



## Art Conservation *and a passion for preservation*

*A passion for his native China's ancient, but largely undocumented, architectural history and material culture led architect Yang Xu to the Winterthur/University of Delaware Program in Art Conservation (WUDPAC), where he is now a Second-Year Fellow focusing on furniture conservation. Yang's path to WUDPAC included earning a Master's degree in architecture, graduating from the CRAFT program (Conservation Resources for Architectural Interior/Furniture and Training, co-sponsored by the New York-based World Monuments Fund and the Palace Museum and Tsinghua University in Beijing), and working on conservation projects at the Qianlong Garden in Beijing's Forbidden City.*

This year, he was introduced to 18th-century colonial America through treatment of a tall Queen-Anne-style walnut clock case dating from the 1750s. The case and the brass dial clock movement it houses were originally purchased by Joseph Pennock, who in 1738 also built Primitive Hall, the Pennock family's ancestral home in Chester County, Pennsylvania. Although the cabinetmaker is unknown, the movement was made by early Wilmington, Delaware clock maker George Crow (working 1744-1762).

The case showed evidence of both its age and everyday usage as it descended through the family before being returned to Primitive Hall, including structural damage and disfiguring repairs. The miter joint of the sarcophagus top, for instance, was modified with crudely gouged-out excavations housing later finials, now removed. Some of the decorative veneers also were inconsistent with the case's period style, and inside the hood several marks, such as "Front Face" and "Right Face" on related panels, suggested that it has been taken apart and restored in the past.

Much of Yang's treatment involved reversing poor repairs with treatments based on current conservation practices, such as the use of new glue blocks that allow movement of previously captive panels, a major cause of the splitting and separation is in the clock case. He also improved its appearance by creating new wood elements to fit as replacements for missing or poorly executed pieces, removing rusting iron nails, chemically decolorizing some of the black staining, and infilling and inpainting cracks and crevices. Once Yang completed the treatment, the clock was reinstalled at Primitive Hall. Meanwhile, he is looking ahead to his third-year internship at the Metropolitan Museum of Art and eventually returning home to China. Yang believes the valuable hands-on training and education in conservation science he is receiving at WUDPAC will prove essential as he both works as an art conservator and continues to study and document the ancient structures and material culture of China.



### ARTC Spotlight—June 2019

*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](http://www.artcons.udel.edu).*

*Top: Winterthur/University of Delaware Program in Art Conservation Fellow Yang Xu reproducing the waist moldings. Above: Shaping the Araldite fill for the gouged-out corner, and inpainting and revarnishing for the bracket feet. Left: The 18th-century Queen-Anne-Style clock case after treatment. Images: M. Anderson, Y.L. Choi, K. Rovito, J. Schneck.*