
Articles You May Have Missed

“Take a peek inside the Museum of Fine Arts’ nearly hidden Asian Conservation Studio,” *Design New England*, 11/01/2017

Almost hidden in the basement of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, beneath galleries of historical objects and masterpieces, is the Asian Conservation Studio, where Philip Meredith quietly toils.

Specializing in painting on paper and silk, Meredith, the Higashiyama Kaii conservator of Japanese paintings, has since 2004 worked on pieces in the collection that includes more than 100,000 Asian artworks constituting what the MFA describes as the “finest Japanese art outside Japan.”

Meredith, who lives in Swampscott, Massachusetts, with his wife, Pauline Webber, also an art conservator, says it was the spontaneity of Japanese paintings that appealed to him.

In the studio, alongside Tanya Uyeda, associate conservator of Japanese paintings, and Jacki Elgar, head of Asian conservation and international projects, Asia — and there are four other conservators and one collections care specialist in Asian conservation, which covers Chinese, Himalayan, Indian, Islamic, Japanese, and Korean art — Meredith stabilizes centuries-old artworks, particularly those on flexible formats such as scrolls, folding screens, and sliding doors.

“25 Million Images to Be Placed Online by 14 Art Institutions Around the World,” *My Modern Met*, 11/03/2017

Art history lovers already have several resources, like the Europeana database and Google Arts & Culture Institute, where it’s possible to view incredible art from multiple collections. What if you want to dig deeper?

That’s where Pharos comes in. This scholarly online archive has a wealth of participating institutions—New York’s Frick Collection, London’s Courtauld Institute, the National Gallery of Art in Washington, and the Yale Center for British Art, to name a few. The goal is to host 25 million images—17 million of them art and the rest supplemental materials.

And while Pharos certainly has the standard, high-resolution images of art, it’s the “extras” that really allow you to dive into the history of each piece.

For instance, the Frick’s vast photoarchives—which comprise the bulk of what’s online so far—allows you to trace the history of an artwork through the years. How has it changed over time through restoration? What other images are connected to it? All these questions, which researchers typically discover by going to an institution and asking special permission to view the archives, will now be answered online.

Another exciting feature is the ability to upload an image and have the database search for related artworks, something that would strip out the need for text searching. The project aims to have 7 million images online by 2020 and currently has more than 60,000 artworks and 100,000 images online today.

“Chubb Donates Damaged Sculpture to Art Conservation,” *Insurance Business*, 11/09/2017

In a gesture that pays respect to the history of art, Chubb has donated a damaged sculpture to a conservation and preservation group.

Specifically, the insurer is donating “L’Esclave de Michel-Ange (S 20)” to the Yves Klein Archives in Paris, France. Chubb chose to donate the sculpture after it had sustained damage due to an accident during transit. The insurer took possession of the art piece after settling the insurance claim with the Canadian collector who previously owned it.

“Rather than manage the sculpture as salvage, we decided to donate it to the Yves Klein Archives for historical preservation and educational purposes,” explained Chubb Personal Risk Services Canada SVP Paul Johnstone. “Because of the damage sustained to the piece and the unique and rare materials Yves Klein used in his work, the sculpture could not be repaired, but it can continue to live on as part of the artist’s records with the Archives.”

“Kelly: ‘Restoration is going fantastic’ on fire-damaged mural — ‘a historical artifact’ from Little Italy,” *Omaha World-Herald*, 11/09/2017

With a little TLC and a lot of professional expertise, a fire-damaged mural from Little Italy is coming back to life. The 22-foot-long oil painting of Carlentini, Sicily, and Mount Etna was

blistered and soot-covered in a Jan. 13 fire that has shut down the Sons of Italy Hall south of downtown.

Meticulously giving the mural tender loving care — with cotton swabs, soft brushes and mineral-spirits organic solvent — is painter-conservator Deborah Uhl.

