

NEWSGRAM

News in brief from the Conservation Center

Issue 42, November 2018



The Class of 2022

Sasha Arden

Rachel and Jonathan Wilf/Andrew W. Mellon Foundation
Fellow in Time-based Media Art Conservation

ENTERING THE INAUGURAL YEAR OF THE TIME-BASED MEDIA (TBM) Art specialization in conservation at NYU is like a dream come true. Although I have spent most of my adult life working with analog and digital media in various capacities, none have allowed for the depth of engagement I have experienced so far. While I helped artists learn how to use media production, managed interactive exhibits, and installed media-based artworks at SFMOMA, I often went beyond the scope of my duties to repair equipment or wonder why an artist decided to display their work in a particular way. I have always been fascinated by how things work. So far, this has lent some amount of success to my career, but something always seemed to be missing.

When I learned that NYU was establishing a specialization in TBM art conservation, it was the answer that I'd been looking for. The deep knowledge of artist materials and processes, art historical research, and engagement with ethical questions required of professional conservators seemed to take advantage of all of the experience I'd accumulated and provide new avenues of intellectual pursuit. All I had to do to be accepted was to complete twelve science credits in a year and refresh my art history training after twelve years out of college, while working full time. No big deal!

Thankfully, I had the support of generous colleagues at SFMOMA, who invited me to participate in Team Media discussions, quality control sessions for works in the media collection, and offered mentorship for conservation. The encouragement from TBM conservators whom I met through SFMOMA, and from people I met after my talks at the Electronic Media Group at AIC, was helpful and heartening. Their openness and collaborative approach to the complex issues that they are facing made me feel both right at home and very motivated.

Needless to say, after a year of incredibly hard work and laser focus getting my prerequisites in order and application submitted, I was moved to tears when I received my acceptance letter. I was simultaneously thrilled to move forward with this life-changing plan, and filled with dread at leaving my home, my partner, and my community in San Francisco. After starting classes a few weeks ago, I am happy to report that being in New York is an incredible experience, and there is nothing else that I'd rather be doing.



(left to right) Tess Hamilton, Adrienne Gendron, Celeste Mahoney, Sasha Arden, Natasha Kung, Derek Lintala, Shaoyi Qian
(photo courtesy K. Martin)

So far I have been learning about materials with hands-on workshops, focusing on the aspects of chemistry that are relevant to conservation, hearing lectures from experts in the various areas of TBM art, and visiting labs and artist foundations around the city. I'm looking forward to continuing to take advantage of the amazing resources at our fingertips in the Conservation Center, at NYU, and in New York. There is really no better place to be to kick off the start of an exciting new field of education in TBM art conservation.

Adrienne Gendron

Lisa and Bernard Selz Fellow in Conservation

I WAS LUCKY ENOUGH TO DISCOVER THE FIELD OF ART CONSERVATION at a young age while working at the RISD Museum as a high school sophomore. My supervisor, Dr. Gina Borromeo, the curator of ancient art, took me behind the scenes of the museum and introduced me to two conservators who were working on the surface of a lacquered Japanese palanquin. This was my first introduction to the field and I decided right then and there to pursue a career in objects conservation.

I enrolled in the University of Delaware's undergraduate program in art conservation to get a head start on my conservation education. At UD, I majored in art conservation and anthropology, with minors in art history and chemistry. It was a jam-packed four years full of coursework, internships, and fieldwork experiences, and I emerged armed with an educational foundation.

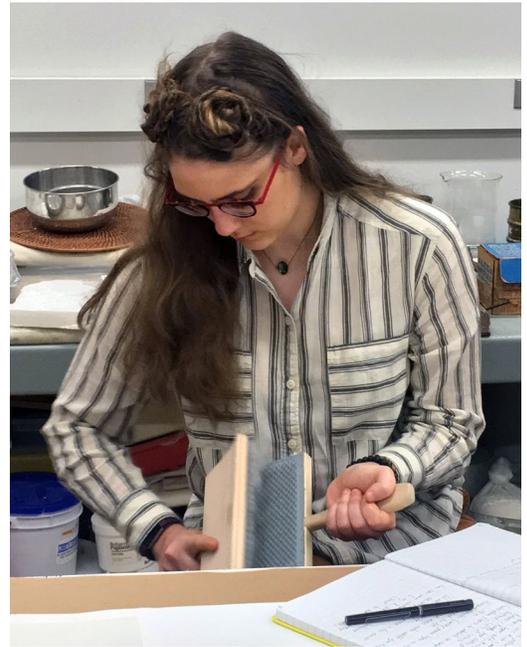
After graduating, I held several different pre-program internships and jobs. The majority of my time was spent at the Anthropology Conservation Lab at the American Museum of Natural History under the supervision of Judith Levinson '84, Director of Conservation, Anthropology Division; Samantha Alderson '94, Conservator, Anthropology Division; and Gabrielle Tieu, Associate Conservator. While there, I worked with materials from Siberia and the Northwest Coast of North America. It was these experiences that cultivated my passion for ethnographic materials and pro-active engagement with native communities. I also spent time at the Smithsonian Institution's National Museum of Natural History with Michele Austin-Dennehy, and at the National Park Service with Joannie Bottkol '11 and Margaret Breuker, where I worked with ethnographic, archaeological, and decorative arts materials.

