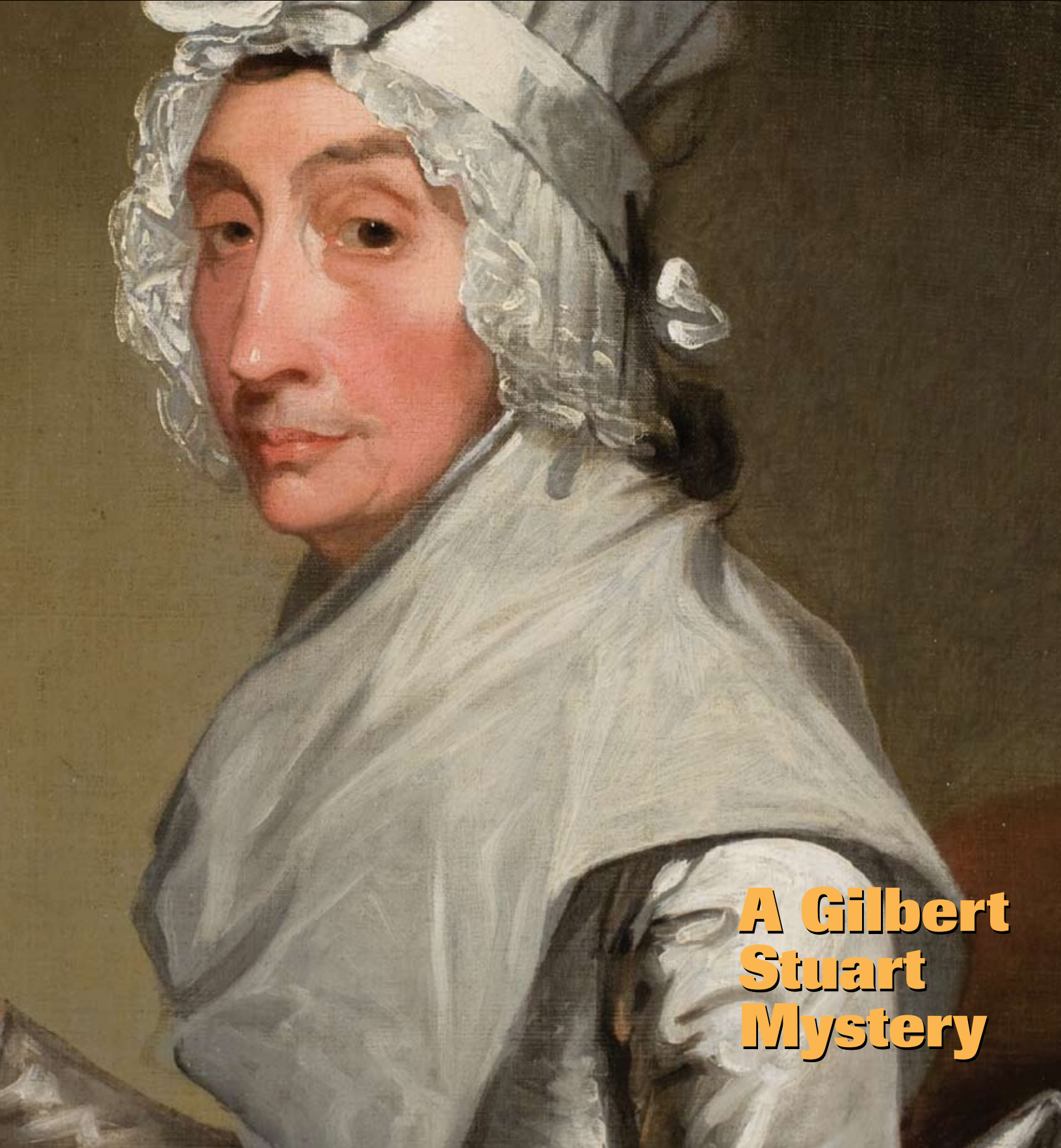


Art Conservator

A PUBLICATION OF THE WILLIAMSTOWN ART CONSERVATION CENTER

VOLUME 4, NUMBER 2 • FALL 2009



**A Gilbert
Stuart
Mystery**

Art Conservator

Volume 4, Number 2 • Fall 2009

Director

Thomas J. Branchick

Editor

Timothy Cahill

Art Direction and Production

Berg Design, Albany NY

Photographer

Matthew Hamilton

Contributors

Mary Catherine Betz, Leslie Paisley

Office Manager

Rob Conzett

Accounts Manager

Terry Haskins

Office Assistant

Amanda Turner

Printing

Snyder Printer, Troy, NY

Design Concept

Kosak Design, Pittsburgh, PA

Williamstown

Art Conservation Center

227 South Street

Williamstown, MA 01267

www.williamstownart.org

T: 413-458-5741

F: 413-458-2314

Atlanta

Art Conservation Center

6000 Peachtree Road

Atlanta, GA 30341

T: 404-733-4589

F: 678-547-1453

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On the cover

Portrait of Catherine Brass Yates (detail)

Anonymous, after Gilbert Stuart

- 3 **Director's Letter**
- 4 **Unraveling a Mystery**
With analysis and connoisseurship, experts delve into a Gilbert Stuart copy
By Timothy Cabill
- 14 **Terra Nova**
A new beginning of an historic Wilson globe
- 18 **Reading the Paper**
A conversation with paper historian Peter Bower
- 20 **Report from Atlanta**
A cowboy artist with roots in Courbet and Capone
- 22 **WACC News & Notes**
Uncanny Americana; WACC restores Gorky murals;
Ivan Albright's raw realism; Cleveland woodblocks



As always, there have been some fabulous works of art at WACC undergoing some interesting treatments. Many of these could be viewed during the very popular public tours of the Center that were arranged through the Clark this past summer. Several of the treatments are included in this issue of *Art Conservator*. The 1810 Wilson globe is a wonderful example of a multi-discipline project, where conservators from all four of our departments collaborated, along with outside contractors, to stabilize and refurbish a national treasure. I am particularly fascinated by the fabrication of the globe's new meridian ring by R. I. Baker of Clarksburg, Mass., who cut the arc from a sheet of brass. After engraving, the Objects lab will tone it to make it compatible with the 200-year-old paper gores and wood stand.

On the cover of this issue is a detail from a *Portrait of Catherine Brass Yates*, a replica of a famous painting by Gilbert Stuart that presented a mystery of authorship. The story, the longest *Art Conservator* has ever offered, relates an intricate process of history, analysis, and connoisseurship. I "bought in" at first, taking the project on for a private owner. The end findings are concrete to me, but these exercises are always subject to interpretation. It was a lot of fun working with the National Gallery of Art in Washington, and the Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco, to compare four paintings—two originals and two copies. For me, the "epiphany moment" came when we viewed all the paintings together in Washington. The clouds parted and the answers we were looking for were literally staring us in the face. It was all in the brushwork! Read the story and weigh in. It's not *The Da Vinci Code*, but it's a fascinating read. Special thanks to the National Gallery of Art and the Redwood Library and Athenaeum for supplying images. —Tom Branchick



As fall came to the Berkshires, snail trails marked the morning dew on a window at Stone Hill.

Unraveling a Mystery

With analysis and connoisseurship, experts delve into a Gilbert Stuart copy

By Timothy Cahill

Art Conservator Editor

In November 2008, Thomas Branchick, Director of the Williamstown Art Conservation Center, traveled to the National Gallery of Art in Washington, DC, on a mission. In the subterranean facilities of the National Gallery's art conservation department, four paintings had been arranged for inspection. The paintings were two seemingly identical sets of pendant portraits of a married couple, *Richard Yates* and *Catherine Brass Yates*, by Gilbert Stuart. The pictures, from 1793, presented in microcosm the two sides of Stuart, early America's greatest portraitist. On one hand was the expert professional limner, embodied by his Mr. Yates, a prosaic New York merchant looking stolidly up from his papers, his brass buttons brighter than his appearance or his expression. On the other was the penetrating psychological genius, honored from his day to this, in the personage of Mrs. Yates, a steely-eyed matriarch whose austere face glows and glowers beneath a ribboned mobcap as her right hand pinches a needle and thread.

