

A TALL ORDER

The Astoria Column, the city's defining landmark, is closed for the summer for a \$1 million restoration. The last significant repair work on the 89-year-old column was in 1995.



Marie Laibinis, the project director, removes moss from a mural. She estimated that by 1995, only about 20 percent of the original art by Italian painter Attilio Pusterla remained. Crews are using a higher quality paint to restore the work done two decades ago.



The distinctive art is known as sgraffito. The murals depict the early history of Astoria.



The cupola at the top of the 125-foot column will undergo waterproofing.



Structural repairs will be made to the observation deck that offers panoramic views of Astoria.



Core samples were taken to get a better understanding of the condition of the concrete. Vertical cracks were visible within a decade after the column was built in 1926.

“In a sense, it’s getting a physical right now,” Marie Laibinis, a Portland conservator, explains as she makes her way up the scaffolding around the Astoria Column. “And we’re learning a lot about the changes.”

The project director for the \$1 million restoration was involved in the last important work to the column in 1995, and she has kind of a maternal warmth for the 125-foot tall monument.

Old age and weather have caught up with the concrete cylinder, which was built in 1926 to

celebrate Astoria’s rich early history.

Over the summer, the column will be cleaned and painted, the observation deck will be stabilized, and crews will decide what to do about vertical cracks that expose the shaft to water.

The plaza at Coxcomb Hill will also be improved. “This time around it’s a little different,” Laibinis said of the restoration. “It’s a more comprehensive look at the column and the murals.”



John Goodenberger, a historic buildings consultant and site manager for the project, shows a plaster section of mural that has delaminated and is separating from the column.

By DERRICK DePLEDGE and JOSHUA BESSEX
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