



# Conservation Office

## 2012/13 Annual Report



# Contents

## **Chapter 1**

Message from the Head

## **Chapter 2**

Conservation Tasks

## **Chapter 3**

Supporting Services

## **Chapter 4**

International Institute for Conservation of  
Historic and Artistic Works (IIC) 2014 Hong Kong Congress

## **Chapter 5**

Other Projects

## **Chapter 6**

Education and Extension Activities

## **Chapter 7**

Internship and Volunteering Programmes

## **Chapter 8**

Research and Publications

## **Chapter 9**

Performance Summary and Organisation Chart



# *Chapter 1*

## *Message from the Head*

One of the privileges of being the Head of the Conservation Office is to report each year on our work and accomplishments which lead to the preservation of cultural heritage. It is always heartening to know that the effort of our conservators has revived the merits of our cultural and historic treasures and make them accessible to the present and future generations.

Last year was a momentous year, our colleagues provided technical advice and support to several blockbuster exhibitions including “PICASSO – Masterpieces from Musée National Picasso, Paris” and “A Lofty Retreat from the Red Dust: The Secret Garden of Emperor Qianlong” in celebration of the 15<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the HKSAR.

The badly damaged clay statue “Wen Pang Guan” had been duly treated by the novel “cocktail therapy” method and returned to its native home at the I Shing Temple in Wang Chau, Yuen Long for the Dajiao Festival. Our conservators will have more conservation cases to share with you in the subsequent chapters. Besides performing the practical work, we have continued to promote conservation awareness through an array of educational programmes for the School Culture Day and International Museum Day.

One of the highlights of our work in 2014 is to plan for the 25<sup>th</sup> International Institute for Conservation of Historic and Artistic Works (IIC) 2014 Hong Kong Congress. In addition to boosting the conservation profile of Hong Kong and empowering the professional exchange, this mega event would also help to promote Hong Kong’s rich cultural heritage as well as its vibrancy to the world.

We are presently in full swing to embark on the complicated organisation work for this biennial international congress, which will be held for the very first time in South East Asia in September 2014. Addressing the theme “An Unbroken History- Conserving East Asian Works of Art and Heritage”, feedbacks on paper and poster submission have been overwhelming since the announcement on call for papers was made in early 2013. A specifically designed thematic website has been launched to disseminate the most up-to-date information and news of the congress.

Dedication and commitment are the hallmarks of our some 80 conservation volunteers, who had contributed a total of 4,612 services hours to support a range of our services last year. They even set up a conservation volunteers Facebook page to enhance communication and to share the fun of conservation work with others. The Facebook page has been very well received and has grown to a group size over 200. I must convey my heartfelt thanks to all volunteers for their unfailing and unwavering support rendered to us in the past year.

After 24 years of dedicated and remarkable service, Henmi Wong, our senior ceramic conservator is retiring this year. By virtue of his professional knowledge and expertise, Henmi has proudly handled countless conservation and exhibition and mounting projects, setting a good standard for our colleagues. He will certainly be missed by all of us, and I wish him a happy retirement life for many years to come.

I look forward to an exciting and exceptional year in our collaboration with IIC to bring the IIC Congress to Hong Kong in 2014. We will also continue with our support to a variety of museum exhibitions and preserving the much treasured museum objects and historical relics for our community. As always, I welcome your comments and suggestions to inspire our work and services.



Shing-wai Chan  
Head of Conservation Office



## Chapter 2

### Conservation Tasks

*Conservation is key to preserving museum collections of historic, artistic and cultural significance for present and future generations. We have eight teams of in-house conservation specialists in Paintings, Photographs & Prints, Historical Documents, Textiles & Natural History Specimens, Organic Materials, Ceramics & Inorganic Materials, Metals and Archaeological Finds to take care of the diverse museum collections and cultural relics. They are dedicated to address the conservation needs of the varied objects, and the highlights of their work are illustrated in the following sections.*

#### Paintings

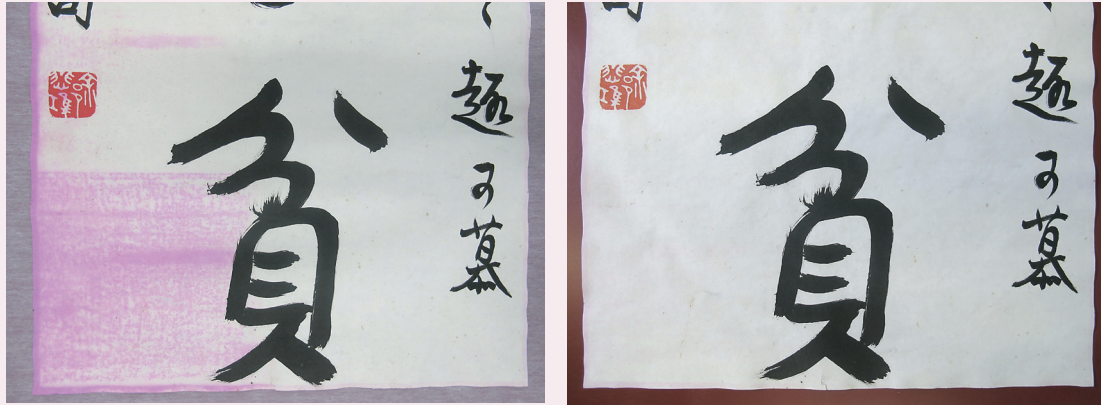
Mishandling and improper storage are common causes of damages to Chinese paintings, resulting in creases, folds, stains, tears, losses and insect damage before the paintings arrive at the museum.

One example is a couplet of Chinese calligraphy in running cursive script written by Xu Beihong (c. 1939), which was stained by the fugitive colourant seeping from the dyes of its silk border. We successfully removed the stains with acetone on a suction table, which provided mild and controllable sucking power to prevent the stain from spreading to the neighbouring areas in the course of treatment.



