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**Queensland floods: update from the front line**

- Is there still faith in remedial conservation?
- Saving Australia's movable cultural heritage
- Big Stuff 2010, ICOM 2010 and workshop reviews galore!



GOCSIG brushes up on techniques



Karibari craziness at the NGA



Review of a conservation summer school, Italy

# President's Report

I am writing this report in Sydney in absolutely sweltering heat – 42°C and 15% RH. The TV news is reporting astonishing flash floods in Melbourne and showing scenes of trams and trains moving through lakes of water. Brisbane, of course, flooded earlier and then before that it was regional Queensland and Victoria – and in between, was Cyclone Yasi. If you have been following reports on climate change research, including that of Professor Ross Garnaut, extreme weather events are set to increase. Clearly, for conservators, this means we will be called on more often to salvage damaged cultural material. It is timely that AICCM has been developing and promoting HEART, but at this point in time we do not know whether it will receive federal funding support – it is in the system at least.

AICCM, through conservators around Australia, has been putting in an enormous effort to disaster recovery – especially since 2009 and the Victorian bushfires – and we owe a heartfelt vote of thanks to those conservators who have been prepared to donate their time, beg their institution for resources, and then get support and information out to the affected areas. These actions speak volumes about what the conservation profession is all about and the work of these conservators shines a reflected light on us all. The profile raising and PR value of this work cannot be overstated – so thank you to the conservators of both the Victorian and Queensland Divisions, and now the Western Australian division!

Since I wrote most of this report, the bushfires in Perth have claimed 72 houses. Again, AICCM conservators have worked hard to provide information and support to a devastated community. State President Isa Loo, and HEART member Cristina Albillos (SLWA), with support from Alex Ellem in Victoria, have been preparing

press releases, speaking on ABC radio and generally letting the community know that it is important to keep everything and that conservators will be able to offer help when the time is right. As their press release said – ‘it is a message of hope’ – and that is exactly what conservators can offer to these devastated communities.

On behalf of the membership of AICCM I would like to thank all these conservators for being prepared to work in this way – it can be an exhausting, continuous process for quite some time. See Julian's interview with Chris Ianna, who has been co-ordinating Queensland's response actions.

In our next newsletter there will be a special focus on the work of these conservators – who are now too numerous to mention here.

Work for AICCM still goes on however, and we now, more than ever, need all the extra hands we can get. At the AGM in Melbourne in October last year, we talked about working more with smaller, focused groups to allow conservators to work in areas of their interest without having to be voted onto Council or commit to more general work. National Council will be having a big, face-to-face meeting over two days in late March to look at this approach and determine action for the next year to three years. However, there are some areas of need already identified and some groups that are already up and running.

The Blue Sky group (also known as the BS Group) has been formed and had its first teleconference. The short-term aim of this group is to examine options to allow for easier working of AICCM National Council and States, so that time can be created to work towards achieving goals that are outside our standard strategic plan which only delivers the status quo. The long-term

aim is to develop and promote projects that deliver more services to members, raises the profile of AICCM and the conservation profession, and cements our position in both the heritage sector and the Australian community.

Its members are Fiona Tennant, Andrew Durham, Mary Jo Lelyveld, Deborah Lau and myself. Please contact any one of us if you have any ideas for this group.

Other groups that have been identified are:

**Code of Ethics** review group – this group will need to review the current Code of Ethics and Code of Practice as it has been over 10 years since the current version was produced. Conservation practice has changed substantially since then, as have the demands on conservators in their working lives. Are our Codes of Ethics and Practice still appropriate? Do they still support our work and help guide our practice? If not, what changes do we need to make?

This group has not been formed as yet – so if this work appeals to you, please put up your hand and volunteer!

**Editorial** group – National Council would like to review our publications – The Bulletin, the Newsletter, and our website. Do we want them to continue as they are? Are there better formats we could use? Do we need to increase our stable of publications? There are many more questions that could be asked, and if some of them just popped into your mind perhaps you should be in this group!

Again, please put up your hand and volunteer for this group if you think you can contribute.

Following the pre-Christmas email requesting suggestions for a patron, and a good tag line, we received a few thoughts. No winners yet, so keep them coming...

## From the Editors

Suggestions for a patron:

- Tom Harley – first chairman of Australian Heritage Commission
- Janet Holmes a Court – private collector
- Alan Myers – Chairman of NGV
- Jeanne Pratt – arts patron

And a tag line for AICCM:

- No Conservation – No Access (a possible T-Shirt?)
- Keeping It Together for Everyone

There must be more ideas out there????

Lastly, as previously mentioned National Council is having a two-day meeting over March 25/26. This will replace the two face-to-face meetings generally held at separate times over the year. The aim is to be able to spend some quality time discussing and planning the work of Council for the next couple of years. If you have any ideas or concerns that you think should be addressed by Council, please contact your state representative, the Secretary, or myself directly.

Thank you.

Kay Söderlund

None of us can have been unaware of the extraordinary forces of nature launched onto Australia over the last few months. And inevitably, once life and limb have been secured, comes the call for conservators to help salvage and preserve the material cultural heritage caught up in the devastation, be they public collections or private memorabilia. In this edition we hear from a number of voices on this issue. Kay as President updates us on where National Council's focus is in this area, Chris Ianna reports from one of the front lines in Brisbane and we hear from Blue Shield on the progress being made in coordinating professional bodies in disaster response.

Newspaper reports from Brisbane not only highlighted the huge response to the call for volunteers at the time of the floods, but since then tell of the atmosphere of mutual community support that is evident. Conservators are playing their own part in this process, and as a profession we applaud our colleagues who have given their time and expertise so willingly and freely.

Also in this edition we have focused significantly on the first of what we hope will be a series of dialogues amongst conservators about issues of common interest to the profession. This edition looks at the remedial conservation vs. preventive conservation debate. Do feel free to comment on issues raised in this article – as you will see there are some strong views held! And thank you Elizabeth Hadlow for providing your feedback on the report on IIC Dialogues in the last Newsletter.

Elsewhere you will find a wide variety of conferences and workshops reported on, as well as our regular items. Take particular note in the Lab and People News on the amount of conservation activity going on in Northern Territory and Tasmania – well done folks!

So keep us posted with all you are up to – we love to hear about it.

**Julian Bickersteth and Fiona Tennant**

## From the Secretariat

I thought I'd write a brief column on news from the Secretariat. As some of you may know I took over the running of the Secretariat from Davina Hacklin in May last year and have been enjoying the many and varied challenges of running this side of the organisation. On that note I must thank all the people who worked so hard to get the new website and the associated members database up and running in particular Alice Cannon, Jenny Dickens, Rob Franzke and Davina Hacklin. The website (and the Secretariat's job) is the culmination of all the hard work that these people put in to creating what you see today.

I also thought I'd share a few observations I've made in this role. Most importantly its given me an opportunity that few get to see of the contribution and participation of the membership in symposiums and workshops. These are often based on specialisations and I think most members wouldn't realize the scale of the work carried out

during the year to run workshops and seminars across the entire organisation. Last year between May and November just over a third of the total current AICCM membership attended either a workshop or a SIG symposium, events organized by AICCM members for the AICCM membership with the support of government institutions and other bodies. In the coming year there are, so far, two symposiums planned, that of the Textile SIG meeting in March and the National Conference in October. These two meetings can be expected to involve at least half of our membership in some way either as participants or contributors. For such a relatively small organisation run almost entirely on volunteer effort, it's an impressive result.

On to more mundane matters, as you will have noticed we've changed the membership renewal date to a fixed date of 1 July each year. This process is still underway and members who wish to renew may either request a prorata invoice by simply emailing

the Secretariat or if they wish pay the full amount, this can be done via the website facility. On that note, some of you may have noticed that when your membership has expired you can no longer log in to renew on line, however if you read the instructions closely (and I know that we all do that...) you will see a section that says "Past members wanting to rejoin click here": that section is for you. You will have to fill out your details again but once the payment is made you will have full access to the membership section of the website.

Lastly if you notice any bugs in the website or broken links please feel free to email the Secretariat with information of the problem.

**Michelle Berry**

### e-conservation

Rui Bordalo of Portugal has established a free online conservation magazine and website called e-conservation (<http://www.e-conservationline.com/>). The magazine comes out every two months and covers topics of general interest to conservators, related professionals and the public at large. As well as the actual magazine, there are links to useful resources such as international job and internship ads, conservation related events and courses and conservation products.

The magazine is published in Open Access under a Creative Commons – Some Rights Reserved – license that allows its free distribution to a worldwide readership and at the same time safeguards the copyright of the authors. Rui welcomes contributions – just go to the website to submit them.

# Conservation in times of disaster – Queensland

During the recent cataclysmic events in Queensland, Christine Ianna was actively involved in AICCM's response. Julian Bickersteth caught up with an exhausted Christine to check on how the response was going.

## ***What preparations were you able to make for the coming floods?***

We had had warning in Brisbane of a combination of high tides and heavy rainfall likely to cause localised flooding, so all the collecting institutions along the Brisbane River had implemented their disaster plans to ensure no collections were at risk. So in the end despite the River flooding far more extensively than was envisaged, good forward planning ensured there was no significant damage incurred at the State institutions.

## ***How was the conservation response coordinated?***

Fortuitously the new Q-DIS, a Queensland Disaster Information Network for Queensland's collections sector <http://manexus.ning.com/group/qdis> had been launched on 9th December 2010, so we had in place a centralised point of contact. As the AICCM representative on Q-Dis I was busy providing advice to Rockhampton and other flood effected parts of the state, when news came through of the inland tsunami in Toowoomba and then the Lockyer Valley.

## ***How did you know what to respond to?***

The project that was identified from a number of directions as requiring immediate conservation response was the salvage of material from one of the largest collection of historic photos, negatives and cameras in Queensland, owned by Sandy Barrie in Ipswich. His house went under the water and a huge project was commenced to try and save the most vulnerable and historically significant material. A number of volunteers including more than eight conservator's from the Brisbane area

worked under Lydia Egunnike's direction to clean, dry and package glass plates for storage. Part of that project was based in Toowoomba at the TAFE college photo department whilst the paper based material was packaged and frozen and awaits drying as time and resources are made available.

The team was under pressure to work fast because of mould and fungus getting into the collection on top of the mud and water, and to date over 200 hours of volunteer hours by both public and private conservators has been put in to stabilise just this one collection. The link to the ABC's report on this project is on the AICCM website

## ***Talking of the ABC, what media coverage was there of conservation issues?.***

A number of AICCM members spoke on local radio including Michael Marendy and myself. Lydia Egunnike of the SLQ was on ABC urging Queenslanders not to discard damaged photographs and documents as they may be salvageable. But the great thing was that through Q-Dis we were working closely with ALIA, ASA and M&GSQ, posting links to useful information and working to answer queries as they came in.

## ***What have we learnt?***

As always we can do things better and also learn from a disaster to improve our response next time. The key issues I would identify are:

1. Disaster preparedness advice is based around an assumption that people have access to electricity, water and materials. In many cases they had none of these things.

2. Where volunteers turn up, careful and ongoing coordination is vital. There is nothing more debilitating after the stress of a disaster to have your museum or even your home full of volunteers sorting through your collections without a clue who any of them are and with no coordination.
3. People want to keep their collections with them. Having been through a traumatic event when they have nearly lost their collection, they do not want to see it shipped off to a capital city for treatment – they want it treated locally.

## ***What happens next?***

The most important issue to realise is that the extent of damage to Queensland (over 70% of the state affected) is such that this is very much a work in progress. The damage is still being assessed, with power and water still not connected in many areas, so it is going to be several weeks until the full needs of damaged collections are going to be identified. So above all, please don't forget us as the work has only just begun.

## ***How can conservators help?***

All offers of assistance are much appreciated. To ensure coherence, as of course Queensland is not the only state affected, please contact Kay Soderlund as the AICCM coordinator for response and recovery if you can help on [k@preservationaustralia.com.au](mailto:k@preservationaustralia.com.au).

# AICCM and Blue Shield Australia

In response to floods in Queensland and Victoria, the Blue Shield Australia (BSA) Committee has convened two special meetings, on January 18<sup>th</sup> and 27<sup>th</sup>, to gather information and discuss how to best respond to these unprecedented circumstances. Our thoughts are with our colleagues in flood affected areas across Australia, and we are seeking ways to assist them to salvage and preserve cultural heritage.

Blue Shield's pillar organizations (ICOM Australia, ALIA, CAARA and Australia ICOMOS) and BSA associate members (AICCM, Federation of Australian Historical Societies, Museums Australia, Australian Society of Archivists, Records Management Association of Australia, Pacific Regional Branch of the International Council on Archives,) attended. Other cultural heritage associations wanting to assist or caught in the midst of the floods also participated. They included: Museum and Gallery Services Queensland, Queensland State Library (**Christine Ianna**), Royal Historical Society of Queensland, Royal Historical Society of Victoria, Public Records Office of Victoria, Museums Australia (Victoria) and Arts Victoria.

Participants gave updated information on how the floods were affecting the cultural heritage sector. Possible recovery efforts were also discussed, to meet immediate and medium and long term needs. **Christine Ianna** announced that an AICCM brochure *After A Flood: How Can You Salvage Precious Belongings?* was being developed, targeting public and private collections. **Detlev Lueth** successfully pursued funding from The Public Records Office of Victoria to print 5,000 copies and assist with distribution.

BSA has placed a central register of cultural heritage affected by the floods on their website. It will be organized by states and territories with

sub-categories of cities then towns, then further divided into Archives/ Libraries/ Museums/ Historical Societies/ and Monuments and Sites. Peak organisations are collecting lists of expert/skilled volunteers who are available to assist. The register will be used to prioritise and better understand how, where and when to best respond to and assist cultural heritage custodians affected by the floods. It will also be used for any submission BSA might make to the enquiries into the recent disasters, with the aim of advocating for better federal and state assistance in preparing, responding and recovering cultural heritage affected by disaster in the future.

Key issues raised at the meetings included:

- Focus on raising volunteer hours for assistance over money, due to complications with processing and utilizing donations.
- Salvage resources and storage materials sought as donations.
- The need for a full time project manager from the cultural heritage sector to help facilitate response recovery actions. Philanthropic support will be required.
- Strong support and a clear need for AICCM's HEART (Heritage Emergency Action Response Team).
- Suggestion that salvage clinics be set up in affected communities manned by conservators/industry professionals. Questions were posed about covering costs (travel, insurance etc) and the ability for some to be released by larger organisations.
- The need to advocate for smaller organisations to apply for disaster relief.
- The Queensland Disaster Information Network (Q-Dis) was an excellent format for sharing information about cultural heritage

affected by the recent natural disasters.

- Investigate the possibility of getting the Commonwealth to fund disaster preparedness bins for organisations in disaster prone areas.
- Recommendation that associations promote BSA via their discussion lists and websites as a point to go to for response and recovery advice. This comes from feedback from member organizations who found there was too much information on the web, and the need for one central and authoritative disaster prevention, preparation, response and recovery source. This would complement what AICCM has done already on their website.

To facilitate a rapid response the BSA committee has decided to meet more regularly with BSA pillars, associate members and any other cultural heritage organisations wanting to assist.

Updates on BSA actions to the recent disasters will be posted on the BSA website and Facebook page as well as on BSA member organisations websites and discussion lists.

