

The Getty Foundation
Panel Paintings Initiative





MAIOR SOLI + SUP OEM STELLARUM DISC
VET DE CATI
SOLUM SM

1523

**"THE PANEL PAINTINGS INITIATIVE HAS BEEN A TIMELY
AND TRANSFORMATIVE OPPORTUNITY FOR STRUCTURAL
PAINTINGS CONSERVATORS FROM AROUND THE WORLD TO
EXCHANGE KNOWLEDGE WITH ONE ANOTHER AND THE RISING
PROFESSIONALS WHO WILL FOLLOW IN THEIR FOOTSTEPS.
THANKS TO THE EXCHANGE OF DIFFERENT EXPERIENCES
SUPPORTED THROUGH THIS INITIATIVE, WE ALL LEARNED
SOMETHING NEW AND MANY IMPORTANT ARTWORKS
RECEIVED TREATMENT. THE FUTURE OF THE FIELD HAS BEEN
SECURED, AS HAS THE CONTINUED CARE OF MANY GREAT
ARTISTIC MASTERPIECES."**

**— MARCO CIATTI
PANEL PAINTINGS INITIATIVE ADVISORY COMMITTEE,
SOPRINTENDENTE, OPIFICIO DELLE PIETRE DURE, FLORENCE, ITALY**



Introduction

Since its inception, the Getty Foundation has a long history of supporting the understanding and conservation of works of art and architecture around the world. For the past decade, we have given most of our grants through strategic initiatives that were developed in consultation with members of the fields that the Getty serves. One of these is the Panel Paintings Initiative, launched in 2008 by the Foundation in collaboration with the Getty Conservation Institute (GCI) and the J. Paul Getty Museum.

Most non-specialist visitors to museums look at the surface of paintings, and they do not think about what lies underneath the paint. If anything, they assume everything is made on canvas. Yet a large number of paintings from the Medieval to early modern periods are on wooden supports. It requires a special expertise and finesse to conserve these works of art, a combination of fine wood-working skills and sensitive aesthetic judgment. Yet in 2008, only a few individuals around the world possessed these abilities, and most were approaching the end of their careers.

In 2009, the GCI, Foundation, and Getty Museum held a conference at the Getty Center in Los Angeles to make visible to the wider field the growing concern about training the future generation

of panel paintings conservators. With the guidance of an international advisory committee, the Foundation moved the initiative forward, seeking and funding model projects.

The primary goal of the Panel Paintings Initiative was to ensure that a sufficient number of well-trained conservators are in place to maintain quality care of panel paintings when the current leaders retire. Additionally, the initiative has sought to expand panel paintings expertise to encompass collections in Central and Eastern Europe.

The following report highlights the positive outcomes of the initiative over the past ten years. None of these accomplishments would have been possible without the commitment and talent of a strong cohort of collaborators. I would like to extend the Foundation's deep gratitude to everyone who participated in the projects as advisors, trainers, or trainees. Special thanks are due to Getty Foundation Senior Program Officer Antoine Wilmering who sought out and nurtured all of the grant projects, and to the Foundation staff who supported him in this endeavor.

Deborah Marrow
Director, The Getty Foundation

PREVIOUS PAGE: Detail of Hubert and Jan van Eyck, *The Ghent Altarpiece*, 1432. Saint Bavo Cathedral. Photo © Lukas–Art in Flanders

LEFT: Pacino di Bonaguida's *Madonna with Child and Saints* (1323–27) during emergency conservation treatment. The Walters Art Museum, Baltimore, Maryland (Gift of the Dr. Francis d. Murnaghan Fund, 1973), 37.2494. Image courtesy Aleksandra Hola



The Panel Paintings Initiative

Jean-Albert Glatigny describes working with his hands as the apogee of life. It is how he has attained his highest sense of fulfillment and purpose. Originally trained as a cabinetmaker, Glatigny has since spent decades sanding, hewing, gluing, wrestling, studying, splintering, and grafting wood. Wood that was formed into spectacular altarpieces that hang in European cathedrals or used as a support for celebrated oil and tempera paintings displayed in museums worldwide. "I felt the most affinity for wood," says Glatigny, Conservator at the Royal Institute for Cultural Heritage in Brussels. "It was a material that pleased me altogether: the smell, the warmth, and the softness all reminded me of building treehouses!"

Glatigny is one of around a dozen experts worldwide who signed on as trainers

for the Getty Foundation's Panel Paintings Initiative to provide individual and group instruction on the structural conservation of Old Master paintings on wooden panels. "The conservation of panel paintings is not done by a single person," says Glatigny. "It's a team effort."

It was 2008, and the field was in a perilous state. Museums faced a shortage of qualified professionals to assume the care of tens of thousands of objects in North American and European collections alone, and there were no existing training programs to facilitate a transfer of skills to the next generation. Over the past decade, the Panel Paintings Initiative has reversed this decline and produced a new tide of conservators who are prepared to assume the unique challenges of preserving these artworks for the future.



LEFT: Jean-Albert Glatigny (left) and Aline Genbrugge (right) during the conservation of a 15th-century German panel. Image courtesy Etienne Costa

ABOVE: Simon Bobak (left) and Aline Genbrugge (right) complete a surface refinement after repairs. Image courtesy Aline Genbrugge



"STRUCTURAL PANEL PAINTINGS CONSERVATION IS NOW CONSIDERED TO BE AS IMPORTANT AS CONSERVATION OF THE PAINTED SURFACE. THE FIELD IS NO LONGER SEEN AS A MATTER OF CARPENTRY. RESTORERS ARE AWARE OF THE IMPORTANCE OF PANELS AS AN INTRINSIC PART OF THE ARTWORK, AND PANEL PAINTING CONSERVATORS ARE VALUED AS MUCH AS ANY OTHER ART CONSERVATOR. I'M COMPLETELY CONVINCED THAT THE PANEL PAINTINGS INITIATIVE HAS PLAYED A VERY IMPORTANT ROLE IN THIS FACT."

