

FINDING A CONSERVATOR

Most of the time the thought of finding a conservator is prompted by a disaster, something has happened and it needs to be fixed. Whether its restoration or conservation your selection can have a long lasting effects.

It is important that you give thought to your selection. In 1966 the flooding in Florence Italy was the disaster that prompted the art world to find a conservator. Prior to that time the conservation of art was a little known profession. Art restoration was in the hands of the museum; the picture framer, art gallery, artist or those with general fix it experience. There were a few who practiced conservation or restoration as there only business.

This loss of art prompted the world's art community to see the need for a better understanding of art, and what can and should be done to preserve it. The magnitude of this type of loss created publicity and a new awareness of art conservation.

Since that time the conservation of art has become a serious profession, we now have schools where the conservation of art is the only subject, and ongoing research to understand how art is damaged and what can be done to prevent it.

Your choice of a conservator should be a thoughtfully made; your decision should not be based solely on an advertisement or phone book listing. If you have had no prior experience check with some one who has first hand knowledge of the type of conservation you need. If you value you artwork this is not the time to do-it-yourself or place it in the hands of a fixer-upper. If conservation is not done properly it can create additional problems and damage. The overwhelming code of conservation is preservation of the artwork and nothing should be done that cannot be undone.

To find your qualified conservation person may take some effort, checking with professional in the arts, who you may know, is a good start. It maybe your picture framer, local museum or gallery. Ask questions, do not hesitate to discuss your problem and what type of treatment is proposed, ask for a written estimate of what work will be done, as well as how much it will cost. Ask about their experience, training and references; do not hesitate to check on them.

Conservators just like doctors have areas of expertise, if your art collection has a variety of types of art you may need to know more than one conservator. To insure the proper care of your art be aware of other conservators and there specialties.

It is important to understand that proper conservation may take time, most of the procedures are labor intensive, hours of careful work that can not be rushed, beware of the quick and cheap job as it usually involves short cuts that can create greater problems later.

Many times the higher cost of restoration or conservation is due to the problems created by the owner, artist, framer or friend trying to fix it. All things that may then have to be undone before the real problems can be addressed.

When art is in jeopardy, find qualified help proper conservation – this is not a do it yourself thing.

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