
Articles You May Have Missed

“How Sweet It Is: Old Ice Cream Factory Now Specializes in Saving History,” *Hidden City*, 04/25/23

The Crane Ice Cream Factory at 256-70 S. 23rd Street, Philadelphia, opened in 1902. It stopped churning out vanilla, chocolate, and strawberry treats in the late 1930s.

The handsome, two-story brick building, designed by engineering firm Ballinger & Perrot, now houses an unusual combination: luxury apartments and the Conservation Center for Arts & Historic Artifacts (CCAHA).

In 1977, Marilyn Kemp Weidner became a pioneer when she founded CCAHA in her home at 600 Spruce Street. Until that time, conservation was primarily about the restoration of paintings. Weidner borrowed techniques and methods from Japanese conservators and was one of first in the United States to preserve works on paper.

CCAHA moved into the former Crane Ice Cream Factory on 23rd Street in 1984. Over the years, CCAHA has formed relationships with the nation's leading cultural and educational institutions, including the Barnes Foundation, the Rosenbach Museum, the Smithsonian, and New York Public Library. It has also preserved Frank Lloyd Wright's architectural drawings, John James Audubon's Birds of America prints and, recently, helped create a special exhibition now on view at the Museum of the American Revolution, Black Founders: The Forten Family of Philadelphia.

CCAHA has also stepped up to meet environmental challenges. In 2016, CCAHA's Samantha Forsko launched the Pennsylvania Cultural Response Team to provide trained volunteer assistance when emergencies occur at cultural institutions anywhere in the Commonwealth.

“Mosul Cultural Museum Announces New Conservation And Restoration Programme,” *The National*, 05/11/2023

The Mosul Cultural Museum has entered the second phase of its rehabilitation, six years after the battle against ISIS left its artefacts damaged, looted or destroyed.

After a painstaking effort of cataloguing what is missing and restoring the fragments that remain, the museum is now beginning work on the building itself, in order to reopen in 2026.

The rehabilitation of the building will reverse changes that were made to the building, which opened in 1974, with one major difference. It will leave as is the three-metre-hole in the main gallery where ISIS detonated explosives on a 9th century BCE platform for an Assyrian throne.

“The aim is to document the actions done by ISIS during their occupation of the city,” says Zaid Ghazi Saadallah, the director of the museum.

The announcement of the new plans was made at a packed press conference at the museum today, attended by the Iraqi Minister of Culture, the head of its State Board of Antiquities and Heritage, and representatives of the four foreign agencies that are collaborating on the museum.

Under the terms of the project, the Louvre is conserving the objects in the museum, the World Monuments Fund is restoring the building, the Smithsonian Institution and are helping to train and work with the staff of the museum, and the Swiss cultural heritage organisation ALIPH is helping to fund and support the overall project.

“Museum Workers Have Stumbled on 2,000 Missing Fragments of a Roman Wall Painting While Restoring an Ancient Theater,” *Artnet News*, 05/08/2023

Archaeologists have discovered 2,000 fragments of an ancient Roman mural inside an ancient theater in the city of Cartagena on the south-eastern coast of Spain.

The theater was built between 5 and 1 B.C.E., and contained enough space for an audience of up to 7,000 to attend ceremonies and performances. Today the theatre, which was excavated in 1988, has been restored to its former glory and, since 2008, houses an open-air museum.

It turned out, however, that the site was still hiding some secrets that have only just been unearthed. The fragments were discovered by accident during restoration work on the theatre's portico towards the back of the stage, which originally surrounded a central garden. Archaeologists began excavating and documenting the wall in January.

The pieces will join another 1,500 fragments that were found in 2006, and historians hope to be able to

reconstruct the original composition and restore the mural. Though details are hard to make out at the moment, there appear to be three main pictorial groups and researchers have detected human figures as well as linear design features.

The city of Cartagena was conquered by the Roman general Scipio Africanus in 209 B.C.E., who named it Carthago Nova (meaning “New New City”), the capital of the province of Hispania Carthaginiensis. During the reign of Julius Caesar, the city received Latin rights and it was an important tributary community of the Roman Empire.

