



ANNUAL REPORT

1 August 2016 – 31 July 2017

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PRESIDENT'S NOTE

Since 2001 the St John's Co Cathedral Foundation has been implementing projects specifically to restore St John's Co-Cathedral to its former condition. This magnificent temple was built by the Knights of St John the Baptist as their conventual church. The restoration of such a unique monument is managed by the Foundation's expert team which also engages conservators to execute extensive conservation projects according to a strategy plan and using the latest conservation technology available. A report on the work performed during that specific year is published every year and this edition refers to the year 2016-2017. The report brings to your knowledge the extent of the conservation works carried out on the marble funerary monuments, inlaid marble floor, main façade, the bell towers, the Grand Masters' Crypt, and several other operational projects.

The magnificent works of art the Knights gave as gifts, over several years to the church to honour God has given St John's Co Cathedral a unique spirit. Its magnificence results from the combination of skill and dedication, not only of the its original sculptors, painters, architects but also of all those who have contributed their expertise to its restoration. Returning the church to its former condition and conserving it in the best manner possible for the knowledge of present and future visitors is the Foundation mission. Though the golden aura and dramatic art captures your attention, one is to keep in mind that this is essentially a holy place of worship and its grandeur is simply a visual expression of faith.

The position of President alternates yearly between a government-appointed member and a church-appointed member of the Foundation's Council. For the year under review, that is from August 2016 to July 2017, it was my responsibility to occupy the position of President of the Foundation. During this period the restoration of the tapestry set consisting of twenty-nine pieces, will come into its last phase, having started this project in 2006 makes it a formidable task. Also, this year has seen the commencement of the new museum extension that would surely become a land mark on the cultural map with the construction of a tapestry chamber of some seven hundred square metres to ensure the preservation of this unique set. It was with satisfaction that we saw as a Foundation the continuation of several challenging projects to further preserve and enhance this unique place of worship.



Mgr Louis Camilleri
President
August 2016-July 2017





ST JOHN'S CO-CATHEDRAL

The St John's Co-Cathedral Foundation was established in 2001 by the Government and the Catholic Church in Malta. The Foundation is administered by a Council consisting of six members: three are appointed by the Prime Minister and three by the Archbishop of Malta. The main aims of the Foundation are the conservation and restoration of the priceless works of art and artefacts preserved within the Co-Cathedral and its museum. The Foundation is responsible for the administration of St John's Co-Cathedral as a religious and cultural monument. The income generated throughout the year funds the maintenance and restoration projects, with the aim of preserving this Maltese jewel in the best possible condition to enhance the knowledge and admiration of present as well as future generations.

The Order of the Knights Hospitaller of St John of Jerusalem, of Rhodes and of Malta built the church which was completed in 1577 as their conventual church and dedicated to St John the Baptist, the patron saint of the Order. Over the years, St John's Church has been transformed into an outstanding treasure house, since the Grand Masters and the Knights donated gifts of high artistic value and made enormous contributions to enrich the church with only the best works of art by leading artists of the time. The numerous artefacts, by artists including the renowned Caravaggio and Mattia Preti, which embellish the Co-Cathedral are the artistic and religious heritage of hundreds of years of glorious history that is simultaneously Maltese and European. It is a unique monument of international importance and is a gem of baroque art. St John's Co-Cathedral is still an active sanctuary and holy place of veneration and hosts the most important church celebrations and state events.

St John's Co-Cathedral's architecture is of a basic mannerist form. The interior, which consists of a wide nave with a barrel vault and two aisles divided into side chapels, was originally just as simple as the exterior. However, in the seventeenth century, Grand Master Nicolas Cotoner ordered the complete redecoration of the interior. The dawn of the seventeenth century saw the formation of a new style that was both exuberant and demonstrative in character and provided ample decorative material. The contrast between the simple architecture of the external façade and the colourful rich interior is a major characteristic that makes St John's such a unique monument.

Mattia Preti, an Italian artist, was commissioned with the embellishment of the vault, where he painted episodes from the life of St John the Baptist. Preti was one of the leading artists of the seventeenth century. His pristine draughtsmanship and skilful use of colour transformed the interior into a celebration of baroque art. Preti produced a masterpiece of dramatic scenes and illusionistic architectural effects. During the seventeenth century, the plain walls of the nave and the chapels





were carved and gilded with a variety of motifs from foliage and flowers to angels and many other symbols.

St John's Co-Cathedral houses one of the most exceptional marble inlaid floors in the world. The floor contains tombstones that commemorate high-ranking members, with carved inscriptions that describe the acts of chivalry and religious ardour of individual knights. The extensive use of symbols and heraldic devices is a unique feature of the floor tombstones.

Under the administration of the Foundation, St John's Co-Cathedral has, over the last fifteen years, undergone an extensive programme where the interior was restored to its former condition that transformed it into the glowing jewel it once was during the reign of the Grand Masters of the Order of the Knights of St John. The planning and design of the extension and refurbishment of the museum was the major project undertaken during the year. St John's Co-Cathedral is one of Europe's unique churches and for this reason was listed, together with the entire city in which it stands, as a World Heritage site by UNESCO in 1980.

This year's report gives an extensive review of the works and project carried out during the presidency of Mgr Louis Camilleri and directed by the CEO Cynthia de Giorgio. It covers the holistic plan implemented to restore and conserve the works of art and artefacts in St John's Co-Cathedral and its museum. A detailed report follows, illustrating the management and projects carried out by the Foundation.





