

### **“YCBA Plans Conservation Exchange in Haiti,”** *Yale Daily News*, 09/12/2012

Following the devastating earthquake in Haiti in 2010, the Smithsonian Institution began a program to recover and restore artworks marred in the disaster based out of the offices of the United Nations Development Program. Now, the Yale Center for British Art is hoping to create a cultural exchange program to teach Haitian artists restoration techniques that the artists can apply to damaged works in their home country.

One participant in the Smithsonian’s Haiti Cultural Recovery Project was Mark Aronson, the chief conservator at the British Art Center, who worked on the project with two Haitian artists and professors, Franck Louissaint and Jean Menard Deroncourt. When conservators at the Yale Peabody Museum uncovered 15 forgotten portraits of Haitian political figures in the museum’s storage facilities last year, Aronson said he invited Louissaint and Deroncourt to New Haven to learn restoration methods that could apply to artwork in Haiti, as the pieces were being examined for restoration purposes by a team of conservators from the Yale Center for British Art.

The Peabody artworks were brought into the United States by renowned abolitionist Frederick Douglass in his capacity as Haiti’s commissioner for the Chicago World Fair in 1893. Aronson said that he hopes to turn the restoration project into a teaching tool by inviting young Haitian artists and would-be conservators to collaborate on the project.

### **“Van Gogh’s *Flowers In A Blue Vase* Damage Seen in X-rays,”** *BBC News*, 09/15/2012

Researchers have spotted a never-before-seen chemical effect in Vincent Van Gogh’s *Flowers In A Blue Vase* that is dulling the work’s vibrant yellows. It seems a layer of varnish added later to protect the work is in fact turning the yellow to a greyish-orange colour.

High-intensity X-ray studies found compounds called oxalates were responsible. But atoms from the original paint were also found in the varnish, which may therefore be left in place.

The new work was begun during a conservation treatment in 2009, when conservators found that the yellows in *Flowers In A Blue Vase* - from a pigment called cadmium yellow - had turned greyish and cracked. Normally, cadmium yellow grows paler and less vibrant as it ages. So the team took tiny samples of the work to some of Europe’s largest sources of X-rays: the ESRF in France and Desy in Germany.

The purpose was to determine not

only what was in the samples in terms of atoms and molecules, but also the precise structures in the interface layer between the original paint and the varnish. That is where the team was shocked to find a compound called cadmium oxalate as the cause of the grey-orange pallor. Oxalates are commonly found in much older works, and in association with different pigments.

This is the first time that cadmium has been seen to form oxalates within the varnish - a protective measure that was added much later. That some of the Van Gogh’s paint has been drawn into the varnish creates a troubling problem for conservators, who of course want to prevent any further degradation but are duty-bound not to remove any original material.

### **“Search For Mysterious Lost Da Vinci Aborted,”** *Discovery News*, 09/22/2012

A longstanding Leonardo da Vinci mystery -- the fate of a lost masterpiece known as the *Battle of Anghiari* -- will remain unsolved. The ambitious project to find the long-lost artwork has been put on indefinite hold.

The scaffoldings have been standing for nearly 10 months in front of a frescoed wall in Palazzo Vecchio, Florence’s 14th-century city hall, in the imposing Hall of Five Hundred. Behind a mural known as the “*Battle of Marciano*,” would lie Da Vinci’s masterpiece, according to art diagnostic expert Maurizio Seracini, director of the Center of Interdisciplinary Science for Art, Architecture and Archaeology at the University of California, San Diego.

Created by Giorgio Vasari (1511-1574), the mural has been at the center of Seracini’s research since the 1970s. Finally, in late 2011, Seracini identified 14 small areas in the frescoed wall that could be explored by endoscopy and asked for permission to investigate them. To ensure that no damage would be done to Vasari’s mural, areas were chosen that were either free of original Vasari paint or were cracked or previously restored.

In January, Seracini’s team drilled six tiny holes into Vasari’s fresco, inserted a 0.15-inch-wide probe and micro-cameras and collected samples of red, white, orange and black material. “None of the six points of entry chosen by the Opificio Delle Pietre Dure was among the 14 original points identified by Prof. Seracini. Nevertheless, he and his scientific team were encouraged by the results,” said National Geographic, who sponsored the *Battle of Anghiari* Project, in a statement.

