Western Association for Art Conservation

The Western Association for Art Conservation (formerly, the Western Association of Art Conservators), also known as WAAC, was founded in 1974 to bring together conservators practicing in the western United States to exchange ideas, information, and regional news, and to discuss national and international matters of common interest.

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Regional News

Daniel Heath Cull
column editor

ALASKA

Ellen Carilee has been working on totem poles, waterlogged wood/ basketry, and shipwreck artifacts. She is involved in the design phase of a new combined facility for the Alaska State Library, Museum, and Archives, particularly environmental concerns and lab planning. She also took the NOAA/ NAS Part 1 training in Foreshore and Underwater Archaeology. Scott Carilee organized an interesting conservation related session at the Museums Alaska conference in Fairbanks this fall entitled “Preservation Ethics and Industrial History Collections.” On the panel were representatives from small Alaskan museums who care for (and sometimes restore) planes, trains, and automobiles. Scott recently did a conservation assessment of the Seward Museum to help them prepare for a move into a new facility in 2012.

Seth Irwin continues to do nomadic paper conservation work for institutional and private clients in Alaska. Lately he has found a champion in the Alaska Aviation Heritage Center, who has hosted his free workshops on tear repair and framing while he has been working on their archives. Seth also made the evening news for his treatment of a rare 1826 watercolor of Barrow, Alaska.

Janelle Matz is organizing the deinstallation and re-installation of three large scale canvases by Spence Guerin at Fairview Recreation Center. The canvases will be cleaned and lined at WCCFA.

Monica Shah was recently hired as the new Director of Collections at the Anchorage Museum at Rasmuson Center, where she will oversee Conservation, Registration, Collections, and the Archives/Library. Monica has been the conservator at the Anchorage Museum since 2007, and has recently been occupied with the conservation assessment of the museum’s Alaska Gallery.

Regional Reporter:
Ellen Carilee

Bronwyn Freya Charette, daughter of new board member Sean and his wife Maria, born August 24, 2010. (4 months)

Julia Walters Moreno, daughter of longtime WAAC secretary Teresa Moreno and Julie Walters, born on Dec. 31, 2010. (1 week)

(only babies of WAAC board members get photos in the Newsletter)
ARIZONA

Many WAAC members may not realize that long-time member Gloria Fraser Giffords is the mother of Congresswoman Gabrielle Giffords. Gloria (Jinx) has mentored many conservation interns in her Tucson studio. Former interns, friends, the WAAC board, and by proxy, the WAAC membership, wish Gabby a full and complete recovery and offer Jinx and the rest of Gabby’s family our heart-felt support.

Martha Winslow Grimm, textile conservator, continues her stitching ways by treating uniforms, a housewife (sewing kit), and ribbons from the Civil War period for an major exhibit at the Missouri History Museum to preparing couture gowns for the upcoming Fashion Design exhibit at the Phoenix Art Museum.

Gloria Giffords is consulting with a San Diego firm on the design, iconography, and construction of two late-baroque style retablos including four life-size statues for the Cathedral of Tucson. Both the retablos and statues are being constructed in a traditional manner entirely of cedar with encarnación and gold leaf. Dedication is planned to coincide with the 200th anniversary of the cathedral.

Linda Morris has been busy in the studio treating a number of water damaged works on paper from private collections with interns Kevin Wohlgemuth, Alison Pinto, and Rachel Shand.

At the National Park Service lab, Audrey Harrison and Dana Senge designed a new internal support system for beaded buckskin clothing. Pre-program intern Amy Molnar has been working on the treatment of a small basket with multiple complex breaks. Both projects are for Grand Teton National Park’s ethnographic collections. Dana and Maggie Kipling treated three historic architectural models on exhibit at Salinas Pueblo Missions National Monument in New Mexico.

Brynn Bender surveyed NAGPRA collections for heavy metal pesticides using the handheld XRF for 8 tribes at the Colorado Historical Society. Initial results identified patterns of contamination located within accession groups. The XRF was also useful in the lab for identifying bromide corrosion products on Spanish reales (coins) from Padre Island National Seashore in Texas.

