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## President's Report

There would be few people who watched the unfolding disaster as bushfires engulfed towns in Victoria during February 2009 who did not feel a sense of horror and grief at the loss of life and property. While in many cases there would be little, if anything, left to salvage, the experience from the ACT fires of 2003 showed that some personal belongings do miraculously survive the searing temperatures. Conservation clinics set up by members of the ACT Division of AICCM after the fires in 2003, yielded medals, a lead crystal vase, a certificate of citizenship that had been held in a fire proof safe and a pearl necklace protected inside a jewelry case.

With this in mind, AICCM decided to issue a media release on handling burnt/ fire damaged material. The Collections Council of Australia generously offered their Media Officer to polish and distribute the media release, which went out under the banner of both AICCM and CCA, attracting an immediate response from several radio interviewers and some follow up newspaper articles.

**Alex Ellem**, the President of the Victorian Division of AICCM, was impressive during the interviews, emphasizing safety issues when handling fire damaged objects and offering hope as well as calm and practical advice.

In addition to the press release, a leaflet titled "After a fire: how you can salvage your families precious belongings" was put together by **Kay Soderlund**, **Elizabeth Hadlow**, and tweaked by various members of the Victorian

Division of AICCM for distribution through the recovery centres. This leaflet and another document written by **Christine Ianna**, "Salvaging keepsakes after a disaster", were added to the AICCM website.

It is amazing how quickly resources can be rallied when there is an emergency. The challenge is in coordinating all the goodwill into streamlined processes that make the most efficient use of the available resources and minimise duplication of effort. AICCM will work with Blue Shield Australia and continue to build on the lessons learnt through the responses to the recent bushfires and those of 2003 in the ACT to develop strategies for salvaging collections and personal belongings following large scale disasters.

Congratulations to the members of the Victorian Division of AICCM on their quick and generous response, and their commitment to ongoing support as the communities slowly recover. Thanks also to the many conservators from around Australia who rang or emailed offering assistance.

**Tamara Lavrencic**

## From The Editors

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One of the pleasures in editing the AICCM Newsletter (and the editors are still at the stage when it is a real pleasure, be assured!) is seeing how the content each quarter comes together. We have the staple diet of Lab and People News and the Interview, and we are still working through the State in Focus with one more to go (ACT in September). We have to think about the *Conservation Matters – what do you think?* Section, but that is good fun to seek out commentary on an issue to which our readers may respond. But the rest is unknown. As the deadline draws near, we are never quite sure what will appear, but we have now got sufficient editions under our belt, that we know something will appear. The task then is to see how we can make for an interesting compilation of what we have received – what we will hold over and what we will combine, and that's where the fun lies.

Well in this edition, we hope we have achieved a particularly interesting mix. Here are a few of the highlights:

- Inspirational words and actions by our AICCM Victorian colleagues in light of the bushfires.
- The state profile focuses on Victoria and Tasmania.
- The Interview is with Malgorzata Sawicki, Head of Frames conservation at AGNSW, and what an interesting story she has to tell.
- Our Canberra reporter, Ian Batterham has once again being trawling the archives AND has added another string to his reporting bow by sourcing the early photograph of one of our brethren – who is it??
- Andrew Durham reports on the visit to Australia of John Holden, one of the authors of the important UK Demos report on the future of the Textile Conservation Centre.
- We welcome a new inclusion in the Lab and People News in the form of student news. This quarter we hear from the graduate students at

the CCMC course at Melbourne University, next quarter we plan to include the new undergraduates from the University of Canberra as well. Our thanks to Melanie Wilkinson for initiating this segment.

- We got no response to our *Conservation matters – What do YOU think?* segment on the Demos report call for conservators to be more engaged. So this time we reprint part of an article questioning the level of hands-on training at university courses. Do get back to us with your comments, as only by debate do we flush out issues that may affect our profession in all sorts of ways.

Enjoy the read and keep it coming folks. We love to hear from you.

# AICCM Awards 2009

## It's awards time again! Conservator of the Year and more!

AICCM is giving four awards again this year. One for **Conservator of the Year** and three certificates of appreciation for:

- **Outstanding service to AICCM**
- **Long service to the conservation profession**
- **Outstanding research in the field of materials conservation**

All nominations are due by **July 31<sup>st</sup> 2009** and awards will be presented at the AICCM National Conference dinner in Perth in September.

The Policy and all Nomination Forms are available on the website [www.aiccm.org.au](http://www.aiccm.org.au). Please send your nominations to the Secretary at [secretary@aiccm.org.au](mailto:secretary@aiccm.org.au) or the Membership Officer at [f.tennant@icssydney.com](mailto:f.tennant@icssydney.com). Please contact Fiona Tennant, Membership Officer for more information. Details of each award can be found within this newsletter.

### Conservator of the Year

The purpose of the selection and presentation of the AICCM Conservator of the Year Award is to:

- Recognize and reward an individual whose extraordinary efforts have directly contributed to the raising of standards in her/his organisation in Australia and/or to recognize an individual who has significantly contributed to raising conservation standards as a whole and whose particular activity has had, or is recognized to have the potential to have, far reaching benefits in the conservation field, nationally or internationally.
- Promote the profession of conservation and its activities to the wider community
- Encourage membership of the AICCM

#### Selection criteria

- The individual must be a member of AICCM and provide evidence of professional involvement, either past or present, in AICCM divisional or national activities. Details of this involvement may also include a list of published materials.
- The member must provide evidence of successful achievement resulting in the raising of standards in his or her organisation and/or evidence of significant contribution in the conservation field which has far reaching benefits nationally or internationally.
- The member must demonstrate willingness to share professional expertise and to participate in formal and informal networking activities to the benefit of conservation
- The achievement must have taken place within the last three (3) years

The Nomination Form is available on the website [www.aiccm.org.au](http://www.aiccm.org.au). Please send your nominations to the Secretary at [secretary@aiccm.org.au](mailto:secretary@aiccm.org.au) or the Membership Officer at [f.tennant@icssydney.com](mailto:f.tennant@icssydney.com). Please contact Fiona Tennant, Membership Officer for more information. Details of each award can be found within this newsletter.

### Certificate of appreciation for outstanding service to AICCM

This award is to acknowledge an AICCM member who has consistently contributed to AICCM, whether at State or National level, for example:

- By being elected onto Committees, National Council or Special Interest Groups
- By participating on organising committees for National, State or Special Interest Group seminars and conferences

#### Selection criteria

1. Length and complexity of their contribution to AICCM
2. Level of commitment to the organisation

The Nomination Form is available on the website [www.aiccm.org.au](http://www.aiccm.org.au). Please send your nominations to the Secretary at [secretary@aiccm.org.au](mailto:secretary@aiccm.org.au) or the Membership Officer at [f.tennant@icssydney.com](mailto:f.tennant@icssydney.com). Please contact Fiona Tennant, Membership Officer for more information. Details of each award can be found within this newsletter.

### Certificate of appreciation for long service to the conservation profession

This award is to acknowledge an AICCM member who has consistently contributed to the profession:

- Through sustained active involvement in delivering conservation seminars, workshops and other educational/learning opportunities
- Sustained mentoring of other conservators
- Ongoing promotion of conservation within and beyond the profession
- By working with allied professions and the public

#### Selection criteria

1. Length and complexity of their contribution to and promotion of the profession
2. Long term benefits of their endeavours on the profession
3. Level of commitment to the profession
4. Extent of mentoring within the profession
5. Number and variety of projects working with allied professions and the public

The Nomination Form is available on the website [www.aiccm.org.au](http://www.aiccm.org.au). Please send your nominations to the Secretary at [secretary@aiccm.org.au](mailto:secretary@aiccm.org.au) or the Membership Officer at [f.tennant@icssydney.com](mailto:f.tennant@icssydney.com). Please contact Fiona Tennant, Membership Officer for more information. Details of each award can be found within this newsletter.

### Certificate of appreciation for outstanding research in the field of material conservation

This award is to acknowledge an AICCM member who has undertaken substantial research in the field of material conservation, and importantly, who has shared this information within the national and/or international material conservation profession.

#### Selection criteria

1. How the research has informed new standards
2. How the research has been disseminated to the profession

The Nomination Form is available on the website [www.aiccm.org.au](http://www.aiccm.org.au). Please send your nominations to the Secretary at [secretary@aiccm.org.au](mailto:secretary@aiccm.org.au) or the Membership Officer at [f.tennant@icssydney.com](mailto:f.tennant@icssydney.com). Please contact Fiona Tennant, Membership Officer for more information. Details of each award can be found within this newsletter.

# State in Focus – TAS and VIC

## Tasmania

### Tasmanian Archive and Heritage Office

The newly-named “TAHO” is the result of a merging of the Archives Office of Tasmania and the Heritage Collections of the State Library of Tasmania. TAHO is within the Education Department. The Archives Office is responsible for access and preservation of Tasmanian State records and non-state deposits. The Heritage Collections of the SLT are made up of the Allport Library and Museum of Fine Arts; the W.L. Crowther Library; the Tasmania collection (including legal deposit) and the Launceston Local Studies collection. Conservation is within the newly developed “Collections” area of TAHO.

The Conservation section is located in a tower block building which was purpose-built as an archive and library repository and opened in 1972. Conservation was established and equipped by David Jones in 1976. In August 2000 Conservation moved from the penthouse floor of the building (with views of Mount Wellington) to the basement (where all Conservation labs end up!). The benefits have been huge with 2½ times the space, the ability to set up dedicated areas for wet treatments, solvents, the suction table, mounting, photography and materials storage.

The Conservation Section began with two staff – Paper Conservator and Conservation Officer and included an Exhibition Officer employed on a contract/casual basis for 2 days a week from 1997 to 2007. Stephanie McDonald (Conservator) is responsible for environmental monitoring, disaster response, advice to staff on storage and handling issues and the treatment

program. The Conservation Officer is responsible for re-housing items, display work and currently the preparation of the convict records prior to them moving to a new storage location.

Over the last one and a half years, a lot of energy has been directed towards the changes for the new TAHO. At the same time as the restructure of the organisation, the public areas were redeveloped which resulted in big moves of collection material. Both Conservation staff were closely involved in co-ordination of the move, including planning, the careful movement of artworks to new screens, training contract staff and co-ordinating re-housing.

The remaining task from the re-location of collections will be the completion of the new “Convict Room” where the records from the colonial convict era, will be stored in a new dust free room with new shelving, all volumes and registers stored flat and eventually boxed.

Juggling the demands from so many different collection areas has always been difficult, so the principle has been to institute a time division of 4/5<sup>ths</sup> Archives work and 1/5<sup>th</sup> Heritage Collections work. In reality both areas need 5/5<sup>ths</sup> Conservation time.

The re-structure has brought benefits as well as losses. Losing the Exhibition Officer, Penny Carey Wells has also been a loss of her fabulous experience of paper and book conservation. And it has meant that any exhibition work now eats into the limited resources we have. However the exhibition and loans programme has been scaled right down for at least the next 12 months. This means we may be in the enviable position of not having so much work driven by exhibition deadlines. Collection management priorities can have a chance to come to the fore.

Stephanie McDonald

### The Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery Conservation Unit

In April 1975 the Trustees of the Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery (TMAG) agreed that a selection committee be formed to consider applications for the employment of an ‘Art Conservator’. In May of that year two candidates were selected, in June interviews were conducted and in July the position was offered to **Romek Pacucki**. Romek started work in August of the same year.

Initially Romek shared a studio with the Paper Conservator at the State Library of Tasmania. In late 1976 the conservation workshop moved to a building in Morrison Street near the TMAG.

In 1979 the conservation workshop was relocated to the refurbished Commissariat Store (built 1808-10) within the TMAG precinct. Romek was closely involved in the design and fit out of the new lab, within the constraints of one of the oldest buildings in Australia. Some of the suggestions about setting up a ‘Restorer’s Studio’ described in Helmut Ruhemann’s book *The Cleaning of Paintings* were adopted, such as painting the walls a matt dark brown colour and the ceiling matt white, and glass skylights in the south facing side of the roof. In addition a fume cupboard was installed, a Willards vacuum hot-table and heated spatulas, a converted drafting easel with a vertical and horizontal track system for a stereo microscope and a good supply of materials necessary for paintings conservation.

**Dr Tony Werner** also offered useful advice in the setting up of the conservation lab. After a long and influential career in conservation both in the United Kingdom and the

United States of America Tony retired in Hobart (spending the southern summer with his daughter in Tasmania and then travelling to England to spend the northern summer with his other daughter there). Many readers will be very familiar with his seminal work with Plenderleith *The Conservation of Antiquities and Works of Art*, first published in 1956. Tony continued to take a keen interest in conservation, and often attended AICCM meetings almost up until his death in 2006 at the age of 95!

Romek was the principal conservator at the TMAG until his retirement in August 1996. During his 20 years he had nine assistants. Following his retirement **Jan Stanczyk**, who had been Romek's assistant since 1990, became the principle conservator. Jan was an object and painting conservator and continued to cover all duties associated with running the department. In mid 1999 Jan took leave due to illness, sadly he passed away in January 2001.

In mid 2001 two positions were advertised, one in paper conservation and the other in painting conservation. These were filled later in the year by **Cobus van Breda** in paper and **Erica Burgess** in paintings. Both still work at the TMAG. **Ray Prince**, our Artisan/Framer, has been on staff since 1987 (Ray, Erica and one of our curators were all at one time assistants to Romek). Ray both restores original frames and makes reproduction frames.

In 2008 **Nikki King Smith** was appointed as Redevelopment Conservator of Objects, part of the new museum redevelopment team. Nikki's primary role is to identify, condition report and treat objects and collections which will be of importance in the redeveloped TMAG, but she also contributes greatly to the conservation needs of the current program and works closely with Erica, Ray and Cobus.

