

SANCHITA BALACHANDRAN

sanchita@gmail.com

APPOINTMENTS

Director, Museum Conservation Institute, Smithsonian Institution	Washington, DC, April 2024 to present
Associate Research Scholar, The Johns Hopkins University	Baltimore, MD Jan 2024 to present
Director, The Johns Hopkins Archaeological Museum	Baltimore MD, 2023 to Jan 2023
Associate Teaching Professor, Dept of Near Eastern Studies, Johns Hopkins University	Baltimore, MD, 2023 to Jan 2023
Associate Director, The Johns Hopkins Archaeological Museum	Baltimore, MD, 2017 to 2022
Senior Lecturer, Department of Near Eastern Studies, Johns Hopkins University	Baltimore, MD, 2017 to 2022
Curator/Conservator, The Johns Hopkins Archaeological Museum	Baltimore, MD, 2010 to 2016
Lecturer, Department of Near Eastern Studies, Johns Hopkins University	Baltimore, MD, 2007 to 2016
Guest Instructor, Winterthur/University of Delaware Program in Art Conservation	Winterthur, DE, 2010 to 2012
Adjunct Lecturer, Department of Museum Studies, Morgan State University	Baltimore, MD, 2008 to 2010

EDUCATION

University of Delaware	Newark, DE, 2018 to present
<i>Doctor of Philosophy, Preservation Studies, Expected completion May 2024</i>	
New York University, The Institute of Fine Arts	New York, NY, 2003
<i>Advanced Certificate in Art Conservation, Terminal degree in this field</i>	
<i>Master of Arts, Art History</i>	
Pomona College	Claremont, CA, 1997
<i>Bachelor of Arts, Art History</i>	

AWARDS, FELLOWSHIPS AND GRANTS

Racism and Repair in the Academy grant, JHU Program in Racism, Immigration and Citizenship, \$67,500	2021
Rutherford John Gettens Award for outstanding service, The American Institute for Conservation	2021
Invited Resident at the American Academy in Rome	2021
Supervisor of the Year, Johns Hopkins University	2021
Stavros Niarchos Foundation Agora Institute Faculty Grant, Johns Hopkins University, \$4900	2021
Iris award for Outstanding Mid-Career Scholar, Bard Graduate Center	2020
Society of Black Archaeologists-SAPIENS Public Scholar Fellow	2020
Johns Hopkins University Discovery Grant, "Uncovering Forbidden Fruit," summer salary support	2018
Untold Stories Project Grant, The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, \$50,000	2017
Workshop Development Grant, Foundation for the American Institute for Conservation, \$1000	2017
Getty Conservation Institute Scholar Residency, 6-months of salary support and housing for research	2016
Arts Innovation Grant, Johns Hopkins University, \$10,000	2016
Awarded "Fellow" status by the American Institute for Conservation of Historic and Artistic Works	2016
Johns Hopkins University Discovery Grant for "Reverse Engineering Ancient Ceramics", PI, \$99,875	2015
Funding from the Deans Office of the Krieger School of Arts and Science for Fall 2015 course, \$5,500	2015
Funding from the Johns Hopkins Program in Museums and Society for Spring 2015 course, \$36,000	2015
Institute of Museum and Library Services, Museums for America Grant Award, PI, \$136,202	2014
Dean's Excellence in Service Award, Johns Hopkins University, \$1000	2011
Fulbright Award, United States-India Educational Foundation for eight months of research in India	2009
Professional Development Scholarship, Foundation of the American Institute for Conservation	2007
The Harvard University Art Museums Baird Fellowship, \$13,000	2004
The J. Paul Getty Museum Travel Award	2002
The J. Paul Getty Trust Fellowship	2001
The Daedalus Foundation Fellowship	2001

The Keeper's Fund Fellowship

2000

PUBLICATIONS

Balachandran, S. and D. Saunders. "On Douris's Cup with Amazons." Article submitted in September 2023 for a forthcoming edited volume.

["Conservation Through Generations."](#) *Information Professional*. October-November 2021.

["Welcome to the Museum of the Future."](#) *Hyperallergic*. July 1, 2021.

["Wonder Woman the Museum Worker Is a Less Convincing Disguise Than Clark Kent's."](#) *Hyperallergic*. January 13, 2021.

