

Australian Institute for the Conservation of Cultural Material Inc.

**1997 PAINTINGS GROUP SYMPOSIUM
VICTOR HARBOUR, South Australia**

PROGRAM

Saturday 18 October

- approx. 12.30pm - 6.00pm Optional winery tour of McLaren Vale
(leaving from Adelaide Airport and returning to Victor Harbor)
- 6.00pm - 7.00pm Check in to Anchorage, Victor Harbor
(rooms previously allocated by symposium organisers)
- 6.00pm - 7.30pm Registration
Drinks in the Boat Bar
- 7.30pm Dinner in the Anchorage Cafe

Sunday 19 October

- 8.00am - 9.00am Breakfast
- 8.30am - 9.15am Registration (for late arrivals)
- 9.15am - 9.30am Welcome
- 9.30am - 10.00am Therese Mulford **Walking you through the Frame Exhibition
at the Queen Victoria Museum and Art Gallery, Launceston**
- 10.00am - 10.30am David Keany **The Painting Technique of Ivor Hele, War
Artist**
- 10.30am - 11.00am Morning tea
- 11.00am - 11.15am Kathryn Ferguson **“It’s Enough to Make You Blanche”**
- 11.15am - 11.45am Bronwyn Ormsby **Tales of England**
- 11.45am - 12.45pm Allan Byrne, Linda Waters and David Stein **Discussion on the
recent international symposium “Modern Art: Who Cares”,
Amsterdam, September 1997**
- 12.45pm - 2.00pm Lunch

2.00pm - 2.30pm	John Hook William Dobell's "The Cypriot": Bad Timing for "Boy Lounging"
2.30pm - 3.00pm	Linda Waters Paul Sérusier's "Boys on a River Bank"
3.00pm - 3.30pm	Sarah Feijen Still life devoured - the attack of the Drugstore Beetle
3.30pm - 4.00pm	Afternoon tea
4.00pm - 4.30pm	Jo Cutler Restoration of the Fairies Tree
4.30pm - 5.00pm	Stewart Laidler "The Laws of the Medes and Persians" - A case study of paint defects in "The Queen of Sheba" by Sir Edward Poynter, PRA; RWS
5.30pm on	Drinks in the Boat Bar
6.30pm	Dinner in the Anchorage Cafe

Monday 20 October

8.00am - 9.00am	Breakfast
9.00am - 10.30am	Leslie Carlyle Artists' Manuals and Instruction Books: An Introduction to the Sources The Academic Style of Painting in Stages Intermediate Layers: Oiling Out, Retouch Varnish, the Isolation of Pigments
10.30am - 11.00am	Morning tea
11.00am - 12.30pm	Leslie Carlyle Bladders to Tube Paints: The Development of Oil Paints and Pigments Megilps, Mediums and Driers: Artists' Manipulation of Oil Paints
12.30pm - 2.00pm	Lunch
2.00 - 3.00pm	Leslie Carlyle Support Materials and Preparation Layers
3.00pm - 3.30pm	Afternoon tea
3.30pm - 4.30pm	Leslie Carlyle New work with cross sections Discussion
5.30pm on	Drinks in the Boat Bar
6.30pm	Dinner in the Anchorage Cafe

Tuesday 21 October

8.00am - 9.00am	Breakfast
9.00am - 10.30am	Leslie Carlyle Varnishes and Varnishing Practices 1750-1900
10.30am - 11.00am	Morning tea
11.00am - 12.30pm	Leslie Carlyle Some of the Themes Identified in the Sources: - The Artists' Anticipation of Change in Their Materials - Authenticity and Adulteration - The Relationship Between Artists and Their Colourmen
12.30pm - 2.00pm	Lunch
2.00pm - 2.30pm	David Wise C.F. Goldie - "The Greatest Master South of the Equator"
2.30pm - 3.00pm	Paula Dredge and Erica Burgess Artists' Materials in the Australian Colonies 1788-1850
3.00pm - 3.30pm	Discussion
3.30pm - 4.00pm	Afternoon tea
4.00pm - 5.00pm	Symposium closing session
6.30pm	Leave the Anchorage for dusk walk on Granite Island
8.00pm	Symposium Dinner at Penguinis on Granite Island

