

FROM ICON, THE INSTITUTE OF CONSERVATION

# Iconnect

## MAGAZINE

Summer 2023 Issue 3

**PLUS:**  
Publishing a  
conservation book  
Transporting  
objects  
Poison dart  
warning

A large, detailed camera lens is the central focus of the cover. The lens is shown from a slightly angled perspective, revealing its internal elements and the glass surface. Inside the lens, a man with a beard and a blue shirt is seen painting a diorama. The diorama depicts a cave interior with stalactites hanging from the ceiling and a rocky base. The man is holding a small brush and is focused on his work. The lens has several markings: 'φ77mm' on the left side, 'LENS' on the right side, and '24-70mm 1:2.8' at the bottom. The background of the lens is dark, making the scene inside stand out.

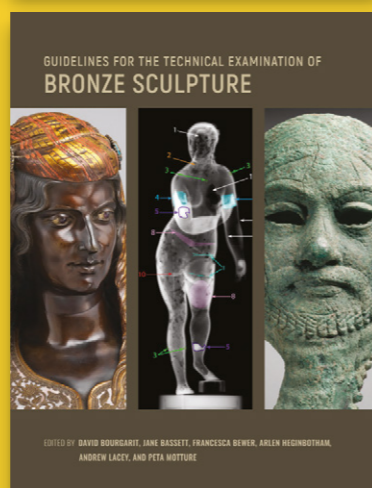
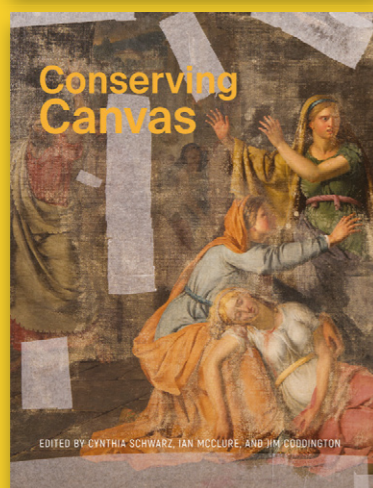
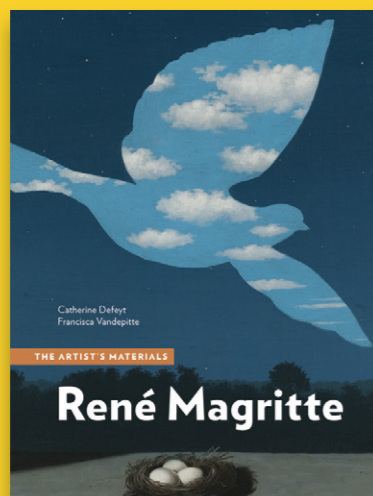
# Media in focus

Tips for  
successful  
industry promotion

**Icon**

THE INSTITUTE OF CONSERVATION

## NEW &amp; FORTHCOMING



### René Magritte The Artist's Materials

Catherine Defeyt and Francisca Vandepitte, with contributions by David Strivay, Elodie Herens, and Joy Mazurek

A copiously illustrated material study that sheds new light on the artistic practice of one of the most famous Surrealists of the twentieth century.

### Conserving Canvas

Edited by Cynthia Schwarz, Ian McClure, and Jim Coddington

This authoritative open-access publication presents important global perspectives on the history, current state, and future needs of the field of conserving paintings on canvas.

### Roy Lichtenstein Outdoor Painted Sculpture

Julie Wolfe, with contributions by Clare Bell and technical analysis by Alan Phenix and Rachel Rivenc

Based on extensive archival research of Lichtenstein's studio materials, interviews, and technical analyses, this book is an essential resource for conservators, curators, and others interested in the iconic artist.

### Guidelines for the Technical Examination of Bronze Sculpture

Edited by David Bourgarit, Jane Bassett, Francesca Bewer, Arlen Heginbotham, Andrew Lacey, and Peta Motture

An invaluable open-access resource for professionals, this volume creates a new framework for advancing the understanding of bronze sculpture.

## WELCOME



Imagine one thing every Icon member has in common is that they want cultural heritage and all those professionals who work in the sector to gain much wider recognition and support. Where some might differ, however, is their confidence to engage with the media to help achieve this. If you currently find yourself on the 'not so confident' side of the fence, I understand completely.

In a previous role, I quite often received calls from journalists looking for a comment or a 'quick quote' from the organisation I worked for and I'll be honest with you – they used to literally make my heart sink. It wasn't because I didn't want to promote our members or because I didn't know my subject. Far from it. It was because I was worried that I'd say something wrong under pressure which would then reflect badly on everyone concerned. I felt much more comfortable tucked away behind my PC, where I was in full control and had ample time to work on my craft.

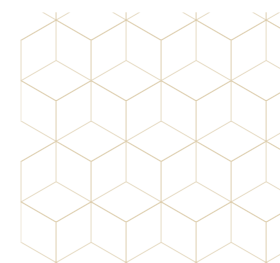
Over time and with more experience under my belt, my confidence started to grow but looking back, I wonder if the journey might have been less stressful if I had received or asked for more guidance and training from my employer.

I wonder if the journey might have been less stressful if I had received or asked for more guidance and training from my employer

If any of the above resonates with you, then I hope you find the lead article on page 12 helpful. It's packed with lots of useful insights and practical tips from people who understand the cultural heritage sector, such as how to get your story noticed, finding the 'right' journalist, establishing your key messages, preparing for an interview and dealing with difficult questions.

If you read the article and decide engaging with the media still isn't your thing – which, again, I do understand – I'm sure you'll find other articles in this issue that will help to inform and inspire you. Among others we have a wonderful piece by Abigail Bainbridge ACR about compiling her new book (page 38); the importance of a collaborative approach to conservation, architecture and historic built fabric (page 23); and the benefits of taking part in Icon's Student Mentor Programme (page 46). You'll also find lots of award winners and finalists from Icon sprinkled throughout – enjoy!

Karen Young, Editor



### Iconnect – a portmanteau

**Icon** – noun;  
Icon, the Institute of Conservation – a charitable company working to safeguard cultural heritage and the professional membership body for the conservation profession

**Connect** – verb;  
to join, link, or fasten together; unite or bind – to bring together or into contact so that a real or notional link is established

**Iconnect** – noun;  
to provide a direct link between you, cultural heritage conservation and the full spectrum of conservation professionals across the world



# Your Icon membership matters

When you join Icon, you show you care about cultural heritage conservation – and help us make the case for high-quality standards in conservation to both policy makers and the wider public

## Be a part of the conservation community

- Plug directly into Icon's global networks giving you the best the sector has to offer.
- From networking, events and career development support, to the latest jobs, news and other opportunities, as an Icon member you have direct access to everything you need to stay in the know.

## Get involved – and get noticed!

- Make the most of your membership and get involved with one or more of Icon's 24 special interest Groups and Networks to find the support you need to raise your profile, learn new skills, get things moving and succeed in your career.

## Icon members always have the biggest advantage

- Our regular *Iconnect* e-bulletins give you all the latest events, sector news and initiatives as they happen.
- Our weekly *Iconnect Jobs* e-bulletin features conservation vacancies all over the UK.
- Get first dibs and discounted admission to all Icon events.
- Keep up with the latest research across three issues a year of the *Journal of the Institute of Conservation* – and online access to everything that has ever been published there, or in its antecedent titles.



- Keep track of your learning with the free Online CPD Log, in the members' area of the website.
- Tell us your successes and help us shout about them across our website and magazine as well as the wide audiences following our social media channels.

## Develop your conservation career

- Only Icon offers the ACR standard – the mark of the high-quality conservation professional in the UK and abroad.
- As a Pathway member, get practical, 1-2-1 mentoring support for your career development from an experienced Accredited conservator, and exclusive career development resources and events.
- If you're a student, get 1-2-1 mentoring for your career development, while you showcase your work in our online project gallery – a virtual calling card you can share with potential employers.



Scan QR code for details

As an Icon member, you've got a place to connect with the world of conservation – and all it has to offer.



THE INSTITUTE OF CONSERVATION



# THANK YOU FOR YOUR COMMITMENT AND SUPPORT

It is a joy and privilege to be speaking to you as the new Chair of Icon's Board of Trustees. I have spent almost 30 years working in and with museums and heritage organisations. Many of these have been in collections-focused roles so I very much appreciate the value of conservation, restoration and other heritage skills and understand that you, Icon's members, are foundational to the

I am in the process of getting to know my fellow Board members and my initial focus as Chair is to make sure we are working together effectively

success of the sector. I hope that my background, knowledge and networks in cultural heritage – alongside my experience of running a membership organisation at the Association of Independent Museums – will complement the wealth of skills we have among Icon's people.

I have joined the organisation at a time of change as we are in the process of saying goodbye to Chief Executive, Sara Crofts, and Head of Membership, Michael Nelles, who have both done excellent work for Icon and its members.

We have responded quickly to these challenges and appointed Kate Frame, former Head of Conservation and Collections Care at Historic Royal Palaces, as Interim CEO, to lead and support the team over the next six months and ensure that our focus on delivering plans, programmes and strategic objectives remains on track. The recruitment process is underway for a new CEO, who will be able to realise Icon's ambition to be an even stronger voice for conservation while at the same time building our resilience and sustainability, and Icon's value and relevance to members.

Elsewhere, I am in the process of getting to know my fellow Board members and my initial focus as Chair is to ensure we are working together effectively, making the most of our range of skills and putting good governance at the heart of the organisation. I realise that the Board is only one part of the Icon team alongside the small but highly effective staff team and all of you who volunteer across our Groups and Networks. I am so impressed with the commitment and dazzling array of activity and peer support that you bring to the Icon membership. Thank you.

The beginning of my journey here has certainly been exciting and interesting and I look forward to meeting as many of you as possible in the months ahead.

Emma Chaplin, Chair of Icon



## Icon's Board of Trustees

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Scan the QR code for more information about the role and responsibilities of Icon's Board of Trustees

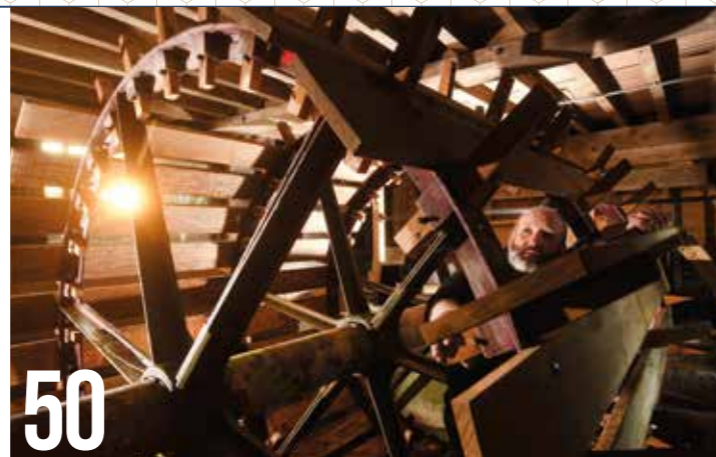
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PROTECTING THE FUTURE

**Iconnect**

THE MAGAZINE OF THE INSTITUTE OF CONSERVATION

**Icon**

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**Published and printed by**  
**CPL One on behalf of Icon**  
Alban Row, 27-31 Verulam Road, St Albans,  
Hertfordshire AL3 4DG  
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With thanks to this issue's key contributors



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**Nigel Larkin**



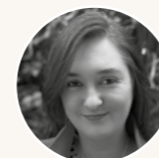
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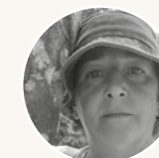
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**Hayley Livingstone**



**Zoë Miller ACR**



**Dr Marianne Davy Ball ACR**



**Sue Tapliss**



Above: Alex Carrington ACR shelter-coating the Romanesque Frieze in September 2020

## ICON MEMBERS RECOGNISED IN BUILDINGS CONSERVATION AND CONSTRUCTION AWARDS



Above: Jane Cowan ACR and Nick Rank

**Jane Cowan ACR, Head of Conservation, Lincoln Cathedral Winner, 2023 Civic Trust AABC Conservation Award**

Congratulations to Jane Cowan ACR, Head of Conservation, and architect Nick Rank, who accepted the 2023 Civic Trust AABC Conservation Award in January, on behalf of the Lincoln Cathedral Works Team, for conservation work carried out on the building's west front and nearby Exchequergate Arch.

Established in 2014, the Civic Trust AABC Conservation Awards celebrate projects that demonstrate the highest standards of historic

building conservation and make an outstanding contribution to the quality and appearance of the built environment.

"Work on the west front of Lincoln Cathedral has spanned more than 40 years," Jane explained to *Iconnect* magazine. "From the enlightened art historians, architects, specialists and clergy of the late 1970s who recognised the need for Lincoln to take action on the decaying sculpture, through to extensive work carried out in the 1990s and the recently completed five-year project, conserving the Cathedral's west front has been the work of dozens of craftspeople, specialists and supporters.

"The award of £12m funding in 2017 from the National Lottery Heritage Fund for the Lincoln Cathedral Connected project gave Lincoln a once-in-a-generation opportunity to complete the restoration of the west front, conserving the Romanesque Frieze, the Gallery of Kings, the Bishop statues, central niche and great west doorway.

"The Cathedral Works Team and

our sub-contractors have done an exceptional job over the past five to six years on what was sometimes a highly challenging and complex project. Lincoln Cathedral's west front is one of the most majestic in Europe and the work of the last four decades has helped preserve it for generations to come."

The Civic Trusts' judges were impressed by the exceptional level of craftsmanship displayed throughout the project, commenting: "Despite the scale, fastidious attention to detail at each step of the project has resulted in a joyful outcome."

**Caroline Babington ACR**  
*Finalist, Women in Construction and Engineering (WICE) Awards*

Congratulations also to Caroline Babington ACR, Collections Conservation Manager at the House of Commons, who was presented with a finalist award for the 2023 WICE Awards, Architectural Technologist, in London this May.

The WICE Awards are designed to celebrate and recognise women who make a contribution to the construction and engineering industries.

Speaking about her finalist award, Caroline told *Iconnect* magazine: "It was such an honour to be a finalist amongst the amazing women forging careers in the construction and engineering industries. It was so inspiring to be part of this, I wonder if it could open up possibilities for other conservators?"



Above: Caroline Babington ACR (left) and colleagues

## BRINGING FALSEHOODS AND FORGERIES INTO THE SPOTLIGHT



Yannick Chastang ACR doing an XRF analysis on a 17th-century royal cabinet on a stand

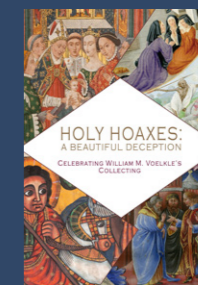
**Yannick Chastang ACR speaks to the press about dealers over-restoring and upgrading furniture**

Fine furniture and decorative arts conservator, Yannick Chastang ACR, recently appeared in *The Observer* and *The Guardian* speaking out about dealers who are having furniture and other antiques over-restored and upgraded to make these items appear older and more valuable than they are. In the article he gives a number of examples including a 19th-century desk that was auctioned for around £2,500 which then reappeared six months later as an 18th-century desk with a price tag of over £1m.

Chastang also highlights that some dealers will buy, for example, an 18th-century object, have copies of it made and then have elements of the original included in the copies so that they appear older.

