



WASHINGTON CONSERVATION GUILD NEWSLETTER

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From the Desk of the President

Greetings from Charlottesville!

The 2010-2011 Guild year is off to a wonderful start. We had lovely weather for an outdoor reception at the October meeting at MCI and a great turn-out for the November meeting at AA/NPG. I hope to see everyone at our annual Holiday Party on **Wednesday, December 1** at the National Trust for Historic Preservation. In addition to our usual holiday cheer, **Brian Baade** will present his talk “Reconstructing the Masters: Historically Accurate Reconstructions of Paintings from Museum Collections.”

Saturday, November 6 was our most recent **Angels Day** at the **National Park Seminary** in Forest Glen, MD. We had a full day of processing and rehousing the archive of this former girls’ school that is now a residential community and historic site. The NPS volunteers had done a great job of preparing the site with several workstations for books, papers, dresses, and objects ready for the WCG Angels to jump right in. We worked in the Seminary’s ballroom which was a gorgeous multi-storied space with stained glass windows, and each workstation was in a balcony around the dance floor. It was a full day; we accomplished everything on our “to do” list, and fortunately we did have enough time for a tour of this amazing site that truly is a hidden jewel. Look for more details and photos elsewhere in the newsletter.

In addition to our usual participation at the **Festival of the Building Arts** (my first time volunteering at this event; so many Girl and Boy Scouts out to get their badges!) the Guild had the opportunity to participate in a Family Day event at the National Air and Space Museum as part of the opening festivities of the Pioneers of Flight exhibit. We were thrilled to be at such a high-profile venue and grateful to all the Guild members who volunteered at this event.

Outreach is a big component of what the Guild does. Our monthly meetings provide a time for us to gather as colleagues and share news and technical information; however our booth, the CRfAA, our website, and Angels Day provide a remarkable array of opportunities to engage the public in our profession.

Outreach has been on my mind quite a bit since I started working at the University of Virginia Library. I am the first conservator to work at the Library and one of two conservators (an Architecture conservator was hired five years ago) on campus. My library colleagues are eager to work with me and learn what conservation can do for the collections here. Most of my outreach here is one-on-one discussions about treatment options for a given book or poster. The larger discussions happen during staff meetings where we're reevaluating workflow or storage practices, but I am also delving into book cradles for the reading room and display standards for our exhibits. It's funny how conservation can touch on almost every aspect of the life of an artifact.

How often do you work outside your lab? And for those in private practice, how much time are you able

to devote to educating your clients? Now that people know my name I could probably spend a whole work week walking around the campus answering questions. The other week did indeed find me in the basement of Pavilion IX looking at historic wallpaper in the back of a cupboard. Of course I have to pace myself because I know best what I can do for the Library collections, and sufficient lab time is just as crucial.

It seems there is no shortage of need for our expertise as conservators whatever our working context. It can be a challenge to connect with those outside our field whether they are co-workers or members of the public whom we encounter at a volunteer event. So to all of our members who have volunteered at our various outreach events, I say thank you for your efforts to represent our profession! And to those of you who have ideas or know of opportunities for outreach, please let us know.

Best,
Eliza Gilligan
President, WCG
wcg@washingtonconservationguild.org



Do you have photographs for the WCG archives?

The WCG archives, held in the Smithsonian Institution Archives, does not have many photographs, so we are appealing to members to provide photographs of people and events from all periods of WCG's history. The archives can accept color and black-and-white prints or digital images. Every photo must have a caption, and ideally every person in the photo will be identified. If you have photographs to submit, please send an email (not the photos!) to: wcg@washingtonconservationguild.org.

RECENT MEETINGS AND EVENTS

Pioneers of Flight Family Day National Air and Space Museum

The WCG Outreach Booth was a highlight at the NASM Pioneers of Flight Family Day. WCG conservators handed out information to the public on conservation as well as assisted young children in making light fading strips. Over 300 people visited the booth and took home light strips. The booth was transformed for the day, and photographs of objects conserved by NASM staff in the new gallery were used for display. Lisa Young, NASM Conservator and WCG Board Member, gave gallery tours highlighting all the objects conserved for the opening of the renovated gallery including objects never seen by the public before. Thanks to everyone who came out and made this event so successful.



