
Articles You May Have Missed

“Escaping the Shadow of Pompeii,” *New York Times*, 11/14/2012

HERCULANEUM, Italy — They are poignant snapshots of sudden death: huddled clusters of skeletal remains in what were once beachfront warehouses, immortalized for eternity when Mount Vesuvius smothered this ancient Roman town in A.D. 79. First excavated by archaeologists some 30 years ago, the warehouses were recently outfitted with walkways and gates to provide access and will soon be open to the public on special occasions.

Reviving history for a modern audience “is one of the beautiful things we get to do,” said Domenico Camardo, the lead archaeologist with the Herculaneum Conservation Project, a joint initiative of the Packard Humanities Institute, of Los Altos, Calif.; the local artistic heritage authority; and the British School at Rome.

The project, an unusual public-private venture, has effectively managed the site for more than a decade. Compared with its better-known Vesuvian neighbor, Pompeii, Herculaneum has become a textbook case of successful archaeological conservation. For many years archaeologists and conservators have undertaken what they describe as “invisible work” here, like installing cost-effective protective roofing or reactivating the Roman sewers under the ancient city so that buildings can once again drain rainwater.

The work also took the deep pockets of the American philanthropist David W. Packard, son of one of the founders of Hewlett-Packard, who discreetly funneled more than \$20 million into the project over the past 12 years, creating a team of specialists, nearly all Italian, to reinforce the local heritage staff. Unesco is working with the Vesuvian sites and studying how Herculaneum could be a model for other World Heritage Sites, particularly in Mediterranean and Arab countries.

“Blanton Exhibition Dives into the Science of Art Conservation with Big Reveal,” *University of Texas at Austin News*, 11/15/2012

The Blanton Museum of Art at The University of Texas at Austin presents “Restoration and Revelation: Conserving the Suida-Manning Collection,” an exhibition on view Nov. 17, 2012, through May 5, 2013, that puts the preservation of Old Master paintings and drawings from the 16th through 18th centuries under a metaphorical microscope. It underscores how the convergence of art and science can lead to new knowledge about the works and their makers.

Antonio Carneo’s 17th-century painting “The Death of Rachel,” recently restored by the National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa, serves as the focal point of this in-depth investigation and is showcased alongside several additional Renaissance and baroque artworks, representing a range of conservation issues.

When the Blanton acquired the work in 1998, the canvas had severe structural problems and a pattern of paint loss indicating that it was probably rolled and folded at some point in its history. A previous restoration attempted in the mid-20th century was left unfinished, and the painting was in need of repair to safeguard it from further deterioration and restore its visual integrity.

The conservators at the National Gallery of Canada, led by Chief Conservator Stephen Gritt, first had to technically examine the painting, clean its surface and fill in areas of paint loss. It took several months to reconstruct the forms in “The Death of Rachel,” and the whole treatment — which took more than 500 hours — was documented through video and photography that accompany the dramatic and successful end result on view.

A range of conservation issues —

and the techniques used to address them — is examined through other works in the exhibition. Also on view is a 17th-century canvas by a follower of the artist Simon Vouet selected for this exhibition because of a startling discovery made while it was being cleaned.

“Vandalised Mark Rothko ‘Could take 18 Months to Restore,’” *The Telegraph*, 11/21/2012

When a Mark Rothko painting was vandalised at the Tate Modern last month, some experts predicted the work would be back on gallery walls before long. However, following a close analysis of the damage, the Tate Modern’s team of leading Rothko conservation specialists have said the work will require a significant amount of work and could take as much as 18 months to restore to its former glory.

In October, Vladimir Umanets, claiming to be an artist acting in the interests of a conceptual art movement called “Yellowism”, is alleged to have scrawled a graffiti message on Rothko’s Black On Maroon (1958). A spokesperson for the Tate told the Daily Telegraph this morning that the damage was worse than had been first reported.

