

Articles You May Have Missed

“Gross Clinic Undergoes Treatment in Run-up to Show,” *Philadelphia Inquirer*, 05/02/2010

Thomas Eakins' masterpiece, *The Gross Clinic* (1875), is undergoing conservation treatment at the Philadelphia Museum of Art. The 8-by-6-foot canvas has had a checkered history of restoration and intervention which will be the subject of an exhibition *An Eakins Masterpiece Restored: Seeing The Gross Clinic Anew*. The show will explore the history of the painting as a work of art subject to the shifting desires and tastes of its longtime owner - Thomas Jefferson University - and the efforts of early conservators and restorers.

How to return this painting to what Eakins intended has been the subject of intense discussion among curators and conservators at the Museum and the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, its institutional owners, for two years. X-rays revealed that Eakins changed his composition during work on the painting.

Conservators and restorers of the past dissolved figures, erased final finishes, exposed lower paint layers, and weakened the composition. In the 1940s, the canvas was glued to two pieces of plywood. Less than two decades later, the plywood had started to warp. The museum's respected conservator at the time, Theodor Siegl, painstakingly removed the wood and glue.

That effort not only saved the painting from disaster, but it also has allowed conservators to easily remove all restoration work; apply a translucent, removable varnish; and ponder what to do next.

“Self-portrait Fingered by Leonardo da Vinci,” *The Australian*, 05/03/2010

Three fingerprints have led experts to conclude that a tattered picture considered inferior by its owners is a self-portrait by Leonardo da Vinci. It could be worth almost \$290 million.

A team of scientists and forensic experts have judged the portrait, discovered in 2008, to be a genuine da Vinci after partially matching the prints on the work with another painting by the master. Carbon dating found the portrait was painted between 1478 and 1520.

Nicola Barbatelli, a medieval historian who discovered the painting at the home of an aristocratic family in Salerno, has no doubt the work is by da Vinci. “It was kept in a sideboard because it was considered inferior to the rest of the family's collection,” he said.

“Ghent Altarpiece to Undergo Restoration,” *The New York Times*, 05/04/2010

In the nearly six centuries since its completion in 1432, the Ghent Altarpiece, one of the world's most renowned works of art, has not exactly been a stay-at-home kind of masterpiece. It was taken apart and hidden twice in the 16th century to protect it from iconoclasts and Calvinists. It was hauled to Paris two centuries later as a war trophy. In 1934 thieves stole two of its panels, and during World War II it was seized by the Nazis and kept in a salt mine.

The altarpiece, by Hubert and Jan van Eyck, is showing its age, and on Wednesday officials from Belgium and the Getty Foundation announced the beginning of an extensive restoration project, which will take place while the work remains on public view at its home, the St. Bavo Cathedral.

The Getty is providing \$230,000 toward the initial stage of the project, a yearlong examination of the altarpiece.

The foundation is also contributing \$400,000 toward another major restoration project already under way in Florence, of *The Last Supper* by Giorgio Vasari, which was severely damaged during a 1966 flood and has not been on public view since. The grants are part of an initiative aimed at training a new generation of experts to restore paintings on wood panel, a highly specialized conservation field.

“Fake’ Raphael Turns out to be Worth £25m,” *Telegraph*, 05/07/2010

A portrait of a young woman, which had been dismissed as a fake Raphael and lay forgotten in the basement of an Italian palace for 40 years, has been confirmed as genuine by art experts and could be worth up to £25 million.

The small portrait has languished in a storeroom beneath a palazzo in Sassuolo, near Modena in northern Italy, since the 1970s. But art historians now believe it to be a first draft by Raphael of part of a larger painting, (or ‘The Pearl’), which hangs in Madrid's Prado.

Mario Scalini, an art expert, came across it when he set about sifting through more than 25,000 works stashed in the palazzo's vaults, which belongs to a noble family who ruled the Duchy of Modena for four centuries. He had a hunch that it was more important than had been assumed, with the main clue being the quality of its frame. He had the painting analysed by experts at a research institute in Pisa.

Using infra-red and ultraviolet ray “multilayer” technology, they were

able to see through accumulated layers of paint. It is thought the portrait was started by Raphael, but finished by one of his most prominent pupils, Giulio Romano, after Raphael's death in 1520.