It's not hard to see why Stuart's *Catherine Brass Yates* is regarded as among the finest American portraits ever made, or why its creator, the painter of six presidents—and every other leading citizen of his age—is one of America's towering masters. Indeed, it was Stuart's stature that had compelled Branchick to fly to Washington, and why the two pairs of Yates paintings had been prepped for examination. So similar were the pictures that, at a glance, they could have been done by the same hand. When that

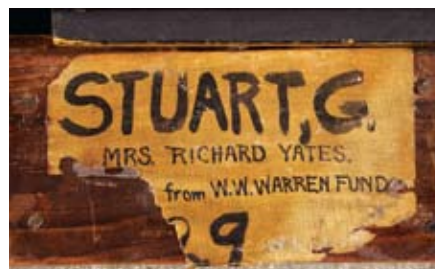
hand might be Gilbert Stuart's, one goes where required.

Attribution was not in question for one of the pairs, the renowned portraits of *Mr. and Mrs. Yates* that belong to the National Gallery. They are known to be by the great man. As for the second, matching versions, top museums had once attributed them to Stuart as well, before subsequent scholarship reversed that opinion and downgraded them to copies by an unknown artist. This diminished attribution had been undisputed for decades, until it was questioned by a wealthy collector and connoisseur in 2007.

The collector, Joseph P. Carroll, of New York and Paris, had acquired the second version of *Catherine Brass Yates* and begun to suspect it was more than it seemed. After conducting his own preliminary research, he commissioned WACC to run analytical tests on the painting. This is a common request among clients wishing to determine the age and scientific profile of a work, and, based on the results

of those tests, it's not unusual for conservators to offer a clinical opinion. Not infrequently, analysis ends up dashing grandiose hopes of a lost Old Master treasure, when the work is found to have some physical property—a pigment, ground, technique, etc.—that was unknown during the artist's lifetime. The science follows standard procedures, and the results are generally clear-cut.

The Carroll case, however, turned out to be far from routine. From chemical analysis to historical research to scholarly inspection, its findings only deepened a mystery that has persisted more than two years, and ranged in



Opposite, *Portrait of Catherine Brass Yates*, a version of a work by Gilbert Stuart, whose authorship is disputed by its owner. Above, a label on the back attributing the picture to Stuart.



time and distance from Scotland and England to New York, Boston and San Francisco, as well as Williamstown and Washington. Throughout the journey, one question has lingered: Were earlier experts hasty in de-attributing Carroll's *Mrs. Yates* from Gilbert Stuart? Is the second version also the product of the man himself?

At the center of this query is the painting's owner, a man who signs his correspondence "The Honorable Joseph P. Carroll" and in conversation invites you to call him "Joe." Carroll is retired from a career in international finance, investment banking, and government; when he inventories his background, it is meant to impress, and does. After serving in the Coast Guard, he graduated in 1964 from Columbia University's School of Engineering and Applied Science, followed by a business degree from the Columbia Graduate School of Economics, and one in advanced management from a joint program at Harvard

and M.I.T. While at Columbia, Carroll was mentored by future-Nobel laureate Milton Friedman. In 1972, he was named a White House Fellow, in the same class as future-Secretary of State Colin Powell, and served as both Staff Assistant and Special Assistant to Treasury Secretary George Shultz. (It is from this government service he added the honorarium to his name.) After finishing his Washington service, he worked for Chase Manhattan Bank, setting up the institutional mechanisms for managing, as he explains, "the excess monetary reserves of both Saudi Arabia and Venezuela"—two of the world's richest oil countries.

A prominent collector and dealer, Carroll began buying art in the 1970s, when, he explains, critic Dore Ashton turned him on to Pollock, De Kooning, and the rest of the New York School. A Korean painting he received as a gift touched off a lifelong passion; he began to collect and study art from that country, eventually becoming an

authority on Korean Buddhist Art and Literati Painting. He is Consulting Curator at the *Musée Guimet*, the French National Asian Art Museum in Paris, where he has worked on exhibitions of Korean art and was co-author of *The Poetry of Ink: The Korean Literati Tradition, 1392-1910*. For his long-time support of French cultural institutions, he was named an Officer in the National Order of the Legion of Honor, that country's most prestigious civilian honor. Carroll was Associate-in-Residence at the Korea Institute of Harvard's Fairbank Center, and has supported numerous museums, including the Art Institute of Chicago, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, and the National Museum of American Art at the Smithsonian Institution.

Carroll owns what he describes as a "substantial" collection of 18th-century American art, including works by Benjamin West, the history painter active in London before and after the Revolution, and Boston portraitist John Copley. When he saw the *Catherine Yates* for sale at an auction in 2007, his interest was piqued. What drew him first, he says, was a single brushstroke, a "flick" of paint on the ribbon on the back of Mrs. Yates's bonnet.

"This is bravura painting," Carroll recalls thinking to himself. "This is wonderful, bravura painting."

"Two things," attracted Carroll's attention, he recalls. "One was the flick, and the second was the left eye . . . the person's left eye, which is looking out. I thought it was one of the most beautiful things I'd seen in the world."

Tantalizingly, there were also a number of aged, handwritten labels on the back of the painting that named it as a Stuart. Despite this apparent evidence, however, it was identified in the auction catalog only as "American School," and nowhere in the description was the discrepancy explained.

Stuart (1755-1828) is credited with more than a thousand portraits in his lifetime, including, besides the country's first six presidents, a glittering list of Supreme Court justices, military heroes, first ladies, statesmen, businessmen, grandees, and artists. Everyone has seen one of his pictures, the iconic image of George Washington that has defined the dollar bill for more than a century. He painted Washington five different times, and produced multiple versions of each portrait.

"Stuart dives deep into mind, and brings up with him a conspicuous draught of character," observed a



Request of Louisa Lee Waterhouse, courtesy Rhode Island Library and Athenaeum, Newport, Rhode Island

contemporary critic on his artistic perception. Stuart's portraits were compared to Reynolds and Gainsborough for their insight; Chardin, Vermeer, and Velazquez for their brushwork. He was born in Rhode Island, where his father, a Scottish immigrant, ran a snuff mill. At 16 he sailed to Scotland to pursue his art training, eventually landing in London, where he became an assistant in the studio of Benjamin West.

West's atelier was a proving ground for many of the 18th-century's most celebrated American painters. West's specialty was vast historical narratives, "ten-acre pictures," as Stuart lampooned them, built from successive studies and sketches. It was common for his assistants to perform much of the actual brushwork on the final canvases; Stuart painted everything from drapery to an effigy of West himself, as an extra in a crowd scene. While in London, Stuart also accepted commissions of his own, at times working on as many as six sitters in a day. It was in London that he created one of his most sublime images, the 1782 portrait of William Grant called *The Skater*.

Contemporary accounts note how Stuart streamlined his working methods, beginning without preliminary sketches or underdrawing, blocking in his subject quickly with background color and brush strokes, then proceeding directly to work. West, by way of praising his assistant, reportedly told a fellow artist it would be "no use to steal Stuart's colors: if you want to paint as he does you must steal his eyes."

Stuart returned to America two decades after he left it, and found a bustling young Republic ready to employ a portraitist equal to its ambitions. His acclaim had preceded him, and he quickly found patrons in New York, where he settled in April 1793. He stayed there just a year and a half; in November 1794, he moved to Philadelphia, then the nation's capital, with a commission to paint



Yates portraits (2); Andrew W. Mellon Collection, courtesy the Board of Trustees, National Gallery of Art, Washington

Washington. Before leaving New York, Stuart managed to portray some three dozen of its prominent citizens, including Gen. Horatio Gates, Stephen Van Rensselaer, John Jacob Astor—and Richard and Catherine Yates.

As Carroll studied his *Catherine Yates* at the auction house, he was lead by his knowledge of East Asian art, where mastery with the brush has the force of identity.

“I come from Oriental art,” Carroll explains. “In the case of, particularly, Korean art, you’re dealing in areas where a man considers it insulting if [he] has to write his signature. By definition, the painting is the signature. So from my point of view, the signature is . . . that ribbon in the back of Mrs. Yates’ bonnet. If you look at that ribbon, the way that’s made, the brushwork on that ribbon . . . the same person who did that ribbon . . . did the ribbon on the piece in the National Gallery. Same brushwork.”

Yet the painting did not go on the block as a Stuart. “I had no idea what the background was,” Carroll says, “because none of the background was in the catalog. The only thing it said in the catalog is that it was from a Mrs. Lull.” Despite the dearth of information, Carroll followed his eye. Immediately after obtaining the picture, he set out to research what he’d bought, following first the painting’s provenance. The “Mrs. Lull” named by the auction house was Emma Terry Lull, of Washington, DC. Emma Lull was daughter of Sophia Pollock Terry; granddaughter of Anna Sophia Yates Pollock; and great-granddaughter of the sitter herself, Catherine Brass Yates. At some point, the Terry children—Emma and her two brothers—each owned the portrait of their great-grandmother. Anna Sophia—their grandmother—was the younger of the two daughters.

