

THE  
**ETHNOGRAPHIC CONSERVATION  
 NEWSLETTER**

of  
*The Working Group on Ethnographic Materials*  
 of  
 The ICOM Committee for Conservation

Number 12

July, 1993

**IN THIS ISSUE:**

Note from your editor	1
Note from Assistant Co-ordinator	1
ICOM-CC Conference - Washington proposed working group program	2
What's on in Ethno Conservation Republic of Maldives	2
Comments on theme article Disaster Preparedness Emergency carts put to use	3
Treatment Inquiry Tibetan sand mandala	4
Workshop Announcement of TLC workshop	4

character. I have had a few replies to the question I posed regarding whether object treatments should be published in the newsletter and they were in the affirmative. I therefore encourage you to provide the editor with articles so that this aim can be met. It is always difficult to drum up articles particularly from all over the world. I hope the conference goes well and I look forward to hearing about it.

**NOTE FROM THE  
 ASSISTANT CO-ORDINATOR**

With the Washington conference just around the corner I would like to take this opportunity to thank all the contributors to the newsletter for the past triennial period. I am sure that anyone who has been involved in the voluntary collection of information will be aware of the difficulties that are encumbered. I feel that we have been able to maintain the initial proposed program with outlines on cleaning, disaster planning and identification methods for binders, and the conference will provide a venue to discuss the issues relating to conservation ethics. I am also pleased to see that we are also presenting information that is topical in other groups. Recent issues of the Western Association for Art Conservators has also devoted time to the discussion of Cleaning issues ( January 1993, ) and The Canadian Conservation Institute Newsletter with disaster planning (April 1993). It is reassuring to know that we keep abreast with the conservation profession.

**NOTE FROM YOUR EDITOR**

This is the last newsletter before the Working Group meets at the ICOM-CC conference in Washington. I hope it finds you before you leave for the conference. I would like to pay special thanks to Marcela Pacheco who has worked tirelessly on updating the membership, printing out labels and organising the printing of the newsletter. I hope you have found the newsletter interesting. The newsletter has been truly international in

With the continued development and progress of ethnographic conservation as a profession, we should be able to maintain a strong presence in the conservation world. This year being celebrated as the Year for Indigenous people also provides the opportune time to consider and discuss issues being more significant to us. Issues such as the repatriation of objects, whether for use or re-burial, and development of indigenous keeping

places or local museums are now common place. Often these objects represent something quite different to these communities compared to our historical custodian role. Discussions that I have had recently with a number of colleagues indicate that we may need to re-evaluate our role in the museum so that we can maintain an active part of the changing working environment, otherwise, unfortunately like many others, we may find that we have increasing more in common with the dinosaur generation.

A special thanks must go to David Horton-James who has maintained the high standard and frequency of the newsletter. He has always been able to provide space for all colleagues inquiries, comments and technical notes.

Cheers,  
Sue Gatenby,  
Assistant Co-ordinator,  
Materials Conservation Division,  
Australian Museum,  
P.O. Box A285, Sydney South,  
NSW, 2000, Australia

## **ICOM-CC WASHINGTON CONFERENCE**

International Council of Museums - Committee for  
Conservation  
10th Triennial Conference  
Washington, D.C.  
August 22-27  
Working Group on Ethnographic Materials  
Meetings

### Proposed Program

Tuesday 24th Aug.'93.

09.00 Introduction  
Co-ordinator  
Chair Mary Lou Florian

Presentation of papers from participants present

Monowar Jahan: Technical Studies of  
Ethnographic Artefacts made of copper and its  
alloys.

Sue Gatenby: An identification Method for Fat  
and/or oil binding media (Lipid) used on  
traditionally painted Australian Aboriginal objects

Colin McGregor: A support system for flexible palm  
spathe objects

10.30 Morning break

11.00 Chair Sue Gatenby  
Pam Hatchfield  
Winne Odder  
continued discussion of papers if time needed.

Questions from the floor  
Conservation ethics and sacred objects.  
Whither repatriation?  
How did old civilisations protect their treasures,  
The ephemeral object and reversibility.