The conservation department at the TMAG, like others elsewhere, spends a good deal of time on exhibitions. So far this financial year we have

been involved in ten exhibitions requiring considerable conservation input, including three challenging contemporary exhibitions (Mike Parr, Ann Ferran and currently Patricia Piccinini). For the coming financial year, Erica and Nikki are preparing an exhibition of seventy contemporary Tasmanian aboriginal women's fibre work pieces (eg baskets and kelp water carriers), which, with three 19<sup>th</sup> century baskets will tour to four or five interstate venues. Ray and Cobus are planning for an exhibition of work by Professor Jao Tsung-I, a ninety year old Chinese calligrapher and scholar. Approximately 160 works are coming from Hong Kong, including very large oriental paintings, one almost 370cm high. Because TMAG is a museum and art gallery (and herbarium), our collection is frequently requested for loan both locally, interstate, and occasionally overseas. So far this financial year the conservation department has processed over 700 loans.

We have four campuses in Hobart and collections at Bothwell and Zeehan. We are also occasionally called upon to do fee for service work for other government bodies. Money earned in this way has been (and continues to be) spent on employing conservators (when possible) to undertake specific projects. Over the last six years we have been fortunate to be able to engage the following gifted conservators on various projects: **Penny Edmonds, Kylie Roth, Michael Staples, Keith Adkins and Judith Andrewartha.**

Although a lot of our work is reactive and exhibitions based, the TMAG is a partner in two ARC linkage grant projects, both initiated by the University of Melbourne: *Conciliation Narratives and the Historical Imagination in British Settler Societies of the Pacific Rim* and *The Twentieth Century in Paint*.

The redevelopment of the TMAG has been and will continue to be an exciting and ongoing project for several years. After considerable consultation a Masterplan has been

developed and TMAG is currently calling for expressions of interest from architectural design teams. This process will close in late May and the successful architectural team will commence in August. The redevelopment will take place in two stages, the first will focus on the entrance, link buildings and the preservation and development of key heritage buildings such as the Commissariat Store (1810), Bond Store (1826) and Queens Warehouse (1867). The second deals with the whole of site and will complete the Masterplan vision.

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## Museum of Old and New Art (MONA)

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In its new incarnation MONA is scheduled to open at the end of 2010. It will be the largest private museum in Australia and was formerly known as the Moorilla Museum of Antiquities in Berriedale, a northern suburb of Hobart. The collection includes significant Egyptian material, modern Australian painters, works by all the YBAs such as Damien Hirst, Jenny Saville and Chris Ofili, large working sculptural objects and many video works. The owner is also building a collection of his favourite local artists.

The new galleries will be over 5000M<sup>2</sup> in size and include 1200 M<sup>2</sup> of AAA rated travelling gallery space. The museum, designed by Fender Katsalidis, has been designed to be sympathetic with the heritage/ listed buildings on the estate, so the three storey building finishes at ground level. The original houses were designed by Sir Roy Grounds for Claudio Alcorso who established the vineyard to which a winery and microbrewery have been added. The main entrance will be through the centre of the original home then down a three storey shaft of sandstone.

MONA has a conservator, conservation assistant, registrar and two technician/ facilities people making up the collections team. With a total staff of 20

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people, and operating on a flat structure, each person is responsible for their own area. This makes the work programme very diverse. **Judith Andrewartha** is the conservator, taking over from **Kylie Roth**, who saw through the inception of conservation at MONA. In preparation for displaying objects, last December we had **Megan Jordan Jones** and **Steve Jackson** visit for 2 weeks to stabilize the Egyptian polychrome mummy cases and bronze statues. They also advised on cleaning a large timber working sculpture by Conrad Shawcross. Currently **Linda Waters**, from ICS, has been working here for ten weeks on a range on modern and contemporary paintings. One of her more challenging projects has been to devise an invisible support system for an irregular large canvas, 2.5 by 4.5 metres with no tacking edges, which has to appear to be hung loosely from the ceiling. The solution – the basis of which is a thin blind stretcher of Alucobond – involves a local construction company, plus the practical expertise of a raft of MONA staff. ICS also have a batch of paintings needing more in depth treatments. **Fred Francisco**, prior to retiring from Artlab, worked on *Shark*, one of the Nolan Paradise Garden works. It consists of 184 panels with 6 works each.

We are working on a conservation strategy for duplication and long term storage for the many varied formats of our time based media works. The recent arrival of a consolidated shipment from Europe included works made from chocolate and wax along with more big things. One work alone was transported in 4 x 40 foot containers. With such a diverse range of objects, and with many of the artists still alive, artistic intent becomes very important so some time is spent ensuring we have a clear picture of the needs for each work. Inherent vice and OH&S issues arise with some contemporary pieces, especially when they are made to actively degrade.

## Victoria

### National Gallery of Victoria

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The NGV continues to be a vibrant and active organization in the Australian arts arena, and is viewed by the State as one of its premier cultural attractions, significantly adding to the status of Melbourne as one of the world's most liveable cities. The exhibition program hosted across the NGV's two exhibition sites (NGV International and NGV Australia) are an active part of Victoria's investment in cultural capital, major events and tourism strategies.

In this context the NGV's Conservation department continues to be one of the largest departments in an Australian institution, managing a busy program in excess of 30 exhibitions annually across two full size and high profile exhibition facilities. The department also manages one of the most significant art collections in the southern hemisphere, incorporating many works by artists rarely seen outside of Europe. The collection encompasses many thousands of years of human history and incorporates materials and artworks from most of the world's major cultures and historical periods. Our international galleries are one of the few places where local residents can view ancient and modern masterpieces that would otherwise require overseas travel. As a department we seek to provide conservation solutions for a broad range of cultural and artistic artifacts ranging from the care of ancient Egyptian burial material to contemporary art where the preservation of the actual object becomes secondary to preserving artistic intent (any tips on accessioning a goldfish and keeping it happily swimming in perpetuity happily accepted).

The department currently consists of approximately 25 staff members at any one time, around 20 of which are ongoing full time positions. This

consistency of staffing is one of the great strengths of the department, as secure employment removes the sense of "camping" so many of us are familiar with, and allows staff to develop long term strategies for the material in their care and their own personal career objectives. We operate within the Collections Management division of the NGV structure, and are broadly represented on committees throughout the gallery's structure. Engagement with activities as broad as teacher professional development programs, public lecture series, risk management strategy development, environmental committees, publication programs and collection development continue to promote an internal awareness of the department within the organization. We strive to be an active part of the gallery community and avoid the traditional "back of house" analogy.

The department is currently organized around the core groupings of Exhibitions conservation, Objects conservation, Textiles Conservation, Paper and Photographic conservation, Frames and Furniture conservation, Technical assistants and Paintings conservation. Each group is headed by a Senior Conservator with considerable technical skill in materials conservation in addition to their management responsibilities. It is not uncommon for conservators working at the NGV to encounter objects that are internationally recognizable and which have value to humanity in excess of their value as parts of the Victorian State Collection. Most conservators working at the NGV have extensive experience working in Australia or internationally prior to commencing work with the department.

The NGV has a continuing tradition of supporting conservation training in Australia. In the past two years many of the department's staff have travelled overseas to participate in training courses and conferences as part of our Director's focus on increasing the international profile of the organization. The recent and exceptionally generous donation by Susan Morgan of a significant sum of money specifically

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for the professional development of conservation staff has been one of the most exciting developments of the past two years. Interest earned on the fund will be used to make further professional development possible (an economic upswing would be most welcome). In addition I can announce that the remarkable support of the Hugh T.D. Williamson Fund will enable a new round of paintings conservation fellowships to operate at the NGV over the next two years. The fund seeks to invest in young people, and in this case young paintings conservation graduates. These positions are the only opportunity of their type in Australia, and we hope signify a maturing of the profession and model that may be followed by other generous benefactors in support of other Australian institutions. The department is also increasingly engaging with conservation education at the University of Melbourne. As department head I strongly take the view that the quality of Australian conservation graduates will be influenced as much by the mentoring and commitment of experienced conservators as it will by their host training institutions. The department will continue to invest in promising students in the hope that they contribute to strengthening of the profession in Australia.

In the medium term I see the NGV conservation department consolidating and strengthening in key areas. Most of these relate to areas in which, as a department, we provide an asset to our organization that cannot be otherwise obtained. For example, strength in being able to carry out high level and intensive treatment on works of art, including complex and risky treatment of otherwise undisplayable work is one of the core capabilities we need to be able to offer our Director and board in order to assure our long term relevance. Likewise offering and progressing new ways of interpreting artworks through greater technical analytical capacity will enhance our usefulness and chances of success in a competitive funding arena. We will also be increasingly engaging with the emerging "risk management" and "evidence based" methodologies for advancing collection management and

maintenance activities. The department receives the strong support of the NGV directorate and new collections manager (Pierre Arpin), and is actively seeking to promote our relevance in a period of economic uncertainty. As a core activity and collaborative custodians of a remarkable collection we hope to be able to report on further advances in our activities in years to come.

## Heritage Victoria Conservation Laboratory

Heritage Victoria's Conservation Laboratory and Archaeology Store is one aspect of the Victorian State Government's heritage management unit.

Heritage Victoria, as part of the Department of Planning and Community Development (DPCD), operates the only archaeological conservation laboratory in Victoria. The conservator at the laboratory is available to advise heritage consultants, owners of registered places and registered custodians of shipwreck artefacts on the preservation of artefacts and materials associated with heritage registered sites.

Artefacts regularly enter our collection having been retrieved from archaeological sites on land, from shipwrecks, or from other registered heritage places.

The lab has several roles:

- Management of Heritage Victoria's collection of artefacts from land archaeological sites, shipwrecks and buildings with the aim of making it more accessible for public access, research and exhibition.
- Advice and analysis on artefact and material conservation issues in historic buildings and sites.

The Conservation Laboratory is situated in Abbotsford a suburb of greater Melbourne which is 3 kilometres from the CBD. Currently Heritage Victoria employ one full time conservator and one part time archaeologist-curatorial officer.

**Contact** [susanna.collis@dpced.vic.gov.au](mailto:susanna.collis@dpced.vic.gov.au)  
**Refer** <http://www.heritage.vic.gov.au/Home.aspx>

## National Archives of Australia – East Burwood

The Victoria Branch of the NAA at East Burwood was officially opened in 1994 as a purpose built repository to store permanent valuable records in a secure, climate controlled environment. The facilities in Melbourne, both at East Burwood and North Melbourne, have over 52,000 metres of Victoria-related holdings of the Federal Government consisting mostly of paper based items but also a number of photographic items, most of which are stored in a dedicated cold-room. Even though the majority of the records are housed at East Burwood, the Public Reading Room is based in North Melbourne, at a shared facility with the Public Record Office of Victoria (PROV). A small number of key records belonging to the NAA holdings are also stored at the PROV.

The Melbourne Preservation Section is headed by the Operations and Preservation Branch situated in Canberra. The role of the Branch is in line with specific directives of the 1983 Archives Act, ensuring that records in the Archives custody are controlled and described and that they remain stable and accessible over time. This work is managed through the National Description and Preservation Plan which coordinates preservation and descriptive projects in all offices of the Archives.

The Melbourne Preservation Section consists of 12 staff, that have varying roles within the section. The Assistant Director manages the local conservation and repackaging projects along with the NAA's national Preventive and Designated conservator programs. Four qualified conservators are based in the laboratory concentrating on treatment work, whilst three staff members are dedicated to repackaging projects. Two

are involved with a program of Digital Preservation whilst the remaining two members of staff focus on data entry tasks associated with repackaging projects.

Unlike other Cultural Institutions, such as art galleries or museums, it is the information contained within the collection which is of primary importance. Therefore the focus is on accessibility for both Government Staff and the Public alike. With such a large collection of records the keyword is preservation rather than conservation or restoration. The majority of the section's output is driven by projects identified from previous collection surveys. The types of collection material that are prioritised for project work include those, due to their inherent instability, that are subject to rapid deterioration – these may include photographic and audiovisual materials prone to the onset of 'vinegar syndrome', paper-based records that contain poor quality papers, or that have been subject to high use or poor storage. Deterioration of paper-based records that contain poor quality papers is generally addressed through repackaging in archival quality materials. Other priority material also includes large-format records which, due to their size, are subject to damage during retrieval and use. This category contains various materials such as maps,

posters, plans, engineering drawings as well as models and machinery.

Making Archive staff aware of potential problems to the records is also part of the section's responsibilities. If damage or potential damage to the records is noticed the staff are encouraged to report it to the section as either a 'referral', 'intercept' or general request via the 'conservator on duty' process. This allows the section to address any ad-hoc issues such as the repair of an item to enable it to be viewed by a member of the public in the reading room.

In addition to the project based and ad-hoc work the section is responsible for other tasks such as disaster planning and recovery, records handling training, preparation of items for exhibition (either within the Archive or at an external institution) and any outreach activities.

For further information please contact Carey Garvie at: [carey.garvie@naa.gov.au](mailto:carey.garvie@naa.gov.au)

### **Louise Bradley conservation framer**

I operate a private, (by appointment only) conservation framing business specialising in modern and contemporary work and work on paper.

I often work closely with conservators in collaborations on framing solutions for difficult pieces. Much of my work is done in my workshop but recently work is done on site at the request of the client, requiring some careful planning on my part. A recently completed long contract involved on-site work at CCMC lab mounting part of the Baillieu library print collection. The library has set up a print study room and the collection is now accessible for study and exhibition. The prints were also assessed for future treatment that will keep conservators at the CCMC busy ad infinitum.

