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Cultural Heritage Imaging
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Samuel H. Kress Foundation Awards Grant to Bay Area Non-Profit Helping Museums

San Francisco — Cultural Heritage Imaging (CHI), a Bay Area non-profit, has been awarded a \$25,000 grant from the Samuel H. Kress Foundation. The grant funds a pilot project that allows CHI to work with staff at the Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco (FAMSF) to evaluate how innovative multimedia techniques and content could help museums with digital conservation projects.

CHI and FAMSF staff will use advanced reflectance transformation imaging (RTI) tools and techniques to digitally document and analyze objects in the museums' collections. After creating the RTI media, project team members will investigate how the interactive, two- and three-dimensional (3D) representations can help museum conservation staff document and preserve collection assets. For example, RTI media reveal highly detailed surface information for paintings, carvings, and other items, which can aid in studying or restoring delicate features on ancient objects.

"The Kress Foundation grant will help us evaluate how museum conservation staff can use interactive digital media to study precious artifacts in new, better ways," said Mark Mudge, CHI President and co-founder. "We've assembled an expert team for this project and we look forward to building on what we have learned from other digital conservation projects."

The \$25,000 project, "RTI Conservation School Pilot Program," will deliver a wide range of multimedia content, including photos, RTIs, screen captures from the RTIs, written materials, and documentary videos. CHI will work with museum staff to evaluate how RTI media can be used in conservation activities. The videos will feature conservators discussing how RTI aids conservation. A larger follow-up focus group of conservators will evaluate the effectiveness of the pilot project and associated content.

FAMSF conservators will select the objects to be photographed, analyze the resulting RTIs, and offer feedback on the results. Susan Grinols, FAMSF Director, Photo Services and Imaging, will coordinate photo shoots with the FAMSF team of art handlers and conservation staff and will work with CHI to photograph selected objects. She will also assist with documentary interviews and video content.

CHI offers training programs and content that use advanced 3D imaging technology created at HP Labs. CHI staff and other collaborators adapted the technology for use in many settings, including archaeological sites, museums, and national parks. The technologies have been field-tested all over the US and the world on many types of artifacts, including rock art, mosaics, ancient coins, ceramics, stone carvings, cuneiform tablets, paintings, and metalwork. CHI offers ongoing digital imaging workshops at its San Francisco headquarters.

CHI plans to launch the FAMSF project during late fall 2009 and winter 2010. For more information about Cultural Heritage Imaging, the Kress grant, or to view interactive 3D media of cultural heritage artifacts, visit www.c-h-i.org or call Marlin Lum at (415) 558-8672.

About Cultural Heritage Imaging (CHI). CHI is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization in San Francisco. Cultural Heritage Imaging drives development and adoption of practical digital imaging and preservation solutions to save humanity's endangered treasures. Cultural Heritage Imaging offers training and consultation services to museums, archaeologists, conservation staff, government agencies, and the public. Visit Cultural Heritage Imaging at www.c-h-i.org.