

In March 2010 the Institute of Fine Arts was awarded a grant from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation to support a four-year project to examine the state of advanced research in the fields that are the primary components of the program at Institute of Fine Arts: art history, archaeology, and conservation. The aim of the project is to ask where these areas are going, what are the strengths in given areas of study, what do they require in terms of resources to pursue advanced research, how these resources are best managed, and how is learning best delivered in curriculum and training programs. The project acknowledges the Institute's leading role in these fields, but is also intended to review the IFA's current position, organization, and research activities and to suggest ways to enhance and to forward its leadership.

This initiative gives the IFA the opportunity to bring distinguished scholars to the Institute as project consultants and collaborators, as participants in workshops and symposia and as visiting professors. The consecutive appointments of three two-year postdoctoral fellows will allow the IFA to support and to benefit from the highest caliber of new research by bringing promising young art historians into our community. The IFA welcomed the first Mellon Postdoctoral Fellow, Jennifer Raab (Yale, Ph.D., 2009), in September. Dr. Raab's fellowship project is a book on *The Art and Science of Detail: Frederic Church and Nineteenth-Century Landscape Painting*. She will teach one course each year (for spring 2012, a colloquium, *Art, Science, and Expedition in America*) and will also participate in the activities of the Mellon Research Initiative, with the specific role of coordinating student involvement. The second Fellow will be selected in March 2012.

This ambitious project is divided into three components: 1. Advisory groups convened to study institutional aspects of research and to review the IFA's place in promoting present and future research; 2. Workshops and conferences designed to explore trends, themes, and topics in current research; 3. Student affiliation with the workshops and working groups. There is an internal committee that has oversight of the project. Its members participate in the meetings of the advisory groups and in the planning of the workshops and related events. The members of that committee are: IFA Director, Patricia Rubin and Professors Michele Marincola, David O' Connor, Barry Flood, Hsueh-man Shen, Robert Slifkin, and Thelma Thomas. A Research Activities Coordinator, Yaelle Amir, is secretary to the committees and has the responsibility of preparing meetings, assisting in reporting project outcome, and in making arrangements for IFA and for Mellon Initiative Research-related events.

A report will be submitted to the Mellon Foundation at the end of the project, summarizing the conclusions reached by the advisory groups and the topics covered by the workshops. This report will be available to the IFA and serve as a guide to the Institute's strategic planning.

There follows a description of the three main components and a summary of their activities to date.

Advisory Groups

See the attached Appendices for the membership of these groups.

Three advisory committees were convened during the 2010-2011 academic year. The first, chaired by Professor David O' Connor, met on November 19, 2010. The purpose of the meeting was to take an overview of archaeology at the Institute and to discuss how archaeology might be considered in the course of the project.

An ad hoc Advisory Committee to the Mellon Initiative met on November 30 and December 1, 2010. Members of the committee represented an international range of research faculties and research institutes, and included institute directors, curators, and professors. The meeting opened with presentations by committee members about their individual research and its institutional contexts. This offered material for a discussion about current trends and concerns to be incorporated as topics in future programming. The organization of art history, archaeology, and conservation at NYU was taken as a case for a discussion of the structuring of research and teaching at a major research university. The committee's views on the matter were incorporated in an options paper submitted to NYU Provost David McLaughlin about the future of art history at the university. A working group on directions in research and teaching will be constituted in 2012. The membership of the group will be similar to that of the Advisory Committee in terms of fields and institutional experience. This group will be responsible for reporting on overall trends in research and graduate teaching in art history, conservation, and archaeology, on optimal structures to support such advanced work in those fields and on current concerns and threats. The IFA will be taken as a specific case for examining these topics. The group will meet at least twice a year for the next three years.

The third committee convened in 2011 was the Conservation Center Futures Advisory Committee. The committee met on April 27 and on October 3. The overall aim of the committee, which will hold future meetings, is to identify possible challenges and opportunities for the Conservation Center in graduate-level education in both near and long term. The committee has discussed the kinds of fields should be taught, the emerging trends to be addressed in teaching and research and the ways that the changing roles of conservators might be reflected in the curriculum. A meeting is being planned to pursue these topics and to make specific recommendations to the IFA and to the Mellon Research Initiative.

Workshops and conferences

Three external coordinators have been invited to work with the IFA committee to develop workshops and conferences exploring key issues in conservation, archaeology, and art history as separate and as interlocking disciplines and in relation to other fields. The coordinators are: Jim Coddington (Chief Conservator, Museum of Modern Art); Jas Elsner (Humfrey Payne Senior Research Fellow in Classical Archaeology and Art, Corpus Christi College, Oxford University); and David Wengrow (Professor of Comparative Archaeology, Institute of Archaeology, University College London). The coordinators will also participate in the academic life of the Institute through giving lectures and seminars and meeting with students to discuss their research. There will be two "summit" meetings each year for the coordinators and the IFA committee to review the program and its results, to be reported to the Mellon Foundation.

