

To tweet or not to tweet?

That is the question posed to four conservators who use social networking sites – page 3

Conserving context

The complexities of Australian indigenous material culture – pages 4 & 5

Behind the blues

Impossible recipes, medieval meanings and conservation science – page 6

No. 16, February 2010

News in Conservation

The newspaper of the International Institute for the Conservation of Historic and Artistic Works



Haiti devastated by earthquake



Severe damage to the Presidential Palace, Port-au-Prince, Haiti



Ruined cathedral, Port-au-Prince, Haiti

The earthquake which devastated Haiti on 12 January 2010 has caused horrific loss of life and damage to the country's already fragile infrastructure. While the effective delivery of the humanitarian response is the international community's immediate goal, international heritage organisations and Haitian partners are now beginning to assess the damage to the country's museums and cultural institutions.

UNESCO has reported that the National History Park, an early 19th century complex, including the ruins of a royal palace and the largest fortress of the western hemisphere, appears to have largely survived the quake. However, UNESCO is awaiting further information about the site, which has been inscribed on the World Heritage List since 1982. The colonial city of Jacmel has apparently suffered extensive damage. Jacmel, founded in the 17th century, had been placed on a tentative list in 2004 with a view to being accorded world heritage status. UNESCO has reported that the World

Heritage Centre is assisting Haiti in assessing the extent of the damage and determining how to go about saving its heritage as soon as possible.

ICOM has released a status report focussing on the effect of the earthquake on the country's museums, with information gathered through its Disaster Relief for Museums Task Force (DRFM) in partnership with its Blue Shield, UNESCO and CER (Prince Claus Fund's "Cultural Emergency Response") colleagues. A number of ICOM members remain missing, including its Haiti chairman.

Its preliminary report suggests that most of the main museums are still standing, although some, such as the Musée d'art haïtien, are too dangerous to enter. Michel-Philippe Lerebours, General Curator and Vice-President of the College Saint Pierre Haitian Museum of Fine Arts has said, "The Art Museum is still intact, but in a very fragile condition. The exhibition hall is still standing, but we do not dare to enter – but at

least the ceiling seems to be stable...Above all, the museum has to be protected from any looting, because it owns the most important collection of Haitian painting."

Some pieces from the Musée Vaudou's Lehmann collection, consisting of more than two thousand Haitian Voodoo objects, are reported to have been damaged. Three hundred and fifty objects, part of a travelling exhibition, were out of the country and the majority of the collection is now said to be relatively safe.

At the Parc historique de la Canne à sucre, ICOM report that two chimneys collapsed and display cabinets and cultural objects have been damaged.

The member organisations of the Blue Shield are liaising with Haitian colleagues to gather further information and coordinate an international response to the devastation.

2009's IIC round table discussion concerned the protection of cultural heritage from earthquake damage – a transcript can be downloaded from the IIC website.

Auschwitz sign recovered damaged after theft

Polish police have recovered the infamous 'Arbeit Macht Frei' sign, stolen from the entrance to Auschwitz concentration camp on the 18th December 2009. The sign was damaged in the robbery, having been cut into three pieces. District prosecutor Artur Wronathe has raised the possibility that the sign was stolen to order by a foreigner, as

arrests were made in the northern port of Gdynia. Polish police are seeking assistance from Interpol and the Swedish government in their investigations, and have arrested five people in connection with the theft. A replica sign will remain in place until the original has been restored and security tightened.

York Minster East window saved from fire

Fire crews have come to the rescue of one of the world's most important medieval stained glass windows in York, UK. The 600 year old Great East window, which is currently undergoing conservation, was threatened by a fire which broke out in an office at the minster's stonemasons' yard. Fire crews and minster security staff had to move more than 300 panels of stained glass out of danger from fire and water damage overnight. The Great East window was completed in 1408 and is considered a masterpiece of stained glass. It is perhaps the earliest English work of art with a named artist, John Thornton. The window was removed in 2008 to begin a 10-year restoration programme. York Minster is no stranger to the risks of fire; the south transept was badly damaged in a devastating incident 25 years ago.

Hand of a bishop, York Minster Great East window



© Fergus Wilde

Editorial

It is saddening once again to be writing about a devastating earthquake, particularly one which has resulted in such loss of life. Once vital humanitarian needs are met, the rebuilding of Haiti's cultural heritage institutions is an essential part of reinstating people's hope and identity. I hope that this aspect of Haiti's recovery will not be neglected once the world's focus shifts elsewhere.

Networks and cultural meanings feature prominently in this first issue of *News in Conservation* for 2010. The *News in Conservation* interview on page 3 deals with networks in their contemporary sense and examines the role social networking plays in the working lives of four conservation professionals. You can GetConnected! and head to the IIC website to join in the discussion yourselves: (<http://www.iiconservation.org/discussion/>)

To ignore cultural context in favour of preserving material integrity is to miss the point of many objects' *raison d'être*

On pages 4 & 5, Vicki Humphrey guides us through some of the complexities surrounding sacred and secret objects from Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, as well as taking a look at indigenous Australian contemporary art. To ignore cultural context in favour of preserving material integrity is to miss the point of many objects' *raison d'être*. Parallels can be drawn with Spike Bucklow's article (page 6) on cultural networks and artists' materials in the English medieval context. He reveals a puzzling impossible recipe for mercury blue to be a sophisticated thought-experiment and makes the case for a more effective partnership between science and art.

This is my last issue as editor of *News in Conservation* as I am leaving to concentrate on research. It has been a fascinating role over the past couple of years – I have got to know many conservators worldwide and I have been impressed by the breadth of our profession in the 21st century. I will be continuing to work with IIC – as a contributor to the newsfeed on the website.

Finally, booking for the 2010 IIC Istanbul Congress opens soon – so get in early to guarantee a place. Registration will be available on the IIC website (www.iiconservation.org/congress) in February.

Lucy Wrapson
Editor

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News in brief...

Restoration continues at Great Mosque of Djenné despite accident



©UN Photo/John Isaac

Inside the Great Mosque of Djenné

Restoration works are continuing at the Great Mosque of Djenné, Mali despite poor weather conditions and an accident late last year. Traditional masons, financed by the Aga Khan Trust for culture, have been undertaking consolidation of the fragile earthen structure dating from 1907. The remarkable nature of the Djenné mosque led to its inscription on the World Heritage List in 1988. Exceptional levels of rain in November 2009 caused the upper part of the south tower of the east façade to collapse. Four masons were thrown to the ground in the resultant mudslide, but thankfully received only minor injuries.

Historic Antarctica plane rediscovered

Conservators have found the remains of the first aeroplane ever taken to Antarctica. The single-engine Vickers was part of the expedition by Australian explorer Douglas Mawson over 1911-12. However, the plane was never used in the air, serving instead as a motorised sledge, with its wings left back in England following an accident. It was eventually discarded as its engine was unable to withstand such low temperatures. A ten person team set out from Hobart, Tasmania in early December to undertake ongoing conservation work on the

fragile wooden huts used as a base for Mawson's expedition. Finding the 'air tractor' and preserving it is a key part of their expedition.

