a cura di STEFANO BERTOCCI FEDERICO CIOLI

Franciscan Landscapes

Conservation, Protection and Use of Religious Cultural Heritage in the Digital Era vol. 1



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Conservation, Protection and Use of Religious Cultural Heritage in the Digital Era

vol. 1





This volume collects the papers presented at the concluding conference of the European project 'F-ATLAS: Franciscan Landscapes: The Observance between Italy, Portugal and Spain' that took place in Assisi, May 11-13, 2023.

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Porziuncola, Assisi (Italy). Drawing by Stefano Bertocci.

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INTEGRATED DIGITAL SURVEY TECHNIQUES FOR THE DOCUMENTATION OF THE ARTISTIC HERITAGE OF THE FRANCISCAN OBSERVANCE: THE PICTORIAL CYCLE OF THE INDULGENCE OF PORZIUNCOLA BY TIBERIO D'ASSISI

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Abstract

The European project 'F-ATLAS – Franciscan Landscapes: Observance between Italy, Portugal and Spain' aims to develop methodologies for managing cultural heritage in the digital era. This paper focuses on the documentation and analysis of frescoes depicting the indulgence of Porziuncola by Tiberio d'Assisi in two locations: the Chapel of Roses in the Convent of San Fortunato in Montefalco (Perugia) and the Basilica di Santa Maria degli Angeli (Assisi). Integrated digital survey techniques, including laser scanning and photogrammetry, were employed to acquire metric, morphological, chromatic, and material data. This data permitted the creation of accurate digital reconstructions, enabling qualitative and quantitative analysis of the frescoes. The project highlights similarities and differences in their execution and composition, shedding light on Tiberio d'Assisi's artistic process. This paper underscores the importance of integrating advanced technologies to understand historical artworks' creation and conservation methods.

Keywords: Tiberio d'Assisi, integrated digital survey, frescoes.





1. Introduction

This work is part of the wide-ranging European project 'F-ATLAS – Franciscan Landscapes: Observance between Italy, Portugal and Spain' coordinated by the University of Florence with the co-participation of the University of Barcelona, the Portuguese Catholic University and the University of Lisbon (ISCTE-IUL).

The project aims to develop methodologies, protocols and tools for the management and enhancement of cultural heritage in the digital era and to define a strategy of documentation and knowledge for conservation, protection, reuse, and promotion, which consider tangible, intangible, and digital heritage (Bertocci et al., 2023). The methodology applied in the project starts from the macro-scale of investigation concerning the architectural and landscape context to a micro-scale concerning the cultural and artistic aspects. This contribution focuses on the documentation through the integrated digital survey techniques (laser-scanner and photogrammetric) for the analysis and preservation of the frescoes that constitute the pictorial cycle about the episodes of the indulgence of Porziuncola made by Tiberio d'Assisi for the Chapel of Roses in the convent of San Fortunato in Montefalco (Fig. 1) and the Basilica di Santa Maria degli Angeli in Assisi (Fig. 2). These frescoes are of great importance because they provide information about the appearance of the Sanctuary of Santa Maria degli Angeli and the events of the Franciscan order at the time of their realization. Also noteworthy is the digital survey outputs'

opposite page
Fig. 2
Chapel of Roses,
Basilica di Santa
Maria degli
Angeli, Assisi.



contribution to analyzing the techniques and methodologies Tiberio d'Assisi employed in representing scenes, adjusting them to the diverse morphology of their respective locations.

