



Art Conservation *and doctoral study*

A few years ago, paintings conservator Tatiana Ausema was at a professional crossroads. The 2003 graduate of the Winterthur/University of Delaware Program in Art Conservation (WUDPAC) was working at the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden in Washington, DC, where her job as a collections assistant entailed coordinating the activities of the conservation, registrar, and photography departments.

Although she enjoyed her work, her career path seemed to be leading away from art conservation and toward collection management. She wondered if that was where she wanted to go. In 2010, she made the decision to pursue a relatively new option for art conservators, the University of Delaware's Ph.D.

program in Preservation Studies. The Preservation Studies Program (PSP), which accepted its first students in 2006, is the only program in North America that offers an interdisciplinary doctoral degree designed to combine technical art history and science. The program accepts one or two students each year, and four have received their doctorates to date. Applicants come from the preservation disciplines, combining areas such as historic preservation, art and architectural conservation, science and engineering, and museum studies; there are few opportunities to earn a doctorate in these cross-disciplinary areas. The program's goal is to help students place their specialization into context within the broader field of preservation studies.

Currently one of nine students working toward the doctorate, Tatiana expects to complete her dissertation in 2015. Her topic was prompted by her interest in Color Field painters, whose driving interest was exploring color through their art. Her dissertation is on the evolution of materials and techniques used by early Color Field painter Morris Louis (1912-1962). Meanwhile, Tatiana continues to work part-time at the Hirshhorn as a research conservator and also teaches an introductory art conservation course for undergraduates at UD's Newark campus. Although her students may not all pursue graduate studies in conservation, she enjoys knowing that they are learning things about art conservation that they will be able to use and appreciate in both their personal and professional lives.

Looking ahead, Tatiana would eventually like to be involved with undergraduate education full-time. She also hopes to be part of the ongoing conversation within the field about how art conservation, and

the role of its practitioners, will evolve. Once a profession in which people were apprentice trained, most conservators today are program trained, and the master's is the terminal degree. With a doctorate in preservation studies, Tatiana will undoubtedly be well-positioned to contribute to that conversation.



ARTC Spotlight—August 2014

The University of Delaware's Art Conservation Department educates and trains professional conservators 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: 2014 Hirshhorn exhibition featuring works by Morris Louis, Kenneth Noland, and Helen Frankenthaler. Above: PSP doctoral candidate Tatiana Ausema in 2008, working on a Noland painting, a project that piqued her interest in Color Field painting technique. Inset: Tatiana today, analyzing samples of Louis's paint materials. Right: Tatiana working with UD undergraduate students on the conservation treatment of paintings and outdoor sculpture. (Photos: Cathy Carver, Lee Stalsworth, Joyce Hill Stoner, Amaris Sturm.)

