



## PIETÀ

### ART-HISTORICAL NOTES AND RESTORATION

Signed OPVS CAROLI CRIVELLI VENETI, the *Pietà* may have formed the lunette of the altarpiece showing the *Handing over of the Keys* (1488-1489) for the Church of St Peter of Muralto in Camerino, preserved in the Berlin Gemäldegalerie. The work displays the typical *pathos* of Crivelli's Christological painting, as testified by the tears lining the faces of the figures, a motif present in the earlier *Pietà* of the polyptych painted for Ascoli Cathedral (1473) and the one in the Metropolitan Museum, New York, the cymatium of the 1476 polyptych for St Dominic's Church in Ascoli. The drama of the image, which is not exempt from the influence of the devotional treatise *The mental pains of Jesus in his Passion* (1488) by the Poor Clare Camilla Battista da Varano, is mitigated by the small angel's heads painted in gold leaf.

Restored many times in the nineteenth century, the painting was executed in tempera with an oil glaze on a support formed by six poplar-wood panels. During the recent intervention of 2011, the structure of the support was enhanced by a containment system of carbon fibre boards created following a 3D analysis.

Cleaning brought back to life the work's exceptional range of colours achieved by the use of azurite, indigo, copper green, cinnabar, red lake, and a generous profusion of gold leaf. The refined drawing was executed in graphite overlaid by brush in brown. Modulated outlines follow the chiaroscuro without corrections, while fine diagonal brushstrokes construct the forms, which can be read under the subsequent application of paint.

False colour infrared imaging – for example, of the blue in the Madonna's mantle – highlights the use of a low-absorption pigment, in this case lapis lazuli which shows up as red. Interesting chromatic correspondences are revealed on the angels in the background. In these figures, which to the naked eye appear green, the use of indigo yields a red colour. In this work too, reflectography enables us to appreciate the details of the preparatory drawing.