In 1896, Lull sold her *Catherine Yates* to the Boston Museum of Fine Arts, where it entered the collection as a Gilbert Stuart. (The matching *Richard Yates*, which

Emma Lull also owned, passed through a succession of dealers, eventually being bought by the Rockefeller family for the Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco. It is now part of the collection of the M. H. de Young Memorial Museum there.) Carroll’s research found that the Boston MFA was still ascribing its *Mrs. Yates* to Stuart as late as 1936, when it was loaned for an exhibition. By then, however, a major crack in that attribution had appeared. In 1926, the four-volume *catalogue raisonné* of Stuart’s works appeared, in which the Carroll (nee Boston) second version of *Mrs. Yates* was identified as “a replica.”

The Stuart catalog had been compiled by a genealogical scholar named Lawrence Park, whose research notes are preserved in the archives of the Frick Collection. Carroll was the first person in eight decades to seek these notes out, and they yielded a single handwritten card about *Mrs. Yates*. The note card indicates that Park initially identified the Boston/Carroll version as by Stuart; then, at what appears to be a later date, he added the following notation in the margin:

Dr. Isaac M. Cline, 1615 Prytania St., New Orleans writes (Nov. 1917) that this is a replica and that he owns the original on canvas 25" x 30".

From Park’s notes to the *catalogue raisonné*’s ears. In the book, there is an entry for the

Portrait of Catherine Brass Yates, referring to the Cline picture, which is the one now owned by the National Gallery. The Boston/Carroll *Mrs. Yates* is listed, for the record, with a single sentence: “This picture is a replica of the preceding portrait.”

Despite the apparent authority of the *catalogue raisonné*, for Carroll, its findings are inconclusive. Although Park researched the Stuart catalog, and his name is on it, he died in 1924, two years before the book was published. Carroll reasons that, because the catalog came out posthumously, we cannot know if Park had finished his inquiries into the Yates picture. For Carroll, it becomes a matter of interpretation exactly what Dr. Cline

was implying when he described the Boston portrait as a “replica,” or what Parks inferred. Did the statement denote a copy of Stuart, or one by him?

(In calling an early American painting a copy or replica, nothing irregular is necessarily implied. In the days before mechanical reproduction, copies of paintings were routinely commissioned, either by the original artist or by a professional copyist after the creator’s death. Stuart himself made considerable income producing copies of his various portraits of Washington. It’s worth noting that none of Stuart’s copies are entirely identical to their original; each possesses something of its own unique character.)

Carroll, having interpreted Parks’s original notes as open-ended, became unconvinced the author reached any conclusion regarding his *Mrs. Yates*.

“Who made it a replica was the editors of the Park papers,” Carroll asserts.

“If you look at the cataloging of Park, he puts on the side that someone said it’s a replica. So I assume what happened is . . . when the editors are putting everything together, they look at this and they say, ‘OK, it’s a replica.’ And they put it down as a replica. But Lawrence Park doesn’t say it’s a replica. . . . He says Cline says it’s a replica.”

Isaac Cline was a New Orleans dealer who had purchased the Stuart originals from a descendant of Maria Yates Pollock, Catherine Yates’s elder daughter. To Carroll, Cline’s statement admitted ambiguity into the Boston picture’s provenance, which, via the *catalogue raisonné*, apparently helped persuade the Boston MFA to demote the painting. In Boston, it was removed from exhibit, and eventually deaccessioned; despite the information in the auction catalog, it was not the shade of Emma Lull, but the MFA that sold the painting to Carroll.

It is precisely ragged ends like this that have impelled the engineer-banker Carroll onward with his quest, especially as uncertainty continued to accrete around his

Mrs. Yates. While he was pursuing his research in spring 2007, the painting was at a New York conservator for removal of grime and old varnish. When the portrait was returned, Carroll was astonished by what the cleaning had revealed. Evidence of pentimenti—faint underdrawings—were visible beneath the surface paint. These ghost marks were most evident in three areas—the crown of the mobcap, the top rail of the chair, and, most noticeably, on the small finger of Mrs. Yates’s expressive right hand. They bolstered Carroll’s growing belief that his painting was something other than a facsimile made by a copyist.

“A copyist makes a copy,” Carroll says. “If the master has done a portrait, you don’t start changing that portrait, changing the back of the chair, changing the design of the hat, changing the length of the fingers. He has done all of that.”

At the same time, yet another apparent clue surfaced: Carroll’s research determined that the weave of the canvas on his painting was consistent with cloth Stuart is known to have used and imported from Great Britain, and that the pigments were also the same as Stuart’s.

Increasingly, Carroll came to believe that what he owned was in fact a preliminary sketch made by Stuart in preparation for the final version of the portrait.

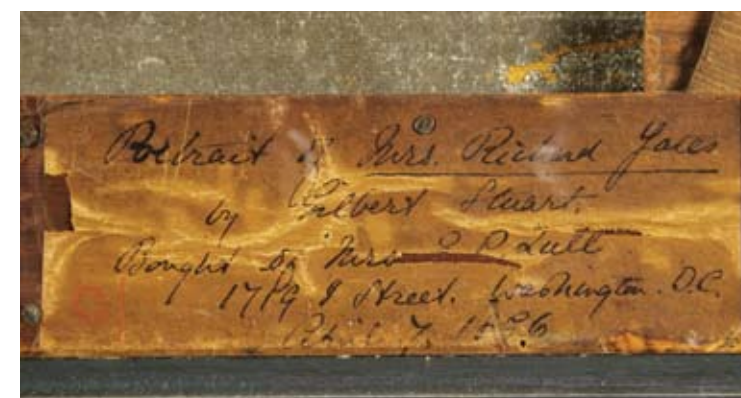
“Based on the physical evidence,” he says, “just looking at the piece, [this] is not a copy but a sketch. Why would it not be a copy? Well, if it’s a copy, you don’t have to work out the design of the hat, the design at the left . . . you don’t do that in a copy. . . . You don’t have to make all these changes. You don’t have to invent an extra couple buttons on the chair. You don’t have to vary the height of the chair in the back. All of these things are [being] worked out in this painting. It may not make it a fully beautiful painting, but to me it makes it a much more interesting painting.”

“Was this done by Gilbert Stuart?,” Carroll asks, somewhat rhetorically. “Who knows, but I don’t know who else could have done it . . . I’m just saying that this is



The Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco, M.H. de Young Memorial Museum, gift of Mr. and Mrs. John D. Rockefeller, Jr.

Copy of *Richard Yates*, from the collection of San Francisco’s de Young Museum, now carries the attribution, “after Gilbert Charles Stuart.”



Handwritten label from the copy of *Catherine Brass Yates*, noting the work was “bought of Mrs. E. P. Lull,” great-granddaughter of Catherine Yates.



Visual analysis of the *Yates* copy, from left: X-ray, infrared spectrum, ultraviolet spectrum, raking light. Below, detail showing apparent underdrawing around the little finger.

clearly a sketch, and it looks like the preliminary sketch to the *Yates* portrait . . . in the National Gallery.”

With his theory formulated, Carroll contacted WACC in May 2007 to subject his ideas to scientific scrutiny.

“What Mr. Carroll wanted was a treatment proposal for a technical study,” Tom Branchick recalls. “That includes X-radiography, infrared imaging, cross-section analysis, ground and pigment identification, binder identification, support thread analysis, comparative photographs of other Stuart paintings, identification of lining adhesive, consulting and communications in a publishable final report.”

In the course of their initial communication, Carroll told Branchick his hypothesis. By the end of the conversation, the WACC director allowed that Carroll might be on to something. “The history, as it was chronologically laid out, made sense,” Branchick says. “That’s one of the pieces of evidence that I found most compelling. He’d definitely done his homework. He has credibility as a scholar. The language was right, the analytical procedures and techniques were right. He knew what he was asking for.”

Branchick, who is also chief paintings conservator at WACC, had treated Stuart paintings in the past. When *Mrs. Yates* arrived in Williamstown, Branchick compared it to a reproduction of the NGA original and wrote an encouraging email to Carroll: “My knee jerk is ‘of course it’s a Stuart.’ It reminds me a lot of two Stuarts I worked on and know intimately, *James Madison* and *Thomas Jefferson* in the Bowdoin College Collection. . . . This is

going to be fun.”

