the original retouched with dots. The upper right section is a reconstruction in limewash. The plaited plants and flowers were reconstructed with matrices and later shaded by observing the original.

There were two reasons why we used various solutions for the retouch of the original sections and the reconstruction of the missing ones. One reason was that a technique might already indicate the difference between the wall painting and the reconstruction. The retouch is reversible and the removal of reconstruction is unnecessary. The other reason was time. The use of matrixes and sponges for shading is a much less time-consuming solution that enables us to approximate the original wall painting, and which still ensures the distinction between the original and the reconstruction.

Conclusion

Besides displaying authenticity in detail, each work of art has to have presence and unity. Damage causes trauma to the work of art, disturbs it, affects its message, its charm, or as Baldini put is, its *eros*. A successful aesthetic presentation, that according to Baldini restores the *eros* of the damaged work of art, also restores its presence and its place in the world. It regains its function and value. The conservators are obliged to treat and lessen this damage as much as they can but without hindering the authenticity of the work of art. We must be aware that works of art are not intended only for the experts but also for the public. The conservators need to take care of their existence and suitable presentation. A work of art uncovered from under the plasters and whitewashes has to regain its potential unity, regardless of it being preserved as one or several fragments or as a complete unit. It needs to get a suitable location inside the building that has changed and gained additions. The suitability of the location is necessary also since the location and the buildings that contain the work of art are in themselves works of art. Archaeological, documentary presentations in which layers of wall paintings are heaped without order and function are unacceptable. Such presentations are like 'corpses' that mar the building, space, unity, rhythm, conveyance, hierarchy, and, in case of churches, its sacredness.

Similarly, the clients and users of churches legitimately demand unified images. Naturally, this does not mean that each missing detail, for example, a face, has to be inpainted. It means that the hierarchically exposed detail or an image in space has to function. After all, the look glides and accepts the absence of the missing, less important details, if only they are suitably presented.

When dealing with works of art the aesthetic criterion is above the historical, documentary one. Wall paintings are specific for being connected to the building they belong to and are often visually its vital part so they must also function like that. As they need their space, so the space needs them. We must also bear in mind the reality of the trade: our clients, end-users, and audience. If the work of art or rather our interventions are not accepted, they are doomed. The article has attempted to show the versatility of issues and solutions based on several practical examples. There is no single solution for everything. When searching for an optimal solution for presentation, principles and criteria are of great aid but one also has to be resourceful and sensitive, but mostly bear in mind the work of art.

AESTHETIC PRESENTATION OF WALL STENCILS

Klavdij Zalar

Keywords

wall stencils, decorative wall paintings, *secco* paintings, integral renovation

Abstract

The article looks at the conservation-restoration of wall stencils, a subject neglected in research and media. Wall stencils require the same interventions for conservation-restoration as figural paintings, meaning they should be equally estimated. However, in everyday conservation-restoration practice, conservator-restorers need to be competitive with craftsmen. Since this is frequently impossible, we are forced to slightly lower the criteria of execution. Nevertheless, we maintain the standard that decorative wall stencils are evaluated and conserved-restored in the same manner as wall paintings.

In recent years, conservator-restorers have been increasingly conducting the work once reserved mostly for constructors and craftsmen. The integral care of the monument steadily enforces the value of the original substances, be it building elements, plasters, whitewashes, or fixtures. Therefore, we started to evaluate decorative wall stencils[1] as wall paintings, trying to match also the execution of interventions with that of figural wall painting. In the past, the conservator-restorers mostly focused on works of art (wall paintings), which were treated regardless of the building they are located in, or of the plasters in their vicinity. Today, the goal is to present the building with its works of art as a unity, which is why conservator-restorers aim to acquire an entire renovation project. When restoring badly damaged parts of the original elements, we try to preserve the original, so that we adjust the reconstruction of the missing parts (be it plasters or wooden elements) to the original representation and structures. What does then distinguish the work of a professionally trained and experienced conservator-restorer? It is mostly the attitude towards the original elements and the artistic evaluation, crucial for reconstructing of original structures and surfaces.

The decorative wall stencils[2] have been evaluated as wall paintings only recently, despite being one of the main artistic elements of certain buildings.[3] In the past, the conservators limited themselves to the pattern and specification of colours of these stencils, while the house painters then created a new reconstruction, but not always in *lime secco*.[4] In

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1   The article is based on the lecture given at the 2017 symposium *The Aesthetic Presentation of Wall Paintings – Problems and Solutions* and the experience acquired through practice. The examples presented in the article are chosen from the conservation-restoration projects of wall stencils executed in recent years: the Tavčar Manor, Visoko near Poljane (2013, 2015–2016); the Šubic House, Poljane above Škofja Loka (2014), and Hotel Tivoli (i.e. Švicerija), Ljubljana, (2016–2017). The reports on the interventions are in preparation.

2   The Slovenian terminology for this type of paintings is not unified or agreed on, so various terms are used: *dekorativne poslikave, dekorativne stenske poslikave, poslikave, dekorativni slikoplesk, šablonske poslikave, dekorativna pleskarska poslikava* etc. None of the stated terms gathered from reports or documents by different authors can be found in the Slovenian (professional) dictionaries (see: Slovarji Inštituta za slovenski jezik Frana Ramovša ZRC SAZU: <http://www.fran.si> [accessed 23 May 2018]. I have been predominantly using the term 'dekorativne šablonske poslikave' (wall stencils) as I find it most defining and it pertains exclusively to the paintings created using a stencil.

3   Mostly in buildings from the turn of the 19th century when the paintings were simultaneous with the construction of the building and part of its original design. A typical example of this is Hotel Tivoli in Ljubljana (PRISTOV 2011; RAVNIKAR, RENČELJ-ŠKEDENJ 2013).

