

# 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)

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Next Member's Meeting

*Field trip to the Chrysler Museum of Art*

**March 11, 2023**

# Letter from the President

Happy New Year, VCA!

I had the pleasure of traveling down to Virginia in December for work, and took some time to hike in the Shenandoah, one of my all time favorite hiking spots. When I first moved to Virginia from the west coast, it took me some time to appreciate the rolling mountains of the Appalachians, but eventually the weathered and wisened peaks, and the calm beauty of a different type of wild grew on me. As I hike in the Adirondacks and along the Hudson up north, I often think about the ridges that connect me to the Blue Ridges, geographically running like a vein across state lines. I encourage everyone to take a moment amongst the hustle and bustle of our singularly significant lives to appreciate these physical forms of interconnectedness.



*Paige Schmidt, VCA President*

Speaking of interconnectedness, in early December, participants in the SHARP grant met virtually to discuss the timeline for completing the project. We are very excited about the breadth of our content and the enthusiasm of the team. We will be working with Headwaters Down LLC for filming and production and after taking a break for the holidays, we're ready to get back to it and hope to complete filming by the end of March.

I hope everyone who was able to attend the Holiday Party had a great time- there is certainly much to celebrate as we settle into this new year, including in person meetings and professional collaborations. While the spring still feels well hidden under snow (at least here), I am also thinking ahead to incoming board members, including someone to fill the position of president. The strength of the VCA is entirely in the participation of its membership, and I ask anyone who has an invested interest in the future of the VCA, whether it be bolstering valued traditions or creating new ones, to please consider running for the position.

Keep warm,  
Paige

# Upcoming Member's Meeting

Join us on March 11th at 11 am in the gallery for a look at Thomas Cole's *The Angel Appearing to the Shepherd*, which was painted in 1833-'34. This 101.5" x 185.2" painting on canvas is Cole's largest painting and is currently undergoing a restoration treatment. Mark Lewis will offer background information on Cole's process and his intentions for this painting, based on research and technical analysis. Mark, Conservation Fellow Katie Rovito, and private Painting Conservator Marla Curtis will describe the treatment process and answer questions about the project.

Lunch will be offered through Taste, please [follow this link](#) to view the menu (payment for individual lunches will be received by Amy Byrne, VCA treasurer). After lunch, explore the museum and its fine collections. An [exhibition on Singletary's work](#) will also be on view.

Admission to the museum is free. For more information about the museum, [check out the website](#). Please RSVP to [programs.vaconservation@gmail.com](mailto:programs.vaconservation@gmail.com) to let us know you will be coming and your lunch choice(s) from the Taste menu.

*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



*Marla Curtis (left) and Katie Rovito (right) working on the painting in the gallery*

# Member's Meeting Summary

November 17, 2022

In November the VCA held its first in-person member's meeting since the pandemic necessitated virtual gatherings. We were hosted by Stacy Rush and her colleagues at the Virginia Museum of History and Culture. Thank you for inviting us to your beautiful new facilities!

The meeting was well attended, with approximately 20 in-person attendees and five members joining over Zoom. Thank you to everyone who contributed to the refreshments table with wonderful dips and desserts!

Following refreshments, F. Carey Howlett presented a fascinating talk titled *Make It 'Till You Fake It: Simulating Historic Chair Tapestries*, in which he discussed the work that he and a talented team of conservators and artists did to bring two suites of furniture from the Flagler Museum in Palm Beach, Florida closer to their original appearance. Both suites of furniture were originally upholstered with pictorial tapestries, but years of life outside of the Flagler Museum resulted in significant damage and loss.



*Carey Howlett discussing the upholstery and the importance of archival photographs in the project.*

In the first suite of furniture from the Music Room, Carey and his team were able to source a commercially available textile substrate that matched the appearance of the original tapestry weave. The designs for the missing and damaged tapestries were created by digitally photographing the remaining tapestries and “stitching” them together in Photoshop. They could then be transferred to the textile substrate with a projector before acrylic paints were used to recreate the woven tapestries with a “paint-by-number” technique to replicate the individual yarn colors used in the original weaving. This approach was hugely successful and, two years later, the Flagler Museum approached Carey about taking on the monumental task of treating and restoring a set of 24 chairs belonging to the dining room.

