



The summer months are busy for gilders, especially those who work on projects outdoors. There's plenty of hay to be made while the warm temperatures and long days of light provide a conducive environment for exterior gilding. So it's an exciting time when you'll see many landmarks spring back to life with the brilliance of gold specially chosen for the wear and tear of outdoor conditions.

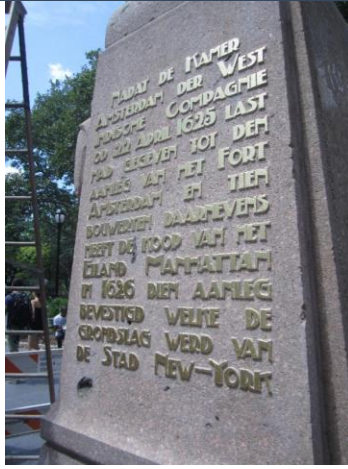
Ever wonder how gilders get those incredibly thin, fragile leaves onto an outdoor surface, without allowing them to blow away? Often gilders use gold leaf squares with a backing paper called "patent" leaf, quaintly still identified as being "for gilding in the wind". Ribbon Leaf is also helpful, with squares of leaf overlapped on a length of paper that gets unfurled. For exterior gilding, a very simplified explanation of the process is: prime the

substrate, apply an outdoor-suitable gilding adhesive, apply a heavy-weight, high-karat (above 23kt) gold leaf. Leaf is so thin that its color is affected by the primer color under it, so gilders typically choose yellow for the base color. We talked with three gilding contractors about their projects, which are garnering excitement and attention with especially beautiful gilding.

Over the past few years, [Jablonski Building Conservation, Inc.](#) (JBC) has magnificently restored a suite of three monuments in New York City's recently redesigned Battery Park. These include: the Walloon Settlers, the Netherlands Flagpole, and the John Wolfe Ambrose - all were gilded outdoors. We talked with JBC Senior Conservator Jennifer Pont about the treatment devised for each of these. "The Walloon Settlers Monument was relocated and restored as part of the re-design of the Battery. The letters of the monument had been in-painted with a deteriorated metallic paint. We decided to remove the [non-original] paint and replace it with gold leaf to return it to its original shine. We chose Dux Burnish Ocher Sealer to prime and seal the cleaned stone -the yellow primer keeps the gold leaf color in a cooler range as evidenced in early gilding - then used LeFranc 3-hour size as our gilding adhesive. For the leaf, we decided to gild with Manetti 'Rosenoble' Double Gold 23.75k patent leaf." It was critical to use a high-karat leaf, especially with the harsh conditions imposed by salt water and wind from New York Harbor.



Walloon Settlers



Netherlands Flagpole



John Wolfe Ambrose

above photos Jennifer Pont, Jablonski Building Conservation, Inc

"For the Netherlands Flagpole", Pont continues, "the choice of materials was identical for that of the Walloon Settlers'. Gilded letters damaged during the monument's disassembly were re-gilded prior to removal and re-location." A gift to the City of New York from the Netherlands in 1926, the monument's gleaming words celebrates the City's "ancient and unbroken friendship [with] the Dutch people."



Conservators prime the letters before applying gold leaf - photo Jennifer Pont, Jablonski Building Conservation, Inc

The John Wolfe Ambrose monument honors an 18th century Irish immigrant and engineer whose perseverance resulted in the eponymous deep sea channel of New York Harbor, enabling New York City to become, as the monument's stele proclaims "the greatest sea port of the world". Pont explains, "this had been installed in the wall behind the Battery Gardens restaurant. It was moved to its current location near the new entrance to the South Ferry 1 Station, cleaned, and restored. We primed with Dux Burnish Sealer in red, providing a warmer undertone for this monument, since it is Stony Creek granite (known for its very large pink inclusions of feldspar, among other large minerals). New leaf was carefully matched to an early gilding - we used Crocodile brand 23.5 karat 'Dukaten' patent gold leaf - the gold beautifully highlights the flowing script and the map details". A bronze bust of Ambrose was later installed and the monument was rededicated this May.

