

# Conservation Office

## 2014/15 Annual Report





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## Message from the Head

I am honoured to have succeeded our former Office Head, Shing-wai Chan to carry the torch since December 2014. Mr Chan's leadership and foresight guided us through this exceptionally challenging year. I would like to thank him for his leadership and distinguished service.

The year 2014 was highly fertile for the Office. For the first time in our history, the International Institute for Conservation of Historic and Artistic Works (IIC) 2014 Hong Kong Congress, an event of significant magnitude organised by the Office was staged from 22-26 September 2014 with a resounding success. There was a large attendance from 32 countries and the regions worldwide. With some 500 participants, the Congress was a good networking opportunity emphasizing the importance of the Hong Kong representation. Apart from organizing the Congress, we also presented conservation papers and posters in the Congress depicting our research initiatives and achievements in preserving local cultural objects.

The Congress not only marked the milestone of our Office's work, but also represented the success of our unprecedented collaboration with IIC to host this mega event. Over the past three years, we strived to go the extra mile to live up to this commitment. I would like to recognize our staff who rose to the challenge and turn our commitment into a successful reality. The Congress indeed elevated the visibility of the Office and unquestionably denoted a beginning to foster further academic collaboration and exchange globally.

Another noteworthy project was the collection removal for the Hong Kong Museum of Art (HKMA) to prepare for its coming renovation and expansion work with a view to giving a new look to the public. We faced numerous challenges in packing and re-housing enormous pieces of dedicated works of art including

Chinese paintings, historical painting, ceramic, textiles, installation art, etc. Nevertheless, the impact of our effort extends immeasurably because the collections can now be safely stored for future displays in HKMA when it re-opens after its renovation.

The exciting conservation project of the lead-tin tablet at Yeung Hau Temple continued this year. Other rewarding experiences included the cleaning of a mural at Man Po Temple, Sheung Wan and Wu Guanzhong's oil paintings. In addition to meticulous cleaning on Wu's painting, extra effort was invested to consolidate the flaking paints. A lot more conservation projects would be shared in this report.

We continued to deliver bespoke extension and educational activities to the students and the general public through the School Culture Day Scheme, International Museum Day and the behind-the-scenes visits. A range of meaningful encounters were created for our participants.

The conservation volunteer scheme extended the community engagement beyond a spectrum of educational activities. I would like to express my heartfelt thanks to the unwavering support from our outstanding and passionate group of 117 volunteers. They contributed 8,652 hours of services in varied aspects of our work to help us fulfil our mission.

While there have been many obstacles in all challenging projects, I have seen our colleagues come together and show resilience, determination and a shared sense of purpose, working effectively. As we move forward in 2015-16 and beyond, we will continue to build on what we accomplished in 2014-15 and be relentless in our goal of preserving our cultural heritage.

Evita Yeung  
Head of Conservation Office

# International Institute for Conservation of Historic and Artistic Works<sup>1</sup> (IIC) 2014 Hong Kong Congress

2014 was truly a momentous year for the Conservation Office as the international conference we have orchestrated for almost three years – the IIC 2014 Hong Kong Congress – finally came on stage in the week of 22-26 September. The event hailed a success with the presence of some 500 conservation counterparts from all over the world.

Held for the very first time in Southeast Asia, the exciting 5-day programme addressing the theme of “An Unbroken History: Conserving East Asian Works of Art and Heritage” was well attended by conservation experts, practitioners, students and museum professionals from 32 countries with half of them from East Asia and a good number being first-time visitors to Hong Kong. During the week, delegates enjoyed over 50 paper presentations and an extensive poster display alongside a trade fair at the Hong Kong City Hall. A dynamic group of international experts and panellists shared their work and latest findings in a wide array of conservation topics ranging from material-based treatments to scientific analysis and preventive

conservation approaches against different backdrops of cultures from the East to the West, and from traditional to contemporary. Congress delegates were contented with the breadth and diversity of the engaging topics, all of which had challenged and stimulated their understanding and thoughts in the field.

In particular, the on-going conservation work in the Mainland was brought to the international stage when Dr Jixiang Shan, Director of the Palace Museum, gave a very inspirational and passionate account of the projects which he had been engaged in China during the Forbes Prize lecture, following his conferment of the Forbes Prize award at the opening ceremony. As part of the fruitful outcome of the technical agenda, the signing of the joint declaration on the Environmental Guidelines<sup>2</sup> developed during the ICOM-CC meeting in Melbourne<sup>3</sup> was formally adopted by the Hong Kong Congress. The Guidelines would undoubtedly serve as a useful reference for practitioners to tackle the complex issue of climatic control from an international perspective.

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

<sup>2</sup> Details of the guidelines can be found on the IIC website at <https://www.iiconservation.org/node/5168>.

<sup>3</sup> The 17th Triennial Conference organised by the International Council of Museums - Committee for Conservation (ICOM-CC) in Melbourne was held on 15-19 September 2014, one week before the Hong Kong Congress.

Beyond academic pursuits, the mesmerizing social programmes also played a key part in extending our warm hospitality to the delegates. Mid-week cultural tours and a series of evening receptions organised at the Museum of Coastal Defence, the Heritage Museum, the British Consulate and the Asia Society, for example, kept delegates refreshed after day-long presentations at the City Hall. The excitement for the Congress lingered on after the sumptuous gala dinner on Thursday and straight through to the grand finale on Friday evening. The three post-congress excursions to the heritage sites in Lantau Island, Macao and Kaiping in China sparked off another round of excitement and applause from the participants. We were heartened to see the smiling faces of the participants with whom we had forged professional linkages bidding farewell to the Congress with new ideas.

Running an international conference of such scale had no doubt created considerable pressure on our already heavy conservation commitments. Yet, the significance and outcome were by far rewarding, far-reaching and manifold.



