Dear Working Group Members,

I would like to wish you a Happy and Prosperous New Year 2011!

It is the second addition of the Wood, Furniture, & Lacquer Working Group Newsletter for the 2008-2011 triennial period and I hope that you will find it as interesting and informative as the first issue that was published in January last year. I would like to make this Newsletter our yearly communication platform allowing you to present your short articles on issues that are of your concern, reports on treatments and materials that should, in your opinion, be brought to our attention as well as a platform for discussion broader philosophical issues related to preservation of cultural heritage.

The last year was very busy with organising the Joint Interim Meeting entitled Multidisciplinary Conservation: a Holistic View for the Historic Interior, Rome, March 2010. This very successful conference was organised with four other ICOM-CC Working Groups (Textile; Sculpture, Polychromy, and Architectural Decoration; Leather and Related Materials; and Murals, Stone, and Rock Art), and the proceedings were published shortly after this meeting on the ICOM-CC website. The report on this meeting is included on pages 6—8.

In this Newsletter you can find also an interesting article by Pascale Patris, a conservator from the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, on treatment of the Bernstorff Suite, currently in the collection of this museum (pages 10-14). Dr Naomi Luxford, Post-Doctoral Research Fellow at the Centre for Sustainable Heritage, the University College London, would like to inform us about her current research project on changes affecting decorative furniture in historic houses in England (page 9). Prof. Michele Marincola, Sherman Fairchild Chairman and Professor of Conservation, Conservation Center of the Institute of Fine Arts, New York University, and Lucretia Kargère, Conservator, The Cloisters/The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, would like to spread the news about their research and a forthcoming book on The Conservation of Medieval Polychrome Sculpture: History, Theory and Practice in America (page 16).
Rui Filipe Teixeira Xavier, Conservator-Restorer of organic materials, Head of the Conservation Department at the Calouste Gulbenkian Museum, Lisbon, and an Assistant Coordinator of our Working Group, encourages us to take a part in a broader discussion on the role of conservation (page 15). He sends us also a postcard from Lisbon: the place of his residence and the host city of the next ICOM-CC Triennial Conference (19-23 September 2011) (pages 4-6).

The call for papers for the forthcoming Triennial Meeting in Lisbon attracted seventeen abstracts for the Wood, Furniture, & Lacquer Working Group, from which seven were selected to be written up as papers and two presented as posters. The selection process was difficult as the abstracts were of a high standard and unfortunately many authors had to be disappointed by the rejection of their proposals.

There were an unprecedented number of over 700 contributions for 21 Working Groups, of which nearly 600 were proposals for papers. The number of paper proposals almost doubles the number of submissions for the previous ICOM-CC Triennial Conference in New Delhi, 2008. The ICOM-CC Directory Board in conjunction with the Triennial hosts and the Preprints Editorial Committee have decided to accept more papers for the Lisbon Triennial Meeting by reducing the presentation time for each author. 276 paper contributions were accepted provisionally, of which 225 will reach final selection. It represents a 50% increase over previous Triennials publications. Of the 115 poster abstracts submitted, 63 were selected for final presentation in Lisbon. More information regarding the 16th Triennial Meeting can be found on the related website: www.icom-cc2011.org.

Good reading!

Dr Malgorzata Sawicki, Coordinator, ICOM-CC Wood, Furniture, & Lacquer WG

The best way to travel after all, is to feel. 

To feel everything in all ways.

To feel everything excessively, because all things are, in truth, excessive…

(Fernando Pessoa, Poet)

Known for its light and beauty, Lisbon has always been a veritable Aladdin’s cave for those in search of new discoveries. The city is full of life, and is notable for the variety of places and history it offers to visitors. It is an amalgam of centuries of influences and contrasts that still coexist in harmony to this day, giving the city a truly poetic aura.

Lisbon, city of poetry, is the capital and largest city of Portugal, with a population of 564,657 within its administrative limits, on a land area of 84.8 km². It lies in the western Iberian Peninsula on the Atlantic Ocean and the Tagus River. Lisbon is the westernmost large city located in Europe, as well as the westernmost capital city. Lisbon is one of the oldest cities in the world.

