

Icon NEWS

THE MAGAZINE OF THE INSTITUTE OF CONSERVATION • JUNE 2022 • ISSUE 100



100 issues of Icon News

Also in this issue

Replica buttons • Career Advice 2 • A science bite • Course progress.... and more besides

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JUNE 2022 Issue 100



From the Editor

Incredible as it may seem, we have reached our hundredth issue. Looking through all the past editions of *Icon News* has brought to mind the many authors I have encountered over the years and their different voices as they have reported from stores and studios, laboratory, classroom, office and site, telling us about everything from stuffed animals to cathedrals, wielding hi-tech equipment or humble cotton wool bud. Thank you one and all. And of course, keep up the good work for the next hundred issues!

This look back on the past has also nudged me to revisit the reasons why *Icon* was set up and what we are aiming to achieve in terms of the public benefit that our organisation delivers. It's useful to remind ourselves of our purpose from time to time as identified by our Charitable Objects:-

- To advance the education of the public by research into and the promotion of the conservation of items and collections of items of cultural, aesthetic, historic and scientific value; and
- To preserve and conserve items and collections of items of cultural, aesthetic, historic and scientific value.

Icon's latest *Strategy* takes this idea of sharing and promoting the public benefit of conservation as its starting point and dovetails very nicely with this description of our guiding purpose. You can read the new *Strategy* in full in our Chief Executive's column.

Lynette Gill



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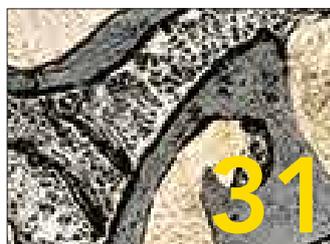
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Cover image
Detail of the pattern on an 18th man's embroidered waistcoat
Image: © Victoria and Albert Museum, London

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Whilst every effort is made to ensure accuracy, the editors and Icon Board of Trustees can accept no responsibility for the content expressed in *Icon News*; it is solely that of individual contributors

Deadlines for adverts and editorial

For the October 2022 issue
Tuesday 2 August

For the December issue
Monday 3 October

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professional update

From the Chief Executive



Sara Crofts on Icon's new Strategy

There is something fitting about the coincidence that we are launching our new Strategy at the same time as we celebrate the 100th edition of *Icon News*. Reaching the 100th issue is a significant milestone, and we should take a moment to reflect. As a publication *Icon News* has charted the first footsteps and then the growing confidence of the Institute of Conservation as it has grown in status as the

professional body for conservation professionals in the UK over the last seventeen years. Many of you will be able to trace the trajectory of your careers through the articles and the reports of Group and Network activities, while for more recent joiners the magazine continues to provide an early opportunity to see your work in print. *Icon News* is also a fantastic reference resource as all of the PDF copies can be accessed via the Icon website:

<https://www.icon.org.uk/resources/icon-news.html>

And of course, reaching the 100th edition of *Icon News* is also a personal milestone for our editor, Lynette Gill, who has been at the helm since the beginning. Being an editor is a tough job, requiring a careful blend of firmness and flexibility in order to cajole content out of willing but time-poor contributors (which, I confess, includes me).

Many thanks for all your hard work, Lynette And let's raise a toast to the centenary edition of *Icon News*!

In April 2022 we published the new *Icon Strategy*¹, which is the culmination of nearly eighteen months of learning and thinking fuelled by conversations that took place in the Boardroom, in (virtual) workshops, informally in various meetings and on social media. We captured valuable knowledge about the current operating environment in our *Horizon Scanning* report² and we also looked to the future and tried to imagine what we hope the conservation profession will become by 2030, and the steps that we need to take to get there.

As a result the new Strategy sets out Icon's aim to achieve wider recognition of the value that conservation brings to society. We will also seek to ensure that the work of conservation professionals is recognised and respected.

Over the coming years we will build on the work of our *Values of Conservation*³ project and will demonstrate and share the

many ways in which conservation brings benefits to people and society through the holistic care of objects, buildings and collections. We will focus our energy on demonstrating the positive impact of conservation, increasing understanding of the profession, and raising its public profile. This will lead to greater respect for conservators, heritage scientists and related conservation professionals. A more visible conservation profession will also have greater influence in the major debates that impact on the care of our shared cultural heritage.

We have identified four key audiences for our work:

- the public
- stakeholders (including funders, cultural leaders and policy-makers)
- young people
- the profession (members and non-members)

How are we going to do this?

To deliver our ambition and to ensure that our work makes a positive difference for our members and for society, we have identified a set of high-level priorities and the outcomes that we will seek to achieve.

A. Champion cultural heritage and the value of conservation

Audience: stakeholders and the public

Clients, stakeholders and members of the public will understand the value of conservation and will seek out appropriate professionals to care for their objects, buildings and collections. Icon will be recognised as the authoritative source of advice on conservation policy and practice and as the leading advocate for conservation and collections care.

We will:

1. Deliver impactful advocacy campaigns that increase public understanding of conservation e.g. Conservation in Action
2. Engage with Government and sector policy-makers, commissioning research to provide an evidence-base where needed
3. Extend our influence and increase our profile through ambassadorial activities such as creating and supporting a Patrons Scheme, developing Icon Fellowship and seeking honours for conservation professionals
4. Promote the Conservation Register to clients and work with like-minded professional bodies to make it easier for clients to access competent conservation professionals

B. Extend our reach within the UK and internationally

Audience: the public and the profession

More people will value and engage with cultural heritage and conservation. Icon will be strengthened and enriched through having a broader range of conservation professionals within its global membership.

We will:

1. Nurture all those who wish to support conservation and seek out ways to bring a wider range of people into contact with Icon
2. Champion the value that conservation brings to all societies in all places
3. Exchange information and expertise with new and existing partners

4. Build collaborative relationships with like-minded organisations to capitalise on opportunities
5. Aim to attract, and where appropriate accredit, currently under-represented conservation specialisms and related disciplines

C. Maintain high standards in conservation practice

Audience: the profession and the public

Conservation professionals will have the skills, knowledge and judgement to care for objects, buildings and collections consistently and thoughtfully. Clients, stakeholders and members of the public will understand the value of accreditation and the importance of professional standards and ethics.

We will:

1. Work with education providers to ensure that training courses meet the needs of employers in the cultural heritage sector
2. Provide high quality opportunities for ongoing professional development
3. Nurture the exchange of knowledge and ideas through our Groups and Networks
4. Continue to develop and promote Icon Accreditation, making it more accessible to members and more attractive to clients, commissioners and employers
5. Investigate the potential for chartership

D. Develop conservation as an inclusive and rewarding career

Audience: young people and the profession

Young people will be inspired to pursue a career in conservation. The profession will become more representative of the society it serves. Conservation professionals will be better rewarded for their skills, expertise and professionalism.

We will:

1. Work with partners and develop resources to inspire school pupils to consider a career in conservation and heritage science
2. Work with partners to build a more diverse and equal cultural heritage sector
3. Support the continued development of vocational routes into the conservation profession
4. Strive to overcome the barriers that make conservation a less rewarding career than it should be
5. Ensure that there are opportunities for emerging professionals to move from training into rewarding paid employment

E. Strengthen our Institute

Audience: the profession

Icon will strengthen its operational capacity and will create a solid foundation from which to grow. Long-term sustainability in the business will arise from:

- **Financial resilience** – developing a stable and effective business, which is robustly governed and able to support growth through increasing our reserves

- **Environmental responsibility** – reducing our organisational footprint and offering leadership and guidance to the profession
- **Social responsibility** – diversifying the profession and working to create a greater feeling of inclusion and belonging within the membership

We will also:

1. Prioritise membership growth by providing a compelling membership offer and ensuring that Icon is a welcoming place for all conservators, heritage scientists and the many others who play a role in conservation, regardless of their specialism or their working environment
2. Enhance our operational effectiveness by welcoming feedback from members and stakeholders and by embracing a culture of continuous improvement within the organisation
3. Foster a greater sense of collective responsibility and ownership in our Institute by encouraging more members to get involved in our work – at every level – and fully recognising the valuable contribution that members make to the profession.

I hope that members will welcome this new *Strategy* and the outcomes it seeks to achieve. I also hope that you will want to work with the staff and trustees to deliver the various strands of activity, whether individually or through your valued participation in Icon's Groups, Networks and committees. As always, I very much welcome your feedback and suggestions. Please do get in touch with me via feedback@icon.org.uk.

Icon's vision is to protect, preserve and promote our treasured cultural heritage through cultivating skilled conservation professionals, supporting meaningful collaboration across the cultural heritage sector, and delivering public benefit through engagement and advocacy.

Icon's mission is to represent and support the practice and profession of conservation by promoting the public value of caring for cultural heritage and upholding high standards and ethics in conservation practice. Icon ensures that the guardians and owners of objects, buildings and collections can access knowledgeable and passionate professionals who will help them safeguard the physical remains of our past for the future.

- 1 <https://www.icon.org.uk/about-us/our-work/icon-strategy.html>
- 2 <https://www.icon.org.uk/resource-report/horizon-scanning.html>
- 3 <https://www.icon.org.uk/campaigns/current-campaigns/value-of-conservation.html>

UKRAINE

In another strange twist of coincidence, the first edition of *Icon News* (published in November 2005) contained this snippet about the *Hague Convention*:

'As the Government consults over the possible ratification of the 1954 *Hague Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict*, it is timely that Euromed's Regional Management Support Unit publishes the outcome from the April workshop held in Amman, Jordan, on '*Cultural Heritage Management in Times of Armed Conflict*'... which summarises the *Message from Amman* with regards to future actions to promote the *Hague Convention and its Protocols*. It may not be a surprise that the participants of the workshop strongly support the widest achievable ratification of the *Hague Convention*.'

It is with great sadness that we find ourselves thinking afresh about the *Hague Convention* as we now watch the terrible events unfolding in Ukraine. The trustees, staff and members of Icon are devastated by the ongoing suffering of the Ukrainian people and the sad loss of civilian lives and livelihoods. In common with many other cultural organisations, Icon published a statement of solidarity on our website. We have also taken steps to try to offer practical support where possible. We are:

- Maintaining a list of initiatives to help protect and care for cultural heritage in Ukraine during and after the conflict - <https://www.icon.org.uk/resource/support-for-ukraine-conserving-cultural-heritage.html>
- Engaging in international policy work with a coalition of other heritage organisations including UNESCO UK, SAVE Europe's Heritage, INTO and World Monuments Fund in Britain
- Facilitating members and colleagues to collaborate on three key topics through an online platform called Basecamp. The topics are material aid; guidance; and sponsoring refugees.

A great deal of the good work being carried out via the Basecamp teams is being delivered by a spirited group of volunteers. I would particularly commend the energy and commitment of Dr Donatella Banti, who was instrumental in catalysing action and continues to act as one of the key co-ordinators. Katya Belaia-Selzer has also played an important role in helping to connect conservators fleeing Ukraine with work opportunities and offers of accommodation in the UK. Many others have contributed conservation materials and equipment or helped to write guidance, which will hopefully ensure that Ukraine's many cultural treasures are safeguarded for future generations.

NEWS FROM THE GROUPS

Archaeology Group

The Archaeology Group was delighted with the response to our first two lunchtime lectures of the year. A full review of each event can be found in this issue. Thank you to committee member Emma Smith, who was fortunate to see the Gold of the Great Steppe exhibition and had an early view of the Galloway Hoard soon after it was first excavated. Recordings of both events will be available to all members in a few months via the Group Members page on the Icon website.

Our next online event will be on the conservation of archaeological glass, celebrating the United Nations International Year of Glass. This will be in June and promises to be an interesting programme with five presentations including an overview of the Beirut Glass project by conservators at the British Museum. The full programme will appear in Iconnect. We will also be holding our AGM at the same event; there will be several vacancies for new members, and we hope to welcome them on to the committee then.

Progress on *First Aid for Finds* continues with compilation of all the reviewers' comments so that they can be incorporated in the next draft. We were able to hold an in-person meeting with the co-authors in Cardiff in April to discuss the structure, design and timetable for the remainder of the year.

Suggestions for future events and workshops are always welcome. Please watch Iconnect, Twitter (@ICONArchaeology) and the website for further announcements. We always love to hear about your current archaeological conservation projects big or small; please tag us in your posts and follow us on Twitter to see what everyone else is up to!

Charlotte Wilkinson ACR

Icon AG Communications Rep

Ceramics and Glass Group

After having a little rest at the start of this year, the Ceramics and Glass Group are back in action planning for the year ahead! We have a variety of events in the making, both in-person and online. A few for which you can already save the date include:

Stain Reduction of Ceramics Workshop -

August 2022 London, UK

We are very excited to announce that we will be hosting two in-person Stain Reduction Workshops in August 2022. This is a follow-up to the very successful online lecture *Stain Reduction of Ceramics* delivered by Lauren Fair (Head of Objects Conservation at Winterthur Museum, Garden & Library) in November 2021, and it will give participants the opportunity to further learn and put into practice the theories and techniques which Lauren introduced.

Each workshop will be two days in length and be held in UCL's conservation lab. Tickets will go on sale shortly; please visit our webpage for further information.

Tentative Workshop Dates:

Tuesday 2 – Wednesday 3 August 2022

Thursday 4 - Friday 5 August 2022

Autumn Meeting

September 2022 Knole, Sevenoaks, Kent

The Autumn Meeting of the Ceramics and Glass Group will be hosted by the National Trust's Conservation Studio at Knole Park on Friday 30 September 2022. The day will include presentations by four guest speakers on the theme of *Conservation of Objects for Exhibition*, CGG's AGM, and guided tours of the Conservation Workshop. Delegates will also be free to visit Knole House, walk in the park, and eat lunch!

We are also hoping to broadcast the AGM online for anyone who is unable to attend in-person. Details of this will be confirmed closer to the date.

If anyone is interested in participating as a guest speaker, please contact us at iconcgg@gmail.com.

We are very excited by these opportunities to once again be able to meet in-person. Hope to see you there!

In the meanwhile, stay in touch with us at:

Twitter: [@ICONCGG](https://twitter.com/ICONCGG)

Facebook: [ICON Ceramics and Glass Group](https://www.facebook.com/ICONCeramicsandGlassGroup)

Instagram: [@iconcgg](https://www.instagram.com/iconcgg)

Marisa Kalvins & Han Zhou (Rose)

Ceramics & Glass Group

Historic Interiors Group

We were not able to have our annual conference last year due to Covid restrictions but we are hoping that we can encourage the original speakers to participate in a series of online talks about historic interiors in libraries. We did have two interesting and very popular online talks, *A Prison's Colourful Past: Revealing the History of Cell Painting at Eastern State Penitentiary, Philadelphia* by Elizabeth Trumbull and *Restoration of the Palace of Westminster Encaustic Tile Floors* by Patrick Duerden.

Our AGM was delayed until May 5 as our speaker, Rachel Morley, Director of Friends of Friendless Churches, was not able to make the earlier date. However, her rescheduled talk entitled, *What have we got to lose?* was a whistle-stop tour of church interiors discussing their development, dereliction and destruction as well as the work of Friends of Friendless Churches.

