

Mellon Pilot Project: Creating a research-based website, investigating the works of the Master of the Fogg Pietà/ Maestro di Figline across international collections

Beginning in 2008, The Courtauld Institute of Art will undertake an 18-month Mellon funded pilot project to unite “virtually” the various pieces that have been associated with a single ensemble by the Master of the Fogg Pietà (active in Florence and Assisi, c.1310 – c.1330), together with detailed information concerning their conservation, physical characteristics and history. This conservation and art historical documentation will be compiled electronically and presented with tools enabling collaborative research and discussion in order to increase the accessibility of the material to a wide range of curators, conservators, scientists, and art historians.

Two of the panels from this putative ensemble belong to the Courtauld Institute, London (Saint Lawrence, tempera and gold on panel, 44.3. x 48.3 cm, P.1947.LF.254) and the Harvard University Art Museums (Pietà, tempera and gold on panel, 42.2 x 50 cm, inv. 1927.30).

Other related works are located in the following collections:

- Avignon, Musée du Petit Palais: *God the Father* (formerly Rennes, Musée Archéologique, inv. 1679)
- 's Heerenbergh, C.J.H. Van Heek Collection: *Saint Paul* and *Saint Lucy*
- London, Private Collection (on long-term loan to the Courtauld Institute of Art Gallery): *A Bishop Saint*
- Parma, Magnani-Rocca Foundation: *Saint John the Baptist*
- Rome, Private Collections: *Saint Peter, Saint James the Greater, Saint Cosmas or Damian, A Bishop Saint.*
- Worcester Art Museum, Worcester, MA: *Saint Francis* and *Saint Philip* (inv. 1923.18-19)

The principal stages of the project are summarized below:

First stage Spring 2008

- Existing material on the two panels currently on display in the Courtauld Institute Galleries will be digitized and used to configure and test the database, the image viewer, and the online working tools for the project. In collaboration with the

National Gallery, London and The J. Paul Getty Museum open source tools, including IPIImage and Gallery2, will be tested and implemented.

- Starting in Summer 2008 a Mellon Fellow will be appointed for the full 18 months to undertake further technical examination of the London panels and other works in the ensemble; to upload images to the database and apply the metadata; to advise project participants on uploading their own images and to check metadata supplied by external parties; to invite new participants to take part in scholarly discussion; and to seek out collaborating partners from institutions and owners whose participation is not yet assured.

Second stage Summer 2008

- Widen the group of participants to include collaborating colleagues from the institutions owning works by the Master, experts undertaking technical study, and other members of the scholarly and educational communities.
- The Mellon Fellow, accompanied when desirable by a member of the supervisory team, will travel to examine each of the paintings in the ensemble, working with in-house or external experts to undertake technical examination as appropriate. Material on other works in the ensemble, including pre-existing conservation records, would be added to the core material on the London panels, establishing methods for integrating information from a variety of sources.

Third stage

- In Spring 2009, the Courtauld Institute of Art Research Forum will host a meeting for project participants, including private owners, curators, conservators, and scientists, providing the opportunity to canvas participants for lessons learned and to consider methods to improve online collaboration. The software tools for online collaboration will be evaluated together with feedback received from the user group initiated by the Getty and National Gallery pilot projects. Meeting participants will explore the progress of research and strategically focus the activities of the Fellow for the remainder of the grant period.

Fourth stage

- At the conclusion of the grant period the Fellow will report on the findings to date, which will also be posted on the Courtauld Institute of Art Research Forum website. Methods and technologies for making this research available to a more general public will be discussed with experts from the other pilot projects and the wider online documentation community.

It is hoped that this pilot project will serve as a model for comparable research on widely dispersed but related works of art through online compilation and collaborative study of technical and art historical information.