I have an interest in decorated and period mounts and my paper, *Reproducing Decorative Mounts*, appears in *Art on Paper, Mounting and Housing*, Archetype/The British Museum. The article includes some of my research into the decorated mounts made by Hans and David Heysen. I would like to further this research so if anyone has an example of one of these lovely mounts around an artwork in their collection please let me know. I would love to visit and see it.

A smaller part of my practice is the cleaning and repair of frames. A smoke damaged frame with considerable missing ornament is currently under treatment.

## Can you help?



### Mystery picture from the Archives

#### Can you help identify this conservator?

The National Archives has a collection of photographs, numbering more than 50,000, produced by the Australian Overseas Information Service documenting Australian Life post WW2. Many of these images are only given minimal identification, including a small number of images depicting conservators and conservation activities. We are calling on AICCM members to help provide us with some information on these images – for inclusion on our collection database. The first one, shown here, is simply entitled 'Art - Irish-born restorer busy in Australia, 1977'. If anyone knows who the conservator is and any associated detail please let Ian Batterham know ([ian.batterham@naa.gov.au](mailto:ian.batterham@naa.gov.au)). We will report back next issue and give you another image to ponder as well.



# Lab and People News

## Victoria

### National Gallery of Victoria

#### Lab News

**Solitaire Osei** is currently examining Mr Darcy's outfit (yes, *that* shirt) for inclusion in the upcoming *Persuasion: Fashion in the Time of Jane Austen* exhibition. **Belinda Gourley** leaves for Florida next week to condition report Dali loans for the Dali Melbourne Winter Masterpiece exhibition opening June. **Janelle Borig** has just seen in the Brack exhibition and is resolving issues around live and organic matter brought in by artists (e.g. goldfish in a fish tank in a VW!!, dead trees etc). **Catherine Earley** has just couriered the Gordon Bennett exhibition back over the Nullarbor and has a series of landscape photos that all look the same. Catherine and Janelle attended community meetings at Kinglake and Kinglake West on behalf of AICCM to get the message to people before block clearing commences, to save damaged items for possible future treatment.

The textiles section has installed *Dressed to Rule*, an exhibition of Imperial Robes which were conserved by Solitaire Osei and **Christina Ritschel**. Solitaire and Christina worked hard to meet the deadline for this exhibition and it is a stunning exhibition with their efforts being highly appreciated by the curator. The *Persuasion* exhibition been another major effort by the textiles lab to conserve 18 consumes in the collection of the NGV. **Annette Soumilas** has produced the display underpinnings to a very high standard and we have all learnt a great deal about this period of costume history. **Mary-Anne Gooden** a conservation student from Melbourne University will be volunteering in the lab one day a week to help us with our busy schedule.

In the Objects lab **Nicola Dunn** and **Marika Strohschnieder** have begun preparing a large number of Eighteen Century Chinese and European objects for the up-coming *Chinoiserie* exhibition, and ceramics for an gallery display to commemorate the 250<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Wedgwood company. Nicola is also working on a large cast iron sculpture by the Australian artist Jock Clutterbuck removing layers of later paint to reveal the original surface before it is displayed at NGVA.

**Michael Varcoe-Cocks** continues to work on the von Guerard exhibition scheduled for 2011. Michael is co-curator with Ruth Pullin and as well as doing the technical examination, cleaning and restoration work on paintings for the show, is involved in all aspects of the development of the exhibition. Michael recently finished the cleaning of three Rupert Bunny pictures in preparation for the forth coming exhibition being prepared by the AGNSW. **John Payne** and **Carl Villis** have finally turned their combined attention to the retouching of *The Finding of Moses*, a task which will take some months of work but will reveal a painting with qualities that were hitherto suppressed under old restorations and discoloured varnish. Carl is also working on a book to publish his research on the newly attributed Dosso Dossi, portrait of Lucretia Borgia. **Raye Collins'** contract has been extended for another financial year, primarily to clean and restore a pair of life size portraits by William Beechey that are on their way into the collection. In the meant time Raye has reached the retouching stage with her very large and extensive treatment of McCubbin's *Melbourne 1888*.

#### People News

We are very happy that **Bronwyn Cosgrove** has returned back to work two days a week after being on sick

leave. Bronwyn is working on a huge Palampore which has many losses for the upcoming *Chinoiserie* exhibition in September. In December 2008 Marika Strohschnieder travelled to the ICON Pest Management in Practice conference at Kelvingrove Art Gallery and Museum in Glasgow. She gave a paper on low temperature treatments for pest eradication which discussed the effects that freezing has on organic materials. Later in April we saw the departure of **Ruth Goris** on completion of her contract. Over the last 18 months Ruth has made a terrific contribution to the frames and furniture conservation program and she will be greatly missed. Ruth will be travelling for several months before heading back to Europe. The department bid farewell in May to **Helen Nodding** on completion of her 6-month contract as a Conservation Project Officer. During her time at the NGV Helen provided the Conservation department with targeted research support in the areas of policy development. Helen will spend the next 6-months continuing to explore Australia before returning to her role as Condition Reporting Administrator at London's Victoria and Albert Museum. Solitaire Osei is nearing the end of her time at the NGV and will be moving on to work on her next production (bub is due in Sept).

### National Archives of Australia – Melbourne

#### Lab News

A number of important collections within the holdings of the NAA in Melbourne have been identified as requiring more intensive treatment work including more appropriate re-housing. These have been predominately photographic and audio-visual material relating to previous Government

Ministers, the Hon. Andrew Peacock and Lord Richard Casey when they were in office. **Amy Bartlett** and **Sarah Gubby** have been working on the Hon. Andrew Peacock items, and **David Parker** and **Debra Parry** have been working on Lord Richard Casey items. The albums in these collections have been a joy to work on as they contain many fascinating images documenting duties carried out here in Australia and Overseas.

The repackaging team have been kept busy working on completing the re-housing of the Wool Board series started a number of years ago. With the imminent transfer of audio-visual material to Chester Hill in Sydney, the team have also been bar-coding a number of series, mostly relating to the ABC.

The Preservation Digitisation Team continues to work several on interesting series, including promotional material from the Board of Trade, and original plans for GPO buildings. **Liam Ryan** has also recently given some training to the staff at the NAA Chester Hill facility in Sydney and gave a presentation on digitisation to students attending the Masters Conservation Course at the University of Melbourne.

In response to the Victorian Bush-Fire appeals, the NAA has donated a number of supplies to the cause, such as archival sleeves to house damaged paper and photographic based items. Debra Parry has been able to deliver some of these supplies to affected communities in the Whittlesea and St. Andrews areas.

As part of the 'Designated Conservator' scheme, that provides support to NAA State Offices with no Preservation presence, David Parker paid a visit to the Adelaide Office to survey some of their collection and to provide training in Document Handling and Disaster Recovery. **Carey Garvie** visited the Hobart office as part of the 'Designated Conservator' scheme.

## People News

On the staffing front, firstly **Luke McKay** has transferred from Preservation to take up a digitising position at our North Melbourne Office, and we say a farewell to **Alexa McNaught-Reynolds** who has returned to her native Canberra to take up a position as Paper Conservator at the Australian War Memorial.

## Tasmania

### The Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery – Heritage Furniture Restoration Unit

In January, this year, the re-development of the House of Assembly, Parliament House, Hobart was opened. **Tony Colman**, of the Heritage Furniture Restoration Unit, restored the remaining 1940's art deco fabric, still remaining after an almost total re-development of the Chamber in 1977. He also managed the Timber colours and finishing for the 1940's re-development.

Conservation and restoration of St Patrick's Church, Colebrook (Pugin), interior, furniture and fittings is still progressing.

During March/April, several pieces of furniture and two doors were conserved for the Southern Midlands Council, Gaol House restoration project.

Work is about to start on three horse-drawn vehicles which will require re-building five of the eight wheels with conservation of the bodies and one hood.

The Heritage Furniture Restoration Unit is a Government Business Enterprise of the Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery.

**Tony Colman**  
Manager

## New South Wales

### Art Gallery of NSW

#### Lab News

The Conservation Department hosted two Advanced XRF workshops for both staff and members of other institutions in February 09. The workshops were presented by Dr Bruce Kaiser (Chief Scientist & Museum Applications Specialist – Bruker AXS, USA). The workshops provided a unique opportunity for attendees to appreciate the benefits of XRF as a portable and non-destructive method of analysis, in addition to its potential uses in the field of identification and authentication.

All departments in Conservation are working towards the relocation of a large portion of the Gallery's collections to an offsite storage facility, still currently under construction, scheduled for the latter half of this year. In preparation for the move **Kerry Head** is working on stabilising framed works on paper with **Sandra Hodgen** consolidating the frames, **Simon Ives** is working on framed oil paintings with **Basia Dabrowa** consolidating the frames.

In the paintings lab **Stewart Laidler** is updating the FTIR equipment. **Lisa Charleston** is looking into improving the environmental monitoring system and providing glazing and backing boards for paintings going on loan. **Andrea Nottage** is working on paintings in the collection for a Rupert Bunny exhibition at the end of the year.

**Malgorzata Sawicki**, with the assistance of volunteer **Lesley Millar**, has been restoring the gilded surface of an original frame for a Bunny painting *A Summer Morning, 1908*. It is one of several frames that will need restoration treatment for the upcoming Rupert Bunny exhibition. **David Butler** is working on nine reproduction frames for the Bunny paintings for the same show.

**Analiiese Treacy** is preparing works on paper for the upcoming Printmaking

in the age of Romanticism, Intensely Dutch and Kaldor exhibitions. **Sarah Bunn** completed consolidation of Aboriginal paintings on paper collected during the 1948 expedition to Arnhem Land for the current Mountford Gifts exhibition.

**Donna Hinton** is enjoying the many conservation challenges associated with displaying and transporting the Gallery's sculpture collections. Recently a number of sculptures have required specialised supports and security devices to protect them during open display. With the help of workshop and installation staff and a metalworking expert, mounts have been designed, constructed and fitted for Simone Mangos' "Salt Lick", Lena Yarinkura's paper bark figures "Two brothers and Modjarrkki the crocodile", James Angus' "Bugatti", Hans Bellmer's "La demie poupie" and Lord Leighton's bronze "Sluggard". Donna is preparing another 40 sculptures for permanent exhibition in the Gallery's old courts.

#### People news

**Alan Lloyd** retired in December after celebrating his 45th anniversary at the Gallery in July last year, however Alan still comes in most Thursdays for appraisal mornings. **Carolyn Murphy** is on maternity leave – welcome baby Jed – and Sarah is working in the paper lab in Carolyn's absence. Malgorzata has recently returned from London where she presented a lecture on the advantages and disadvantages of non-traditional in-gilding techniques to the participants of the *Picturing the Frame: Attitudes, context and treatment from conception to consolidation* conference held by the ICON Gilding and Decorative Surfaces Group. Malgorzata's presentation showcased the research used in her doctoral submission – congratulations Dr Sawicki! Basia recently completed work on the frame for the painting "Rourke's Drift", details of which can be found on the AGNSW website. Basia will also be talking to AICCM members about this project in May. **Angeletta Leggio** generously presented a workshop in the paper lab on pictorialist photographic processes.

## National Archives of Australia – Sydney

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#### Lab News

**Kathy Brennan** and **Fiona Vaughan** have been continuing with the treatment and repackaging of the Title Documents project, which involves humidifying and flattening the 19th century paper and vellum documents, as well as consolidating wax seals and flaking ink.

**Kathy, David Ezzy** and **Filomena Morelli** continue to work on the ABC Television Publicity Files, repackaging photographic and paper files into archival enclosures. Colour transparencies form a large part of the series. All the film and colour prints will be relocated into cold storage.

In an exciting new development, the Trademark Registers project has recently begun. The twenty-three bound volumes contain trademark records for NSW, which date from 1865. **Lynn Sisopha** is leading the current team of **Michael Veitch** and **David Ezzy**. Lynn and Michael have been condition surveying the volumes. David is currently photographing the registers before conservation work begins, which will include cleaning, repairs to trademark samples and bindings, and repackaging.

Filomena has been overseeing a pilot outsourcing digitisation project of cellulose acetate and nitrate negatives from the Cockatoo Island Dockyard series. David is assisting in post-production.

**Shane Booth, Bo Robertson** and **Tanya Bilsborough** are working on the Immigration Records repackaging project, giving a new archival home to the paper records and photographs which form the Correspondence of the Collector of Customs relating to Immigration Restriction and Passports, dating from 1898 to 1948.

#### People News

We have two new members in the Preservation team. **David Ezzy** is temporarily with us as an assistant conservator. David has worked in

Audiovisual Preservation for the last five and a half years at the National Archives. He is also a sports photographer, frequently photographing for *Rugby League Week*. Conservator **Michael Veitch** is taking leave from the State Library of South Australia and Artlab Australia. Michael's area of expertise is bookbinding and paper conservation. We are also happy to welcome **Tanya** back to the team after spending some time working in the Facilities area.

## Powerhouse Museum

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#### Lab News

**Tim Morris** and **Rebecca Pinchin** (Regional Services) attended the annual *Steamfest* event in Maitland (April 18-19) displaying a selection of our model engines & toys. Tim delivered talks on the care of small private collection and personal treasures, complimenting talks by Rebecca about the museums recently launched online *Australian Dress Register* <http://www.powerhousemuseum.com/dressregister/>

**Andrew Grant** (transport curator) on the history of horse drawn carts in Australia. **Ross Goodman** and **Jenny Edmonds** delighted visitors with trips on the Powerhouse's steam engine 3830.

