Volume 13 Number 3 1998

# CONSERVATION The GCI Newsletter











# The Getty Conservation Institute Newsletter

Volume 13 Number 3 1998

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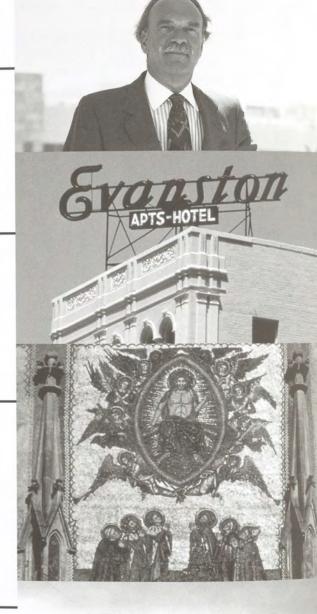
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Front cover: Postcards of Los Angeles from the first half of the 20th century. Buildings such as Los Angeles City Hall, the Biltmore Hotel, and the Church of Our Lady the Queen of the Angels-depicted here-have come to be part of the city's architectural heritage. The postcards are in the collection of the Research Library, Getty Research Institute.

Back cover: Globe photo by Dennis Keeley.







#### Feature

#### Transcending Decay The Restoration of an Industrial Community

In Southern California's expansionist development milieu, where disposing of old buildings remains the norm, the idea of recycling derelict factories and warehouses as a means of revitalizing a declining industrial community is startling. Yet in the industrial district of one small city, this is exactly what a visionary partnership of developers and an architect have been doing, in the process creating what the *New York Times* has called "an impressive fusion of economic renewal, innovative design, and cultural awareness."

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#### Synergy and Collaboration A Conversation with Barry Munitz

The president and chief executive officer of the J. Paul Getty Trust reflects upon the mission of the Getty, the role of education and conservation in its work, and its responsibility to its home community of Los Angeles.

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During the 20th century, Los Angeles developed a rich but not widely appreciated cultural heritage that is often overshadowed by its Tinseltown reputation. In recognition of the cultural legacy of the city that is home to the Getty Center, the GCI is continuing its long-term commitment to Los Angeles by focusing on ways to contribute to the conservation of the city's significant built heritage. In this section, we offer a few brief descriptions of significant places in Los Angeles and environs, "snapshots" that give a glimpse of some of the historic richness in this still-young American community.

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#### Unveiling Prague's Golden Gate The Conservation of The Last Judgment Mosaic

Among the most extraordinary of Prague's artistic treasures is *The Last Judgment* mosaic on the facade above the south entrance of St. Vitus Cathedral in Prague Castle. Considered one of the great monuments in the Czech Republic, the work is the most significant exterior medieval mosaic north of the Alps. For most of its existence, its vivid colors have been rendered invisible, covered over by a layer of corrosion that would repeatedly form after each cleaning. But now—perhaps for the first time since the mosaic's creation—visitors can finally see the full brilliance of the colors in this magnificent 14th-century masterpiece, thanks to a collaboration between the Czech government and the GCI.

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Updates on Getty Conservation Institute projects, events, publications, and staff.

# Transcending Decay The Restoration of an Industrial Community

By Neville Agnew and Jeffrey Levin

An aerial view of the eastern, industrial district of Culver City, probably taken in the late 1970s. The area slid into economic decline, but in recent years it has enjoyed a rebirth of activity through the recycling of old factories and warehouses that provides new functions for the buildings while transforming their structural forms with awardwinning architectural designs.

PRESERVATION PAYS, as many studies have shown. A recent analysis, for example, by the Center for Urban Policy Research at Rutgers University found that historic preservation projects provide an economic boost to communities greater even than that created by new construction. But preservation is more than dollars and cents; it can work to sustain the character and vitality of a community.

In the urban context, conservation ordinarily focuses on the preservation of historic structures and landmarks of high aesthetic and cultural value, often with little or no direct attention paid to the identity or well-being of the local community. But sometimes what is required is a broader vision of conservation, one that addresses not simply individual structures but the community as a whole. An area in physical and economic decline is more than a damaged, inanimate artifact whose repair can be put aside for a convenient time; it is a living, struggling place where the hopes and aspirations of people wither as jobs evaporate and layoffs occur. All is change in urban communities, and the trajectory over time can be rapid, whether upward or downward.

When the trajectory is downward, the result is the big-city version of a ghost town. Once the economic lifeblood of a community runs out, all that remains is an industrial wasteland, a haunting relic of bygone prosperity. One or myriad factors—the flight of jobs to countries where manufacturing is cheaper, demographic changes, or shifts in the industrial demands of a global marketplace—



Far Left: An empty warehouse in the Hayden Tract, prior to being redeveloped.

Near Left: The Conjunctive Points Dance Center. Highperformance parts for General Electric jet engines were, in the past, manufactured in the building. *Photos:* Eric Blanc.

can prompt a slide from prosperity to poverty.

Many sections of Los Angeles-a dynamic and fastgrowing city that historically has had plenty of space for expansion-have experienced bewilderingly rapid turnarounds from boom to bust, as the city grew and fed on its own energy. As new areas developed, others slumped. Venice, for example, the beachside mimic of its famous Italian namesake, is one of California's characteristic schemes and dreams-the turn-of-the-century vision of Abbot Kinney, who arrived in the Golden State in 1880. After a period as a popular resort, the area slipped into shabbiness, decay, and crime, and its canals were filled in or clogged with trash. From the mid-1920s to the 1970s, the area languished. Yet Venice had something going for it that the ghost town does not-prime seaside real estate. Sooner or later its natural endowments could be counted on to reinvigorate it. Today it is the quintessential California beachside community, but with enough of its former seediness still present to provide a piquant vitality.

A few miles inland from Venice is Culver City, an incorporated city with its own local government but surrounded by greater Los Angeles. Long established in Culver City have been components of the entertainment and aerospace industries. Because the city is not blessed by sea and sand, the decline of its industrial east end—after its decades of boom (in response to the defense needs of World War II and the Cold War)—was precipitous. As industries closed or moved away, factory and warehouse buildings fell vacant, and the district began to die. Bordering on southcentral Los Angeles, the city was wracked by riots in 1992 which dealt the area a further blow. This industrial section was set to become, as have many other urban areas in the United States and elsewhere, a wasteland of decaying buildings, graffiti, weeds, and trash—an industrial ghost town that L.A. motorists sped by on their way elsewhere.

Would this part of Culver City—that once had been a thriving community with factory workers who lived in the nearby modest single-family houses, served by corner stores and the amenities of a stable environment—have to enter a terminal phase of utter ruin, wait 20 to 30 years for the economic tide to change and flow in its direction again, and then be redeveloped after the bulldozers had done their work? The answer to this question was fundamentally an economic one. An area such as this, a symptom and a victim of economic forces, could only be revitalized with its inherent workplace character restored if the realities of the market were incorporated into the solution.

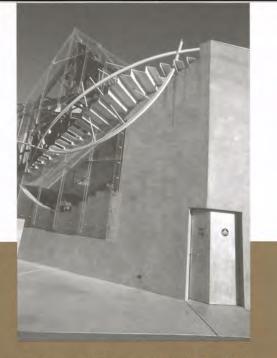
## A VISION OF RENEWAL

Culver City's eastside industrial district—locally known as the Hayden Tract—contains 57 acres and over one hundred buildings. The stimulus for its renewal has been a visionary partnership of developers Frederick and Laurie Samitaur Smith and architect Eric Owen Moss that began about a decade ago. It was a time of economic decline for the district. According to Frederick Smith, by 1991 1 million of the 1.4 million square feet of industrial space in the tract lay vacant. In an area that once employed 3,500 people, only 870 workers remained.

The Smiths, who own 15 acres of the tract, are developers whose agenda is to restore the vitality of the area in innovative ways. As Frederick Smith says with some passion, there is "an ecological need for developers to learn how to recycle, rather than to destroy pre-existing structures." In Southern California's notoriously restless and

The Samitaur Building, leased by Kodak. The building, one of the early Smith-Moss projects, utilizes airspace above a private street, and has brought renewed economic activity to the surrounding, pre-existing warehouse structures. *Photo:* Eric Blanc.





Exterior view of a building redeveloped in the mid-1990s. The building houses Entertainment Asylum, a subsidiary of America Online. *Photo*: Eric Blanc.

expansionist development milieu, where disposing of old buildings remains the norm, the idea of recycling derelict factories and warehouses as a means of revitalizing a local community is startling. Yet this is what the Smiths have done, building upon what existed, as opposed to leveling structures and starting from the ground up.

Frederick Smith's family has long had business associations with the area, and so the tie was there. It was a tie that he felt even more strongly after the 1992 riots, when public perception of the area worsened. "One can't just take from a neighborhood in good times and then desert it in bad," he has explained. "Our family had earned a profit off these buildings for years; we had a moral obligation to help the neighborhood through the crisis."

"The economic future of the community was being destroyed," observes his wife Laurie. "You've got to have the guts to say, 'I'm not afraid of what's going on in this neighborhood. There is hope for this neighborhood.' If you make an attempt to defeat despair, you can conquer."

To conquer, the Smiths have collaborated with architect Eric Owen Moss. People focus on the architecture of Moss—it is hard not to—for its exuberant transformation of worn-out industrial buildings into exciting geometric forms. This is architecture as sculpture, designed to grab the attention of the passerby-sophisticated living sculpture intended to inspire and stimulate the creative people who work in the buildings. Moss's approach is to utilize the shell and body parts of the old warehouses and industrial spaces to create entirely new configurations that maintain a link, through structural elements, to the buildings' previous incarnations. Architect Philip Johnson called Moss "the master jeweler of junk." Here indeed are weathered trusses and wooden beams, columns showing their scars and rough warehouse uses, nail holes and residues of paint, and original unplastered brick walls. At the same time, the buildings are functional, offering a dynamic workplace for the people who use them daily. As an executive at one of the companies occupying a Moss building states, "the difference between a conventional office building, which is conformist, and here is the difference between suffocation and spontaneous combustion. The space really lends itself to the fury and flurry of activity that the creative process demands."

