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# Annual Meeting Abstracts

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*The 2013 WAAC Annual Meeting was held September 8 - 12 at the Asian Art Museum in San Francisco*

*The papers from the meeting are listed below along with summaries prepared by the speakers.*

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## **Building New Expectations: Collections Management in a Multiple Facility Workflow**

Kelly Bennett

The Berkeley Art Museum has a longstanding tradition as a highly accessible art collection. Over the last 40 years the majority the collection has been housed in the museum, and the community that utilizes it has come to rely on the immediacy with which their requests can be met. Following alongside other U.S. museums building new facilities, the BAM/PFA remodel has been designed with different priorities for the space available, by housing the majority of the collection in offsite warehouses. Using multiple warehouses will significantly affect the way the staff, the university, and the public interact with the collection.

This presentation will illustrate the significant changes that will be necessitated in collections management, and how they will impact the relationship of the museum with the community.

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Questions that need answering include: what will it take for BAM/PFA to continue to meet its community's expectations and desires? What new collection management challenges will the museum face, and what institutional priorities will need to shift to maintain a safe environment for the collection?

This presentation will begin with a quick overview of the current management of the collection. This includes curatorial use, educational use, expectations of the university, as well as the museum's relationship with lenders and donors. Next, there will be an overview of the existing/new facilities, outlining resources available during and after the transition to the new museum. This portion will include a description of changes that will occur, specifically the suspension of loans, the closing of the building, and how this period will be used to setup the new workflow. The presentation will also incorporate the handling/movement of the collection, and plans for managing the expectations of the staff and university.

The changing priorities for museums being built in many parts of the U.S. today have dramatically changed the accessibility of artwork. In response, collections management workflows will have to adjust to create a safe and effective new system, as well as maintaining a culture where the community can experience the collection. A multiple facility system opens up new concerns and conservation issues, requiring an institutional shift in priorities to steward the collection. The BAM/PFA has a loyal and committed community that will need to find new methods and techniques to allow them to continue to connect with the artwork.

## **San Francisco Rock Posters and the Art of Photo-Offset Lithography**

Victoria Binder

Offset lithography was the dominant method of commercial printing of the twentieth century. This workhorse of printing, with its complicated equipment and production sequence, left very little room for artistic experimentation. It was during the nineteen sixties, in the small photo-offset lithographic shops

of San Francisco, that commercial need and artistic vision came together in the creation of psychedelic rock posters.

These posters were created to promote music and dance venues featuring many of the greatest rock bands of the sixties. Working under tight deadlines, the artists broke every rule of conventional design, producing works that reflected the visual chaos and revolutionary spirit of the scene. Using sheet-fed offset presses, the small offset lithographic shops affordably produced runs of single-color and multicolored posters in a short period of time. However, unlike larger commercial shops, they were able to provide an environment that was conducive to artistic input.

This presentation examines the process of photo-offset lithography within the context of making early San Francisco rock posters (1966–1968). The materials and major steps of the production sequence for flat multicolor prints are discussed and illustrated with images of original artifacts.

## **The Conservation of a Human Skeleton Modified for Medical Instruction**

Niccolo Caldararo, Claire Antonetti, and Jena Hirschbein

This talk describes the examination and restoration treatment of a male human skeleton that had long been used as a teaching specimen. The treatment would require reassembly and extensive repairs to broken bones due to a fall. Breaks resulted in shattering of the brittle bone material and fragment loss. The skeleton had been previously wired together, had steel inserts for rotation, as well as rods to facilitate weight balance. Bones were first disassembled and catalogued, cleaned and then stabilized using consolidants. Damage to wire or metal-segments was addressed, weak areas of bone were reinforced with metal pins and lost fragments from impact were replaced and secured with adhesive and polymer paste. A new hanging system was suggested that would be more stable. A review of earlier work in the restoration of vertebrate skeletons is provided.

