
Monitoring Radiation for Display of Objects – Do You Know the Whole Story Spectrum? continued

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"Annenberg Foundation was Anonymous Bidder for Native American Artifacts," Los Angeles Times, 12/11/2013

The Annenberg Foundation has revealed that it was an anonymous bidder that paid \$530,000 for 24 Native American artifacts that were being sold at a controversial auction in Paris earlier this week.

The Los Angeles-based charitable organization headed by Wallis Annenberg said that it will return the artifacts to the Hopi Nation and to the San Carlos Apache tribe. Monday's auction in Paris drew international attention after U.S. officials attempted to postpone the sale of the 24 items, which included masks, dolls and other items.

A court in France had dismissed an effort by an attorney who represented the tribes to withdraw the items from the sale that was organized by Eve, a French auction house for antiques and art.

Smithsonian Asian Museums get \$1m to Fund Chinese Conservation," The Art Newspaper, 09/11/2013

The Smithsonian's museums of Asian art in Washington, DC, have received a \$1m conditional grant from the Mellon Foundation to endow the position of an assistant Chinese painting conservator. The grant will also help the Arthur M. Sackler Gallery and the Freer Gallery of Art continue a paid internship programme aimed at training the next generation of Chinese painting conservators.

The programme seeks to combat what Freer-Sackler officials see as a crisis in the field: only four senior Chinese painting conservators currently work at American museums and all of them are close to retirement, a museum spokeswoman says. The museums' conservation studio has trained 19 interns since its inception in 2000, some of whom went on to permanent positions at institutions including the Nelson-Atkins Museum in Kansas City and the National Palace Museum in Taipei. In its first year, the programme received more than 220 applicants from 22 countries for eight positions. Interns receive a stipend of \$45,000 for the year-long course.

"Saving Digital Art from an Early Death at the ZKM Museum," BBC News Technology, 10/21/2013

The ZKM Centre for Art and Media in Karlsruhe Germany has the world's largest collection of digital art, with over 500 pieces in its collection. It's also the global centre for digital art conservation.

It is a Herculean effort to keep their artworks running in their original form on computers often decades old. ZKM's staff try to find as much obsolete digital kit as possible. They trawl waste dumps and the auction site eBay in their quest for authenticity. As part of these efforts, they rent a warehouse outside the city where they store over 1,600 cathode ray TV sets, which are now out of production.

In an unlikely alliance, curators at ZKM foster connections with local dump managers who set aside old computers and audio visual machines in exchange for cigarettes. But keeping all of this obsolete equipment in storage is just a short-term solution. Bernhard Serexhe is the principal curator at ZKM's media museum and leader of a European Union funded

project on digital art conservation. He says the faster technology develops, the shorter the potential lifespan of the art. He proposes a second strategy which is migrating the data of the work to a different platform, or even porting the programme to a different system.

Digitising video art from magnetic tapes is another important part of the museum's work. But there is no consensus on whether repairing digital art is the right thing to do. Some of the artists may have intended their works be shown as a performance, and to cease existing when the technology running it breaks down. The museum's efforts are controversial.

“Conservation Experts Discover Ancient Cave Art in Brazilian Forest,”
Past Horizons, 11/08/2013

While tracking white-lipped peccaries and gathering environmental data in forests that link Brazil's Pantanal and Cerrado biomes, a team of researchers from the Wildlife Conservation Society and a local partner NGO, Instituto Quinta do Sol, discovered ancient cave drawings made by hunter-gatherer societies thousands of years ago.

The drawings are the subject of a recently published study in the journal *Revista Clio Arqueológica*. The diversity of the renderings adds significantly to our knowledge of rock art from the Cerrado plateau. The discovery was made in 2009, when Dr. Alexine Keuroghlian, researcher with WCS's Brazil Program, and her team were conducting surveys of white-lipped peccaries, herd-forming pig-like animals that travel long distances and are environmental indicators of healthy forests.