2. The pictorial cycle of the Indulgence of Porziuncola by Tiberio d'Assisi

Re-proposing in the Chapel of Roses at the Porziuncola (1516), a cycle of frescoes already painted at the Convent of San Fortunato in Montefalco (1512) must be linked not only to the instruction of pilgrims on the essential changes that were taking place in those years within the Franciscan order that would lead in 1517 to the division between minors and conventuals, decreed by Leo X with the bull *Ite* Vos. Indeed, the Indulgence of Forgiveness had become for the friars, who identified themselves with the reform initiated by Paoluccio Trinci, an identity principle to be contested with the rival Conventual friars (Lunghi, 2019). The pictorial cycle of the Indulgence of Porziuncola, painted by Tiberio d'Assisi, follows the narration of Michele de Berardi da Spello and is composed of five episodes (Figg. 3-4):

- (A) saint Francis penitent visited by the angels: this first scene shows saint Francis who, in order to flee the lure of the devil, threw himself naked among the thorns of a bush;
- (B) the angels guide saint Francis to the Porziuncola: saint Francis, holding two small bunches of red and white roses in honour of Christ and the Virgin is guided by the two angels in the direction of the Porziuncola;





















opposite page
Fig. 4
Comparison
between the
episodes E
painted in the
Chapel of Roses
in Montefalco (on
the left) and in
Santa Maria degli
Angeli (on the
right).





- (C) Christ, through the intercession of the Virgin, appears to saint Francis, who has placed the two bunches of flowers on the altar of the chapel;
- (D) saint Francis requests Honorius III to approve the indulgence: Honorius III receives the white and red roses from saint Francis as a sign of the miracle that took place in Santa Maria degli Angeli;
- (E) saint Francis proclaims the indulgence at the Porziuncola: saint Francis preaches the indulgence to a crowd of pilgrims gathered in front of the Porziuncola.

To compare the two pictorial cycles, it is first necessary to describe the spaces in which they are located: the Chapel of Roses in Santa Maria degli Angeli stands on the site where, according to archive documents, a small site was identified as the cell of saint Francis. According to the studies conducted by C. Cenci, the oldest information on this chapel dates back to 1344. This small building was not involved in the demolitions due to the renovation of the Basilica ordered by Pope Pius V and entrusted to Galeazzo Alessi that began in the second half of the 16th century, probably due to its decentralised location. The chapel consists of two spaces of different sizes, covered by a lowered barrel vault and entirely frescoed by Tiberio d'Assisi. The larger one adjoins the original chapel, and the smaller one houses a liturgical altar located on a higher level and overlooks another space that, over time, has become a memorial shrine (Lunghi, 2019).

On the other hand, the Chapel of Roses in Montefalco is located on the left side of the foursided portico preceding the entrance to the church. It is a small space covered by a lowhipped vault and entirely frescoed by Tiberio d'Assisi. At the Porziuncola, Tiberio d'Assisi replicated the episodes already painted in Moltefalco without significant variations, except for adapting the compositions to the different format of the panels, vertical in Montefalco, horizontal in Santa Maria degli Angeli. The painter also revised the reading direction of the pictorial cycle, with the one in Montefalco being read from left to right and the one in Santa Maria degli Angeli read from right to left.

In both chapels, saint Clare of Assisi and saint Elizabeth of Hungary, saint Ludwig of Toulouse and saint Anthony of Padua, saint Bonaventura of Bagnoregio and saint Bernardine of Siena are represented and arranged in the panels in pairs. On the wall behind the altar in the Chapel of the Roses in Santa Maria degli Angeli, there is a representation of saint Francis with his companions, this representation is not present in Montefalco. In both chapels, the Eternal is depicted on the vault.

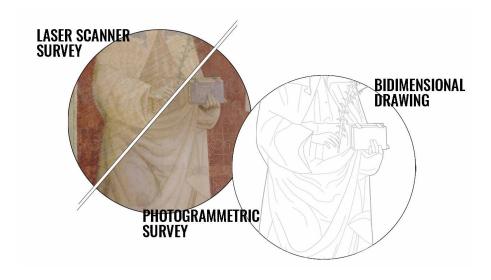
Therefore, the two pictorial representations are the only substantial differences between the last episode (E), in which saint Francis proclaims the indulgence at the Porziuncola. In realising the second pictorial cycle, it is assumed that Tiberio d'Assisi reproduced a realistic setting of the Sanctuary of Santa Maria degli Angeli when the frescoes were painted in 1512. In the episode of the proclamation of the indulgence, it is evident a further expedient used by Tiberio d'Assisi: that of reusing the same drawing used in Montefalco upside down in the arrangement of the figures, perhaps to make it more responsive to reality. From a stylistic point of view, the frescoes are perfectly consistent with Tiberio d'Assisi's painting style, which is very close to that of the great painters of his time, particularly Perugino and Pintoricchio, from whom he derived the foundations of his painting style, although he was not directly their disciple (Bordini et al., 2021).