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### **How We Moved the Alaska State Museum**

Ellen Carrlee

In Spring 2014, the Alaska State Museum moved 40,000 objects to a new storage vault in less than 6 weeks. The move team was led by just seven staff members, but included dozens of museum professionals from all over Alaska, flown in to help while also getting hands-on training thanks to an IMLS grant. This session describes the Incident Command System used to coordinate the effort, lessons learned from moving into an active construction zone, and plenty of packing tips, favorite tools, and equipment for everything from totem poles to a lighthouse lens to a 40-foot walrus skin boat.

### **See the Full Spectrum: Measuring Light Sources with Portable Spectroradiometers**

Charlotte Eng, Frank Preusser, and Terry Schaeffer

Light levels in museums are usually monitored photometrically, *i.e.* in lux or footcandles. That is, the radiation illuminating the surfaces of objects or emitted by the light source is documented according to the spectral sensitivity of the human eye. This measurement method indicates how well objects will be seen and – approximately – the amount of visible light that is illuminating the objects. In museums, near ultraviolet (UV) radiation is also routinely monitored. These data, when combined with knowledge of the light stability of various materials, are used by conservators to develop lighting guidelines and recommend appropriate exhibition times for display of light sensitive objects.

However, photometric measurements cannot provide complete information on the radiation reaching objects. For example, the spectral energy distribution of the light is not available, and blue and far red radiation are both underrepresented. Light energy in either of these regions may thus be overlooked. In addition, UV meters currently in use also are not able to provide spectral information. Because

the UV and blue regions of the spectrum are often more damaging to objects, a full spectral characterization of light sources is desirable.

Spectroradiometry, in contrast to photometry, measures the complete spectrum of near UV and visible light. User-friendly portable spectroradiometers and the accompanying software now available not only record the spectral output of light sources, but also offer multiple options for data evaluation. These include calculation of photometric and colorimetric quantities.

We recently acquired an Ocean Optics Jaz spectroradiometer to monitor lighting in the galleries. In particular, LEDs are being introduced, but there is controversy over their suitability, partly because some LED sources emit a large band of blue light.

The presence and intensity of this blue band cannot be determined adequately by photometry but is easily assessed using spectroradiometry. We demonstrated this by measuring selected LED sources with the Jaz spectroradiometer and comparing these results with readings from an Elsec light meter. Various blue cut-on filters were also placed in the light path. The changes in the blue region were clearly shown in the spectral data, but not evident in the photometric readings.

### **Battling the Beetles: Insect Growth Regulators as a Tool for Pest Management**

Tania Collas

Conservators and collections managers at the Natural History Museum had been battling an infestation of drugstore beetles (*Stegobium paniceum*) within the Birds and Mammals collections for a number of years without success. Despite diligent freezing of infested specimens, the large size of the collections (over 200,000 specimens) meant that, in many cases, previously frozen specimens became reinfested before the freezing of the rest of the collections had been completed.

We realized that we needed to add some new weapons to our arsenal in order to win our battle with the beetles.

While continuing to follow a proactive pest management approach, including cleaning, eliminating clutter, freezing infested or potentially infested specimens, and monitoring the collection areas to identify specific areas of infestation, we also decided to try a species-appropriate insect growth regulator and other safe pest control products.

While we did not expect any one of these approaches to be effective on its own, we hoped that in combination, they would slow the spread of the beetles long enough for us to make headway with targeted freezing treatments. After nearly a year following this approach, our results will be relevant to any cultural or natural history collection vulnerable to pests.

### **The Use of a Water-Based Vegetable Polysaccharide as an Anti-Graffiti Coating to Protect Outdoor Sculpture**

Mark Gilberg and John Hirx

Graffiti can be a major problem in both urban and rural settings and affects both older and historic buildings and monuments as well as outdoor sculpture. While much has been published in the literature over the years on its prevention and removal, no one method for graffiti prevention and removal has found widespread application.

In this presentation the authors will discuss the merits of PSS-20, a water-based anti-graffiti coating made from vegetable polysaccharides, in light of its recent application for the protection of Michael Heiser's monumental sculpture *Levitated Mass*. This artist installation consists of a 340 ton granite boulder straddling the walls of a 139 meter long trench. The boulder is bolted to two stainless steel shelves that are attached to the top of the trench which descends from ground level to almost 4.5 meters below the boulder at its center allowing visitors to stand directly beneath it.