["Malignant Patina: A Love Story."](#) *West 86th: A Journal of Decorative Arts, Design History and Material Culture* 27, 1 (Spring-Summer 2020): 73-91.

["Bringing Back the \(Ancient\) Bodies: The Potters' Sensory Experiences and the Firing of Red, Black and Purple Greek Vases."](#) *Arts* 8, 2, 70 (2019).

Balachandran, S. and K. McHugh. "Respectful and Responsible Stewardship: Maintaining and Renewing the Cultural Relevance of Museum Collections." In *Preventive Conservation: Collection Storage*, edited by Lisa Elkin and Christopher A. Norris, 100-120. New York: Society for the Preservation of Natural History; American Institute for Conservation of Historic and Artistic Works; Smithsonian Institution; The George Washington University Museum Studies Program, 2019. 3-24.

Berg, S. with contributions by S. Balachandran and K. Gallagher. ["Housing Archaeological Collections at the Johns Hopkins Archaeological Museum."](#) Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Archaeological Museum. 2019.

"Transformative Spaces: Dr. S. Paramasivan and Conservation Science in India in the Early Twentieth Century." *Studies in Conservation*, 64, 1 (2019): 24-41.

["Uncovering Ancient Preparatory Drawings on Greek Ceramics."](#) *The Iris*. September 24, 2018.

"Pedagogy and the 'Working Collection': Teaching Technical Research and Experimental Archaeology at the Johns Hopkins Archaeological Museum." Postprints of the October 2016 Penn Museum symposium, "Engaging Conservation: Collaboration Across Disciplines." London: Archetype, 2017: 19-28.

Torres, J., K. Gallagher and S. Balachandran. "Rehousing a 'Working Collection': Perspectives from the Johns Hopkins University Archaeological Museum." *Journal of the American Institute for Conservation*, Vol 56, Iss. 2 (2017): 96-112.

"Technical Studies." In *Selections from the Eton College Myers Collection*. Eds. Meg Swaney and Morgan Moroney. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Archaeological Museum. 2016.

"New Light on Ancient Faces. Undergraduate Students at Johns Hopkins University Study Roman Egyptian Mummy Portraits." *E-News, International Committee for Egyptology in the International Council of Museums*. May 2016: 8.

["Race, Diversity and Politics in Conservation: Our 21st Century Crisis."](#) Conservators Converse, the Blog of the American Institute for Conservation. May 2016.

"Reverse Engineering Ancient Greek Ceramics: An Interdisciplinary Collaboration." *National Council on Education for the Ceramic Arts Journal*, Vol. 37, 2016: 92.

"Archaeology, Conservation and the 'Cost' of Archaeological Artefacts." *Archaeology in Society: Its Relevance in the Modern World*. Eds. Mary Rockman and Joe Flatman. New York: Springer Press, 2012. 128-134.

"The Use of Cyclododecane in Field Stabilization and Storage of Archaeological Finds." *The Conservation of Archaeological Materials. Current Trends and Future Directions*. British Archaeological Reports International Series 2116. Eds. Emily Williams and Claire Peachy. Oxford: Archaeopress, 2010. 77-87.

"Among the Dead and Their Possessions: A Conservator's Role in the Death, Life and Afterlife of Human Remains and their Associated Objects." *Journal of the American Institute for Conservation*, Vol. 48, No. 3 (2009): 197-219.

"Artifact." *Archaeology Magazine*, Vol. 62, No. 6, (November/December 2009): 72.

Balachandran, S. and G. Gates. "When Objects Are Beyond Conservation: Recovering Visual Information from Damaged Artifacts." International Dunhuang Project, December 2007.

"Edge of an Ethical Dilemma." *Archaeology Magazine*, Vol. 60, No. 6, November/December 2007: 18-20, 65.

"Object Lessons: The Politics of Preservation and Museum Building in Western China in the Early Twentieth Century." *International Journal of Cultural Property*, Vol. 14, No. 1 (2007): 1-32.

"ANC2002.36." *Bidoun. Arts and Culture from the Middle East*. Spring/Summer 2008.

SELECTED INVITED TALKS AND PRESENTATIONS

[Invited conversation with contemporary artist Gala Porras-Kim](#). The Getty Conservation Institute. December 2023.

