

The Winterthur/University of Delaware Program in Art Conservation: Curriculum Goals

The Winterthur/University of Delaware Program in Art Conservation is a three-year curriculum designed to educate and prepare graduate students to address comprehensive needs in the preservation of cultural property. Upon satisfactory completion, the student is awarded a Master of Science degree and a Certificate in Conservation.

This curriculum is designed to develop essential skills in critical thinking and communication; improve hand skills; introduce a spectrum of techniques and analyses in the assessment, preventive care and ethical treatment of cultural property; and develop an awareness of conservation literature, connoisseurship, and the history of technology of cultural property.

In science, the curriculum is also designed to produce scientifically literate graduates capable of understanding the fundamental chemical and physical properties of art and cultural materials, the technology of their manufacture, deterioration, and preservation; as well as graduates who will be able to draw from, and add to, the expanding scientific literature within their chosen profession.

A graduating student should be able to work capably as an entry-level conservation professional.

First Year: *Introduction and breadth of exposure*

The curriculum of the First Year serves to introduce the student to an overview of the conservation field and its varied specialties: the history of art and artifact technology, the essential physical and chemical properties of materials and mechanisms of deterioration, professional ethics, and the preventive care and conservation treatment of cultural property.

The courses are presented in the form of conservation science courses, and specialty studies, including preventive conservation, paper, library and archival materials, textiles, organic and inorganic objects, paintings, joined wooden objects, and photographs. Documentation and examination techniques are covered within each specialty area. A comprehensive examination at the end of the First Year draws from materials presented during this time.

By the end of the First Year the student will select a specialty for the Second Year of study.

After completion of the First Year, a student should demonstrate the following:

- General knowledge of current theories, principles, and practices of broad conservation specialties. Subject areas include: preventive conservation, paper, library and archival

materials, textiles, photographs, joined wooden objects, paintings, organic and inorganic objects.

- Development of skills in critical analysis, professional judgment, problem solving, and the capability to assess materials, situations, and published information.
- Basic understanding of the complex issues relating to preventive care. This includes appropriate environmental conditions for different materials; handling and maintenance procedures for storage; exhibition packing, transport, and use; integrated pest management; risk assessment; and emergency preparedness, response, and mitigation.
- Familiarity with the fundamental physical and chemical properties of art and cultural materials and the causes and mechanisms of their deterioration.
- A familiarity with and understanding of the need for and the meaning of the American Institute for Conservation (AIC) *Code of Ethics and Guidelines for Practice* and other ethical codes.
- Ability to prepare written and photographic documentation of conservation work, including condition assessments and the framework for treatment proposals .
- Knowledge and appreciation of the technological developments (materials, craft and techniques), aesthetic history of cultural property, and history of the profession of conservation.
- Knowledge of issues and regulations relating to personal health and safety in the work place.
- Familiarity with basic examination tools and documentation techniques such as ultraviolet and infrared examination, radiography, polarized light microscopy and cross-section microscopy.

Second Year: *Concentration and depth of exposure*

In the Second Year, the student focuses on the specialty of choice with the objective of continuing the development of basic hand skills, a thorough ability to examine and document the condition of cultural property, problem solving and ethical decision making in treatments, and an understanding of the care and preservation within the specialty. Course emphasis can be tailored for students with strong interest in analytical work, collections care, or in various sub-specialties within their major specialty. At the end of this year, the student should be able to work efficiently under supervision.

During the Second Year, the student may also spend time studying a second specialty or minor concentration to increase his or her knowledge of and breadth of exposure to a wider range of materials and techniques. Science courses concentrate on instrumental analysis techniques and the completion of a technical study, which is presented at the end of this year. Electives in the history of technology, art history, anthropology, archaeology, preventive conservation applications, cleaning techniques, and independent study topics are included in this year. At monthly public clinics held at Winterthur Museum, the students participate and practice object assessment and public outreach skills.

During this year, the student prepares a portfolio of work and interviews at several prospective internship sites for Third-Year placement. A qualifying examination for the Second Year is given in the specialization, minor specialty, preventive conservation, and science.

