

Articles You May Have Missed

“Dusting Off a Serene Jewel Box,” *New York Times*, 12/31/2008

The Emperor Qianlong, the fifth emperor of the Qing Dynasty, spent five years building himself a retirement palace -- a fanciful collection of pocket gardens, banquet rooms, prayer halls and a single-seat opera house. The Palace of Tranquillity and Longevity, as it is known, would be a place to meditate, write poetry and enjoy the reviving company of his many concubines. However, Qianlong died, at 89, without ever having spent a night in his retirement home. Emperors came and went, but somehow Qianlong's two-acre jewel box remained untouched. In 1924, when China's civilian rulers tossed the last emperor out of the Forbidden City, the gates to Qianlong's miniature palace were chained shut and largely forgotten.

Word eventually reached the World Monuments Fund, a nonprofit organization dedicated to saving imperiled historic sites across the globe. Six years and \$3 million later the first building to be restored, Juanqinzhai, or Studio of Exhaustion From Diligent Service, has just been completed. In a country where historic preservation usually entails razing a structure and replacing it with a brightly painted replica, Juanqinzhai is something of a milestone.

The pavilion's slavishly faithful restoration is an archetype that both Chinese and American conservators hope to replicate over the next eight years, as the remaining 26 buildings are refurbished. Juanqinzhai's most beguiling elements are the panoramic murals of the pavilion painted on silk. The blend of traditional Chinese painting with the Western use of perspective and optical illusion is a testament to Qianlong's embrace of Giuseppe Castiglione, an Italian artist and missionary who lived in Beijing at the time.

“Pulling Strings: the Marionettes and Art of Gustave Baumann,” *Press Release (PR.com)*, 1/1/2009

After a lengthy and extensive restoration process, the marionettes carved by Gustave Baumann in the 1930s will be on view beginning January 30, 2009 through May 10, 2009 at the New Mexico Museum of Art in the exhibition Pulling Strings: The Marionettes and Art of Gustave Baumann.

Nearly all the puppets had to be restrung, leather joints had to be replaced, costumes had to be restored, and

touch-ups to the paint were required. This will be the first time in forty years that the original puppets have been on public display. Gustave Baumann (1881-1971) learned his wood-carving skills after his family emigrated from Germany to the United States in 1891.

In 1918 Baumann moved to Santa Fe and worked in the basement of this museum on his woodcut prints -- for which he is perhaps better known. Intended in large part to entertain their daughter and friends, the marionette theater became an important part of their creative lives. After Baumann's death in 1971, his wife Jane and daughter Ann, gifted the marionettes, stage materials, and related items to the New Mexico Museum of Art.

“Babylon Is Targeted in Project of World Monuments Fund and Iraq,” *Bloomberg.com*, 1/8/2009

The World Monuments Fund is launching a project with Iraq to preserve the ancient city of Babylon, where King Nebuchadnezzar II (630-562 B.C.) built his hanging gardens, one of the Seven Wonders of the World.

The New York-based nonprofit group, will work with Iraq's State Board of Antiquities and Heritage to develop a master plan to promote conservation and tourism in the city, located about 55 miles south of Baghdad on the east bank of the Euphrates.

The World Monuments president said the city has never been mapped, and there have been very dramatic changes to it. The ancient city, founded around the 18th century B.C., has sustained damage in recent years from Saddam Hussein's efforts to make it a tourist attraction, from looting after the U.S.-led invasion in 2003 and from being used as a military base during the Iraq War.

The World Monuments Fund's project marks the second initiative this decade to aid Babylon. In October 2003, the fund partnered with the Getty Conservation Institute to set up the Iraq Cultural Heritage Conservation Initiative to help preserve museums, archeological and historical sites in Iraq.

“Damage to Historical Monuments ‘Significant’,” *The New York Times*, 04/06/2009

The earthquake in Abruzzo did

not spare the region's artistic patrimony, though government officials said Monday that it was too soon to determine the extent of the damage to historical buildings or works of art.

