Articles You May Have Missed

**“Restoring a Murial Denver Inspired by a Masterpiece,” The New York Times, 10/09/2009**

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“To be true to the artistic in- tent, we painted over,” said Ms. Alden. “There’s no technique for turning faded painted surfaces into lovely new paint back to the way they were. The mural, “Homage to Seurat: La Grande Jatte in Harlem,” is the only remaining preserved panel. Ms. Cockcroft, a prominent painter in the community mural movement, which began in the 1960s. In the 1970s, Ms. Alden founded the Rescue Public Murals, a national program to help avoid the loss of historic and artistic value of community murals. There are 70 colors of paint mixed in the New York City work by Ms. Cockroft, the only remaining preserved panel. The AKTC is best known for its restoration of passenger trains, the Café Santa Fe, in Florence’s Palazzo Vecchio in the 13th century. The AJC has worked on the restoration of the Old City airplane murals, the National Gallery of Armenia.

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The mosaics on the facade of the Grand Hotel Europe in St. Petersburg are a textbook case of the delicate works in need of restoration. Their agencies are not providing the funding to preserve them. The first glass mosaic north of the Alps was Czech, commissioned by Charles IV to decorate the South facade of St. Vitus’ Cathedral in Prague. The combination of mosaic-glass, potash, was invented in Czechoslovakia. Under communism, glass mosaics continued to thrive, and the number of potash colors swelled to 4,000, giving Czech mosaics extraordinary tonal variety. We can only imagine how many of the tiles would come into contact with water, potassium in the glass gradually rises to the surface, where it combines with pollutants in the air to create a gray layer of corrosion on the tile’s surface.

Removing this crust without harming the glass is a time-consuming and delicate operation. Simply removing the corrosion is a short-term strategy, because decay begins again immediately.

“Rags to Riches as Tapestry Masterpiece is Restored to its Former Beauty,” Prague Post, 11/15/2009

Sana’s Old City is one of the world’s architectural gems, a thicket of uneasily medieval towers etched with white filigree and crowned with stained-glass windows. But more unusual than their mere survival is the fact that the traditional building arts continue to thrive here.

The country largely missed the urban renewal phase of Arab history, in which kings and presidents cleared out ancient neighborhoods as an effort to bring their nations into the modern age. By the early 1980s, when Yemen was still emerging from its medieval slumber, preservation was already in vogue.

Architects redesigning the Old City soon found there was more than beauty at stake. The tradition was also more durable and effective than concrete-based modern houses, and better suited to the climate. The walls of plaster, joss, does not erode stones over time the way cement does, and is more receptive to the elements. In material used in roofs and bathrooms, is much stronger than modern equivalents.


Paintings and murals are 749 ancient mural paintings registered with the Fine Arts Department. Most of them are located on the walls of temples and Buddhist temples across the country. Some of these murals date back 700 years to the Sukhothai period. Many of these paintings were stolen by thieves while others have been ravaged by time. Experts agree these ancient masterpieces cannot withstand the elements. The museum can only restore 10 major pieces a year. Experts agree these ancient masterpieces cannot withstand the elements. The museum can only restore 10 major pieces a year.

“Their Art has to be Unseen to be Believed,” Rutland Herald, 12/27/2009

Do as little work as possible and try not to get noticed. This may sound like a good way to get fired, but it is also the credo a good art restorer lives by. When the works are displayed to others, restorers have to hope they have done their work so deftly that the repairs blend seamlessly into the whole.

Art restorers go through years of training. All that training is intended to instill good judgment and teach the restorer to make a repair with the least invasive and most reversible technique possible.

Another mantra for restorers is that any substance used to repair an object has to be removable, says Randy Smith, one of the state’s leading art restorers. Interestingly, one process that can’t be reversed is cleaning. “Once it’s gone, it’s gone,” Smith says.

Nancie Ravenell, the Shelburne Museum’s director of conservation, and Katrann K erschner, the museum’s director of preservation and conservation, work with the museum’s curatorial staff to decide how best to restore an object. Inevitably, part of the work of restorers is dealing with issues created by previous restorers, who used what are now outdated techniques.

Kerschner understands that people in the field are constantly coming up with better ways to do things. “( Earlier restorers) were doing the best they could at the time,” he says. Seeing the flaws in earlier work tends to make restorers humble about their own abilities and persuades them to work with a minimum of technique. “We try to see how we think we can do it,” Kerschner says, “in the future they will probably find they can do it better.”
AYMHM, continued

The first three of these articles appeared as a series about damaged portraits at the Beaufort County Courthouse. The fourth article was published after the first three resulted in voluble commentary.

