

#### NEWSLETTER OF THE

# VIRGINIA CONSERVATION ASSOCIATION

P.O. Box 4314, Richmond, VA 23220

March 2014 ~ Volume 23, No. 4

#### From the President

Dear Fellow VCA Members,

This month's newsletter outlines numerous activities for you to plan for.

One item of particular importance and potential is a "Careers in Art and Objects Conservation" seminar at VCU Cabell Library, planned for Thursday April 18, 3:00 – 5:00 pm. Six practicing conservators will talk about what led them to this profession and what their educational experience was/continues to be. We hope that the seminar will inspire students to consider entering the field. We at least want to open a continuing dialog between our organization and other groups. The speakers will represent various conservation disciplines and education programs. There will be plenty of time for questions and answer period, some informational leaflets and light refreshments. VCU will handle publicity and the information will be widely disseminated to undergraduate and graduate students, but we need your help in spreading the word to any group or person who might be interested. This event has some great potential to promote our profession, which doesn't show up on the radar screen of career advisors and curriculum very often. Your support and participation is important even if you are not presenting and I hope you will attend.

This month we are pleased to present an original research article by one of our members. Holly's work is an important reminder to consider how enclosures are made that protect our valuable collections. Please consider this newsletter a place to share your work.

Enjoy the newsletter and thank you to all of our contributors!

Rick Vogt

# VCA Members' Meeting Thursday, March 20<sup>th</sup> 5:30 p.m.



Photo credit: VMFA

## VIRGINIA MUSEUM OF FINE ARTS

200 N. Boulevard Richmond, Virginia, 23220

"Sydney and Frances Lewis Collection of Modern and Contemporary Art" Speaker: Jay Barrows, Curator Scott Nolley will describe treatments

See Information on Page 3

Refreshments:
Contact Mary Andrews
andrewsmmm@mac.com, 741-8970
or Beth Fulton at
fultonconservation@gmail.com, 358-2006

# 2014-15 VCA Board of Directors NOMINATIONS

Members of the Nominating Committee are Keri Ragland and Kate Sullivan. Any VCA member in good standing is eligible for nomination.

Article 5: Section B of the VCA Bylaws (found in the VCA Directory, page 13) describes the duties and term of office for the Board of Directors.

Nominations for the following positions are open for the 2014-15 year:

Vice President
Treasurer
Disaster Response
Education
Membership
Programs Co-Chair
Publications Co-chair
Refreshments
Web Management

The slate will be presented for election at the Members Meeting on Thursday, May 15, at the Rice House. If you will not be attending the meeting, ballots in the April newsletter will need to be returned to the VCA by May 13.

Send nominations by APRIL 15 to Keri Ragland <u>KRagland@Maymont.org</u> or Kate Sullivan <u>KSullivan@marinersmuseum.org</u>.



# 2014 Calendar

#### March 13

Washington D.C.

Saving Energy in HVAC for Conservation Environments Smithsonian American Art Museum McMillan Education Center

#### March 15-18

Alexandria, VA

VAM Annual Meeting

Alexandria Hilton Mark Center

#### March 17

Deadline: AIC Sustainability Committee Membership [see page 9]

#### March 21

<u>Fellowship Deadline</u>: Post-graduate Mellon Conservation Fellowship in objects/wooden artifacts conservation, Historic New England

#### March 27-28

Williamsburg, VA

MuseumPests 2014: Integrated Pest Management for Museums, Libraries, Archives and Historic Sites Colonial Williamsburg

#### March 31

<u>Fellowship Deadlines</u>: Advanced Training in Conservation, National Gallery of Art Andrew W. Mellon Fellowship in Paintings Conservation, Worcester Art Museum Andrew W. Mellon Fellowship in Objects Conservation, Worcester Art Museum

#### April 17

Richmond, VA

Careers in Art and Objects Conservation

VCU Cabell Library Multipurpose Room, 3pm

#### April 20

Silver Spring, MD Shanna Leino: Bone Tool Making Pyramid Atlantic Arts Center

#### May 28-31

San Francisco, CA 42<sup>nd</sup> AIC Annual Meeting Hyatt Regency Embarcadero Angels Project: rseyler@conservation-us.org