“There was a lot of speculation about the scrawl being made a marker pen, but it wasn’t. The damage was made with ink which has made a deeper mark. The gallery set up a committee including an independent expert to advise on the conservation process. Despite their apparent simplicity, Rothko’s paintings are notoriously difficult to fix because the artist often mixed his own paints with unusual materials.

He used thin layers of paint to achieve a depth and richness of paintings are often comprised of hundreds of meticulously layered sheets of colour. The defaced painting was one of a series, known as the Seagram murals, gifted to the Tate by the artist in 1969.

“Petroglyph Thefts Near Bishop Stun Federal Authorities, Paiutes,” *Los Angeles Times*, 11/18/2012

Ancient hunters and gatherers etched vivid petroglyphs on cliffs in the Eastern Sierra that withstood winds, flash floods and earthquakes for more than 3,500 years. Thieves needed only a few hours to cut them down and haul them away.

Federal authorities say at least

four petroglyphs have been taken from the site. A fifth was defaced with deep saw cuts on three sides. A sixth had been removed and broken during the theft, then propped against a boulder near a visitor parking lot. “The individuals who did this were not surgeons, they were smashing and grabbing,” U.S. Bureau of Land Management archaeologist Greg Haverstock said last week as he examined the damage. “This was the worst act of vandalism ever seen” on the 750,000 acres of public land managed by the BLM field office in Bishop.

The theft required extraordinary effort: Ladders, electric generators and power saws had to be driven into the remote and arid high desert site near Bishop. Thieves gouged holes in the rock and sheared off slabs that were up to 15 feet above ground and 2 feet high and wide.

Visitors discovered the theft and reported it to the BLM on Oct. 31. The region is known as Volcanic Tableland. It is held sacred by Native Americans whose ancestors adorned hundreds of lava boulders with spiritual renderings: concentric circles, deer, rattlesnakes, bighorn sheep, and hunters with bows and arrows.

For generations, Paiute-Shoshone tribal members and whites have lived side by side but not together in Bishop. But desecration of the site, which Native Americans still use in spiritual ceremonies, has forced reservation officials and U.S. authorities to come together and ask a tough question: Can further vandalism be prevented?

The easy answer is to police the site and others listed under the Archaeological Resources Protection Act. But that’s not possible given the condition of cash-strapped federal lands agencies, authorities said. Federal authorities and Native American leaders plan to mark each defaced petroglyph with a small sign pointing out that, as archaeologist Haverstock put it, “this damage was done by malicious, selfish individuals.”

“Seattle Art Museum Restoring Pollock Painting,” *Huffington Post*,

The Seattle Art Museum is restoring a 1947 Jackson Pollock painting that was altered in the 1970s with a coat of varnish. Work started last summer in the museum’s conservation studio on “Sea Change.”

The painting represents Pollock’s transition to a drip technique. The restora-

tion is especially complicated because of the multiple types of media and the depth of the surface, said Nicholas Dorman, chief conservator for the museum. The painting is about 4-by-5 feet in size and includes many layers, beginning with a fine weave canvass, then a white oil base, brushed color images, aluminum paint drips, black drips with imbedded gravel (some pieces of which have come off during transit over the years) and then dabs of pure color.

Several types of paint are used, including oil, house and other commercial paints and possibly an early acrylic paint. The restoration is additionally complicated because some of the materials by their nature are shiny and others are matte. So, as Dorman works removing the shiny varnish, the changes are subtle. Because of the multiple materials, the restoration process itself becomes a research project to find what works best – information that is expected to be valuable to others working in the field.

The work is funded by the Bank of America's Art Conservation Project, which has provided about \$2 million since 2010 to restore art and artifacts of cultural and historical value around the world.

“NMSU Students Learn Art Of Restoration In Museum Conservation Program,” *Las Cruces Sun-News*, 12/01/2012

Nearly 25 years ago, a large-scale bronze sculpture was unveiled at New Mexico State University. Through the years, the statue became corroded and marred with graffiti. Today, the luster is back thanks to a preservation program in the College of Arts and Sciences.