That Moss is a leading architect is indisputable. His designs for Smith projects have won award after award, including five national American Institute of Architects (AIA) awards. The Los Angeles chapter of the AIA in its 1997 design award for one Smith-Moss structure declared that "the building recollects forward, acknowledging its past and the history of the area, while moving decisively forward to create the landmark headquarters for a digital graphics design company."

It has been said cynically of architecture that form follows funding. The Smith-Moss coalition proves this, but in a positive way. Here development has been turned into an art form: it adapts old buildings to new uses; construes the architecture to appeal to the owners and a clientele of emerging technology companies; and recharges the community through job creation and economic activity based not on destruction but resuscitation.

Still, the Smiths' approach has required that a premium be paid for Moss's expensive buildings, and the constraints have been difficult to overcome. Early on, Frederick Smith's vision was seen as "too bold," and his financial advisors told him it was "a mad step." Moss's designs are expensive to build; banks are reluctant lenders in an area previously devastated by riots. Even with over a decade of success, banks will still lend only 50 percent of the financing needed for Smith-Moss projects.

But the contribution these projects have made to the community is now acknowledged. In 1996 Steven Gourley, then mayor of Culver City, wrote that "Mr. Moss and the Smiths have converted these older industrial buildings into spacious high-tech palaces bathed in natural sunlight. They have reshaped those spaces in ways that are so completely new and so far outside our previous realm of experience that they stimulate and challenge our creative energies.... The work of Moss and the Smiths has influenced our debates on public art, the relationship between art and architecture, and the manner in which city government interacts with private entrepreneurs."

The Culver City Council, once skeptical of the Smith-Moss efforts, has come around as an ardent supporter. Recently it agreed that the building that is now home to the graphic design firm Pittard Sullivan can be categorized as art—architectural art—and thus qualifies for a one percent art subsidy from the city.

# AN EQUATION FOR SUCCESS

How is success measured in an undertaking like this? By return on investment? By sustainability? By community acceptance and revitalization? Is this an area on an artificial life-support system provided by courtesy of one couple's vision and money supplemented by reluctant bank loans to finance an architect's personal desire to build eye-catching, award-winning buildings? Certainly the business world has been attracted. Kodak and Sony are the big-name tenants, but other high-tech and media firms, as well as start-up companies, are there too, bringing the number of people employed in the district to around 4,500.

But the goal of the Smiths is more than business expansion through the rehabilitation of existing structures—it is to create a new-media business community mixed with a theatrical/arts community. One building is home to two architectural firms, a ballet company, an artist who works in metal, and studio, gallery, and café space. The Smiths' equation for success is nothing if not ambitious: melding the performing arts with high-tech information industries. They want people working on the cutting edge of technology to have contact with art and culture, so that they are aware of the societal implications of their work. Says Frederick Smith, "we are hoping to create a center where culture won't intimidate." Laurie Smith, whose background is in theater, adds, "to us, it's an urban experiment. . . . We're building a little city here."

As part of creating that city—based on a concept they have called "Conjunctive Points"—the Smiths have long worked on initiating an elaborate plan to use an abandoned railroad easement to creatively link the various parts of the district. The unused easement runs through the tract, and the Smiths envision its long-term development with buildings in the airspace above it and parkland underneath.

The revitalization of the Hayden Tract has been one of the catalysts for improvements in other areas of Culver City, including a face-lift in the business district by the city's community development department. The appearance of tiredness after a long ailment is gone, and new vitality is transforming the city. Sony, which in the early 1990s bought the MGM studios in Culver City, is playing a major role by restoring and expanding its studios. The city's central location and relatively reasonable rents have also helped. Says the president of a film and record company that moved into one of the Smith-Moss buildings: "I wanted to be close to where we do business, which is primarily Beverly Hills, but we looked there, and in order to get the same amount of space it was going to cost twice as much money to get half as good a building. I thought to myself, 'why am I paying this kind of money to be in an uninteresting building, when I can go 10 minutes south, have a really gorgeous building designed by a totally interesting, on-the-edge architect, built to my specifications, for half the price?""

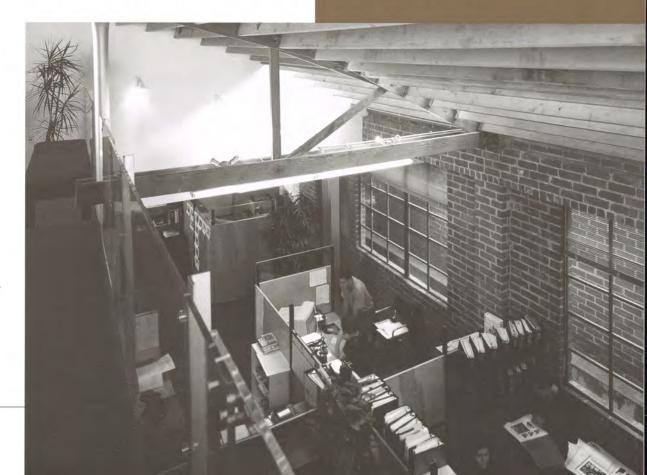
The Smiths have proven that the apparently incluctable urban decline of their area of Culver City can be reversed. The nucleation of a vibrant new-media area has stimulated other initiatives elsewhere within the city, and others have taken note. In 1994 the *Los Angeles Times* reported that "neoindustrial enterprises are attracted to the area, which has become a beehive for computer scientists, filmmakers, and graphic and video designers." In describing the work of Smith and Moss, a 1996 *Times* editorial noted that "the Los Angeles seen from there is not as charming as the old Spanish Mission–style architecture that has symbolized the city's cultural heritage ever since the beginning of the century. . . . It is, instead, an image of the old brick and corrugated metal warehouses from which most of Los Angeles's prosperity emerged, and the newfangled office structures that we hope will ensure its prosperity in the future."

Even the East Coast has noticed, with articles in the *Washington Post* and *New York Times*. A 1997 *New York Times* story described the area as "an impressive fusion of economic renewal, innovative design, and cultural awareness. Factories left empty by the export of manufacturing were transformed into a lively boulevard of the informational city."

The mix for success has included the determination of the Smiths, over the long haul, to persuade, cajole, and convince, as well as a canny business sense counterbalanced by a willingness to accept lower profit for social and community benefit. Playing an equally vital role in turning a sow's ear into a silk purse was finding the right architect to translate vision into structure and to transform dereliction and the depredations of time into buildings that would draw creative businesses like a magnet. This bold conjunction of the social vision of the Smiths, the architectural talent of Moss, and the industrial potential of Culver City has produced a triumph of economic and community restoration that both preserves and creates anew—a model for others to follow.

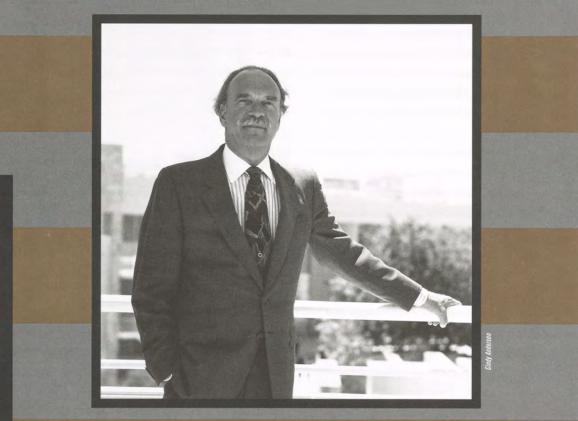
Neville Agnew is group director for Information and Communications at the Getty Conservation Institute. Jeffrey Levin is editor of Conservation, The GCI Newsletter.

Interior view of the offices of Pittard Sullivan, a graphic design firm. The architectural design utilized the shell and certain elements of an existing building to create an entirely new, dynamic workspace that maintains a link, through these structural elements, to the building's previous form. *Photo:* Tom Bonner.



# **Synergy and Collaboration**

# **A Conversation with Barry Munitz**



Born and raised in Brooklyn, New York, Barry Munitz received a bachelor's degree in classics and comparative literature from Brooklyn College before going on to earn a master's degree and Ph.D. from Princeton University. He began his academic career in 1966 at the University of California, Berkeley, as an assistant professor in the dramatic arts and literature department. From 1968 to 1970, he served under former University of California president Clark Kerr at the Carnegie Foundation Commission on Higher Education. In 1970, Dr. Munitz accepted a position at the University of Illinois, where he served for six years, first as associate provost and later as academic vice president. He became vice president and dean of faculties at the University of Houston–Central Campus in 1976 and was made chancellor of that university in 1977.

Dr. Munitz gained experience in the business world when he left the university in 1982 to become a senior executive at MAXXAM Inc., in Houston. He remained there until he was appointed chancellor of the California State University system in 1991. In January 1998 he succeeded Harold M. Williams as president and chief executive officer of the J. Paul Getty Trust.

He spoke with Jeffrey Levin, editor of Conservation, The GCI Newsletter.

Jeffrey Levin: You started off as a literature professor. Is there some connection between the young professor of literature at U.C. Berkeley 32 years ago and what you're doing today?

Barry Munitz: I think there's a connection, both for me and for the Getty board of trustees. I think the board wanted someone who had a humanities background but wasn't grounded in a particular genre of the visual arts. I wasn't someone who was going to look over the museum director's shoulder thinking I could do John Walsh's job as well as, if not better than, John—which is, happily, out of the question. On the other hand, I have an understanding of the humanistic values and traditions that we are focusing on in this setting.

I went into literature because as a kid growing up in Brooklyn, I thought that it had to be the greatest job in the universe to get paid to read and have other people have to sit and listen to you talk about what you read. It still seems to me the greatest assignment in the world. Coming to the Getty was a chance to get grounded again in the substance of what we do, instead of being eight levels removed from a classroom or a laboratory or a recital stage. The common threads are the values—the role the humanities and the arts can play in society. And the long-term commitment that any cultured community has to make to the arts.

