

by

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"Preservation in the Future" is a rather broad subject to say the least, but it is certainly one which deserves our most serious attention. We have all heard at some time in our lives when confronted with problems of our own making that we should hold up a mirror to ourselves. When considering the mind-boggling task lying ahead of us with regard to the preservation of our common cultural and historical heritage, we should perhaps look back to the past in order to find our way to the future. But, no matter how efficacious a study of the past may be it will never provide all of the sightings necessary to chart our future course. What the past can offer, however, is a more than casual indication of the pitfalls we can expect to encounter along our way.

Undoubtedly, the most unwavering enemy of preservation is time. Time is both invincible and merciless. Caleb Colton (1780-1832), an English clergyman, wrote of it, "Oh, Time! the beautifier of the dead; adorning of the ruin; comforter and only healer when the heart hath bled. Time is the most undefinable yet paradoxical of things; the past is gone, the future has not come, and the present becomes the past even while we attempt to define it, and, like the flash of lightning, at once exists and expires." Time is as hard upon us as it is upon our possessions, whether they be personal, or common, what we generally refer to as our cultural heritage. We are living in an age which is extremely time-conscious and consequently has little time. Everything seems to happen in a supersonic tempo. Pick up the telephone and direct-dial Hong Kong. Fly to America in three and a half hours, or the moon in a day and a half. And, if this were not enough we have the digital clock which

neurotically flashes its way through time. With the same sort of Twentieth-century rapidity, our cultural heritage is deteriorating.

Is it, however, really true that the tempo of deterioration has increased in our time? I rather think not. We tend to forget that former times had basically the same problems we have. Take pollution for example, something which we hear about today as if it were a new development. I remember as a child listening to a very old lady recounting how New York used to be in 1890. She described the streets filled with horse manure, the chimneys belching brown smoke, the stink of garbage, and various other delights of daily life in a period we now tend to romanticize as the "Gay '90's." The same holds true for deterioration; it has always been with us. We are simply more aware of it than our predecessors. Felix Ziem's The Piazzetta, during a Flood may at first sight present a rather idyllic moonlight scene of gondolas floating in front of San Marco. What it really shows is one of Venice's eternal problems--one for which there seems to be no acceptable financial solution. Jacopo Marieschi's (1711-1791) The Fondaco dei Turchi, from the Piazza San Marculla gives a good idea how Venice looked during the 18th Century. The Fondaco is a late Romanesque building of the 13th Century which became a Turkish hospital after 1621. In the picture you can see the scaffolding put up to assist restoration of the weakened facade. A good perusal through pictures by Marieschi, Canaletto, and Guardi will provide numerous examples of a Venice already falling to pieces in the 18th Century. Venice, of course, began falling to pieces soon after its inception between the 5th and 8th Centuries. Its very location guaranteed an eternal demise, and it is this fugitive quality which accounts to a large extent for our fascination with Venice.

If Venice is the most glamorous example of deterioration, there are countless others less so. An 1828 illustration to

Carlo Lasinio's Pittura a fresco del Campo Santo di Pisa shows a fresco loosening from the wall. No one in the scene seems in the least bit disturbed. During the latter part of the 18th Century people became fascinated by ruins, in some instances so much so that they had their own ruins built. Ruins were in fashion. The detail of the decrepit fresco in the Lasinio illustration emphasizes the age of the Campo Santo. It is not yet a total ruin, but certainly on its way to becoming one, and this must have been a comforting thought to many of Lasinio's more fanciful-minded readers.

Time may be merciless, but it is an abstraction and therefore cannot really be blamed for the decay it causes. It is an unavoidable element in the greater scheme of things. Man, however, is definitely no abstraction and he can and should be blamed for being the ruthless leveller he is. Man is responsible for most of the wanton destruction which has caused so much of our cultural heritage to disappear throughout the centuries. Should you be tempted to think all of this devastation was done by Attila the Hun and other long-gone barbarians I am afraid I must relieve you of that comfortable illusion. When we think of England and its countless beautiful country houses we usually think of the National Trust and heave a sigh of relief. What we forget is that the Trust is limited in what it can do and that many houses are still destroyed each year, or so mutilated that they may as well be pulled down. Before the Trust was set up in 1895 and really well until after World War II, people did as they liked with houses whose importance as cultural monuments cannot be overly emphasized. Cassiobury, Stoke Edith, Hamilton Palace, Foots Cray Place, and many other magic names are now just that and nothing more. Since 1945 alone 250 houses of importance have been demolished.