Restoring “The Traders” is just one of the many hands-on projects assigned to students in NMSU's Museum Conservation Program. This program prepares students for graduate work to become art conservators. Students enrolled in the program gain practical experience while restoring bronze statues, religious retables and other works of fine art.

Demand for the program began in 2005 after a survey completed by Heritage Preservation and the Institute of Museum and Library. The program is called museum conservation instead of art conservation because the course includes museum studies, an area where conservators work with curators and collection managers who need to be knowledgeable in the fundamentals of conservation. Students in the program also work with the community to provide art conservation services to institutions in

Las Cruces and the surrounding areas.

Restoring the statue was a three-step process. First, Marinas-Feliner's class delicately removed both the graffiti and corrosion. Restoration soap was then used to clean the entire sculpture before a sacrificial layer of microcrystalline wax was applied to protect the surface metal. Marinas-Feliner said the wax would be reapplied every year.

“Italy Tracks Down Copy of Da Vinci's Lost Masterpiece,” *BBC News*, 12/01/2012

Italy's specialist art theft police have tracked down and brought home a 400-year-old copy of a lost Leonardo da Vinci masterpiece - an incomplete fresco painting of the Battle of Anghiari.

Art historians believe that Leonardo, experimenting with various fresco painting techniques, started painting the battle scene in 1503, but he never completed the project. The copy was last seen in public 73 years ago on the eve of World War II, when it was shown at a Leonardo exhibition in Milan. Then it disappeared.

But the Italian police department which specializes in art theft patiently managed to track the clandestine life of the painting - known as the Doria panel from the name of the family in whose art collection it had remained for three centuries.

After being stolen from its owners in Naples, the panel passed into the possession of a Swiss art dealer, was sent to Germany for restoration in the 1960s, then turned up briefly at a New York art gallery in the 1970s before ending up in the collection of a wealthy Japanese art collector in the 1990s.

The painting will be shown at the Uffizi Gallery in Florence during 2013 and will then go on loan for four years back to Japan - under an agreement worked out with the Fuji Art Museum in Tokyo, where it was last exhibited.

“Munch Frieze at Risk,” *The Art Newspaper*, 12/18/2012

A monumental frieze made between 1909 and 1916 by Edvard Munch for the Aula (assembly hall) of the University of Oslo was unveiled to great acclaim in 2011 after a lengthy project to conserve and stabilize the 11 monumental Expressionist paintings. However, only 20 months after the project was completed, a Norwegian conservator has warned that harmful dust

and debris from the restoration of the building's exterior may harm the recently treated frieze. The building project is expected to finish in summer 2013.

“Particles from the plaster that is being knocked off the building's exterior contain alkaline... [and] the particles themselves are like sandpaper,” says Tine Frøysaker, a conservator and professor at the University of Oslo who worked on the Aula frieze. Frøysaker says that measures have been taken to minimize the amount of dust that can seep in, such as increasing the internal air pressure, but the building is old and impossible to seal. She also says that the paintings are particularly vulnerable because they are not glazed.

“Sistine Chapel Tourists to be Vacuumed and Cooled to Protect Frescoes,” *The Guardian*, 12/21/2012

The 5 million tourists who visit the Sistine Chapel every year are to be vacuum cleaned and cooled down before entry in an effort to reduce the pollution damaging Michelangelo's frescoes, said Antonio Paolucci, the director of the Vatican museums.

The heat and dirt generated by 20,000 tourists pouring into the chapel every day has been blamed for the layers of grime accumulating on the paintings. “We will cover the 100 metres before the entrance with a carpet that cleans shoes; we will install suction vents on the sides to suck dust from clothes and we will lower temperatures to reduce the heat and humidity of bodies,” said Paolucci.

Paolucci has been searching for a way to cut down on the bodily debris of tourists since restorers scrubbed a thick layer of dirt off the frescoes two years ago. A 20-year-old air extraction system is no longer up to the job and air conditioning is essential, he has warned.

Apart from the sweat and steam they bring into the chapel, the sheer number of visitors has been criticized for giving the space the feel of a busy train station, complete with pickpockets.