**Deidre McKillop** and **Margaret Juraszek** have been treating 56 Admiralty charts used by Captain J.W. Holmes. The maps have been tightly rolled, with 5-6 maps per roll. Due to their condition the maps had not been able to be physically numbered, photographed or catalogued appropriately.

Tim ran several engines in our permanent display *Steam Revolution* for the purpose of documenting their operation on high definition film. The objects filmed were the highly significant Maudslay beam engine; the locally made Halliday oscillating engine; the Bower and Marshall horizontal engines; two vertical Tangye engines; and the system of shafts that drive the carousel horses.

**Dave Rockell** and **Carey Ward** (Stores and Logistics) recently collected a Gypsy caravan donated by Australian actor Jack Thompson. The gypsy caravan now has pride of place in the Display Store at the Discovery Centre and is the star attraction of the current school holiday program which includes Madame Zelda's one-woman gypsy adventures show and stories of the *Gypsy Crown* with celebrated children's author Kate Forsyth.

**Kate Pollard** has finished photographing the additional 72 glass plate negatives of Clyde Engineering images, recently acquired by the Powerhouse Museum. These images will soon be accessible on the Powerhouse website along with the other 1346 images already available. [http://www.powerhousemuseum.com/collection/database/collection=Clyde\\_Engineering\\_Photo](http://www.powerhousemuseum.com/collection/database/collection=Clyde_Engineering_Photo)

**Nadia McDougall**, **Margaret Juraszek** and **Frances Fitzpatrick** have again been kept busy working on a variety of outgoing loans for Australian National Maritime Museum, National Museum of Australia, Old Parliament House and Australian Centre for the Moving Image.

### People News

**Margaret Juraszek** has changed from full time to part time employment. Unfortunately we bid farewell to **Tasha MacFarlane** and **Chris Brothers**, whose contracts expire at the end of the financial year.

## State Library of NSW

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### Lab news

The State Library is currently undergoing a restructure and the Collection Preservation branch has recently become Collection Preservation and Storage.

**Lang Ngo**, **Nikki Ellis**, **Cathryn Bartley**, **Martin Polkinghorne** and **Trish Leen** recently prepared and installed material for the Library's *Charles Darwin Down Under, 1836*

exhibition. This exhibition celebrates 150 years since the publication of Darwin's controversial *On the origin of species by means of natural selection* and follows the little-known Australian adventures of the young Charles Darwin through a rich collection of original artworks, items and diaries. Darwin visited Australia on the homeward leg of his five-year voyage on HMS Beagle. This exhibition reveals the naturalist's travels in Australia from Sydney Cove to Hobart and on to Albany, exposing his fascination with our landscape, people and extraordinary animals.

Collection Preservation has also prepared items for loan to other Darwin exhibitions around the country. **Guy Caron** has prepared material for the exhibition *Accidental Encounters* at the Macleay Museum. This exhibition delves into science, life and culture in Australia through the letters of Henrietta Heathorn and her fiancé, Thomas Huxley. Assistant Surgeon on HMS Rattlesnake which surveyed Australian waters between 1847 and 1850.

**Steve Bell** has been hard at work on the external exhibition **Women Transported. Women transported: Life in Australia's convict female factories** is a tribute to the memories and experiences of the convict women who made a significant contribution to our nation. This temporary exhibition was previously on display at the Parramatta Heritage Centre, travelled to Tamworth and will now be showing at the National Archives in Canberra from May to June this year.

The branch has also been assisting with several Library events including 2 events associated with Women's History Month, and the opening of the French Film Festival which was attended by Juliette Binoche. Cate Blanchett also graced our shores when she was the guest of honour at a function held in the Mitchell Library.

### People news

There have been a few staff changes in the branch in recent times. In February, Imaging Services farewelled **Andrew LaMoreaux**, who has left the Library for the greener grass of Ohio. We have welcomed **Bruce York** and have also welcomed back **Belinda Christie** as photographers to the branch.

With the addition of storage responsibilities we are also welcoming **Richard Chester** as project officer collection storage and access to the branch. Richard diligently looks after collection storage planning and moves. **Nichola Parshall** made a welcome return to the branch this March after a long absence.

## International Conservation Services

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### Lab News

The great mural project has been completed, with a moveable team of **Adam Godijn**, **Anna Diakowska-Czarnota**, **Arek Werstak**, **Matteo Volonte**, **Noel Turner** and **Melissa Harvey** spending six weeks at the Cathedral church of St Constantine and St Helene in Northbridge, Perth cleaning and conserving the extraordinary murals and icons produced in the 1950s by Vlastislav Zalis. The project was overseen for the church by **Vanessa Wiggan**. Adam and Noel returned from their Tibetan trekking to undertake the work, with Adam departing immediately afterwards to the European highlights of Amsterdam and Florence, where he will be residing until October.

**Oliver Hull**, **Kat Edghill** and **Karina Acton** were meanwhile in Canberra supervising the movement and cleaning of one of Old Parliament House's treasures the Doulton terracotta 'Spartan Women'. Karina had just returned from a week in the field overseeing the relocation of an Aboriginal scarred tree from a paddock near Muswellbrook, due to the area being designated for open cast mining.

**Rachael Crompton** assisted by Karina is managing the relocation of two of the original four Sydney Harbour Bridge cranes. These large pieces of industrial machinery are an extraordinary relic of the original construction of the bridge (they were used for the painting process once the structure was complete), and combine a mixture of almost Heath Robinson ‘making do’ mechanics with sophisticated engineering solutions.

**Erin Watson** and **Doug Rogan** have completed an exhaustive survey of the Australian Red Cross collections across the country and are now finalising their recommendations as to how it is looked after. Erin is also busy undertaking Preservation Needs Assessments for the Department of Corrective Services, and Lake Macquarie City Library.

## Sydney Artefacts Conservation

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### Lab News

Sydney Artefacts Conservation completed the treatment of the entire University of New South Wales outdoor sculpture collection in 2008-2009. The collection is comprised of sixteen sculptures located at the Randwick campus by artists such as Bert Flugelman, Tom Bass, Bronwyn Oliver and Ron Robertson-Swann, amongst many others! The project was carried out over six months by **Anne Cummins**, **Sandra Hodgen Gauld**, **Abby Maxwell-Bowen** and **Thea Eikemo**.

Most recently Anne has been supervising the treatment of the Macquarie Park Place Obelisk having been appointed as Technical Supervisor by the City of Sydney Council. **Andrew Thorn** from Artcare has been awarded the contract to be the conservator for the project. After decades of debate about how to treat the 1818 sandstone monument designed by Francis Greenway it is exciting to finally see some conservation work underway. Rectification drainage work has already been carried out which means the Obelisk is no longer sitting in a pool of water.

Back in the studio, Anne and Thea have been working on the “Royal Hotel Hill End” metal pub sign for NSW National Parks and Wildlife, painted by the well known Australian artist, Donald Friend, in the 1950’s. The sign had previously been treated at another lab, and has since deteriorated, so it has been a challenging project to stabilise the corrosion through highly soluble and degrading paint.

## State Records NSW

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### Technology dependent records

Perhaps because they have just finished spring-cleaning, perhaps because of the ever pressing need for office space, or perhaps because they have realised the threat of loss, NSW State agencies seem to be searching out and finding long-neglected audiovisual and technology dependent records to transfer as State archives. In the past years State Records has accepted transfers of moving picture films, but more recently record managers are uncovering magnetic tapes, VHS video cassettes, mini-discs, beta cam video, and of course CD and DVD collections. This has prompted State Records NSW to change our transfer guidelines slightly – we now state that we may require up-dating to newer formats prior to transfer so that we have more time before obsolescence becomes an issue.

### Dealing with Agency recall of archives

The Department of Community Services (DoCS) currently recall about 75 individual files and about 10 Type 1 boxes of Ward and Adoption records every month. These records, now in the custody of State Records, are in poor physical and chemical condition due to their heavy usage while still active and the poor quality materials used to create them (carbon-copy papers, thermo-fax papers, hectographs, etc). Conservation repairs and re-housing of the files are required before they are sent to DoCS, however this work is proving increasingly onerous and

we are now contemplating a different method of retrieval by DoCS. We are investigating the use of high-speed and flatbed scanners to copy these records so that the electronic copy is sent to DoCS and an electronic master copy is kept for long-term preservation. The files will not survive in their current format for more than a couple of decades and digital copying will therefore be achieving both present access requirements and long-term preservation needs.

### Investigating tape removal on earliest Land Grant Registers

The earliest Grant Registers for NSW (dated 1792 to 1825) are still in the custody of the parent agency, and prior to transfer as State archives they require extensive conservation treatment to remove a variety of tapes, repair tears and rehouse appropriately. State Records requires the agency to commission this work however we are assisting in the process by undertaking a small treatment trial to get an accurate estimate of how long, and therefore how expensive, the treatment will be. A DVD copy of the complete set of registers has been produced and is available for purchase from State Records NSW – the money raised from the sale of the DVD will go towards the conservation costs.

## Queensland

### Queensland News

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The July edition 2009 of Queensland Antiques and Art magazine may be of interest to members, as it contains an article concerning the silver anniversary of AICCM member GN Olsson Mastercraftsmen. The article is featured on pages 46 and 47 of the July edition of the magazine.

## ACT

## National Museum of Australia

**Eric Archer** is currently at the NMA Centre for Historic Research investigating risk methodology as a collections management tool. **Nicki Smith** will be acting in Eric's position for the month of May.

In the Paper & Textiles Lab **Deb Spoehr**, **Carmela Mollica**, **Jess Wignell**, **Ruth Williams**, and **Carlos Ramirez** are working on two travelling exhibitions and one major gallery redevelopment. They are looking forward to welcoming **Mary Gissing**, who will be starting as the new Lab Head on the 4<sup>th</sup> of May.

In the Objects Lab **Sharon Towns**, **Mark Henderson**, **Prue Castles**, **Peter Bucke**, and **Bob Wallis** are working on the same exhibitions. They are also involved with the acquisition of a large collection of contemporary indigenous works depicting the Canning Stock Route.

In the Technology Lab **Ainslie Greiner**, with **Col Ogilvie**, and **Ian Stewart** are working on technology objects for the major gallery redevelopment and continued maintenance of collection technology objects. They recently went to Oran Park in Sydney with a 1923 Citroën and the 1946 Holden Prototype for testing in collaboration with NRMA. **David Hallam** has been on extended sick leave, but is gradually returning to work. **Ian Cramer** is working with volunteers on winter lay-up maintenance of the Paddle Steamer Enterprise, Conservation storage issues, and collection maintenance.

**Noel Lane** our Preventive Officer recently left on a 12 month secondment to the National Gallery and has been replaced by **Donna Wilks**.

**Bruce Ford** is continuing research with the Micro-Fade Tester and working with Nicki Smith to develop our Lighting Guidelines.

## Australian War Memorial

### Lab news

In March, **George Bailey** and **Cathy Challenor** were called up to present evidence at the HMAS Sydney Commission of Inquiry, following research carried out by George, Cathy and **Alana Treasure**, on artefacts recovered from Christmas Island. The Memorial was greatly assisted in this research by the Australian Federal Police Forensics team and Australian National University.

After a very busy start to the year in the Paintings Lab, **Alana Treasure**, **David Keany** and **Kathryn Ferguson** have settled into a more even paced workflow. They have begun work on the upcoming Sidney Nolan: Gallipoli exhibition, continue to work after hours on the diorama collection on display at the Memorial and have successfully trialled their new 'lab-made' humidification chamber to flatten several unusual painted canvas 'posters' recovered from the Vietnam war.

**Alana** has also been visiting the many Defence offices that have loan paintings to keep an eye on the collection outside the Memorial, and continues FTIR and Raman materials analysis for Memorial collection items at the University of Canberra.

**David** has also been working on recently acquired reverse painted glass portraits in conjunction with **Helen** in the Paper Lab for exhibition in our Orientation Gallery.

In the Textile lab **Jessie Firth** is using cyclododecane to mask areas, on a Korean War life vest, in order to remove flourosine dye which has leached out of its packet. **Bridie Kirkpatrick** has been working on preserving felt liners and recovering seats in the Mk IV Female tank, and conserving a c1755 beaver cocked hat. **Tessa Ivison** and **Teresa Duhigg** are ploughing through a mountain of new acquisitions coming through the Freezer Program.

In the Objects Lab, **George Bailey** has been preparing a First World War bronze horse's head for installation into the Sculpture Garden as the Animals in War memorial. **Melanie Forward** has been preparing and installing objects for the A is for Animals travelling exhibition. **Rebecca Dallwitz** and **Eileen Procter** are continuing to survey and treat new acquisitions and loans.

In the Large Technology Lab, a Mark IV tank has been in the Large Technology Workshop for several months where **Dean Willis**, **Alistair Muir** and **Andrew Pearce** are undertaking an extensive treatment including removal of the tracks and a full repaint back to the original colour scheme. **Jamie Croker** and **Andrew Schroeder** are building a Boulton Paul turret from parts that will be retrofitted into the Hudson bomber in the coming months. **John Kemister** has conserved a Jungle Hand Cart and is currently preparing several aircraft engines and propellers for potential display.

Our Preventive Conservation Officer, **Frances Cumming**, is testing temporary showcases that are emitting odours for the presence of potentially damaging compounds.

In the Paper Lab, it has been a busy time, with the arrival of two new paper conservators, a minor lab upgrade, and the demount of a large travelling exhibition "Sport and War". **Alexa McNaught-Reynolds** has been expanding her practical skills with a wide variety of collection materials, including a series of oversized artworks by Napier Waller, and the treatment of early exhibition material from the Memorial. **Karen Holloway** has been working on a variety of art, archival and exhibition material. **Nick Zihrul** has been preparing for a large exhibition of artworks by Sidney Nolan. It includes 68 works on paper, many of which have been painted with textile dyes. The Paper Lab has been upgraded with a new mobile sink and storage cabinets, which provide a more functional and spacious work area.

