

## Articles You May Have Missed

Susanne Friend, column editor

**“Frieze Falls Foul of the Smoking Ban as it Lights up for the Art World,”** *The Guardian*, 08/20/2008

An artwork intended to be a commentary on the smoking ban may never see the light of day - because of the smoking ban. US artist Norma Jeane, whose previous works include a cheese made of breast milk and an invitation to 160 people to have sex on a Roman roof terrace, wanted to create three transparent booths, each just big enough for one person to stand in and smoke.

Norma Jeane, who takes his name from the fact that he was born on the day Marilyn Monroe died, intended to highlight the fact that the once social activity of smoking has been transformed through legislation into an antisocial act.

*The Straight Story*, as the work is titled, was commissioned by Frieze, one of the biggest art fairs in the world. Members of the public were to be invited to smoke inside the booths, which would stand within the Frieze tents. But Westminster council has rejected an application for the “smoking booth” art installation on the grounds that it has insufficient “artistic merit.”

**“From the Art World to the Underworld,”** *The Wall Street Journal*, 08/22/2008

Shortly after 9 a.m. on June 4, three men drove to a seaside promenade near Marseilles, their van carrying paintings by Brueghel, Sisley, and Monet. The art had been stolen at gunpoint from the Mus. of Fine Arts in Nice last August.

Now a Frenchman working for an American art dealer was supposed to show up and buy four works for \$4.6 million in cash. Instead, nearly a dozen French police cars pulled up, led by a colonel for the gendarmerie who quickly took a call from Pennsylvania. “We got them!” Col. Pierre Tabel shouted into his cellphone.

The caller was Robert Wittman, an agent for the Federal Bureau of Investigation who had acted as the American “dealer” and orchestrated the sting. Mr. Wittman is one of the world’s top art-crime investigators. His specialty is going undercover. The 52-year-old has spent two decades impersonating shady dealers and befriending thieves. In all, he’s tracked down \$225 million in missing objects, including a Rembrandt self-portrait and an original copy of the Bill of Rights.

The US is the biggest buyer within the \$6 billion black market for art, the FBI says. Last year, 16,117 artworks in the US were listed by the London-based Art Loss Register as missing or stolen, up from 14,981 the year before.

**“Scrub Sao Paulo’s Graffiti? Not So Fast, London’s Tate Says,”** *Bloomberg.com*, 08/25/2008

Sao Paulo artists Otavio and Gustavo Pandolfo obliged London’s Tate Gallery by painting their distinctive yellow graffiti on outside walls of the museum. Just a month later, their hometown began rolling gray paint across one of the brothers’ murals as part of clean-up efforts.

Officials did an abrupt about-face after the Pandolfos and other artists complained both to the city and in the news media. Now Sao Paulo is creating a registry of street art to be preserved, exempt from Mayor Gilberto Kassab’s drive to eliminate “visual pollution.”

The episode is sparking a public discussion of what constitutes art. “When this happened, we thought, ‘what a mess,’” said Regina Monteiro,

who is director of Projects, Environment and Urban Landscaping and in charge of coordinating the city clean-up. “You have the English pampering our graffiti art, and we’re not giving it the least bit of value?”

**“Atlanta Cyclorama Needs Restoration, Maybe Much More, Some Contend,”** *The Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, 09/14/2008

Earlier this year a team of Atlanta movers and shakers flew to Pennsylvania to visit the newly renovated cyclorama painting at the Gettysburg Natl. Military Park. The in-the-round painting is as big as eight Sistine Chapel ceilings.

The Atlanta delegation began to rethink Atlanta’s own cyclorama of the Battle of Atlanta, the only other surviving example of this gargantuan art form on display in this country. Atlanta’s painting, of the July 22, 1864, clash between Union and Confederate soldiers was last renovated extensively from 1979 to 1982 by conservator Gustav Berger. Some viewers believe the 42-by-358-foot painting is overdue for an overhaul, especially with the sparkling Gettysburg restoration as a reference.

Berger’s team removed the lead and arsenic coating on the back, glued a fiberglass fabric backing on the Belgian linen fabric, and sealed the painted surface with varnish. The road to hell, it’s said, is paved with good intentions, and some contemporary conservators insist that good intentions have caused hellish problems for the Atlanta painting.

