

Scientific Research and Restoration of Artwork “Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary” Painted by Unknown 17th (?) Century Lithuanian Artist

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The artwork came to Lithuanian Art Museum funds in 1954. About 1970 the painting was preventively consolidated, all visual side glued with tissue paper and gauze. For years, the painting was stored scrolled on a roll. In 2012 it was brought to the Lithuanian Art Museum Pranas Gudynas restoration center for research and restoration.

Painting's basis from backside side during previous restorations was brushed with thick mass impregnation layer, in the same manner few patches were made. The edges of the painting strengthened gluing and bonding through linen bands. During previous restorations the paintings size changed, semicircular upper edge part

was missing. Almost all of the area on the visual side overpainted, surface cracked into larger and smaller craquelures. Overall painting area there were lots of small punctures and a few mechanical paint, canvas and primer layer losses. The worst damaged area on the bottom: rotten canvas, badly crumbled off the primer's and paint layers, part of the composition lost. Varnish layer covering painting, relatively thick, rough, gray, in places shallow. Summarizing the state of the painting before restoration – the artwork in a state of emergency.

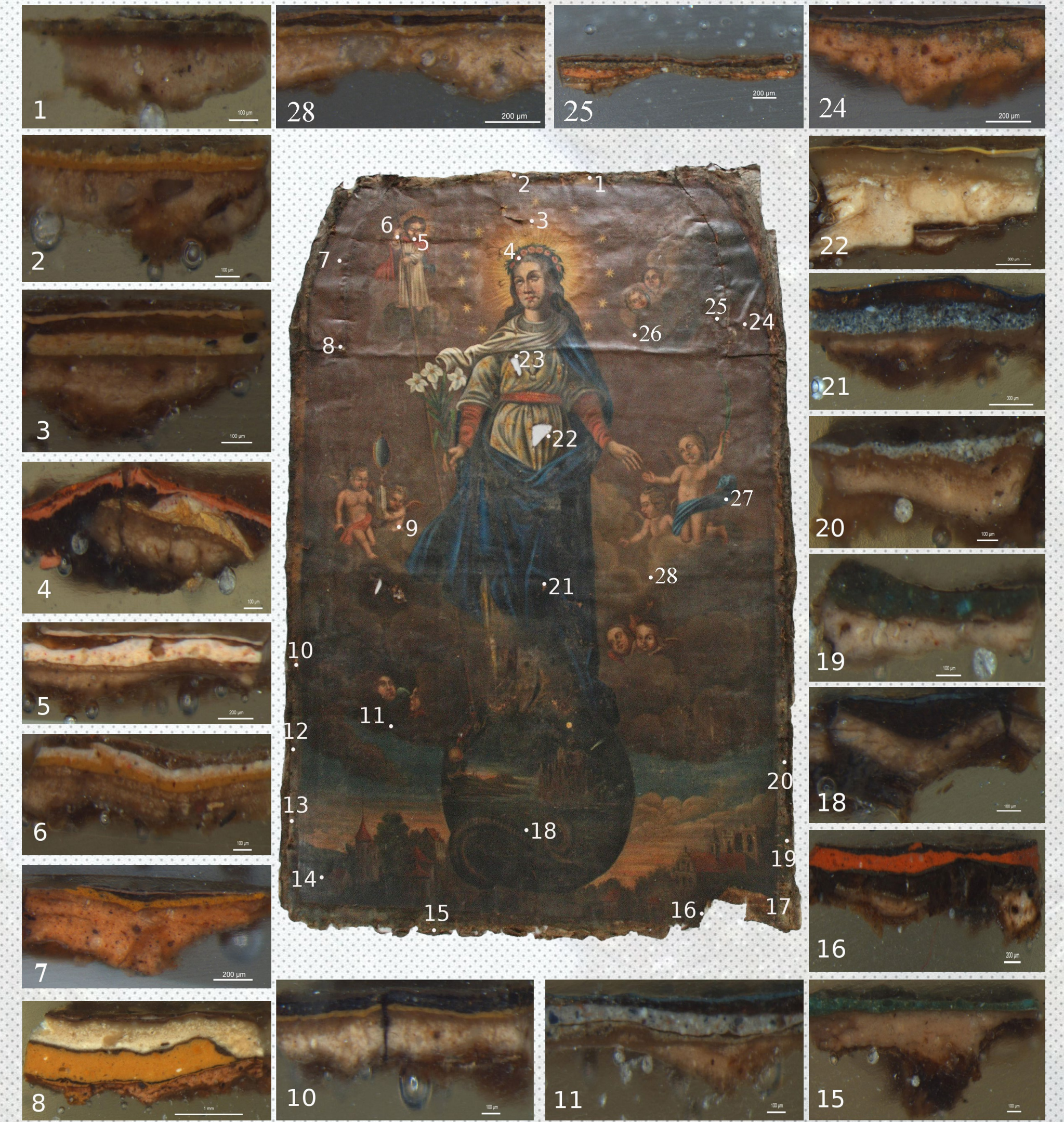
The microchemical, stratigraphic and physical tests research results revealed in detail painting's structure and restoration materials used previously.