Wednesday 22 October

7.30am - 8.30am	Breakfast
9.00am - 10.30am	Travel to Adelaide (Artlab/airport)
10.30am - 11.00am	Morning tea at Artlab Australia *Non-workshop participants are invited to visit Artlab for coffee and a chat or a tour of the laboratories before leaving Adelaide
11.00am	Workshop begins (for those registered) in Paintings Studio at Artlab
1.00pm - 2.00pm	Lunch at Artlab for Workshop participants
5.00pm	Workshop concludes NOTE: Leslie Carlyle has kindly offered to extend the Workshop for those who would like longer to 'play' - participants who need to leave earlier to catch flights will not miss out on content

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Abstracts

**Victor Harbor, South Australia
October 1997**

**Walking you through the Frame Exhibition at the
Queen Victoria Museum and Art Gallery, Launceston**

Therese Mulford

The Queen Victoria Museum and Art Gallery hosted a “Frames in Tasmania Since 1830” Exhibition from 13 July - 22 September 1997. Therese Mulford will discuss the research into the Exhibition, walk you through the Exhibition, and present the rationale for the Exhibition and associated activities. The Exhibition resulted in a heightened awareness of the cultural material in private hands and a better understanding of how to care for the work.

The Painting Technique of Ivor Hele, War Artist

David Keany

The study of Ivor Hele's painting technique for a major travelling exhibition has led to the discovery of a surprisingly varied technique, all of which combined to produce dynamic and sensitive paintings.

Hele's paintings have some problems, most of which can be attributed to the varied techniques used.

“It’s Enough to Make You Blanche”

Kathryn Ferguson

Two paintings were treated after unusual forms of damage occurred, involving inappropriate storage or display conditions. In both cases permanent damage had altered the paint surface. The treatments subsequently involved reducing the visual impact of the damaged areas by the application of varnish and overpainted media to the blanched areas.

Tales of England

Bronwyn Ormsby

This paper is a brief account of the tasks undertaken as part of a two year Internship at the Hamilton Kerr Institute in Cambridge, England from September 1995. The primary purpose of the Internship was to complete a conservation science research project using the analytical technique Gas Chromatography, aiming to document the existence of a saponification reaction between oil paint and alkalis. Artificially aged lead white and bone black oil paint samples were tested along with samples from 16th, 17th, 18th and 19th Century paintings. The alkalis tested include aqueous ammonium hydroxide solutions and triethanolamine, with some solvent tests completed for comparison. A pilot project was completed and in total over 500 samples were run. The second year also incorporated restoration treatments which involved varnish and overpaint removals as well as learning to retouch in egg tempera medium. Some art history study was also carried out on paintings undergoing restoration at the time. As well as the immediate tasks involved, some observations on research and approaches in the UK will be discussed.

**Discussion on the recent international symposium
“Modern Art: Who Cares”, Amsterdam, September 1997**

Allan Byrne, Linda Waters and David Stein

Contemporary art is generally innovative, occasionally outrageous in subject and material structure, invariably fragile and totally dependant on our care for its future survival. Artists have always experimented with new materials in order to expand their means of communication. However, unlike traditional artists who work within a restricted material ‘oeuvre’ contemporary artists are often identified by their new or experimental processes.

The material integrity of works of contemporary art is paramount. Maintaining this integrity is the greatest challenge faced by individuals and organisations that collect late twentieth century works. At no other time in history has the cooperation of artists, curators, registrars and conservators become so pivotal to the care and conservation of works of art. The importance of obtaining artist advice and opinion, the thoroughness of curatorial and registration documentation, along with an adaptable and relevant conservation philosophy are essential features for any system charged with conserving works of contemporary art.

Allan, Linda and David will lead a discussion on the international symposium on the conservation of contemporary art “Modern Art: Who Cares” held last month in Amsterdam.

William Dobell's "The Cypriot": Bad timing for "Boy Lounging"

John Hook

"The Cypriot" was the first of Dobell's great portraits. X-radiography has revealed that it was painted over a completed oil painting of the "Boy Lounging".

The artist's original concept for "The Cypriot" was formulated in London in 1934, and underwent numerous metamorphoses over the following six years.

Dobell finally realised the finished oil painting in his Kings Cross studio in 1940. This final version was the tour de force that he had determined to paint upon his return to Australia.

The reasons for Dobell abandoning "Boy Lounging" may have been economic, personal or just bad timing.

But this image underneath Dobell's masterpiece has significantly contributed to what we see and understand today when we stand before "The Cypriot".

Paul Sérusier's "Boys on a River Bank"

Linda Waters

"Boys on a River Bank", painted by Paul Sérusier, was bought through the Felton Bequest in 1948. It is dated 1906, but examination has revealed a complete underlayer of paint likely to have been applied at a much earlier date. The texture of the paint suggests that the canvas had been rolled in the interim, and the top layer later applied over the old losses and cupping in the paint beneath. Technical examination of the painting proceeded with the aim of trying to establish the time of the earlier layer. Some of the pigments the artist used in the two layers were identified and compared to his colour theories and the related shifts in his palette. The artist's contact with Gauguin may also provide some clues to the conception of the painting.

