AMA art media agency

370

AMA art media agency

DELEGATE YOUR ART CONTENT PRODUCTION TO AMA.

Simple… there is nothing better!

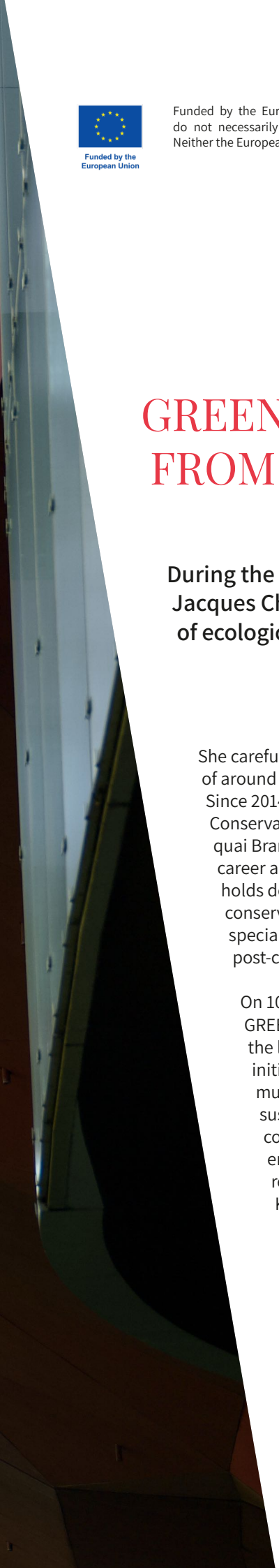
en.artmediaagency.com/services

ECOLOGI

Musée du quai Branly – Jacques Chirac

Photo Mickaël Pjoubert. © Art Media Agency

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Research Executive Agency (REA). Neither the European Union nor the granting authority can be held responsible for them.



GREENART PUBLIC TRAINING: FROM THEORY TO PRACTICE

During the GREENART Public Training held at the Musée du quai Branly – Jacques Chirac on 10 and 11 April 2025, Éléonore Kissel discusses the challenges of ecological conservation in the art world and the evolution of practices in this field.

She carefully oversees the museum's impressive collection of around 370,000 archaeological and ethnographic objects. Since 2014, Canadian-born Éléonore Kissel has led the Conservation-Restoration department at the Musée du quai Branly – Jacques Chirac in Paris. With a long-standing career as a consultant in cultural heritage preservation, she holds degrees in conservation-restoration and preventive conservation from Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne University, specialising in graphic arts. Her doctoral thesis focused on post-colonial material conservation practices at the museum.

On 10 and 11 April 2025, her institution hosted the GREENART Public Training, an event designed to share the latest developments from this European project. The initiative brings together a consortium of universities, museums and professionals, all working towards sustainable solutions for restoration and preventive conservation. Their aim: to develop low-impact, environmentally friendly materials sourced from renewable natural resources or recycled waste. Éléonore Kissel reflects on two intensive days of conferences and practical workshops dedicated to researching and implementing new materials, technologies and solutions for "green" cultural heritage conservation.

How did you organise this event presenting the outcomes of the GREENART European project?

This training continues the partnership the museum had already established with the European Apache project, which included Antonio Mirabile. Nearly two years ago, Antonio suggested I do something similar for GREENART. What I particularly appreciate about these European projects is their commitment to sharing knowledge freely and openly. I began by formally seeking permission to involve the museum in this venture, to make our facilities and technical resources available. After that, I had to manage every aspect of the organisation: finding dates when the Lévi-Strauss Theatre would be free, handling logistics, preparing the programme, arranging moderation and ensuring communication through the museum's website and social media channels. Compared to the scale of the GREENART project, this commitment remains limited in time, but I accepted it willingly. Organising a day of presentations followed by practical workshops poses a real challenge in a venue like ours, which was never designed for such events. We had to equip the theatre foyer with screens and a dedicated Wi-Fi network, and the security team needed to approve the introduction of external materials into a public building of this size.