David Olin, of Olin Conservation Inc., who carried out the conservation of the Gettysburg painting, also completed a study of the Atlanta Cyclorama in 2006. Both cycloramas were hung incorrectly, Olin said.

Hung correctly, a cyclorama painting adopts a bowed-out, or hyperbolic shape. The surface of such a painting is convex in the vertical dimension, and concave in the horizontal, like the inside perimeter of an inner tube. That shape is maintained by a certain loose tension: the painting is hung from a ring at the top and held by a ring at the bottom.

Both the Gettysburg and Atlanta paintings were instead “hung like a shower curtain,” said Olin. That lack of curvature, plus the unyielding fiberglass backing, froze the Atlanta painting in the wrong position.

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**“To Save and not Forget,”** *Chicago Tribune*, 09/12/2008

Auschwitz, Poland — In the years since World War II, this most infamous of Nazi death camps has become a powerful symbol of the horrors of genocide, a place preserved for history as a reminder and a warning.

But Auschwitz, and its neighboring satellite camp Birkenau, were not built to last. Hastily constructed brick barracks rest on marshy soil that over the years has buckled and heaved each winter, threatening the structures.

Curators have battled corrosion of the camps’ thousands of evocative concrete fence posts stitched with barbed wire, as well as the aging of tens of thousands of fragile documents and of the vast heaps of shoes, suitcases, dolls, and other belongings left behind by those herded into the gas chambers.

Exhibits at Auschwitz have been little updated since they were established in 1955, while the number of visitors has been rising since Poland’s inclusion in the European Union in 2004. With survivors of the Holocaust gradually passing away, protecting the structures of Auschwitz as a physical link to history is key but expensive, officials at the memorial say. Finding money to update the aging exhibits and to preserve the increasingly fragile buildings has proved difficult.

Museum officials are working to establish associated charities with tax-free status to accept donations in places like the United States. The memorial also has tried to mend relations with international Jewish organizations, infuriated at Soviet-era Poland’s characterization of Auschwitz as a monument to “victims of fascism” rather than primarily as a Jewish genocide site. Museum officials have since accepted that about 90% of the people killed at Auschwitz were Jewish.

**“Michelangelo’s David ‘at Risk of Collapse’ Because of Traffic and Visitors,”** *The Times* (London), 09/19/2008

Antonio Borri, professor of construction engineering at Perugia University and part of the team monitoring the David’s state of conservation, said that cracks which been repaired during a 2004 restoration marking the 500th anniversary of the statue’s creation had re-appeared.

The statue, which is kept at the Galleria dell’Accademia in Florence, attracts more than a million people a year. Professor Borri said the blame lay with traffic vibrations and the pressure of thousands of daily visitors. Michelangelo’s masterpiece was also vulnerable because of its huge size and the poor quality of marble Michelangelo used, Professor Borri said.

The 2004 restoration involved removing grime and sulphate deposits using distilled water and cellulose as well as repairing cracks. This drew criticism from art lovers who feared that the statue could be damaged during cleaning.

The restoration revealed that the statue, which weighs six tons and is 16ft high, was showing signs of stress around the ankles. The statue of David was commissioned by the Florence guild of wool merchants in 1501 and spent centuries in Piazza della Signoria outside the town hall — formerly the palace of the ruling Medici family — open to the elements.

It was damaged during a riot in 1527, and in 1843 was cleaned using chloric acid. It was moved to the Galleria dell’Accademia in 1873, where it was better protected, although in 1991 a deranged Italian painter smashed a toe on its left foot with a hammer.

**“Mystic Seaport Announces Charles W. Morgan Restoration,”** *The Day (CT)*, 09/17/2008

Mystic Seaport will officially begin the restoration of the Charles W. Morgan, the world’s last wooden whaler, during a special celebration September 27. The event will mark the kick off to the Morgan’s three-year, \$5 million restoration project which will renew areas of the vessel from the waterline down to below the bilge, including parts that haven’t been seen since she was built 160 years ago.

A National Historic Landmark and the Museum’s signature vessel, the Morgan was built in 1841 in New Bedford, MA. During her 80-year career, she made 37 voyages across the Atlantic, Pacific and Indian Oceans. In 1941, the Morgan came to Mystic Seaport, where millions of visitors have since walked her decks. The event will conclude with the ceremonial lowering of a yard from high above the deck.

