

Registrar's Quarterly

Spring 2021



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Image courtesy of Portland Textile Month

Since 1979, the RC-WR has cooperated with the CS-AAM in advocating for the profession of Registrars and Collections Managers across the states of Alaska, Arizona, California, Hawaii, Idaho, Nevada, Oregon, Utah and Washington, and promotes high standards and best practices in registration.

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MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR



HELLO RC-WR MEMBERS,

I am so glad to be able to address you all once again from my office! My museum, the Bowers Museum in Santa Ana, CA, has re-opened at limited capacity according to our state guidelines, along with many, many other museums in our region. As Spring unfolds upon us it feels hopeful to see so many things growing and coming back to life.

We are all acutely aware of how 2020 forced us to change in ways that we never could have anticipated. Nevertheless, the pandemic and all the socio-political movements of the past 16 months have also led to growth for many of us, both personal and professional. The museum industry is adjusting to rapid innovations in education, outreach, and collections care, and many institutions have received the necessary push to move towards equal opportunity and representation in collections and staff, decolonization, and slowly becoming a more accurate reflection of the diverse communities they represent. One thing is for certain, however—there is still much work to do.

In this edition of the *Registrars Quarterly* we have two captivating guest articles from museum professionals whose work has been directly affected by protest—one by the Indigenous Peoples Day of Rage in Portland on the night of October 11th, 2020, and the other by the insurrection against the U.S. Capitol on January 6th, 2021. They recontextualize these events through a museum professional's lens and offer their critical thought on the evolving role of museums in recordkeeping and representation during this moment in history.

Also, in this issue we have our state reports, where you can catch up on re-openings and the latest physical and digital exhibitions in our region, and our quarterly New Reads article, wherein Nancy Arms Simon reviews *On the Road Again: Developing and Managing Traveling Exhibitions*, Second edition.

I hope that you all have been attending some of the webinars in our FREE webinar series this year! That's right, monthly webinars about hands-on conservation with advice from professional conservators are available for FREE to all members and non-members. I'm so happy that some of these webinars have reached audiences across the country and even across the globe—and they will continue to educate collections professionals through [our YouTube page](#), where recordings of every webinar so far are available. More info on our next webinar can be found later in this issue, as well as a link to register.

Finally, I'd like to remind you all that this year is an election year for RC-WR, and we are seeking out candidates for all four of our board positions: Chair, Vice Chair, Treasurer, and Secretary.

If you would like to run for any of these positions, or if you know someone you'd like to recommend, please reach out to any of the three members of our Nominating Committee:

Cory Gooch | WA | cgooch@fryemuseum.org

Alli DeFrancesco | CA | allidefran@me.com

Kathleen Daly | OR | dalytextiles@gmail.com

The deadline for submitting candidates is Friday, September 3rd. Thank you again to all of you who renewed your membership this year. We're grateful for each and every one of you that form our community. Our next issue is in July, so I'll see you then!

With gratitude,
[Katy Hess | RC-WR Chair](#)
Registrar, Bowers Museum, Santa Ana, California

Vibrating with History



—By Nicole Yasuhara, Oregon Historical Society Deputy Museum Director

Like other museums across the country, the Oregon Historical Society (OHS) has been shuttered to do our part to limit the spread of COVID-19 in our community. Our facility in Portland, Oregon closed its doors on March 14, 2020, reopened in July, and closed again in November. During this time, OHS staff has sought ways to engage with the public virtually. One opportunity arose when Caleb Sayan and Sheridan Collins of Portland Textile Month (PTM) asked to collaborate with us on their 2020 festival.

The Portland Textile Month festival aims to bring textile enthusiasts together to share “ideas, histories, knowledge, experiences, and practices across myriad cultures, viewpoints, and generations.” For the collaboration, PTM asked if OHS would be willing to display one of the quilts in our museum collection—the Afro-American Heritage Bicentennial Quilt. After some discussion, OHS agreed to display the quilt in our main entry Pavilion for the month of October.



This occurred with the backdrop of over 100 days of continuous protests for racial justice in the city. Beginning in May with George Floyd’s death by police choking in Minneapolis, thousands of demonstrators took to downtown Portland city streets nightly for protests, calling for accountability, justice, defunding the police, and an end to White supremacy. The protests usually ended at the Multnomah County Justice Center. Despite being only six blocks away from OHS, I never felt unsafe coming to work. Apart from concern about tear gas affecting the museum collections, the thought of hazards to the museum did not enter my mind.

The night of Sunday, October 11 shattered my naiveté. That night, after putting my son to bed around 9PM, I checked my email, social media,

and the news. I expected some information about protests planned for the following day, historically “celebrated” as Columbus Day. Instead, I began reading about the Indigenous People’s Day of Rage and vandalism happening in the downtown core that very night. Moments later, my phone buzzed, and Kerry Tymchuk’s (OHS Executive Director) name flashed on the screen. I can’t remember his exact words, but in my memory, they were something akin to, simply, “They took the quilt.”

In 1974, Jeanette Gates formed a group of fifteen women to sew a quilt honoring the heritage and contributions of the Black community in the history of the United States. Over the next two years, timed to coincide with the United States Bicentennial in 1976, she and other Black women from Portland sewed a

Quilt pre-damage, 2020
Courtesy of Portland
Textile Month

quilt comprised of 30 fabric squares. Each square honors a Black individual or pivotal moment in history, including famed abolitionist Frederick Douglass; America’s first Black published poet, Phillis Wheatley; the Brown vs. [Board of Education of] Topeka decision, which outlawed racial segregation in education; and one square each for the Thirteenth, Fourteenth, and Fifteenth Amendments, each conferring additional rights for Black citizens.

Upon its completion, the quilt was displayed in numerous institutions, including Harvard University and the U.S. Department of State. It was exhibited at, and then donated to, OHS by the Afro-American Heritage Bicentennial Commemorative Quilt Committee, which was

comprised of all the quilters. At the opening of the exhibit, [Kathryn Hall Bogle](#) cut the ribbon as an honor for being the committee member “with the longest years in Oregon.” Bogle (1906-2003) was a social justice activist, social worker, and journalist.

Sylvia Gates Carlisle, daughter of the late Jeanette Gates, was the youngest of the quilters and is the only surviving committee member. She remembers her mother being active in ensuring Black history was celebrated and attempted to have it taught in Portland Public Schools. According to a recent online article by *The Skanner*, after winning a discrimination lawsuit against Georgia Pacific in 1970, Gates used the settlement to bring scholars on Black history to Portland to educate teachers. At the exhibit opening celebration at OHS in 1976, Gates proclaimed:

We hereby introduce a Bicentennial Quilt vibrating with history—pulsating the vitality of liberation and democracy. Here is our Afro-American Heritage; of this we are proud...

On the night of October 11, 2020, protestors had broken the glass windows surrounding the OHS Pavilion, threw flares, used paintball guns to splatter red paint on the trompe l’oeil mural of the Lewis & Clark Expedition that adorns the outside of the museum, and taken the quilt. I offered to come downtown immediately, but there was nothing to be done. Instead, I stayed home and cried.

As a collections professional, my goal is to safeguard history. In this instance, I was unable to protect the quilt (although, thankfully, the remainder of the museum exhibits were untouched). Adding to the emotions were my feelings for the protests and protestors themselves, set against my personal role as a museum worker. What was I safeguarding? Whose

history? Who and what was I safeguarding it from? Did the protestors understand the ways OHS is changing? Were they aware of the small but important steps OHS has taken to address White supremacy? Did they know what they had taken? Would they care for the quilt, and its precious history? I believe that in this case, I was safeguarding an important piece of Black history, for all people to cherish and learn from, to inspire and engage us to do better within our community. Mixed with my righteousness, there is a nagging part of me that questions museum colonialism and gatekeeping.

