



Zoe Finlay Paper Conservation

Newsletter #1, October 2011

WELCOME!

Hello and welcome to the first edition of a new, quarterly newsletter from **Zoe Finlay Paper Conservation**. I hope you enjoy reading these musings as much as I have enjoyed writing them!

The newsletters will include book and art related articles as well as information about events and exhibitions of interest, both locally and further afield.

Also included each quarter will be an article relating to an object on which I've recently worked in my studio. I hope these features give some insight into some of the considerations made and treatments undertaken by paper conservators, as well as reflect the diversity of paper items that come to me for conservation.

Enjoy reading!

Zoe

Right, (clockwise):
Calendar of Saints,
 Paris, 1815, $\frac{3}{4} \times \frac{5}{8}$ ",
Anne Boleyns' 'Gold
Book', c. 1530, $1 \frac{7}{8} \times$
 $1 \frac{3}{8}$ ", **Missal**, Italy,
 17th C, $2 \times 1 \frac{1}{2}$ ", with
 emeralds, gold &
 enamel miniatures.



Images reproduced from 'Tiny Treasures.. (2007)

TINY TREASURES

Miniature books from the
 Grolier Club Collection

I'm currently reading a publication that explores the many diverse and beautiful miniature books from the Grolier Club Collection, New York City.

Miniature books, often defined as measuring no more than three inches in height, have been produced for many hundreds of years. Originally created as miniature clay tablets, they have since progressed through painted manuscripts to present day, printed examples.

Devotional manuscripts were particularly popular and were often carried at the waist by a chain. Notable owners include Anne Boleyn, who carried a miniature prayer book to her execution, and Napoleon, who always carried a miniature library to his military duties. *(continued)*

LOCAL EVENTS:

- **Durham Book Festival** until Friday 28th October, various venues around Durham, durhambookfestival.com
- **International Print Biennale 2011**, 17th September – 19th November 2011, Hatton Gallery, Newcastle University, www.twmuseums.org.uk
- **Northumberland History Fair**, 24th October 2011, Woodhorn Museum and Northumberland Archives, 11am -4pm www.experiencewoodhorn.com/northumberland-history-fair
- **Forgotten Crafts, Seaton Delaval Hall, Seaton Delaval** Various dates throughout October and November, 2011. An opportunity to view demonstrations and try crafts such as making stained glass and woodcarving. www.nationaltrust.org.uk
- **Gateshead International Stadium Antique & Collectors Fair**, 06th November 2011, 9.30-4pm, www.antiques-atlas.com

... AND FURTHER AFIELD:

- **Treasures of the Bodleian, Bodleian Library, Oxford**, 30th September – 23rd December 2011 and **William Golding**, 05th November – 23rd December 2011. www.bodleian.ox.ac.uk
- **Shelley's Ghost: Re-shaping the image of a literary family**, 07th July – 30th October 2011, Dove Cottage, Grasmere, www.wordsworth.org.uk

The Grolier Club's collection was begun in 1884 for bibliophiles and can count 100,000 volumes within its library.

If you are a book collector, of miniatures or any other format, contact me for free advice on storage, display and how best to support your books during use to avoid damage.

'Miniature Books, 4,000 Years of Tiny Treasures' is published by A.C. Bromer & J.I. Edison, (2007).

FROM THE STUDIO

The Pastel Predicament

Pastels have been a popular artists' medium since the 17th century and were previously made with loose pigments bound with substances such as fish glue and gypsum. Modern pastels are made with methyl cellulose, (a cellulose derivative) and are often combined with binders and fillers.

Essentially, there are three main problems posed for a conservator when dealing with pastel drawings (or paintings as they are often called if the entire surface of the sheet is covered with pigment).

The first is the looseness – or *friability* – of unfixed pigment particles, and their tendency to be transferred or wiped off completely.

This leads us to the second problem; how can you work on the back of a drawing if you can't place it face down?

I was recently faced with this predicament when repairing a pastel drawing. A simple solution was to construct a range of narrow foam supports each covered with acid free tissue paper. The drawing was placed face down with only its very edges touching the supports. Glass weights prevented accidental movement while the acid free tissue was replaced as necessary to keep the drawing 'clean'. The supports meant that the front of the drawing could be suspended with no danger of smudging.

The third problem is that the introduction of moisture during repair or wet pressing methods can compact the pigment, making it clump together and turn a permanently darker shade. However, moisture *can* be used, (for repairs or even for washing with some older pastels) and with constant vigilance and control at all times, surprisingly successful results can be achieved.

This just shows that, while an object may appear to be beyond redemption, there is often a wide range of effective treatments that conservators can apply.

DON'T FORGET TO
CHECK MY WEBSITE FOR
LINKS TO LOCAL
AUCTIONEERS, FRAMERS,
ANTIQUE SHOPS AND
BOOKSELLERS, AS WELL AS
FOR MY REGULAR BLOGS!

PAINTING OF THE QUARTER

'The Artist's Studio' by
Johannes Vermeer



Image reproduced from globalgallery.com

You may be wondering why I'm discussing a painting that, admittedly, has nothing to do with paper conservation. The answer is that I couldn't resist including this masterpiece by Vermeer, painted between 1665 and 1668, having recently viewed it in the Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna. The painting is a beautifully powerful play of light, shadow and perspective.

In addition, controversy has raged as recently as March 2011. The painting was a personal favourite of Hitler's and was acquired by him during World War II. As a result, the \$200 million artwork remains at the centre of a restitution dispute.

And as for paper? Ok, the map in the background is a copy of an original by Flemish engraver, Claes Jansz Visscher (1587-1652)!