



SOUTHEAST REGIONAL
CONSERVATION ASSOCIATION

paper | *books* | *paintings* | *objects* | *textiles*

SUMMER

Volume 7
Number 1

August
2024

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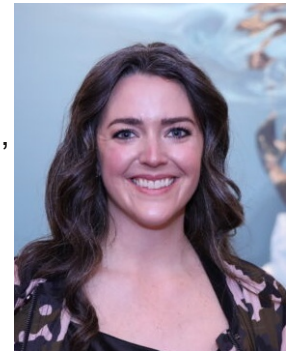
From the Bench of the President

Dear SERCA Members,

As I step into my role as president, I'm thinking about the profound impact our community has had on me and our profession. In conservation, sharing knowledge isn't just beneficial—it is essential. By staying up to date on the latest challenges and advancements, we're able to assist one another in finding innovative solutions to the complex problems we face every day.

SERCA is a supportive and inclusive community where members share experiences, collaborate on solutions, and mentor newcomers. The southeast is known for its hospitality, but the reason SERCA is such a welcoming place is because of each of you. I am proud to steward this strong sense of community within SERCA.

I was honored to serve as SERCA's vice president from 2020-2022—in the midst of COVID—and even though we couldn't meet in person during that time, I was grateful for the opportunity to connect, collaborate, and support one another. While SERCA continues to offer virtual connections, there's something uniquely valuable about in-person gatherings. They allow us to openly share experiences, discuss challenges, and build meaningful relationships. One of my primary goals is to encourage and organize these in-person gatherings. In addition to strengthening our professional networks, they provide access to the emotional and professional support that is so crucial in our field.



(continued on page 3)

Board Members

PRESIDENT

Shannon Kimbro

VICE PRESIDENT

Eliza Gillian

SECRETARY

Sara Latham

TREASURER

Brittany Dinneen

COMMUNICATIONS COORD.

Katie Boodle

NEWSLETTER COORD.

Amparo Escolano

HEALTH & SAFETY COORD.

Katie Etre

MEMBER AT LARGE

Tahe Zalat

Seasonal Quote

"Summer afternoon –
summer afternoon; to me
those have always been
the two most beautiful
words in the English
language."

Henry James

Board Positions Vacant

Dear SERCA Members,

As we continue to grow and evolve as an organization, we're excited to encourage dedicated members like you to consider joining our Board of Directors. We currently have an opening for a Newsletter Editor, and we welcome expressions of interest from those who are passionate about contributing to the leadership and direction of SERCA.

We believe that a strong and diverse Board of Directors is essential for the continued success and growth of our organization. By joining the board, you have the chance to make a meaningful impact, connect with fellow members, and help shape the future of our community. In addition to the Newsletter Editor position, we are also keen to hear from members interested in other potential future roles who bring unique perspectives and skills.

The Newsletter Editor plays a vital role in enhancing our communication efforts by leading the production of our newsletter, ensuring that our members stay informed and engaged. When other vacancies arise, board positions may include roles such as Secretary and Membership Coordinator. The Secretary maintains official records, minutes, and correspondence, ensuring smooth operations, while the Membership Coordinator is responsible for fostering a vibrant and engaged community.

If you are interested in the Newsletter Editor position, or if you'd like to discuss other future opportunities on the board, please reach out to president@sercaconservation.org. We would be delighted to explore how your talents can contribute to our leadership team.

Thank you for considering this opportunity to be a part of our leadership team. Your dedication and enthusiasm are what make our organization thrive, and we look forward to possibly working with you in the future to continue building a strong and dynamic SERCA.



From the Bench of the President (continued from page 1)

Finally, I want to thank you all for your continued support and dedication to SERCA. I look forward to serving as your president and working together to advance our shared mission of preserving cultural heritage.

Warm regards,

Shannon Douglas Kimbro, President

Workshop

We are pleased to announce that Emory Libraries, SERCA, and the Guild of Book Workers-SE Chapter are co-sponsoring a new workshop taught by Jeff Peachey, Conservation Tools: Making, Modifying, and Maintaining. The workshop will be held October 7-11, 2024 at the Emory Libraries Conservation Lab in Atlanta, GA.

Here is the link and registration information on the SERCA website: <https://sercaconservation.org/current-events-workshops/>

Membership

Membership Payments Online via PayPal

Renewing your membership is easier than ever, without having to worry about mailing in those pesky checks!! You will also be able to register and pay for workshops online. Please be sure to submit BOTH the registration form and the payment. If you haven't already renewed, please do so today. And spread the word to 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/>

Newsletter Submissions

Working on an interesting project? Have an internship, job opening, or workshop opportunity to share? Let us know what's going on in your studio! Items for inclusion in the newsletter should be directed to both Newsletter Editors (right now there is one of the positions vacant, please consider joining the team): Amparo Escolano newsletter@sercaconservation.org

SERCA's Newsletter is usually published three times a year in April, August, and December. Please note that articles should be sent at least two weeks prior to publication. Also, even if there is no limit on the number of images, 4 to 6 accompanying images in jpeg format are recommended. The editors reserve the right to copy-edit in order to adapt it to the newsletter format.

