

# Harvard Art Museums

Fogg Museum  
Busch-Reisinger Museum  
Arthur M. Sackler Museum

## Press Release

### **\$506,000 Grant from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation creates new Summer Institute for Technical Studies in Art at the Harvard Art Museums**

Cambridge, MA  
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Harvard University has been awarded a \$506,000 grant from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation for use by the Harvard Art Museums to establish a new Summer Institute for Technical Studies in Art (SITSA). The program, designed for graduate students from art history programs across North America who are interested in broadening their experience with object-focused technical inquiry, methodologies, and instruction, will begin in June 2017. It builds on the accomplishments of the Summer Institute in Technical Art History (SITAH), developed by and conducted at New York University over the past five years.

The new Institute will emphasize holistic interdisciplinary training by providing access to the robust collections of the Harvard Art Museums and neighboring institutions' collections, as well as the expertise of curatorial and conservation staff, faculty, living artists and others whose knowledge may be relevant to specific themes of the workshop. The curriculum is designed to reveal the intrinsic power of art—through close looking at art works in local collections, a variety of demonstrations and hands-on experimentation with artistic materials and techniques, lectures and discussions, and visits to artists' workshops.

“The Summer Institute for Technical Studies in Art will expose emerging scholars and aspiring museum professionals to meaningful object-based experiences, and will help them establish a professional network committed to interdisciplinary collaboration in the areas of conservation and physical history of art,” said Martha Tedeschi, the Elizabeth and John Moors Cabot Director of the Harvard Art Museums.

“This is an exciting development for an institution that already has a long and distinguished history of educating and training the next generation of scholars and museum professionals. We are thankful for the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation’s ongoing support of this important work.”

Approximately 15 participants will be admitted each year to the program, which will take place over two weeks in the summer. The institute will be administered by the museums’ Division of Academic and Public Programs (DAPP) in collaboration with the Straus Center for Conservation and Technical Studies, the birthplace of art conservation and conservation science in the United States.

“This institute will offer a unique blend of academic and hands-on training,” said Francesca Bewer, Research Curator for Conservation and Technical Studies Programs and leader of the new program. “We expect this will help the participants make more informed decisions about the nature and condition of the objects they come in contact with as they embark on their careers. The workshop portion of the course will help equip them with the intellectual tools useful for future projects, whether working closely with conservators, scientists, and artists, or on technical texts and documentation. Art making will teach participants to look anew at works of art.”

The Harvard Art Museums have more than a century of experience and pedagogical practice in this area. The former Fogg Art Museum director Edward W. Forbes and his colleague Paul J. Sachs, who developed the first professional museum training program in the 1920s, were intent on honing the skills of potential future connoisseurs, museum professionals, art historians, collectors, and artists, in order that they might have a more nuanced appreciation of the work of art and of the artist’s process. They also sought to groom stewards of cultural heritage who were knowledgeable in conservation issues.

“There are things that can’t fully be known or understood when looking at a reproduction of an object, whether in print or online; there’s no substitute for experiencing an original work of art up close and in person,” said Narayan Khandekar, director of the Straus Center for Conservation and Technical Studies and a collaborator in the new institute. “The Harvard Art Museums have remarkable collections to draw from, which will be a key strength of this course.”

The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation has been a longtime supporter of both Harvard University and the Harvard Art Museums. The Foundation has provided the museums with critical funding for conservation science and education, publications, as well as fellowships for scholars.

## **About the Harvard Art Museums**

The Harvard Art Museums, among the world's leading art institutions, comprise three museums (the Fogg, Busch-Reisinger, and Arthur M. Sackler Museums) and four research centers (the Straus Center for Conservation and Technical Studies, the Center for the Technical Study of Modern Art, the Harvard Art Museums Archives, and the Archaeological Exploration of Sardis). The Fogg Museum includes Western art from the Middle Ages to the present; the Busch-Reisinger Museum, unique among North American museums, is dedicated to the study of all modes and periods of art from central and northern Europe, with an emphasis on German-speaking countries; and the Arthur M. Sackler Museum is focused on Asian, ancient, and Islamic and later Indian art. Together, the collections include approximately 250,000 objects in all media. The Harvard Art Museums are distinguished by the range and depth of their collections, their groundbreaking exhibitions, and the original research of their staff. Integral to Harvard University and the wider community, the museums and research centers serve as resources for students, scholars, and the public. For more than a century they have been the nation's premier training ground for museum professionals and are renowned for their seminal role in developing the discipline of art history in the United States. The Harvard Art Museums have a rich tradition of considering the history of objects as an integral part of the teaching and study of art history, focusing on conservation and preservation concerns as well as technical studies.

The Harvard Art Museums' recent renovation and expansion builds on the legacies of the three museums and unites their remarkable collections under one roof for the first time. Renzo Piano Building Workshop's responsive design preserved the Fogg Museum's landmark 1927 facility, while transforming the space to accommodate 21st-century needs. Following a six-year building project, the museums now feature 40 percent more gallery space, an expanded Art Study Center, conservation labs, and classrooms, and a striking new glass roof that bridges the facility's historic and contemporary architecture. The new Harvard Art Museums' building is more functional, accessible, spacious, and above all, more transparent. The three constituent museums retain their distinct identities in this new facility, yet their close proximity provides exciting opportunities to experience works of art in a broader context. [harvardartmuseums.org](http://harvardartmuseums.org)

The Harvard Art Museums receive support from the Massachusetts Cultural Council.

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