

# It's a totally different painting!

—How Gallery de Boer restored a treasured family

Five years ago Alenka Keevill received a treasured family heirloom from Europe – a painting of her great great grandmother that is believed to be over 200 years old. The painting has been passed on to the eldest child of each generation and just recently came into Alenka's possession. "I grew up this painting," says Alenka. "It hung in my parents' house."

The woman in the painting is thought to have been a duchess living in or near Vienna. Family legend tells it that she had seven children by the duke. Later, she fell in love with a servant who was fourteen years her junior. She went to Poland with him, leaving behind all but this painting and her jewelry. She had five children with this man. After her death, he remarried. His new wife sent the painting and jewelry back to the duke's eldest child in Austria. This was Alenka's father's grandmother.

While in Europe it had been hung in rooms heated by coal fires. The painting and frame were coated with coal dust, smoke and insect droppings. The painting itself had some holes and was very dirty. However, Alenka doesn't

remember seeing it any other way.

She decided it was time to have this family treasure restored. She collected a couple of addresses from people she knew, trying to find someone she trusted with this treasured painting. Then her husband's aunt sent her an article about Michael Anderson's restora-

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tion work at Gallery de Boer.

"After reading the article, something about it just sounded right," says Alenka. A trip to Owen Sound was in order. They brought the painting and had a tour of Gallery de Boer. "We liked the gallery and really liked Ron. And Michael really knew what he was talking about." After viewing some restoration work in progress, Alenka and her husband knew Gallery de Boer was where the painting should be restored. "We wouldn't have left it with someone we didn't trust."

Restoring a painting is painstaking work. "It's an art and a craft," says Alenka. "There aren't very many people who can do this." Michael Anderson at Gallery de Boer is one of the few people in Canada trained for restoration work. This particular painting took Michael over a year and a half to restore. But the wait was worth it.

"It's a totally different painting," says Alenka. "I grew up with this painting. And suddenly there were colours I didn't know existed – the lace, the skin tones. It came alive. It looks as it was when it was first painted. We are very happy. It was a very professional job. And now it is a museum quality painting."

Now that the painting is restored, it hangs in their bedroom where it can be enjoyed every day. And one day it will be passed on to one of Alenka's sons. And hopefully it will continue to be passed along to future generations.

(c) 2007, Andrea J. Stenberg. Andrea J. Stenberg is a marketing consultant, commercial writer and author specializing in helping small businesses increase their sales by improving their marketing efforts. Her experience includes writing for the corporate sector, small businesses and non-profits as well as for publication. She can be reached at [www.stenbergwrites.com](http://www.stenbergwrites.com).