To contribute to the BSA flood disaster register please email Blue Shield Secretariat at: [info@blueshieldaustralia.org.au](mailto:info@blueshieldaustralia.org.au)

The AICCM representatives on the BSA committee are: **Kay Soderlund** and **Alexandra Ellem**. **Detlev Lueth** is the representative on the committee for the Council of Australasian Archives and Records Authorities (CAARA). Please don't hesitate to contact them if you have any questions about BSA.



# Protection of Australia's Movable Cultural Heritage

## Neil Hogg (Engineering Heritage Australia)

Engineering Heritage Australia (EHA), working with other interested organisations and the responsible federal department, has contributed to a review of legislation relating to the protection of movable cultural heritage. The report from the Review makes many recommendations for increasing the level of protection, and EHA has committed to assist with their implementation.

### Background

Through the mid 2000s EHA became increasingly concerned by the large quantities of vintage machinery being exported permanently from Australia.

In response to requests from amateur machinery organisations and individuals, it was decided that EHA should take a leading role in seeking increased levels of protection for objects of movable cultural heritage. A number of key principles were adopted and followed:

- Find and share factual information
- Encourage other interested organisations to participate
- Consider all objects of movable cultural heritage, not only engineering objects
- Work constructively with the federal department

### Protection of Movable Cultural Heritage in Australia

The Federal *Movable Cultural Heritage Act 1986* provides the framework for the protection of defined categories of objects, including objects of 'Applied Science and Technology'.

It is administered by the Department of Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts and covers; administration, money, export permits and enforcement. It

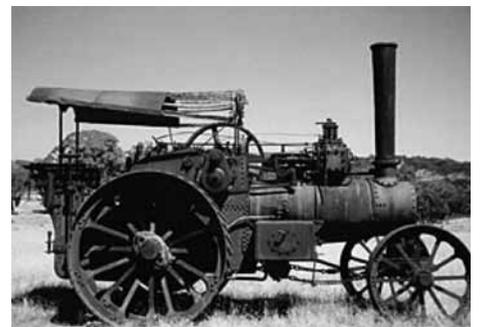
also introduces the concept of Class A objects (which can never be exported under any circumstances) and Class B objects (which may be exported). The **Protection of Movable Cultural Heritage Regulations 1987** provides more detail of the types of objects within each of the category.

The only items afforded Class A status to date are; Victoria Crosses won by Australian service personnel, specified Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander objects, and Ned Kelly's armour.

All other objects may be exported unless it can be proved to the satisfaction of an Expert Examiner, that they meet all four of the following criteria. The object **MUST**

- be of the kind mentioned in the Regulations **AND**
- be over 30 years old **AND**
- not be represented in at least 2 public collections **AND**
- be of significance to Australia

For comparison, the New Zealand legislation presumes that all objects over 60 years old must be protected unless proven otherwise and stresses the concept of custodianship over ownership.



*Clayton & Shuttleworth traction engine now preserved at Milthorpe NSW and featured in Significance 2.0. Photo: Kylie Winkworth*

### Protection in Practice

Since 1997-1998 a total of 457 objects have been granted permanent export permits. Of these, approximately 25% have been objects of Applied Science and Technology. This does not represent the full situation.

In order to deal with the huge number of applications received each year, the Department allows an applicant to explain, often over the phone, that an object does not meet the criteria shown above. If convinced, the Department issues a **Letter of Clearance** for the export of the object. On average 4,500 objects each year are issued Letters of Clearance – mainly to commercial dealers.

By contrast only 63 objects have ever been refused an export permit.

## Engineering Heritage Australia's Position

The Act provides an adequate framework for the protection of movable cultural heritage BUT:

- The Regulations can be improved:
  - Objects should be presumed to be protected and the exporter must be responsible for proving that the object is not worthy of protection
  - Two examples currently in public collections should not deny protection for all other examples
  - Significance should be determined by an objective and transparent process. The document "Significance 2.0" (Collections Council of Australia) should be adopted as the basis for assessing significance.
- All objects must be assessed according to the revised criteria. Letters of Clearance should be discontinued.
- There must be broader community consultation in the assessment process, particularly in assessing significance.

During 2007 and 2008, EHA encouraged the Department to conduct a review of the legislation and communicated with other heritage organisations to encourage them to present their concerns and recommendations to the Department.

## The Review of the Legislation

In early 2009 the Department announced a review of the legislation, and in June 2010 the Department released its Report.

- The concerns of EHA and others have been heard.
- The Department has made 74 recommendations to improve the level of protection which address EHA's concerns.
- The Department has called for continued discussion and involvement.

EHA is extremely satisfied with the outcome of the review, but notes the need for commitment and resources to turn recommendations into reality.

## The Future

EHA has committed to provide resources in three main areas:

- The development of a rigorous significance assessment process for Objects of Applied Science and Technology through the application of the "Significance 2.0" methodology.
- The provision of subject matter expertise, primarily through Expert Examiners, to ensure that all objects receive a thorough assessment of significance.
- The continuation of dialogue with DEWHA and other organisations to improve the level of protection for movable cultural heritage

## Conclusion

EHA has demonstrated that professional organisations can make a valuable contribution to the protection of Australia's heritage.

As the professionals directly responsible for the conservation of objects we encourage AICCM and its members to apply their knowledge and expertise to contribute at all levels towards the protection of Australia's movable cultural heritage. EHA would particularly like to work with AICCM members to further the protection and preservation of engineering heritage.

## References

Neil Hogg can be contacted on [neil.m.hogg@gmail.com](mailto:neil.m.hogg@gmail.com)

EHA website: [www.engineersaustralia.org.au/groups/engineering-heritage/](http://www.engineersaustralia.org.au/groups/engineering-heritage/)

The Act, Regulations and the Report of the Review of Movable Cultural Heritage Legislation  
<http://www.arts.gov.au/movable>

Significance 2.0  
<http://www.environment.gov.au/heritage/publications/significance2-0/index.html>

# Conservation Matters – What do you think?



## How does experience and a changing conservation climate influence conservation decisions?

In a recent edition of the Getty Conservation Institute's *Conservation Perspectives*, Stephen Rickerby, conservation consultant and fieldwork coordinator at the Courtauld Institute in London, made the following comment as part of a discussion about the conservation of decorated architectural surfaces:

*I had greater faith in remedial intervention. That faith has been lost—for me and, I suspect, for many others in the conservation profession. There's a global trend toward preventive conservation and site management and away from remedial intervention. While we all still practice remedial intervention, we now have doubts about its efficacy, and we place it in a context of wider conservation measures. That doesn't necessarily mean that we believe those other measures are going to save paintings. I think there is a more realistic view of what we can and cannot do. The best we can do is to slow deterioration. We've hopefully lost a lot of our hubris in terms of what we think we can achieve.*

The full transcript of the interview is at [http://www.getty.edu/conservation/publications/newsletters/25\\_2/dialogue.html](http://www.getty.edu/conservation/publications/newsletters/25_2/dialogue.html)

The AICCM Newsletter editors asked a number of senior conservators in the Australian conservation profession to respond to Stephen's comments and reflect on their own journey as conservators.

**Sarah Clayton**

I read with interest the article 'Preserving in Place: A Discussion about the Conservation of Decorated Architectural Surfaces' and found that although it relates to a completely different stream of

conservation practices have evolved over the span of my 20 year career in conservation. I have moved away from what I would call 'heroic' conservation treatments, single objects treated over many hundreds of hours, to preventive measures which improve storage and support methods for many hundreds of objects. Certainly it is my solid belief that often doing nothing is far better than risking a treatment that may in the short term improve the aesthetic of an object, but in the long term cause unknown consequences. Over

the last 20 years I have seen too many interventive treatments that have not lasted the distance. The work I have done, for the Antarctic Heritage Trust of NZ has taught me that you can do a lot to preserve objects with far less need for intervention than you might think. Doing less is also an important part of preserving the historical integrity of the items in your care. Having said all that, I think there is still a place for those large interventive treatments – we just have to clearly understand and articulate why they are necessary.

*Over the last 20 years I have seen too many interventive treatments that have not lasted the distance.*

conservation to my own, textile conservation, there appears to be some deep similarities with the way interventive and preventive

**Anne Carter**

I agree with Rickerby that the role of the conservator has changed towards a more holistic and preventive approach where context is the key. Conservators remain distinguished by their knowledge of materials, whether in the role of restorer, preventive conservator or conservation manager. Rickerby's comments come from an architectural/immoveable heritage conservator's experience where context and scale are very different to working as a paintings

conservator in an art gallery, and I can understand the inefficacy of working against nature. The context for production of many paintings I deal with is the art market. I do have doubts about the benefits of some remedial intervention, and like most, I work in the minimal intervention mode and in an environment where signs of deterioration in a painting are more accepted. Treatment, however remains a major task. There is often more involved than the art. Considerations of government, directors, donors, sponsors, events,

public and members all need to be met and this often involves presenting artworks in their best possible format. This all needs to be negotiated. I often feel my most basic role is to advocate for the physicality of the art within all these competing demands. Sometimes treatment may not be required to slow deterioration, but it does improve the life of an artwork in other ways. The magic of a varnish removal should not be under estimated.

**David Thurrowgood**

*"The best we can do is slow deterioration"* is not a view I share. The role of conservators continues to shift, however I find myself increasingly aligned with the philosophies of people like Robert Barclay who articulate the activities of conservators in terms of the continuing cultural history and "currency" of objects. The activities of conservators (whether they

hard to become a part of the bureaucratic machinery of cultural heritage management, then find that they have begun to lose their direct relevance and special skill sets. I believe that heritage organisations and their directors still very strongly want conservators to be the people who can be entrusted with the direct care of objects, and if considered desirable, effect change (in chemical stability or aesthetic appearance) of society's most treasured objects. The skill of remedial intervention, the ability to sensitively and intelligently intervene in the care of an object, is central to what many conservators need to be

statements, copied textbook definitions of environmental parameters, and identify a host of other risks are part of a tick-a-box process that many institutions feel obliged to undertake, but are not committed to. The problem for the profession is that by this process we demonstrate reduced value as an identifiable and essential component of cultural heritage management. The engagement with wide ranging conservation issues (community engagement, strategic collection plans, risk management approaches, environmental strategies ... and other "*wider conservation measures*") are, if properly executed, a valuable and central part of what the profession can provide. However I simultaneously retain belief that (even if it is only applied to one object in 10,000) that the skill of remedial conservation has a strong and continuing role to play in how sectors of our profession operate. A remedial treatment, for all the inherent risks and doubts, continues to achieve a large component of what is expected of our profession.

*The skill of remedial intervention, the ability to sensitively and intelligently intervene in the care of an object, is central to what many conservators need to be able to undertake with confidence.*

able to undertake with confidence. The perceived problems and risks around intervening in objects seem to grow stronger each year. However, perhaps the current tendency to not replace retiring conservators, and certainly not to actively grow departments, provides clues in the necessary reconceptualising of the profession. Conservators who produce three of four line generic condition

sit in the minimum intervention or active interpretation and remedial conservation side of the fence) represent a multiplicity of approaches to continue the relevance of cultural material and enable its re-interpretation by subsequent generations. Today I believe that many conservators (and conservation department cultures) find themselves in a position of having lobbied so

**Ian MacLeod**

Whilst we all have known personal horror stories of when interventive conservation treatments have failed, my failure was confessed to Harold Plenderleith in the document for his 90th birthday party; they serve to remind us that it is only when we fully know and understand the complexity of the processes controlling the degradation of the artefacts and how to stabilise them, that we will be successful in our mission to conserve them. I still have faith in interventive treatments for no

object has acidity taken away and so is made safe. Interventive treatments such as polishing out mild finger print marks from a silver object will save it from an inevitable fate of having those marks indelibly impressed on the surface of the chalice or goblet. The efficacy of treatments depends on the nature of the problem and so perhaps it is a reflection of the way in which students are presently taught that has seen the pendulum swung too far to the right of non-intervention. We need to modify our pedagogy to ensure that the reality is that there are always many ways in which we can respond to an object, and that there is no one way that is correct. Life is not just about prevention versus intervention, for that simplistic response to objects had lead to nations

are choices and there are different approaches, and depending on the needs of the objects we can lean in one direction or the other on a case by case basis. Physical intervention on a rock art site can destroy the spiritual elements of the area but changing the physical chemistry of the environment by planting protective native vegetation near the mouth of a cave or shelter can be enough to change the sky view factor and hence the rate of night time cooling and so reduce the stress on the pigments and see them survive another hundred years. It all depends on your definition of intervention and prevention. For me, I have learnt that I cannot treat the 4.5 million objects for which I am responsible but by creating a high quality storage environment I can help them and allow the conservators to focus their skills and treatments on the objects most at risk of decay and material loss.

*The efficacy of treatments depends on the nature of the problem and so perhaps it is a reflection of the way in which students are presently taught that has seen the pendulum swung too far to the right of non-intervention.*

amount of preventive conservation can remove the creases from a crushed textile, but it will respond wonderfully to being washed and the fibres being allowed to relax, pollutants are removed and the

at war and conservators at odds with their curatorial colleagues. There are always options and so that is what we must teach and that is how we respond to directors, curators and colleagues. There

**George Bailey**

I still have great faith in remedial intervention, but time has tempered my approach to it. As I've matured professionally I've learnt to see past the object

on my bench and I now realise that doing a little work to a lot of objects is often more productive, in the long term, than doing a lot of work on a few select objects. I've also come to have a better understanding and appreciation of deterioration rates. Not all damage or deterioration requires intervention, although often that is our

first inclination. I believe that as a conservation student I was encouraged to over-treat objects, with good reason. It is easier to step back from that than it is to step forward into the unknown. I agree, though, that the best we can do is to slow deterioration. Nothing stays the same forever, not even diamonds.

*I believe that as a conservation student I was encouraged to over-treat objects, with good reason. It is easier to step back from that than it is to step forward into the unknown.*

**John Greenwood**

Stephen Rickerby's hope that we have lost our hubris can be seen more as a loss of innocence and a gaining of wisdom. To know our limitations is a key part of growing up and becoming, in this case, a thoughtful professional. Stephen's views should, if honest, reflect the professional journey of all conservators. I am part of the generation of conservators, who started in the 70's and are now coming to maturity and nudging retirement. *'Full of wise saws, and modern instances'* There is a global trend towards preventative conservation, in most cases the

*Conservation students should be encouraged to take risks, question our utterances and received wisdom and take pride, even with a pinch of hubris in their skills and achievements.*

most cost effective solution, which looks at conservation in an holistic framework, resists unwise interventions and allows us to carefully consider significance, context and other complex issues. As David Leigh the recently retiring General Secretary of IIC stated *'The simple ideas which many of us cut our teeth on... have begun to melt away and go fuzzy at the edges'* We have as a profession, not so much as lost our hubris but have grown up. My conservation journey started by being taught by David or more accurately self taught

for a term before David arrived at Cardiff. Along with two other enthusiastic students, we attacked a lump of archaeological iron with a vibro tool ,led by Plenderleith and Werner. Through the guidance of David we were taught old school recipes, historic treatments and loads of intervention. We were happy as pigs in poo and our hubris was growing. Things have come a long way since then. Conservators can understand the limitations of both their skills and the materials unravelling the complexity of the work and no longer seeing problems in black and white. Hubristic levels were starting to diminish as the *'meta narratives of our relationship with heritage change'* (Tracy Ireland 2011). Following the white heat of technology of the 60s science was increasingly becoming more of a tool to identify problems and less of the way of solving problems. We were realising that heritage was a complex mix of stories, problems with many stakeholders and interpretations. World wide economic mess ups, often led by the hubris of the money men are changing heritage. Throughout the world museums and heritage are suffering and conservation is changing to reflect this. Australia so far has escaped the worst of the financial destruction, but never say never. Conservators are slowly losing the blinkers of hubris and I have tried to reflect this through teaching.