The abbey church of the monastery of Cluny founded in 910 was, before St. Peter's was built, the largest church in Christendom. Throughout its history it managed to survive various

attempts to diminish its splendour until the French Revolution put an end once and for all to its glory. In 1793 Revolutionary troops pillaged the monastery and in 1799 what remained was sold to three local scrap merchants. Descriptions of their attempts to dismantle the remains read like accounts of English murderers trying to boil and saw down the remains of their victims's bodies. We can form some idea of its former grandeur from J.B. l'Allemand's drawing made of the interior in 1787.

So many unfortunate examples of such wilful destruction exist in the annals of our diminishing cultural and historical heritage that it is regrettably very easy to make a long and harrowing list of victims. A few choice examples will have to suffice to illustrate the scope of our losses. The religious zeal of iconoclasts over the centuries is so well known that we need not linger on the splinters left behind them in the name of God and good works. However, when we think of the Age of the Rococo--that gilded period when libertinism went merrily hand in hand with playful intelligence--we would hardly use the epithet "prudish" to characterize its spirit. And yet, there were some people during the 18th Century who were so convinced of their conception of the proper that they attempted to destroy works of art which deviated from their ideas of the morally correct. A case in point is Louis d'Orleans's attempt to slash Correggio's Leda and the Swan to pieces because its eroticism agitated the duke. Louis was the son of the great Regent of France who was responsible for putting together one of the legendary collection of paintings. One can, therefore, safely say that Louis did not grow up in deprived circumstances or in an uncultured milieu. The remnants of the picture, thankfully, were put back together again by Charles Coypel, court painter to Fredrick the Great, who also painted the first of many new heads for Leda. Despite Coypel's well-intentioned restoration, the painting, like Humpty-Dumpty, was never quite the same after the duke's attack.

While Louis d'Orleans's aggression is perhaps better left to the neo-Freudians to sort out, there are numerous instances of

of violent practices during the 18th Century which were both common and widely accepted. The 18th Century was the Age of Decoration par excellence. Paintings, even great masterpieces, were more often than not seen as decorative furnishings. Of primary import was the decorative ensemble of paintings. Now, as we all know, paintings do not usually come en masse in standard formats. Therefore, in order to accommodate paintings to a given decorative scheme they were "formatted," that is, cut down or enlarged. Forty percent of the pictures in the Austrian Imperial Collection were "formatted" when the Stallburg Gallery was re-hung between 1720-1728. The same happened to about a third of the pictures in the Wittelsbach Collection in Schloss Schleissheim near Munich. Many more examples exist. Surprisingly, the practice continues to this day, no longer for decorative purposes, but in the name of historical honesty which I will discuss presently.

Wars, fought for whatever motives, have accounted for untold destruction of works of cultural and historical importance. Caesar's conquest of Egypt left behind the smoldering remnants of the celebrated library of Alexandria. Some historians believe that this loss cannot be blamed on Caesar, but rather on Arabs who supposedly burned the building in the 7th Century A.D. for propaganda purposes. Whoever was responsible, the library is long gone and with it a great deal of ancient literature, history, and learning. Without doubt, the most capricious annihilation of an entire city was carried out by the Fourth Crusaders in 1204 when they literally reduced Byzantium to ashes. Some 25000 Greek and Roman statues brought to Byzantium after the fall of the Roman Empire were destroyed. The few remnants taken to Venice by these devout warriors dazzle our eyes today, but they are the silent and faint witnesses to what once must have been one of the richest and most beautiful cities the world has ever seen. In 1695 Louis XIV's loyal Marechal Villeroi bombarded Brussels with fiery cannonballs. When he was done Rubens's renowned triptych of Saint Job in the Nicholas Church and Rogier van der Weyden's murals in the City Hall, among many other works of art, were only memories.