4   In 2010, I have myself planned the reconstruction of wall stencils in lime or silicate technique in the conservation plan for the Stara šola in Prem, although the paintings were, as the probing suggested, fairly preserved (ZALAR 2010). But in 2013, I already put greater value on the wall stencils in the conservation plan for the agricultural building of the Lanthieri Mansion in Vipava and thus planned their conservation-restoration (ZALAR 2013).

the best-case scenario, they preserved a square metre of the original painting. Stencilled decorations that were painted or finished by hand fared slightly better in this respect.

Fortunately, the value of wall stencils has been growing in the last decades, hence the attempts to restore them in the same manner as figural wall paintings.[5] They are not entirely equal, but they, too, deserve greater recognition and the utmost preservation of their original.

Wall stencils require the same interventions for conservation-restoration as figural paintings,[6] meaning they should be equally estimated. Regardless, the general devaluation of stencils and the demand for conservator-restorers to be competitive with craftsmen has lowered the execution criteria. Needless to say, the work of conservator-restorers depends on financial frameworks.

The first step in conservation-restoration of wall stencils is the research[7] (probing) that provides the information on the existence, appearance, and the state of the stencils. Probing should be divided into two parts. The first, basic probing reveals the existence of certain paintings and their main pattern. Such information can be obtained from a small uncovered area. This type of probing would also determine the elements that need to be better inspected, consequently uncovering bigger surfaces. In their price estimates, conservator-restorers anticipate the uncovering of smaller areas because the investor always prefers lower prices. If more extensive and detailed research was needed, they would conduct an additional probing in which the demands would predict greater areas and meticulousness of uncovering to avoid unnecessary damage due to haste.[8]

Such additional research would be needed already at the stage of the final preparation of the project and finances. As a result, we would know the approximate size and the preservation state of the painting, as well as the duration of uncovering and the size of the needed reconstruction.

Too often, conservator-restorers have to prepare a complete intervention with the final aesthetic presentation based on the results of a smaller probe, which only attested to the existence of the painting. How do we approach the drafting of the estimate? Do we estimate the time-consuming uncovering and the presentation of the damaged original in its entirety or do we optimistically assume that only a couple of square metres are preserved, while the rest can be quickly puttied and reconstructed? Note, that a contractor is selected on the criterion of the lowest tender. Hence, we do not stand a chance in the first scenario, while in the second, we are faced with two options: the project will be either unprofitable or poorly executed. Rarely, the state of the painting will be such that the project will be carried out normally. Therefore, the extent and the interventions must be precisely defined and financially estimated when preparing the documentation, conservation plans, and registers. Here, the responsible conservators play the greatest role by setting the main demands and estimating.

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[5] In the past years, there were several projects of conservation-restoration of wall stencils: the National Gallery (LESAR KIKELJ, BATIČ 2016), the Poljanska 97 Villa (PRISTOV 2014), and the Hribar Villa (KLANČAR 2017) in Ljubljana, the Oton Župančič House in Vinica and Proštija in Novo Mesto (FIR, KAJZAR-TRAJKOVSKI 2016), etc.

[6] The treatments and guidelines for conservation-restoration of wall paintings are described in detail in specialised literature, such as: MORA P., MORA L., PHILIPPOT 1999; BOTTICELLI 1992; BOGOVČIČ 2000 etc.

[7] Probing as a form of research is a regular feature before the start of works or at the stage of preparing the projects and conservation plans. Once it mostly served as a means of securing the information on the existence of the paintings and for documenting, while the decorative wall stencils were only exceptionally conserved and restored. Probing itself was mostly meant for discovery of possible 'valuable' paintings and frescos. Probing reports (for example, ZALAR 2007; 2009; 2012; 2016) are the greatest database on stencilled wall painting.

[8] Similarly, Tjaša Pristov mentions basic or preliminary research, and later detailed research using probing (PRISTOV 2014).

Based on the research results and probing, we decide on the presentation and the phase that is to be presented (if there are several). Together with the responsible conservators, we observe several factors: the chronology and the origin of individual paintings in relation to the building and other elements, and the preservation and completeness of the information regarding the appearance of the painting that ensures credible reconstruction.

But we also consider how demanding and time-consuming the uncovering of a certain phase of a work of art can be, or in other words, the time and, consequently, the financial aspect.[9] Two additional factors are also the intended use and importance of the building. Although the decision lies with the responsible conservator, a dialogue with a conservator-restorer, and if needed, other experts, is welcome if not obligatory.

Deciding which phase to present influences the way a painting will be uncovered. If one of the younger phases is chosen for presentation, the older phases underneath it are preserved, not removed, even in places where the presented painting is lost. If the oldest phase is chosen, the younger ones are documented and all the layers up to the level of the chosen phase are removed. In cases where, for example, time delays dictate mere reconstruction instead of the uncovering of the original, it is best not to remove the whitewashes and to thoroughly clean and prepare the surface for paint before reconstruction.[10]

When removing the secondary layers or when uncovering the chosen layer, special care has to be taken to cause the least damage. But since this segment of the intervention is one of the more time-consuming, we have to find a compromise between swiftness and the damage inflicted. Uncovering and cleaning are the most important and most sensitive phases in the process of conservation-restoration because they can be the most damaging. Since the number and the type of damage can influence the final presentation, we must make time to find the optimal way of uncovering. There exists no rule of conduct. Sometimes it is the scalpel or water that helps, but it mostly depends on the durability of the painting uncovered and the grip of the younger layers. Often experience helps. But sometimes nothing does.

Experience is also extremely important if we encounter problems when recognising and determining the accurate hues and the appearance of paintings. The layers are often hard to separate; they overlap or are simultaneously visible. We need to be cautious and consistent during the entire uncovering because fragments can be essential in correctly determining the appearance and hues (Figs. 1, 2). Frequently, we have problems determining the synchronism of the paintings on the walls and the ceiling, since the later electric installation under the ceiling dissects their flow. In addition, the ceiling usually contains fewer layers than the walls.