Solidified Sunshine, Y'all: Thoughts on SERCA's 2024 Meeting

This year, I was honored to attend SERCA's 2024 Annual Meeting in Jackson, Mississippi as the Leonora O. Weaver Memorial Scholarship recipient. The theme? Gilding! My personal fascination with gilding began in my childhood. My father is a painter and uses gold leaf in many of his works. I have many childhood memories playing in the unbridled chaos of his studio, oil paints oozing from hung palettes, pungent solvents in former jam jars teetering on haphazard plywood shelves (a chaos very dissimilar to my current lab with its organized flammables cabinet and SDS binder), brushes in coffee cans, shreds of scrap gold brushed from surfaces mingling with the dust bunnies in the corner or glinting like embedded mica in our brows and lashes.

In addition to the gold haze of my childhood, as a component of my last year in the bookbinding program at North Bennet Street School, head-edge gilding was technique I'd complete over and over in preparation for a final fine binding, the edges of a stack of prepped textblocks flashing sundry success by workbench lamp light. The final product of this project was a full maroon goatskin binding with surface gilt natural stingray and burgundy stingray leather onlays, and gold and blind tooling. The steps of edge gilding began to feel woven into my being, the gilding becoming muscular and informed by the sensitivity of my fingertips, the dissipation of fog of my breath on the gold. I loved this practice; the way I moved meaning knife caught, the bole pooled, the gold stuck, operating with care and attention.

Care and attention were clear in the work of SERCA's presenters during this 2024 Annual Meeting. I listened enthralled to talks by Kaitlyn Wright, Elly Davis, Katie Etre, Richard

Branyan, and SERCA's guests, Micki and Mitch Cavanah. Micki and Mitch provided us with an overview of gold or "solidified sunshine," an oft repeated epithet for gold during the weekend. We discussed gold in its various applications, but focused on gold leaf, its luster and



I'm attaching a leaf to a gilder's screen with just a whisper of Vaseline, prior to its release against a sanded and boled surface flooded with gilder's liquor (a solution of water, isopropyl, and rabbit's skin glue). Photo Credit: Tahe Zalat.

sensitivity in concert with the complexity of its use. We looked on in awe at both the process and result of Reed's Gold Leaf's work, especially Nashville's Parthenon's Athena, gilded in the South's sweltering summer with no AC nor fans, so as not to disrupt the settling leaves. I gasped as I realized, through the course of their description of this task, that the scaffolding needed to be dismantled after all this delicate work with selfsame delicacy, so as not to scratch or disrupt this beauteous gold behemoth. During their lectures, I was also struck by the incomparability of gilded domes, how the gilder's mark

is left in the form of the sheets' distinct edges (composing a grid), as brush strokes indicate a painter's hand.

Another treasured component of this 2024 Annual Meeting was the workshop, in which we completed assorted gilding methods, including verre églomisé, gilding on a frame pre-treated with bole, and disparate strategies for paper gilding. I found the églomisé mirroring effect truly magical, in absolute wonder as my puckered leaf transformed into a smooth reflection. I instinctually held my breath as I manipulated the gold sheets, unconscious routine from my time head-edge gilding when

any deep sighs would send gold spinning like a tumbleweed. It was with even more reverence for gilders' skills, that I left this workshop!

I look forward to carrying what I've learned forward. Writing this brief contribution was challenging because there was much to absorb and even more on which to reflect. Thank you to SERCA for having me this year! It was an absolute pleasure to meet members, and to learn so much from this community. I look forward to attending the 2025 Annual Meeting!

Lucy Dunphy Barsness

SERCA ANNUAL MEETING: Call for Presenters

Please join SERCA next year for our Annual Meeting "Bridging the Gaps: Practical and Theoretical Approaches to Loss Compensation." Our goal is to have a meeting that will explore the multifaceted theme of compensating loss by examining both practical techniques and theoretical frameworks to provide a comprehensive understanding of how conservators approach the challenge of compensating for losses in artifacts and their histories. Participants will engage with fill methodologies for repair while contemplating the ethical and conceptual implications of loss and intervention.