Controversy over dusting at Canadian museum

Paintings and objects at the Canadian War Museum have been filmed being cleaned by caretakers during a 3-month museum worker strike, the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation has reported. Although the museum has stated that no artefacts have been damaged during the strike, footage on YouTube shows dust being removed from painting frames using fingers, and dusting cloths touching the surface of paintings. The actions were spotted by museum staff during a strike sit-in. Conservators are among the 420 workers recently on strike at the Canadian War Museum and the Canadian Museum of Civilization. Workers from both museums have since voted to accept the tentative settlement negotiated between the Public Service Alliance of Canada and the Canadian Museum of Civilization Corporation, returning to work on December 16 2009.

World Monuments Fund and American Express to fund sustainable visitor centre on Easter Island

World Monuments Fund (WMF) and American Express have announced their financial support of an ongoing sustainable tourism initiative on Rapa Nui (Easter Island) in the form of a new visitor centre. The centre will be located at the entrance to the Orongo Ceremonial Village, one of the most significant archaeological sites in Rapa Nui National Park, and the most visited place on Easter Island. The island is famous for its c. 900 carved monolithic moai statues, made by the Rapa Nui people from the ninth to the seventeenth centuries. Visited by large numbers of tourists each year, Orongo has been the focus of a conservation program supported by WMF and American Express since 2001. The visitor centre is the final component in the redevelopment.

People on the move...

National Gallery's Martin Wyld retires

The chief restorer at the National Gallery in London, IIC Fellow Martin Wyld, retired at the end of 2009. He joined the National Gallery in 1966, becoming chief restorer in 1979. Over his career, he worked on many of the gallery's most iconic paintings, including Holbein's *The Ambassadors* and on three occasions acted as temporary director for the gallery as a whole.

New Ceramics Tutor at UK's West Dean College

Lorna Calcutt has been appointed Programme Tutor for the Ceramics & Related Materials course at West Dean, one of a range of Conservation and Making programmes offered at the College. She will be responsible for overseeing the Graduate Diploma and Postgraduate Diploma students and will combine her new role with her existing one as MA Conservation Studies Tutor.

Stradivarius' recipes

The varnish used by Antonio Stradivarius, the famous Italian violin-maker, to coat his prestigious instruments has been the object of numerous controversial assumptions and arguments for over two centuries. It has been suggested that the exceptional tone and quality of his instruments relates to a "secret" recipe in their varnish. A study driven by the Cité de la musique in Paris together with an international team has just been published in the journal *Angewandte Chemie International Edition*, shedding new light on the subject.

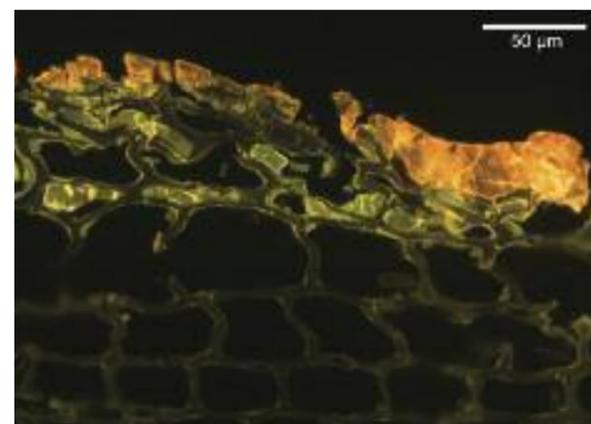
Five Stradivarius instruments from the Musée de la musique in Paris. From left to right, the "Davidoff" (1708), the "Tua" (1708), a "Long- Pattern" model (ca. 1692), the "Provigny" (1716) and the "Sarasate" (1724) (collection Musée de la musique, Paris)



Cliché A. Giordan © Cité de la Musique

"It's a very basic recipe," according to Jean-Philippe Échard, a chemist from the Musée de la musique in Paris who has analysed tiny samples from the museum's Stradivarius collection-which consists of four violins and a viola d'amore. The research showed that the instruments were first coated in a drying oil such as linseed or walnut oil. This was followed by a coat of drying oil and natural resin, with pigments added to all but the earliest instrument.

Cross section of the varnish of the "Provigny". From bottom to top: wood cell structure, the first oil-based layer impregnating the wood (whitish), the top layer, a mixture of oil and resins, with pigments admixed (yellow-orange)



Cliché J.-P. Echard © Cité de la Musique

The NiC Interview. Should you tweet?



© IIC

There has been an explosion of social networking sites on the internet used for everything from arranging lunches to sharing the latest research. It's all being done, worldwide, in "real time". NiC has asked Sagita Mirjam Sunara, Senior Teaching Assistant, Arts Academy of the University of Split, Croatia; Joyce Hill Stoner, Director of Preservation Studies at the University of Delaware, USA; Amber Kerr, conservator at the Smithsonian's Lunder Center, USA; and Athanasios Velios a research fellow at the Ligatus Research Unit, University of the Arts London, UK (and an IIC web editor), to share their insights into what Social Networking (SN) has in store for the conservation community.

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 : Whether you tweet, blog, IM, e-mail or write letters on
 : paper, join the discussion and **GetConnected!** Go to the
 : discussion page on the IIC website
 : (<http://www.iiconservation.org/discussion/>) and share
 : your views on this issue.
 :

NiC: What potential does Social Networking (SN) offer to the conservation professional?

Amber Kerr: Social Networking provides a venue where professionals at all levels can share ideas, announcements, and inquiries instantly, without publication deadlines or formality. Communications can transcend national borders, politics, and professional status. While SN isn't a replacement for traditional publications, it does enhance our ability to connect with each other as a community.

Joyce Hill Stoner: Facebook, in particular, provides conservation news and political issues that affect the arts.

Sagita Mirjam Sunara: Although I have been using social networks to connect with my friends and family, I also see a great potential for communicating with other conservation professionals.

Athanasios Velios: The strength of SN as far as conservation is concerned is for circulating information and its popularity is helpful, although in fact there is a plethora of methods for publishing information online. Because of its virtual-online nature, however, SN has, at least at the moment, limited potential for conservation, and for other professions where manual skills are essential.

NiC: What are the benefits and drawbacks to the heritage conservation community?

Sagita Mirjam Sunara: It allows me to live in a 'global village' where both responsibilities and efforts for the preservation of cultural heritage are shared.

Athanasios Velios: Instant communication applies to the internet in general. Not all of the planet is networked and arguably conservators, who most need to contact other colleagues, are the ones who are unable to.

Amber Kerr: Whether SN makes the world smaller depends on the success of the network being used, who uses it, and the way it is used. SN has increased awareness of issues within our profession, provided news links to projects we may never have otherwise known about, and strengthens

our profession by providing shared access to knowledge. As for possible drawbacks: managing the number of social networking sites and keeping up with the amount of information sharing that goes on can be challenging.

Joyce Hill Stoner: I am continually in touch with colleagues in Japan, Croatia, and France through SN. We have immediate and regular opportunities to share information on conservation topics and in the past these opportunities might only have happened during coffee breaks at conferences. Drawbacks: we may sometimes send things too quickly, before they have been appropriately edited.

NiC: Do you foresee dramatic changes in SN in a few years?

Athanasios Velios: It is difficult to predict the way SN will develop, but more mechanisms for publishing structured, semantic, content would be good. This would allow automatic filtering of postings and specific targeting of audiences. This depends on whether conservation documentation will ever be standardised.

Amber Kerr: I think it will be a wonderful tool for public outreach and advocacy in conservation.

Sagita Mirjam Sunara: Difficult to predict. There are as many possibilities as there are people who use SN and both seem to be increasing rapidly. Conservation professionals will use it more for the promotion of the profession.

