

“Restoration Threatens Georgian Medieval Masterpiece,” AFP, 01/02/2012

KUTAISI, Georgia — Bagrati cathedral, a world-renowned but crumbling masterpiece of mediaeval Georgian architecture, is suffering not only from wear and tear but also from the impact of human meddling.

Keen to please the influential Orthodox Church, the government in the deeply religious former Soviet republic has defied world heritage body UNESCO by starting to rebuild the 11th century monument. The cathedral was badly damaged in the 17th century during an Ottoman invasion, and as its elegant facades slowly crumble and a hole gapes where there was once a majestic cupola, experts fear it could be reduced to rubble.

But instead of conservation, the government started reconstruction work that risked distorting the monument’s original look, prompting outcry from the United Nations culture agency UNESCO as well as experts at home. In 2010, UNESCO’s World Heritage Committee publicly censured Georgia by putting Bagrati on its ‘world heritage in danger’ list.

Jukka Jokilehto, an expert at the International Centre for the Study of the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property is helping the Georgian government to create a more appropriate rehabilitation plan for the cathedral. UNESCO pressure forced the government to halt reconstruction until experts find the right way to deal with Bagrati’s problems.

“Denver Woman Arrested for Punching, Damaging \$30 Million Clyfford Still Painting,” Denver Post, 01/04/2012

A 36-year-old Denver woman, apparently drunk, leaned against an iconic Clyfford Still painting last week, punched it, slid down it and urinated on herself, according to a criminal case against Carmen Lucette Tisch.

“It doesn’t appear she urinated on the painting or that the urine damaged it, so she’s not being charged with that,” said Lynn Kimbrough, a spokeswoman for the Denver District Attorney’s Office, said Wednesday. Damage to the painting, “1957-J-No. 2,” is estimated at \$10,000.

The painting, which is nearly 9 1/2 feet tall and 13 feet wide, is estimated between \$30 million and \$40 million by the museum. Tisch allegedly committed

the offense with her pants pulled down, according to the police report, and struck the painting repeatedly with her fist. The officer stated that scratches and other damage to the painting were visible.

“Sculpture Unveiled Restoration of Donal Hord Piece Complete at South Pasadena Middle School,” Pasadena Star News, 01/06/2012

After three years of work and preparation, South Pasadena Middle School’s newly restored Donal Hord bas-relief sculpture, entitled “Civilian Conservation Corps Workers,” was ceremoniously unveiled. The historic sculpture was renovated using an \$8,000 National Trust for Historic Preservation grant that matched the \$8,000 from the SPMS PTA’s Art Restoration and Preservation Committee.

The lead conservator from Rosa Lowinger and Associates, the company that restored the sculpture, was also on hand to answer questions. “The sculpture tells a California history story,” PTA representative Alexandria Levitt said. “There is a lot of old art in schools that has been sitting neglected for decades and this is a recognition that this piece is important and now it’s been restored and it will get the treatment it deserves.”

“Ancient Temple Restored 107 Years after Quake,” Gulf News, 01/07/2012

Shimla: A 400-year-old Hindu temple in Himachal Pradesh that had been partly damaged in a devastating earthquake has been reconstructed in its original style and will be open to the public later this month.

The foundation of the Bharari Devi temple, located in Sarah village near Dharamsala town in Kangra district, was damaged when the Kangra Valley suffered a devastating earthquake in 1905. The quake had tilted the temple.

The temple was reconstructed at its original site after demolishing the original one. “The new one is exactly a replica of the original one,” Himachal chapter convener Malvika Pathania told IANS. She said stones and bricks were removed from the original one and documented. New ones were placed at the same place and location to maintain its original Shikhar style of architecture.

Before starting its restoration work in 2006, the Lucknow-based Indi-

an Conservation Institute, an Intach unit involved in carrying out conservation of heritage sites, carried out research to ensure that the temple restoration is done as per its original architecture. She said no cement had been used in the building as it was not used in the original structure either. Lime mortar was used in the masonry work.

“A New Deal for Art: Depression-Era Murals Restored, Headed for Newest Portland School,” The Forecaster, 01/10/2012

When the School Department decided to restore and move two 12-by-15 murals from the Nathan Clifford School they had to determine who owned them. “They were commissioned by the Works Progress Administration in the 1930s or 40s,” Doug Sherwood, the department’s facilities director, said. “So we had to get a formal ruling from Washington (D.C.) to find out who owned them.”