While following signals from radio-collared peccaries, the team encountered a series of prominent sandstone formations with caves containing drawings of animals and geometric figures. Keuroghlian contacted a regional specialist in cave drawings who determined that the drawings were made between 4,000-10,000 years ago. The drawings depict an assemblage of animals including armadillos, deer, large cats, birds, and reptiles, as well as human-like figures and geometric symbols. Oddly, peccaries are absent from the illustrations.

“Chinese Temple's Garish Restoration Prompts Outrage,” The Guardian, 10/22/2013

With its bright colours and bold lines, the new fresco on display at a Qing dynasty (1644-1911) Chinese temple is certainly eye-catching. Unfortunately, it bears no resemblance to the delicate historical images it replaced – prompting anger and the sacking of officials who authorised the botched restoration.

Li Haifeng, a senior official with the Chaoyang government, told the state-run Global Times newspaper that the temple's abbot had applied for restoration permission, because the buildings needed maintenance work. But the area management office failed to request approval from the provincial government, and the work was done by an unqualified local company.

While the original frescos were badly faded and damaged, the new versions have horrified observers. Li Zhanyang, an archaeologist with Henan's Culture Relics Bureau, condemned the local government as "uneducated, unreasonable and ignorant of the law". It warned that similar incidents happened each year. "They just use the name 'restoration' for a new project," he said. But He also blamed the Chinese public's aesthetic standards. "Most Chinese people do not enjoy the beauty of ancient, real ruins. Instead, they like dazzling, new, high, big things ... "

“Labour of Love: Restoring the Sacred, 15th-century Art of Mustang's Monasteries,” The Independent, 11/03/2013

At an altitude above 3,800 metres in the Himalayas, just inside Nepal's border with Tibet, more than 30 locally trained inhabitants are busy restoring Buddhist murals inside monasteries which date back to the 15th century. The restoration project is being carried out in the walled city of Lo Manthang, which used to serve as the capital of the once -forbidden kingdom of Mustang.

Over the years, the team of local Buddhists trained by Western art conservationists have replaced the old, leaky roofs of the temples with a traditional assembly of round timbers, river stones, and local clay for waterproofing, and have just begun

to restore the wall paintings, statues, sculpted pillars and the ceiling's painted wooden decorations.

The sacred art of 15th-century Mustang is believed to be among the most expensive in the Himalayas due to the use of pigments made from grinding stones like lapis lazuli, malachite and azurite. Restorers have made these sites among the best-surviving examples of classical Tibetan monastic architecture of the Sakya-pa (one of four major schools of Tibetan Buddhism).

“End of the Dark Age is in Sight,” The Art Newspaper, 11/14/2013

The directors of Iraq's two main museums are hopeful that the day is in sight when their institutions will be open.

The National Museum in Baghdad hopes to reopen to visitors next year. The Basra Museum expects to open in the spring of 2015. However, the other major museum in Iraq, in Mosul, remains closed. Much of its collection was looted in 2003 and reopening could well be years away. Iraq's museums shut during the 1991 Gulf War and then remained closed.

The Baghdad museum eventually reopened briefly in 2000, but closed again in late 2002, a few months before the US-led invasion to overthrow Saddam Hussein. The old Basra Museum has been shut throughout the entire period. In Basra, a new museum is being created in a former lakeside palace of Saddam Hussein.

In 1991, the old Basra Museum was looted, although 700 antiquities from the region were saved. These were sent to Baghdad for safekeeping and will soon be returning to the new museum. The Iraqi government also has long-term plans to create a Grand National Museum on the western outskirts of Baghdad, on the former Muthanna military airbase, which was largely destroyed by American bombing in 2003. If this proceeds, the existing Baghdad museum would be used to display Islamic art and ethnography.

