

PACIN Preparator Conference / Williamstown, Mass. / August 14 & 15, 2009

RE: Conference Survey Summary

Date: September 18, 2009

By: Brent Powell, PACIN Chair

The survey summary is based on completed surveys submitted by attendees after the close of the conference on August 15th and ones which have been sent during the past month. All comments listed are an overview of these surveys per individual presentation. Comments regarding the overall conference and future ideas are listed at the end of the summary.

Day 1: Paper Conservation

Hugh Phibbs: Coordinator of Preservation Services, National Gallery of Art, Washington DC.

Leslie Paisley: Conservator of Paper, Williamstown Art Conservation Center, Williamstown, Mass.

- Very enthusiastic presentation overall by Hugh and Leslie, tag team approach was good.
- Excellent session and with lots of enthusiasm to start off the conference with.
- Informal presentation was good but wanted more power point visual examples to clarify topics presented.
- Excellent knowledge and discussion of materials was presented, expertise impressive.
- A handout regarding material lists and suppliers could be helpful.
- More material samples and actual and handling systems present to physically touch.
- Enjoyed Hugh's discussion and explanation of "preservation conservation" in regards to collection care.

Day 1: Paintings Conservation

Tom Branchick: Director and Conservator of Painting, Williamstown Art Conservation Center, Williamstown, Mass.

- Presenting a problem and discussing the solutions to the problem was best part of the presentation.
- More examples of specific or common problems would have been good in presentation.
- Was good to hear a conservator admit and focus on an actual problem they had encountered.
- Need to have the focus of presentation be more on actual handling techniques for paintings.
- Need to have more focus on materials and handling, specifically framing systems.
- Presentation needed to address the preparators concerns or needs to handling paintings, not just one odd example regarding framing.
- Broader presentation approach to bridge backgrounds of the audience, not a single subject.
- Was expecting more presentation of handling examples, possibly equipment images of handling and of transport.

Day 1: Objects Conservation

Adam Nesbit: Assistant Conservator of Objects, Williamstown Art Conservation Center, Williamstown Mass.

- Subject is too large to cover in 45 minutes, consider making into two sessions or consider a hands on demo as part of the workshop.
- Objects could be addressed in two sessions: examples: common objects: ceramics/glass/ bronze & stone sculptures / not so common: objects: furniture/textiles/contemporary materials.
- Presentation was slow to start but speaker picked up pace as he became more comfortable.
- Speaker addressed subject well but needed some visuals of what he was directly talking about.
- Needed more in depth comments, solutions and visuals not jut basic object handling 101.
- Basic 101 techniques good for review and beginning of presentation.
- Speaker was great in the Q&A when addressing material usage per object type. Enjoyed his explanations which were direct and common sense based.

Day 1: Conservators Q & A Session:

Hugh Phibbs, Leslie Paisley, Tom Branchick, Adam Nesbit

- Excellent question and answer session between speakers and audience.
- Excellent for clarification of material questions and explanation of usage from presentations.
- Adam's Nesbitt was able to continue to address specific issues regarding objects, main discussion of Q&A.
- Wished conservators could have been in attendance for the rest of the conference to hear other presentations, especially to be in attendance during Day 1 afternoon sessions and "Open Forum" discussions.

Day 1: Handling Equipment

Mark Slattery, Senior Technician Exhibitions, The National Gallery of London UK

- Overall comments: Presentation was extremely well prepared and presented many complimentary remarks in surveys.
- Designs of building for specialized needs interesting to hear explained "from need to solution".
- Interesting ideas to long term Health and Safety concerns within design, would like more information.
- Some devices were not practical to small museums with small budgets; some basic examples could have been added.
- Designing new equipment which was compatible to existing equipment such as lifts and frame carts interesting and practical concepts.
- Thinking "outside of the box" and designing to specific needs compared to what can be purchased was very insightful.
- Enjoyed his willingness to share technical drawings and other ideas throughout the conference.
- Could give overview of more examples of equipment and possibility combine this with a workshop demonstration of specific equipment?

Day 1: History of the Profession:

Brent Powell, PACIN Chair, Head of Preparation, Asian Art Museum, San Francisco, CA

- Positive, enthusiastic overview of the profession with the importance to promoting the profession.
- Great to have a history presented and to discuss how many in the preparators' profession differ in skills, job titles and overall responsibilities, which are unique to each institution?
- Part of presentation was too much directed from a manager's viewpoint with hiring and job descriptions, need to cover as a separate session so to fully explain and understand.
- Session could be broken into two parts; "staff professional responsibilities per institutions" & "job descriptions, hiring and training".
- Would like more time or specific session highlighting training with strong emphasize of OH&S training.
- This presentation should have been presented first to start off the conference and to set the mood for the overall program.
- This presentation was a good lead into the "Open Forum" Roundtable Discussions

Day 1: "Open Forum" Roundtable Discussions

Mark Wamaling, Artex Fine Art Services, Andover Maryland; Mark Slattery, National Gallery of London, Bruce Bundock, Francine Lehman Loeb Art Center, Vassar College, Poughkeepsie, NY, Brent Powell, PACIN Chair

- General survey comments: Excellent discussions and sharing of information amongst the attendees and panelists. Favorite session, constructive atmosphere created which continued throughout the conference.
- Could have more "Open Forum" sessions to specific topics in the future.
- General categories and questions were not fully covered; need more time or fewer topics.
- Proved preparators have a voice, need to be heard and need to promote themselves and the profession.

