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The Role of the Trustees and the Direction of the Museo del Prado in Guiding Restorations and Scientific Studies between 1940 and 1970

In 1930 the first X-rays were taken at the Museo del Prado, a fact that had been forgotten until one of these films was found in 2018. Through them and other documents in the Prado's archives, it has been possible to reconstruct an unknown story: that of the fifty years of unsuccessful attempts by the deputy direction and the Museum's Trustees to create a laboratory like those that were being set up in other international museums from the beginning of the 20th century, but which did not arrive at the Prado until 1980. These documents —letters from the direction and records of the Trustees - and some texts of the period written by the deputy director between 1922 and 1960, Francisco Sánchez Cantón, reveal the reasons for the delay and the difficulties faced, especially before and after the Spanish Civil War (1936-1939), by those who were advocating the application of the methods of Technical Art History to the study of the collection. They reveal, indeed, the doubts that our specialists - art historians and restorers - shared with many personalities involved in the history of art at the time with regard to the new science.