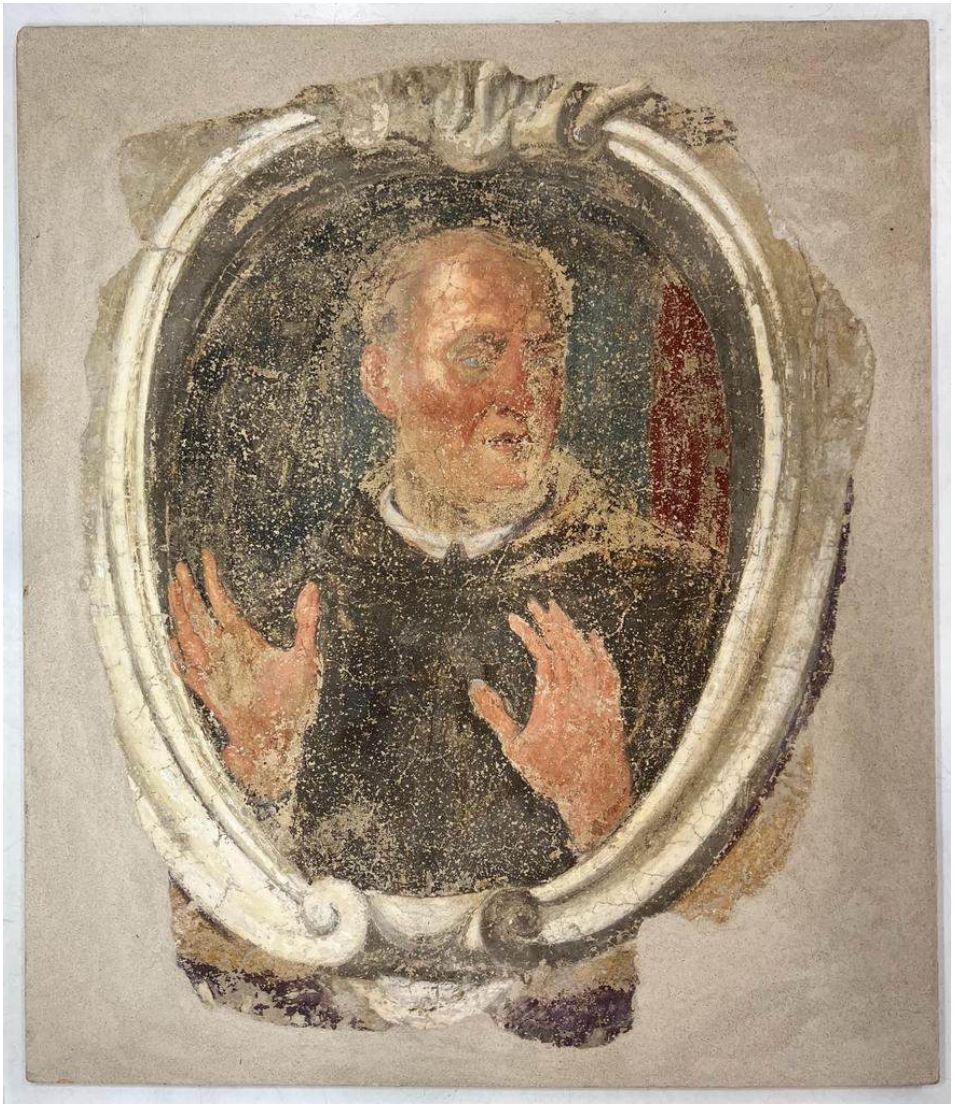
RES 360 F – Advanced Fresco Painting and Restoration

Mahek Pednekar



Object: Detached fresco (second detachment)

Original Location: Cloister of the Church of Ognissanti, Florence

Subject: Franciscan saint within an oval

Technique: Strappo

Artist: Jacopo Ligozzi

Date: 1720

Dimensions – 100 x 85 cms

Description:

The original location of this detached painting was in the cloister of the church of Ognissanti, on the left counter-facade. The painting depicts a Saint inside an oval shaped frame, as it is defined in the Superintendence documentation as - a portrait inside an oval. It is a part of a series of "Portraits of Cardinal Popes and Bishops," a pictorial cycle of paintings from the 1720s. It appears that Fabrizio Boschi and his disciples did not paint this fresco. Given that the cloister dates to the early 1600s and that Jacopo Ligozzi and Giovanni da San Giovanni are credited with creating the visual cycles of the lunettes, the theory that Jacopo Ligozzi is responsible for the decoration seems more plausible. The fresco has been previously retouched and detached twice and applied to a chipboard with the help of a protective lead paint.

