

# Winterthur Program in American Material Culture

Class of 2026



**Jabari Jordan-Walker**

Born December 16th on a (most certainly cold) morning in Chicago, Illinois, **Jabari Jordan-Walker** is a curator, writer, and ethnobotanist. Jabari holds a BFA in critical studies from Emily Carr University of Art + Design, and a MRP from Cornell University, with a focus on international planning and rurality. Bringing critical studies and land use planning into dialogue with American herbal medicine and gardens, Jabari intends to open a wider public discourse around the evolution of the American landscape. Currently, Jabari stewards the Dennis Ryan House (1840), a Greek Revival home in Sparta, Georgia under a preservation easement with the Georgia Trust for Historic Preservation. Jabari's research interests encompass colonial development beginning with early English trade between the Caribbean and northern provinces; enslaved and free people of color as master gardeners; 17th century medicine; and plant hunting and trade in the 17th and 18th centuries. At Winterthur, he will explore African, Asian, North American, and British gardening and landscape traditions and African and African American gardening ethnography to further contextualize his work as a gardener and curator.

Growing up in Lincoln, Nebraska, **Esme Krohn** spent her childhood visiting local museums with her parents and spending weekends on the family farm. She attended Carleton College, receiving her BA in history while working for the Perlman Teaching Museum. There, she developed educational programs and events to help students connect with the college's art collection. While studying in Berlin in 2022, visiting the city's museums made her realize that she wanted to spend her career telling stories about the past through objects. In 2023, she was a REU research partner at the University of Nebraska's Digital Legal Research Lab, where she helped build a database of historical habeas corpus lawsuits and wrote about 19th-century child custody cases. During her senior year, she and other Carleton students collaborated on a project with the Concord Museum in Massachusetts, hand-sewing reproductions of 18th-century American pockets and creating a lesson plan to accompany them. For her senior thesis, she completed extensive archival research on an institution for the intellectually disabled in Faribault, Minnesota. While at Winterthur, Esme is looking forward to developing her skills as a thinker, writer, and researcher, as well as exploring the museum and library's collections.



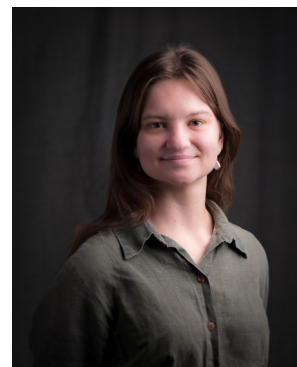
**Esme Krohn**  
*(she/her)*



**Fiona Owens**  
*(she/her)*

Born and raised in Baltimore, Maryland, **Fiona Owens's** interest in history was sparked early by the name of her beloved childhood cat: Cleopatra. With her interests nurtured by supportive parents and nearby museums, Fiona first dipped her toes into the world of American history by participating in the 2019 Washington College Archaeological Field School. That following year, she began a curatorial internship at Hampton National Historic Site, where she continues to volunteer. At Hampton and its sister site Fort McHenry, Fiona explored how material culture connects local communities to the past. Fiona graduated from McGill University in 2024 with a BA in art history, receiving the Judy Vadasz Award in Art History. She minored in anthropology, taking additional classes in Latin, French, and German. For her honors undergraduate thesis, Fiona studied Dame Laura Knight's 1927 portraits of Black Baltimoreans, using these paintings as a window into the lives of contemporary activists and recovering patients in the segregated wards of Johns Hopkins Hospital and the Baltimore Children's Hospital School. At Winterthur, Fiona hopes to apply her personal interest in craft to her academic life, investigating the role of quilt-making and other textile arts in Shaker gift drawings.

**Darby Ronning** attended the University of Minnesota, where she earned a BA in history and a BS in statistical science with minors in French, mathematics, and museum and curatorial studies. During her time in Minneapolis, she worked at the Wangenstein Historical Library of Biology and Medicine, where she managed a collection of 8,000 artifacts and supported outreach efforts in the classroom, with researchers, and in exhibition development. During an internship at the James J. Hill House (a Minnesota Historical Society site), she digitized an exhibit about the 1918 Influenza Epidemic. Her undergraduate honors thesis, supported by the Hedley Donovan Scholarship, explored the prevalence of plants from the Americas in European herbals and recipe books in the early modern period. These experiences cultivated Darby's passion for accessibility in library and museum collections, as well as an interest in the ways historical people interacted with their bodies and the outside world. After graduation, she gained pedagogical experience teaching English to middle schoolers in Cherbourg, France, and working at a French immersion summer camp. At Winterthur, she plans to study medical history and the use of objects in scientific contexts.



