Smithsonian
Museum Conservation Institute

MCI **Weekly Highlight** 13 August 2010

Understanding the American Experience, Valuing World Cultures, Unlocking the Mysteries of the Universe, Understanding and Sustaining a Biodiverse Planet

The Museum Conservation Institute hosted 10 interns and volunteers this summer. These individuals significantly increase research and conservation treatment productivity at MCI. We would like to take the opportunity to acknowledge their contributions and wish them the best in their future endeavors.

- In the Paintings Conservation Laboratory under the mentorship of Senior Paintings Conservator, Jia-sun Tsang, **Laura King** worked on Sam Gilliam's *Muse I* from 1965 which is a stained acrylic painting, and James Aiken's *Swedish Cottage and Shakespeare Garden* from 1959 which is an oil painting—both paintings from the Anacostia Community Museum. **Allison Martin** continued to work with Jia-sun Tsang on several paintings conservation-related projects. **Rebecca Gieseking** worked with Jia-sun on a manuscript based on a plastics conservation project that they began two years ago.
- **E. Keats Webb** worked with Senior Conservator, Mel Wachowiak, on an in-depth exploration of 3D scanning, Quick Time Virtual Reality, High Definition digital video, and Reflectance Transformation Imaging. A publication is pending that will compare the strengths and weaknesses of the techniques in cultural heritage applications.
- In the Textile Conservation Studio, Mary Ballard, Senior Textiles Conservator, oversaw the work of several intern projects focusing on the Black Fashion Museum collection acquired by the National Museum of African American History and Culture. **Cathleen Zaret** finished re-housing the McGee collection of garments,and will turn to repairs on a lovely honeymoon peignoir as she finishes her internship August 30. **Stephanie Spence** worked on rehousing furs, while Laura Dellaccio worked on wool capes, all from the Black Fashion Museum (BFM) collection. **Mary Kuhn,** a volunteer working on the BFM project since May, was taught fiber identification on the FTIR by MCI Conservation Scientist, Jennifer Giaccai. from the Black Fashion Museum.
- **Genevieve Bieniosek's** internship focused on projects in a variety of specialty areas. She assisted Carol Grissom (Senior Objects Conservator) with the development of a protocol for cleaning sandstone used to build the NMAI museum on the National Mall. Sample stones of a similar type were treated with various products, evaluated for their impact on the stone, and monitored for their effectiveness in inhibiting biological growth. She assisted Rae Beaubien (Head of Conservation/Senior Objects Conservator) with her on-going study of painted organic objects from ancient Mesoamerica by carrying out the initial lab excavation of an artifact, found in an elite Maya tomb, on loan for analysis and conservation. Paint flakes uncovered in the matrix soil once formed a decorative coating on a now-disintegrated organic substrate, possibly the remains of a painted wooden bowl. With Don Williams (Senior Furniture Conservator), she participated in the conservation of a 19th c. gilded wooden frame, which included removal of extensive overpaint, cleaning the surviving original surface, and creating replacement components of the decoration to fill areas of loss.
- **Sara Mills** completed a 10-week internship with MCI Physical Scientist, Christine France, focused on the stable isotopic geochemistry of colonial era North Americans in an effort to ascertain dietary information and provenance. Nadia Jimenez Cano continued to work with Christine France on several isotope related projects.
- **Amy Marquardt** has studied the environmental corrosion products of a bronze Rodin sculpture housed in the Philadelphia Museum of Art with Research Scientist Ed Vicenzi and Senior Objects Conservator, Carol Grissom. The sculpture "Eve" was sampled under the supervision of Andrew Lins (Head of PMA conservation) as scrapings from 5 regions of the statue. Amy has been engaged in X-ray microanalysis of these particles and has identified a range of corrosion products using clustering algorithms with collaborators at NIST. The phases identified will inform an upcoming restoration project of Eve at the PMA.