

Annual Conservation Report 2023

Glenn Wharton

With its first intake of students in 2004, the UCLA/Getty Interdepartmental Program in the Conservation of Cultural Heritage celebrates its twentieth anniversary this academic year. The program was originally established as a partnership between the UCLA Cotsen Institute of Archaeology and the Getty Conservation Institute. It was designed to combine the strengths of a major research university and a nonprofit trust, with a mandate for conserving international heritage while creating rich and vibrant training opportunities. This year we reflect on 20 years of accomplishments while planning for a future with sustainability, collaborative practice, diversity, equity, and inclusion central to our work.

The UCLA/Getty Program is the only academic program in the western United States devoted to conservation education and training, and the only one nationally to focus

on archaeological and Indigenous cultural heritage. Our three-year MA program is rich in scientific content, comprising a scholarly approach and research-based treatment methodologies. In 2019 we launched an interdisciplinary PhD in the conservation of cultural materials. We are now one of only two doctoral programs in cultural heritage conservation in the country.

We are enormously proud of our alumni, who are now leading conservation efforts for cultural heritage institutions nationally and around the globe. They hold leadership positions in museums, libraries, archives, and archaeological sites. I am particularly pleased that several of our graduates, including Casey Mallinckrodt, Tom McClintock, and Megan Salas, are forming an alumni association. They even announced a call to celebrate our twentieth anniversary by raising 20 gifts of 20-something—anywhere from \$20 to \$20,000!



Figure 1. Jennifer McGough (Conservation) and Taylor Carr-Howard (Archaeology) learn techniques for excavating fragile ceramics in Alice Paterakis's course Field Methods in Archaeological Conservation. Courtesy of Alice Paterakis.

An important milestone this year is that one of our founding faculty members, Ellen Pearlstein, will retire at the end of the academic year. Since the inception of the program, she has been consistently devoted to our students and the field. We will miss her. A symposium to celebrate her career in May 2024, titled *The Art and Science of Feathers: Biology, Persistence, and Meaning*, will be hosted by the Getty Conservation Institute.

While losing a valued faculty member, we are also growing. Caitlin O'Grady joined our faculty as an assistant professor in January 2024. She has a joint appointment in the Department of Anthropology. O'Grady comes to our program from the Institute of Archaeology, University College London, where she served as an affiliate tutor in conservation. She holds an MA in art history and an advanced certificate in objects conservation from New York University and an MS and PhD in materials science and engineering from the University of Arizona. As a conservation scientist and a trained conservator with extensive archaeological field experience, she has published extensively on the history of conservation and the conservation and analysis of pottery and ceramics, wall paintings, and mudbrick. She is currently working on two book projects. The first is focused on pottery conservation; the second examines the colonial and imperial underpinnings of archaeological conservation.

As a lecturer and director of community engagement and inclusive practice, Anya Dani continues to focus on the preservation of African American cultural heritage and help the program better reach underserved communities. She is committed to a people-centered approach that not only diversifies the types of cultural items we conserve but also empowers communities and normalizes community engagement. This year Dani met with local arts organizations that focus on African American cultural heritage to pursue collaborations. She also worked on a Mellon-funded project to assess and preserve artwork at the Noah Purifoy Outdoor Desert Art Museum of Assemblage Sculpture. Dani also received a UCLA Racial and Social Justice Grant, alongside co-principal investigator Justin Dunnivant, to develop a podcast on African American cultural heritage conservation in collaboration with the Black Art Conservators Group. Lastly, Dani spearheaded the creation and adoption of a 2023–2028 Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility Strategic Plan for our program.

This past year, student affairs officer Shaharoh Chism worked closely with the Cotsen Institute of Archaeology and the UCLA Graduate Division to manage student finances and projections, course scheduling, graduation for the MA class of 2023, faculty recruitment, and the onboarding of newly admitted MA and PhD students and visiting graduate researchers. Lab manager William Shelley developed an online collections database for the program this year. This database contains not only information about materials in our study collection but also images and conservation reports from student class projects. He is also

working with the Getty Conservation Institute's Managing Collection Environments Initiative to develop sustainable and cost-effective methods to improve the climate in our labs at the Getty Villa. Shelley continues to work in other ways to incorporate sustainability into our labs, including working with My Green Lab and its certification program. He also helped oversee renovation of the new PhD student Conservation Lab at the Cotsen Institute, which includes dedicated workspaces for PhD students.