Julius Caesar made a municipium called Felicitas Julia, adding the name Olissipo. Ruled by a series of Germanic tribes from the fifth century, it was captured by the Moors in the eighth century. In 1147, the Crusaders under Afonso Henriques re-conquered the city for Christians and since then it has been a major political, economic, and cultural centre of Portugal. Lisbon, the capital of Portugal since its conquest from the Moors, is a legendary city with over 2000 years of History.

The city was particularly important in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries as the point of departure for maritime discoveries, and for centuries it was a major trading port.

In 1755, a massive earthquake almost completely destroyed the city, in particular the area now known as Baixa Pombalina, named in honour of the Marquis of Pombal, who ordered its reconstruction.

Today Lisbon is recognized as an alpha city because of its importance in finance, commerce, media, entertainment, arts, international trade, education, and tourism.
Lisbon’s new Golden Age began in 1994, when it was proclaimed European City of Culture. It was followed by the World Expo in 1998 for which Lisbon managed to squeeze both the central government and the European Union for financial backing.

Lisbon hosts two agencies of the European Union: the European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction (EMCDDA) and the European Maritime Safety Agency (EMSA). The Community of Portuguese Language Countries (CPLP) is also headquartered in Lisbon.

In 2004 Lisbon hosted the successful European Football Championships and the following year prestigious MTV Europe Music Awards, helping to stamp itself firmly on the rising Euro star map. This led to a new bridge across the River Tagus, a major expansion of the crumbling metro system and the massive redevelopment of the

Lisbon is the seventh most-visited city in Southern Europe, after Istanbul, Rome, Barcelona, Madrid, Athens, and Milan, with about two million tourists a year.

Most of the headquarters of multinational organisations in the country are located in the Lisbon area and it is the ninth city in the world in terms of quantity of international conferences. It is also the political centre of the country, the residence of the Head of State, the seat of Government, the seat of the district of Lisbon, and the centre of the Lisbon region are located in Lisbon.

Unlike most capital cities, Lisbon’s status as the capital of Portugal has never been granted or confirmed officially by statute or in written form. Its position as the capital has formed through the constitutional convention, making Lisbon de facto capital as a part of the Constitution of Portugal.

Seafood is plentiful as small fishing villages surround the city and restaurants prepare usually an excellent fresh catch of the day.

Photo: Rui Filipe Teixeira Xavier
Expo site, the Parque das Nações, now a major visitor attraction.

Lisbon enjoys a Subtropical-Mediterranean climate. Among all the metropolises in Europe, it has the warmest winters, with average temperatures 15 °C (59 °F) during the day and 8 °C (46 °F) at night in the period from December to February. Boasting springtime temperatures during the winter and cool summers freshened by a breeze blowing in from the Atlantic, Costa de Lisboa on the south-western coast offers a rich and impressively integrated diversity.

The Portuguese capital is a trendy, cosmopolitan and creative city, marrying history with a modern era, and traditions with the cutting edge approach.

Lisbon boasts a superb natural setting, tumbling down from seven lofty hills before reaching the banks of the River Tagus. Radiant skies brighten the monumental city, with its typical tile covered building facades and narrow Medieval streets, where one can hear the fado being played and sung at night. Like the blues, fado is an expression of longing and sorrow. Visitors can enjoy the wonderful night life in the city going to a fado club, which offers dining on Portuguese cuisine and listening to fado music, a kind of soul music that is pleasing to the ear and is uniquely Portuguese. The people of Lisbon have been listening to this music in cafes and restaurants for more than 150 years. The music is usually accompanied by a guitar. Lisbon’s best fado houses are run by musicians for love of music, not as a tourist attraction.

But Lisbon is also the stage for popular festivities, the place for exquisite shopping, exciting nightlife, interesting museums, and a place from where motorways branch off in different directions. Lisbon has two sites listed by UNESCO as World Heritage Sites: Belém Tower and Jerónimos Monastery. Travellers can enjoy also a visit to the Luso, located in the Alfama, one of the oldest in the area, which has been in existence since the 1930s.