If we think this sort of wanton destruction is something particular to times long gone which can only be read about these days in history books, we should not forget World War II. In 1945 the famous Kaiser Friedrich Museum in Berlin was bombed. German museum officials had taken the necessary precautions of removing the collection to Flakturm Friedrichshain. The best laid plans of mice and men, as Robert Burns so aptly put it, often go astray. As fate would have it, a fire broke out in the tower on 6 May 1945. 417 paintings were lost. It is a miracle that so many of the pictures stolen by the Nazis survived their various hardships including storage in salt mines. The Allies, unfortunately, were none too discriminate in their bombings. Dresden needs only to be mentioned to conjure up the horror of its demise. The Ovetari Chapel of the Eremitani in Padua was bombed to dust in March 1944 by the US Army Corps thereby obliterating one of the greatest masterpieces of the Italian Renaissance, Mantegna's cycle of frescoes depicting the lives of Saints James and Christopher. And in August of 1944 the Americans shelled the Campo Santo in Pisa--shown earlier in Lasinio's engraving--incinerating a fresco cycle painted over 16 years by Benozzo Gozzoli.

If wars are not enough we now have to contend with an increasing number of mentally deranged people who attack works of art for various reasons ranging from discontent with social or political situations to pure vandalism for vandalism's sake. Rembrandt's Night Watch, Vermeer's Love Letter, Michelangelo's Pietà, to name only a few victims, have all suffered attacks. The Cassel Rembrandt Jacob Blessing His Grandchildren was subjected to a particularly nasty attack with acid in 1977. Lunatics, however, are not the only people responsible for damage to pictures. Perfectly respectable museum visitors, such as the lady with a lorgnette, cause damage without intending to do so. Museum directors and officials are now faced with the dilemma of placing pictures and other works of art behind thick shields of plexiglass or in dungeon-like cases thereby diminishing our ability to appreciate them, or leaving works of art exposed to attack. Such an interposition between the viewer and the work of art is certainly contrary to the artist's original attention of providing the spectator with an agreeable aesthetic experience. The director is therefore confronted

with an ethical decision--protect the work of art as best possible thereby diminishing its direct impact as an aesthetic experience, or run the risk of vandalism. The answer is not easy.

Beyond wilful destruction by man we always have the unexpected natural disaster such as the Florence Flood of November 1966. As you can see from these examples, keeping what we have is not easy. How we can best do this is also no easy matter.

In any discussion which attempts to set out some of the major issues confronting all of us busy with the preservation of our cultural heritage, the subject of ethics is unavoidable. During the past few years we have increasingly heard more and more about ethics, and there is a growing tendency in certain quarters of the conservation community to view ethics as dogma. Ethics, is, however, anything but a dogma. There are no rules which can be applied to each and every case. During his trial in Athens in 399 B.C., Socrates said to his judges that, "The unexamined life is not worth living." For Socrates, the most important thing in life was to scrutinize constantly one's actions and deeds to see if they conform to what is right and good in a given situation. Therefore, we must always ask ourselves if what we are about to do is good or bad, right or wrong. To do this we must be objective and possess both intellectual ability and moral insight. This sounds dreadfully simple, like so much in Socrates, but it is anything but simple. To act ethically requires constant questioning and searching, but the end must always be action. Even taking the well-considered decision to do nothing is a form of action, albeit one of negation.

Since ethics depends upon a questioning, a search for what is the right and best action in a specific, given situation, the person engaged in such an enquiry will constantly have to attempt to remain objective. Being objective is far from easy since we are usually taken with our own ideas and are loath to part with them. Furthermore, since we are the products of our own time, our search for

the right and good will always be influenced by contemporary ideas, manners, and modes. We can, unfortunately, never be completely objective, even if we do our best to be so. Therefore, ethical decisions will always be modish to a certain extent. This is a bitter fact for those who see ethics as dogma, and unhappily there are a number of conservation gurus who believe they can offer ironclad codes which will provide the unthinking and uncritical restorer with answers to every problem. Ethical judgments can only be made by using one's critical faculties to the utmost, by viewing each case as unique, and by never forgetting how easy it is to make a mistake even when one's intentions are of the highest order. However, I would look at this aspect of ethics as being a very positive fact of life. It should ideally help to keep us more objective. If we realize that our ideas are relative to our own time, we will be all that more careful before embarking upon a certain course of action in the conviction that what we are doing is absolutely right and good.