SEM analysis revealed the black material had an unusual chemical makeup of manganese and iron that, according to Seracini, corresponded to the black pigment found

in brown glazes on Leonardo’s “*Mona Lisa*” and “*St. John the Baptist*”

This would suggest that Vasari created it intentionally to preserve Leonardo’s masterpiece. Cecilia Frosinini, mural paintings section director at the Opificio, immediately resigned in protest from the project. “It’s an ethical question. I’m supposed to protect the artworks, and here there is an invasive intervention on the painting,” Frosinini wrote.

Following her reaction, many art historians signed a petition asking to stop the drilling and even questioning the possibility that the fresco was indeed hidden behind Vasari’s mural. “Vasari would have never covered a work by an artist he admired so much in the hope that one day someone would search and find it. You would expect such a hypothesis from Dan Brown, certainly not from art historians,” Tomaso Montanari, an art historian at the University Federico II in Naples, said.

This summer, the saga of the lost Da Vinci’s fresco took its final twist. Cristina Acidini, superintendent for the Polo Museale Fiorentino, replied to Renzi by authorizing the endoscopic investigation of a seventh hole in a paint-free area originally identified by the OPD, but ruled out the possibility of carrying out further holes as requested by the scientific team. In response, Renzi decided to put the project on hold.

In a highly polemic letter to culture minister Lorenzo Ornaghi, Renzi, now a candidate for Prime Minister in the center left party’s primary elections, stated: “if the government is afraid to authorize this restoration, which would be authorized anywhere else at any point of time, we will wait until the government changes.”

A few days ago, Acidini gave the go ahead to fill in the six holes in Vasari’s fresco and dismantle the scaffoldings. “This is how it ends, with strokes of stucco and paint, the search for Leonardo’s mythical work,” the daily *La Repubblica* wrote.

### **“BNSF Awards \$10K Grant to Conserve Murals at Kiva,”** *BCDemocratOnline.com*, 10/01/2012

The Burlington Northern Santa Fe (BNSF) Railway Foundation has awarded a \$10,000 grant to the Koshare Foundation. The grant will enable the Koshare Indian Museum to proceed with efforts to conserve the historic Velino Herrera murals, on the walls of the museum’s Kiva.

The Herrera murals were painted and placed in the Kiva in 1949 and are the only known large murals remaining of this renowned Zia Pueblo artist. The conservation efforts will be led by Koshare Museum

Executive Director, Jeremy Manyik, and Conservator Victoria Ryan of Art Care Services in Colorado Springs.

Herrera completed the murals after they were adhered to the Kiva's adobe walls with wallpaper paste. The Koshare Kiva, along with Herrera's murals, were placed on the Colorado State Register of Historic Sites in 1995. It was listed as an example of the Pueblo Revival style.

There are only two known large scale works by artist Velino Herrera still in existence: the ten murals in the Koshare Indian Museum's Kiva and frescoes in the Department of the Interior building in Washington, D.C.

The paintings appear to be structurally stable but are visually compromised by planar distortions, discolored varnish, and grime. The adhesive is degrading. This deterioration is causing obvious areas of delamination of the fabric from the wall. The murals are in a very public area which is extensively used. There are and have been times when a fire is lit in the center of the Kiva room as part of ceremonies. In addition, visitors were allowed to smoke inside the Kiva for several decades.

**“Heritage Conservations: Restoring Art,”**  
*Times of India, 10/07/2012*

Vaidehi Savnal bends keenly over a 1963 acrylic painting by Harikishan Lall. She is assistant conservator at The Museum Art Conservation Center (MACC). Her colleague Dilip Mestri is using a microscope to click microphotographs of damages on a manuscript from Emperor Akbar's atelier. In a corner, assistant conservation scientist Shilpa Kamat is working on a pigment database that can help restoration experts match colours on ancient paintings.

This workforce led by art conservation consultant Anupam Sah is behind the ambitious 30-month-long Art Conservation Resurgence Project (ACRP) that will cover nine states across India, namely Maharashtra, Jammu and Kashmir, Tamil Nadu, Arunachal Pradesh, Gujarat, Karnataka, Kerala, Goa and Rajasthan.

