

Collection Managers Committee

NEWSLETTER

SPRING 2000

Conservation or Just Preventative Maintenance

Perry Huston and Associates, Fort Worth, Texas

January 31, 2000

Review by Kathleen Koonce, Renee Tucker and Carolyn Spears

The workshop began with an overview by Helen Houp, Paintings Conservator with Perry Huston and Associates. Ms. Houp discussed handling techniques, techniques for assessing a painting's needs, and shared some of her experiences from years of conservation work.

After the slide presentation, Ms. Houp led the group into the lab for some hands-on work. Using a sample painting, we learned different techniques to properly reassemble a painting. We learned to line the rabbet with deco felt as a pad. Deco felt looks like weather stripping and comes in rolls. The felt is backed by an adhesive peel-off paper. The felt is used to completely line the rabbet of a frame so that the stretcher has a soft 'bed'. If the stretcher is loose in the frame even the addition of deco felt, add balsa wood strips on the sides of the rabbet.

Ms. Houp gave helpful suggestions such as creating padded blocks to use as a stable base for paintings undergoing treatments. She also recommended putting metal lip-over stripping around the four sides of the stretcher. The lip-over serves to keep the frame from touching the surface of the painting. A piece of matte board can be used as a spacer to install the lip-over strip. If the back of the painting has inscriptions or other material to preserve, one method Ms. Houp showed the group involved covering the back with Plexiglas. Sealing the back with Plex protects the surface from dust, bangs and the surface remains visible. Be sure to attach the Plex to the frame and not the stretcher using mending plates. The end of the plate over the Plexiglas isn't screwed into the Plexiglas.

Ms. Houp offered great tricks developed over the years. To prepare the mending plates to the back of the painting requires the mending plate to be bent to fit the profile of the frame and stretcher. To do this, Ms. Houp suggested making a paper copy of your mending plates, including the holes, to "bend" over the profile on the verso of the painting. Use the paper model to bend the mending plates in a vise. Ms. Houp warned that some manufacturers of mending plates are no longer using brass. The result is that the inferior products break easily. For the time being, it would be smart to test your hardware before installing it on the painting. Ms. Houp installed D-rings to hang a framed piece with wire or wall hooks.

A discussion of cockling on paper led into a demonstration on proper matting technique with rice paper hinges and wheat starch paste. Methods for removing paper objects from old frames were also discussed. If the paper is framed touching the glass, first remove the glass from the frame without trying to remove the paper object from the glass. Place a board against the paper and turn everything over so that the glass is on top. Slowly lift the glass from the paper. If the paper is stuck to the glass, do not try to pull it off.

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Perry Huston answered some participants' conservation questions giving his opinion on strip lining and wax canvas lining. The trend of conservators is to minimize work on the painting to avoid future problems. After the question and answer session, Perry showed a painting under a microscope showing paint loss problems that were only visible under the microscope. Participants were amazed by the severity of damage seen under the microscope.

Back in the lab, participants learned how to encapsulate labels removed from a painting. It is important to photograph the labels before removing them. To remove adhesive labels, use a blow dryer and spatula on a corner of the label. If the inks are not water soluble, place a moistened towel over the label to loosen it. Be sure to protect the canvas with a piece of mylar before applying the towel. Use a spatula to then gently work up the label. Do not attempt to remove very fragile labels. Instead, put mylar over the label with double stick tape making sure the tape does not touch the label. Once a label is removed, place it between blotters and weight it down.

The group took a tour of the facilities including the vault and the examination/photography room. A demonstration was shown using raking light to illuminate structural damage and ultraviolet light to show hidden pencil writing and changes in the painting. Raking light should be two lights at a 45 degree angle towards the front of the painting. Set up UV lights facing the rear of the painting. Both raking light and UV examination techniques reveal a great deal about the stability and history of a painting.

Perry Huston shared his experiences working on the restorations of the Library of Congress and the Fort Wayne, Indiana Courthouse. The day ended with a tour of FortressFAE facilities by the General Manager, Rick Floyd.

