

Three C's:

Contemporary Conservation with Carbohydrates

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Painting Conservation Fellow

Four Morris Louis paintings from the Harvard Art Museums' Collection were treated in the fall of 2011 and spring of 2012 thanks to funding from the Morris Louis Conservation Fund, Inc. The project involved surface cleaning the raw, unprimed canvas with hand-made bread and masking subtle stains in the canvas with toasted cellulose fibers.

Moving bread across surface of raw, unprimed canvas



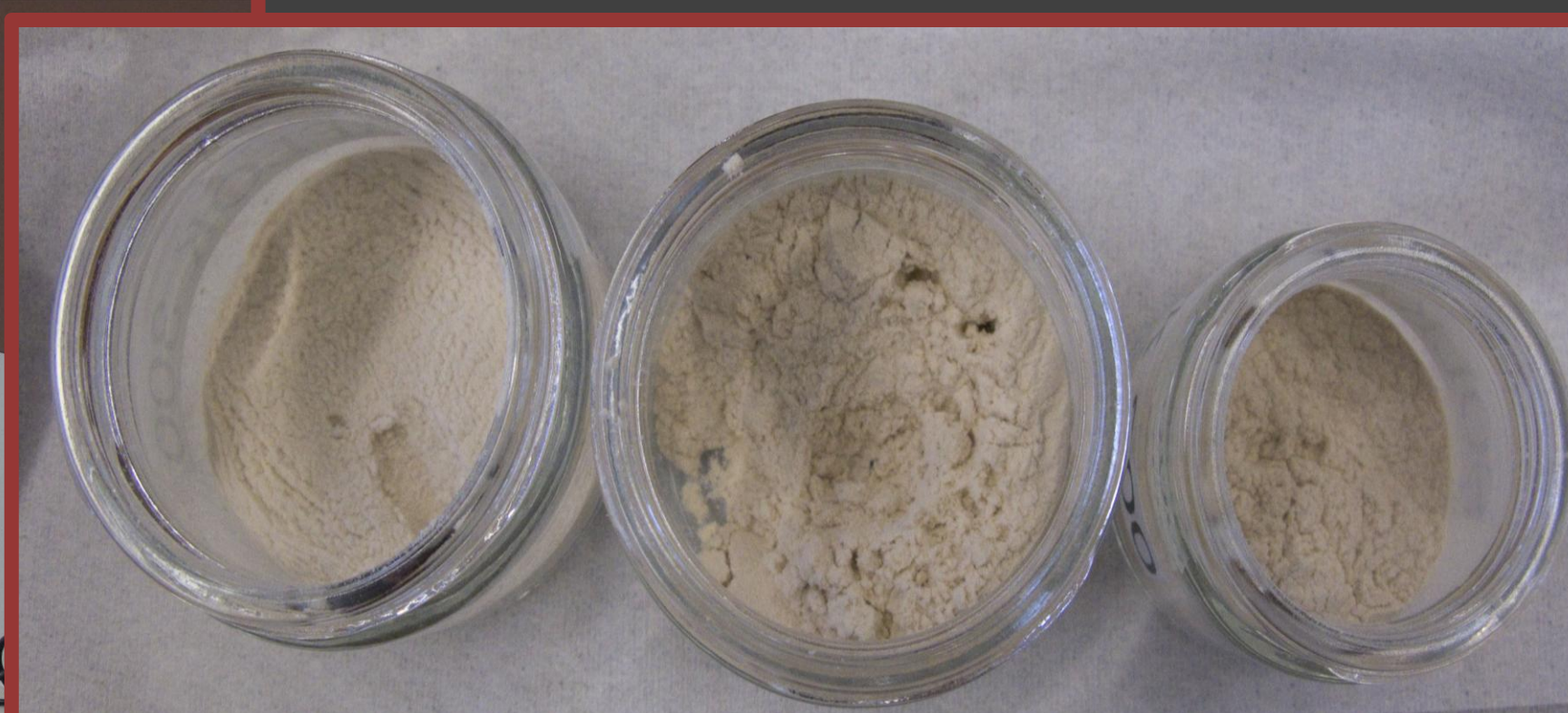
Soiled bread crumbs after cleaning

The soft white center of hand-made*, preservative and additive free bread was crumbled onto the surface of the raw, unprimed canvas and gently moved across the surface while avoiding the painted composition. Nitrile gloves were used to isolate hand oils during cleaning. Soiled crumbs were thoroughly brushed and vacuumed off the surface of the canvas.



Removing soiled bread crumbs from the raw, unprimed canvas

Toasting cellulose powder slowly with gentle heat



Various tones of toasted cellulose powder

Solka-Floc® powdered cellulose was carefully** toasted to various shades with gentle heating, allowing for a natural match to most types of raw canvas. Toasted cellulose was lightly dusted onto subtle stains in the raw, unprimed canvas with a small brush. Since no binder was used, fibers can be easily brushed and vacuumed off the surface if necessary.



Applying toasted cellulose powder with small brush



Before adding toasted cellulose powder



After adding toasted cellulose powder

Acknowledgements

- Teri Hensick, Louise Orsini, Kate Smith, and the staff at the Straus Center for Conservation and Technical Studies
- Will Shank, Conservator
- John Arbib, Bread baker
- Jim Bernstein, Conservator and Debbie Evans, Conservator
- Morris Louis Conservation Fund, Inc.

*Bread must be hand-made in order to control the ingredients used
**Proper safety precautions must be taken when toasting cellulose powder, including wearing a particle filter face mask