



May 19, 1992

Ref: JH:ml

Ms Carolynne Bourne
National Project Manager
Western Metropolitan College of TAFE
Footscray Campus
PO Box 197
FOOTSCRAY 3011

cc: Ian Sapwell Jenni Gilbert Ross Gillespie

RE: NATIONAL SPECIALISED SKILLS PROJECT SCHOLARSHIP
VENICE ITALY

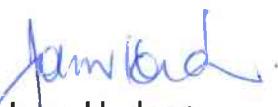
Dear Carolynne,

Please find enclosed report on my study trip to the European Centre for Training Craftsmen, San Servolo, Venice, Italy.

I have detailed each section in sequence of participation after the breakdown of facilities, accommodation and other items of interest.

Please give me a call if you have anything you wish to discuss about this report, and please accept my gratitude for allowing me this very special opportunity to experience this training, different culture and architecture. This training and intermixing with Europeans has been of benefit to myself, and will be of benefit to my work, my fellow workers and Australia in total.

Yours faithfully,


John Hudson
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REPORT

**NATIONAL SPECIALISED SKILLS PROJECT SCHOLARSHIP
VENICE, ITALY**

by

**JOHN HUDSON
PAINTING & DECORATING**

NATIONAL SPECIALISED SKILLS PROJECT SCHOLARSHIP VENICE ITALY

San Servolo is located within the lagoon between St. Marco and the Lido. The island is owned by the Venice Council. It leases parts of the island to a number of organisations of which the centre is one.

The Centre is located to the rear of the island and has several buildings at its disposal.

There are two main buildings, which house students and teachers in single and double accommodation. Also included in this is separate bathroom and toilet facilities for common usage.

The rooms for the students are clean, comfortable and of good size.

The two main buildings also house the main kitchen/lunch room with cooking facilities, a large common room is also used as a lecture room during class times.

Within the passages of this building, the walls contain many items of work completed by previous students.

Office staff also work within this main building. These people speak many languages and are very helpful and pleasant to deal with.

The meals and other supplements are reasonable and of good quantity. Breakfast and lunch are provided and dinner is a BYO affair. This proved to be a good thing, as it helped break down the problems with languages and fears of each other.

Languages between the students was a concern for me at the start, but there was always someone who could talk English or German.

At the end of the 6 weeks on the island my Italian and German had improved greatly.

Travel to and from the island is by Government boats. Students purchase a Venice Card at a cost of 10,000 lire or about A\$10.00. This entitled the user to a discount on normal fares.

Fares range from A.60c to A\$2.20 one way depending on your destination.

Expenses on the island are negligible, the real costs come from the day to day costs of food, film, tools, travel. In some cases the costs are double for the same items in Australia.

Generally the costs of food and beverages are too prohibitive to dine out every night for 6 weeks of training. This is not first class, just an ordinary restaurant in Venice.

Translators for the courses are excellent and proved to be a valuable asset and an invaluable source of information.

All the translators provided excellent coverage of what was said by the instructors, they also gave good feedback and answered all queries.

Class sizes varied from 10-1 through to 21-1. I will say more about this 21-1 later in this report.

Many of the students in the first course are of Italian background and in the second and third course they were of German and French backgrounds. We all got on fairly well and I have a great respect for the centre to allow all these nationalities to be together at one time.

Workshops (practical) of which there are several, proved to be adequate, but are cold and damp. The buildings are rather dilapidated. This is not the fault of the centre, more so the Venice Council which cannot make up its mind what to do with the island.

Tools, equipment and materials are always on hand and the centre seemed to be able to cope with the large number of students.

Students usually brought their own tools and this did help in the long run, although there was a fair amount of interchange between students.

Working hours in each course varied greatly. In the first course the hours were 8:45 - 17:10. For the second and third course, we would work from 8:30 - 21:00 or longer, this included weekends. The instructor was always with us without hesitation or complaint.

There is a large library within the centre, that has maybe 2 or 3 books in English, the remaining books are in Italian, French or German.

Class room aids supplied generally by the instructor included videos, slide programs and many text books and handouts.

The class aids are of good quality and current in technical expertise, many photographs are of actual works of each of the instructors.

Overall this centre provided what was required for the day to day learning of the students. Anything additional that was required by either the teacher or the students was always available.

The centre tries hard to please everybody, which is a good thing for both students and teachers alike.

1ST STUDY

Conservation of Wall Paintings

Teacher: Mr Renato Portolen

Student teacher ratio - 10:1

3 Full Time Translators

Mr Renato Portolen is a specialist in fresco reconstruction who works solely on fresco's within Italy and Germany.

