



The conservation of works on paper has made notable progress in West, especially since the second half of the 20th century, with the progressive assimilation of Japanese techniques in museums and institutions dedicated to the conservation of cultural heritage, particularly in Europe and the United States. In the case of Mexico, one of the institutions where this has occurred is the Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia (INAH),¹ through the Coordinación Nacional de Conservación del Patrimonio Cultural (CNCPC)² and, specifically by its Taller de Documentos Gráficos (TDG).³

This issue of the journal *CR. Conservation and Restoration* focuses on the confluence of knowledge, specialists, events, institutions and exchange of traditions and practices from East and West, around a common purpose: the realization in 2012 of the International Course on Paper Conservation in Latin America: Meeting East, which became the first specialized course in the region, taught in Spanish, dedicated to sharing the basic concepts of Japanese techniques for the conservation of works on paper and promoting their adaptation to the Ibero-American⁴ context.

What was, in 1997 for Marie Vander Meeren (Mexico), just an idea to disseminate what she learned that year in her first course in Japan, in 2011 took form of a seminar to which she invited colleagues with similar experiences. From there, together with Florencia Gear (Argentina), Luis Crespo (Spain) and Doctor Masato Kato (Japan), they set about structuring and planning the course to be held a year later.

At institutional level, this was possible thanks to the cooperation between conservators, particularly through three instances: the CNCPC-INAH and its TDG, the Tokyo National Research Institute for Cultural Properties (TNRICP) and ICCROM. So even with financial difficulties and global challenges of recent years, it has been possible to maintain the complex management, organization and logistics for its realization.

Ten years on from 2012, the scope and continuity of the course is very significant: seven face-to-face events and one remote seminar, with participation of more than 70 students from 17 countries. Its scope has been exponential, as each participant represents the possibility that the knowledge will be preserved and disseminated at their own institutions and respective countries.

¹ National Institute of Anthropology and History (note from the translator).

² National Agency for Cultural Heritage Conservation (note from the translator).

³ Documentary Heritage Conservation Studio (note from the translator).

⁴ Called in this way in order to integrate the countries of Latin America, Spain and Portugal.



Considering that Ibero-America has an extensive documental heritage with diverse and perhaps challenging conservation problems, it is remarkable what the course has represented for the participants: the long days of learning and practice with the Japanese and Ibero-American⁵ masters facilitated the understanding of techniques and invisible features of Japanese practice, which was silent, precise, rhythmic, orderly, to the point that for many of them, this was a before and after in their way of working, as they expressed. For the organizers and teachers of the course, each one has been an opportunity to evaluate and improve the content, update topics and reinforce practice.

Likewise, within the framework of the economic and social reality of this region, participants from different programs and countries have forged ties that strengthen their own learning and have generated a common space for exchanging points of view and to continue researching about related topics.

This issue of *CR. Conservation and Restoration* dedicated to the course mentioned above includes the participation of 32 authors from the following countries: Argentina, Brazil, Ecuador, Colombia, Spain, Paraguay, Chile and Mexico. Throughout 16 articles they refer the diversity of contexts, learning and experiences that have been added over 10 years.

Jeniffer Ponce (Mexico) offers a brief reference of Japanese conservation traditions and the main events that make possible to understand how they were assimilated in the West, which is intertwined with the experiences and reflections that gave rise to the course, by Marie Vander Meeren (Mexico).

With regard to the application of Japanese techniques and their adaptation to regional contexts, several case studies are presented: Martha Luz Cárdenas (Colombia) describes the restoration of a large-format plan in which she applied tension drying and wheat starch lamination. Teresa Espejo and Ana López (Spain) explain their experience with capillary systems for cleaning and deacidification of two collections: one of maps and the other of drawings. Angélica Ángeles (Mexico) refers the application of remoistenable tissue and considers the advantages of this non-aqueous process in the framework of stabilization strategies for the large volume of documents in the Hemeroteca Nacional⁶.

