

**E.C.C.O.**

European Confederation of Conservator-Restorers' Organisations A.I.S.B.L.



# **Conservation and collaboration: E.C.C.O. and the European Union**

**Susan Corr**

O Conservador-restaurador: uma profissão emergente do património.

Muhnac, Auditorio Manuel Valadares

18th January 2019

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### E.C.C.O.

European Confederation of Conservator-Restorers' Organisations



## European Day of Conservation-Restoration

**14th October 2018**

The European Confederation of Conservator-restorers organisations is delighted to participate in this the European year of cultural heritage. Central to the many conversations and dialogues that have taken place over the year on heritage are issues around its care and sustainable use.

This, the first European Day of Conservation-restoration provides the opportunity to highlight the work of conservator-restorers as they are involved in the care of our rich material heritage across Europe.

Conservation-restoration is an approach which seeks to safeguard and transmit the cultural fabric of our world maintaining its historical and material integrity. It offers methods and means to ensure that our daily interaction and encounters with heritage help to both sustain and protect it.

Today the members of E.C.C.O., professional conservator-restorers, are highlighting and showcasing their work in studios, workshops, public spaces, galleries, archives and museums in every country in Europe. We hope you can find the time to visit and indeed see some of these professionals at work. The work can be complex, is always fascinating but more importantly is critical to the legacy we leave for future generations.



by Susan Corr

President E.C.C.O.

# E.C.C.O. Committee 2019 Brussels



European Union



DG Culture and Education



Workplan for Culture 2015-2018  
Voices of Culture and Heritage



OMC Groups



Council of Europe



CDCPP Steering Committee



Strategy 21



European Year of Cultural Heritage 2018



- Council of Europe Framework Convention on the Value of Cultural Heritage for Society. (Faro Convention).
- Adopted by the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe in 2005 coming into force in 2011

# ST21 PREVENTIVE CONSERVATION OF CULTURAL HERITAGE

EUROPEAN CULTURAL HERITAGE STRATEGY FOR THE 21ST CENTURY

in less than 1000 words...

## Preventive Conservation: What?

Based on the principle that prevention is better than cure, **Preventive Conservation** refers to a systematic and integrated approach to care, based on strategies developed for the maintenance and up-keep of the heritage. **Preventive Conservation** is central to any consideration on the use of and access to cultural heritage, and also supports the long-term success and appreciation of interventive procedures carried out during remedial conservation and restoration.

Unlike Remedial Conservation and Restoration, which intervene directly on the material fabric of the heritage, **Preventive Conservation** aims at site-specific evaluation of the factors (physical, chemical, biological, environmental and human) that are contributing to the deterioration of the heritage (recommend a management regime built around suitable methods of storage, handling and use. These recommendations also encompass loan, travel and environmental control including policies such as dirt and dust). The diagnosis and risk-assessment behind **Preventive Conservation**, and the design of suitable and specific management regimes, are the work of the Conservation Restorer. Whenever specialised education is required to directly intervene on the cultural heritage to safeguard it, developing long-term management plans is an iterative and multidisciplinary process, involving many different actors and stakeholders.



## Preventive Conservation: Why?

Cultural identities are shaped by values that are transmitted and re-negotiated from generation to generation. They can be affected by the quality of our experience of and engagement with things like historic artefacts, structures and buildings that are invested with cultural values. Ordinary everyday objects become imbued with significance because of the role they play in our lives as much as those objects which become iconic, celebrated or commemorated. We can have big public heritage for the same reasons as we have small intimate heritage and family heirlooms.

Such are our cultural reference points and they are the touchstones to self-knowledge. Caring for them is a declaration of the importance of memory. It underpins societal well-being and the principles of inclusivity and belongingness. The value of cultural heritage to society mandates the development of policies that realize the potential of this resource to deliver social and economic benefits. **Preventive Conservation** offers a sustainable framework for caring for cultural heritage, a platform for public participation in the care of the heritage and as a driver of local development.



## Preventive Conservation: When?

**Preventive conservation** adopts a proactive attitude to managing change, circumscribed by an imperative to safeguard. Where it is integrated into social policy, the imperative to safeguard is the foundation stone of shared stewardship. It can empower relevant ministries and local authorities to engage with communities in the negotiation of heritage values and in actions, such as identifying and monitoring, that maintain heritage resources for the common good.

Specialist knowledge and training guarantee the scientific rigor of a Preventive Conservation Plan, but local knowledge and experience are also relevant, and indeed necessary, when developing and implementing **Preventive Conservation** strategies. Community and social involvement are absolutely critical for the long-term success of any preventive measures where skills and knowledge can be applied of and developed. Visitors and tourists are also implicated in the care of the heritage and play a role in delivering the plan. Authenticity, integrity and sustainability are core values that constrain and determine all conservation actions. However, where issues of use and cultural legibility

are necessary to the understanding and relevance of the cultural heritage, restoration involving retouching, reintegration, infill and replacement of parts with new materials can be carried out. Different specialisations, particularly in the area of architectural conservation, can include and rely on skilled craftsmen trained in historic techniques to carry out reconstructions and renewal within the framework of larger conservation-restoration projects.