◆ Panel discussion on preventive conservation



◆ The Forbes Prize presentation at the opening ceremony of the Congress



◆ Poster viewing session

Our profound appreciation went to the speakers, stakeholders, sponsors, supporting institutions, staff members, local volunteers, and needless to say, the IIC Council who had spent countless hours throughout the planning process to ensure a seamless delivery of the event. The conference had not only made the concerted efforts worthwhile, but also pushed the Conservation Office from the back-of-house to the front stage, making us more visible from a national and international perspective. More importantly, the Congress had strengthened the professional ties between our Western and Chinese counterparts, many of whom remarked that the first ever bilingual Congress proceedings and preprints were particularly helpful for bridging their connections with and understanding of their peers' interests in other parts of the world. At the end of the week, Dr Shan was so impressed by this thought-provoking conference that he even decided to bring forth a number of joint initiatives with IIC, including the establishment of the first international training centre of IIC at the Palace Museum in the following year.

As the local organising committee, the Conservation Office was glad that we had taken on the challenge, made it a resounding success, and planted seeds for upcoming meaningful, ground breaking initiatives to enhance continuous development in the field of cultural and heritage conservation.



◆ *Friendship reception held at the Hong Kong Heritage Museum*



◆ *A cultural tour to the Tung Wah Ancestral Hall and Coffin Home*



◆ *Toasting at the Congress Dinner*

## Highlights of Conservation Work

*Conservation is a fundamental responsibility of the Conservation Office. It is a distinct field that integrates art, history and science. Conservators need to integrate academic knowledge, technical skills and sensitivity in aesthetic views with awareness of ethical issues. We have eight specialized teams to take care of a diversity of museum collections including Paintings, Photographs & Prints, Historical Documents, Textiles & Natural History Specimens, Organic Materials, Ceramics & Inorganic Materials, Metals and Archaeological Finds. The highlighted projects for the year 2014-15 were outlined in the following sections:*

### Mural “Six Sages in the Bamboo Grove” at Man Mo Temple

Located in the vicinity of an incinerator at Man Mo Temple, Sheung Wan, and continuously exposed to burning of incense, paper offerings and candles, the mural was seriously masked by soot stains and oily deposits. The impermeable accretions of dirt made the wall unable to “breathe” naturally, and moisture was trapped between the wall substrate and the mural layers, resulting in damages such as paint loss, cracks, as well as powdering, peeling and flaking etc.

We began restoring the mural in the summer of 2014 before the holding of the annual Autumn Sacrificial Rites in the temple. Given the project was a race against time, we first considered laser cleaning because it is an effective tool for cleaning tenacious stain and removing soot particles. However, the effect was not satisfactory during trial cleaning. We therefore switched to chemical cleaning.

A “complication”, however, occurred with the chemical cleaning attempt. Milky stains kept appearing one or two days later on the painted surface where the areas had been cleaned. We looked into the issue and identified that excess water in the cleaning agent was causing the problem. To solve the problem, a “mural masking” method, which made use of paper fibre to mask over the mural to control the water amount was introduced.

The presence of an underlying painting was unexpectedly unveiled on the cleaned mural, with its hidden title made visible after the removal of the surface dirt. After seeking opinion from various stakeholders, it was decided that the top layer of the painting was to be kept. Records of the underlying layers were made before colour retouching. Advice had been given to the temple to relocate the incinerator in the interest of the long term preservation of the mural.



- ◆ The mural “Six Sages in the Bamboo Grove” (竹溪六逸) at Man Mo Temple, Sheung Wan regained its original look (below) after removing the stains (above)

## Mural “A Galaxy of Cantonese Operas” at Ko Shan Road Park

“A Galaxy of Cantonese Operas” is a gigantic mural at Ko Shan Road Park commissioned under LCSD’s “Public Art Scheme 2006”. Exposed to rain, sunlight, and other environmental damage, this outdoor installation was in a bad condition when we were engaged in its restoration. In addition to dust, dirt and water stain on the surface, corrosion, paint loss, peeling, scratches and tarnishing were also observed on both the brass and stainless steel components of the artwork.

After gaining a good understanding on the artists’ intention on the look and feel of the artwork as it ages with time, we began the restoration work and formulated plans to tackle the brass and the stainless steel parts separately.

The first stage of the restoration began in February 2014. We first removed the coating of the brass parts and polished them. To prevent further corrosion from happening, we coated the parts with a corrosion inhibitor.

Treatment of the stainless steel parts of the installation, originally painted in bright sky blue, began in January 2015. The original paint was removed and the surfaces were roughened to enhance adhesion between the substrate and the primer. Dents and areas with incomplete welding were filled with putty before two layers of epoxy primer and two layers of urethane acrylic topcoat in the desired colour were sprayed on.

As part of our maintenance programme, the surface of the installation was regularly monitored for colour changes and cleaned when necessary.



- ◆ The brass components of “A Galaxy of Cantonese Operas”, designed in the style of a hand scroll with traditional Cantonese operatic motifs, was treated to prevent further corrosion

## Public Art Work at Hong Kong Velodrome Park

Three sets of colourful outdoor public art were installed at the Hong Kong Velodrome Park in Tseung Kwan O from mid-2014 through early 2015.

Though the installations are still very new, significant fading and degradation were observed to have taken place in certain parts of the stainless steel coatings. Other common defects of outdoor public art, such as accretions and stains, paint losses, scratches, and corrosion products have also emerged.

Given the situation, we devised a proactive approach to monitor the extent of discolouration and degradation of these outdoor artworks.

With colour spectrophotometry, we monitored and quantified colour at regular intervals. We also made use of Pantone® colour swatch cards as a tool to define the colour being monitored. The practice proved to be helpful and would very likely bring added efficiency in future restoration tasks as far as paint-matching is concerned.



