President’s letter

Nicholas Dorman

Dear WAAC members,

To many people Seattle is all rain and woods and coffee, but as I write this in April, springtime is in full expression. I’m pleased to see on my phone’s weather display that it is looking considerably more cheerful here than it promises to be in Denver, Duluth, and Dublin this week. You see, it may rain here but what that really means is that it is mild.

And as it is in the spring, so it goes at the other end of summer. September is marked by golden afternoons and still long-ish days and the place remains wonderfully fresh, unlike so many towns after a long summer of heat and dodgy air-quality. Of course, it isn’t always idyllic up here in September, but I want to assure doubters that if the decade plus that I have lived here is anything to go by, there is a decent chance that the weather will be glorious, with crisp, maybe misty mornings and sunny afternoons. Seattleites are proud of their Septembers and, besides, the WAAC meeting will have much more to offer than weather (oysters, for example).

As I have been planning this year’s meeting, in addition to giving members a chance to visit a great city, hear terrific talks, and have their say at the business meeting, I’ve been working with my colleagues to assemble an agenda that will offer an entertaining and rewarding experience. One that, we hope, will complement and expand members’ interests and knowledge.

At the heart of the Seattle WAAC meeting will be the customary two and a half days of great talks. Serving as the head of conservation at a general museum, I have long found much satisfaction in attending WAAC meeting talks by allied professionals with expertise in fields that I know little about. I’m often struck by the remarkable amount of really useable knowledge that comes from these talks, which can be so beneficial from both practical and theoretical standpoints.

And there is a delight in the rhythm and range of a WAAC session that is unique in our field. It’s something like the (apparently ever less common) experience of stumbling across a series of intriguing books in a library. I can’t overstate how much I have grown to appreciate the range that is reflected in these talks, from the inspiring science-in-progress accounts by GRI experts last year, to superb projects presented by the Getty/UCLA students and graduates, to riveting accounts of treatments and other work out there in the broader conservation community. I clearly and fondly recollect my first WAAC meeting in Portland in 2002, during which a similar profile was apparent. Jack Thompson’s account of building his own paper mill (“Sources of Materials Described: Whiskey and Ibuprofen, widely available”) was the yin to the yang of Gail Joice’s presentation on the impact of 9/11 on museum insurance, which in turn was a nice transition to Claire Dean’s account of protecting rock art sites in South Africa. OK, I’m not going to use all this information to the same degree, but I always bring home use-
ful thoughts, techniques, and tips, and I am inspired by the ingenuity and talent of colleagues in our field. The continuity of basic themes and shared principles, despite superficial incongruities, reminds us why we love doing what we do.

In our schizoid world of peer-reviewed papers, on the one hand, and anything-goes divulgence of information via tweets and wikis on the other, the WAAC meeting provides an unrivalled forum to present one’s best work, often as it is happening, in a professional but utterly congenial atmosphere. While a paper doesn’t need to be (but often is) totally slick, presenters and the board volunteers soliciting the talks take the selection process very seriously. The result is a program that is both fresh and rigorous.

All of which is to say that, if you have something you want to share, we urge you to submit a talk for the Seattle meeting this September. For those of you in institutions, presenting is a great way for you to win approval for, and to feel good about, attending the meeting. For those in private studios, we are incredibly grateful for the time you take away from work to attend WAAC- this is a great time for the field to learn about your work in a lot more detail. Intriguing talks have already been proposed, but there is still space on the agenda so hurry, hurry, hurry if you want a place at the podium this year. Also, you might bear in mind that some of the best talks from the annual meeting are often converted into articles for the WAAC newsletter, so a WAAC presentation is a terrific way to ensure a legacy for the projects that you have worked so hard to complete and share.

So that’s the pitch. But what is Seattle offering this year? At the time of writing, I am still finalizing several program arrangements, but we will have the classic meeting events plus a few new twists. I have provided an outline of what we are thinking inside this issue, along with some travel tips.

For those of you who haven’t been to our beautiful region for a few years, I do urge you to come to the meeting. The city of Seattle has been completely transformed over the past decade, and the museum has been at the heart of that transformation. If you plan a longer trip, the Olympic, Mount Rainier and North Cascades National Parks, Pacific Ocean beaches, and exquisite San Juan Islands are all as gorgeous as ever (although Forks, on the Olympic Peninsula, is now overrun with teenage vampires).

I want to conclude this part of my letter by touching, briefly, on the subject of money. The WAAC board has taken a good look at finances, and it is a simple fact that membership is still a bit light following the economic downturn. We all know that in servicing the cultural arena we are often on the sharp edge of cuts and the breathless extremity of belt-tightening, and so we are trying to do things a bit differently to ameliorate the situation. The first thing to announce, of relevance to the meeting, is the fact that we have decided to donate funds yielded by this year’s silent auction to, wait for it, ...ourselves! So we ask you to go the extra mile to identify classy items to get your colleagues fired up, all for the best possible cause.

Secondly, this year we have ramped up our efforts to obtain sponsorship for the meeting. WAAC is typically just about as uncommercial an organization as could be imagined, but meetings are very expensive, so we have reached out to a small number of sponsors to help support the program. We are incredibly grateful for their partnership and how it will help to bring you a splendid meeting.

Wrapping up, I want to thank you for your membership and your involvement. I hope that you enjoy this edition of the Newsletter and that it inspires you to get involved. Please do consider nominating an unsuspecting colleague, or, even better, yourself, for the election, submit an article to the Newsletter, develop a workshop, propose a paper for the meeting and, whatever else you do, start making plans to join us in Seattle. You are WAAC.

We can’t wait to welcome everyone to the Emerald City this September.

Nick
The Seattle Art Museum (SAM) is delighted to be hosting the WAAC annual meeting this year. For those of you who plan to attend the meeting, we are providing a taster of what the city has to offer. Famous for coffee and grunge, seafood and rain, glass art and northwest mystics, green islands and great mountain ranges, hi-tech and low brow: it’s all here. We urge you to come and see for yourselves.

The Meeting Location
Talks will be presented at the Nordstrom Lecture Hall in the downtown Seattle Art Museum from Wednesday, September 18 – Friday, September 20, 2013, with some pre-conference events held on Tuesday, September 17. The two and a half days of lectures will take place at the downtown museum but other events will be held at multiple venues, so check the registration packs carefully when they arrive.

Getting Here
SAM is located in the heart of downtown Seattle. To get here, fly to SeaTac airport. Sound Transit light rail runs between SeaTac airport and downtown Seattle every 7-15 minutes. The trip takes approximately 40 minutes, and the one-way adult fare costs $2.75.

Taxis charge a flat-rate of $40ish between the airport and downtown Seattle locations, and there are several shared ride van options.

Transportation around Seattle
The Museum is served by Seattle Metro buses in the University Street tunnel station and along First and Third Avenues. Buses run between all conference venues, and details will be provided in the registration pack. The downtown museum is within easy walking distance of the shops, the market, and the recommended hotels.

WAAC wishes to acknowledge and thank the following donors:

For support of the Annual Meeting we gratefully thank: Artech, Bruker, Tru Vue and Workpointe (formerly Spacesaver).

We also thank an anonymous donor for an unrestricted gift of $6,000 to WAAC.

Membership / Membership Directory

WAAC welcomes the following new members: J. Gerrit Albertson, Alice England, Rina R. Hofmann, The Lunder Conservation Center, and Joshua S. Summer.

As noted in the previous WAAC Newsletter, the WAAC Membership Directory will be published and distributed in only electronic form beginning this membership year, for reasons of both cost and environmental impact. This will also allow two versions of the Membership Directory to be sent out. The first will be emailed in early April.
Events
Silent Auction: There will be one. WAAC will be the worthy recipient. Please bring AND buy.

Angels Project
An Angels project is currently in the works. It will take place on Tuesday September 17th and will involve a ferry ride across beautiful Puget Sound and urgently-needed archival assistance to a local historical society. More details soon! Thanks to Alice Bear for helping us to organize this project.

Pre-program Keynote Speech
On Tuesday September 17th, we are very pleased to partner with the Burke Museum of Natural History to present a keynote speech by Dr. Nancy Odegaard about the conservation of Kennewick Man. The talk will be open to the public and promises to be popular, so please sign up promptly when the registration package arrives.

Burke Museum of Natural History
University of Washington Campus
NE 45th St. and 17th Ave. NE

Reception
After the first day of talks, on Wednesday September 18th, we are delighted to welcome attendees to a reception at the Wright Exhibition Space. Virginia Wright and her late husband, Bagley, became known and loved in the community for being the preeminent pioneer modern art collectors in Seattle. Virginia is currently planning a new show of California Light and Space art with a number of truly spectacular pieces and a conservation display that we hope to be able to formally announce in the registration packs.

Wright Exhibition Space
407 Dexter Ave. N.

Conference Banquet
The banquet will take place on Thursday September 19 at the Seattle Art Museum’s Olympic Sculpture Park. With great views of the museum’s spectacular modern sculpture collection, (including important works by Serra, Di Suvero, Oldenburg, and Calder), award-winning architectural/park design by Weiss/Manfredi Architects, and a stunning panorama across Puget Sound to the Olympic Mountain Range.

Olympic Sculpture Park
2901 Western Avenue

On the afternoon of Friday the 20th, post conference collection and other tours will be organized. See registration pack for details.

Accommodations
We have a block of 25 rooms from Tuesday September 17 to Friday September 20. An additional 10 rooms are available on Monday September 16 for members arriving early for the board meeting or other pre-conference events. Participants must book through the hotel reservations line by August and specify that they are part of WAAC. The discounted rate for a room with queen bed is $155 plus tax, with valet parking at a reduced rate of $15/day. The hotel is located downtown, about 5 blocks from the museum and adjacent to the Westlake Center bus and Link light rail station.

Mayflower Park Hotel
405 Olive Way (between 4th and 5th)
Seattle WA 98101
Switchboard: 206.623.8700
Reservations: 800.426.5100

For a self-catering option, participants might consider Homewood Suites by Hilton which offers studio and one-bedroom suites with a fully equipped kitchen. Current internet rates through Expedia start at $143 for queen studio suite, with valet parking for $32/day. The hotel is located about 10 blocks from the museum and 2 blocks from the Convention Place transit station.

Homewood Suites
1011 Pike Street (between 9th and Boren)
Seattle WA 98101
Switchboard: 206.682.8282
Reservations: 800.225.5466

Both hotels offer free wireless internet and are within walking distance of the museum.

