

CONSERVATION IN MUSEUMS: WILLIAM AIKEN WALKER'S MARINE LIFE
PAINTINGS

By

KELLY COURTNEY O'NEILL

A PROJECT IN LEUI OF THESIS PRESENTED TO THE GRADUATE SCHOOL
OF THE UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT
OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
MASTER OF ARTS

UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA

2008

© 2008 Kelly Courtney O'Neill

To my parents, Shirley and Peter O'Neill

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I have many people I would like to thank for their support these past three years and for my project in lieu of thesis. I would like begin by thanking Rustin Levenson for affording me the opportunity to do this project in her Miami studio. Without her guidance and help, I would not have been able to do this project and there would not have been a project to begin with. I would also like to thank Mrs. Levenson's associate, Veronica Romero, for her help inside the studio this summer and for her friendship.

Next I would like to thank the people who have been very influential to me in the School of Art and Art History at the University of Florida. First, I would like to thank Dr. Glenn Willumson for his guidance as the Director of Museum Studies and for allowing me do a project in lieu of thesis that ties in my love of conservation and museums. I would also like to thank my thesis chair, Dr. Eric Segal. Dr. Segal met with me regularly, set deadlines and advised me through the thesis writing process. His guidance and help was invaluable. I would also like to thank the other members of my thesis committee, Dr. Victoria Rovine and Dixie Nielson. Dr. Rovine has continuously challenged me to become a better writer through her African art history courses. Mrs. Nielson has helped me realize my dream of pursuing art conservation as a career through her Museum Studies courses.

On a personal note, I would like to thank my friends for their love and support since I started my master's program. They know who they are; they have helped me keep my sanity and have been my family here at the University of Florida these past three years. I wouldn't have wanted to take this journey with out them.

And last but not least, I would like to thank my parents, Shirley and Peter O'Neill. Their unwavering support has given me the courage and the strength to pursue my dreams.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	<u>page</u>
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	4
ABSTRACT.....	7
CHAPTER	
1 INTRODUCTION	9
2 ARTIST BACKGROUND: WILLIAM AIKEN WALKER.....	10
3 CONSERVATION IN MUSEUMS	14
Conservation	14
Conservation vs. Restoration	15
Role of the Museum.....	16
Conservation in Museums	17
Conservation Budgets.....	19
Preventative Conservation.....	19
Conclusion	21
4 THE PAINTINGS	22
The History	22
The Supports.....	23
The Conservation.....	24
The Restoration.....	25
The Paintings	26
<i>Sheepshead</i>	26
<i>Porkfish-Catalineta</i>	29
<i>Nassau Grouper</i>	31
<i>Spiny Lobster</i>	32
<i>Green Parrotfish</i>	33
<i>Angelfish</i>	35
<i>Lane Snapper</i>	36
5 CONCLUSION.....	38
APPENDIX	
A AIC CODE OF ETHICS AND GUIDELINES FOR PRACTICE.....	39
B SAMPLE CONSERVATION REPORT	48

C CONSERVATION PHOTOGRAPHS	50
LIST OF REFERENCES	57
BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH	58

Summary of Project Option in Lieu of Thesis Presented to the Graduate School
of the University of Florida in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts

CONSERVATION IN MUSEUMS: WILLIAM AIKEN WALKER MARINE LIFE
PAINTINGS

By

Kelly Courtney O'Neill

May 2008

Chair: Eric Segal
Major: Museology

Conservation is the profession devoted to the preservation of cultural property for the future. By providing treatment to arrest the decay of objects and to stabilize against further deterioration, conservation seeks to stop the decomposition of cultural property. Restoration, often confused with conservation, is the continuation of the conservation process by returning the object to a former state. Although restoration is often done with the addition of non-original materials, the intent is to keep the integrity of the work and artist foremost. This is why modern conservation and restoration is done with reversible materials. Together the processes of conservation and restoration have ensured the preservation of thousands of artifacts that would otherwise have been severely affected or even lost to the ravages of time.

For this project, under the guidance and supervision of conservator Rustin Levenson, I performed the conservation and restoration of seven paintings by American artist William Aiken Walker in her Miami studio. The generalities and the specificities of each painting will be addressed in accounts of the process of the cleaning and restoration of each painting. Two preliminary sections discuss the artist and the field of conservation in order to provide context for this report on a conservation project done in lieu of thesis. The background of the artist is discussed in order to place these paintings in historical context. The topic of conservation is

addressed as it relates to this project. More specifically conservation in museums is considered in light of the fact that these paintings by William Aiken Walker are accessioned into the collection of the Museum of Florida History in Tallahassee, Florida.

CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

Conservation is the profession devoted to the preservation of cultural property for the future. By providing treatment to stop the decaying of objects and to stabilize against further deterioration, conservation seeks to stop the decomposition of cultural property. Restoration, often confused with conservation, is the continuation of the conservation process by returning the object to a former state. Although restoration is often done with the addition of non-original materials, the intent is to keep the integrity of the work and artist foremost. This is why modern conservation and restoration is done with reversible materials. Together conservation and restoration have ensured the preservation of thousands of artifacts that would otherwise have been severely affected or even lost to the ravages of time.

For this project, under the guidance and supervision of conservator Rustin Levenson, I performed the conservation and restoration of seven paintings by American artist William Aiken Walker in her Miami studio. The generalities and the specificities of each painting will be addressed in accounts of the process of the cleaning and restoration of each painting. In order to provide context for this report on a conservation project done in lieu of thesis, two preliminary sections discuss the artist and the field of conservation, respectively. The background of the artist is discussed in order to place these paintings in historical context. The topic of conservation is addressed as it relates to this project, while museum conservation is considered in light of the fact that these paintings by William Aiken Walker are accessioned into the collection of the Museum of Florida History in Tallahassee, Florida.

CHAPTER 2 ARTIST BACKGROUND: WILLIAM AIKEN WALKER

William Aiken Walker (1838-1921) was a native of Charleston, South Carolina. After serving in the Confederate Army during the Civil War, Walker made his living as an artist traveling from city to city in the ‘New South.’ Walker was said to be a friendly man who never owned a home or stayed in one place too long but made friends wherever he went. Although he eventually considered Baltimore his home, he often traveled to resort communities in North Carolina, Cuba, and New Orleans as well as in Florida, where he often wintered.¹ He painted landscapes, portraits and marine life but acquired moderate fame and made his living from his paintings of genre scenes depicting black life in the South.²

There is no record of formal art training for Walker, but the city of Charleston is believed to have influenced him in his artistic pursuits. In Charleston, Walker was exposed to American art and artists before the Civil War. Charleston was an important stop for American portrait painters at mid-century. At age 12, Walker painted his earliest known painting which was a portrait of an African American on the docks of Charleston. After being injured in the Civil War, Walker was transferred in 1863 to the Engineer Corps where he was a draftsman and cartographer. During these years, much of his work was devoted to still life painting.

In the late 1870’s he abandoned his early focus on still life in favor of the genre paintings for which he is best known today. However, towards the end of the nineteenth century he returned to still life, when he took up marine painting. An avid sportsman, Walker loved to fish,

¹ Cecilia Steinfeldt, *Art for History’s Sake: The Texas Collection of the Witte Museum* (San Antonio: The Texas State Historical Association, 1993), 255.

² Timothy Eaton, “William Aiken Walker: in Florida,” *William Aiken Walker: in Florida* Exhibition Catalog (Palm Beach, Florida: Eaton Fine Art, 2004), <<http://www.tfaoi.com/aa/5aa/5aa215a.htm>>.

and he often studied and sketched the specimens he caught.³ In 1890 he began a marine series with serious documentary intentions. He wrote annotations on the backs of his drawings giving data concerning weather, tides and the location of where each fish was caught.⁴ Walker traveled the Atlantic and Gulf Coasts of Florida, intrigued by the fish and crustaceans he encountered. Walker also sold paintings to the fisherman who caught them.⁵

Walker continued to document the places he visited along with the fish he caught. He strayed from the duller wood panel background of the fish still lives of his youth by opting instead for depicting a solid background of deep sea green or light brown for his works on canvas. For those on paper, he used the creamy color of the paper itself to provide the background.⁶ Among the paintings conserved for this project, the untouched creamy background of artist board can be seen in his painting *Nassau Grouper*.

Walker's attention to detail rendered his marine life paintings not only scientifically anatomically correct (and this, despite his limited training), but beautiful as well. His use of transparent glazes in subtle shades of a wide range of color skillfully captures the luminescence of the fishes' scales. Walker's style of anatomical correctness and beauty perhaps owe something to the tradition of eighteenth century botanical illustration.⁷

In creating these renderings, Walker either positioned the fish horizontally on the picture surface or turned the picture surface on its vertical axis, depicting the fish suspended from a nail

³ August P Trovaioli and Roulhac B. Toledano. *William Aiken Walker: Southern Genre Painter* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1972), 8.

⁴ Patti Carr Black, *Art in Mississippi 1720-1980* (Jackson, Mississippi: University Press of Mississippi, 1998), 121.

⁵ Trovaioli, *William Aiken Walker*, 8.