“I was not dismissing it as a copy,” Branchick reports, “and part of that was due to the fact I’d worked on the *Monroe* and *Jefferson* Stuarts at Bowdoin College, two of the icons of Stuart’s paintings. Having first-hand working knowledge and intimacy with his handling of the paint, but also choice of fabric, handling of background colors, and that definite scumbling in to enhance the background of his pictures, that’s what initially made me buy into the idea that this might be a Stuart.”

Branchick’s initial belief in the painting makes what followed all the more telling. In addition to *Mrs. Yates*, Carroll also wished to have WACC analyze its mate, the de Young’s *Richard Yates*. Probably done by the same artist, that picture had entered the San Francisco collection in 1993 as a Stuart, but was subsequently relabeled “after Gilbert Charles Stuart.” Mr. and Mrs. Yates were reunited in Williamstown in November 2007, and the analytical report completed by the following October.

The findings, in a nutshell, were a definite maybe.

“[B]oth paintings are not inconsistent with a late 18th- and early 19th-century date,” concluded WACC analytical scientist Xian Zhang.

Says Branchick: “The good thing, or the bad thing—this is also subject to interpretation—of all the analysis that was done on the picture, all that I delineated, was that none of it said this was not a Stuart. It was contemporary canvas, the kind of weave, the kind of binder, the kind of pigments, whatever remnants of varnish were on the pictures—all of it said it would be in the time period that Stuart painted.”

In 2004, Miles was co-curator with Carrie Rebara Barratt of the Gilbert Stuart exhibition organized by the Metropolitan Museum of Art and the National Portrait Gallery.

“Ellen Miles evidently had looked at the [Carroll] picture earlier on, when . . . they had the Stuart exhibition at the Metropolitan Museum,” Branchick says. “I talked to her and told her the picture was here, and was giving her my version of what I thought was right about it, and she said, ‘Tom, I’m not going to close the door on this one. I’m more than willing to work with you; just let me know what you’re finding and we’ll take a look at it, and see where we can go.’ ”

Miles recalls viewing the two *Mrs. Yates* portraits side by side in 2004. “When the portrait of Mrs. Yates now owned by Mr. Carroll was owned by the Boston Museum of Fine Arts, it was brought to New York City at the time of the opening of the Gilbert Stuart exhibition . . . to compare it with the portrait owned by the National Gallery of Art. I didn’t make any notes at the time, but the general consensus was in agreement with the attribution held at the museum that it was ‘after Stuart,’ not by him.”

Nor was that comparison the first times Miles had dealt with the Boston/Carroll picture. For the catalog that accompanied the retrospective, a researcher had followed as many trails as she could find, but could not determine anything definite about its origins. “We have so little documentation about the original situation, and so little about the Yateses, in terms of helping us figure it out,” she says. “Who paid for them, for example. Even

that was a question.”

In the face of the unanswered questions, but still not convinced that Carroll’s claims were wrong, Branchick conceived of comparing the copies with the originals at the National Gallery.

“When I was looking at the illustrations in the Stuart catalog, it was convincing,” he explains. “It wasn’t absolute, but it was convincing. I still had Ellen Miles’s refrain in my mind, that this really didn’t look good, but as she said, ‘I’m not going to close the door on it. Put it through the exercise and we’ll continue to talk.’ I thought, that’s a reasonable, objective approach to the whole exercise. She wasn’t saying this is not a Stuart and you’re wasting your time; she was willing to follow the whole process through and see.”

“The fact that all the analysis was so inconclusive was the thing that made me say, okay, we’ve done all of this, now I think it’s time to exercise connoisseurship. We need to look at all four of these pictures together, and see what that tells us. That’s when I called Mr. Carroll and asked if he would cover the costs of the insurance and transportation. As long as I could secure permission of the De Young to allow their picture to go to Washington, I would go take a look at all four and see if we get some pertinent information. And he agreed. He thought that was a great idea.”

The four paintings were removed from their frames for examination in the National Gallery’s low-ceilinged



conservation department, the *Mrs. Yates* canvases side by side, and the *Mr. Yates*. Branchick and an NGA paintings conservator went to work, looking.

“When I first saw them, it wasn’t like, bam! here it is, problem solved,” Branchick recalls. “You really did need to start looking at the brushwork.”

At a certain point, though, says the WACC director, “the clouds parted.”

“The known Stuart was so dramatically different from the copy. It had to do with brushwork, how he treated the fabric folds, how he treated flesh tones. There are broad brushstrokes, but they’re so controlled as to be absolutely convincing of flesh. The same thing was accomplished in the inkwell in the portrait of Mr. Yates. The highlights in those inkwells—if you looked at the known Stuart versus the copy, the copy was so clumsy. It was almost like a little diagram. You just followed the lines of Stuart, this is how he treated the chair, this is how he treated tack highlights, or how he treated shadows in fabric—then look at the copy, and none of that was there. The copies were thick, they were muddy, there was a build-up of paint that was not in any way present in the two National

Gallery pictures.”

“As soon as you started looking at all of those very subtle nuances of the *bona fide* Stuarts versus what was in the other two, the whole thing was just blown out of the water,” Branchick explains. “The brushwork was clumsy, it wasn’t as crisp. Stuart’s admixture of paint and medium was a lot leaner, so that you would get brushstrokes with furrows. In the copies, there was more medium. It was like looking at melted ice cream versus some that just came out of the carton. Very crisp versus something that was very soft.”

The stark difference in the way the paint was handled cast doubt on Carroll’s hypothesis that his second version is a preliminary sketch. It seems unlikely, even in a study, that Stuart—or any master painter who has settled on a certain ratio of pigment to medium—would thin his paint to the extent evidenced in the Carroll replica.

“I would even elaborate that further, in the comparison between the National Gallery pictures and the other two,” Branchick continues. “It’s how Gilbert builds up flesh tone. It’s done in quick, very facile strokes. Making things a little bit rosier, a little bit greener, a little bit paler in order to give the dimension of facial tones. If you look at

the way, on the Carroll picture and also the San Francisco picture, the copyist handled that—completely different approach. There’s just paint on top of paint on top of more paint. Where Stuart, it’s like the way Franz Hals painted, very quick, fluent tones of paint that sit next to each other, that build up the illusion of skin tone. The copyist was adding paint on top of paint to get the color right. Stuart did it with a lot less paint, and a lot more convincing.”

Later the same day, Ellen Miles also went to the National Gallery to view the four paintings, and arrived at the same conclusion. The exercise recalled close inspections she’d made on the various copies Stuart made of his George Washington portraits. All his work, even his most “abbreviated copies” display recurring techniques, she says.

“I find that even when he’s repeating something . . . that he knows well, he treats it as a new painting,” she says. “Stuart has what you might call an energetic, even nervous brushwork. The way he twists the brush, he gets an edge of white on something, or an edge of a color. You can sense the energy. That’s what I look for when I’m looking at various versions of things.”

“That quality of energy and freshness,” Miles concludes, “isn’t in the [Yates] copies.”

It is never pleasant to dash another’s hopes, and Tom Branchick wasn’t looking forward to reporting his findings to Joseph Carroll.

“I said, ‘Mr. Carroll, it’s absolutely black and white for me now, that your picture is a copy.’ But Carroll still wasn’t convinced. Nor is he to this day. He still makes the argument, why the pentimenti, why the changes to the chair, the pinkie finger, the bonnet—why would a copyist do that? Why wouldn’t he make it exact to Stuart? I said, Well, that is dependant on the skill of the copyist, isn’t it?”

Ellen Miles surmises that the copies were most likely commissioned by the daughters after both parents had died. Sophia, being the younger daughter, received the copies, while her older sister took the originals with her when she relocated to New Orleans.

But Carroll asks, what are the odds that a copyist would use exactly the same canvas and paints that Stuart had used decades earlier? And so the questions persist.

By prior arrangement, both Branchick and Carroll have agreed to let the story be told in *Art Conservator*, and

allow the facts to speak for themselves.

“One thing I would ask you to do,” Carroll says to the writer during an interview for the article, “is go through the same process I’m going through. Follow though the logic of the questions. They lead you to a point where, if this is not a sketch, I don’t know who it’s by.”

