



Threads of Conservation

Social fabric • Fabric and place • Conserving fabric

Australia ICOMOS Conference
5-8 November 2015
Adelaide Australia



Dan Blake

Dan Blake joined Lovell Chen in 2007 and is a Senior Associate specialising in building conservation and restoration, and is responsible for leading conservation projects as a consultant working in multi-disciplinary teams. His projects include redevelopment and adaptive reuse schemes. Dan has delivered a number of award winning conservation and adaptive reuse projects. Most recently the AIA (Victoria) Architecture Awards 2014 commendation and John George Knight Award for Heritage.

Dan has extensive experience in the conservation and restoration of nineteenth and twentieth century structures, with particular emphasis on stonework, masonry and render. In 2012, Dan was selected to attend the Diadrisis Martos Workshop, a six week course on the conservation of a sixteenth century stone monument in Spain, run in association with ICRROM, University of York, University of Jean, the City of Martos, the Department of Culture, ADSUR, IAPH and IPCE. B Arch (RMIT); MA Cultural Materials Conservation (Melb) in fieri; AIA; AICCM; MICOMOS

Conservation of the State Library of Victoria – Case Study

Paper Abstract

The State Library is one of Victoria's most important public buildings. Lovell Chen have been active in the conservation of the State Library of Victoria. Our most recent works involve the external conservation of the Dome Reading Room and Western Facades. Constructed in several phases from the mid 19th Century through to the early 20th Century the fabric of the façades exhibits changes in construction techniques and materials. The Dome Reading Room is a significant early example of the use of reinforced concrete technology.

The works to the Dome Reading Room comprising the repair of cement stucco and the Kahn reinforced concrete system, has presented many challenges relating to limitations on structural loading and difficult access due to the more recent additions enclosing the courtyards.

X-ray fluorescence (XRF) analysis of remnant colour systems confirmed the presence of the mineral composition of Copperas, Titanium, Copper, Potassium and Lead. This has presented challenges in identifying how this traditional coating system can be sympathetically reinstated when only degraded fragments remain.

Trials of a different wash coating system were undertaken using different forms of liquid Copperas and pigment cement. This raised many unanswered questions about the original intent, intended opacity, the current intent with respect to masking colour differences in patch repairing of render, and longevity of an untried form of coating system. In addition client expectations with respect to costly and difficult access to the works, the public profile of the building and how a significant change in the colour and presentation of the Dome were all important factors to consider in the choice of coating system.

The works to the Western Elevation present complex challenges in defining the extent of conservation with respect to the nature of previous repairs. Earlier works undertaken on the building appeared aesthetically unsightly; however in sound condition.