

## **THE LANGUAGE BETWEEN CONSERVATOR, CURATOR AND SCIENTIST**

Robert van Langh  
Head of Conservation & Research, Rijksmuseum Amsterdam, The Netherlands

Already in the 19<sup>th</sup> century there has been an interest of the scientific community into the arts. Whether it concerned the change of paintings, corrosion of metals or change of surfaces on marble statues, it became apparent that a different type of knowledge was necessary to preserve cultural heritage. Since the 20<sup>th</sup> century more museums have set up a conservation department. It is interesting to notice on the objects, the carrier of information, that treatments have taken place that we nowadays think of as not the best treatment for an object. In many cases it is due to the fact that curators are responsible for a collection and not necessarily know what is good for the object, and the lack of good education of conservators. However, training of conservators also truly differs from one country (or within a country) to another, thus not ensuring the quality of conservation involved. Finally scientists are in many cases not trained for the specific job that cultural heritage requires, the 'language' spoken in science is substantially different from the 'language' in (art) history. How can we organise our jobs as responsible people for cultural heritage that the object benefits most of? A process recently started in the Netherlands between the Rijksmuseum Amsterdam, the Netherlands Institute of Cultural Heritage and the Universiteit van Amsterdam may prove as an example