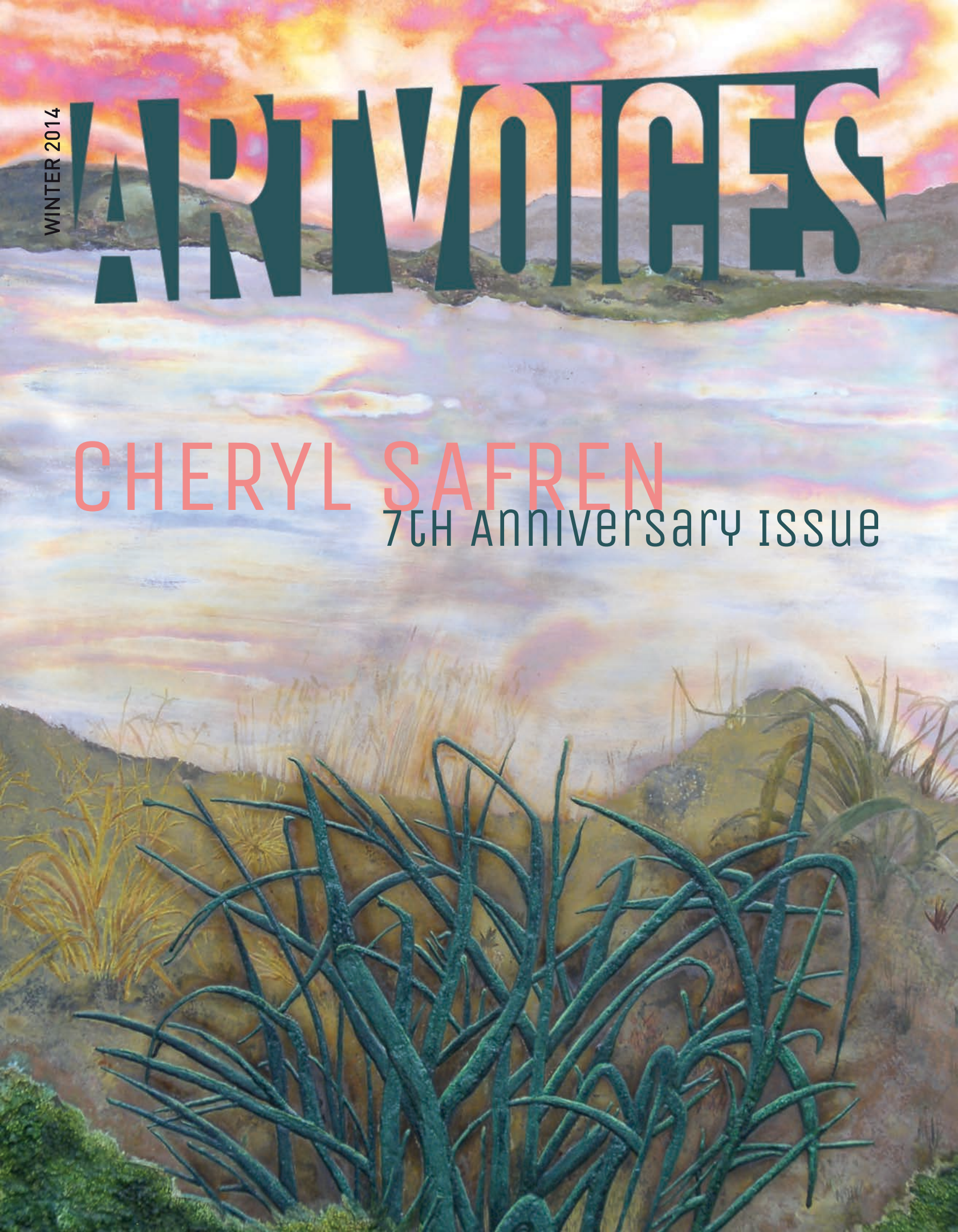


WINTER 2014

ARTWORKS

CHERYL SAFREN

7th Anniversary Issue



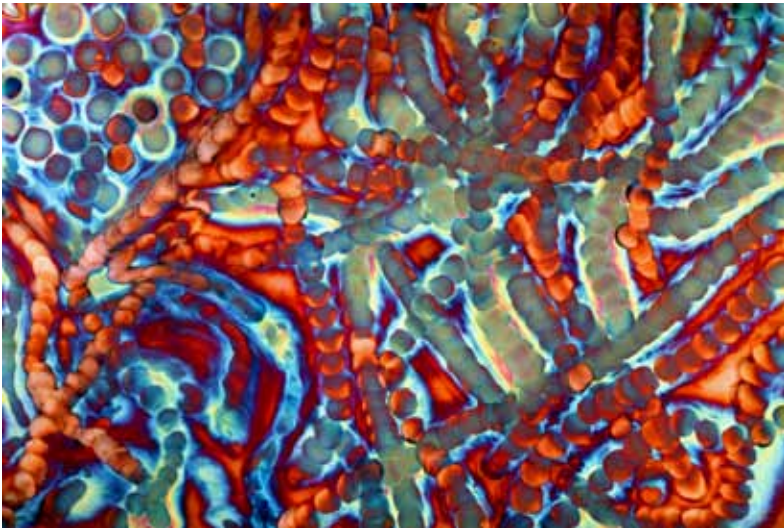
CHERYL SAFREN

GEO-CELESTIAL LAYERS PROCESS IN OXIDATION-TIME

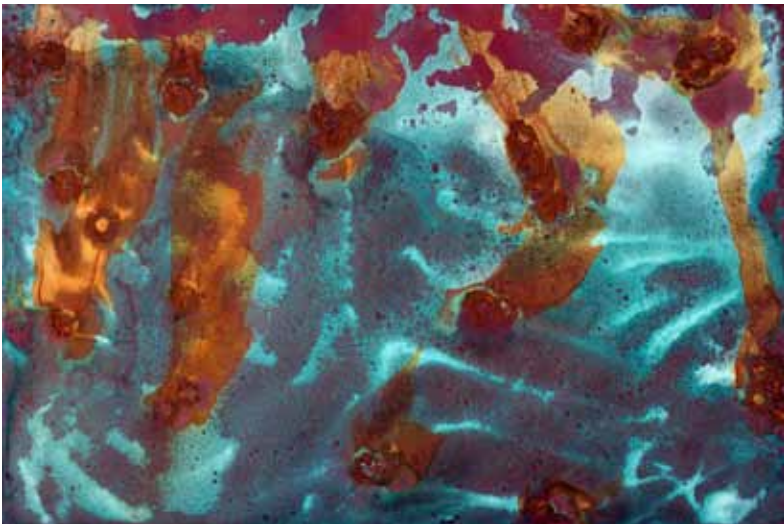
BY AMIR BEY

Before reading any descriptions or commentaries, my first impressions of Cheryl Safren's work were: Quartz sections and polished stone forming patterns, shifting translucent sheets that recall the gas storm clouds of Jupiter's sky, yet in Safren's worlds the clouds' rain is colors gliding without gravity to guide or contain it, colors that coalesce and dissolve, becoming layers of transparent seas and rivers, with flowing currents forming eternally changing centers that stretch as they revolve.





I then discover that she draws inspiration from the clouds, fauna, tectonics, and processes found on imagined extraterrestrial planets, that she has a profound interest in micro and macro organisms, be they new or primordial, she explores the reflective characteristics of metallic surfaces and the inherent mysteries of the oxidation processes of copper and other metals. And her many public works have science-based themes and inspirations informing them that are installed in science and research centers, and industrial companies have commissioned her work, of which there are several at the Biotech Research Center at the University of Utah, and at the Hach Hall, located in the University of Iowa's chemistry building.



In her *Live Painting* series, her observations and documentations of their phases are as much a part of the series as are the final results of the pieces. The series involves experimentation with chemicals on copper surfaces; in the series she observes the passage of time through oxidation. There is a contrast between the command she exercises in directing and influencing oxidation, essentially to guide eroding matter, and the creation of amorphous imagery. Many searches were necessary to arrive at the mastery that she has over these complicated interactions between chemicals, materials, and light. The intermingling between these elements follow natural "laws" based on their characteristics that she purposely combines, obtaining varieties of effects.



"Many hours of research and experimentation has allowed me to control and manipulate chemicals in order to create these images, which were rendered without the use of paint, photography or the computer. Chemistry is allowed to assume center stage. While biology and the environment have influenced the subject of these works, it is the chemical interactions that give full expression to the images. Some of the processes employed produce coarse and grainy textures, while others, produce shiny or gossamer ones."