To date, PSS-20 has proven to be an effective anti-graffiti coating for this monumental work of art. The possible use of PSS-20 as a sacrificial coating for other outdoor sculpture at LACMA will also be discussed.

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### **Art in the Woods/Art in the Museum: Collecting an Experience**

Amanda Hunter Johnson

This talk will describe the collaborative effort required to implement an artist's vision of a commissioned work as well as address the unique challenges of its acquisition.

SFMOMA's 2012 SECA show included David Wilson's 16-foot framed drawing, *Frog Woman Rock from Arrivals*, which was displayed outside along a trail in Presidio Park. Framing and installing this large scale drawing outside tethered to a eucalyptus tree involved substantial collaboration between the artist, museum staff, and the National Park Service and the Presidio Trust.

At the Presidio site, visitors could view the drawing and listen to music recorded by Wilson and his collaborators. Visitors were also encouraged to interact with the installation by writing their thoughts or reactions and leaving the notes in the box holding the audio equipment.

After the exhibition closed, SFMOMA acquired the drawing and recorded music as well as almost one hundred individual responses and drawings left by visitors. Acquisition of this piece poses challenges in collecting a work that combines elements of the genre of social practice as well translating an outside site-specific installation into a museum display.

### **Being the Art: Introduction and Guide to Enter the Mandala Exhibition, Asian Art Museum**

Jeff Durham

In this talk, we'll explore how scientific investigation of art objects can clarify "context," which depending on the object can vary from physical provenance to philosophical charge. In that connection, I'll discuss several objects in the AAM collection, most prominently Simhavaktra Dakini, the Svayambhu Stupa, and the Buddha Vairochana, as examined by our conservation department. There will be special emphasis on how the different

conservation practices involved in researching each object have allowed us to access, visualize, and restore context.

### **In Consideration of the Thangka**

Denise Migdail

By examining the history of storage, display, and conservation of thangkas over fifty years at the Asian Art Museum, San Francisco, it is possible to trace an evolution in conservation philosophies and the efficacy of preventive and sustainable care. With the 2003 move from Golden Gate Park to the museum's current home in San Francisco's Civic Center Plaza, the storage design shifted from vertical, free-hanging, paintings-style storage to horizontal, flat-tray storage with full support.

Further changes followed and developments in storage systems, approaches to conservation treatments, and shifts in exhibition methods are examined, culminating in the creation of the museum's current modular magnetic mounting system, which streamlines departmental costs, reduces material waste, and successfully supports and displays much of the Asian Art Museum's thangka collection.

### **What Lies Beneath: Analytical Studies of Bronze and Glass Artifacts from the Prehistoric Tumulus at Lofkënd**

Vanessa Muros

This paper presents the results of a study undertaken to analyze 14th-8th-c. BC bronze and glass artifacts excavated from the prehistoric tumulus of Lofkënd in southwestern Albania. The conservators on the project were involved in the characterization of the finds and their treatment, as well as aiding project archaeologists with several technical studies on the excavated finds for publication. It was during the course of the analysis of the bronze and glass artifacts that unusual condition issues were discovered on some of the artifacts.

The findings of the technical study will be discussed, the condition issues described, and possible causes for the

deterioration observed will be offered. Since archaeological conservators primarily rely on visual examination, as well as knowledge and expertise, in the field to identify materials and make determinations about condition to preserve the excavated artifacts, it is important to share these unexpected findings to add to the knowledge base conservators can draw on when working with archaeological materials.

### **The Importance of Being Emile**

Devi Ormond

Controversial art historical debates can often be clarified by evidence provided by technical examination of the works in question. Two names surface in one such long-term dispute over Symbolism, those of Paul Gauguin and Emile Bernard. Discussions over who influenced who *vis-à-vis* the birth of Symbolism will be revisited in this presentation.

In September 1888, in the Brittany village of Pont-Aven (France), Gauguin and Bernard painted canvases with a similar motif of Breton women in traditional dress – *The Vision after the Sermon* and *Breton Women in the Meadow (Pardon at Pont-Aven)*. Composed of broad, flat areas of pure color coupled with thick dark outlines and suggestion of the image being cropped, these two works are reminiscent of prints by Kunichika, Hokusai, Hiroshige, and other Japanese artists whose works began to infiltrate Paris in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. They are good examples of the influence that Japanese prints had on the development of a new way of painting.

