

## BOOK REVIEWS

*The Conservation of Antiquities and Works of Art*, Plenderleith, H.J. and Werner, A.E.A., 2nd. edition, Oxford University Press, London 1971, 394 pages.

This excellently produced book has stood the test of time extremely well. Indeed, the statement printed on the title page anticipates a lifetime of 500 years. The blue dust jacket is extremely deteriorated, with multiple tears and losses, stains from a wide variety of agents, and many adhesive tape repair attempts. The binding is in sound condition although the headband shows considerable distortion, due probably to improper removal from tightly packed bookshelves. Also, although each signature is well attached to the binding, the book falls open readily at several places; evidence of regular and general use of the contents. The points at which the binding has weakened in this way correspond to pages 162, 281 and 334. The paper, in concordance with the statement mentioned above, is generally stable chemically with a surface measured pH reading of 6.8 (flat head pH meter). The buffering is obviously still very effective.

Aside from its chemical condition, the paper is in a poor state, bearing signs of heavy and continuous use. Almost all pages, with the exception of the Introduction, Prefaces and Acknowledgements, are dirty, frayed and finger-marked. Specifically, pages 162-186 show signs of splashes from waxy material, pigments and resins; pages 281-296 are spotted with brown and black materials (probably iron stains deposited from solution) and cockled as though thoroughly soaked; while pages 334-351 show accretions of plaster, paints, adhesives and insoluble nylon. The list of suppliers between pages 380 and 382 is almost totally obliterated.

Generally throughout the book, the top right of recto pages and the top left of verso pages show abrasions and scars. These correspond with marks on the front and rear covers which are probably due to the use of some form of metal clip to hold the pages open for protracted periods. The marks on pages 288 and 289 surround two comparatively clean areas on an otherwise splattered brown/yellow page, which supports the above hypothesis.

In general, although still in a stable and

usable condition, it is clear that this book will soon need to be replaced with another of the same edition. It has apparently taken a great deal of abuse since it was first purchased by a student.

Roman Conduit  
(recently unearthed  
beneath a public house  
in the Barbican)

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*The Science and Practice of Conservation in the Museum Context, vol.1*, Whoreson, W., Cleanand Press, Toronto, New York and Boston, 1984, 1084 pages, 1st of a projected 6 vols.

In an age of beautifully produced, visually attractive and contexturally meaningful books, this first book of the series stands in a class of its own. The illustration is lavish, balance is carefully considered and the printing is of the highest quality. This author is quite obviously a writer of some distinction; his prose is lucid, he has a highly polished vocabulary and his control of the material is uncanny. He has that happy ability to explain clearly and concisely without the fault of condescending; a particularly difficult task in his chosen subject matter. In a discipline where the personnel exhibit such a wide range of brain orientations and intellects, from those who can hardly drive a screw into a piece of wood to those who can effortlessly unravel the supine stem of the verb *confiteor*, it is indeed an accomplishment to satisfy all. To appeal, to captivate and to hold an audience as wide as this one needs no ordinary literary talent; and this is exactly what this author possesses. What a great pity that, with such talent and such an excellent start, this Whoreson ran out of ideas after the first paragraph. It makes for such an empty book, albeit a beautiful one...

Albert Speer

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*The Reckitt's Blue Book*, Chandraseka Reknaw, Reknaw Publishing Company, Vizacapatnum, 1985, 763 pages.

This book covers the entire chemistry, morphology, pathology, physics, conservation,

restoration, crystallography, analysis, testing, application, ethnology, deterioration, matting, framing, amelioration, transformation, reduction, oxidation, division, subtraction, encapsulation, consolidation, wetting, confrontation, dissemination, painting and antidisestablishmentarianism of the pigment Reckitt's Blue in remarkable detail. No stone is left unturned, no toad left unevicted, to give the reader everything anybody ever wanted to know about this pigment. Of all the exhaustively studied blue pigments, this is the most exhaustive. The reader will never need to buy another book on Reckitt's Blue. In fact, no other author, be he ever so clever, would dream of even attempting, let alone duplicating, such a tour de farce. It's like Bill Mosienko's three goals in 21 seconds. No professional in conservation - conservator or scientist - can afford to be without this book. It sells for a very modest price, is readily available and comes attractively packaged in a custom brown envelope, postage paid. Buy one, yes please.

