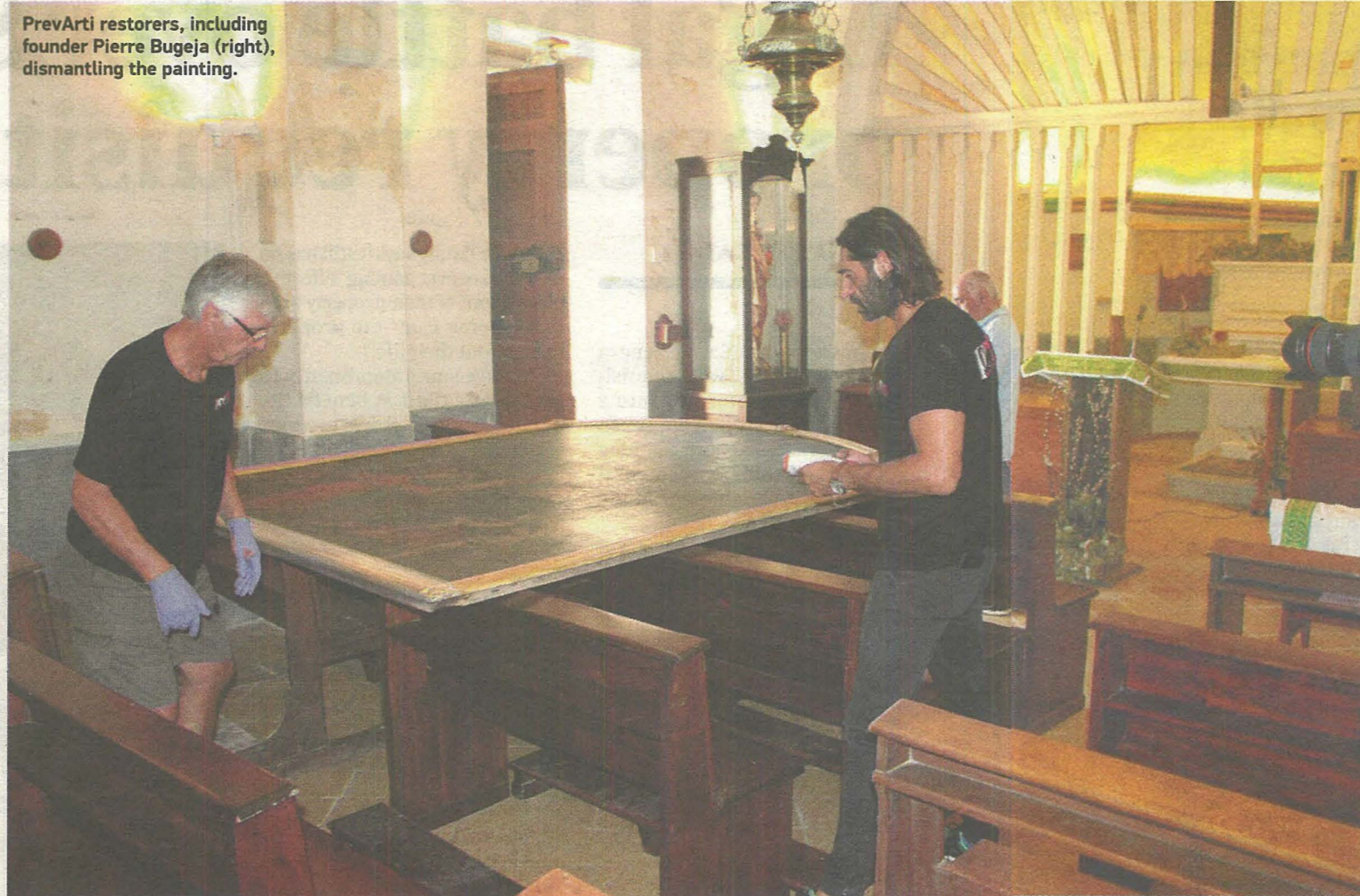


# NATIONAL



The titular painting of the Comino chapel before it was dismantled last August. PHOTOS: BOV and PREVARTI