The elaborate French-Renaissance dining room chairs had returned to the Flagler Museum after years of use in a board room in Chicago. Their hiatus from Florida had seen them reupholstered in a red damask with a completely different profile. Luckily, seven of the original tapestries had been saved when the reupholstery was undertaken. Of the seven sets, one was selected for treatment by textile conservator Susan Adler. Susan’s transformative treatment involved wet cleaning the two tapestry pieces, a chair back and seat, that were determined to be in the best condition. After wet cleaning, the lengthy process of stitched structural stabilization and loss compensation was undertaken with cotton DMC embroidery floss to replicate lost and damaged wefts. Susan used images of the other existing tapestries and archival photos to direct visual reintegration of areas of loss. The conserved tapestries were reintegrated with one chair, reuniting original components after years apart.

The remaining 23 chairs required reproduction upholstery and, building on the success of the painted reproductions in the Music Room, Carey and his team hired a textile firm to weave “blank canvas” that matched the appearance of the original tapestry weave structure. New challenges had to be overcome with this project. The oil paints bled along the linen warps of the woven structure, necessitating that the textile be sprayed with a size prior to painting. The designs of the missing tapestries, sourced from archival images, had to be transferred precisely onto the textile ground as the square upholstery profile necessitated a perfect fit. Some of the tapestry designs were obscured in the archival photographic references, which required additional art historical research and artistic license.



*Susan Adler discussing her treatment of one of the original tapestries.*

The chairs also required conservation as the original appearance of the satin wood, a light and golden yellow wood, had been stained dark over time. Treatment was able to return them to a lighter color before each of the painted reproduction tapestries were attached to the chairs over a carved Ethafoam profile, using minimally invasive techniques. The suite of 24 chairs has been returned to the dining room at the Flagler Museum, where it has been reunited with the rest of the French Renaissance aesthetic of the room.

Both projects emphasize the importance of artistic skill in conservation. Technological solutions were explored, like digitally printing reproduction tapestries, but turning to handcraft ultimately proved to be the most cost-effective option, and with beautiful results.

Following the presentation, a short business meeting was held. Paige, VCA President, reported over Zoom that four SHARP grant videos have been confirmed and shared the timeline for the project. Amy, VCA Treasurer, stated that the VCA bank account has approximately \$9,300 and that she’s still working with the previous treasurer to transfer all the bank account information over to her name. Marla, VCA Programs Chair, gave updates about upcoming events including the Holiday Party, trip to the Chrysler Museum, and possible spring trip to Monticello.

