

6 Restoring the Indian Horse

The goal in restoring the Indian horse was to conserve and display the original paint layer. If some areas had no original paint, information from surrounding areas, other Dentzel horses, and the 1921 carousel installation photograph would be used to reconstruct colors and designs. The Indian horse was chosen because it was clearly illustrated in the installation photograph.

Initial condition

The paint was severely cracked and alligatored. Areas with raised designs, especially around the saddle, were worn to the wood. The area where the steel supporting rod goes through the horse was also severely damaged.

Documentation method

Rosa used photographs, color notation, tracings of designs, and drawings to document the original paint layer on the horse and the progress of the restoration.

She used Kodachrome 64 color slide film and a daylight light source for photographs. Each photograph included a color scale. She used a meter to read the light and took shots at the reading as well as one f-stop above and one below the reading. The best of three shots became the official photo.

She photographed the horse before and after conservation to show color and design on all paint layers and methods used in restoration. She also photographed damage to the original paint and all techniques used in the conservation. She labeled all slides, drawings, and collected materials and stored the slides in clear acid-free protective holders. A log described objectives, materials, procedures, tests, and results.

Creating sample areas

In sample areas Rosa cleaned away the paint layer by layer using heat from a hairdryer and a scalpel. Each sample consisted of a sequence of parallel one-half inch strips to show each paint layer. To identify the samples, she assigned a letter to each area and a number to each paint layer.

The letters were A for the bridle, B for the body straps, C for the saddle, D for designs on the tack, E for the saddle blanket, and H for the body. The numbers were 1 for the outer layer, 2 for the next layer, and so on, ending with the highest number for the original paint



The paint on the Indian horse had become cracked and alligatored.



The samples on the bridle show each layer of paint.