1. CONSERVATION PROJECTS

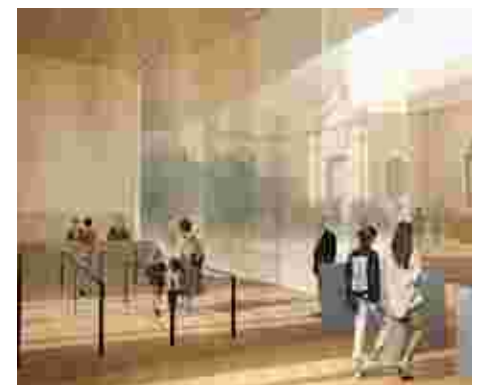
1.1 The Extension and Refurbishment of the St John's Co-Cathedral Museum Project

The Foundation's major project to extend and refurbish the Co-Cathedral's museum started this year. The objective of this project will be to extend and modernise the museum to exhibit most of the works of art and other artefacts in a fully accessible manner according to the importance, relevance and value of each artefact. The refurbishment will consist of exhibiting artefacts in appropriate conservation conditions and in the correct sequence. The extension will consist of creating adequate space and distance for visitors to view and appreciate the *objets d'art* according to the scale and materials of the artefacts. The main objective of the museum will be to highlight the most important collections and artistic contributions.

The extension and refurbishment will consist of a wing dedicated to Caravaggio that will focus on the expanded awareness of the renowned artist. The Centre will be equipped with the latest technologies to support a didactic approach to the artist. A chamber will be constructed to display the set of tapestries, most of which are based on designs prepared by the artist Peter Paul Rubens. The large dimensions of the tapestries require adequate space to be appreciated. The chamber will be equipped with didactic methods to assist awareness of the artistic importance of the tapestries. The collection of illuminated choral manuscripts and the collection of sacred vestments will be exhibited in the adjacent Carapечchia loggia. The *Cappella Ardente*, which is a unique funerary wooden structure, will also be exhibited. The silver collection that is currently in the reserved collection will be housed in the Bartolott Crypt. All the artefacts exhibited will be maintained in the correct climatic conditions to ensure their long-term conservation.

A visitors' centre will be installed at the new entrance to the museum on Merchant Street, with adequate space to facilitate comfortable entry for both group visits and individuals. In 2016 the Foundation had commissioned Architecture Project Ltd to be the architectural consultants to carry out the project to extend the existing museum and to rehabilitate spaces currently under-utilised within the museum premises.

The project was initiated in the first quarter of 2017, when the St John's Co-Cathedral Museum was officially closed and the careful dismantling of all the artefacts within the museum began. The first step was the repainting of the sacristy, which was set to house the paintings that hung in the painting gallery in the Carapечchia Wing, as this area was to become part of the new museum site. After the preparation of the space,





the paintings were carefully moved from the Carapечchia Wing and hung in the sacristy, where they are now enjoyed by the Cathedral's visitors. The restored tapestries were also carefully rolled up under the supervision of the Curator and Foundation's conservators. Once the museum was devoid of any delicate artefacts, the volumes were gutted, services removed and marble flooring lifted and stored for re-use or cycling. Then came the task of dismantling and demolishing previous parts of the old museum. The façades on Merchant Street which were to be retained were numbered, dismantled and stored off site. The remaining elements that made up the museum were demolished and carted away. Parallel to this, archaeologically monitored site investigations were carried out, to establish exactly the ground conditions that could be expected.

In March 2017, the tender for the construction of the museum was issued. Tender offers were received and were processed accordingly. The tender dossier was, however, amended at a later stage following a moratorium on tower cranes within Valletta for the duration of 2018 and tenderers were invited to re-price their offers with this change of logistical set-up. In May 2017, the tender for the complete works of the Caravaggio Wing was issued. By the end of August, the tender returns had been evaluated, negotiated and awarded. Works are set to begin in September 2017.





1.2 Restoration of The Triumph of the Eucharist Tapestries

The project for the restoration of the tapestries at St John's Co-Cathedral is reaching its final stage. This project commenced in 2006 on the initiative of the St John's Co-Cathedral Foundation. This year five tapestries have been restored by the Royal Manufacturers De Wit Laboratories in Belgium.

In September 2016 five of the narrow tapestries depicting the Apostles (St John, St Jude Thaddeus, St Matthew, St Thomas and St James the Great) were sent to Belgium for restoration. Professional advice regarding their restoration process was provided by Mr Yvan Maes De Wit while examining them on his visits to St John's on two separate occasions. The tapestries were woven in pure silk and wool and, since textiles are susceptible to deterioration from handling and being exposed to UV light, with the passage of time their restoration was necessary in order to preserve them.

The methodology of the restoration process consists of the removal of accumulated dust from the surface, followed by the application of a fine mist solution of water and solvents until the fabric is thoroughly cleansed. The tapestry is dried by a special quick-drying process to avoid shrinkage. Earlier restoration interventions were removed, loose parts and threads were consolidated and open seams repaired. The tapestry is then fitted with a new supportive lining to prevent deterioration. The Foundation was provided with air transport for the tapestries to and from Belgium courtesy of the Belgian Ministry of Defence and with the assistance of the Belgian Ambassador to Malta.

The tapestries had originally been woven in Brussels by the tapestry merchant and weaver Judocus de Vos in the late seventeenth century. The set was commissioned by Grand Master Ramon Perellos y Roccaful who had just been elected Grand Master and wished to furnish the Knights' Conventual Church of St John in Valletta with a series of tapestries to be hung on specific feasts. The set of tapestries depicts the Triumph of the Eucharist. The larger tapestries of the set were woven on cartoons based on creations by the renowned Flemish artist Peter Paul Rubens. The set consists of twenty-nine pieces and is the largest collection of tapestries woven during the Baroque Age. Fourteen large tapestries measure approximately just short of seven meters in width and depict scenes from the life of Christ and allegories portraying the Triumph of the Eucharist. Another fourteen smaller panels represent the Virgin Mary, Christ the Saviour and the Apostles. One tapestry portrays the benefactor, Grand Master Perellos who had donated the set to St John's in 1702.





