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No. 24, June 2011

# News in Conservation

The newspaper of the International Institute for Conservation of Historic and Artistic Works



## Europa Nostra Awards Conservation Excellence

Europa Nostra, "the voice of cultural heritage in Europe", announced its 2011 awards earlier this year. In total there were twenty-seven awards across four categories: Conservation, Research, Dedicated Service and Education, Training and Awareness-raising. Twelve awards were made to conservation projects

Among the recipients of the Conservation awards is a project dedicated to the conservation of furniture produced using the *bouille* technique. This style of marquetry is named after André-Charles Boulle (1642–1732), a French cabinetmaker who perfected the inlaying of brass and tortoise-shell. The technique was practised in France, Germany

Double-sided writing cabinet made by Johann Puchwiser from 1705–1715



Photo by europanosstra made available under the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 2.0 Generic License.

and Austria for the production of high quality furniture.

Europa Nostra notes on their website that, "The three-year project carried out at the Bayerisches National Museum in München, focussed on the advancement of conservation practices when treating furniture that is veneered in the so-called "Bouille Technique", with turtle-shell, horn and different metals. ...until now there was only a limited amount of information on the techniques, materials and appropriate conservation methods". In the course of this interdisciplinary research project, two writing cabinets and two writing tables were examined, resulting in the recording of previously unknown data on their manufacture. This led to new treatment approaches being proposed, with a number being successfully applied. All four pieces were made by Johann Puchwiser (1680–1744), the cabinetmaker to the Munich court.

To celebrate the project, the Museum is holding an exhibition, *Prünkmöbel am Münchner Hof – Barocker Dekor unter die Lupe*, which runs until 31 July. The project was funded by the Getty Foundation, the Ernst von Siemens Art Foundation and the Eleanor-Schamberger Foundation.

Another award winning project was the remedial conservation of the Tapestries of Pastrana. These works, from around 1470, were made in Tournai in Belgium and show the military expeditions of the Portuguese king Alfonso V on the Moroccan coast. They are owned by the Colegiata de Pastrana in Guadalajara.

The four silk and wool tapestries, each about 10 metres long by 4 metres high, were designed to hang together in one room. They are unusual for their time in that they depict an historic event rather than biblical or mythical scenes.

Information about all the projects awarded can be found at:  
<http://www.europanosstra.org>



Stages in the treatment of *bouille* technique furniture made by Johann Puchwiser

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Conservators working on the Pastrana Tapestries.



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## Blackbeard's Anchor

What is believed to be the anchor of the pirate Blackbeard's ship, *Queen Anne's Revenge*, was recovered off the coast North Carolina in May this year. As reported in an Associated Press report on Yahoo News, "The anchor is 11 feet, 4 inches long with arms that are 7 feet, 7 inches across. It was covered with concretion – a mixture of shells, sand and other debris attracted by the leaching wrought iron – and a few sea squirts. Its weight was estimated at 2,500 to 3,000 pounds".

*Queen Anne's Revenge* ran aground in 1718 at Beaufort Inlet, Carteret County, North Carolina, USA. The ship was originally a French slave ship called *La Concorde*, which Blackbeard had captured and renamed. Blackbeard, a notorious pirate who operated in the Caribbean, was killed five months after the ship sank.

The wreck of *Queen Anne's Revenge* which was rediscovered in 1996 and is listed on the US National Register of Historic Sites, has already yielded more than 250,000 artifacts.

## NiC goes electronic

**From August 2011 (Issue 25) News in Conservation is going electronic.**

IIC is moving towards more accessible, digital publications. Members will receive an email reminder whenever the new-format, screen-friendly version of NiC is posted on the IIC web site [www.iiconservation.org/](http://www.iiconservation.org/), and will in future also receive information by email when transcripts of 'Dialogues for the New Century', student posters, and other web-based publications become available.

NiC will continue to be published six times per year and will aim to bring you current conservation news from around the globe.

It is important that IIC has your current email address in order to offer these new member services. It is easy to find out whether IIC has your current email address – go to:

[http://www.iiconservation.org/membership/update\\_details\\_call.php](http://www.iiconservation.org/membership/update_details_call.php).

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# Editorial

Once again this issue of *NiC* reflects the broad reach of the conservation profession, in terms of the extraordinary range of our valued tangible and intangible heritage, the breadth of expertise required to care for it and the world-wide spread of conservation effort.

Shadi Khalil treats us to the delights and dilemmas of Syria's polychrome Ottoman *'ajami* domestic interiors. The interiors and their deterioration problems are complex – and they are all different, requiring individual treatment approaches. Decision-making has to take into account client requirements and budgets and – in many cases – the alterations and treatments that have been undertaken in the past.

The conservation of a polar bear may seem to be a stark contrast to the article about the Syrian domestic interiors, but in terms of decision-making and the consideration of conservation ethics there are parallels. Ashley Lingle and Victoria Singleton describe their application of conservation approaches to an object that has previously been cared for under a taxidermy regime.

***NiC* is an excellent vehicle for showcasing conservation work; it also provides opportunities for the discussion of decision-making and of factors that impact on the practice of conservation.**

We salute the work of Anna Somers Cocks in promoting conservation. Jerry Podany, President of IIC, interviewed her as the first recipient of the IIC Advocates Award. The interview provides some very interesting insights on the past and on future challenges facing conservation. Veronica Bullock expresses concern about the effects of cuts to budgets and the discontinuation of nationally coordinated approaches to collection stewardship in Australia – something that is likely to be an issue in many countries in times of economic constraint.

Sadly this is my last issue as editor. I have enjoyed editing *NiC* immensely and I want to thank all of those people who have made it such a pleasure. It has been a privilege to be in contact with people the world over who are doing such fantastic work. *NiC* relies on the contribution of authors and on the inspiring work they are doing and reporting on. I also want to thank the IIC team for their support and the wonderful sense of community they have developed. And to the readers – thank you for your attention and feedback.

Vicki Humphrey  
Editor

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6 Buckingham Street, London, WC2N 6BA, UK  
Telephone +44 (0)20 7839 5975 Fax +44 (0)20 7976 1564  
www.iiconservation.org  
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**Editor**  
Vicki Humphrey  
news@iiconservation.org

**Advertising**  
Graham Voce, IIC  
iic@iiconservation.org

**Design**  
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# News in brief...

## Heritage Ironwork Trainees

The need for trained and skilled practitioners to conservation heritage ironwork has long been recognised. To address this need, the National Heritage Ironwork Group's (NHIG) Heritage Blacksmith Bursary has been established as part of the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) 'Skills for the Future' programme.

In May the first eight trainees started their training – they will receive one year of specialised Blacksmith Conservator training. The training combines the best of the blacksmithing craft with the philosophy and ethics of conservation and is made up of a series of practical skill-based and conservation-based work placements.

