

Care of Paintings – Housekeeping



Whether of sentimental or monetary value paintings are fragile creations that require special care to assure their continued preservation. All paintings change over time and not all the results of aging are necessarily considered as damage. Professional conservation treatments may be required if a varnish becomes so darkened or yellowed that it begins to obscure the artist's original intentions; or when a painting suffers structural damages such as tears, flaking paint, cracks with raised edges, or mould. **Good housekeeping** can prevent and prolong the need for more drastic intervention.

Dust and Dirt - Outside of museum controlled environments it is not always possible to avoid the build up of dust and dirt particles over the years. Dirt not only looks unsightly but can also be very acid, which will speed up the breakdown of canvas and wood.

Smoke and Soot - Smoke and soot can heavily obscure an image. Interestingly hot air carries dirt, so a painting stored above a heat source will attract far more grime than is normal for the rest of the room.

Smoke and Nicotine - A painting that has been housed in the collection of a smoker will collect nicotine deposits on its surface which will appear as an obscuring yellow layer. Conservators often encounter this particular problem in paintings belonging to private clubs, where smoking rooms are not uncommon.

Solution! -Regular housekeeping can do much to protect and preserve a painting and should be carried out at least once a year. It is best done by a conservator as a great deal of damage can occur if carried out incorrectly. A conservator will check the work to ensure that there is no loose or flaking paint. Using special equipment such as soft sable or badger hair brush the conservator will carefully remove the accumulation of dust and dirt. Paintings on canvas will be turned upside down and any dust or debris removed with a palette knife or goose feather.

Spring Profile: The 'Holly Berry Bulge' Effect



A common problem which arises during the spring cleaning is the odd holly berry left over from Christmas decorations! Left behind the stretcher bar the first indication that they are there is often an unsightly bulge on the front of the painting!