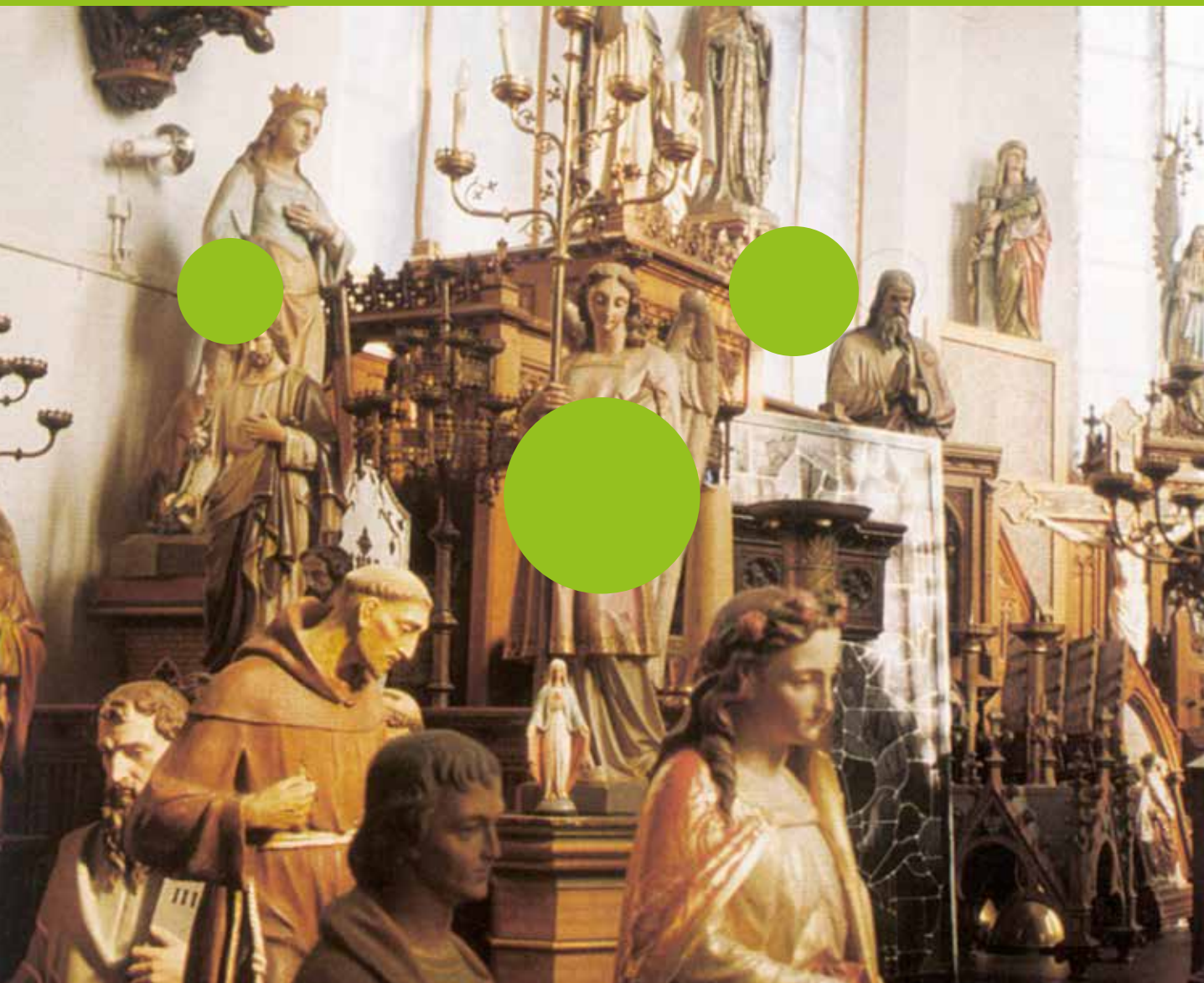


Guidelines on Ways of Dealing with Religious Objects





Preface

Virtually every country in Europe finds itself now having to deal with a changing religious landscape. Flourishing religious communities abound, but the traditional Christian life, in general, is in decline. This has major consequences. Not just for churchgoers and members of monastic orders, but for society at large. More and more churches, monasteries and convents are losing their original function. These religious buildings are the landmarks in our village or city landscapes. With their striking architecture and rich interiors, they are monuments of our cultural heritage.