Nancy Odegaard was a keynote speaker at the Nordic Countries PhD Consortium in November. She lectured on the importance of advanced research in conservation. Also in the Arizona State Museum lab, Ida Pohoriljakova (Queens University) is completing a post graduate fellowship and Emilie Heddebaux (Sorbonne program) completed a graduate internship. Gina Watkinson has begun a graduate degree in American Indian Studies at the University of Arizona.

Lesley Frame has begun a Fulbright with Ian Freestone, Research Professor in Archaeological Science/Head of Archaeology and Conservation, at Cardiff University in Wales. She and Nancy presented/wrote a paper for the Metals 2010 meetings about deactivation of civil war era ammunition.

Marilen Pool completed treatment of two panels from the Maricopa County Court House Jail that consisted of scratched graffiti images through paint on heavy sheet metal. She continues with the Pottery project treatment phase at the Arizona State Museum.

Staff at the Musical Instrument Museum mourns the loss of Head Conservator Barbara Hamann who passed away on November 29th after a struggle with cancer (read a full obituary at cool.conservations-us.org/byform/mailing-lists/cdl/2010/1228.html.) Irene Peters steps up to take over as the new head of the conservation department; she is busy planning the conservation efforts for the next phase of the museums development and expansion. As part of a collaboration between the MIM and Graceland, Irene recently assessed the condition of a Martin guitar that was the last guitar played live by Elvis Presley.

Daniel Cull can most often be found in the visible conservation laboratory treating objects for exhibit at the MIM. Further, he recently completed a project working with the MIM photographer to safely photograph a series of complex shaped objects on loan from the Royal Museum of Central Africa, Belgium. Outside of his responsibilities at MIM, Daniel continues on the board of e-conservation magazine and writes a column for every issue, and as Vice President of WAAC he is currently working on plans for the 2012 annual meeting.

Regional Reporter: Brynn Bender

GREATER LOS ANGELES

Chris Stavroudis is happy to report that over 1,000 conservators world-wide have registered as users of the Modular Cleaning Program.

Sculpture Conservation Studio just completed a project for the Federal Government on the USS Bennington Monument and Wall at the Rosecrans Cemetery in San Diego. Both structures are from 1915 and are made from large granite stones, with the monument being an obelisk 60’ high. The granite wall had been buried for over 50 years and was raised from the ground and conserved.

Linda Strauss has retired from the Autry National Center. Linda graduated from the University of Delaware in 1983 and worked many years at both the Getty and in private practice. She was with the Autry National Center for 12 years. She and her husband, Monty, have purchased a home in Costa Rica and are wrapping things up state-side.

Mark Watters continues to work with Gloria Williams at the Norton Simon Museum on the examination and treatment of the museum’s collection of Fragonard drawings.

Robert Aitchison has been studying the deterioration of platinum/palladium photographs to design a treatment for the staining which often disfigures this photographic process. Robert is participating in the Platinum/Palladium Print Research Project initiated by Connie McCabe and sponsored by the National Gallery of Art.

In November of 2010, Victoria Blyth Hill participated in a two-day symposium on...
Regional News, continued

East Asian Art: Historical Context and Modern Preservation of Paper-based Works. The informative symposium was held in Philadelphia at the Athenaeum. While on the east coast, Victoria also visited the new wing at the Virginia Museum of Fine Art in Richmond, to see the installation of thangkas which she, Cara Varnell, Ashley Macomber, and Jane Berman of Ota House, worked on last year.

LACMA’s on-going treatment of an 18th-century Korean Buddhist painting taking place in the newly renovated Korean ceramics gallery is progressing well. Prof. Park Chi-Sun (Jung-Jea Conservation Center, Seoul, Korea) and her staff have finished blotter washing and are currently removing remnants of old backing material from the silk painting.

Lacey Lieberthal, pre-program volunteer intern in conservation and collections management at LACMA, will be moving to San Francisco at the end of December to attend the University of San Francisco. She hopes to focus on museum studies in preparation for a career in either collections management or conservation. Douglas MacLennan, pre-program volunteer intern in paper conservation, has completed several storage upgrade projects for the Chinese and Korean department at LACMA.