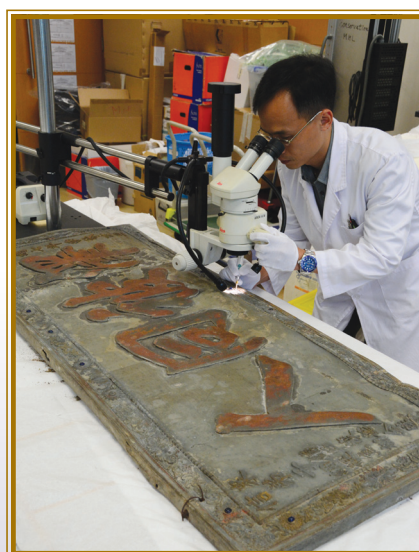


◆ Colourful outdoor public artworks are regularly monitored for surface discolouration

## Tablet in Yeung Hau Temple, Tai O

The story of conserving the lead-tin tablet from Yeung Hau Temple, Tai O continued this year. Due to the rarity of the metal tablet in the region and the complexity involved, we spent considerable time in researching and planning for an appropriate treatment methodology. With an ultimate objective to restore the structural health of the tablet which had been severely deformed and deteriorated over the last century, a “surgical operation” was deemed necessary to open up its internal structure. After weighing the pros and cons of the approach, we designed and tailor-made special tools to facilitate the operation.

The severe structural deformation was self-explanatory when we opened up the “sealed metal box” structure and noted a heavily deteriorated wooden supporting frame with much loosen and flaking wooden chips inside. After careful removal of the chips, the tablet was taken to the second phase of restoration, which included the rectification and reinforcement of the deformed structures, conservation of the gilded features as well as reinstating it.



◆ A conservator removing corrosion from the metal tablet under microscope

## Cannons at Asia Society Hong Kong Center

During the transformation of the Former Explosives Magazine at Admiralty into the present day Asia Society Hong Kong Center, four cannons were unearthed and eventually became part of the artillery collections of the Hong Kong Museum of History. At a recent request from the Asia Society Hong Kong Center, these cannons were drawn out for conservation treatment prior to being on loan to the Center for display on site.

As a first step, surface accretions, foreign materials and corrosion products were removed using the grit-blasting technique. During the process, information on the emblem of King George III and other inscriptions revealed that some cannons were dated as far as 1779.



◆ Corrosion removal and coating application on the cannons

Although cannons were normally not coated during their service life, they must be suitably protected against the harsh elements in Hong Kong as they are now retired into their status of “artefacts”. We therefore decided to apply a durable coating system, consisting of an epoxy primer and a polyurethane top coat, onto the cannons in order to enhance their corrosion resistance and offer an optimum protection to them for prolonged outdoor display.

Taking up the new role as living artefacts, the four cannons now on display at their former homes of the Asia Society Hong Kong Center, will not only be able to reflect their historical context but also act as important tangible links to Hong Kong’s past.

## Wu Guanzhong’s Oil Paintings

The Hong Kong Museum of Art received a generous donation of 25 paintings from the family of the late painting master Wu Guanzhong in 2014, of which 16 easel paintings were created by master Wu between the 1990s and the early 2000s, the period when some of his best works were made. Unfortunately, the painted surface of all the easel paintings were suffering from minor to severe mould infestation when they arrived at the Museum. The task for us, therefore, was to rescue the paintings from further deterioration and to restore them to their original looks as far as possible. This called for careful cleaning and meticulous treatment.

To preserve the integrity of the expressive and delicate impasto brushstrokes of the master painter, we used



◆ Mould was carefully removed from the surface of “Vine Flowers” under magnification

brushes with very fine bristles under magnification to perform surface cleaning. Though much time and efforts had been invested in the project, the experience was rewarding and the sense of achievement was immeasurable.

A painting titled “Huang He” from the collection also suffered from extensive flaking on top of mould infestation, and its paint layer was partially separated from its canvas support. The condition of “Huang He” called for several material tests before the application of materials for consolidation, in-filling and re-touching.

## Chinese Painting “Mountains and Clouds”

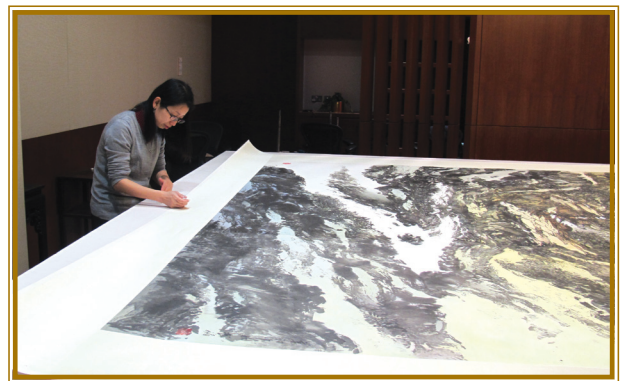
We were tasked with a special mission to rescue a huge and cockled Chinese landscape painting at the Legislative Council (LegCo) Complex. When we were called to perform contingency restoration, a diagonal wrinkle had already formed from the top left to the bottom right of the artwork. It was at risk of splitting



- ◆ The wrinkle (upper) on the ink wash painting “Mountains and Clouds”, displayed at the entrance of Conference Room of the LegCo complex was eliminated after conservation treatment (below)

and could fall off from its mounting any time. As the painting measures 3.35m x 3.39m and there were only three weeks available for the treatment, we had to devise an on-site restoration solution immediately that could quickly address the issue and effectively prevent the problem from recurrence.

The wrinkle was formed due to inconsistent temperature and humidity, as a result of intermittent air-conditioning at the LegCo Complex. The situation was worsened by the size of the painting, as a small wrinkle eventually caused structural changes to the paper.



- ◆ Surface cleaning of the marking



- ◆ Dismounting painting from wall mount

The painting was remounted onto a tailor-made wooden grid, using the traditional mounting technique. It took almost ten days to complete the most crucial remounting work, followed with the stabilisation and consolidation of the grid structure. The entire treatment evened out the tension profile of the paper fibres and prevented the painting from further wrinkling. Now, the painting is nicely displayed under the strict control of temperature and relative humidity at the recommended level in the LegCo.

### Historic Book “History of Yuan”

The “History of Yuan”, consisting of 14 volumes with a total of some 1400 pages, is part of a donated set of the “Twenty-Four Histories”. It was printed in 1923 and offers important reference in studying the history of Yuan dynasty. It is a reprint of a copy published by the Palace Printing House and is one of the most complete set of the same title available today.

The volumes of the “History of Yuan” were in poor and fragile condition when we first examined them. The pages were brittle and suffered from common problems such as water stains, tears, splits, and pest infestation. In view of its historical significance and access requirement in the future, a practicable and systematic conservation approach was devised.

