



Discover More

Welcome to the first Discover More of the new academic year. It signifies the beginning of a major new phase for West Dean College as we launch our new ten-year vision and expand our name to West Dean College of Arts and Conservation to better articulate our specialisms.

It was Christmas 1939 when Edward James first voiced his vision to create a community where young artists and craftspeople could be nurtured. Today, eight decades later, during another time of political turmoil, we are poised to refocus the College he founded, recommitting to James' values and putting education and the development of talent at the heart of our 21st century vision.

Over the strategic period, we will invest in our teaching staff to enrich our educational portfolio and offer more progression paths for students – from a one day taster course,

right through to completing an MA. We will also develop external partnerships which extend our impact and further enhance graduate destination opportunities.

We will develop our College campus infrastructure to provide new and improved facilities for students. These will include a new Library to support scholarship and research and safeguard our phenomenal Archive. We will create new student workshops which support leading practice and provide modern, flexible learning spaces; and we will provide more student accommodation, achieved through careful property conversions, to cater for increased demand for our course programmes.

We will build a new, permanent exhibition space in the heart of our remarkable Gardens to help articulate Edward James' cultural impact for a wider visitor audience through the display of iconic works from our Collection, and we will invest in the

conservation, management and repair of our Collection and West Dean House, which are both core to the delivery of our educational programmes.

It will cost in the region of £25million to deliver our ambitious strategic plan. We have committed £15million towards the project but we will need your help as we seek to secure the rest through partnerships with committed supporters. Your role as funder, advocate or ambassador will be a crucial source of support for which we're incredibly grateful.

I look forward to providing you with more information as we move into phase one of the project, and I or a member of the team will always be happy to answer any of your questions about our strategic plans.

With warm wishes for the festive period,

Alex Barron
Chief Executive

Alumni – where are they now?

Michelle Kirk (MA Conservation specialising in Furniture and Related Objects) graduated in September 2017 and has already secured a position as Furniture Conservator for the Royal Household based at Windsor Castle where she is working on furniture from across all the Royal residences.

www.royalcollection.org.uk

Lucy Cokes (Postgraduate diploma in Conservation of Books and Library Materials) graduated in July 2016. She has spent the last year as a conservation

intern at Canterbury Cathedral working to conserve items from their extensive collection and helping to share and advocate that work through regular blog posts. She is about to begin an 18 month traineeship at Penzance Conservation.

Hannah Young (MA Conservation specialising in Metalwork) graduated in September 2013. Since then she has worked at Royal Museums Greenwich and the Brighton Pavilion and has recently started a new role as Archaeological Conservator at the University of Bergen in Norway.

www.uib.no/en/universitymuseum

Sarah Cliff (Master of Fine Arts, 2017) has been appointed Artist-in-Residence 2018 at Ochre Print Studio



in Guildford. The residency will provide her with access to a fully equipped print studio, workshops and studio space in return for help in coordinating exhibitions and technician responsibilities.

www.ochreprintstudio.co.uk/

Spotlight on...

David Plummer, Graduate Diploma in Conservation of Books and Library Materials

What made you choose to study book conservation?

I originally did a degree in photography at the University of Wales and while there I was lucky enough to get a travel scholarship to pursue photography in Palestine. I was fascinated by the Islamic art I saw then and on later visits to the Middle East. It was at the Library of the Topkapi Palace Museum in Istanbul, with its unique manuscript collection, that my interest in Islamic book structures was raised.

What made you select West Dean College?

Knowing that I wanted to work with books I spent time visiting libraries and collections to discuss different career options open to me. At the Chester Beatty Library in Dublin I met Cécilia Duminuco, a West Dean College books graduate, who was working on the Ruzbihan Qur'an, an extraordinarily beautiful 16th century Persian manuscript. She told me about West Dean College and its immersive learning environment and that I could apply for funding to support my studies. I was lucky to receive a scholarship from the Newby Trust and funding from Anna Plowden Trust which made it possible for me to come this year.

You're coming to the end of your first term, what have you been working on?

I've been working on a couple of different projects. We've had a specialist in teaching us different kinds of bookbinding. I've learnt how to do an 18th century flexible binding and a 19th century case binding. By learning how they are made we can better understand the structures that we will have to work with in the future, identifying their potential problems and importantly their solutions. I've also been working on my first conservation project, a much loved copy of Rupert the Bear.

