

The Research Agenda of Harvard Art Museums' Straus Center for Conservation and Technical Studies

Transcript Begins:

Selmon Rafey: Hi, everyone. Thank you for joining us today for this roundtable discussion titled the research agenda of Harvard Art Museums' Straus Center for Conservation Technical Studies, the session serving as the launch of the second module of the conservation science training and research or CoSTAR Program. My name is Selmon Rafey, and I'm the program manager at the Lakshmi Mittal Family South Asia Institute here at Harvard. Before turning it over to our speakers, I just wanted to give a few house rules. We'll be primarily doing this in the webinar format. So we're very glad we can have people joining us around the world today session. You can submit questions for our speakers via the Q&A function on Zoom. And we'll incorporate that in the discussion that happens towards the end of the session as well. We'll also be able to take questions from the audience using the raise hand function on Zoom. And we'll have to call on speakers or call on audience members to speak at that time. If you have any questions about the session, you can also send messages to us or to me via the chat or Q&A function. And also we posting key links and details in the chat for you to view as well. Other than that, I'll turn it over to Anupam to start off this session. Anupam, thanks for joining us today and for leading the session.

Anupam Sah: Thank you. Thank you very much, Selmon. A very good evening, ladies and gentlemen. Good evening to all the participants of the previous programs and the fresh members in the audience who have joined us today. I take this opportunity to first of all, remember all the trials and tribulations that all of us went through and during COVID times and as mankind and nature is resilient, and we all surfaced through it and we take forward our common human endeavors. And this little program is in that continuum, so to speak. Ladies and gentlemen, on behalf of Dr. Sabyasachi Mukherjee, the Director General of the Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Vastu Sangrahalaya, which is the CSMVS Museum in Mumbai. It's a pleasure. It's a privilege for me, in fact, to welcome all of you to this evening. The CSMVS has joined hands with the Lakshmi Mittal South Asia Institute and Harvard Art Museums, put together this program, which is called CoSTAR, that's conservation science training and research program. And the first thing to do appropriately would be to introduce to the actual star of this program, our very own lovely Meena Sonea, who, until very recently, was the executive director of the Mittal South Asia Institute at Harvard, where she served for 11 years, almost 11 years. And she led and designed a several multidisciplinary programs, research programs, with faculty that came from the humanities, the arts, social sciences, and the pure sciences. And she's the one who initiated the idea of the arts program at the South Asia Institute. And if there's a lady who I know who's persistent and who has got drive, and she's got a sense of a commitment to deliver something that is her ladies and gentlemen, Meena Sonea. And Meena, may I request you to please have the graces with the opening remarks for this to give us a little idea of the genesis of this program.

Meena Sonea: Thank you, Anupam. That was a very generous introduction. I'm so happy to be here and extend a warm welcome to all of you. I'm seeing so many names, who have been with us in the past CoSTAR Module One program, I'm so excited that you're joining us again. So welcome back to them and warm welcome to others who are joining us for the first time. As Anupam mentioned, I used to work with the Mittal South Asia Institute. And I'm still committed to this program that I have borrowed my time from where I'm working currently to continue to work on CoSTAR. And so a little bit about the Mittal Institute at Harvard. It's an institute that focuses on South Asia as a region. And the idea is to bring scholars, experts and practitioners from different disciplines to come together to solve really complex problems. And so, you know, heritage conservation sort of falls very much within the mandate of the South Asia Institute. So just like, you know, the mandate of the institute is to bring people to gather with different expertise. The idea of CoSTAR sort of emerged from that, which is how do you solve the complex problem of one of the plethora of heritage and artifacts that India South Asia has? And how do you bring the different silos people working in silos, how do you bring them together to share knowledge and share resources because something that's so complex will require cross disciplinary solutions. So that's how CoSTAR sort of emerged, and with me was, of course Anupam and Mr. Mukherjee from CSMVS Museum in India, who began to anchor what we were setting out to do, without whom, again, this program would not have been possible. And then, of course, Narayan Khandekar from the Harvard Art Museums, you know, you get the best of the best in the world to partner with us, along with Professor Gina Kim, who's an art historian teaching at Harvard. So it was in some ways, it was just a beautiful sort of bringing of amazing minds together to launch CoSTAR, which is the conservation of science training and research. And we started art first module, which consisted of nine weeks. And the idea was to bridge the museum studies, our conservation and conservation science. And then as Narayan had put it, how do you communicate art history to scientists? And how do you communicate the science behind it to nonscientists? So that's essentially what we had set out to do. And lastly, what were the different approaches to understanding the technical side of, you know, conservation of tangible and intangible heritage. So that's essentially what it was, which was very much if you think of it was like a survey of all the different solutions and problems. Now we're going to start thinking about the second module, which I'll let Anupam speak more about. And we're so excited that within the same year, we were able to actually launch our module two, which will do a little bit more, take it a little further, where you're actually going to be doing more hands on stuff. And I'll let Anupam speak more about that. But without further ado, just a quick thank you to all the people who work behind the scenes to make this program happen. The partnership between the Lakshmi Mittal and family South Asia Institute, CSMVS Museum and the Harvard Art Museums. And then last but not the least, all the folks who've actually participated in the program without you no matter how much work we did behind the scenes, it would not make any difference. So thank you so much for your collaborative spirit, and to all the active participants without whom this program would not have taken shape. So thank you so much. And I'm going to again, hand it back to you Anupam.

Anupam Sah: Thank you very much. Thank you very much Sonea Meena. And it's a pleasure for me now to introduce three panelists first Angela, Angela Chang, Angela is here. Angela in fact, did a lovely presentation on the Shotoku sculptures during the module one and participants are still talking about it. So thank you very much, Angela for that. Angela, in fact, is the assistant director, conservator and conservative objects and sculptures and head of the objects lab at the Straus Center. And as assistant director, she works with Narayan, who I will introduce before Narayan speaks. China has been playing an important role in implementing best practices in preventive conservation and her research interests which she has many some of them are preventive conservation, engagement with artists to draw their techniques and materials, especially of ancient Chinese jades in the Museums various collections. And Angela will be one of the panelists in this session along with... Welcome Angela, Angela Chang. And then we have also Penley Knipe. She's the Philip and Lynn Strauss senior conservator works on paper and head of the paper lab. She studies and preserves the Museums various collections especially on paper and photographs. She's worked with Dutch and Flemish drawing Islamic paintings. And as that Shotoku Case Study showed also fragments of paper which are found within other artifacts. She was also the chair, Penley was also the chair of the Book and Paper Group of the American Institute for Conservation of Historic and Artistic Works. And Penley teaches along with her colleagues at various programs that are run here at Harvard. Welcome Penley, warm welcome to you. And we have also with us Kate, Kate, very good evening, Kate. Hi, Kate. Kate is conservator of paintings and head of the paintings lab at the Harvard Art Museums and areas that she's covered in the work that she's done. They come all the way from the Roman frescoes fragments to contemporary oil paintings. And a great asset for also for this program is because she specializes in the technical examination of paintings, using you know, various techniques like radiography, or infrared reflective Rami luminescence imaging and investigates artists, materials and techniques. She too teaches at the Straus Center with her Straus Center colleagues at the Harvard courses, the ones that are focused on conservation. So welcome, Kate, welcome to all three of you. Welcome to all three of you. And now you see it's wintertime here well in India well also there in the United States it's winter time and it's actually just setting in, in India. But I think we here at CoSTAR already like preparing for a spring Narayan, preparing for a spring of fresh leaves and blossoms of conservation science in the Indian subcontinent. It's always been there a little bit, but you know, you need just the right amount of atmosphere, so to speak, and for things to burst forth and all the glory and for that it is in no small measure that I have to thank you, Narayan for being such a gracious mentor for this program for guiding us and supporting us in your inimitable very underplayed manner and we are truly very grateful to you. And it is with this that I introduce Dr. Narayan Khandekar ladies and gentlemen, who's the director of the Straus Center for Conservation and Technical Studies, Harvard University. Narayan has been leading the Conservation and Research activities here, and also for the center for the technical study of modern art at the Harvard Art Museums. Specializes in the scientific analysis of paintings and painted surfaces. And in fact, this first step of the CoSTAR Module two is analysis of painted surfaces. And we are very happy that Narayan has agreed to be with us again because he's already coordinated so many international groups

