

EDITORIAL

As we come to the end of 2017, volume 38.2 of the *AICCM Bulletin* includes six institutional perspectives on current conservation research and practice. While papers from the recent 2017 AICCM National Conference ‘Collaborate Connect Conserve,’ will be the focus of volume 39.1 in 2018. From the outset the content of these two volumes will be quite different but are likewise similar with a central focus on the conservation skills of interdisciplinarity, resourcefulness and creativity. Volume 38.2 explores the material fabric of objects, and the mechanisms and approaches toward extending the lifetimes of collections. It reports on the highly technical skills and ways of understanding objects that the discipline of conservation is admired for. While the 2018 volumes, will show how objects and collections are ‘doing more’ with the well-known conservation skills highlighted in this volume, along with other skills that are evolving and transforming as part of conservation practice. It will also include a historical and critical reflection of Professor Colin Pearson’s contribution to conservation in Australia, which is an opportunity to assess transformations, where we are today and where objects, and hence our skills base, reside within the discipline and the political, societal and economic values today.

This brings us back to volume 38.2 and the underlying conservation skills and principles that ground the papers and the knowledge that each explores. Within GLAM, that is galleries, libraries, archives and museums, our practice-based and decision making conservation skills are illustrated well in Albertine Hamilton and Marika Kocsis’s paper on the ‘Meek’s Atlas: Treatment of an oversized rolled chart’. The 1862 photolithograph based on James McKain Meek 1861 drawings of colonial Australia, are important cultural records that illustrate the way mid-nineteenth century Australia was interpreted, claimed and classified by those in governance. As such, the 1862 photolithograph is a significant record of its time, valued for its ability to articulate identity and Australia as a nation then, and can continue to be interpreted and accessed upon digitisation. The work itself is made of inherently low quality materials and given its damage and size, this offered the authors a conservation challenge where resourcefulness was demonstrated utilising established and Japanese paper conservation skills. Likewise, Vanessa Kowalski, Catherine Nunn and Caroline Fry’s paper titled “‘*Landscape in Miniature*’—The use of the gum leaf as a painting support in colonial Victoria’ is a fascinating document, work of art and conservation treatment. Uniquely Australian as an oil

painting on a gum leaf, the form is a reminder of place, Australia and a cultural record important to our identity. As Australians we are all aware of dry gum leaves in summer, and it is technical mastery that Alfred William Eustace first produced these paintings in 1870, and that they have been cared for and preserved as reported in the paper. This is certainly an example of ‘proofed concepts’ that can contribute to our discussion on environmental guidelines in conservation and for Australian conservators and communities to ‘make their own judgments based on local climates, an understanding of collection material vulnerabilities to agents of deterioration’ (AICCM 2014).

Similarly within the large institution of the National Gallery of Victoria (NGV), we see an Australian historiography of frames conservation emerge with the paper by Holly McGowan Jones titled ‘Framing Perspectives: Frames conservation and reframing at the National Gallery of Victoria’. With an examination of the key principles, concepts and methods that form the basis of frame treatments at the NGV, the paper likewise reframes the trajectory of frame conservation in Australia with some of its iconic Australian paintings and international works acquired through the Felton Bequest. The paper provides a detailed and thorough timeline, and captures how interdisciplinary conservation knowledge and research is valued within an institutionalised context. The paper spans over two decades of frames conservation treatments, also signalling a maturing conservation profession and the second generation of University of Canberra trained conservators reflecting on the values of cultural materials conservation more longitudinally.

While Ruby Awburn, Caroline Fry and Petronella Nel’s paper on ‘Negotiated Outcomes: Investigating Comparative Colour Change of Proprietary Artist Coating Materials for Contemporary Paintings’, is an example of how conservation can assist artists in cultural production through collaborations and attempting to respond to the difficult question of “how long will it last?” With new materials available to artists and an exploration of materiality, artists often raise this question and by conservation producing materials based and scientific knowledge, we are able to support Australia’s ongoing artistic and cultural production. The pouring coat of epoxy resin produces a glass like finish, and now with knowledge on the degradation profiles of these new epoxy-based artist’s materials, conservation is better equipped to provide advice and undertake remedial treatments. We need such knowledge of degradation profiles and the effects

of conservation materials on objects even with age old objects. Such is the case in Ahmad Abu-Baker and Mahmoud Al-Qudah paper on 'A novel dioxime compound for protecting copper in neutral chloride solutions and to treat bronze disease in archaeological artefacts'. Conservation uncertainties exist for archaeological objects and their treatment, warranting new research and methodologies as technological advances are made in understanding processes. Similarly Julianne Bell, Mark Newnham and Petronella Nel's paper on 'Tea: An Alternative Adsorbent for the Preservation of Cellulose Triacetate Film' interrogates new methodologies but its choice of treatment materials are grounded in principles of sustainability. The proposed use of tea that is available worldwide, offers a possible alternative to the commercially available adsorbents such as activated charcoal, silica gel and molecular sieves for the treatment of cellulose triacetate film. Again, it uses scientific methodologies to produce knowledge on the positive effects of tea on cellulose triacetate film in removing water and acetic acid. In thinking about tea stained cups, the paper is not

advocating for the immediate use of tea for adsorbent treatments but is offering creative alternatives to consider. This is important as objects-conservation is asked to 'do more' and issues of sustainability are important to engage with. This takes us to volume 39.1 in 2018 where we can explore these concepts more fully.

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REFERENCE

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