Sherwood found out that if Depression-era art commissioned by the WPA was framed and easily removable, it belongs to the federal government. If it’s attached to the wall, it belongs to the municipality. The school was built in 1907 and the canvas on which the murals were painted was glued to the wall. That made the art the city’s property.

The murals were painted by Ralph Frizzell in 1940 and are now in Boston at the Williamstown Art Conservation Center, where they’re being treated and having some minor repairs made. The art conservationists will be stretching and remounting the canvases so they can be rehung after the restoration is complete.

“Ridiculous to Wipe Out Frescos, Says Expert,” Times of India, 01/16/2012

PANCHKULA: “It is ridiculous to wipe out the frescos.” This is what Gurmeet Rai, director of Cultural Resource Conservation Initiative (India) and managing trustee of Punjab Heritage Preservation Trust, had to say about the white-washing of over-a-century-and-a-half-old frescos at the Mansa Devi Temple.

Gurmeet, who has been involved with conservation work at Harmandir Sahib, was reacting to the news about the so-called restoration work being carried out by Haryana government

at the shrine. TOI had reported how the white-washing of frescos at the temple had been ridiculed by Indian National Trust of Art, Culture and Heritage (INTACH), whose principal director Nilabh Sinha had said that it is not only against rules of restoration of old and rare works of art but would also damage these rare paintings on the walls of the shrine.

The temple is under the Haryana archaeology department, while Haryana Tourism Corporation is responsible for execution of the ongoing conservation work.

“Cappella Scrovegni, gli Affreschi di Giotto in Buona Salute” (Giotto’s Frescoes in the Cappella Scrovegni are in Good Health), Padova Oggi, 01/13/2012

Ten years after the restoration of the 14th century masterpiece by the Tuscan master, the white effluorescences on the counter-facade have been determined to be “physiological” by the restorers who have been monitoring it.

This recognition produced a profound sigh of relief. The condition of the frescoes is in fact still stable ten years after the large-scale restoration that took place in 2002. “We are managers of a fundamental piece of art - said the minister for Culture Colasio Andrea - one of the ten most visited monuments in Italy.

Restoration is always an act of violence to be forestalled with monitoring, which we carry out every year. The judgment of this year is very comforting, it means that the oversight system adopted after the restoration 10 years ago was effective.”

“Restoration of the Basin of the ‘Fontana dei Fiumi’ (Fountain of Rivers) Begins in Rome,” AdnKronos, 01/15/2012

The restoration work on the basin of the Fountain of Rivers in Rome in Piazza Navona begun in November 2006 and November 2008 will be completed in this year’s phase. As the previous work, this one is also engineered and directed by the Higher Institute of Art Conservation and Restoration together with the Superintendence of the Cultural Heritage Office of the City of Rome.

The complexity of the work of art, its exposure to natural and environmental agents and acts of vandalism have rendered the fountain delicate and fragile

and it needs to be kept under control and undergo periodic maintenance. A special structure with transparent windows will be put around the work site.

The impermeable protective layer of the basin will be removed because it is no longer functional, the basin will be repaired and cleaned, plastered and a protection of travertine blocks will be applied on the rim of the basin.

The fountain was designed and built by Gian Lorenzo Bernini between 1648 and 1651, under the papacy of Innocent X and it was an ornament of this important city piazza constructed on the site of the former Domiziano stadium, at the time the residence of the family of the Pope.

“Kenwood House to Close for £5m Restoration,” Camden New Journal, 01/19/2012

The priceless collection of artworks by Rembrandt, Van Dyke and Gainsborough kept in Kenwood House is set to spend nearly a year on the road as the Heath’s famous stately home closes its doors for a £5.3 million restoration project. The house, dating from the 1600s, will be closed from the start of April while vital roof repairs are done and the landmark cream facade is stripped down and repaired.

The art collection, left to the nation by Guinness brewing magnate Lord Iveagh, will travel to three galleries in America in a year-long tour called the Art of Kenwood in London. The historic Vermeer will be put on display at the National Gallery, in Trafalgar Square.

English Heritage carries out regular maintenance but a comprehensive survey of the state of the house four years ago revealed some worrying damage. Swathes of slate will have to be replaced, which English Heritage is currently sourcing from the Welsh quarries architect Robert Adam bought tiles from. Other crucial work will include replacing the ornamental skylights that bathe the sweeping staircases in sunshine.