NiC: Do you think SN has the potential of broadening the resources used by conservation professionals?

Amber Kerr: I am continually amazed at the resources available to me. Free publications, countless references sites, and professional opportunities all appear through SN. Consider the potential for individuals from different cultures sharing their perspectives on global warming, preservation of cultural sites, or other international issues without censorship or restriction. SN can be used to poll individuals and institutions, to organise and distribute information to a large group instantly, and provide a forum where ideas can be expressed and debated, without having to wait for a conference.

Athanasios Velios: A resource should be permanent, easy to search and accessible. In my opinion SN fails in these areas right now. SN is a rather ephemeral way of posting information that is then consumed quickly and forgotten. With regard to accessibility, SN websites require an account by every user who wishes to access information. Accounts are free but require an agreement with the website's terms and conditions. SN websites are often run by large corporations who need to be profitable and therefore the agreement on issues like personal information and copyright are not always suitable for a publishing resource.

NiC: Do you think SN can be used to deepen and broaden the understanding of the profession?

Sagita Mirjam Sunara: Raising of awareness regarding heritage conservation can be achieved through merging professional and personal observations in tweets and posts,

since these are aimed at a wider public.

Joyce Hill Stoner: The number of curators, art history graduate students, and museum directors who have signed up for the IIC Facebook page is exciting and I think this will lead to more involvement with the conservation profession by allied professionals.

Amber Kerr: One example is the recent IIC blog postings from the Salzburg Global Seminar. Instead of just reading about the outcome after the fact, we could react to the event in real time.

NiC: What developments would you like to see in how conservation professionals use SN in the next decade and beyond?

Joyce Hill Stoner: I want to see an increase of what's already happening, with greater participation across generations. There is a great need to develop increased accuracy in language translation services.

Amber Kerr: I'd like to see fewer people feeling intimidated and just give it a try. The more people who contribute their ideas, the more growth and development will occur. It would be wonderful to organise our profession internationally, finding a way to use technology to help bridge languages and provide a broader foundation of knowledge and resources.

Athanasios Velios: I would like to see more initiatives by conservators to support online collaboration through SN, and more independent not-for-profit SN websites for conservation. More open and free access to conservation information in a standardised format would be good.

NiC: Do you think the forms of social networking as they exist today have really found their final form?

Amber Kerr: I hope they haven't! Social networking as it is today needs to evolve and find its appropriate uses.

NiC: Describe the last time social networking provided an insight that was professionally valuable to you.

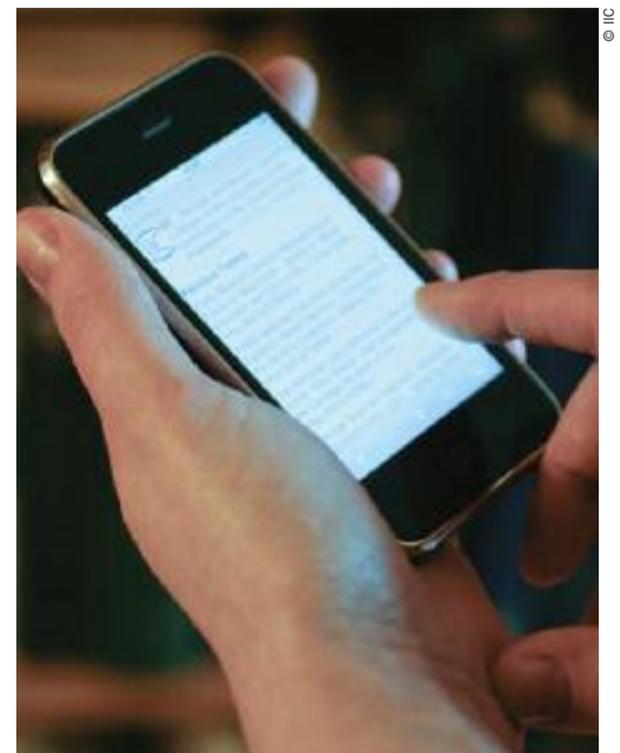
Amber Kerr: I recently posted an enquiry about a painting I was conserving. A fellow conservator saw the posting and commented with some interesting information about similar paintings. I learned something new about the working methods and materials of the artist and so did the public who follow the Lunder Facebook page.

Joyce Hill Stoner: I became a Facebook friend with a reporter who had interviewed me. I told her about research being carried out by two of our Ph.D. students and both ended up on TV explaining their research.

Sagita Mirjam Sunara: I sometimes find it difficult to keep track of all the conservation events. It's useful to have the IIC Facebook group, where I can find announcements and links.

Athanasios Velios: As someone that spends most of his life in front of a computer and almost always online, I embraced SN very early. Although I can see that the strength of SN is its popularity especially in a social context, its current direction has not convinced me that it is either innovative or useful for conservation. I subscribe to a range of mailing lists and RSS feeds and therefore current conservation news arrives at my mailbox on a daily basis. There is no example of information published on SN that I could not find somewhere else.

Accessing the IIC twitter feed by phone



© IIC

This is a story of two young women, underarm sweat, boomerangs, diaries and kangaroos at an exhibition – just a few examples of Australian indigenous material culture



Conserving Aboriginal material culture: cultural and spiritual considerations



Photo: Michal Klivanc. Reproduced with the permission of the South Australian Museum

The Two Young Women of Cape Keerweer were made for ceremonial purposes in 1987 by Angus Namponan, Peter Peemuggina and Nelson Wolmby. The 70 cm and 73cm high figures made from wood, nails, ochre and eucalyptus bark, were described as still being “hot” from ceremony when they first arrived at the museum

A vast range of objects, types of materials and mix of traditional and non-traditional make up Australian indigenous material culture. Almost as diverse are the combinations of factors of significance – spiritual, cultural and historic – which conservators need to consider and which may have very real impacts on the approaches taken to treatments of the material culture of Australia’s indigenous people.

Few people looking at the sculptures of *The Two Young Women of Cape Keerweer* can really appreciate their full significance. It is clear that they are extraordinary objects, but that they were once the focus of extreme emotion and grief; that they were considered powerful – even dangerous – is certainly apparent to only a few. The decorated sculptures represent mythical siblings, who belong to two different but related countries and languages near Cape Keerweer on the west coast of Cape York in Queensland.

The sculptures were made in 1987 and placed outside the jail in Aurukun where a young Aboriginal man had died. Approximately a year after a death, a ceremony is held to release the spirit of the deceased. The ceremonies are intensely emotional and involve dancing and re-enactments of mythical events, with and around sculptures that represent the deceased’s links to country, language and totems. In the

past the sculptures would then have been taken away and allowed to decompose. In the case of *The Two Young Women*, they were packed up in a box and delivered into the custody of an anthropologist with strong links to the community. He was entrusted with their care because he knew the song that had to be sung to them when they were handled. However, he made it clear that they would be going into a museum, where they would receive ongoing care. The Two Young Women are now part of the South Australian Museum’s Aboriginal Cultures Gallery exhibition.

Few people looking at the sculptures of *The Two Young Women of Cape Keerweer* can really appreciate their full significance

For the community in Aurukun, to move the sculptures without singing to them would have been dangerous, close to the time of the ceremony. At a time and context remote from

that ceremony, they were sent from the Museum to Arltlab Australia for checking and treatment in preparation for exhibition. The requirement to sing to the sculptures had diminished as had the *danger* associated with them; however, their cultural significance and the respect afforded them as culturally and spiritually significant items had not. Had they remained in Aurukun they would by now be only traces of decayed wood – a form perhaps in some way consistent with their removal from their original context and time.