“Rescuing Art From the Rubble of the Quake,” *New York Times*, 05/10/2010

Susan Blakney, a paintings conservator from New York, scrambled up a mound of rubble left by the collapse of the Episcopal Holy Trinity Cathedral, searching for small shards of the cathedral's murals. The cathedral is a cherished part of this country's cultural heritage and most of its murals were destroyed in the earthquake that struck in January.

The rescue is being organized by the Smithsonian Institution, which opened a center in June where American conservators will work side-by-side with Haitian staff members to repair torn paintings, shattered sculptures, and other works pulled from the rubble of museums and churches.

Haitian artists and cultural professionals have been conducting informal salvage operations for the past four months. But the Americans are bringing conservation expertise — there are few if any professionally trained art conservators in Haiti — and special equipment, much of it paid for by private money.

The initiative, in its swiftness, its close collaboration with a foreign government, and its combination of private and government financing, represents a new model of American cultural diplomacy, that organizers believe stands in stark contrast to the apathy Americans were accused of exhibiting during the looting of Iraqi artistic treasures in 2003.

The initial financing is coming from three federal agencies and the Broadway League, the trade group for theater owners and producers. Smithsonian officials say the project will cost \$2 million to \$3 million over the next year and a half.

“UPS Truck Crashes into Hirshhorn Museum after Running off Street,” *Washington Post*, 05/11/2010

A delivery truck ran off the road Monday night, broke through a concrete barrier and smashed into the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden on Independence Avenue SW, in the heart of tourist Washington. In an incident with little if any recent precedent on the National Mall, the truck shattered a plate-glass window that forms part of the outer wall of the museum's lobby.

The driver was taken to a hospital with serious injuries. The museum had closed to the public three hours before the 8:30 p.m. crash, and no other injuries were reported. The truck ran through the low concrete structures that serve as flower pots and provide protection and came about one foot into the building. It appeared that the concrete barrier slowed the truck. No art was affected by the crash, officials said.

“Art Seals Reveal Their Secrets,” *PhysOrg.com*, 05/19/2010

A team led by Sichun Zhang at Tsinghua University in Beijing has now developed a new imaging mass spectrometric process to identify paintings and calligraphy without damaging the art pieces.

As the scientists report in the journal *Angewandte Chemie*, the secret to the success of this method is a low-temperature plasma probe that gently removes molecules from the surface of the art works. The temperature of the plasma reaches only 30 °C.

The helium plasma ejects molecules from the surface of the sample and ionizes them. This does not damage works of art. The scientists used this new technique to analyze seals, which are stamped impressions used as signatures and means of authentication on Chinese paintings and calligraphy. The team was able to use their new microplasma probe to reveal variations in the composition of the ink of individual seals, making it possible to differentiate between authentic and inauthentic seals.

“Bank of America Merrill Lynch Announces Unique Art Conservation Funding Programme,” *ArtDaily.Org*, 05/26/2010

Bank of America Merrill Lynch today launched a major initiative to help conserve important works of art and cultural treasures. As part of the Bank of America Merrill Lynch Art Conservation Programme, The Bank of America Charitable Foundation, Inc. will provide grants to restore art works to preserve their unique cultural value for future generations. The programme is expected to grant at least US\$1 million per year, with the actual outlay to vary based on the submissions and the desire to reach multiple geographies and media.

“Aboriginal Rock Art May be 40,000 Years Old,” *The Sunday Times*, 06/01/2010

A red ochre depiction of two giant extinct birds on an overhanging rock in northern Australia could be one of the old-

est paintings in the world. Scientists have calculated the artwork pre-dates European settlement in Australia and could be up to 40,000 years old.

The large painting was discovered on the Arnhem Land plateau in the Northern Territory by members of the Jawoyn Association Aboriginal Corporation during routine patrols of the area about two years ago. However archaeologists only visited the site for the first time last month.

Archaeologist and rock art specialist Ben Gunn, who assessed the painting of the two large birds with outstretched necks, sent a photograph of the rock art to a local palaeontologist who determined it was a depiction of the megafauna species *Genyornis*. The *Genyornis* — a heavy bird which had a broad, rounded beak and was about twice the size of an emu — became extinct about 40,000 years ago. “Either the painting is 40,000 years old, or the *Genyornis* lived much longer than we thought,” Mr. Gunn told *The Times*.