**—JOSÉ DE LA FUENTE
PANEL PAINTINGS INITIATIVE TRAINER,
CONSERVATOR, MUSEO DEL PRADO,
MADRID, SPAIN**

OUR APPROACH

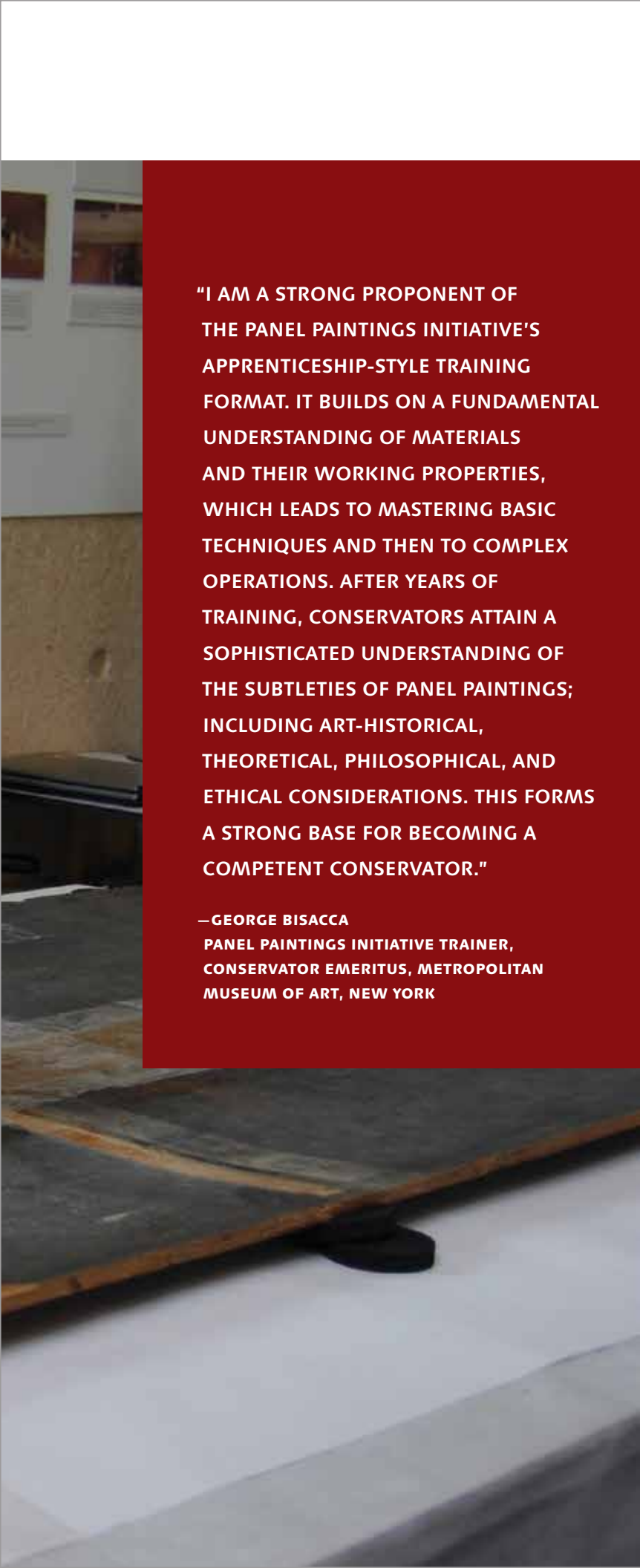
The Foundation's grantmaking began with a needs assessment completed at the initiative's outset, which identified museums with large panel paintings collections, individuals who would benefit most from further training, and the number of conservators who would likely find employment in the field. The results of this assessment provided a clear target of training up to twenty conservators, including professionals in Central and Eastern Europe, where access to best practices has been strongly needed and severely limited. The assessment also indicated the necessity for additional instruction on the history, technology, and science of structural panel paintings conservation to supplement skills-based training.

Training activities started with grants that prepared advanced conservators to become trainers themselves. These were followed by grants for training residencies for midcareer and postgraduate conservators to build their technical skills and decision-making acumen by working alongside both seasoned experts and new trainers. From the outset, Foundation staff worked carefully with trainers and an international advisory committee (see list at the end of this report) to assess each trainee's needs and ensure that they received balanced instruction on projects that exposed them to the conservation of both Northern and

LEFT: José de la Fuente works on Reymerswaele Marinus's *The Moneychanger and His Wife* (1539). The Prado Museum, No. Catálogo: P002102. Image courtesy Enrique Quintana







"I AM A STRONG PROPONENT OF THE PANEL PAINTINGS INITIATIVE'S APPRENTICESHIP-STYLE TRAINING FORMAT. IT BUILDS ON A FUNDAMENTAL UNDERSTANDING OF MATERIALS AND THEIR WORKING PROPERTIES, WHICH LEADS TO MASTERING BASIC TECHNIQUES AND THEN TO COMPLEX OPERATIONS. AFTER YEARS OF TRAINING, CONSERVATORS ATTAIN A SOPHISTICATED UNDERSTANDING OF THE SUBTLETIES OF PANEL PAINTINGS; INCLUDING ART-HISTORICAL, THEORETICAL, PHILOSOPHICAL, AND ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS. THIS FORMS A STRONG BASE FOR BECOMING A COMPETENT CONSERVATOR."

**—GEORGE BISACCA
PANEL PAINTINGS INITIATIVE TRAINER,
CONSERVATOR EMERITUS, METROPOLITAN
MUSEUM OF ART, NEW YORK**

Southern European panel paintings, as well as the approaches of different experts. Funding also made possible a series of international workshops held in Krakow, Dresden, Florence, Brussels, Maastricht, and London, which allowed trainees to come together for group seminars on the history of structural interventions, wood science, and decision-making protocols for conservation treatment that complemented the hands-on residencies. Several of these opportunities also included curators from Central and Eastern Europe to promote greater connections among all staff who care for panel paintings collections in these regions.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Positive outcomes of the initiative are already evident and include the following accomplishments:

CLOSING THE SKILLS GAP

A new generation of conservators, including practitioners in Central and Eastern Europe, are now prepared to undertake complex structural treatments of panel paintings. Trainees have gained experience with different conservation approaches by rotating their training residencies with two or more experts over the course of the initiative, ensuring that there is a strong pipeline of conservators in place.

LEFT: George Bisacca treats Albrecht Dürer's *Eve* (1507) at the Prado Museum. Photo © Metropolitan Museum of Art

SUCCESSFUL TREATMENT PROJECTS WITH VISIBLE RESULTS

Grants awarded by the Foundation have allowed participants at all career levels to work on some of the most significant masterpieces in the history of Western art, including Hubert and Jan van Eyck's *Ghent Altarpiece* of 1432, and individual panels by important artists featured in this report, such as Hieronymus Bosch, Pieter Bruegel the Elder, Michelangelo Merisi da Caravaggio, Leonardo da Vinci, Giorgio Vasari, and Peter Paul Rubens. Many of these projects culminated in public exhibitions featuring artworks that were conserved as part of the initiative.

