

Conservation of Indian Art

Representative Case Studies from
INTACH Indian Council of Conservation Institutes



INTACH

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PREFACE

In the past two years (2008 and 2009), Intach Indian Council of Conservation Institutes (ICCI) hosted two very interesting seminars. In 2008 the seminar was held in Delhi and in 2009 at Lucknow. These were aptly titled experts' meets. They were meets of art conservators, conservation scientists and conservation administrators to discuss their achievements and shortfalls in their history of working with Intach. The method adopted for the meets was simple. Conservation experts coming from different centres of Intach presented case studies and papers followed by discussions and debates. In both the meets Intach invited an external panel of experts who critically analysed the quality of conservation Intach ICCI has been doing.

These meets were very successful, not just in terms of well organized events but in terms of their content as well. Intach has 10 fully functional conservation centres all over India and every centre is run by a set of highly qualified and competent staff. As a result most case studies discussed in experts meets were quite technical inviting a lot of discussions and comments. It must be understood that the case studies represented in these meets are not just Intach centric, they represent meaningful conservation work being carried out all over the country in the last decade. This is the reason why for a long time it was being felt that these cases must be collated in a book which may come in handy to every individual working in this sector.

This publication is therefore a set of case studies specific to conservation of material heritage in India. It has contributions from many conservators and scientists who have made crucial contributions to the field of conservation under the umbrella of Intach. The book is divided into three main parts- Conservation of objects, Conservation projects and New advances in conservation.

Conservation of objects is a set of twelve case studies of conservation of artefacts in different mediums, coming from different regions and holding varied heritage value. These are cases about paper objects, clay models, metal sculptures, paintings, textiles and so on. While some case studies are simple and profound reporting treatments carried out for specific problems, some case studies chart out in detail the conservation process, decisions and ethics involved.

Conservation projects highlight the conservation campaigns undertaken by Intach centres in different parts of the country. Some case studies are about wall painting sites in India, from Kerala in the south to Rajasthan in the west and West Bengal in the east. While Madhurani and Arvind Kumar talk about conserving tempera paintings in the southern parts of India, Dr. O.P Agrawal talks about modern wall paintings in Santiniketan, West Bengal; Joyoti Roy discusses a curious case study on conservation of historic wallpapers in Uttaranchal which makes for one of the very few initiatives undertaken in conservation of wallpapers in the country and

Sunil Laghate talks about paintings on lime plaster in Rajasthan. For the first time a project study on conservation of collections of the Falaknuma palace in Hyderabad talks about how to restore large collections as a whole.

New Advances in conservation is an interesting section. There are articles about a myriad of new achievements and headways made in the field of art conservation. This section covers many themes-use of database technology in documentation by Arvind Kumar charts out a dependable documentation system for wall paintings, Pankaj Sharma talks about conservation management in his article on handling site laboratories, Nilabh Sinha talks about conservation training, Vikram Rathod reports new techniques of paper conservation and Joyoti Roy talks about issues related to conservation of acrylics.

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At the outset we wish to thank Mr. S.K Misra, Former Chairman Intach. It was with his vision that conservators coming from all over India could meet on one common platform to discuss conservation work done by them. It is equally important to thank the contributors to these meets, to all those who dedicatedly drafted in great detail all the conservation work they have done. They are all highly experienced and dedicated conservators who have meaningfully added to the body of knowledge in conservation today in India. Their experiences are now ready to be shared with the young and the experienced in the field.

We also wish to express our gratitude to the dedicated administrative staff at Indian Conservation Institute, Lucknow and Intach Art Conservation Centre, Delhi who meticulously organized and recorded every bit of information collected from each contributor. Our thanks are particularly due to Mrs. Radhamma D., and Ms. Kanak Khan who typed and retyped all the articles.

No conservation project or endeavour is complete without teamwork. We wish to thank all those persons who worked along with the authors in their respective conservation initiatives, their names may not have come but their efforts have been recorded in each case study.

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