

**The
St John's
Co-Cathedral
Foundation**

ANNUAL REPORT
1 August 2012 – 31 July 2013

The St John's Co-Cathedral Foundation

Council Members 2012-2013

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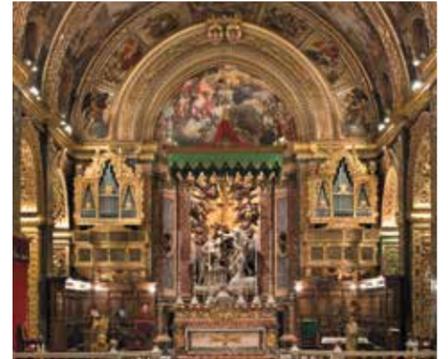


INTRODUCTION

St John's Co-Cathedral is a unique monument and a gem of baroque art. Built in the sixteenth century by the Order of the Knight Hospitallers of St John of Jerusalem, Rhodes and Malta to serve as their Conventual church, it is today considered as one of Europe's finest churches and one of international importance. The building was completed in 1577 and dedicated to St John the Baptist, the patron saint of the Order. The Grand Masters and the Knights donated gifts of high artistic value and made substantial contributions to enrich the church with only the best works of art by leading artists of the time. The large number of artefacts by artists, including the renowned Caravaggio and Mattia Preti, that embellish the church are artistic and religious heritage of hundreds of years of glorious history that is at the same time both Maltese and European.

The Order was organised into eight *langués* representing the different regions of Europe, each of the eight *langués* were provided with a chapel within the Church for its particular devotion. The Knights were noblemen that came from some of the more distinguished families of Europe. After the unprecedented attack on Malta, known as the Great Siege, in 1565, the Knights, as defenders of the Catholic faith and Christian Europe, vowed to turn Malta into a fortress that befitted a military Order with a capital city worthy of an illustrious Order of noblemen. Pride of place in the centre of the new city was reserved for their Conventual church. The austere mannerist architecture of St John's Co-Cathedral, still visible in the external façade, reflects the sober mood of the Order after the Great Siege. The interior which consists of a wide nave with a barrel vault and two aisles divided into side chapels was originally equally simple as the exterior. The dawn of the seventeenth century that had ushered the new baroque style and its flamboyant and demonstrative artistic character provided ample decorative material that can be appreciated today.

During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries the church was transformed into one of the most lavish baroque interiors consisting of gilded stone carvings, marbles, tapestries and paintings. The contrast between the simple external façade and the festive mood of the interior is a major characteristic that makes St John's such a unique monument. The major contributor to this transformation was the Italian artist Mattia Preti, who was commissioned the decorative scheme of the vault where he depicted episodes from the life of St John the Baptist. With his perfect draughtsmanship and skilful use of colour, Preti produced a masterpiece of dramatic scenes together with illusionistic architectural effects. On designs





mostly prepared also by Preti the plain walls of the nave and the chapels were carved with elaborate motifs characteristic of baroque ornamentation, transforming the walls into a riot of gilded foliage, flowers, angels and other symbols.

This year was the fourth centenary since Mattia Preti's birth that occurred on the 24 February 1613. In memory of this outstanding artist and in appreciation of his formidable contribution to the richness of St John's Co-Cathedral, the Foundation commissioned the restoration of the lunette shaped wall painting above the main door. It covers approximately 80 square meters and depicts *The Allegory of the Triumph of the Order*. An event in commemoration of the artist including the unveiling of the restoration took place on the eve of the day of the four hundredth anniversary which was followed by a concert of baroque music.

St John's Co-Cathedral houses one of the most exceptional marble floors in the world. This outstanding decoration consists of a collection of four hundred inlaid marble tombstones that commemorate high ranking Knights. The imaginative designs and the extensive use of symbols and heraldic devices make this floor a unique treasure. Several Latin inscriptions reveal the individual stories of important Knights, their acts of chivalry and religious ardour for which they wished to be remembered.

St John's Co-Cathedral is still a very active sanctuary and holy place of veneration. It hosts some of the most important Church celebrations and State events and is visited by important Church and State personalities on official visits to Malta. St John's is the main attraction for visitors to the island and has become the pride of the Maltese nation.





The St John's Co-Cathedral Foundation

The St John's Co-Cathedral is administered by a Foundation that was established in 2001 in agreement between the Government and the Catholic Church in Malta. The Foundation is responsible for the administration of St John's Co-Cathedral as a religious, cultural and historic monument. Conservation and restoration of the priceless works of art and artefacts preserved within the Co-Cathedral and its museum are the main priorities of The Foundation. The revenue generated throughout the year goes towards the execution of projects with the aim of keeping this Maltese jewel of international fame in the best possible condition for the admiration of present as well as future generations.

During 2012 and 2013 the Council of the Foundation, under the presidency of Mgr. Carmel Zammit, continued implementing its large scale holistic plan under the direction of the curator Cynthia de Giorgio to restore and conserve the priceless works of art and artefacts preserved in St John's Co-Cathedral and its Museum. The following list gives details of the restoration projects carried out and events organised during the year under review.





