



Staff Report
City of Richmond, Virginia



Commission of Architectural Review

3. COA-123205-2023	Final Review	Meeting Date: 3/28/2023
Applicant/Petitioner	Joshua Shaheen	
Project Description	Installation of a mural on the side of a single-family detached dwelling.	
Project Location		
Address: 313 N Monroe St		
Historic District: Jackson Ward		
<p>High-Level Details:</p> <p>Applicant requests approval to install a mural on a non-painted side elevation of a masonry, Italianate, semi-attached dwelling circa 1900.</p> <p>The mural will face the alley.</p> <p>This is a retroactive approval request, as the mural was painted without review and approval by the Commission. This review is the result of a notice of violation.</p> <p><i>Previously, the Commission asked that the applicant provide an abatement method, as the mural is in violation. The applicant has done so. This staff report is a review and recommendation for the proposed abatement method.</i></p>		
Staff Recommendation	Approval, with Conditions	
Staff Contact	Alex Dandridge, 804-646-6569, alex.dandridge@rva.gov	
Previous Reviews	<p>This application was reviewed by the Commission at their January 2023 meeting. The Commission deferred the application with the condition that the applicant, within 30 days of the CAR decision, submit to the Commission a solution that would abate the violation which could include the feasibility of removing the paint from the surface of the brick.</p> <p>The applicant has since submitted additional information that demonstrates a solution that would abate the violation.</p>	
Staff Recommendations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Approval of the abatement method provided by the applicant. • Any repointing necessary be done using a mortar that matches the original in composition and color and be done in compliance with the National Parks Service’s Preservation Brief 	

	#2 -Repointing Mortar Joints in Historic Masonry Buildings; final mortar composition and color submitted to staff for administrative review and approval.
--	---

Staff Analysis

Guideline Reference	Reference Text	Analysis
<p>Standards for Signage, Mural Guidelines, pg. 75</p>	<p><i>Mural Guidelines Murals (other than historic painted wall signs) may be permitted on commercial buildings, as defined by current zoning, considering the following guidelines:</i></p> <p><i>In general, murals should be painted on removable material, not directly on a building wall.</i></p> <p><i>Murals painted on primary facades are not permitted.</i></p> <p><i>A mural’s appearance, colors, and scale should reflect the history of the district of which the building is a part.</i></p> <p><i>A mural should not obscure or distort the historic features of a building.</i></p>	<p>The guidelines give specific mural guidance for commercial buildings. The mural has been painted on the side elevation of a residential building.</p> <p>The mural installed at 313 N. Monroe Street has been painted directly on the brick. While photographic documentation demonstrates that there has been graffiti on this side elevation, it appeared to be light and was only on the lower portion of the side wall and did not extend to the roof line.</p>
<p>The Design Guidelines, p. 63, #1</p>	<p><i>Do not paint historic brick or stone masonry that has not previously been painted. Painting previously unpainted masonry is historically inaccurate and is not permitted. Property owners who wish to remove paint from masonry should work with a qualified contractor knowledgeable in the use of non-abrasive cleaners.</i></p>	<p>The wall where the mural was installed was previously unpainted. Since the January 2023 Review, the applicant has provided an estimate from “Thomas Harrison” to remove the paint from the brick. The estimate outlines the process which would include chemical treatments and power washing.</p> <p>The estimate identifies the paint used on the brick as “Molotow” spray paint that is extremely durable and made with “quadruple-ground car paint pigments”. In addition to the</p>

		<p>paint being extremely adhered to the brick, an anti-graffiti sealant has been applied to the face of the paint. Molotow spray paint is described as being extremely weather resistant and durable. While this description promotes its long lasting attributes, staff finds that its permanence and durability threaten the integrity of the brick. Furthermore, Molotow Spray Paint is an acrylic paint. Paints containing vinyl, acrylic, oils, or plastics are generally considered to not be breathable and can trap moisture. Historic brick and mortar are porous materials that must “breathe” in order to ensure longevity and stability. Staff finds that the paint used on the south wall of the dwelling is not recommended for brick, and if left in place will damage the brick over time.</p> <p>The abatement method submitted by the applicant indicates that it could cause additional damage to the building, especially the mortar joints. Staff agrees that the power washing could damage the mortar joints. However, mortar joints are easily repaired and expected to need repointing overtime. Leaving the paint on the bricks will eventually compromise the integrity of the bricks and the structural integrity of the masonry wall. Bricks are not intended to need replacement, unlike mortar which becomes brittle overtime.</p> <p><u>Staff recommends approval of the abatement method outlined in the estimate provided by the applicant.</u></p>
<p>Maintenance and Repair, Masonry, pg. 89</p>	<p><i>Unpainted masonry should remain unpainted.</i></p>	<p>The mural installed at 313 N Monroe Street has been painted on unpainted masonry. This is in violation of the <i>Guidelines</i>, as stated on pg. 89</p> <p>Painting historic masonry can exacerbate brick spalling. Brick spalling is caused when moisture from the ground or air is absorbed into the brick and is unable to escape. The moisture inside the brick freezes in the winter, and thaws in the summer. This repeated freeze and thaw cycle eventually leads to the face of the affected brick popping off, exposing the interior of the brick. Without the hard, kiln-fired brick face, the softer interior of the brick is exposed making the brick more susceptible to moisture and further damage. Unlike modern construction that has a brick</p>