We are also planning a number of outdoor and online events: in June, our popular Historic Interiors Quiz Night at the George Inn in Southwark, London and in July, a possible visit to the Chinese House at Stowe and Stowe School to view the conservation work on the painted decoration. The online series of talks on Historic Libraries mentioned above is being planned for September.

Call for committee members: we are looking for new members to join our committee and if interested, please contact clsitwell@gmail.com.

Heritage Science Group

Heritage Science research

Nottingham Trent University has earned a Queen's Anniversary Prize for its heritage science research! The heritage science community is celebrating a big achievement: Heritage Science research by the ISAAC group at Nottingham Trent University has won the highest form of national recognition for innovation, excellence and social impact open to a UK academic institution: a Queen's Anniversary Prize. Find out more in the special piece we have written for this 100th Icon News issue!

Icon News 'Science bites'

In this issue you can also find the third 'Science Bite'. Entitled *The Mary Rose hull* it is about using computer science to understand conservation issues; Karoline Sophie Hennum (Conservator at The Historic Dockyard Chatham) presents a summary of her recent research article about the computational modelling of the drying of waterlogged wood treated with Polyethylene Glycol (PEG).

HSG welcomes more contributions from Icon members to publish summaries of your articles with scientific content, with the aim of disseminating Heritage Science, give visibility to your research projects and connect with other conservation professionals. The summaries should be up to 1000 words, and you may also include two or three images or diagrams that will help get the message across clearly. They should be written in a simple and engaging language, in the spirit of the *Heritage Bites*. Please send your summaries to iconhsg@gmail.com and include your name, affiliation, email and details of the full publication.

Events

Icon's Environmental Sustainability Network/Heritage Science Group organised the webinar 'Sustainability in Science, Labs and Beyond' delivered by Martin Farley, where fifty attendees learned how to make their heritage science laboratory or conservation studio more sustainable through the Sustainable Labs Framework (LEAF). The recording is available on the Network's page of Icon's website.

Liaising with other Icon Groups

As part of our new strategy, the Heritage Science Group has started a round of discussions with other Icon Groups to collaborate more closely and organise joint activities. If you would like to get involved or have any suggestions, please don't hesitate to get in touch!

Changes in the HSG committee

The HSG committee is bidding farewell to Hayley Simon, who is stepping down as our Social Media Officer. Thank you, Hayley, for all your work growing the audience for our social media! You can follow the Group on Twitter [@ICONSci](https://twitter.com/ICONSci)

Keeping in touch

Finally, keep an eye out for our notices in Iconnect, on our webpage, and on Twitter ([@ICONSci](https://twitter.com/ICONSci)) and get in touch via our Group email address (iconhsg@gmail.com) if you would like to become more involved in the Group's activities.

Lucia Pereira-Pardo

HSG Committee Communications Officer

Icon Scotland Group

Training and events

Icon Scotland was delighted to hold another popular 'Paper conservators in Scotland news and ideas exchange' on 4 May. The brainchild of Helen Creasy ACR from the Scottish Conservation Studio, the primary aim of these events, which have become an annual fixture in Scotland's conservation calendar, is to better connect the paper conservation community in Scotland. Paper conservators working in or close to Scotland give five minute presentations to their peers, and receive useful feedback and suggestions.

Other happenings

Icon Scotland sits on Museums Galleries Scotland's (MGS) Stakeholder group, along with representatives from other sector organisations including the Museums Association and the Association of Independent Museums. MGS's Empire and Slavery in Scotland consultation is drawing to a close, with recommendations currently being drawn up for submission to the Scottish Government in May 2022. This will also act as a reminder to Parliament that although this was a parliamentary commitment, no further budget is attached as yet for follow-on work to the consultation/recommendations.

The Museums Association's annual conference will be held in

Edinburgh in November 2022, and we look forward to welcoming the wider sector to Scotland. The MA also is about to undertake a revision of their disposals toolkit; if you are interested in getting involved, contact alistair@museumsassociation.org.

Icon Scotland is also offering its support and encouragement to the project that Industrial Museums Scotland is embarking on with the Imperial War Museum, which includes undertaking a programme of conservation of industrial objects. To deliver this strand, an Icon internship in Industrial Conservation has been created. Gretel Evans ACR is the Project Conservator, Sarah Gerrish ACR will act as internship supervisor, and large object training will be delivered by Jim Mitchell ACR. It is hoped that additional training resources will be an output of the project and Icon Scotland is delighted that a light is being thrown on Scotland's industrial heritage.

Gwen Thomas, chair of the Icon Scotland Group, represented the Group at the annual meeting of the Edinburgh Collections Response Network, on 29 March. This informal network functions to share expertise and resources about disaster planning, and was a particularly valuable source of support and information during the pandemic.

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Contact and keep in touch

We are always delighted to have new members in the group, but remember that all you need to do in order to receive the emailed Scotland Group Iconnects is tick the Group on your Icon membership form.

You can also see our latest updates on social media: our blog is at <https://iconscotland.wordpress.com>, our Facebook page is <https://en-gb.facebook.com/iconscotlandgroup> and our Twitter feed is @icon_scotland. Our general email address is admin@iconscotland.org and comments and suggestions for events can be emailed to events@iconscotland.org

Paintings Group

So far this year the Paintings Group has hosted a wide range of talks that have been well attended online. The first was *Paintings Group: Operation Night Watch*, Rijksmuseum with Petria Noble on 23 February. Petria described some of the results of the research into Rembrandt's *The Night Watch*, which took place over the past two years. She also discussed the future treatment of the painting which has just begun. There is a short review of the talk in this issue of *Icon News*. On 26 April Dr Juliet Carey gave a presentation on *Storing and Staging: Baron Edmond de Rothschild's boxes*. Juliet's talk focussed on the boxes commissioned by Baron Edmond de Rothschild used to house some of Waddesdon Manor's collection when not on display. The boxes were originally intended for porcelain, small sculptures and antiquities, and play an active role not only in protection but also in categorising and staging these objects.

Later this year we will hear from Alice Limb (Hamilton Kerr Institute Intern) on some Carracci drawings and paintings, and from Anna Krekeler (Rijksmuseum) on Pieter de Hooch.

If anyone is interested in reviewing any of our future talks, please get in touch. You will receive a copy of one of our publications in return.

Don't forget to follow us on twitter and Instagram.

Icon Paintings Group Committee

icon.paintingsgroup@googlemail.com

@IconPaintings - twitter

@iconpaintingsgroup – Instagram

Icon Textile Group

Latest News

As 2022 progresses at pace, so too does our online and in person offerings. Textile Group members have been treated to numerous online talks on various subjects, if you have missed any, simply type 'Icon Textiles Group – YouTube' in your web search bar where you will be directed to the growing number of recordings, on our very own dedicated YouTube channel.

The Group are interested to hear from members who are able to support and host Ukrainian textile conservators seeking refuge and work in the UK. We would like to be able to help with this process in any way we can. Please get in touch if you are already in the process of becoming a host, as we may be able to share your experience in order to help others wanting to do the same.

In This Issue

Textile Conservator at the V&A, Hannah Sutherland, writes an article about her work on an 18th century waistcoat with many missing buttons. The waistcoat is included in the current menswear exhibition at the V&A, *Fashioning Masculinities: The Art of Menswear* which runs until 6 November. Hannah discusses how she worked with Furniture Conservator Zoe Allen at the V&A in order to produce replica resin buttons. The article discusses the decision-making process, the experiments and the technical details of this project.

Forthcoming Textile Group Events

Textile Group AGM – as this edition of *Icon News* lands on your doormat the Group's AGM will be in the offing; the theme this year is *'Working with Large Painted Textiles'*. The meeting will be once again held via Zoom so that the event is accessible to all. Please check your Iconnects for the latest information on how to attend.

Back to Basics - In-person training on the topic of *'Care of Historic Carpets: Understanding Structure, Surveys & Cleaning'*, led by Ksynia Marko & Glyn Charnock at the Museum of Carpet, Kidderminster. Date: 27-28 July 2022. Limited to sixteen people, the cost of the course is £200, which includes lunch and refreshments. Participants will be asked to arrange their own accommodation for the duration of the course.

Group visit to Heritage Trimmings & the Museum of Making, Derby. Date TBC.

As the year's events are confirmed details will be posted on our Textile Group section of the Icon website, look out for Iconnects and see our Twitter or Facebook page.

Other Textile Related Events

Royal School of Needlework – For a varied and interesting selection of online talks on the topic of all things embroidery, head over to the RSN website (www.royal-needlework.org.uk) where new talks are being added all the time, plus previously recorded ones you can watch again.

Sartorial Society Series – A digital seminar series exploring the history of dress, fashion & bodily adornment. Season 5 is now in progress, there are many online talks across various dates in 2022, previous seminars can be seen for up to a month on their website: www.sartorialsocietyseries.com

Writing for Icon News

If you would like to submit an article or review an event, details of how to write for *Icon News* can be found here: <https://icon.org.uk/what-is-conservation/writing-icon> or by contacting Terri Dewhurst – see address below.

Keeping in touch with the Textile Group

Due to publication deadlines, it is not always possible to mention all events so please check the Icon website, Facebook page, Twitter feed and Iconnect for details. If you have anything that you would like mentioned in our communications please contact the Textile Group's News Editor: Terri.Dewhurst@nationaltrust.org.uk

Textiles Group email: icontextilegroup@gmail.com

Twitter: @ICON_Textiles

Facebook: [Icon Textile Group](https://www.facebook.com/IconTextileGroup)

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Emma Telford ACR writes:

'Damage to cultural property belonging to any people whatsoever means damage to the cultural heritage of all mankind' - part of the preamble of the 1954 Hague Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict, the first international treaty with a world-wide vocation.

I was pleasantly surprised when an email from Icon dropped into my inbox with a link to a statement declaring support and solidarity for Ukraine, expressing serious concern not only about loss of life but also for the cultural heritage that is at risk in that country. I have long thought that Icon could be more vocal about current affairs that touch on our professional body's remit of *'championing the care of cultural heritage'* without in any way becoming partisan or party political, and I have sometimes communicated this in the past.

Why has Icon never put a statement like this out before? Right now, there is a war in Yemen that has been ongoing for more than seven years. We don't hear so much about it on the BBC or any of our legacy media platforms. Unfortunately, it's one where the UK is profiting via arms sales to Saudi Arabia, and simultaneously sending humanitarian aid to Yemen. UNICEF have described it as *'one of the world's worst humanitarian crises'*. According to political analyst Ben Norton *'An estimated 377,000 Yemenis have died in the US-Saudi war on their country, and roughly 70% of deaths were children under age'*¹.

In 2016, shelling sparked a fire in Taiz's national museum in Yemen, burning the building and the vast majority of its historical treasures to the ground. *'Manuscripts, an ornate turban said to belong to an unknown but ancient king, old Qurans dating back more than 1,000 years, and private pistols of Imam Ahmed Hamid Al-Deen - the last Yemeni Imam (national religious leader) before Arab nationalists seized power in 1962 - have all been destroyed'*. It's heart-breaking to read about this. After the fire subsided *'small silver objects could be seen peeking out from amidst the layers of thick ash. The charred remains of manuscripts with blackened edges lay sprinkled above the now totally unrecognisable remains of relics'*².

In 2015, UNESCO launched an emergency response plan to safeguard Yemen cultural heritage after historic buildings in the Old City of Sana'a, a World Heritage Site, were bombed. The Old City of Saa'dah, submitted by Yemen as a tentative site to the World Heritage List, and the historic city of Baraqish were also damaged. UNESCO's Director General expressed distress that *'attacks are destroying Yemen's unique cultural heritage, which is the repository of people's identity, history and memory and an exceptional testimony to the achievements of the Islamic civilisation'*³.

To my knowledge, there has never been a statement from Icon about the destruction of cultural property in Yemen, Libya, Palestine, Afghanistan, Syria, and perhaps most egregiously, Iraq – often referred to as the cradle of civilisation. When I asked about this, Icon responded

acknowledging that this is a valid point and inviting me to write this piece, but also commenting *'there is a more direct connection this time, as both the UK and Ukraine are members of the Council of Europe (and there are multiple personal and professional links between our members and colleagues in eastern Europe)'*.

It's a reasonable point, I think, that there are likely to be personal and professional links between European nations. But I am uncomfortable with the comment more generally and disagree that membership of the Council of Europe signifies more connectedness. All of the countries I've mentioned here are members of UNESCO. Our museums and galleries are stuffed with artefacts from all over the world, not just Europe. Arguably our colonial past links us more strongly to countries outside Europe. At a time when Icon is working hard to encourage more diversity in our profession, I am perplexed by the suggestion that we have more of an obligation towards other European nations.

We should be very careful, I think, that the response of our professional body to the war in Ukraine cannot be construed as seeing it as more significant because it is European, and I therefore think that it is incumbent upon us to pay attention to other conflict zones around the world and support the protection of cultural property wherever it is.

1 <https://www.medialens.org/2022/doubling-down-on-double-standards-the-ukraine-propaganda-blitz/>

2 <https://www.middleeasteye.net/news/taiz-national-museum-reduced-ash-fighting>

3 <https://whc.unesco.org/en/news/1278>

HERITAGE OPEN DAYS

Be a Conservation Ambassador!

TV Programmes like *The Repair Shop* and *Secrets of the Museum* are more popular than ever - and so are 'meet the experts' events. With this in mind, Icon and Heritage Open Days (www.heritageopendays.org.uk) are collaborating on an exciting initiative which partners sites taking part in this year's Heritage Open Days with Icon members.

Together with our members, we plan to create a programme of *conservation in action* events across the country under the banner of 'Conservation Stations'. These events will be an excellent opportunity for us to demonstrate the value that conservation brings to society.

Why get involved?

- you will introduce more people to the work that conservators and heritage scientists do, and why this matters
- you will get an excellent opportunity to promote your business or your museum to a new audience
- you will extend your local networks, and potentially build a fruitful ongoing relationship with a local heritage site or attraction

What is Heritage Open Days?

Taking place every September, Heritage Open Days is England's largest festival of history and culture. It is

community-led, and it brings together thousands of people across the country to celebrate the heritage that matters to them - all for free! Find out more at www.heritageopendays.org.uk.

What is a 'Conservation Station'?

There are lots of ways that conservators and heritage scientists can get involved. Here are some of the ideas that we have suggested to Heritage Open Days participants, but we are also keen to hear your suggestions:

- **Pop-up Shop:** Set up a temporary conservation studio in a heritage space
- **Conservation in Action:** Undertake a conservation project on an item in the collection, a piece of furniture or a decorative feature during the festival
- **Show & Tell:** Invite a conservator who worked on your collection/site to give a talk about what they did
- **Expert Talk:** Host a talk led by a conservator, such as 'How to care for your personal treasures' or 'Looking after the family silver'.

How to get involved – Icon members

A. If you are a private practitioner

Email Geanina Beres (geanina.beres@icon.org.uk) to register your interest in being partnered with a Heritage Open Days participant to deliver an event. Let us know where you are in the country and what you think you'd like to offer.

B. If you work in a museum, gallery or institution

Ask your learning and engagement team or officer if they are planning to participate in Heritage Open Days this year and,

if so, whether you can contribute a *conservation in action* event. Get in touch if you need any help.