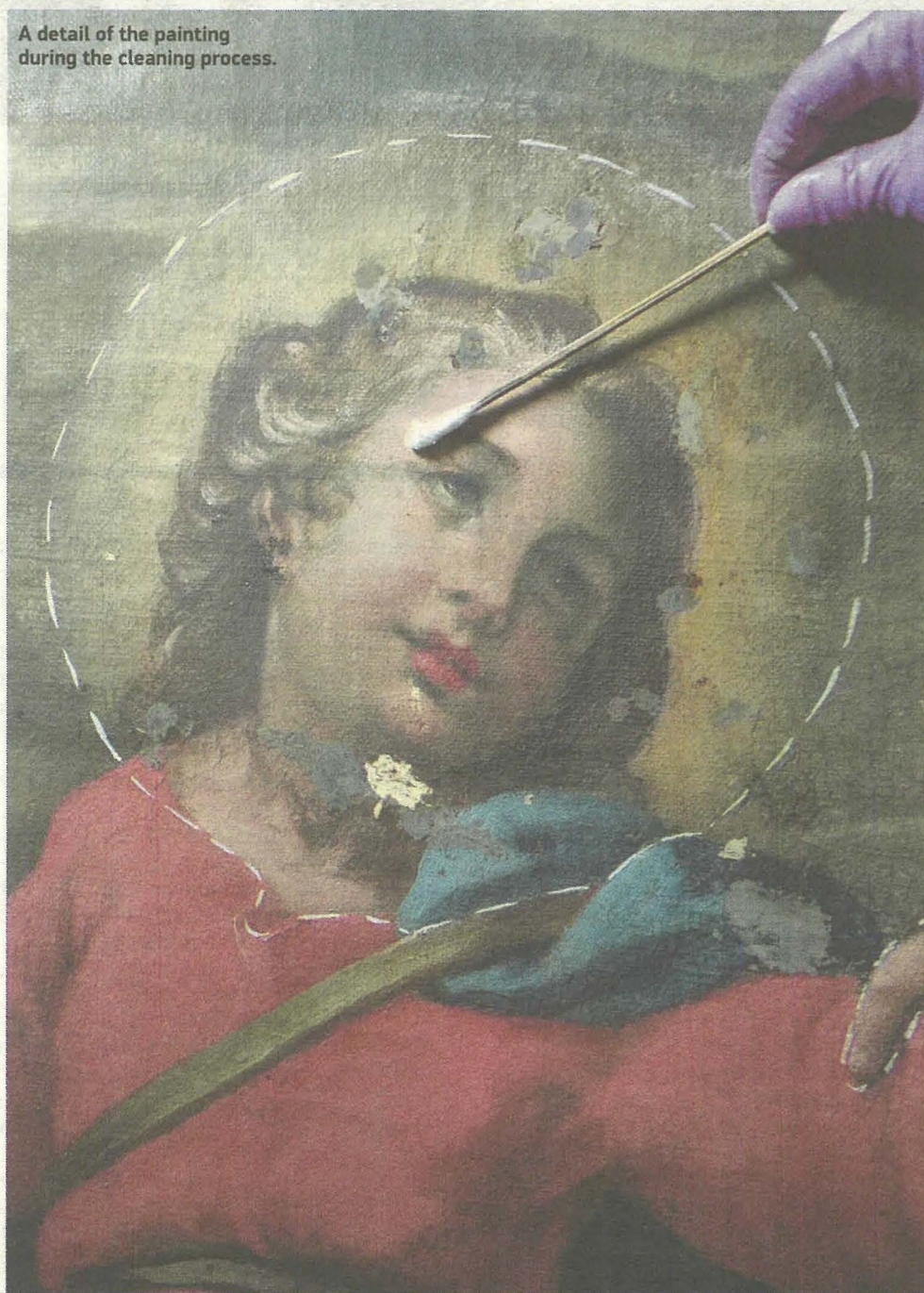


PrevArti restorers, including founder Pierre Bugeja (right), dismantling the painting.



The Comino chapel is dedicated to the Return of the Holy Family from Egypt.

## Titular painting of Comino chapel being restored



A detail of the painting during the cleaning process.

The titular painting at the small chapel in Comino is currently undergoing restoration and conservation works, with the process expected to be completed by May.

The painting depicts the return of the Holy Family from Egypt on their way back to Nazareth. It features the figure of Jesus being held by Our Lady, St Joseph and the donkey which, according to the bible, accompanied the Holy Family on their journey.

The 18th-century oil on canvas work was transported from Comino to the laboratory of restorers PrevArti, in Mosta, last August.

So far, the painting was cleaned in order to remove dust and old varnish, together with any old retouched areas. Any old stucco from a previous restoration intervention was removed mechanically using a scalpel.

After the cleaning process was completed, the paint layer was covered with Japanese paper in order to consolidate it and safeguard the painting during handling.

**“In the 18th century, it was quite common for artists to keep themselves anonymous”**

“This way the painting could be worked on from the back,” explained PrevArti’s founder and senior conservator Pierre Bugeja.

Since the canvas was relined in the past, the old relining canvas is being removed.

“This process is being done slowly using the ‘chequerboard method’ as the old lining is tough to remove. The work is thus focused on small areas at a time and the original canvas is not affected,” Mr Bugeja continued.

After this treatment is completed, repairs will be carried out on the original canvas as necessary. Mr Bugeja is hoping that this will help shed light on the author behind this masterpiece, who to date is still unknown.



