



Art Conservation *and a passion for prevention*

Paintings can disappear under grime and dust; textiles can be consumed by pests or mold, and buildings eventually can crack and crumble. All these problems cause headaches for those who care for the world's cultural materials and who must try, often as an ancillary part of their jobs, to find ways to control the environmental conditions causing the damage or deterioration. Such concerns, however, will someday be the entire focus of the career being planned by Winterthur/University of Delaware

Program in Art Conservation (WUDPAC) second-year Fellow, Melissa King, who in 2020 will graduate as the program's first Preventive Conservation Major.

She is working under the supervision of WUDPAC Associate Director and Assistant Professor of Preventive Conservation, Dr. Joelle Wickens, who leads the effort to provide an education in preventive conservation for all graduate Fellows at WUDPAC.

Melissa's specialized coursework has included a Building Diagnostics course at the University of Pennsylvania Historic Preservation program. There she studied condition issues that could affect a building's ability to successfully house collection items, including a building's ability to maintain a proper environment for such collections. For a course in analytical science research, Melissa helped address an international concern about the increased risk for mold on collections due to rising temperatures, and the goal to find environmentally friendly ways to address the risk. She did this by testing linalool, a fragrant liquid alcohol that is used in perfumes, as a possible fungistat. As part of this project, she began the process of setting up a microbiological lab at Winterthur that will be expanded in the future. Another part of the project was to assess whether the fungistat had any deleterious effects on



collections, which she was able to do through various scientific analytical techniques.

Melissa also worked with a Philadelphia high school that has an extensive collection of art and artifacts, by evaluating the objects' condition and devising ways to improve their collection care. The project provided educational opportunities for the high school students, who learned surface cleaning techniques and important concepts for preventing pest infestation. The project also brought in guest lecturers from WUDPAC who exemplified the exciting ways art conservation can bring science and art together. Melissa spent the summer of 2019 at English Heritage in London and will spend the remainder of her third academic year at the Smithsonian's Museum Conservation Institute in Maryland. Looking ahead, she is excited at the prospect of using her knowledge and training in the growing field of Preventive Conservation.



ARTC Spotlight—September 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.

Top: WUDPAC Fellow Melissa King preparing textile samples for her linalool research project. Above: An Aspergillus niger fungal sample growing on a petri dish with agar medium; Melissa training high school students on dry-surface cleaning techniques on the school's collection of cultural artifacts. Left: Melissa and her major supervisor, Dr. Joelle Wickens, examine objects in Winterthur's collection storage. Images: L. Mina, M. King, J. Hurd, E. Krape.