The Object
- Abelan basketry mask, probably a yam mask, selected for loan to a local gallery (YPM ANT.269341)
- No provenience beyond donor’s name - identified stylistically
- Red, yellow, white, and black pigments are powdery and crumbling - significant loss expected during transport/display

Cultural Background
- Yams are an important part of the cultural landscape of the Abelam people of New Guinea
- Annual ceremonies bring different communities together to celebrate and compete over the largest yams, results determine status of men
- The largest yams (2-3 meters) were decorated with fresh flowers, fruit, feathers, and either new or used masks and shells
- Masks could be heirlooms, but the paint was redone every year and was not expected to last
- Pigments may or may not have had binders

Purpose of Study
- Which consolidant already available in the lab will successfully consolidate the powdery and crumbling pigments without significantly changing their optical properties?
- Pigments need to be consolidated to avoid losses during transport and repeated handling
- Consolidant needs to improve cohesion and adhesion of the pigment layer without significant color change or gloss
- Research, testing, evaluation, treatment, and packing need to be completed in 3 weeks - a very tight schedule
- No time or resources for analysis of the mask or the tests (e.g. pigment ID, colorimetry/spectrophotometry) - need to keep it simple

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Method
1. Literature review to find consolidant options
2. Create facsimiles from rattan & powder pigments
3. Apply selected consolidants to facsimiles, two coats
4. Visual/physical assessment of pigments between coats
5. Best two consolidants tested on the mask
6. Winner applied to the entire mask

Outcome
- Funori selected over 1% KG in H₂O due to slightly better cohesive properties
- Two coats Funori applied to the mask - significant reduction in powdering and crumbling, minimal darkening, interpretation of the object not affected
- Slight gloss visible in tests was not visible on the mask - facsimiles were not perfect, but good enough for