

*The training of conservators/restorers in Europe*

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"The test of a vocation is the love of the drudgery it involves", C.P. Smith, Afterthoughts.

This paper gives a birds eye's view over training in conservation in the Netherlands: the different fields of conservation covered by the program of the State Training School for conservators, the level of training, the role played by a training institution in the protection of the profession of conservator/restorer, and the importance of collegial contacts and co-operation with similar European training institutions, since our mutual aim is the protection of our cultural heritage.

This paper is meant to inspire the panel discussion about the necessity of training in conservation in Europe.

Short history and today's situation.

The State Training School for Conservators (Opleiding Restauratoren) was founded in 1978 by the Ministry of Welfare, Health and Culture.

In view of the enormous problems in the conservation and restoration of objects made of natural polymers training in the conservation of wood (furniture), textiles, books (leather) and paper was given first priority.

This first basic program has grown through the years into

- a four-year program on conservation of furniture (8 students)
- a four-year program on conservation of textiles (8 students)
- a four-year program on conservation of books, paper and photographic material (8 students)
- a four-year program on conservation of glass and ceramics (4 students)
- in cooperation with the Foundation Stichting Restauratie Atelier Limburg a five year program on conservation of painted objects and easel paintings.
- a two-year program on conservation of archival materials.

Apart from the main goal of the program which is to provide and develop courses in conservation and restoration on a high professional level, the State Training School organizes short courses and workshops for conservators and curators to inform

them about new methods and materials. The French call this quite rightly the "education permanente".

Also for those who handle artefacts as part of their daily work, the school organizes courses in how to handle objects of important value in museums, during transport, during exhibitions and in depots. While the curator is responsible for the collection, other employees in the depots do the day-to-day work.

Items for the panel discussion:

For the regular courses given by the State Training School, final examinations including chemistry are required, preferably with a baccalaureate or a degree in art history or chemistry.

The two year course on conservation of archival material is a junior course.

- Is it preferable to divide levels in training, according to the complexity of the conservation problems, into preservation, conservation and restoration.
- Will the present emphasis on preventive conservation lead to the loss of traditional craftsmanship, or is it the task of training institution to provide a solid practical training?
- Is the protection of this many sided profession (and in fact the protection of artefacts) in Europe an international task of the different traininginstitutions or of the different professional organizations?

However it may be, the present-day conservator has the history and the future of our cultural heritage in his hands. It is the task of our traininginstitutions to enable him/her to shoulder this responsibility.