Lasers in the Conservation of Artworks XI

Lasers in the Conservation of Artworks XI

Proceedings of the International Conference LACONA XI, Kraków, Poland, 20–23 September 2016

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The vault of the lantern in the Sigismund's Chapel of the Wawel Cathedral, Kraków, Poland, during laser cleaning. Photo: Jan Marczak

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Contents

Foreword	9
Permanent Scientific Committee	13
Local Organising Committee	14
Final Endeavors of "Monument Man"	
[John F. Asmus, Vadim A. Parfenov, Jessica P. Elford]	15
	10
DEVELOPMENTS IN LASER REMOVAL OF UNWANTED SUBSTANCES ON CULTURALLY-IMPORTANT OBJECTS AND MONUMENTS	
Wavelength-dependent absorption and scattering effects on laser cleaning of	
a corroded iron allov European scale armor	
[Marlene April Yandrisevits, Pablo Londero, Federico Carò, Adriana Rizzo, Caterina Cappuccini]	27
From Earth to Outer Space: Laser cleaning semiprecious quartz and a novel application for meteoritic metal	
[Rebecca A. Kaczkowski, Bartosz A. Dajnowski, Edward P. Vicenzi]	47
Laser yellowing effect: study of the nanophases created by laser irradiation	
of synthetic black crusts using transmission electron microscopy (TEM) and	
electron paramagnetic resonance (EPR) spectroscopy	
[Marie Godet, Véronique Vergès-Belmin, Christine Andraud, Mandana Saheb, Judith Monnier,	
Eric Leroy, Julie Bourgon, Laurent Binet]	63
Laser Cleaning of a First Phase Navajo Wool Chief's Blanket by Nd:YAG	
[Pablo Londero, Ludovica Corda, Daniele Ciofini, Christine Giuntini, Marco Leona]	77
Towards the understanding of the two wavelength laser cleaning in avoiding yellowing on stonework: a micro-Raman and LIBS study	
Athanasia Papanikolaou, Panayiotis Siozos, Aggelos Philippidis, Kristalia Melessanaki,	
Paraskevi Pouli]	95
The potential of OCT for assessing laser assisted removal of deposits from ceramic tiles	
[Magdalena Iwanicka, Iedrzei Musiela, Iadwiga W. Łukaszewicz, Henryk Stoksik.	
Marcin Sylwestrzak]	105

5

The Hanford Nuclear Plant: Radiation Ablation Meets History, Cultural Heritage, and Nuclear Decontamination

[John F. Asmus, Vadim A. Parfenov, Jessica P. Elford]

115

COHERENT LIGHT-BASED METHODS FOR IMAGING, DOCUMENTATION, EXAMINATION AND ANALYSIS OF OBJECTS AND STRUCTURES

Surface micro-profilometry for the assessment of the effects of traditional and innovative cleaning treatments of silver	
[Claudia Daffara, Nicola Gaburro, Giacomo Marchioro, Alessandro Romeo, Giulia Basilissi,	
Andrea Cagnini, Monica Galeotti]	127
Nonlinear optical imaging techniques (NLO) for painting investigation	
[Alice Dal Fovo, Raffaella Fontana, Jana Striova, Enrico Pampaloni, Marco Barucci, Marco	
Raffaelli, Raffaella Mercatelli, Luca Pezzati, Riccardo Cicchi]	141
A moderate microsampling in Laser Ablation Inductively Coupled Plasma Mass Spectrometry analysis of cultural heritage objects: a review	
[Barbara Wagner, Olga Syta, Marek Sawicki]	155
A preliminary study of contemporary binders by Time Resolved Laser	
Induced Fluorescence (TR-LIF) spectroscopy: characterization of the	
painting Nascita Della Forma by Nato Frascà	
[Martina Romani, Marco Marinelli, Alessandra Pasqualucci, Gianluca Verona-Rinati]	179
LIBS, optical and multivariate analyses of selected 17 th -century oil paintings from the Museum of King Jan III's palace at Wilanów	
[Agnieszka Pawlak, Wojciech Skrzeczanowski, Krzysztof Czyż]	191
Elemental analysis of Chinese red seal inks on xuan paper by ArF laser- induced plume fluorescence	
[Bruno Yue Cai, Vincent Motto-Ros, Vincent Detalle, Judy T.S. Lum, Kelvin S. Y. Leung,	
Nai-Ho Cheung]	205

CASE STUDIES

Using the new G.C. Laser Cleaning System for cleaning and surface
preparation for re-gilding of a large outdoor bronze monument of
Alexander Hamilton
[Andrzej Dajnowski, Bartosz A. Dajnowski]

