

SERCA

SOUTHEAST REGIONAL
CONSERVATION ASSOCIATION

paper | books | paintings | objects | textiles

SPRING

Volume 8

Number 1

April

2025

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From the Desk of Katie Boodle

Hello Members of SERCA!

As I sign off as the Communications Coordinator for SERCA, I want to thank everyone who had a hand in this year's Annual Meeting—both participants and presenters as you made it a wonderful event for me to close on! My time on the SERCA board has been both rewarding and eventful as we went through some design and organization changes in how we reach out to the membership. I hope that even more impactful changes will take place in the future and some of the “behind the scenes” work I’ve done will help with the finalization of changes to our website and outreach approaches to the membership at large. While I am sad to be leaving the board, I am very pleased to introduce the new board members who will be taking over not only my position, but also those of Vice President and Secretary.

Kelly Ciociola, SERCA Vice President, is the Owner and Principal Conservator of Ciociola Conservation, LLC in Nashville, TN, specializing in art and architecture. She is a Fellow of AIC and an APT Recognized Professional. Kelly previously served as Conservator for Vizcaya Museum and Gardens and Principal Conservator at RLA Conservation in Miami, overseeing projects across the East Coast and Caribbean, including the Miami Marine Stadium. She also worked at Kreilick Conservation on projects like the Merchants’ Exchange Building and Jeanne D’Arc Memorial. Kelly holds an M.S. in Historic Preservation from Clemson



(continued on page 3)



Board Members

PRESIDENT
Shannon Kimbro

VICE PRESIDENT
Kelly Ciociola

SECRETARY
Lucy D. Barsness

TREASURER
Brittany Dinneen

COMMUNICATIONS COORD.
Marianne Kelsey

NEWSLETTER COORD.
Amparo Escolano

HEALTH & SAFETY COORD.
Katie Etre

MEMBER AT LARGE
Tahe Zalal

Future Leadership Opportunities

Dear SERCA Members,

As our community continues to grow, we are excited to welcome our newest members: Kelly, Lucy and Marianne! Your passion and dedication to conservation strengthen our network, and we look forward to your contributions to SERCA.

At this time, all positions on our Board of Directors are filled, but as with any dynamic organization, opportunities can arise unexpectedly. If you have an interest in becoming more involved in SERCA's leadership, we encourage you to submit a letter of interest. Whether now or in the future, having a strong group of engaged members ready to step into leadership roles ensures the continued success of our organization.

If you would like to express interest in a future board position or learn more about ways to get involved, please reach out to president@sercaconservation.org. We would love to hear from you!

Thank you for being a part of SERCA—we look forward to growing and evolving together.

Warm regards,

The SERCA Board

**Let's Gather Again for
Another Fun Happy Hour!
Who you gonna call?**



From the Desk of Katie Boodle *(continued from page 1)*

University/College of Charleston. She is looking forward to work with SERCA wherever needed.

Marianne Kelsey, SERCA Communications Coordinator, has been involved in the field of conservation for twenty years, and managed the University of Iowa Center for the Book & Paper Research Facility prior to her career in conservation. She runs a private practice paper conservation studio based in Greensboro, North Carolina. She hopes to bring excitement and energy to cultivate more continuing education & professional opportunities for conservators in the Southeast, and is honored to be a part of the SERCA Board of Directors.

Lucy Dunphy-Barsness, SERCA Secretary, is a conservator specializing in book and paper preservation at the State Archives of North Carolina. She earned an MFA in Poetry from the University of Iowa in 2020, studying papermaking and historic calligraphy at Iowa's Center for the Book. She completed the bookbinding and conservation program at North Bennet Street School in 2022 and interned at Dartmouth's Preservation Services. Lucy has also studied at Duke University's Conservation Lab. Based in Raleigh, she enjoys costuming, bobbin lacemaking, and caring for her two Flemish Giant rabbits, Petticoat and Pinafore. She hopes to connect with conservation professionals in the Southeast.

I hope they will enjoy their time on the SERCA board! Please welcome and support them along with me as they help us to continue to make SERCA a networking and support tool for conservators in the Southeast.

It's been an honor and a privilege to serve as Communications Coordinator; though my time with the board has come to a close, I'm excited to see where the next chapter will take both SERCA and its members. I will continue to support the organization in whatever ways I can, and I look forward to seeing all the amazing work that lies ahead for this incredible community.

Warm regards,
Katie Boodle

Membership

Membership Payments now available online via PayPal

Renewing your membership is now easier than ever—no more mailing checks! You can also register and pay for workshops online. Please remember to submit both the registration form and payment to complete your renewal. If you haven't renewed yet, take a moment to do so today—and feel free to share this with your colleagues!