What has been your highlight so far?

I had the chance to do a paper marbling short course which was brilliant as you will often see this in Middle Eastern books. It's also great that we are working on real books, not just theoretical scenarios. It's more meaningful knowing there are real clients who these books will be going back to.

What are your hopes and plans for the future?

I want to complete my MA in Conservation at West Dean College and then my ambition is to work on Middle Eastern manuscript collections within a busy UK museum. I want to promote education and cultural dialogue to further understanding between the Middle East and the wider world.



Urgent restorations to the glass roof of our Orangery

Situated on the north lawn, just behind the main house is our magnificent 200 year old Grade II listed Orangery. This architectural gem requires significant repairs to its glass roof and we are urgently fundraising to complete these. Originally created as a Palm House for house guests to enjoy back in the early 19th century, it is now one of our inspiring creative teaching spaces. Used by more than 700 art students a year, the space, light and ambience is a real asset for our education programme and benefits our students enormously.

It will cost £80,000 to undertake the delicate task of rebuilding the glass roof. We are delighted that we have raised a massive £65,500 towards the total cost and many thanks go to the Trusts who have generously funded this work, including Country Houses Foundation, The Adrian Swire Charitable Trust and the Finnis Scott Foundation.

We are also indebted to the very generous Friends and garden visitors who have already donated £6,000 towards this total.

We still need to raise £14,500 in order to begin these urgent works as soon as possible and we are continuing to approach

Trusts and Foundations for support. Your contribution of any size will make you a vital part of the restoration of this important historic building and essential art studio.

www.westdean.org.uk/appeal



The Orangery, external view.

Meet our new Metals Subject Leader

Welcome to Maickel van Bellegem, Metals Subject Leader, who joined us in October, teaching across the FdA Historic Craft Practices, Graduate and Postgraduate Diploma Conservation and MA Conservation Studies programmes.

What drew you to West Dean College?

Its reputation for high standards of practical work and attention to historical making techniques, in combination with the focussed support provided to students in accomplishing that. And its general setting of course!

Where did your interest in metal conservation come from?

Having trained as a gold- and silversmith initially I developed an interest in metals and metalworking in general and was keen to have a more thorough understanding of why metals behave the way they do. This was an important element in my conservation training.

Where have you worked previously?

At the Rijksmuseum, in Amsterdam, I prepared their collections of jewellery,

silverware and South East Asian bronzes for temporary displays. I worked on various storage, display and research projects at the British Museum, notably lead seal collections, the Late Medieval Gallery, Treasures of Heaven, Germany, and the Waddesdon Bequest. Most recently, I was at the V&A, where I worked on the Rosalinde and Arthur Gilbert collection and the Sacred Silver Gallery.

What areas of metal conservation are your specialist fields?

Hmm, I've never really liked being placed within a box, and when people do, I feel an urge to break through the boundaries of those boxes. Let's say I feel I'm enough of a specialist as a conservator that I can apply conservation principles to a wide range of materials. I guess I do have a special interest (but does that make me a specialist?) in historical making techniques.

What do you hope to bring to the courses?

To give the students a base of knowledge, ways of finding more knowledge and thus



to give them the confidence they need to apply conservation principles. This will be underpinned by an understanding of materials, making techniques and degradation and treatment processes.

What would you say to a potential student considering metal conservation?

Metals are super varied as a material and give a wide range of topics and techniques to get your teeth into so I hope you like a challenge!

They Fly Higher Who To The Summit Strive

Postcard to West Dean is a hand-woven tapestry made at the West Dean Tapestry Studio in 1986. Now a main feature of the College's dining hall, the piece was commissioned to commemorate Edward James' death and acknowledge his support and ambition for West Dean College.

The tapestry also reflects James' maternal heritage and represents various motifs and emblems that celebrate his life and work.

The Latin text reads *altius ibunt, qui ad summa nituntur* which translates as 'They Fly Higher Who to the Summit Strive'. This was the family motto of Edward James'

mother, Evelyn James (née Forbes), and was adopted by Edward James to encapsulate the ethos that he sought to engender at West Dean College.