["How 'New Meaning \[Was\] Put Into Ancient Records': Excavating the History of the Johns Hopkins Archaeological Museum, 1882-1930."](#) Racism and Repair in the Academy Conference, Johns Hopkins University. October 2023.

Invited panelist for a "Working with the Media Roundtable Discussion," sponsored by the American Institute for Conservation. October 2023. [Full text of remarks](#).

"May I know how you kill them to preserve them as specimens?' Life and Death in the Conservation Laboratory." Invited speaker in "The Politics of Conservation Colloquium" series. Museum für Naturkunde, Berlin. May 2023.

Invited [panelist](#) and speaker, ["Whose Future?"](#) The National Gallery of Art. December 2022.

Invited discussant on ["Thoughts on Discomfort"](#), as part of the "Shaping the Collectible" conference, Tate, United Kingdom. September 2022.

["An Unknown."](#) Invited presentation for the Art Gallery of York University "Uncontainable Collections Research Project" and part of a [roundtable discussion](#) with M. Nourbese Philip, Gus Casely-Hayford, and Ciraj Rassool. April 2022.

Invited as a guest to be in conversation with the entire staff of the Princeton University Art Museum. April 2022.

"Visiting with Ancient Potters and Painters: Insights from Art Conservation, Material Science, and Experimental Archaeology." Invited presentation as part of the AGATHOCLES Webinar series co-organized by the University of Arizona and the Università Degli Studi Di Torino. April 2022.

["Art Break: Getting to the Makers of an Ancient Greek Drinking Cup."](#) Conversation with the J. Paul Getty Museum's associate curator David Saunders about objects in the Getty's and Johns Hopkins' archaeological collections. March 2022.

"So-and-so Made This: A Research Methodology for Finding and Being With the Potters of Ancient Athens." University of Pennsylvania, Department of Classical Studies. February 2022.

["The Future of Conservation."](#) Instagram Live with the Legion of Honor/Fine Art Museums of San Francisco's associate paintings conservator Sarah Kleiner. November 2021.

“A Self-Help Guide to Transformation.” Invited talk for the Association for Heritage Preservation of the Americas Regional Conference. November 2021.

Invited as a guest to be in conversation with the entire staff of the Harvard Art Museums. June 2021.

[“Marked in Clay: Interdisciplinary Methods to Re-imagine Ancient Greek Potters at Work.”](#) The Iris Foundation Awards Lecture, Bard Graduate Center. *April 2021.*

[“Making the University Museum More Inclusive: Lessons from the Classroom.”](#) Invited speaker for the “Week of the Classics 2021: The Inclusive Classics” sponsored by the Allard Pierson Museum, The Netherlands. *April 2021.*

“In the Athenian Potter’s ‘Studio’: Attempts at Ancient Ethnography.” Invited speaker for the series “Race and Anthropology” organized by the Anthropology Graduate Students at the University of Arizona. *March 2021.*

Speaker for [“An Inclusive Practice for Cultural Heritage,”](#) first in a series of conversations organization by the University Art Gallery at the University of Pittsburgh. February 2021.

Panelist for “Entering the Field: Insights into the Interview Process.” Held at the 2021 Archaeological Institute of American Annual conference and organized by the Student Affairs Interest Group. January 2021.

“Makers’ Space/Making Space: An Interdisciplinary Imagining of the Lived Experiences of Ancient Athenian Potters and Painters.” Invited speaker to the University of California Cotsen Institute of Archaeology. *October 2020.*

Panelist for the webinar [“Becoming Better Accomplices and Instructors: Justice, Activism and Reflexivity in Teaching Museums and Cultural Heritage,”](#) organized by the Archaeological Institute of America. *August 2020.*

Panelist for [“Your Mummies, Their Ancestors? Caring for and About Ancient Egyptian human remains,”](#) co-organized by Charlotte Parent and Heba Abdel Gawad in collaboration with the Egypt Exploration Society, Egypt’s Dispersed Heritage project, and Everyday Orientalism. *August 2020.* [Full text of remarks.](#)

“Lessons from the ‘American Museum of Unnatural History.’” Keynote for the Association of Academic Museums and Galleries conference. *June 2020.*

