

English Abstracts

Ursula Dorfner, Katrin Herzele

The Federal Assembly Hall – a synthesis of the arts. Restoring the metal surfaces.

Among the varieties of metal objects to be found in the Federal Assembly Hall (Bundesversammlungssaal), many showed only occasional signs of wear and tear. Two such varieties are described in this article by way of example. The oil-gilded, zinc cast surfaces exhibited superficial dirt and partial imperfections. A dry cleaning procedure was carried out, the surfaces were treated with surfactants, and the imperfections in the gilding were retouched. The exposed brass surfaces were originally lacquered, but due to use and cleaning, this finish is now almost non-existent. The surfaces are now covered with a matte film of tarnish. In addition to general surface contamination, corrosion and mechanical damage have also resulted in an inhomogeneous appearance. White spirit was used to clean the surfaces and the products of corrosion were mechanically reduced. Three dimensionality and a homogeneous appearance were achieved.

Bettina Fischer, Agnes Szökrön-Michl

Conserving and restoring August Eisenmenger's frieze painting „Die Entstehung des Staats- und parlamentarischen Lebens“ [The Origin of State and Parliamentary Life]

As part of the restoration work, August Eisenmenger's painting – the oldest wall-mounted frieze in the parliament building – underwent in-depth investigations and restoration work. The cycle of paintings was created using marouflage, an artistic technique that became extremely popular in the nineteenth century, when the monumental buildings that line Vienna's Ringstrasse boulevard were erected. The finished paintings were glued to the wall in situ, making them integral to the interior design concept of the State Hall. Although no details of previous restoration work have been found, it can be assumed that extensive revisions were carried out in the past. The paintings were in a very stable condition; hence, the objective of the restoration process was narrowed down to minimal conservation measures supplemented by partial restorative treatments.

Helfried Karner, Michal Kosco

Decorative paintings in the Federal Assembly Hall

The results of the restorative cleaning of surfaces served as the starting point for monument conservation measures. Questions frequently arose about the handling of earlier interventions and the appropriate integration of modern building technology into the existing structure. An increased pattern of damage was detected on the ceiling that envelops the hall. Both wet and dry cleaning procedures were carried out. Desalination, strengthening and fixation measures were taken in high-stress areas. Three-dimensional enhancements called for sculptural modelling and reconstructions. The process of restoring the surfaces of the paintings involved various decorative painting techniques, such as retouching and stencilling. A major water ingress problem caused an unfortunate setback, damaging one of the finished sections. Following substantial restoration work on the stucco body and efforts to diminish any distracting abnormalities, the aim was to improve the overall appearance of the ceiling, restoring cohesion without masking its historical patina. The objective was to preserve the original substance of the building as far as possible and to safeguard it for the future. Where possible, subsequent treatments were also incorporated.

Peter Kopp

The restoration of the woodwork in the hall of the Federal Assembly

The hall of the Federal Assembly – originally the meeting room of the House of Representatives and now also referred to as the „historical meeting room“ – is the largest mainly unchanged space in the parliament building. Numerous detailed drawings by Theophil Hansen attest to the authenticity of the furnishings. In addition to the use of oak wood for furniture and floors, the surfaces of the wood paneling were artistically decorated with imitation techniques in the form of marbling and graining. Over time, parts of the wooden furnishings were revised and altered by later additions. During restoration, on one hand, installations for contemporary technology were invisibly integrated by the removal and reinstallation

of the historical herringbone parquet, and on the other hand, later additions were largely removed, and changes were reverted to the original state. The heavily soiled surfaces were cleaned using wet-chemical processes, maintenance layers and overpaints were removed with the help of infrared lasers. Missing areas of woodwork and imitation painting were reconstructed using historical techniques, and gaps and damages in the painting were filled and retouched. The goal of the restoration was to achieve a cohesive overall picture corresponding to the age of the hall, as close as possible to Theophil Hansen's original conception.

Thomas Titze

Restoring the original historic furnishings in the Federal Council Chamber

The parliament building has a strikingly cohesive, carefully considered use of stucco lustro, stucco marble and natural stone surfaces. All three materials were used in the Federal Council Chamber to reflect the importance of the hall, and zoning of the wall surfaces was achieved in the process. Stucco lustro was used for the "insignificant" area towards the top of the wall, whereas the lower zones were divided up with stone detailing and high-quality stucco marble décor. The monument conservation assessment found that for the most part, the wall structure remained in its original condition. Challenges faced by the restorers included the lack of information about the original formulae for the paintwork on the stucco lustro surfaces and the extremely high level of craftsmanship in the stucco marble and stucco lustro surfaces. The end result of the restoration process sees the Federal Assembly Hall returned to its original splendour.