In L'Aquila, the regional capital, the earthquake caused “significant damage to monuments,” said Giuseppe Proietti, secretary general of the Italian Culture Ministry. The rear part of the apse of the Romanesque basilica of Santa Maria di Collemaggio, much of which was restored in the 20th century, collapsed and cupolas in at least two churches in the historic center had cracked open.

The third floor of the 16th-century castle that houses the National Museum of Abruzzo was also affected by the quake, though officials have not been able to verify the damage to the art collection there. The Porta Napoli, built in 1548 in honor of the Holy Roman Emperor Charles V, was destroyed in the quake.

The earthquake, with a 6.3 magnitude, was not the first to strike the central Italian city. In 1703, a quake destroyed much of the medieval historic center, which was then rebuilt in the Baroque style, according to Alessandro Clementi, who has written several books on the history of L'Aquila, which was founded in the 13th century and had its moment of greatest socioeconomic importance in the Renaissance.

“Six-figure Sum Needed to Right Wrongs of the Roundheads at Chichester Cathedral,” *West Sussex Gazette*, 01/08/2009

Unique early-16th century paintings in Chichester Cathedral which roused the wrath of Cromwell's soldiers during the Civil War are being targeted for a major restoration and conservation scheme. One of the huge pictures, painted on wooden panels in the South Transept, depicts the faces of kings and bishops.

Another, in the North Transept, features a range of representations of one Bishop of Chichester, gleaming with gold leaf. The pictures show the founding of the See of Chichester, and the renewal of the charter by Henry VIII to Bishop Sherburne, with richly-robed figures. But the wood is visibly cracked and splitting, and an appeal for funds to restore the paintings, by artist Lambert Barnard, is planned.

A small number of the portraits were damaged and blotted out by the rampaging Roundheads, who also caused other damage in the cathedral, defacing tombs, and to the City Cross, after the siege of Chichester in 1642. It is not yet known yet whether any portraits, or remains of them, are hidden under the blacked-out areas.

“Long-lost Calder Banners on Display in Philadelphia,” *Philadelphia Inquirer*, 01/12/2009

Eight banners by Alexander Calder that were feared lost or destroyed have been discovered unharmed in the bowels of a Center City office tower.

For the first time since the mid-1980s, the vanished Alexander Calder banners - part of one of the greatest public art legacies in Philadelphia history - will be on public view until March at the Central Branch of the Free Library on Logan Square. The eight banners are so large - ranging from 18 feet to 28 feet in length - that only the four shortest could be hung in the library's central lobby.

The only banners that Calder ever designed owe their existence to developer Jack Wolgin, who commissioned three signature works in 1975 as part of the Redevelopment Authority's percent-for-art program requirement. He enticed Calder to design a set of banners that eventually filled the space with the bold primary colors of the sun and floral garlands and the silvery tints of the moon and starry night.

In the early 1980s Wolgin sold Centre Square and the new owners decided to spruce up the interior. The banners were taken down. The Calder-designed steel armature from which they were to hang, a piece of sculpture itself, was never used and is in a Centre Square parking garage.

“How Old is that Photo, Really?,” *Los Angeles Times*, 01/12/2009

Scientist Dusan Stulik, researcher Art Kaplan and photographic conservator Tram Vo have developed a new way to authenticate historic photographs. Instead of relying on human eyes and microscopes to date photographic images, as in the past, the Getty specialists devised a scientific method that can determine the age of many photographs made in the 20th century.

The key, they discovered, was to identify hidden chemical “signatures” as-

sociated with particular processes. Taking precise measurements of barium and strontium proved to be most productive because those two metallic elements were used in mineral coatings applied to photographic paper from the end of the 19th century until the 1970s -- but in concentrations that varied according to the manufacturer and time period.

Working with several French organizations, including the Henri Cartier-Bresson Foundation, Stulik and Kaplan recently performed a chemical analysis on Cartier-Bresson's original photographs. It's the first step in building an archival database of the artist's work, to be used as a basis of comparison for dating other vintage prints by Cartier-Bresson -- and for exposing forgeries.

