

ROGERS ART CONSERVATION, LLC
Catherine G. Rogers, Conservator of Paintings and Fine Art
62 Broad Street, Studio J1
Charleston, South Carolina 29401
catherinerogers@gmail.com
iPhone: 843-853-2953

CONSERVATION TREATMENT REPORT

Altar Painting - "Angel #4" by Cesare Porta
St. Mary's Catholic Church
95 Hasell Street
Charleston, South Carolina 29401

Submitted by:
Catherine Rogers

February 5, 2023

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1. PRE-TREATMENT CONDITION OF PAINTING

The entire canvas dimensions are approximately (H x W): 122" x 50-1/4". The canvas is a simple tabby weave of a medium to heavy weight linen. Slubs and nubs are visible in the canvas with irregular threads that appear thicker. Numerous cuts in the canvas are visible in the figure of the Angel and in the left gold background were most likely made in the past to readhere the canvas to the plaster wall. Many of the cuts in the canvas are secured to the wall with numerous tacks which do not appear to be serving a purpose of attachment.

An off-white/beige ground layer covers the canvas. The paint layer appeared to be consistent with oil paint medium and was applied in a thin to moderate thickness. Some paint losses are noted in the paint layer around the tacks and along the canvas cuts after the cleaning process. Extensive areas of paint abrasion are visible throughout the design of the painting and are the result of previous overcleaning using either too strong a cleaning mixture or too aggressive mechanical action. Otherwise, the paint layer was generally well adhered to the ground layer and remained stable and securely attached during the cleaning process.

A canvas distortion which runs vertically through the Angel's proper left eye area is noticeable on the right side of the Angel's face. This is a result of possibly a thick canvas thread in that area of distortion, a crease in the canvas or excess glue in the adhesive of the canvas to the wall. Unfortunately, the canvas is not flexible in this area which would allow this distortion to be reduced. Minimum areas of delamination or detachment of the canvas from the wall support were also noted. Tacks were also used in the attachment of the canvas to the plaster substrate wall in the areas where the canvas was cut. Scattered areas of convex bulges in the canvas are the result of excess glue and/or plaster between the canvas and the wall support.

A heavy layer of grime along with discolored varnish layers and areas of extensive previous restoration work mars the original surface of the painting. At least two different campaigns of overpaint on the original surface of the painting are noted. The surface coatings over the original paint surface typically followed a layering of grime, discolored varnish, overpaint, grime, discolored varnish, overpaint (older and more tenacious to remove than upper overpaint layer). The varnish layer is bloomed (more opaque and whitish coloring) in appearance due to moisture and the old restoration appears darker in appearance than the original paint. A dark red border was painted around the perimeter of the painting and over the gold background in a past restoration.

The halo around the Angel's head had been previously restored using a silver metallic leaf and the dark design details had also been altered from the original design. Cleaning tests in the halo revealed that the original halo was gold in color versus silver but a lighter gold color than the background.

2. CONSERVATION TREATMENT PRACTICES

Removal of the Surface Grime, Old Varnish and Previous Overpaint

The grime and old varnish layers were removed with an organic solvent mixture of acetone and mineral spirits and aqueous cleaning solution (2% solution of Tri-ammonium citrate, buffered to pH 7.0). The tenacious oil overpaint was removed with a non-methylene chloride paint stripper and citric acid gel. In areas where the overpaint was difficult to remove, the stripper gel was covered with plastic wrap for an extended period of time to soften the overpaint. Areas of gel cleaning were cleared using a mixture of acetone and mineral spirits. Tacks were removed and any tack holes consolidated with Beva D-8 adhesive.

Under the previously overpainted areas, abrasion was noted in numerous, scattered areas of the painting, especially in dark passages such as the shadows and adjacent to the previously cut areas in the canvas. This abrasion in some areas could also be the result of sandpaper use in past restorations.

There was no artist's signature in the painting.

Application of Isolating Varnish

After the cleaning process, a varnish layer of Acryloid B-72 dissolved in hydrocarbon solvent (xylene) was applied by brush on the painted surface of the painting as an isolating layer. The gold background was varnished with UVS glossy varnish (Regalez 1094), a synthetic varnish that will not discolor or change in solubility over time.