3. Digital survey and documentation of the frescos

The digital documentation of the Chapel of Roses in Montefalco and Santa Maria degli Angeli and its decorative apparatus was conducted by integrating various techniques and technologies. These were integrated into the acquisition phase and the results, aiming to obtain 2D and 3D elaborations for multidisciplinary applications and analyses (Bertocci et al., 2019).

The integrated digital survey techniques allow the acquisition of a considerable amount of data and the implementation of verification operations for their accuracy. In particular, laser scanning techniques enable the acquisition of information regarding the metric and morphological components of the architectural object under examination. In parallel, photogrammetric surveying – using the Structure from Motion methodology

opposite page
Fig. 5
The data of the
point cloud,
the texture
obtained from the
photogrammetric
SIM survey, and
a detail of the
two-dimensional
drawing.



- enables the acquisition of data concerning the chromatic and material components, which is crucial in documenting decorative apparatuses, especially frescoes.

Following the digital survey campaigns, to develop a reliable digital reconstruction of the decorative apparatus, a process of vectorization of the pictorial decoration and the architecture in which it is inserted was carried out, obtaining reliable two-dimensional drawings and graphical representations (Parrinello, La Placa, 2019).

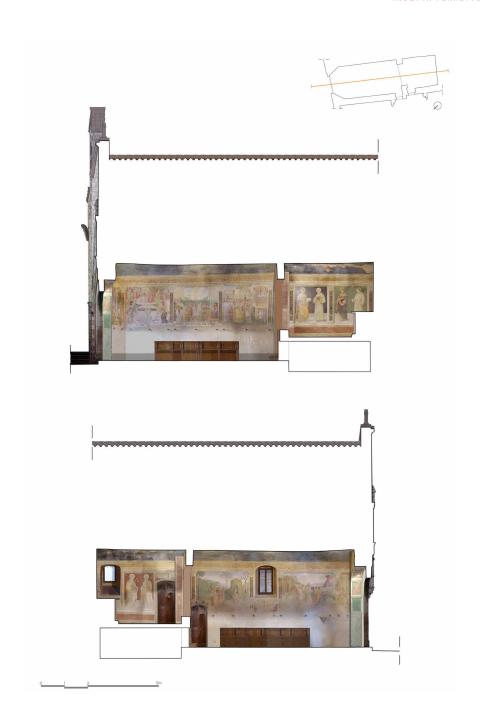
The generation of reliable elaborations from both a qualitative and quantitative perspective formed the basis for subsequent analyses and considerations on the frescoes and their methods of execution. The digital documentation was elaborated following a methodology that included a preliminary phase conducted on-site, aimed at planning the digital survey activity to facilitate the acquisition and subsequent management of data during the processing phase. The principal methodology used for survey operations was employing TLS (Terrestrial Laser Scanning) technology. For the acquisition of metric and morphological data, a Faro CAM Focus^M 70 laser scanner with phase-difference technology was used, through which a series of successive scans were performed, with a common point overlap of at least 50%. Thanks to an integrated HDR camera, it was possible to integrate chromatic data with the metric and morphological data, thus obtaining a highly descriptive point cloud. The acquired data was subsequently imported into specific point cloud management software, Leica Geosystems Cyclone, through which the main phases of filtering, registration, certification, and processing of the global point cloud were developed (Forgione et al., 2022).

opposite page
Fig. 6
Longitudinal
section of the
Chapel of Roses
in Santa Maria
degli Angeli
(credits: Claudia
Cerbai).