We're here to support members who want to get involved. We aim to match you with a local Heritage Open Days venue, we will send a starter pack with helpful tips on running your activity, and we will promote your event widely. Contact Geanina on the address given above.

How to get involved - Heritage Open Days organisers

A. If you have a site and you already have the tools you need to set up a Conservation Station

Plan and register your event with Heritage Open Days at heritageopendays.org.uk/organising. Contact the Heritage Open Days team with any queries, and please also drop them a note flagging your plans to ensure we collate all the events together to maximise promotion for everyone.

B. Interested but need some help?

Get in touch with Sarah Holloway from the Heritage Open Days team to explore options at sarah.holloway@heritageopendays.org.uk

IPERION HS

IPERION HS is a European Research Infrastructure for heritage science which facilitates collaboration between disciplines through free access to high-end instrumentation and expertise.

IPERION HS consists of partners from twenty three countries clustered around their national nodes and includes the EU

IPERION HS has made a webinar for the conservation community about its services

#HSAcademy webinar 6: Arts and Humanities and IPERION HS

E-RHIS IPERION HS HSAcademy

JOANN CASSAR, STEFAN BELISHKI, JOAN ABELA
MATIJA STRLIC AND COSTANZA MILIANI

ARTS AND HUMANITIES & IPERION HS

An introduction to scientific tools for social science and humanities research

Webinar #06/ October, 12nd 2021

0:03 / 37:04 Scroll for details

Member States, Associated countries and extra-European countries (US, Mexico and Brazil). It integrates major centres of research in heritage science, outstanding research institutes, prestigious research laboratories and conservation centres in heritage institutions and universities.

IPERION HS offers free-of-charge access to more than one hundred state-of-the-art scientific techniques and fourteen archives, distributed in sixteen countries. Single or multi-technique proposals should be addressed to one of the three advanced transnational platforms ARCHLAB, FIXLAB and MOLAB. IPERION HS selects the best proposals and covers the costs of this activity.

To date most users have been researchers in heritage science. A drive is currently under way to engage researchers from other important fields in the multi-disciplinary area of heritage, including conservators, who can consider using this infrastructure to study problems associated with an object, series of objects or entire collections; make comparative studies with similar ones held by other entities; identify and characterize a particular deterioration phenomenon and compare with similar situations elsewhere. This information could possibly then be seminal to identify the best possible treatment where this is needed.

Further information about IPERION HS can be found at <https://www.iperionhs.eu/about/> and there is a webinar, illustrated on the previous page, giving further information on this outreach to the conservation community here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YHjG9yTZub4>

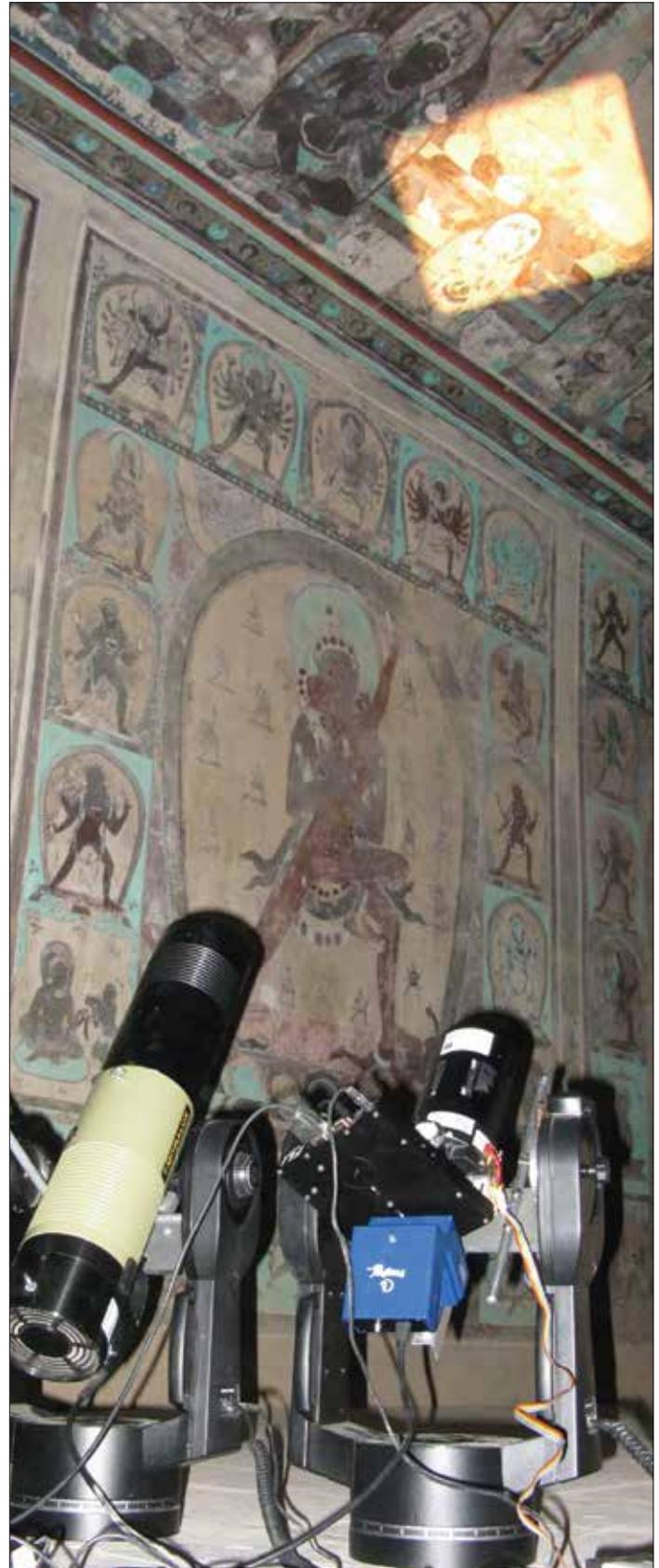
HERITAGE SCIENCE SUCCESS STORY!

Congratulations to Nottingham Trent University (NTU) for its heritage science research, which has earned a Queen's Anniversary Prize for Higher and Further Education. The scheme - which recognises outstanding work demonstrating excellence and innovation delivering real benefit to the wider world - is the highest form of national recognition open to a UK academic or vocational institution.

Heritage science research at NTU is responsible for the delivery of cutting-edge imaging and remote sensing technologies and data science used in the preservation of iconic heritage and cultural artefacts. Large-scale scientific surveys and analyses of iconic heritage sites have included the Mogao Caves in China (a UNESCO world heritage temple complex on the ancient Silk Road) and the Hawara Pyramid in Egypt.

Other pioneering solutions include humanities approaches to preserving intangible heritage, which mitigates the threats to culture and heritage through digital preservation techniques in conflict zones. In response to UNESCO's 'Revive the Spirit of Mosul', this work preserved endangered heritage, connected communities, and reduced inequalities in post-war Mosul.

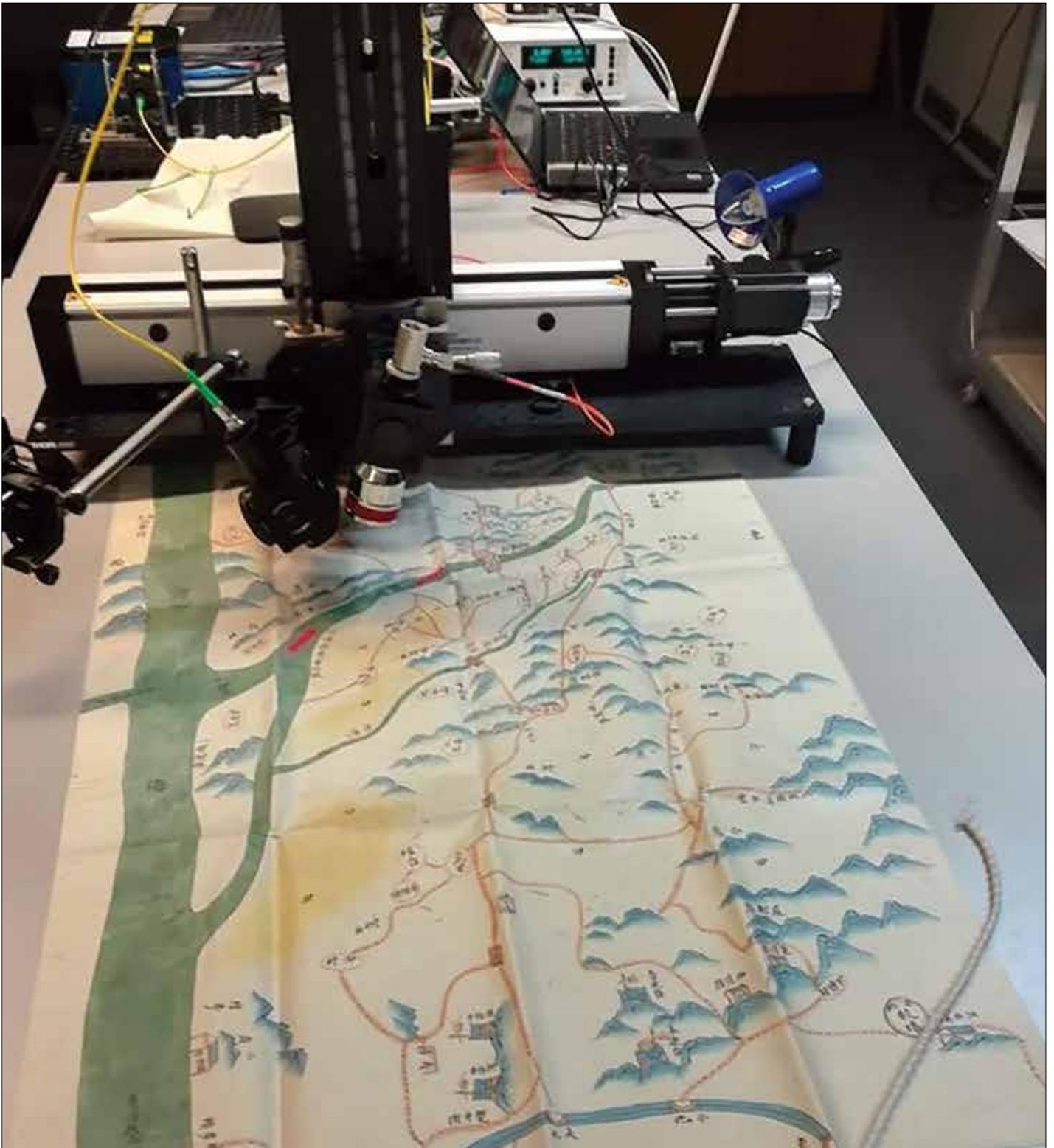
PRISMS developed by ISAAC Lab for remote standoff spectral imaging survey of large wall paintings from tens of metres at the UNESCO site of Mogao Caves



The University's advanced non-invasive imaging instruments and data science methods have been adopted by partners such as the National Gallery London, the National Archives, the British Museum, the British Library, English Heritage,

Victoria and Albert Museum, the Louvre, Dunhuang Research Academy in China, the Brooklyn Museum and the Getty in the USA.

ISAAC Mobile Lab and its spatially offset Raman instrument at The National Archives investigating a 19th century Chinese map



Appointments



Congratulations to **Pip Laurenson ACR** who will be joining the History of Art Department at University College London next month as Professor of Conservation and Director of the new MSc in Conservation of Contemporary Art & Media.

Pip has thirty years of experience in the conservation of contemporary art, establishing and leading the pioneering Time-based Media Conservation section at Tate from 1996 until 2010. She then took up her current position as Head of Collection Care Research to develop, lead and support research related to the conservation and management of Tate's collections. Since 2016 she has also held a Special Chair at Maastricht University as Professor of Art Collection and Care.

Pip's research focuses on developing new ways of working and new conceptual frameworks that address the changing needs of collections of contemporary art in the twenty-first century.

She has a long-term interest in the future of conservation training, championing the development of a conservation profession that is inclusive, open to new ideas and approaches, and able to encourage and engage people in the relevant and pressing debates of our time.

Welcome to these new members

We would like to extend a very warm welcome to all those who joined us in February and March 2022. We hope to see you at an Icon event soon!

Lydia Amies
Student

Amelia Bedson
Pathway

Kirsty Bell
Associate

Jane Booth
Student

Federica Chiantini
Associate

Merry Yee Hang Chow
Student

Frances Clarke
Supporter

Juliana Cordero
Student

Anna Crowther
Student

Roisin Cull
Student

Sally Doran
Pathway

India Ferguson
Student

Laura Goodman
Student

Dominique Growden
Student

Sophie Gwynn
Pathway

Sue Harper
Supporter

Julieta Herrera
Student

Isabella Hogan
Student

Ian Holland
Supporter

Laura Lewis-Davies
Associate

Kylie Lloyd
Student

Malin Lundin
Supporter

Katie McClure
Student

Harry McDonnell-Woods
Student

Bogdan Marcu
Pathway

Laura Marsh
Student

Maryanne Millar
Associate

Henry Milner
Pathway

Francesca Morri
Supporter

Frances Morris
Student

Caitlin Myers
Student

Laura Pate
Associate

Maja Petrovic
Student

Michelle Rheeston
Pathway

Gracile Roxas
Student

Jill Saunders
Associate

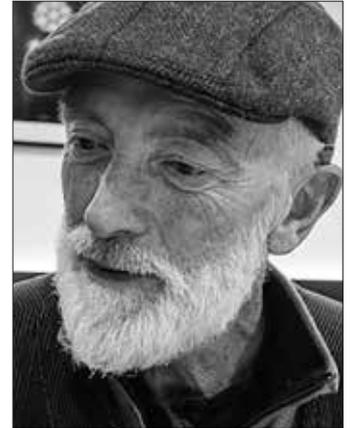
Chris Upton
Supporter

Eva Wolfs
Associate

Imogen Woollard
Student

Angharad Yeo
Student

In memory



John Burbidge ACR

John travelled the world extensively before settling in Florence to study conservation at the Opificio delle Pietre Dure; he then went on to undertake two scholarships in Germany and Sweden studying the conservation of wooden polychrome sculpture. When he returned to the UK in the early 1980s, he taught conservation and restoration at the City and Guilds Art School before establishing Granville and Burbidge in 1986.

John felt passionately about conservation and was always searching to increase his knowledge. He had great attention to detail and worked meticulously throughout any project; whether professional or personal. He saw great beauty in the world and it was always his aim to either restore or maintain this in heritage sites in both the United Kingdom and Portugal.

Although he retired in 2011 and went to live in Portugal he retained his love of conservation and was recently involved in an attempt to preserve a cultural heritage site: Quinta Da Serra. John was instrumental in setting up a local association in Benedita, where he lived, which brought many cultural events to the area, including poetry, music,

photography and dance. John also returned to his love of painting and drawing and recently illustrated a book documenting local history.

He will be greatly missed by his family, friends and colleagues.

