



THE ROYAL OAK FOUNDATION

Americans in Alliance with the National Trust of England, Wales and Northern Ireland

The 2027 Nigel Seeley Fellowship

The Nigel Seeley Fellowship provides training and educational opportunities for individuals with a professional interest in the preservation of historic interiors, finishes, and collections. It is named for the National Trust's Head of Conservation, Dr. Nigel Seeley (1989-2002).

The National Trust's Royal Oak Conservation Studio
Located at Knole in Sevenoaks, Kent in England

Application Deadline: January 15, 2027

www.Royal-Oak.org/Seeley

The Royal Oak Conservation Studio

This year's assignment will be at The Royal Oak Conservation Studio in Sevenoaks, Kent in England.

The Royal Oak Foundation Conservation Studio is a contemporary workspace steeped in history.

The multi-specialist team of conservators work in a 600-year-old barn with a 21st century interior, they are dedicated to the treatment of National Trust paintings, frames, furniture, and objects.

Located in Sevenoaks, Kent, Knole is a unique piece of cultural heritage that sits in a beautiful and popular deer park just off Sevenoaks High Street. Built as an Archbishop's palace and transformed into a lavish Jacobean country house by the Sackville family, six centuries of history are contained in one of the largest houses in England.

Established in 2017, the conservation studio sits at the heart of Knole and is an important asset for the National Trust, not only for the care of its collection but also for championing the cause of conservation. The studio is open to visitors, who can learn about conservation and see the team of experts conserving a range of artefacts from the National Trust's collection.

www.nationaltrust.org.uk/visit/kent/the-royal-oak-foundation-conservation-studio

The Royal Oak Foundation

The Royal Oak Foundation is the United States tax-exempt membership affiliate of the National Trust of England, Wales and Northern Ireland. Royal Oak raises funds for the conservation of historic properties including houses, gardens, countryside and coastlines in Britain. Royal Oak also sponsors educational programs that address issues in conservation and preservation.

www.royal-oak.org

The National Trust of England, Wales & Northern Ireland

The National Trust was founded in 1895 by three Victorian philanthropists concerned about the impact of uncontrolled development and industrialization on the English countryside. More than a century later, the Trust now cares for more than 300 historic buildings and 100 landscape parks of outstanding interest and importance, over 635,000 acres of countryside throughout England, Wales, and Northern Ireland, and nearly 775 miles of coastline.

www.nationaltrust.org.uk



Conservation cleaning of *The Embarkation of George IV from Whitehall: the Opening of Waterloo Bridge, 1817* by John Constable from the collection at Anglesey Abbey.

The 2027 Fellowship Assignment

The Nigel Seeley Fellow will support a conservator at the Royal Oak Conservation Studio and will be treating furniture from some of the National Trust's greatest houses, conserving decorative surfaces, and learning about construction.

Projects range from japanned and lacquered to gilded and inlaid furniture. The experience will be varied including opportunities to explore the many roles conservators take on in the National Trust, including consultancy work and preventive conservation.

The Fellowship will be 3 months in duration starting from mid-May 2027 at the Royal Oak Foundation Conservation Studio. The Fellow will be supervised by a studio conservator. The Fellow will be based at the studio but there will be opportunities to travel to other properties with members of the team to undertake collection surveys, participate in training events and carry-out remedial conservation treatments in-situ.

The Fellow will receive an introduction to the National Trust and the conservation studio. They will have access to the studio's materials and equipment. Besides training in furniture conservation the Fellow will be expected to develop their own treatment proposals and undertake conservation treatment under the guidance of their supervisor. The Fellow will produce all documentation relating to the treatment of their delegated objects, including a final written report of the work undertaken during the Fellowship.

Past Seeley Fellows have worked on important conservation projects including a 17th-century Bureau Mazarin from Castle Drogo, 18th-century cornices from a State Bed at Erddig, and a 17th-century furniture suite from Knole's famed Spangled Bedroom.



Top: Seeley Fellow working on furniture from the Spangled Bedroom. Bottom: Seeley Fellow working on a Bureau Mazarin.

Fellowship Benefits

- \$15,000 stipend
- Up to \$2,000 travel subsidy
- Work visas arranged by The Royal Oak Foundation
- Housing will be provided in Kent
- Opportunity to work in the UK with senior National Trust staff in decorative art conservation.
- Experience working with specialist National Trust staff at Knole, Sevenoaks.
- Participation towards developing significant skills working directly with senior staff of the National Trust's conservation studio.
- Complimentary Royal Oak membership providing free access to NT properties.
- Visits to additional NT sites throughout the UK.
- Equipment Requirements: All equipment necessary for the completion of the Fellowship will be supplied by the National Trust.

Eligibility

- Relevant training and experience in conservation
- American citizenship with passport valid thru December 2027
- Proficient English-language skills (written and spoken)

Application Procedure

1. CV that includes evidence of skills relating to furniture conservation
2. Statement of interest
3. Two letters of recommendation from professionals familiar with the candidate's work
4. Submissions made to: seeleyfellowship@Royal-Oak.org
5. Applications received no later than: January 15, 2027
6. Candidates may be asked to interview with Fellowship committee members
7. Decision date: March 31, 2027
8. The Fellowship will begin in May 2027 (date to be agreed)



Conservation work on Beatrix Potter's dolls' house being filmed for the BBC's *Hidden Treasures of the National Trust*

The Fellow will work as part of a team and should have the ability to work well under pressure and communicate complex issues clearly.

The Fellow will submit written reports to both the National Trust and the Royal Oak Foundation.

The Fellow must be comfortable engaging with members of the public visiting the Royal Oak Conservation Studio and be willing to share his/her experience on the Royal Oak Foundation website.

The Fellow should carry health insurance.

Start Date: May 2027

Who Should Apply: Applications are welcome from individuals at any career point. Applicants should hold a degree or certificate in art conservation with a focus on furniture, textiles, and/or objects, or relevant experience. Familiarity of complex large 3-dimensional objects is essential.

Fellowship Stipend: For the Fellowship period, the Fellow will receive an educational stipend of \$15,000 to be paid in two installments. The Fellow will also be provided with housing in the Sevenoaks, Kent area, and a travel subsidy of up to \$2,000. Fellow will be responsible for travel arrangements, food and other personal expenses associated with the Fellowship. The Fellowship will include a Royal Oak Individual membership.

Application Deadline: The application deadline is January 15, 2027, and the Fellowship will take place in mid-May 2027 for a mutually agreed upon 12-week cycle. The successful applicant will be notified by March 31, 2027.

How to apply: To submit your application, please email materials to seeleyfellowship@royal-oak.org. Please include the downloaded and signed form with your email.

Conservation work on the Royal Sardinian Suite of furniture from Attingham Park in Shropshire.

Left: ©National Trust Images/James Mortimer. Right: ©National Trust Images/Chris Davies.