Restoration

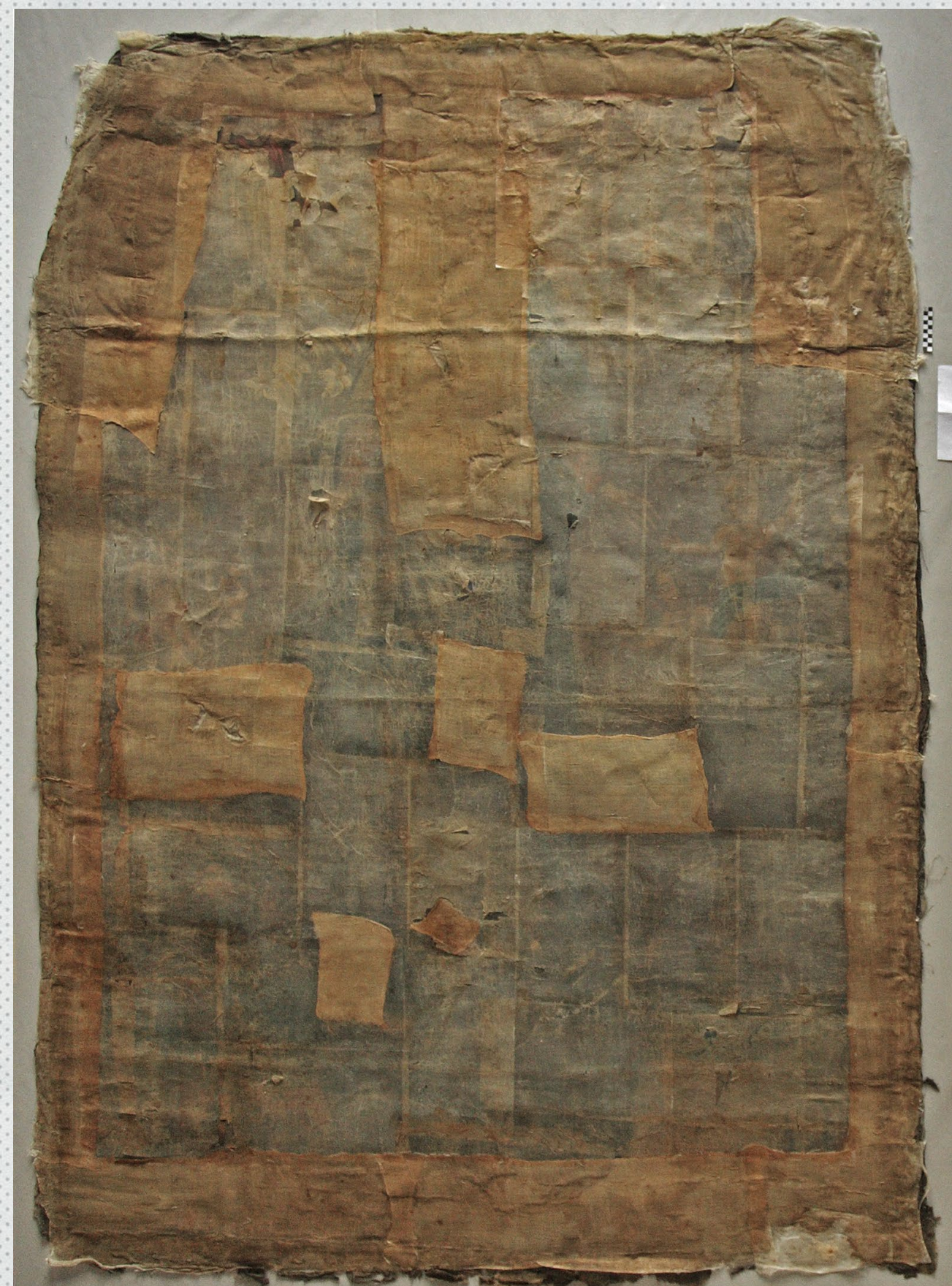
Tissue paper and gauze on the visual side of the picture from previous restorations were removed. The painting's format changes rectified – removed the sewn canvas fragments. Canvas patches on backside from previous restorations and a very thick and hard layer of impregnating mass removed. Restored authentic canvas losses, reconstructed genuine painting's format. Consolidated paint and ground layers, leveled and flattened basis. The artwork lined onto a new canvas. Painting stretched on a new stretcher. Paint and primer losses were primed. Old varnish on the visual side of the painting recovered. Even though after previous restorations the whole area was repainted at least twice the X-Ray image show that painting's composition was changed only slightly. Restorers removed overpainted areas layer by layer and exposed well-preserved seventeenth century authentic painting. On Earth depicted in painting, was found written restoration year, and after the founding this area was decided not to touch. Newly primed areas we retouched with watercolors. In places of biggest losses – at the top and bottom of the painting – reconstruction of drawings was made. The painting covered with protective layer of dammar varnish.

