

Solutions

Broken treasures restored



PAULA MCCULLOUGH PHOTO

If a painting is faded, dirty or discoloured, professional art restorer Hanna Franciscy can bring it back to life. Here she works on a dirty oil painting.



Paula McCullough
On the Cheap

When I found one of my art deco bookends smashed on the floor, I knew the perpetrator had to be Nicholas, our juvenile delinquent tabby cat.

Accidents like this are a mainstay of Fine Art Restorations Inc. (209 Sheppard Ave. E., 416-222-6462), a small store specializing in museum-quality restoration and repairs.

Owner Hanna Franciscy calls her profession "a dying art that takes a love of research, infinite patience and a high level of skill."

She and her late husband, George, trained in Budapest and Vienna, immigrated to Canada and opened their business in

1982. A big scrapbook on her desk bursts with before/after photos and glowing customer testimonials.

Oil paintings, which have suffered neglect, rips and discoloration from proximity to smokers, can be brought back to life; but Franciscy is adamant about the danger of over-restoring. "I'm not creating new art," she says, "So I only do touch-ups if absolutely needed."

She painstakingly cleans, invisibly mends and, if the painting is brittle, relines it with a new canvas backing. Watercolours and prints, too, can be treated.

I own a Kurelek serigraph which has severe fading and discoloration, so Franciscy is cleaning, de-acidifying, then re-matting it with archival quality material and putting it back into the original frame.

The work's not cheap, but is very fair, considering that the work is so diverse. And it's a lot less costly than laying out for new artwork. People can also

bring things in for an estimate... a good idea before committing to a repair.

And — as in the case of my bookend — value is sometimes more sentimental than monetary. Many customers bring in ceramics and sculptures that have suffered profound breakage, sometimes shattered into dozens of small shards which can take up to 25 hours to restore. If this occurs, gather and save all the pieces.

Room With A View, is on Sat. March 1 at Casa Loma and Spadina House Museum. The annual day-long series of decorating seminars costs \$97.50. Second-hand Sleuth columnist Jo-Ann Dodds is one of the speakers and she'll be talking about mirrors. Call 416-923-1171 for information and registration.

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