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Charles Olin

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Olin, Charles, "Conservation: Training, Reports (1966-1973): Correspondence 01" (1971). *Conservation: Training, Reports (1966-1973)*. Paper 16.

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APR 1 1971

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NATIONAL COLLECTION OF FINE ARTS

EIGHTH AND G STREETS, N. W., WASHINGTON, D. C.

April 1, 1971

Honorable Claiborne Pell
United States Senate
Washington, D. C. 20510

Dear Senator Pell:

Pursuant to your visit of the National Collection of Fine Arts/National Portrait Gallery Conservation Laboratory, I have outlined our responsibilities and activities.

The laboratory is administered jointly by the National Collection of Fine Arts and the National Portrait Gallery and is charged with the physical care of both collections. This involves establishing appropriate environmental conditions such as relative humidity control, light filtering, and training of staff in the care and handling of works of art, as well as the actual treatment of objects.

The staff consists of three conservators, one chemist and a secretary; it is anticipated that several additional staff members will join in the near future as the present staff is inadequate to handle the requested workload. The laboratory is equipped to treat paintings, sculpture, and paper with 4750 square feet of space.

The laboratory staff is involved in preparing analytical standards of painting materials, the study of 19th century pigments used by American artists at present particularly George Inness, application and further development of photography for documentary purposes, especially color infrared.

Professional advice and, in rare instances, physical assistance is provided to other Bureaus of the Smithsonian Institution, Government Agencies, and the public for the conservation of painting and sculpture.

The laboratory occasionally has visiting scholars and graduate students.

Sincerely yours,


Charles Olin
Head Conservator

Enclosures