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IN 2004, THE HUNTINGTON’S BOOK AND PAPER CONSERVATORS moved into a new work space on the second floor of the Munger Research Center. Much bigger, brighter, and better equipped than the old one, the Conservation Lab heralded a new era for staff members charged with preserving the 8 million plus books, manuscripts, and ephemera from the Library collection.

“Good Chemistry” (page 10) describes what happened when students from Scripps College and UCLA gained access to the lab as part of two new internship programs. The opportunity to handle and repair rare materials is proving to be an inspiring experience for young students. These internships help guarantee a workforce of individuals with uncommon, if not esoteric, skill sets. In this, the digital age, it is more critical than ever to ensure the preservation of the Library’s collections and the profession that conserves them.

On the other end of the career spectrum is Harrison McIntosh, who looks back and ponders the singular events that conspired to make him the artist he is today, well into his 90s. In “Crafting a Community” (page 6), he identifies a combination of circumstances that converged to shape his career, perhaps none greater that the relationships formed with other artists such as woodworker Sam Maloof and painter Millard Sheets. In the interview, McIntosh describes how a community of artists in and around Claremont, Calif., helped him—and his art—thrive.

Novelist Susan Straight traces a more solitary formative moment that still resonates for her, seven books into her successful writing career. In “A River Runs Through It” (page 16), she recounts a field trip to the Huntington Art Gallery as a 13-year-old. John Constable’s View on the Stour near Dedham would take on a cumulative power for her in the years that followed. The landscape painting even plays a supporting role in her latest novel, Take One Candle Light a Room, in which a travel writer struggles to mentor her 22-year-old godson, who finds himself in trouble. In a lighter moment, she shares her enthusiasm for Constable. “Dedham,” she corrects him, putting the emphasis on the first syllable, wary of coming on too strong. “Not dead ham.”

— MATT STEVENS
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BEFORE AND (EVER) AFTER

You might not think the Gutenberg Bible has much in common with a prop from a 1950s Disney movie, that is, unless you happen to work in the Conservation Lab at the Huntington Library. Exhibits conservator Marieka Kaye recently had a hand in restoring the Disney Company’s gold-plated book featured in the opening of the 1959 motion picture Sleeping Beauty. Meanwhile, exhibition designer Lauren Tawa devised something new for one of The Huntington’s oldest items—the Gutenberg Bible. Tawa’s custom-designed Plexiglas cradle provides better support for volume 1 of the Bible, the 35-pound leather-bound tome that splits time in the display case with volume 2 every 18 months or so.

Boone or Bust

A new installation of French ceramics celebrates a recent gift from collector and Huntington Trustee Emerita MaryLou Boone. It joined another addition to the Huntington Art Gallery—a bust of George Washington made around 1832 by the top portrait sculptor in France at the time, Pierre-Jean David, called David d’Angers (1788–1856). The marble is believed to be a casualty of a fire at the Library of Congress in 1851 and spent decades languishing in a residential backyard before an art dealer rescued it and later sold it to Henry Huntington in 1924. It recently underwent restoration by independent conservator John Griswold.

SEIFU-AN, THE ARBOR OF PURE BREEZE

The journey of a teahouse donated by the Pasadena Buddhist Church last summer

September 2010 Yoshiaki Nakamura (pictured) leads a crew of craftsmen in dismantling the teahouse and shipping all the pieces to his workshop in Kyoto, Japan
FROM MEAN STREETS TO EASY STREET

This summer might go down in local history as the big L.A. traffic jam that wasn’t. The weekend closure in July of a 10-mile stretch of the 405 freeway never lived up to the hype of its biblical nickname.

Some of those folks who stayed home likely played video games for hours, including the new *L.A. Noire*, an action-packed detective thriller set in the mean streets of Los Angeles in 1947. The game’s makers—Rockstar Games and Team Bondi—used street maps from The Huntington’s holdings to lay the foundation for their vintage cityscape.

“It’s mind-boggling how much effort these guys went to,” says Alan Jutzi, chief curator of rare books, reflecting on the years of painstaking effort involved (Jutzi is pictured above right, with fellow curator David Mihaly). That comment could apply to both the video-game team and the original mapmakers. The extensive street-level detail gave the designers the historical information they needed to digitally create the game’s realism. The WPA draftsmen would be proud.

As for the traffic jam that wasn’t, historian Matthew Roth could have predicted that it would go down as a mere SigAlert in the long, complicated history of L.A.’s freeway system. In “Concrete Utopia: Roads and Freeways in Los Angeles”—a Huntington lecture available for download on iTunes U—he tells the fascinating story of Los Angeles in the 1920s and ’30s, when politicians and engineers tried to navigate the future of the city’s roadways through a convoluted political system still entrenched in the 19th century.

Arrivo Seco Parkway, 1948, northbound traffic at 5 p.m. Courtesy Automobile Club of Southern California Archives.

EXPLORE ONLINE

Discover more about these stories at bytes.huntington.org. You can also link to HuntingtonBlogs, Facebook, Twitter, Flickr, and iTunes U.

What happens next? The teahouse and new tea garden will open next spring in time to celebrate the Japanese Garden’s centennial.
CRAFTING A COMMUNITY

CERAMIST HARRISON MCINTOSH EXPLAINS HOW HE MADE HIMSELF AT HOME IN CLAREMONT

CALIFORNIA CERAMIST HARRISON

McIntosh is internationally recognized for the elegant stoneware he began creating in the 1950s and has continued to refine and develop over the course of his long and distinguished career. The simple lines of his forms and their softly curving silhouettes reference the human body or elements of nature, including gourds, eggs, and other natural forms. McIntosh’s exceptionally handsome vessels reflect his familiarity with traditional Japanese pottery as well as his appreciation of postwar developments in Scandinavian design. But McIntosh’s distinctive work ultimately is rooted in a California style of pottery that he helped pioneer, a timeless style of elemental simplicity with an aesthetic directly inspired by nature, architectural form, and music.

McIntosh worked and lived in the art colony of Padua Hills, in Claremont, Calif., and his lifelong friend Sam Maloof lived nearby. That friendship is evidenced in the furniture by Maloof that still graces McIntosh’s home, as the two friends often traded work. But the circle of creative kindred spirits was much wider still; Claremont ceramist Rupert Deese was McIntosh’s studio partner for more than 60 years. Artists Jean and Arthur Ames, Paul Darrow, Phil Dike, Betty Davenport Ford, Millard Sheets, and Albert Stewart were all neighbors and friends as well. McIntosh, now almost 97, shares his reflections on these friendships and on the lively Pomona Valley art community where he and so many others thrived. He is one of the 36 artists who will be featured in this fall’s exhibition “The House That Sam Built: Sam Maloof and Art in the Pomona Valley, 1945–1985,” on view in the MaryLou and George Boone Gallery from Sept. 24, 2011, to Jan. 30, 2012. The exhibition is part of “Pacific Standard Time: Art in L.A. 1945–1980,” an unprecedented collaboration initiated by the Getty that brings together more than 60 cultural institutions from across Southern California for six months, beginning in October 2011, to tell the story of the birth of the L.A. art scene.
What was Los Angeles like in the 1940s when you were a young artist?