Visit our website for more details: : <https://sercaconservation.org/membership/>

Serca Newsletter Archive

Explore our archive of past SERCA newsletters for valuable insights, case studies, and member contributions. Catch up on issues you may have missed!

<https://sercaconservation.org/serca-newsletters/>

SERCA Annual Meeting: Learning, Collaboration, and Community

By Sarah Beach

*Graduate Intern in Furniture Conservation
Biltmore Estate, Asheville, North Carolina*

From the lectures and workshops to the discussions over coffee breaks and shared meals, I had a wonderful time attending my first SERCA annual meeting with the support of a Leonora O. Weaver Scholarship! Being both new to the region and relatively new to



Image 2

the field, I have to commend SERCA on being perhaps the most welcoming conference I have ever attended. I felt like conservators from a variety of practices were able to come together and discuss challenges in a way that supported each other and sought out creative solutions. It was refreshing to hear such candid discussions — With limited positions and clientele in the field, it is so easy to feel the need to be protective and secretive of our specialized knowledge. This comradery permeated through all aspects of the meeting, and is one of the many reasons I will seek to attend future annual meetings.

The opening keynote lecture by Renée Stein (image 1) set the tone well for this year's topic of "Bridging the Gaps: Practical and Theoretical Approaches to Loss Compensation". I thought it was especially interesting to note that just like trends in exhibit design and interpretation, conservation decisions can also be a result of contextual trends that fluctuate over time.

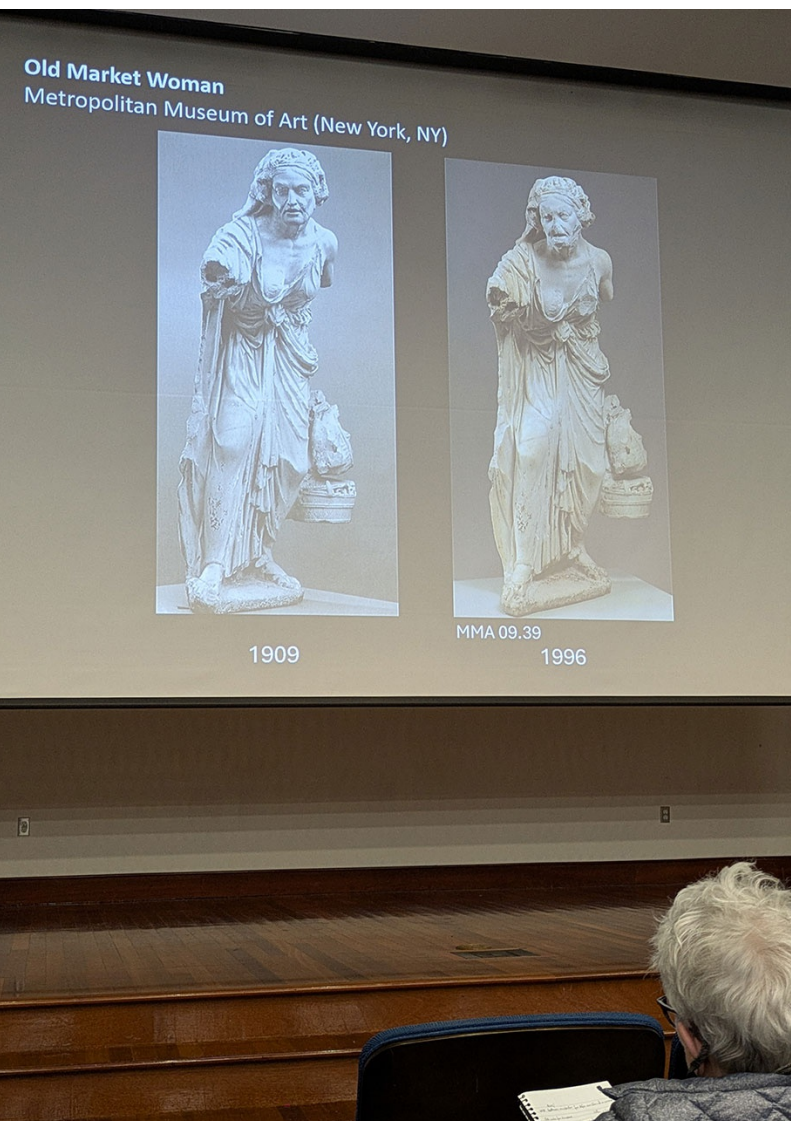


Image 1



Image 3

This theme of addressing old loss compensation methods to better suit current museum goals and ethical considerations popped up in several other talks as well, and has challenged me to look at my current treatment decisions in a new light.

