

OBJECTS SPECIALTY GROUP POSTPRINTS VOLUME FIFTEEN, 2008

*Proceedings of the Objects Specialty Group Session
April 24, 2008*

AMERICAN INSTITUTE FOR CONSERVATION OF HISTORIC AND ARTISTIC WORKS

*36th Annual Meeting
Denver, Colorado*



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*Compiled by Howard Wellman, Program Chair
with Christine Del Re, Patricia Griffin, Emily Hamilton, Kari Kipper, and Carolyn Riccardelli*



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Contents

PROGRAM CHAIR'S FOREWORD

Howard Wellman

v

BRINGING OUT THE “BLING”: DECADENCE IN GLASS

L. H. (Hugh) Shockey Jr.

1

“...IF THE ROOM IS STEADY THE CAPULA SHALL ROCK....” (REYES 2007) STEEL, PLASTIC, AND THE PUBLIC: THE LIFE AND CARE OF *CAPULA XVI AND XVII* IN THE SEATTLE ART MUSEUM OLYMPIC SCULPTURE PARK PAVILION

Liz Brown

13

BECOMING A CHIEF OF OBJECTS

Anne De Buck

33

COLLABORATIVE CONSERVATION OF THE CHARLES HUBBARD NATURAL HISTORY DIORAMAS

Ron Harvey and Nina Roth-Wells

43

TWO CONSERVATORS, A WHOLE LOT OF WALLPAPER AND A ROOM WITH A VIEW—SCENIC RESPITE OR RECIPE FOR DISASTER?

Michaela Z. Neuro

59

BITTEN BY THE BUG:

THE INTEGRATED PEST MANAGEMENT WORKING GROUP'S COLLABORATIVE APPROACH TO PROVIDING IPM RESOURCES FOR THE MUSEUM COMMUNITY

Rachael Perkins Arenstein, Neil Duncan, Lisa Elkin, Richard Monk, and Chris Norris

69

SAVING GRAND CANYON RIVER RUNNING HISTORY

Brynn Bender

85

AN EVALUATION OF POTENTIAL ADHESIVES FOR MARBLE REPAIR

Mersedeh Jorjani, George Wheeler, Carolyn Riccardelli, Winston O. Soboyejo, and Nima Rahbar

95

FROM MARBLE TO MUSSELS:
A SIMILAR TREATMENT APPROACH TO DISSIMILAR MATERIALS

Judy Ozone and Abigail Mack

109

COLLABORATIVE WORK TOWARDS THE PRESERVATION OF
SPRUCE ROOT BASKETRY AS A LIVING TRADITION

Molly Gleeson and Samantha Springer

127

CONSERVATORS WITHOUT BORDERS: AN INTERNATIONAL
ARCHAEOLOGICAL CONSERVATION AND OUTREACH INITIATIVE

Melina Smirniou, Christie Pohl, and Dominica D'Arcangelo

147

Program Chair's Foreword

The 36th Annual Meeting of the American Institute for Conservation was organized around the theme of “Creative Collaboration.” The Objects Specialty Group organized two sessions of twelve presentations that highlighted different aspects of collaborating conservators: with artists, museum professionals, volunteers, scientists, international outreach, and other conservators.

Hugh Shockey discussed working with a living artist to get approval for cleaning the components of a complicated installation. This process involved all stages of planning, treatment, and final installation that culminated in a very pleased artist who continued to seek out conservation advice as the project came to fruition. Liz Brown documented the work necessary to re-build an object in collaboration with the artist when the public interacted with it a little too exuberantly. This led to valuable discussions of impermanence, public interaction, and artist's intent. Anne de Buck discussed working with an artist on a performance installation where the museum needed to develop guidelines and methods for the future preservation of the work and all its working components (including duplication and replacement). The emphasis here came to be a focus on the artwork itself, not the interests of the museum or the artist. Molly Gleeson and Samantha Springer presented a paper on their work with Native Alaskan basket-makers. The traditional artists taught the conservators how to collect and process the natural materials that went into the baskets, giving them an insight into the strengths and weaknesses of the objects, and how to approach sensitive conservation treatments.

Ron Harvey and Nina Roth-Wells presented their work as co-conservators of natural history dioramas that incorporate both objects and painted surfaces. Their collaboration developed a holistic approach to retaining the early 20th century interpretation of the objects while conserving and updating their surroundings. Michaela Neiro discussed the necessary collaboration between conservators, curators, historic house managers, and volunteer docents to carry out the treatment of historic wall-paper in situ while the house was still open to the public. Rachel Perkins Arenstein, representing her fellow authors from the Integrated Pest Management Working Group, presented the history of the IPM-WG, the initiatives being pursued, and the challenges created by the “loose ad-hoc organizational structure” comprised of conservators, collection managers, and pest management professionals who make up the group. Brynn Bender presented on a similar large-scale project: the preservation of a collection of 18 river-running boats from the Grand Canyon. This involved coordinating not only the work of conservators, history “buffs,” river runners, architects, historians and park staff over five years, but also the incorporation of multi-disciplinary techniques to conserve everything from kayaks and motorized fiberglass boats to inflatable rafts.

Mersedeh Jorjani and her co-authors presented a tale of scientific collaboration in the research of marble repair adhesives. Conservators, conservation scientists, and material scientists worked together in order to aid conservators in making informed decisions in choosing adhesives based on carefully defined and tested qualities of the stone involved and the adhesives in common use. Judy Ozone and Abigail Mack demonstrated creative and unusual treatment approaches to a set of dissimilar materials, with a discussion of the ethical considerations that “governed every aspect of the process.” Paul Mardikian and Robert Neyland discussed the “rewarding collaborative research efforts” between national and international institutions and individuals to ensure the long-term preservation of the *H.L. Hunley* submarine, including the “critical role

played by the non-scientists”: politicians, collections managers, entrepreneurs and the general public. Unfortunately, Mardikian and Neyland were not able to submit their talk for publication in this volume, but the research will be published in another format.

The final presentation was by Melina Smirnou and Christie Pohl who talked about the creation of “Conservators Without Borders,” a grant-funded effort to bring conservation services to archaeological sites and collections facilities in developing and art-rich countries. Volunteer conservators undertake to advise local museums, archaeologists, and government officials on current standards for the treatment of archaeological finds, handling and packing, and storage conditions.

As Program Chair, I had the fun task of looking through a wide range of submissions, and the harder one of selecting the few that could fit in the time allotted to us. I want to give my thanks to the 2008 OSG Chair Ann Boulton who shepherded me through the process, and all the rest of the OSG Committee Chairs who provided me with insight and back-up.

Howard Wellman, OSG Program Chair 2008