

Art Conservator

A PUBLICATION OF THE WILLIAMSTOWN ART CONSERVATION CENTER

VOLUME 3, NUMBER 2 • FALL 2008



**Stone
Hill
Center**

Art Conservator

Volume 3, Number 2 • Fall 2008

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On the cover

The walled courtyard and observation gallery at Stone Hill Center, where visitors can view activity in the paintings lab, top floor, and objects lab below. Story, page 4.

Photo: © Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute / Richard Pare

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We're in our new home in the Stone Hill Center, and what an incredible building! The sense of finally accomplishing what we set out to do some 13 years ago has made an astounding psychological difference. We are being barraged by tour requests, some we can honor and others that we can't. Jaws drop when visitors see the new spaces, which are remarkable. Most of this issue of *Art Conservator* is dedicated to giving you an idea of how truly magnificent it is here. I still marvel at the pattern of duct work, electrical conduit and plumbing that pattern the hallway ceiling. It's our own Louise Nevelson suspended in the air, as you can see in the

picture below. The "fishbowl" aspect in the labs, allowing visitors to peek in while we go about our work, is a big hit, as attested to by the hand and nose prints on the windows.

Our outdoor wash pad has already been put to good use. This past summer, I arrived at work in shorts and T-shirt to wash and sun bleach paintings by Paul Feeley (see the article on him in this issue). Well, the main tenet of Stone Hill Center is "Art in Nature." Watching thunderstorms out the panoramic expanse of glass in the paintings lab this August added natural drama to the work day that nothing in Hollywood could top. I am definitely looking forward to fall and winter in our new digs.

We remain on the campus of the Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute in Williamstown, with a 30-year lease that is both fair and generous. Both WACC and the Clark put a lot of effort into forging an agreement that will serve everyone well. Major credit for this document goes to Robert McGill, who this fall leaves the WACC Trustee roster. Bob served as president and treasurer, and the Center is truly indebted to him in both those capacities. We were extremely fortunate as well to have his services during the planning and building phases of this project. Heartfelt thanks! —Tom Branchick



Timothy Cahill

"Our own Louise Nevelson": Exposed pipes, duct work and electrical conduit fitted with precision on the ceiling of WACC's main corridor.



Stone Hill Center

WACC's new facility combines high design and natural beauty

Stone Hill Center, the Williamstown Art Conservation Center's new home on the campus of the Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute, is the result of three intersecting visions. For more than a decade, WACC had been planning to expand out of the space it had occupied at the Clark since its inception. Success had grown the conservation center to the limits of the space it was in, which had been added to and amended several times since 1977. As these plans were being formulated, the Clark announced its own massive expansion, and in 2001 commissioned renowned Japanese architect Tadao Ando to oversee a project that, when completed, will dramatically transform the Williamstown, Massachusetts museum.

Stone Hill Center was the first phase of the project conceived by Ando, the 1995 winner of the Pritzker Prize, sometimes called the Nobel of Architecture. To make way for a new Clark wing and reflecting pool, the building that housed WACC was marked for removal. WACC's affiliation with the Clark, which amounts to a close-knit tenancy, is good for both institutions, and the two institutions worked together with the architect to conceive of Stone Hill to serve a dual purpose: part exhibition, classroom and visitor facilities for the Clark, and part custom-designed center to meet the needs of 21st-century art conservation.

Ando is famous for the fluid ways his buildings collaborate with their natural surroundings. Of all the elements that define the beauty of western Massachusetts, the region's rolling hills are far and away the central ingredient. Shortly after arriving for the first time on the 140-acre Clark campus, Ando stood on the crest of Stone Hill, the verdant promontory that overlooks the museum, and absorbed the view of the Berkshire, Taconic and Green Mountain ranges, which meld and separate there.

Today, Stone Hill Center stands as the manifestation of the architect's contemplation. After more than six years of planning and construction, the new facility was opened in June of this year, when WACC took occupancy. With 20,000 square feet of work, storage, handling and classroom space—more than twice than before—and breathtaking physical surroundings, WACC now stands as one of the most carefully-designed and beautiful

conservation labs in the world.

