



# THE TEMPLE ROOM, STOWE HOUSE, BUCKINGHAMSHIRE

*It was an honour for us at Chroma Conservation to have been commissioned to conserve and restore the plaster ceiling, cornice and architectural joinery (as part of the wider restoration) of the Temple Room at Stowe House, so re-named by the school after one of the boarding houses. It was originally known as the State Drawing Room and was created when the house was remodelled in 1774. It now acts as an overflow of the dining room for the school.*

The plaster relief ceiling, composed of 25 panels, is restrained with its classical motifs which allowed for the striking damask wallpaper and the best of the artwork collection to be the main visual focus.

Some weeks before commencement of our work on site, we carried out uncovering sampling that showed evidence

of dark pink in the corner beds with mid pink and pale pink closer to the centre. Within this scheme, some elements of the decoration were gilded with platinum leaf, but most of the decoration was gilded with gold leaf over the scheme with three shades of pink, this scheme dated to about 1798. However, in recent years these mouldings

*Above, platinum eagles*

had been gilded with imitation silver leaf and the flat background had been overpainted with a rich cream. This scheme was out of place and looked very tired, creating altogether the wrong aesthetic.

The work on The Temple Room ceiling commenced in June 2020. Cleaning tests were carried out before to inform the least invasive method. The ceiling was in generally fair structural condition but did require plaster consolidation and some stabilisation. Water ingress had damaged the original plaster of one large square panel and had been repaired with modern plasterboard. The area around was propped while the plasterboard repair was cut out to allow for investigation of the area which corresponded to a bathroom upstairs.

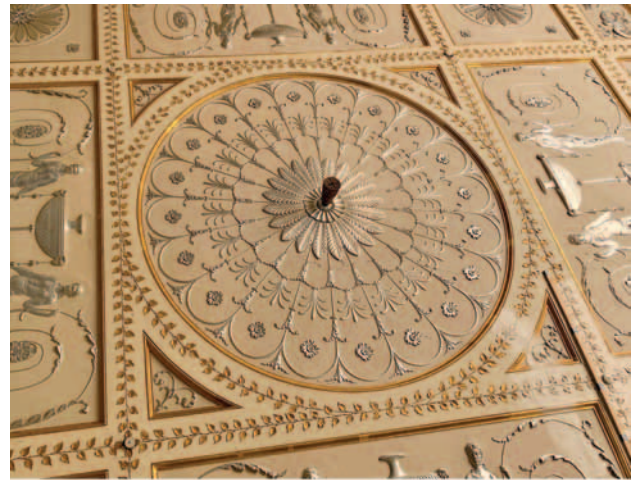
The ceiling structure was examined and no damage or any structural issues were found. The area was then repaired and re-plastered. Minor cracks were present all over the ceiling and coving and those were raked out, filled, primed, and painted. Many details, such as the fine leaves of the ribs were damaged or completely missing. These were re-constructed and re-attached before painting and gilding of the whole ceiling.

Following all the preparation the re-decoration started with primer stain block paint and undercoat applied on all areas. A yellow eggshell background was applied as a ground for the gilding. We used 23.5 carat gold for gilded elements and platinum for the eagles. All three varying pink shades were used and were prepared by Patrick Baty at Paper and Paints.

It was discovered through analysis that the decorative mouldings belonging to the off white joinery had been gilded 9 times prior to our restoration treatment. Records show that these mouldings had first been gilded from 1780. At some stage the fluting of the columns had been overpainted in bronze paint which had badly oxidised, now reinstated with 23.5 carat gold leaf.

Chroma Conservation Ltd. (along with everyone else involved in the project) were delighted upon the completion of the conservation and restoration treatment that the state drawing room was highly commended in The Georgian Group architectural awards in October 2021.

Marta Sledz Wilson MA(Cons.) MSc(Econ.)



*Above, ceiling before our treatment  
Below, ceiling conservation*





*Above, plaster after treatment*



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