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## President's Report

I find that early January is a good time to clear the overflowing in-trays and catch up on a bit of professional reading. Two papers which surfaced as a result of my annual tidy up were so thought provoking and timely that they warrant noting. Released in November 2008, "It's a material world – Caring for the public realm", was commissioned for the Demos Foundation in London, as a result of the proposed closure of the Textiles Conservation Centre (TCC) by the University of Southampton. Co-authored by John Holden and Samuel Jones, the paper is a "call to arms" and a "blueprint for the future" of conservation. Underlying the recommendations is the challenge to the conservation profession "to widen its scope, to look at the broader role conservation plays and embrace public engagement". By coincidence, one of the authors, John Holden, was recently in Australia (February 2009) and gave a presentation on the report at Art Gallery of South Australia. It is to be hoped that the meeting will stimulate further discussion in the next newsletter.

The second paper, "Climate Change and Museum Collections" presented the results of a forum hosted by the International Institute for the Conservation of Historic and Artistic Works (IIC) in September 2008. In the words of the Director of the Tate, Sir Nicholas Serota, "public museums exist by virtue of having established a public trust. Without that public trust, we cannot maintain our position in society". He cautioned that "at a time of climate change and recognition that

there are finite resources in our world... we have to act responsibly and create organisations which are in every sense sustainable. If we don't do so, we will forfeit public trust and ultimately the public investment and public funding that helps us pursue our activities". Along similar lines **Maurice Davies** of the Museums Association, noted that "in endeavouring to preserve collections almost perfectly for future generations, we must not contribute inadvertently to making the planet more uninhabitable for those same future generations". The Editorial in this issue of the AICCM newsletter addresses this issue.

One of the issues raised by the debate on climate change and museum collections is that of environmental specifications. Calls to relax conservation "standards" with respect to light levels, temperature and relative humidity parameters, duration of exhibitions etc, have forced the role of risk assessment to the fore. It is therefore timely that the Preventive Conservation Special Interest Group is hosting a seminar at the Melbourne Museum in early May 2009 on "Risk management as a decision making tool". Graduates of the ICCROM course on risk management, **Catherine Lovelock** and **Eric Archer**, will be key presenters.

**Tamara Lavrencic**

## From The Editors

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Well, it certainly is interesting times! As we read of how the way the world does business is going to change, we need to be aware that this is bound to have an impact on the conservation profession. Specifically the private sector in which almost half of us are engaged are going to see tougher times – unfortunately a proportion of that work is seen as discretionary spending. Luckily the private museum is an unusual entity in Australia, unlike the USA where museums funded by philanthropic trusts are doing it tough, resulting in predictions of significant numbers of museums closing.

More broadly the cost of running museums is going to be increasingly scrutinised. That means energy savings are going to be looked for at all levels from storage to administration areas. This at least means that the environmental and ethical desirability of such will no longer be the only reasons to implement savings. The recent ‘Climate Change and Museum

Collections’ forum, in London, reported on in the last edition of the AICCM newsletter (December 2009), highlighted the role conservators can play in leading this debate.

Much relevant work is already underway within various state and national collecting institutions, but there is a great opportunity for the conservation profession to step to the fore in Australia. We encourage all conservators to make themselves familiar with the issues, and start leading the debate. We plan to discuss this in more detail in the June edition.

Meanwhile, in this edition, look out for:

- The state profiles of **South Australia** and the **Northern Territory**, as we continue our state by state focus on the local conservation activity. Next edition we shall be focusing on Victoria and Tasmania, with ACT to follow in the September edition.

- The in-depth interview with **Catherine Nunn**, paintings conservator who is now in Melbourne after four years working in the U.K.
- More tales from the archives from our investigative reporter extraordinaire, **Ian Batterham**.
- Repairing art damaged by natural disasters – an interesting perspective from main stream journalism at the Wall Street Journal.
- A new topic under ‘Conservation Matters – what do YOU think’ – do read and comment back to us.

We look forward as always to your ongoing support and input.

**Fiona Tennant and Julian Bickersteth**

## State in Focus – SA and NT

In focusing on the conservation profession in South Australia and the Northern Territory we wanted to emphasize the diversity and wide-ranging activities undertaken by conservators here.

In particular we want to show something of the many international projects and partnerships undertaken by Artlab Australia and Fabric of Life in Adelaide, and the Museum and Art Gallery Northern Territory in Darwin, and to give you an idea of the vibrancy and vitality our many visitors bring to the scene, whether they be students or interns like Abby, Filipa and Song, interviewed below, or the pre-eminent scholar and lobbyist John Holden who recently gave a presentation of his report *It's a material world, caring for the public realm* to conservators and curators at the Art Gallery of South Australia.

Let's start with **Jodie Proud**, Senior Paper Conservator at Artlab:

In September 2008 **Anne Dineen** and I were invited to the National Archives in Singapore to deliver a workshop on stain reduction from paper items. The three day workshop comprised of lectures in the morning and practical treatments in the afternoons with fifteen participants from the Archives and Singapore's Conservation Centre. The week started with advice on preventative measures and long term care of paper based collections. We thoroughly discussed mould prevention as the high humidity of the region is problematic to the museum environment, and removal of mould stains from paper even more so. Other types of stains discussed and treated included tidelines and foxing, tape removal and tape stains.

We found the approach to collections care quite different to our own previous experiences. A few conservator technicians raised their concerns about pace and time and doing treatments en

masse efficiently. We observed that the remedy was to treat what was obviously damage first, without prior preparation or consideration for side affects. It lead us to discuss more thoroughly treatment of a work from start to finish, including spot testing, surface cleaning and backing removals to minimize staining and damage from solvent and aqueous treatment used while removing stains. Working to a tight time schedule is a difficult challenge in all conservation facilities, however the thorough care of the work is just as important and became some what of a mantra during our practical sessions.

The cultural experience was invaluable. The Singaporeans were very generous in their hospitality, ensuring Anne and I were comfortable, well fed and entertained for the week. We were able to visit the newly refurbished Peranakan Museum and the Singapore Conservation Centre before celebrating our visit with a relaxing (but pricey!) Singapore Sling at the long bar in Raffles Hotel.



*Anne Dineen and students surface cleaning.*



*Jodie Proud demonstrating stain reduction treatments at the suction table.*

**Mary Jose** now runs Fabric Of Life, a business which has grown and developed out of her previous conservation only business, Mary Jose Textile Conservation:

After working in conservation for nearly 20 years I decided to expand my business and indulge my love of textiles. I have continued to offer textile conservation services to public and private clients but in addition to that I also sell and exhibit fine hand made textiles from various parts of the world. Although we sell both old and new textiles our major focus is on fine quality hand made fair trade textiles. Each year I travel to meet with artisans and to select fine quality hand made textiles to be used for interior decoration or to wear.

We hold exhibitions from time to time. There are a number of steams to this and I will start with the closest to home. Since 2004 we have been working very closely with Ernabella Arts Inc particularly in relation to their batik work. I phoned Ernabella and asked if they would like to work with me to hold an exhibition of batik scarves and Raiki Wara (long cloth) for the Adelaide Fringe Festival in 2004. The response was come up and visit and we'll see if we like you. I travelled up to Ernabella and spent a few days sleeping on the art centre floor and met the artists and the co-ordinator at that time Hilary Furlong. I got the tick of approval and we held our first exhibition together at Fabric of Life I February 2004. Since then we have held may exhibitions together and also a "tjanpi" basket making workshop with three of Ernabella's best fibre artist sitting under the trees in the Adelaide Parklands. We have also sold work to many Museum collections including the Art Gallery of South Australia, The National Gallery of Australia, the Powerhouse, The Queensland Art Gallery, the National Gallery of Victoria and National Museums Scotland. The



success of these exhibitions has helped ensure the ongoing creation of batik at Ernabella.

The other major stream is the collection of textiles from India. I have travelled to India several times and developed relationships with a number of traditional artisans who excel in the production of their crafts. Some of these artisans sell their work through Non Government Organisations and others work from their houses. Most of these artisans are practicing skills which have been passed down through their families for generations. They are embroiderers, tie dyers and weavers. My focus has been on the textile arts of Gujarat, Rajasthan and West Bengal. In these areas artisans are producing work of exceptionally fine quality that I have rarely seen in new work. I hope that by promoting their work I will help in a small way with the survival of these traditions. The slow development of Fair Trade and the appreciation of traditional Indian textiles by the growing Indian middle classes are helping to strengthen the appreciation of this work and increase the desire to help it survive. We also stock textiles from South East Asia, Africa, and Central Asia.

The combination of exhibiting textiles and providing conservation services has meant that I am able to advise clients and how to best care for their textiles and also prepare works for display using conservation practice. It has proved a good way of promoting the need for appropriate care of textiles to ensure their survival. We are also providing a shop front for customers to get advice about conservation of all materials and are able to refer people on to appropriate specialist conservators.

**Kristin Philips**, Head of Textiles Conservation at Artlab, has also been very active in India and South East Asia. Following on from workshops and conservation treatments carried out with **Renita Ryan** at the Sonobudoyo Museum in Yogyakarta over the last two years, and funded by the Australia Indonesia Institute, the Gordon Darling

Foundation and Asialink, Kristin has recently conducted storage and conservation workshops at the Museum Batik in Pekalongan, Indonesia, also funded by the AII, and more recently in Guwahati, Assam, India in conjunction with **Vinod Daniel** of the Australian Museum in Sydney.

This was funded by AusHeritage with a grant from the Australia India Council.



*Kristin at the Batik Museum*



*Kristin in India*

As we write, Kristin is back in Yogyakarta carrying out Counter-Disaster Planning workshops with Joanna Barkman and Sandra Yee of the Museum and Art Gallery Northern Territory.

**Vicki Humphrey** has recently returned to South Australia after 5 1/2 years as Head of Conservation at the British Library and has recently been contracted to provide quality assurance advice over a three year period on the safety and preservation of the National Library of New Zealand's Heritage Collections during their building redevelopment and relocation. (see <http://www.natlib.govt.nz/about-us/current-initiatives/building-redevelopment>) Vicki will also be travelling to the UK in Feb to attend

meetings of the ICON Accreditation committee and the ICON publications committee – she remains a member of both of these committees. Vicki can be contacted by email on [humphrey.vicki@googlemail.com](mailto:humphrey.vicki@googlemail.com).

**Sue Bassett**, Senior Conservator at MAGNT gives us all the news from Darwin and Dili: It's been quite a while since Museum and Art Gallery Northern Territory (MAGNT) contributed to the *AICCM Newsletter* and if there has ever been a time to make the assumption that 'no news is good news', this is probably it.

The Materials Conservation Section of MAGNT occupies a very compact lab space on the Fannie Bay beachfront in Darwin, where the main institution sits and virtually all of its collections are housed. Alice Springs' Museum of Central Australia is also part of MAGNT, and the broader umbrella of Museums and Art Galleries NT covers Alice's Strehlow Research Centre and Araluen Cultural Centre too, but the Darwin facility has the only conservation lab and the only conservation staff in the Northern Territory (the closest being Townsville and Adelaide). The team is part of MAGNT Research and Collections – along with Collections Management, and History and Culture and Natural Sciences branches – and has responsibility for the care of the very diverse art, craft, material culture, historical, archaeological and scientific collections (including wet and dry natural history specimens). The team also provides support (predominantly in the form of advice) to the community and to the regions, as well as to other divisions within our NTG Department of Natural Resources, Environment, The Arts, and Sport, which includes the NT Library, NT Archives Service and NT Herbarium.

The MAGNT conservation team comprises three permanent positions: the Senior Conservator (currently objects/metals), and two Conservators (currently objects and paintings). Recent incidents and circumstances have led to

significant changes and developments at MAGNT such that we also currently have a Temporary Conservator (paper/preventive), and may also soon recruit to a shared Technical Assistant position, making it the closest we have ever come to having a full conservation skills set in the Northern Territory. Hurrah!

