

HAITI CULTURAL RECOVERY PROJECT
INSPECTING A ONE OF THE DAMAGED HECTOR HIPPOLITE PAINTING
AT THE NADER GALLERY



Preparation, JUNE 6TH 2010

Arrived in Miami

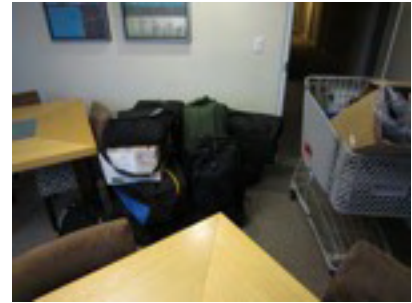
Arrived in Miami then moved to Air Port Holiday Inn hotel where joined other team members and moved to Stephanie Hornbeck's house to organized priority items and repack all supplies. Each box checked to verify contents and order list matches, prioritized in our checked baggage. Four of lap top computers were carried on. Realized that there is no way to bring a printer because of it's size and weight, also possible availability in local market in Haiti so it was returned to store.



Supplies came with various size of shipping boxes



Unpacked and organized



Priority items are all put in checked baggage

Need

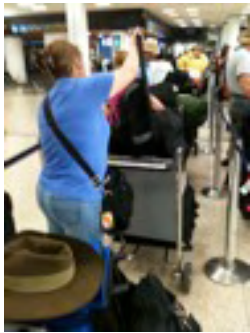
Having to match each item from the boxes with different suppliers lists would be easier to verify if all supplies are already printed on a master sheet.

Ideal would be to send all supplies and equipment together in the one container. I assumed most of the basic supplies had already been shipped, so I requested only certain times to deal with the emergency situation. Many items could be found in Haiti but locating them would be time consuming and require transportation, which was difficult in the current situation.

Day 1, JUNE 7TH 2010

Departure from Miami

Supposed to be able to take two checked bags with additional one paid (\$100.00); however, two days prior to departure, regulations changed to two checked bags per person only. Since tickets were already issued and without prior notice from airline, we pushed them to accept our luggage.



Getting ready to check in all baggages at air port

Once arrived at Port Au Prince air port, Conservation Center project manager Olsen Jean Julien greeted us at the air port terminal and coordinated with personnel from Ministry of Culture to pass the immigration service and custom. Then we headed for Conservation Center to drop our supplies and after lunch we went to our hotel for check in.



Staff from ministry of culture at the airport help us to free pass custom and immigration



Baggage claim area



Conservation Center

Need

Eating at local restaurant is time consuming. Selected restaurant which many other foreigners use as a safe place to eat but is pricey takes long time to get food. It would be easier if a small kitchen could be available at the main office complex including refrigerator and microwave, which would save time. The main office room has small room with sink and wall cabinet and a good location for small kitchen.

Day 2, JUNE 8TH 2010

Inventory day

Arrived at Conservation Center before 8:00 am and started to check all supplies we brought with us and make sure everything matches our list. Meeting with local staff members Fritz Berg Jeannot (Training Coordinator), Olsen Jean Julien (Center & Project Manager), Misly Michel (Administrative Assistant), Jean Baptise Mentor (Office Manager).



Inventory

After meeting, supplies divided between the three different labs. Returned to hotel so Corine Wegener can go to airport to pick up colleagues from ICCROM arriving from Paris.



On the way from hotel to center, we have to pass through many damaged buildings



In some area, building debris narrows the street



leaving from Conservation Center at the gate

Need

The Center is lucky to have two SUV (Nissan Pilot equivalent to Toyota's Landcruiser) for transportation. City's traffic is unpredictable and extra time should be planned to arrive on time from place to place. Also availability of English-speaking driver was limited.

Our hotel was located not far from airport but distance to center is a pretty good distance and passes through the worst traffic areas. If all cars are being used, there is no other safe transportation to the hotel.

Day 3, JUNE 9TH 2010

Busiest day for site visiting

All awoke with food poisoning from hotel supper night before, especially myself and Smithsonian's object conservator, Hugh, who were violently ill through the night. I accompanied the group in the morning but illness and lack of sleep kept me from joining the group in the afternoon. Hugh opted to miss the morning activities and joined the group in the afternoon. The colleagues from ICCROM, Baba Keita and Aprana Tandon, joined us for site visit.

