

# 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](http://virginiaconservationassociation.org)

## Newsletter Contents

<b>Letter from the President</b> .....	<b>2</b>
<b>Upcoming Member's Meeting</b> .....	<b>3</b>
<b>Upcoming VCA Event</b> .....	<b>3</b>
<b>VCA Seeks Board Nominations</b> .....	<b>4</b>
<b>Emerging Conservation Professional Spotlight</b> .....	<b>5</b>
<b>2022-2023 VCA Board Members</b> .....	<b>8</b>

Next Member's Meeting

*Field trip to the Chrysler Museum of Art*

**March 11, 2023**

# Letter from the President

Greetings, VCA,

The whispers of spring are upon us- or at least they are as I write this. With the weather this year, you never know what the next day will bring. Being an avid bird watcher, I have had to adapt to the aviary company kept so far north over winter, and am excited to see what new neighbors spring will bring. I have high hopes that someone will roost in the gaping hole that I watched a Pileated woodpecker form in a pine tree not long for this world by my house. I do love how busy nature is even in the dead of winter; tidying, renovating, retrofitting. A constant unabashed questioning and iterative transformation. As conservators and preservation specialists, we certainly spend a lot of time trying to stave off entropy. But I do believe in our own lives, professional and otherwise, it can be good to evaluate old systems of operation, and do like nature does- transform!



*Paige Schmidt, VCA President*

So far this year, I feel that the VCA has done a great job of just that. While we've changed the bylaws and modus operandi a bit, we've successfully sustained ourselves, and perhaps even discovered new ways to fulfill our mission. I am thankful for the great board members who have made my job as president quite easy and enjoyable, and who have been so game to innovate and explore what the VCA might be and do next.

Work on the videos for the SHARP grant is well underway, and Headwaters Down is scheduled to complete filming in mid-April. We are grateful to be working with a team of such high caliber, and I for one am so excited to see the results. We have five videos currently in progress, and I think that the content produced from the project will far exceed our initial expectations. While there is still much work to be done, we can all be proud of our colleagues participating in this project.

Humbly yours,

Paige

# Upcoming Member's Meeting

All are welcome to join us for a fascinating talk about the research and treatment of the large Thomas Cole painting, *The Angel Appearing to the Shepherds*, in Gallery 211 on March 11 at 11:00am. The treatment is ongoing. Entry to the museum and exhibitions is free, and partners, families and friends are all welcome. See the January Newsletter for more information. RSVP by March 7 at this link: <https://www.signupgenius.com/go/10CoA49ABA92EAAF58-field>, and include your lunch order from Taste, if desired. The menu may be found at the link <https://www.tasteunlimited.com/menu>. Money will be collected on the 11<sup>th</sup> at the museum. After lunch, check out the permanent collection and/or the temporary exhibition of Preston Singletary's glass art.

*Field trip to The Chrysler Museum of Art*

**When:** Saturday, March 11<sup>th</sup> 2023  
Presentation at 11:00

**Where:**  
Chrysler Museum of Art  
1 Memorial Place  
Norfolk, Virginia 23510

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## Upcoming VCA Event

Andrew Baxter will be giving a presentation for an upcoming VCA meeting, likely to take place this spring. Watch for a future email and the May newsletter for additional details!

Andrew Baxter will also invite VCA members to take part in the workshop described below, dates TBA. 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. With over 40 years of metalworking experience 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 are an important part of object conservation. These techniques will be presented along with practical approaches to the conservation of outdoor sculpture. Beginning his career at the Tallix Art Foundry NY, Baxter will draw on his vast experience working 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, North Carolina Museum of Art. 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.

# VCA Seeks Nominations for New Board Members

VCA is seeking nominees for three open board positions, to be voted on this spring. New board member terms will begin in fall of 2023 and are either a one- or two-year commitment. See below for detailed descriptions of each of the open positions, and please contact our membership chair at [membership@virginiaconservationassociation.org](mailto:membership@virginiaconservationassociation.org) to nominate yourself or someone else!

**President** – two years for first term; two years for subsequent terms; remains advisor for one year after completion of term(s). The incumbent is responsible for overseeing and directing the business and program affairs of the VCA. This person will delegate responsibilities to the officers, standing committee chairpersons, and appoint new committees. Additionally, the President will have the authority to convene an Ad Hoc Disaster Response Team as needed by a state of emergency. The President will be the contact for the Disaster Response Team, and the team will act as liaison between VCA members and museums, institutions, and collectors to provide information and/or assistance in case of emergency. Additionally, this person will be responsible for preparing the interim format of the by-laws and any final form as approved by the membership. This person will study legal and financial matters impacting the by-laws and provide reports for consideration. The President will work with a hired third party and the Publications Chair to ensure the VCA website is maintained. If you have questions about the position and what it entails, reach out to our current president at [president.vaconservation@gmail.com](mailto:president.vaconservation@gmail.com).

**Secretary** – one year for first term; subsequent terms two years. The incumbent of this position will take minutes of meetings, including those of the Board, retain records and files pertaining to all the communication activities of the VCA. This person will also be responsible for collecting and delivering official VCA materials at the end of the program year to the Virginia Museum of History and Culture. Reach out to our current secretary with questions at [secretary.vaconservation@gmail.com](mailto:secretary.vaconservation@gmail.com).