Everything about Stone Hill Center evokes elegance and serene grace. The building is sited halfway up Stone Hill's steep slope, cutting into the hill such that a section lies nestled in the landscape, while the remainder, including WACC, rises two stories above grade. For WACC, the result is a facility with labs on two floors, with



spacious, specially prepared studios notable for their banks of floor-to-ceiling windows. All that glass fills work areas with natural light and provides vistas of the surrounding scenery and changing sky. The sense of open space created by the views is echoed inside the building, beginning at the wide entryway and two-story glass atrium, and extending to the broad corridors, dedicated examination room and generous storage areas. Even the amenities, from the loading dock and freight elevator to the new X-ray room, are large enough to accommodate the most oversized artwork.

The glass walls were designed to allow visitors to see into the lab as well, creating viewing galleries that help demystify the conservation process. Inside or out, the building is a source of inspiration that increases the more one's exposed to it. "The design of the building has incredible psychological uplift," notes WACC director Tom Branchick. "The design, the views, even the architectural details Ando worked in—it's beautiful stuff. And pride of place spills over into quality of work." In the pages that follow, we proudly introduce our new home, and present a room-by-room tour as we move into the Stone Hill phase of our own illustrious history.

Stone Hill Center, the new home of the Williamstown Art Conservation Center. Built by the Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute, the Tadao Ando-designed building houses new Clark exhibition galleries and classrooms as well as the expanded facilities of WACC. Opposite page: Trees reflected in the glass of WACC's entrance atrium.

Courtesy the Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute © Jeff Goldberg/Esto

A Gallery of Easels

Paintings represents the largest department at WACC, a fact underscored by the expansive design of the Judith M. Lenett Painting Studio, located on the second floor of the new building. Steady, crystalline light comes through a wall of north windows into the main work gallery, which accommodates easels for six conservators and was designed with a large white wall specifically for oversized works. The west end of the main gallery opens to a multi-use studio dominated by large tables for horizontal treatments, staff work-stations and a spray booth. To the east of the gallery, a second studio holds the lab's vacuum hot table, analytical equipment and additional work space. As evidenced in the photograph below, the east studio is dominated by a dramatic view of treetops outside its large windows, with a sweeping tableau of the Berkshire hills beyond.



Timothy Cahill (2)





Timothy Cahill '02

Sunshine and Paper

The working space of the Paper Department more than doubled with the move to Stone Hill. The lab, designed for all variety of works on paper, has seven benches of various sizes to allow a number of projects to be ongoing at one time. Along one wall, smaller tables serve as dedicated spaces for the department's conservators and interns. The larger benches feature open storage and flat files. The upstairs room was purposely oriented to the east with large windows for direct exposure to the sun. The department can now provide year-round sun bleaching, a gentler technique for removing discoloration on certain artworks than chemical bleaching, a service that was only possible part of the year in the old building. The windows have white diffusing shades for flexibility of light exposure and intensity. When desired, the shades can cover the windows, providing soft, even illumination throughout the day.





Timothy Cahill (2)

Room with a View

The H. Morris Burrows Objects Studio has become a visitor favorite at Stone Hill thanks to its location on the ground floor outside the north courtyard, beside the building's distinctive oblique-angle wall. Groups of on-lookers of all ages have become a regular sight along the glass wall that looks in on the objects lab, where the view can range from a collection of vintage baseball gloves to marble busts or a bronze Diana by Augustus Saint Gaudens. The popularity of the outdoor viewing gallery, and the museum-cum-workshop allure of the objects studio, is evidenced by close inspection of the windows that run its length. Along with the fingerprints of countless hands, one sees a trail of nose prints left by spectators wishing to get the closest possible view of the activity inside.

Framed by Nature

The Elizabeth H. Burrows Furniture Studio offers perhaps the most immediate connection with the natural surroundings of Stone Hill Center. Located on the ground floor, the lab almost feels a part of the nature that flourishes in an open expanse of clover, field grass and trees just beyond the large glass. The meadow falls away to reveal a vast sky and hills rolling north into Vermont. The lab is dominated by a great-room with high ceilings and crisscrossing Nederman exhaust units, where multiple treatments of furniture, frames and wooden objects can be performed simultaneously. A second set of windows (below) looks out on the courtyard and offers visitors a view of the woodworker's craft, and an array of tools on the ledge above.