1.3 Restoration of Main Façade and Bell Towers

One of the major projects at St John's Co-Cathedral has been the restoration of the main façade and the belfries. The restoration work started in 2014 and was completed in December 2017. The architectural firm *TBA periti* had conducted a condition assessment survey of the exterior architectural fabric to establish a conservation strategy and programme that included graphical documentation of the masonry. A detailed photographic record of the areas, in their current state, along with mapping of the areas of deterioration, was also conducted. Areas that had been rendered or plastered were also identified to create an illustrated description of the areas that required intervention. The report also included a description of the types of deterioration on the basis of detailed visual examinations carried out on site, including an appraisal of all elements to be restored or replaced.

Each block of stone was checked for any damages, cleaned and repaired. Retaining the original stone was a key element for all interventions required, although slabs that were in an advanced stage of deterioration were replaced. Part of this restoration process was the removal of encrustation and staining caused by atmospheric changes throughout the years and change of seasons. Another intervention was to divert rainwater inwards instead of having it streaming down the middle part of the main façade. To prevent pigeons and other birds from nesting and fouling the sculptural parts, new transparent spikes were installed. Transparent nets were also affixed in front of small windows and other small openings.

Restoration work was also carried out on the wooden apertures of the towers and the wooden beams of the bells in the belfry. These were carefully restored to their original state and repainted.

The restoration project is being co-financed by the Foundation and the Ministry for Justice, Culture and Local Government. The work was directed by the curator Ms Cynthia de Giorgio and carried out by a team of restorers from the Restoration Directorate, under the direction of Arch. Norbert Gatt and Arch. Jean Frendo.





1.4 Restoration of the Clock

The St John's Co-Cathedral Clock is found on the south bell tower of the building. It has three faces marking the hours, the days of the week and the date of the month respectively. The main one is the clock of the hour, beneath which a Latin inscription bears the name of its clock maker, *Clerici invenit*. Clerici, a Maltese clock-maker, connected the clock mechanisms on three bells, one large and two smaller. The three bells have a high relief coat-of-arms of the Grand Master Wignacourt and the large bell has the date 1619, probably the date when it was cast and possibly that of the construction of the clock.

The restoration of the clock consisted of stabilising the deteriorated surface, repair and plaster of the loose parts and integration of the inscriptions, the numbers and the decorative elements.

The surfaces were cleaned of dirty deposits and past restoration materials. Damaged mortar joints were removed and specific plasters were applied to level the surface. The decoration scheme was preserved and the remaining inscriptions, numbers and other marks carefully integrated. All the deteriorated metal supports were replaced with new ones made in stainless steel, whilst the arms were restored separately.

The three metal arms were cleaned of rust, galvanised, and painted with black varnish. The weather vane also required extensive restoration and repair since, with the effects of the elements, the metal had expanded as the vane was no longer functioning. This part was carefully lowered to ground level and was repaired in the laboratory. The wooden spool on which it spun also showed extensive deterioration and had to be replaced. All the moving parts were repaired, and the weather vane was reinstalled.





1.5 Environmental Control Equipment for the Grandmasters' Crypt

Another primary project on-going at St John's Co-Cathedral was the installation of a permanent environmental control system for the Grand Masters' Crypt.

The project commenced after the restoration of the crypt was completed in 2012. A scientific study was carried out by the Courtauld Institute that focused on the relation between the microclimate condition of the crypt and the conservation of its delicate frescos and monuments.

The study was followed by the analysis of the deterioration phenomena that caused the decohesion of the stone monuments and salts efflorescence on the painted surfaces. The result showed that only active preventive conservation, together with periodic maintenance, could slow down the deterioration process.

Fluctuations of temperature and relative humidity are the main causes of damage to the Crypt. Considering the delicate nature and the importance of the subterranean chamber, the Foundation proposed to install a sophisticated automated environmental control system as the best and unique solution to keep the inner microclimate in a stable and suitable condition for the constituent materials of the artefacts.





