OLEOGRAPH: RETOUCHING

Oleograph, also called chromolithograph or chrome, is a colour lithograph produced by preparing a separate stone by hand for each colour to be used and printing one colour in register over another. The term is most often used in reference to commercial prints. Sometimes as many as 30 stones were used for a single print. The technique was pioneered in the 1830s but came into wide commercial use only in the 1860s. It was the most popular method of colour reproduction until the end of the 19th century, when more efficient techniques rendered it obsolete. [1]

Retouching

Retouching is a restoration process employed to replace damaged or lost areas of media or to conceal blemishes which are not considered historically important. Retouching can be carried out directly on the original item or on paper infills. The former, which could be called interventive retouching, requires the consideration of several important ethical issues, such as reversibility and authenticity. The use of retouching on infills, which could be termed non-interventive, is easier to accept, as it can always be made reversible and can normally be easily identified as a later addition to the original work. [2]

The first stage of retouching was done by Winsor & Newton watercolours, which use water as a solvent. A desirable tone can be achieved by adding layers gradually, from the brightest toward the darkest tone until it gets as close as possible to the original. Retouching is usually done using tratteggio, a technique that consists of filling in the areas with layers of delicate lines or dots in order to render the surface more vivid and transparent. It is important that the integrations blend in with the original, that they do not stand out when observed, but then again, that the difference between the original and the subsequently added interventions can be identified by careful observation.

After the overall varnishing process in a well-ventilated room, the final retouching was performed by using Maimeri Restauro varnish colours for which Dowanol and butanol solvents were used. The retouching was followed by the final varnishing.

Conclusion

Retouching is not, in itself, a creative process but an act of problem solving to obtain an appropriate result through patience, informed decision making, and excellent color matching skills.

It can have a big effect on the overall appearance on the work of art as well as on its artistic value and for that reason it is important to respect principles of distinction, reversibility and minimal intervention during the restoration process. The purpose of retouching is to reestablish the visual impact of the original without impairing the integrity of the work of art.