In a [recent submission to the Oregon Historical Quarterly](#) (titled “Native Belongings and Institutional Values at the Oregon Historical Society, Then and Now”), addressing Native voice in early collecting strategies, I wrote that OHS’ roots are as a pioneer museum. OHS was founded by white males soon after the Oregon Territory became a state—which “involved oppressing Native people, exerting ownership on lands by force and aggression, and attempting (though failing) to control Native culture.” For the past several years, OHS has shifted, to focus on the “good, the bad, and the ugly,” as Tymchuk says, of Oregon history. It is difficult but rewarding to shift our personal and professional focus away from White-centered histories to heart-centered approaches (for more on this, the Five Oaks Museum has made great strides in changing its structure, programs, and mission to be heart-centered).

When I arrived at work the next morning, I was delighted to hear the quilt had been found, soggy from the rain, a few blocks away. Museum collections staff immediately sought to stabilize the quilt. Despite drying it, there is evidence of mold growth within the layers. There is also extensive staining of the quilt blocks, likely from red paint. There were no major structural issues. The quilt has been sent to the Textile Conservation Workshop for conservation and restoration, with the blessing of Sylvia Gates Carlisle. It will be costly. We have removed the stained backing and will keep it, as is, to highlight a new and important moment in history, but hope to return the quilt blocks to their former glory.

In the aftermath of the vandalism and theft, OHS received an outpouring of support from the community. Organizations came forward to support our attempts to address racism and document the history of White supremacy in the state. Money was donated, memberships purchased, and registrations for an event about the quilt (that had been scheduled before the vandalism) increased. So, the theft has become bittersweet. I felt powerless, and then powerful to do more in our community. I felt attacked, and then rejoiced that our work is perceived as important for the health of our community. I am cognizant that our work can only succeed when all are involved, and all stories are told. My passion for cultural care and radical empathy has been strengthened. The sadness and anger from that evening is gone, leaving only hope for a just and inclusive future.



Detail of dirt accretion on the Afro-American Heritage Bicentennial Quilt. *Courtesy of Oregon Historical Society*

The Winter 2019 issue of the Oregon Historical Quarterly, published by OHS, is a special issue on “White Supremacy & Resistance.” The entire issue is available for free on the OHS website, at ohs.org/ohqresistance. ■



Paper Conservator Emily Derse

Did you know that our **Practical Conservation for the Collections Professional** webinars are available to stream anytime on the [RCWR YouTube page](#)? That’s right, you can reference back to Samantha Springer’s conversation about condition surveys, share the introduction to textile and book supports with a colleague, or catch up on our most recent webinar where Emily Derse discussed hinging for works of art on paper, along with some hinging disasters she has run

HANDS-ON!

into over her career. These hands-on webinars have been full of immensely helpful information!

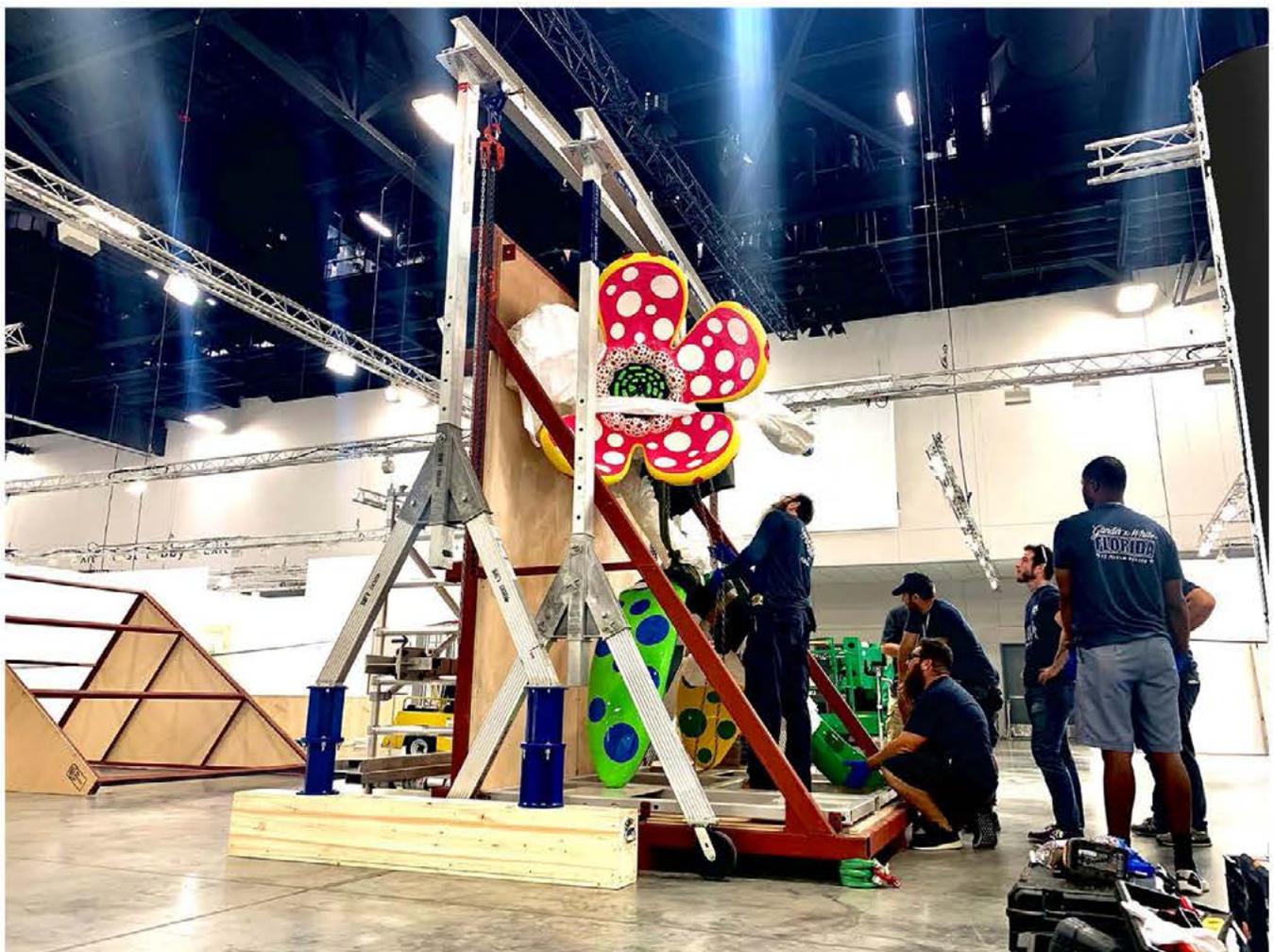
The fun isn’t going to stop yet: Coming up on May 20th (10:00 PDT), Gina Watkinson of the Arizona State Museum will be discussing the care and cleaning of baskets. Many of us have baskets in our collections, so this is sure to be a useful one! [Be sure to register today!](#)

More information about all our events is available at rcwr.org/learn/workshops/.

