



CHÂTEAU DE VERSAILLES

EPICO

The Palace of Versailles oversees the European research programme for developing a preventive conservation strategy for the collections and interiors of historic houses: *EPICO, European Protocol in Preventive Conservation*. Winner of the EU Prize for Cultural Heritage – Europa Nostra Awards 2018, Research Category, this innovative method was acknowledged by the jury as “a powerful tool for the conservation of cultural heritage in Europe”.

Europe's historic houses are several thousandfold. Hundreds of these are open to the public and display their collections within the original interiors, ensuring the transmission of its history to the wider public. The conservation of these historic works is intrinsically linked to the monuments that house them, which presents several challenges regarding their preventive conservation. Climatic conditions, lighting, the effects of a regular stream of visitors, along with conservation measures that are often ill-adapted to the needs of historic houses create a very complex set of specific issues.

The *European Protocol in Preventive Conservation* (EPICO) was created in December 2014 by the Public Establishment of the Palace, Museum and National Estate of Versailles, in partnership with its Research Centre, the "Venaria Reale" Conservation and Restoration Centre in Turin, the Museum of King Jan III's Palace at Wilanów and the Network of European Royal Residences. Within the framework of sound, sustainable management, EPICO has continued its preventive approach by developing an assessment method collections, designed specifically for historic houses. Through the use of this new method, a preventive conservation strategy can be devised to maintain works in the best possible condition, slow down the rate of deterioration and limit the need for restoration.

The international jury for the Europa Nostra European Awards acknowledges that "the EPICO programme has provided a methodology for rational decision-making based on conservation policy priorities. This approach has the potential to become a powerful tool for preserving European cultural heritage, serving as an example to follow for similar collections".



Monitoring the conservation conditions during the moving of the King's Desk © EPV / Didier Saulnier



The King's bedchamber, Palace of Versailles
© EPV / Danilo Forleo



Monitoring deterioration, Palace of Versailles
© Marzio Emilio Villa / Hans Lucas



KEY FIGURES FOR THE RESEARCH PROGRAMME **EPICO**

15

professionals make up the international EPICO team

- Conservation preventive specialists
- Registrars
- Conservators
- Art historians
- Physicist
- Statistician

10

specialists from international institutions

France, Italy, Canada, United Kingdom make up the Scientific Committee

The University of Paris I - Panthéon Sorbonne, the Museum of Decorative Arts, the Centre of Research and Preservation of Collections - the French National Centre for Scientific Research, Public Establishment of the Palace, Museum and National Estate of Versailles, Centre des Monuments Nationaux, The Canadian Conservation Institute, International Institute for Conservation, National Trust

14

causes of deterioration identified for the collections in historic houses

18

indicators of alteration

1

Analysis software for climatic data CGS® (Climate Graphing Software)

63

rooms and

800

objects and interiors assessed using the EPICO method in 5 European residences in Italy, France and Poland, which have benefited from the expertise of EPICO: Versailles, Wilanów, Florence, Turin, Maintenon

Monitoring the conservation conditions: lighting, dust, biological agents, in the Gallery of Coaches in the Great Stables, Palace of Versailles © EPV / Valériane Rozé



THE ASSESSMENT METHOD EPICO



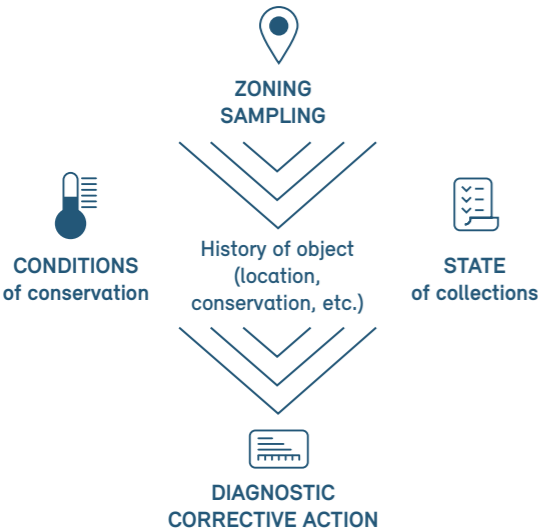
Internal shutter, King's State Apartments,
Palace of Versailles © EPV / Danilo Forleo

The aim of the EPICO programme was to devise an assessment method specially designed for collections and the specific risks related to historic houses. A sustainable management strategy based on preventive conservation requires precise knowledge of the state and conservation conditions of collections. An action plan can then be drawn up to establish preventive and maintenance priorities that aim to limit the amount of restoration required; this will have a significant beneficial impact on the economic management of resources.

