

**Object ID:** 1993.1.1-57      **Conservation ID:** CL4.1993.1.1-57

**Conservator:** Emily Brzezinski

**Culture:** Islamic

**Country:** Pakistan

**Title:** Section of Palace Facade

**Object Name:** facade; palace

**Dates:** c. 1835

**Dimensions:** L: 12 ft, W: 20 ft

## Condition Description

The façade is structurally stable. However, there are scattered areas of degraded wood exhibiting cracking, splintering, and minor checking. These areas are located at the verso, corners, and edges of the sections where they would connect to the larger façade.

Many sections exhibit an unknown bloom that appears white, thin, and has a slightly slick or waxy feel. It occurs on the carved face of the sections, more commonly in the carved recesses and darker, more saturated areas. It is generally minimal and irregularly distributed but appears heavily on several sections (noted in the attached treatment document), most notably the interior edge of the door.

The surface exhibits dust and dirt overall, heavy and ingrained on the verso.

## Treatment Report

**Treatment Start Date:** 3/22/2021

**Done Date:** 3/25/2021

### Treatment Report

All sections received the following cleaning, and approximately half received the described stabilization. Details are given in the table in the attached document.

#### 1. Cleaning:

- Each section was vacuumed with a natural fiber bristle brush to reduce surface grim and the unknown bloom.
- Areas of heavy bloom were cleaned a second time with a worn toothbrush and vacuum until the bloom was removed.

#### 2. Stabilizing cracks and breaks

- Approximately half the second exhibited minor cracks, areas of checking wood, or small loose splinters. These areas were stabilized to prevent further damage during installation or when the sections are assembled, and the degraded wood supports weight.
- Some areas were stabilized with high tack fish glue and weighted or clamped in place. This method was used for areas that would be visible during exhibition, such as the carved face, or areas that needed to support addition weight or abrasion, such as tenon joins or edges of beams.
- Some areas were stabilized with 50% Paraloid B72 in acetone bulked with micro balloons. The solution was not toned to match the wood. This method was used for checked or worn wood or loose sections that could not be stably adhered with

high tack fish glue. It was primarily used on the back of the piece or areas that would not be visible during exhibition.

- Two sections required more involved stabilization, including repair to the mortis and tenon join of 1993.1.5, and shims to stabilize the cross member of 1993.1.22. Details are given in the attached document.

3. Given the size and volume of the objects, this treatment did not involve before and after photography for every section. Only a few sections had heavy enough bloom to appear visibly different after treatment.

**Treatment Summary**

Surface dusting and minor stabilization

**Hours:** 32.00

**Actual Costs**

Contractor/Item	Hours/Quantity	Rate/Price per Item (\$)	Subtotal (\$)
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**TOTAL**

**Object Name/Title:** Palace Façade

**Accession Number:** 1993.1.1-57

**Date:** 1835 (construction date)

**Medium:** Wood and metal, Himalayan cedar and Indian rosewood, walnut doors

**Dimensions:** Height 12ft x Length 20ft

### **OBJECT DESCRIPTION**

Dismantled, the palace façade is in fifty-seven pieces that include the door, doorframe, and surrounding carvings. Many of the elements connect via mortis and tenon joints, although the structural framework of the original palace is not included with the carved façade. The facing side of all elements are intricately carved with floral, vegetable, and geometric motifs and the doors exhibit paint residues in blue, green, and red, with large star-shaped studs in a ferrous alloy. The surface shows irregular saturation and coloring. Ingrained dirt and dust is present overall, especially on the unfinished back of the sections.