Many objects retain their *power* and *danger* as well as cultural and spiritual significance in the longer term. There is a tradition of preservation for these objects and some are hundreds, if not thousands of years old. Stone objects were often kept in caves; wooden objects were kept in caves and, in other areas, buried in sacred wells, where there may have been preservative effects of an anaerobic environment. Because of the *power* of these objects, access to them was and is restricted. In the case of secret-sacred men’s objects, the restriction is based on the individual’s level of knowledge and where they come from. Thus access is restricted to senior men; women are not permitted to see them. Furthermore, a senior Arrernte man from Central Australia would not be permitted to see secret-sacred objects, say, from Arnhem land – unless by invitation. Increasingly from the 1960s and

Photograph: David Potter. Reproduced with the permission of Peter Sutton



Arriving for the ceremony: Nelson Wolmby, painted up ready for the ceremony, lifts one of the *Young Women* from a truck, surrounded by people from Aurukun awaiting the ceremony to release the deceased spirit

Photograph: Dale Chesson. Reproduced with the permission of Peter Sutton



The Two Young Women of Cape Keerweer as the focus of a ceremony outside Aurukun jail

70s, museums in Australia have actively worked to, not only respect these cultural classifications of objects, but to make it possible to enforce the access restrictions and to maintain secret-sacred objects in their collections as culturally living objects. This has a number of practical implications for curators and conservators.

Sue Bassett, Conservation Manager at the Museums and Art Galleries of the Northern Territory, has strong feelings about the appropriate management of secret-sacred men's objects. None of her female staff are permitted to enter the store and this, of necessity, influences recruitment and contract arrangements for the ongoing care of collection items. Similarly, when carrying out preliminary but urgent condition checks on items seized from a house in a suburb of Adelaide under heritage protection legislation, Artlab Australia's objects conservators – all female at the time – arranged for a male staff member to examine the objects while they remained behind a curtain and asked questions about the physical condition of the materials. The arrangements described above demonstrate a respect for culture, through assuring that women do not see or have contact with the secret-sacred men's objects. The senior Aboriginal men's preference is often that the person examining the secret-sacred collection items is non-Aboriginal – better this than an Aboriginal person from a different area.

The ongoing cultural use of such objects has presented challenges to conservation thinking in the past. This is changing as the principles and ethics of conservation shift in keeping with the greater engagement cultural institutions have with their stakeholders, including the communities from which their collections are drawn. Conservators may have balked at a senior man giving smell to a collection item – this may involve the man using his hands to collect sweat from under his arms and then rubbing it over the object. While this can have implications for the physical stability of the object, the implications of not doing it are far greater for the cultural and spiritual significance of the object as this act identifies the individual giving it smell to the ancestral spirits in the object. Similarly, repainting objects may have once been seen by curators and conservators as changing the object without the involvement of the original maker, but the repainting is not an act of restoration but rather a rite of refreshment expressing the repainter's reverence for the object. Even this act has evolved in terms of materials used. It used to be animal fat that was applied with ochre, whereas today it is more likely to be margarine.

The repatriation of Aboriginal cultural material has been

going on since the 1960s and 70s in Australia. However, some museums have developed relationships of trust with the groups from which the objects originate and are seen as safe-keeping places where the access to the objects will be controlled by reference back to the appropriate senior people. There are cases where offers of repatriation have been turned down, because of the stability of the physical and management environment of the institution in contrast to the less socially stable environment of some source communities where objects may not be cared for and access controlled appropriately.

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As well as art and material culture originating from Aboriginal communities, there has been an explosion of creative output from indigenous Australians

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The conservator should also consider depictions of secret-sacred items as there may be sensitivities about the wrong people viewing them. This was clear when T G H Strehlow caused outrage and alienated many life-long Aboriginal friends when he sold images of secret ceremonies to the German magazine *Stern* in 1977. Thus when managing the treatment of Strehlow's field diaries in the 1990s, I was careful to ensure that diaries with images of secret-sacred objects were treated only by male staff. As one of the project requirements was that I personally check every frame of micro fiche after filming, I checked that the client, the Strehlow Research Centre, had sought appropriate permission.

As well as art and material culture originating from Aboriginal communities, there has been an explosion of creative output from indigenous Australians – young and old, from remote communities and from cities. Ochred sculptures such as *The Two Young Women of Cape Keerweer* were never made for sale, but were made exclusively for ceremonial purposes. This has now changed significantly and although ochred objects are, in many instances, considered sacred, this does not rule out their sale for considerable sums of money, with some being made specifically for sale.

Indigenous artists now work in an extraordinarily wide

Fig 1-100 (This particular collection made sense,) 2005. Slip cast earthenware with watercolour and underglaze on wood panel. 210 x 500 x 7 cm, a work by Danie Mellor a Canberra-based indigenous artist



Photograph: Danie Mellor. Reproduced with the permission of the artist.



Danie Mellor; *Exotic Lies and Sacred Ties* (the heart that conceals, the tongue that never reveals). 2008. Mixed media with taxidermy. 190 x 220 x 185 cm. Danie is a self confessed collector of Spode china and it features in many of his works, often as a landscape inhabited by indigenous Australian people and native Australian animal and birds

Photograph: Régis Martin/MAGNT. Reproduced with the permission of Danie Mellor.

range of media and explore themes that include or may be far removed from those that formed the basis of the so-called traditional works. Considerations such as the secret-sacred nature of the artworks or objects themselves may not be of paramount importance in the care and handling of these objects, although themes of secrecy and are often explored.

Culture and spirituality remain at the core of many works, with artists examining the parallel and now interwoven indigenous and non-indigenous cultures. Danie Mellor, a prominent contemporary indigenous artist, draws on a mixed cultural background – with for example, native animals and Aboriginal people inhabiting blue and white Spode landscapes. His subjects and the materials he uses are not “traditional” but they are part of Australia's indigenous cultural material.

In terms of the approach to conservation of his own works, Danie has indicated that “there's no gender issues for me with conservation work, although understandably it may be different for other cultural objects.” He also indicated that he would appreciate it if a conservator were to consult him prior to conserving his artworks, providing an opportunity for him to advise on materials “so there is congruency in terms of what is used for repairs”, and with respect to the appearance of the work.

These are a few snapshots of some of the issues involved in the conservation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander materials. They highlight that no one size fits all and that conservators need to contextualise the items they conserve, seeking guidance from curators or the makers of works. There are also implications for the recruitment and training of conservators; especially of conservators from indigenous backgrounds. Bee Flynn, an Aboriginal conservator in South Australia, also raises an important point, and one with considerable potential as a conservation research project – Bee emphasises the historic and educational value of indigenous Australian artefacts where there is a loss of traditional skills.

Whether dealing with traditional or modern objects, Aboriginal cultural material provides conservators with a range of challenges and is an area where our treatment approaches and application of ethics must work with a diverse range of cultural and spiritual constraints.

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Biography

Vicki Humphrey has worked for twenty years as a manager in conservation. She is currently a consultant based in Australia. Vicki was Head of Conservation at the British Library from 2003 to 2008. She trained as a paper and book conservator at Camberwell School of Art and Crafts. In 1987 Vicki commenced work at the Royal Botanic Gardens at Kew and set up the paper conservation unit there. In 1989 she moved to Adelaide in South Australia and commenced a 13 year stint at Artlab Australia. Vicki is an accredited conservator.