Past years have seen us all working as generalists and largely in a reactive capacity, supporting a demanding and unrelenting in-house and travelling exhibitions program, assessing new acquisitions and preparing outward loans, and keeping up as best we could with basic collection maintenance. Future scheduling and planning promises new opportunities and now includes a very welcome collection-based research component for conservators, with appropriate resource allocation and a review of staff numbers! More hurrah!

**Lisa Nolan**, our paintings conservator (and our first ever specialist in that field), joined us at the end of 2007. After finishing her current task of preparing the outgoing paintings loans for 2009, Lisa will be the first to launch into a major project. She will spend the next 12 months or more exclusively conserving MAGNT's very significant collection of 225 early Papunya-Tula boards. Collected in the 1970s and mounted and framed in ways that seemed fine at the time, this collection has remained largely untouched with much of its identifying labelling and information obscured. It will benefit enormously from the systematic deframing and the level of research, community consultation, documentation, analysis, stabilisation and professional attention and consideration it is about to receive. The development of the Western Desert Art movement was sparked by the production of paintings on boards in the Central Australian Papunya community, and MAGNT's collection includes the earliest consignments of these boards. By way of background to the project, a small number of these works were conserved and were on display in MAGNT's Indigenous Art Gallery when a break-

in occurred in April 2008. Five were stolen and recovered a short time later in nearby scrub, and the perpetrator was apprehended and charged. The incident resulted in Arts Minister Scrymgeour announcing special government funding for this extensive conservation and consultation project, which is proposed to culminate in an international touring exhibition. Provision has also been made for upgraded storage systems for future housing of the collection.

Our temporary position was created as a result of Lisa moving to this project, and is held by **Tharron Bloomfield**, paper/preventive conservator, who joined us from Canberra late last year. Tharron is clearing a backlog of paper-based items requiring treatment and, with his extensive hands-on cyclone recovery experiences following Cyclone Heta in Niue, sharing his expertise on a range of issues related to disaster preparedness and management, as well as all things preventive. Tharron's projects will also include an assessment and upgrade of storage of MAGNT's secret/sacred holdings and development of an IPM plan for the NT Herbarium.

MAGNT conservators were previously quite active throughout the NT, regularly presenting a variety of workshops for regional museums and community groups, and running public conservation clinics in most regional centres. This involvement has ceased while the Regional Museums Support Officer position is temporarily vacant, but outreach programs have continued with a wider regional focus together with MAGNT Curator of Southeast Asian Art and Material Culture, **Joanna Barrkman**.

**Sandra Yee**, our objects conservator who also takes responsibility for textiles, travelled to Dili with Joanna and another MAGNT staff member last year to borrow 47 objects from the national collection of Timor-Leste for a joint exhibition with MAGNT in Darwin. They worked in collaboration with staff of the National Directorate of Culture (DNC), Democratic Republic of Timor-

Leste, to design and construct crates and to clean and pack the loans for freighting. Delivered as on-the-job training for DNC staff, there were clear benefits for both organisations – DNC staff worked with a conservator and display technician to develop skills and sustainable collection management practices at their end, and MAGNT staff gained experience working with a very interesting collection while building professional capacity to work in Southeast Asia and in a cross-cultural context.

The joint exhibition of Timor-Leste art and material culture, *Husi Bei Ala Timor Sira Nia Liman – From the Hands of Our Ancestors*, opened in November 2008 and was the result of a long-term relationship and very successful partnership between DNC and MAGNT. The relationship goes back to the early 1990s and, with UN, UNESCO and AusAID support, has involved salvage of the looted Dili Museum collection by MAGNT staff in 2000, and post-independence capacity-building assistance for DNC in the form of staff seminars and the provision of intensive Darwin-based training of personnel in museum development, procedures and practices. The MAGNT conservation team contributed to this training which, together with the resultant exhibition, has had positive outcomes for preservation of the cultural heritage and identity of Timor-Leste, and to nation-building. The documentation, treatment, preservation and publication of a significant component of the national collection of Timor-Leste has been realised and, on its return to Dili, this material will form the basis of the developing National Museum of Timor-Leste.

Sandra's other overseas activities include delivery of a training program in Indonesia in January and February 2009, together with Artlab. The two-week workshop is funded by the Australian International Cultural Council, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade. It is being delivered to members of the Yogyakarta Museum Association and staff of the Gadjah Mada University

at the Sonobudoyo Museum, Yogyakarta, and will cover museum disaster preparedness and relevant aspects of collections management.

Sandra also proposes to travel to Dili in late March 2009 to provide practical training to Timor Aid and the Alola Foundation on care and management of textiles, and to design and implement storage systems appropriate to local conditions and resources.

Lisa and Sandra are also in the process of developing a collaborative research project with Joanna Barrkman to investigate natural dyes and their application to handwoven textiles in Indonesia and Timor-Leste. The pilot project will commence in March 2009 and involve travel to West Timor to document mud and indigo dyeing techniques with the Yayasan Tafean Pah weaving cooperative.

Sue Bassett is the Senior Conservator (objects/metals). Sue is in the final stages of preparing a Disaster Management Plan for MAGNT, and has been stabilising a variety of objects (metal, wood, ceramic) recovered during dredging for the Darwin waterfront development. She also recently assisted the Department of the Chief Minister by coordinating the display of the painting *Earth's Creation* by Utopia artist, the late Emily Kame Kngwarreye, in Darwin's Parliament House. *Earth's Creation*, comprising four panels totalling 6.3 x 2.7 metres, was part of an NMA exhibition of works by Emily Kame Kngwarreye that travelled recently to Japan.

Some of the big challenges in recent years have centred around the management of a very heavy workload, overflowing storage areas, and an old and unreliable air-conditioning system. Managing risk associated with the servicing, flushing and upgrade of the old wet-pipe sprinkler system and a major carpet-beetle infestation were up there too, as is preserving our maritime collection of deteriorating historic vessels displayed fully rigged in an uncontrolled tropical environment just metres from the sea.

And each year between December and May there's that ever-present threat of a destructive cyclone. But most of these issues have been resolved or are being addressed, systems are being upgraded and improved, outcomes are positive, opportunities lie ahead, and high-level strategic planning for the future of the NT museums sector is underway.

All news is good news!

### **Back at Artlab we spoke to interns, Abby, Filipa and Song:**

Volunteers and interns constantly flow through the different specialty areas of Artlab. They carry out invaluable work, research, and are often able to benefit by broadening their skills and exposure to various types of objects. Three conservators who have recently spent time at Artlab were interviewed to help us learn a little bit more about what motivates this vibrant section of the Artlab workforce.

**Abby Maxwell-Bowen** completed a four week mid-career placement in the Objects lab during December 2008. This is her second trip to Australia.

### **Abby's conservation training and background**

Abby originally trained in conservation through an apprenticeship in the UK. She remained with the London based private conservation company where she completed her apprenticeship and has been working there for 17 years. The company Abby works for takes on all types of work and Abby has vast experience working on outdoor monument and sculptures. Abby described her work as being 60:40% conservation: restoration.

### **Why did Abby come to Australia and more specifically, Adelaide?**

For Abby the main attraction in Australia was Artlab. After unsuccessfully applying for a bursary, Abby moved home and lived with her mum so she could save the necessary funds to fund her time in Australia. It is clear that she was *very*

dedicated to the idea of coming here! Abby has always been interested in working with ethnographic collections and felt that the best place to get that experience was in a country that had its own Indigenous population. The dialogue which surrounds conservation and treatment of ethnographic objects has long fascinated Abby. She also felt that it was difficult to work between the strictly defined conservation disciplines in the UK.

### **An outline of the treatment Abby enjoyed most while working at Artlab**

Abby most enjoyed working on a collection of seven Papua New Guinean costumes. The Asmat costumes had all been made by men and worn during mortuary feast celebrations. The construction techniques are considered secret, which raised the issue of whether Abby should be working on the costumes at all. After discussions with the curator which resolved these issues, Abby devised a method of approach which took into account the brief and resources of the client, and the time she had available. She assessed the object in terms of its requirements for storage and display. Working on the textile's 'knitted' surface was unlike any other experience she had had in England.

### **What is Abby doing with the remainder of her time in Australia?**

Apart from taking out a year-long gym membership, Abby plans to travel and work voluntarily in Sydney, Melbourne, Perth, Auckland, possibly Wellington, and then return to Artlab. Her ultimate objective is securing paid conservation work in Australia.

### **What did Abby like about being in Australia?**

The attractions of Australian life are huge for Abby and mostly come under the heading 'lifestyle'. Not having to commute 2 hours twice a day to her work place rated very highly with Abby, as did our abundance of sunlight, space, high-quality affordable food, and the genuine



people she has met. Professionally Abby has been excited to go to work every day in Australia; the experience has reignited her passion for working in conservation.



Abby working on woven ceremonial costume

**Filipa Quintela** has been working for nearly one year as a volunteer in the Objets lab at Artlab, she has also undertaken some paid work with the Projects team.

#### **Filipa's conservation training and background**

Filipa completed an undergraduate degree in conservation in Portugal in 2007. A nine month internship formed part of her course work, Filipa completed this with a furniture conservator/restorer. Filipa has continued to expand her skills while volunteering at Artlab undertaking a diverse range of jobs such as: repairing ceramics, box making, a furniture cleaning treatment, polishing chrome at the National Motor Museum, working on ethnographic plant fibre objects, cleaning accretions of an intricately carved door, and working on ships models. Some of the paid work Filipa has undertaken with the Projects team includes waxing and patinating large bronzes, and working on stone monuments.

#### **Why did Filipa come to Australia and more specifically, Adelaide?**

Filipa originally came to Australia for a holiday. Whilst still in Portugal Filipa looked at the Artlab website and felt that the company adhered to the same principals as she was taught in Portugal. So Filipa contacted Artlab and organised to visit us while in Australia. The work that was immediately available in Portugal was more 'restoration' than 'conservation' and Filipa wanted to focus on developing her conservation skills. Filipa emphasised that conservation practice in Portugal is not generally 'restoration' based. In fact they have the same principals as Australia. Filipa ended up staying in Adelaide, and eventually married here. Filipa and her partner plan to stay here for a few years.

#### **An outline of the treatment Filipa enjoyed most while working at Artlab**

A treatment Filipa enjoyed and felt she learnt a great deal from was the conservation of a woven plant fibre hat. There were many elements in the open style of the weaving that had snapped and compromised the shape and structural integrity of the form. Filipa spent many hours fixing fine strips of dyed Tyvek in place with Beva film.

#### **What is Filipa doing with the remainder of her time in Australia?**

Filipa plans to continue to volunteer at Artlab, with a view to getting more paid work here. Although this is a somewhat tenuous situation to be in, she says that her Portuguese colleagues are



Filipa working on a plant fibre hat

also experiencing difficulties securing work. Volunteering is a really good way for Filipa to keep her hand skills highly tuned, and stay in touch with the profession.

#### **What does Filipa like about being in Australia?**

The quality of life is much better in Australia than Portugal according to Filipa; there are many more opportunities to work and live the way you want, not to mention better pay conditions. Filipa has loved volunteering at Artlab because of the variety of work she has been able to undertake. In Portugal people tend to be confined to their area of specialty.

**Sangouansinh Phrasavat**, (or Song as she is affectionately known), is currently completing her internship in the Paper Lab. This is her third week with us, and although she is inundated with work and new experiences, she was able to give us a few minutes of her time to discuss her conservation experiences.

#### **Song's conservation training and background.**

Song entered conservation for the love of art. She studied art, but eventually came to the conclusion that she would prefer to work with art, rather than create it.

