

## **Rehabilitation and Display of Artefacts from Dar al-Athar al-Islamiyyah Collection at the Kuwait National Museum. September 2007.**

There are currently three UNDP conservators working on the conservation and preservation of the objects in the Dar al Athar al Islamiyyah collection. Each consultant has a different object speciality. We all care for the collection by carrying out interventive conservation to objects when necessary and, preventive conservation by maintaining storage conditions for the objects which ensure that the environment is stable and that objects are not at risk of further deterioration.

The collection has both an active loan programme with objects leaving Kuwait for exhibition in international institutions. When objects go on loan work needs to be undertaken on the objects in advance to ensure that the objects travel safely and securely. The collection also has a very active publication policy: this involves all conservators to work alongside scholars and curatorial staff to ensure that as much information can be gleaned as possible thus enriching art historical data and contributing to the greater knowledge of Islamic art and culture.

The task of the conservator is to comprehend the material aspect of objects of historic and artistic significance in order to contribute to their preservation and to enhance our understanding of them. The conservator has a particular responsibility in that treatment is performed on irreplaceable originals, which are often unique and of great artistic, religious, historic, scientific, cultural, social and economic value. The value of such objects lies in the character of their fabrication, in their evidence as historical documents, and in their authenticity. Interventions must be preceded by a methodical and scientific examination aimed at understanding the object in all its aspects, and the consequences of each manipulation must be fully considered. An intervention on a historic or artistic object must follow the sequence common to all scientific methodology: investigation of source; analysis; interpretation and synthesis. Only then can the completed treatment preserve the physical integrity of the object, and make its significance accessible. Most importantly, this approach enhances our ability to decipher the object's scientific message and thereby contribute new knowledge to the scholarly world. The conservator must work as part of a team as interdisciplinary co-operation is of paramount importance. The work of the conservator can and should be complemented by the analytical and research findings of scholars.

### **Frances Halahan Head of Conservation.**

I have been working with the collection of DAI since just after the first Gulf War. I am Head of Conservation at the museum and work with visiting conservators and local staff to continue to improve the care of the collection and to carry out conservation to the objects. I oversee the conservation programme and plan the conservation requirements of the collection.

I outsource and manage externally specialised expertise as and when required to implement and carry out the programme of collection conservation. I devise strategies and prepare budgets for appropriate analysis of objects in the collection.

I participate in the various teaching programmes run at the DAI by exposing students to the principles of environmental monitoring and the maintenance of an environment suitable for the long term care of ancient objects. I supervise the logistics of the movement of objects and collaborate with staff for loans and travelling exhibitions. I often work with the curators to discover as much technological information about an object as possible by undertaking examination and analyses. I also work on the development of international standard conservation facilities for the new museum project and, have an active input into the design of the new museums display cases and environmental monitoring system. I coordinate the design of the new conservation laboratories for Kuwait National Museum and ensure that a programme of continued study and active conservation will be sustainable for the future in Kuwait.

### **Sophie Budden**

#### **Speciality: Wood and Decorated Surfaces.**

I have been working with the DAI since 2001. I am the assistant head of conservation and work on a programme of interventive conservation which is based on the object priority structure established after a full survey of the architectural wood collection was undertaken in 2001 -2004. I am currently coordinating the design of the conservation section of a new museum database system which will allow greater access to object information to all users. My other responsibilities include managing the conservation laboratory on a daily basis, organising work plans and sourcing conservation grade materials for use throughout the collection and maintaining equipment and health and safety. I devise strategies for housekeeping and assist in implementing a programme of appropriate environmental monitoring and control for objects in storage and display. I assist in implementing an appropriate integrated pest management programme for the collection. I coordinate a teaching programme to support further learning in this specialised field to a number of Kuwaiti students. I liaise with colleagues and share findings with curatorial and scholarly staff.

### **Amy Crossman**

#### **Speciality: Metal**

I joined the DAI in March of 2007. My responsibilities include the care of the metal collection and the undertaking of practical conservation to metal objects. I participate in the teaching programme by instruction in the structure and deterioration processes of ancient metals. I undertake examination of objects, and relevant information is then documented. An ongoing survey of the metal collection has been implemented, in order to make an assessment of the condition of the objects in the collection. Objects found to be vulnerable to further damage are then entered into a programme for stabilisation. Practical work is implemented under a microscope, and has included removal of excess sand deposits where an object may have been buried, removal of concretions on surface of metal objects, in order to improve the stability and appearance of the object. Metal collections are particularly susceptible to changes in the environment, as such routine environmental control and monitoring are essential. Collections care I have carried out includes routine monitoring of the environment in the stores, to ensure the relative humidity and temperature are stable and are not causing deterioration to occur. Other collections care work includes improving the storage of some of the metal objects and ensuring they are suitably packed and examination of objects to ensure active corrosion is not occurring.