Placements and training include practical experience of ironwork conservation at Hampton Court Palace, conservation approaches at Hereford Museum, The Royal Armouries and Birmingham Museum where amongst other things they will have the chance to work on the Staffordshire Hoard of mediaeval goldsmiths' work. The students will visit a number of established blacksmiths' workshops for on-the-job training – with all spending time with Chris Topp & Co. They will also have five weeks at Hereford College of Technology (HCT) – a leading British training establishment for forge work skills. The bursary will culminate in the achievement of the competency based NHIG Award for Blacksmithing Conservation.

NHIG Heritage Blacksmiths Bursary 2011 Students, from left to right: Alexander Coode, Joanna Williams, Simon Doyle, Joshua Burrell, David Johnston, Matthew Boulwood, Joanne Adkins, and Adrian Wolfe.



## Preventive Conservation in Encinitas?

A preliminary examination report produced by the Sculpture Conservation Studio of Los Angeles, commences as follows: "Surfing Madonna" is an approximately 10' x 10' stained glass tile mosaic mural depicting the Virgin of Guadalupe riding a surfboard on a large wave. The Virgin figure is

wearing a red garment and green cloak lined with gold. The figure's hands are folded together in prayer and her expression appears pacific.' This may not sound like the opening to a report on what is considered to be graffiti but, as reported by www.signonsandiego.com, the mural was installed without the "customary public review" required by the Encinitas code.

The examination report also noted that the placement of the mural, which was stuck onto the wall with very strong glue, ensured that it was protected from sunlight and rainfall and thus it was likely to last longer than it would have had it been placed elsewhere. It was reported that the mural was installed during daylight hours by "a group of artists dressed as construction workers".

## Heavy Rain Reveals Heritage

Much attention has been given to the floods in Australia this year. It is encouraging to hear therefore that heavy rain is not only a threat to world cultural heritage. The Australian Broadcasting Commission (<http://www.abc.net.au/local/stories/2011/05/19/3220917.htm>) has reported that "heavy rainfall earlier this year has helped to uncover an Aboriginal burial site believed to be more than 25 thousand years old".

It appears that the fossilisation of the bones suggests that they date back around 10 thousand years, but as Phil Purcell, an archaeologist with the New South Wales Office of Environment and Heritage points out, "the location of the grave, near the former watercourse of the Lachlan River, suggests the find could be even older...Scientists had previously dated part of these ancient watercourses to 25 thousand years ago, when that part of the Lachlan River, now extinct, was flourishing with water".

## Carbon Footprint of Loans

In December 2010, IIC reported on the website newsfeed that Simon Lambert, a student at Cardiff University, received the Student Conservator of the Year Award for his project, *The Carbon Footprint of Museum Loans*. The project was described as, "an innovative and extensive piece of work with wide benefits, an interdisciplinary project that will engage others outside the conservation community". An article based on this work is now available to read, and can be found at: <http://tinyurl.com/3etnvu4>. It will also be published in the forthcoming publication *Museum Management and Curatorship*, due for publication in August 2011.

# Will dwindling support threaten collections?

## Veronica Bullock from *Significance International* reports on the implications of closures and funding cuts on Australia's cultural heritage.

In April 2010 *News in Conservation* reported that the Australian Cultural Ministers Council had decided to cease funding the Collections Council of Australia (CCA), which was founded to advance the sustainability of Australia's collections. As a result the CCA closed its doors in April 2010. The Cultural Ministers Council, an intergovernmental forum for arts and cultural ministers in Australia and New Zealand, did not stop there. It has recently ceased funding another of its offspring, the Collections Australia Network (CAN). CAN, which is described on its website as "Australian cultural heritage collections online", acts as a portal for the movable cultural heritage sector and has provided a range of information, resources and discussions that are of particular value to Australia's many far-flung smaller museums and galleries.

CAN and CCA were both established in 2004 and were mandated to bring together unwitting siblings into what was described as the 'collections sector' – made up of museums, galleries, libraries and archives across the country. Their national role built on the earlier identified concept of the *Distributed National Collection* and reinforced the need for distributed resources, knowledge, skill and advocacy. Both organisations achieved a considerable amount, despite each having fewer than 5 staff and insufficient funding to commission significant sector-wide projects.

Among the many projects CCA completed in its short life was a survey looking into employment in conservation. This survey confirmed that Australia was suffering from a shortage of workers skilled in collection conservation and preservation. While this shortage may be redressed by

graduates from Australia's two new training programs, there remain concerns about the availability of expertise for the sustainable conservation of the significant collections in the regions, in the absence of a body or bodies coordinating the allocation of resources and distribution of skills.

This is brought into sharper focus with the closure, by 30 June 2011, of the Cultural Ministers Council itself. On the eve of the Cultural Ministers Council's closure there appear to be no alternate plans for the coordinated management of Australia's movable cultural heritage. Australians can only hope that the National Cultural Policy which is in development will address many of the issues and provide support to all areas of the country's cultural heritage sector – including movable cultural heritage collections. And it is not only smaller organisations that are under pressure. A number of the national collecting institutions are threatened by annual (since 1987) 'Ongoing Efficiency Dividend' budget cuts. These cuts particularly threaten core skilled employment, regional outreach programs, and escalating demands to make collections accessible online. Losses have been compounded by further massive cuts resulting from the Global Financial Crisis.

Ian Cook, who has worked in both State and National organisations and is one of the pioneers of the conservation profession in Australia, sums up the situation as follows: "Considering our geography and the demographics of the country we urgently need to implement national strategies focussing on long-term national coordination for collections management. We don't want to lose the hard-won gains of the last 30 odd years. Conservation goals can only be achieved if programs to identify, preserve and support access to Australia's significant collections are both articulated and funded by governments at federal, state and municipal levels. The Australian people deserve no less – it is their heritage."

# New Parts for an Old Bear

Ashley Lingle and Victoria Singleton describe the application of modern conservation principles to the conservation of a polar bear from the collection of the Royal Albert Memorial Museum in Exeter, as part of a long redevelopment project at the museum.

Taxidermy developed over a number of centuries, becoming more sophisticated as methods improved and as the craft was increasingly appreciated for producing museum displays and, in the Victorian era, decorative features for the home. A polar bear, one of a diverse collection of natural history specimens at the Royal Albert Memorial Museum (RAMM), was donated by the estate of Charles Peel in the early twentieth century, along with a number of other taxidermy specimens.

Past display and storage methods and environments had left most of the specimens at RAMM in need of conservation – with aesthetic and structural issues needing to be addressed. The aim was to stabilise the specimens and prepare them for display. In approaching this work, the conservation team were keen to incorporate modern conservation principles such as minimal intervention. This is in contrast to more interventive taxidermy methods that had been used on the collection at RAMM in recent history.

