



Art Conservation *and outdoor adventures*

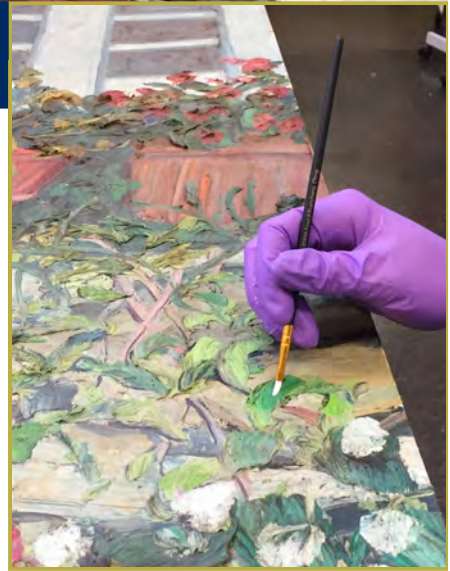
Spider webs, old insect nests, spots of mold, and a meandering slug trail on its grimy surface, evidence of being displayed on a front porch by a previous owner for 30 years, might seem trouble enough for one painting. But these were only some of the problems encountered by Winterthur/University of Delaware Program in Art Conservation (WUDPAC) Fellow Diana Hartman when this year she began treating a large, colorful plein-air oil painting of flowers blooming in a garden.

Diana found that the painting, completed in the early 1970s by artist Fay Peck (1931-2016), also showed the results of damaging interactions between the artist's paints and the acrylic ground and Masonite board on which she applied them. Exposure to humidity had also so warped and weakened the Masonite that Diana thought it to risky to set the painting upright and has kept it flat on a table before and during her treatment to date.

Despite these and other issues that became evident almost daily, Diana has been resolute about her desire to care for the painting and complete her treatment by the end of the academic year. She was also glad she had the opportunity to speak with the ailing artist a week before Peck's death in September.

Peck painted outdoors near her homes in Lake Forest, Illinois and Aspen, Colorado and chose to use Masonite as a support because it could hold the very thick impasto she typically applied. She did this by dipping her brush into a number of different paints and linseed oil without stirring. The result was a high, marbled impasto that while striking in appearance now shows evidence of severe cracking, as well as areas where smooth paint from below has oozed through the upper cracks. During the years the painting was on a porch, the impasto also provided insects with convenient places to burrow and nest.

Much of Diana's focus in treating the painting is on cleaning its surface, a process she carefully began with a water-in-solvent emulsion and revealed vivid blues and greens in place of what had appeared to be black leaves. Her other treatment goals include stabilizing and supporting the Masonite panel, consolidating along the painting's many cracks, and filling and inpainting areas of loss. When Diana's treatment is complete, the painting will be returned to the owner, who has indicated that he will reframe it and has no plans to display the painting on a porch or anyplace else out-of-doors again.



ARTC Spotlight—December 2016

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 and above: Winterthur/University of Delaware Program in Art Conservation Fellow Diana Hartman cleaning the surface using a water-in-solvent emulsion to remove dirt without swelling or solubilizing the sensitive paint layer. Left: Detail and microphotograph (60x) showing extreme drying cracks and smooth orange paint that dried slower than the topmost paint colors, but has now hardened. (Photos: Kelsey Wingel, Diana Hartman.)