When cleaning the wall stencils, we try not to exaggerate but preserve the residue patina since more complex ways of cleaning are unattainable.[11] With recent projects, these were not even necessary. The degree of surface cleaning greatly interferes with the presentation itself. The desire is to preserve the patina and the 'ravages of time' to the utmost

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[9] In the Šubic House in Poljane above Škofja Loka, the stencilled decoration in the 'computer room' was well preserved but the uncovering was difficult and time-consuming. We would need to dedicate 40 to 50 work hours for a single square meter, all the while greatly damaging it. Therefore, a decision was made together with the responsible conservator Damjana Pediček Terseglav (IPCHS Regional Office Ljubljana), Mateja Kavčič (IPCHS RC) and the investor (the Gorenja vas – Poljane municipality) to create a reconstruction of the painting, with the original presented only on the wall with windows, where the surface of the paintings is less extensive and where some of them were already uncovered. Whereas, in the house, where the painting was easier and faster to uncover, it was presented in its original on two walls on which it was preserved (2014; the report is being prepared).

[10] Besides the 'computer room' in the Šubic House, we similarly approached the walls on the staircase, hall, and the small room.

[11] For example, with poultices of ammonium carbonate, anion resins etc.

Fig. 1: After probing and initial uncovering of the paintings in the Tavčar Manor in Visoko near Poljane, we assumed that the green pattern was painted on a dark red background, which is an interesting but rather strange hue combination.

Fig. 2: Only a couple of details, discovered while meticulously uncovering the secondary layers, correctly revealed a green pattern on a lighter grey-green background.

extent. The painting located near a fireplace cannot be white and an object used for years or centuries cannot be new. When you enter an old building or a room, you have to feel its history.

Sometimes it seems as if restoration focused all its attention to retouching, making other interventions less important. Besides the mentioned uncovering and cleaning, there are also the application and finishing of plasters, and the filling of damage. Plasters, for example, can be part of the presentation in sections where the painting is not preserved and are also the surface onto which retouching and reconstruction are made. If the surface texture of the puttied surfaces does not match the original, the quality of the retouch will suffer.

The approach to puttying wall stencils depends on how well the original surfaces are preserved. If they are well preserved, only the local damage is puttied. If such an area is small, then the texture of puttying is not so important. On surfaces where the plaster and lower whitewashes are well preserved and only the painting presented is damaged or missing, we overpaint the lower levels with fewer whitewashes or create passages that are not disturbing. Sometimes even that is unnecessary since the original painting is not painted on an even surface.

Where the original plaster is locally damaged or lost, new lime plasters are made with surface treatments that blend in with the original surfaces. Wall stencils are mostly painted onto rubbed fine plasters with one or a few

Fig. 3: The state of the painted room in the Tavčar Manor after the removal of the secondary layers and the weathered and inappropriate plasters.

Fig. 4: The state of the same room after the reconstruction of lime plasters and the finished puttying of the original surfaces. Preparatory limewash has already been made.

layers of whitewashes that smooth the structure of the plaster. Such damage cannot be puttied in the same way as if it were on a fresco painted onto a smoothly polished plaster. The search for the right structure requires experience and is sometimes demanding but necessary for quality presentation.

On larger surfaces, where the original plaster is poorly preserved or was previously replaced, the inappropriate or badly preserved sections are hammered off and new lime plasters are made based on the existing ones. To achieve the similarity of the final surface with the preserved original, we must heed the structure of the basic 'waving' of the plaster and the finishing treatment (Figs. 3, 4).

When faced with poorly executed infills and larger surfaces, the integration of damage into the final presentation will hardly be successful. The most problematic is the puttying of the damage along the lines of various installations. The approach also differs in the final phase of the presentation including retouch and reconstruction.[12] It is based on the state of preservation of the original painting and the wishes and demands of those included in the decision. On relatively preserved surfaces, we can, similarly as on frescoes, use the technique of local retouching with hatching so we can simultaneously work on the pattern and the background. On surfaces where the original is more damaged, the intervention has to follow the steps of its creation. First, the entire surface has to be suitably filled in plaster and its structure levelled. Secondly, the background, which has one hue, has to be tonally treated. Note that the original painting does not consist of merely one hue, its background hue changes across the surface because of temporal influences (vicinity of fireplaces, humidity, sun exposure etc.). But it is always a colour sum of the background whitewash, the hues of lower whitewashes visible on smaller damaged areas, patina, remains of dirt, and other, younger, whitewashes. The hue is thus not uniform, and it is, therefore, hard to reach a background that would merge with the original, using one type of whitewash. For better results, we use grinding sponges and apply the diluted limewash with sea sponges. Smaller preserved areas of the original painting are not covered up (Fig. 5).

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[12] Specialised literature (for example, MORA P., MORA L., PHILIPPOT 1999; BOTTICELLI 1992; BOGOVČIČ 2000) precisely determines the manners *(tratteggio, a rigatino, a puntino)* and the guidelines (discernibility) of the wall painting retouch. On the other hand, the retouch and reconstruction of wall stencils offers various possibilities and the manner of execution mostly depends on the resourcefulness of the contractor.

Fig. 5: On the less preserved areas of the paintings, the background is firstly tonally treated as can be seen in the example from the Švicarija, located at Pod turnom 4 in Ljubljana (2016–2017). Such a surface is then ready for the reconstruction of the missing areas of the pattern.

To reconstruct the pattern, we make stencils from transparent foil. The application of the pattern depends on the state and preservation of the original, which we always try to capture. To do so, we adjust the density of the limewash, the degree of surface fill, as well as the method of application. We can use either a brush or a sea sponge. Once the reconstruction stood out among the preserved original areas and seemed new, whereas today, it is purposely less refined so that it visually resembles the slightly damaged original. Limewashes are used for both retouching and reconstruction.

In the end, the rooms should look more or less homogenous. The presentation of the painting does not end with the wall. Wall stencils, in particular, are connected with the whole interior: from flooring, furniture, fixtures

Fig. 6: Room that was once a kitchen in the Tavčar Manor, after the finished intervention.

