

WHAT FRAMES A RESTORER?

RESTORATION OF THE UPPER FRAME OF H. J. FRIED'S PAINTING "THE BLUE GROTTA"

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How can a frame be restored to a fresher appearance while respecting its historical patina?
How can previous interventions be minimized without introducing innovation?
How should restorers, curators, and art historians agree on a final result?

Object:
mid-19th century H.J. Fried painting
"The Blue Grotto" – UPPER FRAME (inv. Nr. R/GL-569)

Dimensions:
110.1 × 90.5 × 9.5 cm

Material:
golid softwood.

Finishing:
gilded profile moldings with decorative relief and corner ornaments.

Main damages:
thick layer of dust and impurities, including fly excrement;
gilding partially lost with poliment; major losses to decorative corner elements; wood deformations with gaps in corner joints.

Conservation principles:

Agreed with painting restorer and collection curator – preserve historical patina and maintain visual harmony with the painting.



Cleaning in process

Challenges and questions:

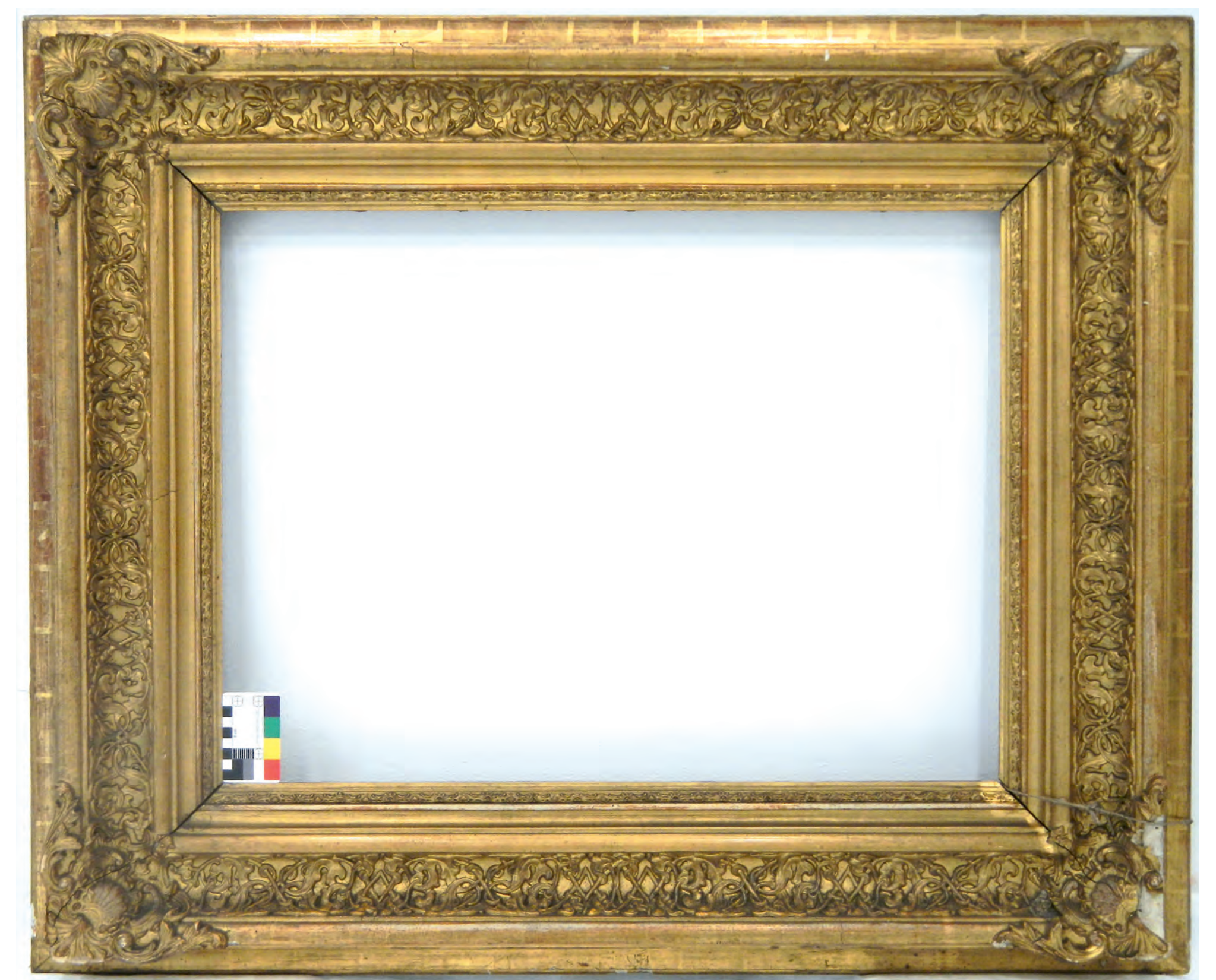
- gilding on poliment did not adhere
- optimal imitation of poliment: red bole or watercolors?
- extent and technique of re-gilding
- filling corner gaps?
- necessity of protective varnish



Most damaged corner BEFORE



Gold leaf patches



Upper frame BEFORE



Same with reconstructed fragments



Same after aging/toning



Upper frame AFTER



Same AFTER

Restoration steps:

- measurements, photo documentation (before, in process, after), condition report
- dry cleaning of back (AkaPAD sponge¹, soft eraser, brushes); wet cleaning of sides and front (enzymatic and 70% ethanol)
- consolidation of finishing (5% rabbit skin glue¹)
- reconstruction of missing corner fragments using silicone mold (Zetaplus C-silicone + Indurent gel²), gypsum casting (Stodent III²), finishing (fine sandpaper, scalpel), and mounting on restoration ground
- filling small losses with restoration ground (7% rabbit skin glue + Bologna : Champagne chalk 1:1¹), final smoothing and shellac¹ solution
- red bole application or watercolor toning; re-gilding with 22 ct gold leaf³ on oil-based adhesive¹, aging with fine steel wool, and toning with watercolors and shellgold¹
- filling corner gaps with wax for frame cracks³ and toning with shellgold¹.

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Different resources: timelines, financial support and capabilities, availability of necessary materials, instruments etc. + **human resources and factors:** the number and degree of involvement of various specialists, their qualifications and experience, the alignment of ethical and artistic principles, the influence of subjective circumstances on collaboration and the process etc.

!!! EACH MENTIONED AND UNMENTIONED "FRAME" IS RELATIVE. EVERY OBJECT REQUIRES STUDY BEFORE, DURING AND AFTER THE RESTORATION !!!

REFERENCES:

- ¹www.kremer-pigmente.com
- ²www.allidental.lv
- ³www.rinaldin.it