

CONSERVATION SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM SUMMARY OF REPORTS (PART 3 OF 3): MOUNTMAKERS FORUM SCHOLARSHIPS

Tru Vue® Conservation Conference Scholarships provide funding for conservation professionals to participate in industry conferences and events. After attending the events, scholarship recipients return to their organizations and communities where they share their experiences and the knowledge gained.

Previous QuickVue articles have featured scholarship recipients of the Foundation of the American Institute for Conservation (FAIC) and The Institute of Conservation (Icon). In concluding our three-part series, we share more stories from [The International Mountmakers Forum](#).

Sponsored by Tru Vue and held at the [Cleveland Museum of Art \(CMA\)](#), attendees of The International Mountmakers Forum's fifth conference were treated to a packed schedule of speakers, how-to sessions, poster presentations and a behind-the-scenes tour of the CMA.

Participating Tru Vue Conference Scholarship recipients included:

- Sheri Besso, [Spie Productions, Ltd.](#)
- Keith Conway, [Smithsonian Institution's National Museum of African Art](#)
- Alan Cooke, [Pitt Rivers Museum](#)
- Rachael Lee, [Victoria and Albert Museum](#)
- Oliver Loaiza
- Chris Moore, [Experience Music Project Museum](#)
- Laura Ostrander, [Rhode Island School of Design Museum of Art](#)
- Gwen Spicer, [Spicer Art Conservation, LLC](#)
- Jacques Talbot, [Oeno Gallery](#)
- Christine Wittich, [University of California-San Diego](#)

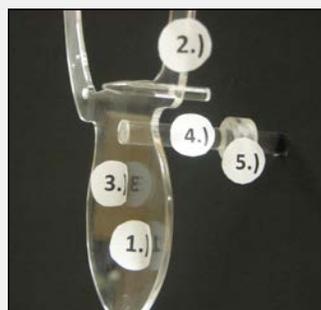
The following are summaries of the recipients' reports:

Sheri Besso, Spie Productions, Ltd.

"As there is no substitute for real-time discussions, to be able to listen to someone's presentation and ask questions right then and there, or share and compare experiences... only makes us better stewards of art and artifacts," said Sheri Besso of Spie Productions, Ltd. "The material information and websites, sharing stories of successes and failures, and email and phone number exchanges are the heart of what I found to be most valuable. What impresses me the most about the Forum is, although the members have insanely creative imaginations, personal safety and the safety of the art/artifact never fails to be the number one priority."

Keith Conway, exhibits specialist, Smithsonian Institution's National Museum of African Art

"I believe that the most valuable element of the Forum was to see the value of cooperation and brilliant team dynamics in action, and see how this group cooperation translates into the resulting exhibition projects presently on exhibit in the CMA galleries," Keith Conway noted. "The Forum has also allowed me to share information both during and after the forum, like the following examples of the use of acrylic in mounts that I fabricate."



Omani jewelry on acrylic, before and after.



Acrylic book cradle mount, before and after.

Alan Cooke, museum technician, Pitt Rivers Museum

Alan Cooke presented “Displaying ‘Curiosities’ from the Cook Voyage Collection.” He said, “The Forum was a unique opportunity to attend an event that focused on mount making. This is unheard of in the U.K. I have returned with a wealth of knowledge in conservation-approved new materials that can be used for my mount making in the museum environment. Alternative approaches to constructing mounts were analyzed, and I now have new techniques to use.” In addition, he learned “immediately accessible avenues to explore that will develop our display and exhibition designs to the next level in 3-D scanning, accompanied by 3-D modeling.”

Rachel Lee, textile conservation display specialist, Victoria and Albert Museum

Rachel Lee shared a poster presentation on the challenges of mounting an 18th century Tahitian mourner’s costume in a 3-D and wearable form for the first time in the object’s display history. She found the Forum, “provided a valuable opportunity to evaluate the mounting choices of this unique object and to consider alternatives for the future.”

With the opportunity to attend others’ presentations, Lee listed several highlights including Jaime Hascall’s reflective talk on “Materials Selection for Object Safety and Practicality.” Lee said, “I was particularly interested in the use of Vivak® and hope to experiment with thermoplastic materials for future mannequin mounts.”