Filling and Inpainting of Losses and Abrasions

Any losses of canvas (tack holes and canvas cuts) and paint layer losses were filled with a reversible vinyl fill material using a micro spatula, careful not to cover any of the original painting. The previously cut canvas areas were filled with reversible vinyl fill material and microcrystalline wax where needed, with care not to cover any original painting. In areas where the old fill was too high, the excess was removed mechanically with a scalpel. Any paint losses were inpainted with Gamblin Conservation Colors, pigments mixed with Aldehyde resin.

Application of Finishing Varnish

After the inpainting was completed, the painting was brush varnished with UVS matte varnish (Regalez 1094), a synthetic varnish that will not discolor or change in solubility over time.

Framing Treatment

The old framing and the adjacent gold paint border were cleaned using an aqueous cleaning solution (2% solution of Tri-ammonium citrate, buffered to pH 7.0). The framing and the gold paint border were repainted with two applications of Liberon Gilt Varnish.

Conservation Team:

Catherine Rogers of Rogers Art Conservation, LLC

Craig Crawford of Crawford Conservation, Inc.

Maho Yoshikawa, Private Practice, Chicago, IL

Project Date: September 19, 2022 - January 10, 2023

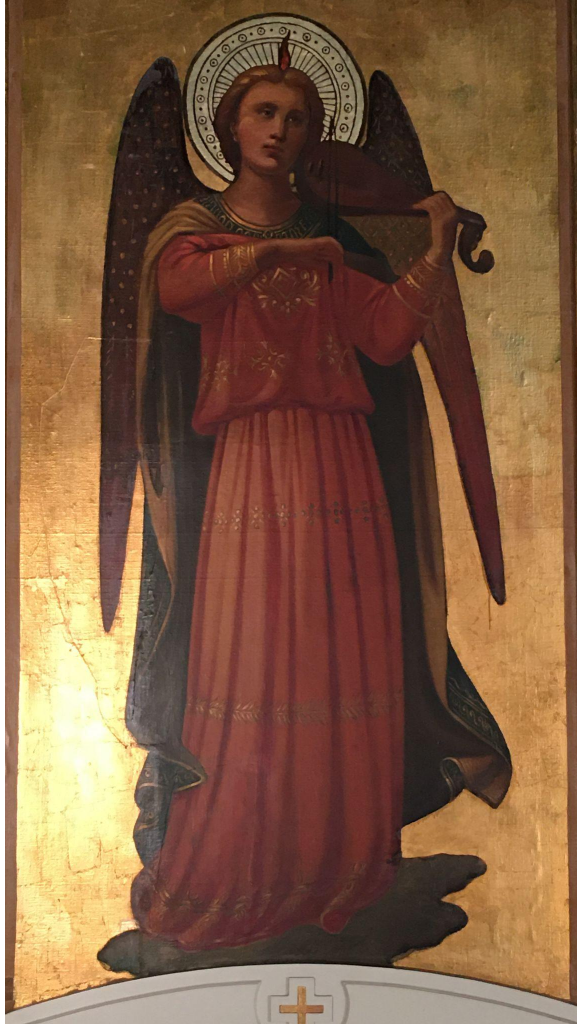
3. CONSERVATION DOCUMENTATION



Before Treatment



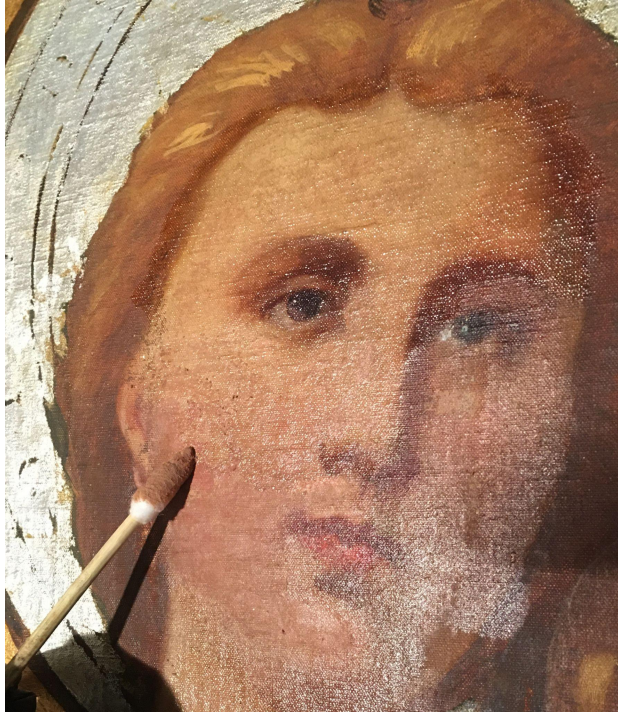
After Treatment



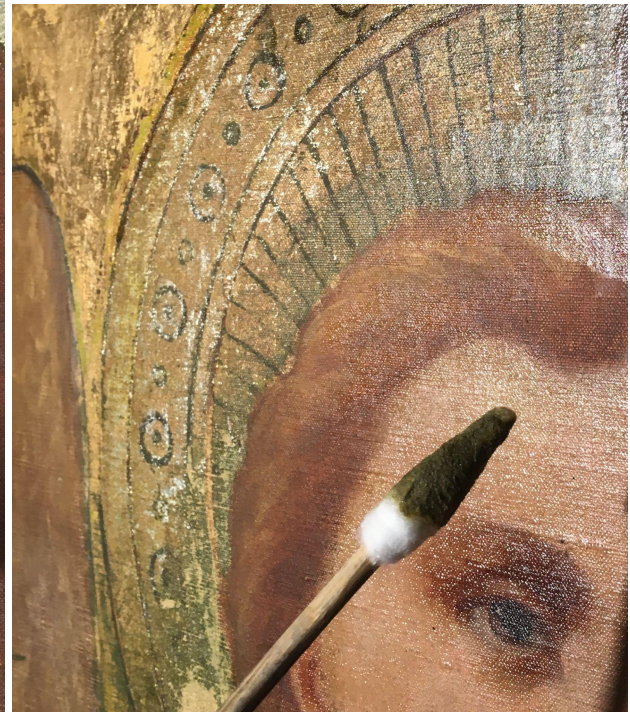
Before Treatment



After Treatment



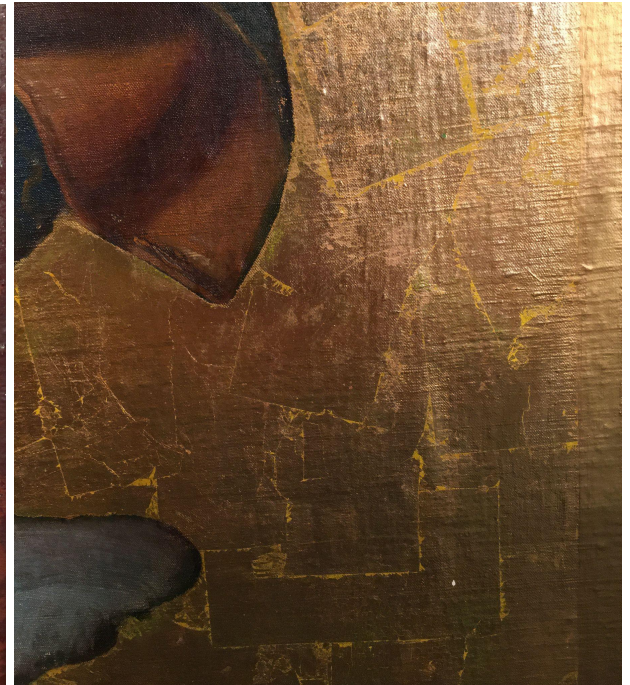
Overpaint removal in face



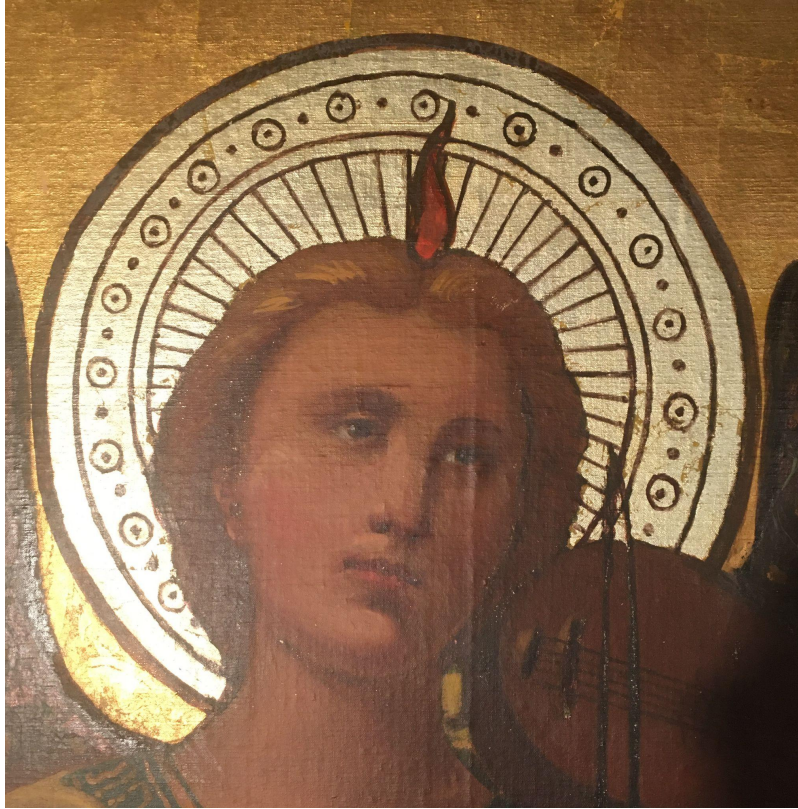
Grime/overpaint removal in halo



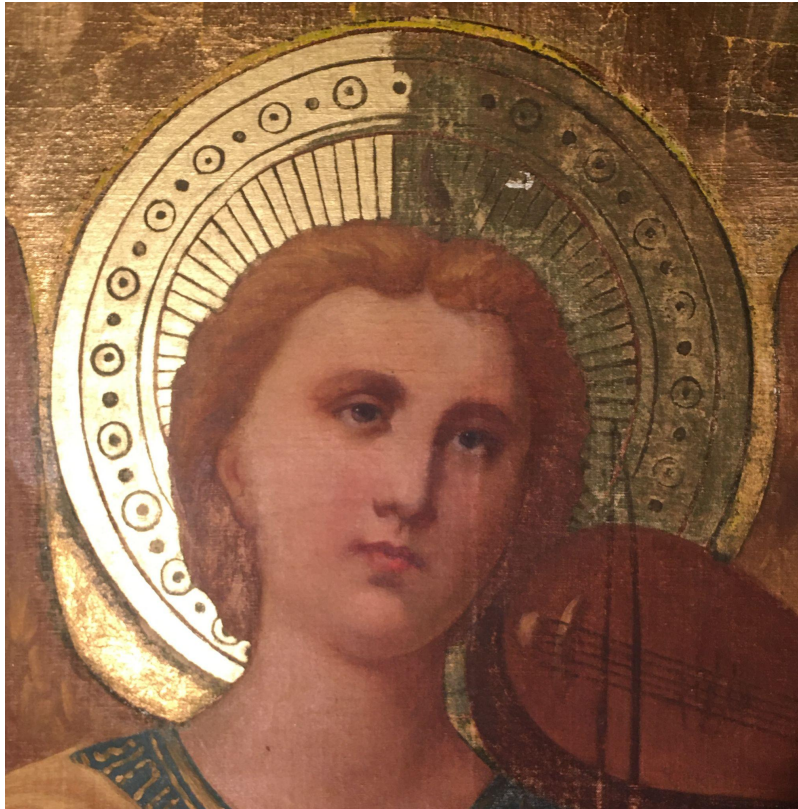
Varnish removal in robe



Area of metallic leaf application using remnants



Before Treatment, Detail



During Treatment, Detail



After Treatment, Detail