

## Articles You May Have Missed

**“Budget Cuts Force Closure of Historic Preservation Programme,”** *The Art Newspaper*, 08/25/2011

Federal budget cuts forced the closure of the National Trust for Historic Preservation’s Save America’s Treasures (SAT) office in July. SAT had provided more than \$315m in funding for historic preservation since 1999. US Congress does not plan to renew funding.

“Save America’s Treasures was a model public-private partnership that invested record amounts to preserve the icons of our democracy,” said Bobbie Greene McCarthy, the former SAT director at the national trust. This recent budget cut does not save dollars in terms of tax revenue. “The SAT appropriation comes out of the Historic Preservation Fund, which is funded by outer continental oil lease revenues, not taxes,” said Hampton Tucker, the chief of the Historic Preservation Grants Division, National Park Service.

The preservation programme was also involved in funding art museums. In February, SAT awarded a \$250,000 grant to the National Historic Landmark building that houses the 1874 Renwick Gallery, a branch of the Smithsonian dedicated to American contemporary decorative arts.

**“Unknown Portrait Discovered Under Goya’s Masterpiece in Amsterdam’s Rijksmuseum,”** *Art Daily.org*, 09/19/2011

An innovative method for examining paintings has revealed a hitherto unknown painting beneath Goya’s Portrait of Don Ramón Satué, one of his most celebrated masterpieces and the only painting by this famous Spanish artist in The Netherlands.

The hidden portrait, which is almost certainly also by Goya himself, was brought to light using Scanning Macro X-ray Fluorescence Spectrometry a new technique developed by the University of Antwerp and the Delft University of Technology. From the scans it can clearly be seen that Goya (1746-1828) painted his portrait of the Spanish judge, Ramón Satué, over a much more formal portrait of a man wearing a uniform.

The decorations embellishing the uniform are those of the highest ranks of a chivalric order instituted by Joseph Bonaparte when his brother, the emperor Napoleon, created him King of Spain. The hidden portrait must thus date from between 1809 and 1813. Goya’s portrait of Satué is signed and dated 1823.

**“Restoration Work to Begin on Miro Mural in Wichita,”** *CBS News*, 09/23/2011

Conservation crews will begin removing a massive mosaic by modern master Joan Miro from an art museum at Wichita State University next week as part of a five-

year, \$3 million restoration effort to stop the work from raining down pieces of Venetian glass and marble.

Measuring 26 feet by 52 feet, the *Personnages Oiseaux* mosaic depicts surrealist, fantastical birds. It was installed in 1978, five years before the death of the Spanish artist.

Unfortunately, the stained glass studio in France that created the outdoor mural based on a Miro painting affixed the approximately 1 million pieces of Venetian glass and marble to particle board. The freezing and thawing cycle of three decades of Kansas winters has caused pieces to pop off, recently as many as 400 a year.

The restoration, being done by Russell-Martí Conservation Services based in California, Mo., will include flipping the mural panels face down in molten gelatin. Crews then will remove the wood backing and clean the backside. After that’s done, a glue will be used to adhere the pieces to perforated stainless steel. The final step of the restoration will be to peel off the gelatin and clean more than 30 years of grime from the mural.

**“Conn. Steel House Getting Chance to Shine Again,”** *Associated Press*, 09/24/2011

Shedding paint flakes the size of dinner plates, the rusty steel house huddled in a corner of Connecticut College’s campus appeared for years to be more of an eyesore than a historic treasure.

As one of few 1930s steel houses of its type still standing nationwide, though, the prefabricated cottage holds a pedigree on par with many better-known architectural jewels. A crew of restoration specialists has dismantled the boxy two-bedroom, 800-square-foot structure and meticulously marked each piece to be sent to a Philadelphia conservation firm. Once every panel, beam and other item is cleaned of corrosion and special rust-resistant treatments are applied, they’ll be returned to New London next year. Then, it will be reassembled on the same foundation where Winslow Ames had the structure erected in 1933 after falling in love with the so-called “homes of tomorrow” that year at the World’s Fair in Chicago.

Ames, founding director of the Lyman Allan Art Museum adjacent to the Connecticut College campus, rented the yellowish-gray painted steel cottage to Navy officers and other tenants until he moved to Missouri in 1949 and sold it to the college. It deteriorated quickly as the college, unsure what to do with it and unaware of its historic value, focused its efforts and money on other projects.