		<p>veneer applied to CMU or frame, an older building's masonry walls are structural, and deterioration of any brick on the interior or exterior facing walls can compromise the structural integrity of the building overtime. (See Figures 4-7)</p> <p>Furthermore, other than repointing mortar joints, brick is relatively maintenance-free. Painting brick adds an additional layer of maintenance to property owners. Moisture <i>will</i> eventually get into the bricks causing paint to buckle, fall off, or even spall the brick as mentioned above.</p>
<p>Maintenance and Repair, Masonry, p. 89</p>	<p><i>The repointing of masonry is necessary in cases where there is evidence of deterioration (i.e. disintegrating mortar, mortar joint cracks, loose bricks or damaged plaster). Do not repoint with mortar that is stronger than the original mortar or the existing brick. Mortar is not glue but a cushion that allows masonry units to expand and contract in periods of freeze and thaw</i></p>	<p><u>Staff recommends that any repointing necessary be done using a mortar that matches the original in composition and color and in compliance with the National Parks Service's Preservation Brief #2 -Repointing Mortar Joints in Historic Masonry Buildings; final mortar composition and color submitted to staff for administrative review and approval.</u></p>

It is the assessment of staff that, with the conditions above, the application is consistent with the Standards for Rehabilitation and New Construction outlined in Section 30-930.7 (b) and (c) of the City Code, as well as with the Richmond Old and Historic Districts Handbook and Design Review Guidelines, specifically the pages cited above, adopted by the Commission for review of Certificates of Appropriateness under the same section of the code.

Figures

Figure 1. *façade photo*



Figure 2. *mural wall*



Figure 3. 1924-1925 Sanborn map

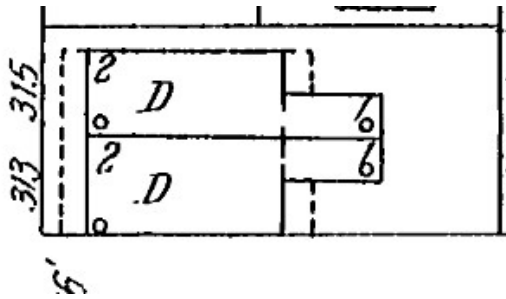


Figure 4. Brick Spalling example



Figure 5. Brick Spalling example

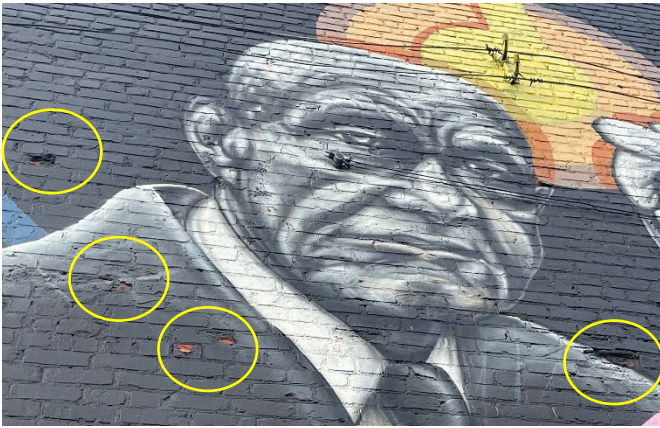


Figure 6. Brick Spalling & Possible improper repointing example.



Figure 7. Brick Spalling/ Up splash causing paint deterioration example.

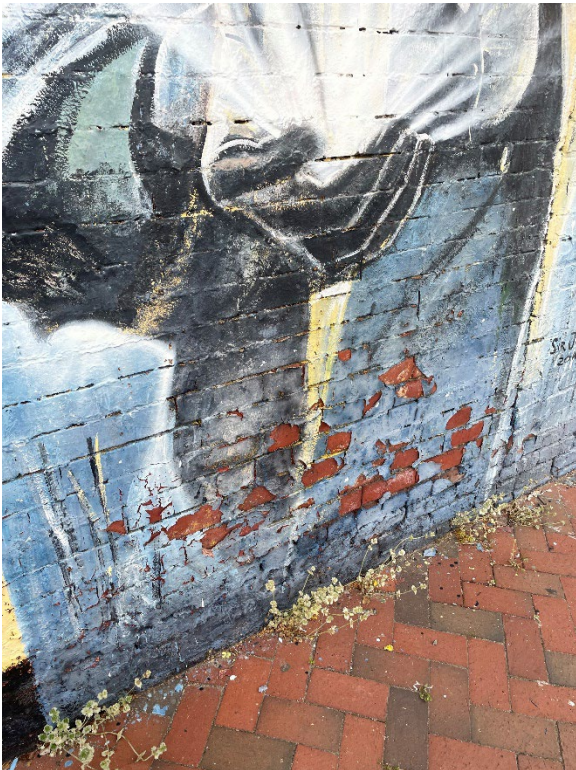


Figure 8. Brick Spalling example.

