

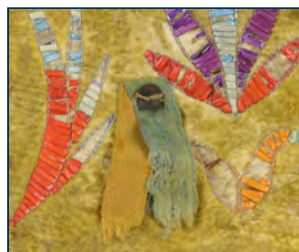
Art Conservation *and wearable documents*

Made of buckskin lined with cotton calico, the Oglala Lakota Sioux boy's vest that this year became a treatment project for Winterthur/University of Delaware Program in Art Conservation (WUDPAC) Fellow Jackie Peterson is decorated with dyed porcupine quills, colored beads, metal sequins and ribbons. Jackie, a textile major, quickly realized that the vest's many components meant she would need to learn more about both textile and object conservation as she developed her treatment plan.

The late-19th century vest was acquired by western collector Amos H. Gottschall, possibly in the 1890s, during a visit to South Dakota's Pine Ridge Reservation. The vest serves as a wonderful historic document; some of the materials like the porcupine quills and the buckskin are traditional to Native American Plains cultures, but other materials like the synthetic dyes used to color the porcupine quills and the cotton lining illustrate an active exchange of materials with Western traders.

The vest is in sound structural condition, though heavily soiled and stained on the front. Testing suggested that the yellow color of the vest is due to the presence of an unbound pigment, which makes it virtually impossible to remove the surface dirt without also removing original colorant. Additionally, the buckskin was prepared with a traditional brain-tanning method that makes it sensitive to both water and solvents. These sensitivities mean that the soiling and staining cannot be removed without loss of material original to the vest. Jackie's treatment therefore had to balance surface cleaning of the beadwork and quillwork while accepting the stained appearance of the buckskin. She chose to reduce the heavy soiling on the beadwork and to selectively clean the quillwork, to bring the embellishments to an even level of cleanliness. Selectively cleaning the quills lessened the dramatic contrast between the soiled buckskin and the embellishments, while brightening the vest's overall appearance. The vest was also damaged from a previous pest infestation that resulted in significant loss and damage to the porcupine quillwork. Jackie's treatment stabilized the most fragile quills to prevent them from being damaged further. She did not replace missing decorative elements, as the vest will serve as a historic document and there are no plans to exhibit it in the near future.

Once Jackie has completed her treatment, the vest will be returned to the University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archeology and Anthropology, which owns the vest. It is hoped that in the future, technological advances may allow for the development of a technique that will permit for stain reduction, while preserving intact all other original components of this interesting and beautiful piece of Native American history.



ARTC Spotlight—April 2017

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 and inset: WUDPAC Fellow Jackie Peterson stabilizing the damaged quills with bridges of Tyvek, toned with acrylic paints and adhered under the damaged quills with a strong but reversible acrylic adhesive. Above left: Details of a ribbon decoration before and after local humidification and attachment to crepeline support fabric. Left: The back of the vest after treatment. (Photos: Claire Taggart, Jackie Peterson.)