What role do the arts have in society? How integral are they?

When you get past the food, clothing, and shelter stages, which are obviously critical, you can't have a fullblown, sophisticated, thoughtful, caring social community absent a humanistic tradition that includes the arts. That's the difference between a core society and a fully flowered social community. When the arts go, you lose the texture, as we are losing it now in our public schools because we're losing the arts. Art adds perspective, setting, comparison, and insight.

You're suggesting that the arts—and the understanding they give us of people—in and of themselves strengthen community...

I'd be hard pressed to think of a single more effective adhesive than that.

You've spent much of your life in education, and you clearly envision education as fundamental to the Getty. What are the connections between your background and what you want to do here?

Well, first it's this common denominator of reaching out to improve people's lives. I loved being at the California State University because it was the institution of opportunity, of socioeconomic mobility, of a second chance for people who didn't automatically have everything breaking for them from the day they were born.

Which you probably related to personally ...

Well, in my life it was Brooklyn College. It was the only chance that I had. Similarly, that's why I was at the University of Houston instead of Rice, and at California State University instead of Stanford, and at the University of Illinois Chicago Circle instead of Urbana-Champaign. There was that common theme. Education is a very big instrument in the toolbox to improve people's lives.

For me, education at the Getty is not solely the Education Institute—it's the Education Institute and the joint conservation master's degree with UCLA and the Information Institute digitizing academic research libraries and the Grant Program supporting scholars, and the Research Institute supporting conferences and visiting scholars, and the education division of the museum. It's everyplace. Perhaps in some ways the Getty is just as much an educational institution as it is an arts organization.

One of your objectives is to create a greater sense of unity within the Trust. What do you see for the Getty for the next five years? What do you see as its mission?

I take the more collective, woven-together, synthesized Getty as the basic assumption. That is, whatever we do, we will examine how it can include many of our components. We're not all going to do every piece of it, but the basic, underlying ethos is going to have to be delivered by a woven-together, collaborative Getty.

Having said that, what makes us unique? We had a July board retreat where we talked about some of these things, and I left the meeting asking myself that question. At this point, the only thing I'm comfortable saying—and I've never really said this publicly—is that there is no other place in the world with this magnetic, seductive, physical

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site, this world-class, carefully focused museum, this superb little university, and a philanthropic foundation.

So, if what makes us genuinely unique is the combination, then synthesis and integration become all the more crucial. We're a museum, a cultural institution, and a philanthropic foundation devoted to acquisition and exhibition, to conservation and teaching, and to learning about the visual arts as they strengthen the humanistic tradition and humanistic values.

Well, how do we define visual arts, because that's a question that gets raised as well?

I'm not so much interested in drawing the line as I am trying to work where the edges seem fairly clear. For example, we can help other arts organizations, but I'm less inclined to say we'll contribute money to Disney Hall [the new concert hall for Los Angeles]. It's not so important to me that there's an exact line. Opera, for example, often breaks all the barriers. The heart and soul of the opera is music, but when Cocteau, Picasso, and Hockney paint screens and curtains for the opera, or for the ballet, it includes the visual arts.

So I think it's a waste of time to try for too precise a definition. My concern is focus. The Conservation Institute is a perfect example. If there are 50 different projects that the GCI could do related to the conservation of cultural heritage, we should stay close to some sense of core in the choices.

My view of defining the Getty mission is that I'm a lot less interested in what finally happens than that everybody is sitting around and arguing about it. The great thing about the in-house program reviews we've conducted is that very thoughtful Getty staff people—none of whom were from the program that they were looking at—had to argue incessantly about what they thought. It's exactly what they should be doing.

The Getty as a place of dialogue ...

Oh, it has to be. It is thoughtful, candid, constant internal dialogue. And that's part of the collaboration.

Do you have specific initiatives in mind in terms of conservation?

Conservation is one of the building blocks of the Getty. I don't have any question about that, and neither

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does the board. As I said at the staff meeting at the GCI the other day, in terms of the Institute's mission, I think there has to be a strong training program. There's a general feeling that we've come away from the training program. I'm less interested in rehashing history than in having a strong training program. What matters to me is that it's there.

Similarly, everybody acknowledges that we've got a strong research and scholarship program that needs to stay right up with and include basic materials research. We've got a unique ability to combine science and application because we have works of art—different than if we were in a metallurgy lab at Caltech. That's why I feel so strongly about collaboration within the Getty.

The other theme is focusing on a smaller number of projects that are carefully selected, close to the core of what we do, with the ability to then write and talk about them soon after. People want to know what we did and what we learned from it.

Those are the three places in conservation: carefully focused and written-about field projects, a strengthened training program, and continued strong science.

And you still see the GCI as an international program?

I don't even know how you'd make the case against conservation being global. To me, with conservation, everything we do is international. The only place where I feel a special obligation is local, where we've already done some work—the Landmarks project, the Siqueiros mural, and other instances [see p. 15].

You're suggesting that the Getty does have a special responsibility to Los Angeles.

I think it does. As Harold Williams has pointed out, when the decision was made that the Malibu museum wasn't enough, it didn't automatically come to pass that the new center would be in L.A. There was a lot of debate about where, and, as Harold says, it could have been in Canada, it could have been in the eastern United States. But the fact is, we're a Los Angeles organization and we're now an extraordinarily visible Los Angeles cultural site. We've got to take a convening, facilitating, coordinating, gathering, partnering role because we're blessed to have the combination I referred to earlier. There isn't any other organization like us in the city. UCLA has spectacular academics, but to make their budget work, they have to raise the money and always will. The County Museum of Art has wonderful works of art but they don't have the foundation. There are large foundations, but they don't have the subject matter and the academics. So we have an obligation—not just in what we do with and for the city, but in pulling together other institutions in the city.

#### How well, up until now, has the Getty addressed the diversity that exists in Los Angeles?

It probably comes in chapters. Up until the end of 1997, you've got years of Harold thinking every day about the diversity issue and the community issue. You're talking about someone raised in Boyle Heights. In some ways I found that the most moving part of the whole opening ceremony was watching the band Los Lobos and then having Harold come up and say that they were from the adjoining competitive high school from where he went to school. It was always on his mind. But he had a museum that was difficult to get to, fairly isolated, and perceived as full of esoteric objects. And so everything he did was to push back against that.

Now we open here, and you've got this much more complex and wonderful place. We reserved a year's worth of school visits in an hour. Eighty thousand kids. We opened up the phone line, and in one hour the entire year was committed. One thing I suggested was that we give priority to those zip codes that had the fewest parking reservations. Now you walk around here any morning and you see Los Angeles.

Even with the base that Harold laid, you have to work at it every day. If you don't, the momentum will fall back to the more exclusive aspect of a museum in Brentwood. But if you look at the tram, if you look at the bookstore line, if you walk through the café, if you come up on a Sunday and see the church groups picnicking on the plaza outside the restaurant, if you see the school visits—you know we've achieved something that all the know-it-alls said not only was impossible but that we didn't care about doing.

Are there places significant to you from your own life that that would be important for you to see preserved? Well, there's one we already lost—Ebbets Field,

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home of the Brooklyn Dodgers. I would have had the Getty Conservation Institute right in there.

The Brooklyn Museum transformed my sense of culture. There it was on Eastern Parkway, free when we were going there. Then there was the New York Planetarium. One of the great things about being raised in New York is that you'd go to every possible museum. I'm sure the teachers loved it. It was a day off. But we loved it too.

It's a wonderful question. What I would want to see preserved isn't necessarily what the world would want to have preserved. That's what's difficult—you have to leap from what made a difference in your life to what things possess enough common value to others that they would want them preserved.

How different is your view of the Getty today than it was the day you first walked in the door?

To my spouse's everlasting bemusement, the first time I was on this site was for the press conference after I was appointed. Because the search was conducted with such confidentiality, no one let me get up here. So the physical reality of it was a surprise. And I still get lost. The range of programs, the strength of professional expertise, the caring and commitment of the support staff, the security people, the landscape people. I'm here late at night a lot, just because it's an easy, quiet time to do work, and everybody loves and cares for the place. Nobody's sloppy, nobody's nonchalant. That's been a wonderful surprise.

The Center has been open to the public and you've been the Getty president for a year. Over the course of that year, what do you think the Getty community has learned and what have you learned?

A pleasant surprise has been just what a spectacularly seductive place this is. And how easy it's been to diversify the crowds. Contrary to those who thought that once we brought in all these first-time, "different" museum visitors we'd jeopardize the works of art, we haven't had any trouble at all. People have been extraordinarily respectful of everything, which is why we've been able to keep it so open and accessible.

Another surprise is that folks want to support the place, whether it's paying to get in—something I don't want to do—or donating works of art, which is something I very much want to do, or even special memberships or paying for the right to use it for an evening for a function that relates to something we do. The interest, the commitment, the international attention, the love for the space have all been pleasant surprises.

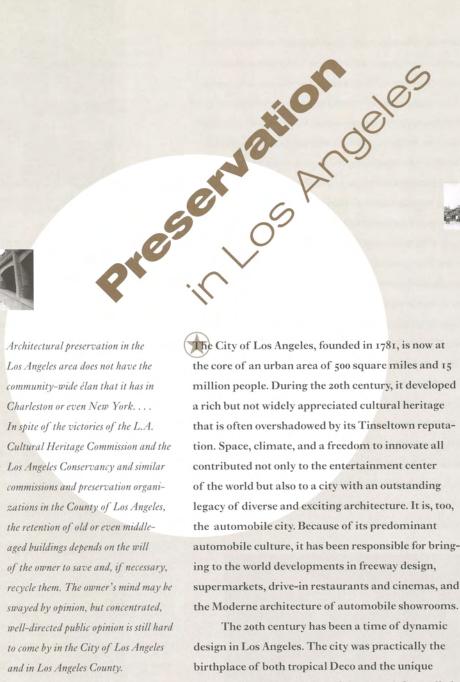
The unpleasant discoveries have been the lack of integration, the separateness of programs, the selfsatisfaction of too many people, the expectation of too many people, inside and outside, that we can fund everything for everybody—that there's this endless cornucopia of resources—and hurt feelings when we make choices or establish priorities among the wonderful things we want to do.