Having taught nearly 1,000 conservators over the last twenty three years I would venture that it is not in the nature of conservators to be arrogant and proud, but quiet, determined and happier looking a down a microscope than speaking out. This reluctance to be bold and stand out in the heritage industry, rather than pride may have slowed changes. I would however as part of my personal development like to say a few words in favour of hubris. It could be judged that a lot if not the majority of great works of art, grand building, world heritage and possibly some of the great national museums were produced as a result of arrogance, power and being out of touch with reality. Without hubris there would be no Angkor Watt, coronation robes of state would be a grey cardie, and the Sistine chapel would have a couple of coats of magnolia emulsion. Our lives would be drabber and our jobs as conservators would be a lot poorer. Also although we teach nascent conservators' restraint, consideration and all of the wisdom we have gained; sometimes the recklessness of youth is what moves a profession on.

*'The older I get the better I know that the secret of my going on  
Is when the reins are in the hands of the young, who dare to run against the storm'*  
Ellas Song; *Sweet Honey in the Rocks*

**Tamara Lavrencic**

When I graduated, I imagined that I would be “treating” paper every day. My first job was at the Queensland State Archives, and after applying full treatment to only a few hundred maps and plans in my first year, I realised

I wasn't going to make much of an impact on the collection! So my focus turned to preventive conservation and to what I could do to protect more of the collection from damage through wear and tear. Over the years, questions have been raised about the long term efficacy of many of the remedial treatments that were “standard” in the 80s, e.g. deacidification, leading to a growing realisation that the long-term implications

of those treatments is not well understood. Conservation decision-making now seems to consider a much wider range of questions, and the level of deterioration and the context in which the object will be stored/housed/displayed plays a much stronger role in the process. Remedial treatment is often the last choice, considered only when all other options have been exhausted.

*Conservation decision-making now seems to consider a much wider range of questions*

**Marcelle Scott**

I share some of Stephen Rickerby's anxiety over treatments, and I'm sure most of us agree that we need to place interventive measures within a broader context. While my own conservation practice has moved away from a treatment focus, I think remedial conservation

expect anything else? Conservation occupies a privileged position, working with and for people in a multi-faceted, multi-generational activity.

Certainly the high cost of interventions need strong justification, especially when there is so much else to do. The extreme weather events, wars and civil unrest we've seen world-wide over the last few months/years/decades quite rightly make us consider the broader strategies that Rickerby mentions. This January's floods, fire and cyclones have surely shown us

the futility and error of hubris. Yet whether we're helping salvage wet photographs, restoring an artwork, or developing policy, we're practicing conservation. The field has always embodied a continuum, rather than a dichotomy, of practice from remedial to preventive. I haven't lost faith in that. Reflecting and improving on what we do, and don't do well; feeling some anxiety about aspects of practice; developing new modalities; and expanding our field of influence is essential professional practice. I haven't lost faith in that either.

*Certainly the high cost of interventions need strong justification, especially when there is so much else to do*

remains at the heart of what we do. It can be contentious and value-laden, attracting advocates and vocal critics. Why should we

**David Hallam**

Maybe I'm a Luddite but for me the undying trend to the fashionable preventive conservation approach as an almost religious view has in my view lead to the deskilling of the conservation profession. We don't need to do anything just

then store it appropriately. Pure preventive approaches will only slow the problem to a dull roar.

Appropriately applied, well diagnosed, and scientifically based, interventive treatment and collections maintenance works. It reduces rates of deterioration to that which is acceptable.

*Preventive conservation is a great “cop out” for those who do not have the science basis or practical skill to carry out successful treatment*

document and watch... I cry at the number of objects I have seen rotting in museum stores when appropriate treatment could have solved the stability problem.

Sometimes the only way to stabilise an unstable object is to treat it

Yes we need to be circumspect with the extent and affect of treatment but that is where applying appropriate risk and significance analysis is essential to our approaches. Real analysis – not just box ticking.

My major concern with current conservation trends are the deskilling of our workforce and the lauding of administration based

approaches to our conservation practice. We now tend to put more “worth” on managing a process than we do on the skills required to carry out the processes. This is wrong.

Preventive conservation is a great “cop out” for those who do not have the science basis or practical skill to carry out successful treatment of difficult, unstable, or “unreadable” objects.

I welcome the eventual return to a less “non interventive” approach as the fashion cycle progresses in the next 20 years or so. I hope those with handskills survive long enough to hand them on to the coming generations.

**Ian Batterham**

It seems to me that Mr Rickerby is being deliberately provocative here. Also, the comment comes from a discussion of decorated architectural surfaces and I could see that there may be some issues he is talking about which relate specifically to this discipline. For example you could clean up an

away from remedial measures – rather that the field of conservation has broadened. We now realise that conservation can involve a range of activities, with intervention being just one. This is a good thing – we now have a range of ways of preserving collections – and the profession has broadened in the same way. A conservator can now be an expert on an area of treatment or he can be an expert on air conditioning systems. This broadening is also good for the profession –

conservators are getting involved in all decisions that affect collections, not just treating objects brought to us by curators/archivists/librarians. Therefore I see a stronger profession with a broader footprint

and a bigger voice. We now look beyond the door of the lab.

As regards whether conservation is cosmetic or not, a lot of conservation actions could be construed as ‘cosmetic’, at least in part. However, they are also necessary – if an item is to be perceived as its creator intended often some cleaning up is required. Give that such activities come with a level of risk it is essential that the person carrying them out is properly trained both in the activity itself and also has the intellectual underpinning to ensure that the actions do not damage or threaten the object in the future. Whether these actions will produce a lasting effect, or preserve the item in the long term is perhaps not the point.

*I see a stronger profession with a broader footprint and a bigger voice*

outdoor sculpture and 5 years later it will be covered in soot and pigeon droppings. This would be demoralising.

From my point of view it doesn't seem that conservators are moving

**Colin Macgregor**

Unhand that Object and Let it Run Free?

The frontier between remedial intervention and within preventive conservation is hard to map and seems to vary with the specialist area which one sits. Some paintings conservation (which is Rickersby's background) could be seen as remedial for purely aesthetic reasons, whereas a furniture, musical instrument or industrial

objects, increasing emphasis over the past 30 years has been placed on limiting deterioration of whole collections.

Currently the great majority of our remedial intervention is done for two reasons:

- Making the object safe to travel or exhibit, which is a form of preventive conservation.
- Cultural respect and the need to avoid displaying a degraded version of the cultural riches of the Australian and Pacific societies.

If museums have not always been the perfect custodians of material tradition in the past we should attempt undo what we can. It is not until we have finally undone the ravages of up to 200 years of less than perfect storage, handling and display on the entire collection, that we will be able to pick any object or specimen and place it in a showcase without the least need for intervention. Then we can focus all our efforts on maintaining a benign environment around the

collections. But this may take some considerable time to achieve.

It's also worth noting that remedial treatments may continue to be necessary in the future due to increasing financial pressures on cultural institutions. If management is forced to generate income through hosting social/entertainment events of various types, and generate income through touring exhibitions with lower overheads, the pressure on collections is likely to increase.

I do share some of Rickersby's reservations about remedial intervention. Despite more rigorous testing and evaluation of conservation materials, we still cannot be absolutely certain of the stability of some consolidants in 200 years time. Adding only what is absolutely necessary to the object is the best rule. If the materials in or under a pigment layer react in unexpected ways with compounds in the object or the environment, there will be a whole new set of challenges and remedial interventions to be undertaken by conservators in the 23<sup>rd</sup> century.

*Certainly when I entered conservation the bulk of my work was a one-to-one relationship with an object which has attracted many of us to the profession*

conservator could argue that many interventive treatments must be done to ensure that the object will survive its use or the conditions to which it is exposed.

Certainly when I entered conservation the bulk of my work was a one-to-one relationship with an object which has attracted many of us to the profession. At the Australian Museum, with over 10 million natural science and cultural

## Kay Soderlund

I have worked as a conservator for over 30 years, and in that time I have seen the approach to remedial conservation change a great deal. When I first studied conservation, the phrase ‘preventive conservation’ was virtually unheard of and conservation was all about the physical object. The intervening years have seen an evolution in our perspectives – allowing for a more intellectual and philosophical examination of what we do. This gives the profession a

that we should move to preventive conservation alone. I think there is a place for both remedial and preventive conservation, as long as it is an examined approach. I took a ten year break from being a paper conservator, and worked more in preventive conservation. When I returned to paper conservation I found that the profession had moved away from washing paper as a treatment due to various concerns raised through research, mainly concerning elements being washed out of the paper or elements being introduced to the paper.

There have also been discussions around the conservation ethic of all treatment being reversible and how could we regard the removal of soluble acids during the washing

process as ‘reversible’? It was about this time that I started wondering if this intellectual discussion regarding remedial treatment was disappearing up its own fundament. Until research provides me with clear evidence that washing paper is more detrimental to the preservation of paper than leaving soluble acids in place, I will continue to wash paper, as I remain convinced of the efficacy of this treatment and I can see and feel the difference in the health of the paper. I guess I am a bit of a traditionalist when it comes to conservation, but I am very open to

the discussions around these issues, and think there should be more of them.

While the discussion in ‘Conservation Perspectives’ was very interesting, I think it only briefly touched on a looming challenge for the conservation profession – that is, the application of conservation principles and ethics in the private sector, and the different requirements and expectations of conservation in that sector. These requirements are just as valid as those for objects held in collecting institutions, and yet most discussions regarding conservation approaches and principles focus solely on publicly held collections or private collections holding recognised cultural material – the cultural elite of objects, if you like. This approach ignores a fundamental principle of conservation, one that is captured in the name of our own association – the Conservation of Cultural Material. Surely this applies to all cultural material if the requirement is there? It is this basic principle that I fear the conservation profession is losing sight of, and where the future challenges lie.

*As a profession we may have ‘lost faith’ in remedial conservation, but that doesn’t mean that we should move to preventive conservation alone.*

chance to move conservation to a more solid, museological footing – away from simply a service profession. It should allow us to examine more closely the essence of conservation and preservation – what is it we are really trying to accomplish, and what do we really need to conserve? Without this examination, any sort of conservation – preventive or remedial – is an abrogation of our responsibilities and obligations as conservators, both to the object and the community. As a profession we may have ‘lost faith’ in remedial conservation, but that doesn’t mean

## IIC Dialogues

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### Elizabeth Hadlow

Thank you Julian for summarising the IIC Dialogues Conservation in Crisis and the plus/minus dilemma – both dialogues are timely and should stimulate much needed debate both within the conservation profession and throughout the wider museum sector (and I use that term broadly!).

I found two comments from the Conservation in Crisis dialogue particularly interesting:

- Editor of *The Art Newspaper* Anna Somers Cocks view that conservators can only communicate information in scientific terminology
- British Medical Journal Editor's observation that transferring a fraction of 1% of the UK Health Budget to fund culture would effectively double the culture budget and achieve savings in health care due to increased community well-being.

### Conservators only communicate information in scientific terminology....

To take Anna Somers Cocks comment first – If the symposium I attended recently is anything to go by I believe conservators are very interested in the origins, significance and history of the objects they conserve. Many of the presenters spent some considerable time giving the cultural background of the objects they treated – sometimes at the expense of focusing on the actual conservation treatment. For me it's all about the intended audience – you have to cater to people's interests and know how to balance the information you are presenting. Some people become conservators because of a passion for materials science, however in my experience most people become conservators because of an interest in history or art or cultural heritage and its significance to society. Most of us also take pleasure in being able to assist in

telling the story of the objects we treat – helping other heritage professionals gain a better understanding of the materials and techniques of construction and use. Anna Somers Cocks gave the example of the dull scientific paper about the conservation of the crucifix in Venice – it would be interesting to know the audience for the paper – if it was a room full of conservators interested to know the science behind the treatment then I think focusing on that is perfectly valid. If on the other hand the audience was broader then catering to those needs would have been useful. An analogy might be that we would not expect a surgeon presenting a paper about a new surgical technique to give the background of the patient if they are presenting to their peers. We might expect them to give a broader perspective if explaining the technique on national radio.

### Shift 1% of health budget to culture budget....

I was extremely interested in the comment of the Editor of the British Medical Journal about transferring some of the health budget to the culture budget. I tend toward the pragmatic as a conservator and understand that in the scheme of things looking after a collection of archival records isn't considered to be in quite the same league as looking after the health of patients in a hospital. I consider one-off treatments of individual objects or artworks to sometimes be an expensive indulgence – both on behalf of the conservator and/or the institution that might instigate such treatments. In particular the scientific investigation of pigments, supports, materials of construction, etc where they play absolutely no part in developing treatment strategy, assisting curatorial investigation, or authentication of the artefact is usually an expensive waste of time and money – often simply because we can investigate and we have a passion to do so. We can waste money like any other sector – and we need to take very seriously how we spend precious tax dollars. For example I know of many institutions where the

push for digital access to collections is very strong – but as yet there seems to be little thought given to how many people actually access these digitised collections – providing a digital copy is perfectly valid where access demands are high, but if the item is likely to be viewed by only one or two individuals why should we copy it?

Whilst I wouldn't necessarily argue with the premise that greater access to culture creates greater community well-being, I do think that the cultural sector needs to take a very close look at what we would spend the money on if we were to get it.

This leads into the next IIC Dialogue.....

### The plus/minus dilemma

It seems to me that the areas identified as requiring discussion within the environmental guidelines dialogue should be expanded to include our overall approaches to the conservation of heritage.

- How long should conservators seek to preserve cultural heritage
- Budgetary climate in which we operate
- Broader moral dimension of energy efficiency and carbon footprint

We need to apply these questions each time we make treatment and preservation decisions.

The answer to how long we should seek to preserve cultural heritage seems to have become – forever – which of course is a totally fantastical notion. Particularly in today's world where we are creating such vast quantities of information and material objects it is becoming even more important for us as a society to prioritise what is truly important to save – and we must also realise that our priorities might change over time.

The budgetary climate to my mind can be translated to again mean social and cultural priorities. We spend our money on what we believe to be important

at any given moment. Some cultural heritage is timeless and it could be argued should be preserved “forever”. However I could never be convinced that some of the art that has been produced, nor some of the information, is important or significant enough to continue spending our diminishing budgets on.

The broader moral dimension relating to energy efficiency is perhaps the most difficult in the short term. Most of our storage facilities have been built to control indoor environments only with the assistance of very energy hungry HVAC systems – to change these buildings will be extremely costly and also very energy and resource hungry. But, it is something that warrants our time and effort to solve.

State Records NSW where I work have long struggled with the plus/minus dilemma – the storage facility at Western Sydney is like a microcosm of archival building design over the past 40 years – some buildings are built like Fort Knox and can maintain environmental conditions well, others are more like tin sheds and rely almost entirely on the HVAC system to control the environment. State Records NSW when they designed and built their last storage building were able

to learn from previous successes and failures and the new building includes many energy efficient design elements such as geothermal air-conditioning, movement-sensor lighting, superior insulation and high thermal mass. This has positioned us well for the future however we need to build more similar facilities to ensure that our long-term storage is sustainable both economically and environmentally.