### VCA Members' Meeting Thursday, March 20, 2014

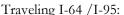
"Sydney and Frances Lewis Collection of Modern and Contemporary Art" Virginia Museum of Fine Arts Richmond, Virginia



Photo Credit: VMFA

The March Program Meeting will be hosted by the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts and will focus on the Sydney and Frances Lewis Collection of Modern and Contemporary Art. Jay Barrows, the Lewis' private curator, will give a gallery tour focusing on some of the pivotal pieces in the collection. Jay will also give us an insider's view of the Lewis's connoisseurship and history with the VMFA. Conservator Scott Nolley will be on hand to discuss the conservation efforts that have been undertaken on certain pieces in the Lewis Collection.

#### Directions and Parking:



- Take exit 78, the Boulevard exit.
- Follow the Boulevard (Route 161 South) for 1½ miles.
- Turn right onto Kensington Ave (Virginia Historical Society is at that corner).
- Take first left onto Sheppard St and go straight for half a block.
- The entrance to the parking deck will be on your left.

Parking is free to VMFA members with membership card, \$5 per day for nonmembers.

The parking deck can be accessed from the main museum entrance on Boulevard or from the intersection of Sheppard St and Stuart Ave.

Further directions and more information available at http://www.vmfa.state.va.us/Visit/Directions\_+\_Parking.aspx

Upon arrival at the museum, please go to the coat check desk where a VMFA employee will escort you to the conservation lab for the refreshments and business portions of our meeting. Guests are welcome, but due to space considerations in the conservation lab, we ask that only VCA members come to the refreshments and business portion of the meeting. You may meet your guests in the main foyer of the museum at 6:15 before proceeding to the gallery tour.

# **SAVE THE DATE!** THURSDAY MAY 15, 2014

The May Members' Meeting will be at the Rice House, the 1960's home on the banks of the James River in Richmond, designed by renowned modernist architect Joseph Neutra. The Rice House is recognized as an excellent example of modernist architecture integrated into a complex natural environment. The property is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. This is a fabulous opportunity to tour and learn about one of Richmond's architectural gems. This will be an RSVP only event complete with professional catering by Mosaic. Stay tuned for details and RSVP sign-up!



Photo credit: Phil Riggan

#### Materials and Enclosure Testing Prior to Rehousing a Nobel Laureate's Research

#### Kristi Wright Davenport Holly Herro

During the summer of 2013, Laura McNulty, a pre-program student intern, worked with National Library of Medicine conservators Holly Herro and Kristi Wright Davenport on a materials testing project to rehouse the working copy of Marshall Nirenberg's Genetic Charts, an important set of manuscripts that some scientists consider the "Rosetta Stone" of modern science. The project was initiated when conservation staff of NLM's History of Medicine Division met with Dr. Nirenberg's former laboratory technician to discuss the history and significance of the charts. When the team opened the box containing one chart, a noticeable acetic-acid odor was present indicating a potential problem with the enclosure.

The focus of the testing was to determine whether the clamshell-style box housing the Nirenberg Genetic Chart was chemically stable. Based on conservation documentation, the box was constructed in the early 1990s using starch-filled bookcloth, library binding board (Davey board), and the synthetic adhesive polyvinyl acetate (PVA) Jade 403.

The methodology was developed using guidelines set forth by the research of Allison Brewer, an undergraduate intern at the University of Kansas. Ms. Brewer's 2013 AIC poster addressed the possibility of acidic off-gassing in boards and adhesives. Additionally, we reviewed an AIC published paper by Catherine Nicholson and Elissa O'Loughlin investigating the use of AD strips for the detection of acetic acid in storage materials.

In the first stage of the project, a variety of traditional box-making materials were separately tested. Samples of the materials were sealed in individual pouches of Marvel Seal, a barrier film that resists the passage of vapor and gas. Also placed inside each pouch was an A-D strip, an indicator for atmospheric acetic acid. As a control, one AD strip was sealed inside a pouch containing no other materials. The pouches were placed in four different temperatures representing a range of potential storage environments: 73F, 64F, 60F, and 40F.