Safren's work engages different areas in the pursuit of these elemental actions. Not all of it is nature-derived or soft: some have industrial, mathematical structures that are heavy, and human. One consistent element is her development of patterns.

Her earliest works were paintings. In the early 1980s she left New York City and moved to Detroit where her husband worked for a period of time, and this allowed her to focus more on her work. In the 1980s Detroit was a center of industrial tool-making. With that as an inspiration, she created many series having industrial themes, most of them in acrylic: Production Table was one piece that was commissioned by Place Machine, Inc. in Troy Michigan. On her return to New York, her work became more “organic.”

During the 1980s-90s she began to experiment with mixed media, then in the late 90s she painted on copper before her use of chemicals on it. Her fascination with the oxidation process is as illuminated as the reflective effects in her work:

“Crystallization, fusion and solidification are just a few of the many chemical processes employed to create this imagery. Some of the colors generated on these copper panels are known as interference colors and are produced by a transparent oxide film deposited on the metal surface. The colors develop when part of the light striking the oxide surface reflects and part [of it] passes through the film before reflecting off the metal below. When the delayed light reappears and combines with the surface light waves, they may either reinforce or cancel each other, generating a specific hue. The thickness of the oxide film dictates the color. Crystallization, fusion and solidification are just a few of the many chemical processes employed to create this imagery.”

Most artists may feel an affinity with Safren’s experimentation. Process is a central aspect of any artist’s work, but the materials usually employed do not evolve as much as the artists do. With Safren, the materials’ evolution is supportive of and is coincident with the development of the project and the artist. Her “life changed” when she discovered resist for chemicals; and she develops her own recipes. About her processes she says:

“It is very difficult to describe my thinking process in words because my thoughts aren’t verbal. They are thoughts more than feelings ... they evolve and change as the work does almost as if I am in the process; it has become so organic for me that I sense how to move.”