A pleasant discovery for me has been how easy it's been to translate the literary side of the arts background to the visual side of the arts background. And, although I expected this, the surprise of how generous and gracious the people inside have been in coaching and mentoring and counseling me through their areas of expertise. That's been a wonderful surprise.

Speaking for myself, it's intellectually engaging and gratifying to be working in a place where people care so deeply about what they do.

Yes, and that means for certain groups and on certain issues, there is extraordinary tension, because it's very smart, very committed, emotionally energized people who disagree. My job is not to make that tension go away. My job is to keep it creative rather than destructive, so that there is synergy and collaboration and you reach a higher level of resolution after banging heads on complicated, challenging issues. But it comes with such caring and such devotion to who we are and what we do. I think the way it has to end is everybody's remembering that we are here for the public. We're a public arts site serving a range of audiences and constituencies. Therefore, there is now a programmatic reality to the Getty Center, and we have to budget for it and plan for it. We're a tax-exempt trust, the beneficiaries of an extraordinarily generous gift-Mr. Getty's will expected "the diffusion of artistic and general knowledge"-and therefore we have a social and civic responsibility.





David Gebhard Los Angeles: An Architectural Guide The City of Los Angeles, founded in 1781, is now at the core of an urban area of 500 square miles and 15 million people. During the 20th century, it developed a rich but not widely appreciated cultural heritage that is often overshadowed by its Tinseltown reputation. Space, climate, and a freedom to innovate all contributed not only to the entertainment center of the world but also to a city with an outstanding legacy of diverse and exciting architecture. It is, too, the automobile city. Because of its predominant automobile culture, it has been responsible for bringing to the world developments in freeway design, supermarkets, drive-in restaurants and cinemas, and the Moderne architecture of automobile showrooms.

The 20th century has been a time of dynamic design in Los Angeles. The city was practically the birthplace of both tropical Deco and the unique American domestic design of the 1950s (often called Googie). Sadly, this heritage, often through destruction and neglect, is disappearing at an alarming rate. Unless action is taken now to encourage an appreciation of the quality of the city's architecture-its restaurants and coffee shops; its hotels, motels, and movie palaces; its bungalows and Craftsman homes-much will ultimately be lost.

With this in mind, the Getty Conservation Institute is continuing its long-term commitment to Los Angeles (see p. 15), focusing on strategic ways to contribute to the conservation of the city's significant built heritage. The GCI will draw on existing collaborations with the organizations and professionals already working to preserve L.A. landmarks, in order to plan programs at the Getty Center, and bring additional conservation expertise to preservation in the city.

In recognition of the breadth of the cultural legacy that exists in the city that is home to the Getty Center, we offer here a few, brief descriptions of significant places in Los Angeles and environs. These "snapshots" give a glimpse of some of the historic richness in this still-young American community.

> CHRISTOPHER GRAY Senior Project Specialist, Getty Conservation Institute





# URBAN ARCHAEOLOGY IN LOS ANGELES

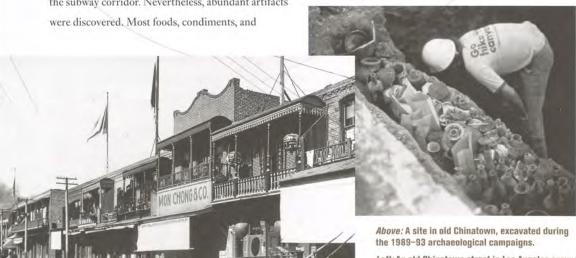
Sites, structures, and other cultural resources that are long gone or forgotten sometimes become known only as the result of events that are, themselves, destructive. This occurred recently in the construction of the Los Angeles subway. Because federal funds were involved, the Metropolitan Transportation Authority was required to identify structures and subsurface resources that might be affected by the construction, to evaluate their significance, and to mitigate the effects on those found to be significant. In the construction of the subway, historical sites were discovered at Union Station, in Universal City, and in the heart of Hollywood.

Under Union Station downtown, the remains of old Chinatown were remarkably intact. This was Chinatown's location from the 1880s until it was demolished in 1933. Public agencies often write off developed areas in the belief that no historical evidence could have survived subsequent constructions. In this case, there was evidence that fill was brought to the site to create a level pad for the new railroad station. Brick and wooden structures were razed and crushed, forming a seal over the streets, sidewalks, foundations, trash pits, and privies.

The area for excavation was limited to the width of the subway corridor. Nevertheless, abundant artifacts

beverages were imported from the homeland in stoneware containers that were discarded, since the next purchase came in its own jar; from a single defined area alone, more than 1,172 pounds of these stonewares were recovered. Excavations at the site uncovered 2,444 examples of porcelain table service; 2,951 stoneware jars and lids; 140 toothbrushes; 370 Asian coins; 666 tiny medicinal vials; sculptures in stone and clay; toys; gambling and opium-smoking paraphernalia; faunal remains; and a variety of other materials, from eyeglasses to doorknobs.

The materials yielded new insight into old Chinatown. The presence of children's toys and women's shoes, jewelry, and cosmetics demonstrated that women and children were present and distinctly underrepresented in census enumerations. Artifacts also showed that the community did not consist only of poor laborers. Prosperous merchants and professionals were represented by more costly porcelain items, a greater elaboration of table service, jade bracelets, and the occasional gold-plated haberdashery or carved ivory toothbrush. The persistence of traditional food, recreational, and medical customs, despite the availability of American products, was attributed to social isolation, language barriers, and consumer choice, and perhaps to a desire to maintain ethnic boundaries in the face of a hostile host community.



Left: An old Chinatown street in Los Angeles around 1900. Photos: Courtesy Roberta S. Greenwood.



Metro Rail donated the artifacts to the Chinese Historical Society of Southern California, which is displaying some, curating the balance, and making two thousand items accessible on its Web page and on CD-ROM. The information is thus conserved, published, and available for display and future research.

The discovery adjacent to Universal City Studios was the Campo de Cahuenga, where the Articles of Capitulation, ending the war with Mexico, were signed in 1847. The stone foundations and tile floor of this adobe rancho were just below the sod in front of the city's historic park commemorating the event, which led to the acquisition of much of the U.S. West. Test excavations have outlined six rooms thus far and revealed construction practices of the time. Here, the discovery has led to preservation, as Metro Rail is taking the steps to avoid the destruction that would otherwise have occurred.

Other discoveries as a result of environmental studies for Metro Rail have included the granite blocks that first paved the streets of downtown Los Angeles and table service and food remains from the turn-of-the-century Hollywood Hotel. A parking garage had since been developed on the site, yet cultural materials were still present below the existing grade. The potential for archaeological evidence of either prehistorical or historical importance does exist in the urban setting, and conservation is best served by strict observance and application of the guidelines for historic preservation through the environmental reporting process.

> ROBERTA GREENWOOD President, Greenwood and Associates



Exterior and interior views of the Gamble House in Pasadena, north of downtown Los Angeles. *Photos:* Tim Street-Porter. Courtesy the Gamble House.

# THE GAMBLE HOUSE

Ninety years have passed since the Gamble family spent its first winter in a new Pasadena home designed by Charles and Henry Greene. Ninety cycles of rain and sun have tested the Oregon pine structural timbers, the redwood split shakes, and Burmese teak entry doors. Though the wood may have lost the fragrance of the forest that it had when the house was newly built, the original exterior and interiors remain substantially intact, a testimony to the high quality of materials initially selected.

Nonetheless, many areas of the landmark house need urgent attention, such as exposed beam ends and rafters that play unwilling host to brown and white-rot fungus. This situation raises the conservation question of what can and should be done where historic fabric is damaged or destroyed. For the most part, remaining old-growth specimens of the trees originally harvested to build the Gamble house are either gone completely or protected from cutting, making in-kind replacement difficult or impossible. Similar wood products currently available are generally so inferior to the quality used in the original construction of the house that to introduce them would be ill-advised, likely condemning the structure to a perpetual cycle of periodic replacement (with increasingly inferior material, as typical forest harvest cycles become shorter). There may be no simple solution, but this and a range of other difficult conservation issues are currently being investigated for a historic structure report being developed for the Gamble House-a program of the University of Southern California School of Architecture-with help from the Getty Grant Program and a generous gift from James N. Gamble.

To conserve this historically important wooden house in a climate conducive to rot is not only a major technical challenge but also a political one. A generation of visitors to the Gamble House, and more than two generations of Pasadena residents, have become accustomed to seeing the house with its coat of now-faded, olive green paint, applied in the 1930s. Because of its age, to some people the paint color has become nearly as historic as the house, even though the very notion of painting wood runs counter to the Arts and Crafts movement's tenet of celebrating the native beauty of building materials. The Greenes were foremost among architects who embraced this idea. Accordingly, as exterior areas of the Gamble House are studied, the consulting team writing the historic structure report will attempt to develop strategies for finishing areas to be treated in a way that is not only consistent with appropriate conservation technology but also respectful of Charles and Henry Greene's original intent. These strategies may run the risk of arousing public ire for tampering with its longheld perception of how the house should look, but the team will also be studying interpretation and education issues connected with the proposed conservation work. The report, which will detail the condition of the house and propose conservation remedies, is expected to be completed by the spring of 2000.