This initial phase of down-

rigging will mark the beginning of the Morgan’s restoration “voyage.” The Morgan’s “voyage” will continue October 19 when the whaling ship is moved from her berth at Chubb’s Wharf down alongside the Museum’s state-of-the-art Shiplift in the Henry B. duPont Preservation Shipyard.

**“Empire State Building Rediscovered its Deco Roots,”** *Urbanite* (NY), 10/10/2008

There was a time when the Empire State Building offered a view of the heavens from its grand lobby. A celestial panorama was painted in gold leaf on the ceiling of the original entryway.

In the 1960s, during renovations, the mural was covered by a drop ceiling. Soon a re-creation of the stars will shine again, as will the entire lobby, which is being restored to how it looked when the World’s Tallest Building — at the time — opened May 1, 1931, on 34th Street and Fifth Avenue.

The estimated \$600 million renovation of the 102-story Art Deco structure is being headed by Beyer Binder Belle. When it is complete, everything down to the lighting fixtures in the lobby will evoke the spirit of the 1930s.

The celestial mural — a gold-leaf-on-canvas painting — is an abstract depiction of suns, moons, and stars in motion. The original painting has been ruined by white paint from renovations in past generations and would cost too much to restore. EverGreene Painting Studios, an art conservation specialist, will recreate the scene on the ceiling of the lobby.

**“Land Art: Here Today, Gone Tomorrow?”** *The Art Newspaper*, 10/23/2008

Green issues are now high up the political agenda, from worries about global warming to research into sustainable fuels. One related topic that is galvanizing conservationists is the fate of a number of iconic works of Land Art which are under threat from energy and real estate development.

Artists such as Robert Smithson, Michael Heizer, and Walter De Maria sought to create works that could not be contained by a museum or placed in a collector’s home. Arguably the most iconic intervention in the US landscape is Robert Smithson’s *Spiral Jetty*, 1970, a spiral constructed from basalt rock and

earth which juts into the Great Salt Lake in Utah from its northeastern shore.

This summer, conservationists won a reprieve from the Canadian oil company Pearl Montana Exploration, which wants to conduct exploratory drilling into the lake bed. In co-operation with Smithsonian's widow Nancy Holt, also a land artist, and the public policy group Friends of the Great Salt Lake, the Dia Art Foundation, which owns and has maintained Spiral Jetty since 1999, started a petition against the drilling.

Other works remain at risk. On the opposite side of the Great Salt Lake from *Spiral Jetty* is Nancy Holt's *Sun Tunnels*, 1976. In Nevada, Michael Heizer's *City*, a massive complex of sculptures and earthen forms built by the artist next to his ranch in Lincoln County, is not yet finished but already threatened by development. Despite the developers, the most consistent threat to Land Art is nature itself. Many early examples are eroding as exposure to the elements takes its toll. For most artists, this is part of the works' natural evolution.

**“Birds of America Restored to its Former Glory,”** *Vancouver Sun*, 11/8/2008

A little-known federal agency has given new wings to a rare and valuable copy of John James Audubon's *Birds of America*.

The four-volume set by Audubon is one of fewer than 100 known to exist. Time, and many sticky fingers, took a toll on his vividly rendered illustrations of 435 birds. In the century and a half since they went on display at the legislative library in Fredericton, many of Audubon's plates, or pages, had developed tears and a heavy accumulation of grime.

Now, years of painstaking effort by the Canadian Conservation Institute has restored the work to its original glory. The institute had been working on it off and on since 1978, says Sherry Guild, a paper conservator who oversaw restoration of the individual pages.

The restoration -- removing the individual plates and rebinding the original four-volume set in 16 smaller volumes -- involved dozens of institute employees over the years. “Our treatment didn't affect the colours in any way . . . The colours were very vibrant, very fresh and the treatment was really

in some aspects not an intrusive treatment. There was no washing of the paper, there were very few treatments that could impact on the colour,” Guild said.

**“Conservator Works on Native Alaskan Kayaks,”** *SouthCoastToday.com*, 11/2/2008

In the New Bedford Whaling Museum, working in the shadow of the Lagoda, art conservator Alexandra Allardt is cleaning and treating a trio of native Alaskan kayaks from the museum's collection. The principal of ArtCare Resources in Newport, R.I., plans on spending many hours during the next several months working to preserve these rare 19th-century kayaks in an effort to make sure that future generations can learn more about the Native Alaskan peoples who made them.

