

VIRGINIA CONSERVATION ASSOCIATION



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The Virginia Conservation Association (VCA) promotes the care and preservation of cultural materials. The VCA offers education and training for those involved in conservation and provides a forum for discussion of pertinent issues and new developments in the field.

The VCA is open to anyone with an interest in the care and preservation of art and historic artifacts.

virginiaconservationassociation.org

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Next Member's Meeting

Virginia Museum of Fine Arts

Thursday May 25, 2023

Letter from the President

Greetings, VCA,

Ok, back to the birds. Today I put up a birdhouse in my yard in New York. We bought our house in October last year, and it was a whirlwind of getting a fence up and replacing deck boards before the first snow fell. Anyone who knows me knows that I am a ball of DIY energy; projects, lists, burning the midnight oil to finish today's project before tomorrow's project begins. However, the older I get, the more I appreciate the pauses in between projects, and the gratification of the doing rather than the done. The mortar of life is made up of the moments of everything in between, and a strong mortar is made of humble intentionality and gratitude.



Paige Schmidt, VCA President



So, today I put up a birdhouse in my yard. But it wasn't just any birdhouse, and it wasn't just a check-box on the to-do list. This birdhouse was made by VCA member Will Hoffman, and painted and bedazzled by his wife and daughter (a superb artist and artist-in-residence). This birdhouse lodged bluebirds last spring in Virginia, and the materials from the previous nest were still in place before I put it up. It was a simple task, but in between stacking wood and weeding, it offered a moment of reflection for the home I had in Virginia. I am thankful that the friends and community I have there continue to serve as the foundation for my home in New York. It gave me great joy to think of the time and intentionality put into making that little bird house; so often it isn't about what we build, but what we share. As conservators and preservation professionals, I think we can all appreciate that so much beauty already exists in the world, and sometimes our role is just to take care of it.

With that, I thank everyone in the VCA for being a part of my community. Leaving the board doesn't feel so much like a goodbye, but a continuation. I will continue to share your names, your kindnesses, your projects, your inspirations, and your bedazzled birdhouses. Don't hesitate to reach out, as I surely will!

Slainte,
Paige

Upcoming Member's Meeting

Join us for a lively evening at the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts on Thursday, May 25! Weather permitting, we will enjoy refreshments in the E. Claiborne and Lora Robins Sculpture Garden before listening to presentations on outdoor sculpture conservation by Andrew Baxter/Bronze et al, Ltd. Fine Art and Debbie Linn, Interim Chief Conservator of the Susan and David Goode Center for Advanced Study in Art Conservation at the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts.

Outdoor sculpture at the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts

When: Thursday, May 25th 2023

Refreshments at 5:30
Presentation at 6:00

Where:

Virginia Museum of Fine Arts
200 North Arthur Ashe Boulevard
Richmond, VA 23220
Meet at *Rumours of War*



"Rumors of War" by Kehinde Wiley

We will convene at Kehinde Wiley's *Rumors of War*. Andrew will talk about assisting with re-assembly and installation of this sculpture. Wiley's *Rumors of War* had been on display for merely a month in Times Square New York City before its acquisition by the VMFA. During that short time frame, the sculpture exhibited corrosion along the joints, requiring conservation. Andrew will describe his treatment that included stabilization of the patina.

Debbie Linn will then discuss her treatment of the sculpture *Chloe* by world-renowned Spanish artist Jaume Plensa. It has become a beloved icon at VMFA, engaging visitors both young and old. Unveiled in April 2017, *Chloe* was commissioned by VMFA with endowed funds as part of its strategic plan initiative to add new site-specific pieces to the E. Claiborne and Lora Robins Sculpture Garden. One of a series of sculptural heads by Plensa, *Chloe* is composed of a stainless steel infrastructure surrounded by fiberglass and marble dust, with a protective polyurethane coating. Unfortunately, soon after the sculpture was installed, the polyurethane coating began to crack and peel off the fiberglass. This damage worsened over time, resulting in a disfigured and structurally compromised surface, particularly along the northwest side of the sculpture's face. Working with the artist's New York-based



