



COLLECTION MANAGERS COMMITTEE
Texas Association of Museums

Newsletter

Fall 2007

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Introducing the New CMC Newsletter

Welcome to the first edition of the CMC's e-mail newsletter. On the left is a menu bar with links. You can use the links to skip ahead to stories in the newsletter, learn about upcoming workshop opportunities, browse job openings, join the e-group, or renew your CMC membership.

We are hoping that this new format will allow us to expand the type of information included in our newsletters and make them more useful to our membership. As an added bonus monies that would have been used for postage can now be used for workshops and scholarships. To celebrate, we are asking our membership to help name our e-newsletter. To submit suggestions for a title, articles, or features you would like to see in the newsletter, contact amyfulkerson@wittemuseum.org.

If you know a CMC member who has not received their e-newsletter please forward them a copy and contact Amy Fulkerson so their e-mail address can be verified.

From the Chair...

Are you responsible for insurance policy in your institution? Perhaps you are even responsible for multiple policies; fine arts, liability and whatnot for those complex locations like museums with ships in the water. I wonder what that policy is like. Well, I am responsible for our fine arts insurance policy here at the Dallas Museum of Art. The joy never ends. Just kidding, because it is actually a very interesting part of our field. And after dealing with the policy for so many years, I still feel I could use a session on Insurance 101 at least once each year. After many years of issues with budget cycles vs. exhibition cycles vs. insurance policy cycles being so different, I finally managed to convince everyone to allow us to get everything lined up with the same schedule. And it is a good thing, even though it is not perfect. I have also been working on improving our coverage by adding little things to the policy along the way. Look to see if your policy covers Long Term Loans. Another important addition has been Registration Papers & Records. Do you have off-site storage? How is that covered in your policy? One item to consider: if your museum has suddenly decided to take a giant (value and/or size) exhibition not normally in your repertoire, you might consider requesting information on insurance just for that exhibition *at the same time* you are working on your annual policy and see if you are able to get a break on cost. Just something for you to keep under your hat for the future.

Gabby

Deaccessioning: How to tell an artifact that you're just not that into them

**newsletter? Email
submissions and photos by
December 1st to:**

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CMC Workshop

October 8, 2007

9:00am – 4:00pm

Witte Museum, San Antonio, TX

Be sure to join us for the next CMC Workshop, *Deaccessioning: How to tell an artifact that you're just not that into them*. Topics to be covered include:

Deaccessioning Theory

- How does deaccessioning fit into good collection management
- What is the role of the Collection Plan and Collection Policy in deaccessioning

Practical Considerations

- Appropriate vs. inappropriate reasons to deaccession
- Who should be involved
- Disposal methods

Deaccessioning Procedures

- What steps are involved
- How long should the process take
- Potential costs
- Are there – should there be – different best practices for different types of objects

Legal Issues

- What are museum professional's legal and ethical responsibilities

\$25 for CMC members, \$30 for non-members

Additional charge for lunch \$10

Look for your workshop flyer and registration soon.

For more information contact Amy Fulkerson at amyfulkerson@wittemuseum.org or Rebecca Norton at information@frontiertimesmuseum.org.

Update: Shipping Workshop

This Summer's workshop, *You want me to send what? Where?!? The imports and exports of complex shipping issues*, will be rescheduled for January or February 2008. Our key speaker John McAlpin of the Houston Museum of Natural Science had to reschedule because he was in Ethiopia preparing to courier the exhibit *Lucy's Legacy: The Hidden Treasures of Ethiopia*.

We hope that you will all be able to attend the workshop early next year. Even if you do not deal with international shipping at your institution, this workshop will cover the basics of shipping anything, anywhere.

Fakes, Forgeries, and Fabrications

American Institute for Conservation of Historic and Artistic Works

Annual Meeting, April 16-20, 2007

Richmond, Virginia

Reviewed by John R. Dennis

The AIC is the only national membership organization of conservation professionals

dedicated to preserving the art and historic artifacts of our cultural heritage for future generations. It has an international membership of over 3300 individuals and institutions. Any interested individual or institution may join at the Associate level. A scholarly journal (thrice yearly), directory (yearly), and newsletter (bi-monthly) are published. Besides the Annual Meeting, a number of Professional Development Workshops are given yearly.

