

# Gloucester WPA Murals

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Gloucester, Massachusetts

*Out of the Shadows: Gloucester's Historic Depression Era Public Art murals*  
(One of the ongoing conservation projects)

3rd Quarterly CPA Progress Report - July 15, 2018

Because Community Preservation funds were in place thanks to residents and the guidance of the CPA committee, the city of Gloucester issued a contract to the **Williamstown Art Conservation Center** (WACC) the first week of May 2018 following a rigorous RFP process. Special thanks to: Donna Compton and Stacey Capone from the City's Purchasing Department; Kenny Costa and Jaimie Corliss (then with the Auditor's Office); and Mike Hale and Jim Destino for their guidance and efforts on behalf of this project. These nationally significant murals would have suffered more years of neglect if not for the Honorable Mayor Romeo Theken's leadership and steadfast support of the arts and Gloucester.

The **Williamstown Art Conservation Center** scheduled a condition assessment team for an immediate trip to Gloucester during the second week of May 2018. Conservation work related to CPA funding commenced **one week** following the signed contract.

Logistics and notifications to appropriate representatives about WACC's upcoming site visit were coordinated-- especially NOAA and the Post Office. (In 2012, I found mural studies at the Post Office which are dynamite examples of the process artists went through with federal assignments. One of the Gloucester muralists, Charles Allan Winter, was actively lobbying for the Post Office commission and was thwarted. For various reasons, no murals were developed there at all.) Although I had routinely confirmed the status of any art on display since 2012, I swept through Sawyer Free, City Hall, O'Maley, NOAA, Post Office and DPW again before the center's pending visit. I found a Stoddard painting at Sawyer Free that wasn't documented. Also, I had not visually confirmed the art beneath the stage in Kyrouz, reportedly last seen and handled ca.2009, because there was no conservation plan in place. Now that there was we needed to clear a route for removal. The reveal in May 2018 proved to be yeoman labor over several days, accomplished thanks to heroic and rapid response by the Department of Public

City of Gloucester, MA, historic murals CPA Third Quarterly Report, July 2018 Works, city staff and various individuals. Thank you Mike Hale, Joe Lucido, Phil Curcuru, Mike Tarantino, Bob Gross, Darrin Merchant, Ed Berkman, Matthew Theken, and Cliff King; also Rose LoPiccolo, Enza Taormina, Joanne Senos, Deb Lucey, Stella Mantzourani, and Ron Gilson for their assistance with this project. **The art that was NOT on display was found to have been left in appalling conditions (about 2009) which triggered an emergency extraction and contract amendment.**

## **BUDGET**

Since becoming the city's Grants Manager, which includes overseeing the CPA awards, Jaimie Corliss has been available and in communication with me and with a financial counterpart, Terry Haskins, at the Williamstown Art Conservation Center. **\$2978 CPA funds have been expended at this time.** I estimate that the CPA portion of the contract will be expended in full by September 2018.

### **In Kind contributions**

In kind contributions since the last quarterly report include a Full work week prior to the conservation team's arrival, a 1/2 day art handling and moving by Cliff King, and a site visit to Williamstown Art Conservation Center in June.

We are extremely grateful to **Beauport Hospitality** for extending some in kind support so that the esteemed guests from Williamstown Art Conservation Center could stay at Beauport Hotel in Gloucester. We extend thanks to the Beauport Team for such ongoing support of the city's arts and heritage, and their willingness to collaborate and partner on many community endeavors.

## **Local business**

The WACC visitors were customers at area businesses like: Beauport Hotel, Caffe Sicilia, Virgilios, Short and Main, Jeff's Variety, Christine's Variety, and Connolly's.

## **Field work in Gloucester and back at the Center**

The assessment covered various locales in Gloucester and is continuing with the art that was brought back to the center. The condition assessment team was comprised of five conservators from WACC with me (in my capacity as a recognized expert in WPA art since the 1980s): Tom Branchik, Director; Maggie Barkovic, Managing this project; Montserrat Le Mense; Mary Holland; Rebecca Johnson; and Matt Hamilton, preparator.



Two teams of four conservators arrived in Gloucester on the evening of May 9th in order to begin at 7:00am the following day. Because the art beneath the stage would be removed off site for later inspection at the Center, a second (and oversized) vehicle and the need for a round trip in a single day (May 10) by the third team was required. The three stand alone Mayor portraits by Winter were packed for that transport as well. Because two teams would remain and one team would depart, I planned separate guided overview tours with stops at each locale on the first full day to maximize efficiency and in order for WACC to confirm or adjust their estimated field itineraries.