She also was keen to learn how Jim Williams used Fosshape® material to create a standard petite mannequin for an exhibition. “Jim has created robust mannequins from Fosshape 600D, a stronger quality of Fosshape that I was not previously aware of. Jim’s clever method of dismantling a four-part Ethafoam® inner ‘body’ once the Fosshape had been heat-set, meant that there is no need to cut and re-stitch the material. I will definitely be considering Jim’s helpful tips and tricks for future Fosshape mounts.”

In addition, Lee shared her appreciation for Gwen Spicer of Spicer Art Conservation’s “Stick to it Magnetic Mountniers” on testing and developing magnetic systems for mounting and display purposes. She noted, “From finding the most appropriate steel gauge to avoid compression, to the unnecessary use of Mylar barriers, Gwen’s introduction and review of magnets has made me re-evaluate their use.”

Gwen Spicer, Spicer Art Conservation, LLC

Gwen Spicer was not only a presenter but also a Tru Vue Scholarship recipient. “There was a refreshing drive among the participants to learn about new things, how new techniques could be applied, workability, and a general interest in using new tools,” observed Spicer.

Oliver Loaiza

Oliver Loaiza also valued Spicer’s presentation and added, “Another very enlightening presentation focused on the types of material testing for objects that are in direct contact with artwork. The presentations were uniquely different, and many of the approaches and solutions for mountmaking were varied. Currently, I am working on an exhibition of African art and I look forward to implementing and sharing what I learned at the Forum.”

Laura Ostrander, lead technician for preparation and installation, The Rhode Island School of Design Museum of Art

Laura Ostrander offered her compliments on Spicer’s presentation and others. She explained, “By attending a conference such as the Mountmakers Forum, I receive such a concentrated amount of pertinent information from the very people on the front lines of research and discovery, and am then able to bring it back to my department and other colleagues...not limited to an itemized list of disaster preparedness supplies, advice on the proper way to store rare earth magnets when not in use, many photographs of various installation implements (i.e. lifts, carts), and techniques used when working with Fosshape.”

Jacques Peter Talbot, preparator, private gallery

Jacques Talbot also appreciated the Forum’s transportation-focused topics as he learned “the design for a successful mount can often be extrapolated to a support, harness, brace or other manner of successfully transporting the work. In essence, the bare bones of the best means of transporting an object can more often than not be identified in its mount. This was a critical realization for me, and as such, I have since endeavored to research mounts for how a particular work may be safely transported.”

“At the end of the Forum, I had not only accrued multiple contacts, but had become privy to the importance of the field’s online communities (arcsinfo.org, paccin.org), which have since informed my current practices.”

Christine Wittich, structural engineer, University of California-San Diego

Echoing Talbot, Christine Wittich said, “The Forum brought to light the consideration of object travel as part of the mount design. Mounting techniques and materials testing documentation can assist others in their designs, but also can lead future mountmakers and engineers to understand the current structure and purpose of the object and mount.”

She continued, “As a structural engineer, the forum was a very unique experience. I gained a more profound understanding and respect for the mountmaking craft. As an outsider to the mountmaking community, I was very grateful for the opportunity to present my collaborative research and to network with the diverse and accomplished group of mountmakers, conservators and preparators.”

Chris Moore, shop assistant, Experience Music Project Museum

Benefitting from the Forum’s many presentations, Chris Moore had worked in the field just five months before attending this educational event. He significantly expanded his network and knowledge, and enthusiastically confirmed his career path. In his words: “I’m so excited for what the future brings. I feel like the Forum flung the doors wide open and threw me into the thick of it. The Forum gave me a taste for what could be, and I’m damn near jumping out of my skin for the opportunity to put the things I learned into practice.”

“Tru Vue scholarship recipients contribute to the conferences they attend as much as they benefit from them. We are proud to hear how the education and insights they gain through these experiences positively affect their individual careers, their organizations and their professional communities,” concluded Yadin Larochette, Tru Vue Museum and Conservation Liaison.

For more information on the Fifth International Mountmakers Forum, including links to videos of the presentations, posters, and handouts, visit <http://mountmakersforumcleveland.com/>.

To review the first two stories in this three-part series, that feature summary reports from the Icon Grant Programme and FAIC International Scholarship recipients, please [click here](#).