

Paul Mardikian and Philippe de Viviès, Conservators at the Clemson Conservation Center

For the month of February, Head Conservator Paul Mardikian and Conservator Philippe de Viviès of the Hunley Project, are both featured for our new press venture, “Honoring the French.”

The Hunley submarine was discovered in 1995 after sinking in 1864 off the coast of Charleston. During an eight-year period, a team of experts worked on the archeological site and on the raising of this historical relic. Financed by the American Ministry of Defense and private funding, the Hunley Project is managed by the [Friends of the Hunley Association](#) that recently linked up with the [School of Materials Science and Engineering](#), and the [Clemson University Conservation Center](#) this past March.



After studying Archeology and Art History at the School of the Louvre in Paris, **Paul Mardikian** received his M.S. in Conservation Sciences and Techniques in 1990 from the Sorbonne. Specializing in marine archaeological conservation, he has worked several years with the team from the Eléctricité de France Valectra Laboratory on the conservation of artifacts from the Titanic wreckage. Hailing from the Paris region, Paul is a globetrotter: he has traveled to Canada to work with the Canadian Parks Services and to Australia to collaborate with the Western Australian Maritime Museum. In France, he has worked on the wreckage of the *Alabama*, an American ship that sunk along the coast of Cherbourg in 1864, allowing him to meet many US Navy experts. After the discovery of the Hunley submarine, the Americans came calling again about working together on this project. Thrilled by the opportunity, Paul Mardikian left France and moved to Charleston, where he has lived for the past eight years. A self-proclaimed “mercenary of marine archeological conservation,” Paul Mardikian is also an artist. Both a painter and sculptor, four of his works were recently accepted into the collections of the Medical University of South Carolina. From February 1st through the 29th, his pieces will be on display at the [Corrigan Gallery in Charleston](#). For more about this event, [click here](#).



Like Paul Mardikian, **Philippe de Viviès** also holds a M.S. in Conservation Sciences and Techniques from the Sorbonne. Born in Aix-en-Provence, France, Philippe started traveling at a very young age. After living all over France (in the Savoie, le Pas-de-Calais and the Midi Pyrénées regions), he has worked in Alexandria, Egypt with Jean-Yves Empeur, the director of research at the National Center for Scientific Research (CNRS). Still in contact with Paul Mardikian, Philippe joined the Hunley Project to carry out his university internship. He was originally only supposed to be in Charleston for six months but he has actually been living there for the last seven years. Having a passion for his work, he hopes to “develop in France a savoir-faire familiar in the United States.” In fact, Philippe seeks to create in Arles a Mediterranean center for conservation, restoration, expertise and research within the domain of marine heritage. “For the Hunley Project, we have been able to develop innovating techniques to stabilize metals during the treatment of archeological objects that have never been used elsewhere. I hope to now bring these techniques to Europe,” he says. Working on this project with his associate Jean-Bernard Memet for the last two years, it was recently commended by the Young Entrepreneurs Initiative Program of the French Embassy in the United States through which it will receive financial support and mentoring.

Although very busy with the Hunley Project, Paul and Philippe are not limited in their activities. Concentrating on his enterprising efforts, Philippe has already established several partners such as the Department of Sub-aquatic and Underwater Archaeological Research, which falls under the auspices of the Ministry of French Culture. Paul, for his part, is spending a great part of his time teaching for different artifact conservation programs in the United States. He is currently preparing an international conference to be held in Charleston in 2010 on the conservation of metal artifacts, thus contributing to making South Carolina an area of excellence in the American Southeast.

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Additional links added on February 4, 2008 by:

[The School of Materials Science and Engineering at Clemson University](#)