State of Conservation and degradation analysis:

The fresco is seen to be in a mediocre state of conservation. There is a deposit of incoherent materials like dust and grime, on the entire surface of the painting which is caused by accumulation of dirt in the Superintendence office where it was previously stored. The pictorial layer seems to have darkened and a lot of aspects of the fresco have faded away causing a loss in the brilliance of the pigments that were original used (fig.2). There are no detachments of the pictorial layer or dust because the last restoration, which probably occurred in the 1960s or 1970s, restored stability of the layer. However, the color drops on the fresco are many and obvious, which has affected the legibility of the work in some sections and revealed the preparation of strong glue in others(fig.3). The grouting done in the previous restoration work is in good condition, and does not show any signs of deterioration, the mortar used is cohesive and stable. Finally, the chipboard support has an inscription on the back (fig.4) and is still in good condition although it has some dents along the edges, probably due to the movements of the same. Paint loss can be seen all over the fresco and there is a major paint loss and abrasion on the face and the right hand. (fig.5 and 6) A slight efflorescence/blanching can be seen on the torso as well. Lastly, there is a intonaco loss along the oval frame.

Fig.1

Fig.2

Fig.3

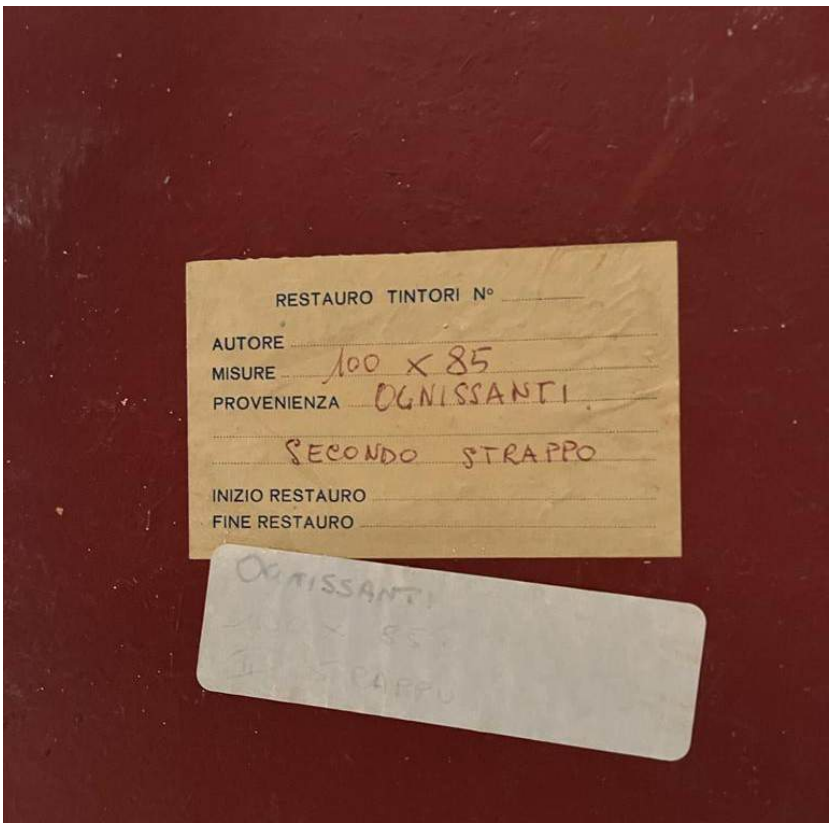

RESTAURO TINTORI N°
AUTORE
MISURE 100 x 85
PROVENIENZA OGNISSANTI
SECONDO STRAPPO
INIZIO RESTAURO
FINE RESTAURO

Fig.4

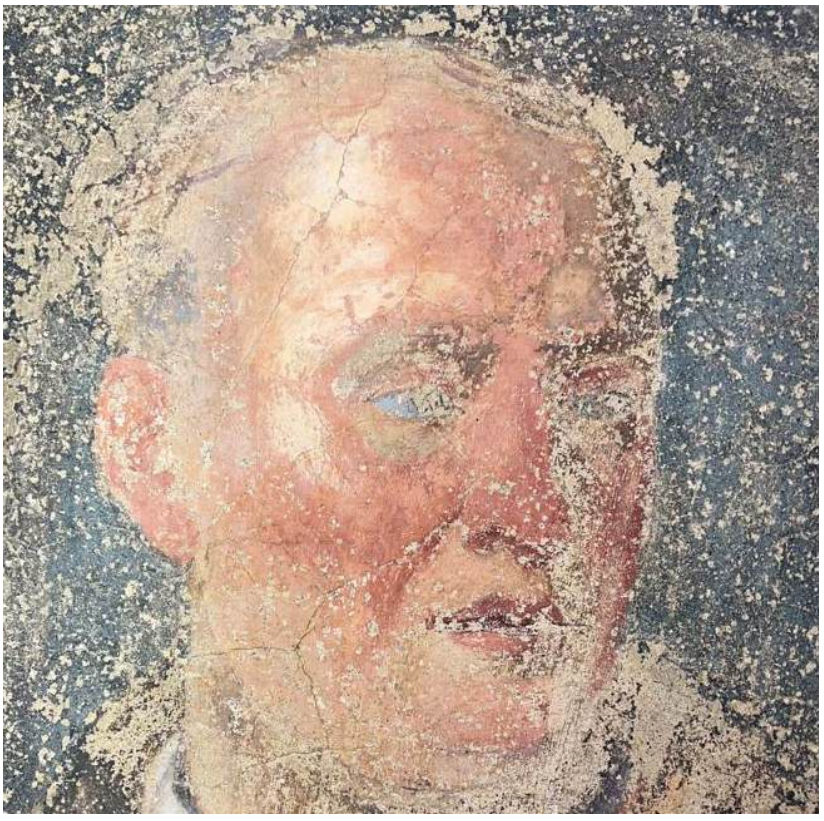


