

Obituary: Jilleen Nadolny

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Image



By Joyce Townsend

Dr Jilleen Marie Nadolny sadly died in December 2023 only a few weeks after diagnosis of a serious illness, in effect in the middle of her career. Jilleen's unusually broad knowledge of materiality and practice is best characterised by the term 'technical art historian', and in recent years this had been her full-time occupation. Her untimely and unexpected loss will sadden

many people in many countries. The contributors of memories for this obituary have mentioned her generous support of the research of others, her willingness to share her wide knowledge of western art from the mediaeval period to the twentieth century, and her charm and natural elegance.

Jilleen grew up in Massachusetts, USA, and studied fine arts at the Pratt Institute, New York, then history of art and art conservation at New York University. Living after that between Paris and London as an independent scholar and researcher, she held a research fellowship in the Scientific Department of the National Gallery, London, and in 2001 was awarded a doctorate in the Conservation and Technology Department at the Courtauld Institute, London. Her research centred on recipes for, and production of, applied relief brocade decoration on polychrome sculpture of the earlier mediaeval period, as used in many northern European countries. Her language skills in German and French, and reading skills in an impressive number of other European languages including their mediaeval variants, served her well for this. In 2003 she moved to Norway to join the staff of the conservation programme at the University of Oslo as an associate professor where she taught history and ethics of conservation, technical art history, examination techniques for works of art, and contributed to research projects on Norwegian painted churches and other buildings. She continued to publish in this area after she moved to London in 2010 and joined Art Discovery, a private company specialising in direct examination and imaging of objects and scientific investigation techniques to support authentication and attribution studies. She was first a senior research associate, again employing her languages in documentary studies related more often to 20th-century art and the Russian avant-garde in particular, then principal investigator, and latterly director of the UK branch until her departure in 2023. She had intended to return to more academic studies.

Over the past two decades, Jilleen participated in many projects in a number of countries. Jilleen was an active member, an assistant coordinator for some years, and a very regular contributor to conferences held by the Art Technological Source Research Group (now a working group of ICOM-CC). She was author of several academic publications. She contributed chapters to the magisterial *Conservation of Easel Paintings* (edited by Joyce Hill Stoner and Rebecca Rushfield, 2012 and 2021), as the principal author of the chapter on art technological source research, and as the author of the history of early scientific examination and analysis of painting materials as well as the history of visual compensation for paintings. Her publications have been very thorough and detailed, and have added to knowledge of technical art history, but the profession has now lost the books that she would have been well placed to write in her later career, including the coverage of her doctoral research. She was always an active communicator as well as a researcher who taught and regularly lectured, not only to the conservation and art history professions, but also to wider audiences of curators, collectors and dealers.

Jilleen is survived by her daughter Chloé Schneider and by her parents, brother and sister.