

NatSCA Conservation Twitter Conference #NatSCAConservation



Programme Day 1: January 19th, 2020

10am – 11 am **From Wall to Shelf – Adventures in decanting the Dead Zoo**

Silvia Da Rocha, Gina Eichmueller and Paolo Viscardi

National Museum of Ireland – Natural History

@DublinDeadZoo

The Dead Zoo is the Natural History exhibition building for the National Museum of Ireland (NMI). The roof of this historic building has reached the end of its life, compromising tens of thousands of displayed and stored objects. In order to safeguard the collection while the roof is replaced, a significant decant is under way, with a project team from Maurice Ward Art Handlers working with NMI curators and conservators. As part of this decant, we have to remove 333 mounted game heads from open display on difficult to access pillars and walls and move them to our offsite storage facility in a safe and conservation-friendly way. This short video highlights some of the issues we have addressed, including packing for handling and transport, IPM and solutions for storage.

11am – 12pm **Fluid preserved collections at the Cole Museum of Zoology: Care and maintenance as they move from display into storage**

Claire Smith - Cole Museum of Zoology

@wetconservatrix

Care of fluid preserved collections: I'd like to show some of the preventive conservation methods that we are employing as we prepare to move our fluid collection into new buildings – both for display and storage. Many of our specimens are around 100 years old, and use materials and techniques which have since been improved upon. Using photographs of some of these specimens, I can give an insight into our decision-making processes, illustrating when we would decide to intervene, and which specimens we would leave alone. I would also like to demonstrate the practical steps which we take to make sure that our fluid preserved collections remain in good condition.

12pm – 1pm **A Whole Different Bearskin: Using natural history conservation techniques to restore a Napoleonic cap**

Lucie Mascord ACR - Lancashire Conservation Studios & Freelance Conservator

@LuceGraham

In 2017, my colleague in social history conservation was approached to work on a significant, newly acquired piece of military history for a private client. The object, a Napoleonic Bearskin of the French Imperial Guard from the Battle of Waterloo, was nearly completely bald due to pest damage. The request of the owner was to restore hair to the hat, at which point I was asked to consult. The level of conservation required put us in an ethical quandary. I developed a methodology that gave us the confidence to go ahead with this significant piece of conservation work, while also satisfying the client. The treatment process came about through much research, practice, error and patience, and took just short of 2 years to complete. This paper will detail the technical aspects of the re-hairing process, as well as the ethical choices we faced and the importance of cross-disciplinary co-operation in our work.

1pm – 2pm The Conservation of Coral: cleaning techniques for cnidarian collections

Natalie Jones - University Museum of Zoology Cambridge
@nautilusnat

The University Museum of Zoology Cambridge has recently revealed a new coral reef exhibit with many of the dry corals being conserved for display. The display is made up of soft corals, stony corals and hydrozoans, and despite all looking relatively similar they provide unique material challenges when it comes to cleaning. This presentation will outline the different cleaning methods used to conserve the corals and explore the benefits of both wet and dry cleaning techniques. It will also look at ways of stabilising the horn-like gorgonin internal 'skeleton' of the soft (gorgonian) corals during cleaning.

2pm – 3pm Well puffed: conservation of two porcupine fish using silk tissue

Lu Allington-Jones - Natural History Museum, London
@AllingtonJones

Two 19th Century taxidermied porcupine fish required repairs to prepare them for a temporary exhibition. They are primarily scientific specimens, so only disparate materials were used (e.g. not isinglass), the repairs were reversible, and all treatments were documented. This ensures that future analysis and research is not compromised. Minimal intervention was observed through the decision to only reconstruct the fins on the side which would be viewable during exhibition. The specimens were cleaned using scarified cosmetic sponge, and broken spines were reattached with Lascaux 498HV. Spines with missing tips were not restored in case these had been broken during life. The majority of conservation involved reconstruction of locally humidified fins using silk tissue, pre-tinted with Lanaset dye and strengthened with Lascaux 498HV. These created a textured translucent base with no visible fibres (unlike when using Japanese tissue). The reconstructed fins were finished with acrylic paints and the addition of rays.

Programme Day 2: January 20th, 2020

10am – 11am Stuffed not Silent: A Study of Social Media as a Tool for Engaging with Taxidermy

Gracie Price - Cardiff University Conservation Department
@magnifyzoology

The introduction of social media has opened new avenues of engagement for museums and conservators. Research has shown that engagement on social media is influenced by the type of content produced and collaboration opportunities created by users. This study aimed to identify the key narratives within taxidermy and how these could be used to create content to increase engagement on social media. The study included a Twitter based experiment, analysing 422 tweets submitted to the #TaxidermyWeek. Analysis of the results indicated that humour is a key factor in gaining engagements and an understanding of the narratives affecting taxidermy are essential to creating engaging content.

11am – 12pm Taxidermy appearance: Re-colouring a Eurasian Otter specimen an ethical and practical consideration

Jen Grossman - Cardiff University Conservation Department
@jen_gossman

The purpose of displayed taxidermy specimens, here excluding type or study specimens, within a museum is in part for education and to present examples of the natural world. Should they represent the animals they depict accurately, or should the history of the mount be shown as well. Conservation can be viewed simplistically as mitigating the decay processes of an object. Recolouring could be seen as obliterating that history, but it also may preserve the educational validity of the specimen. what is more valuable? I will detail the process to recolour an otter mount looking at the successful application of inks within a solvent solution and debate the educational value gained from aesthetic accuracy compared to that gained from maintaining historical evidence of use, ageing and treatment or original production.