and conservation science that is so many advisory committees and the most beautiful Forbes pigment collection and the getting's collection of binding million vanishes is all under his editorial charge. Ladies and gentlemen, Narayan Khandekar. Narayan, may I ask you to launch this program with your keynote remarks and then you can bring in all of us panelists together to have a conversation.

Narayan Khandekar: Lovely, thank you so much Anupam for that very, very kind introduction. And I hope, what I say has enough fertilizer for the buds of conservation science to blossom. I wanted to start off by just introducing who we are The Straus Center for Conservation, and it's a Department of the Harvard Art Museums the Harvard Art Museums has a collection of about 250,000 objects, which is a very big collection in the United States. It's one of the biggest collections, and it's embedded in Harvard University. And in our mission of what we do in the museum research is mentioned, it's there as a core activity of the work that we do in the art museums. And it's been that way for a very long time. In the Straus Center, which started almost 100 years ago, we've been doing technical art history, the study of materials and techniques of artists from the 1920s. And that was part of the very earliest work that we do. And it's part of the work that we still continue to do. And it's a core activity, it's something that we must do. It's something that we share with people, it's something that we collaborate with people about, we have to also coordinate and manage the projects as well. And we're going to talk about that as well as maybe some of the challenges that we face. And what I'm very grateful to Angela, Penley, and Kate who have agreed to talk with me as well, because I think a conversation about how we operate, and we've all worked together for I think 20 years, probably thereabouts, maybe slightly less. But we've all worked together for a long time. So we have a very good understanding very good collaborative approach to how we work together. And I wanted to share that with you as an audience. And we're going to talk a little bit about the different kinds of research projects we work on as well. So we have short term projects, which range from six to eight months long, medium term, which can be for an exhibition or catalog, which run for two to three years, sometimes a little bit longer. And then there are long term projects, which lasts sometimes for an entire career. And some people been working on various projects for 10 plus years. And we work with often focused on works in our collection is often collaborative, and we want to share it with a wider audience. So that's talking to you today is part of our outreach and sharing the research we do it's not sharing the granular details of the research, but it's sharing with you how we approach our research so that you can hear how one institution does it. So I just want to bring in everybody to the conversation and open it up by just asking how do we choose a research topic.

Angela Chang: Narayan, may I back it up just a tiny bit?

Anupam Sah: Yeah.

Narayan Khandekar: Yes.

Angela Chang: Say that undermines leadership. I think research has really floated to the top of our departments priorities. As he said, this is part of our institutional mission. But at the same time, Narayan's emphasis on this has really strengthened our department and I think he could see better than the rest of us the benefit of our pursuing and spending time to do research how it helps us individually as professionals departmentally, and then institutionally as a museum. So even though that was always been part of what we do, it's the name of our department are being given the space, you know, under NEC noise kind of declaration and restatement of the importance of research has really been a big change and an important good change.

Penley Knipe: I'll jump in to answering the Narayan's question about how these research projects get generated. I made a list of kind of the most recent ones from the last 10 years, including our postgraduate fellows, so all the labs have fellows in them, who have graduated from conservation training programs, and are with us for kind of their fourth or fifth year of postgraduate training. So I listed the ones that the conservators have done and the ones that fellows have done. And in our lab in the paper conservation lab, at least, they're all generated except for one, by exhibitions, they start as an exhibition idea, so even the long term project of looking at Islamic and Indian manuscripts, started with the Calderwood exhibition in 2013. So that's where I think the vast majority of our projects in paper conservation, our research projects come from, they are sorted by the curators kind of reaching out to us. Usually, it's that way that the curators start the conversation and have some questions and we look at the object lists and have other questions. And that's how they're born in, in our lab.

Kate Smith: And that's when they're most fruitful, I think. Oh, sorry, please.

Anupam Shah: No, no, so when you said that these started as exhibition ideas, so these are general like they are not exhibitions related to technical analysis or conservation they're exhibitions as curatorial exhibition, like? Okay, that's right.

Penley Knipe: Yeah, they're generally there's one, you know, on printmaking, there's one on the artist Sherry Cole, there's been one of obviously, the one about Prince Shotoku was definitely always had technical studies embedded in it from the beginning. So all of the other ones that I've sort of listed [indiscernible] and her prince, they've kind of come out of reviewing the list with the curators, and either we have questions or they have questions, or both, but they're not technically focused exhibitions generally.

Anupam Sah: Kate, sorry, I interrupted.

Kate Smith: Well, I think we're in our institution. And I think this is a growing trend, as materiality becomes more of the emphasis on our history. But in our institution, we're very fortunate to have a lot of curatorial partners that are already fairly well versed in materials and techniques of art, and are interested in finding out more about those things, interested in being informed in their own scholarship by the material techniques of their collections. So that we're in an environment where the kind of questions we can answer or pose are interesting to those of our colleagues that are putting on exhibitions or are considering things for acquisition so that

we were able to, we have these conversations a lot, what can we learn? What can conservation learn from the objects? And what can we then offer to curatorial from a historical perspective, to enrich their understanding? So it's a happy marriage in that way, because that's not always that relationship has to be established, you know, for those questions to be asked. But the most fruitful research, you know, we're always mining exhibitions or loans or different things for ideas for our fellows to do research projects to and to teach them. And the most fruitful examples are ones that are engaging with questions the curators already have so that their fellows can work with our fellows. And so it's when we can make it something that everyone's interested in, that we're doing it, it gives it a larger meaning. And that's the most fun.

Narayan Khandekar: If I can just jump in on that. What Kate's touching on is that it's a very collaborative process. So we have a curators who have questions, but we also, they work closely with the conservators. And then inside the Conservation Department, we have a laboratory with scientists who can help answer questions as well. So you have scientists, conservators, and curators all working together with questions about an object, and we can all add to the understanding of the work of art, we can answer different types of questions about it. And so working together gives us a more rounded understanding of how the objects made what the object is used for, and different ways that when it's in an exhibition, that it provides different entry points for the audience to look at an object as well.

Angela Chang: I'll say that we have this established our institution, but we're knowledgeable about the different disciplines here. So I understand what a curator does to an extent and they're actually aware of our capabilities and how, as Kate said, we can enrich their work, you know, we can inform their art historical interpretations of artworks, for example. So that groundwork has to be laid and kind of cultivated, I think, because curators have to be knowledgeable and open and curious to what we do. I think, as I agree with Kate, that those are the most fruitful partnerships. But it starts with their even knowing and understanding what it is we do so the more that we we're able to share it. It kind of begets further projects and further questions on you know, not all of which, you don't always have the answers, but at least it is a kind of partnership and collaboration as Narayan says.