The infested volumes were first treated in a nitrogen chamber where the insects were killed in an atmosphere of very low oxygen content, followed by dry cleaning of the surface with chemical sponge. Before repairing all tears and holes, testing on adhesives and colouring of repairing tissues were conducted in order to select the most appropriate adhesive. The 14 volumes were finally returned to a stable and legible state which could be handled safely after conservation treatment. They are now kept under a controlled environment in museum collection stores that is the utmost effort to contain the deterioration of the book in the long run.



- ◆ Covers of a volume of the “History of Yuan” were heavily eaten by insects (left) and repaired with toned tissue paper (right)

## Application of Gellan Gum Rigid Gel in Paper Conservation

We were commissioned to remove foxing stains on a painting. Given the extensive coverage of water-sensitive inks on the painting, direct washing it with water might induce unfavourable impact on its paper structure and affect the fugitive inks and was thus found infeasible. A special washing technique other than conventional wet cleaning was required.

We adopted an innovative method using gellan gum rigid gel, which has been introduced to paper conservation for a few years. This method has the merits of controlling the diffusion of water slowly and its applicability to water sensitive materials. Gellan gum is a biodegradable and non-toxic food additive in powder form. Upon the addition of water and calcium salt, the gel form of gellan gum was prepared and acted like a water-containing sheet. The gel released moisture locally and facilitated local stain removal. After “absorbing” the unwanted stains, the non-toxic gel could also be effortlessly removed without leaving residue or damaging the paper, which make it an ideal cleaning agent for our painting.

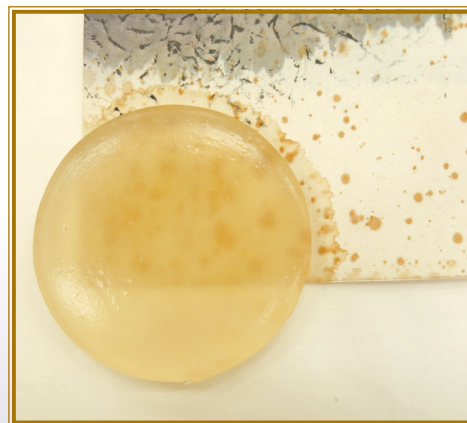
While there are many pros of the rigid gel, we were not completely freed from challenges in its application. The concentration of the resultant gel, for example, was proved to be a tricky riddle - slightly too high, the “cooking” would end up in a burnt formulation; slightly too low, the final product becomes too runny to perform well. Though, it took us rounds of tests to achieve an effective consistency for the stain removal task, the result was encouraging. The stains on the painting were lightened and the supposedly white areas regained its past look with yellowing removed.



◆ A conservator preparing the gellan gum rigid gel



◆ Detail of the painting before treatment



◆ Application of gellan gum rigid gel on the bottom left of the painting

## Painted Birthday Hanging Scrolls

A set of eight historically significant birthday hanging scrolls, all over 110 years old, were conserved to reinforce their structural stability for photo-taking. The scrolls conveyed longevity wishes to a refined scholar in Ha Tsuen, Ping Shan to celebrate his birthday. Owing to their past vertical hanging and storage status, the linings at the back of the scrolls were scattered with holes. Moreover, the centre fabrics came apart from the brocade mounts at the lower seams. It could be the result of the stress exerted by the heavy weight of the wooden

roller at the bottom. In the course of treatment, a silk fabric was firstly dyed to match the neutral tone of the brocade. The dyed silk was stitched to the lower back of the brocade mount as a support to its weak structure. Then, the repairing was done by stitching through the original stitch holes at the seam of the painted textile to the new fabric support. Direct connection to the original seam of the lower mount was thus avoided, and the stress was reduced. The torn areas were also in-filled with newly dyed fabrics and repaired by stitching.



◆ Painted textile with broken seam and its lower mount (upper). Seam repaired after meticulous treatment (lower)



◆ Holes scattering on the lining (upper) were filled (lower)



## “The Extraordinary in the Ordinary: Chairs for Viewing the World through Time” Exhibition

In “The Extraordinary in the Ordinary: Chairs for Viewing the World through Time” exhibition, almost a hundred chairs with different design genres were flown into the Hong Kong Heritage Museum. One of the exhibits, a ceremonial chair from the Victoria and Albert Museum’s collections, arrived with a loose decorative panel part. We conducted treatment as deemed necessary. Old glue was carefully removed before traditional animal glue was applied for reattachment.



◆ *The meticulous treatment of the chair exhibit made its appearance in the mega exhibition possible*

## “Dunhuang – Untold Tales, Untold Riches” Exhibition

We also contributed extensive conservation efforts in “The Hong Kong Jockey Club Series: Dunhuang – Untold Tales, Untold Riches” exhibition. Pre-show treatment, including surface cleaning, parts stabilisation and mounting, were performed on nearly 120 artefacts showcased at the exhibition. The exhibits comprised extra-large replica cave murals, a 13-metre-long statue of the Nirvana Buddha and various figurines, scripts and scrolls, and musical instruments.

To ensure smooth installation of the exhibition, we conducted a pre-exhibition on-site inspection in Dunhuang, checked the condition and verified the dimensions of the exhibits, amongst other tasks, to make preparation for mounting process in Hong Kong. It was our aim that the ambience of the original environment at the Mogao Caves could be replicated as much as possible at the Hong Kong exhibition for the well-being of the Dunhuang exhibits.

## “China: Through the Looking Glass” Exhibition at the Metropolitan Museum of Art

To support the special exhibition “China : Through the looking glass” hosted by and held at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in May 2015, seven sets of iconic cheongsams dated 1920-30 from the collection of Hong Kong Museum of History were on loan to the host museum. Prior to the shipment, exhibits were meticulously repaired, and padding supports were tailor-made to maintain their shape for travelling. A packing proposal was also formulated for safe travelling of the delicate pieces.

One of the selected cheongsams, however, was in fragile condition. Numerous splits and tears were found on its open weave netting. To stabilise it, stitching was adopted for the repair. Moreover, a conservation fabric, silk crepe line, was placed beneath the torn areas as a support and stitched with fine threads.