⁶ Cynthia Seibels, *The Sunny South: The Life and Art of William Aiken Walker* (Spartanburg, SC: Saraland Press, 1995), 170.

⁷ Seibels, *The Sunny South*, 170.

by a string through its mouth. This is the same composition that Walker employed when he painted the marine life in this project. He began each work by drawing the fish in pencil upon his paper or the prepared ground of an un-stretched canvas tacked to a board.⁸ His use of this expedient alternative to properly stretched canvas is indicated by the nail holes in the canvases' tacking margins on most paintings in this project. After having established a sketch of the subject, he then filled in the drawing using either watercolors or oil paints. Walker dated a large number of his paintings, although the reasons for this are not clear. Whether he did so in order to establish the date for artistic or selling purposes, or to memorialize the memory of the catch, remains for another research project.⁹ Nonetheless, the inscriptions usefully place all these works in the years at the start of the twentieth century. With the exception of one painting that is undated, all of these works are dated from 1901 to 1909.

Three of the seven paintings in this project were executed by Walker in Key West, Florida. On the reverse of these three canvases the location of Key West was marked, along with the fish's scientific specimen name. These three paintings are *Porkfish*, *Green Parrotfish* and *Nassau Grouper*. The other paintings include *Sheepshead*, *Angelfish*, *Spiny Lobster*, and *Lane Snapper*, all marine life are found in the warm waters off south Florida.

Aside from the paintings themselves, there is no documentation to provide further evidence of their existence. However, the book, *The Sunny South: The Life and Art of William Aiken Walker*, provides examples of similar marine life paintings by Walker. A *Bluefish* and a *Sheepshead* painting are believed to have been owned by his friend and boating expedition partner, William Henry Gregg.¹⁰ Walker accompanied Gregg on the latter's boat on voyages in

⁸ Seibels, *The Sunny South*, 170-1.

⁹ Seibels, *The Sunny South*, 171.

¹⁰ Seibels, *The Sunny South*, 164.

1899, 1900 and 1908.¹¹ That the *Sheepshead* owned by Gregg is not the same *Sheepshead* painting in this project is clearly indicated by the fact that, despite the similar titles, the two works have different dates. Gregg's *Sheepshead* is dated 1900 which coincides with their 1900 boating voyage while the one treated here was painted two years later. Although the paintings in this project are not represented in books or articles pertaining to Walker, they are evidence of Walker's continuing interest in marine life which began in 1890 and continued until at least 1909.

Whether Walker had hopes of making a complete scholarly study of marine life is unknown. He apparently lost interest in this project sometime after 1912 due to old age, deteriorating health and the inability to travel.¹² Although Walker's last sketch was a North Carolina landscape dated October 15, 1920,¹³ his life's work was full of variety and adaptability to changing circumstances and tastes.¹⁴ Walker's small scale marine still-life works are one aspect of his oeuvre, but these seven paintings broaden our understanding of the range of subjects taken up by an artist best-known for his genre scenes of black life in the New South.

¹¹ Seibels, *The Sunny South*, 163.

¹² Trovaioli *William Aiken Walker*, 122.

¹³ Steinfeldt, *Art for History's Sake*, 256.

¹⁴ Seibels, *The Sunny South*, 202.

CHAPTER 3 CONSERVATION IN MUSEUMS

Although this project focuses on the actual conservation treatment of seven paintings, this section provides a broader perspective on the profession of conservation and its role in museums. The following discussion addresses conservation, the museum's role in conservation, including conservation budgeting and preventative care by museums.

Conservation

Conservation is the profession devoted to the preservation of cultural property for the future. It is also defined as the application of science to the examination and treatment of museum objects and to the study of the environment in which they are placed. Conservation activities include examination, documentation, treatment, and preventative care, supported by research and education.¹

Examination is the investigation of the structure, materials, and condition of cultural property including the identification, the extent and the causes of alteration and deterioration.²

Documentation is the recording in a permanent format of information derived from conservation activities.³ This includes conservation reports and photographic evidence of before, during and after treatment.

Treatment is the deliberate alteration of the chemical and/or physical aspects of cultural property, aimed primarily at prolonging its existence. Treatment may consist of stabilization and/or restoration.⁴

¹ Mireia Xarrie, *Glossary of Conservation I* (Barcelona: Balaam, 2005), 49.

² Xarrie, *Glossary of Conservation I*, 49.

³ Xarrie, *Glossary of Conservation I*, 50.

⁴ Xarrie, *Glossary of Conservation I*, 50.

Stabilization involves treatment procedures that are intended to maintain the integrity of cultural property and to minimize deterioration. Essentially stabilization secures the object in its current state.⁵

Conservation vs. Restoration

Conservation is different from restoration. Conservation in this respect is the control of the environment to minimize the decay of artifacts and materials. Conservation treatment arrests decay and stabilizes artifacts to prevent further deterioration. Restoration is an extension of stabilizing against further deterioration. It is used when conservation treatment is thought to be insufficient, and aims to reinstate an object to an exhibit able condition, without falsification.⁶ Restoration is a continuation of conservation in that it is treatment procedures intended to return cultural property to a known or assumed state, usually through the addition of non-original materials.⁷

Areas of conservation include paper, sculpture, photographic, framing and painting conservation. Each of these different media requires specific skills and specific knowledge. This project is in the field of painting conservation, more specifically paintings on canvas and, in one instance, painting on artist's board.

Any conservation project involves complex issues ranging from technical problems to ethical concerns. In many of these areas, conservators are guided by the American Institute for Conservation of Historic and Artistic Works (AIC), the foremost professional conservation organization. Most reputable conservators are members of this organization. The AIC has provided a Code of Ethics and Guidelines for Practice for conservators. This document (see

⁵ Xarrie, *Glossary of Conservation I*, 50.

⁶ Xarrie, *Glossary of Conservation I*, 50.

⁷ Xarrie, *Glossary of Conservation I*, 142.

Appendix A) delineates obligations that conservators hold to cultural property. Its principles include topics such as advocacy and respect for cultural property, honesty, promoting awareness, conduct, documentation, preventative care, and treatment. Members of the AIC are expected to follow these codes and guidelines in their daily practice of conservation. One specific principle states that “conservators shall practice within the limits of personal competence and education as well as within the limits of the available facilities.”⁸ AIC recognizes that conservators are human beings and therefore somewhat limited as to what can actually be done. Another important thought expressed is that “the conservation professional must strive to select methods and materials that, to the best of current knowledge, do not adversely affect cultural property or its future examination, scientific investigation, treatment, or function.”⁹ The materials that conservators work with today are reversible. To actually alter the state of an object permanently is not something conservators are meant to do.¹⁰ These ethics guide conservators in their work and I have witnessed this firsthand in Rustin Levenson’s conservation studio. Her advice is to follow the code.

Role of the Museum

“Museums collect, preserve, and interpret the things of this world.”¹¹ This definition of museums by the American Association of Museums (AAM) summarizes the three important aspects of most museums: collection, preservation and interpretation. The museum’s responsibility to care for the collection for the future lies under the heading of preservation. The

⁸ American Institute for Conservation of Historic and Artistic Works, *AIC Code of Ethics and Guidelines for Practice*, Principle IV, <<http://aic.stanford.edu/pubs/ethics.html>>.

⁹ *AIC Code of Ethics and Guidelines*, Principle VI, <<http://aic.stanford.edu/pubs/ethics.html>>.

¹⁰ This interpretation of the AIC Code of Ethics is unwritten but practiced by good conservators.

¹¹ American Association of Museums website, “What is Museum?” <<http://www.aamus.org/aboutmuseums/whatis.cfm>>.

preservation of the collection is one of the cardinal responsibilities of a museum.¹² The conservation of a museum's collection is integral to the very definition of museums in this respect.

Conservation is a continuing responsibility.¹³ It is the responsibility of a museum to provide reasonable care for the objects entrusted to it. Regarding objects owned by the museum, this responsibility flows from the museum's legal status, which resembles that of a charitable trust.¹⁴ This legal structure allows for the funding and establishment of museums and provides guidelines for their governance.

The approach to conservation has changed dramatically in many US museums. Historically, the conservator was trained to focus on individual objects; more explicitly, the object in serious need of treatment or the object that was to go on exhibit. Within the museum the conservator's tasks were usually limited to this type of service. But by the mid-1970's a number of museums in the US began to take a more holistic approach to the management of their collections due to a newfound accountability towards collection management. This arose from public attention focused on cultural heritage and ecological concerns because of adverse publicity on questionable museum practices in accessioning and deaccessioning.¹⁵ This was the impetus for a new emphasis on the quality of documentation and record-keeping. Standards were established in these areas within the museum as a whole, and the authority to implement and oversee these standards was centralized in one individual or office. This change reflected

¹² Marie C. Malaro, *A Legal Primer on Managing Museum Collections, Second Edition* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Books, 1998), 407.

¹³ Malaro, *A Legal Primer*, 55.

¹⁴ Malaro, *A Legal Primer*, 406.