The global point cloud is obtained through a visual alignment procedure involving identifying and overlapping homologous points between adjoining scans through rigid rotations and translations. The global 3D point cloud represents the metric basis from which essential data for creating two-dimensional drawings, such as plans and sections, were extracted (Bordini et al., 2021). In parallel with the development of laser scanner surveys, detailed photogrammetric survey campaigns (SfM) of the decorative apparatus of both Chapel of Roses were carried out, aimed at integrating the metric-morphological data derived from the TLS point cloud with a product capable of representing, through mapped 3D models, information on the appearance and conservation status (Forgione et al., 2022) of the frescoes under study. Two digital cameras were used for photographic acquisitions, a Canon 1100D and a Pentax K1, equipped with an 18-55mm lens. Photographs were acquired based on the characteristics of the environment to be documented, taking into account the lighting conditions used to calibrate the camera parameters. According to the acquisition methodology, the photographs have been captured sequentially and maintaining a minimum overlap of 50% between successive photographs (Pancani et al., 2022).

Data acquisition was performed in RAW file format, which keeps colour information for later processing in a specific colour space (Pamart et al., 2017). Images were calibrated by taking a preliminary photograph and inserting a colour checker into the scene. The photographs were subsequently calibrated using Spider Checker® software. The set of balanced and colour-corrected images, saved in .jpg format, was loaded into 3D modelling software (Agisoft Metashape). Most digital processing pipeline steps, camera calibration and orientation, dense point cloud generation, polygon mesh surface reconstruction, and texture mapping were performed fully automatically. After setting up a local coordinate system, the same SfM photogrammetry software automatically generated an ortho-photomosaic from the rasterized close-range image data as a projection onto the best-fit plane (Grifoni et al., 2017). Once the high-poly textured 3D model was obtained, it was referenced and calibrated using coordinates of homologous points extrapolated from the laser scanner survey. This procedure allowed the integration of the two digital survey methodologies, resulting in mapped 3D models with a high level of reliability (Minutoli et al., 2020). By meticulously refining and discretizing the point cloud data, wireframe graphical representations of plans, elevations, and sections at a scale of 1:50 were created (Fig. 6).

These wireframe drawings were subsequently used as the basis for calibrating the orthographic images developed by exporting ortho mosaics from Agisoft Metashape



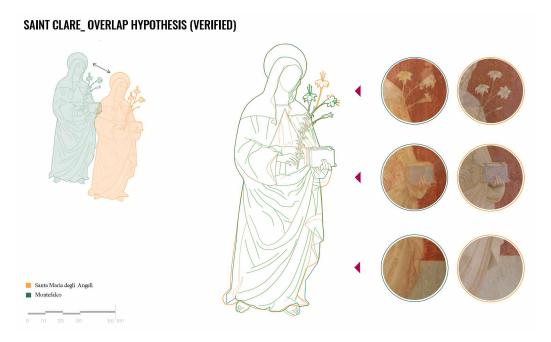


Fig. 7
Hypothesis
of overlap of
the figure of
Saint Clare and
identification
of the main
differences.

software. The data obtained from the photogrammetric survey was integrated, and it became possible to carry out a detailed re-drawing of the frescoes at a scale of 1:10, enabling a comparison of the frescoes and considerations on the methodologies of their creation, as described in the following paragraph. The entirety of the acquired data and subsequent elaboration constitutes a fundamental basis for examining and interpreting the frescoes created by Tiberio d'Assisi in the Chapel of Roses in Montefalco and Santa Maria degli Angeli, considering both their morphological and chromatic aspects.

4. Analysis methodology and conclusions

This section will describe the results obtained by comparing the frescoes executed in the Chapel of the Roses in Montefalco and Santa Maria degli Angeli by Tiberio d'Assisi. It was chosen to consider two sample cases – the representation of Santa Chiara and episode B in which the angels guide saint Francis to the Porziuncola – to illustrate a methodology applicable to the entire decorative apparatus. The analyses rely on two-dimensional drawings at a scale of 1:10 made through the precise rendering of data obtained through the integration of laser scanner survey and photogrammetric survey of the internal surfaces of the two chapels. These surveys have allowed the identification of portions of decorations with overlapping profiles and have demonstrated

opposite page Fig. 8 First overlap hypothesis of the episode B and identification of the main differences.