## People news

The paper lab has been joined by **Karen Holloway** in an ongoing position and recent CCMC graduate **Alexa McNaught-Reynolds** on a short term contract. **Janet Hearne**, recent CCMC graduate, has joined the Paintings Lab as a volunteer once a week – welcome Janet! **Celia Vaughan**, a prospective conservation student, is volunteering in the Textile lab one morning a week. **Celia Cramer** and **Liz Fraser** are volunteering in the Objects Lab.

## Western Australia

### W.A. Museum

#### Lab News

The Department of Materials Conservation has welcomed conservator **Isa Loo** who took up a contract position in late February, working alongside **Richard Garcia** on large technological objects. Isa will be with the team until the end of October, with a possible contract extension for a further 12 months. In addition to her many other duties, Isa has been kept busy delivering Preventive Conservation workshops to Edith Cowan students for the Certificate of Museum Studies.

**Ian Godfrey** has returned back to the warmth of Perth after helping to set up the first materials conservation laboratory in the Australian Antarctic Territory. He has since addressed Federal MPs on the conservation work at Mawson's Huts in Canberra when he made a presentation to the Members of the Antarctic Alliance. He also attended the Mawson's Huts seminar in Sydney in late April, presenting an overview of achievements of the 2008/09 expedition team.

Staff have also been involved in a number of field trips which have included a trip to Rottneest Island Museum to report on the condition of Maritime Archaeology artefacts on display (**Carmela Corvaia**), a trip to Albany to continue work on storage

and environmental issues (**Maggie Myers, Alex Kilpa** and **Don Cockrell**) and a visit to Kalgoorlie (Richard Garcia and Isa Loo) to inspect the WA Museum's collections at the Miners' and Prospectors Hall of Fame and at the Boulder store.

Maggie, Isa and Alex, ably assisted by some History staff and volunteers, also spent days cleaning objects on display in the Fremantle History Museum.

**Inger Nystrom** has recently completed a 3 month contract with the Museum, working on maritime archaeological objects. Inger was able to complete the treatment of the remainder of the silver coins from the *Correo d'Azia*, retreat the swivel gun from the *Zuytdorp*, monitor and change desalination solutions, surface treat and pack desalinated metal objects, surface clean, reconfigure and pack many freeze-dried rope and leather artefacts, deconcrete some composite objects and initiate testing of the iron chelating agent DTPA. All in all, it was a very busy and productive 3 months.

Carmela Corvaia also provided preventive conservation training for Jodie Dowd, an intern from Deakin University, in particular, the care of indigenous artefacts.

#### Workshops

Maggie Myers presented three workshops at the WA Museum – Albany late in March. The topics were Preventive Conservation and Disaster Preparedness and were presented to Museum Australia members and the WAM – Albany staff. In addition a public workshop was given on the "Care of your Treasures". There was a good response to all the workshops, particularly the public workshop, which was advertised by an interview given by Maggie on the ABC Albany that morning.

Conservation, Earth and Planetary Science, Anthropology, Maritime Archaeology and Art Gallery staff attended a two-day workshop, fully funded by Bruker, on the analysis of cultural materials using the Bruker portable x-ray fluorescence spectrometer.

The participating staff were able to apply the non-destructive X-ray fluorescence technique to the chemical analysis of a wide range of cultural materials in the Museum's collection. For example, the identification, comparison, and provenance of pottery from ancient Egypt and Sumeria; identifying metal threads in a historic Chinese fabric prior to conservation; the metal compositions of the failed Gormley sculptures, Lake Ballard; investigation and analysis of the acidic corrosion products on the *Batavia* timbers; analysis, comparison and provenance of copper alloy sheathing in order to assist in wreck identification; identification of corrosion products on reburied metal coupons to ascertain the effect of the depth of burial on the extent of corrosion.

This ability to non-destructively analyse cultural objects and materials for their chemical composition allows a large number of problems in collections management and conservation, and collections-based research, to be solved whilst maintaining the integrity of precious museum objects.

#### Exhibitions

All the books on display in the "Journeys of Enlightenment" exhibition at the Maritime Museum were opened at different pages to minimize the light exposure on these iconic artifacts. In some instances it was a matter of turning the page, others were opened at a different section of the book and required different book support (prepared by **Tim Cook**) specific to that opening. Some of the framed items were also changed for the same reason. The "Journeys of Enlightenment" exhibition is open for 13 months and these sensitive paper artifacts will be changed three times during the display period.

In March, conservators **Ulli Broeze-Hoernemann** and **Jon Carpenter** traveled to Geraldton to take down the cricket exhibition 'Howzat'. They worked with Exhibition and Design staff and completed condition reports on each object and assisted with packing them into prepared crates for transport to Perth.

While in Geraldton, Ulli and Jon also examined objects on permanent display in the museum for their condition and any signs of deterioration.

The Red Bluff pistol was returned to its place in the gallery dedicated to the HMAS Sydney and it looks magnificent on the support crafted by **Rodney van der Merwe** (Exhibition and Design team).

### Australian Leadership Awards Fellowship

Staff of the Department of Materials Conservation (mainly **Vicki Richards** and Jon Carpenter) assisted Maritime Archaeology staff in hosting the AusAid ALAF (Australian Leadership Awards Fellowship) Intensive Program in Underwater Cultural Heritage by presenting lectures, workshops, behind-the-scenes tours, practical fieldwork and networking relating to the conservation of underwater cultural heritage to three professional participants. The two week fulltime program provided intensive contact hours between the three ALAF fellows from Sri Lanka, Cambodia and Thailand and museum staff in order to assist them in building up professional networks in the field.

Vicki Richards has also been awarded the honour of Adjunct Academic Status as a Research Fellow in the School of Humanities (Dept of Archaeology) at Flinders University.

### ArtWorks Conservation

#### Lab News

We have been very busy with several large projects on the go in recent months. **Seth Wiggin** and assistant **Tony Best** recently completed the conservation of the Pioneer Women's Memorial Fountain in King's Park. The sculpture needed sprucing up

to have its photograph taken for a forthcoming book on its artist, Margaret Priest. Water blasting proved ideal for removing corrosion products without contaminating the surrounding water garden with chemicals. Further outdoor sculpture projects are in progress for King's Park and the City of Fremantle.

Meanwhile, **Vanessa Wiggin** and Tony have been steadily working away on a large collection of farming and domestic equipment for the new Wanneroo Museum to open in June. Vanessa also provided a training program for City of Wanneroo staff and volunteers to assist in achieving the tight schedule. Seth is fabricating metal stands for several of the larger items.

Vanessa ventured out to Cunderdin Museum in the wheatbelt in March to teach a weekend workshop on metals conservation. Representatives from several rural museums attended, with a focus on establishing 'men's workshops' to pass on the skills of maintaining historic farm machinery. Vanessa was delighted with a suggestion from the female attendees that they also establish a 'women's workshop' at Cunderdin Museum.

Vanessa was engaged by the Church of St Constantine and Helene in Northbridge to supervise a team from ICS conserving the church's murals and icons. The project was very successful and it was a great opportunity to catch up with other conservators.

#### People News

We will soon be temporarily winding down our operations as Vanessa and Seth prepare for the birth of their second child in May. We are also in the process of relocating to a new house with a dedicated conservation studio, so we will be back better than ever at the end of the year.

## Student News

The student labs at The University of Melbourne are buzzing with activity as the students work toward their end of semester 1 deadlines. The painting students are treating a collection of large 19<sup>th</sup> C. European oil on canvas paintings, each representing various stations of the cross. The paintings belong to and are located within a local church, and have suffered from severe environmental damage (canvas shrinkage, paint film cleavage and cracking/flaking, dirt, varnish discolouration etc.). Treatments being undertaken by the paintings group include consolidation of paint layers, wax/overpaint removal, varnish removal, humidification/re-stretching of the canvas, infilling/inpainting, re-varnishing and rehousing.

The paper students have just completed a two week parchment treatment workshop. The project provided a new challenge for the paper students as they learnt the specialised technique of parchment treatment and string mounting. The paper lab continues to work away at various minor projects in earnest of the end of semester. Continuous treatments undertaken by the paper lab students include a complex backing removal, treatment of an albumen print as well as a treatment of a watercolour painting from the University's collection. An ongoing treatment of a photomontage board containing sixty albumen prints has proved a particular challenge and a valuable lesson in the advantages of team work for two paper students!. The projects and their treatments undertaken by the paper lab students are always broad and varied and are met with enthusiasm and energy.

The objects students have also enjoyed a full and diverse program so far for their first semester of their second year of the Masters course. **Mary-Anne Gooden** is currently treating an embroidered cotton bolero from a private collection. Mary-Anne's treatment involves stain reduction and stabilisation

repairs to several tears and losses. **Charlotte Walker's** major treatment involves the challenge of perfecting her stitching technique to complete a stabilising treatment for a waistcoat, tails and overcoat from a private collection. **Laura Curtis** is working on a Mamluk vase originating from between the Thirteenth to Sixteenth Century. The glazed ceramic has previously been broken into multiple pieces and re-adhered with an epoxy. Many of the pieces were misaligned and the adhesive has discoloured, so Laura is taking the pieces apart and readhering them correctly with a conservation grade adhesive so the vase will be in a more stable condition, thus allowing its true aesthetic to be appreciated. The objects students have been very privileged over the last few weeks to have guest lecturers share their expertise. Metals conservator **Paul Hunt** has demonstrated treatment techniques including electrolysis and corrosion inhibitors, and has given the objects students a fascinating insight into his conservation work at Port Arthur and around Melbourne. The objects students have also enjoyed smashing ceramic objects intended for student projects and learning how to adhere, infill and inpaint them with ceramics conservator **Penny Byrne**.

As the second years have progressed to commencing their second treatment subject, they have welcomed over twenty first year students to the fold. Amongst them are **Claire Tindal** who has travelled from the United States to pursue a master's degree in cultural

materials conservation. Previously she interned in maritime conservation on the H.L. Hunley Project at the Clemson Conservation Center in North Charleston, South Carolina, and hopes to further her maritime experience here in Australia.

The second year students also welcome back **Erina McCann** who has returned to full time study after welcoming her little girl, Niamh, into her family. Erina is specialising in textile conservation and has an academic background in Maori Material culture, traditional weaving patterns and the use of traditional fibres. Erina seeks to take her skills back to New Zealand once she has completed the course and will surely strengthen the skill base of the professional body in New Zealand.

Thesis projects being undertaken this year include **Andrew Dewhurst** who is researching the physical behaviour and deterioration issues surrounding Langridge Artists Oil Colour paints. Andrew's research will contribute to the knowledge of contemporary Australian artist paints and implications for their use and future conservation. **Melanie Wilkinson** is undertaking research into a treatment and storage solution for large format, double sided artworks within a house museum environment. Melanie is looking at materials analysis of various commercial products utilised in the construction and auto manufacturing industry to inform her storage solution. **Sarah Babister** is investigating the history, meaning, construction and

materiality of the Yackandandah bullock hide frame, a unique composite object made in 1902 to honour the coronation of King Edward VII. Her thesis has involved archival research, detailed examination, material testing and treatment of the object in order to explicate its significance and stabilise it for display. **Amy Bartlett** is investigating the materials and techniques of modern laminated photographs in addition to treatment methods such as cleaning.

The Student Committee at Melbourne (SC@M) is also working toward forging new relationships, not only with their Canberra counterparts, but also with the New Zealand Conservators of Cultural Material body. This new relationship endeavours to bring about relationship building between New Zealand professionals and Australian and New Zealand students in conservation.

The Melbourne students are also looking forward to offering support and comradeship to Associate Professor **James Warden** as he commences the Bachelor of Cultural Heritage Conservation program at the University of Canberra. With the addition of the Canberra course, student numbers are now swelling to a healthy 76. The Melbourne group certainly extend a warm welcome to their A.C.T counterparts and look forward to forging a close relationship with them in the interest of cultural materials conservation studies in Australia.

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### Miscellaneous news:

*Anyone who worked with **Tom Mosby** when he was objects conservator at the National Gallery of Victoria in the early 1990's will enjoy watching "MasterChef Australia" on Channel 10. Tom is one of the top 20 contestants thus far. Tom is now a lawyer in Queensland as well as a talented chef.*

## An Interview – Dr Malgorzata (Margaret) Sawicki

*Dr Malgorzata (Margaret) Sawicki is Senior Conservator and the Head of Frames at the Art Gallery of New South Wales, where she has worked since 1986. Trained originally in Poland, Margaret came to Australia in 1983. She returned to University in the 1990s, received her Master of Applied Science (Materials Conservation) with Distinction from the University of Western Sydney in 2000, and recently completed her PhD research on non-traditional gilding techniques with the same University. She is also currently coordinator of the ICOM-CC Wood, Furniture, and Lacquer working group. She was AICCM Conservator of the Year in 1999.*

*Julian Bickersteth caught up with her at the Art Gallery of New South Wales.*



### **How have you come to your present role?**

I trained at the State Enterprise for the Preservation of Monuments in Warsaw in decorative arts as part of which I learnt gilding. This led to further work in gilded and polychrome object conservation and three years study (a bachelor degree equivalent) at the Nicholas Copernicus University in Torun, Poland, in architectural details conservation. I came to Australia in 1983 and spent the first three years here learning English and having children. In 1986 I was lucky enough to gain a temporary role at AGNSW, which then became a permanent role in 1988, and evolved into my current position as Head of Frames in 1998.