Song has completed four years of her paper conservation studies at the *Ecoles de Conde'* in Paris, France. Her fifth year of study is devoted largely to internships, and for the most part will be conducted in Australia. Song will be with us in Adelaide for two and a half months before heading up to the Gallery of Modern Art, Brisbane.

**Why did Song come to Australia and more specifically, Adelaide?**

Song has always wanted to visit Australia, especially since she has family here (situated in Queensland). While in Australia, Song is curious to observe different approaches to conservation between the French and Australians. One difference already noted during this interview is nomenclature! Song is used to 'Conservation' referring to rehousing and storage preparation, and 'Restoration' to practical treatment. She is also interested in learning our approaches to environmental factors with collection care, particularly as they are so different Australia wide – and it appears she has come at the right time as Adelaide is in a very hot and dry period and Brisbane in a more humid time of year.

**Favourite paper based items to conserve.**

Song is currently working on backing removal of silver gelatine prints, which she is enjoying as she hasn't worked on photographs previously. She is also in treatment with a lithographic poster from the Art Gallery of South Australia which has thus far required removal of the cloth lining, tape and tape adhesive removal, humidification and flattening and tear repair. She will complete the job with a new garmount and framing.

As Song is relatively new to the profession, she confesses to enjoy most conservation treatments and is very open minded with any paper based item that requires attention.

**What is Song doing with the remainder of her time in Australia?**

So far Song has been concentrating on her internship and studies, and will try to travel the country's expanse after she has finished her placement at the Gallery of Modern Art, Brisbane.

**What does Song like about being in Australia?**

Although it is aggressively hot at the moment, Song quite enjoys the warmer weather and she loves the Australian landscape. She is testing her taste buds with local produce and is enjoying South Australian wines.



*Song working on a backing removal of a silver gelatin photograph.*

Enjoying South Australian wines – it seems like a good place to finish.



# Lab and People News

## New South Wales

### Australian National Maritime Museum

#### Lab News

**Victoria Bramwell-Davis** is in the middle of a frame conservation project. The 19<sup>th</sup> century gilt frame houses the portrait of Sir John Franklin (a British Royal Navy officer and 5<sup>th</sup> Lieutenant Governor of Van Diemen's Land) belonging to the collection. The painting will be displayed along with many other interesting objects in the forthcoming March-August 2009 exhibition "*Charles Darwin – voyages and ideas that shook the world*". The treatment so far has involved the removal of bronze paint, a dense shellac layer, as well as a later gesso application. This slow, labour intensive cleaning process has taken three months. Currently gesso putty infills and replacements are being crafted and then the loss areas will be in-gilded and distressed to match the original gold finish.

**Caroline Whitley** has also been preparing paper-based collection items for the *Darwin* exhibition, which is marking the 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Darwin's birth and the 150<sup>th</sup> of the publication of his famous evolutionary theory *On the Origin of Species*. These collection items will add to many other objects loaned to us by various UK and Australian institutions for this fascinating show.

**Sue Frost** is preparing swimming costumes for the forthcoming traveling exhibition on the history of swimwear. The exhibition will showcase the ANMM swimwear collection, and will also include some interesting objects from other institutions and private collections. The design concept is to travel as much material as possible on pre-prepared supports mounted within

the display cases to simplify installation time at each venue. So developing mounting solutions with the safety of the objects foremost is one of the challenges. Another is selecting a suitably shaped mannequin for the exhibition and adjusting it to fit each costume.

#### People News

**Kathryn Yeates** – Last September I attended the IIC Congress in London after a three week holiday in Europe. The theme of the 22<sup>nd</sup> biennial IIC Congress: *Conservation and Access* offered a broad spectrum of presentations ranging from the familiar subjects of light damage & exposure times, the effects of vibrations on objects during travel, and the expanding roll of conservators as interpreters, negotiators, and cultural intermediaries. The more challenging subjects of allowing researchers, art history students and school children to have hands-on access to collections reinforced the concept that physical access to objects can be greatly increased without adverse effects to collections – if sufficient will, thought, resources and supervision are available.

One idea that made a strong impression on me and which I would be interested in seeing discussed and developed further by the profession, is the concept that if light damages an object over time and this is accepted and managed, why not similarly manage the damage to an object caused by handling? This is currently a highly theoretical debate. The idea is based around being able to quantify how many times an object can be handled before a noticeable change occurs in its condition. Why not allow robust objects to be handled? As with light levels, acceptable handling levels would have to be defined and parameters set, but it would mean that collections could be accessed to a greater level. Scholarly access could be increased, as could programs that allow interactions

with objects outside of exhibition spaces. I believe this concept has great potential, and would like to see greater direct access achieved in Australian collecting institutions.

### State Records NSW

#### Lab News

A change in the State Records NSW lending policy to include standard processing charges and to begin charging for exceptional conservation treatment work has seen a spate of requests flood in before the new charging regime commenced on January 1<sup>st</sup>. We are preparing loans for 9 exhibitions at present.... This increase also reflects a growing knowledge of what is held in our collection by others across the heritage sector, something which State Records is pleased about.

**Elizabeth Hadlow** has commenced a survey of all the photographic holdings in the collection so that we can ascertain our storage requirements prior to purchasing or building cold storage facilities in the coming year. The photographic holdings at State Records are dispersed among a diverse range of record series and it can be difficult to estimate quantities and formats accurately. Separating these intrinsic photographic materials from their parent record can also be difficult as it creates tracking and additional storage issues. We will be grappling with these issues as we build up a more accurate picture of our photograph collections.

Our Reader demand has not diminished, and this continues to see a steady flow of items to treat before allowing them to be accessed in our Reading Room. We continue to treat many probate and insolvency files damaged by water and mould. We are presently using a combination of 'copy and destroy', consolidation with Klucel, and lining

and repair techniques to make the information accessible for our Readers. **Jill Gurney** and **Dominique Moussou** have been kept very busy with these of late.

**Sarah Bunn** has been treating an interesting collection of tracing paper maps of the Darling Downs and Murrumbidgee River Districts drawn by the Surveyor Townsend in 1852. This collection appears to be unique in its format, as most other surveyors used field books and other paper formats to record their findings. The plans and maps are wonderful in their detail and are beautifully drawn. Sarah has been humidifying and encapsulating the forty-some plans so that one of our readers can complete his book about the squatter holdings and farming properties of that era.

### People News

**Dominique** has increased her days to two per week for the start of 2009. We were sad to see **Sarah** leave us to take up a position at the Art Gallery of NSW at the end of 2008 – but we wish Sarah well in her new endeavours! **Jill** is continuing her part-time contract and **Carol Marsh** is returning to us after a long break in the UK visiting family and friends. **Elizabeth** is still feeling overwhelmed as the only full-time permanent conservator in the team at present!

## Powerhouse Museum

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### Lab News

The Exhibition team was kept busy prior to Christmas preparing and installing objects for *Star Wars: Where Science Meets Imagination*, an exhibition developed by the Museum of Science, Boston, USA and Lucasfilm Ltd. The exhibition includes over 80 models, props and costumes from all six *Star Wars* films and highlights real world technologies that are rapidly making the *Star Wars* fantasy a reality.

The team assisted with installation of Luke's original landspeeder from Episode IV *A New Hope*, scale models of X- and

Y-wing starfighters, the Rebel Blockade Runner Tantive IV and the Royal Naboo Starship. Costumes of some of the unique *Star Wars* characters include Wookiees from Kashyyyk, snowtroopers from Hoth, and Jawas from Tatooine plus an original yoda puppet.

**Dave Rockell** and **Skye Mitchell** finished preparing objects for the touring exhibition, *Great Collections*, which they will also install and dismantle at five regional galleries in NSW. Organised and presented by Museums & Galleries NSW, *Great Collections* offers an unprecedented look at the history of collecting in Australia. Objects include the first botanical specimens gathered by Sir Joseph Banks on Captain Cook's voyage of 1770 (from the National Herbarium of NSW) and a 2006 parody of a celebration of Cook's landing by Aboriginal artist, Daniel Boyd (from the Museum of Contemporary Art). The exhibition is a display of over 115 rare and significant art, objects and documents from a number of institutions including the Powerhouse Museum. The exhibition has now been dismantled from the first venue, Campbelltown Arts Centre and re-installed at the Tweed Regional Gallery in far northern NSW.

**Teresa Werstak** prepared and installed 110 objects for *Living in a sensory world: stories from people with blindness and low vision*. This exhibition gives visitors an understanding of the world of the blindness and low vision community, and their achievements. It features objects from Vision Australia's heritage collection, compelling accounts and examples of new technologies that are increasing the independence of thousands of Australians.

**Sue Gatenby** and **James Elwing** have been investigating the damage caused to a book displayed using Mylar® strips to secure the open pages. Underneath the Mylar® strip the paper was of uniform pale paper colour as opposed to the other sections which were darkened. What has caused this damage? – does the Mylar® act as a filter or cause differential fading? What part does the light play in the process? Some have suggested reflection of the light from the Mylar® strips. Others believe that light plays no part

in this reaction but that contaminants in the air are responsible – or is it the age of the paper or amount of lignin? Usually the solution is to not use Mylar® at all or to cover the entire page with a sheet of Mylar®. After some discussion with staff, and Elizabeth Hadlow from State Records NSW, Sue Gatenby and Teresa Werstak will further investigate this issue by running a series of simple experiments.

**Gosia Dudek** has been busy working on the Bosdyk dolls house, which was acquired by the museum in 2006. A great example of the art of the miniature showing extraordinary attention to detail characteristic of traditional Dutch dolls houses, it was made by Dutch immigrants Frans and Christina Bosdyk in Picton, New South Wales, between 1997 and 2006. It has 20 rooms on five levels and contains over 1,000 pieces of miniature furniture, household items, musical instruments, ornaments and dolls.

Gosia is preparing the dolls house for display at the museum. The work involves cleaning the house and its contents and attaching as many loose pieces as possible following the original set-up. During this process she has come across a few surprises – for example a tiny bible with microscopic text, beautifully made 10mm long leather shoes and grandma's dentures hidden in the top drawer of her dresser.

**Kate Chidlow** has been working on the Australian Dress Register which the Powerhouse Museum launched with a seminar called "Behind the Seams". It is an online resource, similar in concept to the National Quilt Register. The register will document significant men's, women's and children's dress in NSW dating up to 1945. It is aimed at helping museums and private collectors recognise and research their dress collections. It will also offer support for better care and management. It is hoped to record this information while it is still available and within living memory.

Kate is also involved with planning the annual preservation day at the Powerhouse Discovery Centre, which will be held on March 14. The event was

very successful last year, with conservators stationed at four advice banks in the display store. Members of the public are invited to bring along objects and seek advice about preserving their treasures. This year, conservators will be doing treatment demonstrations, a lecture on paper preservation and the advice banks, as well as a children's workshop.

**Nadia McDougall, Margaret Juraszek and Frances Fitzpatrick** have been kept busy working on a variety of outgoing loans. One problematic loan was of 4 Charles Aisen sculptures to the Jewish Museum of Australia in Melbourne. There was a high risk of damage to these fragile tin pieces in transit, but was thankfully prevented by the combined efforts of registration and conservation in the crate fit out.

**Rebecca Main and Chris Brothers** have been working on an as yet undated, very dirty and faded early daguerreotype of Collins Street Melbourne. Very little of the image was visible to the eye, or with straight photography, before treatment.

Rebecca documented its condition and disassembled the packaging, cleaned the daguerreotype plate with a photographic puffer to remove loose specks of dirt and small fragments of paper, removed corrosion from the metal matte, cleaned the glass and leather case, and reassembled it all.

Chris Brothers took photos and details of the image in negative and positive which were photo-shopped to produce a composite image, revealing the whole image clearly.

Curator **Geoff Barker** will now be able to determine the date of the photograph by studying previously unseen details of the image and maker's marks on the plate.

