

# ANNUAL REPORT

## Annual Conservation Report 2019

Glenn Wharton

I AM DELIGHTED TO PRESENT my first report for *Backdirt* as the new Lore and Gerald Cunard Chair of the UCLA/Getty Program in the Conservation of Archaeological and Ethnographic Materials. When I arrived last summer, I received a warm welcome at the Cotsen Institute from its director Willeke Wendrich and its chair Greg Schachner. Former interim chair William Roy coached me on the broader landscape of UCLA, while the founding chair and now distinguished professor emeritus David Scott provided a wealth of knowledge about the history of the program. Current faculty also helped me settle in, each with their own special insights. I also appreciate the help of student affairs officer Shaharoh Chism, chief administrative officer Teresa Sanchez, and the other committed staff members of the Cotsen Institute.

Going forward, my primary goal is to maintain the past success of the program by producing a new generation of conservation scholars and leaders in the field. A key aspect of our future endeavors is to make the program, and hence the field of conservation as a whole, more diverse and inclusive. This is both a pipe-

line issue, for which we need to identify and nurture underrepresented undergraduates with interests in the field, as well as a role model issue, for which we need to provide a more diverse range of scholars and practitioners the opportunity to do research and teach within the program.

A related focus will be on community engagement in conservation. Building on my own work to develop a participatory model for conservation in rural Hawai'i, I look forward to working with community members with stakes in the conservation and display of cultural heritage. From my own experiences in Hawai'i and elsewhere, I have witnessed how the perspectives of those from outside conservation can lead to more considered research through shared participation. The conservation process impacts narratives about the past, so it is imperative to share conservation authority with those who have a stake in how the past is known.

Prior to coming to UCLA, I was involved in very different sorts of scholarship and practice, including experiences that have their own kind of relevance to concerns at the Cotsen Institute. As a time-based media conservator at the Museum of Modern Art in New York, I was engaged with conserving video, audio, software, and performance art. I employed digital technologies such as linked data to share artist concerns with the public, and I published on artist relationships with their creative production. I look forward to continuing my work with artists by inviting them to speak and to work in residence to reflect on issues facing the conservation of material culture, such



Figure 1. Glenn Wharton removes the paint from a statue of King Kamehameha I in Hawai'i.

as social inclusion, illicit trade, destruction of monuments in civil conflicts, and impending losses caused by climate change. These are not small matters. They invite, even compel, new approaches from wherever we can find them.

Implementing these plans will take financial and institutional support. I began my tenure by establishing regular meetings with Michelle Jacobson, director of development at the Cotsen Institute, as well as development staff in the Social Science Division. I look forward to identifying individuals and foundations that are willing and able to support our shared enterprise. Another priority is to seek further linkages and collaboration with the Getty Conservation Institute, the Getty Museum, and the Getty Foundation. For instance, we are in communication about the exciting new initiative Ancient Worlds Now: A Future for the Past. There is great potential for the combined forces of the Getty Trust and UCLA to preserve archaeological heritage and empower both professionals and community members in an international context.

Thanks to the hard work of Ioanna Kakouli and her colleagues, the new PhD program in the conservation of material culture is now a reality. This fall we accepted our first four PhD students, along with five

students in the UCLA/Getty MA program. Combined with the six students who are currently off on third-year internships, we now have 15 graduate students in the Interdepartmental Degree Program. I am pleased to say that the incoming class of students arrived with impressive backgrounds, focused interests, and strong ideas about the conservation field. I look forward to facilitating their research within the program.

At the start of the academic year there were a few personnel changes in our program. We lost Vanessa Muros, who managed the conservation training laboratories at the Getty Villa since the early days of the program. Fortunately she only moved across the hall to become director of the Archaeological Science and Experiments Laboratory (Room A419). She remains a close friend of the program and has been instrumental in guiding William Shelley, our new staff research associate and laboratory manager, as he settles into his position. We are doubly fortunate in that William recently worked in antiquities conservation at the

## Report of the Chair of the UCLA/Getty Interdepartmental Program

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Getty Conservation Institute and is familiar with our laboratories in the Getty Villa, along with many of the institutions from which we routinely borrow artifacts for teaching and student research.

Our faculty have been busy. Ioanna Kakoulli was appointed adjunct professor at the University of Cyprus and is working on research collaborations between Cyprus University of Technology and UCLA. She recently finished her work as associate editor for conservation on the *Encyclopedia of Archaeological Sciences* and has recently published multiple papers on the chemical analysis and production technology of archaeological glass, wall paintings, and pigments.

Ellen Pearlstein continues managing the Andrew W. Mellon Opportunity for Diversity in Conservation summer workshops for underrepresented undergraduates and recent post-baccalaureates. She is also working on a grant, funded by the Institute of Museum and Library Services, with the title Continuing Conservation Research Challenges: The Impact of Cleaning and the Preservation and Restoration of Color on Historic Taxidermy, in collaboration with the American Museum of Natural History, the Institute for the Preservation of Cultural Heritage at Yale, and the Getty Conservation Institute. Her recent publications include research on pigments used on Andean artifacts, research on Spanish colonial featherwork, and her work with the Agua Caliente Cultural Museum.

Christian Fischer has been pursuing his research on ancient Khmer stone material culture through different projects in collaboration with the Cleveland Museum of Art and the École française d'extrême-orient. Together with graduate students in the archaeology program he is also studying the petrography of ancient ceramics from Albania and Ethiopia, and advises students affiliated with the Archaeomaterials Group on various research projects. Christian has recently published several papers on Cambodian stone sculptures, blue-and-white porcelain, obsidian, and pigment identification in wall paintings.

As an update on our former faculty, emeritus professor David Scott has returned to the United Kingdom. In addition to articles, he just published his

ninth book, *Metallography in Art and Archaeology*.

He continues to teach short courses on metallography and the microstructure of ancient and historic metals and has recently lectured at the University of Oxford, the University of Durham, and the University of Padua. Our former acting chair Bill Roy reports that he is happily retired in Everett, Washington, where he enjoys his family and dogs, as well as the return to his ongoing research on the rise of the genre system in American popular music in the first half of the twentieth century. I wish the two of them happy quasi-retirements, and I thank them for all they have done to establish and build the program.

In addition to gathering input from staff, students, and faculty, I have held meetings with alumni of the program. They offered me many thoughts about how better to prepare those who will be coming after them. I invite others to contact me with ideas about the interdepartmental program and the role that material culture conservation has or should have in a world facing environmental destruction, social inequality, and racism. I remain convinced that conservation, with its eye on the past and its working for the future, has a significant role to play.