# Summer Institute for Technical Studies in Art (Cambridge, 5-16 Jun 17)

Harvard Art Museums, Jun 5–16, 2017
Deadline: Mar 20, 2017

Francesca Bewer

Summer Institute for Technical Studies in Art (SITSA)

The Summer Institute for Technical Studies in Art (SITSA) is an intensive two-week workshop for a select group of Ph.D. candidates in art history; it will bring together students from diverse backgrounds and research areas who feel their topics and careers will benefit from object-based and art technical research. It builds on the Summer Institute for Technical Art History that was developed and led by New York University's Institute of Fine Arts for the past five years. Participants will be immersed in the interdisciplinary, collaborative environment of the Harvard Art Museums and the neighboring Department of History of Art and Architecture, as well as other academic and cultural partners 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 expert faculty—conservators, conservation scientists, curators, art historians, artists, and other makers—to engage a cohort of 15 students in close looking at works of art; hands-on art making; guided technical examination and analysis; critical readings; and discussions with experts. Students will be encouraged to build relationships within the group, in the hope that their exchanges will enrich their own research, foster future collaborations, and help spur wider integration of technical studies within the broader field of art history. Generously funded by the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, the program will provide each participant with housing on campus and a stipend of $1,400 to help cover roundtrip travel costs, food, and incidental expenses for the duration of the program.

2017 Course Topic: Translation

This year SITSA will focus on the multifaceted theme of translation. In art production, translation emerges in myriad ways: for example, in the transfer of a design from concept to sketch or model and onward to a finished work; or through trans-cultural and cross-media adaptation. Visual and verbal attempts to represent processes of making are themselves acts of translation, as are our individual attempts at making sense of those explanations. Similarly, the means by which art historians, curators, conservators, and scientists glean and interpret technical and material evidence from physical objects; how they communicate with each other about their questions and findings; and how they make decisions about treating and re-presenting or interpreting works all involve complex exercises of translation. In turn, these interpretations and processes must then be made accessible to diverse academic and public audiences in yet another act of translation.

SITSA will explore these forms of translation, among others, encouraging participants to reflect on questions of accuracy, originality, reproducibility, and adaptation, as well as on how the museum setting itself serves as a locus of translation and interpretation.
SITSA will provide a forum to develop critical skills in the interpretation of object-based, technical analyses. Participants will have the opportunity to translate an artwork of their choice into various media, interpret technical images and data, converse with a variety of experts, attempt to follow a historical recipe, and produce their own instructions and documentation of art making processes. They will also be expected to provide an overview of their research and to consider how the methodologies explored during the workshop might materially and theoretically inform their own scholarly interests.

Eligibility and Application Process

Students currently enrolled in or completing a doctoral program in the United States or Canada are eligible to apply. No background in science or conservation is required. A maximum of 15 participants will be admitted to the program. Applicants will be evaluated on the basis of their academic accomplishments to date and on their expressed interest in integrating technical studies in their scholarly pursuits.

Applicants should submit a cover letter—addressed to Francesca G. Bewer, Research Curator for Conservation and Technical Studies Programs, Division of Academic and Public Programs, Harvard Art Museums—detailing what unique perspective they would bring to the program and briefly explaining how they might integrate technical studies in art into their research (maximum 1,200 words). The letter should be accompanied by an academic and professional CV, as well as a letter of support from the applicant's advisor addressing the individual's academic standing and interest in the topic.

The application deadline is March 20, 2017, with final notification provided on April 8, 2017.

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

Reference:
ANN: Summer Institute for Technical Studies in Art (Cambridge, 5-16 Jun 17). In: ArtHist.net, Feb 16, 2017 (accessed Nov 13, 2026), <https://arthist.net/archive/14791>.