Whenever the subject of conservation, restoration, and ethics arises we immediately think of the restorer. This is neither inclusive nor fair. The restorer is merely one of many people who share the responsibility for protecting our cultural heritage, and by the time objects get to him they have usually suffered due to the negligence of others. Museum directors, curators, civil servants, and conservation scientists share an equal responsibility. A few examples will, hopefully, illustrate the points I wish to make. Restorers, of course, since they are the ones who actually lay their hands on works of art, etc., bear the greatest accountability for the proper care and treatment of anything entrusted to them. We often hear from restorers that much of the worst damage encountered has been caused by previous restorers. There is some puffing of one's own excellence in such a declaration, but there is no denying that a great deal of unnecessary harm has been caused by improper, if not downright bad restoration. James Wyatt, an English architect of some renown, was known as "The Destroyer" as far as his architectural

restorations were concerned. From 1782 until 1791 he worked on Salisbury Cathedral tearing out anything in the church which hindered the view along the full length of the nave. He also removed porches, chapels, and a large bell tower, all in the name of sound restoration. Not even the stained glass windows, which escaped the iconoclasts, escaped Wyatt. He was extremely thorough.

The casual tourist in Paris, and perhaps most of the inhabitants as well, is probably not aware that the City of Lights, so admired as being one of the most beautiful cities in the world, is primarily the creation of Georges Eugène Baron Haussmann (1809-1891), the father of all town planners. No one can deny that Napoleon III's designer succeeded in transforming the city into the grand spectacle it is, but let us not forget the price paid--namely, most of medieval and Renaissance Paris which had survived fire, demolition, wars, and revolution until Haussmann got to work. The past was swept away--not in pieces, but in one massive renovation. While renewal is a normal and healthy process and one which must take place if a city or town is to remain alive and not succumb to the status of "historical site"--ergo dead stage décor--I would say that there are limits.

Italy is so rich in cultural and historical heritage that one might be tempted to believe that a country with so much can afford a few losses. Mussolini's Via Imperali slashed through the Forum Romanum is more than a minor loss. This project was the brainchild of an ego-bloated dictator and again we might be tempted to excuse this bit of vandalism as one of the consequences of undiscerning absolutism. However, dictators are not the only people given to ballooning egos. Restoration architects are among the worst as far as ego-tripping is concerned. Monuments are especially susceptible to unnecessary mutilations because they are still buildings which are in use. This simple fact allows unscrupulous, incompetent,

or simply ignorant restoration architects ample leeway to spout all sorts of tendentious and fallacious arguments, which come under the heading of bunkum and baloney, for making needless or unethical changes to the essential fabric of buildings. The most dangerous restoration architects are the ones who totally dismiss the accumulated historical integrity of a building with its many changes and accumulations in style and structure.

In 1968 the Soprintendenza ai Monumenti per la Provincia di Firenze e Pistoia held an exhibition in Florence which showed restorations carried out under its auspices between 1944 and 1966. Much good work was done. However, there were still far too many examples which can only be labelled as vandalism. Many of the architects involved were, in the words of Benedict Nicolson, former editor of the Burlington Magazine, ". . . at heart Viollet-le-Ducs, determined to restore monuments to their original, pristine state, or where this is impossible, to reconstruct their original form, sometimes on insufficient evidence, [having] no regard for the accumulation of succeeding centuries, for those accretions which are just as much part of the history of a place and often lend a monument its special charm." One can only pray that the proposed reconstruction of the Church of the Spedale di Santa Maria degli Innocenti, Florence, never took place. The ruins from altars from S. Remigio, Florence, need no comment from me. Removal of the pilaster in San Jacopo Oltr'Arno, Florence, is nothing less than wilful mutilation. Two examples of killing a monument by clinical reconstruction to the so-called "original" state are the Cloister of the Basilica of S. Marco, Florence, and the Badia of San Martino in Campo, Carmignano. This is the result of following a dogma which allows for no alternatives, and I say beware of such know-it-all experts who propound such malevolent nonsense under the guise of sound conservation ethics.