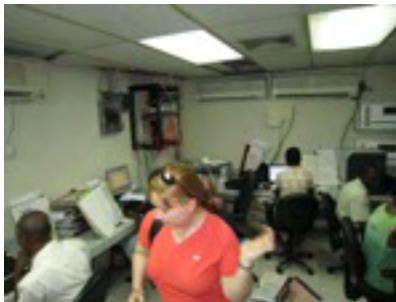


Damaged Center D'Art building

First visited CenterD'Art to see condition of their collection store inside two containers parked on the street; however, director with key was not available, so we moved on to the National Archives, Ecole Nationale Des Arts and radio station to check damage situation.



The building of the National Archive seems sound but roof structure has been partially damaged



The National Archive has many full time staff taking care of daily activities of dealing with books and papers documents



We saw many people were living under the tents at the campus of the Ecole Nationale Des Arts. However we didn't see any collection damage.

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The radio station's collection was stored on 4th floor but I didn't have enough energy to climb up to 4th floor to see the damage at that time

Need

Center D'Art needs to be cleaned of debris. I feel through the cleaning process they might find some important object under the debris and it would be better to do this before getting more rain.

The National Archive was the busiest place I visited and has many full-time staff. One room was dedicated to transferring old records to computer files. Was told that Libraries Without Borders has been helping the local library even before the earth quake.

Ecole Nationale De Arts's small campus was filled with tent and many people was living there. We saw people were busy fixing the damaged part of building and some performing art students were practicing singing along with play drums. We didn't have a representative from this institution at the time of our visit and difficult to understand the scale of damage to this institution. It will be more effective if we could meet representative from each institution during our visit.

Radio station was busy fixing their damaged building but continued broadcasting.. I was not able to go up the top floor to see damaged collection but it seems like most of the collection is music CDs and very easy to replace. Electronic media can be stored at a distance location without actually physically moving it and is probably less of a priority to categorize in an emergency recovery effort. It is unlikely that any rare original recordings would be found and if some are located, it would need special equipment to restore electronic media and could not be done in Haiti. We could suggest that they need to make a priority list based o the rarity of the item.

Day 4, JUNE 10TH 2010

Joint collaboration

We discuss with ICCROM colleagues about current situation of Haitian art scene. UNESCO cultural representative, Elka Selter, joined us. We needed to show both UNESCO and ICCROM representative actual condition and scale of damaged art collections. Smithsonian's collection manager, Gail Joice, arrived and join our tour.



ICCROM presented a nice french brochure

Started from Nader Gallery. Owner George Nader is third generation in collecting and dealing with Haitian art. All the damaged art has been stored at third floor building where his staff member was cataloging and identify all damaged art works. He has a young local guy who works for him doing painting restoration.



Entrance of Nader Gallery



Over 3000 damaged painting is store at third floor of building



Young man works as a restorer at Nader Gallery showing his art supplies

Need

At the time of our arrival, entire third floor was filled with strong smell of chemical fumes. It was a typical lacquer paint smell and possibly came from many empty cans piled up on the side of room used for frame works. Entire storage room does not have climate control and most paintings were piled on top of each other. There is need for vertical storage shelving and and also education about health issues in dealing with chemicals. This location is the only place to store collection under roof. They are also using second floor for storage which has climate control.

Day 4, JUNE 10TH 2010

Visiting the Center D'Art

After visiting a Nader Gallery, we moved to CenterD'Art. We had to wait for the Gallery director to return to show us the damaged collection .



Director explaining his plan for getting four smaller containers to replace current two large containers.

Container's exterior wall temperature was 108 F and interior roof temperature was 105 F. The temperature inside container was 108 F which was creating an oven effect. Inside temperature drop immediately to 98 F when door was opened, circulating fresh air.



There is a power line hanging directly above the container but power has been dead since after the shock



measuring inside temperature



inside roof temperature was 105 F

Need

Collection is one of the most valuable both historically and because of market value . The Center D'Art created Haiti's largest art movement from 1940's by the American artist, Peter Weiss. Therefore, for both Haiti and America should recognize this institution as a cornerstone of our cultural relationship. The collections stored after the quake have never been inspected and there is no list or record of items. Proper storage is a problem because they rely on the Conservation Center's space, which is limited, and cannot afford to house all of the collection from only one particular institute. I strongly believe that if this collection remains stored in the container it will further damage the collection. Because of its historical and cultural significance, saving this collection should be a TOP PRIORITY.

Day 4, JUNE 10TH 2010

Meeting with Ministry of Culture

After Center D'Art, traveled to Ministry of Culture located in the city center to meet with Minister of Culture, Marie Laurence Jocelyn Lasseque. I wasn't sure it taking photographs would be considered offensive so I opted not to do so. Meeting was held at a small portable office.



