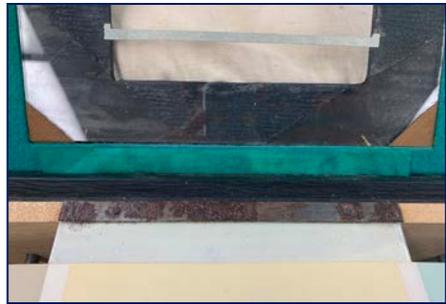




Art Conservation *and a view into history*

Traveling salespeople were once a familiar sight in cities, towns, and the countryside as they went door to door showing their wares. These ranged from kitchenware to Persian rugs to furniture to gravestones, all miniaturized so they could fit inside a suitcase-sized portable box, or kit. One of the more innovative kits was carried in the 1930s by salespeople for Wadsworth Howland and Co., a Boston-based firm that sold artists' supplies and drafting stationery for architects. This kit, known as a Colorguide, promoted Bay State paints.

It contains five rollers that advance color swatches over diagrams of different rooms, allowing homeowners to view the rooms through a glass window and envision how the paints might look throughout the house. Only two such Colorguides are known to exist, both once owned by the same collectors. The first was donated in 1998 to the Athenaeum in Philadelphia and the second was gifted in 2019 to the Winterthur Museum, Garden and Library for its library collection. This year WUDPAC second-year Fellow Elle Friedberg, an objects major with a preventive minor, began treating Winterthur's Colorguide so that it can be preserved and used safely for teaching and research.



Elle found the Colorguide to be in relatively good condition overall, with the mechanical components remaining fully functional. However, a musty odor inside attested to the effects of incorrect relative humidity, as did the corrosion of two metal pieces within the kit, which in turn damaged a green textile on the lid that rests against the metal. Additionally, the interior and exterior of the Colorguide had accumulated a substantial amount of dust and grime.

Elle was able to clean the many small moving parts inside the box using small brushes and a vacuum equipped with microtool attachments. She found a cut-down plastic pipette especially helpful for accessing hard-to-reach areas. She treated the metal by applying solvent with a swab to loosen corrosion and then worked carefully with a scalpel under magnification to reduce it further. She next applied a very thin layer of wax onto the metal to protect it from moisture and covered the damaged green textile with thin strips of a toned synthetic textile for further protection, as well as aesthetic integration.

Before returning the Colorguide to the library, Elle created a custom housing that will help protect it from light, humidity, dust, and insects in storage.



ARTC Spotlight—February 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: WUDPAC Fellow Elle Friedberg surface cleaning the Colorguide with a soft brush. Above: Elle opening the lid of the Colorguide. Upper left: Toning strips of Reemay and Hollytex with Golden Fluid Acrylics to place over areas where corrosion has damaged the interior textile. Lower left: The interior of the Colorguide after treatment with the strip in place. (Images: E. Krape and E. Friedberg.)