Fig. 7: The integrally presented room with the Ivan and Franja Tavčar collection.

to lightning. We should aim to preserve all these elements with their original form and materials.[13] The lightning should also be as it once was. There is no need for the wall painting to stand under a bright spotlight if it was properly conserved-restored. If in the middle of the ceiling of the painted room, there is a rosette, where do we put the lamp? Figures 6 and 7 show two rooms from the Tavčar Manor in Visoko after the conservation-restoration works.[14]

The hereby article brings additional insight into the professional debate on wall painting presentation. It offers the perspective of a contractor, a self-employed conservator-restorer, and brings into the debate the wall stencils – a widely overlooked form of wall paintings. It further reminds the reader of the insufficient knowledge, research, and evaluation of this disappearing heritage. Only by knowing and evaluating, can we determine the guidelines and the most efficient approaches of intervention, which urgently require professionally qualified contractors. The reality, unfortunately, demands compromises. Because wall stencils are sometimes poorly valued, the project surveys only predict the detachment of one square meter of the painting and its presentation on a new location. Such a manner of presentation is not suitable for wall stencils because their repeated pattern is effective if presented in a larger area. In projects with a smaller budget, at least one wall in a room should be presented. The presentation of a greater area is a better choice even if it means that the execution will be less precise or perhaps the presentation concluded without

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[13] On the second floor of the Šubic House, we have preserved and conserved-restored also the wooden floor, interior doors, and furniture, along with all the old protective coatings. After the conservation-restoration interventions, such rooms work as a unity. Unfortunately, the windows were already renovated and painted anew. The rooms now host a museum collection: see website: the Šubic House: <http://www.subicevahisa.si/stalna-muzejska-zbirka/> [accessed 23 May 2018].

[14] The restored rooms of the Tavčar Manor in Visoko near Poljane exhibit the *Visoška domačija pripoveduje* (ČADEŽ et al. 2016).

a final retouch. Above all, the original surfaces of the wall stencils should in no way be destroyed, knocked off, or removed. If they cannot be presented, they should remain covered. Their surface should be prepared for painting, filled in plaster, and covered with a new limewash or perhaps reconstruction.

After all, the experts and owners are (or should be) the guardians of our heritage. In addition, the contractors (of the institutes for heritage protection and freelancers) together with all the other experts cooperate in the protection and restoration of cultural heritage. The scope of expertise needed for quality restoration is too broad for one person. Therefore, cooperation and discussion of equal partners are needed because they are the only path to optimal solutions.

VIEWS ON AESTHETIC PRESENTATION OF WALL PAINTINGS. FRAGMENTS FROM PERSONAL PRACTICE

Ivan Bogovčič

Abstract

The aesthetic presentation of cultural heritage monuments, especially works of art, often questions the accurateness and suitability of the solutions. In practice, this issue affects not only the conservators and restorers but also everyone else professionally involved in the quest for presentational solutions. This article examines a few different examples of aesthetic presentation that conservators and restorers come across during work. In the introduction, we discuss the influential parameters on wall paintings, ranging from dirt and contamination of the paint layer to the larger mechanical losses. In continuation, we focus on the aesthetic solutions to restore greater losses with appropriate decorative plasters and on the retouching and partial reconstruction of patterns on dividing passages and borders. In addition, we focus on the reintegration of decorative parts of the wall painting on the chancel arch, the reintegration of the almost entirely damaged blue background of individual scenes, and on the specific issue of the partly damaged paint layer (facial details). The article also searches for suitable solutions to these individual problems, instead of simply introducing the standard ones.

Introduction

In debates and writings on cultural heritage interventions, one encounters two terms that (should) define the genuineness of a work of art: autochthonism and authenticity. According to expert literature, the meaning of autochthonism is linked with people, animals, and plants. Therefore, it is insufficient in this paper, so the much more suitable term authenticity should take its place. Respectively, it is then the authenticity of the original that must be preserved after extensive interventions.

A question could certainly be raised regarding what this term signifies inside cultural heritage and the narrower, conservation-restoration field. To establish that, a look into history is needed to trace all the views on this matter. As early as 8th August 1851, the newspaper *Novice gospodarske, obertnijske in národske* in its article entitled *Našim podobarjem in malarjem, pa tudi drugim v prevdarek* writes the following thought: 'It is not beautiful because paint and gold abound and because common folk, who have not yet seen anything beautiful, praise it as such.'[1] We include this citation mostly because of the eternal conflict experts have with their clients or the owners of works of art, who, despite relatively well-preserved old gilding, demand greater amounts of new gold – something which is acceptable only in cases of almost entirely damaged gilded surfaces.

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[1] Našim podobarjem in malarjem, pa tudi drugim v prevdarek, *Novice gospodarske, obertnijske in národske*, Ljubljana, Saturday 8. 8. 1857, Tečaj XV., List 63. <https://www.dlib.si/details/URN:NBN:SI:DOC-BJCF730Q> [accessed 9 March 2018].

On the other hand, people (and even experts) reject the original colourfulness of the works after the removal of dirt and overpaintings because they got used to the grey-brown overpaintings of the 19th and 20th century. This is particularly the case with wooden statues (altarpieces) but also with wall paintings since a client often desires much more than we are willing to offer along the lines of our ethical and expert standards.

Authenticity is difficult to pin down, especially with works of art. Is a work of art authentic only at its creation and if not, which of the following alterations can we still consider authentic? To illustrate, let us consider the protective layers (top coats) with solutions of natural or synthetic resins, which oxidise and change colour and hue. That means that through time in such cases unwanted visual changes of the painted surface appear. For the artists, the unwanted changes occur already in pigments since some are sensitive to bright light, high temperatures, and to some compounds from the environment. However, there are also cases of extremity, such as, when expert purism hardly allows the removal of cobwebs, claiming that even these are historical testaments of the work of art or, in other words, part of its authenticity.