1 CONSERVATION PROJECTS

1.1 The restoration of *The Allegory of the Triumph of the Order of St John* – lunette wall painting

The year 2013 marked the fourth centenary since the birth of the Italian artist Mattia Preti. The centenary was an excellent opportunity to restore the lunette depicting the Allegory which had suffered deterioration caused by the accumulation of dust and loose mortar joints as well as the discoloration of the varnish layer. Preti was the artist entrusted with painting the entire vault and apse of St John's Co-Cathedral with scenes from the *Life of St John the Baptist* as well as the large lunette shaped painting depicting *The Allegory of the Triumph of the Order of St John*. The cycle was executed between 1661 and 1666 during the reign of fraternal Grand Masters Raphael and Nicholas Cotoner which proved to be Preti's most formidable artistic undertaking that displayed his virtuosity and technical brilliance. On designs prepared by Preti, the plain walls of the nave and chapels were also decorated with elaborate motifs characteristic of baroque ornamentation, transforming the walls into a riot of richly-gilded foliage, flowers, angels, and triumphal symbols. He also executed several of the altar and other paintings within the Co-Cathedral which can be considered also a Mattia Preti Museum.

The Allegory of the Triumph of the Order of St John symbolises the victory of the Order of St John over the infidels whom they battled against in the name of their Christian faith. The central figure of victory holds the banner of the Order with one hand and a sword in the other whilst standing heroically over the defeated enemy. In the background lie the corpses of infidels and knights beneath a fortified cityscape in a scene reminiscent of the battle of the Great Siege whilst, above, angels and putti hold palm fronds, the symbol of martyrdom, which they offer to the deceased knights.

In the foreground, on either side of the balcony doorway are the two Grand Masters Nicholas and Raphael Cotoner who offer hospice to the sick and navigation for battle respectively. The Grand Masters are depicted in their typical black robe displaying the white eight-pointed cross of the Order on their chests. The older Raphael wears the hat of the Grand Masters whilst Nicholas is accompanied by two youthful pages who hold his hat and wait in attendance until his duties are completed. The scene narrates the art of dying well in that he who dies for his religion dies a victorious death, a belief which is recounted on the epitaphs of tombstones and funerary monuments throughout the church. The entire composition was an apex





of Preti's artistic achievements, with unparalleled dramatic effect, thus depicting the Baroque Grand manner.

Mattia Preti executed the entire vault painting by using an 'oil on stone' technique whereby the Maltese globigerina limestone was soaked in linseed oil and painted over with oil based pigments. The history of the restoration of the vault and lunette started in 1868 when the artist Carlo Ignazio Cortis was employed to carry out the restoration of the vault and the lunette. His intervention consisted mainly of extensive over painting. In 1920 preliminary investigations were carried out by Vincenzo Bonello, then the Director of Works of Art, who subsequently directed the cleaning of the entire vault that had been covered by a white layer of salt deposits. In 1952 Cesare Brandi was engaged to investigate the state of conservation. Similar to Bonello, Brandi identified that the major deterioration factor was water infiltration through the vault and the over painting by Cortis that covered most of Preti's original work. Subsequently between 1959 and 1962, the *Istituto Centrale per il Restauro*, Rome, was engaged under the direction of Cesare Brandi to carry out the restoration of the vault which consisted of removing salt and dust deposits, old varnishes and the previous intervention by Carlo Ignazio Cortis.

Prior to restoration, the vault painting was well preserved by the protective roof installed over the nave; however, the painting on the lunette, whose exterior wall is exposed to climatic conditions, had sustained deterioration. The restoration of the lunette by *Giuseppe Mantella Restauri Opere d'Arte* commenced in August 2012 by documenting the state of conservation of the painting. Studies showed that the stone support and the paint layer were in a sound state of conservation which is a testimony of the compatibility of materials originally used by the artist as well as the manner in which they were originally employed in the execution of the painting. The wall painting had suffered mainly from the accumulation of dust deposits on the stone courses, some loose mortar joints, aging and oxidized varnish and discoloured reconstruction of the painting that had been applied during previous interventions. Scientific tests were carried out to analyse the composition of the pigments and materials used by the artist and the additional materials employed by subsequent restorers.

The first stage in the restoration intervention was the removal of the thick layer of dust that had settled on the irregular stone surface. After this process, it was possible to study the surface which confirmed that the materials from past restoration attempts, such as protective layers of varnish and heavy glazes of colour, had altered with the passage of time, causing visible changes in the overall aesthetic appearance of the painting. The oxidized varnish and residues of the over paintings applied previously





where especially noticeable in the sky. In order to find a method that would remove oxidized varnish and over paintings, several cleaning tests were carried out with various solvents to reach a method and technique that would give the best results without causing any damage to the original paint layer. Once the cleaning methodology was established the process was applied throughout the lunette and first register. The selected solution consisted of a mixture of organic solvents followed by the application of ion exchange resins. Cleaning was carried out using brushes and cotton swabs. As a result, the cleaning process revealed the vibrant colours and the original brush strokes of the artist. Areas of loose plaster were consolidated with acrylic adhesive and deep cracks were consolidated by injecting them with a grout based on hydraulic lime.