We held a memorable graduation ceremony for the class of 2023 at the Getty Villa. It was well attended by friends and family, who celebrated over food and drink after the graduates spoke about their research and summer internship experiences. I am pleased to say that they are now out in the world, successfully starting their postgraduate careers. Lauren Conway is a fellow at the Western Archaeological Conservation Center in Tucson. Her MA thesis was titled "The Storage and Handling of Poisoned Weapons in Museum Collections." Tamara Diss is working as a contract conservator at the Smithsonian's



Figure 2. Ronel Namde teaches paper conservation to participants at the 2023 Mellon Opportunity for Diversity in Conservation Workshop in the Getty Villa research and training laboratories. Courtesy of UCLA/Getty Conservation Program.

National Museum of Asian Art in Washington, D.C. The title of her thesis is “Fungal Pigments: An Investigation into Their Environmental Stability and Applications to Conservation.” Jennifer McGough, now at the Penn Museum at the University of Pennsylvania, wrote the thesis “Compositional Analysis of Lacquer Alterations in Post-Angkorian Buddha Statues and a Novel 3D Approach to Their Conservation.” Isabel Schneider, currently a project conservator at the Brooklyn Museum, wrote “The History and Characterization of Laundry Bluening-Derived Colorants.” Céline Wachsmuth is at the National Museum of the American Indian in Washington, D.C. Her thesis is titled “Sustainable Solutions: Water Based Consolidants for the Treatment of Low-Fired Ceramics.”

Our current MA students traveled widely for their internships this summer. Taylor Brehm interned at both the Kaymakçı Archaeological Project in western Turkey and the Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA). Cheyenne Caraway split her time between the Autry Museum of the American West and Fine Arts Conservation, a private conservation firm in Los Angeles. Rachel Moore interned at the Midwest Art Conservation Center. Kathryn Peneyra worked at the Japanese Institute of Anatolian Archaeology’s excavations near Kaman in central Turkey and then with Thiago Puglieri on sample documentation and analysis. Makayla Rawlins interned at two museums operated by the Mississippi Department of Archives and History.

First-year PhD student Saiful Bakhri researches at the intersection of traditional knowledge and textile conservation cleaning. He narrowed his research to investigating soapnut as a biodegradable surfactant in cleaning batiks, traditional Indonesian cloths made using a wax-resist dyeing technique. Last summer he visited Lasem and Pekalongan, two of three crucial areas in central Java for the early development of tricolored batik.

Chris de Brer continued his technical and ethnographic research on West Mexican ceramics in museums in Mexico and southern California. To gain experience in mosaics conservation, site management, and teaching, he spent time over the summer with the Israeli Antiquities Authority, working at Judeo-Christian and Roman archaeological sites. In addition to his research, he continues to serve as head of conservation at UCLA’s Fowler Museum.

Chongwen Liu’s first year as a PhD student was spent initiating his doctoral research on antifouling strategies for underwater cultural heritage. He met with specialists from different disciplines, including materials science and underwater archaeology, to advance his knowledge as he begins laying the basis for his lab-based research.

Moupi Mukhopadhyay received a Dickson Fellowship from the Art History Department to support her research on murals of the Kerala school of painting in India. The research includes noninvasive analysis of pigments, technical imaging, and interviews with community members associated with the temple paintings.



Figure 3. Student Tiara Woods performs analysis in the 2023 Mellon Opportunity for Diversity in Conservation Workshop in the Getty Villa research and training laboratories. Courtesy of UCLA/Getty Conservation Program.