Cultural networks and artists' materials

It should not come as news to conservators that theirs is a privileged position. The conservators' privilege is with respect to two different cultures; the culture that created the object in receipt of their attentions, and the culture within which they work. The conservator's privileged position with respect to objects is, of course, due to their intimate involvement in the material nature of cultural artefacts. The conservator's privileged position with respect to work is perhaps not quite so obvious. Conservation is not at the top of the heritage sector's hierarchy, and the heritage sector is not at the top of any government or corporate hierarchies.

However, conservation is a meeting point for art and science and, today, the arts and the sciences are 'two cultures', to borrow C.P. Snow's phrase. The current confluence of art and science in the conservation profession is as fortunate as it is rare.

The rarity of meaningful exchange between the arts and the sciences is symptomatic of the existence of diverse sub-cultural networks, rather than a single cultural network. Many modern commentators would recognise Linda Nochlin's identification of 'the fragment as a metaphor for modernity'. And, to the extent that the early twenty-first century is 'post-modern' – in other words, defined by something that it no longer is – fragmentation is an established characteristic of the environment in which the conservator works, along with everyone else. Indeed, interest in phenomena like social networking (see page 3 Should you tweet?) could be seen as one response to cultural fragmentation.

Activities such as conservation have the opportunity to transcend the, now entrenched, art-science divide. However, published studies in conservation which report such activities have shown a tendency to privilege one side of the partnership at the expense of the other. Science is celebrated as a means of discovery. Less prominence is given to the arts which have the capacity to investigate what those discoveries mean.

With a foot in each camp, conservation is a potentially powerful cultural broker, and the profession might benefit from reconsidering the balance of studies undertaken at the art-science interface. This is because treating art objects as an application area for the sciences – as often appears to be the case – does not play to art objects' strengths. If the heritage sector simply acts as a resource for the applied sciences, then it puts itself in competition with other application areas. Now, whilst economic forecasting has recently been shown to be risky, it is a fair bet that the military and medical sectors will remain more lucrative bedfellows for scientists than the heritage sector. Under these circumstances, when a work of art meets a four-

Sky-blue T'chelet drying in the sun, Israel



© Moira Feinsilver

letter-acronym variation on a theme of mass spectrometry or synchrotron acceleration, the work of art might be better looking, but it will always be the junior partner.

Conservation research is important because research has been demonstrated to stimulate teaching and conservation teaching is in crisis (see *It's a Material World: Caring for the Public Realm*, DEMOS, November 2008). And, in turn, conservation education determines the long term prospects for the whole conservation profession. Using the best possible scientific tools for the job is obviously necessary for high quality research in conservation, but obtaining results from scientific tools could be complemented by more critical assessment of those results using intellectual tools developed in the arts.

Mercury blue is the subject of numerous recipes in artists' manuals, yet it never existed

One of the ways in which the conservation profession appears fragmented is in the different approaches conservation scientists take to researching materials in their particular specialist areas. My own main interest is in the materials and methods of painters in the European tradition, but I try to be aware of conservators' activities in other domains. And a broad survey of the conservation literature suggests that the critical interrogation of scientific data derived from Old Master paintings is generally less sophisticated than the critical interrogation of scientific data derived from prehistoric pottery, for example.

Conservators and conservation scientists can enhance the results of scientific examination by placing them in context. The materials and methods of prehistoric pottery, for example, have been placed in numerous contexts, from technical decision making,

Indigo and other pigments from an 1890 Roberson watercolour chart



© Elke Friedrich, Hamilton Kerr Institute



Levigating azurite during historical pigment reconstruction

© Chris Timmus, Hamilton Kerr Institute



Three grades of prepared azurite

© Chris Timmus, HKI



Resin ball, reconstruction of Cennino's ultramarine recipe, Hamilton Kerr Institute

© Chris Timmus, Hamilton Kerr Institute

functional optimisation and evolutionary theory, to social and symbolic import. Such contexts are informed by anthropology, sociology, philosophy of religion, etc. Contextual studies add meaning to raw scientific data and, most importantly, they play to the strengths of the object under examination.

Whilst the heritage sector may be the poor relation of military and medical sectors in economic terms, in terms of cultural networks, it is by far the richer relation. Almost by definition, heritage objects are loaded with meanings, but an effective partnership between science and art is required in order to extract and present those meanings. The value of attempting to find an effective partnership in conservation is suggested by the popularity of museum exhibitions and television programmes that harness the meanings inherent in artists' materials and methods.

My research tries to highlight some neglected meanings associated with the materials and methods of European painters. This has involved trying to integrate data obtained by the scientific examination of artworks with personal experience derived from reconstructions and cultural knowledge embedded in documentary sources. Placing the physical evidence offered by artworks within practical and theoretical contexts has shown that every single material used by artists was part of a vast cultural network that extended way beyond their workshops.

The colour blue offers an example. For at least two-and-a-half millennia, one blue was – and still is – obtained from a carnivorous submarine snail. T'chelet's ritual importance was such that chemical tests to detect fraudulent substitutions are to be found in texts written over fifteen hundred years ago. Indigo, another blue was extracted from a plant, first indigenous to Europe, then supplanted by an exotic Indian import, then harvested locally after transplanting the source, only to be replaced by a synthetic analogue. Where the indigo tradition still survives, its production is surrounded by extensive social taboos.

Mercury blue, a third blue, is the subject of numerous recipes in artists' manuals, yet it never existed. Working on the assumption that the recipe authors were incompetent, some conservation scientists have tried to recreate this non-existent blue, but it was almost certainly a medieval 'thought experiment', like Einstein's light-beam-riding. What the mercury blue 'thought experiment' actually meant suggests a connection between painters and neo-Platonic philosophers. Another blue that actually does exist, ultramarine, provides evidence of millennia-old trade connections with Afghanistan. And numerous complex and well-documented recipes for its extraction from lapis lazuli also suggest connections

with pharmacy, divination and magic that endured up to the seventeenth century. Ultramarine and mercury blue are two of the artists' materials explored in *The Alchemy of Paint*, published by Marion Boyars, London, 2009.

The purification of a fifth blue, azurite, is the subject of on-going research. Ultramarine and azurite can both provide equally beautiful blues, but azurite was much cheaper and is less well documented. This is mainly due to the fact that its cultural associations are less glamorous than those of ultramarine. But, by its contrast with ultramarine, azurite's unsung story draws attention to aspects of culture that, although necessary, are considered low status or unfashionable.

Reconstructions of azurite purification recipes from the fourteenth to the seventeenth centuries are being undertaken by my colleague, Renate Woudhuysen. They are revealing processes and procedures related to practices that craftsmen have undertaken since at least the seventh millennium before Christ. They are also revealing aspects of the value systems that have helped shape the practice of post-nineteenth century art and of twentieth century conservation science. The work will be published in due course.

Author biography

Spike Bucklow's career as a chemist started with the identification and synthesis of sex pheromones for cockroaches. He quickly graduated to making special effects for films, including Jabba the Hut for *Return of the Jedi*, Audrey II for *Little Shop of Horrors* and much more for other 1980s classics. He retrained in



computing with a view to CGI for Jurassic Park but discovered conservation, retrained again, and has not looked back. He currently teaches at the Hamilton Kerr Institute, Fitzwilliam Museum, University of Cambridge. He has had the great good fortune to work on the Thornham Parva Retable, the Westminster Retable, the Macclesfield Psalter and other medieval masterpieces. His research interests are artists' materials and methods.