None of the samples showed change within an initial fourday exposure period. The pouches were resealed after inserting a fresh AD strip and then left in the same environments for two weeks. After two weeks, the AD strips remained unchanged for the board<sup>1</sup> and cloth samples; however, the strips with the samples of PVA shifted in the

<sup>1</sup> In an observation on a much later date, the board showed a slight but noticeable shift, indicating that further testing on this material would also be beneficial. However, due to a recent trend to use Eterno board rather than traditional binder's board, this testing seems less urgent.

warmer environments showing evidence of off-gassing above certain temperatures. Additionally, there was a noticeable vinegar odor when the pouches containing these samples were opened. Further synthetic adhesive testing is in process with the goal of finding more definitive answers for detecting acetic acid off-gassing in common storage environments. The results of this testing will be published when available.

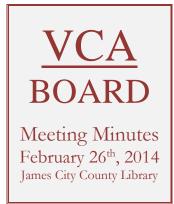


In an additional experiment, three clamshell enclosures created over a range of years were tested with AD strips:

- 2001 box constructed with Davey board and PVA-R
- 2. 1990 Nirenberg box constructed with Davey board and PVA Jade 403
- 3. 1950s box constructed with Davey board and, according to limited documentation, PVA Jade 403



The AD strips in the 1950s and 1990s boxes indicated the presence of acidic off-gassing after four days in all of the tested temperatures, but the color on the strip in the 2001 box remained unchanged regardless of the temperature indicating that PVA-R may not emit acetic acid at the same rate as PVA Jade 403. In general, the experiment showed that PVA Jade 403 is not an ideal adhesive to use when constructing housings for historical objects because acid vapors are released creating an unacceptable microenvironment contributing to the deterioration of the objects over time.



#### **ATTENDEES**:

MARLA CURTIS
NANCY BECK
BETH FULTON
VALINDA CARROLL
KATHY GARRET-COX
MARY SCOTT ANDREWS
KARRI RICHARDSON
PATRICIA SELINGER
CAROL BOYERS GIVENS
WILL HOFFMAN

Rick Vogt could not attend, and Marla Curtis presided over the meeting for him.

#### **Outreach Committee**

Kathy is coordinating VCA's presence at the VAM conference. VCA is sharing a booth with the Washington Conservation Guild. Nancy and Kathy will attend the booth. Kathy proposed that VCA arrange for a printed banner to draw attention to our organization. The banner could be used for several purposes beyond the VAM conference. Kathy will check into pricing. The plan is to have rack cards, a few printed newsletters, and membership forms available at the table. The Board wants to increase membership and will include a sign-up form for the April field trip to Belmont.

Patricia reported that Rick learned class schedules are already set for this semester at VCU and a seminar on careers in conservation could not be added. However, Patricia noted that Preservation Week at VCU would be an excellent opportunity to include this presentation. VCU Libraries has approved Thursday, April 18 for the program from 3-5:00PM in Cabell Library's Multipurpose Room. VCU will handle publicity and the information will be widely disseminated to undergraduate and graduate students. VCU will also provide refreshments. Patricia proposed that VCA cosponsor this event and provide a small honorarium for the speakers. She will be contacting 5-6 speakers from a variety of backgrounds, representing each of the major programs, and different specialties. Speakers will talk about their educational background, how they found out about conservation, how they got into their program.

Valinda then talked about the Virginia Foundation for the Humanities and the Virginia Africana conference in early November. The conference is supposed to be held in Richmond this year, although a venue has not been selected. VCA members can potentially be on panels to talk about collections and sites. There may also be an opportunity to distribute literature.

#### **Nominating Committee**

Marla reported on the positions that are open for election this year: Disaster Response, Education cochair, Publication/Newsletter co-chair, Treasurer, Web Management, Vice President, Programs co-chair, and Membership co-chair, and Refreshments. She asked for a major announcement in the newsletter. The nominating committee is Keri Ragland and Kate Sullivan. Nominations may also be taken at the March meeting, and the ballot will be sent out in the newsletter 30 days before our May meeting on May 15.

#### **Treasurer's Report**

Nancy provided a detailed report for the budget from August through February 26. As of February 26, the VCA has a total balance of \$3,489.72. We still have over \$8000 in CDs.