The City
Seattle has many and varied attractions to offer visitors. In addition to the program venues, events, and activities, other museums and galleries include the Wing Luke Museum of Asian Art Museum

The Eagle, Alexander Calder, 1971
Gift of Jon and Mary Shirley.
Photo: Paul Macapia

Asian Art Museum
the Asian Pacific American Experience, the Frye Art Museum, Chihuly Garden and Glass exhibit, Experience Music Project and Science Fiction Museum, Museum of Flight, Henry Art Gallery, Pacific Science Center, and many more.

While you are here, you must ride the monorail, go up the space needle, or save your money and walk up the Volunteer Park water tour when you visit our own beautiful Seattle Asian Art Museum on Capitol Hill.

There are many fascinating tours and fine places to eat, and we will outline the best of them in the registration/meeting materials.

So we hope very much that we will be able to share our great city with you this September. We are grateful for the pledges of support that we have already received from Tru Vue, Artech, Spacesavers NW, Gamblin, Bruker, and an anonymous donor. Their generosity will help us to make this a very special meeting. I’m excited about the expertise and spirit that the WAAC conference will bring to Seattle and about the hospitality we can extend to everyone who attends the meeting. This is going to be fun!

Nicholas Dorman and Lauren Barach
Seattle Art Museum

And lastly, some scenes of market life:
Regional News

Alaska

Scott Carrlee is presenting three workshops around the state to develop Alaska Collections Emergency Response Teams modeled after the AIC CERT program. These 10 member interdisciplinary teams of museum, archive, and library professionals will be available to organize responses to emergencies involving collections throughout the state. The workshops were funded by a generous grant from the Rasmuson Foundation, a philanthropic organization that funds arts and culture projects in the state of Alaska.

Ellen Carrlee is preparing to move to a temporary lab space this summer. She is helping design the new storage vault, and working on issues of oversized artifacts in preparation for the move of collections in March 2014 and subsequent museum demolition. Hundreds of wet shipwreck artifacts continue to be treated. Ellen also traveled to Bethel to seek collaboration opportunities with the Yupiit Piciryarait Museum for research on gutskin.

The Anchorage Museum and Smithsonian Institution (Arctic Studies Center and National Museum of the American Indian) co-hosted a Sewing Salmon Skin workshop with artists and conservators this winter. Conservators Kelly McHugh, Sarah Owens, Ellen Promise, and Monica Shah collaborated with artists Audrey Armstrong, Coral Chernoff, and Marlene Nielsen. A week of exchange and fish skin processing included teleconferences with students from the Winterthur program and staff at NMAI. This will be the first in a series of materials technology workshops.

Regional Reporter:
Ellen Carrlee

Arizona

Daniel Cull and Rose Cull have recently relocated to London, UK, where Rose has taken up the position of Kress Fellow in Sculpture Conservation at Tate.

The National Park Service conservation lab in Tucson is working with Tonto National Monument in choosing a group of prehistoric textiles that will receive storage mounts that will double as exhibit mounts to enable easy exhibit rotation.

Brynn Bender and Dana Senge visited Chiricahua National Monument to guide park staff on preventive care tasks for their historic house museum. Dana surveyed museum collections at Big Bend National Park and Fort Davis National Historic Site in west Texas.

Maggie Kipling is identifying, surveying, and developing storage containers for a wide variety of plastic objects in storage. Audrey Harrison is working on a storage upgrade project for historic clothing in collections from multiple parks collections.

Bailey Kinsky is treating historic hats from Chiricahua National Monument. Paige Hoskins is rehousing a collection of beaded moccasins from Grand Teton National Park. The lab also hosted a week of public tours for Arizona Archaeology and Heritage Month in March.

The Arizona State Museum celebrated its 120th anniversary on April 7, 2013, and the entire ASM Preservation Division staff has been working on preparing objects for temporary display that highlight the museum’s history as a premiere anthropology museum in the American Southwest.

Nancy Odegaard and Teresa Moreno continue to oversee the construction renovation of the new climate-controlled Arizona State Museum Basketry Vault, which will house the museum’s Save America’s Treasures (SAT) collection of archaeological and ethnological basketry and woven fibers. Nancy continues her work developing the heritage conservation educational programs with Kabul University in Afghanistan.

Teresa dusted off her master’s thesis from her degree in classical archaeology from the UA to use in curating an ASM mini-exhibit for the museum lobby and website. Her thesis, entitled Catalog of Ceramic Lamps in the Arizona State Museum, documents the museum’s collection of ancient Greek, Roman and Egyptian oil lamps. She highlighted fifteen ancient lamps as her “Curator’s Choice.” Teresa continues her PhD research on the conservation of American Indian silver jewelry. Just recently she completed the treatment of an early 20th-century saddle adorned with silver that is on loan to the New Mexico History Museum for their exhibit Cowboys Real and Imagined.

Gina Watkinson presented a poster at the Society for Applied Anthropology meetings in Denver and won the SFAA Gil Kushner Award. She continues her research on Tohono O’odham basketry for her master’s degree in American Indian Studies.

Gina, Marilen Pool, Elyse Canosa, and Brunella Santarelli continue to plow ahead with the condition survey of the ASM SAT basketry collection. Elyse and Nancy are working on the development of a new adhesive for ceramics with the University of Arizona Material Science and Engineering and Chemistry departments. Brunella and Christina Bisulca gave a paper at the Society of American Archaeologists Honolulu meetings for their research on lead in archeological materials.

Martina Dawley, Jae Anderson, Werner Zimmt and Nancy continue their work on testing and developing techniques for the removal of arsenic pesticide residues from Navajo textiles. Nancy worked with Iain Rushworth, a visiting PhD student from the University of Strathclyde, Scotland, on a new system for the detection of mercury vapor and other volatiles that could be present in museum environment.

Regional Reporter:
Brynn Bender

Hawaii

Dawne Steele Pullman continues to be the gypsy conservator keeping clients
happy in California, Hawaii, and Hong Kong. She recently treated paintings by Hitchcock and Gurrey in private collections on Oahu and is back in Asia working on a wide range of artworks from colonial to Chinese contemporary.

In addition to local artists such as D. Howard Hitchcock, Lionel Walden, Jules Tavernier, Isamir Doi, and Tadashi Sato, Rie and Larry Pace have had the opportunity to conserve paintings by a variety of artists not often seen in the Hawaiian Islands. These include a large oil painting by Fernando Botero, a flower painting by Georgia O’Keeffe from a mainland collection, and a beautiful Chinese trade painting of Hong Kong dating to the fourth quarter of the nineteenth century.

The team has also worked on a number of paintings in the collection of the Honolulu Museum of Art (formerly the Honolulu Academy of Art) including a Jes Collings collage, a large Lyn Foulkes mixed media, a 1943 Grandma Moses, and a small oil study by Eugene Delacroix entitled The Justice of Trajan.

Rie and Larry were fortunate to receive a Preservation Honor Award from the Historic Hawaii Foundation in both 2012 and 2013. The 2012 award was for the treatment of two portraits from the ‘Ioan Palace Gold Room, while the 2013 award was for the restoration of the world map mural in the wardrobe of the battleship U.S.S. Missouri.

Seth Irwin reports that staff members from the University of Hawaii Preservation Department continue to work on the rare map collection damaged during the 2004 flood. At last count, the treatments were approximately half done: 120 maps out of a total of 290 have been treated. The staff continues to work on the salvaging of the aerial photograph collection, also damaged in the 2004 flood.

Regional Reporter:
D. Thor Minnick

Los Angeles
A remembrance of Victoria Blyth Hill, who passed away on April 20, will appear in the September issue of the Newsletter.

LACMA conservation research head Frank Preussner continues to lead the Watts Towers Conservation Project team in the evaluation of conservation materials for application on the Watts Towers and analysis of the causes of deterioration. Sylvia Schweri-Dorsch is focused on identifying and testing adhesives for stabilization of glass and ceramic ornament; Blanka Kielb has made progress in the evaluation of polymer-amended mortars for filling of losses and cracks.

The team is also collaborating with the UCLA Civil Engineering Department in a study of the effects of vibration and solar heating on the Towers. The UCLA team, under the direction of Ertugrul Taciroglu and Robert Nickor, installed a tilt-meter, an accelerometer, an ultrasonic wind monitor, and displacement sensors to measure movements of the Towers under thermal, wind, and seismic stress, and plan to develop a dynamic model of the Towers.

Lalena Vellanoweth is working as a temporary senior textile conservator at LACMA this spring, conserving costumes and creating conservation condition reports for two large groups of recent acquisitions. Anne Getts used her Mellon research and travel funds in April to participate in a week-long Textile Society of America study trip, Textiles of the Low Country: Charleston and Savannah: Collecting, Preserving, and Narrating.

This spring, Jacklyn Chi is expanding her pre-program experience at LACMA with time spent in Textile Conservation under the supervision of Catherine C. McLean. Her first project is to conduct an examination and re-housing of a Peruvian textile fragment. Additionally, Jackie is learning the art of water gilding under the direction of conservation technician Jean Neeman.

LACMA paintings conservators have been busy with the recent reinstatement of the museum’s Latin American galleries. Elma O’Donoghue completed the restoration of a large 17th-century colonial panel painting by Pedro Ramírez, Marriage of the Virgin, for the reinstallation. Third year intern Morgan Hayes treated a 17th-century colonial panel made with inlaid shell, called an enconchado. A set of six paintings by 18th-century artist Juan Patricio Morlete Ruiz is also on display in the new galleries, along with a short documentary film about their history and restoration, featuring Mellon fellow Bianca May, paintings conservation head Joe Fronek, and curator Ilona Katzew.

Yadin Larochette started the year with two weeks in Oaxaca, Mexico, attending the tapestry symposium “Interweaving Cultures - The Meeting” co-sponsored by the Textile Museum of Oaxaca and the American Tapestry Alliance, and a related open studios weaving workshop that followed in Teotitlan del Valle. She is currently working on several conservation treatments, including a 17th-century Chinese kesi for Scripps College, funded by the NEA. Yadin is being assisted by new pre-program intern Adelaide Kahn.

Conservators at South Coast Fine Arts Conservation Center in Santa Barbara have been busy completing projects for Missions San Antonio, Santa Cruz, and Santa Inez. Patty West spent many months repairing a Spanish Colonial Santo from Santa Cruz Mission that was not only vandalized but was covered in several layers of over paint and is now back at the mission. Teen Conlon spent several months piecing together another statue that was vandalized. Standing over 6-1/2 feet tall and delivered to the studio in hundreds of pieces, it now has been returned home to St. Stanislaus church in Modesto.