“It looked like what people might have thought of as an old rusty shed,” said Douglas Royalty, a conservation specialist overseeing the restoration with the college’s

art history department chairwoman, Abigail Van Slyck.

John Carr, principal conservator of Milner + Carr Conservation, said the Philadelphia-based firm hasn’t taken on a project quite like the steel house before, but has used similar techniques to restore old diner cars from trains.

**“Vandals Target Los Angeles’ Murals,”** *The Art Newspaper*, 09/30/2011

As Los Angeles’ graffiti problem escalates, the city’s reputation as the mural capital of the world is in jeopardy as its famous wall pieces are disappearing under a sea of spray paint. They are being targeted by vandals who flout the long accepted code that they are off limits for tagging.

Delays in removing the graffiti caused by technical and legal complexities, including the threat of possible artists’ rights lawsuits if murals are damaged during their cleaning, can invite more graffiti. The city boasts around 2,000 murals.

While agencies such as Caltrans spend \$2.5m to \$2.7m each year removing graffiti from Los Angeles’ freeways, tagging on murals cannot be removed for fear of artists invoking copyright laws, particularly the Visual Artists Rights Act and the California Art Preservation Act, which forbid the defacing or destruction of public art without the permission of the artist. The city’s cultural affairs department has a budget for cleaning murals that have been painted with anti-graffiti coatings. It cleans on average 200 murals a year.

“Murals used to be safe from graffiti, but now they are a good place to put tags because you know that they are going to stay there,” says the Getty Conservation Institute’s Leslie Rainer. The Mural Conservancy of Los Angeles, co-founded by Twitchell and Bill Lasarow, proposes a programme encouraging organisations to set up a fund to maintain a mural in exchange for a named plaque. They are currently seeking sponsors for Twitchell’s Steve McQueen and Strothen Martin murals.

**“Ancient Cave Paintings Threatened by Tourist Plans ”** *New Scientist*, 10/06/2011

Prehistoric paintings in northern Spain could be irreparably damaged if plans to reopen the Altamira cave to tourists go ahead. Local officials want to reopen the cave to boost the local economy, but visitors could heat the caves and introduce microbes that destroy pigments.

The Altamira cave paintings were discovered in 1879 and are thought to be at least 14,000 years old. The paintings have attracted huge numbers of visitors – 175,000 in 1973, the busiest year on record. But the cave was closed to the public in 2002 after photosynthetic bacteria and fungi were

found to be consuming pigments at alarming rates.

A team from the Spanish National Research Council in Madrid have modeled the effect of visitors over a number of years and say that tourists would increase the temperature, humidity and carbon-dioxide levels in the cave, creating conditions in which microbes would thrive. In addition, visitors would bring with them organic matter in the form of skin flakes, clothing fibres and dust, which microbes can consume. Air turbulence created by moving people would spread bacterial and fungal spores to other, previously unaffected spaces.

The researchers say they want to prevent the scale of damage that occurred at the Lascaux cave in France, where mismanagement led to successive waves of pathogens attacking wall paintings there. For example, pesticides intended to destroy microorganisms became a source of nutrients for them instead.

**“Eureka! 1,000-Year-Old Text by Archimedes Finally on Display,”** *Fox News*, 10/17/2011

After more than a decade of restoration and study, the public is getting a glimpse at the oldest surviving copy of works by an ancient Greek mathematical genius at the Walters Art Museum.

The exhibition, *Lost and Found: The Secrets of Archimedes*, tells the story of the 1,000-year-old text and the work of dozens of scientists and scholars who uncovered its secrets. The manuscript was in tatters when it arrived at the Walters more than 12 years ago. Scholars believe a 10th-century scribe copied the text from Archimedes’ original Greek scrolls, but 200 years later, another scribe scraped the text from the parchment, rebound it and reused it as a prayer book.

Ironically, this affront may have been the key to its persistence. The prayer book was cared for through the centuries until 1844 when it was found in a Constantinople convent’s collection. The manuscript then disappeared for decades and resurfaced in France, where researchers believe a collector commissioned forgery paintings over the text after 1938.

These forgeries and the glue binding the book together posed the biggest challenge to conservators, according to Abigail Quandt, senior conservator of manuscripts and rare books. The process of conserving the book and imaging it was slow, including four years just to take the book apart. But along the way Quandt came up with new technologies that can be applied to other projects.

Most of the text in the manuscript was recovered using multispectral imaging, but the toughest leaves were taken to the

Stanford Synchrotron Radiation Lightsource lab. There, X-ray beams were used to reveal text beneath the forgery paintings and heavy grime. The conservation work is expected to be complete by the end of the year, but the scholarly work will continue for years.

