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DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSED PROGRAM IN MUSEUM CONSERVATION
UNIVERSITY OF DELAWARE - H. F. duPONT WINTERTHUR MUSEUM

Introduction

In 1968 the compilers of America's Museums: The Belmont Report questioned whether even a small percentage of museums in this country were doing more than "presiding over the steady deterioration" of objects in their care. One year later, Dr. Harold J. Plenderleith, then director of the International Centre for Conservation, Rome, Italy, informed the Scientific Advisory Committee of the Winterthur Museum that not enough museum conservators were being trained to replace those leaving the profession due to retirement, illness, or death, much less to fill the staffs of institutions beginning or expanding their conservation programs.

With the growing concern about how present-day methods of conservation and restoration affect the long-term preservation of objects and with the increasing use of complex scientific techniques to obtain information about art objects, we believe that conservators with strong science backgrounds are needed. We propose a graduate program in museum conservation that will be science oriented and offer specialized training in the care of wood, paper, metals, glass and ceramics, textiles, and paintings. A graduate of this program will: (1) be able to perform the actual conservation treatment; (2) understand the properties of art materials and the techniques used by museum scientists; (3) have a knowledge and appreciation of art objects; and (4) be conversant with curatorial problems.

Our philosophy for training such persons is straightforward. We want to select a minimum of six fellows who started early in their undergraduate work to take courses in chemistry, materials science, art history, and studio art. During the first year of graduate training, we plan to build upon this undergraduate education with advanced courses on the properties and characteristics

of art materials and the use of these materials in fashioning art objects. The intervening summer and the second year will be devoted entirely to the study of conservation techniques and apprenticeship in a special area of conservation.

Implementation of this new program will require the services of assistant conservators at the Winterthur Museum. The careers of these new professionals will be greatly advanced by their involvement with conservators of long experience and the stimulation provided by graduate students.

Both the University and Museum are aware of the value of early and continuous evaluation of their graduate programs for training professionals to serve in museums and historical agencies. Plans for this proposed program include the formation of an evaluation committee of outstanding conservators and museum scientists who share a common interest in establishing the highest possible standards for training in conservation. Both institutions already benefit from advice and teaching provided by distinguished members of the Scientific Advisory Committee (see Appendix F).

The period of support requested is for six years plus one year of planning. One-half of the entire sum required to operate in that period will be sought from private foundation sources and the remainder will be sought from the National Endowment for the Arts. It is the intent of the University of Delaware and Winterthur Museum to use the initial six-year period for the development of sources of funding the program on a permanent basis.

The University of Delaware and the Winterthur Museum started an undergraduate museum conservation program in the fall of 1971. That program is designed to prepare highly motivated students to move into the proposed graduate program with a capability for assimilating more advanced information. The undergraduate program allows the student to take graduate level courses during

the senior year, making it possible to obtain the master of science degree in a period of less than two and one-half years (see Appendix C). It should be made clear, however, that candidates for the six fellowships available in the proposed graduate program would be sought on a national basis. Students from the existing undergraduate program in conservation would have to compete for admission into the graduate program.

Cooperative efforts of the University of Delaware, Hagley Museum, Longwood Gardens, and Winterthur Museum indicate a permanent commitment on the part of these institutions to train professionals for service in museums and related institutions in the United States. An additional indication of the University's commitment is the establishment in February 1972 of a museum studies program under the direction of Dr. Edward P. Alexander, formerly vice president and director of interpretation at Colonial Williamsburg. The opportunity for a healthy interaction between students in the existing programs and those to be enrolled in the proposed conservation training program should be apparent.