2. RESTORATION AND MAINTENANCE WORKS

2.1 Restoration of the Gilded Wall Carvings

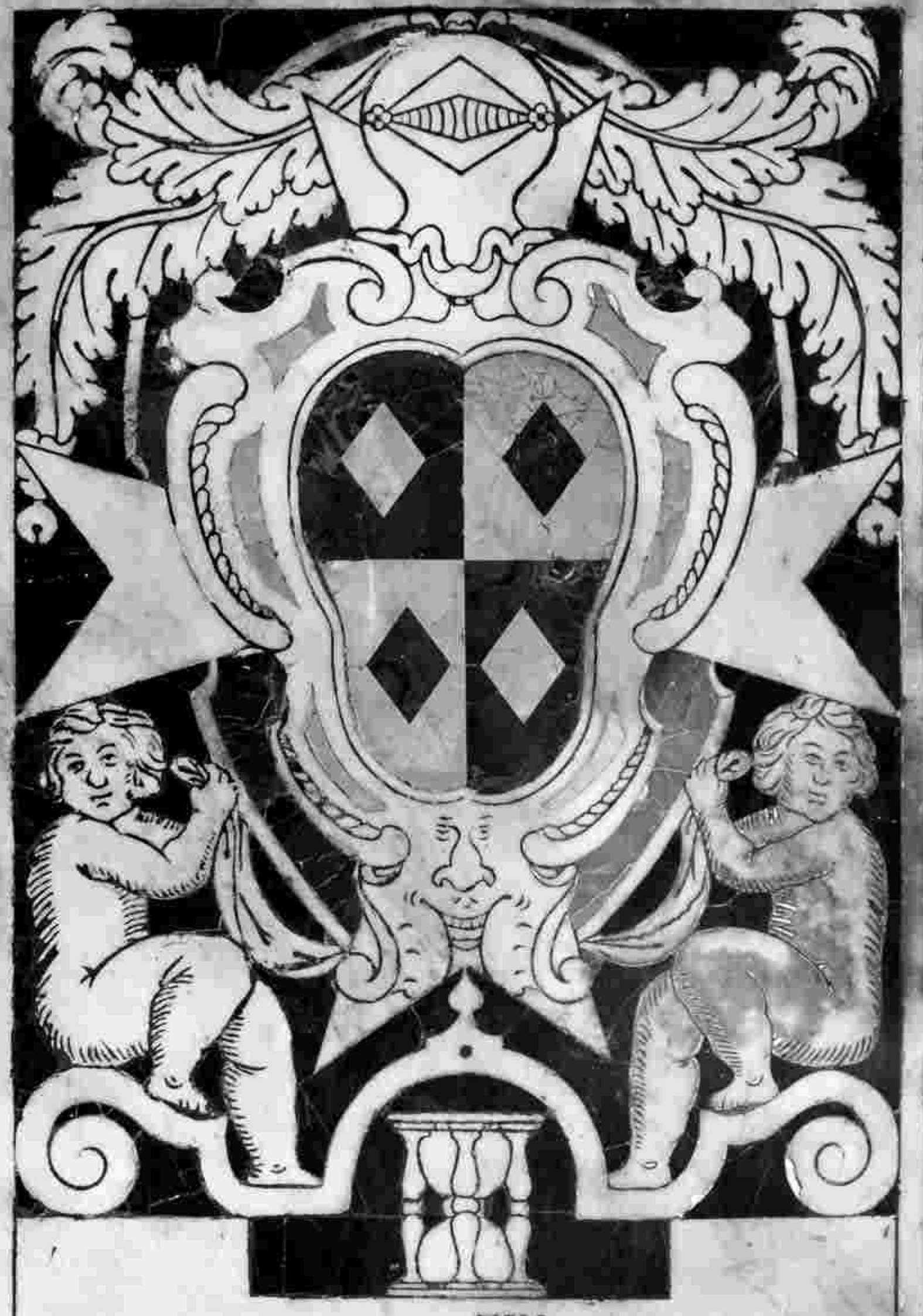
The maintenance project of the restoration of the wall carvings started in March 2015 with the aim of stabilising the conservation conditions of the gilded and coloured embellishments within the Co-Cathedral, thus protecting against further deterioration. The project consists mainly of consolidation carried out on the areas where the state of conservation has shown a type of deterioration resulting from atmospheric conditions.

The areas treated during this year were the painted and gilded surfaces on the inner pilasters of the chapels of Philermos, Auvergne and Provence. The conservation problems were mainly caused by the rising damp and salts, and the resulting detachment and de-cohesion of the gold and the colours from the stone. The deposits of dust and particularly air pollution that had accumulated over the years have caused the gold to appear dull and grey, and the solubilisation of the binder used for the application of the gold leaf and the consequential loss of the brilliance of the gold. The damaged areas were consolidated with the most suitable materials. The abrasions and the lacunae of the coloured surfaces were retouched with watercolours, while the losses in the gilding were reintegrated using the same gold leaf as the original technique. All the surfaces were dusted and cleaned to remove the different kinds of deposits.

The surfaces where the gold had completely lost its brilliance were cleaned and stabilised. In accordance with the aesthetic quality of the interiors of the Co-Cathedral, all the abrasions and the areas where the gold leaf appeared poor and dull were reintegrated with the same quality of gold leaf and gilding technique as had been used originally. The type of binder using an oil-based medium proved to be the most suitable for the inner microclimate of the church and was found to be the best solution to ensure the longevity of the gilding. Maintenance treatments are planned to be carried out frequently to avoid the accumulation of dust during the year, as will monitoring of the rising salts on the surfaces to preserve the integrity of the decorations.

The maintenance project and the restoration works were carried out under the direction of the Foundation's curator, Cynthia de Giorgio, and conservator Adriana Alescio.





2.2 Restoration of the Inlaid Marble Floor

The unique floor of the Co-Cathedral consists of four hundred inlaid marble tombstones dating from the early seventeenth century to the nineteenth century. The tombstones are the resting place of some of the most illustrious Knights of the Order coming from different European regions. The majority of the designs for the marble tombstones were made by renowned artists and were often executed by Maltese craftsmen. They are all original in design and, as a result, they are truly unique works of art. Each one is made of a large marble slab that is inlaid with polychrome marble, and they are embellished with symbols of virtues, death and immortality, such as eagles, lions, crowns, skeletons, skulls and angels. The delicately engraved Latin epitaphs, together with a range of symbols, illustrate the life story of the deceased, as well as his valorous deeds and achievements.

Though marble is considered to be a durable material, it suffers from damage caused by abrasion. The inlaid designs and motifs made of thin marble on the tombstones are also susceptible to cracking, with the passage of time as well as weight, leading to losses in the inlaid marble layer. The restoration of the inlaid marble tombstones is executed according to a priority conservation management plan.

The Foundation employs two full-time marble restorers to repair and preserve the tombstones, as well as the marble monuments. The laborious work involves the skilful consolidation of any loose parts, and the replacement of missing pieces. The restoration of the tombstones is an arduous task and is the main occupation of the in-house marble restorer Jesmond Bartolo. The restoration and conservation of this precious floor consists of replacing the missing inlaid parts with matching marble, often very difficult to obtain, using the appropriate techniques. All restoration is recorded and documented.