We have also trialled the use of seasonal set-points for temperature and relative humidity, but have been thwarted somewhat by the limitations of the original HVAC design – in many cases they were not designed for flexibility and can only run effectively within very limited ranges. For example when we trialled raising the temperature in summer to 23 degrees (only 3 degrees more than the original setpoint) this resulted in the HVAC system interpreting this to mean that it didn't require as much “chiller” – which resulted in the relative humidity spiking up to 70-85%. Our system relies on the chiller to remove humidity from the air and so our system could not cope going outside its very limited design parameters. This has proved frustrating to say the least. We are now looking at retrofitting different humidity controls

to give us more flexibility and hopefully reduce some of our energy requirements.

So whilst I thoroughly endorse the suggestions and proposals presented by the Plus/Minus panellists – seasonal drift, widening the temperature and relative humidity parameters, relaxing regulations to provide more flexibility with loans – I would suggest that we need to take a good look at the technical and mechanical limitations of the HVAC systems and buildings we have inherited and perhaps spend some time trying to work out effective ways of retrofitting better and more efficient systems into our existing buildings. This will need the expertise of other professional groups – HVAC engineers and technicians for example.

I strongly believe that preventive measures such as environmental controls are the keys to us being able to preserve our heritage into the future – individual treatments are a luxury we can afford to spend on an ever diminishing number of items. Debates such as the Plus/Minus Dilemma are crucial if we are to continue to be able to care for the collections entrusted to us. I'd like to see more such debates at a National level at our AICCM conferences.

### Research at the Getty...

Ian MacLeod reports that he has begun a four month program at the Getty Conservation Institute in Los Angeles during which he will remove a stack of leave liability and in the process, be working on assembling a good set of references and doing a lot of reading on the topic of conservation of shipwrecks. “The environment at the Getty is quite overwhelmingly desirable, with great accommodation at the building for resident scholars, which is a 10 minute bus ride from the complex on the hill that looks out over the whole of the giant city like a sparkling jewel in the crown of knowledge, dedicated to the universal care of collections, sites and monuments, not just here in Los Angeles, but around the whole globe. The library is extensive and it has a network of connections, like a million spiders into the hearts of resource centres around the world, and I have an assistant who is doing all the Inter-library loans for me. It has also been a transition from being somebody who drove everywhere in Perth to being a foot slogger and a bus traveller in LA where old people, those over 62 years of age, get cheap 75 cent bus fares! Food shopping is a challenge and requires a couple of trips a week as there is a real limit to how much you can carry by hand and backpack when it is a 2 mile journey up hill.”



Ian MacLeod at Getty Museum Feb 2011  
Photo: David Carson, Getty Conservation Institute

# Can you help?



## Mystery photo

This issue our photo is dated 1977 and has the caption: *Cleaning a bark painting, Australian Museum*. If anyone can identify the gentleman pictured and the circumstances of the photo please let Ian Batterham know ([ian.batterham@naa.gov.au](mailto:ian.batterham@naa.gov.au))



## Mystery solved!

### Mystery photo from the NAA collection

Thanks to Ian MacLeod for identifying the picture, in Newsletter 116 of November 2010 as showing John Clarke (R) and David Gilroy (L) measuring light levels on a replica of a rock art site located in the WA Museum. The photo was taken in 1977 when both David and John were working in the materials conservation laboratory of the museum.

John Clarke was the WA Museum's rock art conservator for many years and now runs a highly successful consultancy business dealing with Aboriginal communities working out mining rights issues etc. David Gilroy is now Ian Macleod's manager of compliance and collections at the WA Museum.

The rock art replica was in Australia's first museum gallery dedicated to Indigenous cultural life – masterminded by Dr Ian Crawford, Historian and rock art guru. It was situated on the first floor of the WA Museum Francis Street building.

The Replica, which is made up of polystyrene foam, is now considered a highly valuable collection item as it was painted by one of the traditional elders of the Kimberley from near the Napier Ranges. During the WA Museum relocation project in 2004 it was relocated into the Kattadjnoong gallery in the old Beaufort Street wing of the WA Museum on the Perth site.



# Working parties

## Mould Remediation Working Group

Last year an expression of interest was broadcast for interested AICCM members to take part in a Mould Remediation Working Group. Our initial group of 6 soon expanded to 18 members who have all taken on various tasks to help us reach our goal of producing a set of AICCM guidelines for mould remediation.

The initial members of the Group met in late October with a fungal ecology expert from the University of Sydney. An outline of objectives was drawn up and tasks assigned according to the objectives. Students at the University of Sydney may be undertaking research projects linked to our objectives.

Members are investigating the following:

- Literature search – past and current treatments
- OH&S issues; health risks
- Mould types commonly found in collections
- Institute of Inspection, Cleaning and Restoration – regulation of remediation industry; training offered by the industry

- Sampling techniques for mould contamination
- Guidelines published by other conservation institutes/organisations
- Regulation in the UK/Europe
- Development of experiments relating to killing mould – collaboration with Botanic Gardens; anoxia treatments
- Literature search – chemical fumigation methods – past and present
- Safe/acceptable spore counts following remediation treatments
- Literature search – Preventing and controlling mould outbreaks in non-air-conditioned museums
- Baseline moisture levels for different materials
  - Safe/acceptable to prevent growth
  - Safe/acceptable following mould outbreak and remediation
- Looking at treatments for various material including sculptures, herbaria, textiles, paper, general or common treatments
- Low-tech, low-cost methods of remediation and treatment – particularly in humid climates and developing countries

- Establishing contact with industry groups – environmental hygienists, disaster recovery firms, etc.

One of the major problems with such a group is sharing the information across long distances – email and other methods of communication do have their limitations and nothing beats sitting down face-to-face and thrashing it out. We are endeavouring to overcome these difficulties at present.

The first deadline for the group was February 1<sup>st</sup> – when such tasks as literature searches were due. We will be posting information on the AICCM website as things progress.

For further information you can contact Elizabeth Hadlow at [elizabeth.hadlow@records.nsw.gov.au](mailto:elizabeth.hadlow@records.nsw.gov.au) or visit the Working Group page on the AICCM website.

## Special Interest Groups

### AICCM Gilded Objects Special Interest Group, (GOCSIG), traditional gilding techniques workshop Melbourne, Australia August 30 to September 3, 2010

#### Louise Bradley

Twelve members of the AICCM GOCSIG, from Australia and New Zealand, gathered at the National Gallery of Victoria in Melbourne for a marathon gilding workshop taught by **Hubert Baija**, senior conservator of frames and gilding at the Rijksmuseum Amsterdam. The workshop was organised by **MaryJo Lelyveld**, NGV conservator of frames and furniture, with support from the National Gallery of Victoria. **Suzi Shaw**, NGV conservator of frames and furniture, also worked hard to ensure the workshop ran smoothly.

The workshop covered the theory and practice of traditional gilding methods with a focus on picture frames made in the European tradition. Baija stressed that gilding conservation would not be

taught. He explained that the conservation of a gilded surface would involve a different set of materials and methods but that in order to carry out a conservation treatment the conservator of gilded objects must have a solid understanding of the structure, materials and methods of manufacture used by artists in many countries and periods of time.

Over five long and intense days each participant prepared a small frame and a panel for gilding using size, gesso and bole. We smoothed our panels using traditional scrapers, horsehair cloth, or modern sandpaper, and experimented with gesso texturing and re-cutting using French gesso re-cutting tools. We prepared compo and pressed ornaments then gilded our objects with gold, silver and Schlagmetal leaf using both water gilding and oil gilding methods. We created matte and burnished surface finishes and experimented with punching, toning, aging and sealing of the gilded surfaces.



*Lisa Charleston and Suzi Shaw observing Matthew O'Reilly and Deborah Whitney preparing materials for compo.*

Baija surveyed our personal gilding tools, laughing gently at fine, but gigantic, gilders mops, or the state of some tools and brushes. We were taught how to sharpen scraper blades and gesso cutting tools and how to clean and care for delicate gilders tips and brushes. Outside the workshop we studied many fine frames in the exhibition *European Masters: Städel Museum, 19th-20th Centuries*. We were also fortunate that the exquisite frame for *The Crossing of the Red Sea*, by Nicolas Poussin, was in the frame conservation lab. All gathered around for a close look as Hubert, MaryJo and Suzi pointed out details



*Hubert Baija tamping gold leaf on a water-gilded ball.*



*Hubert Baija demonstrating how to cut flutes into the gessoed cove of a frame.*



*MaryJo Lelyveld enjoying the art of punching on a gold ground.*

in the fine carving, gilding and gesso cutting.

Baija delivered beautifully illustrated lectures on European frame history and gold ground paintings. He included slides from the Rijksmuseum online paintings catalogue; this contains detailed information about many frames including profile and complex joint drawings. Baija has promised to return to Melbourne to present his workshop on gilding conservation in 2011 or 2012.

On behalf of all participants I would like to thank Hubert Baija for sharing, with such good humour, his deep knowledge and skill. We also thank the National Gallery of Victoria for their generous support of the workshop, and MaryJo Lelyveld and Suzi Shaw for their time, energy, and the use of their lab.

## Photon SIG

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Call for Expressions of interest in the position of Photon SIG Convenor.

The AICCM Photon special interest group represents the interests of those who work with photographic media, including photographic prints, film and negatives and holds a symposium every two years in conjunction with The Book and Paper special interest group. The current convenor, Detlev Lueth has stepped down from the position of Photon SIG Convenor and is seeking expressions of interest from interested members to fill this role.

For further details please contact:

Detlev Lueth

Email: [detlev.lueth@naa.gov.au](mailto:detlev.lueth@naa.gov.au)

Phone: (03) 9348 5780

## Object SIG

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To all the Object SIG members I'd first like to apologise for the inactivity of the group. I've got a few ideas about how the group should proceed, including what workshops or events might be useful, but I'd love to hear your thoughts. Are there particular areas of conservation in which you'd like to update your skills or increase your knowledge? Do you possess expertise that you'd like to share with the conservation community? Any feedback would be gratefully received – you can contact me through the AICCM website or via  
Phone: 03 8341 7235 or  
Email: [hprivett@museum.vic.gov.au](mailto:hprivett@museum.vic.gov.au)  
from 21 February.

## Book and Paper SIG

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The 6th Book, Paper and Photographic Materials Symposium was held last year in Melbourne, 17-19 November 2010. Comprising of two days of presentations and poster viewings, a cocktail reception at Persimmon, a fabulous conference dinner at Mirka at Tolarno, and then a final day of workshops and tours, the event appeared to be enjoyed by all.

Many thanks to the large number of people who presented, supported, attended and contributed to the Symposium.

Special thanks to those on the organising committee for all their hard work: Jane Hinwood, Pip Morrison, Briony Pemberton, Elisabetta Polidori, and Louise Wilson.

The next Symposium is due to be held in 2012 and at this stage it is looking like it will be held in Brisbane, so many thanks to the Queensland bunch for tentatively putting up their hands!

Copies of the 2010 Symposium preprints will be available in the near future through the AICCM Secretariat.

## Textile SIG Symposium

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The organizing Committee are pleased to announce that registration for the AICCM Textile Special Interest Group 2011 symposium *On the Body* is open. Please join us from the 16<sup>th</sup> – 18<sup>th</sup> March at the National Gallery of Australia in Canberra for an exciting program which includes the presentation of a diverse range of papers and a session dedicated to the *Ballet Russes*. Also included in the program is a 'Behind the Scenery' Guided Walk-through of the exhibition *Ballets Russes: The Art of Costume* led by the exhibition's conservators.

### Contact:

Textile SIG Coordinator, Jessie Firth.

Email: [jessie.firth@awm.gov.au](mailto:jessie.firth@awm.gov.au)

Phone: (02) 6243 4421

### Venue:

National Gallery of Australia – in their new Function space, Gandel Hall, which opens out onto the new Australian Garden.

### Catering:

Morning and afternoon tea as well as a light lunch will be provided on each day of the conference.

Conference Welcome reception: A welcome dinner will be held on the evening of Wed 16<sup>th</sup> from 6pm on the lawns of the Botanic Gardens. Transportation from the conference venue to the reception will be arranged. Delegates are invited to bring guests if they wish.

Please check the textile SIG page for up to date information.

# Conference and Workshop reviews

## Big Stuff 2010 Duxford, UK October 6-8 2010

### Alison Wain

On 6-8 October 2010 the Imperial War Museum (IWM) at Duxford in the UK hosted Bigstuff, a conference focused on the challenges of preserving, operating and displaying large technology heritage objects.

The Big Stuff conferences have an Australian connection, the first one having been held in Canberra in 2004. Big Stuff takes the approach that the size and general functional aspects of large machinery objects are critical in determining how to care for and interpret them, regardless of the technology or industry they represent. Such objects are all complex, difficult to handle, expensive to conserve, and inherently risky, both from a safety and a political point of view. People responsible for caring for them, therefore, have shared problems.

Recognising that different backgrounds and roles can bring deeply felt differences of opinion, the theme of the Duxford conference was "Dealing with conflict". This inspired discussions of politics and decision making, with speakers taking a positive and proactive approach to the difficulties and developing improved processes for the negotiation of significance, display goals and treatment priorities.

Several speakers described decision-making models that could defuse conflict, and provide a rigorous framework for assessing and comparing objects. The Australian contingent was particularly strong in this area, reflecting the amount of research being done on these issues at several institutions around Australia at the moment. An updated version of the Conservation

Management Tool developed by Joanna Romanos of Artlab was presented by Allison Russell of the National Motor Museum in South Australia. This Tool combines assessments of significance, physical condition and available resources, with risk management evaluation to clarify decisions about whether to operate large machinery. David Hallam's team at the National Museum of Australia (NMA), has used this system to assess each mechanical system in an object, giving them a numerical risk rating for the whole object. Sue Warren of the Canada Science and Technology Museum Corporation, has adapted the model to static objects, using the significance and collection role of an object to determine whether it should be restored to look new or retain an historic appearance.

Stefan Brueggerhoff of the German Mining Museum, discussed the development of a method for managing whole industrial machinery complexes, including setting priorities for the gradual conservation of a site over an extended period and drawing together the needs, approaches and languages of the many different specialists involved in such a project. Anthony Coullis described the Conservation Management Plan used at Britain's National Railway Museum to assess the advisability of operating historic locomotives in a modern context.

The rush to display objects often overtakes planning and evaluation processes. Andrew Schroeder from the Australian War Memorial (AWM) and I reviewed the collapse of an operational vehicle project and the strategies that helped resolve the resulting conflicts. Dave Morris of Britain's Fleet Air Arm Museum discussed the need to maintain a firm line between flying and non-flying collection objects, and Laura Kennedy (from the Australian War Memorial) and I queried the assumption that using an unprovenanced object for display obviated the need to take ethical questions into account.

On a practical front, Yvonne Shashoua (National Museum of Denmark), evaluated coatings for exposed iron objects, and David Hallam (NMA) demonstrated the importance of analyzing vehicle fluids. Chris Knapp (IWM), described the restoration



Staff and volunteers talking to conference delegates in the Duxford conservation workshop.