Susan Bradshaw, Icon's Head of Professional Development until 2021, writes:

I first met John when he was preparing his application for accreditation back in 2003. He extolled the virtue of conservation with passion and maintained his personal and professional integrity through seeking out best practice. Accredited in 2004, he embraced the whole concept of accreditation and offered his time to support the accreditation process until 2019. For the twelve years of his active work as an accredited member of Icon, he introduced me and other potential ACRs to his wall painting and polychrome conservation work by presenting his experience of the assessment process at clinics and other Icon events.

He trained to be a PACR Assessor in 2007, a role he enjoyed and embraced until 2014. I expect those who were assessed by him would have been impressed by his engagement and thirst for knowing about their work. In 2012 he used his assessor experience on the Accreditation Committee, where he was the wall paintings specialist for seven years. He brought his professional fascination and support of the conservation profession to the table with demonstrable ability to debate.

John was a lovely person and so dedicated to conservation.

Mark Perry ACR writes:

Because of the nature of our professional lives, I didn't really get to know John until I became a PACR Assessor in 2008. I was of course aware of his work and of his reputation as one of our leading wall paintings conservators. I had the opportunity to see at first hand that this reputation was entirely deserved when we carried out a scaffold inspection of one of his most well-received and challenging projects: the famous Doom painting at Holy Trinity Church, Coventry.

John was thoroughly immersed in all things conservation and thought deeply about many issues surrounding both the practical work and the ethics of our profession, as became clear when I had the chance to discuss such things with him or listened to his contributions at the annual Assessor Review meetings. Being more experienced as an assessor than me at the time, he was very happy to give advice based on his experiences, which I found very useful.

In 2011 we collaborated in contributing to a seminar for

practising stone, wall painting and historic interiors conservators considering applying for accreditation, as we were both concerned at the specific difficulties those in private practice faced in the accreditation process. John was a driving force in this and it reflected his interest in ensuring that the Accreditation process attracted – and was accessible to – the best conservators.

When he 'retired' (did he ever actually stop?!) to Portugal, I saw him less frequently, but his appearances at the Accreditation annual review meetings were always a great chance to catch up and chew the cud and I will miss his sharp sense of humour, his array of headgear and a pervading whiff of roll-ups that announced his presence.



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AS BRIGHT AS A BUTTON

Conservators from different specialisms at the Victoria and Albert Museum, Hannah Sutherland and Zoe Allen collaborate on the replacement of lost buttons for a display at a new exhibition



Image: © Victoria and Albert Museum, London

The Victoria and Albert Museum waistcoat (T.36-2019) after treatment

INTRODUCTION

Fashioning Masculinities: The Art of Menswear is an exhibition at the Victoria and Albert Museum (V&A), curated by Claire Wilcox and Rosalind McKeever, which opened in March. Although not a traditional chronology, many periods are covered, from 17th century doublets and gloves to accessories of the 20th century, as well as contemporary pieces.

The object under discussion here is a man's waistcoat dated to 1720-30 (T.36-2019), which was due to be displayed in the exhibition. During its lifetime the waistcoat was adapted to

suit an owner's growing waistline; extra panels have been added into the centre back and sides. Underneath a coordinating coat these would have been invisible to fashionable friends and perhaps just a secret between owner and tailor. Despite these repairs the waistcoat's exterior is in remarkably good condition, but the fragile silk lining had split in several areas leading to loss of material. The waistcoat would have had twenty-one buttons down the centre front but only ten survive.

This article discusses the conservation treatment carried out to the waistcoat, notably the steps involved in the creation of



Image: © Victoria and Albert Museum, London

The lining before its treatment

new buttons and the ethical decision-making process behind their replacement.

DESCRIPTION

The waistcoat is typical of the period, being made from a large repeating polychrome damask and having a curved shape to the button-stand. Structure is provided to the front by shaped sections of flexible card and buckram, this is lined in linen and faced with white silk sarsenet. The back is plain green silk taffeta.

Down the centre front of the waistcoat, and just visible beneath each pocket flap, are a series of thread-wrapped buttons. Although the button core is hidden it is likely to be made of wood. This core is wrapped in yellow silk thread and decorated with a disk of gold. Keeping this halo of metal in place is a pattern of metal-threads with a silk core.

TREATMENT

To prevent further loss the splits in the lining were treated. Silk habotai was dyed to match the faded interior and Stabiltex (fine threads pulled from a polyester mesh fabric) utilized to stitch silk patches behind the worst areas, using lines of laid-thread couching. Dyed nylon net was placed over the whole of the silk lining to protect the fragile fabric

beneath. Two splits to the external brocade were treated with a patch support and the top fabric was surface cleaned.

Early in the assessment the decision was taken to try and replicate the missing buttons. Missing pieces often lead to objects not looking how the maker intended or how the owners saw them. While favourite pieces may often show signs of wear, the loss of elements which make them unwearable is an ethical dilemma which conservators and curators must discuss.

Considering the efforts of the waistcoat's owner and their tailor to keep the front of the waistcoat looking pristine despite the alterations, it is surmised that he would have worn the waistcoat done up somewhat, as was the style at the time, and that if you have nice buttons you want to show them off. The lack of buttons would have been a distraction from the overall object and its role within the exhibition context, or potentially a miscommunication about the way in which these garments were fastened. Furthermore, without these additional buttons the waistcoat does not sit correctly and cannot be safely mounted for exhibition.

The starting point was to consider possible techniques already known to our department and colleagues elsewhere in the museum. Hannah was able to discuss the project with colleagues in private practice in Brighton who had successfully

Left: The wooden mock button. Right: A detached original button



Image: © Victoria and Albert Museum, London



Left: The first mock button: the wooden mould is wrapped with thread Right: The resin copy of the first mock button in the initial resin trial

used polyester resin to make the missing half of a belt buckle¹. Previous work within the V&A had also utilized polyester resin for making replica metal buttons for the exhibition 'Mary Quant'². These were made in 2018 by Haddon Dine, an intern working in furniture conservation, so the furniture conservation studio ended up being the first port of call.

APPROACHES CONSIDERED

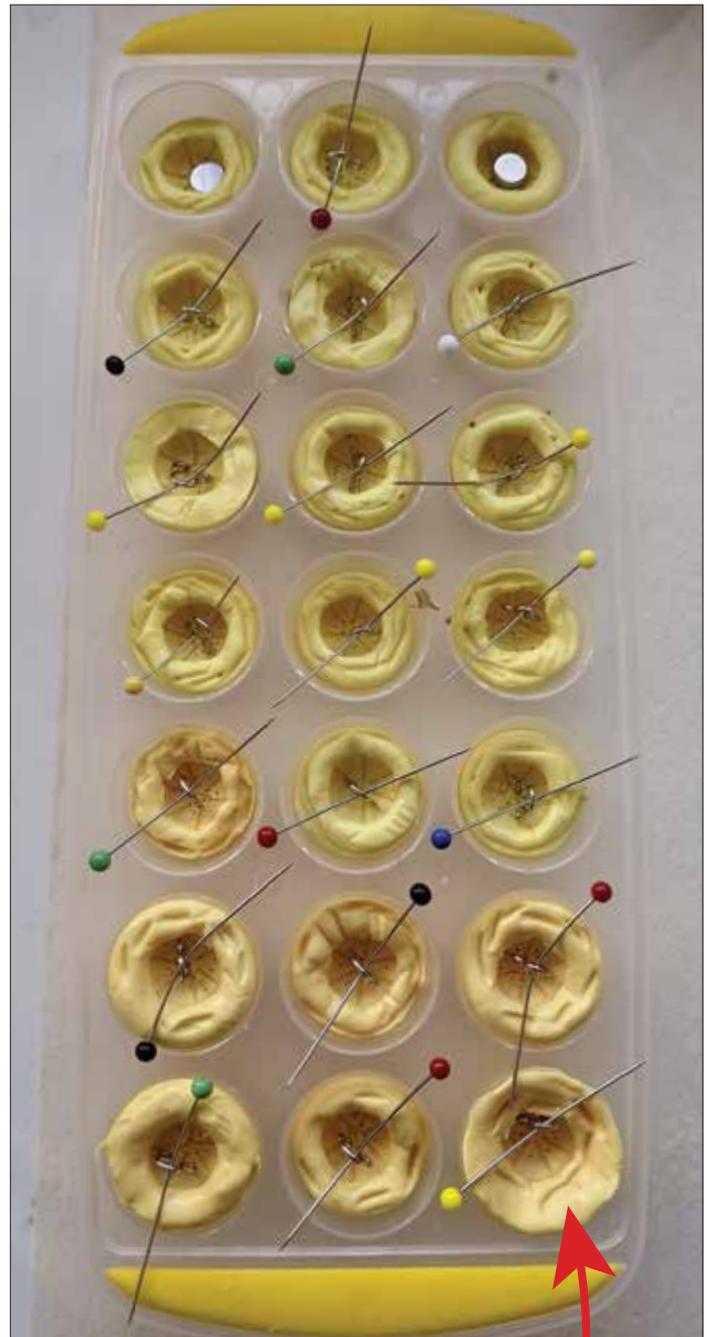
Unlike metal buttons, where a mould could be taken straight from the original, the intricate textures of the waistcoat's thread-wrapped buttons meant an extra step had to be added. Using a barrier layer of cling film³ between the button and the moulding putty was trialed. This didn't give a crisp enough impression in the putty and there was concern that repeating the action to create a full set of button moulds would be detrimental to the original button's surface decoration.

The next approach was to make a new small wooden button and add layers of thread onto it to create about the right texture. As a prop this button could be pushed into the putty numerous times without damage. In December 2020 discussions were started with colleagues at the Natural History Museum about possible 3D scanning and printing options, both as a possible button to mould from and as a final button. But because of the January 2021 lockdown, these investigations were unable to progress and it was back to the earlier plan.

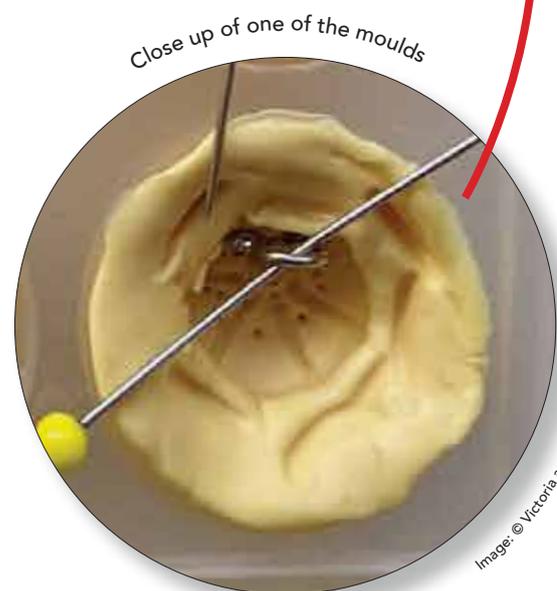
MAKING THE MOULDS

Twenty moulds were made in total. Although one could have been reused several times, the polyester resin is toxic and requires high levels of ventilation. So making up a batch of resin once and pouring it out into twenty small moulds is much safer for the conservator than having to make up multiple smaller batches over more time.

To make the mould for the buttons, 9.5mm in diameter, an ice-cube tray was used to allow many small moulds to be cast one after the other. The dental putty (Elite HD Putty Soft Normal Set)⁴ costs around £45 and making twenty moulds took less than a quarter of the pack. The putty is formed of two parts, which must be combined in equal measure. It takes around one minute to fully combine and then has another minute or two until it cures past the point of being moulded. With just the one replica button to hand, each mould was made individually, and the replica left within the



The ice cube tray moulds ready to be filled



Close up of one of the moulds



Image: © Victoria and Albert Museum, London

Stages of colouring the buttons to match the originals



Image: © Victoria and Albert Museum, London

curing putty for two minutes. A needle was stippled into the inside of the mould, to make each mould slightly different in texture.

CASTING THE BUTTONS

The polyester resin is made up of two parts – the resin and a hardener. The resin is liquid at room temperature but thickens and eventually hardens when mixed with the required amount of hardener – 2% in this case.

It is good to remember at this stage that the aim was to lessen the impact of the missing buttons, but not to disguise the fact entirely. Infilling the buttons with something the right size, about the right texture and about the right colour allows the eye to flow over the object and appreciate it as a *whole*,

rather than focusing on the *holes*. These buttons will be successful if someone across the room cannot tell, but someone studying the piece in detail notices there are differences.

Metal powders can be added to create colour and weight. Gold-coloured mica powder was added to the resin mixture which gave a subtle sheen to the buttons, but the bulk of the colour came from brass metal powder. After a few trials the final recipe was 50ml of polyester resin, brass powder to make the volume up to 95ml, gold mica powder to make volume to 98mls and 2ml of hardener. YouTube was helpful for gauging various ratios of resin: metal powder: hardener.

It was suggested by Jamie Robinson (Zenzie Tinker Conservation Ltd., Brighton) to use the 'eye' part of a hook

and eye as button shanks. These were positioned into the ice cube tray and held in place using slightly bent pins. Small magnets were also trialed, they make the button heavier but may be suitable for some purposes. With the magnets it is worth half filling the mould with resin prior to inserting the magnet, so the magnet is fully encased.

For ease of application a disposable syringe (without a needle) was used to collect the resin mixture and drip in into each button mould. This made the mixture controllable and was easier to work around the shank system to keep them centered. The tray can be gently tapped on the bench to release air bubbles. The buttons cured over twenty-four hours and were then released from their moulds before being left to off-gas under extraction.

GETTING THE COLOUR RIGHT

The metal powders and mica were used to provide a base colour but did not provide a good match for the iridescent metallic sheen on the original. The first attempt at achieving the correct colour was to combine gold mica powder with Paraloid B72 in Acetone (50/50) and apply as a paint. Darker areas were achieved with acrylic paints. The darker layers need to be applied first, as the water-diluted acrylics do not dry well over the Paraloid combination.

Drawing again on knowledgeable colleagues within the furniture conservation studio, Hannah was invited for a 1:1 training session on basic gilding techniques, including water gilding and dispersion gilding with Plexol B500. Both techniques can produce a consistent gold look when applied properly by an experienced hand. Water gilding is often a preferred technique as the final surface can be burnished to a high sheen, mimicking real gold. For this application though, and the author's skill level, gilding with the Plexol B500 lent itself well to the need for the buttons to be 'not perfect'. Many of the original buttons had various levels of tarnishing and the main remaining gold was the halo of metal on each surface. These halos were to be recreated using the gilding, with shadows and discolorations painted on top as required.

Initial trials of gilding had used a synthetic gold, but against the original materials, likely to be of a high carat, they looked green. A 23.5 carat leaf was a better match to the original both in colour and lustre. Curator Susan North was brought in to discuss the colour and size of the buttons and to 'sign off' their attachment.

ATTACHMENT TO THE WAISTCOAT

Before the buttons could be stitched on, each button shank was covered in buttonhole stitching. This hides the shine of the metal 'eye' and helps provide grip for the stitches attaching them to the waistcoat. A circle of tightly woven cotton was placed on the inside of the waistcoat where there was evidence of the original button placement. This was an anchor point for the thread and acted as a barrier between the silk lining and the polyester stitching thread Mara 220.

