

Conserving Artline® fibre-tip pens on paper. Assessing vulnerability on works of art by Jimmy Pike

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ABSTRACT

Works by Walmajarri artist Jimmy Pike are distinct amongst contemporary Indigenous art due to his palette of bright colours and use of modern materials such as fibre-tip pen on paper. From 1990 to 2002, Pike created close to 300 drawings of fibre-tip pen on paper, using Artline® fibre-tip pens on various note-book papers. After his passing in 2002, Pike's widow Pat Lowe loaned the collection of art works to the Berndt Museum for safekeeping. With little literature available on the display and preservation of fibre-tip pen on paper, the Berndt Museum faces the challenge of caring for the Jimmy Pike Collection.

This paper presents an investigation into the light stability and permanence of selected Artline® fibre-tip pens on paper. To obtain information about the materials, techniques, history, story and significance of the collection, key stakeholders were interviewed concerning the Jimmy Pike Collection. In addition, interviews with experts in the fields of paper conservation and conservation science revealed how practising conservators are treating this media type. A selection of materials was tested using accelerated ageing experiments and colorimetry analysis.

Information gained from analytical testing, and primary knowledge from experts and stakeholders, are informing the development of guidelines for the long-term preservation of the Jimmy Pike Collection at the Berndt Museum.

AUTHOR BIOGRAPHIES

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Dr Petronella Nel is a lecturer and objects conservator at the Centre for Cultural Materials Conservation (CCMC). She has a BSc (with honours, 1991) in chemistry and a PhD in chemistry (2000) and MA in cultural materials conservation (2006) all from the University of Melbourne. She is currently leading a McCoy Seed Funding Scheme project 'Self destructive cultural heritage: management of cellulose nitrate in museum collections' 2014, and has: (1) finalised an ARC-DP, 'Archaeological conservation: the development of analysis and assessment protocols for adhesives used on archaeological pottery' with Assoc Prof. Robyn Sloggett (CCMC), Prof Antonio Sagona (Classics & Archaeology) and Deborah Lau (CSIRO) 2008-2012; and (2) a University of Melbourne – CSIRO collaborative research program 'Compositional study of ochre-earth pigments based on micro-PIXE and micro-XRF/micro XRD techniques by application of multi-pixel array detector technology' with Dr's Peter Lynch and David Hay (CSIRO) 2009-2012. At CCMC Petronella is subject coordinator of: Technical examination and documentation, Conservation materials chemistry, Analytical chemistry in conservation and the Chemistry bridging course.