“Past the Crowds to be up Close at the Prado,” *Los Angeles Times* 01/14/2009

Spain's Prado Museum has teamed with Google Earth for a project that allows people to zoom in on the gallery's main works -- even on details not immediately discernible to the human eye. The initiative, announced Tuesday, is the first of its kind involving an art museum. It involves 14 of the Prado's choicest paintings, including Diego Velázquez's “Las Meninas,” Francisco de Goya's “Third of May” and Peter Paul Rubens' “The Three Graces.”

Google Spain director Javier Rodriguez Zapatero said the images now available on the Internet were 1,400 times clearer than what would be rendered with a 10-megapixel camera.

The images can be seen by going to Google, downloading the Google Earth software, then typing in Prado Museum in the search engine. Once the museum zooms into focus, click on the square with the name of the museum.

“Getty Exhibition Showcases Japanese Lacquer Masterpiece, Restored through Getty Grant,” *Art Daily*, 01/15/2009

Sometime around 1640, Japanese craftsmen at a lacquer workshop in Kyoto finished a masterpiece of black and gold lacquer known today as the Mazarin Chest. Lavishly decorated with scenes from Japanese literature, the chest is among the finest examples of a type of lacquer decoration perfected by the Japanese for European consumers.

In 1882, it was purchased by the

Susanne Friend, column editor

Victoria and Albert Museum in London, however, centuries of cumulative exposure to light and changes in humidity and temperature caused a gradual deterioration in the chest's condition, rendering it too fragile for display or transport by 2004. Because raw urushi is extremely toxic and is difficult to obtain in the West, Western craftsmen and conservators have in past years unsuccessfully used Western-based materials, such as waxes and natural and synthetic varnishes. In Japan, however, urushi objects are still restored by urushi masters.

Frequent use of raw urushi can build up an immunity in some craftsmen, though not all. The exhibition at the Getty marks the completion of a major research and conservation project on the Mazarin Chest at the Victoria and Albert Museum in which a Japanese conservation expert worked together with V&A staff. This international collaboration marks the first time a Japanese urushi conservator has traveled outside Japan to treat an object and to train another institution's staff in the restoration process.

“Asking the Artist for a Do-Over,” *Wall Street Journal*, 01/22/2009

Art is long and life is short, according to the old Roman saying, but sometimes art doesn't hold up its end of the bargain. New artworks may look like old works in a short period of time, leaving their buyers perhaps feeling as though they have been had.

Art is sold “as is” by galleries or directly from artists. But it's not fully clear what responsibility artists bear to their completed work, especially after it has been sold. That's particularly the case for artists who purposefully use ephemeral materials in their art. A question arises of when or if to call in the artist if physical problems arise with the artwork.

Tom Learner, a conservator at the Getty Conservation Institute in Los Angeles, leans toward contacting the original artist. A recent instance of redoing the past occurred in 2006 when Damien Hirst's 1991 shark-in-a-tank work “The Physical Impossibility of Death in the Mind of Someone Living,” which had been deteriorating badly because the artist hadn't used a sufficient amount of formaldehyde, was replaced. In fact, Mr. Hirst cleaned out the tank, sawed in half another shark, and made sure that this one was more properly pickled.

An artist's sense of obligation to his or her work sometimes may be time-limited, contractually -- public art commissions usually contain a clause in the agreement stipulating the artist's responsibility for "patent or latent defects in workmanship".

Back in the 1990s, Stella refused to take part in the restoration of a 25-year-old painting that had been brought in for repairs to Brooklyn conservator Len Potoff, who had contacted the artist as a matter of practice. "He said that he couldn't do it," the conservator said. "He's not where he was 25 years ago, and he couldn't put himself in that zone. At the time, I was really p-, but now I find that point of view commendable."

