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In a recent article, our colleague, Rutherford J. Gettens, very correctly observes that "only a small portion of the riches of the past has survived. Much has been destroyed by fire, earthquakes, flood, war and rebellion. A small residue and a precious one is left, but that is threatened by the most inexorable agency of destruction of them all—time itself and slow decomposition. What disaster has spared time may eventually destroy. Those of us who have worked in one museum for more than a quarter of a century, or who, like Ugo Procacci, have studied photographic records of the last half century, realize the truth of Gettens' statement and are well aware, from first-hand experience, that deterioration is a slow but inevitable occurrence, continuing day in and day out in our most precious artistic possessions. We believe, however, that though only a minute number of individuals can escape forever, deterioration can, to a degree, perhaps almost stopped. But we know that few people are conscious of the speed of this deterioration, fewer are interested in doing anything about it and fewer still know what to do.

As our artistic heritage decreases with age, however, the need for deeper knowledge of how to preserve it for posterity becomes more urgent. As we are not the able to stop it, the best we can do is to slow it down, indeed, perhaps almost stop it. But we know that few people are conscious of the speed of this deterioration, fewer are interested in doing anything about it and fewer still know what to do.

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to be just a highly skilled mechanic or will he be only a theoretician, a combination art historian and scientist, who directs technicians in a delicate operation on the complex body of a deteriorated and previously restored work of art?

Considering the variety of response to treatment that may unpredictably occur from area to area in the same work, especially in the field of painting, even after detailed examination, there seems little doubt that while the conservator must be a skilled craftsman, he must also have the initiative to act within the bounds of both wide practical experience and precise knowledge of materials and principles. Unless he is an expert operator himself he cannot with confidence direct the hands of others when a crisis demanding an immediate decision has occurred. As Stout very aptly expressed it in 1950, 'The man who does the work is the man who must know what he is doing.' But what must he know, in order to know what he is doing? What must he know in order to fulfill his function as a conservator or restorer?

There is not, in my opinion, a danger that the restorer will be replaced by the art historian or scientist, or that he must protect himself from their encroachment into his domain. At the same time, Philippot¹ has noted that a number of forms of deterioration have been neglected or left without solution because they go beyond the competence of the restorer. The restorer then must cease to be trained only as a craftsman, artisan or artist. In order to progress technologically and to perform with esthetic judgement he must combine his craft with a knowledge of art history and an understanding of science.

If conservation includes preservation and restoration, then a 'conservator' is one who has mastered the knowledge and artistic skill needed for both of these areas of activity. A 'restorer' may be one who has mastered only the art of restoration, but since, today, an acceptable restoration includes physical rehabilitation as well, it seems essential that a well-trained restorer should also have mastered both phases of conservation. The product of today's training should qualify as an 'engineer in conservation' even though, in actuality, he is called a conservator or restorer. Primarily he must himself be able to perform the actual repair of a deteriorated work of art, because he knows its structure, understands the causes of alteration and is skilled in applying the indicated treatment. In order to complete the treatment with judgement and sensivity, this engineer must have knowledge of art history, art technology and art criticism. Though not a scientist, he must be familiar with the scope, methods and applications of science. And though he may not be able to operate all of the specialized equipment used in examination and analysis, he must know what scientific instruments will give the particular information sought. He must be familiar with their limitations and with the significance of their results. Because his knowledge covers both art and science he will be able to act as the liaison between art historian, curator or art collector and the scientist who may make the analysis. He should be able to translate for him the findings of the scientist. In other words, in addition to his primary duties in conservation, the conservator-restorer has a secondary function* since, in our time, the scientific examination has become an essential part of the study of works of art, not only as an aid in treatment, but to reveal evidence of condition and authenticity to the art historian.

To achieve a high standard of professional competence, therefore, the student of conservation must first be trained in his craft. He must develop manual skill through continuous supervised practice. His eye must gain experience and his mind learn to interpret what the eye sees. Skills of this kind can be learned, but not taught, though guidance is essential in the process. Added to craftsmanship he must acquire a profound knowledge of materials, of environmental agents of deterioration and of the histories of art and technology. Involved in these subjects are principles of chemistry, physics, mechanics, history and art criticism. Where can he receive all this education? Who can teach him? And how long will it take him to become professionally trained? The questions of precisely what curriculum and how much time will produce a conservator remain open. It may take considerable experiment before a satisfactory working result is formulated. To gain the advantages of wide knowledge and experience so very important to the conservator requires a long time, but this can be shortened with teaching and guidance by experienced and communicative instructors.

Philippot¹ has concluded that instruction takes place either in small restoration studios or, more systematically, in art schools or institutes for conservation. In England, at the University of London's Courtauld Institute, the study has been placed on a university level. In the United States we have followed the British pattern with the establishment in 1959–60 of a Conservation Center at the Institute of Fine Arts, New York University*. Until then the only ways of learning the practice of conservation in the United States were through apprenticeship in small studios, self-teaching† or study in Europe. As practised in the United States, the apprenticeship system involves neither a system nor a binding contract, as it did in early times. The relationship of master to pupil follows no established tradition. It is often informal and haphazard, with no definite agreement regarding scope of curriculum, duration of training, costs or remuneration. For just these reasons, as well as for others, very few conservators in museums or in private practice have been willing to take the time or responsibility to train an apprentice. This method, together with self-teaching, has resulted in the widespread treatment of works of art by partially trained and inexperienced operators. It is hoped that the Center at New York University will eventually exert a potent influence in setting professional standards for enduring preservation and for ethical restoration practice in the United States.