He described the image as in good condition but “slightly smudged”, and added that there is too much detail in the image for the birds to have been painted through word of mouth. Arnhem Land is a large Aboriginal reserve in the remote north-eastern corner of the Northern Territory which is known for its abundance of ancient rock art.

“Researchers Get a Kick out of World's Oldest Leather Shoe,” *Los Angeles Times*, 06/10/2010

Archaeologists from UCLA and Ireland have discovered the world's oldest leather shoe, an exquisitely preserved 5,600-year-old woman's size 7 lace-up, in a cave in Armenia.

The shoe was in such pristine condition that at first researchers thought it was just a few centuries old. It was stuffed with grass, which may have been used to keep the wearer's foot warm or to preserve the shoe's shape for storage. Both the grass and shoe were well-preserved, like other organic materials discovered in the cave on the border between Armenia and Iran, including a winemaking apparatus complete with grapes and three human heads preserved in jars.

Such materials usually degrade over time; the team attributed the unusual preservation to the cave's perennially cool temperature and low humidity and a concrete-like layer of sheep dung that sealed in everything and prevented fungi from destroying the remains.

The artifacts date from the Chalcolithic, or Copper, Age, when the first metal tools began appearing. Radiocarbon dating indicated that the shoe was from about 3,600 BC. Its relatively sophisticated design, however, suggests that the style had already been in use for a long time, said UCLA archaeologist Gregory Areshian, co-leader of the research team. The shoe is shaped to fit the wearer's right foot.

"Funds Too Little for Painting Restoration," *The Telegraph (Calcutta)*, 07/04/2010

Johann Zoffany's painting, *The Last Supper*, will be unveiled on Sunday evening at St. John's Church after its restoration over a period of five months. This project jointly undertaken by the Indian National Trust for Art & Cultural Heritage (Intach) and the Goethe Institut/Max Mueller Bhavan, Calcutta, highlights the woeful lack of conservation facilities in this city.

Here, priceless collections of Bengal School artists, the Tagores and others are rotting away in the care of such organisations as the State Charu Kala Parishad, Academy of Fine Arts and Rabindra Bharati Society, which in typically dog-in-the-manger fashion, will not allow them either to be displayed or stored using state-of-the-art technology. Guarding vested interests matters more than heritage. The skills and knowledge of local conservators, too, need to be upgraded through better exposure and workshops. Conservator Renate Kant, who guided and supervised the project, is happy the way things have turned out. The Intach team headed by Subash Chandra Baral, she said, was good at stabilisation of a canvas and documentation, but they "were not used to working so deeply and thoroughly". There has been no concerted effort to train conservators or upgrade their skills. G.M. Kapur, state convener, Intach, says the organisation is keen on collaborating with Goethe Institut as there is great demand for restoring works in the private domain.

"Leonardo da Vinci's *Virgin of the Rocks* Restored to Original Purity," *The Guardian*, 07/14/2010

One of the National Gallery's most precious paintings, Leonardo da Vinci's *Virgin of the Rocks*, will go back on display this afternoon after an 18-month conservation project revealed details lost for a lifetime under a coat of darkening varnish. The conservation work has convinced the gallery's experts that their painting, a

later version of one in the Louvre in Paris, is entirely by Leonardo, one of the greatest geniuses of the Italian Renaissance – and not, as previously thought, partly by his small factory of assistants.

The study of the painting has also established that it was never fully finished. The painting has been in the Gallery collection since 1880 but its uneven finish – with some areas, such as the faces, complete and others, including the angel's hand, barely sketched in – always puzzled scholars.

The mystery deepened in 2005, when x-ray and infrared photography revealed not one, but two, very different underdrawings.

Michael Daley, editor of the *Art-Watch* journal, is cautiously pleased that this time the conservators have left a thin layer of the old varnish instead of trying to get down to the original paint surface. He is normally the scourge of art restoration projects, particularly attempts to strip old varnish, believing that precious original detail added by the artists, in overpainting or coloured glazes, is usually lost in the process. He also believes many old master artists never intended their paintings to be seen in bright colours, and added their own toning layers of darker varnish.

"Deadly Blaze Devastates Famous Art Conservation Centre," *The Moscow News*, 07/16/2010

Flames have engulfed a major art restoration centre for more than a day, killing two firemen, but the Ministry of Culture is hopeful that art stored in the vaults will emerge unscathed.