Rebecca, Chris, **Tasha MacFarlane** and James Elwing will continue to photograph, condition report, treat and re-house using zeolite containing materials, about 60 more Daguerreotypes and Ambrotypes which are part of the early photographic collection.

## People News

As mentioned in the last edition, in 2007 **Jennifer Edmonds** was fortunate enough to be the inaugural recipient of the (NSW) Office of Rail Heritage-sponsored Churchill Fellowship. In July last year she embarked on a three and a half month tour of 39 organisations in five countries, studying how steam locomotives are interpreted and conserved in museums, and how operational locomotives are maintained and refurbished (or restored) at heritage railways. Jennifer was particularly interested in collecting policies, object care philosophies and how different organisations determine which objects will be conserved and displayed and which will be operated as part of their interpretation.

To this end Jennifer visited a number of heritage railways that are purely commercial operations run entirely by paid staff, some run solely by volunteers and others with a mix of both. She met with branch-line railways as well as main-line operators, museums that have only static rolling stock, museums that operate their own rolling stock and operators with their own museums. She also visited a number of steam locomotive and/or boiler manufacturers and repairers, to view the kinds of equipment they have available to them and the kinds of work they are able to produce – work that is currently impossible in Australia due to a lack of space, skills and equipment.

Jennifer spent a number of days at some of the world's greatest railway museums, such as the National Railway Museum at York (UK) and the California State Railroad Museum (US), where she met with collections staff, toured workshops and stores and was treated to their wonderful interpretative displays. Other highlights included a day out on the Rigi rack railway in Switzerland – where staff spoke no English and much of the communication happened through miming – the Talyllyn Railway in Wales – where the staff and volunteers treat their 140-year-old locomotives with enormous care and respect – and a seven-hour trip on the Durango & Silverton Railroad in Colorado that stretched to 12 hours after

a snowfall caused avalanches and broken rails!

Jennifer's report has been submitted to the Churchill Trust and will be available on their website ([www.churchilltrust.com.au](http://www.churchilltrust.com.au)) in the near future. The fellowships are open to all Australians over the age of 18 who wish to develop skills or knowledge in their professional field of endeavour. Information and applications are available through the website.

## SLNSW

### Lab News

**Steve Bell, Cathryn Bartley, and Cecilia Harvey** recently prepared and installed material for the Library's *Heritage Collection 2009* display. This year a diverse range of material ranging from artists' books, the collection of PL Travers (author of *Mary Poppins*) and historic firearms will be on display.

**Tracey Golds, Anna Brooks, and now Nikki Ellis and Cecilia Harvey** have been working on the *Great Collections of New South Wales*. This exhibition offers an unprecedented look at the history of collecting in Australia and is a joint venture between several museums and galleries of NSW and has been organised by Museums and Galleries NSW. It is a remarkable display of over 115 rare and significant art, objects, documents and curiosities from some of the country's oldest, most unique and most important public collecting agencies – and a fascinating look at the business of public collecting in Australia. The exhibition will be touring regional NSW galleries for most of the year.

Assistant Conservators **Cathryn Bartley, Martin Bongiorno, Martin Polkinghorne, Martina Muller, Aileen Dean-Raschilla and Jessica O'Donnell** have been treating and rehousing 300 bibles. The bibles are from the Richardson collection and form part of the electronic records (e-records) project. The e-records project aims to



electronically catalogue the Library's existing card catalogue. Cath, Martin B, Martin P, Martina, Aileen and Jess have also been treating and rehousing 78 WWII posters – newspaper headlines from 1940-1941.

### People News

In mid November last year **Trish Leen, Martin Bongiorno, Catherine Thomson, Guy Caron** and **Andrew Lamoreaux** contributed to the State Library staff exhibition *Unclassified*. For the first time, more than 30 State Library staff will be displaying personal creative work in foyers, corridors and cases around the Library. *Unclassified* is on display until 1 February and includes painting, sculpture, jewellery, graphic art and photography.

Anna Brooks recently welcomed Edward Brooks into the world and is currently on maternity leave.

### Preservation Australia

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Preservation Australia continues to expand and we are very pleased to announce that **Tegan Anthes** is staying on for another year.

We are also pleased to announce that the revamped website was launched at the AICCM NSW AGM in September last year. A full product price list is now available to be downloaded and all the products are listed with images (well, most of them), prices and information. We have also just put up our seminar and workshop calendar for 2009.

During the last few months of 2008 Tegan and Kay were busy visiting various institutions around Australia – if we haven't visited you yet we are on our way! We discussed some of our exciting new products and the possibility of developing some mid-career conservation workshops for 2009. We have a few ideas of international guests that could run very interesting sessions on their specialities. *Is there an area of conservation that you would like a*

*workshop on? Please contact PA with your suggestions.*

The melding of conservation expertise with archival products continues to provide innovative ideas and product lines. This includes the development of a specialised sleeve with a multi purpose use. Named the Jordan-Jones (after **Megan Jordan-Jones** who designed the sleeve while at the AWM) this sleeve has been in production for awhile now, and is primarily aimed at storing medals, badges and coins. Details will soon be on the website.

### International Conservation Services

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#### Lab News

The Paper lab has been focused on cleaning a substantial part of the University of Sydney Library's rare book collection, with **Felicity Turner** utilising a wonderful team of vacationing students.

The Paintings Lab is preparing for the cleaning of the murals in St Helen and St Constantine's Greek Orthodox Church in Perth, for which we have convinced **Adam Godijn** to return from his trek in the Himalayas to be joined by **Anna Diakowska-Czarnota, Arek Werstak, Matteo Volonte, Noel Turner** and **Melissa Harvey**.

At the same time, in the Textiles lab, **Skye Firth** has been working on a large theatrical kimono, as well as preparing a large collection of wool tapestries for the Department of Education.

It was a day of mixed emotions this month when **Oliver Hull** and **Kat Edghill** of the Furniture department bid farewell to the Hamilton Inn sofa, which has returned to its TMAG home, following extensive conservation works (and much debate) over the last year.

**Karina Acton** and **Wendi Powell** continue to brave the summer heat to clean outdoor sculptures in bronze and

stainless steel for the Royal Botanic Gardens, the City of Sydney and in various private collections.

### People News

**Fiona Tennant** welcomed a new addition to her family in January, a baby girl named Chloe. Both mother and baby are doing well, and we are having great difficulty keeping her away from work! Meanwhile, back in the lab, we have also had the pleasure of working with Melbourne University intern **Laura Curtis**, who has helped out in all departments, but was primarily working with the Objects team.

### Victoria

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### National Gallery of Victoria

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#### Lab News

In Photographs Conservation **Belinda Gourley** has developed a new hinging system for the display of works by American photographer David Stephenson for display in the exhibition *Shared Sky* which opens at NGV Australia in March. In Paper Conservation **Ruth Shervington** is treating iron staining on two William Hogarth prints and Louise Wilson is treating a pen and ink drawing by Giambattista Tiepolo in preparation for the exhibition *Satirical Eye* which opens at NGV International in February.

In the Paintings Conservation studio there are a number of major projects still in progress: **Raye Collins** is working on Fred McCubbin's *Melbourne, 1888*, **John Payne** and **Carl Villis** are carrying out consolidation on Giambattista Tiepolo's *The Finding of Moses*, and **Michael Varcoe-Cocks** is cleaning Theodore Rousseau's *Landscape with a clump of trees*.

The Textiles lab is now busy working on textiles for two exhibitions *Persuasion: Fashion in the time of Jane Austin* and

*Dressed to Rule*, an exhibition of Chinese Imperial Robes. **Solitaire Osei**, **Christina Ritschel** and **Kate Douglas** are busy working to get textiles conserved to meet the exhibition catalogue photography deadlines and **Annette Soumilas** has been working part time to produce display underpinnings for the Persuasion costumes. The large quilt by an unknown maker from 1840's which the lab worked on in October and November is now installed at Federation Square and has attracted a lot of attention through visitor numbers and interest from the Press.

**MaryJo Lelyveld** has been removing brass particle paint covering the surface of the original frame for the painting *Quatre Bras* by Elizabeth Butler-Thompson, dated 1875. This unique frame features delicate incised decoration, naming famous battles fought by the regiment, within broad matt water gilded passages. MaryJo used a Wolbers gel to remove the bulk of the paint, while retaining the original ormolu surface coating on the gilding. The remnants of paint required neat solvent compresses and more active mechanical techniques. Ingilding has been undertaken using Plextol B500 to ingild the gold leaf, followed by toning with Orasol dyes in a matte MSA varnish. **Suzi Shaw** is investigating the dating and originality of various pieces of furniture. With advice received from the Metropolitan Museum of Art, she has confirmed the originality of the caned upholstery on *Day bed* by Giles Grendy c. 1735-40. **Ruth Goris** has repaired the frame on a horse painting by J.F. Herring which was missing the entire top edge ornament. In researching frames for paintings by Eugène von Guérard, **Holly McGowan-Jackson** has noted several frames that appear to have been made by the same Melbourne frame maker during the 1850's and early 1860's. The frame maker is yet to be identified. The frames have scrolling or c-curve strap work ornament, decorative corners, and such distinctive structural features as a butt-jointed bevelled baton at the back edge.

**Catherine Earley** has been evaluating a 'green' product called Echopanel. This

has been proposed as a wall covering for an upcoming exhibition. Made of PET it is marketed as useful for desk partitioning. Tests for acidity were negative and **Ian Batterham** has kindly taken receipt of some for testing at NAA so the results should appear on their helpful table of materials soon. If it is stable/viable, perhaps it will be the first of many new 'green' products to be presented for a conservation tick by Exhibition Design.

### People News

In November 2008, **Helen Nodding** was employed on a six-month contract by the National Gallery of Victoria (NGV) as their Conservation Project Officer. Her role is to assist the Head of Conservation in reviewing existing NGV conservation policies and drafting new ones. Helen came to the NGV from London's Victoria & Albert Museum where she had pioneered a new role as the Condition Reporting Administrator, reviewing and overseeing their condition reporting process. An article about her work will be published shortly in the V&A's next Conservation Journal.

Paper Conservation intern **Elisabetta Polidori** is currently in Florence treating a series of Chinese paintings for the Pitti Palace. Whilst in Italy Elisabetta is also carrying out research into the blue paper used by both Giambattista and Giandomenico Tiepolo for their chalk drawings to assist with the attribution of a Tiepolo drawing recently acquired by the NGV.

Kate Douglas and Solitaire Osei's abstract has been accepted for the NATCC (North American Textile Conservation Conference) Quebec, for September 09 and they will be writing a presenting a paper on the work carried on the NGV's *Black in Fashion* exhibition.

The specialist knowledge of our paintings conservators is being put to good use with John Payne co-curating the exhibition *Bugatti: Carlo, Rembrandt, Ettore, Jean* while Michael Varcoe-Cocks is co-curator of a major exhibition on Eugene von Guérard. Carl Villis is writing a book about his research into the newly

discovered portrait of Lucrezia Borgia (c.1518) by the Ferrarese painter Dosso Dossi. Carl is also continuing a scientific research project with **Deborah Lau** and **Peter Lynch** of CSIRO on Dosso Dossi's unusual imprimatura layers, a project carried out at the ALS synchrotron in Berkeley, California. For this project cross-section samples of Dosso paintings from the National Gallery in London, the National Gallery of Art in Washington and the Getty Museum in Los Angeles have been analysed and compared.

### Heritage Victoria

2008 was an extremely busy year for the Heritage Victoria Conservation Lab as **Isa Loo** can attest to. Among her many other conservation duties since joining Heritage Victoria, Isa coordinated the initial treatment phase of the Pentridge Prison leather and textile material that was unearthed – in all there were over 300 items that required treatment in that stage. Isa was ably assisted in this huge job by several University of Melbourne conservation students; **Sheldon Teare**, **Stuart Fuller Sarah Babister**, **Jen Fortune**, **Kate McLaren**, **Reyhane Mirabootalebi**, **Charlotte Walker** and **Vanessa Pitt**. Thank you to all students for both your time and your efforts; this is greatly appreciated by Heritage Victoria.