"Art Club Seeks £1m to Restore Lost Rennie Mackintosh Frieze," *Sunday Herald*, 01/24/2009

Charles Rennie Mackintosh's first major frieze has lain hidden under layers of paint for nearly a century in the Glasgow Art Club. Painted in 1893, the stencilled frieze features sage-green thistles intertwining on a light-yellow background to create an art nouveau lattice.

It was the centerpiece of the art club's gallery but, due to its position under the eaves, it suffered water damage and was eventually plastered over. The money will also go to conserve the rest of the gallery, located in an elegant townhouse, whose existing fireplace, grills and door fittings were also designed by Mackintosh when he was a 25-year-old assistant for the firm Honeyman and Keppie.

Mackintosh's influence over the art club gallery, described by art historian Sir Kenneth Clark as "one of the most perfect small galleries in Europe", was relatively unknown until recently. The very existence of the frieze was lost knowledge until 2000.

"A Prayer for Archimedes," *Science News*, January 2009

For seventy years, a prayer book moldered in the closet of a family in France. Behind the text of the prayers, faint Greek letters marched in lines up the page. In 1998, Christie's auctioned it off—for two million dollars.

For this was not just a prayer book. The faint Greek inscriptions and accompanying diagrams were the only surviving copies of several works by the great Greek mathematician Archimedes.

A nine year research effort has

led to the decoding of much of the almost-obliterated Greek text. The results were more revolutionary than anyone had expected. Archimedes wrote his manuscript on a papyrus scroll 2,200 years ago. At an unknown later time, someone copied the text from papyrus to animal-skin parchment. Then, 700 years ago, a monk needing parchment for a new prayer book cut pages from Archimedes' book in half, rotated them 90 degrees, and scraped the surface to remove the ink. Then he wrote his prayers on the nearly-clean pages.

Reviel Netz, an historian of mathematics at Stanford University who transcribed the text, says that the examination of Archimedes' work has revealed "a new twist on the entire trajectory of Western mathematics."

"The Painted Tomb-Chapel of Nebamun Delights," *The Times*, 01/25/2009

A jazzier institution than the British Museum might have called its new display of Egyptian wall painting Death and the Accountant, because that, basically, is what it tackles. A tomb-chapel is an ancient Egyptian burial complex with an underground grave surmounted by a suite of painted rooms, in which the deceased's story is told in pictures.

The paintings were ripped off the walls of Nebamun's tomb with crowbars and saws in the 1810s by a disreputable Greek tomb-burglar known as Yanni. The British consul in Egypt at the time, the infamous Henry Salt, employed Yanni to locate things and remove them. Salt then sold the paintings to the British Museum as part of a job lot costing a modest £2,000.

The murals were removed in 1997 for a full restoration that took seven years, and the creation of a suitable museum context for them has taken until now. The 11 surviving fragments of tomb wall have been carefully repositioned behind glass; and where previously they were treated as individual scenes, and shown in bits, the aim this time is to evoke the ambience of the tomb-chapel.

"Simple Elixir Called a 'Miracle Liquid'," *Los Angeles Times*, 02/23/2009

It's a kitchen degreaser. It's a window cleaner. It kills athlete's foot. Oh, and you can drink it. Sounds like the old "Saturday Night Live" gag for

Shimmer, the faux floor polish plugged by Gilda Radner.

But the elixir is real. It has been approved by U.S. Regulators. And it's starting to replace the toxic chemicals Americans use at home and on the job. It turns out that zapping salt water with low-voltage electricity creates a couple of powerful yet nontoxic cleaning agents. Sodium ions are converted into sodium hydroxide, an alkaline liquid that cleans and degreases like detergent, but without the scrubbing bubbles. Chloride ions become hypochlorous acid, a potent disinfectant known as acid water. "It's 10 times more effective than bleach in killing bacteria," said Yen-Con Hung, a professor of food science at the University of Georgia-Griffin. "And it's safe."