Elizabeth Salmon also received a prized Dickson Fellowship from the Art History Department. Her doctoral research focuses on traditional methods of conservation developed in India (see *Traditional Methods* by Salmon, this issue). She started the year in Rajasthan, where she interviewed museum staff to learn how they use neem, a local and naturally insect-repellant plant, to prevent insects from damaging their collections. Back in California, she continued her research by growing neem trees and conducting experiments to evaluate the effects of neem on carpet beetles, a major museum pest. She proceeded with further experiments at the program’s Getty Villa laboratories to consider the effects neem may have on cultural collections, with promising results.

Professor Pearlstein continues to direct the Mellon Opportunity for Diversity in Conservation, a pipeline program that since 2018 has conducted workshops, internships, and mentoring to diversify the makeup of students in graduate conservation education across the United States (Figures 2 and 3). Mellon Opportunity staff Bianca Garcia and Nicole Passerotti are crucial participants. Pearlstein and Glenn Wharton continue to serve as co-principal investigators in the second phase of the Sustainability in Conservation Education Initiative, funded by the National



Figure 4. Alice Paterakis with MA students following an interview with artist Stanley C. Wilson about conserving his work, which is in the Golden State Mutual Art Collection and the collection of the LA County Department of Arts and Culture. Courtesy of William Shelley.

Endowment for the Humanities (NEH). They work with research facilitator Justine Wuebold and lab manager William Shelley to conduct interviews, meet with focus groups, and develop exploratory exercises with students focused on sustainability. The team continues to work with a grant-funded sustainability coach as well as academic and professional consultants to assure field relevance for all program outcomes.

Pearlstein and Wharton also continue to serve as co-principal investigators on a second NEH-funded initiative titled Community, Collaboration, and Cultural Heritage Conservation. The funding continues to enable three of our MA students to work collaboratively with American Indian museums and other underserved collections and sites. Planned 2024 student placements, such as at the Barona Cultural Center and Museum, are designed to provide students with experience working with community representatives in caring for their cultural heritage.

Professor Thiago Puglieri just completed his first year at UCLA. He continues as an associate editor of the journal *Conservar Patrimônio*, from Portugal, and works with the International Research Infrastructure for Heritage Science project of the Netherlands Institute for

Conservation, Art, and Science. He completed his term as vice president of the National Association of Heritage Science and Technology in Brazil and serves on the fiscal council of the same association. Puglieri also completed his term as coordinator of the Investigation of Materials, Systems, and Techniques Division of the Technical Commission for Cultural Heritage, part of the Brazilian Association of Non-Destructive Testing and Inspection. He helped organize one of five concurrent general sessions of the Fifty-Second Annual Meeting of the American Institute of Conservation (2024) and was involved in selecting proposals for the conference. Puglieri works with professionals from institutions such as UCLA, LACMA, Getty, the University of São Paulo, the Federal University of Amazonas, and the Museum of Astronomy and Related Sciences, in addition to members of the Ticuna Indigenous community. Dedicating himself to the investigation of Indigenous arts and Indigenous community engagement in scientific investigations, he recently published his first manuscript as a UCLA faculty member, "Paint and Coloring Materials from the Brazilian Amazon Forest: Beyond Urucum and Jenipapo." Puglieri gave an oral presentation at the Forty-Second Annual Dyes in History and

Archaeology Conference (in Denmark) about blue colorants from the Ticuna people and a new synthetic blue colorant still unknown in art history and conservation. He also gave talks at the Federal Universities of Paraná, São Carlos, and Pelotas in Brazil and at Chapman University in California and was on the panel Does Technology Alter Our Conception of Conservation Ethics?, organized by the UCLA Department of Art History. He is working on two papers, one on blue colorants from the Ticuna and the other on a new lacquer produced by the Ribeirinhas, an Amazonian group. He supervises an MA student from our program and a PhD student from his previous program in Brazil, co-supervises another PhD student from Brazil who is spending six months in our program, and works with an undergraduate student from Art History.