Once all the buttons were in place the waistcoat was mounted by Lauren Quinn, Textile Display Specialist, on a padded stockman form. Layers of Ethafoam were used to bulk out a standard workroom figure.



Image: © Victoria and Albert Museum, London

The finished buttons on the waistcoat

CONTINUING OUR WORK

To upskill our team Hannah led a workshop with the rest of the textile conservators on taking moulds of buttons and other missing items, such as a charm from a theatre costume. As part of the session the team discussed the ethics of replication – where it might be suitable and where it is not. The difference between a good match and a falsehood is a fine line.

This success of this project is down to excellent cross-departmental collaboration. The material knowledge of various teams helped move the work along and I am particularly grateful to my co-author Zoe Allen for being so generous with her time and materials. The skills of Lauren Quinn for mounting the waistcoat and Kieron Boyle for letting us ask for many, many angles of photography are also to be applauded.

Fashioning Masculinities: The Art of Menswear runs until November 2022.

Hannah Sutherland is a Textile Conservator and Zoe Allen is Lead Conservator (Furniture, Metalwork, Paintings and Frames), Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

- 1 Personal correspondence with Jamie Robinson, Zenzie Tinker Conservation Ltd. Brighton
- 2 Internal working notes from Haddon Dine
- 3 Polyvinyl chloride film with an average thickness of 8-10 µm
- 4 Available from dental suppliers

MOVING ON UP!

In the second of two articles offering advice for emerging conservation professionals, Julie Bon ACR covers the nitty gritty of CVs, applications and interviews



Julie Bon ACR

In the first article in this series, I shared some memories of being a conservation graduate myself, and what I did to try and gain the experience I needed for the next step. I also introduced the idea that it can be useful to measure yourself against the Icon professional standards and to take some time out for self-reflection.

In this article, I will share my top tips for writing an effective CV, completing an outstanding job

application, and making a great impression at a job interview. These are personal thoughts based on my experience as a conservator, employer, and intern supervisor. I share them in the hope that prospective conservation graduates can take something from this to help them tackle the next step in their career.

CV TOP TIPS

A CV is not always requested as part of a recruitment process, but it can be a useful place to keep your relevant and up-to-date career information. A well organised and current CV can help to complete application forms of varying types by keeping all the relevant dates and summaries in one place. They are also often requested when you submit conference abstracts and papers, so it is useful to keep yours updated.

- 1. RESEARCH:** search for good online examples and take what you like from them. By looking and reading other CVs you quickly get to know what works and what is less effective.
- 2. LAYOUT:** think carefully about how it looks on the page. Do not try to cram too much information in; if it is visually dense in terms of text then this can be off-putting for the reader.
- 3. LENGTH:** a CV should be a comprehensive, in-depth document presenting your relevant academic and professional achievements, including publications and conference presentations. This level of detail is not often required for most conservation job applications. A resume is a concise, curated summary of your educational and

professional accomplishments that are most relevant to the job you're applying for. This should be no longer than two sides of A4.

4. KEY INFORMATION:

 you should include:

- Name and contact details
- Personal profile – keep this brief
- Qualifications, education provider details and dates
- Relevant work experience (paid or unpaid)
- Details of relevant training and CPD
- Details of any bursaries and funding
- Publication bibliography (possibly with links for follow up)
- Membership of professional bodies

5. WHAT NOT TO INCLUDE:

 do not include a lot of detail about particular jobs or projects. Do not include anything that is unnecessary to the job you are applying for and do not include too much personal narrative. The jury is out in the sector as to whether you should include a photo; I would suggest not.

6. STAND-OUT:

 the layout can help with this but also the judicious use of colour or a relevant theme. Again, online research can help you spot what is most effective but do not get too caught up in the formatting or in unnecessary detail.

7. REGULAR UPDATES:

 check your CV regularly and update it when you have a new project, qualification, publication, or experience to list. Make sure you check for spelling mistakes.

Illustration © Amy Kerr



APPLICATION TOP TIPS

Once you have found the job or internship that you want to go for, the next step is to prepare an outstanding application. Having read a significant number of applications in my time I am pleased to be able to share some of my top tips to help make your application stand out.

1. **READ** the job or placement description closely and take notes on the key points. The scoring criteria for the application process, and later for the interview process, will be based on the key points from the person specification so make sure you can demonstrate these.
2. **REQUEST** any extra information if it is offered from the supervisor or manager if a name is mentioned. Note that there may be cultural differences here and play it accordingly: sometimes this is seen as showing initiative and sometimes it can come across as pushy.
3. **RESEARCH** the venue, the employer or supervisor, the collection, the websites, client list (if private sector), standards they work to. Consider a visit to the studio or the institution in advance if that is possible.
4. **REFEREES:** keep them on standby, regularly update them, and check their availability.
5. **EXAMPLES:** keep a list of situations you've tackled, not just with collections but 'human' situations too, for example working on your own or as part of a team, dealing with the public, or problem solving. These sort of scenario examples will help you to answer competency-based questions and they can be useful to reference in both your application and particularly in your interview.
6. **TAILOR** your application to the advert and the job or placement description. Do not take the easy option of copying and pasting from previous applications. Every job and every employer is different so your application needs to be individually tailored. For internships, talk about the position of the placement in your career and what you want

to build on. Make sure to avoid using words like post, job, or employment if it is not an actual job. Make sure that you demonstrate that you know what an internship is.

7. **GENERALISATIONS:** avoid broad statements about objects, museums, heritage, and your feelings about the joy of heritage. Passionate? You may be but it's an over-used word. Be specific and show your enthusiasm through examples of what you've done, where you've been and what you've learnt.
8. **MAKE A DRAFT** checking your experience, examples and competencies against the job or placement description.
9. **MAKE A FINAL DRAFT** and read it aloud for sense and conciseness; imagine you're reading this as the prospective employer. It is also a good idea to get someone else to check it.
10. **CHECK and DOUBLE-CHECK** spelling and names especially.

INTERVIEW TOP TIPS

After completing a well-constructed, thoughtful, and well-tailored application you have left the employer with no choice but to offer you an interview. Now you have to be ready to sell yourself and prove to the interview panel why you are the best conservator for the job. Again, I offer you some of my top tips to help you face this daunting prospect.

1. **PREPARATION** is all. Look over your application, rehearse your examples against the competency criteria or other points in the job description. Do some further research into the institution, studio or employer and make sure you find a way to reference this in the interview.
2. **PLANNING:** Think about how you want to present yourself at interview. If it is a face-to-face interview, then make sure you know how to get to the venue and perhaps practise the route. Make sure you arrive in plenty of time and do not appear rushed. If it is an online interview, then

make sure you think about how best to present yourself. Consider your setting, background, and lighting. Make sure that pets and family members stay out of the way. Make sure your technology is working and your Wi-Fi is reliable.

- 3. PRESENTATION:** if you have been asked to prepare a presentation then make sure you follow all the guidance given to you. If you are given five minutes, then make sure your presentation lasts five minutes. Make sure to rehearse and time it – this demonstrates your organisational skills, your ability to follow instructions and your commitment to get this job. And that’s without even considering the content of what you have presented. You may wish to consider sending your presentation to your interviewers in advance in order to avoid any technological hitches and associated stress.
- 4. RELAX:** try to take time in advance, and during the interview, to stop and relax. It can be easy to forget to be yourself and to be spontaneous. You want to try and present your best self.
- 5. NERVES** will affect you in lots of ways, but interviewers will understand! Being quiet is often less of a problem than going the other way. Interviewers, especially in the UK, tend to prepare for shy or nervous candidates. Some can be actively put off by a candidate who talks over questions or acts in an inappropriate or over-confident way. Remember that your interviewers are probably almost as nervous as you are; it is in their best interests if you do well so they will be willing you on.
- 6. TIMING:** you will have a limited time to get yourself across. Just keep an eye on the time and make sure you get in what you want to get in and use the examples that you want to make sure your interviewers hear.
- 7. QUESTIONS:** Prepare a short list to ask when the time comes at the end of the interview but make sure you keep it to one or two key points. This is your opportunity to learn about your prospective employer and to gauge whether this is somewhere you would want to work. Also, do not be afraid to ask questions during the interview as this shows you are engaged and listening.
- 8. PORTFOLIOS:** Have one or two key examples earmarked when you are asked to talk about your portfolio as there will always be limited time for this. Get across the main points you want to illustrate about yourself and make sure you choose examples that are tailored to the job you are applying for.
- 9. DO YOU WANT THE JOB OR PLACEMENT?** You may be asked this at some stage in the interview, or at least WHY you want it; it’s a surprisingly simple question but demonstrates a lot about you. Make sure you take some time to think about how you might answer that.
- 10. THAT END-OF-INTERVIEW MOMENT** – gather your self-confidence and make it clear why you are the right conservator for the job. Leave your interviewers with a great final impression. Remember, enthusiasm is almost always a scoring criterion for interviews.



FURTHER ADVICE

There are plenty of resources available to help keep you on track with navigating the next steps. Your university tutors and teachers will be able to provide you with a wealth of information. The Icon website is always a useful resource but there are any number of other heritage organisations that you might consider joining while you are job-hunting and able to make the most of student membership rates. These include, but are not limited to:

- International Institute for Conservation of Historic and Artistic Works (IIC)
- International Centre for the Study of the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property (ICCROM)
- Museums Association (MA)
- Irish Museums Association (IAM)
- American Institute for Conservation (AIC)
- The Archive and Records Association (ARA)
- National Trust (NT)
- National Trust for Scotland (NTS)
- English Heritage (EH)
- Historic Environment Scotland (HES)

Remember that these memberships always look good on your CV or on job applications and demonstrate a genuine interest in, and support of, the cultural sector.

I hope these thoughts and tips are useful to the next generation of conservators. As we all know, this is an exciting, fascinating, challenging, and inspiring sector to work in. We are all privileged to work with heritage collections in a very immediate and focussed way. However, the more I learn throughout my career the more I realise that it is the people that we work with that make this job so special.

I wish you all luck in the next steps along your career path. In the immortal words of Gwen Stefani, another musical icon at the height of her powers in 2004 when I was a bright-eyed and determined conservation graduate: *'What You Waiting For?'*

THE LEARNING CURVE

Victoria Stevens ACR is the Leading Tutor in Books and Archives at City and Guilds London Art School. Here she describes how the new book and paper BA course has progressed in challenging times

The timing could hardly have been less auspicious: setting sail on a new course in the boiling seas of lockdown was never going to be plain sailing.

Following the much-mourned closure of Camberwell, the reimagining of book and paper training in the capital via a three year BA in Book and Paper Conservation at City and Guilds London Art School (CGLAS) was a glimmer of hope for the specialism.

The foundations of the syllabus, drawn up by leaders in the field of book and paper conservation, were very solid: the longer format allowed a return to a focus on historical craft, with the inclusion of related specialisms such as printing, art history and the history of media and a strong emphasis on the science that underpins the practice of book and paper conservation.

The crew were ready, the cargo lashed to the deck, the charts primed and then: the covid-19 pandemic washed all that away.

COPING WITH THE PANDEMIC

The teaching of what is essentially a practical syllabus to the first intake of undergraduates was definitely a challenge when remote learning was a necessity. However, this was done with structure and efficiency by then book tutor Abigail Bainbridge ACR, Sean Thompson ACR, Edward Cheese ACR, Nicholas Pickwood ACR and the lead tutor for the paper stream, Judith Gowland ACR.

It was fortunate that, in part, the course structure played to the restrictions on in-person tuition created by covid lockdowns. The first year of the CGLAS book syllabus was sufficiently flexible to be able to focus on the theoretical knowledge that supports practical learning, interspersed by practical experience where possible. There was a strong emphasis on developing an understanding of historical structures and the history of book production, the history of decorative forms in binding and the history and technology of component elements of book production such as papermaking, printing and the manufacture of skin materials.

In the brief periods when the severest lockdown conditions were lifted, the students had the opportunity to try out some of the theoretical knowledge they had developed, making paper and fish leather, as well as creating a series of binding models including limp parchment structures. In addition, this academic year we have been fortunate to have the historical craft skills of Richard Nichols ACR a highly experienced archive conservator, who has been the guide for the first year students' journey into account book styles and finishing.



image: Victoria Stevens

The author's first day and that is a look of terror

GETTING BACK TO NORMAL

When I started as lead tutor for the book stream in October 2021, the second years that I met were undaunted, focused, knowledgeable and in possession of some really encouraging and already-honed hand skills, remarkable considering the limited in-person studio time they had enjoyed. This is to their, and their tutors', credit. The academic year 2021 – 22 has allowed the whole student body, now two intakes, much more freedom and practical productivity, as we have been able to meet and work together.

My ethos is to get the students working as if they are in an institutional studio setting, much as they will do when they graduate, fostering group working, collaboration and discussion of projects together and mutually supportive



images: Cristina Biagioni (l) and Victoria Stevens (c, r)

Second year students at work on their book projects (l); first years' paste making (c); second years testing their paste making efforts for its 'monster drool' qualities(r)

conservation practice. This allows them to feel comfortable when discussing their work in a group, both the triumphs and the tragedies, the things they find hard and the things they enjoy, all in a relaxed and non-judgmental way.

Being back in the studios has also allowed us to get stuck into some real book projects with some very real problems. So far, we have worked on a late C18th tightback, a German leather case binding and a variety of album structures. There have been plenty of howls of anguish as tightback leather spines prove virtually impossible to lift and paring knives refuse to sharpen, but a corresponding number of moments of great satisfaction as boards are reattached or leather dyes perfectly, and the analogue machine that is the book format starts to work again.

The book stream has also benefitted hugely from the input by Christopher Harvey, whose support and tuition to the second years in print and photo identification was superb.

The learning curve for us all, students and tutors, is definitely steep, but we are all making great progress, building up substantial calf and thigh muscles in our climb, all the while developing this very strongly structured course out of its infancy.

SOME ENJOYABLE EXPERIENCES

We have also managed to have some fun along the way. The second year students have enjoyed study visits to the College of Arms, Lambeth Palace Library and The National Archive conservation department: all different but with the same underpinning purpose of access to and use of collections.

As an end of term treat, we hit the highway on a road trip to Northamptonshire in March for an immersive skin study day, taking in Harmatan and Oakridge Leathers Ltd and the Leather Conservation Centre. These visits enabled the

Outside the College of Arms (l); discussing manuscript items held at Lambeth Palace Library (r)



image: Christopher Harvey



image: Victoria Stevens



images: Cristina Biagioni

Second year students on their day out at Harmatan and Oakridge Leather Ltd (l, lc, rc); and analysing the Betty Haines sample archive at the Leather Conservation Centre (r)

students to see not only best practice in the field of conservation and materials manufacture but also appreciate the factors and judgements that are in play to make the most suitable conservation treatment decisions.

The varying use of collections that conservation has to respond to, such as the challenges of storage in a historical building, the opportunities that new buildings offer for studio space and the need to have collections available and useable for all, were all covered along with demonstrations of treatments, discussion of treatment approaches and the ability to see and handle historical bindings and bound structures close at hand.

