

HIRST CONSERVATION EASEL PAINTINGS STUDIO

Since opening in 2007, Hirst Conservation's easel painting's studio in Laughton, Lincolnshire has enjoyed a variety of commissions from both public and private collections.

Recent treatment of two paintings is described below.



Following an isolating varnish of Paraloid B72, re-touching was undertaken using a synthetic resin and dry pigments, and a final varnish of semi-shiny MS2A applied.

Finally, the painting was framed, which included the insertion of non-reflective, UV filtering Tru-vue™ Museum Glass and a backing board to protect the object from environmental deteriogens and impacts.



Portrait after treatment

Smithills Hall, Bolton Museums Portrait of Richard Henry Ainsworth (1875)

On arrival at Hirst's studio, this portrait of R.H. Ainsworth, dated 1875 and signed with the initials 'W.K.K.' was found to be in sound condition, marred only by dirt, a discoloured varnish, and drying cracks in passages of the paint film.



(Above) Dirt before removal
(below) After

Tests to establish the safest and most effective treatment methods found that the surface dirt could be removed using ammonium hydroxide (pH 8), with localized areas of more intractable dirt (e.g. on the floor tiles) removed with tri-ammonium citrate (5%).

Varying sensitivities of the light and dark paint layers meant that the varnish could be fully removed from some areas but only selectively removed from others, in both cases using the solvent propanol and cotton swabs.



Yellowed varnish removed from the left side of the painting.

It is difficult to appreciate just how severely a degraded and yellowed varnish can compromise the appearance of an image until one encounters an oil painting like that from St. Albans Church (right).

The aged varnish, composed of a natural resin such as dammar or mastic, would originally have been applied as a clear liquid to saturate and protect the paint layer. Over several decades the varnish had hardened and darkened due to molecular cross-linking and photo-oxidation, making the painted image almost impossible to see behind a murky veil of yellow.

Removal of this varnish revealed the beautiful and vibrant colours of the painting, as seen on the right hand side of the image above.



Yellowed varnish removed from the left side of the painting.



Application of an isolating varnish

Congratulations to paintings conservator Alison Aynesworth (BA, MA) who has been approved as an Accredited Member of the Institute of Conservation (Icon). A peer-based assessment process confirms that Accredited Conservator-restorers have the appropriate knowledge, practical skills and sound professional judgement to uphold the care of our cultural heritage across a range of disciplines.

Welcome to Alison Foster (MA, MA, PgDip), who, after a twelve-month Icon/HLF sponsored internship with Hirst Conservation, is to join the company as a valued full-time conservator.

And finally... in recognition of fully complying with important parts of health and safety law, Hirst Conservation is proud to have recently become an accredited member of CHAS, the Contractors Health and Safety Scheme.

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Conserving the Past Enriching the Future

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THE USHER ART GALLERY, & TATE MODERN CLEANING AND CONSERVATION OF TWO MARBLE STATUES

Tate Modern's request to the Usher Art Gallery, Lincoln, for the temporary loan of two life size marble statues for the 'Return of the Gods: Neoclassical Sculpture in Britain' exhibition led first to their cleaning and conservation by Hirst Conservation

Joseph Nollekens (1737-1823), the creator of **Venus Chiding Cupid** and **Mercury**, was one of the most successful and celebrated British artists of his time.



Statues of **Venus Chiding Cupid** and **Mercury**, Joseph Nollekens (1737-1823), with dirt removed from their left sides.



surface dirt that had accumulated on their backs and in their finely carved detail.

Following a series of cleaning tests and UV examination for waxy/oily coatings, soft brushes were employed to dislodge loose dirt, followed by cotton swabs of xylene to remove the

grease. More intractable areas of dirt were then cleaned from the marble using V&A solution cleared with white spirits.

No protective coatings were applied after cleaning as, following their exhibition at the Tate and return to the Usher Art Gallery, these beautiful statues will be displayed for all to enjoy in a stable museum environment.



The statues after treatment, prepared for exhibition at the Tate.

Their creator, Joseph Nollekens died in 1823, having made hundreds of thousands of pounds from his art



ST. ANDREW'S CHURCH, CRANWELL

REPAIR OF A DRY STONE WALL. CLIENT: Trevor Bush (Church Warden & Project Organiser)

An unwelcome encounter with an out-of-control car led to the partial demolition of a traditional dry stone wall bordering St. Andrew's Church, Cranwell. Hirst Conservation was invited to reconstruct the wall and re-bed the coping stones.



Rebuilding of the dry stone wall

employed in different regions of the country. In this Lincolnshire example, the two outer elevations were built up with the existing facing stone, whilst the inner cavity was firmly packed to secure the facing stones.

Rebuilding the wall demonstrated a crucial principle of conservation, that is, the use of original material to reconstruct a failing structure, without incorporating additional materials that could affect its integrity.

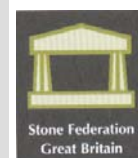


The reconstructed dry stone wall retaining its original materials

Slightly varying methods of dry stone walling are employed in the construction of dry stone walls in different



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THE ASSEMBLY ROOM, LEEDS GRAND THEATRE

CONSERVATION & RESTORATION OF A 19TH CENTURY POLYCHROME CEILING

ARCHITECT: Martin Ward (Design Building partnership Ltd), BUILDING CONTRACTOR: (Laing O'Rourke)

The restoration of the Assembly Room, Leeds Grand Theatre, is a hugely ambitious project masterminded by Opera North, Leeds Grand Theatre and Leeds City Council that will provide a 200-seat performance space for young performers, new artists and special musical events.



