THE ZIBBY GARNETT TRAVELLING FELLOWSHIP

Report by
Idries Trevathan

Study trip in Washington DC, United States of America

To study Objects Conservation at the National Gallery of Art

6th June – 5th August, 2005
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Introduction

My name is Idries Trevathan, I am 23 years old and have British/ American nationality. I am currently studying at undergraduate BA (Hons) level in conservation studies at the City and Guilds of London Art School in Kennington, London. I hope to find future employment in a Museum or a private workshop as a conservator of historic sculpture.

In the summer of 2005 I heard about the Zibby Garnett Travelling Fellowship through my tutor at my school. I applied successfully, and I travelled to the Washington DC in the United States of America, where I attended a two-month internship program in the objects conservation department at the National gallery of Art. The Zibby Garnett Fellowship awarded me two thousand pounds which paid for my flight, accomodation, and other expenses. I also raised other funds by working part time during the evenings. I managed to pull together roughly £2500, which I calculated to be sufficient funds for my trip to the States.

Having benefited from two years of practical and academic tuition, the internship offered me the chance to work in an expert professional environment, which would compliment my studies with valuable practical experience. My aim in going to the National Gallery was to deepen my understanding of Museum work, including collection management, curatorship and a wide spectrum of related issues. The National Gallery of Art is unsurpassed in its collection, expertise and research but also leads the United States and the world in its fresh approach to conservation. This was especially apparent in the constant dialogue between the conservators and scientists.

Not only would I learn from working in such a museum, but this would also reflect well on my professional profile and would hopefully lead me to a rewarding future in conservation.

What I intend to discuss in this travel report are my experiences and the valuable skills I gained while on my summer Internship at the National Gallery of Art in Washington DC. Not only shall I attempt to describe my work at the gallery but also mention the people I met and other travels and experiences made. I partook in a two-
month internship program at the gallery. My time there was divided between Intern orientation sessions and my own specialised work within the objects conservation laboratory.

Figure 1 and 2. Maps of North America and the east coast of the United States. The red dots and lines highlight all the areas I travelled. Images are taken from mapquest.com and Expedia.com.
I travelled to the east coast of the United States of America. This coastline is lined with several large and important cities such as Boston, New York, Philadelphia, Baltimore and Washington DC, many of which I visited. Washington is south to all these cities and is surrounded by the rural states of Virginia and Maryland. Washington, the capital of the United States is part of the District of Columbia.

**My arrival in Washington DC - The city and its history.**

Arriving in Washington I had certain expectations of the United States of America, but it was not as I had anticipated. Regarded as the most powerful place on earth, Washington DC is a monumental city consisting of long boulevards lined with beautiful neoclassical buildings. Washington is the centre of the three branches of government – represented by the White House, Capitol, and Supreme Court buildings which all dominate the landscape. Arriving in Dulles Airport, I was picked up by Judy Ozone, one of the conservators from the objects laboratory. We drove down through the Mall and she pointed out all the major museums and monuments. The National mall is laid out along two miles between the US capitol and Potomac River; it is both the cultural and political axis of the United States. The Mall is filled with many of the city’s biggest attractions including nine Smithsonian Museums, such as the National Museum of Air and Space, Natural History and American Museum and the National Gallery of Art. It also contains several of the city’s most important monuments and memorials, dedicated to presidents such as Washington, Jefferson, Lincoln and Roosevelt and to veterans of the Vietnam War, World War I, and World War II.

In the early 1600s, settler Captain John Smith arrived in the area that would eventually become America’s capital. After driving out the Native Americans who originally lived there, colonists used the land for farming until the site was selected for political purpose. At that time president Washington commissioned French architect Pierre L’Enfant to design the new city. Not long after the construction began, L’Enfant was replaced by the city surveyor Andrew Ellicot and Mathematician Benjamin Banneker. Parts of L’Enfant’s vision, like the Washington Monument can still be seen today. The city is designed into four quadrants north east
NE, north west NW south S and south west SW. Located exactly at the centre of the quadrants is the capitol. The streets that divide the four quadrants are North Capitol, East Capitol, South Capitol and the National Mall.

We entered Dupont Circle, an area northwest of the capitol, well known for its nightlife, restaurants and bars. This was my home for the first three weeks of my stay in Washington. I had been offered accommodation by a gallery conservator which included looking after his cats during his excavation assignment in Turkey, an offer accepted without hesitation as it allowed me time to look for other accommodation. The apartment was beautiful and the area was very exciting, especially as it was near a vibrant Latino area. I found central Washington to be quite compact and walk-able with the metro as an affordable alternative. Dominated by the presence of the Federal Government, the world’s first planned capital appeared to be a beautiful and lively city. Washington had unique neighbourhoods, with their own history, appearance and atmosphere. Previous to arriving to Washington, I had heard a lot about the high crime rate and was relieved to find myself in a safe and friendly part of town. However, during the next three weeks I looked for another room and got to know all the different neighbourhoods of the city, some of them dangerous.

