PABST MANSION
MILWAUKEE

HERITAGE

August 2025

Frames of Time

Preserving the Art of the Pabst Mansion

While the Pabst Mansion is often admired for its grand architecture and lavish interior, its collection of original art offers another layer of historic beauty that visitors may initially overlook. Many of the artworks are more than just beautiful objects; they're fragile artifacts that have endured over a century of light, heat, humidity, and handling. Preserving them requires both science and artistry.

The craft of conservation itself can too be overlooked in terms of the scientific, artistic, and problem-solving skills required to restore and preserve artworks. Repairing precious objects is a practice millennia old. In the 19th century, however, the blending of art and chemistry for this purpose grew dramatically. For instance, during this time, chemist and physicist Michael Faraday conducted studies at the National Gallery in London determining the damaging effects of coal, gas lighting, and high humidity on its paintings. Similarly, chemist Louis Pasteur, most famously known for his work in bacteriology and immunology (and milk *pasteurization*), conducted studies on paint. Interest in developing scientific methods for conservation continued to increase, and by the 1920s a growing number of larger institutions began to incorporate special departments dedicated to the work of conservation. As any field in the sciences, techniques and treatment options continue to be refined to this day.

Even with over a century of scientific knowledge behind them, conservators must also carry the artistic skills necessary to make it seem as if they did nothing at all to a perfect original artwork. To retouch paintings, for example, conservators must sometimes fill in large areas of loss, requiring them to imitate the original artist's style to an imperceptible degree.

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Frigates off the Norwegian Coast

HERITAGE is the newsletter for Pabst Mansion, Inc., which preserves, shares, and interprets an iconic Milwaukee home that serves as a testament to the Gilded Age. Through immersive tours, educational opportunities, and programming, Pabst Mansion, Inc. brings visitors back in time to help understand the present, sharing the story of brewing, architecture, art, and culture through the lens of the Pabst family and its impact on Milwaukee.

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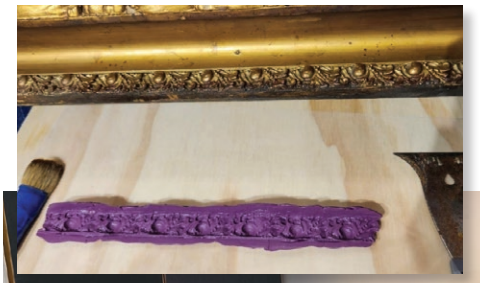
Similarly, an objects conservator must create molds and carvings, and finish them in a way to blend with the original via creative solutions to match the age and effect. Each piece requires a different approach, with patience and confidence playing equal roles.

The Mansion recently endeavored to conserve the large oil painting *Frigates off the Norwegian Coast* by Karl Paul Themistocles von Eckenbrecher (1842–1921). Over the course of its life, the once-vivid maritime scene had faded, accumulated grime, and bore a repaired (but still visible) tear in its canvas. To bring it back to life, the painting was first carefully removed, packaged in a custom-built box, and transported by Guardian Fine Art Services to Baumgartner Fine Art Restoration in Chicago.

At the studio, head conservator Julian Baumgartner worked to stabilize the painting and revive its depth by removing old surface grime, varnishes, residues and overpainting, as well as applying a vapor treatment to remove distortions. The tear was then reinforced with a layer of Belgian linen and archivally safe plastic. Areas of lost pigment were meticulously retouched, and a new layer of varnish was applied to protect against UV damage and future fading.



A work of art in itself, the original ornate gilded frame was also treated as a distinct artifact. Objects conservator Terri White removed layers of bronze overpaint with a delicate acetone wash, revealing the original goldleaf surface underneath. In spots where an insoluble dark paint was applied, White camouflaged the areas with powdered pigment and mica powder. Additionally, where decorative elements had been lost, she created numerous custom molds and adhered goldleaf to match the original design, thus restoring the frame to its full historic character and returning it to a state that aligns with the opulent design of the Pabst Mansion. In total, White spent nearly 100 hours applying delicate skill to the frame.

The ornate golden frame shows damage and deterioration before restoration.