— Pierre Naquin and Carine Claude

Did you follow the progress of the GREENART project or did you only get involved for the public presentation?

I focused on outreach and promoting the project to professionals. My discussions with Antonio began about eighteen months ago and I gradually saw the programme take shape. I kept an eye on GREENART's research, but I did not take part directly, as the Musée du quai Branly is not, strictly speaking, a member of the GREENART consortium.

Social Responsibility (CSR) position at the start of 2022, with a full-time staff member coordinating efforts across all teams to adopt more environmentally responsible practices.

For example, my team is deeply involved in a green alternatives project led by the Ministry of Culture, which questions environmental guidelines: should we stick to the traditional standard of a stable climate at 18 degrees and 50% humidity all year round, or can we allow for some flexibility?

and practice. I can give you a concrete example. We are currently launching a project at the museum focused on the conservation-restoration of metal objects, specifically looking at the shine and brilliance of ornaments, ceremonial weapons and jewellery. In this context, several members of my team attended Gabriella Di Carlo's workshop on innovative and eco-friendly materials for protecting metal surfaces. The timing of this training could not be better and it may offer us a real opportunity for practical application.

> Material conservation borrows a great deal of knowledge and expertise from other disciplines, and innovations developed specifically for our field remain the exception rather than the rule.
>
> — *Eleonore Kissel*

Would it have been beneficial for the museum to take a more active role in this project, as other institutions have done?

To join a major European research project, you need to ensure you have enough people to commit. Our team consists of just six members: four in conservation-restoration, one in conservation science and one in preventive conservation. We are already involved in various research projects, usually on a smaller scale. I am not sure we would have had the time to take on more. That said, the Musée du quai Branly team has taken a proactive approach to ecological transition in material conservation for several years now. We have organised public talks and workshops on these issues, and secured funding to work on bio-based packing materials. More broadly, the museum created a Corporate

Meanwhile, the Collections Management team is working on a European project to replace wooden crates for transporting artworks with recyclable cardboard alternatives.

Do you think there is now enough information available on ecological practices in conservation-restoration?

