

NEWSGRAM

News in brief from the Conservation Center

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The Conservation Center Introduces the Incoming Class of 2011

Every applicant to a conservation program knows all too well about the long hours spent in the chemistry lab, the numerous art history seminars and lectures, the successes and failures in studio art classes and the procurement of a pre-program internship, or two. It is this intense preparation that directs their passion for the profession to the application process and ultimately placement in a graduate program.

Between March 25 and April 1, 2011, the Conservation Center was a beehive of activity, meeting and interviewing invited applicants to the program. Thanks to the tireless help and dedication of our student body, office staff, area conservation labs and tour guides and the committed members of the admissions committee, we were able to come out of the process, relatively unscathed, with a list of talented students and offers of admission. With decisions firmly made, we would like to introduce you to our fall 2011 incoming class.

Rita Berg, a recent graduate of the MA program here at the Institute, received her BA in Art History and Italian Studies, summa cum laude, from the University of Minnesota. "After completing my MA, I took some time for travel and living abroad in New Zealand and Australia," says Rita of her post-graduate life. "I recently moved back to St. Paul, MN, which I consider my home, having moved here as a teenager from St. Petersburg, Russia."

Traveling to the opposite side of the globe, Rita worked as a pre-program conservation intern at the Art Gallery of New South Wales in Sydney, Australia, and spent three months in different areas within the museum's conservation department. "During my time in objects



Rita working on an aboriginal bark painting

conservation," she explains, "I had the most unique opportunity of working closely with a number of **Aboriginal bark paintings** from the museum's collection. This proved to be a very special experience, given that these precious objects are not often found in art collections outside of Australia and, given their fragile nature, rarely travel overseas for exhibitions."

Rita, primarily interested in paintings conservation, says the Kress Program in Paintings Conservation drew her to the NYU program, because "it provides a unique opportunity for the study and conservation of Old Master paintings." She is also interested in the area of emergency preparedness and cultural heritage response and recovery, and was recently appointed a new member of the AIC's Emergency Committee for the 2011 – 2015 term.

Quinn Ferris, one of two students to follow a specialized academic track in the Mellon-funded pilot program in library

and archive conservation, received her BA in Art History from Sarah Lawrence College. “As part of my abroad experience in Florence my junior year at Sarah Lawrence,” she says, “we took classes with two conservators from the Opificio delle Pietre Dure, which was incredible, because we were learning to make frescoes in a country where we were surrounded by historical examples.”



Quinn, under the Tuscan sun in Chianti, Italy

Faced with career choices, Quinn gravitated towards art conservation, because she found that her “inclination towards material art and her avid interest in history, theory and ethical issues could find no better place to all be put into practice at once.” She is interested in library archives and book conservation, particularly in the understanding of binding and sewing constructions. Looking towards the future and where her career path might take her, Quinn says, “I’m far more attracted to working in a public library or museum than for private collectors, because then everyone has a stake in what you do, as well as access to what you’ve worked to save.”

When asked why she chose the Institute of Fine Arts, Quinn replied, “NYU offered the scope of experience that I was looking for in a graduate program. The

summer internships and opportunity for travel are incredible, as is the access to New York’s museums—plus the opportunity to toughen-up my tender, small town girl spirit by really living in the big city—we’ll see how that one goes!”

Desirae Peters graduated with highest honors from the University of Texas at Austin with a double major in Art History and Spanish/Hispanic Studies. She feels, given her background, that she’d like to more fully explore Latin American and Spanish art in her art history studies at the Institute. She is currently undecided as to her area of specialization, and has prior conservation experience with paper, frames and objects, but is also eager to explore paintings and books conservation. She explains her decision to pursue conservation as a realistic blending of her interests. “I love to learn about other cultures and I am fascinated by the mysterious histories of an artwork, the method of its construction, and the scientific research dedicated to its preservation. I have always loved chemistry, biology, and the fine arts. I love to work with my hands. Once I discovered the field, it was a natural match.”

Recently, she, too, interned at the Art Gallery of New South Wales in the frames and objects conservation lab. The internship began in the New Year and will end later this month. Desirae describes it as “an incredibly humbling and informative experience where I submerged myself in another place and culture. I think it’s crucial that we constantly push ourselves to understand others, and I’ve found traveling is one of the best ways to do that. And of course, it’s a great opportunity to visit the world’s art museums!”

