

PRESS RELEASE

THE INTESA SANPAOLO RESTITUZIONI PROJECT TURNS THIRTY AND RESTORES A MONUMENTAL WORK IN VICENZA

- **The two-yearly programme for the restoration of Italian artworks, a project overseen and promoted by Intesa Sanpaolo, was launched in Vicenza in 1989 and is now about to celebrate thirty years, three decades during which over 1300 works of art have been restored for the benefit of the country.**
- **Restoration work on the monumental “Cena” by Veronese has been announced, a piece kept at the Church of St Mary of Mount Berico as part of the *Restituzioni* restoration project.**
- **The nineteenth iteration of *Restituzioni* is currently being launched.**

Vicenza, 2 July 2019 – It was announced today at the Church of St Mary of Mount Berico in Vicenza that restoration work is to begin on the monumental canvas painting by Paolo Veronese “Cena di San Gregorio Magno” (*The Supper of St Gregory the Great*), to celebrate the thirtieth year of the Intesa Sanpaolo *Restituzioni* project.

The preservation-restoration of the painting, which will be completed by 2021 and forms part of the wider series of “monumental” *Restituzioni*, will run alongside the beginning of the XIX edition of *Restituzioni*, the two-year restoration programme for artworks belonging to Italy’s artistic heritage, a project overseen and promoted by Intesa Sanpaolo.

The painting is owned by the Municipality of Vicenza, and has been kept by the Servite Order of Mount Berico ever since it was completed.

The Superintendence of Archaeology, Fine Arts and Landscape of the Provinces of Verona, Rovigo and Vicenza will carry out preliminary investigations before the restoration, and will manage the whole operation in partnership with the Opificio delle Pietre Dure (*Workshop of Semi-Precious Stones*).

Giovanni Bazoli, President Emeritus of Intesa Sanpaolo, said: *“There are two major anniversaries in 2019 regarding the history of the Intesa Sanpaolo Progetto Cultura project and our bank’s relationship with the city of Vicenza. Twenty years ago, we established the first complex of Gallerie d’Italia here in Palazzo Leoni Montanari, and ten years earlier, in 1989, the president Feliciano Benvenuti launched the Restituzioni project. Over the years, Intesa Sanpaolo has ensured that this project goes on, with a strong conviction and sense of responsibility, fulfilling the bank’s national role as a leader also by contributing to the preservation and promotion of the country’s historical artworks. We celebrate thirty years with this impressive project involving the Bank and public authorities in the restoration of a painting by Veronese, an extraordinary example of the rich artistic heritage of the Veneto region.*

The project consolidates the strong relationship between Intesa Sanpaolo and the city of Vicenza, testifying to the essential link between the story of Restituzioni in the community and Vicenza's cultural heritage."

Cena di San Gregorio Magno (The Supper of St Gregory the Great), painted in 1572 by Paolo Caliari (more commonly known as Il Veronese) hangs on the far wall of the historical refectory in the Church of St Mary of Mount Berico, a Marian place of worship held by the Servite Order and visited by millions of pilgrims every year.

The painting, monumental in size (4.45m x 8.78m, totalling approximately 39m²), belongs to the series of so-called "Suppers", and is considered one of the later masterpieces of Veronese. Veronese was a key figure in the Italian Renaissance and, together with Tiziano and Tintoretto, an eminent artist in sixteenth century Venetian painting.

Of the whole series, *The Supper of St Gregory the Great* is the only one still kept in the place where it was originally painted. The painting depicts one of the suppers that St Gregory often provided to pilgrims, during which Jesus appears alongside the Pope to reward his charity.

The condition of the painting bears witness to its troubled story: on 10 June 1848 during the First War of Independence, the canvas was ripped by Austrian soldiers into 32 pieces and later subjected to an initial restoration upon the request of Emperor Franz Josef. This was followed by other partial restoration works.

The restoration (by Valentina Piovan working for the Superintendence of Archaeology, Fine Arts and Landscape for the Provinces of Verona, Rovigo and Vicenza) will begin in September 2019, with preliminary investigations by the Superintendence focusing on currently unexplored aspects of Veronese's masterpiece. The work will be analysed from a historic-conservation point of view by consulting documentary and iconographic sources, and comparing the painting with other works by the same artist, and from a scientific point of view, with accurate verification using chemical and physical investigations to support the restoration work.

