



Art Conservation *and designing a treatment*

Grammar of Ornament by English architect and designer Owen Jones (1809-1874) is not a book to curl up with in a cozy chair. Indeed, the 1856 edition WUDPAC Fellow Johanna Pinney is treating weighs 20 pounds and measures 22 inches by 16.25 inches by 2.5 inches; it is best viewed while it rests on a table or is supported in a cradle.

But Johanna knows that this volume of the book, which has never been out of print since its publication in 1856, has been viewed often. Her evidence is the finger smudges that dot almost every page, helping her envision someone in a library leafing through the book on a rainy afternoon. There is certainly much to contemplate and enjoy. *Grammar of Ornament* has been considered a milestone in the world of design since its publication in 1856 for the way in which it uses 100 brilliantly colored lithographic prints to illustrate Jones’s view of the underlying principles that make art beautiful. The book takes

both a global and historical approach to its subject, and the illustrations range from Grecian floor tiles to Italian Majolica to Indian textiles to Medieval stained glass, and much more. To underscore his belief that beauty will be in harmony with nature, the last chapter is devoted to “leaves and flowers from nature.”

Johanna, a library and archives major with a paper minor, found that the book is in poor, unstable condition and must be treated before it can be used. The leather spine is missing, and the covers are detached, but the text block is intact, and the pages are held together by sturdy sewing and an adhesive, likely animal glue.



The colorants used to illustrate the plates, ranging from reds and blues to oranges, gold and black, are still vibrant. Johanna will clean the pages using soft brushes and cosmetic sponges and believes some pages will require humidification locally to relax creases after she has mended any tears. She will also address mold on the back pages of the book.

When Johanna completes her treatment, she will return the book to the Winterthur Library, where it will continue to be used for study and research. Future researchers will be required to approach the book with clean hands to avoid additional prints and smudges. Johanna, however, has no plans to remove those that already exist, because they help tell the story of the book’s history and of past readers who enjoyed learning from *Grammar of Ornament*.



ARTC Spotlight—December 2022

The University of Delaware’s Art Conservation Department educates and trains professional conservators who are well versed in the treatment, analysis, documentation, and preventive conservation of individual artifact and archive collections. For more news about our students and other department activities visit our web site at www.artcons.udel.edu.

Top: Winterthur/University of Delaware Program in Art Conservation Fellow Johanna Pinney examining the Grammar of Ornament. Above: Johanna turning a page of the oversized volume as it rests on a book cradle. Left: A close-up view of a highly colored design, one of the book’s 100 brilliantly colored lithographic prints. (Images: E. Krape for the University of Delaware.)