Inside the gate of Ministry of Culture

During meeting, we reported our progress in Conservation Center and minister agreed to create some sort of an official document relating to the work with our Conservation Center.



Minister (lady in yellow dress) and her staff at front of portable office

Need

Appears minister understands our mission and importance of operation and willing to support Conservation Center's operation. Suggest we ask more assistance in promoting public awareness and use media to show general public about our mission and involvement. If we can use media to show basic handling and first aid of damaged objects, it could potentially save many important objects still out in the community. Also, having a strong tie with government could allow us to tap into a wide range of resources, including human resources and most needed availability of storage facility.

Day 4, JUNE 10TH 2010

Visit Cathedrale Sainte Trinite mural painting

One of the most famous Haitian earthquake-damaged image was taken from this church mural. More than 90% of original building has been destroyed and only two sections of wall with mural painting images are intact. Appears clean up effort was achieved and only some part of debris was still left on the ground which probably contains a lot of fallen images of mural painting.



Inside the gate of Ministry of Culture

The largest surviving image is the Last Supper scene; however, right above the image the roof hasn't been covered by tarp and shows some water mark on the surface of painting. Also, the condition of ground is unstable, many fresh cracks have opened on the wall and appear ready to fall down. The Smithsonian's structural engineer has checked damaged structure but currently inappropriate wooden braces have been placed in which don't support fallen wall structure.



Wooden beam is just supporting archway and not the mural image wall



Many fallen images are not collected appropriately and still on the open ground



Section of fallen wall shows how thin the original paint was applied directly to the concrete wall

Need

Need to stabilize concrete wall structure to stop further deterioration of painting images. All images start at 8 feet up from ground and I would suggest to build platform at same level to reduced impact damage in case more sections of wall fall down until proper treatment. Also, definitely need to cover the roof by tarp to avoid more water damage. The tin roof is probably creating more acidic water damage to surface of mural images. All fallen mural images need to be collected and catalogued by location and subject and then stored inside of building with climate control.

Day 5, JUNE 11TH 2010

Meeting day

A long morning meeting to discuss with all current conditions of different institutions collections between IC-CROM representatives, Centers staff and conservation team. After the meeting, other conservator created examination form based on my painting examination form which I send it to smithsonian collection manager Gail Joice prior to our visit. She used my form as a standard examination form for this operation.



After the office work, Smithsonian object conservator ,Hugh, and I went out with center's administration assistant, Carmelita Douby, to local office/art supply store to see what is available for our operation. An Office Max, which is probably run by Office Depot in U.S. and they told us that it will take about 20 days to get an order from their store catalogue. There was only a very small selection of art supplies; however, Nader Gallery's painting restorer told us that there is a another store nearby that carries more art supply. Most stores close at 4:00 pm so we were not able to check another art supply store.



Sherwin Williams store was found at Petionville

Need

Need to check what kind of supplies are available locally for our operation and conservation practice. This would allow the center's staff to get it for us instead of spending conservator's time. Should have one person dedicated for this job as supply and materials manager, so they will be more familiar with materials and the local market scene.

Day 6, JUNE 12TH 2010

Visit to Marianne Lehmann Voodoo collection

After the brief meeting at the Center, we travel to see damage of one of the largest voodoo collections in Haiti owned by Marianne Lehmann.



Contemporary voodoo Flags at Nader Gallery

The Lehmann collection is located in Petionville where entire area did not get much damage. However, some of the objects had fallen from the shelf at the storage and broke into several pieces. This collection is unique and probably one of the most important of Haitian's cultural heritage. For and an unexplainable reason all the photos I took at this place are filed in my digital camera card as unidentified images and cannot be processed as a picture image. It's taking a space in the digital card but I cannot find the way to access.



Our convoy back to the conservation center at the gate

Need

All the collection is covered with a lot of heavy dust and a 20-year collection of Haitian news paper is stuck on top of each other at the side of stair way. Out side covered area is hosting many other statues and objects in open air which should be stored at the indoor facility. Over 2000 items are jammed into this two story colonial style house and should be stored at a larger space-appropriate facility possibly with a climate controlled environment. For the short term, items can be vacuumed of dust; however, since many objects are made with organic materials and used as a ceremonial piece which show many signs of human handling, there should be some way to clean and handle these in order to keep all characteristic features. Because they are covered with dust, they will need a thorough inspection to determine if it all of the human-handling characteristics are original or not.

