

## Editorial

When Gordon Selfridge opened his department store in London's Oxford Street in March 1909, it caused a sensation. Not only had it been built at unprecedented speed to create the largest store ever to be built from scratch, rather than by expansion, it also introduced Selfridge's American style of retailing to the British public. Central to the success of the store was its founder's genius for advertising and promotion; nowhere was this more apparent than in the store's approach to window dressing, which offered stylish, co-ordinated displays designed with all the care of a stage set. In our first paper, Michael Beare provides a case study of the recently completed programme of repairs to address a corroding structural steel frame that had threatened the safety of the stonework façades. A method of working was devised that limited any disruption to the public and also avoided the distinctive window displays being obscured by scaffolding.

Shortly after Selfridges opened its doors to its first customers, another building with a Beaux Arts-style façade was commencing construction in Manhattan, namely the New York Public Library. Unlike Selfridges where the façade is clad in limestone, the library elevations are of marble. The library is of course located in an urban area where the level of air pollution is high, and the marble elevations are susceptible to erosion and 'sugaring'. In our second paper, Elena Charola and her colleagues explore the mechanism of this form of decay which has caused extensive damage, particularly to the more exposed elements of the building, together with its moulded and carved decorative features. The authors report on their campaign of work to conserve the library's façades using the principle of minimum intervention.

By the mid-1920s the Beaux Arts-style was becoming distinctly *passé*, and architects increasingly embraced Art Deco with its modernistic, streamlined features of smooth shiny claddings, flush window surrounds and chrome trims. In Britain, Vitrolite, a self-coloured glass manufactured by Pilkingtons, available in black and a range of vivid colours that echoed those found on the artefacts in the recently discovered tomb of Tutankhamun (1922), quickly established itself as a favourite cladding, particularly with the designers of retail, commercial and leisure developments. In our third

paper, Fiona Hudd examines the history and importance of this archetypal 1930s material and explores, through case studies, the practical problems and solutions associated with the conservation of a building product that is no longer available.

In our next two papers we move away from the conservation of façades to concentrate on internal matters. Firstly, Thomas Paradise reminds us of the pressures that many of the world's heritage sites are under from sheer volume of visitors. His study of the tombs and chambers hewn from the sandstone at Petra demonstrates that not only are internal surfaces vulnerable to the abrasive effects of visitors touching, rubbing and treading, but also that the elevated levels of interior humidity caused by the respiration and perspiration of visitors may also be contributing to surface erosion. Clearly, control measures are needed to prevent further damage. While limiting visitor numbers would help as a short-term measure, a longer-term solution is needed that would permit as many visitors as possible to marvel at Petra's remarkable architecture without jeopardizing it. A full understanding of the exact nature of the mechanisms causing the loss of stone at Petra has to be a prelude to devising an appropriate solution. Dr Paradise's paper provides valuable preliminary data and a springboard for further research to find ways to counter the raised humidity levels that tourists bring.

In our final paper Karen Morrissey explains that architectural paint research, far from being just a tool for establishing the original internal décor, has the potential to inform both conservation strategies and subsequent programmes of work. Her paper provides a helpful guide for anyone new to commissioning paint analysis by showing the contribution it can make to understanding a building. She also explains the key stages of a paint research project and gives clear advice on how to commission paint research and how to avoid potential pitfalls, so that conservation projects can derive maximum benefit from a timely and thorough paint investigation.

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