**Susie Collis** returned to the lab at the start of January 2009 after completing a secondment elsewhere within Heritage Victoria's and is looking forward to being back in the lab. She is currently supervising CCMC student **Mel Wilkinson** during her work placement. Susie, as the newly appointed lab team leader will be co-ordinating the day to day operation of the conservation laboratory.

For the latter half of 2008, Heritage Victoria's senior conservator **Jenny Dickens** assessed a record number of applications for the object conservation and collection management grant program for Heritage Victoria. Jenny also supervised Sheldon Teare for his

conservation internship which was based in the lab and provided guidance to Isa Loo in setting up the treatment project for the Pentridge Prison leather and textile objects. Isa and the many volunteer students were very fortunate to gain some insight into specific aspects of archaeological conservation from Jenny who shared her expertise on several occasions in the latter half of 2008.

Finally, it is with sadness that we say goodbye to Isa Loo, who has decided to go west and take up a position at the Western Australian Museum in their Department of Materials Conservation. Thank you Isa for your excellent work at the lab over the past year, you will definitely be missed but we wish you all the best for the move and for your new position.

## Centre for Cultural Materials Conservation, The University of Melbourne

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### Lab News

Staff are preparing for the beginning of the 2009 Academic Year commencing in early March. This year we again have a strong interest in the Masters by coursework and minor thesis. We are running the very successful Chemistry Bridging Course in February. The course is recommended for students who lack a background in chemistry or who wish to revise its basic concepts and practice. The course has been specifically developed to teach the fundamentals of chemistry to those entering the Master of Arts in Cultural Material Conservation. Also in February, three subjects for the Postgraduate Certificate in Arts (Photographic Conservation) are being offered; Preventive Care of Photographs and Film, Photographic Materials and Techniques, and Duplication, Archiving and Preservation. These three subjects are being presented by **Clara von Waldthausen**, an experienced photographic conservator and educator based in Amsterdam. See the CCMC

website for further information. [www.culturalconservation.unimelb.edu.au](http://www.culturalconservation.unimelb.edu.au)

Amongst the usual array of private and University collection treatments, paintings conservators (**Caroline Fry**, **Vanessa Kowalski** and **Catherine Nunn**) have been undertaking research into a collection of paintings on unusual Australian supports from a regional Victorian collection. The results of the research on these unique artworks will be published in the next *Melbourne Journal of Technical Studies in Art*, which focuses on Supports. This will be the third in the series, the first two journals having focused on frames and underdrawing.

In late 2008, paintings, paper and frames staff (**Catherine Nunn**, **Olivia Cranstone**, **Kellie Slape**, **Libby Melzer**, **Briony Pemberton**, **Jordi Casasayas** and **Sean Loughrey**) worked on a series of oil portraits and drawings of Australian poets and writers by artist Louis Kahan AO (1905-2002). The drawings are part of the Baillieu Library Collection at the University. These works are on display at the Ian Potter Museum of Art until mid April.

In December **Jude Fraser** treated three cardboard models, c. 1860, of St John's Church, Hobart and the two adjoining orphan school buildings, buildings designed by Tasmanian architect John Lee Archer in the 1830's. The models, attributed to Tasmanian convicts, were treated on-site in the church as they were too fragile to travel. Cleaning and repair work were undertaken, frequently with the accompaniment of the church organist who was practicing on the 1896 William Hill organ.

### People News

In January we welcomed back paintings conservator **Jocelyn Evans**, who has been overseas since July 2007, undertaking an advanced fellowship at the Strauss Conservation Centre at Harvard Art Museums, Boston. Her fellowship research project focussed on the technical investigation of a 16th Century Italian panel painting. She also

gained some experience in the world of private conservation in the US, working in Houston, Texas for Whitten and Proctor Fine Art Conservation Studio.

## NAA Melbourne

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### Lab News

The lab's 'Conservator on Duty' program continues to provide plenty of items for treatment from our Reading Rooms at North Melbourne; this will ensure that the section is kept busy on an ongoing basis.

The repackaging team have been working on sorting and repackaging images from our ABC collection, including a number of official press stills of celebrities and prominent people dating from the 1960's – a definite trip down a red-carpeted memory lane. In addition to this, the team have been undertaking work on a large amount of HMAS Sydney related files, and have just begun work on the last of the Wool Board series, which will complete project work that has been ongoing for several years.

The Preservation Digitisation Team has been working on some interesting items, including promotional material from the Board of Trade, and original plans for GPO buildings. They have recently finished scanning the plans for the Fort Building at Queenscliff.

As part of the Immigration Museum's 'Customs' and 'Getting In' galleries, the NAA were able to loan a number of interesting objects for their display, including some fine crafted historical measuring devices such as hydrometers. **Sarah Gubby** and **David Parker** had the privilege to prepare these objects in time for their install before Christmas.

The National Archives are presenting a series of 'The Constitution Founders' lectures. The most recent presentation, held at the Supreme Law Court in Melbourne, was titled "Andrew Inglis Clark – The man and his legacy" and was delivered by The Hon Justice Peter



Heerey. **Debra Parry** and David Parker were involved in preparing selected items for display and to assist on the day.

### People News

There is plenty to report on Staffing news. Firstly, all the repackaging staff have been converted to non-ongoing NAA contracts. Congratulations to **Luke McKay** on the birth of his baby son Thomas and to Sarah Gubby for completing her current Cert IV in Training and Assessment. Equally, a big well done to **Amy Bartlett** and **Alexa McNaught-Reynolds** for completing the course work for their Masters of Arts in Cultural Materials Conservation. If this wasn't enough, they have also undertaken a Postgraduate Certificate in photographic conservation for which only one subject remains. **Debra Parry** is currently working a four-day week to enable her work continue her consultancy work with Heritage Victoria.

## ACT

### National Collections Preservation Committee (NCPC)

The NCPC represents the heads of Conservation in the Commonwealth cultural institutions. This includes the National Library of Australia, National Museum, National Gallery, National Film and Sound Archives, National Maritime Museum and the Australian War Memorial. The Committee also has representation from Old Parliament House and Parliament House on occasion. The current chair of the Committee is **Jennifer Lloyd**, Manager, Preservation Services, National Library of Australia. (02) 6262 1223. [jlloyd@nla.gov.au](mailto:jlloyd@nla.gov.au).

The Committee continues to liaise with the University of Canberra on the new Conservation course that commences in a few weeks. The first year of study for students involves studying subjects

that are already run by the University as part of other heritage and museum courses. The second year of the course will involve practical conservation work that will take place within the Federal cultural institutions. The University has appointed a Course Convenor but unfortunately they do not commence work until June 2009. The finer details of how students will be taught conservation skills is still to be ironed out and will be documented in MOUs between the University and the Institutions.

### Australian War Memorial

#### Lab News

In the Paper lab, time was when the weeks either side of the New Year were a time for housekeeping and reflection; not any more! **Nick Zihrul** has been busy treating works on paper by **Max Ragless** for a small exhibition entitled "Mobilising the Home Front". Ragless, a self-taught South Australian artist (and vigneron!) had the interesting technique of combining traditional watercolour and drawing media with diluted oil paints thus achieving intensely coloured "washes". **Bernard Kertesz** has been preparing items for a large travelling exhibition on animals in war whilst **Helen Butler** has been preparing a large photographic exhibition for travel.

In the Objects Lab **Rebecca Dallwitz** and **Melanie Forward** are working on the final objects selected for the travelling exhibition "A is for Animals" which will open at the AWM in late February. **Eileen Procter** has been cleaning a group of objects that were used during the making of the AWM's Long Tan gallery film in 2007. **George Bailey** is preparing a bronze horse head for its integration into a new memorial dedicated to animals in war. The horse head was originally part of a memorial to ANZAC troops in Port Said, Egypt. The original memorial was destroyed by Egyptians during the Suez Crisis in the 1956, because they saw it as a symbol of British colonialism.

After a very busy 2008 the Objects Lab is looking forward to a quieter year in 2009, with the opportunity to catch up on some outstanding tasks, such as condition reporting and the identification and correct storage of radioactive and pharmaceutical collection items.

**Bridie Kirkpatrick, Jessie Firth, and Sarah Clayton** with **Tessa Ivison** guidance are broadening their skill by learning about the conservation of the taxidermied animals in the AWM's collection. Many of the animals are going on display in the travelling exhibition "A is for Animals".

Large Technology Objects (LTO) workshop is working on several projects for the first half of this year. The first is the conservation of the Mk IV Female tank, including full repaint inside and out. Construction of a Boulton Paul turret for the Hudson bomber is under way from a large pile of bent and corroded components. Conservation of a Jungle Hand Cart is also being carried out.

#### Paper News

The Paper Lab is looking forward to **Karen Holloway** joining us as our new paper conservator in March. We will also be welcoming back **Alexa McNaught Reynolds** who will join us, on contract, in March. **Lidija Trpcevska-Josevska** is looking forward to attending the first two modules of the photographs and film intensive at the Centre for Cultural Materials Conservation. The organisers of Business Continuity Awareness Week have invited **Bernard Kertesz** to present a paper at their Canberra launch, on the history and operations of the Disasters ACT network (DISACT). In 2009 DISACT celebrates its tenth birthday.

## National Library of Australia

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The Preservation Services staff at the National Library of Australia continue to work on items that are likely to be displayed in the Library's Treasures Exhibition. The main exhibition space at the Library will be closed in October 2009 and a redevelopment project will see the creation of a permanent exhibition space that will display 'treasures' from the Library's collections. Staff are currently working on items that will be displayed in the April 2009 exhibition which will be a 'sampler' for items displayed in the Treasures Gallery when it is opened in November 2010.

Reformatting staff at the Library, **Patricia Crampin** and **Jutta Crosthwaite-Klein**, continue to work on preparation of a Chinese collection called the London Missionary Collection. This collection consists of over 680 items (an item may be as many as 25 volumes) which are books bound in Eastern style bindings. The items are being disbound and repaired prior to digitisation. Work on this collection has been ongoing for the past three years and is likely to be completed in the 2009/2010 financial year. The entire collection will then be available online through the Library's catalogue. This is the first collection of this type that has been digitised and was selected because it is rare and valuable and testing showed that microfilming was not able to sufficiently reproduce the Chinese script.

The Conservation staff, **Sophie Lewincamp**, **Lydia Preiss**, **Lisa Jeong-Reuss**, **Susanne Wullen** and **Janet McDonald**, continue to work on the various treatment programs for the Library. This includes surveying and treating items that are scheduled for digitisation in our routine digitisation program, preparing items for exhibitions, treating items that were identified for treatment by users of the collection and mopping up various water disasters. Workmen in the building continue to be the main source of disasters.

The Library's bookbinders, **David Roberts** and new recruit **Anthony Shaw**, are working on educating collection managers and stack staff on how to decide if a book needs to be repaired. With so many books in the collections it is not possible to repair every book and decisions need to be made about when an item can be discarded and a new copy purchased and when an item should be repaired. Sometimes it is appropriate to do nothing and just return the item to the stacks untreated.

## National Archives of Australia – National Office, Canberra

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### Lab news

**Ian Batterham** has recently returned from his time writing policy and is now overseeing the laboratories in Canberra and Sydney. He also oversees Preservation Digitisation and Exhibition conservation.

**Tania Riviere** has been appointed Laboratory manager in Canberra and now looks after our team of conservation staff.

**Travis Taylor** continues work on a large ferrogallic architectural print of the old Victoria Bridge in Brisbane. He has been experimenting with the use of a colour laser printer to produce infills.