Lisbon, a cosmopolitan city with a rich cultural life and many national museums and art galleries, offers to the traveller a wealth of activities from sightseeing and shopping to fishing and sailing. It is a very colourful city with its multi-coloured tiled residences and office buildings. It also offers excellent food. Seafood is plentiful as small fishing villages surround the city and restaurants usually prepare an excellent fresh ‘catch of the day’.

Lisbon is, also a city inhabited by people who love visitors and tourists.

For all of the reasons explained above, visiting of the city of Lisbon must be a mandatory point in all travelling itineraries.

PS. Travel tips for Portugal: many museums are closed on Mondays. The normal opening hours are from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. from Tuesday to Sunday. Smaller and private museums may have different opening times.
“Multidisciplinary Conservation: a Holistic View for Historic Interiors” was the title of the Joint Interim Meeting of the five ICOM-CC Working Groups in Rome, March 23-26, 2010. The conference was held at the Complesso San Michele a Ripa Grande in Rome, a headquarter of the Ministero per i Beni e le Attività Culturali (MiBAC). It was hosted by the Istituto Superiore per la Conservazione e il Restauro (ISCR), with the support of the International Centre for the Study of the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property (ICCROM) and the International Council of Museums – Italia (ICOM Italia).

A successful earlier collaboration between three ICOM-CC Working Groups - Leather and Related Materials; Textiles, and; Wood, Furniture, & Lacquer – which produced the ‘Upholstery+’ Conference in Krakow in 2007, has expanded in Rome 2010 to include the Sculpture, Polychromy, and Architectural Decoration as well as the Murals, Stone, and Rock Art groups. While the 2007 Joint Interim Meeting was dedicated to multidisciplinary aspects relating to one object (the chair, the sofa, chaise longue etc) the Rome 2010 Meeting encompassed a broader multidisciplinary subject, the “historic interior” itself.

The buildings and their interiors consist of multiple facets and materials often altering dramatically through-out their life spans due to change imposed by society, their environment and use. The proper care for historic interiors draws from many conservation specialisations as well as from many other fields. Therefore it is essential to approach each project in a holistic manner using a multidisciplinary and collaborative approach. The posters and papers that were presented at the Rome 2010 conference outlined collectively the key issues relevant to this topic: conservation policy, methodology, protocol, diagnosis, scientific analysis, education, preventive measures, historical and aesthetical aspects as well as practical treatments including restoration, reconstruction, and replication.

From almost ninety abstracts, which were submitted for this meeting, forty-six papers and thirty-three posters, all peer reviewed, were presented by authors from twenty-five countries over a period of three intensive days. The conference was attended by 245 delegates from all over the world.

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team. The members of the different Working Groups had also their separate meetings during the conference providing an opportunity for people from different countries to meet as well as share and discuss their opinions.

The papers and posters presented conservation issues related to varied interiors: palaces, castles, historic houses, theatres, villas, museums, temples and churches. Most papers emphasized the need for holistic treatment of interior as well as preserving the historical context and function of the building, although it was stressed that a balanced strategy is often necessary in order to achieve this task. The collaboration between curators, surveyors, architects, conservators, caretakers, end-users, stakeholders, and the public (to name but a few) is vital and communication between these professionals and experts from varied fields must be open and transparent. Many speakers highlighted the role of the public as interactive viewers, who can be continually engaged and often offer support in maintaining integrity of a historic interior.

Regardless of the conference’s focus on the collaborative approach for the conservation of historic interiors, the statement was made that not enough papers were devoted directly to the degradation of materials, its causes and potential solutions. The criticism has been made that “the presentations were quite ‘empirical’ ” and that the conference showed “the lack of well based scientific methodology to conservation issues and how to solve certain environmental problems and degradation issues, the papers and posters presented conservation issues related to varied interiors: palaces, castles, historic houses, theatres, villas, museums, temples and churches. Most papers emphasized the need for holistic treatment of interior as well as preserving the historical context and function of the building, although it was stressed that a balanced strategy is often necessary in order to achieve this task. The collaboration between curators, surveyors, architects, conservators, caretakers, end-users, stakeholders, and the public (to name but a few) is vital and communication between these professionals and experts from varied fields must be open and transparent. Many speakers highlighted the role of the public as interactive viewers, who can be continually engaged and often offer support in maintaining integrity of a historic interior.