Penley Knipe: I think that, if it's all right. You know, maybe a decade ago, our fellows' projects were a little bit more freeform and but it has become part of the mission of the museum that we do this kind of work that even our fellows but also the conservators, we all work in collaboration that's tightened up a bit and only led to what Angela was speaking about this kind of circle where it just reinforces itself. But the projects in the past are at some of our fellows would work on things that they just were kind of interested in that weren't necessarily related to an exhibition or something that we were acquiring. And that focus has really changed in the last I don't know would you say maybe decade. So it's just kind of a great consequence of everything kind of coming together, curatorially conservation wise, and in terms of our mission.

Anupam Sah: And what was it like before?

Narayan Khandekar: It was very loosey goosey, it was, you know, people would just come along, they would like say, you know, I'm curious about this, and you know, they would just like go through storage, and it was, you know, freeform sort of thinking. And in a way, what it did was put a lot of pressure not, you know, carrying out a research project is quite a complicated business. And we try and guide people through that process. But if you come in not knowing what you want to do, and you have to think up a project from the start, and how to manage that and work your way through it, it can, you know, you can get a little bit of brain freeze as well, you know, you can like suddenly go like, "Oh, my God, what am I going to do? How do I make my mark on the research world? You know, this is my one chance." And we hadn't, you know, that not everybody is cut out for that kind of research. So what we're doing now is giving more structures so that people can get a feeling about how to do a research project. And I think, you know, what we've been saying is that it's most effective when it fits into a larger scheme, when we're not doing something just for ourselves. It's not me search, it's, you know, research, and excuse my palms. And it's really, you know, fits into a larger, you're doing something for the institution, not for yourself. And I think that actually is the most rewarding and I think that's about a lot of different parts of life public services, good because you're doing something for the greater good of society. And I think thinking about doing something for the greater good is an important way of thinking about research as well.

Kate Smith: Well, ask the so what question a lot as it casually speaking, but we can do a lot of really fascinating things and learn all kinds of fascinating information that we love to know about. But there has to be a reason why we do it, or else you could just spin off into the information universe forever, and not necessarily do it for a reason. So we have to remember to ask ourselves, so what.

Angela Chang: I think the focus that Narayan's referring to, with our choices of topics, also comes from, you know, our having to prioritize our work, and justify our use of our time and resources. Because research is very time consuming. You can't do it by yourself. So you're claiming other people's time as well. And so when there's an institutional need for it, you know, it complements an exhibition or other projects happening in the museum in our museum. People can get behind it, you know, it might be a very small research question to begin with. And it might grow or it might not. But it is serving a greater question and purpose. And I think as the researcher or part of the research group, you feel, you know, you feel like you're part of a team with a purpose, you're not making it up, as Narayan said. And there's kind of less at stake to I think there's less pressure because you're part of a group being asked to investigate a question and hopefully find something you might not. But it still has a purpose. And even if you don't find something, it is a kind of finding, you know, you don't discover the smoking gun, you can reveal that there's nothing there, or what we see from what we see, we can't make conclusions about this question. And that's important as well.

Anupam Sah: Right, Angela, so, from what we are voicing. It's very interesting for me, particularly in our context. So I have a few questions that have come up now. So one of the first

thing is that when we talked about that this is initiating from exhibition, and then we talked about curators being informed and about how we handled each other on this. So what happens does the curator think of an exhibition and come up with the questions themselves, if they are informed and initiated? Yes, they might think of something. But does it also mean sometimes a little proactive aspect from your side that you have a conversation with the curator and say, "Hey, you know what, by the way, this is going to be very interesting if you work out like this" and then and then it flowers into something else, because then the whole thing gets curated. Also, the science also gets curated in that process. So does that happen also do you proactively engage with them? Or it's not that they just come up to you and say, "Hey, you know what, you know."

Angela Chang: Once in a while they do. But it's usually it's kind of bolstered and encouraged on our part. We do get involved with exhibitions and loans, or even a curator's research early on, I think, and we look together. And, you know, it might be a question of like, was this always black? Is this now faded, you know, something very basic, like that, you know, it might be just examining the condition of an object, where we say, you know, this wasn't always this way, or this looks like it's changed, or there's been some kind of intervention, or this is just where, and we find that acceptable or not. So I think, you know, we're always on the lookout for it, because we're curious and excited to do new projects. But we do kind of, we do try to encourage curatorial questions, or maybe they have a question that they don't know could be investigated from our angle from the material angle. So they don't do it on their own, I don't want to give them all the credit.

Kate Smith: There's also a semi spontaneous organic quality. So for example, if something is going to be used for exhibition, it requires treatment, it needs to be cleaned or sterilized in some way. So we begin so often with the paintings and begin by, okay, we're going to be working on this picture, to make it ready. And as a part of our process, our documentation, which is we do a baseline of some technical imaging, often as we get better acquainted with the object, questions are raised in our mind, why is it look like this or whatever. So sometimes, we'll start to do a bit of a deep dive as a result of treatment, which did not initially require research or study. And then it can, something can rise to the surface, and we can inform the curator at that point, hey, we're just starting to discover something interesting. Do you want to know more? So often, it's like, we don't know until we get into something that there might be something to be interested in. And so it's a matter of keeping them apprised of what we're learning as we're learning it. And then sometimes that organically can become something more. Sometimes it's just an interesting write up for the file. But there have been multiple occasions where we end up working an X radiograph into an exhibition or something because of what we've learned, without realizing we were going to do that.

Narayan Khandekar: We, we...

Anupam Sah: Yeah, sorry, Narayan.

Narayan Khandekar: No, I was going to say we had an exhibition a few years ago called the philosophy chamber based on the first museum at Harvard. And each of the labs produced an essay for their catalog, and it came out of the work exactly like Kate described, you know, there was a bus that was being cleaned by someone in Angela's lab, and he wrote an essay about it. And you're on mute Anupam.

Anupam Sah: Could you say that again? Because I think it's very, very important for this conversation that is happening, just this little aspect of the essays, because I think some of us might have missed it, yeah.

Narayan Khandekar: Yeah, so we worked on an exhibition, which was based around the first museum at Harvard. And in preparing objects for the exhibition, we found very interesting things. So Tony Segal, in Angela's lab, found a lot out about this unusual code stone material that was used for casting a basket as well as the number of layers of paint that were on it. And that gave us an insight into the history. And it was important because this was a sculpture given to us by Benjamin Franklin, who was an important figure in American history. Kate's lab did an interesting study on a painting of one of the Hancock's and we learned a lot about the evolution of when the painting was first done, and how that was adjusted to fit in. It was a very flamboyant painting in the first place. And then it was adjusted to fit into the very sober, puritanical taste of Boston at the time. And Penley's lab did a work on a very large drawing that was in an unusual condition. And related to actually, you might need to fill me in a little bit about the Dayton rock essay, because I can't give it up in a nutshell, but.

Penley Knipe: It was a very large drawing, it was traced from the Dayton rock. And I think the essay kind of focused on how that tracing was done and materials and techniques that were used. And she worked, Andris worked closely with Georgina on that, didn't she?

Narayan Khandekar: She did. And so what we have is, the work that was done to prepare something for an exhibition proved to be interesting enough to write up into essays and include into the catalog itself.