**Sally Kneebone** continues work on a series of blueprints from the River Murray Commission. She is also working on a series of treaties recently transferred from the Dept of Foreign Affairs.

**Kylie Roth** our exhibitions conservator has been very busy over the Christmas period with numerous installations, deinstallations and loans. At the time of writing she is in Ipswich pulling down the 'It's a Dog's Life' exhibition.

**Alison McCrindle** is now our preventive conservator, filling **Ellie McFadyen's** (metaphorically) large shoes.

**Cheryl Jackson** has moved to Jervis Bay for two years but is still working part time for the Archives (nice work if you can get it!). She is working on policy documents relating to our photographic holdings as well as presenting workshops and writing information pieces on conservation of photographs.

**Peter Shaw** has been busy managing the Preservation Digitisation teams in Sydney, Melbourne and Canberra since December and has been conducting workshops on photographic preservation in conjunction with the Archives' Summers Past Exhibition at NSW regional centres.

Sadly **Jess Wignell** has been lured to the NMA. But on a bright note, **Clair Murray** will be returning to work on 4 February after being off for 12 months with her second baby (Lennox, younger brother of Bella).

**Dara Rome** is still working for us on a part time basis. She is working in our policy section preparing documents on handling mould and basic conservation procedures.

SA

## Artlab

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The objects lab has been working through a large number of treatments on private ceramic works such as plates and figurines. The objects lab was lucky enough to host mid career intern **Abby Maxwell-Brown** in December. Abby worked primarily on a range of plant fibre ceremonial costumes from Papua New Guinea, and it was great to have someone with her experience in the lab. **Mary-Anne Gooden** has returned from her studies in Melbourne for a month of work with us. We have all appreciated having **Filipa Quintela** continue her volunteer work with us.

## Projects

**Di Whittle** and **Zandria Farrell** have been busy out on site with bronze and stone treatments on various memorials and sculptures including the Light horse and War horse memorials and the Cross of Sacrifice, as well as works by Clifford Last, Guy and Arthur Boyd, Greg Johns, and Bert Flugelman. They have also been managing some large sculpture relocations, graffiti attacks and extensive vandalism repairs. In December conservation/restoration work was begun on the 'Favourite' a circa 1919 motorcycle, which is a significant object from the Birdwood, National Motor Museum collection.

## Paintings

**Rita Bachmayer** has been preparing several paintings, owned by the Art Gallery of South Australia, by Nora Heysen. The works are being prepared for loan for an upcoming exhibition of Nora Heysen's paintings which opens at Carrick Hill and will then be travelling to several regional galleries. **Lisette Burgess** is currently applying compo ornament to a Hans Heysen replica frame for a painting which is part of the Hans Heysen Exhibition at the Art Gallery of South Australia. **Eugene Taddeo** and **Marek Pacyna** have been working on several paintings by the early 20<sup>th</sup> century South Australian artist, John Giles. These works are being prepared for an upcoming exhibition of the artist's work at the South Australian Maritime Museum. **Chris Payne** has been putting the finishing touches on "The Horse Muster" by Thomas Clarke. The painting is owned by the Art Gallery of South Australia and has had extensive areas of old, discoloured retouching removed as part of its treatment. **Gillian Leahy** has been working on "Portrait of the Artist's Wife" by John Longstaff. The painting is also owned by the Art Gallery of South Australia. The treatment has included cleaning, infilling and in-painting.

## Textiles

**Kristin Phillips** is currently in Yogyakarta, Indonesia giving a workshop on Disaster Preparedness and Collections Management, in collaborating with Sandra Yee (from the MAGNT).

## Paper

The Paper lab is in a state of flux at the moment. **Colin Brown** and **Michael Veitch** will both be leaving the books conservation team. **Charlotte Park** will also be departing from the paper team for a year of adventuring overseas. **Robyn Tait** has gone some way to balancing these departures, when she took up the role of Principal Conservator in the lab. She has very capably taken on the role of heading up the lab. **Helen Szuster** has also temporarily joined the lab whilst on holidays from her conservation studies at Melbourne University. **Sangousansinh Phrasavat**, a paper conservator from Ecole de Condé in Paris will be with the paper team until mid March.

## People News

Congratulations go to **Joanna Barr** on the birth of a baby girl, Nicola, born in December, mum, dad and baby are all doing well.

Artlab was privileged to host John Holden in January. John is the author of "It's a material world, caring for the public realm" a paper commissioned by the Demos Foundation in London, as a result of the proposed closure of the TCC, Textiles Conservation Centre by the University of Southampton.





## MayDay 2009

### This May, take at least one of the following steps to prepare your organisation for disaster response:

- Dust off your disaster plan and make sure it's up to date or make a timeline for developing one.
- Download and use a copy of *Be Prepared* – guidelines for writing a disaster preparedness plan: <http://www.collectionsaustralia.net/search.php?search=be+prepared>
- Update your staff contact information.
- Identify and prioritise important collection materials.
- Identify the three biggest risks to your collection or heritage site.
- Get to know your local firefighters and police – invite them to tour your organisation and give you pointers on safety and preparedness.
- Conduct a building evacuation drill and evaluate the results.
- Eliminate hazards such as storage in hallways, blocked fire exits, or improper storage of paints, solvents, etc.
- Make a plan to install any needed safety systems.
- Find a 'buddy' collecting organisation to work with in case of a disaster. A model for collaboration is DIS-ACT: <http://www.anbg.gov.au/disact/>
- Provide staff with easily accessible disaster response information, such as is provided by the Australian government's website, Emergency Management Australia: [http://www.ema.gov.au/agd/EMA/emaInternet.nsf/Page/Emergency\\_Management](http://www.ema.gov.au/agd/EMA/emaInternet.nsf/Page/Emergency_Management)
- Arrange or attend emergency response training days on firefighting, crowd control, flood water management etc., or a workshop on disaster preparedness for collections.
- Promote **MayDay** to your colleagues by posting this flier on notice boards in your heritage organisation, and by discussing with colleagues what you will do to mark MayDay on 1 May 2009, and throughout the month of May.
- **Contact the Collections Council of Australia in mid-April to request a media kit for promoting your MayDay activities.**



## An Interview – Catherine Nunn

**Catherine Nunn** is a senior painting conservator at the Centre for Cultural Materials Conservation (CCMC), University of Melbourne. She currently manages the fee-for-service paintings section at CCMC, and also teaches in the Masters program. Catherine has a Bachelor of Applied Science in conservation of cultural materials (University of Canberra) and was a post-graduate intern at the Ian Potter Art Conservation Centre in 1999. She then worked at the Auckland Art Gallery, New Zealand and undertook a two-year advanced internship in the Conservation of Easel Paintings at the Hamilton Kerr Institute (University of Cambridge) (2003-2005). She returned to Australia to CCMC in 2007. She is also currently undertaking a Master of Arts by research (part-time) to investigate the materials and techniques of E. Phillips Fox.

Julian Bickersteth recently caught up with her.



### ***Can you tell us about how you came into conservation?***

I first learnt about conservation through a tour of Artlab when I was at school in Adelaide. To me, it seemed like the perfect blend of art, history and science. I took a gap year during which time I did volunteer work at Artlab and undertook some foundation training at the North Adelaide and Central Schools of Art in Adelaide. Then I began my formal training in conservation at the course in Canberra.

### ***What training did you receive in Australia?***

I completed the Bachelor of Applied Science in the Conservation of Cultural Materials, specialising in Painting Conservation in 1998. Over the University summer breaks I also worked at Artlab and the National Gallery of Victoria, which I believe was essential to get some more practical experience to top up the limited hands-on experience that was available during the course. I also did some Art History study at the Australian National University during my degree. After Uni I was a post-graduate intern at the Ian Potter Art Conservation Centre at the University of Melbourne (now CCMC).

### ***What led you to seek further training and experience overseas?***

I had always wanted to live and work overseas, but I didn't really plan how this would happen; it just evolved. I had applied for internships in the US, but when I finished my internship in Melbourne I was offered a job at the Auckland Art Gallery, so I initially went to New Zealand. I hadn't really considered New Zealand before, but it was a good opportunity to gain some experience in a large gallery and work with some good conservators. However, it was the bright lights of London and the opportunities for travel in Europe that really excited me. I was interested in working on earlier European paintings and learning about traditional restoration techniques. I also wanted to be able to work closely with European restorers in a mentoring-type environment. So, in 2002 I left for the UK with a working holiday visa, but I did not have any work lined up in London before I left.

### ***What did you do and how easy did you find that experience?***

Initially, I did not find it all that difficult to get a job in London – within two weeks I was working in private studio, having been in touch with the British Association of Painting Conservator-Restorers (BAPCR) and registering with them that I was looking for work. I learnt

a lot of good practical skills from working in this studio, and an insight into the dealer market in London. However after three months in a very highly stressed, low waged environment, I was ready for some different experiences. I was offered work on a wall painting project in a church in Coventry (near Birmingham), on a week-on week-off roster. I spent the weeks off in London working for other private studios. Like Australia, the conservation world in the UK is relatively small, and once I knew a few people, the work was not too difficult to come by. During my first winter in the UK I spent a lot of time working in churches on various types of wall paintings, altarpieces and hatchments, as well as easel paintings.

Before leaving for the UK in 2002, I had applied for an internship at the Hamilton Kerr Institute (HKI) at the University of Cambridge. Because I had not arrived in the UK until after they interviewed the applicants, they could not consider me for the intake that year, but said to come and visit them as soon as I arrived to be considered for the next intake. So, four days after landing at Heathrow I was on the train up to Cambridge to have an interview. My jet lag musn't have been too bad as I was offered the internship the following year, but as it was unfunded I needed to raise some money. I spent the next few months applying for

various scholarships and was successful in three of these, and raised approximately \$35,000 to cover my living expenses and student fees.

This two-year advanced internship was the highlight of my time abroad. I worked with many highly skilled conservators and was able to work on many early European paintings from various public and private collections. I was also able to learn egg tempera retouching and gain experience in the structural treatment of panel paintings – both skills that were not taught in Australia. I also undertook a research project focusing on the conservation history of an eighteenth century collection in London.

After my internship I stayed on in the UK for another year or so and worked in a number of private studios. I felt that this experience was extremely valuable, as I worked closely with a variety of eminent conservators, and learnt something new nearly every day. I also was able to work on some of the most beautiful paintings in London, for clients willing to do whatever was needed to preserve their collections. While the work was physically and mentally demanding; normally 7 to 8 hours a day at the easel, sometimes re-touching all day, I felt that this was a very good way of honing my practical skills to be able to work quickly to a high standard.

***What perspective do you now have on Australian conservation training having worked overseas?***

During my time as an intern at the HKI, I worked alongside students undergoing post-graduate training in conservation, as well as other international interns who had trained in the US, Spain and Italy. Being exposed to different approaches to conservation from people with training from all over the world gave me perspective to assess how Australian training stacked-up internationally. I believe that the training I received at

Canberra gave me a good theoretical knowledge of conservation and collections management. However, developing my skills as a practical painting conservator came from my post-training experience, working closely with highly skilled practitioners. At the HKI, post-graduate students study in a working studio, 5 days a week, 9am-5pm for three full years. Lectures are incorporated into the working day, and with only two students per year, the student-teacher ratio is remarkable. Consequently, the students at the HKI receive far more individual attention than we did at Canberra. Despite this, I felt that the training I received at Canberra gave me a very good understanding of the materials science of all types of objects (not just paintings) and a broader understanding of collection management issues. I think it is important for all conservation graduates, not just Australian graduates, to be exposed to different approaches to conservation by working with conservators with a diverse range of training backgrounds. I believe it is important to remember that University based training can only take students so far, and it is up to the self motivation of students to gain more practical experience through work placements, and their own determination to develop their skills in their specialization – be it practical conservation, preventive conservation or collections management.