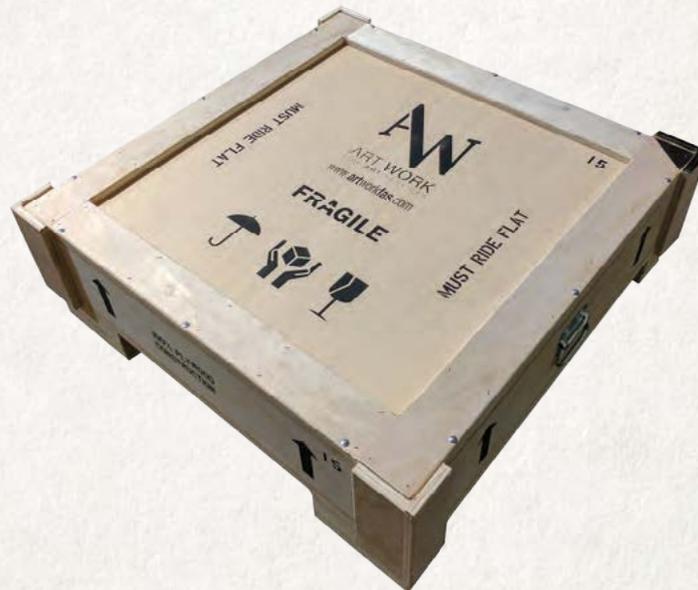
If there are any particular subjects you would like to see covered in a webinar or you know a conservator that you think should share their extensive knowledge, don’t hesitate to reach out to Beth Sanders at RCWRViceChair@gmail.com.

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SIGNS FROM THE SIXTH



COLLECTING THE ATTACK ON THE CAPITOL

The US Capitol Building on the morning of January 7th, 2021

—By Frank A. Blazich, Jr., PhD
National Museum of American History

On the cold morning of January 7, 2021, assorted detritus of a domestic attack on the Capitol Building lay strewn along the grass and in the trash cans of the National Mall in Washington, DC. As cleaning crews walked the grounds picking up litter and hauling away bags of trash, news media filmed interviews and segments regarding the previous day's events. Various law enforcement personnel from federal and state agencies patrolled on foot or sat in vehicles spaced around the mall. Nary a camera or person noticed the solitary individual wearing rubber gloves with a grocery tote in

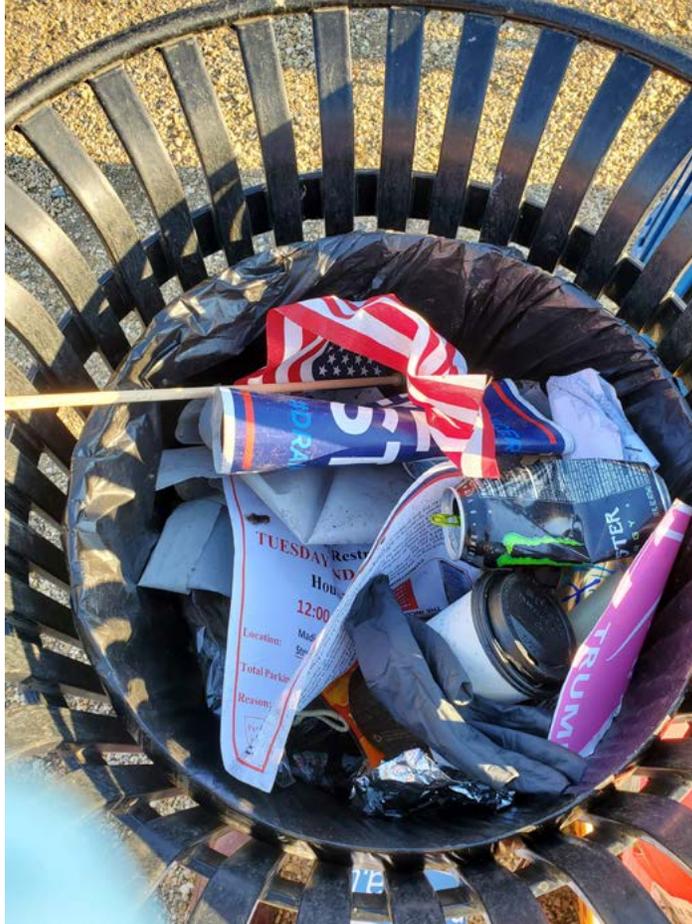
one hand and a pile of signs in the other, digging through the garbage and rescuing pieces of history.

Normally a curator of Modern Military History, an unusual course of events brought me to the National Mall to locate and collect items of American political history. The previous day had found me at home with my wife, staring at a television in disbelief at the scenes unfolding at the Capitol. That evening, I received text messages from my museum's leadership about what had transpired. Knowing that many of the objects from the day's rally and riot would quickly be removed from the mall and discarded, I volunteered to go out the next morning to collect

what I could find. Two primary influences factored into my rationale for volunteering, the dangers of COVID-19 and potential violence aside. First, the National Mall is a place of constant change and public gatherings. The remnants of these events are ephemeral, gone as swiftly as the gatherings themselves materialize. Secondly, fellow colleagues in the Division of Political and Military History had previously collected materials related to the George Floyd/Black Lives Matter protests in the summer of 2020, ensuring unique artifacts did not vanish into a landfill. Their actions inspired me and provided a precedent.

My efforts can be considered “rapid response collecting.” There was, however, neither specific training nor detailed guidance to govern my curatorial actions. Past conversations with colleagues who collected from the summer protests or at political conventions informed my preparations. Based on my conversations that evening, I assembled an impromptu COVID-era curatorial “field kit” for the morning’s work: tote bags, a box of nitrile gloves via Harbor Freight, face mask (and a spare), business cards, identification badge, and a mental list of imagery and objects I had seen in news footage the day prior. On this latter point, I primarily sought signs and flags, featured so prominently in the crowds.

Arriving along the National Mall around 7:30 a.m., I parked by the Smithsonian Castle and then walked towards Capitol Hill. The first protest signs could be seen sticking out of the variety of trash cans



A trash can full of flags and flyers from the day before

lining the emerald grass fields and in the hands of cleaning crews policing up the grounds. A slight panic swept over me at the sight of the men carrying trash bags, my thoughts contemplating if I was too late to save some key artifact now on its way to a landfill. I changed my collecting approach immediately to attempt to save everything of pertinence and move quickly to cover as much ground as possible. Rather than linger over any specific artifact weighing its intellectual value or condition for long-term preservation, I adopted the technique I use in archives when handling

large bodies of records. I skimmed every item for specific terms or symbology, specifically “Stop the Steal,” references to Trump or the 2020 Election, COVID-19, conspiratorial and white supremacist paraphernalia, and material culture anomalies, such as tools or improvised weapons.

Every potential artifact collected offered more than history but also the risk of contamination. Collecting under “normal” circumstances is tricky enough, but that morning I had to contend with the risk of exposure to COVID-19. Suffice to say, I wore a new mask and carried half a dozen pairs of nitrile gloves in my pockets, changing them every 30 minutes. In the aftermath of the day my vehicle, having transported the presumed contaminated materials, was quarantined for 72 hours.

After placing the first few signs in the trunk of my car, I began walking towards the Capitol. While signs could be spotted at a distance due to their size, scanning the grounds turned up assorted small business

cards, handouts, and leaflets which had been missed by cleaning crews. These increased in number the closer I moved to the Capitol, akin to following a debris field before coming upon the main hull of a shipwreck. A block away from 3rd Street SW, separating the large fields of the National Mall from Union Square and the Capitol Reflecting Pool, I could see two large, repurposed aluminum street signs leaning on a signpost. In stenciled paint on one could be read the slogan

“OFF WITH THEIR HEADS—STOP THE STEAL,” while an adjacent sign, forcefully ripped from the post, featured a smoking skull with a blonde toupee bearing a similar message, “STOP THE 2020 STEAL.” Taking account for their size, compared to everything else, I made the decision to make a long walk back to my vehicle to drop them off before visiting the grounds around the pool.