By the middle of next year, conservators from the museum will train people from these nine states on preserving their heritage. The centre will create exhaustive directories of the damage done to historic and artistic works. This material will then be made available for reference.

In the second stage, a series of volumes of conservation treatment procedures and systems will be compiled and implemented. But the real change is likely to happen on field. In addition to acquiring information

from locals, the real challenge before the team is to turn locals from varied ethnic communities into independent restorers.

In the spirit of going local, the project intends to adopt the crowdsourcing model, and upload all data collected for anyone to access online. “It will be like Wiki in nature, and up by December. Anyone who has a restoration technique to share, for instance, can add it. This is how we will proceed until all key content crystallises into a publication,” says ACRP member Isaac Matthews.

**“Kimbell Art Museum Creates iPad App Featuring Permanent Collection,”**  
*Dallas Art News, 10/07/2012*

The Kimbell Art Museum announces the creation of a new iPad app that features conservation information on 32 works in the Museum's collection. The free app will be available on 20 iPads, which Museum visitors can borrow and use in the galleries during the anniversary exhibition *The Kimbell at 40: An Evolving Masterpiece*.

“Conservation is one of the most important and fascinating things we do here at the Kimbell, and it's so rare that we have the opportunity to share this type of behind-the-scenes information with our visitors,” commented Eric M. Lee, the Museum's director. “With the iPad app, we're able to deliver in-depth research, descriptive images and intriguing discoveries too extensive to be included on the gallery wall labels, in an innovative format that allows for personalized exploration of the collection.”

In addition to the restoration of paintings carried out by Claire Barry, director of conservation, and her colleagues, extensive technical studies have been conducted on many of the works in the Museum's collection. An impressive selection of conservation discoveries are featured on the app.

**“Defacing Rothko Painting ‘Not Vandalism’,”**  
*BBC News, 10/08/2012*

A man who claims responsibility for defacing a painting by Mark Rothko at the Tate Modern has told the BBC: “I'm not a vandal.”

The painting, *Black on Maroon*, one of Rothko's Seagram murals, was written on with black paint on Sunday. Vladimir Umanets, founder of a movement he calls Yellowism, claims to be responsible but denies criminal damage. Mr. Umanets compared himself with the surrealist artist Marcel Duchamp. He said: “Art allows us to take what someone's done and put a new message on it.” However, he acknowledged he was likely to be arrested shortly. He added that he was

a big fan of Rothko.

After the incident, Tate Modern was shut for a short period. But a spokesperson for the gallery told BBC arts correspondent Will Gompertz that it would not change its policy of allowing people up close to the art.

Conservator Julia Nagle said on Radio 4's Today programme that she had “every faith” the defaced painting could be restored. “The first thing you need to know is what the painting was originally made of, in order to distinguish between the solubility of what you want to get rid of and the original painting. “Fortunately, in the case of Rothko, there's a massive body of research into his techniques - and a great conservation department at Tate.”

**“Restorers Tackle Obscene 17th-Century Graffiti On Rediscovered Frescoes,”**  
*The Guardian, 10/08/2012*

The beautiful 15th-century frescoes hidden behind a false roof in the cathedral of Valencia, eastern Spain, were a spectacular find – a remarkably well-conserved example of work by the Renaissance master Paolo da San Leocadio.

Restoration came with a set of unique problems. A 17th-century workman, for example, had added his own graffiti touches to the frescoes before covering them over, including one that is familiar to school toilets across the western world: a depiction of a full set of male genitalia scratched into an angel's wing. “The truth is that we have barely advanced over the centuries,” Carmen Pérez, head of Valencia's conservation institute, told *El Mundo* newspaper.

The graffiti was only part of the damage inflicted on the frescoes by those who covered them up in 1674 – when damp was already deemed to be making them grubby and worthless. Workmen also tested their plaster-flicking accuracy on the Renaissance masterpiece, aiming at angels' eyes, mouths and other targets.

The frescoes were rediscovered eight years ago, when Pérez and her team started restoring the 17th-century baroque vault built underneath them. A hole in the vault gave way to an 80cm (2ft 6in) deep air chamber where pigeons had been nesting. Above the pigeons were the smoke-blackened remains of the once-colourful Renaissance frescoes featuring a dozen angels playing harps, pipes and other medieval instruments. These have now been restored, and the graffiti removed, as art historians rewrite the history of Renaissance art in Spain.