“Art history is not a definitive black and white process,” insists Carroll, whose passion for this inquiry is hard to challenge. He wants the public to have the opportunity to see the four paintings together, and has approached the National Portrait Gallery about the possibility of arranging such an exhibition.

“Let people come to their own conclusions,” he says. “There are smart people in the world. People can debate.”

Branchick agrees: “I would love to see something like that. Maybe the National Portrait Gallery would be able to make it happen, out of scholarship and connoisseurship. Or maybe a teaching institution.”

At the end of the day, Carroll explains, his concern is that the art be served. Aware of possible skepticism of his motives, Carroll hastens to add that his campaign, “is not about money. I’m spending thousands of dollars on this.”

“I have told . . . the National Portrait Gallery that I’d like to have these both out there,” Carroll adds. “I said, if this is a Gilbert Stuart, you can have the piece. I’ll just give it to you. The issue here is not money. The issue here is the idea that you could lose a work of art because people don’t want to look at it and understand, and it disappears.”

Carroll acknowledges he is not willing to go gentle into this particular night. He is convinced that, by oversight or worse, a mistake has been made by the scholarly community. He hopes his efforts will prompt a re-evaluation of Stuart’s working methods and oeuvre.

“I think what’s happening,” he says, “is that, as the sketches have come up, they’re catalogued as ‘American School’ or as copies, like this one, and gotten rid of.”

Carroll allows he is standing alone against the findings of decades of expertise. But he relinquishes none of his conviction nor skepticism towards the status quo.

“People create ideals of what they would like things to be,” he observes, “and then they either put them in this box or put them in that box.”

Throughout the two-year odyssey of this painting, that’s the one thing that has been demonstrably true. **G**



Two details of *Mrs. Yates*: The Stuart original, left, and the copy by an unknown artist.

Gilbert Stuart, *Portrait of Catherine Brass Yates (detail)*, Andrew W. Mellon Collection, courtesy the Board of Trustees, National Gallery of Art, Washington



James Wilson, *Terrestrial Globe*, c. 1810, during treatment.

Terra Nova

A new beginning for an historic Wilson globe

James Wilson was traveling through Vermont's Connecticut River valley in 1795 when he took a side trip to Dartmouth College, and there viewed, for the first time, a pair of globes, one of the Earth and another of the night sky. The sight of those charted spheres set in motion an enthusiasm that became a life's work for the then-37-year-old blacksmith-farmer. Over the next fifteen years, Wilson acquired an impressive inventory of skills and knowledge, from geography and cartography to printmaking and brass engraving, as he taught himself how to make his globes. At one point, he sold his livestock to buy a set of the *Encyclopedia Britannica*; another time, he walked from Vermont to New Haven, Connecticut, to learn copper engraving. By 1810, he had perfected his art and sold the first numbers of his creation, "A new Terrestrial Globe on which the Tracts and New Discoveries are drawn from the Accurate Observations made by Capt. Cook, Furneau, Phipps etc." They were the first globes ever produced in America.

Wilson accomplished all this far from the cosmopolitan centers of the world he depicted, in a farmhouse in the remote village of Bradford, Vermont. Wilson went on to become a world-renowned globe-maker, and today Wilson globes are prized as historical objects, art treasures, and exemplars of the cartographer's craft. And of these, the first globes, made in 1809-10, command their own kind of awe. Quite obviously labors of love, they are slightly awkward in their execution but nonetheless charming. They contain certain archaisms that Wilson updated in 1811, the year he opened a globe-making business and began dating his work. In his first globes, the Atlantic is called the "Western Ocean," and Antarctica is altogether unknown.

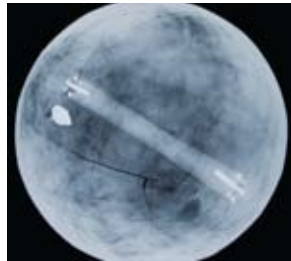
In 1960, the Bradford Historical Society obtained one of the earliest surviving globes by its most famous son. It was purchased in "deplorable" condition—cracked, punctured, stained, peeling, and missing its original meridian ring. No matter; it was displayed in the lobby of the local bank and immediately became the symbol of town pride. "This is a great story of Yankee ingenuity and perseverance," says Larry Coffin, president of the historical society. "Wilson was a Renaissance man. He did everything he needed to perfect his globe."

In 2007, with the globe's bicentennial on the horizon, the Bradford Historical Society contacted the Williamstown Art Conservation Center. "We brought it in for stabilization and repair," Coffin explained. "We had decided we did not want it to look new. We did not want it restored."

The globe is constructed of two sewn-halves of *papier-mâché*, skim coated with plaster and covered with a paper map. The map contains twelve wedge-shaped sections called gores, hand-tinted with watercolors. A wooden horizon ring, decorated with signs of the zodiac, divides the two hemispheres at the equator, and a brass meridian ring demarcates latitude measurements. The globe is displayed on a wood stand with turned legs, also made by Wilson. [For details of the conservation treatment, see pp 16-17.]

The Bradford Historical Society, which raised funds for the treatment from local businesses and townspeople, will have an official unveiling of their reborn world on January 18, 2010, 200 years to the day that Wilson began selling his famous *Terrestrial Globe*.

Anatomy of Mr. Wilson's Globe



When purchased by the town of Bradford, Vermont in 1960, the c. 1809-10 James Wilson globe was recorded by the town historian in "deplorable" condition. Here, a view of the globe before treatment records a range of staining, dirt, abrasions, cracking, punctures, and losses to the surface.

Treatment involved WACC's Objects, Paper, Paintings, and Wooden Objects departments. X-rays, in addition to revealing a network of cracks across the plaster surface, showed a wooden pillar and metal pivot pins for the meridian ring. The white spot is a lump of lead shot Wilson inserted as a counterbalance to allow even rotation.



The globe is constructed of plaster over *papier-mâché*. The surface is covered with paper sections, or gores, attached longitudinally, like sections of an orange, capped on each pole by a pair of end-caps. Wilson taught himself cartography and copperplate engraving, and devised and printed the sections of the map himself. In cases where large pieces of paper and plaster were missing from the surface, the areas were filled with an acrylic molding paste bulked with glass microballoons. The repairs were covered with patches of vintage paper and inpainted.



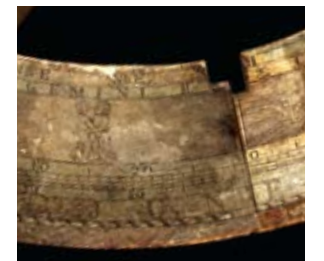
North-south rifts in the paper followed the edges of the paper gores. While restorations of other Wilson globes have involved removing the gores, that option was rejected in this treatment. The surface was in such poor condition that removal risked further paper losses. To stabilize the plaster damage, a syringe was used to inject acrylic adhesive into the gaps. Vintage paper fills were inserted where necessary to cover the deep plaster cracks and bridge weak areas of the surface.



Surface treatment was also complicated by varying levels of damage to the paper layer. Some sections were stripped to bare plaster, while the exposed paper in others was unprotected by sizing or varnish. Patches of original varnish across the surface (visible as dark amber spotting) added to the challenge. Cleaning was done first with dry erasers, then with a poultice of methyl-cellulose, a substance close to wallpaper paste that dissolves dirt and stains. Wilson's tinting of the continents with watercolors rendered it impossible in some instances to clean those areas due to the water-soluble pigments.



Treatment of the wooden globe stand was concentrated on the horizon ring, which had suffered a deep diagonal split. Splints were secured to the ring and the areas of loss filled. Wilson decorated the top of this equatorial ring with zodiac symbols printed on paper. They had become discolored by two centuries of grime and indoor pollutants. Solubility issues made the staining impossible to reverse fully, but the ring was brightened with the cleaning strategy used on the globe. The notch is for the original meridian scale, which has disappeared. A replica, modeled on the Bennington Museum's 1810 Wilson globe, was fabricated from brass and hand-engraved.



Some of the greatest damage was found in the region of the South Pole, which was severely crushed, punctured, and cracked. A small spatula was inserted under the paper layers to lift the crushed sections back into surface plane, and tiny balsa wood wedges were inserted between the layers for support. Bulk adhesive mixture and plaster fill was injected in the gaps, and the areas patched. A thin protective coating of synthetic resin was applied over the entire surface. At the time Wilson made his first globes, Antarctica was undiscovered. The region was known simply as the Ice Sea.



