The Working Group (WG) Coordinators and the ICOM-CC Directory Board met in Rome in October 2009, to discuss various common issues including the Triennial Conference, the Preprints and selection process, and developments to the ICOM-CC website.

ICOM-CC Website
During this meeting the WG Coordinators requested that the ICOM-CC website Forums be open and accessible to everyone, with no restrictions. … This is now a reality! These 23 Working Group Forums are now freely open to members and non-members alike! Anyone can now post new topics for discussion and access the Forums’ various discussions. There is also a website feature that allows you to sign up to be informed via email of any new thread to a discussion topic you are interested in, should you wish to be so informed, or cancel out of a discussion thread if you prefer that option. We are very excited by these new “web 3.0” developments and hope that you will join in and take part in these exchanges. The Forums are free to anyone but you must first register on the website. Please contact me if you have trouble doing so. The ICOM-CC is investing its work time and revenues into this interactive website feature because it is convinced that the profession will most benefit from furthering and facilitating open exchanges; please do contribute to its success by joining in!

A corollary to the above is that the ICOM-CC Directory Board has decided to disband all ICOM-CC listservs. Thus, in December 2009, the icom-ethno-listserv was terminated and renamed the ethnographicconservation listserv, and is now a non-affiliated international discussion list open to partnership with any organization, including ICOM-CC. I remain its moderator. With approximately 250 participants, 90% being ethnographic conservators, the listserv remains a valuable communication tool while the ICOM-CC website Forum and its other information dissemination features (News; Calendar Events) grow in prominence and gain broader participant-base among conservation practitioners.

Name Change
On our “to do” list is the question of the Name of our Working Group. I hope that you have had time to reflect on this during the last year. The Name Change Committee and I would like, in these next few months, to continue to discuss this topic with you, the members, on the ICOM-CC website where Australian conservator, Andrew Thorn, who has worked with Native communities and Native experts, has recently posted his views on this topic. Thorn discusses one of the main points in favor of a name change: i.e. that the word “ethnographic” is not used, and can even be embarrassing, when one is actually speaking with Native descendant communities about their heritage objects.

Additionally, should a name change be undertaken, the more important question is what new Name could potentially replace Ethnographic? This continues to be a major stumbling block. It is important that we all continue to consider the views and opinions raised, and share our own, regarding the pros and cons of a name change and the suitability of a given replacement. And what better place to do so than the new WG Forum, where you can access the entire discussion, sign up for email updates, and stay informed of postings addressing these vital issues. Get registered, keep current and stay tuned for more...(don’t be shy, that's what it's for!).

Conservation of Thangkas
The electronic Postprints of the Special Session on the Conservation of Thangkas, held at the ICOM-CC 2008 Delhi Conference, were published in early 2009. They are now available on the ICOM-CC website under our Working Group section. The Postprints include 13 richly illustrated papers and four abstracts, edited by Mary Ballard, from the Smithsonian Institution, and myself. The papers and abstracts provide many examples of successful collaborations, and include the diverse viewpoints and
approaches of speakers from different countries (North America, Europe and Asia) and museological institutions, as well as the private sector, private collectors, and local and religious communities. The papers are accessible to ICOM-CC members only for 3 years. In 2012 the Postprints will become available and accessible to all registered ICOM-CC website users.

**Triennial Conference**

We are now mid-way into the 2009-2011 triennial period, and the Call for Papers for the upcoming 16th ICOM-CC Triennial Conference in Lisbon, Portugal September 19-23, 2011, has just come out! The theme will be Cultural Heritage / Cultural Identity: The Role of Conservation. The selection of papers for publication in the Preprints – and presentation at the conference – will follow a two-step process. The Call for Abstracts of prospective papers and posters is the first step, followed by a preliminary selection of potential speakers/authors who will receive an invitation to submit full papers, or (short) poster abstracts. Abstracts must not exceed 1000 words in total and should be submitted via the conference website www.icom-cc2011.org beginning March 15, 2010, and no later then April 16, 2010.

I encourage all of you to consider submitting your work. Submissions that relate to our Working Group’s Program at: http://www.icom-cc.org/238/triennial%programme, are especially welcome. Please do not hesitate to contact me to discuss any ideas or thoughts on a potential paper or poster. We hope to have a diverse and dynamic session in Lisbon in 2011 but this depends on your input and your contributions. Recall that the 2008 New Delhi Conference had over 600 delegates, and the same numbers are expected in Lisbon. This is a rare opportunity to exchange with a vast network of colleagues and learn through exposure to a large spectrum of viewpoints and experiences. For more details visit the conference website (http://www.icom-cc.org/244/triennial-conferences/16th-triennial-conference-lisbon-portugal/).

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**ARTICLES**

**Evaluation of Methods to Identify Native-processed Gut in Alaskan Artifacts**

In ethnographic collections, material attribution regarding artifacts from the Arctic region may be questionable, particularly those pertaining to sea mammal “gut,” defined here as native-processed intestinal membranes. In conservation literature, investigations on the physical characteristics of the gut were primarily carried out to determine suitable conservation treatments, and not to identify the animal source of the membrane material itself (Schaffer 1974; Hill 1986; Morrison 1986). This current research evaluates whether methods for characterizing native-processed gut materials used by Alaskan cultural groups can be done by gleaning information obtained from ethnographic literature on gut manufacture and use, examining marine mammal geographic ranges, and distinguishing morphological traits of intestinal material. Text on mammalian biology and histology were also consulted to understand the gross anatomy, structural and morphological features of sea mammal intestines.

A review of ethnographic literature reveals that sourcing, processing and usage of gut are connected to the availability of different sea mammal species and the preferences of use by the local people (Wilder 1976; Hickman 1985; Issenman 1997; Reed 2005). However, a cultural group’s dependence on species’ availability cannot be fully restricted to local sources owing to the possibility of a material obtained through trade. John J. Burns, a mammalogist studying Arctic sea mammals, writes that Aleut items labeled “bear” can be troublesome because bears do not occur west of Unimak Island, but do occur throughout most of the remainder of the region occupied by the Aleuts (Hickman 1985). Items from the Alaska Peninsula or Kodiak Island have a high possibility of being made from bear, but it was recorded that Aleuts traded with the peoples of mainland Alaska to obtain bear intestines, which is prized for its delicacy (Reed 2005). Furthermore, the cultural attribution of an artifact can further be confounded by the erroneous interpretations of native terminology. Since many native Alaskan terms have Russian origins, translation of material names from native language could also muddle their attribution to proper animal sources. For instance, Burns writes that, “[the material attributed as] ‘bear’ could be a reference to the sea bear, which was a common way of referring to fur seals, especially by the early Russians” (Hickman 1985:29).

The usage of gut in artifacts, according to cultural preferences, is manifested in several ways. It is well documented in ethnographic literature that native Alaskan peoples select gut materials from different genera of pinnipeds for their unique physical properties when made into artifacts (Hickman 1987; Issenman 1997). Pinnipeds are aquatic carnivores (suborder Pinnipedia), which have a gastrointestinal tract similar to vertebrae animals. Different processing methods (i.e. summer- vs. winter-tanning) that alter physical properties and visual appearance of gut are also relevant to the intended function of the finished artifacts. For example, the Siberian Yup’ik of St. Lawrence Island [known as Sivuqaq in the Yup’ik language] preferred coats to be made of winter-tanned gut because the opaque, parchment-like appearance was more aesthetically pleasing to them (Oakes and Riewe, 1998). Contrarily, inhabitants of the Diomede Islands [located in the middle of the Bering Strait, between mainland Alaska and Siberia, Russia] maintained that the white garments did not stand up very well against weathering because “all of the oil has been removed” (Hickman 1985:29).
In spite of its richness, there are issues associated with the characterization of materials based on information gleaned from ethnographic literature. In some ethnographic accounts, qualitative descriptions of processed gut materials infer that there are inherent characteristics that can be used to assess which part of the gastrointestinal tract the material originated from (Wilder 1976). However, the subtle nuances of material properties and choices may reflect single practices observed by individual authors, which may not readily translate to large numbers of comparable artifacts.