“Dior to Fund Versailles Makeover,” The Art Newspaper, 11/14/2013

The fashion house Dior is to sponsor the restoration of the Queen's House in Versailles. The house was Marie Antoinette's rustic hideaway,

where Louis XVI's queen played out a fantasy life as a simple milkmaid until the revolution of 1789 imposed a sterner reality. The house was abandoned after the revolution.

The hamlet, built between 1783 and 1787, was partly inspired by the landscapes of the painter Hubert Robert. It was designed by the architect Richard Mique, who was guillotined for a failed attempt to save the queen's life.

The mock farming village was constructed without foundations in half-timbered plaster and brick. The work will involve lowering the gardens and grounds to prevent rising damp, followed by the restoration and consolidation of stonework, timber and roofs. Interior flooring, panelling and paintwork will be reproduced on the basis of either 18th-century records or an early 19th-century redecoration by the empress Marie-Louise, Napoleon's second wife. The work is due to be completed in 2015.

“French Fall-out over Restoration,”
The Art Newspaper, 11/28/2013

The unauthorised restoration in 2011 of a 16th-century masterpiece, housed until recently in Colmar's Musée Unterlinden, has divided experts and highlighted some glaring gaps in France's management of its art treasures.

The debate revolves around Mathias Grünewald's Isenheim Altarpiece. Created in the 1520s for the Antonite monastery, the altarpiece is formed of seven painted wooden wings, folded around a gilded reliquary. A public spat erupted in 2011 when the museum, without seeking authorisation from the government, decided to restore the altarpiece—an intervention that some scientists did not deem necessary.

Within six days, restorers had wiped off most of the varnish on The Torment of Saint Anthony and then revarnished it. They repeated the process on half of Saint Anthony Visiting Saint Paul the Hermit, as a “test”. No specific scientific examination or evaluation was conducted before or during the 2011 intervention.

The C2RMF (Centre de Recherche et de Restauration des Musées de France) was called in after a public outcry prompted Frédéric Mitterrand, then the culture minister, to intervene. Preliminary observations by the C2RMF

showed that the yellow varnish on the first panel, dating from 1946, was reduced to eight microns. On the second panel, it was stripped down to 4.3 microns.

The dispute has divided experts, creating a rift between those who think restoration should be based on scientific studies and the old school, who have faith in experience and resent the criticism of their colleagues by the media. The French authorities have never managed to provide a technical framework or protocol for restoration in museums, but with tensions running high on all fronts, the Isenheim project is unlikely to bring this any closer.

“Work Underway to Restore Rare Synagogue Mural,” WCAX.com, 12/06/2013

In Burlington's Old North End there are still hints of what used to be -- a bustling Little Jerusalem. But one symbol of the area's past is not so obvious. Jeff Potash and Aaron Goldberg are working to restore the Lost Shul Mural, a rare piece of synagogue folk artwork painted on the wall of what used to be the Chai Adam synagogue in 1910.

Art historians say that symbols such as the Lion of Judah, the Ten Commandments and the Crown of Torah are unique to only this type of synagogue folk art. The work was a labor of love in many ways. The artist, Ben Zion Black, was known for his murals throughout Europe in the early 20th century and was brought from Lithuania to Burlington to create a special work for the synagogue.

But he had another reason to come to Vermont. A girl he had courted in Lithuania was whisked away to Burlington by her parents because they disapproved of her dating the artist. Black came to Burlington to find her. He eventually married Rachel Black and they settled in the area. Years later the synagogue was converted to an apartment building and the work deteriorated to its current state. When it is fully restored, the project will sit in the lobby of the Ohavi Zedek Synagogue.

“200-hour Rehab Saves SAM's Prized Pollock,” Seattle Times, 12/07/2013

One of the real treasures of Seattle Art Museum's collection is about to go back on display. Jackson Pollock's

1947 painting “Sea Change” has been out of sight in the museum's conservation studio for more than a year. SAM chief conservator Nicholas Dorman has been undertaking some major work on the piece: He's done a microscopic study of its several layers of paint and, most important, removed a layer of synthetic resin varnish that was applied by a freelance New York conservator in the late 1970s.