STRONGER PROFESSIONAL NETWORKS

While the main focus of the Panel Paintings Initiative was to transfer technical and decision-making skills to the next generation of panel paintings conservators, the international workshops supported by the Foundation provided an added value of bringing together cohorts of trainees, thus strengthening their professional connections with one another and the field overall.

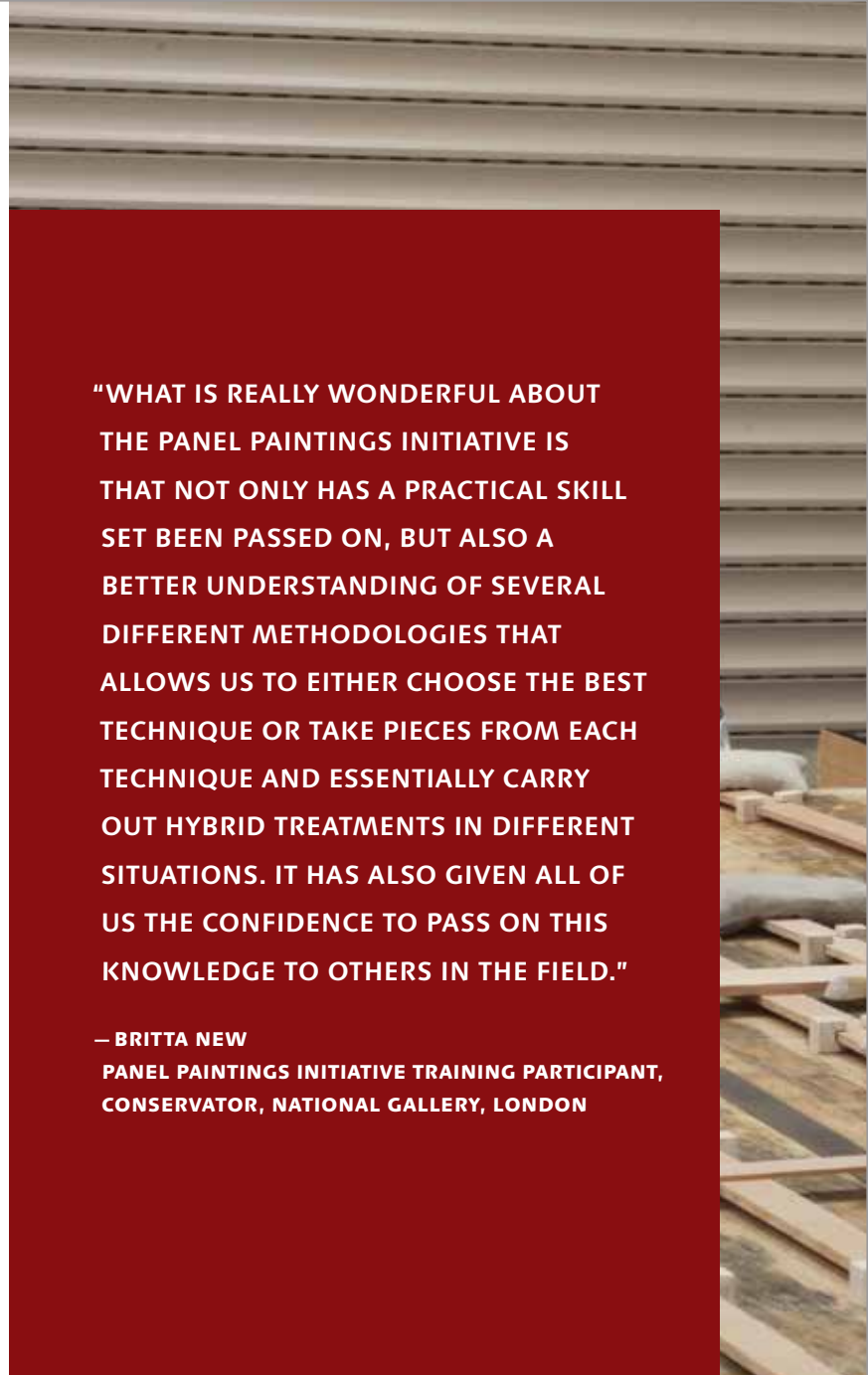
INNOVATIVE DIGITAL APPLICATIONS

In several cases, grants included the extensive study and documentation of artworks before, during, and after conservation treatments. This information was collected and shared through innovative web applications that provide open access to key artworks and artists, such as the *Ghent Altarpiece* and the paintings of Hieronymus Bosch.

"WHAT IS REALLY WONDERFUL ABOUT THE PANEL PAINTINGS INITIATIVE IS THAT NOT ONLY HAS A PRACTICAL SKILL SET BEEN PASSED ON, BUT ALSO A BETTER UNDERSTANDING OF SEVERAL DIFFERENT METHODOLOGIES THAT ALLOWS US TO EITHER CHOOSE THE BEST TECHNIQUE OR TAKE PIECES FROM EACH TECHNIQUE AND ESSENTIALLY CARRY OUT HYBRID TREATMENTS IN DIFFERENT SITUATIONS. IT HAS ALSO GIVEN ALL OF US THE CONFIDENCE TO PASS ON THIS KNOWLEDGE TO OTHERS IN THE FIELD."

**— BRITTA NEW
PANEL PAINTINGS INITIATIVE TRAINING PARTICIPANT,
CONSERVATOR, NATIONAL GALLERY, LONDON**

ABOVE: Britta New fitting a new auxiliary support to Giovanni Martini da Udine's *Virgin & Child* (NG778). Photo: Lynne Harrison, The National Gallery





ACCESS TO KEY RESOURCES

The Foundation also provided support for the translation and open access digital publication of important historical texts critical to the field of panel paintings conservation, including several publications: Jacqueline Marette, *Wooden Supports in Twelfth–Sixteenth-Century European Paintings* (Archetype Publications: United Kingdom, 2016); H el ene Verougstraete, *Frames and Supports in Fifteenth- and Sixteenth-Century Southern Netherlandish Painting* (The Royal Institute for Cultural Heritage:

Brussels, 2015); and Marco Ciatti and Cecilia Frosinini (ed.), *Structural Conservation of Panel Paintings at the Opificio delle Pietre Dure in Florence: Method, Theory, and Practice* (Edifir – Edizione Firenze: Florence, 2016). Support also extended to the development of research priorities for the field led by the Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research and the Rijksmuseum, *The Conservation of Panel Paintings and Related Objects* (Rijksmuseum: Netherlands, 2014).



