



FACTVM
FOVNDATION

FOR DIGITAL TECHNOLOGY
IN CONSERVATION

Take Care

08-07-2014



A glibly said and clichéd throwaway over the shoulder as we leave that we don't really pay attention to - and that is very much the case with the history of our custodianship. Over the last few days we have been working on a number of projects (some of which appear in the newsletter - which I recommend) which remind us of many things, but amongst the most serious is the number of lost art works that we know of - that we know have been lost though they were valued (not always by all). We exhibit an extraordinary lack of care in our custodianship of great works, those works that represent a fundamental component of what makes us all human - our history and our culture.

We were evaluating all the various ways that we 'lose' objects of such importance - and if we examine these reasons for loss we realise just how ashamed we should be.

Let's look at our first cut:

1. Intended destruction by custodian/owner/usurper: political, religious, ideological, aesthetic
2. Theft, appropriation, forfeiture
3. Re-use of material/canvas etc
4. Simple loss, misplacement
5. Natural disaster - earthquake, plane crash, hungry animals, lost ship, flood/damp, visitor effect, fire, termites, avalanche, tornado, etc
6. Accident - various
7. Subject of work destroys it
8. War/conflict
9. Error
10. Degradation, deterioration
11. Restoration/care
12. Artist destroys work
13.

So, what this list is telling us is that however safe we judge our important artefacts, history tells us that complacency is a big mistake. And this process of 'loss' is accelerating as we find more ways to achieve it - often for benign reasons but we are still losing works constantly.

There is an answer - and that also relies on an accelerating process - our ability to record and preserve digitally.

If we had been thoughtful and had recorded any - or all- of those lost works we could now not only enjoy them through technology's gift - but also our descendents could. The excuse is - we didn't have the skills so it's not our fault - well we do now and it is. It is imperative we preserve what we have been given the duty, the obligation of care for so that the record that we make is only for monitoring and research (and that's important), nothing more serious.