



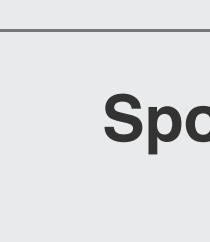
LOS ANGELES HISTORIC THEATRE FOUNDATION

Dear {{patron_first_name}},

Following on from our in-depth look at historic preservation work at the El Capitan Theatre in Hollywood, we are now crossing the street to bring you the in-depth scoop on preservation work being undertaken at the **TCL Chinese Theatre** in Hollywood.

Just like you, we are missing being able to enjoy our historic theatres and movie palaces right now. When things get back to normal we look forward to seeing you at, and showing you around, some of our historic theatres throughout Los Angeles! In the meantime don't forget about our regular **Coffee & Conversation** free webinar series – see lahtf.org for the latest news.

For now, stay well.

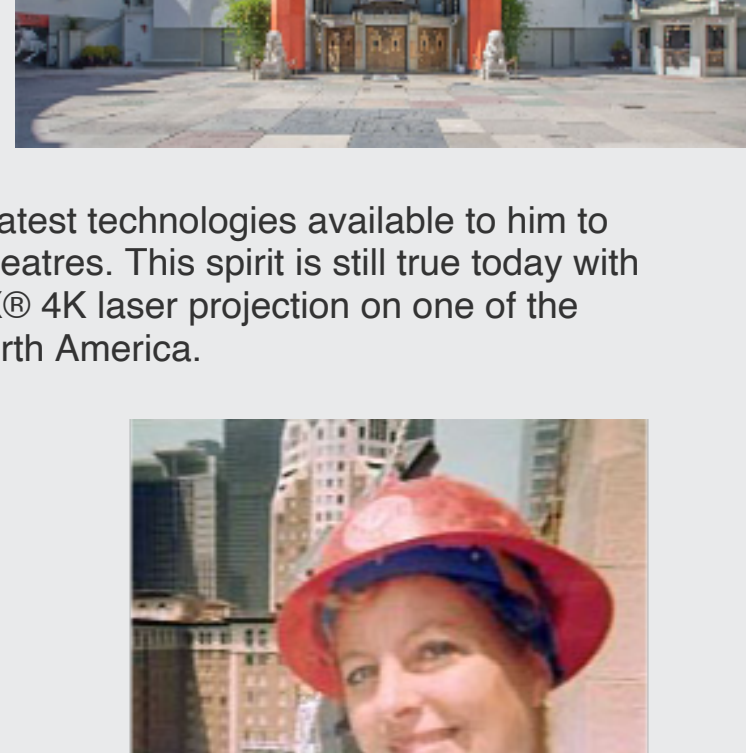


Mike Hume, Board of Directors

Spotlight on: the TCL Chinese Theatre

The TCL Chinese Theatre was master showman Sid Grauman's second Hollywood theatre following the opening of the Egyptian Theatre in 1922, just down the street on Hollywood Boulevard.

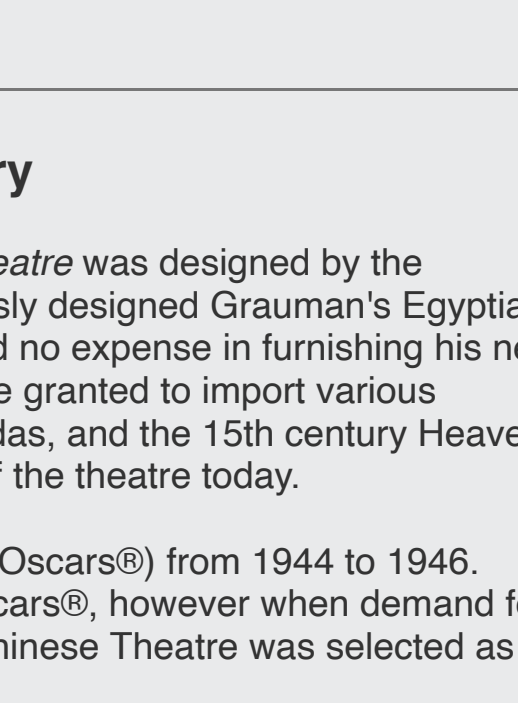
Movies at Grauman's Chinese Theatre were preceded by elaborate prologues on the theatre's massive stage which was nearly 140ft wide.