**“Restored ‘América Tropical’ Mural Unveiled on Olvera Street,”**  
*NBC News 10/09/2012*

One of LA's most famous murals,

originally considered so controversial that officials painted over it with whitewash, has been fully restored and was unveiled Tuesday on Olvera Street downtown.

América Tropical, painted in 1932 by David Alfaro Siqueiros and considered his greatest work, has a long and troubled past, including initial outrage at its shocking visual imagery. It depicts a brown-skinned man crucified under a massive eagle. City officials considered the mural so offensive at the time that they ordered it covered over.

The mural made its comeback Tuesday after a nearly \$10 million restoration project funded by the City of Los Angeles and the Getty Conservation Institute. A cultural center devoted to the mural's history and Siqueiros' work also opened.

Siqueiros was inspired by what he had seen in Los Angeles during the Great Depression -- a community that was far cry from the idyllic oasis that many believed it to be. Although the left and right sides of the mural feature rainforests and Mayan pyramids painted by Siqueiros, he left the final part of the mural unpainted until the night he chose to unveil it, seemingly in expectation of the reactions he knew it would elicit.

That image was front and center on Tuesday, as Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa and J. Paul Getty Trust President and CEO James Cuno cut a ceremonial ribbon at the center. At the accompanying cultural center, visitors will be able to learn more about the mural, the conservation process and the artistic legacy of its creator.

The mural will also have several brand-new layers of protection, including a canopy that spans the south wall of the Italian Hall, with sun shades on each side to prevent it from being directly exposed to sun and rain.

#### **"Restoration Planned for Carracci Gallery in Rome,"** *New York Times*, 10/10/2012

Officials on Wednesday announced plans for the long overdue restoration of the Carracci Gallery in the Palazzo Farnese. With the bidding process for restorers now open, work is scheduled to start in January and take a year to complete.

The project will be the most ambitious and complete restoration of the gallery in centuries, involving the celebrated frescoes on the vault as well as its elaborate stucco frames and decorations, and scholars anticipate that vital information will be gleaned from the cleaning.

Even though the gallery is one of the most celebrated -- and studied -- monuments of Baroque art, it still harbors some secrets, "like determining which hands painted which section," said Rossella Vodret, an

Italian culture ministry official responsible for Rome's historical patrimony and its museums, which paid for the preliminary studies of the restoration.

The frescoes of mythological scenes were designed and painted primarily by Annibale Carracci, with some help from his brother Agostino, and several students from their workshop, including Domenichino and Giovanni Lanfranco, who went on to stellar careers in Rome. The restoration, she said, is above all a "scientific endeavor."

#### **"The Pope: That Painting of Pompei will be restored in the Vatican" (Il Papa: Quel Quadro Di Pompei Si Restauri In Vaticano),"** *La Repubblica*, 10/12/2012

Pope Benedict XVI wanted the restoration of the painting *Madonna of Pompei* to take place in Rome, consigned to the expert hands of Vatican conservators. In the next few hours the painting that Bartolo Longo brought to Pompei on the 13<sup>th</sup> of November 1875 will be taken down and placed in a custom crate for transportation to the Vatican.

One of the most venerated images of the Virgin in the world, the painting depicts the Madonna enthroned with the baby Jesus in her arms and at her feet Saint Domenic and Saint Catherine of Siena. The painting measures 120cm by 100cm.

Technicians of the sanctuary and pontifical experts noticed the painting's deteriorating condition. The painting was restored in 1965 when a sheet of Plexiglas was placed in front of it to prevent damage. According to one scenario, the presence of the Plexiglas combined with the heat of the candles and the bright light of the sanctuary over the years has led to the emergence of a condensate that has slowly altered the paint film.

Pope Ratzinger's haste in removing the painting has generated some dissatisfaction in Naples, as it means the traditional Kiss of the 13<sup>th</sup> of November will be missed.

#### **"X-Rays Reveal True Identity Of Subject In Holbein Portrait,"** *The Guardian*, 10/13/2012

The true identity of a man whose face has been known in Britain for 400 years has been revealed by conservation work completed last week. Holbein's portrait, thought to be of a goldsmith called Hans of Antwerp, first came into royal possession in 1639, during the reign of Charles I, but early repair work obscured clues to the real name and trade of the man it depicts.

