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**Uncovering the Original: An Examination of a Seventeenth-Century copy of Raphael's *Holy Family*, c.1518.**

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## Uncovering the Original: An Examination of a 17th-Century copy of Raphael's *The Holy Family*, c. 1518, The Prado Madrid.

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### Introduction to The Project:

This report has been written as part of the annual project *Conservation and Art Historical Analysis*, presented by the Sackler Research Forum at the Courtauld Institute of Art. Seeking to encourage collaboration between art historians and conservators, the scheme brings together two students - one from postgraduate art history and the other from easel paintings conservation - to complete an in-depth research project on a single piece of art. By doing so, the project allows a multifaceted approach combining historical research with technical analysis and, in this case, conservation treatment of the work in question. Focusing on the painting as a physical object with a material history, the project shows the value of combining art history with the more scientific aspects of the field of conservation.

The focus of this project is a painting of the Virgin and Child with Saints Anne and John - a copy of Raphael's *Holy Family* from the Prado - of unknown artist and date. It is owned by St Patrick's Catholic Church in Wapping, where it had been recently found in a cupboard underneath the stairs. It came into the Courtauld Conservation Department to be treated by Annie Cornwell in November 2015, at which point it was in quite poor condition. As initial treatment of the work began it soon became clear that the painting was: firstly, of an earlier date than initially thought (it had originally been presumed to be an 19th century copy) and secondly, had quite a prolonged and interesting material history with numerous restoration campaigns. For these reasons it was chosen as an appropriate subject for the Research Forum, and Amalie Juel was brought on board to complete the art historical side of the project. Two lectures concerning the research were completed in January and May 2016. This article is the written version of those lectures.

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Unknown artist, *The Holy Family* after Raphael. St Patrick's Catholic Church, Mapping.



Raphael, *The Holy Family*, c. 1518, The Prado.

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## Part 1: The Painting, The Church and its Copies

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### Introduction to the Painting:

When the painting came into the Courtauld for treatment it had no known date, artist or provenance. Soon after its arrival, however, its similarities to Raphael's *Holy Family* was recognised and it was deemed a copy of this work (see previous page for images). This painting, popularly nicknamed *La Perla* due to Felipe IV's preference for it,<sup>1</sup> is generally dated to 1518/19, though there are still some qualms connected to this. The first record of the painting is in a letter written by Baldassare Casiglione on 27 May 1520, where he mentions a painting owned by a bishop, presumed to be Lodovico Canossa.<sup>2</sup> Another early mention can be found in Vasari's *Lives*, where he notes that a *Birth of Christ* by Raphael was sent to the counts of Canossa in Verona (though he describes it as "the birth of Christ" it is generally accepted as a reference to the *Holy Family*).<sup>3</sup> Vasari also remarks that the painting was held in such esteem that even high offers to purchase it had been refused.

The composition of Raphael's *Holy Family*, and therefore the St Patrick's painting also, is dominated by the pyramidal figure group occupying the central space of the work. The virgin, depicted wearing a red iridescent dress and a blue mantle, is seen embracing an elderly woman kneeling at her side, who is believed to be St Anne (though there are some theories that she is more representative of St Elizabeth). With her right hand, the Virgin supports the Christ child, whose foot rests on a wicker cradle filled with fine white fabric. This gives the impression that Christ has recently been dragged onto his mother's lap, producing a sense of immediacy within the painting. The child casts a happy gaze towards his mother, while simultaneously stretching out his arms to the young St John approaching from the left, who has pulled up his leopard skin and offers Christ the fruits he has gathered. The whole group has been placed in an idealistic landscape, the greenery of which creates a harmonious setting for the scene. Towards the upper left, the figure of St Joseph, depicted within an arch that mirrors the ruined city opposite, appears as a passive onlooker to the main group. The scene is lit with rays of sunlight breaking through clouded skies.

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<sup>1</sup> It is said that when the painting arrived in Spain after being purchased from Edward Bass to Felipe IV, the king exclaimed; "here is the pearl of my collection!" The remark allegedly led to the composition's alternative title. Polter, Stefan B. ed. & trans. *Raphael, a critical catalogue of his paintings*. Vol. II. (Münster: Arcos Verlag, 2005): 186. See also Harris, Enriqueta. "Velázquez as Connoisseur." *The Burlington Magazine* 124, no. 952 (1982): 439.

<sup>2</sup>"Se occorrese 'l Vescovo mandasse quello quadro" cited from; Shearman, John. *Raphael in Early Modern Sources (1483-1602)* (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 2003): 596.

<sup>3</sup> Polter, *Raphael, a critical catalogue of his paintings*: 186.

## Introduction to the Church:

St Patrick's Church is located in Wapping, East London, traditionally a very poor area associated with the Docklands which was particularly devastated by the Blitz in World War II. Despite this, the church has quite an interesting collection of artwork, the origins of which can be somewhat traced through various newspaper articles. The earliest of these is from 1900, when artist Prospero Greenwood, responsible for the painting currently on the main altarpiece of St Patrick's, discovered an apparent Rubens at the church.<sup>4</sup> An early photograph of this painting, taken by Mr Greenwood, can be viewed at the National Archives at Kew where the record found alongside it states: '*Photograph taken from the original Rubens 'The Preparation for the Entombment' now in St Patricks Church, Wapping. August 17th 1900*'. Though highly unlikely that the painting was an original Rubens the photograph does look Rubens-esque in style and has many similarities with many of his other Entombment scenes. Sadly, this painting is no longer at the church and we have been unable to track down its current location.