In his day Sid Grauman embraced the latest technologies available to him to help sell his shows, and tickets to his theatres. This spirit is still true today with the TCL Chinese Theatre utilizing IMAX® 4K laser projection on one of the largest IMAX® projection screens in North America.

Alongside these modern innovations is the theatre's commitment to keep the historic nature of Grauman's Theatre preserved for current and future generations.

LAHTF recently sat down with **Amy Higgins**, a freelance Building Restoration Artist, to hear about the many historic preservation projects she has undertaken at the TCL Chinese Theatre.



TCL Chinese Theatre: Brief History

Opened in May 1927, *Grauman's Chinese Theatre* was designed by the architect firm Meyer & Holler who had previously designed Grauman's Egyptian Theatre, opened in 1922. Sid Grauman spared no expense in furnishing his new movie palace and special permission had to be granted to import various Chinese artifacts including temple bells, pagodas, and the 15th century Heaven Dogs which still stand guard at the entrance of the theatre today.

The theatre hosted the Academy Awards (the Oscars®) from 1944 to 1946. Hotel ballrooms had previously hosted the Oscars®, however when demand for attendance grew due to their popularity, the Chinese Theatre was selected as the hosting venue.

In 1958 the theatre was equipped for the widescreen Cinemiracle process which saw much of the stage gutted, the orchestra pit removed, and the proscenium vastly widened.

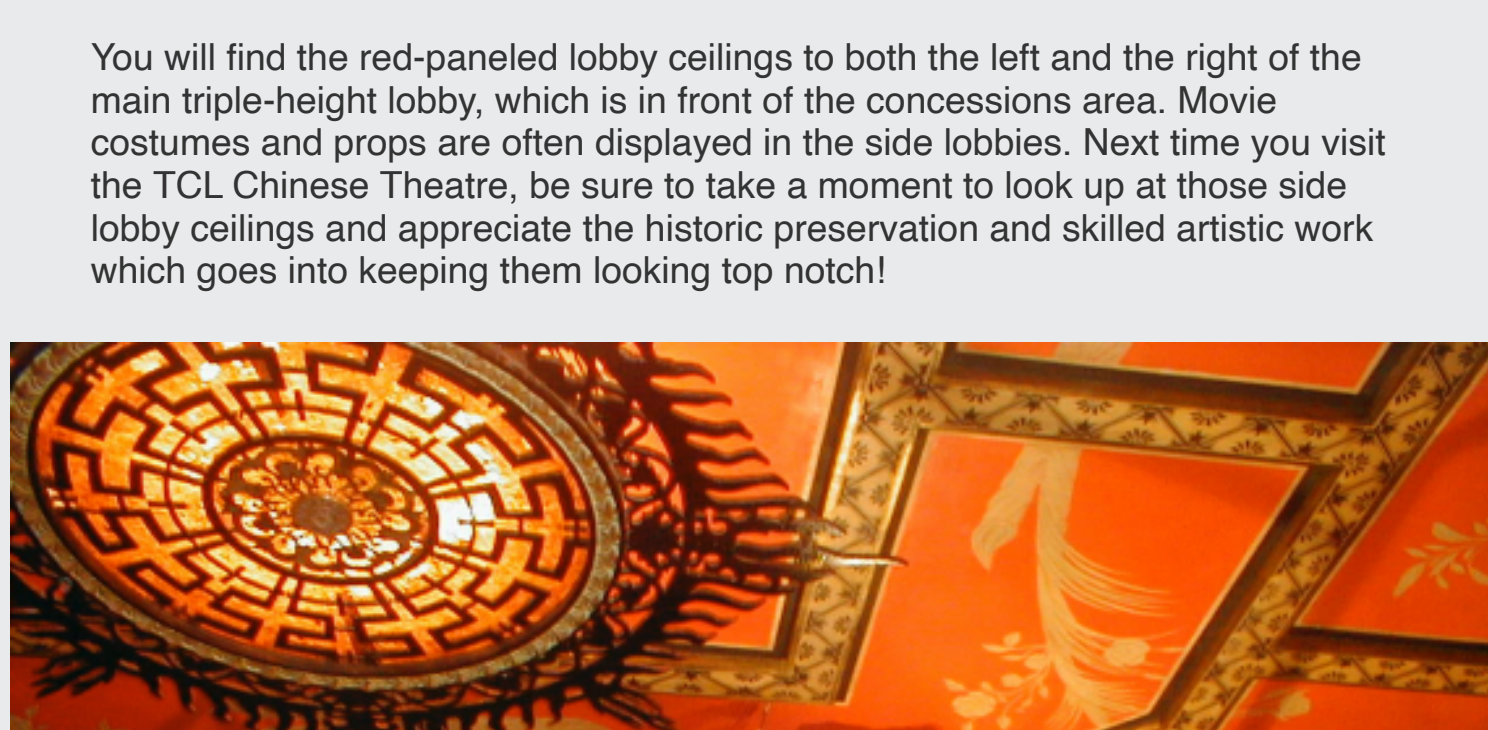
In 1973 the theatre was sold to Ted Mann and became known as Mann's Chinese Theatre. In 2011 the theatre changed hands again then subsequently in 2013 a naming rights partnership with Chinese electronics firm TCL saw the theatre rebranded as the TCL Chinese Theatre.