### **What are you working on at present?**

We are deep in preparing and consolidating some 180 frames for relocation to our off-site store, which is due to happen in the next few months. We are also preparing various old frames and making new frames for the Rupert Bunny exhibition which opens in November at the Gallery.

### **How did your role as Coordinator of the ICOM-CC working Group come about?**

In 2002 I gave a paper at the ICOM-CC triennial assembly in Rio de Janeiro on non-traditional gilding techniques

(which incidentally has been the subject of my doctorate at University of Western Sydney), at which conference the moribund Wood, Furniture and Lacquer working group was resuscitated. In 2005 at the next triennial meeting in the Hague I was asked to be the Assistant Coordinator, and then in 2007 an interim meeting of this group with the Leather and Related Materials and Textile working groups took place at Krakow, and I became heavily involved due to my Polish background. So in 2008 at the next triennial in New Delhi on the retirement of the current coordinator Dr Hany Hanna, I was asked to be the coordinator. We are now planning another interim meeting, partly due to the success of the Krakow meeting in Rome next year when we will be meeting with the same three groups along with the Sculpture, Polychrome and Architectural Decoration and Murals, Stone, and Rock Art working groups. ICOM -CC is in good health with nearly 1700 members. I gain great satisfaction from seeing these groups work together. In the 1990s both in Australia and worldwide there was too much fracturing of these groups, all doing their own thing. So many of the issues we encounter as conservators are common ones, and by working together we can learn together so much faster.

### **And how would you judge the health of AICCM?**

I think we are in good shape. In my view the strength of Australian conservation lies in the diversity of its background. With a high number of migrants in the profession, with widely differing training backgrounds, we are able to work together, and learn from and fire off each other. Regular AICCM conferences are a key to this, and I am a great advocate for general conservation meetings. If we fracture too much into SIG meetings, we will quickly become isolated.

### **What is your view on the ideal training for a conservator?**

In a perfect world every conservator would undertake a science degree followed by an art history degree and then a Masters in materials conservation. Such courses do exist in Germany and Poland but they are a big commitment in time (up to 6 year) and cost. In addition conservators need at an early stage to identify that they have the necessary pre disposition for the profession in terms of manual dexterity and patience. I have some concerns when I look at the curriculum for the new University of Canberra course that it is short on the strictly conservation subjects such as organic and inorganic materials conservation or preventive conservation. This is vital in my mind

for conservators to have, prior to specialising in any field. I would also like to see more opportunity for mid career development. I was a great advocate of the Masters course at the University of Western Sydney which is no longer running. Working conservators needs avenues for being able to advance their knowledge.

### **What are the challenges you currently face?**

Finding suitably skilled staff. We are lucky at AGNSW in being supported to provide opportunities for international students to come as interns. We have students from Finland, Estonia, Germany, England and France, and we often learn as much as they do from the different approaches to conservation that they are being taught. However finding trained conservators with the necessary science and art history knowledge remains a real challenge.

**Thank you, Margaret.**

## General News

### **AICCM Victorian Division – Victorian Bushfire Response Update**

As you are probably aware the committee of the Victorian Division of AICCM: **Alex Ellem** (president), **MaryJo Lelyveld** (secretary), **Libby Melzer** (treasurer), **Alice Cannon**, **Liz McCartney**, **Raye Collins**, **Marika Kocsis**, **Amy Bartlett** (student rep), and **Bianca Di Fazio** (student rep) have been actively responding to the Victorian bushfires, offering advice and support concerning the salvage and preservation of items recovered from the fires.

#### **Our Supporters**

The decision to make this undertaking has been assisted with the support of National Council and many conservators in Melbourne (and interstate) who have offered to volunteer. Support has come from Collections Council Australia who collaborated with AICCM on the press release *Fire Damaged Memorabilia – advice for bushfire victims* of February 12<sup>th</sup>. Other organizations that have expressed their support for the AICCM bushfire response are the Public Records Office Victoria, the National Archives of Australia (Melbourne Office), the National Gallery of Victoria, The Centre for Cultural Material Conservation, the State Library of Victoria, Museums Australia (Victoria), Museum Victoria, Heritage Victoria, ArtLab Australia, Australia ICOMOS, Blue Shield Australia, and Arts Victoria.

Substantial material support has been offered by the Public Records Office Victoria and the National Archives of Australia (Melbourne Office) in the form of hundreds of archival boxes, thousands of archival bags, and numerous other storage materials. As

well Justine Heazlewood and Diane Brodie from PROV have advanced our cause through networking, directly contacting councils in affected areas apprising them of what AICCM are doing, and printing thousands of our *After A Fire* Brochures, written by **Kay Soderlund**, and sending them to the councils along with our *Salvaging Your Possessions: Important Tips* poster, co-produced by MaryJo Lelyveld and Alex Ellem. Material support has also been given by the National Gallery of Victoria, which also included the offer of the use of a car to transport people and storage items to affected communities, The Centre for Cultural Material Conservation, University of Melbourne, who also offered administrative support, and the Powerhouse Museum, Sydney, who have made a generous donation, initiated by **Kate Chidlow**, purchasing smoke sponges and various storage materials through Archival Survival. The State Library of Victoria and Museum Victoria and the other collecting organizations have also offered flexibility for conservators to leave work early to attend bushfire visits.

We would also like to thank **Kim Morris**, **Detlev Lueth**, and **Barbara Reeve** for information and advice on the Canberra bushfires, **David Hallam** for putting together an information sheet for conservators on how to deal with fire damaged metals and **Penny Byrne** for advice on dealing with fire damaged ceramics. Thanks go to Minuteman Press Spencer Street as well for donating services in printing additional copies of the *After A Fire* Brochures.

#### **Getting Our Message Out There**

Our message has also been spread widely thanks to the interest and support of others. On April 29, Alex was one of three speakers at an Arts

Roundtable in Yea concerning Bushfire Recovery headed up by Lynne Kosky, Victorian Minister for the Arts, and Penny Hutchinson, Director of Arts Victoria. Sue Strano from Regional Arts Victoria spoke of arts projects aimed at galvanising and healing communities hit by the bushfires, Alex provided an update on what AICCM are doing and hope to do in the future, and Helen Simondson from ACMI spoke about an award winning digital story telling project with La Trobe City Council, *From the Ashes: Stories from the Gippsland Bush Fires*, which came out of the bush fires in 2006.

The media have also shown interest in what AICCM is doing with various interviews being broadcasted. **Tamara Lavrencic** was interviewed in a segment titled *Saving and Restoring Damaged Memorabilia on Bush Telegraph*, ABC Radio National on February 13<sup>th</sup>. Alex has been interviewed by Denis Walters on 3AW on February 12<sup>th</sup>, then on February 23<sup>rd</sup> by Kulja Coulston and Donna Morabito on The Grapevine on 3RRR. On *Life Matters* ABC Radio National on April 16, Richard Aedy interviewed Alex in the segment *Conservators Help Bushfire Communities*. The coverage on national radio has led to great feedback and seems to be raising public awareness of what conservators do in the wider community.

### Visits to Communities

Volunteers have been making visits to bushfire affected communities since mid March. Alice Cannon, Marika Kocsis, **Debra Parry** and Alex, made the first visits to the St Andrews and Arthur's Creek Relief Centres, the next day MaryJo Lelyveld, Liz McCartney, Debra Parry and Raye Collins, took a stall at the Yea Autumn Festival offering information. **Catherine Earley** and **Janelle Borig** attended a community briefing meeting at Kinglake West and the following night Catherine went to a community meeting at Kinglake. Salvage and recovery were the main topics of these meetings as preparations were being made for people to return to their homes to salvage what they could before sites were cleared. In early April,

MaryJo, Libby, and Alex attended a similarly focused community meeting at the Whittlesea Activity Centre, using a car kindly offered by the National Gallery of Victoria. On May 3<sup>rd</sup>, Alex, MaryJo and Liz attended the Marysville and Triangle District Communities' Planning Day, a day people were able to voice their hopes for the future of their communities. We were able to give advice and materials to quite a few people and a carload of boxes and bags to the Marysville Historical Society.

### More to Come

In mid May volunteers will present the first Conservation Clinic at a Combined Historical Societies Network meeting. Representatives from twelve historical societies from areas widely affected by the bushfires such as Nillumbik Shire, will be in attendance. Volunteer conservators will speak about the AICCM response, discuss the needs of the various historical societies, perform demonstrations and offer materials for storage. Later in May Alex will participate in the Fire Recovery Project Forum in Yea, organised by the Cultural Development Network (Victoria). The forum will focus on identifying the needs of artists and their communities and what can be done to support them. Other community meetings and events will be attended such as the opening of Radio Marysville.

Kim Morris and Alex Ellem will be speaking about responding to bushfires at a Victorian Off the Record Event at the State Library. Kim will focus on his experience of the Canberra bushfires and what can be learned from that. Alex will update Victorian members about the actions taken by the Vic Division in its bushfire response.

Having contacted councils and historical societies around the state, we await requests to visit other communities in the weeks and months to come. The plan is to offer conservation clinics in which we will provide further conservation advice to people about things they have recovered. The clinics will incorporate demonstrations of basic techniques people can perform to clean and carefully store their possessions

until they are ready to see a conservator for further treatment. It is planned that these clinics will be administered through local councils, historical societies and community arts groups.

A paper concerning key factors in the bushfire response development and delivery will be presented at the National Conference in Fremantle this September.

### Thanks

AICCM Victorian Division would like to thank everyone who has offered and given us support. It has made it possible for us to offer meaningful assistance to people affected by the bushfires. We apologise if we have forgotten to name you, and we thank you now for your help.

If you haven't yet offered assistance and would like to make a difference in this effort, please contact Alex at aellem@unimelb.edu.au.

## Call for AICCM Archival Material

The ACT Division committee have been working through the archives of the AICCM in readiness for deposit with the NLA. Unfortunately there are still some significant gaps in the material. Gaps of particular concern are:

- National Council 2005
- National Conferences between Perth 1973 and Canberra 1988
- National Conferences post 1999
- Special Interest Groups – Paintings, Textiles, Gilded Objects, Conservation Framing, Conservation Science, Antarctic Heritage, Wet Organics, Preventive Conservation, Photon & Objects
- Book and Paper SIG – First Symposium, 2000
- Newsletters prior to issue 43 of 1992, also missing issue 89
- Division records – WA Division, Tasmania Division

If you have any of these records, or any other significant AICCM records that should be archived please contact Ian Batterham (Phone: 02 62123424, email: ian.batterham@naa.gov.au) as soon as possible to arrange transfer.

## Gabo Trust Scholarship Winner

**Anne Cummins** director of Sydney Artefacts Conservation has been awarded the Gabo Trust-International Institute for Conservation Travelling Scholarship for the study of the conservation of sculpture anywhere in the world.

In recent years Anne has worked on several challenging outdoor projects including the repeat treatment of 15 metre high timber and fibreglass matchsticks by Brett Whiteley for the AGNSW; relocating and maintaining Alexander Calder's 20 tonne sculpture outside Australia Square; and just last year condition reported Antony Gormley's installation *Inside Australia* comprising 51 stainless steel sculptures scattered over a 10 square kilometre salt pan in the remote desert of Western Australia.

During the past 17 years in business she has developed a keen interest in the dialogue with artists and the role of conservators in recording artist's materials and intentions at both the commissioning stage (for new commissions for the Sydney Olympics in 2000), as well as with artist's foundations and fabricators, when major conservation treatments are required and the artist is no longer alive.

Her topic for the scholarship is to explore artists' intents for aging and conservation of contemporary sculptures by interviewing key international artists and artist's foundations whose works are in Australian collections. To meet with curators and conservators who have direct experience with these issues in contemporary sculpture to discuss the most successful methods of recording and anticipating how they negotiate the often differing perspective of preserving the artist's intentions as well

as preserving the works for the future.

As part of the trip she will be meeting with contemporary British artists Antony Gormley and Anish Kapoor in London; the Alexander Calder and Clement Meadmore artists foundation in New York; the Nasher sculpture park in Dallas and the Storm King sculpture park in New York; conservators of contemporary sculpture at the Tate Gallery in London, Museum of Modern Art and Metropolitan Museum in New York.

Anne is particularly interested in discussing in depth artists' experiences and attitudes to being contacted by conservators over the years. Especially in regards to issues such as the current trend by purchasing institutions to conduct artist video interviews when artworks are acquired into a collection and artists' attitude to public interaction with their artworks and how this is managed by the exhibiting institutions.

## Stories from the files

### National Archives of Australia

*The Commonwealth records held by the National Archives of Australia contain many fascinating stories. Ian Batterham is researching a number of these stories to present them here in the pages of the AICCM Newsletter. For this issue the story concerns the Committee for the Conservation of Cultural Property (ACT), the body that immediately preceded the AICCM.*

*Unless otherwise referenced, all information presented comes from the files A3382/1 item 1973/126, Committee for the Conservation of Cultural Property (ACT) and A3382/1 item 197/502 Submission from the Institute for the Conservation of Cultural Material (ACT Division).*

### The Committee for the Conservation of Cultural Property (ACT)

The early 1970s was an exciting time in the heritage sector in Australia. In 1973 the Department of Urban and Regional Development established a Committee of Inquiry into the National Estate

(which resulted in the establishment of the Australian Heritage Commission). In 1975 the Committee of Inquiry on Museums and National Collections released their recommendations (now known as the Piggott Report, after chairman Peter Piggott) which outlined new directions for Australian museums and ultimately led to the establishment of the National Museum of Australia.

In this environment Australian conservators began to become more political and more organised. The major products of this new enthusiasm were the establishment of the ICCM (now AICCM) and ultimately the introduction of the conservation course at the Canberra College of Advanced Education (now University of Canberra).

