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 and 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, that includes a statement detailing what questions and unique perspective they 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 March 1, 2020, and applicants will be notified of selection by April 1. Please submit application materials in electronic format to am_dapp@harvard.edu.

Course Topic: Replication

There is a long history of artists and craftpeople creating copies or multiples of their work, producing artworks that are themselves multiples, and incorporating reproduction(s) into original works. Familiarization with instruments and materials of one’s craft to hone skills entails repetition of gestures. Copying others’ works and artistic processes is also a time-honored practice: for some, it is an act of devotion; for others, it is adopted for greater dissemination or to serve remunerative ends.

The life of an artwork may also involve replication at various stages. Archaeologists and art conservators, for instance, attempt to replicate objects to better understand artists’ working processes, the evolution of technologies, and how particular works change over time. Increasingly, art historians are applying such hands-on methodology as well. Through the theme of replication, SITSA will consider authenticity, originality, reproducibility, appropriation, and multiples. Guided by experts, participants will consider theoretical and practical questions about replication. They might consider the limits and possibilities of research into replication (by art historians, artists, scientists, conservators, craftpeople) and what more could be learned from other disciplines. They might also investigate what kinds of new knowledge digital imaging and analytical technologies can provide. Participants will be introduced to the tools used routinely in conservation to gather evidence of manufacture, alteration, and restoration and will carry out in-depth examination and documentation of selected objects from the museums’ collections. Bronze casting, printmaking, analog photographic printing, and reconstruction of a historical oil painting are among the hands-on processes that will be attempted, in combination with close looking at works and conversations with artists.

The museums’ various collections, conservation research projects, as well as preparations for the upcoming exhibition States of Play: Prints from Rembrandt to Picasso will form the artifactual and material backbone of the course.
Summer Institute for Technical Studies in Art
June 8–19, 2020