Figure 2 and 3. The Lincoln Monument and Reflecting Pool (right) and the Washington Monument (Left).
Just across the Potomic River, on the South East side of Washington is Anacostia, a district said to be particularly lawless with weekly shootings and muggings. I definitely saw a very dark and dangerous side to the city, something that I was not accustomed to living in London. Despite its perilous outer areas, the centre of Washington is probably the safest and securest place in the whole of the United States. The security was visible with police cars on every corner and police convoys escorting senators and world leaders around the capital. I felt the city centre stood in stark contrast to the other districts of the city.

D.C Timeline.

? 1800: Congress and the rest of the federal government move to DC. President John Adams moves into the unfinished White House.

? 1812-16: The War of 1812 takes the toll on DC. The English burn the capitol, White House and other federal buildings.

? 1846: The city of Alexandria County (now Arlington County) are ceded back to Virginia. The Smithsonian museum is chartered by congress.

? 1848-50: The 184 mile Chesapeake and Ohio canal is completed between Georgetown and Cumberland, Maryland. The canal operates from 1828 to 1924 as a transportation route, primarily bringing coal.

? 1861-65. Although the civil war disrupts progression. The districts population doubles from 60,000 to over 120,000. Slavery is abolished in D.C in 1862. President Lincoln is shot and killed five days after General Lee’s surrender in April of 1865.

? 1871-74. The territorial form of government is formed in D.C.

? 1878- The commission form the of government is re-established.


? 1912: Japan sends a gift of 3,000 cherry blossom trees to D.C as a token of friendship. Hundreds of thousands come to watch the blossoming of the trees every year.

? 1912: The Lincoln memorial is completed.
? 1932: The population in D.C rises sharply with Roosevelt’s New Deal and the growth of federal agencies.

? 1943: The Jefferson memorial is completed.

? 1963: Civil rights march converges on the capital. Martin Luther gives his famous speech.

? 1970: Washingtonians are given their right to elect a representative in congress.


? 2001: Terrorists destroys part of the pentagon.

**History of the National Gallery of Art**

In 1937, when Andrew W. Mellon, the noted statesman and philanthropist, donated his private art collection to the nation, President Franklin D. Roosevelt accepted the gift for the United States of America. In addition, Mr. Mellon provided the funds for the building to house the collection. Since then the National Gallery of Art has grown to include around one hundred thousand objects and now attracts six million visitors a year. The original museum, designed by John Russell Pope and known as the west building (where I worked), opened its doors to the public in 1941. The east building containing the contemporary collections and special exhibitions, was designed by I. M. Pei and opened in 1978.

Unique among the world’s museums, the Gallery does not use public funds for any acquisitions. All works of art have been give by private donors or purchased with privately donated funds. The founding benefactors of the National Gallery were a diverse group who nevertheless shared two common characteristics: great wealth and a love for collecting. However the United States government and private benefactors, in accepting the original gift, pledged to maintain the building and pay personally for operations.

Although established as a bureau of the Smithsonian institution, the gallery is an autonomous and separately administered organization governed by its own board of trustees. The Board of Trustees comprises of a chairman, a president, and three other trustees who appoint the executive officers at the gallery: the director, deputy
director, Dean for the communication of advanced study of visual arts (CASVA), administrator, treasurer, secretary-general counsel, and External Affairs Officer.

Figure 4, 5 and 6. From left to right are the East building, exhibiting modern and contemporary art, the second is a view of the National Archives building from the Sculpture Garden and thirdly the main entrance to the West building (Where I worked).

The National Gallery of Art - Settling in..

The first week was very intense as I had to adjust myself to the climate, people and the American way of life. I spent a lot of time getting to know my new environment and the other conservators in the laboratory. I started my work in the gallery in a state of amazement which initially made it difficult to focus. The object conservators were all very friendly and welcoming. At first I was keen to impress, which was incredibly exhausting when combined with the unbearable humid climate and jetlag. The head of the department was Shelly Sturman, a well-respected conservator, with over 30 years experience working in conservation. I found her to be the perfect mentor, from whom I learnt a vast amount. Throughout my time at the gallery she constantly helped me with research and often took time out of her own busy schedule to explain conservation methods or ideas.

The objects conservation department had seven conservators in total and most of them were female. As the National Gallery only employs the best conservators, I
was privileged to work with some very experienced, talented and distinguished people who are all very grounded and easygoing. After meeting all the objects conservators and a visit around the laboratory, Shelly Sturman set me several tasks, such as examining and researching a particular Degas bronze. There were a number of methods I discovered from lectures held for the Interns, the most efficient and reliable way to researching a particular art work at the gallery was by examining curatorial records.