**Chairperson, Membership Committee** – two years first term; subsequent terms two years. The Chairperson of this committee will receive applications for membership. This person will maintain updated membership lists and send these out from time to time to the membership. This person will send emails to membership on behalf of the Board and members, including meeting notices and informational materials not included in the newsletter. The Membership Chair will also chair the Nominating Committee. They will facilitate the needs of the Board with the committee. Contact our current membership chair at [membership@virginiaconservationassociation.org](mailto:membership@virginiaconservationassociation.org) with questions or to nominate yourself or someone else!



# Emerging Conservation Professional Spotlight

*Allison Kelley*

A common adage in our profession is “conservation is a small world.” I’d like to add that “conservation is cyclical” as I often find myself returning to skills, materials, and people in unexpected and delightful ways. This phrase holds true as I find myself in my first post-graduate position at the same institution where I first learned to be a conservator (and submitting this bio to a newsletter I used to edit!). I began as a pre-program intern in the Objects lab at The Colonial Williamsburg Foundation in 2016 and six years later, I have returned as a Post-Graduate Fellow in Objects Conservation.

As a member of the Objects lab, I get to work on a variety of materials including a frame trimmed with leather that accompanies a school-girl sampler and a large silver cup and cover with elaborate repousse decoration. The highlight project of this fellowship is an ongoing treatment of a Staffordshire pearlware mug (2020-63) that continues unveiling new mysteries as the treatment progresses.



*Working on a ceramic treatment as an intern in 2018. Photo by Emily Williams. With permission of the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation.*

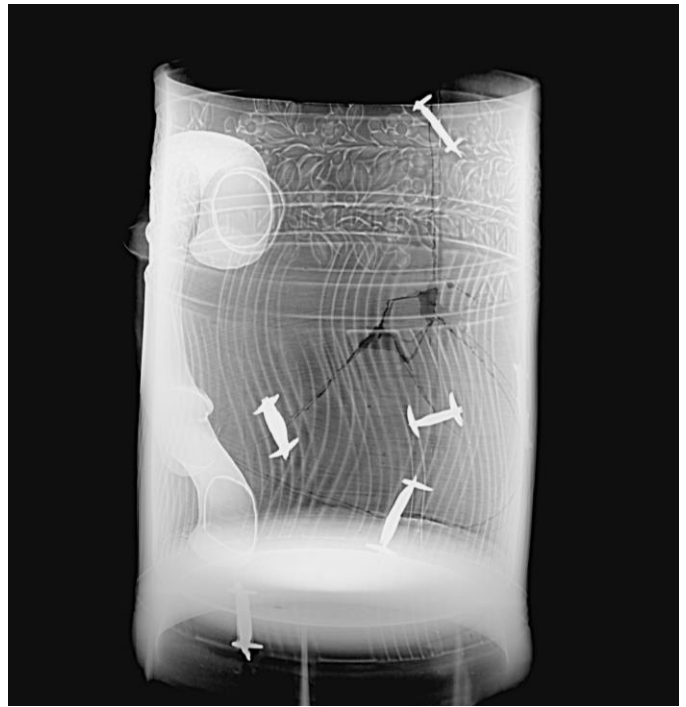


*Working on overpaint removal as a fellow in 2023. Photo by Aliza Taft. With permission of the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation.*

The mug dates to the early 19<sup>th</sup> century and is stamped with the inscription “America Independent 1776”. This item was newly acquired as a gift to the collection and is receiving in-depth treatment in preparation for display. The mug arrived completely overpainted except for the underside, obscuring the condition of the glaze and ceramic body beneath. X-radiography revealed a network of cracks with a single starting point indicating a likely history of impact damage. X-rays also showed the presence of six metallic mends along sections of the cracks that are unlike any ceramic repair I had ever seen. This was only the first mystery to be revealed.



Overall view of the mug (2020-63) before treatment with overpaint intact. Photo by Allison Kelley. With permission of the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation.



X-radiograph showing the metallic repairs and extent of impact damage. Photo by Allison Kelley. With permission of the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation.

Overpaint removal proceeded, albeit slowly, with a stubborn 20<sup>th</sup> century paint requiring poulticing with acetone to soften it enough for removal. As the paint cleared away, more unusual conditions appeared. While the unpainted underside showed typical brown staining following the crazing of the glaze, a different, spotty stain appeared in numerous locations along the body. This dark gray/black stain has a spotty, amorphous appearance and it occurs only on the exterior in isolated patches. I will use portable X-Ray Fluorescence and other analytical techniques alongside comparable samples to investigate the nature of the stain.

In addition to the strange stains, the true extent of restoration and damage was made clear. During a previous repair, large areas were sanded down, sometimes all the way through the glaze to the clay body, to allow for a “smooth” finish. The metallic mends were found to be lead that was slotted into grooves that were made in the ceramic body to keep the cracks stable. These invasive methods drastically altered the condition and appearance of the mug, and my



Detail view of the unusual staining on the exterior. Photo by Allison Kelley. With permission of the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation.



*Overall view after overpaint removal with metallic mends and fill material still in place. Photo by Allison Kelley. With permission of the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation.*

next big challenge is to work with the curator to determine an appropriate treatment for this object that best represents its history.

As I finish the sixth month of my fellowship, I find myself deeply gratified by the tangible proof of the growth of my skills in the intervening years since I was in the lab as a pre-program intern. Where once I was guided step by step through every treatment, now I am the one leading the process from proposal to completion. This fellowship has helped reaffirm my training and skills and confirms that I am ready to enter the field as a professional conservator capable of holding my own no matter what comes my way.





## 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

**Virginia Conservation Association**

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[www.virginiaconservationassociation.org](http://www.virginiaconservationassociation.org)

[www.facebook.com/VaConservation/](https://www.facebook.com/VaConservation/)