The polar bear had been displayed as part of a diorama. It was positioned with its front left paw on a seal – as if attacking and clawing the seal. When the display was dismantled the seal was removed, resulting in the loss of the attacking paw. In addition to the loss of the polar bear's paw,



The polar bear before conservation



The polar bear after conservation was completed

the specimen had also lost three toes from the front right paw and one claw from the back right paw. The claws and the hair around the paws were covered with several coats of white paint from a previous mount. Shrinkage of the skin had caused three of the seams on the underside of the polar bear to split open, exposing the straw filling. The armature of the tail was still present, but the tail itself was missing. The mouth had been altered and various shades of blue paint had been applied. The mouth was also severely cracked. The bear's coat bore a century's dust, particularly on the ventral side, and the polar bear had become discoloured. As well as evidence of insect attack, patches were missing from the bear's legs and back – these appeared to have been cut out.

Before the conservation work commenced, exhibition technicians created a new mount. The missing front left paw and the side of the back left paw were covered giving the impression that they had sunk into snow as the bear walked through a snowscape, which was created using a low density polyurethane foam which was painted. Also before commencing conservation work, appropriate health and safety measures had to be taken, due to the number of toxic substances that have been used on taxidermy specimens in the past.

As a first treatment step the polar bear's hair was brushed and vacuumed. This was followed by further cleaning with a Smokesponge and then by swabbing with a solution of alcohol and water. Old paint and glue on the surviving paws had to be carefully removed – the paint was removed by swabbing with acetone and the glue was swabbed with warm deionised water.

## The use of conservation techniques and principles helps to retain the integrity of taxidermy specimens

Because the specimen was going back on display, aesthetics were a factor in the treatment. The curator wanted bald patches to be treated and claws replaced. While the bald patches on a moose in the collection could be treated with moose hair, this was not the case with the polar bear, as samples of polar bear hair proved to be much less readily available than moose and other hair samples. Thus hair from other animals had to be considered, along with the ethics of taking this approach. The hair was sourced from hair and fur samples donated to the conservation department with the understanding that they would be used for the conservation of taxidermy specimens.

Ideally, the replacement hair had to be an appropriate colour and texture to blend with the polar bear hair. After comparing samples, including synthetic furs, cow, ermine, deer and goat, it was decided that the cow, goat and deer hair had the closest texture to the polar bear hair. Natural hair was chosen in preference to synthetic because of the texture and to help mitigate the effects of differential aging. Our experiments to dye the hair samples using hair dye and hydrogen peroxide were unsuccessful. Ultimately a wash of acrylic paints on the cow and goat hair proved to be the most successful method.

To reconstruct the missing three toes from the bear's front right paw, a *papier maché* base was created with acid free tissue formed into the required shapes for the toes. These shapes were then covered with a light Tosa Tengujo Japanese tissue adhered with hydroxypropyl cellulose. The replacement toes were then adhered into place on the paw. Using the remaining claws, moulds were prepared with silicone putty so that replacement claws could be cast in plaster. It was important that the replacement hair on the toes was correctly oriented and was of an appropriate length. Simple tissue patterns were made for each toe, to assist in

selecting the correct replacement pieces. Goat hair was the most suitable hair for the toes – it was cut and tinted with acrylic paint before being attached with hydroxypropyl cellulose. The polar bear's missing tail was reconstructed using the same technique as used for the toes. The new tail is secured in place with a stainless steel wire and acrylic resin.

The visual impact of the missing slices of hair on the bear's legs and back was minimised when small tabs of tinted cow hair were inserted into these areas. The cow hair was adhered to small strips of Japanese tissue and then these strips were in turn attached using hydroxypropyl cellulose.

Rather than softening the skin on the underside of the bear to rejoin the split seams, the gaps were sealed with acid free tissue then filled with layered Japanese tissue. To finish off this repair, strips of tinted goat hair were secured in place over the final layer of Japanese tissue. Breaks in the bear's ear were adhered and clamped until the adhesive had dried. The cracks that had formed in the painted features on the face were filled in with microballoons in acrylic resin; these repairs were then retouched with acrylic paint.

The conservation of the polar bear was a challenging and gratifying project, which highlighted the lack of published literature on the subject of taxidermy conservation. At RAMM, while the value of using taxidermy methods on taxidermy specimens is recognised as a viable option, the conservation team has been working to develop gentler treatments. By using sympathetic materials and methods that allow for future re-treatment, the integrity of the object can be retained. We hope that this article helps others working in this area and would welcome further discussion and an exchange of ideas.

The polar bear will be displayed in the Case Histories Gallery in the new RAMM reopening 14 December 2011.

### Biographies

Ashley Lingle is currently a student at University College London taking the MSc in Conservation for Archaeology and Museums. The work undertaken during the second year of the degree which is being spent as an intern with the Royal Albert Memorial Museum. She has a BA in Anthropology from Tulane University, after which she worked as an archaeologist on a site near Los Angeles, CA. During this time Ashley found an interest in conservation and began her studies at UCL starting with the MA in Principles of Conservation.



Vicky Singleton began her education with a BA in Archaeology at Durham University. After her BA she went on to complete an MA in Artefact Studies at UCL concentrating on both the different roles of archaeological find specialists and the varied approaches to the study and interpretation of artefacts from archaeological and museum collections. During her MA in Artefact Studies this, Vicky developed an interest in archaeological and museum conservation which led her on to study an MA in the Conservation of Museum and Archaeological Objects at Durham University.



The right paw before treatment.



The Phases of reconstruction of the polar bear's missing toes.



© The Royal Albert Memorial Museum

Shadi Khalil reveals some fascinating discoveries about the 'ajamī rooms in Syrian houses, as well as some specific aspects of the conservation and restoration in these rooms.



## Polychrome Syrian Ottoman 'ajamī Interiors



Photograph by Shadi Khalil.

Restored 'ajamī ceiling in Bayt Jacques Montluçon dated to AD 1790–91

Since 2006 Shadi Khalil has been carrying out restoration projects on eight polychrome wooden 'ajamī reception room interiors and ceilings in some of the most important houses in Damascus, including Bayt Farhi / al-Mu'allim, where restoration work was carried out in 2007–8, Bayt Mujalled/Nora Jumlat (restored 2010–11) and Bayt Nizam (restoration in progress 2011). 'Ajamī is the Arabic word for the *pastiglia* technique used to produce relief ornaments with a thick flowing paste of gypsum and animal glue.

