

Exotic Surfaces: Chinese Export lacquer
October 30, 2015

9:00 – 10:00 *Analytical Techniques Used for Lacquer* (SRAL)

Participants will learn about the following four analytical techniques and methods used for the organic and inorganic analysis of Chinese Export lacquer and ground layers:

- Cross-section microscopy and layer separation – *Emily Brown*
- Scanning Electron Microscopy – Energy Dispersive Spectroscopy (SEM-EDS) of cross-section samples – *Catherine Matsen*
- X-ray Diffraction (XRD) of ground layers – *Jennifer Mass*
- Pyrolysis gas chromatography mass spectrometry (TMAH-Py-GS/MS) of lacquer and ground layers and data interpretation with ESCAPE (Expert System for Characterization using AMDIS Plus Excel) – *Chris Petersen and Mike Szelewski*

10:00 – 12:30 *Conservation Treatment Demonstrations*

Four groups will rotate through conservation labs in 25 minute sessions

- Consolidation- principles and options – *Maria João Petisca, Mark Anderson* (LF 01- Wood Shop)
- Filling - principles and options – *Marianne Webb, Liz Peirce* (304 - Metals Lab)
- Inpainting - principles and options – *Silvia Miklin-Kneifacz, Emily Brown* (312 - Upholstery)
- Cleaning – principles and options – *Stephanie Auffret, Lauren Fair* (313 - Furniture Lab)

10:00 – 10:30 Session 1

10:30 – 11:00 BREAK

11:00 – 11:30 Session 2

11:30 – 12:00 Session 3

12:00 – 12:30 Session 4

12:30 – 1:30 LUNCH

1:30 – 3:00 *Case Studies* (Rotunda)

- Marianne Webb
- Sylvia Milkin
- Joao Petisca

3:00 – 3:30 BREAK

3:30 – 4:30 Open Discussion with Dragon screen

Case Study Presentations

Marianne Webb - *Recreating Chinese lacquer decoration using reversible mediums.*

A Chinese export lacquer screen dated to a 1820 had extensive loss of decoration caused by light degradation and previous restoration efforts. Acrysol WS24 along with dyes and acrylic paints were used to imitate the red raised areas and recreate the gilded decoration. In another recent project with carved Chinese export lacquer the use of new Gamblin pigmented wax resin sticks proved useful for filling fine cracks.

Silvia Miklin-Kniefacz - *The rediscovered Lacquer Panels of Schönbrunn - A balancing act between conservation and restoration*

In the course of preliminary investigations for the conservation of the two Chinese Cabinets at the Palace of Schönbrunn, thirteen Chinese lacquer panels, eight European lacquer panels, four Coromandel lacquer panels and 23 fragments of Coromandel lacquer integrated in European panels were identified. All had been installed in the cabinets before 1900 and then replaced in 1900; they were rediscovered in the Imperial Furniture Collection Vienna (Hofmobiliendepot Wien).

The surfaces of the Chinese panels were in three different conditions:

- The majority had the appearance of an original, unvarnished, matt and light damaged surface
- Two panels were covered with a yellowish varnish (similar to the panels mounted in the room)
- Three panels were covered with a very thick, almost dark brown transparent coating.

To explore the possibility of installing the panels in the cabinets again, together with panels which had not been exchanged, exemplary conservation on each type of condition was carried out:

- Panels without (obvious) secondary coating allowed a traditional, but irreversible treatment with Asian methods (*urushigatame* and inpainting with *urushi*).
- Panels with European coatings required closer consideration to removing, reducing or preserving the later interventions and careful tests with different solvent gels.

The exemplary conservation showed that although each panel underwent special treatment according to its different history and state, the overall appearance within the context of the Chinese rooms came out to be well acceptable.

Maria João Petisca – *Dragon Screen :Past conservation, present condition and future approaches*

The Dragon screen from the Chinese Parlor at Winterthur has a long history of past treatments, several of them documented. The present condition of the piece will be discussed using past conservation reports and analytical data to identify conservation materials and techniques used for its previous treatments. Future conservation approaches will be presented and discussed with the participants.