

ANNUAL REPORT

Annual Conservation Report 2021

Glenn Wharton¹

I HAD EXPECTED TO CELEBRATE the end of Covid-19 and the return to normalcy in this report. Unfortunately, the disease is still with us, but as I write, incoming data from university and public health officials look promising. Rather than providing a full pandemic update, I rejoice in being back on campus and teaching a live lecture class in the fall of 2021. Masks prevent me from seeing the bottom half of student faces, but given their bright eyes and nodding heads, they are clearly as happy as I am to be back. I had forgotten the thrill of being in a classroom, sharing knowledge and learning with students.

Our MA students were given leave of absence this year because we could not teach them the skills and knowledge they required to become practicing conservators. They will return in January 2022, when we will reoccupy our training laboratories at the Getty Villa and teach hands-on courses in artifact analysis and conservation. Our doctoral students all changed their plans as field research was prohibited last summer. Some are now finding their way into the field, while others are still waiting for borders to open and pandemic levels to decrease.

Moupi Mukhopadhyay was able to conduct her first round of collecting noninvasive technical data from wall paintings in four temples in Kerala, India, with varied histories, stakeholders, and physical conditions (Figure 1). She hopes to supplement her noninvasive imaging and spectrometry data from this season with data from a field season of point analysis and minimally invasive sampling to understand better the materials and techniques behind the murals to guide their future conservation.

Elizabeth Salmon's doctoral research focuses on plant material traditionally used for pest management in India, with potential applications in cultural heritage preservation. She is currently doing an internship at the National Museum of the American Indian, where she is working with colleagues at the Museum

Conservation Institute and the National Museum of Natural History to survey pest management practices across units and gain a comprehensive knowledge of a wide variety of pest management strategies.

Chris de Brer continues his research on figurative funerary ceramic vessels from the Late Formative/Preclassic period of West Mexico. He has been unable to travel to Mexico to perform technical analysis of vessels, interview scholars, and conduct ethnographic research with ceramic artists. He has made good use of his time during the pandemic researching funerary vessels at the Fowler Museum, where he serves as head of conservation. Topics he explores at the museum include materials analysis, provenance research, display strategies, possible repatriation, and issues with heavily restored objects.

Jaime Fidel Ruiz-Robles is researching the effectiveness of silver nanoparticles in preventing the growth of microbial biofilms on archaeological stone monuments in tropical environments. This work involves synthesizing silicone nanoparticles with silver added as a biocide and then field-testing them on stone surfaces in Mexico. He looks forward to performing nanoparticle production in an Italian laboratory once travel bans are lifted and a visit can be arranged.

Our MA students took advantage of their leave of absence by taking on remote—and now also in-person—internships at various institutions. Some are also taking courses and conducting conservation research. They are an ambitious group. Below is a partial list of their internships and research projects:

- Lauren Conway worked with the Musical Instrument Museum in Phoenix, the Fowler Museum at UCLA, and the National Endowment for the Humanities-funded Life Cycle Assessment Project.
- Tamara Dissi worked with the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts.
- Jennifer McGough worked for the Tatyana M. Thompson and Associates painting conservation practice in Santa Monica and with Firebird Anthropology Collections in Phillips, Maine.

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Figure 1. Moupi Mukhopadhyay takes visible and infrared reflectance images of the Lord Ganesha celebration mural scene on the south wall of the Pundareekapuram Temple in Kottayam, Kerala. As she is permitted to use only sunlight to carry out noninvasive imaging, she uses a reflector to guide sunlight into poorly lit areas. (Photograph by Kajal Mukhopadhyay.)

- Isabel Schneider worked at the Florissant Fossil Beds in Colorado and the Michael C. Carlos Museum in Atlanta and did conservation work with the private firm Jones Abbe Art Conservation in Athens, Georgia, and Tougaloo, Mississippi.
- Céline Wachsmuth worked with the Anchorage Museum, the Fowler Museum at UCLA, and the National Endowment for the Humanities-funded Life Cycle Assessment Project.

