Hampshire Antique Restoration
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CONDITION REPORT AND TREATMENT PROPOSAL

OBJECT: Early 19th Century Pietre Dure Marble Specimen table	**OBJECT NUMBER**: 2345-08-F
OWNER: Edward James Foundation	**DATE RECEIVED**: 07/01/2007
CONSERVATOR: David Burton	**DATE EXAMINED:** 07/01/2007

DIMENSIONS **H:** **W:** **D:**

DESCRIPTION:

An early 19th century Pietre Dure marble specimen table supported on a simulated rosewood and parcel gilt columnar base above a trefoil platform base raised on bun feet and brass castors (Picture 1)

TOP

The marble top is composed of 113 different samples of Italian marble inlaid into a white marble substrate separated by black granite lines and edged with a green marble edge banding. The numbers 1 and 2 engraved into the edge –probably to correspond with a separate key to inform the original owner about the marbles used. The numbers 1 and 2 giving both a starting point, and a direction to the reader.

COLUMN

The base constructed from various timbers, the apron being fabricated from a brickwork substrate of oak and mahogany, veneered with rosewood and with applied beaded and gilded decoration. The apron is dovetailed and screwed into an oak block surmounting the column. The beech column is produced from two sections glued together then turned into shape. The surface was then grained to simulate rosewood, with a section of gadrooned and gilded decoration mid way, the whole contained within a gadrooned and gilded beech collar at its base.

The column is attached to the trefoil base by means of a large central bolt passing through the base and into the column, with 3 additional screws surrounding this bolt as an anti-rotational feature. The platform base has an oak carcass fabricated in two parts glued together and is veneered in rosewood. Doweled into the base are beech turned bun feet which are also grained to simulate rosewood, recessed into these are brass track castors.

CONDITION:

TOP

There is a crack in the marble substrate at the edge of the table top with obvious accretions, however this appears stable (Picture 2). The whole of the top of the piece is somewhat contaminated showing evidence of possible previous treatment with waxes or shellac. Some of the rosewood veneer on the apron under the top has become detached

COLUMN

When the table was originally inspected in situ it was seen to have a noticeable looseness at the base of the column, and a lean sideways. Upon disassembly it was noted that the central portion of the base of the column was protruding beneath the applied and gadrooned/gilded collar (Picture 3). This end of the column can also be seen to be out of square (probably from manufacture). The applied and gadrooned/gilded collar (Picture 4) has the grain running perpendicular to the column, and shrinkage here over time has most likely caused this issue.

This column is affixed to a block with the grain direction perpendicular to that of the column. The dimension of the column is great enough to cause structural failure due to the differing planes of movement inherent in cross grain construction. Consequently movement of the block over time across the column has caused the glue joint to fail producing a noticeable gap running down the column (Picture 5).

The joint between the column and the block appears sound with no discernable movement. Localised areas of the simulated rosewood finish on the column have degraded producing a cloudy and unsightly finish. There are also heavy losses to the gilded areas and degradation of the gilt surface lacquer (Picture 6).

BASE

There is a witness mark underneath the base around the bolt that holds the base to the column providing evidence that a washer has been lost. This structurally essential retaining bolt currently bottoms out in the hole, and is not performing its intended function. Several areas of original veneer have cleaved away from the substrate.

The base has been previously restored and several replacement areas of rosewood veneer, some rather crudely fitted, and quite visible and therefore detracting from the original aesthetic quality of the piece (Picture 7). an old repair composed of iron straps let into the oak substrate to attempt to consolidate a failure

of the glue joint in the substrate is also present (Picture 8).

There is also evidence of a previous break in one extremity of the platform base where the short grained substrate has fractured across the dowel hole for the bun foot, causing a complete separation of both substrate and veneer from the piece.

FEET

All 3 bun feet were found to be loose in their sockets where the hide glue had ceased to effectively adhere (Picture 9), and all 3 have become oval due to natural shrinkage causing a limitation on the full rotation of the castor.

PROPOSED TREATMENT:

TOP

The surface accretions present in the crack will be dissolved and then removed. A stopping wax of a matching colour will be used to fill the unsightly void. A protective coat of micro-crystalline wax completes the treatment.

COLUMN

The cloudiness in the simulated rosewood will be improved by saturation of the shellac varnish with solvent. The losses to the gilding will consolidated where cleavage is present, and the missing areas replaced in the traditional manner, and the new gilding blended in to match. The missing washer will be replaced spreading the load on the retaining bolt and allowing it to perform its original structural function. I will shim out the outer gadrooned ring with veneer to allow the load-bearing to take place around the outside of the ring.