Entering Union Square, I encountered more people than anywhere else in the mall that morning. Pacing in front of the reflecting pool was a lone protestor waving a “Don’t Tread on Me” Gadsden Flag and exchanging curt words with some nearby individuals. I next came upon a wooden structure resembling an overturned set of stairs. Two square plywood signs were affixed to the base, one of which read “THIS IS ART.” Graffiti from a variety of hands covered the legs and sides of what I slowly recognized as gallows, sans noose. Unable to remove any of the timbers much less transport them, I hastily took photographs of the graffiti to save at least something of the object.



In a parking lot adjacent to the reflecting pool, a line of Metropolitan police officers mingled with an array of law enforcement officials from Virginia and assorted federal agencies. Reaching the Ulysses S. Grant Memorial, a small crowd of maybe 20 stood in front of temporary fencing. Across the street loomed Capitol Hill, in front of which uniformed National Guardsmen could be seen spaced 10 or 20 feet apart. The morning joggers, seemingly oblivious to the events

of January 6, robotically glided past, pausing only when the Guardsmen directed them to move away from the Capitol. The battlefield of the previous day could be seen ahead. The most visible damage was ripped white material hanging in shreds from the scaffolding erected for the inauguration of January 20. General stillness and an exhausted tension permeated the air.

Upon the grounds around the Grant Memorial were pieces of discarded equipment from an angry, invading force. An unknown hand had scratched “TRUMP” in the mud by a copse of trees and shrubs. A few feet away on a temporary fence a white poster board read “We’re Right We’re Free We’ll Fight You’ll See.” Once more I returned to my vehicle to drop off armfuls of signs, although I opted to drive closer to the Capitol to shorten my walks. Following the sweeps of the grass around Union Square and the Reflecting Pool, the trash cans along the mall became my priority.

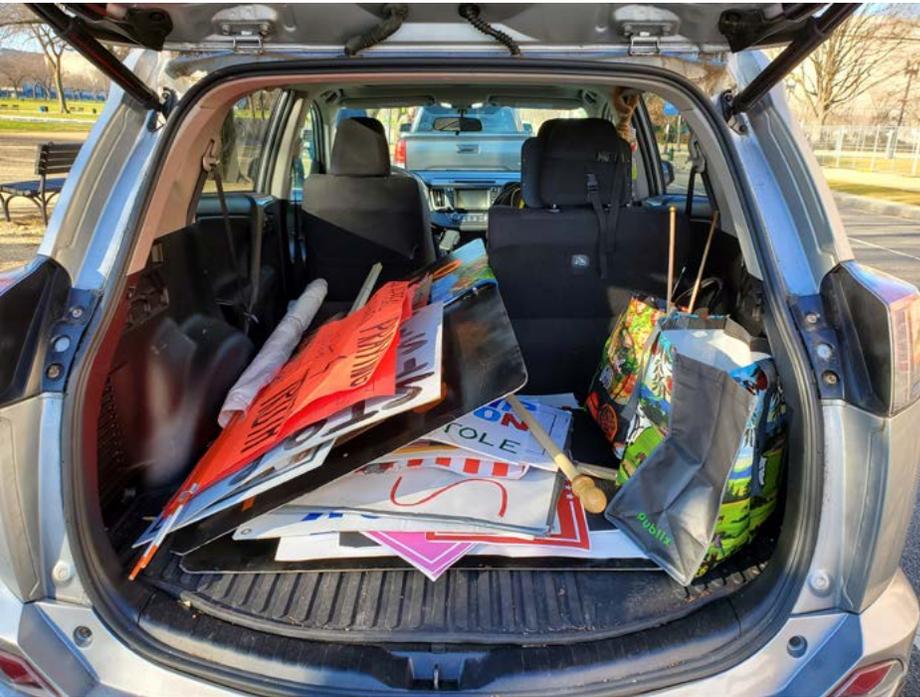
The cans closest to the Capitol held the greatest density of relevant materials.

Between masses of empty cigarette packs and empty liquor bottles were squirreled away various nuts of historical value. Hand-outs and leaflets abounded. Flags, so prevalent in news footage, frustratingly proved elusive. Flag poles of wood and white PVC pipe stuck out at crazy angles from the cans. After searching through at least several dozen cans I spied a hint of blue fabric which proved to be a blue and white scrap of fabric reading “PENCE,” crudely cut off a banner or flag. Farther down the mall a small “Trump 2020” flag emerged from within the trash—accompanied by a small, mud-stained American flag.

After three hours with my vehicle filled, I ceased my gathering effort. All told, I collected almost 100 individual items, the largest being



manager, and fellow curators. This documentation provided my pandemic-isolated political history colleagues the information necessary to decide which items would be accessioned, placed in context and relation to other 2020 Election materials they had acquired over the course of the previous year.



The author's vehicle filled with the items collected that day

a rolled-up banner and the smallest a business card. After quarantining the materials in a secure location, I photographed and measured all the materials and wrote up notes on every piece to provide the information to my registrar, collections

The collected materials included both mass-produced items and unique hand-made signs. Several of the latter variety featured profanity, racist, or white supremacist imagery. Most of the signs echoed political discontent and language paralleling that of the Trump campaign. These multi-faceted materials collectively reflect a disgraceful, criminal moment in our nation's history, but they also mirror other artifacts of protest and conflict within the political and military history collections. As a military historian, I have often reflected on the important decision to preserve the remains of Nazi Germany's concentration camps in Europe, and the ongoing efforts

to preserve the Japanese American incarceration camps in the United States. Controversial objects, whether micro or macro in scale, must be preserved and have a place in museums if, at nothing else, to offer tangible evidence of such past actions to nonbelievers and educating those unfamiliar with past national actions.

From the birth of the United States to the present, assemblies and demonstrations have produced a dizzying array of material culture, almost all of a predominantly ephemeral nature. “STOP THE STEAL” may join a banner celebrating the electoral victory of Thomas Jefferson over John Adams in the 1800 presidential election, banners from the National Women’s Party advocating suffrage, signs from the 1963 March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom, and posters declaring “Stop Abortion Now” or “Black Lives Matter.” All these artifacts form part of the broader collection of materials discussing the freedom to petition, several of which are currently on display within the political history exhibition, *American Democracy: A Great Leap of Faith*.

Reflecting on my rapid collecting efforts of January 7 within the wider context of contemporary American society, I recognize that museums have an opportunity to more closely align with their host communities. Preserving the material culture record of protests and other events of ephemeral nature will require curators to either be prepared to race out into the field at a moment’s notice or advise and guide members of the public to help save materials for museums. Due to COVID-19, numerous museums instituted moratoriums on collecting, forced to ask potential donors to hold materials until it was safe to transport them to museums. The pandemic has also allowed museums to better educate the public on the types of pandemic-related artifacts



desired for collections, and the underlying reasons behind the preservation of such materials. This type of education can make every citizen material culture-minded, ergo, potential curators. Rapid response collecting can just as easily become mass response collecting.

I was but one person gathering potential artifacts for a few hours over a relatively small area of real estate. The Capitol Building and the adjacent grounds were inaccessible. Today I find

myself haunted by my inability to preserve more materials, but I try to take solace in the thought that something was saved. Hopefully, my small sample of material accurately captures the zeitgeist of the day and the intent of the people involved to challenge our democratic traditions.