There is no fixed format for the events, which will be occasions to explore different forms of presentation and discussion. There will be three principal events in every academic year, one organized by each coordinator. The topics for 2011-2012 are *Presentism*, *Comparativism*, and *Images and Ontology*. The first workshop, *Presentism*, organized by Jim Coddington (November 5, 2011) posed questions about our relationship to the past and to the objects that are being treated in the present. The theme is of common interest, but it has special implications for the conservation and restoration of works of art. The presentations ranged from pre-history to the present. The exhibition *Edge of Empires: Pagans, Jews, and Christians at Roman Dura-Europos* at the Institute for the Study of the Ancient World provided a material focus and a controversial case for discussion. It is the intention of the Mellon Initiative programming to exploit the resources of New York collections to include object-based study in the workshops. The programs for this workshop and for those described below are posted on the Mellon Research Initiative section of the IFA website (under Research and Libraries).

The art-historical colloquium *Comparativism*, convened by Jas Elsner and scheduled for March 30-31, 2012, will reflect upon the strengths and weaknesses of comparative practice in art history as an initial basis for approaching the larger issue of the place of the comparative in art historical practice and to open a space to consider parallel problems in archaeology and conservation. The specific aim of the workshop will be to bring together a group of scholars who have made a specific virtue of working in more than one sub-field of the discipline to reflect on what the comparative process entails methodologically and how it contributes their work. The intention of the colloquium will be to look at work both across cultural fields (e.g. European art, Islamic art, Chinese art) and at work across periods within a single cultural field (ancient, medieval, modern etc).

The third event for the academic year, *Image and Ontology in Comparative Perspective*, organized by David Wengrow for April 28-29, 2012 will continue the inter-disciplinary and multi- or cross-cultural inquiry proposed in the *Comparativism* conference by examining the ontological status of images. The colloquium will open with a plenary lecture by the anthropologist and student of Claude Lévi-Strauss, Philippe Descola of the Collège de France, who will present a global perspective on the topic, as encapsulated in the recent exhibition held at the Musée du quai Branly, *La Fabrique des Images*. Fred Myers (Department of Anthropology, NYU) will respond to this paper. Two major sessions, comprising presentations and discussion, will follow around the themes: *Sources for an Ontology of the Image* and *Comparing Image Worlds*. There will also be poster presentations addressing the workshop theme, commissioned from current IFA students.

The opening conference of the 2012-2013 academic year, *Beyond Representation: An Interdisciplinary Approach to the Nature of Things* (September 27-29), takes up the ontological perspective and comparative strands of the previous conferences arguing that over the past two decades the disciplines of anthropology, art history and the history of science have been marked by a renewed concern with the agency, presence, and ontological status of crafted things, including material images and that this development reflects a notable shift in scholarship. This “ontological shift” in the humanities raises significant questions relating to the nature and operation of images and things in the world, their relation to speech, texts, and words, materiality and its relation to both ontology and semiotics. Acknowledging the need for

an interdisciplinary approach to the profound questions raised by these developments, the colloquium aims to unite scholars from art history, anthropology, political science, and the history of science in an exploration of materiality, ontology and presence. The colloquium, organized by Jas Elsner, Barry Flood, and Ittai Weinryb (Bard Graduate Center) is being jointly sponsored by Bard Graduate Center and the Institute of Fine Arts Mellon Initiative. As with the other events, it will bring together an outstanding international group of scholars, affording opportunities for stimulating exchange of the highest level and opening the IFA community to new perspectives and approaches. As with the other events, some participants in the conference will be invited to give additional seminars at the IFA and/or to meet with students.

The overarching themes of the following two years will be “Description/Translation/Mediation” and “Value,” to be explored in a combination of workshops, reading groups, and conferences.

Student affiliation

Students are welcome to all of the events planned as part of the initiative, but there will be three principal ways to give them particular opportunities to participate in its investigations.

1. A reading group, coordinated by IFA professor Robert Slifkin and the Mellon Postdoctoral Fellow, Jennifer Raab: This reading group will provide the opportunity for students to discuss key texts related to the series of Mellon symposia and the themes identified with each (ontology, translation/mediation, value). Beginning spring 2012, the group will meet approximately 3-4 times per semester. Visiting scholars will occasionally be invited to join the group. The aim is to provide a relaxed and congenial forum for discussing conceptual and methodological issues across the fields of art history, archaeology, and conservation science, and to enable a deeper engagement in the Mellon symposia.
2. Bursaries will be given to students to give poster presentations at specific workshops or conferences (starting with *Image and Ontology*).
3. From 2012 there will be Mellon Initiative Student Fellows, who will receive bursaries. The Student Fellows will be expected to attend all the workshops and conferences and to develop a symposium from the topics that arise or that they decide have been neglected. Their position is that of a critical and engaged public. They are the voice of the next generation of scholarship, which the initiative wishes to inspire as well as to inform.

