

Scenic Wallpaper: Conservation and Curatorship in the American House Museum

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ABSTRACT

This thesis will give an overview of the role of scenic wallpaper in America, and will locate the gaps in scholarship on the topic. Through the use of case studies, I have determined that the major lacuna is in conservation of historic scenics. Most scenic wallpapers have certain elements in common; such as thick, flaking distemper paints and yellowing varnish.

Although scenic wallpapers in house museums across the United States face the same conservation issues, they are nearly always conserved by paper conservators without any previous experience with scenics. Accordingly, I attempt here to catalogue the conservation methods, along with other pertinent information, for several sets of scenic wallpaper in American house museums, with the hope that curators and conservators will have a starting point from which to examine their scenic wallpaper and prepare for its conservation and ongoing housekeeping.