



## US HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL MUSEUM RAILING MOCK-UPS, WASHINGTON, DC



### Client/Owner

architrave p.c. architects/United States Holocaust Memorial Museum

### Location

Washington, DC

### Project Dates

2008-2009

### Materials

Steel

### Services Provided

Assessment  
Testing Program  
Mock-ups  
Recommendations  
Cost Estimating

The US Holocaust Memorial Museum is a major institution dedicated to educating the public about the Holocaust, in Washington, DC. Designed by the late James Freed of Pei Cobb Freed & Partners, the museum was dedicated in 1993, one of the newer institutions along the National Mall. The first major space that a visitor encounters is the Hall of Witness, a triple-height sky-lit space. The space is consciously designed to feel un-modern and industrial, with un-painted brick walls, industrial roof trusses, and exposed steel turnbuckles and handrails.

The handrails presented a complex restoration challenge to the museum staff. The handrail had always been painted, a standard way to protect the mild steel rails from constant wear, and abrasion endemic to their function. However, paint continued to fail quickly, and the railings had been recoated multiple times in only 15 years. The museum staff sought a long-term solution which protected the steel, was maintainable, and still consistent with the design aesthetic.

Conservation Solutions, Inc. (CSI) was contracted by architrave p.c. architects in 2008 to develop a comprehensive testing program of possible paint removal methods and alternative finishes. Finish options ranged from high-performance coatings to chemical patinas, which could actually be enriched by constant contact and use. Product selection was tailored to account for the logistical and environmental parameters inherent to a large, public museum. The finishes also needed to be visually compatible with the somber, industrial space. CSI subsequently directed the execution of the mock-ups and the implementation of a maintenance plan. CSI participated in monitoring and evaluating the results over the course of several months, helping the client arrive at a visually appropriate and long-lasting solution.