



Begun in 2019, the work has just been completed on the ground floor

Restoration of the Palazzo: Allori's decorations, the fifteenth-century ceilings and the Chapel dedicated to Mary Magdalene

The frescoes on the walls of the Gallery have been rediscovered, while the Portinari coat of arms have emerged in the friezes. The chapel is an extremely rare case of mural a secco painting

Florence, 7 April 2022 – From the very entrance of the palazzo, the Stories of the Odyssey and of Hercules decorating the loggias of the Emperors' Courtyard, set in marvellous grotesque decorations, and the frieze of the *Batrachomyomachia*, a battle of mice and frogs, reveal what a treasure trove Palazzo Portinari Salviati is. Going up to the *piano nobile*, one discovers the fifteenth-century coffered ceilings with a frieze preserving the Portinari coat of arms, a door flanked by lions, and the frescoed vaults of the many rooms overlooking Via del Corso, while a small jewel is the Chapel, frescoed – like most of the building – by Alessandro Allori and dedicated to Saint Mary Magdalene. The restoration of the historic rooms of Palazzo Portinari Salviati and the recovery of the decorated walls and ceilings, coordinated by Adriana Novelli, project manager of the operation promoted by LDC Hotel, has been planned and carried out by restorer Anna Medori with the staff of the Faberestauro company of which she is the owner. The methodology of the work has been planned in the wake of detailed historical and artistic research, supported by constant observation and study of the surfaces, the materials and the surrounding context.

An extensive campaign of diagnostic investigations preceded and guided the restoration of the decorated ceilings and walls in the various spaces; this began in 2019 and has been recently completed. A programmed maintenance and monitoring plan has also been drawn up to verify the state of conservation of the surfaces over time.

On the **GROUND FLOOR OF THE PALAZZO**, the decorative cycles dedicated to the **Stories of the Odyssey** and the **Labours of Hercules**, painted by Allori and his assistants, and the frieze illustrating the poem attributed to Homer, the **Batrachomyomachia**, have undergone a conservative conservation, as they had been restored recently, between the end of the last century and the early 2000s. Great attention was paid to the **Madonna and Child enthroned**, which required more care because



the colour had lifted in several places. The fresco, off-centre with respect to the seventeenth-century span in which it is inserted, has a **fourteenth-century iconography, but the extensive repainting is fairly recent**: nineteenth-century or later, perhaps to restore an underlying or torn work.

On the **PIANO NOBILE** the restoration has proven a real opportunity for continuous and exciting discoveries such as, for example, the **discovery of paintings beneath the layers of plaster on the gallery walls**, the finding of signatures and dates on some paintings and the presence of works of paper painted with the Salviati coat of arms covering the Portinari family coat of arms on the beams of the coffered ceilings.

The work on the *piano nobile* began in **October 2020 with the stripping of the walls in the rooms of the Gallery**, which since the end of the nineteenth century, as can be seen from an image in the Alinari archive, had appeared with the ceiling of the vault decorated in 1780 by Tommaso Gherardini, depicting a number of Olympian gods, and with the walls covered by layers of plaster. The removal of the white plaster, carried out with hot compresses and mechanical removal, revealed several layers of paint that completely concealed the marble sculptural groups, imitating classical statues, conceived within niches inserted into architectural divisions. The ceiling was also affected by much lifting of the paint layer and widespread fractures and micro-cracks, and this was dealt with. The **wooden coffered ceilings** in some of the rooms, decorated with floral motifs, rampant lions and grotesques and with the coats of arms of the Portinari and Salviati families, which had already been restored in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries – many of the beams, cornices and panels are of recent construction compared to the original late sixteenth-century beams – had to be restored due to damage caused by infiltration of water. The same is true of the **frescoed vaults**, which are supported by wattle ceilings that have been affected by structural problems due to water infiltration and consequent buckling. Consolidation of the support structure has been followed by restoration of the painted film. The niche, **decorated with delightful grotesques modelled on the late sixteenth-century ones** by Alessandro Allori and his workshop on the ground floor, but actually the result of a later period and part of the extension of the *palazzo* carried out between 1669 and 1698, has also been restored, with cleaning, stucco and the removal of abrasions.

THE CHAPEL DEDICATED TO SAINT MARY MAGDALENE - Work began in February 2019 on the restoration of the chapel decorated by Alessandro Allori and his assistants, Giovanni Maria Butteri and Alessandro Pieroni between 1578 and 1580, with wall paintings depicting the **Stories of Mary Magdalene** and the panel painting of **Christ in the House of Martha and Mary Magdalene** in the centre of the altar table.



Palazzo
Portinari Salviati

YOUR PLACE IN HISTORY

The scientific analyses, conducted using high-definition images, magnifying devices and material investigations planned by Professor Guido Botticelli and supervised by Soprintendenza officials Fulvia Zeuli and Jennifer Celani, revealed very **full-bodied and textured brushstrokes** but not the typical signs of workmanship on fresh plaster. Allori probably painted on plaster that was already dry, and he worked on scenes on the wall as if he were dealing with a painting on panel. **This is a rare example in the Florentine context of a mural oil painting, an unusual choice in the context of traditional painting with real fresco typically used for wall decorations in this period.** The reasons for this choice may be many: the plasterwork may already have been finished and dried at the time of the painting, or perhaps he was striving for greater brilliance and the chance to set down more defined details. **Another example of this type in Florence can be found in the Sala delle Carte Geografiche in the Uffizi, painted in oil with gilded miniatures by Ludovico Buti, who also worked with Allori at Palazzo Portinari, around the end of the sixteenth century.**

The problems with the chapel, which have damaged the beautiful texture of the original paintwork, are mainly due to the infiltration of humidity, which over time made necessary various restoration and maintenance operations.

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