Strategies for Care of Outdoor Collections working with contract conservators

Kelly Ciociola, Principal Conservator
Christina Varvi, Principal Conservator

852 NW 71st Street • Miami, FL 33150
5418 Packard Street • Los Angeles, CA 90019
323.377.8425 • 305.573.7011
rlaconservation.com
RLA Conservation
Architectural Features, Sculpture, and Objects

- A national practice with offices in Los Angeles and Miami, FL.
- Established in 2008 by Rosa Lowinger, a graduate of NYU’s Institute of Fine Arts.
- 7 Conservators on staff and 8 technicians
- A team of professionally trained conservators and artisans specializing in the care of sculpture, historic architecture, and artifacts.
What RLA Works On:

- Historic Architecture
- Fountains & Water Features
- Mosaics & Murals
- Public Art & Monuments
- Artifacts & Decorative Arts
- Modern & Contemporary Objects

Materials We Work With:

- Acrylic
- Adobe
- Aluminum
- Beading
- Bone/Ivory
- Brick
- Bronze
- Cardboard
- Ceramics
- Concrete
- Copper
- Cotton
- Electronics
- Ferrous metal alloys
- Fiberglass
- Gems & Minerals
- Gilding/Gold Leaf
- Glass/Crystals
- Gold & Gold Plating
- Granite
- Lead
- Leather
- Limestone
- Linoleum
- Marble
- Mosaics
- Neon
- Nickel
- Paint
- Petrachrome
- Plaster
- Plastics
- Rubber
- Sandstone
- Scagliola
- Silk
- Stained Glass
- Stucco
- Terra Cotta
- Terrazzo
- Wood
Services / Approach

- Pre-Fabrication Reviews of New Artwork Commissions
- Emergency Services & Insurance Evaluations
- Architecture and Collections Surveys as well as CAP Assessments
- Detailed Condition Assessments, Proposals, Cost Estimates, and Treatment Reports for Conservation Maintenances and Treatments
- Recommendations for Routine Maintenance
- Documentation & Conservation Oversight
- Maintenance Training for Clientele
Types of Clients:

- Federal, state, county, and city public art entities
- Non-profit institutions and public art organizations
- Museums
- Colleges and Universities
- Transportation and aviation collections
- Theme parks
- Developers, Building Management companies, Facilities management departments
- Native American tribal organizations
- Private residences/clients
- Contractors
Conditions in the South and West that may differ from those in the Northeast or Midwest.

- Extreme heat – for extended months of the year
- Year-long Humid/Wet environments (Miami, Hawaii, PNW)
- Dry/arid environments
- Harsh sun exposure
- Salinity
- Hard Water
- Regular preparations for natural disasters
Extreme Heat – For Extended Months of the Year

- Large Fluctuations between daytime highs and overnight lows
- Objects can become hot to the touch
- Can affect how treatments respond
- Physical Dangers to staff/conservators during maintenance
  - Can change working conditions to accommodate – like working during the night.
Year-Long Humid/Wet Environments  
(Southeast, Hawaii, Pacific Northwest)

- Promotes corrosion and micro biological growths.
- Problematic for certain outdoor treatments, such as re-painting sculpture.
  - Usually routine, periodic rains that can interrupt or delay treatments
  - Higher humidity can result in longer cure times for certain products/materials.
Salinity
Dry/Arid Environments

• Can lead to embrittlement and cracking for various materials.

• Without periodic rains to “rinse” surfaces, corrosive particulates and accretions sit on the surfaces for longer periods of time.

• Can be difficult to carry out certain treatments like patching or re-painting because the materials tend to cure a lot faster than standard cure rates in these environments.
Harsh Sun Exposure

- UV degradation leads to:
  - Color fading or shifting
  - Bleaching
  - Embrittlement of plastics and applied coatings
  - Accelerated discoloration/yellowing of plastics and resins
Hard Water

Image Credit: USGS
Regular Preparations for Natural Disasters
Public Interaction
So you don’t have a conservator on staff…

Where do we go from here?
Evolving Long-Term Partnership Between Conservator + Institution
Five Step Plan for Proper Care of Outdoor Artwork and Non-Traditional Collection Elements:

1. Have a long-range plan for maintenance and prioritization of care.
2. Work with stakeholders to address maintenance.
3. Have an emergency plan in place.
4. Regularly review condition to prevent damage or safety hazards.
5. Design, build, and site collection elements correctly.
Up-to-Date Collection Surveys

Arts Foundation For Tucson & Southern Arizona
Up-to-Date Collection Surveys

Flagler Museum, Palm Beach, FL
Regular Maintenance Plans

Cummer Museum of Art and Gardens, Jacksonville, FL
Recommendations for Monitoring
Regular Maintenance Plans

San Diego International Airport
Training In-House Staff
Provide Recommendations for Siting Based on Conditions & Level of Public Interaction
Complete Conservation Treatments as Needed

Jose Bedia Plazas, Village of Key Biscayne, FL
Complete Conservation Treatments as Needed

Wilshire Boulevard Temple, Los Angeles, CA
Conservation Planning in Preparation for Restoration/Building Rehabilitation Project or Special Event
Construction/Conservation Oversight

Gold Mosaic Tile Feature, Academy Museum of Motion Pictures, Los Angeles, CA
Construction/Conservation Oversight

Vizcaya Museum and Gardens, Miami, FL
Disaster Planning
Pre-Fabrication Conservation Reviews for New Commissions

Review of Proposal Documents:
- MODELS
- SKETCHES
- MATERIAL SAMPLES
- PREVIOUS SIMILAR PROJECTS
- PROPOSED FABRICATOR
- ENGINEERING DOCUMENTS
- RECOMMENDED MAINTENANCE
THANK YOU!

Rosa Lowinger, CEO and Chief Conservator
Christina Varvi, Principal Conservator
Kelly Ciociola, Principal Conservator

323.377.8425 • 305.573.7011
rlaconservation.com info@rosalowinger.com