

**Eli Wilner & Company to be Honored by the  
Historic Charleston Foundation for its Work in Frame Conservation**

**Detail of complex frame restoration process at Eli Wilner & Company studio**



**Cherub head during frame restoration**



**Cherub head after frame restoration**

**NEW YORK, NY** - On April 30, 2019, the Historic Charleston Foundation will be honoring Eli Wilner & Company with the Samuel Gaillard Stoney Conservation Craftsmanship Award, for its work in historic frame conservation. This presentation will take place during Historic Charleston Foundation's annual Charter Day celebration. In recent years, Eli Wilner & Company has completed two elaborate frame restoration projects for the Aiken-Rhett House, one of the Foundation's most prominent sites.

In 2017, Eli Wilner & Company was contacted by the Aiken-Rhett House's Museum Manager, Valerie Perry, about restoring the original 19th Century gilded frame on Luther Terry's Romeo & Juliet painting. This large frame, approximately 84 x 63 inches, was extremely fragile due to prior insect damage, had losses to the gesso and gilding, and was in need of significant cleaning. It had never been professionally conserved and had prior unsuccessful restoration attempts. The Wilner studio artisans began by carefully test cleaning the surface and stabilizing as much of the original gesso and gilding as possible, and structurally reinforced the frame. All losses to the ornament were then filled and regilded. These repairs were patinated to blend with the original surface.



*Eli Wilner & Company master carvers work to restore lost ornament on the original gilded frame on Luther Terry's Romeo & Juliet painting in the collection of the Historic Charleston Foundation's Aiken-Rhett House.*

Thrilled with how this project turned out, Ms. Perry submitted another important frame in the collection requiring conservation. The frame on a circa 1858 copy of Raphael's Madonna of the Chair painting was in similar disrepair. This exceptionally elaborate frame presented some unique challenges. In particular, the frame's punchwork spandrel had significant damage and the only way to fully treat the losses and old repairs in these areas, was to fully disengage the carved cherub heads mounted at all four corners.

Both of these extremely labor-intensive frame restoration projects, which require highly skilled artisans in carving, gilding, and mold-making, had significant retail estimates. Through their internal museum matching funds program, Wilner was able to lower the costs to help these be more affordable undertakings for the budget of a small historic house museum. It should also be noted, that to aid in the Foundation's conservation program of the Aiken-Rhett fine and decorative art collection, the retail operations at Historic Charleston Foundation instituted a

"Dollar Ask" program in 2012, which requires retail associates to ask visitors for contributions toward conservation efforts at the museum houses. The program has been extremely successful and has provided funding for objects and surfaces in critical need of conservation.

Eli Wilner & Company has completed many frame restorations and reframing projects for some of the country's most prominent historic homes, including George Washington's Mount Vernon, as well as two National Historic Trust Sites: Woodlawn in Fairfax, VA and Lyndhurst Mansion in Tarrytown, NY. Institutions of all sizes are invited to submit historic framing project proposals to the Eli Wilner & Company museum matching funds program.



*An Eli Wilner & Company master artisan restores a gilded punchwork spandrel on the frame holding a circa 1858 copy of Raphael's Madonna of the Chair painting in the collection of the Historic Charleston Foundation's Aiken-Rhett House.*

As seen on [ArtDaily.com](http://ArtDaily.com).