

## Art restoration

Restoration is any process aimed at the survival of a work of art and the restorer's function is to give it back its former beauty. That happened in the past, when restorers often made irreversible changes to the works of art to let them look glorious again, but those days are over: for a hundred years the main purpose is to preserve them for the future. Using watercolour paints to restore a fresco is, for example, a recent years solution to lend reversibility to the changes. This technique was used in the 20-year restoration of Da Vinci's «The Last Supper» too, that had been damaged by the poultice of dust, glues, resins, solvents and paints randomly overlapping the painting and therefore considered unrestorable. But a careful restoration brought back one of the masterpieces of the history of art to the human race.

Nowadays restorers commonly use the **Tinted varnish treatment** consisting in acting with spots or commonly stippling where paint may be missing or where the piece is damaged using diverse shades of the required colour. In this way light reflects like the paint. Obviously this action is possible only after an elaborate cleaning of the work.

Cleaning is a very delicate action, there are surely restorations easy to realize, but mostly restorers are not aware of all the materials used to create a work of art and could damage it. Chemists, in this case, can help them: using not destructive techniques, like **X-ray Fluorescence Spectroscopy**, they analyze the piece detecting potential damaging substances. But cooperation between restorers and chemists is not always possible, that's why cleaning is still a controversial question: this process is irreversible, so some think damages, part and parcel of history, should not be repaired: they testify the flow of time.

## Activities

### True (T) or False (F)?

- T  F 1) Restoration aims at giving back a work of art its former beauty.
- T  F 2) Restorers have always made reversible changes to renovate a piece.
- T  F 3) Using watercolor paints allows restoration to be reversible.
- T  F 4) «The Last Supper» has never been restored.
- T  F 5) Tinted varnish treatment acts where paint may be missing.
- T  F 6) A work of art should be cleaned only after its restoring.
- T  F 7) Chemistry plays an important role in the restoring process.
- T  F 8) Cleaning a work of art may be damaging to it.

**Tick the correct answer**

**1) A restorer's purpose is to:**

- a) make an ancient work of art modern.
- b) preserve a work of art for the future.
- c) analyze the substances used to create a work of art.

**2) Watercolor paints:**

- a) lend reversibility to the changes.
- b) cover the dust on the pictures.
- c) have never been used to restore a work of art.

**3) Analyzing a work of art:**

- a) is not useful to restore it.
- b) should be done before restoring it.
- c) is not possible if the piece is too old.

**Complete the text with the most suitable words.**

- 1) For a hundred years restorers aim at the ..... of a work of art for the future.
- 2) Irreversible changes can be avoided thanks to .....
- 3) «The Last Supper» was considered ..... because of all the different substances overlapping the painting.
- 4) Restorers need ..... to analyze a work of art.
- 5) Before ..... work of arts should be cleaned with special chemicals.
- 6) Chemists use ..... to detect potential damaging substances.
- 7) Cleaning is an ..... operation.
- 8) Some think that ..... a work of art can be damaging to its survival.

## Keys

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- F 3) Using watercolor paints allows restoration to be reversible.
- T 4) «The Last Supper» has never been restored.
- F 5) Tinted varnish treatment acts where paint may be missing.
- T 6) A work of art should be cleaned only after its restoring.
- F 7) Chemistry plays an important role in the restoring process.
- F 8) Cleaning a work of art may be damaging to it.

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**Complete the text with the most suitable words.**

- 1) For a hundred years restorers aim at the PRESEVATION of a work of art for the future.
- 2) Irreversible changes can be avoided thanks to WATERCOLOUR PAINTS.
- 3) «The Last Supper» was considered UNRESTORABLE because of all the different substances overlapping the painting.
- 4) Restorers need CHEMISTRY to analyze a work of art.
- 5) Before RESTORATION work of arts should be cleaned with special chemicals.
- 6) Chemists use NOT DESTRUCTIVE TECHNIQUES to detect potential damaging substances.
- 7) Cleaning is an IRREVERSIBLE operation.
- 8) Some think that CLEANING a work of art can be damaging to its survival.