
Annual Meeting Presentation Summaries

The 2005 WAAC Annual Meeting was held August 27 - 29, in Cody, WY. The papers from the meeting are listed below along with summaries prepared by the speakers.

The Art of Yellowstone: Aesthetic Conservation

Peter Hassrick

Yellowstone National Park has long been considered one of America's finest experiments. When it was established in 1872, there was considerable debate about how useful it would be. Despite the fact that the legislation mentions nothing about aesthetic or cultural values, people of the time recognized that it was being set aside primarily because of its scenic wonders. It was to be an extraordinary visual experience. This talk addresses why the nation, inexorably driven by notions of progress and exploitation of natural resources, could justify such a move and establish such a remarkable world precedent.

Conserving Charles Russell Wax Sculptures at the Buffalo Bill Historical Center

Sarah Boehme and Glenn Wharton

The West that was Cast – Sarah Boehme

The collection of Charles M. Russell wax sculptures at the BBHC presents a fascinating chapter in the history of American western art and sculptural history. Charles M. Russell (1864-1926) holds a position as one of the most popular and beloved western artists. Known as the "cowboy artist" he is celebrated for deriving his art from his personal knowledge and experience working as a wrangler. His biography and his personal characteristics contributed to his success and to the identification of his audience with this art. His actual artistic accomplishments are often overshadowed or not understood for many reasons.

The Buffalo Bill Historical Center owns a collection of over 50 wax sculptures by C.M. Russell, acquired in the early

years of the Whitney Gallery of Western Art. Until recently, these sculptures were generally considered as models for bronze works. This group of waxes, however, were kept in the family and were never cast in the artist's or his widow's lifetime.

After the death of Nancy Cooper Russell in 1940, works of art from her estate were acquired by a Russell collector, Homer Britzman. Britzman had many of these pieces cast into bronze, and he also published an article cataloguing Russell's bronzes, without distinguishing between those cast in the artist's lifetime and the later bronzes. He did, however, see that the original sculptures were preserved and acquired by others, who eventually donated them to this museum.

Several of the wax sculptures had still not been cast in bronze, so the first director of the Center commissioned some additional casts. In 1986 the Whitney Gallery of Western Art was scheduled for a re-installation, and all works of art moved into storage. Many of the waxes appeared in such poor condition that they could not be reinstalled without conservation work. Treatment and research revealed that in the casting done in the 1940s and 1950s many of Russell's original sculptures had been modified, and would require the curator and conservator to work together to understand Russell's original intentions.

A Goopy Situation – Glenn Wharton

Treating the collection was perhaps the most challenging project Glenn and his colleagues had ever faced. The sculptures were not simply composed of wax, Russell combined materials at hand, including coat hanger wire for armatures, wood, leather, textiles, plaster, oil paint, and watercolor. Not only had some of the wax sculptures partially melted and recrystallized on the surface, the plasticine additions exuded oily, sulfur laden liquids that heavily corroded the iron armatures.

Fortunately the museum acquired good photo-documentation of the sculptures prior to their re-working for bronze casting. Working from these photographs, chemical analysis, and CAT scans at the local hospital, the team pieced together the problematic history. Conservation

proceeded by developing methods for removing the additions, providing structural support, and cleaning the goopy brown exudates from the surface.

Flaking Away: Treatment of a Troubled Ambrotype

Laura Downey Staneff

An ambrotype portrait, potentially of historical significance, was sent to Silverpoint Art Conservation for treatment of its flaking backing.

Examination showed complications for what had been expected to be a straightforward treatment: the ambrotype was backed with asphaltum rather than lacquer, and the flakes endangered the image itself. This paper discusses the structure of the ambrotype in the context of other examples of the medium, as well as outlining the process of devising a minimally-invasive treatment for this photograph.