### **June 2018**

About a month later, during the week of June 18th, I visited the conservation center to check on the art that was removed and confer with the conservators. Emergency triage related to safe temporary storage and inspection were underway. The conservators are in the throes of preparing the condition assessment from their discovery in the field and at their facilities. I anticipate that the conservators' results will be completed and ready for inclusion in the next CPA quarterly report.

When future work is completed on the murals, the conservation team will return. Art will shuttle back and forth to the Center and in some cases with a shipping company sub contractor.

End report. Prepared by Catherine Ryan

Figure 1, photographs, and printed matter from the conservation center below

Figure 1: Second quarter (April 15) filing vs 3rd quarter (July 15) filing. Green check marks indicate completed.



## *Photographs: BEFORE*

Photo caption:

Snapshots photographed circa 2009 and shared with Catherine Ryan in 2015



## Photographs: MAY 2018

### Photo caption:

Kyrouz Auditorium. Appalling discovery related to murals not on display. By 2018 the art having been so improperly stored and poorly treated, and without labels or protective barriers *anywhere*, inevitably became surrounded (thankfully not atop) and obscured over time by dense storage: holiday decorations; various construction remnants; stacks of file cases which turned out to be mostly old ballot machines; office equipment; and a staircase. Clearing a path to the art required much labor. All needed to be removed, boxes opened, and floorboards lifted so the art could be extracted and we could ensure whatever art may possibly be there was found.



**Photo caption:**

Phil Curcuru and Mike helped move and shift storage that first day. At some point, we finally could see the APPALLING art storage by - ill fitting lengthy (110") split tubes-- NO end caps, NO glassine, NO inner tube(s)-- so of course they collapsed & disintegrated even more than was evident in the 2009 photos.





**Photo caption:**

Some of the art was tossed back there with no wrapping at all. Everything had to be removed albeit the art, left untouched as we found it, until the conservation team was on site.



**Photo caption:**

It's a very low and difficult space to navigate but with so much help on several days, and with purpose behind our efforts, we cleared the cavities so Williamstown Art Conservation Center could extract the art. DPW staff and Clifford King (Catherine's spouse), a volunteer who is an electrical engineer, are used to working around IT and PA equipment, which was in front, cluttered over, and missing a door found later underneath other storage.



## DPW rescued the art in 2018 as they did in the early 1970s.

After the center and side crawl spaces beneath the stage were cleared - some of us were done. DPW of course had much more heavy work to do negotiating content dispersal, and preparing Kyrouz for a big public function. DPW should be commended for their professional efficiency and kindness and great support for the city's culture.



**Photo caption:**

What a difference many days and lots of help make!

The art was undisturbed because any art handling was to be completed with the Williamstown Art Conservation Center only. We left the space ready for the conservation team and with enough room to negotiate extraction from this storage and down flights of stairs.



**Photo caption:**

Darrin Merchant assisting Williamstown Art Conservation Center. Director, Tom Branchick, looks on.



Photo caption:

conservators Montserrat and Rebecca from Williamstown Art Conservation Center at City Hall with Donna Compton and Stacey Capone City Purchasing\_20180510\_©c ryan, May 10 2018



Photo caption:

(L to R) Montserrat and Rebecca, Williamstown Art Conservation Center conservators, meeting Joanne Senos\_ Mike Hale \_Enza Taormino\_ at City Hall, Gloucester MA \_20180510\_ Oscar Anderson mural in the background ©c ryan, May 10 2018



Photo caption:

Williamstown Art Conservation Center Conservators meet Deb Lucey at O'Maley Innovation Middle School\_detail of Mulhaupt mural above. (L-R) Maggie, Principal Lucy, and Mary-





**Photo caption:**

Introducing conservators from Williamstown Art Conservation Center to Stella Mantzourani from Sawyer Free Library, as they quickly tour all the Gloucester MA mural sites (prior to conservation teams assigned in the field). Stella shared her knowledge about the space when it had been the children's library and her memories of visiting and checking out books. (L-R Conservator Rebecca, Stella from Sawyer Free, and Conservator Mary)



**Photo caption:**

Four conservators tour Gloucester MA mural sites before breaking off into field teams\_ this stop Oscar Anderson mural at NOAA headquarters ©ryan May 2018



## Photographs: June 2018

Photo caption:

**“CPA funding supports conservation needs of Gloucester’s municipal art at the Williamstown Art Conservation Center state of the art facilities.”** ©c ryan, June 2018. Conservators had to “boot it and suit it” for these examinations to protect themselves from airbornes, and to protect the incredibly fragile and compromised works of art. Fragments were responding well to relative humidity control. Conservators L-R Montserrat, Maggie and Mary



Photo caption:

**“Three Mayor portraits from the collection of the City of Gloucester by artist Charles Allan Winter are assessed by Williamstown Art Conservation Center thanks to support from the CPA.” ©c Ryan, June 2018.**



