

The Making of Conservation Science (online, 29–30 Apr 21)

Online, Apr 29–30, 2021

Valerie Vocking

A Brill Nuncius Seminar on the Material and Visual History of Science.

Organizers: Sven Dupré (Utrecht University/University of Amsterdam) & Esther van Duijn (Rijksmuseum Amsterdam)

This seminar focuses on the disciplinary formation of conservation science in the post-World War II period. While the first half of the twentieth century witnessed the modest beginnings of a science-based conservation practice, the first museum laboratories, and the introduction of new technologies for the investigation and conservation of art (such as X-radiography and UV imagery), the second half of the twentieth century saw the consolidation of the developments that started before WWII with the establishment of international organizations (e.g. ICOM-CC), journals (e.g. *Studies in Conservation*, *National Gallery Technical Bulletin*), and institutes (e.g. the KIK-IRPA) in which the place of conservation science was negotiated. The seminar considers the post-World War II – period up to the 1970s when some conservation theorists, confronted with the processual and intangible aspects of contemporary art, questioned the dominance and principles of science-based conservation. The focus of the seminar is on diverse actors, including scientists and science policy-makers, collectors and conservators, museum professionals and administrators, and the institutional contexts in which these actors operated (e.g. museums, universities, laboratories, conservation studios).

This seminar is funded by the Descartes Centre (Utrecht University) and Brill Publishers.

Programme

Day 1: Thursday 29 April

Moderator: Sven Dupré (Utrecht University/ University of Amsterdam)

15.00-15.30: Keynote lecture by Geert Vanpaemel (University of Leuven): From Rome to Brussels. Science and art in the care of paintings.

15.30-15.35: Commentator: Esther van Duijn (Rijksmuseum)

15.35-15.45: Questions from the audience

15.45-16.00: short break

Moderator: Robert van Langh (Rijksmuseum)

16.00-16.20: Lecture by Jo Kirby (Courtauld Institute of Art/ formerly National Gallery, London):
Science and Conservation at the National Gallery, London: the 1950s to the 1970s.

16.20-16.25: Commentator: Katrien Keune (Rijksmuseum/ University of Amsterdam)

16.25-16.35: Questions from the audience

16.35-16.55: Lecture by Camille Bourdiel (Centre d'histoire sociale des mondes contemporains
(CHS), Université Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne): The Laboratory of the Louvre museum after World
War II: the movement towards universality, 1946-1968.

16.55-17.00: Commentator: René de la Rie (University of Amsterdam)

17.00-17.10: Questions from the audience

17.10-17.20: Brill Digital Book Exhibit

Day 2: Friday 30 April

Moderator: Maartje Stols-Witlox (University of Amsterdam)

15.00-15.20: Lecture by Michael von der Goltz (University of Hildesheim): Conservation in the ear-
ly Federal Republic of Germany - A difficult way to interdisciplinarity.

15.20-15.25: Commentator: Ernst Homburg (University of Maastricht)

15.25-15.35: Questions from the audience

15.35-15.55: Lecture by Andrea Luciani (Luleå University of Technology): "The ideal of the ideal
environment": The influence of climate control on the emergence of preventive conservation theo-
ries.

15.55-16.00: Commentator: Bart Ankersmit (Netherlands Cultural Heritage Agency, RCE)

16.00-16.10: Questions from the audience

16.10-16.30: short break

Moderator: Esther van Duijn (Rijksmuseum)

16.30-16.50: Lecture: Ron Spronk (Radboud University, Nijmegen / Queen's University, Kingston):
Infrared reflectography.

16.50-16.55: Commentator: Michiel Franken (RKD - Netherlands Institute for Art History)

16.55-17.05: Questions from the audience

17.05-17.25: Lecture by Salvador Muñoz-Viñas (University of Valencia): The role of science in the
conservation world: a naïve exploration.

17.25-17.30: Commentator: Ella Hendriks (University of Amsterdam)

17.30-17.40: Questions from the audience

If you want to participate in the online seminar, please send an email to brillnunciuseminar@gmail.com. You will receive a link to the Vimeo stream in advance of the seminar date.

Reference:

CONF: The Making of Conservation Science (online, 29-30 Apr 21). In: ArtHist.net, Apr 4, 2021 (accessed Mar 27, 2026), <<https://arthist.net/archive/33752>>.