“Learning from the Ancestors in Storage: Teaching the Conservation of Cultural Heritage to Non-Specialists at the Johns Hopkins Archaeological Museum.” Global Consortium for the Preservation of Cultural Heritage. Smithsonian Institution. *Washington, DC. October 2019.*

[“The ‘Peculiar Problems’ of Preservation: Life, Death and the Afterlife in the Museum.”](#) The M. Victor Leventritt Lecture, The Harvard University Art Museums *Cambridge, MA. April 2019.*

“Reconsidering Collections Care: Reflections on Conserving *People’s Things*” Keynote at the Annual North American Graduate Programs in Conservation conference. *Los Angeles, CA. April 2019.*

[“Divine and Ghostly Things: Debating the Care of Religious Relics at the Madras Government Museum.”](#) Wolf Humanities Center, University of Pennsylvania. *Philadelphia, PA. February 2019.*

“Being Curious, Uncomfortable and Uncertain: Adventures in Interdisciplinary Teaching and Learning.” Panelist at the session “The Mellon Foundation at Fifty: Reflecting on Five Decades of Philanthropy in the Museum.” College Art Association Annual Conference. *New York, NY. February 2019.*

[“The Museum Was Like Heaven, All the Gods Being There: Approaches to the Preservation of Archaeological-Devotional Objects at the Madras Government Museum, India, in the Late 19th and Early 20th Centuries.”](#) Presentation for “Indigenous Ontologies of Active Matter” at Bard Graduate Center. *New York, NY. April 2018.*

Invited two-day campus visit at Middlebury College. *Middlebury, VT. October 2016.*

Invited week-long campus visit to the University of Cape Town/Iziko Museums of South Africa to teach a course and deliver a public lecture on “Contemporary Issues in Art Conservation” This project was supported by the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation. *Cape Town, SOUTH AFRICA. July 2015.*

“Between the Mundane and the Magical: Objects, Fieldwork and Sites at the Johns Hopkins Archaeological Museum.” Panelist for “Conservation and the Future of Art,” Institute of Fine Arts. *New York, NY. February 2015.*

Invited three-day campus visit and lecture series, Queens University. *Kingston, CANADA. March 2012.*

“The Life and Afterlife of Indian Images.” Keynote at the New York University Abu Dhabi Institute. *UNITED ARAB EMIRATES. February 2011.*

“Glorious Icons: How Bronze Images Transformed the Mission of the Government Museum, Chennai,” Rao Bahadur Vemuru Ranganatham Chetty Endowment Lecture, Government Museum. *Chennai, INDIA. January 2010.*

SELECTED PAPERS PRESENTED

“On Douris’ Cup with Amazons.” Co-authored with David Saunders at the annual Archaeological Institute of America meeting. *January 2023.*

[“Thinking Work: What Can Ancient Drawings Tell Us About the People Who Made them?”](#) Presentation for the Thinking Through Drawing Symposium. *October 2020.*

“Facial Reconstruction of Ancient Egyptian Mummies: Experiences from the Johns Hopkins Archaeological Museum.” Co-authored with C. Wilkinson, K. Smith, M. Roughley and J. Garcia. Annual meeting of the American Institute for Conservation. *Houston, TX. June 2018.*

“One of Us? Navigating ‘Rehumanisation’ Questions in the Depiction and Display of Ancient Egyptians From the Johns Hopkins Archaeological Museum”. Co-authored with K. Smith, C. Wilkinson, M. Swaney, J. R. Garcia and M. Roughley. Conference on Art Materiality and Representation. *London, UK. June 2018.*

“Fieldwork in the University Museum: Using Conservation Approaches to Examine Ancient Art with Undergraduate Students.” Annual meeting of the Archaeological Institute of America. *Boston, MA. January 2018.*

“Perspectives on ‘Diversity’ From the Field of Art Conservation.” Annual meeting of the Archaeological Institute of America. *Boston, MA. January 2018.*

“CSI (Ceramics Scene Investigation), Ancient Athens: (Re)Picturing Greek Potters and Painters.” The Getty Conservation Institute. *Los Angeles, CA. June 2017.*