“Damaged Portraits are being Restored,” Washington Daily News, 1/21/2010

A hunt for Christmas decorations two years ago unearthed a treasure trove of damaged paintings hidden in a closet in the Beaufort County Courthouse. Efforts are under way to repair the portraits, which depict five leading Beaufort County residents from the past, and hang them in the Superior Courtroom, according to Clerk of Court Marty Paramore.

The story behind the damage was revealed by Jim Vosburg, former attorney and Superior Court judge. Vosburg was a lawyer involved in what turned out to be a particularly contentious child-custody case in 1968. “It was a very, very vicious custody proceeding. Things got really unpleasant, and the court recessed for a two-hour lunch break.” During the recess, the little boy who was at the center of the custody battle managed to get his hands on a court gavel. “He took that gavel and threw it at every portrait in the courtroom.”

Damage to the portraits ranged from small dents in the paint to sizable tears in the canvas. In 2008 the Beaufort County Board of Commissioners voted to fund the repairs, at a total cost not to exceed $3,000.

Happy that the portraits would be repaired, Paramore solicited bids on the work. To his shock and disappointment, a Raleigh art conservator submitted a nonbinding estimate that ranged from $12,500 to $17,500. And that didn’t include needed repairs to the ornate frames. Discouraged, Paramore feared the restoration work couldn’t be done. Then, a local artist came forward and became intrigued with the project.

“Scoble is Restoring History,” Washington Daily News, 1/22/2010

Nancy Scoble, a respected Washington artist and a genius at art restoration, was approached by Clerk of Court Marty Paramore and asked to consider taking on the project. She responded with enthusiasm. Experiences with family paintings prompted her to learn more about restoration. “I wanted to find out how to do this right, so I took course after course after course,” she said. “I’ve worked on the restoration of canvas paintings as well as porcelain pieces.”

The series of courthouse portraits, and older paintings in general, are covered with layers of soot and dirt from furnaces, along with nicotine stains from cigarettes, cigars, and pipes. This is in addition to the tears and gouges caused by the little boy wielding a wooden gavel more than 40 years ago.

Most of the portraits appear to date back to the 1860s, according to Scoble. She starts with a gentle cleaning and then begins the actual restoration process. “I work on the outside edge first and remove layers of grime,” Scoble said. “I repair the tears and chipped paint and freshen the faces. And I stabilize the paintings.”

“Courtroom is Gallery of Noted Citizens,” Washington Daily News, 01/24/2010

When one enters the Superior Courtroom in the Beaufort County Courthouse, there’s almost a feeling that the notables depicted in the paintings are looking down and making sure everything is being handled the way it should be. Included are prominent attorneys, District and Superior Court judges and even chief justices of the North Carolina Supreme Court, all with at least one thing in common — strong ties to Beaufort County and eastern North Carolina.

After a gavel-wielding youngster damaged five of them in the 1960s, the paintings are being restored for $3,000. Although the Washington Daily News’ Web site has been inundated with comments from out-of-towners who are questioning the restoration project, local residents are pleased.


A Washington Daily News series about a local artist’s efforts to restore paintings housed in the Beaufort County Courthouse has generated an unprecedented number of comments on the newspaper’s Web site. Clerk of Court Marty Paramore hired Washington artist Nancy Scoble to restore five paintings that had been stored in a closet under the stairs in the courthouse’s lobby. Posted online at www.wdnew.com, the series drew criticism from some members of the art-restoration community, and support from people who approved of using a local artist to perform the work.

According to Paramore, the criticism began with the publication of the first installment in the series. Taken together, the comments outnumbered those for all other local stories posted on the site since 2003, according to the Daily News’ management.

A link to the first article in the three-part series apparently was posted to a conservators’ chat room, said Perry Hurt, associate conservator with the N.C. Museum of Art in Raleigh. Most of the conservators’ replies were not intended as personal criticism of Scoble, Hurt said. The article tapped into “this well of frustration” within the restoration community, he said.

For her part, Scoble apparently was blindsided by the controversy. Scoble, a local art teacher, said she took a private art-restoration course with a teacher in Boca Raton, Fla., in 1996. She said the restoration methods she uses are outlined in art publications, and that all of her work is done “under true archival process.” “Everything is reversible,” she added. Scoble said her touch-ups are done in watercolors, which are easily removed. “And I never use acrylic,” she said. She uses wax to fill in rips and tears on canvases, and the wax also can be removed, Scoble continued.

She said her goal is to clean, reveal, and preserve the image as the artist intended it, with a focus on the figures in the foreground. She does little to nothing to the backgrounds of portraits. She also documents her work step by step with photography, saving the resulting images on CD.

In a later posting on the Daily News’ Web site, Hurt apologized “for any disrespect” Scoble might have perceived in the online comments. “I want to make it clear that, in my view, it’s not a personal attack,” he told the Daily News. “It’s a larger issue that these conservators were trying to address, in a good way or not a good way in some respects.”