"Chloe" by Jaume Plensa

gallery, Galerie Lelong, it was determined that the best way to repair the sculpture and return it to the artist's aesthetic vision was to completely remove the original polyurethane coating and replace it with a new protective coating system of the artist's choosing. From testing to final execution, Debbie Linn will share details about the work undertaken to safely restore the sculpture's pristine white surface. Andrew will finish the presentation with a discussion of the treatments that he has carried out for over 20 years on outdoor sculptures by Moore, Scudder, Maillol, and Lipton. The meeting will be moved indoors if weather conditions are poor with PowerPoint presentations about Plensa's *Chloe* and the second total repatination of Moore's *Knife Edge Mirror Two Piece* outdoors at the National Gallery of Art. Moore's Bronze Form at the Getty Center was repatinated in July of 2022, and Andrew will also describe that process.

Presenter Biographies

Andrew Baxter began his career with metalworking at the Tallix Art Foundry in Peekskill, NY. He has over 40 years experience with metalworking and metal conservation. He is widely known for his expertise in patination and outdoor sculpture conservation, and has worked at locations such as The Getty Center, Smithsonian Institution, National Gallery of Art, The White House, Kykuit/Rockefeller Brothers Fund, Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, and North Carolina Museum of Art. He has also held various positions on the VCA board including President.

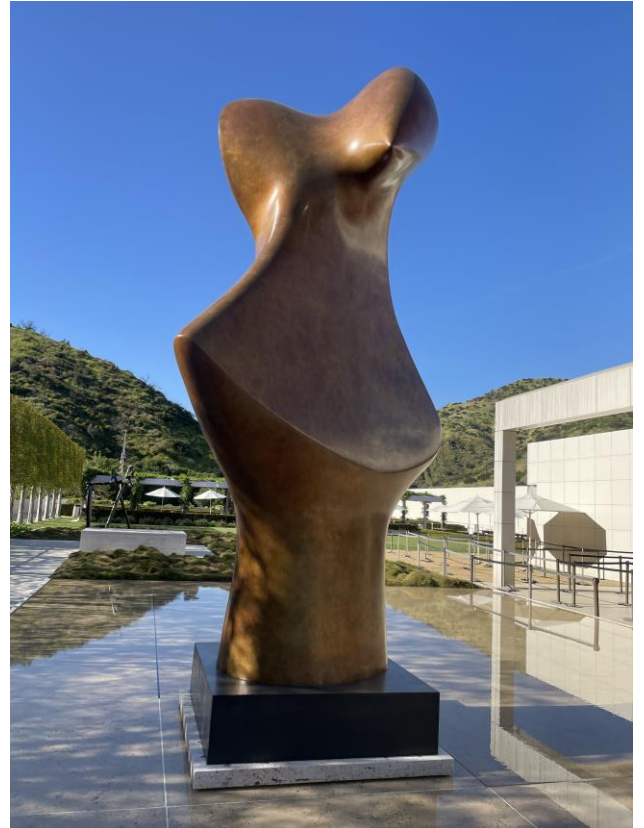
Debbie Linn was appointed to her current position in November 2021 after having served as Assistant Chief Conservator for two years. She is responsible for oversight and management of the conservation program which is dedicated to the preservation, treatment, research, and scientific analysis of the museum's collection of over 55,000 works of art. Linn began her conservation career in the early 1990's with internships and positions at the National Museum of American History, the Freer Gallery, Harvard University, and the Museum of Fine Arts Boston. After receiving her Master of Fine Arts and Certificate of Advanced Study in Art Conservation with Honors from the Garman Art Conservation Department at SUNY Buffalo State, she worked at a variety of institutions including the Field Museum, the Chicago History Museum, the Newberry Library, and the Library of Congress. While her graduate studies focused on works of art on paper, over her career she gained extensive experience on three dimensional objects, exhibition preparation, overall project management, preventative conservation, and disaster recovery, including a devastating fire at the Chinese American Museum of Chicago in 2008. Linn has also taught many workshops and classes on myriad conservation and collections care topics for a range of audiences from high school and college classes to museum professionals.

Upcoming Event – Metal Patina Workshop

June 15-16, 2023

The Cook Foundation in Gloucester VA will be hosting a metal patina workshop conducted by VCA member Andrew Baxter in association with the Gloucester Arts Festival.