Faculty were busy learning the skills of remote and hybrid teaching. Our own research continues. Ioanna Kakoulli has consolidated and expanded her research areas, with a focus on five scientific pursuits: archaeological materials science and ancient technology, archaeological forensics, human agency and the environment, archaeo-inspired novel materials design, and sustainable biocultural heritage conservation. Research efforts in these fields have created new national and international interdisciplinary collaborations and new courses and study-abroad programs at the interface of the humanities, the social sciences, and the physical sciences and engineering. Kakoulli continues serving on the faculty advisory committee of the UCLA Stavros Niarchos Foundation Center for the Study of Hellenic Culture. During the Covid-19 pandemic, she continued supporting and promoting diversity by engaging the community and mentoring students from underrepresented groups while offering formal teaching remotely. She also continues to serve on various editorial committees and as a

reviewer of grants in the United States, Europe, and elsewhere; a member of the board of trustees of the Cyprus American Archaeological Research Institute in Cyprus; a scientific consultant for UNESCO; an expert witness for Homeland Security; and a scientific foreign expert for the International Atomic Energy Agency. Recent achievements include launching the Sustainable Marine Biocultural Heritage Conservation Project with international partners in Cyprus and development of the Ancient Technology, Materials, and Forensics Summer Travel Study Program, which will take place in summer 2022 in Cyprus.

Ellen Pearlstein was awarded the prestigious Rome Prize Fellowship in Historic Preservation and Conservation by the American Academy in Rome. Research in Rome will permit her to extend her investigations into collaborative conservation practices between museums and Indigenous communities to the more distanced relationships of European institutions with collections from the Americas. She recently submitted her book manuscript *Conservation and Stewardship of Indigenous Collections: Changes and Transformations* as part of the Readings in Conservation series of the Getty Conservation Institute. Pearlstein continues to pursue additional research interests, including the provenance of Andean *qeros*, ceremonial beer vessels made of wood, plant resin, and pigments. She also presented and published on the science and cultural use of featherwork. Her most recent research is on the work of George Wharton James, an entrepreneur and collector of Native American objects who was active in the first quarter of the twentieth century.



Figure 2. Screen shot from the 2021 Andrew W. Mellon Opportunity for Diversity in Conservation workshop (Captured by Nicole Passerotti)

Pearlstein continues to direct the Andrew W. Mellon Opportunity for Diversity in Conservation workshops to introduce prospective students from underrepresented populations to the field of conservation (Figure 2).² Due to the pandemic, the seventeen participants accepted into the workshop in 2020 were carried over into 2021 and took part in a fully remote workshop in July. The online format allowed Pearlstein and two co-organizers, Bianca Garcia and Nicole Passerotti, to invite 28 instructors from across the United States. Each student received a box of about a hundred items for hands-on work. Two workshop participants were fully supported by the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York. It was a banner year for the program, as five Mellon Opportunity alumni were accepted into graduate programs in conservation.

I am completing several research projects that I initiated before arriving at UCLA in 2019. The first is the Joan Jonas Knowledge Base, launched in October 2021. This online, open-source information resource about the seminal installation and performance artist is a project of the Artist Archives Initiative, a research program I codirect with computer scientist Deena Engel. I am also coediting the volume *Philosophical Issues in the Conservation of Contemporary Art*, which is part of the Readings in Conservation series

of the Getty Conservation Institute. As I complete these contemporary art conservation projects, I also turn my attention to the conservation of traditional cultural heritage. An exciting foray into the past took place in the seminar *Managing Change: Challenges in Conserving Contemporary Art and Cultural Heritage*, which I taught together with Miwon Kwon, chair of the Art History Department. In this seminar, we searched for resonance between emerging theory for conserving new forms of contemporary art, and new models of conserving traditional cultural heritage.

Our staff also remain busy and dedicated to managing our program. Student affairs officer Shaharoh Chism devotes her time to admissions, courses, and financial management for our students. She is also completing a master's degree in music at the California Institute of the Arts. Our laboratory manager, William Shelley, has the best news of all. He is now the proud father of a daughter. With both parents being graduates of our program, we have high hopes for Zoe. While not fathering, his primary research focus is on introducing sustainable approaches to further green our laboratory practices.

Our program launched two initiatives this year, both funded by the National Endowment for the Humanities. Pearlstein and I are the principal investigators of both projects. The first is the Sustainability in Conservation Education Initiative. The aim is to develop curricular materials for integrating sustainability into conservation education that will be distributed internationally to faculty in other conservation

2. Outreach, Andrew W. Mellon Opportunity for Diversity in Conservation, <https://mellondiversityconservation.org/outreach>.

programs. Justine Wuebold joined the UCLA/Getty Conservation Program as a research associate for this initiative (Figure 3). She is interviewing academic professionals about holistic approaches to sustainability curriculum development and collecting teaching tools, methods, and case studies related to art conservation, built heritage, libraries, archives, archaeology, and historic preservation education. Through this project, Wuebold is building a network of practitioners in the field who are passionate about developing sustainable practices for conservation education. She is working with our faculty to field test sustainability curricula in our courses.

