

Tracing of past restorations of ‘Madonna dei Fusi’ attributed to Leonardo da Vinci

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“Madonna dei Fusi” (‘Madonna of the Yarnwider’) is a spectacular example of Italian Renaissance painting, attributed to Leonardo da Vinci, possibly with aid of one of his pupils. It was probably executed between the years 1501–1507. The exact history of the picture could be traced down since its purchase by Henry Petty-Fitzmaurice, the 3rd Marquess of Lansdowne in 1809.¹ Since then it was restored at least twice, but previous attempts cannot be excluded. The painting was previously extensively examined with various non-invasive techniques.²⁻⁶

The aim of this study⁷ is to give an account of past restoration procedures. The evidence of a former retouching campaign will be presented with cross-sectional images obtained non-invasively with Optical Coherence Tomography (OCT). Specifically, the locations of overpaintings/retouchings with respect to the original paint layer and secondary varnishes will be given.

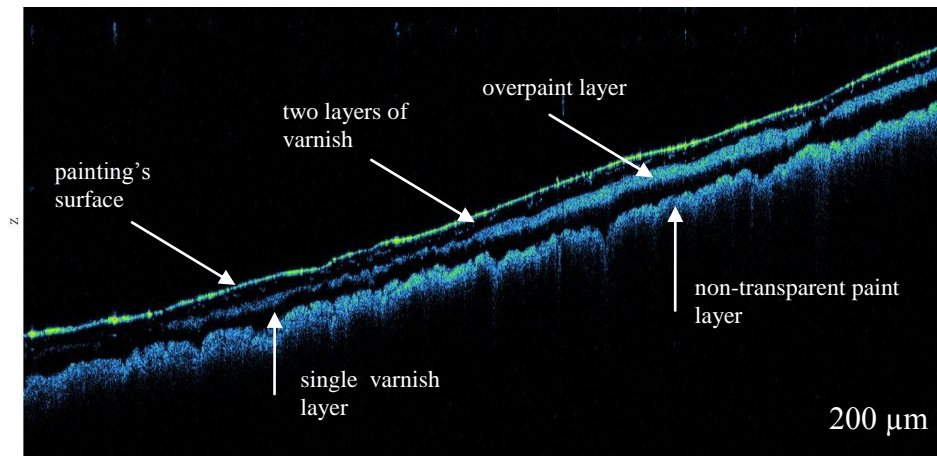


Figure 1 Exemplary result of the OCT examination. The overpaint layer is clearly visible between layers of varnish.

Interestingly, these alterations are not clearly distinguishable with the UV-excited fluorescence, probably due to the fact that the overpaint layer is covered with two layers of strongly fluorescing varnish.

In the contribution the procedure for extracting maps of alterations from the OCT data will be presented. Additionally, the evidence of a former transfer of the pictorial layer to the new canvas support by detecting the presence of its structure incised into paint layer will be shown.

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