Also in 2013, the theatre underwent a massive IMAX® upgrade project. By burrowing through the auditorium floor into the basement and re-raking the seats, the theatre now boasts a 94ft x 40ft (28.7m x 14m) screen, one of the largest IMAX® screens in the United States, and the only IMAX® theatre in the world with a curtain. Seating capacity is currently 932.

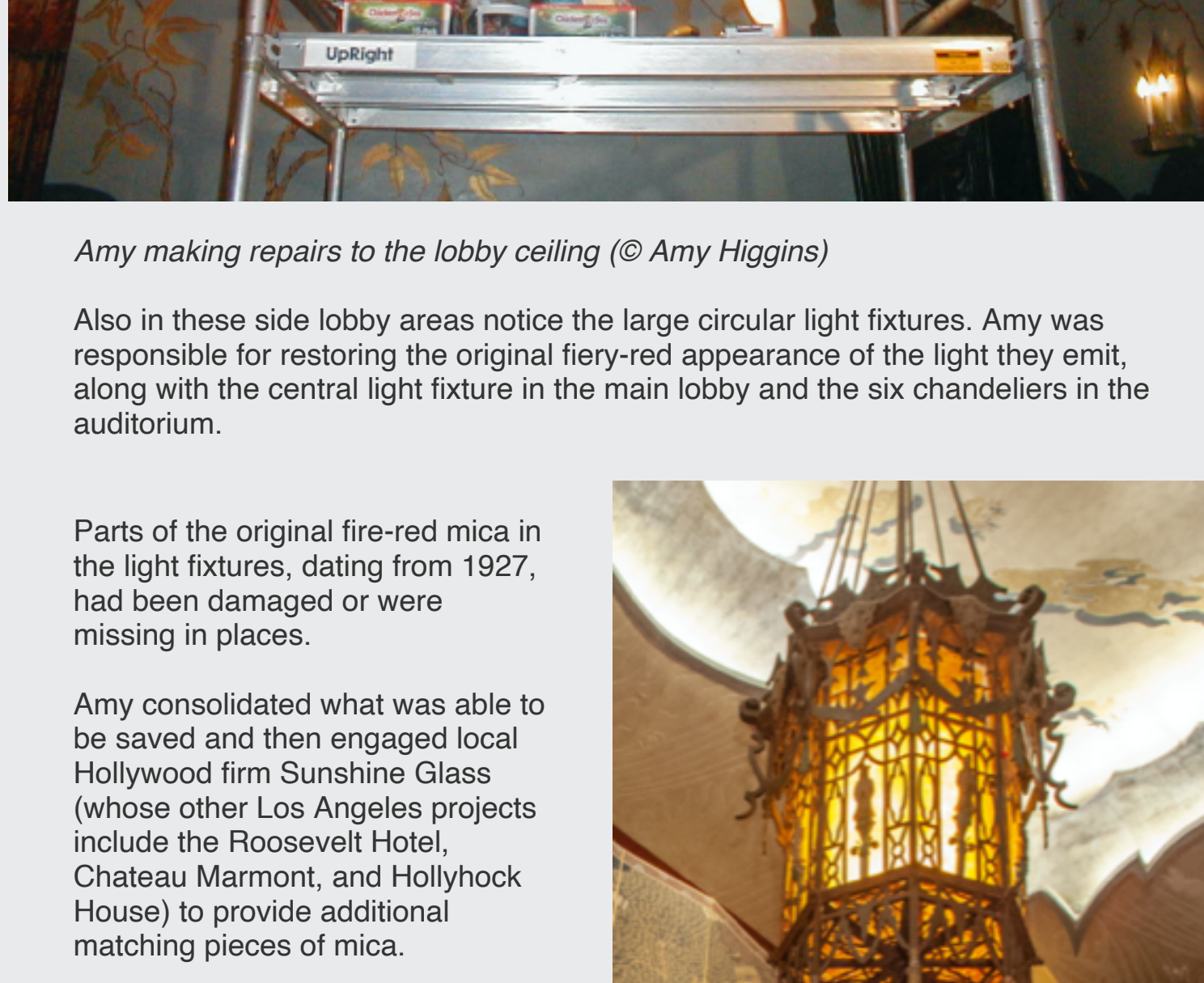
Lobby Ceiling & Chandelier Repair

Parts of the lobby ceiling are susceptible to water damage and require occasional repair. The panels are a mix of periods with the flowers being original to the theatre and the orange-red backgrounds having been redone in the 1950s. Amy worked with fellow artisan Christine Muratore to repair the damaged panels.

When conserving these areas, as much of the deteriorating paint which can be kept is preserved in place, however pieces which are badly flaked have to be removed. B-72 acrylic resin is used to consolidate paint and areas where paint is missing are carefully in-painted to match what has been lost.



You will find the red-paneled lobby ceilings to both the left and the right of the main triple-height lobby, which is in front of the concessions area. Movie costumes and props are often displayed in the side lobbies. Next time you visit the TCL Chinese Theatre, be sure to take a moment to look up at those side lobby ceilings and appreciate the historic preservation and skilled artistic work which goes into keeping them looking top notch!



Also in these side lobby areas notice the large circular light fixtures. Amy was responsible for restoring the original fiery-red appearance of the light they emit, along with the central light fixture in the main lobby and the six chandeliers in the auditorium.

Parts of the original fire-red mica in the light fixtures, dating from 1927, had been damaged or were missing in places.

Amy consolidated what was able to be saved and then engaged local Hollywood firm Sunshine Glass (whose other Los Angeles projects include the Roosevelt Hotel, Chateau Marmont, and Hollyhook House) to provide additional matching pieces of mica.

As can be appreciated from looking at the main lobby light fixture (photo on right) there were some complex shapes involved in the process of restoring the fixtures to their original appearance!

