

GALLERIE NAZIONALI DI ARTE ANTICA – CONSERVATION LABORATORY

The Conservation Laboratory run by the Soprintendenza per i Beni Artistici di Roma has been operational since the beginning of the 20th century. Initially located in Palazzo Venezia, it moved to Palazzina Savorgnan in the 1980s. While chiefly hosting restorers directly employed by the newly formed MIBAC (1975), it nevertheless continued to open its workspace also to private restorers.

The Laboratory engaged in significant and prestigious projects while in Palazzina Savorgnan (FIG. 1). Some of these projects, involving the restoration of movable works, were showcased in two exhibitions entitled *Laboratorio di Restauro* (Rome, 14 December-28 February 1986; 30 March-30 June 1988). The restorations in question included, i.e., a panel painting by Antoniazio Romano from S. Maria dell'Anima in 1988 (FIG. 2); and a painting by Lanfranco entitled *La Musica* (inv 2411) in Palazzo Barberini in 1993 (FIG. 3).

Of equal importance are the worksites on which the Laboratory has collaborated with in-depth technical and diagnostic studies, microclimatic studies and insights into the techniques of execution of the various artefacts and restoration techniques. These projects have seen the Laboratory engaged in the protection and conservation of cultural heritage throughout the region of Rome and Lazio. Especially worthy of note, by way of an example, are: the restoration in the early '90s of the vault frescoed by Pietro da Cortona in Palazzo Barberini (FIG. 4); the preliminary studies in the dome by Lanfranco and the restoration of the squinches in the dome frescoed by Domenichino in S. Andrea della Valle (1998) (FIG. 5); the environmental study and restoration in the church of S. Clemente, developed during the '90s in connection with the lower basilica's complex environmental situation (FIG. 6); the restoration of Lanfranco's canvas for the church of S. Agostino in 1997 (*Meditation on the Trinity*, FIG. 7); and the restoration of Caravaggio's works in the Cerasi Chapel in S. Maria del Popolo (in 1998-2000 FIGG. 8-9). These are just a few examples testifying to the Laboratory's wide range of interests and professional skills ranging from the restoration of frescoes, mosaics, marble and paper works to works on wood and canvas.

On moving to its current premises in the late 1990s, the Laboratory redirected its efforts to the care and management of museum collections, following a radical transformation of the Ministry of Culture (2014-16) which sparked a wholesale rethink of the conservation and enhancement of cultural heritage throughout Italy.

As the Conservation Laboratory of the Gallerie Nazionali, the laboratory now focuses on the care and management of the gallery's collections (FIG. 10). In particular, we are studying a system for protecting thinned panels that can ensure a balance with the environment without losing the opportunity for easy inspection of the back (FIG. 11); also, we are conducting a campaign of studies of paintings on copper, in which our collection is particularly rich (FIG. 12). Special attention has been devoted to the

reconstruction of the history of the collections and to diagnosing executive techniques, for example: the studies we conducted on the *Fornarina* (FIG. 13) in collaboration with Università di Roma Tre INFN (2020); those we conducted during the restoration of Murillo's *Nursing Madonna* (2021, FIG. 14); and those currently under way on Bronzino's *Portrait of Stefano Colonna* (FIG. 15) conducted with E-RIHS.it, the Italian node of the European research infrastructure on Heritage Science.

That said, our commitment to the protection of the territory has in no way diminished and the Laboratory has actively participated in the recovery of cultural heritage in the areas affected by the earthquake in Amatrice (2016, FIG. 16), offering to restore two works: a Madonna with Child and Saints, a 15th century panel from the church of S Andrea in Configno, and a Madonna with Child and Saints by N. Ricciolini, an 18th century work from the church of S Maria della Mercede in Collegentile.

Finally, an important aspect of the Laboratory's activity is the training of young restorers in conjunction with various Italian universities through internship programmes, in the course of which we guide them in the restoration of artworks from our collections (fig. 17).