Understandably, as a military curator I typically do not collect elements of protest and dissent, focusing instead on objects involving state-sanctioned organized violence. But as a historian and curator, the miasma of mendacity hovering over the nation’s politics which fueled the attempted insurrection necessitated the gathering of items, COVID-19 and violence be damned. Contextualized with other artifacts of previous demonstrations, these materials of January 6, 2021 provide windows for scholars and visitors to peer into national psyches—past and present—to understand or question the nebulous being known as democracy. ■



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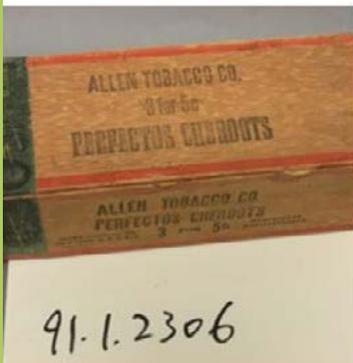
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ARIZONA

Arizona Historical Society recently launched a public facing version of PastPerfect Online, making its collections from across the state database available to the general public in one streamlined location. Arizona Historical Society is home to thousands of artifacts—from Wyatt Earp’s wedding ring to a World War II AT-6 airplane. Explore the state’s diverse history by exploring our new online Past Perfect Online catalog. This catalog searches the collections of our four museums: Pioneer Museum in Flagstaff, Arizona Heritage Center



Bag



Box, Cigar

at Papago Park in Phoenix/Tempe, Arizona History Museum in Tucson, and Sanguinetti House Museum & Gardens in Yuma.

azhs.catalogaccess.com/

Due to the pandemic, **Arizona Museum of Natural History** (AZMNH) had to remove one of its interactive exhibits. It’s being replaced with *Ologies: The Science of Anthropology and Paleontology*, the AZMNH’s first exhibition to illustrate the differences and similarities between these two sciences, as well as the Museum’s first bilingual exhibition.



▲ Display at the *Ologies* exhibit, AZMNH

▼ Visitors at the World Trade Center 9/11 Exhibit

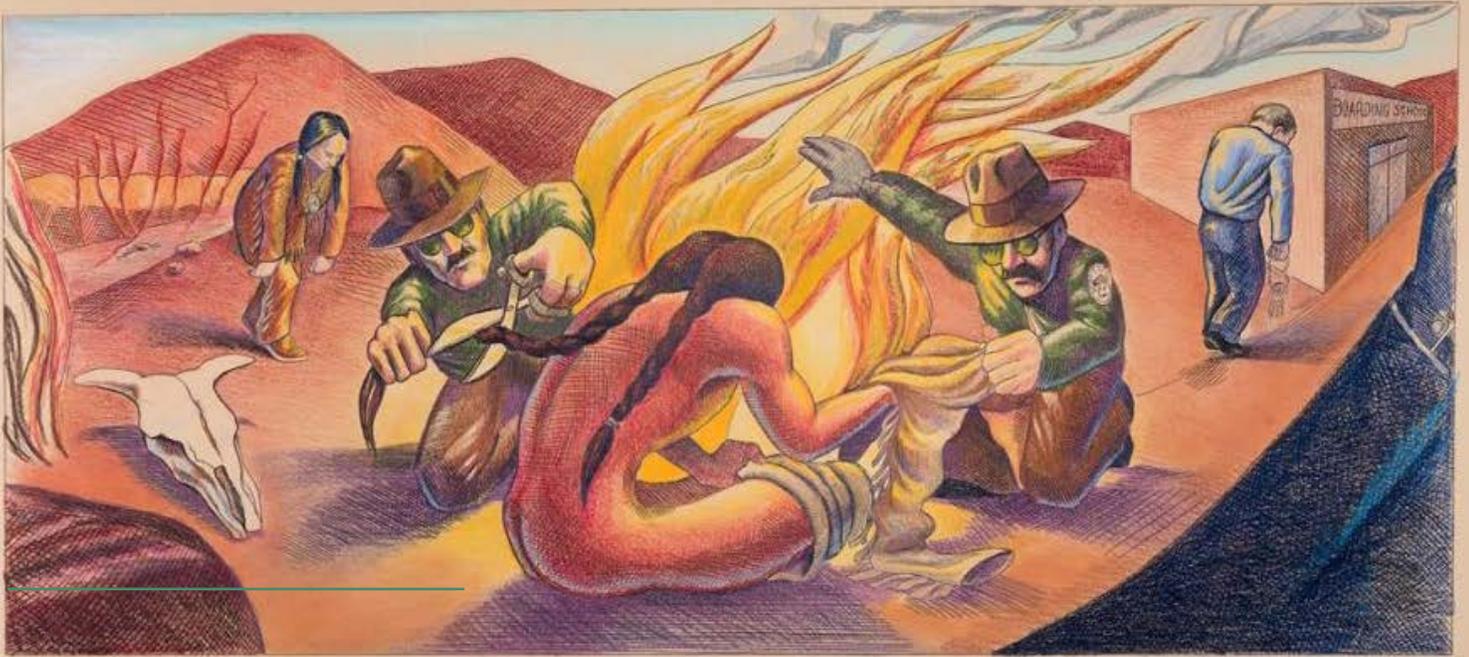


From March 27–May 2, 2021, the **Hall of Flame Museum of Fire-fighting** is hosting the World Trade Center 9/11 exhibit, which is being traveled by Honor365. There will be a 1-hour Honor Walk program that will take place on May 2, 2021 at 11:00am at the Hall of Flame Museum. The program will be to remember and honor the fallen of 9/11 and pay tribute to Veterans and First Responders in the local community.

Honor365’s mission is to provide resource and referral support to veterans, first responders, and their families. The vision: A world without suicide. Honor365’s pillars include education, employment, healthcare, and housing. Honor365 proceeds from this nationwide tour are dedicated to supporting mental wellness for veterans, first responders, and their families. It is anticipated that the exhibit will help heal, unite, and educate the world in numerous ways.

The **Museum of Northern Arizona** (MNA) observed the spring equinox on March 20th in the Easton Collections Center (ECC).

The building was planned in consultation with several Colorado Plateau tribes. During these consultations one of the Elders commented that although the Native American objects in the ECC were



▲ Lucas Museum of Narrative Art, Los Angeles. © 1980 Judith F. Baca
Image courtesy of the SPARC Archives (SPARCinLA.org)

chive includes more than 350 objects related to the creation of the Great Wall, from concept drawings and mural studies to blueprints and site plans to notes and correspondence. Objects from the archive may be included in the Lucas Museum’s permanent displays when it opens in 2023. (Originally slated to open in 2022, the museum has delayed its inauguration after the pandemic forced it to push back its construction schedule.)

The **Japanese American National Museum** (JANM) will reopen to the public on weekends beginning Friday, April 16. Admission is free but with reserved tickets only—no walk-in admissions.

“JANM has always been a vibrant gathering space for our local communities and visitors from across the nation and the globe to come together to reflect, to learn, and to cel-

ebate,” said Ann Burroughs, President and CEO of JANM. “We are poised to re-open our doors and to re-establish those physical connections which are so important to our mission. This has been a difficult and painful few weeks in which the heightened racism and violence against the Asian community has been at the forefront of our minds, particularly in the wake of the abhorrent and tragic killings in Atlanta. Offering JANM as a place of healing and renewal is one of the most important services we can provide at this time.”

The **J. Paul Getty Museum** in Los Angeles announced today that it had acquired *Lucretia*, a painting by



▲ Exhibit hall, Japanese American National Museum.
Photo by Paloma Dooley

Artemisia Gentileschi that manifests her ambition for delving into historical subjects and her singular position as a female Baroque artist in 17th-century Italy. The work is believed to date from the late 1620s and will go on view when the museum reopens in the coming weeks, the Getty says. (A firm date has not been set.)

The museum said it acquired the painting from the London



▲ *Lucretia* by Artemisia Gentileschi

dealer Patrick Matthiesen but did not disclose the price. *Lucretia* was rediscovered after residing in private collections for centuries, it adds. It sold in 2019 for €4.8M (with fees) at the Parisian auction house Artcurial, setting an auction record for the artist.