“PARTICIPATING IN THIS PROGRAM OPENED SO MANY DOORS FOR ME—WITNESSING TREATMENT DECISIONS BEING MADE, TALKING WITH AND WORKING ALONGSIDE THE EXPERTS, LEARNING ABOUT RELEVANT PUBLICATIONS AND GETTING ACCESS TO THEM—WHAT ELSE DOES ONE NEED? THE OPPORTUNITY TO OBSERVE LEADING CONSERVATORS IN OUR FIELDS AND HAVE ENOUGH TIME TO UNDERSTAND THE PHILOSOPHY BEHIND OUR WORK IS INVALUABLE. I ENDED AS A DIFFERENT PERSON.”

—ALEKSANDRA HOLA
 PANEL PAINTINGS INITIATIVE TRAINING PARTICIPANT,
 INDEPENDENT CONSERVATOR AND ASSISTANT
 PROFESSOR, JAN MATEJKO ACADEMY OF FINE ARTS
 IN KRAKOW

A STRONGER FIELD FOR THE FUTURE

Nearly ten years after the Panel Paintings Initiative began, the program exceeded its original goals. At least twenty professionals are either in senior conservation positions or on their way to establishing careers in the field. Dozens more have increased their knowledge as a result of the international workshops. Participants in the training residencies are working at leading institutions, such as the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Louvre, the Opificio delle Pietre Dure, the National Gallery, and the Getty. In Central and Eastern Europe, trainees are overcoming the political and economic barriers of the past to transform the practice of panel paintings conservation and update instructional curricula in training institutions.

Several leading experts have now retired from structural panel paintings conservation, with more to follow. They can do so with the confidence that there are capable successors in place who are active in the field and consult with one another through the professional networks nurtured by Getty grants. The dedication of the panel paintings trainers and the new generation of conservators they have mentored has secured a safer future for Old Master paintings on wooden panels.

In the pages that follow, we offer an overview of selected Panel Paintings Initiative projects.

LEFT: Aleksandra Hola retouching reconstructed pieces of Pacino di Bonaguida’s *Madonna with Child and Saints* (1323–27). Image courtesy Aleksandra Hola





Selected Projects

ALBRECHT DÜRER
Adam and Eve, 1507



The first Getty Foundation training grant of the Panel Paintings Initiative was devoted to the restoration of Albrecht Dürer's seminal *Adam* and *Eve* panels of 1507 in the collections of the Prado Museum. Dürer created the paintings while in Nuremberg,

Germany, following his second sojourn in Italy. In their monumental grandeur and exquisite attention to line and color, the panels represent the highly original fusion of Italian and German influences for which Dürer is known.



PREVIOUS SPREAD: Luuk Hoogstede improves the level of the paint surface of Lucas Cranach's *Eve* at the Royal Museum of Fine Arts, Brussels. Image courtesy Jean-Albert Glatigny
LEFT: Albrecht Dürer, *Adam* and *Eve* panels, 1507. Photos © Museo del Prado
ABOVE: Loosening an original wooden crossbar from Dürer's *Eve*. Photo © Metropolitan Museum of Art



The conservation project began with an in-depth examination of the support panels and paint layers of the painting, which required a wide range of advanced scientific methods. A group of trainees led by experts from the Metropolitan Museum of Art and the Prado were brought in to observe the restoration in progress and contribute as appropriate. Conservators removed the rigid, non-original restraints, so that both panels could expand and contract in different environmental conditions

without undue stress on the paintings. Then cracks were mended and the *Adam* painting received a new flexible, auxiliary support frame to stabilize the panel. Emergency conservation treatments were completed as needed to secure sections of lifting paint.

After structural work was completed, the paintings' delicate surfaces were cleaned and varnished. Dürer's masterpieces were returned to public view at the Prado in November 2010.

ABOVE: Removing a non-original crossbar that had been nailed to Dürer's *Eve*. Photo © Metropolitan Museum of Art

RIGHT: The front and back of Dürer's *Eve* during conservation treatment, showing surface damages caused by the non-original crossbars which were intended to stabilize the panel. Photos © Metropolitan Museum of Art



HUBERT AND JAN VAN EYCK

The Ghent Altarpiece, 1432



Hubert and Jan van Eyck's *Adoration of the Mystic Lamb*, better known as the *Ghent Altarpiece*, is considered the most important extant work of early Netherlandish painting and one of the most significant works of art in Europe. Painted in 1432 for the Saint Bavo Cathedral in Ghent,

Belgium, the large and complex altarpiece has survived a dramatic history that includes being dismantled, looted, and damaged many times over. Although the altarpiece underwent a restoration following World War II, its condition remained dire.



LEFT: Central section of Hubert and Jan van Eyck, *The Ghent Altarpiece*, 1432. Saint Bavo Cathedral. Photo © Lukas–Art in Flanders

ABOVE: High resolution detail of the *Ghent Altarpiece* (above left) and infrared image revealing the underdrawing (above right). Image courtesy clostertovaneyck.kikirpa.be

Since the Panel Paintings Initiative launched, the Foundation has awarded several grants related to the conservation of the *Ghent Altarpiece*. The first grant focused on a thorough condition assessment and emergency stabilization, which involved training of postgraduate and mid-career conservators under the supervision of leading panel paintings experts. Funds allowed an international advisory committee, led by art historians and conservation scientists specializing in early Dutch and Flemish paintings, to oversee the

condition assessment. The investigation resulted in a plan for a full conservation treatment of the altarpiece—a collaboration among the Flemish government, KIK-IRPA, and their partners.

