

AMERICAN FRIENDS OF THE MAURITSHUIS



Newsletter Spring 2012

Dear American Friends of the Mauritshuis,

In September 2011, Dina Anchin, student at the Buffalo State College Art Conservation Program, our recipient of the Conservation Internship arrived at the Mauritshuis for her 6-month internship. In order to fulfill the 12-month requirement of interning at a museum, Dina will continue her practical experience at the Cleveland Museum of Art in Cleveland, Ohio for an additional six months. We are pleased to share Dina's interesting report with you of her recently completed Internship at the Mauritshuis.

CONSERVATION INTERNSHIP DINA ANCHIN

My major project at the Mauritshuis was the examination, analysis and treatment of *Flower Still Life with a Watch* by Abraham van Beyeren (see Figure 1). Van Beyeren was born in The Hague c.1620-1621, and worked in many of the cities within the Netherlands throughout his career. In 1677, he finally settled in Overschie, where he died in 1690. Van Beyeren worked in a number of different genres, including seascapes, fish and flower still-lives and sumptuous banquet scenes. It is the latter that he more well-known for; there are only four known flower still-lives by him. Aside from *Flower Still Life with a Watch* in the Mauritshuis, these include *Still Life with Flowers* (Amsterdam), *Flower Still Life with Watch* (Enschede) and *Flowers in a Vase on a Ledge* (Minneapolis).

Flower Still Life with a Watch is an oil painting on canvas, dated 1663-1665. It measures 80 x 69 cm and is signed lower center, on the edge of the table in dark brown paint: *AVBf*. Before treatment began, the painting was covered in multiple layers of thick yellowed varnish. Despite the strong crack pattern, the paint is in relatively good condition. There are small paint losses throughout, with



Figure 1. Before Treatment, *Flower Still Life with a*

larger clusters of small losses along the bottom edge and at the right side of the painting.

Watch. The blue box indicates the location of Figure 2. The orange box indicates location of Figure 3.



Figure 2. During Treatment. Orange arrow points to initial shape of table. Red arrow points to change of placement of Pink Opium Poppy.

As the varnish removal progressed, a number of changes made by the artist to the composition became increasingly visible throughout the painting. An example of this is the shape of the marble pedestal. In Figure 2, to the right of the pedestal, one can see a lighter area in the dark background, indicating the initial shape Van Beyeren blocked out for the pedestal. At some point during the process, he painted over this area with dark brown paint, making the pedestal smaller and centering it within the composition. Another change to the composition is the placement of the Pink Opium Poppy that hangs just above the pedestal: a ghost image of the flower's original placement can easily be seen above it (see Figure 2).

As can be expected, some of the paint used by Van Beyeren has degraded and discolored with time, an example of which is the orange flower, the Austrian Briar in the middle of the bouquet. This flower was painted with orpiment, a toxic pigment containing arsenic, which is known to turn transparent or grayish in color as it degrades. When examining the flower, we can now see white and pink paint layers below the orpiment (see Figure 3). The white layer appears to be a small reserve Van Beyeren left for the Austrian Briar, while the pink layers are from a flower painted first, before the Austrian Briar, which was then partially painted on top of it. Analysis of this area demonstrated that part of this discoloration is due to the migration of pigment particles into the varnish layer. With the aid of magnification, we can actually see these particles that seem to float in the paint layer (see Figure 4).

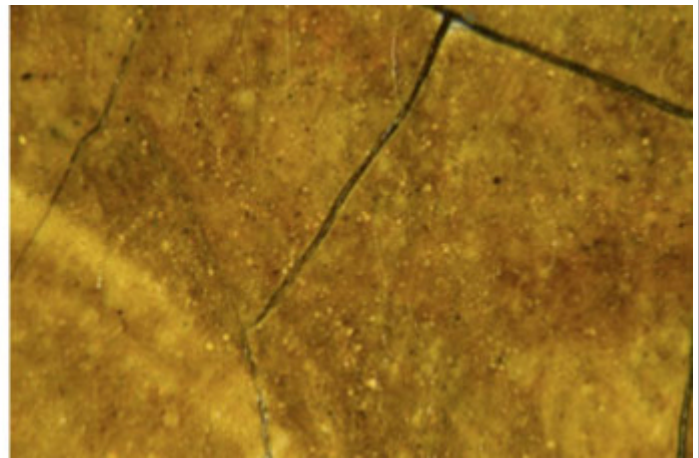


Figure 3 (left). Before Treatment, Detail of Austrian Briar from *Flower Still Life with a Watch*.

Figure 4 (right). Photomicrograph of Austrian Briar showing degraded orpiment paint layer, magnification 8x, *Flower Still Life with a Watch*.

Restoration of *Flower Still Life with a Watch* helped to reveal the true colors of the flowers and improve the legibility of the painting. Van Beyeren's spatial arrangement of flowers within the composition creates a sense of depth and real space, which is now much more tangible. In addition, it is now easier to see that Van Beyeren painted with a looseness and spontaneity that distinguished him from other flower painters of the time, giving his paintings a lively quality.

MAURITSHUIS EXPANSION PROJECT

April 1st was the last day the collection was still on view in the Mauritshuis and now a new and exciting new phase has started. From April 28th until mid 2014, around 70 highlights from the collection of the Mauritshuis will go on display in a separate wing of the Gemeentemuseum in The Hague. [Among this selection are Vermeer's *View of Delft*, *The Bull* by Potter and Rembrandt's *Anatomical Lesson*.](#)

Also, Vermeer's [Girl with a Pearl Earring](#) will be included in the Gemeentemuseum until May 28, when her tour to Japan and the United States will begin, together with other highlights from the Mauritshuis. We will keep you updated as these exhibition dates get closer.



SUPPORT THE AMERICAN FRIENDS OF THE MAURITSHUIS

The Board of the American Friends wishes to express its gratitude to our supporters who make it all possible. By joining the American Friends, you become a member of a group of patrons who care deeply about the Mauritshuis and are committed to support Dutch paintings of the Golden Age. In addition to receiving the American Friends newsletter, supporters receive invitations to museum visits, events, private gallery viewings, and much more. The American Friends is a recognized tax-exempt 501(c)(3) organization and all contributions are tax deductible to the full extent of the law. Please become a supporter today!



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