The mural was painted in 1952 for the old Caniglia’s Steakhouse at Seventh and Pierce Streets, and remained there until the restaurant closed in 2005. After the fire last January, it seemed the mural was toast. Kenneth Be of the Ford Conservation Center in Omaha, though, removed layers of soot. And then officials called for Uhl.

“It moved from a conservation project to restoration,” Uhl said. “They brought me in because I’m also a painter.” A 1991 graduate of Duchesne Academy, Uhl has studied at the Art Institute of Chicago, the University of Iowa and Buffalo (New York) State College, the latter known for its school of conservation.

“Going to the cleaners, Delaware Art Museum’s new exhibit gets some TLC,” *WHYY*, 11/10/2017

Many of the works in The Delaware Art Museum’s new John Sloan exhibit are at least 100 years old, and before they went on the wall, they went out for a good cleaning.

John Sloan lived from 1871 – 1951 and some of the pieces in this show have not been shown since the artist’s lifetime. “They need cleaning and care,” said Heather Campbell Coyle, chief curator at the Delaware Art Museum.

That means a trip to art conservator Mark Bockrath. “One issue with the Sloan paintings is that since they are 20th century paintings, there was a period where he was experimenting with different materials,” Bockrath said.

Those different materials didn’t necessarily work well together over time, the outcome being a more dingy, muted look to many of the paintings. Bockrath wants any painting he works on to look as close as it can to what would have come off the artist’s easel.

Coyle spends months or even years researching the paintings in the museum’s shows, but she learns new things about the artist from the conservator as well.

Bockrath doesn't want you to think about the restoration work at all. He would rather you never thought of the painting as needing to be cleaned. "If you can see the restoration than I'm not doing my job properly."

"School Mural Hidden for 50 years Under Layers of Paint Ready to Emerge," *Portland Tribune*, 11/29/2017

Efforts by Portland's Heritage Conservation Group and the Abernethy Elementary School PTA to fund the \$71,274 restoration project for artist Erich Lamade's 1940 "Pageant of Oregon History" mural in the Abernethy School's library got a boost in early November from a \$20,000 Oregon Heritage Commission grant.

Nina Olsson, president of Heritage Conservation Group, says the grassroots effort would focus on the artwork's place in history and its connection to today's education.

For the past 10 years, Olsson and others have worked to uncover Lamade's mural that was hidden beginning in the mid-1950s under at least six layers of interior paint. Lamade painted the mural as part of a federal Works Progress Administration commission during the 1930s and 1940s.

Olsson plans to begin during the summer of 2018 restoring pieces of the 300-square-foot mural on the classroom's southeast and south walls, using cleaning and restoration processes developed through Portland State University's Regional Laboratory for the Science of Cultural Heritage Conservation. More work would be done in the summer of 2019.

"A Storied Art Collection Shrouded in Mystery will Anchor New UC Irvine Museum," *Los Angeles Times*, 11/15/2017

When real estate developer Gerald Buck was selling a rural farm near San Luis Obispo, land he bought in a failed oil-drilling scheme, a prospective buyer offered him an elegant Old Master painting by Anthony van Dyck in lieu of cash.

Buck had no interest in art, but neither did he have any other buyers in sight. So Buck plunged into researching the painting's authenticity, history of ownership and market value — then agreed to the trade. And he was off.

The Van Dyck is long gone, but now, four decades later, the Gerald E. Buck Collection has grown to more than 3,200 paintings, sculptures and works on paper. Not only is the vast trove the finest holding of its kind in private hands, the collection is poised to anchor an ambitious new museum being launched at UC Irvine.

Chancellor Howard Gillman is expected to announce Wednesday the formation of the UCI Museum and Institute for California Art, or MICA, with the Buck Collection as its core.

The collection, much coveted by other museums, focuses on artists who emerged in California between World War II and 1980. In addition to postwar art, the collection includes plein air, Social Realist and important early Modern paintings from the first half of the 20th century, especially in Southern California.

