

NEWSGRAM

News in brief from the Conservation Center

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A Summer in Europe

The Samuel H. Kress Foundation Summer Internships in Paintings Conservation

The Samuel H. Kress Program in Paintings Conservation provides unique opportunities for Conservation Center students to train in the care and treatment of Old Master paintings. These include one-of-a-kind classroom projects, special lecture series and participation in workshops directed by leading professionals in the field. In increasing the scope of this vital program, our students now benefit from an even more intensive interaction with conservation professionals and works of art—summer internship opportunities in Europe.

The **Kress Foundation** is providing funding for our paintings majors to travel to leading European institutions and intern for 6 to 8 weeks during the summer, with a focus on the conservation of European paintings, Old Masters and painted surfaces. This summer marked the first in a series for this innovative program, and sent paintings majors Kristin Bradley, Kristin Robinson and Sophie Scully off to Oslo, Cologne and Dublin.

Oslo, Norway

In the spring 2011 semester, Kristin Bradley audited a course on polychrome and monochrome wooden sculpture, taught by Michele Marincola '90, which piqued her interest in medieval painting techniques. "An understanding of medieval methods," says Kristin, "would provide an excellent background to the technology of Old Master paintings." For that reason, and to learn more about Scandinavian culture, Kristin chose to go to Norway for her Kress summer internship. Kristin spent 6 weeks in Oslo, Norway (June 1 – July 16) working at the **Kulturhistorisk Museum** at the University of Oslo in the department of Paintings and Polychrome Sculpture under the supervision of Kaja Kollandsrud, Senior Conservator of Paintings and Polychrome Sculpture.

Kristin's main task was working on a relocation project. Earlier in the year, a water leak had been found above the room where the medieval collection was being stored. While climate control was not affected by the leak, repairs were necessary in the storage room and the objects needed to be moved. The decision was made to relocate these objects to a new, state-of-the-art storage facility where the University's ethnographic and archaeological collections are housed. Kristin helped assess the condition of approximately 160 objects ranging in size from 10cm - 4m in their largest dimension. If necessary, loose paint was secured with Flexitol surgical tape as a temporary solution. In instances where flaking was more extensive, facings were applied with squares of Japanese tissue paper and isinglass. Several large crucifixes were soft-packed and then attached to larger plywood crosses that had been constructed specifically for the purpose of transporting these very delicate works. "Through my involvement in this project, I learned firsthand about the issues of climate control in a real-world situation," says Kristin.



Kristin consolidates the border of a 13th-century relief frontal by applying isinglass through Japanese tissue



A wrapped crucifix, ready for storage



Kristin works on a polychrome statue of St. Olaf at the Kulturhistorisk Museum

Once the relocation was completed, she worked on a few of the ongoing treatments in the studio, including mechanically removing newer overpaint from a polychrome sculpture of a bishop and consolidating a 13th-century relief frontal. With Kaja she discussed the use of an appropriate adhesive based on the materials of the piece and the environment where it would be housed after treatment. She also wrote two examination reports for polychrome sculptures from the 13th century, a Virgin and Child and a Crucifix.

Kristin also broadened her connoisseurship of Norwegian art by spending time with Kaja in the galleries discussing the distinct Norwegian stylistic characteristics. She soon found that the collection of painted medieval objects exhibited the use of early oil bound paints, and most of the sculptures have never been overpainted during their long lives. They also talked of the decisions made regarding compensation in past conservation treatments. In general, many objects have not undergone multiple conservation campaigns, and some have never been treated. Because the collection is so well preserved, it is excellent for study of the stylistic developments and painting techniques of this early period in Scandinavia.

While in Oslo, she visited the **National Gallery** (where Munch's *Scream* is on display), the **Munch Museum**, the **Vigeland Park**, the **Norsk Folkemuseum**, and the **Viking Ship Museum**.



Kristin examines the triptych

She also visited the labs of the Norwegian Institute for Cultural Heritage Research (NIKU) and the Munch Museum, and traveled to Stockholm and Copenhagen as well as to the beautiful fjords of Norway.

Cologne, Germany

Kristin Robinson spent six weeks (May 30 – July 8) interning at the **Wallraf-Richartz-Museum & Fondation Corboud** in Cologne, Germany under the supervision of chief conservator Iris Schaefer. The museum was recently honored with the 2010 Keck Award for its groundbreaking project “Painting Techniques of Impressionism and Postimpressionism,” which involved an **electronic publication** of the research’s findings.

At the museum, Kristin carried out the technical examination of a 16th-century Italian portrait on panel by Francesco Salviati and its period frame, both recently acquired by the museum. Her investigation involved x-radiation, infrared reflectography, UV radiation, and microscopy, and resulted in a thorough examination and condition report for both panel and frame and treatment proposal for the frame. She was able to treat the frame before the opening of the museum’s summer exhibition, “Tat Ort,” in which the painting was included.