Restored painting is displayed at St. Francis of Assisi (Bernardine) Church in Vilnius.

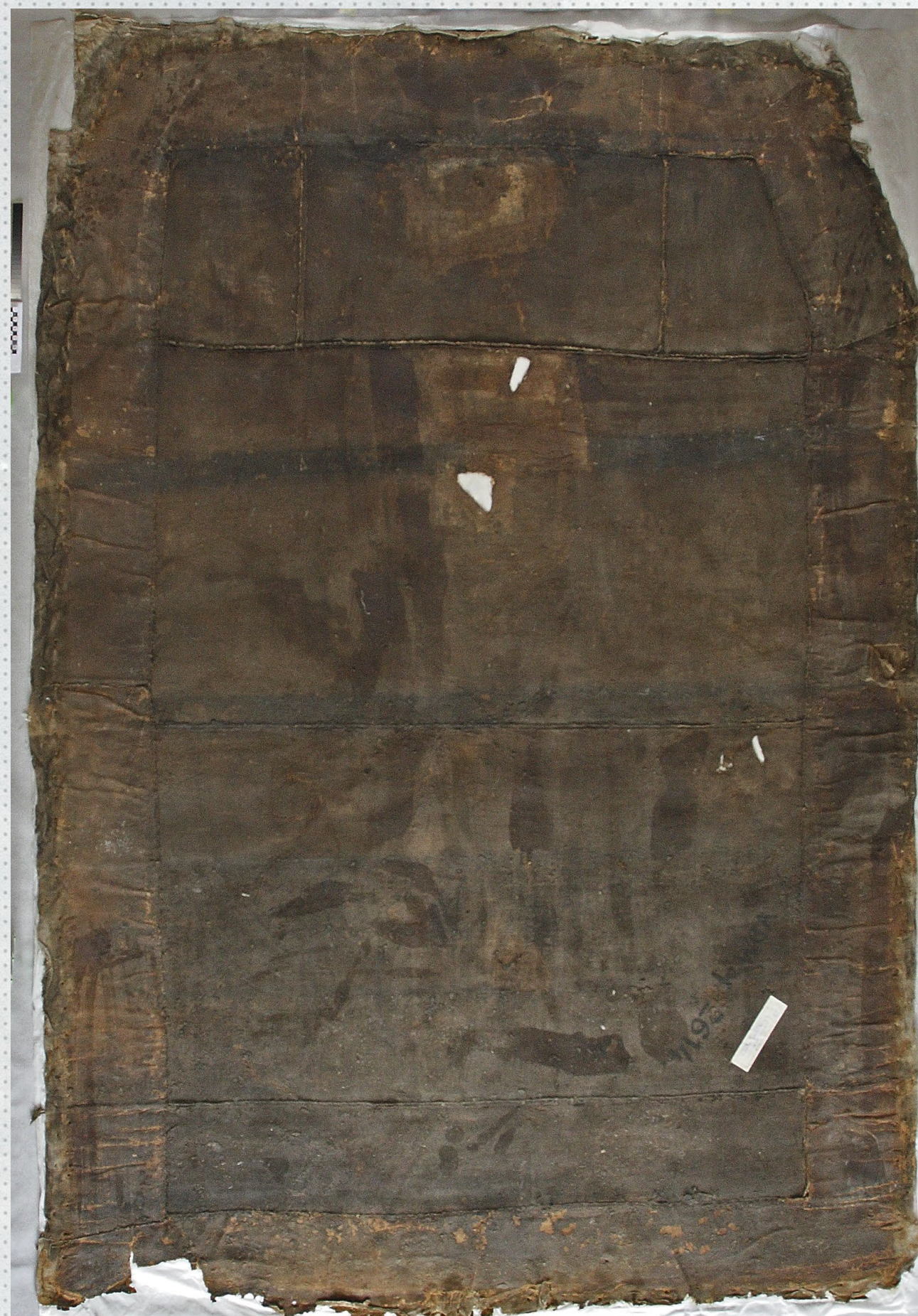
The painting was preserved and restored by the easel paintings restoration expert Algimantas Vaineikis, highest qualification category easel paintings restorers Birutė Miškinienė and Inga Petkutytė (the author of the report) and easel painting restorer Birutė Bražinskienė.



ill. 5. Cross sections of the paint layers.