This method can be applied to any historic house, regardless of its size or the number of collections it conserves. Using simple tools (paper or Excel depending on the size of the building, or even a database), the EPICO method aims to provide a full overview of the condition of the building to establish priorities and draw up a long-term strategy. This is based on a systemic assessment strategy in which the conditions of conservation, the state of conservation of the collection and the presentation of the works are analysed.

THE FUNDAMENTAL ELEMENTS OF THE METHOD EPICO

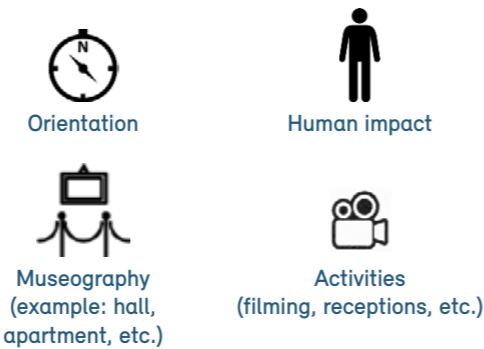
CAUSE AND EFFECT RELATIONSHIP OF VISIBLE ALTERATION



The collections in historic houses, together with the interiors and architecture form the building's identity and, as such, cannot be separated. Contrary to an ordinary museum, the objects in historic houses cannot be placed into any sort of logical order and displayed in a museum equipment designed for the conservation of collections. Nevertheless, this intrinsic relationship between collections and their buildings will help us to find a connection between the material deterioration of collections and the environmental conditions that could be the root of the cause.

Zoning

Considering the large number of objects and rooms, a statistical approach is required to identify the representative sample of both the rooms (the conditions of conservation) and collections (the state of conservation). The distinctive criterion of the house and its collections were thus identified in order to select a statistically representative sample of the palace and museum's different conservation zones. Zoning therefore consists of identifying the zones (one or several rooms) in the historic building that meet similar criterion and then selecting a statistically representative sample of the rooms to be assessed. The main criterion used are the following:

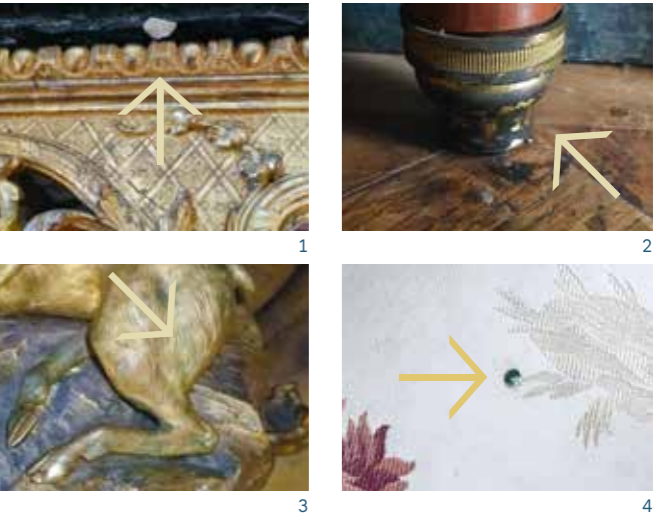


Object sampling

Once the zoning phase is complete, the object sampling phase can take place. Condition reports are then written up with the help of two manuals:

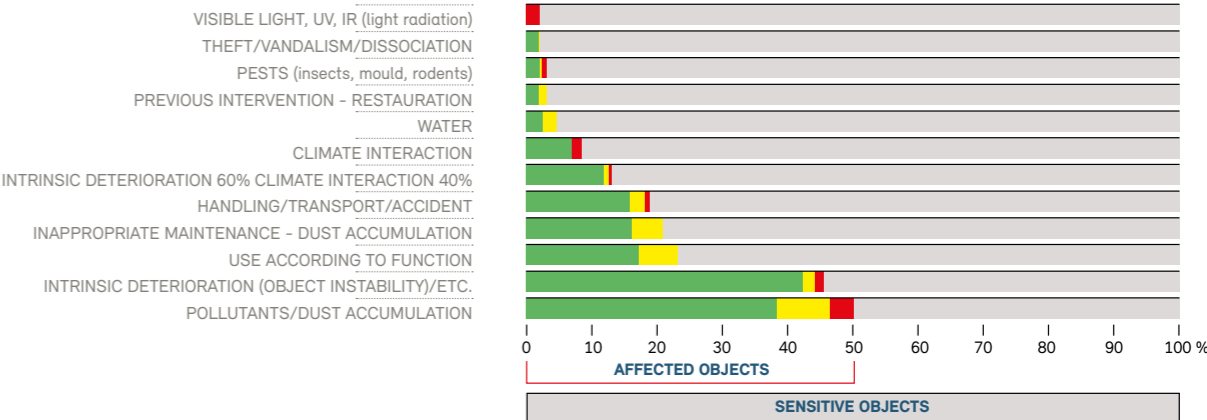
- General alteration indicators (18 in total)
- Risks and alteration causes (14 in total)

Extract from the alteration manual.
Example: exogenous element with a level 4 severity rating according to interaction with the object.
Level 1 (inert) up to level 4 (immediate and active).



Diagnostic and corrective action

The impact of alteration causes and risks is measured (active or inactive) in order to prioritise practical recommendations based on the results.





COLLABORATION EPICO



INTERNATIONAL SYMPOSIUM IN 2017

As part of the EPICO research programme, the Public Establishment of the Palace, Museum and National Estate of Versailles, the Network of European Royal Residences and the Palace of Versailles Research Centre, in collaboration with the International Committee for historic house museums (DEMIST), have organised an international symposium on *Preventive preservation in the historic houses and palace-museums: Assessment methodologies and applications*. This will took place in the Palace of Versailles' auditorium from 29 November to 1 December 2017.

The first phase of the EPICO programme came to an end with a three-day symposium, with the participation of **51** speakers, **5** round tables, and **160** registered people representing **16** countries from Europe, North America, South America and Asia. The symposium was sponsored by **7** international organisations: ArdenPlast, Boston University, Polygon, Testo, Abiotec, CTS, ILTI Luce.

This event laid the foundations of a new method for the preservation of collections in historic houses.



International symposium, the Palace of Versailles' auditorium, 29 November to 1 December 2017: presentation of the results of the EPICO programme. From left to right: L. Salomé, Director of the Palace of Versailles Museum; B.Saule, Past director of the Palace of Versailles Museum from 2009 to 2016; D.Forleo, EPICO Project Supervisor, in charge of preventive conservation for the Palace of Versailles; A. Laudy, Biologist, representative for the Jan III Palace, Wilanów, Poland, EPICO partner; N. Wansart, Scientific collaborator, EPICO team, Palace of Versailles; N. Francaviglia, Research Associate, EPICO team, Palace of Versailles Research Centre
© EPV / Didier Saulnier



EPICO

Cronache 7

EPICO - European Preventive Conservation - Phase 1

Metodi di valutazione d
Méthodes d'évaluation
Methods for conservati
Metody ewaluacji stan

PUBLICATIONS AND TRAINING EPICO

PUBLICATIONS

D. Forleo (dir.), R. Genta, N. Francaviglia, A. Laudy, M. Nervo, A. Pawlak, B. Saule, N. Wansart et. al., Actes du colloque international : La conservation préventive dans les demeures historiques et les châteaux-musées : méthodologies d'évaluation et applications, FR/EN, Online, Silvana Editoriale, 2019.