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processes.” (Ana Bidarra, May 2010)¹ In response, one can obviously riposte that the conference can only be as informative as submitted papers. Yet, with over ninety abstracts submitted for this meeting by professionals working at many recognised institutions all over the world, papers and posters were selected to present a global overview of the conservation of historic interiors and the treatment of objects and decorative elements contained within. Hence, one may wonder whether there has been sufficient research conducted on “environmental problems and degradation processes” in relation to conservation of historic interiors. However, this critical assessment confirms also the complexity of this broad subject and demonstrates that maybe there is a need for a follow-up conference that would focus, in particular, on degradation of materials in historic interiors and varied approaches to their treatments.

The Rome 2010 conference and the resulting proceedings, which are available at the ICOM-CC website, aimed to bring to attention the concepts hidden behind the keywords that are predominant in the terminology of the current conservation policy, such as ‘holistic’, ‘multidisciplinary’, ‘collaborative’, ‘communication’. The conference has provided a unique opportunity for many professionals from different fields to gather to discuss ongoing projects and strengthen contacts between conservators, art historians and scientific experts. The objective of the meeting focused on providing an overview of the complex problems involved when dealing with conservation of historic interiors within a multidisciplinary and holistic framework. It was also hoped that presented papers will stimulate an ongoing debate on varied approaches for the conservation of historic interiors and if the follow-up conference would be the result of such discussion, it would mean that we succeed.


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Proceedings of this conference are available at:
http://www.icom-cc.org/

Enter the site and follow the link to one of the five involved Working Groups.
Change or Damage?

Dr Naomi Luxford, Post-Doctoral Research Fellow, the Centre for Sustainable Heritage, the University College London

Cracking, lifting, warping, fading, cupping: the language of change is very complex. The UCL Centre for Sustainable Heritage has recently been awarded a 3 year Post-Doctoral research project to study change in decorative furniture in historic houses. Understanding the typology of change and when it turns to damage will be one of the key research questions, addressed by Dr Naomi Luxford, project Research Fellow.

Based on this, recommendations for care of these important collections will be drawn, enabling their future preservation.

The research will identify and test methods of non-destructive monitoring to study changes to decorative furniture surfaces. The view of stakeholders, as well as the public, on what constitutes damage, will be sought through an interactive web video. By understanding the effect of current display on material change, the impact of future environmental changes on decorative furniture can be assessed.

Furniture is often richly decorated with veneers of exotic woods, forming highly ornate floral designs (marquetry) or geometric patterns (parquetry). The different materials exhibit different responses to changes in environmental conditions, and this can lead to damage. Climate change, and with it higher temperatures and humidity indoors will further exacerbate the processes. Understanding them is vital to successful management of change and to protection of these collections for future generations.

The collection of the research partner English Heritage will be used to study these beautiful but vulnerable objects. Amber Xavier-Rowe, Head of Collections Conservation at English Heritage is convinced that the project will be of enormous benefit to the management of furniture collections: “Within English Heritage wood has been assessed as the second most damaged material in the recent decennial collections audit. We are delighted to be able to support this long overdue research project.”

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Project webpage
http://www.ucl.ac.uk/sustainableheritage/changeordamage.htm

The project is funded by the AHRC/EPSRC Science and Heritage Programme.
In November 2007 the Metropolitan Museum of Art completed the renovation of the Wrightsman Galleries. They are a collection of 18th century Period rooms containing a century of French Decorative Arts at their highest level. The project required each piece of furniture to be examined, cleaned and treated according to its condition. Much of the furniture is finished with gold leaf, which is usual for the 18th century. Few of the diverse gilt finishes are in their original state as these were restored, partially or completely, over the years by their various owners. Scientific investigation techniques offer opportunity to study furniture technology in depth, often raising many questions about the history of furniture and its manufacture.