The question arises whether the work of art is authentic merely at its creation or can it be considered authentic with all its later changes as well. Meaning that (if we adopt the stance of the artist) the work of art is authentic only when created, but accepted as authentic also with its changes that were not desired but cannot be removed without damage. Hence, the removable darkened protective overcoats, dust sediments, and other dirt are definitely not part of the authenticity. The crucial authenticity parameters, in fact, are the preserved original size, technique, composition, and other art elements that demonstrate the artistic narration. The aesthetic additions carried out during the conservation-restoration intervention have to non-intrusively incorporate into the original and leave the elements of art relatively intact.

Visual changes caused by the darkened protective overcoats are noticeable particularly in blue pigments, as the authentic blue drapery veiled in a yellow-brown oxidised protective overcoat (varnish) seems green. Consequently, this drastically changes our emotional perception, particularly with colour symbolism, which is an important component of the works of art in Christian iconography. In such a case, the issue is resolved by removing the darkened overcoat, which is not the authentic part of the work of art, but merely a means of protection. This is a common phenomenon with paintings on canvas and wood. Wall paintings undergo such visual changes because of the removable dust sediments, other dirt, the unwanted and harmful organisms (Fig. 1), and, in some fewer cases, unsuitable retouches, or even overpaintings.

The more disturbing changes are, however, those in which the external factors change the paint tone of the paint layer. To demonstrate, let us mention the changes present on a larger area and then on details. The first example shows immense changes in the polychromy of the altarpiece. The long-term light exposure dulled the red component of, supposedly, alizarin in the first coat of marmorino pink tone and the painted marble pattern (Fig. 2a). The visible parts of polychromy are completely altered, giving misleading information to the potential researcher of stylistic attributes. The once colourful marbleisation is now merely a faded image of its original state. Similar changes can also be seen on the wall paintings but they have occurred mostly because of harmful substances in the air.

The other example is the changes of the Giulio Quaglio's vault painting in the nave of the Ljubljana Cathedral of St Nicholas (1705–1706). The external factors altered the colour of the lips, nose, cheekbones, and parts of the

Fig. 1: An example of severe dirt and mould on the wall painting by the master of Suha from the mid-15th century in the St John the Baptist parish church in Suha near Škofja Loka. The test dirt removal probe shows the colourfulness of the original.

drapery of certain figures (Fig. 2b), all of which Quaglio did not desire.[2] In both examples, however, an inattentive researcher may believe such changes an authentic contribution of the artist.

Examples of aesthetic presentations of the damaged works of art

Reintegration of the damaged or deficient work of art using retouching or reconstruction signifies a valid and delicate intervention into the integrity of each work of art. In practice, we encounter various cases for which there exist several suitable solutions. Usually, the most suitable variation of the presentation is accepted and decided upon synchronically by all the parties involved.

The article presents some selected cases from personal practice, which may help us further reflect and develop fresh ideas and improved solutions. In our practice, we first encounter the principles of cultural heritage preservation. However, they are general and often too rigid, since they apply to all kinds of heritage and do not consider the specifics of individual branches.

This plurality of approaches is especially noticeable with visual works of art. The particularities of individual visual arts branches constantly demand new approaches and the search for suitable solutions. In wall painting, these are various techniques, styles, technologies, work pertaining to the interior and the exterior of the building, different microclimatic and other influences, diverse interiors, and similar initial parameters. As the pattern from the chapel

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[2] As a member of the consultation committee, I suggested the making of a surface-limited copy that corrected the altered red tones to improve the comprehension of Quaglio's painting.
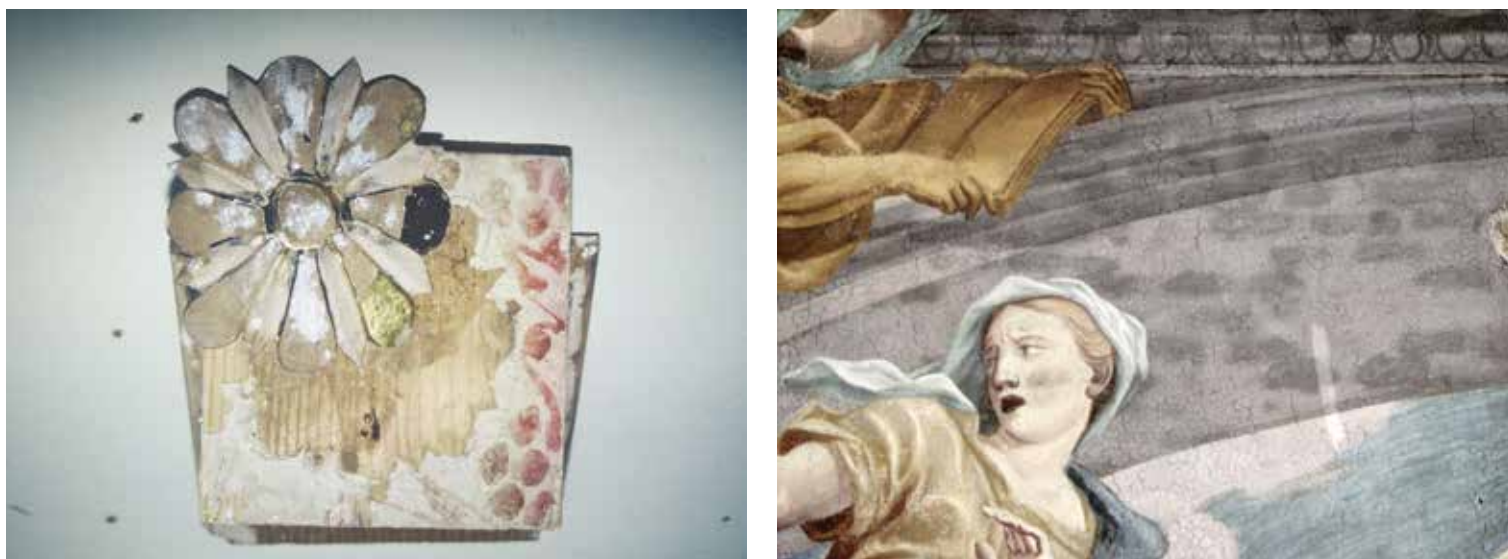
Figs. 2a, 2b: Colour change in the polychromy of the wooden altarpiece (2a, left) on the side altar of St Rocco, St Fabian and St Sebastian (1638) in the chapel of ease of St Peter in Dvor near Polhov Gradec and the pigment change on the detail of Quaglio's vault painting (2b, right) in the Ljubljana Cathedral of St Nicholas.