Organisers Chris Knapp and Jackie Walker on the deck of HMAS Belfast



Delegates watch aircraft prepare for the Duxford Airshow



Breakout session on the balcony during the Bigstuff conference.

of a B52 aircraft, and the Duxford approach to suspending aircraft, while Norbert Tempel (Westphalian Museum of Industry), spoke of rehabilitating a vapour discharge tower, which illustrated the ethical dilemma of having to damage or remove outer parts to stabilize internal ones. James Mitchell (Industrial Heritage Consulting), spoke of the twin perils of not operating objects, and of operating them badly, while Brian Barker spoke about an award winning training program, developed jointly by IWM and BAPC, to train volunteers in the conservation and preservation of aircraft. Finally Carl Warner (IWM), outlined ways to help visually impaired people appreciate large technology objects.

If anyone would like more information about any of the papers, please contact Alison Wain on [alison.wain@anu.edu.au](mailto:alison.wain@anu.edu.au)

## **ICOM – CC Photographic Materials Working Group Interim Meeting Modern Photographic Materials, Athens, Greece 19 – 22 October 2010**

### **Tegan Anthes**

Last year I was lucky enough to attend this conference in Athens. The conference was held in the new building of the Benaki Museum, in a sleek and modern purpose built building set in an industrial area of the city. The Benaki Museum also has the original, traditional museum located across from the gardens and parliament.

The conference was over 4 days with the first two days encompassing papers from photographic conservators across the globe. The third day was a specialist workshop on Contemporary Photographic Processes by Sylvie Penichon from the Amon Carter Museum, Texas. The fourth day was a workshop titled “Digital Prints that look like photographs but aren’t really (or are they?)” by Martin Jurgens.

There were many interesting papers and I am happy for people to contact me for further details on specific papers as unfortunately this conference has not produced pre or post-prints, but rather a brief abstract booklet. I have outlined below a few of the papers that I found the most interesting.

Sabine Zorn (Bern University of the Arts, Switzerland) presented a paper on “Diasec and other finishing techniques – Investigation of Light Induced Aging”. Sabine has been researching the long-term effects of face mounting photographs and this paper focussed on the light fading of yellow and magenta dyes in colour photography. Sabine explained that face mounting uses pressure sensitive adhesive or silicone rubber to attach acrylic or polycarbonate (other substrates are possible) to the verso of a photograph. Sabine reported that face mounting chromogenic prints accelerates their sensitivity to light. The yellow and magenta dyes were greatly affected by the face mounting process, not only from the light damaged but also deterioration from the pH value and off gassing of the adhesive layer. While face mounted, silver dye bleach had no discernable change in sensitivity to light.

Kate Jennings (Tate, London) and Sylvie Penichon (Amon Carter Museum) reported on their “Preliminary Investigations in the Preservation of Backlit Works of Art”. The presentation included the identification of the construction techniques, electrical components and the photographic material of these complex works of art. This is an ongoing research project.

Another topic of ongoing research was Clara von Waldthausen’s paper on the formation of a white powdery substance on the inside of acrylic glazing. Clara suggests that this is possibly minute surface abrasion from dust particles rather than deterioration of the PMMA, yet Clara made no strong conclusions but rather suggested that further investigations were necessary.

And Celine Quiriaux (Photograph Conservator, Brussels) gave a very interesting paper that began because of a sneeze. She was asked to investigate two Ilfochrome photographs that were by the same artist, displayed beside each other in an exhibition. One printed in 1997 and the other in 2001. Unfortunately, during the exhibition a patron sneezed on the works. One photographic print sustained no damage, while certain dyes of the other were solubilised, leaving a noticeable colour change. Celine discovered a major difference in the paper and dye technology, through various scientific investigations she carried out on off-cuts from these photographs. This re-iterated the photographic conservators’ nightmare of continually changing formulas and technologies in photographic papers and dyes.

Emily O’Reilly (National Museum Wales) – some of you may remember her from her short stint in Australia – presented various ethical dilemmas that are becoming more prevalent in the photographic art world. The option/question of reprinting another print if the original is damaged or faded is an ethical choice that a conservator is occasionally involved in? If the artist agrees – does this make it more acceptable? What to do about editions, as reprinting affects the number of prints in existence. I think conservators in Australia are facing similar issues and it would be an interesting topic of discussion.

As I mentioned before, the last two days were workshops – both jammed with information.

Sylvie covered the photographic printing processes, focussing on modern methods. She discussed identification

methods and characteristics of prints that would be commonly found in galleries. Following this, she detailed the mounting and finishing techniques, including the materials used as backing and facings for photographs. The day finished with exhibition and storage guidelines. Sylvie's knowledge on this topic is exceptional and the day was a great immersion into these processes.

The final day was spent with Martin Jurgens as he imparted some of his vast knowledge on a variety of photographic techniques including – Fuji Pictography, D2T2 (dye diffusion thermal transfer), ZINK, Cyclicolor and of course inkjet. Each technique was discussed and Martin had numerous samples to study and compare. Martin enforced the need for gathering your own sample sets and carrying a loop in your pocket.

## ICOM General Conference Shanghai, China 6-12 November 2010

### Sabine Cotte and Catherine Smith

The theme for ICOM General Conference was 'Museums and social harmony', highlighting the position of museums as mediators in a transforming global economy, and an environment that considers preservation of cultural diversity and promotion of environmental, social and economic sustainability as essential. Held at the International Expo site in Shanghai, China, one of the most dynamic and populous cities in the world, the ICOM



General conference was attended by 3,600 international delegates. The logistics of this level of attendance were evident on the first day as buses arrived with military precision from hotels around the city, and channelled attendees through airport-like security points to the amazing floating red pagoda of the Chinese Pavilion. The sheer scale of Shanghai, and the surreal and astounding Expo site, set the scene for the week of the conference.

An impressive opening ceremony was held in a huge hall with keynote speeches delivered by international cultural personalities via simultaneous translation. The moderators of the session, Professors Amareswar Galla and Kidong Bae reminded the audience that the United Nations has identified the importance of mutual tolerance and harmony for cultural diversity, and the power of culture in dealing with global development. Museums can be seen as places for facilitating intercultural encounters and inclusion, which was well illustrated by Professor Lourdes Arizpe (Mexico), whose work as an ethnologist and folklorist situates museums as intangible cultural centres and institutionalised 'agoras' of cultural identities. Professor Arizpe saw museums and communities as partners for sustainable practice based on scientific knowledge, memories, and reverence for collective commons. Mrs Gabriella Battaini-Dragoni (Council of Europe) advocated intercultural exchange as a replacement for multicultural archiving, and to define museums as 'where we gather and learn' rather than 'what we own and buy'. Professor Alpha Konare, former president of Mali, reminded us that Africa would be the most populated and the youngest continent in 2050, and about the crucial work ahead for museums to embrace a broader definition, accept minorities and differences and promote inclusion against a backdrop of mutual recognition.

The ICOM-CC session theme was 'Conservation in a changing world', and focussed on the role of conservators

in this transformation of museums, particularly around access, intangible heritage, conservation training and conservation in the context of developing nations. The ICOM-CC session took place on the afternoon of the first day of the conference and opened with a brief overview of ICOM-CC's activities by President of ICOM-CC Marie Claude Corbeil. Unfortunately several of the twelve speakers listed in the program were not present. The speakers who were in attendance addressed a broad range of issues associated with cultural materials conservation with a focus on intangible aspects of cultural heritage, changing art practice and the need to innovate 'traditional' conservation practice.

Catherine Smith (New Zealand) discussed biculturalism in New Zealand as established by the Treaty of Waitangi (1840) and consequent rights held by Maori over their cultural material, intangible and tangible. Discussing conservation of Maori cultural materials within this framework, she showed examples of conservation treatment in partnership with Maori people that underlined the dynamic character of this culture. She stressed that it is a conservator's responsibility to engage with the community in question in order to facilitate the preservation of cultural heritage.

Anne Marie Deisser (Belgium), Dinah Eastop (UK) and Lolana Sipan (Iraq) made a presentation about the creation of the Kurdish Textile Museum in the historic city of Erbil in Kurdistan, a not-for-profit organization that aims to preserve and share local knowledge. The museum is seen as much as a centre of transmission and creation as it is a place for memory. In this way it plays an essential role in social integrity after the economic, social and political disruption caused by war.

Sabine Cotte (Australia) presented the particularities of preserving living religious heritage in the Himalayas, and stressed the importance of recognising the use-value of this heritage, which determines the purpose of conservation.

She insisted on the necessity of sharing decision-making with the communities using the heritage, local artists and religious authorities for sustainable cross-cultural conservation projects that become ways of reinforcing social cohesion.

Eve Graves (UK) gave a moving account of the projects undertaken by students from the Camberwell College of Arts to enhance the central place of people in conservation projects. Students create and conserve reminiscence boxes for the elderly and develop not only their skills but also a genuine empathy with the people that benefit from the projects, keeping in mind that access to cultural material, considered as a starting point for memories and for communication, is integral to conservation of meanings. In Graves' words, 'the stuff of life' varies across the world and generations, but is always giving access to the things we share, provided that we engage with the society and reflect upon our aims for conserving. The role of video recording and virtual access to collections for preservation of intangible aspects of cultural heritage were also discussed in presentations by Maniatis Nikolaos (Greece) and Hanneke van der Beek (Netherlands).



Lawrence Chin (Singapore) talked of the public/private partnership model at the University of Singapore where a fully-equipped conservation lab is leased to a private conservator; the funds generated are reinvested in the preservation of the collection, while some treatment of artefacts is also outsourced. Finally Wu Laiming, Head of Conservation at Shanghai Museum, presented scientific research conducted at the Museum, such as modification of chitosan to make adsorbents.

Overall the ICOM-CC session provided insight about the diverse concerns and activities of conservators working in an ever-changing museum environment. Unfortunately due to time constraints question time was extremely limited, impacting on the exchange of ideas and feedback. The distribution of a program that accurately reflected the presentations given on the day and the introduction of each speaker would have also enabled greater interaction and discussion between delegates.

The following day a visit to the conservation department of Shanghai Museum provided the opportunity to admire the incredible dexterity of paper conservators working on structural consolidation and lining of Chinese scrolls, which were then dried on the studio wall. Another feature of the paper conservation lab were the stunning large red-lacquered tables used by restorers to work on the scrolls. The following one-day visit to the National Silk Museum in Zhejiang showed the extremely dynamic character of this institution; developing ancient textile preservation techniques and a database of commonly used fibres for identification purposes, participating in archaeological excavations, promoting traditional methods of textile production, and even producing their own silk crepe as a cheaper and more sustainable resource. Later we visited a water village, Wuzhen, where indigo-dyed textiles were traditionally produced. Now a highly-frequented tourist attraction, Wuzhen was a reminder of the economic potential of preservation of cultural heritage and traditional techniques of production.

All of these activities took place against the incredible backdrop of the buzzing city of Shanghai where every night is a festival of neon-lit high-rise buildings close to small streets of traditional houses with their common courtyards. The ICOM General Conference was a place for interesting encounters and a great experience at all levels, showing the diversity and dynamism of the international museum community.

*First published in the Ethnographic Conservation Newsletter #32 (Feb. 2011).*

## Review of the Montefiascone Conservation Summer School Lazio, Italy August 2010

**Rachel Sawicki**

Chester Beatty Library, Dublin  
Irish Heritage Council Book  
Conservation Intern

The following review will appear in a forthcoming edition of ICON news in the United Kingdom, however, the contents are particularly relevant for AICCM members as the Montefiascone programme co-ordinator, as well as many of the teachers and participants, travel from Australia to take part in the School every year. In addition, the Nicholas Hadgraft Scholarship is open to conservators and conservation





Detail from CBL In 21.8 Tuti Nama c.1580 depicting a book seller in a bazaar. Image © The Trustees of the Chester Beatty Library, Dublin

students worldwide, and *Conservation by Design* are currently accepting applications for the 2011 Summer School. August 2010 marked the 24<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the internationally renowned Montefiascone Conservation Project in Lazio, Italy. The Project was set up following concerns over the derelict state of the town's seminary library which houses manuscripts, rare printed editions, and the late medieval collection of Cardinal Barbarigo. Upon discovering the library, Australian conservator Cheryl Porter invited Nicholas Barker from the British Library to appraise the collection and an international rescue effort was soon after established. In the years since the Project's inception, conservators, students, and archivists have flocked to the historic *Seminario* to help preserve and catalogue the collection. Now in its 19<sup>th</sup> year, the ever-popular Conservation Summer School has been successfully running in conjunction to help fund the costs of this essential conservation work.

As recipient of the 2010 Conservation by Design **Nicholas Hadgraft Scholarship**, which is offered each year in commemoration of this much loved and respected British book conservator, I had the great privilege of attending two courses in last year's programme. The first course, *Recreating the Medieval Palette*, was led by leading pigment expert and Montefiascone Project founder Cheryl Porter. This intensive week-long course was attended by an international mix of conservators, artists, archivists, and art historians coming from Scotland, Japan, the United States, Italy and Australia. In addition to superbly illustrated lectures on the art historical aspects of colour, participants carried out practical experiments to recreate a variety of pigments found in the Medieval Western and Islamic palettes. This year's lectures were well supported by afternoon trips to neighbouring Orvieto and Bolsena to view the composition and condition of the glorious medieval frescoes within the region's churches. During these sessions, Cheryl's in depth understanding, passion, and familiarity with the region's artworks really shone through, bringing to life the story and history of the paintings being studied.

The second week's course, *Introduction to Islamic Book Structures*, was led by experienced and energetic manuscript conservators John Mumford and Marco di Bella. Increasing interest in Islamic book structures led to this year's course being extremely popular and participants were led through a challenging week of practical bookbinding sessions and discussion about historical exemplars. The course was well attended by a variety of professionals including conservators, bookbinders, curators, and leading Islamic art historians. The variety of specialisms represented within the classroom last year promoted engaging debate about the various aspects of Islamic manuscript construction and the representation of books in Islamic art. One interesting discussion point concerned the position of the *lesan*, or envelope flap, which is generally designed to fit underneath the upper



Cheryl Porter with participants from her pigments workshop

board in Islamic books. Manuscript paintings from Islamic lands often portray books with the *lesan* on top of the upper board, as depicted in this image. This discrepancy stimulated debate between book conservators and art historians about the possible reasons for this inconsistency.

The third week's course centred on the Biccherna of Siena led by Australian-trained conservator and bookbinder Jennifer Storey, and the month was rounded off with Maria Fredericks' and Joan Weir's course on the decorated paper bindings of Montefiascone. Both courses were equally popular and exemplified the high standard of the teachers and courses offered each year at Montefiascone.

It was a privilege and a great pleasure to attend the 2010 Montefiascone Conservation Summer School and I feel honoured to have received the scholarship in Nicholas Hadgraft's name. The combination of world class tutors, enthusiastic participants, Italian sunshine, and Lazio's finest food and wine makes the programme at Montefiascone immensely enjoyable and worthwhile for everyone with an interest in manuscript studies. This year promises to be even more exciting and challenging with an expert-led programme covering topics on European and Islamic book structures. For further information on upcoming courses see <http://monteproject.co.uk/en/> or show your support on Facebook's *Montefiascone Conservation Project* pages. Details on Conservation by Design's generous Nicholas Hadgraft Scholarship can be found at [http://conservation-by-design.co.uk/nicholas\\_hadgraft\\_monte\\_project.html](http://conservation-by-design.co.uk/nicholas_hadgraft_monte_project.html).

