

PROPOSAL FOR TREATMENT OF CONFESSIONAL BOX AT SAN GABRIEL MISSION

Inspection of confessional box and proposed exhibition space was undertaken on site at the San Gabriel Mission on February 9th 2019 by
Catherine Keaveney, Furniture & Wooden Objects Conservator

CONDITION AND ASSESSMENT

This is an object with great historic significance and even in its current state of disrepair is valuable to the story of the Mission in Southern California. The Confessional box is approx 200 yrs old. It is currently being stored under a portico at the mission with some exposure to the elements, but is protected from direct sunlight.

Joints are stable and structure is self supporting.

The base of each of the three sides has rot and pest damage and the whole piece leans forward. With good judgment the piece has been stored off the ground protecting it from further damage through abrasion and water damage.

Pest damage is noted throughout the piece which is currently deemed inactive.

One armrest on the interior is detached. Some wooden pieces have been stored with the object, one of these is similar to the attached armrest and further investigation may make it possible to re-attach correct piece.

This structure has undergone previous repairs and some pieces -even the crown and crucifix- may be from another similar confessional box. C There is some movement of pieces.

Footrest for front is detached and in ill repair.

Cobwebs and accumulated dirt throughout.

Found photographs show the object as having had pierced tin plate windows on each side. These are now missing.

TREATMENT PROPOSAL

Objective is to stabilise the Confessional Box in preparation for installation in the San Gabriel Mission Museum. The proposed conservation approach is to have minimum intervention but ensure the structure is stable and cleaned for exhibition.

- Conservation grade cleaning using fine brushes, to get rid of accumulation of dust and cobwebs, taking care not to lose any further material from the object in damaged areas.
- To re-adhere armrest and/or footrest should the appropriate pieces be found amongst the ones kept with the object.
- Consolidate and strengthen the rotted and pest worn areas using Paraloid B72 (a conservation grade consolidant) mixed with micro beads or coconut fibre. This is an appropriate conservation technique and reversible for future campaigns.

- Create support for the crown with crucifix.
 - Wax will be used throughout to condition the wood and protect it. This will also give a uniform color and finish to the overall piece and will make it more aesthetically appropriate in exhibition.
 - The proposed exhibition space was discussed with the committee. This object is to be exhibited on a plinth off the ground and away from direct sunlight.
- It is agreed that the piece needs a mount maker to create a display plinth to
1. Keep the piece off the floor, continuing to protect it from underneath.
 2. To support and balance the item to a level standing.
 3. The mount maker should also devise a system to secure the artefact to the wall of the exhibition space.

The mount maker who is used by the Huntington Museum and who has worked alongside Catherine Keaveney is recommended for this project:
Kamil Beski, Beski Projekts, cell: 323-244-1493,
email; kamil@ beskiprojekts.com

COST ESTIMATE FOR TREATMENT BY WOODEN OBJECTS CONSERVATOR

Approx 20 hrs @ \$125.00 per hour = \$2,500

Should additional issues arrive once work begins, an approximate 10 hrs contingency is needed.

Approx 30 hrs \$125.00 per hour = \$3750

PHOTOGRAPHS OF AREAS OF CONCERN



Numerous pieces creating crown



Support suggested at back of crown



Armrest proper left still attached
Also example of rotted wood



Interior showing loose wood pieces
stored with object



Possible footrest for front



Accumulations of dirt and debris