¹⁵ *Archival Informatics Technical Report* Vol.2, #4, Winter, 1988, 26, <http://www.archimuse.com/publishing/exh_mgmt/exh_mgmt_ch1_D.pdf>.

the heightened consciousness of those governing museums, who now realized that they had a trust-like responsibility to see that collections were managed prudently for the public. When standards were being established for documentation and record-keeping, a major goal was to prevent problems. Using this holistic approach, museums made dramatic advances in gaining control over collections, leading to the use of preventative conservation.¹⁶

Conservation in Museums

Conservation in museums is usually conducted by either in-house staff members or by contracted professionals. Conservators who belong to a museum's staff oversee the collections, assist the registration department, and take care of any necessary conservation or restoration needs required to maintain the collections.

Many museums employ outside conservation help on a contractual basis. Museums may use the expertise of freelance professional conservators, regional conservation facilities, and conservators from museums that provide outside services. This is true even if there is a conservator on staff.¹⁷ Often times outside opinions are needed when working on a particular project. Small and midsized museums often do not have the funding or space for a conservator on staff. When they need a conservator, they have to contact one of the aforementioned services. Museums, particularly in the registration and curatorial departments, have to make contacts with accredited conservators in their area. The AIC provides a referral system that identifies

¹⁶ Malaro, *A Legal Primer*, 412-13.

¹⁷ Ed. Rebecca A. Buck and Jean Allman Gilmore, *The New Registration Methods* (Washington, D.C.: American Association of Museums, 1998.), 103.

conservators by specialty, membership level and geographic area.¹⁸ They are an excellent contact for those museum staff trying to locate quality professional conservation work.¹⁹

Conservation Budgets

For a museum to be accredited by the American Association of Museums (AAM), it must have a conservation plan and budget. These need not be presented in detail, but they must be a priority in protecting and caring for the collection. Unfortunately, there is never enough money for conservation. Endowments, grants, trusts or donations often enable museums to pay for conservation. Generally, those objects that need conservation the most should be treated first. Such decisions are under the discretion of relevant museum staff (i.e. the registrar, the curator and the director).

Preventative Care

From the moment they are created, all objects are vulnerable to physical deterioration. This process can be slowed by careful handling and by storage in a clean, stable environment. It has been estimated that lack of proper routine maintenance is responsible for 95% of conservation treatments; the remaining 5% result from inappropriate handling.²⁰

Initial conservation of museum collections must be performed by museum staff through preventative care.²¹ Preventative care helps protect the collection from future damage. The long term health and preservation of collections is affected by relative humidity, temperature, light, air

¹⁸ Buck and Gilmore, *The New Registration Methods*, 104.

¹⁹ When deciding to hire an outside conservator, museums should also perform background. This includes, but is not limited to, asking other museum professionals for recommendations and independent research on the conservator in question.

²⁰ Buck and Gilmore, *The New Registration Methods*, 103.

²¹ Buck and Gilmore, *The New Registration Methods*, 104.

pollution, pests and human error. These specific areas of concern can be monitored through preventative care which constitutes the holistic approach to conservation mentioned above.

Relative humidity (RH) is the proportion of water vapor in a given quantity of air compared to the maximum amount of water vapor that the air could hold at the same temperature.²² RH is expressed as a percentage. The maintenance of a stable RH is desirable, whereas extremes and rapid fluctuations can result in severe damage to an object caused by changes in shape and size, chemical reactions and biodeterioration of materials. Extreme high RH (60-70%) can produce mold growth on organic materials. A low RH (40-45%) produces dissection, cracking, and embrittlement in organic materials such as panel paintings. A constant RH between 50-60% is best for mixed collections, and is generally preferred in museums because their collections usually include a variety of objects.

Temperature directly affects RH. It is very important to keep the temperature stable. Increased temperatures will produce chemical deterioration, biological activity and minor physical expansion of some materials.

Light is radiant energy that permanently damages light-sensitive materials by catalyzing degradation reactions. Both type (UV and infrared) and intensity (amount of illumination) of light affect an object's condition. Daylight is most hazardous to objects. There are three types of radiation that affect objects. The first is visible radiation which provides illumination. Visible light can be monitored through use of photographic light meters and is measured in foot candles or lux. Ultra-violet (UV) light is invisible short wave radiation. This is the most damaging

²² Buck and Gilmore, *The New Registration Methods*, 104.

component of the light spectrum. Infrared (IR) is long wave radiation manifests as both heat and light.²³

Air quality cleaned and maintained through air filtration systems which clean air of its particulate and gaseous contaminants. Further protection includes storing in acid-free and neutral tissue or untreated cotton or linen to prevent off-gassing of materials onto objects.²⁴

Human error through inappropriate handling accounts for 5% of conservation treatments. In an effort to prevent staff from inadvertently injuring an object, they should be trained on how to handle objects properly.²⁵ This includes detailed information on how hold objects properly and how to transport objects safely.²⁶

Conclusion

Although paintings and other works of art should only be conserved by a professional conservator, it is the responsibility of a museum to care for their collection and oversee their conservation needs. There are several things museums can do to protect and ensure preservation of their collection. Proper preventive care is important before and after conservation treatment, to prevent the need for further conservation and to avoid further damage.

²³ Buck and Gilmore, *The New Registration Methods*, 106.

²⁴ Buck and Gilmore, *The New Registration Methods*, 107.

²⁵ Buck and Gilmore, *The New Registration Methods*, 45.

²⁶ Buck and Gilmore, *The New Registration Methods*, 45.

CHAPTER 4 THE PAINTINGS

The project described here is focused on the assessment and conservation of seven marine paintings by William Aiken Walker. Although this group of works shares many similarities, each one presented unique circumstances.

The History

Unfortunately, the history of these specific paintings remains mostly unknown. Walker painted them in the early 1900s and most likely sold them to the people who caught these particular fish or to individuals he encountered in the resort towns where he thrived as an artist. In 1999, a curator from the Museum of Florida History was asked to examine the paintings at the Wakulla Springs Hotel. He identified them as being painted by William Aiken Walker. They remained there in Wakulla Springs until they were transferred to the Museum in August 2006 through donation from Edward Ball Wakulla Springs State Park, Division of Recreation and Parks, Department of Environmental Protection. Before the paintings were donated into the Museum's collection, conservator Rustin Levenson saw them in early spring 2006 while she was on assignment restoring a ceiling in the Hotel. The paintings were found stacked one atop the other in a pile on the floor of the closet. Stacked more than twenty paintings high, they were a sight to behold-- a dirty sight to behold. All of the paintings in this project arrived in the conservation studio with dirty, moldy mat boards, two of which also had bird excretions on the mat board. Along with the history, the conditions of temperature and relative humidity are unknown. It can be surmised that conditions were not ideal because of their discovery in a pile and the evidence of mold and surface grime on the paintings.

The first of these paintings from the pile chosen for conservation was the *Tarpon*. (This painting was not a part of this project.) The painting was conserved by Rustin Levenson in 2006.

It was chosen for conservation based on the desire for the Museum to lend the painting to the Flagler Museum for a special exhibition on sport fishing. The next paintings chosen for conservation from the pile are the seven paintings in this project. They were selected as a representative group from the collection that showed a variety of fish. The Museum's conservation budget from the state, along with a donation from their Friends support group, Friends of the Museum, allowed for the conservation of this group of works. The rest of the paintings from the pile are in stable storage until the Museum has the funds for their conservation.

Assessing the seven paintings in this project, six are oil paintings on canvas and one is oil on artist board. And of the six on canvas, four of the canvases are made of tabby weave canvas,¹ a common canvas, and two are of the rarer twill weave canvas.² The tabby weave is a little bit thicker whereas the twill in this case provided a thinner canvas support for the paintings. This made the twill weave paintings more vulnerable (as they were not stretched on auxiliary supports such as stretchers), to damage by bending or tearing. This discovery of the different types of materials Walker used highlights his versatility as an artist. It shows he was able to paint on different supports and that perhaps he simply painted on what he had available. Also, once the mat boards were removed, evidence of pin holes in the tacking margins show that Walker tacked his canvases to another support while painting, most likely outdoors.

The Supports

All seven paintings came affixed to a mat board as its only permanent form of exterior support. (In shipping, each painting was individually secured in a Mylar sleeve.) All mat boards

¹ Tabby weave canvas is the over-under weave of canvas threads.

² Twill weave is the diagonal weave of canvas threads.

except the one belonging to the *Angelfish* had the marine specimen's scientific name and common name written on the bottom center of the mat board. Most of the paintings also had string attached through the top of the mat board that indicates how Walker had hung each. But this ready-made mat board frame did not offer adequate protection for each painting. In fact, over time, the mat board actually damaged the canvas it was framing. All of the canvases showed indentations around the border of the canvas caused by where the mat board laid on the painting surface. In addition, the unknown adhesive Walker used to attach the mat board to the reverse of the canvas (and artist board) abetted in the deterioration of the canvas. In the cases of the *Spiny Lobster* and *Sheepshead*, residue along with a layer of canvas had to be scraped away from the existing tabs in order to remove the adhesive and tabs.

The Conservation

Each painting was cleaned front and back. The reverse, usually done first, was cleaned with a conservation sponge after the tabs and adhesive residue were removed. This had to be done very carefully as most of the canvases were brittle and extremely dirty. The twill weave canvases were more sensitive and required more care because the thinness of its canvas left it vulnerable to tearing, especially at the corners.