During the condition assessment, the altarpiece was removed from its glass enclosure and temporarily dismantled—a rare event that made it possible for experts to comprehensively examine and document the artwork. The resulting photos and documentation, unprecedented in detail and quality, led to an innovative



ABOVE: Ray Marchant sharing his observations on the *Ghent Altarpiece* with fellow trainers. Still from <https://youtu.be/diVKNPBz2A>. Film © 2011 produced by Visser & Van Rijckevorsel filmproducties
RIGHT: Homepage from the *Ghent Altarpiece* web application. Image courtesy closertovaneyck.kikirpa.be

Closer to Van Eyck

The Ghent Altarpiece Restored

Further works by Jan van Eyck



web application supported in large part by the Getty Foundation and hosted by KIK-IRPA. Debuting in 2012, *Closer to Van Eyck* is an open access website where high-resolution, multispectral images of the altarpiece allow art historians and art enthusiasts alike to examine the panels at a microscopic level. An expanded version of the web application launched in

2017, adding documentation produced during and after the full conservation of the altarpiece. Overall, the site has set a new standard for digital projects related to art history and conservation by providing access to the decision-making process for the treatment of the altarpiece and by disseminating the website's open-source technology to the museum community.

PETER PAUL RUBENS
The Triumph of the Eucharist, 1626



In 1626 Peter Paul Rubens completed one of the most important commissions of his lifetime, a set of finished oil sketches referred to as *The Triumph of the Eucharist* series. These paintings on wooden panels combine some of the most salient qualities of Rubens's oeuvre: powerful yet delicate handling of form and expressive use

of the human body. The panels were commissioned as studies for large, sumptuous tapestries—to be hung in the Clares de Descalzas Reales monastery in Madrid—and are exquisite works of art in their own right, offering a rare glimpse into the artist's process.



LEFT: Peter Paul Rubens, *Triumph of the Eucharist over Idolatry*, 1625–6. Photo © Museo del Prado
ABOVE: Peter Paul Rubens, *Triumph of the Church*, 1625–6. Photo © Museo del Prado





At the Prado Museum, six paintings from this important series showed structural damage due to previous well intentioned, but harmful, interventions. At some point in time, caretakers had thinned the wood and applied restraints to flatten the panels, once-common practices that had caused cracks, deformations, and uneven surfaces in the wood, thus threatening Rubens's virtuoso brushwork.

In 2011 a Foundation grant provided major support for a series of rotating training residencies for conservators at all levels to work on the panels. More seasoned conservators gained experience on the most challenging parts of the

treatments, while those newer to the field learned basic skills to treat splits, cracks, and other structural problems. All trainees benefitted from observing complex decision-making processes that involved conservators, curators, and conservation scientists.

Prior to the conservation project, it would have been unsafe for the panels to travel; however, following the completion of the treatment, the newly restored paintings were displayed alongside four of the original corresponding tapestries in an exhibition of 2014 that opened at the Prado before traveling to the Getty Museum later that year.

LEFT: *Triumph of the Church* during treatment, gluing the split that nearly separated the panel into two pieces. Photo © José de la Fuente

ABOVE: José de la Fuente (left) and Jonathan Graindorge Lamour (right) examining a cradle attached to the back of one of the *Triumph of the Eucharist* panels. Photo © José de la Fuente

GIORGIO VASARI

Last Supper, 1546



At the Opificio delle Pietre Dure (OPD) in Florence, trainees at early- and midcareer levels participated in the structural treatment of Giorgio Vasari's *Last Supper*, one of the most severely damaged artworks to survive the city's disastrous flood of 1966. During the flood, the monumental painting was fully immersed in water, with some sections submerged for more than twelve hours. As a result, the paint was in danger of sliding off its support.

Immediately afterward, the sodden panels of the painting were separated to hasten drying, with an emergency paper treatment applied to the surface to prevent the paint from peeling away. It was only recently, due to the enormous complexity of the painting's conservation challenges, that experts developed the technology to repair and rejoin the artwork, the last major painting harmed in the flood to be restored.



LEFT: Giorgio Vasari's *Last Supper* (1546) conserved and reinstalled in the Cenacolo, the old refectory of Santa Croce. Photo: ZEPstudio/Opera di Santa Croce

ABOVE: Inside the Museum of Santa Croce in Florence after the flood of November 4, 1966. Photo: RAFFAELLO BENCINI/AFP/Getty Images

Given the large size, complicated construction, and extensive damage of the *Last Supper*, it served as an ideal training project for younger conservators. Trainees, including those from the Getty Museum, took part in advanced discussions to devise the treatment and assisted with the implementation of a new frame, thus learning both the necessary hand-skills and problem-solving skills inherent to structural panel paintings conservation. The team's solution—based on Vasari's original support system—successfully stabilized the painting while allowing the panels to move naturally with standard temperature and humidity fluctuations.

In 2013 the stabilization of the wooden substrate was completed and the five panels of the *Last Supper* were re-connected for the first time in forty-seven years. After the remaining surface treatment was complete, the painting was reinstalled in the Santa Croce Museum in 2016 for a major exhibition commemorating the fiftieth anniversary of the flood. A book published by the OPD has shared the results of this model project with the field.

TOP: Sue Ann Chui using a rebate plane to level the reverse of the central panel of the *Last Supper*. Image courtesy Sue Ann Chui

RIGHT: Facing paper attached to the surface of the *Last Supper* kept paint from peeling off the wooden support. Image courtesy Britta New

FAR RIGHT: Part of the conservation team at the OPD following reassembly of the *Last Supper* after the panels were separated for nearly fifty years. Image courtesy Archives of the Opificio delle Pietre Dure





LEONARDO DA VINCI
Adoration of the Magi, 1481



In 2013 the Getty Foundation provided an additional grant to the OPD to organize a conservation training project related to the treatment of four exceptional paintings—individual works by Leonardo da Vinci, Fra Angelico, Simone Martini, and Alessandro

Allori—that chronicle Florentine painting over a two-hundred-year time span. The conservation of Leonardo's *Adoration of the Magi* (1481)—considered one of the largest works of its kind by the artist—involved a five-year treatment that included



LEFT: Leonardo da Vinci, *Adoration of the Magi*, 1481. After restoration. Image courtesy Archives of the Opificio delle Pietre Dure

ABOVE: Ciro Castelli (front) and Andrea Santacesaria (back) using a router along a joint on the *Adoration of the Magi*. Image courtesy Archives of the Opificio delle Pietre Dure





training residencies focused on the structural repair of the individual planks making up the support, which had gradually separated over time. In tandem with the Foundation-supported structural stabilization, conservators cleaned the surface and removed yellowed varnish, revealing new evidence that Leonardo was developing the composition for this unfinished painting directly on the panel rather than through drawings. In 2017 the fully restored painting was returned to the Uffizi Gallery (where it had been since 1670) and was featured in the spotlight exhibition of 2017, *Magic Cosmos: The Adoration of the Magi Restored*.

