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MEREDITH MICKELSON

TALAS has moved. The new address is 213 West 35 Street, 9th Fl., New York, NY 10001-1996 (212-736-7744).

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TECHNICAL NOTES

LABELING FOR ARTISTS MATERIALS

A voluntary program to label artists' materials for chronic toxicity has been completed, and products with new designations should be visible in stores sometime during the next year.

Artists' representatives, under the leadership of the national Artists Equity Association based in Washington, DC, and art materials manufacturers worked together to develop the consensus program. The agreement covers only materials which are marketed or intended for artists or crafts people. The standard was formed under the auspices of the American Society for Testing and Materials (ASTM) and is known as the Standard Practice for Labeling Artists Materials for Chronic Health Hazards. Artists Equity and most leading manufacturers ratified the draft language of the standard; and then the standard was finally approved 25 March 1983 by ASTM.

According to the ASTM standard (D4236), products will be analyzed by an industrial toxicologist who will determine toxicity by assessing the following:

1. Current scientific knowledge of the toxic potential of each ingredient.
2. Specific chemical form and levels of each potentially toxic ingredient.
3. Physical form and reasonable foreseeable uses and misuses of the art materials.
4. Potential for synergism and antagonism of various ingredients.
5. Potential chronic toxic effects of any breakdown products for any reasonably foreseeable use or misuse of the art materials.
6. Opinions of various regulatory agencies and scientific bodies on the potential for chronic adverse health effects of the various ingredients.

Depending upon the degree of any hazard involved, the words "Danger," "Warning" or "Caution" will be required on the label. Labels will also state the hazardous ingredient; the name of any ingredient that has or might be associated with allergies or hypersensitivity; as well as precautionary statements and information about risks.

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Manufacturers have formed the Art and Craft Institute in Boston, MA to certify that their products do conform to the ASTM labeling practice. The Institute includes artists representatives in monitoring policy, an on-staff toxicologist and a newly purchased computer able to track several thousand formulations of artists materials. Products submitted to this scrutiny will be entitled to carry the Institute's seal. Individual companies may employ their own certified toxicologist instead, so long as their practices conform to the ASTM standard. Manufacturers will also provide information on product toxicity to the Rocky Mountain Poison Control Center for distribution to hospitals and individuals. In addition to the ASTM program, legislation to mandate labeling of chronic health hazards in artists' materials has been introduced in New York, Massachusetts, California and the U.S. Congress. Though no bills have passed, some may be reintroduced in future sessions. The threat of government action undoubtedly spurred manufacturers to self-regulation. Artist advocacy groups disagree whether mandatory programs are a desirable next step. On the one hand mandatory programs would ensure that dangerous products are so marked; on the other hand, certain types of legislation could force many materials off the market. Funding availability will also influence the effectiveness of such legislation.

MARIAN DIRDA

ETHYLENE OXIDE: A STATEMENT OF CONCERN

The Conservation Division of the British Columbia Provincial Museum has stopped using ethylene oxide in vacuum chamber fumigation for insect control of museum collections for three equally important reasons.

1. The health hazard to staff of the desorbed ethylene oxide from artifact material.

We did not remove artifacts from the fumigation chamber until the chamber environment recorded zero ppm ethylene oxide using the Bacharach TLV sniffer. This took in some cases up to 24 air washes and required constant monitoring.

Despite these precautions we were concerned about the desorption of ethylene oxide from artifact materials after they had been removed from the chamber.

It is documented in the literature that ethylene oxide may form a true solution with some plastics, not just gas trapped between some fibers, and thus is slowly desorbed. This may occur with other artifact materials.