Once complete, the surface of each was cleaned with ammonium citrate³ to remove surface grime and mold, with the *Nassau Grouper* as the exception. The *Nassau Grouper* is the one painting on artist board. The artist board's nature required a method of dry-cleaning with a conservation sponge.

After the surface was cleaned, consolidation adhesive was poured into any cracks, including paint losses, and along the edges of the canvases that were exposed with no ground

³ Ammonium citrate is a weak acid that is commonly used to clean oil paintings.

layer. This is the stabilization aspect. The two paintings that required the most consolidation were the *Sheepshead* and *Spiny Lobster*. During and after this process, each painting was flattened with weights to allow the adhesive to assist in closing up the cracks.

The Restoration

The restoration process overlaps with the stabilization aspect of the conservation process. During and after consolidation, each painting was flattened with weights to allow the adhesive to assist in closing up the cracks. This helped to reform the canvas to its prior flat shape.

Another important aspect of restoration is filling and toning losses. Losses in the paint layer, particularly in the *Spiny Lobster*, *Lane Snapper* and *Porkfish*, were filled with the conservation fill Modostuc.⁴ Then these areas of loss were retouched and toned to blend into the painting. Scratches on several of the paintings were toned as well to make them less distracting from the overall composition.

Non-original material in the form of Pcap patches⁵ were added to the reverse of two canvases for canvas reinforcement. A Pcap patch the width of the painting was affixed to the reverse of *Angelfish* at the bottom tacking margin. The tacking margin and the exposed raw canvas next to it made the bottom edge flimsy and vulnerable to damage. A Pcap patch was also added to the lower proper right and lower proper left corners of the *Spiny Lobster* where the corner showed signs of separating from the rest of the canvas during the cleaning of its reverse.

Pcap was also used to form new tabs in the place of the original tabs on the reverse. The Pcap tabs were secured to the reverse and wrapped around a sized cut piece of gator board for support. Acid free tape was used to attach the new tabs to the gator board. This allows a nice,

⁴ Modostuc is Italian gesso.

⁵ Pcap is a strong, thin, malleable material that is excellent for added support in patches, tabs, insert linings, strip linings and loose linings. It is applied with Beva film, an adhesive, by heat, in most cases to the reverse of canvases as added support.

flat support for shipping and for storage in the museum. The Pcap tabs can be affixed to a new mat board in the future if the works are displayed.

The Paintings

Sheepshead

Sheepshead was the first of the seven paintings conserved. It is 19 ¾” in height and 13 7/8” wide with a vertical orientation. In the center of the painting is a portrayal of a sheepshead fish (a silvery fish with vertical black bands) against a soft green background. The *Sheepshead* is suspended on a nail from a green string that is anchored in the fish’s mouth. This string in the painting mirrors the actual string attached to mat board above the fish’s head. In the lower proper right of the canvas Walker signed and dated this work “WA Walker, 1902.”

Sheepshead is an oil painting on tabby weave canvas, which is the most common type of canvas consisting of over-under weaving canvas threads construction. Tack holes are visible around the perimeter where Walker attached the canvas to another support during painting. The canvas edges are fraying and the canvas has become embrittled. There is an area of flaking and loss in the central area and lifting paint around the perimeter. There is significant cracking and cupping throughout the painting, especially where the mat board was previously, and there are localized opening of cracks. There is also significant surface grime throughout the painting as well.

Walker’s *Sheepshead* was a challenging painting to conserve and restore, not only because it was the first one undertaken. Before cleaning or removing the mat board, consolidation⁶ had to be performed on a loss (missing paint) in the center of the fish body. This had to be done

⁶ Consolidation is a treatment using an adhesive to reattach localized areas of ground or paint that are flaking. Andrea Kirsh and Rustin S. Levenson, *Seeing Through Paintings: Materials and Meaning in the Fine Arts Volume I* (New Haven, Yale University Press, 2000), 312.

before anything else because the area was sensitive and could continue to flake if it was not secured from further damage. A small amount of Beva D8 was placed into the area of loss and heat was applied from a spatula to activate the adhesive. A layer of Mylar (a non-stick plastic) was placed underneath the canvas and another layer was placed as a barrier between the hot spatula and the surface. This protected the canvas from adhering to the counter and the spatula.

The verso. The first hurdle was removing the tabs and the adhesive that Walker used on the verso to adhere the canvas to the mat board. This took several days of applying adhesive removers. The methyl cellulose was most effective in removing the tabs from the canvas but it left behind the adhesive residue that was on the tabs. The use of methyl cellulose, benzene, commercial remover, and acetone removed small areas of adhesive but the best method was warm water and a scalpel. It took days to remove from all eight areas where the tabs were located. After this was completed, Levenson removed the mat board with a scalpel (areas along the border were stuck to the mat board.)

The recto. Before cleaning the entire surface, the tacking margins needed to be cleaned with distilled water to remove areas where the mat or glue from the tabs was stuck. After testing for sensitivity, the entire surface was cleaned with ammonium citrate (this weak acid can be used to clean most surfaces because of its gentle nature), followed by distilled water. This cleaning helped remove the surface grime and dirt. Then along the edges of the canvas, diluted Beva D8 was applied to consolidate them. On the surface in small sections at a time, small amounts of ETOH (ethyl alcohol) were used in the cracks, followed by Beva D8 to consolidate the cracking. The ETOH was applied first because it provides the Beva D8 a direction to flow into the cracks instead of resting on the surface of the canvas. This process was followed with distilled water

because any adhesive left on the surface causes that area to be glossy regardless of the finish it had before (which was matte in this case). This process took several days. After each day, a protecting barrier of Mylar was placed over the whole surface of the painting and then flat plates and weights were applied on top of the Mylar. This helped the surface to flatten out the bumping around the cracks and where the mat board left an imprint on the canvas. It is also necessary because the surface has memory, which left un-weighted would allow the canvas retain its bumpy shape and negate the application of the adhesive.

Further treatment. The next day the verso was cleaned with a conservation sponge and the application of a towel dampened with water to relax the canvas. The central loss was consolidated again and re-weighted. The re-dampening of the reverse and re-weighting occurred over a long period of time. After two weeks of applying a dampened towel with water to the reverse, ETOH was used in the place of water. After just one day the canvas was much flatter. (This was only done twice because ETOH is much stronger than water).

After two more weeks of flattening, the adhesive Lascaux 498-20X was applied into the canvas fringes. Ivory Modostuc was used to fill in missing spots in the tacking margins and the central loss. Then the retouching began. The edges and the tacking margins were toned with Gamblin Conservation paints.⁷ The central loss was retouched so that it blended with the rest of the fish. Scratches were toned throughout the painting and retouching varnish was applied into the central loss.

After the canvas was cleaned and restored, eight PCap (a strong material used in conservation lab for linings) patches were made and adhered to the verso of the canvas with a BEVA adhesive film over the areas where the paper tabs were previously. This will allow the

⁷ Gamblin Conservator Colors are reversible paint materials. They can be removed in the future if needed and will not interfere with the original paint.

canvas to be attached to something in the future; perhaps a new mat or frame without being destructive to the canvas. Lastly, the painting was secured to gator board (a stiff cardboard) with acid free tape and wrapped it in Dartec (a breathable plastic that does not stick to the surface of paintings).

Porkfish-Catalineta

The *Porkfish* (or *Porkfish-Catalineta*), the second painting conserved, is 18” high and 11 7/8” wide with a vertical orientation. The main subject is a porkfish (a silvery-gray fish with vertical black striped head and horizontal yellow striped body). Like the *Sheepshead*, it too hangs on a nail from a yellow string anchored to the fish’s mouth and head in front of a light green background. This also mirrors the actual string hung through the top of the mat board.

Walker signed the front and back of this painting. He signed the front in the lower proper right “WA Walker 1901.” On the reverse, Walker recorded the scientific name, location and date of this painting: “*Anisotremus Virginicus*- / Pork-fish- / Key West. Dec. 17th, 1901. / Porkfish WA.Walker.”

Walker’s *Porkfish* canvas is extremely delicate. The twill weave (a diagonal weaving of threads), instead of the standard over-under tabby weave fabrication of canvas, made the material weaker and thinner. All paintings should be handled with care but the construction of this particular painting made delicate handling a necessity rather than a priority.

The *Porkfish*, painted in oil, is in stable condition but there are a few concerns. There are holes at the corners and at the proper right where the artist tacked the canvas to a board while he painted. There is damage to the canvas at the corners and around the edges. The canvas has become embrittled and has frayed around the edges. There are also losses around the perimeter

and discoloration of the paint and ground layers due to surface grime. Localized craquelure⁸ has developed on the surface and there is evidence of mold on the reverse.

The verso. First the tabs on the reverse were cut, separating the canvas from the mat board. Most of the tabs were readily separated from the canvas with a scalpel, while excess adhesive residue from the tabs was removed with warm water and a scalpel. Then the reverse was cleaned with a conservation sponge and a vacuum, with special care taken when cleaning over the lower half where Walker had recorded information on the reverse.