A 'Murillo' painting described in the same article, however, does still reside in side altar of the church. Though upon inspection it appears unlikely to be an original Murillo it is, in a similar way to the photograph of the apparent Rubens, clearly a decent facsimile of Murillo's style and composition, bearing particular resemblance to his *Virgin and Child in Glory*, c.1673. In addition to these examples, an article from the Burlington Magazine in 1927 details a 17th century copy of a lost Ercole de Roberti fresco at the church.<sup>5</sup> Interestingly, this painting is now in the collection of the Ringling Museum in Florida, which bought the painting from St Patrick's around 1930 (see following page for a photograph of the painting as it was at St Patrick's).



Murillo-esque altar in St Patrick's Church. Photograph taken by Annie Cornwell September 2015.

Sadly, the church itself doesn't have any documentation or records of the artworks currently present, but in looking at a more general history of the parish it is possible to pin down a point at which its art collection appears to have begun. From its opening in 1879 the church faced extreme financial difficulties due to the high prices of both the grounds and building costs - £7,250 and £4000 respectively. The purchase and construction had been organised by Cardinal Henry Edward

<sup>4</sup> "A Rescued 'Rubens'" *The Tablet*. <http://archive.thetablet.co.uk/article/1st-september-1900/37/a-rescued-rubens> [accessed: 05.12.2015].

<sup>5</sup> Holmes, Charles "A Lost Picture by Ercole de Roberti." *The Burlington Magazine for Connoisseurs*, vol. 50, no. 289 (1927): 170-172.



*The Dormition of the Virgin*, after Ercole de Roberti. c.1610. Photograph taken at St Patrick's in 1927 by Father Reardon. Now at the Ringling Museum of Art in Florida. Image from *The Burlington Magazine for Connoisseurs*, Vol. 50 (1927).

Manning who, ironically, was thanked by Fr Lucas (then responsible for St Patrick's) for his generosity in creating such heavy debt.<sup>6</sup> From its opening church is known to have struggled with funding, even sending letters to more wealthy parishes in London asking for donations.<sup>7</sup> At the turn of the century, however, its fortunes changed when it received significant funds and began building a collection of artwork. An article in the *Catholic Universe* from 1919 describes the collection then as follows:

*"While most of the St Mary's and St Michael's pictures are soundly executed copies of works by Murillo, Vandyck [sic.], and other old masters, I was assured on the day of my visit, and I hope it is true, that some of them are originals of considerable value. Whether copies or originals, they certainly help to give a Catholic feeling to what would otherwise be a rather bare church".<sup>8</sup>*

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<sup>6</sup> Parish of St Mary and St Michael, *A History of St Mary & St Michael's Parish*. (London: Terry Marsh Publishing, 2007): 132.

<sup>7</sup> Information gathered from interviews with parishioners of St Patrick's and members of The History of Wapping Trust.

<sup>8</sup> Citation from a 1919 edition of *The Catholic Universe* taken from Parish of St Mary and St Michael, *A History of St Mary & St Michael's Parish*: 216.

Though some of St Patrick's paintings are believed to have come from a nearby chapel in Wapping which was destroyed, much of the funding and art collection were gathered by Fr Francis Cotter Beckley (1843-1908), who had worked as a missionary on the continent and returned to Wapping around 1900 with large amounts of money and an extensive art collection. He is listed as the rector of Wapping in 1899, and there is a memorial for him within St Patrick's itself.<sup>9</sup> The funds Cotter raised were used to open a local school, the construction of which, it should be pointed out, also somewhat coincides with the sale of the Roberti copy, or, possibly, the supposed Rubens. Another explanation for the church's new-found wealth, suggested Prospero Greenwood, is that the paintings were brought over from Europe by pirates. Fantastical perhaps, but it must be said that the church is just around the corner from 'Execution Dock' and, historically, piracy within the area was commonplace. In conversations with The History of Wapping Trust, this was also the first reaction when asked how the paintings might have been acquired.

The general trend of the information gathered is, however, that the church has an interesting and somewhat surprising history of collecting high quality copies of important European masters, of which the *Holy Family* is a key example.

### **Copying Raphael:**

Investigating a copy of Raphael's work offers several challenges due to the long and detailed afterlife of his paintings. Raphael is, in fact, counted among the most reproduced European artists of all time.<sup>10</sup> Though the widespread practise of copying Raphael has been studied at considerable length in relation to the education of artists or collectors,<sup>11</sup> surprisingly little scholarship is devoted to the study of the copies themselves. This report, therefore, hopes to contribute to a field of study that has not yet been fully utilised. However, when conducting research on specific copies there are complications that arise, summarised here by Cathleen Hoeniger:

*"If the subject of copies after Raphael appears to be full of potential for art historians, it is tempting to ask why so little research in this direction has been ventured. Certainly, the reason that a systematic investigation of copies after Raphael has not been undertaken must lie both in the sheer volume of the copies and in their diversity."<sup>12</sup>*

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<sup>9</sup> Parish of St Mary and St Michael, *A History of St Mary & St Michael's Parish*: 169.

<sup>10</sup> Hoeniger, Cathleen. *The Afterlife of Raphael's Paintings*. (New York; Cambridge University Press, 2011): 101.

<sup>11</sup> Hoeniger, *The Afterlife of Raphael's Paintings*: 100.

<sup>12</sup> Hoeniger, *The Afterlife of Raphael's Paintings*: 101.





Rubens, *The Holy Family with St Elisabeth*, 1608-09, Metropolitan Museum, New York.



Raphael and Giulio Romano, *The Gonzaga Madonna*, 1518-19.



*The Holy Family (La Perla)* sold at an auction at Bonhams in 2015.



Giulio Romano, *Madonna and Child with Saint Anne and Infant St John*. Fondazione Casa di Risparmio di Fermo.



Juan José Martínez, *The Holy Family*, 1850-1860, lithograph. British Museum, London



Giulio Sanuto, *The Holy Family*, 1540-88, engraving, British Museum, London.

