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58.3_ Restorations worth remembering

The Rosary and termites

The termite attack had been devastating, and had not even spared the oil painting on canvas of the Madonna of the Rosary in the apse of the Church of Sant'Andrea Apostolo in Tortoli. Not only had the attack affected the support frame, but the re-covering canvas and paste glue, applied in a 1991 restoration, had proved particularly appetising to the voracious insects, which only stopped at the preparation.

Detail of termite tunnels
on the back of the painting



Termite larvae



The completely "eaten" frame elements





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The back of the painting after the removal of inconsistent material.
Note the remnants of the re-covering canvas.



On behalf of the parish priest Monsignor Crobeddu and under the supervision of Morittu Giovanna of the Soprintendenza Archeologia, Belle Arti e Paesaggio of Sassari and Nuoro, Anna Rita Pisu initiated the restoration work that, given the canvas poor condition, was extremely complex.

The large size of the painting (2.05x3.25 m) and the precarious condition of the paint, with lifting, falling and peeling, made the task of reconstructing the countless gaps even more difficult. Altered retouches from a previous restoration and heavy, yellowed varnish covered in a thick layer of dirt completed the desperate situation.

Given the differences in the level of the different areas, Anna Rita Pisu decided, in agreement with the works management, to restore the flatness of the painting by intervening with **Balsite**, a material already tried and tested for this type of intervention, but still little known.

Balsite has the advantage over traditional putties of being very adhesive, and also flexible, allowing some movement of the canvas without coming off.

Furthermore, despite being an epoxy putty, it is also easily reversible by working with appropriate solvents.

Next, the application of Balsite.





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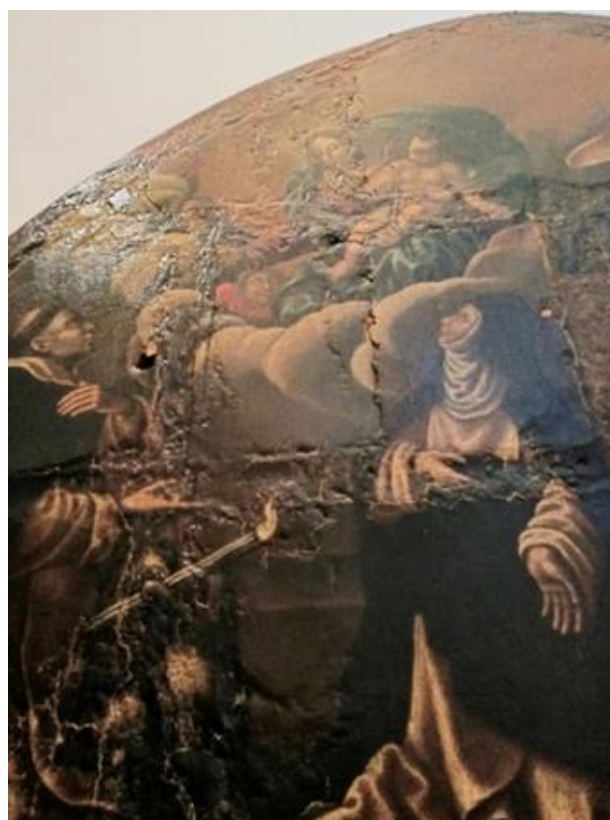
Once the flatness of the whole had been recovered with an accurate intervention, it was possible to proceed with the lining using Ispra polyester canvas and **G.B. Original Formula Beva 371**.

The pictorial layer, which was strongly unbalanced in the different areas, was evened out with the application of **Berger Isolating Varnish** before the retouching. The same varnish was used when applying Balsite, to insulate the contact areas and prevent the epoxy resin from migrating and causing darkening on the edges of the canvas gaps. Cleaning, plastering and pictorial retouching were then carried out, with the final application of Lefranc & Bourgeois Matt varnish.

A detail of a cleaning block



The surface before restoration





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The painting after restoration



BIBLIOGRAPHY:

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