

Katherine D. Parks (2015)

Bio

Education

Wesleyan University

Major: College of Letters; Minor: Archaeology
Dean's List Spring 2011

Class of 2015

GPA: 3.67

Experience

Preservation Services – Olin Library, Middletown, CT *Sept 2013 – Present*

- Work with Wesleyan's Head Conservationist to repair and preserve antique and valuable books, magazines and other print media
- Utilize proper techniques for handling fragile and rare materials

French Language Teaching Assistant – French Studies Dept. *Sept – Dec 2013*

- Worked with French 111 professors to prepare speaking activities for after-class sessions
- Consulted 20+ students on topics including vocabulary, grammar and living in France
- Assessed students and created exam questions

Gallery Studio Workshop Intern – Worcester Art Museum, Worcester, MA

June – Sept 2013

- Worked with head of museum's Education Department to create template for education database to organize student and teacher workshops
- Coordinated workshops for incoming student groups
- Created written materials for universities and artists inviting them to participate in museum programs

English Language Teaching Assistant – IPAG School of Commerce, Paris, France

April – June 2013

- Created lesson plans to develop skills such as interview techniques
- Conversated with French students to develop speaking skills and fluency
- Acted as liaison between students and professors to monitor academic growth

Art Gallery Intern – Gallerie Sept Parnassiens, Paris, France

Jan - June, 2013

- Prepared gallery space for openings
- Interacted with French artists and gallery patrons
- Hung and prepared paintings for transport after sale

Museum Volunteer — EcoTarium, Worcester, MA

2010-2011

- Assisted in planetarium and astronomical shows
- Interpreted science and nature exhibits
- Assisted Volunteer Director in providing visitor information

Activities

- Quasimodal A Cappella
- Bell and Scroll Society
- Second Stage Theater
- Wesleyan Clinic Escort
- Wesleyan Center for Prison Education

Skills

- Microsoft applications, including Excel, PowerPoint and Word for PC and Mac
- Student Manager database system
- Fluent French - Speak, read and write

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Program Proposal

1. Provide a brief overview of the organization for which you will intern or program/project you are developing.

The Monastic Archaeology (MonArch) project is the result of a thirty-year collaboration between Professor Clark Maines of Wesleyan University and Professor Sheila Bonde of Brown University. This multi-disciplinary project looks at medieval monasticism as an integrated expression of spiritual, social, and economic forces, rather than as a collection of religious buildings. The MonArch project aims, ultimately, to supplement and expand the definitions of monasticism used by the disciplines of history, architectural history, and archaeology.

This summer, the project will be excavating at the Carthusian monastery of Bourghfontaine near Villers-Cotterêts, France. First under the patronage of Charles Count of Valois and later his son Phillip VI King of France, the site at Bourghfontaine was established between 1323 and 1325 and survives today as a monumental ruin. Though the first excavation will take place this summer, Bonde and Maines have previously studied this site in terms of royal patronage and the role it played in the monastic community.

Evidence from documentary and iconographic sources reveals that the heart of King Philip VI was buried at this Carthusian charterhouse. Recent radar testing has confirmed the presence of a small structure near the church believed to be a chapel built for the heart tomb of the King. This summer MonArch will excavate this chapel to uncover the details of the plan of this funerary structure, to gain a preliminary assessment of site stratigraphy and possibly to locate the foundations of the heart tomb. The presence of a royal mausoleum such as this has major implications for the study of royal patronage in monastic settings.

2. Briefly provide details of the internship or experience, including responsibilities and tasks.

The MonArch excavation at Bourghfontaine offers an unrivaled learning environment, providing one-on-one attention and a host of responsibilities that will allow me to interact with the project in more depth than at other undergraduate field schools. As a first-time excavator, I am incredibly fortunate to be a member of a small six-person crew. Not only will I have the privilege of learning under the close supervision of two preeminent monastic archaeologists, I will also be tasked with a slew of additional responsibilities – from cleaning and cataloguing, to drafting sections and objects, to helping to prepare the final site report when we return to the States.

For the first five weeks of the project, I will be living and working in France as a member of the excavation team. Monday through Sunday, the six-person team will work on site

during the daylight hours under the supervision of Professor Maines and Professor Bonde. Taking only a midday lunch break, I will be assigned a plot to dig and document. I will be taught the proper techniques for shoveling, using the trowel to feel the different levels of earth, and carefully unearthing pieces of material culture. In terms of documentation, I will be required to draw scaled top plans of my trench to record the location of artifacts and other features in the soil. Once our survey is completed, I will be working with others to backfill the trenches and restore the plot to its original condition.

