

[SUMMARY]

A Brief History of the Conservation of Plastic-based Artworks with Case Studies

Hohi IKEDA, Independent Conservator

At present, plastic-based modern art works, design works, and modern industrial heritages are important cultural factors, collected by museums in the same way as traditional paintings and sculptures. This might be because such items became essential materials drastically and largely affecting daily life, cultures and industries in the mid-19th century and thereafter. In the collections of museums including social and cultural products related to daily life and historical events, the ratio of plastic works, which are like a mirror to an era, is higher than that of five decades ago.

However, plastics begin to physically deteriorate immediately after they are produced. Although it is possible to delay the progress of such deterioration by ensuring appropriate storage environment, not all museums have an ideal storage environment. In addition, interventional conservation treatments, including cleaning, bonding, filling, and enhancement, are carried out on plastic works, but such treatments are not easy and not always practical, suggesting that the treatments are actually limited. Thus, for conservation and repair of plastic art works, discussions should be held on storage of data including images, constitutional materials and techniques, interviews with artists, and other documentations, or in some cases, reproduction of the works may be necessary, based on contracts and copyright of artists.

The objectives and needs for preservation and repair of plastic works are as important as those seen in other cultural products, so that future generations can preserve past techniques and products to utilize them as subjects of investigations and research, and enjoy viewing them.