The cheongsams were cushioned at their collars, and the bodices were stuffed with paddings to avoid creasing and distortion. They were finally laid flat in foam cavities of the required shapes and all were cushioned with tissue papers for protection during their journey.



◆ Conservators cushioning the collar of a cheongsam for loan

## “Ecole de Lingnan, le Reveil d’une Nation” Exhibition at Musée Cernuschi, the Asian Arts Museum of Paris

A number of challenges arose during our preparation for the on loan exhibits to France for the exhibition, held from 20 March to 28 June 2015. The exhibition featured 49 sets of precious Lingnan paintings from the collection of the Hong Kong Museum of Art.

In addition to the routine pre-shipment work such as condition checking and preparation of condition reports for the artworks, special measures was called for because of the climatic difference between Hong Kong and France. Our conservator served as the courier for the artworks and designed the protective enclosures and wooden crates for shipping.



◆ All loan artworks were properly displayed in the exhibition



However, a rare logistic problem came up during the return of the paintings. The shipping company failed to arrange a separate cabin for the collection crates. The courier reached out and liaised with both the freight forwarder in France and the airline to ensure that the artworks' crates would not be mixed with other containers. With the courier's timely actions and the prompt help offered by the airline, the "crisis" was resolved and all exhibits returned home intact in an individual cabinet.

## Collection Removal of Hong Kong Museum of Art

Due to the expansion work of the Hong Kong Museum of Art, the valuable collections had to be relocated to other storage premises for preservation and security reasons. The collection removal exercise was kicked off in March 2014. We were involved in the planning work of the moving logistics, such as devising the packing and crating methodologies for various types of works of arts; preparing packing materials and containers and supervising art handlers during the removal process.

The project was rolled out in phases, according to the categories of the collections. Prior to the move, condition of the collections was documented. Brocade boxes, carton boxes with foam and tailor-made archival boxes were made available especially for the vulnerable and delicate objects such as scrolls and Chinese costumes.

The first phase primarily involved the movement of paper-based artwork such as scrolls of Chinese paintings, posters, Western paintings, maps, etc. Then, we focused on delicate ceramics and non-paper based artefacts which required specific individual packing and special attention. The work was not only relatively time-consuming but also urged for pairs of skillful hands. It took almost three months for us to pack all the fragile items. The relocation of oil paintings, large installations and sculptures followed. Oversized objects, as well as artworks that were displayed until the closing date, would be moved in the final phase. With the strong commitment and dedication of the teammates, over ten thousand of the precious artworks had been safely relocated to other temporary storages in seven months.



◆ *Conservators packing the collections with die-cut foam and Tyvek paper*

## Research & Development

*On top of keeping abreast of the latest cutting edge technologies in our day-to-day work, we were also actively engaged in research to expand the knowledge and expertise, to improve the preservation and conservation methodologies, to understand the nature and properties of materials and to heighten conservation standards.*

### Academic Papers and Posters

We not only hosted the prestigious International Institute for Conservation of Historic and Artistic Works (IIC) 2014 Hong Kong Congress but also presented two papers and two posters during the occasion.

The titles of the two papers were “The analysis and conservation of a Chinese silk birthday hanging of the Qing dynasty” and “A two-step consolidation approach in conserving an unfired clay statue” respectively. The former paper depicted the studies on the precious materials used in fabricating a massive-sized birthday hanging by means of a series of analytical techniques. With more solid information regarding the compositions of the hanging, the treatment options in consolidating its shattered painted silk were postulated.

The latter chronicled the two-step approach to reinforce an inherently unstable unfired clay statue. The 300-year-old statue, “Wen Pang Guan” was in poor condition with pest infestation and serious structural damage on its head, torso and supporting feet, all of which rendered it impossible to “stand” on its own. It was later returned to I Shing Temple in its original shape and a sound condition after the conservation treatment following a range of conservation examination and analysis work.



◆ Our subject conservator presenting a research paper at IIC 2014 Hong Kong Congress

Our colleagues also presented two posters at the Congress, namely “Solving a conservation problem: The treatment of a batch of century-old Chinese manuscripts printed with fugitive red grid-lines” and “SEM-EDX analysis of blue and green pigments used in nineteenth century China trade oil paintings by Chinese school artists”.

The former examined the treatment of a collection of Chinese manuscripts with printed fugitive red grid-lines, while the latter focused on the study of selected blue and green pigments on three 19th century China trade paintings from the Hong Kong Museum of Art collection. The two papers and the summaries of two posters had been published in the Congress preprints.



◆ Our subject conservator presenting a poster to a delegate at IIC 2014 Hong Kong Congress

## Education & Awareness Promotion

*As history is made every second by everyone, things that we see and use today will turn into cultural artefacts one day as evidence to testify how this generation has led our lives, and how we have interacted as a community. Preservation not only enables us to pass on good memories, but also make cultural heritage available to the next generations.*

*During the year, we ran a number of educational and extension activities to continuously enhance the public awareness of conservation. As an important part of our activities, we incorporated fun-filled elements into the hands-on practical work to immerse participants in a different experience.*

### School Culture Day Scheme

Under the School Culture Day Scheme, secondary school students were able to get a taste of what a conservator does through our highly popular thematic workshops. By undertaking simplified conservation tasks relating to oil paintings, wooden artefacts and textiles, students could gain insight into the fundamental concepts of museum conservation. More than 200 students and teachers from 9 secondary schools attended our workshops during the year.



◆ Curious students creating their very own miniature painting frames

### International Museum Day 2014

As part of the family-oriented International Museum Day held in May 2014, four sessions of the workshop themed on “A Miraculous Experience in Print-making” were held. The two-stage creative activity comprised carving and printing conducted in the workshop. Based on their preference, participants were encouraged using foam boards to create their own printing boards and their unique works were printed in combination of different colours and types of paper. Apart from understanding the basic print-making technique, the participants also enhanced their understanding on the associated preservation needs for the prints.