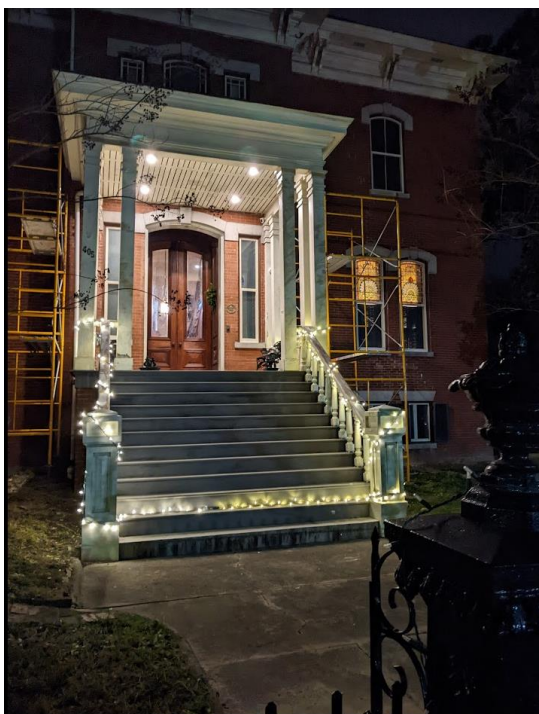
# VCA's Winter Holiday Party

*December 10, 2022*

After a few years on hiatus, the Virginia Conservation Association held a winter holiday party on December 10 at a beautiful historic home in Petersburg. The home was built in the 1870s by Charlie Cuthbert's family and he and his wife Beth have been in the process of restoring it. This home provided a wonderful setting for the holiday party. Members and guests mingled and chatted, surrounded by objects full of historic merit, like a chair Abraham Lincoln sat in and a table hit by a cannonball during the Civil War—not to mention the historic fabric of the home, its high ceilings and original lighting fixtures. The building restoration is still ongoing and we heard from several of the conservators and VCA



members who have taken part in the conservation and preservation efforts. Carey Howlett made brief remarks thanking the individuals who have helped keep this wonderful house going in so many ways, from window restoration to paintings conservation to gilding specialists and wooden artifacts conservation, and those present who worked on the Cuthbert's heirlooms spoke about their treatments and preservation efforts. The VCA is very grateful to our generous hosts and to Carey for planting the idea of this event and we can't wait to see it when the project is complete!



# Emerging Conservation Professional Spotlight

*Elyse Nurenberg*

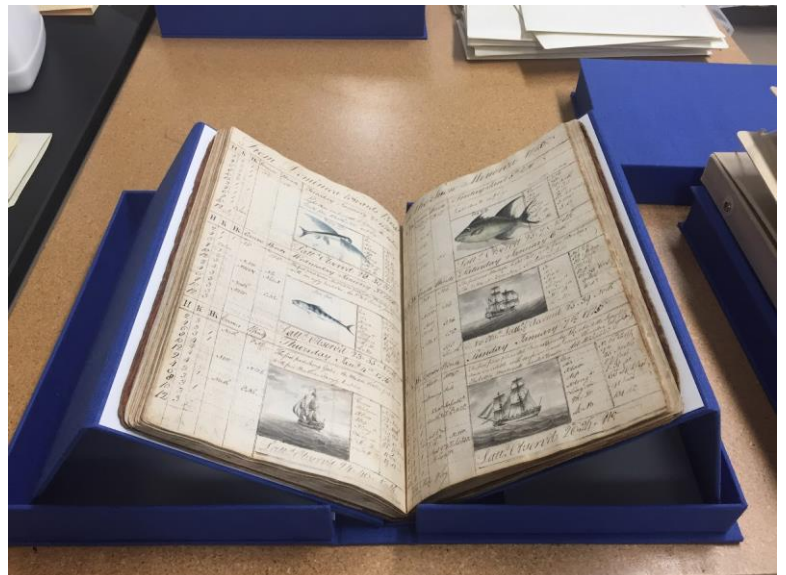
“Why did you choose to intern at the Mariner’s Museum?” Having traveled down from the Midwest for the internship, I have heard that question many times this past summer. The answer is simple: the internship afforded me the opportunity to develop skills that I was seeking and to work with part of the Mariner’s Museum’s incredible collection. During my internship project, I helped to create clamshell style boxes to store a collection of ship logbooks. While I have done a variety of museum collections related projects in the past, I was seeking experience in specialized collections housing. The boxes that I made followed a pattern that allowed me to tailor them to the size and demands of each book, although the unique condition of specific books sometimes required creativity and pattern tweaking. Over the course of the summer, I made 72 boxes for the logbooks while simultaneously learning about the best storage materials, unique challenges specific to housing books, and the fantastic work being done by the conservation, archives, and collections staff at the Mariner’s Museum.