“Hadrian's Hall: Archaeologists Finish Excavation of Roman Arts Centre,” *The Guardian*, 12/26/2012

Archaeologists who have completed the excavation of a 900-seat arts center under one of Rome's busiest roundabouts are calling it the most important Roman discovery in 80 years.

The center, built by the emperor Hadrian in AD123, offered three massive halls where Roman nobles flocked to hear poetry, speeches and philosophy tracts while reclining on terraced marble seating. With the dig now completed, the terracing and the hulking brick walls of the complex, as well as stretches of the elegant grey and yellow marble flooring, are newly visible at bottom of a 5.5 meter hole in Piazza Venezia.

The complex was only unearthed thanks to excavations to build a new underground railway line which will cross the heart of Rome. Today the performing space is riddled with pits dug for fires, revealing how after three centuries of celebrating the arts, the halls fell into disrepair with the collapse of the Roman empire and were used for smelting ingots.

At the center of the main hall is a massive, nine-by-five-meter chunk of the monumental roof which came crashing down during an earthquake in 848 after standing for seven centuries. Following the quake, the halls were gradually covered over until a hospital built on top in the 16th century dug down for cellar space.

“Secret Painting in Rembrandt Masterpiece Seen,” *Discovery News*, 01/26/2013

Scientists may be one step closer to revealing a hidden portrait behind a 380-year-old Rembrandt painting. The masterpiece, “Old Man in Military Costume” by Dutch painter Rembrandt Harmenszoon van Rijn, resides at the J. Paul Getty Museum in Los Angeles. Scientists had noticed the painting bears faint traces of another portrait beneath its surface.

Researchers had previously probed the painting with infrared, neutron and conventional X-ray methods, but could not see behind the top coat, largely because Rembrandt used the same paint (with the same chemical composition) for the underpainting and the final version. New studies with more sophisticated X-ray techniques that can parse through the painting’s layers give art historians hope that they may finally get to see who is depicted in the secret image.

Matthias Alfeld from the University of Antwerp and an international team used macro X-ray fluorescence analysis to examine a mock-up of Rembrandt’s original, created by museum intern Andrea Sartorius, who used paints with the same chemical composition as those used by the Dutch master. Sartorius painted one portrait on the canvas and then an imitation of “Old

Man in Military Costume” on top. The scientists targeted four elements of the paint to fluoresce, including calcium, iron, mercury and lead, and got much better impressions of the hidden painting in the mock-up than they were able to before.

“See Naples before It Dies of Neglect,” *The Art Newspaper*, 01/29/2013

The increasingly dire state of conservation of much of Naples’s cultural heritage — its churches, monuments, libraries and palaces — has been highlighted by a damning news report published by one of Italy’s leading papers, the *Corriere della Sera*, in January.

The report revealed an alarming statistic: Naples has around 200 closed and abandoned churches. Some have been stripped of all their furnishings including works of art, some never received the funds they had been promised, while others received them but never embarked on the agreed conservation projects. Others still were closed down, restored and then never opened again.

The report points to years of neglect and mismanagement by the local and national government, as well as by the Church and the regional arm of the ministry of culture.

The city’s historic center, the largest in Europe, has been listed as a Unesco World Heritage site for the last 17 years, however the city’s residents have long bemoaned the state of their heritage, so much so that a petition, signed by 16 civic committees and 60 leading intellectual figures, was circulated at the end of last year calling for the city to be stripped of its Unesco title.

The mayor, Luigi de Magistris, says that his administration has just managed to prevent an European Union grant of €100m, earmarked for the town center, from being sent back to Brussels.

“Army Life Murals Locked Away at Presidio,” *SFGate.com*, 02/02/2013

Up two flights of stairs in a 100-year-old Army barracks at the Presidio of San Francisco is a hidden treasure - a series of colorful murals that show the life of ordinary soldiers during the Cold War.

The murals were painted more than 50 years ago and are portraits of life in the Army. There is nothing fancy about the murals. “You might call the style Army realism,” said Robert Thomson, a federal preservation officer with the Presidio Trust,

which administers the Presidio, now part of a national park.

