

Articles You May Have Missed

“Spanish Church Slammed over ‘Frightening’ Sculpture Restoration,”
BBC News, 06/26/2018

A lick of paint can do a lot to lift a drab interior, but when it comes to historic sculptures it turns out the job is best left to experts.

That is what a church in Spain discovered after hiring an arts and crafts teacher to freshen up a 16th century wooden sculpture of St George. Images shared on social media showed the warrior with a transformed pink face and bright coloured armour.

Cultural officials have blasted the botched attempt as “frightening”. “We cannot tolerate more attacks on our cultural heritage,” Spain’s art conservation association (ACRE) said in a statement. “It shows a frightening lack of training of the kind required for this sort of job.”

The parish priest in the northern town of Estella simply wanted the sculpture to be cleaned and did not intend for it to be restored, the Efe news agency reports. But the move has enraged local officials who are demanding to know why they were not informed of the church’s plans. “The council wasn’t told and neither was the regional government of Navarre,” the town’s Mayor Koldo Leoz told *The Guardian* newspaper. “They’ve used plaster and the wrong kind of paint and it’s possible that the original layers of paint have been lost. This is an expert job it should have been done by experts,” he said.

The group in charge of the project - Karmacolor - reportedly uploaded a video to Facebook showing every stage of the project but later deleted it.

How to Spot a Perfect Fake: The World’s Top Art Forgery Detective,
The Guardian, 06/18/2018

The unravelling of a string of shocking old master forgeries began in the winter of 2015, when French police appeared at a gallery in Aix-en-Provence and seized a painting of Venus, by the German Renaissance master Lucas Cranach the Elder.

Purchased in 2013 by the Prince of Liechtenstein for about £6m, Venus was the inescapable star of the exhibition of works from his collection. But an anonymous tip to the police suggested she was, in fact, a modern fake.

The painting’s seizure hoisted the first flag of concern about a wave of impeccable fakes. The quality of these jolted the market. The sums of money at stake in art have grown monstrous, and the incentive to be a proficient forger has soared. The technologies available to abet the aspiring forger have also improved. Naturally, then, the frauds are getting better, touching off a crisis of authentication for the institutions of the art world.

In December 2016, in a signal of how attribution scandals have spooked the market, Sotheby’s took the unprecedented step of buying Orion Analytical, becoming the first auctioneer to have an in-house conservation and analysis unit. Orion Analytical, a conservation science lab in Williamstown, Massachusetts, was run, and staffed almost solely by, James Martin, who has loaned his forensic skills to the FBI for many art forgery investigations. With Martin in the building, “the pictures and other objects moving through Sotheby’s now have a much higher chance of being checked”, Sotheby’s CEO Tad Smith said.

Last year, Martin analysed more than \$100m worth of artworks before they went under the hammer or into private sales. Sotheby’s employs him, in part, as a conservator, so he ministers to the health of the paintings and sculptures that pass through.

“What Colour is this Dress? Guggenheim Reveals Manet Painting after Three Years of Restoration,”
The Art Newspaper, 06/29/2018

A freshly-cleaned fashion statement by Édouard Manet goes back on view at the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum in New York for the summer, after three years of research and restoration.

The free and expressive brushstrokes and bright colours of *Woman in Striped Dress* (1877-80), were hidden under two layers of discoloured varnish. The major restoration was carried out to prepare for the work’s inclusion in the travelling exhibition *Van Gogh to Picasso: the Thannhauser Legacy*, due to open at the Guggenheim Bilbao on 21 September.

The painting, found in the artist’s studio when he died, had been

dramatically changed over the years, including being cut down on the sides and trimmed at the top. Overpainting included an added signature and filling in the trellis-like background. Even the subject’s right eyebrow was changed during the earlier restoration from a raised arch to a more neutral and passive line.