In this light, texts on mammalian biology and histology were consulted to see whether the intestinal tracts of different pinniped families have distinct anatomical, structural and morphological features that can be directly related to the processed gut incorporated into artifacts. In the case of adult gut parkas, ethnographers have reported on the value placed on long intestinal strips which provide sufficient yardage for a parka, and many examples of parka have been reported to include a continuous, slit but otherwise untrimmed intestinal membrane. This raised the question about whether comparing dimensional differences in the processed gut membrane might aid in distinguishing the animal source. Although pinnipeds have a gastrointestinal tract similar to vertebral animals, measurements of the gastrointestinal tract of different pinniped species do vary (Mead 2002, Ridgeway and Harrison 1981, Hickman 1985, Issenman 1997). The dimensions of processed gut strips are also affected by the size of individual specimen within a particular pinniped species (Hickman 1985). In addition, it is uncertain to what extent the measurements of the gastrointestinal tract of a specimen provided in zoological literature corresponds to the actual length of the native-processed gut. Measuring the length of the continuous gut strips used in parkas constructed horizontally cannot accurately determine the original intestine length because the gastrointestinal tract’s length and volume can double or triple after the muscles lose their tonus [the continual and partial contraction of the muscle] soon after the animal’s death (Mead 2002), and the intensive handling during the preparation procedures may further induce dimensional changes in the processed membrane. As Hickman writes, “when wet, a parka changed shape, even got considerably longer” (Hickman 1985:7). The processed gut membrane is hygroscopic and the dimensions of a finished gut parka are influenced by moisture; therefore, the dimensions of an artifact containing or entirely made of gut membrane may initially be subject to changes resulting from the original use context, and by subsequent relative humidity changes in the storage environment.

In summary, the author’s research on evaluating methods to identify processed gut materials in native Alaskan artifacts was met with several challenges, the foremost of which is that artifacts in ethnographic collections have a likelihood of being broadly labeled or mislabeled with regard to cultural attribution. Identification of materials based on information extrapolated from ethnographic accounts can only be meaningful when the artifact is firmly attributed to a certain cultural group. Artifacts containing sea mammal internal membranes are often loosely labeled as “Inuit,” which has now become the blanket term to refer to Arctic cultural groups east of Alaska, e.g. Canada and beyond. Alaskan cultural groups prefer to be called “Eskimo” as a blanket term, although each cultural group should be referred to by its ethnic name, i.e. Yupik, Inupiaq, etc. (Smith 2009). Although valuable for comparison, ethnographic accounts record individual observations that can have a wide variation according to local practices, the time period in which the account was documented, also native versus ethnographers’ perspectives. Furthermore, determining the availability of particular sea mammal species to native groups is complicated by the overlapping of sea mammals’ natural habitats and their seasonal migration routes in the Arctic region (Ridgeway and Harrison 1981). Using the gross measurements of intestinal tract from biological texts are not conclusive in distinguishing the membrane’s animal source since the material easily undergoes dimensional changes from handling and processing before being made into artifacts.

Perhaps the greatest hindrance to species-specific identification of native-processed gut materials is the difficulty of procuring vouchered reference samples. Native-processed sea mammal gut is not commercially available, and certain materials are only available to native Alaskan tribal members. In spite of the difficulties in procuring native-processed gut, a preliminary investigation of the physical properties, structural and morphological traits of native-processed gut was carried out on reference samples attributed to the walrus (family Odobenidae) and seal (family Phocidae), generously provided by the conservation laboratory of the National Museum of Natural History (NMNH), the National Museum of American Indian (NMAI) and Fran Reed, an artist based in Alaska who worked with native Alaskan materials. With technical support from the Getty Conservation Institute, environmental scanning electron microscopy (ESEM) was used to examine the surface morphology of the reference samples, which revealed that the processed gut retains a multi-strata structure of compact and fibrous layers; however, characterization of these layers could not be made without the aid of a biologist, and was not included in the original scope of research owing to time constraints. ESEM images illustrating morphological and structural features of native-processed gut will be included in a forthcoming paper by the same author, “Evaluation of methods to identify Native-processed gut used in Alaskan artifacts.”

References
Anthropological Preventive Conservation:
Fading Assessment on Works of Feathers

UCLA and the Getty Conservation Institute (GCI) are continuing to collaborate to study the fading behavior of selected feathers in order to formulate display lighting guidelines for anthropological featherwork. The development of these guidelines will be based on an accurate understanding of feather color chemistry including pigments and structure, cultural use including color selection and exposure through prior use, and accelerated fading with and without ultraviolet radiation.

Since feather coloration varies considerably between species, and recent research has indicated difficulty in procuring unaged feather samples, work is being restricted to six species of birds: American Goldfinch, Great Horned Owl, Mallard Duck, Northern Flicker, Red-tailed Hawk and Western Scrub-Jay. These birds were selected because they are not endangered, are local to California, and have cultural significance as evidenced by their use in past and recent regalia and basketry.

During the next year, the project will be focused on procuring fresh feather samples, carrying out accelerated aging of samples using a microfademeter and aging chamber, surveying colleagues regarding observed fading in collections, and meeting with cultural experts to discuss the importance of color in feather selection and traditional use and care practices of feathered objects. The project team will also devise a document to use for recording detailed information about anatomy and condition of feathers used on cultural objects and will test this form by visiting collections to examine Native California featherwork. Investigations will also include the evaluation of color loss that occurs from sources other than fading, i.e. abrasion, and the effectiveness of microfading technology (MFT) as a predictive tool for feather fading behavior. A longer-term goal of the project is to determine whether protein damage results from photochemical exposure of feathers.

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Jim Druzik, Senior Scientist, Getty Conservation Institute
Christel Pesme, Getty Conservation Institute
Renée Riedler, Getty Conservation Institute
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Basket exhibition at the Southwest Museum of the American Indian
at the Autry National Center

The Art of Native American Basketry: A Living Tradition is a comprehensive exhibition that opened on November 6, 2009 and is running through November 2, 2010 at the Autry’s Museum of the American West in Griffith Park. The show exhibits more than 300 baskets selected from the Southwest Museum’s collection of 14,000 baskets and represents more than 100 cultural groups from eleven regions of North America. Baskets range in size from small Pomo feather baskets made for sale to tourists, to massiveApache olla baskets used for storing seeds in large quantities.

Pomo feathered basket with string handle from the Edwin Greble Collection. Featured in the exhibit and on the website: www.autrnationalcenter.org/basketry/

The Autry invited thirteen contemporary basket weavers to serve as consultants in research and planning. In addition, baskets purchased from each consultant were accessioned and included in the exhibit. The exhibit is intended to demonstrate how the materials, techniques, and designs of the baskets vary from region to region, reflecting different
physical environments and traditions. Also evident is the distinctive styles of individual artists, whose signatures can be instantly recognizable to other weavers. Related to the exhibit, there are two workshops where visitors can experience basket weaving and learn the importance of native plants from a Native American point of view.

Visitors enter the exhibition through a room with an overhead visible storage area including glass shelves allowing for the display of a broad range of baskets viewed from the sides or below. Slightly less than half of the baskets are exhibited in this visual storage area and the rest are inside cases in the interpretive section of the exhibit. The main interpretive section is organized by geographic region. Each section includes significant examples of baskets from that region, video footage of contemporary basket weavers, and other interpretive elements such as basket-making materials and audio components providing descriptions from Native consultants. Also included are historic photographs from the Institute for the Study of the American West’s Braun Research Library to help provide further cultural and historical context.

Both the Autry’s Museum of the American West and the Southwest Museum of the American Indian are part of the Autry National Center but are situated in separate campuses 8.4 miles apart. Since the merger in 2003 the Southwest Museum of the American Indian has had limited exhibition space due to ongoing conservation efforts at the Arroyo campus. Integrated pest management of the collection along with individual conservation needs of objects have been the priority for the Southwest Museum collection. These previous conservation efforts helped support the creation of this exhibit that opened within a very short period of time. The show was planned, organized and realized in only eight months to open at the Griffith Park campus. Working closely with the collections and exhibition departments, the conservators’ tasks included organization for the move of the baskets from the Arroyo campus to the Griffith Park campus. Logistics for the move of the baskets included documentation (condition reports and photographs), cleaning, and packing of the baskets. Some baskets took more time to pack than the others due to their fragile characteristics. Where necessary some instructions had to be included to unpack and repack the collection for the possibility of the interpretive section of the show traveling. Due to the time limit, no active conservation work was carried out; therefore baskets needing any structural or superficial consolidation were excluded from the exhibit.