In addition to cleaning the kayaks, two require stabilization and support in areas where shrinkage through the decades has cracked and curled the leather, creating gaps through which the interior structure of the kayaks can be seen. Ms. Allardt says that the goal of her work is not to restore the kayaks to their original state, but rather to stabilize their condition and preserve their original construction materials and methods.

**“Donatello Bronze Statue of David Slaying Goliath Gets Makeover,”** *Daily Telegraph*, 11/30/2008

Cutting-edge laser technology was used to clean more than a century of grime from the statue of the boy who killed Goliath, created by the artist Donatello in the 15th c. “We could only intervene now with the newest laser techniques; even the most delicate mechanical procedure would have hurt it,” said Beatrice Paolozzi Strozzi, director of the Bargello Museum that hosts the statue.

The 200,000 euro restoration also involved the polishing of a thin layer of gold that adds luster to the statue. Donatello's David is regarded as crucial to the history of Western art because it was the first free-standing bronze nude to be created since the time of the Greeks and Romans. The bronze statue, standing just over 5ft tall, depicts the young David with his foot on Goliath's severed head and a large sword in his hand. Apart from a pair of boots and a hat bound with

laurels, the figure is naked and almost feminine in its physique.

**“British Army to Help Turn Dictator's Palace into a Museum,”** *The Art Newspaper*, 12/01/2008

The British Army is offering to help create a museum in Basra, which would be set up by the Iraqi authorities in one of Saddam Hussein's palaces. British military planners have code-named the project Operation Bell, after Gertrude Bell, the archaeologist who helped establish the Baghdad Museum in 1926.

Assistance is also being offered by the British Museum, but all parties stress that this is an Iraqi venture. The location will be the Lakeside Palace, built by Saddam Hussein in the early 1990s. Set beside an artificial lake and overlooking the Shatt al-Arab waterway, it lies in a secure area 2km south of the city center. The opulent palace has a North African feel, with marble in the main rooms.

The Lakeside Palace would provide considerable space for antiquities. These would come from Baghdad's National Museum, which has a huge collection in its stores (including some from Basra which survived the looting in 1991). The new museum would also show ethnography, manuscripts, and more modern historical items. Its location in one of Saddam's palaces would help tell the story of very recent events. No one is willing to discuss the construction costs of the new museum, but they could be up to £10m. Once prime ministerial approval is granted, the Basra Museum could open in two years.

**“Rock Art Restoration Plan Seen as Desecration,”** *The Age* (Melbourne), 12/8/2008

A plan to restore one of Victoria's most important rock art sites has fallen foul of the local Aboriginal group, which claims it is akin to having Picasso restored by trainees.

The Dhudhuroa Native Title Group claims the restoration project, proposed by a State Government body, would “deface and desecrate” ancient motifs at the Mudgegonga rock art complex near Myrtleford, more than 3000 years old. Co-chairman Gary Murray is furious that Aboriginal Affairs Victoria employed non-indigenous experts in rock art

conservation and representatives of other traditional owner groups on the project.

He said the Dhudhuroa Native Title Group has primacy over country in north-east Victoria, and Aboriginal Affairs Victoria failed to obtain consent for the restoration project or for inviting other groups onto Dhudhuroa territory. The book *Prehistory of Australia* says that with its hundreds of motifs, the Mudgegonga region is considered the second richest rock art site in Victoria. The paintings are of ochre and pipeclay on rock with red and white staining.

**“Graffiti Study Bolsters ‘Broken Windows’ Theory,”** *Los Angeles Times*, 11/21/2008

In a series of real-world experiments, people exposed to graffiti, litter and other cues of lawlessness were more likely to commit small crimes, according to a study published today that bolsters the controversial “broken windows” theory of policing.

The idea is that low-level offenses like vandalism and panhandling create an environment that breeds bigger crimes. According to the theory, authorities can help head off serious violence by keeping minor infractions in check. Dutch researchers tested the psychological underpinnings of the theory and found that signs of social disorder damped people's impulse to act for the good of the community, allowing selfish and greedy instincts to take over. The results appear in the journal *Science*.

