

## CASE STUDY

# DESIGNING A CONSERVATION LAB: CULTURE PERTH & KINROSS

This project focused on the creation of a suitable conservation environment inside Perth Museum & Art Gallery's stores. The lab was designed to enable the Conservation Officer to progress work on preparing collections for a major new cultural attraction in Scotland.

### ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

#### PROJECT FUNDING:

- This project cost £5,038.
- It was funded by Culture Perth & Kinross internal budget and Museums Galleries Scotland Small Project Fund.

#### PROJECT DELIVERY:

- Duration of project: 5 months

#### AWARDS:

- The 'Conservation in Action' exhibition was shortlisted for the International Institute of Conservation's 'Keck Award'.

### THE PROJECT:

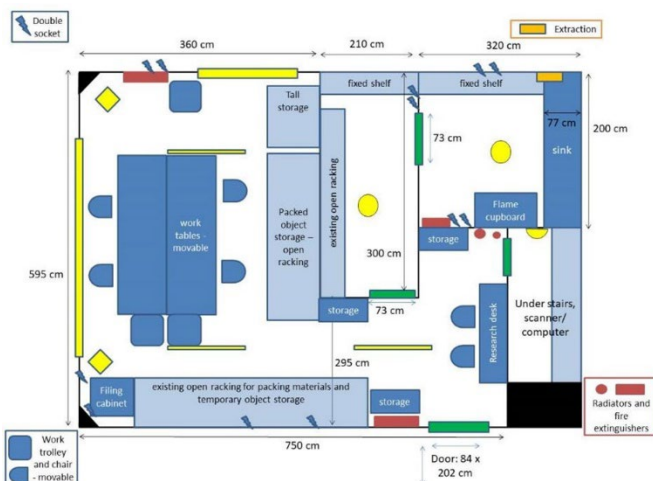
This project marked an essential and exciting stage in Culture Perth & Kinross' (CPK) work to create, in partnership with the Council (PKC), a new museum in Perth city centre. The collections chosen for display in City Hall (a former civic venue), all needed to be assessed, cleaned, conserved and packed, but there was no designated space to do so.

An overflow costume store was therefore transformed into a dedicated conservation lab. The new lab is ideally situated adjacent to the collection stores, and near the main collections office where curatorial and exhibition colleagues supporting the new museum project are based.

The room's layout was designed to be flexible and can be used by several people at once. In-house staff, volunteers and interns have been or will be trained and supervised to carry out general object cleaning, preparation, collections inventory marking, weighing, and packing tasks. External specialist conservators have used the room for collections assessment and treatment where objects are too fragile to move off site.

**“This project would not have been possible without the generous grant received from Museums Galleries Scotland.”**

Rhona Corbett, CPK's Head of Heritage and Culture



## CHALLENGES AND SUCCESSES:

- This project has transformed Culture Perth & Kinross' in-house conservation capacity and has been fundamental in facilitating delivery of the Conservation Programme attached to the Perth City hall project; the £24 million development of a new museum in the centre of Perth.
- It has ensured that most of the conservation work on the collections can be undertaken in-house throughout the new museum project, avoiding high fees for external contractors to carry out collections care activities and remedial treatments, potential studio rental fees and art handling costs. The Conservation Officer is now able to work safely, systematically, and effectively on Perth's Recognised Collections of National Significance.
- The expansion of in-house conservation capacity and infrastructure led to the Conservation in Action exhibition at Perth Museum & Art Gallery which ran from 14th January to December 2020. The exhibition allowed a chance to promote public understanding of conservation. At the heart of the exhibition space was an enclosed Conservation Studio where visitors could watch the live conservation of TA-KR-HB, Perth Museum & Art Gallery's Egyptian mummy, as she was treated by CPK's in-house conservator, Anna Zwagerman, Egyptology conservators, Richard and Helena Jaeschke, and Will Murray from the Scottish Conservation Studio.
- Several remedial conservation projects are now underway, including the conservation of osteology, partially funded by MGS. Throughout August and September, four conservation master students joined us from Glasgow and Cardiff University to work in the lab, assisting with MGS funded archaeology and objects conservation projects.

## THE IMPACT IT HAS MADE:

There have already been opportunities for volunteers, interns, and CPK staff to develop collections care and conservation skills:

- Training session to introduce conservation materials and techniques, and packing methods, to ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) students from a diverse range of backgrounds.
- Multiple sessions to introduce conservation materials and techniques, and the City Hall project, to front of house staff.
- Space for specialists and researchers to properly view and treat collections.
- Working with City Hall Champions (a group of volunteers promoting the new museum) to clean and re-pack prehistoric archaeological collections such as lithics and stone axes.

## GUIDANCE:

- Visitor feedback from the 'Conservation in Action' exhibition overwhelmingly stressed the excitement at seeing work in public which is so often undertaken out of sight; this sentiment was perhaps amplified by spot-lighting the conservation of human remains which served to foreground how decisions about treatment are reached, particularly with regard to sensitive material.
- Encouraging a dialogue with visitors was the principle aim of the exhibition and in addition to in-person interaction, the gallery studio included feedback points, comments sheets and an 'Ask the Conservator' blackboard to encourage dialogue and engagement.

## USEFUL RESOURCES:

If you would like more information about this project please contact Anna Zwagerman, CPK Conservation Officer email: [azwagerman@culturepk.org.uk](mailto:azwagerman@culturepk.org.uk)

More information about the City Hall project can be found at: [www.culturepk.org.uk/museums-and-galleries/city-hall-project/](http://www.culturepk.org.uk/museums-and-galleries/city-hall-project/)

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