D. Forleo, N. Francaviglia, *Condition Assessment of Historic House Collections: Testing Different Statistical Methods at the Château de Versailles*, Studies in Conservation, Volume 63, 2018 - Issue sup1. IIC 2018 Turin Congress preprints Published Online: 11 Sep 2018

D. Forleo (dir), N. Francaviglia, S. De Blasi, A. Pawlak, N. Wansart, M. Nawrocka-Teodorczyk, W. Baginski, *Méthodes d'évaluation de l'état et des conditions de conservation des collections dans les demeures historiques*, IT/FR/EN/PL, Centro Conservazione e Restauro La Venaria Reale, Cronache 7, Gênes : Sagep Editori, 2017

D. Forleo, *La conservation préventive des collections des demeures historiques et châteaux-musées: le programme de recherche EPICO*, FR, *Monuments Historiques & Sites Patrimoniaux remarquables*, Monumental, semestriel 1, 2017

D. Forleo, N. Francaviglia et N. Wansart, *Méthodes d'évaluation des collections...*, FR/EN, in Actes du colloque *Les nouvelles rencontres de la conservation préventive*, APRévu, 2017

D. Forleo, N. Francaviglia et N. Wansart, *Six facteurs potentiels de dégradation à surveiller*, FR, *Les Carnets de Versailles*, Avril 2016

SEMINARS AND TRAINING

The Palace of Versailles organises seminars and training on the preventive conservation of historic houses and the EPICO method.

Many heritage institutions have already benefitted from this training: the Institut National du Patrimoine, the École du Louvre, the "La Venaria Reale" Centre of Conservation and Restoration, University of Paris III Sorbonne Nouvelle, University of Paris IV, University of Cergy-Pontoise, etc. From 2019, the EPICO programme will be integrated into the Master of Preventive Conservation of the University of Paris I Panthéon-Sorbonne: the students will benefit from an extensive course of the programme and will have the opportunity to apply their learning during particular seminars.



Training as part of the Summer school in Heritage Science of the Université de Cergy-Pontoise: *Condition survey and risk assessment in historic houses museums : methods and implementation*. Chinese students examining the state of works in the Palace of Versailles using the EPICO method. © EPV / Danilo Forleo

