



RESTORATION AND SCIENTIFIC ANALYSIS

The restoration of the painting led to the unexpected and exciting discovery of an unfinished work, which we can consider a true pictorial palimpsest. Its incompleteness is not a flaw, but a source of valuable data that reveals the artist's creative process.

Perhaps conceived as a small devotional work, it then became a sketch for the depiction of a full-length saint, whose barely sketched pictorial drafts were covered and used to create the face of Christ. The *Redeemer* is painted with light strokes that reveal the underlying draft. Only sketched details can be seen, such as the position of the hair indicated by a barely outlined lock and the two overlapping versions of the robe. The work, most likely misunderstood due to a lack of research and studies to decipher the image, suffered inevitable deterioration until the 1960s, when it was presumably repainted. The re-evaluation of the great Cretan artist increased the demand for his works and with it the production of fakes. It is in this context that our painting was remade by an unknown forger, who concealed the original drafts by roughly tracing the image of Christ.

The scientific study of the painting focused on high-resolution image analysis at different wavelengths: induced ultraviolet fluorescence, false-colour infrared, infrared reflectography and X-ray.

The data obtained from false-colour infrared imaging is particularly interesting, as it revealed the presence of an underlying painting that was different from what could be seen directly. Reflectography at 1900 nanometres provided a clearer view of the painting beneath the visible one: the presence of a figure's robe and an elliptical area in the upper right-hand corner is clearly evident. Subsequently, FTIR and Raman spectroscopic investigation techniques and MA XRF X-ray fluorescence analysis were used to characterise the paints and pigments present. The information obtained made it possible to determine both the original materials and those applied in other restoration work. The mapping of the chemical elements, carried out using MA XRF, highlighted the non-original repainting on the surface and revealed that in the upper right-hand corner, beneath the surface layer, there is a Madonna and Child. The non-invasive techniques were then combined with a study aimed at characterising the wooden support through material analysis.

The cleaning process carefully recovered the original layers, gradually revealing even those whose

presence was uncertain. All the data, compared with that of other paintings by the artist, confirmed that the work was entirely authentic.

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