APPENDIX I: Archaeology Advisory Committee 2010

Chair

David O'Connor, Institute of Fine Arts, Lila Acheson Wallace Professor of Ancient Egyptian Art; Director, North Abydos project

External Members

Clark Erickson, University of Pennsylvania, Associate Professor of Anthropology; Associate Curator, American Section, University Museum

Brian Rose, University of Pennsylvania, Professor Classical Studies, J. R. Pritchard Professor of Archaeology, Curator-in-charge, Mediterranean Section, University Museum; Vice-President, American Research Institute in Turkey; President, Archaeological Institute of America

Roland R. R. Smith, Oxford University, Lincoln Professor of Classical Archaeology; Director, Aphrodisias excavations (IFA)

Paul Zanker, Scuola Normale Superiore di Pisa, Professore ordinario di Storia dell'arte antica

NYU Faculty

Ann Macy Roth, Clinical Associate Professor of Egyptology; Clinical Associate Professor of Hebrew and Judaic Studies and of Art History

Lillian Lan-ying Tseng, Institute for the Study of the Ancient World, Associate Professor of East Asian Art and Archaeology

IFA Representatives

Jonathan Hay, Ailsa Mellon Bruce Professor of Fine Arts (Chinese Art)

Clemente Marconi, J. R. McCredie Professor in the History of Greek Art and Archaeology; Director of Selinunte excavations

Marvin Trachtenberg, Edith Kitzmiller Professor in the History of Fine Arts (Medieval and Renaissance Architecture)

Ex-officio

Patricia Rubin, Institute of Fine Arts, Judy and Michael Steinhardt Director

APPENDIX II: Mellon Initiative Advisory CommitteeExternal members

Caroline Arscott, Head of Research, Professor of Nineteenth-century British Art, Courtauld Institute of Art, London

Suzanne P. Blier, Allen Whitehill Clowes Professor of Art, Professor of African and African American Art, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

Marco de Michelis, Dean of the Faculty of Arts and Design, Professor of Architecture, Università Iuav di Venezia, Venice

Leah Dickerman, Curator, Department of Painting and Sculpture, Museum of Modern Art, New York

Hal Foster, Townsend Martin '17 Professor of Art and Archaeology, Department of Art and Archaeology, Princeton University, Princeton

Thomas Gaehtgens, Director, Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles

David Joselit, Carnegie Professor, History of Art, Yale University

Carol Mancusi Ungaro, Associate Director for Conservation and Research, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York and Director, Center for the Technical Study of Modern Art, Harvard Art Museum, Cambridge, MA

Margaret Root, Professor of Near Eastern and Classical Art and Archaeology and Curator of Near Eastern and Greek Collections at the Kelsey Museum of Archaeology, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor

Alain Schnapp, Professor of Greek Archaeology, Université de Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne, Paris

Avinoam Shalem, Professor, Medieval Islamic Art, Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität, Institut für Kunstgeschichte, Munich

Kathryn Smith, Chair, Associate Professor of Art History, Department of Art History, New York University, New York

Carl Strehlke, Curator, Philadelphia Museum of Art, Philadelphia

Wu Hung, Professor, Chinese Art, Department of Art History, University of Chicago, Chicago

Institute of Fine Arts Committee Representatives

Michele Marincola, Conservation

Patricia Rubin, Renaissance Art

Hsueh-man Shen, Pre-modern Chinese and East Asian Art

Robert Slifkin, Modern and Contemporary Art

Thelma Thomas, Late Antique, Byzantine and Christian Art

APPENDIX III: Conservation Center Futures Advisory Committee

External Members

Suzanne Deal Booth, The Booth Heritage Foundation and The Friends of Heritage Preservation

Aviva Ruth Burnstock, Head, Department of Conservation and Technology, The Courtauld Institute of Art

Adrian Heritage, Professor of Conservation, Cologne University of Applied Sciences, Cologne

Richard McCoy, Associate Conservator of Objects and Variable Art, Indianapolis Museum of Art, Indianapolis

Mary Oey, Conservator and Preservation Education Specialist, The National Archives, Library of Congress, Washington DC

Tim Whalen, Director, Getty Conservation Institute, Los Angeles

Institute of Fine Arts Committee Representatives

Michele Marincola, Sherman Fairchild Chairman and Professor of Conservation

Norbert Baer, Hagop Kevorkian Professor of Conservation

Hannelore Roemich, Professor of Conservation Science

Margo Delidow, Mellon Fellow