

Chagall Mosaic, "Les Quatre Saisons"

Condition Assessment and Repair Documents | Chicago, IL



CLIENT

First National Bank of Chicago

BACKGROUND

The mosaic "Les Quatre Saisons" (The Four Seasons), designed by the artist Marc Chagall, was completed in 1974. The mosaic covers the walls of a reinforced concrete vault structure that is approximately seventy feet long, ten feet wide, and fourteen feet high. The glass and ceramic tesserae mosaic are laid into the mortar setting bed on 128 precast concrete panels.

Since the late 1980s, damaged tiles have been replaced, the severely deteriorated original mosaic top has been replaced with granite slabs, and multiple preservation efforts have been undertaken to clean and maintain the artwork. WJE was first retained in the early 1990s to assess the distressed areas and to design a secondary roof to shelter the monument from extreme weather conditions. Two decades later, WJE was again retained to assess the type and extent of existing distress and to provide recommendations for its long-term conservation.



SOLUTION

WJE performed a conservation assessment of the mosaic to detect areas of distress. Conditions were documented on photographic survey sheets, the inspection revealed light atmospheric soiling and other deposits, isolated instances of graffiti, loose or missing tesserae, cracking, and mismatched grout from previous conservation campaigns. Additionally, the bird deterrent system located on top of the mosaic was found to no longer be effective.

WJE removed the graffiti and cleaned the mosaic with a neutral pH, nonionic surfactant. Missing or damaged tesserae was replaced with new tesserae selected to best match the original shape and color. Where the bird deterrent system had detached from the granite copings, the posts were reattached with an adhesive.

Along with the detailed conservation assessment and treatments, WJE provided the client with documentation of the conservation treatments including high resolution photographs mosaic to be used as a reference in future conservation work.