There are numerous reasons for which a copy of a painting such as the *Holy Family* might have been made. By far the most common impulse for copying was educational and the majority of copies were created as didactic exercises in the emulation of revered painters.<sup>13</sup> The dissemination of Raphael's art in particular has often been linked to the tradition of students copying the great masters,<sup>14</sup> the practise of which belongs not only to the anonymous persona of "the student of art," but also recognised artists, such as Rubens, who are known to have copied works by Raphael. Interestingly, Rubens seems likely to have made copies, or as least sketches, of the *Holy Family* as his *The Holy Family with St. Elisabeth*, of 1609-09 (see previous page), bears a strong resemblance to the Raphael.

In England, copying works by Raphael took on particular significance in establishing a "British School" of painting in the eighteenth century. Jeremy Wood, in his study of Raphael copies in mid-eighteenth-century London, connects Hugh Smithson's (the first Duke of Northumberland) gallery of Northumberland House to the establishment of a deliberate national style of art.<sup>15</sup> In his research, Wood uncovers how Smithson's works, alongside Raphael's tapestry cartoons currently at display at the Victoria & Albert Museum, were used to teach 'proper style' at the newly established Royal Academy of Arts.<sup>16</sup> The use of Raphael within the academy can also be observed in Georg Scharf's lithograph *A Lecture on Sculpture by Sir Richard Westmacott at the Royal Academy*, in which copies of the Raphael cartoons can be seen in the upper gallery. Their central position in the print attests to the importance of Raphael as a fundamental artist within the program of the academy.<sup>17</sup>

Another motivation for copying art was how it enable a patron or owner to 'possess' a work of art that cannot be bought in its original form. The desire to possess Raphael's works resulted in copies created in a great variety of mediums. Before the introduction of photographic reproductions in the late 19th century, Raphael's paintings frequently were replicated in the form of engravings which circulated as collections or portfolios, or were set as illustrations into printed books.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Hoeniger, Cathleen "How copies may shed life on the Reception of Raphael," in *Inganno – the art of deception: imitation, reception, and deceit in early modern art*, ed. Sharon Gregory, Sally Anne Hickson. (Farnham: Ashgate, 2012): 102.

<sup>14</sup> Hoeniger, *The Afterlife of Raphael's Paintings*: 39.

<sup>15</sup> Wood, Jeremy "Raphael Copies and Exemplary Picture Galleries in Mid Eighteenth-Century London." *Zeitschrift für Kunstgeschichte* 62, no. 3 (1999): 394.

<sup>16</sup> The Royal Academy of Arts was established in 1768, Smithson commissioned his copies from Anthon Raphael Mengs in 1752. *Ibid.*

<sup>17</sup> Hsieh, Chia-Chuan. "Publishing the Raphael Cartoons and the Rise of Art-Historical Consciousness in England, 1707-1764." *The Historical Journal* 52, no. 4 (2009): 900.

<sup>18</sup> Hoeniger, *The Afterlife of Raphael's Paintings*. New York; Cambridge University Press, 2011: 100

Up until now the three main purposes of Raphael copies have been briefly covered; in educating the arts student, within the greater context of formalising a national style, and to enable a greater audience to possess a work that would otherwise be unavailable to them. With no documentation regarding the specific context, artist attribution or even dating of the piece, navigating the Wapping copy within this wider context was difficult, and required certain steps. There were as follows: to determine upon which version of the *Holy Family* the St Patrick's painting was based and to carry out an investigation into the materiality of the work, which would hopefully lead to a proposed dating. Combined, these would ultimately lead to a wider investigation of the context in which it was created. Before any of this was possible, however, initial treatment of the painting was required to aid readability and to allow a more accurate analysis of the work.

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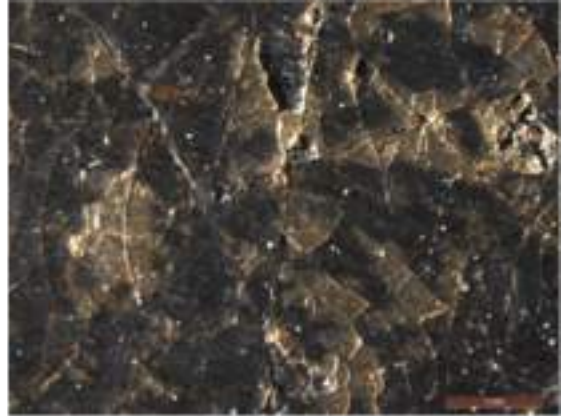
## Part 2: The Painting; Condition and Technical Examination

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Before treatment. Front and verso of *The Holy Family* from St Patrick's Church.

The painting, as previously stated, came into the Courtauld for conservation treatment in November 2015 in quite poor condition. It had been found propped up on the floor in a cupboard in St Patrick's and had a significant amount of surface dirt on both the front and verso. The painting appeared to have been stored upside down as drip marks from a previous water damage could be clearly seen on the back.



Photomicrograph of delaminating varnish.

In addition to this, the painted surface was also hidden beneath numerous layers of severely degraded varnish. A cross-section taken from the left side of the painting clearly showed dirt embedded both within and between these layers, all of which were contributing to the extremely dark appearance of the work. Not only were these varnish layers extremely yellowed, as occurs naturally during the ageing process, and further muddied by dirt, they were also delaminating in large areas that appeared to correspond with the water damage seen on the verso. This was causing significant scattering of light and completely obscuring any details of the paint surface beneath (see image above), preventing any accurate visual analysis from being carried out.



Before treatment. *The Holy Family* from St Patrick's Church.



During treatment, after varnish removal. *The Holy Family* from St Patrick's Church.

As will be seen throughout, treatment of the painting has significantly aided this research project - the first step of which was varnish removal, which allowed the true colours and composition of the painting to be seen. As the details of the work became much more discernible, the similarities between the St Patrick's painting and the Raphael could be examined more closely. In many areas, particularly in the folds of the Virgin's sleeve (see below) and Christ's white blanket in the basket, the accuracy of the copy became obvious.

