



THE UNIVERSITY OF
MELBOURNE

Loong 龍 Conservation Project

Update Number 5 | 20 May 2022

In this update

Pearl and Flame regalia

Rehousing Loong's 龍 skirt and remnants

Schools visit

Removing unsuitable materials

Student conservators at work

Repairing scales with Funori and Japanese Tissue Paper

Pearl and Flame regalia



Image: Objects Conservator Ellie Bernard re-adhering silk on the flame regalia alongside an 1901 image of Loong 龍 and his pearl and flame regalia from the State Library of Victoria.

The Pearl and Flame regalia that supported Loong 龍 during his parade life was transported to the Grimwade labs in North Melbourne in late 2021 for assessment and treatment. The fragile regalia are an important part of the Bendigo Easter Parade and act as 'teasers' during the procession.

The teasers were used in the parade to lead Loong 龍 through the streets of Bendigo. The ball-like 'pearl' consists of several round bamboo hoops covered in paper and held together by string and wire to create a cage inside which a ball rotates. The 'flame' is made of painted silk, bamboo, wire and paper.

The conservation treatment for the regalia involved cleaning, repairs and replacement of paper loss, and re-adhering decals and loose silk.



The Loong 龍, Chinese Dragon Conservation project is supported by the Victorian Government through the Living Heritage Grants Program.



Image: Before and after image of the base of the 'flame' regalia.

Rehousing Loong's 龍 skirt and remnants

Throughout Loong's 龍 long life members of the Bendigo community have cared for him by repairing damage, replacing loss and preparing him for the annual Easter Parade. The Bendigo Golden Dragon Museum has retained in storage a number of remnants which have been removed from Loong 龍 over time, including scales and original fabric pieces from his skirt and damaged neck. In early 2022 conservators and students from the University of Melbourne's Grimwade team flattened, rolled and rehoused these remnants in archival boxes to extend their life.



Images: Bendigo community members preparing Loong 龍 for the Easter Parade c1930.



Image: Objects Conservator Ellie Bernard rolling and wrapping remnants of Loong's 龍 skirt for storage

Schools visit

During treatment work at the Museum in early May, the team shared information about the Loong 龍 Conservation Project and the role of conservators with visiting school groups. Students listened intently and asked questions about the training required to become a conservator. One student even declaring their interest in becoming a future conservator!

Image: Conservator Dr Holly Jones-Amin speaks to a group of primary school children about the Loong 龍 conservation project.



Removing unsuitable elements

Underneath and inside Loong 龍 there have been a number of elements added which have assisted his carriers to hold him steady during the annual Easter parade. Masking tape and rubber wrapped around his bamboo poles has aided hand grip, and foam pieces have provided shoulder comfort for those carrying his weight. As Loong 龍 is no longer required for parade and retaining the material could in time damage the original surface, these additional elements have been removed.



Images: Masking tape and residue glue has been carefully removed from the bamboo support poles.



Images: Dr Holly Jones-Amin carefully inspecting and removing perishable foam from underneath Loong 龍.

Student conservators at work

Images of the University of Melbourne's Masters of Cultural Materials Conservation students working in May 2022.



Repairing scales with Funori and Japanese Tissue Paper

A significant area of concern throughout the project has been the deterioration of Loong's 龍 scales. Beautifully handcrafted with silk, cotton, paper, metal and mirrors, the 1000+ scales which adorn Loong 龍 required urgent works to clean and stabilise deterioration. Of particular concern was the visible and extensive damage to the silk which has resulted in exposed cotton fibres protruding from underneath. To repair and stabilise this the Grimwade conservation team applied funori, a water soluble adhesive made from seaweed, and hand coloured Japanese tissue paper to the area of loss to reposition the cotton fibre and seal the surface. Funori is a traditional Japanese adhesive primarily used in painting and textile conservation as a weak but stable adhesive. Strong adhesives when applied to fragile material like silk can easily create stress and damage to fibres adjacent to the repair area. Funori and wheat starch paste are ideal adhesive materials to use on Loong 龍, with funori being preferred as a more sustainable product.