> EDWARD BOSELEY Director, The Gamble House

### LOS ANGELES IN NEON

In 1922—to advertise his Packard showroom in downtown Los Angeles—automotive pioneer Earle C. Anthony put up the first neon sign in the United States. It was the beginning of a neon age for the city. Over the course of the next three decades, neon lights—three times brighter than incandescent bulbs of equal power—flourished as an architectural element in L.A.'s downtown, in the Wilshire Boulevard corridor, and in Hollywood. Raymond Chandler, in his 1949 novel *The Little Sister*, described Los Angeles as a city transformed by its neon lights.

Adolfo V. Nodal, now general manager of the Los\_ Angeles Cultural Affairs Department, has spearheaded a long-term project to preserve and restore the city's vintage neon signs. As director of the MacArthur Park Public Art Program, he was fascinated by the darkened rooftop signs dotting the park. In 1986 he succeeded in getting five signs relit to commemorate the park's centennial.

After Nodal took the helm of Cultural Affairs, the city department conducted extensive research to identify and catalog L.A.'s hundreds of vintage and artistically unique neon signs, and it raised funds to initiate a major restoration project. By 1997, with financial assistance from the Community Redevelopment Agency, over 50 signs had been relit and restored in the historic Wilshire district. In addition to illuminating L.A.'s past and returning a little magic to these once-bustling urban communities, the signs have helped upgrade and revitalize the areas. They are a

anston

Night and day views of the neon sign above the Evanston apartment house in L.A.'s Wilshire district. *Photos:* Courtesy the Cultural Affairs Department, City of Los Angeles.

source of local pride and have played a role in encouraging property owners and commercial businesses to invest in these neighborhoods, thereby stimulating economic activity.

The neon preservation effort is now focused on relighting and bringing attention to more than 70 historic signs in the Hollywood district. There are also plans to put the glow back on the dozens of vintage neon signs languishing on marquees in downtown's historic Broadway theater district, as well as on surrounding landmark hotels and properties. These relit signs could bring excitement to the area and prompt new economic growth.

L.A.'s great neon age of the early 20th century constitutes a unique aspect of its historical identity. Relighting these signs is a luminous contribution to the city's cultural

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heritage. Because of this project, neon is being recognized as significant to the city's contemporary identity as well. Not only did neon change the face of the city visually and aesthetically, it had a direct impact on its economic growth. The transformative effect of this beautiful signage is equally powerful today.

#### KAREN GERST Development Coordinator, Cultural Affairs Department, City of Los Angeles

## Los Angeles River Bridges

Though barely mentioned in architectural surveys of Los Angeles, the concrete arch bridges across the Los Angeles River are "among the largest and most beautiful in the United States," says Steven D. Mikesell, the leading authority on California bridges. Eric DeLony, chief of the Historic American Engineering Record (the U.S. National Park Service division that certifies structures for the National Historical Record), calls the 10 highway bridges, all built between 1910 and 1934, "a unique collection of different designs and styles. . . . Some of the most interesting work that you'll find anywhere in the country." DeLony, the author of *Landmark American Bridges*, singles out for praise the viaducts, which span not only the river, but rail tracks, roads, and even freeways. "Very masterful. Very, very elegant, major multiple spans."

Standardized steel trusses had characterized much American bridge design up until the early 20th century. But with the newly perfected poured concrete technique, bridges could be individualized to reflect the decorative embellishments of any phase of history. When Merrill Butler became Los Angeles engineer of bridges and structures in 1923, the Beaux Arts tradition—a conflation of 19th-century Parisian neo-Baroque, imitation Renaissance, and Main Street Imperial Roman—dominated U.S. public architecture. For example, the portals and viewing balconies of the 1909–11 Buena Vista Viaduct (now the North Broadway Bridge) were designed to look like Roman temples. The Spanish Colonial Macy Street Viaduct, the Gothic Revival Fourth Street Viaduct, and the neoclassical viaduct at 9th Street all went up while Merrill Butler was engineer of bridges and structures. However, most of his bridges—from the three-thousand-foot-long Sixth Street Viaduct,

with its 112 streamlined columns, to the elegantly simple curve of the Fletcher Bridge that links Silver Lake and South Atwater—imply that Butler appreciated a cleaner, modern look that expressed the structure's function.

As the bridge-building era ended, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers began to encase the Los Angeles River in concrete. Ornamentation on the concrete arch bridges started to disappear, replaced by standard issue bridge specifications from the California Department of Transportation; changes in bridge-building technology made the concrete arch prohibitively expensive. By Butler's death in 1963, his bridges, like the river they crossed, had faded from public consciousness.

From its founding in 1986, Friends of the Los Angeles River called for the restoration of the river bridges and their inclusion on the National Historical Register. In 1990, a Los Angeles City bond issue provided for the seismic strengthening of more than 120 city bridges. Clark Robins, a 34-year veteran of the city's structural and geotechnical engineering division, saw the restoration of the concrete arch bridges as the capstone of his career, and he found money for it in the federal government's Highway Bridge Replacement and Restoration Fund. When the last restoration is finished in the year 2000, Robins says it will have cost about \$66 million, a tenth of what it would have cost to replace the bridges. Only one bridge was more expensive to restore than to replace.

The bridges are being brought up to modern seismic codes while maintaining "as much accuracy in the architectural appearance as we could," says Robins. Historical lighting and railings are being reinstalled. Eric DeLony calls the current seismic retrofitting "as fine a contemporary bridge rehabilitation program as I have seen anywhere in the country."



Left: A view of the First Street Bridge looking west toward downtown Los Angeles.

Below: A view of the Fourth Street Bridge. Photos: Gregg Gannon.



What moved Clark Robins to undertake such a huge project? "If you can imagine how small the town was in those days and how much money they put in those projects and how proud they were of them," Robins explains, "they make us look pretty bad. I just have so much admiration for the people of L.A. in those days, and the people who carried out their will."

LEWIS MACADAMS Poet and Founder, Friends of the Los Angeles River

# THE DOWNEY McDonald's

In the Los Angeles suburb of Downey is the Speedee McDonald's Drive-In, the earliest remaining example of the original hamburger stands conceived by the McDonald brothers.

The drive-in, which originally opened in August 1953, is an example of the distinctive hamburger stands with the golden arches that were a fixture in American suburbs in the 1950s and 1960s. Since then, these stands have been either demolished or radically remodeled. The Downey stand survived because its owner held an original franchise from the McDonald brothers, before Ray Kroc catapulted the McDonald's Corporation to worldwide prominence. In the mid-1980s, it was certified as eligible for the National Register of Historic Places.

When the Downey franchise was sold back to McDonald's in 1992, the corporation began looking for ways to close the operation, claiming it was losing money. In January 1994, the corporation shut down the restaurant, citing damage from the Northridge earthquake. However, an attempt to demolish the structure was blocked by the Downey City Council because the building had landmark status. The lease was then terminated, and the site reverted to the Pep Boys company, which owned the property. However, because the building and sign incorporate the trademark golden arches and the Speedee character, the building could not be adapted to any other use.

The Los Angeles Conservancy—led by its volunteer Modern Committee—and the Downey Historical Society pressed for preservation by staging rallies at the site that helped generate international publicity. A campaign encouraging people to write the chairman of McDonald's even prompted a response from California governor Pete Wilson, who urged the corporation to "preserve for posterity the home of the golden arches."

In 1994, the National Trust for Historic Preservation recognized the importance of the Downey drive-in by designating it one of America's 11 most endangered historic places, and it provided a grant to fund a marketing study. For more than two years, the Conservancy waged a battle with the McDonald's Corporation. Pep Boys remained a crucial ally, by resisting market pressure to develop the site and by keeping the building secure and clean.

The stalemate was broken when new management at McDonald's took a fresh look at the Downey building and recognized that it had to be saved. In October 1996, the corporation announced that it would reopen the restaurant. Just two months later, with a gala celebration, the Downey McDonald's reopened, with its distinctive features restored and a new structure to house a museum, gift shop, and restrooms incorporated into the site.

The effort to save this historic structure was initially rebuffed. But the process did keep the building standing until McDonald's was willing to preserve its history.

LINDA DISHMAN Executive Director, Los Angeles Conservancy THE GETTY CONSERVATION INSTITUTE AT WORK IN AND AROUND LOS ANGELES



The historic McDonald's restaurant in Downey, a Los Angeles suburb. *Photos:* Courtesy the Los Angeles Conservancy.

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ca Tropical • The only surviving public mural in the United States by Mexican artist David Alfaro Siqueiros, painted in 1932. Located on Olvera Street in downtown Los Angeles, América Tropical is the subject of a joint project of the GCI and El Pueblo de Los Angeles Historic Monument that involves conservation and long-term protect tion of the mural, and the creation of an adjacent exhibition. · A Robert Graham sculpture, created for the 1984 Olympic Games and located at the east entrance of the Los Angeles Coliseum. The GCI undertook assessment and conservation of the work, which was damaged by vandalism and environmental factors. · A group of 17 monumental sculptures created by Simon Rodia over 30 years in south-central Los Angeles. The GCI assisted in the conservation effort to preserve this official City of Los Angeles cultural heritage monument, providing technical assistance during the project. • Back Seat Dodge '38 • A 1964 Edward Kienholz sculpture that is part of the collection of the Los Angeles County Museum of Art. Suffering from a pest infestation, the artwork was treated by Institute staff using nontoxic eradication methods developed by the GCI. • Getty Seismie Adobe Project • A GCI research project focused on methods for the seismic strengthening of historic adobes in Los Angeles and throughout California. The project team devised relatively simple measures to help prevent the collapse of adobe structures during an earthquake.+ Historic Preservation Partners for Earthake Response • A consortium that included the GCI, the Los Ange les Conservancy, the California Office of Historic Preservation, and the National Trust for Historic Preservation. It was formed after the Janu ary 1004 Northridge earthquake to assist property owners to repair and restore historic buildings damaged by the quake. • Survey of Damage ric Adobe Buildings • A survey of historic adobe buildings damaged as a result of the 1994 earthquake. After the quake, the GCIas part of its commitment to researching conservation measures appropriate for adobe structures-conducted this survey. The survey was published to help owners, building officials, cultural resource managers. architects, and engineers understand the risks earthquakes pose to adobe buildings and the necessity for taking action to limit those risks L.A. • A GCI outreach project for a diverse group of Los Angeles youth who were asked to photograph designated heritage sites as well as the landmarks of their personal lives and neighborhoods. It resulted in an exhibition at Los Angeles City Hall and at the Central Library, and in the publication of an award-winning book. UCLA · Joint efforts of UCLA and the GCI focused on conservation. These included an exhibition at UCLA's Fowler Museum on the royal tombs of Sipán; a symposium on the management and conservation of rock art sites, cosponsored by the Rock Art Archive of UCLA; and a collabo ration with the UCLA Department of Archaeology to address conservation at the Maya site of Xunantunich in Belize. • Technical Advice · Conservation advice for a number of institutions around Los Angeles For example, GCI staff offered postfire disaster response consultation for the Los Angeles Central Library and the Huntington Library, and technical advice on the restoration of a Chinese shrine at Evergreen Ceme tery in East Los Angeles.

