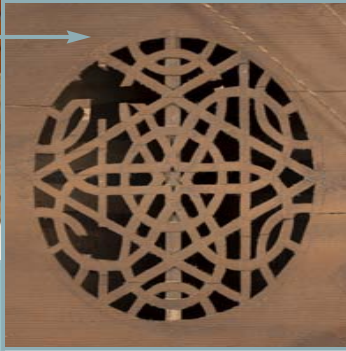


Art Conservation *and history's music*



For almost 1500 years, a stringed, musical instrument called the ud (or oud) has been a familiar part of life in the Middle East. A fretless, short-necked member of the chordophone family, the ud is an ancestor of the more familiar European lute and can be found today in differing sizes and with varying numbers of strings throughout the Arab-speaking world. An eight-string, 19th-century Moroccan ud owned by the University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology since the late 1890s recently became a treatment project for Winterthur/University of Delaware Program in Art Conservation (WUDPAC) Second-year Fellow Jennifer Schnitker.

It was an ideal assignment for Jen, who is an objects major with a special interest in musical instrument conservation. Jen found that after many years in archival storage the *ud's* pegbox and one of the interior bracings had separated from the neck, pieces of the rosette were missing, and its wooden body showed some cracking and joint separation. The instrument's unvarnished surface was soiled and had a stain that seemed to have been caused by water. As she planned her treatment, Jen's goal was to stabilize the *ud* in order to ensure its preservation and enhance its aesthetic appearance. She did not, however, plan to try to make it playable. Future viewers will get a sense of what the instrument is, rather than what it sounds like.

Jen determined that she would need to reconnect the pegboard and the neck, replace broken pieces of the rosette, and remove excess adhesive, which had been used in past repairs, from the neck and front of the soundboard. She decided, however, not to repair the cracks in the rib joins along the side of the *ud* because this could reintroduce tension and cause additional damage. She also determined that a non-polar solvent should be used to clean the surface, since a polar solvent such as water could cause the wooden body to swell and crack.

On the front of the *ud* a decoration made of small pieces of a purple-colored textile with contrasting silver wound threads offered Jen a different opportunity. She plans to study the textile in order to understand the dyes that were being used in North Africa in the 19th century. She also intends to reshape the instrument's strings, which are made of gut and have relaxed and stretched over the years, so that she can ease them back in place. Finally, she will create new storage housing for the *ud* before it is returned to the Penn Museum.

ARTC Spotlight—February 2013

The University of Delaware's Art Conservation Department educates and trains professional conservators in the treatment, analysis, documentation, and preventive conservation of individual artifacts and entire collections. Our students are powerful public spokespersons for cultural heritage and its preservation. For more news about our students and other department activities, visit our web site at <http://www.artcons.udel.edu>

To learn more about the extraordinary university-museum partnership that brings material culture and preservation training to University of Delaware students, visit the special exhibition web site and activity blog for "A Lasting Legacy," a year-long exhibition at the Winterthur Museum, Garden & Library, at <http://www.winterthur.org/?p=910>

Top: X-radiograph of the Penn Museum's oud (acc. no. 29-201-637). Above: WUDPAC Fellow Jen Schnitker dry surface cleaning the oud's soundboard. Inset: Detail of the oud's rosette.