Other Gems:

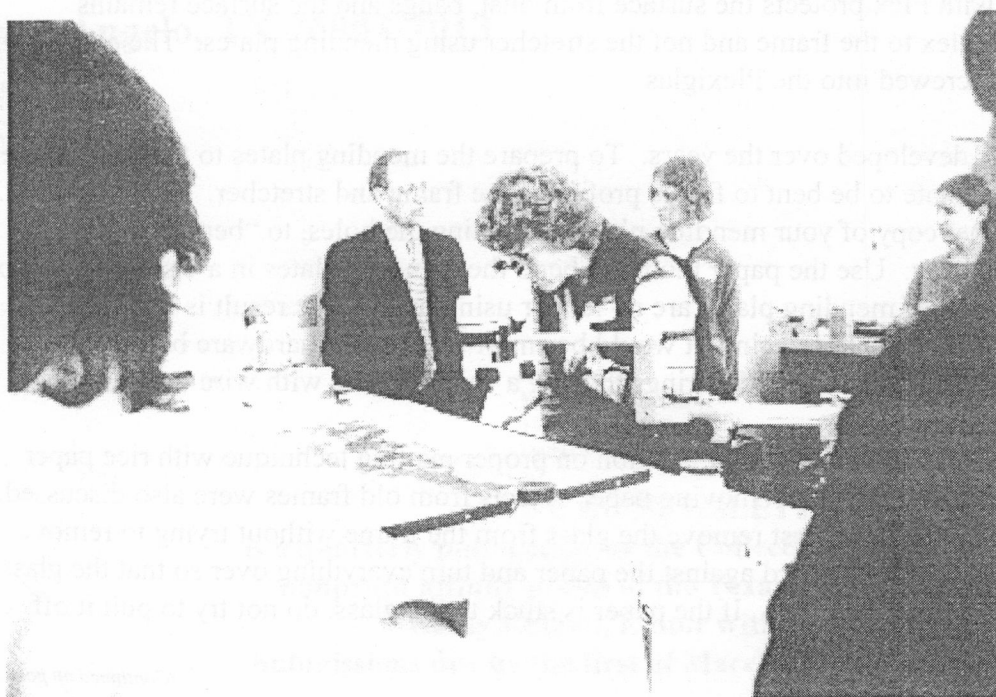
**Never use nails when working on a stretcher or canvas, use screws. The nails cause too much percussive damage.*

**Don't use a feather duster to clean frames, use a vacuum - the feathers get caught in loose wood.*

**Don't hold frames by the ornamental plaster - it's very fragile.*

**On the surface of a painting, use a soft natural bristle brush to clean.*

**UF3 damage continues in the dark until the energy is used up! UF3 blocking Plex is available.*



Workshop participants take turns examining paintings under the watchful eye of the instructor.

Materials To Use & To Avoid

Good Materials

**note exceptions*

Cotton

Polyethylene and other polyolefins-plastics, foams, etc.

Acrylics-plastics, fabrics, felts, glazing, lacquers, etc.

Polycarbonates

Polyesters (exceptions: polyester coatings may corrode some metals due to residual peroxide catalysts and styrene. May damage black & white photographs for same reason.)

Nylon

Teflon

Natural rubber, non-vulcanized

Starch glues

Epoxy adhesives (exceptions: amine-curing epoxies can damage copper)

Shellac

Moisture-cure urethanes, 2-component urethanes

Latex paints (exception: PVA latex)

Warning: may tarnish metals during initial 5 month drying period. Vinyl acrylics are preferred,

e.g., Mastercraft interior latex

Pratt & Lambert interior "Vapex"

SICO interior latex

Melamine-coated wood boards

Warning: resins and wood components in particle board can be damaging, especially to metals. Uncoated end-grain should be exposed as little as possible to case interior.

Choice of Woods

Well seasoned soft woods are best. (Oaks, chestnut and some mahogany's are very bad. You can actually smell the acetic acid in these products.) Wood boards when properly formulated are comparable to soft woods.