There were a couple of overages this year, approved by the board for refreshments and stamps. The board had not set up a budget line for Miscellaneous items last year, so it is confusing where some items should be taken out of. Board members need to come up with next year's budget for the next board meeting. There was also a question raised about capping the amount of overages. There is also a problem of not having enough paid memberships to account for the budget. We do have enough money in the account, however we need to focus on adding more members.

#### **Website Committee**

Valinda continues to ask for people to please send pictures! The pictures can be from anyone, and can be of meetings, or anything conservation related.

#### **Education Committee**

Carol spoke about the respirator fit testing workshop possibility. She's been in contact with the AIC and learned there is a new committee forming to help with respirator fit testing. We would have to find a hygienist, and the workshop would have to have a fee. The recommendation is to have a 1 hour lecture, and then schedule 30 minutes per person for fitting. Also, you must come with a signed permission slip from a Doctor or licensed health professional. She still needs to get more information, and it is possible that the VCA could subsidize part of the cost, and members will have to pay a fee as well. The program is still in development.

#### **Programs Committee**

Our next board meeting will be determined later. The next members meeting will be March 20 at 5:30 PM at the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts. Jay Barrows, the personal curator for the Lewis Collection, will talk about 4-5 pieces from the collection from a curatorial standpoint, and Scott Nolley will talk about the conservation issues association with them. We will meet in the objects lab to begin with refreshments, brought by Mary Scott Andrews and Beth Fulton. The talk will be held in the galleries, and will be open to anyone. The board would like to extend invitations to other VAM members and local museum professionals. In April, there will be a field trip to Belmont, the Gari Melcher's museum. Mary suggests starting the day at Belmont at 10 AM with a presentation from conservators, and then breaking up for lunch, and then continuing with tours after lunch. Boxed lunches are a possibility.

The May 15th members meeting will be at the Rice House in Windsor Farms. There is an upper limit of 100 people allowed in the house, so members will have to RSVP. There may also be issues with parking, and the event has to be catered by Mosaic. The meeting with be free to VCA members, but there will be a \$10 charge for guests/ non-members. The catering includes a vegan-friendly menu, but there will not be any alcohol. The meeting is first come, first serve so if you are interested, e-mail Mary Scott Andrews with your reservation. The cut-off date is May 1st.

#### **Publications Committee**

Patricia requested funds to buy a high resolution logo for publication purposes. Approved by the board.

#### **Disaster Response Committee**

Kathy brought up an e-mail that she received from FEMA. They are doing a regional tabletop exercise for regional business emergency operations. They are sending out feelers to museums and conservation professionals to see if there's an interest in involvement. The board agrees that the VCA should be involved, and that we want a seat on the tabletop. There are specific issues in conservation and emergency response that need to be addressed. VAM is not interested in participating. This could be another avenue of educating the public about issues in conservation.

CC3

#### **NEW MEMBERS**

Please add to your directory:

KATE SULLIVAN
ASSISTANT CONSERVATOR
USS MONITOR CENTER
THE MARINERS' MUSEUM
100 MUSEUM DRIVE
NEWPORT NEWS, VA 23606
757-591-7734 WORK PHONE
KSULLIVAN@MARINERSMUSEUM.ORG

MAEVE WOOLLEY BRISTOW
18331 BLACK CREEK ROAD
FRANKLIN, VA 23851
757-876-7526
BLACKCREEKWORKSHOP@GMAIL.COM
WWW.BLACKCREEKWORKSHOP.COM

HALEY BECK
408 WEST 31<sup>ST</sup> STREET
RICHMOND, VA 23225
804-232-0452
LIZZIBECK@GMAIL.COM
STUDENT

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Special thanks to Haley Beck for helping with this issue of the VCA Newsletter!

#### VCA Members' Meeting

January 16, 2013

**Lauren Fly Robert Self** 

#### "CONSERVATION CONUNDRUMS"

Maymont Garden Hall

# Lauren Fly, Paintings Conservator Working with a New and Very Different Client



Doha Skyline. Photo by Lauren Fly.