In the Varengeville Room gallery there are four finely carved and gilded rococo armchairs. A settle from the Bernstorff Suite placed against the opposite wall suggests the armchairs are from the same Suite, a set composed of twelve armchairs and two settees now residing at the Metropolitan Museum. The armchairs are named after Baron Bernstorff who ordered them in 1754 for his Copenhagen palace. Although well documented the Suite has a complicated history of ownership, especially regarding the chairs frames and Beauvais tapestries weave upholstery.¹

The Palace on Bred Street in Copenhagen was decorated during the years 1753-1757². The Gobelins Hall or Tapestry Room on the Palace main floor had four Beauvais wall tapestries. The tapestries of the room remained in place until the year 1904. Today the Gobelins Hall still retains three console tables and their mirrors, and an over-mantel mirror with a marble fireplace conceived as an integral part of the architecture. They match the carved paneling with typical rococo embellishments of the room where the corresponding sofas and chairs carved frames were in display. The armchair and settee frames were made by a skilled Parisian menuisier Nicolas Quinibert Foliot (1706-1776) who was born into a family of chair-makers and furniture carvers and was granted the title of Menuisier du Garde Meuble du Roi. Eight of the armchairs and one sofa are stamped with his menuisier mark N.Q FOLIOT on the inside seat back rail, (photo) Each piece of the entire Suite is numbered on the underside of the front seat rail and the same Roman numerals are also cut into the under sides of

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*Bernstorff armchair. Photo: Pascale Patris*

*Stamp at inside of rear seat rail. Photo: Pascale Patris*
the removable seat, back and armrests as a mean of identifying the parts of each chair in the set. In addition is impressed in the wood the crowned G property mark of King George of Greece, who bought the Palace and its content in the late 19th century. Each piece of the seat furniture is covered with the original wool and silk Beauvais tapestries mounted 'a chassis' with drop-in-seats, removable backs secured with brass tongues to the armchair frames, and with the arm pads screwed to the armrests.

As part of the conservation treatment, the entire set required preliminary examination and analysis. The Bernstorff Suite in its current condition is now separated in two sets. Half of the Suite, a set of six armchairs and one settee are mordant gilded, with gold leaf applied onto a drying oil varnish. It looks like these were restored with a brass leaf instead of gold leaf applied directly over the original gilt surface also using an oil mordant. Brass leaf, an alloy of copper and zinc, is used as a substitute for gold leaf. As the amount of copper increases the colour of the leaf deepens. The metal leaf is often referred to as imitation leaf, composition gold leaf or Dutch metal.

The other half of the Suite, a set of six armchairs and the second settee is currently finished with a highly reflective water-gilt surface. This group has a striking appearance due to the burnishing of the leaf. Small areas have been gilded with green gold leaf on details such as small acanthus leaves, palm leaf returns and flower petals. This type of decorative mannerist finish, combined with the re-cutting style of the gesso, is not typical of the 18th century. The gold leaf was applied on a bright red bole over the traditional white gesso applied directly to the wood. On 18th century gilt wooden objects, red bole was usually found only on the highlights, while a light yellow bole layer would have been traditionally applied over the entire gesso ground and recesses.