Continued discussion of 93-96 projects.

12.30 Close of meeting

Sunday Aug. 23<sup>rd</sup> Closed Working Group Meeting

1400hr. Welcome  
Co-ordinator (RB)  
Reiteration of working group objectives  
Membership and organisation  
Reports from 90-93 program researchers and  
discussion  
moderator Jo Hill

Suggestion from Co-ordinator: Papers on Tuesday  
24th be summarised by authors - 10 minutes max - and  
20 minutes discussion afterwards.

Call for nominations for position of co-ordinator  
and election.  
Appointment of assistant co-ordinators.

Break

The program for 93 - 96  
guidelines for submission of programs proposals

Discussion How far have we got with our present  
programs?  
Can we develop them further?  
Can we, should we increase the scope  
of our research programs?

Other business: The newsletter

Close of meeting

*Co-ordinator,  
Richard Renshaw-Beauchamp,  
Tideview Conservation,  
6555 Tideview Road R.R.1,  
Sooke, B.C.  
Canada VOS INO*

## **WHAT'S ON IN ETHNO CONSERVATION REPUBLIC OF MALDIVES**

### **NATIONAL MUSEUM MALI, THE REPUBLIC OF MALDIVES**

The national museum is located in Sultan Park which was part of the sultan's palace. The museum is a conversion of an old palace building which is open to the public, daily, from 9:00am to 3pm, except on Fridays and public holidays. Reorganisation of the displays is now going on. The valuable collections of the museum are large and varied. It includes stone objects belonging to the Maldives' pre-Islamic period, royal chairs and palanquins, costumes and ornaments worn by various kings and queens, arms and armour, paper and cloth manuscripts, photographs of important personalities and events, anthropological objects and other historic materials that enable one to journey through centuries of Maldivian culture, tradition, belief and their past way of life. It is a notable fact that throughout the ages there was constant efforts to preserve historical objects. Of the artefacts contained in the Museum, many were donated by private parties, some found at the palace or bought by the government and or obtained from excavations carried out in various parts of the country. There is a continuous effort to find more historical items for the Museum and funds are set aside especially for this purpose. Two of the most important items being exhibited in the National Museum are a coral head of a statue of Lord Buddha and a wooden panel erected in the Hukuru Miskiyy (Friday Mosque) in 737 A.H. Like most of the objects in the Museum these two items need conservation treatment.

Intense heat, high humidity and subsequent growth of moulds and tropical insects such as termites and beetles are the root cause of damage to most of the objects. Hence, the need to establish a conservation treatment centre is one of the highest priorities of National Centre for Linguistic and Historical Research for upgrading the Museum. With support from UNESCO, work on this project is already underway. The National Centre for Linguistic and Historical Research is planning to add an extension to the Museum to alleviate the problems caused by lack of space.

*Habeeba Hussain Habeeb*  
*Director*  
*National Library*  
*Male*  
*Republic of Maldives*

---

## **COMMENTS ON THEME ARTICLE DISASTER PREPAREDNESS**

### **EMERGENCY CARTS PUT TO USE**

The Royal British Columbia Museum has developed a useful and portable Emergency Cart. The cart contains an inventory of equipment needed for dealing with emergencies in the Museum Curatorial and Storage Building. Measuring 150 cm long X 86 cm wide X 143 cm high, with built in shelves and drawers, on caster wheels, painted bright yellow, and marked For Emergency Use Only, the cart provides a means of quickly and efficiently responding to crises.

Recently we experienced a flood in the Ethnographic collections storage area. This gave us the opportunity to put the cart to use in a real life situation, and determine advantages as well as the flaws of the carts. Within 5 minutes of the Conservation Services Department being notified of the problem we were up on the 15th floor with the cart and dealing with the situation.