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# Unveiling Prague's Golden Gate The Conservation of The Last Judgment Mosaic

by Francesca Piqué, Giora Solar, and Dusan Stulik

EVER SINCE THE "VELVET REVOLUTION" brought democracy to Prague in 1989, a growing number of travelers have made the city a popular destination in central Europe. The reasons are easily apparent. Walking the narrow and winding streets of this great capital, one can see a stunning panoply of architecture that reflects the centuries of dramatic history and rich culture the city has witnessed. With landmarks from the medieval to the modern, Prague is a place of great churches and synagogues, university buildings, civic structures, family palaces, royal residences, and historic cemeteries.

No matter where you are in Prague, the dominant landmark is St. Vitus Cathedral, in the center of Prague Castle on Hradčany Hill. The third church to stand on the site, the cathedral was constructed beginning in 1344. Work was interrupted early in the next century by the Hussite revolution, and the cathedral ultimately was not fully completed until 1929. Today St. Vitus Cathedral is not only a house of prayer but also a center of Czech art and culture. Within its walls of magnificent stone and ironwork are six hundred years of history and heritage, including the ornate St. Wenceslas Chapel and the chamber housing the Bohemian crown jewels.

Among the most extraordinary of the cathedral's artistic treasures is *The Last Judgment* mosaic on the facade above the south entrance of the building, often called the Golden Gate. Considered one of the great monuments in the Czech Republic, the 84-square-meter (904-square-foot) mosaic was completed within one year—1371. It is the most significant exterior medieval mosaic north of the Alps, embodying history and extraordinary art.

Unfortunately, for most of the mosaic's existence, its brilliant colors have been rendered invisible, covered over by a layer of corrosion that would repeatedly form after each cleaning. The problem has persisted for centuries, despite a series of attempts to restore the mosaic to its original glory. But now—perhaps for the first time since the mosaic's creation—visitors can finally see the full brilliance of the colors in this magnificent 14th-century masterpiece, thanks to a collaboration between the Czech government and the Getty Conservation Institute.

#### The Challenge

As mosaics were not typically used in Gothic architecture, *The Last Judgment* probably reflects the personal taste of Charles IV of Bohemia, the Holy Roman emperor who commissioned the work after returning from a visit to Italy. Charles had made Prague his capital, and he spared no effort to ensure that the new cathedral would be a fitting symbol of the city's power and prestige.

The Last Judgment is divided into three panels placed above three large archways. In the central panel is Christ ascendant, above the patron saints of Bohemia. Below the saints, Charles IV is depicted with his fourth wife, Elizabeth of Pomerania. The left panel shows souls ascending into heaven, while the right depicts the damned being cast into hell. The mosaic is made up of nearly one million pieces of cut glass cubes (tesserae), along with natural quartz and chalcedony pebbles. The pebbles were used exclusively to create the flesh tones, while the glass, in over 30 hues, makes up the rest of the work.



The return, after every cleaning, of the grayish layer of corrosion products covering the mosaic has confounded for centuries those who sought to reclaim the work. Prague Castle records indicate that the first restoration attempt occurred one hundred years after the mosaic's completion. Other cleaning and restoration efforts followed, including one beginning in 1890 in which the mosaic was removed from the cathedral, restored, and then reinstalled 20 years later. Four decades after that, the surface of *The Last Judgment* was again heavily corroded.

In 1953 Czech experts began a comprehensive scientific study of the mosaic's deterioration and determined that the problem was the potassium-rich mosaic glass. When exposed to water, the potassium in the glass leaches out, then interacts with pollutants in the air, resulting in the formation of a corrosion layer. This research led to the cleaning, restoration, and regilding of the mosaic and, importantly, to the application of a protective multilayer polymer coating. However, because of the inadequacy of materials available at the time and the lack of periodic maintenance recommended by the restorers, the coating failed to prevent subsequent deterioration. In the 1970s, Czech conservators reported the delamination of the protective layer and the renewed growth of the corrosion layer.

Since then the mosaic has been cleaned for important events. However, each cleaning involves the removal of a very thin layer of the glass tesserae—between 0.5 to 1.0 millimeters. Because each tessera is approximately one centimeter thick, theoretically, the mosaic would no longer exist after perhaps 10 more cleanings. What was needed to save the mosaic in situ was a coating that could prevent the formation of corrosion, and a program for regular inspection and maintenance of this coating.

This conservation challenge was undertaken in 1992 when the Office of the President of the Czech Republic and the GCI began a collaborative project to find a solution to this centuries-old problem and to restore and conserve the mosaic in its original location.

#### The Project

The mosaic is located on the exterior of St. Vitus Cathedral, in the heart of Prague Castle. Photos: Dusan Stulik.

Work began with a review of all existing written, photographic, and scientific documentation, as well as with an assessment of the state of the mosaic. Scientific tests confirmed the conclusions of the Czech scientists regarding the causes of the mosaic's deterioration. The project's two main tasks were to develop a method for gently removing the surface corrosion and to identify a coating that could provide long-term protection against moisture and air pollutants. Both the Office of the President and the GCI agreed that the project should not have any artificially imposed deadlines. The restoration treatment would be executed only when the cleaning and coating methodologies were fully tested in laboratories and in situ.

Several mechanical, chemical, and laser-assisted cleaning methods were considered. Laboratory tests and examination of cleaned tesserae under optical and electron microscopes indicated that cleaning could best be accomplished with a stream of compressed air and microscopic glass particles. Using glass particles harder then the corrosion layer but softer than the mosaic tesserae would

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thoroughly clean the mosaic surface while automatically stopping the process once the surface corrosion was removed.

The development of a mosaic protective coating proved most challenging. Inorganic coatings could provide adequate protection against water, but these coatings are not fully reversible and must be applied at a very high temperature that would be incompatible with in-situ treatment of the mosaic. Organic coatings are reversible and easily applied, but they offer less protection against water and pollutants.

In collaboration with the Materials Science and Engineering Department of the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA), the GCI conducted a three-and-onehalf-year investigation of a preservation technology for mosaics, including testing of protective coating methods and materials. This research identified sol-gel materials a hybrid of organic and inorganic materials that have properties similar to glass but do not require very high temperatures for production or application—as the best coating materials currently available for the mosaic. The Materials Science and Engineering Department, which includes one of the leading laboratories for sol-gel research, prepared the sol-gel material; it was then tested in custom-designed

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Left: The mosaic conservation team beneath the St. Vitus mosaic on October 29, 1998, after the unveiling of the restored central panel. From left: Eva Skarolkova, Milena Necásková, Dusan Stulik, Alois Martan, Francesca Piqué, and Martin Martan.

Below: Ivo Mathé, vice-chancellor of the Office of the Czech President; Eliska Fucikova, director of the National Heritage Department in the Office of the Czech President; and Barry Munitz, president and chief executive officer of the Getty Trust, at the unveiling of the mosaic. *Photos:* Frank Long.

aging chambers at the GCI.

The mosaic coating selected includes three layers of organically modified sol-gel with embedded gold leaf where needed. In the application process, all layers are heattreated using computer-controlled banks of infrared lamps. The top layer is a "sacrificial layer" that protects the underlying layers and will be replaced during scheduled periodic maintenance of the mosaic. The coating is designed to protect the mosaic surface for a long period, but can be removed when advances in science and technology provide even more durable materials.

One complicated issue involved the ethics of regilding the mosaic. In mosaics, gilding consists of an extremely thin layer of gold leaf applied to individual tesserae, then protected by a thin layer of glass. In the case of *The Last Judgment*, in which the entire background was gilded, corrosion damaged the gilded tesserae, destroying both the glass protective layer and the gold leaf itself. All that was left were the red or blue tesserae in which the gilding had originally been embedded.

The golden color in the mosaic has significance that goes beyond aesthetics. It is a representation of heaven and also has the functional role of glowing and shining as it reflects sunlight. For these reasons and because the entrance beneath the mosaic is called the Golden Gate—previously gilded parts had been regilded in past restorations.

For reasons of significance and aesthetics, regilding had to be considered. It was also clear that the ethical implications of regilding required thorough discussion. Was it ethical to complete missing color? What should be done in the case of existing traces of old gold? What about places where it was not clear which tesserae were gilded? How much regilding should be applied, if any?

To resolve these questions, an international advisory committee was formed. Meeting in Prague in October 1996, the committee reached full consensus—the oncegilded background of the mosaic should be regilded. Among the committee's additional suggestions were that nonbackground parts be regilded only if there was certainty regarding their past color; tesserae with any traces of previous gold should not be regilded; new gold leaf should not be applied to the whole surface of each tessera; and some glass should be left ungilded.

