

The Royal District Nursing Service *St Kilda Road Head Office*: Varnish removal and treatment of an oversized silver gelatin photograph

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ABSTRACT

This poster presents the treatment by of an oversized silver gelatin photograph with a badly discoloured varnish by staff of the Centre for Cultural Materials Conservation. This work was treated over several months in 2009-2010 and involved the collaboration of many conservators and technicians at the Centre.

It outlines the materials and condition of the photograph, along with the treatment pathways, the group approach to decision-making, and a discussion of the ethical considerations surrounding the treatment including the decision to remove the varnish.

As the final treatment varied from the original treatment proposal, renegotiation with the client was also required. The outcome for the photograph was a dramatic visual change, and the work was returned much closer in visual appearance to its original state.

BIOGRAPHY

Kelly Leahey has been employed since mid-2009 as an Assistant Paper and Photograph Conservator at CCMC. She has recently completed the Master of Cultural Materials Conservation at the University of Melbourne and is soon to complete the Postgraduate Certificate in Arts (Photographic Materials Conservation). Kelly also holds a BA in Creative Arts (Hons), University of Melbourne (2004).

Libby Melzer is a paper conservator with the Centre for Cultural Materials Conservation, University of Melbourne. She has a Bachelor of Applied Science in Conservation of Cultural Materials specialising in paper conservation from the University of Canberra. She was the Ian Potter Art Conservation Centre paper conservation intern in 2002. In 2004 she completed an Australian Youth Ambassadors for Development Project surveying and developing a management plan for a collection of Spanish colonial Church archives in the provincial centre of Bohol in the Philippines.

Supported by an Australian Postgraduate Award, Libby is currently undertaking her Masters by Research into the Materials and Techniques of French and Flemish Illuminated Manuscripts in Australian Collections. She has previously been employed as a Paper Conservator by the National Archives of Australia in Canberra and Melbourne. She is the current treasurer of the Victorian Division of the Australian Institute for the Conservation of Cultural Materials.

Briony Pemberton has been working as a paper conservator since 2000, undertaking positions at the Tate Gallery in London, The State Libraries in Victoria and New South Wales, and the National Gallery of Victoria. She has been at CCMC since 2007 working primarily on the consultancy program, where she treats works on paper for a wide variety of clients. She has a Bachelor of Arts in Fine Art History and History from the University of Melbourne (1995) and a Masters in Paper Conservation from Camberwell College of Arts, London (1999). She has presented talks on the history of the graphite pencil, pressure-sensitive tape, and the treatment of an 18th century mezzotint. She has published research that looked at efflorescence found on leather bindings and in 2001 she co-curated an exhibition on drawing materials at Tate Britain.

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