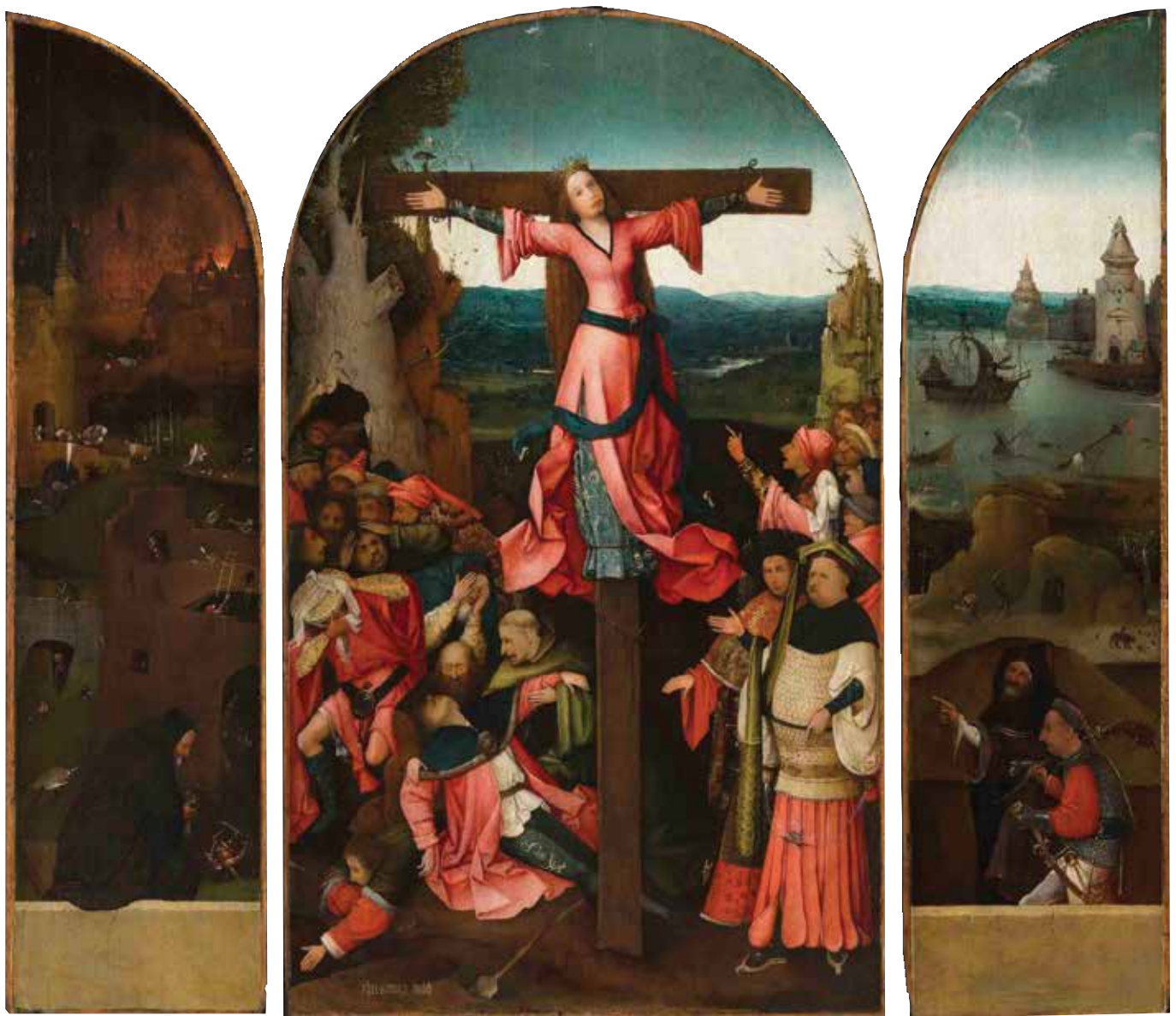
The training residencies were designed especially for early-career postgraduates, offering the chance to work on highly important and complex panels at one of the

leading conservation facilities in Europe. Three workshops provided participants with a deeper understanding of the historical context of panel paintings, including the evolution of panel production, scientific research, and conservation technology. The trainees—drawn from Eastern, Central, and Western Europe—overlapped at various times throughout the project, thus reinforcing their international network.

Funding also supported the English translation and online publication of a collected volume of key texts related to structural panel paintings conservation, which were not easily accessible. Containing a plethora of historical and technical information, the volume promises to be an essential resource for specialists in the field, as well as for curators and the broader conservation community.

LEFT: Conservators beginning to remove the crossbars held by brackets or *ponticelli* ("little bridges") during the treatment of the *Adoration of the Magi*. Image courtesy Archives of the Opificio delle Pietre Dure

HIERONYMUS BOSCH
Bosch Research and Conservation Project



In February 2016 the Noordbrabants Museum in the Netherlands opened an unprecedented exhibition of the works of Hieronymus Bosch. This exhibition brought the majority of the artist's extant paintings and drawings back to his hometown on the occasion of the five-hundredth anniversary

of his death. Leading up to this landmark exhibition, the Getty Foundation provided a grant for the structural conservation of three Bosch works to be displayed—the *Triptych of Saint Wilgefortis*, *Hermit Saints Triptych*, and the four-panel *Visions of the Hereafter* series.



LEFT: Hieronymus Bosch, *Saint Wilgefortis Triptych*. Gallerie dell'Accademia, Venice. Photo courtesy Rik Klein Gotink for the Bosch Research and Conservation Project

ABOVE: Luuk Hoogstede (left) working with Roberto Saccuman (right) during treatment of the central panel of the *Saint Wilgefortis Triptych*. Image courtesy Luuk Hoogstede





The conservation of these polyptychs provided an excellent training opportunity for younger conservators. It included the stabilization of the works for travel, the creation of new auxiliary supports, and, in the case of *Visions of the Hereafter*, the construction of new display cases that would buffer potentially harmful humidity changes and allow the work to be viewed from all sides. The newly conserved paintings were first revealed to the public in early 2016 at the Gallerie dell'Accademia in Venice, Italy before presentations at the Noordbrabants Museum, followed by the Prado Museum, as part of the most complete exhibition to date of Bosch's art.