Damascus is one of the very few cities in the world that still retains a large proportion of its historic domestic structures. In the Old City of Damascus, around 3,000 to 4,000 old houses still exist, often arching over streets and intricately woven into each other. These historic private houses, most built in the 18th and 19th centuries, are the real treasures of Damascus. Plain and insignificant from the outside, the interiors of these houses often reveal a breathtaking beauty. Upon entering such a house, the visitor must first pass through a narrow dark corridor, often turning one or two corners before being welcomed by the scents of lemon trees, jasmine, and roses. A richly decorated courtyard awaits, replete with multicoloured stone pavement, a sparkling central fountain and lush greenery. This courtyard forms the

heart of each traditional house. Surrounding the courtyard, each house contains a number of highly decorated reception rooms. The interior decoration incorporates stone mosaics and reliefs, coloured stone paste inlays, and polychrome wooden panelling, created using the 'ajamī technique. In the 18th century, mother-of-pearl inlays and mirrors became popular as additional decorative elements.

Close examination as well as scientific analyses, carried out by a number of organisations, have demonstrated that the pigments and binders used to create the original surfaces would have appeared significantly lighter and brighter than most of the wooden panelling and ceilings do today. Currently, many rooms have brown and glossy surfaces that have resulted from the later application of varnishes, which have darkened over time. Though there are very few untouched examples of 'ajamī rooms, those that do exist prove that the original surface aesthetic of the 'ajamī rooms alternated between shiny and dull metal areas, glossy glazed paints, and glittering matte and silky colours. Key examples of this are: two 'ajamī rooms in the inner courtyard of Bayt al-Hawraniya, one dated 1787–88; a further two 'ajamī rooms in Bayt Qaziha (1828) and the 'ajamī room in the north wing of Dar al-Fanoun, which is dated to 1816.

The original rich effects were achieved through light

reflected around the room from the numerous polished metal-leaf surfaces, while the walls appeared as if they were formed from soft textiles. The ceilings give the impression of luxurious carpets. These effects are now not quite as rich in some of the houses, with original colours hidden behind darkened varnish layers. Fortunately, in many cases the layers of varnish can be removed and the surfaces returned to an appearance closer to their original beauty and sophistication.

Because the paints on the painted surfaces have different binding media, including animal glue, egg white, linseed oil and natural resins, the polychrome surface decoration is complex to clean or restore and requires modified consolidation and surface cleaning methods. Two paints, the bright blue smalt and the coarsely ground sparkling orpiment, are in some cases bound in animal glue. As a result, these paints are very sensitive to water-based cleaning materials. On the other hand, the resin-based transparent glazes, which were applied over tin leaf, can be easily removed or damaged if organic solvents are used. This is especially the case with the yellow and orange glazes, which are sometimes hard to recognise under the brown varnish layers. Furthermore, the wide variety of paints and metal leafs present have resulted in a variety of different damages: flaking 'ajamī ornaments, flaking paint layers, delamination



Shadi Khalil carrying out watercolour retouching of white losses in the ground, Bayt an-Nofara, Damascus, 2008



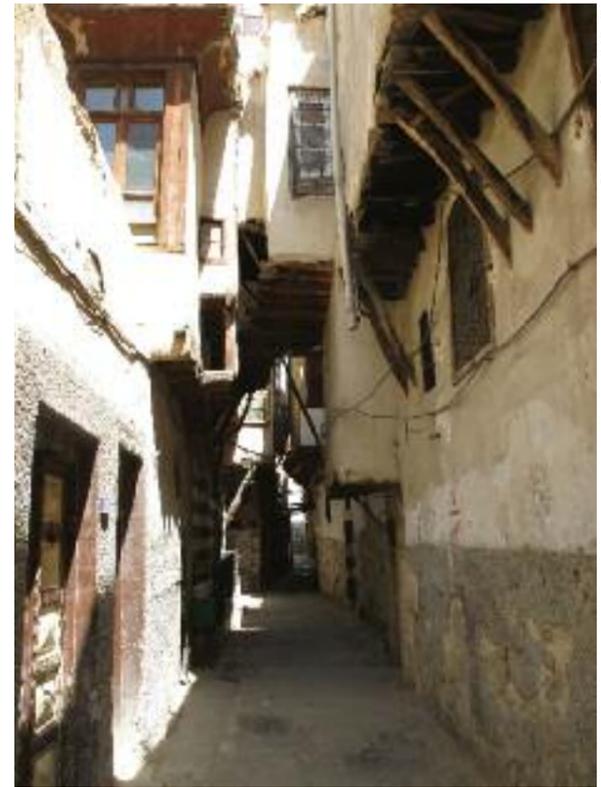
Bayt Nizam, grape room, during removal of later paint exhibiting fine details and matte light blue background for the gilded carvings instead of glossy dark green.



Courtyard Bayt Mujalled



Removal of later paint and varnish layers from the grape room (1835) in Bayt Nizam revealed the original, significantly lighter polychromy.



Damascus streetscape – with houses often arching over streets and intricately woven into each other.

of the tin foil, powdering thick smalt layers, and the delamination of thin tempera paint layers caused by excessive tension in the later varnish layers.

To determine which consolidation medium to use, all of the different surfaces have to be examined, and cleaning tests conducted for each type of paint and metal leaf. In most cases, following these tests, two different consolidation materials are selected for use. In the restorations already carried out, sturgeon glue was applied to the powdery smalt layers and other sensitive areas, and on other areas, especially the delaminating tinfoil, the acrylic dispersion Plextol B500 was chosen.

**The design idea behind these rooms was to feature bright colours, glossy metal leaf and glazes in a balanced way, to create the effect of a highly patterned carpet.**

The specific nature of the complex polychromy requires that in certain areas, consolidation and surface cleaning have to be carried out in one step, or with less than an hour time difference between the two phases of cleaning.

The surface cleaning of the entire room also requires testing and experience to maintain the fine balance between the paints and metal leafed surfaces, while also managing the various aging phenomena. The design idea behind these rooms was to feature bright colours, glossy metal leaf and glazes in a balanced way, to create the effect of a highly

patterned carpet. Today, various colour changes and damages resulting from ageing affect this finely-tuned composition. It is for this reason that surface cleaning is such an important and sensitive restoration technique in the preservation and restoration of the original designs and colour schemes. The extent of surface cleaning has to take into account the many ageing and corrosion processes which cannot be prevented or reversed. Examples of this are the corrosion of copper leaf, which results in a green surface appearance in place of the original glossy reddish metal, and the colour fading in paint layers containing indigo and cochineal.

When restoring these interiors, a new balance between the surface contrasts and colour schemes has to be found, to preserve the original design concept of a well-balanced carpet and to prevent disruption to the character of the sophisticated polychromy.

In some rooms, entire panels have been repainted with later or new paints, leading to a significantly different surface appearance. Fine details and sophisticated painted surfaces are now hidden underneath monochrome, mostly glossy paint layers. These details and elaborate original surfaces have been brought back to light and life recently through cleaning and restoration in Bayt Nizam, a project which began in 2010 and is funded by the Aga Khan Trust for Culture; Bayt an-Nofara; and Bayt Mujalled/Nora Jumlat.