The Grabar art centre on Ulitsa Radio, near Kursky Vokzal, has been gutted by the blaze. Art works were being evacuated from the building up until 1 am Friday on Friday, and at the time of writing 60 paintings and 50 pictures have been moved to the Cultural Ministry's vault. Talks with the city museums are being also conducted, to discuss where to store the paintings.

Saving the artwork came at a high price. Firefighters Alexander Dymchikov and Vyacheslav Shakhshin were killed by falling debris after freeing three people from the burning building. The fire has practically destroyed the building and made it unusable. The Grabar centre has long been one of the leading art restoration complexes in Russia. Specialising in ancient and 18th-century Russian art, its most famous projects include restoration work on icons by Andrei Rublev.

"400 Years after His Death, Caravaggio Work is Found," *The Independent*, 07/19/2010

Art experts in Rome are analysing what they believe is a previously unknown painting by the Italian Baroque master Caravaggio. As his homeland marked the 400th anniversary of his death this weekend, the Vatican's official newspaper *L'Osservatore Romano* published the newly discovered work on its front page.

Depicting the martyrdom of St. Lawrence, it was found recently among the possessions of the Society of Jesuits in Rome. It shows a semi-naked young man, his mouth open in desperation with one arm stretched out as he leans over flames. If the suspected provenance is confirmed, it would be the first painting by the Baroque genius to emerge since *The Calling of Saints Peter and Andrew*, which went on display two years ago. The Vatican newspaper did not reveal where the painting is being analysed or by whom.

Interest in the mercurial artist has been raised by recent attempts to shed light on the mystery surrounding his death on 18 July 1619 at the age of 38. The investigation, involving DNA tests and comparisons with living relatives, concluded that the painter was probably buried in Porto Ercole, in Tuscany, after suffering an illness, thereby bringing centuries of speculation, including assassination theories, to an end.

"Expert Finds That Restoring Art Helps Restore Owners, too," *The Times-Picayune*, 07/24/2010

Blake Vonder Haar established the New Orleans Conservation Guild Inc. with the intention of building on the city's solid reputation as a center of furniture restoration. The aftermath of Hurricane Katrina opened the business up to a "whole new world of problems."

Work poured in, in the form of pieces as different as their owners and all afflicted by any combination of water damage, mold, chemical damage, muck, or tearing. To meet demand, the conservation guild, flooded with both jobs and offers of help from restorers around the world, upped its staffing to 40 people. Since Katrina, it has completed more than 6,000 restoration jobs.

Aside from the technical challenges, handling clients' fragile emotions, especially in regard to cherished pieces of art, was "very difficult, physically and emotionally," Vonder Haar said. "Often,

all they had left in the home was what was hanging on the walls.” The conservation guild finished clearing its backlog of Katrina paintings just nine months ago, and more than 200 pieces of Katrina-damaged paper -- birth certificates, Bibles, and sentimental scraps -- still await treatment.

The past five years of emotionally draining work have given new meaning to Vonder Haar’s appreciation for her work, she said. “You feel like you have a much more important role in recovery,” she said. “You’re helping people feel whole again.”

“Solving the 800-year Mystery of Pisa’s Leaning Tower,” *The Telegraph (UK)*, 07/28/2010

John Burland, emeritus professor of soil engineering at Imperial College London, has spent the last two decades striving to save - and understand - the Leaning Tower of Pisa. After defying gravity, Italian bureaucracy, and accusations of corruption, it seems he’s finally cracked the case.

From 1990 to 2001, the tower remained closed – many doubting it would ever reopen – as the International Committee for the Safeguard of the Leaning Tower strove to save it from collapse. After numerous missteps, Burland ultimately won over the committee with a process called soil extraction. Akin to microsurgery, it entailed drilling out slivers of soil from beneath the northern side of the tower - away from the lean - and allowing gravity to coax the structure back upright.

Work began in 1999, using delicate, Archimedes-screw drills. At the same time, technicians in a piazza-site trailer monitored data from 120 sensors set up inside and beneath the tower.

By the time he called a successful halt, two years later, 70 tons of soil had been removed and the tower had returned to its early 19th-century inclination. Soil extraction brought the tower back by 50 centimetres to four metres off-centre – an amount that reduced the tilt and the stress on the vulnerable first storey enough to be safe, yet maintained the distinctive lean.