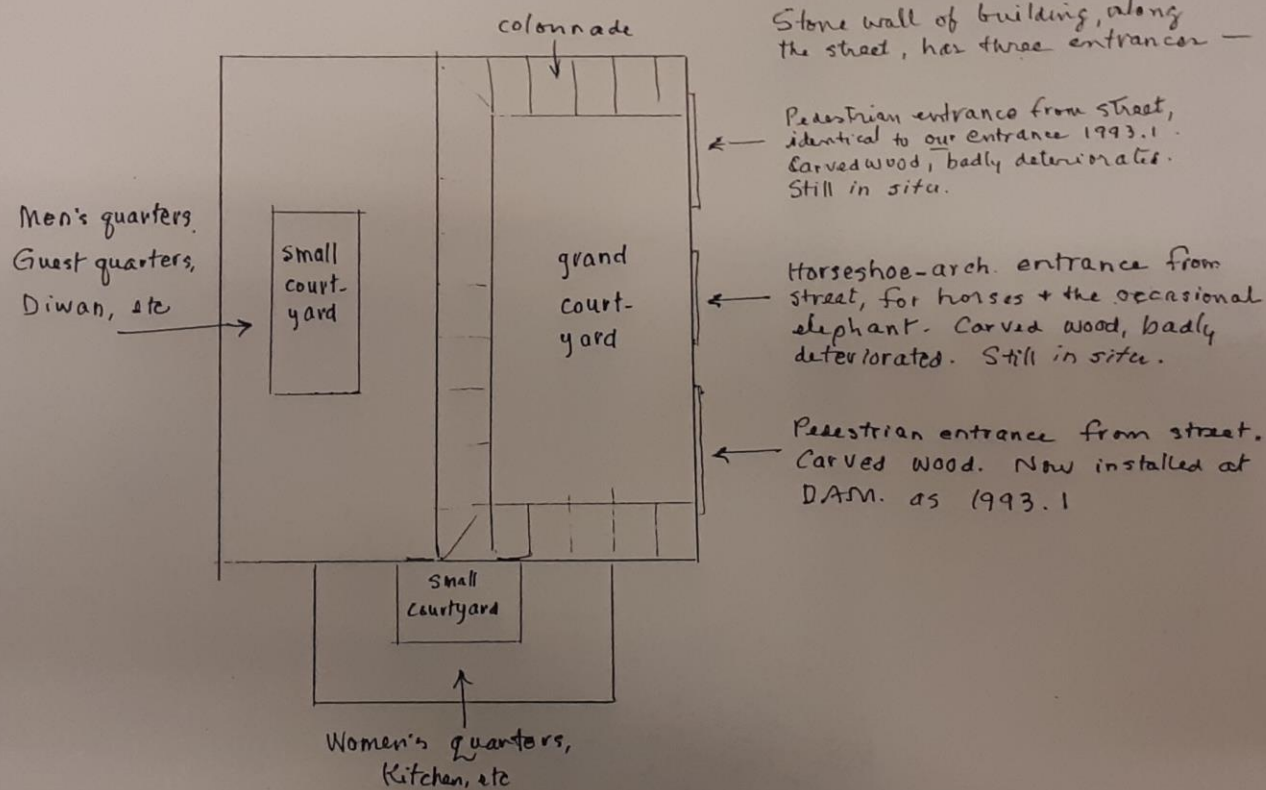
### **HISTORICAL CONTEXT**

According to the Denver Museum of Art's object file, this façade was part of the palace of Sayyed Akbar Shah, King of Swat (1835-57) between 1835 and 1857, located in Pakistan's Swat Valley. Sayyed Akbar Shah was the first and only ruler of the Kingdom of Swat, appointed to rule over the newly unified Afghan clans in the area. His palace was constructed in the capital of Saidu. After his death in 1857, British occupation of India and the surrounding regions, and the subsequent political upheaval, prevented anyone from ascending his throne.

The façade is one third of the main entrance, which would have stood to the left of the main doorway with a nearly identical doorway on the right. Between them, the central archway was large enough for mounted elephants to pass through. According to the façade's intake papers, the center doorway is in poor condition and the right doorways is nearly completely lost.

1993.1 SECTION OF A PALACE FAÇADE

Sketch and words from a March 1996 letter to Bj Averitt from David Logan



This area has two entrances: from the grand courtyard, and one into the men's area thru which young boys carry food and serve the men.