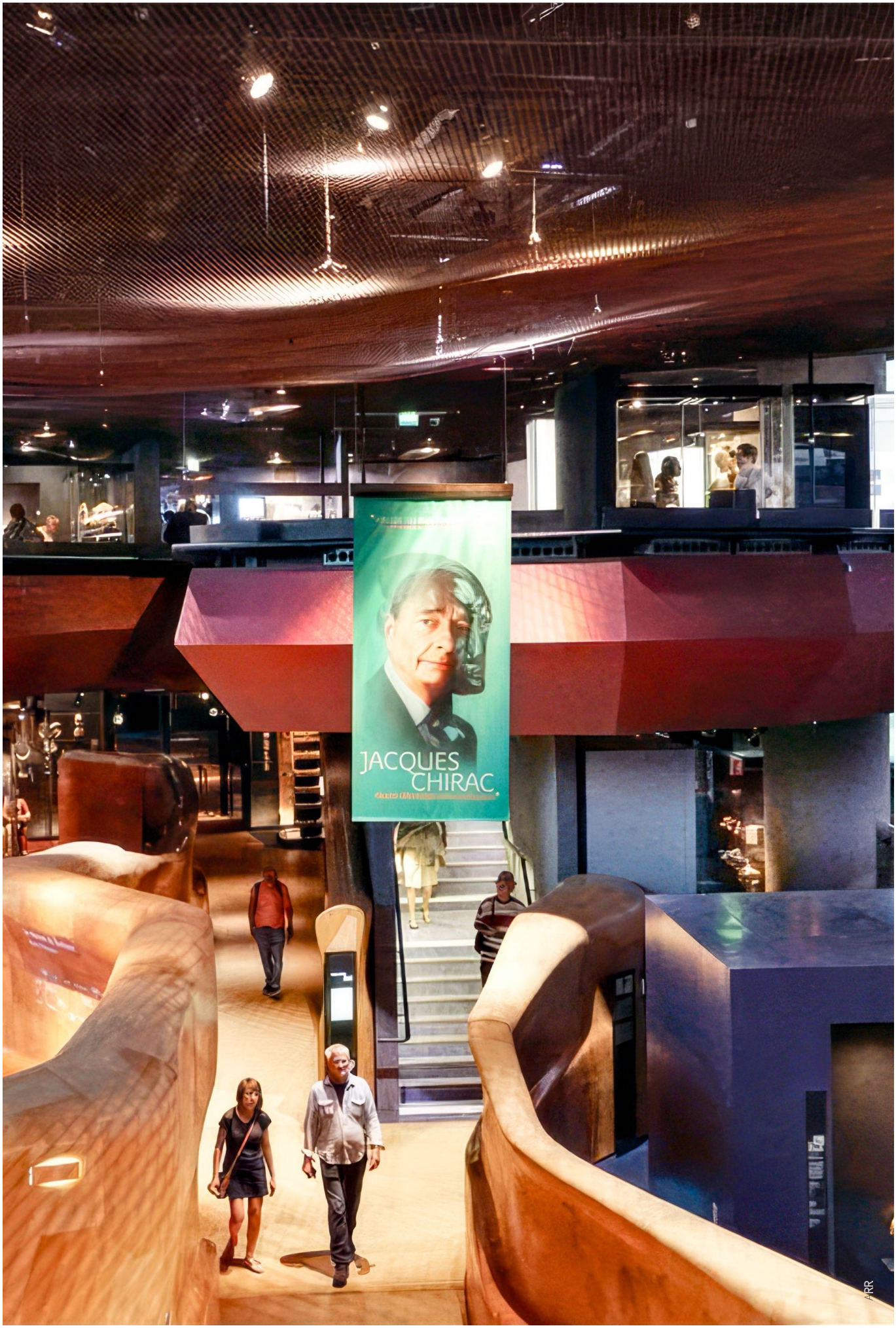
At the end of 2019 or the beginning of 2020, I carried out a literature review on the ecological approach to material conservation, organising the references by theme — climate control, transport and conservation-restoration treatments. Even then, there were already several hundred references and since then, the field has grown exponentially. It has now reached a point where it is difficult to keep up with all the new initiatives and publications. This is precisely where projects like GREENART prove their worth: they help bridge the gap between theory

We are still in the testing phase, but we are considering scaling up what GREENART has developed and applying it to specific collections. Gabriella Di Carlo's team has worked extensively with the bronzes at the Vedova Museum in Venice and we could use their methods on North African jewellery to observe, over the long term, how these materials perform.

GREENART covers a wide range of areas, from transport boxes to cleaning and various types of protective coatings. Were you aware of all these aspects?

I was fairly aware of the different strands of the project: one part focused on conservation-restoration, with both cleaning and protective treatments, and another part on preventive conservation, covering monitoring, storage and pollutant absorption.

I am not sure this structure was as


JACQUES
CHIRAC

clear to all participants in the presentations and workshops, as GREENART is indeed a project with multiple objectives, underpinned by analytical sciences. Personally, because I followed the development of the programme, I had a fairly clear understanding of the different directions.

Had you already tested any of the products developed as part of GREENART?

Not those from GREENART specifically, but we had tried some materials from Nanorestore and exchanged ideas with speakers who led workshops as part of the Apache project — some of whom are also involved in GREENART. For example, Gabriella Di Carlo ran a workshop with us and we also discussed conservation box solutions with Manfred Anders [see p.80].
We were aware of ongoing developments and knew that some aspects of GREENART are entirely new compared to Apache, such as the creation of polyurethane foams from bio-based materials or the focus on the ecological assessment of materials. Others seem more like a continuation or deepening of developments first explored in Apache.

