

CICRP PRESS KIT

The Centre Interrégional de Conservation et Restauration du Patrimoine (CICRP, Interregional Centre for Heritage Conservation and Restoration) fulfils a public service mission by conducting research, furthering knowledge and contributing to the preservation and restoration of cultural property, whether in the public domain or privately owned, having been classified as “Monuments historiques” and thus offered heritage protection by the French state.

This mission is carried out in the form of scientific and technical consulting and assistance provided to the managers of collections and local authorities.

Backed by its multidisciplinary teams and its array of scientific equipment, the CICRP is active in all areas of heritage conservation and restoration – evaluation, assessment, research, treatment and follow-up – on behalf of all types of cultural institutions and historic sites, including archives, libraries, contemporary art centres, historical monuments and museums.



View of the CICRP (Photo: Olivier Metzger)

The activities of the CICRP are governed 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), the city of Marseille, the Conseil Régional of the Provence-Alpes-Côtes d’Azur région and the Conseil Général of the Bouches-du-Rhône département.

The CICRP is located at the heart of the Belle de Mai district not far from downtown Marseille, on premises that once housed tobacco factories operated by SEITA. Abandoned in 1982, the entire industrial zone, with a total surface area of 80,000 m², is a focus of Euroméditerranée, a major programme of urban renewal and economic development in Marseille and one of the largest underway in Europe.

Three complexes have been redeveloped at this disused site located behind the Saint-Charles train station: a venue for cultural and artistic events, a media park and a 24,000 m² heritage centre accommodating storage facilities for Marseille’s museums and archives, the INA (Institut National de l’Audiovisuel) and the CICRP.

The CICRP consists of three buildings with a total surface area of 8,000 m². Two of these were rehabilitated by the architectural firm of Lévy-Magnan to house

administrative offices and restoration studios. The third building housing the laboratory was rehabilitated by the architectural firm of Castaldi.

The CICRP officially opened its doors on 2 October 2002, during a ceremony presided by Jean-Jacques Aillagon, Minister of Culture, assisted by Jean-Claude Gaudin, the mayor of Marseille and vice president of the French Senate, Michel Vauzelle, chairman of the Conseil Régional de Provence-Alpes-Côtes d’Azur, and Jean-Noël Guérini, chairman of the Conseil Général des Bouches du Rhône and senator.

Elisabeth Mognetti, head curator, was appointed as the centre’s first executive director (2000–2006) to guide the creation and initial development of this novel and unique public institution. She had been the initiator of the project for the CICRP and had played a leading role in all design and planning phases beginning in the mid-1990s.

At first, the activities of the CICRP were focused mainly on the restoration of works for major museum renovation and reinstallation projects (Musée Granet in Aix-en-Provence, Musée Fabre in Montpellier) in line with its recognised expertise in the treatment of paintings on all supports. But the centre soon began to pursue the development of an additional area of expertise, conducting research on alteration phenomena affecting a variety of materials, and especially stone.

In 2007, by appointing chief curator Roland May as its new executive director, the CICRP demonstrated its commitment to build on the work accomplished and the experience acquired by adopting a wider focus for its ongoing development, encompassing restoration activities, studies and research but also the preventive conservation operations first introduced in late 2004, at the same time expanding its geographical reach, positioning the CICRP as an institution whose resources would be dedicated to the service of its local region of Provence-Alpes-Côte d’Azur while also acquiring the status of a resource centre and leader in its field for all of southeastern France and beyond. To this end, it has sought to forge international partnerships, especially with institutions and experts based in the countries of the Mediterranean region and in northern Europe.

Missions

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

It serves all types of cultural institutions and historic sites – principally archives, libraries, art centres, historical monuments and museums – either by assigning its own experts to specific restoration, conservation or research projects or as a resource and referral centre.

Among its activities, the CICRP participates in the examination and discussion of all issues pertaining to conservation and restoration, offers recommendations for specific treatments, supported where necessary by preliminary studies, and suggests methodological approaches. 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 carries out all of its activities in full compliance with the guidelines set forth within the Code du Patrimoine, the official French legislation on cultural heritage.

