

Harvard Art Museums

Fogg Museum
Busch-Reisinger Museum
Arthur M. Sackler Museum

Summer Institute for Technical Studies in Art June 11–24, 2023

The [Summer Institute for Technical Studies in Art](#) (SITSA) is an intensive, two-week workshop for predoctoral art historians from diverse backgrounds and research areas whose training to date has given them limited access to object-focused technical inquiry, methodologies, and instruction. It aims to expose participants to the interdisciplinary approach and tools that are core to technical studies while fostering relationships that further collaboration, enrich research, and enhance scholarship across the field of art history and beyond.

As the field of art history continues to evolve toward a more interdisciplinary, inclusive practice, the role of scientific inquiry and technical study is increasingly valued. And as art history students contemplate careers in academia as well as in the museum field, they will appreciate the important role that the dynamic dialogue with conservation professionals and artists plays both in fostering a fuller understanding of the physical nature and life story of objects and in informing decisions about their preservation and stewardship.

Throughout the course, participants will engage with conservators, conservation scientists, curators, art historians, artists, and other makers in the collaborative environment of the Harvard Art Museums and the neighboring Department of History of Art and Architecture as well as other academic and cultural venues in the Greater Boston area. Under the direction of Francesca Bewer, Research Curator for Conservation and Technical Studies Programs at the Harvard Art Museums, SITSA will unite an expert faculty to engage a cohort of 15 students in close looking, art making, and the scientific investigation of objects from the museums' collections. Students will take part in peer-to-peer teaching, discuss technical art history writing, and have opportunities to question their assumptions about the physical realities and lives of objects. The cohort will explore ways in which the skills and knowledge they acquire during the course can meaningfully contribute to their research, be applied in teaching, and be communicated in different museum contexts.

Each participant will be provided with housing and a stipend of \$1,800 to help cover roundtrip travel costs, food, and incidental expenses for the duration of the program.

This workshop is made possible with support from the Mellon Foundation.



Course Topic: Color

Hovering somewhere between matter and light, color is key to our perception, navigation, and representation of the physical world. At once enchanting and challenging, color is both scientific phenomenon and subjective experience and is intimately linked to language and culture. It has propelled thinkers and makers of all sorts—philosophers, artists, alchemists, and scientists, among others—toward exploration, experimentation, and discovery. Developments in theory and practice, together with the histories of trade and technology, taste and fashion, arts and culture, have influenced the aesthetic, economic, and social values of color as well as our interpretation of it.

What questions does the theme of color invite? How do they contribute to the critical and methodological discourses of art history, conservation, and curatorial practice? How do they relate to concepts of materiality and technique in artworks and cultural artifacts? What are the limits and possibilities of research into color by art historians, artists, scientists, conservators, and craftspeople, and what could be gleaned from other disciplines? What kinds of new knowledge are afforded through digital imaging and analytical technologies?

Guided by experts, the SITSA cohort will consider such theoretical and practical questions about the materiality of color. Subtopics may include the physics and chemistry of color, how color is created in various media, shifts in artists' palettes, the concept of mimesis, and issues related to the alteration of materials over time.

Eligibility and Application Process

Art history students currently enrolled in or completing a doctoral program in North America are eligible to apply. No background in science or conservation is required, and any specialization is welcome. A maximum of 15 participants will be admitted to the program. Applicants will be evaluated on the basis of their expressed interest in integrating technical studies in their own scholarly pursuits and in the field more broadly, as well as their academic accomplishments to date.

Applicants should submit a cover letter addressed to the Director of SITSA, Dr. Francesca G. Bewer, Research Curator for Conservation and Technical Studies Programs, Division of Academic and Public Programs, Harvard Art Museums; it should include a statement detailing what questions and unique perspective the applicant would bring to the program and a brief explanation of how the program would enrich their work (maximum 1,200 words). This should be accompanied by an academic and professional CV, as well as a letter of support from a faculty advisor that addresses the applicant's academic standing and their interest in the topic.

The application deadline is February 19, 2023, and applicants will be notified of selection by March 31.

Please submit application materials in electronic format to: am_dapp@harvard.edu.

Further information about SITSA can be found [here](#).