The San Diego Museum of Art

is pleased to announce the opening of two exhibitions, *Cranach to Canaletto: Masterpieces from the Bemberg Foundation* and *Everything You See Could Be A Lie:*

Photorealistic Drawings by Ana de Alvear. From Old Master paintings to contemporary, hyper-realistic drawings, works from these exhibitions are rarely seen in the U.S. and will be on view at the Museum beginning June 18, 2021, through September 27, 2021.

The **California African American Museum** in Los Angeles will premier *Sanford Biggers: Codeswitch* in Summer 2021. For more than two decades, Los Angeles native Sanford Biggers has been developing a singular body of work that is deeply informed by African American history and traditions. *Sanford Biggers: Codeswitch*, the first survey of quilt-based works by the New York-based interdisciplinary artist, features over fifty pieces that seamlessly weave together references to contemporary art, urban culture, sacred geometry, and more.



▲ Sanford Biggers, *Reconstruction*, 2019 Antique quilt, birch plywood, gold leaf, 38 x 72 x 19 in. © Sanford Biggers and Monique Meloche Gallery, Chicago. RCH Photography

The exhibition's title, *Codeswitch*, refers to both the artist's quilt series, known as the Codex series, as well as to the idea of code-switching: shifting from one linguistic code to another depending on social context. The Codex series includes mixed-media paintings and sculptures done

directly on or made from pre-1900 antique quilts. This process, like linguistic code-switching, recognizes the plurality of language, as the quilts signal their original creator's intent as well as the new layers of meaning given to them through Biggers's artistic interventions.

The exhibition at CAAM is curated by Rivers Institute and is the first project in a multi-year collaboration between CAAM and Rivers Institute.

On view at **Los Angeles County Museum of Art** (LACMA) for the first time in almost 20 years, *Slowly Turning Narrative* (1992) is a room-sized video installation by Bill Viola in the museum's collection. An

acknowledged pioneer of video art, Viola was crucial in establishing video as a major medium in contemporary art. *Slowly Turning Narrative* offers Viola's characteristically hypnotic sense of wonderment at the world and reveals the fullness of his philosophical vision.

Slowly Turning Narrative includes two projections on a large central rotating screen.

One presents images of virtually everything that constitutes life, embracing the broadest sweep from birth to death. The other shows a close-up of Viola's head incanting "the one who lives," "the one who acts," "the one who reads," and more. As this screen rotates, a



▲ *Slowly Turning Narrative*, Bill Viola, 1992, video/sound installation, Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Modern and Contemporary Art Council Fund, installation view, Los Angeles County Museum of Art, 2020, © Bill Viola Studio
Photograph © Museum Associates/LACMA

mirror on the back comes into view, reflecting the image of the viewer in this video evocation of human existence. On view April 1, 2021–June 27, 2021.

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IDAHO

This year marks the centennial of the **Idaho State Capitol**. Through a special partnership with the legacy architectural firm that designed the building, the Capitol Curation Program brought the original architectural drawings into the statehouse through the new exhibit *Make Clear the Path of Duty*.

The **Museum of North Idaho** is working to relocate and expand! They have embarked on an ambitious campaign centered around the historic J.C. White House. This will bring them out of the 4,371 square foot building they have occupied for the past 40 years, and into an 11,500 square foot facility to house their growing collections and exhibition program. Their team recently

traveled to Boise for an inside look at the Idaho State Museum which is just three years out from their comprehensive renovation and expansion.

Ketchum's historic **Ernest and Mary Hemingway House** was highlighted in the new documentary, *Idaho's Hemingway*. The largest

“artifact” in the collection of the Ketchum Community Library, the historic property on the Big Wood River has hosted a writer in residence since 2019.

In finding innovative ways to keep traditional events alive through COVID, the **Latah County Historical Society** and **McConnell Mansion** have turned their annual spring tea into takeout. “High Tea at Home” will raise historic preservation funds through curated afternoon tea packages (teacups included).

From the **Boise Art Museum's** *The World Stage*, to the **Idaho State Museum's** *Trailblazing Women of Idaho*, new exhibitions are opening again. The Idaho State Museum shifted what was once an opening gala to opening week. Members, contributors, and VIPs explored in small groups with the collections and exhibitions team. While the pre-COVID crowd was missed, the more intimate experience received great attendance and feedback.

NEVADA

Clark County Museum's current exhibit, *Soft Focus*, features quilts created by local fiber artists, inspired by photographs from the museum's collections.

The **Nevada State Museum's** changing gallery features two exhibits, *Fueling the Boom: Chinese Woodcutters in the Great Basin 1870-1920* and *Our Nevada Stories: Objects Found in Time*. An online exhibit, *Gifts of Healing: French Travel Posters, 1945-1949*, is also featured on the museum's website.

The **Nevada Art Museum** opened *Shifting Horizons* on March 27th. The exhibition features artworks and archival objects that have been gifted to or purchased by the Nevada Museum of Art in the past three years, demonstrating their ongoing commitment to integrating a range of artistic voices.

Young at Art: A Selection of Caldecott Book Winners will be on display at the **Wilbur D. May Museum** until March 30th.

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OREGON

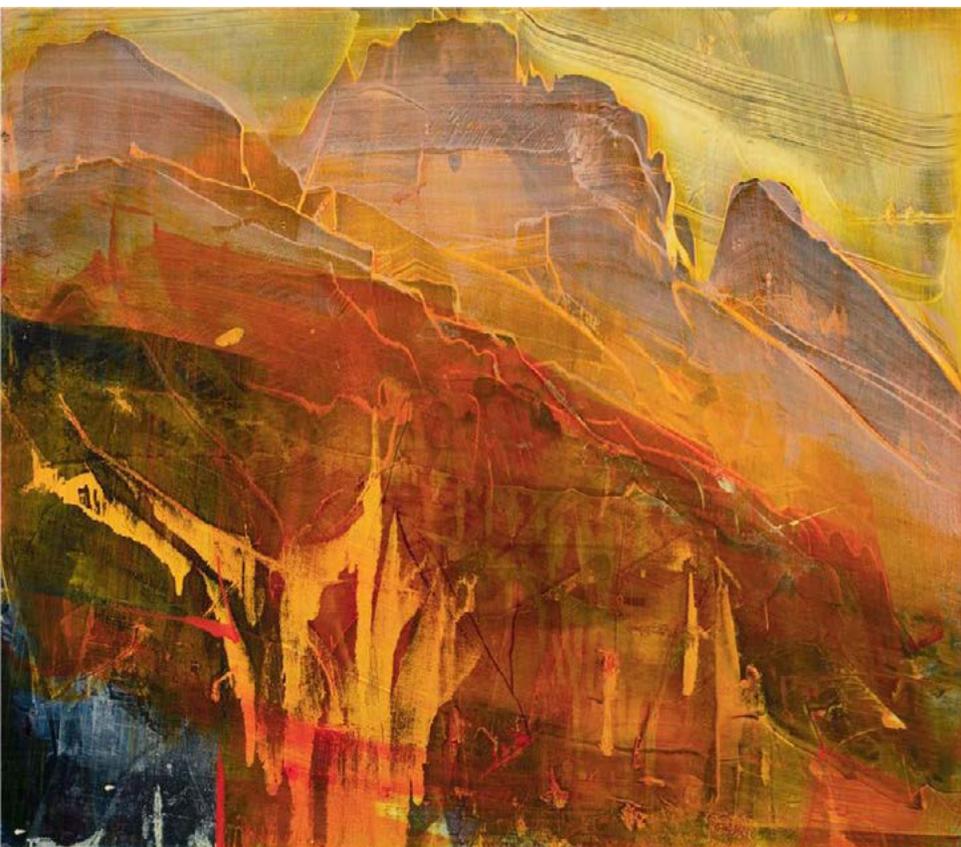
After a 3-month closure, the **Evergreen Aviation & Space Museum** in McMinnville re-opened, ready to share a new exhibit, *Patterns in the Sky*. The constellations referenced in this exhibit are identified by those in the western world but are interpreted differently by many differ-

ent cultures across the globe. The exhibit encourages visitors to seek out the multitude of interpretations of the vastness of space and all its contents.

