

Realigning the Legal Vision: Introductory Note

Since 2004, LIC's first interim meeting in Athens, Greece, LIC had been planning their second interim meeting in Egypt, coincidentally for this same time period. How delighted and grateful we were that PROMET invited us to partner with their conference in Cairo, as a one day LIC satellite meeting, concerned with the various legal issues in conservation, on the LIC theme of Realigning the Legal Vision.

In the three year interval, between the two LIC interim meetings, many unfortunate international incidences have brought the plight of our global world heritage into the public limelight. Perhaps a positive outcome, to so many of the tragedies, is that as conservator-restorers we are no longer pursuing our professional interests regarding, the legal issues of cultural heritage, alone amongst our various professional colleagues. Is it not therefore fitting that we take some energized direction from the famous Egyptian pyramids and channel this into truly Realigning the Legal Vision in regards to safeguarding our global cultural heritage? Is it not now our professional responsibility, as conservator-restorers, to become well informed with the legal issues in conservation and then share this information with the public at large? Surely over time the empowerment of shared knowledge will make it difficult for responsible politicians and heads of states to ignore the plight of our global world heritage and therefore convince them to act accordingly in creating and maintaining adequate legislation that safeguards international cultural heritage.

This collection of LIC papers is a testament to the seriousness of the issues at hand and trends that warrant immediate development. The vision of respect, regarding the cultural heritage of the many cultural groups and countries which make up our global village, is the essential point of departure and constant theme in these papers. Decision makers must come to terms with the fact that culture at large is also an essential part of our daily life, a required corner stone of the pyramid, which contributes to healthy local communities and partnering nations, resulting in a healthy global village. Recent statistics indicate that major amounts of monies resulting from the illicit trade of cultural heritage are being funnelled back to purchase arms, and create political unrest, even wars, leading to the death of many innocent citizens, especially women and children. As professional conservator-restorers we are no longer working within our isolated oases of the arts, whether that is a museum, gallery, university institution, or private conservation-restoration studio. Recent world crises have dismantled our illusionary museological walls and our professional work has migrated into the social realm. Future developments in technology will maintain our connection to the international social context; even change how the general public will interact with their cultural heritage. I therefore encourage all readers to take up the challenge, as have the authors of these papers, in applying part your ethical energy towards realigning the legal vision in the pursuit of safeguarding global cultural heritage.

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