To prepare for this historic event, an international team of art historians, conservators, scientists, and software developers formed the Bosch Research and Conservation Project. A second Getty grant allowed the team to travel around the world to study and photograph the work of Bosch and his workshop, using specific equipment to ensure vivid and consistent high-resolution images. The team gathered over ten terabytes of data for the documentation alone, an amount equal to the entire printed collection of the United States Library of Congress at the time.

The findings of the Bosch Research and Conservation Project are available through boschproject.org, a groundbreaking site that marks the first standardized photo documentation of an artist's body of work. The site incorporates a "curtain viewer," or a split-view browsing experience, designed to feel like the user is peeling back the surface of the painting with the drag of a cursor. Other features include a "tag" search function that allows users to compare recurring details across the artist's oeuvre, interactive condition reports for all artworks included on the site, and a comprehensive bibliography.

LEFT: Hieronymus Bosch, *Ascent into Heaven* from *Visions of the Hereafter*, after 1486. Palazzo Grimani, Venice. Photo courtesy Rik Klein Gotink for the Bosch Research and Conservation Project

ABOVE: A comparison of hands in Bosch paintings constructed with the Bosch Project web application. Photo Rik Klein Gotink and image processing Robert G. Erdmann for the Bosch Research and Conservation Project

PIETER BRUEGEL THE ELDER IN VIENNA



The Kunsthistorisches Museum Wien (KHM) was awarded a grant in 2012 for a training project involving six paintings from the museum's unparalleled collection of works by the great Netherlandish painter Pieter Bruegel the Elder, including the iconic *Hunters in the Snow* of 1565. A mixture of religious and genre scenes, the

paintings all display the artist's characteristic attention to detail and lively compositions. Given the great significance and popularity of the panels, experts had to work quickly and methodically to remove one work at a time from the museum galleries for study and complete the project over a two-year period.



LEFT: Pieter Bruegel the Elder, *Hunters in the Snow*, 1565. Photo © KHM-Museumsverband
ABOVE: Pieter Bruegel the Elder, *Children's Games*, 1560. Photo © KHM-Museumsverband





During the process, trainees at different levels worked alongside the lead conservators to complete thorough condition assessments and develop structural treatment protocols for each panel. The project team assembled historical information about the paintings, prepared new X-rays, took 3-D measurements, analyzed the wooden supports, and created full photographic documentation of each piece. The team also developed new microclimate boxes to improve stability going forward,

and worked with curators in Vienna to review provenance and prepare a timeline of past conservation treatments. All of this work prepared the paintings for a landmark exhibition and related publication of Bruegel's work at the KHM in 2018. The museum is providing open access to the high-resolution images taken during the technical studies and is using the technology developed for the *Ghent Altarpiece* web application, *Closer to Van Eyck*, also supported by Getty Foundation grants.

LEFT: Measuring the panel thickness of Pieter Bruegel the Elder's *Procession to Calvary* (1564) using a laser grid. Image courtesy KHM-Museumsverband
ABOVE: Pieter Bruegel the Elder, *Peasant Dance*, 1568/69. Photo © KHM-Museumsverband

CARAVAGGIO AND RUBENS IN VIENNA





In 2014 the Foundation awarded a second grant to KHM, which focused on the training of conservators from Central and Eastern Europe through the structural treatment of Michelangelo Merisi da Caravaggio's

David with the Head of Goliath (ca. 1600) and Peter Paul Rubens's *Landscape with Philemon and Baucis* (ca. 1620/1625), both considered Baroque masterpieces.

LEFT: Michelangelo Merisi da Caravaggio, *David with the Head of Goliath*, ca. 1600. Photo © KHM-Museumsverband

ABOVE: Peter Paul Rubens, *Landscape with Philemon and Baucis*, ca. 1620/1625. Photo © KHM-Museumsverband



Caravaggio's *David with the Head of Goliath* is one of only two existing paintings by the artist on wood panel. A beautiful and emotionally evocative work, the panel was in critical and fragile condition as a result of past conservation interventions that had shaved the wood support down to only a few millimeters in thickness—nearly as thin as paper. The project required the removal of the existing rigid cradle—a latticed wooden structure

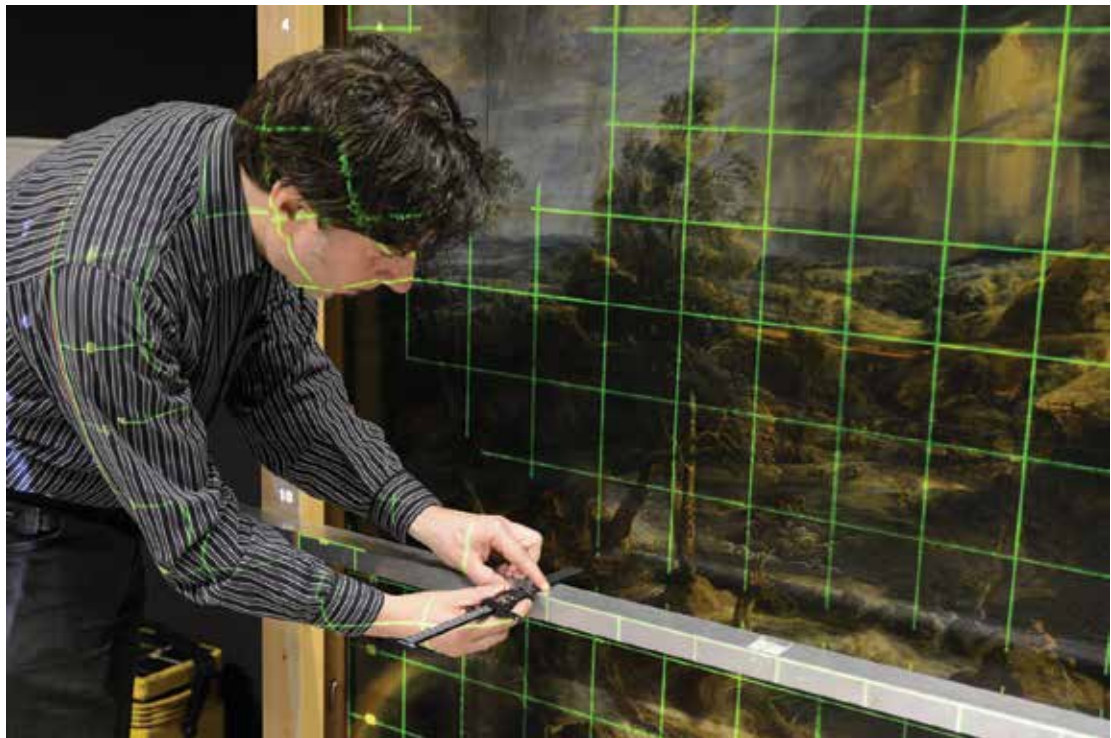
subsequently attached to the back of the panel—intended to prevent warping. Following the cradle's removal, the panels needed rest to resume their natural shape before the conservators could determine the next steps, which included the construction of a new flexible support and the repair of multiple fractures threatening the integrity of the paint layers. Panel Painting trainees participated in each stage of this process.