The hand-writing is Edward James' own, sourced from the College Archives, and the colour is a typical example of that used in James' own correspondence to friends and associates. The birds represent James' love of nature, and the stars are a recurring motif across James' activity - from interior decoration, book design, and architecture. The coloured rectangles represent the colours of Ireland, Mexico, and Italy, the three countries in which James spent the later years of his life.

The tapestry was designed by Pat Taylor, former Director of the West Dean Tapestry Studio. It was woven by Pat Taylor, Helen Gibbs, and Penny Bush.

West Dean remains a place of critical importance to the art and craft of tapestry weaving in the UK today. For more information on forthcoming events, commission enquires, or to purchase a tapestry woven by the Studio, please contact us.

www.westdean.org.uk/tapestry



Partnerships: Royal Academy of Arts Dalí /Duchamp Exhibition

Take another look at two artistic giants: father of conceptual art Marcel Duchamp, and larger-than-life Surrealist Salvador Dalí. This is the first exhibition to throw light on their surprising relationship and its influence on the work of both artists.

On the surface, these two great 20th-century artists could hardly be more dissimilar, but Dalí and Duchamp maintained a lasting bond of friendship and mutual admiration throughout their careers. This original exhibition brings

together around 80 works, including some of Dalí's most inspired and technically accomplished paintings and sculptures, and Duchamp's groundbreaking assemblages and readymades. It will also showcase the less familiar: photographs by Dalí, paintings by Duchamp, correspondence and collaborations between the two artists.

We are thrilled to be a loan partner for the exhibition which is open until 03 January 2018 at the Royal Academy of Arts. Two of our ceramics conservation students, Sophie Croft and Adelheid Hansen, assisted with the condition report and cleaning of the iconic red Lobster Telephone, an Edward James and Dalí collaboration, before it went on loan to the exhibition.

www.royalacademy.org.uk/exhibition/dali-duchamp



© Salvador Dalí, Fundació Gala-Salvador Dalí, DACS 2017

A day in the Life of a House Volunteer

Rhoda Sheppard first began volunteering at West Dean seven years ago, through her involvement with The Arts Society, Chichester. She is now their Chairman and half of all of the Volunteers who come to help work on items in the house here at West Dean, are fellow Arts Society members.

Her lifelong interest in art and artefacts sparked her initial interest in volunteering here, and she is still amazed at the pieces she gets to work with at West Dean. Rhoda comes every two weeks to work alongside the House Stewards to clean and conserve a wide variety of objects from around the House and also acts as a steward on House Open Days, guiding visitors through the collections on display. She explains, "Every time we come in it is something different. Ming Vases from the 11th century; wooden wine boxes; cleaning fabrics and metals; identifying insects; packing fabrics for long term storage. We also record damage to objects for the House Stewards and compare the object's current state with providence records. It is not at all like cleaning your own house. We start each session with a "how to" from Emma and Angela from the Collections team, on the specific techniques we need to use. It is very meticulous work."

When asked if she had a favourite item she said, "I don't have one item I can choose! I do love going up into the Tower Suite, formerly Edward James private bedroom, as it feels like you see something new each time, whether it's the ceiling cornices, the paintings, or the bed. It's inspiring just being in the building. Being a volunteer is so much more than just cleaning, I get to see a side of West Dean that no one else gets to see, it is a privilege but a huge project that is never ending"

www.westdean.org/volunteers

Rhoda Sheppard



Thank You



Our Discover More newsletter is collated to keep you, our valued supporters up to date with our work. You are supporting a diverse range of projects and we would like to take this opportunity to thank you for your generosity. West Dean College of Arts and Conservation exists thanks to the vision of our founder Edward James, who gifted his entire estate and art collection to create a place of study for crafts people and artists. Today, your gifts continue to deliver that vision and ensure that talented students can access art and conservation education in an environment that is fit for the 21st century.

For further information contact the Development Office:
Helen Saelensminde, Group Head of Fundraising - helen.saelensminde@westdean.org.uk
Jane Meechan, Development Manager - jane.meechan@westdean.org.uk
Hannah Langley, Individual Giving Manager - hannah.langley@westdean.org.uk

West Dean College of Arts and Conservation,
The Edward James Foundation, West Dean, Chichester, PO18 0QZ T. 01243 818265

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