**“De Wain Valentine’s *Gray Column* Restored for Modern Art Show,”** *The Guardian*, 10/08/2011

The joy of art conservation lies in rescuing damaged work by painstakingly restoring its looks. Tom Learner is one of a rare breed of conservators whose speciality is modern art. His latest achievement is the restoration of an extraordinarily large, previously unseen work by the Colorado-born artist De Wain Valentine, which is leading to a reappraisal of the sculptor’s contribution to American art.

Valentine’s artistic heyday was the 1960s and 1970s, so his oldest work has only survived four decades so far. Yet his use of experimental materials meant that a range of fresh challenges faced Learner and his team at the Getty Conservation Institute in Los Angeles.

“We chose De Wain because his work was not easy to restore,” said Learner. The polyester resin Valentine hoped to work with was used for small objects, because it tended to crack. But the artist wanted to work on a large scale to create *Gray Column*, a 3m by 2m slab, weighing just under two tons. Valentine’s resin has proved stable, but it scratches easily and a number of ridges had formed on the surface with age. The artist wanted these sanded away but the conservators had a different agenda. They knew there was a value attached to the blemishes of time.

For Valentine, a smooth surface was the whole point of the work and he did not want it to look old. A compromise was reached and the artist is now happy with how his monumental piece looks.

**“Artifacts Indicate a 100,000-year-old Art Studio,”** *Los Angeles Times*, 10/14/2011

In a tiny South African cave, archaeologists have unearthed a 100,000-year-old art studio that contains tools for mixing powder from red and yellow rocks with animal fat and marrow to make vibrant paints as well as abalone shells full of dried-out red pigment, the oldest paint containers ever found.

The artifacts were uncovered at a well-studied site called the Blombos Cave, which sits by the edge of the Indian Ocean about 180 miles east of Cape Town. The two shells had a red residue from a soft, grindable stone known as ochre. A residual stain line in one of the shells indicated that the mixture had at one time been wet. Along with ground-up red ochre, the mixtures contained

charcoal and crushed spongy bones that were probably once rich in fat and marrow.

The team also found rock fragments from the grinding stones that were used to make the mixture. One of the stones had remnants of a yellow pigment, perhaps from a previous batch of paint, that was not present in the reddish batches from the abalone shells. By measuring the damage to quartz sediments caused by radioactive isotopes in the soil around the ochre containers, researchers were able to calculate that the paint tool kits were about 100,000 years old.

**“Portland’s MPF Conservation Team’s Work Shines in the Mason Monterey Collection at the Oregon Caves,”** *OregonLive.com*, 10/15/2011

Conservators Kate Powell and Mitchell Powell are mending, cleaning and conserving two dozen pieces of Monterey furniture for the chateau at the Oregon Caves National Monument in Southern Oregon.

The Oregon Caves Chateau, designed in a rustic style by local architect Gust Lium, is built into the steep mountainside that houses the caves. The lobby is the fourth floor of the lodge; a stream runs through the third floor dining room.

Since it opened, the purposely primitive interiors were complemented with colorful Monterey furnishings -- the Western-inspired line that flourished from 1929-43. The furniture, often bedecked in leather with wrought-iron hinges, hand-painted donkeys, flowers and sombrero-wearing figures, was a popular choice for hotels and lodges throughout the southwestern United States.

With the 100th anniversary of the Oregon Caves’ designation as a National Monument and the chateau’s 75th anniversary in 2009, the Friends of the Oregon Caves and Chateau determined to restore and conserve two dozen pieces of furniture. The Powells have spent 10 months on research, paint matching, cleaning, resurrection of upholstered pieces and replication of broken, unusable chair legs. Gamblin helped the Powells come up with something they could use as a protective barrier on the painted furniture. Pieces that are headed to the museum got a wax finish, but those that will go back to work in the chateau received a coat of Galkyd.

**“Treasured Campus Murals Conserved for Future Generations,”** *University of Wisconsin-Madison News*, 10/25/2011

1940s-vintage murals depicting the societal values of advances in science by John Steuart Curry are being carefully preserved by the university as the rest of the 1937 Biochemistry Building located at Henry Mall and University Avenue was gutted and rebuilt around it.