Baxter will present an overview of metal finishing and chemical patina application techniques. The workshop will be useful to conservators and artists alike with consistent heat applied techniques, and then more experimental finishes such as cold process applications. Bronze coatings with patinas on materials like stone, wood, and shell will also be demonstrated. The use of wax tinted with dry pigments, and inpainting areas of loss with tinted coatings is an important part of object conservation. This will be presented along with the conservation of outdoor sculpture. Baxter began his career at the Tallix Art Foundry NY. He will draw on his vast experience of work with numerous prestigious institutions mentioned in his bio on page 4.



Andrew Baxter worked with Steve Roy in July 2022 to chemically repatinate Henry Moore's Bronze Form at The Getty. Andrew will demonstrate this and many other patina techniques during his upcoming workshop

He will share techniques and processes for treating sculptures by noted artists like Rodin, Maillol, MacMonnies, Bourdelle, Frishmuth, Hoffman, Lachaise, Manship, Tiffany and Remington. Then more contemporary artists including Hepworth, Moore, Manzu, Dali, Lichtenstein, Graves, Marisol, Stella, Frankenthaler, de Kooning, Flanagan, and Plensa.

Andrew Baxter recently returned from a week with the Getty Conservation Institute to prepare for his upcoming Patination of Bronze workshop at the Getty in October. Subsequently, Andrew has created a more structured and analytical workshop with documentation of chemical formulas and techniques. Andrew is enthused to present this updated and improved method of demonstration for the Cook Foundation in Gloucester, Virginia on June 15 & 16. There are a limited number of spots available. Please contact Andrew with questions about the content of the workshop at bronzeeetal@msn.com and Elizabeth Blackney, Executive Director The Cook Foundation, to sign up for the workshop: director@thecookfoundation.org

Field Trip to the Chrysler Museum of Art

March 11, 2023

The VCA met in gallery 211 on a sunny Saturday morning at the Chrysler Museum of Art to hear about the complex history and treatment of a monumental painting on canvas, created by Thomas Cole in 1840. VCA members Mark Lewis, Chrysler painting conservator; Katie Rovito, post-graduate fellow in painting conservation; and Marla Curtis, painting conservator in private practice, each talked about the role they've played in the extensive conservation treatment.

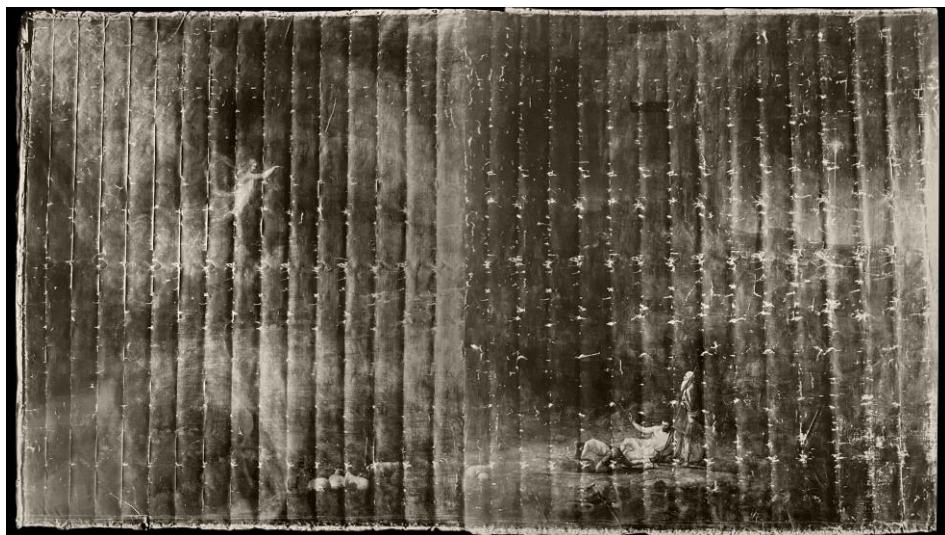


*VCA members heard about the in-process conservation treatment of Thomas Cole's *Angel Appearing to the Shepherds*.*

Cole completed the painting in approximately two months, following extensive preparation that

included traveling in Europe to study figure painting and experimenting with landscape features that would appear exotic to American viewers. As with most painters of the Hudson River Valley school he painted on a red-orange preparatory ground layer that provided the ideal midtone for his landscapes, lent depth to his luminous night sky, and allowed

for a relatively thin paint layer. When the work was completed, Cole traveled with this painting, unstretching and rolling the massive canvas for transit. The painting was eventually acquired by and displayed in the Boston Atheneum until a fire in the late 19th century resulted in the canvas being unstretched and rolled once again. It stayed tightly rolled and stored until 1948, when it was unrolled and deemed to be in such poor condition that it was re-rolled and returned to storage for another three decades.