Figure 1. Diagram of the Floorplan of the Palace from the DAM Object File for 1993.1.1-57

In 1992, the façade was salvaged from the ruins of the palace by the owners of Eshwan Traders, in Pakistan. However, the salvaging was unconfirmed in the object file, and I was not able to locate much information on the palace itself, or when it fell to disrepair. The façade was sold to David Logan and David Lucero from a Pakistani antique showroom in May 1992 and brought to the Denver Art Museum. It was examined by Islamic art experts Ronald Otsuka and BJ Averitt, who approved acquisition.

The façade had been treated upon its arrival to DAM, which may have included washing with a non-ionic surfactant and local consolidation of the paint (unrecorded, and unconfirmed). It was exhibited from 1993 until 2017, when it was deinstalled for the renovation of the Martin building. During exhibition it was treated several times for an unknown white bloom that routinely leached from the wood, usually the heaviest at the interior carved elements, especially the doors.

### **Project Description**

This project consisted of a brief assessment and treatment of all sections of the palace façade in preparation for re-installation of the fifth floor of the renovated Martin building. The façade had been deinstalled and packed in 2016, so the general condition and treatment needs were known. Due to construction and installation logistics, the treatment took place March 22-25, the week before the façade was scheduled for installed. As such, all fifty-seven pieces were not individually documented, and the treatment focused on overall cleaning of the bloom and structurally significant repairs.

### **Overall Condition**

- The façade is structurally stable. However, there are scattered areas of degraded wood exhibiting cracking, splintering, and minor checking. These areas are located at the verso, corners, and edges of the sections where they would join.
- Many sections exhibit an unknown white bloom that appears white, thin, and has a slightly slick or waxy feel. It occurs on the carved face of the sections, more commonly in the carved recesses and darker, more saturated areas. It is generally minimal and irregularly distributed but appears heavily on several sections (noted below), most notably the interior edge of the door.
- The surface exhibits dust and dirt overall, heavy and ingrained on the verso.

## Overall Treatment

All sections received the following cleaning, and approximately half received the described stabilization. Details are given in the following table.

1. Cleaning:
  - Each section was vacuumed with a natural fiber bristle brush to reduce surface grim and the unknown bloom.
  - Areas of heavy bloom were cleaned a second time with a worn toothbrush and vacuum until the bloom was removed.
2. Stabilizing cracks and breaks
  - ☐ Approximately half the second exhibited minor cracks, areas of checking wood, or small loose splinters. These areas were stabilized to prevent further damage during installation or when the sections are assembled, and the degraded wood supports weight.
  - ☐ Some areas were stabilized with high tack fish glue and weighted or clamped in place. This method was used for areas that would be visible during exhibition, such as the carved face, or areas that needed to support addition weight or abrasion, such as tenon joins or edges of beams.
  - ☐ Some areas were stabilized with 50% Paraloid B72 in acetone bulked with micro balloons. The solution was not toned to match the wood. This method was used for checked or worn wood or loose sections that could not be stably adhered with high tack fish glue. It was primarily used on the back of the piece or areas that would not be visible during exhibition.
  - ☐ Two sections required more involved stabilization, including repair to the mortis and tenon join of 1993.1.5, and shims to stabilize the cross member of 1993.1.22. Details are given in the chart below.
3. Given the size and volume of the objects, this treatment did not involve before and after photography for every section. Only a few sections had heavy enough bloom to appear visibly different after treatment.

**Table 1: Condition and Treatment of Individual Sections, by Accession Number**

Section/ Acc. Number	Condition	Treatment	Notes
1993.1.5	Mortis and tenon joint separated in one corner, minor splits to tenon and pegs.  Crossbar at back lifted from board.	Split tenon joint stabilized with high tack fish glue and clamped into place.  Lifted crossbar stabilized with 50% Paraloid B72 in acetone bulked with micro balloons.	

