The Ninpheaum of Sacchetti Palace in Rome

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The Ninpheaum of Sacchetti Palace on Via Giulia in Rome has been the object of recent conservation treatment. This project permitted the recovery of an original little known sixteenth century construction with high artistic value.

The workshop represented the opportunity to study directly the rich decorations created by a combination of different materials assembled together using sophisticated techniques, which were typically used in the same historical period. The peculiar characteristics and the poor state of conservation in which the artifact was found were the motivations for the decision to entrust the Istituto Superiore per la Conservazione ed il Restauro [1] with the conservation project. This project, significant for its educational possibilities, represented an excellent opportunity for conservation students of the ISCR Scuola di Alta Formazione to develop their skills.

The work consisted in a complete restoration of the two fountains situated on the short sides of the Loggia. Furthermore the exemplary conservation treatment of small sample areas of the paintings was finalized to the development of a conservation protocol for the re-application of the original paint scheme[2].

The conservation project aimed to a sustainable preservation of the decorations, reinforcing both the structure and the pictorial surface through consolidation, cleaning, and chromatic reintegration.

The extremely diverse state of preservation of the paintings in the vault and on the walls in contrast to the two fountains, represented an evident problem for the final aesthetic presentation of the entire monument. It was necessary to find a balance in order to attenuate the apparent lack of homogeneity that characterized the monument before the conservation treatment started.

The solution was to reintegrate the geometric scheme of the fields in which the decorations are enclosed and recreate in this way the architectural order of spaces. The complexity and diversity of the materials used in the Ninpheaum as well as the particularity of the architectural construction, a loggia that is opened on two sides, and its location on the Lungotevere (one of the main arterial streets of a densely populated city), brings to the conclusion that this building necessitates constant monitoring and maintenance.

1) Work executed in the years 2005-2008 with the direction of the Dott.ssa Caterina Ben Valassina and Arch. Anna Maria Pandolfi.
2) The conclusion of the study on the superficial areas painted has been entrusted from the company Gianantonio Zari.

Photographer: Edoardo Loliva, ISCR