Three years after the works were completed, an essay appeared in the *Mercure de France* written by Gabriel-Albert Aurier entitled «Le Symbolisme en Peinture, Paul Gauguin ». Aurier wrote of Gauguin's *Vision* as being a key work and its artist being the leader of this modern style which he coined 'Symbolism.' In this essay, there was no mention of Emile Bernard.

Feeling slighted that his part in the creation of this new type of painting was completely ignored, it has commonly been believed that, in reaction to Aurier's



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article, Bernard added ‘Pardon at Pont-Aven’ to the title of his painting *Breton Women in the Meadow*. At the same time he was said to have written ‘Pardon’ in black ink on to the reverse of his canvas. In doing so, it is thought that he was giving his work a more religious context ~ that of a Pardon (a penitential ceremony which occurs on the feast of the patron saint of a church). This would subsequently allow his work to stand up to Gauguin’s *Vision* and thus show that his work had a significant part to play in the development of Symbolism. In 1903, it was clear that his grudge against Gauguin had not subsided. Bernard went as far as to accuse Gauguin of plagiarism:

“Le Pardon de Pont-Aven venait d’avoir lieu et j’avais peint, me servant comme thème du costume local, une prairie ensoleillée de parti pris jaune historié de coiffes bretonnes et de groups noir-bleu. De ce tableau Gauguin partit et fit *La Vision du Sermon*, tableau dans lequel les coiffes forment également le motif principal.”

Within the context of a multidisciplinary research into the materials and techniques of Vincent van Gogh and his contemporaries carried out at the Van Gogh Museum between 2005-2013, the opportunity arose to examine other works by Gauguin and Bernard, as well as by Van Gogh, who brought the unlikely pair together and was involved in their artistic discourse, albeit from afar. A clearer picture emerges of the close working relationship between Gauguin and the younger Bernard during their short sojourn in Pont-Aven, especially in terms of their choice of materials.

Recent technical and scientific research into *Breton Women* has thrown fresh light onto this particular issue in the debate concerning Bernard’s tampering with titles. On the reverse of the canvas of *Breton Women*, residues of paint can be seen. Pigment identification as well as imprints on the painted surface show that these residues are indeed from the front of the work. The still slightly wet paint was transferred onto the back of the canvas when the work was rolled prior to transport.

Gauguin carried this painting with him to Arles in October 1888. Van Gogh, when he

first saw the painting, waxed lyrical about this ‘magnificent canvas’ to his brother Theo. (Letter 715 to Theo van Gogh on or about Thursday 25<sup>th</sup> October 1888)

In fact, he was so taken by the painting that he made a detailed watercolor copy of it. It is this copy that we can refer to and definitively state that after painting the work in September 1888, Bernard made no changes to the composition when it later was in his possession. What is of great interest to note is that the small remnants of green paint found on the canvas reverse can clearly be seen to lie on top of the inscription ‘Pardon.’ By deduction, Bernard had written the inscription shortly after completing the work and before it was taken down to Arles, intending his work to be placed within a religious context.

It cannot be denied that Gauguin’s *Vision*, does carry a profound spirituality devoid in Bernard’s work. The evidence retrieved from the technical examination, in spite of Bernard’s claim that his work influenced Gauguin, does not categorically prove this to be the case. What it does provide us with, however, is an end to the discussion of when and why Bernard decided to change the title of this important painting. *Breton Women in the Meadow (Pardon at Pont-Aven)* was always originally to be painted in the setting of a religious ceremony. Taking into consideration that both artists were using the same materials (and possibly sharing them), it is without doubt that they must also have shared their ideas, subsequently influencing each other in the artistic paths they ultimately chose to take thereafter.

