

CONSERVATION OF MURAL PAINTINGS

by Mrs. Wannipa Na Songkhla
Archaeologist, Mural Paintings
Conservation
Laboratory, Department of
Fine Arts, Thailand,

Mural Painting is one of the most important means of artistic expression of the Thai people dating back over the centuries. Because of the high humidity in the atmosphere, valuable mural paintings all over the country stand in urgent need of conservation treatment. In October 1980 the Department of Fine Arts, with financial assistance from the Ford Foundation, and financial as well as technical assistance of ICCROM (International Centre for the Study of the Preservation and the Restoration of Cultural Property), organized a two-month intensive training course in Conservation of Mural Paintings for 23 Thai conservationists.

In addition to the staff members of the Archaeological Division, Museum Division and the Conservation Laboratory of the Department of Fine Arts and lecturers from universities in Thailand, the trainees benefited from the expertise of experienced conservationists from various parts of the world invited to participate in the training programme. The team of international experts was headed by Mr.

Paul Schwartzbaum as Co-ordinator Dr. B.B. Lal, Chemist from India, Mr. Alexandre, Architect from Peru, Mr. Hienz Leitner, Artist-Conservator from Austria, Mr. C. Giantomossi and Mr. G. Bottielli, Experts in Conservation of Mural Paintings from Italy.

The subjects discussed during the training were : principles of conservation, ethics and re-integration; Thai traditional paintings-characteristics, styles, values, as well as materials, tools, pigments, medium-techniques; architectural considerations-techniques of Thai construction, engineering problems; documentation-importance and techniques. The major part of the training was however devoted to chemistry, especially the basic concepts vital to the problems of conservation. The training programme was based at the Mural Painting Conservation Laboratory of the Department of Fine Arts, but practical training and experiments were conducted at the various temples amply decorated with mural paintings in central and northern Thailand.



*Restoring paints on damaged
mural paintings.*