October Meeting

“RTI @ MCI: Escaping Flatland Using Computational Imaging”

Presenters: Mel Wachowiak, Senior Conservator and Keats Webb, Imaging Specialist

A Summary of the October 7 Lecture

At WCG’s October meeting, Melvin Wachowiak and Keats Webb led an informative lecture on the uses and advantages of Reflectance Transformation Imaging (RTI). RTI is a new form of digital imaging that can successfully photograph objects that are difficult to image using other imaging techniques, including single photographs and 3-D scanning, such as translucent, dark, or glossy objects both large and small. Wachowiak and Webb presented their explanation of the process in three basic steps: the set up, data processing, and visualization. Together these three steps resulted in the successful documentation of several objects of various materials.

The lecturers described RTI as being “2½-D,” a technique of photography that can capture an object that exists in our multi-dimensional world. In the set up, multiple images are taken of the same object from a fixed vantage point but with the light source position varying. The lights are set up to have a constant radius surrounding the object creating a virtual hemisphere of light. The multiple pictures are combined to create a single picture file. It may look like an ordinary 2-D photo when uploaded onto a computer screen, but it actually documents the object in every different light position down to the individual pixel. The viewer can then work with the image on a computer screen and use a mouse to choose which light direction they would like to use to view the photographed object. This way the viewer is able to visualize the different lighting options which offer shifting surface enhancements. RTI allows users to capture an object from every imaginable position, providing a raking light from 360 degrees. This permits comprehensive understanding of an object’s surface.

Wachowiak and Webb gave five examples of different types of objects that have benefited from RTI documentation in their studio. Henry Ossawa Tanner’s *Flight Into Egypt*, part of the Smithsonian American Art Museum’s permanent collection, presented an excellent example of RTI’s capability of documenting a painting. The RTI captured the incredibly textured surface of the paint which helped the conservators understand Tanner’s evolution as an artist.

The Walters Museum’s *The Ideal City* by Fra Carnevale is a huge oil painted panel, 31 5/8 x 86 5/8 inches, that was used as an example to demonstrate RTI’s ability to photograph an object of a large size. RTI made it possible to see the fine detail in the panel’s wood; scribe lines, scratches and knots would have been difficult to see with the naked eye.

A large cabinet made of ivory and ebony from the Cooper-Hewitt National Design Museum was used to demonstrate that RTI can serve as a successful alternative for 3-D scanning. A 3-D scan of an object as reflective as the cabinet would have scattered the light and been incapable of producing a clear image, yet the RTI capture showed no surface reflection. Similarly, a highly reflective daguerreotype measuring 2½ x 2 inches had some of the same photography difficulties as the cabinet, but RTI proved to be a successful way to capture the small and reflective surface without any scattering of light.

A leather Lenape Bandolier bag from the Museum of the American Indian had a faded ink inscription that was illegible. The use of RTI on the bag was not successful, but by looking at the four dozen high-resolution source

images, more of the inscription was deciphered, making the surface appear legible enough to make out all but two words of the previously illegible text.

Wachowiak and Webb made a clear case for RTI's advantages as a successful technique for documenting objects of varying materials and size. RTI is a high resolution, high precision, accessible imaging technique one-tenth of the cost of a 3-D scanner. RTI does not work with all objects but can be an excellent tool for research and conservation for some objects and materials. There is no one single technique that will image all objects, but understanding the techniques available and their applications will only aid the documentation of cultural heritage objects.

Diana Van Wagner
Pre-Program Intern
The Phillips Collection and the Smithsonian American Art Museum

November Meeting

“Rescue, Recover, and Restore: Smithsonian’s Haiti Cultural Recovery Project,” was a panel discussion with Richard Kurin, Smithsonian Under Secretary for History, Art, and Culture; Olsen Jean Julien, Project Manager and Haiti’s former Culture Minister; Corine Wagener, President of the U.S. Committee of the Blue Shield; Stephanie Hornbeck, Chief Conservator and Principal, Caryatid Conservation Services, Inc.; Hugh Shockey, Conservator, American Art and National Portrait Gallery’s Lunder Conservation Center; and Michael Bellamy, Smithsonian Director, Office of Engineering, Design, and Construction; with participation from Rachel Goslins, Executive Director, President’s Committee for the Arts and the Humanities; Dr. Diana N’Diaye, Curator and Cultural Heritage Specialist; Steven Mellor, Acting Associate Director for Collections and Facilities, National Museum of African Art (NMAfA); Gail Joice, Museum Collections Manager, National Museum of the American Indian (NMAI); and Eryl Wentworth, Executive Director, American Institute for Conservation of Historic and Artistic Works (AIC).