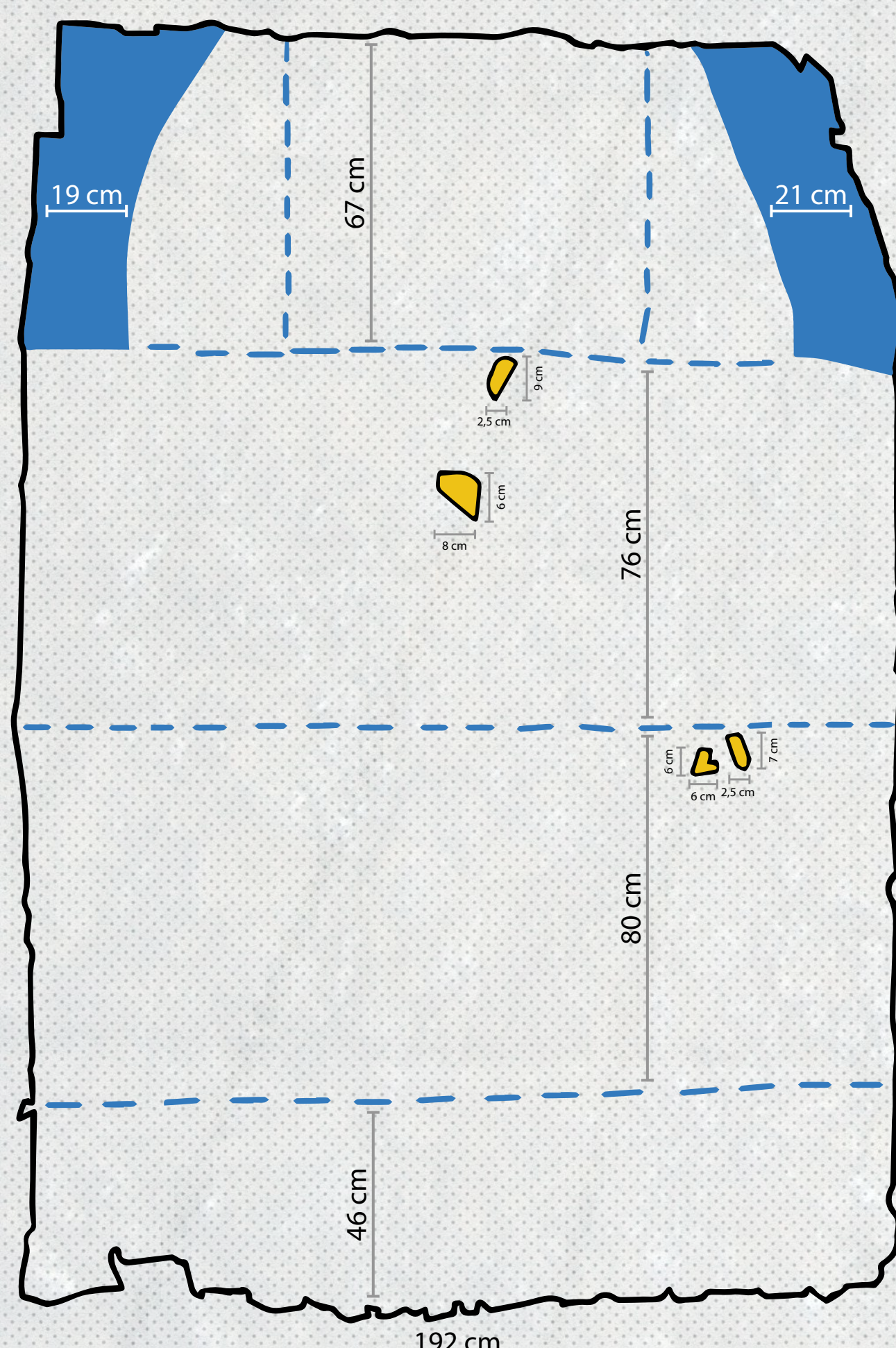
ill. 1. Before the restoration, visual side with an old preventive tissue paper and gauze.



ill. 2. Backside of the painting before restoration.



ill. 3. Scheme of defects of the backside.



ill. 4. Scheme of defects of the backside: the painting's format is changed during previous restorations.



ill. 6. a), b) Removal of the non-authentic fragment of canvas on the top of the painting.



