

National Report 2014 Verband der Restauratoren e.V. (VDR)

Political Issues

The political issue in focus was the commitment to establish the legislative regulation for the protection of the professional title „*Restaurator / Restauratorin*“ (equivalent to Conservator-Restorer as stated in E.C.C.O.’s guidelines and competences EQF level 7) in as many federal states in Germany as possible. Currently, the law regarding the title of “*Restaurator / Restauratorin*” exists in two federal states (Sachsen-Anhalt and Mecklenburg-Vorpommern) and includes a register of qualified conservator-restorers. In the context of the forthcoming legal recognition of the title of “Conservator-Restorer”, the VDR has to negotiate with the Central Association of German Crafts (ZDH), because of the inclusion of the term ‘restoration’ as an area of study in their *master craftsman diploma*. The federal ministry of economics is in agreement with many examination regulations for the *master craftsman* certificate, which also includes the term ‘restoration’ as an area of competency. As a consequence the ZDH wants its master craftsmen to be listed in the register of conservator-restorers. In such a form (including master craftsmen in the register of conservator-restorer) the legal regulation would be obsolete from the VDR’s perspective.

Throughout 2014 the VDR negotiated with the ZDH about the draft of the title protection law, but always proposed formulations in the interests of the VDR members. Nevertheless, the ZDH got at all stages of negotiations the signal that the VDR is interested in a collegial cooperation with the ZDH and that the crafts also profit from a clear definition of tasks and interests. Softening on the stance on the legitimate and societally relevant theme of “*regulation of the professional title*” as an integral part of the larger challenge of “*protection of cultural heritage*” and is therefore not possible for the VDR.

The conflict of interest with the craftsmen association raises the question, how international standards, which have been developed in recent years for the protection of cultural heritage, can be maintained.

The nature of negotiations in 2014 with the ZDH already demonstrated the denial of quality assurance within the conservation-restoration of cultural heritage, which can only be assured through agreement on necessary competences. The attitude of the ZDH became increasingly combative in attempts to block this law through significant influential political lobbying, promising, “that there will be no law for the protection of the title *Restaurator*” in any federal state in Germany. It was also the beginning of disputes via verbal and written statements from the ZDH maintaining that ‘craftsman restorers’ are the competent “Restauratoren” while denying the practical skills of conservator-restorers.

Meanwhile the existing law for the title of Restaurator in the state of Sachsen-Anhalt was adjusted to European law: the recognition of qualifications acquired in other countries is now an integral part of this law.

Interchange with political and cultural institutions / Partners

VDR is a new member of the German Cultural Heritage Committee DNK (*Deutsches Nationalkomitee für Denkmalschutz*). The DNK is an interdisciplinary forum and serve as an interface between politics, administration and the specialist level for the preservation of the built cultural heritage. It is one of the main initiators of the European Cultural Heritage Year - ECHY 2018.

Within the German Cultural Council (*Deutscher Kulturrat*) a new expert committee for Cultural Heritage was founded in October 2014 and VDR is represented by its President Jan Raue. In this Cultural Council there are also delegates from the VDR in the expert committees of "Education" and in the "Council of Art".

With the „Conservation-restoration Programme of Fine Arts " in the federal state of North Rhine-Westphalia has allocated substantial funds to encourage museums and collections to undertake urgently required preservation and restoration measures. This is the only state initiative of its kind in the federal republic. Under this promotional programme, the VDR is committed to setting up a coordination office that provides museums and galleries with professional advice in submitting their applications and throughout ongoing proceedings.

Education

The VDR was invited to the conference of higher education, which was a good occasion for exchange on professional politics and educational themes.

A Student Colloquium "*Preservation of (Hi)story*" (*Geschichte(n) bewahren*) took place, organised by the interest group "Conservator-Restorer in Education" of the VDR in collaboration with the conservation-restoration student body of the Cologne Institute of Conservation Science at the Technical University, Cologne.

Continuous Professional Development

Beside the workshops and seminars organised throughout the year, the VDR established a new format under the title of "the Day of Continuous Professional Development". It offers its members through its expert and interests groups seminars and workshops on themes the members requested in a previously conducted survey. It takes place every year at the fairs in autumn where the General Assembly of the VDR also takes place, to facilitate that its members can participate in the fair, the GA and the "Day of Continual Professional Development".

- Business start up for young professionals and students in conservation-restoration.
- Electrolytic cleaning of metals with Pleco Pencil
- Salt reduction of natural stone works and wall plasters
- Integrated Pest Management

A field trip to Bamberg was organised by the expert group "*Wall paintings and architectural polychromy*" with visits and lectures from experts about the special

challenges of the conservation and restoration of the sites, buildings and works of Art of the world heritage city.

“Adhesion of modern materials” as lecture and a workshop of “Fillings and bonding of works of art made of rigid and soft foam” were organised as event series by the expert group “Modern Art – Cultural Goods of Modernity”.

Workshop “Adhesion of cracks in canvas” organised by the expert group “Painting on Canvas”

Seminar of “Digital Documentation”.

Conferences

Within the framework of the European cultural heritage fair “denkmal 2014” in Leipzig the aspects of quality assurance, task sharing, and others are the themes for the meeting with the higher education institutions in the field of conservation-restoration. Theses were also the themes in the round table discussion with the title “Conservation-restoration in dialogue. Quality and competences” the VDR invited high-profile representatives of associations, public authorities, foundations and education institutes.