The November meeting focused on a discussion among key figures in the effort to help Haitians recover their cultural property following the 7.0 magnitude earthquake that occurred January 12, 2010. With the epicenter located near Port-au-Prince, damage from the 35-second earthquake is inestimable. The Haitian government reported an estimated death toll of nearly 230,000 people, and the loss of 250,000 residential structures left over one million Haitians homeless.

Richard Kurin spearheaded the effort among a network of public officials, Smithsonian employees, and volunteers to aid Haiti. Even as the Haitians struggle to find housing, basic medical care, and as the government infrastructure rebuilds, Olsen Jean Julien commends the work of the Project participants. He stated, “[Haiti is about] culture, books, democratic liberty...If there is no culture, there is no future for Haiti.”

Kurin added that the AIC’s Disaster Response and Recovery Teams have been the primary “doers” in the Recovery Project. Eryl Wentworth stated the cultural recovery has been aided by nearly 200 AIC members (and many within the WCG). Since 2005, partly in response to hurricanes Katrina and Rita, sixty “rapid responders” have been specially trained and organized by the AIC to form the Collections Emergency Response Team (AIC-CERT) in preparation for on-site recovery of material culture. At the beginning of the Haiti Recovery Project, many conservators had to take materials in their luggage, as no central shipping point for materials could be obtained. The author would like to acknowledge donations of conservation supplies by the New York-based company Talas.

Since damaged structures with salvageable building materials are being pulled apart for raw materials, the Institut de Sauvegarde du Patrimoine National (ISPAN) has marked historic sites to deter material “harvesting.” Buildings that have lost nearly all structural integrity but have murals that are susceptible to damage from the elements have received some consolidation, framing, and protection from wind and rain. The Holy Trinity Cathedral suffered almost total collapse; only three murals (approximately 15% of the original number) survived. These surviving murals will be removed from the exposed walls and stored until they can be reinstalled in a new setting.

The publicly-owned collections will be treated by ISPAN, MUPANAH (National Museum of Haiti), and the Bureau of Ethnology. Until that time, the Recovery Project has assisted in getting the objects into safe storage areas until they can be treated and have focused on treating works of art by the privately-owned Musee/Galerie d’Art Nader, Sugar Cane museum, and the Centre d’Art. To demonstrate the level of treatment that could be obtained, selected books and journals from the National Library’s collection of rare 19th-Century Haitian books were conserved; the National Library completed a contract to treat 3000 additional books from the collection. It is also a priority for the Recovery Project to train capable Haitians to help with conservation and stabilization of their artwork for future recovery and long-term preservation, and this training is being completed with the assistance of the International Centre for the Study of the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property (ICCROM). Already, fourteen individuals from various public institutions in Haiti have been trained to address their collections’ condition.

The lack of a Ministry of Culture in the United States results in difficulties when volunteers attempt to aid in cultural recovery on an international scale. The Haitian Cultural Recovery Project is organized by the Smithsonian Institution, the Haitian Ministry of Culture and Communications, and the Presidential Reconstruction Commission along with a variety of intergovernmental organizations and non-governmental organizations. To finance the Recovery Project, the Foundation of the AIC (FAIC) secured funds from the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS), the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH), and the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA). Donations were even secured from the Broadway League through the President’s Committee on the Arts and Humanities; the donors felt the Recovery Project was an area where their funds could truly make a difference.

Julien defined goals for the Recovery Project: a national register to form an inventory of the surviving Haitian works; organization of the newly-trained Haitians; introduction of conservation training, conservation documentation guidelines, and disaster preparedness to the universities (they previously focused on preservation). To prioritize special projects and conservation within the public institutions, the leaders of the Recovery Project will meet with the heads of each institution to prioritize their needs, accept or confirm special project proposals, and identify at least two employees to participate in a three-week training session on collection management and disaster preparedness. In the near future, Julien also hopes for conservation labs to serve as headquarters for the project, long-term funding, and sustainability.

The meeting was scheduled to coincide with the Smithsonian American Art Museum’s Public Lecture and was attended by nearly 120 members of the public and WCG. The discussion was taped live and can be viewed from the SAAM website at <http://americanart.si.edu/conservation/video/haitirecovery/index.cfm>. More information on the Haiti Cultural Recovery Project can be found on their website at www.haiti.si.edu.