Still life devoured - the attack of the Drugstore Beetle

Sarah Feijen

An interesting and particularly challenging treatment of a seventeenth century Dutch oil painting infested with Drugstore Beetle (*Stegobium paniceum*(L)). The painting suffers the unusual condition of severe insect infestation of all elements of the painting, not just the timber stretcher and frame components. In fact, it is the lined canvas support and the paint film which are most extensively attacked and weakened. Current comprehensive treatment involves eradication of the insects by an appropriate fumigation method, physical stabilisation of the painting, and image reintegration.

Restoration of the Fairies Tree

Jo Cutler

Ola Cohn carved and painted an old redgum stump in the Fitzroy Gardens in Melbourne with fairy figures and animals, 1931 to 1934. The tree steadily deteriorated outdoors and was repainted several times. The tree was treated in 1977 and repainted again in 1978. Recently the tree was examined and documented thoroughly. The tree itself was treated with timber preservatives. The old repainting was removed, the carved areas stabilised, and the tree repainted using original colour slides as a guide.

**“The Laws of the Medes and Persians” -
A case study of paint defects in “The Queen of Sheba” by
Sir Edward Poynter, PRA; RWS**

Stewart Laidler

In the *Manual of Oil Painting* by John Collier, published in 1886 an account is given of the directions for monochrome painting drawn up for the students at the National Art School in South Kensington by the then Director Sir Edward Poynter. Because of the rigid adherence to these directions the students called them “The Laws of the Medes and Persians”. They describe a fairly classical painting exercise of building up the painting from the shadows to the lights using a limited palette.

“No glazing is ever necessary. Use no medium.”

In the painting process forms, designed by Lord Leighton to record artists’ materials and techniques, to be found in the library of the Royal Academy, there are three forms that were filled in by Poynter. In “*Atlanta’s Race*” completed in 1875 there is a mention of Roberson’s medium, a mixture of copal resin/mastic resin and linseed oil. Later in “*Diadamene*” 1885 Poynter mentions only copal, linseed oil (Bell’s recommended by Prof. Church) and turpentine in about equal proportions.

The use of Roberson’s medium (essentially a megilp) contrasts with that given by William Muckley in a *Handbook for Painters and Art Students*, published in 1882, in which there is an introduction by Poynter.

“All your remarks on vehicles, habits of painting, etc., seem to me admirable.”

Muckley decries the use of megilp.

“Mediums composed of drying oil and mastic varnish have been used too freely by the English school of painters.”

Muckley then suggests that pure linseed oil is all that is needed for mixing with opaque colours to give them a drying quality. For transparent colours, especially when glazing, good copal or amber varnish with linseed oil could be used.

Muckley was also aware that mediums with mastic resin in them were quite solvent sensitive and advocated the use of copal to make them less so.

From the defects in the paint layers in “*The Queen of Sheba*” at the AGNSW, it is patently obvious that Poynter did not always achieve the correct balance between the ratio of oil/resin/pigment and good technique, and that perhaps did not always choose the most suitable materials.

This paper describes the types of paint defect in closer detail.

C.F. Goldie - “The Greatest Master South of the Equator”

David Wise

Charles Frederick Goldie was a New Zealand artist who trained in Paris in the last decade of the nineteenth century. An extremely methodical painter, he maintained many of the academic techniques he was introduced to in Paris throughout his career.

Artists' Materials in the Australian Colonies 1788-1850

Paula Dredge and Erica Burgess

From the earliest British colonisation of Australia, draughtsmen and watercolourists were active in portraying their new home. There was however a demand for paintings in the more permanent and prestigious medium of oil. Many of these first artists, soldiers, administrators and convicts, although not trained in this medium, were willing to take on the challenge. Importantly they were also able to do so because they were beyond the control of Britain's established artistic institutions.

In the first 40 years, artists often depended on personal connections in Britain for the importation of painting materials and convict artists had particular trouble in this. The problems of shortages led to some improvisation and substitution of materials. By the 1830s a number of professionally trained British artists emigrated to Australia and the supply of artists materials also became more reliable. This difficult early period, greatly dependant irregular supplies from Britain, was followed by rapid commercial development of the colonies and fast shipping which ensured that new materials and techniques from Britain were quick to flow to the Australian colonies.