As the treatments are not standardised and due to the range of materials involved, treatment requires considerable care in assessment and decision-making. The necessity to vary the treatments to suit the characteristics and damage of each separate surface means that treatments of whole rooms or ceilings can be very complex. The duration of treatments can vary considerably depending on the amount of work required, the delicacy of the work and client requirements. Part of the treatment service is to successfully manage this balance.

Interestingly, the old rooms still fulfil their function as welcoming reception rooms. When meeting Damascene inhabitants or foreign visitors today in one of the few well-preserved *'ajami* rooms, most are quite surprised by the brightness of the colour scheme, and even more so by their overwhelming sense of relaxation and calm, induced by the harmony and beauty of the colours and patterns. The intention of the original decoration still impresses these visitors through the years, making them feel that they are welcomed as guests, encouraging them to stay and enjoy their visit. Visitors to one of the many dark, varnished or overpainted rooms have a very different experience; though the rich patterns are still impressive, the sense of lightness and harmony is not the same – not as originally intended. The ceilings appear to be heavy and bearing down on their heads, and the wall panels resemble old embossed leather.

Many of the old houses in Damascus are now being

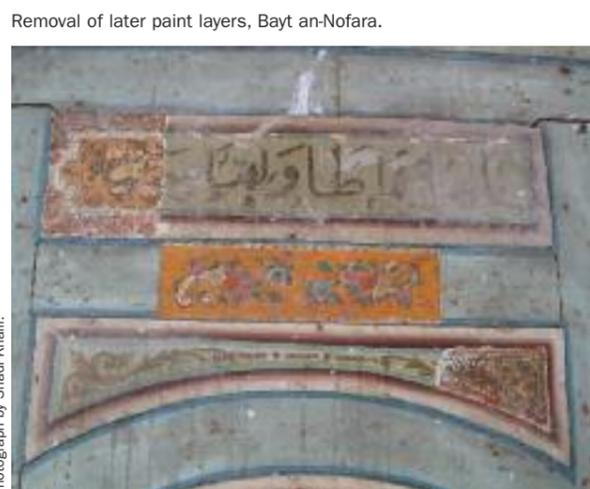
converted to hotels, restaurants and other commercial properties. Not all are being converted with sensitivity to the original designs and the delicacy of their aesthetic balance. It is important now to enable more visitors to experience and understand the original welcoming beauty and sophistication of these *'ajami* rooms, and to allow the original intention of their decoration to shine through. The more knowledge that can be shared about the original appearance of these rooms, the more successful those projects can be. The restoration efforts discussed here, as well as other contemporary research and preservation projects on Syrian rooms in museum collections, are providing a better understanding and a new perspective on the decoration of old houses in Damascus.

**Biography**

After studying agriculture and landscape design at the Agricultural Institute, Damascus, Shadi Khalil worked as a freelance garden designer in historic houses of the Old City of Damascus (2002–2006). After falling in love with the old houses he began his professional career in conservation and restoration of polychrome wooden interiors in the traditional Arab courtyard houses in 2006. Educated in the techniques of restoration, and mentored by the German conservator Anke Scharrahs, he has carried out examinations and restoration projects of so-called *'ajami* rooms in many of Syria's most important historical houses, including Bayt Farhi/al-Muallim, Bayt Mujalled, and Bayt Salim al-Quwatli in Damascus, as well as in the al-Azm palace in Hama. Currently, he is involved in the restoration project of Bayt Nizam, run by the Aga Khan Trust for Culture.



email: sh.restoration@hotmail.com



Removal of later paint layers, Bayt an-Nofara.



Varnish removal on an early 19th century ceiling in Bayt an-Nofara.

# The IIC Advocate Award

Across the world there are those who are deeply committed to the preservation of heritage but are not necessarily heritage professionals. These world visionaries may work in museums, government posts or within the private sector. They may be artists, pioneers in the communications industry, scientists, architects, authors, educators or entrepreneurs. They may be involved in the arts, the sciences, commerce or politics and policy. What they share is the understanding of the value of heritage to the future and the need to care for that heritage in a sustainable way. The IIC wishes to acknowledge this support with the announcement of the Advocate Award. This award is given in recognition of those who use their influence, resources and talents to support the efforts of heritage preservation.



Photo courtesy of Anna Somers Cocks

We congratulate the first recipient of the IIC Advocate Award, Anna Somers Cocks. This award recognises her work to promote conservation through the growing presence of conservation news and reporting in *The Art Newspaper*; her tireless efforts as Chairperson of the Venice in Peril Foundation; and her ongoing scholarship and public support of heritage conservation world wide.

To celebrate this award and the achievements of Anna Somers Cocks, Jerry Podany, President of IIC, spoke with her on February 25th 2011 and asked her about *The Art Newspaper*, changes in the world of heritage conservation and her dedication to the city of Venice.

## A conversation with Anna Somers Cocks

*JP: When did you become aware of heritage conservation and how has it changed since then?*

ASC: It was when I joined the Victoria and Albert Museum in 1973. The department had been called the Art Workshops. The people there were considered craftsmen and they wore brown coats, but shortly before I arrived the same people had been redefined as technicians and were given white coats. About then the first scientific head was appointed and that defined the future direction of conservation. The first thing I learned to say was that the effort was to *conserve*, not to restore. The change in terms was considered a very important distinction and we still hold to it today.

As for how conservation has changed, I think there is a greater awareness of the fragility of our world. Perhaps the heritage conservation world has grown as the ecological conservation world has grown; we are now more keenly aware that things get used up, they are finite. The “penny dropped” for me when someone told me about the fragility of textiles: “You can choose if something is to last 50 years, 100 years or 500 years, depending on how you treat it,” I was told. You have to make a choice and recognise that we have power over the future of objects, over their survival.

And of course there has been enormous growth in the influence that conservation departments have. They often have the final say as to how things are exhibited or for how long, or even where, although there seems to be a bit of a backlash now by some museum directors who are questioning whether the high standards being insisted upon by conservators are really necessary. I am not an expert in that area but I can certainly see that there is a degree of hypocrisy in it all. I remember taking some art works to an exhibition where another lending museum had insisted on some very demanding conditions, which we all knew were never met back home.

When it comes to the conservation of archaeological materials, we were of course quite aware of the 1970 UNESCO treaty against the trade in looted material and this was respected at the V&A. We would not ever have acquired an object if it did not have a good provenance. It was simply not interesting to have an object you knew nothing about. The legal wrangles that have arisen lately are the consequence of re-emerging nationalism and archaeology being used as a political armlever. When the “source countries” have ceased to feel they are the weaker side they may well begin to ask themselves whether they are looking after their heritage as well as they might, and whether their policies are conducive to heritage preservation. For example, in some countries construction work is completely stopped if archaeological remains are found in order that excavation can take place. Of

course that is a very good idea, but resources must be made available to archaeologists to assure that this rescue work is done in a reasonable amount of time, so that development can then proceed.