It was a marvelous time to learn about art. My brother Robert and I would go to all the art exhibitions. One of the best art galleries was called Dalzell Hatfield, in the Ambassador Hotel. When I first arrived at Art Center School, I worked in its offices in the morning and took drawing classes there in the afternoon. The school was only about three years old then, still located on Seventh Street near Westlake Park [now MacArthur Park]. Chouinard [Art Institute] was a few blocks away. Those were the two most important art schools in Los Angeles.

The Foundation of Western Art, a privately endowed art museum that showed the works of contemporary artists, was nearby too. I was in the gallery one day, and the director told me he needed an assistant, and I got the job. Many California artists would come through; I sent out invitations to shows for all these different artists, and I helped to hang the shows. So I became acquainted with many artists of the time, such as Millard Sheets, Phil Dike, and Tom Craig.

You lived with your parents and brother in Silver Lake then, in a house built for them by the architect Richard Neutra. How did that happen?

I was fascinated with architecture, especially the modern style that was developing in Southern California. When my parents were planning to build a house in Los Angeles in 1937, I told them about Richard Neutra. We called him, and the next day found ourselves sitting in his Silver Lake living room planning the design of our house using redwood. We did much of the work ourselves.

What I like about Neutra that’s reflected in my own work is the simplicity of things—his architecture is mainly to keep the appearance clean using simplified areas of glass and open spaces in relation to nature.

Was it during this time that you started working seriously in ceramics?

In 1940, a friend of mine told me about a very good night class in ceramics at USC taught by Glenn Lukens. I studied with him for a year. Meanwhile, I set up in my parents’ garage, bought materials, and found a secondhand gas kiln that my dad and I put outside the garage. I learned the formulas for clay and how to make glazes, and I started making cast pieces. My brother had been hired by Walt Disney to make backgrounds for his films, so he would take my pieces to work, and the Disney artists would buy these for one, two, or three dollars so that I could buy more materials.

How did you end up coming to Claremont?

Millard Sheets was the chairman of the art department at Scripps College, and he had a great reputation among young artists in Southern California. I found that I could use the GI Bill, so I went to Scripps to see the facilities. There I met Richard Petterson, who was teaching a ceramics class, and right away he was really enthusiastic about me coming to the Claremont Graduate School. I brought some samples of my work, and these were submitted to Sheets. I was labeled a “special student” because I didn’t have any college degrees behind me.

And in Claremont you met Sam Maloof?

Sam and I got acquainted when I was studying in Claremont. Sam was not a student there, but he was working for Millard, who had hired him to make silk-screen prints of his paintings. So for a year or two Sam lived at Millard’s house. As time went along, Sam and I became more established, and we started having lunch together just about every week. Sam did his banking in Claremont, and he’d call me when he came to town. If I was free, if I wasn’t firing the kiln, we’d meet at Walter’s Restaurant for lunch.

Also, when Sam and I were first beginning on what would become our professions, the Pasadena Art Museum was putting on the California Design exhibitions.

It was a golden age, with Millard Sheets and this beautiful little town.

Tan Gourd Vase, ca. 1952, stoneware, 9 ½ x 4 ¼ x 4 ¼ inches, collection of Catherine McIntosh, Claremont, Calif. Photo by John Sullivan. Opposite: Harrison McIntosh scratches sgraffito lines into the dry clay of a footed bowl, 1977. Photo by Catherine McIntosh.
What was California Design?
Eudorah Moore started it, and Sam and I both became acquainted with her. She was very encouraging for us. California Design mainly consisted of all kinds of furnishings for the home and accessories designed for mass or limited production, but it also included studio works like ours. Sam had a van, so we would go to Pasadena together to take our pieces for the shows. These shows turned out to be quite valuable because a lot of people in Southern California saw our work, and Sam and I would get orders.

Why did this artist colony take hold in Claremont?
It was a golden age, with Millard Sheets and this beautiful little town. Many of the artists who became well known had gone through the war, so Claremont, because of the GI Bill, became their paradise. And with the university, it had all that an artist wanted for intellectual stimulation. We were all part of a whole scene of what was going on in the contemporary field. Everyone was using traditional materials but in new ways, supporting one another. Every time anyone had an art show, everyone would come.

All the artists spent time together? Not the painters with the painters and the ceramists with the ceramists?
Yes, the painters and craftsmen, potters, weavers, sculptors were really mingling together—it was a true cohesive community with a lot of great friendships, and everyone

Bruce Moran likes to tell the story of Diogini Marmi, a 17th-century Italian potter who kept a diary in which he recorded the secrets of his trade, including recipes for glazes and tips on how to sustain the fire in his kiln. He also collected writings about alchemy.

“My approach as a historian is to look at alchemy not so much as something people believed in or as any kind of philosophy, but as something people did,” explains Moran, the Dibner Distinguished Fellow at The Huntington for 2010–11 and professor of history at the University of Nevada, Reno. “Alchemists made things.” This approach departs from traditional notions of alchemy, or the process of turning base metals into silver or gold. Through stories about specific people and their crafts, particularly of the hands-on, artisanal variety, Moran hopes to demystify alchemy.

His biggest challenge lately, though, has not been in explaining what pottery and alchemy have in common, or even in distinguishing his earthy approach from those of fellow historians who explore alchemy vis-à-vis medicine or philosophy. Rather, he and others have been trying to stretch the bounds of the history of science, a field of study that hasn’t always embraced alchemy. Where might alchemy fit in when discussing, say, the history of the scientific revolution?

Some possible answers appear in the most recent issue of *Isis*, one of the premier journals of the history of science, medicine, and technology. Its editors invited Moran to edit a series of articles for their “Focus” section, a recurring roundtable discussion on the state of the field. Moran asked fellow historians of alchemy—Lawrence M. Principe, William R. Newman, Ku-ming “Kevin” Chang, and Tara E. Nummedal—to contribute essays.

For Nummedal, the ACLS/Burkhardt Fellow at The Huntington for 2010–11 and associate professor of history at Brown University, the occasion marked a cultural shift in the study of the history of science as well as a moment of introspection for those who study alchemy.