He also recalls a "stunning" 19th-century desk in a country house that was later sold to a dealer. "That object has been totally ruined by restoration," Chastang commented in the article. "It's not reversible and, in 10 to 20 years' time, it will fall to bits because the chemicals they used makes it impossible to restore again.

Paintings conservator-restorer, Dr Clare Finn ACR, shares a book review of *Holy Hoaxes: A Beautiful Deception*, by William M Voelkle. William M Voelkle is Curator Emeritus of Medieval and Renaissance Manuscripts at the Morgan Library & Museum, New York. Over the course of his 50-year career, he built up a private collection of fakes and forgeries of manuscript illumination, many of which he discusses in his book, *Holy Hoaxes: A Beautiful Deception*.



In her review (available on Icon's website), Dr Finn provides an insight into some fascinating aspects about both Voelkle's work and his recently

published book, which – among other things – details some of the tell-tale signs of forgery which conservators would do well to spot.

Interestingly, in one section of her review, Finn notes that: "Voelkle tells us that most manuscript forgeries have aspects, in part at least, that are genuine. For example, the Spanish Forger used parchment cut from real medieval choir books." A point not dissimilar to that raised by Chastang in the news item opposite.



Above: Dr Clare Finn ACR



To read Dr Clare Finn's book review in full, scan the QR code.

They over-cleaned it, making it totally new. The varnish and the marquetry were removed and part replaced. I was so appalled by it."

Speaking to *Iconnect* magazine, Chastang points out that this is an international issue. "In May this year, the French national newspaper, *Liberation*, reported that a top antiques dealer in France will be going to court for over-restoring and making and selling fake furniture between 2003 and 2015, worth an estimated value of €12.5m. Press articles can sometimes be the best, if not the only option, to highlight these issues and change poor practices."



To read the full article published by *The Guardian*, scan the QR code.

**Icon**

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**ICON COMMENT:**

*Icon continues to promote the highest professional standards in the sector through the compulsory codes of practice to which all members must agree as a condition of membership, along with our ethical guidelines that encapsulate concepts common to all actions involved in the care of items. We will continue to campaign for best practice in the industry, which includes promoting our Conservation Register to those who need to access the services of a professional conservator-restorer, while at the same time meeting the needs of our members and the market.*

# ICON STAFF AND MAGAZINE FINALISTS IN 2023 MEMCOM AWARDS

We are thrilled that Icon is a finalist in three 2023 Memcom Awards categories: Best Social Media Presence (<£50K), Best Magazine Launch or Relaunch (*Iconnect* magazine) and The Memcom Rising Star (Jess Lock, Membership Manager).

Memcom is a professional organisation that supports and connects those working in the membership sector through a range of services and initiatives including conferences, networking events and the annual Memcom Awards, which aim to recognise and celebrate excellence in the sector.



The winners will be announced on 26 September – please keep an eye out for any exciting updates!

## BE A CONSERVATION AMBASSADOR AT HERITAGE OPEN DAYS



**Above:** Katarina Kelsey demonstrated how conservators repair historic books as part of Heritage Open Days 2022

Icon and Heritage Open Days are collaborating again in 2023 to partner Icon members with sites taking part in this year's Heritage Open Days.

Taking place every September, Heritage Open Days is England's largest festival of history and culture. It is community-led and brings together thousands of people across the country to celebrate the heritage that matters to them – for free!

Together with our members, we plan to create a programme of Conservation in Action events across the country under the banner of 'Conservation Stations'.

### What is a 'Conservation Station'?

There are lots of ways that conservators and heritage scientists can get involved, such as:

- **Pop-up Shop:** Set up a temporary conservation studio in a heritage space
- **Conservation in Action:** Undertake a conservation project on an item during the festival
- **Show & Tell:** Give a talk about a project that you have worked on
- **Expert Talk:** Host a talk such as, 'How to care for your personal treasures' or 'Looking after the family silver'.

Getting involved has many benefits including introducing more people to the work that you do, promoting your business or museum to a new audience and extending your local networks.



Scan the QR code to learn more but hurry - the deadline to register is 10 August!



## IMPROV

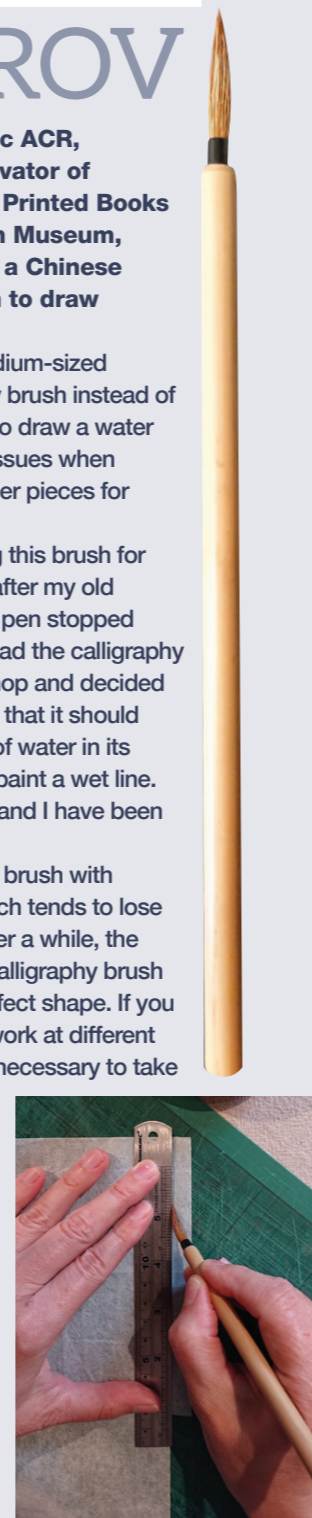
**Monika Stokowiec ACR, Assistant Conservator of Manuscripts and Printed Books at The Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge, uses a Chinese calligraphy brush to draw waterlines**

I use a small to medium-sized Chinese calligraphy brush instead of a water brush pen to draw a water line on Japanese tissues when cutting strips or other pieces for repairs.

I have been using this brush for several years now after my old plastic water brush pen stopped working. I already had the calligraphy brush in my workshop and decided to try it as I realised that it should hold a fair amount of water in its hair to allow me to paint a wet line. It worked very well and I have been using it ever since.

Unlike the plastic brush with synthetic hairs, which tends to lose its pointy shape after a while, the natural hair of the calligraphy brush reliably stays in perfect shape. If you are on the go and work at different locations, it will be necessary to take a small jar of water with you alongside your calligraphy brush.

It is also pleasing to know that the brush is made of natural materials which will last a very long time. You can buy one for just a few pounds in most art shops.



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**M**any conservators, restorers and heritage scientists are used to working quietly behind the scenes and are perfectly happy for the objects and buildings they care for to take centre stage.

However, as the media's appetite for all-things-cultural-heritage continues to grow, this almost inherent modesty – combined with a slow, methodical and controlled way of working – could prove challenging for anyone suddenly contacted by a deadline-driven journalist, asking for a comment or interview about something potentially newsworthy.

And let's face it, the likelihood of this happening is increasing all the time. While a number of controversial topics have hit the headlines in recent years (Kim Kardashian wearing Marilyn Monroe's dress, climate activists targeting prized portraits and calls for The Parthenon Sculptures to be repatriated to Greece, to name but a few), prime-time television series such as *The Repair Shop*, *Secrets of the Museum* and *Hidden Treasures of the National Trust* have undoubtedly helped to shine a spotlight on different professionals working in the cultural heritage sector, alongside the diverse and fascinating treasures they care for.

**Newsworthy work**

Many of the projects that Icon's members work on are newsworthy, not just because they are highly visual but because they often have local, national or even international significance and help to demonstrate how important cultural heritage is to society and our sense of belonging. They are also a fantastic opportunity to show exactly what the role of a conservator, restorer or allied cultural heritage professional involves.

Nigel Dacre is a media executive, journalist and writer. During his 25-year career as a journalist, he worked for the BBC and ITN, and was editor of *ITV News* for seven years. He also served on Icon's Board for three years which gave him a ringside seat in the world of conservation.

"As a journalist, I was always struck by how Icon's members were doing such newsworthy work, even though they just thought it was 'business as usual,'" Dacre told *Iconnect* magazine.

As press interest in cultural heritage continues to grow, we focus in on some essential skills to use when interacting with journalists



# MEDIA IN FOCUS



Above: Nigel Larkin cleaning the skull of the Type specimen of *Pliosaurus carpenteri*, a Jurassic marine reptile at Bristol Museum and Art Gallery

Linking to a famous person or place can help to get a story picked up, or something topical, such as climate change, celebrity culture or working on an object linked to a major event

"First of all, there's often a very interesting backstory to the projects they're working on – about how something was discovered or how it needs to be conserved, restored or repaired – and often it would involve some really interesting people or places. And then on top of all of that, it's really visual work."

**What are journalists looking for?**

Andrew Henderson-Schwartz is Head of Communications at the Museum of London Archaeology (MOLA) and echoes Dacre's comments: "Generally, journalists are looking for anything that is unusual, unexpected or extraordinary. Firsts are also quite key, such as 'this is the first time this has been seen' or 'this is the first time we've used this technique'. Doing something that is revolutionary and changing the way you do conservation is a good hook."

Nigel Larkin is a conservator of natural history specimens and a long-standing member of Icon. He has appeared on radio, TV and in the press dozens of times throughout his career. Reflecting on his experience, he said: "Generally, the red tops just want a 'hook' to hang the story from, which is easy in my line of work – they relate any kind of fossil to a *Jurassic Park* headline and for whale skeletons, *Moby Dick* and all the whale-based puns you can think of. For the more quality newspapers and websites, they still like it if the story involves the biggest/smallest/only object of its type, helps to rewrite

history or if there is a very unusual angle."

Henderson-Schwartz goes on to suggest: "Linking to a famous person or place can help to get a story picked up, or something topical, such as climate change, celebrity culture or working on an object linked to a major event, like the recent coronation. With conservation, the live aspect of a project is really important. It's no longer newsworthy if you did all the work 12 months ago. I think archaeologists and conservators often want to have all the facts in place before telling a story but it's sometimes more powerful if you don't have all the answers yet. It also sets you up to do another press release in the future."

**Getting your project noticed**

If you work for a large institution, you may be lucky enough to have a PR, marketing or communications team that actively promotes your newsworthy projects to the media. However, if you are in private practice or work for a smaller organisation, the onus may fall entirely on you to get your story 'out there'. Below are some key areas you might like to consider if you want to take a more proactive approach.

**Be visible online**

Dacre stresses the importance of having an online presence as it's a good place to get spotted by journalists. "In the old days, it was more difficult because you had to know who to reach out to and send them a press release but now, anyone can get on social media. If you're a bit of a technophobe, make the effort to learn how to upload good content and images to platforms like Twitter, LinkedIn and Facebook. And make sure you're feeding out a regular

**97%** of Icon survey respondents\* agree that engaging with the media can provide a good opportunity to promote cultural heritage and those professionals working in the sector

\*Icon Media Engagement Survey, February 2023 (117 respondents)

flow of the work that you're doing. Obviously, no one can guarantee that your story will get picked up but if it does, it not only helps to get your project in the news, it can help with things like funding, too."

When you do share a story on social media, make sure you mention and/or tag relevant people or organisations who will be happy to reshare this, including Icon.

**Picture perfect**

Having a strong image to support your story is also key and Henderson-Schwartz advises taking a mixture of landscape and portrait photos. Press will generally favour a landscape image whereas some social media platforms prefer portrait.

Larkin suggests that having an action shot is often best. "If you have a really good photo that shows work being undertaken, with an actual person in the shot, this seems to be a winner." Henderson-Schwartz adds that looking directly at the camera can also help: "Often when MOLA releases a suite of images to the media, the image that gets picked up the most is when a team member is looking directly into the camera because that's how you connect with the reader."

**Finding the right journalist**

When reaching out to local TV, press and radio, it can prove more fruitful if you take a targeted approach. There is nothing to be lost by sending a press release or brief outline of your project to a generic 'news desk' email address but, as Dacre points out, there are far smaller teams working on the news desk than there used to be and a lot won't even reply.

Henderson-Schwartz echoes this: "To sell your story more effectively, you need to find and contact specific people. Use Google to find journalists who have written similar articles in the past and show them that you've paid attention to their work. Say 'Hi, I really enjoyed reading your piece about X and I have a story here that I think might be of interest to you on a similar topic.'"



Above: Nigel Larkin and Fiona Bruce at the Antiques Roadshow at Wollaton Hall

NOTTINGHAM CITY COUNCIL

When looking for media contacts, Larkin also suggests reaching out to your local museum or county council press office as they might be happy to help. Similarly, if you have recently completed training, you could contact your college or university as they are often keen to share success stories involving former students.

Bear in mind, however, that timing is key. "Don't send out news items on Fridays or weekends as no one will read them," advises Henderson-Schwartz. "Sending a press release out between 9-10am on a Monday or Tuesday means you stand a better chance of it being discussed in editorial meetings and put forward for publication. And don't send it out at the same time that a major event is taking place."

And when you do find a good journalist, everyone is in agreement: add them to your contact list and make sure you reach out to them the next time you have a story.

**Top tips when being interviewed**

In the short Icon Media Engagement Survey we conducted in February 2023, we asked members 'How confident do you

**If you have a really good photo that shows work being undertaken, with an actual person in the shot, this seems to be a winner**

(or would you) feel speaking to the media?' and only a quarter of those who responded to the question (24/96) said they felt "very confident". Below are some tips that we hope will help to boost your confidence if you do get to speak to a journalist about your work.

**Be prepared**

To make the most of a media opportunity and settle any pre-interview nerves, be well prepared. "You need to put in the same

level of preparation as you would for a conference talk or similar, or you might get caught off-guard," advises Henderson-Schwartz. "Have a crib sheet of key facts about the subject with you. Research some similar topics, too, so that if the journalist asks, 'where has this been seen before?' you have an answer."

If you get a request from a journalist that is out of the blue, Henderson-Schwartz goes on to say that it's fine to ask them for a list of questions so that you can prepare in advance. "Alternatively, jot down questions you think they may ask – both easy and difficult ones. And try to find out as much as possible about how and where the interview will take place, for example face to face, over the phone or via Teams or Zoom. This will help you to prepare and will stop you getting flustered at the last minute because you don't have a phone signal."

Both Larkin and Henderson-Schwartz also recommend Googling a journalist before agreeing to an interview. If you find they have written negative articles or about topics you're not happy to talk about, simply decline the interview.

**Key messages**

It's important to have three or four key messages in mind that you want to get across in your interview and to then explain these clearly and succinctly – something our expert contributors and survey respondents agreed on. "Just keep hammering home those three or four points," says Henderson-Schwartz. "You don't need to give them every detail right off the bat. If the journalist wants to know more, they will ask. In terms of defining your messaging, try

to explain your topic to a colleague or friend in around 30 seconds. If you can clearly explain what it is you want to talk about in that time, then you've probably hit your key messages."

Sarah Scaturro is the Eric and Jane Nord Chief Conservator at the Cleveland Museum of Art. In December 2022, she presented Icon's Annual Lecture, It's Just a Dress!, during which she talked about her personal experience of speaking up and appearing in the press when Kim Kardashian wore a Marilyn Monroe dress at the Met Gala. At the end of her presentation, Scaturro offered some tips to fellow conservators, including, "make sure that every detail you mention is something you might want to go into more deeply, in case the reporter picks up on this".

