“The Mystic Marriage of St. Catherine of Siena” is one of Ursuline Academy paintings restored by Lloyd Young. Below, he works on portrait restored for the Rev. Clarence Pope, Baton Rouge. It was done in 1840s by itinerant artist.

FOR eight hours a day, Lloyd Young works with delicate equipment used in Louisiana State University physics and space research. Then for another five, or six, or eight hours, he rejuvenates mistreated art works at his home in Gonzales.

The latter occupation, more often than not, is a labor of love. Young recently restored paintings in Ursuline Academy without charge. He also has restored a number of Tulane University and Newcomb College art works, including paintings by the Woodward brothers.

At LSU he spends many lunch hours with H. Parrott Bacot, Anglo-American Museum curator, searching for long neglected paintings. You might say his is a hobby of “search and restore.”

Of all his restoration efforts, Young is probably proudest of the Ursuline Academy painting entitled “The Mystic Marriage of St. Catherine of Siena.” He thinks this may be one of the most important paintings in Louisiana today.

“A friend said there was some interesting art at the academy,” Young recalls, “so I just went along with him one day to visit. When I saw their quality and the way many were crumbling and flaking—well, I was hooked!”

“Before I could do anything else I had to get the boards back together and get rid of the borers that infested them. After that it was a matter of cleaning the surface thoroughly and retouching spots that had flaked away.”

Young’s unusual combination of skills in physics and art restoration was acquired through education (B.S. in industrial education, with art courses on the side), a four-year apprenticeship as a machinist in industry, and a tremendous interest in art—his own and that of others, no matter of what period, or style.

He says he has considered leaving LSU, where his title is research associate in physics, to give full time to the restoration work, but “every time I am about to do it, some especially fascinating problem comes along—like the

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space balloon, or the spark chamber for studying cosmic rays."

Then, too, the LSU campus is a fertile field for his art detective work. For example, he recently discovered on the floor behind a filing cabinet a signed lithograph of the original Julio painting of Generals Lee and Jackson.

His biggest assignment, in size at least, was to restore a badly mutilated six-by-eleven-foot painting of Gen. William Tecumseh Sherman, first president of LSU. An alumnus and a faculty member commissioned this job, one of the few academic projects for which Young has been paid. He does earn fees from private collectors and art galleries.

Among the more important works of art he has restored professionally are two Rembrandts, a Copley, and a William Aiken Walter painting valued at $40,000.

SAY a painting is torn, has jagged holes, or is missing some sections. Young backs it with strong Belgian linen coated with resin, sandwiches the whole thing between layers of plastic, then fuses all layers together on a stainless steel heat table of his own design. Voila! A new surface ready for retouching or painting.

Young says he faithfully replaces the original art. "it isn't MY painting, after all! I only restore what the artist did originally."

One of his major labors of love was restoring a large number of paintings done by Ellsworth and William Woodward, the talented brothers who came to New Orleans in the late 1800s. Ellsworth founded the Newcomb School of Art; William taught drawing and sketching at both Newcomb and Tulane; both were leaders in the development of the world-famous Newcomb pottery.

"I knew how great the Woodwards were. Every book on Louisiana features them. But I wanted to..."
more, and the place to go was the place where they were most active—right? So—and this was a good many years ago—I went to the campus art museum and asked to see Woodward paintings. Would you believe it? The student in charge had never heard of them!”

This so upset Young that he started his own search for lost Woodwards. “We found Woodward paintings all around, in attics and even in a storage area under a stage floor. Most of them were in bad condition.” He restored 10 of the paintings last year for Newcomb and has several more to do.

A large collection was found in the attic of a home owned by Carl Woodward, recently deceased New Orleans architect and son of William Woodward. Hurricane Betsy had blown off part of the home’s roof, and the art was badly damaged, but Young was able to restore them. A few of these Woodwards, in desperate need of repair, were given to Young for his own motley collec-

 

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tion, which has turned his home into a veritable art gallery and is largely composed of works he found in junk shops or dark corner of antique shops and that given him by acquaintances who figured only he could restore it. A beautiful landscape by Drysdale, for instance, when found “looked like it had been beaten with two baseball bats.”

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Pointing to an exquisite small work with special pride, Young said: “I found this in a junk shop, along with hubcaps, glass eyeballs and no telling what else. But the junk man had good taste; this is a good painting.”

WHAT with the rewards of his scavenger hunts and gifts from friends, he has assembled a variety that includes a small Renoir sketch, an etching by Morris Henry Hobbs, paintings by Julia Michel Black, an Audubon print, a Gould flower print, paintings by Alberta Kinsey, Clementine Hunter and Knute Heldner, a Peterson still life of 1872, a William Aiken Walker work, paintings and wood carving by William Woodward, and several lovely paintings by Ellsworth Woodward, including a couple from the artist’s Munich days.

Among the paintings of which he is most proud are those of New Orleanian Robert Rucker, a personal friend with whom he has spent many hours scouring Louisiana backroads and swamps for paintworthy scenes.

Although he has had opportunities elsewhere, Young says he won’t leave Louisiana. “To me, this state is beautiful. I like what’s left of early rural Louisiana—the little cabins and the natural beauty—not the big plantation homes. That’s why I enjoy working with Bob Rucker on the sort of scene he does most.”

Rucker also is well known for his riverboat paintings. Young has helped with these, too, doing research to insure perfect accuracy.

THE scene of Young’s restoration work is a simple little concrete block building in his backyard. He refers to it as “The Shed.” However, the visitor, whiffing a splendid aroma of old canvas, paint and turpentine, enters by way of a little foyer made elegant by wall paneling composed of ancient South American doors, brass candelabra from a remodeled church, an 1820 deacon’s bench, and a beautiful old secretary—all gifts or payment in kind for restoration work.

In the workshop itself, every corner is piled with canvases in various stages of repair or disrepair; a stack of enormous books waits to be rebound; and leaning against the window is a broken but fascinating square of delicately stained glass.