I really appreciated the practicality of the various hands-on workshops SERCA hosted over the course of the meeting. Though one of the reasons I love being a part of the conservation field is its constant experimentation with new and innovative techniques, such methods can often be incredibly unattainable to the majority of conservators. These workshops were not highly

specialized techniques that required exhaustive training or expensive equipment. Instead, there was an emphasis on accessibility: practitioners were honest and open about incurred costs and where they were sourcing materials. This type of realistic approach to conservation is so important in order to effectively care for cultural heritage.

Casting and molding losses in gilded frames with Larry Schutts was an especially relevant workshop as I have been treating the losses in a nineteenth-century gilded frame from Biltmore House (Image 3). The Biltmore frame even has a bead molding similar to that of some of the frame fragments used in the workshop (Image 2). In my treatment proposal I included several steps on casting replacement pieces in epoxy putty, but I had not actually done this process prior to this workshop! It was an excellent opportunity to get a feel for different casting and mold-making materials. It also challenged my approach as I had never considered casting the fill directly on to the frame. I look forward to continuing my experimentation with the techniques I learned at the conference in real-world treatment scenarios.

I cannot emphasize enough how grateful I am to have been able to attend SERCA's annual meeting with the support of the Leonora O. Weaver Scholarship. Many thanks to the executive board for working hard to put on such a successful event, to Spelman College and its students for sharing their campus and insights, and to all the attendees that made the annual meeting such a welcoming gathering. I look forward to future meetings!

Pattern Weights : SERCA TIP March 2025

By Stephanie Watkins,
Senior Paper and Photographic Materials Conservator,
Watkins Conservation Services, LLC

Weights are essential conservation tools. As there is not one type, size, shape, or weight that fits all work applications, having a variety on hand creates more efficient workflow. Their form follows their function.

Familiar to textile conservators, tailors, and sewers, pattern weights come in a wide variety of shapes and sizes. Pattern weights replace pinning of paper or polyester patterns during fabric and leather cutting. Suitable for conservation use are those made of glass, ceramic, leather, wood, metal (iron, steel) and fabric bags filled with stainless steel shot, glass beads, or sand.

Comercially made leather, metal, and glass paperweights function as larger pattern weights, too! Circles, cylinders, and pyramids (tetrahedrons and polyhedrons) are popular fabric shapes for pattern weights.

Dritz brand D607 pattern weights (left image

back, set of 4) are sold in blue, pink, green, and purple (rarer, not shown). Each is 4 oz. in weight. Keep them grouped in the box for a larger, heavier weight. Used individually, the soft, low profiles are particularly helpful when holding an area in which you need to do fine close-up work with both hands. Not shown, USA-made leather weights filled with stainless steel shot (1" x 2.5" (1/4 lb.) and larger sizes) are available from family owned, [Harry J. Epstein Co., Kansas City, MO](#).

It can be challenging to determine the fill materials of commercial products if you want a lead-free lab. Lead is prevalent, especially within the secondary resale markets. For example, circa 1980's white hard plastic encased pattern weights (left image, right front) have lead interiors, obvious once the casings crack.

Most economical is to make your own pattern weights to suit your preferred needs adjusting sizes and weights accordingly. A quick online search will provide many ideas and numerous free patterns, blog tutorials, and videos.



Commercially made



Handmade

Examples:

- A tutorial using flat steel washers, covered in [Fabric and felt by Danielle, \(2021\)](#). This is an easily stackable and customizable design (right image, dark circle front center).
- A tutorial for flat square pillow weights with a handling strap by [Caroline Fairbanks \(Dec 2023\)](#). In conservation use, pillow weights stack well if you need to add more weight to a small area (right image, back stack of five).
- A tutorial for triangular pyramid (tetrahedron) [Pattern weights by Sachiko, \(2012\)](#) (right image, front right). Polyhedrons, or 4-sided pyramid weights, are also possible (right image, front left, gray leather, Inherent Vice Squad's "Eyjafjallajökull weight").
- A Canadian [Etsy shop, KnackeredMamas](#), still sells this style as door stops if you need very large weights.

Whether 3- or 4-sided pyramids, if you need a flat base, glue a heavy weight card (4- to 6-ply matboard scraps work well) to the bottom interior base and let it dry before sewing the sides. Leaving a little air gap at the top when filling helps with grabbing ease, or similarly, add a handling tab at the top. While an easy to make shape, pyramids don't stack well if you need more weight in a specific area.