The studio finished the cleaning and repair of the Campbell Grant murals in the lobby of the Santa Barbara High School, and a large 10’ x 13’ painting The Landing of Cabrillo by Dan Sayre Groesbeck which has been hanging in the Santa Barbara County Courthouse. The studio is currently overseeing the restoration of the 21’ high, 12-1/2 ton steel painted sculpture The Chromatic Gate by Herbert Bayer.
Regional News, continued

Tania Collas and Liz Homberger represented the Conservation Section of the Natural History Museum at the Centennial Safari, the first of many events celebrating the Museum’s 100th anniversary. Displaying Mission-era polychrome wood and ceramic artifacts from the History department’s collections, Liz and Tania discussed the techniques and materials of fabrication as well as the conservation of the objects.

Tania and Liz continue to work on the soon-to-open Los Angeles History hall: they have begun installation and are finishing the preparation of the final few objects. Liz is treating early California objects, including a leather sandal worn by a Franciscan monk and silver-plated and brass ecclesiastical objects. Tania is overseeing the preparation and reframing of 19 paintings for the exhibit.

Rosa Lowinger has been named curator of the exhibition Concrete Paradise: Miami Marine Stadium at the Coral Gables Museum in Florida. Rosa will be one of the instructors at the Association for Preservation Technology’s architectural finishes workshop at Taliesien North in June, 2013.

Caroline (Carrie) Roberts, intern in the antiquities conservation department at the Getty Villa, is launching a project on the study of green pigments in Greco-Roman Egypt. Carrie is examining methods of non-destructively identifying greens on ancient artifacts to contribute to the study of greens and their use in Egypt. Carrie will continue this research as a Fellow at the Metropolitan museum next year.

Jeff Maish and curator David Saunders are partnering with scientists Karen Trentleman and Marc Walton of the Getty Conservation Institute on the Attic Pottery project. This project seeks to understand, at a fundamental level, the materials and techniques employed by ancient artisans to create the iconic red and black figure pottery of ancient Athens. Supported by a grant from the National Science Foundation, scientists from the GCI, together with conservators and curators from the J. Paul Getty Museum, are partnering with The Aerospace Corporation and the Stanford Syn-

Taliah Radiation Lightsource (SSRL) to conduct detailed studies on these important ancient artifacts. By analyzing examples of pottery produced by different artists and over a broad time period, the project team is seeking to better understand the relationships between ceramic technology, artistic expression, and workshop practice.

In May, Erik Risser, David Saunders and Marie Svoboda will be presenting research papers at the ICOM/CiNC conference in Copenhagen. The papers, presented at the Conservation in the Nineteenth Century working group, are entitled The Restoration and Conservation of the Bronze Apollo Saettante from Pompeii, by Risser and Saunders, and Precision and Mastery: Identifying the Work of Raffaele Gargiulo on Four Apulian Vases, by Svoboda.

Regional Reporter: Virginia Rasmussen

New Mexico

M. Susan Barger is moving the traveling exhibit Art Across New Mexico around the state to small museums and holding workshops along the way. The show travels to eleven venues in small museums and libraries around the state until next December. The show is the traveling version of the larger show now showing at the New Mexico Museum of Fine Arts, 14,000 Years of New Mexico Art.

Regional Reporter: Silvia Marinidas-Feliner

Pacific Northwest

Linda Roundhill, (owner Art and Antiquities Conservation LLC) has completed a project for the Puyallup Tribe of Indians, archaeological material for the Army Corps of Engineers, several Inuit stone carvings, and a pair of fencing swords. Linda is also busy independently investigating and testing new/unusual materials for their use in conservation.

J.Claire Dean recently completed field work in Tempe, AZ, assisted by Deborah Ulh. Claire continues to develop conservation projects at the Tulalip Tribes’ Hibulb Cultural Center near Everett, WA, and is scheduled to carry out field work in South Africa in April or May.

The Royal BC Museum was reorganized in the fall of 2013. Conservation Services lost Robert Davison, senior preservation architect, and gained Kay Garland, preservation specialist. While Kay does not have a conservation background, she has been quick to pick up the principles of preventive conservation and is already running a new inspection/isolation/freezer room in the Archives to reduce the risk of infestation in that collection. Kay is also working to load the new cold storage facility with A/V collections, and has taken over data logger monitoring and pest inspections.

Lisa Bengston’s work on the Chinese paper lantern has moved into the RBCM galleries as she completes the treatment under the gaze of the public over the next six months. So far this has been an extremely successful program, serving to promote the goals, methods, and theory of art conservation.

George Field returned to Amsterdam to retrieve a loan of ethnographic materials. The loan ended prematurely due to space requirements for the coronation the new Dutch king.

Jana Stefan returned slightly belatedly, after another field season in the Antarctic conserving artifacts left by the early explorers. Jana will be the media and programs star during our upcoming exhibit Race to the End of the Earth, a traveling exhibit produced by the American Museum of Natural History.

The rest of the RBCM conservators have also been busy with treatments, public outreach, and collections storage projects. They had the pleasure of hosting Fleming College intern Rob Armour.
Regional News, continued

this spring. Rob assisted with the loan of the John Lennon Rolls Royce to Montreal as well as several other imminent loans and projects. Volunteers Paige Keith and Vicky Karas have been methodically surveying collections storage, identifying deteriorating foam (presumably all Polyplank) that will be replaced by brand name Ethafoam in the future. They look forward to welcoming two summer interns, Courtney Von Stein from the Winterthur Conservation Program and Emily Turgeon Brunet from Queen’s University.

Conservators at the Seattle Art Museum have had a busy spring. Starting the year on a great note, SAM acquired a new Bruker Tracer-III handheld XRF. The purchase was funded by museum supporters and local collectors and a grant from local arts organization 4culture.

Nicholas Dorman and curator Xiaojin Wu curated a display about conservation treatments of Japanese paintings. The treatments were supported by the Sumitomo, Carpenter, and Japan Foundations, and the display included exquisite tools and materials lent by mounter Tomokatsu Kawazu. The museum was pleased to receive funding from the Sumitomo Foundation for treatment of another important Japanese painting, Scenes from the Life of Gensei Shonin. The project will take place over the next two years.

The conservation department collaborated with curator Josh Yiu to prepare art from the collection for a major exhibition of SAM’s first director. Richard Fuller. Liz Brown has been studying objects with techniques including thermoluminescence and using the new XRF. Corine Landrieu has been undertaking condition reports and treatments, working with Liz and Marta. Pinto-Llorca and Kewei Wang of the University of Michigan are mounting two previously un-mounted Chinese calligraphy works. The show will launch SAM’s Getty-funded online catalog of the Chinese paintings collection.

SAM has had the pleasure of displaying an exhibition from Kenwood House. Peter Malarkey kindly assisted with condition reporting all the incoming art, and the department has been closely involved with tours and educational activities relating to the show. Department coordinator Lauren Barach curated an exhibition-within-an-exhibition of SAM’s Rembrandt print collection.

Nicholas Dorman presented on the treatment of SAM’s Venus and Adonis at a study day in the galleries of the Ringling Museum’s Veronese exhibition, and he and curator Chiyo Ishikawa discussed the painting in a public lecture at SAM. The painting returns to Seattle soon and will be the subject of a gallery display about the technique and conservation.

SAM’s Bank of America-funded conservation treatment and study of Jackson Pollock’s Sea Change is drawing to a close. The project allowed the Conservation Department to bring in experts including Jim Coddington, Wendy Lindsey, and Alan Phenix. The museum was very fortunate to be able to benefit from the experience and generosity of Jim and from colleagues at the J. Paul Getty museum and Getty Conservation Institute as they work on their own Pollock projects.

Nicholas Dorman attended a study day on Pollock’s Mural at the Getty. Liz Brown was delighted to attend the recent Calder conservation symposium at the Alexander Calder Foundation in New York. The meeting had been delayed because of Sandy but was extremely interesting given the considerable collections of Calder’s work in Seattle. Liz is also working with intern Josh Summer on treatment of a large Bob Arneson installation piece in the galleries.

Further afield in the Seattle community, Julie Creahan, Laura Phillips and Nicholas Dorman presented a workshop on collections salvage for local collection managers as a program of SHERN, the Seattle Heritage Emergency Response Network. Julie, Nicholas and Liz all attended presentations by candidates for the new conservation department at the University of Washington library. And finally, the museum inaugurated a high-profile cinematic artwork by Doug Aitken on the downtown museum façade - a suitably spectacular way to welcome colleagues to Seattle for this year’s WAAC meeting in September. The whole conservation team is working to prepare a terrific meeting.

Corine Landrieu completed her treatment of an architectural glazed terra cotta sculpture for the Museum of History of Industry, and it was installed on the North facing wall of the museum’s new location on South Lake Union.

She recently finished the assessment of the Fuller collection for the Seattle Asian Art Museum in preparation for a major exhibition, and began treatments. In the studio she has been working on a range of conservation projects, including some Civil War weapons and another underwater mine from the same period.

Assembling and binding 200 love letters, telegrams, and cards from 1937-1939 has provided Susan Lunas with several news ways of saying “I love you.” The greatest challenge was limiting moisture as most of the fountain pen inks, and lines of the lined paper were very water soluble.

Lisa Duncan, Art Conservator, LLC is moving to Seattle! It is bittersweet leaving the Eugene and Willamette Valley, but opportunities await in the big city!

Jack Thompson has been contracted to clean a series of photo-murals displayed in the restaurant of the Multnomah Falls Lodge. The Lodge is part of the national park system dating to the early 1920s, operated now under contract by a private company. It is located approx. 30 miles east of Portland, Oregon. Jack first worked on the murals in the early 1980s and again in the 1990s. The initial treatment was complicated because the photographs had been “improved” post World War II by a sign painter with oil paint, wax, and dark varnish.

Regional Reporter: Corine Landrieu
Regional News, continued

Rocky Mountain Region

Beverly Perkins, chief conservator at the Buffalo Bill Center of the West, completed the treatment of 64 firearms from the Smithsonian Institution.

Mark Minor completed a furniture and horse-drawn vehicle survey for the Grant-Kohrs Ranch National Historical Site in Deer Lodge Montana.

Heather Tudhope, conservator of paper and photographs in Denver and her husband Roby Sherman are expecting a baby boy in early June. Heather has been taking a break from conservation for the past year to spend time raising their daughter (now four). It looks like it will be a few more years before Heather’s studio will be back up and running and taking on new clients. She still helps out answering preservation questions via e-mail at conservator@tudhope.net.