“There’s just so much new work being generated all the time,” she explained. “And once there’s a critical mass of scholarship, then it’s a good moment to stop and think: What does this add up to? Where are we going to go next?”

As the journal was going to press, Moran and Nummedal traveled to Taiwan, where fellow *Isis* contributor Kevin Chang, of Academia Sinica in Taipei, helped host a small conference in celebration of the “Focus” series. Moran and Nummedal marveled at how far they—and their field—had come.

“I don’t know what sort of cosmic forces conspired to make this happen,” pondered Moran, alluding equally to the *Isis* essays and the fellowship he experienced this past year at The Huntington (not only with Nummedal but with yet another alchemy scholar—Dibner Research Fellow Margaret Garber, of California State University, Fullerton). “Most university departments are lucky if they have a historian of science,” says Moran, “let alone someone who focuses on alchemy. And here we had three of us this past year at The Huntington.”

—MS

*Isis* is published by the University of Chicago Press on behalf of the History of Science Society. The “Focus” essays appear in the June 2011 issue (vol. 102, no. 2).
Scripps College junior Dinah Parker developed a love for art while restoring antiques at her family’s business. But her best grades were in science, so when it came to choosing a major, she was considering chemistry or pre-med. There was one problem. Science alone didn’t satisfy her artistic passions.

Then one day her roommate told her about a new undergraduate major, in art conservation. “It was perfect,” recalls Parker. “It required the science courses I’m good at plus the art courses I love.”

Before Scripps—a woman’s college in Claremont, Calif.—began developing its new art conservation major, The Huntington’s library conservation department had undergone its own evolution, complete with a new, state-of-the-art lab. Safeguarding the Library’s more than 8 million rare books, manuscripts, prints, photographs, maps, and other materials is a growing challenge. Seven years ago,
the conservation team moved from the two tight rooms into which they had once squeezed to a 10,000-square-foot space in the Munger Research Center outfitted with sophisticated equipment and bathed in natural light. Today, it houses not only standard book and paper conservation equipment like high-powered light microscopes, suction tables, and book presses, but also more sophisticated equipment found in only few labs nationwide. Their leaf caster, a high-tech device that gently assists in the repair of sheets of paper eaten away by mold, pests, or just plain age, is a conservator’s dream. The lab also boasts a built-to-spec light-bleaching system that irradiates paper with ultrabright light to remove stains.

Last year, these two developments—Scripps’ new major and The Huntington’s state-of-the-art lab—converged. The Scripps’ undergraduate art conservation major is one of only a select few in the nation. Typically, students find out about the field late in their academic careers and play catch-up trying to fulfill the prerequisites for graduate school. The new major streamlines that path by requiring students to complete all the prerequisites, such as general and organic chemistry, art history, and studio art. And it includes an internship so students can learn hands-on skills and begin assembling a portfolio.

“Grad schools require hundreds of hours of bench work before students can even apply,” says Mary MacNaughton, Scripps associate professor of art history and director of the college’s Ruth Chandler Williamson Gallery. “But it’s a catch-22. Without the degree, it’s hard to get the opportunities,” she says. So MacNaughton started researching conservation labs that could host her students.

Around the same time, Holly Moore, The Huntington’s Lloyd E. Cotsen Head of Conservation, was thinking about new ways to use the lab and its highly trained staff to expand on the two internships she had in place. The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation Fellowship in Conservation makes it possible for college grads intending to apply to conservation graduate programs to practice hand skills and develop a portfolio over a three-month period during the summer. Another program, the Advanced Internship for Conservation Graduate Students, helps graduate students in their final year of studies to refine their techniques and make more nuanced treatment decisions over an intense, 9- to 12-month period.

But few opportunities exist for undergraduate students to put theory into practice. If Moore could develop such a “pre-program” internship in conjunction with Scripps, it would be one of only a handful offered at institutions nationwide. She had the lab space, she had the equipment, and she had a staff of six, including several conservators from nationally and internationally recognized conservation programs. Could she make these precious resources available to some well-qualified undergraduates?

The answer came when Scripps’ MacNaughton called one day asking if she could bring a few of her students to tour The Huntington’s lab. Over a series of conversations, Moore and MacNaughton created the Scripps College Art Conservation Independent Study Internship. Each semester, one or two interns would spend a day each week at The Huntington. They would follow a demanding syllabus developed by The Huntington and approved by Scripps.

“I designed the syllabus thinking about what I would have wanted as a young student,” recounts Erin Jue, a paper conservator on staff. “Undergraduate interns need to be exposed to a broad range of treatments, but they also need to start thinking about grad schools.” Jue studied biochemistry/molecular biology and art history at Berkeley and then earned a Master’s in Art Conservation from New York University.

This past January, Scripps students Dinah Parker and Robin Dubin began their 10-week internship. Initially, they were a bit intimidated at the thought of handling rare photos, drawings, and other fragile objects, says Jue. But two months later, as they stood at adjoining benches perched over some 19th-century maps of Los Angeles County, the initial jitters had all but faded as they confidently worked on the material with ease.

The maps were from a collection of more than 360 recently donated to The Huntington. Hand drawn between 1860 and 1895, they are a telling example of preservation’s importance. Showing roads, land ownership, buildings, geographical features, and
waterways, the maps provide valuable insights into the development of Los Angeles County before, during, and after the boom of the 1880s. But after years of use by the Los Angeles County Assessor’s Office, they were brittle, covered with grime, and riddled with small tears. Without intervention, they would be too fragile to use.

Before the interns began, The Huntington’s paper conservators took the maps out of their bindings. To help remove the heavy creasing, they gently introduced moisture by humidifying them in giant containers and then flattened them between sheets of felt. The interns removed surface dirt using a dry cleaning method employing grated eraser “crumbs.” The interns then got the chance to humidify and flatten smaller areas on the maps that remained creased. For this task, they turned to a fabric used by sportswear manufacturers—waterproof, breathable Gore-Tex.

Water can be a conservator’s friend or foe. When used correctly, it helps to loosen folds and wrinkles. But if uncontrolled, water can, of course, weaken, stain, and destroy paper. Gore-Tex is permeable in only one direction, and it releases water in vapor form. By creating a Gore-Tex package, the interns controlled the flow of water, easing away creases.

Then the interns stabilized tears at the maps’ edges. Working slowly and methodically, they re-adhered loose fragments to the underlying fabric support using wheat-starch paste. To repair any tears, they added pieces of conservation-grade Japanese tissue paper, which is thin and flexible but has strong, long fibers. “Robin loves tear repair,” teased Parker. “It makes such a dramatic difference,” agreed Dubin. “The maps were falling apart. Now they look better, and I can see the difference I’m making.”

