



## THE DANCE OF THE GRACES

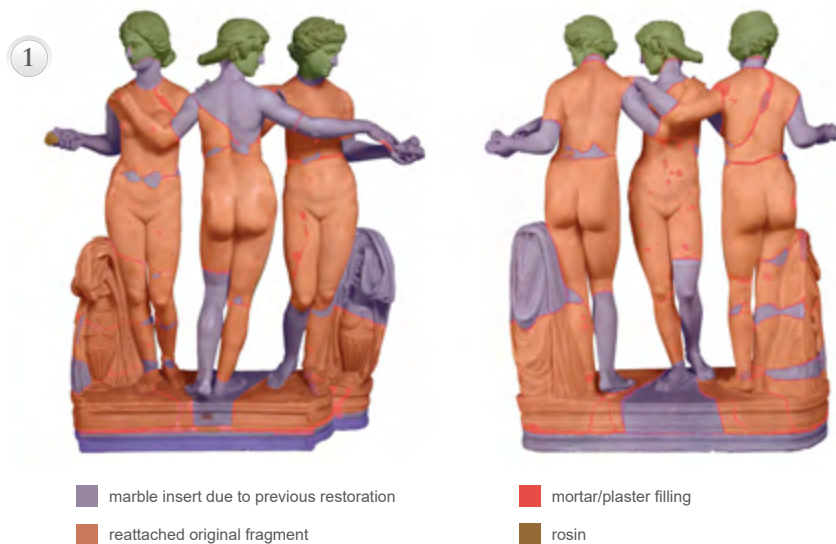
*“... and sweetly too they look from under their brows”*

### THE VATICAN GROUP OF THE THREE GRACES & RESTORATION

The earliest records date back to the second half of the 16<sup>th</sup> century when the group was owned by Giovanni Francesco Peranda, a man of great culture, secretary and trusted person of the Caetani family. In 1591, Peranda decided to sell his conspicuous collection of works of art, including our Graces, to Cardinal Enrico Caetani, which began to collect an initial nucleus of antiquities that was later greatly increased by subsequent purchases. In 1642, the group of the Three Graces was described in Rome in the Caetani Palace, later Ruspoli, on Via del Corso, where it was greatly admired until it became part of the papal collections. Acquired under Pius VII in 1815, it was exhibited in the Braccio Nuovo for a short time and finally placed in the Gabinetto delle Maschere in the Pio Clementino Museum in 1932.

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We do not know where our group was found, which was evidently discovered in a very fragmentary condition. The sculpture was restored as early as the second half of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, recomposing the various portions with great skill and integrating the missing parts (1). The heads,



although ancient, were inserted on this occasion and in fact differ in chronology and stylistic features. During the recent restoration, only on the head of the central figure did traces of pigments such as haematite, white lead and vine black, emerge. The sixteenth-century restorer carried out a polishing of the marble surfaces in order to completely remove the decay so that the added portions were camouflaged, so that it is still difficult to distinguish between the original and the integrated parts.

In the course of the current cleaning, it was possible to detect the numerous joint lines (2), also highlighted by the changing of the resins in colour (3), which were used in the past both for the adhesion of the different fragments and sometimes for the fillings. The latter were removed,



reactivating the adhesives when necessary, and restored with lime putty mortar and marble dust aggregates. At the end of the restoration work, in order to maintain the valuable luminosity of the ancient waxes, it was decided not to apply the protective coating, so as to fully enjoy the nuanced and warm chromatism of the marble thus recovered.