During the treatment these areas were held in place with Japanese paper. The cleaning and consolidation revealed Preti's original brush work and vast colour scheme consisting of pastel shades for the skies and architecture, and vibrant colours for the figures and drapery. At close proximity the rapid brush strokes and dabs of paint used for highlighting his figures show Preti's technical confidence and knowledge of painting large scale compositions. After cleaning and consolidation the painting was retouched with water colours using the *rigatino* method which is a series of fine parallel lines for the restoration intervention to remain easily legible. Abraded areas were painted with light washes of water colour to conceal the visible mortar joints and to give an overall aesthetically appealing result. The final stage was the application of a diluted layer of varnish to revive the colours and act as a protective layer to the paint layers. Of particular note is the technique Preti adopted making use of bare Maltese stone in certain areas as a colour in the scene.

The restoration and conservation of the lunette was carried out by the team of *Giuseppe Mantella Restauri Opere d'Arte* who conducted works under the expertise of Giuseppe Mantella together with all the Foundation's staff, particularly, Cynthia de Giorgio the curator and the conservator Francesca Muscat.





1.2 The Restoration of the Chapel of the Langue of Auvergne

The Chapel of the Langue of Auvergne, situated on the epistle side of the presbytery between the chapels dedicated to the Madonna of Philermos and St George, was one of the first chapels to undergo baroque decoration in the 17th century. The Chapel was initially dedicated to St James, however this was later changed to St Sebastian after a request from Langue of Castille whose patron saint was St James. The walls and passageway of the Chapel of St Sebastian are adorned with intricate carvings and gilding works amongst which are the coat-of-arms of its benefactor Fra Jean de la Baume de Foursat consisting of the golden *fleur-de-lys* on a red background. The chapel was decorated and completed by 1666.

At the centre of the Chapel's dome is the lion of La Cassière as is found in all the other 8 chapels. The eight segments of the dome are adorned with crowned dolphins and *fleur-de-lys*. In the pendentives are the coat-of-arms of four illustrious Grand Masters of the *Langue* namely Fra Jean L'Evesque de la Cassiere, Fra Jean de Taxis, Fra Guy de Blanchefort and Fra Pierre d'Aubusson all surmounted by an open crown on a background decorated with arms, trophies and banners.

The altar, being one of the oldest in St John's Co-Cathedral, is built of polychrome stone and has a pair of columns on each side following the design drawn up by Captain Antonio Garsin commissioned in 1646. The altar front included the coats-of-arms of the king of France, the Order of St John, the Grand Master and the Langue of Auvergne. It was to be similar in style to the altar in the Chapel of Provence. Documents also record that the complete altar cost 260 *scudi*.

The Chapel is elaborately decorated with wall carvings with intricate designs consisting of various types of weapons symbolic of the military role of the Order, urns, cherubs and a profusion of foliage which were gilded in 24-carat gold leaf. The walls of the chapel are carved and gilded in an exquisite manner following the water gilding technique. Each wall carries a coat-of-arms supported by angels in flight with their elegant brocade drapery. The dolphin representing the Langue is a continuous form of ornamentation found throughout the chapel.

The Chapel of the Langue of Auvergne underwent a major restoration intervention from November 2012 which took eight months to complete. The restoration was entrusted to *Iconos Restauri* following a tendering process. The project consisted of the restoration of the dome, wall carvings, and the stone reredos, the two lunette paintings depicting *The Martyrdom of St Sebastian* and the *St Sebastian meeting Pope Pius Caius on the way*





to martyrdom both by Giuseppe D'Arena and the titular painting of *The Martyrdom of St Sebastian* attributed to Lucas Garnier.

The dome and walls of the chapel had suffered extensive deterioration instigated by the infiltration of rain water from the dome that had caused the irreparable loss of the gilding and the erosion of some of the carvings. The lower strata of the walls had partially lost their gilding as a result of rising damp. The carvings and gilding were also covered with a thick layer of candle soot deposit as well as dust that had accumulated over the years.

The restoration project consisted of a close examination of paint and gilt layers to identify the deterioration and to plan the correct methodology for the restoration required. Samples of paint and gold were taken for scientific analysis to be carried out to identify the manufacturing techniques used in the 17th century.

The two lunette paintings and titular painting were lowered from their position and transferred to the temporary laboratory set up within the co-cathedral. The initial phase of the restoration consisted of the removal of large quantities of superficial dust and debris of damaged material such as old pointing, with the use of vacuum suction and soft brushes. Preservation measures and consolidation were carried out on vulnerable areas before this stage was carried out.