### **Conservation Materials Assessment Methodologies for Transparent Plastic Art and Design: Risks, Joint integrity, Artificial Aging, and Analysis**

Donald Sale

Modern and contemporary collections are rich in art and design made of transparent plastic. Exquisite sculpture, paintings, photographs, and art-books exploit the exceptional properties of a range of transparent synthetic polymers. Extraordinary furniture, designer items, costume accessories, and architectural

models rely on the structural properties of transparent plastics to articulate form and space. Art and design made of transparent polymers may be tinted, lacquered, painted, or printed in a variety of polymeric materials.

The conservation of modern art and design made of transparent plastic is complex due to the differing sensitivities of individual polymers to solvents and adhesives. In this study frameworks were developed to assess conservation materials for rigid transparent plastics. Test methods are presented, data from previous studies are summarized, and assumptions from the results are reassessed. Standards used in industry to identify adhesives and solvents that will not damage thermoplastics, by dissolving them or causing stress-crazing, are compared. Artificial aging, sample designs, scientific analysis, tensile strength, yellowing, and conservation treatments are discussed.

The aim of this study was to investigate molecular changes in a group of adhesives 20 years after exposure to a range of extreme environmental conditions used to accelerate aging. Samples stored in the dark were compared to those exposed to intense heat, light, combinations of each, and a museum window used to investigate the impact of the spectral distribution of filtered sunlight, and daily cycles of different levels of light, heat, and relative humidity. The aged samples were analyzed using Fourier Transform Infrared (FTIR) Spectroscopy, Thermo Gravimetric Analysis (TGA), Pyrolysis Gas Chromatography Mass-Spectrometry (Py GC-MS), and Dynamic Load Thermal Mechanical Analysis (DL TMA).

A case study of aged 1:1 Paraloid B-67 / Paraloid F-10 on PMMA indicated that these polymers didn’t yellow after exposure to any environment, but there were changes in the glass transition temperature (T<sub>g</sub>) that appeared dependent on the aging conditions. Preliminary DL TMA data indicated that the T<sub>g</sub> increased more in samples exposed to multiple environmental parameters involving either a part dose of high heat (50%) combined with a part dose of light (25%), or a full dose of light in a museum window (100%) with cycles of changing levels of filtered sunlight, temperature, and humidity.

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The T<sub>g</sub> increased less in samples exposed to a continuous full dose of only heat (100%) or artificial museum light (100%). There are three streams of results in this study: adhesives and solvents that appear suitable for the conservation of specific transparent plastics in art, architectural models, and design; an evaluation of the methods used to assess the materials; and the relationship of the aging environments to museum conditions.

This paper summarizes research and scientific analysis carried out as a guest scholar in the Getty Conservation Institute in 2012-13. This unparalleled opportunity involved examination of the excellent collection of transparent plastic art, architectural models, and photography in the Special Collections of the Getty Research Institute and the J Paul Getty Museum, and consultation with staff and scholars in all Getty Programs including the Trust.

### **An Approach toward Treating Composite Materials in an Outdoor Environment**

Frank Preusser and Christina Fisher

Since January 2011, the Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA) has worked under contract to the city of Los Angeles on the conservation of the Watts Towers, a National Historic Landmark and 'outsider art' sculptural site. The Towers were created by artist Sabato Rodia between 1921 and 1954. The site consists of 8 sculptures constructed of scrap metal covered in Portland cement with embedded glass and tile fragments, shells, stones, and other materials. LACMA's mandate is to update the site's conservation and maintenance plan and provide daily preservation maintenance.

Challenges to the preservation of these structures arise due to the effects of the environment on original and restoration materials as well as inherent vice in the combination of materials used by the artist. Thermally-induced, wind-driven, and seismically-induced mechanical stresses and weaknesses in the original structural design are causing cracking of the cement shell. The open cracks allow for water ingress, causing corrosion of

the steel armature and subsequent mortar spalling. Varying thermal expansion coefficients of the materials used in the composition of the structures result in loss of ornamentation.

The development of a treatment protocol for the structures incorporates macro- and microscopic approaches to evaluate the condition of the structures, determine the causes of deterioration, select and test materials, and monitor offsite and in situ tests. A global treatment approach was developed to extend life expectancy of repairs to once every 20-25 years.

