



## MADONNA AND CHILD

### ART-HISTORICAL NOTES AND RESTORATION

Signed and dated OPVS CAROLI CRIVELLI VENETI 1482, and probably conceived as the central element of a triptych or a polyptych, the work reuses the iconography of the *Madonna and Child* in the Szépművészeti Múzeum in Budapest, dating from 1480.

There are striking elements here drawn from an earlier tradition, such as the little figure of a Franciscan friar in the lower left, portrayed in profile and kneeling with his palms together, plausible identifiable as the patron who commissioned the work. This iconographic motif – like that in the 1481 polyptych in the exhibition – recalls late Mediaeval prototypes such as the *Madonna and Child with the Donor Vulciano Belgarzone* painted in 1394 by Nicolò di Pietro and today in the Accademia Gallery in Venice.

The painting was restored in the mid-nineteenth century. Consisting of a single large panel of poplar wood, painted in tempera with an oil glaze, it has been fitted with a modern frame. The new restoration has consolidated the support and recovered the original range of colours. Gold and brilliant pigments, dark blues, reds, and greens, were applied on the detailed and descriptive drawing to obtain an effect of soft tonalities. In particular, the deep blue of the Madonna's mantle has been rendered by superimposing a coat of precious azurite over the indigo. The resulting effect of transparency saturates the general tone of the clothing and modulates the volumes of its forms, enriched by costly gilded decorations. The restoration of the frame has enhanced the carving of the decorative elements and the gilded surface.

One of the most interesting features of the false colour infrared image can be seen in the painting of the drapery behind the Madonna. The intense red colour indicates the use of a dye such as indigo. The stratigraphic reading of the Virgin's mantle below her left knee reveals a preparation made of plaster and glue onto which has been applied a mixture of white lead and indigo. A thick layer of azurite follows, a layer formed by grains of vegetable black dispersed in an organic medium, a coat formed by a mixture of ochre and calcite, and finally a layer of varnish.