Aside from the inspired motivation she receives from chemical processes and scientific concepts, she also draws from traditional cultures from around the world. It should be noted that while she adores Japanese patina techniques her work isn’t beholden to traditions: they are springboards for new concepts. This is evident with works where she uses forms from earlier civilizations that she fashions into unique patterns. With her patterns she erects structures that are organic, industrial, fantastic, geological, extraterrestrial, alchemical, and abstract, creating varieties of manifestations whose common elements are structural contexts that have an evolutionary motion, described by the themes she embraces and through the titles of her pieces such as “*Gestation*”, “*Creation*,” and “*Habitation*.”

Safren employs alchemy in her work, with the addition of causing the metamorphosis of materials through the combination of chemicals and light, results achieved by photo-synthesis. Her work challenges the notion of what an organic process is: Does organic process only involve materials such as wood, fabric, or soil? Can anything that is made of materials found on earth or even in extraterrestrial bodies be organic as well? Can anything that an organic facilitator, an anthro-fabricator, such as a creator like Safren, be organic?

www.safren.com

(previous page) **Bioscaffold**
chemistry on copper, 36 x 36in.
1 of 3 panels that comprise the Bioscaffold Triptych

(facing page top) **Interior Transport**
chemistry on copper, 24 x 36in.

(facing page middle) **Sea Foam**
chemistry on copper, 24 x 36in.

(facing page bottom) **Coral Reef**
chemistry on copper, 24 x 36in.



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SCIENCE / TECHNOLOGY

OCTOBER 23, 2006 | VOLUME 84, NUMBER 43 | PP. 53-56

Chemistry For The Sake Of Art

For one Long Island artist, her studio is her laboratory

[Ivan Amato](#)

Dispersed throughout [Cheryl Safren](#)'s modest home in a dense residential neighborhood east of Queens on New York's Long Island are signs of intense chemical investigation.



Courtesy of Cheryl Safren

ARTSY CHEMISTRY Safren relies on chemistry to produce myriad effects in copper sheets, her primary artistic medium.

Her basement looks like a laboratory. Hanging on one wall are goggles, a splash visor, and heavy-duty rubber gloves. What once was a bar now serves as a lab bench, hosting bottles and vials with liquids and solids in a rainbow of colors. On a table on another side of the basement rests a few ziplock plastic bags containing colored globs, the results of experiments with different polymer formulations to determine which ones hold together better. Nearby on the floor are scores of copper test strips the size of playing cards, each one subjected to a different chemical treatment.

Safren, who had worked since the 1970s as a graphic artist and then later as an art teacher, is a homegrown, self-taught applied chemist. Rather than making new medicines, commercial polymers, or semiconductors, her product line is fine art. On the walls of her living room, and in a growing number of public and corporate spaces, hang the visually stunning results of what she thinks of as proprietary art experiments. Her shows have names like "Chemistry on Copper" and "Percolations." The latter ran at the [Great Neck Arts Center](#), in Great Neck, N.Y., this past spring.

"The results she was getting—the textures, patterning, and final composition—were stunning," says Regina Keller Gil, founder and director of the arts center. "The public was fascinated by it, and they wanted to know more," recalls Gil, noting that Safren wasn't willing to divulge too many details. Safren considers the treatments that she is developing to be trade secrets, which explains why she has developed an encryption scheme to keep track of them without inadvertently giving them away to, say, a visiting reporter. For example, the formula for one copper test plate reads "Bill + George + Marilyn." Each name refers to a chemical or process. Another plate reads "George + Daniel + Marilyn."

One of the works hanging in Safren's otherwise sparse, bone-white living room is an earthy-colored landscape titled "Stansbury Park," after a park west of Salt Lake City. From a distance, the imagery looks like an unusually colored landscape painting with representations of a snow-capped mountain, sky, water (reflecting the sky), and grass. "When you get closer, you realize that there is no paint on the surface whatsoever and that the whole thing is done with chemicals," Safren says. She uses acids to etch texture down into the metal sheet; gas-fueled torches and a variety of chemical treatments to modify the surface in ways that produce a spectrum of colors; and polymers, glass, and other materials to build up from the surface.

"My work, rendered without the use of any paint, allows chemistry to assume center stage," Safren explains in an artist's statement that she has distributed at her art shows. "Changing color through reaction, crystallization, fusing, and solidification are a few of the ways chemistry informs this work. Chemistry is sometimes the subject of my work, often its inspiration, and always the method or means of its creation."

In addition to hanging on the walls of her own home, Safren's works now are displayed in venues as diverse as the Tallyn Reach Public Library, in Aurora, Colo.; the Marine Biological Laboratory, in Woods Hole, Mass.; Wyeth Pharmaceutical headquarters, in Madison, N.J.; and the University of Georgia's School of Forestry.

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Pulp Art Becomes Her

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Ivan Amato/C&EN

COPPER TRIALS Each card-sized copper sample reveals visual and textural effects due to specific chemical treatments.



Cheryl Safren

[View Enlarged Image](#)

CAPTIVE ON COPPER With chemical treatments of her own design, Safren captures organic forms, like this wildflower, in her copper works.

Chemist Joachim Schummer, editor of the philosophy of chemistry journal [Hyle](#), has written about Safren's work. As part of a special issue on "Aesthetics and Visualization in Chemistry," Schummer describes it this way:

"Safren uses chemical reactions on metal surfaces to create dynamic images. With these works, Safren brings to the fore the chemical materiality of painting and the intimacy of individual artists with their materials. Safren's 'paintings' interact with their viewers through the refractive and reflective nature of the chemicals applied to the surfaces."