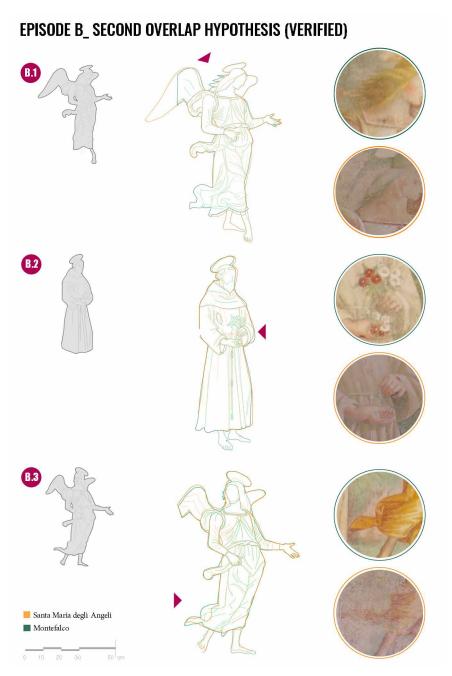
EPISODE B_ FIRST OVERLAP HYPOTHESIS (NOT VERIFIED)



the use of the same preparatory drawings or templates to impress reference incisions and profiles on freshly applied plaster. As described in Figure 7, the overlap between the two drawings representing Santa Chiara corresponds almost perfectly. The main differences are found in the right part of the fresco, particularly concerning the drapery of the dress and the lilies that the saint holds in her hands. In the Montefalco fresco, there are three lilies, while in the one in Santa Maria degli Angeli, there are four. Given the almost total correspondence of the main lines, the hypothesis of using the same preparatory drawing can be verified.

Regarding episode B, an overlap was first made, assuming the use of a single preparatory drawing representing the three figures. As described in Figure 8, this hypothesis is not verified, as overlapping one of the three figures results in the misalignment of the other two. Therefore, we proceeded with the overlap, assuming the use of three preparatory drawings, one for each figure. As in the previous case, this hypothesis verifies the correspondence of the principal lines, especially in the overlap of drawing B.1. The main differences are recorded in the upper part, in the representation of the hair and in the wing, which in the case of Santa Maria degli Angeli is fully represented, while in the case of Montefalco is only partially represented due to the shape of the frame. As for drawing B.2, the main difference is that in the representation in Santa Maria degli Angeli the two small bunches

Fig. 9
Second overlap
hypothesis of the
episode B and
identification
of the main
differences.



of red and white roses are not depicted, but the hands are in the same position. Figure B.3 almost perfectly corresponds; the only substantial difference is found in the lower part of the dress. So in this case, the second hypothesis of overlap, which suggests the use of three preparatory drawings, can be considered verified. In conclusion, with the updating of the technologies at our disposal and the integration of proven methodologies in various areas of the analysis of wall paintings, it is possible to take further steps of definite interest from the point of view of scientific research and, specifically, to clarify the operating methods and working phases (Bertocci, 2023). This contribution underscores the importance of defining an operational methodology for the study and analysis of pictorial representations and how this can serve as a crucial tool for their preservation and enhancement.

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The volumes present contributions from the International F-ATLAS Conference, promoted within the European project "F-ATLAS – Franciscan Landscapes: The Observance between Italy, Portugal and Spain", funded in 2020 by the JPICH 2019 Conservation, Protection and Use Call. The Conference brought together experts from various disciplines, including history, architecture, geography, digital humanities, and computer science, creating a rich and comprehensive interdisciplinary dialogue. Participants from renowned international universities offered unique insights into the Franciscan Observance and its impact on European Cultural Heritage. The contributions examined the past and sparked discussions on the future of documenting and safeguarding religious heritage.

Integrating historical research with technological progress opens exciting possibilities to create comprehensive digital archives, virtual reconstructions, and immersive experiences that can bridge the gap between the past and the present.

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