**Intern orientation sessions.**

The intern orientation sessions were run by the Department of Academic Programs at the Gallery and I learned about each department’s role and responsibility. These meetings were a separate programme to the everyday work in the objects conservation department. I was very grateful to attend as this enabled me to meet members and staff from nearly every corridor of the National Gallery. This included conservation, administration, education, facilities management and the curatorial offices. The sessions were held every Tuesday and Thursday mornings, and I made many friends and acquaintances both with conservators and workers from other departments. I made some very good friends with the other interns from all over the world and grew very close to many of them, including Sara Tarrissi from Italy, Christoph Brenner from Austria and an American called Nathan Timpano. We spent most of our lunch breaks, evenings and weekends together and were joined by many others.

**Department of Curatorial Records (DCRF).**

I visited the curatorial department throughout the Intern sessions, organised by the adult education department. The Department of Curatorial Records (DCRF) of the National Gallery of Art maintains the object folders for all the paintings, sculptures, and decorative arts in the Gallery’s collection. Each folder is the most complete record possible of information about any particular work of art. The files are updated as new information becomes available for curators, conservation department, other Gallery departments, or through research by DCRF staff.
The DCRF is also responsible for the upkeep of all the records in the Gallery’s collection management system CMS or ‘Leonardo’. This includes cataloguing of the new acquisitions, official changes in attribution, title, and date, corrections and additions to cataloguing information, and the development of the scholarly portions of the database. The collection management system (CMS) is only available in-house to all gallery staff, and the collection information is available in two ways, to the staff via the internal Gallery website and to the public via the Gallery’s website.

**Examining acquisitions.**

In working with the conservators I learnt that a major aspect in deciding over possible acquisitions (purchasing an object), was the research into its provenance and history of ownership. The National Gallery of Art has researched the provenance of its entire collection since its inception and has published information on its website. I had the opportunity in assisting Daphne Babour (Object Conservator) in examining a German polychromed wooden sculpture of St John for a possible acquisition. We analyzed the object through a number of methods. We observed the object under ultraviolet light and it revealed original paint and cracks that were not visible to the naked eye. We also took paint sections which we viewed under polarised microscopy. I took many X-rays of the object which will be discussed later. We talked about the aesthetics of the object and whether it would improve the *Objects Collection*. It was undecided whether the piece was to be bought during my stay at the NGA. I also learnt about the importance of provenance issues at a Museum. The true ownership and authenticity must be proven before any interest of purchase begins. The St John sculpture belonged to an art dealer; therefore the conservators were cautious and wanted a full examination.

While working with Daphne Babour I was told about the gallery’s involvement in examining spoliation of Art work in Nazi Germany. I was told many artefacts were returned, due to scholarly publications, declassifications of archival documents and archival resources following the fall of the Berlin Wall and break up of the Soviet Union. The NGA included itself in a major international provenance research of all
of its Artworks and many were returned. All the archival documentation is then stored in the NGA’s library department of Curatorial records, which I often visited.

**Work in the Sculpture Garden**

Another major part of my summer work at the National Gallery of Art was in joining the other sculpture conservators in their annual preventative treatments of all external sculpture. The majority of the Sculpture can be found in the sculpture garden across the street from the National archives. The informal garden includes new plating of Native American species of the canopy trees, flowering trees, shrubs and perennials. A fountain, which serves as an ice rink in winter, is at the centre of the garden, and walking and areas offer visitors a chance to rest and reflect on the works on view.

![Figure 7. A map of the sculpture Garden with all the artists listed below. We treated on most of the sculptures on this list. Image taken from NGA website.](image)

There is also a café at one end of the garden. An ornamental metal fence with marble piers and plinths, designed to reflect the historic character of the West building, enclosing the Sculpture Garden. There are also many other sculptures scattered around the east building, including impressive pieces from Andy Goldsworthy, Henry Moore and Rodin. A Henry Moore sculpture was the first object the conservators planned to treat. British born artist, Henry Moore, was commissioned to produce a sculpture for the 1978 opening of the East building of the National Gallery. The massive sculpture now stands right outside the main entrance of the East building. The sculpture is made of copper alloy commonly referred to as ‘Bronze’. Bronze consists of copper alloyed with tin, zinc and other minor elements such as silicon, lead and iron. We were conserving the piece in order to keep it as the artist intended and to protect it from the elements, pollution and vandalism. Once every year the sculpture is washed and waxed. This was the standard treatment for most of the bronze sculpture in the garden. We started with soap and water; the soap was a mild, non-ionic detergent without perfumes or colorants. The protective coating is primarily carnuba wax with a mixture of natural and synthetic waxes. The shiny areas were polished with a fine grade of micro alumina powder and then coated with an acrylic resin before being waxed.