The **Oregon Museums Association** offered webinars alternated with virtual meetups.

The **High Desert Museum** in Bend received a \$6 million grant to display its vast but largely unseen art collection. The museum, which has previously had an emphasis on Natural History, holds important works by artists like Rick Bartow, Charles Russell, and Edward Curtis. Typically, these pieces were used to complement ethnographic exhibitions but soon they will be put on long-term view in a newly constructed art space, part of a campus expansion. Groundbreaking on the expansion is expected to start within the next three years.

▼ James Lavadour, *Golden*, 2018, The High Desert Museum



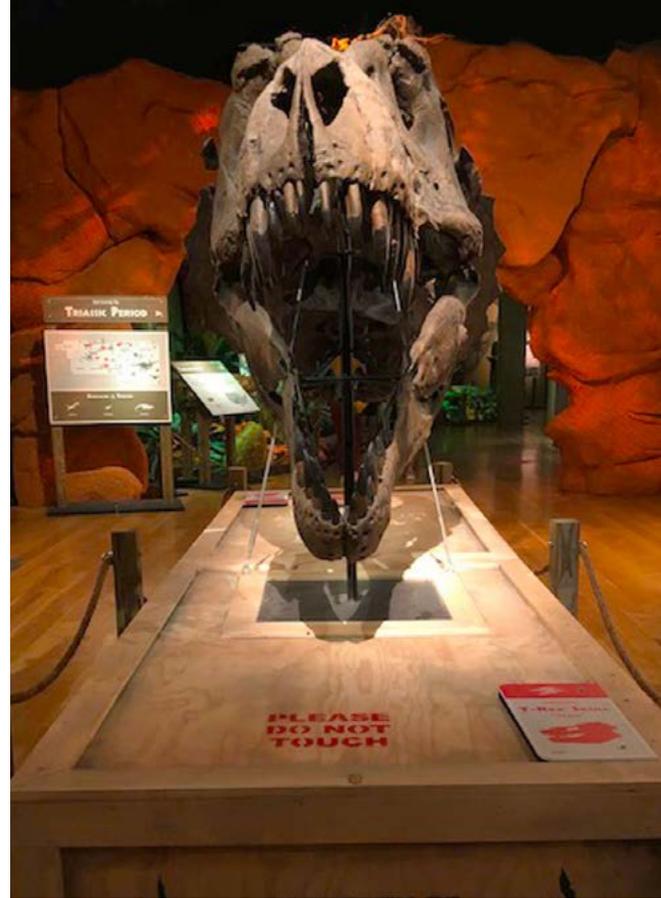
► Explore real dinosaur discoveries, Oregon Museum of Science and Industry

The **Oregon Museum of Science and Industry** in Portland opened a new exhibit *Dinosaurs Revealed*. Visitors can journey back 250 million years to prehistoric North America. The exhibit features life-sized dinosaurs, two detailed dinosaur cast fossils, and more through an immersive experience that showcases the science behind paleontology, evolution, and extinction.



UTAH

Utah museums had a busy first quarter, and we are very excited to see vaccines rolling out quickly across the state! Most museums have been



able to reopen at partial capacity, but there is hope that by the summer everyone will be able to reopen, and we'll see a rise in attendance.

Utah collection specialists attended RC-WR's conservation webinar *Stabilization: Handling and Storage Enclosures for Fragile Paper Objects*. This training came just in time for **Springville Museum of Art's** registrar, Hannah Barrett, to move several works on paper into a new flat file!

Maggie Leak, Registrar at **Utah Museum of Fine Arts**, attended the Deaccessioning After 2020 Symposium organized by Syracuse University and attended by over 1,200 museum professionals.

In February, registrars attended Sites & Insights: Butterfly Biosphere, a professional develop-



▲ Museum professionals visiting the Butterfly Biosphere at Thanksgiving Point

ment event at **Thanksgiving Point**, where we learned about the challenges of living collections (suddenly feeling so grateful for a collection that doesn't eat each other—I'm looking at you, praying mantises).

In April, the **Utah Museum of Fine Arts** completed a large deinstallation of the traveling exhibition *Black Refractions: Highlights from the Studio Museum in Harlem*, under virtual courier oversight.

WASHINGTON

The **U.S. Naval Undersea Museum** in Keyport, WA, is excited to report on the restoration of DSRV-1 Mystic, a submarine rescue vehicle used by the Navy until 2008. The fiberglass

of the vehicle's hull was damaged after years of being outdoors, both before it arrived at the Museum and on outdoor display, as it is too large to fit inside. The Museum was able to repair the fiberglass and paint the vehicle, giving it extra protection from the elements. While we wish it did not have to be displayed outdoors, this project upholds our commitment to collections care and keeping this important piece of Navy history with us for years to come!

greatly impacted our progress on many projects. We are glad to have joined the group of museums that re-opened our doors to visitors in April 2021, finally welcoming them to two new exhibitions. *René Lalique: Art Deco Gems from the Steven and Roslyn Shulman Collection* was curated by MOG curator Katie Buckingham and features roughly two hundred pieces culled from a promised gift of over 600 pieces and includes an exhibition catalog published by the Museum. Counterparts: Glass + Art Elements is guest curated by our wonderful colleague Lisa Young and displays works in glass paired with those in other media. We are very grateful to our colleagues at Seattle Art Museum, Tacoma Art Museum, and Whatcom



▲ The DSRV-1 Mystic at U.S. Naval Undersea Museum

What to say about 2020?! **Museum of Glass in Tacoma** was mostly closed, and the majority of the staff spent the year in furlough, which

Museum and several artists and galleries for lending works.

Amazingly, despite the pandemic, MOG's traveling exhibition *Art Deco Glass from the David*



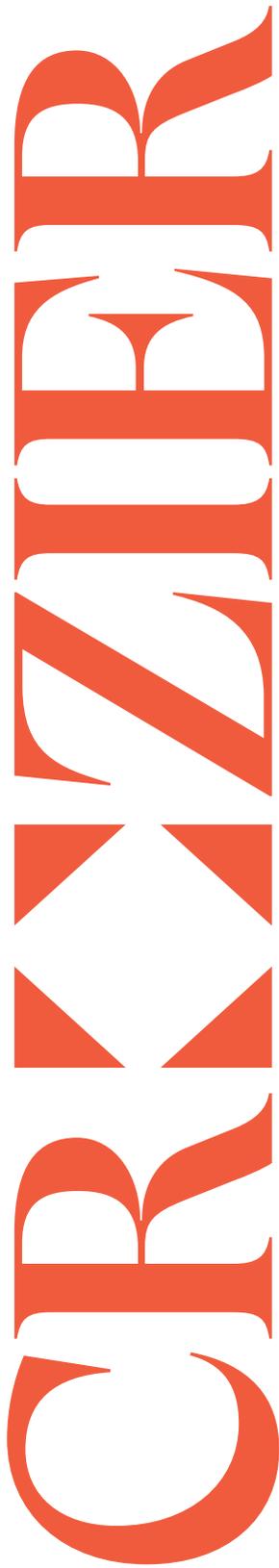
Huchthausen Collection continued to share their mission as it traveled to Huntsville Museum of Art in Alabama and Museum of Texas Tech University in Lubbock.