While monuments are especially vulnerable due to their utilitarian nature they are not the only things to suffer at the hands of restorers. The Book of Kells had a very checkered history before it finally ended up in the collection of Trinity College, Dublin. It had been hidden in 899 from invading Danes, only to be stolen in 1006. Subsequently, it was the jewel of many prominent collections. When it ended up in Dublin an early 19th-century bookbinder decided to give the book a uniform size and proceed^{ed} to trim the edges regardless of whether or not any of the illuminations had to be cut off. This was a nasty bit of "formatizing" and while we might think this could never happen again I have the sneaking suspicion that too many old books are still trimmed down and prettied up to an unnecessary extent--not to mention prints and drawings which are still too often given and overly zealous bath and bleaching. And, what can one say about the recent cleaning of Bernini's magnificently playful statue of an elephant supporting an obelisk in front of Santa Maria Sopra Minerva in Rome? This particular bit of "restoration" was carried out by the Roman Parks Service and the result is tragic. Much of the original relief and definition which was still under an unpleasant layer of grime was, along with the dirt, sandblasted away leaving behind a clean, but ever so dull and pedestrian surface structure. Gone is gone.

We are living in a technological age and have all too often placed a blind trust in technological advances. The restoration profession has not escaped from an overly joyous faith in the benefits provided by scientific developments. Before I am accused of being either anti-science or simply reactionary, I would like to make it very clear that I am aware of the many good and serviceable materials and techniques provided by science. Restorers should make use of them whenever possible, but they should not loose their critical faculties. One has to remain alert to potential dangers. Two examples will have to suffice. A few years ago a leading conservation scientist propagated the use of a varnish which later turned out to be composed of ingredients which with time

cross-linked thereby making the removal of same wonder varnish virtually impossible. This nostrum was distributed among many leading museums and some restorers, acting on the principle that a distinguished reputation guaranteed quality, were so foolish as to apply the varnish to important pictures without first making sufficient tests. One museum discovered, just in time, that the proffered varnish cross-linked. It was immediately removed. The person responsible for this concoction cannot in any way be faulted for attempting to produce a varnish which answered the aesthetic requirements of a final protective layer and which would not have to be removed as frequently as most varnishes have to be. However, the scientist-in-question's over-enthusiasm may have been the result of an attitude which concentrated on the problem rather than the client. Art works are unique and consequently require at all times to be dealt with with the utmost care, caution, and respect. They are not patients, as we hear these days ad nauseam to be seen exclusively as the unhappy, abstract possessors of a swollen goitre or weeping sore.

Many years ago I had the opportunity of witnessing the treatment of a 15th-century sandstone statue of "The Man of Sorrows." It was filthy, suffered from surface effervescences, flaking, etc. This poor "Man of Sorrows" endured a series of experimental treatments which turned him successively pristine white, subdued beige, mouse grey, and finally, odious cream white. What went on with the physical structure of the stone I leave to the scientists, but I do not suppose it was any too beneficial. Objects must never be used for experimentation, but again I fear the practice is more common than we realize or are prepared to admit. In the area of paper conservation, which has its own problems, the worst being the sheer magnitude of the amount of paper needing treatment, there are many new methods being propagated for mass de-acidification. All I can say is be careful before settling on any given method. Enough scientific indications exist to show that some cures may eventually be worse than the present illness.

If there are still too many conservation scientists who see the deterioration of artistic and historic works as an abstract problem to be solved without ever pausing to consider aesthetic and ethical considerations, there are still too many museum directors, curators, librarians, and archivists who know little to nothing about the conservation and have even less interest in learning enough about it to become meaningful partners with their colleagues the restorers and conservation scientists.