During the initial examination of the first water gilt chair and settee, traces of a previous ground were discovered. This time the ground is showing a saturated yellow ochre colour. It is visible in areas of loss and furthermore in microscopic sections taken from different areas on the chairs. These yellow ochre remnants prevented the later gesso from adhering properly to the frame. The entire surface is now severely delaminated and there are large areas of loss scattered all over the gilded surface. Further investigation of the entire Suite of twelve armchairs and two settees revealed that all chairs retain at least part of the earlier ochre yellow ground. Most probably this represents the original ground preparation. Microscopic analysis also confirmed that remnants of original oil-gilt layers including restoration with imitation gold leaf were present on the water-gilded set. Consequently at some time in the 19th century the entire Suite was re-gilt with imitation gold leaf. As J. P. Morgan acquired the Suite in 1904, it is likely that the currently water gilt set was completely refinished when the Bernstorff Suite was split up in two sets sometimes after his death in 1913. Based on these findings the water gilding present on this second set is unlikely to date from before 1900³. This hypothesis is supported by archival material re-
The samples provided for analysis consisted of flakes taken from gilded areas of both chairs, from the MMA and Copenhagen. To gain further information on the seating furniture, a trip to the Copenhagen National Museum was arranged to look at a known armchair whose description suggested that it is similar to the Bernstorff seats. The armchair is also stamped “N.Q. Foliot” on the back seat rail as on several pieces of the presented Suite. This particular armchair, one of a pair, is presumed to come from a separate order for an unknown client in Copenhagen. The National Museum’s armchair in Copenhagen has a very different presence as it lacks the nobility and significance of the Bernstorff seats. Furthermore, the overall carving quality of the armchair is not as refined, being too shallow and not as well defined. A thorough examination of the Copenhagen armchair was carried out to compare dimensions, joinery and carving details, all of which were very similar. Previously performed cleaning tests had opened windows to the gilded finish build up, revealing a ground preparation with a similar saturated yellow ochre colour. The entire surface is currently finished with imitation gold leaf. The National Museum Head of Collection generously offered to take a few samples for comparison with the Bernstorff armchairs. The samples provided for analysis consisted of flakes taken from gilded areas of both chairs, from the MMA and Copenhagen, embedded in cross sections which were analyzed through microscopy in reflective light. Additionally scrapings from the ground were examined under scanning electron microscopy (SEM-EDS), Fourier transform infrared micro spectrometry (ATR-FTIR) and gas chromatography/ mass spectrometry (GC/MS). Analyses were conducted by the Department of Scientific Research at the MMA.

SEM/EDS indicate similar components and pigmentation of the yellow ground layers in both examples. It consists mainly of lead white with a large amount of calcium and a yellow iron earth pigment. ATR/FTIR and GC-MS analysis confirmed that the yellow ochre ground retains traces of protein, most likely collagen from animal glue. An oil component was also detected during the analysis. The results suggest that tempera could have been used for the ground layer: water-based oil emulsion, a thin resistant layer applied to the wood. Tempera surface specific particularities could produce a brighter finish to the gilt surface. Through microscopic examination of stained cross-sections, it was observed that protein and oil were present in the ground layer. The oil was trapped at the bottom of the ground layer while protein was detected on the upper part, separated over time through the degradation of the materials. SEM/EDS analysis for the metal leaf show that the gold alloy on the lowest gilt layers from both objects (MMA and Copenhagen) was found to be very similar. The metal leaf layer on the top surface of
During the Copenhagen visit, I observed in the Gobelins Room the entirely gilded wall original paneling décor, console tables and mirror frames; in the National Museum’s Decorative Arts galleries the decorative architectural elements. Their surfaces were all finished in a similar manner with glossy imitation gold leaf applied over a varnish. Oil gilding might have been a common surface treatment in Denmark, a lasting practice or tradition in the Danish craftsmen.

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stratification of surface layers</th>
<th>MMA 66.59.2 Bernstorff suite</th>
<th>130/1893;J.221 Copenhagen</th>
<th>MMA 1996.30 German chair</th>
<th>MMA 1995.149 Herter Brothers chair 1881-82</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Wood</td>
<td>beechwood</td>
<td>beechwood</td>
<td>ash</td>
<td>maple</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ground layer</td>
<td>Calcium, lead white</td>
<td>Calcium, lead white</td>
<td>Calcium, Red lake pigment,</td>
<td>Lead white, barium sulfate</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Ochre yellow earth</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Binder in ground</td>
<td>Protein glue traces / oil</td>
<td>Protein glue traces / oil</td>
<td>oil</td>
<td>oil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coating on ground</td>
<td>none</td>
<td>none</td>
<td>shellac</td>
<td>none</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mordant layer*</td>
<td>Oil varnish</td>
<td>Oil varnish</td>
<td>Oil varnish</td>
<td>natural plant resin, identification of copal, linseed oil (mordant layer and coating on ground*)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Metal</td>
<td>Gold leaf</td>
<td>Gold leaf</td>
<td>Gold leaf</td>
<td>Gold flecks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Au 96.7</td>
<td>Au 96.</td>
<td>Au 90.8</td>
<td>with approximately 30% Ag</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ag 0.9</td>
<td>Ag 1.1</td>
<td>Ag 6.4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Cu 3.4</td>
<td>Cu 3.5</td>
<td>Cu 2.8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Top layer</td>
<td>Unidentified</td>
<td>Unidentified</td>
<td>Unidentified</td>
<td>natural plant resin/ Linseed oil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Analyses were done from cross-sections.