Hoping for a return to more normal work, staff at the Museum of Glass are excited to delve into the most recent gift of nearly 400 works from the Robert M. Minkoff Foundation Collection. A selection will be featured in an exhibition in the spring of 2022 that will coincide with the City of Tacoma hosting the Annual Glass Art Society Conference, bringing glass artists and enthusiasts from across the world.

On view until April 25 at the **Frye Art Museum** is the exhibition *Anastacia-Reneé: (Don't be Absurd) Alice in Parts*. Combining poetry, objects, and video, this immersive installation by multi-genre writer and performer Anastacia-Reneé offers a rageful meditation on gentrification—of neighborhoods and its insidious effects on the body—as seen through the eyes of her multilayered and witty character Alice Metropolis. Anastacia-Reneé's work is rooted in the Black feminist and womanist traditions and their intersectional approach to addressing racism, sexism, homophobia, ageism, and class. In her writing, she plumbs

▲ Installation view of *Anastacia-Reneé: (Don't be Absurd) Alice in Parts*, Frye Art Museum, Seattle, January 30–April 25, 2021. Photograph: Jueqian Fang

the depths of the day-to-day experiences, emotions, and injustices that too often go unexpressed in order to transform silence into language and action. Experience the exhibition from the comfort of home with this [3D exhibition tour](#). ■



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New Reads

by Nancy Arms Simon



On the Road Again

Developing and Managing Traveling Exhibitions
SECOND EDITION



REBECCA A. BUCK, JEAN A. GILMORE, and IRENE TAURINS

*On the Road Again:
Developing and Managing
Traveling Exhibitions,*
Second edition

By Rebecca A. Buck, Jean A. Gilmore, and Irene Taurins,

Copyright American Alliance
of Museums

Published by Rowman
& Littlefield, 2020

For museum professionals working in small or medium-sized institutions and often wearing multiple hats, it is useful to know something about everything. When any museum professional strives to understand exhibitions from multiple angles, it makes them better at their job. When they understand how their gear works with the others to keep the machine going, it makes them better prepared to anticipate what steps they might take to make life easier for their colleagues. Be you a registrar or collection manager, you could easily be responsible for in-house loans or a traveling exhibit, even if it is only once every few years. For all these reasons, *On the Road Again: Developing and Managing Traveling Exhibitions* is a solid resource. Published by the American Alliance of Museums (in conjunction with Rowman and Little-

field), it is true to AAM's cause to bring museums together under standardization and best practices.

More of a handbook than a theoretical text, *On the Road Again* starts out with a strong introduction in chapter one and lays out the big picture with concepts and background in chapter two. Chapter two also includes the first of many checklist templates included in the book. The checklist is to traveling exhibitions as the mission statement is to collections. It is the guiding document that defines all activities. This first checklist includes records of the roles that must be filled in exhibition planning. Smartly, the roles were not listed by job title, but rather by duty or task. Implying that, even if someone doesn't hold a specific job title, the role must still be filled.

In addition to a variety of checklist templates, chapter three includes sample documents like Condition Reports, Request for Proposals (RFP), and Budgets. It even goes into RFP language, although registrars in many institutions are well aware of area vendors and just call around for bids. This obviously is not an option in an institution like a university museum that may have requirements in place around an open bidding process. Included in the section on insurance, there are pull-out paragraphs on indemnity and terrorism coverage.

Chapter four goes into detail about contracts and contract negotiations. Usually there would be some legacy information around contracts and a registrar would not be left to create these documents from scratch. Even if basic contract information is already available at your institution, it can be useful to compare your documents against this best practices model. Chapter four can also be used for contract terminology reference.

The chapter on "Preparing the Exhibition for the Tour" covers thorough information on handling condition reports during exhibition tours. It also has a great pull-out section on digital condition report (DCR) basics, including what to consider when making the switch to digital and protocols around their use. The section ends with DCR templates, including images. As we move forward into our digital age, knowledge about DCRs will become a requirement for all registrars handling traveling exhibitions, even if their specific institution has not implemented them. Best to get on board with the program now so as not to be left behind.

The world of couriers is changing rapidly since COVID-19, and I imagine we will see an updated section in the third edition of *On the Road Again* that covers trackers, tracking platforms, and digital couriers. But the reasoning behind why we used in-person

couriers should not be left behind, and I hope that in successive editions AAM will see fit to outline the historical background of couriers and how to use that knowledge to logically inform the need for couriers in a more virtual world. The section on couriers goes into guidelines about determining the need for a courier, including difficulty of installation, object value, and object fragility. It also covers consolidated shipping, consolidated courier oversight, and sharing responsibility with other institutions, which we will also probably see more of in the future. I especially appreciated the section on duties a courier must be able to perform and the need for a courier contract to outline responsibilities and expectations.

From the beginning chapters on exhibit conception through installation and dispersal, *On the Road Again* breaks down the process of managing an exhibition in clear language and steps. It includes details like "when is it best to disperse from the final venue" and "under what conditions might you consider dispersing from a second location?"

I appreciated the way that the authors underscored communication and planning in every chapter. From the broad to the minute, *On the Road Again* encourages communicating the same details at every venue on a tour, even the details that

may seem obvious, so that there is no question as to whether everyone is on the same page.

In addition to professionals in small- and medium-sized institutions finding this useful, I think Museum Studies students would do well to pick it up at some point as they near entering the field, be it through an internship, temporary work, or full-time employment. The basic material would help students gain a thorough understanding of the profession when they are choosing an area of emphasis. I always learn a thing or two when I embark on a New Read, and this was no exception.



Online:

Ruling Class Solidarity: Conflict & Growth at SFMOMA, How museum collector-trustees recapture charitable donations

By Sam Lefebvre

Backbeat

backbeat.substack.com/p/ruling-class-solidarity-conflict

Speaking of exhibitions...*On the Road Again* clearly illustrates the nuts and bolts of how to make exhibitions happen.

But *why* do we make them happen?

Years ago, when I worked as an art handler and found myself having theoretical discussions about the meaning and purpose of art, (often at 2 am before opening day), someone would ask the question “what is the purpose of art?” My flippant answer, (which my younger self thought was very clever at the time), was that the purpose of art was “to make jobs”. With all the packing and unpacking and moving around, it seemed like the art was sometimes secondary to the project of transporting it.

According to this well-researched article by Sam Lefebvre, the purpose of art is to make yet even more money for the wealthy.

Lefebvre outlines how art works as an asset class, used as collateral through limited partnerships, art investment funds, art-secured loans, and fractional giving.

Ruling Class Solidarity reveals exactly how much time and how many resources museums are putting into their own collection, and into the collections of the wealthy. While the article focuses on fine art, the extension to other museum collections and objects is not a stretch. And regardless of the type of museum, the same systems of investments, use of limited liability companies, reputation laundering, tax free dividends, offshore blocker corporations, and management fees are being used to keep funneling money back to “ultra-high net worth individuals”. The implica-

tions for museum professionals are significant.

There has been a lot of awareness raised during the past year about the need for equality. Some museums even claim to be working towards this change. Every choice to purchase a work by an artist of color, a woman, or a trans person is applauded as if real change is now, after years of begging and pointing out the obvious, finally at our threshold.

But the museum is accountable to investors and donors instead of workers or visitors, despite all the jargon focused around reaching out to marginalized communities.

Very few of us get into the business of museums because we are money driven. At some point you must come to terms with the reality of our industry and the fact that “love of your field” does not buy groceries. Lefebvre’s article explains a lot as to why most of us are not compensated for our education and experience or for some of our colleagues, even earning a living wage. It explains why it is so hard to get works created by people of color on our walls, and a diverse group of faces in the private offices. As much as I thought I was aware of the inner workings of art and finance, this was an eye-opening and truly frustrating article to read. For those reasons, I urge you to read it too. ■