The next step was the removal of old or unstable mortar joints from previous restoration interventions which were then replaced with new mortar. Detached paint layers and gilded areas were consolidated using appropriate adhesives. All carvings and flat walls that carried stubborn encrustations were cleaned using various aqueous or chemical solutions depending on the type of deposit. The dome and the arch over the altar had completely lost the gilt layer due to the previous problems of water infiltration from the roof. Gilt areas were cleaned with various methods depending on the manufacturing technique. Linseed oil applied during the twentieth century was removed using poultices of alkaline solutions.

Damaged carvings were reconstructed with lime and globigerina mortar. Lost pictorial areas were integrated using lime-based paints. Re-gilding with 24-carat gold leaf was carried out in two techniques following the same original methods used to decorate the chapel in the 17th century. For the mordant gilding technique the stone carvings were prepared with a wash of lime-based brown coloured paint to act as a warm base for the gold leaf that was affixed to it using a mordant oil adhesive. On the other hand, for the water gilding technique (*bolo*) the stone carvings were prepared with a layer of white calcium sulphate followed by the application of bolo that in turn acts as a bed for the gold leaf.





The three canvas paintings suffered mostly from oxidised varnish that subdued the overall appearance of the paintings as well as from craquelure of the paint and ground layers. The three canvas paintings were graphically documented and scientifically studied using non invasive methods followed by a restoration intervention. Cleaning involved the removal of numerous layers of oxidized varnish and previous restoration interventions. It was evident that the latter two materials were obscuring the vibrant colours and the brushwork employed to execute them. The paintings were cleaned and strip lined. The two lunette strainers were found to be damaged and thus they were replaced by new wooden stretchers and the paintings were stretched onto them. Losses in the paint layer were pictorially integrated using reversible materials. The paintings were then varnished and placed back *in situ*.





1.3 Restoration of the sepulchral monument of Grand Master Annet de Clermont de Chattes-Gessan in the Chapel of Auvergne

The sepulchral monument of Grand Master Annet de Clermont de Chattes-Gessan situated in the Chapel of Auvergne was carved in 1660 and is one of the monuments that were put in place before the stone carving and gilding decorative scheme. The monument belongs to the 59th Grand Master of the Order who was revered for his military virtues.

The monument is carved out of white Carrara marble with coloured marble inlays. It carries a funerary urn over the plinth that bears a Latin inscription describing the merits of the Grand Master. The bust of the Grand Master is also carved out of white marble and placed within a niche before a black background. On each side of the bust and above the Grand Master's head are carved skulls. The monument is surmounted by the coat-of-arms of the Grand Master flanked by two *putti* that also carry garlands of fruit. Below the bust of the Grand Master is a black bird as a symbol of Fra Jean Jacques de Verdelin, who together with Fra Claude de Montagnac, had erected this monument to his memory.

The monument was found to be in a structurally good condition. Therefore, reviving the aesthetic qualities of the monument was the aim of the restoration intervention. This consisted of the removal of thick layers of dust, candle soot and other atmospheric deposits that accumulated over the years causing the white carrara marble to appear dull and grey. The lower part of the monument was covered with a thick layer of dirt as well as several layers of aged wax applied during previous interventions. Tests were carried out to identify the most appropriate cleaning methods to clean the monument. Subsequently, the monument was cleaned from all wax and other deposits. Upon the completion of the cleaning process the monument was waxed, polished and buffed. The marble was carefully cleaned and waxed by the Foundation's resident marble restorer Raymond Aquilina.





1.4 Restoration of the Dado

The stone dado that surrounds the nave and chapels within St John's Co-Cathedral is made of Globigerina limestone that varies in height from 30cm to 60cm from ground level. The dado in the nave is surmounted by a moulding almost 35cm high which is then followed by marble cladding or low relief carved and gilded decorations on the walls.

Studies carried out in 2004 had shown that the main sources of deterioration were rising damp and several layers of oil based paint applied to the dado that encouraged capillarisation of the dampness to rise causing superficial salts that dried and accumulated on the surface that resulted in the breakdown of the gold and painted layer. This analysis proved that to counter this effect it was necessary to remove all the oil based layers from the dado within the Co-Cathedral to liberate the stone from non-porous material that had sealed the stone. The removal was carried out mechanically and with the use of poultices to absorb any oil residue that would have seeped into the stone. This in turn would allow damp to evaporate at lower levels and reduce capillarisation reaching the decorative courses. Through this mechanical removal the original colour was revealed and parts that survived were retained. The process of removing the numerous layers of paint took place between 2004 and 2007. The clean stone was left uncovered to allow the stone to dry. Loose mortar joints were then replaced with a lime based plaster to obtain a regular finish of the stone surface.

The intervention carried out in October 2013 consisted of further treatment to remove any salt efflorescence that had occurred during the drying period by applying poultices of de-ionised water. Lime-based plaster was again applied to the surface to obtain a homogeneous finish of the dado surfaces within the nave and the chapels.