Again, she also highlighted the importance of succinct messaging: "Reporters are often on deadline and so our responses need to be short, pithy and to the point. Try to respond with already formed quotes that you've prepared beforehand and understand that nuance is hard to convey."

**Rehearsing**

If you don't have a marketing or communications colleague you can call on, Henderson-Schwartz recommends asking a friend or partner to run through some questions with you that a journalist might ask. "It's really useful to film yourself during this exercise, too, and watch the recording back. It's a bit cringey, but you learn a lot about your mannerisms. Some people notice they talk too fast, fidget a lot or sway from side to side."

**Dressing the part**

When choosing what to wear, Henderson-Schwartz advises dressing comfortably but confidently. "If you're at home doing a radio, podcast or Zoom interview, don't do it in your pyjama bottoms. Make sure you are wearing something that you feel professional in because that is going to translate into how you speak and approach the interview."



Above: Andrew Henderson-Schwartz at the site where Harpole Treasure was discovered

Right: Nigel Larkin interview in The Shropshire Star

Above inset: Andrew Henderson-Schwartz





If you are being filmed or photographed, he advises wearing neutral colours and avoiding jazzy clothing or items that have slogans or messages across them. However, if you have branded clothing with your business logo on, he says this should be fine, but have something else on standby just in case the journalist would prefer you to wear something else.

### Managing nerves

Feeling nervous before and during an interview is perfectly natural. The best way to tackle this is to prepare as much as you can in advance, take a deep breath before you give an answer and take your time. "Icon members should always remind themselves that they are THE expert in the project they have undertaken and are being interviewed about," Larkin points out. "Also, they are being interviewed because the project is interesting, otherwise the journalist would not waste their time."

Henderson-Schwartz also suggests that a little 'back and forth' before the interview can help to settle nerves, for example, you could ask: "Am I okay sitting here?" However, an experienced journalist will usually help to put you at ease so that everyone gets the best out of the interview.

### Dealing with difficult questions

One of the key things that can put people off an interview is the prospect of being asked a difficult question. If you don't want to answer, Dacre advises Icon members to stick to the core message. "Just talk about the conservation issues and don't get drawn into wider debates about some of the more controversial aspects around your work."

Patricia Smithen ACR is Associate Professor, Department of Art History and Art Conservation, at Queen's University in Canada. In preparation for a potentially controversial topic, a former employer provided her and other staff members with training. She advises: "Practise NOT answering a question if the interviewer asks



**Left:** Eleanor Black, Collections & House Manager, being filmed in the Writing Room at Sissinghurst Castle for the BBC's *Hidden Treasures of the National Trust* series

**Below:** Simon Markus, a Project Manager from MOLA, being interviewed by a news channel

start your answer again rather than trying to weave your way back.

If the story is being shared in print or online, some of our survey respondents suggest asking to see a copy of the article before it's published so that any mistakes or

omissions can be picked up and corrected. However, the reality is that quite often journalists are not in a position or willing to do this.

Asking for a correction once a story has been shared is obviously more challenging. If it is something that can be corrected, for example, in an article published online, then Henderson-Schwartz advises considering whether asking for the correction is worthwhile as you want to maintain a good rapport with the journalist for future opportunities. "If they've

written pottery 'shards' rather than pottery 'sherds', it's not a big deal as it doesn't impact the overall message. But if they say an object is going to X museum and it's actually going to Y museum, then it's worth saying, "Thanks for publishing the article, it looks great. One small point, though, if you're happy to make the amend..."

Larkin also offers a further piece of advice for those concerned that they'll say something wrong during the interview, or that their words

something unexpected or off-topic and don't be afraid to say that you would rather not respond to that question."

If the interview is live, then Larkin even suggests simply laughing and saying: "That's above my pay grade" or similar. But he also highlights that sometimes a difficult question can be a gift. "If you are asked what sounds like a really tough question, such as 'Why should money be spent on conserving this object when people are starving?' they are actually giving you an opportunity to

**Feeling nervous before and during an interview is perfectly natural. The best way to tackle this is to prepare as much as you can in advance**

explain why this project is important and, if there is time, why collections, museums and conservation are important, too. Explain these things succinctly and finish with a reminder that the money for conserving museum objects never comes from the same pot as, for instance, free school meals. All these things are ring-fenced."

Henderson-Schwartz also recommends researching what's called the bridging technique. "It involves acknowledging a question and then using a short statement or phrase to bring the discussion back to what you originally wanted to talk about." Search online for 'Bridging techniques ABC' for some examples and think about how you could apply these if you're asked a question that you'd prefer not to answer.

### Asking for corrections

No matter how well you plan for your interview or execute it on the day, mistakes can and will happen, on both sides of the fence.



Henderson-Schwartz says that it's fine to correct a wrong assertion made by a journalist, even if it's a live interview, but do this in a friendly way. If they say, "This pot is believed to date back to 300BC" and that's not the case, rather than tell them they've got it wrong, correct them by saying, "actually, it is old, but it's not quite that old..."

If it's you who has made a mistake during the interview, then he says that providing it isn't live, you shouldn't be afraid to ask if you can

will get taken out of context or the journalist will omit an important fact. "If a project is interesting enough that it warrants a press release or interview, then it is important enough for a webpage or blog. If you can make sure in advance that an authoritative account is written about your work and that this is ready to be made live on the day of the interview or article (taking care not to break any embargo), then you can direct people to this via your social media channels or press release. This gives you much more control of the narrative, whatever happens."

### Some final thoughts

Many of our survey respondents indicated that engaging with the media can be very rewarding, but it can also be incredibly time consuming and requires flexibility. This is certainly worth bearing in mind for those who are in private practice or whose employers are reluctant to allow them to prepare for an interview during work hours.

Henderson-Schwartz concludes that, in general, there is a lack of attention to media training in the sector: "We all get training in health and safety, systems and processes, and equality, diversity and inclusion, but not necessarily how to engage with the media. If you are likely to speak to the media on a regular basis, then don't be afraid to ask your employer for media training."

### Want to learn more?

Whether it's how to write a press release or more tips from communications experts on a particular aspect of working with the media, please let us know how we can offer you further support, through *Iconnect* magazine or Icon training events. Email [iconeditor@centuryone.uk](mailto:iconeditor@centuryone.uk)

**With thanks** to everyone who shared their experience and expertise to help us to compile this article including Nigel Dacre, Karen Dundas ACR, Andrew Henderson-Schwartz, Nigel Larkin, Sarah Scaturro, Patricia Smithen ACR and all our survey respondents.



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# ON THE MOVE

**Ella Swindells, Elan Jaglom Collection Registrar at The Wallace Collection, introduces some of the key issues considered by museum registrars when transporting objects for loan**

**F**or many of us working in the field of cultural heritage the very essence of our work is to protect the objects we care for, which includes minimising the risk of damage when objects are being transported for loan.

Thankfully damage to objects during transportation is not a common occurrence, as the registrar's primary aim is to get any carefully selected objects from A to B safely without any major issues. National museums in the UK also work to the highest standards in terms of object handling, packing and transport arrangements as maintaining the condition of an object on loan is of

paramount importance.

In my experience, if any damage does occur this tends to be more minor in nature, such as small sections of gilt from a frame flaking or coming loose. However, even the smallest amount of damage can impact the aesthetics, life and value of an object, which is why assessments, planning and any necessary conservation work prior to transportation and loan is so crucial alongside best practice for packing and handling.

In terms of who is responsible for the transportation of objects going on loan, this very much depends on the institution. For larger institutions and national museums in the UK, a registrars team will usually manage

and organise all the necessary arrangements. This ranges from small journeys across London to objects travelling all over the world. However, it is important to note that while the registrar will be overseeing the project, we are in constant contact with a plethora of different teams and professionals including conservators, technicians and transport agents who all play a crucial role.

## Identifying and mitigating different types of damage

Damage can be caused by many different factors surrounding the transport of an object or collection and it is usually the job of the registrar to anticipate and recognise all the different areas of risk and to mitigate these as much as possible.

The first step is to ensure that any object being considered for loan is stable enough to be transported. This part of the process typically involves working with conservators who will assess the object and may even carry out some conservation work to prepare the object for its journey, for example, to consolidate any areas that are loose or may be prone to damage. They will also note at this stage any

specific display requirements for the object while on loan including temperature, relative humidity and light exposure which the registrar will then communicate to the borrowing institution.

Quite often it is decided that an object is not able to travel because it is inherently unstable. When I think of materials that may be too fragile to be transported, waxes certainly come to mind as well as frescos and pastels, which can also be poor candidates for a loans programme and extra consideration for these objects is often required. However, this is by no means a blanket clause and very much depends on the individual object, which is why assessments are made on a case-by-case basis.

## Crate specifications

Both the packing materials and crate offer a vital physical protective barrier for the object being transported and shield it against all manner of dangers such as simple bumps and scrapes, shock and vibration and fluctuations in environmental conditions.

Museums will use museum specification crates for transit, especially if the object is going to travel a long distance. Due consideration is given to the wood used for the crate, the type and density of the foam used inside the crate to protect the object (especially on the riding edge of the crate) and the type of screws, bolts and varnish used in the crate assembly.

When travelling overseas, crates may spend some time in very cold airport warehouses; sit on airport runways, open to the elements; travel for miles by boat or truck, on potentially very bumpy roads; be craned into buildings or carried upstairs in a historic house by hand; or be manoeuvred on pump trucks or skates.

As crates need to be moved easily, access to handles or having the correct sized blocks on the riding edge for pump trucks and skates is essential and ensures smooth and safe handling of the crate itself.

In addition to providing physical protection against general bumps and scrapes, the crate also provides a buffer against sharp changes in environmental conditions which would otherwise cause stress to the object inside and could lead to significant damage. To give you an idea of the sort of difference a properly constructed crate can make, it typically takes six hours for the inside of a crate to reach 50% of the difference of the outside temperature.

Quite simply, if the crate is not built to the correct specification, then the object immediately becomes more vulnerable.



### Packing and packing materials

Other culprits for damage include poor packing and inferior packing materials. This is something that museums easily mitigate against by using trained technicians and experienced transport agents who are well versed in packing museum objects appropriately, only use conservation grade materials and act upon the advice of conservators.

Registrars will always carefully consider the object and its journey when thinking about packing and will be in conversation with conservators and technicians when deciding how best to pack each object. We would discuss the most suitable packing materials to use for each object type, considering how the two materials will interact with each other. We would also discuss the type of support the object will require in the crate, for example, internal batons or whether the object would be safest travelling on a mount or unmounted. Other considerations such as orientation of the object within the crate will also be discussed. Very often, conservators themselves will play a key role in packing objects.

For sensitive paintings being sent on loan, a commonplace method used to reduce the impact of environmental changes is to add a marvel seal. The painting will be glazed and have a backboard and marvel seal added to the back which creates a form of microclimate for the object. This offers another layer of very effective protection to the object from environmental shocks, both when it's in transit and then when the object is displayed while on loan.

National museums and other well-resourced institutions will have dedicated teams to work on the packing of objects. However, when working with smaller institutions or private individuals who generously send their objects for loan, the registrar (of the borrowing institution) and transport agents will tend to play a bigger role in the packing and transport arrangements before the objects are sent. This helps to avoid the potential use

### Prior to transit the object will have a condition report made which will note the condition of the object at the point of packing and shipment

of non-conservation grade packing materials.

Abrasion caused by packing materials can also pose a real threat to the object, including when the correct packing materials are used incorrectly. For example, an unglazed painting would need to have additional protection to ensure no packing material comes into direct contact with the painted surface. Even if the painting is poly wrapped prior to crating, if the proper use of cotton ties is not employed the polythene could sag and may touch the paintwork.

Damage can also be caused by the mode of transport which is why museums will only use known and experienced fine art transport agents to transport collections. For national museums, our transport must also always comply with the Arts Council's Government Indemnity Scheme transport guidelines which stipulate a minimum standard for



Due consideration is given to the type of wood used to make a crate

transport vehicles. This includes having temperature control equipment in the vehicle, tracking systems and air-ride suspension, which reduces the impact of vibration on the objects. Crates must also be securely strapped into the vehicle.

### Crossing borders and courier services

When crossing a border, crates will go through customs and security checks. To avoid any difficulties or the need to open crates, registrars and the transport agents work hard to make the process as smooth as possible, ensuring correct permits and licences are sought in advance and completed correctly. It is the job of the registrar to also plan and approve the security and safety of the object at each stop along the object's journey as it is not always possible to complete shipments in one day. All stops have to be pre-planned and approved, not just for security purposes but to also ensure environmental conditions are maintained.

Lenders, including national museums, smaller institutions and private collectors, may also send physical or sometimes virtual couriers with the objects for both the transit and installation of their object into an exhibition. It is the courier's responsibility to ensure all aspects of the object's journey are safe and as agreed and approved by their registrar, and to intervene should any aspect of the journey be unsuitable for the object. They will be expected to witness the condition check and packing of the object prior to transit and then be present for its collection by the transport agent. The courier will then accompany the object on all manner of transport, be that truck, plane, train or boat, to its destination. The courier will be present to ensure handling of the crate is acceptable along with the handling of the object when it is unpacked. The courier provides assistance to the borrowing institution for the installation of the object, especially if it is a more fragile object or the installation for display is complex. Sometimes the need for a courier is also part of the conditions of insurance.



Above: Poly wrap is used around a glazed painting



Crates need to be designed so that they can be accessed and moved safely and easily

### Monitoring objects during transit

Data loggers are often used to monitor different factors that may affect objects during transit and can be placed inside or outside the crate. Depending on the type of data logger used, it can monitor and send live data about relative humidity, temperature, light, vibration and shock.

While data loggers have been available for some time, Covid really increased the frequency of their use as institutions were unable to send physical couriers with their objects and this was a way of monitoring the potential impact of transit.

Data loggers can also be used for security purposes as some can monitor the real-time location of your object, enabling you to query

any unplanned or elongated stops which is an excellent tool when a courier is not being used.

### Damaged objects

Thankfully, I have never experienced major damage or a significant change in an object's condition, though from time-to-time a minor change in condition may be noted. Sometimes this is simply because something was missed off the original condition report which is either not of notable concern or it is general/additional information about the condition of the piece.

Prior to transit the object will have a condition report made which will note the condition of the object at the point of packing and shipment and will also include photographs. Once the object is then unpacked at

its destination, it will be immediately condition checked against this report and any change in condition will be noted. The change can then be easily pinpointed as occurring during transit so this is a crucial step when sending objects and collections out for loan and exhibitions.

In the unlikely event damage is identified by the museum receiving the object on loan, a damage report form would be completed. This document will record relevant details including when the damage was noted, photographs, information from any data logger used, possible causes and the severity of damage.

### Insurance matters

Insurance cover for loaned objects varies widely and depends on a number of different conditions and factors. It is the responsibility of those borrowing the object to insure it for loan and the lending institution will always have received a copy of the policy in advance, to approve all the inclusions and exclusions and, if necessary, to ask for additional cover or top ups.

Commercial insurance is used by some museums, both in the UK and abroad, however most UK museums use the Government Indemnity Scheme when they borrow objects for their exhibitions. There are similar national indemnity schemes across the globe, but the UK scheme is often referred to as the 'gold standard' due to the excellent breadth of cover.