During this year, restoration was carried out on forty-two tombstones, including, for example, those commemorating Pompeo Rospigliosi in the chapel of Philermos, Rene de Maisonseule in the chapel of Auvergne, and Bernardo Scaglia, the oldest tombstone present in the Church. The aim was to restore large or small losses that had occurred with the passage of time. Materials used during past restoration interventions not compatible with the marble were removed. All the tombstones in the main nave were examined and each tombstone that had sustained losses was cleaned up, and replacement was carried out with new marble parts of the same type and colour. In addition, all the losses of the profiles and inscriptions caused by the abrasion of footfall on the surface were filled using suitable materials to render the incisions visible and enhance the aesthetic quality of the design.





The restoration of the tombstones was carried out by the marble restorer, Jesmond Bartolo, under the direction of Adriana Alescio, the Foundation's conservator. Further protection of the tombstones against deterioration caused by the abrasion of footfall of visitors walking daily through the Co-Cathedral, is provided by a protective carpet along the tourist route within the church.

2.3 Graphic Documentation of the State of Conservation of the Tombstones

The mapping project commenced in 2015 with the aim of recording the state of conservation of all the tombstones in the main nave, the chapels and the oratory. The study consisted of recording the type of existing damage and its progress. The analysis of the study will assist in identifying the deterioration connection between the manufacture technique of the tombstones, that is the type of marble, thickness, position, the subsoil condition, such as lifting and the presence of rising damp, and the accidental causes of deterioration by breakage and footfall abrasion.

Visual analysis was followed by a digital survey of each tombstone using the latest technology and software. The mapping of the various types of damage and deterioration was carried out with the use of specifically coloured symbols on black and white images of the tombstone. Each symbol refers to the specific type of damage present in the legend.

Each mapped tombstone was recorded on a data sheet, with the record being identified by name and number of the tombstone, and accompanied by historical information about date and placement, as well as technical information about dimension, type of marble, name of the artisan and date of past restorations documented. The graphic documentation collected and concluded in 2016 will be used as a database for marble cataloguing. It will also serve as a database for maintaining a restoration programme that will be updated periodically.





2.4 Conservation of the Funerary Monument of the Grand Master Marco Antonio Zondadari

The funerary monument of the Grand Master Marco Antonio Zondadari is situated on the left-hand side of the Main Entrance of St John's Co-Cathedral. This is the first of the two masterpieces that the Florentine sculptor Massimiliano Soldani Benzi realised for this Cathedral, followed by the monument dedicated to the Grand Master Manoel de Vilhena.

The monument, made in Florence in 1723, is an outstanding example of the sculpture of the late baroque, characterized by an impressive combination of dark bronze elements and polychrome marbles.

The Grand Master is represented in a full-size bronze figure wearing armor and laid on a sarcophagus of green marble, with his left arm over a pillow of yellow marble. The urn rests on a high marble pedestal is held by two bronze figures of Faith and Hope. Behind the Grand Master are displayed two enormous marble banners and a set of lances realized in bronze. Between these the figure of Charity and a small *putto* emerge to hold up one of the standards. On the dado is the commemorative inscription on a black marble slab, above which is an elaborate bronze scroll with an ornamental termination of wolves' heads. The composition is framed by two red marble columns, set on diagonally displaced pedestals and rising to sustain the entablature. Above the white marble cornice there is a large central coat-of-arms between other trophies and putti made in bronze.

The monument was examined and found to be in a structurally good condition. The conservation treatments focused on reviving the aesthetic qualities of the monument, removing the thick layers of dust and grime. Tests were carried out to identify the most appropriate cleaning methods to remove the aged wax applied to the marble elements during previous interventions and other deposits, whilst the bronze parts were simply dusted.

Subsequently, the marble surfaces were treated with new wax and polished to revive the natural brilliance of the marble. These operations were carried out by the Foundation's resident marble restorer, Raymond Aquilina, under the supervision of the in-house conservator Adriana Alescio.





2.5 Restoration of the Head of St John the Baptist and the gilded wooden mural plaque

The fine marble sculpture representing the Head of St John the Baptist is a mannerist work of art dated back to the 16th century. The first attribution was to the French artist Pierre Puget even if the fine details and the manufacture technique called to mind the Florentine school. Currently, the marble sculpture rests on a carved gilded wooden mural plaque affixed to the wall of the Oratory, on the right-hand side of the altar. There is no information regarding its original placement or the provenience. Probably the two artefacts arrived in St John's at two different times and were then assembled.

The beautiful head of St John was carved from a unique piece of white Carrara marble. On the back, a metal insert was later inserted to join the head to the plaque. The detail of the sculpture is very well executed: the hairs and the beard were modelled using chisel and hand drill, the expression of the face was enhanced by polishing and treating the surface with a light patina.

The plaque, on the other hand, is a mannerist work of art made in carved wood, decorated with gold leaf applied over an Armenian bole layer and burnished.

The marble sculpture was found to be in a good condition despite the huge amount of dust and dirt that covered the surface. The old coating had also become dark due to the high retention of dust accumulated especially between the waves of the hairs and the beard.

The wooden plaque was in a bad state of conservation due to cracks, missing parts and abrasion spread over the surface. The plate, where the head was inserted, was completely abraded and the original gilded decoration was totally missing as in the external part. Lacunae were present along the foliage and fractures were noted in the central part of the shell; gold losses and abrasion were evident on the base where many etches representing inscriptions, names of saints and sketches of ships were found.

The marble sculpture was inspected, separated from the plaque and transferred to the temporary lab of the Co-Cathedral. It was dusted using soft brushes and a vacuum cleaner to remove the large amount of dust. Specific tests were carried out to identify the most appropriate cleaning methods to remove the aged wax applied during previous interventions and other deposits without dissolving the original patina. Finally, the marble was treated with a new layer of wax to protect the surface and to obtain the desired finish.