Conservators from the Midwest Art Conservation Center of Minneapolis meticulously stabilized, cleaned and restored them. The paintings are on canvas and Joan Gorman, senior paintings conservator at the center, says they were likely painted off-site and applied to the walls later. Murals in another room were painted on a thinner muslin canvas at the site.

During construction the areas were protected on all sides and a special heating and ventilation system was developed to shield and insulate the murals from the elements during the winter, when main building systems were removed and replaced. All water pipes were routed around the murals because leaks in past decades had damaged the murals.

Because of a well-documented 1985 restoration of the murals, conservators knew exactly what type of varnish to apply and in what quantities. "The 1985 varnish is a stable, synthetic resin which is used instead of natural resins, which yellow and age very poorly," Gorman says. "We use that varnish today. It's still a horse in our stable. The thin layer of varnish we added is different but entirely compatible with, and will not affect, the 1985 varnish."

**"Anger over Louvre's Plan to Clean a Leonardo,"** *The Art Newspaper*, 11/01/2011

The Louvre's latest attempt to conserve a masterpiece by the artist, *The Virgin and Child with Saint Anne*, 1508, has yet again sparked a wave of debate about cleaning paintings, even if they are dirty and discoloured.

The proposal to clean the work was first mooted at a two-day conference held at the Louvre in June 2009. According to *Le Journal des Arts*, the Louvre abandoned plans to conserve the work in 1994 because the solvents used to remove varnish risked damaging the paint layers beneath. In autumn 2010, the Louvre decided to try again. Vincent Pomarède, the project leader and keeper of paintings at the Louvre, said that the aim was "to solve the problem of the thick varnish that pulls on the paint layers, creating an uneven surface".

Pomarède's solution involves thinning the layers applied in the 19th and 20th centuries, leaving a film of varnish eight to 12 micrometres thick, rising to 25 micrometres across the faces of the figures. This strategy, which would still involve the use of solvents, raises fears that the sfumato, Leonard's "smoky finish" effect, could be compromised.

Michel Favre-Félix, the president of the Association for the Respect and Integrity of Artistic Heritage, is concerned, saying: "Leaving a layer of varnish is preferable but the deep infiltration of the solvents is the core issue. The varnish and sfumato are

so closely allied [that] we must ascertain, before moving ahead, whether the sfumato will be harmed by the solvents."

Pomarède insists his approach is safe: "At no point will we be in contact with the paint layers... the restoration is essential if we want to preserve this masterpiece, which is under threat because of the raised micro-blemishes on the surface. These are due to the oxidised varnish layers."

**"Appetite for Art: Restoring Ancient Works With Hungry Bacteria,"** *Wired.com*, 11/1/2011

The frescoes in the Church of Santos Juanes in Valencia, Spain, have been damaged by fire (the Spanish Civil War), glue (botched restoration attempts in the '60s), and salt blooms (a side effect of pigeon nests). But the 17th-century masterpieces aren't lost yet.

The Polytechnic University of Valencia's Institute of Heritage Restoration and Centre for Advanced Food Microbiology have joined forces to rejuvenate the priceless works. Tool of choice: bacteria.

The idea is to use the harmless *Pseudomonas stutzeri* microorganism to clean the works in lieu of toxic chemicals or the jittery hands of restorers. "We grow the bacteria in a culture that has the substrate we want to eliminate," says Pilar Bosch, a biologist who helped refine the method after studying with the team that cleaned Italy's Campo Santo di Pisa. Effectively trained to eat salt and glue, the bacteria are brushed onto the frescoes and covered with a gel that, when heated with lights, creates humid conditions (perfect for nibbling) and aids cleanup.

Just 90 minutes later, the surface is rinsed with water and dried, killing the bacteria. For the *Pseudomonas*, every masterpiece is the Last Supper.

**"\$1.1 million Sculpture Damaged by Cleaning Woman in German Museum,"** *Washington Post*, 11/07/2011

A \$1.1 million art installation in Germany's Ostwall Museum was damaged by a cleaning woman who mistook a hand-painted patina for dirt and scrubbed it away.

Artist Martin Kippenberger's *When It Starts Dripping From the Ceiling* was comprised of a wooden structure and a rubber trough painted to look as though it had once contained a puddle of dirty rainwater. The artwork fell victim to an expensive mistake when a woman from the cleaning agency, whose employees had been instructed to stay at least eight inches away from the art at all times, "cleaned" the installation.

It remains on view while insurance adjusters assess the damage, and the owner of the work decides whether it should be restored.