Despite these immediate similarities, there were also several noticeable deviations from the original. Most obvious was the difference of the colouring scheme between the two paintings. The virgin's blue mantle was green in the Wapping-version as opposed to the traditional blue seen in the Raphael. The Saint's was also different - in this case green in the Raphael but bright blue in the Wapping painting. The Saint's fist, on which she rests



Detail of St Patrick's Painting.



Detail of Raphael.



Detail of St Patrick's painting.



Detail of Raphael.

her head in the Raphael work, also appeared to have been omitted in the Wapping-version, thus further changing the appearance of the main figural group (see detail above). The absence of St Joseph in the arched architecture of the upper left corner was another significant difference from Raphael's composition. And finally, the landscape in the upper right also stood out and it depicted an even light blue sky with vague architecture, rather than the detail of the ruined city in the Raphael. What became obvious after the varnish removal, however, was that many of these areas had been altered from their original state by previous restoration campaigns.



Cross section taken from Virgin's green robe. In normal and UV light.

The Virgin's green robe, as the largest single area of difference, was examined first. Not only was the colour, as previously stated, different from the Raphael but the painting technique in this area, when viewed under a microscope, was noticeably different from other areas of original drapery in the Wapping painting. The overall delicacy and shading of the paint was also much more crude. Because of these concerns that this area was non-original a cross section was taken to determine if there was any concrete evidence for this section of paint being a later addition to the work.

The cross section, seen above, provided solid evidence that the green was non-original overpaint. When viewed in ultra-violet (UV) light it could clearly be seen on top of aged fluorescent varnish in an original drying crack, proving that it was a later addition, applied long after the original paint had dried. In addition to this, a layer of brown glassy particles could be seen underneath the green paint. The angular appearance of these particles is indicative of a pigment known as smalt - a blue

colour which degrades to brown over time due to the leeching of potassium.<sup>19</sup> Analysis of the cross section using scanning electron microscopy and energy dispersive x-radiography (SEM-EDX) confirmed this by identifying the presence of potassium, silicon, aluminium and cobalt, the elements that identify smalt. It is likely, therefore, that this area was overpainted, firstly, to cover up the degraded smalt after it turned brown and, secondly, was painted in green because the original colour was unknown. This is made even more clear by areas of the Virgin's originally blue robe that have been missed out in the overpaint campaign because they presumably were not recognised as the drapery but instead believed to be brown areas of the background. These include areas where the same piece of cloth is brought over her shoulder, and the shape of the folds above her proper left foot (on the right of the painting).



Diagram showing location of overpaint campaigns on the St. Patrick's *Holy Family*.

Further non-original campaigns of overpaint were found on the painting, including the Saint's blue robe and much of the upper background. As this diagram shows, at least a third of the entire work was found to be overpainted - all campaigns were identified by either cross sections or microscopy which revealed them to be in and/or on top of original drying cracks. The results of the removal of some of these campaigns will be discussed in the next section.

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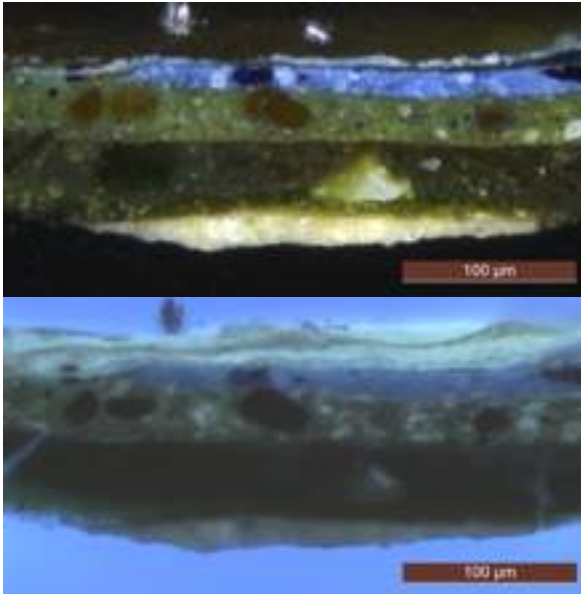
<sup>19</sup> Spring, Marika; Higgitt, Catherine and Saunders, David. 'Investigation of Pigment-Medium Interaction Processes in Oil paint containing Degraded Smalt'. In *National Gallery Technical Bulletin*, vol. 26 (2005): 56.

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### Part 3: The Painting; Overpaint Removal

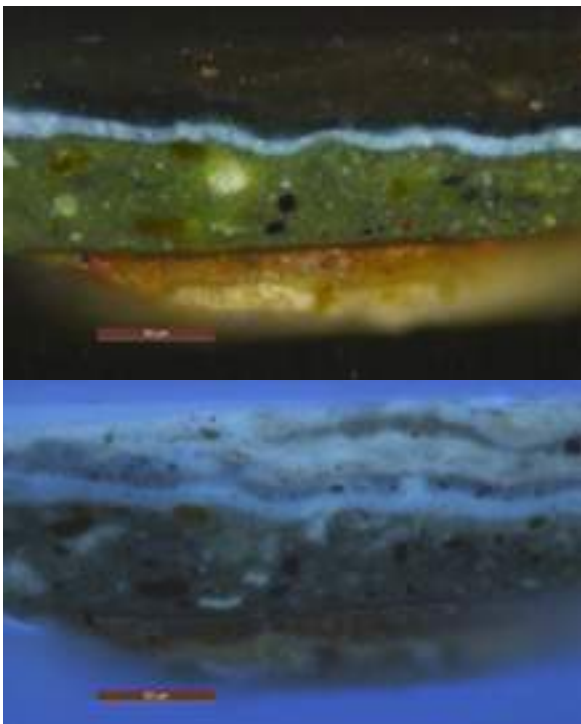
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In recognising the extensive overpaint campaigns present on the painting, treatment progressed with the aim of looking into the possibility of removing at least some of the non-original paint. The two areas that stood out the most - and were therefore dealt with first - were the areas of drapery that were incongruous to the original: the green robe of the Virgin and the blue of the Saint's, which was incorrectly covering up her arm.



