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VALENTINE'S DAY MASCARA



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FRANKLIN

BANKSY

Valentine's Day Mascara, Margate

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BANKSY

Valentine's Day Mascara, Margate

1.0 Summary

The following report details the conservation of the Banksy known as Valentine's Day Mascara which appeared on the wall of a house on Valentine's Day Tuesday 14th February 2023. The mural depicts a caricature of a 1950s housewife wearing a blue pinny and yellow Marigold washing-up gloves. Standing with a swollen eye and a missing tooth she is depicted as having just pushed her male partner into a chest freezer, his legs sticking out from the far end. The piece included a real chest freezer, which was twice removed from the site before being relocated to Dreamland.

2.0 Condition Assessment

The mural needed to be assessed on arrival at our studio both to record its condition on arrival and to ensure a conservation plan could be agreed to conserve and present the piece for display at Dreamland in Margate.

Due to the detailed planning process required to remove the mural from the building the brick structure had been carefully protected and stabilised from the reverse prior to being removed. The wall comprises a lower section of Victorian brickwork and an upper section of post-War brick, the result of repairs carried out after bombing damaged adjacent buildings. The removal process involved the propping of the building, stripping out the internal structures, removing an inner skin of brickwork from the reverse of the wall and the consolidation of the reverse using tongue and groove plywood and expanding foam. The initial assessment showed that externally the wall was in relatively good condition with only localised damage to the early brickwork at lower levels. Internally the wall

The mural was removed in a steel cradle in one piece measuring approx. 3.8m W x 2.4m H and consists of a single skin brick stretcher bond wall painted with masonry paint. It is understood that the wall is a post-War addition following damage to adjacent houses and that there is a 100mm (4") cavity between this and the original inner wall of the house which remains intact.

The existing off-white masonry paint appeared to be in relatively good condition prior to the application of Banksy's spray paint. However, there were areas of damage and loss along the lower parts of the wall and flaking associated with microbiological growth on the right side in particular. The lower part of the wall was obscured by grass and other weeds and the freezer originally stood on a tarmacked surface. A broken three legged plastic garden chair was part of the original ensemble of abandoned freezer and other detritus which made up the scene.

Conservation work typically involves surface cleaning followed by stabilisation of areas of flaking and delaminating paint. Any areas of damage and paint losses can be reconstructed in preparation for eventual display. It was agreed that the general approach would be to clean and conserve the work with a minimal amount of restoration to the original painting – i.e. to clean to a naturally weathered look. Cleaning involves removing superficial dirt, drip marks and any debris (powdered paint, brick, sand and cement) from the cutting processes used in the detachment.

It was necessary to carry out surface cleaning to remove brick dust and any undesirable organic matter, the treatment of microbiological growths such as mould and moss, followed by stabilisation and restoration of any losses which might have occurred as a result of the removal process. The intention was to stabilise the mural, reinstate missing elements and to mount and frame it for display.

3.0 Conservation Treatments

The mural was treated between April and May 2023 and delivered to Dreamland on June 6th. The main aim of the conservation process was to re-assemble all elements of the detached mural and restore any losses in such a manner that it can be displayed as a complete, framed piece of wall. The thinning of the cavity wall by the removal of the internal brickwork was carried out first to ensure the outer face of the wall could be stabilised and to make a more readily manageable and transportable image. This is essential to facilitate all elements of the future handling of the piece.

It was agreed the brick wall should have a new support on the reverse comprising a 26mm aluminium honeycomb and/or ply sheet adhered to the back of the bricks. This ensures the bricks maintain their relation to one another during transportation.

It was necessary to frame the piece for both display and for the protection and stabilisation of the brickwork. Our proposal was to employ a powder coated aluminium frame (to be determined) which will be slightly proud of the paint surface (approx. 5-10mm). The existing steel lifting cradle was adapted and incorporated into the support structure of the piece.

The proposal outlined below was to apply new materials to the reverse of the wall as shown in the drawing to the right. The intention was to include adaptation of the support frame and crate so that transportation and subsequent display is made easier.

Outline of the proposed Conservation Treatments:

3.1 Detailed condition assessment & report on arrival. This was required to determine and document the extent of work before treatment and will be updated after treatment to record condition before transportation to the new location.

3.2 Fix areas of flaking and lifting of the paint using conservation-grade adhesives. This involves the re-adhesion of the existing paint layers to one another and the support.

3.3 Surface cleaning to remove superficial dust and dirt (clear loose dust & debris from removal process).

3.4 Cut new support boards to allow the reverse to be stabilised.

3.5 Reduction in the thickness of the wall to have been completed on site prior to arrival.

3.6 Remove ingrained dirt and organic material and treat areas of mould / microbiological growth.

3.7 Injection of consolidant into cracks and fissures to secure any friable and detached edges.

3.8 Even up cut brick edges to square and consolidate against water ingress which may cause damage to the paint in future.

