

NEWSGRAM

News in brief from the Conservation Center

Issue 27, August 2013

INSTITUTE of FINE ARTS
NEW YORK UNIVERSITY

In Their Own Words

The Class of 2017

Applicants to the conservation program this year again faced stiff competition as we continued to see very high admissions numbers. In March, we interviewed many passionate, highly-qualified applicants, which made the final selection quite difficult. In the end, six carefully chosen students formed the incoming class. In addition to this class of six, we also are welcoming our fifth Leon Levy Visiting Fellow in the Conservation of Archaeological Objects, Moses Mkumpha, from Malawi. The Center is very pleased to introduce to you, in their own words, the Class of 2017.

Emily Cohen

Library & Archive

After a lifetime of making art, I graduated magna cum laude from Washington University in St. Louis, MO with a BFA in painting only to realize my senior year that I no longer wanted to pursue becoming a fine artist. I didn't recognize my interest in the field of conservation until after graduation when I started working in a specialty paper store. In hindsight, this was a great introduction to some of the papers used both by artists and conservators! It was around this time that I began to consider what I wanted to do with my artistic skills and whether or not I wanted to return to school. Then, on my birthday (when you get free admission), I went to the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum in Boston. There, the conservators happened to have their work spaces temporarily set up in the tapestry room before relocating to the museum's new wing. This serendipitous occurrence made me understand that art conservation could perfectly integrate my skill set: manual dexterity with art historical knowledge. It was then that I knew I wanted to pursue this as a profession, despite the years of chemistry coursework I had ahead of me!



Emily travelling in Stockholm's Djurgarden, summer 2013

I'm thrilled to be entering the library and archive program at NYU. When I was working toward my painting degree, I had been particularly interested in making works of art on paper and just so happened to fall in love with bookbinding after taking it as an elective. Having always enjoyed working with paper, as well as being an avid reader and lover of photography, I knew that I would want to pursue the conservation of paper, whether bound or unbound. With excitement, I'm anticipating the variety of opportunities that the library and archive track will present to me, especially with the ability to take advantage of the museums and libraries of New York City.

Despite my background in painting and my interest in paper conservation, my pre-program experience was in objects conservation, having worked under Barbara Mangum of *Sculpture and Decorative Arts Conservation Services* in Somerville, MA. I'm grateful to have had the opportunity to work with so many materials—from plastics to metals—and in such a variety of scales—from handheld to twenty feet tall. The most satisfying project that I had the opportunity to work on was a vandalized, late 19th-century bronze statue from the grave of Sarah Osgood in Norwich, CT. The life-size bronze had been cut into pieces with a chainsaw, and Barbara, my co-intern Laura Panadero (who will now be my classmate!), and I spent over a year attempting to assemble the pieces before a foundry could re-weld her. Then, after some cleaning and inpainting, we had the immense pleasure of returning the sculpture to her home.

Originally from Atlanta, GA, I have been a resident of Somerville, MA for the past three years. I have experienced the culture of a Southern, Midwestern, and New England city, but I am sure that living in New York will be full of surprises! I'll be on the lookout for a place that serves good fried okra, and I'm looking forward to discovering the best biking paths the city

has to offer. In addition to the chance to live in New York for a few years, NYU was my first choice because of its emphasis on art history and the opportunities it gives its students to travel while furthering their conservation studies. Now that I'm in the library and archive program, I can't wait to learn more about the history of writing and the book, as well as the history of photography. Eventually, I hope to start a private practice, where I look forward to meeting the challenges of making treatment decisions under always changing circumstances.

Harry DeBauche

Objects/Sculpture

I received my BFA in Illustration from the Rhode Island School of Design, after which I spent two years at the Universities of Wisconsin and Minnesota finishing my prerequisite science coursework. Most of my previous undergraduate studio experience has been related to sculpture, mostly portraiture in ceramic or cast metal, and, perhaps unsurprisingly, that's the area of conservation that most interests me. In addition to the carving and modeling I did in and out of school, I spent three months at the University of Wisconsin-Madison's Chazon Museum of Art cleaning one of the large, iron Louis Sullivan architectural grilles recovered from the demolished Chicago Stock Exchange.