Fig.5

Fig.6

Interventions:

To move forward with a potential pre-consolidation of the pictorial surface, the first step is to determine the stability of the pigments. First, dust, previous touch-ups, and any localized repainting were removed from all surfaces (if any, and in line with the DL and the Superintendence); this operation was completed first dry with soft bristle brushes, then wet with sponges dipped in demineralized water. Cleaning tests using ammonium carbonate aqueous solution poultices were carried out to address the sulphation issue and clean the surface layer of the fresco. The first cleaning test was performed in three different areas, using a cotton swab dipped in 15% ammonium carbonate diluted in de-mineralized water. One of the areas showed increase in efflorescence (fig.7 and 8) while the other two spots showed no visible change. The second cleaning test was performed using poultices

of aqueous solution of ammonium carbonate. A saturated ammonium carbonate solution was used to swell paper pulp (wood pulp, pure cellulose fiber flakes), and the resulting mixture was then applied to the surface layer with the help of Japanese paper. This was allowed to sit on the ground for ten minutes. The tested areas released a yellow like hue (possibly a protective layer) (fig.9) on the Japanese paper and a white efflorescence (fig.10) is visible after the water wash. The rest of the cleaning is performed with the same saturated ammonium carbonated soaked wood pulp and Japanese paper all over the fresco for ten to fifteen minutes. The rest of the fresco was mechanically cleaned using a sponge dipped in tap water.