The wooden plaque was treated separately. All the deposits of wax, such as candle-wax drips, were removed mechanically from the surface; cracks, fractures and missing parts were repaired and filled with *gesso di Bologna* mixed with animal glue. Metal inserts were cleaned of rust and stabilised. All the lacunae and the abrasions were integrated by using watercolours and varnish colours to match the gold leaf tonality.

The restoration of the two artefacts was carried out by the Foundation's resident marble restorer, Raymond Aquilina, and the in-house conservator Adriana Alescio.



2.6 Restoration of the Marble Pilasters in the Nave

The giant pilasters of the main nave were encased in green marble in the XVII century following the Grand Master Nicolas Cotoner's proposal. Each pilaster was covered with slabs of marble of different sizes, from the dado to the cornice decorated in gold leaf.

The bas-relief of the coat-of-arms of the Grand Master Cotoner is placed on the top central part of each pilaster. It is realised in polychrome carved marble, as is the eight-pointed cross that is found in the lower part.

The pilasters were found to be in a structurally good condition. The slabs of Verde Antico marble are generally in a good state of conservation despite the surface of some of them suffering from discolouration and pitting. These phenomena are concentrated on the lower parts of the pilasters of the south side, due to the rising damp mostly present on that side. Missing parts were found on the decoration of the coat of arms due to the inlayed marble having become detached from the support.

The aim of the restoration was to remove the deposits of dust and dirt accumulated on the surface over the years, repair and integrate the decorative motifs of the coat-of arms where the marble was missing. A light cleaning was carried out on the entire surface to remove residues of wax and other deposits, whilst the losses were integrated using the same type of marble of the original.

Only the coat-of arms and the eight-pointed cross were treated with a new layer of wax to protect the surface and maintain the natural brilliance of the marble. These operations were carried out by the Foundation's resident marble restorer, Raymond Aquilina, under the supervision of the in-house conservator Adriana Alescio.





2.7 Maintenance of the Grand Masters' Crypt

The Grand Masters' Crypt represents a highly important feature of Malta's historical and cultural heritage. It was excavated during the Co-Cathedral's construction in 1577 and is situated beneath the choir and the altar areas. It consists of a rough square in plan with two arched recesses in each of the north and south walls, a polygonal sanctuary with a large window at street level, and a western apsidal area. The crypt contains monuments dedicated to the first twelve Grand Masters of Malta, either freestanding sarcophagi, or set into the walls, as well as marble tombstones set into the floor. The frescos that decorate approximately 160 square metres of the surface are attributed to the Italian artist Niccoló Nasoni, and date from 1723-1725.

The scope of the maintenance within the Grand Masters' Crypt consisted of a series of treatments to stabilise the condition of those areas where deterioration had reappeared after the last restoration. This was due to the porous character of Maltese limestone and the crystallisation and deliquescence cycle of salts.

Studies of the deterioration showed that the same areas were affected before the restoration of the entire crypt was carried out. This was especially the case in all the pilasters below the frame, the west side of the altar, and the monuments of the Grand Masters L'Isle Adam, and de Valette. Observation was also carried out on all the painted surfaces and the state of conservation of the other monuments, to be sure that the deterioration had not extended to the most stable areas.

The main treatments were the consolidation of the monument of L'Isle Adam, and re-filling of the fractures found on the pilaster close to the entrance. The painted surfaces were dusted, and localised re-efflorescence was removed by using soft brushes or sponges dampened with deionised water. The bases of tombs and walls were checked and cleaned with a vacuum cleaner, as was the flooring. The consolidation of the monument of L'Isle Adam was carried out by injecting nano lime dispersion used in different concentrations of up to 50g/litre, applying the same methodology recommended by the Courtauld Institute of London, which had carried out the restoration of the Crypt in 2012.

Nano technologies were introduced in the restoration field in order to find *avant-garde* consolidation solutions for artefacts where other organic or in-organic materials were not completely effective, as with those subjected to moisture. The formation of calcium hydroxide nanoparticles and their dispersion in aliphatic alcohols has generated a product able to be used in such extreme conditions, ensuring greater kinetic stability thanks to the nano-sized particles, greater penetration





into the porosity of the material, and a reduced formation of surface whitening.

The maintenance works were carried out between October and November 2016.

2.8 Restoration of the oil on canvas painting representing the *Annunciation*

The oil on canvas painting representing the Annunciation is a copy of a 15th century painting of the same subject. It was commissioned by Pietro Urrea Camarasa, Prior of the church, whose representative escutcheon is shown on the left side of the painting. According to documentation about the painting it seems that it was first placed in the sacristy, and then moved into the chapel of the Blessed Sacrament. The strainer and the decorative frame were replaced during a past restoration as were the relining and two panels on the back, probably inserted to isolate the painting from the wall and protect the canvas from the humidity. Despite the good state of conservation of the canvas and the strainer too, the surface appeared to be yellowed due to the aging of the protective varnish, whilst some areas appeared dull and dried up. Craquelures were lightly diffused over the all surface.

The aim of the restoration was to revive the aesthetic quality of the painting, by cleaning the varnish layer and removing the deposits of dust and dirt. Overpainting was removed, paying specific attention to unstable and faded colours. *Lacunae* revealed after cleaning were retouched using transparent varnish colours and given two applications of varnish in order to saturate the colours and protect the surface.

The conservation-restoration project was carried out under the supervision of the in-house conservator Adriana Alescio.





2.9 Restoration of the oil on canvas painting representing St Louis

The painting representing St Louis is an oval painting on canvas measuring 75 x 65cm. The decorative frame consists of three wooden pieces jointed together and covered with a ground layer made of gypsum. Silver leaf was applied on a layer of Armenian bole and coated with shellac which gives the effect of gold.

The painting was found to be in a poor state of conservation due to the unstable condition of the canvas and the presence of holes easily visible from the surface.

