
Technical Exchange

Albrecht Gumlicht
column editor

Gamblin Conservation Colors in ½ Pans

Like everyone else, the ICA had difficulty getting the Gamblin Conservation Colors to stay in solution. Paintings conservator Per Knutas came up with the following very useful solution. He ordered empty pans and watercolor travel boxes from Daniel Smith. He mixed the Gamblin colors thoroughly, adding xylene to the colors that had dried out somewhat. He then poured the paint into pans, right to the top of the pan. As the solvent evaporated and the paint no longer reached the top of the pans, he poured more paint into the pans, let the solvent evaporate, and repeated the process until he had cakes of Gamblin colors similar to watercolor half pans. We put these into the watercolor travel boxes and use our sets both in the lab and on-site.

Wendy Partridge



Recycled Razors

The Florentine bisturi or scalpel, consists of a special re-worked shaving blade once used in barber shops. Many of these traditional razor blades were originally made in Solingen, Germany, a European cutlery production area, well-known for high quality steel.

Nowadays, the old blades are revived in Florence, Italy making them a useful conservation tool. So, if you just happen to be traveling to Europe, consider having your own set made: Start by getting a couple of old razor blades at any swap meet. Don't forget to travel with them in your suitcase, not your hand luggage! Once in Florence, present a drawing of your preferred shape to Gianfranco & Filippo Galli, professional sharpeners of all sorts of tools. You may want to ask the workmen to save the wooden (or horn) handles that will be removed.

The blades then undergo careful re-shaping/re-grinding/re-sharpening processes resulting in different shapes, of which a couple are shown in the image. They can be sharpened to various thicknesses. The convenient heavy-duty blades are highly valued tools (not just by wall paintings conservators, who kindly sent in this tip). They can be used for various tasks, like the removal of excess gesso or modeling of recent sculptural elements, fills, etc.

At the conservation worksite in Bamiyan, Afghanistan, Japanese conservators have successfully used these scalpels to remove later earthen plasters on the Buddhist mural paintings made in the 7-9th-centuries CE. The German made, Italian worked, Japanese used "bisturi" made the work go easy(er) in Afghanistan.

Information:

Find razor blades at any swap meet. Sharpening Shop:

Gianfranco & Filippo Galli
Via della Spada, 26/r, Firenze, Italy
Tel: 011 39 055 282410.

Price for sharpening: approximately 20

Yoko Taniguchi

Japan Center for International Cooperation in Conservation, Tokyo



(The preceding tip may not be the most widely applicable, but it was so Sweeney Todd I couldn't resist it. Ed.)

WAAC Publications

Handling Guide for Anthropology Collections

Straightforward text is paired with humorous illustrations in 41 pages of "do's and don'ts" of collection handling. A Guide to Handling Anthropological Museum Collections was written by Arizona State Museum conservator Nancy Odegaard and illustrated by conservation technician Grace Katterman. This manual was designed to be used by researchers, docents, volunteers, visitors, students, staff or others who have not received formal training in the handling of museum artifacts. Paper-bound and printed on acid-free stock.

Price, postpaid:

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