Those holdings include metaphysical abstractionists Agnes Pelton and Henrietta Shore, Surrealists Knud Merrild and Lorser Feitelson, muralist Belle Baranceanu and colorist Oskar Fischinger. The gift is accompanied by 398 file boxes of art books, auction catalogs, the collector's notepads and acquisition records.

"Sotheby's Scientists just Scored a Big Win in the Battle Against Fake Art," *Fast Company*, 12/05/2017

Here's another example of why science pays, kids. It was exactly one year ago today that Sotheby's announced the acquisition of Orion Analytical, a materials analysis and consulting firm whose crack team of scientists—led by the noted art-fraud guru Jamie Martin—would use their forensic skills to detect fake artworks.

The auction house then established its Department of Scientific Research, which is the only facility of its kind in the art-auction industry.

In honor of the department's first anniversary, Sotheby's today is revealing one of its recent coups: researchers did a materials analysis on a 1915 work by Kazimir Malevich, to help verify that it was the real thing. As it turned out, the painting contained the same unusual blue paint additive as another Malevich work from the time period—this one in the collection of the Art Institute of Chicago.

Researchers also examined both works with infrared photography to discover they both contained similar hidden changes that Malevich made during the composition process.

The painting, Suprematist Composition With Plane in Projection, went on to sell for \$21.2 million at Sotheby's New York headquarters earlier this year after a fierce bidding war. It was the fourth-highest auction price ever for a Malevich work.

Sotheby's says it has established state-of-the-art laboratories in both New York and London and plans to expand to Hong Kong, as well.

"Scientists from UCLA, National Gallery of Art pioneer new way to analyze artwork," *Art Daily.org*, 12/12/2017

Scientists from UCLA and the National Gallery of Art have used a combination of three advanced imaging techniques to produce a highly detailed analysis of a second century Egyptian painting.

They are the first to use the specific combination — which they termed "macroscale multimodal chemical imaging" — to examine an ancient work of art. The new technique enabled them to learn about the raw materials the artist used, and the order in which they were applied to the painting, and it uncovered insights about the painting's connections to other work from the same era.

The approach, which is described in a paper published in *Scientific Reports*, integrates three existing techniques — hyperspectral diffuse reflectance, luminescence, and X-ray fluorescence — to examine the painting.

By combining data from the three modalities, the researchers were able to map the signatures of molecules and elements across the surface of the painting for each pixel of the image. The findings revealed important details on the painting's composition and structure.

"Taj is a Grandiose Work of Art, Restoring it Will Take Time," *The Print*, 12/08/2017

Fodor's Travel Guide has included the Taj Mahal in its list of places not to visit in 2018, as the monument will be under restoration.

The Print asks: has construction made Taj Mahal lose its photo-op potential?

We have to look at the problem in two ways – one is air pollution. This is a problem for everybody: the tourists, the people of India, and therefore, the government.

The other part is the restoration of the Taj Mahal. One must account for the fact that it is a medieval building. Like all other monuments, it also needs to be restored. Modern cement, iron beams, and reinforced concrete cannot be used for its restoration. That would compromise the technology used during Mughal times.

The passion of Emperor Shah Jahan to build a grand structure with delicate inlay work led to the diminishing of the coffers of the Mughal Empire. Shah Jahan was jailed by his son to put an end to this self-destructive, extravagant obsession.

“Drip dry: Moca LA to restore Pollock painting in its galleries,” *The Art Newspaper*, 12/13/2017

An important drip painting by Jackson Pollock, Number 1, 1949, housed in the Museum of Contemporary Art in Los Angeles for nearly 30 years, is about to get a very public cleaning.

The nine-foot wide canvas will be restored in an open gallery at the museum’s Grand Avenue location from 4 March to 3 September, with a conservator from the Getty Conservation Institute on hand to take questions during set times.

The GCI’s head of science, Tom Learner describes the painting’s condition as “good for its size.”