of ease of St Nicholas's (Fig. 3a) shows, a suitable intervention on a damaged wall painting requires a thorough study of the painting content. The colour study from St Nicholas's does not include the pattern, which, however, strongly resembles the pattern on the painted wooden ceiling, presumably created after the great fire, mentioned by Scarlichi in his visitation in 1631. The changes of the yellow tones on the wall painting by Johannes von Laibach in the presbytery and the chancel arch of the nave (warmer tones) were most probably caused by the high temperature. Presumably, the Gothic painted wooden ceiling burnt down in the fire and then an unskilful master poorly captured the authentic patterns, as was noted by Nataša Golob in her book.[3]

Our fieldwork discloses the extreme sociological importance of the wall paintings in Slovenian churches. These works of art, created for the people, are located in buildings still intended for the initial (ceremonial) purposes. Therefore, the approaches cannot be the same as when presenting works of art in museums or in places where the buildings no longer perform the initial function. This stance is well known and accepted by experts, but is, nevertheless, frequently the source of disagreement in practice. When talking about the sociological moment of the (aesthetic) presentation, let us recall the scenes of St Christopher from many Slovenian church exteriors that spark debates about his deficient image among the distressed locals. He can no longer be the patron whom you would ask to watch over you. In the example from Fig. 4, we could reconstruct the missing figure of baby Jesus and a part of Christopher's head in concordance with the characteristics of other wall paintings by the same painter. While for professional research, we would preserve a well-documented state of the authentic parts of the painting.

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[3] GOLOB 1988, pp. 74, 170.

Examples of aesthetic presentations of wall paintings

Hrastovlje, the chapel of ease of the Holy Trinity, a wall painting by John of Kastav, 1490

In the Church of the Holy Trinity in Hrastovlje, larger missing areas of the painting were filled in decorative plaster. The technical execution was based on two layers of two different plasters. The missing areas were first filled in with the so-called rough 'red' plaster that gets its colour from ground red volcanic lava, which contains aluminosilicates. These give the plaster the hydrophilic properties that make it swell when in contact with capillary moisture (water) and thus form a barrier on the surface, meaning that soluble salts from water no longer accumulate under it.

Rough plaster is also used to prepare a surface, which is, particularly with Gothic paintings (Hrastovlje), uneven. The epidermis of the 'red' plaster is rough for a better grip of the decorative plaster that is to follow. The surface of the rough plaster should reach about five millimetres or more below the painting level and should be moist, but not wet, before applying the smooth plaster (Figs. 5a, 5b).

The decorative plaster levelled with the painting and then smoothed. Still moist (but not wet), it is scraped off for a millimetre or two to open up its texture with visible particles of slaked lime and multicoloured aggregate. For optional toning, the plaster can be enriched with pigments that are stable in alkaline solutions. The parameters that affect the colouration of the decorative plaster are described in details in the *Varstvo spomenikov* journal.[4]

Suha near Škofja Loka, the parish church of St John, a wall painting by the master of Suha, *c.* 1450, the vault of the presbytery

Before the intervention, the well-preserved wall painting of the vault of the Suha presbytery displayed a lot of minor damage in the paint layer (Fig. 6a) that hindered the comprehension of the whole. Especially impeding were the damaged decorative pattern details, highly important for the comprehension of the 'laced' vault (its field and ribs). We found sufficiently preserved repetitions of the individual motifs to construct new patterns to fill in the damaged parts of the borders or dividing passages. In a similar manner, we made the stencils of rosettes and stars, and other related damaged elements. By careful research of the damaged surfaces, we were able to determine the exact location of the ruined stars and other ornaments (Fig. 6b).

Suha near Škofja Loka, the parish church of St John, a wall painting by the master of Suha, *c.* 1450, *The Last Judgement*

When painting *The Last Judgement* in the church of St John, the master of Suha used the precious blue azurite, which is technically and technologically considered a very demanding pigment in wall painting. Because it does not assure a good grip or cohesion between the paint layer and its base, on some parts of the painting, the azurite has completely deteriorated, while on others, it remained in traces.[5] Bearing in mind the symbolism of blue in Christian iconography and the artistic value for the comprehension of such painting style, together with a conservator we