We are looking to SERCA members to volunteer as presenters but also encourage members to share this announcement broadly in their professional communities. We are hoping to have a blend of presentations, mini hands-on workshops, and discussions. At this time, we are envisioning presentations of 20-



Leather filling prepared with acrylic resins and japanese paper. Photo Credit: Amparo Escolano



25 minutes followed by time for Q&A from conservation professionals across all disciplines. Do you have a technique that you would like to share with your peers in a presentation format followed by a demo or a mini hands-on session? We are envisioning hands-on sessions lasting between 1.5-2.5 hours depending on complexity of the technique and number of participants.

The Annual Meeting will be held in Atlanta, GA, over a Friday and Saturday in late February or early March 2025. We're excited to bring together our community for this event, and we encourage you to get involved by submitting a proposal. This is your chance to share your knowledge, insights, and innovative ideas we'd love to hear from you!

For more details, please visit <https://sercaconservation.org/annual-meeting/>.

If you'd like to submit a proposal, please send it to communications@sercaconservation.org.

Gilder's Lung and Mad Hatter's Disease: Too Much of a Good Thing

By Kathryn Etre

Our recent annual meeting centered around gilding including gilding demonstrations as well as case studies on the conservation of gilded surfaces. Beautiful but deadly, there is a long history of diseases caused by gilding, especially gilder's lung and mad hatters disease. What are the dangers inherent to gilding and the conservation of gilded surfaces and how do we prevent these potential dangers?

There are three different pathways in which toxins from gilding can be introduced: inhalation, ingestion, and skin contact.

With inhalation, the greatest danger is mostly an issue of particle size. Particles of less than 10 μm , dust, are of the greatest concern. Although particles of this size typically do not occur with traditional gilding techniques, this smaller particle size can be encountered during sanding of gilt surfaces and/or the use of metal powders to create a metallic paint. Frequent inhalation of dust can cause the inflammation of mucous membranes, pneumoconiosis (dusty lung) which causes the lungs to lose elasticity, and increased risk of lung cancer.

However, although the smaller particle size is the most dangerous, larger particles can cause damage such as being a choking risk, frequent irritation of the lungs and digestive track, and ingestion.

Even though gold and silver are considered edible, constant ingestion of these metals can cause gastrointestinal upsets, renal damage, headaches, and irritability. The over consumption of silver could cause a gray discoloration of skin, hair, and internal organs as well.

The biggest danger, however, comes with any elemental used to create alloys and/or non-traditional gilding materials such as copper, tin, lead, arsenic, and mercury. Although these elements typically only occur in small amounts in most gilding products, even a "...low-dose exposure is a subtle and hidden threat..." (Mood et al 2021, 2). However, these elements are also the most common heavy metals seen in human poisoning, both intentional and accidental.

For example, imitation gold contains high amount of copper, which can be toxic in high amounts. Tin in bronze leaf can cause damage to nervous system. Lead with silver or copper alloy leaf will cause high blood pressure, damage to reproductive organs, lethargy, brain damage, lung

dysfunction, liver and kidney damage, and cancer. Risks from lead consumption are magnified in children, well documented in the consumption of lead paint flakes.

Although arsenic and mercury are the most toxic as gaseous fumes, these are the two elements that cause the severest damage in any form. Mercury can cause personality disorders (mad hatters disease), visual and hearing impairment, and nerve damage (uncontrolled movements and slurring). Mercury is more common in fire gilding used to apply gold to a baser metal, such as copper alloy. Objects conservators should take care when treating gilt historic jewelry. Although mercury is much more dangerous in a vapor than in liquid form, direct contact can cause skin lesions. Grainger, Uline, and Stericycle, to name a few, all carry well-equipped mercury spill kits for safe clean up and disposal of mercury.

Arsenic, commonly in copper alloys, has been documented as a poison from 1500 BC. Arsenic can cause neurological damage, skin and hair changes (Mee's lines), edema, damage of red blood cells, heart problems, and jaundice.

Luckily, not all is lost. All of these negative consequences of gilding and conserving gilt surfaces can be easily prevented with the use of proper PPE. N95 dust masks and fume extraction will prevent the inhalation and ingestion of these metals. Gloves should be worn, particularly when the composition of the gilding is unknown. Contaminated gloves should be immediately removed and disposed. See previous Health and Safety articles on choosing and disposing gloves. "There is a place like no place on earth. A land is full of wonder, mystery, and danger. Some say to survive it, you need to be as mad as a hatter. Which, luckily, I am." – Mad Hatter, Alice in Wonderland

Although achieving the sheen and beauty of a gilt surface can be satisfying, both in the application of gilding and returning a gilt surface to its former glory, such work carries inherent dangers. However, with proper prevention, such work can remain a wonder without the danger of becoming a mad hatter.

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Photo Credit: Kathryn Etre