There are drawbacks. Electrolyzed water loses its potency fairly quickly. Machines are pricey and geared mainly for industrial use. The process also needs to be monitored frequently for the right strength.

"Experts Unveil New Leonardo Portrait," *Associated Press*, 04/02/2009

Experts unveiled Thursday a previously unknown portrait of Leonardo da Vinci showing the artist and inventor as a middle-aged man with piercing eyes and long, flowing hair.

The painting was discovered in December in the collection of a family from Italy's southern Basilicata region. Who made the painting and when it was done is still being investigated, but experts have ruled out it being a self-portrait. Medieval historian Nicola Barbatelli, who found the painting, said carbon-14 analysis of the wood supporting the canvas dated the material to the late 15th or early 16th century, when Leonardo (1452-1519) was alive.

However, experts cautioned that the age of the wood didn't necessarily mean the portrait was painted at that time. Alessandro Vezzosi, the director of a museum dedicated to Leonardo in his hometown of Vinci, said the painting may have been made much later as it is consistent with the depiction of the artist found in a 17th-18th century portrait kept at the Uffizi Gallery in Florence.

The newly discovered portrait, partially damaged by scratches and measuring some 60 by 45 centimeters, shows Leonardo wearing dark robes and

a black, feathered hat.

"Officials Erase Historic Berlin Wall Mural," *Der Spiegel*, 03/27/2009

One of the most famous paintings on the Berlin Wall, depicting Soviet leader Leonid Brezhnev kissing his East German counterpart Erich Honecker, has been destroyed by the authorities.

The image became one of the most famous pictures on Berlin's East Side Gallery, the mural bedecked Wall which is now Berlin's longest remaining stretch of the former frontier of the Cold War. Artist Dmitri Vrubel painted the picture in 1990, just months after the Wall was officially declared open. Just days after the East Side Gallery was opened on Sept. 28, 1990, the German Democratic Republic ceased to exist.

The open-air concrete canvases have since developed into a tourist attraction and the whole stretch has been protected by a preservation order since 1993. But time has taken its toll and the paintings are graffiti-covered, flaking and faded. Efforts to restore the gallery are turning out to be less of a renovation and more of a complete overhaul.

In order to preserve the Wall, all the remaining art works are to be removed using steam. The underlying concrete will then be restored and, finally, the original painters will have to come and repaint their section of the Wall.

But Vrubel, who never agreed to his artwork being destroyed, is not happy. "I've got no problem with a restoration, but now it will be a new picture. I can't simply repeat my first painting." Instead he's considering painting a new kissing scene. Brezhnev and Honecker's embrace will remain the motif, but he may give it a different perspective. "This wasn't actually intended as a political image," said Vrubel. "It's about love." **"Keeping Art, and Climate, Controlled,"** *The New York Times*, 04/03/2009

Since 2000 catastrophic rainstorms have become so prevalent in England that the National Trust has gradually retrained its emergency teams to cope with floods, in addition to its time-honored enemy, house fires.

A week after Cragside, a Victorian house museum in England was flooded in 2008, Sarah Staniforth, director of historic properties at the National Trust in Britain, moderated a panel dis-

cussion on climate change as it pertains to museum collections at the annual conference of the International Institute for Conservation of Historic and Artistic Works. The forum was the brainchild of the institute's president, Jerry Podany, the chief conservator of antiquities at the J. Paul Getty Museum in Los Angeles, who believes the panel was the first of its kind.

A major issue confronting museums is to figure out whether their current climate guidelines can be refined. Although they have been debated for centuries, those in use today date to 1956, with Harold J. Plenderleith's "The Conservation of Antiquities and Works of Art," the first comprehensive guide on the subject. Research into different approaches is already under way at conservation and study centers like the Getty's, the Canadian Conservation Institute and the Center for Sustainable Heritage at University College, London.

The Image Permanence Institute at the Rochester Institute of Technology has integrated some of its findings into computer programs that can predict damage in many different materials. Historic house museums are on the front line in the battle against climate change. Most manage already without HVAC systems, which are hard to install without destroying the historical integrity of a building. The National Trust in particular, with more than 300 houses, is something of a green museum resource center.