Gwen Manthey
Paintings Conservation Intern
Walters Art Museum

2010 Washington Conservation Guild Angels Day

The Washington Conservation Guild Angels took over the National Park Seminary in November to rehouse, document, and archive paper records belonging to the group Save Our Seminary (SOS)! This non-profit organization is a dedicated group of volunteers who bring public awareness to the National Park Seminary through tours, research, public lectures, and more. A group of nineteen volunteers, from SOS and WCG, spent all day Saturday, November 6, 2010, rehousing, sorting, cleaning, and documenting over twenty cabinets worth of historical archives and 3-D objects belonging to SOS!

In a 19th century ballroom, tucked away in each balcony, groups of volunteers worked throughout the day to go through the archives of the girls who once attended the School. Many of the archives had been seen before, but some were being opened for the first time. Volunteers worked in groups of 2 and 3 to go through and examine boxes of papers, scrapbooks, framed documents, 3-D objects, books, and more. Thanks to a generous grant through FAIC, Foundation for the American Institute for Conservation, archival supplies were purchased for this task.

Groups of papers, letters, leaflets, and other paper collections belonging to the girls who attended the school



as well as documents which record the history of the alumni were rehoused into acid-free folders and placed in acid-free record storage boxes. This work will allow the SOS volunteers, who trained and worked with the WCG conservators, to further sort, catalogue, and produce finding aids for the collections in the future. Many of the documents were thrown into acidic cardboard boxes and were over-crowded, so our rehousing project ultimately allowed the documents to be separated and sorted into more boxes for ease of handling. Eliza Gilligan, WCG President and Paper conservator at the University of Virginia, commented that for an archive of school papers it was very interesting that many of the items did not relate to academics at the school but rather the social activities of the girls.



Among the paper archives were a number of 3-D objects in need of repackaging. WCG volunteers worked on two textile dresses which the girls attending the Seminary would have worn at their many social engagements. Other objects cleaned and packaged were porcelain tea sets, silverware, jewelry, drinking cups, and more. A doll, which appeared hand-made and was wearing the uniform which would have been worn by the girls at the school, was also found in the collection. Custom acid-free boxes were constructed by volunteers for many of these objects, and they were packed away until more research could be completed on their historical importance.

Some of the most interesting objects examined were the scrapbooks that the girls kept while they attended school at the Seminary. One in particular contained photographs, letters, and everything else you could imagine including a plate and candles from a birthday celebration. The scrapbooks were interleaved with acid-free tissue and packed away for further work at a later time.

The day ended with a guided historical tour of the property, buildings, gardens, and sculptures which encompass the Seminary property at this time. Many of the older structures, formerly sorority houses, are for sale as single-family homes. The main school buildings were renovated and have been sold as condominiums. The project could not have been so successful without the help of the SOS volunteers and members, especially Chris Maines and Bonnie Rosenthal, Site Coordinators. Thanks to all the WCG and SOS volunteers who helped to volunteer for this project.

Lisa Young
WCG Angels Chair

Upcoming WCG Meetings 2011

Monthly meetings for the 2010/2011 season begin in October 2010 and run through May 2011. The meetings are usually held on the first Thursday of each month. Most meetings begin at 5 p.m. with a reception, followed by the guest speaker's presentation. Please check individual meeting announcements for exact times and locations.

January 6

WCG's Three-Ring Circus will be held at the S. Dillon Ripley Center.

February 3

Speaker and venue TBA.

March 3

Intern Talks. Venue TBA.

April 7

Speaker and venue TBA.

May 5

Annual Business Meeting. Venue TBA.



ANNOUNCEMENTS

Call for papers – 2011 ANAGPIC Student Conference Special Session

Conservation/Conservation Science Lightning Round

Delaware Art Museum

Saturday, 16 April 2011

On behalf of the Association of North American Graduate Programs in Art Conservation, the Winterthur/University of Delaware Program in Art Conservation invites submissions for a Conservation/Conservation Science Lightning Round to be held during the 2011 ANAGPIC Student Conference in Wilmington, DE.

The preservation and conservation of cultural heritage is inherently interdisciplinary, and its scholars may be found in a variety of disciplines ranging from art conservation and archaeology to materials science and nanotechnology. This session invites submissions from current North American doctoral students and post-graduate researchers that relate to technical art history or the preservation of art, historic architecture, and cultural heritage, broadly defined. “Post-graduate researchers” includes students who have graduated from a Master’s program and are now on advanced internships carrying out research. The Conservation/Conservation Science Lightning Round will consist of 12 speakers, each with five minutes to present an illustrated summary of their research to current conservation graduate students, followed by a Q&A session for all speakers.