*Elyse showcasing a logbook containing some seascape paintings*



*A stack of logbooks awaiting rehousing next to a stack of completed boxes.*



*An illustrated logbook inside a box that Elyse constructed which included a built-in cradle to make the book easier to look at and handle.*

Although the internship focused on a box making project, it was ultimately about something much larger: preserving one-of-a-kind pieces of history. The ship logbook collection at the Mariner’s Museum contains thousands of pages of handwritten, and sometimes hand-painted, records of life aboard a ship, seaports, battles, mutiny, adventures, and the occasional gossip. The records, handwriting, and the occasional beautiful illustrations found in these logbooks provide a window into the world and personalities of the men and women who took the time to record their voyages. These books have made a lasting impression on me, and I am grateful to have played a part in preserving them so that future generations can feel the same connection to these voyagers that I felt while leafing through the pages of their logbooks.



*Elyse making a clamshell box*

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## Upcoming Event – “Art Out Loud”

*Elizabeth Robson*

The Chrysler Museum of Art is hosting an “Art Out Loud” event on Friday, January 27<sup>th</sup> from 6pm-10pm. The theme is Heroes and Villains, and attendees will explore how power, morality, and adventure collide in art! The museum conservators, Katie Rovito and Elizabeth Robson, will show off their superpowers. They use x-ray vision, nerves of steel, super healing, and time-traveling abilities to keep our collection safe from the evil villains: time, pests, environment, and other foes. Talk with the team and learn about how they use their powers for good!

Visit <https://chrysler.org/event/art-out-loud-heroes-villains/> for more information.



*Image credit: [www.chrysler.org](http://www.chrysler.org)*



# The Washington Conservation Guild

The Washington Conservation Guild (WCG) is a non-profit organization dedicated to preserving and conserving material culture. The educational association promotes exchanging ideas and knowledge through tours, lectures, workshops, and symposia that serve conservators, educators, scientists, archivists, collections professionals, art historians, students, and other allied professionals and conservation enthusiasts in the Washington DC, Maryland, and Northern Virginia regions.



WCG offers a forum for sharing conservation information and interacting with colleagues through monthly lecture meetings, specialist committee meetings, a membership directory, outreach activities, informal gatherings, emerging professional activities, and occasional workshops and webinars.

WCG is offering free membership to emerging conservation professionals for the 2022-2023 season. For more information about how to become a member, upcoming events, or ways to volunteer, visit their website: <https://washingtonconservationguild.org/> or contact at [wcg@washingtonconservationguild.org](mailto:wcg@washingtonconservationguild.org).

## Social Media:

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/WashingtonConservationGuild>

Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/dconservators/>

Twitter: <https://twitter.com/dconservators>

YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCUWe7frisSeHDYTsJTaeSPgbe>

Flickr: <https://www.flickr.com/photos/washingtonconservationguild/collections/>

# VCA JANUARY BOARD MEETING MINUTES

Virtual Board Meeting - January 11, 2023

## 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 6:30 pm

## PRESIDENT'S REPORT (PAIGE SCHMIDT)

Paige reported on her conversation with the director of VAM. Four videos have been confirmed for the SHARP grant and a film crew has been identified to do the filming and editing. Details and scheduling need to be finalized.

## TREASURER'S REPORT (AMY BYRNE)

Amy reported that the budget is on track for this year. She will work on the budget for next year so it's ready to be voted on by membership in the spring.

## SECRETARY'S REPORT (SARA LUDUEÑA)

No updates to report.

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## COMMITTEE REPORTS

### Programs Committee (Marla Curtis)

Details for the Chrysler event are finalized, planning for the Monticello trip is underway.

### Membership Committee (Elizabeth Robson)

Elizabeth discussed issues she has encountered with the website and proposed some alternative options that the board will consider. Elizabeth also discussed where things stand with the membership directory and how it should be distributed to membership. Options include a PDF version to be sent to all members, printed copies to be sent to members that request them, or printed copies sent to all members. Elizabeth will begin her duties as head of the nominating committee to identify candidates for the president and secretary positions.

### Publications Committee (Jackie Peterson-Grace)

No updates to report.

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Meeting adjourned by President Paige Schmidt at 7:50 pm



## 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/)