



E.C.C.O. Professional Guidelines (II)

Code of Ethics

Promoted by the European Confederation of Conservator-Restorers' Organisations and adopted by its General Assembly, Brussels, 7 March 2003.

I. General Principles for the Application of the Code

Article 1: The Code of Ethics embodies the principles, obligations and behaviour, which every conservator-restorer belonging to a member organisation of E.C.C.O. should strive for in the practice of the profession.

Article 2: The profession of the conservator-restorer constitutes an activity of public interest and must be practised in observance of all pertinent national and European laws and agreements, particularly those concerning stolen property.

Article 3: The conservator-restorer works directly on cultural heritage and is personally responsible to the owner, to the heritage and to society. The conservator-restorer is entitled to practise without hindrance to her/his liberty and independence.

The conservator-restorer has the right in all circumstances to refuse any request, which s/he believes is contrary to the terms or spirit of this Code.

The conservator-restorer has a right to expect that all relevant information regarding a conservation-restoration project (of any size) is given to her/him by the owner or custodian.

Article 4: Failure to observe the principles, obligations and prohibitions of the Code constitutes unprofessional practice and will bring the profession into disrepute. It is the responsibility of each national professional body to ensure that its members comply with the spirit and letter of the Code, and to take action in the case of proven non-compliance.

II. Obligations towards Cultural Heritage

Article 5: The conservator-restorer shall respect the aesthetic, historic and spiritual significance and the physical integrity of the cultural heritage entrusted to her/his care.

Article 6: The conservator-restorer, in collaboration with other professional colleagues involved with cultural heritage, shall take into account the requirements of its social use while preserving the cultural heritage.

Article 7: The conservator-restorer must work to the highest standards regardless of any opinion of the market value of the cultural heritage. Although circumstances may limit the extent of a conservator-restorer's action, respect for the Code should not be compromised.

Article 8: The conservator-restorer should take into account all aspects of preventive conservation before carrying out physical work on the cultural heritage and should limit the treatment to only that which is necessary.

Article 9: The conservator-restorer shall strive to use only products, materials and procedures, which, according to the current level of knowledge, will not harm the cultural heritage, the environment or people.

The action itself and the materials used should not interfere, if at all possible, with any future examination, treatment or analysis. They should also be compatible with the materials of the cultural heritage and be as easily and completely reversible as possible.

Article 10: The conservation-restoration treatment of cultural heritage should be documented in written and pictorial records of the diagnostic examination, any conservation / restoration intervention and other relevant information. The report should also include the names of all those who have carried out the work. A copy of the report must be submitted to the owner or custodian of the cultural heritage and must remain accessible. The record remains the intellectual property of the conservator-restorer and shall be retained for future reference.

Article 11: The conservator-restorer must undertake only such work, as s/he is competent to carry out. The conservator-restorer must neither begin nor continue a treatment, which is not in the best interest of the cultural heritage.

Article 12: The conservator-restorer must strive to enrich her/his knowledge and skills with the constant aim of improving the quality of her/his professional work.

Article 13: Where necessary or appropriate, the conservator-restorer shall collaborate with other professionals and shall participate with them in a full exchange of information.

Article 14: In any emergency where cultural heritage is in immediate danger, the conservator-restorer – regardless of her/his field of specialisation – shall render all assistance possible.

Article 15: The conservator-restorer shall not remove material from cultural heritage unless this is indispensable for its preservation or it substantially interferes with the historic and aesthetic value of the cultural heritage. Materials, which are removed, should be conserved, if possible, and the procedure fully documented.

Article 16: When the social use of cultural heritage is incompatible with its preservation, the conservator-restorer shall discuss with the owner or legal custodian, whether making a reproduction of the object would be an appropriate intermediate solution. The conservator-restorer shall recommend proper reproduction procedures in order not to damage the original.

III. Obligations to the Owner or Legal Custodian

Article 17: The conservator-restorer should inform the owner fully of any action required and specify the most appropriate means of continued care.

Article 18: The conservator-restorer is bound by professional confidentiality. In order to make a reference to an identifiable part of the cultural heritage s/he should obtain the consent of its owner or legal custodian.

Article 19: The conservator-restorer should never support the illicit trade in cultural heritage, and must work actively to oppose it. Where legal ownership is in doubt, the conservator-restorer must check all the available sources of information before any work is undertaken.

IV. Obligations to Colleagues and the Profession

Article 20: The conservator-restorer must maintain a spirit of respect for the integrity and dignity of colleagues, the conservation-restoration profession, and related professions and professionals.

Article 21: The conservator-restorer should, within the limits of her/his knowledge, competence, time and technical means, participate in the training of interns and assistants.

The conservator-restorer is responsible for supervising the work entrusted to her/his assistants and interns and has ultimate responsibility for the work undertaken under her/his supervision, s/he must maintain a spirit of respect and integrity towards such colleagues.

Article 22: Where work is (in whole or in part) sub-contracted to another conservator-restorer, for whatever reason, the owner or custodian must be kept informed. The original conservator-restorer is ultimately responsible for the work, unless prior arrangements are made to the contrary.

Article 23: The conservator-restorer must contribute to the development of the profession by sharing experience and information.

Article 24: The conservator-restorer shall strive to promote a deeper understanding of the profession and a greater awareness of conservation-restoration among other professions and the public.

Article 25: Records concerning conservation-restoration for which the conservator-restorer is responsible are her/his intellectual property (subject to the terms of her/his contract of employment). S/he has the right to be acknowledged as the author of the work.

Article 26: Involvement in the commerce of cultural property is not compatible with the activities of the conservator-restorer.

Article 27: When a professional conservator-restorer undertakes work that is outside the scope of conservation-restoration, s/he must ensure that it does not conflict with this Code.

Article 28: To maintain the dignity and credibility of the profession, the conservator-restorer should employ only appropriate and informative forms of publicity in relation to her/his work. Particular care should be exercised in relation to information technology (IT) in order to avoid the dissemination of inappropriate, misleading, illegal or unauthorised information.

Acknowledgements

The European Confederation of Conservator-Restorers' Organisations (E.C.C.O.) prepared the E.C.C.O. Professional Guidelines based on the study of documents of national and international organisations for conservation-restoration and heritage. The "Conservator-Restorer: a definition of the profession" (ICOM-CC, Copenhagen 1984) was the first document adopted by E.C.C.O.