“Rubens Masterpiece ‘Made for Market,’” The Art Newspaper, 01/17/2012

The restoration of a painting by Rubens from London’s Courtauld Gallery has revealed that the work was probably not a commission, but created for the speculative market.

Cain Slaying Abel, around 1608-09 is due to go back on display next month, following an 11-month project to clean the work and address structural issues. The money for the treatment came from the Bank of America Art Conservation Project.

The fact that the oak boards are made from sapwood (the outermost, younger wood) has led conservators to speculate that the painting was for the art market. “It was typical for a client to buy panels for the artist, and in doing so, [the client] would normally buy the best quality materials,” says the conservator Kate Stonor, who explains that sapwood is not ideal because it is soft and sweet, making it prone to woodworm.

“We think Rubens bought the panels himself and chose the ‘cheap and cheerful’ option,” says the conservator Clare Richardson, who also worked on the piece. Aside from areas of paint loss and layers of varnish that had yellowed, and, in some cases, became opaque, the most pressing concern related to the work’s cradle, a late 19th- or early 20th-century addition that was restricting the panel’s natural movement and was full of woodworm. The glue was beginning to fail and the panel was starting to pull away from the cradle, causing an unnatural inward curve of the boards, which resembled a miniature mountain range.

“After Being Stricken by Drought, Istanbul Yields Ancient Treasure,” New York Times, 01/23/2012

ISTANBUL — On a long-farmed peninsula jutting into Lake Kucukcekmece, 13 miles west of the city center, archaeologists have made an extraordinary find. The find is Bathonea, a substantial harbor town dating from the second century B.C.

Discovered in 2007 after a drought lowered the lake’s water table, it has been yielding a trove of relics from the fourth to the sixth centuries A.D. After the drought exposed parts of a well-preserved sea wall nearly two and a half miles long, the archaeologists saw that the harbor had been equipped with docks, buildings and a jetty, probably dating to the fourth century.

Other discoveries rapidly followed. In the last dig season alone, the archaeologists uncovered port walls, elaborate buildings, an enormous cistern, a Byzantine church and stone roads span-

ning more than 1,000 years of occupation. Since then, a second, older port on the peninsula's eastern side was found, its Greek influences suggesting that it dated to about the second century B.C.

Because the archaeologists are at the beginning of a multiyear dig at a site not known from historical sources, they are hesitant to draw many conclusions. Even the name Bathonea is a placeholder, inspired by two ancient references: the first-century historian Pliny the Elder's "Natural History," which refers to the river feeding the lake as Bathynias; and a work by a ninth-century Byzantine monk, Theophanes, who called the region Bathyasos

“Remarkable Discovery Could Shed New Light on Mona Lisa,” The Telegraph, 02/01/2012

A painting thought to be the earliest copy of Leonardo da Vinci's masterpiece and created alongside the original has been discovered in Madrid's Prado museum. The Prado painting was long thought to be one of dozens of later replicas of the masterpiece made in the centuries after Da Vinci's death but it is now believed to have been painted by one of his key pupils working alongside the master.

The background had been painted over in black for unknown reasons sometime in the late 18th century, therefore ruining the aesthetic and disguising its importance. As the later paint layers were stripped away, the appearance of a Tuscan landscape in remarkable condition and of such striking resemblance to the original led to further investigations.

Ana González Mozo, a technical specialist at the Prado, presented the findings at a conference on Leonardo da Vinci at London's National Gallery last month. She said that what was most exciting about the Prado replica is what it reveals about Da Vinci's original. In the Madrid copy, which is close in size to the original, there are areas that are better preserved than in the Louvre painting.

What is more, a comparison of infrared reflectography on the two paintings, a process enabling conservators to peer beneath the surface, revealed similar sketching beneath the paint on both. Experts believe this suggests that the original and the copy were begun at the same time and painted next to each other, as the work evolved, even quite possibly while the model was present.

“Bank of America Merrill Lynch Art Conservation Project Helps Restore 20 Works of Art across Globe,” ArtDaily.org, 02/02/2012

The Bank of America Merrill Lynch Art Conservation Project is an extension of the company's global commitment to supporting the arts. At an event at London's Courtauld Gallery on January 31st, Bank of America Merrill Lynch announced this year's conservation funding recipients through its unique Art Conservation Project.

