



ICOM-CC Working Group Programs 2011-2014

Name of Working Group: Theory and History of Conservation

Coordinator: Isabelle Brajer

Working Group activities and projects planned for 2011-2014

- Continuation of Forum postings and discussions on website
- Production of annual newsletters
- Participation in established Theory and History WG projects, such as the Oral History Project
- Establishment of new WG project: The Conservation Film Index
- Liaison with other organisations
- Interim meeting: May 16-17, 2013 in Copenhagen; Theme for papers: The Impact of Culture on Conservation Theory and Practice; Theme for open discussion: Making Mistakes in Conservation
- Active member participation in relevant non-ICOM-CC meetings, such as CiNC – Conservation in the Nineteenth Century (Copenhagen 2013)

FORUM: The Theory and History of Conservation Working Group has had an active Forum discussion on the website since 2009. Currently, there are over 20 open discussion topics, the scope of which we intend to supplement and expand by adding more comments and new postings over the next three years. Topics of interest to WG members are extremely varied because of the different special interests of the members – almost all are also members of other WGs focusing on conservation problems related to specific materials. We bring to the Theory and History WG a common interest in the general trends and reasoning behind our actions and how they relate to the history of our profession. We are interested in studying historical materials and methods, and their impact on current practice. Yet, individual interests and personal experiences and points of view are clearly visible in contributions to these general topics. This is in keeping with the spirit of this working group – by sharing our own professional experiences and opinions we contribute to the broadening of the group's base of knowledge.

NEWSLETTERS: Supplementing the Forum as a venue for sharing information are the annual Newsletters, which we intend to continue producing in the current triennial period. These Newsletters contain summaries of meetings, seminars and conferences (both ICOM-CC related and non-ICOM-CC), abstracts of relevant recent publications and descriptions of research projects, which allows our members to keep abreast of developments in our field.



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INTERIM MEETING: The Theory and History WG will hold an interim meeting in Copenhagen on May 16-17th, 2013. The topic of the meeting is The Impact of Cult on Conservation Theory and Practice. This topic will be interpreted as broadly as possible. In addition to the traditional concept of cult value as applied to religious objects of veneration (for example, polychrome sculptures in the Catholic Church), we would like to explore the impact of cult on objects used by indigenous people, and even the concept of cult in the art trade (personality cult, cult of money). The interim meeting will be a direct continuation of the (non-ICOM-CC) conference in Copenhagen – Conservation in the Nineteenth Century (CiNC), organized by the National Museum of Denmark. The main theme of the interim meeting (The Impact of Cult on Conservation) will be supplemented by an open discussion about a topic of interest to members of our group: making Mistakes in Conservation. Thus, at one extended venue, WG members can participate in a broad range of historical and theoretical issues, spanning historical to contemporary issues in the Theory and History of Conservation.

Specific themes of research /investigations

PROJECTS AND TOPICS OF INTEREST: As in previous triennials periods, the Theory and History WG is committed to the Oral History Project (est. by Joyce Hill Stoner), continuing in the conduction of interviews with relevant persons in our profession. In addition, two new topics were suggested as areas of interest for the group to work on: Making Mistakes in Conservation and the establishment of a Conservation Film Index. It was agreed to focus on the second topic as a long-term project for the working group. The proposal focuses on the collection of information about films documenting conservation procedures and events, or showing historically important persons. The idea is to establish a place on our website, where members can log information about the films and where they are archived. The first topic – a continuation of the research presented at the working group session at the Triennial Conference in Lisbon aiming at the study and systematising of errors in our profession was chosen as a discussion topic for the interim meeting. The goal is to learn from our mistakes in a similar way as the aviation and medical industries have. In the first stage, working group members will express their opinions as to the structuring of the continuation of this research.

INITIATIVES: The Theory and History WG has launched initiatives fostering cooperation between similar working groups in other organisations, such as the ICOMOS and UNESCO. This initiative was taken in the face of enormous global changes affecting cultural heritage in the 21st century, which have started over the last two decades. There is a need to observe and follow the symptoms of change in order not to be left behind when key objectives for the protection of cultural heritage and its conservation are formulated. A member has been appointed to keep the working group



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abreast of new developments, and a section in the newsletters will be set aside to report progress regarding these initiatives.