Kate Smith: And that wasn't the original plan for the catalog. But as we emerged, we really have to get this, this is great stuff I think I had it.

Penley Knipe: It might be the first time that all three labs have contributed to an exhibition catalog. So it's pretty unusual. But another outcome can be like gallery talks, a number of us have written wall labels like a wall label here or there from a technical study. And sometimes people have written small entries in catalogs, did I already say that one catalog entries. So it can be an essay, or it can be just something like a label or a short gallery, a short catalog entry. It's all kinds of things are born from this kind of research.

Anupam Sah: I like to reiterate. Lots of things are born from this research, because I find this, it's caught my attention, because this is the time in India, if you're talking in this context, there are so many museums that are coming up. There are so many exhibitions in line, especially on

this 75 years of independence sort of festival that's being organized and there's a profusion of museums who are taking, you know, taking out exhibition and private galleries, everybody's coming out of this hiatus, so to speak from this COVID. And it's fantastic what you say, because if there are so many exhibitions happening, that means all of them have the possibility of some seeds of research, some essays, gallery talks, as you said, related to the materiality of it related to the other aspects of it, which very honestly, they're not on the radar when these things are designed. And so the onus lies on all the curators across this beautiful country, to maybe bring it into their fold to why not have a conversation about it? It may flower into something it may not, but at least begin it. And at the same time, I think if the conservation community in India, also sort of proactively starts having a conversation with all even the galleries, even if they go for a gallery opening or you know, that's too late, but maybe for the next exhibition then, I think if we could engage with everybody, I think what a flowering, yeah? And eventually what a harvest? Yeah.

Narayan Khandekar: I think that would be amazing.

Anupam Sah: That would be amazing. I think we'll launch a program on this. This is what a beautiful idea. I'll share the program with you, we'll make a proposal. I'll share it with you,

Narayan Khandekar: Please do.

Anupam Sah: Yeah, that's going to be great.

Narayan Khandekar: It's so important to I mean, what we're talking about really is what we find and what Angela said. And I wanted to thank you earlier about, you know, what, how things have changed since I've been the director of the Strauss Center is that we have put this emphasis on research. But it's one thing to do the research, it's another thing to make people aware that you're doing it. And we get the word out there. And what we've been doing is we go to conferences, and we give talks at conferences, so we reach maybe 1000 people at a time at a conference, we write essays in catalogs. And so there might be 2500 people who read by the catalog. Sometimes we are we're in the popular press, and that can reach a lot of people. The Internet, you know, the stories about the pigments have been viewed by probably 18 million people, which is an unbelievable amount if we get into something like The New Yorker that reaches 2 million people. So we have a lot of different ways of reaching audiences about the work that we do. And it's part of our thinking is how to reach those audiences. And one of the things that I had said when I became the director is that each lab must produce one publication or give a talk at a conference or have some form of like recordable outreach per year, and that was a minimum and we exceed that we do more than that all the time. So even setting what I thought was a reasonable bar proved that we can get so much out there.

Angela Chang: I think it's great to maybe it might be good to talk about I mean, we do very intentionally share our work. But what why is that important? And that can help us figure out how we do it. I feel like, you know, what we've given talks, it really does bolster and inform your research. I mean, you have other people asking you questions, or they've done

complimentary work, and they're willing to share it. So it kind of enhances the work you've already done. And then among non-specialists, it sparks their interest and their support, whether it's just from their attention, and they're sharing it if they're teachers or the members of the public. And, you know, institutionally it kind of justifies our time spent on research, I think, because it gives back to the department as well as the institution, it gives back this very, like, substantive, you know, public outreach and attention, that shows that we how we sort of stand apart and how we put our collections and our resources to work, which then kind of engages, you know, fundraising for us. And, you know, more and more sports. So it's cyclical in a couple of different ways I think. So I feel like it's helpful to think about that purpose of sharing, even before the, you know, publications and talks and gallery talks.

Anupam Sah: Yeah, please get.

Kate Smith: Well, one thing that keeps occurring to me too, is that what I love about the content that conservators produce and technical art historians produce is the humanizing factor. So that this is the fact that we focus on materials, how things are made and what they were made of, always implies a person making them, you know, it's this humanizing element. And I think that's what can be really great for audiences, maybe non-typical audiences is that this art was made by someone for us to see. And it's to be very sort of broad and philosophical about it. That's what's so beautiful. And I think it helps people connect. And so the ultimate, so what question for me in our work, is that we have a way of humanizing art and cultural heritage for everybody else.

Anupam Sah: So this approach that is there. So if you're talking about the Straus Center, is it something that sort of germinated here a little more than at other places, of course, comparisons are odious. We're not comparing anything, but how does it go generally, across the continent? Is it a conscious sort of approach, if not a strategy amongst intuition? Are people conscious of this fact that this is how we can, you know, bring the East and the West in this sense of the term together? The curatorials, the humanities and the sciences together? Is it a conscious effort? Is it something that is catching on so to speak? Or is it going to catch on?

Kat Smith: I see it as a trend? What do you think Narayan?

Narayan Khandekar: Yeah, I totally agree. It is a trend. And maybe 20 years ago, there was a big leaning, there's a pendulum that moves backwards and forwards. And 20 years ago, it was very much about theory. And the people like TJ Clark, you know, like, all theory, or, you know, the objects were almost secondary to the theory. And it's swung back now. So that people are very interested invested in understanding the material nature of art. So that's something that changes, that's a fashion but what we've been able to do is stay true to our mission, and whether so in a sense, and I think this is very true to Harvard, we're very completely unfashionable. And I think that's a good way of being you know, we've got a course that we're on and we stay with it, because we believe in it, we're not changing. And so the optics, you know, this sort of roving searchlight of fashion hits us sometimes misses us, but we're always

doing the same work. And one of the things that we do as well as work very closely with young curators and young conservators, and young scientists, and what they learn with us is something that they take with them throughout their career. So we've got people who've done great projects. Yeah, I'm just thinking, for example, in Kate's lab, we've got a young curator who's very interested in 19th century art. She worked with a conservative who came to us from Australia who's gone back to Australia. And they have brought like, great entry to the projects that they worked on. And when they leave the museum, so Ruby, who's the Australian went back to Australia where conservation science is not very strong. And she's able to see what sciences we can do at Harvard, she can then talk about it in Australia when she's gone back. And Sophie who's a curator has seen how much you know, conservation and science can bring to her understanding of the art that she's passionate about. And so in her career, she takes that forward with her, and she's able to share, and yeah, presumably she's going to have a long career. So she may end up being a museum director and...

Kate Smith: 100%.

Narayan Khandekar: And if she's a museum director, then she can support the department and the science department as part of her initiatives. So it's, you know, we're taking the long term view, and the Straus Center has had a lot of very important directors come through the department, as art historian, so people like Tom Lance, or Jim Cuno, or Glenn Lowry, or Michael Brand, you know, all these people have had close contact when they were at Harvard with the Straus Center, and then that's informed how they operate as museum directors in other institutions. So there's quite a long rambling answer, but I think it touches on what your question was.

