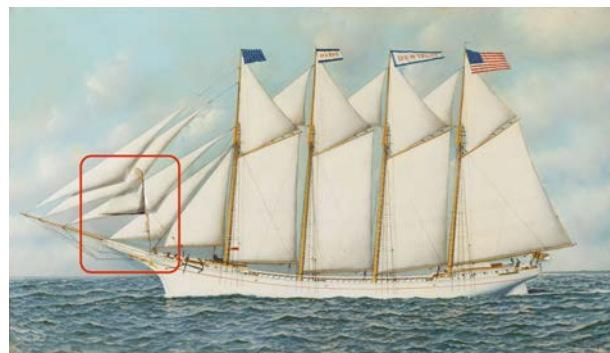




Art Conservation *and raising the sails*

Almost from the time he arrived in this country from his native Denmark in 1873, artist Antonio Jacobsen (1850-1921) lived close to the Hudson River in what is now Union City, New Jersey. Just across the river, the busy New York harbor was filled with schooners and steamships that arrived every day from around the country and the world. These became the subjects for thousands of his paintings, as well as his legacy as a great maritime painter who over the decades documented the evolution of ships.

This year, a 1906 Jacobsen portside portrait of a four-masted schooner called the *George W. Truitt* became a treatment project for Winterthur/University of Delaware Program in Art Conservation (WUDPAC) Fellow Katelyn Rovito. Through this treatment Katelyn, an artist herself who is more often attracted to figures and the human form than architectural shapes, is gaining an appreciation for maritime paintings and the conservation challenges they present.



Until recently, the *George W. Truitt* belonged to descendants of George W. Elzey, the ship's captain who is thought to have commissioned it; it still retains the signature of his daughter, Elizabeth Bennett, on the verso of the stretcher. Katelyn found the painting to be in generally good condition, with evidence of earlier conservation treatments, as well as current conservation needs such as careful cleaning and consolidation of flaking paint and craquelure. But it also had a more serious problem—a six-inch-long L-shaped tear in the canvas, bisecting the vessel's jibs and the hand-drawn, water-soluble ink rigging; the tear happened while a family member was preparing the painting for donation to the Bethel Maritime Museum in Bethel, Delaware.

To repair the tear, Katelyn is using micro-sized crochet hooks to pick up both ends of individual threads on each side of the tear and join them so that they overlap. She then drops a small amount of adhesive on top and allows it to dry before moving on to the next thread. To do this safely, she placed a three-inch-wide collar on each corner to keep the canvas suspended so she can work on the front or flip to the back while working under the microscope.

When Katelyn completes her treatment, the painting will be returned to the Bethel Maritime Museum, where it will spend the foreseeable future being cared for with other artifacts of Bethel's rich maritime past.



ARTC Spotlight— September 2020

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 artifact and archive collections. For more news about our students and other department activities visit our web site at www.artcons.udel.edu.

Top: Detail of a tear in the schooner painting before treatment. Above: WUDPAC Fellow Katelyn Rovito tear mending under the microscope. Insets: The tear before and after mending. Right: The schooner painting before treatment. Images: Evan Krape and Katelyn Rovito.