Fig. 1 - The Palazzina Savorgnan, the late headquarter of the Conservation Laboratory

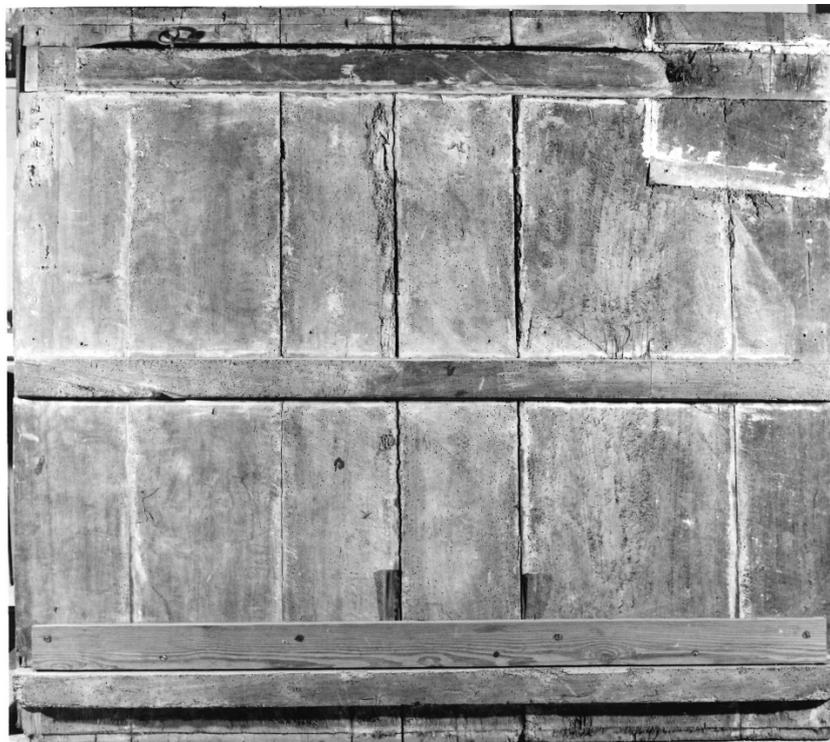


Fig. 2a-b Antoniazzo Romano, from S Maria dell'Anima church, after restoration (1998)

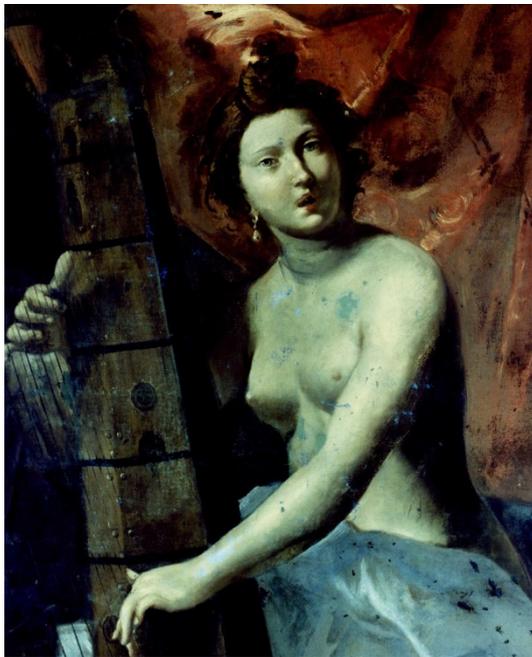


fig. 3a-b Lanfranco, *La Musica*, Gallerie Nazionali di Arte Antica, inv 2411, restoration and UV detail (1993)



fig. 4 Ceiling of the Salone di Pietro da Cortona, *The Triumph of Divine Providence* (1633-1639), restoration 1991