Four Denver-area conservators, Barbara Johnson (objects), Karen Jones (book and paper), Paulette Reading (textiles), and Camilla Van Vooren (paintings) will be presenters at the 29th Annual Rocky Mountain Antiquarian Booksellers (RMABA) Association Fair.

The presentations highlight the fair theme of preserving and caring for collectibles of all types and will be a great venue for educating the public about the field of conservation. The fair will be held at the Denver Merchandise Mart in August.

Regional Reporter:
Paulette Reading

San Francisco Bay Area

Antoinette Dwan gave two workshops in March, first for the paper conservation staff at the National Gallery of Art and later for the staff and students at Winterthur/University of Delaware Art Conservation Program. The topics were the use of ammonium citrate dibasic in paper conservation and stain reduction with sodium borohydride methods. The same material was presented to the paper conservators from SFMOMA and the Legion of Honor, San Francisco.

Laura Neufeld, the advanced intern at the Legion of Honor paper lab, will be representing Buffalo State Art Conservation Department at the 2013 ANAGPIC conference in Los Angeles with her research entitled “Problem Children: Technical Analysis and Conservation Treatment of Two Works on Paper by Karel Appel.” In the fall of 2013, Laura will begin her new position as Mellon Fellow at the Museum of Modern Art, New York.

Victoria Binder, the associate paper conservator at the Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco, presented a poster on “Digital Fills of Glossy Photographs” at the 2013 AIC & ICOM-CC Photographs Conservation Joint Meeting in Wellington, New Zealand.

Sarah Gates of the Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco Textile Conservation Lab is very pleased to announce that the de Young will be installing a short, three-month exhibition of some of the most beautiful and oldest textiles in the permanent collection. Over fifty percent of the textiles have never been shown before and others have not been shown for ten to twenty years or more. Both Beth Szuhay and Hannah Lumb Riley were hired on short contracts to help wet clean and line some of the textiles. The exhibit, From the Exotic to the Mystical, opens May 4th.

Candis Griggs Hakim finally settled into the chaotic, traffic-y life in Doha, Qatar and is thoroughly enjoying her contract with the National Museum of Qatar. Under head conservator Valerie Free, she evaluates (and will soon treat) hundreds of ethnographic objects from the region in preparation for the museum’s opening in 2015. The collection contains everything from ornate Bedouin jewelry to pearl merchants’ chests, goat skin yogurt churns, camel saddles, and bejeweled daggers and swords. Candis invites anyone visiting the Middle East to make a stop in Doha.

Will Shank, whose business Conservation Resources Management is based in both San Francisco and in Barcelona, participated in the creation of a working group in the conservation of contemporary murals for the RICAC (the Hispano-American Network of Conservation of Contemporary Art) of INCCA, at the Reina Sofia Museum in Madrid in February. During three days in March, Will delivered a series of lectures on the care of contemporary art and temporary murals to the conservation students at the University of Ljubljana, and to the conservators from the National Restoration Center of Slovenia.

In April, Will made a presentation to ICON in London called “Up The Wall: The Multi-Disciplinary Approach of Rescue Public Murals.” In May, Will organized a two-day Street Art symposium in Mexico City with Lizeth Mata Delgado of the Seminario Taller de Restauración Moderna y Contemporánea of the Escuela Nacional de Conservación, Restauración y Museografía of the National Institute of Humanities (INAH) in Coyoacán, Mexico.

Susan Roberts-Manganelli reports that Robert Gamblin spoke in April at Stanford University about Gamblin Conservation Colors. The event was sponsored by the Bay Area Conservation Guild and the Conservation Labs on Stanford campus.

The Asian Art Museum has had a busy spring. China’s Terracotta Warriors: The First Emperor’s Legacy, opened in February to record crowds. In conjunction with this show, Katie Holbrow has been identifying Han Purple pigment on objects in the museum collection and is planning a collaborative research project with scientists from the Stanford Linear Accelerator Center (SLAC).

San Diego Area

No news reported.

Regional Reporter:
Frances Prichett
Regional News, continued

Katie recently visited the Getty Center to share lacquer samples and XRF data with Arlen Higenbotham and Michael Schilling and scientists there. Some of this data will be used in the stabilization treatment of Chinese wood and lacquer from the Warring State period.

Shiho Sasaki reports that she has just finished an intensive rotation of Asian paintings and is looking forward to a well-deserved vacation in Japan.

Mark Fenn is currently working with Delta Cabinets to develop an art storage cabinet that can be customized for anoxic fumigation, and is completing the final treatment steps of a pair of monumental outdoor bronze Japanese lions. These Edo period shrine guardians will be installed at the front entrance of the museum, and the year-long treatment was a team effort including work by conservators Elizabeth Saetta and Adam Nesbit.

Textile conservator Denise Migdail recently helped install a set of Edo period samurai armor and is planning textile projects for summer graduate intern Samantha Fischer from Queen’s University.

Regional Reporter:
Alisa Eagleston

Regional News, continued

Texas

Stephen Gritt, director of conservation and technical research at the National Gallery of Canada, spoke in January at the Blanton Museum of Art, University of Texas at Austin. Stephen addressed the importance of conservation in art museums within the context of their current exhibition Restoration and Revelation: Conserving the Suida-Manning Collection. Stephen oversaw the conservation of the centerpiece of the exhibition, Antonio Carneo’s 17th-century painting The Death of Rachel, which took over 500 hours to clean and restore.

The Harry Ransom Center at the University of Texas at Austin is pleased to announce that Diana Díaz Cañas has joined the HRC as a conservator of photographs, working with Barbara Brown in the Photograph Conservation Lab. Diana is originally from Bogota, Colombia. Following her education and training there, Diana worked as a conservator at the historic Archivo de Bogotá. Later she graduated from the Post-Graduate Course in Conservation of Photographs at the National School for Conservation (ENCryM) in Mexico City. Since Diana’s arrival in October 2012, she has completed several treatments of photographs included in HRC’s Spring 2012 exhibitions, and is working on other treatment projects in the lab and helping to reorganize the lab space.

The Ransom Center also hosted an on-site visit and consultation from April 2 - 4 by Thea Burns. Thea examined a selection of the Ransom Center’s holdings of pastel paintings by Frank Reaugh. Reaugh (pronounced Ray) was a Dallas-based artist whose career spanned the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Known as the “Dean of Texas Artists,” Reaugh is well known for his works in pastel, both studio works and especially his field sketches of West Texas, New Mexico, and other locations in the American Southwest.

Thea consulted with Ransom Center conservators Heather Hamilton and Ken Grant to help characterize Reaugh’s working techniques and materials, his idiosyncratic framing style, and the physical stability of the works themselves. The consultation was in support of a planned exhibition of Reaugh’s works at the Ransom Center in 2015. Thea also gave a public lecture at the Ransom Center on the history of pastel entitled “Pastel: Materials, Techniques and Genres” that drew an audience not only from campus but from the local pastel artists’ community. Paper conservators Jodie Utter from the Amon Carter Museum and Tina Tan from the Museum of Fine Arts Houston also attended.

Regional Reporter:
Ken Grant

WAAC Publications

Handling Guide for Anthropology Collections

Straightforward text is paired with humorous illustrations in 41 pages of “do’s and don’ts” of collection handling. A Guide to Handling Anthropological Museum Collections was written by Arizona State Museum conservator Nancy Odegard and illustrated by conservation technician Grace Katterman. This manual was designed to be used by researchers, docents, volunteers, visitors, students, staff or others who have not received formal training in the handling of museum artifacts. Paper-bound and printed on acid-free stock.

Price: $8.85
($6.60 copy for orders >10 copies)

Back Issues of WAAC Newsletter

Back numbers of the Newsletter are available. Issues Vol.1 - Vol.14, #3 (Sept. 1992) are $5/copy. Issues Vol.15 - Vol.29, #3 (Sept. 1997) are $10/copy. Issues Vol.30 (Jan. 2008) and after are $15/copy. A 20% discount will be given to libraries seeking to obtain back issues to complete a “run” and for purchases of ten copies or more of an issue.

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Claire Gerhard

Send prepaid orders to:
Donna Williams
WAAC Fulfillments
Conservation Meets Sustainability: Recycling Wooden Exhibition Cases

The Role of Exhibition Cases

Museums attempt to give visitors reasonable access to their collections, while preserving objects for the enjoyment and use of future generations. Exhibition cases are designed to provide visual access to museum objects, while protecting them from accidental damage, theft, vandalism, dust, ultraviolet light, environmental pollutants, extreme relative humidity, and temperature fluctuations.

A well-designed, functional exhibition case is thus an integral part of a successful exhibit, making it the object of intense focus and often heated debate among an exhibit’s numerous stakeholders: art handlers, building managers, curators, conservators, designers, engineers, fabricators, scientists, and security officers, among others. The processes described in this paper are a result of an exemplary collaboration between conservators and fabricators to address the persistent problem of VOCs emitted by wood by applying principles of sustainability to high-tech solutions.

The Drawback of Wooden Display Cases

Wood long ago became the material of choice for museum display cases because of its availability and relatively low cost. Further, wooden cases can be built simply using in-house craftsmen and facilities. Which largely explains why wooden exhibition cases are still being used in museums, despite numerous reports since the 1970s on the volatile organic compounds (VOCs) emitted by wood (specifically, acetic and formic acids) that can corrode objects displayed within a sealed case. The damage to objects in a sealed display case caused by the VOCs released from wood is irreversible.

Wood is corrosive by nature, and all wood, whether aged or newly harvested, can emit VOCs such as acetic and formic acids at room temperature. VOCs trapped within a sealed case, where there is no natural ventilation, can corrode metal, paper, and textiles, accelerate degradation, and cause irreversible color changes and fading.

The earliest report of damage to objects enclosed within a wooden display case was published in the 19th century (Eastlake et al. 1850). Since then, systematic studies in conservation have recorded and illustrated the corrosion caused by VOCs emitted from wood (Oddy 1975, 235-237; Oddy 1973, 27-28; Padfield et al. 1982, 24-27; Hatchfield 2002; Sage 1994, 113-124).

VOC Tests and Material Evaluation

Museums routinely use the Oddy test (Oddy 1975, 235-237) to detect corrosive gases within display cases. The test, devised by British Museum conservation scientist Andrew Oddy in 1973 (Oddy 1973, 27-28), places coupons of silver, copper, and lead inside airtight glass jars and exposes them to the VOCs commonly emitted by wood, as well as high temperature, and 100% relative humidity.