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Day 6, JUNE 12TH 2010

After leaving the Lehmann collection, we stop by a restaurant near the hotel to meet one of the foundation members. She explained to us how the Voodoo community has changed and is trying to reach out more to general public to establish better understanding of voodoo culture in Haiti. She was very passionate about this issue and also told us correct way to call this culture as Vodun with almost silent "N" on the end.



Revisit to Nader Gallery to pick up first group of paintings for project

Saturday and many place close early, so at the time we are getting out from the restaurant it was too late to visit Nader Gallery; however, knowing the next day is Sunday and most business are closed, I ask Center manager Olsen to call Gallery owner to see if he can meet us at Gallery to let me pick up some of the damaged paintings, I couldn't treat any painting through entire my deployment to Haiti as a painting conservator. Fortunately Mr. Nader was still at the Gallery and I was able to go there and pick five paintings with Mr. Nader and bring back to the center. Collection manager Gail was still with us and able to produce release agreement form and contract with Mr. Nader, allowed us to officially the start of business. We brought these paintings back to the center and stored at the registration office storage room.



Day 7, JUNE 13TH 2010

Started day by writing a condition report for three paintings. The Smithsonian's collection manager Gail Joice was leaving Haiti by noon flight, so I wrote three quick painting examination reports which include Celestin Faustin and two paintings done by Carlo Jean Jacques. Two of the remaining paintings were done by one of the important Haitian artist Hector Hippolite so I decided not to touch his painting with the limited time schedule and passed on to next conservator for fresh start. Also I found out that none of the staff members at the office are working on Sunday and it is difficult to hold our driver for a day. So I had a only about four hours to work on the painting and focus on the one painting done by the Celestin Faustin" in order to accomplish best work.



Treatment started by vacuuming the surface with speed control vacuum cleaner with micro tip brush followed by consolidation of damaged surface and tear mending methods from reverse. Filling the damaged area was done but time ran out for proper inpaint.



Day 8, JUNE 13TH 2010

My last day in Haiti and my flight was schedule to leave at noon, so leave for the airport early to ensure no traffic delays on the way. Arrived at the center with other team members in the morning and had about one hour left to work on the painting's inpaint then heading to the air port with U.S. Blue Shield president Cornine Weggner. She was supposed to be pick up Center's new director Stephanie Hornbeck at the air port coming from Miami around same time of my departure.



After I returned to the States, I did some research about this artist. He studied under the famous painter Wilmino Domond and his earlier painting style shows strong influence of his teacher. He often painted Christian subjects. However, later in his career he developed his own style and subject related to voodoo, which was constantly haunting from his birth.

The painting above is dated 1981 which is the same year of artist's death and subject is the artist himself reaching out to a voodoo goddess Erzulie Dantor. This was completed near his death so he may have had a glimpse of his success. Following is his biography:

"Faustin was named after his grandmother Celestina, who exercised a lasting influence on his life. Famous as a 'wise woman,' she was profoundly involved in Voodoo. Through her constant communication with the loas, she learned that her grandson was claimed from birth by Erzulie Dantor. She ascribed Celestin's exceptional gifts and success to the power of the goddess. On one hand fascinated and attracted by the religious fervor of his ancestors, Faustin was on the other hand revolted by it and was torn between accepting and refusing their beliefs. His paintings are statements of this ambivalence." Faustin was born in 1948. He was gone much too early (1981) and his works are very rare. This painting is Faustin toiling with Erzulie Dantor who seemed to consume his life in ever greater measures until some think she consumed him in the end.

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Summary

Haiti is a very interesting country, especially compared to the United States. Many things run differently in public life. One of the significant differences is that people run the air condition system only at night because of the expense of energy. The entire city's power was down since the January earthquake and people are living without power or using generators. Compared to our standards, it is very difficult situation but people in Haiti seem to be adapting quiet well. It was difficult facing an overwhelming conservation need from so many different institutions and gathering the focus of where to start was almost impossible. Each institution has different situations but, over all, the common problem is the lack of proper storage facility both before and after the earthquake. Most of the institution's collection has been store without climate control and once their facility was destroyed by the earthquake, many of them no longer have any permanent storage space at all.