Jennifer Badger, assistant paper conservator on contract at LACMA, has settled in nicely with the staff. She has completed numerous treatments on a range of material from Islamic and Indian miniatures, Western prints, ink drawings on tracing paper, Japanese prints, and most recently a recent acquisition of Hawaiian Kappa. This last enters LACMA’s growing collection of Pacific Arts. It is a 19th-century bark cloth, decorated with a simple quilt design, made as a bed covering for Princess Ka’iulani, 1875–1899. Jennifer is also working closely with LACMA’s new assistant curator in the prints and drawings department, Naoko Takahatake, who is systematically re-organizing the entire collection of small format prints and drawings in anticipation of the opening of a new study center.

Chail Norton attended the Mellon funded workshop ‘Characterization of Silver Gelatin Photographs’ held at the New York Public Library in October 2010.

In December Chetan Suryawanshi started in the research laboratory of LACMA as Mellon Postdoctoral Conservation Research Fellow. He takes over from Rebecca Broyer who accepted a tenure track teaching position at USC and left LACMA in July. Chetan will continue LACMA’s research in the preservation of objects made of plastic, esp. cellulose acetate and other cellulosic esters. Chetan’s research during his graduate work (PhD at Northern Illinois U. and M.S. at U. of Cincinnati) dealt with polymer based composite materials for multi-functional applications.

Bianca May is continuing her second year as Mellon Fellow in painting conservation at LACMA. Bianca is restoring paintings from the series The Ports of France by Juan Morlete Ruiz, which the museum acquired in 2007. Nicole Bloomfield began her Mellon Fellowship in textile conservation at LACMA in October, 2010. She graduated from the Fashion Institute of Technology program in Textile Conservation and Fashion Studies in May of 2009.

Erin Jue from the Huntington Library and Jennifer Kim from the AMPAS Margaret Herrick Library are continuing their full time positions at their respective institutions but have also begun taking on private work both independently and jointly.

Regional Reporter: Virginia Rasmussen

Gregory Thomas, Art Care, has just completed the treatment of three conte crayon figurative drawings by E. Savage and an oil on canvas portrait by Lloyd Sexton. Greg continues his private practice working in his studio in Kailua, Hawaii.

Dawne Steele Pullman volunteered 2 weeks in Haiti helping to teach a Collections Management course organized by ICOM. Aside from helping with lectures, work included digging on site amidst rubble for art works, supervising case study teams, and researching availability of materials locally (truly a challenge!); simultaneously a stimulating and exhausting experience. Also, for her private practice she finished the treatment of three Howard Hitchcock paintings in Hawaii for private clients.

Regional Reporter: Dawne Steele Pullman

PACIFIC NORTHWEST

Megan Salazar-Walsh and Isabel Blue interned with Alice Bear Conservation this summer into fall.

Jack Johnson conducted a CAP survey of the Tillamook County Pioneer Museum on the Oregon coast and is currently restoring a collection of early (1900) photomurals of farming in Moro County, Oregon, which were exhibited at the centennial celebration of the Lewis & Clark expedition of 1805-06.

The staff at the Royal BC Museum has been extremely pleased to host two recent conservation interns. Johanna Wilms worked for six months between April and October, bringing her wooden objects expertise from the University of Applied Science and Art in Hildesheim, Germany. Johanna was fortunate to have the opportunity to attend the WAAC Portland meeting while in the neighborhood. Mary-Lou Florian spent considerable time training Johanna on fibre identification. Krystyna Halliwell joined them from the Sir Sandford Fleming College Collections Conservation and Manage-
ment Program in September. Krystyna has been busy researching current practices in coatings for silver objects. She’s also shown wonderful initiative in preparing artifacts for loan, making object mounts, and moving the contents of the museum’s on-site historic house to an off-site warehouse while fire suppression is installed.

Also joining them in the lab is JoAnn Peters, chemistry professor at Central Washington U. JoAnn is spending her sabbatical in Victoria, researching methods for identification of plastics in the History Collection. JoAnn is also looking into options for storage of deteriorating plastics, including cold storage and isolation with scavengers. JoAnn plans to attend the Eastern Analytical Symposium in New Jersey in November, engaging with her colleagues in plastics research.

The Helmcken House fire suppression project has involved every one of the conservators at the RBCM, with Lisa Bengston leading the team. Lisa and George Field were on a roadtrip just prior to that, assisting with the transfer of artifacts to the Nisga’a First Nation. George also travelled to the interior of BC to attend the CCI totem pole workshop in September.

