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Handing Over The Chair

MARGARET (PEGGY) HOLBEN ELLIS '79, EUGENE THAW PROFESSOR of Paper Conservation at the Institute of Fine Arts, NYU will become Chair of the Conservation Center, taking over from Dr. Hannelore (Hanne) Roemich, who has served in this position since September 2014. The change in leadership at the Conservation Center is guided by a policy of regular rotation of senior administrators who report to the Director of the Institute of Fine Arts. During Hanne's fall 2017 sabbatical, she will dedicate much of her time to the development of our new [Time-Based Media Art Conservation Education](#) initiative. Peggy will settle into the downstairs office of the Chair, where she will once again guide and inspire life at the Center.

On the occasion of Handing Over the Chair, Hanne and Peggy respond (lightheartedly) to a few questions:

Peggy: During your tenure (2014-2017) as Chair, what changes occurred at the IFA/CC and what was behind them?

Hanne: One of my first projects after taking over leadership was the renovation of the kitchen. With support from alumni and faculty we could afford new cabinets and appliances, and make it look really nice. I am a strong believer that social life is important in every institution and especially at the Conservation Center, where our flexible and customized curriculum demands that we be able to frequently gather and exchange ideas and socialize. This is also the reason why I am obsessed with selecting the right wine and cheese for receptions. Everyone must feel welcome and want to come back!

On a more technical note, the installation of a new imaging station in the old photo lab was one of the major recent upgrades for the Center, thanks to a generous donor. We now have a multi-band imaging set-up and a digital scanner for X-radiography plates. Our current students and some recent graduates pushed me to make improvements in this area and I am thankful for their efforts.

Staff changes occurred on many levels during the last three years. Now in place are Amelia Catalano as the new Manager of Laboratories and Study Collection and Jess Cayer as Grant Administrator. Of course, I won't forget to give special mention to Kevin Martin, Academic Advisor, who has been a rock in the stormy sea for many years, with whom I've been up the creek without a paddle many times(!). It was during my time as Chair, that Kevin negotiated the transition from the MA/Advanced Certificate program to a MA/MS dual degree program—a change, which brought great rejoicing among current students, but unhappily cannot be retroactively applied!



Hanne "hands over the chair" to Peggy



Past, Present, and future Chairs of the Conservation Center (left to right: Peggy Ellis, Michele Marincola '90, and Hannelore Roemich)

CHOOSE TO DONATE TO THE CONSERVATION PROGRAM, AND SUPPORT OUR STUDENTS AND EDUCATIONAL MISSION BY CLICKING [HERE](#).

Hanne: What are you looking forward to as Chair?

Peggy: I have always greatly enjoyed the company of our students, grads, and many, many friends of the IFA/CC. As Chair, first from 1987-2002, and in just a few days from now, I can re-establish myself as the one who “needs to know absolutely everything about everybody.” This can range from suggestions for strengthening our curriculum, recommendations for new equipment, or just who had a baby or where to find cool jewelry.

I probably shouldn’t admit this, but I enjoy the challenge of fundraising. It is enormously satisfying to follow the footsteps of Michele and you in insuring that the CC is on firm financial footing.

Finally, as [AIC](#) president, I am looking forward to getting our students and alums even more involved in professional service than they already are—thanks to the leadership of Rebecca Gridley, ’17, the Emerging Conservation Professionals Network ([ECPN](#)) is very active in New York City. I am particularly proud of our impressive record of AIC Board positions; through their sustained service to the conservation profession, IFA/CC grads have played an enormous role in the conservation of our cultural heritage.

Finally, as Chair, I am looking forward to acquiring some new chairs (purple!) for my office.

Peggy: Can you share some happy moments that occurred during your tenure as Chair?

Hanne: Oh well, where to start! One of my favorite programs is our [Judith Praska Distinguished Visiting Professorship in Conservation and Technical Studies](#), established by an anonymous donor. We had Salvador Muñoz Viñas, Cathy Baker, Larry Becker ’82, and Thea Van Oosten during my tenure. They came to teach for us for one term and brought some new perspectives and not to mention different personalities to the Center. I also care very much for our [Levy Fellows](#), who have come from Albania, Sri Lanka, Malawi, Egypt, China, and Cambodia. One day soon I will travel and visit them in their home countries. But let’s get to the core definition of “happy moments,” which need to be related to chocolate in some way or another—this Newsgram’s banner image is proof of that! Chatting with students in my office and sharing chocolate, yes, lots of happiness there to remember. Less fattening activities were working with Christine Frohnert and Kevin on our Time-based Media Art Conservation Education initiative, soon to be unrolled. We are a great team and I hope this program will benefit conservation education in ways extending far beyond my tenure as Chair.

Margaret Holben Ellis and Hannelore Roemich

Christine Poggi, a respected scholar with expertise in modern and contemporary art; Italian studies; and gender, sexuality, and women’s studies, has been appointed as the new Judy and Michael Steinhardt Director of the Institute of Fine Arts, effective September 1, 2017. Most recently, Dr. Poggi was a professor of Art History at the University of Pennsylvania, with a secondary appointment in Italian Studies in the Department of Romance Languages.

Read more by clicking [here](#).



Hanne and first-year students, Kim Frost, Lia Kramer, Chantal Stein, Lydia Aiken-head, Egyptian Levy Fellow Nadia Elkourany, and Soon Kai Poh, during an orientation week excursion to the AMNH in August, 2015



Hanne this past spring with some of our graduating class (left to right: Shannon Mulshine ’17, Laura Panadero ’17, Emily Cohen ’17, and Rebecca Gridley ’17)

Image credits: Amelia Catalano, NL Roberts, Steven Salzgeber