National museums and other Exchequer-funded bodies in the UK, however, cannot cover their collections through the Government Indemnity Scheme as the risk is underwritten by the Secretary of State. The borrowing institution must therefore meet various criteria regarding security, environmental conditions and transport in order to be approved by the national museum or other Exchequer-funded body prior to loan to reduce any risk. There is a minimum liability the borrowing institution will be required to cover but the majority of the risk lies with the national museum or other Exchequer-funded lending institution. ➤



**Above:** Tyvek wrap is used to protect a sculpture prior to crating

It is important to note here that insurance is a complex area, with many variables involved, so the above is intended as just a small snapshot of some of the different types of insurance cover objects can fall under.

### Risks to objects pre- and post-transportation

All handling and movement of objects, no matter how minimal, incurs risk and I believe damage is often more likely to occur outside of transit, during the preparation stages or when an object is being installed. For example, there is often a significant amount of handling prior to objects being transported, especially in larger institutions, such as getting the object off display or out of storage; preparing an object for loan, which will demand further object handling for things like photography and condition reporting; mounting/mount making; and, of course, packing. Transit within a museum may also have similar vibration impacts on the objects to that of a short truck journey within London but will often not receive the same level of protection on a museum trolley as a crate would offer on a truck.

If you are lending an object, you are passing it into the care of another institution. It is the responsibility of the registrar to work closely with the borrowing institution to

provide them with all the relevant information about what is needed to help protect an object when it reaches its destination. Loan negotiations between institutions discuss all aspects of the loan and detail everything that affects the object. These negotiations typically take around nine months but can vary depending on the loan.

Ahead of the loan, the registrar would fully discuss any special handling, packing and display requirements with the lender, to ensure mitigation against all risk is planned for, as far as reasonably possible. The Loan Agreement between parties will also state the specific lighting and environmental conditions required for the object to be displayed and stored safely throughout the loan period, which has been agreed by both parties. The borrower will also be expected to provide information to satisfy the lender regarding environment, supplying readings from the relevant galleries to ensure conditions are adequate, security details, display and installation information and methodologies, which will all need to be carefully reviewed and approved by the lending institution. Cooperation and a huge level of detailed communication is key at this stage to avoid any potential handling errors that could lead to damage.

### Research into object transportation

Current research into improving best practice when transporting cultural heritage objects tends to be led by institutions, especially those that have specialised conservation scientists and research departments and the relevant resources to monitor and trial new ways of working.

Constantine, a fine art transport agent that I have been in touch with, mentioned that it works in collaboration with museums and institutions to lead on best practice. Constantine has also mentioned that it investigates and continually looks into a variety of new materials and Turtle, the crate construction company it works exclusively with, is testing new types of wood for bespoke crating. Turtle has experts in the field of conservation and vibration that it uses for testing its products, and also contributes to conferences and periodicals on the impact of shock and vibration, particularly on artwork.

### In conclusion

While this article has been unable to cover every aspect of object transportation, or every type of object, I hope it has provided some insight into the role of the registrar when transporting objects for loan or other purposes.

### ABOUT THE AUTHOR



**Ella Swindells** is Elan Jaglom Collection Registrar at The Wallace Collection. Her role includes managing the loans out programme at the museum as well as the long loans in programme and collection displays. She is also responsible for and assists with collection management. Ella previously worked as Collection Registrar at the V&A, across different loans programmes.



Inspecting work taking place as part of the Canterbury Cathedral 'Journey' project, funded by the National Lottery Heritage Fund

# COLLABORATION IS KEY

In this excerpt from his presentation at the Natural Stone Show, **Michael Sheppard ACR** discusses the importance of a collaborative approach to conservation, architecture and historic built fabric

**A**rchitectural conservation, design and traditional trades are all closely linked in the field of cultural heritage management. Each profession brings a unique set of skills and knowledge to the table which, when combined, result in successful and sustainable conservation of historic buildings and built fabric.

Firstly, let's take a closer look at conservation. The primary aim of conservation is to preserve cultural heritage including historic buildings, artworks and artifacts for future generations. Conservators possess a deep understanding of the physical and chemical properties of cultural heritage materials and employ a range of scientific and technical approaches to preserve and restore these. They are also well-versed in the

legal and ethical frameworks that govern the conservation of cultural heritage.

Architecture, on the other hand, is the art and science of designing and constructing buildings. Architects, structural engineers and allied professionals have a deep understanding of building materials, techniques and technologies, and are skilled at creating functional and aesthetically pleasing structures that meet the needs of their clients. Architects play a critical role in the conservation of historic buildings, as they are responsible for designing and implementing alterations and additions to existing structures that preserve their historical integrity.

Traditional trades encompass a range of skills and techniques that have been developed and passed down over generations.

These trades are aplenty and include stonemasonry, carpentry, joinery, blacksmithing, stained-glass manufacture, lead workers, roofers, thatchers and other skilled crafts that are essential for the conservation of historic buildings. Traditional tradespeople have a deep understanding of the materials and techniques used in historical construction and are skilled at using traditional tools and methods to carry out repairs and restoration work.

### The benefits of a collaborative approach

All three professions are essential to the successful conservation of historic buildings and a gratifying circle of collaboration can occur if all parties are working together well. Conservators work closely with architects and traditional tradespeople >

to ensure that conservation principles are incorporated into all aspects of a project, from the initial design stage to the final implementation. Architects collaborate with conservators and traditional tradespeople to develop conservation-friendly design solutions that preserve the historical integrity of a building while also meeting the needs of its occupants. Traditional tradespeople work with conservators and architects to carry out repairs and restoration work using traditionally sympathetic techniques and materials, which are often essential for maintaining a building's historical authenticity.

This brings together different perspectives and knowledge bases, allowing professionals to consider multiple factors and viewpoints when making decisions and, by working together, professionals can develop solutions that balance these competing priorities, resulting in a building that is both historically authentic and functional for contemporary use.

Collaboration can also lead to more efficient and cost-effective conservation efforts. By involving multiple professions from the outset of a project, professionals can identify potential challenges and develop solutions that consider the unique technical and historical aspects of the project. This can prevent costly mistakes and delays that may arise if professionals work in isolation and overlook important considerations.

Furthermore, a multidisciplinary approach can lead to more sustainable conservation practices. By considering the long-term implications of a project from multiple perspectives, professionals can develop solutions that prioritise the use of sustainable materials and techniques. This can reduce the environmental impact of conservation efforts and ensure that cultural heritage is preserved in a way that is responsible and ethical.

**Below:** A stonemason working on a major project at Lincoln Cathedral

**Bottom:** A medieval carving splendour at Lincoln Cathedral



## By considering the long-term implications of a project from multiple perspectives, professionals can develop solutions that prioritise the use of sustainable materials and techniques



### The role of the conservator

Professional conservators play a vital role in the collaborative effort as they bring unique expertise and knowledge to the team, drawing from scientific and historical research and technical analysis to develop conservation strategies that are both effective and sustainable. As conservators are trained to analyse and understand the materials and structures of historic buildings they develop conservation treatments that are tailored to the specific needs of each project.

Consulting professional conservators at the early stages of project planning is essential as it allows for a comprehensive

York Minster Chapter House ceiling



A collection of medieval and contemporary tools



A community church renovation and repair with trainee stonemasons and conservators at Redbrook Church, Monmouth

understanding of the unique characteristics and challenges of a project, enabling a more successful outcome.

Conservators can conduct a detailed assessment of the condition of the building and identify any potential conservation issues. They can also provide recommendations on appropriate conservation treatments and suggest ways to integrate modern technology with traditional techniques to achieve the desired results, if at all possible.

Early conservation advice can help ensure that the conservation goals of the project are aligned with its historical and cultural significance. By understanding the unique characteristics of each building, conservators can provide valuable insight into the history and cultural significance of the structure and

help develop conservation strategies that preserve its authenticity.

Finally, and possibly high up on the agenda from a commercial point of view, collaborative work with conservators at the early stage of project design can help manage costs and prevent delays. By identifying potential issues and developing effective solutions, conservators can help to prevent costly and time-consuming problems from arising later in the project. They can also provide guidance on materials, techniques and project management, helping to ensure that the project is completed efficiently and within budget.

### Architecture at Icon

A new initiative from Icon, called 'Architecture at Icon', aims to highlight the importance of

### ABOUT THE AUTHOR



**Michael Sheppard ACR** is Deputy Director, Developments and Projects, at the Cathedrals'

Workshop Fellowship ([www.cwfcathedrals.co.uk](http://www.cwfcathedrals.co.uk)). With more than 20 years of practical and managerial experience, Michael specialises in stone and decorative surfaces. He has worked with numerous conservation contractors and on notable projects including his recent role as Director of Works and Property at Lincoln Cathedral.

interdisciplinary collaboration between architecture and conservation and aims to promote a more integrated approach to the conservation of historic buildings and built fabric. Icon has identified that by fostering greater collaboration between professionals, we can achieve more sustainable and successful conservation outcomes, as previously highlighted. The initiative recognises that architecture and conservation are inextricably linked and that both professions bring unique expertise and skills.

Through 'Architecture at Icon', the Institute aims to provide a platform for architects, tradespeople and conservation professionals to share knowledge and best practices, and to encourage more interdisciplinary learning and networking opportunities. This initiative will also provide resources and training opportunities that promote a more integrated approach to conservation and architecture.

Icon is committed to supporting professionals across the conservation and architecture fields to work together more effectively. By promoting greater collaboration, we can ensure that historic buildings are conserved in a sustainable and holistic manner, while also ensuring that they continue to serve the needs of communities for generations to come.



### ICON ATTENDS NATURAL STONE SHOW

Icon was delighted to join 200+ other exhibiting organisations at the 2023 Natural Stone Show, held at ExCel London on 6-9 June.

The three-day show is the only UK event dedicated to the natural stone industry, catering for three different target audiences on each day, with Architects' Day taking the lead on 6 June, followed by Industry Day and Conservation Day.

As well as showcasing the latest products, services and innovations in the industry, the Natural Stone Show also offers a free-to-attend conference experience to educate and engage visitors. Our sincere thanks to Michael Sheppard ACR, who gave an excellent presentation to attendees on behalf of Icon, titled: 'Conserving the Past, Building the Future: A Collaborative Approach'.

"It was a great opportunity to network, meet some of our members and to help raise the profile of conservators working with built fabric," says Jess Lock, Membership Manager. "A lot of delegates and exhibitors were interested to learn more about Icon accreditation, which we found very encouraging, and we had plenty of opportunities to demonstrate how useful the Conservation Register can be. It was a very positive experience and we hope to attend again next year."



# MEET ROWAN KITT

We catch up with aspiring professional, **Rowan Kitt**, an apprentice carpenter and joiner based at a National Trust site in Cornwall



**I grew up with no clear pathway that I wanted to take.**

I liked history but also had an interest in joining the police, but it wasn't until lockdown that I found my love for woodwork. I made garden planters at home, which I really enjoyed, and it sparked my interest in joinery. Growing up near Cotehele, where I work, also meant I appreciated my local heritage from an early age, so when I saw this apprenticeship opportunity come up, it really excited me.

**An apprenticeship gives you a hands-on way of exploring a subject** while also gaining qualifications. It allows you to spend two to three years working, getting a feel for the job and learning new skills. It also allows you to be adventurous and to learn something new without worrying about the cost and responsibilities that come with studying at university. I think there's a lot of pressure for people my age, and younger, to go to uni and while it's a great way to gain amazing qualifications that can set you up for life, it's not a guarantee.

**I'm currently completing a Level 2 Architectural Joinery Apprenticeship with the National Trust**, supported by the Hamish Ogston Foundation. It's a two-year course, progressing on to Level 3, with one year guaranteed work at the National Trust when I've finished. I'm based at Cotehele estate in Cornwall and occasionally Lanhydrock, too. For a block of three weeks, I work on-site with my mentor and trainer, Jonathan Bale, and then every fourth week I attend Exeter Construction College, where I'm taught about health and safety at work and how to use different woodwork machinery, hand tools and building materials, and different woodwork methods and techniques.

Jon is a fantastic teacher. He started out as an apprentice for the National Trust too, and because he has been in my position he



**Left:** Rowan Kitt with mentor Jonathan Bale

**Below left:** Rowan learning different woodwork methods

**Below:** Cotehele House from the east-terrace



NATIONAL TRUST IMAGES, JAMES DOBSON

understands the challenges and obstacles I need to overcome in order to succeed. He provides me with helpful and logical advice, which has allowed me to really develop my skill set and become more confident in myself and my work. We get along really well and make a good team.

**So far I have worked on bespoke gates, windows and doors**, which the National Trust have a lot of! We cover the whole of the South West and our projects have ranged from a repair job on some doors at Overbeck's in Salcombe, Devon, to replacing rotten gates with exact replicas made from oak or accoya – something which will last a long time and I'll be able to see for the next 50 years.

**The things I like the most about my apprenticeship include** working as a team, being able to make a difference and keeping history alive. Learning about the properties we work on and the history behind them is amazing. Carpentry and joinery is such an important skill set and I believe that wherever my career takes me, I'll be able to make a big impact with what I will have learnt during my apprenticeship.

**My biggest challenge has been building confidence in my ability.** It was important to me that my work was perfect but Jon helped



**I think to encourage more young people to learn craft skills we need to show the upcoming generation the importance of our local heritage and conservation work**

me to understand that we need to make mistakes in order to learn from them. Once I found that I was improving and I was becoming more involved with work coming in, it allowed me to really build my confidence.

When I've completed my Level 2 Apprenticeship I hope to progress to a Level 3 and continue to work for the National Trust for many years to come. In later life, I still want to be doing joinery and, whether that's in cultural heritage or not, I'll always have a passion and love for heritage work as it's where I started my journey.

**I think to encourage more young people to learn craft skills** we need to show the upcoming generation the importance of our local heritage and conservation work. By choosing heritage, we are helping to keep alive the work of our ancestors. Without that history, we wouldn't be where we are today, so it's important to recognise what they did and to maintain this for the future, whether it's a building or technique. When it comes to encouraging the public to appreciate their heritage, I think we need to publicise the work that goes into keeping history alive, for others to enjoy. The more people that can understand and appreciate the past, the better.

Patrick White, Head of Policy and Skills, provides an overview of Icon's recent work in supporting skill development and producing guidance for environmental conditions for storage and display

## BALANCING CLIENT DEMAND AND SKILLS SUPPLY



**Left:** Accessing skilled conservator-restorers, as pictured, is essential in the interests of achieving high-quality outcomes. This image, which was voted 'People's Favourite' in the 2023 Icon Photography Competition, shows how conservator Sejal Goel (Missouri Historical Society) had to adapt the lab facilities in order to access the entirety of Charles Lindbergh's 1927 rubber raft during a routine clean

Much of the work on skills in the heritage sector is focused on the development and supply of skills in the workforce. Often this is fine, particularly where these skills development activities are driven by clear employer demand and by those who know and understand the specific skills that are needed to practice as a conservator in the 21st century.

However, this isn't always the case. There are instances where skills development activities suit only one part of the sector or they do not align with the real demands

of clients, commissioners and employers of conservation services. These issues can be resolved, particularly when employers still recognise the importance of the specific skills that are needed in the workforce. Icon's Conservation Higher Education Institutions Network is a good example of a concerted effort to bring together employers and training providers to ensure that skills development activities match the needs of the sector.

More concerning are the parts of the market where commissioners,

employers and clients are simply not working with individuals with the appropriate skills and knowledge to effectively care for objects and collections. The reasons behind this are understandably complex and the required solutions equally varied.