Lead is extremely susceptible to corrosion by the acids emitted from wood. Lead exposed to VOCs forms a characteristic white crystalline growth on its surface, composed of lead salts. Silver coupons become tarnished by sulfur and carbonyl sulfides off-gassed from wood, and copper coupons are susceptible to chloride, oxide, and sulfur compounds.

Objects made from materials that fail the Oddy test cannot be displayed in wooden cases without considerable risk of permanent damage.

Misconceptions about VOCs

There are many misconceptions concerning VOCs. These commonly held but potentially dangerous beliefs need to be recognized in order to ensure the safety of objects in museum displays:

- VOCs in wood can be contained with paint and other coatings.
- Aged wood does not release VOCs.
- The process of engineering wood does not release VOCs.
- Colors and dyes do not release VOCs.
- “Green” materials are conservation-friendly.
- Plastics do not release VOCs.
- Adhesives do not release VOCs.
- Gaskets do not release VOCs.

The Zero-VOC Conservation-Grade Microchamber

The Smithsonian Institution is committed to addressing present problems with sustainable solutions that do not compromise the needs and resources of future generations. This approach to preventive conservation is not only environmentally sound, but also economically viable.

For the last 10 years, a museum conservator and exhibition fabricators at the Smithsonian have engaged in a collaborative effort to design and produce a practical and sustainable solution to the problem of VOC corrosion. The team’s objectives were to minimize the corrosive damage caused by VOCs emitted from wood, without having to discard countless wooden exhibition cases that remain a valuable commodity to the museum.

The team designed a lightweight, non-wood chamber that can be retrofitted to existing wooden display cases of assorted sizes and dimensions. This isolation chamber, made of non-VOC-emitting material, eliminates direct air exchange between the chamber and the wooden case on which
it fits, and prevents contact between display objects and the wooden case (Fig. 1).

A subspace houses materials that further safeguard display objects, such as silica gel to absorb moisture, a VOC absorber, and an acid scavenger. With the object on display securely housed in the isolation chamber, the wooden case can retain its aesthetic appeal while serving as a base of support for the chamber (Fig. 2).

A recyclable* aluminum and polyethylene composite called DIBOND® is used to make a box that fits inside an existing wooden case (Fig. 1). Computerized drawing and cutting methods provide the precision and speed necessary to produce precisely sized boxes to accommodate wooden cases of various sizes, styles, construction, and dimensions.

To avoid using adhesive, which is a source of solvent-based VOCs, DIBOND® sheets are scored and miter-folded, a process similar to origami folding, with only a few metal rivets to reinforce the corners (Fig. 3).

This box serves as the chamber’s subspace and houses buffered silica gel, VOC absorber, and acid scavenger. An access port on one side of the box allows for easy access to the subspace from the exterior of the case.

A shallow, channeled deck is then constructed from DIBOND®, using the same techniques of scoring and folding. This deck fits atop the DIBOND® box (Figs. 1 and 2). Slots in the deck provide for air exchange with the desiccants in the subspace. An acrylic vitrine cover fits into a recessed area between the deck and the wooden case, completing the retrofitted display case.

Application

Our newly designed micro-chambers were first employed in the Smithsonian exhibition “Cyprus: Crossroads of Civilizations” at the National Museum of Natural History (September 29, 2010 through May 2, 2011). Marking the 50th anniversary of the independence of the Republic of Cyprus,
the exhibition featured more than 200 artifacts, including gold jewelry, vases, bowls, bronze and copper items, and nearly 100 coins from the Hellenistic period to the Venetian period (Figs. 4 and 5). The micro-chambers were central to our efforts to preserve these invaluable items on loan to the Smithsonian.

For the Cyprus exhibit, wooden display cases gathered from various Smithsonian museums and units were retrofitted with our conservation-grade micro-chambers. Colored fabrics and plastic laminates were chosen for their non-corrosive properties, ease of handling, and suitability for the exhibited items. Didactic panels were, for the most part, posted inside the display cases. In addition, sets of copper, lead, and silver coupons were placed on each deck to monitor for the presence of VOCs for the duration of the exhibition (Fig. 4).

After nine months inside the micro-chambers, these coupons were retrieved. Close examination showed no corrosion or tarnish on any of the metal coupons, proving that the micro-chambers performed as expected, providing a VOC-free environment for exhibited museum pieces.

Summary

The sustainable, conservation-grade micro-chamber described here has gained increasing acceptance within the Smithsonian since 2011. Indeed, the Office of Exhibits Central, which supports Smithsonian museums and units in all aspects of exhibition design and production, has been routinely retrofitting existing wooden cases for Smithsonian museums and units.

Museum curators and designers are constantly on the lookout for colors, materials, and textures to enhance the visual impact of their displays. To meet this demand, plans are under way to improve the design of the micro-chamber and to test a variety of sustainable, recyclable materials for the deck and isolation chamber that have aesthetic appeal, yet meet increasingly stringent safety standards.

*DIBOND® is a fully recyclable material. However, at present, the specialized machines required to recycle DIBOND® are manufactured and used only in China.

Acknowledgements

Stephanie Scheivert, Chair, Smithsonian Environmentally Responsible Exhibits and Displays (SEED)
Don Hurlbert, Senior Photographer, National Museum of Natural History
Rae (Harriet) Beaubien, Head of Conservation, Museum Conservation Institute

References


The Use of Siloxane-Based Cleaning Systems to Clean Water-Sensitive Painted Surfaces by Tiarna Doherty and Lucian H. Shockey

Introduction

John Scott’s “Thornbush Blues Totem” was made in 1990 and entered the collection of the Smithsonian American Art Museum in 1994. The large sculpture is made of formed and welded steel, aircraft cable, and copper alloy fittings. All surfaces of the piece were primed and painted with the exception of the cables and fittings. The painted surfaces appear to have been brush applied: there is significant variation in paint thickness throughout, visible brush strokes, and scattered drips of paint. The painted surfaces have a shiny appearance.

The sculpture came to the conservation lab from storage previous to display in the exhibition African American Art. Harlem Renaissance. Civil Rights Era and Beyond presented by the Smithsonian American Art Museum in 2012. A preliminary examination of the sculpture in storage identified the conservation treatment priorities as removing residues of adhered urethane foam residues as well as large strips of an adhesive foam tape.

The large passages of adhesive foam tape that were found along the sides of the sculpture, at the bottom edges of the base, appear to have been on the sculpture in 1994. It is speculated that the tape was applied in the past to facilitate moving the large, heavy sculpture and/or to protect a floor surface. The residues of adhered urethane foam were due to a packing decision made by the museum registrars department without consulting conservators.

The surface of the sculpture had a light layer of dirt and grime overall. In areas where foam residue and tape were found on top of the paint film it was clear that a combination of solvent and mechanical action would be needed. Before treatment took place there was no time for analysis of paint media. This took place during and after treatment. As with the majority of conservation treatments, analytical support is not readily available and treatment decisions must be made without consulting conservators.

The paint surfaces were tested for solubility in a wide range of solvents including filtered tap water, pH 7 buffered water (Bis-Tris), petroleum benzine, xylene, ethanol, and benzyl alcohol. In all cases the paint was soluble. Based on previous experience by one of the authors using silicone-based materials for cleaning water-sensitive surfaces it was decided to test that class of materials [1].

Silicone-Based Materials

It is worth reviewing the nomenclature of silicone-based materials as it can be confusing. Silicon is the free element listed on the periodic table. The element silicon does not exist in nature as a free element and must go through a chemical reaction to be released from silica or quartz (silicone dioxide: Si-O2).

The silica is heated with a carbon source such as wood in a carbothermic reaction. The reaction isolates silicon which can then be reacted with methyl chloride in the Rochow-Muller direct process producing methylchlorosilanes. These silicon compounds contain both methyl groups and chlorine and can be distilled to dimethylchlorosilane which is hydrolyzed to produce siloxanes and silicones.

The term silicone was first used to describe synthetic polymers containing a Si-O backbone in 1857 [2]. Technically the term is applied to materials with the Si-O bond however the term is now widely used to refer to substances that contain a silicon atom.

Silicone fluids, more accurately described as linear and cyclic volatile methylsiloxanes (VMS), are characterized by their special surface properties. Their low surface tension is related to the length of the Si-O and Si-C bonds which are able to adopt low energy configurations at interfaces [3]. This property has made them ideal for release agents.

Silicone fluids are used in the cosmetic industry to formulate water-in-oil emulsions. Silicone materials are extremely non-polar making them suitable for cleaning applications on water-sensitive surfaces. Their low-surface tension means they are able to wet out surfaces and undercut soiling material. The neat VMS materials are characterized by low toxicity and no odor [4].

In testing silicone-based materials for cleaning applications in conservation our approach has been to start with the neat silicone solvents and then explore building emulsions or micro-emulsions by adding low HLB surfactants (either polyether modified polysiloxanes or trisiloxanes or ethoxylated aliphatic alcohols) to the silicone solvents [5]. Some dimethicone crosspolymers, e.g. Velvasil, come mixed in a dense gel form to which polar solvents (including water) may be added creating an emulsion.

Testing and Treatment

On the John Scott sculpture, testing was carried out in order to determine which silicone-based material or combination of materials would allow for removing the foam adhesive tape without solubilizing the original, water-sensitive paint surfaces.

The solvent cyclomethicone D5 was tested first since it had a slow evaporation rate which would give us working time to observe the behavior of the solvent and interaction with the paint surface. Cyclomethicone D5 is a pure form of the solvent where there is a 5 ten-member ring of alternating silicon and oxygen atoms with each silicon atom having two methyl groups attached.

While there was no immediate reaction with either the paint films or the adhesive of the tape other than wetting the surface, the slow evaporation rate appeared to lend itself to slowly undermining the adhesive of the foam tape.
The use of a shaped and sharpened wooden applicator was the primary mechanical tool required to remove the tape and carrier.

The cyclomethicone D5 made the physical manipulation of the scalpel easy due to the slick interaction of the solvent with all surfaces: the scalpel blade could more easily slide over the slightly uneven paint surface and under the foam adhesive tape.

Hexamethyl disiloxane, a linear form of a silicone solvent, was also tested. The supplier of our hexamethyl disiloxane, Shepard Brothers Inc. in La Hambra, CA, uses the abbreviation DMF for their line of linear silicone solvents (not to be confused with dimethylformamide). The 0.65 indicates viscosity (measures in units of stokes at 25 degrees C), a parameter that is used widely for distributing linear silicone fluids. This material was able to wet well onto the surface and appeared to penetrate into the plastic carrier of the tape. The process of mechanically removing the tape and foam adhesive was similar to that described above, however the working time was less because it has a much faster evaporation rate than the cyclic silicone solvents.