This interactivity is particularly compelling. To take in the full effect of Safren's works, engaged viewers might find themselves moving from one side of the work to the other, and then squatting low before rising up on tippy-toes. Each change in the angle defined by the eye, artwork, and light source changes the work's appearance. What's more, Safren notes, because her chemical treatments subtly change over time—for example, by picking up moisture on humid days—they, in a sense, evolve. In these ways, the appearance of the work is quite literally relative to space and time.

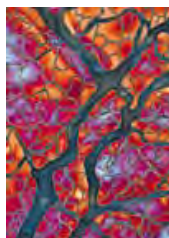


Cheryl Safren

[View Enlarged Image](#)

METALSCAPE

Titled "Stansbury Park," this copper work depicts a landscape near Salt Lake City.



Cheryl Safren

[View Enlarged Image](#)

LIFE LINES Titled "Capillary 1," this copper-based work's visual elements emerge from both heat and chemical treatments.

Safren's applied chemistry approach to art started in 2001 with her son's high school science project. The project he chose, and with which she assisted, centered on submerging copper metal strips in various household liquids—among them vinegar, lemon juice, hydrogen peroxide, and a salt solution—and observing what happened. "I found this to be fascinating," says Safren, noting that her son got an A and then moved on from science into film-making and other pursuits. "But I became curious to see what happened when you used other chemicals and not just household things," she says.

In time, she began experimenting with various oxidizing chemicals and corrosives, beginning to tread into chemistries not usually done in suburban settings like her Long Island home. She tapped into her chemical engineer second cousin to get some tips on safety. And she sometimes travels to a more spacious studio in upstate New York when she needs to work on a larger scale commissioned work. "It just evolved," says Safren. "Once I started, I couldn't stop."

Like any applied scientist, many of her experiments don't work out. But working with copper has a fail-safe component, Safren notes. "I can sell the copper as scrap. I can sell my mistakes." She remembers bringing a particularly large batch of failures to the scrap dealer. "He kept peeling off the twenties," Safren says with a thief's grin. What satisfies her way more than a pile of \$20 bills, she says with a decided Long Island accent, is the thrill of applying her own chemical investigations to making art that itself celebrates

chemistry.

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Chemical & Engineering News

ISSN 0009-2347

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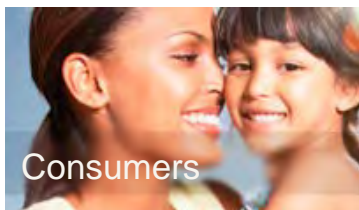
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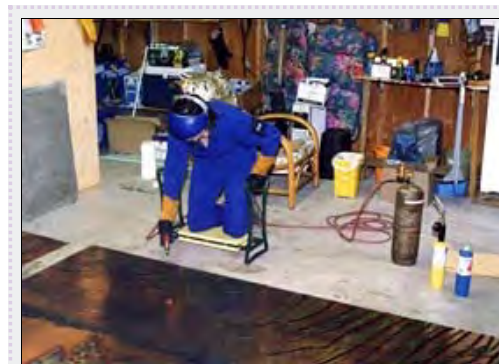
By Michael Cervin

It might be hard to imagine that a one-car garage could be the space so many unique and compelling copper works come out of, but for [Cheryl Safren](#) of New York, it's all part of the big picture. Safren was a fine art painter since 1975, creating flyers, brochures and packaging and teaching art classes on the side. But in 2001, while helping her son create various chemical reactions on copper for a school project, she was sent on a different trajectory.

"I didn't know what the reactions would be. We kept scientific data, including length of submersion, and documented it daily." They used vinegar, lemon juice, hydrogen peroxide and salt solutions, she recalls. "It was so primitive," Safren says, certainly compared to her current work. Her son quickly lost interest, "But I could not stop," she says. "I've always loved the color of copper because my mother had naturally copper-colored hair. It's such a beautiful color."

Safren became hooked on the diverse and richly colored chemical reactions with copper. She contacted a cousin who was a chemical engineer, "for safety reasons," she admitted, "because some of the things I use are not good for you." Without a studio she took her experiments outside.

"My earliest efforts of applying chemistry on metal were in my back yard on a bed of sand," she says. "I was using temperatures of 3,000 degrees. Wood burns and concrete explodes, so working inside my house was not a good idea."



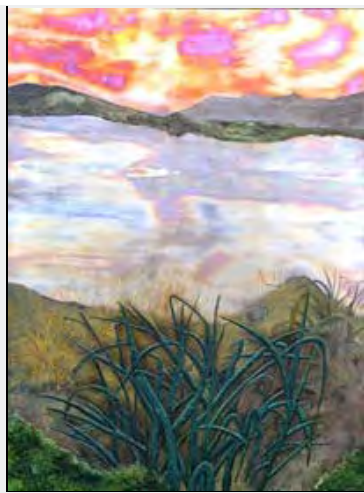
Copper artist Cheryl Safren at work

Photograph courtesy of Cheryl Safren

Eventually she converted the garage into a studio where things like wind, snow and rain were appeased. Though she won't divulge the specific types and combinations of chemicals she uses, due to her years of experimenting, she will apply heat to her copper sheet on occasion with the chemicals to produce certain effects.