The artefacts in the flooded area are stored on "full space" tracked shelving. The spaces between the tracking rails are filled in with plywood platforms, which stand 3cm above the surface of the floor. A burst pipe in the air conditioning system caused a large pool of water to accumulate under the platforms. Artefacts in the area were moved by conservators into temporary storage elsewhere (none got wet fortunately). The standing water was mopped up using towels squeezed into buckets, and after drilling holes for access, a wet/dry vacuum cleaner. Towels were also used to dam the immediate flow from the pipe, and a dehumidifier and fan were installed and left over the weekend to ensure drying of the plywood platforms.

We were glad to test the carts out on relatively minor emergency. Having all the materials and equipment immediately at hand on the Emergency Cart saved us a lot of running around. One improvement for the cart would be to have many more towels ready for use. This flood involve less than 10 litres of water, but soaked nearly our entire supply of towels. A wider selection of vacuum nozzles would have meant more rapid removal of the standing water. As it was, we experienced a short delay while holes were drilled in the plywood platforms to accommodate the nozzle we did have. The intention is to have three of these carts built, a real necessity in the case of a larger flood, or one affecting several floors. In the meantime the cart we do have proved invaluable in this situation. I hope that others may find our experience a valuable lesson in being prepared before disaster

strikes.

A list of the supplies on our cart follows, for more comprehensive plans, write, call, or fax the Conservation Services Section at the Royal British Columbia Museum, 675 Belleville Street, Victoria, B.C. Canada V8V 1X4 Telephone: (604) 387 3647 Fax: (604) 356 8197.

Emergency Cart Inventory: 1 Emergency Cart; 1 garbage can with lid (plastic, 100 litre); 1 wet/dry vacuum cleaner (now with various nozzles and an extension tube); 1 pail (plastic, 5 litre); three squeegees; 3 pairs rubber boots, various sizes; 1 roll of polyethylene sheeting (30 meters); 1 roll polyethylene tubing (30 meters); 1 electric fan; 10 chemical spill pillows; 1 mop; 1 mop bucket with wringer; 1 packing blanket; 4 packages cotton towels (20 each); 4 Tyvek asbestos suits; 1 box dust masks (20); 1 folding table; 1 moving dolly; 1 trouble light and battery; 1 electric plug adaptor ( industrial and standard conversion); 1 - 15 meter extension cord; 2 packages blotting paper; 8 rolls duct tape; 3 pairs rubber gloves; 3 sponges; 1 small crowbar; 1 pair pliers; 1 vice grips; 1 pair scissors; 1 flat slot screwdriver; 1 multi head screw driver; 2 lino knives; 1 hammer; 1 roll masking tape; 3 pencils; 1 steno note pad; 1 - 70 mm square "note-it pad" (self adhesive paper); 1 pad writing paper; 1 package Tyvek labels; 1 felt marker.

*Kjerstin Mackie  
Conservation Services  
Royal British Columbia Museum  
675 Belleville Street  
Victoria, British Columbia  
Canada V8V 1X4*

## **TREATMENT INQUIRY**

### THE CONSOLIDATION OF A TIBETAN SAND MANDALA

Recently at the Linden-Museum in Stuttgart, Germany, a tantric mandala was created by six Buddhist monks from Dip-Tse-Chok-Ling Monastery in northern India. The mandala is two metres in diameter and is made up of 60kg of very fine sand coloured blue, yellow, red or green, and small quartz pebbles similarly coloured. The areas of highest relief were made structurally hard by mixing milk with sand prepared in some way we as yet know nothing about, but the greater part of the mandala consists of layers of the different coloured sands carefully poured to compose detailed pictures. No fixative was used to keep the sand in position.

Traditionally sand mandalas are created to fulfil a specific ritual after which they are destroyed. The Linden-museum has however been given permission from the Dalai Lama to preserve the example made at the museum.