Cross-section taken from right side of Saint's blue robe. In normal and UV light.

This cross section, taken from the right side of the blue overpaint near to the Saint's yellow robe, revealed three layers of overpaint on top of original (the darkest green and the lowest layer). All three of these layers, two blue and one light green, could be seen on top of fluorescent varnish in old drying cracks. The original paint was found to contain, through SEM-EDX, solely copper green and lead white. The blue paint on top was found, through Fourier-transform infra-red reflectography, to contain Prussian blue - a more modern pigment invented in the early eighteenth century.



Cross-section taken from left side of Saint's blue robe. In normal and UV light.

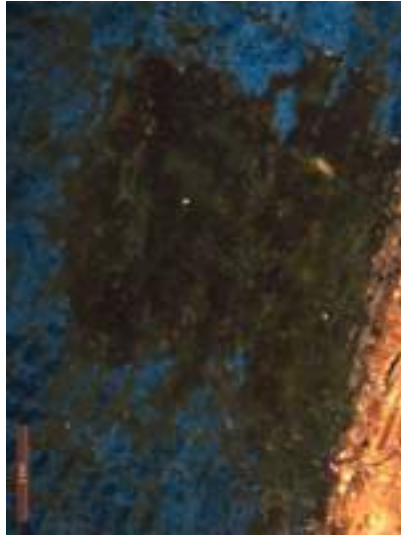
Once it had been determined that the original green appeared to be present underneath the overpaint, a second cross-section was taken from the left side of the Saint's robe to ascertain whether her arm might be there also. This cross section showed the same three layers of overpaint, but instead of the dark green underneath there was a thin layer of flesh-coloured paint, indicating the presence of the arm. The overpaint could once again be seen on top of fluorescent varnish and drying cracks, further confirming its status as a later addition.



However, though this provided promising evidence that both the Saint's arm and green drapery were underneath, cross-sections can only ever show the state of one tiny specific point of paint. The state of the original paint over a wider area, therefore, was still unclear. Another concern was that the copper green might have, as this pigment is prone to do, faded to brown over time. It was thought that this might have been the reason the area was repainted in the first place.



Overpaint removal test revealing flesh paint underneath.



Overpaint removal test revealing original copper green underneath.

To investigate this, small tests were done to remove the overpaint. This allowed for not only an analysis of the ease and possibility of removal, but also for a better understanding of the condition of the original paint layer. As can be seen here, both tests were successful and therefore an overall removal of the overpaint was carried out.



Details of Saint's robe before overpaint removal.

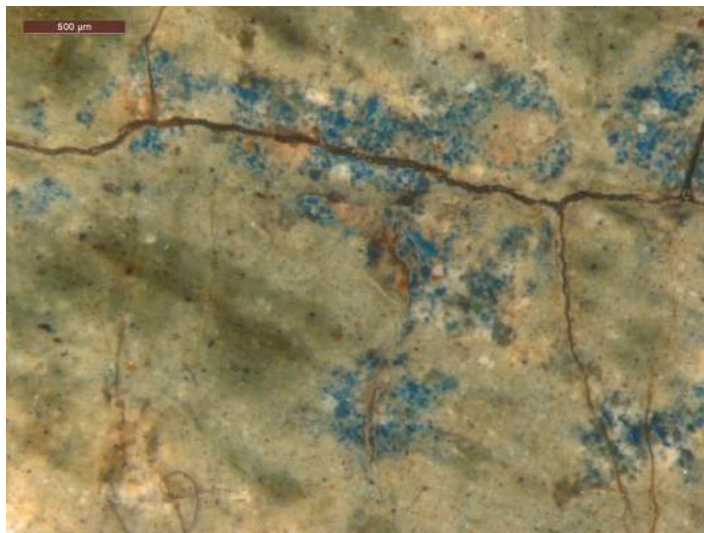


Detail of Saint's robe after overpaint removal.

As can be seen here in the before and after overpaint removal images, the gains made to the painting were significant. Not only did the recovery of the Saint's arm provide a much more anatomically correct reading of the composition, but the removal of the blue, which had been far

too flat and bright, allowed a much greater sense of depth to be seen in this area of the work. It also allowed the faces of the Saint and Christ to be better appreciated.

After the successful removal of the blue, a removal of the second area of overpainted drapery - the Virgin's green robe - was considered. This was a slightly more challenging decision because, as already discussed, this overpaint was known to be on top of discoloured smalt (see page 13 for an image of the cross section). However, microscopy had revealed that there were some areas of azurite underneath as well, which had remained their original blue.



Azurite underneath green overpaint in the Virgin's knee.

In addition to this, SEM-EDX analysis carried out on the cross section had found that the green overpaint contained titanium, an element indicative of either titanium white or titanium yellow, both of which were invented c. 1930. As the proposed date of the painting is early-mid seventeenth century (see next section), this meant that the green was likely added almost three hundred years after the painting was completed. There were also numerous other arguments for the removal of this overpaint campaign, which are listed here:

- After the removal of the Saint's blue robe the two green areas clashed and the incongruity of the green overpaint campaign became even more noticeable.
- Not only was the green colour wrong it was also changing the outline of many other areas of the painting including the Virgin's sleeve and, most importantly, the profile of infant St John.
- Areas of the Virgin's robe, also in discoloured smalt, had been missed out in the overpaint presumably due to their being mistaken for background brown. This meant that the very shape of the robe and the way it went over the Virgin's shoulder was incorrect.
- The brown smalt clearly showed through throughout the green paint, meaning that extensive retouching would have been needed to even this out.
- The removal of the overpaint, though difficult, was possible. In the painting's longer -term future it might have become impossible to remove. Removing it at this point, therefore, allowed for a future conservator/owner to make decisions about the painting's appearance.
- Aesthetically, discoloured smalt is widely accepted and it is not uncommon to see it in painting's of this type and age.