Iris Bermoser, Emanuel Schaden, Bruno Rey

Restoring the historic stone elements of the Federal Assembly Hall. From minimal intervention to regilding

The stone décor in the Federal Assembly Hall consists of various specimens of polishable coloured limestone and white marble. The stone surfaces in various areas, including door surrounds and the pedestals for the telamon and caryatid figures, were designed with gilding and polychrome 'Lüsterfassung' (a translucent colour glaze). While the space as a whole makes a very intact overall impression, the gilding and paintwork in

the easily accessible areas are severely damaged. The decision was made to repair the surface design in the most damaged areas by regilding and refreshing the polychromy. In the surrounding areas, the more minimalist restoration concept devised for the project as a whole was applied. The aim of this varied approach was to ensure a harmonious transition between the recently finished areas and the aged appearance of the existing surfaces.

Peter Kopp

Preliminary investigations in the National Council Chamber

Max Fellerer and Eugen Wörle were responsible for the overall reconstruction of the parliament building after it suffered severe damage during World War II. Certain areas, culminating in the National Council Chamber (Nationalratssitzungssaal) were remodelled in the simple, formally abstract design language that emerged during the 1950s. As well as working to the meagre budget afforded in the era of post-war reconstruction, the architects' design also succeeded in creating completely new spatial qualities for the Plenary Hall (Plenarsaal) and adjoining corridor area (Couloir, which were designed in the form of a wide corridor with rest areas and provide access to the radially arranged meeting rooms. Also significantly, the design was not limited to the cladding of the wall surfaces; in addition to fire-retardant materials, soundproofing material was also integrated into the construction of the substructures, which improved the acoustics of the space considerably.

Christian Reisinger, Erich Neuhauser

Restoring the heraldic eagle in the National Council Chamber

The heraldic steel eagle makes its own distinctive mark on the National Council Chamber. Measuring 2.27 metres in height and with a wingspan of 3.86 metres, it cuts a powerful figure. The eagle, created in 1954 by Rudolf Hoflehner, is based on the sculptor's own design and weighs around 650 kilogrammes. It consists of five main parts: the left and right wings, torso and breastplate are attached to a supporting structure at the centre of the sculpture. All parts are cut from solid 10 millimetre-thick steel plates (some of which are curved) and have been subsequently arc welded together. The

sculpture is secured to the wall with five cylindrical steel bolts measuring 4.5 centimetres in diameter and 3.8 centimetres in length. The bolts are inserted into steel sheathing in the wall. The heraldic eagle was restored in situ in 2012. In 2018, during the renovation of the parliament building, it was taken down and temporarily stored near Wiener Neustadt. In the summer of 2019 it was transported to Metallwerkstatt C. Reisinger, the metal workshop where it was subsequently restored and preserved. When the sculpture, restored to its “former glory”, was returned to the parliament building in the summer of 2021 and mounted in its rightful place behind the president’s lectern, many media outlets reported that “the eagle had landed smoothly”.

Sandra Chesi, Friedrich Nussbaumer, Katharina Schwarzenegger

Compromise, creativity and a melting pot of terminologies. Overseeing the restoration works in the National Council Chamber and corridor area

Monument restoration is a multifaceted process that combines research, planning and practice. It therefore brings together a variety of specialist disciplines which, despite their different terminologies, all work towards a common goal: preserving the cultural heritage and its integral place in the extant setting. To begin with, complex information must be collected and interpreted in context. Other important factors that contribute to successful project execution are identifying the necessary measures to be taken and making concrete plans. The following article sheds light on the perspective and experience of overseeing the restoration of the National Council Chamber and corridor area in Vienna’s parliament building. The aim here is to describe how overseeing the restoration project works and to explain approaches to ensuring an optimal connection between theory and practice, as well as ways of achieving a jointly defined outcome. This is a process that poses many challenges and therefore requires not only specialist expertise, but also creativity and the ability to compromise in order to achieve a common aim.

Ursula Dorfner, Katrin Herzele

The ministerial staircase – “angelic”

Four grand staircases lead to the first floor of the parliament building in Vienna. The railings on both sides

of the stairs, featuring herms, floral décor, chains and medallions, are based on a design by Theophil Hansen. The ministerial staircase (Ministerstiege) located in the south-eastern part of the building was inspected as part of the preliminary inventories and assessments. The purpose of visual checks and scientific examinations was to find out more about the material and coating system used. The results laid the foundations for the subsequently defined restoration measures.