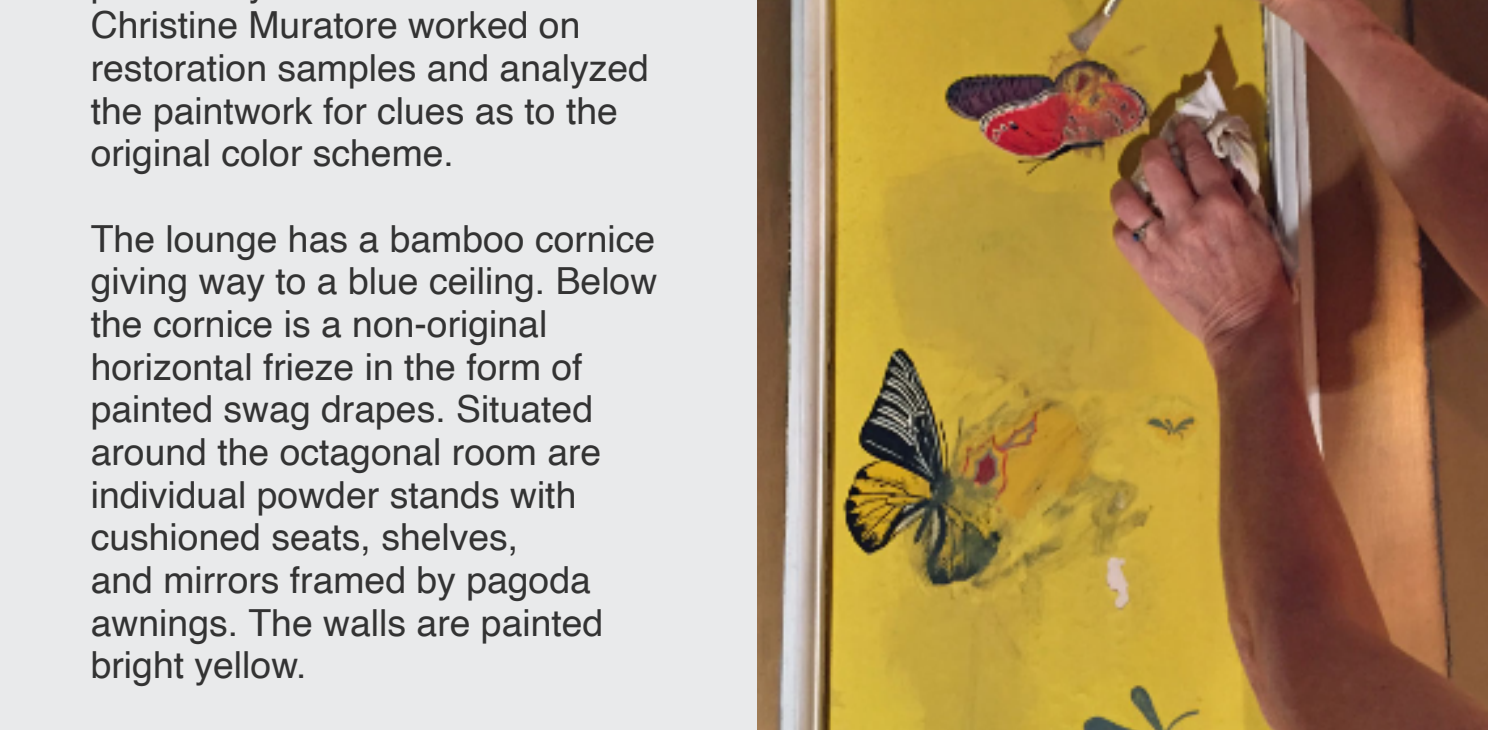


The result is that the six auditorium chandeliers and the light fittings in the lobby really pop with that fiery-red color, further emphasized by paint finishes on the adjacent ceilings and walls.



Ladies Lounge

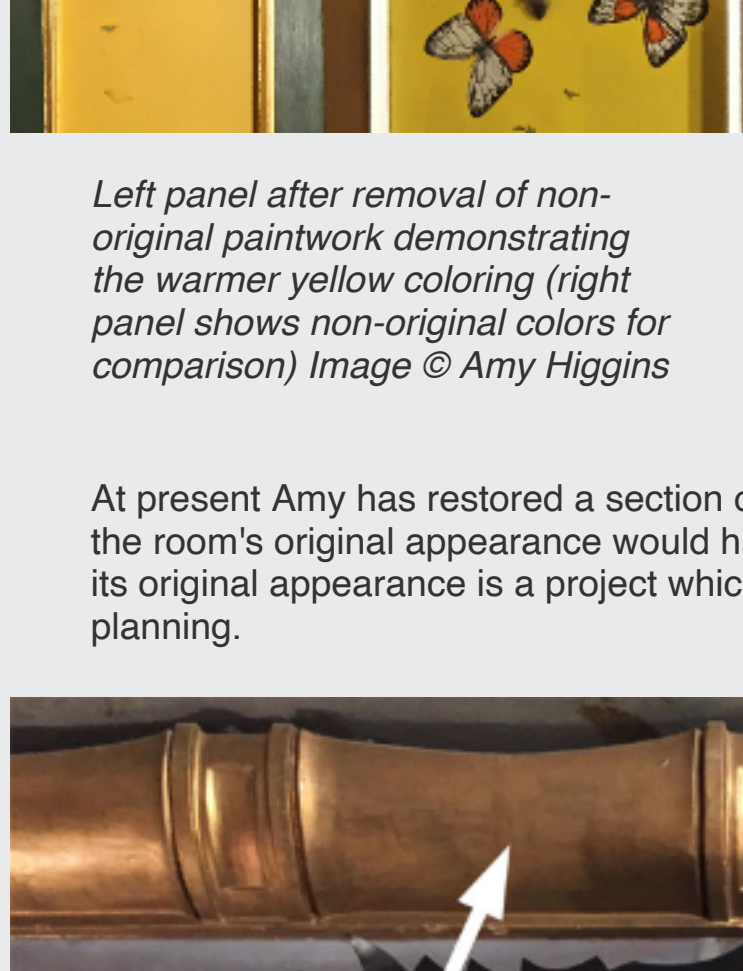