## Making Karibari boards at the NGA Canberra, Australia January 2011

Sara Freeman – University of Canberra

In early January this year the National Gallery of Australia's paper conservation department hosted a workshop on Japanese paper conservation techniques structured around making and using a Karibari board. The workshop was presented by Ranson Davey, who is currently senior paper conservator at the National Gallery in Ireland. Ranson has had long standing interest in Japanese scroll mounting techniques. He has studied with various teachers in Rome, Japan, Hawai'i and Australia throughout his 30 year career.

This was a rare opportunity for us and was attended by paper conservators from as far a field as Perth, Brisbane, Adelaide, Sydney and Melbourne. Two student places were generously sponsored by AICCM's Canberra branch. The course was structured in two parts. 'Making a Karibari board' over five days, and 'Using a Karibari board' over two days.

You might wonder what on earth a Karibari board is and would you really want to make one? A Karibari board is a Japanese drying board, used for gently drying and flattening papers and scrolls undergoing treatment, that for various reasons cannot, be pressed under weights. These include prints with platemarks or embossing, pastels or other fragile works whose face

cannot be touched. The benefits of the board are the lightness and airiness of the structure which allows more even drying, and the slight give of the surface of the board which lessens the risk of tearing a work. Large boards can be used to work on long scrolls.

The structure of the Karibari board is exactly the same as a panel of a traditional Japanese screen, and we were instructed on how to make one of these from the wooden lattice right up to the ninth paper layer and final coating with kakishibu or fermented persimmon juice. This was a very complex procedure and a mammoth task to fit into 5 days. Most nights we worked till 7 or 8pm to get each section of the process completed.

The workshop participants were all on a steep learning curve from the first hour of day one, when Ranson had us practicing squaring up perfect sheets of Japanese mino paper with Japanese paper knives or marubochi. In the course of the next five days the 10 participants learnt how to use and maintain 4 different Japanese brushes, use and sharpen the round flat backed blade of the marubochi, prepare wheat starch paste in the traditional manner, prepare long scrolls of Japanese paper in two different styles – with knife cut joins and water cut joins, paste up and smoothly align incredibly thin large sheets of sekishu paper with a pitching stick, and how to recognise and work with the grain of Japanese papers when brushing on the paste and smoothing wet sheets onto the Karibari board. All of these were skills required to construct the board.

The Karibari board's nine paper layers are all different. Some layers are only pasted at the edges of the frame, some fully pasted and laid down in brickwork fashion. One layer looked like the shingles of a traditional straw rain coat from a Hokusai print. Another tricky layer which gave some of us grief involved each piece of paper catching a cushion of air between it and the layer beneath. The final layer required heat and sunshine to dry a paste sizing and the final persimmon juice protective coating. We were blessed with both on the Saturday afternoon. All the boards lined up drying in the sun on one of the NGA balconies looked like a Japanese paper maker's workshop.

We worked in pairs for most of the first five days, as many parts of the process required an extra pair of hands. This encouraged new friendships to grow. Different work practices could be heard around the room, from quiet concentration, to serious discussion, to happily chatting about everything but the job at hand. Ranson was kept on the run the whole time, answering questions and demonstrating techniques. Andrea Wise, Fiona Kemp and James Ward worked hard as Ranson's assistants while managing to make 2 boards during the workshop as well. Andrea had hired Kerry Yates (conservation Student UC) to cater the morning and afternoon teas, and her welcome spreads of food kept our strength up over the intensely focused long days.

*As a Western trained Japanese conservator working in Canberra, I was delighted to hear about a workshop demonstrating the making of Karibari that was being run locally. I enthusiastically took the*



opportunity to deepen my understanding of one of the conservation techniques used in Japan.

The workshop was facilitated in professional and friendly manner. The facilitator Ranson with helpful staff of NGA's Andrea, Fiona and James have done tremendous amount of preparation that they put into the workshop, ensuring it's success and smooth running for all the participants.

Through the process of making a Karibari board, the 10 participants were exposed to many various techniques of Japanese paper conservation. The many steps involved allowed for learning about the properties and workings of Japanese paper, using the traditional knife and straight edge to square the sheet of paper, making starch paste and working with different brushes. These are skills acquired by the scroll mounters over years and years of practice and experience. It was riveting to hear Ranson's experiences and the experiences of other's in the workshop from their time spent visiting traditional Japanese scroll mounting studios and paper making studios. A particular story that had a great impact on me was story told by Andrea about a experience she had during a training session from a Japanese master. She witnessed two of his apprentices sorting through every single sheet of Japanese Mino paper looking through and separating those that were most suited for a particular job, removing any that had even the slightest of impurities. These apprentices spent years repetitively carrying out this work to be familiar with the paper and develop skills to distinguish characteristics within them. Stories like this just made me recognise that we were not skimming the surface of the tradition of Japanese paper conservation but gaining a deeper appreciation of this fine art. This experience also renewed desire within to learn more about Japanese paper conservation methods and theory.

I believe everyone completed the workshop with the attitude that this experience was just the beginning of their journey to discover more about the art of Japanese paper conservation. As a wonderful extra each participant constructed a Karibari board over the course of the workshop to

take home, along with other traditional tools to just aide us in our conservation work. This workshop has been so valuable to me and just made me realize how much I am yet to learn about my own country and their deep tradition of scroll mounting. Next time I visit Japan I'm sure to visit some of the places that were mentioned in this workshop and continue in my own journey of learning and discovery.

**Shingo Ishikawa**  
(Paper Conservator, NFSA)

Part two of the course resumed after a much needed two day break! Three of the eleven people in this group had done the first part, and the rest were newcomers from Brisbane, Sydney, Melbourne and Canberra. Thrown in the deep end they were all soon cutting and squaring up paper with the marubochi and Japanese awl, and learning how to feather tear and join lengths of scrolls, sharpen knives and clean brushes.

This part of the workshop focused on how to use the Karibari board and Ranson demonstrated many different lining and flattening techniques on the board. Correct use of the mizubaki, or water brush was important to master. Any paper being stretched on the Karibari board has to be relaxed by dampening with this beautiful deer hair brush, which works the moisture into the body of the paper rather than the surface effect of a spray. We tested the different results of lining a work with thick paste, thin paste, against the grain and just water – this last involved two wet sheets of Kozo paper laid one on top of the other and gently pounded with a stiff brush, making a remarkably strong bond from a slight meshing of the fibres. This pounding technique is used in Japanese scroll mounting. Ranson also taught us how to flatten very fragile work within a dampened kozo envelope, the edges of which are pasted to the Karibari board to dry, meaning no paste comes in contact with the work, and no heavy downward pressure damages any original texture.



Overall the course echoed the subtlety and complexity of the Karibari board itself – unfolding layers and layers of valuable learning for everyone taking part. It was a fabulous week and a half of intense learning and enjoyable socialising. Somehow in the midst of all the hard work we managed to go out for three large meals together, and do lots of catching up and making new friends over lunch breaks and drinks at the end of the day. I think every participant, no matter what their level of experience, gained a lot from the workshop. A big thankyou to Ranson Davey for travelling all this way and being so generous with his knowledge and experience, and to Andrea Wise, James Ward and Fiona Kemp for the huge job of making this event happen.

*(As one of the students who received a place in the workshop through the sponsorship the AICCM Canberra branch, I would like to thank AICCM Canberra for this support. Being able to attend this workshop and learn so much from everyone was really fantastic.)*

# Lab and People News

## Northern Territory

### Museum and Art Gallery of the Northern Territory

*The following submission from MAGNT was intended for the previous newsletter but was not printed due to technical error.*

This year's very short dry season is pretty much over in Darwin and we can feel the humidity building. Stage 1 of our climate control system upgrade presented some challenges and hiccups but all now appears well and the system is ready to take us through another wet season.

The 27<sup>th</sup> Telstra National Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Art Award is currently on display and fills our two main temporary exhibition spaces. Since the preparatory work undertaken to get that major annual event up and running, the conservation team of **Sandra Yee, Sue Bassett** and **Charlotte Walker** has been preparing outgoing works for two future exhibitions. The first is a Wamud Namok AO retrospective at MCA. Wamud Namok AO, whose artworks feature in major public collections around the country, was a significant rock art/bark painter, land management advocate, environmentalist and elder from Arnhem Land who was honoured in a state funeral in remote Gunbalanya following his death late last year. MAGNT holds a significant collection of Wamud's works and is lending a number of his bark paintings and works on paper to MCA. The second is our own *Yalangbara*, an exhibition that MAGNT is developing in collaboration with Rirratjinju caretakers, the Marika family and in partnership with NMA,

due to open in Canberra in December. *Yalangbara*, a site on the Gove Peninsula listed on the Register of the National Estate, is a significant ancestral creation site for the Rirratjinju clan and Yolngu people of that region.



*Jenny O'Connell (left) and Sandra Lee*

**Jenny O'Connell** from the University of Melbourne's Master of Arts (Cultural Material Conservation) postgraduate course, undertook her three-week internship with us and assisted with the preparation and packing of loans. Jenny is also documenting our packing method for transporting bark paintings and undertaking a comparative study of methods employed by other Australian cultural institutions. Thanks Jenny!



Charlotte Walker has also been assisting with providing access to many of MAGNT's stored textiles for research, curatorial assessment and future display purposes. She carried out a wet cleaning treatment on a dress jacket designed and worn by Mr CL Aubrey Abbott (1886-1975), Administrator of the Northern Territory between 1937 and 1945, which was displayed recently at the Government House open days in Darwin.

Conservation technician **Morgwn Hyde** is assisting **Lisa Nolan** with the Papunya Tula boards project, which has now been ongoing for over 18 months. Interesting information continues to be uncovered from the paintings' supports as they are deframed and removed from their 1970s museum frames and backings. A housing enquiry form has been sent to all Australian institutions who store early Papunya Tula boards to assist MAGNT's decision-making during the next stage in the project. Consultation with the Papunya community, artists and their families is being undertaken through the Aboriginal Areas Protection Authority (AAPA) to inform future management protocols.

Sue Bassett has recently been in Alice Springs visiting heritage properties and attending the NT Heritage Advisory Council meeting. Sue was recently appointed to the council, which is responsible for a number of functions including advising the Minister on matters affecting the natural and cultural heritage of the Northern Territory.

## Tasmania

### Tasmanian AICCM branch

Since the last newsletter the Tasmanian AICCM council has changed with **Cobus Van Breda** stepping down from his role as Tasmanian President of the AICCM. **Michelle Berry** is now the President while **Judith Andrewartha** continues as the very capable Secretary and **Marika Kocsis** as Treasurer, although recent news is that Marika will be returning to the mainland in a few weeks so this position will need to be refilled.

The Tasmanian branch membership held its AGM in Oatlands in December this year followed by a walking tour of the historic buildings of this old Midlands Town. Brad Williams, the local Heritage Officer, generously shared his knowledge of the buildings and sites around the town, some of which date from the convict period and the conservation work currently being undertaken. The walking tour ended at Callington Mill, a fully restored and now operational flourmill originally built in 1837. The mill is driven by a large stone windmill which looks suspiciously like it should be somewhere in Holland rather than the depths of the Tasmanian Midlands. Our next meeting will be held at Port Arthur Historic Site.

### Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery

At the Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery, **Nikki King Smith** has been working on preparing loan items for mainland (a classic Tasmanian phrase) institutions. She and Cobus Van Breda also presented a workshop on preventive conservation to students from the Australian National University who were doing a short intensive course at Narryna, a historic house in Hobart.

### Museum of Old and New Art (MONA)

The Museum of Old and New Art (MONA) opened with great fanfare on the 21 January seeing the culmination of several years work by conservators **Kylie Roth**, **Judith Andrewartha** and **Melanie Fihelly** as well as members of the International Conservation Services team and other conservators who've worked on the many MONA projects. We can recommend a visit; it is truly an astonishing experience.

### Queen Victoria Museum and Art Gallery

Recent news from the Queen Victoria Museum and Art Gallery has seen **Jocelyn Evans** leave to join the Queensland Art Gallery while **Melanie Fihelly** has been treating and preparing a range of Colonial and Convict artifacts at QVMAG in preparation for the Tasmanian Connections Exhibition. This included a collection of scrimshaw, early colonial swords, bushranger pistols and rifles, convict leg irons and handcuffs and some transportation related tools and artifacts. She has also been using anoxic treatment on some insect infested objects. **Marika Kocsis** will also be leaving and returning to Melbourne to work with the Centre for Cultural Materials Conservation at Melbourne University.

### Private Conservators

**Judith Andrewartha** is currently working on a crazy quilt dated 1891 for the National Trust and a Preservation Needs Assessment of the textiles in the Circular Head Heritage Centre collection at Smithton.

**Michelle Berry** is completing contracts with the Port Arthur Historic site and the Australian Antarctic Division, while two Tasmanian members, **Michael Staples** and **Marty Passingham** are currently down south at Davis, one of

the Australian Antarctic Bases, working on the restoration of Biscoe Hut. This early ANARE field hut suffered fire damage some time ago and several seasons of work have been needed to undertake repairs.

### National Trust of Australia (Tasmania)

The Tasmanian National Trust recently established a conservation workshop in one of the original farm cottages at Clarendon, a National Trust colonial homestead near Launceston. This exciting development will enable the condition of the Trust's large and significant collections to be professionally assessed, conservation priorities determined and appropriate and documented treatments carried out.

The Trust currently employs three conservators; Conservation Manager **Linda Clark**, frame conservator **John Hay** and paper conservator **Tamara Hollister**. One of our first tasks is to get to know the collections and we are presently preparing a Preservation Needs Assessment of two of our collections; Franklin House, Launceston and Home Hill, Devonport.

**John Hay** is restoring a number of frames from the Clarendon collection while **Tamara** is busy preparing a unique collection of nineteenth century Tasmanian seaweed pictures for storage. **Linda** is supervising the restoration (to working order) of a pipe organ originally owned by Tasmania's first Anglican bishop and thought to have stood in the music room of Runnymede, his Hobart home and now a National Trust property. As the organ is unable to be returned to Runnymede, the restored organ will be installed in the recently opened Museum of Old and New Art, Hobart.

## Port Arthur Historic Site Management Authority

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The Port Arthur Historic Site Management Authority is deep in a planning stage after receiving joint World Heritage status. There will be many challenges to come for the staff as it cares for a city site, the Cascades Female Factory, a regional site, the Port Arthur Historic Site and a remote and currently unsupervised site, the Coal Mines Historic Site that are all on the register. The World Heritage award has also prompted a reassessment of our collection management practices and the issue of public access.

Michelle Berry has been contracted to develop a plan for the treatment of eight rail lengths and two wheel sets of convict origin. The work will be supervised by **Michael Smith** with Michelle in a consultancy role over the term of the treatment. Michael has been undertaking an internship with the Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery that has focused on the future care and management of material from the Port Arthur massacre in 1996 that is on long-term loan with the Museum. This material has a public access caveat and is being prepared for a further period of long-term storage.