Christian Reisinger, Erich Neuhauser

Restoring the ministerial staircase in the parliament building

The ministerial staircase is one of four similarly constructed grand staircases in the parliament building. Theophil Hansen’s attention to detail is particularly pronounced in his work on the ministerial staircase. One example of this is the wide variety of ball chains between the herms. The spaces between the herms are filled with the aforementioned suspended chains, which consist of balls, medallions and bells of varying sizes. Two additional delicate, vertical rounded rods were installed on site to further reduce the spaces between the herms by the stairwell and in the breastwork. Several volutes, acanthus leaves and lion heads complete the sumptuous impression created by the ministerial staircase. The damage described in the report was substantial. Many of the decorative trims had to be supplemented and replaced. At the outset of the restoration process, the task of repairing the chains seemed almost impossible. The result of thorough, gentle cleaning and a great deal of retouching and professional conservation was an outstanding feat of restoration.

Franka Bindernagel

The Parliament Library. Exemplary partial reconstruction of the concealed painterly décor

Theophil Hansen’s idea of Greek-style polychromy is ubiquitous throughout the rooms of the parliament building. However, not all of the surfaces have survived to this day; many have simply been covered up over the decades. The library is a case in point: here, numerous usage-related changes, renovations and additions have greatly altered and impacted the appearance of this part of the building. The original design and interior of

the library hall were retraced as part of the research effort for the restoration project. The well-preserved wooden furnishings and the essentially unaltered spatial structure of the hall attracted the interest of monument conservators, who recognised the potential for restoration here. The planning phase focused on such matters as devising a concept for dealing with the individual spaces and material surfaces; during this stage, the restorers set up test areas in the library. In addition to the treatment of the wooden, stone and metal surfaces, the exemplary partial reconstruction of the interior was intended to convey an idea of the appearance that could be achieved. This article provides insights into the concept, implementation and outcome of this partial reconstruction.

Sylvia Schönolt

The facades of the parliament building

Although the facades of the parliament building were restored in various stages from the mid-1990s through to 2007, the need for further action was identified during the course of the major renovation project. The aim was to restore the main facade on the Ringstrasse side to its former glory and to improve the overall appearance of the other facades. The parliament building's street facades, built in various kinds of natural stone, were therefore refurbished according to their presence in the urban space: comprehensive restoration work was carried out on the main facade, while various techniques were used to clean and perform technical repairs on the other facades. The courtyard frontage, a combination of natural stone elements with rendered surfaces, was largely refurbished in keeping with the existing structure.

Iris Bermoser, Emanuel Schaden, Bruno Rey

Restoring the formal integrity of the natural stone friezes on the parliament building's facade

Long natural stone friezes adorn the lateral external facades at the level of the parliament building's top storey. These friezes have been badly damaged in places and have developed major imperfections over time and due to former structural alterations. Measures taken during the course of the renovation project also called for further alterations to the substance of the friezes. The challenge was therefore to create an intact,

visually pleasing appearance by rectifying the defects. Artificial stone reconstructions were produced on a large scale and in various dimensions for this purpose. The conservation measures were required to safeguard the heritage to the best possible extent while also making modern interventions.

Markus Pescoller

The polychromatic painted axis II on the parliament building's facade. History, investigation and reconstruction

The cleaning of Theophil Hansen's painted axis on the south-eastern corner of the parliament building during the major overhaul provided an opportunity to explore the history of its restoration in greater detail in order to determine the original paintwork for the reconstruction. Laboratory analyses were carried out alongside this investigation and the results were synchronised with the existing building. The reconstruction was adapted to the aged appearance of the facade with light patination.

Anja Haralter-Tupi, Katharina Fuchs, Johann Nimmrichter

The roof parapet figures of Vienna's parliament building. Investigating the condition of the sculptures and measures to improve their structural stability

The roof parapet figures from Vienna's parliament building are not only unique in Austrian architecture in terms of their design and number, but also on account of their material composition. The marble used is very much at the mercy of the Central European weather conditions due to the extremely exposed position of the figures. For the first time since the parliament was erected over 130 years ago, the figures were taken down and subsequently replaced, allowing the state of their preservation to be examined in greater detail. The investigative procedure used for this purpose was ultrasonic pulse velocity measurement: a non-destructive technique commonly used for dense rocks, predominantly marble. Documents containing details of investigations carried out during the last phase of restoration (1998–2004) were helpful for ascertaining the further conservation measures to be taken. The measurements are described in more detail in the following article, which also sets out the measures for preserving the roof parapet figures.