Figure 8 and 9. Buffing and waxing sculptures dedicated to the children of the Holocaust (Left). Applying a layer of mineral spirit to a steel sculpture by Ellsworth Kelly (Right).
The majority of the job was the waxing and buffing of the piece. The outdoor heat made working difficult in a number of ways; it made the work exhausting and heated the bronze making it difficult to buff the wax evenly. It took nearly five days to finish treating the sculpture.

**Trip to Chesapeake Bay/ Maryland**

In the third week I took a trip to Kent Island which lies just one hours drive south-east of Washington DC. The trip took us across the state of Maryland to a very popular destination in Chesapeake Bay. I went with Michael Bellman, a colleague from work and his wife Chantal. We were going to meet his family in the area known for fishing and sailing. We went to an authentic American restaurant called Jim’s Crab Bar. I ordered the famous Chesapeake crab cake as well as the Gritz (a typical southern dish). Michael Bellman’s family were a Jewish family from New York who had now settled in the state of Maryland. We talked for hours about travelling and differences between English and American culture and Michael’s father was looking back on his visits to England. I was very touched by being welcomed so warmly into their family.

On our way back to Washington, we stopped off in the town of Annapolis which was one of the first settlements and arguably has one of the oldest histories in the whole of the United States. It was also the first capital city before Washington DC and I found the city had a very European look but with a strong American atmosphere about it, perhaps due to the presence of the ‘Navy seals’, based in the town of Annapolis. This trip to the sea and away from Washington was a real eye opener and encouraged me to make more trips outside Washington.

I grew very close to this family, particularly to the Michael and Chantal. Soon after this trip they got married and I was invited to the pre-wedding ceremony. It took place in a beautiful park within a pleasant area called George Town just outside of Washington, the home of wealthy people, such as senators and businessmen. It was a pleasure to attend such a happy event.
**Moving to the U-street area**

Finding accommodation in DC was very difficult being busy all day and most evenings. The questions of accommodation became a worry and I asked everyone I knew in Gallery as well as the other Interns if they knew a place to stay. Lucky enough two days before I was to move out I received a call from a girl named Elizabeth McPherson, offering me a room to rent in the Ustreet area of DC. U Street used to be ranked second to Harlem in New York as America’s main centre for black entertainment. Just down my street were the famous Lincoln and Howard theatres, where many of the greatest jazz performers had appeared, such as Ella Fitzgerald, Billie Holiday, Count Bassie and DC’s own Duke Ellington. (Whose house was a few blocks from mine). Next door to the theatre was ‘Bens Chilli Bowl’ an old eat in frequented by the likes of Bill Crosby, Denzal Washington and myself. They served the best cheese- chilli fries in the whole of Washington, and I often went there after work to get a quick bite to eat, as well as watch the interesting characters from U- Street. My flat- mate was a black American named ‘Joey’, who found work playing music around different bars and clubs in DC. I really enjoyed living in this area as I saw a different face to Washington DC, there were parades and festivals held most weekends as well as music concerts.

**X- Radiography**

The technician and I took many X-ray pictures of the Degas bronze to analyze the structure. The object conservators and conservation scientists were examining materials used in Degas wax sculpture. Shelly Sturman and Daphne Barbour are writing on a technical and historical study of all Degas’ waxes and the bronzes cast from them. In looking at the bronze it was necessary to determine what was done to the wax sculpture in anticipation of casting and afterward. The research undertaken on the Degas waxes is partly intended to establish the authenticity of the works. Whilst the authenticity of the waxes is not in question, there is the uncertainty as to where the Degas works begin and end as many of the waxes were repaired or otherwise altered after his death. The original wax of the particular bronze I was analysing was not owned by the NGA. I was asked to investigate in which Museum
the original wax had been displayed and to collect all available information and imagery. Studying the structure with x-radiography (X-ray) and X-ray Florescence (XRF), the x-ray showed complex wire structures, other materials such as different waxes, clays, and diverse experimental objects like long nails, corks and door hinge pins.

Figure 7 and 8. Dylan Smith assists me in examining the X-rays of the Degas bronze.

The x-rays also revealed the inside of the sculpture to be like the skeleton of a body. X-ray penetration portrays metal armature as a thick white area. The x-ray appears as a detailed sketch or drawing with an intricate interior structure. The wire is wrapped and twisted forming a basic skeleton of a backbone, neck, ribs, arms and legs which can be manipulated into any position.