Please submit proposals (abstract of no more than 250 words, contact information, and institutional affiliation) or any inquiries to anagpic.lightning@gmail.com. Submissions must be received by 10pm EST on January 5, 2011. Speakers will be notified in February 2011.

Call for Presentations –APT DC Annual Symposium March 2011

Topic: Climate Control for Historic Buildings and Collections

The Association for Preservation Technology DC Chapter, in conjunction with the Washington Conservation Guild, requests presentations for our Annual Symposium to be held in Washington, DC, on March 24-25, 2011. Presentations are to address the challenges of balancing the needs of building preservation, museum collections, and visitor comfort. The Symposium would like to explore the decision-making processes related to the introduction of environmental controls, best practices for climate control, successes and failures (including lessons learned), and the utilization of green practices and technologies.

All presentations that discuss case studies should address one of the above topics, and presenters are encouraged to demonstrate how the case study contributes to the field by providing in-depth analysis of what was learned in the course of the study or project.

Abstracts should be 250 to 300 words and must include the title, the name of the speaker or speakers, the address of the speaker and any institution they are representing, email address of the speaker, and the speaker's resume. Students are encouraged to submit work that is relevant to the topic. Presentations are to be 30 minutes in length with time for questions. Abstracts are due January 10, 2010, and should be sent to APT DC at info@aptdc.org with a copy to catherine_dewey@nps.gov.

Selection Notification and Speaker Responsibilities

Please read the following guidelines carefully.

- Each presenter will receive a complimentary registration for the symposium, lunch included. Speakers will not be paid. All travel and additional expenses are the responsibility of the speaker.
- If your abstract is selected, you will be notified by January 20, 2011.
- Presenters are encouraged to use PowerPoint technology to enhance their presentations. No other audio-visual requirements will be permitted. PowerPoint presentations must be submitted to APT DC at a specified deadline date in order to preload presentation to avoid on-site slow downs.

Selection Criteria

All abstracts are peer reviewed by an APT DC/WCG-appointed committee. Each abstract is evaluated in four key areas:

- Originality
- Quality of the abstract (clearly defines outcomes, flows smoothly)
- Relevance/significance to the field of Historic Preservation
- Objectives

We look forward to your participation in educating architects, conservators, house museum managers, and preservationists. *Contact info@aptdc.org, subject line “2011 Symposium” with any questions.*

PEOPLE

Amber Kerr-Allison accepted the position of Paintings Conservator at the Smithsonian American Art Museum. She began her new role at SAAM on November 15.

Anna Friedman has joined the Smithsonian Institution Archives for a one-year post-graduate research fellowship examining the architectural drawing collections for previous treatments, especially for non-aqueous deacidification such as Wei T'o and Bookkeeper.

Alisha Chipman is the third year photograph conservation intern at a shared internship at the Smithsonian Institution Archives and Library of Congress. Alisha is from the University of Delaware/Winterthur Program.

Glen Ruzicka, previously the Director of Conservation at the Conservation Center for Art and Historic Artifacts, passed away on November 21.

Ann Creager's husband passed away on November 8. Ann Creager is a Paintings Conservator at the Smithsonian American Art Museum and is currently serving as the lab's Acting Chief Conservator.

Mark Rabinowitz, Vice President, Conservation Solutions, Inc., was a recipient of the Mark Hampton Rome Prize under the category of Historic Preservation and Conservation. His research topic involves the study of Italian marble quarrying and carving techniques from the turn of the 20th century used in the creation of American monuments.

MEMBERSHIP

WCG dues are \$30 per year, \$20 for students and interns, payable to the Washington Conservation Guild or WCG.

The membership year runs from July 1st through June 30th. Membership forms can be requested by mail from the Membership Secretary at P.O. Box 23364, Washington, D.C. 20026 or can be filled out and submitted on our website. Changes of address or telephone numbers, corrections to the directory, and dues payments should be sent to the Membership Secretary at the address listed above or to: wcg@washingtonconservationguild.org



The membership schedule is as follows:

- April: Membership renewal notice mailed
- July 1: Beginning of membership year
- September 15: Deadline for membership renewals

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2010/2011

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Newsletter Submissions

WCG Newsletter is printed quarterly (Fall, Winter, Spring, Summer). Items for inclusion in the WCG Newsletter should be directed to:

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Email submissions are preferred. Please note that articles should be sent at least two weeks before publication. The editor reserves the right to edit copy to fit available space.

Next issue: Spring 2010

Deadline for submissions: February 15, 2010