

ART AS EVIDENCE: THE SCIENTIFIC EXAMINATION OF WORKS OF ART

***Karen Trentelman, PhD
Senior Scientist
The Getty Conservation Institute***

DATE: Thursday, November 9, 2017

TIME: 6:00 PM Social Hour, Light Meal
7:00 PM Lecture

PLACE: Skaggs Institute (Molecular Biology Building)
10596 North Torrey Pines Road
La Jolla, CA 92037

RSVP: By Tuesday 7, 2017
<https://trentelman.eventbrite.com>



ABOUT THE SPEAKER

Karen Trentelman is a senior scientist and leads the Technical Studies research group at the Getty Conservation Institute (GCI). Current areas of research of the team include: the application of non-invasive spectroscopic and imaging technologies to the study of paintings and illuminated manuscripts, reverse engineering ancient and historic artistic technologies, and the elucidation of pigment degradation pathways. She is also active in the education and training of scientists and conservators in the application of X-ray fluorescence spectroscopy to the study of works of art, having organized bi-annual workshops since 2002, and currently is writing a textbook to accompany the course. She received a Ph.D. in Chemistry from Cornell University and carried out postdoctoral research at Northwestern University and the University of Illinois, Chicago. Before joining the GCI in 2004 she was a research scientist at the Detroit Institute of Arts.

ABOUT THE PRESENTATION

What does a scientist do in a museum? The scientific study of works of art addresses questions related to conservation (material identification, degradation processes, compatibility of treatment methods), curatorial (artist's technique, workshop practice, attribution/provenance), or material (physical properties and behavior) issues. Answering these questions frequently requires detailed analyses of cultural heritage materials and the reconstruction of historic technologies. The precious nature of works of art creates unique analytical challenges, often necessitating the development of new analytical approaches or specialized instrumentation. A premium is placed on those techniques that either can be used completely non-invasively (i.e., without the removal of any sample, such as X-ray fluorescence and Raman spectroscopies), or can provide new and vital information with the removal of only minimal amounts of material (such as trace analysis via inductively coupled plasma mass spectrometry (ICP-MS) or chemical state information via X-ray absorption near edge spectroscopy (XANES)). Underlying all the work is the common goal of furthering the understanding of the materials and methods used in the creation, interpretation and conservation of works of art.

This talk will present examples of research focused on objects in the collection of the J. Paul Getty Museum, ranging from Egyptian mummies, to medieval manuscripts, to 19th century drawings, to ancient Athenian pottery, to paintings by Rembrandt.