C.Reknew

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*The Crap of Old Master Drawings*, Brusco, A., Novosti Press Agency, Moscow, 1983, 500 pages

This volume, written by one of Europe's leading experts, the late Antonio Brusco, is compiled from his years of experience in treating Old Master drawings, and details the various graffiti and ephemera found attached to them when their backings were removed. For example, on the verso of one of Leonardo da Vinci's sketches for *The Last Supper* he found what is reputed to be a shopping list, although this is written in a code different to that which Leonardo normally used (when he wasn't writing  $\alpha\beta\gamma\delta\epsilon\zeta\eta\theta\iota\kappa\lambda\mu\nu\xi\omicron\pi\rho\sigma\tau\upsilon\phi\chi\psi\omega$ ) and the exact significance of it will not be known until cryptographers at the United States National Security Agency have deciphered it. In another example, a letter to Michelangelo from his mum, warning him of the problems of working in draughts and giving cures for sciatica and myopia, indicates that he was under a considerable degree of suffering whilst working on the Sistine Chapel ceiling.

Interesting to note are the many accretions found on these drawings such as a miniature engraving which pre-dates Roland Hill's invention of postage stamps by some four hundred years, and depicting a portrait of Lorenzo the Malignant, a little known scion of the Gorgonzaga family.

It is difficult to see where this extraordinary and exhausting piece of art historical espionage fits in with the needs of the paper conservator or art historian, and one wonders how Signor Brusco found the time

to write it and restore so many drawings. However, the book may be useful for flattening said drawings.

Salvador D'Oyly  
Marc Shagall

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*Technical Writing for the Technical Writer*, Spottishote, S., & Balkan, P.Q., Pauper's Press, Ottawa, 1979, 43 pages.

This is the most worst written book I ever recieved for reveiwing. There is literally hundreds of grammatical errors that shows a very laxative approach to editing. Also too, not only are there many spelling mistakes but the writers have obviously got a lot of problems with word splitting. In some cases two seperate words are split in different ways. It is typical of this dayan age that literacy takes a back seat to other things and this is what this book is for to cure that! Aside from these areas where the book fall down a bit it's alright for the beginner to use as it is well laid out and the introduction doesn't put the reader off right from the start. Generally speaking I can recomend this work to all those in technical jobs where they need to write but do not have the educational background for it. Its a pity that a little more careful poofreading was not done from the outset so as to catch the many typographical errors.

Leon Spinks

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*A Handbook of Sourcebooks: Being the Proceedings of a Conference Held*, Vol.1 of 10, The International Council for the Royal Institution of the National Bureau of the American Society of Testing (ICRINBAST 6), Paris 1977 41 pages (parallel English, French, Dutch and Polish texts), includes an illustration, 500 titles and bibliography. Slight spotting on the spine and dust jacket. \$99.50 each volume. A pocket book is in preparation.

This book is the proceedings of a conference in which the papers have been published. It is believed that this represents the proceedings of an international conference held in Poland in May and June 1977, following the disastrous flood of 4th November 1966. However, it is fortuitous that due to an editorial oversight, details of where and when the meeting took place are not included. Such information is useful in its own right but if international symposia are to be of value one must be prepared for a noticeable number of spelling mistakes. The diagrams are, however, relevant and the same is true to a lesser extent of the chapters. Only the more

serious errors are included. It contains copious references and a bibliography, and bomb threats and blackmail are discussed as well.

This well produced and attractive book is fairly typical of conference proceedings and a welcome addition to this rather rarified literature. Although a little expensive for a volume of such size and such typographical mistakes, the spacious format (the bilingual reader can scan opposite pages) makes this

book the most stimulating and informative that has ever been published.

If your reviewer has taken trouble with this book it is because it is a landmark where the authors write about matters of which they have no first-hand experience. Veteran and novice alike, on both sides of the Atlantic, will find it a reliable guide for years to come.

Bristols Hove-Albion