Research and testing evaluated cementitious, elastomeric, and adhesive repair materials as well as corrosion protection and water repellency. Reliance was placed on image capturing in high resolution photography, thermal imaging, digital microscopy, and digital radiography. Measurements of crack movements, tilt, vibration, environmental conditions, and corrosion potential were recorded using purchased and engineered equipment. Collaborations took place with the LACMA Conservation Center, UCLA Department of Civil and Environmental Engineering, and the Getty Conservation Institute. An internship program was implemented to pair local high school students with recent graduates from the UCLA/Getty Program in Archaeological and Ethnographic Conservation.

The methods used by the LACMA conservation team and their collaborators at the Watts Towers will be discussed with a focus on relaying a contemporary approach toward treating a complex structure composed of composite materials in an outdoor environment.

### **Preservation Strategies for a Busy Chinoiserie Interior Within an Indian Inspired Palace: Using New Technology and Tried Strategies to Manage the Historic Environment in the Royal Pavilion in Brighton, England (without central heating)**

Donald Sale

The Royal Pavilion in Brighton, England is a world renowned former royal palace of King George IV by John

Nash inspired by India, with an exquisite Chinese inspired, or chinoiserie interior by Frederick Crace and Robert Jones. It is the key attraction in Brighton, attracting 100,000 visitors a year, and is in fact within an estate in the center of Brighton, comprising the earlier Indian inspired riding stables and later gatehouse. The Royal Pavilion is also the key element of a service of 5 museums and historic properties, and other historic and auxiliary buildings, which hold over 200,000 collection items.

This paper focuses on the conservation and preservation strategies, and the prototype trials and change initiatives, which were developed to manage the continuous flow of visitors through the richly decorated interiors of the Royal Pavilion. Working jointly with education, curatorial experts, front of house and income development teams, a preservation program was developed to ensure long-term public engagement with the lavish chinoiserie interior and collections within this Indian inspired architectural gem.

Some interesting considerations that impact the preservation of the chinoiserie interior and collections is that the historic environment is illuminated with natural lighting from hundreds of windows and roof-lights, augmented with rewired original light fixtures and reproductions. The temperature in the winter is managed predominately with dispersed independent electric heaters at low levels, instead of a centrally controlled system, and cooled with natural ventilation through open windows in the summer.

It's novel structure, which is a feat of engineering and architectural design, has minimal building mass to mitigate the exterior weather conditions of a seaside palace retreat on the south coast of England. The collection furnishings, many designed or reproduced for the rooms that they occupy, are on open display and separated from the public when visiting or attending events by free-standing barrier ropes. While prints, drawings, and paintings are displayed mostly behind glass, and there are a couple of display cases for temporary exhibitions, the wall-papers, furnishing textiles, and richly painted decorative interiors are on open display.

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In this paper, preservation strategies are presented that were developed to manage collection care and interior environmental conditions to international standards by modelling aspects of now familiar frameworks such as the Agents of Decay first presented by Stefan Michalski of the Canadian Conservation Institute and Conservation Risk Management by Robert Waller of the Canadian Museum of Nature.

Further consultation involved the frameworks developed by Sarah Staniforth and many others at the National Trust in England, Wales, and Northern Ireland and Kate Frame and others at Historic Royal Palaces in London. A broad range of engaging examples are presented that demonstrate the development of institution-specific risk-management strategies and the use of new technology through prototype trials, developed by the author at different institutions, to ensure that the exquisite chinoiserie interiors within the magnificent Indian inspired Royal Pavilion, continues to engage and inspire current and future audiences.

### **An Inventory of the Photographic Collection at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art: A Collaborative Approach**

Asti Sherring and Laura Moeller

The photography collection held at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA) encompasses more than 15,000 objects which span the history of the medium, from 1839 to present day. This paper will address the comprehensive inventory and conservation assessment of LACMA's photography collection undertaken from 2014 to 2015. This effort is grant funded with financial support from the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS).

The inventory of LACMA's photography collection aims to address the imminent preservation needs of the collection as a whole, while also providing accurate and extractable data for future conservation and collection management initiatives. The IMLS project focuses on four core aspects, which include: the standardization of naming conventions

for photographic processes, the input and verification of descriptive metadata at an object level, the digital documentation of artworks, and planning for long term storage needs. This effort will help prepare the collection for the establishment of a Photography Study Center, scheduled to open fall of 2014.