“Conservation Science in Early Twentieth Century India: Dr. S. Paramasivan and the Conservation Laboratory at the Madras Government Museum.” Annual meeting of the American Institute for Conservation. *Chicago, IL. June 2017.*

“Race, Diversity and Politics in Conservation: Our 21st Century Crisis.” Annual meeting of the American Institute for Conservation. *Montreal, CANADA. May 2016.*

“Reverse Engineering Ancient Greek Ceramics: Education and Research through Replication.” Annual meeting of the American Chemical Society. *San Diego, CA. March 2016.*

“Recreating Greek Pottery.” National Council on Education for the Ceramics Arts. *Kansas City, MO. March 2016.*

“The Conservation and Technical Analysis of Ancient Near Eastern Objects at the Johns Hopkins Archaeological Museum.” Annual meeting of the American Schools of Oriental Research. *Baltimore, MD. November 2013.*

“Conservation and the University Museum: Challenges and Rewards of Access to Collections.” Annual Meeting of the American Institute for Conservation. *Albuquerque, NM. May 2012.*

“Conservation as a Means of Revealing the Past: Case-Studies from the Johns Hopkins Archaeological Museum.” Society for Historical Archaeology, *Baltimore. MD. January 2012.*

“Conservation, Archaeology and Advocating for Objects at Abydos, Egypt.” Annual meeting of the American Research Center in Egypt. *Cambridge, MA. April 2005.*

“Conservator-Archaeologist Collaborations: Abydos as a Case Study.” Annual meeting of the Society of American Archaeology. *Montreal, CANADA. April 2004.*

“Observations on Conservation in Angkor.” Presented at the plenary session of the annual meeting of the American Institute for the Conservation of Historic and Artistic Works. *Miami, FL. June 2002.*

COURSES AND GUEST LECTURES TAUGHT

Cultural Heritage in Crisis; Archaeological Museum Practicum: Collections Management; Egyptian Funerary Arts in the Archaeological Museum (co-taught with Betsy Bryan); Ancient Color: The Technologies and Meanings of Color in Antiquity; Examining Archaeological Objects; Freshman Seminar: Technical Research on Archaeological Objects in the Johns Hopkins Archaeological Museum; Contemporary Issues in Art Conservation; Recreating Ancient Greek Ceramics; Global Perspectives on the Museum (co-taught with Elizabeth Rodini); Introduction to Museum Practice; Introduction to Metals Conservation; and Introduction to Conservation Principles.

Facilitated the use of the Johns Hopkins Archaeological Museum for over 400 courses between 2010 and 2023, reaching more than 14,000 students. Presented guest lectures and demonstrations in over 200 courses during this time period. These courses spanned numerous departments and programs including Archaeology, Art, Classics, Chemistry, History, History of Art, History of Science, German and Romance Languages, Materials Science and Engineering, Museums and Society, Museum Studies, and Near Eastern Studies, among others.

MUSEUM AND FIELDWORK EXPERIENCE

Museum Conservation Projects

The National Museum of African American History and Culture, The Smithsonian Institution, Washington D.C. (2014-2015); The Nature Conservancy, various sites (2008-2010); The National Museum of the American Indian, The Smithsonian Institution, Washington D.C. (2007-2008); The Vancouver Museum, Vancouver, CANADA (2005-2007); The Guggenheim Hermitage Museum, Las Vegas, NV (2005-2006); The Harvard Art Museums, Cambridge, MA (2003-2004); The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, NY (2003); The J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles, CA (2001-2002).

Conservation Fieldwork Experience

New York University Excavations at Amheida, Dakhleh Oasis, EGYPT (2010 and 2011); The Pennsylvania-Yale-Institute of Fine Arts Expedition, Abydos, EGYPT (Projects from 2002 to 2010); Architectural Conservation, Inc., Berkeley, CA (Projects from 1998 to 2006); The National Park Service, New York, NY (Projects in 2003 and 2005); The Preah Khan Conservation Project, Angkor, CAMBODIA, for the World Monuments Fund (2000); Villa La Pietra, Institute of Fine Arts, New York University, Florence, ITALY (Summer 2000); The Yasmina Necropolis, Carthage, TUNISIA, for the University of Georgia, Athens (Summer 1999); and The Paradesi Synagogue, Cochin, INDIA for the World Monuments Fund (1999).