**Researching thesis topic.**

The research and examination of the x-rays interested me so much that I decided to do my own investigation into the manufacture and structure of bronze sculpture. I realized that it would be an exceptional topic for my thesis, and I had unlimited resources of reference and was surrounded by experts who were more than happy to help me. I felt confirmed in this choice when Mr Richard Stone, a conservator from the Metropolitan Museum, New York, came to assist the conservators in analysing
several Severo bronze sculptures for possible acquisition. He was a specialised conservator who had been working on x-radiographs all his professional life. I decided to make the most of his visit by attending all his lectures and asking him as many subject related questions as was possible. On one particular day he joined Caitlin Jenkins, the x-ray technician, and myself in the x-ray room, offering us valuable advice on improving our x-ray methods. The taking of x-rays is often a matter of trial and error and his visit proved extremely helpful as he explained the different aspects of taking x-rays and the useful parameters applied in accordance to the material that was being investigated. He recommended some articles on the subject and offered me some of his own material which he had not yet published. All the conservators in the objects laboratory eagerly reminded me how lucky we had been in having Richard, a top specialist, sharing his knowledge on the subject. Even though I felt a little out of my depth when listening to him, I took a lot of notes and scrupulously studied them at home using books as references. During the week he spent at the Gallery I learnt a huge amount about a subject previously unknown to me and gathered books and articles to research the subject in preparation of my thesis. I felt so privileged and inspired working on a Degas’ sculpture, which was so highly regarded, and I found it a joy to walk in the mornings to the objects laboratory and be surrounded by Degas waxes. I spent many hours looking very closely at the wax sculptures and admired Degas’ workmanship and skill; I was often joined by other conservators, enthusiastic to share their knowledge on the artist, his working habits and any interesting information they had encountered. Often I learnt more from just informally chatting with curators or conservators than by reading books on the subject. After each of those conversations I would quickly record everything that was said and return to it later at home to clarify my notes. I frequently stayed up late, reading or writing, desperately trying to catch up on things I wanted to know so that I would be able to discuss the subject further the next day.
Continuation on outdoor sculpture
During the week in which we were trying to finish the outdoor sculpture treatments, the weather was changing erratically from tropical rainstorms to heat waves. Our work was entirely dependent upon the weather and we spent a lot of time waiting for it to stop raining. As a result we had to work overtime, staying sometimes until eight o’clock in the evening just to keep to our tight schedule. Most of the treatment involved cleaning the sculpture with soap and water as the weather made buffing and waxing difficult. Other materials such as steel, iron and other metals required different types of treatment. For instance particular sculptures by Miro, Shapiro and Smith needed an application of mineral oil to protect and show their original colour. At times the humidity was so overwhelming we felt dehydrated and disorientated making it impossible to work for many successive hours. The work in the sculpture garden was physically demanding, especially for someone not accustomed to that climate. I nevertheless enjoyed the work and saw it as good exercise. I lost a stone in weight that week alone.

Trip to Charlottesville - Virginia and Monticello.
After the tiring week working in the Sculpture Garden I decided I needed a break from Washington. A group of friends and I decided to rent a car and take a trip to Charlottesville in Virginia. We were mostly Europeans and all interested in taking a trip to engage with American history. Both the route we took and the destination was steeped with history. We planned the route through the state of Virginia, stopping at major historic battlefields of the American civil war as well as famous vineyards.
Charlottesville is famous for its university and the architect Thomas Jefferson. We visited both his university and his house called Monticello, just outside Charlottesville which he called “my little essay on architecture”. Jefferson, the author of the Declaration of Independence and third president of the United States, studied the buildings of Ancient Rome and began building his house in 1768. However after returning from France with new ideas about architecture 1798, he redesigned the house completely. As a result I found Monticello a remarkable integration of classical architecture and modern innovation. It is the only house in
the United States which is on the United Nations prestigious world heritage list of international treasures.

*Figure 9 and 10. My friends and I outside Jefferson’s house ‘Monticello’ (left). Our return trip took us through Shenandoah national park (Right).*

The University of Virginia in Charlottesville is also an impressive building and is considered one of the most important historic buildings in America.

During the trip I realized that despite America only having three hundred years of history, it is nonetheless both interesting and exceptional. The founding fathers of the United States were idealists who believed in equal rights and freedom. This was evident everywhere, written on all the monuments and memorials around Washington and Charlottesville.

The return trip took us through Virginia’s Shenandoah National Park which was more than a hundred miles of forest. Upon my return to the UK I learned that an ancestor of mine, Eli Trevathan, had trekked through this very valley in the early 19th century, migrating with his family and one slave to Tennessee and later Kentucky. We stopped off and took walks up into the mountains where we saw undisturbed nature, with animals and beautiful waterfalls. This return trip was particularly enjoyable as it was refreshing to be surrounded by countryside and away from the bustling metropolis of Washington DC.
The 4\textsuperscript{th} of July - Independence Day.

The week started with July the 4\textsuperscript{th}, America’s national Independence Day with marches and parades all over the Mall and later, at night massive fireworks displays. I and most of the interns went to a party on a rooftop with a good view of the fireworks. The night was enjoyable; we were talking, laughing and watching the amazing firework displays over DC’s skyline. It was amazing to see how much time and effort had been made in preparation of Independence Day celebrations and it showed how important it is to the American people. We stayed awake till the early morning hours only to snatch a few hours of sleep before work. That day most people in the Gallery were tired, and not a lot of work was achieved.