Within LACMA's database platform, The Museum System (TMS), a custom module was built for the project. The implementation of this database feature addresses the needs of conservation, collection management, curatorial, and registration, allowing for greater accuracy during data collection. By implementing a specific constituent within the existing database to fit the needs of the inventory, useful data can be collected and collated, which will in turn provide the museum with reliable information for the management and use of its collection.

As consistent nomenclature is added to the TMS database, the efficacy and use of these records improves museum wide. Additionally, the development of a uniform language for photographic processes seeks to contribute to the larger international discussion within the field of conservation regarding the standardization of naming conventions. Paramount to LACMA's vision, this project provides the opportunity for advocacy and public engagement with programs related to the care and management of a rapidly growing and active photograph collection.

### **Gelatin and Carrageenan Mixtures: Protein-Carbohydrate Adhesive Combinations for Consolidating Southeast Asian Paintings**

Shiho Sasaki

In 2009, the treatment of some very large Thai paintings on woven fabric provided an opportunity to evaluate certain characteristics of two adhesives: gelatin and carrageenan. These two adhesives were evaluated alone and combined in different proportions to achieve the desired levels of viscosity, penetration, strength, flexibility, and visual appearance. The proportions,

concentration and application methods were varied for different application methods of the consolidation treatment.

### **The Best Thought(out) Schemes o' Mice an' Men Gang Aft A-gley [often go awry]**

Chris Stavroudis

With apologies to Robert Burns and thanks to the Internet for the proper quote, a more reflective title would be: Preliminary results: Testing the Swelling of Cotton Fibers with Different pH and Conductivity Solutions Using Cotton Duck Fabric and a Biaxial Strain Tester.

Richard Wolbers' insights into the importance of pH and ionic strength (conductivity) in controlling the swelling of acrylic paint films have opened up a new way to look at aqueous treatments in general. As a result, many of us are thinking about applying these insights to other aspects of conservation treatments.

The background and theory for wanting to control the ionic strength, pH, and osmotic potential of a bath will be presented. In that context, the preliminary results with the canvas tests will be discussed.

In addition, details of the construction of the DIY biaxial strain tester will be presented. (I'm sure everyone will want to run home and build their own.)

### **Neutralizing the Nuclear Option**

Donna Williams

Los Angeles artist Chris Burden's anti-war diorama *A Tale of Two Cities* was originally assembled 32 years ago - a collection of five thousand models and toys glued to slabs of cardboard, designed to be exhibited on a panoramic landscape of sculpted wet sand.

Over the course of multiple exhibitions, the piece's substrate had become warped and delaminated, the cardboard encrusted with black mold. By 2013, the installation had become sufficiently dilapidated that Burden publicly expressed his intent to exercise the artist's contractual right to



**“Vandalized Monet Painting Receives Radical Restoration,”** *Fine Art Today*, 07/03/2014

Almost exactly two years after a visitor to its galleries punched a hole through a prized Monet, the National Gallery of Ireland unveiled the restored painting.

In late June 2012, the National Gallery of Ireland was in the headlines under unfortunate circumstances. A visitor to the museum’s galleries attacked Claude Monet’s “Argenteuil Basin with

alter his work via the “nuclear option,” blowing it up as a final performance piece - a logical conclusion to this broad depiction of futuristic feudal warring states. “The work would still exist,” said the artist, “but as rubble.”

However, in response to a mockup of a conserved single panel, Burden instead agreed to consider the alternative option of an extensive conservation campaign. Over the course of several months, the installation was cleaned, repaired, re-fabricated, and remounted on lightweight, interlocking sheets of honey-comb aluminum panel.

Following conservation, *A Tale of Two Cities* was loaded into 16 custom-made crates and shipped across the country, where it occupied a major place in the artist’s one-man survey *Chris Burden: Extreme Measures* at the New Museum in New York last year. The work is currently scheduled for exhibit at the Orange County Museum of Art in the fall.

