

# MFA *The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston*

## **Position Available**

Title:	Assistant Conservator of Works of Art on Paper
Reports To:	Head of Conservation
Pay Type:	Full-Time, Regular, Exempt, 35 hrs/week
Salary:	Commensurate with Experience and Education
Benefits:	Group Medical and Dental Insurance, Life and Long Term Disability Insurance, Retirement Plan, Flexible Spending Plans, Paid Time Off, Reserve Time Off, Holiday Pay, Museum Membership and Discounts
Work Schedule:	Monday – Friday, 9am – 5pm
Work Location:	Beck Building, non-smoking facility

### **Definition**

The Assistant Conservator of Works of Art on Paper is responsible for the conservation and preservation of works of art on paper in the museum's collection, in accordance with the AIC code of ethics. This includes the examination, documentation, and treatment of prints and drawings and assists with related collections such as: manuscripts on parchment and vellum, Islamic and Indian paintings on paper and palm leaves and Portrait Miniatures. S/he participates in all activities in the paper lab including the examination and documentation of prints and drawings and related collections to determine materials and methods of fabrication and assess condition. S/he is responsible for determining if treatment is required, making treatment recommendations, and carrying out conservation treatments. S/he leads individual treatment and research initiatives and contributes to collaborative efforts led by the Head of Lab and/or the Chairman, Department of Conservation that will further conservation and technical art historical research at the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston.

### **Requirements:**

Bachelor's degree and completion of a graduate-level course of study in Conservation, or equivalent education and training. The position requires at least two years of post-internship experience in objects conservation. The successful candidate must have rudimentary knowledge of museum practices and collections management, a familiarity with the types and materials represented in the museum's collection of works of art on paper, and strong records of achievement in the field. S/he should have a demonstrated ability to work independently as well as successfully with others, e.g., Museum staff, volunteers, and diverse public constituencies to achieve institutional objectives and fulfill the mission of the museum. Excellent written and oral communication skills in English are essential, as is an ability to work with databases, word processing, and other computing tools that the staff is expected to use on a regular basis.

The employee must occasionally lift and/or move up to 50 pounds. Reasonable accommodations may be made to enable individuals with disabilities to perform the essential functions. Manual dexterity is frequently required as duties call for the handling of artwork, and operation of tools and equipment. Job duties entail standing, walking, sitting, occasional climbing, bending and kneeling. Specific vision abilities required by this job include close, color, and peripheral vision.

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While performing the duties of this job, the employee is occasionally exposed to fumes or airborne particles, toxic or caustic chemicals and the risk of radiation.

## **Responsibilities**

- Communicates regularly with Head of Lab to ensure work flow is manageable and on track and that the highest museum standards are being realized in the care of the works of art on paper collections.
- Examines works of art on paper, assesses condition, prepares examination reports, arranges for photographic documentation, and proposes and performs treatment for works of art on paper in the collection. Prepares examination reports to provide descriptions of media and support descriptions; assessment of artist' techniques; assessment of condition problems; requirements for handling, storage, exhibition and travel as well as recommendations for treatment. As necessary proposes and carries out additional analysis to identify materials and techniques of fabrication used in works of art already in the collection and for works being considered for acquisition. A variety of analyses and tests may be performed to determine media and support identification, age, structure and stability, and to help determine the outcome of various treatment options.
- Examines works of art on paper to determine if they can be loaned safely to outside organizations; examines works of art upon their return to the museum. With the supervision of the Head of Lab, advises the Curator, Conservation Technicians, Registrars and Preparators on loan requirements, including travel and display recommendations, which are passed on to the borrowing institution. Confers with Head of Lab about special requirements and colleagues from borrowing institutions to make sure MFAH guidelines for loan can be met. Examines loan objects not belonging to the museum and documents the condition accordingly.
- Evaluates media, supports and conditions of all potential acquisitions of works of art on paper and prepares a thorough written report documenting findings. For new acquisitions provides recommendations for future framing, storage, handling, display and travel. Confirms authenticity as necessary. Works closely with senior conservation staff, conservation scientist and curators in these evaluations.
- Carries out basic treatments in order to stabilize and restore, as possible, the physical and/or visual integrity of the work of art. Treatment may include, but is not limited to, performing structural stabilizations such as consolidation and local mending, backing removals, dry and aqueous cleaning procedures, working with bleaching techniques and/or solvents to mitigate condition problems which cannot be safely or satisfactorily addressed through aqueous procedures, overall lining, and loss and color compensation with fills and retouching. Works with senior staff and conservation scientist on complex conservation projects.
- Enters all findings and written documentation in museum database. Ensures the photographic documentation related to the conservation of works of art on paper is properly labeled and stored.
- Participates in exhibition preparations as needed. Includes attending planning meetings and contributing to public events. Assists with work in museum galleries, including the installation and de-installation of works of art on paper and special exhibitions, and the handling of emergency situations as needed.

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- Advises curators and other museum personnel on the maintenance of a proper environment for the optimum preservation of works of art on paper, museum-wide. Includes monitoring environmental conditions in museum galleries and storage areas and preparing works of art on paper for on and offsite storage. Makes recommendations for the safe installation and display of works of art on paper including recommendations for light levels, temperature, relative humidity and handling precautions. When problems are found, investigates the best course of action to correct the problem. Participates in updating art handling guidelines and teaching proper handling of works of art on paper to other museum employees who handle artwork.
- Mentor and supervise pre-program interns and volunteers in the paper lab with their individual conservation project. Consults with Head of Lab before the purchase of lab supplies and equipment.
- Attend Courier training and upon completion of the training, couriers works of art from the collection to outside institutions as approved by the Chairman, Department of Conservation and as regular work schedule allows.
- As budget allows, pursues professional development opportunities by attending conservation workshops and meetings on an annual basis
- Conducts research relevant to the field of paper conservation, with a focus on the MFAH collection and exhibitions including works of art on paper. As appropriate and as possible shares results and/or presents information in lectures or in publications, which may include e-publications and web contents.
- Educates the public on the field of conservation. Conducts classes and tours and gives lectures as required. Assist in-house Education and Learning and Interpretation Department with didactics and audio tour contents.
- Performs and/or participates in special projects for the Head of Lab such as disaster planning, database review, and strategic planning.
- Keeps lab organized and clean with all hazardous materials stored and labeled properly according to the Guidelines for Chemical Safety.
- Answers questions and advises colleagues, scholars and outside callers as needed.

## **Other Responsibilities:**

- Upholds the professional standards of the field. Always acts in a manner that is consistent with the best interests of the museum, protecting and enhancing its reputation and standing within the community of museums.
- Adheres to the museum's code of ethics and avoids any real or perceived conflicts of interest.
- Shows respect for co-workers and visitors and an understanding of and appreciation for the diversity of the museum's staff, volunteers, and audiences.
- Aspires to excellence in all aspects of his/her work and serves as a model for others. Suggests methods for improvement as appropriate and maintains personal and professional growth.
- Maintain a safe and healthful environment according to OSHA guidelines in a proactive fashion. Reports hazards, concerns and problems to appropriate personnel.
- Confers with supervisor relating to personal needs that may conflict with professional responsibilities.
- Maintains confidentiality.
- Adheres to all MFAH protocols, procedures, rules, and policies.

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Work environment: Reasonable accommodations may be made to enable individuals with disabilities to perform the essential functions of this position.

**How to Apply:**

Send resume to Human Resources, Job 20-025CON, P.O. Box 6826, Houston TX 77265-6826; Fax 713-639-7508 or email: [jobs@mfa.org](mailto:jobs@mfa.org).

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