Was there products that particularly interested you during these two days of training?

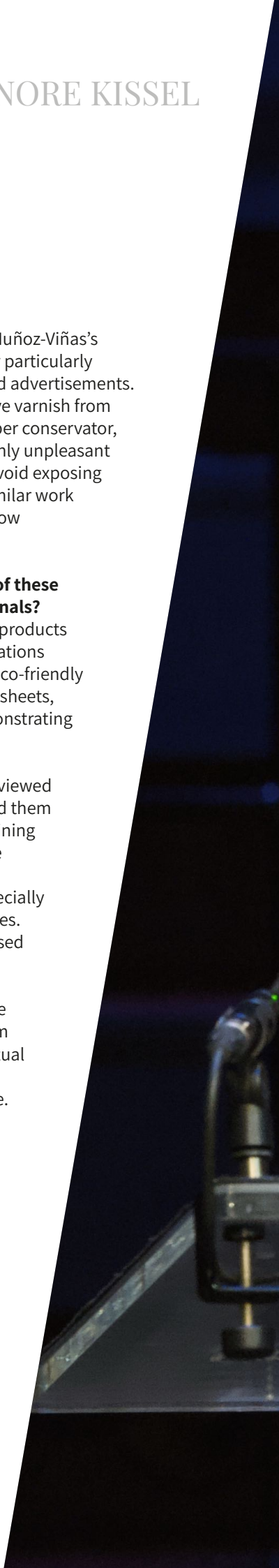
I was especially impressed by the coatings for metal objects that can be reversed using very low-toxicity solvents like water or ethanol. The nanocellulose-based coatings also caught our attention. On the other hand, dispersions for consolidating encaustic paintings are less relevant for our collections.
Each participant found different aspects appealing, depending on the specificities of their collections. Some of my colleagues, for instance, found Salvador Muñoz-Viñas's presentation on mounting systems for works on paper particularly interesting as they work with collections of posters and advertisements. Pénélope Banou's presentation on using gels to remove varnish from works on paper also stood out for me. As a trained paper conservator, I remember having to treat a varnished print using highly unpleasant solvent baths, which meant working at weekends to avoid exposing colleagues to toxic fumes. If we ever need to treat a similar work among the museum's 10,000 graphic pieces, I would now consider the solution presented by Pénélope Banou.

What steps are necessary between the development of these products and their widespread adoption by professionals?

A combination of factors needs to come together. The products must be developed and supported by scientific publications that explain their properties. If a manufacturer offers eco-friendly consolidants but refuses to provide full technical data sheets, or if there are no comparative laboratory studies demonstrating their effectiveness, penetration and reversibility, it becomes difficult for us to adopt them.
Ideally, these products should be published in peer-reviewed journals (A-grade), ensuring that experts have assessed them and can highlight any methodological flaws. Then, training sessions like the GREENART workshops allow us to see these materials in practical use on sample objects.
Then comes the question of product accessibility, especially for public institutions bound by strict procurement rules. It is much easier to purchase a product from a recognised supplier in the conservation-restoration sector than directly from a university laboratory.
Finally, you need a motivated team willing to test these innovations and a project that allows you to move from the laboratory context to real-world application on actual objects. This requires a certain level of trust, as well as the ability to monitor how treatments evolve over time. For example, we are considering testing the coatings developed by Gabriella Di Carlo's team on five North African jewellery pieces that will go on display, alongside more traditional techniques. This will allow us to observe their behaviour on a daily basis.

Is it common to test new products in your field?

It is relatively rare. Conservation-restoration is a niche market, with few scientific developments dedicated exclusively to this sector. Most of the products we use — resins, boxes, pollutant sensors, insect traps, disinfectants — were originally developed for other fields, such as medicine, the food industry, or manufacturing. The first vibration sensors, for example, came from the construction industry.



Éléonore Kissel

Photo Mickaël Pijoubert. © Art Media Agency