

“Art Expert Says He Never Recommended Mural’s Demise,” *Chatham Daily News*, 06/27/2013

A fine art conservator based in London said he never recommended scrapping the corn mural at the Chatham Cultural Centre.

Keith Bantock of Bantock Art Conservation Services Inc. said he did tell administration officials over the telephone he thought it would be difficult or impossible to rebuild the 34-year-old organic corn mural that was created for the 1979 International Plowing Match held in Chatham-Kent. The corn mural is back in the news this week as a result of the chair of the Chatham-Kent Museum Board demanding a third-party review of why the corn mural was scrapped without proper permission.

“People have to accept that the mural had a limited life span,” Bantock said. “The mural was around for longer than intended.” Bantock added, however, he sees no problem in reviewing the procedures when it comes to deaccession of art pieces. Dr. Bruce Warwick, chair of the museum board, said “the issue is now less about a mural and more about the process -- accountability and transparency -- two over-used words that often ring hollow.”

“Lasers & Art Conservation: Duke University Professor Discovers New Way to Analyze Paintings,” *Huffington Post*, 07/04/2013

A Duke University professor who developed a laser to study melanoma has discovered a new use for the system: uncovering what’s underneath artwork without damaging the pieces in any way.

Dr. Warren S. Warren was at the National Gallery in London, looking at an exhibit on art forgeries, when he realized that the art world used imaging technologies that were 30 or 40 years old. Warren and others in Duke’s Center for Molecular and Biomedical Imaging, which he heads, have discovered they can use Warren’s pump-probe laser to create three-dimensional cross-sections of art that let researchers see colors and layers and maybe, at some point, discover the source of materials.

John Delaney, senior imaging scientist in the conservation division of

the National Gallery of Art, researches how to adapt noninvasive analytical imaging methods to help identify and map artists’ materials. He has traveled to Durham to see the laser system at work.

The first beneficiary of the laser is the N.C. Museum of Art, about 60 miles southeast of Durham. The museum and the school are figuring out together how to make the pump-probe laser work optimally for art conservators. Warren’s lab will develop a portable version of the pump-probe so it can go to the paintings, and so it can be used to examine larger works of art.

The pump-probe laser system provides a three-dimensional view of any part of a painting without taking a chip. Warren explained that the pump-probe laser uses two laser pulses of different colors and varies the delay between the pulses. The first one “pumps” the pigment and the second one “probes” what happened to the energy deposited by the first one.

“Bank of America Merrill Lynch Art Conservation Project 2013 Gives New Life to Historic Artworks at Four National Cultural Institutions Across Asia,” *Jakarta Post*, 07/04/2013

Bank of America Merrill Lynch has announced that it will provide funding, though its global Art Conservation Project to conserve artworks of significant historic and cultural value at four national cultural institutions across Asia, including Australia, Japan and China.

These artworks are part of a total of 24 projects in 16 countries around the world that have been selected for grant funding in 2013. The beneficiaries of the 2013 grants include:

— Rare ceramics from Qinglongzhen near Shanghai, dating from the Tang and Song dynasties, at the Shanghai Museum
— 14 stone sculptures at the Beijing Stone Carving Art Museum, dating from the second to the nineteenth century
— The North Wind, an iconic Impressionist work by Frederick McCubbin at the National Gallery of Victoria in Melbourne

“As art conservation consumes ever greater portions of tightened museum budgets, the need for private arts funding has become even more critical,” said Matthew Koder, President, Asia Pa-

cific, Bank of America Merrill Lynch. “We are honored to help preserve works of art that are culturally and historically significant to these countries as part of our longstanding partnership in Asia, where we have done business for more than 60 years.”

“Saving Medusa,” University of Delaware *UDaily*, 07/11/2013

This June, 14 University of Delaware art conservation undergraduates and one graduate student worked with famed conservator Roberto Nardi to excavate and preserve the remaining salvageable pieces of a medallion in a Medusa mosaic.