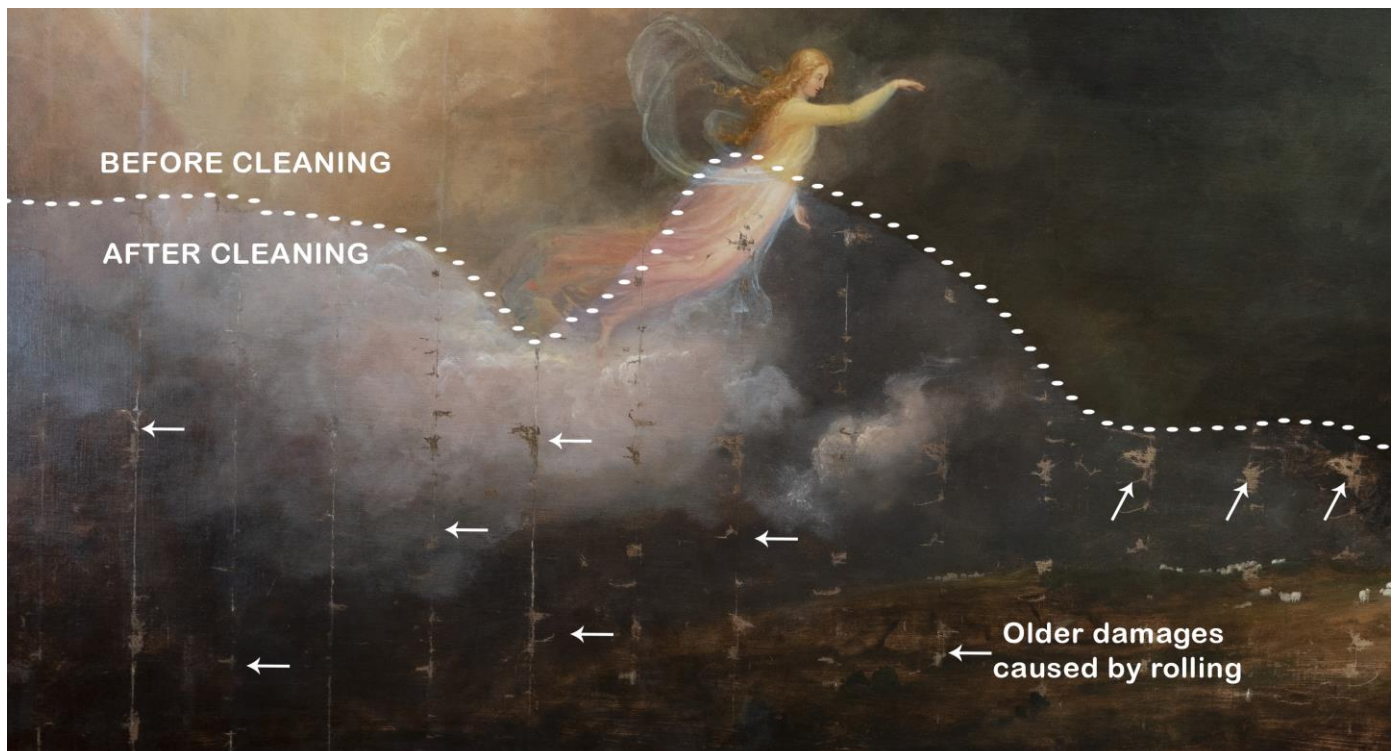
Archival image of the unstretched painting, circa 1948. Image courtesy of the Chrysler Museum of Art.



Conservation treatment underway in the gallery. Image courtesy of the Chrysler Museum of Art.