Included in the conservator’s task was mount-making for some of the baskets due to the time constraints the show had. Since Los Angeles is near several active fault lines and known to have past earthquakes in varying intensities, objects in the exhibit need to be secured by proper mounts or weights that are stable and will not harm the objects. Angie McGrew, associate conservator, designed and created weight mounts for most baskets, because it was time effective and baskets could stand on their own. Baskets can be fragile and depending on the curators’ and consultants’ choice of display, special mounts may be needed. Some individual baskets needed special weights to hold them down on the shelves. Supports varied in weight and shape to accommodate each individual basket. These weights were designed according to the stability and the weight of the basket and placed inside the baskets. Other considerations when designing weights were their appealing look and practicality. Some weights inside the baskets are visible; therefore they are designed to look tidy and inconspicuous to not overshadow the basket. Practical weights are important when exhibits travel to other venues. The weights are designed so that they can be used if needed in other venues with simple explanations.

The Art of Native American Basketry: A Living Tradition presents basketry as part of a living culture instead of remnants of a long-gone way of life. The collaboration between the museum and Native basket weavers not only resulted in exhibiting this significant collection, but also opened new paths to bring insight in understanding the Southwest Museum’s vast collection through Native American consultation.

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CONSERVATION TREATMENTS

An Effective Method for Cleaning Feather Bonnets

Introduction
Different methods for cleaning feathers in ethnographic collections have long been a topic of discussion in the field of conservation. A few methods mentioned in the literature include vacuuming and mechanical cleaning with a grooming stick or sponge (Schaeuffelhut, et al, 2002), the use of solvents such as industrial methylated spirits (IMS) (Rae and Willis, 2002), ultrasonic aqueous cleaning, (Baron and Weik, 1986), and the use of lasers (Solajic et al, 2002).

This article will discuss another method used with great success in the treatment of Native American bonnets, which have been subject to years of storage in dirty and smoky environments, resulting in heavy deposition of soot on the feathers. The method is a relatively simple one, requiring only readily available commercial materials. It is very effective on fragile down and semi-plume feathers, and well suited for doing treatments in the field, or in small museums and facilities, which have limited laboratory accommodations.

Background
One problem with cleaning feathered objects is that
ethnographic material, by its very nature, is often composed of many different types of materials - feathers, beads, threads, fabrics, and leathers - assembled together in a single object. This precludes simply immersing the feathers in a mild detergent solution for cleaning, as such treatment could easily damage the associated components. Native American feather bonnets typically include large eagle, hawk or owl feathers, bundled with semiplume feathers, wool fabric, sinew thread, rawhide, pine pitch, clay, horsehair (see Figure 1), and sometimes even the tissue surrounding the heart of a deer or elk (pericardium). The feather assemblies are mounted with a leather thong on a felt or leather hat blank, often with an additional fabric ‘trailer’, which drapes down the back of the wearer. The variety of materials in close proximity makes cleaning individual feathers difficult without affecting the surrounding materials.

Eighteen feather bonnets in the permanent collection of the C.M. Russell Museum in Great Falls, Montana, required treatment and cleaning in preparation for display. The most noticeable problem with the majority of the bonnets was the presence of a sooty, black residue coating most of the semiplume feathers, in some cases completely obscuring their original colors. Not only was the soiling visually distracting, it was obvious that such heavy residues could easily cause further long-term damage to the objects.

Method

The solvent chosen for the cleaning solution was 91% isopropyl alcohol. It is readily available in drug and department stores, relatively non-toxic, and proved especially effective in dissolving the soot. Ethanol and 70% isopropyl alcohol were also tested, with less than satisfactory results. Drying time for the cleaned feathers was quickest with 91% isopropyl alcohol.

Cotton squares, sold by the cosmetics industry, were used to isolate the semiplume feathers and absorb the alcohol solution during cleaning (Figure 2). A wide, soft, natural-bristle brush was used to apply the alcohol directly to the feather. With the cotton pad held behind the semiplume, the alcohol-soaked brush was used first to gently spread the feather fibers across the cotton, then to apply the solvent by gently pressing the brush against the feather without moving the brush across the feather surface (Figure 3). Scrubbing or brushing was avoided to minimize mechanical damage to the feather fibers.

Initial attempts to clean the semiplumes with gentle suction from a micro-vacuum failed: The fine feather filaments were much too fragile and the soil too tightly bound to the fibers for vacuuming to have any noticeable effect without causing severe mechanical damage to the feather. Therefore, a ‘dry cleaning’ method, using commonly available solvents and materials was developed to clean the feathers. This method allowed the semiplume feathers to be cleaned safely and rapidly, while minimizing damage to the feathers or the surrounding materials.

Figure 1: Typical assembly of feathers and mixed materials used in Native American feather bonnets (after Hunt, 1954).

Figure 2: Cotton pad inserted between semiplume and contour feather to isolate the semiplume. Black, sooty deposit on semiplume feather is very apparent.

Figure 3: Alcohol applied directly to the semiplume using a wide natural-bristle brush.
When the square cotton backing and feather were sufficiently saturated with alcohol, a second cotton square was applied over the top of the now flattened semiplume and gently compressed, effectively removing the alcohol and dissolved soot from the feather (Figure 4).

Sometimes many changes of cotton pads and reapplications of alcohol were necessary before the soot was completely removed. It is worth noting that spot testing on the soiled cotton squares revealed the presence of both lead and arsenic (Figure 5).

The semiplume feathers were allowed to dry completely. The plumes were then brought back to their original shape rather easily, by using one of two methods: using a smaller natural-bristle brush, and working the semiplume from the base of the feather, gently fluffing the fibers out and away from the feather shaft; or the sometimes more effective method, using gentle air pressure from a commercial hair drier in which the heating element had been disabled. The moving air seemed to provide quicker and more natural looking results on the cleaned feathers.

The use of isopropyl alcohol and cotton compresses proved to be a very efficient cleaning method for even the largest feather bonnets. It was found that the semiplume feathers on a short bonnet with no trailer could be cleaned completely in as little as 5 hours, and a long double trailer bonnet could be completely in as a little as 14 hours, depending on the extent of the soiling.

Other Considerations
Alcohol will remove any natural oils in the feather. The choice to use a somewhat aggressive solvent was weighed against the devastatingly dirty condition of the semiplume feathers, which would almost certainly cause continuing and irreversible damage to the object if left untreated. However, in most instances, the semiplume feathers used on the bonnets were from domestic birds, possibly chicken or duck. The example in the image at the beginning of this article uses ostrich plumes. All of these types of feathers had already been cleaned commercially and stripped of their natural oils before the construction of the bonnet.
It is common to encounter dyed semiplumes when working with feather bonnets. Pretreatment testing is always in order, but in no instance did the 91% alcohol affect any of the dyes on any of the feather bonnets in the treated group. The example bonnet shown in the illustrations above dates back to the 1920’s and incorporates early aniline dyes.

It is important to note that this method of cleaning semiplumes is not effective on contour feathers. The three-dimensional structure of contour feathers is easily damaged by mechanical manipulation, making the application of even the gentlest compress pressure inadvisable. Alternatively, it may be possible to draw the alcohol solution through the feather using a type of suction device, but this method was not tested. However, it was observed that little or no soot had been deposited on the contour feathers, though they were obviously subjected to the same environmental conditions as the adjacent semiplumes. The semiplume feathers appear to preferentially attract the soot particles from the atmosphere. Because of this, it is important that the freshly cleaned bonnets be stored and displayed in relatively pollution-free environments after cleaning.

Conclusion
This method of cleaning semiplume feathers on Native American feather bonnets is especially useful because the necessary materials are readily available. The alcohol solvent is relatively non-toxic and very effective at rapidly removing soot and dirt deposits from the feathers without disturbing the surrounding contour feathers or other organic materials on the objects. This method can be especially useful when conservators have to work in the field or in areas with limited ventilation and no access to laboratory facilities.