That layer not only significantly dulled the painting's appearance but threatened to destroy it. Dorman admits that removing the 1970s-era varnish achieves no more than a “subtle transformation,” but it makes it immediately obvious that the picture was made in two separate phases.

First, Pollock brushed paint onto a vertical canvas. Then he decided to lay the picture flat on the floor and drip much thicker layers of aluminum and black house paint on it. He also sprinkled pebbles into the wet paint. The new microscopic studies show the different paint layers, but more importantly, now that the shiny varnish has been removed, the contrast between the matte brushed surface and the glossy, dripped paint is immediately obvious.

What Dorman also points out is how carefully Pollock applied the dripped paint. This was not the wildly splattered “action painting” that many people imagine. At some stage in the process, Pollock painted linear guidelines in dark-brown paint and then went to great trouble to obscure most of them with fine trickles of black and aluminum.

“Vasari's Last Supper Reassembled 47 years after Florence Flood,” The Guardian, 12/26/2013

The last casualty of the devastating Florence flood of 1966 has been reassembled, raising hopes of a full restoration before the 50th anniversary of one of the greatest cultural disasters of modern times.

Giorgio Vasari's The Last Supper, painted on five wooden panels and measuring about 2.5 metres by 6.5 metres (8ft by 21ft), was one of the most seriously damaged works to survive the flood. The Last Supper was completely immersed in water for about 12 hours and the lower portion of the painting

was under water for even longer. To help them dry, the waterlogged panels were separated.

The work remained in pieces for decades, but this week the Getty Foundation, which sponsored the reassembly of the painting, announced that for the first time in 47 years, the five wooden panels were rejoined. The operation, which began more than three years ago, was carried out at the Opificio delle Pietre Dure (OPD) in Florence and coordinated by its deputy director of painting conservation, Cecilia Frosinini.

Frosinini said the water shrank the panels and dissolved the glue that had been used to provide a surface for the painting. When the painted area and the panels were measured separately, it was found the wood had contracted by 3cm. The conundrum was eventually resolved by taking advantage of the splits in the panels that had opened up as a result of the soaking that they received. "Tiny slivers of wood were inserted in the gaps in the panels to give them back their original dimensions," said Frosinini.

“Banksy Paintings Vandalised in Sundance Film Festival Town,” The Independent, 01/03/2014

Two murals by the elusive graffiti artist Banksy were vandalised on New Year's Eve in the US town that hosts the Sundance Film Festival, with one now possibly beyond restoration.

An artwork of a young boy with angel wings and a pink halo praying in front of a can of pink paint was found defaced in Park City. The transparent protective shield was smashed and brown paint had been sprayed over the mural. The second painting of a cameraman shooting a video of a flower had its clear covering broken but was otherwise left undamaged.

The motive for the crime remains unclear, but police are looking for a white male wearing a baseball cap who was captured vandalising the artwork on CCTV at around 2am on Tuesday, Al Jazeera reports.

Banksy is thought to have painted the unauthorised murals three years ago while debuting his documentary *Exit Through the Gift Shop* at Sundance. People were angered by the graffiti at first but now consider them a source of local pride, according to the Historic Park City

Alliance who features the work on their website.

“Saving Relics, Afghans Defy the Taliban,” New York Times, 01/12/2014

Every piece of antiquity that is restored to the halls of the bombed, pillaged and now rebuilt National Museum of Afghanistan sends a message of defiance and resilience to the Taliban, who in 2001 smashed every museum artifact that they could find that bore a human or animal likeness.

But these are messages for others as well: to the warlords who looted the museum and to corrupt custodians of the past who stood by while some 70,000 objects walked out the door. Just a few years ago, the National Museum here was defined by how much it had lost — some 70 percent of its collection destroyed or stolen. Three hundred of the most important of the 2,500 objects the Taliban had smashed have been painstakingly reassembled in recent years, and many of the others are arrayed in boxes and trays, awaiting their turn for restoration.

