

assessed by the review of the course written by three of the participants published in ICON News (January 2010).

“Discussions were honest, lively and varied [...] problems were shared and debated, and new pathways opened up and solutions suggested.” (Ann French)

“[...] it was clear we were experiencing a slightly different take on issues surrounding the conservation of cultural heritage.” (Louise Vaile)

“The course encourages conservators [...] to take part in the discussion on challenging issues, from the knotty subject of terminology to the power of the conservator’s voice.” (Isobel Watts)

Dinah and I produced a SWOT analysis of the course, based on the course evaluation sheets collected by West Dean College. The participants were perhaps more honest in this anonymous feedback. The lack of clarity of the course content beforehand – other than an awareness of the ICCROM SDC course, and my ICON news article of March 2007 – was raised as a point to note. It was also suggested that the course should be called “Conservation Methodology: Exploring the Relationship between Theory and Practice”. An up-to-date bibliography was requested, and it was suggested that starting the day with a short summary of the forthcoming events, and a short recap at the end of the day would be helpful. While participants enjoyed the comfort and luxury of West Dean, the non-stop intensity of the course, watching conservation videos after dinner, followed by late night discussions in the bar, some did note that, as a residential course, it was expensive.

SCD-UK 2010 – The Sir John Soane Museum

West Dean were unable to host the course in 2010, but have scheduled a course to be run in December 2011. We were anxious to maintain momentum and meet the demand the course had created. I looked to see whether we could offer a cheaper non-residential London based course in 2010. The Sir John Soane Museum, at Lincoln’s Inn Fields in London, offered a possible location for SCD-UK10. The museum is the creation of Sir John Soane (1753–1837), one of England’s greatest architects. We were able to hire their seminar room and the staff of the museum kindly gave the participants privileged access to the museum and the collection. The flyer for the course read:

The course will be run in collaboration with ICON. It is inspired by the Sharing Conservation Decisions course run by ICCROM, tailored to meet concerns of UK conservators. The course will explore ‘the object’, in the context of wide ranging cultural values. With reference to a wide range of case studies, the course will examine how conservation decisions are made and examine the role of the professional conservator in the process. The course, which aims to provoke debate, is a re-run of the 2009 course held at West Dean College in November 2009. A slightly different take on the issues surrounding the conservation of cultural heritage.