PURPOSE OF SMITHSONIAN FACILITIES INTERNSHIPS AT THE SMITHSONIAN

The primary purposes of the Smithsonian Facilities (SF) Castle Collection pre-graduate program conservation internship is to provide a practical learning experience in gilded wood furniture conservation. Expected knowledge and or skill will vary according to the specific area of study within the art conservation field, academic requirements of the university, and professional goals of individual students. The intern is expected to be preparing an application portfolio, but not currently enrolled in a graduate conservation program.

This is an opportunity for pre-graduate, conservation program candidates with an undergraduate degree who are seriously considering a career in art conservation, specializing in furniture and wooden objects. The successful applicant will have an undergraduate degree in history, studio arts, art history, or a related field, and be able to demonstrate a degree of familiarity with wooden furniture or gilded wood conservation. The career objectives of each participant will be considered in making placements.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The Smithsonian Institution Castle Collection is offering one or two short-term internship(s) in the field of gilded wood furniture conservation. This will be a twelve week internship with the possibility of renewal, if the project allows. The conservator will work with the successful applicant(s) one or two days a week. The intern(s) will be mentored by the conservator in the conservation treatment of a late 19th century gilded wood vitrine. Activities will include examination and treatment, with the opportunity for minimal research. The project does not need to be completed by the end of the term.

STUDENT RESPONSIBILITIES

Students will engage in activities which contribute to the smooth functioning of the specific internship experience. Depending on the internship experience, students will be expected to demonstrate knowledge and or skill from among the following: oral and written communication, leadership, initiative, and self-monitoring. The intern will create a record of the project to add to their graduate application portfolio.

Interns will be required to exercise logical problem solving skills and appropriate aesthetic judgment. The intern must be able to discern a subtle range of colors, differences in value, hue and saturation, and to evaluate the light-scattering (opacity) and reflective quality (gloss) of surfaces and learn how to manipulate these qualities. The intern will be familiar with the AIC Code of Ethics and demonstrate the judgment and restraint necessary to successfully manipulate unique cultural artifacts, in accordance with the AIC recommended standards of practice to extend the life of cultural property.

SUPERVISORY RESPONSIBILITIES

Supervisor will provide students with assignments and activities which will provide the opportunity for the student to learn about, and participate in a professional capacity in the management of a conservation treatment. Supervisor is also responsible for identifying the expectations of the project and the provision of opportunities to participate in conservation activities, and the provision of resources, time, and support to facilitate the successful completion of the assignments.

PROJECT OUTCOMES

1. Photography and written documentation of the treatment.
2. Presentation to SF senior staff of final project (including process used, results obtained, benefits to SF and suggested follow-on work)
LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Working under the guidance of the conservator, interns will gain knowledge and experience in techniques of traditional, gilded wood furniture conservation. Interns will receive experience in the preparation, testing and use of solvent gels for the cleaning of gilding, and the use of traditional animal protein glues or other adhesives for surface consolidation and repair, to achieve an aesthetically appropriate gilded surface. Interns may also participate in making minor repairs and may use traditional or non-traditional compensation techniques, such as sculpting small elements with compo, gesso, non-traditional or other materials.

Professional skills to be developed will include:
• Visual examination and condition assessment
• Photography and documentation
• Solvent testing and chemical cleaning of coated surfaces
• Consolidation of damaged surface and substrates
• Compensation for lost material and minor repairs
• Re-gilding, and patination of surfaces where necessary

Visit our website for more information. | E-Mail: SFinternship@si.edu