**"Devil found in Detail of Giotto Fresco in Italy's Assisi,"** *Reuters*, 11/07/2011

Art restorers have discovered the figure of a devil hidden in the clouds of one of the most famous frescos by Giotto in the Basilica of St. Francis in Assisi. The devil was hidden in the details of clouds at the top of fresco number 20 in the cycle of the scenes in the life and death of St. Francis painted by Giotto in the 13th century.

The discovery was made by Italian art historian Chiara Frugone. It shows a profile of a figure with a hooked nose, a sly smile, and dark horns hidden among the clouds in the panel of the scene depicting the death of St. Francis. The figure is difficult to see from the floor of the basilica but emerges clearly in close-up photography. Sergio Fusetti, the chief restorer of the basilica, said Giotto probably never wanted the image of the devil to be a main part of the fresco and may have painted it in among the clouds "to have a bit of fun."

The master may have painted it to spite someone he knew by portraying him as a devil in the painting, Fusetti said on the convent's website. The artwork in the basilica in the convent where St. Francis is buried was last restored after it was severely damaged by an earthquake in 1997.

**"Sheldon and Caroline Keck Helped Improve the Craft of Restoration,"** *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, 12/07/2011

Sheldon and Caroline Keck, who lived in Brooklyn Heights from 1940 to 1963, were prominent art conservators who had learned a new approach to their craft from Edward Waldo Forbes, who brought art historians, restorers and scientists together at Harvard's Fogg Museum in the early decades of the 20th century.

Sheldon Keck met Caroline Kohn in 1931 while both were taking Forbes's course on the methods and materials of Italian art. They moved to New York City in 1933 and married. By the end of the next year Sheldon was working at the Brooklyn Museum. Sheldon entered the U.S. Army, and Caroline, who generally did conservation at home, filled in for him at the Brooklyn Museum.

The Army assigned him to the Monuments, Fine Arts, Archives Section. He became active with what were known as the Monuments Men, working to find and protect artworks that Hitler had removed from museums and private collections, so they eventually could be returned to rightful owners.

In 1954, together with the Brooklyn Museum director and staff members, the Kecks created the ground-breaking *Take Care* exhibition that explained in detail the hows and whys of modern conservation. A companion book, *How to Take Care of Your*

*Pictures: A primer of practical information*, was jointly published by the Museum of Modern Art and the Brooklyn Museum.

By the time the Kecks sold their State Street home and moved permanently to Cooperstown, NY, Sheldon had become director of the first academic training program for art conservators in the U.S. (at New York University), and Caroline was head of the Brooklyn Museum laboratory.

Their dedication to improving how art conservation is taught and practiced was total. They were true pioneers in a rapidly evolving art field. Sheldon Keck died in Cooperstown in 1993, aged 83; Caroline survived until 2007, dying at 99, also in Cooperstown.

**“Una ‘Scuola’ nel Getsemani per Restauratori Palestinesi” (A “school” in Gethsemane for Palestinian Restorers), *Agi.it*, 12/16/2011**

Creating an on-site school for the training of Palestinian conservators is the goal of a project promoted by the Cooperazione Italiana under the Wings of the Dove program, sponsored by the Foreign Ministry in collaboration with local Italian businesses in order to sustain development in Palestinian territories.

The initiative focuses on the formation of six Palestinian experts in the restoration of mosaics and monuments. The Italian project is aiming to create a worksite in the Church of All Nations in Jerusalem, built between 1920 and 1924 on the Mount of Olives by Italian architect Antonio Barluzzi.

The activities of the worksite will focus on the restoration of the lead roof sheets of the church and on the mosaics, which are partially detached due to water infiltration. The Italian experts will offer technical consultation in addition to providing all the equipment for conservation operations.

**“La Stanza Segreta del Cardinale fra Pavoni, Civette e Papaveri” (Among peacocks, owls and poppies, the secret room of the Cardinal), *Corriere della Sera*, 12/18/2011**

Considered one of the most beautiful in Rome by scholars who were able to see it after the discovery in 1985, the fresco in the Bird Room in the Pavilion of Ferdinando de’ Medici has remained largely unknown to the general public.

Now a careful restoration has brought it completely to light and Eric de Chasse, director of the Academy of France has decided to include the Pavilion in the tour of the Villa Medici.

Built in the 16<sup>th</sup> century and decorated by Jacopo Zucchi and collaborators between 1576 and 1577, the Pavilion has two rooms. The smaller, the Stanza dell’Aurora, is completely painted with allegorical mo-

tifs, grotesques and four interesting views of the Villa Medici; all within the decorative standards of the times.

