



Soprintendenza  
Speciale per il Patrimonio  
Storico, Artistico  
ed Etnoantropologico e  
per il Polo Museale  
della città di Firenze



Florence, September 24, 2014

PRESS RELEASE

## Leonardo's *Adoration of the Magi* completed the first stage of restoration

Yesterday morning, at the Opificio delle Pietre Dure and Restoration Laboratories in the Fortezza da Basso in Florence, the results of the first stage of the restoration work of Leonardo da Vinci's *Adoration of the Magi* were presented with the attendance of **Cristina Acidini**, superintendent for the Historical, Artistic and Ethno-anthropological Heritage and for the Museums of the City of Florence, **Marco Ciatti**, superintendent of the Opificio delle Pietre Dure, **Antonio Natali**, director of the Uffizi Gallery and **Maria Vittoria Rimbotti**, president of the Amici degli Uffizi association.

In November 2011, thanks to the support of the Amici degli Uffizi, Leonardo's masterpiece, panel painting depicting the *Adoration of the Magi* (246x243 cm), begun in 1481 for the monastery of San Donato in Scopeto and then left unfinished, had been moved to the restoration Laboratories of the Opificio delle Pietre Dure at the Fortezza da Basso.

During the first year the artwork has been subjected to a comprehensive series of diagnostic tests to fully understand the conservation state of the wooden support (that has undergone dimensional changes over time) and of the preliminary painted surface that Leonardo had begun to compose.

The subsequent first stage of the restoration intervention, focusing on the painted area, will be completed within the summer of next year.

This will be followed by the restoration of the wooden support, which is necessary in order to ensure its solidity and to avoid negative repercussions on the painting itself.

The painting will presumably be returned to the Uffizi by the end of 2015, showcased in the newly refurbished Room 15 of the Gallery.

"This is another very important moment in the history of the restoration of the masterpiece by Leonardo – said **Cristina Acidini**, superintendent for the Museums of the City of Florence – with the Opificio delle Pietre Dure showing the results of the intervention on the painted surface: a decisive contribution to the advancement of our knowledge of the painting, with regard to both the materials present on the table and their different layering, and its original execution. This provides new opportunities for interpreting the *Adoration of the Magi* as a whole as well as in its details."

According to **Antonio Natali**, director of the Uffizi Gallery, "The cleaning, where it is complete, has appreciably revealed what had only been possible to infer by reading the infrared results. We can now assert with absolute certainty that upon completion of the restoration, the eyes of all Uffizi visitors will be convinced of a theological unfolding that so far had been reconstructed only through investigation. Thus turning into reality our aspiration of making the museum a place of education rather than amazement."



SOPRINTENDENZA SPECIALE PER IL PATRIMONIO STORICO ARTISTICO ED ETNOANTROPOLOGICO  
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On her part, President of the Amici degli Uffizi, **Maria Vittoria Rimbotti**, has underlined that “it is two years since the restoration started, a long and extremely delicate process undertaken by the Opificio delle Pietre Dure in Florence with the professionalism and outstanding expertise that have made it a world-renowned benchmark for art restoration”. “Right from the beginning – continued **Maria Vittoria Rimbotti** – the Amici degli Uffizi have closely followed this restoration works. In 2012, in view of the upcoming celebrations for our twentieth anniversary, we sustained the expenses for the diagnostic tests. It then seemed only befitting that the Association I am honored to chair should go on to financially support the continuation of the task”.

In more technical terms, **Marco Ciatti**, superintendent of the Opificio delle Pietre Dure, said that “in this second press conference dedicated to the restoration of Leonardo da Vinci’s *Adoration of the Magi* from the Uffizi Gallery, we can confirm that the issues and the hoped-for results, anticipated and suggested in the previous conference based on the results of the diagnostic tests on the artwork, have been fully realized over time, also revealing at the same time interesting new aspect. We can now clearly and uncontrovertedly see that the cleaning intervention, through a light, gradual and differentiated thinning out of the various materials superimposed on the surface over the centuries by different maintainers and restorers of the Gallery, was absolutely necessary and technically possible.”

#### ATTENTION

In [AreaStampa](#) of the Polo Museale Fiorentino website, you may find this press release along with a wide selection of photographs of Leonardo da Vinci’s masterpiece.

## The Restoration Results

by Marco Ciatti

*Superintendent of the Opificio delle Pietre Dure in Florence*

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We can now clearly and uncontroversially see that the cleaning intervention, through a light, gradual and differentiated thinning out of the various materials superimposed on the surface over the centuries by different maintainers and restorers of the Gallery, was absolutely necessary and technically possible.

It is clearly visible how the painted surface, although barely sketched, is now free from the dangerous effect of accumulated tear material, and the drawing and shading finally emerge in full clarity, making their expressive values more thoroughly readable.

For example, alterations of these added materials and non-original alterations on the beautiful figure of the thinker, or Isaiah according to Antonio Natali's iconographic reading, flattened by whitening, disappeared with a gentle cleaning treatment and the power of volumes and expressions immediately resurfaced. But especially in the upper part does the new reading of the artwork forcibly asserts itself, revealing the thinnest hint of the colour of the sky and making visible to the naked eye, instead of only with infrared, the figures of the workers intent on rebuilding the Temple, an element of great iconological importance, as well as the battling horses and other figures on the right. The presence of these traces of colour, already evidenced by the first diagnostic tests, is perhaps at the origin of the coating with which, in past centuries, it was attempted to cover them, maybe in order to give the composition the effect of an intentional monochromatic, rather than an unfinished work.

This delicate cleaning has also allowed to penetrate more and more into Leonardo's way of working, confirming the initial interpretation about the various phases and materials, but also adding new elements, examples and interesting interpretative issues. Some elements are significant in order to understand Leonardo's mental process, by which he worked very freely according to inspiration, over an extremely rigorous perspective setting of the whole. The group of heads on the left side clearly shows the various possible levels during the construction process of the images. To the far right, instead, a horse's head can be seen in different positions, for which the painter had evidently not yet made his final choice.

It is visible everywhere that a lot of added matter has been left, according to the theoretical approach and cleaning technique typical of this Institute, both as safety level and as "patina" of past history. The principle guiding us, as it is well known, is that the cleaning process should not aim at making the painting as good as new, an unprovable and dangerous pretense since no one can know exactly which was its appearance and that could lead to irreparable damage, rather to allow a correct reading of its meanings and expressive values, albeit with signs of the passage of time.

In the end, Leonardo's painting must have the appearance of an unfinished, very old painting, but in good conditions regarding both materials and readability. This, as well as the utmost respect towards its material and formal authenticity, is the purpose of the whole team at work at the Opificio (conservators, scientists, art historians) that, with a continuous confrontation with the Direction of the Uffizi Gallery, with the scholars of Leonardo's work and with the fundamental support of the Amici degli Uffizi, see to the



imminent conclusion of this first stage of the intervention. The results, however, are of such interest and novelty that, according to our principle of total transparency, we felt it appropriate to present them to all interested parties.