Harry in the lapidarium of St. Paul's Cathedral, cleaning and cataloging the remains of the Norman cathedral, destroyed in the Great Fire of London

I first really became aware of art conservation while spending a semester abroad in Rome where I was able to see, for the first time, the full history of Western art restoration displayed simultaneously. It was only then, when I could actually see how dynamic and complex a field conservation was, as well as the impact it had on peoples' experiences of works of art, that I decided to pursue it as a career.

For the past year I've been studying conservation of wood, stone, and gilded objects, as well as carving reproductions of Early English gothic ornament in limestone, oak and limewood at the City and Guilds of London School of Art. My time at the school gave me the chance to work for a week at Westminster Abbey cleaning several pieces of 16th-century, carved oak furniture, as well as the document chest left by Margaret Beaufort, Henry the VII's mother, when she died at the deanery. This summer, I'm working at St. Paul's Cathedral in London for a month surveying and cleaning fragments from the Norman cathedral, which had previously occupied its site.

Rebecca Gridley

Undecided

A native New Yorker, I graduated from Yale University with a BA in Art History. I wrote my thesis on John Currin's *Cranach Nudes*, painted in 1998–99, in order to combine my strong interests in both modern and contemporary art and renaissance art. The IFA appealed to me, because studying art history has been integral to my

approach to conservation, and vice versa; the process of close-looking and researching construction methods is most often my entry point for art historical analysis. I hope to continue studying these areas of art history, but am excited to expand out of my comfort zone and take classes in Asian and non-Western Art as well.

After college, I worked as account manager at a large private conservation lab in Chicago, which sparked my interest in disaster response management and emergency preparedness. This experience became useful soon after I started my internship last fall at **Art Conservation Group** (ACG) in Brooklyn. I assisted ACG with recovery efforts and triage immediately following Hurricane Sandy, and with stabilization treatments over the following months. The hurricane also provided an opportunity to intern for Cranmer Art Group, treating a collection of large-scale contemporary paintings that were flooded while in storage.

At ACG, some of my favorite projects have included treating a 15th-century terracotta portrait bust, a collection of Han Dynasty burial figures, and recently, a 21st Dynasty Egyptian sarcophagus.

I am starting at the IFA undecided as to whether I will pursue objects or painting conservation. Regardless, I am looking forward to taking advantage of the IFA's tremendous travel opportunities, as they offer such exciting hands-on experience in both specialties. Outside of the lab, you can usually find me at the pottery studio, kickboxing or biking around Brooklyn.



Rebecca consolidates the surface of a 21st Dynasty Egyptian sarcophagus at ACG

Moses Mkumpha

Leon Levy Visiting Fellow 2013–2014

I am Malawian by nationality. Malawi is located in southeast Africa, and borders with Tanzania in the north, Mozambique to the east and south, and Zambia to the west. I was trained as a biology high school teacher and hold a Bachelor of Education in biology with a minor in chemistry from Chancellor College, University of Malawi.

I came to learn about conservation through an advertisement in the news looking for a conservation officer at the Department of Antiquities under the Ministry of Tourism, Wildlife and Culture. I chose the career because of the role it plays in the management and preservation of cultural heritage property. I prefer preventive conservation as an area of interest as my prior conservation experience was cleaning graffiti, lichens



Moses, blue jacket, explains Stone Age history in Malawi during an exhibition by the Department of Antiquities on June 23, 2013 for African Civil Service Day

and mosses from rock paintings at Chongoni Rock-Art Area.

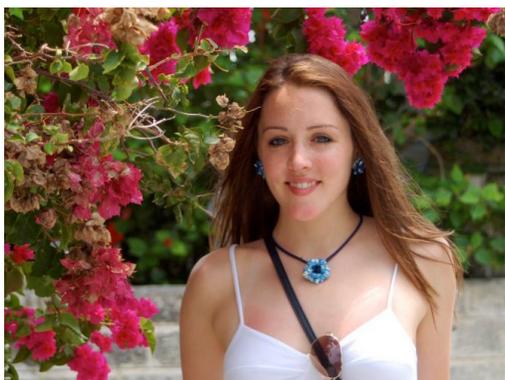
The Chongoni site was inscribed on the World Heritage List in 2006 by the UNESCO World Heritage Committee. With 127 rock-painting locations identified, the site has the richest concentrations of rock art in the whole of central Africa. The rock paintings are of two types, red and white. The red paintings are the oldest made during the Stone Age period by hunter-gathering BaTwa Pygmies. Chewa farmers, using white clay, made the white paintings during the Iron Age period. The rock painting had and still continues to have cultural significance as a center of traditional and religious ceremonies for the creators of the art, as well as their descendants.

