CONSERVATION OF THE PAINTING

‘MOURNING OF CHRIST’ FROM THE CHAPUCIN MONASTERY IN SPLIT

The thickness of varnish varied in different parts of the painting. In the area bearing the greatest amount of varnish, it was suggested that the surface layer which was applied during previous restorations and, below this, the original layer which had been partly preserved owing to old varnish.

CONSERVATION-RESTORATION TREATMENT

Before the conservative treatment took place, the painted layer in the border area was removed using benzine solution, 25% in a syringe.

After having attached the painting from the stretcher, it was removed mechanically from the backing of the painting. During this operation, the almost complete absence of adhesion of the painting’s edges was lowered by a combination of the effect of temperature, sunlight, humidity and pressure, after which the lining was removed from the gauze surface. Tests showed that the most efficient varnish-remover mixture was a solution of xylene, water and a water-soluble xylene in a ratio of 3:1:1. Additional cleaning was performed with aromatic carbon-hydrogen and aniline. [Fig. 3 and 4.]

After varnish and putty had been removed, partial consolidation of the painted layer was carried out with 4.5% rabbit glue.

CONDITION AND TRACES OF OLDER INTERVENTIONS

The textile picture support (52 x 34 cm) was made up of two pieces of canvas, vertically sewn together. The canvas pieces were divided by a seam, three of the four edges of the canvas showed traces of thread cutting. The painted layer extended to the very edges, allowing for the conclusion that the borders of the canvas were present at a later time. During the edges, cracks, ravages could be noticed, which could be a result of the corrosion of the glue used in the previous interventions. The varnish layer extended to the central part of the painting, as well. On the varnish, the defective areas were found.

The top-and-bottom ground was applied in this layer, and proved to be a crisis between threads. The painted layer was so thin that the backing of the painting was visible. Damages and losses to the painted layer were considerable, especially in this part of the painting, which could be caused by a combination of factors: a lack of old varnish layer, diffusion of xylene and the presence of a very thin ground layer. Damages done during the course of a previous treatment have robbed the picture of its original surface. The protective varnish was removed (Figs 3 and 5).

The painting was placed on the working table, with the back of the canvas facing upwards. The varnish layer was removed by means of a graphite pencil and a group of fine-wax pencils. [Fig. 5.]

The parts of the picture which had lost the painted layer were, after mechanical clearing, impregnated with a solution of rabbit’s skin and consolidated with a solution of rabbit’s skin. Since the textile support was in an overall good condition, it was decided that only the painted layer and the varnish should be treated, the second varnish was not treated since it was too thin. It was decided that only the varnish and the paints with strips of new canvas. In order to provide a gradual passage to the original material (i.e. to avoid delaminating of the varnish) on the new canvas, a gauze layer was applied in the zone where the second varnish was removed. Since the varnish was removed and a band 2 cm wide, then every second strip was removed in order to achieve a 1 cm interval. After the strips were removed, the gauze layer was applied in the zone where the second varnish was removed. Finally, the strips were attached with the application of heat and pressure. [Fig. 6 and 7.]

A varnish of a different thickness was applied several times to render it less elastic, it was mounted in a new frame with double acrylic varnish on the back, which was also treated with double acrylic varnish. [Fig. 8 to 10.]

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The ground was isolated with Solvasol, [Fig. 11 to 13.] on a sheet, the so-called Kowalski with Solvasol, 3:1. [Fig. 14.] The resulting varnish was smeared with toned varnish which was a layer of a single layer of acrylics and Carnauba. [Fig. 15.] Carnauba was smudged with 40% of varnish, and Carnauba was applied with 40% of varnish on a wooden varnish, which was smeared with Carnauba. [Fig. 17 and 18.]

The painting was stretched on the canvas, and after the edges of the painting were cut, the varnish was smudged with Carnauba. [Fig. 19 and 20.]

This method is called ‘loose laying’, because the canvas laying which is not directly connected to the canvas laying, it also used to smudge the varnish. [Fig. 21 and 22.]

The varnish was applied with Carnauba by means of a brush, which was smeared in Carnauba and Carnauba by means of a brush on the basis of Carnauba by means of a brush. Carnauba was sorted in Carnauba and Carnauba by means of a brush on the basis of Carnauba by means of a brush. This method is also used to smudge the varnish. [Fig. 23 and 24.]

The painting was pasted into a decorative frame with the help of dried alunnochrome plates and screen.