The CICRP is active in three areas:

- preventive and curative conservation: these operations mainly involve the control and eradication of pests, microbiological infestations and contamination accompanied by diagnostic studies, identification of insects and fungi, recommendations for treatment and the monitoring of technological developments in treatment and prevention as well as the handling of issues raised by conservation centres, storerooms and many other aspects of collection management. The CICRP may also provide environmental consulting (climate, pollutants, etc.), especially in connection with the rehabilitation or construction of storerooms and museums.
- research and studies concerning alteration phenomena affecting heritage materials, especially stone, paintings on all supports and materials used in contemporary art. These investigations are carried out in the context of national or international research programmes or in connection with studies conducted for specific restoration projects. They rely on scientific analysis of micro-samples, non-destructive examination techniques as well as characterisation and accelerating ageing tests. They also involve documentation through the use of scientific imaging (infrared, ultraviolet, radiography, etc.). In the case of studies conducted prior to or in the course of restoration projects, these investigations serve to validate approaches to restoration and provide guidance in the decision-making process for the contracting authority and the contractors.
- reception of works for 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, mainly paintings on all supports and graphic art. The restorers selected by the contracting authority thus have access to fully equipped studios and additional resources in support of their work (scientific imaging, studies, etc.) ensuring the best

possible conditions for restoration operations and permitting exchanges with expert scientists in the field.

In each of its areas of activity, the CICRP has sought to develop core competencies.

In the field of preventive conservation, the control and eradication of pests, and particularly insects, is furthered by the presence of an entomologist on staff and the initiation of research programmes to investigate insect species such as *Stegobium paniceum* or innovative treatments.

The CICRP engages in research and conducts studies in two main areas. The first of these relates to stone, seeking to expand our knowledge of this heritage material and investigating alteration phenomena and treatments (desalinisation, laser cleaning). The second was introduced more recently and concerns materials used in contemporary art, such as polymers and fluorescent paints. These two research areas were selected in recognition of the CICRP's geographic situation. In the first case, issues raised by the condition of stone in built heritage are highly germane, due to the pervasive presence throughout the Mediterranean region of monuments dating from Antiquity. Secondly, the region delimited by the cities of Lyon, Nice, Marseille and Montpellier boasts a concentration of cultural institutions and collections devoted to contemporary art without equal in France. These areas of expertise are being developed owing to the presence among the staff of the CICRP of two geologists as well as one chemist specialising in the organic materials used in contemporary art.

Lastly, thanks to the specially designed configuration of its facilities, the CICRP is able to receive very large format painted or graphic works for restoration (up to 4 m by 10 m) and is the only establishment in France able to receive works of this size. All of the equipment available is calibrated to meet these specifications (travelling crane, heating tables, etc.) and the centre is staffed by a technical and scientific team specialising in painted works (chemist, photographer, installer).

Each year the CICRP carries out nearly one hundred consulting and assessment missions, receives more than one hundred works for restoration and participates in or coordinates several research programmes.



*CICRP – Large format restoration studio
(Photo: Boris Conte)*

Resource centre and scientific partnerships

In recognition of its public service mission, the CICRP aims, in the context of its activities and as a complement to the core competencies it develops, to serve as a resource centre for heritage professionals.

It demonstrates this commitment by providing advisory services and by referring interested parties, where applicable, to other specialists employed by local, national or international structures with whom it collaborates. Furthermore, the CICRP's resources include a documentation centre, which maintains both a Web site and a specialised collection of materials pertaining to conservation and restoration that is freely accessible to the public.

The CICRP also contributes to the training of heritage professionals via a partnership with the Institut National du Patrimoine, by participating in the development of continuing education programmes or by holding seminars on its premises.

It welcomes interns pursuing the equivalent of French *licence* or master's degrees, junior researchers and doctoral candidates in various fields, ranging from art history and chemistry to geology and microbiology. It also opens its studios, in the presence of senior restorers serving as instructors, to students enrolled in degree programmes in art restoration (INP, MST Paris, Ecole d'Art d'Avignon).

All of these actions have given rise to numerous national and international partnerships contributing to the formation of networks of expertise. Thus the CICRP works on a regular basis with the Centre de Recherche et de Restauration des Musées de France (C2RMF), the Institut National du Patrimoine (INP) and the Laboratoire de Recherche des Monuments Historiques (LRMH), but also with partners outside the heritage field such as the Forensic Laboratory of Marseilles or those based in universities (e.g., CEREGE-CNRS at the Université Paul Cézanne – Aix-Marseille III) to share experiences and equipment.