Megan Randall earned a BA in Art History, cum laude, from Carleton College in Minnesota. She also earned an MA from



Desirae prepares to trim excess mends of a recently humidified and flattened circus advertisement during her fall 2009 internship at the Harry Ransom Center

Christie’s Education in Modern Art History, Connoisseurship, and History of the Art Market where her thesis topic was *Michael Heizer: Displaced/Replaced*.

Megan’s first conservation experience was at **Modern Art Foundry** in Queens, New York, where she did routine cleaning, waxing, and polishing of outdoor bronze sculptures by artists including Gaston Lachaise, Henry Moore and Louise Bourgeois. “This sparked my interest in conservation and led me to apply to a conservation internship offered by the Chinati Foundation,” she says. “Under the supervision of their conservator, Bettina Landgrebe, I completed treatments on Donald Judd’s untitled concrete boxes, *School No. 6* by Ilya Kabakov and *Monument to the Last Horse* by Claes Oldenburg and Coosje van Bruggen.



At Modern Art Foundry, Megan chases a section of a Louise Bourgeois Personage sculpture with a carbide tip in a pneumatic pencil grinder

One of my favorite experiences was operating the manlift to do cleaning and inpainting on the upper-most sections of *Monument to the Last Horse*.”

When not pursuing her interest in modern and contemporary objects conservation, Megan spends much of her free time playing club-level ultimate Frisbee on the New York-based women’s team **Bent**, who placed 10th in the nation last season!



Kari works on outdoor sculpture at the Block Museum of Art, Northwestern University

Kari Rayner, our second student in the library and archive specialization, was a dual major at Northwestern University where she earned a BA in Art History and Art Theory and Practice. Kari has had many pre-program conservation experiences, including paintings conservation at the **Detroit Institute of Arts**; an internship at a conservation center in Florence, Italy; an objects conservation internship at the **Baltimore Museum of Art**; volunteer work in the conservation department of the Johns Hopkins University Library; in print conservation at the **Block Museum of Art**; and assisted with conservation science research at Northwestern University. Kari says her favorite experience was working on the painting *Capri* by

Constantin Westchiloff at the Detroit Institute of Arts, because she “took it through multiple types of conservation treatments and was able to see the artwork transform considerably.” For Kari, “conservation combines my interests in art practice, art history, and problem-solving. I also find conservation to be a particularly rewarding field and fulfilling in its day-to-day activities: I enjoy working with my hands, researching, and writing. Above all, I enjoy learning, and I believe that conservation is a field in which I will constantly be expanding my knowledge.”

The structure of the program and its emphasis on art history is among the reasons why Kari chose NYU. “The variety of summer opportunities abroad is particularly exciting, and I am also thrilled to be able to take advantage of the resources of New York City.” When it comes to art history, Kari is “most excited by contemporary art because of the wide variety of types of work being produced and its relevance to the present.” Her interest here doesn’t end with art history. She adds, “I am also intrigued by the unique conservation challenges that many contemporary artworks present.”

Jessica Walthew comes to the program from Philadelphia where she’s worked at the **Philadelphia Museum of Art**, the Penn Museum, and the **Fossil Prep Lab** at the Academy of Natural Sciences. “One of my favorite experiences”, she says, “has been working in the Fossil Prep Lab on a newly discovered species of dinosaur, a **Patagonian Titanosaurus**; this is quite a departure from the work I usually do and it’s been a (good) challenge.”

She earned a dual degree in Art History and Biology (honors) and graduated cum laude from Williams College. When asked why she decided on conservation as a career, she explains, “I double majored in biology and art history

as an undergraduate and wasn’t sure how I could find a career that allowed me to pursue my love of science as well as my love of art history. Luckily my neighbor Teri is a paintings conservator and she enlightened me by telling me about the breadth of the field of conservation.”



Jessica cleans the base of a statue of a guanyin at the University of Pennsylvania Museum

Jessica is looking forward to studying art history alongside her training in conservation. Of her past art history experience, Jessica says, “I loved my classes on Islamic and Colonial art and architecture during undergrad. I’m looking forward to learning more about archeology all over the world and also Asian art.” She plans to pursue a specialization in ethnographic and archeological objects and says that “working on objects from the **Royal Tomb of Ur** at the Penn Museum was an amazing experience that got me hooked on working with archeological materials.”

The Center warmly welcomes Rita, Quinn, Desirae, Megan, Kari and Jessica as its newest incoming class. •

—Kevin Martin

Kevin is the Academic Advisor for the conservation program

photo credit: Michael Bartolotta, Victoria Chisholm, Isis Tatiana Hocknos, Burke Patten, NL Roberts, Tessa Thomas, Stephanie Watkins