Kasey Lee attended the WAAC meeting, including RTI workshop and Gamblin Paints tour. Kjerstin Mackie and Colleen Wilson are back from extended holidays during which they galavanted overseas. They’re now busy planning the Pacific Conservation Group meeting in Victoria, marking the 60th meeting of this group! Colleen is also contributing to the RBCM blog.

Betty Walsh is busy preparing for the upcoming opening of The Other Emily exhibition, with the assistance of contract conservators Barry Byers and Simone Vogel-Horridge. Robert Davison is facilitating ongoing preparations for cold storage of AV collections, as well as working with Kasey on the latest round of collections risk assessment.

Regional Reporter:
Corine Landrieu

ROCKY MOUNTAIN REGION
Lisa Capano will be travelling to the island of St. Croix to restore an oil on canvas by Charles “Bud” Hawes from 1969.

Emily Kleinkauf, Erin Murphy, and Rachel Dook were in residence as pre-program conservation interns at the Buffalo Bill Historical Center this fall.

Jessica Cosmas from Bryn Mawr and Kallie Holt from the University of Iowa returned this winter for two weeks to work with the XRF carrying out analysis of some of the paints and paintings of Harry Jackson and other works in the Buffalo Bill Historical Center collection.

Mark Minor is beginning treatment on a pair of 1870s-era military wagons for the Frontier Army Museum in Fort Leavenworth, Kansas. One is a cavalry cart for a gatling gun; the other, a 4-mule escort wagon.

This February, Victoria Montana Ryan taught the introductory course, Care of Paintings, through Northern States Conservation Center’s museum classes online. The class introduces basic principles for the care of paintings and has previously had students from small institutions, international students, and undergraduate students from around the country.

Carl Patterson attended the IIC Congress in Instanbul and took the opportunity to travel for two weeks through the country visiting museums and archaeological sites. Of special interest was the current conservation and stabilization of mosaics. Patterson is currently teaching Introduction to Art Conservation at the University of Denver.

Cindy Lawrence (paintings), Judy Greenfield (objects), Mark Minor (furniture), Camille Moore (paper), and Paulette Reading (textiles) have joined together to form Mountain States Art Conservation. It is a consortium of independent conservators in private practice.

By time this goes to press, the Denver Art Museum will have re-opened its American Indian galleries. Planning, conservation, and installation have been underway for the past nine months. Over 700 objects, paintings, works on paper, and photographs have passed through the conservation department in need of treatment and or special mounts.

Objects conservator Gina Laurin has been overseeing the conservation of a broad range of ethnographic objects. Contract objects conservators Julie Parker and Judy Greenfield and American Indian specialist Tom Towner have devoted many hours to supporting and implementing the project.

Steve Osborne and Jacob Galey designed and fabricated a myriad of mounts. In addition James Squires readied paintings and Sarah Melching works on paper and photographs. Volunteers Beryl Jacobsen, Julie Scott, Alice Yockey, and Jane Matthews provided time and expertise in finishing mounts. Conservation assistant Aaron Burgess and pre-program intern Micheal Mike, contributed towards all of the disciplines with true talent and enthusiasm.

Regional Reporter:
Paulette Reading

SAN DIEGO AREA
Paintings conservator Gary Hulbert recently completed a complex, nearly two-year project involving the re-location and conservation of a large fresco mural depicting the San Diego tuna fishing industry. The mural, painted by George Sorenson in 1936, was rediscovered in 2004 on the campus of San Diego State University. The fresco was partially destroyed and covered up by renovations in the 1950s. The mural is now in the university’s library.

Regional Reporter:
Francis Prichett
NEW MEXICO

In November, Bettina Raphael, Mark McCormick, and Steven Prins presented a panel discussion on technologies and analysis used in conservation for the annual meeting of the New Mexico Association of Museums in Las Vegas, New Mexico.

Museum Development Associates, the nonprofit museums services organization serving small and rural museums in New Mexico and surrounding states and directed by M. Susan Barger, closed the end of December due to the vagaries of the economy. Small Museum Pro! the certification program started by Museum Development Associates and Eastern New Mexico University will continue through the Distance Learning Department of ENMU.

Bettina Raphael is working on a project for the conservation of Sioux buckskin garments for a museum in South Dakota.