In the context of specific missions or in relation to its areas of research, CICRP staff collaborate with experts affiliated with numerous institutions worldwide, such as the University of Meknes and the Direction du Patrimoine Culturel (Ministry of Culture, Morocco), Egypt's Supreme Council of Antiquities, the University of Boumerdes (Algeria) and the Agence Nationale d'Archéologie et de Protection des Sites et Monuments Historiques (Algeria). Partnerships are currently being forged with the Ecole Supérieure des Arts de Saint-Luc (Restoration department) in Liège (Belgium) and the Stichting Restauratie Atelier Limburg in Maastricht (Netherlands), among others.

The CICRP actively participates in European workgroups drafting standards for the conservation of cultural property.

Staff and equipment



CICRP
Restoration studio
(Photo: Nathalie Jouan)

The staff of the CICRP consists 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 chef de travaux d'art (restoration studio supervisor), a photographer and a photographer-radiographer, administrative staff, information officers, installers and technicians.

The CICRP maintains a research and analytical laboratory on its premises in order to analyse micro-samples or carry out non-destructive examinations directly on art works as well as characterisation and accelerated ageing tests, a photographic studio and a studio for exposing and developing radiographs.

The CICRP's restoration studios are installed in facilities with a total surface area of nearly 2,000 m² including specialised sectors: paints, varnishes, graphic art, wood, storeroom, quarantine, etc. Specific equipment, whether in terms of its usage (travelling crane) or size (heating table), has been installed to receive paintings and graphic art works in large and very large formats.

The centre also employs innovative techniques, such as a geographical information system for the study and monitoring of infestation phenomena using georeferenced data. Similarly, a prototype system making use of image comparisons is currently being developed and tested.

The CICRP maintains a documentation centre, open by appointment to the scientific community of curators, 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.

Outlook

For its development, the CICRP directs its efforts so as to ensure balanced growth of the three main aspects of its work – restoration, research and studies, preventive conservation – while expanding its geographical reach. The centre thus dedicates its resources to the service of its local region of Provence-Alpes-Côte d’Azur but also aims to acquire the status of a resource centre and leader in its field for all of southeastern France and beyond.

Thus the CICRP’s current development projects focus on:

New partnerships: These initiatives have been given official status in the form of a policy of institutional and operational cooperation. This policy has resulted in the signing of partnerships with the Centre de Recherches et de Restauration des Musées de France (2007) and the Institut National du Patrimoine (2007), the latter supplementing that signed with the Laboratoire de Recherche des Monuments Historiques in 2005. In addition, multi-year agreements have been concluded for specific projects: Musée des Augustins (Toulouse), Musée Fesch (Ajaccio), Musée de Bastia, Institut d’Art Contemporain (Villeurbanne) and Musée Alsacien (Strasbourg), among others.

New regions: Conscientious efforts have reinforced collaboration with the Languedoc-Roussillon region, from Montpellier to Perpignan, as with Corsica, and regular contacts are maintained with the Rhône-Alpes region and the Auvergne. Lastly, the CICRP’s network of scientific collaboration now extends beyond the borders of France, resulting in stronger relationships with experts and institutions in the Mediterranean region for issues relating to stone (Algeria, Egypt, Morocco, Tunisia) and the initiation of ties with northern Europe (Liège, Maastricht) and southern Europe for contemporary art.

New areas of specialisation: In connection with these new partnerships and these new regions, new areas of specialisation are being developed. While continuing to focus on the control and eradication of pests and alteration phenomena affecting heritage materials, and especially stone, the CICRP has moved into the area of contemporary art and the many issues raised by the conservation of modern materials, including polymers and fluorescent paint.

New equipment: In support of its development ambitions, the CICRP enlarged its research laboratory facilities in 2008.

A planning study was launched in 2006, for the second phase of expansion work. This project for the addition of a further 1,500 m² of technical facilities by 2011–2012 will enable the centre to optimise its use of space so as to better handle the simultaneous presence of several very large paintings and to diversify its specialised work sectors through the creation of multi-purpose studios for three-dimensional

works, with a view to developing competencies related to ethnographic objects and contemporary art works.

The CICRP's Web site, which underwent a major revision in 2007 and was translated into English in 2008, has been designed as a communication tool but also to provide assistance to heritage professionals. Thanks to regular content updates and the reporting of news items of interest, it is the essential platform for the CICRP's activities.

Readers are encouraged to explore the site and to visit it often, as an indispensable complement to the information provided in this press kit: www.cicrp.fr.



CICRP (Photo: Olivier Metzger)