References

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Training

Studying Ethnographic Conservation at Camberwell within a Broad-based Undergraduate Program

In October 2010 the first cohort of students to enroll in the newly validated BA Conservation honors degree program at Camberwell College of Arts (University of the Arts London) will enter their final year of full time study. During the early part of the year they will choose the type of cultural material that they will work with for their major projects. This material will come from public collections providing students with invaluable opportunities to work with a range of museum professionals, including conservators, curators and / or collections managers, while putting into practice the flexible open-minded and cooperative approach they have been learning over the previous years. Their work will contribute to the community by returning objects to collections with their physical stability assured and their stories revealed. Thus the objects become accessible for use within the context of the collection.

Rebecca Chisholm examining a Samoan Bark-Cloth

About 40 years ago Camberwell began to offer training in paper conservation. Over a decade ago now, the program was broadened to include a wider range of organic materials and in recent years more and more students have chosen to specialize in ethnographic material. Last year ¾ of the cohort made this choice, with project material including a Samoan tapa cloth, a Nuu-chah-nulth woven cedar bark cloak, and a Jamaican Lace-bark bonnet. This year projects include a small group of European Valentine cards, a Brazilian feathered headdress and a pair of gaiters worn at the Battle of Waterloo. A long-standing
collaborative relationship has been built with several London museums, including Kew Gardens Museum of Economic Botany and the Cuming Museum, to the mutual benefit of students, the collections, and the communities they serve.

No doubt project choices will continue to vary year by year but there is clearly a growing interest in ethnographic conservation and the opportunities it offers for deepening understanding of different approaches to the interpretation and treatment of a wide range of cultural items. Students value the experience of helping to reveal an object’s story, loss of which can be just as harmful as physical damage. They also learn to appreciate why every effort must be made to involve source/creator communities in conservation decision-making and to understand the issues that can arise during this process. They are sensitized to the need to preserve languages. Key here is their awareness of the importance of cultural literacy. There has been much discussion within the conservation profession about the political legacy and current interpretation of terms like *ethnography* and *ethnographic*. The ways in which the language used to discuss cultural material has been formed and contested is seen as part of the learning in conservation at Camberwell. The Conservation Department benefits from a very international body of students, as well as a wide age range, so there are also valuable opportunities for sharing approaches to many aspects of life and learning.

The BA Conservation core program has been designed to provide a solid basis for those who want to enter the conservation profession with open minds about their future directions within it. It is particularly suitable for a future working with collections with mixed materials, as it does not require the traditional early specialization, and, therefore, renders our graduates potentially useful members of teams working with ethnographic collections.

As with the other conservation programs at Camberwell, there is a balance between theoretical and practical study. All students follow an intensive course in materials science, participate in regular sessions on museology, and the history, theory and ethics of conservation, and have both theoretical and practical sessions in collections management and care. They visit a wide range of collections and conservation studios and participate in volunteering programs to assist local and national collections.

The studio sessions are planned to allow students to develop a wide range of skills, enabling them to deal with many of the organic materials and categories of object they might encounter in collections of all types. As well as paper, papyrus, parchment, plastics and textiles of many types, they may also work with keratinaceous material (feather, fur, horn, baleen, tortoise shell, beaks), calcareous material (shell, coral, eggs, bone, and ivory), plant material (barkcloth, cane, gourd & wood), non-cellular organic materials (wax, urushi, latex), and the inorganic remains of organic materials (fossils). They may be involved with clothing of all sorts from anywhere in the world; domestic and ceremonial artifacts, taxidermy specimens, and works of art. As we also deal with natural history collections students gain insight into the reasons why different types of natural and cultural material rub shoulders in many mixed collections and the practical and ethical concerns this can raise.

There are other ways in which this London-based program has developed alongside broader international debates in the cultural sector. Students are expected to keep abreast of these developments via the media as well as through professional websites and academic literature. Advocacy for the importance of preserving the natural and cultural environment for individuals and communities, needs to be part of the conservator’s role, so the development of communication skills is seen as key to the education of a
rounded conservation professional. Students are encouraged to disseminate their work beyond the university by participation in national and international conferences, publishing in journals and newsletters and, most importantly, by working with public collections to raise awareness of our collective responsibility for preserving the things that matter. Learning to work with ethnographic collections brings the students a little closer to understanding our common humanity within the endlessly diverse ways in which we approach our world.

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UCLA/ Getty Conservation Program
Student Update

The UCLA/ Getty Master's Program in Archaeological and Ethnographic Conservation is pleased to announce that it has accepted its 3rd class of graduate students. The members of the class of 2012 are Robin O'Hern, Tessa de Alarcon, Lily Doan, Dawn Lohnas, Nicole Ledoux, Cindy Lee Scott and Elizabeth Drolet. Students in the class of 2010 are currently on their third year internships, listed below. To complete their degrees, they will return to Los Angeles in June for final presentations of their Master’s theses.

• Siska Genbrugge – Los Angeles County Museum of Art (Los Angeles, CA); Museu Nacional de Arqueologia (Lisbon, Portugal); Luxor Temple, Epigraphic Survey, University of Chicago (Luxor, Egypt); Organics Conservation Laboratory, British Museum (London, UK).
• Lauren Horlick – Natural History Museum of Los Angeles County (Los Angeles, CA); Alaska State Museum (Juneau, AK); American Museum of Natural History (New York, NY).
• Jiafang Liang – Qin Terracotta Warriors and Horses Museum (China); Nelson Atkins Museum (Kansas City, MO).
• Linda Lin – Agora Excavations, American School of Classical Studies (Athens, Greece); Seattle Art Museum (Seattle, WA).
• Suzanne Morris – Santa Teresa Monastery Museum (Arequipa, Peru); UCLA/RUG Fayum Project (Fayum, Egypt); Aneta Zebala Conservation Studio (Los Angeles, CA).

Molly Gleeson, UCLA
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Associate Professor Information Studies and UCLA/ Getty Master's Program in Archaeological and Ethnographic Conservation.

REVIEWS: Workshops

Taking Care of the National Museum of the American Indian’s Collection

Kelly McHugh
As it has done for the last twenty years, the Conservation Department of the National Museum of the American Indian (NMAI) continues to conduct consultations with its Native constituency regarding the care and treatment of the collection. Numerous articles on the subject have been published by the NMAI conservation staff, representing a wide range of projects, and illustrating the commitment the institution has in incorporating Native authority into its day-to-day operations (For a complete list go to: www.nmai.si.edu/collections and research/conservation/publications). Although these interactions have been extremely positive, they are not without complexity. This article attempts to acknowledge and discuss one of these challenges: the role of caretaker. A recent consultation/workshop on Tsimshian masks will be used as a point of reference, and three perspectives will be provided: consultant, David A. Boxley (Alaskan Tsimshian); Anne Gunnison (Mellon Fellow in Conservation, NMAI); and me, Kelly McHugh (Conservator, NMAI).

David A. Boxley first visited the NMAI Cultural Resources Center over a year ago to act as a consultant on a joint Smithsonian loan from the NMAI and the National Museum of Natural History to the Anchorage Museum in Alaska. During that visit, Mr. Boxley was frank in his discussion regarding the positive role museums have played in his efforts to revive his traditional culture. He also expressed that while he has learned from studying examples of Tsimshian objects in museum collections he has not always felt welcome in these institutions. He has often stated that Tsimshian objects in museum collections belong to the Tsimshian people, and we, the museum professionals, are the caretakers of the objects while they remain in our possession.

What does it mean to be a “caretaker” of another’s cultural material? The NMAI’s Collection Care Policy defines it as follows: “The Museum acts as steward, rather than owner, of the collection, and that preservation should be undertaken in consultation and collaboration with Native communities. The Museum recognizes its Native constituents may consider collection items as living entities, and that staff should act accordingly in their preservation.”

This directive takes into consideration the large geographical area covered by the collection and the variety of cultures represented, thus allowing room for any number of different approaches to collection care. This allows for a dynamic engagement between the stewards or caretakers of the collection and Native and First Nations communities from throughout the entire Western hemisphere, who have different histories, live in different political, social and economic climates, but who share a common history of self
It is this intersection between museum professional and community member that is essential to examine. In the NMAI conservation department we seek guidance from community members in caring for and treating their objects and we anticipate that the discussions will be centered around our greatest responsibility, the objects themselves. However, it is what these objects represent, the stories they tell and the part they play in preserving both the past and the future that is the primary concern of the community member or advisor. This broader picture is essential if we are to understand the needs of the collection and our responsibilities as its stewards.