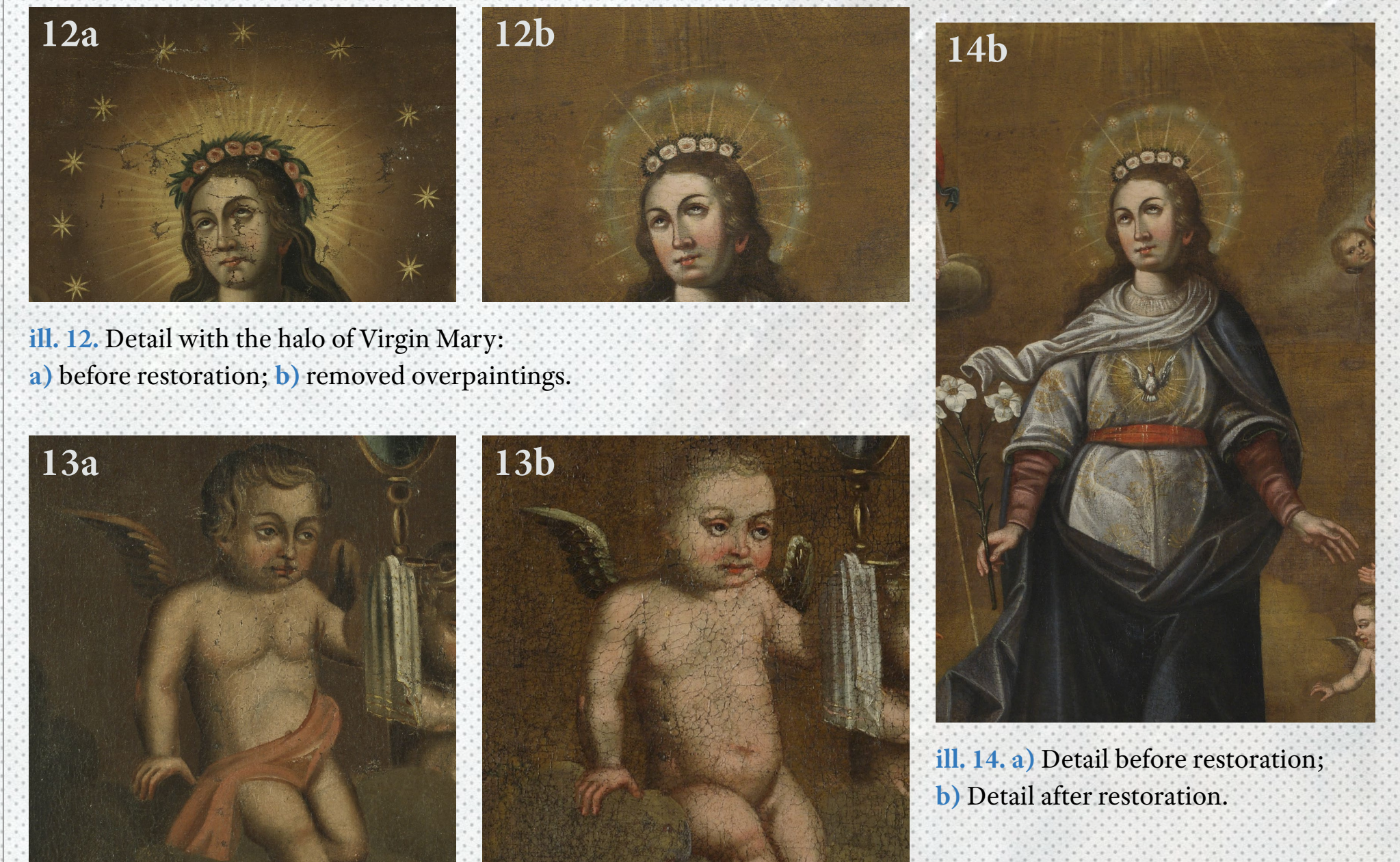
ill. 7. a), b) Thinning of an old layer of impregnating mass on backside.



ill. 9. Image of the painting under UV light.



