

Art Meets Science at the IMA



What happens when K-12 teachers, museum educators and art conservators get together? They create new and exciting ways of looking at and learning through art!

On May 31st, the K-12 Outreach Committee of the American Institute for the Conservation (AIC) was thrilled to partner with the Indianapolis Museum of Art (IMA) and the Art Education Association of Indiana to present an evening teacher workshop, Art Meets Science, as part of the museum's First Friday events and in conjunction with AIC's 41st Annual Meeting in Indianapolis.

The event, led by art conservators Sarah Barack and Beth Edelstein, started off with an active dialogue in the museum galleries, looking at Italian Renaissance painting, African sculpture, and modern works by Robert Indiana. During the tour, Sarah and Beth modeled the observations and investigations that would characterize a conservator's approach to an art object. In each example, they discussed how conservators manipulate the electromagnetic spectrum through various laboratory techniques to better understand works of art, their materials and their history.

After the tour, teachers gathered for refreshments and a short presentation on why art conservation is an ideal lens for learning a wide variety of skills and content in the classroom. An engaging and productive discussion followed, with teachers and conservators brainstorming ideas for lesson plans and hands-on activities.

Special thanks to Jessica Watson (AEAI Elementary Education Division Chair), Heidi Davis-Soylu (IMA Manager of Academic Engagement and Learning Research), and Tania Said (AEAI Museum Education Division Chair) for making this such an enjoyable event, and to all the educators that attended for their brilliant ideas and valuable feedback.

After attending the "Art Meets Science" workshop at the IMA, I felt inspired to integrate even more science into my art lessons. I particularly enjoyed walking through the IMA's African art gallery & learning about how art conservation can be incorporated into the art room lesson. For example, there was a beautiful coil vessel that Sarah and Beth showed us-- they were describing how a small clay sample is removed and investigated to determine how best to conserve it. Later, when we had our discussion session with them, art teachers shared ideas about how we could experiment with light, color fastness and fading in students' art (among other engaging topics!) I also imagined the flip side: art could be integrated in to the science lessons too! How cool would it be to have a periodic table online, where art images were associated with each element? For example, each time you click on the element gold (Au), you would be directed to all kinds of artworks that used gold, eg. gold leaf, repoussé, filigree, Fabergé--you name it--now, science meets art!

--Emma Said, elementary art teacher, IPS School 106

I am always looking for new jobs, related to visual arts, to share with my students. Art Meets Science at the IMA sounded like a perfect evening to discover just that, plus they promised a delightful First Friday evening event afterwards! I signed up knowing very little about the restoration and identification process. I found it fascinating! Beth Edelstein and Sarah Barack were so knowledgeable and easy to talk with. I had many questions and they had many answers. I will continue to keep my eye on the IMA and their educational events. I had a delightful evening and left with many new ideas for sharing restoration with my students.

Beth Siminski, elementary art teacher, Maple Glen Elementary

For more information about conservation and K-12 education, please visit www.conservation-us.org/K12 and the AIC wiki (a work in progress) at http://www.conservation-wiki.com/wiki/K-12_Educational_Resources_on_Conservation; or email Sarah and Beth at K-12@conservation-us.org.