MMA 1996.30 Gilded chair, German, 1828, by K.F. Schinkel, made for the Prince Karl’s Palace in Berlin

Illustration table of examples.

Both samples was found to be low-zinc brass rather than gold. Comparison of the MMA and Copenhagen seats original finishes are remarkably similar in microscopic analysis under visible and ultra-violet light.

In short, the Copenhagen and MMA armchairs share many parallels in their history, in particular in the material and technique used in their manufacture. The original surface of the armchairs and settees was oil gilded5. For several decades it was believed that the second half of the Bernstorff set had retained is original water gilt surface, in reality the oil gilt finish is the original intention. It is surprising that oil gilding was used for this important set of furniture since in 18th century France, water gilding would be traditionally expected. The suite of armchairs and settees may have been shipped to Copenhagen dismantled, to be joined and finished by Danish craftsmen6.
It opened an opportunity to explore further gilt surfaces in the history of furniture making, with the question of predominant materials and techniques used for gilded finishes in the northern European countries.

A study carried out at the National Museum in Denmark has shown that techniques for the treatment of surface for furniture finishes are not greatly different from the 18th to the 19th century. Over the years, based on close observations of characteristic furniture finishes, in particular from German manufacture, comparisons can be made with a few examples in the MMA collection. These furniture are showing similar materials and techniques involving various combinations of ingredients, often including pigments, linseed oil, stand oil, natural resins, and varnishes and so on; these make variations of built up layers on thin ground preparations, which ultimately affect the final aspect of the leaf finish due to the various layers characteristics and transparencies.

During the 18th and the 19th century German furniture were known for having a great influence on Danish furniture manufacture. In the late 18th century several books concerning the treatment of surface finish were published from the best foreign publications after the Germans with instructions for making different varnishes, lacquers, and gold varnishes. In the following Neoclassical period, glossy finishes were highly appreciated for ‘the sake of their durability’. In the literature of that time, repetitive words durable, hard, high gloss polish, make clear that this was an ideal for surface finishes. Furniture with genuine gold leaf on thin preparation to the wood is certainly present in Danish collections. Such as the Klismos chair in gilded beech wood, from early 1790s, by the famous Danish painter and designer N.A. Abildgaard (1743-1809), now in the collection of the Danish Museum of Decorative Art, along with one of the gilded armchair from the set made for the Prince Karl’s Palace in Berlin, by K.F. Schinkel, German architect (1781-1841), from the MMA collection present in these examples as a study case.

The examination results of the Bernstorff Suite provided a typical illustration of the history of a group of furniture over the years with their various restorations. It has given an insight to workshop practices than one would anticipate for 18th century high quality gilded furniture, and a brief overview of combination of complex materials to achieve an ideal finish. Also it opened an opportunity to explore further gilt surfaces in the history of furniture making, with the question of predominant materials and techniques used for gilded finishes in the northern European countries for the period under consideration.

2. Krohn, M., Copenhagen, 1922, France and Denmark’s artistic connection during the eighteenth-century.
3. Archival material recently discovered at the Frick Collection, NY, indicates that the Duveen firm, New York, ordered from A. Decour and Co, Paris, the restoration of a ‘set of chairs with tapestry from the Morgan Collection’ - letter between Paris and New York, June 3, 1915.
4. Department of Scientific Research, Metropolitan Museum of Art Mark Wypyski Research Scientist SEM/EDS Adriana Rizzo Research Scientist ATR/FTIR and GC/MS
6. Brigandi, C., 1969, Curioso itinerary delle collezioni Ducali Parmensi, p.68 She refers to chairs made for the Parma Ducal Palace, ca, 1749. The chairs were shipped from Paris to Italy dismantled where they were assembled and gilded by Italian gilder.
The limited space allowed for this article obliges me to exercise restrain, yet this broad subject deserved a decent debate. Although my area of expertise in conservation terms relates to lacquered objects, I found it important to draw attention to a completely different, but equally vital issue.

