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FOVNDATION
FOR DIGITAL TECHNOLOGY
IN CONSERVATION

Candide meets Star Trek

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If we believed the press we would be feeling that the light at the end of the tunnel is getting larger, the idea is that all our troubles are over and that we can now slip back into a comfortable existence where nothing is lost and we are content - art galleries will exhibit the same paintings and objects, museums will contain the same artefacts, nothing has changed and Dr Pangloss is that strangely dressed man strutting, with a little limp, down the steps.

We are allowed to feel that perhaps the press might have a bias that is about something other than reality. But then sometimes we are surprised - as we were by the Financial Times last week in a piece entitled *Factum Arte remaking history* - knowing that nothing in any gallery, any vault, any exhibit - in fact anything - is the same now as it was last week - we are, and all things are - changing and the sooner we understand this the betterwell we do, of course, otherwise our world's personal focus on genealogy and ageing would not be so intense and profitable for the providers of salve.

I know I started this note with tunnels and trains but that was to show that what you read is not always the whole story. The FT demonstrated that sometimes the press can tell complicated stories very clearly. In this case the story is that we are able, with digital technology, to dematerialise and then re-materialise an object, almost like Star Trek but without the sound effects and more importantly - we are shown how the data is mediated, transformed and elaborated. This is truly incredible - beyond belief - but it is true. We want to continue to develop this incredible ability to help conservators, restorers and all of us to understand clearly what is happening to our cultural heritage and also what we can do, with the knowledge and information which can help us enjoy it and engage with it without touching or harming it. This is the future - and we are there. Beam me up Scotty.....