

N.C. Museum of Art Exhibition Offers Rare Opportunity to Watch Conservator at Work
Conservator Noelle Ocon will work on Flemish painting in Museum gallery

Raleigh, N.C.—Beginning February 20, 2016, the North Carolina Museum of Art (NCMA) presents *Actual State*, a rare opportunity for Museum visitors to watch a conservator restore a painting in the galleries. On select days during the exhibition, NCMA conservator of paintings Noelle Ocon will bring back to life a damaged 16th-century Flemish painting—a process that is normally only completed in the conservation lab.



The term *actual state* refers to a painting wherein the old varnishes and restorations have been removed, revealing the true condition of the original paint layer. Throughout its life, a painting can be restored many times, hiding years of damage—accidental or otherwise. As part of a conservation treatment, paintings are cleaned, or returned to their actual state, and revarnished. After revarnishing, areas of damage are blended in with the surroundings using special paints made just for conservators—a process called inpainting or retouching. The extent of original damage is very rarely revealed to the museumgoer.

In this exciting opportunity, visitors can get a behind-the-scenes look as this process unfolds. *Actual State* features two Flemish paintings from the Museum’s collection currently attributed to a follower of Bernard van Orley: *The Ascension* and *The Pentecost* (both circa 1530). Conservation treatment has been completed on *The Ascension* (cleaned, varnished, and retouched), while in the frame next to it is a photographic reproduction of *The Pentecost* prior to retouching. The painting of *The Pentecost* sits on an easel nearby—in its actual state. While on public display, it will undergo inpainting to retouch old losses, abrasions, and other damages. In an unusual fashion, only one side of the composition will be retouched first, so that the progress of restoration can be readily seen.

Conservator Noelle Ocon will be working in the *Actual State* exhibition gallery during the following days and times:

Tuesdays and Thursdays

February 23–July 7, except for May 17 and 19:
10:30–11:30 am and 1:30–3 pm

Weekends:

February 20–21: 10:30–11:30 am and 1:30–3 pm
March 5–6: 10:30–11:30 am and 1:30–3 pm
April 2–3: 10:30–11:30 am and 1:30–3 pm
May 7–8: 10:30–11:30 am and 1:30–3 pm
June 4–5: 10:30–11:30 am and 1:30–3 pm
July 2–3: 10:30–11:30 am and 1:30–3 pm
July 9–10: 10:30–11:30 am and 1:30–3 pm

Actual State will be the first in a series of permanent collection focus exhibitions highlighting the work of the NCMA's Conservation Department, a staff of three conservators who care for, maintain, and repair works in the Museum’s permanent collection. Information on conservation projects, frequently asked questions about conservation, and more can be found at ncartmuseum.org/art/conservation.

Actual State

February 20–July 10, 2016

East Building, Level B, Studio 3

Free

About the Exhibition:

Actual State is organized by the North Carolina Museum of Art. Support provided by anonymous donors in honor of Noelle Ocon and Dennis P. Weller. This exhibition is also made possible, in part, by the North Carolina Department of Natural and Cultural Resources; the North Carolina Museum of Art Foundation, Inc.; and the William R. Kenan Jr. Endowment for Educational Exhibitions. Research for this exhibition was made possible by Ann and Jim Goodnight/The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation Fund for Curatorial and Conservation Research and Travel.

Image Caption:

Follower of Bernard van Orley, *The Pentecost*, circa 1530, oil on panel, 37 1/2 x 43 1/2 in., Purchased with funds from the State of North Carolina

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About the North Carolina Museum of Art

The North Carolina Museum of Art's permanent collection spans more than 5,000 years, from ancient Egypt to the present, making the institution one of the premier art museums in the South. The Museum's collection provides educational, aesthetic, intellectual, and cultural experiences for the citizens of North Carolina and beyond. The 164-acre Museum Park showcases the connection between art and nature through site-specific works of environmental art. The Museum offers changing national touring exhibitions, classes, lectures, family activities, films, and concerts.

The Museum opened West Building, home to the permanent collection, in 2010. The North Carolina Museum of Art, Lawrence J. Wheeler, director, is located at 2110 Blue Ridge Road in Raleigh. It is the art museum of the State of North Carolina, Pat McCrory, governor, and an agency of the Department of Natural and Cultural Resources, Susan Kluttz, secretary.