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[4]   BOGOVČI Č 1987, pp. 116–122.
[5]   KRIŽNAR 2006, p. 239.
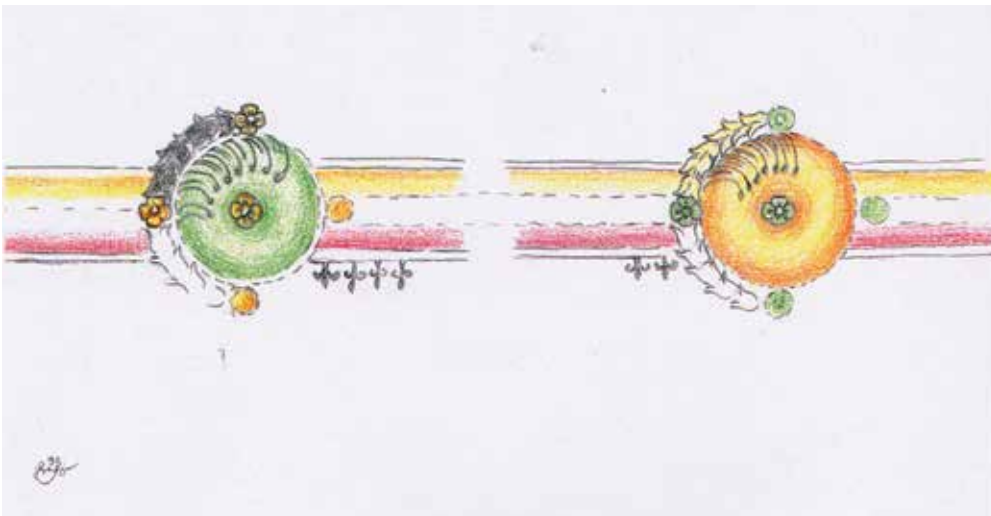
Fig. 3: The colour study of the pattern from the decorative border with consecration crosses, the nave of the chapel of ease of St Nicholas in Visoko under the Krešček hill.
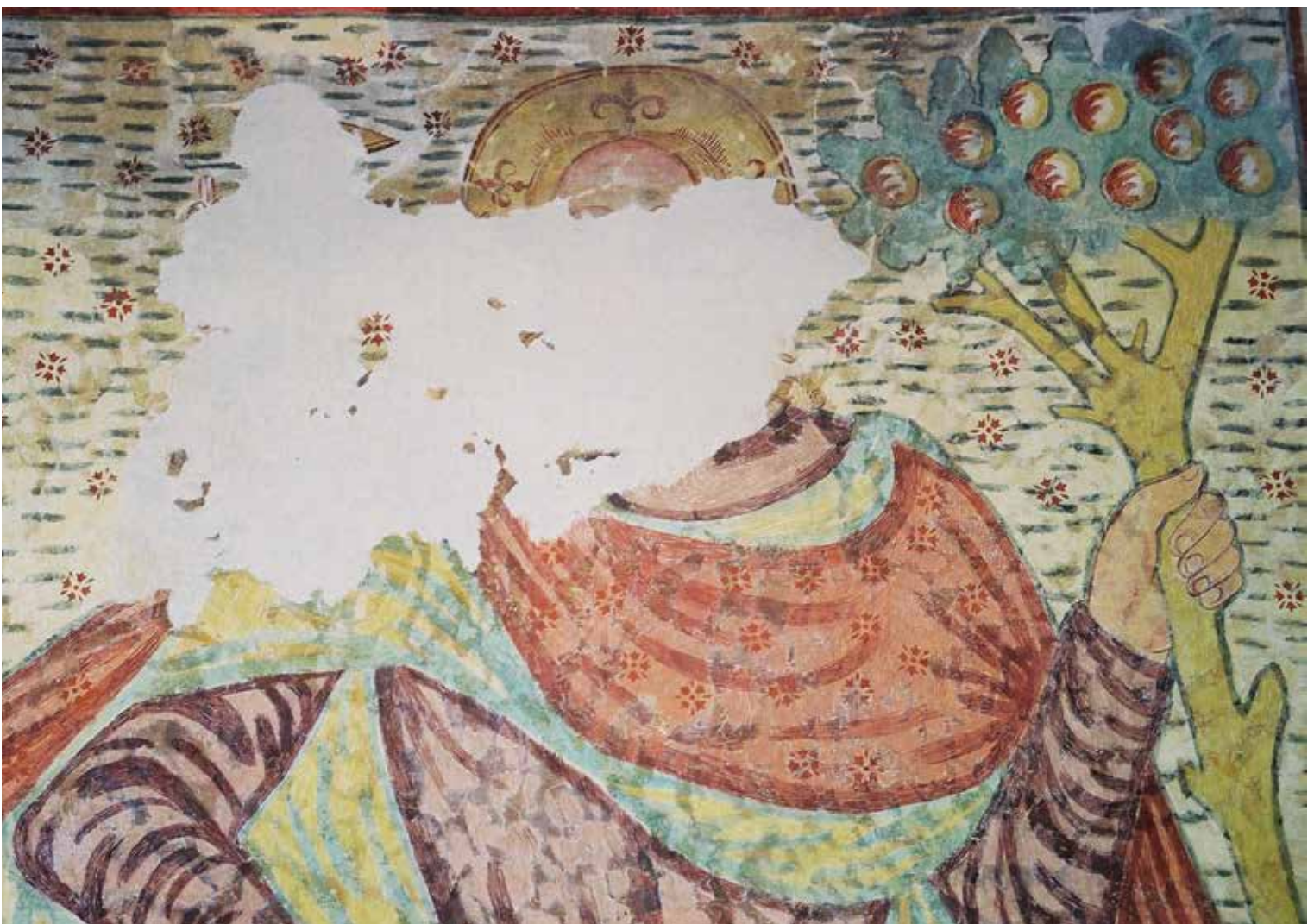
Fig. 4: St Christopher (the first quarter of the 16th century) on the southern naval façade of the chapel of ease of St Agnes in Lopata in Suha Krajina in 1996.

Figs. 5a, 5b: Left: a greater loss on the Hrastovlje *Danse Macabre* by John of Kastav (1490) treated with rough red plaster. Right: treated with smooth decorative plaster applied on top of the red.

decided to aesthetically fill in the areas with a substitute since, due to its instability, the use of azurite would be irrational and costly.

In terms of technique, the reintegration used a series of rough short lines, so that a slightly more attentive observer would be able to see the added coloured layers (Fig. 7b). The corrections by Bartholomew of Lach (Jernej of Loka) were suitably integrated into the work of the master of Suha, yet still distinguishable from the original. As a binder, we used a diluted Primal AC 33 emulsion – the one that eternally raises debates. Similarly debatable is the suitability of retouching in *fresco, secco* or lime technique that has been present for decades. On the preserved original *intonaco* the damaged paint layer cannot be replaced with retouch in *fresco*.

Likewise, nanotechnology does not yet offer sufficient and complete solutions in the field of retouching, therefore the debate between 'schools' continues. Let us recall the different approaches by the 'Roman', 'Brussels' and 'Russian school' when it comes to discussing other works of art.[6] Although reversibility and compatibility of materials and actions are the required safety net, they are not fixed principles for all cases.