Regional Reporter: M. Susan Barger, PhD

SAN FRANCISCO BAY AREA

Elisabeth Cornu has retired from her position as Head Objects Conservator at the Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco. Elisabeth will continue to teach conservation courses, especially abroad, and has recently co-taught a stone monument conservation course at the Universidad del Museo Social in Buenos Aires, with biochemist Marcela Cedrola and stone conservator Patricia Riadigos, both from Argentina. She will continue to be active in conservation projects in the San Francisco region, and will host Egyptian Fulbrighter Mahmoud El Shendidy in October and November of this year.

Candis Griggs Hakim, private practice objects conservator, recently moved one hour north from San Francisco to Sebastopol, in Sonoma County. Before the winter rains came, she was racing to treat several outdoor sculptures including Deborah Butterfield horses and an Olaf Eliasson, and is now snugly in studio working on a Native American basket, Vietnamese wood carvings, a ceramic sculpture by an Oakland artist, and a World War II Japanese sword. She loves the slower pace of life in wine country and invites all her Bay Area colleagues to come up for a visit.

Katharine Untch has been promoted to Director of Conservation at ARG Conservation Services, a conservation contracting firm based in San Francisco providing conservation of buildings, sites, and monuments. The firm frequently teams with objects, paintings, paper, and architectural conservators for special field projects. Katharine was the lead instructor in developing a new workshop for the American Institute for Conservation (AIC) on Outdoor Sculpture Conservation, funded in part by the National Endowment for Humanities. The first workshop venue took place in San Francisco in partnership with the Arts Commission. The next workshop will be in the DC area in the fall of 2011.

Will Shank spoke in an education session during the annual meeting of the National Trust for Historic Preservation in Austin, Texas, in October about “American communities and their murals.” He has also written a paper for the NHTP Journal called, “Recognizing and Protecting America’s Public Murals.” With faculty members Laura Fuster López and Mercedes Sánchez Pons, of the training program of the Universidad Politécnica de Valencia (Spain), Will is organizing a symposium about contemporary murals and their conservation, scheduled for spring 2011.

Mark Harpainter recently finished a three year project for Iolani Palace in Honolulu, completing work on five objects in October, including the Kamehameha throne and a koa wood stand supporting two elephant tusks originally given to King Kalakaua on the occasion of his 50th birthday jubilee. The collections and curatorial department at Iolani Palace was one of two recipients of a National Collections Award for 2010 for their exemplary work reconstructing the interiors of the palace. Another interesting project during the past year was the reconstruction of four badly broken legs from a mid-eighteenth century Venetian commode, using unidirectional carbon fiber reinforcement. Mark would be interested to hear from other object/furniture conservators who have employed this material in their conservation work.

Martha Little has been working two days a week as library conservator for the Environmental Design Library rare books conservation project at UC Berkeley. The project, funded by a gift earmarked to address the most urgent conservation needs of the collection, will last from October 2010 to July 2011.

The conservation department of the Asian Art Museum is very busy with upcoming exhibitions and projects. Katie Holbrow, department head, is working to bring the lab into the twenty-first century with digital record-keeping and a stronger web presence. She is also working closely with Shihoko Sasaki, conservator of paintings and paper, to secure grant funding for the survey and treatment of the Korean and Japanese paintings collections.

Third-year graduate intern Elizabeth Seatta (Buffalo) has been working with XRF to examine bronzes. In conjunction with that project she invited conservation scientist Aaron Shugar to visit for an intensive two-day study of XRF equipment, qualitative analysis of spectra, and strategies for quantifying the results.

Pre-program technician Kimi Tiara has been working with Shihoko and Denise Migdail, conservator of textiles, to redesign and upgrade magnetic mounting systems for light-sensitive paintings and textiles. Outside of her responsibilities with the Asian Art Museum, Denise has completed her work with the Oakland Museum of California providing information and conducting presentations regarding their textile rehousing grant.

Regional Reporter: Beth Szuhay

TEXAS

Sylvie Pénichon, conservator of photographs at the Amon Carter Museum
Regional News, continued

of American Art, attended the Interim Meeting of the Photographic Material Working Group of ICOM-Conservation Committee (Athens, October 19-20, 2010) where she co-presented a paper titled “Preliminary Investigation on the Preservation of Backlit Works of Art” with Kate Jennings, conservator of time-based media at Tate London. While in Athens, she taught a one-day workshop on contemporary photographic practices that was attended by 64 conservators from 20 different countries (Benaki Museum, Athens, October 21, 2010).