*JP: You predicted some time ago the “end of the MBA approach to museum administration”, changing not only the way things are done in museums but much of their focus. What do you predict are some of the changes coming to heritage conservation? And what do you think are the required changes?*

ASC: One of the changes relates to what I was just saying about looting. I actually believe there could be officially sanctioned trade in archaeological artefacts. I think it would be healthy and would help squeeze out the illicit trade. I asked a high-ranking Italian official with responsibility for the country’s archaeological patrimony what they planned to do with all the material that is being uncovered and will be uncovered in the future, since everything below the ground belongs to the Italian State, and he had no answer. To start becoming more realistic about our approach to heritage is an absolutely essential change, and funding rescue archaeology in the face of development is another vital need. Take, for example, the building of the big dams in Turkey or in China, where very large chapters of the world’s history simply disappeared because there were not enough archaeologists to carry out excavations in sufficient time. We need to develop international teams of rescue archaeologists, with the emphasis on the rescue of knowledge even more than the rescue of artefacts, although the two obviously go hand in hand.

*JP Do you foresee any changes in the area of collections conservation?*

ASC: Certainly the desire for greater access has presented new challenges for conservation. The idea that when something enters the museum, it will be only handled by the “initiated” is changing, although I can’t see it going too far. Greater general use of the collections would certainly put more pressure on conservation resources.

*JP: You once said that “the art world is a microcosm of the larger world” and this reminded me of something you said when you were part of the IIC dialogue “Conservation in Crisis” (<http://www.iiconservation.org/dialogues>). You noted that conservators often “...miss the real or bigger story” related to what they do. Let’s talk about that for a moment. How do you think conservators need to change their approach to communication?*

ASC: I think there should be a large banner hung up in every studio or laboratory reading, “The best is the enemy of the good”. I’ll give you an example. The Venice in Peril Fund is now helping to fund the restoration of a 19th-century crane in the Arsenale in Venice. It is a very important and rare industrial artefact. However, the people who are restoring it come from architectural conservation and are treating it as if it were a building by Palladio. Their preparatory study of the crane has been enormously detailed and expensive – every rivet has been measured and drawn – and to my mind they are overdoing it. We need to be more flexible and realistic.

The other thing is that we need to collaborate with other disciplines to bring life to an object that is being conserved. There is a wonderful example of this that I have spoken about before. It has to do with an early 16th-century Tuscan wooden crucifix that belongs to the Curia in Venice. The object was conserved a few years ago, and when the presentation was made to the public the conservators went on and on about the technical aspect of the treatment and restoration. Then there was a rather dull discussion about the stylistic attribution of the object. What was missed, and what was far more interesting, was that this crucifix had for centuries been carried in procession in front of condemned prisoners as they walked from the Carceri next to the Doge’s Palace to the space between the two columns of the Piazzetta to be decapitated. You have to think about what will catch the imagination of the public and, for that matter, the trustees, if you are going to defend your budgets and your existence.

*JP: Is it fair to say that conservators need to expand their vocabulary and reach out to other disciplines and to the larger world?*

ASC: Full technical reports are vital, but you don’t have to burden lay people with them. You should be able to communicate the essence of what has been done in plain English. When I was at the V&A the conservation department wore white coats, represented science and were “over there”, while the art historians were somewhere else and there was very little interaction. That has to change.

*JP: You have certainly made this effort on behalf of conservation in The Art Newspaper by carrying a growing number of articles about the field. How do you think this coverage has influenced all of the various worlds from which your readers come?*

ASC: People are fascinated by the making of a work of art, and they are equally intrigued by how an object is “fixed”. That appeals as a story, just as in the fashion magazines, people love “make overs”, the before and after. The conservation profession has people’s natural curiosity on their side right from the beginning, and that is what *The Art Newspaper* tries to kindle.

*JP: Print real-estate is expensive, why does The Art Newspaper report on conservation at all?*

ASC: *The Art Newspaper* covers all aspects of the art world, and conservation has been a very important aspect of that world for a very long time. Just think of the Cavacchi workshop sculpting the missing parts of Roman statues in the 18th century. The history of art is entwined with the history of restoration and conservation, and the direct influence of conservation on the world’s art is something that cannot be ignored and should be both valued and openly discussed.

*JP: This award is about recognizing people who, although not directly conservation professionals themselves, have given a great deal of support and made a difference to the efforts of conservation. Recipients are policy makers, influential thinkers and creative supporters. As one of those people who influence the perception of heritage conservation, what would be your advice to the profession so that it remains sustainable, particularly in this time of economic downturn.*

ASC: I would draw attention to the time bomb that awaits us in the form of the art of the twentieth century and onward. A lot of this art is auto-destructing because craftsmanship was not part of the artists’ intentions. I would advise the conservation sector to look at the art market and look at where the interest is: contemporary art is now more important in terms of the market than older art. I believe there will be a need for a large number of professionals who can deal with the multifarious objects and materials that artists have chosen and will choose to make their art works. It is going to be very scientifically challenging.

*JP: Another challenge for heritage conservation is presented by living historic places. This was explored in the recent IIC Istanbul Round Table “Between Home and History” (<http://www.iiconservation.org/dialogues/>). Gentrification, tourism and neglect all constitute enormous problems that are made more complex when a historic area is also called home. Venice is among the best known examples of an inhabited historic city and with world renowned works of art, masterpieces of architecture, stunning urban planning – and millions of tourists. And it is in danger. Share with us your passion for the preservation of Venice.*

ASC: I serve as the chairman of the Venice in Peril Fund (<http://www.veniceinperil.com/>), which was founded after the great flood of 1966. In those days there was not a real recognition on the part of the government of the special needs of Venice, so we began by responding to obvious needs, with the conservation and restoration of its monuments and buildings. From the start, Venice in Peril adopted an holistic approach to the conservation of a building and its contents, which at the time was rather new. However, there are much deeper, core problems for Venice. One now has to look at the very big picture for somewhere as complex as Venice and what we see is absolutely terrifying. The fact is that the water level is inexorably rising and the mean water level is already 23cm higher than it was in 1897, when the zero point was established. The predictions are that this will rise by another 50 to 75cm by 2100, and the the barriers that are currently being built (estimated completion 2014) to stop the acute flooding events can do nothing against this chronic problem. It is astonishing, but there is no official government policy on how to begin to deal with this problem.

Venice is one of the world’s great treasures and the heritage preservation community must band together to insist on sufficient efforts and support to save it. And we have to be more creative in our search for solutions while also being realistic. Seventeen and a half million tourists come to Venice every year and they should be asked to contribute to the efforts its preservation.