Art historians have an undisputed weakness for the glitter and the glamour and much prefer devoting their attention to flashy exhibitions rather than to the humdrum but ever so vital work of conservation. Exhibitions are extremely pleasurable experiences for people who really enjoy looking at works of art. They can also be extremely instructive and usually provide the specialist with the unique opportunity of seeing works together which are normally dispersed over the world. For the past few years we have been surfeited with exhibitions and there is a growing tendency to make them ever more lavish and spectacular. The Mona Lisa, or as Lord Clark described her, "the submarine goddess of the Louvre," visited America in 1963. Michelangelo's Pietà has been to New York, and to accommodate the crowds a conveyor belt, with three speeds which could be adjusted to meet the size of the crowds, had to be installed. The people responsible for granting permission for these vulgar stunts are no better than circus entrepreneurs.

In 1978 I saw a great deal of the contents of the National Archeological Museum of Naples in New York and the exhibition went on to three other museums in the United States. The irony is that it proved easier for me to see Pompeii in New York than Naples where the rooms containing the mural paintings are more often closed than open. This is certainly none too ethical if you happen to believe as I that works of art were made to be seen and that it is right and good that they should be made

available to spectators. After seeing Pompeii in New York I saw Dresden in Washington, D.C. where I was told by a curator of the National Gallery of Art that it took fifteen airplanes to bring over the objects on display. They went on to two other museums before returning to Germany. The chances of something going wrong must be astronomical despite all the care that is obviously expended to protect the objects. Museum directors should pause to reconsider such gigantic exhibitions in the light of what is right, what is good for objects subjected to such travel.

Along with exhibitions, acquisitions also pre-occupy the thoughts of museum directors, sometimes to the exclusion of other pressing priorities. The reason is obvious. Every museum has a healthy desire to extend its collection, and rightfully so. However, in these troubled economic times directors should pause to reconsider their priorities. The primary task of any museum is to conserve present holdings, and unless a museum has unlimited funds, a balance has to be struck between buying and preserving. Unfortunately the glamour and the glitter connected with a new acquisition often outways arguments for conservation. Conservation, or so the reasoning often goes, can always take place later. The possible new acquisition will only be up for sale once. It is now or never. Sometimes, however, the same applies for sick objects. Again, therefore, the director should ask himself what is right, what is best.

One concept of restoration is particularly subject to much controversy. We hear over and over that we must get back to the "original" condition, or that we must respect it. This sounds good enough, but unfortunately there is little agreement on what is meant by "original" condition. We have already seen what damage can result to monuments when people misconstrue "original" condition.

When Howard Carter opened Tutanchamun's tomb in 1923 he found an almost "original" condition. If we are to be strict on this point then he should have left things exactly as they were and closed the tomb. And yet, we all accept such archaeological plunderings and I, too, have seen and greatly enjoyed King Tut in Munich. Our idea of the past is conditioned by our own period and every previous period. The concept of the ideal is constantly changing. Even though we know better we still usually make the mistake of thinking that Classical statuary was always a pristine cream or white colour. Nothing could be further from the truth or original condition. Statues were painted or polychromed and usually had eyes which tried to give the impression of living eyes. Most statues have lost their original polychrome and are consequently mere shadows of their original condition. No one walking through the Forum Romanum today would ever think that what he sees is the original condition.

← And yet, there is much restoration work carried out in the name of the "original" condition. The Apollo Belvedere was found ca. 1509. A drawing from the early 16th Century by Marco Dente shows the statue as it was after being found. Around 1532/3 Montorsoli made additions which caused a great controversy during the second half of the 19th Century. They were removed not too long ago. In order to make his additions Montorsoli evened off the breaks, a practice common in the restoration of antique statues as it was formerly carried out in such studios as that of Bartolomeo Cavaceppi in Rome in 1768. What the restoration purists have here achieved is the Apollo Amputatus and they have certainly interfered as much as Montorsoli did in his day with the "original" and historical condition of the statue as it was when found in 1509.