▲ A calligraphy brushed flat after lining

The team has also conserved and remounted Chinese paintings for display in many thematic exhibitions. To ensure that all materials applied onto the works of art meet with the international standards and preservation requirements, the team prepared its own starch paste for painting mounting. Natural plant-based dyes for silk paper colouring and traditional hand-made Xuan paper were also used to repair the painting collections. A comprehensive archive of various mounting papers was also established to facilitate subsequent mounting tasks.



▲ Purple stains and creases at the lower right corner of the calligraphy (left) are removed after treatment (right)

### *Photographs and Prints*

The scrapbook of Louie Yu Tin, which contains some invaluable works produced by the artist over the years, is one of the very important collections donated to the Hong Kong Heritage Museum last year. Nonetheless, the scrapbook suffered severely from the splitting of the book spine. Judging from the inner page of the cover, the hard cover was found to come from another old dictionary but it was not wide and strong enough to hold all the pages together. We used archival boards mounted with a toned book cloth to extend the spine. The weakened cover was consolidated with a strong adhesive mixture of polyvinyl acetate and wheat starch paste. The book was therefore nicely conserved for display purpose as well as for further study.

Other than conserving the scrapbook, we conserved a toy packaging box as toys are also a highlight collection of the Hong Kong Heritage Museum. As a consequence of age and use, it is inevitable that many toys, their packaging boxes exhibit varying degrees of wear and tear. It was common that these packaging boxes were mended by sellotapes in places of damage, but sellotapes stained the packaging box further when the adhesive degraded. The team removed the sellotapes on the packaging box and then repaired the tears with Japanese tissues and starch paste. To return the box to its original shape, our conservators gently introduced water vapour generated from an ultrasonic humidifier to relax the deformed parts and to revive the flexibility of the cardboard. The shape of the box was finally restored.



◀ Tears on a toy packaging box (left) were repaired (right)

▶ The deformed toy packaging box (left) was reshaped after treatment (right)



## Organic Materials

Before the hanging decoration of “double happiness” written in Chinese characters could be put on display in the “Greetings by the Dragon and the Phoenix-Selected Cultural Relics of Diamond Restaurant” exhibition at the Heritage Museum, the unstable polyurethane materials (PU foam), which was used as the cushioning material at the back of the wooden decorative piece, was removed. The exposed part of the foam had discoloured, crumbled and became brittle. Stable polyester felt was inserted to replace the PU foam. The original nail holes on the backing fabric were reinforced with conservation fabrics (Stabiltex) and adhesive (Beva) film. The object was then remounted onto its original position with copper nails.



▲ Remounting the backing fabric after replacing the unstable PU foam with polyester felt





▲ *Cockroach specks found on the poster*

In terms of conservation support for the museum collection, our team also worked on some hand-painted advertising posters for Cantonese operas displayed at the popular Sunbeam Theatre. Cockroach droppings found scattered on the acrylic paint surfaces, which could lead to etching and permanent staining of the paint layer, were treated urgently with methyl cellulose gel and cleaned off with a scalpel and moistened cotton swabs. Most of the specks were successfully removed, thus preventing further damage to the artefacts.

In addition, a number of miniature plastic toys which suffered from deformation, fractures, losses and unstable paints were restored. The small sizes of the objects called for treatment under the microscope. After deliberating the strength, reversibility and the effects of adhesives on the plastic material and the paint, a water-based acrylic emulsion with the appropriate glass transition temperature was selected for the restoration work. The separated parts were reattached to their original positions and the unstable paints were consolidated successfully.



▲ *A miniature toy before treatment (left) and during treatment (right). Pins were used to secure the position of the hen until the applied adhesive was cured.*

## ***Ceramics and Inorganic Materials***

Amongst the many public artworks in Hong Kong, the Bruce Lee bronze sculpture located at the Avenue of Stars in Tsim Sha Tsui is arguably one of the most popular sculptures in the city. However, the unfavourable humid and harbour fronting environmental condition has posed much conservation problems to this bronze sculpture, inducing and accelerating the deterioration of the metal and rendering the sculpture rather unsightly with patchy green copper corrosion developed all over the surface.

Our Ceramics & Inorganic Materials team was tasked to arrest the corrosion problem and to devise an effective methodology to conserve the sculpture. After removing the unsightly and harmful corrosion products from the statue, we applied a coating onto the statue surface, which was specifically formulated to protect the bronze from damaging agents. The statue returned to its original charm and beauty upon treatment completion.



▲ *The corrosion products removed with a copper wire brush*



▲ *The bronze statue after treatment*

Another work example was the restoration of the bronze sculpture, “Kiss” in Po Hong Park, Tseung Kwan O, which was a commissioned work of the Sai Kung District Council Public Art Project 2009. Owing to a defect originated from the cast of the bronze, a hairline crack was developed on the cheek of the mother component. As a result, rain water, together with some soluble copper salts, seeped through the crack into the interior of the sculpture from the top. The blue-green corrosion mixture continued to drip down onto the front surface of the child component, forming quite unsightly stains.

Working together with the sculpture’s artist Tung Ching Fan, the crevices in the head part were filled with expanded foam and polyurethane grout to prevent the ingress and seepage of water moisture into the bulk of the sculpture. The copper stains were also removed to restore the original look and feel of the sculpture.

