

GENERAL TECHNICAL & CONDITION DESCRIPTION

The analysis of this painting was limited to a frontal review as the painting was firmly hung high up to the wall and viewable from a ladder. Therefore the condition of the painting's verso could not be carried out while the review of the upper frontal levels was limited.

Object:	-Titular Painting.
Subject:	- <i>Assumption of the Virgin Mary</i> and its Decorative Frame.
Location:	-Basilica of the Assumption of the Virgin, Mosta. ¹
Medium:	-Oil on textile support.
Author:	-Stefano Erardi (1630 - 1716). ²
Period:	-1678. ³
Dimensions:	-c.440 x 234cm (unframed).
Property:	- Basilica of the Assumption of the Virgin, Mosta -Tel: 79201844 [Dun Sebastian Caruana]

¹ Recoop, "Method Statement and Estimate," July 2016 , p.4. – The painting previously adorned the old Parish Church of Mosta and was amongst other altar paintings S. Erardi was commissioned to execute for this location.

² Atelier del Restauro, "State of Conservation and Treatment Proposal for the Conservation and Restoration of the Titular Canvas Painting of the Assumption Attributed to Stefano Erardi 1678," 5 July 2016 , pg.7 - The painting was traditionally attributed Pasqual Buhagiar but in 2009, Prof. Keith Sciberras in , "Baroque Painting in Malta," pg. 224, attributed the altarpiece to Stefano Erardi since it does not stylistically and technically reflect the altarpiece depicting *The Assumption of the Virgin* by P. Buhagiar found in the Attard Parish Church.

³ *Ibid.*, pg.9. – The painting was commissioned by Rev J Chetcuti in 1678.

Auxillary Strainer:	- <i>Verso of the painting not accessible.</i>
Original Support & Extension Support:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -<i>Verso of the painting not accessible.</i> -Textile. -Hand woven. -Seam joints are present horizontally and vertically around the painting showing that the painting is composed of around four pieces of textile sewn together. In the centre, two seams are evident, possibly indicating that one of them is of the lining textile. In 1860, a top extension horizontal textile in correspondence to the celestial sky was added and the vertical sides were reduced in size.⁴ -The painting was possibly relined in early 1975.⁵ -The painting has textile tensile deformations and sagging on the lower right part of the painting.
Preparation:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Quite thick. -Textile weave shows through. -The preparation presents weak adhesive properties especially in the bottom and left side of the painting. Leading to cracks, cupping, active lifting and losses in the preparation. -Plaster infills done during previous conservation-restoration treatments are evident in various parts of the painting surface especially in the perimeter as they are not level to the painting surface.
Pigment: & Varnish	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -The pigment is thinly applied with areas of slight impasto. -Metal crown inserted above the Virgin Mary.⁶ -Twelve (12) metal haloing stars inserted around the Virgin Mary's head.⁷ -Abrasion of pigment due to a possible over cleaning or weakened binding agent of the pigment is evident especially in the lower half of the painting. -Retouchings and possible overpaintings executed during previous conservation-restoration treatment are evident and are found in correspondence to the plaster infills and in other areas. -The varnish is not homogeneously applied

⁴ *Ibid.* - In 1860 the painting was transferred to the current Mosta Basilica so it was restored by Salvatore Barbara who extended the top part and reduced the sides to allow it to fit into the new titular frame.

⁵ *Ibid.* - During early 1975, the painting was restored by Maurice Cordina who carried out an extensive cleaning process and relined the painting.

⁶ *Ibid.* - In 1975, the painting was crowned by Bishop Gonzi and a pilgrimage was held for the occasion.

⁷ *Ibid.* - In 2000 the stars were inserted and a pilgrimage was held for the occasion.

Decorative Frame:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -<i>Verso of the frame is not accessible.</i> -Since the painting was eventually extended on the top horizontal part and reduced in size on the verticle sides, this is probably not the original decorative frame. -Wooden. -Silver leaf tinted gold through shellac. -The frame seems to be directly mounted onto the painting and not into the adjacent stone frame. -Rusted nails are evident all over the frame's surface. -Losses in preparation is evident all over.
Previous Interventions:	<p>Painting:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Various interventions evident with the naked eye. ⁸
Examination by Conservator-Restorer:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Anastasia Anastasi Vella. Tel: 99488411.
Date of Examination:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -30th August 2018.

⁸ *Ibid.* – In 1827: the painting was restored by the artist, Giuseppe Hyzler (1787-1858). In 1860: the painting was restored by Salvatore Barbara who extended the top part and reduced the sides to allow it to fit into the new titular frame. In 1925: the painting is said to have been restored. During the early 1975: the painting was restored by Maurice Cordina who carried out an extensive cleaning process and relined the painting. In 2000: the painting underwent a light cleaning process by Alfred Briffa.

ESTIMATED CONSERVATION-RESTORATION TREATMENT PROPOSAL

The treatment proposals is based on the limited viewing access as the painting is hung high up to the wall and viewable from a ladder, therefore the verso and upper layers could not be studied well.