In many ways, what is needed to save Venice is also what is needed throughout the preservation community: flexibility, creativity, outreach and realism, added to the already deep commitment to saving our world’s heritage.

# IIC News

## IIC Vienna Congress 10-14 September 2012

There has been an excellent response to the call for papers for the 2012 IIC Congress *The Decorative: Conservation and the Applied Arts*. Members of the Technical Committee are reviewing some 220 proposals for papers, looking for those that most closely fit the theme of the conference and that will also give a good programme of presentations. In this first round of review the proposals are

Donnerbrunnen (Thunder Fountain), Vienna



presented to the Committee, via a web database; this is also used by the reviewers to store their comments and rankings. Authors who submitted abstracts should hear the outcome of the review at the end of June 2011.

The Technical Committee is chaired by Sharon Cather, and the Editorial Committee will include Joyce Townsend and Sharon Cather.

The deadline for submitting posters will be advised later in the year. Booking for attendance at the Congress will be open from early 2012.

## Calls for Papers & Course Applications

**10th Biennial International Conference of the Infrared and Raman Users Group**  
28-31 March 2012  
Barcelona, Spain  
Call for registration of interest deadline: 31 July 2011  
[www.irug.org](http://www.irug.org)

**Journal of the Institute of Conservation Call for Papers - Parchment and Vellum Special Issue**  
Volume 35 issue 2, Autumn 2012  
Call for papers deadline: 31 August 2011  
[journal@icon.org.uk](mailto:journal@icon.org.uk)

**Asia-Pacific Regional Conference on Underwater Cultural Heritage**  
8-12 November 2011  
Manila, The Philippines  
Call for papers deadline: 30 June 2011  
<http://www.apconf.org/call-for/second-call-for-papers/>

**Costume Colloquium III Past Dress - Future Fashion**  
8-11 November 2012  
Florence, Italy  
Call for papers deadline: 31 October 2011

**The Renaissance Workshop - The Materials and Techniques of Renaissance Art**  
10-11 May 2012  
London, UK  
[www.renaissanceworkshop2012.org](http://www.renaissanceworkshop2012.org)

## Meetings and Conferences

**SFIC conference: Jardins de Pierre**  
22-24 June 2011  
Paris, France  
[www.sfic.fr](http://www.sfic.fr)

**The Inclusive Museum Conference 2011**  
30 June-3 July 2011  
Johannesburg, South Africa  
<http://onmuseums.com/Conference-2011>

**Matter and Materials in/for Cultural Heritage (MATCONS 2011)**  
24-28 August 2011  
Craiova, Romania  
<http://www.forummuzeulolteniei.ro/index.html>

**XIIth IADA International Congress 2011**  
29 August-2 September 2011  
Bern, Switzerland  
<http://www.iada-online.org/>

**LACONA IX - Lasers in the Conservation of Artworks**  
7-10 September 2011  
London, UK  
[www.lacona9.org](http://www.lacona9.org)

**ICOM-CC 16th Triennial Conference**  
19-23 September 2011  
Lisbon, Portugal  
<http://www.icom-cc2011.org/>

**Adhesives and Consolidants for Conservation: Research and Applications**  
17-21 October 2011  
Ottawa, Canada  
[jane.down@pch.gc.ca](mailto:jane.down@pch.gc.ca)

**Chemistry and Preservation of Waterlogged Wooden Shipwrecks**  
18-21 October, 2011  
Stockholm, Sweden  
[www.shipwrecks2011.com](http://www.shipwrecks2011.com),  
[info@shipwrecks2011.com](mailto:info@shipwrecks2011.com)

**AICCM National Conference 2011**  
19-21 October 2011  
Canberra, Australia  
[ian.batterham@naa.gov.au](mailto:ian.batterham@naa.gov.au)

**Salt Weathering on Buildings and Stone Sculptures Conference**  
19-22 October 2011  
Limassol, Cyprus  
<http://www.swbss2011.org/>

**Managing Archaeological Sites with Mosaics**  
24-27 October 2011  
Meknes, Morocco  
[dmichael@spidernet.com.cy](mailto:dmichael@spidernet.com.cy),  
[bouzidi3@yahoo.fr](mailto:bouzidi3@yahoo.fr)

**FUTURE TALKS 011. Technology and Conservation of Modern Materials in Design**  
26-28 October 2011  
Munich, Germany  
[bechthold@die-neue-sammlung.de](mailto:bechthold@die-neue-sammlung.de)

**Plying the Trades: Pulling Together in the 21st Century**  
8-11 November 2011  
Oaxaca, Mexico  
<http://www.icom-cc.org/52/event/?id=123>

**21st Annual IAMFA Conference**  
13-16 November 2011  
Auckland, New Zealand  
<http://www.iamfa.org/conference2011.asp?L1=0&L2=0&L3=1&L4=1&L5=0>

**'I Know Where I'm Going' - Remote Access to World Heritage Sites from St Kilda to Uluru**  
23-24 November 2011  
Edinburgh, UK  
<http://inspace.mediascot.org/behavior/iknowwhereimgoing>

**'Let the Material Talk' - Technology of Late Medieval Cologne Painting in Context**  
24-26 November 2011  
Cologne, Germany  
[www.doernerinstitut.de](http://www.doernerinstitut.de) and  
[www.wallraf.museum](http://www.wallraf.museum)

**Conservation Challenges, Solutions & Collaboration Opportunities in Uncontrolled Environments**  
9-11 March 2012  
Hobart, Australia  
<http://www.polarheritage.com/>

**Modern and Contemporary Mural Paintings: Technique, Conservation and Access**  
4-5 May 2012 - Please note this is change of date  
Valencia, Spain  
<http://mcmp2012.webs.upv.es>

**IIC Congress Vienna 2012: The Decorative: Conservation and the Applied Arts**  
10-14 September 2012  
Vienna, Austria.  
<http://www.iiconservation.org/congress/>

**IIC Nordic Group XIX International Conference - Planning to move? Processes and consequences for collections, objects and society**  
15-17 October 2012  
Oslo, Norway  
[http://www.nkf-n.no/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=category&layout=blog&id=77&Itemid=267](http://www.nkf-n.no/index.php?option=com_content&view=category&layout=blog&id=77&Itemid=267)

## Courses, Seminars and Workshops

**Digital Photography of Museum Objects**  
21-22 June 2011  
London, UK  
[www.academicprojects.co.uk](http://www.academicprojects.co.uk)

**New Methods of Cleaning Painted Surfaces**  
27 June-1 July 2011  
London, UK  
[www.academicprojects.co.uk](http://www.academicprojects.co.uk)

**Identification of Wood**  
28-29 June 2011  
London, UK  
[www.academicprojects.co.uk](http://www.academicprojects.co.uk)

## Sale of IIC Publications

Now is your chance to catch up with IIC publications at a significant discount!