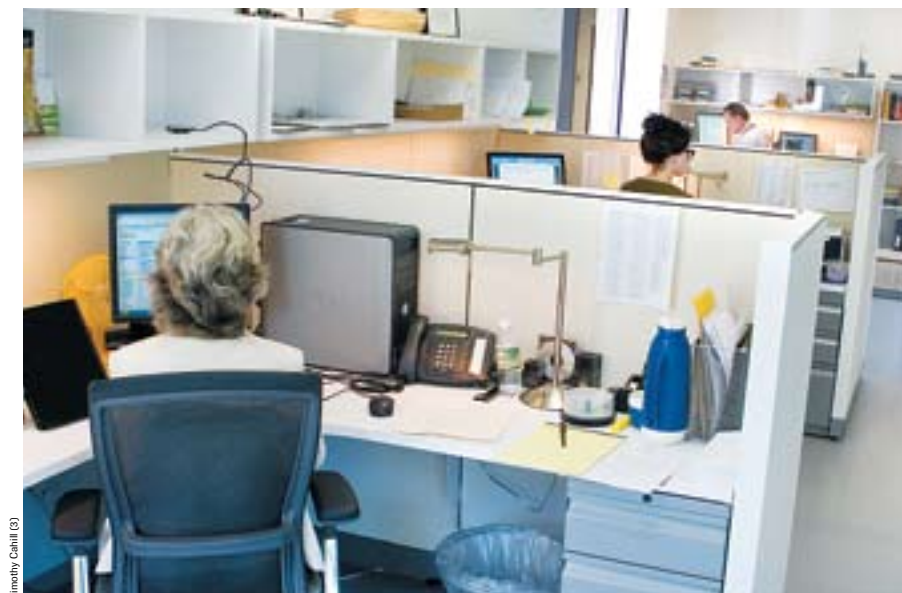


Timothy Cahill (2)

Analysis and Offices

Like other departments in the new facility, the Analytic Services lab at Stone Hill combines a first-class working environment with inspiring views of architecture and the landscape. Benches for microscopes and other instruments extend around the room, where a broad array of scientific investigation and analysis is performed. To the left, a large window looks out onto the walled courtyard. Stone Hill's common spaces—conference room, employee break room,

etc.—offer spare, functional beauty, an ethos extending to the front office area as well (below right). The facility's technical capabilities are similarly first rate. The Stockman Family Foundation X-Ray Room is among the best in the Northeast. It's 360-kilavolt capacity will allow WACC to examine large works in marble and bronze, as well as massive furniture pieces, as never before.





The Art of Ando

With Stone Hill Center, architect Tadao Ando aimed to create “a building that blends gracefully with its surroundings and enhances the experience of both art and nature for all who work and visit there.” Whether visiting or working, there can be little doubt of his success. The building seems to grow organically out of the landscape, as evidenced in the view looking north, right. As for the Clark galleries, the building’s main public use, few venues incorporate their natural setting into the experience of art quite so effortlessly. The galleries open onto a broad outdoor terrace with spectacular vistas; from there, a stone and steel staircase leads down to the courtyard. Sheltered by a concrete wall

that is sectioned and textured to evoke wooden planks, Ando’s courtyard expresses every aspect of the building’s philosophy of “art in nature.” Its rectangular cutout frame transforms the landscape into an ever-changing work of art, and its wall of windows provides visual access to the art of conservation taking place in the labs.



Timothy Cahill (3)





Two views of *Retour de Bal Masque, Monte Carlo* by Frederick Bridgman: The painting, left, and the back, showing 35 separate patches and a new tear in lower left.