A significant factor is often a lack of understanding of the work of professional conservator-restorers; either simply not knowing that the skills exist or not realising that the individuals they work with don't have the full range of skills and underpinning knowledge of

conservation theory and practice to ensure the best outcomes for heritage. Worryingly, there are also parts of the sector where clients and commissioners know that the skills exist but still don't access these, either because they don't know how to or they don't recognise the importance of those skills.

This must change. Stimulating client demand is an important issue for Icon – it forms a key tenet of our recently published Skills Strategy, sits at the heart of our work to increase the recognition of the conservation profession and underpins our broader efforts to advocate for and support professional conservators with issues that matter to them.

These issues are not unique to conservation; they affect all parts of the heritage sector. Icon is working closely with sector partners through the Heritage Skills Demand Group (a sub-group of the wider Historic Environment Forum) to ensure that owners of heritage assets appreciate when they need heritage skills and that they are able to locate those skills and actually use them in practice, in the interest of achieving high-quality outcomes and a sustainable balance of demand and supply and resilience in the heritage skills market.

Icon's Head of Policy and Skills, Patrick White, is Co-Chair of the Group, alongside Jonathan Thompson, Senior Heritage Advisor at the Country Land & Business Association. The Group also includes Tracy Manning ACR from the Church of England and representatives from the Houses of Parliament Restoration and Renewal Programme, Cifa, RICS, RIBA, Historic Houses and the Heritage Alliance. The Group has a wide remit, but its current activity is focused on influencing policy, such as the National Planning Policy Framework, as well as working to support clients in reaching fully trained and accredited conservation/restoration professionals.

## GOOD PRACTICE GUIDANCE



Cultural heritage institutions need to operate in a more sustainable manner in response to the global climate crisis, rising energy costs and local and national carbon reduction policies.

Since the 1970s a set of narrow parameters for relative humidity and temperature have come to be accepted as the 'gold standard' for preventive conservation. Achieving and maintaining these narrow parameters has

proven difficult and costly, both financially and in terms of greenhouse gas emissions. In the majority of cases, there has also been no need to store or display historic materials within these narrow parameters.

This is a challenging issue for professional conservators, let alone those institutions that don't have access to in-house conservation advice. Icon's Policy Forum has taken this issue to heart, spearheading the development of a short guidance note, which is available on the Icon website (scan the QR code to view). This work has the support of the Heads of Conservation Group within the National Museums Directors Council in the UK and Icon will be working closely with sector partners to share this support as widely as possible.



## REVIEWING THE SKILLS INVESTMENT PLAN

**The Skills Investment Plan for the Historic Environment was developed in 2019 by Skills Development Scotland and Historic Environment Scotland. Its aim is to address skills challenges and identify opportunities in the sector, which supports an estimated 20,000 direct jobs across Scotland covering construction, the creative industries and tourism.**

**A lot can change over four years and so the Plan is currently being reviewed and refreshed to ensure that it continues to be fit for purpose and meets the needs of the historic environment sector in Scotland.**

**Icon is delighted to have been invited to facilitate the 'conservation, art and artefacts' theme, which will first look at the forthcoming challenges in this part of the sector, develop our understanding of the skills gaps**

**and identify key priorities and areas for action. This work will start in autumn 2023 but we have already been working with Historic Environment Scotland to identify key stakeholders to bring into this conversation. However, if you do have comments to share, please get in touch by emailing Patrick White (pwhite@icon.org.uk).**

## GET INVOLVED IN ICON'S POLICY WORK

Do you have views you would like to share or pressing issues that need to be addressed? Icon is committed to supporting its members in issues that matter to them. Please get in touch with Patrick White, Head of Policy and Skills, at pwhite@icon.org.uk



Aimee Sims outside the Palace of Westminster

# HEAR, HEAR

**Aimee Sims ACR, Conservation Manager, Houses of Parliament Restoration and Renewal Programme, talks about her current role, pay inequalities in the cultural heritage sector and the importance of learning transferable skills**

**Q | What first sparked your interest in conservation and cultural heritage?**

When asked what I wanted to be when I grew up, I answered that I wanted to own a museum, so I guess I've always had heritage in my bones. I only found out that

conservation could be a career while I was doing my undergraduate degree in Art History. I could never see myself as a lecturer or curator so discovering that there was a field where I could combine fine art, science and history was a gamechanger.

**Q | Please give us a potted history of your career...**

I trained at the Queen's University Art Conservation programme in Canada as an object conservator, which provided me with a fantastic start to my career. I was lucky enough to intern at the Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery and then at Historic Royal Palaces. Between then and now I've worked for the National Trust, Leader Textile Conservation, Historic Royal Palaces, Eton College and now the Houses of Parliament Restoration and Renewal Programme.

I started my training in interventive conservation but through a fortuitous miscommunication I ended up interning for the Preventive Conservation team at Hampton Court Palace and realised that preventive conservation and conservation management were where I excelled. I joined the Icon Care of Collections Group Committee in 2020 as the Events Coordinator and I am now the *Iconnect* News Officer.

**Q | Tell us a little bit about the Restoration and Renewal Programme at Westminster and your role as Conservation Manager...**

The Palace of Westminster is the seat of national government for the UK as well as being a Grade I-listed building and designated UNESCO World Heritage site. Both Houses of Parliament are committed to preserving the Palace for future generations. However, the Palace is enormous and complex – the size of 16 football pitches – with the whole building sharing the same water, electric, sewage and gas systems. Many of these services are over 50 years old and have reached the end of their lifespan.

I work in the Restoration and Renewal Delivery Authority, which is an independent body responsible for preparing proposals and delivering works to restore and renew the historic building, comprised of 240 members of staff, who in turn are supported by hundreds of contractors from businesses across the UK. We're developing options



HISTORIC ROYAL PALACES



ETON COLLEGE

Above: Aimee Sims at Eton College

Left and below: Previous conservation work for Historic Royal Palaces



HISTORIC ROYAL PALACES

for how significant elements of the restoration work will be delivered and the level of ambition for restoration work, which is expected to be voted on by both Houses of Parliament later this year.

I act as a heritage subject matter expert (SME) to support the strategic vision, planning and delivery of the programme. I support the identification and mitigation of key risks and define conservation and collections care priorities, resource and training needs and cost estimates aligned with business case, procurement and construction schedules.

I lead a team of conservators as well as procure and manage external contractors to help design and deliver the safe decant and storage of the heritage collections while also ensuring the collections remaining in situ are protected and monitored.

**Q | What aspect of the role do you enjoy the most?**

Working within a multi-disciplinary team means that I'm constantly learning and inspired by people who are at the top of their field. What first attracted me to the role and continues to motivate me is the potential within this programme to develop new learning and partnerships with other industries that could ripple outwards and improve the heritage sector as a whole.

**Q | Has any aspect of your current role proved particularly challenging?**

The biggest challenge is balancing all the requirements that come from internal and external stakeholders. As conservators I've always thought our greatest strengths are our abilities to react dynamically to change and solve problems creatively, and the Restoration and Renewal Programme is providing lots of opportunities to do both!

**Q | What was it like taking part in the International Institute for Conservation Congress last September?**

I am lucky enough to say that this was my second experience taking part in



an IIC Congress. I presented a poster at the 2018 Turin Congress and knew from that experience that I wanted to return and present a full paper one day.

Alongside my colleagues, Jennifer Ellison and Eleanor Rowley-Conwy, we delivered a presentation that introduced the Restoration and Renewal Programme and explored the impact conservation and increased heritage awareness has had on planning, risk mitigation and project management.

My IIC experiences have both been brilliant, albeit very different. Attending the 2018 Turin Congress in person meant I was able to network with colleagues and experience people presenting their papers live. While the 2022 virtual conference was a triumph in accessibility, sustainability and convenience, I missed the in-person collegiate aspect. If possible, I will be prioritising attending conferences in person and delivering papers live moving forward as I find it a more enjoyable and enriching experience.

**Q | You became an accredited member of Icon in March 2019. Why do you feel accreditation is important?**

I have always wanted to be in management or leadership positions and knew that I had the ambition and skills to achieve this. However, due to my age and less than 10 years' experience in the sector, my professional opinions were often undermined and my career progression stunted. I saw achieving accreditation as a way to add irrefutable value to my CV as well as committing myself to becoming a more active leader within the conservation profession.

At the time of applying I was 29 and had only been working professionally for four years and knew this would present a challenge to the assessment committee. However, I had confidence in my experience and I think that made all the difference.

At the time, I could not afford to fund the process myself and decided



**My ambitions include continuing to learn and be curious, pushing for change and growth within our industry, and making conservation and collections care more profitable, accessible, diverse and mainstream**

to put together a business case to present to my employer, asking them to support the venture financially as well as agreeing it in my performance review. This was paramount to me being able to achieve accreditation, and I truly believe that if more employers made it a priority to support their employees in this venture we would see more conservators becoming accredited.

**Q | What else do you consider especially important in the world of conservation right now?**

I am constantly disheartened at the pay gap between professions with equal or lesser qualifications and training compared to heritage professionals. A consequence of this problem is the current lack of diversity within the conservation sector and the limited influx of new talent. With the cost of living rising, we are losing skills because professionals cannot afford to live off the current wages or are not willing to take the risk of temporary contract work.

The only way I can see this

changing is by professional bodies and members pushing for recognition of our qualifications and skills (such as through accreditation), more integration between the heritage sector and the construction/architectural/building management/project management and media sectors, and conservation as a profession becoming more recognised by the public.

The biggest shift will come when heritage organisations collectively adhere to competitive pay bands and secure contracts. This post-Covid era has brought with it adverts for zero-hour contracts, replacing roles which used to be permanent. This is hugely detrimental to the industry. How are conservators supposed to grow and develop the heritage field when we are constantly at odds with our employers over our own worth? Naturally, this stems back to the lack of funding within the heritage sector, a problem I haven't quite figured out how to solve yet!

**Q | Your career progression since graduating in 2014 is very impressive. What advice would you offer other Icon members who wish to progress and excel in their chosen specialism?**

When I began my training, I was sure I would be an interventive conservator working in a textile studio. Finding myself in a situation that was not part of my plan, and having to adapt to this experience, opened my eyes to the importance of developing transferable skills. I was willing to work at any and all heritage jobs, even if they weren't exactly in my specific field. A by-product of this is the huge amount of varied experience I amassed over a relatively short period of time, which has made me more employable and allowed my career to progress faster than anticipated.

**Q | Has anyone been a particular inspiration or support to you during your career so far?**

If I had to name specific people who continue to inspire and support me, I could fill an entire issue of *Iconnect*

**Left:** Aimee with her Icon accreditation certificate

**Right:** Aimee's dog Lemon on their travels through Europe



magazine. I'm most proud of being a graduate of the Historic Royal Palaces Intern programme because they gave me a solid foundation of experience. I have Kathryn Hallett and Kerren Harris to thank for this, and they continue to encourage and support me both personally and professionally.

**Q | What are your ambitions for the future?**

I am a fervent believer in questioning and improving current practices and knowledge. I will never recognise a problem without also bringing a solution to the table and I believe every person has the capacity to incite positive change. This is how I believe we ensure the continued growth and resilience of the heritage industry and the conservation profession.

Therefore, my ambitions include continuing to learn and be curious, pushing for change and growth within our industry, and making conservation and collections care more profitable, accessible, diverse and mainstream. So basically, to take over the world and cause some chaos!

**Q | Tell us a little bit about Aimee outside of work...**

If you haven't already guessed, I'm a whirlwind of eclectic, passionate energy. I'm constantly looking for

creative outlets and love to try new things. Last year I spent three weeks driving around Europe with my dog Lemon and I've been teaching myself construction skills because my dream is to buy and restore historic properties to turn them into artist's co-ops, studios and community creative spaces.

An interesting fact about me is that I currently live in a house on a waterlocked island in the Thames. This year I started a YouTube channel called *My Island Life*, with weekly episodes that document the experience of London island living as well as exploring the history of the local area and showcasing my DIY projects.

**To find out more** about the Restoration and Renewal Programme, scan the QR code. To watch Aimee's YouTube channel, *My Island Life*, visit [youtube.com/@islandaimee16](https://www.youtube.com/@islandaimee16)





BOYCE KEAY

**Above:** Networking at Icon's Members' Meeting

**Right:** Marsh Charitable Trust ambassador, Peter Anwyl-Harris

**Far right:** Icon's outgoing Interim Chair, Sophie Rowe ACR



# AND THE WINNER IS...

We shine a spotlight on the winners of the new Marsh Awards for the Conservation and Restoration of Objects and Collections

Much of the important work that conservators and heritage scientists do is hidden from public view, which in turn means that the associated benefits of this work often go unrecognised and are therefore not as highly valued as they should be.

In our continued efforts to raise the profile of those working in cultural heritage, Icon is thrilled to have partnered with the Marsh Charitable Trust to launch three new awards that will help to ensure that the work of conservation professionals is better recognised and more fully respected.

The Marsh Charitable Trust believes that people are at the heart of the charity sector because they voluntarily or professionally go above and beyond to make a difference. Their awards, which were first established in 1987, help to celebrate the outstanding contributions of these people who are committed to social, cultural and environmental causes.

Commenting on the new partnership and awards, Brian Marsh OBE, Chair of the Marsh Charitable Awards, said: "We are pleased to have presented these awards for the first time with Icon this year. The dedication of individuals, both volunteers and

professionals, to the continuation of conservation and heritage science cannot be overestimated and we are glad to be able to celebrate their contributions through these awards, which we hope will continue for many years to come."

The awards were presented at Icon's 2023 Members' Meeting on 11 May by Marsh Charitable Trust ambassador, Peter Anwyl-Harris, and Icon's outgoing Interim Chair, Sophie Rowe ACR.

Below you will find a brief outline of the exemplary work being carried out by each of this year's winners. Congratulations to you all!

## 2023 Marsh Award: Conservation in Action

**Winner:** Mary Evans, Icon Pathway member

**Project role:** Volunteer Conservation Lead and Training Coordinator

**Project outline:** First large-scale condition survey of a 300-year-old collection, library and archive owned by Spalding Gentlemen's Society

**Project dates:** 2021-2025

**Nominated by:** Ian Hoult, Honorary Curator, Spalding Gentlemen's Society

Established over 300 years ago, Spalding Gentlemen's Society has an extensive collection held in its museum, library and archive, including a rare specimen of tapestry by James Christopher Le Blon. Despite the cultural significance of many of its objects, the collection has never been formally reviewed and conservation work has been minimal. This needed to be addressed, not just to conserve the Society's collection but to move forward with planned buildings work, including a museum extension.

As the Society is a small, volunteer-led organisation, it appealed for volunteers to help conserve and safely store its collection. Located in a socially and culturally deprived area, the Society also wanted to use this project as an opportunity to inspire visitors and existing supporters, while widening the collection's appeal to those less able or willing to engage with cultural heritage. Conservator Mary Evans, who had previously supported the Society with smaller projects, offered



to volunteer her time and expertise to help coordinate and train a team of volunteers to condition check, clean, stabilise and pack the artefacts in coordination with the Society's honorary curator and librarian.

After 18-months under her tutelage, Mary's team of volunteers (with ages ranging from 16 to 90+) are already making excellent progress and the project has increased heritage engagement and developed a valuable feeling of health and social wellbeing in the process for all those involved. The project has also provided material to use constructively on social media and the Society's website, helping to promote the value of conservation in the preservation of heritage, appeal to a younger audience, and to show that this work is more than just an academic exercise.

