

NEWSGRAM

News in brief from the Conservation Center

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STITAH: The Summer Teachers Institute for Technical Art History

“One of the most rewarding and helpful experiences I have had in my study of art history to date... Outstanding opportunity and what a great idea... A very rich, intense and stimulating program...” These overwhelmingly positive responses effectively express the success achieved by the inaugural year of the Summer Teachers Institute for Technical Art History.

The STITAH program, sponsored in full by the [Samuel H. Kress Foundation](#), featured a week-long intensive workshop focused on exposing undergraduate art history faculty to technical art history through the lens of Old Master Painting. Armed with preparatory reading and infused with enthusiasm, the fifteen STITAH participants tirelessly reviewed multiple case studies, toured museum galleries, and rolled up their sleeves to practice Old Master painting techniques. The STITAH faculty, traveling from near (The Metropolitan Museum of Art) and far (The National Gallery, London), matched the group in dedication and perseverance, patiently describing their life's work and expertly answering questions. Overall, the course helped to create a foundation of learning for these art historians so that they might expand their own course offerings to include technical studies—thereby stimulating an interest in this field among the upcoming generation.

The week began with an introduction to the subject by Michele Marincola '90, which was followed by a fascinating tour through the Northern Renaissance galleries at the Metropolitan Museum of Art (MMA), led by Maryan Ainsworth, Curator of Netherlandish Painting. Following lectures by Dr. Ainsworth and Professor Marincola at the Conservation Center, the group traveled up to The Cloisters, where Professor Marincola continued the conversation in front of superb examples of polychrome sculpture. These trips effectively underscored the need to examine actual works of art, and the value brought to their understanding by direct observation; this integrated schedule also provided the model for the rest of the program. Thus, the presentations given throughout the week were punctuated by frequent museum trips—to the MMA and the Frick Collection. Charlotte Hale, Conservator, MMA, spoke about her work on the Frick's [Bellini](#) painting, *St. Francis in the Desert*, after which she joined the group to view the [work](#) of art. Michael Gallagher, Conservator in Charge, MMA, lectured about his work on Velasquez, and then, along with his colleagues in the Paintings Conservation Department at the MMA, generously opened up his lab to the STITAH participants. This visit demystified the process of conservation for the group, allowing them to better visualize how technical studies can be a vital component of a conservation treatment. Ian

McClure, Susan Morse Hilles Chief Conservator, came down from Yale University and Ashok Roy, Chief Scientist and Director of Scientific Research, traveled from the National Gallery, London to discuss their research and present case studies in which technical studies revealed great insight. Melanie Gifford, Research Conservator for Painting Technology, and John Delaney, Andrew W. Mellon Senior Imaging Scientist, joined as well from the National Gallery of Art. In addition to lecturing, Dr. Gifford introduced an interactive gallery-focused exercise, which asked the STITAH participants to present their own observations. By turning the tables so that the students suddenly led the dialogue, the group effectively modeled methods of engagement that they might adapt in their own courses.

The week held ample opportunity for hands-on activity as well. Karen Thomas '04, Associate Conservator, Paintings Conservation at the MMA, and Nica Gutman-Rieppi, Associate Conservator of the Kress Program in Paintings Conservation, demonstrated the infra-red reflectography equipment at the Conservation Center, and supervised as the participants peered through the binocular microscope to examine Old Master paintings—the first such experience for many in the group. Karen's x-radiography discussion paired the exposed film with



Phoebé Dent Weil leads a workshop on artists' practices

the actual painting imaged, a true treat for all. And what would a seminar on traditional artists' practices be without cracking a few eggs? Phoebe Dent Weil, a member of the founding class of 1960, created a veritable wonderland studio in 4R, the Center's workshop area, complete with an iron gall ink demonstration and mock panels and canvases for the participants to try their hands at painting, both with egg tempera and oil painting. Several exuberant students volunteered to grind mineral samples of azurite, turning the workshop into a workout for the brain and the body.