Before the ICCM was instituted at a national seminar in Perth in August 1973 there was, very briefly, a body established in Canberra called the Committee for the Conservation of Cultural Property (A.C.T.) (CCCP).

Unfortunately there is no record of the actual inception of the CCCP or the discussions that led to its creation. We join the story in June 1973 at which time the committee had already been established and had its own constitution. The file information relates to a submission from the CCCP to the Committee of Inquiry into the National Estate (CINE) and gives a lot of interesting detail.

### Committee members of the CCCP were:

Anne Beggs (National Archives of Australia) – Secretary

Barbara Ross (National Archives of Australia)

Wal Ambrose (Conservator/Research Officer, Department of Anthropology, ANU)

Alan Byrne (National Library of Australia)

Ian Cook (National Library of Australia).

### The aims of the CCCP were set out in its constitution:

1. To promote the advancement of the science and art of the conservation of cultural property.
2. To promote co-operation and an exchange of information and ideas between those concerned with the conservation of cultural property. In particular to improve technical knowledge, and disseminate the information within the field.
3. To hold regular meetings to further the above aims.
4. To persuade government to participate in the conservation of cultural property.

Membership of the committee was open to 'all people and institutions interested in furthering the aims of the committee'. Although not stated in the constitution, it seems the primary aim of the committee was to work towards the establishment of a national conservation body.

On 8 June 1973 the CCCP contacted Mr RN Walker, Director of the National Trust. He was, at that time, working for the task force gathering information for the CINE. He was invited to a General Meeting of the CCCP on 13 June at the Coombs Building at the ANU. Unfortunately he was in Perth at the time and could not attend. He was however able to attend an Executive Meeting of the CCCP on 26 June 1973 at the home of Thea Exley (later to be Director of Conservation at the National Archives of Australia).

In his Note for File on this meeting Mr Walker reported that the CCCP were 'amongst those responsible for the organization of a National Seminar for the Protection of Cultural Property to be held in Perth from 6 – 11 August, 1973'. He states that the prime objective of the committee was 'the formation of a National Committee/Society for the Conservation of Cultural Property'. The committee was also concerned about collections of archaeological and Aboriginal material and impressed on Mr Walker that these 'should be accepted as an important ingredient of the National Estate'. Further, there

was also a need for a national policy on questions such as:

- a) 'what material should remain in situ as opposed to being removed to museums;
- b) gathering material in private collections into places where it would be in expert hands;
- c) strong and uniform legislation throughout Australia to establish that such Cultural Property is part of the National Estate and should not be disbursed through various private and local collections such as District Historical Museums.'

Behind these questions is the push towards development of a National Museum which focussed on the collection, preservation and interpretation of Indigenous material.

Before the Perth seminar the CCCP assisted Dr Colin Pearson in developing a draft Constitution and set of By-Laws for the proposed new body. A copy of these documents is included on both of the files.

Mr Walker attended the seminar in Perth at which the ICCM was formed.

As an interesting aside there is a version of the constitution of the new body on the file 73/502 which gives the name of the new body as IPCM, the Institute for the *Preservation* of Cultural Material. At the time there was clearly some uncertainty as to the most appropriate term, a discussion that continues to this day.

Once the ICCM had been established as a national body there was no reason for the CCCP to continue. The individual committee members do not vanish though, all going on to work as members of the AICCM, either the national body or the ACT Division.

### RH Low Mass Hot Suction Table – Virginia Dahlenburg

Faced with 5 problematic painting conservation jobs that had not adequately responded to any hand

conservation treatment, and with the clients running out of patience, I contacted **Robin Hodgson** of RH Conservation Engineering. As Robin is a long term colleague I felt able to ask him whether the RH Low Mass Hot Suction Table would offer treatment solutions to these problematic works. After extensive discussion and appraisal it was considered that 4 of the 5 paintings would respond well to treatments on the RH Table. The 5th work, a work of oil paint on paper on canvas, had an alternative cold treatment devised for it.

The 4 paintings were on cotton or linen, with tears and major water damage, with the accompanying cleavage, cracking, crazing and deformation to the ground that goes with it. One work also had large areas of impasto.

I am thrilled with the results in all 4 cases, and the treatments were made simple on the RH Table as I was able to manipulate the very fragile areas with ease and confidence. The superfine latex membrane cover sheet and the ease with which the pressure can be regulated, ensured that all bits went back into their proper places and there was no loss of impasto.

The unique Low Mass design of the RH Table gave a very uniform heat distribution, was quick to heat up and the works could be saturated with uniform heat (in this case 69°C) in about 9-10 minutes, after which the heat could be turned off. It then only took 12-15 minutes to cool down to under 35°C at which point the suction could be stopped as well.

To other conservators that undertake structural treatments on paintings, I urge you to look into the RH Low Mass Hot Suction Table; in less than 8 stress free hours I had completed 4 otherwise very difficult structural treatments.

Driving away from "Robin's", knowing I now had a lot of in-filling and in-painting to do, I began to hope that Robin would soon design a machine that could do that for me also.

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The standards referred to relate to photographic enclosures but the criteria for those is more stringent than most, if not all, other archival storage applications. The suitability of polypropylene archival enclosures in both temperate and tropical climates has also been proven by **Albox** customers in such climatic areas.

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National Museum of Australia, Australian War Memorial, National Library of New Zealand, National Gallery of Australia, National Archives of Singapore, Artlab Australia, National Trust of Australia, The History Trust of S.A.

*A respected authority - Helen Onopko B.A. M.A. (Archives & Records) – expressed her opinion: “I wouldn't use any thing else”.*

## Conference News

**Presentation of *It's a Material World; caring for the public realm* by John Holden, hosted by Artlab Australia at the Art Gallery of South Australia, Wednesday 5 February 2009.**

**Report by Andrew Durham,  
Director, Artlab Australia**

John Holden is the former Head of Culture at Demos, one of the UK's leading independent think tanks, and is Visiting Professor at City University, London.

His recent publications include *Democratic Culture; opening up the arts to everyone* and *Culture and Learning; towards a new agenda* as well as *It's a Material World; caring for the public realm* which he co-authored with Samuel Jones.

*It's a Material World* was commissioned as a response and hopefully to add weight to the resistance against the proposed closure of the Textile Conservation Centre in the UK, formerly at Hampton Court Palace but more recently moved to purpose-built facilities in Winchester as part of Southampton University.

The "pamphlet" was launched at a high profile event at the Banqueting House, Whitehall in London last year. In publicizing the launch, the November issue of *Iconnect* announced: *The Textile Conservation Centre's staff and its supporting Trust, the TCC Foundation, wanted to use the University of Southampton's decision to close the TCC to prompt debate around the challenges and opportunities that face the conservation sector. The TCC Foundation therefore commissioned Demos...to consider how conservation and conservation education relate to wider social and political issues and how many of the changes we are seeing in the world today will affect conservation.*

We were fortunate therefore to have the opportunity to hear John Holden launch

the report in Adelaide in February, presenting the background, substance and salient points of the research carried out by the authors which prompted lively discussion between the 50 or so participants who included curators, historians and art historians, librarians and archivists as well as conservators and other heritage professionals from Artlab, the Collections Council of Australia and the private sector.

Before coming to the conservation debate, however, it is important to say something about the context of his visit; John had been invited by the University of South Australia to attend, as keynote speaker, their research symposium on *How do we value arts and culture?* The visit was co-funded by ArtsSA, Artlab's parent organization.

His paper *Democratic Culture; opening the arts to everyone* formed the basis of his presentation at the symposium and the starting point for subsequent speakers and respondents. It was well attended by academics – mainly from "cultural" faculties but with at least one economist and business modeling specialist – visual and performing artists, writers, craftspeople, festival directors and at least one conservator.

The essence of the day's discussions lay in the definition of "value"; John Holden gave useful and provocative differentiations between "intrinsic", "instrumental" and "institutional" values, and the economist gave a pretty good exegesis of the need for business plans and the evaluation of value, and above all the importance of creating value. The talks focused in their different ways on the definition of value, on how you create it and how you measure it to justify investment in it.

Until I introduced the word and the concept in the context of the following day's presentation of *It's a Material World*, "conservation" had only been mentioned once, by an artist talking about the significance, or otherwise, of the longevity of an artwork.

But although conservation did not feature in the general discussion around the importance of art and culture, I think it was totally fitting that *It's a Material World* should be presented within this broader context and that we, conservators and our colleagues in related fields, should continue to consider and debate *the challenges and opportunities that face the conservation sector* with reference to the broader debate about cultural values, however we may see them.

It seems to me that the issues of value and the importance of conservation are extremely similar, if not exactly the same, as those pertaining to the creation of cultural value. The essence of *It's a Material World* also lies in the importance of value: how we keep things? Depends on how we value things.\

And examples illustrated in the report, such as the Cerne Abbas Giant in Dorset, England and the famous mosque in Djenné in Mali bear testament to how icons of culture are revered and valued to the point where individuals are prepared to give up their own valuable resources of time and money towards their preservation.

John Holden duly delivered his presentation of the Demos report to the diverse audience mentioned above. The full text can be obtained for free at the Demos website.

We also watched the brief (5.5 minutes) video which was produced whilst researching the report. This was introduced by Vicki Humphrey, now returned to Adelaide but until very recently Head of Conservation at the British Library some of whose staff were featured in the video. A less expected champion of preservation for posterity, indeed an indignant protester at the prospect of losing not only his life's work but his identity was a young (and pixilated) graffiti artist.

You can see this at [http://au.youtube.com/watch?v=-c\\_0eMSBXIk](http://au.youtube.com/watch?v=-c_0eMSBXIk).

And we were able to see and to show John Holden some of the valuable work achieved here by the Collections Council of Australia as CEO Margaret Birtley spoke to the "live" website pages of the CCA's Conservation/Preservation Showcase.

The ensuing discussion, in response to John's talk and the paper itself, covered far more issues than I can mention here but included the need to engage with

politicians and the challenge for the conservation sector to communicate more effectively the relevance of what we do.

Perhaps these are questions which will be addressed at the NZCCM conference in Auckland later this year which will *examine the public face of conservation and how the profession can remain relevant in a rapidly changing world.*

In the meantime we should all take up the *call to arms* which Michael Day, CEO of Historic Royal Palaces, refers

to in his foreword to *It's a Material World*. In his words: *All conservation organizations, conservators, professional associations, research centres, education providers and government policy makers need to work together to open new ways to foster conservation. This will ensure its valuable role in society is strengthened, so that our material heritage remains meaningful for society today and in the future.*

For, as John Holden put it at the outset, *It is only when people care about things that they get conserved.*

## Multidisciplinary Conservation: a Holistic View for Historic Interiors Call for papers!!! Call for papers!!! Call for papers!!!

Interim Meeting of Five ICOM-CC Working Groups  
Wood, Furniture, and Lacquer  
Textile  
Sculpture, Polychromy, and Architectural Decoration  
Mural Paintings, Stones, and Rock Art  
Leather and Related materials  
in collaboration with  
Istituto Superiore per la Conservazione e il Restauro (Rome),  
Rome, Complesso San Michele a Ripa Grande, Sala dello Stenditoio  
23 – 25 March, 2010

Multidisciplinary approach to the conservation of historic interiors will be the subject of the ICOM-CC Joint Interim Meeting at the **Complesso San Michele a Ripa Grande** - headquarters of the Ministry of Cultural Property - Rome, March 23-25, 2010. Five ICOM-CC Working Groups will gather together to discuss and elucidate

problems related to the artistic, historic, environmental, ethical and technical aspects that may arise at the conservation/ restoration of artefacts, which while differing in techniques and materials, form as a whole a unique context of heritage interior.

Contributions should focus on specific projects providing guidelines for preventive conservation and methodology of treatments as well as on theoretical issues, conservation techniques and research with the aim of defining an exhaustive state of the art on this issue.

We invite the submissions of paper/poster proposals by all conservators, conservation scientists, curators and art historians in the field independent of their ICOM-CC membership status. All submitted paper/ poster proposals will be reviewed by the program committee consisting of the Coordinator and Assistant Coordinators of the individual ICOM-CC WGs. The official language of the conference will be English.

Postprints of the presentations will be published on the ICOM-CC web-site immediately after the Interim Meeting. Authors will be required to submit full papers at the time of the conference at the latest.

Please send an abstract for the paper/poster via e-mail to the relevant coordinator of the ICOM-CC WG by September 30, 2009. Abstracts of no more than 500 words should include also the title, authors' names and address of corresponding author including an e-mail. Successful authors will be notified by October 30, 2009. Preference will be given to the working group members.

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Have you worked on an interesting case in a castle or an historic house?  
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# Development of a magnetic vertical display system for bark cloth artefacts

## Introduction

My interest in materials conservation is what first attracted me into the museum sector. I enjoy working directly with artefacts and in particular, resolving design problems associated with storage or display. The project I undertook for my first internship in the Collections Integrity Unit at the Australian Museum was therefore ideal.

## The Problem – What About Magnets?

The Australian Museum has an extensive collection of bark cloth from the Asia Pacific region (Figure 1). Periodically, parts of the collection are required for exhibitions and display systems used for textiles, works on paper or canvas have often proved unsatisfactory. This is partly because the felted bark cloth material, which is sometimes referred to as 'tapa' is neither a textile nor a paper product, but possesses properties of both. So my supervisor and I investigated the use of magnets in an alternative vertical display system for bark cloth artefacts.