Ian Hoult, Honorary Curator at the Society, commented in his nomination form: "During the process, we have been helped by numerous organisations with

SPALDING GENTLEMEN'S SOCIETY



BOYCE KEAY

**Above:** Mary Evans with a volunteer at Spalding Gentlemen's Society

**Left:** Marsh Award winner for Conservation in Action, Mary Evans (centre)

funding and built a reputation for doing good work, but this is only as good as the quality of those that lead a project. Mary has grown during this period to be an inspiring and very capable professional, willing to share knowledge and inspire those around her while never losing sight of the main focus for a conservator: preservation of the items in her care for future generations to enjoy.”

Commenting on her award, Mary told Icon: “I was incredibly honoured to have firstly been nominated for this award and then overwhelmed to have won this Marsh Award. I am privileged to work with an amazing group of people and look forward to our group and project going from strength to strength.”

**Finalist:** Project Team, English Heritage Trust

**Project:** Belsay Awakes

**Project outline:** An English Heritage and National Lottery Heritage Funded project at Belsay Hall, Castle and Gardens, Northumberland, encompassing reroofing the Hall, maintenance work to the Hall and Castle, a new café, a playpark, and major landscaping to the gardens and carparking area, improving access and new interpretation throughout.

**Finalist:** Project Team, National Trust

**Project:** Constable Revealed

**Project outline:** The conservation treatment of John Constable's The Opening of Waterloo Bridge. The project was undertaken in front of the public and created an opportunity for Sarah Maisey ACR (Senior Remedial Conservator, Paintings) to engage with renowned experts, film production companies and National Trust staff and volunteers, enabling the dissemination of key messages.

### 2023 Marsh Award: Early Career Conservators

**Winner:** Marina Herriges, Conservator, Icon Pathway member

**Project role:** Co-Investigator/Research Assistant, University of Glasgow

**Project outline:** Embedding environmental sustainability for active learning and student engagement in



Marsh Award winner for Early Career Conservators, Marina Herriges (centre)

textile conservation

**Project dates:** September 2020 – August 2022

**Nominated by:** Karen Thompson ACR, Senior Lecturer and Programme Co-convenor (MPhil Textile Conservation), University of Glasgow

This project grew out of Marina's dissertation research (MPhil Textile Conservation 2020) 'Challenges in textile conservation: Sustainability as key for the profession to move forward'.

The goals of the project were to embed sustainable practices in the MPhil Textile Conservation programme at the University of Glasgow and to foster an awareness in students that they can take into the wider profession through their placements, dissertation research and future work.

The project was developed as a collaboration between Karen Thompson ACR, other teaching staff and students on the MPhil Textile Conservation Programme, and Marina, as an external partner. As a recent graduate of the

programme, she brought knowledge and understanding of sustainable practices and experiences, demonstrating the important contribution that can be made by emerging conservators, both as a role model in leadership and an advocate for sustainable practices.

A pilot project undertaken by Marina and Karen during 2020-21 began to explore how to embed sustainability in the curriculum. As a result, they were awarded funding from the University of Glasgow's Learning and Teaching Development Fund during the academic year 2021-22 to further this study. Marina played an important role in the delivery, support and dissemination of the project, providing a range of lectures and workshops and working with students and staff to develop projects that could begin to build in sustainable practices.

Learning from others and building on existing practice has also been important. Through this project, staff and students developed links across Glasgow Life, Hunterian Museum and Kelvin Centre and

### THANK YOU TO OUR JUDGES

We would like to say a very big 'thank you' to the chairs and judges of the 2023 Marsh Awards for the Conservation and Restoration of Objects and Collections: Geanina Beres (Icon), Rebecca Bissonet ACR (Icon Member), Josep Grau Bove (Icon Member), Nic Boyes ACR (Icon Trustee), Catharine Bull (SPAB), Duygu Camurcuoglu ACR (Icon Member), Alan Chandler (University of East London), Louise Davison (Icon Trustee), Annie McCarthy (Marsh Charitable Trust), Katie Owen (Freelance Communications Specialist), Professor Anita Quye (Icon Trustee).

Marina also developed a connection with students and teachers at other universities. This helped the University of Glasgow to reflect on and contextualise its practices and contributed to wider debates and the exchange of ideas.

Marina identified and led opportunities for wider engagement in events and publications, providing students the opportunity to contribute to external facing activities. This included her leading the COP26 Edit-a-thon, which resulted in a related blog post and article for IIC. Marina, Karen and a student representative presented this work at the University's Learning and Teaching Conference in March 2022. In collaboration with Karen, Marina has also written a paper submitted for ICOM-CC 2023 and will present it on behalf of the project team.

Commenting on her award, Marina told Icon: “I am very grateful and honoured for this award. This project is very important to me, personally and professionally. I am also very appreciative of Karen Thompson's generosity in nominating me. Karen trusted my research interests and skills since day one; I am very thankful for her support.”

### 2023 Marsh Award: Research in Conservation

**Winner:** Dr David Thickett

**Project role:** Senior Conservation Scientist, English Heritage

**Project outline:** Showcase research and development

**Project dates:** 2003 onwards

**Nominated by:** Dr Naomi Luxford, Conservation Scientist, English Heritage

Throughout his career, Dr David Thickett's research has advanced our understanding of showcases and their use with collections. This has included assessing the effectiveness of the existing showcase designs, testing cases to determine their performance, and investigating new designs and methods to improve their efficacy in protecting collections.

Aware that the wrong case design or materials can increase

deterioration to the collections inside, while working at the British Museum, David further developed the 3-in-1 Oddy test method to help mitigate pollution risks to objects inside showcases. Many years later, he continues to assess the Oddy test methodology and to share this knowledge with others so that the test and its results can be widely applied.

David's research has also led to the development of a practical way of measuring air exchange rates (AERs) in showcases. It is now standard practice at English Heritage (EH) and many other institutions to test the AER of all showcases. This has transformed our understanding of the relationship between AERs and case performance, as AERs impact on everything, from dust deposition and pollution concentration to environmental control performance. His research in this area has provided valuable evidence for showcase specifications and technical requirements – knowledge that has been used with showcase manufacturers to develop a standard for the design of showcases.

In addition, David has developed tools to assess the performance of different environmental control approaches, particularly addressing risks to archaeological metals and the use of low relative humidity (RH) display environments to prevent corrosion. This work has enabled

highly vulnerable materials to be publicly displayed in the historic buildings they are associated with, whilst at the same time minimising the significant burden of regular silica gel changes, making low RH showcases more sustainable.

Alongside his many presentations and publications, David has provided training sessions on showcases, AER testing and Oddy testing internally, at EH, and externally, through Icon and other organisations, to share the results of this work with the wider conservation and heritage community. This dissemination means the high-quality research outcomes are available, both academically and to all those involved in cultural heritage, via the EH website, journals, conferences and in-person training.

**Commended:** Kate Jennings, Icon Associate member

**Project role:** Metalwork Conservation Subject Leader, West Dean College of Arts and Conservation

**Project outline:** Replicating Old Sheffield Plate. This collaborative project benefitted both the Winterthur Institute at the University of Delaware and West Dean College students, helping them to learn the nuanced process of fused silver plating.

**Project dates:** October 2022 – January 2023

**Nominated by:** Caitlin Young, Metalwork Conservation Student, West Dean College of Arts and Conservation



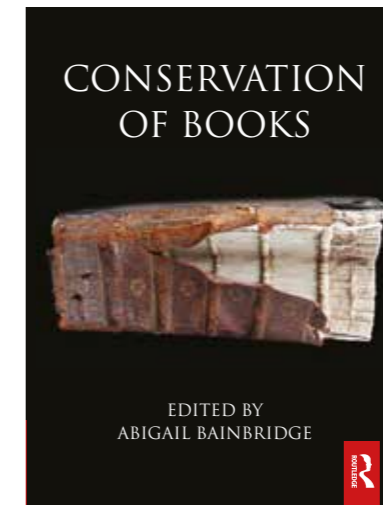
Marsh Award winner for Research in Conservation, Dr David Thickett (centre)

Abigail Bainbridge ACR shares her experiences of compiling *Conservation of Books*, the first reference book of its kind

# AN OPEN BOOK

In August 2019, an editor from Routledge got in touch and asked me to submit a proposal for a text on book conservation. Six months prior, they had asked me to review someone else's book proposal and at the end of the form was a question asking if I had any book ideas of my own. "A book on book conservation," I wrote casually, "we don't have one of those." My furniture conservator husband, Tristram, loved *Conservation of Furniture* and there was also *Textile Conservation*, *Conservation of Leather* and the recently updated *Conservation of Easel Paintings*. But despite the obvious irony, *Conservation of Books* hadn't yet materialised.

I accepted Routledge's invitation but where to start? I knew it needed to cover book structures and not just European ones. But what kind of taxonomy sorts all the different binding styles in a way that makes sense? It also needed to cover conservation techniques but should this be as a how-to, step-by-step guide with photos? Colleagues expressed alarm: what about the general public picking up the book and doing a bit of DIY book repair? Then how about a broad overview, that doesn't go into details? Recent graduates weighed in, frowning: they wanted a text to refer to when they didn't feel confident, that would tell them everything they needed to know.



So, I asked a colleague who had previously worked on a big book project for advice and she said: "No way – you'll never be able to do it without funding and an institution over you." At the time I was teaching part time and running a business with Tristram. The imposter syndrome over whether I was experienced enough to do this weighed heavy, but equally I didn't want to bring someone significantly more senior on board as co-editor and lose sight of what was my project. Our twins were about to turn three in December and we all know what happened in March 2020.

## Planning the content

Over the spring and summer, I slowly refined my ideas and finally submitted a proposal to Routledge in August 2020. For this I needed to define the book's goals, identify the target audience, produce an outline and wish list of authors against each chapter, review the competition and suggest a timeline. The proposal would be submitted for peer review

and if it passed muster, I'd get the go ahead.

What eventually materialised was a book in five parts covering book structures, materials used in bookbinding and their degradation, ethics, preservation and treatments. We would aim it broadly at early to mid-career conservators, making sure it was still a useful reference book for everyone, but assuming a base level of knowledge that would allow us to cover more ground than if we had to start at the beginning.

Treatments would be described on the broader end of the scale to manage word count and avoid suggestions of a one-size-fits-all possibility. Book structures would be arranged geographically(ish), acknowledging the challenges of talking about Islamic or Jewish bindings within that framework. Authors would be asked to try to de-centre the European book wherever they could so that the text would be as balanced and widely applicable as possible.

It took a few weeks to get the proposal peer reviewed by the colleagues I suggested (I think – as each review was blind, I didn't know who had said what). As with peer-reviewed articles, I took some of the feedback on board, discarded other bits and then re-submitted the proposal for approval by some 'higher-ups' at Routledge, eventually signing a contract in October 2020.

## Word counts and figures

Sadly, none of the contributing authors got as many words – or images – as they wanted. While the overall word count was initially daunting (225,000 minimum, 250,000 maximum), when I started dividing that up into as many pots as we needed, it didn't look nearly enough. For a lot of the subjects we were hoping to cover there could be, and have been, entire books written. For others there was much more research available so the word count sometimes reflected this as opposed to the size or importance of the subject covered. Just from a question of scale, it was obvious from >

the beginning that a broad overview would be needed for each subject and bibliographies would point the reader to more in-depth information.

I was also given a small 'figure' allocation at first, which I negotiated up to 98. Routledge count a figure as an image, text box, table, graph – anything that is not straight text. It felt impossible at first until I realised that I could batch multiple images together as one figure. Georgios Boudalis, then Katerina Williams and Roger Williams (not related), offered to make illustrations where possible, which was an amazing gift. It allowed us to show certain features more clearly, as well as multiple possibilities for a structure in a single image. It also provided a level of consistency in style across the book. Budget only allowed for black and white printing (which was a shame, but out of my control) and colour wouldn't be missed in illustrations.

I put together a detailed outline on Google Sheets, with suggested word counts against each chapter and sub-chapter. I allocated 30,000 words to the bibliography with about as much confidence as I would use to predict the weather in England, and applied a calculation to divide that up proportionally for each chapter. I sprinkled figure counts across the rows and listed the names of authors as I signed them up and only put my name down against the foreword, correctly predicting that I would need to step in to fill gaps later.

### Sourcing authors

I chose authors according to a few criteria. My primary goal was to have reliable, strong writers with a collaborative approach. The vast majority were conservators so that the particularities of book structure and conservation could be considered, regardless of subject. I also brought on board conservators from other specialisms to cover some of the materials and treatments, such as wood and metal.

For some subjects, there were recognised experts with international reputations. For others, there were people I met during my years of



teaching who I knew could do a great job but weren't as well known. It felt important to me that that the book was not a who's who of recognised names in the field and that people with less experience could benefit professionally from the platform this book would create.

For a few of the subjects, I went on recommendations from colleagues. A particularly uncomfortable part of the process was organising people and content around areas I knew nothing about. I just tried to be upfront about this with the authors and leave them to make decisions that I couldn't. Some of the authors

already knew me well, but there were others I still haven't met in person and I am so grateful that they trusted me enough to put their time and expertise into this project.

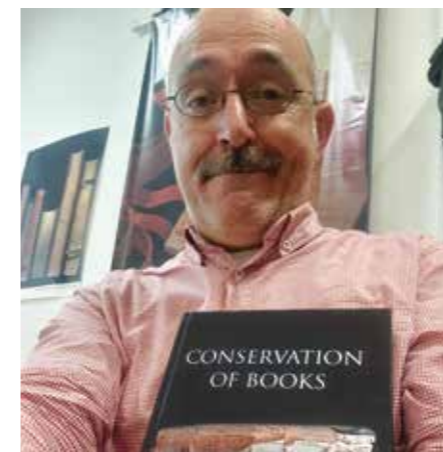
### Deadlines, deadlines

By November 2020 I had names against most of the chapters, so I set November 2021 as the deadline for submissions, asking for outlines by around February so we could coordinate an approach. I set up documents for abstracts, biographies and other things we would need for the final submission that could be worked on, as and

### ABOUT THE AUTHOR



**Abigail Bainbridge** ACR is a book and paper conservator and Director of Bainbridge Conservation. She has taught extensively on the degree programmes at West Dean College, Camberwell College of Art, and City & Guilds of London Art School. She has an MA in Conservation Studies from West Dean College and a BFA from the Maryland Institute College of Art. Abigail is an Icon accreditation assessor and mentor, sits on the Royal Society of Chemistry's Heritage Science Expert Working Group, and was Treasurer then Chair of the Icon Book & Paper Group for eight years. [www.bainbridgeconservation.com/cob](http://www.bainbridgeconservation.com/cob)



**Above:** Georgios Boudalis, a contributing author who also helped to produce illustrations

**Left:** Abigail assessing a set of large 19th-century English springback bindings

**Right:** XRF analysis of the inks in a potentially medieval Torah (Manuscript Scrolls Trust, Scroll 1540) with Grzegorz Nehring and Ira Rabin at Bundesanstalt für Materialforschung und -prüfung, Berlin



when people had time.

The number of authors fluctuated over the course of the project but in the end there were 70, spread all over the world. And there was as much variety in their attitude towards deadlines as you can imagine, from early submissions in the summer of 2021 ("I'm aiming for teacher's pet," said one author) to dropping out entirely, a month or two before the final deadline of July 2022.