DEVELOPING AS WE GO

The course is also becoming both broader and deeper as it is shaped through delivery. In this academic year we were joined by two Graduate Diploma students, both with specialist and much needed professional interests: wallpaper conservation and globe conservation. The School has worked hard to develop a curriculum that enables both of these students to progress within their chosen specialisms, with

CGLAS wood and decorative surfaces tutors providing great support and learning opportunities and the conservation community coming forward with huge willingness to offer placements.

This has been the case for all the second year students, and the offers of placement support so far has been really encouraging. This is great to witness and share in, and so supportive for the whole student body to see the faith that book and paper conservation has in its emerging professionals and the willingness the community has to develop these growing talents. CGLAS is thankful for this support, and always open to exploring additional opportunities that may benefit the students.

LOOKING AHEAD

'I personally worry that we are slowly losing a skilled workforce in the conservation of rare books and archives.'¹

This comment from Don Etherington in 2018 is both accurate and pessimistic. In the last twenty years we have lost some

Second year students at The National; Archive, and some of the incredible stationery binding structures they saw there



image: Cristina Biagioni



image: Cristina Biagioni

image: Cristina Biagioni



Threading various dyed leather samples to attach to the stock solutions bottles.

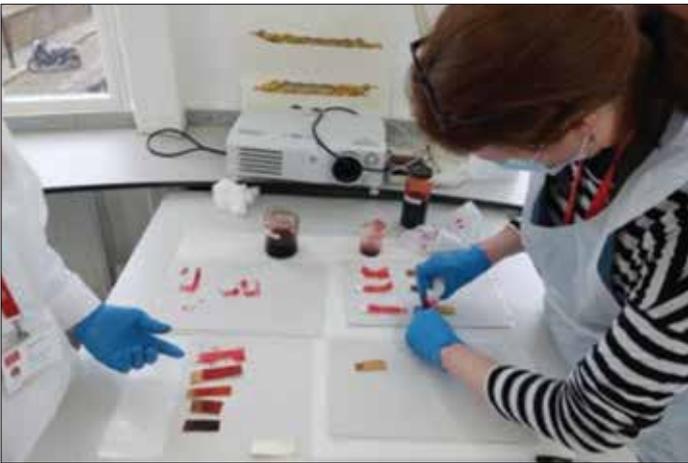
image: Victoria Stevens ACR



Students testing the effect of the stock solutions on various skin substrates.

Students sharing results and comparing applications of dyes to skin materials

image: Victoria Stevens ACR



great innovators of library and archive conservation, including those who honed their skills in the aftermath of another disaster, the Florence flood of 1966. Some of these gave the profession its quantum leap: people like Tony Cains, Chris Clarkson and Peter Waters. It was through these people that more formalised conservation training programmes were developed across Europe and the United States. Their response to the natural crisis in 1966 reflects the profession's response to the covid-19 pandemic: through skills sharing, collaboration and generosity the current and next generation of conservators has been engaged, educated and inspired through mining the rich seam of online content that we have all benefitted from in the last two years.

The need for formal training in library and archive conservation has never been greater, with archives in particular featuring more prominently in the engagement offer of all heritage sectors, providing the back story to exhibitions and depth to the interpretation of aesthetically focused collections. Education and the development of knowledge and practical hand skills in both books and paper is an essential part of this, with archives forming the cross-over area in the Venn diagram of this broad conservation specialism. A firm understanding of the history, science and materiality of each is essential to fully equip the library, archive and works of art on paper conservators of the future: the two are insolubly linked and together can offer each other so much.

As the second year students move into their third and final year and start to specialise in one side of this same coin or another, I am encouraged to see that those who are leaning more to pure paper are still enjoying and benefitting from their library and archive modules and projects, supported by those members of the team who find book conservation more in tune with their natural skillset.

Looking forward to summer 2023 and the graduation of CGLAS's first student cohort, it will be great to welcome the conservation community to share in the progress and achievements of these remarkably tenacious and resolute students, who have faced many obstacles but have continued on their chosen paths with great focus and determination.

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1. Don Etherington, *After Florence: Developments in Conservation Treatment of Books in Flood in Florence, 1966: A Fifty-Year Retrospective*; Paul Conway; Martha O'Hara Conway, eds; Michigan Publishing, University of Michigan Library, 2018

CONFERENCES

CONSERVATION MATTERS IN THE NORTHWEST

Manchester December 2021

After enjoying helping to coordinate the well-established 'Conservation Matters in Wales' for a number of years and a recent move of one of us to England, we were keen to continue the brand in the Northwest. The first in what will be an annual series of events in the Northwest took place on 10 December 2021: the new 'Conservation Matters in the Northwest' conference with the theme 'Covid and other disasters.'

The conference was organized by the Northwest Conservators Group in partnership with the Northwest Museums Federation and Museum Development Northwest, kindly sponsored by Historyonics, and was open to all with an interest in Conservation in the Northwest. This included curators, students, volunteers, interns and, of course, conservators.

The meeting took place on a cold and windy day in the warm and cozy Coal Store room at the People's History Museum in Manchester. We had taken many Covid precautions and encouraged the wearing of face coverings during the meeting except when asking questions or during mealtimes. Sadly, some delegates were unable to attend because of having to self-isolate.

The global pandemic has been hard on many of us personally and professionally. We have been forced to think again about our support networks and our mental health, and about the sustainability of our practices. We wanted to take this opportunity to explore: What are your experiences of this extraordinary year? Are you coming up for air, or still picking up the pieces? Have you been dealing with water ingress and pest outbreaks during lockdown?

Rachel Webster and Abby Stevens

described how they dealt with an outbreak of biscuit beetles in Manchester Museum's Botany collection during lockdown, which required large numbers of specimens to be bagged and transported to the Conservation Centre in Liverpool for freezer treatment, overcoming the challenges of vacuum cleaner supply problems and vans full of specimens breaking down on the M6 in mid transport.

Similarly, Whitworth Art Gallery in Manchester experienced a moth outbreak during lockdown – in this case in wall-hung rugs.

Ann French ACR explained how the gallery



Food connects delegates at the *Conservation Matters in the North West* conference – a nice symbol of connection after a long time of isolation

addressed the immediate problem, and then, following initial management reluctance, managed to make the case to obtain funding for upgrades to the Textiles store. One thing we all learned is that there is nothing like a good disaster to get the attention of senior management.

Rachel Swift ACR, based in Shropshire, applied her conservation skills in a transferrable way in her community by organizing cultural activities to persuade residents to come back to the high street following lockdown. She used ceramics, problem solving, her creative and communication skills to run workshops where she felt slightly out of her comfort zone but managed to use her expertise to help other people.

Claire Dean, student at Northumbria University, was talking about inclusion and access. In her experience, the pandemic has improved access for some disabled people with regard to information being available on the internet. In other ways, things are more difficult now, such as face coverings, which make communication more challenging for people relying on lip reading; Claire herself is deaf and was therefore talking from personal experience. Her talk was packed full of information and tips for creating inclusive events, but also everyday activities, such as avoiding automatic backgrounds in online meetings, and having the awareness that the cognitive load is greater in online than during in-person meetings.

Pierrette Squires ACR of Bolton Museums presented on behalf of two Cardiff University Conservation students, **Natalie Longworth** and **Jingyi Zhang**, about how students on placement in Bolton had a baptism of fire, or, rather, water, when they assisted in the response to a large roof leak. The students were lucky enough to become engaged

hands on with the rescue and subsequent treatment of mounted birds which had got very wet. Added professional development for the students was networking with **Lucie Mascord ACR**, Natural History Conservator at Lancashire Conservation Centre, for advice. Having the extra two pairs of hands available was extremely helpful to the museum and demonstrated the value of hosting placements.

We are very grateful that the fantastic lunch was paid for by Historyonics and provided by Open Kitchen, the People's History Museum's on-site café which is a social enterprise and Manchester's leading sustainable catering company. (Food waste is reduced by using good ingredients which elsewhere are thrown away; any profits go to local communities struggling with food security).

After lunch, **Kloe Rumsey** gave us a tour of the amazing People's History Museum's conservation studio, which is lovely, bright and airy. As much as we all enjoyed the talks and discussions, we all know that the highlight of a conservator's day is to have the opportunity to explore someone else's workplace. Here, we continued the many conversations we already had over coffee and lunch – an amazing networking opportunity.

After so many of us had not seen each other for such a long time it was both refreshing and also a little scary to be in the company of friends and colleagues. For some of us who struggle to network online it was one of the first times we had networked for two years. We certainly look forward to the 2022 conference.

Thanks to all who helped organize, contributed to and attended such an uplifting event.

Christian Baars ACR & Pierrette Squires ACR

PODCAST

THE C WORD: Standards in Conservation Season 11, episode 2

The C Word is a podcast covering issues related to conservation in the context of museums, galleries, and heritage. The catchy title was chosen as the hosts, **Jenny Mathiasson** and **Kloe Rumsey**, felt that in some museums, conservation can be met with a degree of hostility or trepidation, and so they wanted to dispel misconceptions and celebrate conservation.

They invite guests on to discuss a range of topics such as treatment of specific materials, environmental monitoring, and also wider concerns including restitution, couriering and display. The most recent episode covers conservation standards, with contributions from guest hosts Dr David Leigh ACR and Dr Isobel Griffin ACR who, in addition to having a wealth of conservation knowledge, are both directly involved in the creation of conservation standards.

The notion of 'standards' is something we are all familiar with as we encounter standardised objects every day, from batteries to paper sizes. But regarding conservation, the introduction of industry standards is a relatively new concept, only having been around for about fifteen years. There is clearly

no one way to standardise what conservation is or how it is done, as each collection is unique and has its own demands. As such, conservation standards are meant to guide rather than dictate an approach, forming a baseline of agreed best practice.

Most countries have their own standards-setting body which feeds into larger European and international organisations. In the UK we have the British Standards Institution, linking to CEN, the European Committee for Standardisation and ISO, the International Standards Organisation. All standards go through a rigorous peer-reviewed development process and they may also be subject to review from five years after publication to take into consideration research developments, technological advancements, and changing practice.

As the podcast participants talk us through the steps involved in standard creation, from conception to publication, it becomes evident that the route is far from straightforward. Ideas are workshoped, drafts are worked up and approvals must be gained, even just in order for the creation or revision of the standard to be accepted as a new working item. Despite the lengthy process, Isobel Griffin points out that within the toing and froing of ideas lies the beauty of the standards creation procedure - nurturing conversations and different approaches - and

encouraging people to reflect upon their own practice and ask themselves how the profession can do better.

When one thinks of the word 'standard', it can connote rather rigid and unbending rules, and as pointed out by Jane Henderson ACR, a member of the BSI conservation standards committee B/560, standards risk the misconception that there must be one supreme rule strictly adhered to by all, regardless of context. Logic, caution, and understanding are integral values in creating standards, ultimately seeking to enable people to make their own decisions in the best way possible. As explained on the podcast, standards must also be responsive to ongoing contextual shifts. For example, lighting technology has changed a lot in recent years and as such, the lighting standards in the museum context are up for review. Sustainability is also becoming a key consideration in what standards contain, for example with the factoring in of climate change projections and dynamic responses to collection care.

But there's a catch... the standards aren't free to access, and they aren't cheap. And while this can be frustrating, once you consider the extensive process all official standards undergo, with input from hundreds of people in various countries, it makes sense that all this work comes at a price. However, Isobel Griffin shared her insider tip and revealed that



you can get free digital access with online membership of the British Library and other national libraries, thereby accessing valuable information and supporting our libraries in one fell swoop!

This podcast is an entertaining and painless introduction to the world of standards, and my congratulations go to the C-word's hosts, whose questions and comments really brought the topic alive.

Alice Rose Archer

MA student, Preventive Conservation
Northumbria University

You can catch the podcast at:

<https://theword.show/2022/04/06/s11e02-standards-in-conservation/>

LECTURES

ZOOMING IN ON OPERATION NIGHT

WATCH: comprehensive research & decision making

Icon Paintings Group

Online 23 February 2022

.....
Introduced by **Clare Finn ACR, Petria Noble**, Head of Paintings Conservation at the Rijksmuseum, fascinated us with her evening lecture on the research and conservation of Rembrandt's masterpiece: *The Night Watch*. Did you know that the official name of this painting is actually '*Officers and other civic guardsmen of District II in Amsterdam, under the command of Captain Frans Banninck Cocq and Lieutenant Willem van Ruytenburch*'?

And did you know that within this group of men, it is the dog that has quite a story to tell?

The size of the large group of researchers who took part in all the different elements of the investigation of *The Night Watch* is astonishing. Many questions had arisen about the painting process, the present materials and the painting's treatment history, condition, and conservation. Were the darker tones meant to be so brown? What more can we learn about the pigments Rembrandt used? What is the condition of the ground? What is going on with the dog with its brown colour and light contours, which seems like an odd combination?

From SEM-EDX and Laser Speckle Imaging to macro XRPD scanning and Reflectance Imaging Spectroscopy: an impressive

The Night Watch





Detail from *The Night Watch* showing the dog

number of research techniques were employed to answer these questions, supplemented with notes and reports on the treatment history. These go all the way back to 1696, with notable events such as a knife attack in 1975 and a whole history of linings that have taken place during the painting's lifetime.

Let's go back to the dog. What was Rembrandt's intention? Looking at the MA-XRF calcium distribution map, it actually became clear that the paint layer had become abraded. The calcium-containing light

coloured sketch beneath was exposed to a greater degree than originally intended. This hypothesis was supported by other research techniques as well. Moreover, the original colour of this so-called 'light coloured sketch' might, despite what we see in the dog nowadays, have been darker.

All this research resulted in an interim condition research report, containing information about the painting technique, the painting's condition and implications for treatment. Older varnish remains were found underneath the modern varnish which

The Calcium Map, made with the Macro-XRF scanner, where you can see Rembrandt's sketch in the upperpart of the painting



complicates its removal. A more structural issue was some large-scale deformations, which were made visible with a laser-generated height map. These findings among others were combined into the decision document in which three treatment options were discussed, ranging from more research-based steps to urgent and desirable treatments. Since a local treatment would not sufficiently address the deformations and redoing the lining was not an option, it was decided to re-tension the painting on a new strainer following the 'Spring Tension System.' This treatment was ongoing at the time of the lecture but is now completed, while the interpretation of the research results is ongoing.

With all this research, a wealth of information was obtained and questions could be answered. It shows us that combining all these developing research techniques can tell us more about the present materials and the painting's condition. Nevertheless, this rich scientific data also leaves the Rijksmuseum with new questions and we will eagerly await future results.

Iryn Bijker

Paintings conservator
PhD candidate University of Antwerp

GOLD OF THE GREAT STEPPE

Icon Archeology Group
Online 24 February 2022

As many of you have hopefully seen, the Icon Archeology Group has begun to deliver a series of lunchtime lectures featuring recent or ongoing projects in the world of Archaeological Conservation. The first of these took place in February and focused on the Gold of the Great Steppe exhibition which was on display at the Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge, from September 2021 - January 2022. The exhibition explored the culture of the Saka people of Iron Age Kazakhstan, mainly featuring precious metals and organic material from burial contexts, much of which had been recently excavated.