“I was also involved in the environmental monitoring of the museum and in the installation of “Tat Ort” by way of condition reporting and assisting with last-minute retouching,” says Kristin. Additionally, she worked on a loan assessment for a 15th-century triptych by the anonymous South Rhenish Master. The assessment involved determining whether the panels were stable enough to travel and then preparing a treatment proposal for the work. “My conservation experience thus far has been based largely on private practices,” she says. “The experience in Cologne allowed

me to better understand the priorities and tasks of a museum conservation department, as well as the materials and techniques currently being used by European conservators.”

While abroad, Kristin saw the Ghent altarpiece by the Van Eyck brothers and Anish Kapoor’s *Leviathan*, the **Monumenta 2011** installation at the Grand Palais in Paris. “I also traveled to Berlin, where I visited five housing estates designed by Bruno Taut during the Weimar Republic to augment research for my Master’s in art history-required qualifying paper on the architect!”

Dublin, Ireland

The **National Gallery of Ireland** (NGI) was host to Sophie Scully’s Kress summer internship from July 4 – August 12. Sophie’s visit, under the supervision of Simone Mancini, Head of Conservation, coincided with two ongoing projects in the department: the preparations for relocating the collection during the upcoming renovations of the museum’s galleries, labs and storage facilities, and the relocation and treatment of Daniel Maclise’s *The Marriage of Strongbow and Aoife*. Measuring 3.17 x 5.15 meters, *The Marriage of Strongbow and Aoife* (Irish, c. 1854) is an impressively large picture, presenting numerous logistical challenges to a conservator, including how to move the painting and carry out the necessary structural treatments. “Learning about their creative solutions to the move was a valuable experience for me,” says Sophie, “and working on such an astounding painting was a rare opportunity.”

Sophie’s work on the picture included removal of the facing and varnish removal. Varnish removal was essential to the in situ analysis that was scheduled



Kristin Robinson cleaning the gilt cassetta frame for the Salviati panel under magnification



Sophie (foreground) removes varnish on Daniel Maclise’s *The Marriage of Strongbow and Aoife* (also pictured is Peggy Reme, paintings conservation fellow at NGI)

to be performed in mid-July. A team of material scientists from the University of Perugia, as part of the Europe's Cultural Heritage Advanced Research Infrastructures (CHARISMA) project, travelled to the gallery with their mobile analytical facilities in order to carry out x-ray fluorescence, micro-Raman, and Infrared spectroscopic analysis on the painting. These non-invasive methods of analysis were undertaken to learn more about the pigments and binding media that this innovative painter used.

Sophie soon found out that there were thousands of works, besides the Maclise, that needed to be relocated over the coming years. "Most critical at this stage was to perform a detailed condition survey of each painting in the collection, and so I was able to participate not only in the survey itself, but the hours of organization that go into such an enormous undertaking." She says that participating in the two projects was "further enriched by the enthusiasm of the members of the department and their eagerness to share with me their opinions, approaches and conservation backgrounds."

It is with immense gratitude that the students and the Center acknowledge the generosity of the Samuel H. Kress Foundation in continuing to support the paintings conservation program at NYU. The contacts made through these internships will remain invaluable connections to our colleagues in Ireland, Germany and Norway, and will certainly lead to further exchange and collaboration. For our students, these international experiences, along with their graduate education, will certainly prepare them to become leaders in the global field. •

—Kevin Martin

Kevin is the Academic Advisor for the conservation program



Daniel Maclise's massive *The Marriage of Strongbow and Aoife*

The Center Congratulates our May Graduates: Joannie Bottkol and Kristin Patterson.

Joannie Bottkol '11 spent her fourth-year Internship in objects conservation at the Brooklyn Museum working under Kenneth Moser, Vice Director for Collections, Carol Lee Shen Chief Conservator, and Lisa Bruno, Conservator of Objects. From September 2011 until September 2013, Joannie will be the Andrew W. Mellon Fellow for Objects Conservation at the Brooklyn Museum. "The Brooklyn Museum's conservation staff is extremely bright and resourceful," says Joannie, "and I am enormously lucky to be able to continue learning and working there. It is going to be a busy and exciting time of treatment, research, courier trips and project management. I believe I will come away from the experience a much better conservator and I hope to give something back to the museum and the department in the process."

Kristin Patterson '11 completed her fourth-year Internship in the Paintings Conservation Department at the Philadelphia Museum of Art in July, under the supervision of Mark E. Tucker, Vice Chair of Conservation and The Aronson Senior Conservator of Paintings. Kristin will continue working at the PMA as the Kress Modestini Fellow in Paintings Conservation for 2011 – 2012, working on traditional paintings. She will begin by treating a 1503 panel painting by Jacopo de Barbari, entitled *An Old Man and a Young Woman*. "It's a painting that's been on view for years, stable but with large areas of retouching that appear to differ from the original composition," Kristin says. "The museum is excited to have a request for loan of the painting at a time when a fellow with interests in this period of art is available to reassess the lacunae and reconstruct the image to a state closer to the original."



Hannelore Roemich, Acting Chairman of the Conservation Center, Kristin Patterson '11 and Kevin Martin at the Institute's graduation ceremony in May

photo credit: Kristin Bradley, Elli Jahn, Kaja Kollandsrud, Simone Mancini, Adam Mendelowitz, Kristin Robinson, Sophie Scully, Caroline von Saint-George