Painting & Decorative Frame:

- Insitu partial facing of the parts of the painting and frame surfaces which present severe lifting of the pictorial layers to avoid further losses during detachment from the stone frame and transportation.
- Packing and Transportation of painting with its decorative frame to the conservation-restoration laboratory.
- Removal of the painting's auxiliary strainer frame from its decorative frame.
- Drawing up an indepth Condition Assessment Report of the painting and its decorative frame including non-invasive scientific analysis and detailed photographic documentation.
- Drawing up of a Preliminary Treatment Proposals of the painting and its decorative frame based on the indepth Condition Assessment Report.

Painting:

- Facing of all the painting's pictorial layers.
- Removal of the painting from its auxiliary strainer frame support.
- Should the auxiliary strainer frame support present active or inactive wood worm flight holes and not have expandable corners and bevelled edges, this is to be discarded and replaced by a new auxiliary strainer frame support with bevelled edges and expandable stainless steel fittings.
- Removal of the lining textile support and inlays, if present.
- Cleaning of the painting's verso textile support from any possible surface dirt, dust pockets, residues of lining adhesives.
- Strengthening and stabilization of any possible perforations caused by the inserted metal crown and stars placed above the Virgin Mary.
- Strengthening of seam joint in correspondence to the extension of the textile support and the joints pertaining to the original textile.
- Flattenning and stabilization of any textile tensile deformations and sagging.
- Consolidation of the textile including tair repair, if present and canvas inlays where and as required.
- Lining or strip lining of the painting using a new textile support of a similar weave, as and if required.
- Mounting onto a new auxiliary frame support.
- Removal of facing from the pictorial surface.

- Following a series of cleaning tests to identify the best chemical and mechanical methods to apply, cleaning all the paint surface to remove unhomogeneously applied varnish, altered retouchings, overpaintings and old weak and unlevelled plaster in-fills.
- In-filling of losses in preparation through new plaster in-fills levelled down to the plastered surfaces.
- Reintegration of the paint layer, with special attention to the areas which are severely abraded.
- General varnishing.

Decorative Frame:

- Consolidation and stabilization of the rusted nails present over all the tinted surface.
- Consolidation and adhesion of the loose wooden elements forming the decorative frame, where applicable.
- Surface cleaning of the wooden verso.
- Treatment of wood worm flight holes, if present.
- Following a series of cleaning tests to identify the best chemical and mechanical methods to apply, cleaning of the gold varnished surface to remove surface dirt, possible wax deposits, oxidized varnishes, and any altered gold pigment integrations, if present.
- In-filling of the losses in preparation, including around the rusted nails through plaster in-fills levelled down to the plastered surfaces.
- Reintegration of the gold surfaces presenting losses, as required through the new application of bolo and silver leaf tinted through shellac or an approved similar inert material.
- General varnishing.
- Mounting of the painting inside the decorative frame.

Painting & Decorative Frame

- Transportation to the Mosta Basilica.
- Re-attachment of painting with its decorative frame into the adjacent stone frame, possibly using the same hanging system.
- Final report to include historical background, results obtained through non-invasive scientific analysis, manufacturing techniques, in-depth condition assessment for the painting and its decorative frame, risk assessment, detailed preliminary treatment proposals, treatments carried out, related documentation including photographic documentation and recommendations on the preventive conservations measures and monitoring guidelines to safeguard the artefacts.

FINANCIAL ESTIMATE OF THE CONSERVATION-RESTORATION TREATMENT

It is important to note that:

- The General Technical and Condition Description and the Estimated Treatment Proposal were drawn up following a viewing session on the 30th August 2018 with no access to the painting's verso and limited access to the upper layers of the painting. Therefore an indepth analysis of all the paint layers will allow a more detailed and definite assessment and proposals.
- The General Technical and Condition Description and the Estimated Treatment Proposal were drawn up following a viewing session on the 30th August 2018. Should a long span of time pass from another examination of the painting and its decorative frame, the conditions of these artefacts may alter.
- This estimate is based on a general basic rate for conservation-restoration services which averages to €20.00/hr.
- This estimated period is based on a 40hr working period per week.
- An overtime rate is not included.
- Days falling under public holidays are not included.
- VAT and other taxes are not included.
- Other benefits which may effect the final estimate are not included.
- Packing and transportation from the Mosta Basilica to the laboratory and from the laboratory to the Mosta Basilica or to any decided hosting location is not included.
- The manufacturing of an auxillary strainer support [if required] is not included.
- The drawing up of the required reports is not included.
- The conservation-restoration of the decorative frame is included.
- The conservation-restoration is limited to the altar painting depicting the *Assumption of the Virgin Mary* and its decorative frame within the Mosta Basilica and not to any other artefact within the Basilica or its structure.

Estimate:

- Total hours required as per Treatment Proposal based on the viewing on the 4th August 2018: **approximately 300 hrs**
- Based on a 40hr working period per week: **approximately 7.5 weeks**
- Average rate for conservation-restoration: **€20.00/hr**

Total Exclusive of VAT: €6,000.00 in approximately 7.5 weeks