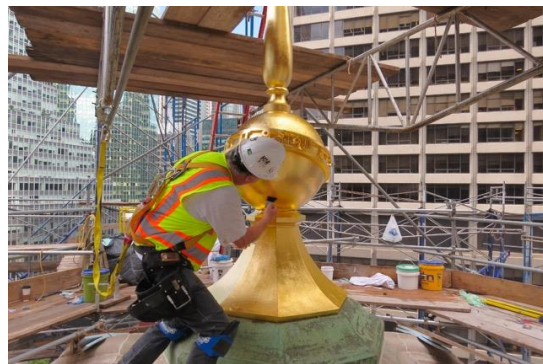


A compelling project in the heart of Manhattan was recently completed by the [Gilders' Studio Inc.](#) St. Bartholomew's Episcopal Church, designed in an exuberant Byzantine style by Bernard Goodhue, was constructed in 1918 at it's present location on Park Ave, St. Bart's has undergone several reconstructions. Michael Kramer, founder and principal of Gilders' Studio explains, "although the dome has been radically reconfigured from the original, one element that has remained the same is its gilded bronze finial. As its centennial approached, the Church decided to clean and refurbish the building's dome and exterior, and to restore the gilding on the fifteen-foot tall finial. General contractor [Graciano Corp.](#), removed the finial and shipped to us for restoration".

The finial's globe pre-treatment in Studio.
photo Gilders' Studio, Inc.



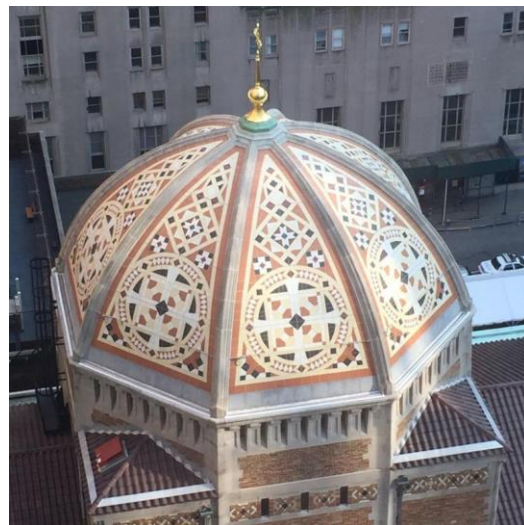
Re-installing the finial, photo Gilders' Studio, Inc.



Michael Kramer of Gilders' Studio, Inc retouches gold leaf after installation. photo Jill London

Kramer continues, "after stripping the finial and making much needed bronze repairs, we gilded with a new layer of Manetti 23.75K gold leaf, adhered with Manetti's 12 hour size - our go-to gilding adhesive". The finial was then wrapped and shipped back to NYC where it was reinstalled in September of 2017.

In May of this year, the St. Bart's project was honored with a Preservation Award from the New York Landmarks Conservancy.



St. Bart's freshly gilded finial shining bright. photo Gilders' Studio, Inc.

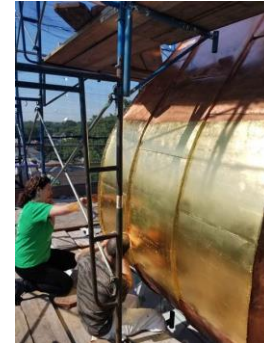
St. Vladimir Ukrainian Catholic Church in Elizabeth, New Jersey offers a look at how new construction can be carefully implemented in restoring an historic profile. Originally built in 1903, the refurbishing of the Church's three deteriorated onion domes (comprising 1200 sf total surface area) was completed by [Imhoff Company](#). The gilding was done by [B.A.S. ArchDesign, Inc.](#) The two companies are long time collaborators in restoration. Due to the poor condition of the large, central onion dome, it was determined that this would be replaced by a new dome. Imhoff Company fabricated a copy of the large dome, repaired the two smaller domes and also expertly installed the scaffold.



St. Vladimir's onion dome, deconstructed



new dome with copper cladding



Katerina Spilio applies gold leaf to the prepared surface

photos courtesy Imhoff Company



B.A.S. founder and principle Katerina Spilio recounts, "the project was technically challenging because of weather conditions and logistical scaffolding considerations. Many areas were a challenge to reach easily. B.A.S. used LeFranc 12-hour size which came to tack at different times because of varying heat and humidity.

Nevertheless, Spilio continues, "the 12-hour size allowed us to gild for a longer period. The first day, we only sized a small portion, just to test our proof of concept, and then once we established a baseline, were able to go full speed ahead. We used Manetti 23.5kt patent leaf in roll form for efficiency." The three domes are glowing beacons for the community.

St. Vladimir's crowning glories shine brightly once again.
Photo Jessica Warren

These three notable projects highlight the skills, expertise and care of a few conservation-minded gold leaf specialists. Their talents carry forward a beautiful and inspiring historic legacy.

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