About the preparation and application of adhesives, María Garavito (Colombia), Laura Milán (Mexico), Claudia Pradenas (Chile) and Cynthia Solís (Paraguay) describe the importance of the knowledge acquired in the course; they focus their article on four adhesives: Methyl cellulose, Klucel[®] G, type B gelatine, wheat starch and the case of remoistenable tissue. In addition to referring technical aspects of their preparation and use, they mention the advantages and disadvantages of each one, with the understanding that it is not a question of defining one adhesive as better than another, but of being clear about the state of the paper and the problem to be solved.

Considering the economic situation prevailing in Latin America and the difficulty of acquiring Japanese tools in countries of the region, Martha Luz Cárdenas (Colombia), Helena Malatesta (Paraguay) and Marianela Menchi (Argentina) refer the search for regional alternatives and their adaptation in their respective countries; to which they add activities that have resulted from this, for example, the training of their colleagues and the adaptation of their laboratories.

⁵ Conservators of Mexico, Argentina and Spain.

⁶ National Newspaper and Periodicals Archive (note from the translator).



The dissemination of knowledge of the course has had continuity above all through those participants who carry out teach or work on training activities, as the assimilation of Japanese techniques contributes to a broader, more reflexive and, perhaps, novel way of teaching, together with a renewed organization and attention to treatments for the benefit of generations of students. In this way Victoria Casado, Laura Milán and Pilar Tapia (Mexico) explain how they have implemented most of the course topics with their students at INAH's Escuela Nacional de Conservación, Restauración y Museografía (ENCRyM).⁷ Silvana de Fátima (Brazil) describes the capillary cleaning of a photogravure, as part of the teaching program at the Universidade Federal de Pelotas, so that the students would have a meaningful experience executing the process.

For their part, Sonia Merizalde (Ecuador), Ana Laura Masiello (Argentina), María Toninetti (Argentina), Dara Valencia (Mexico), Adriana Gómez (Mexico), Ina Hergert (Brazil) and Richard Francisco Solís (Chile) describe their experiences of dissemination and training in professional and academic environment, as this has given them the guidelines to raise awareness among their authorities and colleagues; integrate concepts, criteria and processes, as well as favoring sense order and cleanliness in the work space. They also explain the importance of keep generating knowledge on related topics through various activities such as publications, thesis tutorials or by inserting content in academic conservation programs.

With regard to other more reflective topics derived from the course, Luis Crespo (Spain) refers how the didactic resources are designed to alternate knowledge, practices and, at the same time, transmit that subtle and invisible notion, typical of the teaching dynamics, so that the participants have the experience of preparing themselves to work in a more present, reflective, ordered way and, therefore, with better results in their execution. He also highlights the importance of sharing this knowledge generously, which is the best expression of the bonds of support and friendship among the participants.

In the same sense of intertwining the intangible or subtle with the tangible or practical of learning Japanese techniques, Tania Estrada (Mexico) shares her reflections about the professional stay she made at TNRICP in 2014. The opportunity to live and learn with the Japanese masters in their own working environment gave her access to a very significant assimilation into daily practice, through which the Japanese transmit their teachings from master to apprentice.

While there is a relevance of the course clearly expressed by the authors in this issue, Ana Dalila Terrazas (Mexico) presents a unique approach referring to what goes on behind the scenes, in order to dimension what the shaping of the course implies in terms of: inter-institutional management (CNCPC-INAH, TNRICP and ICCROM), the organization within the CNCPC, the preparation of contents, practices and didactic material, the dynamics with the Japanese and Ibero-American teachers, the logistics for the participants, among many other tasks that have had to be readjusted for each edition. It also includes a list of the persons who represent the three institutions involved, as well as the Japanese and Ibero-American conservators who have made each course possible, which is a way of expressing the relevance of their collaboration and support.

