



## All Grand Challenges

The Smithsonian's Museum Conservation Institute (MCI) is the center for advanced conservation consultation, research, and treatment for all Smithsonian museums and collections. MCI's Senior Conservators – **Mary Ballard** (textiles), **Carol Grissom** (objects), **Jia-sun Tsang** (paintings), **Mel Wachowiak** (imaging techniques), and **Don Williams** (furniture/wood), headed by **Rae Beaubien** (archaeological objects) – conduct conservation projects, technical studies and research to further the preservation and technical understanding of the Smithsonian's collections. The Conservation Group has an umbrella theme "**Healthy Environments, Healthy Practices, Healthy Collections**," developing conservation protocols, procedures and products that are as safe as possible for the staff, the collections and the global environment. Consultation and treatment assistance are available to Smithsonian museums and research centers, with priority to projects that support new museums, such as NMAAHC, and the four Grand Challenges.

- In FY2010, the Conservation Group managed **116 active projects** — completed **34** projects, and undertook **39** new projects; and participated in **32** new and **17** on-going projects.
- Collaborations with all **19** Smithsonian museums, including A&I, NZP, **4** research centers (MCI, SIA, SIL, STRI), and **17** SI offices and interest groups. Federal partners included the Department of Homeland Security's Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), the Department of State's Cultural Heritage Center (CHC) and Cultural Heritage Program/Interior Design; the Department of Interior's Museum, U.S. Secret Service, and U.S. Senate Curatorial Committee.
- Organized **6 training events**, including a 5-day workshop on the "Modular Cleaning Program," explored new cleaning methods based on non-toxic formulations (**Tsang**), and two 4-day courses "Preventing Illicit Trafficking/Protecting Cultural Heritage," for nearly 50 ICE agents (**Beaubien** with **Paula DePriest**, Deputy Director).
- Submitted **14 proposals**, of which five were funded. Several highlighted modern materials, an outgrowth of a collaborative NMAH-MCI project selected for presentation at the American Experience Idea Fair, entitled "Plastics: The Material of a Thousand Uses" (**Tsang**).
- Published **7** professional papers, submitted **12** papers, and delivered **36** presentations. One of the published papers "Red 'Staining' on Marble: Biological or Inorganic Origin?" *APT Bulletin: Journal of Preservation Technology* 41 (2-3): 11-20., authored by **Grissom** et al., was the recipient of the Association for Preservation Technology International's 2010 Oliver Torrey Fuller Award for the *APT Bulletin* article that best demonstrates technical excellence and innovation.
- Supported research and conservation efforts of many SI interns, fellows, and post-docs, including **13** MCI fellows, interns and contractors under their supervision. Fellow and intern projects were highlighted in the 3<sup>rd</sup> Annual SI-Conservation Conference, organized by **Ballard**.
- Featured in new outreach venues, including an MCI web-page on **Wachowiak's** Imaging Studio projects, and a Smithsonian Networks documentary on **Ballard's** conservation team working on NMAAHC's Black Fashion Museum collection.

### Selected FY2010 Publications (MCI Senior Conservator, MCI fellow/intern):

Gervais, Claire, Carol A. Grissom, Nicole Little, and Melvin J. Wachowiak, "Impact of cleaning marble with ammonium citrate," *Studies in Conservation* 55: 164-176.

Moskal-del Hoyo, M., M. Wachowiak, and R. Blanchette, "Preservation of Fungi in Archaeological Charcoal," *Journal of Archaeological Science* 37: 2106-2116.

Pohl, Christie M., Greg Hodgins, Robert J Speakman and **Harriet F Beaubien**, "The effect of cyclododecane on carbon-14 dating of archaeological materials," *Journal of the American Institute for Conservation* 48 #3 (Fall/Winter 2009): 223-233.



Above: Aging plastics from the NMAH collection.  
Below: Red staining on the amphitheater at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, Arlington, VA.

