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Taliesin Workshop on Historic Finishes

APT and Taliesin Preservation, Inc., hosted a workshop on historic finishes on the grounds of Taliesin on June 13-15. The workshop was further supported by the NCPTT and the Frank Lloyd Wright Conservancy. The workshop started off Thursday evening with a private tour of the house led by site architectural historian Sidney Robinson. The following morning the group gathered at the Visitor Center Conference Room. Brian Powell began the session with a lively discussion on historic paints, advances in paint analysis, and examples of how historic paint analysis can change the direction of a restoration. Next came John Canning, who expounded upon the benefits of continued use of traditional paint materials and provided outstanding examples of his team's craftsmanship using beer as a binder. David Riccio walked the group through an explanation of plaster reattachments, again using traditional and in-kind materials. Discussions on technique and philosophy continued through lunch.





After lunch Powell showed the group how to collect and mount samples and how to identify paint layers and construction anomalies in situ using Frank Lloyd Wright's uncle's farmhouse as a classroom. At Tan-y-deri, the home Wright built for his sister, Canning opened a can of local beer and demonstrated wood-graining techniques with traditional materials. Riccio then created a mixture of plaster of paris and hemp to demonstrate reattachment methods.

On Saturday morning Kyle Normandin led the team through a presentation on wood types, treatments and finishes, and deterioration mechanisms. He followed up with the cultural-resource management plan and the decision-making process for wood-finish restoration in the midcentury Modern Eames House that was carried out by the Getty Conservation Institute and the Getty Museum.

Rosa Lowinger then taught the group about architectural metals most likely to be encountered in midcentury and late-twentieth-century Modern structures and sculpture. She discussed mostly cupreous and ferric alloys, finishes one would expect to encounter, deterioration mechanisms, and modern-day treatments.



The group then met for an in-depth walk-through at Taliesin, where conservation approach, material types, and finishes and treatments were discussed. Normandin led an overall discussion on site management, while Lowinger gave details on how she would conserve the collections, metal hardware, and garden statuary. Lowinger wrapped up the workshop at the farmhouse with a demonstration on metal treatments using objects from Taliesin's collection.

As a special treat, Dan Vernon, the estate manager, took the group into the depths of the house to see the stabilization efforts and the current restoration work and to the nearby Unity Chapel, the Lloyd-Jones family chapel designed by Chicago architect Joseph Silsbee and Frank Lloyd Wright.

--Gina Crevello, Training and Education Committee Co-Chair and Workshop Moderator