



Art Conservation *and historical restorations*

Too much love can sometimes be a bad thing, as Winterthur/University of Delaware Program in Art Conservation (WUDPAC) Fellow Lindsey Zachman was reminded last fall when she treated a Dutch engraving that showed evidence of many restoration campaigns, with results as varied as they almost certainly had been well intentioned. The engraving, dated 1604, depicts an oft-painted Biblical scene from the Book of 1 Kings, the meeting of the prophet Elijah and the widow of Zarephath, and is by Dutch contemporaries, artist Abraham Bloemaert (1566-1651) and engraver Jan Saenredam (1565-1607).

In her examination, Lindsey found that while some restorations had been done well, others, by less skilled hands, had resulted in work that was visually distracting and even odd, such as graphite lines drawn in areas of loss in an attempt to match the surrounding pattern and a bird that seemed to be flying without a body because of an out-of-alignment tear mend. Lindsey also learned from researching other versions of the same print that text at the bottom, perhaps the Bible verse, had been neatly cut away.

The engraving would require many different types of treatment to address all the problems, a prospect Lindsey, a paper conservation major, found both challenging and exciting. She first bathed the engraving and removed its lining and two thick patches on its reverse side. She then turned to the tear in the top right corner that had caused the bird's body to disappear. When ethanol and deionized water did not soften the adhesive used to make the mend, she bathed the engraving again in an enzyme bath while working with a very fine brush to ease apart the poorly mended tear. She dried it between felts with glass weights and locally humidified, flattened, and realigned the various folded areas. Happy to find that the bird's body was intact, though folded into the original mend, she re-mended it after carefully aligning the tear on the suction table.

Lindsey mended two other tears with Japanese tissue paper and created new toned papers from paper pulp to match the large areas of loss and to fill many small holes and losses she found overall. She relined the engraving using medium-weight Japanese paper. Once her treatment was completed, Lindsey planned to place the engraving in a window mat before returning it to its owner. There, she hoped, the engraving would be in a happier state than when it first came to her, and closer to its original appearance.



ARTC Spotlight—August 2019

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 artifacts and entire collections. For more news about our students and other department activities visit our web site at www.artcons.udel.edu.

Top: WUDPAC Fellow Lindsey Zachman reattaches the corner in its proper alignment using the suction table, brushing an ethanol and deionized water mix through the surface to reactivate the adhesive previously applied to either side of the tear. Above: Using the light table while filling small losses in-situ with toned paper pulp. Right (upper): Before and after treatment of the skinned and misaligned corner. Right (lower): Suspending the print between two sheets of Hollytex after pulling it from the bath, allowing excess water to drip before drying the print between felts. Images: J. Irving, J. Hurd, L. Zachman, A. Fichtner.