Trip to New York City

After finishing work on Friday 7\textsuperscript{th} of July, two good friends, Christoph and Sara, joined me in catching the 7:10 pm express train from Union Station DC to Penn Station in New York City. We had arranged to stay at a friend’s house in an area of New York called Little Italy. We arrived in Penn Station at 11:30 pm and took a taxi to the little Italy/ China Town area. After leaving our bags in the apartment, we ate in a typical Italian restaurant, not far from the apartment. We watched the interactions between people and found the general atmosphere distinctly different to Washington. People were more varied and the restaurant waiters un-friendly. However, there seemed to be an air of authenticity in the life of New York when compared to the somewhat forced pleasantness of DC. We finally got to bed long after midnight and awoke early the next morning to explore the city.

Our priority for the weekend was to visit all the major galleries in New York including the Metropolitan, the Museum of Modern Art (Moma), the Guggenheim and the Frick collection. We managed to fit in many other activities, visiting the city’s attractions such as the Statue of Liberty, Wall Street, the Empire State Building and Central Park.

We spent most of Saturday in the Metropolitan Museum, with not enough time to see the collection in its entirety and to truly appreciate each room. I walked in absolute wonder; the galleries and rooms displaying sculpture from ancient Egypt
and Rome through to the Renaissance, with sculptors such as Bernini and Canova on show. The quality and range of art exhibited was extremely varied and vast, leaving me in a state of amazement. The Metropolitan was one of the biggest and most impressive Museums I had ever visited. While in New York we spent a lot of time wondering around Manhattan and Central Park where we enjoyed the musicians and performers.

The Frick collection, a small walk from the Metropolitan, housing an outstanding range of European and American Art, was a real surprise for us all. It was the former residence of Henry Clay Frick (1849-1919), a Pittsburgh coke and steel industrialist who collected sculpture and paintings from all over Europe. The beautiful building was re-designed by John Russell Pope to house Frick’s massive collection. I came across many masterpieces by Rembrandt, Goya, Cezanne and very important Renaissance bronze sculpture which I was very keen to examine. After learning about the methods at the NGA, I was able to look at the bronzes closely and understand their manufacture and surface appearance. I found ‘reading’ a bronze an inspiring and exhilarating experience and I shared my newly acquired knowledge with my friends. Both Christoph and Sara are Art historians and they shared their knowledge of and ideas about many of the paintings with me.

Discussing Art in this fashion continued throughout the weekend and I learnt a great deal which made me look at art from a different perspective, looking more closely at the colours and lines within the paintings. After enjoying the Frick collection we went to the Guggenheim Museum which is an impressive circular building. Known for its more contemporary art, it also exhibited beautiful artwork by Picasso and Kandinsky.
I was told by numerous people that in recent years the Guggenheim had received poor ratings and bad exhibitions and it’s reputation had sunk and was no longer considered a good museum or worth visiting, especially as the entrance fee was a hefty $20. We decided to, at least, admire the interior of the building as we all had National Gallery passes which enabled us to enter all museums free of charge. Most of the space at the Guggenheim was taken up by an exhibition of sculptures by the artist Jorge Ortieza called ‘Myth and Modernism. Most of the sculptures were abstract shapes carved from stone or cast bronze. Christoph, Sara and I were not impressed and we left shortly after arriving.

We had arranged to meet another intern for lunch at the Neue Gallerie. The Neue Gallerie was dedicated to German and Austrian art and there were great works of art by Klimt, Schiele and Ernst. After looking around the gallery, we spent a couple hours in the gallery’s café, which was famous for its authentic German cuisine. I enjoyed a good English tea and Apfelstrudel and discussed what we would do that evening. The friend we met for lunch suggested a great Jazz venue in downtown New York. We all agreed and reserved seats at the Vanguard Jazz bar in Greenwich Village for that evening. I later found out that it was popular among jazz loving New Yorkers and was a famous venue because jazz musicians had once played there, such as Miles Davis and John Coltrane. Significantly for me, my father was born and
grew up in this part of New York. We sat there for hours listening to a three piece band; it was perfect relaxation after our hectic day in the New York bustle. We got back to our apartment late and slept soundly though the traffic and noise of the night. Most of Sunday was spent just walking through the New York streets such as Broadway Avenue and 5th Avenue, Time Square, captivated by the incredible architecture and business of the city. It was a beautiful sunny day with a cool breeze coming off the sea. That day passed in an instant and before even realizing our time was over, we were onboard a train going southwards to Washington.

On returning to Washington Sunday evening, there was a strange feeling as if we were coming to a small provincial town. Union Station was empty which was so strange when compared to the busy Penn station. The differences between Washington DC were enormous. I realized that New York was a unique city in the United States and set itself apart from everything else on the east coast.