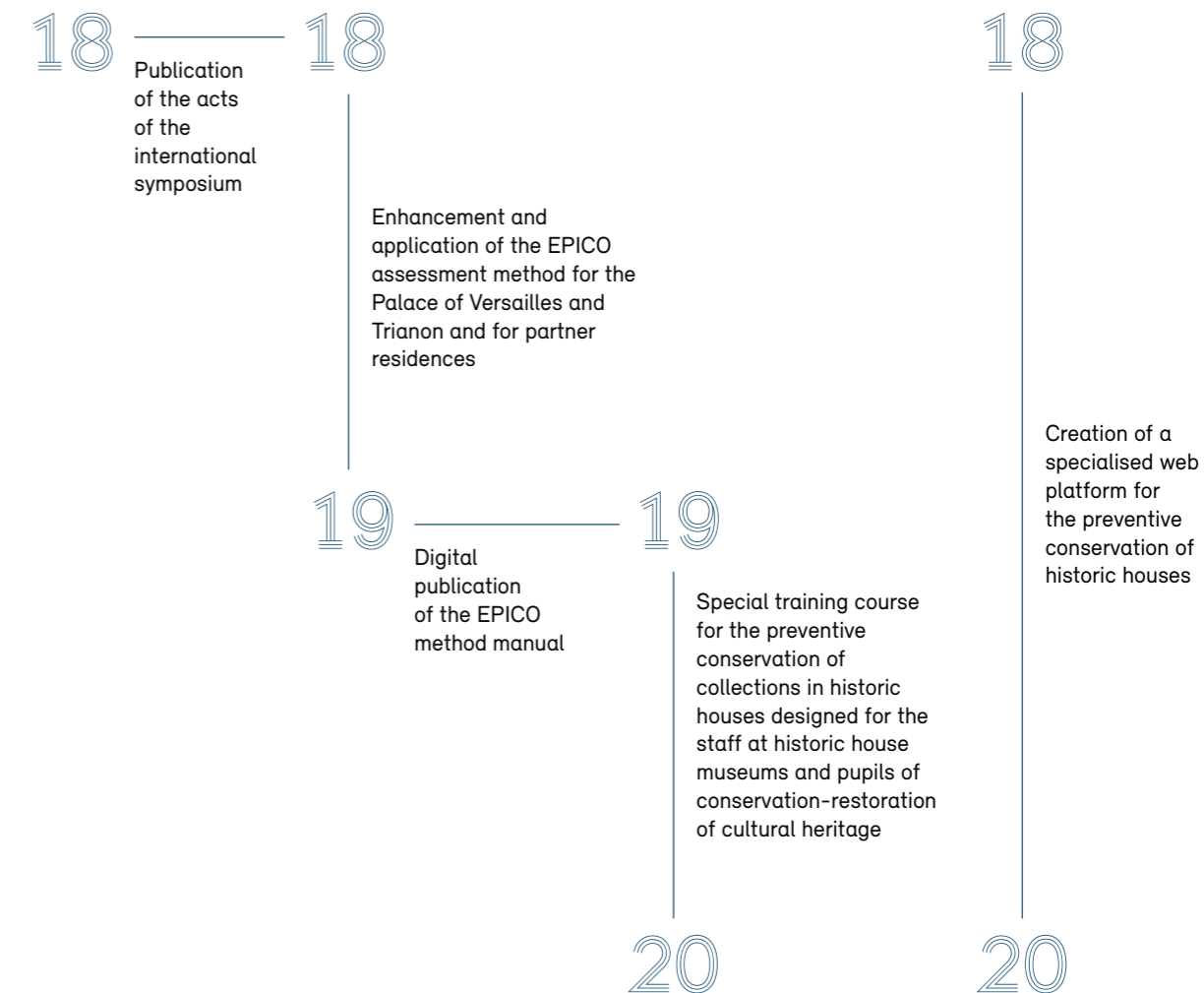


EPICO
TODAY



2018-2020 PROGRAMME

As a result of its initial international success, the EPICO programme has launched a new phase, from 2018 to 2020, with several aims:





EPICO

WINNER OF THE EU PRIZE FOR CULTURAL HERITAGE / EUROPA NOSTRA AWARDS RESEARCH CATEGORY

In June 2018, EPICO was acknowledged by the jury as “a powerful tool for the conservation of European cultural heritage” with “tangible effects and a direct impact on the long term preservation of cultural property. The results highlight the importance and potential of preventive conservation”.



EPICO / AN INTERNATIONAL RESEARCH PROGRAMME
CREATED THANKS TO THE SYNERGY BETWEEN THE
MOST RESPECTED INSTITUTIONS OF EUROPE.

CREATED IN 2014 BY THE PALACE OF VERSAILLES,
EPICO BRINGS TOGETHER PLACES OF EXCEPTIONAL
BEAUTY FACING THE SAME ISSUES.

1 project leader, the Public
Establishment of the Palace, Museum
and National Estate of Versailles

8 European
institutions
involved

1 web platform for
preventive
conservation

1 network of royal residences in Europe
With its 27 members representing over 90 castles in
Europe, the Association is a unique network through
which members have been able to work on important
collaborative programmes serving the scientific
community for the last 20 years.
Partner of the programme, the Association will be
responsible for publishing the results of the programme
by setting up an internet platform for EPICO and the
preventive conservation in historic houses and
palace-museums.

2014-2017 PARTNERS OF THE EPICO EUROPEAN RESEARCH PROGRAMME



2018-2020 PARTNERS OF THE EPICO EUROPEAN RESEARCH PROGRAMME



Award ceremony for the EU Prize Europa
Nostra European Cultural Heritage Summit
«Sharing Heritage Values.»
Berlin, 18-24 June 2018 © Europa Nostra



CONTACT

More about EPICO on
www.europeanroyalresidences.eu
www.chateauversailles.fr

Danilo Forleo
EPICO Project Supervisor
conservation.preventive@chateauversailles.fr

Unhanging and rehanging of tapestry as part of work
carried out on the Queen's State Apartment in the
Palace of Versailles. © EPV / Danilo Forleo