

Preventive Conservation: What?

Based on the principle that prevention is better than cure, **Preventive Conservation** refers to a systematic and integrated approach to care, based on strategies developed for the maintenance and up-keep of the heritage. **Preventive Conservation** is central to any consideration on the use of and access to cultural heritage, and also supports the long term success and appreciation of interventive procedures carried out during remedial conservation and restoration.

Unlike Remedial Conservation and Restoration, which intervene directly on the material fabric of the heritage, **Preventive Conservation** arises where site-specific evaluation of the factors (physical, chemical, biological, environmental and human) that are contributing to the deterioration of the heritage recommend a management regime built around suitable methods of storage, handling and use. These recommendations also encompass loan, travel and environmental control including pollutants such as dirt and dust. The diagnostics and risk-assessment behind **Preventive Conservation**, and the design of suitable and specific management regimes, are the work of the Conservator-Restorer. Whereas specialised education is required to directly intervene on the cultural heritage to safeguard it, devising long-term management plans is an iterative and multidisciplinary process, involving many different actors and stakeholders.



Photo by David Aguilera Cueco

Preventive Conservation: Why?

Cultural identities are shaped by values that are transmitted and re-negotiated from generation to generation. They can be affected by the quality of our experience of and engagement with things like historic artefacts, structures and buildings that are invested with cultural values. Ordinary everyday objects become imbued with significance because of the role they play in our lives as much as those objects which become iconic, celebrated or commemorated. We can have big public heritage for the same reasons as we have small intimate heritage and family heirlooms.

Such are our cultural reference points and they are the touchstones to self-knowledge. Caring for them is a declaration of the importance of memory. It underpins societal well-being and the principles of inclusivity and belongingness. The value of cultural heritage to society mandates the development of policies that realize the potential of this resource to deliver social and economic benefits. **Preventive Conservation** offers a sustainable framework for caring for cultural heritage, a platform for public participation in the care of the heritage and as a driver of local development.



Photo by David Aguilera Cueco

Preventive Conservation: When?

Preventive conservation adopts a proactive attitude to managing change, circumscribed by an imperative to safeguard. Where it is integrated into social policy, the imperative to safeguard is the foundation stone of shared stewardship. It can empower relevant ministries and local authorities to engage with communities in the negotiation of heritage values, and in actions, such as identifying and monitoring, that maintain heritage resources for the common good.

Specialist knowledge and training guarantee the scientific rigor of a Preventive Conservation Plan, but local knowledge and experience are also relevant, and indeed necessary, when developing and implementing **Preventive Conservation** strategies.. Community and social involvement are absolutely critical for the long term success of any preventive measures where skills and knowledge can be availed of and developed. Visitors and tourists are also implicated in the care of the heritage and play a role in delivering the plan. Authenticity, integrity and sustainability are core values that constrain and determine all conservation actions. However, where issues of use and cultural legibility

are necessary to the understanding and relevance of the cultural heritage, restoration involving retouching, reintegration, infill and replacement of parts with new materials can be carried out. Different specialisations, particularly in the area of architectural conservation, can include and rely on skilled craftsmen trained in historic techniques to carry out reconstructions and renewals within the framework of larger conservation-restoration projects.



Photo by David Aguilera Cueco



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