Anupam Sah: Yes, yes, it does, it does, it does Narayan, it does. So, I mean, of course, now, as this is happening, there are also challenges that, there are certain things that that probably you face when you when you so see there are two aspects. One is the aspect about embedding research into exhibitions, that sort of that's how the conversation started, right? But other than this, embedding conservation and technical studies into exhibitions or from exhibitions, what about suo moto research that you take up? So there is research that is because of an impetus of any external event that is happening, and you would like to engage with it, right? What about things that you take up on your own as individuals? Individually, what is it that inspires you to take up something as the next? This is a very personal type of an answer you know, it is not a generalized answer, what is it that particularly drives you to pick a topic for research? Is there anything particular or?

Kate Smith: Thinking of the appear project as a good example, I mean, there's the ancient panel painting examination and research project with the Getting Started around the ancient, the Roman Egyptian funerary portraits, of which there are only about 1000, we have five of them in our collection. And there's this international group of institutions that are gathering lots of technical information into a centralized database to better study these objects about which we know very little. So it's hard to resist an opportunity to contribute to something larger.

Particularly, there's a responsibility to do so when you hold some of those objects in your collection. They're also just beautiful and captivating, so being able to spend time studying their materials and techniques is a lot of fun. But we have between myself, and then Kathy, and Georgina, in the conservation science lab, three of us have contributed a lot of our work professional time to that research over a number of years, a lot of time. It's actually also produced a special exhibition within the museum as a sort of a side effect or an end result or a culmination of that work. So part of it is just what's going on in the world, I suppose. It's because sometimes it's something like that. There's this other thing happening, and we've put our going with it.

Anupam Sah: Okay. So to put a pointed question across to you as a layperson, someone who's not into Earth conservation or into the sciences of it, and I see this happening, and I asked you, Kate, what is it that sort of made you pick up a certain research project which you have enjoyed doing? What is it that was it because it was a larger project, and you wanted to be part of it or what contributing thing, but what is it in your heart that made you let's do this, yeah?

Kate Smith: Yeah, I think if there's a question that you can answer if there's a question because you have the object and the answer lies in the object. You know, we've discovered paintings below the surface of painting, for example, and you can see a ghost of that in an X radiograph. But you want to know more you want to have a better answer for what you found. There's a sense of discovery and revelation, I suppose and the fact that the object is the only thing that can tell you that story. So you as in working with that object are the one that's going to bring any kind of illumination out, there's a sense of discovery that's really exciting and hard, really hard to resist, actually. When Narayan talks about the idea of a research project in the shaping that we're always trying to talk about project creep. I could literally spend the rest of my life going deeper and deeper and deeper and deeper into something. And so if you're not careful, and set boundaries, you could become obsessed with one painting and learn about every particle. And that's not a reasonable way to live. But that's the dark side, and the light side is that that's just fun to do fun to discover things, mysteries.

Anupam Sah: So I mean, it's open to all the panelists, some pet project of yours, or some passion project of yours. But what I'm really interested to know as a lay person completely, with no idea about this field is what is it that made you do it? So for you, from what I see what you said, it is about maybe that sense of discovery or sense of, you know, a little spark of that, like a child also inside you a bit of curiosity, not in the as a term curiosity, but you know, their sense of adventure something. Okay, so that's one of them. I mean, anybody else? If you have something in mind that made you do something, you know, from your heart? What was it?

Angela Chang: Anupam, I'll talk about the shorter sculpture a little bit, because I actually my past with it, this goes back many years, when I first encountered it in a box on the floor in a storage room. And it's such a captivating object, you know, aesthetically, and I think, just this basic questions of like, what is this? Like who made this? Where did this come from? Why is it here in a box on the floor? Why aren't we showing it? You know, these just basic questions of

curiosity. And I think over time, I learned how a lot of staff members just thought, "Oh, this is, that's my favorite object of the collection." They just seen it, and they felt a connection to it. And maybe there's some nature of this being a Buddhist object helps, I don't know. But you know, it's baby, it's very serious, what's going on, he has these eyes. And all these people who said, that's my favorite object, they knew nothing about it. They didn't know it was hallowed. They didn't know it contained all these things that it had this other, you know, 700-year history of being alive. And so I think I just always knew it. And then when it when we had a curator and an opportunity to look more into it, you know, I don't know, maybe I was passively waiting for this chance. So I was able to jump on that and make it a bigger thing. I mean, that project came from a curator having some basic questions, but it really was up to us to grow it in the way that we wanted. You know, we could have just said, "Oh, no, we don't find any evidence of that we're all set." But instead, it kind of, you know, branched off into many questions and branched off into finding a huge array of other experts with related backgrounds who could help us. So I think there's a little personal investment and passion in all of these, all these projects, because we could kind of, we could cut them off much earlier than we do. And sometimes we don't, as Kate said, it can be problematic. But you know, it also begets itself, you know, you get excited you get a little rush for little findings, or a very complimentary research partner who can drive you to understand the impact of what you can find or what you can't find.

Anupam Sah: So how important are research partners? How important are they?

Penley Knipe: I mean, they're everything right? We only bring one piece of it. So we need our conservation science colleagues or curatorial colleagues, we need other experts in the field. We spend a lot of time like trawling through the research the writing, trying to figure out like who is the specialist on you know, bookworms, or who is the specialist on a particular what ID or something we really do need are experts in related fields, it's a very important part.

Anupam Sah: So sometimes this team, the research team, grows organically, I suppose. And sometimes it is premeditated, right at the beginning. Yeah, what usually works better? Is there something I mean, you can't generalize? But I suppose what's working.

Angela Chan: I think it starts with acknowledging your limits, your own limits...

Anupam Sah: Very good.

Angela Chan: Personally and professionally...

Anupam Sah: Very nice.

Angela Chan: You can't figure out everything. And there are people who spent a lifetime studying the aspect that you're in need of. So those complementary and willing experts is a really critical part of this.

Anupam Sah: Complementary, generally willing and willing experts. Yeah, willingness, also important.

Penley Knipe: And we'll go give a talk and someone in the audience will really help us out, they'll say, "Oh, actually, I've seen that somewhere and send a source or make a connection for us, or I know, this colleague might be able to help you." So that's a huge part of like, we have these partners in the beginning and throughout, but then when you finally get to present it, you're still learning, you're still getting a lot of help and collaboration from your colleagues out there in the field.

Kate Smith: And as conservators working in with an encyclopedic collection, you know, for me, one year, I'm working on an ancient Egyptian portrait, and the next year, I'm working on an 18th century Italian painting, so I have to be ready for everything. And I can never be the expert on anything, that's not how I work anyway. So you have to find those people to do intelligent work.

Anupam Sah: A lot of people in the audience may like to ask questions also. So before we do that, what are the common sort of... See, when whenever there's a development in something, whether there's a surge forward, there is also a back porch, right? So what are the things that sort of show resistance to efforts like this? What is the pattern of things that one should be expecting when one is launching into research about something? Are there few things that are common?

Narayan Khandekar: So I'm going to just share with you an interesting observation that I had, when I was working on a study of Australian Aboriginal bark paintings. There was a generally understood fact, which turned out not to be true that there was no binding medium, that these were just pigments that were locked onto the surface of bark. And so when we set out on this project, which was, it was a big research project, people were saying, why are you wasting your time. And as it turns out, there was finding medium, and we were able to find all different kinds of things about it, it changed the entire narrative of bark painting in Australia, but what we had to do is get work against the received wisdom, that wasn't true. And so that was a really hard thing to do. You know, people will say, this is a fact, we know, this is a fact. And the thing is that science is really just a declaration of where things stand at this moment. And they change all the time. So the chemistry that I learned in college, which was a long time ago now, is not the science that's being taught to students at college right now. So, you know, we have to be prepared to keep learning and not to get fixed in our ways. And then I think that's an important thing. That's another way of saying what you just said.