Photo caption:

Exterior Williamstown Art Conservation Center, ©c Ryan, June 2018



Photo caption:

Interior (partial lab shot, one floor) detail showing “Easel Alley”, Williamstown Art Conservation Center, ©c ryan, June 2018



# About the Williamstown Art Conservation Center:

[Williamstown Art Conservation Center](#) (WACC) was established as the regional conservation center for New England by the US government back in 1977. The center publishes a magazine regularly, **Art Conservator**. In 2017 the summer issue focused on the center's 40th anniversary milestone. I will scan and upload articles from that issue, and I dropped off a copy with Jaimie Corliss. You can also find it online here to read and download as a PDF:

<http://www.williamstownart.org/artconservator/artconserv17sum.html>

The Lab at 40

*An anecdotal history of the Williamstown Art Conservation Center*

The Director

*Tom Branchick reflects on thirty-six years at the easel*

Also take a moment to peruse the list of consortium members.

## Members of the Consortium

### Williamstown

#### Art Conservation Center

227 South Street,  
Williamstown, MA 01267

Addison Gallery of American Art,  
Phillips Academy  
—Andover, MA  
Adirondack Museum  
—Blue Mountain Lake NY  
Albany Institute of History & Art  
—Albany, NY  
Alice T. Miner Colonial Collection  
—Chazy, NY  
The Arkell Museum  
—Canajoharie, NY  
Arnot Art Museum  
—Elmira, NY  
Art Complex Museum  
—Duxbury, MA  
Bennington Museum  
—Bennington, VT  
Berkshire Museum  
—Pittsfield, MA  
Bowdoin College Museum of Art  
—Brunswick, ME  
The Cheney Homestead of the  
Manchester Historical Society  
—Manchester, CT  
Colby College Museum of Art  
—Waterville, ME  
Eric Carle Museum of Picture  
Book Art  
—Amherst, MA  
Farnsworth Art Museum  
—Rockland, ME  
Fenimore Art Museum  
—Cooperstown, NY  
Frances Lehman Loeb Art Center,  
Vassar College  
—Poughkeepsie, NY  
Frederic Remington Art Museum  
—Ogdensburg, NY  
Gershon Benjamin Foundation,  
—Clayton, GA  
Harriet Beecher Stowe Center  
—Hartford, CT  
Herbert F. Johnson Museum of Art,  
Cornell University  
—Ithaca, NY  
Historic Deerfield, Inc.  
—Deerfield, MA  
Hood Museum of Art,  
Dartmouth College

—Hanover, NH  
The Hyde Collection  
—Glens Falls, NY  
The Lawrenceville School  
—Lawrenceville, NJ  
Mead Art Museum,  
Amherst College  
—Amherst, MA  
Memorial Art Gallery,  
University of Rochester  
—Rochester, NY  
Middlebury College Museum of Art  
—Middlebury, VT  
Mount Holyoke College Art Museum  
—South Hadley, MA  
Manson Williams Proctor Arts  
Institute  
—Utica, NY  
Museum of Connecticut History  
—Hartford, CT  
Neuberger Museum,  
Purchase College, State University  
of New York  
—Purchase, NY  
New Hampshire Historical Society  
—Concord, NH  
New York State Office of General  
Services, Empire State Plaza Art  
Collection  
—Albany, NY  
Newport Restoration Foundation  
—Newport, RI  
Norman Rockwell Museum at  
Stockbridge  
—Stockbridge, MA  
Picker Art Gallery,  
Colgate University  
—Hamilton, NY  
Plattsburgh State Art Museum  
—Plattsburgh, NY  
Portland Museum of Art  
—Portland, ME  
Preservation Society of Newport  
County  
—Newport, RI  
Rhode Island School of Design  
Museum of Art  
—Providence, RI  
The Rockwell Museum of  
Western Art  
—Corning, NY  
Roland Gibson Gallery, State  
University of New York  
—Potsdam, NY

The Ruth and Eimer Wellin Museum  
of Art at Hamilton College  
—Clinton NY  
Smith College Museum of Art,  
—Northampton, MA  
Springfield Museums  
—Springfield, MA  
Sterling and Francine Clark Art  
Institute  
—Williamstown, MA  
Suzy Frelinghuysen and George L.K.  
Morris Foundation  
—Lenox, MA  
Union College  
—Schenectady, NY  
Von Auersberg Gallery, Deerfield  
Academy  
—Deerfield, MA  
Williams College Museum of Art  
—Williamstown, MA

### Mission Statement

The mission of the Williamstown  
Art Conservation Center, a  
nonprofit institution, is to protect,  
conserve and maintain the objects  
of our cultural heritage; to provide  
examination, treatment, consultation  
and related conservation services  
for member institutions, and for  
other nonprofit organizations,  
corporations and individuals; to  
conduct educational programs with  
respect to the care and conserva-  
tion of works of art and objects of  
cultural interest; to participate in the  
training of conservators; to promote  
the importance of conservation  
and increase the awareness of  
the issues pertinent to collections  
care; and to conduct research and  
disseminate knowledge to advance  
the profession.