Thank you, Catherine



# General News

## Stories from the files: National Archives of Australia

*The Commonwealth Government records held by the National Archives of Australia contain many fascinating stories. Ian Batterham is researching a number of these for the AICCM Newsletter. This story comes from the mid-1960s and discusses the syllabus for cadet restorers at the Art Gallery of New South Wales. Unless otherwise referenced, all information is from Prime Ministers Department file: NAA A463/33, 1967/1063, Conservator of Paintings: Appointment of a Commonwealth Conservator.*

### Conservation training in Australia in the 1960s

The cadet restorer training program at the Art Gallery of New South Wales was mentioned in the previous story from the files. This program ran throughout the 1960s and produced a number of conservators who went on to carve out venerable careers. These include Indian conservator Annan Singh Bisht (who studied as part of the Colombo Plan); Alan Lloyd, Head of Conservation at the Art Gallery of New South Wales since 1977; Ian Cook, the first conservator at the National Library of Australia, who later managed Artlab and is now director of 3CS AsiaPacific; and Alan Byrne whose career included working as a senior painting conservator at the Art Gallery of South Australia, the Museum of Contemporary Art in Sydney, the National Gallery of Australia as well as a period as head of conservation at the Australian War Memorial.

A series of documents outlining the three-year syllabus for cadet restorers as at 1966 is in the file. The documents describe the topics covered in each year and include sample exam papers.

The first three months of the course are described as a practical component. Mr Ford and Mr Farris instructed the cadets in frame making, mount cutting, preparing support panels with sub-frames, the use of various adhesives and the mounting of works on paper. This was two one-hour periods each week.

At the same time William Boustead gave two half-hour lectures a week on 'types of painting supports from early to the present day' covering 'materials and methods of preparation, discussion and demonstration'. He also covered safety procedures with toxic materials. The cadets were also expected to carry out private study on Australian art and conservation.

At the end of three months the cadets were given an examination for aptitude. This involved cutting, assembling and finishing simple picture frames for an oil painting and a watercolour, cutting a mount and glass for a watercolour, and cutting and preparing a panel for mounting a damaged canvas. They also had an examination with questions on what they had learnt and general questions on art history.

The remainder of the first year involved training in a range of topics: manual dexterity; artists materials; media identification; identification of supports; identification of damage (mould, water stains, crackle, cleavage, pentimenti, retouched areas, insect damage to frames etc); safety measures with toxic and flammable materials; art history; art techniques; and simple cleaning methods using moderate solvents.

The second year covered: examination and reporting on stored paintings; calibration of thermohygroscopic instruments; care of print collection (in collaboration with Mr Farris); identification of graphic media; instruction on lining of paintings using suction and heat; sealing of

flaking or blistering paint; adhesives and filling media for lining, mounting and retouching; retouching of oils, tempera, watercolours, wax and other media; instructions on photography and darkroom procedures; use of scientific instruments; some deep-cleaning instruction; and simple research projects.

The third year covered: more advanced restoration methods; use of scientific apparatus, x-ray, ultra-violet ray, infra-red ray, for diagnosis; deterioration of works of art due to environmental, chemical processes, faulty techniques, microbiological forces, general ageing; preservation and correctives for this; and spurious and genuine detection.

The cadets were given an examination at the end of each year. The file contains exam papers but does not state the year they relate to.

There are four papers: oil painting, prints and drawings, chemistry, and art history. There were no yes/no or multiple choice questions, each required a written answer.

In the oil painting paper, after being asked to explain in some detail the types of crackle occurring in oil paintings (20 marks), cadets were asked – among other questions – what was meant by 'pentimento' (15 marks), what the term 'refractive index' implied and what part it played in oil painting (10 marks); why did lead white dry more quickly than other white pigments titanium and zinc (10 marks) and the advantages of damar resin over copal (5 marks).

The prints and drawings paper starts with a broad question on factors which cause deterioration of prints and drawings and steps to take to reduce them (20 marks) and a brief explanation of the major printmaking techniques (20 marks). Other questions included identifying the techniques used to produce sample

prints (10 marks); describing how to remove grease, water stains, fox marks and spilled ink from prints (10 marks); describing the effect of bleach on carbon black, fountain pen, iron gall and biro ball-pen (5 marks); describing the test required to determine whether bleach residues remained in a print after bleaching and explaining why this test is essential (10 marks); and describing how to rectify the low pH of a print.

The chemistry paper begins with a description of the structural formulae of various organic chemicals, mostly solvents (20 marks). Other questions include the difference between methane and methyl alcohol (15 marks); demonstrating knowledge of the hydroxyl group (10 marks), an isomer (5 marks) and Dalton's Atomic Theory (10 marks).

The final paper is on art history and is worth quoting at length, as an indication of what was considered important for a conservator to know at that time. The first question asks the cadet to explain the importance of the Heidelberg School in the history of Australian painting, also why it is so named and if there is good justification for the name (20 marks); the cadets then had to briefly indicate the style, period, and range of media and techniques for each of the following Australian artists: John Glover, Conrad Martens, ST Gill, John Russell, JJ Hilder, Lionel Lindsay, Margaret Preston, William Dobell, Russell Drysdale, Ian Fairweather and Leonard French.

Later art history questions ask the cadet to distinguish between earthenware, stoneware and porcelain, and to explain the terms ceramic, pottery and china (5 marks); to account for modern sculptors' preference for welding over modelling and carving techniques (5 marks); to explain the techniques of bronze casting (5 marks); to explain the significance of the Italian Renaissance and list the principal artists (20 marks); and to briefly explain the terms baroque, romanticism, expressionism and cubism (5 marks).

The cadetships offered at the Art Gallery

of New South Wales were the only training of conservators in Australia before the course at the then Canberra College of Advanced Education was established in 1978. The high calibre and subsequent careers of the cadetship graduates attests to the program's success. This is a credit to William Boustead and his staff. It is fascinating to have this insight into the curriculum and to see how it compares with conservation courses on offer today.

### NSW Division News

NSW Division held a number of events in 2008 that were very well attended and received by the membership. We intend to have a similar programme of events in 2009 and encourage members to get in touch with us if they have an idea for a tour, presentation or other event. Feedback from the audience has been to increase the number of presentations about treatments to encourage discussion about techniques, approaches and new treatment methods. Whether we can provide this depends on our NSW membership – we need you to be involved and let us know what you are doing!

We are currently planning tours at the Art Gallery of NSW in conjunction with some of their exhibitions this year, as well as tours of the Powerhouse Museum's Castle Hill storage facilities.

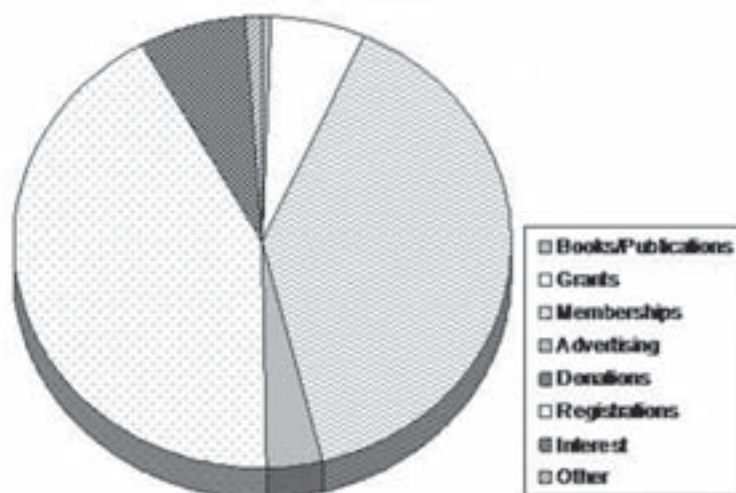
## The Search for Alternative Funding

### Dr Maria Kubik, AICCM National Treasurer

This is an ambitious year for the AICCM, with a new look and new paid administration staff. Long overdue, a financial review was undertaken in mid 2008 to pre-empt the usually difficult and expensive end of year audit. As a result, a number of changes have been implemented so that our accounts are easier to manage and the subsequent audit proved much quicker. The upfront costs incurred by the review should thus be earned back through leaner administration costs and cheaper audits in years to come.

In addition to the review, the improved image of website and streamlined newsletters have all had large start up costs, and impact on AICCM's budget. A large component of income relies on memberships and registrations, with only limited funding in the form of donations and publications (see pie chart). In years without significant conferences and symposia, income becomes reliant solely on membership. With the change of government last year, we were not able to get our usual multi-year grant through the Department of Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts and other avenues of funding must be sought:

AICCM Income by type 2007/08



1) In 2007, the AICCM successfully obtained status as a Deductible Gift Recipient. This means donations to AICCM are tax deductible, and a Public Fund was established to manage such revenue. Donations may be made through the website at: [http://www.aiccm.org.au/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=61&Itemid=54](http://www.aiccm.org.au/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=61&Itemid=54). A public fund committee exists to promote the scheme and make decisions about spending of resulting revenue. Vacancies on this committee exist, and members of good standing within the AICCM are invited to register their interest.

2) National Council is currently investigating other funding options in the form of grants from foundations. There are a number of such grants available to heritage and arts organisations, for which we may be eligible. Part of the process however involves registering as a Tax Concession Charity, which we are now pursuing.

3) For events and projects, funding may be applied for through sponsorship. There is usually an obligation to promote the company in return, so potential sponsors are carefully screened.

It is hoped that by diversifying our income approaches, we can take pressure off future membership fee increases. Assistance with grant writing, approaching potential sponsors (or by contributing financially) from experienced AICCM members would be greatly appreciated. Please contact me if you are able to help in any way on (08) 9492 6731 or by e-mail at [maria.kubik@artgallery.wa.gov.au](mailto:maria.kubik@artgallery.wa.gov.au).

## Conference News

### ICOM-CC 15<sup>th</sup> Triennial Conference

In our various reports from delegates to 'Diversity in Heritage Conservation-Tradition, Innovation and Participation,' ICOM-CC 15th Triennial Conference, New Delhi, India, 22-26 September 2008 in the December 2008 AICCM Newsletter, we neglected to identify that **Sabine Cotte**, Paintings Conservator, also made a significant contribution to the conference and presented two papers, one in the Education group and one in the Thangka special interdisciplinary session. We apologise for not including her name alongside the other Australian contributors.

### Course Announcement

#### Soima 2009: Safeguarding Sound and Image Collections

**Dates:** 17 November-11 December, 2009 (four weeks)  
**Application deadline: 20 April, 2009**

**Place:** New Delhi, India with study visits to other Indian cities

**Organisers:** NRLC (National Research Laboratory for Conservation of Cultural property, Lucknow) in collaboration with other national cultural institutions in India, ICCROM (International Centre for the Study of the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property)



#### With the cooperation of:

- American Institute of Indian Studies, India
- International Association of Sound and Audiovisual Archives (IASA)
- Centre de Recherche sur la Conservation des Collections, (CRCC), France
- Masters Degree Program in Moving Image Archiving and Preservation, New York University, USA
- Thomson Foundation of Film and TV Heritage, France

#### The Course

Today sound and image records account for a large portion of the world's memory and are found in diverse cultural institutions. As documents of intangible heritage and contemporary culture they are of immense value; yet, archives, museums, libraries and other cultural institutions around the world are struggling to conserve their sound and image collections in both analogue and digital formats. Moreover, conservation of sound and image materials is complex and requires specialized guidance, skills and infrastructure. While digitization offers new possibilities for wider access and preservation, many institutions lack expertise to assess the technological implications and to make informed choices that do not strain institutional resources and at the same time respect the authenticity and inherent values of this heritage.