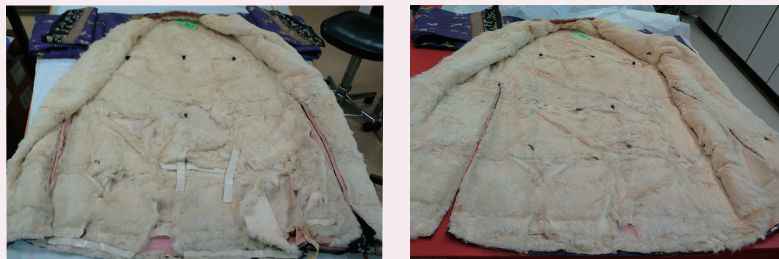


▲ *Blue-green copper corrosion stains marring the front of the “Kiss” sculpture*

## *Textiles and Natural History Specimens*

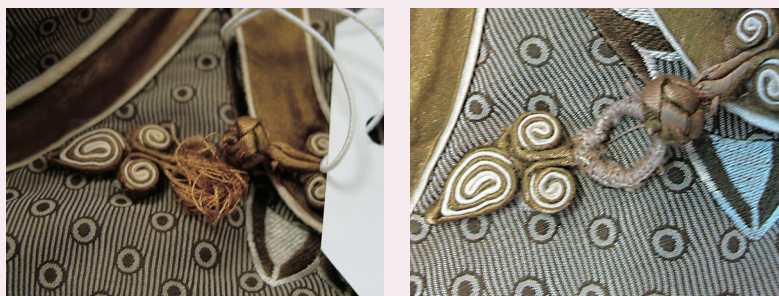
The Textiles and Natural History Specimens team was busy working on qipaos last year. To promote the cultural significance and artistic legacy of qipaos - the timeless Chinese nationalist fashion icon - a selected variety of qipaos was loaned to the National Museum of Singapore for exhibition while some other qipaos were chosen for an outreach exhibition entitled “Transformation of the Qipao” held at Olympian City.

Most parts of qipaos were extremely fragile, and required a lot of conservation attention. In the case of a qipao dating from the 1920s, for example, all the loops of the flower buttons were worn out, leaving only split threads. To restore the appeal of this qipao as well as to conserve the flower buttons, polyester threads that matched the buttons’ colour were used to reinforce the surviving threads and to reconstruct the loops.



▲ *Details of the torn areas on a fur lining of a qipao dated late Qing dynasty before treatment (left) and after treatment (right).*

Equally meticulous conservation was performed on another precious qipao dating from the late Qing Dynasty, which was beautifully lined with white rabbit fur. The fur’s condition, which was stained and degraded as a result of previous repairs using double-sided adhesive tape, caused quite some distress to conservators. Although the use of solvent and heat were effective in removing the residual adhesive stains, the fur was found to become slightly stiff. The torn areas were then repaired by stitching, and supported with polyester fabric and heat-activated adhesive to restore the strength of the qipao.



▲ *Close up of a broken flower button of a qipao dated 1920 before treatment (left) and after treatment (right)*



## *Historical Documents*

Many of the historical documents had exhibited various degrees of deterioration before they became a collection item of the museum.

Amongst the other items conserved by our team during the year was a published account from a charity organisation formed by the gentry and merchants in Guangdong, Hong Kong and Macau, required very intensive treatment. This Chinese thread-bound book (dated July 1915) did not only contain the receipts and expenditure records related to the donations collected in aid of the victims of a natural disaster, but also included a few pages of lithographic prints about the donors. However, the paper materials had deteriorated and yellowed to such an extent that virtually all the images and printed information were blurred and illegible. The pages were therefore surface cleaned with chemical sponge before treating with hydrogen peroxide solution on the suction table to reduce the staining. The tears and losses were finally repaired with tissue paper strips and methyl cellulose. The treatment was so successful that the page contents regained their legibility, and the paper strength was much improved to facilitate future handling.



▲ *A published account of receipts and expenditure records of the donations collected by a charity organisation in July 1915 before treatment (left) and after treatment (right)*

## *Archaeological Finds*

Further to the effort made in previous years, our Archaeological Finds team finally completed the painstaking restoration work for Wen Pang Guan and returned it to its home at I Shing Temple in Wang Chau, Yuen Long. Standing more than 2m tall and weighing over 200kg, the heavily restored clay statue required a custom designed lifting system for transportation. In order to protect and stabilise the statue during the move, a specially cradled wooden crate was also designed and made. The villagers hosted a ceremony to welcome the return of Wen Pang Guan, which was just in time for the celebration of the Dajiao Festival held every eight years in late November.



▲ *Wen Pang Guan, on its return to I Shing Temple after restoration.*

After the Wen Pang Guan project, our team took on the challenge to conserve the mural painting in Tai Fu Tai Mansion in San Tin, Yuen Long. This opulent residence was built in 1865 by the scholar Man Chung-luen, who was bestowed with the title “Tai Fu” by the Qing Emperor. With its fine architectural decoration, the building is one of the most beautifully embellished traditional Chinese buildings in Hong Kong.

The mural painting in question was located on the upper part of the rear wall at the main hall. It was suffering from surface losses, delamination and detachment of the façade from its brick substrate. While natural hydraulic lime was used to fill up the major voids and cracks found between the mural painting and its brick substrate, nanolime was used to consolidate the remaining and difficult-to-access fissures and micro-cracks. Finally, the surface losses were compensated and retouched to revive the artistic merits of the wall painting.



▲ *Mural painting before treatment (upper) and after treatment (lower)*

## Metals

The historic diesel electric engine No. 51, Sir Alexander, as well as two signal semaphores located at the Hong Kong Railway Museum, are iconic models of the museum collections. Over the past year, the Metal Conservation team continued to conserve and restore these historic railway objects to prolong their longevity for permanent display.

Fabricated with wrought iron and mild steel, the diesel engine and the two semaphores suffered from varying degrees of metal corrosion, material loss, surface coating depletion and suspected structural damage. Such an extent of deterioration would not only erode the original information from the items, but posed a risk to visitors.



▲ “Sir Alexander” after treatment



▲ A conservator measuring the dry film thickness of the coating after treatment.

Close inspection revealed that most of the metal components on both signal semaphores were badly corroded, and there was severe material loss on the footing sections. We therefore formulated a treatment plan with the professional advice from a structural engineer. To avoid introducing hot works to the original materials, which might give rise to possible adverse effects, all repair materials such as steel angles and bars were secured to the semaphores with bolts and nuts rather than the commonly employed welding technique. All degraded coatings and iron corrosions were thoroughly removed mechanically and the entire structures were protected with a durable coating system to prevent corrosion. “Sir Alexander” survived a better condition, and was then protected with a topical epoxy-polyurethane coating system after corrosion products were removed from the metal.