I loved my experience at Chongoni Rock-Art Area. During the cleaning exercises, I learned so much about the conservation of the paintings, and I was satisfied with the work and how it increased the appreciation of the rock art. In the future, I envision further schooling in conservation studies, publishing research and helping to develop and establish a curriculum for conservation studies at a tertiary level in my country.

Shannon Mulshine

Library & Archive

Despite having fallen in love with the Boston-Cambridge area, where I attended Harvard College to earn my BA in art history with a minor in studio art, I am eager for the transition to New York City, where my studies will be inspired by the great collections to which I'll have access. My knowledge of the culturally rich and beautiful neighborhood, gained during an education internship at The Frick Collection, motivated my decision to choose NYU in pursuing my study of conservation. Pair the location with the opportunity to continue my studies in art history, which I believe will prepare me to be a well-informed and analytical conservator, and NYU was a natural first choice.



Shannon vacationing in Bermuda

I first learned about conservation in my junior year, when my advisor, knowing of my dual interest in art history and art making, recommended that I explore a course offered biannually by the Straus Center for Conservation and Technical Studies on the materials and techniques of art and artifacts. I had recently switched majors and, despite loving my introductory art history courses, was already itching for some hands-on work. Watching the Straus conservation staff busy in their remarkable facilities, I knew immediately that I could be happy in the field, combining a researched and inquisitive intellectual approach with dexterous manual work on projects that had the potential to shed light on and preserve our cultural heritage.

Though I never considered myself to be science-minded, the impressive instruments of the Straus frequented my memory as I took two years of chemistry in eight months and was surprisingly delighted with it.

I have since believed that I would be interested in the conservation of works on paper, having ample studio experience working with paper myself. I had the remarkable occasion to explore this type of work during an internship at the Harvard Business School's Baker Library's conservation lab, where I enjoyed practicing and improving multiple tear mending techniques, and sorting through the contents of old business folios in consideration for new enclosures—an exciting task because one never knows what one's going to find!

In terms of my art historical interests, I would love to build upon my undergraduate studies in early modern Western art, because I find the issues raised to be stimulating, but I have always desired to study the Renaissance, and this may just be the perfect opportunity for that. Regardless of the specific subjects of study, what I desire most from my time at NYU is to learn to create a productive dialogue between historical knowledge and material objects, which will allow me to serve both the historical and technical fields one day, potentially in a research facility like the Straus Center.

While my excitement for the program at NYU cannot be overstated, I am secretly looking forward to New York for the amazing variety of food it has to offer. Having spent this past year as a Harvard Square bartender and oyster shucker while completing organic chemistry, I have learned that there is no better way to get to know a neighborhood and achieve a sense of home than to eat at its restaurants. In the fall, when I am not busy in the labs or studying in Central Park for my daily dose of nature, I hope to meet you downtown for some good food and conversation.

Bermet Nishanova

Archaeological Objects

I graduated from the University of Georgia with double majors in art history and biochemistry in 2013. As a biochemistry student, I worked in the Complex Carbohydrates Research Center where we investigated means of developing efficient and alternate fuel. During



Bermet hiking towards Dorothy Lake, near the Continental Divide Trail in Colorado

my time in the lab, I used analytical equipment such as HPLC (high-pressure liquid chromatography), infrared spectroscopy, and UV spectroscopy, all of which, unbeknownst to me at the time, helped prepare me for the world of conservation.

As an art history student, I interned at the Georgia Museum of Art writing condition reports for Pierre Daura's works on paper. Pierre Daura (1896–1976) was a Spanish-born artist whose works were influenced by the French *Cercle et Carré* style. His art was also motivated by the historical events of the Spanish Civil War. Although I did not have many opportunities to do hands-on treatment work at the museum, I read books and articles that would greatly expand my understanding of issues related to paper conservation.