I decided to apply to graduate programs two years after my graduation from UD. The process was long and arduous, but I made it through in one piece! After spending the bulk of my pre-program years in New York, I had fallen in love with the city and witnessed firsthand the wealth of resources and networking opportunities that are available here. The Conservation Center's program offered a great deal of flexibility and independence, as well as the opportunity to work with a wide array of faculty who are practicing conservators. The dual-degree program also offered the prospect to study art history on a graduate level—a topic I wished I had more time to study in my undergraduate career. So, I decided to accept NYU's generous offer and enter the class of 2022.

Thus far, I have been fully immersed into the world of conservation studies. After several years of learning bits and pieces here and there from hands-on experiences, I am thrilled to have the opportunity to receive a formal education on topics like production technology and material science. I have already absorbed so much knowledge and there is so much more to come; the Institute offers so many learning opportunities, it's difficult to pick and choose. I'm so excited for the years to come and know that I will emerge well-equipped to become a professional conservator.



Adrienne and Sasha prepare iron gall ink during a lab session of Technology & Structure of Works of Art I. (photo: A. Catalano)



Tess practices carding wool during a lab session in Technology & Structure of Works of Art I. (photo: A. Catalano)

Tess Hamilton

Stockman Family Foundation Fellow

AS AN UNDERGRADUATE AT YALE UNIVERSITY, I STUDIED studio art and English, but my driving passion was always photography. I was first introduced to the silver gelatin darkroom when I was thirteen, and I was instantly hooked to the medium. By the time I was in college, I was like a darkroom mole, only emerging into the light of day to make more pictures to go develop and print in the red-lit basement of the art school. The summer before my senior year, I studied the wet plate collodion process with two artists, Quinn Jacobson and Mark Sink. As I started to explore the history and theory of photography and became interested in the 19th-century image-making technologies, I knew I wanted to dedicate my life, not only to making images, but also to studying and preserving historic images and processes—but I wasn't quite sure how. Thinking about becoming a librarian, substituting my basement darkroom for a basement archive, I talked to a rare book librarian who suggested that I look into conservation. It was a revelation—the perfect career existed, and I had never even heard of it! Never had I imagined I could combine my love for photographic history, technique, technology, and chemistry in such a meaningful way, and to help others do the same through the preservation of images.

I started working for several conservators: Catherine Sease and Paul Messier, at Yale University, and after graduation, Jude Southward at the Denver Museum of Nature and Science, the conservation department at the Denver Art Museum, and photo conservator Jennifer McGlinchey Sexton. As I gained more experience working with objects, paper, and textiles, as well as photographs, I fell more and more in love with the career and all of its complexities and diversity of materials. I applied for graduate training in a whirlwind year, and I could not be more grateful to my incredible mentors for all of their support, encouragement, and teachings during the process.

The program here at NYU was always my first choice. The oppor-

tunity to receive a degree in art history concurrently with conservation was an appealing way to deepen my studies. The chance to live in New York City, so rich in art resources and photo history, was an absolute dream. When I received the acceptance letter and phone call from Dr. Roemich later that day, I instantly accepted.

I was nervous to move to New York, but after a month, living in the city feels somehow...right (although, I still manage to walk the wrong way every time I emerge from the subway). As daunting as the city felt, I was even more anxious to meet my classmates and enter an intense graduate level training. In the first few weeks, the NYU program has felt like a flood of endless knowledge and opportunities. While it is sometimes overwhelming, each topic that we study, each piece of knowledge I gain, and each opportunity that arises feels more exciting and rewarding than the last; I am thankful to have such a supportive, kind, and curious group of classmates and teachers with whom to swim through it all. I cannot wait to see what the next four years have in store!