The NMAI conservation department offers its numerous fellows and interns the opportunity to participate in consultations and understand how these dialogues affect the conservation process. It is our obligation, not only to the Native constituency and to the collections, but to the interns and fellows to ensure that these exchanges take place. Objects in our collection are not viewed as static; they are inextricably linked to their place of origin and the people who created them. It is imperative that those of us, in our roles as caretakers, understand this broader context.

The role of caretaker remains a complex privilege for me. While my education expands with each consultation, I recognize that it is the visiting advisors who are the true caretakers. I am humbled at their willingness to share personal stories and experiences in order to underscore the cultural importance of the pieces housed in our collection. The Boxleys are selflessly motivated in their commitment to cultural survival, which is central to everything they do in their lives. I frequently felt like a well-intentioned gatekeeper, and acknowledge that despite my best intentions the relationship is inherently unbalanced.

**David A. Boxley (Alaskan Tsimshian)**

All of my life I have been a proactive advocate for my culture. In my village, because of circumstances beyond our control, our native ways, the ceremonial and ancient ones, are gone. Our language is dying and although there has been resurgence in areas like dance and ceremony, so much is absent. When I stand in the storage in Suitland, I am filled with emotion and an anxiety that I have too little time to absorb what the elders are trying to tell me. As an artist making my living producing art from these examples, I have been so fortunate to meet the conservators at the NMAI. It is human beings like these that we, as first nations culture bearers, need so that we can look at, touch, and feel the spirit of those ancestors who have left such magnificent treasure for us to learn from.

This last trip to Washington D.C. and Suitland was a full plate. We were vendors, performers [the Boxleys...
participated in the Christmas Craft show at NMAI], and researchers as well as teachers and advisors. I appreciated the rapt attention of those very educated women, who treated us as though they were the caretakers of our history and cultural artifacts; which they are, in more ways than I have seen in many years of visiting many other museums. I thank them for their open hearts and willingness to know how we feel about these treasures and their generosity in letting us have access to them. I hope to return sooner than later.

Anne Gunnison
As Smithsonian employees from several institutions waited in the main rotunda of the NMAI Cultural Resource Center (CRC) for an H1N1 flu vaccination we were treated to a performance by David A. and David R. Boxley, singing songs, telling stories, drumming, and dancing with incredible masks they had carved. Surely this would assuage any anxiety about getting a vaccination!

This serendipitous performance was a gift from the Boxleys to all of us, especially to those of us in the conservation lab. And it served as yet another example of why I was drawn to the NMAI Mellon conservation fellowship: the prospect of participating and being directed by consultations with Native and First Nations constituent groups in the conservation of their objects here at NMAI.

In the two days they were at the CRC, the Boxleys were generously forthcoming with information that would help us better understand and care for the Tsimshian objects in the collection. Speaking in their language, playing a drum and a rattle, wearing a frontlet, dancing a transformation mask, all provided a physical and audible understanding of how similar items in the collection would have been identified, played, worn, or danced. When talking about objects in the collection, including the materials used and the technological processes employed in their construction, it was with the knowledge of craftsmen, intimately aware of how these objects function in day-to-day life or in the potlatch. When they explained formline drawing - a mystery of lines creating incredible figurative imagery - it was with the practice of artists able to read and create the messages imbedded within. I feel honored to have received these personal stories and knowledge, and carry the tremendous responsibility of caring for their cultural heritage in the most well informed manner possible.

The Boxleys’ insatiable enthusiasm to see, hold and examine the Tsimshian objects in the collection was contagious; the relief and sadness they sometimes expressed at viewing these pieces was both crushing and humbling. Their visit to the collections was underscored by a sense of urgency, which they both expressed, to acquire new knowledge, and to reintroduce and disseminate this knowledge to their communities. Again I am reminded of how important it is to provide access to these objects; they comprise the consultants’ cultural heritage, their treasures, and their teaching tools. The potential they represent for sparking recollections, recovering important memories, informing creative processes, and promoting cultural vitality in individuals and communities is immeasurable.

I am also reminded of why I find this consultation process so important: personal stories and interactions imbue my work with a greater sense of accountability regarding the wishes of invested community members. I feel fortunate to have been able to listen to and engage with both David A. and David R. Boxley, as I try to understand my role as caretaker. As a conservation fellow, I know the insight I
gained from this experience will guide my thinking in my future conservation approach.

Part 1 by Kelly McHugh, Conservator, NMAI
Part 2 by David A. Boxley, Alaskan Tsimshian
Part 3 by Anne Gunnison, Mellon Fellow in Conservation, NMAI

Uncomfortable Truths Exposed
Conservation: Principles, Dilemmas and Uncomfortable Truths,
London, UK, Sept. 24 and 25, 2009

This international two-day symposium was an essential and welcomed debate about conservation principles. Assembled to complement the book by same name (Richmond and Bracker 2009), the event was arranged by the Royal Academy of Arts and organized by the book’s editors Alison Bracker, of the Royal Academy, and Alison Richmond, who worked until recently in the Conservation Department of the Victoria and Albert Museum, London. It was held at the Royal Geological Society, which, along with the Royal Academy, is based at Burlington House in central London. The symposium was open to the public as well as to professionals.

Contributors and topics covered at the two-day gathering differed from those presented in the book: the latter considers conservation principles in the widest sense, encompassing ethics and decision-making, while the symposium focused more specifically on uncomfortable truths. I contributed a chapter to the book (Eastop 2009) as well as a paper at the symposium.

The symposium included panel discussions and 17 presentations covering sites, buildings, monuments and museum collections. A number of the presentations which I thought would be of particular interest to the WG are summarized below. Sound recordings of the presentations have been posted on the website of the Royal Academy: http://www.royalacademy.org.uk/

Uncomfortable Truths
Subjectivity was the focus of the paper by Salvador Muñoz Viñas, Head of Paper Conservation, University of Valencia, Spain. In his paper You are not being objective: conservation as an act of taste a wide range of examples were presented to demonstrate the subjective nature of conservation. He argued that such subjectivity was not a criticism of conservation because subjectivity was necessary to make sense of the world.

The fallibility of conservators was the subject of the presentation When things go wrong: sharing experiences for collective learning by Sarah Maisey, of Dublin City Gallery, Ireland. She argued that conservation supported a ‘culture of perfection’ where there was a tendency to cover up mistakes rather than to share the lessons that could be learned from them. Drawing on examples from other professions she discussed the advantage of ‘no blame’ working cultures. Mistakes can be classified as errors of execution or errors of planning or knowledge. She made the following recommendations: mechanisms for near miss reporting as well as for reporting errors; the incorporation of error reporting into the ethics of conservation; and, the inclusion of error analysis and reporting into conservation education.

Theories and Philosophies
Several papers explored Brandi’s theories of restoration (Brandi 2005). Sebastiano Brassi of Kettles’ Yard, University of Cambridge, concluded that Brandi’s ethical rigor remains useful even if his technical prescriptions do not. The philosopher Jonathan Rée, who chaired a session, suggested that the study of conservation might be enriched by considering the model of translation, where a work of art, like a translated text, is essentially dynamic and cannot be fixed.

Sanchita Balachandran, a private conservator based in Baltimore, USA, analyzed her responses to undertaking conservation work on human remains, including the partially wrapped and mummified body of a woman. While recognizing the distancing mechanisms of managerial and legal frameworks she argued that an empathetic response should not be neglected or ignored when dealing with human remains.

Contested Values
In the presentation, From conservation to controversy? The intangible legacy of Calton Hill, Kerstin McKee of the University of Edinburgh, spoke of the range of values that can be invested in a single site. She started by describing the monuments and observatory built on a hill above Edinburgh, outcomes of the eighteenth century Scottish Enlightenment. The site was later abandoned and vandalized. An oral history project conducted in 2004-2006 revealed the importance of the site for gay and lesbian history, and ‘gay heritage walks’ were established. McKee argued that inclusive histories are desirable, and a key component of any decision regarding the preservation of public spaces should include a discussion to determine who decides which history is represented when preservation interventions are made.