Photo by David Aguilera Casas

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# ST21 CONSERVATION-RESTORATION OF CULTURAL HERITAGE

EUROPEAN CULTURAL HERITAGE STRATEGY FOR THE 21ST CENTURY

in less than 1000 words...

## Why Conservation-Restoration?

Exposing the principle of public participation in the Cultural Heritage, Strategy 21 entrusts us all with its care and understanding. Conservation-Restoration refers to the process of care, as well as the professional field of practice concerned with material heritage and is at the heart of this emerging, cross-sectoral landscape of cultural heritage stewardship.

Conservation-Restoration professionals are authorised, through specialised education and training, to access and intervene directly on the material fabric of the cultural heritage. They play a key role in decisions around the management of cultural heritage assets and collections, and operate within a strict code of ethics, professional standards and competences. Conservation-Restoration negotiates action and participation in the cultural heritage so as to preserve its physical and historical integrity and cultural agency. The processes of documentation carried out during Conservation-Restoration can also enrich the narrative and enable the storytelling about the heritage and its associated cultural communities. In short, the aim of Conservation-Restoration is to promote the life of heritage owners, make them available to the public (including researchers), without compromising their authenticity and significance.

## What is Conservation-Restoration?

Cultural heritage is a diverse, yet finite and irreplaceable resource. Authenticity, integrity and sustainability are core values informing the care and use of heritage today, and are the measure of how successfully it is transmitted to future generations. Together with technical diagnostics, considerations such as these inform the need, nature and extent of actions and measures to be carried out by the Conservator-Restorer, on a spectrum of Preventive Conservation, Remedial Conservation and Restoration. Each of these represents different levels of intervention, depending on the condition, form, function and intended purpose of the cultural heritage asset. Scientific methodologies employed in the analysis of materials and processes of deterioration are combined with humanistic concerns around authenticity, value and significance in the negotiation of sustainable preservation outcomes.

The detailed examination and close scrutiny undertaken by the Conservator-Restorer results in new knowledge about the materials, fabrication and histories-of-use of a heritage item. This corpus of knowledge contributes to specialised and non-specialised publications, promoting a general understanding and appreciation of the cultural significance of heritage. Such insights underpin the sustainable use of heritage, and are key to its successful management.

Cultural agency often depends on legibility. Consequently, sensitive and skilful intervention (eg., retouching of a painting) is sometimes necessary to preserve the legibility of an artistic or architectural work. Conservator-Restorers are trained to do this. However, although it employs some of the same skills and knowledge used in the creative arts and crafts, it is not the aim of Conservation-Restoration to create new objects.

The nature of material cultural heritage, its physical and chemical properties, how it has been affected by previous and existing conditions and use, mean that expert analysis is the appropriate first step in developing a plan of conservation and after-care. If circumstances permit, and the parameters of care and intervention are clearly defined by

Conservator-Restorers, passive day-to-day care of a cultural heritage asset, which can come under the ambit of Preventive Conservation, can be shared with other heritage professionals and avocational actors.

Both the Faro Convention and Strategy 21 recognise that sustainable public use and enjoyment of the Cultural Heritage relies on some level of public understanding and appreciation of its multiple values, as well as the principles of its Conservation-Restoration. It is also recognised that even basic heritage literacy amplifies the public good and well-being derived from the heritage, safeguards it into the future, and stimulates exchequer expenditure on heritage conservation and presentation in a broader social matrix.

## What is Remedial Conservation?

Remedial conservation is a 'knowing' intervention to the fabric of the cultural heritage; it is a calculated action, governed by a strict set of parameters to achieve a specified outcome. All remedial conservation is intended primarily to stabilise or retard the deterioration of the heritage and to diminish future risk without compromising its material and historical integrity. Involving cleaning, repair and consolidation, such interventions can and often do ameliorate or reverse prejudicial changes leading to significant improvements in physical condition and visual appearance. The type of remedial conservation undertaken is determined by the nature of the heritage and the material from which it is made. Interventions require dexterity and skill in application and technique combined with knowledge of materials, their manufacture and the processes of deterioration.

## What is Restoration?

As stated above, the cultural agency of the material heritage often depends on its legibility which may be undermined due to past alterations, damage and deterioration. Restoration is a complex ensemble of actions which can include the integration and replacement of non-original elements, reconstruction, retouching and infilling. It is aimed at facilitating the appreciation, understanding and utilisation of the cultural heritage.

## Preventive Conservation

It is explained in a separate Factsheet.



[www.coe.int/strategy21](http://www.coe.int/strategy21)



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Photo by Sebastien Dubouille/ICP/2017





- 4 pillars of the European engagement with Cultural heritage
- ENGAGEMENT
- SUSTAINABILITY
- INNOVATION
- PROTECTION



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Thank you for your  
attention