Finally, to support ongoing care, the restored painting and frame were then photographed by fine arts photographer Michael Tropea. These high-resolution images serve as imperative visual records, helping to track changes in condition over time.

Conservation bridges the past and present. With each project at the Pabst Mansion, a better understanding of how these works were made, have aged, and how best to preserve them is gained. The Pabst Mansion is endlessly grateful to the donors, members, and patrons who make this preservation work possible and encourages visitors to take a closer look at the paintings lining the Mansion's walls during their next visit. Behind each frame is a network of quiet, careful labor that ensures the art remains as beautiful as it was in the Pabsts' day.

(Left) Silicone molds were created to replicate decorative elements that were lost.

White applies gold leaf.

Bottom right corner with newly-cast molding attached.

UPCOMING EVENTS

Oktoberfest Tours

September 19, 26, & 27

5pm on Fridays, 4pm and 5pm on Saturdays

Tickets: *Adult: $30, Senior/Student/Military: $28, Member: $13*

Herzlich Willkommen, Oktoberfest! Delve into Milwaukee's vibrant German heritage on this special guided tour through the home of Milwaukee's famed German immigrant family. Hear stories of the Mansion's history and its ties to the German community while sampling a selection of local Oktoberfest beers and German Riesling (the Captain's favorite!) paired with Milwaukee-style German cuisine. With gemütlichkeit abound, we invite you to prost like good old Captain Pabst!

**All beer and food samples included with the price of your ticket.*

Illuminating the Dark Tours

Offered in October only
Fridays: Run on the half hour from 4:30 - 6pm
Saturdays: Run on the half hour from 4:30 - 6pm

Tickets: *Adult: $30, Senior/Student/Military: $28, Member: $13*

This specialty afterhours tour offered only in October will take place in a dimly lit Mansion where themes of darkness and the revealing of unseen spaces will be explored, offering visitors an opportunity to see the Pabst Mansion in a 'new light.' Visitors will be guided by candlelight as they explore the dark, in areas varying from literal light sources in the home, to the darkness of loss, to viewing hidden compartments and seldom-seen lower-level spaces.

Limit 15 people per tour. Advance ticket purchase highly recommended.

A Victorian Macabre Tea

Thursday, October 3, 2025, 4:30pm

Tickets: *Adults: $60, Child: $40, Adult Member: $50, Child Member: $30*

Step into the shadows of the Gilded Age for a hauntingly elegant evening of tea by candlelight. Join us after dark for a special edition of Royal Tea, held in the dimly lit opulence of Mrs. Pabst's Parlor and the Captain's Study. Sip on signature teas inspired by the spirit and stories of each room, enjoy devilishly delicious tastings, and raise a glass of champagne as whispers of the past echo through the halls of the Pabst Mansion.

Guests are welcome to wander the first floor of the Mansion during the event, lit only by candlelight and moonbeams.

MEMBERSHIP

Yes, I want to be a member of Pabst Mansion!

☐ Comet	$1,000
☐ Grand Circle	$500
☐ Beer Baron	$250
☐ Blue Ribbon	$125
☐ First Mate	$50
☐ Student	$25

☐ I am interested in volunteer opportunities, please contact me.

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

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Please make checks out to Pabst Mansion. To pay securely by credit card, visit **www.pabstmansion.com/memberships**

I am currently a member but would like to make an additional contribution to the Mansion.

Enclosed is my contribution for $ _____.

Detach and mail to: Pabst Mansion, 2000 West Wisconsin Avenue, Milwaukee, WI 53233

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(REGULAR SEASON)

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Sunday 11am, 1pm, 2pm, 3pm

SELF-GUIDED
Daily noon-1pm

Adult: $19
Senior/Student/Military: $17
Child (6-17): $12 Child (5 and under): Free
Member: Free
Prices and hours subject to change.

SPECIALTY TOURS
The Pabst Mansion has an array of year-round and seasonal specialty tours.
Visit **pabstmansion.com** to learn more!

Located on 20th and Wisconsin Avenue.
Limited parking is available.
Wheelchair accessible.