**“Turning Back Time, Carefully, on Portraits at City Hall,”** *New York Times* 12/12/2008

Kenneth Moser, chief conservator at the Brooklyn Museum for 30 years, is a painting conservator, and for two years he has restored the historical portraits that adorn the hallways, ceremonial rooms and workspaces at City Hall. In a game of hide and seek, the portraits, dulled by age and abuse, have vanished from their perches in small, scattered batches, returning months later, their dignity reinstated.

Mr. Moser's work on the paintings is part of a campaign by Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg to refurbish much of City Hall's unparalleled ensemble. It can cost as much as \$60,000 to renovate one painting, depending on its size — the portraits can measure up to 13 feet in height and 4 feet in width — and condition.

The Mayor's Fund to Advance New York City, a nonprofit organization founded by Mr. Bloomberg, has raised \$1.7 million from individuals, corporations, foundations, and the National Endowment for the Arts to pay for the portraits' conservation and the long-term care of the collection.

The last time the portraits underwent such extensive restoration was in the 1920s, said Mary Beth Betts, the resident expert on the collection. Many of the portraits were made by 18th- and 19th-century masters like Thomas Sully, Rembrandt Peale, and John Trumbull, whose “Declaration of Independence” appears on the reverse side of the \$2 bill.

**“Shepard Fairey Arrested In Boston,”** *Huffington Post*, 2/7/09

Boston — Police in Boston say the artist famous for his *Hope* posters of President Obama has been arrested on outstanding warrants. Shepard Fairey was in Boston on Friday for his new exhibit at the Institute of Contemporary Art.

Police Officer James Kenneally says the department had Jan. 24 warrants alleging the Los Angeles artist tagged property with graffiti.

Fairey's Obama image has been sold on thousands of stickers and posters. It is the subject of a copyright dispute with the Associated Press. Fairey argues that his use of the AP photo is protected by “fair use,” which allows exceptions to copyright laws. A California lawyer who has represented Fairey in the copyright case didn't immediately respond to an e-mail seeking comment on the arrest.

**“Sketches behind da Vinci Painting May Be Leonardo's,”** *Reuters*, 12/18/2008

A curator at the Louvre Museum in Paris has stumbled upon some unknown drawings on the back of a painting by Leonardo da Vinci that look like they might be by the Italian master himself, the Louvre said on Thursday.

The extraordinary find was made by chance, when Louvre staff unhooked Leonardo's *The Virgin and Child with Saint Anne* from the museum wall as part of a broad programme of study and restoration of paintings by Leonardo, including the *Mona Lisa*.

“When the work, which is painted

on wood, was unhooked, a curator noticed two barely visible drawings on the back of the painting, showing a horse's head and half a skull,” the museum said. After the initial find, the museum conducted detailed tests on the back of the painting. Photographs taken with an infrared camera revealed that there were not two but three drawings. The third one is of a Child Jesus playing with a lamb.

“This is an exceptional discovery because drawings on the back of paintings are very rare and no example by Leonardo was previously known,” the Louvre said. “The style of the drawings recalls the style of Leonardo, but research is ongoing to clarify their authorship.”

**“Promoting the Profession of Conservator-Restorers,”** *Times of Malta*, 12/21/2008

Higher education training in conservation-restoration studies in Malta began in 1999 with the setting up of the Malta Centre for Restoration in Bighi. The courses offered are a four-year Bachelor's Honours degree in Conservation, B.Cons. (Hons), with the emphasis being on hands-on conservation-restoration. The areas of study offered are conservation of paintings and polychrome sculpture, of objects made of glass, ceramics, metals and stone, of textile material and of books and works of art made of paper.

Malta is one of the few countries in Europe where the profession of the conservator-restorer has been adopted in a legislative framework with the enactment of the Maltese Cultural Heritage Act of 2002. The law recognises the fact that a high level of education and qualification is necessary to enter the profession of conservation-restoration. However, notwithstanding this requirement in the law, the warrant board has still not been officially constituted and qualified professional conservator-restorers, even in public institutions, are currently working illegally.

*The water you touch in a river is the last of that which has passed and the first of that which is coming.*

*from The Book of Water  
by Leonardo Da Vinci*