ABOVE: Ingrid Hopfner (left) and Georg Prast (right) conduct precise measurements of the Caravaggio panel before beginning treatment. Image courtesy KHM-Museumsverband

RIGHT: Using laser grid lines to measure curvature of the Rubens panel before beginning treatment. Image courtesy KHM-Museumsverband

Landscape with Philemon and Baucis, Rubens's powerful representation of the natural world, set the course for the future development of landscape painting. The work is among the greatest dramatic landscapes by the artist, who may have created it for his personal collection. It is one of two large landscapes painted by the artist during this period that feature scenes from classical literature; in this case, it is from Ovid's *Metamorphoses* (small figures on the right side of the painting indicate it is the story of Philemon and Baucis being rescued from the storm by the gods Jupiter and Mercury). The painting is structurally complex, having been cobbled together from ten different pieces

of wood. Each plank aged differently, so the panel presented unique conservation challenges. Experts worked closely with Panel Paintings Initiative trainees during the structural treatment, and together they stabilized the painting and devised a new auxiliary support. The project also produced new technical insights into how Rubens added to his landscape paintings over time, thus changing art historical interpretations. The conserved panel was featured in 2017 in the exhibition, *Rubens—The Power of Transformation*, at the KHM; the new research resulting from the treatment was included in the accompanying catalogue.





ABOVE: Bartholomäus Sarburgh, *Madonna of the Burgomaster of Basel, Jakob Meyer zum Hasen*, around 1635/1637. Photo: Herbert Boswank © Gemäldegalerie Alte Meister, Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden

RIGHT: Conservators and curators examine the Sarburgh panel before treatment. Photo: Elke Estel/Hans-Peter Klut © Gemäldegalerie Alte Meister, Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden

International Workshops

From the outset, it was clear that training residencies alone would not be enough to fully prepare a new generation of structural panel paintings conservators. Postgraduates and professionals in Central and Eastern Europe, in particular, required additional instruction on the history, technology, and science related to panel paintings conservation. The Foundation developed two strands of international workshops for these two groups. Not only

did these workshops provide valuable exposure to the historical context and current best practices and scientific research related to panel paintings conservation, the programs also encouraged communication among the Panel Paintings trainees and current experts. As a result, the training participants have a strong professional network in place to consult on future research and treatments.





STATENS MUSEUM FOR KUNST

A grant awarded to the Statens Museum for Kunst in Copenhagen supported a summer institute at the Jan Matejko Academy of Fine Arts in Krakow in 2010, which brought together twenty curators and conservators from the former Soviet Union, paired with Western European specialists, to introduce best practices in the structural conservation of panel paintings. The workshop inspired a similar workshop in Dresden and another in Krakow, leading to the treatment of six panels by Hans Süß von Kulmbach, the most prominent apprentice of Albrecht Dürer.



ABOVE: Salvatore Meccio shows workshop participants in Krakow how to prepare a wooden wedge. Image courtesy Aleksandra Hola

RIGHT: Hans Süß von Kulmbach, *The Story of St. Catherine of Alexandria: Disputation with Philosophers*, 1514–1515. Photo: Pawel Gaşior © St. Mary's Basilica, Krakow, Poland

FAR RIGHT: Discussing Coromandel Screens in the Rijksmuseum Furniture Department as part of a workshop organized by SRAL. Image courtesy Kate Seymour, SRAL



STAATLICHE KUNSTSAMMLUNGEN

DRESDEN

With Getty support, the Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden (SKD) organized and hosted a ten-day institute in 2013 to introduce best practices in the structural conservation of panel paintings to twenty-eight curators and conservators from Germany and Central and Eastern Europe. Similar to the Krakow workshop, the program included theoretical and practical topics, visits to local collections and conservation laboratories, and hands-on workshops involving both curators and conservators as equal partners in treatment decisions. The project also incorporated treatment of works in the SKD collections, including Bartholomäus Sarburgh's *Madonna of the Burgomaster of Basel*, Jakob Meyer zum Hasen (1637).

STICHTING RESTAURATIE ATELIER

LIMBURG

The Stichting Restauratie Atelier Limburg (SRAL) received support to organize a series of workshops specifically designed for the postgraduate trainees of the Panel Paintings Initiative. The group visited museums and private collections in Italy, the Netherlands, Belgium, and England, where they met with leading experts at premier institutions and gained insights into how panel production developed differently in these regions, and how this led to geographical variances in treatment protocols. The workshops complemented the project-based training provided by other Getty grants and in addition helped the postgraduates expand their professional networks by getting to know one another and the other colleagues they visited.

GRANTEES

Churchwardens of Saint Bavo Cathedral
Courtauld Institute of Art
Jan Matejko Academy of Fine Arts in Krakow
Kunsthistorisches Museum Wien
Metropolitan Museum of Art
Museo del Prado
Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research
Opificio delle Pietre Dure
Royal Institute for Cultural Heritage (KIK-IRPA)
Royal Museums of Fine Arts of Belgium
Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden
Statens Museum for Kunst
Stichting Noordbrabants Museum
Stichting Restauratie Atelier Limburg
University of Cambridge

For further information on specific projects, please visit getty.edu/foundation.

PANEL PAINTINGS ADVISORY COMMITTEE

George Bisacca, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, *Co-Chair*
Simon Bobak, Private Conservator, United Kingdom
Marco Ciatti, Opificio delle Pietre Dure, Florence
Paul van Duin, Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam
Ian McClure, Yale University Art Gallery, New Haven
Jørgen Wadum, Statens Museum for Kunst, Copenhagen, *Co-Chair*

Special thanks to Tim Whalen, John E. and Louise Bryson Director, Getty Conservation Institute and Mark Leonard, Former Head of Paintings Conservation at the J. Paul Getty Museum.



The Getty Foundation

1200 Getty Center Drive, Suite 800
Los Angeles, CA 90049-1685 USA
www.getty.edu/foundation