The Institute of Fine Arts is Awarded a Grant from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation for a Study on Future Directions in the Fields of Art History, Archaeology and Conservation

The Institute of Fine Arts (IFA) is pleased to announce that it has been awarded a grant from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation to support a four-year study that will seek to explore and shape the direction of research and teaching in the fields of art history, archaeology, and conservation.

The study will be conducted by review panels in each of these fields. Each panel will be chaired by a visiting professor and will be comprised of IFA faculty and external experts. The panels will be charged with examining the state of advanced research in selected subject areas, asking where those areas are going, what are their strengths, what resources are required for advanced research, how those resources are best managed, and how learning is best delivered in curriculum and training programs. Panel meetings will include open sessions, with workshops and lectures, involving students as well as post-doctoral fellows appointed in conjunction with the project.

At a time when higher education, particularly in the humanities, is facing major challenges, it is opportune to assess the directions that these disciplines might take in the future. Art history rejoices in a multiplicity of approaches. Recent years have seen the emergence of the “new art history,” feminist art history, queer art history, visual culture, material culture, visuality, and gender studies, to note but a few of the strands, concepts, and topics that have enriched and tested established modes of study and that merit review as new research questions are formulated for the coming generation. Archaeology, which can be defined as a set of practices and protocols relating to the uncovering, recording, and conservation of sites and artifacts, is allied with anthropology, art history, and classical studies in the interpretation of the objects and cultures it investigates. Consequently, within the academy the placement of archaeology as a discipline varies: sometimes archaeology is a separate department; sometimes it resides in its allied faculties. These placements, their consequences, and their costs are to be considered. Conservation studies range over restoration, preservation, technical analysis, conservation science, and technical art history. The first graduate level training program to be offered in a university in the United States was through the IFA’s Conservation Center founded in 1960. This makes the IFA a logical place to take the
lead in assessing the conceptual and historical dimensions of the field and in examining the advances in conservation science and techniques that have taken place over the past fifty years.

The review process will include conferences and symposia, and its results will be published in a report that combines and synthesizes the findings of the individual panels. These reports will be made available to the field at large on the IFA website, as well as on other academic and institutional websites.

It is anticipated that the project’s collaborative exchange and discussion will produce an enduring impact that greatly benefits the field at large and enriches the academic culture of the IFA through its thorough and thoughtful examinations of the states of teaching and research in art history, archaeology and conservation, and its recommendations for their futures.

*The Institute of Fine Arts has played a defining role in the disciplines of art history, archaeology, and conservation since its founding in 1932. It is unique in its integration of those fields and in its focus on research-led graduate teaching. Its range of interests and sphere of influence are international and interdisciplinary. With its close ties to the major museums and collections of New York City, its participation in NYU’s global network, and its excavations in Sicily, Egypt, Turkey, and Greece, the Institute offers a distinctive program of object-based study.*