Dated somewhere around the second century, it remained buried for centuries on the island of Sardinia until its discovery in 2010. Blogging their experience, the students worked with Nardi, to excavate the pieces and transport them to a workshop in a converted 13th-century Franciscan convent outside of Rome, where they began to piece together the fragments.

The students also studied under Roberto Cassio, director of Vatican Museums Restoration Laboratory for Mosaics, who uses traditional Roman materials and techniques to reproduce and restore classic, religious and modern subjects and portraits. “Introducing us to the new mosaic material he uses, comprised of glass with metals and minerals, he walked us through his method of creating tesserae and molding them with a blowtorch,” the students wrote in a June 21 blog post.

“This was the first time the department has offered this experience, and we certainly hope to do more,” said Vicki Cassman, associate professor and undergraduate director of the art conservation program. “Our students returned with a deeper appreciation and understanding of conservation, not just as something we study in class, but as something that has a profound impact on culture and society across the globe.”

“Agilent Technologies Powers Art Conservation Workshop at Yale University,” *Market Watch*, 07/16/2013

Agilent Technologies Inc. today announced it is supplying state-of-the-

AYMHHM, continued

art instruments and software for a workshop at Yale's Center for Conservation and Preservation on Recent Advances in Characterizing Asian Lacquer at Yale University.

An international group of art conservators and scientists are learning advanced techniques in gas chromatography and mass spectrometry to help them analyze lacquer and a broad range of other trace-level compounds found in Asian lacquer artifacts. Careful analysis of lacquer can reveal a wealth of information about the age and geographical origins of the components, and also address the authenticity of the artifact.

Modern coatings that aim to imitate lacquer are composed of various mixtures of polymers and pigments and can also be characterized using GC/MS techniques. The five-day workshop, based on the Getty Conservation Institute's research on Asian lacquers, was developed in partnership with the Yale Institute for the Preservation of Cultural Heritage.

"Smithsonian Institution Grapples with Maintenance of its Growing Inventory," *The Washington Post*, 07/17/2013

Smithsonian Inspector General Scott Dahl testified that the Smithsonian is still using inadequate storage space in Suitland, a temporary facility built in the 1950s that was never intended for permanent storage of collection items. In 2010, one of the buildings collapsed in a snowstorm.

The world's largest museum complex is bursting with stuff, from elephants to first lady gowns, biological specimens to space shuttles. Now, the Smithsonian Institution is grappling with a long-term challenge: how to maintain the 137 million items in its collection.

On Wednesday, the Committee on House Administration held a collections stewardship hearing to discuss challenges to implementing a maintenance plan to care for the art, archival footage, and dinosaur bones.

In an audit of the National Museum of American History, the museum could not locate 10 percent of items

sampled, including historic gold watches and Roman coins. Audits of several other institutions also revealed incomplete collections.

G. Wayne Clough, secretary of the Smithsonian, said the Smithsonian has gone to great lengths to remedy maintenance issues, investing \$462 million in collections management and \$390 million in facilities improvements since 2006. But Smithsonian leadership has also been vocal about its aging infrastructure and the long-term impact of budget cuts on maintenance. Still, the panel assured Congress that "the treasures are safe."

"Museum Has One More Painting Than It Thought," *Aberdeen News*, 07/20/2013

When a Frank C. Ashford painting was sent to Minneapolis to be restored, the Dacotah Prairie Museum found it had one more Ashford painting than it thought.

The museum has long owned an original Ashford oil painting called "Portrait of a Young Woman." With the support of the Yellow Brick Road Quester Club, the museum hired the Midwest Art Conservation Center in Minneapolis to restore the painting.

While the painting was in Minneapolis, the conservator removed the canvas from the frame to discover another painting of another young woman underneath. The two pieces will be jointly unveiled at a reception on Tuesday. The discovered painting needed only minor repair, which was financed by the Dacotah Prairie Museum Foundation.

Ashford was a 19th-century artist who had strong ties to the Aberdeen area. "Portrait of a Young Woman" portrays a "mystery lady," as little is known of her background, her identity or even the time period Ashford painted it.