2. The health hazard to staff from handling ethylene chlorohydrin contaminated artifacts.

It is well documented in the literature that ethylene oxide reacts with chloride to form ethylene chlorohydrin. Ethylene chlorohydrin is less volatile than water, thus is persistent. It is absorbed through the skin and is considered more toxic than ethylene oxide. It is possible that ethylene chlorohydrin is formed on artifact material which may contain salt from usage or fabrication from marine or soil environments, in cell protoplasm or as iron or copper chloride corrosion products, etc. There is no method except chemical analysis for monitoring the presence of ethylene chlorohydrin on material.

3. The loss of potential research information in artifacts fumigated with ethylene oxide.

It is well documented in the literature that ethylene oxide reacts with proteins, cellulose and fatty acids. The reactions chemically alter these substances commonly found in artifact material and makes them unsuitable for future research.

The Conservation Division of the British Columbia Provincial Museum is now researching non-chemical alternatives to insect control.

MARY-LOU FLORIAN

(The above appeared in part in *Art Hazards News*, May 1983)

MARILYN KEMP WEIDNER wishes to review the development of the Suction/Vacuum Table since its introduction to the field of conservation at the AIC Annual Meeting in Cooperstown, NY in May 1974.

Mrs. WEIDNER would appreciate receiving correspondence from colleagues who have built their own tables or developed techniques for the treatment of works of art using the Suction Vacuum Table. She is particularly interested in learning of any new developments in the table itself, other than those in the literature. Conservators' experiences during treatments, both negative and positive, would also be of significance.

If sufficient new data is obtained, Mrs. WEIDNER is prepared to compile the information and present it to the membership at the next AIC Annual Meeting.

Members are encouraged to submit articles for this column. Telephone numbers for Technical Editors are on page 20.

CONFERENCES, COURSES, SEMINARS

Sept. 6-9 1983. National Conference of the Institute for the Conservation of Cultural Material (ICCM), Brisbane, Australia. The theme is Conservation--the Art, the Craft and the Science. Contact: Dr. Neville Agnew, Hon. Sec., ICCM, Qld. Div., Conservation, Queensland Museum, Gregory Terrace, Brisbane, Queensland 4006, Australia (07-52-2716).

Sept. 7-9 1983. Fifth International Seminar on Applications of Science in Examination of Works of Art, Boston. Contact: Research Lab, Museum of Fine Arts, 465 Huntington Avenue, Boston, MA 02115.

Sept. 12-16 1983. IADA Congress in The Hague at the Royal Library and General National Archives. Papers to be given on map conservation, xero-radiography of bookbinding, problems in restoration of historical bookbindings, ethics, treatment of modern art, deacidification, etc. Contact: J.H. Hofenk de Graaff, Central Research Laboratory for Objects of Art and Science, Gabriel Mesustraat 8, NL-1071 EA Amsterdam, Netherlands.

Sept. 21-30 1983. Paper Conservation Course, University of Victoria, British Columbia. An intensive eight-day course of lectures, demonstrations and laboratory sessions is offered, the instructor is CHARLES BRANDT, Chief Conservator, Provincial Archives of Manitoba. Fee, \$280. Canadian. Contact: Joy Davis, Advance Studies in Cultural Conservation, University Extension, University of Victoria, B.C., Canada, V8W 2Y2. (604-721-8462).

Oct. 2-4 1983. Administration of Photograph Collections Workshop in Minneapolis, Mn. An introductory level workshop on historical development of photographs, identification of photographic media, collection policies, preservation and the use of photographs for research, exhibition and publication. Tuition: \$50. Contact: The Society of American Archivists, 330 S. Wells St., Suite 810, Chicago, Il. (312-922-0140).

Oct. 27-29 1983. First International Conference on Non-Destructive Testings in the Conservation of Works of Art, Rome. Sponsored by Italian Society for Non-Destructive Testing (AIPND) and Institute Centrale del Restauro). Topics will include defining methods for studying and measuring the chemical and physical characteristics of ancient artifacts and environments to be prepared, and identifying new materials and procedures in conservation and testing methods. Contact: AIPND, Via Foresti 5, I-25126, Brescia BS, Italy.