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GlasgowLife

Banners Painted on Crepe Paper
for the Coronation of King George VI

Decorations are central to the visual culture of coronation celebrations. However, as ephemeral objects, they are not usually designed to last. This project has conducted object-based research into the construction of seven crepe paper bannerettes in Glasgow Life's collection, which have survived in remarkable condition. Systematic analysis using a digital Dino-Lite (AM4113/AD4113) microscope has clarified the cost-effective measures taken to manufacture these banners.

Image 1. Copper corrosion and hand-painted finishing details in black. Taken at 20x magnification with transmitted light.

Image 2. Black paint displaying metallic pigments and other impurities. Taken at 20x magnification with transmitted light.

Image 3. White crepe with gold paint not reaching the edge of the paper. Taken at 20x magnification.

Image 4. Central Diagram. Photograph of 'Banner 9' (as labelled on the verso), unidentified paint on crepe paper, 632mm x 531mm x 3mm, Glasgow Museums and Library Collections, Temp. 25965. The blue boxes indicate the locations from which the Dino-Lite images were taken.

Image 5. Recto view. Overlap of blue and red paint. Taken at 20x magnification with transmitted light.

Image 6. Verso view. Overlap of blue and red paint. Taken at 20x magnification. Image reversed horizontally.

Image 7. White crepe with gold paint truncated at the edge of the paper. Taken at 20x magnification.

Image 8. Bottom Left, Photographs of Banners 10-15, unidentified paint on crepe paper, various dimensions, Glasgow Museums and Library Collections, Temp. 25960-4, 25966.
All images CSG CIC Glasgow Museums and Library Collections.

Fast-Drying Paint

Cheap, industrial paints were likely chosen to create the banners. Contained at the edges, the rheology of the paint suggests that an efficient stenciling technique was used to apply the designs. Some finishing touches were then painted in by hand. On all seven banners, the paint is applied in a series of monochrome layers. **Image 5** demonstrates the clear distinction between colour layers, which indicates the use of a fast-drying paint. Flat wall paints were popular in the 1930s. The use of an oil-based paint modified with an alkyd resin or other drying inclusion is also possible.

Gold Pigment

Gold leaf is too expensive a material for the production of ephemera. Bronze powers have been used to create imitation gold paint since the mid-nineteenth century. These metal flake pigments are usually produced from sheets of copper-zinc alloys, known as brass. On the above banner, the gold paint has tarnished in three areas. **Image 1** demonstrates the blue-green hue of these degraded spots, indicating copper corrosion. It is therefore probable that the gold paint contains a bronze powder pigment. The black paint is also contaminated with metallic pigments.

Crepe Paper

To produce crepe paper, a number of creping techniques can be applied to a vast range of tissues and papers, although the process always involves passing sheets of material through heated rollers. The sheets recoil and crinkle after being stretched, which enhances their elasticity and movability. For the banners, these qualities make crepe paper a cheaper alternative, suitably feigning the visual and physical properties of fabric. The sharp edge in **Image 6** indicates that the design was applied to the crepe paper before the banner shape was mechanically cut.

Selected Bibliography
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