The course will provide an overview of issues related to the preservation and access of sound and image materials e.g., photographs, films, video and audiotapes, and



digital materials. It will discuss the value, meaning, selection and use of sound and image collections in various institutional contexts, exploring the potential of sound and image media in transmitting knowledge and cultural traditions. Initial sessions will especially focus on identification of various formats including the playback equipment, life expectancy of media and ways of detecting deterioration. Additional course topics will include: current knowledge and practices for documenting and cataloguing, media handling and storage, risk assessment of collections, emergency preparedness and response, criteria and technologies for migration and reformatting, planning preservation projects, outsourcing options, digital preservation and management. Other issues such as curating and access, copyright laws, legal deposit, and institutional and national preservation policies will be discussed in context with participants' working realities. Adaptation to technological changes and related cost-effective preservation strategies will form a key component of the course.

### Objectives

At the end of the course, participants will be able: to recognize materials and media in their sound and image collections, to identify risks and make informed choices for preservation and access. They will have improved their skills to communicate effectively across disciplines and to work in a team.

### Course Methodology

The course will comprise lectures, a variety of group activities, practical sessions, case studies and site visits. Significant time will be allocated for independent consultation with the course team. Case studies for the course will be based on participants' inputs and will address issues and challenges identified by them. Thus, active involvement of participants will be sought during the course preparation phase. A follow-up programme, will involve working on

self-defined initiatives in participants' home institutions and communicating as well as networking through a platform supported by the organizers.

### Participants

The course is aimed at professionals working with mixed collections that have sound and image records of national or regional significance. In particular, it will interest archivists, collection managers, conservators, curators and librarians in charge of preserving such collections in various cultural institutions around the world. It will also interest Information Technology professionals working on projects involving digitization of sound and image collections or allied professionals and managers working for broadcasting institutions. Preference will be given to people actively involved in teaching and advising.

A maximum of 22 participants will be selected.

### Teaching Team

International team of recognized experts identified through professional networks of the partners.

**Working Language:** English

**Course Fee:** 900€

### Travel, accommodation and living expenses

Participants will be responsible for their round trip travel costs to and from New Delhi, India. In order to cover living costs during the course, participants should plan for a *minimum total allowance* of US\$ 1500. This sum would include the costs of accommodation in moderately priced hotel rooms (which NRLC will locate for the participants). Candidates are strongly encouraged to seek financial support from sources such as governmental institutions, employers and funding agencies. The organizers may be able to offer a limited number of scholarships to selected candidates who have been unable to secure funding.

### Application

Please use the Course application form at [http://www.iccrom.org/eng/01train\\_en/forms\\_en/applfrm\\_en.doc](http://www.iccrom.org/eng/01train_en/forms_en/applfrm_en.doc) and send it together with a statement summarizing your experience and the relevance of the course to your current or future projects in no more than 700 words. Applications should be mailed to the following contact address:

**SOIMA 09-Collections Unit  
ICCROM  
13, via di San Michele  
I-00153 ROME RM, ITALY  
Tel +39 06 585531  
Fax +39 06 58553349  
E-mail: [collections@iccrom.org](mailto:collections@iccrom.org)**

## GCI Conference News

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The Getty Conservation Institute is pleased to announce that papers from the GCI's Experts' Roundtable on Sustainable Climate Management Strategies (Tenerife, Spain, 2007) are now available for download from the GCI's website ([http://www.getty.edu/conservation/science/climate/climate\\_experts\\_roundtable.html](http://www.getty.edu/conservation/science/climate/climate_experts_roundtable.html)).

Topics addressed include current climate management strategies and emerging trends; the meaning of sustainability in relation to the preservation of cultural heritage; and whether cultural institutions such as museums, archives, and libraries can or should play a role in the debate about energy consumption. The participants' discussion papers are supplemented by a transcript of the meeting and a bibliography on climate management.

# Repairing Art Damaged by Natural Disasters

*The way in which conservators and the conservation profession is perceived by the broader community should always interest us. The following article, on the role of conservators in disaster response, was sent to the editors.*

## Wall Street Journal, August 12<sup>th</sup> 2008

Water from the Iowa River was rapidly creeping up the walls of the University of Iowa's Museum of Art during June's floods. Ann Kennedy Haag of the Chicago Conservation Center was masked in a respirator to protect her from highly toxic black mold. She was holding one of the works of art that she and her colleagues, along with museum staff and volunteers, were attempting to rescue. Then the power went out, as it did repeatedly while they struggled to get the remaining art out of there. "We had to freeze and just stand there holding the pieces until the power came back on, which often took several minutes."

Each time the power failed, the electronic scrubbers removing black mold from the air also failed. "Even with our respirators on," recalls Ms. Haag, "we would have to go outside from time to time – because when the scrubbers failed, the mold made us sick." If gagging on mold wasn't bad enough, she added, "the place smelled horrible because the flood waters were full of farm waste, gasoline and sewage."

Several days earlier, before the dikes were breached, the Chicago conservators had worked with museum staffers, volunteers and other art handlers to remove as much of the collection as possible – including works by Picasso, Braque, Pollock, Beckmann, Kandinsky, along with a highly valued African collection.

Working nearly nonstop during the week of June 9, the professional and volunteer teams evacuated works constituting about 99% of the value of the museum's collection and representing nearly 80% of many thousands of works. "We had to inventory and assess every piece to

determine how it should be wrapped and packed for moving," Heather Becker, CEO of the Conservation Center, told me. What they couldn't get out of the museum before the rising flood waters forced their getaway, they moved to higher levels. The center, which was called in by the museum's insurance underwriters, Lloyd's of London, is involved in disaster recovery nationally because it uniquely can field conservators skilled in virtually all media including painting, sculpture, prints and photography, as well as furniture.

The daunting work amid the mold occurred two weeks later, when the rescue crew was readmitted to the building to remove the remaining art. Often working in the dark with spelunkers' headlamps, taking essential breaks because of the black mold, the center's team worked for almost a month to remove the last 3,000 to 4,000 works, wrap and package them, and load them on refrigerator trucks for shipment to the mold containment area for evaluation and restoration at the center's Chicago headquarters.

Bad as the Iowa River flood was for the university's art museum in Iowa City, the Cedar River made an even more formidable assault on the museums of Cedar Rapids, including the National Czech & Slovak Museum. While a 400-pound chandelier of Bohemian crystal remained above the flood waters, the river rushed through most of the museum's collection of Czech and Slovak textiles, which includes leather coats, leather vests, and vividly colored, embroidered and beaded clothing. When conservators from the center arrived on June 19, 15 feet of flood water had just receded from within the building.

The flood heaved the collection against

the downstream walls as if there had been a tidal wave of mud. "When we began to remove objects, they were so heavily covered in mud that we didn't know what they were," recalls Joe Gott, a senior arts handler for the center. "We set up a triage system in the museum's parking lot, consisting first of a series of nine laundry tubs. As textiles were brought out, they were separated by color. In the first tubs, we loosened and scraped the mud off. We ran them through several successive basins of gradually cleaner water, gently brushing the fabrics. After they had been washed as well as possible, we blotted them and set them on racks to dry."

Throughout that flood recovery effort over almost a week, the center, summoned here by the museum's restoration contractor, found volunteer help invaluable. Locals brought towels donated by a hotel and helped man the washtubs and drying racks. "Finally we put the material in boxes and packed our refrigerator trucks for the trip back to Chicago for evaluation and restoration. Our final goal will be to have our conservators clean and repair everything they can," Mr. Gott said. "We could simply have loaded the 1,200 pieces from the Czech and Slovak Museum into the freezer trucks," Ms. Becker commented, "but when we can do triage on the scene the results are better."

The center worked entirely on site when it was called in by several private collectors who suffered soot-damage to their works by Botero, Calder, Warhol, Lichtenstein, Matisse and Picasso in last year's fires in California's Rancho Santa Fe, near San Diego. There, they set up "clean rooms" in the collectors' homes, totally encapsulating them by stretching

plastic on all the rooms' surfaces – ceilings, floors, windows – and worked in them to remove soot from the art. “The less moving of valuable pieces, the better,” counsels Ms. Becker.

That couldn't be done with the flood-damaged art and antiques that were among the pieces the center recovered after Hurricane Katrina from the New Orleans Museum of Art and several private collections. Among the beautifully restored items about to be returned to a New Orleans home are two Sheraton sideboards with boxwood inlaid veneer and brass hardware that the center staff recovered from several feet of water.

Closer to the center's Chicago home, Ms. Becker was instrumental in recovering the multimillion-dollar LaSalle Bank photography collection when the bank's Chicago headquarters suffered a fire in December 2004. “To organize the recovery, inventory and take down a collection of 4,500 works and then preserve the ones damaged by

smoke, soot and water was an amazing job,” says retired La Salle Bank CEO Norman R. Bobins. The collection dates back to an 1839 photo by William Henry Fox Talbot and includes work by Ansel Adams, William Eggleston and Edward Weston. Remarkably, only about 50 prints were irretrievably damaged. Ironically, when Ms. Becker and the collection's curator, Carol Ehlers, were struggling through a stairway with one of the prints, they were stunned to see that it depicted the devastating 1871 Chicago Fire. (The bank was recently acquired by Bank of America, which plans to maintain the collection.)

So what should even those of us with modest art collections do to minimize risk in the event of floods, fires, hurricanes and the like? Ms. Becker suggests that we “regularly update inventories and appraisals and keep insurance coverage up to date. Always keep an off-site copy; otherwise your access to vital information can be challenging when a disaster occurs.”

Only 25% of the center's conservation work is disaster response. An equal percentage comes from museums. The other half involves private and corporate collectors. Recalling their efforts to save the remaining artifacts at the University of Iowa's Museum of Art, Ms. Haag says: “When the lights went out while we were trying to breathe through the black mold, inventorying and packing pre-Columbian artifacts with light only from our headlamps . . . awful as it was, I realized how much I love my job.”

*From the Wall Street Journal, August 12th 2008. Reproduced with kind permission from the author Joel Henning.*

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# Conservation Matters – What do YOU think



The recent UK Demos report “*It’s a Material World*” was co-authored by Samuel Jones. In an article in the UK Museums Journal (January 2009) entitled “*The museum sector needs to champion the many benefits that conservation can bring*”, he wrote in part:

“Caring for the material world – an essential part of the maintenance of our public realm – is rooted in the profession of conservation. We need to put its values at the heart of policy thinking across a range of areas and open its benefits to the public.

Demos’s pamphlet, *It’s a Material World*, was launched in November. It argues that caring for the material world has a bearing on issues such as social wellbeing and community. Across time and geography, the choice of what to conserve and how to do it reflects and creates social value. When Ambrogio Lorenzetti contrasted ‘good’ and ‘bad’ government in his Siennese frescos, he juxtaposed a well-built and cared-for city with one that had crumbling buildings and missing roof tiles; and today, worshippers at the Great Mosque of Djenné in Mali take part in the communal repair of the mud walls in an annual ceremony. Conservation is a way of thinking and being – it expresses and reinforces social bonds and confirms

identity. Conservation and the values on which it is built connect deeply with many of the major challenges we face.

Engagement in conservation can connect with people with the public realm and provide a space in which to communicate the many values that shape modern society.

Conservators must be supported and championed within museums and heritage. But conservators must also lead change and reflect new values themselves by bringing the public into decision making. Conservation juries could be set up to provide conservators with different public values and to give the public access to profession expertise. Juries would not have the final say, but would offer perspectives that could be reflected in the conservation process.

Caring for and celebrating material objects gets people excited. Conservation has a wide appeal – 3.5 million tuned into each episode of the TV program *Restoration* and 500

volunteers helped conserve the Cerne Abbas giant. Conservators can provide the expertise, management and structure for public action. At a time when public understanding of different cultures is of such importance, conservation has much to offer.”

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**What do you think? Do you agree or disagree, and if the former, what do you think we should do about it? Send an email to the editors with your comments.**

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