

STRUCTURAL AND AESTHETIC TREATMENT OF WORKS OF ART ON PAPER



Green-Winged Macaw

Folio, possibly from “Impey album”

Attributed by inscription to Shaikh Zain al-Din

Opaque watercolor on paper

Company style at Calcutta, ca. 1780: 35 1/4” x 22 3/8”

(Goswamy, B.N. and Smith, C., *Domains of wonder: selected masterworks of Indian painting*, San Diego Museum of Art, 2005, p. 290-291)

Owner: San Diego Museum of Art, Edwin Binney Collection, #1990:1357

Conservator: Beth Heller, Balboa Art Conservation Center

Treatment:

This watercolor was prepared for the exhibition “Domains of Wonder”, which travelled to the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, and the Dallas Museum of Art, after the opening exhibition at the San Diego Museum of Art.

Darkened lead white on the lower-most flower and along the raised claw was partially converted to lead sulfate by local application of hydrogen peroxide in methylcellulose gel. The gel was cleared as much as possible with local application of de-ionized water by swab. The incomplete conversion was considered to be visually disturbing by the curator. After consultation, the incomplete conversion was overpainted with a combination of Rembrandt pastels and Prismacolor colored pencils.

It is speculated that the reversion/conversion process was complicated by an unknown combination of traditional Indian chalk whites with Western whites, which were being imported into 18th century Indian workshops in an effort to merge working methods.

“Green-winged Macaw” was one of approximately 50 Indian and Persian artworks treated by this writer in preparation for the Domains of Wonder exhibit. Paintings were cleaned and mended, losses filled and inpainted, and flaking paint consolidated. Other items include:

- Krishna Story Enacted, 1736 Rajasthan, Mewar workshop, opaque watercolor and gold on paper
- The Celestial Chariot, 1650, Pahari, opaque watercolor and gold on paper
- Dismembering of the Demon Kalanemi, 1740, Pahari, brush drawing on paper



Before Stain Removal



After Stain Removal

**Tsukioka Yoshitoshi (1839 – 1892), Incomparable Woman Warrior: Han Gaku
From Incomparable Warrior Series (1883-1887)**

(Yoshitoshi musha-burui: Han Gaku-jo), 1883

Color woodblock print, ôban, 15 in. x 10 in. (approx.)

(attribution retrieved from Library of Congress website on 8/22/07: <http://www.loc.gov/exhibits/ukiyo-e/images.html>)

Owner: San Diego Museum of Art, #553-66:202.24

Conservator: Beth Heller, Balboa Art Conservation Center

Treatment:

After consultation with the curator, this print was prepared for exhibition by diminishing the black and purple ink stains and general surface grime at the right edge of the image, as well as the smudge on the figure's face. The curator determined that the stains were not original to the artwork and that they detracted from the overall viewing experience.

In addition to the stains, there were Japanese paper hinges adhered to the reverse of all four corners. These hinges were removed with controlled local application of moisture.

The handmade Japanese paper was very soft, with fibers lifting very easily. After testing with a variety of solvents, the stains were found to be somewhat responsive to local brush application of benzine, and were reduced further by successive rapid “dotting” motions with a kneaded gum eraser, alternating with further applications of benzine.

New machine-made Japanese paper hinges were adhered to the top edge, reverse, with Aytex P wheat starch paste.



Before Treatment



After Treatment

Ando Hiroshige (Ichiryusai), (1797-1858)
Full Moon Triptych, title and dates untranslated
Color woodblock print on Japanese paper
16" x 30" (approx.)

Owner: Private Collection, Fiji, BACC#: P117/04
Conservator: Beth Heller, Balboa Art Conservation Center

Condition:

The print perimeter, reverse, was adhered between a cloth-covered window mat and masonite board. Severe insect infestation resulted in significant losses to the paper, most notably along the top edge, although grazing was seen across the back of the print. Pigments appeared faded from exposure to UV light, and the paper was yellowed from contact with acidic materials.

Treatment:

The print was released from the window mat by gradual, mechanical delamination of matboard layers until the final paper layer was reached. The final paper layer was removed via local application of water and gentle mechanical means. The fabric that originally lined the mat board was found to be attached by an adhesive of unknown composition. The adhesive was removed, to the extent possible, by the application of acetone, and the fabric was released from the print, enabling the removal of the print from the masonite support.

Japanese paper strips were temporarily adhered to the verso with wheat starch paste to bridge areas of loss along the upper edge, in order to stabilize the print in preparation for washing and mending. The print was humidified in a chamber and was washed with ultrasonic mist on the suction table, and then was allowed to air dry on a rack.

Medium weight Japanese paper was toned with watercolor and wheat starch paste by burnishing against grained wood to mimic the grained areas of the print. Areas of loss were filled with the toned paper and wheat starch paste, from the recto. Temporary bridge mends were removed during this process. Filled areas were patched from the verso, using light weight Japanese paper and wheat starch paste. The moon and chop areas of loss were filled, from the verso, with acrylic-toned Japanese paper. The mended print was humidified and lined with heavy weight Japanese paper and wheat starch paste. The lined print was dried between smooth non-woven polyester, blotters, and felt, under weighted plexiglass. The new lining was trimmed. Visual integration of the filled areas was completed by inpainting with colored pencils and pastels. The print was hinged from the verso with Japanese paper and wheat starch paste and was installed in a new museum-quality window mat.