### ACT

## National Archives of Australia

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**Travis Taylor** has been keeping the Lab manager's seat warm while **Tania Riviere** has been away on leave. **Sally Kneebone** has been busy working on various exhibition materials, a Victorian period trademark register and a series of maps related to the Ranger Uranium mine inquiry. **Suellen Bailey** has also been working on exhibitions, maps related to the Ranger Uranium mine inquiry and large electoral and referendum posters from 1918. **Cheryl**

**Jackson** has rejoined the lab after a couple of year's absence and has prepared some botanical drawings for exhibition. **Clair Murray** has been busy with several exhibitions including the Memory of a Nation change over, and **Ian Batterham** has taken over all loans from the National Archives, as well as being busy preparing the next AICCM national conference. **Daniel Eisenberg** has been working clearing the backlog of old exhibition paperwork, as well as developing a new exhibition management document. **Ruth Williams** has been involved in a number of exhibition and framing projects and is currently working on preparing the *Shell Shocked* exhibition works for transport. **Ruth Bergman** has been joined by **Chris Bowman** to bring us to a full compliment of Lab Assistant positions.

## National Museum of Australia

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The last 3 months have seen a hive of activity within the Conservation section at the National Museum of Australia. On November 14th 2010, 90 Vicars Street hosted "Come Into My Shed" the first NMA Warehouse open day in years. The team spent the preceding weeks getting ready for the big day which was a huge success. Heavy rains on the day kept many away, but the visitor count had still topped 1,500 after 3 hours.

January 26 saw the closing of the temporary exhibition "Yiwarra Kuju: The Canning Stock Route". With over 122,300 visitors, this was by far the most popular exhibition in the Museum's history. Staff are now hard at work on de-installation and preparing the temporary exhibition space for "Not just Ned: a true history of the Irish in Australia" due to open on St Patrick's Day.

Beyond "Irish", the main work underway is collection and loan preparation and installation of the Museum's new gallery "Landmarks: People and Places across Australia". All the large technology is

now in, including a Simplex windmill, the prototype Holden, a "Cobb and Co." coach and a 15.2 tonne excavator scoop from the mines in Western Australia. Now, the team is flat out with the task of installing all the "small things".

The other major news for the Conservation team at the NMA is the retirement of Head of Conservation: Eric Archer who departed on the 15th of October 2010 after 10 years of committed and strategic leadership.

### Victoria

## National Gallery of Victoria

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**Carl Villis** has commenced the cleaning and restoration of Poussin's *Crossing of the Red Sea* – a project that will take a year to complete. John Payne has commenced an equally long treatment of Cola Dell'Amatrice's *Finding of the True Cross*. **Michael Varcoe-Cocks** has completed a number of complex cleaning and restoration projects for the upcoming Eugene von Guerard exhibition. As co-curator Michael is also deep in the writing of the catalogue and the logistics of putting the show together. Michael has been assisted in the treatment work by Williamson Foundation Fellows, **Alex Ellem** and **Helen Gill**. Helen is now finishing the restoration of a work by Constance Jenkins for new displays at NGVA. **Raye Collins** has completed her work on the Beechey portraits and has returned to finishing McCubbin's *Melbourne 1888*.

The Paper and Photographs conservation lab is back to normal after the rewarding experience of the 6<sup>th</sup> AICCM Book, Paper and Photographic Materials Symposium, held last November at the NGV. **Ruth Shervington** is undertaking the very delicate treatment of a rare drawing representing *New South Wales Bat* (anonymous artist, 1800 ca.) to be

included in the major exhibition *This wondrous land: colonial art on paper*, to be displayed at NGV:International in April 2011. **Louise Wilson** has been couriering around Japan to ensure the safe travelling and installation of an extremely precious loan of artworks by Albrecht Durer. **Elisabetta Polidori** is busy with the treatment of several Eugene von Guerard pen and ink drawings, whereas **Pip Morrison** has taken care of a rather unusual new acquisition, four large format photographs mounted on light boxes.

The staff of the Textiles lab, **Kate Douglas**, **Annette Soumilas** and **Solitaire Osei** have been busy working on men's costumes for the double venue exhibition *Manstyle*. The recently closed exhibitions, *Australian Made: 100 Years of Fashion* and *Lace in Fashion* were very popular with the public and received much praise, in particular the lace mounting system utilising magnets.

The recent floods in Victoria have been testing the environmental systems of several regional galleries so **Catherine Earley** and **Helen Casey** of the Exhibitions Conservation team have been busy trying to help settle things in readiness to install our *Imagining the Orient* touring show. **Janelle Borig** has been in Christchurch deinstalling the very successful *Ron Mueck* exhibition which seemed to bring much pleasure to the residents of the earthquake stricken city.

**Sharon Grigg** completed the extensive treatment to the Carlo Maratta style frame on Beechey's portrait of the *First Earl of Stradbroke*, including replacement of almost 3 metres of lost gesso and gilding along one member. The Earl now shares the same gallery wall with his wife, the Countess of Stradbroke, which was treated earlier in the year. **MaryJo Lelyveld** continues to head the lab, forging new paths through research into frames for von Guerard works, and assisting with the development of the departmental strategic plan. **Noel Turner** is blitzing his way through (another) bronze paint removal project on a frame from von

Guerard's *Sydney Heads* after extensive testing using solvent gels.

The Paper and Photographs conservation lab with great pleasure welcomes back **Ruth Shervington** after her absence for maternity leave. On a sad note, we farewelled **Christina Ritschel** from our shores as she returned to her homeland Denmark to take up a permanent position. We wish her well and hope she will be back for a visit soon.

## Centre for Cultural Materials Conservation

The academic staff are gearing up for the beginning of the academic year in late February, reviewing lectures and practicals, preparing readers, sourcing objects for treatment and research, restocking the labs and attending to the myriad of related administrative tasks. In January, the Specialist Certificate in Preservation of Photographs was delivered by visiting international expert in photographic conservation, **Clara von Waldthausen**. The course combined both theory and practice of photographic materials preservation. The subjects delivered in the course were Photographic Materials & Techniques and Preventative Care of Photographs & Film. The Chemistry Bridging Course, which has been specifically developed to teach the fundamentals of chemistry to those entering the Master of Arts in Cultural Material Conservation, will be run in February. It is recommended for students who lack a background in chemistry or who wish to revise its basic concepts and practice.

In the treatment labs, there have been a few staffing changes. **Kelly Leahey** has recently departed to undertake two overseas internships on the conservation of photographs. Initially she will be working with Nora Kennedy at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York and then will be in Amsterdam working in private practice with Clara von Waldthausen. Kelly

received an Ian Potter Foundation Travel Grant to support her with these endeavors. We wish her well and thank her for her hard and attentive work over the past eighteen months. We welcome **Albertine Hamilton**, a recent graduate from the University of Melbourne Masters course who will be assisting in the paper section. Another recent graduate, **Stefanie-Ann Alexander** is working on paper-based material from the Grimwade art collection, in preparation for an exhibition at the Ian Potter Museum of Art in March. Stefanie will commence her PhD studies in March but will continue to work with us to further enhance her hands-on skills. We also welcome **Reyhane Mirabootalebi**, a recent objects graduate from our Masters course, who is assisting in the objects lab. In late February, **Marika Kocsis** will be rejoining the paper team after having worked in Launceston for nearly two years.

In late 2010 the paper team (**Briony Pemberton**, **Belinda Gourley**, **Jude Fraser** and Kelly Leahey) completed a large project involving the in-situ treatment of historic wallpapers at Gulf Station, a property in the Yarra Valley managed by the National Trust of Australia (Victoria). This was both a challenging and rewarding experience. The property is undergoing extensive work and will re-open to the public later this year. Belinda Gourley and **Katy Glen** are mid-way through treating a collection of very brightly coloured and slightly headache-inducing works on board that are required for exhibition, while Briony Pemberton is working on a problematic pencil drawing that has a very thick layer of animal glue on the verso.

The paintings lab has been dominated over the past few months by a very large Napier Waller mural painting of Australian symbolic figures, known as *The Royal Insurance Murals*, previously displayed in the Architecture Library at the University. The work, originally painted on a plaster wall, had been transferred some time in the past and now exists as two 2x3.5 metre stretched canvases. **Catherine Nunn** and **Vanessa**

**Kowalski** have been stabilising the paint layer and retouching many scattered losses and abrasions. We have also been sharing the lab with numerous past Premiers of Victoria, as **Caroline Fry** has been cleaning and rehousing a number of portraits from the Parliament of Victoria art collection.

In the objects lab **Holly Jones-Amin** and **Carmela Lonetti** are working on a large variety of objects from both the University collections and private clients. A couple of challenging treatments were completed on outdoor sculptures; a large fibreglass sculpture was worked on in collaboration with private conservator, **Paul Hunt**; and a terracotta statue was treated off-site. These projects provided opportunities to investigate a new range of materials that could meet conservation requirements and were also able to withstand ongoing outdoor exposure. Other recent projects have included treatment of significant heritage moveable and immoveable objects and preparation of a Conservation Management Plan for a collection of heritage objects and fixtures in a building. In preparation for the re-opening of the Grainger Museum at The University of Melbourne late last year, objects staff carried out treatment projects for the new exhibitions, objects staff delivered training to museum staff and developed cleaning protocols for the largely open-displays. Currently, preparation is underway for an exhibition, *The Leonhard Adam Collection of Indigenous Culture*, at the Ian Potter Museum of Art. Major treatments on PNG bark paintings, a Navajo Blanket and a number of wooden and fibre based objects such as shields, masks and baskets have been undertaken. Vanessa Kowalski and Catherine Nunn assisted with the treatment of the Groote Eylandt barks.

## National Archives of Australia – Melbourne

Our Conservators and Preservation Digitisation staff **Debra Parry**, **Amy Bartlett**, **Liam Ryan** and **Tha Iem** presented a poster at the AICCM Book, Paper and Photographs Symposium held at the National Gallery of Victoria in November 2010. The poster was entitled “Collaboration of Conservation and Digitisation Teams at the National Archives of Australia, Melbourne” which used examples to highlight how the teams communicate and work together to ensure items are preserved and made accessible to the public.

Debra Parry and Amy Bartlett have been working on a range of intensive treatment projects such as oversized plans depicting the lighthouse at Cape George, New South Wales. They have also completed the treatment of a mouldy Queensland Post and Telegraph file containing photographs. In addition, a variety of items have been treated and repackaged as part of our services program including engineering plans, reports and photographs of Australia Post machinery and buildings.

Tha Iem and Liam Ryan have been busy scanning photographs and negatives of Commonwealth building sites and Works departmental activities. They have also been scanning some damaged aerial survey photographic diapositives, which were stabilised and prepared for scanning in the Lab by Debra Parry.

Debra Parry has just returned from a month long project at the National Museum of Cambodia where she provided training and preservation advice on the Museum’s collection of glass plate negatives.

## New South Wales

### Australian Museum

Work continues preparing a range of objects for the *Rituals of Seduction: Birds of Paradise* exhibition. **Kristel Smits** is working on some amazing, and quite beautiful, ethnographic materials such as head dresses and ceremonial items incorporating feathers from Birds of Paradise species. **Michael Kelly** is working on material from the Rare Books collection, such as ‘Volumes I & II, a Monograph of the Paradiscidae and Bower Birds’ by R. Bowdler Sharpe, published in parts from 1891 – 1898, London. **Sheldon Teare** continues to clean and restore amazingly plumed mounted historical specimens and scientific skins.

**Kate Jones** has processed a number of loans going out to regional and interstate institutions. Kate and Sheldon are treating a number of objects from the Solomon Islands for loan to the National Gallery of Australia in the coming weeks.

**Heather Mackay** has been working on the treatment and storage upgrade of palm leaf aprons from the Pacific collection. These objects have deep creases and will be humidified in a humidity chamber which is part of our new vacuum suction table. Heather and Alex Roach of Heritage Pest Management have just completed the anoxic treatment of a 15 metre long Solomon Islands War Canoe which was exhibiting evidence of dry-wood termite infestation. This is the largest object to be bagged and flushed with nitrogen in the Museum.

**Colin Macgregor** completed the first replica of a museum specimen using the Museum’s 3D laser scanner for an exhibition. The non-contact replication of a rare fossil skull was possible using a 3D digital model created by Materials Conservation staff and sent

to a company in Sydney which creates physical prototypes of a synthetic polymer from digital information. This avoids the risks of using conventional molding materials on fragile specimens.

The Museum recently purchased a Portable XRF, and conservation was asked to organize training with everyone's favourite inventor, Dr Bruce Kaiser. Several conservators from the Art Gallery of NSW, the Maritime Museum and ICS joined us for the two day workshop.

The AM conservation team has all been working hard to put content up on the Museum's website. The website is set up to allow each staff member to upload content and interact with interested public. Check out the conservation website at <http://australianmuseum.net.au/Materials-Conservation-Unit/>. Visit often, as we try and update regularly!

## Australian National Maritime Museum

**Jonathan London** is involved with a number of projects – the redevelopment of the Wharf 7 foyer, conservation of a memorial to seafarers and the preparation for departure of a touring exhibition. Jonathan is also preparing a paper to be presented at the Australian Maritime Museum's Council annual conference in SA in March.

**Rebecca Dallwitz** has been with us since August 2010 working as the preventive/objects conservator on a fixed term contract. We now heartily welcome her to the permanent conservation team as Objects Conservator. She has recently completed the mammoth task of reassessing the contents and resupplying all of the disaster bins and stores within the museum. Now the objects collection awaits her TLC!

**Julie O'Connor's** sewing machine has been running hot as the textile re-housing project continues at the ANMM. At the end of 2010, a total of 718 textile items including accessories,

banners, coats, collars, dresses, flags, footwear, gloves, headwear, jackets, pennants, manchester, ribbons, scarves, skirts, shorts, shoulder-boards, swimwear, socks, tallies, ties, trousers, underwear and vests were re-housed in the modified compactus. She is presently "swimming" in the re-storage of over a hundred items of swimwear from the *Exposed – The Story of Swimwear* exhibition which returned early from travelling to various venues throughout Australia. She has written a paper on "Storing Wearables", which has been submitted to the Textile SIG Symposium *On the Body* to be held between the 16<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> March in Canberra.

**Sue Frost** is also preparing a paper for the 2011 Textile SIG Symposium, based on the challenges and solutions involved in the preparation and installation of historic swimwear for our 2010 touring exhibition *Exposed – The Story of Swimwear*. She also recently attended the "Use of the Karibari board" workshop at the National Gallery in January, hoping to discover more about possible textile based application for its use.

**Caroline Whitley** also attended the NGA's Karibari board workshop, and has returned to the lab intent on repairing and making better use of our old and neglected Karibari. She has recently been preparing information and materials for a folder and box-making, storage, handling workshop she will present to staff and volunteers at the Norfolk Island Museum in late February.

**Penny Nolton** recently travelled to Western Australia to assist with the return to the ANMM of Dutch shipwreck material. In addition, she has been researching plastics conservation issues and condition reporting a hydroplane speedboat in preparation for conservation treatment.

## Powerhouse Museum

Prior to Christmas, the exhibitions team was busy assisting with the preparation of objects and installation of *ABBAWORLD*. The exhibition comes from Sweden, following its successful debut in London last January and a season at Federation Square in Melbourne.

*ABBAWORLD* features more than 20 original costumes, live concert footage, behind-the-scenes photographs and album covers. Objects from the Powerhouse Museum's collection were added to the content to highlight the impact of the band on Australian pop culture.