Suha near Škofja Loka, the parish church of St John, a wall painting by the master of Suha, *c.* 1450, the chancel arch

The chancel arch wall in the nave was 'uncovered' by chance, prompted after probing into a narrow passage near the chancel arch. Under the removed recent whitewashes and plasters, we found fragments of decorative passages on the transition of the wall painting from the arch to the level surface of the arched wall (Fig. 8a). This is another example that can stress the significant connecting role of the decorative elements.

The already-known elements reconstructed the missing painting that concludes the one continuing from the presbytery and connects both Baroque side altarpieces. It draws the eye into the interior of the marvellously painted presbytery, complemented with the golden altarpiece by Jamšek (Fig. 8b). Aesthetic additions on the arch and chancel arch are executed technically and technologically also elsewhere in the church.

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[6] The use of the colletta adhesive, wax-resin pastes, or the fish glue solution when consolidating or reinforcing paintings with new canvas.

Figs. 6a, 6b: Above the main part of the wall painting by the master of Suha (*c.* 1450) on the vault of the presbytery of the parish church of St John in Suha near Škofja Loka before the intervention. Below after the intervention with the yet unretouched symbol of St Luke.

Fig. 7a: The main part of *The Last Judgement* by the master of Suha (*c.* 1450) with the corrections by Bartholomew of Lach (earlier than 1533) from the church of St John in Suha after the removal of the dirt and mould and after gaps and other types of damage have been puttied.

Suha near Škofja Loka, the parish church of St John, the wall painting by the master of the Bohinj presbytery, *c.* 1450

In *Coronation of Mary,* painted by the master of the Bohinj presbytery in the Suha church, the paint layer of the background and the facial details are lost. The loss could have resulted from the use of unstable pigments or, as in the case of azurite, pigments with insufficient adherence and cohesion in the paint layer. We have partially aesthetically presented the parts with existing reliable data. The background of the figures and the eyes of Mary and Jesus were not reconstructed or filled in. To clarify the possible reconstruction of the details, we carried out a test 'retouch/reconstruction' of the eyes merely on the photocopy of Jesus's head, since the details in the eyes are extremely important when researching the style characteristics of a work of art. Currently, a careful observer might notice contemplation (Fig. 9a), which, however, would disappear instantly if the damaged paint layer was reconstructed and the eyes could 'see' (Fig. 9b).

Fig. 7b: The main part of *The Last Judgement* after the retouching of the puttied gaps and damage and the reconstruction of the blue background based on the findings.

Figs. 8a, 8b: After the removal of recent whitewashes and plasters and puttying of damage in the paint layer, came the reintegration of the damaged and missing decorative painting of the chancel arch in the nave of the parish church of St John in Suha near Škofja Loka.

Figs. 9a, 9b: Detail from *Coronation of Mary* (*c.* 1450) from the parish church of St John in Suha near Škofja Loka. Left: photo of the face after restoration. Right: simulated eye reconstruction on the photocopy of the same detail.

Conclusion

We have to be aware that the basic principles of protecting and preserving cultural heritage are canon or dogmas. It is, therefore, our job to look for suitable solutions in all individual cases. They have to cater to a wide circle of potential consumers of the visual arts (we were entrusted with), to please the experts, and, of course, please the client to the highest extent.

The fundamental principles should be a solid guideline, a pointer in this responsible job, but not an unsurpassable obstacle. In the ordered intervention, we must preserve the authentic components of the treated works of art.

After decades of use, the *tratteggio* technique still has fewer negative than positive features. The positive results (transparency, layering, softness, hardness, etc.) outweigh the financial input that is necessary for an appropriate presentation of the work of art concerned. This technique with all the other executed 'selections' provides a wide narrative frame for retouching and reconstruction of all visual arts branches, not just wall painting.[7]

Tratteggio developed from the reintegration of paint layer damage on *Trecento* and *Quattrocento* panel paintings, where the original paint layer consisted of short lines in tempera. The base was usually white and was, even after the possible isolation, still absorbent enough for the first layers of paint. In *tratteggio*, aquarelles were thus applied onto a white basis (chalk ground). If we further observe the technical possibilities of the *a rigatino* and *a puntino* techniques and the combining with glazes, the combinations of reintegration were practically unlimited.

At the Florence exhibition in 1972,[8] they presented a restoration treatment on the famous *Crucifixion* by Cimabue (painting on wood) where the applied short lines already showed form and intertwinement and were no longer solely vertical. The lines were painted in a more relaxed manner and with paint combinations. The example greatly advanced the development of this still growing and improving technique.

For retouching of paintings on canvas, wood, or on wooden polychrome sculptures, slowly but steadily paints with natural or synthetic, resinous binders were used in practice. When Slovenian restorers visited Rome in 1976, Laura Mora from the Istitute Centrale del Restauro passed on a list of verified retouching paints with a resinous binder stocked by the Maimeri factory in Milan.

The centenary of the publication of Dvořák's *Catechism*[9] prompted several valid thoughts regarding the attitude of the cultural heritage expertise towards modern heritage preservation. In the century after the first publication of *Catechism,* the existing views modified, so it would be wise if we pondered the positive and the negative aspects of the current practice both in Slovenia and abroad. We know that the reasons for contemplating the future heritage protection are not merely the narrow expert and financial ones but also sociological and others. Such contemplation is vital in the awareness that we will not be able to preserve the entire (art) heritage in its authentic substance for future generations.

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[7] BALDINI 2003, I, pp. 98–100. BALDINI 2003, II, pp. 94–95.
[8] *Firenze Restaura*, 1972.
[9] DVOŘÁK 1916.

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The Influence of the Restoration Approaches, the Cooperation between a Restorer and an Art Historian, and of Technical Art History on Final Presentation
Mateja Neža Sitar
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Introduction to the Protection and Preservation of Wall Paintings in Slovenia
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