"Sewage Backup Floods Lab at Folk Art Museum," *Santa Fe New Mexican*, 07/23/2013

Raw sewage flooded the conservation lab at the Museum of International Folk Art on July 14 during the final day of the Santa Fe International Folk

Art Market. Carrie Moritomo, public information officer for the New Mexico Department of Cultural Affairs, said the sewage backup was caused by a piece of plastic flushed down one of the museum's toilets.

No artwork from the collection of the Museum of New Mexico was damaged, Moritomo said, but the lab will be out of commission for four to six months. She said she did not have an estimate for the cost of remediation, but the tile floor in the lab will have to be replaced.

The conservators have been moved to offices in the Stuart Udall Center for Museum Resources on Camino Lejo near Old Santa Fe Trail. But no one was working there on Tuesday because of a mouse problem in a closet, which is to temporarily serve as a "lab." The space has been used by the Folk Art Market, and its staff suggested that the space be turned over to the conservation lab.

"Spain Museum uses Robot to Help Restore Works," *Arab News*, 07/25/2013

In the basement of Madrid's Reina Sofia museum, a giant robotic machine painstakingly scans a painting by Catalan surrealist artist Joan Miro, slowly snapping hundreds of microscopic shots. The pictures taken by the machine, which uses infrared and ultraviolet photography, will help experts determine the condition of the 1974 oil on canvas painting called "Women, Bird in the Night" in unprecedented detail.

The device lets restorers see cracks, scratches and creases as well underlying preparatory sketches and all subsequent touch-ups that would be otherwise undetectable. The robot has been nicknamed "Pablito" since the first work it tackled was the modern art museum's top draw — Pablo Picasso's immense canvas "Guernica," a depiction of the carnage of the Spanish Civil War.

The machine, which is nine meters long and 3.5 meters high and weighs about 1.2 tons when it is assembled at its full size, took 22,000 pictures of Picasso's black-and-white masterpiece last year. Those images are currently being analyzed by the restoration department at the museum.

Since then, the robot has been used on about a dozen other works, mostly by Miro, to help prepare an exhibition of works by the Catalan artist which will travel to the United States next year.

“Part of Vasari Corridor Roof Collapses in Florence,” *The Art Newspaper*, 08/19/2013

Emergency restoration work started today on a section of Florence’s famous Vasari Corridor, after some plaster and tiles fell from the roof on Friday. The damage occurred in the section of the raised corridor that passes next to the church of Santa Felicita, just over the Ponte Vecchio, on the south side of the river Arno.

It is reported that no one was hurt, and museum professionals are already establishing the best course of action to restore the damage to the building. Around ten portraits have been removed from the walls as a precaution while restoration work begins, but the popular tourist site will remain open.

The Vasari Corridor is a long, raised passageway that connects the Palazzo Vecchio, in Piazza della Signoria, with Palazzo Pitti, on the other side of the river Arno. It passes through and along some of Florence’s most important landmarks, such as the Uffizi galleries, the Ponte Vecchio and the Boboli Gardens. It was designed and built in 1564 by Giorgio Vasari to allow Cosimo de Medici and the rest of the Florentine elite to walk safely through the city.

“Great Pompeii Project Finally under Way,” *The Art Newspaper*, 07/30/2013

Conservators are using lasers to clean the delicate frescos in one of Pompeii’s most popular sites, the Villa of Mysteries. The laser is able to detect and remove the different protective layers that have been applied to the frescos by previous restorers.

The Neapolitan Superintendency, the regional arm of the ministry of culture which is responsible for heritage and archaeological sites in and around the Naples area, is overseeing the project and is single-handedly funding the €900,000 restoration costs, which include conventional cleaning of other decorative elements, such as mosaics.

The news is especially welcome given the recent controversies and scandals that have tarnished the reputation of one of the world’s most well known archaeological sites.

Work ground to a halt last year because of a lack of professional staff as Italian and international experts decried the state of the ancient town, which was so bad that some ancient buildings had started to collapse, including the House of the Gladiators.

