

Reconsidering the Classification of Foxing through Photographic and Historic Analysis and Presenting Two Case Studies of the Conservation Treatment of Foxed Paper

ABSTRACT

This poster was presented at the AIC meeting of 2008. It summarized the results of my PhD thesis paper for the Tokyo University of the Arts, which reconsiders the C. E. Cain and B. A. Miller classification of foxing and describes conservation treatments of foxed paper. The goals of the paper were to evaluate and characterize the forms of foxing defined and classified by Cain and Miller in their 1984 article, “Proposed Classification of Foxing”, published in the Preprints of the American Institute for Conservation 10th Annual Meeting, and also to report on two different conservation treatments of artworks on foxed papers from the collections of the Library of Congress done during my internship year there in 2006–2007.

Cain and Miller’s classification remains remarkably useful to discussions of foxing. I hope that my contribution will augment their classification through photographic documentation and analysis. The poster showed photographs including images produced under normal and UV light. The analysis presented showed that some foxing appears to elude classification under Cain and Miller’s categories or may represent subcategories. The poster also illustrated foxing on Western type paper made in Japan including some papers made in the Meiji era (starting in 1868). These findings resulted from the examination and consideration of the history of some papers from the eighteenth-twentieth century. These papers included Western paper; Western type paper made in Japan; and Japanese paper. The artworks examined included works by Western and Japanese artists. Examination was done at four institutions: the Library of Congress; the Arthur M. Sackler Gallery and Freer Gallery of Art (the National Museums of Asian Art of the Smithsonian Institution); the Carnegie Museum of Art; and the University Art Museum—Tokyo National University of Fine Arts and Music.

The eighteenth-century Japanese print (*ukiyo-e*) “Back View of a Noblewoman” by Chobunsai Eishi (1756–1829) and the sixteenth-century engraving “Music Motet” by Jan Sadeler I were selected for treatment from the Library of Congress collections. These prints had foxing and were treated with different methods which were described in detail on the poster. With regard to the Japanese print, it was inferred from analysis with Scanning Electron Microscopy (SEM) and copper test strips that the cause of foxing on the *ukiyo-e* was copper from the artificial gold paper to which it was adhered. After careful testing, chelating agents were used to remove the staining. It was presumed that the cause of foxing on the Music Motet engraving was water damage and the effects of two backing papers. Sun bleaching of the print in an alkaline solution under a UV filtering Plexiglas was used to remove the staining. Among other sources, these treatments were informed by the articles “The use of chelating agents in conservation treatments” by Helen Burgess (*The Paper Conservator* volume 15 1991 36–44) and “Alternatives to conservation methods of art on paper” by Keiko Mizushima Keyes (Preprints, International Conference on the Conservation of Library and Archive Materials and the Graphic Arts, Cambridge; England: IPC. 166–170). The positive treatment results confirm the efficacy of the strategies described in the articles.

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