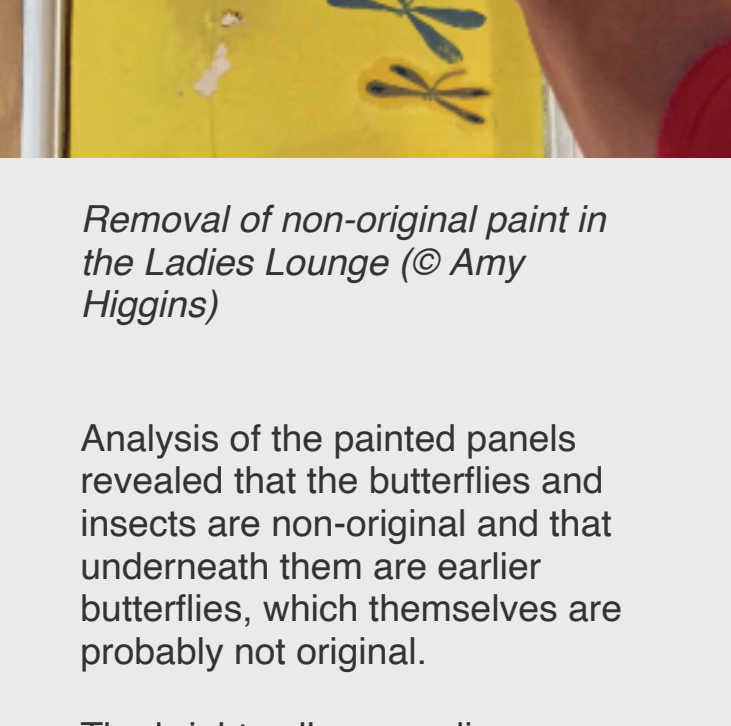
In November 2019 LAHTF held one of our signature "All About" events at the TCL Chinese Theatre, where attendees were treated to seeing the most recent work Amy has been undertaking at the theatre, in the basement level Ladies Lounge.