The talk was delivered by three speakers involved in the project. Curator **Dr Rebecca Roberts** opened by setting out the context of the finds, and giving an overview of the exhibition design. The partnership with the East Kazakhstan Regional Museum of Local History was highlighted, with the importance of displaying the research as excavated and interpreted by Kazakhstani archaeologists of note.

She was followed by conservator **Susanna Pancaldo**, who spoke about the logistics of delivering the exhibition within the context of the pandemic. There was interesting discussion



Visitors viewing remains from the burial of a young warrior at the *Gold of the Great Steppe* exhibition

on the use of cloud technology for communication between all involved parties, the need for streamlined procedures with tight timeframes, and the need for flexibility in design, for example in designing cases that were able to respond to incoming artefacts where final dimensions and condition were not always fully known.

The main focus of the presentation was the ongoing research by PhD candidate at the McDonald Institute for Archaeological Research, University of Cambridge, **Saltanat**

Amir. It was impressive to see the level of analysis carried out within the tight timeframe of the exhibition, in order to better understand the materials and manufacturing methods employed. Especially interesting to the audience was the range of largely minimally interventive sampling and minimally destructive techniques used. Amir presented the very preliminary results of this analysis, highlighting the localised material use and production methods employed, however highlighting the different supply networks and traditions of working within the overall Saka culture.

On a personal note, having attended the exhibition in October, it was wonderful to learn more about this ongoing research and gain a further insight into the incredible objects seen within the exhibition. Although the exhibition is now over, the exhibition catalogue is available from the Fitzwilliam Museum, on the Fitzwilliam Museum website (<https://-steppe-gold.fitzmuseum.cam.ac.uk/>) with future publications due.

Emma Smith
Emerging Professionals Liaison Officer
Icon Archaeology Group

CONSERVATION OF THE GALLOWAY HOARD

Icon Archaeology Group
Online March 2022

The second lunchtime lecture of the Icon Archaeology Group, held in March, focussed on conservation of the Galloway Hoard. The lecture was given by curator **Dr Martin Goldberg**, who gave the context of the excavation and situated the finds in their historical context, and conservator **Dr Mary Davis**, who gave an overview of much of the scientific analysis and conservation as it stands.

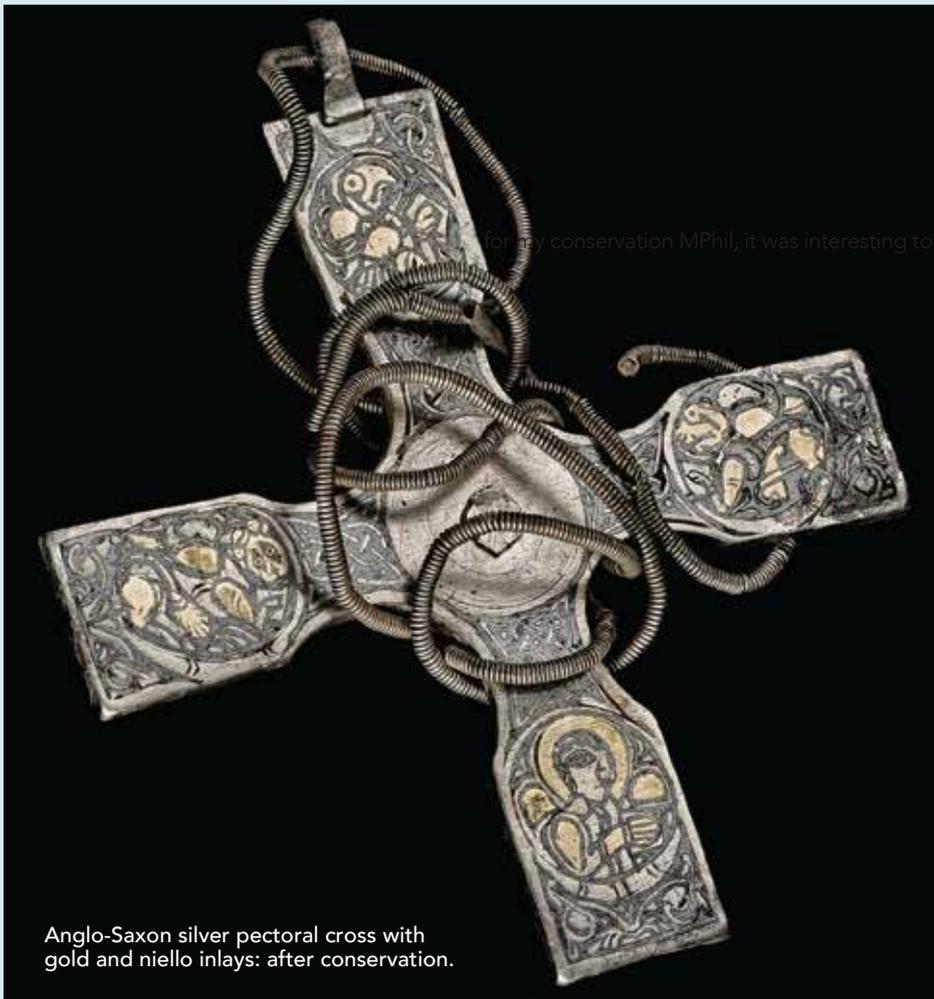
The hoard, dated to c.900AD, was discovered by metal detectorists in 2014, and is described as the richest collection of rare and unique Viking Age objects ever found in Britain or Ireland. Mary detailed the different cleaning methods used, depending on material and decoration, showing a range of mechanical cleaning, overall and localised chemical

Pear-shaped plaque, bottom of a bow-case (gorytos 38629)



Detail of the pear-shaped plaque - Deer eye; turquoise (white of an eye), lapis lazuli, lost (pupil of an eye);





Anglo-Saxon silver pectoral cross with gold and niello inlays: after conservation.

see where conservation and research of the hoard has moved since being acquired by National Museums Scotland (NMS).

The Galloway Hoard is still on tour, in Kirkcudbright galleries until July 2022 and in Aberdeen Art Gallery until October 2022. A book on the current research is available from NMS, with an overview of this research also available online at <https://www.nms.ac.uk/explore-our-collections/stories/scottish-history-and-archaeology/galloway-hoard/>.

Emma Smith

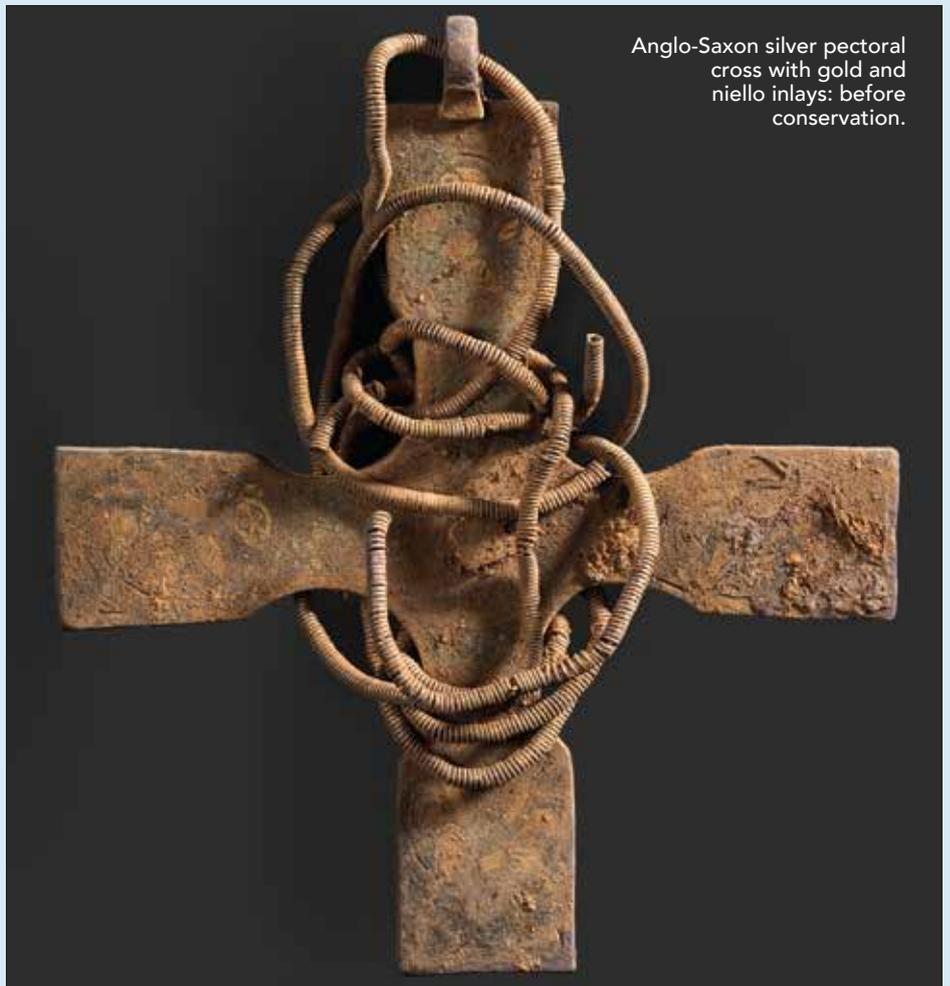
Emerging Professionals Liaison Officer
Icon Archaeology Group.

cleaning, and overall and localised electrolytic reduction.

The use of videos and before and after images gave a real sense of the conservation challenges that accompanied these complex objects, including silver and gold of differing alloys, rock crystal, and organics. Throughout the presentation, information about the analysis carried out with partner institutions highlighted the complexities of the manufacture and final deposition of these objects.

The final part of the presentation gave an overview of the ongoing research, as part of the AHRC funded 'Unwrapping the Galloway Hoard' project, which aims to better understand the complex layers of deposition, including a silver-gilt vessel with lid, wrapped in textile, containing within a variety of artefacts themselves wrapped in leather and textile bundles. The use of technology to capture and reproduce both images and 3D models of the underlying vessel, allows this to be seen by researchers and the public without needing to fully remove the preserved textile remains.

Overall the talk was attended by 154 people, and following the presentation there was some great feedback and questions from participants. From a personal perspective, having received a lecture by Gretal Evans ACR on the initial investigation and conservation carried out on the hoard by AOC Archaeology when studying



Anglo-Saxon silver pectoral cross with gold and niello inlays: before conservation.

THE MARY ROSE HULL

In the latest in our occasional series of *Science Bites*, Karoline Sofie Hennem, Conservator at The Historic Dockyard Chatham, outlines how computer science has been used to understand the drying of waterlogged wood

BACKGROUND

In 1545, King Henry VIII's warship, the *Mary Rose*, sank after thirty-three years of service. Since her raising from the Solent in 1982, she has undergone decades of conservation treatment. Conserving the hull was challenging because waterlogged wood is an incredibly complex material. Its heterogeneous nature makes it extremely difficult for conservators and scientists to analyse and understand changes and/or damage related to conservation treatment and/or drying processes.

To conserve the hull, scientists and conservators began an extensive treatment in 1994; this included incorporating polyethylene glycol (PEG) gradually into the waterlogged wood, to consolidate it while the water was being removed. From then up until 2004, the hull was sprayed with PEG200

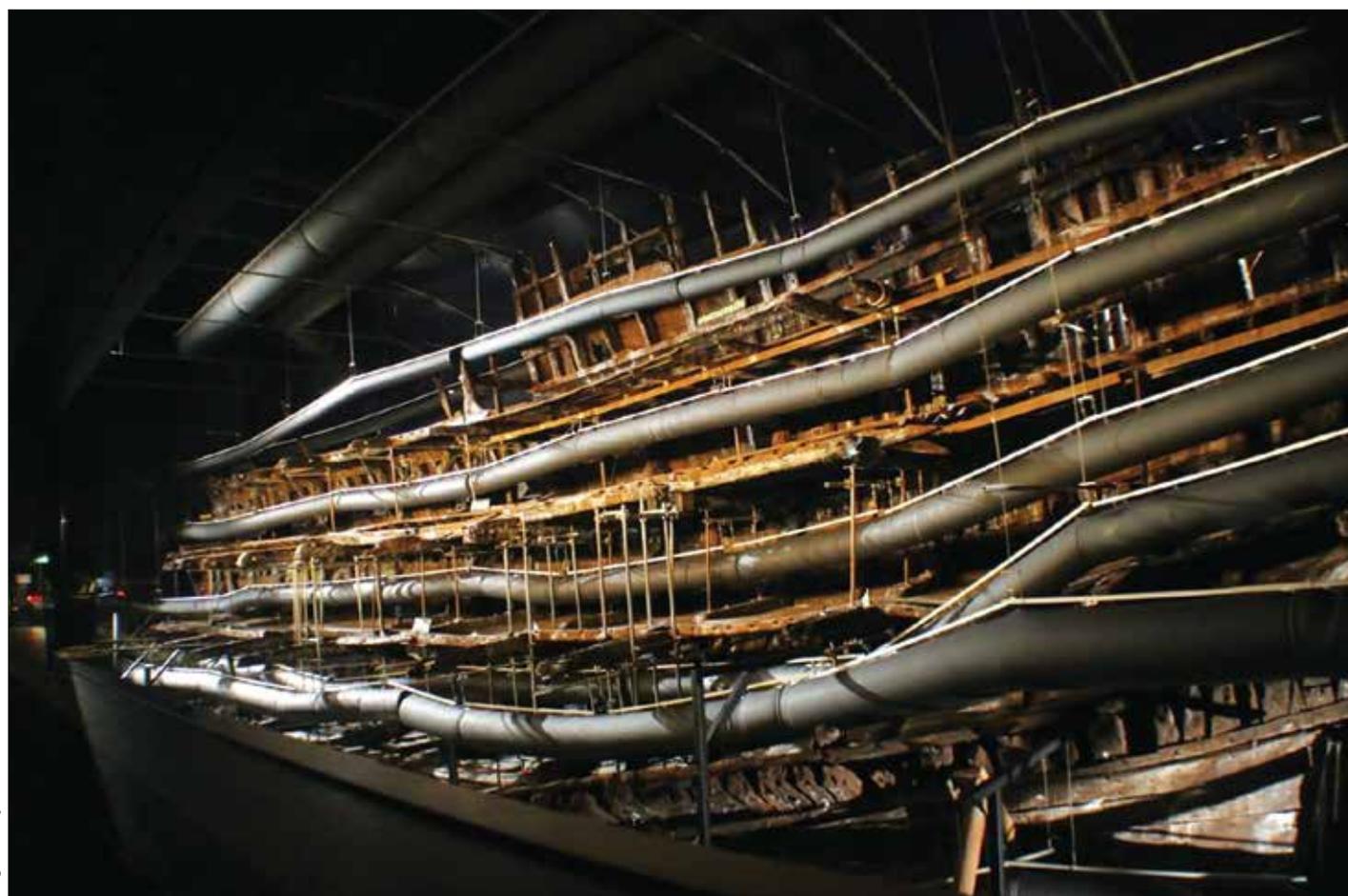
(incrementally until concentration reached 40%), and from 2004 to 2013 the hull was sprayed with PEG2000 (incrementally until concentration reached 60%).