The surprise lies in the vault of the second room, dubbed the Bird Room, for the multitude of birds and other animals that populate a trellis wrapped around an aviary. Restorer Luigi de Cesaris, under the direction of Colette de Matteo and Didier Reppelin has brought to light the delicate colors which were hidden by whitewash applied when Napoleon moved the French Academy to the Villa Medici in 1803 and designated the Pavilion as a sculpture studio.

**“Another Collapse at Pompeii Renews Fears About Its Fate,” *New York Times*, 12/23/2011**

Mount Vesuvius preserved the city of Pompeii in ash nearly 2,000 years ago, but current neglect of this Unesco World Heritage site in southern Italy is taking its toll. A courtyard column of a Roman house collapsed on Thursday, the latest in a series of crumbling artifacts at the site, Reuters reported.

Last year there were other collapses, including part of what is known as the House of Gladiators. The damage played a role in a no-confidence vote against Culture Minister Sandro Bondi earlier this year. Although Mr. Bondi survived the vote, he ended up resigning in March.

The city, which was buried by an eruption of Vesuvius in 79 A.D., is one of Italy’s most popular tourist sites. “To overcome the emergency created by these collapses,” Tsao Cevoli, head of the National Association of Archaeologists said “we need to hire specialized maintenance workers straight away. That is the only possible cure for Pompeii.” In October the European Union pledged nearly \$150 million to help preserve and monitor the site.

**“Louvre’s Leonardo Was Overcleaned, say Art Experts,” *The Guardian*, 12/28/2011**

The Louvre is facing accusations that it overcleaned a masterpiece by Leonardo da Vinci, leaving it with a brightness that the Renaissance master never intended. Two of France’s top art experts have voiced their protest over the cleaning of The Virgin and Child with Saint Anne by resigning from the Paris museum’s advisory committee responsible for its “restoration”.

Such was their concern for the 500-year-old painting that Ségolène Bergeon Langle and Jean-Pierre Cuzin – eminent former specialists in conservation and painting respectively at the Louvre – could no longer associate themselves with its treatment. A senior museum source said the experts believed the restoration had gone too far, and that steps had gone ahead without adequate tests. The restoration has divided the committee between those who believe the paint-

ing is now too bright and those who regard the cleaning as moderate.

There were also disputes over whether an area dismissed as removable repaint was in fact a glaze applied by Leonardo. Two such resignations are a major embarrassment for the Louvre as well as for fellow colleagues of the international committee, whose 20 members include two specialists from the National Gallery in London, Larry Keith and Luke Syson.

The Louvre source said that Keith and Syson were particularly keen on this restoration: “The English were very pushing, saying they know Leonardo is extremely delicate but ‘we can move without any danger to the work.’ Seventeen years ago, the Louvre abandoned an earlier attempt to clean the painting amid fears over how the solvents were affecting the sfumato, Leonardo’s trademark painterly effect for blurring contours. Since then, the British influence on restoration has helped to sway the Louvre.

The Louvre declined to comment on the two resignations, but defended its cleaning process. Vincent Pomarède, the Louvre’s head of paintings, said: “Rarely has a restoration been as well prepared, discussed and effected, and never will it have benefited from such effective techniques. The first assessment revealed the excellent state of conservation ... comforting us in the choices made.”

**“Hard Times for a Tower and its Murals,” *Los Angeles Times*, 01/03/2011**

Faced with complaints from neighborhood groups, docents and even one of the artists’ descendants, San Francisco has stepped up efforts to restore the landmark Coit Tower and its historical Depression-era frescoes.

No one disputes their historical value. But the works — along with their iconic Art Deco home, San Francisco’s fluted Coit Tower — are in trouble. Mineral blooms on the concrete pillar’s interior walls, a by-product of this city’s legendary fog, have marred the earth- and jewel-toned images. Their surfaces bear chips and scratches from the indiscreet hands of countless visitors. The ceiling plaster is peeling. The lighting is dim.

Faced with complaints from neighborhood groups, docents and even one of the artists’ descendants, the city has stepped up efforts to restore the tower and its murals.

The San Francisco Arts Commission has retained a preservationist to assess the damage and hopes to raise enough money to restore the works while improving lighting and other aspects of the visitor experience. Recreation and parks officials have promised to channel 1% annually from the Coit Tower earnings into a fund for mural upkeep, in addition to pledging up to \$250,000 for a one-time restoration.