PRESS KIT

The Centre Interdisciplinaire de Conservation et de Restauration du Patrimoine (CICRP) fulfils a public service mission by contributing to the conservation and restoration of cultural heritage objects and buildings or other structures having been classified as “Monuments historiques” and thus offered heritage protection by the French state, whether held or administered by public institutions or privately owned.

Backed by its multidisciplinary teams and its full complement of state-of-the-art scientific equipment, the CICRP is active in all areas of cultural heritage conservation and restoration – assessments, analyses, research and studies, treatment and follow-up – on behalf of all types of cultural heritage institutions and sites: archives, libraries, contemporary art centres, historic buildings and other structures, museums.

The CICRP’s activities relating to conservation and restoration are mainly focused on its particular areas of expertise: works on paper, contemporary art materials, preventive conservation, biological contamination, easel paintings, wall paintings and stone.

All of the CICRP’s activities are carried out in full compliance with the guidelines set forth in the Code du Patrimoine, the official French legislation on cultural heritage.

The CICRP is administered by a groupement d’intérêt public à caractère culturel (a public interest group with a cultural mission) formed by the French state (Ministry of Culture and Communication), the City of Marseille, the Conseil Régional of the Provence-Alpes-Côte d’Azur region and the Conseil Général of the Bouches-du-Rhône département.

Missions of the CICRP

The CICRP has three main missions, in service of the conservation-restoration of cultural property: technical and scientific assistance, research and studies, and the dissemination of knowledge.

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Technical and scientific assistance in support of preventive conservation and conservation-restoration efforts

The CICRP provides scientific and technical assistance in the field of heritage conservation and restoration to local authorities and any services or individuals responsible for the protection of cultural property.

In particular, the CICRP participates in the examination and discussion of all issues pertaining to conservation and restoration, proposes methodological approaches, and makes recommendations for courses of action, supported where necessary by preliminary studies. Furthermore, in keeping with its public service mission, the CICRP lends its scientific and technical expertise to facilitate effective exchanges between contracting authorities and contractors for conservation or restoration projects.

The CICRP’s services are provided at the request of cultural property owners or administrators, but also to government agencies as part of their scientific and technical verification procedures. These interventions, more than one hundred of which are carried out by the CICRP each year, generally begin with an in situ assessment.

The CICRP also regularly receives works of art in its workshops for restoration or for preliminary studies in advance of restoration. The skills and expertise of the CICRP’s teams, as well as its entire complement of scientific and technical resources and equipment, are made available for the restoration of works of art, mainly paintings on all supports and works on paper. Restorers selected by contracting authorities thus have access to fully equipped workshops and additional resources in support of their work (scientific imaging, studies, etc.), ensuring the best possible conditions for restoration operations requiring such an environment. On average, the CICRP receives about a hundred painted works each year.

Research and studies in the CICRP’s areas of specialisation

The CICRP carries out research and studies in its areas of specialisation, focusing on degradation mechanisms, from the perspective of both assessment and treatment.

To this end, the CICRP has developed numerous partnerships with leading French conservation institutes (Centre de Recherche et de Restauration des Musées de France, Laboratoire de Recherche des Monuments Historiques, Centre de Recherche et de Conservation des Collections), with specialised research centres or laboratories in France (Bureau de Recherche de Géologie Minière, forensic science laboratories of police departments, etc.), as well as with international institutions (Art Institute of Chicago and Centre de Recherches Alexandrines, among others).
Dissemination of knowledge, while serving as a repository for resources in conservation and restoration

Complementing the core competencies it develops, and in recognition of its public service mission, the CICRP also aims to serve as a resource centre for cultural heritage professionals and to communicate its work and values with a wider audience.

This policy promoting the dissemination of knowledge is pursued through a website (www.cicrp.fr) and a regular newsletter as well as special events.

The CICRP frequently takes part in or organises exhibitions, study days, seminars, conferences and other events relating to the issues faced in the conservation of cultural property.

Its staff frequently serve as guest lecturers for the degree and diploma programmes of the Institut National du Patrimoine and other educational institutions in the heritage field. The CICRP also invites selected graduate students at all levels as well as young researchers for internships, across a range of academic disciplines, including art history, chemistry, geology and microbiology.

Staff and equipment

The CICRP has a permanent staff consisting of 28 civil servants (of the French state and the city of Marseille) representing a broad spectrum of competencies and professions: curators, geologists, chemists, an entomologist, a registrar, photographers, radiographers, administrative personnel, research officers and assistants, installers and technicians.

The CICRP maintains a research and analytical laboratory on its premises in order to analyse microsamples or to employ non-destructive techniques to analyse and examine works of art, as well as to conduct material characterisation or accelerated ageing tests, a photographic studio, and a studio for exposing and developing radiographs.
The CICRP’s restoration workshops are installed in facilities covering a total area of nearly 2,000 sq.m, including specialised zones for work on paint layers, varnishes, works on paper, wooden supports, supplemented by storerooms, quarantine areas, etc. Thanks to the specially designed configuration of its workshops, the CICRP is able to receive painted works or works on paper in very large formats (up to 4 m by 10 m) and its capacity in this area is unique in France. In addition, a specific set of equipment, both to facilitate work activities (travelling crane) and in keeping with the dimensions required (heating tables) has been installed to facilitate the examination, conservation and restoration of paintings and works on paper in large and very large formats.

The CICRP maintains a documentation centre, open by appointment to the scientific community of conservators, restorers, educators, students and researchers, offering a constantly expanding collection of books and periodicals relating to the conservation and restoration of cultural property and the materials used.

LOCATION AND IMMEDIATE ENVIRONMENT

The CICRP is located at the heart of the Belle de Mai complex, a group of former tobacco factory buildings not far from the Saint-Charles train station in Marseille, operated by SEITA for many years before being abandoned in 1990 and soon thereafter rehabilitated as part of the Euroméditerranée urban regeneration project.

This former industrial complex was redeveloped in three zones: a group of venues for cultural and artistic events, a media park including audiovisual and multimedia studios and facilities as well as offices for producers, publishers and broadcasters, and finally a 24,000 sq.m cultural heritage cluster bringing together storage facilities for Marseille’s museum collections and archives, the Institut National de l’Audiovisuel and the CICRP.

The CICRP comprises three buildings, together totalling 6,500 sq.m. Two of these buildings were rehabilitated by the architectural firm of Lévy-Magnan to house administrative offices and restoration workshops. The third building housing the centre’s scientific laboratories was rehabilitated by the architectural firm of Castaldi.