Natasha and Celeste setting up their microscopes for the Fiber Identification workshop during Orientation Week.
(photo: NL Roberts)

Natasha Kung

Dedalus Foundation Fellow in Conservation

WHEN I STARTED MY UNDERGRADUATE STUDIES AT NEW York University, I had no idea what my major might be. I found myself in an Archaeology class because, frankly, it fit into my schedule, but it was in this class that I learned about art conservation. I immediately made an appointment to learn about the Institute's program and the field at large. I fell in love with the idea of working with objects so intimately and learning about the processes and materials that go into making works of art. I decided that summer after my freshman year to pursue degrees in Art History and Chemistry with the goal of getting into the program at the Conservation Center and becoming a conservator myself.

I was one of the few people in my chemistry classes who didn't want to be a doctor and, naturally, it confused my friends when I explained how I wanted to preserve art in a museum while we were learning about Quantum Mechanics and Biochemistry. I'm constantly

reminded that conservation is a unique field and an intriguing mixture of art history, science, and studio art. Throughout my pre-program internships, I was always surprised and excited by what I was learning. I'm someone who is interested in almost everything and this field is a perfect match because there are countless avenues of research that I can pursue and endless issues that arise in works of material culture.

I wanted a diverse pre-program experience and so, through various internships, I worked on books, paper, sculpture, textiles, photographs, and preventive conservation. It was certainly a struggle to live in New York City where I was not only interning part-time at two or three museums at once, but also serving as a waitress in the evenings to supplement my museum internship stipend, if there even was one. It was after interning in the Department of Photograph Conservation at the Metropolitan Museum of Art under the supervision of Nora Kennedy, Sherman Fairchild Conservator in Charge, that I was then hired as a Research Assistant to help design new housings for the upcoming exhibition of daguerreotypes made by Joseph-Philibert Girault de Prangey. I've developed a strong passion for photochemistry, early photographic processes, and the captured image. I also worked one summer on outdoor sculpture maintenance with Central Park Conservancy, and had a blast working on bronze and stone sculpture in a hectic, not to mention, sweaty, environment. I will eventually decide between these two specialties, but for now, I'm enjoying keeping an open mind. I'm indebted to my supervisors for not only sharing their labs and knowledge with me, but for giving me endless support to help me get here.

Choosing to come to NYU for my training was one of the easiest decisions that I've had to make in life. Having grown up in New York, I understand the wealth of opportunity and diversity this city can offer someone in the arts, and I'm beyond excited to get to work with such amazing professors and mentors every day. I was also attracted to the opportunity to continue studying art history, as I truly believe art history and conservation are codependent upon one another.

The first month of school has been filled with lots of reading, field trips, and reconstruction labs so that we can understand how materials and artworks were historically made. I'm surrounded by people as passionate about the arts as I am, and I'm really looking forward to spending the next four years with my cohort. Our winding backgrounds have led us to this point and also to such varying interests, so I'm excited to learn from them as well. It's really a dream to be at the Institute, and I can't wait to see what I'll accomplish next!

Derek Lintala

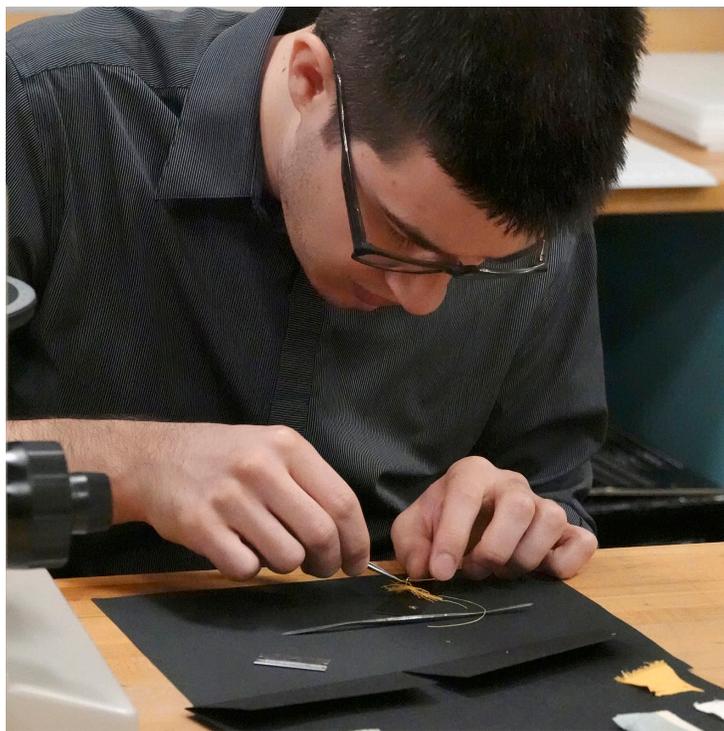
Mario Modestini Fellow in Paintings Conservation