As the silicone solvents did not appear to have much of a solubilizing effect on the adhesive itself it was decided to explore using the commercially prepared silicone-based gels. These gels are crosspolymers that contain silicone. They are supplied in a concentrated gel form and the solvents are generally cyclomethicones. When we used these gels we first diluted them using small amounts of the silicone solvents. The gels were tested alone and then as emulsions with water or another solvent.

Lastly, another dimethicone / polyethylene glycol (PEG) crosspolymer commercially named USG-107A by Shin Etsu was used. The USG-107A has reportedly greater phenol substitution groups and vinyl functional groups than the KSG-210 which were described to us by the manufacturer as lending to better spreading/wetting properties.

The silicone gel USG-107A was thinned with the linear silicone solvent hexamethyl disiloxane. While this mixture wet on to the surfaces as others had, it was found to have the most effective working time. As no solvent combination was found to dissolve the foam adhesive easily, mechanical action was required to remove the tape. This mixture was found to be the most effective at providing physical proper-

A dimethicone / polyethylene glycol (PEG) crosspolymer commercially named KSG-210 by Shin Etsu was emulsified with a small amount of 1-methoxy-2-propanol. A second test was carried out with another emulsion by substituting the emulsified phase with n-butanol. The paint did not show any sensitivity to either mixture. The adhesive bond of the tape was undermined to some degree. The tape and foam adhesive had to be removed mechanically. The area was rinsed with hexamethyl disiloxane and cyclomethicone D5.
The Use of Siloxane-Based Cleaning Systems to Clean Water-Sensitive Painted Surfaces, continued

isiloxane evaporate much faster. In addition, the linear forms of the solvent pose less of a threat to the environment [6].

Conclusion

The treatment of the sculpture was effective in allowing us to remove different forms of residues from a water-sensitive surface. Due to limitations in time and access to analytical equipment, samples were taken after cleaning was underway for analysis of the paint. The paint was characterized as a methyl methacrylate-butyl methacrylate-alkyd mixture by FTIR and Py-GC-MS [7].

While the paint surfaces of the John Scott have been described as shiny, it is important to note that they are very uneven due to the hand application of the paint layers. Thus, working mechanically over the uneven surface under the foam tape was challenging since one could not see the surface of the object. The silicone-based materials were very useful in both allowing for us to physically manipulate materials safely while also not solubilizing the original painted surface.

We look forward to the results of ongoing PhD research into the efficacy and clearance of silicone, currently being carried out by Professor Richard Wolbers [8].

Acknowledgements

The authors would like to thank Chris Stavroudis, Richard Wolbers and Scott Hudnell for their guidance and generosity in sharing information, Jennifer Giaccai for scientific analysis, and Mary Tait for photography.

Endnotes

1. In the summer of 2009 Richard Wolbers introduced this material during a Cleaning Acrylic Paintings meeting. The meeting was a collaboration between the Getty Conservation Institute, the Getty Museum, the Tate, and Winterthur/University of Delaware Program in Art Conservation. The subsequent use of cyclomethicone and Velvsil Plus are described in “Developing cleaning systems for water-sensitive paints by adjusting pH and conductivity” by Tiarna Doherty, Chris Stavroudis, and Jennifer Hickey. Paintings Specialty Group Postprints. American Institute for Conservation 2010. Forthcoming.


5. For more information about these surfactants see Chris Stavroudis, A Surfeit of Surfactants, WAAC Newsletter, Volume 34. Number 3. September 2012: 24 – 27.

6. “Octamethylcyclotetrasiloxane (cyclomethicone D4) has been identified as bioacumulative and therefore potentially harmful to the environment. Because of its silicon content, it is recycled differently from hydrocarbon solvents. This means that the solvent should not be mixed with other solvents for hazardous waste but disposed of separately unless explicitly instructed otherwise by your waste hauler. In general, the family of volatile methylsiloxanes are considered safe for human exposure but there is growing concern over long term exposure, particularly in women, and particularly those with silicone-based implants. The decamethylcyclopentasiloxane (cyclomethicone D5) and polydimethylsiloxanes remain widespread in personal care products.” See “Developing cleaning systems for water-sensitive paints by adjusting pH and conductivity”

7. Email correspondence with Jennifer Giaccai and the Analytical Report in object record file, Conservation Department, Smithsonian American Art Museum

A Tensioning Device for the Reduction of Severe Planar Distortions in Paintings

In the wake of Hurricane Sandy the community of paintings conservators is once again reminded of the challenges posed by water damage. Planar deformations in canvas supports are of paramount concern, as are issues of lifting, flaking, and paint loss.

The treatment goal in correcting planar deformations is to equalize the tension across the entire picture plane. (Consolidation of endangered paint should be addressed prior to this procedure, even when nothing more than temporarily “holding flakes in place” is possible.)

The device proposed here is based on a stretcher model developed by Claudia Kluger, while working with Prof. Winfried Heiber, that utilized a system of clamps and straps. The clamps were stapled to webbing straps; the straps were then stapled to an expansion work stretcher for gradual tensioning. Individual straps were independently tightened as needed by the somewhat cumbersome method of re-stapling. (A clamping system that does not require flattening of the tacking edges has also been developed.)

The current mechanism is capable of more precise and efficient tensioning, especially on large paintings, because the construction allows for controlled and gradual tweaking of the tension at each site of clamping – like tuning a piano.

The Components

Framework

The framework is a fixed work strainer made to accommodate the dimension of the painting plus enough space in either direction for attaching the clamps and the bolt system used in pulling out the canvas.

Aluminum angle plates are fastened to the work strainer. These can be the “T” profiles used in the prototype or ready-made punched steel angles that are pre-drilled with holes at 1-inch intervals. For smaller-sized paintings, one “L” angle with the base mounted towards the painting would suffice.

Clamps

The wooden sections of the clamps are made of lengths of baseboard molding cut into slightly under 2-inch widths. The baseboard profile should be such that when the molding pieces are clamped together, there is a space of at least ¼-inch to accommodate the tacking margin.

The front edge of the wood clamps are lined with Volara to aid in maintaining a grip on the painting’s tacking margins. Pressure sensitive adhesive is not recommended for adhesion due to “creep” of the adhesive when under tension. If Lascaux 360HV is rolled on to Volara (or other good gripping material) and allowed to dry, this material can be cut into strips and pressed on to the inside edges of the wood clamps.

The wood clamps are tightened with bolts, washers and wing nuts.

A nail is driven through the bottom half of the clamp so that it fits into a very slightly larger receiving hole in the top half. This keeps the wooden elements in alignment and also acts as the attachment site for the link to the tensioning bolt.

The tensioning bolt consists of a 3 inch flattened-end hanger bolt. It is attached to the clamp with a Duolock snap which links the eye of the bolt to the nail in the clamp. Due to its rigidity, the snap prevents the bolt from spinning when ultimately tightened by the wing nut.

The threaded end of the bolt is fitted through a hole in the aluminum angle plate attached to the strainer, and secured with a washer and wing nut. Adjustment of the wing nut is used to control the tension; as the wing nut is tightened and the bolt is drawn in, the canvas slowly tightens.
Application

The deformed painting is freed from its stretcher and transferred to the device by attaching the clamps in the corners and centers of all sides, facing the edges first, as necessary.

Then further clamps are systematically attached until the entire perimeter is fixed. Each of the clamps is tightened by slowly turning the outer wing nuts until even tension is achieved by “feel.”

The chamber is created by placing Mylar or vinyl strips over the clamps and the outside of the strainer. The table is covered with plastic or Mylar. Blotters wetted with a saturated NaCl salt solution are placed within the chamber beneath the painting to maintain a relative humidity of approximately 74%. Humidity dials or cards should be placed within the chamber to monitor the increase in relative humidity. Small fans placed within the chamber equalize distribution of humidity.

As stated in Conservation of Easel Paintings, an appropriate fungicide can be used if prolonged humidification is needed. In the two cases tested, humidification was elevated over the course of 3 days and no fungicide was added. In the first test ambient humidity of 70% was sufficient. In the second test humidity was elevated to 75% by the introduction of ultrasonic mist fed into the chamber. (More information on the methodology of implementing humidification and heat, regardless of the stretching system can be reviewed in Conservation of Easel Paintings.)*

In the treatment of “War Pieta” the paint and ground layers were consolidated with a solution of hot Beva 371 diluted with petroleum distillate which was brushed through the paint layers to stabilize them. The Conservation of Easel Paintings describes the use of fungicide if prolonged humidification is needed. In the two cases tested, humidification was elevated over the course of 3 days and no fungicide was added. In the first test ambient humidity of 70% was sufficient. In the second test humidity was elevated to 75% by the introduction of ultrasonic mist fed into the chamber. (More information on the methodology of implementing humidification and heat, regardless of the stretching system can be reviewed in Conservation of Easel Paintings.)*

*By Carolyn Tomkiewicz

War Pieta by Max Ginsburg

Once the canvas is tightened around the entire perimeter, it can then be humidified. As the canvas begins to equalize, the process of tightening continues until planarity is achieved.

by Carolyn Tomkiewicz
A tensioning device for the reduction of severe planar distortions in paintings, continued

verso of the canvas, while still in the tensioning device. The painting was then released from the device, placed on the suction table and heat-activated with a tacking iron through silicone release Mylar through the face.

In the case of “River,” tenting which was limited to minor, scattered areas, was consolidated locally with sturgeon glue through the face. Residual deformations were eliminated on the low-pressure suction table. Each case is different - each case will demand individual decisions.

Acknowledgements

Sincere thanks to artist Max Ginsburg for allowing the treatment of War Pieta (water damaged in 2011) to be published and to artist Jayne Holsinger, who kindly provided her Hurricane Sandy-damaged painting for testing (River 2012). The tensioning device was constructed by Simon Liu with the assistance of Niko Papadimitriou. Caitlin Breare, graduate student of the NYU Program at the Conservation Center, Institute of Fine Arts, and Kieven Havens, pre-program intern, assisted in the treatment.

Footnotes

1. Kluger, Claudia, Dehnmethoden für Leinwandgemälde. In: Mitteilungen des Deutschen Restauratorenverbandes 1984/85, pp.30-32 (Methods of Expanding Canvas Paintings, In: Communications of the German Restorers Association.) The clamping device described in the article is shown below. Some of the design principles were adapted in the present work.