Since November 2010, Diana Díaz, adjunct faculty of the International Post-graduate Course in Photograph Conservation at the National School for Conservation (ENC RyM), National Institute of History and Anthropology (INAH), in Mexico City, has been working with Sylvie at ACMAA. During her three-month residence, Diana will assist with exhibition preparation and work on a number of different projects.

In early October, Mark van Gelder and William Hayden re-gilt the star being held aloft by the Goddess of Liberty statue atop the Texas State Capitol dome, (on scaffolding over 300 feet above ground level). Brian Howard also consulted with the State Preservation board on aspects of the project, which involved working with other contractors who were repainting the replica statue and many of the other metal roof surfaces.

Judd Foundation conservator Shelley M. Smith returned to Marfa, TX at the end of June after having worked on the de-installation of Donald Judd’s building at 101 Spring Street that served as his New York residence and studio. The 5-story cast-iron building designed by Nicholas Whyte in 1870 is currently undergoing major restoration scheduled for completion in 2013. During this 4-month project, immovable works were protected on-site and 5000 objects, furniture, and artworks were documented and some treated onsite before being packed and moved to temporary storage or to local area conservation studios.

Assisting in this project was conservation intern Kendra Dacey, who primarily worked to stabilize Judd’s significant collection of African masks and Vickie Arndt who worked as preparator and registrar. Contract conservators who worked onsite with Shelly include sculpture conservator Eleonora Nagy, paintings conservator Suzanne Siano, Frank Stella specialist Luca Bonetti, and Marlene Eidelheit of Saint John the Divine Textile Conservation Center.

In July, Nora Nagy travelled to Marfa, TX to lead a groundbreaking treatment of a work in the collection of the Judd Foundation. Nora was assisted by Shelley and by Bettina Landgrebe, conservator at the Chinati Foundation. This collaborative project was the result of over three years of research and planning as part of the Judd Foundation’s effort to set the standard for the conservation of works by Donald Judd, by retaining all original materials. It will culminate in published articles geared at conservation professionals and collectors alike to raise awareness by improving the methodology that is being practiced in the restoration of Judd’s work, and to change the current ideology that drives these methods.

Bettina Landgrebe recently accepted a post on the Judd Foundation’s Advisory Committee for Conservation and Restoration (ACCR), which was established in 2005 under the purview of Marianne Stockebrand to promote best practice in the handling, installation, maintenance, and care of works of art by Donald Judd. The ACCR consists of sculptural conservators Derek Pullen and Nora Nagy as well as Dudley DelBalso who worked as Donald Judd’s first assistant; she presently serves on the Judd Foundation’s Board of Directors. Since the committee’s inception it has successfully furthered the presence of art conservation within the foundation by appointing a permanent full time conservator and has recently published a paper on the care and maintenance of Judd works in metal. This will be followed by a paper on the care and maintenance of Judd works in wood.

In early November 2010, Stephanie Watkins, head of paper conservation at the Harry Ransom Center at the University of Texas at Austin, attended the CCAHA symposium on East Asian Art held in Philadelphia, PA, along with other WAAC members. In December 2010, Desirae “Desi” Peters graduated from the U. of Texas at Austin with a double-major in art history and Spanish/hispanic studies with a minor in chemistry. During her last semester volunteering in paper conservation at HRC, Stephanie and she treated 18th-c. parchment contracts and announcements. Currently, she is pursuing additional conservation training opportunities and applying to conservation graduate programs in the USA.

Austin paper conservator, Lauren Morales, continues to volunteer in paper conservation at HRC under Stephanie’s supervision, working primarily on early English and French circus advertisements.

The last of the University of Texas at Austin Kilgarlin School graduate conservation students volunteering in paper conservation included Alex Bero who worked on circus posters, and Jennifer Evers who worked on manuscript tape removal. Alex currently interns in the conservation department at the American Museum of Natural History in New York City and Jennifer currently interns in the conservation department of the University of Illinois.

Regional Reporter: Ken Grant