The second initiative is Community, Collaboration, and Cultural Heritage Conservation. Over the course of three years, a \$250,000 grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities will support three of our MA students to work collaboratively with tribal museums and to extend their skills to other underserved collections and sites. The funds will help the program refine its model of collaborating on research and course work with Indigenous scholars, tribal representatives, and students. Extending the model of community-based conservation to African American, Latinx American, and Asian American collections will allow us to develop new partnerships and model collaborative practice for the field.

We launched two remote lecture series during the pandemic. Based on the overwhelming success of attracting international speakers and drawing large audiences, we decided to extend the lectures. The aim of the Distinguished Speaker Series is to foster intellectual discussion about the role of cultural heritage conservation in critical readings of the past. In March, Gabrielle Tayac (Piscataway Indian Nation) spoke about her work as a curator at the National Museum of the American Indian and her research at George Mason University on uplifting the voices of Indigenous elder women leaders and helping them preserve their treasured cultural legacies, an effort that was sponsored by Rockefeller Philanthropy Advisors. In June, Jeanelle Austin, cofounder and lead caretaker of the George Floyd Global Memorial in Minneapolis, spoke about her work to preserve offerings left at the murder site and to preserve the spirit of protest. In November, Ndubuisi Ezeluomba, curator of African Art at the New Orleans Museum of Art, spoke about the restitution of Benin cultural patrimony and the role of American cultural institutions in supporting the process.



Figure 3. Justine Wuebold leads a class discussion about sustainable environments for museums, libraries, and archives in Ellen Pearlstein's course *Issues and Problems in Preservation of Heritage Materials*. (Photograph by Ellen Pearlstein.)

The second series, Conservation Collaborations, continues in the 2021–2022 academic year with monthly online lectures and panel discussions. This series is student-centered; our students suggest speakers and host the lectures. Speakers have presented on the fate of Confederate monuments, archaeological field conservation, the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act, and specialty areas including horological and glass conservation. Upcoming topics include architectural preservation, revivalist weaving, Indigenous curation, the conservation of waterlogged ships, Asian lacquer, and Indian paintings.

Despite the pandemic, the UCLA/Getty Conservation Program continues to thrive. We all look forward to 2022 as we move back into our laboratories to resume research and teaching at the Getty Villa.

Incoming Students



TAYLOR BREHM

Taylor Brehm received her BA in archaeology with a minor in anthropology from the University of Wisconsin–La Crosse in 2014. After graduating, she moved to Minneapolis to work in the Archaeology Department of the Science Museum of Minnesota, where she assisted in local excavations, rehoused archaeological collections, and participated in public outreach. She often worked with the conservator at the museum, where she developed her interest in conservation. First as a volunteer and later as an employee in the Conservation Department of the museum, Taylor learned firsthand how to treat a variety of objects, from humidifying Inuit sealskin boots and stabilizing Dakota beadwork to reconstructing a thousand-year-old precontact ceramic vessel. In addition, Taylor was an intern at KCI Conservation, a private conservation firm in Minneapolis. She increased her experience with contemporary art treatments by working on Paul Manship bronze objects, an art piece by Ayomi Yoshida at Target Corporation headquarters, and outdoor sculptures. During her time at UCLA, Taylor hopes to explore how community engagement can assist in determining object treatment and storage methods, as well as gain more experience performing on-site archaeological conservation.