"I use many chemicals and heat," says Safren. "Some chemicals are applied cold, then heated, some never receive heat. Chemical reactions vary, some are instantaneous, some take weeks and years. The natural oxidations process also changes depending on the humidity."

She purchases copper sheet from [B & B Sheet Metals](#) in Long Island City. From there she begins to apply different chemical reactions on her test strips---small copper foil she uses as guinea pigs. "For every work I create I use many test strips," says Safren. "I had 82 test strips for a triptych I recently did." And each test is numbered, defining its chemical



Sand Cove, chemistry and plastic on copper

Photograph courtesy of Cheryl Safren

makeup so she doesn't have to re-invent the wheel. Older test strips are brought to [Two Brothers Scrap Metal](#) in Farmingdale, New York and sold. "My public works are sealed with [Incralac](#) so there is no chromatic degradation or oxidation," she says. Then there are her "living paintings," copper works which are not sealed and where the environment plays a part in the evolution of the piece.

"I do things to promote changes and encourage texture and growth so things come out in many colors and layers," she says. "You don't know exactly how they will evolve."

She stresses that she does not etch copper, the chemicals reside on top of the sheet creating diversity of color and texture.

"When you look at my work it changes depending on the light, the time of day, the angle from where you're standing," says Safren. "The dynamic interaction is compelling."

Currently she's experimenting with crystal formations which fan out like ferns across the copper sheet to create dynamic images with an almost prehistoric feel. "There are thousands of crystal formations which form in a myriad number of formations," she says. Her work at times seems other-worldly, funky odd shapes and colors that seem to resemble amoebas under glass, or science fiction book covers.

Much of her work is not purchased within the arts community.

"I'm not a chemist, though the main buyers of my work are science people. I'm called an applied chemist, but this isn't my education," she says with a laugh.

Commissions include [Florida State University](#), Psychology Building in Tallahassee, FL, the City of Aurora, Colorado, and the [University of Montana](#), Skaggs Science Building in Missoula, among others. Running October 26th through December 2, will be "The Alchemy of Art" at [Adelphi University](#) in New York. Her two foot by three foot copper works sell between \$2,000 to \$3,000, while her three foot by four foot pieces fetch \$3,000 to \$5,000. She would love to work on larger copper canvases, but, after all, it's still a one-car garage.

Resources:

Visit Cheryl Safren's [upcoming exhibition](#) and hear her speak on "The Alchemy of Art" at a one-day symposium on October 29 at Adelphi University, Garden City, NY, (516) 877-4555.

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[Metals in Jordan, Utah.](#)



A composite image featuring a young woman on the left holding a camera lens up to her eye, and a close-up of a man's face on the right. A magnifying glass is positioned over the lens and the man's face. The text 'The Intersection of Art & Science' is overlaid in large, white, bold letters with an orange outline.

The Intersection of Art & Science

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The Intersection of Art & Science



*Julie Arslanoglu,
associate research
scientist in the
Department
of Scientific
Research for the
Metropolitan
Museum of Art*

What do art majors and science majors have in common? At "Intersections of Art and Science," a one-day symposium held on Wednesday, October 29, 2008 at the Ruth S. Harley University Center, students from these two traditionally separate disciplines found that they have a lot more in common than they previously thought.

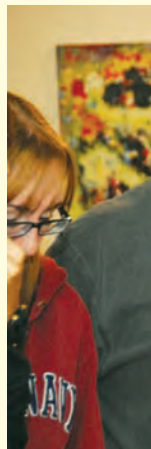
The symposium, the first of its kind at Adelphi, was sponsored by the College's Departments of Art and Chemistry, in collaboration with W.W. Norton & Company and Cengage Learning. Lectures by eminent artists and scientists were followed by the "The Alchemy of Art" exhibit and reception at the University Center Gallery, where the works of artists Cheryl Safren, Puneeta Mittal M.A. '06, and Paul Liam Harrison were displayed.

The main goal of the symposium was to explore the connection between art and science and foster conversations between researchers and artists. The series of lectures was designed to stimulate discussions of how artists use or are inspired by science and technology, and how science can create or investigate works of art.

According to event facilitator and Assistant Professor of



Mary Jane Robertshaw, guest of Dr. Mary Virginia Orna, and featured artist Cheryl Safren





Above: Neil Jespersen, professor of chemistry at St. John's University, and Dr. Mary Virginia Orna



Students and faculty discuss the day's lectures at "The Alchemy of Art" exhibit and reception in the University Center Gallery

Chemistry Justyna Widera, the symposium celebrated the aesthetics of research.

"I hope that students [left] this symposium with a sense that art is not created in a vacuum," she said. "Artistic production is framed or shaped by other intellectual practices or modes of thought, scientific inquiry among them."

The effects of the symposium went beyond merely a theoretical appreciation of how art and science are intertwined.

"Students see how this can impact their lives," Dr. Widera said. "[Students in the sciences] see how many jobs, how many interesting jobs, are available for them. It's not just

medicine. [Art students] also see the practical applications of chemistry to their work, and I hope that many of them will enroll in chemistry classes for nonmajors."

Both science and art majors who attended the symposium gained newfound respect for each other's field of study. Art major Allison Salvie '12 was intrigued by the lecture on the Shroud of Turin given by Dr. Mary Virginia Orna, who is also a Catholic nun.