Technical Note: Tip for Using Abalone Veneer

Scott Carrlee

This technical note is about how to use a product called abalone veneer to replace missing abalone inlay elements on artifacts. Abalone inlay is quite common on Northwest Coast Native artifacts as well as artifacts from the Pacific Islands. The veneer can be easily fashioned to almost any shape, and although it is similar in appearance, upon close inspection it will never be mistaken for the real thing. Examples of use in two treatments will be shown, and some pieces of the veneer will be on hand for close inspection.

Conservation Projects for Walt Disney Feature Animation: Sneezy, Dopey, Grumpy, and You

Tim Campbell

This presentation will discuss the various facets of the Disney animation art collection and the many types of conservation treatments and conservators involved in its preservation. The Disney collection consists of 65 million pieces including drawings, paintings, and study models in

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various media. The collection is housed in a secret location near Disney's Burbank studio.

Research on a 15th-century Spanish Altarpiece: A Collaboration between the Balboa Art Conservation Center and the San Diego Museum of Art

Alexis Miller, Judy Dion, Steven Kern

This talk presents questions and answers from a technical study of an altarpiece in the collection of the San Diego Museum of Art. The Balboa Art Conservation Center and the San Diego Museum of Art collaborated through a grant from the Kress Foundation's Old Masters in Context Program. Analysis of the materials and techniques used by the artist confirm the regional attribution of the altarpiece. Determination of the original configuration and construction helped show how the altarpiece may have looked five hundred years ago.

Cowboys and Indians on the Border: Frames Designed by Artists

William Adair

This presentation will cover the arcane subject of picture frames from painters of western subjects, specifically those of Irving Couse, Frederic Remington, and Charlie Russell. I will discuss the conservation treatments of Remington's work from the Remington Museum in Ogdensburg, NY, where the originals were taken off in the 1950-60s and replaced with the rustic driftwood look that was so popular at the time. Luckily, the originals were saved in the basement, and I was able to conserve them and rejoin the abandoned relics with the paintings, giving us valuable clues of the artists' intent.

Introduction to Harry Jackson and the Treatment of His Painting

Carmen F. Bria

The treatment was performed on-site in the artist's studio in Cody, Wyoming in December of 2004 and presented several challenges, not the least of which was the artist himself. Harry is

the very colorful and persistent 80 year old Cody artist who has lived and worked in Cody most of his life. He came to Cody in 1938 after he ran away from home in Chicago at age 14. *White Figure*, an abstract expressionist work, was created in 1948 while Harry was living and working in NYC and after he met, befriended, and was inspired by Wyoming native and artist, Jackson Pollock.

The painting *White Figure* is still owned by the artist, and we will be able to see this painting as well as many of his paintings and sculptures during a tour of his museum and studio in Cody. The artist welcomes WAAC participants to Cody and looks forward to hosting us at his museum and studio.

Hard Hats and Steel-toed Boots: Extreme Installation for the National Museum of the American Indian's Inaugural Exhibition

Jessica Johnson

The National Museum of the American Indian conservators faced some interesting challenges during the summer of 2004 for the installation of the new Mall museum. Ongoing construction challenged conservators and collection staff to come up with innovative, cooperative solutions for safe object installation. This talk will discuss how a sense of humor and a collaborative approach was vital to survival in an extreme installation environment so that we were able to open the museum on time. It will also look back, from about one year later, and discuss what we've learned since.

The Plains Indian Museum: A Study in Collaboration

Emma Hansen

The Plains Indian Museum at the Buffalo Bill Historical Center has a long-standing commitment to the meaningful involvement of Native scholars, artists, traditionalists, and other community members in the development of policies, programs, and interpretations of collections. This cooperative approach is most evident in the award-winning reinterpretation of the

Museum's permanent exhibitions completed in 2000 and continuing efforts at developing relevant programming and outreach to Native communities. This presentation will discuss the Museum's past and present collaboration with Native community members as well as plans for the future.

