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INFLUENTIAL CONSERVATOR WINS 2006 PLOWDEN MEDAL

James Black, who has played a major role in the preservation of cultural heritage internationally through conservation training and publication, has been awarded the Royal Warrant Holders Association 2006 Plowden Medal. The award has been made in recognition of his invaluable contribution to the development of the conservation profession. He will be presented with the Medal by the Lord Mayor of the City of London, Alderman David Brewer, at the Royal Warrant Holders Association lunch in London on 6 June.

The Gold Medal, inaugurated in 1999, is awarded by the Royal Warrant Holders Association in memory of the late Hon. Anna Plowden CBE, the leading conservator who was Vice-President of the Association at the time of her death in 1997. The Medal is presented annually to the individual who has made the most significant recent contribution to the advancement of the conservation profession. It can also be awarded to recognise a lifetime of commitment and achievement.

James Black has practised and taught high standards of conservation for many years, delivering quality training to conservators through international summer schools in many disciplines. By bringing together conservators internationally and through his publishing company he has communicated conservation issues to a very wide audience and been effective in enabling multi-disciplinary collaboration - resulting in new thinking on conservation issues..

James Black was born in 1947 and, after graduating in Metallurgy from Nottingham University in 1969, began his career in the steel industry. Three years later he made a career switch, becoming an archaeologist and conservator on excavations in Ethiopia, Kenya and Syria. He then spent two years as archaeological conservator at Leeds University, participating in archaeological excavations in Afghanistan. In 1976 James was appointed Lecturer in Conservation at the Institute of Archaeology at the University of London and while he was there he took part in excavations in Swaziland and returned to Syria. He also led conservation missions for the International Council of Museums (ICOM) to Yemen and Libya.

After working as a conservation consultant and wall painting conservator for two years in Austria, France and the UK, he founded the Institute of Archaeology Summer Schools in 1983 offering short specialised courses in the conservation of art and antiquities. These courses were among the first attempts to provide continuing professional development for conservators. Six years later he created an educational charity – International Academic Projects (IAP) – which absorbed the Summer Schools. Its aims are to help promote education, training and research into conservation, archaeology, anthropology and other related fields. James continues to act as co-ordinator for the IAP which runs a professional development programme of short courses in the UK and throughout the world, as well as a distance learning programme.

Through Archetype Publications Ltd James Black has produced a substantial body of work on art, antiquities, preservation and related topics, which are directly useful to conservators and fundamental to current practice. Many publications, often of a technical and scientific nature, have been published in conjunction with other organisations ranging from the British Museum to UNESCO.

He has lectured widely, including at the UNESCO Conservation Course in Pakistan in 1989 and on ICCROM courses in Rome and in 1995 in Brazil. He was part of the 1992 and 1995 missions to Beirut to set up the Museum

Conservation Laboratory and led a conservation mission to the National Museums of Syria in 1996.

Anton Mosimann, President of the Royal Warrant Holders Association comments, “James Black is a truly worthy recipient of the Plowden Medal. By organising the dissemination of technical information through teaching and publication he continues to promote the development of the conservation profession in a unique way. His communication to a wide international audience is particularly significant as he has achieved it independently – something which was also Anna Plowden’s particular strength. ”

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