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Odyssey Grant – PACE Newsletter Report

### “Odyssey in Art and Science: Summer Teachers Institute in Technical Art History”

During July 2022, I spent five days learning new skills and information about technical art history. I participated in the Summer Teachers Institute in Technical Art History (STITAH) at Yale University, a week-long intensive workshop on technical art history, co-organized by the Yale Institute for the Preservation of Cultural Heritage, Yale University Art Gallery, and the Yale Center for British Art, funded by the Kress Foundation. I am grateful for SHSU’s Odyssey Grant and the Department of Art which assisted in costs related to the workshop. This year’s theme was “Brush with an Artist” which focused on close looking and hands-on learning about paint, pigment, and different mediums. It is rare in art history undergraduate or graduate work to learn about technical art history (and art conservation which is closely tied to it) and I am grateful for the opportunity to learn. We learned about a range of processes, participated in workshops, and attended lectures, including but not limited to: infra-red imaging, ultraviolet light, x-radiography, materials and techniques of Bámgbóyè Equestrian Shrine Figure, project files with works in the collection of the Yale University Art Gallery and the Yale Center for British Art, Italian tempera painting, gilding, production and application of oil paint in the northern European tradition, Japanese scroll painting, workshop on scroll and sumi-e painting, workshop on techniques of photographing in a museum environment, technical aspects of modern painting, and a keynote lecture on Rembrandt’s *Nightwatch*.

At SHSU, my students often have medium-specific questions that engage with the materials used by artists, and this was one of my primary impetuses for applying to participate. Through hands-on learning, I gained better skills to answer those questions and new ideas of classroom implementation. For classroom implementation, we do not have a conservation lab for art on campus. While formal or visual analysis papers have regularly been a part of my classes, during the early days of the pandemic, I had refocused assignments. For Fall 2022, I have returned to a formal analysis paper with a focus on artworks on campus to support prolonged close looking and analysis. I have also restructured a research paper assignment to integrate the importance of close looking and visual analysis skills from the close looking assignment in addition to scholarly sources and critical analysis.

The STITAH organizers at Yale are planning to continue to work with 2022 participants and my hope is that they can further support access to learning about conservation and technical art history with artworks in the SHSU University Art Collection. I am hoping to build further class assignments to engage students in technical art history with STITAH support. An additional benefit to attending the workshop is that I can now share more information about these kinds of career paths with students. Furthermore, through workshops with various conservators, we learned about various painterly approaches, issues with paint and canvas, and impacts of techniques. These will inform all my art history classes and my research.

I participated in two projects at STITAH that I hope to develop on campus into assignments. One project included STITAH participants being given the conservator’s report on an object in the Yale University Gallery or the Yale Center for British Art

collection and then work as a group to extrapolate to all participants and our leaders what we believed happened to our artwork. This project is difficult to recreate on campus without the conservator's report, but I hope to further investigate ways to apply this project. Another example, we were given about an hour's knowledge from conservators working on African sculptures then worked in groups to look closely and present findings. I hope to find ways SHSU can gain conservation knowledge about works in the SHSU University Art Collection to create similar assignments.

In my art history courses, I strive to engage close looking and visual analysis to build students' visual acumen and critical analysis skills. The workshop prompted me to consider how to do this in ever more meaningful ways on campus. Another aspect of the workshop is partnerships across disciplines, particularly between the arts and sciences. My hope is that my PACE newsletter essay also serves as an invitation for partnership, to find new ways to encourage partnerships between art and science to further develop new modes of classroom engagement.