

Plastics Lifetimes Are Short



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Plastics and rubbers are found in a variety of collections: historic, ethnographic, scientific, design, as well as modern and contemporary art. Most museums have these materials in their collections and the amount will continue to increase. This presentation will include overviews of the current state of knowledge regarding identification of plastics, physical and chemical qualities, causes and appearance of deterioration, preventive and active conservation measures, health and safety, and issues such as handling and marking. There will be a brief discussion on practical preventive conservation of plastics and rubbers as well as the challenges of active conservation.

Preserving Plastics for the Future

Yvonne Shashoua
Senior Researcher
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National Museum of Denmark

Museum objects are rarely collected for their material type but for their origin, function, design, rarity, cultural or historical significance. Degradation of plastics cannot be prevented, reversed, or stopped, but only inhibited or slowed. The purpose of this presentation is to discuss the status of preservation of plastics in museum collections. Of the ca. 50 basic plastics types available today, four have been identified as being more vulnerable to degradation than others in museum collections; cellulose nitrate, cellulose acetate plasticized PVC and rubbers. The most frequently seen forms of degradation in museums and the possibilities for slowing breakdown will be illustrated. Recent research by the speaker into the effectiveness of inhibitive conservation and forthcoming research into interventive conservation of plastics will be presented.



MCI

Topics in Museum Conservation

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9:45 am to 12:00 noon
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MCI Theater
MUSEUM SUPPORT CENTER
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