These changes were presumably to make the painting more saleable, says Carol Stringari, the deputy director and chief conservator of the Guggenheim Foundation, who led the project. The restoration and research project, which involved over 25 specialists, began with intensive scientific analysis. This revealed that there was no preparatory sketching underneath and the composition was not altered.

Gillian McMillan, the associate chief conservator for the collection, gradually removed most of the varnish, initially using very thin, small pieces of tissue for control. This revealed not only the artist’s brushwork—“one of the most exciting things” for Stringari—but also that the dress is not black-and-white striped, but a greyish-white and black with deep blue-violet. Whether the unveiling will cause another viral dress sensation awaits to be seen.

“Peruvian Restoration Centre Rescues Art from Ruin,”
The Toronto Star, 07/04/2018

The old colonial palace high in the Andes and crowded with treasures from Peru’s bygone golden age feels more like an emergency room than a workshop for recovering damaged artwork. But sculptures of decapitated Roman Catholic saints, dismembered angels and charred paintings from remote churches across the spine of the Andes all find their way here, where a team of dedicated specialists works to restore them after catastrophic fires and centuries of neglect.

The facility, which opened in 2003, claims to be the only one of its kind operating in Peru and has already made major contributions to the country’s cultural heritage: Between 2015 and 2017 it rescued more than 500 paintings, sculptures, and ceramic pieces.

Cuzco was the capital of the ancient Inca Empire, and from the 16th to 18th centuries it became an epicentre

for Catholic-themed art under Spanish colonizers. Paintings from the “Cuzco School” reflect a rich blend of European influences with Indigenous imagery and homegrown artistic techniques that later spread throughout South America.

The team also restores delicate sculptures depicting Catholic martyrs made from wood and cloth that are often missing heads or arms. The workshop struggles to run on a shoestring budget of \$700,000 a year, said Nidia Perez, an art historian who heads the workshop. But the team never loses sight of its mission. “We are keeping alive the memory of Andean art,” she said. “We must fight every day to keep it from disappearing.”

“Mural discovered at old Moorhead High School,” *West Fargo Pioneer*, 07/12/2018

A nearly 80-year-old oil painting featuring early pioneer and American Indian life in the region has been discovered in the former Moorhead high school located in the heart of the city.

The mural – named “Making Camp on the Red River Trail,” according to the Minnesota Historical Society – was painted in 1939 by Lucia Wiley for the school as part of the national Federal Art Project of the Works Progress Administration, an agency created by President Franklin Roosevelt’s New Deal program.

Brian Cole, Moorhead orchestra teacher and school historian, recently stumbled onto the painting, which had been concealed over the years due to remodeling projects. Rita Berg, associate paintings conservator with the nonprofit Midwest Art Conservation Center in Minneapolis, inspected the work and conducted a light surface cleaning.

“Conservation Should Soon be a Warranted Profession,” *Times of Malta*, 07/20/2018

Conservators’ 15-year wait to be recognised legally was likely to come to a happy end this year. The Malta Association of Professional Conservator-Restorers (MAPCo-Re) was informed that the long-promised warrant system for the conservation profession would kick in by the end of this year.

The conservation professionals’

warrant is listed in the 2002 Cultural Heritage Act but has never been introduced. Amendments to certain aspects of the law, including granting the warrant, have been discussed in recent years.

According to their association’s president, James Licari, a warrant would ensure that the profession was acknowledged legally and that Malta’s collective cultural heritage was preserved for its various values – whether historic, religious, aesthetic or scientific – through professional, scientific methods as well as appropriate materials. Currently, the conservator-restorer may work on cultural heritage, but so can anyone else who may wish to appropriate the title without the necessary education

“CMA Keeps Ancient Skills Alive with Center for Conservation of Chinese Paintings,” *Cleveland.com*, 07/22/2018

After a 43-year career at the Shanghai museum, Zhu Pin Fang is sojourning at the Cleveland Museum of Art where she is passing on highly specialized knowledge of centuries-old techniques to Yi-Hsia Hsiao, the museum’s associate conservator of Chinese paintings.