The looted objects have also been returning. In recent years, Interpol and Unesco have teamed up with governments around the world to interdict and return at least 857 objects. Another 11,000 objects have been returned after being seized by the border authorities at Afghanistan's own frontiers.

A recent security upgrade at the museum financed by the United States government was just completed. And a team of archaeologists from the University of Chicago's Oriental Institute are halfway through a three-year-long grant from the American government to register every object in the museum's collections, creating a digital record.

Intended to guard against future theft, the project will also help with restorations, and serve as a resource for scholars worldwide.

“Goal Met for Lincolns’ ‘Courting Couch’ Restoration,” The State Journal-Register, 01/14/2014

With still a few days to go, the Springfield Art Association has met its goal in an online pledge campaign to raise \$4,500 for the restoration of Abraham and Mary Lincoln's "courting couch."

The art association is trying to save the roughly 180-year-old couch where Mary Todd received her suitors, including Abraham Lincoln, and where guests sat at their wedding in 1842.

The organization started a Kickstarter.com campaign Nov. 21 to raise funds to restore the couch. It has shown the effects of time and wear with torn seat upholstery, loose casters and some veneer loss. The couch currently is being restored at The Conservation Center in Chicago. Conservators have discovered that the original horsehair upholstery was hidden under replacement fabric on the seat back and arms of the couch.

“Metropolitan Museum of Art's Costume Institute Renamed After Anna Wintour,” Fashion Times, 01/15/2014

When it reopens in May, the Metropolitan Museum of Art's Costume Institute will have an updated costume conservation laboratory, a new 4,200-square-foot gallery and a different name. Named after one of the most high-powered fashion industry figures in the world, the space will be called the Anna Wintour Costume Center.

Wintour, who has been a Met trustee since 1999, has raised about \$125 million for the Costume Institute alone, in addition to raising money to help with the two-year, almost \$40-million renovation of the space. The space will reopen on May 8 with the debut of "Charles James: Beyond Fashion."

“Facebook Vote Saves Madonna and Child: Cash-strapped Italy Takes to Social Media to Decide which Artistic Treasures Most Need Restoration,” Daily Mail, 01/22/2014

As home to half the world's artistic treasures, it is hardly surprising that cash-strapped Italy struggles to pay for their upkeep. But officials, faced with unbearable choices on which masterpieces to save, have come up with a very novel solution — opening a Facebook vote to the public.

The government selected eight pieces of art in urgent need of restoration from across Italy and posted them on the social networking website. The artworks ranged from an ancient Roman marble

horse in the Uffizi Gallery, to a painting of Mary Magdalene at the feet of Christ by Renaissance artist Fiorentino, in the Accademia museum in Venice.

The public were asked to click on the work that most deserved to be repaired. The winner was a Madonna and Child by Pietro Perugino, which is now undergoing restoration. The other pieces will also be fixed as budgets permit, officials said.

Italy is increasingly reliant on private companies to pay for renovations. Accessories brand Fendi has donated £2million to repair Rome's Trevi fountain, while Diesel is paying for Venice's Rialto bridge. Italy spends billions less on its cultural gems than either France or Germany. Of European Union countries, only Greece invests less.

The country's globally renowned archeological sites, such as Pompeii, suffer regular collapses for lack of repair. Over the last year private companies have attempted to fill the gap, with luxury footwear label Tod's footing the bill for the five-year restoration of the Colosseum.

“Russia Sentences Secret Agents over Theft of Gutenberg Bible,” BBC News, 06/06/2014

Russia has sentenced three agents belonging to its Federal Security Service (FSB) for trying to sell a rare 15th-Century Bible, officials say. Colonel Sergei Vedishchev was given more than three years in a penal colony for stealing the two-volume Gutenberg edition from Moscow State University.