Now, using x-ray technology and infra-red photography, Royal Collection Trust conservators have discovered that Hans was

in fact a merchant working in London's steel-yards. The conservators found that the painting had been broken into pieces within the first 100 years of its life and then been glued back together.

Removal of overpaint and dark varnish has proved that, although the sitter may have been called Hans, he was actually a merchant. It is a finding that makes sense to Holbein experts since the painting is one of only seven surviving portraits produced by Hans Holbein the Younger between 1532 and 1533 and the rest are all of German merchants of the Hanseatic League.

The discovery came when the royal conservators spotted that the sitter's seal, in the foreground, had been altered to appear as a "W". In fact it was originally a merchant's mark -- a circle and crossed lines. The same mark can be seen in reverse on the letter held in the man's hand. The careful cleaning work has also exposed the gem-set rings worn by Hans, which also indicates the superior wealth of a leading merchant.

#### **"Enthroned Madonna and Child Painting Restored,"** *Times of Malta*, 10/26/2012

A scientific conservation exercise on one of the finest and most significant Early Renaissance paintings in Malta has been completed. The exercise, with the support of Banif Bank (Malta), was carried out by the University of Malta's Research Programme for the Study of Late Medieval and Renaissance Art.

This undertook diagnostic analysis of the painting, and embarked on a conservation and restoration intervention to restore it to its former glory and give it back its original qualities. The work comes from the inner circle of Antonello da Messina and represents the Enthroned Madonna and Child.

It is the surviving central panel of a triptych, commissioned for the old parish church of Zejtun around the first decade of the sixteenth century. The delicate work was carried out by Recoop - The Restoration and Conservation Coop Ltd, which removed layers of over-painting and gave back the work a close approximation of its original appearance. The painting was first restored in 1672 by Pietro Nunez de Villavicentio who added his signature. The restoration exercise removed his over-painting.

#### **"NGV Artworks Languishing in Vaults,"** *The Age*, 10/24/2012

Around \$630 million of state artworks held by the National Gallery of Victoria are languishing in overcrowded vaults and are not stored to an acceptable industry standard. Storage issues also plague Museum Victoria

where an important part of its collection sits in a Carlton basement that is prone to flooding, according to a report by the Auditor-General tabled in parliament yesterday.

The report raises concerns about the way the state's institutions store and manage \$5 billion worth of collections. Auditor-General Des Pearson said the bulk of the state's collection is not on display, with storage facilities near or at capacity. The National Gallery of Victoria and Australian Centre for the Moving Image's storage facilities have reached capacity, while 93% of Museum Victoria's storage facilities are occupied.

The report said cramped storage conditions were compromising the preservation of collections. Around \$15 million of funding allocated in the state budget will be used to address urgent storage issues at major institutions. The report said overcrowding was the reason why NGV reported that only 66% of its collection is stored to industry standard.

Robyn Sloggett, director of the Centre for Cultural Materials Conservation at Melbourne University said conservation and housing standards had progressed exponentially in recent decades, but so had the volume of material acquired.

#### **“New York’s Art World Counts the Damage Done by Hurricane Sandy,” *The Guardian*, 10/31/2012**

At the American Institute for Conservation, coordinator Beth Antoine says: “We’re expecting a whole lot of damage to be reported for weeks ahead.”

Outdoor art received special attention in the buildup to Sandy's arrival. The Museum of Modern Art removed statues, including Picasso's *She-Goat* and Katharina Fritsch's *Group of Figures* from the Abby Aldrich Rockefeller Sculpture Garden and wrapped and secured others. The Public Art Fund closed and secured Tatzu Nishi's scaffolding installation around the sculpture of Columbus at Columbus Circle. The Metropolitan Museum of Art took extra precautions with its roof sculpture by Tomás Saraceno.

Galleries in the Chelsea district of the city have been particularly hard hit. With water rising, paintings not removed from walls have been badly damaged. On the pavement outside Churner and Churner gallery on Tenth Avenue, soiled paintings in bubble wrap are piled up. The cleanup has barely begun.