We know of no conservation case studies we can call upon in order to see how conservators elsewhere may have tackled such a conservation project. We are however aware that similar materials are used to create religious pictures, by Central Australian Aborigine, and by Indian communities in the Southwest USA. No doubt the materials are utilised for the same purpose elsewhere.

Have any Newsletter readers had practical experience consolidating such artefacts? Anybody with any suggestions as to the appropriate consolidants? Possible pitfalls? All correspondence on the subject would be welcomed.

*Sabine Weik,  
Conservator,  
Linden-Museum, Hegelplatz 1, 7000 Stuttgart 1, Germany.  
Fax # Germany 711 297047.*

---

## **WORKSHOP**

### THE GETTY CONSERVATION INSTITUTE

#### ANNOUNCEMENT FOR THE TLC WORKSHOP

February 28 - March 4, 1994. The Getty Conservation Institute, Marina del Rey, CA, U.S.A. **Methods in Scientific Examination of Works of Art: Thin-Layer Chromatography.** This one-week workshop is designed to introduce participants to thin-layer chromatography (TLC) as a method of analyzing a range of binding media materials. TLC analysis is a low-cost and effective method applicable for binding media including proteins, carbohydrates, waxes and resins. The workshop is suitable for conservators and for conservation scientists who are not familiar with this technique. Sessions will provide a balance of lecture and hands-on practice. Lectures will cover the theory of TLC and its application to the study of binding media. The binding media analysis kit, developed in the GCI Scientific Program, will also be discussed. Practice sessions will cover all the steps in TLC analysis and use of the binding media kit. The number of participants will be limited to 15.

Audience: In the selection process, preference will be given to conservators and conservation scientists whose

job responsibilities include binding media analysis and whose laboratories lack the facilities to carry out more sophisticated analysis techniques.

Costs: There is no fee for the workshop, but participants must meet their own travel and living expenses.

Application deadline: September 30, 1993.

Contact: Training Program, The Getty Conservation Institute, 4503 Glencoe Avenue, Marina del Rey, CA 90292, U.S.A. (310) 822-2299, FAX (310) 821-9409.

---

The ETHNOGRAPHIC CONSERVATION NEWSLETTER of the Working Group on Ethnographic Materials of the ICOM Committee for Conservation is available free of charge to those with a professional interest in the care and research of ethnological collections.

The publication date and deadline for the next issue is 15th October, 1993; however ARTICLES ARE WELCOME AT ALL TIMES!

Authors are asked to submit articles in either English or French. As an option, one is also invited to send an additional copy of the same article in the language of his or her country of origin, if it is other than the two languages, above, in order to share this published work with colleagues at home. We prefer that articles, notes and letters for publication be typed and double spaced. Black and white illustrations are welcome.

PLEASE PROVIDE CHEMICAL COMPOSITION IN ADDITION TO THE BRAND NAMES OF COMMERCIAL PRODUCTS AND CONSERVATION MATERIALS, SINCE COMMON NAMES AND TRADEMARKS VARY INTERNATIONALLY.

#### INQUIRIES OR SUBMISSIONS FOR NEWSLETTER

Please forward inquiries regarding the Newsletter, as well as articles to:

*David Horton-James,  
Materials Conservation Division,  
The Australian Museum,  
6-8 College Street, Sydney, NSW, 2000  
AUSTRALIA  
FAX No.: 61 2 339 8251*

For information regarding the International Council of Museums (ICOM), and the ICOM Committee for Conservation, please contact:

ICOM,  
Maison de l'UNESCO,  
1 Rue Miollis,  
75732 Paris Cedex 15,  
FRANCE.

#### DISCLAIMER

The Newsletter provides a forum for ideas, but this does not imply an endorsement for any products or procedures; it cannot, therefore, be responsible for the recommendation or application of same. This same principle of neutrality applies to individuals and institutions; the Newsletter is not a judge in regard to either the aforementioned, or of related articles published herein. This information presents brief views of issues related to ethnographic conservation, and is not intended to replace the advice of a conservator with respect to particular circumstances.