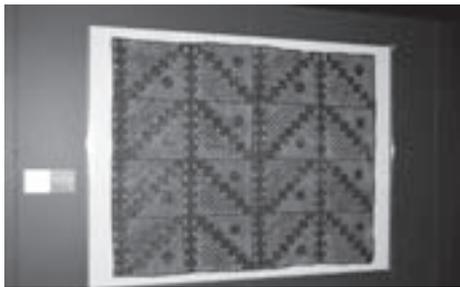


Figure 1. Bark cloth artefact

## Other Display Systems

This project initially involved looking at what systems are currently in use for the display of bark cloth and highlighting the problems associated with them. Treating bark cloth as a textile is inappropriate because it is not a textile and sewing it for display causes damage to the painted surface if it has one. If paper display systems are utilized, glue residues sometimes left on the bark cloth afterwards can leave the artefact

vulnerable to pest attack. Perspex clip systems (Figure 2) can work well but the bark cloth have on occasion, slipped out of the clips. Hanging the bark cloth over rods for display (Figure 3) is another non-invasive technique but has the disadvantage of only allowing part of the artefact to be on show.

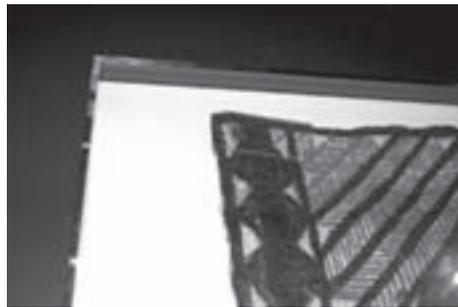


Figure 2. Perspex clip display system

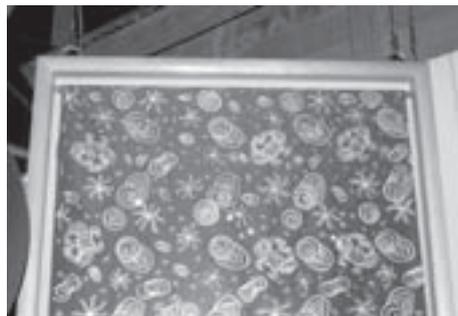


Figure 3. Example of rod display system

## Issues

We hoped that a magnetic system might improve on some of these identified weaknesses. Magnets have the property that they exert force without the need for a chemical substance or some other invasive impact on the material. Magnets have been used before in the materials conservation context but not for this particular application.

The system had to fulfill the criteria of being safe, looking good and working well. Thus attention was paid to the functional, as well as the aesthetic aspects of the system. It also had to fit in with the Australian Museum's goals of best practice in the employment of non-invasive techniques for object display.

The materials conservation staff members of the Australian Museum are often called upon to assist in setting up displays in other museums through their involvement in the Museum's Outreach Program. This system therefore, not only had to be cost-effective but portable and easy-to-use. And finally, it was preferable that the materials would be readily available from a local supplier.

## The System

I researched the properties and potential applications of various types of magnets. This led me to discussions with a representative of a Sydney based magnetics company. Bearing in mind all the above criteria, and through a process of elimination, I came up with a system that was based on two key components. These were, a self-adhesive flexible magnet at the back of the bark cloth with another kind of magnet on the surface. Several protective barrier layers also had to be built into the system to ensure that the bark cloth was safe from any potentially harmful effects of the magnets. And the entire system had to be mounted onto a rigid surface so a piece of plywood was used.

Thus for testing purposes the system was comprised of:

- a plywood backing board,
- a Marvelseal® 360 barrier (Figure 4) on top of the wooden board (Figure 5). This is an aluminized polyethylene and nylon barrier film. I used it on the plywood to reduce the harmful effects of acidic off-gassing to the artefact from the exposed wood surface below,
- a self-adhesive flexible magnet (Figure 6) is attached to the Marvelseal® 360. Self-adhesive flexible magnet is similar to fridge magnet material but with one adhesive side,

- a piece of Mylar™ is used to cover the flexible magnet attached with a strip of double-sided tape (Figure 7). Mylar™ is a thin, strong polyester film. I used it to protect the artefact from coming into direct contact with the magnet, a metal object that could potentially corrode,
- washed calico wrapped over all of this (Figures 8 -10) to give the bark cloth something slightly textured to cling to,
- the bark cloth,
- a disc of Mylar™ (Figure 11) is placed on top of the bark cloth for each magnet used and,
- Neodymium magnets are placed on top of the Mylar™ barrier discs with the sample bark cloth now held in place between the backing board and the magnets (Figure 12). The Neodymium magnets I chose are permanent magnets that possess a good mix of the desired properties for this system. They are also shiny, elegant and sufficiently strong.

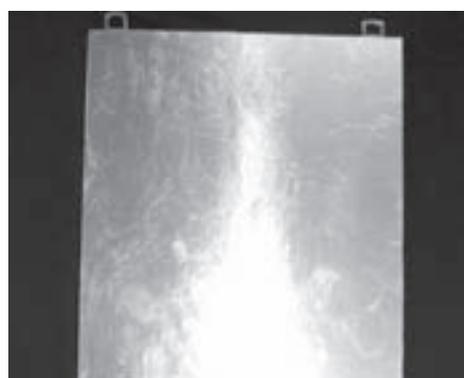


Figure 4. Marvalseal® 360



Figure 5. Plywood (rear)



Figure 6. Flexible magnet

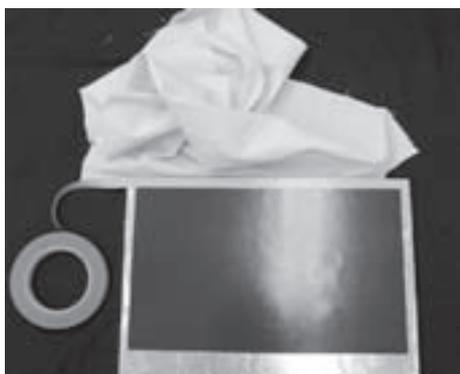


Figure 7. Mylar™ barrier attached with double sided tape



Figure 8. Calico barrier



Figure 9. Calico wrapped over all layers and attached to rear of board



Figure 10. Complete backing board



Figure 11. Mylar™ discs used as barrier under magnets

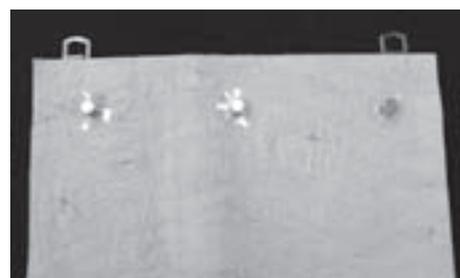


Figure 12. Complete system with bark cloth sample in place

### The Components of the System Three Tests of this Magnetic Display System:

**TEST 1 – AIM:** An experiment to determine how many magnets would be needed to hold up a given area of bark cloth

#### Method

I worked out how many magnets would be needed to hold up a given area of bark cloth by first determining the load limit of one magnet in this system. The backing board was attached vertically to a wall. Three identical strips of bark cloth with a pouch sewn at their base were positioned on this board, each with a magnet to hold them up (Figure 13). Weight was added incrementally to each of the pouches until the bark cloth slid off the backing board (Figures 14 & 15). Three strips were used to

demonstrate the repeatability of the findings.



Figure 13. Magnets holding up bark



Figures 14 & 15. Loading up the bark cloth strips with lead shot in 5g increments until they fell

## Results

One square metre of medium weight bark cloth should weigh approximately 140g. I found that one magnet could support 100g.

## Conclusion

Thus, you would require a minimum of two of these magnets to support one square metre of bark cloth comfortably that is, one at each top corner. This is a useful formula for the user of this system to calculate how many magnets would be needed to hold up a given area of bark cloth.

## TEST 2 – AIM: Scanning Electron Microscopy to examine whether the magnets compress the bark cloth fibres

### Method

A possible detrimental effect of the magnets could be that they compress the fibres of the bark cloth. We therefore performed Scanning Electron Microscopy (SEM) on a sample of bark cloth. SEM enables scientists to view any specimen at a magnification of up to 100,000 times. This was done to investigate whether the magnetic force of the magnets had over a period of three weeks, compressed the fibres in the material.

A piece of bark cloth was mounted on double-sided carbon tape on an aluminium disc (Figure 16). Next the sample was gold sputter coated (Figure 17). The bark cloth sample was then put under the LEO 435VP Scanning Electron Microscope (Figure 18) with a Robinson Backscattered Electron Detector for examination of the required areas. Images were taken for comparison of the area that had not had a magnet on it (upper) and that which had (lower). Five different magnifications were captured starting at 100 times the original size (Figure 19), then 250, 500, 750 and 1000 times (Figure 20).



Figure 16. Mounting the bark cloth sample



Figure 17. Gold sputter coating



Figure 18. LEO 435VP Scanning Electron Microscope



Figure 19. SEM image of bark cloth sample at 100 times the original size

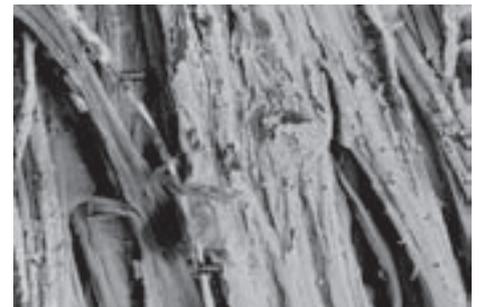


Figure 20. SEM image of bark cloth sample at 1000 times the original size

## Results

Even at a magnification of 1000 times we could see no perceptible difference between the area that had not had a magnet on it and that which had.

## Conclusion

Therefore, it can be said that for this period of time and when used with the barrier layers incorporated in this system, the magnet had no obvious detrimental effect on the bark cloth.

## TEST 3 – AIM: An experiment to calculate the compressive force of the magnet

### Method

And finally, I designed an experiment to calculate the compressive force of the chosen magnet in this display configuration.

It is known that the strength of the magnetic attraction between two magnets will diminish the further apart the two magnets are. As this system incorporates intermediate barriers between the magnet on the backing board and those on the surface it was important to include these barriers in setting up the tests as they could have an effect on the outcome. The same components utilized in the first experiment were therefore used here but this time the backing board was clamped into a horizontal position. The three test magnets were each glued to a length of cotton tape that were then tied to three calico bags underneath them (Figures 21 & 22). Weight was incrementally added to the three bags. The weight at which the magnets were pulled off the board indicated the compressive force of the system.



Figure 21. Compressive force test



Figure 22. Bark cloth sample, Mylar™ barrier disc, magnet and weighing apparatus attached below

## Results

There is the equivalent of 127.1g of compressive force acting on the surface (over the surface area of this magnet with this system). The surface area of the magnet is 0.000127 square metres. Therefore, the compressive force equals 1,003,340g per square metre or approximately 1003kg per square metre or 1 tonne per square metre.

## Conclusion

The SEM pictures showed that the bark cloth fibres do not appear to be damaged by this.

## Discussion and Conclusion of Project

The results of all of these tests showed that this magnetic display system for bark cloth artefacts seems to be safe, strong and provides a system of known parameters that could be used in a variety of different settings. All of the criteria that had to be considered during the development of the system were met.

In conclusion, this project was very satisfying because it was both relevant to my interests and successful. I believe that this was due to a combination of factors. It was a discrete project with a clearly defined beginning, middle and end. Aided by committed and enthusiastic supervision, it progressed well throughout these stages. I had a lot of autonomy but had ready support whenever I required it.

I particularly enjoyed the challenge of identifying the range of issues to be considered in the development of this system and designing and carrying out the experiments to test its viability. I have been pushed out of my comfort zone and learned many new things about the process of undertaking research in the materials conservation context. I would like to follow it up with a paper or technical note in a relevant journal. I hope that this system can provide a safe, alternative display system for bark cloth that may also have broader application for use in object storage. The system may require further refinement but at the very least, I hope that my efforts will provide a useful starting point for others.

## Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Colin McGregor and my supervisor, Kate Brotherston, of the Materials Conservation Lab of the Australian Museum for their support and guidance throughout this project.

Megan Dean-Jones

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# Conservation Matters – What do YOU think



*Hans-Christoph von Imhoff has led an eminent international career within the conservation profession. Here he puts forward his views on the current status of university training for conservators.*

It is obvious that in the past few years the profession has made enormous efforts to develop its systems of education and training, its standing, and its codes of ethics and practice. Nevertheless I am somewhat worried: it is a profession in which the professional works with her/ his hands and eyes in excellent coordination with her/ his highly trained brain. I have seen young conservator-restorers, trained by recognized institutions, who wrote brilliant diploma works, but after having passed their final exams were not able to stretch a painted canvas on a stretcher or do other delicate but routine conservation procedures appropriately, evidently due to lack of well trained manual experience and know-how.

No abstracting description of a manual action nor any written instruction

can substitute hands-on, well guided physical experience and extensive training. There is a danger at present that this profession, while gaining in great speed a lot more historical, scientific and highly refined knowledge about materials, procedures and also better source information, might be losing a lot of the physical know-how it had accumulated earlier passing a far less perfected curriculum which was not academic. Older conservation methods are not necessarily bad in themselves, but their application often caused damage when they used by inexperienced or incompetent persons who lacked the necessary understanding and the experience of how to use them correctly.

This problem most often derives from and becomes enhanced by the

present university system: in order to find time and energy to produce all the 'measurable' work to obtain the obligatory university credits, university has developed high experience in measuring the quality of written work. On the other hand practical work in the context of conservation and restoration of delicate objects, such as paintings, is more difficult to 'measure' in objective terms. As a consequence, practical work on objects becomes of secondary importance.

From *Aspects and development of a conservator-restorer's profession since WWII*, by Hans-Christoph von Imhoff, reprinted with permission of the author.

**What do you think? Do you agree or disagree? Send an email to the editors with your comments.**

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