Pictures can also be subjected to equally drastic treatment, a sort of "formatizing" to meet historical expectations. Ter Brugghen's Adoration of the Kings in the Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam, has undergone an alteration which brings it more in line with

his other compositions. The figures in his pictures are usually placed very close to the upper border of the canvas. His Adoration was subjected to both extensive art historical and scientific investigation and the proof offered to support removal of the upper and lower strips of canvas is not sufficient, in my opinion, to warrant removal. They have been called later additions "in the style of Issac de Moucheron (1670-1744)" and if they are indeed later, as is surmised and quite possible, then they were done at a point in time none too distant from the original. The reason why the strips were added (and we will forget who painted them), say at the wish of an early collector for a more dramatic composition, should also be taken into serious consideration before removing them. The strips may well not be by Ter Brugghen, but they were part of the Adoration for a long time before being removed on what basically remains shaky evidence. In this instance a better solution could have been considered, namely, having a special frame made to cover the two strips, a practice followed in the National Gallery, London.

People with a pedestrian inability to appreciate works of art as aesthetic objects are overly inclined to view them exclusively as historical documents. These same people are the ones who are all too eager to get back to what they understand as the "original" condition no matter what the consequences may be for the object in question. Edward Waldo Forbes, the man who created the Fogg Museum, Harvard University, was just such a purist. Under his directorship the Fogg pursued a ruthless program of restoration. Botticelli's Magdalen at the Foot of the Cross is a case in point. We can gather a vague idea of what the picture once must have looked like by referring to a copy made by Peter Teigen before the restoration. Forbes had all former re-paints removed and then had the losses toned in in so-called neutral colours. The result is a patch work quilt, an aesthetic horror, but no doubt an honest historical document, if by "historical" is understood the damaged condition of the painting rather than its long-gone original condition.

Forbes is lauded today in America by restorers of the prosaic ilk--those who like to think they are doctors and works of art patients. If one has to draw a comparison between professions for uninspired, technician-minded restorers who cannot see the forest for the trees, then I suggest an analogy with undertakers rather than doctors. Forbes's approach has led to some of the worst excesses in modern conservation, the "restoration" of the Jarves Collection of Italian Primitive paintings housed in the Yale University Art Gallery being a case in point. The restorer responsible for looking after this collection has mercifully retired, but when he was still at work he blithely scraped away paint to get down to the underpainting--what he considered the "original" condition. All of this filleting was done under the assumption of good, sound, scientific conservation procedure. Most of the Jarves Collection is now hidden away in a storeroom. When I visited the depot some years ago I could not help thinking how the poor innocents lined up on tiered racks look like those shrivelled, desiccated mummies found in Mexican ossuaries. Once colourful, vibrant gold back panel paintings had been transformed into dusty skeletons. The motto "Cleanliness is next to Godliness" should be painted over the door to this particular storeroom.

The most recent, significant application of Forbes's theory can be seen on Cimabue's great Crucifix, one of the most tragic victims of the Florence Flood. No paint was removed by the restorers involved, but the losses caused by water damage were dealt with by using the tratteggio technique. In this instance the restorers who worked on the Crucifix decided to give the term tratteggio a more splendiferous name. It was called chromatic orchestration or something equally nonsensical. The two slides show just how ruthlessly this totally insensitive technique was applied to one of the most important works of the Trecento. No attempt was made to approach even the local colour of the various parts of the cross. What is at issue in this sort of so-called "honest" restoration is that no technique, no matter how clever, how cerebral, how reversible must ever be allowed to get in the way of the work of art itself.

Hopefully, these few examples have shown that we must be very careful when using the term "original" condition. The Acropolis as it appears on the left is as it stands today. It is certainly not in its original condition. We will never see it as it once was and we can only imagine what it must have been, helped perhaps by Leopold von Klenze's romantic vision painted in 1846. One wonders what we would do today had the Acropolis been re-constructed around the middle of the 19th Century by someone inspired by Von Klenze's colourful fantasy. Thank heavens this was not done, but had it been the purists would no doubt get their sledge hammers poised to destroy all reconstructions in the name of honesty and "original" condition, thereby in turn re-destroying the monument. Mercifully, we have been spared such a conundrum.

