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Restore: The Basic Concepts



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Even if restoration sometimes affects the value, an old work needs periodic care to conserve its integrity. Always a gentle "medicine," which depends on the correct diagnosis!



1. A wide variety of treatments

If you want to bring back the lost luster to an old work... or simply repair an accidental tear that happened on one of your latest creations, you will often need to use restoration techniques.

- Almost anything is possible: replace threads in a canvas, brighten an engraving, remove a varnish... and even the extreme of transferring the image to a new backing. A bit of advice: never be too invasive, intervene as little as possible! To that end, use restoration materials that are reversible (for example, make your repaints with watercolors).
- Never hesitate to seek the expertise of a professional: without information restoration

can sadly rhyme with aggravation.

Note: When to consult a professional?

- If the work has been transferred to a new canvas.
- When a canvas reacts to water.
- When the paint layer does not adhere well to the backing.
- To confirm your diagnosis and your battle plan.



2. An essential analysis

All restoration work begins with a careful examination of the characteristics of the work. Make multiple observations, photos and tests, to avoid unpleasant surprises.

- **Examine under three types of lighting**

- Light from the front: face the work, in natural light, and photograph not only the colors, but also the details that appear important to you.

- Low-angled lighting: oblique lighting will emphasize the reliefs (the "touch" of the painter, suspect areas or traces of old tears).

- Back lighting: a lamp placed behind the work reveals holes, even if miniscule, as well as the fragile parts of a canvas.

- **Identify the canvases which react to water!**

From an edge, take one horizontal and one vertical thread and lay them flat in a container. Pour in a little water: if they react, move, swell or even become longer, you must avoid any intervention requiring dampening.

- **Anticipate the results**

Before any work requiring the use of a solvent or even water, test the fastness of the colors. Before removing varnish, verify its presence with a UV lamp. Do not take any action without first having validated your method

Closeup on: facing

Facing (cartonnage) consists of covering the paint layer with a temporary layer of paper. It makes it easier to transport a damaged work and to intervene on the front without damaging the work.

See also

Carefully select your materials for art restoration



The instruments and products used by restorers are both simple and very specific. Everyone has his own needs, do the same: make your own assortment!

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