Conservation of Thangkas: Preserving a Living Religious Heritage
Sabine Cotte

ABSTRACT: Thangkas are not only artworks but part of a living religious heritage. Conservation of this type of heritage requires a different approach to assess what values are carried by the objects and what is to be conserved. It implies the necessity to broaden our thinking beyond the actual Western conservation ethical standards, which may be oriented too exclusively on material conservation. Some examples of acceptable compromises can be found through dialogue with all involved communities and by sharing knowledge and experiences with them; the aim is to find innovative ways to integrate conservation awareness within a living culture.

BIOGRAPHY: Sabine Cotte received a diploma in conservation of paintings from the Institut Français de Restauration des Oeuvres d’Art, Paris, in 1990. She also graduated from the ICCROM mural painting conservation course in 1994. She has worked in conservation of Himalayan paintings since 1992 and has completed various missions for UNESCO and private foundations in Bhutan and Nepal, on conservation of thangkas and mural paintings. She has published several articles and posters on this topic, in international journals and conferences. She has worked in Paris as a private conservator for ten years, both on Himalayan and Western art, mainly for institutions. She moved to Australia in 2001 and works privately in Melbourne, Victoria. She is currently enrolled in a Masters in Conservation at Melbourne University, her research topic being “Conservation of thangkas in Australia”.

CONTACT: Sabine Cotte, 2 McCabe Place, North Melbourne VIC 3051, Australia. Email: sabinec@ozemail.com.au . Website: www.sabinecotte.com .