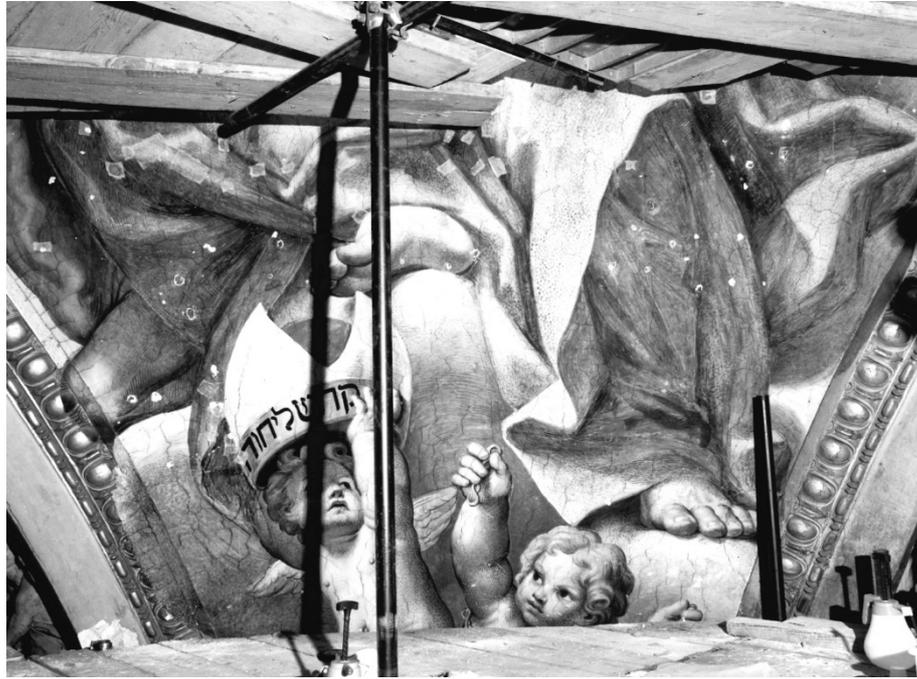


fig. 5 Rome, S. Andrea della Valle, Domenichino, dome's squinches (1621-1628);
restoration 1998

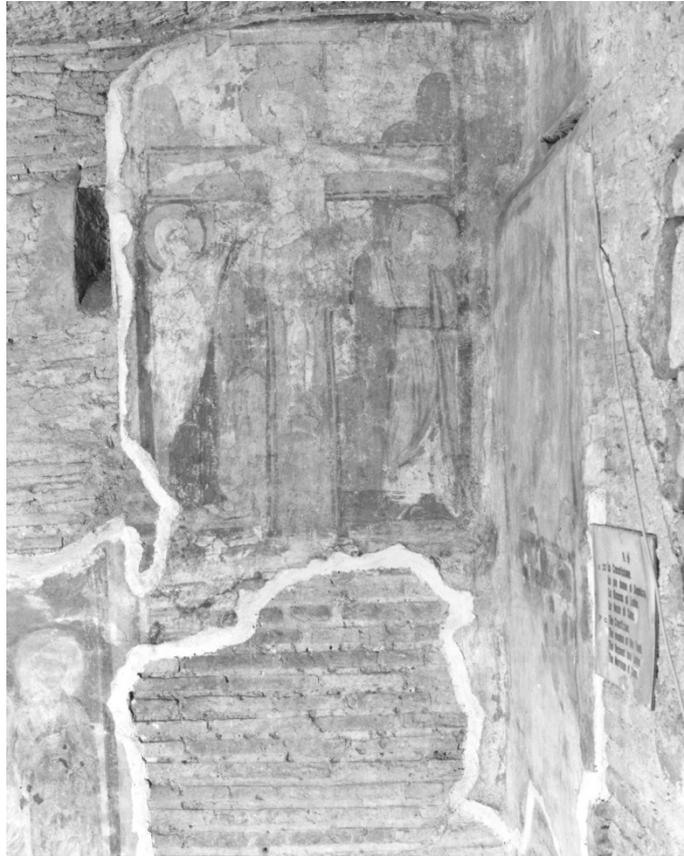


fig. 6 Rome, S. Clemente, studies of microclimate in the lower basilica, restoration of frescos, stones and mosaics (during the 90s)