Patchwork Past of an Alabama Artist

By James Squires

The painting *Retour de Bal Masque, Monte Carlo* by Alabama artist Frederick Bridgman (1847-1948) first came to the Atlanta Art Conservation Center for repair of a large horizontal tear (approximately 18 inches) that occurred while the owner was moving the picture. Examination of the reverse showed 34 separate patches of varying sizes, shapes and materials. Clearly the painting had undergone numerous restoration campaigns; square-shaped stains in the canvas reverse suggested that the painting was once lined to an auxiliary canvas support. For reasons unknown, the lining was removed and the patches were adhered locally to support the numerous tears and holes.

Given the extent of restoration and the painting's generally good condition, treatment was limited to addressing the existing tear. The thin canvas was responsive to humidification and flattening, which allowed me to adhere a patch onto the reverse once the torn canvas yarns were realigned. Appropriate filling and inpainting successfully concealed the damage.

A week after the painting was returned, I received a call from the owner. To my surprise, he explained that while trying to hang the picture and its heavy frame, he had accidentally put his hand through the lower right corner of the canvas. The painting had started to fall and, by sheer instinct, the man had pushed against the picture to prevent it.

The painting returned to AACC for a second treatment. Given the nature of the new damage, a large hole with missing pieces, it was necessary to line the original canvas to an auxiliary canvas support. This required all 35 existing patches be removed. While the large patch that had recently been applied came off easily, the other 34 were adhered with lead-based adhesive. Lead-based adhesives in general tend to be—as in this instance—tenacious and difficult to remove, not to mention the serious health considerations they raise. A special Mylar tent was constructed to contain the airborne lead as conservators mechanically removed the patches with sharp scalpels. The lead was then captured using a HEPA vacuum.

With the patches off, canvas inserts were made to fill gaps caused by the most recent damage. These inserts were taken from the existing tacking margins of the picture, and, once fitted, lightly adhered across the tear edges with BEVA film strips. This technique successfully held the new inserts and other tear edges in place long enough to lay the painting onto its new auxiliary canvas. The painting was lined using BEVA 371 adhesive and the vacuum hot table. The BEVA strips melted into the lining adhesive, leaving the surface flat and distortion-free. The new losses were leveled and inpainted to reintegrate the damages back into the picture.

The owner was happy with the work, and, once home, hired professional art handlers to hang the picture.

James Squires is Associate Conservator of Paintings at the Atlanta Art Conservation Center.

Modernist painter reemerges after decades in obscurity

Despite taking an active role in modern art circles during his lifetime, abstract painter Paul Feeley (1910-1966) lapsed into relative obscurity during the four decades following his death. As artist and educator, Feeley was a leading member of the generation of painters who succeeded abstract expressionists like Jackson Pollock and Willem de Kooning. He ran the influential art department at Bennington College and helped organized important exhibitions there of Pollock, David Smith and Hans Hoffman, among others. He showed regularly in avant-garde