Hsien-yang Tseng of the Katholieke Universitat Leuven, Belgium, addressed uncomfortable social and political issues. He considered a number of significant buildings and monuments in Taiwan and the political and social tensions reflected in their histories and preservation. He argued that discussion about conservation provided a welcome mechanism for revealing and talking about contested values and uncomfortable historic events.

In Cardross Seminary: Modernity, Decay and Ruin, Diane Watters, of the Royal Commission on the Ancient and
Historic Monuments of Scotland, discussed the complex interactions of material and social change that have influenced the preservation of a seminary designed in 1953. The huge complex reflected the short-lived confidence of post-war Catholicism: the seminary has been closed, the buildings are now derelict and their future is uncertain.

The final presentation of the symposium, *The Neues Museum Restoration [Berlin, Germany]* by David Chipperfield Architects, was made jointly by David Chipperfield and Julian Harrap. They described their approach to restoring the museum, which was damaged in the Second World War. The building remained a ruin in the Deutsche Demokratische Republic, and was selected for restoration after the 1989 reunification of Germany. They explained the importance of clarity regarding the rules and principles of their interventions, compared to the dynamic process of the restoration itself, involving 6 years of planning and 5 years of implementation. They sought to acknowledge the material and volumetric form of the original building, to retain evidence of its war-time destruction, and to re-establish it as a functioning museum.

**My Conclusions**

- The symposium may be viewed as a significant milestone in the history of conservation. Both symposium and book have received considerable media coverage, e.g. IIC 2009; Kapelouzou 2009; Richmond 2009.
- Despite the stated objective of fostering public debate of conservation principles, judging by the symposium, conservators continue to talk largely to fellow heritage professionals. This highlights the urgent need to develop and sustain effective means of engaging the public (Jones and Holden 2008).
- Decision-making processes are never neutral. It is important to recognize and acknowledge the social and political contexts of conservation decisions and actions. A fascinating account of the political realities of conservation principles is provided by Smith and Scott in ‘Ethics and practice: Australian and New Zealand conservation contexts’ (Smith and Scott 2009), Chapter 17 of the book.

**References**


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**SALZBURG GLOBAL SEMINAR**

**Connecting to the World’s Collections: Making the Case for the Conservation and Preservation of our Cultural Heritage**

Salzburg, Austria, Oct. 28 to Nov. 1 2009

This international session was co-hosted by the Institute for Museum and Library Services (IMLS) and Salzburg Global Seminars (SGS), and addressed the sustainability of cultural heritage. As IMLS research in their the *Heritage Health Index* report showed, collections in the United States are at risk, and this situation was confirmed in many other countries during the Seminar, although needs, issues and resources varied.

The 60 participants from 32 countries and various disciplines related to heritage preservation, worked on a set of recommendations to overcome institutional, logistical, political, and financial barriers that prevent optimal conservation of collections. The Seminar produced a consensus declaration on the conservation and preservation of cultural heritage which can be viewed on the IMLS website at http://www.imls.gov/pdf/Salzburg_Declaration%20.pdf. The detailed summary report the Seminar commissioned can be accessed via http://www.imls.gov/pdf/SGS_Report.pdf. The report may also be available from a link through the IIC website. In addition, the SGS has made available podcasts of several of the conservators' talks (excerpts or full), and they can be downloaded from the SGS homepage at http://www.salzburrglobal.org/2009/index.cfm.

The Seminar addressed the following questions:

1. What are the primary conservation challenges confronting cultural heritage institutions around the world today?
2. What are sustainable strategies and new forms of collaboration that can help institutions meet these challenges?
3. What role can indigenous conservation play?
4. Are cultural heritage institutions adequately prepared for emergencies? If not, how can they get prepared?
5. What education and training models are needed for conservation in the 21st century?
6. How can we create the political will and public support for improved conservation and what is the role of cultural ministries, policymakers, and private donors?
7. What can cultural heritage institutions, their staffs, and their associations do to raise awareness around the importance of conservation?

Additionally, participants were divided into five working groups devoted to providing an opportunity for sustained, specialized discussion in small groups. The groups focused on the following areas:
1. Emergency Preparedness, Response, and Recovery;
2. Raising Awareness and Support;
3. New Preservation Approaches;
4. Education and Training;
5. Assessment and Planning.

Since reports on this excellent conference have been published, I'll highlight two issues that I personally found especially meaningful. First, the definition of "conservation" was not limited to the physical preservation of collections, although this was addressed in relation to current and future needs with, for example, issues such as climate change or limited financial resources. Discussions included examples of other aspects of preserving heritage, from practicing and teaching heritage craft skills, to bringing library resources into communities, to contextualizing issues in preservation culturally, in relation to the media, and to new technologies. The Salzburg Declaration is interesting not only for what it says, but for what it does not say; it is a conservation conference summary that does not emphasize technical content.

Second, the different format of this conference was a key factor in its success. Salzburg Global Seminars has unparalleled excellence and experience in its organizational abilities and its hosting of the session. While the rest of us cannot hope to achieve their standards (no baroque palace, you say?) conservators might, for future conferences, consider their program format that emphasized informal discussion. Only a fifth perhaps of the participants were invited to speak, their papers were limited to 10 minutes so no panel went longer than a half hour, and each panel session was followed by approximately an hour of discussion. As the Seminar wrote in relation to its goals, "Whereas there are many conservation conferences worldwide, few explicitly strive to bring together a multi-disciplinary, international group of participants for an open, informal exchange of thoughts and ideas in a neutral setting". In addition, there was no pressure on participants to arrive with publishable papers; the requirement instead was to keep an open mind and be prepared to work intensely.

I am immensely grateful to the IMLS and to Salzburg Global Seminars for sharing their expertise and resources to advance conservation.

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Icon Ethnography Group Meeting
Scraping Gut and Plucking Feathers, the Deterioration and Conservation of Feather and Gut Materials.
University of York, Oct. 6, 2009
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This meeting, organized by the Ethnography Group of ICON, brought together conservators, natural history specialists and curators from all over Britain as well as Germany and North America to discuss the properties and conservation of two fascinating materials. Split into three sessions, the first third of the day contained presentations on feathers. Hein van Grouw of the Natural History Museum in Tring showed us the feather as a component of the living bird; highlighting aspects such as structure and coloring he provided an excellent foundation for the rest of the day. Although health and safety prevented the use of a live bird model it was also a beautifully illustrated talk.

The next paper by Katrina Cook, also of the NHM, showed us the breadth of the study collection at Tring and the particular conservation problems she encounters and the solutions for these that she has found useful. Ellen Pearlstein then presented a summary of current research at the Getty Conservation Institute/UCLA on feather color fading. Both the method and findings of this were a fascinating paper, with relevance to all the collections represented in the room, and I am sure I am not the only one who hopes to hear more from the project in the future.

The next set of talks were all on gut parka conservation carried out respectively by Kate Jackson and Andrew Hughes of the Pitt Rivers Museum in Oxford, Pippa Cruickshank and Vanessa Saiz Gomez of the British Museum and Sandra Gottsman of the Reiss-Engelhorn Museen in Mannheim, Germany. The three papers complemented each other, having just enough in common to provide an overview of current practice in the conservation of these objects, and just enough variance to remind us that with anthropological artifacts the variety is what keeps the work interesting.

Jackson and Hughes’ gut skin items had been previously exhibited in the historic Pitt Rivers permanent display and their paper described the retreatment and remounting of these three objects. Their use of sausage skin as a filler material was particularly interesting to the audience who had plenty of questions regarding preparation and sourcing.
Saiz Gomez and Cruikshank’s parka had also been previously treated but for once the previous conservation was still performing well; this was particularly cheering to the many conservators in the audience. The paper also described the construction of the mount, a theme in all three papers. Gottman’s paper was strong on the technology of gut parkas with some lovely diagrams of its construction. She also received an enthusiastic response to her use of a papier mâché custom mount.

The final segment of the day was a short but illuminating demonstration of feather conservation techniques from the very knowledgeable Allyson Rae. An impressive audiovisual setup provided by the venue was a small camera mounted over her bench which relayed immediately to the presentation screen behind her allowing a clear view to all the audience of the cleaning and repair techniques she demonstrated. This, along with the small poster session, bibliography and well timed programming contributed to a thoroughly interesting and enjoyable day.