It appears to me that training centres‡ which have emerged in

* The Center was established through a grant of the Rockefeller Foundation, July 1959, and is housed in the Institute of Fine Arts, 1 East 78th Street, New York.
† A book on the restoration of paintings published in 1959 in the United States advertises itself as follows on the flyleaf: 'The artist who wishes to learn restoration will find this book an indispensable must. His income from a single restoration commission, which is usually easy to obtain, generally pays for the book more than ten times over.' The author proceeds in the book to explain how an artist may teach himself restoration.
‡ The Institut Royal du Patrimoine Artistique, Brussels; the Courtauld Institute, London; the Danner Institut, Munich; the Instituto del Restauro, Rome; the Institut für Technologie der Malerei, Stuttgart; the Akademie der Bildenden Künste, Vienna; Conservation Center, Institute of Fine Arts, New York University, New York. All except the last are concerned mainly with the conservation of painting and sculpture. The programme of the New York University Center embraces broad principles governing the care of all the plastic and archaeological arts. The inclusive approach does not prevent eventual specialization which, in fact, is encouraged after the student has been introduced to the extensive variety of materials of all art forms and the problems of their preservation. Nevertheless, the aims and scope of education and training remain the same for all.

Murray Pease of the Metropolitan Museum of Art presented this aspect of the conservator's role at a lecture entitled 'The conservator and the museum curator' at New York University, April 14, 1961.
training for engineers in conservation

art schools, conservation institutes and universities since the original recommendations in Museum 2 (1927) as there are today than in any other way methods and means for the broad though specialized training modern conservation requires. Each of the three different types has advantages and disadvantages, but all, by their very nature, can more easily and more methodically expose the student to learned specialists in different fields, to various points of view about procedures and philosophy and to a broad vista of the problems to be solved than can the individual restorer in the small restoration studio. Most of the centres pursuing a planned and published curriculum allow three to four years* to give the student the necessary practical instruction and knowledge of art and science.

1. At the Institut für Technologie der Malerei in Stuttgart, entrance requirements for students in restoration include one year of practice in a restorer’s studio, plus a special aptitude test. In addition the first two semesters are considered probationary. Selection of students who have manual dexterity as well as intellectual ability, integrity, objectivity and patience is extremely important. Methods of selection cannot be too carefully formulated.

2. An analysis of the curriculum of the Istituto del Restauro, in Rome, shows that in their 3 to 4 year course about 79 per cent of the time is devoted to actual studio practice to gain skill and experience; 21 per cent is given to sciences, art history and theory of restoration. While this ratio may not be considered ideal by everyone, emphasis on the development of practical skills is essential to producing a high standard of practice after training is completed.

3. At the Doerner Institut in Munich certain advanced students are permitted to earn as they learn. Privately owned works of art are treated under supervision and students who need financial aid receive remuneration for what they do. Such a system may involve organizational, legal, ethical and practical difficulties, unless all aspects have been very carefully studied and are clearly delineated to everyone concerned. This method, however, may help the advanced student to prolong the duration of supervised study and to acquaint himself with professional practice.

4. The amount of time required to educate and train a conservator is considered to be about 3–4 years. Can a completely competent conservator be trained in this period or is an additional period of supervised practice needed, perhaps an "innovation" to the traditional institution?

5. The Courtauld Institute and British Council in London have since 1956 presented a compressed two-week course on the conservation of paintings which is open to practising restorers as well as to others concerned with the preservation of paintings. In a less formal way, the Institut Royal d’Art et d’Archéologie in Brussels has done similar educational work by inviting restorers from many parts of the world to spend as much time as they can in observing and practising with the staff of the institute. Refresher courses or highly specialized courses can be of great value and inspiration to older restorers who want to keep abreast of advances in the field.

6. In order to promote growth and progress, research and development of new materials and methods should be encouraged and undertaken in teaching centres as is presently done in Rome and Brussels.

7. The question of licensing remains a matter of the laws of individual countries, but should continue to be studied by educators in our field for the purposes of having as nearly as possible an international unity in requirements and standards.

The field of art conservation is composed of a small number of persons, compared, for instance, with those of medicine, law, architecture, creative art or art history: and it is an extremely specialized field. Since this is so, it seems logical that the very few educational centres now extant should cooperate in the teaching process by exchanging curricular ideas, students and teachers. Without loss of autonomy on the part of each centre, it might be possible for IIC and the Rome Centre to aid in this cooperation to coordinate a kind of international training programme. Involved would be a thorough study of the present curriculum, teaching procedures and conservation processes in each of the present schools to make use of the strong points of each for the common benefit of all schools and students. Just as a start, centralization at the Rome Centre of information on all schools of conservation, including scope, aims, duration of courses, costs and requirements for admission, would simplify the present problem for young people seeking an education in this field. It might be feasible for IIC to have a standing committee of interested members from different countries which would work closely with the Rome Centre in studying means of education and training, set standards and suggest changes in present curricula. Through international cooperation and through cooperation, in each country, of the teaching conservators with art historians and scientists, it should be possible to produce engineers in conservation who surpass in skill and knowledge those of us who are practising today. Only through progress in our field can we save our dwindling patrimony.

References

2 PICACCI, U., Fresco crisis, Connaissance, 142 (1958) 154-158.
6 EIGENBERGER, R. et al., Pour une éducation professionnelle des restaurateurs d’œuvres d’art, Museion, 19 (1952) 83–85.