



Preventive
Conservation
in Historic Houses
and Palace
Museums:
Assessment
Methodologies
and Applications

SilvanaEditoriale

Preventive Conservation in Historic Houses and Palace Museums: Assessment Methodologies and Applications

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Preventive Conservation at Villa La Pietra: Management, Collaboration, Education

Abstract

Villa La Pietra is located in the hills of Florence, Italy. It was the home of the Acton family between 1903-1994. In 1994 its collections were bequeathed to New York University (NYU). Preventive conservation measures have been implemented step-by-step during the last two decades. In March 2018 a one-week environmental monitoring campaign was conducted by two graduate students from NYU's Institute of Fine Arts' conservation program. Such collaborative projects are an essential component of the Villa's mandate for education and provide the students with a work experience while contributing to the long-term preservation strategy of the estate.

Keywords

Window films, LED, light monitoring, relative humidity monitoring, education.

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Preventive Conservation at Villa La Pietra

In 1994, the collections – comprised of more than six thousand artworks, a library of 12,000 volumes and an archive of photographs, contained within a historic 15th century Villa and gardens – were left to NYU. NYU's Institute of Fine Arts (IFA) established a holistic



Fig. 1
Sala da Pranzo –
Monitoring RH and
temperature. (Source:
Katherine Parks, Villa La
Pietra, NYU Florence)

Fig. 2
Rotonda – high priority
location for light
monitoring. (Source: Lowry
Palmer, Villa La Pietra, NYU
Florence)



approach for the care of the estate in partnership with the Italian State Fine Arts authorities (Soprintendenza). This collaboration is an essential component of the Villa's sustainable conservation plan [Ducey-Gessner *et al.*, 2016].

Faculty and students of the IFA's Conservation Center have been performing conservation treatments every year, for one or two weeks. The first preventive conservation project in March 2018 offered the

YEAR	AREA	IMPLEMENTATION
1999/ 2000	Pest Management	Chemical treatment of wood-boring beetles in 1999. Since 2000 anoxic treatment with nitrogen. Inspections during dusting sessions.
2003	Climate Control System	Automatic A/C system control. Additional spot readings and recordings of RH and temperature.
2003	Visitor Management	Guided tours restricted to 15 people. Shoe covers, mats under carpets, stanchions. Volara and Mylar protection under art objects on furniture. Regular checks of hanging systems and supports. 6000 visitors per year.
2003	Storage	Two climatized spaces. Survey in 2013.
2003	Particulate	Regular dusting by conservators-restorers.
2003	Security	Fire alarm system in compliance with the Italian and American regulations.
2003	Condition Documentation	Condition surveys are completed or on-going for all parts of the collection.
2003- 2014	Light Control	2003: shutters closed when there are no visits. 2006: Blue Wool Standard in 3 rooms. 2014: UV-filtering windows films in 13 rooms.

students a training opportunity in the conservation challenges particular to historic homes.

Katherine Parks (2nd year student) undertook a survey of devices for recording relative humidity (RH) and temperature currently used at the Villa. Equipment and workflows for monitoring will be upgraded as a result of this study. Hobo data loggers are considered as an option and were tested in a trial run (fig. 1).

Soon Kai Poh (3rd year student) concentrated on the assessment of lighting conditions, starting with areas of high levels of daylight (fig. 2). The window films (Llumar – Helios THE80) installed in 13 rooms in 2014 and the installation of LEDs are effective measures, which reduce the risk of damage by UV to a minimum. An overview of measures implemented since 1999 is given in table 1.

Table 1
Step-by-step implementation of preventive measures at Villa La Pietra.

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