To order, please go to the IIC web-site - [www.iiconservation.org](http://www.iiconservation.org) and order from the 'Buying IIC Publications' page - [www.iiconservation.org/publications/pubs\\_sale.php](http://www.iiconservation.org/publications/pubs_sale.php)

### IIC Congress Preprints

Copies of the following Congress preprints are available at £8 per volume (delivery to UK) or £12 (delivery to EU, US, rest of world).

- Conservation of Far Eastern Art (Kyoto 1988)
- Conservation of the Iberian and Latin American Cultural Heritage (Madrid 1992)
- Preventive Conservation (Ottawa 1994)
- Archaeological Conservation (Copenhagen 1996)
- Painting Techniques (Dublin 1998)
- Tradition and Innovation (Melbourne 2000)
- Works of art on paper (Baltimore 2002)
- Modern Art, New Museums (Bilbao 2004)

Copies of the following Congress preprints are also available at £20 per volume (UK) or £25 (EU, US, rest of world):

- The Object in Context: Crossing Conservation Boundaries (Munich 2006)
- Conservation and Access (London 2008)

Copies of the following Congress preprints are also available at full price: £35 (UK) or £50 (EU, US, rest of world)

- Conservation and the Eastern Mediterranean (Istanbul 2010)

All prices include surface postage; for airmail costs on your order please mark your Order Form accordingly.

### Studies in Conservation

Back issues of *Studies in Conservation* are available at £4 per issue (UK) or £7 per issue (EU, US, rest of world); remember that there are four issues per volume. Prices include surface postage; for airmail costs on your order please mark your Order Form accordingly.

### Reviews in Conservation

Copies of *Reviews in Conservation*, from number 1 (2000) to number 10 (2009), are available as follows: £5 per issue (UK) or £7 (EU, US, rest of world). A full set of issues 1 to 10 inclusive is available for £40, or £50 (EU, US, rest of world). Prices include surface postage; for airmail costs on your order please mark your Order Form accordingly.

All prices are quoted in and will be charged in Sterling. This offer is only available through the IIC web-site and this offer is subject to availability.

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June 2011

**Picture Frames: Early and Modern**  
1 July 2011  
London, UK  
[www.academicprojects.co.uk](http://www.academicprojects.co.uk)

**Giltwood Frame & Object Restoration**  
4-8 July 2011  
Oxford, UK  
[www.academicprojects.co.uk](http://www.academicprojects.co.uk)

**Identification of Paper Workshop**  
4-5 July 2011  
London, UK  
[www.academicprojects.co.uk](http://www.academicprojects.co.uk)

**Lichens and Gravestones Maine, USA**  
17-23 July 2011  
Steuben, Maine, USA.  
<http://www.eaglehill.us/index.shtml>

**Montefiascone Book Conservation School**  
25 July-19 August 2011  
Montefiascone, Italy  
<http://monteproject.co.uk/en/study-programme>

**Modern Metals and Alloys: Structure, Coatings, Conservation**  
16-18 August 2011  
London, UK  
[www.academicprojects.co.uk](http://www.academicprojects.co.uk)

**Chemistry for Conservators**  
1 September 2011  
By correspondence  
[www.academicprojects.co.uk](http://www.academicprojects.co.uk)

**Conservation of Historic Wallpapers**  
5-8 September 2011  
West Dean, UK  
[cpd@westdean.org.uk](mailto:cpd@westdean.org.uk)

**Conservation of Glass Objects**  
12-16 September 2011  
London, UK  
[www.academicprojects.co.uk](http://www.academicprojects.co.uk)

**Workshop on Cultural Property Risk Analysis**  
15-16 September 2011  
Lisbon, Portugal  
[www.protectheritage.com/Lisbon2011](http://www.protectheritage.com/Lisbon2011)

**Care and Conservation of Modern & Contemporary Outdoor Sculpture Masterclass**  
15-17 September 2011  
Oporto, Portugal  
[2021@2021.pt](mailto:2021@2021.pt)

**The History of European Bookbinding 1450 - 1830**  
19-23 & 26-30 September 2011  
Venice, Italy  
[www.icon.org.uk/www.ligatus.org.uk/summerschool](http://www.icon.org.uk/www.ligatus.org.uk/summerschool)

**European Workshop and Training Day on Cultural Heritage Preservation**  
26-28 September 2011  
Berlin, Germany  
[www.smoohs.eu/EWCHP](http://www.smoohs.eu/EWCHP)

**The Anthropology of Cloth and Clothing**  
26-29 September 2011  
West Dean, UK  
[cpd@westdean.org.uk](mailto:cpd@westdean.org.uk)

**Book Conservation Courses - Bosses and Clasps I, II and III**  
3-7, 10-14, 17-18 October 2011  
Horn, Austria  
[www.european-research-center.buchstadt.at](http://www.european-research-center.buchstadt.at)

**Ship Models: Care, Conservation and Display**  
11-13 October 2011  
London, UK  
[www.academicprojects.co.uk](http://www.academicprojects.co.uk)

**Loss Compensation in Paintings - Filling and Retouching Masterclass**  
10-12 November 2011  
Oporto, Portugal  
[2021@2021.pt](mailto:2021@2021.pt)

**For more information about these conferences and courses, see the IIC website: [www.iiconservation.org](http://www.iiconservation.org)**

## PROFILE

### Location

The Metropolitan Museum of Art

### Exhibition

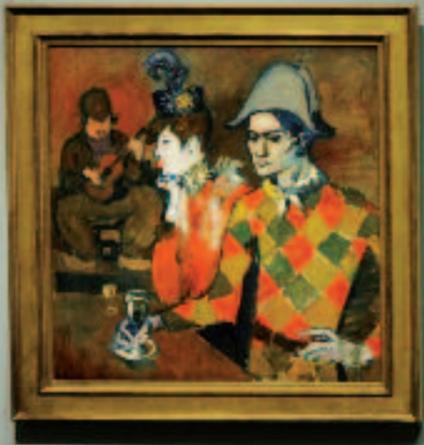
Picasso in The Metropolitan Museum of Art

### Time

April 27, 2010 – August 15, 2010

### Glazing

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Pablo Picasso, *At the Lapin Agile*, 1905, The Walter H. and Leonore Annenberg Collection, Gift of Walter H. and Leonore Annenberg, 1992, Bequest of Walter H. Annenberg, 2002 (1992.391); *The Actor*, 1904-05, Gift of Thelma Chrysler Foy, 1952 (52.175); *Saltimbanque in Profile*, 1905, Bequest of Scofield Thayer, 1982 (1984.433.269). All works from The Metropolitan Museum of Art. © 2010 Estate of Pablo Picasso / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York. Photo: Don Pollard.

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