The Art Conservation Project will see the restoration of 20 art works and artifacts with important cultural and historical value from 19 countries. The 2012 award selections for EMEA include one of Leonardo Da Vinci's earliest manuscripts at the Castello Sforzesco in Milan; five Marc Chagall paintings at the Tel Aviv Museum of Art and a collection of 1st century BC Urartian jewellery at the Rezan Has Museum in Istanbul.

The programme aims to strengthen public awareness about the importance of art conservation, and the value that it holds in underpinning museum and gallery programming throughout the world. At last night's event, guests received a preview of the newly restored Rubens' 'Cain Slaying Abel'. This iconic work was restored as part of the bank's inaugural project and will be on public display at the Courtauld Gallery.

“Ghent Altarpiece Gets Own Interactive Web Site,” New York Times, 02/24/2012

A group of American and European art officials announced on Friday that as part of an emergency conservation of the Ghent Altarpiece that has been taking place over the last year, the work has been photographed centimeter by centimeter at extremely high resolution for the first time.

And the results are now available to the public at an interactive Web site, “Closer to Van Eyck: Rediscovering the Ghent Altarpiece,” that allows viewers to zoom in close enough to see tiny trees and cathedral windows no bigger than the cracks that have marked the altarpiece's surface since its completion in 1432.

“We deliberately chose an open-source approach to the images, with the hope that it will spur more projects using interactive, high-resolution imaging

techniques for the technical study of works of art,” said Ron Spronk, a professor of art history at Queen's University in Kingston, Ontario, and at Radboud University in Nijmegen, the Netherlands, who led the Web site project.

The Web site – a collaborative project of the Royal Institute for Cultural Heritage, Lukasweb and the Vrije Universiteit Brussel – was created with the help of a grant from the Getty Foundation and with support from the Netherlands Organization for Scientific Research. As part of the restoration project, the altarpiece, whose home is the Villa Chapel in St. Bavo Cathedral in Ghent, was removed from its glass enclosure and temporarily dismantled.

The Web site shows the altarpiece in both its open and closed positions and, besides conventional photography, uses infrared reflectography and x-radiography, allowing viewers to see beneath the work's surface to its underpainting.

“Cracking the Curious Case of Picasso's Ghost Subject,” New York Times, 03/01/2012

A 1904 Picasso hanging in the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum in New York depicts a skeletal woman, her eyes hollow, her cheeks sunken as she presses down with all her might on an iron. The painting, “Woman Ironing,” from Picasso's Blue Period, has long been considered one of the institution's most important works.

It has also been one of its greatest mysteries. For years conservators have known that beneath the surface lies the ghost of a figure – a three-quarter-length view of a man with a mustache – which Picasso had painted over. “Picasso often reused canvases because at that point in his life he didn't have much money to buy supplies,” said the Picasso biographer John Richardson. “It could be an image from a previous period.”

Carol Stringari, the Guggenheim's chief conservator and deputy director, explained that though the painting has been X-rayed, the museum hasn't had the resources to analyze it properly. Still, over the years curators, historians and scholars have speculated about whom the figure might be. Now a grant from the Bank of America's Art Conservation Project will give the Guggenheim enough money to try to find out.

“With these resources we can

do scholarly and scientific research and some subtle treatment,” Ms. Stringari said.

“Diego Rivera Sketches Undergo Restoration in Mexico,” Latin American Herald Tribune, undated

MEXICO CITY – Four sketches made by Mexican artist Diego Rivera in the 1930s for New York’s Rockefeller Center are being restored with a grant from Bank of America, the Diego Rivera-Anahuacalli Museum said. The sketches, which are part of the holdings of the Diego Rivera-Anahuacalli Museum, were deteriorating due to the effects of humidity and the temperature in the gallery, the museum said in a statement.

The works being restored, all of which are on paper, are “El hombre en el cruce de caminos” (sketches a and b), “El agua, origen de la vida” and “El hombre tecnico.”

“Chatsworth’s £14m Restoration Unveiled,” Yorkshire Post, 03/10/2012

For more than a year, this magnificent country estate has been shrouded in steel while workers took on the vast task of a £14m restoration project. But now the last pieces of scaffolding at Chatsworth have been removed, in preparation for the 300-year-old house opening for the new season tomorrow.

This phase of the ongoing “masterplan” has seen the conservation and restoration of two most visible façades of the house restored to their original glory, following a year-long project to repair and clean the sandstone exterior.