## *Chapter 3*

### *Supporting Services*

*One of the key tasks of the Conservation Office is to provide supporting services to the museums and enormous support has been provided for the museums' array of in house and outbound thematic exhibitions. Other than exhibition support, the Office also developed and implemented regular preservation programmes to protect objects from environmental damages or pest attacks. These efforts are manifested in this Chapter.*

#### *Thematic Exhibitions*

Our conservators make every effort to ensure the well-being of the exhibits throughout the course of exhibitions, from exhibition planning, condition inspection, exhibits mounting, environmental monitoring and packing of loan exhibits to their eventual return.

In 2012, the Conservation Office supported three blockbuster exhibitions, namely “A Lofty Retreat from the Red Dust: The Secret Garden of Emperor Qianlong”, “The Majesty of All Under Heaven - The Eternal Realm of China’s First Emperor” and the “PICASSO - Masterpieces from the Musée National Picasso, Paris”. The exhibitions were held at different LCSD museums to celebrate the 15<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the establishment of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region.



▲ *A conservator inspecting the condition of an oil painting for the “PICASSO – Masterpieces from the Musée National Picasso, Paris” exhibition*

## ***“The Majesty of All Under Heaven - The Eternal Realm of China’s First Emperor” at the Hong Kong Museum of History***



Proper exhibits mounting is crucial to ensure the safe display of museum objects and to contribute to the overall museum experience of visitors. To enable a fragile and heavily restored terracotta chariot horse to stand on its own, a tailor-made metal mount fit with crafted wooden blocks and polyethylene foam lining was devised to support the sheer weight of the horse at certain identified spots.

▲ *A special mount devised to support the fragile terracotta chariot horse for the “The Majesty of All Under Heaven - The Eternal Realm of China’s First Emperor” exhibition*

## ***“A Lofty Retreat from the Red Dust: The Secret Garden of Emperor Qianlong” at the Hong Kong Museum of Art***

Three remarkable panoramic paintings (Tongjinghua) at the Qianlong Garden were on loan from the Palace Museum. It was indeed a very challenging task for the Office to safely display these large format paintings with extra-ordinary sizes of about 4m x 3m in an exhibition with limited space and preparation time. Tremendous efforts and special care were exercised to mount the panoramic paintings onto frames so that they could be displayed in an upright position to simulate the context of Qianlong garden. Ten experienced conservators worked tirelessly for a week’s time with the Palace Museum couriers to install the paintings, and managed to meet the exhibition opening.



▲ *Collaborating with the couriers of the Palace Museum, conservators were inspecting the physical condition and checking the actual dimensions of the panoramic painting to be displayed at the exhibition “A Lofty Retreat from the Red Dust: The Secret Garden of Emperor Qianlong”*



▲ *Installing an oversize painting for the “A Lofty Retreat from the Red Dust: The Secret Garden of Emperor Qianlong” exhibition*

## *“Chinese Painting and Calligraphy of the Song, Yuan and Ming Dynasties from the Osaka City Museum of Fine Arts” at the Hong Kong Museum of Art*

Besides exhibition mounting work, conservators also advised on the packing of the scroll paintings and worked with the lending museum to devise a safe and necessary movement and emergency plan for the loan exhibits. With special arrangements being made with the relevant authorities well in advance, our conservators and couriers were able to oversee the loading and unloading of the crates at the bay areas at the airports, ensuring the provision of the needed security and work supervision to the treasures at all times during their transit.



▲ *The couriers of the Osaka City Museum of Fine Arts supervising the installation of a millennia-old scroll for the “Chinese Painting and Calligraphy of the Song, Yuan and Ming Dynasties from the Osaka City Museum of Fine Arts” exhibition*

## *Pest Management*



▲ *A head section of Tai Hang Fire Dragon being loaded into the nitrogen chamber for fumigation treatment*

Given that a wide range of museum objects are susceptible to pest infestation, our resident conservators continued to design and implement specific pest management programmes for individual museums. Should insect pests be detected in objects, the team can effectively eradicate all life stages of insects that may exist in the infested objects by exposing them to an extremely low oxygen environment for 3 weeks in a purpose designed fumigation chamber.



▲ *Bamboo powderpost beetles (left) found in the bamboo of a traditional Chinese lantern (right)*

During the past year, 11 operations were conducted to eradicate insect infestation in more than 4,000 organic objects from various museums, archives, libraries and the Antiquities and Monuments Office. Amongst these objects were a good number of local intangible cultural heritage items, including traditional Chinese lanterns, festive lions, dragon head and tail sections and accessories used in the Tai Hang Fire Dragon Dance. Most of them were made of bamboo, paper and other organic materials, which are particularly prone to insect infestation.



# Chapter 4

## *International Institute for Conservation of Historic and Artistic Works (IIC) 2014 Hong Kong Congress*

*Hosting an international congress is a great opportunity to make Hong Kong and its accomplishments in cultural and heritage conservation known to a wider world.*

Apart from performing the regular conservation duties and supporting services, the Conservation Office is always committed to promoting conservation awareness and to heightening professional excellence in the field. For the very first time in South-East Asia, we are honoured to host the 25<sup>th</sup> IIC 2014 Congress in Hong Kong on 22-26 September 2014 at the invitation of the International Institute for the Conservation of Historic and Artistic Works (IIC)<sup>1</sup>. The Congress will be held at the Hong Kong City Hall – a cultural landmark carrying the collective memories of the people of Hong Kong down the years.

To signify our unique cultural characteristics, the Congress theme is set as “An Unbroken History: Conserving East Asian Works of Art and Heritage”. Given the importance of the Congress, we anticipate some 400 scholars, conservation practitioners and experts from the region and worldwide will be attracted to Hong Kong to examine the latest advances and research findings in the field of museum and heritage conservation.



