



The training of a fluctuating staff in the principles of preventive conservation

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I – Presentation of the museum

-a free drawing school was installed from 1819 in the buildings of the former Ursulines convent.

-the foundation of the museum arose from the activities of the **Historical and Archaeological Societies**, the **Society of the Friends of the Arts** and the **Society of Natural History**

-on 15 August 1866 the museum was inaugurated in the premises of the drawing school and organised with a

- natural science section

- history and fine arts section



-the name of Vivant Denon was given to it in 1895 associating it with this great man born in Chalon,

-the museum grew progressively by the construction of a building to join the former drawing school and the building in the Rue Boichot given to the museum after the 2nd World War.



-the archaeological collections include several thousand archaeological and ethnographic objects,

-the fine arts collection arises from an accumulation of works and objects of local interest among which some real masterpieces and remarkable objects stand out.



Exceptional local figures : **Vivant Denon, Jules Chevrier, François Chabas.....**, have allowed the constitution of a fine art collection of approximately 10,000 objects including notably:

- 480 paintings,
- 300 sculptures and sculpted fragments,
- 2700 graphic documents,
- 2400 decorative and ethnographic objects,
- 3000 coins and medals.

A study for preventive conservation was carried out in 2002

A. Diagnosis



The building presents visible sanitary problems



The areas are insufficient to contain the museum's collections

The spaces are difficult to use as they are many, dispersed and not very suitable





- the collection suffers from conservation problems**
- the climate is not controlled**

B. Recommendations

**-re-organise the collections, improve their conservation,
-act effectively and for the long term on the immediate
environment of the collections,**

-define an architectural project and create a scientific and cultural programme,

-carry out a climatic study which would allow a new arrangement of the spaces and their function (conservation, exhibition, storage....) and would propose climate control solutions,

-create of a quarantine zone,

-reorganise the reserves : acquisition of storage facilities, materials for wrapping and treatment of collections,

-organise staff training in conservation techniques.

III Carrying out the preventive conservation plan

Staff training. Two phases :

- A. – awareness,**
- B. – specialisation.**

A. Awareness

2001 : introduction to preventive conservation and fire safety

- measuring and control of climate,
- maintenance of premises,
- introduction to the evacuation of works after fire,
- handling works,
- elaboration of a work evacuation programme.

2002 : climate measuring training

The anoxia campaign begins : the works are sorted, transported or treated in situ, the importance of inspections is confirmed



2003 :

- introduction to the fabrication of frames,
- de-infestation campaign (417 documents damaged by mould),
- beginning of the campaign to mend frames and wrap.



B – Specialisation of three staff members 2004 – 2009



The conservators intervene according to their specialist knowledge:

- train and supervise the staff,
- prepare and oversee the reorganisation of the reserves
- keep a global vision of the collections from sorting to wrapping the de-infested and consolidated object.

The paintings (480)

Review of condition – insecticide and fungicide treatments – the staff remove dust, fix lugs and hanging systems, fix into frames, mark and make polypropylene pochettes

The graphic documents (2700)



- the works are removed from frames
- 1st sorting according to techniques : drawings, prints, illuminations, miniatures,
- 2nd sorting: drawing techniques and alterations (pulverulent techniques, thick board mounts, acids, alteration of miniatures),
- Training in dusting prints, in mounting restored works, making conservation pochettes

-works classed by technique, format, artist, inventory number, supervised by the restorer



The Objects

- sorted by material
- logic of the collection
- conserved for retrospective inventory



The sculptures

- large, heavy stone items, in inappropriate exhibition settings have been treated twice with biocides.
- the sculptures of more modest formats mostly in plaster or clay have been arranged in 3 special reserves.



The frames

- global evaluation campaign,
- introduction to the specific deterioration of gilded wood,
- establishing a conservation – restoration programme,
- training in dust removal, re-fixing of small elements of stucco, small re-touching in watercolour.



IV Continuing prevention

From 2001 to 2009, 83 days of training, more than 6000 objects treated and wrapped, 9 reserve and storage spaces created.

Today we must:

-maintain the inspection of collections, pay attention daily to climatic variations during moves, exhibitions or maintenance and ensure that climate measuring and control instruments are maintained.

-continue the training of new, and reinforce that of old, reception and security staff.

-for specialised staff: improve the level of technical ability and update regularly the knowledge gained. The presence of conservators is essential to ensure analysis, recommendations and control.

-carry out a preventive conservation plan for the archaeological collections.

Thank you for your attention!