

# The Marble Restoration Company Receives Preservation Alliance Grand Jury Award

Since 2014, the cornerstone of The Marble Restoration Company's work has been giving facelifts to local landmarks and upscale residences. Located in Lafayette Hill, Pennsylvania, the company has earned significant recognition in their market through offering quality service at a fair price. Like any new company seeking success, growth is sometimes achieved by venturing out of your comfort zone, rolling up your sleeves and undertaking the unknown. This is one of those stories.

"We were hired by Hansell Contractors to restore the stone in the Esherick House, a local historic landmark," explains Rick Sirianni, owner of The Marble Restoration Company. "Hansell Contractors are really unique because they specialize in doing original restoration of historic homes. They are amazing, and everyone of their employees pays attention to every detail, even doing research into the history of the structure. It was this mindset that allowed us to become artisans working to preserve everything."

Built in 1961, the Esherick House was designed by architect Louis Kahn for Margaret Esherick. Esherick, a Philadelphia bookseller, wanted something bright and efficient, and Kahn, one of the most influential architects of the twentieth century, designed it for her. Now a national legacy, the Esherick House has

## Peter J. Marcucci

"...Hansell Contractors are amazing at what they do. Doing a preservation is a lot different than doing a restoration. You're trying to preserve the original look with the wear and tear, rather than making it look new again. It was a unique situation for people like us who work in the restoration industry. It was a good project and we are all grateful to have been part of it."

— Chaz McFadden,  
Production Manager,  
The Marble Restoration  
Company

become one of the most studied homes by architects in training.

"Normally, our inclination would have been to match the background of the stone and fill the holes in," continued Rick, "but the preservation architects said, 'No, no, no! Just leave it the way it is!' So that presented a challenge, or at least a little bit of a challenge."

"Keeping everything as authentic as possible was basically our goal," explains Chaz McFadden. Chaz is the company Production and Technical Manager, and all around artist. "It wasn't to go in and make everything perfect again. They really just wanted it left in the condition that it was,

sort of. To be honest, that goes against everything that I was taught. I was taught to fix everything and make it look brand new again, but in this case we needed it to look brand 'old' again!"

"In terms of the soapstone vanities, soapstone pretty much has an aged look to it, whether it is ten years old or a hundred years old. They looked very natural and very raw, and they really did take a beating over the years from not being cleaned correctly and the hard well water from back in the day. Fortunately, everything was matte finished and in a natural state when it was installed, so it was somewhat of a normal process of honing while leaving the etching and scratch marks. We then used Tenax Tiger Ager that we purchased from Braxton-Bragg to give it its depth and color again. So in that respect it was kind of nice getting everything back to looking like it was when it was first fabricated, yet leaving the natural wear from normal usage. Of course, all the seams in the backsplashes had to be re-grouted."

Chaz went on to say that other areas needed grouting as well as shoring-up, adding, "On one of the fireplaces, they didn't even want some of the holes filled in the hearth. There were, however, voids where the panels butted up to each other. The epoxy used back then had cracked and fallen out, so we replaced it to give it a cleaner look and to keep dirt and debris from getting in there. Additionally, we did light



On the soapstone fireplace and hearth restorations: "We did light resurfacing on the hearth, and filled in some voids where the epoxy used back then had cracked and fallen out."

resurfacing on the hearth, but that's it. The surround and the mantle surfaces were still in good shape and only needed cleaning and enhancing as well as filling the voids in the seams."

Rick: "Honestly, everyone made the decisions real easy, because not only were the two owners there, who were big supporters of the arts, but the restoration architects were there, too. They simply walked us through and gave us very clear instructions as to what they were looking for. That was really helpful. One of the trickiest parts of the preservation was filling in the concrete kitchen floor where the old heaters used to be. This really challenged Chaz, because the new cement had to look like the old cement."

Photos provided courtesy The Marble Restoration Company

Soapstone pretty much has an aged look to it, whether it is ten years old or a hundred years old...We used a color enhancer that we purchased from Braxton-Bragg to give it its depth and color again." Also, all the backsplash seams were re-grouted.



Chaz: "Yeah, actually it was due to the fact that the coloring in the aggregate and sand used today is completely different from what was used in the 1960s. So the challenge was to create a dirtier, browner shade versus a gray. What we did was take brown and black concrete stain and applied it using a mild acid solution to etch the stain into the concrete. Once that was done and we knew we got the color as close as we were going to get it, we applied a little bit of enhancing to get it to all blend together. We then did a few coats of lithium silicate sealant to give the water repellency it needed. It was in a working kitchen, and they didn't want oil stains. So we didn't make it look pretty, and we didn't make it look bad, so it looked good. If it looked new it would have looked bad."

If preserving a national treasure wasn't itself an honor, receiving an award was.