The past has, I believe, shown us that there is no particular reason for any undue optimism about the future of preservation. Wars will always be with us. We have yet to hear to what extent cultural treasures were destroyed during the recent Gulf War. Demolition of monuments will proceed at a hair-raising tempo as long as we have unscrupulous property developers and eager-beaver town planners coupled with ignorant or indifferent civil servants who blindly grant permission for such destruction. The greater public will always remain indifferent to such problems thereby making it difficult to muster enough voting clout to influence legislators. Museum directors and curators will undoubtedly continue to mount blockbuster exhibitions causing countless works of art to undergo journeys they should never experience. Floods, fires, and earthquakes are part of daily life. We cannot stop them--only deal with them when it is too late. Tourism will continue to grow and is perhaps the single greatest potential future threat to preservation, not only of buildings, but entire cities like Venice and Florence, or areas like Tuscany and the Lake District.

Bad restorers will always be with us like death and the income tax collector though hopefully on a decreasing scale. However, when one sees how much average, below average, and downright bad work is still done, and both accepted and in many instances praised, one cannot be overly optimistic that this situation will change in the near future. Art historians who end up working in museums will need formal training in conservation principles, methods, materials, and the like, if they are ever to become serious partners with their colleagues the restorers and conservation scientists. While no one, who really understands the importance of interdisciplinary co-operation, can argue with the necessity for such training, I do not see it being included in the curricula of university art history programs. Until museums make such extra training mandatory for employment, the situation will remain unchanged. Conservation scientists have to get beyond their telescopic myopia of viewing works of art as abstract problems and recognize them for what they are, namely aesthetic and historical objects which, unfortunately, all too often have ailments. However, I have the sneaking suspicion that there are still too many conservation scientists who could fall over the Mona Lisa without really knowing what it was other than being a hindrance. And restorers. Restorers must find an acceptable balance between the humanistic approach to works of art which is founded upon a solemn and sensitive understanding of the aesthetic and historical integrity of works of art and the scientific-clinical approach which concentrates on mundane techniques and materials.

How often we hear, usually at conferences like this, that there is so much good interdisciplinary co-operation taking place these days. I do not believe that for a moment and a great deal of work has yet to be done before that will ever be a meaningful reality. Advances have been made in the training of restorers, but a lot still needs to be done, especially in the area of international standards for training programs. Proper training of restorers--not to mention art historians and

conservation scientists--is the key to significant future progress in the field of preservation. But this is, I fear, still a long way off. Legal recognition of the conservation profession is still a dream. Money for training, materials, equipment, personnel, projects, and scientific research will always be scarce. Pollution is mushrooming over the entire world at an alarming rate. Every generation will always think it has most, if not all, of the answers--that its methods, materials, and ethical perceptions are the best and correct ones. One does not have to be a genius to realize this is simply not so. And choices as to what must and can be saved will have to be made. Losses will also, regrettably, have to be accepted.

And time. Time marches on and along its path our cultural and historical heritage will slowly pass away as it has always done. None of us can stop time. We can, however, delay the degradation it brings, and we can postpone the inevitable losses it causes sooner or later. Despite this sombre litany of woes, we must not give up our battle against time if we are to provide future generations with a shadow of what we have been privileged to see, experience, and enjoy. Conservation is a noble profession but I do not envy restorers the work which remains before them and will always remain before them.

Preservation in the future: Any reasons for optimism?

by M. Kirby Talley, Jr.

Abstract:

Our common cultural and historical heritage has been and still is threatened by wars, natural disasters, bureaucratic indifference, lack of funds for preservation, unsympathetic town planning, pollution, and bad restoration practices. Undoubtedly, time is the greatest of all enemies to preservation and we will have to *accept* the fact that a certain amount of irrevocable attrition is inevitable. In order to combat effectively the myriad dangers to our cultural and historical heritage, renewed efforts will have to be made to raise the standards of education and practice in the conservation field. Efforts must also be made to stimulate public awareness of the importance of conservation and professionals will have to play a far more active role in lobbying politicians to place conservation more prominently on their agendas. Complacency with the many remarkable achievements attained in the conservation field over the past thirty years is potentially one of the most menacing threats to the preservation of our common cultural and historical heritage.

TIME
MONEY
EDUCATION
MANPOWER
ETHICS
VISION
CONVICTION
COURAGE