Anupam Sah: All right.

Kate Smith: Not everyone is interested in materials and techniques. If you can't, that's okay, too. There are so many different ways to study cultural heritage, right? So if someone isn't interested, they're not going to, it's not going to become a conversation. And if it's not going to become a conversation, then you know what I mean, so that it's not that there's always this beautiful, collaborative spirit. And there's not sometimes that's just how it is.

Anupam Sah: And, you know, I think it's open to everybody here who is in the audience to also, you know, who listened to this conversation to chip in with their own thoughts and ideas, and this is a conversation these are really not question the answers. These are comments that members in the audience would have. So I'll just invite anyone and everyone here to, you know, just generally, if you raise your hands, it's even better if you speak your questions out. I think, you know, we're all part of one conversation. Until some hands, Selmon, will you be able to see the hands that go up? Or do you want people to type in the?

Selmon Rafey: We can do either. The attendees are allowed to raise their hands that we can call on them to speak using their microphone. We can unmute them, or they can also submit questions via the chat or the Q&A function. So if they are able to speak, they speak, if they can write in their questions, they can write it

Anupam Sah: Shibuna has one question. She says, "What are the significant limitations of art research from perhaps your experience?"

Penley Knipe: I mean, one very big limitation we haven't spoken about is time, right? We're all working very, very busy labs, with exhibition pressures and acquisition pressures and lots of meetings to go to. So I mean, I think one significant limitation that I experienced, and I assume my colleagues do is, you know, how do you carve out the time, it's not the most burning thing that's going on? In the lab every day, there's always you know, someone who needs something today. So how do you carve out the time and devote the time to something that can go to the backburner a little bit?

Anupam Sah: That's a very, very good question, Shibu.

Narayan Khandekar: And there's also funding as well, which is another limitation. Yeah, we need money to do research. And something that we do often is get funding from private organizations, institutions, and that helps us enormously so people, you know, the publications help us reach an audience who then want to support what we do. But one of the limitations that we've found is that it's very difficult to get government support for projects. So even though you know, people might think, you know, you're Harvard, you know, you get access to everything, getting support from the government has been really, really difficult. And you end up writing grant proposals, you submit them, and then you know, it's like watching a bad YouTube video, you don't get that time back. It's totally wasted, you know, two weeks is gone, and you get nothing for it. So there are limitations about who will support your work. And then how you embrace that as well, how you cultivate that, that support.

Anupam Sah: So how do I say? Yeah, please, please.

Angela Chan: I'm sorry. I think these if I just can add, these time and money constraints are real, and are making a priority of research is important. So at the same time, I think it's possible that these constraints can help your research, they can put a limit on the scope that you're going to pursue, or you can decide not to do it all together, it can help you prioritize, because

sometimes there are so many things that are attempting to do and calling for you. So it can be a good thing to help focus in some cases.

Narayan Khandekar: Yeah, I think if you impose a question at the beginning a hypothesis or a thesis at the beginning of your research, then you have to answer that at the end of it. And that creates a narrative arc that you can answer and that that provides constraints for your research, because you then are deciding whether the extra work that you're thinking about answers that one question, and that's especially important for shorter projects, you know, that you're needing that structure. So that's a self-imposed limitation, it can actually be very helpful in keeping the project on track.

Penley Knipe: And because we supervise our fellows' projects, we really have to implement that all the time. So we really have to work with them so their project stays on course, and that's something then you can transfer to your own project. You can hear yourself saying, "Huh, what is my research question? Is this careening out of control? So stay focused."

Anupam Sah: So when someone comes up in this context, if they say, you know, there is statement which is often unsaid, but it is implied is that what's the point of doing all this research? I mean, what's the point? I mean, why? Are you able to quantify your work in some way monetarily or something to justify, do we ever do that? Or do we always do it in terms of the intangibles and the value and the significance?

Narayan Khandekar: So I think, you know, we can quantify it in the number of publications that we produce or the number of lectures we give. But we also, because it's in the mission of the museum research is considered to be something that it's the museum business, you know, like making money is the business of a bank. And doing research in a University Art Museum is the business of what a university does. And so I think that's, you know, we don't have to address that in a way. But it, we can also look at it as providing enhanced value for the work of art, the more you understand a work of art, the more valuable it becomes. And so what we're doing is enhancing our understanding of a work of art. And then, by doing so we make it more valuable. We understand more about the whatever culture it is that made it the artists that made it, you know, we're learning more and more about it and enhancing its value that way.

Angela Chang: I'll say that, just to bring back what Kate was mentioning before about how, looking at art from the material side, can engage audiences, because we think about the people and we've all made things and we can engage with our artwork and our culture in that way. We're all working with art that will have a longer life than all of us. So we're just kind of putting into the pot, a little bit more information, a few more questions and a way that our audiences and students can look and ask their own questions about our works of art. So it adds a kind of immeasurable value, I think, and justification to why we are protecting and holding these objects in our collections for our lifetimes and for their lifetimes.

Kate Smith: That's good questions in the chat. I'm reading them.

Anupam Sah: Oh, this, would you like to ask this question, Sanjay? I'll read out the question. If Sanjay... Okay, so let's go to Sanjay's question here. So Sanjay Thar is also I mean, all of you probably know Sanjay Thar. He's one of the pioneer figures for art conservation here, across India and a fantastic colleague and a very, very fine person, golden Heart. He says, "As conservators and conservation scientists, how can we initiate questions for curatorial research, much in the same way as curators do? Or is their supportive role too well defined?" So here, we have assumption that the curators initiate questions. So you think that as conservators also, how do we do that? Or is there a supportive role, too much define?

Kate Smith: To me the different institutions have different to personalities, this kind of divide, and I think, the Harvard Art Museums, were really able to, I mean, more and more, I feel like we're able, we're really at the table and being part of the conversations around what we want to think about our study. We're not, you know, I think it's happening more and more. I don't think that's true everywhere. But I think it's also true, another instinct kind of depends on where you are and what the culture is. And maybe we can start talking.

Anupam Sah: So sorry to interrupt, but let's put it across this way the question that, let's say from the example of the Straus Center, what are some questions that Straus Center initiated for the Harvard Art Museum?

Narayan Khandekar: So I can answer a couple of those right off the bat. The first is about plastics that are in the collection. And that is a question that was pressing. It's about the care of the collection. And to look after the plastic material in the collection, you need to understand what it is. So we said, this is not properly catalog. This is not properly documented, we need to understand it otherwise, we're putting our collections at risk. And we've been doing a multi-year. It's a long term project. And you heard last year or maybe earlier this year from Georgina Raina and Susan Costello, about the work they've been doing. And that was an initiation from our department and we really push that forward. That was very important. And another project that we put forward was the work on the Rothko murals. And you heard me talk about. So we had a what was perceived to be an unsolvable problem. And we said about how do we address this, this issue, which we don't know how to solve it, but we're going to do what we can. And it came from the Conservation Department first. And then we brought on board curators once we knew that we had a solution to the problem. And so there is room for that. And we can bring forward ideas and talk to them. And part of that is that I report directly to the director of the museum. And so if we have things that we think are important, we can talk directly to Anita. And so you know, these are things that I think, you know, need to be addressed in the care of the collection.

