



Restorers and Conservators

Corporate Portrait

**of churches – chapels and their interiors/ fittings– castles –
forts – patrician residences – excavations – murals**

Our company specialises in the conservation and restoration of paintings, sculptures and historic monuments.

Our expertise extends to research activities, developing novel methods for detaching and transferring murals, work on historic plasters, Medieval and Baroque stucco as well as church interiors and fittings.

Alongside intensive research into novel restoration methods, evaluation of new materials, and accomplishments in the realms of mural painting, historical plasterwork as well as Medieval and Baroque stucco, equal importance is given to the conservation and restoration of Roman, and Renaissance to Baroque church interiors and fittings.

The conservation of stone with polychromy discovered as a result of archaeological excavations is immensely challenging due to the complex issue surrounding the absorption of salts from the soil, the extreme climatic conditions and their impact on the finds and the new materials.





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Experience

Renowned for their expertise far beyond Switzerland's borders, restoration specialists Oskar Emmenegger & Sons Ltd. were founded as a family enterprise in 1959 in Merlischachen, Canton Schwyz. The company relocated to Zizers in Canton Graubünden in 1982. It specialises in the conservation and restoration of churches, chapels, castles, forts and patrician residences and has, over the decades, acquired a wealth of know-how. Clients are the direct beneficiaries of the company's immense font of knowledge and experience in virtually every facet of restoration, conservation and research.

The company

Immensely experienced, company founder Prof. Oskar Emmenegger today heads the Zizers-domiciled company in conjunction with his son Rufino Emmenegger, also a qualified restorer. The restoration atelier they run maintains links with an autonomous IT company run by another son, Rafael Emmenegger, who specialises in the mapping and documenting of restored objects, together with other relevant data.

The staff

Five restorers, student trainees and specialists in the realms of photography, IT and documentation

Our staff represent a range of disciplines and benefit from first-class education and substantial experience. The team is complemented by a number of student trainees taken from universities of applied sciences.



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What we offer

Range of services

We are international. Our clients are predominantly based in Switzerland, Germany, Austria, France, Italy, Egypt, Syria, Jordan and Turkey. We have also completed assignments throughout all of mid and Eastern Europe, the Middle East and other parts of the world.

Our specialities

The expertise of restorers Oskar Emmenegger & Sons Ltd. extends to research activities, developing novel methods for detaching and transferring murals, work on historic plasters, Medieval and Baroque stucco as well as church interiors and fittings. We have developed in-house processes and special tools – both highly regarded internationally – used in the transfer of detached frescos and stucco.

Alongside intensive research and accomplishments in the realms of mural painting, historical plasterwork, and Medieval and Baroque stucco, equal importance is given to the conservation and restoration of Gothic and Baroque church interiors and fittings.

Our specialisms

Intensive research and activities in the realms of murals, historical plasterwork as well as Medieval and Baroque stucco. Conservation and restoration of Roman to Baroque church interiors and fittings. All this is supported by the appointment of consultants and experts.





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Focuses

- Structural investigations and development of restoration and conservation strategies
- Conservation of Medieval stucco
- Conservation and restoration of historic plasterwork
- Conservation and restoration of fittings including altars, panel paintings and canvas paintings
- Research
Investigation and testing of materials for suitability in restoration work Development of novel restoration methods and techniques
- Detaching and transferring murals
We are highly regarded internationally for, amongst other things, improving existing methods for detaching and transferring of murals and developing new ones. Experience has been gained as a result of work involving the detaching and transfer of more than 400 m2 murals at risk through demolition, the building of reservoirs, etc.
- Documentation
The IT arm of the company provides photo documentation services and compiles reports on conservation and restoration activities. It also carries out building documentation, damage and condition mapping, plus photo laboratory work. It maintains its own database archiving system.



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Challenge

The conservation of stone with polychromy presents a particular challenge in the field. Often at very exposed locations, archaeological excavation sites present the conservator with complex problems due to the climatic conditions encountered, which can be extreme and which impact the finds themselves and the materials to be used

A further challenge lies in the transfer and conservation of detached murals and their preservation. When it comes to substrates and types of mounting, every assignment requires a bespoke approach. Rufino Emmenegger continuously develops these new techniques and processes, for which the company has gained much admiration internationally.

Dissemination of knowledge

A further challenge is the teaching assignments, courses, talks and publications undertaken by the company.

Prof. Oskar Emmenegger spent 25 years providing the Institute of Historical Monuments (part of the Federal Institute of Technology ETH, Zurich) with consultancy and research services as a scientific expert in questions of restoration. He provided tuition at academies and universities at home and abroad, amongst them the Stuttgart State Academy of Art and Design and the Academy of Fine Arts Vienna.



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References

Projects

Since the founding of the company, far in excess of 150 projects of historic significance – churches, chapels, castles and patrician residences – have received its attentions in the realm of restoration.

Significant projects

Amongst the most significant work carried out by restorers Oskar Emmenegger & Sons Ltd. are the conservation and restoration of the Gothic altars in a large number of Canton Graubünden's churches (including Chur Cathedral) and the examination and conservation of the timber ceiling in Zillis Church, which dates from 1140.

Also receiving the expert attentions of the company have been stuccos, stone sculptures, murals/frescoes and/or fittings in the convents/monasteries of Disentis, Münsterlingen, St. Katharina in Diessenhofen, St. Johann in Müstair, St. Georgen in Stein am Rhein, Kirche St. Gieri in Rhäzüns, in the Jesuit Church and Church of St. Leodegar in Lucerne; in the churches in Arvigo, Cauco, Grono, Churwalden, Waltensburg and Triesen; in the Temple of Merenptah, Luxor, Egypt; in the Church of St. Michael in Hildesheim (stucco work); in Vaduz Castle and Köpenick Castle, Berlin; and the Barraud painting in Lucerne railway station.

The company was tasked with overseeing works at Vaduz Castle, at Köpenick castle, Berlin, and at Celle Town Hall, Germany.

Oskar Emmenegger & Sons Ltd. acted as consultants for the restoration of timber ceilings in the churches of Dädesjö (13th century) and Södra Rada, both in Sweden; in the former Dominican monastery in Guebwiller, France; and in the 9th century convent of Oberzell on Reichenau Island, Germany. The company acted as lead restorers in a research project initiated by the German Ministry of Trade and Industry: 'Damage to murals: their causes and conservation'.



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Examples



Müstair, convent of St. Johann, fragments of mural from the 12th century, mural transfer

When restoring the convent church between 1948 and 1951, the restorer, Sauter, detached 12th century murals in the apses that were in danger of collapsing and, using methods prevalent at the time, placed them on temporary plaster structures. No further work was carried out on them, and they remained on display in the convent.



The bearing structures deformed considerably over time, once again endangering the murals. We were commissioned to transfer the two murals to new, definitive bearing structures and to remove the hardened remains of thick lime-based whitewash. Following the restoration, we carried out some moderate retouching to visually distracting parts of the mural.



The two Roman murals are currently on temporary loan to the Deutsches Historisches Museum, Berlin. They were mounted by us in Berlin. We are also checking their condition there on a regular basis.



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