Reading the Paper

A conversation with paper historian Peter Bower

Peter Bower is a bona fide star in the world of paper analysis. A renowned forensic paper historian and analyst, he has been a key consultant on cultural projects and criminal investigations across Europe and North America. He is a leading expert on papers used by Constable and Gainsborough, and has performed a groundbreaking historical and technical examination for the Tate Gallery of the papers used by J.M.W. Turner. In 2000, his investigations helped confirm the rediscovery of a lost drawing by Michelangelo. Criminal cases he has worked on range from the identity of Jack the Ripper to the analysis of \$200 million of forged US Treasury Bonds. Bower is editor of two journals of paper history, and has published, in addition to two books on Turner, more than one hundred fifty articles, essays and conference papers. "Every sheet of paper tells a story," he writes. "It contains the marks of its making and as such is capable of intense examination." Bower led a two-day seminar, "Reading the Paper: Context and Interpretation in the Analysis of Paper" at the Williamstown Art Conservation Center October 1 and 2, 2009. The seminar, sponsored by the American Institute for Conservation of Historic and Artistic Works, attracted curators and scholars from Boston, New York, Philadelphia, Washington and Los Angeles. While at WACC, Bower sat for an interview with Art Conservator that ranged from art to science to the pleasures of paper. —Timothy Cahill

Art Conservator: What led you to your interest in paper?

Peter Bower: One of my oldest memories is sitting on a wet concrete floor surrounded by wet wooden boxes in Austria. This is just after the war [WWII] and my father was in military intelligence. Austria was occupied, just as Germany was, and these were English banknotes, forgeries, recovered from one of the lakes. I still have some of those notes.

I collected paper as a child, much to my parents' annoyance. We moved from country to country a lot, and my collection had to go with me. I made paper when I was in art school, just out of interest. . . . And after a period in the music business, I decided I needed to utilize as many different aspects of my interests together, which include history, science, working hard physically—which papermaking is—interest in materials, interest in surfaces, how things work—it was a very conscious decision, that this suited more of me than anything else. So I did it.

You began as a papermaker?

Yes. I made paper for artists by hand, sheet by sheet, the laborious way. Trying out all sorts of methods that were mentioned in the literature, and I didn't believe half of what they were saying. So I started collecting and analyzing paper . . . to understand how the old guys had actually done it. And because people began to know I was

doing that, they started to ask me, "Oh, you know about old paper, could you take a look at this drawing? Could you have a look at this watercolor or this document"—whatever. So it was an evolution.

In 1988, the Tate wanted Turner looked at. They asked for research projects, and I said, okay, I'll do Turner's papers.

No one had ever done that?

No. No—it was a daunting task. They gave me two years, and I said, "You're looking at a twenty-year project. You're not going to get it done in two years." But, we started. I produced two exhibitions at Tate Britain and two books. I've looked at everything they've got, and I probably looked at six thousand other Turners around the world.

What did you learn about him?

He knew what he wanted. He was fascinated by materials, and it's very obvious he, like Rembrandt and a few other people, was essentially an experimenter, but building on his experience constantly. It's fascinating to see him try out—there's one sheet of a particular paper, say, and it's a half-finished work, and you can tell he didn't like it, he stopped. But when he was really engaged—and you see this with Constable, you see this with other artists—even the worse rubbish paper is turned into an absolutely amazing work. Artists like that are fascinating. . . . I'm

fascinated to see what choices they make. In the last Turner exhibition I did at the Tate, the last section was of other artists using the same papers Turner used.

What did you learn comparing Turner to other artists that way?

You suddenly realize that Turner had the courage, in a sense, to almost attack the paper. He knows how far he can take it. Whereas other artists, they're not so energetic. Their imagination doesn't demand as much of their materials.

From papermaking to forensic historian required a much deeper commitment to the science of paper.

Yes, what it's made of, and how what it's made of works with each other. How all the elements connect. . . . If you're making an etching paper, you want a completely different set of physical characteristics than if you're making a lithography paper, or a writing paper, or a

watercolor paper. You can start off with the same cellulose fibers, linen rags, hemp, whatever, and develop different potentials in the various stages of the making. But you have to know about how cellulose works, and how heat works, getting the water in and out of the fiber, everything like that. That's intriguing, that's really fascinating.

You're going down to the molecular level with this?

Yes you are. If you go around a mill—even a really high tech mill is a mixture of high tech and cooking.

Meaning papermakers are like chefs? They work from recipes—

A great papermaker, particularly working by hand, is like a fantastic chef. . . . They can make stuff that not only looks good, but really does what the user wants. But there are papermakers over time who have written things down about what they've done, and half the time they don't do

(continued on page 26)



Peter Bower discusses a specimen of paper fiber during a seminar at the Williamstown Art Conservation Center.



Harry Jackson, *The Range Burial*, 1963, and *The Stampede*, 1965, after treatment. Both paintings are in the collection of the Buffalo Bill Historical Center in Cody, Wyoming.

A cowboy artist with roots in Courbet and Capone

This past summer the Atlanta Art Conservation Center undertook the conservation of two large pictures on loan to the Booth Western Art Museum from the Buffalo Bill Historical Center in Cody, Wyoming. The paintings, by Harry Jackson, painted in the early 1960s, highlight the hard lives of the cowboys on the Western prairie. The two pictures tell the story of a cowboy's death during a cattle stampede and his subsequent burial on the range.

The paintings are titled *The Range Burial* and *The Stampede*. *The Range Burial* was completed first, in 1963, and is dedicated to the artist's late friend, Jackson Pollock. *The Stampede*, telling the first part of the story, was finished two years later, in 1965. Jackson has lived a colorful life, to say the least, as suggested in the memoir on his website (www.harryjackson.com): "In 1924, the world renowned painter/sculptor Harry Jackson was born into

a mafia family ruled by Al Capone in his very own bullet blasted, blood spattered Chicago. In 1938, fourteen-year-old Harry Jackson's brothel Boss Grama was going to kill him—so Harry Jackson escaped to cowboy in the Rocky Mountains near Cody Wyoming for near on four years. Then Harry Jackson fought in the Pacific with the Marines at Tarawa, Roi-Namur and Saipan-Tinian—after being wounded and decorated Harry Jackson became the youngest Marine Corps Combat Artist—and the best according to the Marine Corps Commandant and *New Yorker* magazine (Nov. 20, 1943 issue)."

Jackson began as an abstract painter, exhibiting with Pollock, Willem De Kooning and others in New York. After seeing a black-and-white reproduction of Titian's *The Flaying of Marsyas* in 1952, Jackson immersed himself in the Old Masters, sailing to Europe in 1954 where, his unpunctuated website explains,

"he studie[d] the Venetian painter Titian in particular and other Renaissance art in Italy Sicily Switzerland Austria Germany France and Spain." Upon his return to America, Jackson slowly rejected abstraction in favor of an expressive, muscular realism. *Stampede* and *Range Burial* were both commissioned by the US Ambassador to Denmark; Jackson relocated to Italy to create them. The composition of *The Range Burial* clearly alludes to Gustav Courbet's *The Burial at Ornans*.

When they arrived at the Atlanta lab, the overall condition of both paintings was good. Each picture, measuring approximately ten feet by twenty one feet, arrived at the Center off its stretcher, rolled onto cardboard concrete tube forms. The treatment involved fairly routine grime removal, revarnishing, and inpainting, then restretching the canvas onto existing supports. Much of the treatment involved the modification of the existing stretcher

members to better support the canvas. Corrugated plastic inserts were custom cut and installed between the crossbars flush to the surface of the stretcher, filling the gaps and creating a solid support. A heavy linen canvas was stretched over each stretcher to offer frictional support to the original canvas while also functioning as a soft barrier layer.

Once the original canvases were restretched, the surfaces were aqueously cleaned to remove grime prior to revarnishing. Losses were filled and inpainted and the pictures prepared for transport to the Booth Museum. A large tractor-trailer was hired with doors tall enough to accommodate the pictures. The surfaces were wrapped with Tyvek and placed face-to-face in the truck, contacting on outriggers installed onto the stretcher reverses which protruded forward to prevent the canvas faces from touching.



Uncanny Americana

In 1897, a chemist at the Joseph Campbell Preserves Co. developed a commercially viable method to condense and can soup. Three years later, the company adopted its familiar white and cherry-red label. Mr. Campbell probably couldn't have guessed the impact he would have on American cultural history, or known how iconic his soup would become when he commissioned a promotional sign depicting the product as the American flag.