Work took place to reverse the effects of hundreds of years of weather damage and included cleaning more than 2,200 square metres of stonework; restoring 21 two-metre-high urns on the top of the house; re-pointing the 20 metre high facades with tonnes of lime mortar; and the re-gilding of 42 windows. All the new stone used to repair the house comes from the same quarry that provided the stone to build Chatsworth in the 1820s, when the house was remodelled by the sixth Duke of Devonshire.

“Vermeer’s Woman in Blue Regains its Hue,” The Art Newspaper, 03/05/2012

Visitors to the Rijksmuseum will soon be able to see Vermeer’s newly restored Woman in Blue Reading a Letter, 1663-64, when it returns home following a Japanese tour which funded the

work’s restoration. Conserving a painting simply to regain its visual impact is a luxury, but the opportunity came with a Japanese request to borrow the work.

The work was done at the Rijksmuseum in 2010, just before Woman in Blue made its first trip to Asia, as part of the touring exhibition “Communication: Visualising Human Connection in the Age of Vermeer”. Ige Verslype, a conservator at the Rijksmuseum, acknowledges that Woman in Blue had “suffered severely since its conception” following several restorations, the most recent of which was in 1962.

Yellowed varnish, discoloured retouching and numerous, tiny paint losses interfered with the original blue hues, delicate details and overall legibility of the work. The picture was first subjected to a detailed examination, which included taking five minute paint samples. Most of the varnish and retouchings were then painstakingly removed.

Most dramatic is the removal of the varnish which has restored the work’s original cool tones and enhanced its visibility. The change is particularly striking in the area of the blue jacket in shadow. It is now also evident that Vermeer used slightly different shades of blue on the jacket and the chair top.

“Lovingly Restored Keith Haring Bathroom Mural Open to the Public,” Artinfo.com, 03/08/2012

Less than a year before his untimely death from AIDS in 1990, the prolific artist Keith Haring took part in a site-specific exhibition at the LGBT Community Center in New York’s Greenwich Village, electing to create a hyper-sexual mural in the building’s second story bathroom. His piece at 208 West 13th Street, titled “Once Upon a Time,” covered virtually every available space in the room with his distinctive cartoon-like figures painted in thick black lines, the imagery among the most sexually explicit of the 31-year-old artist’s career.

Though long left to deteriorate out of view, the so-called Keith Haring Bathroom has just emerged from a \$25,000 conservation process and is open to the public through March 31. Amazingly, though the mural was originally only intended to be a short-term installation, it “has held up remarkably well – considering,” according to Harriet Irgang Alden, conservation director at Rustin

Levenson Art Conservation Associates, the group that handled the restoration.

The former lavatory, which was stripped of its toilets, sinks, and stalls, will be used as a meeting room. Removing all that plumbing and partitioning has presented some other conservation challenges though.

Many of the bathroom’s walls now features many large holes that, once patched up, will constitute conspicuous gaps in the frenzied mural. The question of what to do with those blank areas will have to wait until the \$20,000 required for the second phase of the restoration are raised.

“Philip Guston’s 1935 Mural *The Inquisition* in Morelia, Mexico Undergoes Restoration Thanks to U.S. Interest,” Virtual Strategy Magazine, 03/12/2012

Hidden behind a false wall for almost 40 years after its creation in 1935, “The Inquisition (also known as “The Struggle against War and Terror”), a 1024 square foot true fresco by renowned artists Philip Guston and Reuben Kadish, captured the attention of New York artist Leah Poller, who dedicated 10 years to bringing attention to this major work, which is finally undergoing restoration under the auspices of INAH (Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia, Mexico City).

Reflecting the socially driven Mexican muralist messaging and supported by a powerful controversial imagery, it was threatened with destruction shortly after completion. Miraculously spared by being hidden behind a hastily constructed false wall in the Museo Regional de Michoacan (Morelia), its accidental discovery following a ceiling leak in 1973 rendered it visible once again; nonetheless, it continued to languish in the rarely visited second courtyard of the Museum for another 30 years.

In 2003, New York sculptor Leah Poller was invited to exhibit in this same museum. She recognized the mural’s importance and joined forces with fellow sculptor and renowned Mexican cultural activist Arquitecto Arturo Macias to create IACI, Inc. (Intercambio de Arte y Cultura Internacionale AC), to begin a program to re-acquaint both Mexico and the US with the work. It took several more years for the Mexican government to allocate funds for the restoration program.