3. This clamp arrangement orients the clamp perpendicular to the canvas plane. One block of the clamp is placed on the inside of the tacking margin while the second wood block, with the canvas strap stapled to the edge facing the tacking margin, maintains the right angle of the tacking margin. The blocks are pressed together with a bolt and wing nut and the canvas strap then fixed to an expandable stretcher. This clamping mechanism could also be used with the tensioning system described in this article. Renate

Articles You May Have Missed


HERCULANEUM, Italy — They are poignant snapshots of sudden death: huddled clusters of skeletal remains in what were once beachfront warehouses, immortalized for eternity when Mount Vesuvius smothered this ancient Roman town in A.D. 79. First excavated by archaeologists some 30 years ago, the warehouses were recently outfitted with walkways and gates to provide access and will soon be open to the public on special occasions.

Reviving history for a modern audience “is one of the beautiful things we get to do,” said Domenico Camardo, the lead archaeologist with the Herculaneum Conservation Project, a joint initiative of the Packard Humanities Institute, of Los Altos, Calif.; the local artistic heritage authority; and the British School at Rome.

The project, an unusual public-private venture, has effectively managed the site for more than a decade. Compared with its better-known Vesuvian neighbor, Pompeii, Herculaneum has become a textbook case of successful archaeological conservation. For many years archaeologists and conservators have undertaken what they describe as “invisible work” here, like installing cost-effective protective roofing or reactivating the Roman sewers under the ancient city so that buildings can once again drain rainwater.

Pogendorf, Doerner Institut, Munich, Germany. Personal communication.


Materials

Volara
Lascaux 360HV
baseboard molding
3-inch continuously threaded bolt with washer and wing nut
Duolock snap
gofastandlight.com/prodinfo.asp?number=FI-H926851&variation=&gclid=CMGDgvjw2rYCF UdU4Aod31QADA
flattened-end machine screw hanger 1/4"-20 thread, 3" overall length with washer and wing nut - mcmaster.com/
steel angle with holes
fastenal.com/web/products/details/41183
The work also took the deep pockets of the American philanthropist David W. Packard, son of one of the founders of Hewlett-Packard, who discreetly funneled more than $20 million into the project over the past 12 years, creating a team of specialists, nearly all Italian, to reinforce the local heritage staff. Unesco is working with the Vesuvian sites and studying how Herculaneum could be a model for other World Heritage Sites, particularly in Mediterranean and Arab countries.

“The Blanton Exhibition Dives into the Science of Art Conservation with Big Reveal,” University of Texas at Austin News, 11/15/2012

The Blanton Museum of Art at The University of Texas at Austin presents “Restoration and Revelation: Conservations the Suiza-Manning Collection,” an exhibition on view Nov. 17, 2012, through May 5, 2013, that puts the preservation of Old Master paintings and drawings from the 16th through 18th centuries under a metaphorical microscope. It underscores how the convergence of art and science can lead to new knowledge about the works and their makers.

Antonio Canova’s 17th-century painting “The Death of Rachel,” recently restored by the National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa, serves as the focal point of this in-depth investigation and is showcased alongside several additional Renaissance and baroque artworks, representing a range of conservation issues.

When the Blanton acquired the work in 1998, the canvas had severe structural problems and a pattern of paint loss indicating that it was probably rolled and folded at some point in its history. A previous restoration attempted in the mid-20th century was left unfinished, and the painting was in need of repair to safeguard it from further deterioration and restore its visual integrity.

The conservators at the National Gallery of Canada, led by Chief Conservator Stephen Gritt, first had to technically examine the painting, clean its surface and fill in areas of paint loss. It took several months to reconstruct the forms in “The Death of Rachel,” and the whole treatment — which took more than 500 hours — was documented through video and photography that accompany the dramatic and successful end result on view.

A range of conservation issues — and the techniques used to address them — is examined through other works in the exhibition. Also on view is a 17th-century canvas by a follower of the artist Simon Vouet selected for this exhibition because of a startling discovery made while it was being cleaned.

“Vandalised Mark Rothko ‘Could take 18 Months to Restore’,” The Telegraph, 11/21/2012

When a Mark Rothko painting was vandalised at the Tate Modern last month, some experts predicted the work would be back on gallery walls before long. However, following a close analysis of the damage, the Tate Modern’s team of leading Rothko conservation specialists have said the work will require a significant amount of work and could take as much as 18 months to restore to its former glory.

In October, Vladimir Umanets, claiming to be an artist acting in the interests of a conceptual art movement called “Yellowism”, is alleged to have scrawled a graffiti message on Rothko’s Black On Maroon (1958). A spokesperson for the Tate told the Daily Telegraph this morning that the damage was worse than had been first reported.

“There was a lot of speculation about the scrawl being made a marker pen, but it wasn’t. The damage was made with ink which has made a deeper mark. The gallery set up a committee including an independent expert to advise on the conservation process. Despite their apparent simplicity, Rothko’s paintings are notoriously difficult to fix because the artist often mixed his own paints with unusual materials.

He used thin layers of paint to achieve a depth and richness of paintings often comprised of hundreds of meticulously layered sheets of colour. The defaced painting was one of a series, known as the Seagram murals, gifted to the Tate by the artist in 1969.

“Petroglyph Thefts Near Bishop Stun Federal Authorities, Paiutes,” Los Angeles Times, 11/18/2012

Ancient hunters and gatherers etched vivid petroglyphs on cliffs in the Eastern Sierra that withstood winds, flash floods and earthquakes for more than 3,500 years. Thieves gouged holes in the rock and sheared off slabs that were up to 15 feet above ground and 2 feet high and wide.

Visitors discovered the theft and reported it to the BLM on Oct. 31. The region is known as Volcanic Tableland. It is held sacred by Native Americans whose ancestors adorned hundreds of lava boulders with spiritual renderings: concentric circles, deer, rattlesnakes, bighorn sheep, and hunters with bows and arrows.

For generations, Paiute-Shoshone tribal members and whites have lived side by side but not together in Bishop. But desecration of the site, which Native Americans still use in spiritual ceremonies, has forced reservation officials and U.S. authorities to come together and ask a tough question: Can further vandalism be prevented?

The easy answer is to police the site and others listed under the Archaeological Resources Protection Act. But that’s not possible given the condition of cash-strapped federal lands agencies, authorities said. Federal authorities and Native American leaders plan to mark each defaced petroglyph with a small sign pointing out that, as archaeologist Haverstock put it, “this damage was done by malicious, selfish individuals.”


The Seattle Art Museum is restoring a 1947 Jackson Pollock painting that was altered in the 1970s with a coat of varnish. Work started last summer in the museum’s conservation studio on “Sea Change.”

The painting represents Pollock’s transition to a drip technique. The restora-
tion is especially complicated because of the multiple types of media and the depth of the surface, said Nicholas Dorman, chief conservator for the museum. The painting is about 4-by-5 feet in size and includes many layers, beginning with a fine weave canvass, then a white oil base, brushed color images, aluminum paint drips, black drips with imbedded gravel (some pieces of which have come off during transit over the years) and then dabs of pure color.

Several types of paint are used, including oil, house and other commercial paints and possibly an early acrylic paint. The restoration is additionally complicated because some of the materials by their nature are shiny and others are matte. So, as Dorman works removing the shiny varnish, the changes are subtle. Because of the multiple materials, the restoration process itself becomes a research project to find what works best — information that is expected to be valuable to others working in the field.

The work is funded by the Bank of America’s Art Conservation Project, which has provided about $2 million since 2010 to restore art and artifacts of cultural and historical value around the world.

“The Traders” is just one of the many hands-on projects assigned to students in NMSU’s Museum Conservation Program. This program prepares students for graduate work to become art conservators. Students enrolled in the program gain practical experience while restoring bronze statues, religious retablos and other works of fine art.

Demand for the program began in 2005 after a survey completed by Heritage Preservation and the Institute of Museum and Library. The program is called museum conservation instead of art conservation because the course includes museum studies, an area where conservators work with curators and collection managers who need to be knowledgeable in the fundamentals of conservation. Students in the program also work with the community to provide art conservation services to institutions in Las Cruces and the surrounding areas.

Restoring the statue was a three-step process. First, Marinas-Feliner’s class delicately removed both the graffiti and corrosion. Restoration soap was then used to clean the entire sculpture before a sacrificial layer of microcrystalline wax was applied to protect the surface metal. Marinas-Feliner said the wax would be reapplied every year.

“Italy Tracks Down Copy of Da Vinci’s Lost Masterpiece,” BBC News, 12/01/2012

Italy’s specialist art theft police have tracked down and brought home a 400-year-old copy of a lost Leonardo da Vinci masterpiece - an incomplete fresco painting of the Battle of Anghiari.

Art historians believe that Leonardo, experimenting with various fresco painting techniques, started painting the battle scene in 1503, but he never completed the project. The copy was last seen in public 73 years ago on the eve of World War II, when it was shown at a Leonardo exhibition in Milan. Then it disappeared.

But the Italian police department which specializes in art theft patiently managed to track the clandestine life of the painting - known as the Doria panel from the name of the family in whose art collection it had remained for three centuries.

After being stolen from its owners in Naples, the panel passed into the possession of a Swiss art dealer, was sent to Germany for restoration in the 1960s, then turned up briefly at a New York art gallery in the 1970s before ending up in the collection of a wealthy Japanese art collector in the 1990s.

The painting will be shown at the Uffizi Gallery in Florence during 2013 and will then go on loan for four years back to Japan - under an agreement worked out with the Fuji Art Museum in Tokyo, where it was last exhibited.

“Sistine Chapel Tourists to be Vacuумed and Cooled to Protect Frescoes,” The Guardian, 12/21/2012

The 5 million tourists who visit the Sistine Chapel every year are to be vacuum cleaned and cooled down before entry in an effort to reduce the pollution damaging Michelangelo’s frescoes, said Antonio Paolucci, the director of the Vatican museums.

The heat and dirt generated by 20,000 tourists pouring into the chapel every day has been blamed for the layers of grime accumulating on the paintings. “We will cover the 100 metres before the entrance with a carpet that cleans shoes; we will install suction vents on the sides to suck dust from clothes and we will lower temperatures to reduce the heat and humidity of bodies,” said Paolucci.

Paolucci has been searching for a way to cut down on the bodily debris of tourists since restorers scrubbed a thick layer of dirt off the frescoes two years ago. A 20-year-old air extraction system is no longer up to the job and air conditioning is essential, he has warned.