CHEYENNE CARAWAY

Cheyenne Caraway is Mississippi Choctaw and Chickasaw from southern Oklahoma. In 2015 she earned a double BA in anthropology and studio art from Fort Lewis College, where she was first introduced to collection care as an undergraduate intern at the Center of Southwest Studies. Cheyenne was a museum contractor in the Four Corners region from 2016 to 2018. She became collections manager at the Southern Ute Museum in 2018. During this period, she assisted with a full collections inventory and installed exhibitions. She also worked with the tribal legal department to update the terms and conditions of loans and the collections management policy of the museum to reflect the mission of the tribal council. Furthermore, she strived to include input from the tribal members themselves. Cheyenne's first immersive conservation experience was the 2018 Andrew W. Mellon Opportunity for Diversity in Conservation workshop. This weeklong workshop was a transformative experience, confirming her desire to pursue a career in conservation. She has since worked as a conservation intern at the National Museum of the American Indian, the American Museum of Natural History, and the J. Paul Getty Museum. During these internships she worked on a range of materials and pieces, including a Piipaash (Maricopa) cradleboard, a Tlingit (Chilkat) tunic, a Haida dance hat, and a pair of Coptic shoes. She presented at the annual conference of the Association of Tribal Archives, Libraries, and Museums, and moderated a general session for the American Institute for Conservation. She has worked with public, private, and sovereign organizations and dealt with prehistoric, historic, and contemporary Indigenous art and collections. Cheyenne hopes to continue taking holistic approaches to projects at UCLA while prioritizing a Native perspective and cultivating relationships with Indigenous communities.



RACHEL MOORE

Rachel Moore is a member of the Hopi tribe in Arizona but calls Albuquerque, New Mexico, her home. She received a BA in anthropology with an emphasis on archaeology and a minor in visual arts from Brigham Young University in Provo in 2014. As an undergraduate student, she worked in archives and collections at the local anthropology museum, where she developed a love and passion for museum work and saw that bridges need to be built between archaeology, museums, and Indigenous people such as herself. She went on to obtain an MA in museum studies at Arizona State University, graduating in 2016. Much of her graduate work focused on Indigenous collections management and material agency. Shortly after graduating, Rachel returned to Albuquerque, where she spent the next four years working for the Indian Pueblo Cultural Center as the curator of exhibitions. She built relationships with tribal community members and dug into the task of bringing Indigenous narratives to the forefront of work done by and in museums. Since 2018 Rachel has volunteered at the conservation laboratory of the state of New Mexico to gain experience in a broad spectrum of materials, including bronze, granite, ceramics, and silver. In 2021 she was a conservation intern with the National Museum of the American Indian in Washington, DC. She is eager to join the Cotsen Institute and bring Indigenous narratives and collaboration to the care and management of Indigenous cultural heritage.



MAKAYLA RAWLINS

Makayla Rawlins is from southern California and is passionate about preserving cultural heritage and ensuring its representation in museums. She earned her BA in art history and biological anthropology from the University of California–Santa Barbara, with a minor in American Indian and Indigenous studies. Her interest in conservation began during her second year of college with an internship that involved photographing the entire campus collection. Next, she pursued a Conservation Internship for Broadening Access at the National Museum of the American Indian, funded by the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation. There she found her passion for community-based conservation and continued with a second internship as well as a paid, limited-term staff position. She assisted with a loan to the Cherokee Nation Capitol Museum and worked with the Collections Management Department on community engagement. She dealt with objects such as a Cherokee wooden pottery stand, organic beaded necklaces, and a lacrosse ball. From this experience, she gained an understanding of the importance of background research prior to treatment and knowing the full context of what is being handled. Recently Makayla participated in the UCLA/Mellon Opportunity for Diversity Workshop. There she was exposed to all areas of conservation, including paper, paintings, and textiles. Many of the guest speakers encouraged Makayla to work with the Soboba Band of Luiseño Indians, her own tribe, as well as the Pechanga Band of Luiseño Indians, and she looks forward to being a resource for them. Currently she works for Native Land Digital as the volunteer coordinator and communications assistant. Native Land Digital is a Canadian nonprofit organization focused on land acknowledgment and digital mapping of Indigenous lands around the world. Makayla looks forward to working with more communities during her time at UCLA and continuing to help preserve their cultural heritage.

Kathryn Peneyra grew up in Chapel Hill, North Carolina. She earned a BA in chemistry from Carleton College in 2017. For her undergraduate thesis, she examined the use of X-ray fluorescence in imaging underpaintings. In the years since graduating, she has been expanding her conservation knowledge through conservation internships alongside her full-time job as an ecological landscaper. Internships in the objects conservation laboratory at the Peabody Essex Museum in Salem, Massachusetts, and at the National Park Service in Lowell, Massachusetts, exposed her to a wide variety of cultural materials, including canopic jars, Tlingit double-headed daggers, and Indian unbaked clay figures. Kathryn also spent a summer doing outdoor sculpture conservation with private conservators in Seattle. She is excited to engage more holistically with conservation at UCLA, learning about not only conservation treatment but also fieldwork, community outreach, ethics, research, and sustainability.



KATHRYN PENEYRA