"I never really liked science," Ms. Salvie said. "But this made me more interested."

Biochemistry major Lendelle Raymond '12 also gained a new outlook by day's end.

"I've never seen art from this perspective before," she said. "I guess I consider art more diverse now, more relevant to other disciplines."



Puneeta Mittal M.A. '06 (right) chats with art education majors Melissa Castor '12 and Justin Vecchione '12

DEDICATION CEREMONY
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JAMES L. SORENSON
MOLECULAR BIOTECHNOLOGY BUILDING
A USTAR INNOVATION CENTER



inspirational public art

Public art for the building was selected by a team of scientists and artists. From the aluminum and stainless steel “NeuroStars” by Cliff Garten to the bronze washed bioscaffolds of Cheryl Saffren, the building art pays homage to the beauty and complexity of biological forms.

CLIFF GARTEN

Cliff Garten is the recipient of two Individual Artist Fellowships from the National Endowment for the Arts, the Bush Foundation Fellowship for Individual Artists, the Bush Foundation Leadership Fellowship, and the Jerome Foundation Travelling Artist Grant. His civic sculptures have consistently been named best in the nation by The Americans for the Arts Public Art Network and have been cited for design excellence by the American Society of Landscape Architects.

DAVID MANN

David Mann is a painter, who is represented by McKenzie Fine Art in New York City and whose exhibitions have been reviewed in The New York Times, Art in America, Art News as well as many other publications. He has been a recipient of The Pollock Krasner Foundation Award.



DAVID SCHARF

David Scharf is a scientist, a photographer, and an artist, specializing in Scanning Electron Microscope (S.E.M.) imagery. For over 30 years he has been an innovator in the science, technology, methodology, and photography of this uniquely fascinating form of imagery. His images define the state-of-the-art in this area of science and technology.

MICHELE R. GUTLOVE

For the past 15 years glass has been Michele Gutlove’s primary medium for artistic expression. However, her formal education in architecture and years of architectural practice provide a foundation in structural engineering, solar energy and day lighting as well as art history and painting.

CHERYL SAFREN

Cheryl Safren has been a fine artist for over thirty years, was a commercial artist for twenty years, and has been an art teacher for more than a decade. Safren’s chemistry on metals artwork was featured in the October 26, 2006 issue of Chemical and Engineering News. She has participated in over a hundred juried art shows winning prizes and grants. The artist has also won and completed many commissions for corporate and governmental clients.

City of Aurora, Colorado
Art in Public Places Collection Guide

PUBLIC ART



activates public places
builds community pride
entertains & strikes emotions
encourages citizen involvement
challenges people to think & imagine
creates shared experiences
beautifies the visual environment
makes the arts accessible to all
brings diverse communities together
creates dialogue & interaction
expresses community identity
provides positive & uplifting activities
commemorates & celebrates history
leaves a legacy for future generations



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ARTWORK LOCATIONS BY ARTIST

These numbers correspond to the artworks pictured on pages 8 - 30

WARD V

- 50. **Tim Upham** • Aurora Wheel Park
2500 S. Wheel Park Circle
- 60. **Carol Redmond** • Meadowood Recreation Center
3054 S. Loreda Street • Interior Lobby

WARD VI

- 31. **Christoph Spath** • Fire Station 13
23911 E. Arapahoe Road • Exterior South Side
- 36. **Nate Pack** • Mission Viejo Library
15324 E. Hampden Circle • Interior Magazines
- 37. **Cheryl Safren** • Tallyn's Reach Library
23911 E. Arapahoe Road • Interior Foyer
- 43. **Sheila Ghidini** • Mission Viejo Park • Mission Viejo
Parkway & Nassau Drive • Entrance to Baseball Fields
- 46. **Emanuel Martinez** • Horizon Park
South Reservoir Road between Quincy & Hampden avenues
- 52. **Jean & Tom Latka** • Aurora Reservoir
5800 S. Powhatan Road • Picnic Shelters
- 53. **Ken Ball** • Saddle Rock Golf Course
21705 E. Arapahoe Road • Exterior Entrance
- 54. **Richard Jones** • Saddle Rock Golf Course
21705 E. Arapahoe Road • Interior Clubhouse
- 55. **Sherri Dunn** • Saddle Rock Golf Course
21705 E. Arapahoe Road • Interior Clubhouse

Public art
challenges
people to
think &
imagine

LIBRARIES



35 **ALTO** • 1984 (restored in 2009)

Media: Powder coated steel

Artist: Lyman Kipp (Naples, FL)

Formerly Hoffman Heights Library • 1298 Peoria Street

In 2009, a Private Equity Fund sponsored by The Trammell Crow Company donated **ALTO** to the City of Aurora. Kipp was a prominent sculptor from the 1950s to the 1970s. *Westword* honored the AIPP Program with a “Best Of” award in 2009 for restoring this sculpture.

To hear the artist talk about their work call toll-free ArtLook (888-827-8566) ArtNumber (3000) LookNumber (35).



36 **DEWEY DECIMAL SYSTEM** • 2006

Media: Acrylic on canvas

Artist: Nate Pack (Clinton, UT)

Mission Viejo Library • 15324 E. Hampden Circle

DEWEY DECIMAL SYSTEM is composed of 16 paintings created specifically for the library. The painted subjects draw from the types of books one would find in the library sections.