**Darby Ronning**



**Eleanor Shippen**

*(she/her)*

A Nashville, Tennessee native, **Eleanor Shippen** grew up in a historical landscape with conflicting narratives of the American South. Eleanor fostered her interest in connecting the public to historical records while interning with the Metropolitan Archives of Nashville-Davidson County. Her experiences engaging with visitors prepared her for a position interpreting at an 18th-century house museum, where she witnessed the significance of material culture in interpreting overlooked and complicated histories. Eleanor further developed her interest in public history through interdisciplinary coursework as an undergraduate at the University of Victoria in British Columbia. In 2023, Eleanor presented her research on Southern historical memory and plantation venues at the National Council on Public History conference. After receiving her BA in anthropology, Eleanor held several positions at Nashville heritage institutions, including the Tennessee State Museum. As an assistant curator, Eleanor applied her interests in visitor experience and multivocal, accessible interpretation of material culture to her work on the exhibit “Tennessee Furniture: Selections from the State Museum Collection.” Eleanor currently serves as co-chair of the New Professional and Student Committee for the National Council on Public History. At Winterthur, she is eager to apply the methodologies of memory studies and public history to explore national consciousness at heritage sites and to interpret objects featuring American iconography.

**Parker Thompson** is an emerging museum professional and historian, originally from Charleston, South Carolina. He is a recent graduate of Brandeis University, where he received his undergraduate degree in history. His scholarly interests cover the history of photography, American media, and African American social history. He has career interests in the curatorial field, focusing on photography and visual culture. Since 2020, he has operated the “Always Been Project,” a curatorial endeavor focused on African American vernacular photography. Previously, he has worked at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston as an Objects Conservation Intern, where he extensively employed 3D imaging for conservation, and as Collections Stewardship Intern at the National Museum of African American History and Culture. He is currently researching a forgotten Black queer performer and nightclub owner, Jimmie Daniels, who was prominent during the Harlem Renaissance. In addition to photography, Parker is interested in material culture from the American South, such as Edgefield Pottery, which is local to his birthplace.



**Parker Thompson**



**Ashley Vernon**

*(she/her)*

Shaped by the midwestern flair for spinning a tale, **Ashley Vernon**, born and raised in Northwest Indiana, took to photography to capture the unique narratives of everyday individuals and places. Storytelling became a common thread in her work as she pursued a BA in art at Valparaiso University. Naturally, museums seemed to call to her as repositories for this important work. As she gained experience at the Valparaiso University Archives, the Brauer Museum of Art, and the Porter County Museum, she observed how skillfully exhibited objects communicate larger stories about individuals and societies. Passionate about making these stories accessible for audiences unfamiliar with creative and historical spaces, Ashley was inspired to create her senior thesis project, “In Plain Sight: A Curated Art Walk.” This award-winning endeavor engaged her skills in designing an accessible, technology-supported, self-guided community art walk. During her time with the Winterthur collections, she hopes to deepen her understanding of compelling storytelling, effective display and culture-celebratory curation.

Growing up in Cincinnati, Ohio, **Camille Williams** cultivated an early interest in history, writing, visual arts, dance, and theater. She continued pursuing these interests at Northwestern University, and graduated with a double major in journalism and history with a minor in dance in 2022. She owes much of her curiosity about archives and documentation to her time with the Chicago Dance History Project, where she transcribed the interview of 103-year-old African American dancer, Lester Goodman. She also served as Chief Programming Officer for Supplies for Dreams, a student-run nonprofit which provides mentoring and field-trip programming for elementary students in Chicago Public Schools. Through the Claudine K. Brown Internship in Education at the Smithsonian, she acquired valuable knowledge on making museum resources accessible for educational initiatives, which deepened her interest in K-12 education. From 2022-2024, Camille worked as a Fulbright English teaching assistant at Kurt Tucholsky High School in Berlin, Germany, where she engaged students in learning about American culture and history. At Winterthur, she hopes to gain experience interpreting objects, especially those related to the performing arts, in order to tell intersectional stories and promote local history appreciation.



**Camille Williams**

*(she/her)*