#### The Mosaic Unveiled

Conservation of the central panel started in June 1998, beginning with the removal of the corrosion laver. using the methodology developed at the GCI. Working tessera by tessera, two teams of conservators took a month to clean the mosaic. The cleaning immediately revealed the beauty of the medieval artwork, with its magnificent range of colors. The second phase of the conservation treatment-the application of the protective coating to the glass, with gold leaf applied where appropriate-was finished in September. Conservation of the remaining two panels will be carried out by Czech conservators, who will complete the work by the year 2000, with the GCI continuing to provide technical support and guidance. A long-term maintenance and monitoring program is being developed and will be implemented to ensure the mosaic's preservation. The project has been thoroughly documented, and the results of the work will be published.

On October 29, 1998, the central panel was unveiled outside the cathedral's Golden Gate. The timing of the ceremony was propitious—not only because it was held just a day after the celebration marking the 80th anniversary of the founding of an independent Czechoslovakia. This "resurrection" of *The Last Judgment* mosaic occurred exactly 650 years after Charles IV—the monarch who commissioned the work—established Prague's university (the oldest university in central Europe) and the New Town district of the city. It is fitting that yet another one of his legacies has been renewed in a manner that he would surely recognize as true to his original vision.

Francesca Piqué is a project specialist at the GCI. Giora Solar is the GCI's group director of conservation. Dusan Stulik is a GCI senior scientist. Staff Update

# New Director of the GCI

On December 15, 1998, the J. Paul Getty Trust announced the appointment of Timothy P. Whalen as director of the Getty Conservation Institute. Whalen, a Southern California native, has been in charge of conservation grant-making activities for the Getty Grant Program since 1991 and has been with the Getty since 1981. He succeeds Miguel Angel Corzo, who resigned as GCI director at the end of November.

Prior to managing conservation grants, Whalen served for five years as assistant director of the Getty's building program office, where he supervised and coordinated early planning and programming for the Getty Center project. Before that, he was assistant director for administration with the Getty Research Institute, and earlier he worked at the Getty Museum. He holds a B.A. in art history and an M.A. in art history and museum studies from the University of Southern California. During 1994-95 he was a Loeb Fellow in Advanced Environmental Design at the Harvard University Graduate School of Design, where he examined the role preservation issues play in urban planning and public policy debates.

During his tenure with the Grant Program, Whalen was responsible for the funding and oversight of a number of notable projects in architectural conserva-

tion and museum conservation, as well as expansion of funding activities in Los Angeles. Among the international projects was the conservation of the early Christian and late medieval mosaic cycles at the Basilica of Santa Maria Maggiore in Rome. He was also instrumental in helping the Bay Area Video Coalition in San Francisco organize an international conference on the conservation of video works of art. A number of notable historic American residential buildings, including Frank Lloyd Wright's Falling Water and Henry Hobson Richardson's Glessner House, received conservation planning support during Whalen's administration. He was also involved in advancing the National Trust for Historic Preservation's efforts to diversify the field of historic preservation, through grants enabling preservationists from diverse communities to attend the National Trust's annual meetings.

"I am delighted that we could appoint a longstanding and trusted Getty colleague who is as well suited to this job as Tim Whalen," said Barry Munitz, president and CEO of the Getty Trust. "Tim brings extensive experience and a broad perspective on the entire field of art, architectural, and archaeological conservation. His deep knowledge of the Getty's activities and his understanding of the issues in



both conservation and funding perfectly position him to lead the Getty Conservation Institute."

"I am energized by the Getty Trust's commitment to conservation and delighted to be given this chance to shepherd the Conservation Institute into the next century," said Whalen. "Given the demands of the field, there could not be a more critical time to uphold and advance the Institute's fine work in service to the conservation profession and the preservation of our collective heritage. My time in this field has consistently demonstrated that need always exceeds the resources available to save those things and places which reflect the values and aspirations of a culture or community. Still I am convinced of the potential for the Getty to contribute significantly to this effort, and I look forward to working with such a talented group of dedicated colleagues." With regard to the activities of the GCI, Whalen said that "while field projects will continue to help us answer and demonstrate solutions for unsolved conservation questions, I anticipate that training and research, particularly as it relates to movable collections and site management, will gain increased prominence in the work of the Institute."

Whalen is a member of the International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS); the Society for the Preservation of Ancient Buildings; the National Trust for Historic Preservation; the Nonprofit Management Association; the Los Angeles Conservancy; and the Southern California Association for Philanthropy. He also served as an advisory committee member to the Foundation Center and Council on Foundations' joint study of international grant making, published in 1997.

Whalen succeeds Miguel Angel Corzo, who served for eight years as director of the GCI. During Corzo's tenure, the Institute achieved a significant presence in the world through its scientific research, conferences, publications, training programs, and field projects. Under his direction, the Institute developed projects in partnerships with governments and other national institutions. Among the betterknown projects were the conservation of the tomb of Nefertari in Egypt; the Buddhist grottoes in Mogao, China; the basreliefs of the Royal Palaces in Abomey, West Africa; and the rock art of Baja California, Mexico. Among the GCI projects developed in Los Angeles under his leadership were the conservation of the Robert Graham sculptures at the Los Angeles Coliseum; Ed Kienholz's sculpture at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art; and the ongoing conservation of the David Alfaro Siqueiros mural América Tropical in the El Pueblo Historic Park at Olvera Street.



Master's Program in Archaeological and Ethnographic Conservation

The Getty Trust and UCLA are creating a master's degree in the conservation of archaeological and ethnographic materials. Original in its focus among existing conservation training programs in this country, it will provide students with not only a cultural orientation to conservation but also a strong base in materials science, anthropology, and fieldwork. Getty Trust president and CEO Barry Munitz and UCLA chancellor Albert Carnesale officially announced the new degree program.

"Preserving both ancient and modern artifacts and understanding the contexts from which they come are critically important," said Richard M. Leventhal, director of the Institute of Archaeology at UCLA. "An emphasis on context is part of what will distinguish this program from others and is what makes it such a valuable addition to the UCLA Institute of Archaeology."

"Traditionally, conservators are trained to work on fine arts objects in museums or studio contexts," said Marion True, assistant director for planning at the Getty Villa in Malibu and curator of antiquities for the Getty Museum. "But in providing fieldwork and a deeper understanding of the materials from which objects are made, this program will raise the standard of professional conservation practice to a higher level, ensuring that the evidence of the past survives well into the future."

In the three-year graduate program set to begin in 2002, the first year's curriculum will be built around general courses in anthropology, archaeology, and conservation. The second will offer more technical training, in specially designed laboratories at the Villa, and the third will be devoted to internships on archaeological digs or in museums. The M.A. degree will be conferred by UCLA. Similar programs are currently offered at the University of London's Institute of Archaeology and at the National Center for Cultural Heritage Science Studies at the University of Canberra in Australia.

Three new faculty members, funded by UCLA, will be added to direct and teach in the program; and professional conservators, conservation scientists, archaeologists, and site preservationists on the Getty staff, as well as consultants, will serve as instructors and guest lecturers. The program's scientific faculty will work with resident scientists at the GCI and will have access to the Institute's state-of-the-art analytical laboratories. Timothy P. Whalen, the newly appointed director of the GCI, commented, "Education and training are at the core of the Getty Conservation Institute's activities. The UCLA/Getty partnership perfectly complements both our mission and the skills of the Getty's experienced and internationally trained conservation professionals."

UCLA's Leventhal said the new program will prompt archaeologists to think more about the future and conservators to consider how objects were used and why they are important culturally. "The interplay between the two groups will create a new breed of practitioners and will professionalize a growing trend among archaeologists to preserve archaeological sites and objects for the future," he said. "It acknowledges that we are part of both the local and the world communities."

The specialized facilities being created at the Villa, which is closed for renovation, will include conservation laboratories, offices, a classroom, a library, and study areas. Scheduled to reopen to the public in 2002 as a center for the study of comparative archaeology and cultures, the Villa will remain the home of the Getty Museum's Greek and Roman antiquities collection and will offer programs to promote a broader understanding of ancient cultures from all parts of the world. As such, it will be a unique public institution in the U.S., dedicated solely to ancient art and related academic and scientific disciplines. "The Villa site is so conducive to this type of study. We have long envisioned it as a place of training in archaeology and ethnography," said True.



# Olduvai Museum in Tanzania

Project

Updates



The GCI completed expanding and updating the exhibits at the Olduvai Museum in Tanzania. This was the final component of the Institute's Laetoli project, which involved working with the government of Tanzania to protect the 3.6-million-yearold hominid footprints at Laetoli, discovered by Mary Leakey in the late 1970s. Mary Leakey originally created the museum at Olduvai in 1970 to provide visitors with information on the significant anthropological discoveries made at Olduvai Gorge; an exhibit was later added on the site of Laetoli, which is some 25 kilometers south of the gorge. Although the museum is small, it is visited by most of the 100,000 annual visitors to the Ngorongoro Crater and Serengeti National Park, as well as by school groups from the region. For the museum at Olduvai, the Institute team created new exhibition panels with images and text and a replica of part of the footprint trail. In addition to highlighting the importance of Laetoli in human evolution and the conservation project there, the exhibits, in English and Swahili, pay tribute to the 60 years of work by Louis and Mary Leakey at Olduvai Gorge and Laetoli.

The renovated museum was officially reopened on October 15, 1998. The vice president of Tanzania, Omar Ali Juma, attended the reopening ceremony. The objective of this complex GCI project is to develop appropriate preventive conservation technologies for museums in hot and humid climates, in combination with practical environmental management strategies that encompass museum collections and the buildings that house them.

Collections

in Hot and Humid Environments

An essential step in the establishment of a museum's environmental management strategy is an assessment of the factors affecting the preservation and care of its collections. Such an assessment should focus on the museum's physical environment and its organizational structure. This GCI project includes the development of a conservation assessment methodology that can assist museums to identify and analyze their environmental needs.