This problem of appropriate storage gave us hesitation about taking on any project knowing that any object treated by us will be automatically going back to improper storage and face possible new damage. While in Haiti, I tried to focus on making a priority list from different institutions based on their collections rarity, replacement value, cultural and historical significance, and degree of immediate need. This caused me to select two of the institution as a top priority. One is the Cathedrale Sainte Trinite's mural painting and the other is the CenterD'Art collections. The church mural painting is obviously deteriorating day by day by simply standing in the outdoor atmosphere without proper care. It needs immediate treatment in order to save the image left on the wall, but the wall hosting the mural painting is structurally unstable and that makes an unsafe environment to work on the project. My recommendation is to work on the wall's structural problem and try to buy some more time to develop better conservation plan to save what left of the wall's images. The first step will be building a platform at same height as the painting images. It might be helpful if the surface of the wall is covered by construction netting. If further damage or loss of image occurs to the mural painting, the public support for saving it will probably be lost. I also suggested that all fallen wall pieces on the ground which has painted surface be saved and tagged and then put in the indoor facility.

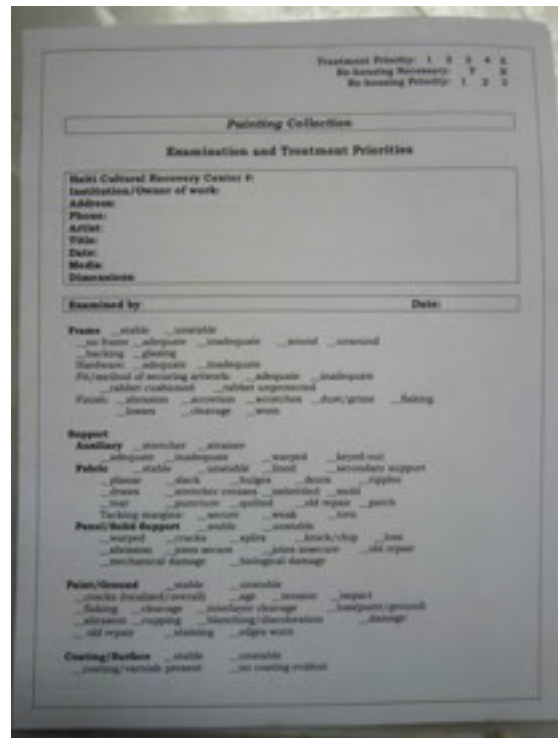
The other top priority list of institution is the Le CenterD'Art, which has been totally destroyed and most of their collection has been store at inside the two containers on the street. At the time of previous group's inspection, the container's inside temperature was high but humidity was low and they didn't categorized it as a top priority but condition has been changed and at the time of our inspection, there was a build up of humidity inside the container and we found signs of mold grow on some of the painting surfaces, which was probably caused by temperature difference between the day and night causing significant condensation inside the container.

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Also, we measured the inside temperature of container at 108 F which was creating a oven effect on all objects inside, possibly damaging more painted surfaces of the objects. One of the biggest problem with this institution is that they no longer possess any facility to bring back treated objects. I would urge them to start taking their damaged collection back to their or some facility because of mold growth damage. The director of the institution told us that they are getting four new smaller containers on site to replaced two large container in near future for storage. The Haitian art movement was started by the help of American artist Dewitt Peters in 1944 who established the art school Le Center D'Art. This institution is a bridge between our two nations therefore their collection has a significant historical and cultural value.

In addition, I did some research for possible portable storage shelter for Le Center D'Art and came a cross a product. This company already send their product to Haiti and two of their representatives are still in Port Au Prince.



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The Intershelter Dome is a temporary housing structure that resembles a modern-type of igloo. The domes, which are available in a 14-foot model for \$7,500 and a 20-foot model for \$12,500, can provide shelter to between two and six people. The domes are made out of an aerospace composite material and can withstand hurricane force winds, as well as earthquakes. Arctic and desert models are also available.

According to Intershelter President and CEO Capt. Don Kubley, the domes can be put together by three people in about two hours. Intershelter Domes have been deployed in 15 countries thus far, Kubley said. In the U.S., they have been deployed in California, Oregon, Washington, Michigan, New York, and Louisiana. As with some of the aforementioned shelters, the Intershelter Dome not only serves as disaster relief housing, but can also be used for a wide variety of other applications including migrant workers, military housing, hunting camps, the homeless communities, and quarantine shelters.

Although they have only had mass production capabilities for a little over year, Kubley said the company is currently in talks with the Department of Defense about providing its shelters to the military. The company is also working with FEMA to develop a first responder camp, in which the company would provide shelters for 300 first responders, as well as medical facilities in the first 24 hours following a disaster event.

"Mark my words, a year from now, when you turn on the television to Fox News or CNN you'll see (our domes) after every major disaster and theaters of war," Kubley said.

To get more information about the Intershelter Dome, visit intershelter.com/index.cfm.