The effect of missed deadlines turned out to be as much a mental load problem as a practical one. While there was no way I could read all 250,000 words at once if everyone submitted their copy on 1 November 2021, for a long time I worried about whether enough would ever get sent in to even produce a book.

Despite an increasingly colourful Google Sheet tracking progress, just keeping up with who I'd pestered and when felt like a full-time job. I began to realise that if I'd been smarter, I would have lied about the deadline and claimed it was a couple of months earlier. Of course, in the middle of all this, everyone was dealing with Covid alongside day-to-day life and delays were inevitable. Many of the authors were managing full-time jobs, other projects, illness, loss of family members, birth of children and so on, not to mention quarantines that made access to research material difficult to impossible.

And while everyone was busy

writing, occasionally one of the authors or I would notice with a panic that a subject hadn't been covered. Georgios Boudalis and Julia Miller covered the birth of the codex in the Eastern Mediterranean for instance, but suddenly I realised we were leaving out early codices in China; they had their own genesis. Minah Song gamely stepped in and added a section. And when Minah wanted to write about Korean printing ink and we otherwise hadn't covered printing ink as material at all, we added new chapters quite late in the day on East Asian inks (Minah) and European inks (Elizabeth Savage and Linda Stiber Morenus).

The ultimate 'hats off', however, goes to Jen Anderson, who agreed about six weeks before the final deadline to write an entire chapter on leather conservation as the original author couldn't contribute. I also ended up writing or co-writing six chapters myself. In general, I acted as content editor, copy editor and peer reviewer, unless there was a subject I wasn't comfortable with or it was something I had written myself, in which case I passed along drafts to colleagues for review.

A whole figure-generation project ran alongside this with its own spreadsheet. I made the decision up front not to use any figures if the author didn't hold copyright to avoid making the paperwork even more complicated. Nevertheless, we still needed to turn in a massive

spreadsheet with figure numbers, file names, captions, credits and copyright statuses.

### Over to the publishers

As we neared the deadline, I spent increasingly more time during my workday, evenings and weekends working with the authors to get their chapters finished and tied into each other, checking in periodically to ask my editorial assistant if we could have another 10,000 words or so. Finally, in August 2022, I submitted everything to Routledge and sat back to wait for a production team to take over. I passed the time by reading the book again to make a list of words to be indexed, in the hope of saving time at that stage. It was hard to decide where to draw the line – *Anobium punctatum*, and *pest*, yes. *Furniture beetle*? Okay. *Book worm*? “Oh yes,” my book dealer friend nodded eagerly. “And *worm*.”

In October a freelance copy editor was assigned. She and I and many of the authors went through the whole book again to clean it up. I had paid absolutely no attention to the formatting of the bibliographies and it was as if someone waved a magic wand and sorted these all out. However, there was still more changing for me to do later in December when the typesetters came in and changed the format from Word documents into a single PDF with page spreads.

In the two weeks leading up to Christmas, the authors and I went through all the chapters again to find as many mistakes as we could, trying not to affect the pagination with any changes we made. Over the Christmas holiday I then indexed the book, deciding on a final list of words and finding all the corresponding page numbers. The publishing assistant and I went back and forth some more as the typesetters corrected the errors we had spotted, only for us to spot more. At some point, we finally accepted that we'd done our best and sent it off to be printed and bound. By now, the twins had turned six.

Around the same time, we were working on the cover design. While it had to fit in with the style

The image used on the cover of *Conservation of Books*, showing a 1592 Geneva Bible that Abigail treated for St Nicholas' Church, Thames Ditton (London)



of Routledge's book series in conservation and museology, I could pick a front and back cover image. The image on the front is a British binding that I worked on, after treatment, but because so much structure is exposed it looks like it could be partway through treatment and I liked leaving that up to the reader's imagination. It also shows some of the book's insides. On the back is a book before treatment from one of the authors, Kristine Rose-Beers, showing endband structure and damage on an Islamic binding.

The official publication date was 27 March 2023 but most of the authors got their contributor copies a couple of weeks earlier and the internet was flooded with images of the book. As the editor I was sent six copies along with two others to use as display copies at the launch party scheduled a month later. The kids were shocked

**It felt important to me that that the book was not a who's who of recognised names in the field and that people with less experience could benefit professionally from the platform this book would create**

that there were so many; it turned out that since I'm a book conservator and sometimes make one-off bindings, they thought this whole time I was writing one single copy of a book. I laughed and told them that lots of copies would be made and that each copy would sell for about £200. Six-year-old maths kicked in and their little heads almost exploded in anticipation of maybe selling *five* and becoming *rich*.

You might not be surprised to learn that I have not become rich. Sales have apparently done very well but at the time of writing, I think my takings are around £3000 for two and a half years of work, so I can't recommend this as a revenue stream for conservators. I should have applied for funding but in the beginning I was too nervous about whether the book would work out at all to accept someone else's money, in the middle I was too busy and at the end it was too late.

The book itself is an excellent example of the general trend towards faster and cheaper since about the beginning of the 19th century. With no input from me, I promise, it has an adhesive binding and paper-covered case binding with a stiff spine (see chapter 7.2). I'm sure it will exhibit classic damage of the structure quite quickly unless shelved flat or with a book shoe with textblock support (see chapter 20.1) and read with book supports (see chapter 21). The reader will then be faced with some decision-making about possible treatment (see chapter 15).

# NEWS FROM ICON'S GROUPS AND NETWORKS

## MODERN MATERIALS NETWORK ENJOY EXHIBITION



A visit to the Design Museum's Objects of Desire: Surrealism and Design 1924

– Today exhibition followed by a behind the scenes tour started the Modern Materials Network (MMN) events programme for the year.

As our small, diverse group of conservators wandered around the exhibition, we were intrigued and delighted by the objects on display and chatted about the challenges these pose to the people in charge of their care. The exhibition was both glamorous and beautiful, full of masterpieces of design and many instantly recognisable icons, and quite a few new (to us) surrealist discoveries. A lot of the surrealist designs would not have been possible without modern materials and, indeed, it's often the properties of modern materials that make the objects surreal.

Tom Wilson, Head of Collection and Research at the Design Museum, kindly gave us a tour of their superbly organised on-site storage. We got a chance to browse the shelves and ask Tom lots of questions. The museum's collection is relatively small at around 4,000 objects, spanning from the early 1900s to today, and is full of design classics. It consists mainly of mass-produced objects but recently they have acquired the Sir Terence Conran archive, which is very important to them as he founded the Design Museum in Shad Thames in 1989.



**Above:** The radio collection held in the Design Museum store

**Above right:** Some of the many instantly recognisable signs in storage at the Design Museum

**Right:** The UP7 foot chair by Gaetano Pesce looks solid but is made from polyurethane foam

Tom told us that the Design Museum has no staff conservator but uses Icon's Conservation Register to find conservators when needed. Otherwise, Tom is looking after their collection singlehandedly, helped only by a small robotic vacuum cleaner (Roomba) that sometimes gets stuck in the rails for



FABIANA PORTONI

the roller racking!

Please keep an eye on the MMN's webpages and follow us on Twitter (@IconMMN) for information about future visits to less well-known museums, where we can see some historic collections of modern materials.

**With thanks to Jannicke Langfeldt**

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## THE BOOK & PAPER GROUP EVENTS AND TRAINING UPDATE

 The last few months have been busy for Icon's Book & Paper Group as we have been gearing up for a dynamic, event-filled 2023!

The Events and Training Subcommittee has been working hard to develop ideas and reach out to peers from varying conservation disciplines to deliver an exciting programme of events across the year. These provide opportunities for conservators to share their skills and research, deepen our knowledge and learn new practical skills. We are pleased to say that this year we are bringing back in-person events alongside online talks, providing further opportunities for face-to-face networking which so many of us have missed.

In March we hosted a fascinating online lecture with Amsterdam-based conservator, Herre de




**Above:** Bindings by Hunia in the Richthofen collection, Tresoor, the Netherlands


Vries, who talked about how he identified master bookbinder Roelof Hunia (1722–1803) from the books he bound. The event was well attended and Herre gave us an intriguing insight into how the material evidence we preserve as conservators is used in the historical research of books.

In May we kicked off with two major event series. We continue to work with the Textiles Group on A Patchwork of Shared Skills,

promoting understanding and collaboration between our two specialisms with a trio of lectures. We are also delighted to work with conservator Abigail Bainbridge ACR on a series, celebrating the launch of the new publication, *Conservation of Books* (see page 38). The events relate to the different chapters, from wide-ranging practical workshops to online lectures on Korean bookbindings (27 July) and Swiss Anabaptist devotional bookbindings (14 September). We are also working with the Heritage Science Group and are planning a joint event for later in the year.

For updates on all our upcoming events, please keep an eye on the Icon website and follow us on social media:

 @IconBook\_Paper


 @iconbookandpaper

**With thanks to the Icon Book & Paper Group Committee**

**Below:** Haizea Salazar-Basañez discusses managing mould outbreaks affecting contemporary artwork



## CARE OF COLLECTIONS GROUP TAKE A CLOSE LOOK AT MOULD AT RECENT AGM

 The 2023 Icon Care of Collections Group (CCG) Annual General Meeting was held on 26 April. Along with the usual order of business, talks were presented from across the globe on The Recurring Issue of Mould.

We began proceedings with brilliant presentations by Claire Dean from Tuille House, looking at how to identify mould from its doppelgängers. Case studies were then provided from the National Trust, British Library and independent museums in both the UK and USA, looking at different treatment methods and their level of success or failure.

To close, we had a fascinating look at contemporary artwork with Haizea Salazar-Basañez where mould outbreaks cannot be removed but must somehow be managed, which got us all thinking about our relationship with mould and objects.

The CCG aims to follow on from this conference with a series of tips, hacks and information on dealing with mould. Follow us on social media (@CCG\_ICON) to find out more.

**With thanks to Kayleigh Spring**

## NIKKIE SAYRE REFLECTS ON INTERNATIONAL LECTURES

 I attended both of the Student Lunchtime Lectures organised by the Ceramics & Glass Group held on 18 April and 4 May and was delighted to find they featured a wide array of fascinating projects.

All the presenters did a fantastic job at representing their projects in an easy-to-follow manner, while also bringing up interesting technical points which expanded my understanding of how to approach complex conservation problems. The presentations included discussing the careful creation of structural support fills on archeological glass, the consolidation of cold painted labels on wet specimen jars, the ethical and technical challenges presented when treating unfired clay, the conservation of papyrus substrate on an Egyptian cartonnage mask, approaches to organising and bonding pottery sherds in field conservation and an overview of

work experiences done by students in the conservation field. I particularly enjoyed learning about Chenyue Xu's project, which featured 3-D modelling of excavation spot spreads as well as the digital reconstruction of vessels.

As international events, the lectures brought together perspectives from the UK, the Netherlands, Switzerland and South Africa and nurtured a strong sense of camaraderie and information sharing. Aided by PowerPoint, each presenter/group spoke for approximately 10 minutes before participating in a Q&A session in which the viewing community had the opportunity to engage with




the material and deep dive into the specifics of the various treatments and experiences presented. During these Q&A sessions many excellent points were brought up and added beautifully to the information provided.

Overall, it was an excellent opportunity to see what my fellow conservation students are working on and exploring, as well as a special insight into the process of decision making when treating an array of objects.

**With thanks to Nikkie Sayre, Student at West Dean College**

**Above:** Chenyue Xu working in the Palloures Pot Cluster Restoration Project in Cyprus

## TEXTILES GROUP PROVIDES FURTHER DETAILS OF UPCOMING EVENTS FOR EMERGING PROFESSIONALS

 The Icon Textiles Group has two events planned for emerging professionals later this year.

The first will be a visit to the V&A on Friday 22 September to look at methods of display in the galleries. Numbers will be limited so please look out for the event being advertised soon if you'd like to book.

The second is the Icon Textiles Group Emerging Professionals and Student Event – An Introduction to Textile Conservation, which will take place on Friday 3 November at the University of Lincoln. So far confirmed speakers include upholstery conservator Heather Porter ACR and textile conservators Claire Golbourn ACR, Deborah Phipps and Alison Lister ACR. The speakers will discuss their varied pathways and experiences working as textile conservators for the National Trust, in museums, private practice and freelance. The diverse skills useful in textile conservation will be discussed, to offer emerging professionals and students an insight into the opportunities available in the sector.

Those attendees who are emerging professionals can apply for a travel grant from the Anna Plowden Trust/Clothworkers' Foundation CPD Grants fund which supports practising conservators in the UK by contributing towards the cost of short courses and attending conferences. For anyone wishing to try for a grant, the relevant deadline this year is 9 September ([www.annaplowdentrust.org.uk](http://www.annaplowdentrust.org.uk))

Further details about the events will be published on Icon's social media and the website in the coming months. Please direct any questions you have to [heymlmelinda@gmail.com](mailto:heymlmelinda@gmail.com)

**With thanks to Melinda Hey**



**Above:** Heather Porter ACR delivering her Icon Back to Basics upholstery conservation training course

**Left:** Textile conservator Deborah Phipps of the Norfolk Museums





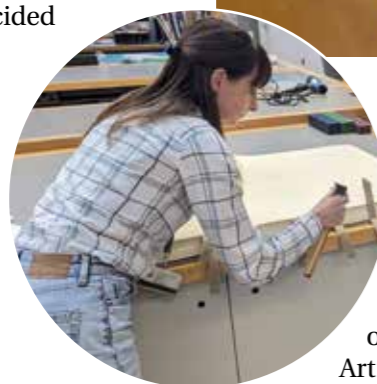
**Tell us about your background...**

**Zoë (mentor):** During my Fine Art degree, I developed an interest in the narrative potential of damage and degradation of materials, so conservation seemed perfect. After studying at Camberwell, I secured a summer internship in the library of the American Museum of Natural History in New York. From there, I applied for a job at the British Library, based then at the British Museum Bindery, and have worked here since – a brilliant but surprising 20 years!

**Hayley (mentee):** I decided to study conservation a few years after completing a Fine Art and Art History degree at Kingston University. At the time I had been working in various jobs and volunteering with museums in Bristol. I began the Masters in Conservation of Fine Art at Northumbria University in 2020 without having any real conservation experience. I chose the Easel Painting pathway as I felt I already had a good understanding of paintings due to my own experience as a painter. I found the first year of the master's course very challenging because of the restrictions caused by the pandemic; there wasn't a lot of opportunity to get hands-on! By the second year there was much



**Above:** Zoë working on an early edition of Peter Pan  
**Left:** Zoë doing conservation work on a large atlas



improvement and I graduated with a distinction in 2022. When I finished university, I was offered a job at the Fine Art Restoration Company (FARCo), having previously worked there as an intern during the summer. My time at FARCo was fantastic; I gained huge amounts of practical experience and improved my decision-making skills and general confidence in the field.

**Why did you take part in Icon's Student Mentor Programme in 2021?**

**Zoë:** Having supported interns and students over the years, I felt I could

help Icon's new initiative. At the British Library, we have adapted our training over many years to match a changing profession and to help the next generation close the gap between qualifying and being employment-ready. Underfunding in heritage and the challenges of a pandemic have eroded students' opportunity for practical experience. The experience of a conservator who is navigating work alongside life, family and organisational change can therefore be really valuable for new conservators.