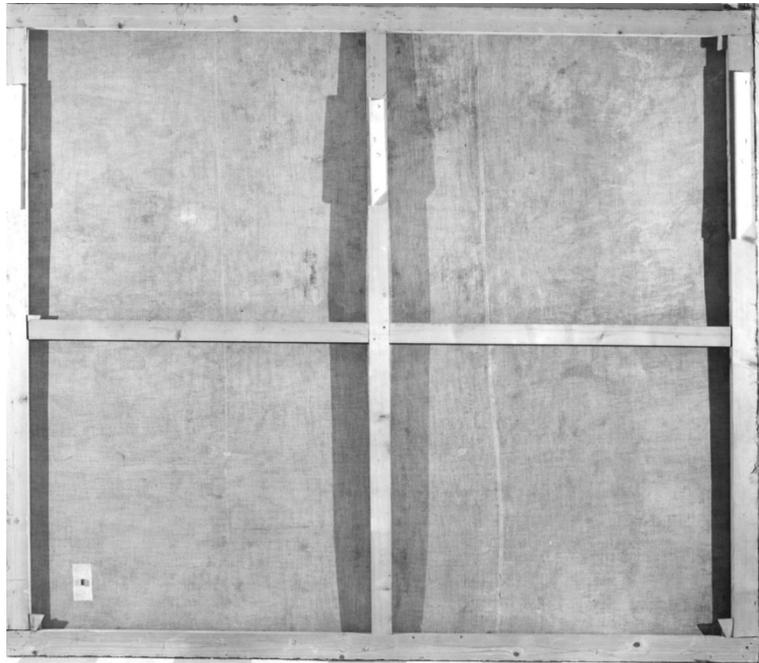


fig. 7 Rome, S. Agostino, Lanfranco, *Meditation on Trinity* (1616), restoration 1997-8

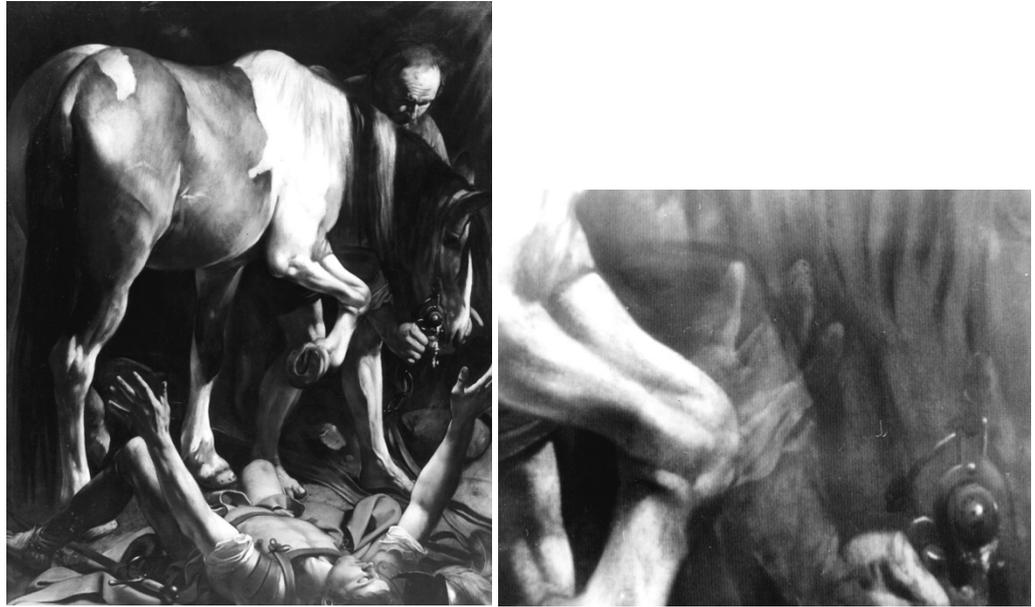


fig. 8 Rome, S. Maria del Popolo, Cappella Cerasi painting by Caravaggio (1600-1), restoration and IR detail 1998-2000