The 1920s Baroque panels

The Assembly Room was designed in the Gothic style by Corson and Watson and opened in 1878 as a venue for 'respectable entertainment'. A contemporary witness described the ceiling as being '...formed of wood, arranged into panels with arched and longitudinal moulded ribs and...picked out in colour and gold'



(Top) Original ceiling before treatment, (right) top panel after cleaning and retouching, (far right) ceiling before treatment

In 1907, the stage was converted to a cinema which unfortunately caught fire in 1923. Left with a charred and smoke blackened room, the quick-fix solution was to disguise the damaged walls and ceiling with Baroque style decorative panels, as illustrated in the photograph above. The original ceiling panels over the balcony, which were too low to cover, were simply plastered and painted over.



The new stencilled panels created to cover the plastered 'balcony' section of the ceiling.

In 2007, Hirst Conservation was asked to inspect the condition of the original polychrome ceiling above the plaster panels, with a view to its cleaning, conservation, and ultimately its revealing as the true ceiling of the Assembly Room. Our conservators found a polychrome ceiling frozen in time, still coated with the thick carbon deposits and

'stalactites' of soot, unseen and untouched for 85 years. The design on the panels was virtually indecipherable. In places, the unvarnished polychrome had been severely affected by the heat of the fire, leading to shrinkage and scorching of the paint layer. Installation of pipes and cables from which to suspend 1920s decorative Baroque panels had led to the unrestrained chopping and removal of sections of the original painted wood.

In 2008, Hirst undertook the cleaning and conservation of the whole ceiling. Tri-ammonium citrate, applied and cleared with sponges, was successful in removing the dense dirt from the polychromed wood. Beneath the dirt lay a simple but effective design of which the principal feature was a sun with a gilded central boss. Severely damaged or missing sections of the

design were retouched using acrylic paints. Tests showed that removal of the plaster from the original panels in balcony section of the ceiling could not be achieved without dam-

aging the polychrome, so new panels were fitted over the plaster and stencilled to replicate the 1870s design. A final varnish of MS2A was applied. Conservation and reconstruction of the ceiling has resulted in this long neglected feature regaining its rightful place as the crowning glory of an exceptional public space.



Artist's impression of the Assembly Room with its original ceiling revealed and restored.

PARISH CHURCH OF ST CHAD, YORK

MORTAR ANALYSIS, RE-POINTING ETC

ARCHITECT: Potts, Parry, Ives & Young, BUILDING CONTRACTOR: A&K Bridgett & Sons Ltd



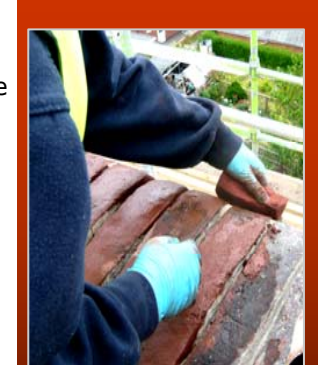
Removal of loose brick and cementitious pointing from the parapet coping stones

In 2007, Hirst Conservation was invited to evaluate the condition and stability of the visibly decaying bricks on the parapet and walls of St. Chad's Church in York.

The assessment included an on-site examination of the walls, analysis of the pointing mortar to establish the composition of original and repair mixes, and semi-quantitative soluble ion analysis in conjunction with micro-chemical testing to establish the salt species present. These procedures helped to determine the most likely causes of brick degradation, enabling the most appropriate remedial measures to be established.

The preferred option for treatment was to conserve and repair the bricks in situ, so that their deterioration was reduced, whilst the character of the building, with as much original material as

possible, was retained. Re-pointing, using a more porous mortar, would relieve the stresses of migrating and evaporating water (with associated salt precipitation) in the bricks by offering an easier transpiration path.



New brick insertions and re-pointing of the parapet using colour-matched hydraulic mortars

Final treatment included careful removal of the non-porous pointing and decayed bricks, application of a biocide, dirt removal using the Doff™ system, re-pointing using porous hydraulic lime mortar mixes, the insertion of new bricks in areas of loss, and final pointing and profiling using colour matched hydraulic mortars.

ROCHDALE TOWN HALL

CLEANING AND RECONSTRUCTION OF DAMAGED POLYCHROME DECORATION

CLIENT: Gordon Chadwick (The Impact Partnership, Rochdale Metropolitan Borough Council)



Removing yellowed varnish

Rochdale Town Hall was designed in the Gothic Revival style by Crossland and completed in 1871. Over the years, significant sections of the once stunningly decorated Arts and Crafts interior have been overpainted.

Those areas that remain are often coated in a yellowed varnish.

Hirst Conservation was commissioned to clean and restore a damaged area of original decoration, which included a frieze of figurative panels representing 19th century industries in Lancashire. Coated in dirt and a resin varnish, a large

part of the polychrome was also missing where a pipe had been removed. Following dirt and varnish removal, this missing area was reconstructed using acrylic paints and glazes of Paraloid B72 with dry pigments, allowing this unique depiction of the county's proud industrial heritage to be enjoyed once again.



Figurative frieze on the upper wall after removal of dirt and discoloured varnish, showing (left) large area of missing decoration, (right) the same area after retouching.