After completion of the Second Year, a student should demonstrate the following:

- Increased proficiency in implementing conservation activities including examination, documentation on both detailed and quick assessment levels, treatment, hand skills and preventive care practiced within the major specialty.
- Ability to investigate the causes and changes in an object's condition and/or to evaluate techniques, methods, and materials to be utilized in conservation treatment.
- Knowledge of the history and current philosophies, principles, practices, methods and techniques of the relevant conservation specialty.
- Basic familiarity with and understanding of instrumental and chemical analysis methods as they relate to the activities of conservation, including examination, documentation, treatment, and preventive care.
- Relevant connoisseurship skills.
- Ability to formulate, design, and conduct a scientific technical study of cultural materials, and present the information in a professional manner.
- Skill in communicating and presenting information on preservation to colleagues, allied professionals, and the public.
- Basic familiarity with fundraising and professional advocacy.
- Efficient planning, implementation, and time management practices.
- Ability to work neatly and efficiently in the lab, demonstrating proper safety and laboratory maintenance procedures.

Summer Work Projects: *Practical application*

An eight-week summer work project at an institution, conservation laboratory, or historic or archaeological site occurs after the end of the first and the second academic years. These experiences provide practical application in collection survey, preventive care, and/or conservation treatment. Some work projects also include relevant additional coursework. Students report their experiences in a formal presentation to their supervisors, fellow students, and the public.

Seminar Topics: *Professional awareness*

Seminars featuring current students, faculty, and outside professional speakers provide broader insights into preservation issues and practices. These seminars are presented once a week during the course of the academic year in both the First and Second Years. Second-year students present their summer work project experiences, observations, objectives, and results. Students rehearse their talks

with a faculty member and are trained in public speaking skills. Professionals in conservation and allied fields are also invited to speak.

Third Year: *Practice and refinement*

The entire Third Year (or internship) is spent under the supervision and mentoring of conservation professional(s) at one or more host institution(s) or private laboratories, where the student functions as a cooperative and productive staff member. The fundamental objectives of this year are to broaden the student's exposure to specialty object problems and treatments; to refine hand skills; to build confidence in object assessment, decision-making, and analytical abilities, and to improve report-writing skills. Monthly and bi-monthly reports are submitted by the students to their faculty supervisors and members of their advisory committees, who regularly review the progress of the internship through these reports and personal contact. At the end of the Third Year, the students submit a portfolio and present formal 30-minute talks that summarize their work, which includes the second summer work project and the third -year internship. Oral examination by the faculty advisory committee is also required to satisfactorily complete degree requirements for a Master of Science in Art Conservation and a certificate in Conservation.

After completion of the Third Year, a student should demonstrate (note that these characteristics should be an integral part of all three years but are perhaps best acquired following completion of the Second Year):

- Professional behavior, institutional accountability, and professional responsibility.
- Skill in performing complex treatments using a range of conservation procedures and techniques.
- Ability to make independent judgments regarding the extent of conservation treatment to be performed on individual objects or entire collections.
- Ability to develop alternate or innovative solutions to problems using traditional approaches and new technologies or techniques.
- Ability to interpret and utilize current literature, scientific data, and research.
- Ability to make decisions relating to the preservation of cultural property, and to establish priorities for such recommended action.
- Ability to conduct collection assessments and conservation surveys, and in doing so identify the nature or properties of the materials, the causes and extent of deterioration, and practical/realistic options for their short and long-term preservation.
- Awareness of personal strengths, limitations, and areas for improvement, including the ability to accept and provide constructive criticism.
- Ability to function as an effective and productive member of an interdisciplinary project team.
- Time management skills and the ability to identify and formulate priorities for action.
- Awareness of appropriate behavior within an organizational structure.

The development of these skills, knowledge, and abilities will continue through one's professional career. Ideally, initially this will take place under the supervision of an experienced conservation professional and/or through an advanced fellowship opportunity.

Approved by the WUDPAC Executive Committee and the Art Conservation Department
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