The Cleveland museum recently completed a \$1.5 million challenge grant from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation in New York by raising an additional \$1.5 million to establish a center in Chinese painting conservation.

“It’s fantastic,” said Clarissa von Spee, the Cleveland museum’s curator of Chinese art and head of the department of Asian art since 2016. Von Spee spoke in the museum’s Chinese art conservation lab while Zhu and Hsiao worked on the delicate task of preparing a layer of feather light xuan paper, made of sandalwood fibers, for mounting on the back of a 16th century scroll painting.

Remounting a Chinese scroll painting with fresh sandalwood paper is a complex, highly demanding task that needs to be done every century or so, said Per Knutas, the museum’s chief conservator. Knutas said has worked since 2014 to establish the Chinese painting conservation center, which he said was the second outside China after one established at the British Museum in London.

The museum will use income

from the \$3 million endowment to pay for yearlong renewable fellowships for mid-career specialists who will train under Hsiao. The center will focus first on conserving paintings in the museum’s own collection, and will then branch out to aid other institutions, Knutas said.

“St. Teresa Chapel Shines Again,” *Winona Post*, 07/30/2018

The Chapel of Saint Mary of the Angels in Winona will soon have a new face to show the public after a team from the Midwest Art Conservation Center (MACC) finished their restoration on the altar this past week.

In a five-day session, conservationists from MACC worked diligently to clean and restore the famed mosaic ceiling and marble altar of the chapel as the six-month project came to an end. The restoration project is one of the largest performed on the Saint Mary’s University-owned chapel since its creation in the early 1920s.

Saint Teresa was powered by coal, and over the years the coal began to darken the previously luminous glass and sculpture work. While there was very little actual damage to the building, the altar had seen better days.

Due to the scale of the project, planning started immediately. The first step was the survey, where conservators examined the building to see what the damage was and what would be needed to complete the restoration. After the survey, the main two focuses of the project were determined — the cleaning of the mosaic ceiling and the central marble altar. Originally, the plan was to do these steps in stages, with each taking a week, but eventually the plan shifted to fit both steps into the same timeframe.

“Gallery Owner Flooded with Offers for Rare Art he Found,” *New York Post*, 07/28/2018

The owner of a Chelsea gallery says he has been flooded with offers from around the world to purchase a trove of paintings he found abandoned in a storage locker.

The six abstract expressionist artworks by famed artist Willem de Kooning and a painting by modernist Paul Klee could fetch tens of millions of dollars at auction, said David Killen, the

owner of an eponymous Chelsea gallery.

After *The Post* broke the story of his remarkable discovery last week, Killen said he has received overwhelming interest from around the world, including a call from the renowned auction house Sotheby's, which he said had previously turned up their nose at his find. "Sotheby's had no interest when I first approached them, but after the article came out, they were suddenly interested," he said. "Well, it's too late."

Killen discovered the cache of abstract paintings last year after he paid \$15,000 for the contents of a storage locker in New Jersey that contained some 200 works of art. The paintings were once housed in the Manhattan studio of Orrin Riley, an art conservator who founded the conservation department at the Guggenheim Museum and later ran his own restoration business where he restored work by the Dutch-born de Kooning.

After Riley's death in 1986, his partner, Susanne Schnitzer, took over the business, but was killed by a garbage truck as she crossed a Midtown street in 2009. Some of the hundreds of paintings found in her studio were placed in a Ho-Ho-Kus, NJ storage unit by the executors of her estate.

"National Gallery Wins Grant to Help Save Art Conservation Skills," *The Guardian*, 08/01/2018

Essential conservation work on world famous paintings, including the equestrian portrait of Charles I in the National Gallery in London, in which Anthony Van Dyck transformed the diminutive monarch into a heroic emblem of power on a magnificent horse, will be used to train a new generation on how to prolong the life of historic canvases, through grants from the Getty Foundation in California.

