



Tindell's Restoration Schools & Studios

By: DiAnna E. Tindell

DiAnna founded Tindell's Restoration Schools & Studios in Nashville, Tennessee. It is very broad scoped & has expertise in many fields to offer the best of each for restoration services. DiAnna is a member of many international groups & serves actively at regional & annual events. DiAnna has expertise from a Score of years training internationally and has taught many talented students in areas such as Graphic Art & Paper Conservation, Oil Painting & Frames, Crystal & Glass, Pottery, Porcelain, Marble, and many other Mixed Media types. She has restored many objects for museums and rare collections. She is a published columnist in many antique trade papers & magazines and has authored books on restoration. Tindell's Restoration has been featured on HGTV and other educational programs. Her website is a library of useful information & time well spent to view at: www.TindellsRestorationSchools.com.

Oil Paintings Restoration

Our studio has seen numerous oil paintings with a variety of problems needing some form of restoration. Most problems require normal restoration processes such as cleaning, patching, in painting and re-lining. However, we have also been faced with other more challenging restoration of paintings. For example, a short time ago a number of paintings that had been trapped in a fire were brought in for restoration. The fire had melted the bubble wrap around some of the paintings, leaving smoked circular imprints on both the front and back of their canvas. Paintings have also been brought in that needed restoration of their canvas torn open by some type of blunt force. Unfortunately, individuals without restoration training will sometimes try to repair a distressed painting, often creating a far greater need for restoration in the process. It is amazing to know that, in the hands of a skilled restorer, a painting that has suffered from mishap or abuse can still be returned to its original beauty.

The cleaning of old oil paintings involves many different products and processes for removing household dirt, tobacco smoke, yellowed varnish and other substances. Many paintings have been ruined by well intentioned amateurs who attempted to clean them with soap and water, kerosene, linseed oil, glue, 409 and other home remedies. More often than not, it is better to do



Before



After

nothing and let an experienced professional do the work. They are knowledgeable in the use of the best proprietary chemical formulas that have already been proven safe. Many of these products are old masters European Museum formulas, carefully compounded with the finest ingredients, manufactured to the original specifications under scrupulous batch by batch control. An experienced restorer will use only time proven organic based formulas of the type used to preserve the oldest artifacts in the world's leading museums.

Before the restoration of an oil painting is begun, it is important to take several detailed photos of both the front and back of the painting.



Before



After

If there is any writing on either side of the canvas, one should be sure to take close up shots of the written areas. Photos are also recommended at various stages of the restoration to ensure that a more complete historical record will accompany the artwork.

Because the restorer will probably be using various chemical formulas, he will need surgical gloves to protect the hands and adequate ventilation for a clean breathing environment. Care must be taken not to press down on

the canvas. Supports should be placed under the area of the painting being restored to help bring it up to the height of the stretcher bars and prevent undue pressure on the canvas. If the canvas is in need of new stretcher bars, the painting may be removed from the old ones before cleaning.

A "test" is a must before proceeding on any piece. Starting with the least aggressive cleaning product, use a cotton swab to test a corner of the oil painting. Depending on the level of cleaning, the "test" will aid in determining which cleaning formula to use for the best results. An important caveat comes to mind - don't "over clean" a painting. If tests are done and the processing applied carefully, a painting can actually be cleaned in various levels to maintain all, some or none of the original aging components that give the painting it's overall aged patina. It is important to consult the client and provide detailed photos of the test in various stages to be certain the goals are mutual on the overall completed appearance before proceeding on to the next step(s). Otherwise, a dramatic difference in the painting after cleaning may be misunderstood and shock the client.

Once the "test" has shown the restorer which products



Before



After

would be best to use, the cleaning of the oil painting can begin. A wooden Q tip (cotton swab) dipped in the cleaning product should be utilized, applying the cleaner with a rolling motion (not a circular scrubbing motion). Watch the swab carefully to ensure that only dirt or varnish is being removed and not paint. It is best to only clean a 2" square area at a time, neutralizing the area before proceeding to another 2" square area. Preferably, a

restorer will clean the painting by area, such as cleaning the sky at one time, then the trees, etc., making it easier to detect any color that might be coming off the painting. This technique also helps keep a more even appearance during the cleaning process. A "half-and-half" photograph taken before the cleaning process has been completed will provide an additional historical record of the restoration.

Depending on what formulas are applied and how many times they may be required for various levels of restoration, the "curing time" between each process may be as long as fourteen (14) days or more. As a consequence, the restoration of a painting can take many months to complete, requiring a great deal of patience. If one process is begun too soon after the last, there can be adverse reactions that will harm the painting.

In the event that something more is needed beyond a simple cleaning, such as the restoration of damage caused by a fire, flood, or other disaster, the number of products and processes required to address those problems will multiply. The addition of material to patch a hole or re-line the entire canvas is another procedure that is sometimes needed to complete the restoration. There are traditional methods and more modern approaches to add to a canvas. The preferable method or approach is dictated by any long term damage to the original painting. It is wise to use reversible solutions if possible should the need arise. The goal is to help support the painting in the area of the tear or protect the entire structure as needed. Try not to apply more solution than is absolutely necessary to avoid corruption of the original paint. It is crucial to allow ample time for the painting to cure after cleaning, neutralizing and/or conditioning before attempting any patching or re-lining.

There will be many times when an item will suffer missing

paint due to scratches, flaking, cracking or other damage. The in painting of such areas will require the restorer to match, as closely as possible, the original artist's medium, style, and application technique. Many a restoration has failed because a poor in painting job has made the differences between the original and the restoration painfully visible. Thus, a quality in painting job often requires the expertise of a gifted restoration master.

The final step is to varnish the oil painting with gloss, matte, or some other suitable formula of varnish finish to seal, protect and display the newly restored painting. The goal is to capture the true final look that the artist would have desired in the beginning. It is important to know that the more glossy the finish, the more imperfections that will be revealed. In the event that the painting has undergone extensive restoration, it may display better if the final varnish is more of a satin or matte finish. There are many factors that will govern which varnish to use. Normally, one coat of varnish will be applied at the six month stage of a restoration with a more final coating at twelve (12) months, allowing plenty of time between stages for adequate curing. If a painting is of significant value, it would be best to leave the restoration to the experts. ♦

Tindell's Restoration Studios

DiAnna Tindell, Master Restoration Specialist
Restoring Fine Art, Antiques, Collectibles... etc.
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Please feel free to contact us regarding any of our Services & School training programs. We offer a broad spectrum of services with many resources.

Conservation & Restoration Services included but not limited to: Oil Paintings, Frames, Graphic Art & Paper Conservation, Photos, Porcelains, Figurines, Sculptures, Pottery, Faux Finish Designs, Furniture, Crystal, Marble, Alabaster, Ivory, Metals, Silver, Bronze, Hot Glass Flame Working, Venetian Glas, Chandeliers, Outdoor Structures, Customized Conservation Framing, etc...etc...etc...

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