He had offered it to a collector for under \$1.15m (£700,000; 1.07m euros), a fraction of its estimated value. His two accomplices received lighter sentences for trying to find a buyer.

The three men were caught in a sting operation by their own agency. The book, which was produced by German printer Johannes Gutenberg in the 1450s, was stolen from the Moscow university's safe in 2009. The book is to undergo repair work after a page was cut out for the buyer to check its authenticity.

“Car Bomb Explodes Outside Cairo Museums,” The Art Newspaper,

01/24/2014

Ancient artefacts and manuscripts were destroyed today when a car bomb exploded in Cairo near the Museum of Islamic Art and the Egyptian National Library and Archives. Egypt's antiquities minister Mohamed Ibrahim described the event as “a huge loss” for the people of Egypt and the world, reports Ahram Online.

The scale of damage to the Museum of Islamic Art's collection is unclear as efforts to catalogue the damage are being hampered by concerns over the structure's stability; hanging ceilings within the 19th-century structure collapsed in the explosion and its decorative façade sustained serious damage.

Egypt's Heritage Task Force has posted images of the damage on its Facebook page. The photographs show considerable damage to the national library, caused in part by burst water pipes. According to the group, eight manuscripts have been destroyed and several others are damaged. The staff is working to transfer the collection to a secure location.

The target of the attack was the main Egyptian police headquarters which received the brunt of the blast. The explosion, which killed at least four people and injured more than 70, comes on the eve of the third anniversary of the Egyptian Revolution.

“Syria's Heritage in Ruins: Before-And-After Pictures,” The Guardian, 01/26/2014

The war in Syria has claimed more than 130,000 lives and it is also laying waste to its historic buildings and Unesco-listed sites. Across Syria, where a seemingly unstoppable war is about to enter a third year, a heritage built over 5,000 years or more is being steadily buried under rubble.

Syria has six Unesco sites, representing at least 2,000 years of history. All have been damaged.

In Aleppo, one of the oldest covered marketplaces in the world is now in ruins; its maze of stone streets has been one of the most intense battlefields in the country for the past 18 months, bombed from above by air force jets and chipped away at ground level by close quarter

battles that show no sentiment towards heritage.

Those who dare raise their heads above the ruins, towards the ancient citadel that stands at the centre of the city, can also see damage to several of its walls. Homs itself has fared even worse.

Archaeological sites in Syria are often on the front lines of conflict and are experiencing heavy damage. Economic hardship and decreased security mean even sites away from the fighting are looted. With little or no access to the country, satellite imagery is being used to track the destruction.

The Global Heritage Fund's director of Global Projects, Dan Thompson said: "All of the country's world heritage sites have sustained damage. As far as we know, no concrete action is being taken to combat the damage in the present moment."

“Rome Museum Opens Windows on Grand Masters During Spring Heatwave,” The Guardian, 05/11/2014

Concerns have been raised about the preservation of one of the world's finest art collections after it emerged that a cash-strapped museum in Rome had resorted to opening its windows to reduce humidity.

Home to masterpieces by Caravaggio, Titian, Raphael and Rubens, Rome's Borghese Gallery has been without air conditioning in one section for two months due to a funding slowdown, just as Rome sweats through a hot spring.

Opening windows might bring in cool air now, but with summer approaching, the race is on to get the air conditioning working again. In the meantime, the paintings risk exposure to humidity and pollution from Rome's heavy traffic.

The Borghese's problems follow a series of collapses at the Roman city of Pompeii as Italy's flatlining economy cuts down on cash to maintain the country's huge archaeological and artistic patrimony. On Saturday, the Italian government announced €5m (£4m) in emergency funding for the 1,200-room, 18th-century Bourbon palace at Caserta, near Naples, after a large piece of tiled roof collapsed – the latest in a series of mishaps at the Unesco site.