The rare lithographed-tin advertisement has been called the "holy grail" of promotional signs, both for what it depicts and where it was manufactured. In 1990, an example is said to have sold for \$85,000. Whether the item pictured here, brought to WACC for cleaning by a private client, fetched such a price is not

known. It is, at any rate, a rare bit of Americana.

It was made by the Standard Advertising Company of Coshocton, Ohio. What Campbell is to canned soup, Coshocton is to promotional ads. It was there, at the confluence of the Walhonding and Tuscarawas rivers, that the modern "specialty products" industry was born in the 1880s, when Jasper Meek, the ambitious publisher of the weekly *Coshocton Age*, sold a local shoe merchant on the idea of printing the name of his store on book bags. Meek was only trying to employ his presses between editions, but the idea was so successful that soon he was trumpeting merchants on everything from wooden rulers to horse blankets. His Tuscarora Advertising Company made so much money that Meek sold the paper.

Moved by Meek's success, Harry Beech, editor of the rival *Coshocton Democratic Standard*, established the Standard Advertising Company in 1888. The small Ohio town began attracting commercial artists from across the US and Europe. In 1901 the companies merged, with Standard maintaining the sign business.

It was around this time that the Campbell's flag was produced. The name of the designer is lost to history, but the design is a deft stroke. The ensign waves on a pole with gold ropes and tassels. The flag itself is constructed of fifty-two Campbell's cans arranged in five rows. In the upper left, eight cans, colored blue and bearing five-cornered white stars, completes the picture. The cans represent the twelve flavors then available, from chicken, beef, tomato, celery and mutton broth to tomato okra, mock turtle, ox tail and mulligatawny. "Just Add Hot Water and Serve," the sign both proclaims and instructs, promising "6 Plates for 10c."

Clever as the design was, it was even more controversial. The idea of Old Glory being used to sell soup was decried as desecration; the furor prompted Campbell's to withdraw the signs and destroy them. A few survived, obviously, and it is tempting to imagine one of them hanging in a small neighborhood grocery in Pittsburgh, where it is seen by a young Andrew Warhol. Three decades pass, the memory preserved like a mock turtle in a tin, until the boy, now Andy Warhol, paints his famous pictures of soup cans and exhibits them, flag-like, in a grid. There's no proof art history happened this way, of course, but Coshocton is less than fifty miles from Warhol's home town. Looking at the older flag sign, the similarities between it and Warhol's 1962 *Campbell's Soup Cans*, now in the Museum of Modern Art, are, well, uncanny.

—Timothy Cahill

Arshile Gorky, *Mechanics of Flying*, 1937, after treatment.

WACC restores lost murals for Gorky retrospective

Arshile Gorky's *Mechanics of Flying* was one of ten large murals created for the Federal Arts Project during the Depression and installed in the Newark Airport in 1937. Most of the paintings, which were criticized for being too abstract when made, have been lost; *Mechanics* and another surviving work, *Aerial Map*, exist through sheer good luck. In 1976, both oil-on-canvas murals, which had been adhered directly to the terminal walls, were discovered under fourteen layers of interior wall paint. Apparently, at some point a supervisor with no taste for modernism sent in a team with paint and rollers and effectively obliterated Gorky's art. At the time of the discovery, the desecrated works were sent to a conservation lab, where the wall paint was removed and the support repaired and relined with linen and a wax adhesive. They were installed in the Newark Museum, where they are on long-term loan from the New York-New Jersey Transit Authority.

With time, deficiencies in the initial restoration became obvious. In the course of removing the wall paint, much of Gorky's original pigment was skinned off as well, and inpainting meant to cover the losses suffered shifts in color, opacity, and reflectance. The lining also loosened from the original canvas, resulting in large planar bulges. The murals were brought to WACC for a second restoration, in preparation for the Gorky retrospective currently on view at the Philadelphia Museum of Art. WACC director and chief paintings conservator Thomas Branchick removed the older painted repairs and three decades of grime, then reformed the existing wax resin and re-adhered the lining. Repair of the lining was enhanced by the Center's eight-by-twelve-foot vacuum hot table, which supplied the sustained pressure necessary to ensure that the auxiliary support will not release in the future. Paint losses and abrasions were inpainted and the murals sent to the Philadelphia exhibit, after which they will return to Newark.



An evocative *Early Head* by a raw Chicago realist

This distinctive oil-on-canvas portrait, *Early Head*, was painted by Chicago artist Ivan Albright, one of the most extravagant, if grim-themed American realist artists of the 20th century. Albright (1897-1983) was a twin, and he and his brother Malvin were both accomplished artists, as was their father, Adam Emory Albright, who produced several portraits of his identical sons together. The brothers shared studios on and off throughout their lives.

In his portraits, Ivan Albright explored the passage of time and

its effects on human flesh, often using a high-keyed palette with morbid reds and purples. Perhaps because of this, he was asked to create the painting of the dissolute main character for the 1943 film *The Picture of Dorian Gray*. He is sometimes associated with Magic Realism, and his work anticipates the so-called “Monster” school of raw post-war Chicago painters.

Albright was a prolific artist, and known for the high sums he charged for his work; he once reportedly turned down a purchase prize from the Museum of Modern Art because the amount was

too low. His paintings contain an almost hallucinatory level of interpretive detail, and often have long, evocative titles, like the 1928 *Flesh (Smaller than Tears Are the Little Blue Flowers)*.

Early Head is undated, but is likely from the early 1930s. It was brought to WACC by Albright’s daughter-in-law in good overall condition, but covered with a slight grime layer and suffering minor planar distortions. At the bottom center of the image there was an area of paint, roughly one inch by four inches, where the color and surface gloss were slightly different. Since there was no evidence of previous damage to the canvas support, and therefore no need for prior restoration, it was assumed that this was reworking done by the artist.

The grime layer was removed using a diammonium-citrate solution with a slightly alkaline pH. To lessen the warping, humidification was done by placing damp blotters on the back of the canvas for twenty minutes, followed by dry blotters and weight overnight. The stretcher frame was keyed out slightly to tighten the fabric, and the keys secured with hot glue. The painting had never been varnished, and after consultation the owner choose to leave it as is. Minor inpainting was carried out with aqueous pigments. Watercolors were the most sensible choice, with gum arabic added to increase surface gloss. Some minor inpainting was also done with colored pencils.

—Mary Catherine Betz

Ivan Albright, *Early Head*, circa early 1930s, after treatment.



Anoxic Treatment Thwarts Infestation

Thirty-three woodblocks by Cleveland artist Mable Hewitt were at WACC recently from the Cleveland Museum of Art. Telltale signs, including tiny flight holes in the blocks and evidence of frass (waste), indicated the potential of infestation by wood-boring beetles. Hugh Glover, chief conservator of Furniture and Wooden Objects, treated the blocks in a nitrogen-induced anoxic enclosure, essentially a large plastic bag into which nitrogen was fed to replace existing oxygen, eliminating whatever insects may have been present. In the photo above, the nitrogen cylinders are on the right, with a relative-humidity control unit below. The bag contained a recording hygrothermograph, a portable oxygen monitor, chemical oxygen absorber, and the woodblocks on thin, closed-cell polyethylene-foam interleaving. The bag was sealed with a line of pinch clamps. The treatment took about three weeks. At the request of the client, the flight holes were left unfilled. The blocks, used to create white-line woodcut prints, will be exhibited at the Cleveland Museum.



WACC Receives Grant for New Digital X-ray

A grant from the Stockman Family Foundation will allow the Williamstown Art Conservation Center to replace its old analog X-ray equipment with state-of-the-art digital radiography. The Lorad 200 kV system should be installed before the end of this year, allowing safer, faster, and superior X-ray images on 14-by-17-inch plates, with the convenience and flexibility of digital processing.

Staff News



Hélène Gillette-Woodard has been named Senior Conservator of Objects and taken over all operations and planning for the WACC Objects Department. Hélène

has an MA in Art Conservation from the State University College, Buffalo/Cooperstown, N.Y., and has worked at numerous museums, including the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, the Philadelphia Museum of Art, the National Museum of American History, and the Indianapolis Museum of Art (IMA). At the IMA, she participated in two museum expansions and designed the objects conservation laboratory. Before relocating to Williamstown, she owned a private art conservation practice in central Indiana. The range of her experience includes American and European Sculpture and Decorative Arts, African, South Pacific and Native American artifacts, Asian art, archeological artifacts, contemporary art and sculpture, and outdoor sculpture.