In particular, the 24th edition of *CR. Conservation and Restoration* is an acknowledgment of the Japanese team headed by Doctor Masato Kato, the Ibero-American team in charge of the TDG with the collaboration of Luis Crespo and, until 2018, of Florencia Gear, as well as Marie Vander Meeren, coordinator of this complex and motivating group of specialists.

⁷ National School of Conservation, Restoration and Museography (note from the translator).



Each of the articles shows the remarkable potential of teaching and adapting Japanese techniques in a Western context. The results are very encouraging: more reflective and coherent decisions, preparation of materials with up-to-date knowledge, application and improvement of the methodologies learned. The course has also led to a broader understanding and renewed interest in subjects that are essential for the conservation of works on paper, such as the management of humidity in the treatments applied to the work, dilutions of adhesives and non-aqueous treatments, among others. All this reinforces the relevance of the course content.

In other topics related to the conservation of works on paper, in the *Memoria* section, Ana Dalila Terrazas (Mexico) presents an overview of the history of the TDG, from its beginnings in 1973 to the present day. After almost 50 years, its content is of particular relevance because it offers a chronology and acknowledgement of the people who, over the years, in their daily work, have been part of the evolution of the workshop and –in a broader context– of the history of the conservation of documental collections at the CNCPC. Alongside dates, archival data and anecdotes, there are also technical references and events that invite reflection and strengthen the activities of the TDG within the framework of the substantive lines of work of the CNCPC. In this sense, there are topics of the course that can contribute to the work of fellow restorers at INAH, and that is why some basic contents are being adapted to facilitate their dissemination in other formats, taking advantage of digital platforms and resources. One example is the distance training that the TDG gave in 2021 to INAH restorers, about materials and techniques for works on paper that are applicable to other types of materials, such as textiles and basketry, and even auxiliary processes for easel painting, sculpture and mural painting.

The article by Roxana Romero, Ayerín González and Mariana Aguilar (Mexico), refers some of the knowledge that can be shared among the different specialists within the CNCPC, specifically, on the advantages of applying facings with a technique used for the intervention of documental heritage, in a light sculpture of Apostle Santiago that was severely damaged after the earthquake of 19th September 2017.

In additional and very timely topics to accompany the content of issue 24, in the section *Conservación en la vida cotidiana*, Tania Estrada and Ariadna Rodríguez (Mexico) describe the basic care for handling, safeguarding, storage and exhibition of personal photographic archives, which helps to make this information available in a clear, brief and accessible way for readers.

In the section *Conoce el INAH*, Mónica Pérez (Mexico) presents an overview of the Historical Archive of the Museo Nacional de Antropología,⁸ whose diversity of documents (lists of works, payrolls, reports, invoices, loan requests, etc.) is representative of the wide-ranging activity of the museum both national and international. The article is an acknowledgement to the pioneers in its management and is a reference to re-signify INAH's own collections.

It should be noted that issue 24 of *CR. Conservación y Restauración* was published in Spanish and English, with the aim of facilitating its dissemination among the international community of conservators, as an example of inter-institutional collaboration, which, in this case, has been of great relevance for Ibero-America. It also helps to raise awareness of the participation of TNRICP colleagues who have been involved in the various editions of the course over a decade. Beyond the Spanish-speaking community, the articles will be a point of interest and a meeting point for

⁸ National Museum of Anthropology (note from the translator).



specialists from other latitudes who will be able to access the content in English. This has been possible, thanks to the effort, dedication and careful work of the colleagues and translators who participated in this bilingual edition.

In a regional context, particularly in Latin America, with great challenges in the conservation of works on paper, it is essential to encourage the continuous updating and improvement of colleagues dedicated to this category of heritage. The issue 24 of *CR. Conservación y Restauración* is also an invitation to continue, in whatever way possible, the chance of joining efforts to disseminate learning, exchange experiences and strengthen knowledge on the aforementioned subjects. For the time being, all that remains is to appreciate the journey that began a decade ago with the satisfaction and serenity that the initial purpose has been fulfilled.

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