In addition to repairing two of the Los Angeles County assessor’s maps, they also worked on photos from early 20th-century Los Angeles and placed early architectural drawings of the Huntington mansion into Mylar sleeves.

“We’ve been incredibly lucky,” says Dubin. “We’re not the kinds of interns who only wash brushes and strain paste. We’re actually entrusted to touch things.” Moore agrees that giving college students such open access is rare. “Undergraduate programs for conservation were practically nonexistent when I was preparing to apply to graduate schools,” she said, “so I had to find an internship without the backing of a college or university. It made the process much more difficult.” Just as crucial for Dubin and Parker was their exposure to Huntington staff members who served as mentors. Tips on repairing a frayed manuscript came between recollections about graduate programs and classes and descriptions of the close-knit community and intense camaraderie that awaits the students pursuing careers in preservation. “Grad school is such a defining moment in one’s career,” said Jue.
“Not only do you develop relationships with other conservation professionals and conservation educators, but you also meet some of your best friends and people who are bound to become life-long colleagues.”

Shortly after the Scripps students started, Moore launched one more internship, partnering with UCLA to host students from its library and information studies master’s program (see sidebar). All the while, The Huntington remains a dynamic collecting institution, having added more than 100,000 rare books, manuscripts, photos, and other objects over the last few years alone. As collections come in, fragile and worn items pass through the lab for evaluation and conservation. Moreover, every time The Huntington mounts an exhibition, the conservators must examine and conserve the objects going on display beforehand. All of this activity points to a growing demand for conservation, says Moore, who is quick to point out that a vital internship program is part of her program’s dynamism.

As for Parker and Dubin, they have since returned to the classroom full time, studying art conservation theory with a better understanding of what it means in practice.

Diana W. Thompson is a freelance writer based in South Pasadena, Calif.
While the Scripps interns were learning about paper conservation, UCLA graduate student Jacque Giebel was honing her book repair skills under the tutelage of The Huntington’s rare-book conservators.

As a master’s candidate in library and information studies, Giebel had been working at UCLA’s Library Conservation Center, where she became a self-declared book repair addict. But UCLA students only repair books from the general collection. With a love of history and an undergraduate degree from San Diego State University, she was eager to get her hands on rare books. Her adviser suggested she approach The Huntington. At the time, a formal internship did not yet exist. But Holly Moore, The Huntington’s head of conservation, was looking for ways to expand internship opportunities, and a new UCLA Information Studies Internship was the answer.

When Giebel first walked into the lab in the fall of 2010 she was awestruck. “A lab like this was where I wanted to go with my career,” she said. Over the course of her Huntington internship, Giebel learned techniques for reattaching a book’s front and back cover, or “boards.” She created new hollow spines in place of tight-back spines that had weakened over time due to use. A hollow spine better distributes the weight of the pages of the book, thus reducing the pressure to the spine and adding years to a book’s life. In addition, she learned how to dye, trim, and finish leather—a technique out of reach for many book conservation labs because of the time and skill needed to work in leather and the elevated cost of the materials.

One of the most valuable elements of the internship was interaction with a diverse group of conservators. There’s no single right way to repair a rare book, as Giebel learned as she considered treatment options. Exhibits conservator Marieka Kaye might suggest one approach she learned in graduate school at Buffalo State College. Assistant book conservator Justin Johnson might offer another, one that he had practiced as a graduate student at West Dean College in West Sussex, England. Giebel would come away not only having learned treatment options; she also gained valuable insights into the distinctions between conservation graduate programs.

By the end of her 12-week internship, Giebel completed five books to include in her portfolio, all of them dating from the 1800s. She felt invigorated, with a clearer focus on the future. “Grad school involves so many assignments it can blind you until you lose track of your career goals,” says Giebel. “This experience reminded me why I wanted to become a conservator.”
“I should paint my own places best,” John Constable said in 1821. “Painting is but another word for feeling. I associate my ‘careless boyhood’ to all that lies on the banks of the Stour.”
Constable’s six-foot painting View on the Stour near Dedham (1822), one of six celebrated large-scale paintings of his childhood landscape, came to The Huntington in 1925. It hangs in the southwest corner room upstairs in the Huntington Art Gallery, walls painted deep red to best accentuate the work, and I visit this painting—sometimes with my daughters, sometimes alone—many times each year.

Thousands of people stand in front of their favorite Huntington works of art each year—they come from across the world to see Pinkie, The Blue Boy, and other famous paintings or sculptures. My eldest daughter used to linger in front of Joshua Reynolds’ portrait of the actress Sarah Siddons as the Tragic Muse, though she was also fond of the J. M. W. Turner paintings of Italy, the shivery, blinding white light he gave Venice in The Grand Canal.

But John Constable’s work saved me many times during the last five years, while I worked on a novel about a travel writer who leaves her childhood home behind, abandoning the landscape of inland Southern California’s orange groves and wild Santa Ana River, to live in Los Feliz and fly frequently to Europe. I was born in Riverside, not far from the Santa Ana, and left my river behind when I went to the University of Southern California and then graduate school. But I came back. As a novelist and professor, for 23 years I’ve lived within walking distance of my river, but last fall, I felt strange still to be writing about the same landscape. River scenes were important in my 2001 novel Highwire Moon, and I was writing again about the tangled wild grapevines and cottonwoods for Take One Candle Light a Room, my new book. My character, Fantine, can’t wait to leave behind her father’s orange grove and the river where she and her brothers used to catch crayfish. She writes about rivers in Europe—the Thames in England, the Limmat in Switzerland—and rarely visits home. But one night, her godson—an orphaned 22-year-old who wants to write about music and art, and whom she’s promised to help with visits to The Huntington and USC—gets into trouble because she refuses to let him stay with her. He takes a Constable print from her living room and goes on the run to Louisiana, to the Mississippi River, where their ancestors lived, and she has to travel to that river to find him.

But how could I continue to love my own unremarkable landscape so much, to make it my life’s work? I came to The Huntington to stand in front of Constable’s work so often because it became clear to me that his Stour River was not glorious and romanticized, but the opposite—his river and banks and people are transcendent in their everyday working life. Constable’s lack of romanticism and his ardent respect for every tree branch, every cow crossing a bridge, every boatman waiting patiently for a lock to open, made me examine those of us who create art out of those places we never leave, even if we are physically removed. Constable painted because he loved his “own place” more than any other, even after he left Suffolk for London.

