

# TECHNICAL NOTES

## HEALTH EXAMINATIONS

In response to STEPHEN BONADIES' suggestion of getting a "base-line" physical examination and subsequent ones to monitor possible damage from our daily work, I would like to relate my own experience.

As you are aware, the federal government has Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) Regulations, and the states usually add their own to one degree or another. In these regulations are contained recommendations (and requirements, I am told) for employer-provided physical examinations for workers in contact with hazards (e.g. asbestos, vinyl-chloride, carcinogens, fork lift equipment). My employer, the University of Michigan, has a policy of providing physicals whenever OSHA or MIOSHA recommends and whenever an employee's department head recommends it. The Director of my museum passed along the University memo and I signed up. One time at the clinic I met several women from the University Herbarium who worked with para-dichlorobenzene.

This practice appears to be quite a generous benefit from an employer judging from our colleagues, and I hope some one reads the reports! But I cannot help but think that the employer gets something out of it. A search of OSHA and state regulations might pay off. Regional conservation groups might want to take this on.

On the other hand, as you say, good habits and preventive management of hazards are the tools of health maintenance. The medical tests we undergo indicate damage when it has already occurred and often when it is already major.

I hope this information is helpful to health-conscious colleagues.

AMY ROSENBERG

## WE HELP FIND THE ANSWERS

Dear Ann:

Thank you so much for forwarding my query on ethylene oxide to Ellen Howe. She responded beautifully with a package of good, solid information.

JOHN McCLEARY  
Madrid, Spain

Any other questions? Also see articles in Technical Notes column.

ANN WAGER

## QUERY

Information on J. Brown, an itinerant portraitist active in Massachusetts c. 1806-08 is being sought. His painting style is distinguished by fine brushwork and sharp linear accuracy in his subjects' faces. The location of signed or attributed Brown paintings or related information would be appreciated. Contact: Nancy Styczynski, New York State Historical Association, Box 800, Cooperstown, NY 13326.

## QUERY

The New Reference Tools Special Project Committee of the Art Libraries Society of North America (ALS/NA) seeks information on art reference tools currently in progress. The committee attempts to maintain a complete file of new art reference works in progress in order to keep art librarians and visual resources cur-

ators, the primary users of such works, aware of what is new and forthcoming in the field. We would like to hear art historians, art librarians, visual resources curators, authors, compilers, anyone currently working on a reference tool in any field of the visual arts, architectural, archaeology, and the crafts. Please contact: Janet Clarke-Hazlett, Art Librarian, Vassar College, Poughkeepsie, NY 12601.

## FORBES PIGMENTS RESEARCH

In our continuing quest to identify the Forbes collection of pigments, we request anyone having samples from the following list of yellow pigments to respond by sending us a small sample for analysis.

3.01.1-2	3.09.1,3,4,6
3.02.1-2,4	3.09.7,9-13,16
3.03.1-9,14	3.10.1-13
3.04.4-5,7-10	3.11.1,4-6
3.04.13,15-17,20	3.12.1-4
3.05.2,5	3.13.1-3
3.06.1-10	3.14.1-2
3.07.1-5	3.15.1,4
3.08.1-15,20	3.20.1-5

Please send samples to DIANA OMECINSKY, Detroit Institute of Arts, Research Lab., 5200 Woodward Ave., Detroit, MI 48202. Thank you for your assistance.

## ARSENIC IN TAXIDERMY SPECIMENS

The Occupational Health and Safety Section of Colorado State University warns that arsenic levels in taxidermy specimens are potentially hazardous. Arsenic was frequently used in the past, and is still used occasionally today in the preservation of animal and bird skins. According to Betsy Webb of the Denver Museum of NATURAL History, time, movement and aging cause arsenic to migrate through preserved skin and down to the tips of hairs and feathers. It may actually be present as a fine dust.

The Rocky Mountain Regional Conservation Center raised this issue in the March 1983 issue of Arts Hazards News and has been working with OSHA to determine the extent of the problem.

Samples of taxidermy from typical museum collections have been analyzed for arsenic, and it has been found in every sample. The test was fairly simple but expensive (approximately \$40.00 per sample).

Although the danger is hard to assess, precautions need to be taken in handling and working with these specimens. Arsenic can be absorbed through the skin, inhaled or ingested. It can cause immediate illness or chronic disorders which could take years to appear. The problem can be especially acute with children, the elderly or persons with a health condition which could be aggravated by the poison.

In working with or around taxidermy specimens, we make the following recommendations:

1. Where possible, the known presence of arsenic should be retrieved from records of preservation treatments or from the memory of staff. These specimens should be so identified.

2. When in doubt, ASSUME ARSENIC TO BE PRESENT.

3. Avoid direct contact with or movement of these specimens. Wear appropriate protective gloves, and wash your hands immediately after handling the specimens. Lab coats and overalls should be worn and kept clean. If there is a lot of movement or dust, dust-masks should be worn and kept clean. Handle the piece by its stand or mount if possible.

4. Any program which allows the public direct contact with arsenic-treated materials should be reconsidered. This is especially true with children or others particularly susceptible to the poison.