### Atlanta Art Conservation Center

6000 Peachtree Road  
Atlanta, GA 30341

Alabama Historical Commission  
—Montgomery, AL  
Booth Western Art Museum  
—Cartersville, GA  
Brenau University  
—Gainesville, GA  
Columbia Museum of Art  
—Columbia, SC  
The Columbus Museum  
—Columbus, GA  
High Museum of Art  
—Atlanta, GA  
Mason-Scharfenstein  
Museum of Art  
—Demorest, GA  
Montgomery Museum of Fine Arts  
—Montgomery, AL  
Morris Museum of Art  
—Augusta, GA  
Telfair Museum of Art  
—Savannah, GA  
Vanderbilt University Fine Arts  
Gallery  
—Nashville, TN  
Watson-Brown Foundation  
—Thomson, GA



*About the facilities, from the center's printed matter:*

*The Williamstown Art Conservation Center (WACC) is a non-profit institution devoted to the preservation and conservation of cultural historical materials, serving the northeast. WACC is located on the campus of the Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute in Williamstown, Massachusetts. The eleven conservators cover multiple disciplines, covering a wide range of expertise on a variety of materials; we treat a full range of artworks and artifacts, including paintings, works on paper, photographs, sculpture, art objects, textiles, furniture, fine frames, antiques, heirlooms, and personal treasures. The Center serves museums, libraries, educational institutions, historical societies, and archives, as well as corporations, independent art professionals, and private collectors. Our facilities are equipped to handle oversized paintings and objects with a wide range of materials and equipment that are reflective of a multidisciplinary team with over twenty years' experience. The conservators at the Williamstown Art Conservation Center adhere to the Code of Ethics and Guidelines for Practice as formulated by the American Institute for Conservation of Historic & Artistic Works (AIC), the national membership organization of conservation professionals. Written records and photographic documentation assure a permanent archive of information on all objects, enhancing monetary value, scholarly reference, and efficacy of future conservation. Our mission at WACC is to protect, conserve, and maintain the objects of our cultural heritage; to provide examination, treatment, consultation, and related conservation services for member institutions, and for other non-profit organizations, corporations and individuals. As a large regional center in Massachusetts, we have a personal commitment to preserving and researching our local cultural heritage and engaging with public outreach. We are a registered with the System for Award Management (SAM). Resumes for the conservators involved in the paintings, paper, and framing departments will be attached.*

**List of Facilities and Equipment**

*Designed by renowned architect Tadao Ando, WACC at Stone Hill is a unique facility for art conservation, offering state-of-the-art laboratories housed within world-class architecture. The new facility, which opened in June 2008, was designed to meet the needs of 21st-century conservation. It offers spacious labs for paintings, works on paper, photography, objects, textiles, furniture and picture frames, each space brightly illuminated with natural light and built to meet the specific needs of its specialty. The paintings lab is specially equipped with a large hot table for doing structural treatments on oversized paintings. Additional facilities include an analytical laboratory, examination room, classroom, and photo-imaging studio, as well as an X-ray room with 160-kilovolt capacity. Stone Hill Center also houses Clark exhibition galleries.*

**Environmental Alarm System and Monitoring:**

*There is a central system for air conditioning and humidity which keeps all levels stable. The system is self-monitoring providing real time data capture and alarms if out of acceptable thresholds. Environmental alarm system maintenance and testing is performed in-house by the buildings' owners.*

**Building Layout and Design:**

*The Center's area has been specifically planned for art conservation work with work areas for each specialty or field of expertise separate from storage rooms for the same disciplines. The doors ceilings are 12' high providing access to the majority of large items.*

**Security Systems**

*There is an extensive CCTV system with both external and internal cameras. The DVR that records all images is located at the owners' security department. There is a local monitor for cameras located in the security office adjacent to the loading dock. The security alarm system comprises 360 degree motion detectors in rooms that have windows to the exterior. There are additional motion detectors in connecting door areas and storage locations. All external doors are contacted. All external doors have locks and have non-duplicable keys. Fire exits have internal 'crash bars' but no external access. All windows are fixed non-opening. All windows are toughened double plate glass with environmental properties as well as being impact resistant. There is full time security officers' 24/7 monitoring the building.*