

For eight weeks this past summer, I had the privilege of working as an intern for Nonnie Frelinghyusen, curator of American Decorative Arts at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City. The Met is one of the largest and most renowned art museums in the world. Its encyclopedic collection includes examples of fine and decorative arts from almost every period and every corner of the globe. In order to display as much of the collection as possible, the offices are hidden around the building, mostly on floors above and below the collections. Luckily, the American Wing offices are located just above their galleries (and the Ancient Near East offices).

I spent most of my time in the library of the American Wing, but I was occasionally sent to offices around the building. Although on the surface, I was only acting as a delivery service (something necessary in a building several blocks wide), taking books and paperwork from one office to another gave me the chance to visit several departments and offices I would never have seen otherwise. The best offices to visit were the conservation departments. In Paintings Conservation, there are works from every period put on easels next to each other with no carefully planned order designed to highlight a particular theme. Although in Paintings Conservation, I was only there to help pick up books, I went to Paper Conservation with Mrs. Frelinghyusen and some of the other interns specifically to learn about the work done there. Using an ongoing project involving the restoration of drawings from Tiffany Studios, one of the conservators explained to us her process of cleaning and studying the works.

My largest project this summer was digitizing Mrs. Frelinghyusen's slide collections. Over the eight weeks I probably scanned about 9,000 images. Not all of these were kept, but the ones that were had to be carefully labeled with any information on the original slide and sorted into the appropriate folders. Scanning so many images did occasionally get boring, but it was a

valuable opportunity because I was exposed to so many different images and because I began to really consider studying stained glass windows. I have always enjoyed looking at stained glass, but before I had scanned a slide collection that included examples of windows from America and England, from the Medieval period through the mid-20th century, I had never really thought of them as art historical subjects to be studied very seriously. Another, smaller project that I worked on this summer was a basic inventory of Pennsylvanian redware pottery. To do this I created a PowerPoint with the images and information of the objects in TMS (the museum's internal object database), and then checked this information with what was in the galleries.

In part because of the breadth of the collection and in part because of the international recognition of this museum in a city as global as New York, the Met is visited by millions of people every year. Working at the Met allowed me to come in before and leave after the crowds, giving me the opportunity to look closely at works without being distracted by crowds or blocked by a tour group. Although the Temple of Dendur in the Egyptian Wing will always be an impressive display, even if it is being used as merely a backdrop for a concert or dinner, walking by the temple when there is no one else in the space is incredible.

I also got to experience the collection in a way most visitors cannot. I got to see one of the earliest stages of a period room installation and I got to see the back of a large Tiffany Studios window. The back of this window was particularly interesting because it had examples of confetti glass (plates of glass with flakes of glass embedded in them) and dichroic glass (glass that has different transmitted and reflected colors).

Although I took the opportunity to visit several galleries when the museum was closed to the public, most days I got to the American Wing by walking through the Medieval Wing. This was partly because I knew I would not get lost (a common problem in the Met), and partly

because I am especially interested in Medieval Art. Walking through this wing, I always tried to stop and really consider at least one object or case. This helped keep me from becoming overwhelmed and forgetting everything I read and saw. While reading the information on a sculpture group with King Herod, I learned that he was often shown seated with his legs crossed. I found this incredibly interesting because I work at All Saints' Chapel as a sacristan and we had been told not to cross our legs during the service or in the presence of consecrated elements. I do not know if this is a coincidence or if crossing one's legs was already seen as rude during the Medieval period, but it was fascinating to learn of a possible explanation for this liturgical tradition.

Every week, I (along with all of the other interns) also got to hear talks from people who worked throughout the museum. The head of security told us the story of a makeshift hospital being built below the American Wing during a function hosted by the president while two people from the Egyptian wing talked to us about their work in Egypt. There were also other, staff-wide talks given by the curators in charge of the rotating exhibits and Mrs. Frelinghuysen arranged for all of the American Wing interns to have lunch with the other curators in the department. I was also able to attend a staff symposium held every other year. This year, the speakers (including the director of the Guttenberg, an English professor, and someone from Christie's) all spoke on the nature of the "global museum."

Although I loved working at the Met this summer, this experience has helped me realize that I really would prefer to teach than work as a curator. I missed the work that I have done as tutor in the past; I missed learning through teaching. Regardless of what career I choose, my experience at the Met will be invaluable as it gave me an incredibly personal connection to such an important collection.