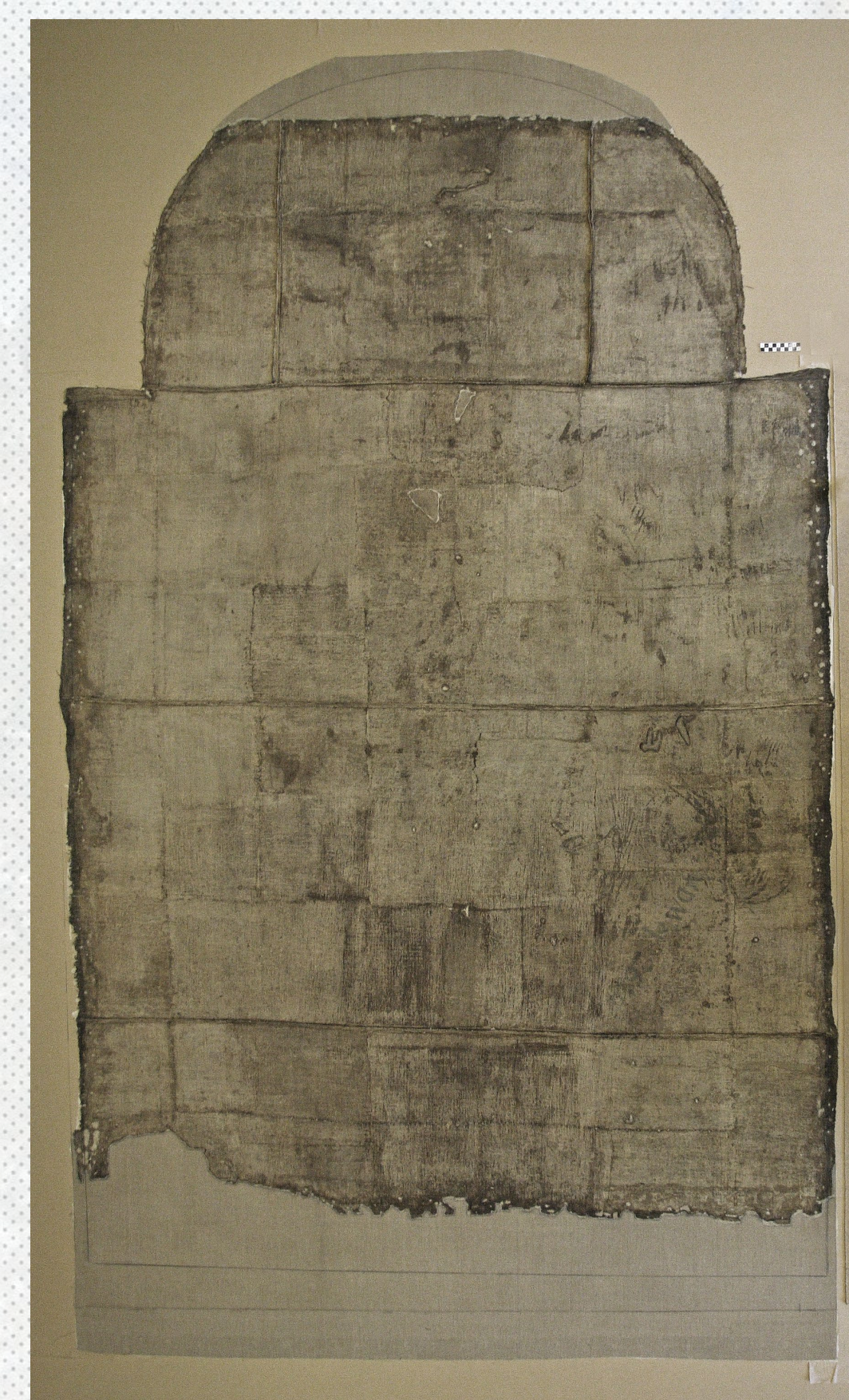
ill. 11. Uncovered year of previous restoration – 1858.



ill. 12. Detail with the halo of Virgin Mary: a) before restoration; b) removed overpaintings.

ill. 13. Detail of an angel with drapery on the left side: a) before restoration; b) removed overpaintings.

ill. 14. a) Detail before restoration; b) Detail after restoration.



ill. 8. Reconstructing an authentic format of the painting.



ill. 10. Radiograph of the painting.



ill. 15. a) Painting before restoration. b) Painting after restoration.