Conservators will repair, salvage art will be sold at knock-down prices and insurance premiums will rise. Perhaps also, Hurricane Sandy will inspire new art. Wednesday was, by coincidence, the day that artist Michel De Broin's *Majestic* – a sculpture made from

street lamps damaged in Hurricane Katrina – was to be unveiled.

#### **“Chelsea After Sandy: MoMA Talk Sheds Light On Restoration Process As Galleries Recover,” *Huffington Post*, 11/05/2012**

At an event held at The Museum of Modern Art, aimed to help those affected by Hurricane Sandy's unwelcome visit through New York City and its many museums and galleries a man asked whether freezing the work would stop mold from growing.

Experts from the American Institute for Conservation Collections Emergency Response Team (AIC-CERT) were there to give advice to befuddled artists and gallerists. Monona Russell, an independent conservationist, told the well-dressed crowd at the MoMA to put on Tyvek suits and rubber boots to enter flood-damaged areas.

The no-nonsense, self-described “industrial hygienist” said to make sure not to bring your boots back home with you, because you could track in waste materials and toxins from damaged sites into your living space.

Caitlin O'Grady, an art conservationist from the University of Delaware's Department of Art Conservation, took on a challenging issue facing many post-Sandy: insurance claims. She urged the audience to begin the process of gathering documentation for the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and insurers -- and to freeze all paper records and receipts.

Salt damage is another factor, she noted. If salts crystallize, they can expand once the space returns to room temperature, which causes further damage to the art work. She advised keeping air circulating when drying out works, and keeping the lights on, since mold likes to grow in the dark.

#### **“Restorers Claim to have Uncovered Lost Giotto Frescoes in Quake-hit Chapel,” *The Guardian*, 11/06/2012**

Art restorers working on frescoes in a forgotten chapel in Assisi believe they have stumbled across proof that stunning images found under layers of grime are the work of medieval artist Giotto.

The discovery of the artist's initials on the frescoes follows two years of restoration work in the Chapel of St Nicholas in the lower basilica of Saint Francis. The work was prompted by a 1997 earthquake that damaged the basilica.

Experts have argued that the frescoes in the chapel, which has been closed to the public and neglected for years, were at best the work of Giotto's followers in the 14th century. But restorers claim the letters

GB – standing for Giotto di Bondone, his full name – prove the cleaned-up images were his.

“This is one of the first works of [Giotto's] artistic life and is of great importance to reconstruct the chronology of his work and that of his workshop,” said chief restorer Sergio Fusetti of the Assisi frescoes. The frescoes were painted when Gian Gaetano Orsini, a deacon, was buried.

#### **“Ancient Tunnels in Rome Reopen to the Public,” *The Art Newspaper*, 11/21/2012**

Few people have ever visited the long network of underground tunnels under the public baths of Caracalla, which date back to the third century AD and are considered by many archaeologists to be the grandest public baths in Rome.

This underground network, which is due to be reopened in December, is also home to a separate structure, the largest Mithraeum in the Roman Empire, according to its director Marina Piranomonte. The Mithraeum has just reopened after a year of restoration work which cost the city's archaeological authorities around €360,000.

Mithraeums were places of worship for initiates of the religious cult of Mithraism, which was centred around the Persian god Mithra and practiced throughout the Roman empire from around the first to the fourth centuries AD. A Mithraeum would usually exist underground, either in a cavern or beneath existing buildings, and was traditionally dark and windowless.

The conservation problems began when skylights were installed. The presence of sunlight coupled with the circulation of air altered the underground microclimate and caused algae to grow on the walls as well as water gathering in the 25 metre-long central hall. During the work the skylights were sealed shut, a collapsed vault was restored and the walls and flooring were cleaned. A lighting system was also been installed to compensate for the closure of the skylights.

The Mithraeum was discovered a century ago and was almost entirely devoid of decoration. Only a small and poorly conserved fresco of Mithra remained, although the site had other significant features including the *fossa sanguinis*, a two-and-a-half-metres-deep square pit in which new initiates would be lowered to receive the blood of a specially sacrificed bull.

The Mithraeum is due to be connected with the other branches of the underground network to form a single visitors route, although two further adjacent spaces have still to be restored before this can happen. Restoration work is expected to take around two more years.