

Conservation and Restoration

Pictures can become worn and damaged and also fade, rot or even corrode. Change and decay cannot be prevented altogether, but by an understanding of the materials involved, a conservator/restorer can assist in holding things in a steady state.

In fact, a picture begins to deteriorate from the moment it is finished. Changes are produced by chance, by light and air, dust, wear and tear or even harmful gases, insects and humidity.

So, conservation can be viewed as an ongoing matter, like vehicle maintenance, not just a case of magical restoration after serious damage has occurred, in the hope of returning the picture to its full original appearance.



The most that a conservator can do is to stave off the working of those factors that affect the picture and then to recover what is left of its 'character'.

Thus the aim is to recover the legibility of the work of art whilst respecting the aesthetic and historic characteristics of its appearance and age.

The conservators aim should be to responsibly and sympathetically preserve the character of the original as much as possible.

For further details, please see:

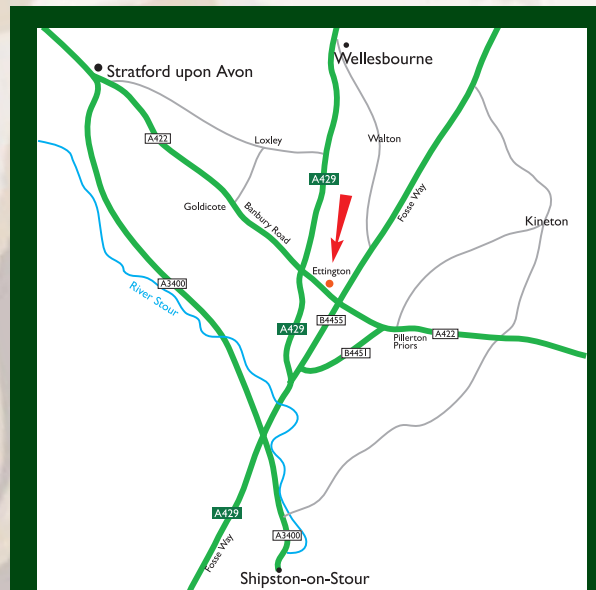
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All work is undertaken after a physical examination and tests of the artwork.

A written report and photographs will be included with a quotation.

Collection, delivery and insurance can be arranged.



SIMON FOSTER
STUDIO

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Restoration & Conservation of
Paintings and Frames



'The conservators aim should be to responsibly and sympathetically preserve the character of the original as much as possible'

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Paintings and their frames are made of many different materials

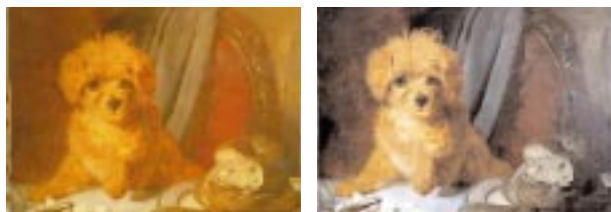
These include canvas, wood, paint, varnish, metal, glue, gilding and plaster. Together they form a complex structure that is easily damaged. The materials are also sensitive to and can be damaged by the surrounding environment, changes in humidity, excessive amounts of light, heat, dirt and handling.

Problems

- Tears, punctures and holes, sagging canvas, bulges and dents, split canvas edges.
- Splits, warps and cracks in wood. Insect damage (e.g. wood worm)
- Cracked, loose or flaking paint, lost paint, fading.
- Discoloured varnish, dirt and dust, whitening mould or mildew on the surface and disintegrating frames.

Solutions

- Save any pieces that have fallen off, however small. Keep them safely in a bag or envelope as they can often be replaced.
- Do not attempt any repair or cleaning yourself. This is a skilled process and should only be carried out by a conservator.
- The use of backboards is recommended as a crucial preventative conservation measure.
- If you think your painting has a problem or you want to find out more about its condition contact a paintings conservator.



Moving your painting

Tears, holes, scratches and dents are most likely to happen when your painting is off the wall. If you plan ahead, these damages can usually be avoided.

If you are decorating, take the painting out of the room before any work has begun.

Make sure you have somewhere to put your painting before you move it.

When off the wall, store with the image facing a wall or padded surface, away from doorways, furniture and passing people.

Always make sure your hands are clean and dry, or wear clean cotton gloves.

Make sure the painting is securely fitted into the frame and the hanging fittings are secure.

When carrying your painting have it facing towards your body and use both hands, one to hold the edge and the other to support it from beneath.

Paintings with glass or decorative frames can be heavy, you may need two people for safety.



Where to hang your painting

Most of the materials in a painting respond to changes in relative humidity and temperature by expanding and contracting. If the relative humidity changes regularly then the painting keeps on expanding and contracting, the structure can be stressed and begin to fall apart – paint layers crack, canvas splits, wood splits and original paint flakes off. In a museum we can control the environment with air conditioning, but this is not usually an option in the home, so a painting can then suffer quite easily from variable humidity.

When choosing a place to hang your painting it is worth considering the following points:

- During the summer in Britain, the conditions in a well ventilated room are, in general, fairly good for paintings.
- In the winter months, however, the central heating in homes really dries out the air and causes problems. Rooms that suffer from damp will have high humidity – dampness encourages mould or mildew.
- Light and dirt also cause problems. Too much light can fade certain colours and will speed up the darkening of varnish, the more light the faster this happens. Dirt looks unsightly and may be very acid. Acid will speed up the breakdown of canvas and wood making it very brittle and vulnerable to knocks and blows.