Images: Before conservation treatment. A large number of Loong's 龍 scales have silk which has split and cotton fibre protruding. The conservation treatment has sort to stabilise this through the use of funori and hand coloured Japanese tissue paper.

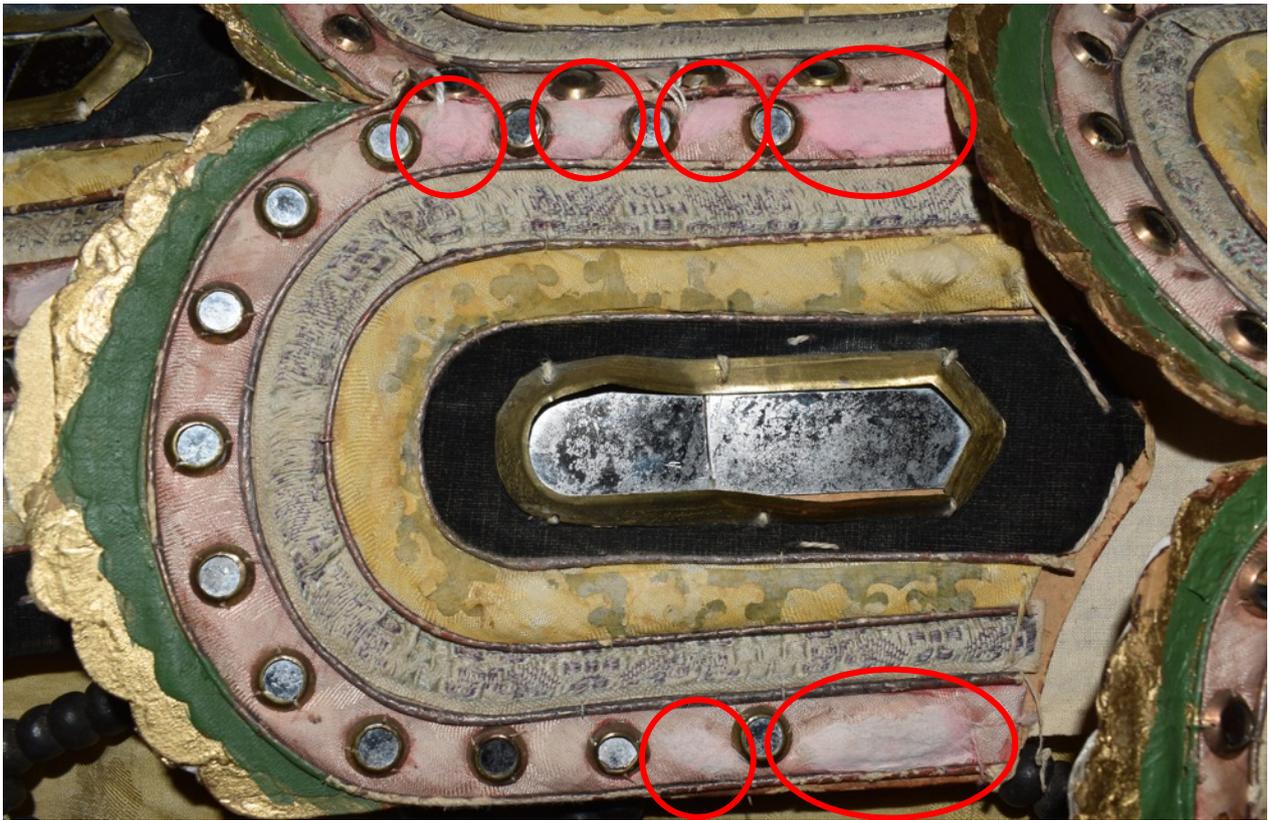


Image: After conservation treatment. Areas repaired with funori and Japanese tissue paper are circled.



Image: During conservation treatment. Conservator Dr Reyhane Mirabootalebi demonstrates the process of stabilising the silk fabric on Loong's 龍 scales to Masters student Gemma Ghourkassian.

Get in touch

Project leads

Hugo Leschen – CEO Golden Dragon Museum

Penny Tripp – General Manager, Grimwade Conservation Services, The University of Melbourne



ceo@goldendragonmuseum.org