The lessons on this subject were broken down into 75% theory and 25% practical.

Theory was conducted in one of the main classrooms of the centre. practical exercises were completed in a workshop that contained many frescos.

The theory lessons covered the following areas:

- * History of fresco's
- * Conservation versus restoration
- * General terminology
- * Technical terms
- * Intervention, cleaning, chemical treatments
- * Chemical analyst
- * Documentation of fresco's
- * Chemical treatments and reactions
- * Fresco construction

The practical lessons covered the following areas:

- * Plans for procedure for repairs
- * Cleaning
- * Removal techniques
- * Repairs to degradation
- * Chemical treatments
- * Mixing of materials
- * Application of materials

Mr Renato Portolen's style of teaching was similar to the mastery style of learning, he spoke for many hours on fresco's and the intervention on fresco's. His style of lessons was also somewhat romantic, he has a great belief in the original concepts of each artists work.

He allowed during the lessons indiscriminate questions and discussions on each subject. He always allowed enough time and discussion between each of the students and himself.

The theory lessons were always backed up by small amounts of practical exercises, during which he allowed us to discuss and work out each of our own problems. Within these lessons he also allowed us to choose what type of intervention we would like to do.

This gave greater scope to his lessons and he retained control of the group and was able to help each of us individually. There was many group discussions on each piece of work.

Many of the subjects he spoke of I have had prior knowledge of, ie, substrate problems, rising damp etc.

There was many areas that I had no knowledge of, the pigments, chemicals, chemical breakdown, types of fresco's, dry and wet. The history was also important to know.

To be able to teach this subject in Australia would be difficult and this is due mainly to the lack of real fresco's and the methods of applications.

European countries use materials that are sometimes unavailable or restricted in use for us in Australia.

The information was very useful to me and will be used by me, to help many restorers in the intervention on wall paintings.

The group all said the same thing at the completion of the course, that it was far too much information for one course, and it was suggested that it would be more beneficial for the students if the lesson be put into 2 sections, one for the learner and one for the experienced persons.

Mr Portolen agreed and he will look at this and he did say he was trying to give us 4 years of study in 2 weeks. He has agreed that this could be put into 2 sessions.

Overall I was very pleased with the lessons and the dedication of the teacher, he backed up all the theory with practical lessons and tried to help as much as possible.

The only down side was that we could not visit a site in Venice, this was due to an oversight by the people in Venice, it would have been of great benefit to see a fresco reconstruction in action.

2ND & 3RD STUDY

Scagliola 1 & 2

Teacher -O Mr Manfred Siller

Student Teacher Ratio - Scagliola 1 - 21:1

Scagliola 2 - 13:1

3 Translators - Part Time 2.5 days each week

Scagliola is a mixture of alabaster plaster, pigment and glue water. When mixed it forms a hard surface that looks and feels like marble.

Mr Siller is a master in Scagliola, who has been working in this field for some 25 years. His basic training began in Germany and now he works and travels worldwide with his skills.

The lessons in this subject were a complete reversal of the first course. Practical lessons made up 95% of the lessons and the remainder was theory and history of scagliola.

The theory lessons covered the following areas:

- * History of multiple uses of scagliola
- * Materials and mixing quantities
- * Mixing techniques
- * Levelling, sanding and polishing techniques
- * Tools and equipment

The practical lessons covered the following areas:

- * Mixtures
- * Quantities of materials
- * Techniques of mixing
- * Colour organisation
- * Levelling techniques
- * Polishing techniques
- * Negative construction
- * Inlaying and cutting

Mr Siller's used many visual aids for the theory lessons including slides, technical books, overheads and handouts.

The practical lessons are taught in sections in a way as to allow the students to see each separate process in action.

Mr Siller produced a small flat panel on the first day and then allowed the students to choose what type of construction they wish to complete.

The photographs enclosed show the negative form that I produced with the help of Mr Siller.

From each student a new colour and style of finish was required and Mr Siller would assist each student in the mixing and laying of the wet solution into the negative forms.

This presented a number of problems for the first course, mainly due to the number of students (21). It was quickly discovered that this was far too many and Mr Siller and the class was not pleased at all.

It was difficult to discuss or to get answers for problems on your own jobs. Mr Siller was far too busy to hold a large discussion on each project. He was not happy with this situation and he expressed his regret to us.

In the second course this problem did not arise as there was only 13 students, and this proved to be more acceptable for everyone. Mr Siller was more acceptable and able to hold deep discussions on each section of work.

His style was quiet and forceful, he allowed you to think and to decide for yourself, without letting you get too far ahead.