FROM THE CHAIR

In 1989, five people met at the Texas Memorial Museum in Austin to create the Collection Managers Committee. Kathy Roland of Fort Concho National Historic Landmark was a member of that founding group and has been active throughout CMC's history. Now she is retiring as CMC newsletter editor and Member-at-Large. We say a fond farewell and express our gratitude for her commitment to professionalizing our field.

Please attend the CMC Business Meeting at the Texas Association of Museums Annual Meeting on Wednesday, April 26 from 5:15 -6:15. It's your chance to meet your fellow professionals. We'll install a new Chair, Treasurer and Member-at-Large.

Most importantly, come with a kernel of an idea for a session at next year's TAM Annual Meeting. If there is some topic that you wish TAM would do a session on at the Annual Meeting, this is your chance to suggest it. We, the membership, come up with the sessions...not some disembodied authority from far away. You don't have to be a speaker, but you can help plan it (and possibly chair it).

ARC EDUCATION WORKSHOP

Accreditation and Review Council (ARC), a unit of the Council of Texas Archeologists (CTA), is pleased to announce that it is now accepting applications for the accreditation of archeological collections care facilities in Texas.

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Accreditation and Review Council Education Workshop
July 19-23, 2000
Lubbock, Texas

Please contact Susan Baxevanis at (806) 742-2479, e-mail mxseb@ttacs.ttu.edu, for more information and to register for the workshop. Space is limited. Register by May 10, 2000.

NOTICE OF UPCOMING WORKSHOPS

April 25, 2000

TAM/CMC Pre-conference Workshop, Austin Museum Law 101
Basic information on contracts, gifts, deaccessioning, intellectual property and torts in museums.

April 25-28, 2000

TAM Annual Meeting, Austin Sessions and CMC meeting

July 17, 2000

CMC Workshop, Millard's Crossing, Nacogdoches

Mark It! Pack It! Store It!

Storage & Collections, part of a "Back to Basics" series.

Participants will learn new marking techniques, how to revamp their storage, and container making. A great update for those in the know, and simply wonderful for those wanting to know.

October 23, 2000

CMC Workshop, Perry Huston & Associates, Fort Worth

Conservation or Just Preventative Maintenance, Take II

Sold out last time, with a long waiting list, we are again presenting Helen Houpp, paintings conservator. She will show us how to pad a rabbit on a frame; add a protective backing, install the correct hanging hardware, save old exhibition labels from the old backing, photograph for treatment, and so on, and so on.

January 29, 2001

CMC Workshop, Sebastopol SHP, Seguin Chips, Mother Boards &

Mice: Collections Management in the New Century.

A comprehensive review of Collections Management Software currently available on the market. We will also cover setting up collections documentation for converting to a software program, policy & procedures for collections, and Internet access.

If you're interested in any of the above workshops, please contact Kandy Taylor-Hille at 830-379-4833 or e-mail her at sebastopol@the-cia.net

☐ \$10.00 Membership Fee

Membership Form

NAME *(please print clearly)*

INSTITUTION

ADDRESS

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ZIP CODE + 4

TELEPHONE

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Please make checks payable to the **Collection Managers Committee**.

Send check and form to Megan P. Bryant, The Sixth Floor Museum, 411 Elm St, Suite 120, Dallas, Texas 75202-3301

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From Chairman Elect Kandy Taylor-Hille

It is with great anticipation that I greet each of you on the eve of the year 2000 Annual Meeting for TAM in Austin. As a fellow board member on CMC put it (and I paraphrase) "The TAM meeting is the reason I make it through the year, it gets my juices flowing." What keeps my "juices flowing" during the year is participating in CMC workshops. It is especially important that each of you attend the CMC business meeting, which is on Wednesday, April 26 at 5:15. We promise to let you out in plenty of time to get ready for the night on the Capitol, but I want to encourage each of you to come to the meeting fully ready to participate. With workshop proposals in hand and ready to make sure YOU are an active member of CMC, I am sure each of us will do our part to make this a productive and useful expenditure of our time. Be there! And don't forget to get your "Bug Me About CMC" button from a CMC board member! Take it easy, Kandy

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Kathy Roland, Editor with Evelyn Lemons

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