The recto. After the reverse was cleaned, Beva D8 was applied to the surface edges and areas in the tacking margins where holes had been made from the artist pinning his canvas on stable surface. Then distilled water was used on the narrow tacking margins to remove any adhesive residue from the mat board. Next the entire surface was cleaned with ammonium citrate, followed by distilled water to remove surface grime.

Further Treatment. After cleaning, the reverse was dampened with water and the canvas was weighted over a period of four weeks (with continual re-dampening and re-weighting). During this time, a palette knife was used to flip part of the lower proper left canvas edge that was bent onto the surface back in place. Frayed edges were stabilized and stray threads were reattached with Lascaux 498-20X adhesive. Several losses in the proper right and left, upper center, upper proper right and left were filled with Ivory Modostuc. The losses were retouched and stains were toned throughout with Gamblin Conservation Colors and retouching varnish. Three PCap patches with BEVA film were applied to the reverse at the lower proper left, center proper right and upper proper left to reinforce weak canvas support.

⁸ Craquelure is the pattern of cracks in a painting. Kirsh and Levenson, *Seeing Through Paintings*, 312.

Lastly, eight PCap patches with BEVA film were secured to the reverse with a heating spatchula on the areas previously covered by the original paper tabs. The painting was secured to gator board and wrapped in Dartec.

Nassau Grouper

This was by far the simplest, yet most nerve-racking of the paintings to clean due to its material. The *Nassau Grouper* was painted on artist ply board, making this painting the only one of the seven paintings in this project to be done on paper. The board is 16 1/8" in height and 12" in width, with a vertical orientation. The board is largely unpainted with the *Nassau Grouper* (a light background fish with brown/red-brown vertical bars) in the center of the composition.

Walker was very meticulous in recording information about this *Nassau Grouper*. He actually signed and dated the front in two areas and wrote the location in another. In the lower proper right, vertically, he signed "WA Walker. Dec. 1901" and at the lower proper left he wrote "Key West, Fla." In the upper proper right, with the composition at a horizontal orientation he signed "WA Walker. Dec. 4/01." Then on the reverse Walker wrote the scientific name, location and date of this painting. In the center of the reverse reads in five lines: "Epinefolhelus Stratus- / Nassau Grouper, / at Key West. Fla- / Dec. 1901. / Wm.A.Walker."

Despite its storage for an unknown number of years, this painting was in good condition. The artist board is becoming embrittled around the perimeter but is in stable condition. The mat board has left an imprint on the artist board surface and above the back of the fish there is a break in the board. There is also evidence of mold on the recto and verso. In the paint layers on the fish there is discoloration from grime and localized craquelure but the design is stable.

The verso. Before doing anything to this painting, Levenson contacted paper conservator Daria Keynan. After assessing that the work only needed cleaning, Keynan instructed Levenson

on how to proceed. It was decided that the tape on the verso could not be safely removed but the tabs were cut, separating the artist board from the mat board. Then the verso was cleaned first with a conservation sponge to get rid of dirt and grime, being very careful when cleaning over the center where Walker had written species, location and date information in pencil.

The recto. After the verso was cleaned, the surface was also dry-cleaned with a conservation sponge to remove dirt and surface grime. The actual fish body was the only painted area, which is surmised to be oil paint but because of the nature of the artist board there was no testing. The painted area was also delicately cleaned with the conservation sponge to remove discoloration. This is all that we were able to do to clean the painting safely. Then the tabs were trimmed back with a scalpel so that they would not project from the reverse. Eight PCap tabs with BEVA film were attached to the reverse where the paper tabs still are, using a light amount of heat. Lastly, the painting was secured to gator board and wrapped in Dartec.

Spiny Lobster

The *Spiny Lobster* (or *Crayfish*) has the appearance of the *Sheepshead* (paint hues, paint handling and tabby weave construction) but the sensitivity of the *Porkfish*. It is 19 ½” in height and 13 ½” wide with a vertical orientation. In the center of the painting, lies a spiny lobster (in hues of brown and green) with its pointers extending past the mat board. The *Spiny Lobster* is depicted against a washed blue-green background. In the lower proper right Walker signed the painting “WA Walker.”

There are holes around the top edge where Walker tacked the canvas to a board while he did the painting. There is also evidence of mold on the reverse and the old canvas has become embrittled. There is also fraying around the perimeter. Cracking has occurred on the corners with localized opening of cracks. Cupping, a distortion of the paint surface resulting in raised areas adjacent to the cracks, has also occurred throughout the painting, especially where the mat

board previously rested. Losses are evident in the paint layer in the central area and the lower proper right and left corners. The paint has been discolored from surface grime throughout the painting as well.

The verso. The mat board and tabs were removed from the reverse of the canvas with a scalpel. Tab adhesive residue was removed with methyl cellulose in water. After removing the mat board, it was apparent that the canvas, particularly at the corners, was weak. The reverse was cleaned to remove grime and mold with a conservation sponge. Unfortunately in the process, part at the lower proper left corner separated from the rest of the canvas. A PCap patch with BEVA adhesive film was immediately applied to this area for reattachment and reinforcement.

The recto. After the reverse was stabilized, the surface was cleaned with ammonium citrate and distilled water. Another PCap patch was added to the reverse of the lower proper right because it was found to be extremely weak. All the cracks around the corners were brushed with Xylene, followed by Beva D8 to stabilize and flatten the cracking. Excess Beva D8 was removed with distilled water Beva D8 and Lascaux 498-20x. Losses in the lower proper right and left were filled with Ivory Modostuc and toned, along with scratches and canvas edges throughout, with Gamblin Conservation Colors. Lastly, eight PCap tabs were attached to the reverse with Beva adhesive where the previous paper tabs were located (two tabs on each side). The canvas was secured to a piece of gator board and wrapped in Dartec.

Green Parrotfish

With a height of 17 7/8" and a width of 11 7/8," the *Green Parrotfish* has the same twill weave canvas fabrication as that of the *Porkfish*. In hues of pink, brown and blue, the *Parrotfish* hangs from a yellow ribbon which also hangs on a nail. The *Parrotfish* is depicted against a light green background.

Walker signed and dated the painting in the lower proper right as “WA Walker.” On the reverse he wrote more detailed information as he had done with the *Porkfish* and *Nassau Grouper*. He wrote “Pseudoscarus Guacamaia. / Green Parrot-fish. / Key West, Fla. / WAWalker. / Dec. 1901.” Although this information provides the month but not the actual date in December that Walker painted the *Green Parrotfish*, the other two were painted on December 4th and December 17th, 1901. It is safe to conclude that the *Green Parrotfish* was painted in this time frame, if not during this particular trip to Key West.

The mat board has caused deformation on the canvas surface and there is significant surface grime. There are holes around the edges where Walker tacked the canvas to a support while painting. The canvas is also fraying around the perimeter. The canvas has become embrittled with age and there is evidence of mold on the reverse. The oil paint is extremely discolored due to grime and mold accretions. There is significant cupping/bubbling along perimeter from mat board. There are small losses of paint along the proper right edge from the mat board.

The verso. The paper tabs were removed from the mat board by scalpel. The tab adhesive residue was removed from the canvas with the application of warm distilled water and a scalpel. The reverse was then cleaned with a conservation sponge and vacuum.

The recto. First the tacking margins were cleaned with distilled water. Then the entire surface was cleaned with ammonium citrate followed by distilled water. The canvas edges were consolidated with BEVA D8 and Lascaux 498-20x. Losses in the upper proper right tacking margin were filled with Ivory Modostuc. The losses were then retouched and toned with Gamblin Conservation Colors. The canvas was flattened with light moisture to the reverse and weights on the surface over three weeks.

Lastly, eight PCap tabs were cut and attached with Beva adhesive to the reverse where the paper tabs were previously (two tabs on each side). The PCap tabs were secured to gator board and wrapped in Dartec.

Angelfish

At a height of 13 7/8" and a width of 17 1/4", the *Angelfish* has a horizontal orientation, unlike that of the rest of these paintings. It is also depicted against a dark green background, unlike any of the other paintings. Walker signed his signature "WA Walker" on the front lower proper right. He recorded information regarding the particular type of angelfish on the reverse as "Pseuocaiulus Zenopetetus / Black Angelfish 1909."

There are holes around the edges where Walker tacked the canvas to another support while he did the painting. There is damage to the canvas at the corners and the around the edges and fraying has occurred on the embrittled tabby weave canvas. There is evidence of mold on reverse and losses around the perimeter. Ground and paint layers do not extend to bottom side of the painting, leaving 3/4" of exposed and weak canvas. There is cracking around the canvas corners with localized craquelure and oil paint discoloration because of surface grime.

The verso. The paper tabs were separated from the mat board and adhesive residue were removed by scalpel. When the mat board was being removed, the side edges were stuck and had to be separated carefully.

The recto. Once the mat was successfully removed, the tacking margins were cleaned with distilled water to remove all adhesive residue left from the mat board. Then the entire surface was cleaned with ammonium citrate and distilled water. At the corners, Xylene and Beva D8 were brushed into the cracks.