The partnership with the GCI allows MOCA, which does not have its own staff conservator, to share the science of the restoration as it goes along. For its part, the GCI was looking for a “test case” to try out some of the cleaning systems they have been developing specifically for Modern paintings.

Another goal is to conduct an analysis to identify exactly what kind of paint Pollock flung or dripped in his celebrated fashion on this particular canvas. The GCI’s working assumption is that he used an “alkyd” or synthetic-resin-based house paint. MOCA’s label currently identifies it as “enamel and metallic paint on canvas”.

A very early test cleaning of one small area, done by Chris Stavroudis, a private conservator who will work with the Getty on the project, has already yielded good results.

“Cleveland Museum of Art Embarks on Radical Reconstruction of Cambodian Krishna Statue,” *Cleveland.com*, 12/17/2017

The Cleveland Museum of Art’s seventh-century Cambodian statue of the Hindu god Krishna, a broken masterpiece painstakingly reassembled in 1978, is ready for a yearlong radical makeover in the museum’s conservation lab.

The goal of the project, funded by a \$70,000 Bank of America Art Conservation Project grant, is to dismantle and reconstruct the sculpture’s 11 pieces to re-create its correct pose for the first time since the fragments were unearthed in stages starting more than a century ago. The pose matters because it will help reveal the work’s true religious meaning at its time of origin -- a pivotal moment in the development of Hinduism.

The new restoration will show that instead of gazing straight ahead as he has in the museum’s galleries for decades, Krishna was designed to face down slightly, enabling him to gaze directly at worshipers to foster a form of Hindu observance known as Darsan. Darsan is Sanskrit for connecting spiritually and emotionally to an auspicious person or deity through eyesight. The restoration will also enable conservators to disassemble and reassemble the Krishna so it can travel to other museums.

“New Technology Aims To Slow Damage To Georgia O’Keeffe Works,” *Santa Fe New Mexican*, 12/29/2017

Chemical reactions are gradually darkening many of Georgia O’Keeffe’s famously vibrant paintings, and art conservation experts are hoping new digital imaging tools can help them slow the damage.

Scientific experts in art conservation from Santa Fe, New Mexico, and the Chicago area announced plans this week to develop advanced 3-D imaging technology to detect destructive buildup in paintings by O’Keeffe and eventually other artists in museum collections around the world.

Dale Kronkright, art conservator at the O’Keeffe Museum in Santa Fe, said the project builds on efforts that began in 2011 to monitor O’Keeffe paintings using images from multiple sources of light. The creeping problem of soap build-up in paintings looms not only over O’Keeffe’s paintings but also the vast majority of 20th-century oil paintings, in part because canvases from the period were primed with nondrying fats or oils, Kronkright said.

To develop imaging technology that can assess the growth of the protrusions, the NEH awarded \$350,000 to the O’Keeffe museum and a collaborative art-conservation center run by Northwestern University and the Art Institute of Chicago. The project aims to create a web-based system that allows any art conservator to upload and analyze images of paintings in efforts to limit damage from soap formation.

and finally ...

“Secret Centuries-Old Document Discovered Inside Buttocks of Jesus Statue,” *Ancient Origins*, 12/11/2017

During restorations of an 18th century wooden statue of Jesus Christ, Spanish workers discovered a peculiar note that appears to be a makeshift time capsule.

The most surprising and bizarre thing about this unexpected discovery is that the note was found in the buttocks of the statue.

The document was discovered by workers of a Madrid-based art restoration company who were restoring the wooden statue when they reportedly found two pieces of paper hidden inside the hollow wooden statue, after removing a piece of fabric that covered Christ’s behind.

According to the statue’s restorers, the note dates back to 1777 and is signed by Joaquin Minguez, a chaplain of the cathedral of Burgo de Osma at the time. The document found talks about life in the town in 1777, the author, the local economy, games and customs of the time, etc." The newly discovered documents have been sent to the Archbishop of Burgos, where they will be archived.

Interestingly, a copy of the original document was created and placed back into the buttocks to preserve Minguez’s intent.