It was decided, therefore, that the Virgin's overpainted green robe also be removed. Though this has revealed a large area of brown smalt there are areas of good quality original blue (see page 19). These provide the viewer with more accurate information about the original state and colour of the drapery. It's removal has also greatly improved the outline of John's face, as well as the shape of the Virgin's sleeve. It has allowed a much greater appreciation of the beauty of the original painting, particularly the folds of the Virgin's red robe from which the proximity, tone and colour of the green overpaint had been a distraction



Detail of St Patrick's painting before overpaint removal.



Detail of St Patrick's painting after overpaint removal.



Detail of Raphael showing St Joseph in the upper left background.



Overlay onto detail of St Patrick's painting. The red line is the composition of the Raphael, the green is what can be seen on the St Patrick's painting.

Additional more minor areas of overpaint were also removed where it was deemed appropriate. This led to another important discovery concerning the painting's original composition. The figure of St Joseph, whose absence had been a major discrepancy between this painting and the Raphael, was unveiled in the upper left background, in an area previously overpainted with thick resinous foliage. Though the figure is worn, the placement and position of Joseph clearly matches the Raphael (see the overlay above). His robe was identified, through microscopy, to contain azurite particles which appear the same as those seen in the Virgin's robe.



Painting before overpaint removal.



Painting after overpaint removal.

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## Part 4: Dating the Painting

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Overlay of the Raphael (red lines) onto the St Patrick's painting.

After the removal of these overpaint campaigns the painting was re-analysed in relation to the original Raphael and it was immediately clear that the painting was a far more accurate copy than it had initially appeared. Here, an overlay of the Raphael onto the St Patrick's painting shows the closeness of composition. The figures are almost identical - down to the detailing of the position of Christ's fingers. The folds of drapery also accurately match and the newly found figure of Joseph, as seen already, also corresponds. It should be pointed out that the slight discrepancies that can be seen - for example in the placement of the feet - are to be expected. For a totally accurate composition a tracing would have been required and, as this painting is significantly smaller than the Raphael, this would have been impossible in a pre-digital age. It is possible that a

squaring-up method may have been used, though there is no evidence for this on the painting. Another thing that must be pointed out here is that the only areas that still remain different - namely the upper right background - are the areas where overpaint is still present. (Treatment of the painting is on-going and these may also be removed at a later date).

A question still remained, however, as to whether the painting was a copy of the original Raphael, or rather a copy of a copy. As previously discussed the tradition of copying Raphael has been rich and diverse, resulting in numerous versions of the *Holy Family* on which this painting could be based. Therefore, in order to conduct a closer art historical study of the Wapping painting it has been essential to determine whether or not this is the case. Thankfully, the removal of the overpaint has provided much more clarity to this than was previously possible, and the painting's accuracy in relation to the original Raphael became obvious. Though there are other early copies - both printed and painted - it has been observed that there is a strong tendency to only mimic the main figural composition, and that the background is often changed. The only accurate examples that we have found - one being Juan José Martínez's lithograph from c. 1850-60 (see page 8) - are much more recent than this painting is believed to be. In fact, no copy of the Raphael which

pre-dates the proposed date of this painting (see further discussion) and matches the background as accurately has been found, and it is therefore believed that this work was done directly from the original Raphael.

Once this had been determined, the provenance of the Raphael painting was examined to see where the St Patrick's work might fit into its history. Fortunately, the *Holy Family* has a well documented and known provenance, the details of which are as follows:<sup>20</sup>

c. 1518 - 1604	Painted for and remained in the family of Ludovico Canossa
1604 - 1627	Collection of the Gonzaga Family
<b>1627 - 1649</b>	<b>Collection of Charles I</b>
<b>1649</b>	<b>Commonwealth Sale of Charles I Collection- Edward Bass sells it to Alonso de Cardenas (for Felipe IV of Spain)</b>
1649 - 1813	Various locations, all as part of the Spanish Royal Collection
1813 - 1818	France - the painting was looted during the Napoleonic Wars
1818 - 1857	The painting was returned to the Spanish Royal Collection, places in the Royal Monastery of San Lorenzo, Madrid
1857 - Present	The Prado Museum

The section of the provenance that is key for the St Patrick's painting are those dates highlighted in bold above, when the Raphael was purchased from the Duke of Mantua's collection for King Charles I. The collection was bought in batches and a record of *Holy Family* can be found in the second batch, which was bought for 27 000 ducats.<sup>21</sup> The *Holy Family*, when bought by the Gonzaga family in 1604, had been valued at 10 000 ducats, so it was clearly the most valuable piece purchased by Charles I. Therefore, the painting was, firstly, one of the most important works in the newly acquired collection of the King and, secondly, was, at some point soon after 1627, in England.

King Charles I was, by 1623, the most celebrated English collector, having inherited collections from both his brother and mother. His motivation for acquiring a vast art collection has been interpreted as following the precedent of other great British collectors such as the Earl of Arundel and the Duke of Buckingham.<sup>22</sup> As his works accumulated, Charles developed a programme to create a collection to rival those of other royal houses in Europe. Edward Chaney, in his research on English collecting, demonstrates how Charles went to great lengths, stretching his resources in

<sup>20</sup> Information taken from The Prado website. <https://www.museodelprado.es/en/the-collection/art-work/the-holy-family-known-as-la-perla/f3d745b8-f800-437a-a664-9f3d065ce127>. Accessed 14/04/16.