The foundation is worried that the traditional skills of repairing or re-lining canvases, mending tears and preserving cracking or peeling paint, are being lost as a generation of conservators retires. The grants are intended to spread the understanding of how to conserve these works between institutions and countries.

"For years museum conservators have adopted a 'wait and monitor' approach to any major structural

intervention on canvas paintings," Antoine Wilmering, a conservation expert at the Getty, said. "But the danger is that once treatment can no longer be delayed, the experts with direct knowledge of lining and re-lining won't be there to offer help."

The National Gallery will receive more than £70,000, so that it can share the conservation process on the monumental Van Dyck. Since it came to Trafalgar Square in 1885 the huge painting has rarely been off display, but while the 17th century canvas is in relatively good condition, the more recent lining intended to protect it is failing and has to be replaced, and the paint surface has a web of cracks and splits.

Visiting conservators and a final international workshop will share in the work on the painting, which will include removing the old lining and applying a new one. The Getty intends to hold a major international symposium at Yale University in October 2019, the first since 1974.

"Restored Dioramas Take Center Stage in New Legacy Museum Exhibit," *Tuskegee University*, 08/02/2018

Tuskegee University's Legacy Museum is set to feature a new exhibit, "20 Dioramas: Brightly-Lit Windows, Magically Different," that specifically focuses on the display of cultural dioramas that were created in the 1940s by African-American artists.

The dioramas demonstrate the rich past of African-Americans, each depicting a scene of historical significance spanning from ancient Egypt through World War I. Tuskegee acquired the dioramas from the State of Illinois and the federal government to use as a vehicle to educate the public.

Originally, 33 dioramas were created for the 1940 Negro Exposition in Chicago; however, 13 were lost and Tuskegee was given the remaining 20. Because they needed serious restoration, the five-foot dioramas have been stored away from public view for decades.

By witnessing conservation work up close and in person, students can better understand the myriad aspects of restoration work. Studying the dioramas also introduces students to the practical aspects of art conservation, where they

learn how to remove decades of grime and dirt, and repair cracks in each diorama's surface.

"McAvoy on Preservation: Conservation Starts with a Story — Hollywood Craftsman had One in 1940," *Larchmont Chronicle*, 08/02/2018

In 1940, Joe Pellkofer had a story he wanted to tell. The owner of the Superior Cabinet Company and his 25 artists and craftsmen knew Hollywood thoroughly, and he thought that in addition to people who were able to see Hollywood for themselves as tourists and residents, others might wish to see a three-dimensional version of a landscape they had grown familiar with through the movies and travel brochures.

He began to create "Hollywood" in miniature, a scale model of its streets and buildings on a platform 11 feet by 12 feet. He surrounded the 45 main "blocks" (over 450 buildings) from Melrose to the hills and La Brea to Gower with a "cyclodrama mural" of the Hollywood Hills.

The effort took four years. Every elevation of the buildings was photographed for detail and scale. Municipal maps were used to obtain street directions and alignments. He spent almost \$50,000 on photos alone.

Completed in late 1945, the model made its official debut in Hollywood on Jan. 4, 1946, to glowing reviews. The exhibit traveled from 1946 to 1948. Pellkofer began to tour the country with his creation, exhibiting it at World Fairs and other venues.

Hollywood Heritage acquired "Hollywood" and another miniature, the "Paramount Studios Lot," recently. Donna Williams, president of Williams Art Conservation Inc. and a board member of Hollywood Heritage, is in the process of cleaning and conserving these treasures. The display is housed in Hollywood Heritage's "De Longpre Annex".