In 1990 the GCI first developed an assessment strategy—intended for museums in the United States—in collaboration with the National Institute for Conservation (presently Heritage Preservation). Although this methodology has been widely used in the United States, museums in nontemperate climates and with different economic realities required an assessment model that reflected their particular situations and problems. Therefore, a new assessment model was crafted by Kathleen Dardes of the GCI and two architect-engineers, Michael Henry of the firm Watson & Henry and Sam Harris of Kieren, Timberlake & Harris.

In August 1998, this new model was field-tested at the Museum of Sacred Art in San Salvador, Bahia, Brazil. There were many reasons to select a museum in Brazil. The largest tropical country in South America, Brazil has a well-established professional conservation infrastructure, many important museums, and a highly motivated private institution, the Vitae Foundation, whose program includes supporting the preservation of Brazil's museum collections and material cultural heritage. Without a "standard" by which to compare museums, requests received by the Vitae for grants related to preventive conservation have been hard to evaluate. Thus, the use of assessments to determine museums' environmental needs, along with the implementation of the resulting recommendations, are goals that the Vitae Foundation shares with the GCI.

In the August field test, Kathleen Dardes and James Druzik of the GCI and consultant Michael Henry worked with Vitae-sponsored Brazilian conservators, museologists, conservation scientists, architects, and engineers to try out the new assessment strategy on the Museum of Sacred Art, an institution that matched most of the criteria for a test site and one with an administration committed to the evaluation effort and willing to implement recommended changes. The museum, part of the Federal University of Bahia, is housed in a converted 17th–century Carmelite convent and contains a fine collection of silver artifacts and polychrome wood religious sculpture.

The consensus of the Brazilian participants following the field test was that the process worked well and could be replicated at other institutions. The field test clearly demonstrated the effectiveness of the conservation assessment model, both in terms of its usefulness to a museum and its ease of use for novice assessors. The results obtained in Brazil will serve as a contribution not only to the Brazilian material cultural heritage but also to collections in other regions of the world facing similar conditions.

The development of a museum conservation assessment strategy is only part of the Collections in Hot and Humid Environments project. Future updates will describe the GCI's scientific work addressing mold growth, insect infestation, protection of metals, and monitoring techniques.

# **The Agora**

As reported in the previous newsletter, the Agora's values and benefits inquiry is yielding some important insights into the role conservation plays in society. This inquiry links the GCI's central mission of advancing the conservation field with some of the significant issues facing contemporary society: the myriad faces of globalization, efforts to renew civil society, the quickening pace and politicization of cultural change, and the challenges and opportunities posed by new technologies.

Building on previous meetings and discussions, the ongoing values inquiry is proceeding with in-depth examinations of such topics as the processes by which objects or things come to be considered "heritage" and the role of conservation among those processes; the idea of "universality" (i.e., are some heritage objects meaningful to all people, regardless of their cultural differences, and does heritage play the same role in all societies?); and the implications of these issues for conservation practice. As these investigations



progress, the Agora will continue to organize multidisciplinary discussions and exchanges, undertake research through partners, communicate findings, and work toward a major conference in the year 2000.

An inquiry into the economics of conservation is also under way. Economic values are extremely influential in shaping heritage conservation decisions. As this influence grows, the imperative to understand the assumptions, logic, and tools of economics is ever greater. In December 1998, at the Getty Center, the GCI convened an Agora meeting for cultural economists, conservationists, and other heritage specialists. Organized in collaboration with Erasmus University in Rotterdam, Netherlands, this meeting was a keystone in the Agora's effort to shed light on the critical economic factors that shape conservation decision making.

By creating dialogue between cultural economists and experts from heritage and cultural fields, the Agora aims to challenge and strengthen economists in their ability to address conservation issues, while helping conservation professionals better understand the contributions of economists. Specifically, the goal is a fuller understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of using economic analysis in conservation decisions.

# Mortality Immortality? The Legacy of 20th-Century Art

Not all contemporar art will survive nor is it intended to. Is contemporary art only for contemporary times? No, most emphatically not

#### Edited by Miguel Angel Corzo

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Which objects or events will define the art of our time? Who will decide what is to be preserved for posterity and how to preserve it? If an artist chooses ephemeral materials, should the work be allowed to deteriorate?

These are among the questions posed in this stimulating volume, based on a GCI conference on the preservation of contemporary art held at the Getty Center in March 1998. Professionals from a range of disciplines—artists, museum directors, curators, conservators, art historians, dealers, collectors, and scientists, as well as a philosopher and a lawyer—offer their individual perspectives on the artist's original intent, the effect of the art market, ways to cope with rapidly evolving media technologies, and fine art as popular culture.

Authors include celebrated artists David Hockney, Judy Chicago, and Bill Viola; philosopher Arthur Danto; collectors Clifford Einstein and Agnes Gund; and museum professionals Roy A. Perry, head of conservation at the Tate Gallery, London; James Coddington, chief conservator at the Museum of Modern Art, New York; Peter Galassi, chief curator of photography at the Museum of Modern Art; and John Hanhardt, senior curator of film and media arts at the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York. The foreword is by Mildred Constantine, formerly a curator at the Museum of Modern Art.

The 34 essays in this handsome volume, illustrated with more than 80 color photographs, center on the following topics: "Is Contemporary Art Only for Contemporary Times?," "Present and Future Perceptions," "The Challenge of Materials," "The Art Ecosystem," and "Who Is Responsible?" Museum professionals, dealers, collectors, conservators, artists, art historians, and all those engaged in the dialogue surrounding art and cultural heritage will find this timely volume of critical interest.

Miguel Angel Corzo is former director of the Getty Conservation Institute. 212 pages, 10<sup>1/2</sup> x 11 inches 80 color and 11 b/w illustrations ISBN 0-89236-528-5, paper, \$39.95

### **GCI** Newsletter Honored

The December 1997 issue of *Conservation, The GCI Newsletter* (vol. 12, no. 3) has been awarded the 1998 Premier Print Award from the Printing Industries of America. This is the third time that *Conservation* has received the award.

The Premier Print Award is given to "those firms that demonstrate a unique ability to create visual masterpieces. Chosen from thousands of entries, each represents the unique partnership between designer and printer, need and creativity, technology and craft." The GCI's new brochure also received the 1997 Premier Print Award.



#### Gaetano Palumbo Project Specialist, Conservation

Growing up in Milan, Rome, and Sapri, a small city in southern Italy, Gaetano Palumbo was never far from archaeology. Family trips in Italy and abroad included visits to historic sites. Gothic cathedrals in France and Greek temples in Sicily are his first memories of imposing monuments. But Rome, his birthplace, is the city that he still likes the most.

At the University of Rome, he majored in archaeology, specializing in the Near East. He was particularly interested in human settlements at the periphery of early urban civilizations, and he wrote his master's dissertation on Bronze Age cemeteries in Palestine. From 1982 to 1984, he worked for the archaeological office of Rome, mapping archaeological sites threatened by development. This experience helped him appreciate the necessity of recording sites under threat and the importance of the surrounding landscape for understanding a site. He spent the next two years as a visiting scholar at the University of Arizona. Back in Rome, he worked on his Ph.D. dissertation, focusing on the end of the third millennium B.C.E. in Palestine-Transjordan.



In 1990 he moved to Jordan. Over the next four years he worked on an ACOR/ USAID project to inventory the archaeological sites in the country, and he trained Jordanian professionals to use the database. In 1994 he worked as a Unesco consultant with a team of professionals on the management plan for the Petra Archaeological and Natural Park. His time in Jordan taught him the difficulty of balancing preservation with the desire of people for modernization. Jordan was also where he met his wife Anna, an Italian architect working at Petra; the two were married in the Byzantine church on Mount Nebo.

In December 1994 he joined the GCI's Documentation Program. Building on his experience, he participated in the documentation of several GCI field projects. Now, as part of the GCI's Conservation group, he is a team member of the mosaics in situ and earthen architecture projects. He is working with other colleagues here in adapting geographic information systems (GIS) for use in conservation. He enjoys reporting on his work-he's authored 3 monographs and over 60 articles. But he knows that the recent birth of his son is going to have an impact on his writing output, and on sailing, another big passion in his life.

**David Schow** General Services Coordinator, Administration

David Schow was born in Salt Lake City, Utah, and raised in Golden, Colorado, a rural community west of Denver. Growing up in the foothills of the Rocky Mountains, he spent a good deal of time outdoors, hiking, fishing, and skiing. His mother, a homemaker, and father, an airline pilot, shared their passion for the outdoors with all six of their children. It was music that first caught David's interest. By the time he'd finished high school (where he took a number of music classes), he'd taught himself to play the piano and guitar.

After studying business administration at Metropolitan State College in Denver, he took a job as a skilled craft specialist with the parks department at the City of Lakewood, a Denver suburb. He enjoyed both the variety of skills he garnered in construction and seeing park facilities produced at the end.

In 1984, he came to Los Angeles to see the Olympic Games. Afterward, wanting a change in his life, he decided to stay. He found a job with United Airlines, managing building operations at the company's facility in the Marina del Rey section of Los Angeles. Four years later he became the facilities manager for a start-up technology company. This was followed by a



similar position with L.A. Gear, a shoe and clothing manufacturer with offices in Marina del Rey, adjacent to the GCI's first offices. After getting to know several Institute staff, he applied for a position at the GCI as a facilities and engineering assistant. He was hired in 1991.

Since the Institute's move to the Getty Center, he has become the GCI's liaison with other service departments at the Center. In addition, he assists administration with purchasing and accounting and manages the GCI's audiovisual equipment. He likes the need to be innovative and finds his work at the Institute to be more stimulating than other jobs he's held. He particularly likes the people he works with and the long-term friendships that have grown out of the work.

David still finds time for music, and he uses a music workstation at home to do composition. The outdoors continues to beckon, and on weekends he's often out enjoying all that Southern California has to offer.



IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE GCI'S CONCERN FOR THE ENVIRONMENT THIS NEWSLETTER IS PRINTED ON RECYCLED PAPER





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