◆ Adult and children participants having fun at our print-making workshop

## Behind-the-scene tours

Equally inspiring, but targeted for a different audience, were our behind-the-scene tours. These were run on-site in our laboratories where local university lecturers and students studying art, architectural conservation, museum studies and relevant disciplines could self-experience the actual work of conservation professionals. Some 150 local students and lecturers from various tertiary educational institutes took part in 7 tours during the year.



◆ Visual arts students from Hong Kong Baptist University enjoying the tour on paper conservation

## Conservation interns

We were glad to have Hsu Yu-shin and Jacinta Brown to work with us in 2014-15. They were teamed up with senior conservators according to their academic specialities, interests and career goals.

In the Paintings team, Hsu Yu-shin who was pursuing a Master degree in Taiwan spent three months with us. She found the internship a very rewarding experience as she was able to take part in the full process of a number of conservation tasks. For example, she helped with the remounting of a Chinese literati painting, conserved paintings for display in a thematic exhibition and participated in the conservation project “A Study on Lingnan Paintings”.

Having worked in Luang Prabang, Laos, Ms Jacinta Brown, a holder of a Master’s degree in Cultural Material Conservation, had joined the Textiles and Specimens team for eight weeks from March to May 2014. Jacinta devoted her time in treating a painted textile hanging scroll and remarked that it was an enjoyable opportunity as her mid-career training. Her rich experience in conserving cultural objects also enlightened our junior conservators. It was indeed a valuable occasion for our conservators and the intern alike to share experiences across different specialities.



◆ Ms Hsu Yu-shin skilfully removing the old pressure-sensitive tapes on the border of a painting with a heated spatula



◆ Ms Jacinta Brown meticulously repairing the broken seams of a painted textile

# Community Engagement

*The Conservation Office is blessed to have a team of supportive volunteers all along. The dedication and time they offered were instrumental in the efficient completion of the tasks. They have also brought fresh vigour and new insights into our work.*

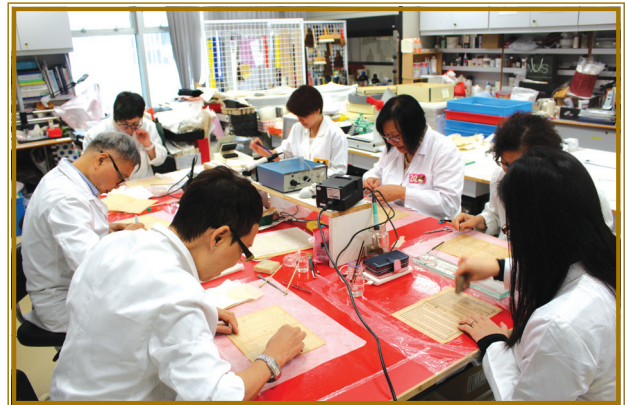
## Conservation Volunteer Scheme

During the year 2014, a total of 117 individuals took part in our volunteer programme and contributed an impressive 8,652 hours of service towards heritage preservation. For the second consecutive year, the Office was awarded the Gold Certificate for Volunteer Service (Organisation/Corporation) by Volunteer Movement, a scheme initiated by the Social Welfare Department. Moreover, we were thrilled that both the number of volunteers and their service hours had

been growing steadily over the past few years. What was more, many volunteers had served us for several years and as a result, they had already developed the fundamental skills to handle simple treatment work independently. In addition to conservation tasks, volunteers also rendered enthusiastic support to various extension and educational activities. This year, they also provided unfailing support to our international event - IIC 2014 Hong Kong Congress.



◆ A group photo of volunteers presented with awards for their outstanding contribution in 2014



◆ Volunteers handling simple treatment work

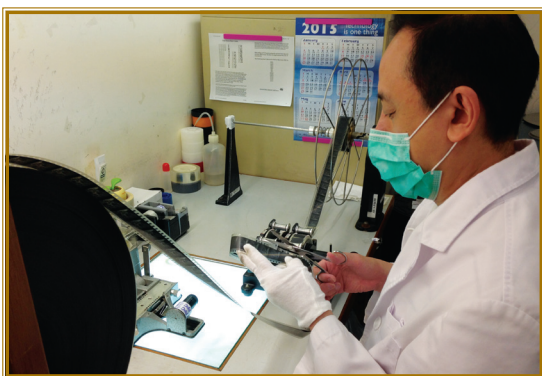
## Other Conservation Services in LCSD

Our counterparts working in Hong Kong Film Archive (HKFA) and Hong Kong Central Library also continue to make an all-out effort in preserving our cultural heritage. Below are the highlights of their achievements in the year 2014-15.

### Hong Kong Film Archive

#### *Digital preservation of the nitrate film collections of the HKFA*

During 2014-15, conservators at the Hong Kong Film Archive conserved a collection of early Hong Kong films, which were acquired from the United States in 2012. While the films contained rare feature film titles of Hong Kong before World War II, some of them were printed on an unstable and highly inflammable nitrocellulose film base. Without prompt treatment and proper storage, these films could eventually decompose, leaving nothing of its valuable visual and audio contents behind. Making these accessible as soon as possible, therefore, was essential for research and exhibition.



- ◆ *Repairing the damaged edges and perforations of the nitrate film “Follow Your Dream” (1941) with film repair tapes before film digital scanning*

By producing high resolution digital moving images and capturing their respective audios, digital copies for access and research were made as an interim measure. As of 31 March 2015, thirteen titles were digitized following with the duplication of the nitrate films to an archival carrier.

#### *Special restoration for the outdoor screening of “Follow Your Dream” (1941)*

To prepare for the public screening of an early Hong Kong film “Follow Your Dream” (1941), the team repaired the damaged edges and perforations of its nitrate copy with film repair tapes before performing digital scanning. The digitally restored version was shown at an outdoor screening at the Piazza of the Hong Kong Cultural Centre (HKCC) in March 2015.