BASE

The cleaved veneer needs to be re-glued, and the missing areas replaced with a matching rosewood veneer. The cloudy and de-natured polish will be removed and some re-polishing will be necessary. Some in-painting will be necessary to disguise previous joins in replacement sections. All three bun feet need re-gluing into their respective sockets.

ESTIMATED COST:

ACCEPTED BY: **DATE:**

(SIGNATURE)

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TREATMENT REPORT

OBJECT:	**OBJECT NUMBER**:
OWNER:	**DATE COMPLETED:**

DESCRIPTION OF TREATMENT:

1. Disassemble and remove old glue residue

The loose and damaged parts were carefully removed and all screws and shards of timber were set aside and labelled. A jig was made to support the remaining frame whilst restoration was in progress.

Laponite was used to gel the degraded animal glue prior to mechanical removal with a plexiglass scraper and damp cloths.

2. Veneer repairs to base

Cleaved veneer was found using the tapping method, and the sections marked before injecting hot hide glue underneath and cramping with masking tape. Missing of veneer was replaced with sections of period rosewood veneer and a jig was made to allow for cramping on the curved surfaces of the trefoil base. Some minimal in-painting was done at this stage to harmonise the replacement sections using shellac and earth pigments.

3. Consolidate faux rosewood finish

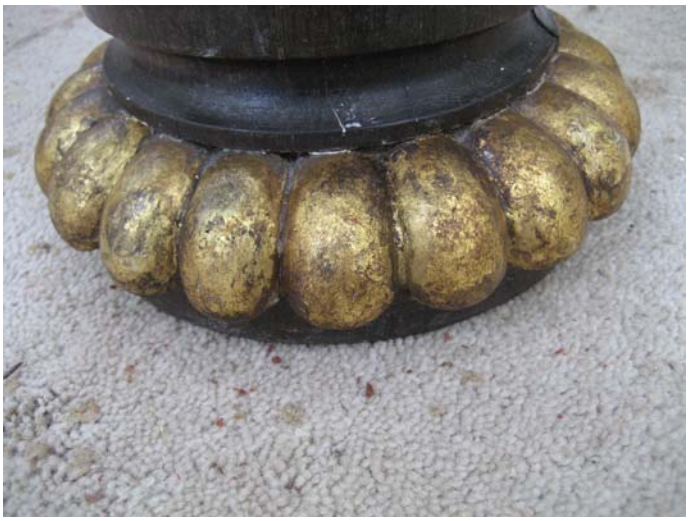
The faux rosewood finish was tested and found to be a shellac based finish soluble in IMS. A test area was isolated and found to respond well to saturation with solvent, removing the cloudy appearance and consolidating the friable surface. The whole column was treated in this way using IMS applied with a pony hair brush and allowed to air dry uninterrupted.

4. Restore damaged gilding

Cleaved gesso was found using the tapping method, and the areas identified before carefully injecting a 5% Isinglass solution as a consolidant. This was chosen as the preferred consolidant medium after a comparison test was conducted on 10 differing options (see report enclosed).

Gesso losses were filled using 10-15 layers of new gesso applied with a nylon artists brush. The remaining sound gilding was cleaned using a non ionic detergent (1% Synperonic A7 solution in de-ionised water) applied with a small stiff bristled brush and removed immediately with cotton buds to prevent water ingress to any fine cracks.

Once the gesso had cured it was scraped back to profile using a Stanley blade, and smoothed using damp linen to a flush finish. A 1/6 yellow bole to size layer was applied and smoothed using scotch-brite pads when dry. After 24 hours the boled surface was water gilded using 23 ¼ ct. gold leaf, and the edges of the re-gilding softened with a damp q-tip.



The remaining gilding was then cleaned with a 1% Synperonic in de-ionised water solution, the new gilding was toned in to match the original using acrylics as a toner scumbled into place with an artists brush. The gilded areas were then waxed using a proprietary beeswax polish to complete the treatment.

The remaining veneer replacements were coloured in using acrylics and sealed with 5-10 rubbers of shellac.

The fissure in the marble substrate was steam cleaned before an amalgam of epoxy resin and marble powder was used as filler. The whole surface was then de-greased with acetone and white spirit before being rinsed with de-ionised water and allowed to thoroughly dry before having a protective coat of micro-crystalline paraffin wax applied and buffed to a lustrous finish.

The finished table was assembled with the addition of the mahogany spacer washer to eliminate the looseness in the platform/columnar joint.