



### The Forbidden City's Lodge of Retirement

In preparation for the 2008 Summer Olympics in Beijing, Smithsonian Institution scientists and conservators from the Smithsonian **Museum Conservation Institute** worked with experts from the Palace Museum, in the Forbidden City, Beijing, China, and the World Monuments Fund, to restore the site of Emperor Qianlong's Lodge of Retirement.

The Lodge of Retirement was constructed in the Forbidden City for the 4<sup>th</sup> Qing emperor, in anticipation of his retirement circa 1796. (A more literal translation of the Lodge of Retirement is the Studio of Peaceful Old Age.) Nearly every surface of the interior of this opulent mansion was decorated in some way. The chambers of the Lodge of Retirement had remained untouched and had been seen by only a few people since the 1920's.

This restoration project brought this spectacular and highly significant structure into public light for the first time and represents an international collaboration that addressed important conservation issues and approaches expected to benefit future conservation projects.

Conservation issues pertaining to the

Lodge building itself, as well as its contents, were addressed: structural analysis, heating, ventilating and air conditioning, roofing, windows, water-proofing and restoration of decorative materials and objects. Conservation challenges involved not only the restoration of the material fabric of the Lodge, and making it accessible to the public, but addressing the issues of replicating historic artisan skills and techniques long lost, replacing original materials (jades, silks, bamboo marquetry) no longer available, and protecting the Lodge and its contents from insect and fungal damage.

The Museum Conservation Institute (MCI) is the center for specialized technical collection research and conservation for all Smithsonian museums and collections. MCI conducts in-depth studies of artistic, anthropological, and historic objects using state-of-the-art analytical techniques to elucidate their provenance, composition, and cultural context, and to improve the Smithsonian's conservation and collections storage capabilities.

For more information you may visit this web site: [www.si.edu/mci](http://www.si.edu/mci)