

***Noémie Etienne***

## **Histories of Conservation Science and Scientific Conservation after World War II**

Conservation became a scientific discipline during the 20th century. Nevertheless, different traditions of caring for objects existed since a long time, and are still alive in different social and cultural contexts. After WWII, in Europe and North America, a training in chemical knowledge and in using sophisticated devices has provided an occasion to gain professional recognition. The birth of professional schools, opposed to the empirical teaching in the studio, is another side of the same process. The use of chemical products during the second part of the 20th century has taken a major part in shaping conservation as a scientific field, using chemical treatments (biocide) to prevent the proliferation of insects described as «pest». But even in this context, multiple traditions of conservation still do co-exist, often outside of the museum. In this paper, I would like to consider the limits of scientific conservation. As scholars such as Lotte Arndt have recently emphasized, the use of chemicals has complicated the process of restitution. Furthermore, the Post-colonial and Green turns currently taken by conservators put into question the scientific paradigm. Indigenous scholars and activists are reclaiming alternate forms of caring for their properties. Thus, I will explore the multiple traditions of caring for (im)material culture, including approaches outside of Europe. For instance, I will question the training of African conservators in Europe and also discuss the possibility of bringing back to light alternate traditions, which have sometimes been erased and expelled out of the museum.