- ◆ *Test screening the restored digital copy of “Follow Your Dream” (1941) in the cinema of the HKFA*



- ◆ *A scene of the outdoor screening at the HKCC*

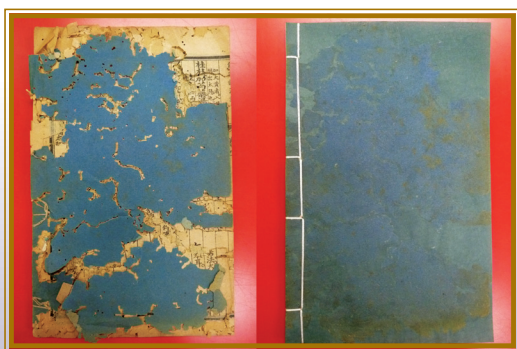
## Hong Kong Central Library

To support the “Exhibition on Traditional Chinese Medicine” held at Hong Kong Central Library, the book conservation team offered treatment for a set of 12 rare Chinese thread-sewn books entitled “Zhongxi hui tong yi shu wu zhong”, pertaining to the Library’s Special Collection. These books, donated by Ms Elsie Hume Elliot Tu, were published in 1908 in Shanghai. It was the first set of medical books that attempted to integrate Chinese and Western medicine.

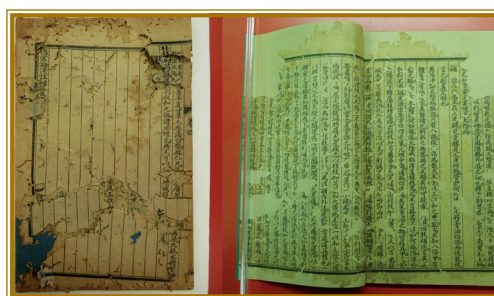
Perhaps deteriorated by light, the originally blue covers shifted to green shades in different extents, exhibiting uneven tints at various areas of the covers. Apart from discolouration, some of the books also suffered from



◆ Front cover heavily damaged by insect attack (left) was repaired after treatment (right)



◆ Back cover heavily damaged by insect attack (left) was repaired after treatment (right)



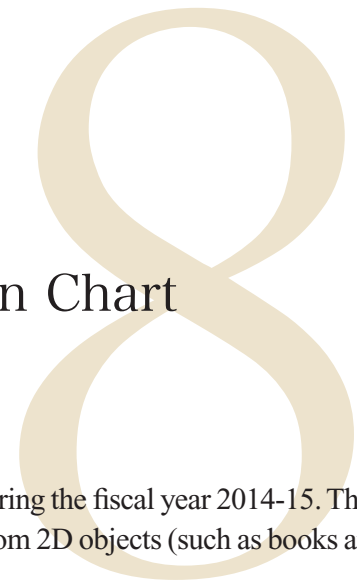
◆ Book leaves heavily damaged by insect attack (left) was repaired after treatment (right)



◆ Part of the treated books on display at “Exhibition on Traditional Chinese Medicine”

serious insect infestation, fungal attack, embrittlement, etc. Proper treatment was needed to stabilise and restore their physical conditions to revive their vital function as a source of readily information accessible to readers, and as exhibits for display.

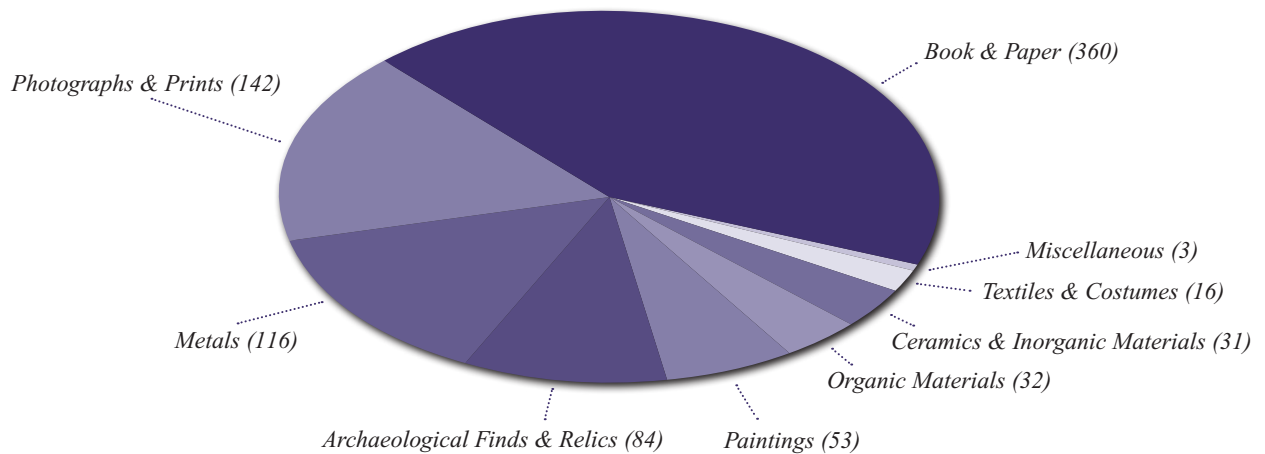
To mend the losses on the front and back covers, bamboo paper was custom-dyed to match the varying shades of green or blue at respective areas of the losses. The dyeing solution used was a mixture of Chinese pigments. Book leaves damaged by insects were treated by applying a piece of lining paper onto the verso of the book leaf for better support and strengthening. The pages were subsequently dried and flattened by attaching onto a wooden drying board. Finally, the books were re-sewn and mounted for display.