IIC News

IIC Congress 2010 Conservation and Access

The twenty-third IIC Congress will take place in the spectacular and historic city of Istanbul, the European Cultural Capital for 2010. In conjunction with the Sakıp Sabancı Museum, the many Congress events will focus on the conservation of moveable and immovable heritage in or from the Eastern Mediterranean. The Congress will take place on 20 to 24 September 2010 and will include four days of papers and a day of excursions in and around Istanbul.

Registration will open on the IIC website (www.iiconservation.org/congress) in February, where further information can also be found.

What registration brings you

The registration fee covers attendance throughout the event, full buffet lunch, morning and afternoon refreshments every day of the technical programme, the printed Congress Preprints (and CD), prior online access to the abstracts and papers (from a date to be advised) and attendance at evening receptions. There will be an additional fee for the Congress Dinner and for whole-day excursions on the Wednesday.

Registration for the Congress opens early in **February 2010**. The registration fee is discounted for IIC members. Consider joining IIC now, to save money and get all the other benefits of membership straightaway – see the IIC website.

Provisional Programme Overview

Monday 20 September

- 09.00 Registration opens, Sabancı Centre
- 10.00 Coffee
- 11.00 Opening ceremony
- 11.45 Forbes Prize Lecture:
Dr David Lowenthal
- 12.30 Lunch
- 14.00 Session 1
- 17.30 End
- 18.30 Reception

Tuesday 21 September

- 09.00 Session 2
- 12.30 Lunch
- 14.00 Session 3
- 17.30 End
- 19.00 Reception

Wednesday 22 September

- 09.00 Visits and excursions
- Free evening

Thursday 23 September

- 09.00 Session 4
- 11.00 Poster viewing session
IIC Group representatives meeting
AATA abstractors presentation
- 12.30 Lunch
- 14.00 Session 5
- 17.30 End

Friday 24 September 2007

- 09.00 Session 6
- 12.30 Lunch
- 14.00 Session 7
- 16.30 Keck Award presentation
Announcement of 2012 venue
- 17.30 End of technical programme
- 18.30 Reception

Visits and excursions

A series of visits is being arranged to Istanbul venues, to be announced on the IIC website.

Registration

Online registration opens in early February 2008. Booking online is straightforward, just go to the IIC website

(www.iiconservation.org) and follow the links to the Congress pages. The registration pages are clearly marked there. Members should log onto the IIC website before attempting to register, in order to take advantage of the special members' rate. Contact the office if you have forgotten your password.

Non-members may wish to join (via the website, or by contacting the office), in order to take advantage of the discount while also gaining the manifold benefits of membership.

If you wish to participate in the one-day excursions you will need to choose and book this at the same time as registering for the congress. You also need to book in advance if you wish to attend the banquet.

During online registration you can choose to pay online (WorldPay), send a sterling cheque drawable on a UK bank, or make a direct bank payment.

Booking in advance for the Congress is required and admission on the day cannot be guaranteed.

Accommodation in Istanbul

For your hotel arrangements please follow the link on the Conference website to Vista, who have arranged an allocation of rooms at special IIC prices at hotels not far from the conference venue. If you wish, you can also make your travel bookings by using the Vista website. You are of course free to make your own hotel arrangements, but will not then benefit from the special discounts negotiated for us by Vista.

Help for Student Members

The Brommelle Memorial Fund was established in 1990 in memory of Norman Brommelle, who was Secretary-General of IIC from 1958-1988. The fund is used to provide assistance for students of conservation who wish to attend the Institute's international congresses.

Students are defined as those enrolled in a full-time course of conservation training leading to a recognised academic qualification. Students may apply at any time during their course of study, including their final year or internship. Applicants must be Individual Members or Student Members of IIC in good standing.

In order to spread funding over as wide a geographical area as possible, it may be necessary to restrict the number of recipients from any one organisation. The Fund will normally provide only a part of the total cost of attending the Congress and it is important that students should attempt to obtain additional funding from else-where. Successful applicants will receive not less than the amount of the Congress Fee.

Applications must be received at the IIC office by 30 April 2010 and successful recipients will be advised by the end of May. The application form can be downloaded from the congress website, or a paper version obtained from the IIC office. Send the completed form by email, post or fax to IIC together with a copy of your CV and a letter of support from your course supervisor. Applications will be accepted in English only.

Help from the Gabo Trust

Thanks to the generosity of the Gabo Trust we are able to offer up to three cash awards of up to £1,000 to assist practising sculpture conservators who work on modern sculpture to attend the Congress.

Application is open to participants from any country. Applicants should ideally demonstrate in their CV practice in modern sculpture conservation. This funding will not cover total attendance, accommodation and travel/subsistence costs, so applicants will need to guarantee in their application that

they can fund the balance of the costs themselves.

A brief statement should be provided in English describing how attendance at the Congress would be of benefit to the individual and to conservation in his/her country. The application should be supported by one senior professional conservator, who should be named, with affiliations and contact details, on the application document.

Applications will be accepted by post, fax or email and should be received by **30 April 2010**.

IIC Keck Award 2010

Every two years an award is offered to the individual or group who, in the opinion of IIC Council, has done most to further the public appreciation of the work of the conservation profession. The award consists of a certificate and a cash prize of £1000, presented at the biennial IIC Congress.

Details of previous award winners can be found on the IIC website:

http://www.iiconservation.org/about/keck_award.php

We are now seeking nominations for the 2010 award. If you would like to propose yourself, or a colleague, please send your nomination to the IIC office (preferably by email) to arrive by 31 March 2010. You should send a statement of between 500 and 1000 words describing the nominee's public outreach activities and outlining what supporting material, such as publications, websites, videos, or evidence of media coverage is available. You may be asked to supply these at a later date. The application should include the name, job title and professional address of the individual (or of all the partners in a group project). Send your proposal to iic@iiconservation.org with the words 'Keck Award' in the subject line, or by post to IIC, 6 Buckingham Street, London WC2N 6BA, UK.

New IIC Fellows

Congratulations to all newly elected IIC Fellows! We will be featuring the biographies of other newly elected IIC Fellows in future editions of News in Conservation.

Shing-Wai Chan

Shing-Wai Chan is head of the Central Conservation Section under the Leisure and Cultural Services Department, overseeing the provision of a wide range of conservation services for the public museums,



monuments, archives and libraries in Hong Kong. He obtained his BSc in chemistry from the Chinese University of Hong Kong in 1983, and after joining the conservation profession in 1985, received a Post-Graduate Certificate in Archaeological Conservation from University College London in 1987 and, later a Certificate in Paper Conservation from ICCROM. He attended the Berkeley Executive Program at the Haas School of Business, UC Berkeley in 2000, as well as the Museum Leadership Institute at the Getty Center in 2008.

With a keen interest to promote conservation work in the region, he has served as an Honorary Advisor for the University Museum and Art Gallery, Tung Wah Museum and Macau Museum, and has lectured extensively for the Architecture Conservation Programme and Museum Studies Diploma Programme of the University of Hong Kong and the Chinese University of Hong Kong, Hong Kong Art School and the School of Professional and Continuing Education. He is currently the Chairman and a founding member of the

Hong Kong Curators Association, the only organisation for museum professionals in Hong Kong.