Though the labor component is the most important part of the dig, I will also be working to curate and catalogue any material we might find. Each artifact must be cleaned and labeled. I will learn how to identify and label material finds, which could include animal bones, human bones, pottery, metal artifacts, and tile fragments. I will be taught how to properly draw objects for the catalogue and final site report.

After our work is completed in France, I will continue my involvement with the program in the United States from July 15th to August 15th. From my home in Massachusetts, I will be producing inkings of drawings of objects and structures for publication, using the skills taught to me by Professor Bonde in France. Additional duties include cataloguing of photographs and objects for the annual report and creating graphs and charts of our finds. Most of this work will be conducted remotely over the Internet. Periodically, I will commute into Providence to meet with Professor Maines to present and discuss my work.

3. How have you communicated with the employer and determined mutual interest?

Professor Maines and I have been in touch since November when he first presented the opportunity to me. In late December, he officially invited me to join his team and I accepted shortly after. We meet roughly every two weeks to discuss logistics and the details of the project.

4. How will this experience enhance or broaden your career goals?

Ever since I was little, I have been fascinated by residues of the past. I was, and still am, endlessly enthralled with museums and other places where the physical remnants of history live. To me, relics emanate an almost mystical aura and I have always viewed them with reverence and awe.

Adding to this fascination is the fact that many of the ancient artifacts we most revere today were everyday objects. Think of the Rosetta Stone. Today it is one of the centerpieces of the British Museum, but in its time it was nothing more than a billboard of sorts. Who knows which of the trinkets adorning my own desk might one day provide valuable clues for some future archaeologist? Every ticket stub, coffee mug and photo tells a story, captures some moment in the past, and I have a strong desire to protect these treasures. That's why I cannot bear the thought of throwing away any potential "material history" – much to the chagrin of my roommates. Thus I have a desire to become an archaeological conservator, helping to protect our most valuable insights into history,

culture, and ultimately, humanity.

My passion for conservation work really took hold while I was in Paris for my COL semester abroad in the spring of 2012. I spent many hours studying museums, making a point to see both the art museums of great renown and the less well-known ethnographic and cultural gems (including the gallery where I worked). I noticed that the level of restoration and preservation among the museums and even among the different galleries within the same museum reflected a great disparity. Though the great works of art were restored with deliberate care, the smaller historical artifacts were often derelict and disintegrating. It seemed unjust to me that certain pieces were conserved while others were disregarded as unimportant.

The principal revelation for me came while touring an archaeological exhibit at St. Peter's Cathedral in Geneva. The church itself is magnificent, dominating the skyline of Geneva's old city. Yet deep underneath the church, painstakingly excavated level by level, was more than three millennia of history. From the 2,000-year-old bones of a pre-Christian pagan, to the mosaic floor of a 7th century Roman bishop, to the 12th century foundations of the current cathedral, here was a window into the past directly beneath our feet. I had found my passion – to conserve amazing pieces of history like this for future generations.

I currently work in the Olin Library Book Preservation Lab, repairing and preserving Wesleyan's rare and circulating book collection. This job has only increased my interest in the field of conservation. I love being able to interact closely with antique books, transforming them from a stack of ragged and torn pages into a tightly bound book. I take pride in knowing that my efforts have not only protected a valuable work, but have enabled students to engage with a rare text for the benefit of their own studies. My desire to protect the past is motivated in large part by a belief that these gems of the past should be openly accessible for study in the present.

The MonArch excavation will broaden my career horizon significantly. Throughout the experience I will be building a set of necessary skills for graduate school and beyond. Though I have experience with conservation through my work in the Book Lab, the hours I spend doing onsite fieldwork will demonstrate my ability to work in a cultural context as part of an interdisciplinary team, underscoring my dedication to the collaborative nature of conservation. Additionally, conservation programs in the United States require many prerequisite skills that often cannot be acquired through university study alone. During and after the excavation, I will learn these necessary technical capacities.

Onsite, I will be developing a familiarity with the handling of materials immediately after they are removed from the ground while they are in their most fragile state. Manual dexterity and technical aptitude are critical capacities for a conservator. While honing my identification skills, I will be able to determine proper handling techniques based on the material structure of objects. These skills will be finely tuned during curating. I will be required to use gentle care to remove debris that is hazardous to the object. Once I am in the States, I will be working on projects I can use to build my portfolio. I will be working

on representational drawing and scientific illustration for publication in the final site report. These samples are critical for graduate school applications, as they will demonstrate my ability to use drawing for scientific documentation purposes.

The experience of assisting in the discovery of the heart of the first king of France – from underneath a field in the French countryside – would provide an unparalleled first step for me into the field of archaeological conservation. I am so grateful for this opportunity and know I will profit from every shovelful.