The final stage consisted of the application of paint using natural earth pigments such as burnt sienna, ultramarine suspended in de-ionised water and minimal percentage adhesive. Two layers were applied using a brush and sponge technique.





1.5 Restoration of the Flemish Tapestries

The St John's Co-Cathedral Foundation embarked on a restoration project in 2006 which saw two tapestries restored per year at the Royal Manufacturers De Witt Laboratories in Belgium. The entire project will take approximately ten years to complete and so far ten tapestries have been restored. In 2011 the tapestries depicting 'The Crucifixion' and 'The Last Supper' were flown to Belgium and returned in June 2013. This year the tapestries depicting 'The Adoration of the Magi' and 'The Entry into Jerusalem' were sent for restoration.

The tapestries were woven at the Flemish atelier of Judocus de Vos in the late 17th century following their commission by Grand Master Ramon Perellos y Roccaful who had just been elected Grand Master and wished to furnish the nave of the Knights' Conventual church of St John in Valletta with a series of tapestries to be hung on specific feasts. 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 Flemish tapestries in the world. The fourteen large tapestries measure approximately 6.70 by 6.10 meters and depict scenes from the life of Christ and allegories portraying the principal and fundamental divine truths of the Catholic faith. Another fourteen smaller panels represent the Virgin Mary, Christ the Saviour and the Apostles. A tapestry portraying the donor, Grand Master Perellos, completes the set.

The tapestries were woven in pure silk and wool and since textiles are susceptible to deterioration with the passage of time their restoration was necessary in order to preserve them. The restoration process consists of the removal of accumulated dust from the surface which is 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 are then removed, loose parts and threads are consolidated and open seams repaired. The tapestry is then fitted with a new supportive backing and lining to prevent deterioration.

The Foundation was being assisted in this project by the Belgian Ambassador to Malta, H. E. Jean-Francois Delahaut, the Maltese Ambassador in Belgium, H. E. Ms Vanessa Frazier and the Belgian Ministry of Defence with the provision of air transport for the tapestries to and from Belgium. The restoration cost is funded by the Foundation.





2. CONSERVATION AND MAINTENANCE WORKS

2.1 Vestments Preservation Project

A preservation project was undertaken for the sacred vestments collection being displayed in the Vestment Hall at St John's Co-Cathedral museum. The project consists of the provision of a new support system. This project was carried out in order to conserve the vestments that were suffering deterioration caused by physical degradation. The conservation and preservation project commenced in 2011 and was completed this year. The focus of the project was to replace the previous exhibition supports in order to eliminate sharp edges as well as stress points that were contributing to the degradation. This was carried out by using appropriate material to preserve and exhibit the vestments appropriately.

During the assessment period tests were carried out in order to identify the most appropriate methods and materials to effectively exhibit the vestments without causing any further damage. Taking the 360 degree showcases into consideration, the supports were designed to offer adequate presentation of the vestment from all angles. After careful study of available materials and consultations with various textile conservators and museums, moulds were designed from inert material, each one specifically custom-made to fit the exact shape and size of each individual vestment.

Each mould was covered with inert wadding to provide support and a barrier between the mould and vestment. The entire mould was then upholstered with inert fabric. For aesthetic reasons, the fabric was selected to be of a similar colour to the lining of the vestments. Synthetic materials were used in order to eliminate any possible biological attack or any deformations in the presence of changes in temperature and relative humidity of the surrounding area.

The light fittings within the showcases were fitted with ultra violet filters in order to reach acceptable lux levels. Other small items such as maniples were displayed at the base supported with inert material, thus eliminating sharp edges and folds as well as any additional material that was susceptible to infestation. Black-out fabric was fitted to the windows on the first floor of the vestment hall to eliminate natural ultra violet radiation entering from the exterior. This project was undertaken by Francesca Muscat, the Foundation's conservator.





2.2 Conservation of the Inlaid Marble Floor

The unique floor of the Co-Cathedral consists of over four hundred inlaid marble tombstones dating from the early seventeenth century to the ninetieth century. The tombstones cover the resting place of some of the most illustrious Knights of the Order that hailed from different European regions. The majority of the designs for the marble tombstones were made by renowned artists and were often delicately 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 embellished with symbols of virtues, death and immortality, such as eagles, lions, crowns, skeletons, skulls and angels. The finely engraved Latin epitaphs together with a range of symbols very briefly indicate the life story of the deceased as well as his valorous deeds and achievements.

Though marble is considered to be an enduring material it suffers from damage caused by abrasion. The inlaid designs and motifs on the tombstones are made of thin marble pieces which are also susceptible to cracking with the passage of time leading to losses in the inlaid marble layer. This is why the Foundation does not allow visitors wearing stiletto heels that may seriously damage the thin 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 and time-consuming 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 using appropriate techniques. Sometimes it is very difficult to find the marble of the correct colour to replace the badly broken one. All restoration is recorded and documented.

In order to protect the tombstones from further abrasion caused primarily by visitors that walk through the Co-Cathedral on a daily basis, the tourist route on the Co-Cathedral floor is covered by a specially made protective carpet.