Barbara Reeve

Barbara Reeve gained her Bachelor of Arts cum laude in Classical and Near Eastern Archaeology from Bryn Mawr College before taking a Bachelor of Science degree with honours in Archaeological Conservation and Materials Science at the University of London. Barbara's interest in conservation grew out of her initial interest in archaeology. During her first appointment as a conservator, at the Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge, she tutored undergraduates for the Faculty of Classics Tripos.

As Head of Collection Services at the Australian War Memorial, Canberra since 1998, Barbara oversees all conservation, registration, and collection systems management programs. From 1993 to 1998 Barbara was Head of Conservation at the Australian National Maritime Museum, Sydney. Her extensive experience as a conservator includes working for public institutions and in private practice, in the latter undertaking consultancies for museums, for private and corporate collectors, and for archaeological excavations in Syria, Cyprus, France, Italy, Hong Kong, Australia, New Zealand, the United Kingdom, and the USA. She established and taught a conservation course at the University of Hong Kong (1990-1993). She attended the Museum Leadership Program at the University of Melbourne's Business School in 2001. Her current professional interests include disaster response for bushfire-affected communities, the design of energy-efficient collection storage facilities, and museum ethics.



Elena Shishkova

Elena Shishkova has a Postgraduate Diploma in Paper Conservation from the St Petersburg Serov College of Arts and an MA in Art History from the St Petersburg Repin State Institute of Painting, Sculpture and Architecture. She gained her PhD in art history from the St Petersburg Academy of Art and Design.



Since 1998, Elena Shishkova has been Head of the Oriental Painting Scientific Restoration Laboratory at the State Hermitage Museum in St Petersburg. She is a member of the Paper Conservation Group, Russian Ministry of Culture Commission for Assessment of Restorers.

Elena has been involved with numerous international projects including the 1997 conservation of Rembrandt's etchings from the Rovinskij Collection (State Hermitage Museum-UNESCO) and the conservation of Levashov Family Album, Hermitage Collection, in conjunction with the US North-East Document Conservation Center. In 2000 she took part in the survey of Japanese paintings in the Hermitage Collection in collaboration with the State Tokyo Institute of Technology and Restoration, Tokyo-Kyoto and in 2008-2009 undertook a survey of the Hermitage Photography Collection (with the support of the A. Mellon Foundation, NY, USA).

Her publications and lectures centre on the conservation treatment of paper and oriental paintings, as well as conservation theory. Elena presented posters at IIC Congresses in Munich (2006) and London (2008).

Calls for Papers

SEM and microanalysis in the study of historical technology, materials and conservation

9–10 September 2010
London, UK
Call for papers deadline:
19 February 2010
info@sem2010.org.uk

10th International Symposium on Wood and Furniture Conservation

October 2010
Amsterdam, The Netherlands
Call for papers deadline:
1 May 2010
www.ebenist.org

La restauration des œuvres d'art en Europe entre 1789 et 1815

2 October 2010
Geneva, Switzerland
Call for papers deadline:
15 May 2010
noemie.etienne@unige.ch

Adhesives and Consolidants for Conservation: Research and Applications

17–22 October 2011
Ottawa, Canada
Call for papers deadline:
1 September 2010
www.cci-icc.gc.ca/ann/symp2011-eng.aspx

Meetings and Conferences

International Symposium on the future of Museum Climate seen in the context of Global Climate Change

1 March 2010
Copenhagen, Denmark
http://www.smk.dk/

9th Biennial international Conference of Infrared and Raman Users' Group

3–6 March 2010
Buenos Aires, Argentina
www.irug9.org

ICOM-CC joint interim meeting: multidisciplinary conservation: a holistic view for historic interiors

23–25 March 2010
Rome, Italy
www.icom-cc.org/51/news/?id=45

ICON Conference: Conservation in Focus 2010

24–26 March 2010
Cardiff, United Kingdom
www.iiconservation.org/events/index.php?idnr=347

ICOM-CC Graphic Documents Working Group: Choices in conservation: practice versus research

21–23 April 2010
Copenhagen, Denmark
www.icom-cc.icom.museum

9th Indoor Air Quality meeting (IAQ2010)

21–23 April 2010
Chalon-sur-Saône, France
www.chateaudegermolles.fr/spip.php?rubrique44

MEDACHS 10: Marine Environment Damage to Coastal and Historical Structures

28–30 April 2010
La Rochelle, France
http://medachs.univ-lr.fr/

Archaeological Sciences in the Eastern Mediterranean & the Near East

29 April–1 May 2010
Paphos, Cyprus
http://icaseemne.net/

XII Reunión técnica de conservación-restauración

Barcelona, Spain
3–4 May 2010
www.gruptecnic.org

AIC 38th Annual Meeting: The Conservation Continuum

11–14 May 2010
Milwaukee WI, United States
www.conservation-us.org/meetings

The technical examination of Old Master drawings: symposium in conservation science

British Museum symposium
20 May 2010
London, United Kingdom
drawings@bm-mellon-symposia.org.uk

All Things Bright and Crumbly, All Projects Great and Small

ICON Ceramics and Glass Group
20–23 May 2010
Lincoln, United Kingdom
kmagill@thebritishmuseum.ac.uk

ICOM-CC Wet Organic Archaeological Materials

24–28 May 2010
Greenville NC, United States
www.woam2010.com/index.htm

YOCOCU: Youth in the Conservation of Cultural Heritage

24–26 May 2010
Palermo, Italy
www.yococu.com

New Insights into the cleaning of paintings (Cleaning 2010)

26 May 2010
Valencia, Spain
www.cleaning2010.uvp.es

CONSTGLASS: Conservation materials for stained glass windows

27–28 May 2010
Romont, Switzerland
http://www.vitrocentre.ch/

Preservation and Conservation Issues in Digital Printing and Digital Photography

27–28 May 2010
London, United Kingdom
www.iop.org/Conferences

Contemporary Art: Who Cares?

9–11 June 2010
Amsterdam, The Netherlands
www.incca.org/contemporaryartw/ocares

36th Annual CAC conference: sustainability of the profession

10–12 June 2010
Ottawa ON, Canada
www.cac-accr.ca/english/e-CAC-conference.asp

Archaeological iron conservation colloquium

24–26 June 2010
Stuttgart, Germany
http://www.icom-cc.org/52/event/?id=90

Chemistry for cultural heritage (ChemCH)

1–3 July 2010
Ravenna, Italy
www.socchimadbc.it/pages/OrgDivis.htm

Central Asian Islamic Manuscripts and Manuscript Collections

8–10 July 2010
Cambridge, United Kingdom
www.islamicmanuscript.org

In situ technical imaging for art and archaeology: a symposium in conservation science

15 July 2010
London, United Kingdom
www.britishmuseum.org/technicalimaging

The 2010 American Glass Guild Conference

23–25 July 2010
Detroit MI, United States
www.americanglassguild.org/index.html

4th International Architectural Paint Conference

3–6 August 2010
Lincoln, United Kingdom
http://www.lincoln.ac.uk/home/conferences/architectural_paint/index.htm

2nd Balkan Symposium on Archaeometry

15–17 September 2010
Istanbul, Turkey
http://www.iku.edu.tr/TR/sem_ice rik.php?p=160&r=0