In a relatively short amount of time, the small island nation of Qatar has become the wealthiest nation in the world. Because the country's current wealth relies heavily on limited oil and natural gas resources, the government has developed a long-range plan for maintaining the high standard of living for generations to come. One of their "Four Pillars of National Vision" is the development of their education and cultural sectors. To this end, they are acquiring art, forging partnerships with high-caliber foreign institutions and building new museums. Because the Qatari museums are buying art and building museums at such a fast rate, they are in need of conservators. They have virtually no native-born conservators, so they are relying on foreign conservators and museum professionals to care for their valuable collections.

As part of her work with a conservation studio in the Netherlands, Lauren worked on a series of projects for the Qatari Museums Authority. One major project was the conservation of *Imperial Procession*, a painting attributed to Franz Hörmann and Hans Gemminger (c. 1640), and now hanging in Doha's Museum of Islamic Art. As part of a rotating team of conservators, Lauren was also able to travel to Doha to work on a large panoramic painting of Isfahan located in the Orientalist Museum. Through both experiences, Lauren learned the challenges and benefits of working with the Qatari bureaucracy and people.

Due to Qatar's strict regulations of alcohol and solvents, conservators are forced to ship supplies from their home countries. This, in turn, often leads to further issues and delays due to customs clearances that can take months. The

Qatari government is slow to sign contracts and provide timely payments. Additionally, the Qatari government requires that conservators pay a 10% bond for each contract to ensure the work is finished and done to their standards. This bond can be a major investment on a large job and sometimes proves to be a financial strain for smaller conservations studios. Given all these circumstances, conservators interested in working with Qatar should evaluate projects on an individual basis and retain attorneys familiar with Qatari law to review all contracts and bonds. For more information, please feel free to contact Lauren at lauren@flyartsinitiative.com.

#### Robert L. Self

Robert H. Smith Director of Restoration, Monticello A Collections Manager's Worst Nightmare



Commode before Treatment. Photo by Robert Self.

The mysterious subject of Bob's lecture was a walnut commode attributed to the Monticello joinery, most likely made by the enslaved craftsman John Hemmings and used at Monticello.

In October of 2006 a fine arts shipping company was hired to pack and transport the piece to Salem, Massachusetts for treatment by an upholstery conservator. It was packed it in a single cardboard box that unfortunately offered little protection against an unsecured object in the truck, which crashed into it causing catastrophic damage to the commode inside. The piece was so unstable it could not be shipped back to Charlottesville for conservation without risking further damage. It was decided instead that Bob would travel to Salem to treat the commode there.

Fortunately the wood panel was still hanging together (no missing pieces) which allowed for a fairly straightforward treatment, at least in theory. Bob injected liquid hide glue into the fractured areas and then applied deep throat clamps in conjunction with a ½" Plexiglas panel that spanned the whole side. Everything was then carefully pressed back into alignment. The final step in the treatment was to touch up the fracture lines and conserve the existing finish on the entire piece. Although minimal scarring was apparent and unavoidable the damage thankfully had occurred to the back of the commode, the side not usually on view. A non-

intrusive upholstery system was subsequently installed by the upholstery conservator, and the commode is now on view at Monticello in one of the recently re-interpreted second floor spaces.



Commode after treatment. Photo by Robert Self.

#### VCA Business Meeting Minutes January 16, 2014

VCA President Rick Vogt brought the meeting to order and announced that unfortunately, due to illness, speaker Katherine Ridgeway was unable to present at the meeting.

Outreach: Rick would like to put together a program at VCU (with the possibility of other local colleges attending) that is inspiring, motivational, and positive about careers in conservation. Looking for a date in April, or May, and that lasts for an hour or so. Please e-mail Rick if you are interested in presenting. If it goes well, maybe we can consider doing a second presentation in the Norfolk/Tidewater region.

The VAM has asked us to contribute to their April issue of VAM Voice, their quarterly magazine. Kathy Garrett tells us that they have asked us to come up with a question, and then submit a couple of answers to it, by the deadline of February 15. If you have a suggestion for the question, please e-mail <a href="mailto:info@virginiaconservationassociation.org">info@virginiaconservationassociation.org</a> by January 24.

<u>Disaster Response:</u> Kathy is still looking for volunteers to help vacuum mold off of books at the Norfolk Public Library. She would like to send two people each week, possibly on Wednesdays. Please email Kathy if you are interested.