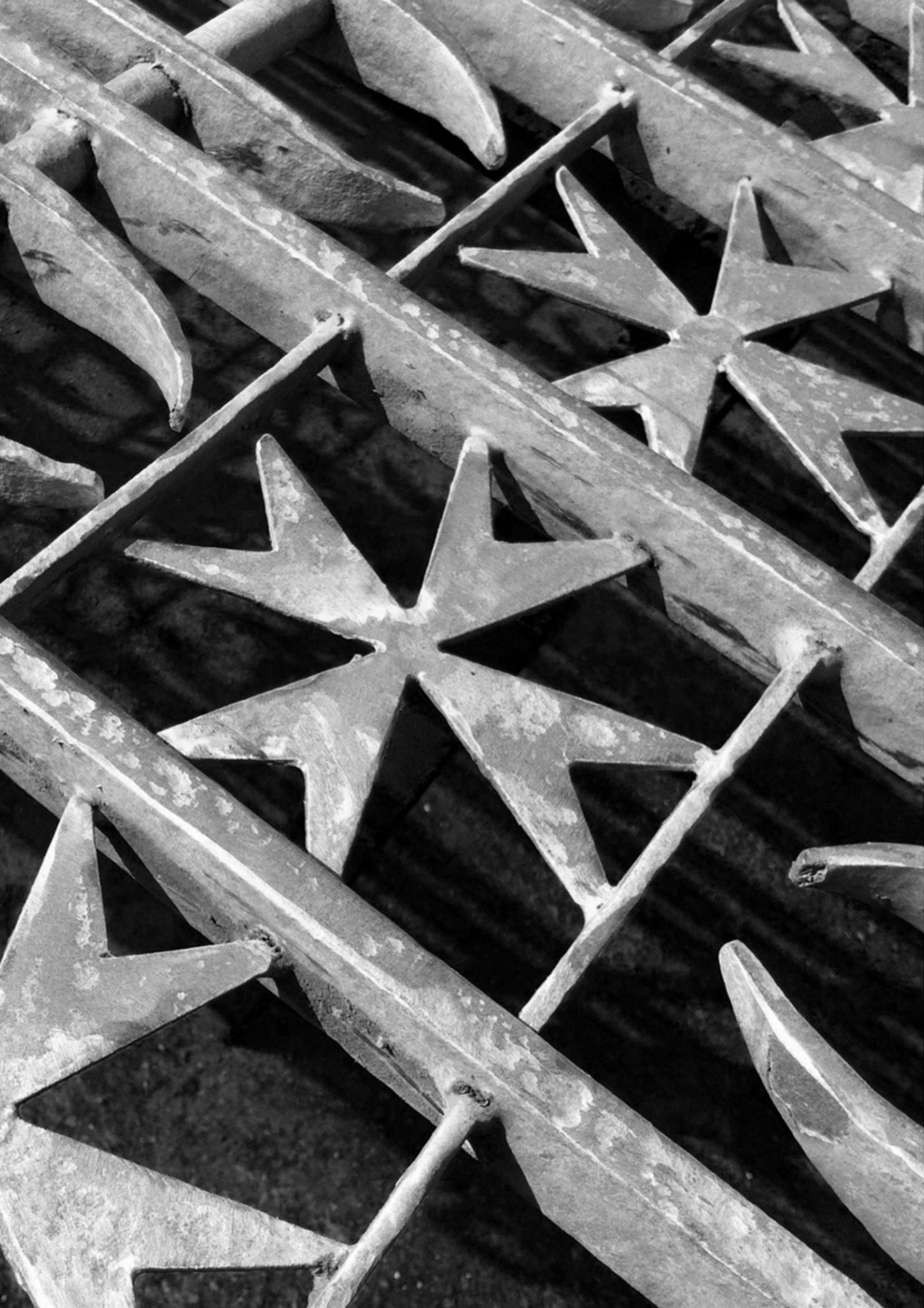




The tombstone of Leopold Ignatz von Sauer Ankenstein situated in the Chapel of Germany needed major restoration. On account of its location, which is immediately after the passage to the German chapel from the atrium on the north side of the nave, it sustained extensive damage and was broken in half. Therefore, the tombstone required to be lifted and transported to the Foundation's restoration laboratory where it was repaired and restored, a process which lasted twelve months. The two halves were fixed back together using fibreglass rods and epoxy resin.

Another sixteen tombstones were restored during this year, amongst which were those belonging to Carlo Carafa, Pierre Viany, Rene du Pre, Miguel Torrellas y Sentmanat in the main nave, and Thomas de Hozes and Francisco de Torres Pacheco y Cardenas in the Chapel of Castille. The restoration of the tombstones is carried out under the direction of Francesca Muscat, the Foundation's conservator.