ICOM-CC Paintings Group Workshop: Current Practice and Recent Developments in the Structural Conservation of Paintings on Canvas Supports

16–18 September 2010
Vantaa, Finland
tannar.ruuben@metropolia.fi

ICON Ethnography group symposium - Basketry conservation

19 September 2010
London, United Kingdom
ICONbasketry@googlemail.com

IIC Congress 2010: Conservation and the Eastern Mediterranean

20–24 September 2010
Istanbul, Turkey
www.iiconservation.org/conference/s/istanbul2010/

2nd Historic Mortars Conference

22–24 September 2010
Prague, Czech Republic
www.itam.cas.cz/HMC2010

4th international Symposium of the ICOM-CC working group Art Technological Source Research

23–24 September 2010
Vienna, Austria
http://www.icom-cc.org/52/event/?id=103

CMA4CHL Application of multivariate analysis and chemometrics to environment and cultural heritage

26–29 September 2010
Taormina, Italy
http://w3.uniroma1.it/cma4ch/

Glass and Ceramics Conservation 2010

3–6 October 2010
Corning NY, United States
www.icom-cc.org/51/news/?id=23

Big Stuff 2010

6–8 October 2010
Duxford, United Kingdom
cknapp@iwm.org.uk

ENAMEL: 3rd experts meeting on enamel on metals conservation

8–9 October 2010
New York NY, United States
day@frick.org

Interim Meeting of the ICOM-CC Metal Working Group

11–15 October 2010
Charleston SC, United States
ICOMCC.Metal2010@gmail.com

The British Museum Citole: New Perspectives

4–5 November 2010
London, United Kingdom
nspakman@britishmuseum.org

ICOM Triennial Conference on Museums and Harmonious Society

7–11 November 2010
Shanghai, China
http://icom.museum/gen_conferen ces.html

Cultural Heritage and New Technologies

15–17 November 2010
Vienna, Austria
http://www.stadtarchaeologie.at

6th AICCM Book, Paper and Photographs Symposium

17–19 November 2010
Melbourne, Australia
belinda.gourley@ngv.vic.gov.au

Denkmal 2010 - Europäische Messe für Denkmalpflege, Restaurierung und Altbausanierung

18–20 November 2010
Leipzig, Germany
www.denkmal-leipzig.de/LeMMon/denkmal_web _ger.nsf/start?OpenPage

Colours, Early Textiles Study Group (ETSG) Meeting

19–20 November 2010
London, United Kingdom
h.persson@vam.ac.uk

Courses, Seminars and Workshops

Técnicas orientales aplicadas a la restauración del papel
2–5 March, 2010
Valencia, Spain
http://www.cfp.upv.es/cfp-posei2-web/cursos/idiomaes-cid21746_tecnicas-orientales-aplicadas-a-la-restauracion-del-papel.html

Climate control in historic houses-ICN Masterclass

3–5 March 2010
Amerongen, The Netherlands
http://www.icn.nl/en/actueel/agenda/masterclass-climate-control-march-2010

Society of Archivists Conservation Training Scheme

Chemistry Week
12–15 April 2010
Brighton, United Kingdom
http://www.archives.org.uk

14th International Course on Wood Conservation Technology

24 May–2 July 2010
Oslo, Norway
http://www.iccrom.org/

ATHAR-MOSAIKON: Conservation and Management of Mosaics on Archaeological Sites

3–21 May 2010
Tyre, Lebanon
http://www.iccrom.org/

Spot Tests for Material Characterization

5–8 July 2010
Kaman-Kalehoyuk, Turkey
alicepaterakis@yahoo.com

Ancient and Historic Metals: Technology, Microstructure, and Corrosion

16–20 August 2010
London, United Kingdom
dascott@ucla.edu

ICON Ethnography group workshop - Basketry conservation

15–18 September 2010
London, United Kingdom
ICONbasketry@googlemail.com

For more information about these conferences and courses, see the IIC website:

www.iiconservation.org

A Letter

Too many charts and graphs?

There is much to celebrate as we enter the 60th anniversary year of IIC. There is also much to evaluate. Let's take, for example, *Studies in Conservation*. On occasion it has been said that *Studies* is "too scientific" and not sufficiently practical or relevant to what conservators do on a day-to-day basis. While it is certainly the case that *Studies* is not a "how to manual", the question of overall relevancy is an important one. But relevancy is often dictated by how information is accepted, interpreted, and used – perceptions of relevancy can be skewed by common and persistent misunderstandings. Throughout its history *Studies* has reflected the application of the most recent scientific thought and tools to the challenges facing conservators. Scientific investigation has led to a better understanding of materials and techniques used by artists and craftsmen and it has given us a better grasp of the destructive processes that affect those materials. It has also led to methodologies used to interrupt deterioration. Conservators have looked toward *Studies* for over a half century to help them understand new treatment methods and to evaluate the reliability and appropriateness of traditional restoration and preservation approaches. Yet, there persists the opinion that the pages of *Studies* contain too many charts and graphs, too much data, and not enough "usable"

information. To explore if this contradiction is valid let's look at the most recent issue of *Studies* and evaluate its relevance to the concerns of working conservators.

Volume 54:4 contains five articles, with illustrations and yes, charts and graphs. They offer the following:

- The treatment of a complex and fragile 19th century glass model of a micro-organism. Micro computer scanning was used to clarify the manufacturing approach and instrumental analysis characterized the glass composition, providing an understanding of the deterioration process. The author shares inventive and wonderfully straightforward treatment techniques as well as discussing the optimum environmental conditions for long term preservation.
- This detailed look at the challenges faced when treating documents produced with iron gall ink, raises questions of how dependable our efforts to evaluate treatments are and why we must develop more accurate and simple analytical tools. The authors assess treatments and numerous approaches to solubility tests too. Most prove unreliable, especially for hydrophobic papers.
- A potential baseline for studying the exchange of material culture through the petrographic and mineralogical characterizations of ground layers on a variety of 12th century AD urushi objects. Knowing the compositions of different applications of urushi leads to

better decision making at the bench.

- A study of using a YAG laser for the removal of lichen and other contaminants from a limestone sculpture provides important advice for conservators seeking best practices using this emerging technology.
- An evaluation of the materials used to construct micro-climate exhibition cases and the identification of secondary harmful byproducts leads one set of authors to warn that there are no emission-free materials, despite the claims of many manufacturers – practical advice for conservators designing and constructing showcases.

We have come to realize that the interaction between analytical science and the conservator's actions is how the profession best achieves its goals. Volume 54:4 is an example of how *Studies* reflects this partnership and offers a resource to explore meaningful solutions and contributions to the field. Accordingly the five papers include both instrumental analysis and practical information.

IIC members should be proud that Vol.54:4 represent the work of a broad range of professionals (chemists, biophysicists, biologists, material scientists, conservators, geologists, archaeometallurgists) from six different countries. *Studies* is truly international because of whom it serves and because of who contributes to it. It represents what conservation, as an activity and as a profession, is increasingly becoming: multidisciplinary. Can *Studies in*

Conservation be improved? Yes, of course and there are efforts continually underway to make it an ever more useful resource. But it is up to all of us to support, use and contribute to this long standing and relevant resource. *Studies* is a place where you can count on the theoretical, technical, and practical all coming together for one purpose: the preservation of cultural heritage. And that is, after all, where conservators' commitments lie.

Jerry Podany, President IIC

The latest issue of *Studies in Conservation*