After each section was completed, he would look and he would say "control, control". If he was satisfied with the work he would then tell you what was the next process and ask you to proceed.

Mr Siller would go into great depths to ensure that everybody understood what was required and the standard that was expected. His technical expertise was above what was required, he was not afraid to offer advice in any aspect.

I believe that he was trying to lock everybody into a system that was similar to our lock step type of learning, but with more freedom of expression.

Generally I was very pleased with the lessons, both 1 and 2. I have produced a frame that now hangs on the wall of the workshop. I was happy with the instructions given and the amount of time everybody put in.

The time in each of these 2 Scagliola courses went into the night, many of the students would work late, up till 21:00 hours. It was not expected of you, it was because you want to do this.

Overall the course was very interesting and I can see a very good use for this subject in Australia.

I believe I can produce a small article here given the resources, materials and time to do this. At this stage the materials are available in Australia and at a reasonable cost.

I also believe that the foundation should look at bringing Mr Siller to Australia. His technical expertise in the subject would greatly benefit any learner.

This would also provide a service to clientele from all over the building and art trades and the costs could be covered by fee for service and the ongoing future investment in these skills for Australia.

I have only two things to present that are on the down side:

1. I believe that the time allowance before and after the course (before and after flights) is not long enough. 2-3 days before and after the course would be more realistic. It is too much of a culture and travel shock, and to have only 1 day to pack and organise travel arrangements is a nightmare.
2. The stipend of \$25.00 is not realistic, the astronomical costs of living in Venice is, to us, far too much to bear alone

I fully realise that the foundation has borne the other associated costs for the course, but for an extra \$25.00 a day, it would not add a huge burden on finances, for the student it is additional costs that needs to be looked at.

Note: Two people I think the foundation should look at bringing to Australia are as follows:

Mr. Manfred Siller 7000 Stuttgart
Scagliola 1 Neve Weinsteige 23/1
 Tel: 0711/609816
 Fax: 0711/6490148

Mr Siller does not speak English.

Ms Virginie Paul 2 Adolphe Max Place
Wall Pictorials F-75009 PARIS
 FRANCE

Ms Paul speaks English/French and some German

JOHN HUDSON
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SCAGLIOLA

Scagliola is a plaster and pigment medium that is mixed with glue water to produce a solid surface which appears to be not unlike marble. It can be produced in a number of colours and colour variations with inlaying and seamless joins.

Scagliola can also be produced to cover a large area of surfaces without colour loss or unsightly joins. It is polished with pumice stones to produce a sheen.

HISTORY

It's history began in about 1610 in a Monico Residence of a palace. The Italians and Germans both agree to disagree on the originator of the technique. Both claim they are the conceptual designers. The German's call it Stuck Marmo, the Italian's, Scagliola, we call it plaster marble. It adorns many buildings including churches, public buildings and private mansions of Europe, America and Saudi States.

In Australia, Sydney has the far greater amount of plaster marble. It is again in many banks, churches and public buildings. In Melbourne it is basically the same, the Gothic ANZ building in Collins Street, has had this system, but it was removed and never replaced. There are some private homes in Melbourne that still have features of plaster marble, one is Ravenswood House.

WHAT IS IT USED FOR & WHERE CAN IT BE USED?

It's main function is for replacing marble in areas that require a seamless finish or non structural surface that costs less and resembles marble. Columns, table tops, altars, wall and moulded surfaces are not uncommon.

It is structurally sound enough for tables although it requires the addition of mesh to be included into the mixture when wet and then when it is dry.

Gelatin gives variation
in drying time.

Weyermann
(Seaford).
Rabbit glue.

Colour variation and additional colour designs are its greatest asset, the variety and inlaying can produce endless systems of colour and line designs.

In Europe it is used on walls as the finished product as well as moulded areas. In Sydney and Melbourne it is basically the same, although inlaying of other colours is more associated with European architecture.

The only place that this material should not be used is where there is a likelihood of moisture or extremes of temperature, because it is made up of plaster, it is very susceptible to water and movement in structure surfaces, thus creating a drummy or loose surface that will eventually collapse.

Small hairline cracks that appear over many years because of movement are thought by European standards as a character building rather than a problem to the untrained eye.

HOW IS IT MADE?

Scagliola plaster is a fine plaster that is not available in Australia. I use a plaster from Sydney that is similar, the addition of marble powder is to enhance its strength and polishing viability.

Plaster with the addition of 5% marble powder is mixed with glue water to achieve a mixture that is similar to a stiff doughy consistency.

