



FEATURE PROJECT

ENOCH
PRATT

FREE LIBRARY

Baltimore, MD





The Enoch Pratt Free Library was built in 1933 by architect Clyde Nelson Fritz.

A comprehensive, three-year restoration was completed in 2019.

EverGreene's involvement included:

 HISTORIC FINISHES INVESTIGATIONS

 PLASTERWORK

 DECORATIVE PAINTING & FINISHES

One of the oldest public library systems in the United States, the Central Branch of the Enoch Pratt Free Library is one of Baltimore's crown jewels of architecture.

Clyde Nelson Fritz merged traditional styles with new materials and building techniques, introducing modern elegance and artistic detail into his architecture. His work represents an extraordinary example of 20th-century American renaissance and neoclassical massing, merged with French art deco-influenced metalwork.





The comprehensive restoration of the 300,000 square foot library provided a unique opportunity to preserve original artistry, craftsmanship, and design intent, while introducing 21st-century amenities to the building.

Reviving architectural beauty and expanding opportunities for learning, research, creativity, and engagement enabled improving overall services to the community at large.



1882

Enoch Pratt gifts the City of Baltimore a Central Library, four branch libraries, and an endowment of \$83,333.33.

1886

The Central Library on Mulberry Street opens.

1905–1908

Andrew Carnegie gifts the Library \$300,000 to build new library branches in memory of Enoch Pratt.

1933

Central Library opens at 400 Cathedral Street. It was designed by Clyde N. Fritz and Nelson Fritz of Baltimore.

2016

Remarkable ceremony for historic \$115 million renovation of the Central Library.




2019

The Pratt celebrates the Grand Reopening of the Central Library.



CENTRAL HALL

Much of the original decorative paint ornament was still visible in Central Hall. Restoration included:

-  PLASTERWORK
-  DECORATIVE PAINTING & FINISHES
-  GILDING





CENTRAL HALL 1933



CENTRAL HALL 2019

INVESTIGATION, RESEARCH + ANALYSIS

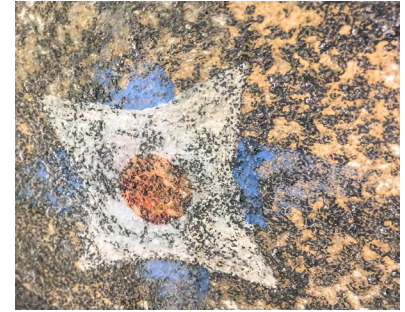
Combining in-situ investigations with archival research, conservators documented colors, stenciling compositions, and freehand decorative and figurative work on plaster walls and ceilings. The challenges were that alterations had reduced the contextual evidence within historic spaces. Each new discovery revealed by the investigations added perspective to the design process, which was driven by a desire to honor the historic decoration while incorporating present-day aesthetic taste.

 INVESTIGATION, TESTING & ANALYSIS

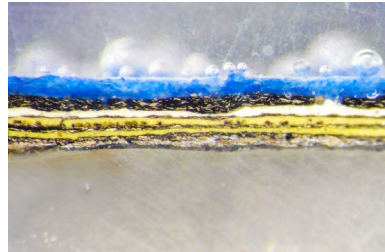
 PAINT STUDIES



ORIGINAL DECORATION



TRACING



MICROSCOPY



COLOR-MATCHING



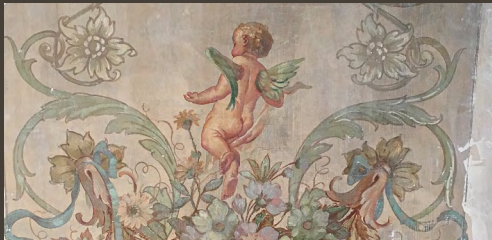
LARGE BEAM PATTERN DEVELOPMENT

ROOM 206

Historic photographs showed that the ceiling décor of this educational room had been covered after the installation of modern lighting. Closer investigation revealed that much of the decorative painting had been lost. Only a few fragments of the original art were still in existence around the ceiling perimeter. To not destroy the painted decoration any further, the largest section was conserved, protected throughout the work, and was left exposed, allowing us a glimpse into the architectural and artistic past. The plaster cornice was replicated and applied to a new wall on the south side, and sound reducing acoustic plaster was installed on the ceiling.

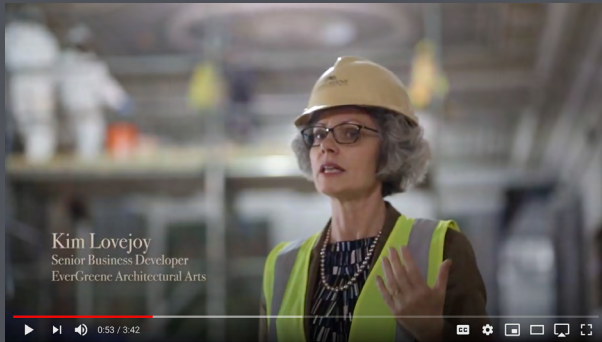
 CONSERVATION TREATMENTS

 ACCOUSTIC PLASTER



ROOM 207 & 208

Historic, profiled plaster cornices that had been infilled to conceal sprinkler pipes were recreated in the traditional method. The ornate historic scheme of stencils and small vignettes was recreated using marouflage, a technique where painted canvas is affixed to the wall with a plaster-like adhesive, essentially creating a mural.



[VIEW VIDEO](#)



ROOM 207 & 208

Obscured since the 1950's and protected over the years with drop lightboxes, the majority of the 1930's decorative ceiling scheme was intact beneath layers of paint. Small painted canvases affixed to the beams were discovered, depicting bucolic scenes of Chesapeake Bay farm and wildlife. The beam décor, including intricate stenciling was completely reinstated, featuring the 1930's decorative color palette with few adaptations.





ROOM 253

A series of conservation treatments were applied to the still intact, original small ceiling perimeter coffers. Damaged and lost paint was refinished, missing plaster rosettes were recreated and installed, and star silent acoustic plaster was installed in the large coffer fields.

 PLASTERWORK

 DECORATIVE PAINTING & FINISHES

NORTH & SOUTH READING ROOMS

Based on the results of the paint reveals and consecutive analysis, a selection of florette stencils that once adorned each of the ceiling beams were recreated. The stylized floral elements were mixed and matched with varying colors to create a unique pattern on every beam in the room.

 DECORATIVE PAINTING & FINISHES

 STENCILING





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- [EPISODE 10: PRESERVING HISTORY](#)
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As the nation's largest specialty contractor of architectural arts, EverGreene has provided award-winning design and fabrication, conservation and restoration services for many for the world's most significant buildings and objects since 1978.

EverGreene's artists, craftspeople, and conservators are among the most talented and highly trained in the country. Our solutions are informed by a cross-disciplinary approach integrating conservation science, restoration craftsmanship, advanced technology, art history, architecture, engineering and construction. Clients also benefit from single-source responsibility, high standards, and a unified artistic vision.



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