An extensive treatment in the 1970's that included a robust wax resin lining, generous inpainting, and the application of a thick synthetic varnish layer returned the painting to a sound-enough state that it was acquired by Walter P. Chrysler, Jr. in 1980. Recent examination determined that the modern varnish appeared murky, obscuring details of the composition and giving the painting an overall muted appearance. A Sherman Fairchild grant was secured to treat the painting and conservators began examination and testing. Due to its significant size (8' x 16'), treatment had to be

undertaken in the gallery in view of the public. This factor significantly limited solvents and materials available for treatment and dramatically increased the amount of time treatment took as curious museumgoers stopped to watch the treatment unfold and asked questions. Overall, the project provided an excellent opportunity to engage with the public and share details of the work that often takes place behind closed doors.



Comparison of the painting's condition and appearance during treatment. Image courtesy of the Chrysler Museum of Art.

The extensive damage to the painting and its long history presented challenges as the conservators worked to remove layers of discolored and possibly tinted varnish. The non-original materials were dark in color and closely resembled the earth tones Cole used in much of the painting. Handheld ultraviolet flashlights, magnification with an Optivisor, and good lighting supplied by supplemental work lights were all crucial to navigating the slow and careful removal of varnish layers. Solvents were held on the painting's surface to extend working time with materials like Evolon, but paper towels were found to be effective as well.

The painting will be varnished and final inpainting completed before the treatment is finalized. Its monumental size ensures that it will remain on display for the foreseeable future, as it is too large to fit through the surrounding doorways! Thank you to Mark, Katie, and Marla for spending their Saturday with us, sharing interesting details about the project and the painting. VCA members in attendance also had the opportunity to chat over lunch and enjoy the special exhibition [*Preston Singletary: Raven and the Box of Daylight*](#), on view until July 2, 2023.

Emerging Conservation Professional Spotlight

Hannah Sanner

My name is Hannah Sanner and I am rounding out my internship at the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation. I graduated from William & Mary in 2021 with a degree in Chinese language & culture. Throughout college I struggled to incorporate my love of material culture alongside my language education. After receiving the Woody scholarship to intern at the Winterthur Museum, I was finally introduced to the many facets of museum studies. My supervisor, Laura Johnson, arranged for me to work in multiple departments including curation, registration, exhibits, and education. Ultimately, I was attracted to conservation due to the intersection of stewardship and materiality. I am currently interning across three labs in Colonial Williamsburg, but my current project in the Paper lab best exemplifies my experience so far. I am conserving *Plate II: Attended by His Levée in London* from Hogarth's 1768 *A Rake's Progress* series.



Hogarth print being submerged in pH adjusted wash bath. Image taken by Pam Young.

The most valuable aspect of working with this Hogarth print has been the freedom to experiment. As an emerging conservator, treatment design is pivotal for learning the available tools of the trade. Before I began surface cleaning, Assistant Paper Conservator Perrine LeSaux provided me with an opportunity to experiment with a variety of erasers on different expendable prints and drawings collected for practice in the lab. I was able to test for potential residues and abrasive damage in a controlled environment before planning my treatment. Similarly, the print was hinged on a secondary paperboard support, allowing me to perform solubility spot testing on the adhesive that remained on the support before removing the hinges from the object.

The greatest challenge of this treatment has been consistency. Given the print is part of a series, I needed to achieve aesthetic balance with the other prints in the collection. Some of these prints have already been treated and exhibit different degrees of yellowing and discoloration. The first washing bath of the print did not result in significant reduction of scattered “foxing” stains across the print. These localized blemishes are likely caused by mold given the proximity of a major tideline. I spent a significant amount of time using



Hannah Sanner lifting print from bath with assistance from Perrine LeSaux. Image taken by Pam Young.

reducing agents and chelators on a suction platen to carefully lessen the appearance of these stains. Ultimately, a second course of baths was necessary to further reduce yellowing to achieve the approximate tone of the other treated Hogarth prints in the series.

The Hogarth print project has been instructive in tackling unique variables that affect treatment. Interestingly, the project has deviated from prior treatments within the same collection. No two objects will ever react identically in conservation. Fortunately, my supervisors have provided me with the space and tools to adapt to challenges that will be crucial to my training going forward.

