



## Art Conservation *and career paths*

Sam Lee didn't always have a road map for her future. A second-year WUDPAC Fellow, she grew up in San Francisco with a passion for science. In college she majored in chemistry and minored in art history. Still, something was missing. Chemistry "felt sort of sterile to me, like it lacked soul," she said. Yet in art history, "I was like, there's *too much* soul here!"

Conservation became the perfect intersection of her two passions. Now, as a paper major and library archives minor, she's putting those passions to work conserving a vibrant 1972 map of London from the Disaster Research Center's unique collection, which focuses on artifacts related to human and natural disasters. The map, created by the UK's Greater London Council, may have played a role in the planning for the Thames Barrier, an iconic anti-flooding structure. It features bright watercolors and felt-tip marker details in green, yellow, blue and pink over a diazotype base. (Diazotype is a print-making process often used in architectural drawings.)

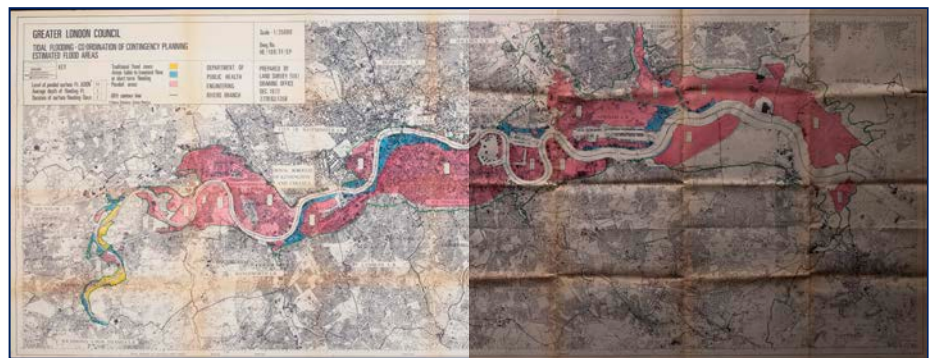
Sam was intrigued by its utility. "The Center's staff were interested in having it digitized, and it was an object they like to show on tours," she explained. By making it easier to handle and more accessible, "It wouldn't just be me getting to learn," she noted, "I could give them something too."

Measuring nearly six feet long, the map's size complicates handling and storage. It had two significant tears and discoloration where it had been folded. In her treatment, Sam has dry cleaned the unprinted areas and plans to mend the tears.

"I will shape the repair paper to the shape of the tear and then paste it over the tear and dry it," she said. She plans to leave the discoloration untreated, because to clean it would require a wet treatment that would impact the map's watercolors. Also, the folds and discoloration "tell a little bit of the history of the object," she said.

Her goal is stability and accessibility so the map can be handled. To that end, she has focused on how it's going to be used, creating guidelines in case the DRC wants to exhibit it, and making sure the housing for its storage is user-friendly.

Unexpectedly, the map has also guided Sam in a new direction: she's pursuing scientific research on how the dyes in diazotype prints fade. "It was an interesting avenue to investigate," she said, adding with a laugh, "I didn't know what a diazotype was before I met this map!"



### ARTC Spotlight—February 2025

The University of Delaware's Art Conservation Department educates and trains professional conservators who are well versed in the treatment, analysis, documentation, and preventive conservation of individual artifact and archive collections. For more news about our students and other department activities visit our web site at [www.artcons.udel.edu](http://www.artcons.udel.edu).

Top: Winterthur/University of Delaware Program in Art Conservation Fellow Sam Lee applying wheat starch paste to secure a tear before mending.

Above: Sam realigning a tear from the recto. Right: Oxidative discoloration and distortions seen in normal light (left) and raking light (right) before treatment. (Images: C. Maitland and S. Lee)