Further Treatment. The reverse was cleaned with a conservation sponge and vacuum. The holes in the surface perimeter (due to the artist tacking the canvas on board while painting) were

consolidated with Beva D8. The frayed threads around the perimeter were reattached with Lascaux 498-20X. A PCap lining was attached with Beva adhesive to the bottom to reinforce the ¾” of exposed canvas. A loss in the lower proper right was filled with Ivory Modostuc. The loss and scratches were toned with Gamblin Conservation Colors. Nine PCap tabs were attached to the edges where the paper tabs were, with two tabs on each side except for three on the bottom to strengthen the edge. The PCap tabs were attached to a piece of gator board and wrapped safely in Dartec.

Lane Snapper

Lane Snapper (or *Biajiaba*) has a height of 19 ¾” and a width of 13.” It is vertically oriented like most of the paintings but instead of being set against an abstract greenish background, this Lane Snapper hangs in the center of a brown wooden slat or door. The mostly white and yellow striped snapper (with a pink tail) is suspended by a green ribbon on a nail head. The shadow cast by the Lane Snapper on the wood background is painted onto the surface. In the lower proper right, Walker signed and dated the painting “WA Walker. 1902.” He also recorded the scientific name and common name of the fish on center bottom tacking margin: “*Neomaenis Synagris* – Lane Snapper.”

Before beginning conservation, the painting was assessed, noting its frayed and damaged edges, with losses in paint layer on the snapper itself. There are scratches and significant surface grime throughout, along with cupping and cracking with localized opening of cracks. The old tabby weave canvas has become embrittled and there is mold on the reverse. There are holes around the edges where Walker tacked the canvas to a board while he did the painting. The canvas is fraying around the perimeter. There is discoloration due to surface grime.

The verso. The mat board was separated from the canvas by cutting the paper tabs with a scalpel. Because the canvas was strong and the paper tabs were old and very dry, the tabs and the adhesive residue were removed by scalpel as well.

The recto. Adhesive residue left on the surface from the mat board was cleaned with distilled water. The entire surface was cleaned with ammonium citrate, followed by distilled water. Most cracking occurred on the proper right near the Snapper's body. Xylene and Beva D8 were brushed into the cracking and any residual adhesive was removed again with distilled water. The canvas was flattened and dampened over a period of two weeks.

Further Treatment. The reverse was cleaned with a conservation sponge and vacuum, carefully cleaning around the pencil marked perimeter on the canvas. Frayed threads around the perimeter were reattached with Lascaux 498-20X. The central loss on the snapper body was consolidated with Beva D8 and filled with Ivory Modostuc. The loss was retouched and the scratches were toned with Gamblin Conservation Colors. Eight PCap tabs were attached to the reverse, where the paper tabs were previously located, with Beva D8 and heat application. These tabs were secured to gator board and then the canvas and wrapped in protective Dartec.

CHAPTER 5 CONCLUSION

The conservation of these seven paintings took place over the course of three months, from May- July 2007. Since then, the paintings have been returned to the Museum of Florida History in Tallahassee, Florida. Now that these paintings have been properly conserved they may be safely stored, exhibited and studied further. Moreover, the maintaining of careful documentation of the conservation process insures that any future treatment can be undertaken with the benefit of this information. The Museum of Florida History and Rustin Levenson's Painting Conservation Studio both have copies of the conservation reports and photographs of each painting. This documentation is now a part of the each painting's history.

The future display of these paintings is currently unknown. But what is known is that the future care and preservation now lies with the stewardship of the Museum. Hippocrates once said, "Ars longa, vita brevis," which translates: "Art is long, life is short." These paintings outlived William Aiken Walker and hopefully they will continue to outlive us.

APPENDIX A
AIC CODE OF ETHICS AND GUIDELINES FOR PRACTICE

HISTORY

The first formulation of standards of practice and professional relations by any group of art conservators was produced by the IIC-American Group (now AIC) Committee on Professional Standards and Procedures. Formed at the second regular meeting of the IIC-AG, in Detroit, May 23, 1961, the committee worked under the direction of Murray Pease, conservator, Metropolitan Museum of Art; other members of the committee were Henri H. Courtais, Dudley T. Easby, Rutherford J. Gettens, and Sheldon Keck. The Report of the Murray Pease Committee: IIC American Group Standards of Practice and Professional Relations for Conservators was adopted by the IIC-AG at the fourth annual meeting in New York on June 8, 1963. It was published in *Studies in Conservation* in August 1964, 9(3):116-21. The primary purpose of this document was: to provide accepted criteria against which a specific procedure or operation can be measured when a question as to its adequacy has been raised.

The first formulation of a code of ethics for art conservators was adopted by the members of IIC-American Group at the annual meeting in Ottawa, Ontario, Canada, on May 27, 1967. It was produced by the Committee on Professional Relations: Sheldon Keck, chair; Richard D. Buck; Dudley T. Easby; Rutherford J. Gettens; Caroline Keck; Peter Michael s, and Louis Pomerantz. The primary purpose of this document was: to express those principles and practices which will guide the art conservator in the ethical practice of his profession.

These two documents, *The Murray Pease Report: Standards of Practice and Professional Relationships for Conservators* and *the Code of Ethics for Art Conservators* were published in booklet form by the IIC-AG in May 1968 together with the *Articles of Association of IIC and Bylaws of the American Group*.

In 1977, the Ethics and Standards Committee (Elisabeth C. G. Packard, chair; Barbara H. Beardsley; Perry C. Huston; Kate C. Lefferts; Robert M. Organ; and Clements L. Robertson) was charged with updating the two documents to reflect changes in the profession. The 1968 format was retained, except that the more general Code of Ethics was placed first as Part One, followed by the Standards of Practice as Part Two. These revised versions of the code and standards were approved by the Fellows of AIC on May 31, 1979, at the annual meeting in Toronto. This document was amended on May 24, 1985, at the annual meeting in Washington, D.C., to reflect the addition to the AIC Bylaws of procedures for the reporting, investigation, and review of alleged violations of the code and standards and of mechanisms for appealing such allegations. Between 1984 and 1990 the Ethics and Standards Committee, responding to further growth and change in the profession, and following on several years of AIC discussion on the issue of certification, was charged by the AIC Board to work on more substantial revisions of the document. This was done by soliciting commentary from the specialty groups and also from the membership via issues sessions at the annual meetings in Chicago (1986) and Cincinnati (1989). Following this, a document consisting of a new simplified Code, prepared by the committee, and

a revised Standards, prepared primarily by the board was presented to the membership for discussion at the 1990 annual meeting in Richmond. The consensus of the membership at the meeting was to continue the revision process. During these important years, the members of the committee were, Elisabeth Batchelor, chair; Robert Futernick; Meg Loew Craft (until 1989); Elizabeth Lunning (from 1987); Carol C. Mancusi-Ungaro; and Philip Vance (until 1986). In 1989, the committee added corresponding members Barbara Appelbaum, Paul N. Banks, Steven Prins, and Elisabeth West FitzHugh.

In 1990, the AIC Board charged a newly appointed committee to assess the role and use of the code and standards and as well to analyze specific difficulties within the documents themselves. The committee first undertook an in-depth comparative analysis of the documents organizing them topically and relating them to other codes of ethics both in conservation and in other professions. Between September 1991 and May 1992, the committee produced five lengthy discussion papers on basic issues as supplements to the AIC News (prior to November 1991, the AIC Newsletter). From these papers, the committee compiled an extensive body of membership and specialty group commentary, supplementing that obtained previously. It then began the creation of a new revision, the first draft of which was published in the September 1993 AIC News following a discussion session at the 1993 annual meeting in Denver. A revised draft was published in the May 1994 AIC News and discussed at the 1994 annual meeting in Nashville. A final version of the revised document was prepared and was approved by AIC Fellows and Professional Associates through a mail vote in August 1994.

Besides a new simplified Code of Ethics and the creation of Guidelines for Practice to replace the Standards of Practice, the new document will be supplemented by commentaries, a detailed description of which was published in the November 1993 AIC News. The goals and purposes of the committee and the problematic issues it sought to address in creating the revision are described in the committee's columns in the September 1991 AIC Newsletter and September 1993 AIC News.

Ethics and Standards Committee members during these years and involved in the creation of the revised code and guidelines were: Debbie Hess Norris (chair, resigned 1993); Donna K. Strahan (co-chair 1993-94, chair 1994); Carol Aiken (co-chair from 1993, resigned 1994); Nancy Ash; Dan Kushel; and Robert Espinosa (from 1993).

Elisabeth C. G. Packard, Chair, Ethics and Standards Committee 1977-79

Amended May 24, 1985

Revised August 1994, Dan Kushel, Member, Ethics and Standards Committee

CODE OF ETHICS of the American Institute for Conservation of Historic and Artistic Works

PREAMBLE

The primary goal of conservation professionals, individuals with extensive training and special expertise, is the preservation of cultural property. Cultural property consists of individual objects, structures, or aggregate collections. It is material which has significance that may be artistic, historical, scientific, religious, or social, and it is an invaluable and irreplaceable legacy that must be preserved for future generations.

In striving to achieve this goal, conservation professionals assume certain obligations to the cultural property, to its owners and custodians, to the conservation profession, and to society as a whole. This document, the Code of Ethics and Guidelines for Practice of the American Institute for Conservation of Historic and Artistic Works (AIC), sets forth the principles that guide conservation professionals and others who are involved in the care of cultural property.

