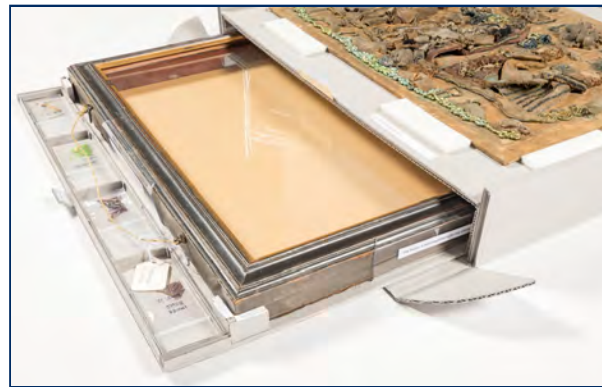


Art Conservation *and building a framework*

As a teenager, Philip De Paola taught himself to sew and developed what he terms a “passion” for tailoring, as well as the excellent hand and visual skills tailoring requires. So it may have been no surprise when the current junior at University of Delaware, seeking a more hands-on way to study heritage and culture, switched majors from anthropology to art conservation after his freshman year.

This decision and Philip’s continuing interest in textiles led this year to a summer internship in the textile conservation lab at the Winterthur Museum working with Textile Conservator Laura Mina and Preventive Conservator William Donnelly. There, in addition to assignments that included treating needlepoints and making a petticoat for a dress on display, he became adept at what may be one of the least exciting but most important areas of art conservation – creating custom-sized housings. Their importance speaks to the concern that art and cultural artifacts in storage can be degraded or even destroyed by pests, dust, improper handling, changes in temperature and humidity, water leaks, smoke and/or fire or other occurrences too terrible to contemplate. A custom-sized box made completely of archival materials cannot protect an object, textile or painting from all of these possibilities, but it is the first step in assuring that the object is well-supported and protected while still allowing access for research.



ARTC Spotlight—November 2018

The University of Delaware’s Art Conservation Department educates and trains professional conservators who are well versed in the treatment, analysis, documentation, and preventive conservation of individual artifacts and entire collections. For more news about our students and other department activities visit our web site at www.artcons.udel.edu.

Top: University of Delaware undergraduate art conservation major Philip De Paola making blue board corner piece to properly support a needlework in its box. Above: Fashioning and securing a blue board corner piece for placement in the support box. Right, upper: Another needlework, with frame, in a custom-made storage housing with multiple levels. Right, lower: A 19th-century Sumpwork and frame, housed in storage with custom-made multiple levels. Images by Jim Schneck, courtesy Winterthur Museum, Garden & Library.

Philip made boxes for seven different objects, ranging from embroideries, a mini-bed with a canopy to a 17th century Jacob’s Ladder, a toy that unfolds a bit like a modern-day Slinky. In each case, he first drew a three-dimensional diagram based on his own precise measurements of the item to be housed, and then used the diagram to outline the pieces he would need on a large piece of archival card board. After making his cuts with a box cutter, he constructed the box.

The boxes ranged in size and shape from one for the bed that was 18 ½ inches high, with supports for the legs, to a box about 20x3x3 inches with an accordion support for the Jacob’s Ladder. Each box also had a drop down front and a tray that allowed the object to slide easily in and out. In addition, he helped Library and Archives conservator Dr. Melissa Tedone sew 10 quilted fleece book futons which will be used in the Winterthur Library Lab by first-year WUDPAC students during Library Block. While his internship focused on textile conservation, Philip found that creating the boxes was an enjoyable learning experience that will also be important as he pursues a career as an art conservator.