fig. 9 Rome, S. Maria del Popolo, Cappella Cerasi painting by Caravaggio (1600-1), restoration and raking light detail 1998-2000



fig. 10 Conservation Laboratory, Palazzo Barberini

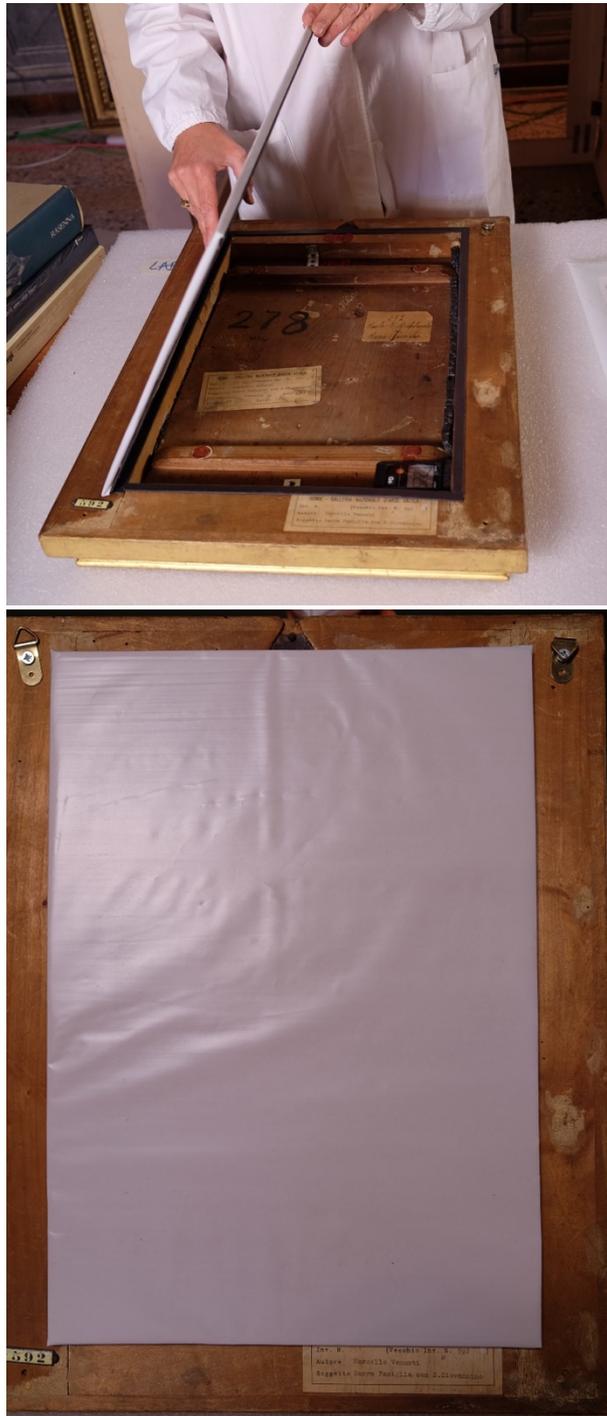


fig. 11 Studing a technologically advanced membrane, which delays and controls changes of humidity



fig. 12 Studying paintings on copper



fig. 13 Studying the *Fornarina* by Raphael



fig. 15 Murillo, *Nursing Madonna* restoration (2021)



fig. 15 Studying Bronzino, *Portrait of Stefano Colonna* (2021-2022)



fig. 16 Working for the recovery of cultural heritage in the earthquake lands of Amatrice



Fig. 17 Training young restorers in conjunction with various Italian universities