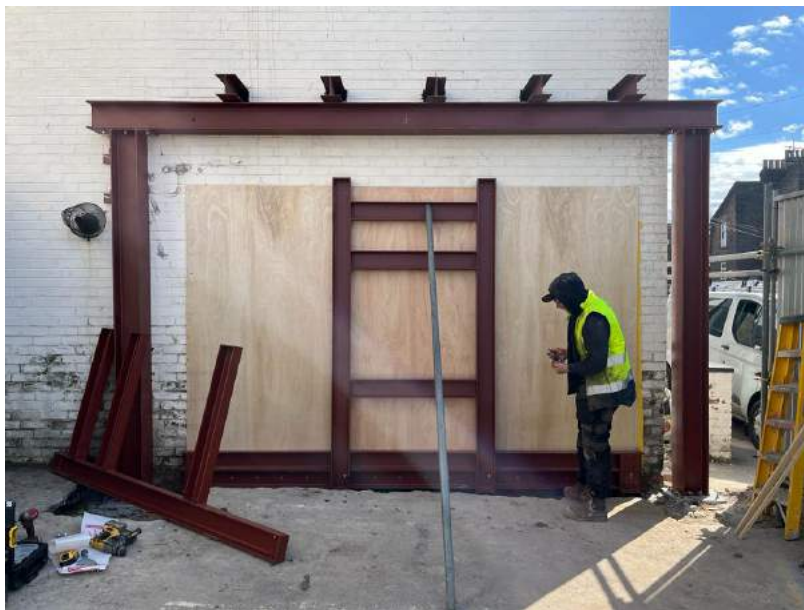
3.9 Apply new plaster repairs to any areas of loss and carry out fine filling of cracks.

3.10 Carry out detailed retouching to match the existing finish in order to restore all areas of loss which might arise from the relocation process.



3.11 Apply lightweight, dimensionally stable 26.4mm aluminium honeycomb board or ply sheets and resin fix to reverse of the sections. This will ensure that the bricks are individually supported.

3.12 Design, manufacture and apply new frame. The outer edges of the aluminium support board may extend out beyond the painted plaster finish to allow secure fixing to an outer frame. Fill gap between frame and plaster with neutrally toned black finish to provide visual spacer between the mural and its frame. The ground in front of the wall to be reconstructed on a steel supported plate covered with resin-bonded gravel to imitate the original surface on which the chest freezer originally stood and on which it will then be mounted. A dark-grey, powder-coated aluminium frame was chosen.





4.0 Materials & Methodology

The cleaning and conservation of the mural was carried out using well-established conservation techniques. The following conservation treatments were proposed, subject to testing, together with a range of materials and methodologies listed below in no particular preference:

- 4.1 Assessment A further assessment of the nature, extent and condition of the murals was carried out as part of preliminary investigations and documentation ahead of any conservation treatment. The preliminary inspection and survey will provide baseline information on the extent and condition of the paintings prior to conservation treatment. Preliminary photographic documentation will include overall views of the wall painting and details to illustrate types of condition and deterioration. The condition survey will provide both an accurate method of assessment of the problems and will form part of the archival record.
- 4.2 Surface cleaning Superficial cleaning of the mural was carried out to remove accumulated dust and dirt using soft brushes to lift loose dirt carefully towards a vacuum cleaner. Further cleaning was carried out to remove or reduce ingrained surface dirt and grime using both dry methods (Wishab™¹) and aqueous cleaning solutions, simply using deionised water applied and cleared with cotton wool swabs.
- 4.3 Consolidation In most areas the painting appears completely stable but where any weak areas were found consolidation of the paint and brick surface was achieved using carefully controlled applications of a conservation-grade consolidant such as Paraloid B72². Powdering paint was consolidated using a low percentage of Paraloid B72 (circa 5% in acetone and ethanol 1:1), which is typically applied with a syringe or brush, through an intervention layer of L2 tissue, or as a light spray.

¹ Wishab™ sponges consist of soft silicone rubbers designed to crumble in use removing dust and dirt in the process - produced by Akachemie, Germany.

² Paraloid B72® - a solid stable acrylic resin copolymer - 98-100% weight methyl and ethyl methacrylate - produced by Rhöm & Haas. Powdering paint would be consolidated using a low percentage of Paraloid B72 (circa 5% in toluene) applied with a syringe or brush, through an intervention layer of Eltoline tissue, or as a light spray.

4.4 Flaking paint

In places where the paint layer or ground was found to be lifting or delaminating, areas of weak or flaking material require fixing to ensure long-term stability. Where such conditions are found previous tests have shown that the layers can be carefully re-adhered and laid back in their original plane using a conservation-grade fixative Lascaux 4176 MFC³ (typically 1:5 or 1:10 in deionised water as necessary) applied by brush or syringe as required.

4.1.5 Plaster Repairs

In places where the surface had been damaged by drilling the holes were filled with a lime : sand (1:3) plaster.

4.1.6 Retouching

Retouching was very limited and confined to the application of artist's acrylics with the aim of producing a more even appearance overall. No retouching of missing paint was carried out so that a naturally weathered look was maintained.

4.1.7 Plaster Repairs

A resin deck was constructed at the front on which the freezer could sit together with the broken chair. Imitation moss was added back to help disguise the join with the wall which was originally covered with weeds.



³ Lascaux 4176 Medium for Consolidation is a conservation-grade consolidant developed with the Swedish Heritage Board composed of a fine aqueous dispersion of acrylic copolymer based on acrylate ester, styrene and methacrylate ester. It has excellent ageing properties, remaining soluble, with minimal yellowing.

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