John Constable was born in 1776 in East Bergholt, Suffolk, England, an area known eventually, because of his work, as “Constable Country.” The Stour River winds through the countryside, as it does through his paintings, and, rather than a rough waterway or even a scenic wild course, it is a working river; Constable’s father owned two mills, at Flatford and Dedham, and the river was punctuated by locks to make it navigable by barges—which carried grain harvested from neighboring fields and then ground in those mills to docks along the coast.

From the very beginning, when young Constable worked in the countryside around his home, he sketched the locks, the pilings and horses and barges, the mills themselves, the humble homes of farmers along the river, and the trees and banks and weeds beside the water. His father had expected John, his second son, to be a clerk-gyman, and when that wasn’t what John wanted, to inherit the family mills. But though he worked at the mill, he travelled the Suffolk countryside sketching with a local plumber, also visiting and sketching places associated with the
celebrated portrait master Thomas Gainsborough, who’d been born about 10 miles west, in Sudbury.

In 1799, he went to London, hoping to make his name and see his work exhibited at the Royal Academy, but his paintings of the working river, the wheat and cornfields, and the ordinary people and animals of Suffolk garnered little attention. Epic paintings, historical themes, and exotics were considered prestigious—not scenes of rural commerce and daily life. In 1819, Constable finished and exhibited at the Royal Academy the first of his six-foot Stour paintings, *The White Horse*, created from a six-foot sketch he’d painted from memory and from those sketches he’d made while still in East Bergholt, studying every detail of the land, even making sure the exact blossoms on each plant were right for the month.

The painting was a sensation—it gave an epic sense to an everyday place by its sheer size and audacity. At the Royal Academy, Constable next exhibited *Stratford Mill* in 1820, *The Hay Wain* in 1821, and in 1822, *View on the Stour*. In 1824, *View on the Stour* was exhibited at the Salon in Paris with other works, and awarded a gold medal by Charles X.

Constable died suddenly on March 31, 1837, having worked that very day on his last painting. He never left England, even when his paintings were being shown in Paris and he was at the peak of his success. He never crossed the borders to Scotland or Wales. He never made much money, for even after his Paris triumphs, his pictures sold to French dealers for an average of about 20 pounds. He had a wife who was ill for most of their marriage and who gave birth to seven children, and his financial situation was almost always dire. Yet, he found time to paint the mills, the locks, the fields, and the river Stour.

《The sound of water escaping from Mill dams, …Willows, Old rotten Banks, slimy posts, & brickwork. I love such things—Shakespeare could make anything poetical—he mentions “poor Tom’s” haunts among Sheep cots—& Mills… & the Hedge pig. As long as I do paint I shall never cease to paint such Places.》

—John Constable, letter to John Fisher, 1821

In his *View on the Stour*, men are poling a barge, waiting for their turn, and a girl crosses a bridge in the near distance. The footbridge is not architecturally significant or even quaintly lovely—it is a spindly contraption that ends in a steep, weedy, raw dirt bank of a rich red-brown shade. The wood
pilings at the landing are strung with slimy, drying moss, and a rake lies prominently in the foreground. The white horse’s broad back is turned to us—the viewer sees the horse’s rump.

The paint is alive, in layers and broad strokes and then the smallest specks of color which might have been applied with a single hair. Swallows skim the water, tiny stones are strewn on the bank, and weedy lilies are clumped nearby. Miniscule white dots make light—the white headscarf of a small washerwoman crouched at the bank, the white on the frayed bump of old rope knotted around the piling, and on the rusty chains dangling into the water. The white dot on a boatman’s pipe is topped with an even smaller point of red.

Did I stand in front of this painting for the first time when I was only 13?

A school field trip brought me from Riverside to The Huntington. (We were called Mentally Gifted Minors back then, my group, a term that my own three daughters find hilarious, as it implied that we had no physical gifts at all.) We were let to wander, which I remember so vividly—the pond with lily pads, the Japanese Garden, and the cooled hush inside the portrait gallery where I stood before my first large paintings.

I remember standing close enough to see brush strokes on canvas, the way different elements shone in the light when I moved forward and backward. I am not the kind of sentimental writer who will claim that I remember View on the Stour from that day, but I know I saw the glitter of white paint representing pearls on women’s gowns in the Gainsborough portraits, and the way the background in Lawrence’s Pinkie seemed so distant and eerily menacing to me.

I learned about art and even some about writing from the notes beside the works—diaphanous, ethereal, pastiche, pointillist. And all these years later, I made my character Fantine, the travel writer, acknowledge her debt to museums and the vocabulary they gave her.

It was Constable’s work that moved me most, in the years to come. I listened to Water Music, Handel’s iconic tribute to King George’s journey on the royal barge up the Thames; I travelled to the Mississippi many times, standing beside it in Minnesota and in Louisiana, seeing the immensity of a water highway travelled by barges. Then Constable painted because he loved his “own place” more than any other.

I walked my own Santa Ana, meandering between boulder-strewn foothills, remembering as a child when I collected acorns from the native oaks, ground them into an inedible mash, and made my younger brothers taste it. I touched the wild tobacco blossoms, yellow and tubular as macaroni. Constable made me realize I have always loved artists who make native landscapes their lifelong subjects. Marcel Pagnol wrote of his beloved hills outside Marseilles; Eudora Welty, writing in her bedroom, made vivid the landscape of small-town Mississippi; Joyce Carol Oates writes of hardscrabble rural New York; Ernest J. Gaines of southern Louisiana.

In 2007, The Huntington hosted a rare visit of Constable’s “six-footers,” and that was when I realized how he was foremost in the tradition of artists who spend their lives replicating a childhood landscape in a way that makes the place—which is often obscure—important to the world.

My own daughters have been coming to The Huntington since they were born. The middle daughter is majoring in art history/African American studies, and loves sculpture more than landscape painting. But my eldest daughter worked for a summer at The Huntington, whose art is inextricably entwined now with our lives. Last year, studying in London, she visited her favorite Constable, The Cenotaph, at the National Gallery as often as I visit View; this spring, she called from the National Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C., to report, “I visited our Constable here.” (It is Wivenhoe Park, Essex.)

In January, I walked the Santa Ana River with my dog. The recent storms had uprooted willows and bamboo and tangled the wild grapevines into snarls along the cottonwoods and oaks. The winter grass had sprouted within three days, like green needles at our feet; the fields of wild oats by summer would be golden and shaking—our untamed version of grain. I looked down the watercourse and thought of what John Constable would see—what small highlights of white and red and gold he might use to make this place seem like home.