Further embarrassment came when Annamaria Caccavo, the head of the firm Caccavo srl, which had secured contracts for conservation projects in Pompeii, was arrested and charged with corruption and fraud in February. The former special commissioner, Marcello Fiori, and the former director of conservation, Luigi D’Amora, are also under investigation for overspending, awarding irregular contracts to Caccavo and authorising unnecessary work on the site.

Meanwhile, the European Union has given €105m of funding to kick start the stagnant “Great Pompeii Project”, which finally seems to be under way.

“American Tourist Breaks Finger Off 600-Year-Old Statue At Italian Museum By Accident,” *The Huffington Post*, 08/06/2013

An American tourist broke a finger off a statue at the Museo dell’Opera del Duomo in Firenze, Italy, on Monday. According to *Corriere Fiorentino*, the 55-year-old Missouri man was measuring the right hand of the ancient artwork when he unintentionally snapped the pinky finger off the estimated 600-year-old piece. A security guard monitoring the exhibit reacted immediately but apparently intervened a moment too late. As to be expected, museum officials were none too happy with the apparent accident.

Fortunately, the broken piece was not part of the original work by Giovanni d’Ambrogio, a late 14th-century Florentine sculptor. Museum director Timothy Verdon confirmed to Italian media that the plaster finger was one of several restorations made to the Virgin Mary statue throughout the years. Experts

are currently working to determine the extent of the damage, *Firenze Today* reports.

For his part, the American tourist apologized, but he may be financially liable for the damage, Italy’s *The Local* notes.

“Botched Restoration of Fresco turns into Windfall for Spanish Town,” *Washington Post*, 08/14/2013

A year ago, Cecilia Gimenez’s botched attempt to restore a fresco of Christ inspired ridicule. Now, the 81-year-old Spanish artist is having the last laugh. Since gaining worldwide attention, the disfigured fresco has drawn more than 40,000 visitors and raised more than \$66,000 for a local charity in the town of Borja.

The art has also prompted the town to put the likeness on merchandise. Gimenez and a local council are set to sign a deal next week that splits profits from merchandise featuring the image, with the artist getting 49 percent, said councilor Juan Maria Ojeda.

The turnaround is apparently quite the relief for Gimenez, a retiree who was overwhelmed by the attention a year ago. The fresco originally depicted Christ wearing a crown of thorns in a style known as “Ecce Homo” (“Behold the Man”).

The church painting was for decades a little-known piece of religious art by a minor Spanish artist. It had remained in peaceful obscurity in the Misericordia sanctuary since it was painted in 1930. That was until Gimenez, a longtime devotee of the work, decided that it needed some attention because damp church air was causing it to flake.

Her attempt didn’t go so well, and some dubbed Gimenez’s retouching of it “Ecce Mono” (“Behold the Monkey”). But the retouched version grew popular. The image started appearing — without authorization — on T-shirts and cellphone covers, coffee mugs and wine labels. People arrived in Borja asking to see the painting.

The council started charging an entrance fee of \$1.30 and giving the money to the Sancti Spiritus charitable foundation, which used the windfall to help pay bills at a care home for elderly people.

“Frida Kahlo Restoration Work Begins,” *The Guardian*, 08/12/2013

Mexican artist Frida Kahlo is renowned for her painting, especially her vivid self-portraits, but she was also a keen photographer and collector of photographs, like her husband, Diego Rivera. The museum based at Kahlo’s former house in Mexico City, La Casa Azul, or the Blue House, possesses around 6,500 images, many taken by Kahlo and Rivera, and capturing their bohemian life in the first half of the 20th century. Among those pictured are André Breton, the French writer, and Leon Trotsky.

The vast collection, much of which is in need of repair, also covers works by celebrated photographers such as Man Ray and Henri Cartier-Bresson. Now, more than 350 of the photographs are to be restored in a six-month scheme financed by the Bank of America Merrill Lynch, one of 25 such projects undertaken by the bank over 2013.