The theme of this well attended annual meeting was "Fakes, Forgeries, and Fabrications." The meeting was comprised both of General Sessions, to which all attendees were invited, and Specialty Groups where one could listen to more specific talks given by specialists in their field—such as Paintings, Book and Paper, Architecture, Electronic Media, and so forth.

Talks at the General Session included lectures on Connoisseurship and Provenance Research, the Role of Scientific Examination and Materials Analysis in Authenticity Studies, Dealing with Fakes in the Marketplace, and several papers dealing with criminal law and civil law as it pertains to liability for Conservators, Scientists, and other Art Experts. Lawyers, an FBI agent (the FBI has 12 full time agents and 3 Special Prosecutors dealing with art theft, fakes, smuggling across international borders), scientists, insurance experts, connoisseurs, and the Director of IFAR were among the speakers.

Several general themes reoccurred during these talks. The foremost was to never say (or write) "It is...." but rather to always say, "In my opinion, it is...." therefore allowing one to have some 'wiggle room' if litigation ever occurs. Another theme was the making of a provenance for a work of art. This writer has had several 'owners/dealers' come to the Dallas Museum of Art who are much more interested in the paper trail a conservation treatment will generate than in the treatment itself. One "owner/dealer" even asked to see the DMA letterhead, envelopes, and asked numerous questions about how various receipts, treatment records, invoices etc. are signed and dated, and by whom. Short term loans generate paper, as do appraisals, opinions, and auction catalogue entries, which if extensive enough can make a spurious art object seem genuine. Connoisseurs and scientists are now saying that it takes a collaborative effort to attribute or authenticate a work of art. A close combination of scholarship, connoisseurship, and the examination of the physical properties of a work—often including laboratory or other technical testing—is now generally accepted and is the standard for authentication. Lawyers and law enforcement officials continuously stressed vigilance on the part of Museum professionals when dealing with suspect artifacts. With the increasing value of art, the potential for fraud increases exponentially, further suggesting that a healthy, but fair, skepticism is in order.

This writer mainly attended the Objects Specialty sessions. Titles such as *Negotiating Encounters with Suspect Artifacts* and *The Art Loss Register and the Conservator's Role in Protecting Against the Theft of Artifacts* set the tone for these sessions. Esoteric questions such as, "Can the Conservators at the Met be held responsible for perceived damages done to the Euphronios Krater while the object was at the museum?" were discussed in a more informal atmosphere at these sessions. Case studies of individual objects either once thought to be fakes, or thought to be good were given. Newer analytical methods and newer interpretation of older known methods were summarized. Data bases of isotopes found in various materials such as marble are gradually being formed (these are very long term projects) and now being used on a limited basis to authenticate art works. One paper, *From Delicious to Not Quite Right: Subtleties in Discerning the Authenticity of African Art* again stressed the key role of connoisseurship in authentication, as technical analysis can be confusing, and quite possibly wrong.

It was reported that this was the best attended AIC Meeting ever. The author believes the subject matter is what 'brought out the troops,' as the questions raised are becoming increasingly critical in the museum world. The next AIC annual meeting will be held in Denver, April 21-24, 2008—the theme is 'Creative

Google Brings Robert Keith Back to Beaumont

This article is based on “Introducing the Wentworth” which was first published in *Viewpoints*, Sept 2007.

By Ware Petznick

The McFaddin-Ward House has undertaken an ambitious publishing plan, which begins with two books on the museum’s furniture collection. One is a reprint of the *Robert Mitchell Furniture Catalogue No. 75* (ca. 1911) and the other will be a catalogue of the McFaddin-Ward House’s furniture collection. As such, interesting information has been discovered online recently about many manufacturers. Thanks to Google and Google’s “image” search function, collections research and identification has increased significantly in recent years. To cite an example, Google led us to Rhonda Bolner. Bolner, a descendant of the founder of the Lincoln Chair Co., has emailed primary documents and her research on the firm to us. With little difficulty, the internet kindly brought new information about the ca. 1930 walnut chair in the McFaddin-Ward House library and, in turn, has cast new light on the role Robert Keith had in Beaumont.