The wrong straining of the support and the stiffening of the canvas had caused tears around the nails along the perimeter and the consequential deformation of the canvas. The paint layer was tarnished due to the aging of the varnish and craquelures were mostly concentrated on the left side of the Saint, probably due to the excessive use of heat during a past intervention.

The aim of the restoration was to remove the deformation of the canvas and clean the surface of the dust and dirt deposits. Cleaning tests were carried out in order to find the best methodology to remove the overpainting. The canvas was consolidated from the rear side; the edges were reinforced, and the holes mended with patches of synthetic canvas. All the lacunae revealed after cleaning were filled and retouched with watercolours and varnish colours. Finally, the surface was coated with two layers of protective varnish.





2.10 Restoration of the oil on canvas painting depicting *The Coronation of the Virgin*

The painting dedicated to the Assumption and *The Coronation of the Virgin Mary* is one of the largest paintings belonging to the church, measuring 3.80 x 3.10 cm. It once hung on the south wall of the sacristy, above the entrance, but at a later stage it has been stored in the Picture Gallery. This oil on canvas painting is datable to the late sixteenth century and is by an unknown artist.

The lower edge of the painting had an extensive area of severe flaking as well as other areas affected by detachments and lifting of the pictorial layer from the canvas support. These areas had been faced with Japanese paper at some stage in order to prevent further paint loss until conservation works could be carried out on this painting. The thick layer of tarnished varnish and the alteration of the extensive overpainting diffused over the surface, had completely obscured the real chromatic tonality of the composition.

The challenge of the restoration works started in June 2016 with the aim of reviving the aesthetic quality of this important mannerist painting, starting from the analysis of the constituent materials and the study of the iconography.

The reconstruction of its historical vicissitudes, provenience and manufacture techniques, will be able to assist in restoring it to its former condition.

The conservation-restoration project is being carried out by Sig. Charles Vella under the direction of the Foundation's curator Cynthia de Giorgio and the supervision of the conservator Adriana Alescio.





1.11 Environmental Monitoring Study

For two years a constant environmental monitoring programme has been taking place within the St John's Co-Cathedral with the objective of recording the interior microclimate of the building through regular and systematic inspection.

The programme consists of documenting the atmospheric environmental changes throughout the year. The monitoring will serve as a database of information for establishing a preservation strategy. The resulting data will aid the assessment of the state of conservation of the various works of art in the church and museum.

The aim of the monitoring programme is to record and analyse fluctuations in the environment, to identify problematic conditions before damage to the artefacts is caused and to address the conditions before they become widespread. The data is being captured by temperature and relative humidity loggers at specific points within the church and the museum to log the daily changes of these parameters in relation to seasonal changes, the opening and closing hours of the church and the museum and the flow of tourists. Each data logger is set to record the values every hour. The results can show undesired development that could lead to degradation and they serve as a basis for planning a maintenance strategy programme. Monthly readings are carried out by the Foundation's conservator and the data are collected for analysis. Data such as temperature, relative humidity and dew point value per hour are transformed into a graph and interpreted.

The analysis of the information regarding the microclimate of the Co-Cathedral will assist in understanding the patterns of the effects the changing environment may have on the physical and chemical reactions of materials used in the decorative surfaces and the specific materials that constitute the artefacts, such as the marble cladding and gilding, as well as the state of conservation and the rheological behaviour of organic materials of the works of art conserved in the building. The results of the monitoring procedure will assist in determining the right maintenance and in the choice of the best conservation methodology.





3. PROGRAMMES AND INITIATIVES

3.1 World Tourism Day

To celebrate this event, the Foundation opened the Co-Cathedral's doors for visits on 27 September 2016. A total of 1,407 visitors enjoyed free entrance between 14:00 and 16:00.

3.2 *Notte Bianca*

St John's Co-Cathedral participated in the annual event of *Notte Bianca* on Saturday, 01 October 2016 by opening its doors for free visits from 19:00 until Midnight. Leaflets with general information about the Co-Cathedral and the artefacts within it were handed out to the visitors. A brief write-up about the project of the refurbishment and extension of the museum was also included in the leaflet, whilst a feature on the rendering of the project was run on a screen inside the church.

Guided tours, in Maltese and English, of the church and the oratory took place at frequent intervals. The Foundation's in-house restorers demonstrated various restoration procedures. *Coro Catidralis* directed by Maestro Hamish Dustagheer performed sacred music throughout the evening.

A total of 8,617 visitors entered St John's Co-Cathedral during this event.

3.3 Website and Mobile App Project

In 2017 the Foundation's website was continuously updated with some of the main pages being revised. The translations were also revised and Chinese and Polish were introduced. A Procurement and News & Events section were introduced and in the 360° Views section one of the views, that of the main nave, was made available for free.

3.4 Disposable Skirts and Shawls

The Foundation decided to replace the fabric shawls and skirts handed out to visitors with disposable equivalents since these would be more hygienic and give a professional touch to the Co-Cathedral's image. The grey-coloured shawls and skirts with a coloured logo of the Foundation are made from disposable non-woven fabric.