2023 – 2024 Virginia Conservation Association Board Nominations and Proposed Budget

Nominees for the 2023-2024 VCA Board

President – Carey Howlett

Secretary – Claire Martin

2023-2024 Virginia Conservation Association Proposed Budget

	Credit Line	Budget
Expenses		
	Programs	\$700
	Refreshments	\$300
	Holiday Party	\$500
	Web Management	\$4000
	Membership	\$40
	Miscellaneous	\$100
	Treasurer/Admin	\$300
Total Expected Expenses		\$5940
Income		
	Regular Membership	\$2596
	Student Membership	\$43
Total Expected Income		\$2639

The ballot for Board elections will also provide the opportunity for the membership to vote to approve next year’s budget, as proposed here. The board feels that the website needs to be reconfigured and redeveloped to better suit the needs of the membership. This year’s proposed budget includes funding for VCA to hire an outside contractor to create a website on a platform that can be managed by the VCA board after the initial setup and formatting is complete.

Following the initial investment for formatting a new website, the annual service and maintenance fees for the website will be comparable to those of previous years.

If you have comments, questions, or thoughts on what you would like to see on the new website, please contact our Publications Chair at publications.vaconservation@gmail.com

VCA APRIL BOARD MEETING MINUTES

Virtual Board Meeting - April 18, 2022

ATTENDEES

Paige Schmidt, Marla Curtis, Elizabeth Robson, Amy Byrne, Sara Ludueña, Jackie Peterson-Grace

Call to Order: President Paige Schmidt called the meeting to order at 6:00 pm

PRESIDENT'S REPORT (PAIGE SCHMIDT)

Paige met with Headwaters Down and VAM to discuss progress with the SHARP grant video series. The board agreed that the videos need to have some continuity in their design and include the VCA and VAM logos rather than focus too heavily on the institution at which they were filmed. Filming was completed by the end of April, the grant will be concluded by the end of May.

TREASURER'S REPORT (AMY BYRNE)

Amy clarified all purchases made this year. The board discussed budgeted expenses in comparison to actual funds spent for each of the categories in last year's budget and made adjustments to the proposed budget as needed. The board agreed to allocate \$4000 to creating a new website, pending membership approval.

SECRETARY'S REPORT (SARA LUDUEÑA)

Minutes from this year's meetings have been uploaded to Google Drive.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Programs Committee (Marla Curtis)

May programming has been confirmed. A visit to Monticello may be an option for programming in the fall or next spring.

Membership Committee (Elizabeth Robson)

Candidates were identified for the President and Secretary position. Elizabeth reiterated the large amount of work required of her position every fall. A new website should be able to alleviate much of that work, making the board position less of a commitment.

Publications Committee (Jackie Peterson-Grace)

Jackie agreed to work with Elizabeth to source quotes for and facilitate the creation of a new website.

Meeting adjourned by President Paige Schmidt at 7:15pm



2022 – 2023 Board Members

Paige Schmidt president.vaconservation@gmail.com	President
Sara Ludueña secretary.vaconservation@gmail.com	Secretary
Amy Byrne treasurer.vaconservation@gmail.com	Treasurer
Elizabeth Robson membership@virginiaconservationassociation.org	Membership Chair
Marla Curtis programs.vaconservation@gmail.com	Programs Chair
Jackie Peterson-Grace publications.vaconservation@gmail.com	Publications Chair

VCA Student Scholarship

VCA offers two annual scholarships of \$250 each to be used for furthering education in the field. Use of funds may include conference or class fees or other professional-development expenses. Applicants must be VCA student members to apply. Applications are accepted throughout the year and will be evaluated during the April and December Board meetings.

To apply, submit a one-page proposal for use of funds that specifies how the scholarship will assist in the pursuit of a career in conservation or a directly related field. To apply, email our

Contribute to the Newsletter!

Are you working on an interesting or challenging treatment? Have you made exciting research discoveries, come across valuable resources, or attended an inspiring professional development event? We want to hear from you!

Our all-volunteer publishing team regularly calls for content and any VCA member is welcome to contribute. If you are interested in writing for the newsletter but would like some advice and guidance, please get in touch with our Publications Chair to discuss your ideas.

Contact Us

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