BEING ACCEPTED TO THE CONSERVATION CENTER'S PROGRAM in art conservation has been an enormous honor, and it truly feels like the opportunity of a lifetime. The dual-degree program offers a well-rounded approach to conservation. After just a few weeks of classes, I have been presented with so many opportunities to learn new things—lectures, workshops, museum and conservation lab visits. The list of activities is endless. I have lived in New York City for about four years, but I have never had the city's art resources opened to me in the way they are now. As the year progresses and my acceptance begins to feel real, I can't help but think back on my journey into conservation, and how I arrived at the Conservation Center.

From an early age, I always had a strong interest in creating things, whether artworks or otherwise. My father was a high school art teacher in Cleveland, Ohio, and he always encouraged artistic experimentation and knowledge of materials, however obscure they may be. During my early education, I enjoyed history classes the most, and have always sought to experience history in a direct and personal way. My curiosity about creativity, materials, and history all contributed to eventually finding conservation during my undergraduate studies.

During high school, I was fortunate enough to take an art history course, which set me on a path to eventually major in the subject at Boston College. At the same time, I continued to create my own artwork and minored in studio arts. After my sophomore year, I began an internship in the paintings conservation lab at The Cleveland Museum of Art under Marcia Steele, Senior Conservator of Paintings. At the museum, I focused primarily on digital imaging for technical research, as well as on frame conservation and gilding techniques with Technician of Paintings and Frames, David Piurek. Many of the methods I learned I still employ when making my own artwork. This experience, which lasted over a period of several years, was extremely influential and shaped my approach to the field. My supervisors in Cleveland provided me with so many amazing opportunities, and set professional examples I hope to emulate.

I strongly believe that experimenting with materials can be the most effective way of understanding them. For this reason, I am enjoying the Technology and Structure of Works of Art course required of first-year conservation students. There is no more intimate way of understanding an object than actually making or recreating one. I look forward to starting my specialization in paintings (specifically gold ground panels), and to begin working with objects from the Samuel H. Kress Collection.



Derek diligently prepares fibers for analysis during the Fiber Identification workshop.
(photo: NL Roberts)

Celeste Mahoney

Conservation Center Fellow

WITH ADAGES OF EGGS IN BASKETS AND CARTS BEFORE horses weighing heavily on my mind, I picked up and moved to New York City four and a half years ago, a few days after my 24th birthday. My friends and family were totally stymied by my decision; I was a painfully introverted homebody who needed GPS directions to drive to the grocery store five minutes away, but I felt that it was my best shot at a future in conservation. I've never thought of myself as an all-or-nothing kind of person, but NYU was the only graduate school I applied to. After I moved to the city, it took me a long time to work up the courage to apply—but I told my now-girlfriend on our first date that I was going to, and so I had to go through with it. The best feeling was being able to call my parents and tell them I got in. They had no idea I had even applied; I just didn't want to disappoint them if I didn't make the cut.

I knew NYU was my top (and only) choice, not just because of the location, but because I found my way to conservation through my love of art history, and it seemed just perfect that I could continue my education with a dual degree. Working with my hands gives me such a sense of satisfaction and accomplishment, and I've always known that I wanted a career with a heavy element of that (I had to be leashed as a small child and my most frequent parental admonishment was “no touching!”). After college (a BA in art history from SUNY Geneseo), I would randomly email conservation studios asking to intern. I got lucky, and interned at a private paintings conservation studio under an incredibly caring and intelligent team (thank you, Kevin Gleason and Julia Bogacki). Since my approach worked the first time, I continued my random emailing once I had decided to move to New York, and I got lucky again and interned at the Museum of Biblical Art (thank you, Clare Manias). I'm truly grateful for the generosity shown to me by so many of my former professors and mentors, because without their guidance and encouragement, there's no way I would have made it this far.