Susan Straight has written seven novels, including Take One Candle Light a Room, published in October 2010 by Pantheon. She is professor of creative writing at University of California, Riverside. She is also a columnist for the new publication Boom: A Journal of California. You can learn more about her at susanstraight.com.
WHAT JAMES JOYCE CAN TEACH US ABOUT OUR PLACE IN THE WORLD

By Colleen Jaurretche

How well I recall my thrill as a young graduate student at the Huntington Library, when I first read an original typescript page— to my delight annotated by James Joyce at the precise line I had questioned. While surely other scholars of modern literature had read it before me, the moment had all the portent of a private (and great) discovery—I had found it, and it was my own. God, it seemed, wanted me to keep writing that dissertation.

Write I did, and well over a decade later I find that The Huntington keeps revealing marvels to me. The Burndy collection of rare books and manuscripts on the history of science is my latest fascination and perhaps the grandest of the Library’s acquisitions in recent years. Donated in 2006 by the Dibner family, the 57,000 volumes will long have a dramatic impact on the study of the history of science. But why, you might wonder, would a Joyce scholar want anything to do with science?

This past June I directed the 22nd North American James Joyce Conference. Themed “Joyce in Science and Art,” the event took place at The Huntington and Caltech and featured scholars whose work highlights the relationships among science, humanistic thought, and art.

In the instance of Joyce, some relationships between science and art are inbuilt. For example, physicist Murray Gell-Mann named his newly discovered subatomic particle “quark,” a word coined in *Finnegans Wake*. And recently scientists sent a simulated RNA sequence into space, encoding in it a passage from Joyce’s work.

Such anecdotes point out Joyce’s ability to capture our collective imagination. His engagement with worlds outside the covers of a book stems from his own reading, which ranged from theology to literature, philosophy, history, and scientific concepts such as alchemy and physics. In every instance he invites us to research in depth the connections between seemingly disparate realms of experience. Indeed, his work brings together heterogeneous fields of inquiry, one for whom both science and art weigh equally.

The conference was a hit and demonstrated the degree to which Joyce’s intellectual and aesthetic interests continue to feed our own. A high point was a plenary address on the “The Einstein of Modern Fiction,” where speaker Jeffrey Drouin elegantly laid out reading common to both giants, and broadened our sense of shared cultural influences. At the same time poets, novelists, and performers of high magnitude—Eavan Boland, Paul Muldoon, Sinéad Morrissey, Nicholson Baker, Fionnula Flanagan—gathered to salute Joyce’s legacy in modern letters.

As for me—18 years have passed since I sat down to that typescript page. Since then the world of a scholar in the humanities has undergone a revolution, with vanishing job opportunities, and colleges and universities in crises. Without institutional structure, and without the carrot and stick of “publish or perish,” why would anyone want to think about Joyce, let alone run an entire conference on the man? And why at The Huntington, where earlier periods of literature reign supreme? The answer is easy—because its rich holdings of pages and letters reach ever backward in a kind of umbilical spiral to our literary past, not only to Joyce’s typescript, but also to those very documents of Renaissance or medieval work that ignited in my mind a flame I hope will always burn, and one that I wished to share, however briefly, with a community I have come to call my own.

Colleen Jaurretche is a Pasadena-based writer, independent Joyce scholar, and co-director of Libros Schmibros Lending Library and Used Bookshop.

Go to itunes.huntington.org to listen to audio programming from the 22nd North American James Joyce Conference, including an interview with novelist Nicholson Baker; poetry readings by Eavan Boland, Paul Muldoon, and Sinéad Morrissey; and a reading of James Joyce’s short story “Counterparts” by actress Fionnula Flanagan.
In the past year, Huntington staff and conservators have been busy examining and restoring outdoor sculpture on the grounds. While visitors may have spotted the scaffolding surrounding a pair of bronzes in front of one of the entrances of the Library Exhibition Hall, few are likely aware of the rich histories behind those works. That pair, and the two at the other entrance to the Library, were cast by 17th-century sculptor Hubert Le Sueur, who served as the court sculptor to Charles I, king of England (1600–1649); only one other set is known from this series, which is now at Windsor Castle. In addition, the 18th-century limestone statue of Neptune near the Library’s east entrance steps once stood at the Imperial Palace (Hofburg) in Vienna. Our god of the sea needs a little help after enduring the elements for the past 90 years or so, and will soon undergo conservation treatment.

So while we have taken great care to assess the condition and materials of these works, we also try to be meticulous in reviewing their rich histories. There’s an even older and less visible European sculpture tucked amid the cycads and ferns near the loggia on the east side of the Huntington Art Gallery. Visitors might already be familiar with the bronze Bacchante—an exuberant six-foot female figure holding a bunch of grapes high above the head of an infant faun. But that work, completed around 1900, is by an American, Frederick William MacMonnies (1863–1937). One of the most important Italian sculptures on the grounds is the base beneath the bronze Bacchante—a rare example of Florentine marble carving dating to the mid-16th century.

It is at once a complicated and glorious piece. But, in fact, the fountain had not run properly for years. With the reopening of the Huntington Art Gallery in all its newfound splendor, could we fix this exterior ornament? And if we did, would water flowing through it put it at risk?

These are precisely the kinds of questions that help connect new generations of curators to the collections; there is always something to be learned. An article we reexamined—published in Italian in 1990—was particularly
Purchased by Henry Huntington in 1912 from the New York dealer Eugene Glaenzer, the carved Italian sculpture—a marble fountain—stands at just over four feet high and is decorated with ornament typical of the mid-16th-century Mannerist style. At the base, in each of the four corners, a bearded head holds his mouth open. It was from these mouths that water from the fountain would originally have issued.

The bronze Bacchante stands nearly six feet high. Henry E. Huntington acquired it directly from the artist, the American sculptor Frederick William MacMonnies. The dancing figure’s exuberance exemplifies the Beaux-Arts style that MacMonnies likely adopted while he was in Paris at the end of the 19th century.

illuminating. In 1988, Florentine art historian and current superintendent of the Museums of Florence, Cristina Acidini Luchinat, visited The Huntington to study the fountain. Her research—published in a Tuscan art history journal—unraveled the base’s mystery. From the Latin inscriptions on the west side of the fountain, Acidini was able to tell that the fountain was “made for the honest pleasure of Tommaso Albiani in 1570” and that, subsequently damaged, “it was restored by Francesco, descendent of Tommaso Albiani, in 1790.” She identified the obscure coat-of-arms on the north side—featuring a castle flanked by two trees on a hilltop, rising out of the sea—as belonging to a member of the Tomei family who was “TOMASI AVXSOR,” Tommaso’s wife.