Instead of a scientific paper I aimed to address the more comprehensive concept of the Triennial Lisbon conference theme: the role of conservation. I intend this article to go beyond a simple exchange of information and communication amongst people employed in conservation and research in Lisbon/Portugal, but to engage a broader audience and focus on actual reality.

As an active conservator-restorer since 1991 and being employed at the Calouste Gulbenkian Museum for 18 years I have been observing how the role of conservation is understood in the scope of the cultural heritage community, particularly in Portugal. I am concerned that major decisions associated with preservation of cultural heritage are left to conservation practitioners, who are experts in their own areas of expertise, yet in their undergraduate and graduate conservation courses never studied works of art, art history, and never had an opportunity to become familiar with art objects.

Now, conservation as an autonomous cultural entity, in its most practical sense, focuses on circumstantial speeches, but averts from the every-day reality, to the point of focusing either on teaching or on research, but rarely both.

Analyzing the subject of our conservation work - several tasks related to conservation routine performed daily around the world - one can ask the question what generation of young conservators are we preparing and what role will they have in preserving world cultural heritage?

Recently, reading an article by the American author Stephen Conn, titled “Museums need objects”, the inexorable reflection came to my mind that socio-museology brought us the argument about the role of the “collection”. I was led to think that today, conservation in Portugal does not have a correct and rigorously defined role as an individual subject. Furthermore, it stands for more civic identity rather than technical one.

If it is fundamental to highlight the individual and distinct merits that always come to mind in a positive way, it is also important to create the background for a discussion about the role of conservation. But not to alienate its active agents, of today and tomorrow, rather to rethink a material culture that also regards the person.

Today, the diagnostics and symptoms are more than evident and raw. As the argument of cultural and patrimonial conservation that time and time again replaces and repeats itself in redundant and shallow discussion, we should allow for a revisit of the core issues regarding the practices in conservation as a whole, as a system, and not only as a trivial sum of good case studies.

So, it is about a true and effective global evaluation, acknowledging the risks of conservation, instead of just emphasizing risk assessment in preventive conservation. This should be our course; a structured strategy to consider seriously. A chronological analysis of the needs, to better identify and characterize this time, this path, in order to support a better definition of what is to come.

Conservation as an autonomous cultural entity, in its most practical sense, focuses on circumstantial speeches, but averts from the every-day reality, to the point of focusing either on teaching or on research, but rarely both.
The Conservation of Medieval Polychrome Sculpture:
History, Theory and Practice in America

Lucretia Kargère, Conservator, The Cloisters/The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York

Michele Marincola (Sherman Fairchild Chairman and Professor of Conservation, Conservation Center of the Institute of Fine Arts, New York University) and Lucretia Kargère (Conservator, The Cloisters/The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York) are writing a book on The Conservation of Medieval Polychrome Sculpture: History, Theory and Practice in America (working title). The book is scheduled for publication in 2013, to coincide with the upcoming 75th Anniversary of The Cloisters Museum. Using case histories of collections in the United States, with an emphasis on those of The Cloisters and the Metropolitan Museum, the authors will trace the history of treatment of medieval painted wood sculpture, assess the performance of these treatments over time, and explain methods in practice today.

There are no comparable books in print and in English on this topic. Students, or staff at smaller museums, who often do not have the luxury of specializing in a specific type of conservation or curatorial practice, have few options to consult. At present, readers in English are forced to pull together an understanding of treatment methodologies and materials from articles and essays located in technical journals, exhibition catalogues, or symposia publications. This book hopes to offer both a practical and theoretical discussion of the treatment of polychrome medieval sculpture, and contextualize these objects within their historical environment in the museum, within a single volume.

Useful website addresses:

ICCRM
http://www.iccrom.org/

ICCRM International Training Directory
http://www.iccrom.org/db_train.php

ICOM-CC 16th Triennial Conference, Lisbon, Portugal, 19-23 September, 2011
http://www.icom-cc2011.org/

ICOMOS
http://www.international.icomos.org/home.htm

GCI Bulletin

e-Conservation Magazine
http://www.e-conservationline.com/