Restawr fuq it-Titular ta' San Nikola

F'dawn l-aħħar xhur, bejn Novembru 2012 u April 2013, ReCoop (Restoration and Conservation Co-operative) Ltd wettqet ħidma ta' restawr u konservazzjoni fuq il-pittura tal-kwadru titulari ta' San Nikola li jinsab fil-knisja parrokkjali tas-Siġġiewi. Dan il-proġett importanti ġie fdat f'idejn ReCoop Ltd mill-Arċipriet, ir-Rev. Kan. Joseph Grech.

Il-pittura, li saret fuq it-tila bl-użu ta' pigmenti fiż-żejt, huwa xogħol tal-artist prolifiku Barokk Mattia Preti (1613-1699). Il-kwadru jirrappreżenta l-ħelsien ta' żagħżugħ mill-jasar, wieħed mill-mirakli attribwiti lil San Nikola ta' Bari. Il-pittura, iffinanzjata minn Giovanni Fiol, saret fil-bidu tas-snin tmenin tas-seklu sbatax meta ġiet ukoll ikkonsagrata l-knisja l-ġdida tas-Siġġiewi ddisinjata mill-arkitett Malti Lorenzo Gafà. Kitba fuq id-dahar tal-pittura turi li din ġiet restawrata mill-inqas darba fl-1929 minn P. Galea.

Din il-pittura kellha bżonn ta' attenzjoni immedjata minħabba li wieħed seta' faċilment jinnota tiżqiq, l-aktar fil-parti t'isfel tagħha. Kienu wkoll evidenti għadd ta' rqajja' u tbajja' ta' verniċ u żebgħa.

Qabel ma nbdiet il-ħidma ta' restawr, il-pittura ġiet dokumentata b'għadd ta' ritratti. Permezz ta' diversi eżamijiet, it-tim tar-ReCoop seta' jidentifika restawr li kien sar fl-imgħoddi u ra x'materjal ieħor kien hemm fuq is-saff taż-żebgħa biex b'hekk seta' jagħżel l-aqwa trattament possibbli. Dan beda b'testijiet ta' tindif fuq il-pittura biex jiġi identifikat l-aktar mod effettiv biex tiġi restawrata u fl-istess ħin protetta l-pittura. Waqt dan it-trattament ta' tindif, tneħħew saffi qodma ta' żejt u verniċ flimkien ma' żebgħa antika fuq l-oriġinal. B'hekk il-pittura reġgħet ħadet il-ħajja tal-bidu tagħha.

Il-pittura għaddiet minn intervent strutturali fejn id-dahar tagħha tnaddaf minn saffi ta' ħmieġ li akkumula maż-żmien. Imbagħad it-tim tar-ReCoop saħħaħ il-pittura oriġinali billi kkonsolida s-saff tal-pigment u waħħal tila ġdida u b'saħħitha tal-għażel. Imbagħad il-proċess, in-nuqqas ta' pigment ġie integrat b'pigmenti riversibbli apposta għar-restawr. Fl-aħħar il-pittura ngħatat verniċ apposta biex jipproteġi l-pigmenti mill-elementi.

Dan ir-restawr qed jaħbat mal-400 anniversarju mit-twelid ta' Mattia Preti u b'hekk qed jgħin biex issir iktar riċerka u studju dwar dan il-pittur Barokk u l-opra artistika tiegħu f'Malta. Ta' min jinnota li fil-proċess tal-istudju ta' din il-pittura nstab li l-pittura oriġinali li ħadem Preti kienet madwar erba' ċentimetri ikbar mid-dimensjonijiet tal-gwarniċ skulturat fil-ġebla fejn kellha titpoġġa. Il-probabbiltà hi li kien hemm żball fil-qies u għalhekk naħsbu li l-kwadru tnaqqas meta ġie biex jitqiegħed f'postu.

Nikol Bezzina

The Restoration and Conservation Co-operative Ltd (ReCoop) has recently completed the restoration and conservation treatment of Mattia Preti's (1613-1699) large titular altar painting which hangs at the parish church of St Nicholas in Siġġiewi. Parish priest Rev. Can. Joseph Grech entrusted ReCoop Ltd with this important restoration project. Work commenced in November 2012 and was completed in April 2013.