▲ IIC 2014 Hong Kong Congress venue - Hong Kong City Hall

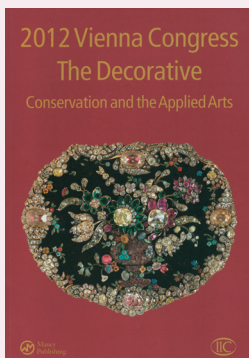


▲ Thematic website of IIC 2014 Hong Kong Congress: [www.iic2014hkcongress.org](http://www.iic2014hkcongress.org)

<sup>1</sup> Founded in 1950 and based in London, IIC has been mounting a major conference every two years on a topic of current interest since 1960s. It is an internationally acclaimed conservation organisation supported by individual and institutional members worldwide, and serves to provide a communication platform with the mission to advance the professional standards for cultural heritage preservation through conferences, publications, awards, and collaboration with other museums and organizations.



▲ *Participants gathering the most up-to-date information on conservation supplies and equipment at the Trade Fair of IIC 2012 Vienna Congress*



▲ *Preprints of the IIC 2012 Vienna Congress*

The Congress mainly consists of a 5-day technical programme complemented by an array of social events. An Organising Committee headed by the Head of Conservation Office was formed in 2012 to start planning and organising the event. Invitations for papers and posters to be presented at the Congress have been launched successively since early 2013 and were met with overwhelming response from all over the world. For the benefit of the participants, not only will the Hong Kong Congress be conducted with simultaneous interpretation in English and Putonghua, but the Congress Preprints will also be produced unprecedentedly in English and Chinese. Comprising a good number of selected papers and posters, the Preprints will serve as the finest reference materials for conservation studies and research, and will become an imprint for the Hong Kong Congress.

To make the Congress more eventful and far-reaching both in the profession and our community, we have been actively engaging support from different cultural institutions and companies, in particular on funding the attendance of the Chinese delegates. A volunteer recruitment campaign was also launched earlier to enlist public involvement as well as helping hands for the event. Working towards excellence, the Organising Committee will endeavor to make the event a success to illustrate Hong Kong's cultural profile and achievements in heritage preservation to our international counterparts.



▲ *Participants attending the welcome reception of IIC 2012 Vienna Congress at the Kunsthistorisches Museum Vienna*

# *Chapter 5*

## *Other Projects*

### *Central Repository*

To meet the preservation needs of our ever-growing museum collections in the long term, we have been actively planning the construction of a Central Repository to house the ever-growing collections of the public museums, Film Archive and the Antiques and Monuments Office. A site in Tin Shui Wai measuring some 5,000 m<sup>2</sup> has been identified for this purpose.

The project has met with the support of the Yuen Long District Council (YLDC), which also suggested the inclusion of certain auxiliary facilities to facilitate the staging of thematic exhibitions and bespoke educational and extension activities. Besides the essential artefacts storage, the Central Repository is planned to comprise an exhibition gallery, a multi-purpose activity room and a resource centre cum collection study room. Through visual art displays, thematic exhibitions, access to selected collection items, and an array of extension programmes, the Repository is set to serve a secondary role to extend the much valued museum service to local residents, students, the general public, scholars and researchers.

The Repository will be purpose-built and duly equipped to maintain a suitable environment for the long term preservation of the invaluable museum collections. A Centralised Museum Collection Management System will also be developed to effectively manage the huge quantity of collection items and to facilitate public access to a wide range of collection information beyond the physical boundaries of the stores and museums.

We will continue to work closely with the Architectural Services Department on a technical feasibility study for the project. Once the necessary endorsement and funding are sought, construction work will commence with a target completion date has been set for 2020.



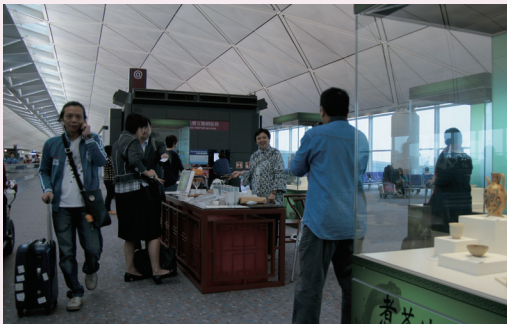
## *Airport Displays: “Glimpse of Hong Kong”*

The “Glimpse of Hong Kong” exhibition series jointly presented by the Leisure and Cultural Services Department (LCSD) and Airport Authority Hong Kong (HKAA) has met with resounding success since its launch in 2011. Coordinated and mounted by our Conservation Office, the array of artefacts on display have served to help both local residents and foreign visitors better understand the local art and culture, besides heightening the cultural image of Hong Kong.

In May 2012, “Theatre Art of Cantonese Opera” and “The Art of Cantonese Opera” adopted a new look when they were relocated to Gate 22 at the Departures Hall on Level 6 and Gate 36 at the Arrivals Hall on Level 5 respectively. Taking the opportunity of the move, a new exhibit “Man’s Red Python Ceremonial Robe Embroidered with Dragon Motifs” was added to the “Theatre Art of Cantonese Opera” exhibition.



▲ *Air passengers taking group photos in front of the exhibits of “Theatre Art of Cantonese Opera” exhibition” at its new location near Departure Gate 22*



▲ *Visitors attending the demonstration on Chinese tea in front of the “Tea through the Ages” exhibition at Departure Gate 31*

With a view to reviving the fond memories of childhood in locals and foreigners alike, the existing “Tea through the Ages” exhibition at Departure Gate 31 has been planned to be replaced by a display of toys selected from the Hong Kong Heritage Museum collections in late 2013.