**Mi Vida: The Saving of a Mural on Dry Wall**

Anne Zanikos

In 1972, San Antonio artist Jesse Trevino returned from service in the Viet Nam war to recover from the loss of his right arm. As he healed and taught himself to paint with his non-dominant left hand, he painted his first mural on the wall of his bedroom. In 2005, the house was sold, and the biographical mural was slated for destruction. The deinstallation, relocation, and treatment of the mural will be discussed with emphasis on the treatment decisions associated with the fragile dry wall support.

a Single Sailboat” (1874) as it hung on the wall, reportedly putting his hand through the canvas. Shortly afterward, the museum launched the Claude Monet Research and Conservation Project to mend a three-branch tear in the canvas and restore it to its original condition.

The National Gallery’s website details the various stages of the extensive project, which included stabilizing the painting, testing materials, repairing the tear, lining and restretching the canvas, restoring and replacing paint fragments, and filling in the paint.

One of only three Monet paintings in Ireland, “Argenteuil Basin with a Single Sailboat” is back on view at the National Gallery in Dublin. The painting now hangs behind a thin layer of protective glass.

**“Gothic Church’s Frescoes Destroyed during Restoration,”** *The Art Newspaper*, 08/26/2014

German heritage advocates have accused the Russian Orthodox Church of causing irreversible damage to the 14th-century Brick Gothic church of St Catherine at Arnau near Kaliningrad, especially to its frescoes.

“The... iconography of the painting[s] in St Catherine’s Church in Arnau from the 14th century had not yet been thoroughly researched [and they] are irretrievably lost,” wrote Nicole Riedl, an expert in Medieval wall paintings at Hawk University of Applied Sciences and Arts in Hildesheim, Germany in her report, after she visited the church in July with a group of activists from the German-based Kuratorium Arnau.

Just three patches of fresco remain in St Catherine’s, following restoration work carried out after the church was handed over to the Russian Orthodox Church by local legislators in 2010. The frescoes were created when St Catherine’s was a Catholic church. It became a Lutheran church after the Reformation and the frescoes were whitewashed for centuries, then uncovered in the early 20th century.

Riedl wrote that, from a conservation point of view, the Russian church’s actions in restoring the Arnau church have violated both the Charter of Venice as well as Russian culture laws. Following the German delegation’s visit, the news website Newkaliningrad.ru

reported that the Kaliningrad Diocese of the Russian Orthodox Church was cutting off relations with Kuratorium Arnau.

**“Cheltenham Banksy ‘Mural to Cost £26,000 to Restore,’”** *BBC News*, 08/22/2014

A graffiti-damaged mural in Cheltenham by street artist Banksy can be restored at a cost of almost £26,000, a professional art conservator has said.

The ‘Spy Booth’ artwork, which depicts three spies “snooping” on a telephone box, appeared in Hewlett Road in April. It was badly damaged with spray paint earlier this month. Robin Barton, from London’s Bankrobber gallery, who asked Tom Organ to assess the damage, said the six-week project would return it “to its former glory”. Mr. Barton said it had been “established beyond doubt” that the mural could be successfully restored whilst keeping the structural integrity of the Grade II listed building intact.

The artwork was daubed with white paint just days after it appeared in April but it was saved by drinkers who rushed from a nearby pub to wash off the paint before it dried. In August, silver and red graffiti was sprayed over the mural and, less than two weeks later, protective hoardings were removed and holes made at the four corners.

After the holes appeared, businessman Hekmat Kaveh - who has offered funds to buy the house to ensure the mural stays in the town - said he thought an attempt was being made to remove it.

**“Clyfford Still Touch-up Exhibit shows Art sans Makeup,”** *The Denver Post*, 09/02/2014

Time hasn’t been kind to Clyfford Still’s 1942 abstract masterpiece, PH-126. Paint is separating along its left edge, and its whole surface appears to be randomly flaking.

So it goes in the world of oil-coated canvases, and a good percentage of the 825 paintings in the Clyfford Still Museum’s collection are showing signs of age. Fortunately, Chief Conservator James Squires and his team are there to perform cosmetic surgery.

Their touch-ups are delicate and tedious. The museum’s new exhibit,