Treasurer's Report: Nancy Beck handed out copies of the Treasurer's Report and pointed out that our current balance looks much lower than it has previously. This is due to donations to the FAIC, and a \$300 donation to Bacon's Castle as a thank you for allowing us to have the Holiday Party on site. The VCA has now invested \$8000 into CDs and has to date earned \$.33.

Carol Boyers Givens reminded membership that we needed to nominate a nominating committee at this meeting, to find nominees for the upcoming elections. Keri Ragland and Kate Sullivan nominated themselves and will serve as co-chairs.

Education Committee: Carol is trying to line up at least one, possibly two things for this summer, including respirator fit testing. We have enough interested parties that OSHA should be willing to come down and give a workshop. An idea was brought up to perhaps do a fit-testing workshop in conjunction with other personal protections in the workplace.

<u>Programs Committee:</u> Karri Richardson reported that she has not finalized the next meeting yet, but it will be announced through the newsletter and e-mail.

Lauren Fly and Bob Self gave very interesting talks on their conservation conundrums. Lauren spoke about working with the country of Qatar. Bob talked about a shipping gone awry, and the consequent conservation treatment.

At the end of the meeting, Carol reminded us that if we have ideas for new board members, to please e-mail the nominating committee.

Kerri Richardson also talked about a possible field trip to Belmont in Fredericksburg this spring.

And to conclude the evening, Will Hoffman, who is a conservator at the Mariner's Museum, reminded us of the e-mail that was sent out regarding funding for the Museum. He asked that we all please go to the website and sign the petition.

# SAVING ENERGY IN HVAC FOR CONSERVATION ENVIRONMENTS

The Washington Conservation Guild is pleased to host an HVAC workshop presented by William P. Lull of Garrison/Lull Inc.

#### THURSDAY, MARCH 13

9:30am-4:30pm McMillian Education Center Smithsonian American Art Museum

Cost \$20 WCG Members, \$50 non-members Participation is limited to 40 people.

REGISTER TODAY by emailing: rsvp-HVAC@washingtonconservationguild.org

# AIC SUSTAINABILITY COMMITTEE SEEKS A NEW PROFESSIONAL MEMBER & STUDENT MEMBER

- ❖ Term of service: June 2014 May 2016
- \* Tasks: Telephone conference calls with the committee members once a month. Research, write and edit the AIC Wiki Sustainable Practices Page. Participate in researching and writing any group presentations, publications, blogs, and social media posts. Initiate and support committee projects to increase awareness of sustainable practices in the conservation community. Collaborate with related committees, networks, and working groups.
- Student member also serves as liaison between the Committee and the Emerging Conservation Professionals Network.

Send a one page statement of purpose and your resume by MARCH 17 to Betsy Haude, Committee Chair. mhaud@loc.gov

# SUMMER EXHIBIT INTERNSHIP UVA Library

Prepare UVA Library materials for an October 2014 exhibit on the Civil War. Materials include books, printed broadsides, maps, and manuscripts.

Duration: June 2-August 1, 2014

Accepting applications until the position is filled. Send resume, letter of interest and contact information for three professional references to Eliza Gilligan, Book Conservator for University Library Collections, emg3b@virginia.edu.

#### CAREERS IN ART AND OBJECTS CONSERVATION

Thursday, April 17

VCU Cabell Library Multipurpose Room, 2<sup>nd</sup> floor 3-5pm

A special seminar presenting the various paths to a career in conservation

#### ALUMINUM: HISTORY, TECHNOLOGY & CONSERVATION!

Conference and Workshop: April 7-11, 2014 Smithsonian American Art Museum Emil Buehler Conservation Laboratory, National Air & Space Museum

REGISTER: www.conservation-us.org/aluminum

The conference will bring together international specialists to facilitate the exchange and dissemination of knowledge, experiences, and expertise in the deterioration and conservation of aluminum alloys. The workshop will focus on the identification of aluminum alloys and finishes as a professional development opportunity for conservation professionals.

Virginia Conservation Association P.O. Box 4314 Richmond, VA 23220

www.VirginiaConservationAssociation.org



Next VCA Members' Meeting Virginia Museum of Fine Arts Richmond, VA March 20, 2014, 5:30 p.m.