## *Chapter 6*

### *Education and Extension Activities*

*In the light that prevention is much better than cure, it is important to promote the conservation concepts and awareness to a wider community and audience. To achieve this, we organised a broad range of educational programmes including workshops, lectures, and guided tours for students and interest groups. The mode of presentation has become more immersive and interactive in the International Museum Day programmes for the general public. We also extended our education initiatives beyond Hong Kong by delivering a series of conservation lectures to museum professionals in Guangdong last year.*

#### *Lecturing at the Guangdong Museum of Art*

At the invitation of the Committee of Art Museums in China, we delivered a series of lectures on conservation strategies and service development, the role of conservation in art museums, collection management, community engagement, and conservation education for more than 50 art museum curators in the Mainland at the Guangdong Museum of Art on 7-9 November 2012. Participants were eager to participate in the subsequent discussions and exchanged views on diverse yet specific topics related to the development of museum and conservation service.



▲ Our delegation taking a group photo with the senior colleagues of Guangdong Museum of Art before the lectures.



▲ Our Head of Conservation Office sharing his experience with the mainland museum colleagues during the Q&A session.

## *Educational Workshops and Laboratory Tours*



▲ *Students making a plaster model (left) and learning about woodblock printing (right) in conservation DIY workshops of the School Culture Day Scheme*

We organised three experiential workshops and a guided tour to our conservation laboratories under the School Culture Day Scheme for students to heighten their understanding on the importance of cultural heritage and its preservation. Nearly 250 students and teachers from eight schools took part in our activities. The workshops on “Understanding Conservation of Oil Paintings” and “God’s works? - The Facets of Wood Carvings”, undoubtedly, were the most enticing, as students could experience for themselves the hands-on fun and challenge of conservation work.

## *Conservation Programmes for International Museum Day*

To raise the conservation awareness of the public and to lead them to learn about the conservation inputs behind an exhibition, four activities collectively known as “Tracing Conservation – Discovering Hints of Conservation Work in Museum Exhibitions” were held at the Fireboat Alexander Grantham Exhibition Gallery and the Hong Kong Museum of History as a highlight of the public programmes for the Hong Kong International Museum Day 2012. More than 100 participants joined the behind-the-scene visits. They were asked to look for inconspicuous conservation clues at various spots in the galleries to answer a set of questions related to our conservation work for museum displays. All the participants, including both adults and children, found the activities amusing and illuminating.



▲ *Colleagues explaining the conservation work for Fireboat Alexander Grantham to the participants*



# Chapter 7

## Internship and Volunteering Programmes

*The Conservation Office has always committed to engaging the community. We have continued to enrich the experience of students and volunteers by way of internship and volunteering programmes, as illustrated below.*

### Conservation Internship



▲ *Charlotte Chee vacuum-cleaning the very dirty curtain of a bridal sedan chair.*



▲ *Irene Ryu removing pressure-sensitive tape at the back of a Chinese painting with a heated spatula.*

Over the past year, six interns were mentored by us under our internship programme for three weeks to three months. Based on their academic backgrounds and areas of interests, they were assigned to work with our different specialist conservators on the treatment of museum exhibits, preservation programmes, exhibition mounting and conservation documentation.

Jason Ho, Irene Ryu and Charlotte Chee are all students of Museum Studies, a post-graduate course offered by the University of Sydney in Australia in association with the University of Hong Kong. They were involved in various conservation projects during their internship.



▲ *Jason Ho installing a special mount for a textile exhibit inside a showcase.*

Jason Ho practised mounting of exhibits for the thematic exhibition, “Anti-Japanese War Heroes: An Exhibition on the Hong Kong Independent Battalion of the DongJiang Column”, held at the Museum of Coastal Defence. Irene Ryu provided conservation support for thematic exhibitions as well as undertook simple conservation treatment for paper artefacts. Charlotte Chee was involved in the conservation projects for historical textiles. All of them enjoyed the internship and commended that it complemented the theoretical part of their studies.



▲ *Sylvia Haliman inspecting the metal threads of a wedding skirt.*

Being interested in Archaeological Finds, Tracey Wong from the Tinjian Normal University and Ka-lok Fok from the Hong Kong Academy of Performing Arts were glad to participate in the reconstruction of potteries, as well as conservation treatment of various wooden statues and artefacts from the historical buildings.

Sylvia Haliman, who graduated from the University College London with an MA in Principles of Conservation and an MSc in Conservation for Archaeology and Museums, was attached to our textile conservators for three months. She undertook researches and treatment work on stage costumes and historical textiles.

### *Conservation Volunteer Scheme*

Bearing the fruits in previous years, we successfully recruited more than 80 volunteers last year who contributed a total of 4,612 service hours to support our work. To engage more volunteers in our various conservation programmes, a 2013 Conservation Briefing Session cum Award Presentation was held on 12 January 2013. Our Head of Office, Mr. Shing-wai CHAN, greeted more than 70 attending volunteers and started off the day with a progress update on our preparatory work for the “IIC 2014 Hong Kong Congress”, which has been scheduled for September 2014. Our conservators also took the chance to introduce a variety of our year’s programmes for participation by the volunteers.



▲ *A group of volunteers carrying out conservation work on some 1870s’ armour-piercing shells at the Museum of Coastal Defence*

To express our gratitude to our volunteers' dedicated efforts and active participation in the 2012 programmes, 23 volunteers, each of whom had served for over 240 hours, were presented with the "Outstanding Volunteer Award". The volunteers were led to tour our conservation laboratories at the Hong Kong Heritage Museum to view our on-going treatment work and to share the experience of our specialist conservators.



▲ Group photo of volunteers upon receiving the Outstanding Volunteer Award.