Socialising with friends

Many evenings were spent with friends, either going to out restaurants or one another’s house. An English intern called Michael Parsons who worked in the curatorial offices lived in the well to do area in Georgetown. The beautiful 18th century house sat in a very rich neighbourhood and had an outdoor swimming pool and outhouse. At least three times a week you would find most of the interns here, swimming, having barbeques and relaxing after the long day. On the weekends we would visit the other museums along the Mall such as the Hirshorn Museum, the Freer and Sackler Museums and the Air and Space Museum. I visited these museums many times during my stay in Washington, often on my own. We often ate at one another’s houses, which was nice as many of us lived alone and appreciated the company in the evenings. Working and socialising everyday with the other interns enabled me to really get to know them. It seemed that during the last weeks of my time at the Gallery all the interns became very close and felt an impending sadness over the end of the internship and our time together. We had come from all over the world and were all away from home, so we acted like each others family, helping and looking out for each others welfare. I was told by Gallery staff that this
was not always the case with the previous interns, and we were lucky to have such a caring and dynamic group.

**New assignment- Qin Dynasty sculpture.**
I had three weeks remaining and had nearly finished my research on the Degas bronze. Shelly assigned me another task working on a small terracotta figure that had been in storage for a long time. All the conservators were eager for someone to write a report and conserve the piece. It belonged to the head objects curator at the National Gallery Mr Nicholas Penny, an Englishman who had worked at numerous English museums such as the Fitzwilliam and the National Gallery in London. He was one of the Gallery’s most important curators; this became more evident when we visited the Curator’s offices for the intern orientation sessions. He was spoken of very highly and was often referred to as ‘the Gallery’s best catch’. I was told the treatment needed to be perfect as Nicholas Penny had a very good eye and demanded perfection from the conservators. This made me very nervous and apprehensive that I was not ready for the job. I managed to dispel my self-doubt and accept the task with gratitude. The terracotta warrior’s head had broken off and my task was to write a report on the object’s condition as well as researching appropriate adhesives to bond the head back to its body.

*Figure 13, 14 and 15. Three different views of the Qin Dynasty sculpture before and after the treatment.*
I read numerous articles and books on different adhesives and their properties as well as acquiring a better understanding of terracotta as a material. Researching meant visiting the library and also looking at web pages dedicated to the study of conservation materials. I also went through many articles in the museums off-file storage. This was all very time-consuming and when divided between the work in the sculpture garden, I was extremely busy for the rest of my time at the Gallery. I managed to write a very long report both on the object’s condition and a treatment report describing in great detail every possible adhesive used in terracotta restoration, finally recommending the most appropriate adhesive for the object.

I then practiced adhering broken shards of terracotta to have my skills practice before treating the object. Shelly was happy with my work and preparation, and encouraged me to begin treatment. I consolidated and adhered the head after colour matching the in-fills. The treatment was successful and I was congratulated by all the conservators. For myself I was just relieved at doing nothing wrong. From this assignment I managed to research many different things that I had not known about, I was grateful to Shelly in encouraging me to research the different adhesives. The research was more for my benefit and I was aware of the extent that this would serve as very useful back at school in London.

**Trip to Baltimore**

Baltimore is a city that is situated further north on the east coast. Only a forty minute train ride away, I decided to take a day trip to see the city of Baltimore and its Museums. The city has a bad reputation because of high unemployment and a high crime rate. This was very evident to see as soon as I left the train station. The streets were dirty and beggars lined the sidewalk. Even though it was mid afternoon and the streets were busy, there was an air of danger. I kept my bag close by and tried to fit in as best I could, even though I must have stuck out.

I made my way directly to the Walters Collection that, like the Frick collection was private. Once again I was able to enter the Gallery free of charge with my National Gallery of Art identification badge. The collection was very big and covered all sorts
of artefacts from French impressionism to Islamic art. I was particularly interested in their Renaissance sculpture court. It was, however, sad to see many of the sculptures in terrible condition, the sculptures had many noticeably bad repairs and in-fills, and they also had a collection of dirt and dust covering them. It seemed the Walters collection was under funded which was strange to see, especially as I was used to the pomp and lavishness of the National Gallery and Metropolitan. Despite this the experience was worthwhile and enjoyable. I made my way to a famous Baltimore Lexington Market, where it was said they sold the best seafood on the west coast, and again like Chesapeake Bay was known for the crab meat. The market was an old building that dated back to the 19th century; there were crowds of bustling people buying and selling fish, while a jazz band played in a small stage set in the middle of all the fish stalls. This was an impressionable experience as there was so much happening around me. I made my way to small fish bar and sat myself on one of the small tables ordering a fish cake with a side order of grits, and eagerly watched the life around me. With a full stomach I strolled down to the waterfront where all the boats were docked, by now it was mid afternoon and it was unbearably hot. The weather throughout my time on Eastern Coast was something I had not reckoned with. It was positively tropical and is not something that we are aware of in the UK – we presume that it will be similar to our more moderate climate. I didn’t stay long before catching a cab to the Baltimore museum of Art which was on the outskirts of the city. The museum was fairly big with a nice collection that seemed to pride itself on a massive collection of Henry Matisse and a large sculpture garden with many similar bronzes to the ones at the NGA. I was intensely occupied for a few hours before catching the train back to Washington. Overall I found Baltimore a wonderfully strange city to visit, however it would probably be the first and last time I was ever to go to Baltimore. The different cities along the east coast were so diversely different in the layout, style of architecture and street atmosphere.