I am relishing being a student again, and it seems like every week I have a new favorite topic that I could happily study for the rest of my life. Dredging up and dusting off my “school skills” has been a struggle (wait, how do you cite in Chicago format, again?), but I'm so happy to have such a brilliant and supportive group of people with which to go through this journey. The city has morphed before my eyes, back to the exciting cultural hub full of potential it was when I first moved here. My first week in the city, walking home at night, I was fascinated that I could still see the clouds so clearly, even though it was so late—I'd never seen them after dark before. “Night clouds” became my personal symbol for the unique beauty and promise of New York; the city is always so alive that it never gets dark enough to obscure the clouds. Now, whenever I want to remind myself how far I've come, if it's after sunset, I just look up—the night clouds are always there, and so are the possibilities.

Shaoyi Qian

Andrew W. Mellon Fellow in Library and Archive Conservation

IT WILL TAKE ANOTHER 500 WORDS TO EXPLAIN HOW I ENDED up as a Chemical Engineering major at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign so I will just start with how it did not feel right for

me—especially when I was halfway through my junior year and suddenly all my classmates seemed so keen on interning at a plant, attending a career fair, joining a research group, and applying to grad school. I was, in contrast, not as motivated and the thought of working in the Chemical Engineering field just seemed unenticing.

I always wanted to practice art, but for some other 500-word reason, I could barely squeeze a drawing class into my schedule. It was then a beam of light shone down on me one day when I heard about art conservation for the first time in my Instrumental Analysis lecture. I suddenly felt that this could be the right path for me as it would bring me closer to the art world I dreamed about and where I could put my chemistry background to good use. But, that beam of light began to fade as soon as I started my research into the field.

It was after looking at almost all the programs offered across the world, and my choices were already narrowed down to three or four, that I realized the only prerequisites I'd fulfilled were chemistry and art studio experience. My parents were not very supportive when they first heard about this idea, so I was not sure if I would even go if admitted into an unfunded program. There was no way I could pay tuition as an international student on my own. Among my limited choices NYU crept up to the top of my list. I couldn't think of a place that would offer more resources or be any livelier.

In the meantime, I left my chemistry research group and started working in the book conservation lab at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. I've always loved libraries, books, and their design. It's not only their content but, and this might sound strange, also the air they give off. I find them mysterious and quirky (in a good way of course), and these are two characteristics that thrill me. The enjoyment of repairing books quickly took me in.

My supervisor, Quinn Ferris '15, also graduated from the Mellon Library & Archive program at NYU. She shared with me the amazing opportunities she was offered both in and outside school, how the courses are tailored to your own development, how nice and helpful the people are, and so on.



Denyse Montegut '92 instructs the incoming class, pictured here with Shaoyi, on proper slide preparation for fiber identification.
(photo: NL Roberts)

I decided to visit the Conservation Center during that spring break. The visit was so unique that I left thinking, "I'm in. I'm totally in," even though everything was so unknown at the time except that I knew I wouldn't want anything else. Looking back on my senior year, it really was the craziest year for me. I'd never worked so hard and so desperately. I realize that there are many people who don't apply to a conservation graduate program straight out of undergrad, but in my case (which needs another 300-word explanation) I knew that was the only chance for me.

In December 2017, I fulfilled the art history requirements just in time to submit the application and bid farewell to Chemical Engineering. At the same time, I was also very excited to learn that I got the Mellon-funded pre-program summer internship at the Huntington Library. To be honest, after my interview at the Conservation Center I felt a bit frustrated because I thought I could've done better. So, when I got Kevin's email, in which he really succeeded in burying the lead, I had to read it three times to make sure it wasn't in fact a rejection letter. I couldn't scream for joy because I was in a museum! For me, there really was no decision-making process because I replied yes right away.

So, here I am already a month into the semester. I can still recall how nervous I was about the orientation week, how tense I was during the interview, though I might have done a good job concealing it (or did I?). I can still recall my hectic senior year, especially being overshadowed by the uncertainty and trying to reason with my parents. Now I'm finally doing what I love. I found my anchor. I used to feel like I didn't belong anywhere, but now I'm surrounded by people who hold the same enthusiasm I do. Yet, each one of them has their own story, own expectations, own insights, and I really hope to get to know more about my classmates and professors in the months and years to come.

I've been asked a lot about settling in NYC and starting school since I came here. My answers somehow all start with "I don't know," but in my heart I do know. It may just be that I need some time and reflection before they become something that can be put down into words, at least for me.

Honorary IIC Fellowship for W. Thomas Chase '67

During the IIC 2018 Turin Congress in September, W. Thomas Chase was presented with an Honorary IIC Fellowship for his contributions and achievements in the field of conservation.

Congratulations to Tom for this well-deserved recognition.

[Read more.](#)