

# Freer House Report: Spring, 2016

Dear Friend,

Please join us as a member today and help support this Detroit landmark!

Here are some of our recent accomplishments.



William Colburn, Director, The Freer House

## 1. Restoration and Revitalization.

Two major projects to restore the Freer House have begun. The Garden Revitalization Project, Phase I, include clearance, grading and paving of new walkways. As funds are secured in 2016, work will continue with implementation of the historic garden plan including appropriate plantings, fencing and seating. Also, the replacement of all outdated heating and cooling systems in the Freer House has been approved by the WSU Board of Governors and work on this project has begun. As part of this project, an inappropriate HVAC unit installed in the historic Whistler Gallery in the 1960's will be removed, allowing the restoration plan for this important room to move forward as funding is secured.



Garden Project, Phase I

## Fine Art Connoisseur



## 2. National Publicity Received.

Thanks to Peter Trippi, Editor of *Fine Art Connoisseur* magazine, the Freer House received its first national publicity in a major feature article in the January/February, 2015 issue of this prestigious magazine for art collectors and enthusiasts. The Freer House was also featured in the winter, 2015 issue of *Wayne State Alumni Magazine* with an article on the friendship between artist James McNeill Whistler and his most significant patron, Charles L. Freer.

## 3. Outstanding Lectures with Distinguished Speakers.

The Freer House and co-sponsors continued the superb quality and high audience attendance of its lecture series. Topics with national and local speakers in 2015 ranged from *The Business of Asian Art: Yamanaka & Co. and Charles L. Freer*, by Yuriko Kuchiki of New York, to *Beneath the Surface: A Scientific Investigation into the Freer House Original Decorative Paint Treatments*, by Cathy Selvius DeRoo, Research Scientist, DIA.



Yuriko Kuchiki



Freer's Rookwood Inkwell

**4. Rare Treasures Documented.** An exciting project to inventory, photograph and document over 100 rare art, furniture and personal objects that once belonged to Charles L. Freer, now in the private collection of Dr. Thomas W. Brunk in Detroit, was a major accomplishment by a team of WSU, CCS and UM students and professionals working with Freer House staff. The object inventory has been entered into a Filemaker Pro database and will help to permanently document these exceptional objects that were used or displayed by Freer in his home.

## 5. Historic Hecker House Photographed.

The Freer House hired renowned architectural photographer Alex Vertikoff to completely photograph the interior of the historic Hecker House, adjacent to the Freer House, before its purchase by WSU as the new Tierney Alumni House. These beautiful photos will serve to document the exceptionally restored condition of the Hecker/Tierney House upon its sale to WSU last year.

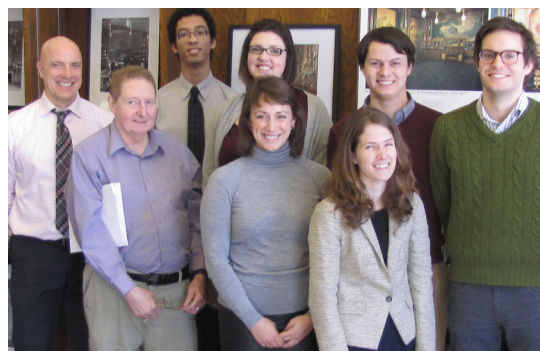


Staircase Landing, Hecker House

continued on reverse

## 6. Students' Skills Enlisted.

Students in photography, art history, library science and museum studies from Wayne State, the College for Creative Studies and the University of Michigan, made significant contributions to Freer House projects in 2015 and learned much in the process. The students worked on various projects including research on the original contractors and artisans who built the Freer and Hecker Houses and creation of interpretation ideas and future plans for a new exhibit and visitors center in the carriage house.



UM Museum Studies Student Team with Freer House Interns, Staff & Dr. Thomas Brunk

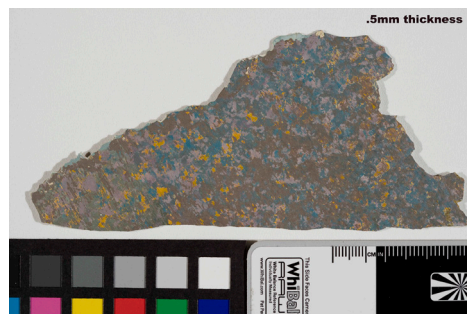
## 7. Partnerships Strengthened.

The outstanding partnership between the DIA and The Freer House has grown to include joint programs and projects with departments ranging from American Art to Conservation. A highlight of 2015 was a collaborative effort with the Community Relations Department's *Inside/Out* program to replicate the DIA's triptych painting *Spring, Summer, Autumn* by artists Dewing and Tryon, commissioned by Hecker for his home in 1894 under Freer's influence. The reproductions were installed on Ferry Street between the Hecker and Freer Houses from April-July, 2015.



Summer and Autumn reproductions

**8. Colorful Discoveries Revealed.** Funded by the Americana Foundation, a partnership project with the DIA's Conservation Department Research Scientist, Cathy Selvius DeRoo, now in its 4th year, has resulted in some stunning discoveries regarding the beautiful original decorative paint treatments created for Freer by various American artists and craftsmen for his home between 1892-1906, and now mostly hidden under subsequent layers of institutional wall paint. Dr DeRoo presented her remarkable findings at the November Freer House public lecture event, and in an official report, adding greatly to our knowledge of these extraordinary decorative wall surfaces.



Original Paint Sample, from the Parlor

## 9. Community Participation Engaged.

The Freer House has continued to welcome and receive individuals and groups asking to tour the building at regular and specially scheduled tours. Groups visiting in recent months include the Japan Business Society of Detroit, the Junior League of Detroit, the American Association of University Women, Kresge Arts Fellows, DIA members and staff, as well as students and classes from CCS, WSU and U of M.



Friends of the Freer House from the DIA

## 10. Memberships and Funding Expanded.

Support for Freer House programs, projects and operations continues to expand. In addition to essential funding from the Merrill Palmer Skillman Institute/WSU, the Freer House has been fortunate to receive continued funding from the Americana Foundation and new funding as a "Detroit Anchor Arts Institution" from the Kresge Foundation. A vital source of revenue also comes from Freer House members, donors, and partner organizations whose ranks continue to grow. Please support the preservation and restoration of the Freer House with your new membership - or membership renewal - today.



**Your help makes a difference!**

For membership and additional information contact  
William Colburn or Rose Foster at 313-664-2500 or [william.colburn@wayne.edu](mailto:william.colburn@wayne.edu), [rmfoster@wayne.edu](mailto:rmfoster@wayne.edu)  
The Freer House, Merrill Palmer Skillman Institute, WSU, 71 East Ferry, Detroit, MI 48202  
<http://mpsi.wayne.edu/freer/index.php>