"A Jackson Pollock Painting Gets A Touch-Up — And The Public's Invited To Watch," *NPR*, 08/06/2018

From March 4 to September 3, conservator Chris Stavroudis is part of the exhibition Jackson Pollock's Number 1, 1949: A Conservation Treatment at

The Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles. Number 1, 1949, is a swirl of multi-colored, spaghettied paint, dripped, flung and slung across a 5-by-8-foot canvas. It's a textured work — including nails and a bee— and in the nearly 70 years since its creation, it's attracted a fair bit of dust, dirt and grime.

That's where conservator Chris Stavroudis comes in: His job is to clean the painting using swabs, solvents, and tiny brushes. For the last several months, he's been hard at work, once a week, in full view of the public, in a gallery at The Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles.

Pollock used all sorts of paints — oil paint, house paint, car paint, radiator paint — and they all aged and got dirty in different ways. Working with the Getty Conservation Institute, Stavroudis did tests to see what kind of cleaning was needed. Stavroudis suspects the bee was unintentional (it probably just flew into the wet canvas as Pollock painted), but the nails weren't. Pollock added them for texture.

Art conservation is as much detective work as aesthetic exercise — and a nail that fell out of the painting gave clues to Pollock's thinking. In the tiny indentation where a nail had been, Stavroudis saw a hairline of bright orange, under many dribbles of white. "Everyone always thinks of him as just slopping paint around," Stavroudis says, "but he looked at it, decided the orange was too bright, and took it down."

This is the first time any conservation work has been done on Number 1, 1949, and because it's a 20th century work, it's harder to conserve than, say, a Rembrandt. With new, 20th century materials, however, there's much less conservation scholarship; they're still in the process of learning what happens when the swab meets the paint.

“‘A Menace to Life and Limb’: The Artworks that Have Injured – And Killed,” *The Guardian*, 08/21/2018

Anish Kapoor's art installation *Descent Into Limbo* is a big, black hole, too deep for viewers to be able to see the bottom. Or is it merely a black circular painting?

You stand on the edge of the

dark nothingness, fascinated and perhaps a little tempted to reach out a foot and test it. You could call it a meditation on the sublime. Or an accident waiting to happen.

Descent Into Limbo was first seen in 1992, but the inevitable accident has finally come. A visitor to Kapoor's show at the Serralves Museum in Porto, Portugal, had to be taken to hospital after ending up inside what is in fact a 2.5-metre-deep hole.

When Doris Salcedo cut a crack through the floor of Tate Modern's Turbine Hall in London in 2007, visitors could not resist putting a foot or a leg inside. Quite a few injuries resulted from playful antics or people tripping up. When Carsten Höller installed giant spiral slides at the same museum in 2006, thousands took the plunge and a few got bruised.

Far more seriously, Christo and Jeanne-Claude closed their 1991 installation, the *Umbrellas*, when high winds caused one of its huge beach umbrellas to crush a 33-year-old California woman to death and injure several others. We want art to be dangerous, but not that dangerous. Or do we?

It has been recognised since the Romantic age that some of the most powerful imaginative experiences derive from terror, horror and awe. The 18th-century thinker Edmund Burke called this dark aesthetic "the sublime". He observed that real, even life-threatening, danger will always trump mere pictures of horror.

Today, artists teeter over that precipice. Installation art can put us at real risk. Luckily, the victim of Kapoor's black hole is said to be doing well in hospital. Most injuries caused by art are, mercifully, mild. Yet something in us is drawn to the void, the precipice, the crack in the floor. If art couldn't hurt us, it wouldn't move us.

“The Guggenheim Gets \$750,000 to Help Answer Knotty, Existential Questions About the Nature of Conceptual Art,” *ArtNet News*, 08/29/2108

The Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum has embarked on the third and final phase of a years-long collaboration

with the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation that the *New York Times* has described as "one of the most ambitious conservation projects ever to address the deep uncertainties raised by Minimalism and Conceptualism."

The endeavor marks the first time the field has sought to reach consensus on how to display and preserve artwork that might otherwise exist only as a diagram or an idea. Now, the Mellon Foundation is awarding the project a hefty grant of \$750,000.