Glue water is made up of rabbit skin glue and water. The rabbit skin is soaked in water for about ~~an~~ hour, then double boiled, never reaching above 60°c. When the glue is melted down more water is added to produce a thin liquid that is added to the plaster. More detailed information about mixture and additives will be provided at class sessions.

With the cold glue water, pigments are added to the plaster mixture to produce a colour of your choice.

Production of veins is made by adding darker or lighter colours in a thicker medium.

The amount and variation of veins is dependant on how much additional colour and new mixture is added. Trial is most important to all new additions or colour change.

The mixture is broken down into 3 or 4 sections which I call loaves of plaster. Each loaf of plaster is slightly different in colour and veins. This allows you to lay the plaster mix in a uniform manner and also produces a colour variation over the whole production.

Extra colour whether darker or lighter, can be added by mixing a heavier plaster mixture to produce what I call nuggets, they are similar to small balls and nugget shapes. These are added to the outside of the loaves to help in producing larger veins and colour variations on the surface. This process is not always necessary.

When all the colour and nuggets are added the loaves maybe cut into slices, these slices vary in thickness depended on the negative form or surface to which it is to be applied to. The variation maybe as much as 2mm - 25mm. Slices are cut off each loaf systematically and layed down in front of the loaf being cut. This ensures that the slices remain in order and unmixed at this stage.

Slices of the plaster mix are then layed in a systematic finish over the whole surface. There is a need to ensure that the plaster mix is pushed well into position especially on a contoured or moulded form. Care should be taken not to apply to much pressure as this will blend the veins into the original base colour.

When all the laying is completed, there maybe a requirement to provide support to the object. This maybe a simple mesh (cloth) addition or for more structure jobs, wire mesh maybe required. Each application must be looked at before mixing of the plaster.

Flat bed table tops only require mesh on the back for support where, a wall project depending on the thickness may require wire mesh. Most plaster, when nearly cured can be shaved with a plasters rasp or knife to remove any lumps or bumps. Indentations are difficult to repair.

When the plaster mix has fully cured it can then be removed from its form, or the form guide can be removed from around it.

- Plaster grows when it dries. Thin coats x 4
1 - 39°
Silicon or Shellac (cheapest) comes away easily.
- Smooth would ag laminox bend tops, or marble (best)

POLISHING & REPAIRS

Small holes and cracks can now be repaired with the main colour of the plaster mix. The repair work is done with small spatulas and tools. Glue water is much weaker at this stage of work. The strength of the glue water maybe as much as $\frac{1}{4}$ of the original mix.

After each repair, this may include applying a mixture all over the form, the excess mixture should be removed with a wooden spatular shaped to the surface form, when the repair mixture has lost its wet look.

The repair mixture should be allowed to dry and then polish with a pumice stone. The pumice stones vary in hardness, starting with the hardest to the smoothest grade, repairing in-between polishes will gently allow the fine veins to appear and also polish the surface.

This process may take place up to 15 times, to achieve the smoothest and shiniest finish of the plaster. After the smoothest of the pumice stones has been used, application of the repair mixture and then the sanding with Silicon Carbide paper grade 600 through to 1200 must be used.

If at this stage it still requires more polish 1800 to 2400 paper maybe used, always using the repair mixture between each polish, usually 1 application with each grade of paper.

Care must be taken not to use excessive water as this will swell the plaster and may cause unrepairable damage.

When finally all the polishing is completed, beeswax is applied to the whole surface, then buffed to provide an even shine and protection.

INLAYING

Inlaying of other colours or patterns is done prior to the sanding with silicon carbide or the beeswax.