Although the program has ended, the project is far from over. We are currently working to create curriculum support material to provide content for participants wishing to add technical studies to their courses. This information will likely be in the case study format, with high resolution image files of technical studies such as infra-red reflectograms and x-radiographs; of course all data will be complemented by explanatory text. We are also busy reviewing the post-course evaluations, in order to learn what approaches worked best and what may need some reworking. These comments and suggestions are invaluable, as we are thrilled to turn our attention to the future and STITAH 2012. This second iteration of the program is slated to be presented at Yale University, so stay tuned for more details!

—Sarah Barack '03

Sarah is the 2011 – 2012 Samuel H. Kress
Fellow in Technical Art History

The Center Congratulates our September Graduates: Raina Chao, Lisa Conte, Briana Feston, Jennifer Hickey, Amanda Holden, Lisa Nelson and Katherine Sanderson

Raina Chao '11 spent her fourth year at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston and has accepted a year-long position at the Getty Museum as a Graduate Intern in Decorative Arts and Sculpture Conservation. Raina will be focusing on technical studies of pieces in the Getty's collection with a focus on furniture, composite and mixed-media objects, an area where Raina is particularly interested. "I'm excited about this internship because the Getty's program and resources will provide an opportunity to focus on technical studies, one of my main interests."

Lisa Conte '11 remains at the Metropolitan Museum of Art where she has spent the last year as a fourth-year Intern. Lisa has been awarded the Andrew W. Mellon Fellowship to conduct research on the technical aspects of Odilon Redon's lithographs in the collection of the Metropolitan.

Briana Feston '11 completed her fourth-year Internship at the Walters Art Gallery and accepted a contract position as a sculpture conservator at the Hirshhorn Museum where she is supervising the condition reports and packing of about 1500 objects and sculptures that are being moved off site. Once the move is done, she will also have the opportunity to treat some of the pieces. In mid-March 2012, Briana leaves for France for a Kress Fellowship at the Musée de Sevres in Paris, for one year. "My project will be the examination and conservation of a number of porcelain bisque and Japanese porcelain that were shattered when the museum was bombed during WWII. The goal is that a number of pieces will be back on exhibition for the following year."

Jennifer Hickey '11, after interning at the Museum of Modern Art in the paintings conservation department for her fourth-year Internship, is now dividing her time between MoMA and Modern Art Conservation, a private conservation studio owned and operated by Suzanne Siano '96. At the museum, she's hoping to pursue research on the treatment of aging acrylic paint films. "There is life after graduate school (something I strongly suspected)," she muses, "and I plan to spend many fruitful hours playing catch the laser pointer with Edie (my cat), baking, reading for pleasure, and maybe even *gasp* doing a bit of drawing and painting of my own. And this will all be done procrastination and guilt free!!"

Amanda Holden '11 spent her fourth-year Internship in textile conservation at the Winterthur Museum and assisted with courses taught at the University of Delaware's conservation program. She continued working at Winterthur over the summer where she supervised four pre-program interns and prepared over 100 textiles for an upcoming publication. Amanda recently accepted the Assistant Conservator of Textiles position at the Indianapolis Museum of Art (IMA). Amanda describes her excitement over this new position, "the IMA is a vibrant museum full of unparalleled energy. I am fortunate to have an opportunity to work with such brilliant conservators, scientists, researchers and staff. I look forward to being part of this exciting team."

Lisa Nelson '11 finished her fourth-year Internship at the American Philosophical Society Library and has been working part time for Rieger Art Conservation. Lisa next will be going on her long-awaited honeymoon and then starting a one-year contract position at the Brooklyn Museum working in paper conservation.

Katherine Sanderson '11 continues her two-year Andrew W. Mellon Research Scholarship in Photograph Conservation at the Metropolitan Museum of Art where she will be assisting Nora Kennedy in her course, *Alteration & Deterioration of Works of Art: Photographic Materials*, for IFA art history and conservation students, as well as her own research conducting a color monitoring study of a collection of photographic works in the Museum's holdings.



Lundy Pentz, biology faculty at Mary Baldwin College, practices pouncing



STITAH participants try their hand at tempera paint



Lundy Pentz practicing his calligraphy with iron gall ink

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photo credit: Michele Marincola