For conservation use, heavier weight fabrics such as canvas (cotton duck), mattress ticking, denim, denier Cordura® (camping and luggage fabric), upholstery and marine upholstery fabric all work well for weights. If you are making many, using a sewing machine is efficient, yet many fabrics can be sewn by hand, of course. Leather is easily sewn together if you have an industrial sewing machine, a walker foot, or a hand-held leather stitcher tool.

Stainless steel shot (around 8 g/cm³), available from hunting suppliers in various gauges, substitutes for highly toxic lead shot (11.34g/cm³). Alternatively, glass micro beads (many sources including Fisher Scientific, Carolina Biological Supply, and Fairfield Polyfil from quilting and crafts stores) and the much lighter plastic beads can also be used depending on your weight needs. Partial filling will allow more drape and movement in your cloth weight. This feature is desirable when 3D elements need weighting. For small weights, a food or postal scale will allow you to control the fill amount if you want standardized heft or volumes.

An advantage when weights are made of stainless steel or glass beads and washable fabrics (not all fabrics listed above are washable) is that the weights can be hand-washed, rinsed, and air-dried if they get soiled. If worried about potential colorant transfer whether from water or solvent exposure, wash and bleed out well any fabrics chosen before sewing or choose natural fabrics without colorants, such as canvas. Using a barrier between the weight and the artifact, such as Mylar, blotter, heavy cloth or paper, or platen, also reduces any transfer from weights to artifacts.

In addition to pattern weights, short "worms" and longer "snakes" are simple, easy to make cylindrical tubes that are sewn at both ends. For more ideas, see [Sourcing Studio-Lab Weights](#).



Protecting Our Most Valuable Tool: Eye Safety in Art Conservation

By Kathryn Etre

Director of Conservation,

Mississippi Department of Archives and History

Conservators rely on their eyesight in every aspect of their careers. Eyes are a conservator's primary tool for assessing, examining, and documenting the condition of artworks, color matching, inpainting, creating good fills and repairs – to name just a few. Due to their vitality in the conservation field, eyes need to be protected. There are 2.4 million eye injuries annually in America, which is nearly 2000 a day. With the use of eye protection, at least 90% of these injuries could be prevented, keeping the conservator in the field longer and healthier.

Chemical burns, irritation, corneal scratches, and foreign objects in the eye are the most common injuries that can occur during conservation practice. However, cancer, cataracts, and retina damage from toxic chemicals, repetitive contact with chemicals and irritations, and UV lights can happen when a conservator's eyes are left unprotected.

The proper eye protection should be chosen for a specific hazard, be comfortable and fit properly, not restrict vision and movement, be durable and easy to clean, and allow for unrestricted functioning of any other required PPE, such as facemasks and respirators.



There are two main types of eye protection suitable for most conservation work: protective glasses and goggles.

Safety glasses are the most common form of protective eyewear. These safety glasses look like normal glasses, except they have an industrial design and are produced from stronger materials. Safety glasses should have side shields to protect the eyes from material entering from behind the lenses. As safety glasses are best for larger particles, safety glasses should be impact resistant. However, safety glasses will not prevent fine dust from filtering behind the glasses. Such dust can be highly irritating to eyes. Nor can safety glasses fully protect the eyes from splashes or vapors.

For protection from fine dust and chemicals – both splashes and vapors, safety goggles should be chosen. Protective goggles form a protective

seal around both eyes. The goggles should be tight fitting, and completely cover the eyes and eye sockets. Ideally, these goggles should be chemically resistant and be indirectly vented. These indirect vents are best to prevent contact from vapors and dust. These indirect vents, however, can cause the goggles to fog. Goggles with an anti-fog coating can be purchased.

Light exposure can cause eye damage as well. Many conservators use UV light for imagery and/or to evaluate the conservation process. UV light, however, can cause damage to retinas, cataracts, or cancer. Most polycarbonate lens, such in prescription glasses, will reduce the UV light to acceptable levels. However, ideally, eyewear protection for UV light should wrap around to prevent leakage from side. Uline and many laboratory supply companies have both impact resistant safety glasses and chemical resistant goggles - both with UV protection.

The detailed work of conservation as well as the increasing amount of work completed on a computer can cause strain. In fact, Computer Vision Syndrome, also referred to as Digital Eye Strain, describes a group of eye and vision-related problems that result from prolonged computer, tablet, e-reader and cell phone use. To prevent such strain – both from detail work and computer work –, conservators should follow the 20/20/20 rule. Take a 20-second break every 20 minutes and look at something 20 feet away. Glasses with blue light filters can assist with the digital eyestrain.

