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UM FINE ARTS SCHOOL FOCUSES ON PUZZLING PAINTINGS

By Leslie Vining
Office of University Relations
University of Montana

MISSOULA--

A painting of an earless face and armless torso is part of the permanent art collection at the University of Montana. Who painted it? Who is the subject? The work, referred to as "The Admiral," is just one of several puzzles locked up in the collection.

"The figure may have been cut out of one picture and glued onto another canvas," UM Fine Arts Dean Kathryn Martin said, "but nothing is certain."

According to Martin, the portrait was once believed to be done by Rembrandt Peale, an early American colonial painter--but studies have proven this to be false.

"The Admiral" and other works in the collection must be researched by art experts because, Martin says, "When someone gives you a painting, you want to check its authenticity before you spend \$3,000 for restoration and up to \$300 for cleaning."

This research is the first step in the University's present project to evaluate, restore and reorganize the art collection. The effort is funded by a \$36,500 grant from the Montana Legislature, appropriated from less than one percent of the Montana coal tax revenues.

Conservator Richard Trela from Clancy has examined overall condition of

(over)