

## Conservation Workshop B: **Research and Conservation of 1964 World's Fair Fiberglass Benches**

### **Syllabus**

Taught by Mary Jablonski, Associate Adjunct Faculty  
GSAPP Historic Preservation Program, Columbia University.

This is a hands-on conservation course. We will be conserving an artifact from the 1964 World's Fair. As with many mid-century modern materials, some of the materials used in the benches were experimental. One of the questions we will be asking is "Was this the first use of fiberglass for benches?" The bench will be brought into the laboratory for conservation and we will be working in the laboratory for the seven weeks of class. Class work will exceed the actual class time and you should expect to spend at least one evening a week working on this project.

Schedule: 7 weeks.

### **Phase 1: Research and Document**

Weeks 1 through 3

A conditions assessment and proposed treatment report will be produced for 1-2 benches at their storage location to gain an understanding of the types of deterioration found on the benches. Several additional benches will be examined to very general conditions. Questions and issues addressed at this time which will include:

1. Archival Research on benches using NY Public Library and Municipal Art Society. Try and determine who designed the benches.
2. Test the fiberglass to identify the matrix.
3. Determine if the fiberglass was originally painted or not.
4. Determine how to remove the paint from the fiberglass without damaging the surface.
5. Remove paint from fiberglass slats and determine if the surface is damaged.
6. Based upon the testing of fiberglass, determine how best to repair the fiberglass.
7. Analyze the aluminum for alloy if can gain access to a hand held XRF machine.
8. Attempt to identify if any coating was placed on the aluminum originally in 1964.
9. Based upon the analysis of the aluminum base determine if any finish should be applied to the aluminum.
10. Produce a Conditions Assessment and Proposed Treatment Report
11. Select 1-2 benches for conservation

### **Phase 2: Conservation**

Weeks 4-6

The students will conserve 1-2 benches based upon the number of student in the class.

### **Phase 3: Final Treatment Report**

#### **Week 7**

A written and graphically illustrated Final Treatment Report will be produced by the students. It will include a written description of all testing and all treatments and include product literature for each product used in the conservation treatments.

We will give an oral presentation and a final report to the NYC Parks Department.