

Rediscovering an American Master: An Examination and Analysis of the Decorative Plaster Ceiling of Robert Winthrop Chanler's Whitney Studio, New York.

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Rediscovering an American Master: An Examination and Analysis of the Plaster Ceiling of Robert Winthrop Chanler's Whitney Studio, New York

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Abstract

Though a well-known decorative painter and muralist in the early 20th century, Robert "Bob the Sheriff" Chanler was an incredible personality that has been largely forgotten overtime. His work is representative experimentation that characterized the early 20th century, a style that can only be called 'Chanleresque.' This thesis intends to study the decoration of the Whitney Studio within the body of Chanler's interiors, screens and murals, to analyze the materials and structure that compose the ceiling and present a proposal for the original color findings. The finishes present unique challenges, as they are primarily metallic foils, which are then modeled with a series of glazes. This highlights a moment in America's artistic development that bridges the and patronage of Gertrude Vanderbilt Whitney with the vision of an American artist. The interior's design elements are a true American influence that span from French rocaille plasterwork to ancient influences from Eastern philosophy to Native American spiritual beliefs. Chanler alone as a truly unique example of craftsmanship, and is one of Chanler. This thesis attempts to (1) provide a historical framework of artistic and technological aspects and significance of the Whitney Studio, analyze the finishes and materials used in the original product and propose a general conservation program for the ceiling, along with reconstruction of the original color scheme and a partial model of the originally employed. While this project is centered on the conservation of the Studio, the methodologies, techniques and approaches discussed are a study for further conservation work in decorative plaster, metalwork and twentieth century artist-designed interiors and Robert Winthrop

Keywords

Historic Preservation; Robert Winthrop Chanler; Plaster, Whitney Studio; Conservation, Finishes, Sheriff Bob, World Monuments Fund, Conservation Laboratory

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