The murals are almost unknown. They are not accessible to the public. The rooms, both about 120 feet long, are locked and will remain closed until the Presidio Trust figures out a way to let the public see the murals.

The murals were painted in 1956 and 1957 and were painted by three soldiers, led by Spc. 3 Perrin Gerber, a graduate of the Chicago School of Fine Arts and a commercial artist in civilian life.

Anyone who ever spent any time in the military will recognize the murals - the uniforms, the insignia, the feel of life as an ordinary soldier. Some of the murals have been damaged by moisture, but most are in good condition, the colors bright, waiting for a chance to be seen again. “We are writing a technical preservation report to come up with a plan to protect them and make them more accessible to the public,” Thomson said. Until then, however, the murals remain out of public sight, waiting to be discovered again.

“Unesco Raising \$11m To Save Mali’s Heritage,” *The Art Newspaper*, 02/21/2013

Unesco has launched a \$11m rescue project for Timbuktu, following a meeting in Paris on 18 February. Key heritage experts travelled from Mali to report on the damage to ancient manuscripts and historical sites in the ancient city, which lies on the edge of the Sahara.

The destruction in Timbuktu and other sites in northern Mali was caused by Islamic rebels who fled in late January, following the arrival of French troops.

Unesco’s “Action Plan for the Rehabilitation of Cultural Heritage and the Safeguarding of Ancient Manuscripts in Mali” was approved at the end of the day-long meeting. Mali’s minister of culture, Bruno Maïga, said in an interview with *The Art Newspaper* that 2,000-3,000 manuscripts had been destroyed by rebels at the state-supported Ahmed Baba Institute of Higher Learning and Islamic Research in Timbuktu. “These were manuscripts which had been set aside for conservation or digitisation,” he explained.

In the meantime, there are fears that the fragile manuscripts, some dating back many centuries, could be threatened by conservation problems. The Unesco conference also stressed the need to digitise the most important material as an urgent priority.

Unesco has promised to assist with the restoration of buildings in Timbuktu. Fourteen of the city's 16 most important ancient mausoleums were virtually destroyed by the Islamic rebels, but they will now be rebuilt.

“Buddhists, Reconstructing Sacred Tibetan Murals, Wield Their Brushes in Nepal,” *New York Times*, 02/23/2013

LO MANTHANG, Nepal — Dozens of painters sat atop scaffolding that soared toward the roof of the ancient Thubchen Monastery. With a swipe of their brushes, colors appeared that gave life to the Buddha.

“In Nepal, no one knows how to do this, so we have to learn,” said Tashi Gurung, 34, a painter participating in what is one of the most ambitious Tibetan art projects in the Himalayas. Financed by the American Himalayan Foundation, the project is aimed at restoring to a vibrant state the artwork of two of the three main monasteries and temples in Lo Manthang, the walled capital of the once-forbidden kingdom of Mustang. Bordering Tibet in the remote trans-Himalayan desert, Mustang is an important enclave of Tibetan Buddhist culture.

The project in Lo Manthang has stirred debate. Some scholars of Tibetan art assert that the painters are altering important historical murals and jeopardizing scholarship by painting new images atop sections of walls where the original images have been destroyed. Those involved in the project argue that residents want complete artwork in their houses of worship.

The project's director is Luigi Fieni, 39, an Italian who first came to work here after graduating from an art conservation program in Rome. Mr. Fieni and other Westerners have trained local residents to work on the art, creating a 35-member team. Mr. Fieni wanted his team, rather than do purely restoration, to paint sections of the walls where an original mural had disappeared or been destroyed.

Mr. Fieni's approach to restoring the temples and monasteries has been contested. Christian Luczanits, a senior curator at the Rubin Museum of Art in NY, which displays Himalayan art, said that sufficient scholarship had not been done into the original paintings. “The temple now after restoration cannot be understood anymore without the previous documentation,” Mr. Luczanits said in an interview. Last year, he made his opinion known at a contentious

meeting at the palace in Lo Manthang.