The so-called Panza Collection Initiative has been quietly chugging along since 2010 and centers on the study of the most perplexing, fragile, and intellectually confounding works the museum purchased in the early '90s from controversial Italian collector Count Giuseppe Panza di Biumo. As part of the initiative's third phase, the museum will publish an archive of all its research and interviews online and convene a symposium next spring in partnership with the Los Angeles-based Getty Conservation Institute.

The Guggenheim also plans to publish a book of its research and conservation findings in 2020. The overall project "was devised as a direct collaboration between the field of conservation and the field of art history and with a curatorial perspective," said conservator Francesca Esmay. In addition to interviews with artists, the endeavor involved in-depth archival research, conversations with studio assistants and fabricators, and an ongoing exchange with an international advisory committee of conservators and historians.

Although the Panza Collection includes 350 works in all, the museum has narrowed its focus to the work of seven artists: Dan Flavin, Robert Irwin, Donald Judd, Robert Morris, Bruce Nauman, Lawrence Weiner, and Doug Wheeler.

“Third ‘Restoration’ of Catholic Artwork in Spain Sparks Outrage, Hilarity,” *Catholic News Agency*, 09/10/2018

In the third known act of egregious artistic restoration of Spanish Catholic art in recent history, a 15th century statue of Christ and Mary has been given a fresh - and loud - coat of

paint, simultaneously sparking hilarity and outrage online.

The wooden statue, from a chapel in the village of El Ranadoiro, about 35 miles west of Oviedo, depicts Christ on the lap of who appears to be his grandmother, St. Anne, with his mother the Blessed Virgin Mary standing to the side. The figures, once plain wood, now sport bright colors, with St. Anne in a hot pink veil and sky blue robes, Christ in lime green, and Mary in a light turquoise veil and deep red robes.

Each face dons lined eyes and bold red lips; St. Anne's fingernails are painted a muted pink. Amateur artist and local resident Maria Luisa Menendez said she offered her talents to the parish priest, who gave her permission to paint the statues.

The saintly snafu has some comparing Menendez' work to that of Cecilia Gimenez, who 'restored' the now-infamous Ecce Homo painting in Spain in 2012. Her fuzzy, monkey-like depiction of Christ spawned its own SNL skit and a comedic tributary opera, and continues to draw thousands of visitors a year from all over the world. Spanish art conservation group ACRE bemoaned the botching of yet another piece of historic Spanish art.

“Art Conservation Using Saliva Wins Chemistry Ig Nobel,” *Chemistry World*, 09/14/2018

This year's chemistry Ig Nobel prize has been awarded to three Portuguese conservation scientists who showed that human saliva is a good cleaning agent for paintings and historical artefacts.

Paula Romão, Adília Alarcão and César Viana's 1990 paper revealed how the trio collected saliva and measured how effective it was at removing dirt from 18th century gilded sculptures. They note that conservators have long been using their own saliva in preference to other solvents when working with delicate materials such as gold leaf and ceramics.

'I know that it seems quite improbable, but human saliva is indeed an effective cleaning agent for surfaces like paintings, sculptures and gilded wood. But don't try to use it on your kitchen counters,' Romão said in an

acceptance video that was played at the awards ceremony at Harvard University.

The cleaning action is in part due to an enzyme in saliva, α -amylase, which breaks down starch into simple sugars.

The Ig Nobel prizes are awarded annually to celebrate improbable scientific research across a variety of disciplines. Among this year's winners are Marc Mitchell and David Wartinger, who were awarded the medicine prize for using roller coaster rides to hasten the passage of kidney stones, and an international team who won the biology prize for demonstrating that wine experts can smell the presence of a single fly in a glass of wine.

“Specialists Conserve Capitol artwork,” *News Tribune*, 09/23/2018

Two women from Ohio are working hard to make sure Missourians can enjoy murals — and other artwork — in the Capitol for a long time to come.

