



Commissioning Conservation Treatment for Cultural Objects

1. Identification and Assessment of Objects

It's important to have an object accurately identified and valued before deciding on the type and level of conservation treatment to be undertaken. Conservators do not value artwork. Some of the major museums and galleries provide identification and advisory services at specified times or may be able to refer owners to commercial valuers. You can also consult a valuer registered under the Commonwealth Government's Cultural Gifts Program.

Make sure you receive a report on the condition of the item and a quote for the cost of conservation before deciding whether to have treatment carried out. Some conservators charge for this initial report.

2. Treatment aims

The aim of conservation is to safeguard objects and the information contained in them for future generations. Conservation activities include examination, documentation, treatment, preservation, restoration and preventive conservation, all of which are supported by research, education and training.

Sometimes more than one conservation option may be available. The cultural or sentimental significance of an object can have a bearing on the conservation decision. This choice rests with the client, aided by the professional advice of the conservator.

3. Conservation treatment

Make sure you are satisfied with the security precautions, including fire protection and insurance, when engaging a conservator to undertake a treatment.

Treatment carried out should be consistent with that originally specified and quoted and ensure you are consulted before approving any significant variations.

The conservator should provide clear and unambiguous documentation of materials and procedures used including photographic documentation of before and after treatment. This information may be important in relation to the care of the object, particularly if further treatment is required in the future.

4. Costs

Make sure you receive a written quote for work on each object. This quote is usually based on an assessment of the condition of the object and the estimated time and materials needed for the recommended treatment. Other costs may include insurance, storage and transport, if necessary.

Feel free to discuss costs, methods and materials with the conservator. If conservation is complex and costly, ask for more than one treatment recommendation and quote, or a variety of options from the conservator.

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