

Researches on Conservation of Organic Materials Needed

The conservation of organic materials is in flux. New and better techniques have to be developed and chemicals, experimented on. Also the results of these activities have to be disseminated and shared. It underscores the need for a continuing exchange of information on the subject. This summarizes the SPAFA Seminar on Researches on Conservation of Organic Materials held on March 9-14 1982 in the Philippines and sponsored by UNESCO.

The seminar served as a venue for conservators in the SPAFA member countries to describe some of the conservation work they had done. Delegates from Thailand, for instance, explained the procedures used in preserving Thai traditional paintings in paper. The Indonesians outlined the restoration of a historical wooden building while the Filipinos talked of ways of conserving a balanghai, a waterlogged plank boat of the 16th century, and historical papers.

Thus, the discussions provided helpful tips on how specific organic materials can be treated and preserved. Organic materials, as the participants defined them, include

collections made of wood, textiles, leather, ivory, paper, bamboo and others which are subject to deterioration due to changes in the weather condition, fungus, insects among others.

Uses of Chemicals.

All the participants agreed that a lot still have to be accomplished in the area of conservation of organic materials. Primary, among these, concerns the use of chemicals. They advised caution in their use as conservation agent. Only chemicals that do not alter the physical properties of organic objects and are not health hazards should be employed, they stressed. In this context, they recommended polyvinyl acetate solution as a consolidator of fragile organic materials.

The delegates also observed that some countries forbid the importation and use of some chemicals, a few of which are proven effective conservation agents. Hence, they recommended that governments be requested to allow the entry of these needed chemicals.

Documentation of Conservation Efforts

The seminar also focused on the need to conduct a continuing research on conservation techniques and to document in detail the methods in order to facilitate replication and comparison. The participants suggested that these reports be forwarded to the SPAFA Coordinating Unit which would, in turn, distribute them to the people concerned. Moreover, the Coordinating Unit was requested to act as a go-between of international conservation centers and the conservators in the region to facilitate exchange of relevant materials. In this connection, they also recommended that another seminar on the same subject be conducted. Conservators should also be given a chance to observe their colleagues at work, they added.

The information work they said, involved not only documentation but also education of curators and museum staffmembers on the importance of conservation of their collections.

Following are the official delegates to the seminar:

Indonesia — Mr. Samidi, Mr. Kosasih, and Mr. Tjokro Soedjono;
Philippines — Engr. Susan S. Stuart del Rosario, Mr. Federico B. Aromin, Jr., and Ms. Jane Ameline R. Balbuena;
Thailand — Dr. Plitadet Pholgerdee, Mrs. Kulpanthada Janposri, and Mrs. Chiraporn Aranyanak

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