Professor Ioanna Kakoulli currently serves as acting director of the Stavros Niarchos Foundation Center for the Study of Hellenic Culture at UCLA. She also serves as diversity officer of the Materials Science and Engineering Department and is on the faculty advisory committee for the Cotsen Institute of Archaeology and the board of trustees of the Cyprus American Archaeological Institute. In addition, she serves as an expert witness for the Department of Homeland Security on issues pertaining to looted antiquities, a scientific consultant for UNESCO, and a reviewer for peer-reviewed journals and national and international funding agencies. She continues to manage an active research group of PhD and MA students from the Materials Science and Engineering Program and the Conservation Program. Research projects within the group include the development of sustainable porous building materials and antifouling coatings for cultural and natural heritage preservation, the development of novel radiative cooling paints, and the study of ancient pigments and painting technologies.

This year, working with colleagues in the Netherlands, Glenn Wharton launched a new area of research on parallels between managing ecosystems in nature conservation and cultural heritage conservation. The aim is to learn from the field of ecological restoration to advance research and practice in cultural heritage conservation. After five years of research, this year he submitted a coedited book titled *Philosophical Issues in the Conservation of Contemporary Art*, part of the Getty Conservation Institute's Readings in Conservation series. In addition to this research and sustainability research within the NEH-funded initiative with Pearlstein, Wuebold, and Shelley, he serves on a number of professional boards and committees, including with Voices in Contemporary Art, a nonprofit he founded to advance stewardship of contemporary art.

Alice Paterakis continues to serve as a lecturer for our courses on metals, ceramics, and glass conservation and as director of conservation for the Japanese Institute of Anatolian Archaeology in Turkey. This year she launched a

new research project on the stabilization and consolidation of unfired clay and adobe mobile and immobile heritage. In this project she works with Archaeology PhD student Rachel Schloss to test various consolidants on unfired clay from Trabuco Mission (dating to 1800) in Orange County and on adobe from the San Juan Capistrano Mission church. She also published an article on the monitoring of soil in an archaeological context to predict the corrosion risk of excavated metals. For one class project, she worked with Anya Dani to facilitate a conservation treatment of a sculpture by Black American artist Stanley C. Wilson, whose work is in the collection of the Los Angeles County Department of Arts and Culture (Figure 4). Our students interviewed the artist to learn about his preferences for conservation. After their treatment of the sculpture, the students presented their work at the annual conference of the Association of North American Graduate Programs in Conservation.

During the course of the year, the program hosted three visiting researchers. Éléonore Kissel, head of conservation at the Musée du Quai Branly–Jacques Chirac, researched the conservation of Indigenous collections. Greta Ugolotti, a PhD student at the University of Bologna, was in residence to advance her studies on the efficacy of ammonium phosphate treatment on wall paintings, plasters, and other support materials. Chiara Biribicchi, a PhD student at Sapienza University in Rome, worked in our laboratories on sustainable solvents under the direction of Michael Dautre of the Getty Conservation Institute.

Our two virtual lecture series continue to attract large audiences. In our Distinguished Speaker series, we invite prominent people from other fields to provide their perspectives on cultural heritage conservation. We began the year with a lecture from Roger Michel, executive director of the Institute for Digital Archaeology, who spoke about installing robot-generated replicas of the Parthenon Marbles in the British Museum as a means to return the originals to Athens. Ihor Poshyvailo, general director of the National Memorial in Ukraine, spoke about Russian military damage to cultural heritage and resistance among Ukrainians. Artist Gala Porras-Kim gave a lecture on her practice of exhibiting the work of conservation to unveil how museums continue adding meaning to collections in a postcolonial context. Recordings of these lectures are available on our website.

Our students select speakers for our Conservation Collaborations lecture series. Over the course of the year, topics included Yup'ik masks at the Vatican, collaborations with Indigenous communities in North America, community archaeology in Sudan, conserving a church in Kuñotambo, African sacred objects, Luso-Asian lacquered objects, and biocultural heritage.

We all rejoiced this year in being fully back from COVID lockdown, just in time to celebrate our twentieth anniversary in person.