

richly-furnished country house located in the south of England, which operates as a residential conservation college, an art gallery and a functioning country estate. The house and its grounds could supply a wide range of conservation case studies. An important element of the SCD course was the variety of speakers and teaching methods. I contacted Dinah Eastop (Senior Lecturer, Textile Conservation Centre) who had taught on the SCD 2006 course, focusing on ‘the object as a source of information’. She remembered the humorous double act that Daniela Russo (Conservator-restorer, *Scuola Alta Formazione La Venaria Reale*, Torino) and I had provided as a pair of argumentative medieval slippers, “I was the right one. No, you were always wrong!”, describing our past life and future conservation needs. Dinah kindly agreed to assist in planning the course and provided a clear overview and direction for the project. Jonathan Ashley-Smith (former Head of Conservation at the Victoria & Albert Museum, London) was also extremely helpful and supportive of the project. Susan Bradshaw (Accreditation Manager, ICON) agreed to talk about the professional accreditation process. The staff at West Dean, particularly Liz Campbell (Short Course Manager) and Sharon Michi-Kusunoki (Curator), agreed to provide access into the decision-making processes of the house and the estate. A tutor of the West Dean Conservation Course, Lorna Calcutt, attended the course. Their goodwill meshed the course into the running of West Dean. Living in the house and grounds for three days meant that the participants had to address practical problems of living and using historic buildings and artefacts.

SCD-UK West Dean College, November 2009

The first run of the course was planned for October 2008, but had to be cancelled due to poor take-up of places. Finally, in November 2009, the course, entitled “Conservation Methodology”, was delivered. The eleven conservators who arrived at West Dean had taken a leap of faith and later admitted they were expecting a very dry academic experience. Dinah Eastop and I, as lead tutors, sensed an initial tension. Some participants felt obliged to criticize the use of sixteenth-century tapestries to decorate the main corridor, and suggested that these should be put into storage and replaced by replicas. The corridor had been designed to house the tapestries. The ‘tapestry issue’, and the myriad of issues this observation raised, became a motif of the course, which was referred to during later discussions. As it became apparent that there were no right or wrong answers as far as Dinah and I were concerned, the participants realized that they were in a ‘safe zone’ which encouraged open discussion and questioning of ‘accepted rules’. By and large, we adhered to the road map (Day 1 – The Object; Day 2 – The Contexts; Day 3 – Decision-Making). The ICCROM toolkit was shamelessly ransacked to present a series of lectures, videos, tours of the house and study of objects within the collection.