Re-carpeted in 2013, more recently other areas of the Ladies Lounge needed attention due to fading paint. Amy and fellow artisan Christine Muratore worked on restoration samples and analyzed the paintwork for clues as to the original color scheme.

The lounge has a bamboo cornice giving way to a blue ceiling. Below the cornice is a non-original horizontal frieze in the form of painted swag drapes. Situated around the octagonal room are individual powder stands with cushioned seats, shelves, and mirrors framed by pagoda awnings. The walls are painted bright yellow.

Amy felt that the color scheme was not delicate enough for the 1920s time period, and didn't match the complexity of the decoration throughout the theatre and in particular the lobby.

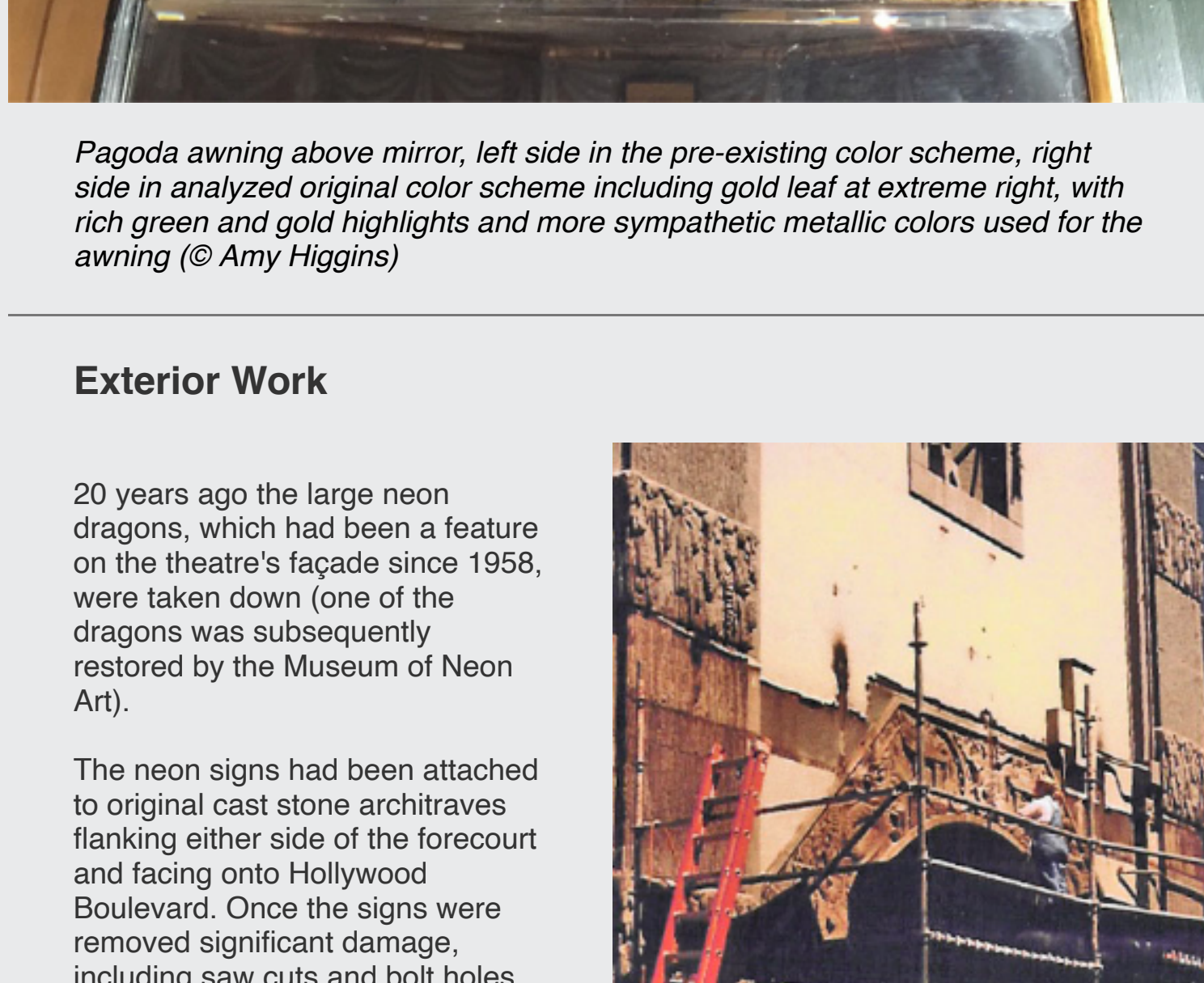


Analysis of the painted panels revealed that the butterflies and insects are non-original and that underneath them are earlier butterflies, which themselves are probably not original.

The bright yellow paneling was originally a much warmer shade of yellow.

Paint scrape tests revealed rich green and gold colors in place of the existing white highlights. The gold cornice would have originally been gilded as opposed to painted gold as it is now. The pagoda awnings above each mirror would have been finished in metallic colors rather than their present black and beige appearance.

At present Amy has restored a section of the room to what the analysis suggests the room's original appearance would have been. Full restoration of the room to its original appearance is a project which will require future funding and planning.



Exterior Work

20 years ago the large neon dragons, which had been a feature on the theatre's facade since 1958, were taken down (one of the dragons was subsequently restored by the Museum of Neon Art).

The neon signs had been attached to original cast stone architraves flanking either side of the forecourt and facing onto Hollywood Boulevard. Once the signs were removed significant damage, including saw cuts and bolt holes, could be seen along with missing elements where the neon signs had been bolted to the wall.

To restore the original appearance, Amy removed extraneous non-original material and then built up a wire understructure where elements were missing or partially destroyed. As the pair of architraves are symmetrical, Amy was able to recreate all the missing elements by cross-referencing between the two architraves. Cement was sculpted on top of the understructure to build up the surface to match the surrounding details.