“New Compact Accelerator To Help Preserve Heritage Artworks,” *Phys.org*, 04/21/2023

Beyond fundamental research, accelerators are well known for their contribution to the medical field, especially to cancer therapy. However, they can also be used in more unexpected ways, such as for the analysis of historical artifacts and works of art.

Developed by INFN (the Italian National Institute for Nuclear Physics) and CERN, MACHINA (Movable Accelerator for Cultural Heritage In-situ Non-destructive Analysis) is a compact, transportable accelerator designed specifically for cultural heritage applications. MACHINA is based on a radio-frequency-quadrupole accelerating cavity designed at CERN.

Following testing, the accelerator will be transferred to the Opificio delle Pietre Dure (OPD) in Florence, where it will become a part of their regular diagnostic activities. MACHINA will be used to analyze works of art in a non-destructive manner, using IBA techniques that allow measurements to be performed on a variety of objects that would otherwise be impossible to analyze because they are too fragile or too large to move.

Although based in OPD, MACHINA can be further transported for in situ measurements at other museums or conservation sites.

“Vatican Restorers Are Working to Bring a Colossal Roman Sculpture of Hercules Back to Its Golden Glory,” *Artnet News*, 05/24/2023

A gilded bronze sculpture, Hercules Mastai Righetti, now housed

in the Vatican Museums, is undergoing a \$113,588 facelift to remove centuries of grime from its golden surface.

The work depicts the young demigod Hercules leaning on his club, holding the apples of the Hesperides (evening nymphs), in his left hand. The identity of the original sculptor remains unknown, but the work is believed to date from the second to third century B.C.E.

The statue was first discovered in 1864, under the courtyard of the Palazzo Pio Righetti in Campo de' Fiori, according to the Patrons of the Vatican Museums (PAVM), which is funding the restoration. It was found during construction on a banker's villa and then donated to Pope Pius IX, who placed it in the papal collection.

Scholars believe that lighting struck the statue in ancient times and it underwent a ritual burial based on Roman custom. The sculpture bears an inscription with the letters "FCS" which stands for "fulgur conditum summanium," a Latin phrase meaning: "Here is buried a Summanian thunderbolt."

Vatican Museum restorer Alice Baltera said in remarks to the Associated Press that the original gilding is "exceptionally well-preserved," likely because it had been buried after the lightning strike. But the current restoration has been called "very complex" because of the structure and size of the sculpture. Measuring 13 feet tall, it is one of the largest ancient Roman bronzes to survive to the present day.

Restorers are now working to undo some of the previous restoration work done by the Neo-Classical sculptor Pietro Tenerani at some point in the 19th century. Such efforts include replacing the plaster added to the sculpture with fresh casts made of resin and removing a wax coat that had been added to the surface.

"A Forgotten Monument to Times Square Flickers Back to Life," *Bloomberg*, 06/08/2023

Standing 10 feet tall, wide, and deep, the hulking 1966 sculpture called *The Gates to Times Square* radiates bright blue neon light through what appears as a giant capital 'A' split open. Inside, illegible letter-like forms made of metal and glass tubes mimic the alluring mess of mid-20th century commercial

signage found throughout its namesake destination.

It is unquestionably artist Chryssa (Vardea's) masterpiece. But until recently, it had been seen by almost no one in 25 years. Among the first artists to meaningfully work with neon, the artist was born in Greece in 1933, and relocated to the US in the mid-1950s. By 1961 she was given a solo show at the Guggenheim.

But by the end of the 20th century, Chryssa and her work had fallen into obscurity, and *The Gates* sat in storage at the Albright-Knox Art Gallery (now AKG Buffalo) in Buffalo, NY, in serious need of repairs.

This year, a new traveling exhibition, "*Chryssa & New York*," aims to reinstate the artist, who died in 2013, to the place she earned in American post-war art history. The show, which is at Dia Chelsea in New York City through July 23, gathers dozens of her canvases, sculptures and larger-scale neon-and-metal works, anchored by a full restoration of her most complex creation.