Georgina Garrett, Deputy Head of Collections Conservation & Care, Horniman Museum, London.

REVIEWS: Books

Contesting Knowledge:
Museums and Indigenous Perspectives
Susan Sleeper-Smith, editor.
Lincoln and London:
University of Nebraska Press, 2009

Spanning some 360 pages, pages including general introduction and prefatory remarks at the start of each of three parts of four chapters apiece, the present volume comprises the series of papers presented at a symposium entitled, Indigenous Past and Present: First Annual Symposium, Contesting Knowledge: Museums and Indigenous Perspectives. The symposium was held at the Newberry Library as part of the Committee on Institutional Cooperation/American Indian Studies Fall Symposium, on September 24, 2007. Published here as a single volume entitled Contesting Knowledge: Museums and Indigenous Perspectives, under the editorship of Susan Sleeper-Smith, the book is directed at museologists, curators, and scholars of Native Studies. While direct reference to conservation practice is limited, conservators will find the volume useful to the extent the book provides an overview of contemporary voice and equity debates taking place within museums, particularly those housing “ethnographic” collections, as these museums in particular continue to address the claims and grievances of indigenous and third world commentators and groups. Mainstream public museums at the local, regional, and national levels are increasingly confronted with the claims and grievances of indigenous communities seeking to liberate discussion of their realities, within museums, from the mere ethnographic, and to situate them where they more properly belong: within the context of narratives of cultural revitalization and nation-building. Hence the rise of tribal museums located within self-governing areas.

The papers as a whole offer a deconstruction and critique of historic and conventional ethnographic, museological, and curatorial practices as these pertain to global indigenous populations. As an alternative, they chart the contemporary rise of tribal museums (run by indigenous community members, for indigenous community members) in our own postmodern era, and the emergence of a unique indigenous museological ethic, premised upon the primacy of traditional knowledge systems and oral traditions associated with indigenous cultural survival, and the privileging of the Native voice as both author and narrator. In a sense, this indigenous museological ethic can be characterized as museology driven from below, as opposed to earlier, more conventional museological approaches driven from above, by colonial officials, administrators, academics, intellectuals, and other typically non-Native or non-indigenous elites.

Briefly stated, the three broad themes into which the papers are organized are: Ethnography and the Cultural Practices of Museums (offering an overview and critique of historic ethnographic and conventional museological practices); Curatorial Practices: Voices, Values, Languages, and Traditions (charting the emergence of an indigenous museological ethic); and “Tribal Museums and the Heterogeneity of the Nation-State” (examinations of tribal collecting institutions as expressions of indigenous cultural sovereignty).

The series of papers, comprising the work under review, thus provide an overview of current debates in the museological representation of indigenous peoples and cultures. In tracing the historical development of the representation of indigenous peoples and cultures in museums, archives, and related collecting institutions, and in bringing this discussion forward to the present day, Western constructs for the institutionalized description of indigenous and tribal peoples are revealed as traditionally premised upon processes of subordination and negation. As a response to this, late twentieth and early twenty-first century innovations have led to the rise of tribal museums, and notions of the museum different, a title claimed by the Smithsonian Institution’s National Museum of the American Indian.

If these remain challenging times for the spectrum of collecting institutions as they address the myriad claims and grievances of indigenous and third world peoples, they are equally challenging times for indigenous groups as they assert space for themselves within the increasingly complex matrix of multicultural and plural states, composed of elements variously descended from surviving aboriginal populations, colonial settlers and imperial elites, the enslaved/the indentured, as well as contemporary immigrant and refugee populations, not to mention
The continuing rise of tribal museums: typically smaller-scale institutions located on treaty settlement lands, fulfilling a role in cultural retention and revitalization efforts directed as much at their own community members, as for the education and enlightenment of the general public at large.

Indigenous groups, and ethnic or national minorities, enclaved within states, are constrained at the legal level by the presence or absence of constitutional recognition of their rights, and in more practical terms by their socio-economic status within the country as a whole. It is important to note that while the majority of the papers in this volume present case studies of indigenous cultural retention and revitalization with respect to mainstream museological practice in Canada and the United States, neither country has thus far ratified or endorsed the 1989 International Labour Organization Convention 169 on Indigenous and Tribal Peoples (ILO C169), nor the 2007 Universal Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), including their many respective provisions concerning the culture and heritage rights of indigenous groups. For a current assessment of the conditions facing indigenous groups globally, including cultural matters, refer to the 2009 edition of the United Nations periodic report, “State of the World’s Indigenous Peoples” at [http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unpfii/documents/SOWIP_web.pdf](http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unpfii/documents/SOWIP_web.pdf)

If we can accept the contention that artifact conservation is as much a social practice as it is a technical-scientific endeavor, this volume is of use in exposing those tensions underlying collecting and curatorial practices within museums, the venue within which most conservation work continues to occur. As indicated, there is little discussion of conservation practice as such. The conservation profession must not be left behind as the refinement and elaboration of an indigenous museological ethic continues. Conservators must engage in this conversation, bringing the following points to the table:

- Whose values and assumptions form the basis of conservation decision-making, whether for individual artifacts and works of art, or for entire monuments, historic sites, and cultural landscapes (the heritage conservation principles remain constant despite increasing scale: the minimum degree of intervention necessary to preserve/stabilize/interpret; the maximum retention of original material with the minimum introduction of new elements; the imperative for documentation throughout all stages of treatment)? Historically, the values and assumptions of non-Native elites have predominated.
- How to give concrete expression to the preservation of the intangible aspects of indigenous heritage in a manner consistent with indigenous cultural protocols and sensitivities (e.g. traditional care within storage and exhibitions spaces; the use of contemporary indigenous art as a metaphor for the sacred; etc.)
- How to undertake ethical, properly informed conservation decision-making in such fashion as to uphold the overarching principle of reconciliation and renewal in collecting institutions between indigenous and non-indigenous stakeholders? A narrow focus on purely technical criteria in conservation decision-making is unlikely to achieve this.

Having raised these issues, the leadership in collecting institutions should recognize the range of practical benefits arising from a greater degree of indigenous involvement in their ordinary operating environment. In short, the hiring, retention, and promotion of indigenous staff fosters social inclusion and cohesiveness, civic participation and citizen engagement, demonstrates an institutional commitment to democratic principles, and ultimately enables the institution to present itself as a credible voice within the equity and diversity debates which are central within the contemporary museum movement. While conservators and other museum professionals need not become strident activists on behalf of indigenous rights, frankly stated it should be a measure of the museum worker’s professional knowledge and competence that they are aware that these issues exist with respect to indigenous collections in museums, and that when the opportunity arises they are equipped to provide their institutional leadership with sound advice as sensitive matters emerge. Aside from the range of issues raised in the papers comprising this volume, conservation practice needs to be included in future discussions of this sort.

Finally, insofar as a number of papers presented in this volume appear preoccupied with the continuing use of the term *ethnographic* in respect of institutional collections of indigenous material culture (a concern which has been
expressed in conservation circles as well), might this writer respectfully suggest adoption of the term *indigenous and locally acquired materials* as a suitable replacement for *ethnographic materials* for the purposes of conservation usage?

**John Moses** (Delaware band, Six Nations of the Grand River) works as a policy analyst on Aboriginal issues in Gatineau, Quebec, Canada. Moses is a former assistant curator and acting head of the conservation section at the Canadian Museum of Civilization.

The views expressed in this review are solely those of the author and should not be taken as an indication of the position of the Museum or of the Government of Canada.

**Conservation: Principles, Dilemmas and Uncomfortable Truths.**

Alison Richmond and Alison Bracker, editors.

Richmond and Bracker write that conservation is the result of "a multifaceted matrix of values that have changed over time and are open to interpretation" (xiv). This realization is at the heart of this exciting new publication. The editors, Alison Richmond and Alison Bracker, have gathered a significant collection of contributions that attest to the state of critical discourse within the conservation profession at the end of the first decade of the twenty-first century. This book demonstrates that conservation, as a field, has moved away from simplistic, theoretical cut out and apply concepts that have inadvertently caused as many new problems as they have solved old ones. In their stead a different discourse has developed in which the watch words of plurality, diversity, and interdisciplinary praxis have become the guides. In fact, in a chapter that outlines a personal history of ethics, Jonathan Ashley-Smith explicitly states that: "the drive to define a profession in terms of ethical behavior, rather than knowledge and competence, has led to the belief that there is one set of ethics for all occasions. The tolerance of diversity is one way out of this situation" (21); by drawing on a wide scope of ideas outside of the traditional conservation canon, and from contributors beyond the conservation profession, this book does just that.