4. CONCERTS

- Organ recital by Wayne Marshall on 19th October 2016 for the delegates attending the 7th World Summit on Arts and Culture.
- Concert of Polish sacred music with arrangements by Maciej Fortuna to commemorate the 1050th anniversary of the Baptism of Poland was held on 27th October 2016.
- Concert of sacred music which included Mozart's Requiem and other sacred works by St Paul Choral Society in aid of Inspire Malta was held on 11th November 2016.
- An oratorio "*Canticum Vitae* - Song of Life" written by Msgr Lawrence Gatt, music by Mro Hermann Farrugia Frantz with the participation of *Coro Bel Canto* was presented for the first time on 17th November 2017. This concert was organised by *Dar tal-Providenza*.
- *Oratorium* for Peace presented by Regine Sixt. This was a tribute to Drying Little Tears for the Children of the World and was held on 25th November 2016 on the occasion of the Annual Global Convention of Sixt International 2016.
- International Christmas Carol Concert was held by The *Collegium Musicum* Choir and Orchestra in aid of Aid to the Church in Need (Malta) on 16th December 2016. This concert was under the direction of Mro Dion Buhagiar.
- A concert of sacred music was held by Mifsud Brothers Ltd on 18th December 2016, with the participation of orchestra, soloists and choir under the direction of Mro Dion Buhagiar.
- A concert of Baroque music was held by *Teatru Manoel* as part of the Valletta International Baroque Festival on 13th January 2017. The concert consisted of Marc Antoine Charpentier's "*Tu Deum du Mont*" *Motets pour La Chapelle du Roy* and was performed by the French Ensemble *Correspondances*.
- On the occasion of the Rabat AGAPE Festival to mark the special occasion of the 1950th Anniversary of the Martyrdom of St Paul and the Maltese Presidency of the Council of Europe, *Fondazzjoni Paulus* presented the world premiere performances of Christopher Muscat's "*L-X Ta' Frar 1928*" and Mgr Marco Frisina's "*Fino ai confine della terra*" with the participation of Malta Philharmonic Orchestra and The Jubilate Deo Choir under the direction of Mgr Marco Frisina. This concert was held on 11th February 2017.
- A concert of sacred music was held on 7th April 2017 for the Informal Meeting of EU Finance Ministers, with the participation of the *Coro Bel Canto* under the direction of Mro Hermann Farrugia Frantz.





- A concert of sacred music by ProMuzika Ensemble was held on 21st May 2017 on the occasion of the 2017 Maltese Presidency of the Council of the European Union for the Informal Meeting of Agriculture Ministers.
- A concert by *Cappella Musicale Pontificia Sistina* directed by Msgr Massimo Palombella was held on 9th June 2017. This concert was organized by The Diocese of Malta.
- The Seventh Annual Orchestral Charity Concert was organized in aid of the philanthropic activities of the Maltese Association of the Sovereign Military Order of Malta, on 15th June 2017, with the participation of the Malta Philharmonic Orchestra under the direction of Mro Prof Michael Laus and the Goldberg Ensemble – Malta. During this concert works by Handel, Marenzio and Mozart were performed.





5. DISTINGUISHED VISITORS AT ST JOHN'S CO-CATHEDRAL

- Hon Miro Cerar, Prime Minister of Slovenia
3 August 2016
- His Eminence Cardinal Vincent Nichols, Archbishop of Westminster, London UK
7 September 2016
- H E Johann N Schneider-Ammann, President of the Swiss Confederation
9 September 2016
- His Eminence Gennadios, Orthodox Metropolitan Archbishop of Italy and Malta
1 October 2016
- Hon Stefania Giannini, Italian Minister of Education
5 October 2016
- Hon Peter Pellegrini, Deputy Prime Minister of Slovakia
9 October 2016
- Hon Lubomír Zaorálek, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Czech Republic
20 October 2016
- H E Andrus Ansip, Vice President of the European Commission
20 October 2016
- Hon Katrina Hanse-Himarwa, Minister of Education, Arts and Culture of Namibia
21 October 2016
- Mr Georges Dassis, President of the European Economic and Social Committee
1 November 2016
- H E Rosen Plevneliev, President of the Republic of Bulgaria
18 November 2016
- H E Edgars Rinkēvičs, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Latvia
22 November 2016
- Ambassador H E Elisabetta Belloni, Permanent Secretary of the Italian Foreign Affairs Ministry
23 November 2016
- H E Mr Lazăr Comănescu, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Romania
2 December 2016
- Hon Wolfgang Sobotka, Austrian Federal Minister of the Interior
2 December 2016





- Mr Beillard - Deputy Secretary General of the EU, Mr Stevens – PSC Ambassador and Mr Ronds – Special Representative of the EU
12 January 2017
- H E Matthijs van Bonzel, Ambassador of the Netherlands to Spain, H E Ms Argita Daudze, Ambassador of Republic of Latvia to Spain and H E Ms Aránzazu Beristain Ibarrola, Director of the Representation of the European Commission in Spain
13 January 2017
- H E Abdul bin Rashid Al Zayani, Secretary-General of the Gulf Cooperation Council
30 January 2017
- EU Heads of States and Governments – EU Summit
2 February 2017
- H E Aurelia Frick, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Education and Culture of the Principality of Liechtenstein
14 February 2017
- H E Witold Waszczykowski, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Poland
20 February 2017
- Mr Stuart William Gill – UK High Commissioner of the United Kingdom to Malta
5 March 2017
- H E Tibor Navracsics – EU Commissioner for Culture
8 March 2017
- Hon. Dott. Graziano Delrio, Italian Minister of Infrastructure and Transports
29 March 2017
- H E Francisco Ribeiro Telles Ambassador of Portugal
10 April 2017
- H E Elmar Məmmədov, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Azerbaijan and his delegation
17 April 2017
- Hon Margot Wallström, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Sweden
26 April 2017
- Hon Jean Asselborn, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Luxembourg
26 April 2017
- Sig Maria Voce President of the *Movimento dei Focolari* [Focolare Movement]
2 May 2017
- H E Kolinda Grabar-Kitarović, President of Croatia
10 May 2017





- H E Petro Poroshenko, President of Ukraine
16 May 2017
- Hon Maurizio Martina, Italian Minister of Agricultural, Food and Forestry Police
23 May 2017
- Hon Corina Crețu – EU Commissioner for Regional Policy
9 June 2017
- H.I.H. the Grand Duchess Maria of Russia, Head of the Russian Imperial House
16 June 2017



