

## Art Conservation – Where Art Meets Science

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In recent news, climate activists in Washington, D.C. poured red powder on the original document of the Constitution of the United States. More and more frequently, whether because of fire or conflict, salvage efforts have been required at museums and cultural heritage sites around the world. Over the past few months, the Vancouver Art Gallery mounted an exhibition focused on authenticity studies of ten oil sketches purported to be by J.E.H. MacDonald but later found to be forgeries. For all these situations, professionals from the field of art conservation have had the expertise to help. Art conservation has the goal of preserving cultural heritage for present and future generations, through research, documentation and treatment. The roles of the conservator and the conservation scientist will be explained, as well as the collaborations these specialists have with other professionals, such as art historians and archaeologists. An overview of the science that is critical to conservation will be described. This lecture will also give examples of research by experts who work in the field and use tools from disciplines including analytical chemistry, polymer science, materials science, and engineering.

### Bio

Alison Murray is an Associate Professor and Graduate Coordinator in the Art Conservation Program, at Queen's University in Kingston, Canada. She received her honours B.Sc. in Chemistry from McGill University and her M.Sc. and Ph.D. degrees in Materials Science and Engineering from Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore, specializing in Conservation Science, offered through a joint program with the Smithsonian Institution. Alison is interested in materials science applied to cultural heritage, including paintings and archaeological objects. Her research has integrated information from mechanical testing data, chemical analysis, and surface analysis, with the goal of quantifying changes brought about by the cleaning process, ageing, and environmental conditions. Another area of research is improving the teaching of science to art conservation students. She is a Fellow of the International Institute for Conservation.