



Smithsonian  
***Donald W. Reynolds Center for  
American Art and Portraiture***

***National Portrait Gallery  
Smithsonian American Art Museum***

# News

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## **Two Smithsonian Museums to Open Innovative Lunder Conservation Center, the Only Fine Art Facility of its Kind**

On July 1, the Smithsonian American Art Museum and the National Portrait Gallery will debut the first art conservation facility that allows the public permanent behind-the-scenes viewing of the preservation work of museums. The Lunder Conservation Center is visible to the public through floor-to-ceiling glass walls that allow visitors to see the collections care and modern techniques that conservators use to examine and treat the national treasures entrusted to both museums.

The 10,200-square-foot Center is located on the third-floor mezzanine and fourth floor of the museums' shared National Historic Landmark building. Its five state-of-the-art laboratories and studios are equipped to treat paintings, prints, drawings, photographs, sculptures, folk art objects, decorative arts and frames. The Center is a destination for learning about conservation science and techniques through educational kiosks, videos, public programs and outreach initiatives.

"We want every visitor to see the magic performed by conservators who assure that our collections are in great condition for future generations," said Elizabeth Broun, The Margaret and Terry Stent Director of the Smithsonian American Art Museum. "We hope this new Lunder Conservation Center will inspire all who visit to learn more about how to care for treasured objects at home and encourage them to help preserve public art in their communities."

"Museums are as much about preservation as display," said Marc Pachter, director of the National Portrait Gallery. "We owe future generations the enjoyment of works now in our care. The preservation of our national legacy is a shared concern of all Americans and we are thrilled to provide an exciting way to further our national commitment."

In addition to providing expanded space for conservation projects, the Center will inform the public on the science and skills of art conservation through a variety of programs. Each lab and studio is introduced by a kiosk that includes specific information on the types of treatments performed in each area with video clips and photographs of before-and-after treatments; the paper lab, objects lab and paintings studio have a live-camera display so visitors can see close-up work. Wall displays that explore basic conservation topics also are available. Outreach programs will be offered to target audiences including students, families and conservation professionals. A full-time educator with knowledge of fine art conservation will develop and manage these interpretive and outreach programs.

Claire Larkin, special projects director at the Smithsonian American Art Museum, oversaw planning for the Center. She consulted with more than 35 conservation professionals at key institutions in the United States and visited the country's best facilities to refine the Center's concept and to generate program ideas. Conservators from across the country participated in creating the educational components for the Center. A 40-foot media wall will feature 16 of these experts, with brief video clips exploring special conservation projects and career experiences. Extended interviews with 22 experts will be available at [www.lunderconservation.si.edu](http://www.lunderconservation.si.edu).

"We received invaluable support from conservation scientists and professionals who are excited that this work will be featured in such a positive and public way by the museums," said Larkin.

"The new Lunder Conservation Center at the Smithsonian American Art Museum and National Portrait Gallery is based on an excellent idea that gives the public a look into a critically important museum function: the conservation of collections," said Ross Merrill, chief of conservation at the National Gallery of Art. "The conservation process remains one of the most interesting but little-known aspects of a museum's role. The Center will provide a dual service, caring for the collections and educating the public."

"This pioneering project that engages the public in the important work conservators do in laboratories across the country will put a welcome spotlight on the careful stewardship of fragile collections that takes place every day in museums," said Debra Hess Norris, chair and professor of art conservation at the University of Delaware, Winterthur.

Funds for the Center, totaling \$10 million, were raised from private contributors. The Lunder Conservation Center is named in honor of the lead donor, The Lunder Foundation which

provided a \$4 million challenge grant that was the catalyst for attracting \$6 million in matching funds from 65 private contributors. Other major supporters of the center were the Horace W. Goldsmith Foundation of New York City and the Getty Foundation, a program of the J. Paul Getty Trust in Los Angeles.

Peter Lunder serves on the Smithsonian National Board and is an emeritus member of the Smithsonian American Art Museum's Board of Commissioners. Lunder and his wife Paula are collectors of American art and contributors to the museum. In 2001, they established the Lunder Education Chair at the Smithsonian American Art Museum.

The National Historic Landmark building that houses the museums and the Lunder Conservation Center is located at Eighth and F streets N.W. in the heart of a revitalized downtown arts district, above the Gallery Place/Chinatown Metrorail station (Red, Yellow and Green lines). Hours are from 11:30 a.m. to 7 p.m. daily. Admission is free. Smithsonian Information: (202) 633-1000; (202) 357-1729 (TTY). Web site: [www.reynoldscenter.org](http://www.reynoldscenter.org).

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**Note to Editors:** Selected high-resolution images for publicity only and additional information about the grand opening are available at <http://newsdesk.si.edu/kits/pob>.