<sup>21</sup> Cust, Lionel. 'Notes on Pictures in the Royal Collections-XXVII: The Mantua Collection and Charles I'. In *The Burlington Magazine for Connoisseurs*, vol. 24, no. 131 (1914): 254-57.

<sup>22</sup> Pears, Iain. *The Discovery of Painting: The Growth of Interest in the Arts in England, 1680-1768*. (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1988): 1.

order to culturally establish London as a new Rome, or at least the equal of Paris or Madrid.<sup>23</sup> His collection emphasised Renaissance art, setting a precedent for Italian art within the British nobility and accounting for the prominent position the Raphael held in his collection.<sup>24</sup>

Due to the strict laws placed upon art trade, art collecting was a limited practise in Stuart England. It was illegal to import paintings for sale, auctions were forbidden in London unless held under the aegis of the Corporation and painters were tied to the essentially artisanal guild of the Painter Stainers' Company.<sup>25</sup> Additionally, there was no "English School" of painting, and there was little sign that anyone particularly wanted one. Thus, in this early period there were few collectors, and the most distinguished of the painters were foreign. Art collecting was therefore restricted to those who had the money and influence to buy works abroad, mainly through ambassadors or other agents, and then import them, largely isolating the practise to the nobility.

Despite these restrictions, however, the craze for collecting grew more dramatically in the 1620s and 30s than in any other period of British history. Data about collections in the Elizabethan era reveal the numbers of paintings in various Lord's collections: Pembroke had around sixty pictures; Leicester about two hundred; Bess of Hardwick, seventy; Cobham, seventy-seven; and Lumley almost three hundred.<sup>26</sup> In the Stuart era these figures more than double: James, the 3rd Marquis of Hamilton, owned about six hundred by the 1630s; the aforementioned Earl of Buckingham had accumulated three hundred and twenty-five before his death; and the Earl of Arundel had eight hundred. When it was sold between 1649 and 1653, Charles I's collection numbered one thousand, three hundred and eighty-seven works.<sup>27</sup>

The interest in collecting fuelled a formalisation of connoisseurship in England,<sup>28</sup> where the value of the painting was often rooted in the vague criteria of its cultural value and reconcilability rather than an appreciation of style in the modern sense.<sup>29</sup> This form of art valuation reflects the prime motivation for collecting art in the Stuart era: much like Charles collected art as a display demonstrating wealth and power, so did the British nobility assimilate his collection to also display their influence. Any collector at the time ideally wanted, therefore, to procure works by a known

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<sup>23</sup> Chaney, Edward. "The Italianite Evolution of English Collecting," in *The Evolution of English Collecting: Receptions of Italian Art in the Tudor and Stuart Periods*, ed. Edward Chaney. (London: Yale University Press, 2003): 51.

<sup>24</sup> *ibid.*, 52.

<sup>25</sup> Pears, *The Discovery of Painting: The Growth of Interest in the Arts in England, 1680-1768*: 1.

<sup>26</sup> Chaney, "The Italianite Revolution of English Collecting": 54.

<sup>27</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>28</sup> Henry Peacham, John Selden and Franciscus Junius, each published a treatise that greatly encouraged the growth of connoisseurship, art history, and thus collecting in England: Peacham's *The Art of Drawing*, which went through numerous editions between 1606 and 1661; Selden's *Marmora Arundelliana* (1628); and Julius's *De Pictura veterium*.

<sup>29</sup> Brotton, Jerry. *The Sale of the later King's Goods: Charles I and His Art Collection*. (London: Pan Macmillan, 2007): 13, 44, 311.

master or at least with a recognisable Italianate style.<sup>30</sup> Within this context several copies were made of famous works in the various noble collections. Considering the prominent role of Raphael's *Holy Family*, it is highly likely copies would be made of it to adorn other noble residences. Charles himself can be demonstrated to engage with the culture of creating copies as substitutes. When he was still Prince of Wales in 1623, he employed the Spanish court artist Michel de la Crux to copy all the paintings by Titian in the palace of King Philip IV.<sup>31</sup>

The *Holy Family* was in the collection of Charles until the Civil war of 1646-49. After the act of July 1649 the Rump Parliament declared the forfeiture of the goods of the late King to pay off the debt still due to their creditors, and inventories and valuations of the works of art remaining in the royal palaces were completed in September 1649.<sup>32</sup> By the drawing of lots, Edward Bass became the agent for the sale of the Raphael, which by some accounts this occurred in 1649,<sup>33</sup> by others in 1651.<sup>34</sup> At the time of Bass's acquisition the painting, valued at £2000, was still the most expensive in the collection and it was sold almost immediately back to the Spanish royal family, through Spanish ambassadors operating on behalf of Felipe IV. At the time of its sale the *Holy Family* was among the most famed paintings in Europe,<sup>35</sup> and it is certainly not inconceivable that copies would have been made before its departure. Copies created as substitutes for paintings removed from their original context were certainly not uncommon at the time. For instance, when art experts in the employ of Augustus III (1696-1763), Elector of Saxony, succeeded in purchasing Raphael's *Sistine Madonna* for the Royal Gallery in Dresden, a copy was made by the painter-restorer Pier Antonio Avanzini in 1730 to replace the original on the high altar of San Sisto in Piacenza.<sup>36</sup>

In summary, this research has made it evident that conditions were ideal for a copy of Raphael's *Holy Family* to me made in the early-to mid seventeenth century. This could have been either before the beginning of the Civil war in 1646 as an act to assimilate the royal art collection and thus historically connected to the rise of connoisseurship in England, or possibly after the rising to commemorate such a powerful and prized work in a British collection. Due to the lack of documentation, however, this theory cannot be confirmed purely by art historical observations. However, technical research into the materials of the painting support this theory, and were, in fact

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<sup>30</sup> This is particularly evident in Edward Chaney's documentation of the writings of the Earl of Arundel on his collection of art. Chaney, "The Italianite Revolution of English Collecting": 53-4.