To enhance the communication between our colleagues and volunteers, a Facebook page about conservation volunteers was successfully launched and the group size has grown to over 200 friends. The platform was used not only by our volunteers for sharing the pleasure of their volunteering work, but also by colleagues of the Conservation Office for posting the latest news about our activities



▲ Facebook on conservation-volunteers Hong Kong



▲ Volunteers conserving a wooden statue from the Hung Shing Temple, Kau Sai Chau



# Chapter 8

## Research and Publications

*Our conservation colleagues have continued to strive for professional excellence by expanding our conservation knowledge and focusing on researches on materials identification, the causes of deterioration, and treatment methodologies for museum collection items.*

### Research Highlights

#### *Novel techniques to monitor air quality*

Good air quality is essential for long term preservation of museum objects. In the light that corrosive emissions from the interior decorative paints in museums is a major source of contamination, we conducted research on a range of commonly used paints. The volatile emissions from paints were collected by tiny micro-fibres required of the solid phase micro-extraction method, which were then analysed with gas chromatography mass spectrometry to deduce their exact molecular structures. The quantities of volatile emissions were then measured with the combination of a photoionisation volatile organic compounds (VOC) meter. From the preliminary results, it was found that the amount and nature of emissions varied amongst different paint manufacturers' formulations. This finding serves as a useful reference for identifying the appropriate paints to be used in the museums.



▲ *A conservator preparing samples of interior paints for volatile emissions analysis by gas chromatography mass spectrometry*

#### *Material analysis: wood identification and paint history*

To better our understanding of the timber structures used in the Tung Wah Museum, Old Wan Chai Post Office and Yan Tong Kong Study Hall, a cross-sectional analysis was conducted to identify the wood species and hence their nature and properties. Results revealed that *Eusideroxylon zwageri* was used in the Tung Wah Museum, while *Shorea laevis* was used in the Old Wan Chai Post Office. As neither of the identified species is native to Hong Kong, we concluded that the timbers used in these

historical buildings might be imported from Southeast Asia. As further exemplified by these findings, most historical village houses or buildings were built of native softwoods as the structural components while government buildings in western architectural style commonly employed high density hardwoods imported from Southeast Asia.

Paint and mortar analysis is also key to unveil the history and materials of the paints used in historical buildings. To help us plan for the restoration of the Morrison Building, Helena May Building and Government House, paint samples of these buildings were analysed. It was found that the proportion of lime, gypsum and clay present in the ground and mortar varied amongst these buildings but polyester, polyvinyl acetate and polyethyl acrylate emulsions, which were common coating materials at the time, had been generally used for painting the exterior walls. These findings did provide important clues to identify suitable and compatible materials for future restoration work.

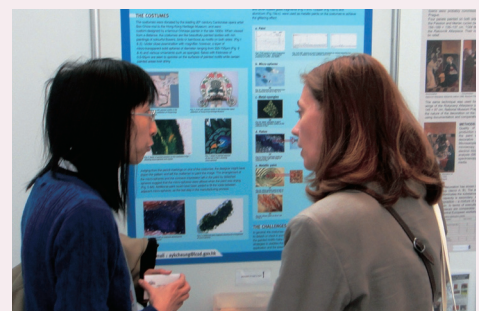
### *Publications and International Exchange*

As part of our ongoing effort to keep abreast of global advancement in the area of cultural heritage conservation, members from the Conservation Office attended the 24<sup>th</sup> International Institute for Conservation of Historic and Artistic Works (IIC) Congress in Vienna, Austria in September 2012.

Our colleagues presented two posters at the Congress, namely “Traditional Chinese Mounting Styles and Presentation Techniques of Scrolls” and “Glittering Decorative Art: Reflective Cantonese Opera Costumes”. The former poster depicted the mounting materials and styles of Chinese painting mounting generally adopted in Southern China while the latter focused on the analysis of the decorative materials commonly used on the early 20<sup>th</sup> century Cantonese opera costumes. To the delight of our presenters, the one on Cantonese Opera Costumes was selected as the “Best Poster” of the Vienna Congress. The summaries of these two posters have also been published in the Preprints of the 2012 Vienna Congress.



▲ *University of Vienna Campus, Venue for IIC 2012 Vienna Congress*



▲ *Our subject conservator presenting the “Best Poster” to a congress participant*



▲ *Paper presentation at the IIC 2012 Vienna Congress*

What made this prestigious biennial event more exciting was the announcement made by IIC at its closing – the next IIC Congress will be held in Hong Kong in 2014. Considering that an invaluable opportunity to showcase the cultural heritage of Hong Kong and a phenomenal recognition of our work, the Office is honoured to undertake the mission to host the next Congress in South-east Asia for the very first time.



▲ *Head of Conservation Office introducing Hong Kong following IIC's announcement on the host city for the 2014 Congress*

Focusing on the theme of “An Unbroken History - Conserving East Asian Works of Art and Heritage”, the IIC 2014 Hong Kong Congress is scheduled for 22-26 September 2014 at the Hong Kong City Hall.