At the time the fountain was made, the Albiani family was living in the Tuscan town north of the beach resort of Viareggio, where they were established as merchants of leather and, later, cloth. As successful merchants, the family may well have had business dealings with the Medici bank in Florence. Acidini praised the refined style and high
quality of the pedestal’s carving, writing that “the richness and abundance of the inventive composition raises the fountain to the level of a ducal commission,” meaning that the sculptor probably created pieces for the Medici themselves. This remarkable statement limits authorship of the fountain to within a small circle of artists active in mid-16th-century Tuscany. The fountain’s motifs and style suggest several possible candidates. For example, the fountain’s ram heads are similar to those on Giambologna’s Neptune statue in Bologna. Stylistic connections can also be made to the work of Florentine sculptor Tribolo, who designed the Boboli Garden at Palazzo Pitti in 1549 for the grand duke of Florence, Cosimo I Medici, as well as to Tribolo’s colleague Pierino da Vinci, who worked with Tribolo on the sculpture of the Medici villa gardens at Castello. Judging from style and quality, and happily supplied with the marble's date of manufacture, 1570, she concluded that the likeliest sculptor was Battista Lorenzi, a student of Baccio Bandinelli and later an assistant to Benvenuto Cellini. Lorenzi is responsible for several works throughout Florence, including the bust of Michelangelo for his tomb in the Church of Santa Croce.

This remarkable statement limits authorship of the fountain to within a small circle of artists active in mid-16th-century Tuscany.

The fountain served as a focal element in the garden of the Albani palace until the late 18th century, when it no longer appears in maps of the property. Why it was sold and how it found its way to the United States is not known. During the Renaissance such fountains were included in country villas with vast gardens and in city palaces with outdoor courtyards, where they would inspire a sense of refuge and tranquility. Happily, this impressive fountain, now located at The Huntington, retains its original purpose. Whether water will ever flow through it again is a question sculpture conservators continue to grapple with; but if running water poses no risk to this important sculpture, they are hopeful that it can.

Nicole Logan was a curatorial intern of European art at The Huntington in the winter and spring of 2011. Photos by Martha Benedict.
In Print

A SAMPLING OF BOOKS BASED ON RESEARCH IN THE COLLECTIONS

THE FRONTIER OF LEISURE: SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA AND THE SHAPING OF MODERN AMERICA
Lawrence Culver
Oxford University Press, 2010

Southern California has long been promoted as the playground of the world, the home of resort-style living, backyard swimming pools, and year-round suntans. Tracing the history of Southern California from the late 19th century through the late 20th century, The Frontier of Leisure reveals how this region did much more than just create lavish resorts like Santa Catalina Island and Palm Springs—it literally remade American attitudes towards leisure.

THE ELUSIVE WEST AND THE CONTEST FOR EMPIRE, 1713–1763
Paul W. Mapp
University of North Carolina Press, 2011

In the early to mid-18th century, imperial officials in Europe knew very little about western North America. Yet competition to gain access to the Pacific Ocean and control trade to the Far East enhanced the importance of western American territories. Mapp reconstructs French, Spanish, and British ideas about these then-unknown regions, especially the elusive Northwest Passage, and shows that a Pacific focus is crucial to understanding the causes, course, and consequences of the Seven Years’ War.

FACT AND FICTION
When Deborah Harkness was working on her previous book, The Jewel House: Elizabethan London and the Scientific Revolution (Yale University Press, 2007), she spent a four-month stretch at The Huntington reading every book written in England on science between 1558 and 1603. For her newest book, the professor of history from USC relied on her imagination. The novel, A Discovery of Witches (Viking, 2011), tells the story of what happens when historian (and witch) Diana Bishop gets her hands on a rare alchemical manuscript from Oxford’s Bodleian Library.

LINE IN THE SAND: A HISTORY OF THE WESTERN U.S.-MEXICO BORDER
Rachel St. John
Princeton University Press, 2011

St. John explores how the U.S.-Mexico boundary changed from a mere line on a map to a clearly marked and heavily regulated divide between the two countries. Focusing on the desert border to the west of the Rio Grande, the book explains the origins of the modern border and places the line at the center of a transnational history of expanding capitalism and state power in the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

THE COPERNICAN QUESTION: PROGNOSTICATION, SKEPTICISM, AND CELESTIAL ORDER
Robert S. Westman
University of California Press, 2011

In 1543, Nicolaus Copernicus publicly defended his hypothesis that the earth is a planet and the sun a body resting near the center of a finite universe. The Copernican Question reframes this pivotal moment in the history of science, centering the story on a conflict over the credibility of astrology that erupted in Italy just as Copernicus arrived in 1496. Westman shows that efforts to answer the astrological skeptics became a crucial unifying theme of the early modern scientific movement.

ANNOYING: THE SCIENCE OF WHAT BUGS US
Joe Palca and Flora Lichtman
Wiley, 2011

NPR science correspondent Joe Palca and multimedia editor for NPR’s “Talk of the Nation: Science Friday,” take readers on a scientific quest through psychology, evolutionary biology, anthropology, and other disciplines to uncover the truth about being annoyed. What is the recipe for annoyance? For starters, it should be temporary, unpleasant, and unpredictable, like a boring meeting or mosquito bites. Palca was the science writer in residence at The Huntington in 2009.

Go to itunes.huntington.org to listen to Joe Palca speak about the book.
Changing the Subject

A PAIR OF HISTORIANS VISITS AMERICA’S TWO CIVIL WARS

THE WAR OF 1812


“At best,” the Pulitzer Prize–winning historian from the University of California, Davis, continues, “Americans barely recall…a handful of patriotic episodes.”

Indeed, today Americans might have vague notions of Francis Scott Key’s drafting of “The Star Spangled Banner” at Fort McHenry or of Andrew Jackson’s improbable dominance at the Battle of New Orleans. Less known are the complicated tensions that played out north and south of the border in the decades after the American Revolution—in this case the U.S.-Canadian borderlands that ran from Detroit in the west to Montreal in the east.

“In this civil war,” Taylor writes, “loyalty did not neatly follow national origins and identities, which were up for grabs.” Before the war, the Royal Navy did not acknowledge the right of the United States to naturalize British subjects and would routinely capture American sailors and force them into service. Impressment, as it was called, is but one of many causes that Taylor alludes to in his long book title.

“With Alan, it’s always important to pay attention to the title,” says Carole Shammas, professor of history from USC and convener of “American Origins,” an annual seminar series sponsored by the USC-Huntington Early Modern Studies Institute. Taylor’s work was the focus of a full-day seminar where four distinguished scholars used the four sets of constituencies mentioned in the subtitle to critique the book from various areas of expertise, including British, Canadian, Native American, and American history.

