



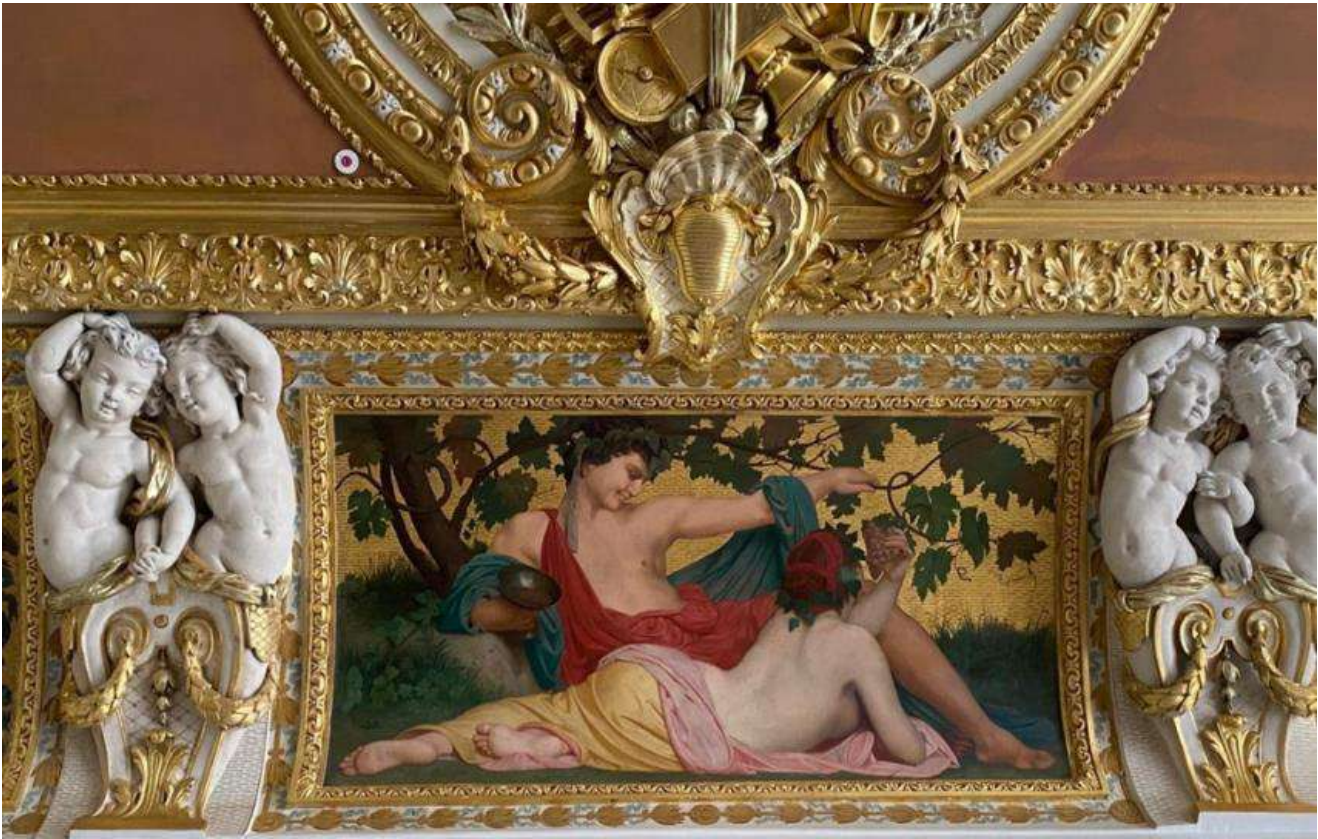
CONSERVATION AND RESTORATION AT THE BRITISH EMBASSY, PARIS, FRANCE

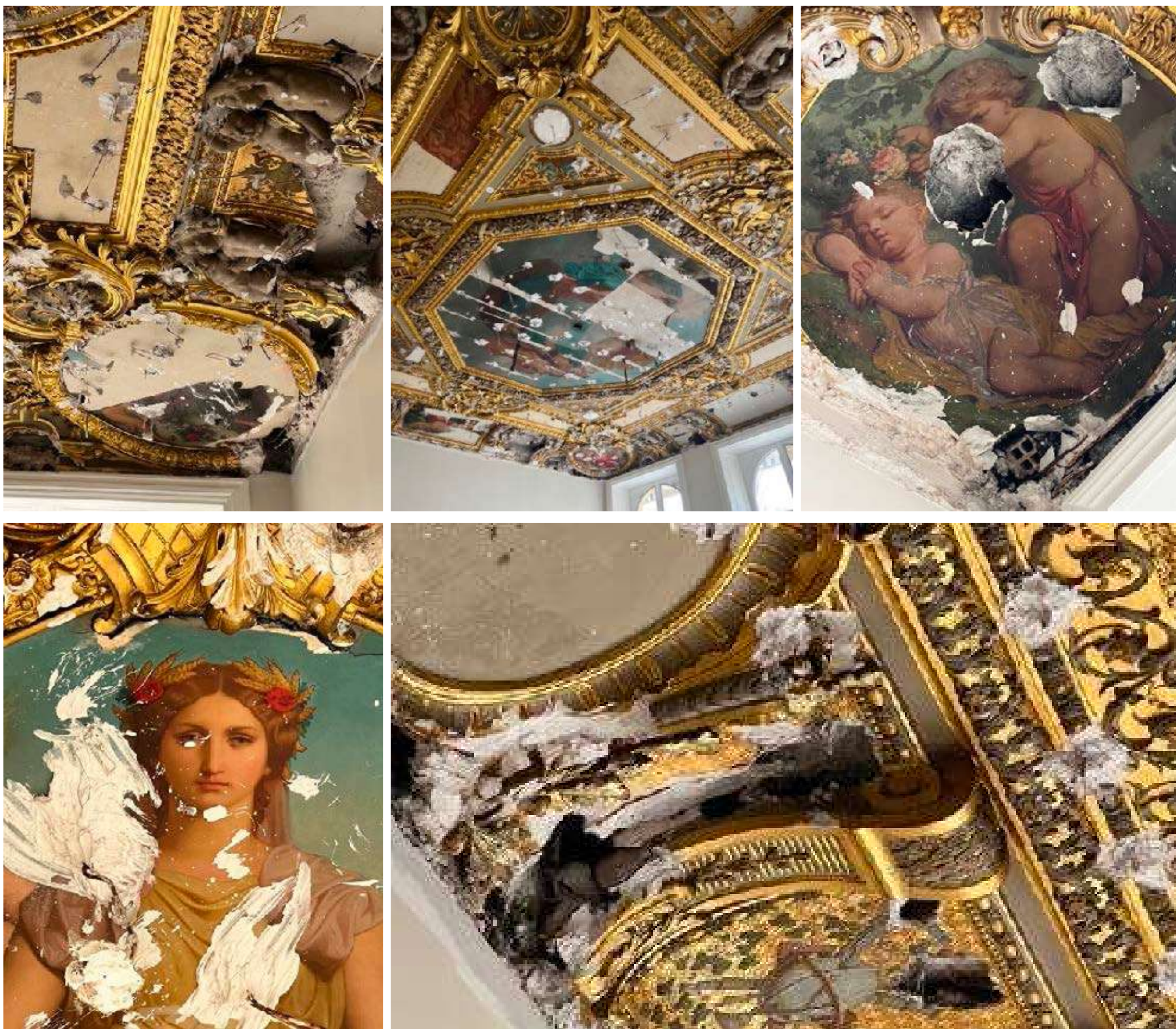
In 2020, three long-hidden and very badly damaged, gilded and decorated ceilings — adorned with 19th-century masterpieces by artists such as William-Adolphe Bouguereau (1825–1905) — were discovered on Rue du Faubourg Saint-Honoré in Paris, France.

Over the next several years, a multidisciplinary team of conservators, artists, and gilders have painstakingly restored both the original ceilings and the artworks which they housed. At last, in August 2025, the wonderfully renewed surfaces and their paintings were reunited within the original historic architectural setting, marking the triumphant completion of an extraordinary project.