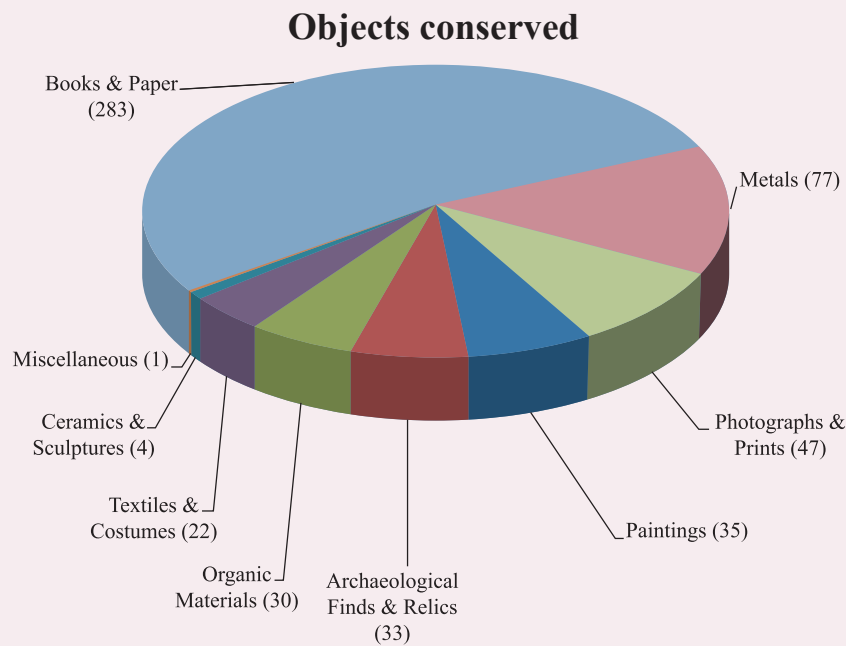


# Chapter 9

## Performance Summary and Organisation Chart

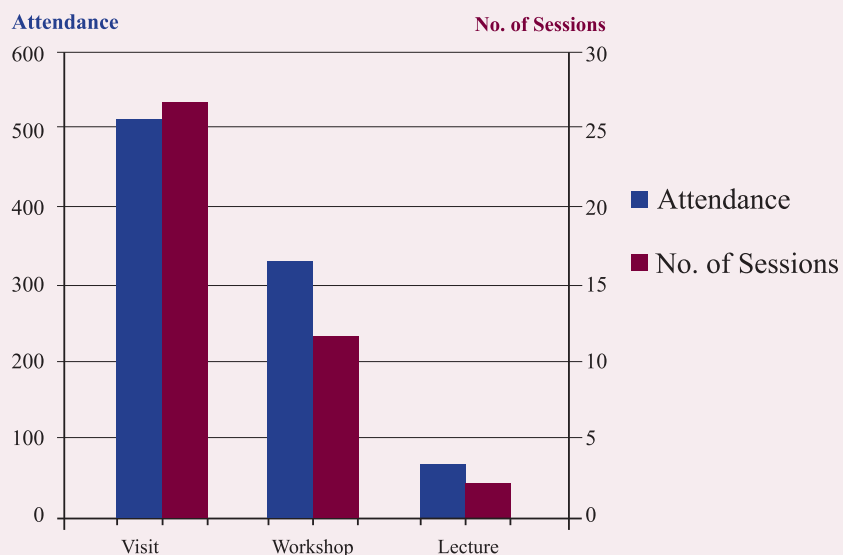
### Performance Summary and Organisation Chart

A total of 532 museum objects were restored by the Conservation Office during the fiscal year 2012-2013. They are classified into eight categories based on the nature of materials, ranging from 2D objects (such as photographs and prints) to 3D artefacts (including ceramics and inorganic materials).

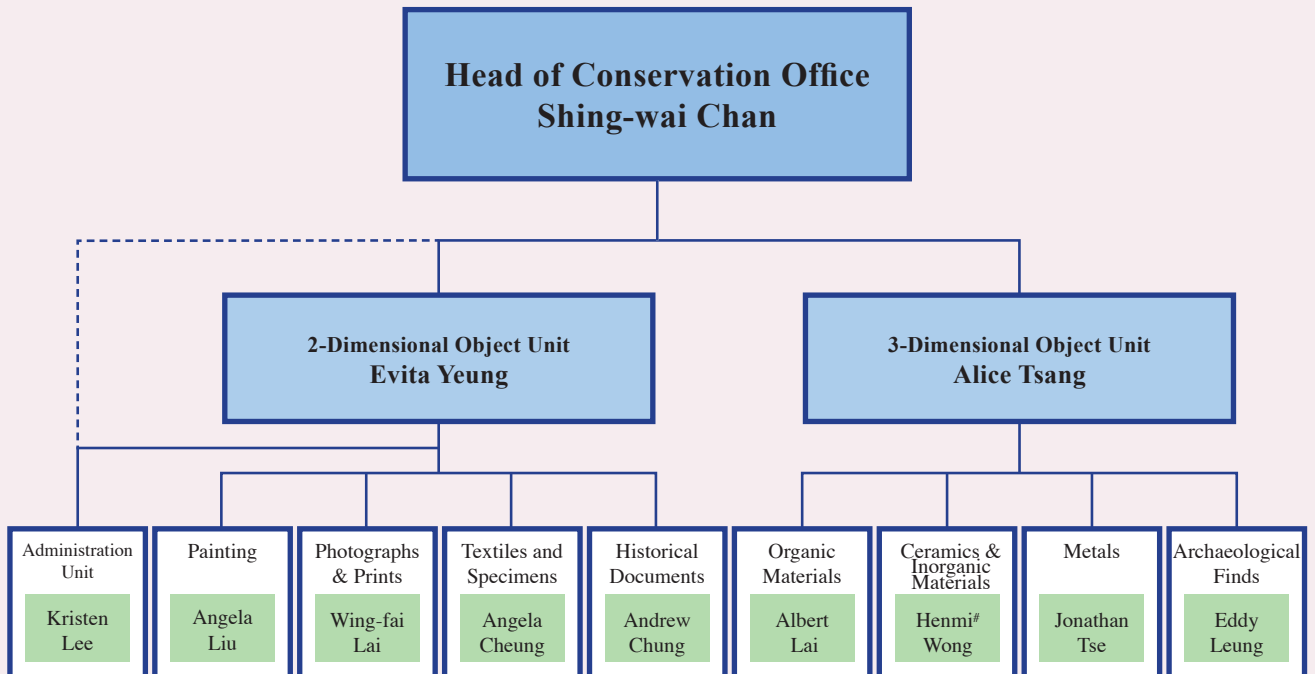


To promote awareness of conservation, a total of 41 sessions of educational activities, including laboratory visits, workshops and lectures were held for 907 attendants.

### Educational Activities



## Organisation Chart



#Retired in June 2013



## **Conservation Office**

---

Address: Room 417, Hong Kong Museum of Art, 10 Salisbury Road, Tsim Sha Tsui, Hong Kong

Telephone: (852) 2734 2106 / 2724 9059 Fax: (852) 2301 3610

Email: [conservation@lcsd.gov.hk](mailto:conservation@lcsd.gov.hk)

Website: [www.lcsd.gov.hk/conservation](http://www.lcsd.gov.hk/conservation)