When Dia decided to put together a Chryssa show, there was little doubt that *The Gates* would have to be brought back to life. But after decades of storage at the Albright-Knox, the work required extensive restoration.

"With neon, the more it's turned on, the more it's displayed, the better condition it tends to remain," says Dia curator Megan Holly Witko.

Lite Brite Neon, a custom neon and lighting shop, led the restoration of *The Gates* and other neon works in the exhibit. The full restoration of *The Gates* and many other smaller works is a big step towards making Chryssa's name a recognizable one again.

"For Sale: San Francisco Art Institute Campus, \$50-Million Diego Rivera Mural Included," *LA Times*, 06/30/2023

The financially troubled San Francisco Art Institute has put its campus on sale, and the deal includes a building adorned by a multimillion-dollar mural by famed artist Diego Rivera.

Facing a debt of about \$20 million, the school at one point considered selling Rivera's "*The Making of a Fresco Showing the Building of a City*" by itself to stay afloat. But rumors that the mural

could be moved out of the school and the city sparked outrage among artists, professors and city leaders.

Unable to meet its debts, however, SFAI filed for Chapter 7 bankruptcy protection on April 19, and on Tuesday, the real estate company Cushman & Wakefield announced it had been hired to sell the historic campus in San Francisco's Russian Hill neighborhood, including Rivera's 1931 mural. No price has been listed for the entire campus.

The sale is expected to bring in a hefty sum, however, since the Rivera mural sitting inside one of the two buildings is estimated in the bankruptcy filings to be valued at \$50 million, making it its most valuable asset.

When rumors began to surface that SFAI's board of trustees was considering selling the mural, it sparked outrage among its faculty, who said in an open letter that selling and removing the mural would "damage the school's reputation, legacy and position. We have a predominantly white and extremely affluent board that is seeking to protect its own wealth by selling the work of an artist of color to another white and incredibly powerful buyer."

The "powerful buyer" mentioned by the professors was disclosed as filmmaker George Lucas, who had expressed interest in buying the mural for the Lucas Museum of Narrative Art under construction in Los Angeles, according to the *New York Times*. In response, San Francisco supervisors in January 2021 designated the mural a city landmark.

"Extreme Weather Threatens the Best-kept Art of the Ancient Silk Road," *Washington Post*, 07/17/2023

Changing weather patterns in northwest China are putting ancient Silk Road cave murals and statues at risk.

Research released Monday by Greenpeace has found that Buddhist artwork in caves across Gansu province is under intensifying assault from the elements as the region gets hotter, wetter and more prone to sudden downpours.

"Gansu is famous for its caves and the art stored inside them for centuries," said Li Zhao, a Beijing-based researcher at Greenpeace East Asia. "Increased bouts of rainfall in the desert pose an acute risk. Spikes in humidity,

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flash floods and cave-ins are already happening.”

Over the past two decades, temperatures in Gansu have risen faster than the global average. At the same time, overall summer rainfall has risen even as total days of precipitation have dropped — meaning that when it rains, it often pours.

In recent years, public awareness of extreme weather has grown rapidly in China as deadly floods and record heat waves have brought home the dangers of a changing climate. The Chinese government has positioned itself as being proactive in tackling the problem, pledging to peak carbon dioxide emissions before 2030 and to reach “carbon neutrality” by 2060.

But environmental activists remain concerned about Beijing’s slow progress in quitting coal power. Efforts to protect the Gansu grottoes have been ongoing for decades, but it is only recently that research has begun to consider how a rapidly changing climate could make conservation harder.

The Getty Conservation Institute, a Los Angeles-based nonprofit, has worked with local experts for decades to protect and record archaeological findings in the region. One of the most recent developments in that collaboration is the adoption of an open-source inventory platform developed by Getty, called Arches.