“Pre-Raphaelite Mural discovered in William Morris’s Red House,” *The Guardian*, 08/18/2013

It began as an attempt to restore one blurry image that had been hidden for a century behind a large built-in wardrobe on William Morris’s bedroom wall. Months later, the painstaking removal of layers of paint and wallpaper revealed that an entire wall at the artist and craftsman’s first married home was painted by his young friends who would become world-famous pre-Raphaelite artists.

The near-lifesize figures on the wall at the Red House, now buried in south-east London suburbia at Bexleyheath, are now believed to represent the joint work of Edward Burne-Jones, Dante Gabriel Rossetti, his wife Elizabeth Siddal, Ford Madox Brown and Morris.

“In the morning we had one and a half murky figures, in the evening we had an entire wall covered in a pre-Raphaelite painting of international importance,” James Breslin, property manager at the Red House, said.

The mural is also a significant discovery for the National Trust. Ten years ago the National Trust bought the redbrick house studded with romantic

details including turrets, stained glass, window seats, a miniature minstrels’ gallery and a well, and opened it to the public for the first time.

In the bedroom the discovery almost doubled the cost of the conservation work, to £110,000. Fragments showing up on the ceiling and the other walls – partly covered by a particularly horrible 1960s version of Morris’s classic willow boughs design, whose owner could never have guessed they were burying a genuine piece by the master – suggest there is much more work to come.

“Picasso Murals Debate Divides Norway,” *BBC News*, 08/19/2013

The fate of five Picasso murals on buildings damaged in the Anders Breivik bombing in Oslo in 2011 has led to a heated debate in Norway.

A panel of experts has recommended demolishing the buildings and removing the murals. But art experts say that as the murals were designed by Picasso for those specific buildings, they should remain where they are. The artworks were Picasso’s first attempts at concrete murals. The murals were drawn specifically for the government buildings known as H and Y block. Picasso’s designs were sandblasted onto the concrete both outside and inside the buildings by the Norwegian artist Carl Nesjar.

Both buildings were damaged when Breivik set off a van bomb at the foot of H block in July 2011. A panel of experts has decided the most economical solution would be to demolish the buildings, cut the murals out and place them elsewhere.

Norway’s government has until early next year to decide what to do about the buildings. The rights to the murals are owned by the Picasso family and they must be consulted on what happens to them

“Egyptian Antiquities Looted, Damaged in Unrest, Reports Say,” *Los Angeles Times*, 08/21/2013

The latest political unrest in Egypt has resulted in the theft and destruction of more than 1,000 artifacts in

a museum south of Cairo, according to multiple published reports. The looting is believed to have taken place over several days starting last week.

The Malawi National Museum, located in the Nile River city of Minya, contained numerous archaeological specimens and antiquities dating back thousands of years. Reports claim that the recent attacks at the museum represent the largest instance of cultural looting in the country’s history. Among the casualties is a missing 3,500-year-old statue of the daughter of Pharaoh Akhenaten, according to the Associated Press. Other missing objects include sculptures, coins and various metal objects.

Other attacks on cultural sites around Egypt have been reported during the unrest. Irinia Bokova, the head of UNESCO, has publicly condemned the attacks, saying that “this constitutes irreversible damage to the history and identity of the Egyptian people.”

“JMW Turner’s Country Retreat to Undergo £2m Restoration,” *The Independent*, 08/28/2013

A bid to raise £2 million to restore JMW Turner’s neglected Grade II country home has been boosted by £135,000 of lottery money. Built in 1813, Sandycombe Lodge in Twickenham is listed as one of English Heritage’s buildings at risk due to large amounts of damp and a collapsed basement ceiling.

Plans are underway to restore the holiday home to how it looked when Turner lived there. The £135,000 grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund will enable detailed excavation work on the house, such as taking paint scrapes from the walls to match the paint colours chosen by Turner. The Andrew Lloyd Webber Challenge Fund for Historic Buildings at Risk has also donated £140,000.

Sandycombe Lodge, which was designed by Turner, was used by the painter as a retreat away from his Harley Street studio. His retired barber and wigmaker father William resided there permanently. As part of the restoration, which is due to finish in 2017, the interiors will be designed to match Turner’s own as closely as possible. A collection of his original prints will also be on show.