Via his data analysis, Burland unlocked the 800-year mystery as to why the tower leans south not north: namely, a fluctuating water-table on the upper layer of silt. By a quirk of local geography, Pisa’s water-table rose higher on the tower’s north side, often reaching within one foot in rainy season, and this gave the tower an annual ratchet southward.

Armed with this vital information, in 2003, Burland introduced a new

drainage system beneath the piazza’s north side, one that lowered and stabilised the water-table. The inclination continues to be monitored daily by the OPP and new figures reveal that the tower didn’t move at all between 2003 and 2009.

“Stitches in Time for Grand Old Gowns,” *zev.lacounty.gov*, 07/29/2010

There’s nothing like the prospect of a glamorous Los Angeles debut to make even the most luxurious wardrobe cry out for a little freshening up. Especially when the clothes are hundreds of years old.

When Catherine McLean, the head of textile conservation at LACMA, got the assignment to prepare about 250 ornate European dresses, gowns, suits, and accessories for exhibition, the pressure was on. Not only would it be a race against the clock to ready the garments for the upcoming *Fashioning Fashion: European Dress in Detail, 1700-1915*, McLean and her team also would have responsibility for spiffing up one of the museum’s hottest acquisitions in recent years—the multimillion dollar Kamber-Ruf collection, made up of more than 1,000 garments and accessories.

The exhibition had to be ready for the grand opening of the new Renzo Piano-designed Resnick Pavilion. That meant just two years for McLean and company to accomplish hundreds of tasks: refurbishing, stitching, cleaning, and otherwise preparing for their close-ups hundreds of outfits.

“Discovery of Ancient Cave Paintings in Petra Stuns Art Scholars,” *The Observer*, 08/22/2010

Spectacular 2,000-year-old Hellenistic-style wall paintings have been revealed at the world heritage site of Petra through the expertise of British conservation specialists.

The paintings, in a cave complex, had been obscured by centuries of black soot, smoke and greasy substances, as well as graffiti. Experts from the Courtauld Institute in London have now removed the black grime, uncovering paintings whose “exceptional” artistic quality and sheer beauty are said to be superior even to some of the better Roman paintings at Herculaneum that were inspired by Hellenistic art.

They were created by the Nabataeans, who traded extensively with the Greek, Roman, and Egyptian empires and whose dominion once stretched from Damascus to the Red Sea, and from Sinai to the Arabian desert. Such is the naturalistic intricacy of these paintings that the actual

species of flowers, birds, and insects bursting with life can be identified. They were probably painted in the first century, but may go back further. Conservation took three years. The paintings are not at the main site, but at the less well known canyon of Siq al-Barid in Beidha – nicknamed “Little Petra” – about 5km away.

“Funds for Jersey’s Glass Church Restoration Project,” *BBC News*, 08/27/2010

One of Jersey’s most famous churches has been awarded government funding for a major restoration. St. Matthew’s Church at Millbrook - known as the Glass Church - is decorated in Art Deco Lalique glass dating back to 1934. The Friends of the Glass Church have already raised £140,000 towards the restoration fund and work has been completed on the roof of the church. The church is internationally acclaimed as the only remaining and complete example of Rene Lalique’s heavy, clouded glass. Much of the restoration and conservation works will be undertaken by local craftspeople, although some specialist assistance will be required.

Conservation

Patio Rose

ORIGIN Cocker, Britain, 1986

PARENTAGE (["Sabine" x "Circus"] x 'Maxi') x 'Darling Flame'

FLOWER SIZE 2.4 in (6cm)

SCENT Light, sweet, and musky

FLOWERING PERIOD Repeats well

HEIGHT / SPREAD 3.3 ft (1m) / 1.6 ft (50 cm)

HARDINESS Zone 6

AWARDS Dublin GM 1986

Conservation is somewhere between a Miniature and a Patio rose, although its narrow, upright habit sets it apart from both. The semi-single flowers are pretty, with orange petals grading to yellow at the center. They keep their color fairly well as they age, fading only very slightly from pale orange to salmon. The flowers come in compound clusters of up to 40, and the whole stem seems to burn with color. Conservation has small healthy glossy leaves and compact, upright stems. It is a useful container plant and responds well to pruning.

from: The American Rose Society Encyclopedia of Roses, Charles and Bridgid Quest-Ritson