The painting, which was executed using pigments bound in an oil medium applied on canvas, is a late work by the prolific Baroque artist Mattia Preti, and represents A Miracle of St Nicholas of Bari*, depicting the liberation of a Christian boy from slavery. The painting was executed in the early 1680s at the time of the consecration of the new church designed by the Maltese architect Lorenzo Gafà and was funded through provisions left by Giovanni Fiol. Records show that the painting went through at least one restoration intervention in the second half of the 20th century.*

This work needed immediate attention since sagging was easily noticeable and areas of bulging canvas were apparent in the lower areas of the work. Numerous patches and stains of both varnish and of scattered over paintings were also evident.

Before the restoration intervention could start, the painting was documented photographically. These physical examinations helped the ReCoop team to identify past restorations and any foreign materials present on top of the paint layer and helped in designing the best treatment

possible. The treatment commenced with cleaning tests. These tests were executed to ensure the tailoring of the safest and most effective cleaning agent and methodology. Particular phases of treatment included the cleaning, whereby dark layers of aged oil and varnish together with any over paintings were removed to uncover the original paint layers underneath. Thus the painting regained its original luminosity and vivid palette.

The painting also underwent structural intervention. The back of the painting was cleaned from any old and aged layers of dirt. The ReCoop team then consolidated the painting by attaching a pre-treated piece of new and strong linen canvas to the back in order to add strength to the painting. Any loses were integrated and the painting was given final protective layers.

This restoration coincides with the 400th anniversary from the Baroque artist's birth and thus marks an important contribution to research and study on Mattia Preti and his oeuvre in Malta.

Lisa Xuereb

Nhar is-Sibt 6 t'April fit-8.00 ta' filgħaxija fil-knisja parrokkjali saret serata li fiha ġie inawgurat il-kwadru titulari wara li sarlu restawr mid-ditta ReCoop Ltd. Is-serata, ippreżentata minn Dott. Nicholas Vassallo, bdiet b'daqq fuq l-orgni minn John Aquilina, Organista tal-Katidral tal-Imdina. Wara għamel diskors ta' ringrazzjament l-Arċipriet, il-Kan. Joseph Grech. Eżatt wara ñkixef il-kwadru fost ċapċip minn dawk kollha preżenti.

Il-Prof. Keith Sciberras, imbagħad, għamel diskors li permezz tiegħu, u bl-għajnuna ta' ritratti fuq skrin kbir, ta ħarsa lejn il-kwadru ta' San Nikola fl-kuntest tax-xogħol artistiku ta' Mattia Preti. Huwa qal li m'hemmx dubju li l-kwadru huwa xogħol tal-id tal-Preti. Interessanti kien ix-xebh tal-kwadru tagħna ma' pittura tal-Preti fil-Knisja ta' San Franġisk f'Fano, l-Italja. Diskors ieħor sar minn Paul Muscat dwar il-ħidma li saret fuq il-kwadru mil-lat ta' restawr u konservazzjoni. Huwa ta ħarsa lejn l-istadji kollha li kellu jgħaddi minnhom il-kwadru biex seta' jiġi restawrat b'mod professjonali. Semma, fost l-oħrajn, li l-pittura tagħna ftit drabi biss ġiet restawrata u jidher ċar li s-Siġġiwin ħadu ħsieb sewwa ta' dan il-kwadru tant għal qalbhom.

L-organista John Aquilina għalaq is-serata b'daqq fuq l-orgni tal-knisja tagħna li ssebbħet mill-ġdid bi kwadru li reġa' ngħata l-ħajja f'għeluq l-400 anniversarju mit-twelid ta' Mattia Preti. Il-ħlas għal dan ir-restawr laħaq il-15,000 ewro li l-biċċa l-kbira tagħhom inġabru permezz ta' donazzjonijiet mill-parruċċani u minn benefatturi oħra.

Inkunu għaqlin f'din il-festa billi:

- Inqerru u nitqarbnu (ikun hawn konfessuri barranin).
- Nersqu iktar lejn il-knisja u nsibu ħin għat-talb.
- Infittxu l-għaqda vera bejnietna.