What follows is the story of that remarkable journey.

After the Second World War, public taste had shifted, and elaborate architecture with richly decorated embellishment was increasingly regarded as outdated—mere relics of a bygone era. As a result, such features were frequently destroyed, damaged, or, in this instance, concealed beneath suspended ceilings, often causing further harm in the process.





In April 2020, our client, the Foreign Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO), commissioned Hare & Humphreys to develop a comprehensive conservation plan, to assess the feasibility of restoring three of the main ground floor ceilings.

After a period of meticulous collaborative planning and the careful removal of remnants of two remaining artworks - in a parlous state - restoration of the ceiling surfaces could finally begin. The remnants - long-forgotten masterpieces (L'Automne from 'Les Quatre Saisons 1854-1855 and Les Saisons 1857' both by William-Adolphe Bouggereau) - were now placed securely into conservation storage, while the painstaking process of returning the ceiling embellishment

to something approaching its original splendour was set in motion. The heavily decorated surfaces of the three ceilings, including many of the figurative elements painted within the wider scheme, could now be restored.

Once all three ceilings had been carefully conservation-cleaned and meticulously restored, this phase of the project was complete. The work had required extensive repairs to much of the historic plasterwork and gilding, along with significant and challenging repairs to large sections of the severely damaged decorative paintwork. Despite the complexity of this task, it was successfully completed - on time and within budget - by mid-August 2022, allowing the scaffolds to be struck.

The FCDO remained eager for the restoration of the paintings to progress and, if possible, for them to be reunited within their original setting. The works were therefore brought out of storage in early 2025 for assessment by the team, enabling the development of a repair strategy with which to move forwards. Planning focused not solely on the conservation and restoration process itself, but also on the complex challenge of reintegrating these pieces into their original ceiling setting, as requested - a task scheduled for August 2025.

Repairs commenced in May 2025, and by July the restoration of both artworks was nearing completion. The paintings were therefore prepared for transport to Rue du Faubourg Saint-Honoré, where a specially constructed platform would enable them to be positioned and securely fixed to the substrate.





Once the canvas fragments had been cleaned and reassembled, missing areas were replaced using precisely matched canvas, which could be seamlessly integrated into the original. Attention then turned to replacing the absent figurative and narrative elements, guided by the photographic reference gathered during initial research.





Completion

We are extremely proud to have been appointed by the Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office to undertake this challenging conservation and restoration project which has been carried out in a true spirit of cooperation throughout its duration, to completion in August 2025.

It has also been our immense privilege to work collaboratively with such an enthusiastic team of professional conservators and artists.

Finally, we wish to express our gratitude to both ARCOA and DEL BOCA, members of the family group of companies Atelier de France to whom we are also proud to belong. Thank you to both companies for their unstinting support in this unique endeavour.

Hare & Humphreys

Founded in 1987, Hare & Humphreys is one of Britain's leading exponents of fine decoration, gilding, and conservation, specialising in historic and contemporary buildings and delivering a wide range of expertise both nationally and internationally.

Our specialist services

Our team of highly skilled painters, decorators, gilders and conservators undertake a diverse range of projects, from

listed buildings to the creation and installation of hand-made and bespoke finishes for contemporary interiors. We also provide a full range of more traditional finishes including graining, gilding, trompe l'oeil, polished plasters, wallpapers and embossed leather.

We invite you to come and see us at our newly refurbished workshop and studio where we can help to translate your ideas and projects into reality.

Our plan for the future

2025 has begun with the appointment of new management with a dynamic vision and mandate to expand opportunities in the conservation & heritage sector as well as generate controlled growth whilst fully respecting and retaining the traditions and ethics of the company. Hare & Humphreys new MD Thomas Wallerand states that "our founding principles of quality, fairness, integrity and a warm customer focussed service will remain implicit in all that we do as we grow our business, and our people without compromising customer satisfaction."

Contact

Thomas Wallerand, Managing Director

Mobile: 07947313453

Hare & Humphreys Ltd - Second Floor, 15 Young Street,
London W8 5EH +44 (0) 20 7833 8806 info@hare-humphreys.co.uk www.hare-humphreys.co.uk