<sup>31</sup> This is recorded by the Italian painter active at the Spanish court, Vincenzo Carducci, in his *Diálogos de la pintura* [Madrid, 1633]; Hoeniger, "How copies may shed life on the Reception of Raphael": 109.

<sup>32</sup> Loomie, Albert J. "New Light on the Spanish Ambassador's Purchases from Charles I's Collection 1649-53." *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 52 (1989): 257.

<sup>33</sup> Information taken from The Prado website. <https://www.museodelprado.es/en/the-collection/art-work/the-holy-family-known-as-la-perla/f3d745b8-f800-437a-a664-9f3d065ce127>. Accessed 14/04/16.

<sup>34</sup> Joanna Pitman gives the specific date of October 23rd, 1651. *The Raphael Trail*. London: Ebury Press, 2006: 143.

<sup>35</sup> Pitman, *The Raphael Trail*: 144.

<sup>36</sup> Hoeniger, "How copies may shed life on the Reception of Raphael": 105.



the initial reason that the painting was examined as a possible seventeenth century copy in the first place.

There are two pigments present in the painting which strongly point to it being an early copy of the Raphael. These are both blue and have both already been mentioned - smalt and azurite. As already stated, smalt was a cheap blue pigment which, as can be seen in the painting, degrades over time to a muddy brown due to the leeching of potassium.<sup>37</sup> Because of this, when a new blue pigment, Prussian Blue, was invented in the early eighteenth century smalt, though technically still available, basically becomes extinct and is very rarely found in paintings after this date. The amount of smalt seen in this painting - the whole of the Virgin's robe and likely much of the sky in the upper right (underneath the overpaint) - makes it very unlikely that it was completed after the beginning of the eighteenth century. The use of azurite also significantly drops after the invention of Prussian blue, though for more economical reasons than smalt. It was replaced for the simple fact that it was much more expensive and difficult to buy. The difference in price is particularly relevant to this painting as the pigments have clearly been used very economically - with the much more expensive azurite reserved for important highlights only: in the Virgin's knee and lap, in lines of Joseph's sleeve and certain areas of the sky. The artist was clearly being careful in his use of the pigment, making it more unlikely that such an expensive pigment would have been chosen if a good cheap alternative had been available.

In addition to this, there is another aspect of these blues that point to the painting being at least early seventeenth century. This was found in a cross section (see next page) taken from the Virgin's knee which, as can be seen here, is quite patchy which large areas of white interspersed amongst the azurite. Importantly, what this cross section revealed that this white layer was actually another layer of degraded smalt - which simply appeared whiter to the higher lead white content. It is extremely non-sensical for smalt, a cheap pigment of significantly less quality to be used on top of expensive azurite especially for an artist, as already mentioned, who was being very economical in his pigment choice.

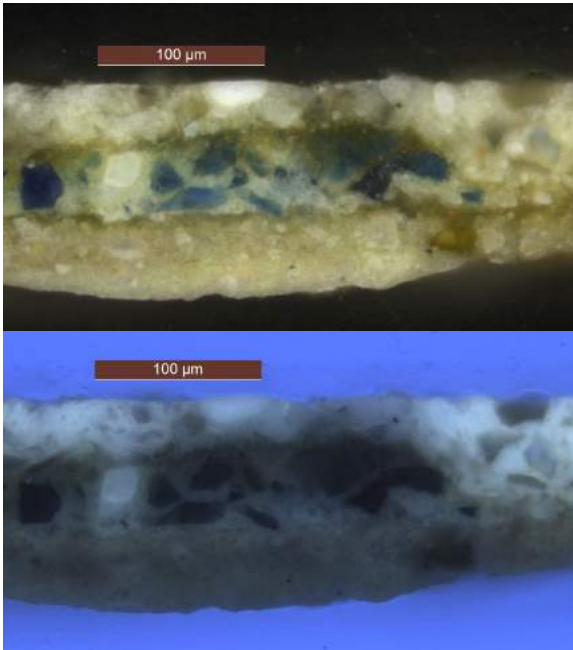


Detail of Virgin's knee after overpaint removal.

The smalt seen in this cross section is, instead, believed to be a much earlier restoration campaign. The azurite seen throughout the painting is extremely coarse and worn in many areas and this is possibly the reason behind its restoration. In terms of dating the painting, this finding is of key importance as it means not only was the work completed by the artist before Prussian

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<sup>37</sup> Spring, Higgitt, and Saunders. 'Investigation of Pigment-Medium Interaction Processes in Oil paint containing Degraded Smalt', 56.



Cross section taken from white area in Virgin's knee. In normal and UV light.

blue was invented but it was also restored at least once before Prussian blue was invented, thus pushing its dating earlier into the seventeenth century and matching the time period in which the Raphael was in England.

A final piece of technical information which backs this hypotheses was the discovery of calcium carbonate in the ground layer of the painting. This is a material indicative of the work being created in Northern Europe, including Britain, rather than an Italian copy (as had been thought upon initial examination).

Through this combination of technical and art historical information it seems highly likely, therefore, that the painting was completed in England sometime between 1630 and 1649.

### **Final Remarks:**

As a conclusion to this project, the huge value of combining art historical research with technical analysis and, in this case, the conservation treatment of the painting, must be noted. Without varnish removal it would've been impossible to determine not only the quality and colour of the paint beneath, but also of any of the significant alterations that had been made to it. Without overpaint removal it would have been impossible to confidently state that the painting was likely copied directly from the Raphael, upon which the analysis of its context of creation was based. The importance of technical analysis has also been shown. Finally, it has demonstrated the worth of examining copies not solely as versions of the original works but as independent pieces of art in their own right.

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