As my dual degrees suggest, I love both science and art history. I couldn't decide between the two until one day my art history professor, Dr. Shelley Zuraw, recommended that I look into art conservation as a possible career option. As a graduate of the Institute, she also told me of the Institute of Fine Arts' conservation program. What interested me most about the Institute's conservation program was that it placed equal emphasis on art history and science. This was significant to me because I wanted to find a field within art history where the application of science played a meaningful role.

My academic area of interest is the Bronze Age Oxus civilization, also known as the Bactria-Margiana Archaeological Complex, which developed along the piedmont region in the upper Amu (Oxus), Murghab and Tedjen Rivers, and is surrounded by the Hindy Kush, Kopet Darg and Zagros Mountains in Central Asia. I have a more personal connection to this art because of my cultural roots in Central Asia (I was born in Kyrgyzstan). I am very excited to learn more about the arts of this era and explore the cultural history of the Ancient Near East and Central Asia.

Laura Panadero

Undecided

A high school ceramics teacher first introduced art conservation to me, because they knew of my interest in studio art and chemistry. When I began college at Tufts University I believed art conservation was the job of my dreams, but in my first semester I struggled with chemistry and at the same time fell in love with archaeology. This prompted me to abandon the possibility of art conservation for a double major in archaeology and art history. However, after attending a careers panel two years later I changed my mind again (much to the surprise and amusement of my adviser) and steeled myself for a return to chemistry. Luckily, the second time was the charm! I graduated in 2012 fully dedicated to pursuing a career in conservation.

With a goal set to attend graduate school in art conservation, I began interning with private objects conservator Barbara Mangum in Somerville, MA. I have worked with her for the past year and a half and have been lucky to work on objects in a wide variety of materials including wood, ceramics (both high-fire and low-fire), metals, and plastic. The most difficult, and most memorable, piece I worked on was a life-size brass grave sculpture that needed to be reassembled

after having been cut apart by vandals. It was a study in patience and perseverance (as my fellow intern, and future classmate, Emily can attest to), but by the end I had experienced the most difficult and tedious moments of conservation, as well as the most rewarding. Unfortunately, it did not help me decide on an area



Laura and the skeleton of a cave bear at the Museum of Zooarchaeology, Cambridge University

of conservation to pursue! I am interested in oil painting, works of art on paper, and objects (especially ceramics), and I am most looking forward to exploring all these areas in the first year of study.

In addition to conservation, I am excited to advance my art historical studies. Because of my archaeological background I have had a lot of exposure to ancient periods, but am also interested in expanding on my knowledge of the medieval period in general, and illuminated manuscripts in particular. My art historical interests are somewhat widespread, but I am looking forward to exploring them along with my conservation studies. In fact, it is this ability to study both subjects together that attracts me to the program. I believe art historical perspective is necessary for a complete understanding of art objects. Also, as I hope to work in an institutional or museum setting, I think such a perspective will be helpful when working alongside art historians and curators.

When I'm not studying I spend most of my time cooking, reading mystery novels, watching Netflix (I am currently working my way through the X-Files), and picking up all varieties of art and craft projects. I love to paint, and am currently attempting to learn watercolors, which I hope will be somewhat easier to use in a cramped New York City apartment! While I am just the tiniest bit nervous about relocating from the relatively small city of Boston to the very large city of New York, I am very excited for all the new experiences that such a setting will undoubtedly bring. •

Alumni Update



Morgan Adams '13 has been appointed the inaugural 2013 – 2014 Pine Tree Foundation Fellow in Book Conservation at the Morgan Library & Museum. This fellowship will provide Morgan with the opportunity to develop and refine her judgment and treatment skills through projects of increasing complexity under the on-going supervision and mentoring of book conservators Maria Fredericks, Drue Heinz Book Conservator, and Frank Trujillo, Associate Book Conservator. This new

Fellowship has been made possible through the generosity of the Pine Tree Foundation of New York. Morgan Adams is the first graduate of the Mellon Library & Archive Conservation Education program at the Conservation Center, Institute of Fine Arts, New York University.

photo credit: Art Conservation Group; Joel Cohen; Harry DeBauche; Stephen Meno; Cholpon Minbaeva; Liz Mulshine; N.L. Roberts; Lindsey Tyne '10; Mr. A.Z. Topeka, Chief Draughtsman in the Department of Antiquities