The White House- John Adams sculpture.
One of the great highlights of my trip came as something of a shock to me. I could hardly believe my luck when one afternoon at the gallery I was unexpectedly chosen
to go to the White House with a gallery conservator to examine a John Adams plaster sculpture. The White House curator had acquired a few sculptures and wanted the gallery’s advice on their condition. I was taken through the lobby and down underground to the Curators office, on the way I saw different lavishly furnished rooms, George Bush’s dog with many armed agents around it watching me suspiciously. The office was among underground bunkers and safes with massive industrial doors. It was a positively surreal experience walking through a house that I had only ever seen on television, all the while reflecting on how strange it was that I happened to be in the house of arguably the most powerful man in the world. After examining the sculpture we left the building, laughing and saying ‘if only our friends could have seen us’.

![White House](image)

*Fig 16. I was unable to take any photos inside the White House because of security reasons.*

**Last Week**

My last week was spent desperately finishing work and visiting the library and making photocopies from important articles and books. Every morning, before the gallery opened to the public I wandered the empty gallery rooms in silence, admiring the sculpture and paintings very closely and without disturbance. These mornings
assumed a very special status for me as it was a quiet time where it seemed that I was the only person in the whole National Gallery. I was lucky to be allowed to wander the gallery without guards or the general public surrounding me. That week I paid visits to some of the painting conservators and looked at the massive Rothko canvasses, discussing his painting techniques and problems in conserving this type of contemporary art. All the conservators were extremely receptive to me and enjoyed discussing their work. I made a habit of asking many questions.

Figure 17. Shelly Sturman and all the conservators treated me to leaving lunch. Left to right, Daphne Barbour, Shelly Sturman, Judy Ozone, Dylan Smith, Me, Abigail Mack, Katy willliams and Caitlin Jenkins.

**Leaving lunch and gifts.**
A few days before leaving the National Gallery, everyone in the objects lab took me out for lunch to a Thai restaurant. After finishing the meal, they gave me two books as a leaving present. One book about the history of the National Gallery, and the other a signed copy of Nicholas Penny’s own book Materials of Sculpture. I made a
toast in which I thanked all of them for their time and patience, and explained how grateful and lucky I felt. They responded warmly encouraging me to apply for another internship at the gallery. Later that day, several of the conservators approached me quietly, telling me of a three year Mellon fellowship placement that was available at the gallery in the year 2006. They strongly encouraged me to apply for this position once I had graduated. Their encouragement came as a surprise and I felt a mixture of humility and assurance that I had made a good impression on my colleagues in the lab. In one of the books given to me was a personal message that read ‘You are now considered part of the objects lab family’. I had successfully completed my time at the Gallery, making the most of everything that had been assigned to me. I tried my utmost to engage both the people and every task with my full attention and capability, and I had recognition for my efforts, something that meant a great deal. I was very sad to leave the gallery, the people, art work and my life as a museum conservator.
**Conclusion**

My trip to the National Gallery of Art surpassed all my expectations. The great fortune of living in the Capital city of the most powerful nation on earth and working at one of the most illustrious art institutions in the United States is something I still regard with delight. I took real advantage of my time there and used all the resources at the National Gallery fully including the library, curatorial department, the archives and most importantly, the people. I tried to organise my short time to its greatest potential, between working at the gallery, my own personal research and meeting new people. What I gained from my experience abroad did not only equip me with skills and information in conservation but also gave me a hugely awarding life experience. From this I gained something perhaps more useful than any other, confidence and learning to interact and work with a great variety of people. I realized and was reminded at the Gallery, time and time again, that the greatest challenge was not the practical work in treating objects but in dealing with the different Museum personalities and accommodating all of them. I will now enter my last year of my degree as a stronger and more confident person, my life experience enriched, inspired, with a greater thirst for knowledge. I am profoundly grateful for the support the Zibby Garnett Travelling Fellowship awarded me, it has been of enormous benefit and is sincerely appreciated. Quite simply, all of the above would not have been possible without their support.