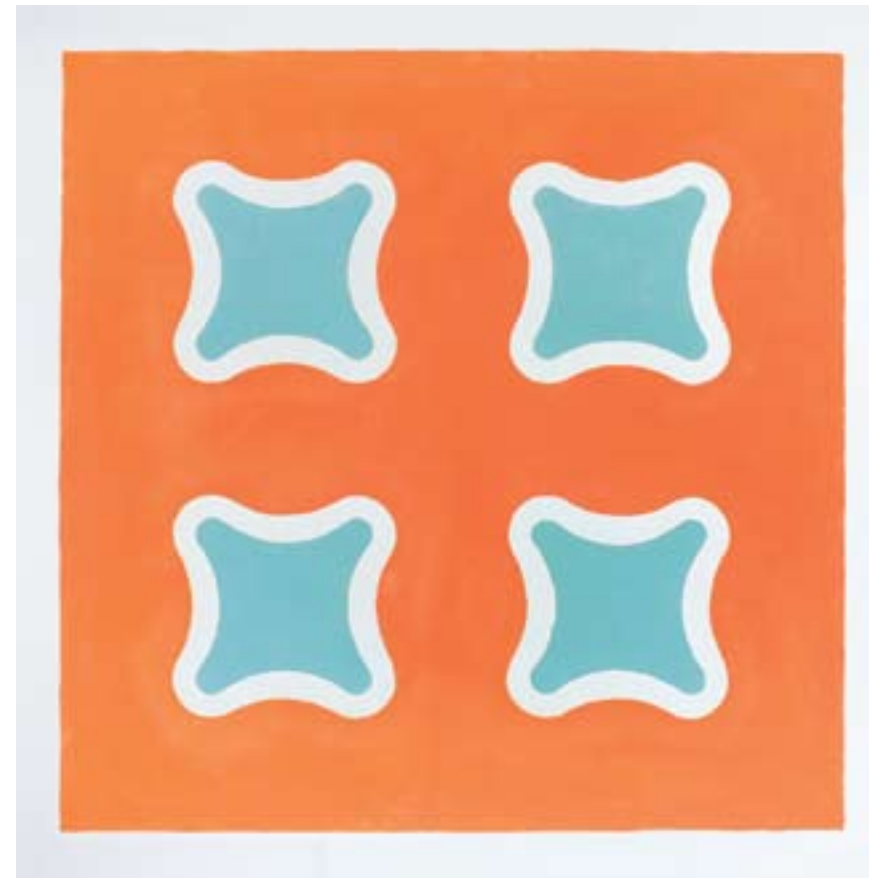
have been treated at WACC in that time, several in preparation for exhibitions at the Lawrence Markey and Matthew Marks galleries in New York, and at the Bennington Museum. "My grandfather is a hidden secret," says Vanessa Harnik, one of Feeley's three grandchildren, all of whom are working to preserve the memory of a man who passed away before they were born. "His work is so relevant now. It's alive, bright, cheerful—human."

Feeley dedicated his life to art, but only found his mature voice in the late 1950s, after decades of experimenting with prevailing expressionist styles. When he finally hit his stride, it was not in the emotionally charged mode of the painters he emulated, but with cool formal abstractions of simple shapes and solid colors in symmetrical patterns. He was inspired by the geometric sculpture of ancient Aegean civilizations, by Moorish and Arabic architecture, and by common items such as children's jacks. He translated these influences into the spare language of High Modernism, leavened with playful Pop touches. "He wanted something that would endure the way Egyptian pyramids endure," says his daughter Jennifer Feeley. "Something that would be transcendent yet related to the world in some way."

A group of more than a dozen works from Feeley's mature period in the 1960s were recently brought to WACC. The large paintings—up to 8 by 12 feet—typified his practice of applying commercial enamel paint to raw canvas. They had been preserved in private storage for decades and were in the lab for cosmetic cleaning and repairs prior to being brought to public view. The family wants to arrange "exhibitions

and placement in museum collections," Ms. Harnik explains. "We want to get [the paintings] seen, not just hidden in storage."

At Bennington College in the '50s and '60s, Feeley was director of the art department that also included painter Kenneth Noland and critic Clement Greenberg, and whose most famous graduate was Helen Frankenthaler. In 1959, he authored a



20-point art policy for the college that reflects his own artistic temperament. *Item 4: "The encouragement to do the most elementary and primitive things in art, if necessary, in order not to operate in a hollow, pretentious manner."* *Item 10: "To view the study of art in the light of making living worthwhile and not simply in the light of encouraging a talented few."* Feeley advocated for famous contemporaries and the art movements of his time, so much so, his daughter Jennifer notes, it took him until middle age to be free from the influence.

"He said he had to let go of everything he'd ever learned. He felt released from the constraints of the lineage that he knew so well and admired and worked to expose. He was able to evolve to where he was really singing," Ms. Feeley recalls.

The first half of the 1960s were productive years for Feeley. He worked ceaselessly, and had six solo exhibits at the prestigious Betty Parson's Gallery. He died at age 55 of leukemia, a disease his daughter suspects was caused by his exposure to atomic radiation in WWII. Feeley was among the first Marines sent into Nagasaki following its bombing in August 1945.

"He died just at his prime as an artist," Ms. Feeley says. "He had hit his stride and was ready to move forward. He was cut down just as that happened."