To start the year, **Suzanne Chee** has been busy unpacking, photographing and documenting the finalists for the next Powerhouse International Lace Award. This award was developed to inspire local and international designers and artists to create a new generation of lace, encompassing a diversity of materials, techniques and scale. There will be 140 finalists from 22 countries. *Love Lace* will open in August 2011 for Sydney Design Week.

**Nadia McDougall** and **Dave Rockell** have been condition reporting, cleaning and preparing 20 objects for loan to the National Museum of Australia for their *Landmarks: people and places across Australia* exhibition due to open early this year. Objects have included timber specimens, wool samples, a desk used by Walter Burley Griffin, a gold pouch and a sample section of tiles from the Sydney Opera House.

**Frances Fitzpatrick** dressed and installed three costumes (two swimsuits and a mermaid costume) as well as two books, and a beautifully sequined collar and headdress, at the National Portrait Gallery in Canberra for their *Indecent Exposure* exhibition. A portrait-through-objects exhibition on the life of Annette Kellerman (1886–1975), swimmer and entertainer and vaudeville star, includes samples from the material culture of her life and exploits: photographs, film, newsreels, movie

posters, books and ephemera, and a selection from the wonderful collection of her costumes.

Some of these Powerhouse Museum pieces have been previously displayed by other institutions – unfortunately we are yet to have our own Kellerman exhibition.

The Conservation Department ran a disaster training session in October. This was a fun and interesting experience. Everyone in the lab was asked to contribute to a disaster flip book which is currently being printed for the department. After gathering many materials from the local opportunity shop, the items were placed in muddy water. Conservators referred to the flip book information and set about salvaging the items. People were asked to work with different material types so that they could gain a better understanding of what to do in a disaster. It was a good bonding experience and it was great to see how well the conservators worked in a team. It was also interesting to find out what was needed for drying objects and the session gave us a better idea of what materials and equipment are needed to prepare for a disaster.

A disaster training session for curatorial, security and registration staff will be run in the next couple of months. The focus will be on handling and moving water and fire damaged objects.

After a few years in pre-production, The Australian Dress Register website will go live in February which we are very excited about it. The launch will follow a little bit later.

## International Conservation Services

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The opening of MONA in Hobart saw a substantial contribution from ICS staff, with **Karina Acton, Arek Werstak, Kate Papierniak, Adam Godijn, Fiona Tennant** and **Jane Hamill** all contributing. MONA may be a challenging place for conservators, but it is also a truly exciting place to

be part of as it sets a new museological path forward whether through its juxtaposition of antiquities and contemporary art, its total reliance on iPods for all content provision (there are no labels) or just its in-your-face artworks, such as the so called ‘poo machine’. The latter is in reality Wim Delvoye’s *Cloaca*, a large installation that literally turns food into faeces in the museum.

Back at the more mundane level, 2011 started at full speed for the Paper Conservation lab. After a short break from a Christmas rush Kate Papierniak was busy assessing conservation needs of over 200 artworks and photographs. Kate and **Wendi Powell** are busy remediating the usual problems found in paper based artefacts: acidity, backing boards, foxing and pressure sensitive tapes. Of particular interest is a Chinese scroll (undated) which required implementing the vertical flattening method. An artwork on paper by Fred Williams backed onto masonite board is particularly challenging with thickly applied paint layers and soluble media. We have also achieved great success in treatment of 17<sup>th</sup> Century hand coloured map, which required extensive use of consolidants.

**Oliver Hull, Eoin O’Sullivan** and **Kat Edghill** in the furniture lab have been immersed in a large project restoring the heritage furniture from the Governor’s suite at the Reserve Bank of Australia, whilst fitting in treatment of an exquisite Chippendale writing desk, a large Aboriginal wooden sculpture and various items for the National Trust including a magnificent 18<sup>th</sup> century painted wooden coat of arms.

**Skye Firth** has been keeping calm amidst all the excitement, and treating a large collection of 39 pennant flags from Norah Head Lighthouse Trust, in amongst a range of upholstered, framed and downright huge artefacts.

In paintings **Anna Diakowska-Czarnota**, and **Matteo Volonte** have been called at short notice to deal with a range of problems arising from the Queensland floods, in particular looking at the best way to remove the mud that

caked so much material caught up in this substantial disaster.

We were sorry to have only the benefit of a few months of Jane Hamill’s expertise, but the lure of Antarctica has grabbed her for a second winter on the ice at Scott Base. Meanwhile we welcome two recent Melbourne University graduates, **Claire Heasman** to the paintings lab, and **Sophia Lo Bianco** to the objects lab.

## State Library of NSW

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The Branch welcomes **Bronwen Glover**, who joins us from the Archives of Ontario, having completed her training at Sir Sanford Fleming College, Peterborough. She joins the team who are working on the Macarthur papers project which include: **Cathryn Bartley, Jessica O’Donnell, Aileen Dean Raschilla**, and **Silvana Volpato**. The work on this project involves the rehousing and treatment of volumes of Macarthur papers including land grants and early correspondence between Elizabeth and John Macarthur and their children.

**Agata Rostek-Robak** is packing her bags in preparation for the return couriership of the material for *James Cook and the Exploration of the Pacific* which has been travelling to 3 venues since 2009. Agata will be collecting the material from Berne. This complex loan of 12 items to three venues, Bonn, Vienna and Berne has been managed by **Dana Kahabka** with great assistance from our colleagues at the National Library of Australia and the Australian Museum who have also kindly assisted in the couriership of our material between venues. It has been a huge collaboration and Dana will be very happy when all the material is safely returned and in storage.

**Lang Ngo** and **Dana Kahabka** are currently installing the travelling exhibition of *The Governor: Lachlan Macquarie 1810 to 1822* at the Glasshouse Regional Gallery in Port Macquarie. This is the second stop on the Macquarie tour after a successful stint at the Liverpool City Library, with Dubbo Regional Gallery and Albury

still to come. Again this forms another collaboration with our sister institutions with material from the Powerhouse Museum and the Historic Houses Trust also on display in the exhibition.

**Trish Leen** has been working on The Dixson Collection of Maps digitization project. Each week Trish assessed the condition of the maps from the Dixson collection (16<sup>th</sup> to the 20<sup>th</sup> century) to see if they were sufficiently robust for the large-format scanner. Items that required treatment where conserved, with the more fragile examples designated to be photographed, instead of using the scanner. Although a slower technique it produces the same high-quality result. To date approximately 900 maps have now been scanned.

## Preservation Australia

We have not had time to write anything for this segment as we have been busy making some very basic, quick and unscripted videos for YouTube on salvage of water damaged material. So have a look at: [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vDpQake9\\_IIE](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vDpQake9_IIE)

This kept us busy and was a lot of fun. Other news is that Preservation Australia has recently purchased Conservation Resources, and we have taken on an administrator (much needed!), Ella Factor.

## State Records NSW

**Dominique Moussou** has been working on a large volume that was severely water and mould damaged while in the custody of the parent Agency. The paper is severely degraded – crumbling, friable, weak and torn. Pages require cleaning, consolidation and reinforcement with Japanese lining tissue. A distinct odour leads us to believe that the volume was at one time treated with Thymol to kill the mould – Dominique is therefore undertaking the treatment in the fume hood and is wearing appropriate PPE.

**Jill Gurney** has been re-treating a Crown Plan that had been lined in the past. Pieces of the map had been

incorrectly situated and aligned and they needed to be disassembled and reassemble correctly. We have been making use of other records in the State archives to help with the correct alignment of the pieces – its been a real mystery jigsaw puzzle!

**Elizabeth Hadlow** has been focusing on gathering information about mould for the working group, as well as finishing off the re-organisation of the laboratory and office space.

**Carol Marsh** and **Clara Cesarone** continue to work on Department of Community Services files being recalled to answer freedom of information and other personal requests from clients. The files being treated were created using poor quality copy papers and have been extensively handled and used throughout their lives resulting in severe damage. The records require basic repairs prior to issuing so that they can be handled without risk of further loss.

By the time this Newsletter goes to press State Records NSW will have welcomed a new member of the conservation team – **Paul Smith** is commencing in early March as our Preventive/Paper conservator. Paul has spent many years in the UK and most recently has been working on a large digitisation project at the National Archives, Kew.

**Frances Cumming** left State Records NSW soon after her arrival to take up a position as Exhibitions Conservator at the Art Gallery of NSW. We wish Frances well in what sounds like an interesting and challenging role.

## Western Australia

### Corkill Conservation

Corkill Conservation has had a busy Christmas and New Year. As clients kept calling, there was no time for end of year filing or tidying, which had to be postponed until the January break. In early January, **Felicity Corkill** attended the Karibari workshops run through the NGA. While very tiring,

it was great to learn so much and also get to better know some fellow paper conservators. After returning to Perth and having a week off to catch her breath, Felicity is back, hard at work, treating a badly cigarette smoke-stained Albert Namatjira watercolour, a collection of Japanese woodblock prints and removing tape from an album full of postcards.

## Western Australian Museum

Following reciprocal visits between the WA Museum and the National Research Institute of Maritime Cultural Heritage (NRIMCH) of Korea by Mi Young Cha and **Ian Godfrey**, the WA Museum recently signed a Statement of Intent to exchange staff and to conduct collaborative research and conservation/excavation programs with the NRIMCH. The agreement will run for an initial period of 3 years and signifies a significant step in the development of mutually beneficial programs between the NRIMCH and the WA Museum Conservation and Maritime Archaeology departments. The first exchange will occur in March 2011 when Lim Seong-tae (ceramics/metals conservator) will work in the Conservation department for 1 month. WA Museum staff will work in South Korea later in the year with collaborative research programs being established in the interim.

After her internship at the National Museum in Singapore, **Isa Loo** returned to work at the Museum and traveled to Geraldton where she assisted with the de-installation of the *Femme Fatale* exhibition, completed condition reports on objects for a planned mining exhibition and carried out some maintenance work on a plane in the Geraldton Museum.

**Vicki Richards** and **Jon Carpenter** traveled to Cape Town where they taught a Part 3 NAS course in *in-situ* conservation management of underwater cultural heritage to local heritage enthusiasts and professionals.

**Kalle Kasi**, **Ian Godfrey**, **Vicki Richards**

and Jon Carpenter conducted behind the scenes tours of the Conservation Department work areas and gave in-depth laboratory work sessions to participants in the National Youth Science Forum. The budding scientists from all over Australia were impressed with the nature of the work and research and the links between chemistry and conservation.

**Maggie Myers** completed a mannequin and fitted Heath Ledger's Joker costume for display at the recent opening of the State Theatre Centre of WA.

Restoration of the Oldsmobile, a project overseen by **Richard Garcia**, is nearing completion, with the vehicle looking absolutely magnificent.

Jon Carpenter and **Alex Kilpa** have made good progress as they continue to plough their way through the backlog of ferrous archaeological artefacts. While tackling routine finishing of desalinated objects, Alex is also reconstructing the remains of a water distillation unit from the *Xantho* (1872) shipwreck.

**Inger Nystrom Godfrey** joined the department in January on a 3 month contract that will see her working on non-ferrous and other archaeological objects from the maritime archaeology collections.

## Queensland

### Queensland Museum

**Jenny Blakely** spent the week after the flood crawling around the Museum's WWI tank, *Mephisto*, removing the river mud and who knows what. She was helped by a team of other staff from various sections of the Museum. The flood waters came up the sides of the tank approx 700mm and, once they receded, left behind very smelly, slippery and sticky mud.

Firstly, access had to be gained to the tank using sledge hammers and bolt cutters to remove the surrounding display structure. Then the area was washed out with a fire hose, broomed and vacuumed several times. The surfaces of the tank were cleaned with high pressure water and much of the mud scooped out by hand. This cleaning process was repeated to the affected surfaces numerous times. All traces of water were removed with a water vacuum cleaner followed by compressed air. Some areas of the iron did flash rust and were treated immediately with Inox – a lubricant with an anti corrosion,

anti moisture formula. This product was also applied to the dried surfaces of the drowned but now clean section of the tank. **Peter Maxwell** kindly volunteered his advice and time to ensure the best treatment for QM's most valuable object.

Luckily, even though the car parks, animal freezes and services were damaged and the entire Cultural Centre Precinct was closed for weeks, this was the only Museum object flood affected.

**Elizabeth Thompson**, **Jenny** and **Helen Barnard** are getting back to the normal mayhem progressing on condition reporting and treating 130 Torres Strait Islander objects from QM's collection for an upcoming exhibition. **Janet Campbell** has been slaving away scanning our paper-based object records converting them to digital records.



The back door of the Queensland Museum  
13<sup>th</sup> January 2011



Grey St River, Brisbane, outside the Queensland Museum



Cleaning around the Mephisto



Dinosaurs having a dip in *Playasaurus Place* in Grey St, Brisbane



Cleaning around Mephisto



Cleaning around Mephisto

We welcome your contributions to the newsletter, as well as any comments you may have. Deadlines for submissions are: **1<sup>st</sup> February, 1<sup>st</sup> June and 1<sup>st</sup> October.**

Please send your submissions to [newsletter@aiccm.org.au](mailto:newsletter@aiccm.org.au) All submissions will be acknowledged by email. If you haven't heard from us, we haven't heard from you!

We encourage the use of images wherever possible. Please send separate to your text in either .jpeg or .tiff files.

All text should be sent in .doc or .docx file, in 12pt Times New Roman font, with no editing. Names in the text should be in **bold** the first time used, then in normal font afterwards.

Thank you  
Julian Bickersteth and  
Fiona Tennant (Editors)

Advertising is accepted.

#### Positions vacant

1/2 page*	\$110 inc. GST
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#### Commercial

1/2 page*	\$220 inc. GST
full page#	\$300 inc. GST

#### Discounts

10% for 2 issues, 15% for 3 issues, 20% for 4 issues.

#### Inserts

Positions Vacant	\$110 inc. GST
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\$0.88 per word including GST.

\* 1/2 page: 190mm (w) x 125mm (h) landscape

# Full page: 210x297mm portrait, with 3mm bleed all around

Notices pertaining to AICCM activities are free of charge.

Advertising for inclusion in body of Newsletter accepted until the 1st day of the month in which the Newsletter is due. Early booking preferable.

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# CONSERVATION IN AUSTRALIA: PAST, PRESENT, FUTURE

2011 National Conference • Canberra 19–21 October



The very first AICCM Conference, “Conservation in Australia”, was held in Canberra in 1976. The intervening 35 years have seen many changes in the organisation and the profession.

The 2011 National Conference will be a chance to look at those changes and to consider where they have brought us. We will also look to the future: one significant aim of the conference will be to reposition the AICCM and the profession to ensure they are prepared to take on the challenges of the future.

It will be a forum for new ideas, forward thinking, broadening scope and building partnerships and will challenge members to revisit their basic perceptions of the AICCM, the profession and the definition of “conservator”. From this a stronger, more focused, more outward looking and more cohesive organisation will result.

The National Conference will present and promote a range of events and activities that will raise the profile of conservation in the national consciousness and engage society in supporting the professionals who preserve cultural heritage.

There will also be sessions on conservation research, conservation practice and conservation treatment, with an emphasis on subjects of broad interest.

**The organising committee now welcomes abstracts (maximum 300 words) for papers on these themes.**

**The deadline for abstracts is 30 June 2011**

To submit an abstract, or for further information, please contact:

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