**Hayley:** I applied to join the programme during my first year at Northumbria. I was the first person in my family to attend university and I often felt as if I needed someone to talk to about developing the soft skills which would help me in my career. The process of applying for the programme was quick and easy, and I was very pleased to be accepted. Zoë and I had our first meeting in September 2021 and throughout the year we met over Zoom for a one-hour chat, although I did also journey down to London to meet her in person at the British Library. Now that our official mentorship has ended, we continue to meet every few months to catch up.

# THE VALUE OF MENTORSHIPS

**Zoë Miller ACR and Hayley Livingstone** reflect on the benefits of taking part in Icon's first Student Mentor Programme

**What sort of topics did you discuss?**

**Zoë:** I shared experiences, positive and negative, of the realities of getting things done at work. The value of skills such as communication, decision-making, presentation, time management and how to use a portfolio to support an interview, even when nervous! Hayley's insight and experiences were fascinating, such as her dissertation research and professional interests, and I shared day-to-day challenges at work.

Having navigated returning to work part-time after having children, I shared how this has affected earnings and aspirations but also improved valuable skills like influencing, planning and organisation – a gift of parenting! We reflected on challenges such as gaining accredited status with young children, entering conservation leadership after years at the bench and how to nurture specialist areas of expertise (I know a lot about iron gall ink now!). I've enjoyed discussions with Hayley on all sorts of issues including how long to stay in the same job and the choices I've made in my journey.

**What did you learn from each other and how did you benefit from the programme?**

**Zoë:** I've enjoyed understanding more about what paintings

**The hardest part of being an emerging conservator is following work around the country and having to uproot your life in the process**

conservation students learn – such as colour matching exams and painting techniques – and hearing from Hayley about conserving work by living artists and how artistic intention interacts with decisions in conservation.

Most poignantly, it reinforces the financial and geographic uncertainties faced by new graduates and the dedication and commitment required to pursue a career. Colleagues have to make really difficult choices between their conservation work and their

personal life and a mentor can share experience to help explore those tough decisions.

**Hayley:** Zoë and I are from different specialisms of conservation, and although we do talk about our current projects and the materials and techniques we use, our rich and valuable discussions mainly focus on issues and skills that are relevant to conservators from all specialisms. We often speak about my professional development and career goals, and how to achieve these. We also discuss the ever-present issue of low salaries and lack of work in the sector. We both felt comfortable enough to share details about our personal lives with each other. This mutual understanding strengthened our mentor/mentee relationship and has really helped me to navigate what the world of conservation is really like.

**What's next for Zoë and Hayley?**

**Zoë:** I lead a brilliant team of inspiring, hardworking conservators – naturally including an intern!

I find it so rewarding to be a small part of shaping their careers and knowledge as we continue to develop as a team. We will be looking for a new conservation intern very soon.

**Hayley:** The hardest part of being an emerging conservator is following work around the country and having to uproot your life in the process. Although I loved my job at FARCo, the studio was based in Carlisle. Recently I felt compelled to leave in order to look for work in the South West of England, to be near my friends and family. I'm currently in the scary situation which many of my peers from Northumbria are facing; looking for work!



**Above:** Hayley at FARCo during her placement  
**Inset:** Hayley working on a repair at FARCo

**Are you interested** in taking part in Icon's Student Mentor Programme? Scan the QR code to learn more.



# POISON DART WARNING

Dr Marianne Davy Ball ACR, an ethnographic conservator and researcher, raises her concerns about the handling and storage of poison darts



A Penan dart with poisoned arrowhead for large game



Penan poisoned darts and dart paraphernalia

It has been a great privilege over the years to have spent time with various Malaysian Orang Asal groups, enjoying chats and knowledge exchange on a variety of subjects as part of my research. Recently, I have also met people from a number of new groups and it is during these conversations that a concern of mine as an ethnographic conservator has continued to present itself.

Many museums contain darts from blowpipes, some of which can be seen loose in drawers or in unmarked containers, often with little in the way of attached documentation. These darts come from a huge number of geographical regions, including sub-Saharan Africa, South-East Asia, Polynesia and the Amazon Basin. Notes on dart poison can also be found in Chinese literature.

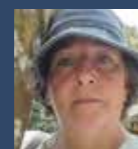
To this day, the Temiar of Pahang and the Iban and Penan of Sarawak, amongst others, are all forest hunters who are using dart poison from the latex of the Ipoh, Upas or Tajem tree *Antiaris toxicaria*, shot from blowpipes. This tree can be found across Africa, South-East Asia and much of the Pacific, and the poison can be referred to as either 'Ipoh' or 'Upas' in Malaysia. Ipoh latex

contains cardiac glycosides which, when injected into the bloodstream from the sharp little dart tip, causes paralysis of the central nervous system and cardiac arrest.

According to information I was given recently, in some areas of Borneo the Ipoh poison is traditionally mixed with other toxins, particularly those found in the local millipedes, to increase potency: other sources talk of it mixed with the *Strychnos ignatia*, or St Ignatius Bean, from the same genus as *Curare Strychnos toxifera* – both potent sources of strychnine. My latest trip to the Penan in April this year produced further, unexpected information about their practice of mixing the tree poison with cobra venom.

Although there is a local antidote to Ipoh poison, it is not something available outside the area and must be administered immediately. It also does not act on any of the other toxic additives which may be in the poison.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Dr Marianne Davy Ball ACR is a freelance ethnographic and social history conservator and researcher into traditional craft technologies, much of which has been based in SE Asia. She is currently researching traditional Chinese craftsmanship in Ipoh, Malaysia; publishing a book on the *Crafts of the Orang Ulu, Sarawak, Malaysia*; and consulting on an entomology museum renovation. marieannedavy@yahoo.com



Jalong Kieheng, a Penan with his blowpipe with its spear tip



A Temiar man from Pahang, cooking latex from the Ipoh tree to make dart poison

Any attending physician would have to be familiar with the possible types of poison involved in the production of these darts to be able to administer medicinal antidotes.

For museum collections, the assumption appears to be that age will have nullified the toxins and the poison will no longer be active. However, in my talks with the groups who use these poisons, this is not the case. They are horrified that such potent toxins should be unrecognised in collections and say that age makes no difference to the toxicity: they are still very much able to kill and as such, should be fully labelled as a hazard/toxin and not to be handled without full precautions in place, undertaken by knowledgeable museum personnel.

## ICON'S PEOPLE

### Welcome, new members

We would like to wish a very warm welcome to all those who joined us in February, March and April 2023. We look forward to seeing you at an Icon event soon!

#### Student

- Yasmin Barghi
- Jamie Bennett
- Laura Bolick
- Abigail Buckland
- Jay Evans-Wheeler
- Fiona Gillespie
- Tom Greenway
- Andie Griffin
- Jess Hay
- Portia Lawson
- Wesley Leak
- Sara Leonowitz
- Isabel Lewis
- Liu Liu
- Jamie Rees
- Sophie Russell
- Mariya Salyuk
- Mary Scott
- Ellen Seidell
- Lucy Wadsworth
- Katie Wilkie
- Thomas Yeung

#### Associate

- Megan Barnett
- Sophie Barraclough
- Rachel Beard
- Amalina Dave
- Sangeeta Debashis

#### Hollie

- Drinkwater
- Amanda Garratt
- Nicola Grahamslaw
- Sydney Heath
- Jamie Hood
- Owen Lazzari
- Alexander Musgrave
- Joanna Neville
- Eleanor Palmer
- Jade Pinkett

#### Pathway

- Alafia Akhtar
- Philip Barrant
- Xsusha CarlyAnn Flandro
- Amy Meeson
- Galini Stergiou
- Alison Torbitt

#### Supporter

- Rowena Bowles
- Sophie Bryan
- Annika Erikson
- Hannah Ford
- Cameron Nairn
- Katrielle Pearse
- Vicky Rees
- Fred Simmons
- Port Sunlight
- Lucy Witts



BOYCE KEAY

## MOVING ON TO PASTURES NEW

Icon bids a fond farewell to Dr Michael Nelles, former Head of Membership, who has recently left Icon to take up another senior membership role within the field of cultural heritage.

Michael joined Icon in 2014, taking on responsibility for Icon's membership team and the provision of services to members. A naturally outgoing character, Michael was always keen to meet members and get involved, quickly becoming a common fixture at Icon Group and Network events and AGMs.

With responsibility for Icon's conferences, Michael was heavily involved in planning and development work for Icon's 2015 triennial conference in Birmingham and project-managed the 2019 conference in Belfast. He also took on a series of IT projects including the redevelopment of Icon's Conservation Register in 2018, with support from a Task and Finish Group appointed by Icon's Board. More recently, he project-managed the complete revamp of the membership magazine, leading to its

transformation into the present *Iconnect* magazine that you are currently reading!

"It's been so rewarding to have had the chance to get to know so many of Icon's members over the last nine years," Michael commented. "I'll definitely miss being involved and catching up with you all, so please do stay in touch!"

We all wish Michael the best of luck in his new role as Membership Manager at the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings (SPAB).

## AND MOVING UP AT ICON...

Finally, congratulations to Icon's **Jess Lock** (right), who was promoted to Membership Manager in April 2023 (previously Membership Officer) and **Geanina**



**Bereş** (left), who is now Communications Manager (previously Communications Officer).





# HANGING BY A THREAD

**Sue Tapliss**, Director of Whitchurch Silk Mill in Hampshire, talks about conservation work and making the craft of silk weaving sustainable



Nigel Spender conserving the waterwheel at Whitchurch Silk Mill

## Who does your conservation work?

Icon member Nigel Spender is our appointed industrial heritage conservator. His work, knowledge and the machinery support he provides is second to none. We are also very aware that while silk weaving skills are on the endangered list, Nigel's work as a millwright is also critically endangered.

## Tell us about some of Nigel's conservation work

A key part of his work has been conserving, maintaining and repairing the waterwheel, which takes power from the River Test. It really is the heartbeat of the mill – you can feel its rhythm throughout the building, which is really important for our visitor experience.

Nigel has also conserved the warping mill and just started work on our looms. He is also helping our two Weaver Tacklers to better understand the workings of our machines. Although they won't be able to conserve or remanufacture parts, they will be more switched on to the needs of the machinery, which will make our craft more sustainable.

## What other plans do you have for the future?

We are very much a visitor experience and our visitors will always be key to our success. But to make the craft of silk weaving and the mill more sustainable, we'd like to sell our silk elsewhere in the country – such as through high-end stores or bespoke suit makers on Savile Row. We're quite a long way off from that, but that's our vision!



Whitchurch Silk Mill

## Tell us about Whitchurch Silk Mill

It's a Grade II\*-listed regency mill built in 1815. It is one of just three mills in the country still weaving silk but, since 1990, we've also been a working museum. Our remit is to preserve Whitchurch Silk Mill, to tell the story of Whitchurch's place in the history of silk making and to preserve the skills needed to operate the machinery.

This year the Heritage Craft Association listed the craft of silk ribbon weaving as critically endangered and silk weaving as endangered. As we're a small mill with just 12 looms, it really is a case of the survival of the smallest.

## What is your role at the mill?

A huge part of my job is trying to balance the budget. We receive



valuable income from the museum/visitor experience, which is managed by Whitchurch Silk Mill Trust, and on the operations side we have Whitchurch Silk Mill (Trading) Limited, which includes a riverside café and gift shop that sells our branded silk.

However, it's very expensive running the mill so to fill the gap we do a lot of fundraising.

Recently we were successful in securing some resilience and recovery funding from the National Lottery Heritage Fund, which will pay for a trainee weaver and the conservation of three looms and a pirn winder.

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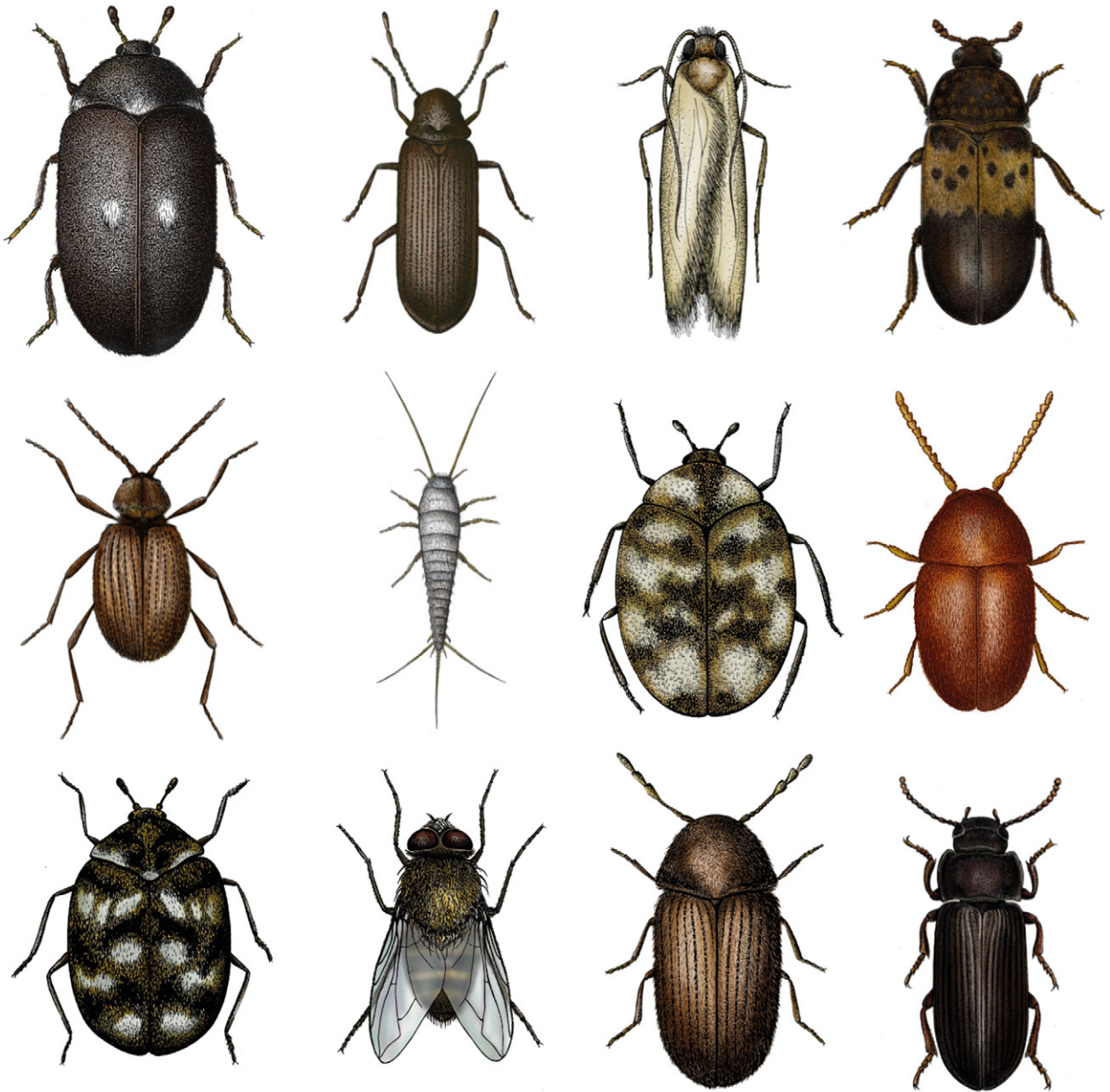


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