Two new books from the University of Pennsylvania Press are the result of scholarship emerging from The Huntington’s two research institutes. Collecting Across Cultures: Material Exchanges in the Early Modern Atlantic World is the first book in the press’s Early Modern Americas series. Peter C. Mancall, professor of history and anthropology at the University of Southern California and the director of the USC-Huntington Early Modern Studies Institute, is editor of the new series and co-editor of the new volume. He and volume co-editor Daniela Bleichmar, assistant professor of art history and history at USC, have gathered 14 essays that go beyond earlier studies of collecting, where the focus might have been relegated to the movement of objects from the New World to European curiosity cabinets. In this book, an international group of scholars has “gone global,” in the words of art historian Malcolm Baker, who wrote the foreword. The essays show how collecting in the early modern world transcended geographical and cultural boundaries and ascribed new and valuable meanings to objects in the process.

Sunbelt Rising: The Politics of Space, Place, and Region is an anthology of 13 essays that began as papers presented at two conferences in 2008 and 2009—one at The Huntington, sponsored by the Huntington-USC Institute on California and the West, and the other at the William P. Clements Center for Southwest Studies, Southern Methodist University. It is edited by Michelle Nickerson, assistant professor of history at Loyola University, and Darren Dochuk, assistant professor of history at Purdue University. Contributors to the volume examine the Sunbelt as both a physical space—with its raised highways, sprawling prisons, and fast-food restaurants—and a culturally contested place, where literature, religion, and civic engagement have come to shape many aspects of the nation’s political and economic landscape.
Gary Gallagher reviewed hundreds of envelopes in The Huntington’s John P. Nicholson collection, including these examples. The Huntington recently added about 3,000 more Civil War-era envelopes to its holdings in the Jay T. Last collection. Huntington staff are preparing the new material for scholarly use.

The remarks of John Brewer, Elizabeth Mancke, Daniel K. Richter, and Sean Wilentz have been gathered and published in the Huntington Library Quarterly (vol. 74, no. 1), along with Taylor’s response.

Gary Gallagher also chose his book title strategically, hoping to change the course of Civil War scholarship in the process. In The Union War (Harvard University Press, 2011), he seeks to reverse what he calls an overcorrection in most studies of the Civil War: For too long the emphasis has been on race and emancipation, which he says distorts the true motive of Northern soldiers—preservation of the Union. Gallagher says even the word “Union” has lost its original meaning, and he concedes that “it is difficult to recapture why it once resonated so powerfully.”

In addressing that challenge, he explored The Huntington’s vast holdings on the Civil War during a year of research in 2008. He says he wrote and researched most of the book during that time, reading every issue of Frank Leslie’s Illustrated Newspaper and Harper’s Weekly from the period—“The Huntington has complete runs”—while also surveying regimental histories, letters, and even a large assortment of envelopes. Color lithography was emerging in the 1860s, and envelopes featured symbols and slogans in support of the North’s cause.

“For countless Americans who came into contact with these envelopes,” he says, “the dominant patriotic message concerned the need to preserve the Union.”

Gallagher, the John L. Nau III Professor in the History of the American Civil War at the University of Virginia, has made good use of The Huntington’s library collections over the years while also helping to organize a number of Civil War conferences, including the upcoming “Civil War Lives” in October. He hopes his new book will encourage others to explore the role of Union more systematically.

Taylor echoes Gallagher, acknowledging that the real work of a book often begins after an author lets it go: “When you publish something,” Taylor says, “it’s not yours anymore. It belongs to your readers, so what you want a book to do is enter a conversation.”

—MS
A Convenient Truth

THE HUNTINGTON’S TISSUE CULTURE LAB PRODUCES A NEW CROP OF SUCCULENTS FOR SALE

by Matt Stevens

WHEN JOHN TRAGER TALKS ABOUT the plants available through The Huntington’s International Succulents Introductions (ISI) program, it’s almost like he’s trying to find homes for beloved pets. “This one will end up with big prominent teeth,” he says of the beauty called *Agave guiengola* ‘Moto Sierra,’ referring to the serrated edges of the long leaves (pictured at right). “And this one has great coloring,” he says, describing the *Aloe* ‘Vulcan’s Fire.’ “It’s modest in size, good for a residential landscape, and it stays clean.”

His final selling point is straight out of the plant propagator’s handbook, “clean” being the term for disease-free. Trager is the director of ISI, a Huntington program that has been around for decades and is well known to conservationists as far away as South Africa and Germany. Each year, he and a small team of staff and volunteers propagate and distribute dozens of rare succulents to collectors, scientists, and researchers. Each spring, a new list of offerings is published in the *Cactus and Succulent Journal* and posted on The Huntington’s website.

The 2011 crop is notable for the emergence of a number of plants produced by The Huntington’s Tissue Culture Lab (11 out of 31, to be exact). In “A Clean Start” (*Huntington Frontiers*, Fall/Winter 2009), we introduced readers to the concept of micropropagation, a technique in which small containers of sterilized plant tissue produce hundreds of plants far more quickly than if the plants had been propagated by traditional methods such as grafting or hand-pollination. Trager and ISI were also profiled in the article “Quietly to the Rescue” (*Huntington Frontiers*, Spring/Summer 2006).

Even with the amazing new method, Trager still warns that plant cultivation is not about instant gratification. The small ‘Vulcan’s Fire’ won’t bloom into rich reds and oranges until, say, 2019. The 75-year-old “mother” plant in the Desert Garden (pictured above) is proof that patience will be rewarded.

When not preserving the fate of a species, Trager has fun naming the plants. A contest among staff produced the name ‘Vulcan’s Fire,’ which is not a nod to *Star Trek* but rather a reference to the Roman version of the Greek god of fire and smithery, Hephaestus. Trager is mindful that some might question his god-like role intervening with nature, especially when propagating an open-pollinated hybrid like *Huernia* ‘Foma,’ which means the plant that produced the pollen is unknown. ‘Foma,’ it turns out, is a name inspired by the Kurt Vonnegut novel *Cat’s Cradle* and means “harmless untruths,” from the fictional religion Bokonism. “This plant seems harmless enough,” says Trager, satisfied with his choice.

Matt Stevens is editor of Huntington Frontiers.

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On the Cover

Paper conservator Erin Jue consolidates the cracking and powdery paint layers on a manuscript with a tiny brush, using a diluted solution of glue derived from seaweed. The binocular microscope (with a camera and screen) helps her place the adhesive beneath the detached paint particles. The lights on the microscope are fiber optics and do not emit heat. The manuscript she is working on is called “The Imperial Achievement [i.e., the coat of arms] of Queen Elizabeth,” ca. 1620, from The Huntington’s Francis Bacon Library collection.

The Huntington’s state-of-the-art Conservation Lab is also the site of a pair of new internship programs that help to prepare undergraduate and graduate students for careers in conservation.

Photos by Martha Benedict