217

Contents

Experiences at the Academy of Fine Arts of Brera in Milan, Italy: the	
application of laser-technology on three case studies of the historical	
heritage	
Elisa Isella, Donatella Bonelli, Silvia Cerea, Francesca Mancini, Veronica Ruppen,	
Alessandra Botteon, Antonio Sansonetti]	229
Decontamination of biocidal loaded wooden artworks by means of laser	
and plasma processing	
[Birgit Angelika Schmidt, Simone Pentzien, Andrea Conradi, Jörg Krüger,	
Constanze Roth, Oliver Beier, Annett Hartmann, Bernd Grünler]	241
Laser-based techniques for a multidisciplinary action aimed at the	
restitutive restoration of S. Costanzo church in Ronciglione (Italy)	
[Valeria Spizzichino, Luisa Caneve, Massimiliano Ciaffi, Roberta Fantoni, Massimo Francucci,	
Massimiliano Guarneri, Antonio Palucci, Gaetano Terranova, Franca Persia, Angelo Tatì,	
Maria Fernanda Falcon Martinez, Chiara Giuffrida, Francesca Scirpa, Laura Bartoli,	
Alessandro Zanini]	253
Archaeometric investigations of medieval stained glass panels from Grodziec in Poland	
[Dariusz Wilk, Marta Kamińska, Małgorzata Walczak, Ewa Bulska]	263
Easel paintings on canvas and panel: application of Nd:YAG laser at 355	
nm, 1064 nm and UV, IR and visible light for the development of new	
methodologies in conservation	
[Joakim Striber, Vanja Jovanović, Maja Jovanović]	279
White, yellow and green pigments on Polish artists' palettes in the period 1838–1938	
Mirosław Wachowiak, Grzegorz Trykowski, Iwona Żmuda-Trzebiatowska	293
Spectral imaging of Dutch gilt leather for improved conservation strategies	
Roger M. Groves, Vassilis M. Papadakis, Martine Posthuma de Boer, Tigran Mkhoyan,	
Bianca van Velzen, Kate Seymour]	307
Author index	321

Foreword

The eleventh conference on Lasers in the Conservation of Artworks has been the latest of the LACONA conference series, initiated more than 20 years ago - in 1995 - by Costas Fotakis and held in FORTH in Heraklion, Greece. It was followed by the LACONA II meeting in Liverpool, UK in 1997, LACONA III in Florence, Italy in 1999, LACONA IV in Paris, France in 2001, and then Osnabrück, Germany in 2003. The LACONA conference was held in Vienna, Austria in 2005, followed by Madrid, Spain in 2007, Sibiu, Romania in 2009 and London, UK in 2011. The most recent LACONA X conference was planned in 2013 in Egypt; however, due to political disturbances it was transferred to Sharjah, UAE and held in 2014. The present edition was held in Kraków, Poland, hosted by the Jan Matejko Academy of Fine Arts. It was co-organized by Nicolaus Copernicus University in Toruń, The Interacademic Institute of Conservation and Restoration of Art in Warszawa and Kraków, and, last but not least, by the National Museum in Kraków.

The early editions of LACONA were devoted mostly to the application of lasers to cleaning of artworks, which, at the time, was an emerging topic. Today, we prefer to talk about "removal of unwanted layers and coatings" to emphasize that this application now goes far beyond simple "cleaning" and has become – for many classes of objects – a mature procedure, widely accepted within the conservation/restoration community. Nevertheless, its effective and safe application to specific objects remains a subject of extensive study. Also, continual progress in the development of lasers, especially by utilizing the ultra-short pulses provided by compact and less expensive sources, opens new areas of application by placing a broader set of tools in the hands of the conservator/ restorer. Another significant feature of recent LACONA conferences is the much broader range of subjects presented, since the application of lasers in the conservation of artworks covers much more than simply "laser cleaning". Appropriate restoration procedures are always preceded by examination and laser techniques - or, more broadly speaking, techniques utilizing coherent light - such as LIBS, Raman spectroscopy, optical coherence tomography and nonlinear or two-photon laser microscopy, feature regularly as significant subjects at LACONA.

A specific aim for the LACONA series has always been to bring together conservation scientists active in the field of developing methods and instruments with practising restorers and conservators who are the most important recipients of these new developments. Without the professional knowledge and experience of the latter it would not be possible to implement any of the results obtained in laboratory research in conservation practice. Therefore, LACONA has always been a unique forum for the exchange of ideas between scientists and practitioners. All these areas of interests are reflected in this year's conference programme, where the two largest sessions are devoted to fundamental research on the removal of unwanted substances with the aid of lasers and to case studies, in which reports of the use of lasers in restoration studios were presented. These two groups of contributions were complemented by coherent light-based methods for imaging, documentation and examination of objects and structures as well as laser-based spectroscopic techniques for the analysis of culturally-significant objects and the monitoring of restoration treatments.

During this, the latest, LACONA conference, 45 oral communications and 14 posters were presented. For the first time the LACONA conference was preceded by a oneday workshop for about 50 participants, dedicated to laser cleaning techniques for various cultural heritage objects. During hands-on sessions, the participants had an opportunity to work with four different specialized lasers to gain experience and a better understanding of the use of lasers in conservation. This session could not have been possible without a kind support from Dr. Alessandro Zanini from El.En., Ms. Małgorzata Musiela from Restauro Sp. z o.o. and Mr. Bartosz Dajnowski from GC Laser Systems Inc.

This volume comprises 20 peer-review research articles submitted by participants

after the conference. They are organised in three chapters covering laser ablation, coherent light-related analytical techniques and case studies. Additionally, the first chapter contains two key-note articles, describing lesser-known aspects of the history of use of light and lasers in the context of preservation of cultural heritage.

Finally, as a chief editor I would like to express my gratitude to the co-editors of this volume, all referees, the Permanent Scientific Committee of LACONA Conferences and, last but not least, to the Local Organising Committee. Very special thanks go to His Magnificence, the Rector of the Jan Matejko Academy of Fine Arts in Kraków, Professor Stanisław Tabisz, and the Deans of the Department of Restoration and Conservation of Artworks. Without their enthusiastic support this event would not have been possible.

Piotr Targowski LACONA XI Chair Kraków, Toruń – September 2016



Lacona XI participants during the Conference Dinner in the "Wieliczka" Salt Mine, September 22nd, 2016.

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