

# **FRENCH CHARTER OF RESTORATION**

## **FOR ANTIQUE FURNITURE**

This charter has been written in order to define the ethical and practical criteria of the restorer's craft in the historical and artistic fields of the patrimony. It applies to craftsmen of all disciplines working for either the public or private sector.

In France, restoration is at present an ill-defined skill : that is why it is necessary to describe the responsibilities involved and set forth the criteria of professional behavior.

If the restorers are willing to act with authority, they have to share a unique standard regarding the ethics and practice of their skills, so that it be acknowledged by the owners of objets d'art, of collections or any person interested in protecting the patrimony.

# Objectives of conservation

Each article has a separate existence and must be considered in its entirety.

It has its history, its original shape, the materials it is made of and information about the technology used to manufacture it.

The responsibility of the restorer is double : to protect the article, restore it to its true form, help understand it and therefore ascertain that its aesthetical and historical tenor survive.

## The restorer and the article

### *General rules*

Any intervention means a modification of the article. The restorer must abide by the physical, historical and aesthetical entirety of the article on which he works.

Whatever is the value and the quality of the article he wants to restore, the restorer has to stick to the most stern and precise criteria in the choice of treatment.

Even if under certain circumstances, his intervention is a limited one, the restorer must imperatively, and first of all see to the good preservation of the article and refrain from any spectacular intervention which might be inefficient and dangerous in the end.

It is contrary to the ethics of restoration to modify or hide the true reality of an article.

It is forbidden to erase part of an article unless an evidence has been given that it is not genuine. Previous meaningful modifications should be acknowledged.

### *Exam and documentation*

An exhaustive documentation has to be collected before any restoration. A thorough examination must be made beforehand. The restorer has to look for any existing documentation in order to establish and record the condition of the article, its history and the causes of its alteration.

A draft treatment should be proposed to the owner of the article. Methods and materials must be recorded on a technical file and organised as a useful documentation.

The way the article is presented, stocked and exposed must be duly considered ; improving them may prevent restoring.

### *Treatment and reversibility*

The means and preparations used have to be selected regarding their optimal compatibility with the article and their stability through the years.

Since restoration is advancing, and techniques are improving , the treatments applied have to be reversible. This will allow the use of new treatment and give information through scientific means.

## **Professional efficiency**

### **Knowledge of one's limits**

The restorer must not accept work beyond his competence, or if he feels unable to do them because of lack of time, interest or any other reason.

The restorer has to improve his craft, develop his efficiency and seek information about new techniques.

### *Disclosure and knowledge*

No secrecy must be made either of techniques or material used for restoring.

The restorer must have the opportunity to explain his research and experiments through team work in the same way as other collaborators (scientist, art historians,..)

## **Professional relationship**

Team work is desirable.

Before any delicate work, the restorer must look for and take advice from his colleagues and other authorised persons.

It is the restorer's duty to give pieces of advice to owners and curators regarding the way to handle and deal with the article.

### *Apprentices*

The restorer who takes on apprentices must have the necessary knowledge, material possibilities and enough time to give a worthy apprenticeship of his craft.

Delegation of authority and sub-contracting

The restorer is held responsible for the works he has been helped perform or he has sub-contracted.

## **Training**

Training must develop the sensitivity to art and manual skill, the acquisition of a theoretical knowledge for materials and techniques.

Practice is compulsory and skilled restorers must be in charge.

That is why, it would be wise to promote a training which, besides historical subjects, includes the following : scientific, artistic and technical subjects, bearing in mind that none must prevail.

*Science :*

- chemistry, biology, physics;
- knowledge of constitutive materials and process of alteration;
- knowledge of restoration materials;
- methodology for research and analysis.

*Art :*

- development of sensitivity;
- theory and practice of artistic techniques.

*Techniques :*

- ethics and theory of restoration;
- history and technology of restoration;
- practice of restoration.

This knowledge finds its implementation in the apprenticeship with efficient and responsible professionals.

The restorer must behave in a professional way, meet the standard mentioned in the Charter, be fully aware of his responsibilities since he is the one who works on the object.

Practice is the main part of the activity, it must be supported by a sound theoretical knowledge. So the restorer or restorer to be, willing to actively practice his job, must keep on increasing his knowledge and developing his craft through permanent practice and exactitude.

His intervention led by a thorough reflection, sensitivity and absolute respect of the object makes him a privileged actor in the preservation of the patrimony.

Through an open exchange of view with his colleagues and owners of public or private collections helps the restorer improve his craft.

This Charter has been ratified by the Students and oldest Students from the French Institute of Work of Arts, the Museum's Professional Association for Art restorations and State Administrations.