

ABSTRACT

The Reframing and Mounting of Ginevra De' Benci for Exhibition

Eric Michael Tollefson

Frame Conservator

National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C. USA

When preparing to display Leonardo Da Vinci's painting Ginevra de' Benci at the National Gallery of Art's exhibition Verrocchio: Sculptor and Painter of Renaissance Florence, I was tasked with not only reframing the double-sided panel painting but also remounting it from its well-known large baffle display to a freestanding pedestal.

The previous freestanding baffle display of the painting offered a wealth of space to construct within to view the work successfully. It provided both a secure structure for mounting the framed painting and interior space to accommodate all of the workings of the two frames and security systems hidden inside.

In addition, the baffle offered stability but, with its massive presence, separated the other side of this double-sided work creating the effect of seeing a separate painting once you reached the other side of the wall.

The proposed new installation offered none of the amenities of the baffle on its surface but did promise something greater; viewing the painting in the round for the first time and seeing it as a singular work.

My approach to solving this problem was to separate it into two distinct tasks; reframing and mounting. The reframing could only come after the first task of mounting was solved. I accomplished this by creating a stainless steel encasement around the panel painting mounted in a secure structure built into the pedestal. Once the priceless work was housed in the steel case and mounted, I carved and gilded two identical frames but fabricated them without rabbets. The frames, now thinner than they usually would be, hang over the painting secured to the mount with magnets, never touching the work itself.

BIO

Eric Michael Tollefson

An expert in the aesthetic, technical, and historical aspects of custom frame design and fabrication, gilding, and frame conservation Eric Michael Tollefson has supervised both production framing and bespoke frame making, period frame sales and frame restoration for nearly three decades.

Working as Studio Director for Gill & Lagodich, Eric's specialized expertise has proved invaluable in providing creative framing solutions and correct historical applications working with museums, artists, and collectors.

As the Collection Manager and Chief Preparator of the McGuigan Collection he oversaw the framing, restoration, organization, and physical move of this private 19th century American art collection to a newly built study library and gallery facility in coastal Maine.

He is a contributing writer for Picture Framing Magazine and has taught courses in gilding, ornament application, frame finishing, restoration, and conservation at conferences throughout the country.

In 2019 Eric joined the National Gallery of Art in Washington DC as Frame Conservator and continues his work in private practice.