Payne de Chavez Joins Furniture Department



Kathleen Payne de Chavez has joined the department of Furniture and Wood Objects as an Assistant Conservator. She completed her M.S. in Art Conservation at the Winterthur University of Delaware Program in 2008, focusing on objects conservation with an additional concentration in preventive conservation. Kate did internships at the Cleveland Museum of Art, the Intermuseum Conservation Association and the Santa Teresa Monastery Museum in Arequipa, Peru, where, among other projects, she conserved 18th-century maguey sculpture. Her areas of interest are gilded and painted picture and looking-glass frames, as well as polychrome wooden sculpture.

A pair of enamel-on-canvas paintings from the 1960s by Bennington artist Paul Feeley. Above, *March 11, 1963*, and, right, *Altair, 1964*.

galleries, and was remembered with a posthumous retrospective at the Guggenheim Museum in 1968. Less than a decade later, however, as modernism gave way to postmodern sensibilities, he was all but forgotten.

During the past decade, the Feeley family has worked to revive the painter's reputation. More than 80 of his large canvases

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Associate Conservator of Paintings
- John Conzett
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- Matthew Cushman
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Conservator of Paintings
- Alicia Zaludova
Technician in Frames
- Xian Zhang
*Analytical Scientist/Dept. Head of
Analytical Services*

WACC hosts paper workshops



Hildegard Homburger (left) instructs Moyna Stanton of the Cleveland Museum of Art on dyeing tracing paper for repairs. Above, the Smithsonian's Andrew Hare prepares to unroll a Ming Dynasty hand scroll. .

WACC hosted a pair of paper conservation workshops this past summer in conjunction with the opening of its new facility in Stone Hill Center. In July, "Care and Handling of East Asian Scrolls and Screens," was conducted by Andrew Hare, Supervisory Conservator of East Asian Painting at the Freer and Sackler Galleries of the Smithsonian Institution. The workshop, offered to WACC's consortium members at the annual meeting, discussed the basics of handling works on paper and silk, and answered questions about storage and display of traditional Asian art. Funding was from the Hirayama Program

Phase Two in New Orleans

Having completed the rescue phase of post-Katrina collections care at the Louisiana State Museum, WACC conservators are preparing for phase two of their work at the New Orleans museum, a detailed condition assessment of thousands of LSM's most important objects.

The multi-disciplinary survey will inspect a selection of high-priority artifacts in five of the museum's collections: Visual Arts, Jazz, Material Culture, Maps and Memorabilia, and Costumes and Textiles. A number of these collections encompass a variety of media, and will involve a team of paintings, paper, objects, furniture and textile conservators and technicians. The work is scheduled to begin in December and continue through 2009.

Assessment will be made of more than 1,600 objects in the State Museum. Conservators will evaluate the condition of each object, make recommendations for special handling, and

for Japanese Painting Conservation. The second workshop, "Conservation of Tracing Paper," was lead by Berlin-based conservator Hildegard Homburger. The two-day workshop was funded by the National Endowment for the Humanities and the Foundation of the American Institute for Conservation of Historic and Artistic Works (FAIC) Endowment for Professional Development. Homburger, a former conservator-in-residence at WACC, gave hands-on instruction in mending tears and losses, flattening, dyeing of mending paper, and lining techniques.

prioritize a conservation treatment schedule for work on site and in Williamstown. Conservators will also recommend care and storage to be carried out by museum staff.

The LSM, housed in a complex of buildings in New Orleans's French Quarter, is home to an eclectic array of paintings, prints, photographs, furniture, uniforms, musical instruments, toys, books, and ephemera relating to more than two centuries of Louisiana history and culture. Among the artifacts to be surveyed are an 1848 painting of Zachary Taylor, an 1893 Queen of Comus Mardi Gras gown, a variety of horns, strings and drums related to the origins of jazz, and a 1925 toy washing machine.

The assessment will be funded by a grant from the Institute for Museum and Library Services. While in New Orleans, under a grant from the Getty Foundation, WACC staff will also conduct a feasibility study for establishing a conservation center in Louisiana.

Williamstown

Art Conservation Center
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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 Arsell 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

Fred L. Emerson Gallery,
Hamilton College
—Clinton, 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
—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

Williams College Museum of Art
—Williamstown, MA

Vermont Museum and Gallery
Alliance
—Shelburne, VT

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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