Out of their Native Earth: The History of Excavation and Conservation of Ancient Hopi Murals from Awatovi and Kawaika-a

Leslie Rainer, Angelyn Bass Rivera, Lydia Vagts

In 1935, a team of archaeologists from the Peabody Museum, Harvard University began excavation of Awatovi and Kawaika-a, two 15th-17th-century Hopi villages in the Jeddito Valley of Arizona. In 1936, they discovered fragments of a mural in a kiva (ceremonial room). What began as promising turned astounding: the uncovering of the remains of over two hundred individual paintings on the walls of approximately twenty kivas.

The exquisite artistry and craftsmanship of the wall paintings, and their sheer number, make them among the most important archaeological discoveries in the American Southwest. During four field seasons, the archaeologist, Watson Smith, and his assistants exposed murals at Awatovi and Kawaika-a layer by layer, recording each of them with scale drawings, notes, and photography. Following documentation, they removed several fragments from the walls using the strappo technique.

The stripped murals were rolled up and transported to the Peabody Museum at Harvard. Fourteen fragments were remounted on permanent backings for display. Field documentation was used to make color reproductions of all mural fragments, including those that were not preserved.

The foremost archaeologists and conservation scientists of the period from Harvard University and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology carried out scientific analysis and conservation of the murals, both on site and in the laboratory following removal. Thorough

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analysis of the painting materials and use of modern conservation materials were a significant component of the project. Recent conservation treatment relied on the field documentation and materials analysis, published by Watson Smith in 1952. Following excavation and conservation, the mural fragments were widely exhibited.

Today, the Museum of Northern Arizona and the Peabody Museum house the collection of fragments and reproductions, which have been exhibited, or in storage for decades. In 1998, a collaborative project was initiated between the two museums to assess and conserve the fragments for possible future exhibition.

This paper will summarize the history of excavation and discuss the continuing importance of Watson Smith's pioneering comparative and material analysis of the Awatovi and Kawaika-a murals. This will follow with a discussion of recent conservation work and research, including condition assessment and documentation, materials analysis, and treatments involving re-adhering plaster layers, removing inappropriate past treatments, and installing secondary structural supports.

Scary Pottery: Saving a Southwest Collection at the Arizona State Museum

Nancy Odegaard, Margaret Kipling, Teresa Moreno, Annick Vuissoz, Hui-chun Chen

Scary Pottery has been the major character of the Arizona State Museum Conservation laboratory for the past 5 years. The pottery represents the most comprehensive collection of Southwest Ceramic Whole Vessels and includes almost 20,000 examples that span over 2000 years to the present. Since their excavation and arrival at the museum, evil environmental forces have conspired to destroy them all.

An alliance among those who wish to preserve these collections and to render the evil forces powerless was formed. But, maintaining order and progress through this quest has not been easy and many conservation wizards have barely escaped with their lives. In this story Scary

Pottery will be victorious against the evil environmental forces and will live happily ever after in a new Pottery Vault next to the conservation wizards and their new modern conservation laboratory.

Turning Over Old Leaves: Palm Leaves Used in South Asian Manuscript Production

Rachel Freeman

On the Indian subcontinent and throughout Southeast Asia, palm leaves were often used as a support for manuscripts or paintings that incorporate incised calligraphy, ink, and opaque watercolor. Although much has been published about the preparation, production, and conservation of palm leaf manuscripts, identification of the leaves themselves has been overlooked. The research presented today focuses on this problem, and outlines conclusions based on the examination of leaves from documented botanical sources.

Saving the New Orleans: A Conservation Assessment of the 1924 Douglas World Cruiser

Tania Collas

The Douglas World Cruiser known as the *New Orleans* is one of two surviving airplanes that completed the first Round-the-World Flight in 1924. Built in Santa Monica, California, the *New Orleans* was acquired by the Natural History Museum (known at that time as the Museum of History, Science, and Art) in 1927 because of its significance to both local and national aviation history.

