

SHERRYN VARDY

2021 AICCM/ADFAS Armidale Mid-Career Scholarship



Sherryn is a private paintings conservator who runs Gippsland Heritage Conservation, the only conservation service in the Gippsland region in Victoria. This scholarship provides a two-way learning opportunity with the team at Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery, where Sherryn can learn from and assist them with treatments while gaining access to major equipment in a long-established laboratory. TMAG contributed a substantial amount towards the scholarship.

The scholarship will help fund a two-week professional development placement for Sherryn to collaborate with the conservators in the conservation lab (painting) at the Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery.

Collaboration and sharing of ideas are particularly important in the conservation field. The last in-person meeting of painting conservators in Australia was at the AICCM Painting SIG in 2016. Therefore the opportunity for candid discussions about treatments, work methods and problem solving has been limited. Most learning is 'on the job.' In early 2019 Sherryn started her business, Gippsland Heritage Conservation (GHC), a private painting conservation studio in Gippsland, regional Victoria. The opportunity to interact with other conservators has been self-driven, arranging zoom meetings or phone calls particularly after early 2020 due to the pandemic. Immediately before the first lock down Sherryn I volunteered at Tasmanian Museum and Gallery (TMAG). Since then Sherryn have maintained a relationship with Jennifer O'Connell, Senior Conservator (Painting) at TMAG and value her advice and the opportunity to discuss ideas.

Both TMAG and GHC are regional conservation practices – isolated from other conservation professionals. There is a very small number of painting conservators in Tasmania (a search on Find a Conservator reveals only one in Tasmania itself), and Sherryn is the only conservator practising in the Gippsland region which covers the majority of south-eastern Victoria. Developing a connection between TMAG and GHC will allow for an exchange of ideas and possibly lead to future



collaborations. An opportunity for an institution to have a private conservator join the lab for a set time would be beneficial to both parties. Some treatments and projects require more than one conservator to complete, and this would be an opportunity to physically undertake treatment that otherwise has been difficult for the sole painting conservator at TMAG.

In addition to exchanging ideas, the experience of sharing treatment methodologies and learning new skills, participating in this activity would allow Sherryn to work in a long-established lab with access to major equipment such as the vacuum hot table and suction platen. As a small business Sherryn does not have access to large expensive equipment, but gaining experience in using the equipment would be beneficial for the future of her business. The opportunity to also work with a conservation technician and have access to objects and paper conservators for questions relating to labels, and other materials would increase her knowledge and assist in her business as it develops.

Promoting conservation to the public is a passion of Sherryn's. During her career she has held various roles in relation to the development of exhibitions, and to be able to contribute to an exhibition at TMAG and promote conservation to the public would not only benefit her but the wider community.

During her two weeks at TMAG, a talk with the local ADFAS Society and AICCM Tas Division could be held further promoting the importance of conservation. Other achievable outcomes of this activity would be building strong networks within the conservation community. Connections Sherryn could call on to discuss treatments and problem solve. This network could have the potential to be developed into a group where conservators, who may feel isolated, could interact as a form of mentoring for mid-career conservators.