Many people are guilty of forgetting PPE in the moment or throwing off said PPE – like gloves and goggles – when that person gets hot or frustrated. However, with the large demands a conservator place on their eyes, it is important to keep eyes healthy. Choosing – and wearing – the appropriate protective eyewear will assist in keeping eyes healthy for the career of a conservator.

[American Optometric Association. Protecting your eyes at work.](#)

[Center for Construction Research and Training, 2015. Eye Protection: A Basic Understanding of the OSHA Standard.](#)

[Harris J, Smith A, Roth G, Topmiller J and Matetic RJ, 2022. The Manufacture and Selection of Eye Protection at Work June 8, 2022. CDC.](#)

[OSHA. Personal Protective Equipment: OSHA 3151-02R 2023.](#)



IF A LARGE PARTICLE IS STUCK IN THE EYE:

- Do not rub or apply pressure to the eye
- Do not attempt to remove the particle
- Apply a patch or large gauze bandage over the eye
- Immediately go to an Emergency Room

IF THERE IS A CHEMICAL OR IRRITANT IN THE EYE:

- Wash eye under faucet or eyewash station with cool water for at least 10 minutes
- Even if the eye feels fine after the wash, go to an Emergency Room to get the eye evaluated

Bridging the Gaps: A Transformative Experience

Jelani Rashad

*Postgraduate Research Fellow in Art Conservation
Yale Center for British Art*

SERCA 2025 was a unique and inspiring experience for me. As someone who's on the pre-program path, Bridging the Gaps reinforced the motivation I have for becoming a full-time conservator. I got the opportunity to network with a number of conservators, ranging from different specialties within the field. When speaking with these conservators, I learned about why they chose their career path and what factors influenced their decision. Although each person had different responses, the general consensus was that they fell into the field naturally. Whether it was through another person informing them of conservation or finding out about it individually, each response was relatable to how I found out about conservation. SERCA was the first conference where I could relate to the people in attendance and not feel like an outsider.

Through presentations and workshops, I learned important information about conservation. One presentation that stood out to me was *Evolving Approaches* by Renée Stein. The code of ethics section caught my attention immediately. Stein's presentation stressed the importance of considering the goals of compensation: structure and aesthetic. A quote that stood out to me from Stein was, "The ability to be accurate is largely based on the evidence we have." This quote reminded me that the methods and materials conservators apply revolve around the original oneness of an object. I learned that it's vital for a conservator to not go against an object's original composition to protect its future examination,



scientific investigation, treatment, and function. Prior to this presentation, I knew that considering ethics when approaching loss compensation was essential, but this presentation dove deeper into the subject.

Lastly, the hands-on workshops were my favorite part of the conference. Amparo Escolano's session, titled *Creating Reproduction Book Leather with Acrylics and Reproducing paper textures with cellulose power*, was a personal favorite. I got the opportunity to replicate a leather surface with acrylic media and reusable silicone rubber molds. This demo gave me new insight on how conservators can replicate original surface textures on leather objects without the use of solvents and expensive

materials. My color matching skills were put to the test, but I had no fear in my heart! I underestimated the flexibility of the silicone mold before jumping into the demo, but it was able to cover the original surface of the leather object. This replication is highly efficient, as it doesn't sacrifice durability or strength.

My time spent at SERCA 2025 will never be forgotten. The connections I made in addition to the new information I learned inspire me to stay on this path I have forged for myself. I am forever grateful for this experience!



SERCA Community

Connections

We're excited to introduce a brand-new section in the Newsletter: SERCA Community Connections! This space is dedicated to fostering relationships, sharing resources, and connecting our members to valuable opportunities. In this section, you'll find:

- Paid Opportunities: Listings for internships and career advancement in conservation.
- Career Navigation: Tips on finding mentors, professional development opportunities, and overcoming career challenges.
- Announcements: Workshops or funding opportunities specifically tailored to conservation professionals.
- Transitions: Offering the sale or transfer of equipment, tools, supplies, or businesses that could benefit fellow conservators.
- Reflections or advice: Insights from established or retiring members on building and sustaining a career in conservation.

Please note: This is not a space for direct sales but rather a way to connect members and cultivate meaningful professional relationships.

Have an opportunity to share? Looking for a mentor? Need to rehome equipment? This is the place! Send your submissions or inquiries to newsletter@sercaconservation.org, and let's support and uplift our community together!





Snapshots of Success: Highlights from the 2025 SERCA Meeting!

