

WINTERTHUR



Winterthur/University of Delaware
Program in Art Conservation



Treatment Proposal

Removable upholstery caps for 2 Hamilton chairs



Accession: L2020.1024._

Object: 2 Hamilton chairs, of a set of 7

Object Date: c.a 1800

Place of Origin: North America, Mid-Atlantic, New York

Artist/Author: attributed to Elbert Anderson

Materials: Mahogany, beech

Dimensions: 91.8cm tall, 58.8cm wide, 48.8cm deep

Owner: Winterthur Museum

Reason for Treatment or Examination:

Creating removable upholstery caps for set of chairs, to enable safe display and study of frames

Examined by: Sean Billups

Consulted: Kathy Gillis

Report Date: 12/7/2021

Previous Treatment

When accessioned, this set of chairs featured 20th century upholstery, which was removed to enable study of the frame and further treatments.

The upholstery consisted of a bed of metal springs set on 4” wide jute ribbon which was woven and stapled to the underside of the frame. On top of the springs was a layer of coarsely-woven jute, then a linen dust cover, then a show cover. Around the perimeter of the show cover was a strip of decorative tape adhered with hot melt glue.

Samples of each upholstery material were taken from each chair. These samples were sewn into mylar sleeves and placed in a binder so they would be available in the event that the materials needed to be referenced.

Under the layers of upholstery, the frames had been lined around the bottom with linen fabric soaked with hide glue to act as a consolidant. This appears to have been added after at least 1 upholstery campaign, possibly more. This linen and hide glue was softened with cotton poultices and warm water, and carefully removed by hand and a microspatula.

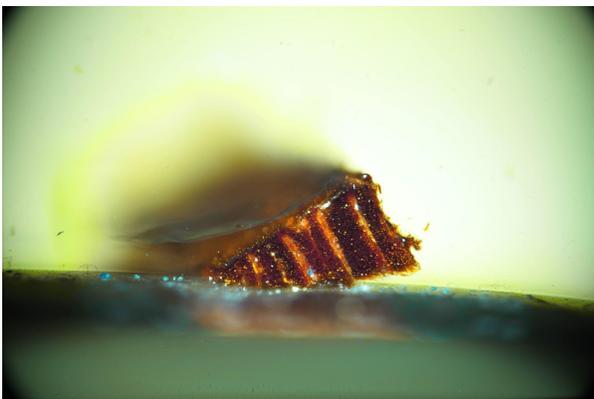
Once the linen had been removed, the frames were consolidated: small dissociated pieces and larger splits were reattached with hide glue. Removing the fabric had loosened small pieces of wood on most of them, and one of the armchairs (L2020.1024.1) had a broken and loose arm. A 20th century screw was removed from the arm in what looked like a previous repair; the split was cleaned with a brush, and the join was reattached with hide glue.



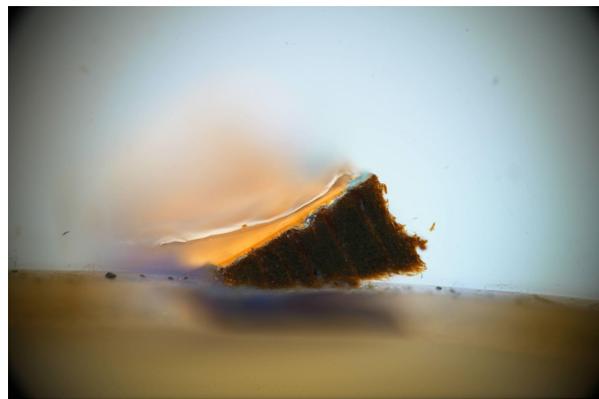




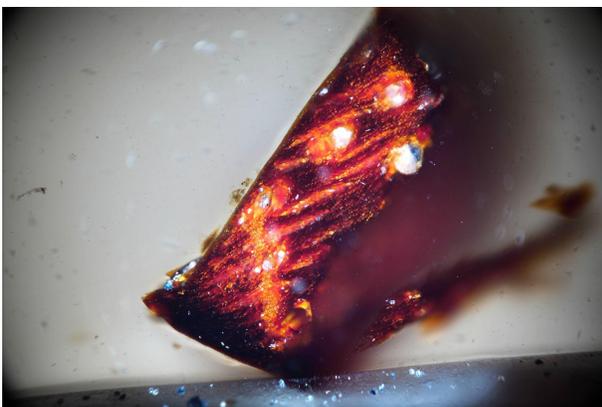
After the frames had been consolidated, 2 samples were taken from 2020.1024.1, cast in bioplastic, polished, and microscopy done under visible light and UV.



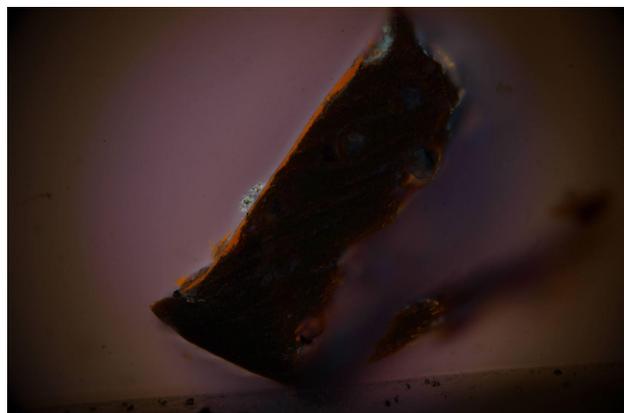
Sample #1 under visible light



Sample #1 under UV; orange fluorescence indicates presence of shellac, white top layer suggests cellulose nitrate.



Sample #2 under visible light



Sample #2 under UV; orange fluorescence indicates presence of shellac.

Treatment Proposal

1. Construct removable upholstery caps for the set of 2 chairs, to allow for non-intrusive display as well as study of the frames.
 - a. Create frame fill/cushion top from stiff ethafoam
 - b. Make side pieces to cover frame side rails from $\frac{1}{8}$ " polyethylene sheeting, drill holes for decorative tack layout.
 - c. Consider covering entire cap with $\frac{1}{2}$ " batting, to be determined upon consult with curator.
 - d. Cover entire cap with show fabric.
 - i. secure decorative tacks with starlock washers, cut shanks on the inside.
 - e. Line interior of side pieces with $\frac{1}{8}$ " thick volara to cover starlock washers and shanks, preventing scratching of wood surfaces.
 - f. If the show fabric pulls the side pieces away from the frame, make a removable dust cover on the underside, securing with garment hook and eye fasteners.