The whole project will last around two years.

There will be many initiatives presented in 2020 for the restoration of this monumental painting: a full year of scheduled events evocatively entitled #aspettandoVeronese (waiting for Veronese). These initiatives will occur alongside the restoration work, right up to the moment when the extraordinary painting is "restored", in its reborn form, to the city of Vicenza and the rest of the world.

The Vicenza residents and tourists will be able to see the restoration work up close and follow developments, thanks to guided tours (available via booking); there will also be a packed schedule of side events that intend to give an insight into the "Vicenza Veronese", by analysing other extraordinary works on display not only in the Church of St Mary of Mount Berico, but also in the Church of Santa Corona and the Civic Museums.

Restituzioni is a programme founded in Vicenza in 1989. For the past 30 years, the Intesa Sanpaolo Group has supported (in two-yearly intervals) the restoration of artworks from public, private and ecclesiastical museums, archaeological sites and churches all over Italy. These works are selected in partnership with a panel of scientific experts – this board today is formed by Carlo Bertelli, Giorgio Bonsanti and Carla Di Francesco – on the basis of proposals submitted by Italian ministry authorities responsible for conservation.

The choice of artworks to restore is determined by one criterion: listening to the needs of regions and showcasing their identity via interventions that prioritise the effective need and urgency of restoration. The aim has always been to restore works that represent the variety of Italian historical-artistic heritage in terms of both chronology and materials/techniques (paintings on panels and canvas, frescoes, mosaics; marble, stone or bronze sculptures; textile works; jewellery, etc). The project does not only involve works of undisputed importance, but also works that speak to us and help reconstruct the region's history. At the end of the restoration projects of each iteration, the renovated works are presented in an exhibition organised by Intesa Sanpaolo for the public to admire the painstakingly achieved results of the restoration.

Since 1989, over 1300 artworks have been “restored” to the population: a sort of ideal museum with items ranging from the proto-historical era up to the present day, covering areas from archaeology to goldware to plastic art and paintings. There are **over 200 museums, archaeological sites and churches** that house their treasures for the general public who benefit from this project, as well as **over 150 qualified workshops** across the country who are tasked with the restoration works, and just as many academics involved in writing up the historical-critical commentaries for the catalogues. All of these initiatives supplement the restoration projects on monumental-scale works, such as the Paleo-Christian floor mosaics in the Basilica of Aquileia; the frescoes of Altichiero and Avanzo in the Cappella di San Giacomo (*Chapel of St James*) in the Basilica of St Anthony in Padua; the frescoes of Lanfranco in the Cappella di San Gennaro (*Chapel of St Januarius*) in the Duomo of Naples; and the House of Manzoni in Milan, a true “national” monument. As part of these works, in June 2009, to mark the twentieth year of *Restituzioni*, work was completed on the fourteenth century frescoes of Stefano Fiorentino in the church of Chiaravalle Abbey (Milan). Now, to mark the thirtieth anniversary of the project, the oil painting “*The Supper of St Gregory the Great*” at the Church of St Mary of Mount Berico in Vicenza is to be restored, a special birthday gift for the hometown of *Restituzioni*.

The nineteenth edition of *Restituzioni*, which is currently in its early stages, will also include the restoration of another 80 collections of works, dating back to ancient times to the present day, involving over 180 individual artworks belonging to museums, churches and archaeological sites. For the first time ever, all the regions of Italy will be involved.

Furthermore, as in the last few iterations, a focus continues to be placed on European areas where the Group is active. This can be seen in the restoration of a masterpiece by Vittore Carpaccio belonging to the Jacquemart-André Museum in Paris, *The Visit of Hippolyta, Queen of the Amazons, to Theseus, King of Athens*, painted around 1495.

The final exhibition of the XIX edition will take place in spring 2021.

PHOTOS OF THE PAINTING CAN BE FOUND AT <https://bit.ly/2Yo3UG0>

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