

Business

Miraculous Crucifix to be restored through BOV's support

17th Century Ta Giezu Crucifix to undergo studies and restoration

The 17th Century miraculous Crucifix found at the Franciscan Church of St Mary of Jesus (Ta' Giezu) will undergo an extensive conservation by the Arts Conservation Consortium through the support of Bank of Valletta.

Attributed to Fratello Innocenzo da Petralia, (1592-1648), the work of art is carved in such a way that it depicts the aftermath of the hits that the body of Jesus Christ suffered during his ordeal. Legend has it that the artist woke up one morning and found the head of the statue complete, making it exceptional and unique.

The crucifix falls under the responsibility of the ArchConfraternity of the Miraculous Crucifix, a brotherhood with the sole aim to focus on the proliferation of the devotion for this crucifix. The ArchConfraternity was set up in 1646 and boasts by Grand Master Manuel Pinto de Fonseca as one of its rectors in during the mid-18th century. Under expert advice, the ArchConfraternity commissioned the Arts Conservation Consortium (ACC), a consortium set up apositely for the restoration of the crucifix, and all experts in their field to study and restore the crucifix, the cross and the niche.

Speaking during a press conference held prior to the commencement of the restoration works, Mr Anton Cassar, Secretary of the



Archconfraternity explained 'The miraculous crucifix draws countless pilgrims to its shrine for spiritual comfort as well as to admire a unique work of art.

The proposed restoration works are expected to unveil and confirm or otherwise a number of

myths surrounding the crucifix that will add historical value to this unique gem.'

Dr Christian Attard, the project's leader and historian, explained how the historical and contextual study that will accompany the physical restoration of

the work may throw new light on its authorship and on the historical and artistic contexts in which it was made.

Head Conservator Charles Vella explained that this will be an extensive conservation programme that will include: an in-depth scientific/physical diagnostics and identification of constituent materials used; scientific and technical studies of the structure; and scientific and physical examinations of the pictorial layers. Last but not least the programme will also include a number of measures for preventive conservation.

Other conservators forming an essential part of the project are Adriana Alescio and Michael Formosa. Perit Andrew Ellul is responsible for the architectural surveys of the chapel and the niche in which the Crucifix is exhibited. This will help the monitoring of the relative humidity and temperatures.

This conservation process will be curated by Cynthia De Giorgio, a qualified curator and current Chief Curator of St John's Co-Cathedral. This Scientific/diagnostic programme has been authorised by the Catholic Cultural Heritage Commission of the Archdiocese of Malta.

'The national significance of the crucifix, was one of the main factors why Bank of Valletta eagerly adopted this project,' said Bank of Valletta CEO Mario Mallia. 'We say adopted rather than sponsored as we closely follow the progress of the project as part of our responsibility towards the Maltese community, to which we owe our existence'.