



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

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

News

Sept. 18, 2008

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Innovative Lunder Conservation Center Receives Prestigious Keck Award

Today, the International Institute for Conservation of Historic and Artistic Works awarded the prestigious Keck Award to the Lunder Conservation Center, which is jointly administered by the Smithsonian American Art Museum and the National Portrait Gallery. Julie Heath, the Lunder Conservation Center coordinator, accepted the award on behalf of the two museums at the 2008 International Institute for Conservation Congress in London.

The Lunder Conservation Center, which opened July 2006, is the first art conservation facility in the United States that allows visitors to the museums permanent, behind-the-scenes views of crucial preservation work. Five conservation labs are visible through floor-to-ceiling glass walls, which allow the public to see all aspects of conservation work that traditionally takes place out of view at other museums and conservation centers. The 10,200-square-foot center includes laboratories and studios equipped to treat paintings, prints, drawings, photographs, sculptures, folk art objects, decorative arts and frames.

“It has been a joy to see visitors appreciate the essential work that our conservators are doing to preserve the nation’s cultural heritage, and to see our conservators’ profound commitment to sharing what they do with the public,” said Elizabeth Broun, The Margaret and Terry Stent Director of the Smithsonian American Art Museum.

“It is a great honor to have the Lunder Conservation Center recognized with the Keck Award,” said Martin E. Sullivan, director of the National Portrait Gallery. “Offering the public the opportunity to view the labs gives our museums great teachable moments where we have a chance to show how we treat and conserve our nation’s treasures.”

The center is a destination for learning about conservation and modern techniques that conservators use to examine and treat artworks. Conservators from across the United States advised on

its educational components. Public outreach and interpretive programs—from weekly behind-the-scenes tours to specialized lectures—are offered to students, families, the general public and conservation professionals. Interactive kiosks and special displays make it easy for visitors to learn about the importance of conservation and show how to take an active role in caring for public art and monuments, as well as how to care for personal treasures at home. Each lab and studio is introduced by a kiosk that includes specific information about the types of treatments performed in each area with video clips and photographs of before-and-after treatments. A 40-foot media wall features 16 experts, with brief video clips exploring special conservation projects and career experiences. Extended interviews with 22 experts, along with many other educational resources, are available at lunderconservation.si.edu.

The Keck Award, established in 1994, is presented every two years at the International Institute for Conservation Congress to the individual or group who has, in the opinion of the Institute’s council, contributed most toward promoting public understanding and appreciation of the accomplishments of the conservation profession. The Institute, an independent international organization, serves as a forum for communication among professionals who aim to provide the highest possible level of care for the world’s cultural heritage. In 2000, the Smithsonian American Art Museum received the Keck Award for its program “SOS! Save Outdoor Sculpture,” which is sponsored jointly with Heritage Preservation.

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 in Washington, D.C. Hours are from 11:30 a.m. to 7 p.m. daily. Admission is free. Metrorail station: Gallery Place/Chinatown (Red, Yellow and Green lines). Smithsonian Information: (202) 633-1000; (202) 633-5285 (TTY). Web site: lunderconservationcenter.si.edu.

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