Although repairs and replacements have been made to the *New Orleans* over the years, the biplane has never been subjected to a full restoration, as its sister ship the *Chicago* received in the 1970s. The extent to which the *New Orleans* retains its original material, at least partly attributable to benign neglect, increases the historic value of this unique aircraft.

Unfortunately, many of the airplane's original components, some of which were made from inherently unstable materials, have reached a critical stage of degradation. To save the *New Or-*

leans, NHM is undertaking a detailed conservation assessment of the airplane, which will culminate in a plan for its conservation treatment and long-term care. For this conservation assessment, funded by a generous grant from the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS), NHM has brought in a team of three expert consultants; their findings and recommendations will then be reviewed by a panel of aviation conservators and historians to ensure that the proposed treatment approach will stand the test of time.

Island Style Disaster: University of Hawai'i at Manoa Library Disaster

Lynn A. Davis

Manoa Valley where the University of Hawai'i Library is located has the highest annual rainfall on the island of O'ahu. A perfectly normal winter storm caused a flash flood that ripped through the ground floor of one of the library buildings with the force of a tsunami. Since then (as the library continues to cope with disaster recovery) we have earned a reputation for giving one of the best disasters anyone has had a chance to participate in. Island style disaster recovery has presented many opportunities to explore treatment issues relating to maps and aerial photographs damaged by clay, soil, silt, and water.

Getting Ready to Respond: When Theory and Life Meet

Jennifer Koerner

The paper conservation staff of the Los Angeles County Museum of Art responded to a call for help with salvaging works of art from the studio of Joe Goode which had been ravaged by an early morning fire on the 24th of May, 2005. Only two weeks before, the author had fortuitously attended the workshop "Recovery of Wet Materials Following a Disaster" held at the National Conservation Training Center, which provided hands-on practice in salvage techniques and procedures. The real life salvage operation put to the test many of the lessons learned at the workshop, and problems encountered highlighted the need for advance preparation of disaster response kits.

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As a result the paper conservation department of LACMA is in the planning process of assembling response kits which can be used for a variety of situations. A discussion of the workshop, the Joe Goode fire, and the disaster kits will be presented.

The Collection Conservation Program of the Quai Branly Museum, Paris

Gabrielle Tieu

A new museum, which will house the largest ethnographic collection in France, will be launched next year in Paris. Prior to the opening, a two-year conservation program has been developed to prepare, transfer, and bring up to conservation standards over more than 300,000 objects. This presentation will give an overview of this project, highlighting the significant role of conservators and preventive conservation within project as well as the impact on conservation practices in other museums in France.

The Resurrection of a Crucifixion

Susanne E. Friend

"For two years Jan Styka studied and sketched in the Holy Land--and on his way back to Poland, Styka knelt in Rome before Pope Leo the XIII to have his palette blessed. The gigantic canvas, made to order, awaited his return."

Jan Styka's 45' x 194' representation of the Crucifixion was completed in 1894 and brought to the United States in 1904, where the artist was forced to give it up when he was unable to pay custom duties. The painting languished in pieces rolled up in storage until it was purchased in 1944 and brought to Los Angeles to be installed as the centerpiece of a new multimedia show at the Forest Lawn mortuary in Glendale. The artist's grandson was brought in to install and restore the painting.

As may be imagined, the vicissitudes of transport, time, negligence, and ill-considered restoration have left the painting in a very poor state of preservation. When the Forest Lawn Museum finally decided to have the painting conserved, the sheer scale of the painting was the primary factor in dictating timing and

financial constraints. The levels of repair, target aesthetic quality, and critical lighting selections were major topics of negotiation and discussion before work ever began.

This talk is yet another in a long line of papers presented at WAAC that unabashedly presents material illustrating some of the aesthetic and practical compromises required when doing conservation in general but particularly when the work is on a monumental scale.