Fig.7

Fig.8

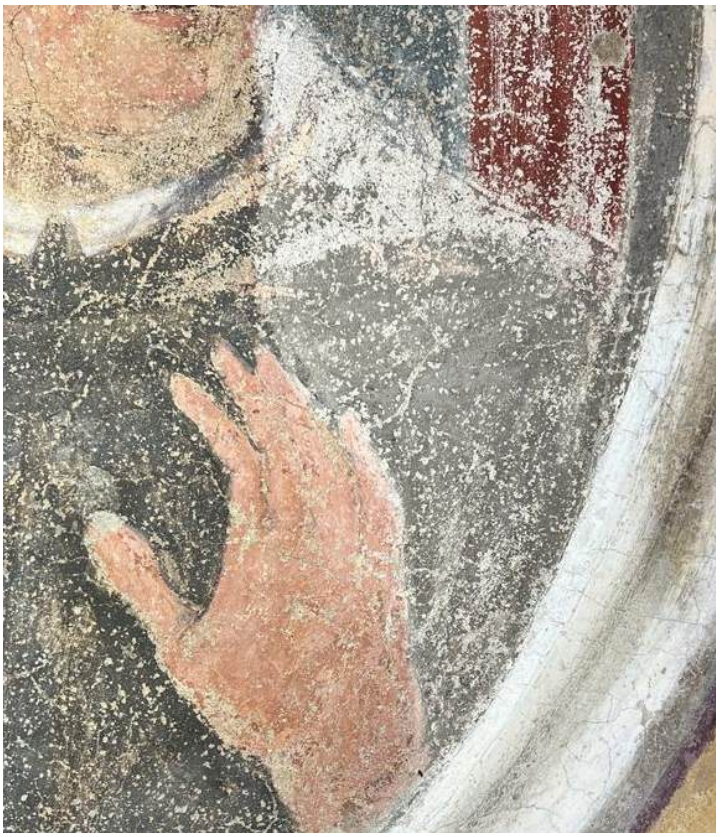


Fig.9

The paint losses were then retouched with water colors, to ensure 100% reversibility, in a few areas using the technique of pictorial reintegration, ringranatura, tratteggio and mimetic retouching. The areas around the frame were retouched using the technique of mimetic retouching where a lighter shade of the warm grey was used to re-construct (fig.11 and 12) the aspects that were lost. The technique of tratteggio was used in the larger paint losses that were seen below the white frame. This retouching was done with the help of fine lines (fig.13) with a slightly lighter colored purple paint. The other areas were retouched by closing all the open gaps (fig.14 and 15) to determine the different shades and then retouch the entire patch accordingly.

Fig.11

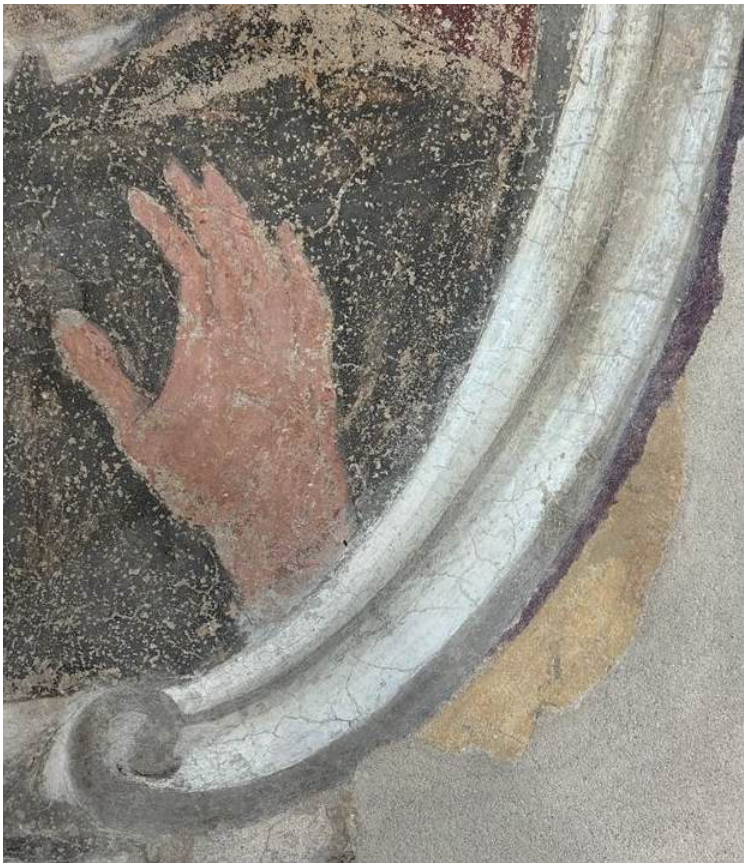


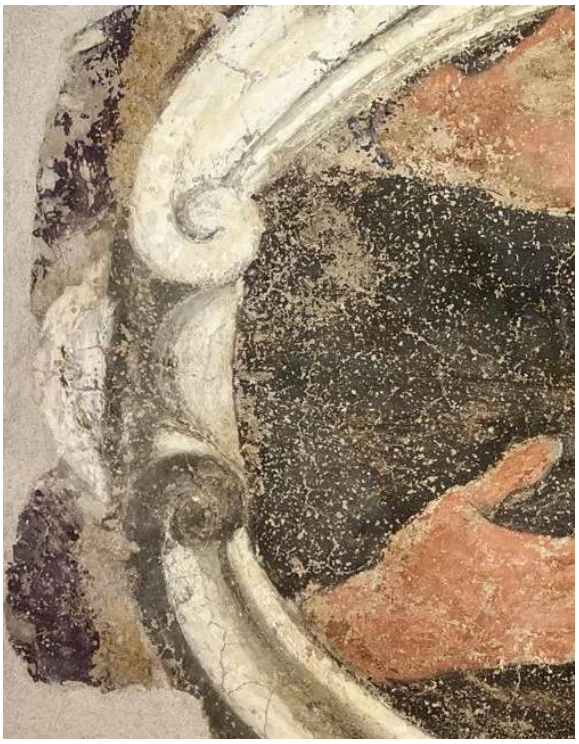
Fig12

Fig.13

Fig.14

Fig.15

Lower half of the fresco



Before retouching

After retouching

Lower left side of the fresco

Before retouching

After retouching

Extra Documentation:

Raking light photographic documentation