- Glass Deterioration Colloquium organized by the State Academy of Art and Design, department Conservation-Restoration of archaeological, ethnological and handcrafted objects.
- “Textile rooms – in focus of conservation”, conference organised by the expert group “Textile”. Preservation possibilities of presentation, the production of replica and special conservation methods for silken wall coverings and interior textiles, as tapestries, wall hangings and silk carpets.

Publications

“The transience of material” (*Die Vergänglichkeit des Materials*) was the title of a conference about exceptional materials such as copaiba balsam, Nutella, polyurethane, blood or Penaten cream, with which artists experimented while creating their works. As sometimes the volatility of the materials and techniques are at times contradictory to the artistic intention, conservator-restorers are confronted with new questions and challenges. The e-book of this conference is available as pdf-download at the “expert forum”, which can be accessed through a newly linked website (<http://forum-restaurierung.de>) from the VDR homepage.

The Berlin “Dance of Death” - “La Danse Macabre”. *History – conservation-restoration – public*” (*Der Berliner Totentanz. Geschichte – Restaurierung – Öffentlichkeit*) describes the wall painting scheme the “Dance of Death” in the *Marienkirche* in Berlin as one of the extensive vast and in situ conserved “Death of Dance” depictions of the Middle Age north of the Alps. With abundant illustrations the book reflects the scope of previous achievements and setbacks in the conservation-restoration of the painting of the “Dance of Death” from its uncovering in 1860 until now. (Editor: Maria Deiters, Jan Raue, Claudia Rückert, Lukas Verlag Berlin 2014.)

“Quality in conservation-restoration in monuments preservation” (Qualität in der Restaurierung in der Denkmalpflege): is the publication of the proceedings of the conference with the same title organised by the federal state department for the preservation of cultural heritage, Brandenburg, in cooperation with the Association of Restorers in Crafts and the VDR.

In December 2013 seventy international conservators and curators met for the symposium *“Fail better”* at the Hamburger Kunsthalle to continue discussions about conservation practice and decision making in Modern and Contemporary Art. The symposium was successfully recorded and the video is now available online. The symposium was held in English.

“Let’s clean silver” (Let’s putz Silber) – the gloss of silver and the efforts to preserve or regain this gloss and the problems and questions arising from this were the theme of the conference. The proceedings of the conference are now online for members of the VDR.

“Conserving movement” (Bewegung Konservieren) Vintage cars, weaving machines and kinetic sculptures. Music instruments, mechanic furniture and sound pictures. All those cultural goods have one thing in common: they are in movement, and they are in the hands of conservator-restorers, who are entrusted with the conservation of these goods. But how can one conserve movement? The VDR expert group *“Technical Goods”* addressed these problems and discussed approaches during a conference in 2013. Podcasts and videos are now available as podcasts and as videos for members.

Public relation

“The presence of the VDR at relevant fairs is important for the association and the profession. Contacts to neighbouring disciplines are established and alliances are made for the future. Furthermore, fairs are medial events, which are distributed in local and supra-regional medias.” Stated by the person responsible for public relation at the VDR.

Participation in the following fairs 2014 included:

Monumento in Salzburg, Austria in January

The *Monumento* Salzburg has evolved to an international platform for monument preservation, restoration and conservation in the middle European region. Along with the presentations there is a broad accompanying program with the themes surrounding preservation of monuments. It is an occasion for the VDR to meet with the Austrian ÖRV, the Swiss association SKR, and the Italian VKRS from south Tyrol

Art fair in Hamburg in February / March

This small fair for works of art and antiquities is supervised by the regional group of the VDR Hamburg to give an opportunity to provide information about the profession of conservation-restoration beyond arts and crafts.

European Heritage Fair – EUHEF in October

Exhibition of products and services for use in the care, restoration and conservation of historic houses and gardens.

WERTE (Values) near Hannover in November

Conservator-restorers and arts and crafts business give insight in their abilities and are given the opportunity to present their services with other notable specialists in historic locations.

denkmal in Leipzig in November

Europe's leading trade fair for Conservation, Restoration and Old Building Renovation

The accompanying program of the VDR at the „*denkmal 2014*“ consisted of several activities:

- Consulting on conservation-restoration and providing information about the VDR
- A paper was given by the president of the VDR, Christian Leonhardt: „*History in layers. Excellent collaboration in monument preservation*”
- Meeting with representatives of academies and universities of conservation-restoration
- Panel discussion „*Conservation-Restoration in Dialogue. Quality and Competences*“
- Speech „*Professional field of conservation-restoration*”

The VDR has a group on “Xing” which is a German equivalent to “LinkedIn”.

Defending professional interests

A critical statement from the VDR expert group “*Graphic, Goods of Archives and Libraries*” was made regarding short-term training for “serial paper conservation-restoration” that would enable conservator-restorers from other disciplines to work as Paper conservator-restorers on the objects from the collapsed archive in Cologne. The statement was sent to 22 representatives of higher education and it was possible to sign in an online petition. A meeting with CICS Köln resulted from the statement and the VDR hopes for a professional, appropriate and collegial solution.

Statement against the sale of art owned by public authorities: Two paintings by Andy Warhol, owned by the state of North Rhine-Westphalia were auctioned off at Christies in New York. The VDR stated the sale of artworks, financed by tax payers, should remain accessible to society and not disappear into private collections. The VDR stated this as breaking all taboos.

Conservator-restorers from Cologne participated in the warning strike about the tariff dispute at the collective bargaining of public service.

Let's think more about strikes of the whole conservation-restoration community!

Anja Romanowski

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Picture 1: Emperor's hall in the New Residence during the field trip to the world heritage city of Bamberg

Picture 2: Announcements from the VDR student colloquium