

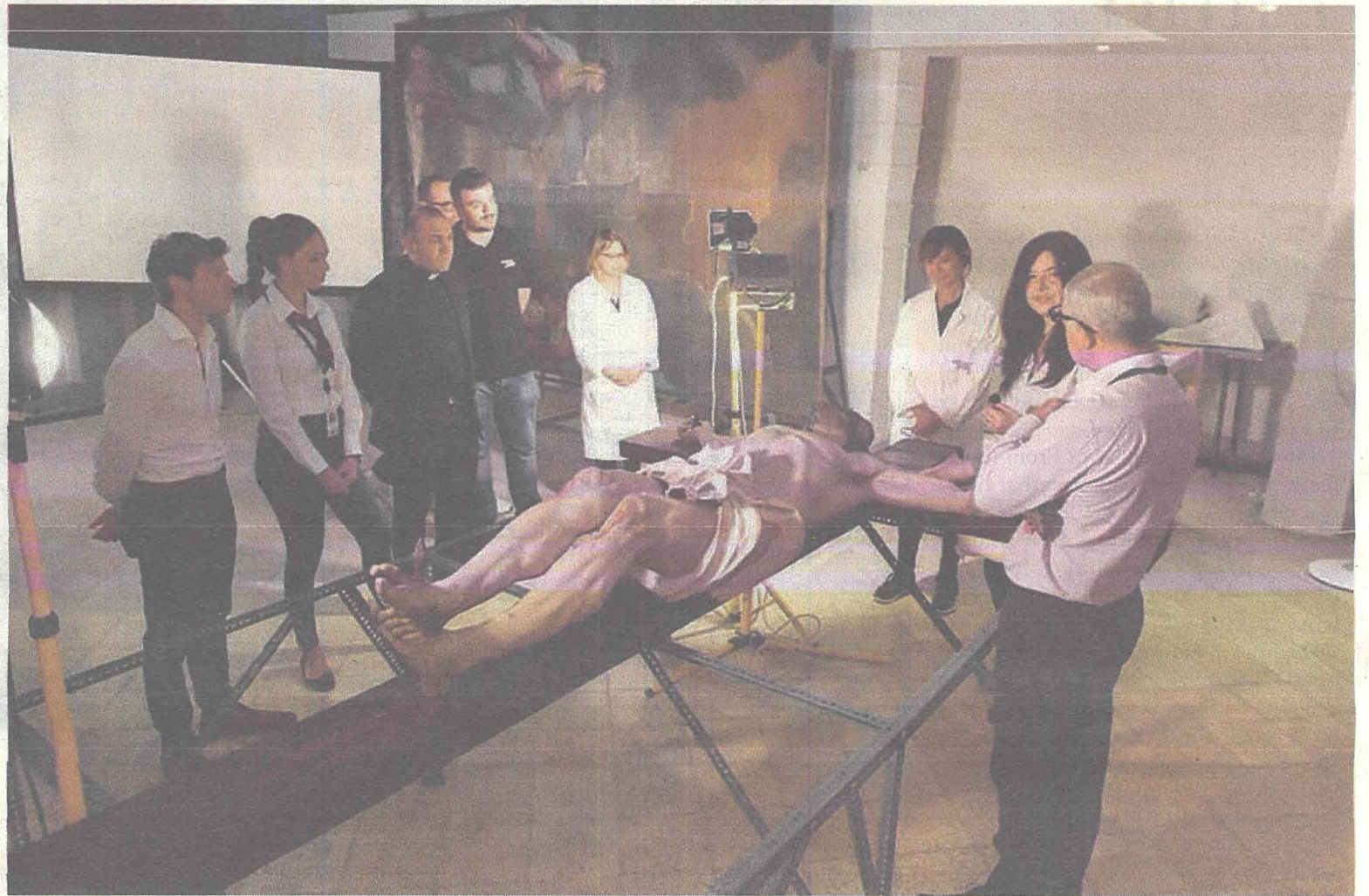
# 17th century altar painting and crucifix in Siggiewi Parish Church being restored

AN altar painting and a crucifix, dating back to the late 17th century executed for the chapel of Our Lady of Sorrows in Siggiewi Parish Church, are undergoing major restoration and conservation works which are being supported by Bank of Valletta. The Golgotha Group which was executed in Rome (possibly under the supervision of Lorenzo Gafà), was completed in August 1700 and arrived in Malta on the 4th January 1701.

This is a testimony of the dynamics involved in the commissioning of important artworks, directly from Rome, by a modest village community. The Siggiewi parish church, designed by Lorenzo Gafà was completed in the 1690's and the construction of the altar of Our Lady of Sorrows was executed between 1694 and 1696. Gafà was in Rome to oversee works on the titular work for St. John's Conventual Church in 1699. It is possible that at this time he was also overseeing the execution of the Golgotha Group.

The painting is attributed to Michelangelo Marulli, a Maltese artist practicing in Rome, while the crucifix is the work of sculptor Giovanni Battista Vanelli. Emerging data supports the idea of a close collaboration between the two artists and indicates that Marulli polychromised the crucifix.

All this information was revisited and complemented by physical evidence during this conservation project entrusted to Agatha Grima Conservators. "The conservation project started with the gathering of information through research of existing records and documents, and through thorough scientific documentation" said Agatha Grima. "This documentation consists of high resolution imaging, non-invasive physical-optical investigations, testing and analysis. The new information shed light on the original manufacturing technique, the fragile and unstable condition of the work and the numerous previous interventions which had left the original layers hidden under thick opaque layers of grime, oxidized varnish and overpaintings".



With this in mind, the Conservators formulated a tailored specific treatment, split in three phases. The treatment started off with the cleaning and removal of all foreign materials currently hiding the readability of the work. In the coming days, with the commencement of phase 2, the weakened canvas and wooden support will undergo structural consolidation and supporting. Phase 3 will incorporate the aesthetic integration and application of protective layers.

Charles Azzopardi, Executive PR & Marketing at Bank of Valletta, stressed on the commitment of the Bank in support of the local Arts & Culture sphere. "Recently acclaimed with a prestigious award by Arts Council Malta, the Bank is once again proudly supporting another conservation project which will enhance our commitment of passing on our heritage in a better state to our future generations".

The project is expected to be completed by the end of this year.

