



E.C.C.O. Professional Guidelines (I)

The Profession

Promoted by the European Confederation of Conservator-Restorers' Organisations and adopted by its General Assembly, Brussels 1 March 2002.

Preamble

The objects, buildings and environments to which society attributes particular aesthetic, artistic, documentary, environmental, historic, scientific, social, or spiritual values are commonly designated "Cultural Heritage" and constitute a material and cultural patrimony to be passed on to coming generations.

Since it is entrusted to the care of the conservator-restorer by society, s/he has a responsibility not only to the cultural heritage itself, but also to the owner or legal guardian, the originator or creator, the public, and to posterity. The following conditions serve to safeguard all cultural heritage regardless of its owner, age, state of completeness or value.

I. Definition of the Conservator-Restorer

The conservator-restorer is a professional who has the training, knowledge, skills, experience and understanding to act with the aim of preserving cultural heritage for the future, and according to the considerations outlined below.

The fundamental role of the conservator-restorer is the preservation of cultural heritage for the benefit of present and future generations. The conservator-restorer contributes to the perception, appreciation and understanding of cultural heritage in respect of its environmental context and its significance and physical properties.

The conservator-restorer undertakes responsibility for, and carries out strategic planning; diagnostic examination; the drawing up of conservation plans and treatment proposals; preventive conservation; conservation-restoration treatments and documentation of observations and any interventions.

Diagnostic examination consists of the identification, the determination of the composition and the assessment of the condition of cultural heritage; the identification, nature and extent of alterations; the evaluation of the causes of deterioration and the determination of the type and extent of treatment needed.

It includes the study of relevant existing information.

Preventive conservation consists of indirect action to retard deterioration and prevent damage by creating conditions optimal for the preservation of cultural heritage as far as is compatible with its social use.

Preventive conservation also encompasses correct handling, transport, use, storage and display. It may also involve issues of the production of facsimiles for the purpose of preserving the original.

Conservation consists mainly of direct action carried out on cultural heritage with the aim of stabilising condition and retarding further deterioration.

Restoration consists of direct action carried out on damaged or deteriorated cultural heritage with the aim of facilitating its perception, appreciation and understanding, while respecting as far as possible its aesthetic, historic and physical properties.

Documentation consists of the accurate pictorial and written record of all procedures carried out, and the rationale behind them. A copy of the report must be submitted to the owner or custodian of the cultural heritage and must remain accessible. Any further requirements for the storage, maintenance, display or access to the cultural property should be specified in this document.

The record remains the intellectual property of the conservator-restorer and shall be retained for future reference.

Furthermore, it is within the conservator-restorer's competence to:

- develop programmes, projects and surveys in the field of conservation-restoration
- provide advice and technical assistance for the preservation of cultural heritage
- prepare technical reports on cultural heritage (excluding any judgement of its market value)
- conduct research
- develop educational programmes and teach
- disseminate information gained from examination, treatment or research
- promote a deeper understanding of the field of conservation-restoration

II. Education and Training

To maintain the standards of the profession, the conservator-restorer's professional education and training shall be at the level of a university Master's degree (or recognised equivalent) in conservation-restoration. The training is further detailed in "E.C.C.O. Professional Guidelines III".

Conservation-restoration is a complex and rapidly developing field. Therefore, the qualified conservator-restorer has a professional responsibility to keep up to date with new findings, and ensure that s/he practices her/his profession in line with current ethical thought. Continuing Professional Development is further detailed in "E.C.C.O. Professional Guidelines II".

III. Distinction from other Related Fields

Conservation-restoration is distinct from related fields (e.g. art and crafts) in that its primary aim is the preservation of cultural heritage, as opposed to the creation of new objects or maintaining or repairing objects in a functional sense.

The conservator-restorer is distinguished from other professionals by her/his specific education in conservation-restoration.