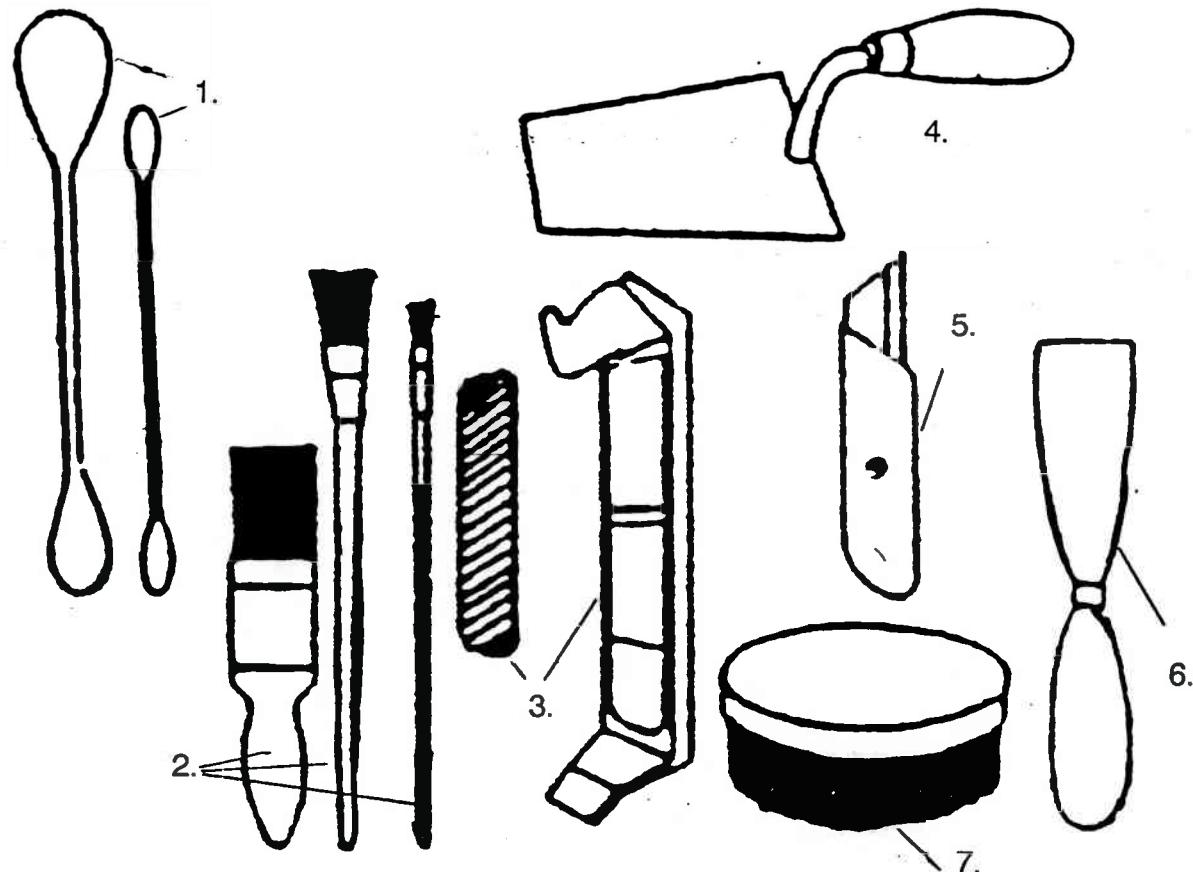
Inlaying can be achieved after the plaster has dried and you can use, N/T cutters, stanley knife, chisels to make your design within the dried plaster. This is then polished so that both surface are at the same level, then proceed with the silicon carbide.

NOTES

- * All colours and glue water mixtures should be tested and timed before mixing a large volume of plaster.
- * If the plaster mixture is to dry when it is being applied it will crack badly.
- * If the plaster mixture is to wet it will sag and be difficult to lay.
- * Ensure that after each polish with the pumice stone that you clean all surfaces with water to remove any small particles of that grade of pumice.
- * Test all colours including the nuggets before making the whole mixture.
- * All colours vary when added together, and they will all play a part in the drying time.
- * Glue should be strained before adding to the dry plaster mixture.
- * All colours that are added should be done so in a measured amount and recorded so that future references can be made.
- * Care should be taken when polishing with the pumice stones, these stones will alter the profile of any shape in one pass over.
- * All additions to the plaster mixture should be done in a measured amount and recorded for future references and matching.
- * All surfaces that the plaster is layed into must have a breaking compound. This ensures that the plaster will not adhere to the mould or flat surface. French polish or liquid paraffin are ideal.
- * Only use the materials mentioned, many plasters generate to much heat and will bleach the colour of the pigments.

COLOURS	PERCENTAGES	DRYING TIME
Ultra Marine Blue	800/7 ltrs	Medium <i>3 hrs workable</i>
Ultra Blue/ Yellow chrome	800/7 ltrs <i>800cc/7 litres</i>	Medium
Indian Red	600/7 ltrs	Good <i>4 hrs workable</i>
Indian Red/ Yellow Oxide	1000/7 ltrs	Good
Indian Red/ Yellow Chrome	800/7 ltrs	Good
Yellow Chrome	250-300/7 ltrs	Medium
Black/Red	800/7 ltrs	Medium
Yellow/ Green Red	800/7 ltrs	Medium

Scagliola Tools



1. Spatulas, large and small
2. Brushes 50mm, 25mm, 10mm
3. Plasters/modellers rasp
4. Trowel, small
5. Stanley knife
6. Scraper 75mm, 100mm
7. Rubber bowl 120mm wide approx.
8. Strainer - stockings