Wendy Partridge and Andrea Chevalier work for the Cleveland, Ohio-based ICA Art Conservation Center, a nonprofit regional center. Both women are fellows in the American Institute for Conservation of Historic and Artistic Works, and both have been doing art conservation work for around 35 years.

They're in Jefferson City now, working on the “Power From the Hills” mural by Ralph Chelsea Ott that's in the northwest corner of the second-floor mezzanine area overlooking the Capitol Museum. Their work is part of a three-phase contract between Missouri's State Capitol Commission and the ICA, Commission Chair Dana Rademan Miller explained.

Miller said the restoration work is important, because: “We have this amazing collection of art” created by the first Decoration Commission bought with money left-over from construction of the Capitol. “It's literally an art gallery” as well as a museum housed in the Capitol.

Miller said it's clear the mural suffered water damage over the years, although the source of that water isn't known. Partridge said, “This painting has had problems from the get-go. “It may have been because of the materials the artist chose, because all of the other murals in the Capitol are in really, very

good condition.” “This one, we think, probably has had flaking problems from the beginning,” she said. “As we're cleaning up our adhesive residues, we're uncovering old areas of damage that were over-painted in the past.

“Marina Abramovic Attacked with Painting at Exhibition in Florence,”

The Art Newspaper, 09/24/2018

An amateur artist tried to attack Marina Abramovic after one of the opening events for her exhibition at Palazzo Strozzi in Florence yesterday (23 September), the museum has confirmed.

According to local press reports, a 51-year-old Czech man hit Abramovic over the head with a painting on paper he had made of her that was framed but without glass. Police reportedly said that the man had been involved in similar situations before, but released him because the artist did not want to press charges.

Abramovic told Italian media that she had smiled at the man, who approached her while she was leaving Palazzo Strozzi after a book signing event with fans, because she believed he was offering her the “very distorted” portrait as a gift. “In a split second I saw his expression change and become violent, as he came towards me very quickly and forcefully,” she said. “Danger always happens quickly, like death itself.” Despite the shock, she was not injured.

“New Research Finds that Caravaggio Died of Sepsis, Not Syphilis,”

Hyperallergic, 09/21/2018

Before establishing a certain cause of death for the Baroque painter, scientists first had to find his body. The truth was hidden in his teeth.

A serial gambler with a penchant for prostitutes, booze, and brawls, art historians have largely agreed for the last four centuries that Caravaggio died of syphilis in 1610.

However, new research conducted by a team of seven French and Italian scientists at the IHU Méditerranée Infection Institute of Marseille and published in one of the world's leading peer-reviewed medical journals, *The Lancet*, has concluded that the irascible

artist ultimately succumbed to an infected sword wound.

The killer, in this case, was staphylococcus. Researchers were able to detect the bacteria through microbes extracted from the remaining blood vessels within the Baroque artist's teeth.

“Turin’s Chapel of the Holy Shroud—Almost Entirely Destroyed by Fire—Reopens after €30m Restoration,” *The Art Newspaper*, 09/27/2018

The Chapel of the Holy Shroud in Turin reopens 21 years after it was almost entirely destroyed by fire and 28 years after it was closed because a chunk of marble had fallen from a cornice.

A masterpiece of Baroque architecture, designed by the mathematician priest Guarino Guarini, it was commissioned in 1668 by the Savoy ducal family to house its most prestigious possession—the linen cloth believed to have wrapped the body of the dead Christ.

The origin of the fire that raged throughout the night of 11 April 1997 remains a mystery. It burned especially fiercely because the chapel, which had just been restored, was still full of wooden scaffolding.

The long delay in restoring the chapel began with a lengthy judicial seizure of the site while fruitless attempts were made to find out whom to blame for the fire. In the absence of architectural drawings or other documents, this was followed by a detailed analysis of the daring structure of the building, which boasts a self-supporting dome with interlocking marble blocks. There was then a lengthy period of disagreement over how much of the original material to reuse.