Apart from the sweat and steam they bring into the chapel, the sheer number of visitors has been criticized for giving the space the feel of a busy train station, complete with pickpockets.

“Hadrian’s Hall: Archaeologists Finish Excavation of Roman Arts Centre,” The Guardian, 12/26/2012

Archaeologists who have completed the excavation of a 900-seat arts center under one of Rome’s busiest roundabouts are calling it the most important Roman discovery in 80 years.
The center, built by the emperor Hadrian in AD123, offered three massive halls where Roman nobles flocked to hear poetry, speeches and philosophy tracts while reclining on terraced marble seating. With the dig now completed, the terracing and the hulking brick walls of the complex, as well as stretches of the elegant grey and yellow marble flooring, are newly visible at bottom of a 5.5 meter hole in Piazza Venezia.

The complex was only unearthed thanks to excavations to build a new underground railway line which will cross the heart of Rome. Today the performing space is riddled with pits dug for fires, revealing how after three centuries of celebrating the arts, the halls fell into disrepair with the collapse of the Roman empire and were used for smelting ingots.

At the center of the main hall is a massive, nine-by-five-meter chunk of the monumental roof which came crashing down during an earthquake in 848 after standing for seven centuries. Following the quake, the halls were gradually covered over until a hospital built on top in the 16th century dug down for cellar space.

“Secret Painting in Rembrandt Masterpiece Seen,” Discovery News, 01/26/2013

Scientists may be one step closer to revealing a hidden portrait behind a 380-year-old Rembrandt painting. The masterpiece, “Old Man in Military Costume” by Dutch painter Rembrandt Harmenszoon van Rijn, resides at the J. Paul Getty Museum in Los Angeles. Scientists had noticed the painting bears faint traces of another portrait beneath its surface.

Researchers had previously probed the painting with infrared, neutron and conventional X-ray methods, but could not see behind the top coat, largely because Rembrandt used the same paint (with the same chemical composition) for the underpainting and the final version. New studies with more sophisticated X-ray techniques that can parse through the painting’s layers give art historians hope that they may finally get to see who is depicted in the secret image.

Matthias Alfeld from the University of Antwerp and an international team used macro X-ray fluorescence analysis to examine a mock-up of Rembrandt’s original, created by museum intern Andrea Sartorius, who used paints with the same chemical composition as those used by the Dutch master. Sartorius painted one portrait on the canvas and then an imitation of “Old Man in Military Costume” on top. The scientists targeted four elements of the paint to fluoresce, including calcium, iron, mercury and lead, and got much better impressions of the hidden painting in the mock-up than they were able to before.

“The Art Newspaper, 01/29/2013

The increasingly dire state of conservation of much of Naples’s cultural heritage—its churches, monuments, libraries and palaces—has been highlighted by a damning news report published by one of Italy’s leading papers, the Corriere della Sera, in January.

The report revealed an alarming statistic: Naples has around 200 closed and abandoned churches. Some have been stripped of all their furnishings including works of art, some never received the funds they had been promised, while others received them but never embarked on the agreed conservation projects. Others still were closed down, restored and then never opened again.

The report points to years of neglect and mismanagement by the local and national government, as well as by the Church and the regional arm of the ministry of culture.

The city’s historic center, the largest in Europe, has been listed as a Unesco World Heritage site for the last 17 years, however the city’s residents have long beenmoaned the state of their heritage, so much so that a petition, signed by 16 civic committees and 60 leading intellectual figures, was circulated at the end of last year calling for the city to be stripped of its Unesco title.

The mayor, Luigi de Magistris, says that his administration has just managed to prevent an European Union grant of €100m, earmarked for the town center, from being sent back to Brussels.

“Unesco Raising $11m To Save Mali’s Heritage,” The Art Newspaper, 02/21/2013

Unesco has launched a $11m rescue project for Timbuktu, following a meeting in Paris on 18 February. Key heritage experts travelled from Mali to report on the damage to ancient manuscripts and historical sites in the ancient city, which lies on the edge of the Sahara.

The destruction in Timbuktu and other sites in northern Mali was caused by Islamic rebels who fled in late January, following the arrival of French troops.

Unesco’s “Action Plan for the Rehabilitation of Cultural Heritage and the Safeguarding of Ancient Manuscripts in Mali” was approved at the end of the day-long meeting. Mali’s minister of culture, Bruno Maïga, said in an interview with The Art Newspaper that 2,000-3,000 manuscripts had been destroyed by rebels at the state-supported Ahmed Baba Institute of Higher Learning and Islamic Research in Timbuktu. “These were manuscripts which had been set aside for conservation or digitisation,” he explained.

In the meantime, there are fears that the fragile manuscripts, some dating back many centuries, could be threatened by conservation problems. The Unesco conference also stressed the need to digitise the most important material as an urgent priority.
Unesco has promised to assist with the restoration of buildings in Timbuktu. Fourteen of the city’s 16 most important ancient mausoleums were virtually destroyed by the Islamic rebels, but they will now be rebuilt.


LO MANTHANG, Nepal —

Dozens of painters sat atop scaffolding that soared toward the roof of the ancient Thubchen Monastery. With a swipe of their brushes, colors appeared that gave life to the Buddha.

“In Nepal, no one knows how to do this, so we have to learn,” said Tashi Gurung, 34, a painter participating in what is one of the most ambitious Tibetan art projects in the Himalayas. Financed by the American Himalayan Foundation, the project is aimed at restoring to a vibrant state the artwork of two of the three main monasteries and temples in Lo Manthang, the walled capital of the once-forbidden kingdom of Mustang. Bordering Tibet in the remote trans-Himalayan desert, Mustang is an important enclave of Tibetan Buddhist culture.

The project in Lo Manthang has stirred debate. Some scholars of Tibetan art assert that the painters are altering important historical murals and jeopardizing scholarship by painting new images atop sections of walls where the original images have been destroyed. Those involved in the project argue that residents want complete artwork in their houses of worship.

The project’s director is Luigi Fieni, 39, an Italian who first came to work here after graduating from an art conservation program in Rome. Mr. Fieni and other Westerners have trained local residents to work on the art, creating a 35-member team. Mr. Fieni wanted his team, rather than do purely restoration, to paint sections of the walls where an original mural had disappeared or been destroyed.

Mr. Fieni’s approach to restoring the temples and monasteries has been contested. Christian Luczanits, a senior curator at the Rubin Museum of Art in NY, which displays Himalayan art, said that sufficient scholarship had not been done into the original paintings. “The temple now after restoration cannot be understood anymore without the previous documentation,” Mr. Luczanits said in an interview. Last year, he made his opinion known at a contentious meeting at the palace in Lo Manthang.

Among those present were Mr. Fieni, an abbot, the prince of Mustang, and representatives of the American Himalayan Foundation. There was vigorous debate, and the royal family and the abbot both backed Mr. Fieni. The ceremonial prince, Jigme Singi Palbar Bista, said that the buildings “are renovated very well.”

**“Art Museum’s Storage Bin Held a Secret Masterwork,”** *Los Angeles Times*, 03/30/2013

Tucked away and forgotten for years in a museum storage bin, the small oil painting held a great secret.

It all started in 2000 when a canvas in dreadful condition called “Venice: The Molo from the Bacino di S. Marco” was bequeathed to the Denver Art Museum from a deceased local collector’s foundation. The accompanying paperwork was vague and referred to it as “from the studio” of Giovanni Antonio Canal — known as Canaletto — an important Italian painter in the mid-1700s.

Because it was assumed to be a student rendering, the painting was relegated to storage. Seven years later, Timothy Standring, curator of painting and sculpture at the Denver museum, ran across the piece while doing routine inventory. It was so discolored and coated in grime, he later joked, it looked as if it had been “in someone’s home who smoked Marlboros for 50 years.”

Still, there was something that caught his eye. Then he got excited. No student painted this. Charles Beddington, one of the world’s foremost Canaletto scholars, agreed to come to Denver to take a look in person. “Of course you know this is a Canaletto,” Beddington pronounced, putting the last doubt to rest.

He dated it about 1724, making it one of the artist’s earliest undocumented works. And it was a mess. The museum won a grant from the European Fine Art Fair Restoration Foundation to restore the painting to Canaletto’s vision. In early 2012, that job landed in the lap of James Squires, the museum’s associate conservator of paintings.

Squires put in more than 100 hours over the course of a year on the 18-by-31-inch canvas, at times up to six hours on one square inch. But as he worked, something magical happened. Yellow-gray skies turned soft blue, and as the painting was cleaned, new figures appeared.

**“Engineers, Conservationists Work on Lasting Fix for Watts Towers,”** *Los Angeles Times*, 04/01/2013

From a distance, the Watts Towers rise as a beacon of pride in a community that has struggled for years with poverty and crime. But up close, tiny cracks are tearing through the historic sculpture.

The towers have been deteriorating for years, prompting quick patch jobs that did little long-term good. Now, a team of engineers and conservationists have descended on Watts to try to discover the root problems and come up with a more lasting fix.

Frank Preusser, conservation scientist for the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, has hooked the towers up to several devices to monitor its complex condition. Sensors track movements of the cracks, wind gusts, and minute vibrations.

Concerned about the towers’ frail state, Los Angeles’ Department of Cultural Affairs contracted with LACMA in 2011 to help with maintenance and restoration. Preusser and four full-time museum employees keep daily tabs on the towers. In December, UCLA engineers joined the effort to perform structural tests.

Data collected so far point to a monument that mimics a living organism: cracks contract and expand as if the tower is breathing. And the structures tilt to the north when the sun rises and return to their original position when the sun sets. It’s this flexibility that helped the towers survive the 1994 Northridge earthquake. Engineers said, but the constant movement is also why past restoration efforts were short-lived. The team is slowly getting closer the best way to repair the cracks and reattach artifacts after testing dozens of mortars, crack fillers, adhesives and water repellents.

Besides the towers’ daily movement, Mother Nature is also contributing to the slow deterioration. Preusser’s team is finding that howling winds are causing the most damage. Two years into what was slated as a yearlong project, the team is certain about one thing: The towers will not topple, a long-standing fear.

The findings from restoring the Watts Towers may help with future preservation projects — but coming to the right conclusions will take additional time, Preusser said. He ignores critics who just want the cracks filled. “I got email after email. ‘Why haven’t you started filling cracks?’” Preusser said. ‘I reply, ‘Do you want me to fill cracks the same way knowing it will fail?’ … I want to make my own mistakes and not repeat the mistakes of the past.”