12pm – 1pm Conservation issues of botanical wet collections

Marion Dangeon, Laura Brambilla - Haute Ecole Arc Conservation-restauration
@liquor_project

Botanical wet collections present very specific conservation issues due to their composite nature. The main degradations encountered in botanical wet collections are the degradation of the seals or lids (loss of airtightness), the toxicity or evaporation of the solvents and the discoloration of the specimen that may lead to liquid opacity. The work on these conservation-restoration issues has been started in 2016 with a study of the collection of the Botanical Museum of the University of Zurich. A specific investigation has been carried out during the FLUIDIS project for the specimen's discoloration. The results of these works will be presented during the Twitter conference. A thorough investigation of all the issues affecting the conservation of botanical wet collections will be carried out during the LIQUOR project.

1pm – 2pm Using Japanese Paper on Fish Mounting Conservation

Eleri Paatsi - Estonian Museum of Natural History
@NHM_Estonia

In Autumn 2020, research and conservation work on the Estonian Museum of Natural History's fish mounts collection started. The fish collection consists of 95 mounts created between 1947 – 1979. Study has revealed the fish taxidermy techniques used in the Soviet era in Estonia. Ever since the mounts were created nobody has restored them and the specimens have many problems. Several tests were done to find out the best cleaning fluid and best adhesive. The biggest task was fixing mechanical damage and the most suitable method so far has been using Japanese tissue as it solves many different issues that will be presented at the conference. This work is a part of the thesis that will come to an end in Spring 2021. As work is still in progress more interesting discoveries might occur. Work has been created in collaboration with Estonian Academy of Arts, Estonian Museum of Natural History and Conservation and Digitisation Centre Kanut.

2pm – 3pm The case of the donated collection of rodents (*Ctenomys*) to the Félix de Azara Natural History Foundation

Stella Maris Alvarez - Fundación de Historia Natural Félix de Azara. CONICET
@StellaM3436Sur

The Félix de Azara Natural History Foundation houses eleven collections of natural history and anthropology. One of the most important is the mammalogy collection, which has more than 14,000 specimens, including 85 type specimens (10 belonging to the rodent genus *Ctenomys*). We show preventive conservation and catalogue tasks that are currently being carried out on the collection of the genus *Ctenomys*. We are working with 2,000 specimens coming from several localities at South America. The collection has skins and skeletons that were donated by Elio Massoia in 2006 and Julio Rafael Contreras in 2005. This fact confronts us with the complexity of understanding the criterion of each original collector and the information associated with the specimens in their catalogs, labels, and field notes. Reconciling all this data with documentation and actual conservation criteria is a difficult task.

Programme Day 3: January 21st, 2020

10am – 11am Displaying Deep Sea Invertebrates: a technique for mounting smaller fluid preserved specimens

Natalie Jones - University Museum of Zoology Cambridge
@nautilusnat

The University Museum of Zoology Cambridge recently acquired a collection of fluid preserved deep-sea invertebrates collected by the British Antarctic Survey (BAS). The collection includes examples of the species

found at hydrothermal vent sites at depths of up to 2394m in the Scotia Sea on the northern edge of the Southern Ocean. Small invertebrates can be challenging to display well in fluid due to their size and delicate nature and aren't particularly suitable for more traditionally used glass plate and monofilament thread mounting methods. This presentation will outline the method for using Collodion solution as a reversible and stable adhesive in ethanol based preservatives.

11am – 12pm Silk and Ivory: Conserving a Brisé Fan

Daisy Graham - Freelance Textile Conservator

@DaisyGr34037223

This presentation considers the conservation of an ivory brisé fan undertaken as a student project at the Centre for Textile Conservation at the University of Glasgow. Although the treatment focused on stabilising the damaged silk ribbons, the method was influenced by the presence of ivory and the interaction between these two materials. The fan will be briefly contextualised and the relationship of both ivory and silk to the natural world will be highlighted. This will be followed by a description of its condition and then the treatment – a combined stitched and adhesive approach as well as replacement of extremely damaged ribbons. The restrictions placed on the choice of conservation materials due to the ivory will be highlighted and the overall success of the treatment evaluated.

12pm – 1pm The application of Lascaux in the restoration of taxidermy and entomology collections

Bethany Palumbo ACR - Palumbo Conservation Service

@bethany_bug

Materials historically used in the restoration of natural history collections have not always demonstrated good reversibility or long-term chemical stability. With the increasing influence of the field of art conservation, there is currently a movement among professionals who work with natural history collections to embrace materials that are consistent with these standards. One such product is 'Lascaux 498-20X', an acrylic adhesive that is commonly used in textile and painting conservation. The aim of this paper is to supplement our knowledge of these existing usages with a selection of recent case studies describing the use of Lascaux on taxidermy and entomology collections. These examples demonstrate the use of Lascaux 498-20X as an adhesive, a consolidant, and a loss compensation material. Applied with Japanese tissue, either in multiple layers or mixed into a paste, it provides a strong yet flexible base for a variety of applications. It can be used in repairing torn or broken skin, and rebuilding areas of loss. If mixed with pigments, Lascaux provides a realistic fleshy appearance in the restoration of fish fins and tissue. Diverse in its applications and easily removed with acetone or toluene if required, Lascaux shows much promise as a standard adhesive in the conservation of Natural History collections.

1pm – 2pm Japanese tissue repair of 100 plus butterflies crushed by broken glass

Simon Moore ACR – Freelance Conservator

Delivered through @Nat_SCA

In 2020, a large case of mainly British butterflies was damaged in transit causing the glass to break inwards onto the fragile specimens. The case contained c. 100 specimens and about 90% of these sustained damage from a detached wing to almost complete obliteration. This project shows how the faded labels were read and restored, and the specimens were gradually pieced together and re-assembled using 10 gsm Gampi tissue, varying grades of neutral pH PVA adhesive and much perseverance.