37 **PRAIRIE GRASS SERIES** • 2005

Media: Chemically treated copper murals

Artist: Charyl Safren (Valley Stream, NY)

Tallyn's Reach Library • 23911 E. Arapahoe Road

THE PRAIRIE GRASS SERIES

exemplifies the natural beauty of the wind-blown prairie surrounding the library. With brilliant colors, the dramatic sky & wildflowers are recreated with chemicals on copper panels.

THE ACADEMY OF APPLIED
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University Center 201
Schedule
Friday, February 29, 2008

7:15 a.m.–7:45 a.m.

Registration

Ruth S. Harley University Center, first floor atrium

7:45 a.m.–8:00 a.m.

Welcoming Remarks

Ruth S. Harley University Center, room 203

Dr. Marcia G. Welsh

Provost and Senior Vice President

for Academic Affairs, Adelphi University

Dr. Stephen Z. Goldberg

Academic Director, Long Island JSHS

Professor of Chemistry, Adelphi University

8:15 a.m.–11:05 a.m.

Student Presentations

Please note: Section assignments are located on your name tags.

Section #1, Behavioral Science/Education/Political Science/Psychology,

University Center, room 201

Section #2, Biochemistry, University Center, room 203

Section #3, Botany/Environmental Science/Geology,

University Center, rooms 211–212

Section #4, Cancer/Cell Biology/Microbiology, University Center, rooms 213–214

Section #5, Chemistry/Material Science, University Center, rooms 215–216

Section #6, Earth Science/Zoology, University Center, room 313

Section #7, Genetics/Neurology, Hagedorn Hall of Enterprise, room 209

Section #8, Health Sciences/Medicine, Hagedorn Hall of Enterprise, room 218

Section #9, Mathematics/Computer Science, Hagedorn Hall of Enterprise, room 219

Section #10, Medicine, Hagedorn Hall of Enterprise, room 220

Section #11, Physics/Meteorology, Harvey Hall, room 106

Section #12, Psychology, Harvey Hall, room 109

11:15 a.m.–11:45 a.m.

Lunch

Ruth S. Harley University Center, rooms 201–202

11:45 a.m.–12:15 p.m.

Keynote Speaker

Ruth S. Harley University Center, room 203

Cheryl Safren

Artist

“Chemistry for Art’s Sake”

12:30 p.m.–4:00 p.m.

Student Finalist Presentations

Ruth S. Harley University Center, room 203

Keynote Speaker

Cheryl Safren, Artist

Cheryl Safren has been a fine artist for over thirty years, was a commercial artist for twenty years, and has been an art teacher for more than a decade.

As a former commercial artist, Cheryl served as art director of Liberty Travel and GOGO Tours for three years. Subsequently, as a freelance graphic designer, she produced promotional materials, and product and package designs for a large and diverse clientele.

Cheryl is also a New York State certified art teacher (K-12) and the first art teacher ever to win the Kufeld Award for Excellence in Teaching. She has also taught undergraduate and graduate courses as an adjunct professor at Hofstra University. She currently teaches in the Manhasset School District in Long Island.

Cheryl Safren's fine art is in many private and public collections including: Tallyn's Reach Municipal Building, Aurora, CO; City Hall, Balatonfured, Hungary; Marine Biological Labs, Woods Hole, MA; Place Machine, Inc., (div. of Thyssen Industries, Germany) Troy, MI; Satco, Inc., Brentwood, NY; Florida State University, Psychology Building, Tallahassee, FL; University of Georgia, School of Forestry, Athens, GA; Sienna College, Loudonville, NY; Teleflex Corporation; University of Maine, Department of Biochemistry, Microbiology, Molecular Biology, Orono, ME; University of Montana, Skaggs Science Building; and Wyeth Pharmaceuticals.

Ms. Safren's chemistry on metals artwork was featured in the October 26, 2006 issue of *Chemical and Engineering News*. Her work was included in *Hyle: International Journal for Philosophy of Chemistry*, special issue *Aesthetics and Visualization in Chemistry*, published in Germany in 2002. Also that year, she was interviewed in Hungary by Magyar television's cultural station, and her work appeared in *NY Arts* magazine.

In 2006, the Great Neck Art Center presented *Percolations*, a two-person exhibit that showcased the artist's work. This was the artist's fifteenth solo show. Other shows of note include: 2005, *Chemistry on Copper* at the Discovery Museum in Bridgeport, CT; 1990 *Interior Landscapes* at the American Association for the Advancement of Science in Washington, D.C.; and *Chromachines* at Lawrence Institute of Technology in Southfield, MI. She has participated in over a hundred juried art shows, winning prizes and grants. The artist has also won and completed many commissions for corporate and governmental clients.

Chemistry and Art: Ancient textiles and medieval manuscripts examined through chemistry

Mary Virginia Orna*

ABSTRACT

The socio-historical value of examining ancient textiles and medieval manuscripts is illustrated by specific examples from the author's experience. Materials examined included pre-Columbian Peruvian textiles and Armenian and Byzantine medieval manuscripts, with connections made to present practice in both fields. Synthesis of pigments using recipes taken from medieval artists' manuals pointed to the strong relationship between modern chemistry and the artistic endeavors of the Middle Ages. While chemists always seem to have been more interested in the interface between their discipline and art, as evidenced from the discussion below, the last section of this paper will discuss a recent lively interest on the part of some artists, especially with respect to the chemical changes that take place in a "finished" work of art.