The painting has so far been cleaned in order to remove dust and old varnish, together with any old retouched areas.

“In the early 18th century, it was quite common for artists to keep themselves anonymous. However, the frame and the faces of the figures in the painting, are very similar to others featuring in paintings found at Nadur parish church,” he said.

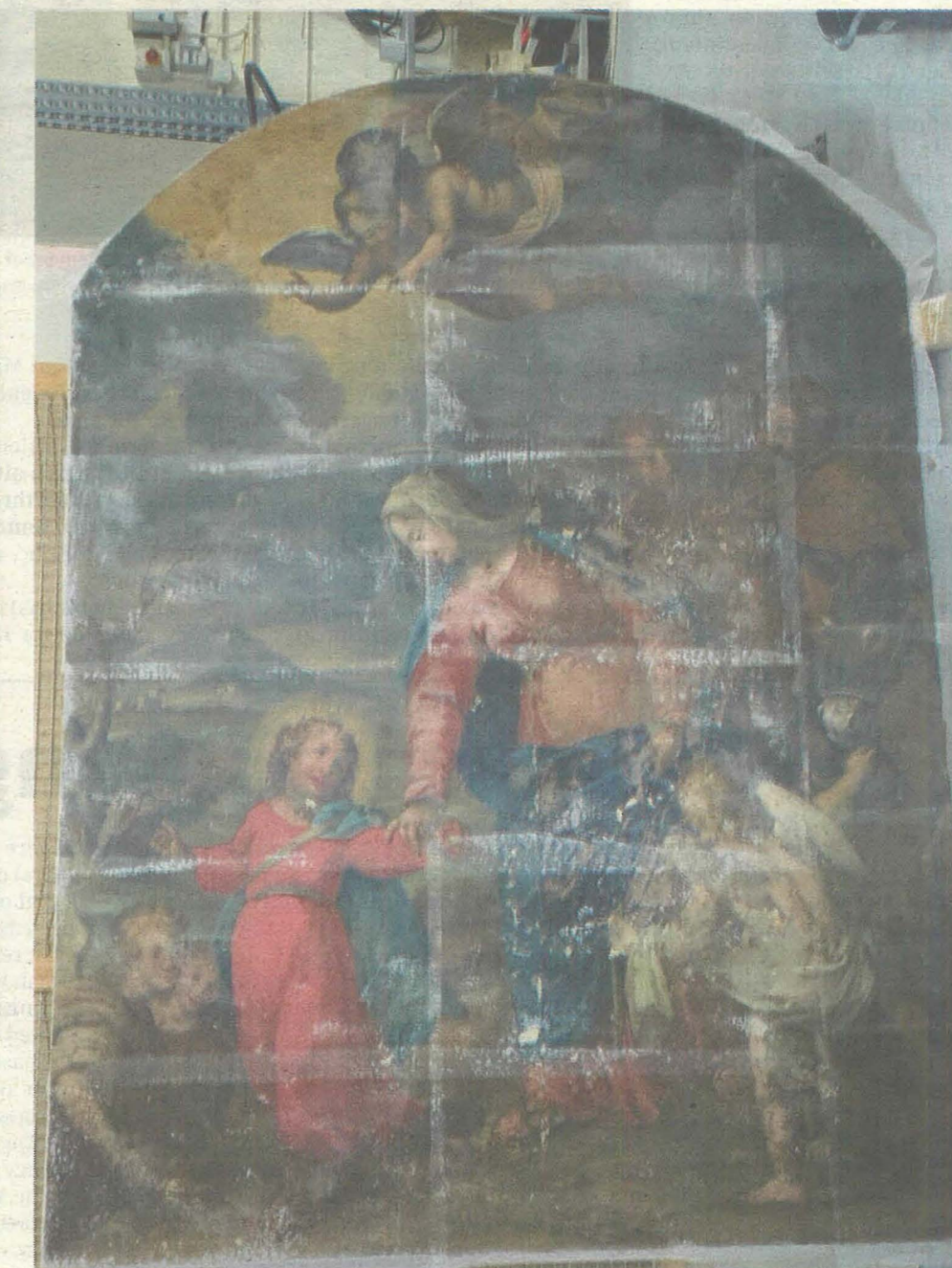
“Therefore, it is not excluded that this painting originates from the hands of one of

the artists who are already known to have worked on paintings of the Nadur church. However, so far we can not say this with certainty.”

The chaplain of the Comino chapel, Mgr Joseph Attard, last year said that once he took charge of the chaplaincy, he immediately felt the need to conserve the painting.

“I am already looking forward to see the completion of the restoration process and then we will welcome back the painting for public admiration at our chapel, in Santa Marija Bay, by May 2020,” he had said.

The project is being supported financially by Bank of Valletta.



The painting during the restoration works.