Rick: "I think the biggest reason the Esherick House was picked for preservation, was because Louis Kahn is a very famous architect, and there aren't many of his houses standing anymore. The second reason is because the current owners who reside there (Dan Macy & Paul Savage) were committed to bringing the house to its original state. So the preservation was mainly driven by these two factors.

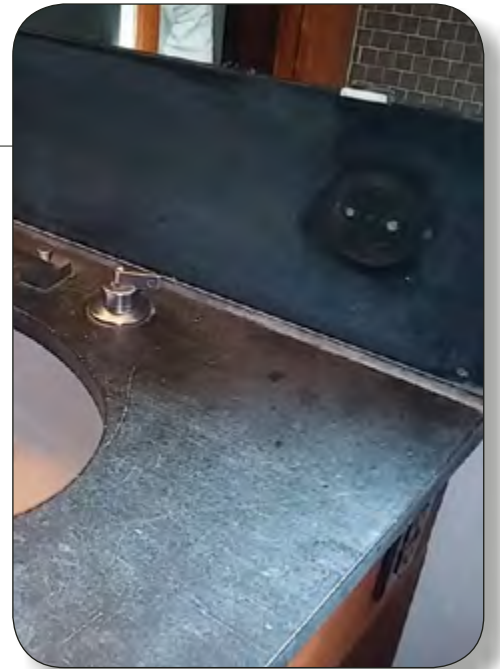
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“The Preservation Alliance for Greater Philadelphia is a huge organization, and when we got the invitation for the award ceremony, we were a little stunned. That said, we were elated to win an award. The neat thing about the ceremony, is that it took place at the Union League of Philadelphia, which is in a historical building that we maintain. It is one of our oldest accounts, and we are in there maintaining their marble floors every week.”



### A Future To Preserve

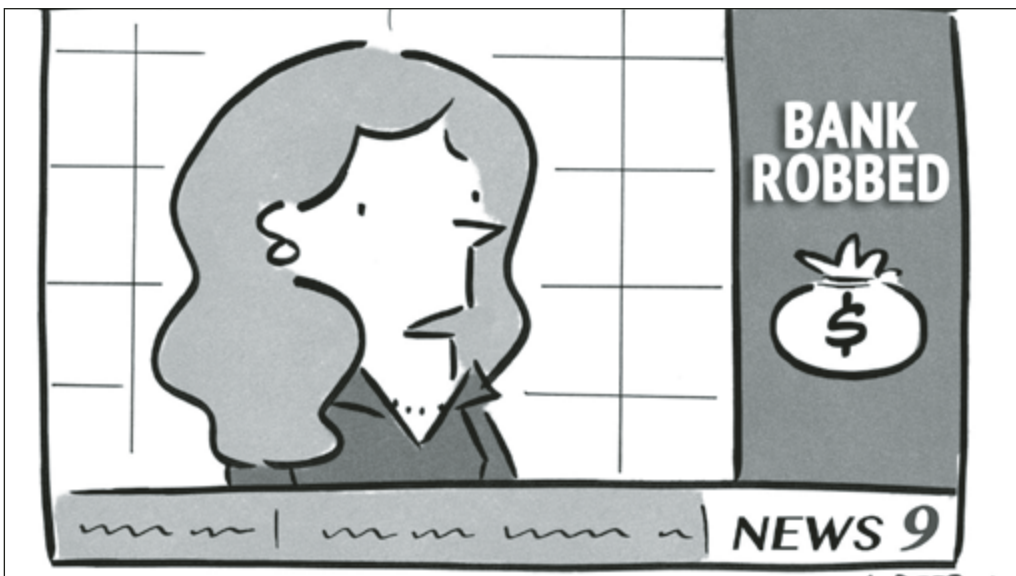
Chaz: “The Esherick House is an amazing property, and to have the original components of the house intact, is a sight to behold. We are always looking for opportunities but when it comes to preservation, it’s a whole other level of what we do. When you’re facing something that is old and historic, and you’re being asked to make it look original and still usable, it’s an honor. Our projects are always successful, and anytime we can get a next project like this under our belt it only helps our team. It is challenging, and I look forward to the next opportunity.”

Rick: “It was a real honor for us to do it. We knew it was something special, but didn’t realize just how special until we got the award. Doing this kind of work just adds to our skill set, and we may actively go after this kind of work in the future. As far as historical restorations, there are many historical buildings in Philadelphia and the surrounding area that were built in the 1700s and 1800s, and we stay very busy doing restoration on these.”

For more information about The Marble Restoration Company go to [www.marblerestorationco.com](http://www.marblerestorationco.com).



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“Police are offering five thousand dollars to anyone with information leading to an arrest. The criminals are offering ten thousand dollars to anyone with information that can keep their yap shut.”

Above: Living room soapstone hearth, before restoration. Below—after. “The extent of our work included two green soapstone vanities, two fireplaces (one in the main living room, one in the master bathroom area), and the concrete area in the working kitchen.”

