The Conservation of the East Window of Agher Parish Church

Emma Newman - MA in Stained Glass Conservation and Heritage Management, University of York

Introduction to the Conservation Process

York Glaziers Trust were invited to carry out the conservation of the 18th century window by Deirdre McDermott of the Irish Georgian Society. The window was in a critical condition and had been on the 'at risk' register for many years. As this is the only surviving window by Thomas Jervais in Ireland the Irish Georgian Society with many donors funded the conservation as they felt it was critical to ensure its survival. The window was structurally unsound with broken pieces of glass, insufficient protective glazing, failing lead and was also very dirty.

Cleaning and Conservation

The window was cleaned with cotton swabs in a solution of 50:50 deionised water and ethanol. Some areas of glass had a combination of cold paint and fired paint that was not chemically cleaned. In the case of stable paint, it was very gently cleaned with a soft bristle brush.

The broken pieces of original glass were edge-bonded with HXTAL NYL-1. An infill was painted for a missing piece of glass, and was edge-bonded to the original glass with Araldite. A piece of float glass was slumped and added as a backing plate for extra protection.

Releading

The lead used on the window was torn badly along the perimeter of the window and at many solder joints, particularly where copper ties had been attached. Before removal, the lead had detached from some of the perimeter glass. It was decided to re-lead the window, allowing the glazier to straighten the panes.

Reinstallation

The conserved window was re-installed with internally ventilated protective glazing with the window set into a bespoke frame.

A Brief History of the Window

The East Window of Agher Parish Church has been dated to c. 1770 and attributed to a Dublin born artist, Thomas Jervais. This window is the only surviving work by Jervais in Ireland and is currently known to be one of the oldest pieces of glass in the country. It was originally situated in Dangan Castle in Co. Meath, the childhood home of the first Duke of Wellington, Sir Arthur Wellesley. The scene depicts St. Paul preaching to the Athenians, based on a cartoon by Raphael from 1515-16, currently on loan to the Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

Experimental Techniques

Jervais used unusual plating techniques to enhance the colour of his silver stain from a lighter shade of yellow to a deeper amber tone. He used various plating techniques that allowed him to use both fired and cold paint to achieve different painting styles.

Design-Enhancing Plates

Jervais used design-enhancing plates throughout the window to create depth. The above images show how he built St. Paul's yellow stained robe with the use of two seperate silver stained plates. He also used these plates to enhance the intensity of the stain.

Stain Application

There are several examples of silver stain being applied in sheets onto the glass. The above examples highlight where the sheets of silver overlapped before firing.

Glazing the Plates

Jervais used partial design-enhancing plates to intensify colour on small sections of St. Paul's robes. When re-glazing the window, pieces of lead were used to secure the partial plates in place. Jervais had previously tucked them under the lead.

I'd like to thank the team at York Glaziers Trust and all at the Irish Georgian Society for their support throughout this project.

Should you have any questions or require a bibliography, please contact:
Emma Newman - ecn511@york.ac.uk