Day 2: Packing Principles:

Kele McComsey; President and Senior Partner SurroundArt, Brooklyn NY

- Overall survey comment: Excellent presentation with visual images and hands on examples to clarify his comments.
- Enthusiasm and love of his craft was a highlight and continued to be shared throughout conference with attendees.
- Hands on examples were easy to understand in relations to design and material.
- Enjoyed emphasize on how design should be understood from start to finish in the scenarios of the packing, transport, unpacking and re-packing.
- Good examples of packing to be designed for potential storage use, a beneficial concept.
- Materials handout would have been helpful for future reference and suppliers.
- Should be considered as a workshop session so more discussions could be directed to actual design concepts. Also could include actual internal packing of boxes as well as box construction methods.

Day 2: Transport Methods and Equipment:

Jason De Block; Assistant Manager of Exhibitions; Yale university Art Gallery, New Haven CT.

- Great overview to how staff has built their truck and equipment to fit their specific needs.
- Liked the examples of equipment and how they were designed to specific needs.
- Need more visual images of how equipment was used, especially artwork tied within truck.
- Could have some explanations and visual examples of how to use a rental truck or other common scenarios encountered, not just a specialized truck.
- Would have liked to get more examples in regard to storage/packing systems and design relations for how they work within the local transport needs.
- Good examples and explanations in regard to security and tracking systems used.

Day 2: Mountmaking Principles:

Robert Fuglestad, Robert Fuglestad Design, Williamstown, Mass.

- Good theory of approaches to mount making designs.
- Handout was informative for material information and suppliers.
- Would have been more informative with actual images to clarify his presentations.
- Needed more introductive explanation not just mountmaking theory to start.
- Would have liked more information or physical examples of mounts and materials.
- Could consider possible step by step visual presentation of principles of a mount being made to an individual object.
- Could make in future a better workshop lab presentation.
- Questions and answer session was good to help explain theory that was presented.

Day 2: Three Workshops:

Lab1# Installation Techniques:

Ashley McGrew, (Moderator) Lead Preparator J Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles, Kevin Marshall, Lead Preparator, Getty Villa, Mike Mitchell, Lead Preparator J Paul Getty Museum, Clark Corelius Installation Manager, Yale University Art Museum, New Haven CT.

- General Comments: Very good presentation, large subject for short amount of time, needs to be covered in a longer period. Well covered and enthusiastic presentation.
- Maybe more focused subject with less individual speakers.
- Could be made into a double session or half day session covering more hanging systems types.
- Include more information about wall types and specific construction.
- Larger version could expand into display cases, platforms installation and larger sculptural installation.

- Was great seeing the Getty level of installation hardware and systems designed for space.
- Need some more variety overall types of systems, not just the Getty's best systems.
- Like to hear more regarding Yale or other institutions systems, types of walls encountered in older buildings, problem solving.
- Could use more test demonstrations not just theory discussion.

Lab #2 Rigging Techniques

Mark Wamaling, Director of Packing and Crating and Scott Patti, Rigging Specialist, Artex Fine Art Services, Landover Maryland.

- Excellent workshop presentation; quality demonstration with clarity of basic types rigging systems and equipment.
- Stressed the importance in the knowledge of rigging in preplanning, communication and team work.
- Stressed the importance of using a professional and experienced rigger and quality equipment.
- Helped de-mystify the basics of rigging while stressing the importance for always using a knowledgeable rigger and knowing what to communicate with the professional.
- With more time some visual examples of rigging practices with actual artworks would be great.
- Speakers need to have microphones so they can be heard over the noise of the equipment being used.

Lab #3: Equipment Discussions

Mark Slattery, National Gallery of London; Kurt Christian, Head Preparator St. Louis Art Museum, St. Louis, Mo; Brent Powell, PACIN Chair

- Very good workshop overall in regard to equipment types and group discussions that ensued.
- Good follow up to Mark's talk in the Day 1 presentation on equipment.
- Archival footage of The National Gallery of London and WW11 transport and storage of the collection were enjoyed and discussed by all.
- Longer time period would allow for demonstration with actual equipment and tools.
- OH &S issues were discussed and could be made into a more important part of the workshop.
- More images of equipment types within certain categories could have been presented.
- Enjoyed the discussion of equipment in regard to overall needs to specific adaptations.

Overall Conference Summary: Highlights, Impressions, Weakness

- Great idea to finally hold such a conference specifically tailored and outreach to the profession.
- Well organized and solid start for building on this same conference for the future.
- Raised the level of the "Preparator" by holding such a specific conference for the profession.
- Excellent networking with fellow colleagues and relationships built to continue in the future.
- Good to mix the institutional as well as the commercial staff as we all have the same goals.
- Good to mix institutional and commercial staff to share different ways in which each handle a similar problem yet have different approaches with the same result.
- More time could have been spent to specific subjects with more images, actual handouts of materials, systems or demonstrations.
- Hope that this conference will continue to grow improves and appears in other areas of the country and or overseas, spread and builds the profession.
- Hope that this conference can be rescheduled to appear again in the same region in future years,
- Excellent way for smaller regional museums and their staff to meet other colleagues, share ideas and create networking capabilities.
- More "Open Forum" and or Q&A sessions to specific topics.

“New” Ideas: Ideas to build upon or grow into future conference programs.

- Session on problems solving: examples of specific problems and how each was solved, any subject.
- “Hall of Shame” sessions to admit to an actual problem that occurred and what was learned from it.
- Session or workshops specifically targeting case design, fabrication and climatic systems.
- Session on the subject of exhibition design in relation to installation floor plans, wall building and overall display furniture.
- Session or workshop specifically geared to storage handling and housing designs.
- Restructure in a two day format with second day being all workshops with more time allowed for each.
- Restructure into a three day conference with third day being just for workshops, more specific sessions.
- More time allotted for “Open Forum” and or Q&A session at the end of each half day presentations.
- More hands on workshops so people can actually learn a skill and work with the professional.
- Maybe produce “hands on workshops” to a specific subject.
- Another survey out to members to ask what they would have built on from their review to this first conference,