"Field Museum Leak: Artifacts in 3rd-Floor Storage Room Get Wet," *Chicago Tribune*, 04/06/2009

Field Museum officials rushed to work before dawn Friday to frantically remove nearly 200 historical artifacts from a storage room, where a leaking roof had caused many of the objects to get wet, said Lance Grande, a senior vice president of the museum who oversees collections and research.

The items, including masks, textiles and baskets, were in a large third-floor storage room, which houses 25,000 artifacts from around the world. At about 5 a.m. Friday, an alarm alerted museum staff to a leak in the roof, apparently from a broken drainage pipe, Grande said. Museum officials discovered a wet patch—nearly 2 feet square—in the storage unit's ceiling that dripped water

onto shelves.

Only three of the wet objects were damaged, said Grande, although he could not specify which three. He said that the museum's staff would be able to restore them within a week, and that the broken drainage pipe and leaking ceiling would be repaired Tuesday.

"Classic Craftsman: 17th-century Style Furniture," *Los Angeles Times*, 04/10/2009

Patrice Pinaquy doesn't just make furniture that looks like it came from the 17th century. He builds furniture as though this were the 17th century.

Using techniques that are as antique as his tools, the craftsman can spend more than 1,000 hours on a single table. He says his collection of antique woodworking tools may be one of the largest in the world. If a tool breaks, there's a good chance he will simply make a new one, just like his predecessors did in 1700.

Pinaquy, 61, came to the U.S. in his early 20s, eventually landing an office job in Los Angeles. As he explored the city, he wondered: Where was the evidence of the kind of artistic craftsmanship that surrounded him in Europe?

Using the processes of eras past is not some Renaissance fair stunt but rather a logical approach to replicating, restoring or repairing 300-year-old furniture, he says. Pinaquy is one of a few experts called by the Huntington Library, Hearst Castle or the Getty when an antique needs restoration.

"Restorers 'Wiped Away' Precious Details from Rare William Shakespeare Portraits," *The Telegraph*, 04/14/2009

When the only known portrait of William Shakespeare was unveiled earlier this month, it was hailed by academics and fans alike as taking us a step closer to the true likeness of the great playwright. Experts believed the newly discovered painting, called the Cobbe portrait, which was painted when the writer was still alive, and another version called the Folger portrait had both been altered after Shakespeare's death.

But it has emerged that art conservators who joined forces to restore the two portraits by removing the top layer of paint to reveal the "authentic" portraits

AYMHH, continued

beneath, were actually wiping away priceless insights into the changing appearance of Britain's greatest playwright.

The Art Newspaper claims that the images which had been painted on top of both portraits had actually been painted in Shakespeare's own lifetime and provided valuable information about how he looked as he aged.

In the Cobbe portrait, believed to have been painted for the Earl of Southampton, the sitter was given a bouffant hairstyle. It is possible the Earl may have wanted a more flattering image. The Folger portrait, in which Shakespeare's hair was replaced by a bald forehead, may have been altered to reflect his appearance at the time of his death, six years after the original painting. The conservation work was undertaken by Mr. Cobbe, who is a professional restorer.

“Visitors can Watch Precious Painting being Repaired at DAI,” *Dayton Daily News*, 04/24/2009

Per Knutas, a Danish-trained painting conservator, will clean a Frank Stella canvas that hangs in the Dayton Art Institute's Dicke Wing of American Art. Knutas will clean the Stella art as a gift to the DAI.

At the moment, he's busy working on “Madonna and Child,” the colorful abstract painting by Alfred Jensen that's one of the museum's special treasures. What's cool is that the museum has decided to let the members of the public see the painstaking restoration process for themselves.

Knutas will be working in Gallery 220 for the next three weeks and is happy to take questions as he cleans and restores the painting. The DAI's chief curator hopes the interaction will prove educational for visitors.