## Performance Summary & Organisation Chart

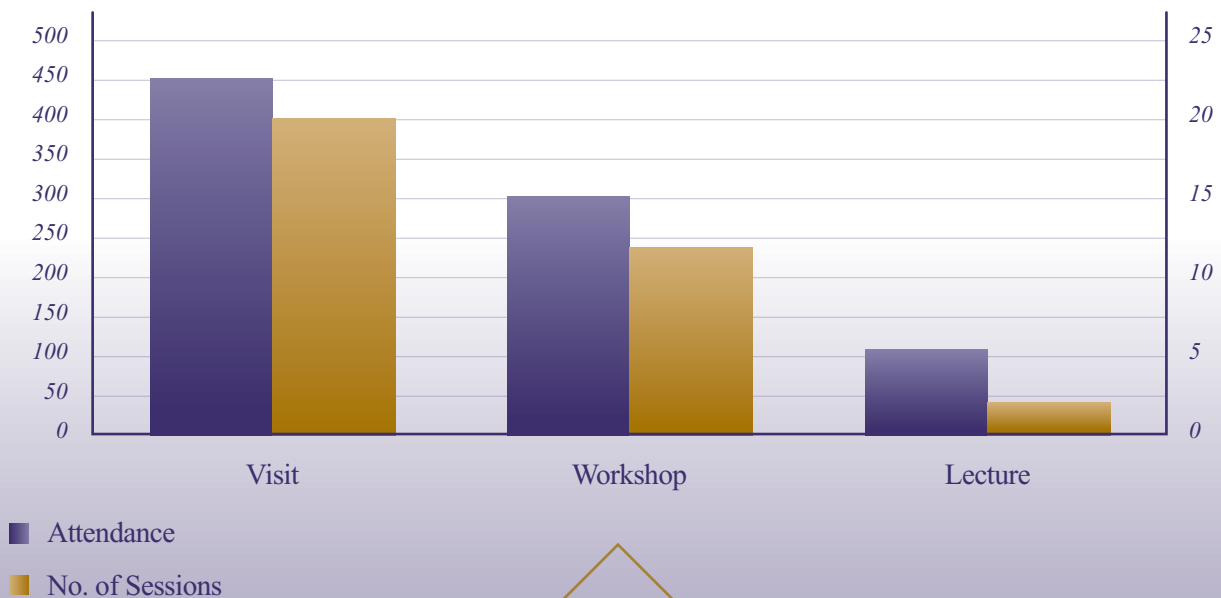
A total of 837 museum objects were conserved by the Conservation Office during the fiscal year 2014-15. They are classified into eight categories based on the nature of materials, ranging from 2D objects (such as books and paper) to 3D artefacts (such as ceramics and inorganic materials).

### Object Conserved



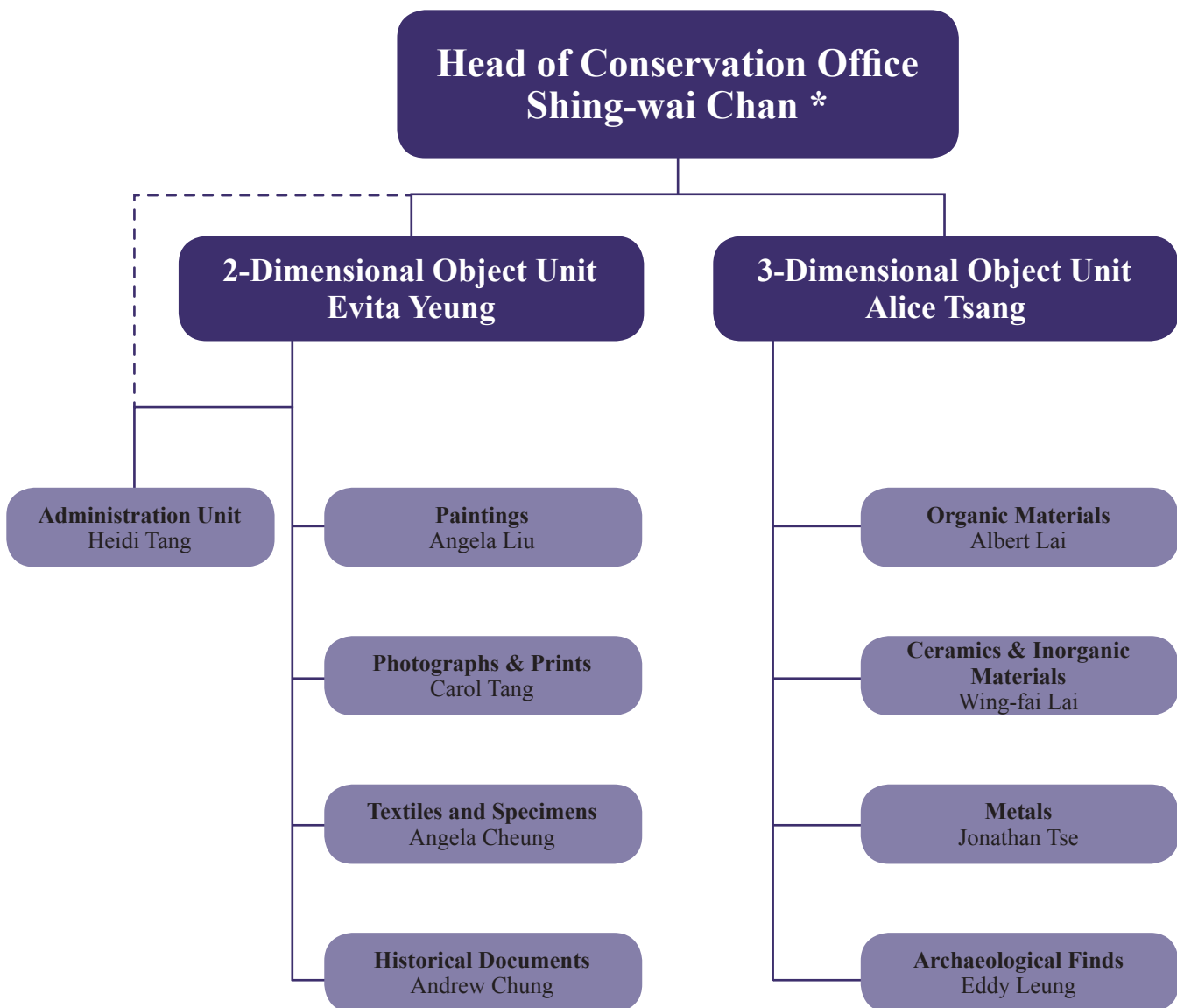
To promote awareness of conservation, a total of 34 sessions of educational activities, including laboratory visits, workshops and lectures were held for 863 participants.

### Educational Activities





# Organisation Chart



\* Mr Chan has left the Office since Dec 2014 due to his promotion. Please refer to the website of the Office for the current organisation chart.



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