“Arches allows a big-picture view of that situation across all these sites, which should allow them to see things like trends in conditions and then also proactively to prioritize interventions,” said David Myers, a senior project specialist at Getty.

Because of Getty’s open-source software, the Dunhuang Academy “made changes that no one else had done” by incorporating data from monitors to measure the flow of visitors, carbon dioxide levels and humidity, Myers said.

Other historical sites across China are less prepared to respond to climate change. “There are hundreds of less-funded, less-studied sites all around China that are facing these same risks,” said Li of Greenpeace. The discovery, classification and preservation of ancient history are of particular importance to Xi Jinping, China’s leader, who has called for the creation of “archaeology with Chinese characteristics” and sought to frame the Chinese Communist Party as

the natural inheritor of ancient Chinese civilization.

Given the huge number of cultural artifacts at risk and the unpredictable nature of climate change, sometimes the best — maybe only — option is to prepare for the worst to ensure as little ancient history as possible is lost. “You need to take the best science and you do scenario planning. You play out how you would respond in all of them just so that you’re prepared,” Myers of the Getty Conservation Institute said.

“The Price of Admission to America’s Museums Keeps Rising”, *New York Times* 08/01/2023

Audience sizes just aren’t what they used to be at the Guggenheim Museum, where membership — once a dependable source of income — has declined by nearly 16 percent since 2019, and attendance in June slumped by 26 percent, from 89,600 to 65,900, over the same time frame.

What has increased is the cost of running the institution. A newly unionized work force has bumped up salary expenses, while inflation is driving up the cost of everything from heating to shipping artworks, according to senior museum officials. At the Guggenheim, leaders said that options for relief were limited after three years of managing the fiscal crisis of the pandemic.

And so on Tuesday, the museum raised admission fees, bringing the cost of an adult ticket from \$25 to what is becoming the new normal for major museums: \$30.

Most cultural organizations are navigating the same uncertainties, asking if the decision to raise fees to offset operating costs — basically maximizing revenues from a smaller core of visitors and art lovers — is worth the risk of limiting access to great art to mostly wealthier patrons.

Large donations from corporations and philanthropists often come with restrictions that prevent officials from putting the money toward operating costs.

A recent survey by the non-profit American Alliance of Museums illustrates the potential for economic risk: It found that only one-third of museums have rebounded to pre-pandemic attendance levels, with two-thirds experiencing reduced attendance closer to 70

percent. More than half predicted their profits to stay the same or decrease.

Expensive renovations and the construction of new galleries have increased operating costs at exactly the wrong time, leaving officials with higher overhead.

Some institutions do say their attendance has fully come back, including the Los Angeles County Museum of Art and the Detroit Institute of Arts. But overall, arts organizations have struggled.

Harry Philbrick, a museum veteran who is interim executive director of the Fabric Workshop and Museum in Philadelphia, which has free admission, is especially worried that changing attitudes among consumers might lead to an existential crisis for the industry. “Museums are really struggling” in part because the internet has taught younger generations that culture should be cheap, if not free, Philbrick said. “If you are used to getting music basically for free on your phone, why pay for art?” he said. “The museum format is antithetical to how some people are used to getting culture.”

Membership

Chris Stavroudis
membership secretary

WAAC welcomes the following new members (and welcomes back very late renewals:

Amanda Burr, Elizabeth Burton, Biblio C Cile-Rouleau (MESS), Joy Carlsen, Rhea DeStefano, Cody Driver, Elizabeth Estabrook, Ria German-Carter, Madison Gordon, Colette Hardman-Peavy, Laura Hishimoto, Caroline Hoover Nelson, Seth Irwin, Andrew Jacobs, Sara Kornhauser, Robin Langmuir, Debbie Linn, Oriana Montemurro, Travers Newton, Dennis Piechota, Emma Reuther, Corina Rogge, Attn: Kelly McHugh, Yoonjoo Strumfels, Mayra Villegas, Magdalena Wantschik, Rachel Waters, and Claire Winfield

Curiosity never retires.

from *The Light Pirate*
by Lily Brooks-Dalton