2.3 Metal Gates

Works commenced on the restoration of the three double-leaf metal gates closing the arches and the three lanterns overlooking Merchants Street. The three double-leaf metal gates were carefully removed and transported from the site to the workshop and back to the site. For security reasons each double-leaf gate was dismantled one at a time and the gate opening was temporarily securely blocked up once the gate was removed.

Any redundant metal components within the three double leaf gates and the three lanterns including the supporting chains were replaced and/or restored.

All metal components including the supporting chains were grit blasted in order to remove advanced rusting and treated with hot dip galvanisation. They were then treated with primer, followed by an application of a protective paint finish. The 8-pointed Maltese Crosses were also treated and given a white paint protective finish. All existing hinges and any loops or hooks that could not be removed were also carefully treated and restored.

The double-leaf gates and lanterns, including the supporting chains, were carefully re-installed.





3. PROGRAMMES AND INITIATIVES

Mattia Preti 400

The year 2013 marked the fourth centenary since the birth of the artist Mattia Preti who was born in Taverna, Calabria, on the 24th February 1613. The St John's Co-Cathedral Foundation had commenced with activities to commemorate Mattia Preti and his outstanding artistic works for St John's Co-Cathedral in 2012 on the precise day of his birth by celebrating Mass for the repose of the soul of Mattia Preti followed by a lecture entitled 'Update on Mattia Preti' by Giuseppe Mantella. Plans for the restoration of the large lunette space above the main doorway where Mattia Preti executed the painting depicting the *'Allegory of the Triumph of the Order'* were announced to mark the centenary.

Inauguration of the Restoration of the Lunette – *The Allegory of the Triumph of the Order*

The restoration of the lunette that had commenced in August 2012 was unveiled on the 22nd February 2013. The evening began with an introductory speech by the President of The Foundation, Mgr Carmel Zammit, and was followed by two talks delivered by Cynthia de Giorgio, the curator in charge of the project, and Giuseppe Mantella, the head restorer responsible for the execution of the restoration. The talks were followed by a concert of Baroque and Classical music conducted by Prof. Dion Buhagiar accompanied by mezzo soprano Claire Massa and Tenor Frans Mangion.

Mattia Preti 400 – Lectures

Two academic lectures were organized in continuity of the commemorative events to mark Mattia Preti's birth. The first lecture was held on 28th February 2013 entitled *Mattia Preti: If you seek his monument* and was delivered by Prof. John. T. Spike, a leading art historian and renowned author, who specialises in Baroque art with special focus on Caravaggio and Mattia Preti. The second lecture was delivered by Prof. Keith Sciberras on 28th April 2013 entitled *Mattia Preti: The Triumphant Manner – an assessment*. Professor Sciberras is Head of the History of Art Department at the University of Malta and has published extensively on the subjects of Roman Baroque sculpture and Baroque painting and the artist Mattia Preti.





Cappella Ardente Lecture

James Saliba, the head restorer responsible for the restoration of the *Cappella Ardente*, delivered a lecture on the restorative process on 28 May 2013. The lecture was entitled *The Cappella Ardente and its Restoration*. He was supported by The Malta Historical Society and The St John's Co-Cathedral Foundation.

Notte Bianca

Notte Bianca 2012 was organized on 29th September. The Co-Cathedral, Oratory and Museum were open to the public free-of-charge, from 1900hrs till midnight. 8,600 persons visited the Co-Cathedral during this event. Didactic flyers on the latest restoration projects were made available. The visitors were able to observe at close quarters various restoration works being carried out.

International Museum Day

This year International Museums Day took place on 18 May 2013. St John's Co-Cathedral, Oratory and Museum was open free-of-charge to all who wished to avail themselves to a visit to St John's on a Saturday afternoon, it was open between 1300hrs and 1700hrs. A total of 699 visitors took advantage of the opportunity to visit St John's.

It is to be noted that admission to the Co-Cathedral and the Museum during opening hours is against a relatively small charge so that The St. John's Co-Cathedral Foundation can carry out the extensive restoration works that the Co-Cathedral, the Museum and their artefacts can be conserved for present and future Maltese generations and the enjoyment of foreign visitors.

During the daily morning church ceremonies and on Sunday mornings the Co-Cathedral is open for congregations free of charge.