Anupam Sah: I see. So as conservators, you take the initiative of going to the head of the institution and saying this is a real thing, and this needs to be addressed. And then, you know, it's also important then how to articulate it and how to communicate it.

Narayan Khandekar: Absolutely.

Anupam Sah: And I suppose intrinsically, human beings are reasonable. So if there is a line of logic and mutual...

Narayan Khandekar: Yeah, you're very optimistic, Anupam.

Angela Chan: I think we can initiate more easily questions of preservation. So it's something that no one else would see, like this question about plastics, that there's a need to identify this specific plastic types in order to preserve them the best give them the best conditions to stay alive. In other cases, I think the questions that when we're looking at objects, looking at the condition, looking at how something is made those basic questions can spark research as well. I'm thinking of Sue Costello's research on June where, which is Imperial Ceramics made in China. I believe she presented on this, did she? I don't remember. But you know, these are these highly valued objects for which we have many in our collection. They're really beautiful. And I think their value kind of art historically speaking, has overshadowed how this question about how they're made. And I think her investigation along with our conservation science colleagues of like, how do you even get a blaze to look like this, grew into a collaboration with our ceramics studio ceramics program here at Harvard. So we engage potters in this and how they made things, how they glaze things, and we realized that through this basic question, why is it so beautiful? How is this made, you know, that it was not understood, it was not previously really published and thoroughly investigated about how these places were made, that there are these optical effects that we have access to instrumentation that's, you know, state of the art, that is sort of the only way you can investigate some of these different oxidation states specifically for these glazes? So, you know, this is an example of an initiated research topic from conservators and conservation scientists that really, you know, did add to the value to how we regard these already very special ceramics as something else.

Anupam Sah: So taking from what you said and to pick up that little bit in Sanjay's question also, there's one part of his question, which said, or are our roles too well defined? So I don't know, do you generally feel having worked in the profession for so long that conservators need to redefine the thing a little bit? Because so this thing about our perception that our role is only to do this or this or this. You think this is something worth thinking about in the months to come about redefining the roles of conservators so they can consciously feel they should get into this aspect also just...?

Narayan Khandekar: Absolutely, I mean, that's, that's a fundamental part of any institutional program is understanding the roles and responsibilities of each person and how they contribute to the running of the institution. And so those periodically have to be redefined. And so I think that's a really important part being able to expand the work that you do, because otherwise you're sneaking it in or doing it after hours, or you're trying to do something extra, without affecting your job. So you do need to define research as part of your job. That's an important aspect in carrying out research.

Angela Chang: It does start with that question, though, which I think is such a good one, you know, what is my role? Has my role changed? Can it change? Do I have other capabilities? Can that can serve my job and my institution as well? I think it has to be done carefully, though, if you're going to expand and grow, because as Kate was referring to, you know, your cultural kind of the personality and the history of your institution, some places might ask you to stay in your lane more strictly than others. But I think it can be done respectfully, you know, it can be, there are overlapping areas in our institutions that we don't always acknowledge, can be very rich.

Anupam Sah: Fantastic, brilliant.

Narayan Khandekar: Yeah, you can find collaborators in other museums and say, you know, if your museum doesn't want you to do research, but you find collaborators in another museum who were doing that kind of work, maybe you can convince your museum to participate in a project that they're part of, you know, there are ways around it. It's not, a linear process. And, you know, things evolve. And I'm just thinking of Penley's project with the Indian and Islamic pigments that started off as exhibition, but it's been going for almost 10 years now, turned into an amazing project, looking at pigments across time in geography and its developed initiatives with Gina Kim, in the history of art and architecture. It's the, you know, you're part of this bigger project, Anupam. You know, it's a project that started off as one thing and it evolved into something else. And if a project can do that, then I think the job of the conservator can also do that as well.

Anupam Sah: Very good. That was a beautiful question. And that second line was also important. Thank you very much. I think this has flagged a very, very important point, I feel. I feel it has. And there are some questions that I've been talking about, we have touched upon it to some extent, but there is this thing that what are the given the differences in training of conservators, scientists and art historians, what are the other attitudes necessary for a fruitful collaboration? Is there anything that we feel there should be some commonality or something that we should? When speaking to experts outside your field, when speaking to experts, what are the other attitudes you feel that are necessary for fruitful collaboration?

Kate Smith: Listening, I mean, because the training is so different, that our brain structures are different, and our ways of approaching. So I feel like a conservator's role often because this is my, but because we tend to be our work is naturally somewhat collaborative, internally without you know, even you know, when I work on a painting on paper, I'm always having to talk to Penley about, so we're always collaborating anyway, I feel like we end up being a fulcrum of communication to some degree. So there's this sort of empathy that you need and listening because we're used to not knowing everything, because we can't, you know, and so when dealing with someone who's an absolute specialist, who's used to knowing the answers, it's very uncomfortable often, for people with that type of training to come into an arena where they may not know what you're talking about. And so is it, you know, it's about inviting people into that way of thinking.

Anupam Sah: So going further from your question, and then picking up Ninah's comment that says, piggybacking on Sanjay's question, "Has Straus collaborated with conservators outside Harvard Art Museums? And what do they find useful?"

Penley Knipe: I mean, for the Shotoku paper, because I'm not an expert in Asian paper, I definitely collaborated with my colleagues at the Museum of Fine Arts Boston. So that's just a very simple, straightforward example. But I think all of us collaborate all the time with our colleagues in other institutions or private, that have expertise that we don't, but they are conservators or conservation scientists. We're very much in touch with the Museum of Fine Arts in general, always back and forth.

Anupam Sah: And are there any consortiums for art research? There's a question from participants.

Narayan Khandekar: I think we have regular professional meetings, the American Institute of Conservation has an annual meeting and 1000 conservators, 1200 conservators get together in one place at one time. And that's a great way to meet and talk about people find out what's going on. And you can sometimes find collaborators that way, you know, if you find that there are people doing the same kind of work, it's a really good opportunity. But I wanted to just touch on something else, too, that you mentioned, which is near when we're approaching collaborators, one of the things that I'm always thinking about is, what is it that they need from this project, like I know what I need, but we need to also think what the collaborator needs as well. And it's an important part of a negotiation to think about how we can both work together, but then come away from this project, and both have got what we want, which is often quite different things.

Anupam Sah: Sure and so relevant. So I suppose research has gone into... Dhruv... Dhruv was here. Dhruv, actually research has been in various aspects, from paintings to archives to collection housekeeping, there's a whole slew of subjects that have been touched upon. There's one from Bhaskar. We have ladies and gentlemen, we have about six, seven minutes for the closure of this session. So I'll take a few questions, just one or two. One of them is Bhaskar asks, relating to the philosophy of conservation, he says how can research and outreach, both research and outreach, how can these ensure that the communication is immune to claiming a selective past? Something that modern nation states...? I can't read the whole thing. Let me try to bring it to you. Wow, it's taking me time to understand the question. Where are we? Here we are. Okay. How can research and outreach ensure that the communication is immune to claiming a selective past? Something that modern nation states are eager to do? Let me see the second one. How is information conserved alongside the object? This is largely seen as technology. But it is a matter of time that it becomes the standard practice in conservation. How long might this take to become a standard formal practice? Let's take the second question first. How is information conserved alongside the object?

Kate Smith: So important?

Anupam Sah: And when it became standard practice? So just put it simply, how is information conserved alongside the object? And would it become a standard formal practice?