Also in the Objects lab, **Lauren McMullen** has joined the staff as an Advanced Intern. She has a BFA in sculpture from the College of Saint Rose in Albany, NY, and an MS from the Winterthur/University of Delaware Program in Art Conservation, with a focus on objects conservation. While at Winterthur, she interned at the Carnegie Museum of Natural History, the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, and the Walters Art Museum.

Paper Department head **Leslie Paisley** has been named a Fellow of the American Institute of Conservation of Historic and Artistic Works (AIC). The peer-reviewed honor, which requires recommendations from five fellow members of AIC, is awarded to conservators who demonstrate “sustained high-quality professional skills and ethical behavior” and “participate in an exchange of ideas regarding methods.”

Thomas Branchick

*Director; Conservator of
Paintings/Dept. Head*

Mary Catherine Betz

*Associate Conservator of
Paintings*

John Conzett

Office Manager

Matthew Cushman

*Assistant Conservator of
Paintings; Analytical Science*

Hélène Gillette-Woodard

*Conservator of Objects/Dept.
Head*

Hugh Glover

*Conservator of Furniture and
Wood Objects/Dept. Head*

Matthew Hamilton

Photography Technician

Terry Haskins

Accounts Manager

Rebecca Johnston

Conservator of Paper

Henry Klein

Conservation Technician

Montserrat Le Mense

Conservator of Paintings

Cynthia Luk

*Conservator of Paintings;
International Projects Specialist*

Amanda Malkin

Pre-Program Intern/Technician

Allison McCloskey

*Assistant Conservator of
Objects and Textiles*

Lauren McMullen

Advanced Intern of Objects

Adam Nesbit

*Assistant Conservator of
Objects*

Leslie Paisley

*Conservator of Paper/Dept.
Head*

Kathleen Payne de Chavez

*Assistant Conservator of
Furniture and Wood Objects*

Amanda Turner

Office Assistant

Sandra Webber

Conservator of Paintings

Reading the Paper

(continued from page 19)

what they write down. Never trust papermakers, what they write down.

There’s a certain intimacy to works on paper. Was that part of the attraction?

I just like it. It’s very versatile and beautiful. It’s magic, in a sense. You’re turning the detritus of society, basically old rags, into something useful: that’s its beginning in the Western tradition. It’s a recycling process. You’re not using new fiber through most of papermaking history. You’re using old rags, sailcloth that’s been on the ship for years and is now too weak, too worn to be used as a sail, but it’s in beautiful condition to make paper out of. I’ve got papers in my collection that are a thousand years old, but that’s because they were made properly—basically, they’re just pure cellulose and nothing else. They were well-made from good material.

Pure cellulose?

It’s fantastic. It responds, it breathes, it has a memory.

What are the people who engage your services generally asking you to do?

It depends. Some of the auction houses want me to look at works when they’re compiling the catalog for a sale, to scan the works and pull some out for further investigation. They cannot afford to make mistakes.

This is to verify authenticity?

Yes, and date. Very often, there’s nothing wrong with a work, it’s not a fake, it just happens to have been loosely attributed to somebody else twenty-five years ago without much thought, and it isn’t by that person. . . . Institutions hire me . . . to help the art historians. They might have a lot of works by a particular artist, and they’re not sure which ones would be later works and which ones are early works. Sometimes the materials can assist—“Sorry, that can’t be from 1810; it wasn’t made till 1845.” You find yourself shifting art historians’ perspective rather dramatically.

Other than working methods, what information can you gather from the paper an artist uses?

I’m usually working in terms of, how does this fit? is it right? You get a blue-flecked paper—looks like one of the ones that Turner uses. I’m thinking of a group of little pictures of Vesuvius going up. Quite fast. Gouache, a bit of watercolor. Seven-by-five inch, similar to a Turner format. They’re not Turner. For years they’ve been called Turners, but they’re not. Turner never ever used this blue fleck, even though it was available to him. This particular paper is not the one he liked using. It’s the version Windsor and Newton made, and he never used it. So who can it be? And you think, well, when was Vesuvius blowing up? 1837 or ’8, whatever it was, and I thought, okay, Turner had a friend, Clarkson Stanfield. They were very good friends. He’s a good painter. You do the digging into Clarkson Stanfield’s life and letters, and there he was, in a rowboat, watching Vesuvius go up, doing these paintings. 🇺🇸

Williamstown

Art Conservation Center

227 South Street, Williamstown,
MA 01267

Addison Gallery of American Art,
Phillips Academy
—Andover, MA

Albany Institute of History and Art
—Albany, NY

Alice T. Miner Colonial Collection
—Chazy, NY

The Arkeell Museum
—Canajoharie, NY

Arnot Art Museum
—Elmira, NY

Art Complex Museum
—Duxbury, MA

Atlanta Historical Society, Inc.
—Atlanta, GA

Bennington Museum
—Bennington, VT

Berkshire Museum
—Pittsfield, MA

Bowdoin College Museum of Art
—Brunswick, ME

Charles P. Russell Gallery,
Deerfield Academy
—Deerfield, MA

The Cheney Homestead of the
Manchester Historical Society
—Manchester, CT

Colby College Museum of Art
—Waterville, ME

Connecticut Historical Society
—Hartford, CT

The Daura Gallery at Lynchburg
College
—Lynchburg, VA

Eric Carle Museum of Picture
Book Art
—Amherst, MA

The Farnsworth Art Museum
—Rockland, ME

Fort Ticonderoga
—Ticonderoga, NY

Frances Lehman Loeb Art Center
Vassar College
—Poughkeepsie, NY

Frederic Remington Art Museum
—Ogdensburg, NY

Herbert F. Johnson Museum of Art,
Cornell University
—Ithaca, NY
Historic Deerfield, Inc.
—Deerfield, MA

Hood Museum of Art,
Dartmouth College
—Hanover, NH

The Hyde Collection
—Glens Falls, NY

The Lawrenceville School
—Lawrenceville, NJ

Mead Art Museum,
Amherst College
—Amherst, MA

Memorial Art Gallery,
University of Rochester
—Rochester, NY

Middlebury College Museum of Art
—Middlebury, VT

Mount Holyoke College Art Museum
—South Hadley, MA

Munson Williams Proctor Arts
Institute
—Utica, NY

Museum of Connecticut History
—Hartford, CT

Neuberger Museum,
Purchase College, State University
of New York
—Purchase, NY

New Hampshire Historical Society
—Concord, NH

New York State Office of General
Services, Empire State Plaza Art
Collection
—Albany, NY

Norman Rockwell Museum at
Stockbridge
—Stockbridge, MA

Picker Art Gallery,
Colgate University
—Hamilton, NY

Portland Museum of Art
—Portland, ME

Preservation Society of Newport
County
—Newport, RI

Rhode Island School of Design
Museum of Art
—Providence, RI

The Rockwell Museum of Western
Art
—Corning, NY

Roland Gibson Gallery, State
University of New York
—Potsdam, NY
St. Johnsbury Athenaeum
—St. Johnsbury, VT
Springfield Library and Museums
Association
—Springfield, MA

Sterling and Francine Clark Art
Institute
—Williamstown, MA

Suzy Frelinghuysen and George L.K.
Morris Foundation
—Lenox, MA

Tioga Point Museum
—Athens, PA

Union College
—Schenectady, NY

Vermont Historical Society
—Montpelier, VT

Vermont Museum and Gallery
Alliance
—Shelburne, VT

Williams College Museum of Art
—Williamstown, MA

Atlanta Art Conservation Center

6000 Peachtree Road
Atlanta, GA 30341

Alabama Historical Commission
—Montgomery, AL

Booth Western Art Museum
—Cartersville, GA

Columbia Museum of Art
—Columbia, SC

The Columbus Museum
—Columbus, GA

High Museum of Art
—Atlanta, GA

Montgomery Museum of Fine Arts
—Montgomery, AL

Morris Museum of Art
—Augusta, GA

Telfair Museum of Art
—Savannah, GA

Mission Statement

The mission of the Williamstown Art Conservation Center, a non-profit institution, is to protect, conserve and maintain the objects of our cultural heritage; to provide examination, treatment, consultation and related conservation services for member institutions, and for other non-profit organizations, corporations, and individuals; to conduct educational programs with respect to the care and conservation of works of art and objects of cultural interest; to participate in the training of conservators; to promote the importance of conservation and increase the awareness of the issues pertinent to collections care; and to conduct research and disseminate knowledge to advance the profession.



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CENTER
227 SOUTH STREET
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