The book contains twenty-one individual chapters on a variety of topics and fields of conservation, from building to contemporary art conservation, and a whole lot in between. I do not intend to summarize the book as a whole as others have already ably undertaken such a task [c.f. Iris Kapelouzou, « Alison Richmond, Alison Bracker, Conservation: Principles, Dilemmas and Uncomfortable Truths », CeROArt, 4 | 2009, [En ligne], mis en ligne le 15 octobre 2009. URL : http://croft.revues.org/index1336.html]. I will focus here on just a few chapters that I felt were most significant to my understanding of the ethnographic conservation field.

The chapter most explicitly concerned with *ethnographic conservation* is authored by Marian Kaminitz and Richard West Jr., with a host of Zuni affiliated contributors. It is concerned with work conducted with the National Museum of the American Indian and the Zuni Pueblo, New Mexico, in a loan to the A:shiwi A:wan Museum and Heritage Center in the Zuni Community. Many of the concerns addressed in this paper will be familiar ground for many readers of this newsletter, such as the dilemma of dealing with the legacy of colonialism in collections institutions, the ideas of intangibility within material culture, and the necessity of giving voice to indigenous peoples to allow their material culture to speak for them, and not, as previously, about them. The dilemma for conservation in these approaches has been the realization that "cultural sensitivities may override the need for treatment" (202).

Associated with understanding cultural sensitivities is the appreciation for the idea of cultural significance, a perspective Mariam Clavir raises. She explores the concept that both works of art and conservation are the result of specific social environments, and that these change both geographically and through time. I found one point she raised encapsulates some of the difficulties the conservation profession has had in understanding these ideas: i.e., "Cultural significance is tied not only to the time period that created its original meaning, but to today, and the future. [...] Awareness may be more difficult when the cultural significance being presented today is not tied to the object’s original purpose or meaning" (142).

Language plays a significant part in the development of conservation. As noted by Ashley-Smith, “ethical ideas become channeled or blocked by the barriers of language and gulfs between disciplines” (18). However, it is not simply differing languages that are behind issues in conservation, linguistic nuances are also the source of uncomfortable truths, such as those discussed in a chapter by Salvador Muñoz-Viñas in which he posits the concept of minimum-intervention as being an oxymoron. This is an important chapter for ethnographic conservators as minimum-intervention is a widely cited principle of our field. Muñoz-Viñas suggests that: “When we speak of minimum-intervention we do not actually care about the intervention itself. Rather, we care about the losses in the meaning-bearing ability of the objects” (55). His suggestion that conservation needs to be more exacting with its theoretical concepts. However, he concludes that this would be “ultimately better, more satisfying, for more people” (57).

Another approach that utilizes linguistics, and that I believe to be significant for ethnographic conservators, is that of
material culture studies, championed in this book, and beyond, by Dinah Eastop. Material culture studies are important to ethnographic conservation, as they are “concerned with why things matter to people” (150); as such, material culture studies pay careful attention to the range of meanings of words. In this chapter, Eastop analyses a variety of papers given at a recent conservation conference to discover how the term principle is invoked. Eastop notes that the “three different but inter-related meanings of principle are origin, fundamental assumption, and rudiment” (151). Through analysis of the use of principle, within conservation papers Eastop concludes, “principles and the practice of conservation are cultural phenomena that are constrained historically and socially” (161). It seems to me that understanding these constraints is vitally important for conservators, especially so for those conservators who work within a variety of socio-cultural contexts.

Amongst the plethora of ideas within this book, I particularly enjoyed the chapter by the philosopher Jonathan Rée, in which he suggested that “Bentham’s notion of the Auto-Icon deserves to be extended to cover any objects that are removed from ordinary cycles of maturation and decay in order to become permanent representatives of their former transient selves” (3). As anyone who trained at the Institute of Archaeology, UCL, will know, it is an idea based on Bentham’s wish to see everyone preserved as embalmed corpses, permanent monuments to themselves. This is how Bentham, himself, has been preserved in the University that was founded upon his ideals. Wonderfully weird, and a fascinating theoretical concept for considering conservation objects.

In conclusion, this book sets out to investigate contemporary principles, dilemmas and uncomfortable truths within the conservation profession. As a collection of essays the book achieves this goal of highlighting the key areas of discourse in contemporary conservation, as well as bringing some new ideas forward. I thoroughly enjoyed reading the wide scope of ideas, approaches, cases studies, and concepts discussed within the book and, happily, found much to both agree and disagree with. I was especially pleased that the editors did not present a unified theory based on the chapters, but suggested a multiplicity of conservations built on diversity. To my mind the book captured this feeling well. Furthermore, this book demonstrates all the characteristics of the high quality conservation related publications we have come to expect from Butterworth-Heinemann. It is sure to become a major ‘time capsule’ within the history of conservation thought. However, in many respects it is really only the beginning of a new discourse into the issues raised within. This book is very much like a red pill being handed to you by Morpheus; it has no answers but reveals truths. I can only suggest that you read it and head down the rabbit hole to see where it will take you.

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UPCOMING: Conferences, Meetings and Courses

ICOM-CC 16th Triennial Conference, Lisbon, Portugal, September 19-23, 2011
Theme: Cultural Heritage / Cultural Identity: The Role of Conservation

The conference theme aims to capture the recognition by communities or nations of the importance of affirming their cultural heritage in this era of globalisation, as they evolve through contact and exchange with other cultures. Considering this trend, the conference will explore and compare different approaches regarding conservation policies and methods, as well as scientific methods for studying materials and technologies, in order to improve our understanding of the role of conservation in valuing heritage and its relationship to other areas such as sociology, economy, and politics, which are vital in ensuring the sustainability of communities.

The ICOM-CC Triennial Conference in Lisbon will be an opportunity to share methods, studies and strategies to value individual cultural identities through heritage conservation by addressing topics such as:

- The relationships between cultural heritage and cultural identity;
- National and international conservation policies;
- The importance of interdisciplinarity in the preservation of cultural heritage;
- The development of research and education in heritage conservation;
- Standards, practices, and methodologies for heritage conservation.

Call for Papers and Posters
ICOM-CC is inviting paper and poster contributions for its 16th Triennial Conference. This two-step process consists of a call for abstracts of prospective papers and posters, followed by an invitation to submit full papers and poster abstracts for publication. Please refer to the various Preprints documents on ICOM-CC’s dedicated conference website http://www.icom-cc2011.org/ for the schedule and instructions.

Symposium: Basketry Conservation
15 to 19 September 2010
At the Royal Botanic Gardens Kew, London
Includes a practical workshop tutored by Sherry Doyal, and Barbara Wills, British Museum.
Info: ICONbasketry@gmail.com
Many thanks to all who submitted articles, reports, treatments and reviews for this issue of our Newsletter! Your contributions are thought provoking and informative!

I encourage all our readers to consider sending in articles, projects, reviews, announcements or any information relevant to this readership. Generally speaking submissions are between 1000 and 1500 words in length, although longer or shorter pieces are definitely welcome. Our next issue is planned for January 2011 so please send me your submission by the end of December 2010 at kimcc@mac.com.

To ensure that our coverage continues to reflect the broad and diverse perspectives of our membership we continue to expand the number of reporters who gather news and information for this publication. The following is a list of our current reporters:

**North America**
- Krysia Spyridowicz Eastern Canada
- Ann Howatt-Krahn Eastern Canada
- Colleen Healey Eastern Canada
- Heidi Swierenga Western Canada
- Christine Del Re Eastern USA
- Molly Gleeson Western USA

**Europe**
- Renata Peters United Kingdom
- Anne Lisbeth Schmidt Scandinavian countries

**Pacific**
- Marcelle Scott Australia

**Asia**
- Wing Fai Lai Hong Kong and area
- Ita Yulita Indonesia
- Hyun Sook Lee South Korea

If you are interested in becoming a reporter please do not hesitate to contact me.

**Kim Cullen Cobb**, Editor
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