KEYWORDS: pigments, dyes, textiles, manuscripts, analysis, synthesis

RESUMEN

El valor socio-histórico de examinar textiles antiguos y manuscritos medievales se ilustra con ejemplos específicos de la experiencia de la autora. Los materiales examinados incluyen textiles peruanos precolombinos y manuscritos medievales de Armenia y Bizancio, con conexiones hechas a la práctica actual en ambos campos. La síntesis de pigmentos con recetas tomadas de manuales de artistas medievales apunta hacia la fuerte relación entre la química moderna y los esfuerzos artesanales de la Edad Media. De la discusión que se presenta deriva el interés de los químicos por el punto de contacto de la química y el arte; no obstante, en la última sección de este trabajo se discute el reciente interés vívido de parte de algunos artistas sobre los cambios químicos que tienen lugar en una obra de arte terminada.

Palabras clave: pigmentos, tintes, textiles, manuscritos, análisis, síntesis

Introduction

While thinking about how to introduce this paper on chemistry and art, it struck me that there is nothing in art that does not have something to do with chemistry. All art objects are material substances, and as such, are subject to the laws and to the manipulations of chemistry. At the same time, chemistry, in some limited instances, can also be subject to the manipulations of the artist. According to Hill and Simon (2010),

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Figure 1. A diorama depicting a typical ancient Peruvian grave-site. Museo Nacional de Arqueología, Antropología e Historia del Perú, Lima, Perú. Photograph: M. V. Orna.

art is a mirror of culture and of a culture's values. Using the materials available to them, artists can interpret their experience from a variety of perspectives: historical, socio-historical, symbolic, cultural, behaviorist, communal, environmental, functionalist, and structuralist. Thus, when examining a work of art, a chemist must keep these factors in mind and not concentrate solely on the material substance. Otherwise it would be possible to miss understanding the cultural context out of which the object came, and thus reduce the examination of art to an exercise in analytical chemistry rather than an appreciation of the cultural value of the object in question.

egar; copper, lime, vinegar, and ammonium chloride (called “sal ammoniac” in the recipes); copper, lime, vinegar, and potassium carbonate (called “oil of tartar” in the recipes). The pigments manufactured from these recipes presented a very complicated chemical profile: some resulted in rather chemically pure products, and others resulted in mixtures that defied analysis. In our laboratory, a compound harvested from a mixture resulting from carrying out a recipe in one of major medieval artists’ manuals, the *Mappae Clavicula* (Smith & Hawthorne, 1974), turned out to be identified as calcium copper acetate hexahydrate, an exotic compound whose crystal structure was first determined in 1967 (Langs & Hare, 1967). What we found remarkable in following the chemical pathways of these medieval artists was the degree of sophistication they attained long before the advent of modern chemical theory that would provide a theoretical basis for these syntheses.

For a review of the coordination chemistry of the pigments and dyes cited in this paper, please see reference (Orna *et al.*, 1994).

Modern developments at the interface of chemistry and art

Although artists and chemists alike have always been deeply involved with the use of materials, particularly with respect to their transformation into other forms, artists seem to have neglected, or even shied away from, the application of chemical theory and practice to their artistic endeavors, even though chemistry is, in fact, the scientific discipline most closely related to artistic practice. Spector and Schummer (2003) attribute this marginalization of chemistry to a culturally rooted “chemophobia”, but they also give examples of many artists who are willing to experiment with the new materials that chemistry offers, and also with the fact that their work may indeed be a “work in progress” given that chemical reactions within the work may continue over long periods of time after the work of art was presumably “finished”.

One artist who has boldly experimented with copper reactions in her works is Cheryl Safren; she has produced works of great beauty without the use of any paint, allowing chemistry to assume center stage. Changing color through reaction, crystallization, fusing, and solidification are a few of the ways chemistry informs her works. “Chemistry”, she says “is sometimes the subject of my work, often its inspiration, and always the method or means of its creation. The dynamic process that forms my current work involves copper, chemicals, and extreme heat. Light hits the copper and cascades into a burst of fiery color and then, just as suddenly, tapers off into cool serenity. Mood and thought change as light and color shift rhapsodically. When the light dims or strikes at certain angles the color becomes saturated, majestic, and even reverential. Shifting light on the copper surface and viewer movement are the kinesthetic forces altering perception, allowing us to discover new and interesting things each time we view the work.” Figure 9 is a beautiful example of her method.



Figure 9. Safren, Cheryl: *Creation 17*, 2002, 24" × 36", chemistry on copper. Used with permission.

Safren continues: “Many hours of research and experimentation have allowed me to control and manipulate chemicals in order to create these images. While biology and the environment have influenced the subject of these works, it is the chemical interactions that give full expression to the images.” Safren (2010) is one example of a developing new world where chemistry is art and art is chemistry!

Concluding remarks

The topic of “Chemistry and Art” is necessarily broad since all art works lend themselves to chemical examination. This paper has outlined several very narrow areas where the two disciplines have interfaced with one another. This interface is continuing to grow as more opportunities arise for dialogue between artists, chemists, curators, and conservationists. It is hoped that all parties, in coming to understand better how a works of art were produced and what their material vulnerability may be, may be better prepared to not only preserve these works for future generations, but also to come to some understanding of the cultures that produced them.

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