I. The conservation professional shall strive to attain the highest possible standards in all aspects of conservation, including, but not limited to, preventive conservation, examination, documentation, treatment, research, and education.

II. All actions of the conservation professional must be governed by an informed respect for the cultural property, its unique character and significance, and the people or person who created it.

III. While recognizing the right of society to make appropriate and respectful use of cultural property, the conservation professional shall serve as an advocate for the preservation of cultural property.

IV. The conservation professional shall practice within the limits of personal competence and education as well as within the limits of the available facilities.

V. While circumstances may limit the resources allocated to a particular situation, the quality of work that the conservation professional performs shall not be compromised.

VI. The conservation professional must strive to select methods and materials that, to the best of current knowledge, do not adversely affect cultural property or its future examination, scientific investigation, treatment, or function.

VII. The conservation professional shall document examination, scientific investigation, and treatment by creating permanent records and reports.

VIII. The conservation professional shall recognize a responsibility for preventive conservation by endeavoring to limit damage or deterioration to cultural property, providing guidelines for continuing use and care, recommending appropriate environmental conditions for storage and exhibition, and encouraging proper procedures for handling, packing, and transport.

IX. The conservation professional shall act with honesty and respect in all professional relationships, seek to ensure the rights and opportunities of all individuals in the profession, and recognize the specialized knowledge of others.

X. The conservation professional shall contribute to the evolution and growth of the profession, a field of study that encompasses the liberal arts and the natural sciences. This contribution may be made by such means as continuing development of personal skills and knowledge, sharing of information and experience with colleagues, adding to the profession's written body of knowledge, and providing and promoting educational opportunities in the field.

XI. The conservation professional shall promote an awareness and understanding of conservation through open communication with allied professionals and the public.

XII. The conservation professional shall practice in a manner that minimizes personal risks and hazards to co-workers, the public, and the environment. **XIII.** Each conservation professional has an obligation to promote understanding of and adherence to this Code of Ethics.

GUIDELINES FOR PRACTICE of the American Institute for Conservation of Historic and Artistic Works

The conservation professional should use the following guidelines and supplemental commentaries together with the AIC Code of Ethics in the pursuit of ethical practice. The commentaries are separate documents, created by the AIC membership, that are intended to amplify this document and to accommodate growth and change in the field.

PROFESSIONAL CONDUCT

1. Conduct: Adherence to the Code of Ethics and Guidelines for Practice is a matter of personal responsibility. The conservation professional should always be guided by the intent of this document, recognizing that specific circumstances may legitimately affect professional decisions. 

2. Disclosure: In professional relationships, the conservation professional should share complete and accurate information relating to the efficacy and value of materials and procedures. In seeking and disclosing such information, and that relating to analysis and research, the conservation professional should recognize the importance of published information that has undergone formal peer review.

3. Laws and Regulations: The conservation professional should be cognizant of laws and regulations that may have a bearing on professional activity. Among these laws and regulations are those concerning the rights of artists and their estates, occupational health and safety, sacred and religious material, excavated objects, endangered species, human remains, and stolen property.

4. Practice: Regardless of the nature of employment, the conservation professional should follow appropriate standards for safety, security, contracts, fees, and advertising.

4a. Health and Safety: The conservation professional should be aware of issues concerning the safety of materials and procedures and should make this information available to others, as appropriate. ☞

4b. Security: The conservation professional should provide working and storage conditions designed to protect cultural property. ☞

4c. Contracts: The conservation professional may enter into contractual agreements with individuals, institutions, businesses, or government agencies provided that such agreements do not conflict with principles of the Code of Ethics and Guidelines for Practice. ☞

4d. Fees: Fees charged by the conservation professional should be commensurate with services rendered. The division of a fee is acceptable only when based on the division of service or responsibility. ☞

4e. Advertising: Advertising and other representations by the conservation professional should present an accurate description of credentials and services. Limitations concerning the use of the AIC name or membership status should be followed as stated in the AIC Bylaws, section II, 13. ☞

5. Communication: Communication between the conservation professional and the owner, custodian, or authorized agent of the cultural property is essential to ensure an agreement that reflects shared decisions and realistic expectations. ☞

6. Consent: The conservation professional should act only with the consent of the owner, custodian, or authorized agent. The owner, custodian, or agent should be informed of any circumstances that necessitate significant deviations from the agreement. When possible, notification should be made before such changes are made. ☞

7. Confidentiality: Except as provided in the Code of Ethics and Guidelines for Practice, the conservation professional should consider relationships with an owner, custodian, or authorized agent as confidential. Information derived from examination, scientific investigation, or treatment of the cultural property should not be published or otherwise made public without written permission. ☞

8. Supervision: The conservation professional is responsible for work delegated to other professionals, students, interns, volunteers, subordinates, or agents and assignees. Work should not be delegated or subcontracted unless the conservation professional can supervise the work directly, can ensure proper supervision, or has sufficient knowledge of the practitioner to be confident of the quality of the work. When appropriate, the owner, custodian, or agent should be informed if such delegation is to occur.

9. Education: Within the limits of knowledge, ability, time, and facilities, the conservation professional is encouraged to become involved in the education of conservation personnel. The objectives and obligations of the parties shall be agreed upon mutually.

10. Consultation: Since no individual can be expert in every aspect of conservation, it may be appropriate to consult with colleagues or, in some instances, to refer the owner, custodian, or authorized agent to a professional who is more experienced or better equipped to accomplish the required work. If the owner requests a second opinion, this request must be respected. ©

11. Recommendations and References: The conservation professional should not provide recommendations without direct knowledge of a colleague's competence and experience. Any reference to the work of others must be based on facts and personal knowledge rather than on hearsay.

12. Adverse Commentary: A conservation professional may be required to testify in legal, regulatory, or administrative proceedings concerning allegations of unethical conduct. Testimony concerning such matters should be given at these proceedings or in connection with paragraph 13 of these Guidelines. ©

13. Misconduct: Allegations of unethical conduct should be reported in writing to the AIC president as described in the AIC Bylaws, section II, 12. As stated in the bylaws, all correspondence regarding alleged unethical conduct shall be held in the strictest confidence. Violations of the Code and Guidelines that constitute unethical conduct may result in disciplinary action. ©

14. Conflict of Interest: The conservation professional should avoid situations in which there is a potential for a conflict of interest that may affect the quality of work, lead to the dissemination of false information, or give the appearance of impropriety. ©

15. Related Professional Activities: The conservation professional should be especially mindful of the considerable potential for conflict of interest in activities such as authentication, appraisal, or art dealing. ©

EXAMINATION AND SCIENTIFIC INVESTIGATION

16. Justification: Careful examination of cultural property forms the basis for all future action by the conservation professional. Before undertaking any examination or tests that may cause change to cultural property, the conservation professional should establish the necessity for such procedures. ©

17. Sampling and Testing: Prior consent must be obtained from the owner, custodian, or agent before any material is removed from a cultural property. Only the minimum required should be removed, and a record of removal must be made. When appropriate, the material removed should be retained. ©

18. Interpretation: Declarations of age, origin, or authenticity should be made only when based on sound evidence. ©

19. Scientific Investigation: The conservation professional should follow accepted scientific standards and research protocols. ©

PREVENTIVE CONSERVATION

20. Preventive Conservation: The conservation professional should recognize the critical importance of preventive conservation as the most effective means of promoting the long-term preservation of cultural property. The conservation professional should provide guidelines for continuing use and care, recommend appropriate environmental conditions for storage and exhibition, and encourage proper procedures for handling, packing, and transport. ☞

TREATMENT

21. Suitability: The conservation professional performs within a continuum of care and will rarely be the last entrusted with the conservation of a cultural property. The conservation professional should only recommend or undertake treatment that is judged suitable to the preservation of the aesthetic, conceptual, and physical characteristics of the cultural property. When nonintervention best serves to promote the preservation of the cultural property, it may be appropriate to recommend that no treatment be performed. ☞

22. Materials and Methods: The conservation professional is responsible for choosing materials and methods appropriate to the objectives of each specific treatment and consistent with currently accepted practice. The advantages of the materials and methods chosen must be balanced against their potential adverse effects on future examination, scientific investigation, treatment, and function. ☞

23. Compensation for Loss: Any intervention to compensate for loss should be documented in treatment records and reports and should be detectable by common examination methods. Such compensation should be reversible and should not falsely modify the known aesthetic, conceptual, and physical characteristics of the cultural property, especially by removing or obscuring original material. ☞

DOCUMENTATION

24. Documentation: The conservation professional has an obligation to produce and maintain accurate, complete, and permanent records of examination, sampling, scientific investigation, and treatment. When appropriate, the records should be both written and pictorial. The kind and extent of documentation may vary according to the circumstances, the nature of the object, or whether an individual object or a collection is to be documented. The purposes of such documentation are: ☞

- to establish the condition of cultural property;
- to aid in the care of cultural property by providing information helpful to future treatment and by adding to the profession's body of knowledge;
- to aid the owner, custodian, or authorized agent and society as a whole in the appreciation and use of cultural property by increasing understanding of an object's aesthetic, conceptual, and physical characteristics; and to aid the conservation professional by providing a reference that can assist in the continued development of knowledge and by supplying records that can help avoid misunderstanding and unnecessary litigation.