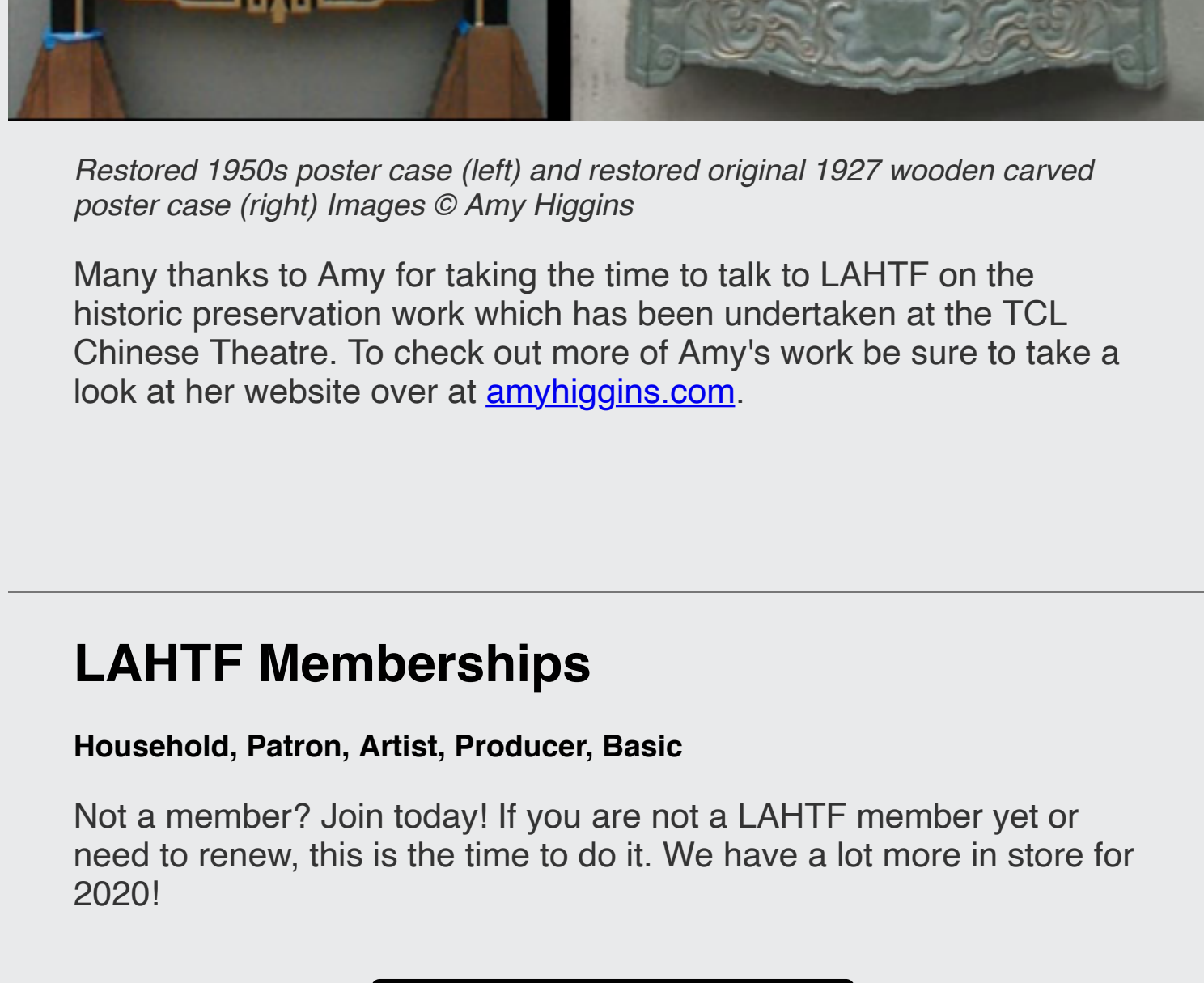


Bonus Insider Tip!

In our discussions Amy spoke about the poster cases in the forecourt, many of which are not original (they date to the 1950s) but still require sensitive treatment to keep them looking good in a highly-trafficked and high-touch environment.

Did you know that two of the original poster cases are still in place? Next time you visit the forecourt, check out the two poster cases facing into the forecourt. You'll notice that these are elaborate wooden carved poster cases, quite unlike the black-and-gold metal poster cases which face onto Hollywood Boulevard and are also on the sidewalls of the forecourt.

So next time you take your friends to visit the historic TCL Chinese Theatre and forecourt you will have some great insider knowledge to share!



Many thanks to Amy for taking the time to talk to LAHTF on the historic preservation work which has been undertaken at the TCL Chinese Theatre. To check out more of Amy's work be sure to take a look at her website over at amyhiggins.com.

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Not a member? Join today! If you are not a LAHTF member yet or need to renew, this is the time to do it. We have a lot more in store for 2020!

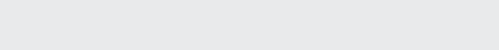
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The Los Angeles Historic Theatre Foundation rises to its crucial mission to protect, preserve, restore and sustain the operation of Southern California's historic theatres on the strength of the generosity of its supporters.

Your support can help the LAHTF save and use irreplaceable theatres by filling historic stages and screens with great entertainment and their beautiful auditoriums with large and appreciative audiences.

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