An Old Composition RCA "Nipper" Dog Teaches Some New Tricks

Maria Sheets

Art Restorations, Inc. is a 27 year-old Dallas, Texas based company with 14 conservators working in 6 different disciplines. Even with this base of knowledge, use of professional networks, and moderate training in modern materials, it seemed little could prepare us for the treatment challenges offered by a circa mid-century composition RCA "Nipper" Dog damaged from excessive heat first in earlier store window displays and later crude climate storage.

This presentation describes the year long, almost pro-bono process of addressing previous repairs, cracking, and severe warping required to help this, almost junked, 36" high American icon get back on his paws.

To Stretch or Not to Stretch ... That is the Question!

Duane R. Chartier

Stretched canvas as a textile support for painting has been prevalent since the end of the sixteenth century in northern Europe and slightly thereafter in Italy through Venice. Then came rapidly the development of various devices, notably the familiar keyed stretchers, and a myriad of variations on mono and bidirectional expansion stretchers.

There have been recent advancements in the understanding of painting mechanics as well a huge, although nebulously defined, database comprised of the collective experience of art conservators

throughout the world. However, this knowledge and experience has not translated into any of the long overdue changes in both art production practices and the use of stretchers versus solid supports.

This talk presents some historical speculation on the forces behind the changes in artistic practice that led to the adoption of canvas over wooden panels as well as some recent advances that may represent somewhat of a breakthrough in stretcher design that would significantly reduce long term environmental damages to stretched canvas.

Conservation of Heat Damaged 1873 Wax Flower Wreath

Maria Sheets

This presentation illustrates the delicate treatment of an elaborate wax flower wreath made in 1873. The wreath's various petals and leaves were found to be dirty, detached, missing, or sagging after long-term storage in the hot attic of a Corsicana, Texas residence. This presentation describes the cleaning, reconstruction, compensation, stabilization, client education, and transport challenges involved in handling this fragile family heirloom.

Polylactic Acid: A Fresh New Polymer from the Corn Field

Catherine C. McLean

Polylactic acid (PLA) is one of several relatively new polymers that can be formed using carbohydrates from plants, such as corn, as the raw material. PLA applications range from packaging to fiber manufacture. Using corn to make polymers is part of a larger movement to replace fossil fuel resources with renewable resources.

Recent improvements in bio-processing techniques, combined with rising oil prices, have lowered the cost of this material, making it competitive with similar petroleum-based processes. This presentation will discuss PLA's basic production methods, physical characteristics, and potential applications. Since PLA is also biodegradable, implications for those interested in its preservation will also be covered.

Summer of the Samurai: The Stabilization of a Set of Armor from the Late Tokugawa Period

Susie Seborg

A fragile suit of Samurai armor dating to the late Tokugawa Period (1603–1868) within the collection of the Natural History Museum of Los Angeles County was conserved during the summer of 2005. Research and scientific analysis helped determine the materials used to construct the various components of this composite object, which include paper, silk, copper alloy, iron, lacquer, and linen. Conservation treatments undertaken included stabilizing cracks within the lacquer, securing areas of lifting paper, and lessening the stress applied to the shattered silk facings. Creating a support for storage and handling proved particularly challenging, given the fragile and composite nature of the object.

Home Alone: Working for Yourself

Susie Lunas

A look at conservation through the eyes of a private conservator who works at home.

Of Mazes and Multiple Choice Exams: Lessons from the Repair of Three Malibu Tile and Wrought Iron Tables

Amy Green

When I prepared a proposal for the repair of five Malibu Tile tables in 2001, I was in the early stages of my conservation education. At that time I still considered it possible to find a single best option for the treatment of an object or material. When I was awarded the job in 2003, I had amassed considerably more experience and a deeper understanding of the tenets of the profession. At each turn and for each element of the tables I needed to weigh the environment in which they had been, where they were going, how they would be viewed, and how they would be maintained. Added to this list of criteria was consideration for the original intent of these works both visually and functionally. This paper will examine the decisions and options encountered in preparing and implementing the treatment of these tile and metal tables.