Among those present were Mr. Fieni, an abbot, the prince of Mustang, and representatives of the American Himalayan Foundation. There was vigorous debate, and the royal family and the abbot both backed Mr. Fieni. The ceremonial prince, Jigme Singi Palbar Bista, said that the buildings “are renovated very well.”

“Art Museum's Storage Bin Held a Secret Masterwork,” *Los Angeles Times*, 03/30/2013

Tucked away and forgotten for years in a museum storage bin, the small oil painting held a great secret.

It all started in 2000 when a canvas in dreadful condition called “Venice: The Molo from the Bacino di S. Marco” was bequeathed to the Denver Art Museum from a deceased local collector's foundation. The accompanying paperwork was vague and referred to it as “from the studio” of Giovanni Antonio Canal — known as Canaletto — an important Italian painter in the mid-1700s.

Because it was assumed to be a student rendering, the painting was relegated to storage. Seven years later, Timothy Standring, curator of painting and sculpture at the Denver museum, ran across the piece while doing routine inventory. It was so discolored and coated in grime, he later joked, it looked as if it had been “in someone's home who smoked Marlboros for 50 years.”

Still, there was something that caught his eye. Then he got excited. No student painted this. Charles Beddington, one of the world's foremost Canaletto scholars, agreed to come to Denver to take a look in person. “Of course you know this is a Canaletto,” Beddington pronounced, putting the last doubt to rest.

He dated it about 1724, making it one of the artist's earliest undocumented works. And it was a mess. The museum won a grant from the European Fine Art Fair Restoration Fund to restore the painting to Canaletto's vision. In early 2012, that job landed in the lap of James Squires, the museum's associate conservator of paintings.

Squires put in more than 100 hours over the course of a year on the 18-by-31-inch canvas, at times up to six hours on one square inch. But as he worked, something magical happened. Yellow-gray skies turned soft blue, and as the painting was cleaned, new figures appeared.

“Engineers, Conservationists Work on Lasting Fix for Watts Towers,” *Los Angeles Times*, 04/01/2013

From a distance, the Watts Towers rise as a beacon of pride in a community that has struggled for years with poverty and crime. But up close, tiny cracks are tearing through the historic sculpture.

The towers have been deteriorating for years, prompting quick patch jobs that did little long-term good. Now, a team of engineers and conservationists have descended on Watts to try to discover the root problems and come up with a more lasting fix.

Frank Preusser, conservation scientist for the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, has hooked the towers up to several devices to monitor its complex condition. Sensors track movements of the cracks, wind gusts, and minute vibrations.

Concerned about the towers' frail state, Los Angeles' Department of Cultural Affairs contracted with LACMA in 2011 to help with maintenance and restoration. Preusser and four full-time museum employees keep daily tabs on the towers. In December, UCLA engineers joined the effort to perform structural tests.

Data collected so far point to a monument that mimics a living organism: cracks contract and expand as if the tower is breathing. And the structures tilt to the north when the sun rises and return to their original position when the sun sets. It's this flexibility that helped the towers survive the 1994 Northridge earthquake, engineers said, but the constant movement is also why past restoration efforts were short-lived. The team is slowly getting closer the best way to repair the cracks and reattach artifacts after testing dozens of mortars, crack fillers, adhesives and water repellents.

Besides the towers' daily movement, Mother Nature is also contributing to the slow deterioration. Preusser's team is finding that howling winds are causing the most damage. Two years into what was slated as a yearlong project, the team is certain about one thing: The towers will not topple, a long-standing fear.

The findings from restoring the Watts Towers may help with future preservation projects — but coming to the right conclusions will take additional time, Preusser said. He ignores critics who just want the cracks filled. “I got email after email. ‘Why haven't you started filling cracks?’” Preusser said. “I reply, ‘Do you want me to fill cracks the same way knowing it will fail?’ ... I want to make my own mistakes and not repeat the mistakes of the past.”