25. Documentation of Examination: Before any intervention, the conservation professional should make a thorough examination of the cultural property and create appropriate records. These records and the reports derived from them must identify the cultural property and include the date of examination and the name of the examiner. They also should include, as appropriate, a description of structure, materials, condition, and pertinent history. (C)

26. Treatment Plan: Following examination and before treatment, the conservation professional should prepare a plan describing the course of treatment. This plan should also include the justification for and the objectives of treatment, alternative approaches, if feasible, and the potential risks. When appropriate, this plan should be submitted as a proposal to the owner, custodian, or authorized agent. (C)

27. Documentation of Treatment: During treatment, the conservation professional should maintain dated documentation that includes a record or description of techniques or procedures involved, materials used and their composition, the nature and extent of all alterations, and any additional information revealed or otherwise ascertained. A report prepared from these records should summarize this information and provide, as necessary, recommendations for subsequent care. (C)

28. Preservation of Documentation: Documentation is an invaluable part of the history of cultural property and should be produced and maintained in as permanent a manner as practicable. Copies of reports of examination and treatment must be given to the owner, custodian, or authorized agent, who should be advised of the importance of maintaining these materials with the cultural property. Documentation is also an important part of the profession's body of knowledge. The conservation professional should strive to preserve these records and give other professionals appropriate access to them, when access does not contravene agreements regarding confidentiality. (C)

EMERGENCY SITUATIONS

29. Emergency Situations: Emergency situations can pose serious risks of damage to or loss of cultural property that may warrant immediate intervention on the part of the conservation professional. In an emergency that threatens cultural property, the conservation professional should take all reasonable action to preserve the cultural property, recognizing that strict adherence to the Guidelines for Practice may not be possible.

AMENDMENTS

30. Amendments: Proposed amendments to the Code of Ethics and Guidelines for Practice must be initiated by petition to the AIC Board of Directors from at least five members who are Fellows or Professional Associates of AIC. The board will direct the appropriate committee to prepare the amendments for vote in accordance with procedures described in Section VII of the Bylaws. Acceptance of amendments or changes must be affirmed by at least two-thirds of all AIC Fellows and Professional Associates voting.

COMMENTARIES

31. Commentaries: Commentaries are prepared or amended by specialty groups, task forces, and appropriate committees of AIC. A review process shall be undergone before final approval by the AIC Board of Directors.

2. GROUND AND PAINT LAYERS

DAMAGE OR LOSS:

DISCOLORATION:

CLEAVAGE:

CRAQUELURE:

MOLD OR ACCRETIONS PRESENT:

FORMER TREATMENT:

3. SURFACE COATING

BLANCHING:

DISCOLORATION:

PREVIOUS TREATMENT:

SUMMARY OF CONDITION:

PROPOSED TREATMENT:

TREATMENT:

REMARKS:

DOCUMENTATION

PHOTOGRAPHS:

FILE NAME:

APPENDIX C
CONSERVATION PHOTOGRAPHS



Sheepshead (Before Treatment)



Sheepshead (After Treatment)



Porkfish-Catalineta (Before Treatment)



Porkfish-Catalineta (After Treatment)



Nassau Grouper (Before Treatment)



Nassau Grouper (After Treatment)



Spiny Lobster (Before Treatment)



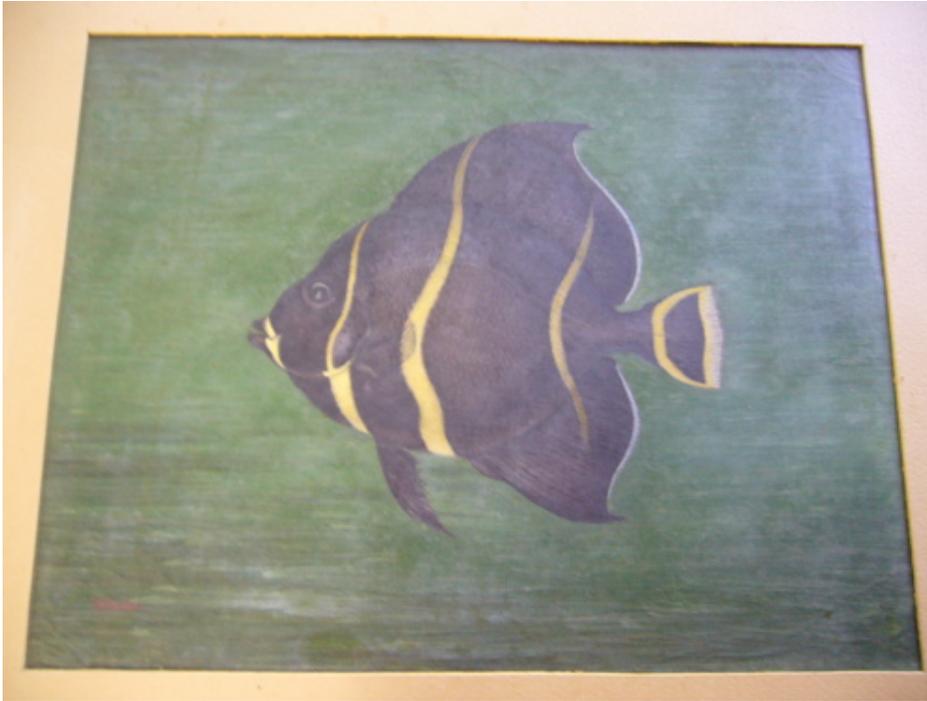
Spiny Lobster (After Treatment)



Green Parrotfish (Before Treatment)



Green Parrotfish (After Treatment)



Angelfish (Before Treatment)



Angelfish (After Treatment)



Lane Snapper (Before Treatment)



Lane Snapper (After Treatment)

LIST OF REFERENCES

- American Association of Museums website, "What is a Museum?" <<http://www.aam-us.org/aboutmuseums/whatis.cfm>>.
- American Institute for Conservation of Historic and Artistic Works, *AIC Code of Ethics and Guidelines for Practice*, <<http://aic.stanford.edu/pubs/ethics.html>>.
- Archival Informatics Technical Report* Vol.2, #4, Winter, 1988,
<http://www.archimuse.com/publishing/exh_mgmt/exh_mgmt_ch1_D.pdf>.
- Black, Patti Carr. *Art in Mississippi 1720-1980*. Jackson, Mississippi: University Press of Mississippi, 1998.
- Ed. Buck, Rebecca A. and Jean Allman Gilmore. *The New Registration Methods*. Washington, D.C.: American Association of Museums, 1998.
- Eaton, Timothy. "William Aiken Walker: in Florida." *William Aiken Walker: in Florida* Exhibition Catalog. Palm Beach, Florida: Eaton Fine Art, 2004.
<<http://www.tfaoi.com/aa/5aa/5aa215a.htm>>.
- Kirsh, Andrea and Rustin S. Levenson. *Seeing Through Paintings: Materials and Meaning in the Fine Arts Volume 1*. New Haven, Yale University Press, 2000.
- Malaro, Marie C. *A Legal Primer on Managing Museum Collections, Second Edition*. Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Books, 1998.
- Seibels, Cynthia. *The Sunny South: The Life and Art of William Aiken Walker*. Spartanburg, SC: Saraland Press, 1995.
- Steinfeldt, Cecilia. *Art for History's Sake: The Texas Collection of the Witte Museum*. San Antonio: The Texas State Historical Association, 1993.
- Trovaioli, August P and Roulhac B. Toledano. *William Aiken Walker: Southern Genre Painter*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1972.
- Sichel, Adrienne. "Women: The Fabric of Society." *Tonight*. 13 Feb. 2008
<<http://www.tonight.co.za/index.php?fSectionId=360&fArticleId=3381046>>.
- Xarrie, Mireia. *Glossary of Conservation I*. Barcelona: Balaam, 2005.

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Kelly O'Neill earned her bachelor's degree in Art History and a minor in the Classics at the University of Florida in Gainesville, Florida in 2003. While earning her degree, she spent a semester abroad studying art history in Florence, Italy through Florida State University's study abroad program in 2002. Upon graduation, she completed consecutive internships in Historic Preservation, Painting Conservation and in the museum field which led her to pursue a graduate degree in Museum Studies. Ms. O'Neill will graduate with her Master of Arts degree in Museology from the University of Florida in May 2008. Ms. O'Neill is currently working in Rustin Levenson's Painting Conservation studio in Miami, Florida and will pursue a Master of Arts degree in Art Conservation in the near future.

CONSERVATION IN MUSEUMS: WILLIAM AIKEN WALKER'S MARINE LIFE PAINTINGS

Kelly Courtney O'Neill

352.328.9226

Museology

Eric Segal

Master of Arts

May 2008

This thesis attempts to highlight the importance and practice of art conservation in museums through the conservation of seven paintings by American artist William Aiken Walker. Along with the actual treatment of these paintings, topics including the artist background, conservation and the role of conservation in museums are discussed. Together these topics provide context for these paintings and an impetus for the discussion of a larger dialogue between conservation and museums.