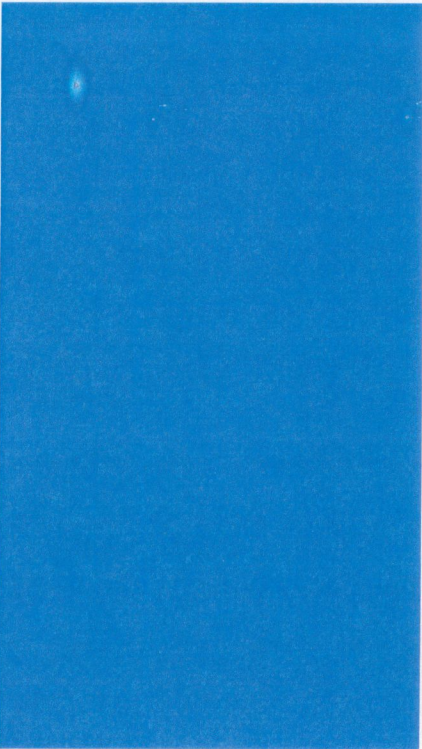


Catalog image of “The Wentworth” appears courtesy of Rhonda Bolner.

The richly carved, high back arm chair recalls high-style, early eighteenth century designs from England and Europe with a curved back, central splat and elaborate stretchers. It retains a metal maker’s label on the back chair rail, which identifies it as the product of the Lincoln Chair Co. of Columbus, Indiana with a bust of Abraham Lincoln. What the chair itself does not tell us is where the McFaddins purchased it and how it came to Beaumont, but new evidence indicates reasonable conclusions. It is likely that the McFaddins purchased “The Wentworth” from the Robert Keith Furniture Company and that the Jeffersonville, Madison and Indianapolis Railroad Company transported the chair south from the manufacturer in Indiana to the retailer in Kansas City, Missouri.

The Orinoco Furniture Company was founded in Columbus, Indiana in 1890 by the Rohminger brothers but was reorganized under William Harvey Lincoln in 1891. In 1913, Lincoln established the Lincoln Chair Company, which added high-quality chairs, tables and upholstered seating furniture to the lines of dining and bedroom furniture already in production under the Orinoco name.

Conveniently abutting a major railroad line, the Lincoln Chair Company had direct distribution immediately out the factory doors to furniture retailers in the Midwest. Rhonda Bolner confirms that the Robert Keith Furniture Company in Kansas City was one of the firm’s main retailers. (Other firms Bolner identifies are Marshall Field in Chicago and T.C. Chapman’s in Milwaukee, Wisconsin.)



Keith is presumed to be the McFaddin's particular source for purchasing "The Wentworth" for several reasons. Mrs. W.P.H. McFaddin traveled often via rail to her childhood home in Huntington, WV, and may have gone via Kansas City. The museum's archives retains a bill from "The Robert Keith Furniture & Carpet Co." with an illustration of their eight-storey showrooms at the corner of Grand and 11th (later, Baltimore and 13th) in Kansas City. On February 5, 1908, Robert Keith confirmed payment from WPH McFaddin for \$97.61 worth of goods. At that time, the firm also listed "Curtains and Upholstery" on their billhead. Given the McFaddins' repeated patronage of other firms and the prominence of Keith in this part of Texas, a later purchase ca. 1930 seems likely.

Perhaps Mrs. McFaddin contacted the Lincoln Chair Company at 1720 17th Street in Columbus, Indiana by telephone upon seeing one of their advertisements in *Good Furniture Magazine*? Indiana may seem an unlikely source for furniture, but by 1919, Indiana's furniture industry was the fourth largest in the country. However the McFaddins procured "The Wentworth", a continued fashion for historic revival styles clearly was alive and well in 1930s America and the McFaddins' Beaumont, Texas, household. Using the internet to find more about the Lincoln Chair Company is not only expedient as a guide to information, but it is also far less expensive than telephoning historical libraries or traveling to Indiana from Texas. A good computer with reliable internet service is not only a worthwhile investment but, in the opinion of this author, a necessity.