

Returned to Former Splendour: Paintings, Conservation, and Dyes

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[Animated Logo with sound sting]

[View of Heidi Sobol standing at a table case in the exhibition Return to Former Splendour in the Sigmund Samuel Gallery of Canada] Heidi Sobol: In this show, we have what we call: *Return to Former Splendour* *[cut to panning shot of the introductory text panel of the exhibition]* in the Sigmund Samuel Gallery of Canada, in the temporary exhibition space and it's a focus on conservation that we do here at the ROM, *[cut to view of Heidi standing a table case in the exhibition]* specifically paintings conservation. And in our table cases *[cut to close up of graphic panel showing various tools and materials used by conservators]* we have some really neat tools and materials and methods that we use in the conservation department. *[Cut to view of Heidi standing a table case in the exhibition]* Of interest is one of our numerous Kreighoff's, *[cut to panning shot of contents of table case, zooming in on a small oil painting in a gold frame]* one of the smaller ones, that we have done some micro sampling done on it to help us understand the composition of what makes up the painting.

[Cut to view of Heidi standing a table case in the exhibition] In the case of the painting we have on display, we took the micro sample, *[pan down to zoom in on table case; cut to close-up of micro sample encased in resin within the case]* which is no bigger than the end of a period at the end of a sentence and I have the sample encased in resin here. *[Cut to view of Heidi standing a table case in the exhibition]* We sent the sample off to CCI, the Canadian Conservation Institute, for analysis. They do a variety of microanalytical things, like Fourier transform infrared spectroscopy and...and a variety of x-ray microanalysis as well. This is incredibly useful to help authenticate the work and actually place the work in the whole artist's oeuvre. And when we have a number of these microanalytical techniques compiled on one artist, *[cut to panning overview of the exhibition, showing wall-mounted text panels and imagery and two table cases in the centre of the space]* we can actually create a compendium of all their materials, techniques, as well as their...the paints that they used, their palettes and we can place it exactly, in a specific timeframe.

[Cut to view of Heidi standing a table case in the exhibition] In the case of this Kreighoff, we knew it was a Kreighoff, but we want to help with the research and

add to um...the study of this artist. We were able to determine that the red that he used was *[cut to panning close-up of red pigment in a glass dish within the table case]* dry-processed um...cinnabar, also known as vermillion, and that was wonderful news—we knew that it wasn't a cadmium red, *[cut to view of Heidi standing a table case in the exhibition]* because if it was a cadmium red, we'd be in trouble with our attribution because cadmium red wasn't invented until 21 years after Kreighoff died.

[Cut to close-up of a life-size image of the oil painting, Dr. Oronhyatekha, from 1896, 1897] In the whole concept of figuring out about pigments, we do a lot of work with pigments themselves. *[Camera zooms out and pans to reveal the entire wall]* We like to research, not only historical pigments, but also *[cut to view of Heidi standing a table case in the exhibition]* contemporary ones that tend to be more stable, lightfast, um...work better in solution when we're doing any type of in-painting, and we've highlighted three historical pigments here in this case. *[Cut to close-up of the contents of the table case, including red, yellow and blue pigments, text panels and an Islamic miniature painting]* We have ultramarine, carmine and Indian yellow.

Now the Indian yellow we have is actually synthetic *[camera pans up to show Heidi standing at the table case]* Indian yellow because authentic Indian yellow is no longer around. We do have it on display in a...as it's used as a watercolour medium in the ah... *[Cut to close-up of Islamic miniature painting of a man in yellow robes and a woman in a red sari]* Islamic miniatures in the 17th century. The one that's made today *[cut to zooming close-up of a pile of yellow pigment in a glass dish on a white background]* is very similar in tone, in chroma, but much more stable than the original Indian yellow, and it's called nickel azo yellow. *[Cut to view of Heidi standing at the table case]* However, real Indian yellow was perhaps one of the most controversial and mythical pigments. Originating out of the 15th century in India, it was found to be created by feeding cows exclusively mango leaves with just a little bit of water. This would mean they would only live about two years and those two years would not be a good time—it would be a very excruciatingly painful and they'd subsequently die. Their urine, which was bright, bright yellow, would be collected, precipitated *[cut to panning close-up of balls of yellow pigment arranged in a shallow stemmed glass]* and formed into balls, pigment balls, to be traded west, towards to Europe, *[cut to view of Heidi at the table case]* to be used not only as a glazing medium in oil colour, but also primarily, as a watercolour pigment. *[Camera pans down to show pigments arranged in the table case]* So in 1908 in perhaps, one of the first international animal rights cases, this process of making this pigment was found to be exceptionally cruel and it was outlawed internationally *[camera pans up to show*

Heidi standing at the table case]. You cannot purchase authentic Indian yellow. Perhaps a few older pigment merchants might be able to sell you the original ones, but it would be highly suspect...and you'd have to wonder where it actually came from...

[Podcast ends with animated ROM logo and soundsting]