The decision was finally made to replace 1,150 badly damaged elements and consolidate the remaining 4,000. The quarry at Frabosa in Piedmont, from which the black and grey marble was originally extracted, was reopened for this purpose. The restoration work has been a state-of-the-art project in which the damaged fragments have been incorporated and then patinated so that they blend in with the new marble.

As Luisa Papotti, the superintendent for archaeology, fine arts and landscape in the Piedmont region,

says: “This has not been a rebuilding, but a conservation project.”

“National Museum in Rio Starts Rebuilding Efforts with Temporary Exhibitions,” *The Art Newspaper*, 10/01/2018

Less than a month after a fire consumed the National Museum in Rio de Janeiro on 2 September, efforts are underway to revive the institution. The museum recently installed tents outside of the charred building to hold a temporary outdoor exhibition of pieces from its collection that were stored in other facilities in Brazil, totalling around 1.5 million objects.

It has also launched a crowdfunding campaign to raise 50m reais (\$12m) to restart a programme that lends objects from its collection to local schools, and is nearly halfway towards its goal.

The director of the museum Alexander Kellner has announced that organisers will consider installing a more permanent exhibition space outside the museum to host rotating public exhibitions.

As for the pieces still trapped in the debris of the destroyed institution, Kellner says the two major concerns are rain, which would further deteriorate salvageable objects, and looting. Unesco estimates that it will take at least a decade to restore the museum and its collection.

Although officials are still tallying the remaining pieces, the museum has confirmed that the Bendegó meteorite, the largest ever discovered in Brazil, and several other space rocks survived the fire—along with the fish who lived in the fountain of the central atrium.

Around 260 indigenous Brazilian artefacts housed in the museum also managed to escape damage, since they were lent to the Memorial of Indigenous Peoples museum in Brasilia for an exhibition that opened five days before the fire.

“Death Triumphs: Museo Del Prado Completes Challenging Two-Year-Long Bruegel Restoration,” *The Art Newspaper*, 10/02/2018

It has been one of the most challenging restorations undertaken by

the Museo del Prado in recent years. The Triumph of Death (1562-63) by Pieter Bruegel the Elder, returned to the Madrid museum's walls at the end of May. Following almost two years of conservation.

The Triumph of Death has regained its structural stability and original colours—transparent in the background and extraordinarily vivid in the foreground. “The work required a complete cleaning, which was particularly complex because of the thinness of the original layer of paint compared to the thickness of the retouches—a real crust,” says Maria Antonia López de Asiain, the conservator who restored the surface of the painting.

With the aid of copies created by the painter's two sons and the use of infrared reflectography, it was possible to eliminate the areas of repainting and reintegrate lost details. The removal of varnish applied during previous interventions has restored the original colours, recovering the characteristic bright tones of the blues and reds and the depth of the landscape.

The conservator José de la Fuente, meanwhile, restored the painting's support, which is made up of four horizontal oak panels. He levelled the cracks in the top panel and removed a cradle that had constrained the natural hygroscopic movements of the wood. A beech stretcher was designed to match the curvature of the panel and attached to the painting using a reversible system of nylon screws and stainless-steel springs..

“Conservation Work of Historic 1965 Mural Begins at CSULB,” *Long Beach Post*, 08/13/2018

Conservation work began today on the large 22-by-21 foot mural painted by Canadian artist Rita Letendre for the 1965 California International Sculpture Symposium at Cal State Long Beach.

Microscopic samples of the paint will be taken to the Getty Conservation Institute in Los Angeles to analyze in preparation to conserve the mural next summer. The University Art Museum, in partnership with The Getty Conservation Institute and RLA Conservation of Art & Architecture, will lead the project as the seventh artwork on campus to be restored through its conservation initiative started in 2014.