Kate Smith: If I understand it's about the documentation and rationale of the work, and I think the American Institute of Conservation and our Code of Ethics documentation is part of the ethical requirement of our work in terms of it's as almost as important as a treatment is how we record what happened and why written in photographically and that that material is maintained in archivally sound way, whether it's on paper or digitally, so that is, that meta textual piece is so, so important, so that the people coming after us will know what we did and why

Anupam Sah: But do you see really this happening? Or is it people are getting bored of putting all this documentation together all the time and just finishing all the work?

Kate Smith: No.

Anupam Sah: No?

Kate Smith: It's because right there's a component but no, it's so hard wired. From our very beginning of our training. There's just no, I mean, if it's not done is really considered to be a slip a professional slip. It's because there was a time not that long, how many decades back where documentation was not taken as seriously as it is now. And you lose so much. I mean, in our institution, we literally see it as important as the work itself. It's absolutely without question, we have to do it.

Anupam Sah: It's interesting because...

Narayan Khandekar: We pull out records from you know, the 1920s 1930s all the time.

Kate Smith: All the time, all the time.

Anupam Sah: I find it a challenge in getting people to create things together in writing. Because somehow there is a perception, not just here, but in many colleagues around the world that I've seen, as they say that, you know, we work so much. And now to put it all together, like that's, you know, another, and it's more boring than actual work, because work is fun. And then after the end of the day, now you say, so the choice is either to finish the work, or... the documentation, because when she do documentation, it's got to be absolutely thought on because it's forever. So you can't be casual about the documentation, you know, it takes up a lot of energy takes a lot of commitment. And but that's interesting what you say, it would be a professional slip, right?

Penley Knipe: [crosstalk] out of ethics.

Kate Smith: We've all encountered treatments from the past that were not properly documented, and are so frustrating. And we then have to go and spend a lot of time redoing, reanalysis or testing or being in a mystery world of having to figure out what happened because

someone didn't write it down. So experiencing that also motivates us to not want to be not want to do that to the next person, you know. And it's just the right thing to do, I guess you have to think of it that way, right? Because it doesn't...

Angela Chan: I agree with you, Anupam, that it is difficult to do.

Kate Smith: Yeah.

Angela Chan: And it could often be done better, even by all of us who are saying it's how important it is.

Kate Smith: A body camera [indiscernible] this idea.

Angela Chan: I'll say that publications are another way to preserve this information. And it's a way that helps us to kind of button things up and summarize our work and distill the most important parts and then put it out there in a way that's available to other people.

Narayan Khandekar: The other thing that we are also very conscious of is the format in which we save the documentation. And quite old fashioned. I think that digital documentation is very important. But I also think keeping some record on paper is also important. You know, paper has lasted a long time.

Anupam Sah: Yeah. Yeah.

Narayan Khandekar: I think there's a you know, some combination of the two is important.

Anupam Sah: Yeah.

Penley Knipe: That's our practice here.

Anupam Sah: Well, ladies and gentlemen, it's going to be 2100 hours here in India, and we've done beautifully with time, with the auspicious beginning by Selmon Rafey, thank you, Selmon, and it's 2100 the clock has just struck. And there are a few questions here. But the questions here, ladies and gentlemen, are related to where can I study conservation? What are the career aspects? And we will be able to answer that I can just write an email address here for you. It's called what is the email address, Namita?

Namita: [crosstalk]

Anupam Sah: Yeah, just put it on the chat. So that please write to us and we'll answer those questions related to, you know, how can analysis of surface pigments help and things like that? There are answers to all of them. And in fact, this Module two is going to address painted surfaces and things like that. So I think I will. This has been a fantastic session, to say the very least and I have come out so much richer from this. You know, we talked about how projects are generated. And we started about we began from the beautiful thought about the exhibition ideas about materiality becoming a priority in our curatorial endeavors. It's about the relationships that develop with different people. The questions that the curators have the

questions that the audiences or the end users might have, and the questions that the conservators might have. We talked about different disciplines and how things have to be cultivated. There has to be understanding and how things have changed from the past decades to the present. And we are also aware that everyone is not cut out for research, but there are there are periods and plazas where we can meet together and have a little conversations and what is it that motivates some individual things that inspire us could be passion projects could be something spiritual. And then we talked about how to use this, how to disseminate it, we talked about, you know, how we write essays about it and things but we also talked about the limitations and how very nicely said Angela that sometimes you know, these limitations about they also help us to prioritize our work You know, so these are all very, very and the fact is all of you were speaking from your firsthand experiences and this. So this was so, so beautiful. And then we went about the dissemination of art, whether and you know, that very nice thing that Narayan talked about how it sort of went on from whether you know, how many do you reach through a newspaper, how many you reach through online versions of things, and how much to publication, because these are all real, real aspects of the dissemination of the work that we have done. And we touching about the humanizing elements in these things. And the fact that all this research and bringing these arts and the humanities together is the Straus Center team feels it is a trend, it is a trend, and real trend, and it's trending, so to speak. So that's very positive, that's extremely, extremely positive. And, wow, there's so much stuff here. And then we talked about the various challenges acknowledging our limits, we talked about some practical aspects, I should put all these things down, you know, and beautiful terms, like, you know, sciences declaration of things, and, you know, and sometimes so many ways to address and study cultural heritage, our limitations, whether it's time or funding and the people that we engage with, and who will support us for our work. And, you know, that wonderful little phrase you made about that arc from a hypothesis to this? And, you know, sometimes you have to work within that limitation of that arc. And how do we communicate it to others, whether it's through personal interactions, or it is through conveying an enhanced value of something and our mandates as institutions, as museums, as cultural institutions, and that very important fact about our roles and how it is important for us to acknowledge that we may have to redefine our own roles to make for a larger purpose, you know, out of a sense of purpose, not as out of arrogance about you know, what we're going to do. And then we closed with things like you know, the rationale of doing this work, the importance of documentation of this work, and how we need to address it a little more seriously. And all these, you know, in Shakespeare, there was something and it was, well, that was something else actually. The fact is that paper is, there were so many questions about paper from people who were in archives, asking whether, you know, analysis would help in archives also. As you can see that even this discussion today, going on to contemporary technical analysis, the closing lines were about the importance of that fantastic support, which is paper, which has stood the test of time, and to put everything there in writing. And it really exemplifies that things which are good and sound and sincere, I would say, like paper, people come back to it time and time again, and they will continue doing so. And I will pin all these thoughts on paper too. Thank you, Narayan. Thank you Penley, Angela,

the lovely, lovely audience and all the lovely organizers of this course, I can't thank you enough. This has been such a beautiful and rocking launch of this program. Fantastic.

Angela Chan: Thank you Anupam.

Narayan Khandekar: Thank you, Anupam.

Penley Knipe: Thank you.

Narayan Khandekar: Anupam, thank you for being such a wonderful kind and generous host for the...

Anupam Sah: No, no, this was really, I really enjoyed this. Thank you so much.

Penley Knipe: Thank you.

Anupam Sah: Bye, everybody. Look forward.

Angela Chan: Pleasure. Take care.

Anupam Sah: Pleasure meeting all of you. And ladies and gentlemen, some of you who are interested in the module too, I see some, quite a number of people who applied for the conservation research program. So if there's anybody else who's interested, please write to us. And we kept the date till the 21st of November, in case somebody is interested in participating in the training program. Thank you very much once again.