4. CONCERTS

- On Friday 19th October 2012 the St Paul's Choral Society presented *The Best of Karl Jenkins Sacred Songs and Te Deum*. This concert was held in aid of Hospice Malta and was directed by Mro Hugo Agius Muscat and the Orchestra Leader was Sarah Spiteri.
- *Tenebrae*, the APS Bank Annual Concert, was held on 9th November 2012. Works composed during the 19th century for the liturgy of the Tenebrae celebrated in Maltese churches during the last three days of Holy Week. This concert was held under the musical direction of Mro Michael Laus with the participation of Mirabitur Choir and the Malta Philharmonic Orchestra.
- The *Terramundi Concert* was held on the 19th November 2012. Works of Sacred Music by Joseph Hayden, Gioacchino Rossini and Giuseppe Verdi were performed during this concert under the musical direction of Mro Prof Dion Buhagiar with the participation of the *Collegium Musicum Choir*.
- A concert conducted by Mro Joseph Vella was held on 23rd November 2012 in celebration of his 70th Birthday. The program started with a sacred choral composition *Domine Jesu Christe*, followed by *The Apocalypse Verses*, a 50-minute work for tenor and solo, with the participation of the *Laudate Pueri Choir* and the Malta Philharmonic Orchestra. This concert was performed also in honour and in the presence of Mgr Charles J. Scicluna, Auxiliary Bishop-Elect of Malta.
- An Oratorio entitled *San Nikola* was held on 3rd December 2012, in aid of *Dar tal-Providenza*. This *Oratorio* was composed by Mro Prof Dion Buhagiar on a *libretto* by Prof Joseph Friggieri. The orchestra and the choir were under the direction of Mro Prof Dion Buhagiar.
- A Sacred Music Concert held as a tribute to Mgr Mikiel Azzopardi founder of *Dar tal-Providenza* was organised by *Dar tal-Providenza* on 11th December 2012 under the patronage of H. E. Dr George Abela, President of Malta, and H. G. Mgr Paul Cremona O.P., Archbishop of Malta, with the participation of the Armed Forces of Malta Band.





- Another *Terramundi Concert* was held on 25th February 2013. Works of Sacred Music by Joseph Hayden, Gioacchino Rossini and Giuseppe Verdi were performed during this concert under the musical direction of Mro Prof Dion Buhagiar with the participation of the *Collegium Musicum Choir*.
- A Sacred Music Concert entitled *Sanctificatur Nomen Tuum* by Italian composer Federico Gozelino and Mro Colin Attard with lyrics by Canon Joe Meilak was held on 5th April 2013 with the participation of the String Ensemble from the Malta Philharmonic Orchestra.
- An Organ Recital by Diego Cannizzaro from Sicily was held on 24th May 2013. This concert was organized by the Rotary Club Malta in the Oratory of St John's Co-Cathedral.
- Another Concert of Sacred Music organized by the Rotary Club Malta with the participation of Diego Cannizzaro and St Paul Choral Society was held at St John's Co-Cathedral on 25th May 2013. This concert was held in aid of *Dar il-Kaptan* on the occasion of the 400th anniversary of Mattia Preti's birth.
- An Oratorio, *San Paolo Evangelizza i Maltesi*, by Mro Carlo Diacono for soloists, choir and orchestra composed on the occasion of the International Eucharistic Congress in 1913 was presented by the Archdiocese of Malta on 31st May 2013 to commemorate the centenary of the Congress and the Year of Faith. The Oratorio was conducted by Mro Mgr Gwann Galea with the participation of the *Mirabitur Choir* and the Malta Philharmonic Orchestra.
- An orchestral *Sacred Music Concert* was organized by the Sovereign Military Order of Malta on 20th June 2013 under the distinguished patronage of the Hon. Dr Joseph Muscat, Prime Minister of Malta with the participation of the Malta Philharmonic Orchestra under the direction of Mro Prof Michael Laus, the Goldberg Ensemble and Soprano Gillian Zammit. During this concert works by Liszt, Schubert, Bach and Mozart were performed.



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

- The Hon Giulio Terzi, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Italy
12 September 2012
- H.E. Guido J. Martinelli Endara, Ambassador of Panama to the Italian Government
26 October 2012
- H.E. Cardinal D Calcagno
17 November 2012
- The Hon Dr Claudia Schmied, Minister for Education, the Arts and Culture of the Republic of Vienna, and the City Councillor of Vienna for Culture Dr Andreas Mailath-Pokorny
1 January 2012
- H.E. Ms Lucinda Creighton T. D., Minister for European Affairs of Ireland
3 December 2012
- H.E. Luis Latorre Tapia, Ambassador of Ecuador to the Vatican City
16 January 2013
- The Hon Preneet Kaur, Minister for External Affairs of India
10 April 2013
- H.E. Cardinal José Saraiva Martins C.M.F.
2 May 2013
- Mr Eric Mayer Schaller, Honorary Consul for Malta in Strasbourg
9 May 2013
- The Hon Igor Luksic, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Montenegro
5 June 2013
- The Hon Thorbjorn Jagland, Secretary General of the Council of Europe
17 June 2013
- The Hon Amedeo Giovanardi, Italian Senator
17 June 2013
- H.R.H. Prince Norodom Thanora of Cambodia
19 June 2013
- H.E. Riyad Malki, Foreign Minister of Palestine
27 June 2013





- H.E. Dott. Giovanni Umberto De Vito, Italian Ambassador to Malta
4 July 2013
- The Hon Paula Bennett, Minister for Social Development of New Zealand
8 July 2013
- H.E. Vincent Mertens de Wilmars, Belgian Ambassador to Rome and Malta
19 July 2013





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The St John's Co-Cathedral Foundation
St John's Co-Cathedral
St John Street
Valletta VLT1156 · Malta