

# Conservation of Album of Drawings

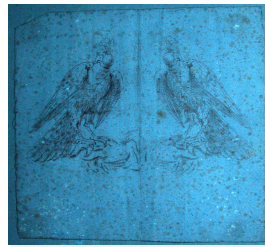
## Anonymous, Netherlandish (?), WA1994.44, The Ashmolean Museum

### Abstract

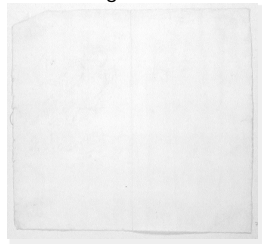
This poster describes part of a MA project concerned with the treatment of a miscellaneous album of late 18<sup>th</sup> century Netherlandish drawings, from The Ashmolean Museum in Oxford. The conditions of the album and the drawings, made of classical friable media, were assessed and drawings selected for treatment. Scientific analyses of the materials, media, and techniques were used. Here, the focus is on the treatment of a single drawing, WA1994.44.73, *Two Sketches of Falcons on Perches*, probably used as a counter-proof.



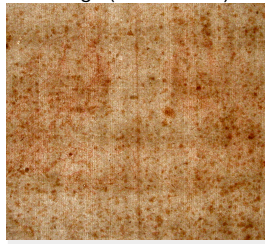
Visible image



UV image (320-405 nm)



Infrared image (&gt; 950 nm)

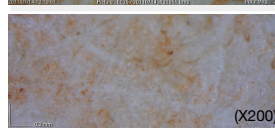
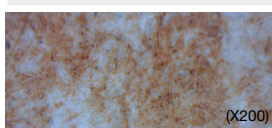
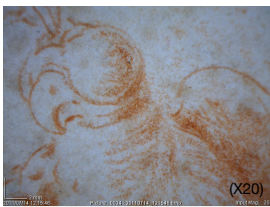


Transmitted light image

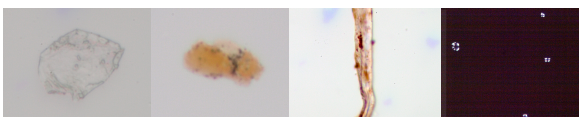
### Condition survey

The drawing primary support is made of lightweight, handmade, laid paper with an antique pattern, uneven edges, heavy felt indentations, and vertical creases. As shown in the images above, it had surface dirt and discolouration along the edges, severe red brown foxing, paper remnants, and some adhesive residues. The only medium is red/brown chalk/crayon(?), in good condition but with some abrasion. Under UV light, clusters of pale yellow fluorescent dots appear at the bottom-right and bottom-left corners, possibly foxing or mould, while the stains at the centre fluoresce orange. The image is not visible in infrared light, but the chain-lines are.

As shown below, the left and right sketches are nearly identical. A mock-up drawing further confirmed this, suggesting that the right image is a counter-proof of the left one, to be used for an engraving.



Magnified images of the left and right sketches



Medium pigments seen with a microscope (X400)

### Treatment

The main aim of the treatment was to reduce the surface dirt, discolouration, foxing, and stains, as well as remove the paper remnants and some adhesive (for stabilisation of the drawing).

#### Detaching the drawing

Local humidification with poultices was first attempted where the primary support was attached, but was not effective. Subsequently removal was attempted with a steam pencil, however the adhesive still remained very hard, creating mechanical stress. A small amount of adhesive was analysed using Fourier transform infrared spectroscopy, suggesting it is similar to UHU® glue, with a high percentage of polyvinyl acetate and possibly some cellulose nitrate. A Teas chart pointed to an appropriate solvent and acetone poultices were used. This was effective and the primary support was then successfully detached from the textblock using a spatula.

#### Removing remnants and adhesive residues

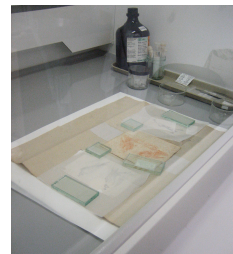
The paper remnants create an uneven surface and risk causing further creases, so it was decided to remove them. Poultices of acetone were thus used to remove the adhesive residues first. Then, the textblock remnants were removed with a scalpel, leaving the last thin layers to avoid skinning.

#### Stain and foxing removal

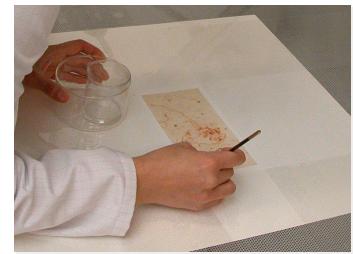
Tweezers wrapped in cotton swabs damped with distilled water were rolled over all pre-existing stains along the edges and heavy foxing, but avoiding the medium. The stains were reduced significantly, less so the foxing. A remaining corner stain and adhesive residue were also treated using a suction table and acetone. The stain was substantially reduced and much adhesive removed.

#### Tabbing

The primary support was put back to its original textblock location and secured at the four corners using Japanese paper.



Acetone poultice treatment



Foxing and stain removal on suction table

### Conclusions

Detaching the drawing primary support from the textblock was the most time consuming and challenging task, although the FTIR adhesive analysis helped to find a proper solvent for poultices and speed up the process. After this, most of the adhesive residues were removed and the stains much reduced.

Samples of red/brown chalk/crayon(?) were later analysed with visual-infrared observations and polarising microscopy. The range of possible media was narrowed down significantly, but pinning down the exact medium is not straightforward and will require more research.

### Acknowledgements

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