PROFESSIONAL SERVICE

Founder and Director, Untold Stories Project (www.untoldstories.live)
Founder, Concerned Conservators and Conservators of Color Groups
Secretary, Board of Directors, The American Institute for Conservation (AIC)

Nov 2017 to March 2023
Nov 2016 to March 2023
July 2012 to May 2016

PROFESSIONAL MEMBERSHIPS

Fellow, American Institute for Conservation
Member, Archaeological Institute of America
Member, The Society of Black Archaeologists
Member, American Society for Overseas Research
Member, International Council of Museums

PRESS AND MEDIA APPEARANCES

Film and Radio Appearances

[“Mysteries of the Kylix: Recreating Ancient Greek Ceramics”](#), an 18-minute long film based on the 2015 JHU undergraduate course “Recreating Ancient Greek Ceramics” taught with the Archaeological Museum collection, 2015.

[“The Johns Hopkins Archaeological Museum.”](#) Radio essay on Baltimore’s NPR station’s “Humanities Connection,” 2014

Featured Articles

[“Hostile Terrain 94 delivers harsh critique of America's immigration policies.”](#) *JHU Newsletter*, December 2021.

[“Art installation memorializes the thousands of lives lost at the U.S.-Mexico border,”](#) *JHU Hub*, November 2021.

“Should Mummies be in Museums?” *Scholastic News*, October 2021.

[“The Thorny Ethics of Displaying Egyptian Mummies to the Public,”](#) *Undark*, June 2021.

“Dismantling White Supremacy by Emphasizing the Diversity of the Ancient Past.” GradImpact. Council of Graduate Schools. June 2021.

[“Beyond the hands of a potter: Uncovering Hidden Identities.”](#) *University of Delaware Research Magazine*, 8, 2, 2020.

[“Meet the Egyptian dead at Johns Hopkins thanks to mummy facial reconstruction,”](#) *The Washington Post*, November 2018

[“Meet the Egyptian dead at Johns Hopkins thanks to mummy facial reconstruction,”](#) *The Baltimore Sun*, November 2018.

[“Flipped Learning. Professors are reinventing the way they teach to engage a generation of students raised in a wired world.”](#) *Johns Hopkins Arts and Sciences Magazine*, Spring 2017.

[“Unlocking the mysteries of classical Greek pottery.”](#) *The Baltimore Sun*, January 2016.

[“Experiential Archaeology Class Recreates Ancient Ceramics”](#), *Archaeology Magazine*, October 2015.

[“Getting Hands-on with Ancient Greece,”](#) *JHU Arts and Sciences Magazine*, Spring 2015.

Podcasts

Guest on [Brains On!](#), on “How Were People Mummified?” November 2022.

Guest on the podcast [Vanguard of the Viragoes](#) with ChelseaDee Harrison. January 2021.

Guest on the Peopling the Past podcast. [“Thrown Together: Potters, Painters, and Ceramic Production with Sanchita Balachandran.”](#) December 2020.

Guest on the Museum Archipelago podcast. [“Sanchita Balachandran Shifts the Framework for Conservation with Untold Stories.”](#) 2019.

Guest on the Museum Archipelago podcast. [“Conservation in the 21st Century.”](#) 2018.

[“Recovering the Ephemeral with Sanchita Balachandran.”](#) Interview by Allison Chu for “The Order of Multitudes,” the 2020-21 Mellon Sawyer Seminar at Yale University. December 2021.

Interviews

[“Recovering the Ephemeral with Sanchita Balachandran.”](#) Interview by Allison Chu for “The Order of Multitudes,” the 2020-21 Mellon Sawyer Seminar at Yale University. 2021.

Interviewed for the feature [“Should Mummies Be in Museums”](#) for *Scholastic News*, a national magazine for 4th to 6th graders with a circulation of 6 million.

[“Pushing Boundaries: Sanchita Balachandran and the Art of Conservation.”](#) The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation “Shared Experiences Blog,” August 2017.

Featured in the J. Paul Getty Foundation’s anniversary report, 2017, pg 14-17:
https://www.getty.edu/foundation/pdfs/reports/25th_anniversary_report.pdf