MONITORING THE DRYING PROCESS

The sprays were finally turned off in 2013 and the hull entered its air-drying phase. To monitor this drying process, an incremental borer was used to gather core samples. The core sample locations were chosen carefully to obtain a representation of the entire hull. These samples were taken from several locations to represent the order of the base of the ship (hold, orlop, main and upper). All core samples were measured to retrieve their moisture content throughout, from the surface to the inner core.

The research showed that, as expected, there were variable levels of preservation and degradation throughout the *Mary Rose* hull structure. Furthermore, the differences in moisture content in the hull correlated with erratic drying rates in the timber, as, after four years of controlled air-drying, the overall moisture content drop ranged between 4 and 34% for the depth-averaged core samples. Overall, surface samples saw a more rapid drying than inner samples.

The drying ducts made for the controlled air-drying of the *Mary Rose*



In addition to this, it was evident that the PEG treatment played a part in the erratic drying rates. PEG, especially when considering degradation levels, distributes heterogeneously in wood, and therefore it is expected that it is more concentrated closer to the surface than in the inner structures of the timber. Its level of penetration will also have contributed to the varying drying patterns in the *Mary Rose* timbers. Altogether, the pre-eminent reason for the more rapid drying of the surface samples was, in comparison to inner samples, that they encountered a much higher degree of atmospheric exposure and greater levels of PEG.

Therefore, scientists were left with a complex dataset, with high variability in the data, which makes determining drying rates and predicting the drying from just the raw data difficult, if not impossible.

THE COMPUTATIONAL MODEL

In this research project, Gabriel Lipkowitz (student at Imperial College London at the time of project start) and I (student at University of Oslo at the time of project start) looked for new ways to analyse the moisture content data of the core samples collected over the span of 1,092 days by Eleonora Piva as part

of her PhD thesis. Together, under close supervision from Professor Eleanor Schofield (Deputy CEO of the Mary Rose Trust), our different backgrounds from mathematics/material science and conservation helped us create a simulation to predict the drying rate of waterlogged archaeological wood following PEG treatment and controlled air-drying, using a numerical model written in Python programming language. This allowed us to better understand the complex data collected by Piva.

Last November, twenty-seven years after the treatment of the *Mary Rose* hull first began, the paper *Numerical Modelling of Moisture Loss during Controlled Drying of Marine Archaeological Wood* was published.

OUTCOME

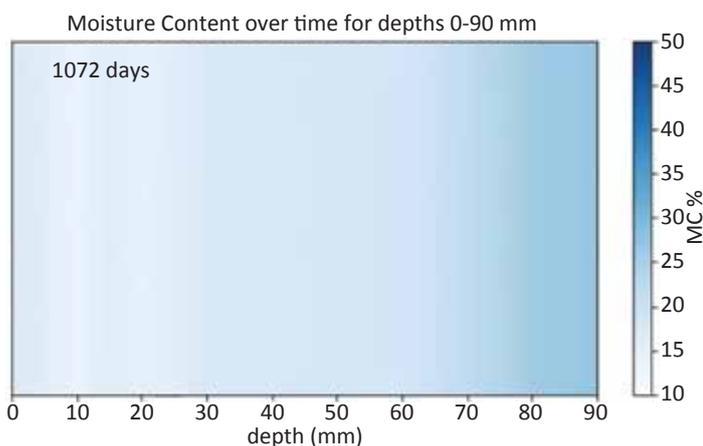
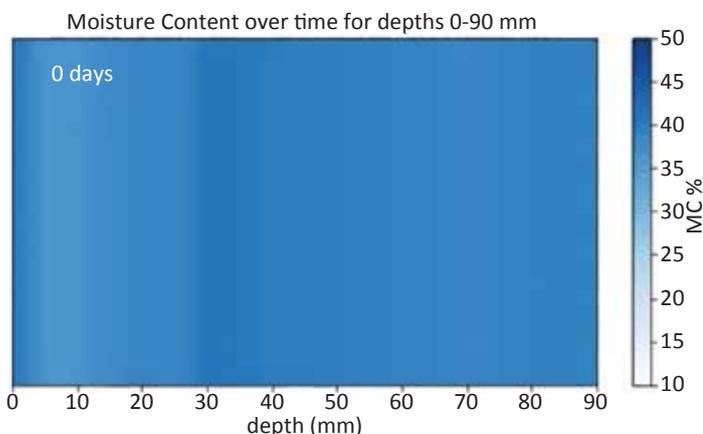
The methodical approach and models presented in this paper enabled us to describe and quantify the drying of different regions and depths of consolidated marine archaeological wood. The image shows a snapshot of the empirical computational model (the code can be downloaded in the link at the end of this article) and a spatiotemporal model on day 0 and day 1072 of drying of the *Mary Rose*, showing the significant loss of moisture over time.

The model provides knowledge on the material state at select time intervals, which now can be correlated to other associated datasets such as physical movement and chemical changes, thereby developing a deeper understanding of this unique piece of cultural heritage. Despite the high variability of the raw data, the model revealed a clear and consistent trend: for each sample depth, an inverse exponential drying rate over time.

Our paper can hopefully help conservators and scientists in both improving and developing conservation strategies to ensure the preservation of waterlogged archaeological wood for years to come.

Article reference: Lipkowitz G, Hennem KS, Piva E, Schofield E. *Numerical Modelling of Moisture Loss during Controlled Drying of Marine Archaeological Wood*. *Forests*. 2021; 12(12):1662. <https://doi.org/10.3390/f12121662>

Supplementary material: use this link to download a zip file with the code and the model: <https://www.mdpi.com/1999-4907/12/12/1662/s1>



the emerging professional

CONSERVATION OF URUSHI-LACQUERED PORCELAIN

Han Zhou (Rose) introduces her MA research project at West Dean College of Arts and Conservation; her work on the conservation of urushi-lacquered porcelain won her the 2021 Denise Lyall Prize



The pair of Japanese trumpet-shaped lacquered porcelain vases, RCAGM collection, Accession number RC720

Introduction

During my two years of study at West Dean College with a specialisation in the conservation of ceramics and related materials, I have encountered various objects with a range of different conservation issues. Among them were two Japanese trumpet-shaped urushi-lacquered porcelain vases from the Russell-Cotes Art Gallery & Museum (RCAGM) in Bournemouth, which inspired me and acted as a case study for my MA research project.

Urushi-lacquered porcelain has been a relatively under-researched area in conservation, with little information available in published literature. My research project aimed to establish a starting point for the ongoing study of the conservation of urushi-lacquered porcelain, and to help ceramic conservators to make informed decisions when dealing with this type of

object. Although it is only a preliminary study, I am deeply honoured that this project has been recognised by the Denise Lyall Prize.

Historical background

Urushi, or East Asian lacquer, refers to the natural polymer obtained from the sap of *Rhus verniciflua*, a type of lacquer tree indigenous to Japan, China, and Korea. Between the 1690s and the 1710s, hard-paste porcelain with urushi decoration first entered the export market from Japan to Europe, combining two of the most luxurious oriental curiosities. This type of object was specifically produced for the export market, possibly to attract new market demand.

The two vases from RCAGM are examples of this trend. RCAGM houses the collection of Sir Merton and Lady Russell-Cotes. According to Duncan Walker, the curator of RCAGM, these two vases were originally made in Arita, Saga Prefecture in Japan, in 1850-1900. Although there is no clear record of acquisition, the vases were possibly acquired during the Russell-Cotes couple's trip to Japan in 1885 and were probably once displayed in the Royal Bath Hotel where the couple shared their passion for travel and collecting souvenirs with the visitors.

Han Zhou at work on the condition assessment of the two lacquered Japanese vases from the RCAGM collection



Condition Issues

The combination of urushi and hard-paste porcelain gave rise to challenges for their preservation and conservation. While the hard-paste porcelain substrate is stable under most environmental conditions and chemically inert, urushi can be affected by many environmental factors, including fluctuation in relative humidity (RH) and exposure to light. The difference in the expansion and contraction rates between the hard-paste porcelain surface and the urushi makes the urushi decoration susceptible to delamination and exfoliation from the object.

The two vases from the RCAGM showed physical damage to the lacquer coating, which could be categorised into three types: surface cracks, lifting from the ceramic substrate, and lacunae. Both vases have a thick layer of surface dirt and body losses at the rim area, with some of the detached sherds retained.

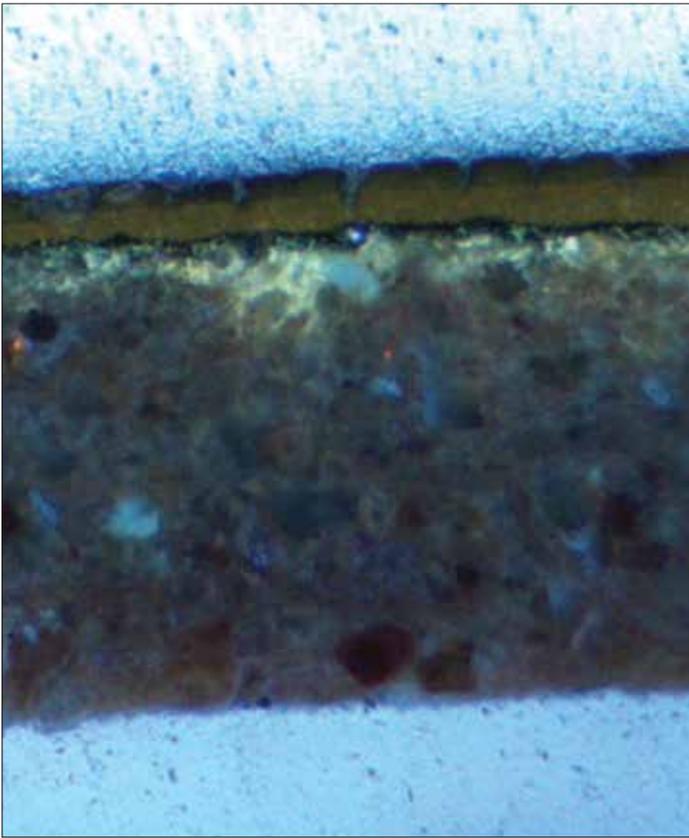
Approach

To acquire a better understanding of this type of object, a literature review was carried out which addressed the art-historical context of the collection of urushi-lacquered porcelain, the chemistry of urushi, the degradation of urushi, existing conservation approaches, and ethical concerns. As a limited amount of literature that focused on urushi-lacquered porcelain was found, the literature from other disciplines, such as lacquer conservation and furniture conservation, was also consulted.

Scientific analysis was carried out with samples available from the case study objects. Depending on the accessibility and availability of the analytical equipment during the project, optical microscopy, Fourier-transform infrared spectroscopy (FTIR), and solubility tests were used to gain a basic understanding of the physical and chemical nature of the lacquer coating on the case study objects.

Example of lacunae in the lacquer coating





Cross-section of the lacquer coating sample under microscope (50x magnification under UV light from a LED epi-fluorescent illuminator)

As part of the project, I also focused on the development of a treatment method to fill the lacunae in the lacquer coating, which was identified as one of the major conservation issues for the case study objects. Compared to urushiware with other substrates, the urushi coating on a porcelain substrate can have a characteristic of being very thin. The requirement to fill such shallow lacunae on a smooth and non-porous surface makes the commonly used filling materials in ceramics conservation less appropriate.

Thus, I investigated the use of solvent-set Japanese tissue paper as a filling material, where the adhesive would be applied on the Japanese tissue paper in advance and activated by suitable solvent prior to application. The experiments focused on the identification of adhesives with suitable adhesion strength to the hard-paste porcelain substrate and long-term stability for the fill.

Samples with mixtures of Lascaux 498HV and Lascaux 303HV in different ratios, Paraloid® B72, and EVACON-R™ (EVA) were tested through various analytical methods, including light-induced degradation with a Q-Lab Xenon light chamber, FTIR, spectrophotometry, and standard tape test method (ASTM D-3359).

Some findings

Based on the experimental results, some informative comments were made with recommendations for potential future research subjects to further develop this treatment method. All the adhesives showed a good long-term chemical stability after the accelerated ageing process. EVA was rated to have the best and most stable adhesion performance. The adhesion performance of Lascaux mixtures requires more testing with more mixture ratios. A general observation was

that the adhesion performance of the Lascaux mixtures on glazed ceramic substrate increased with the increase of the Lascaux 303HV in the composition.

As a tentative comment, Paraloid® B72 was not regarded as a suitable material for preparing solvent-set Japanese tissue papers because of its high viscosity, while it could still be an appropriate choice for other application methods. However, there are still some unsolved questions, such as the dark ageing performance of the Lascaux adhesives, and the impact of off-gassing on the long-term stability of EVA in a closed environment, that require further research and analysis.

Planning for the future

The scope of this project only allowed a preliminary investigation. It is hoped that this project could act as a starting point to aid conservators in making informed decisions when facing urushi-lacquered porcelain, and to inspire future research projects to further explore the potential of this treatment method. I have also reached out to several collections in an attempt to locate more examples of urushi-lacquered porcelain, with information collected and summarised in the appendix of my dissertation.

Moving on

Since completing my MA studies at West Dean College, I have undertaken a three-month work placement with Sarah Peek Ltd. Under the supervision of Sarah Peek ACR and Jasmina Vučković ACR, I was encouraged to work on a wide range of projects, including ceramics, glass, plaster, and stone, which enabled me to further develop my practical skills, time management skills, and decision-making skills, and to achieve high standards of treatment completion informed by ethical best practice.

I have also recently joined the Icon Ceramics and Glass Group Committee as an events coordinator, through which I'm hoping to make more contributions to the development and promotion of conservation.

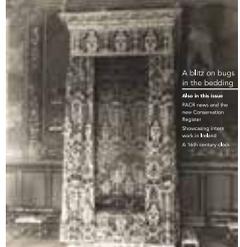
While I'm now taking a short break to visit my family in China after a long separation due to the global pandemic, I'm hoping to further broaden my working experience across both museum and private sectors. As an emerging conservator, I'm only at the gateway to the world of conservation as a profession. The recognition from the Denise Lyall Prize, as a perfect ending for my MA study, encourages me to explore the world of conservation with confidence, as well as an eagerness to keep learning.



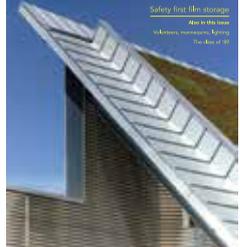
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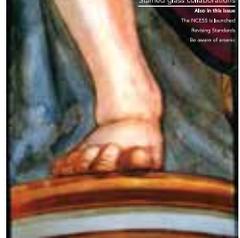
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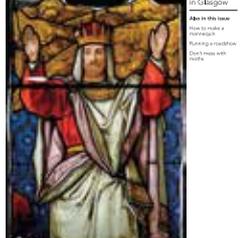
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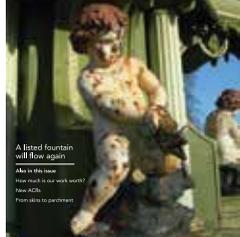
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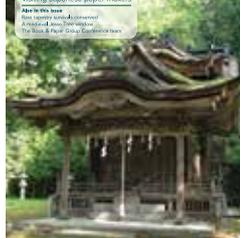
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