<b>1993.1.24</b>	Loose and lifting splinter of wood at lower end, where wood has degraded more severely.	Stabilized with 50% Paraloid B72 in acetone bulked with micro balloons.	
<b>1993.1.1</b>	Lifting splinters toward end of beam and along decorative edge.  Large splinter at center of verso.	Splinters at end of beam stabilized with 50% Paraloid B72 in acetone bulked with micro balloons.  Splinter at decorative edge and verso stabilized with high tack fish glue.	
<b>1993.1.18</b>	Significant bloom overall.		
<b>1993.1.21</b>	Splits and loose splinters to cross members at back.	Stabilized with 50% Paraloid B72 in acetone bulked with micro balloons.	
<b>1993.1.26</b>	Splits and loose section at middle	Stabilized with 50% Paraloid B72 in acetone bulked with micro balloons.	
<b>1993.1.36</b>	Lifting wooden decorative element on interior front side. Loose wooden element along bottom interior.	Stabilized with 50% Paraloid B72 in acetone bulked with micro balloons.	
<b>1993.1.28</b>	Detached wooden splinter at the center of the verso.	Reattached and stabilized with 50% Paraloid B72 in acetone bulked with micro balloons.	
<b>1993.1. 13 Door frame</b>	Unfinished edges: Loose fragment at worn corner, several lifting splinters at old nail holes.  Front facing carvings: two loose splinters.	Exterior: stabilized with 50% Paraloid B72 in acetone bulked with micro balloons.  Front facing carvings: stabilized with high tack fish glue	

<p><b>1993.1.22</b></p>	<p>Loose splinter at upper corner. Screw attaching plywood split wood of the object.</p> <p>Shorter crossbeam mobile and lifted from structure, possibly due to a failing nail.</p> <p>Insect bore holes, no signs of active infestation.</p>	<p>Splinter stabilized with high tack fish glue and clamped in place.</p> <p>Loose corner stabilized with basswood shims between horizontal member and base, anchored with high tack fish glue.</p>	<p>Plywood loose and highly mobile, only attached with single screw at center, screw not fully screwed into plywood and object.</p>
<p><b>1993.1.8</b></p>	<p>Two loose wooden splinters from unfished verso.</p> <p>Insect bore holes, no signs of active infestation.</p> <p>Extremely grimy interior</p>	<p>Splinters stabilized with high tack fish glue.</p>	<p>Plywood loose and highly mobile, only attached with single screw at center.</p>
<p><b>1993.1.23</b></p>	<p>Heavy bloom overall.</p> <p>Large crack at verso.</p> <p><b>3/30/21 UPDATE:</b> Split at front section of the mortis join at upper proper left corner during installation, possible at a repair from an earlier treatment (possible remnants of hide glue at break edges)</p>	<p>Crack stabilized with 50% Paraloid B72 in acetone bulked with micro balloons.</p> <p><b>3/30/21 UPDATE:</b> Split at upper motis join reattached with high tack fish glue and clamped to place.</p>	
<p><b>1993.1.9</b></p>	<p>Several sections of checking wood on the interior beams at the verso.</p>	<p>Stabilized with 50% Paraloid B72 in acetone bulked with micro balloons.</p>	
<p><b>1993.1.14b</b></p>	<p>Heavy bloom at interior edge, both at recto and verso.</p>		<p><b>Sample 1</b> taken from interior recto.</p>



<b>Door</b>			<b>Sample 2</b> taken from interior verso.
<b>1993.1.14a</b> <b>Door</b>	Splinter on the interior edge of the verso. Two loose sections of degraded wood in worn areas of the verso.	All sections stabilized with high tack fish glue.	
<b>1993.1.10.8</b>	Split to the tenon join.	Stabilized with high tack fish glue.	
<b>(no number on object)</b> <b>"29" on blue tape</b> <b>small square medallion</b>	Split across the width of the back, slightly mobile.	Stabilized with high tack fish glue.	
<b>1993.1.16a</b>	Split on long side, slightly loose.	Stabilized with high tack fish glue.	Unstable location is a previous repair with animal hide glue.
<b>1993.1.12h</b>			Previous repair located at lower 'fleur-de-lies', repair with animal hide glue. Appears stable.
<b>1993.1.15</b>	Small splinter at center of verso.	Stabilized with high tack fish glue.	

Photography:



1931.1.5: Before treatment (left) with the broken mortis and tenon joint, and (right) after treatment