Shrinking faith communities and diminishing funds are now placing this heritage in jeopardy. This calls for creative solutions. Choices must be made: what should be kept, and what should be relinquished? This applies not just to the buildings themselves, but also to their magnificent interiors and the objects in them. In 2010, Museum Catharijneconvent, the national museum for Christian art and culture in the Netherlands, took the initiative to devise fundamental solutions, in cooperation with various partners. These efforts culminated in the *Guidelines on Ways of Dealing with Religious Objects*.

The Guidelines are a unique instrument. Never before has an aid been devised for dealing with 'surplus' religious objects. The guidelines are easy to use: church owners and heritage specialists can ascertain what possesses cultural value, and where necessary, how religious objects can be deaccessioned with all due care. The close collaboration with national heritage agencies, and above all with the various Churches, has made the Guidelines a successful instrument.

The Guidelines have attracted great interest all over Europe; we are made aware of this on an almost daily basis. We therefore decided to publish them in an English translation, including a section on how they were devised. If you are involved in the problems relating to religious heritage, you may find this publication useful. Please feel free to contact the project group with your questions or comments. Let us learn from one another: there is strength in partnership!

Marieke van Schijndel
Director
Museum Catharijneconvent


Marc de Beyer
Project leader,
Guidelines on ways of Dealing with Religious Objects
Museum Catharijneconvent



Guidelines on Ways of Dealing with Religious Objects

What should we do with items belonging to our religious heritage?

The religious landscape of Western Europe is changing dramatically. Fewer and fewer people attend church, and many churches and monasteries around Europe are being forced to close their doors. As a result, besides finding a new use for these buildings, it is also necessary to deal with the religious objects they contain. Church owners and administrators are therefore compelled to make choices: what shall we keep, and what shall we dispose of?

There are a number of guidelines in Europe for dealing with churches and monasteries, but up to now, there have been no guidelines for dealing with religious objects. For this reason, Museum Catharijneconvent, in the Netherlands, joined forces with churches and heritage institutions to develop the *Guidelines on Ways of Dealing with Religious Objects* ('Guidelines'). This publication discusses the Dutch Guidelines and the way they were prepared. 

►
Every year, on 5 July, the diocesan town of Vic in Catalonia, Spain, celebrates the Feast of Sant Miquel dels Sants. 'Michael of the Saints' was born in Vic and is the town's patron saint. In this picture, the saint's statue is about to be wheeled into the cathedral.

The entrance is flanked by human towers or 'colles castelleres', forming pillars of an imaginary castle. This church feast enjoys the lively participation of the local community, as is clear from the photograph. Adrià Costa, Osona.com



Are you involved with policy-making in the area of the religious heritage? If so, you may find this publication helpful. The Dutch Guidelines project team will be happy to support you in this endeavour. You can find our contact details in the credits at the back.

What are the Guidelines?

The Guidelines consist of two instruments:

- the *Roadmap for Reusing and Deaccessioning Religious Objects* ('Roadmap'), which describes procedures that owners can use for deaccessioning religious objects.
- the *Religious Objects Assessment Guide* ('Assessment Guide'), which helps owners of churches to assess the cultural value of objects.

The Roadmap was prepared in accordance with the ecclesiastical law or guidelines of the various Churches involved. Each one has its own guidelines, procedures and organisational structure; above all, each has its own language. In the Dutch Guidelines, we focus primarily on those that have been afflicted by a sharp decline in membership.

The Assessment Guide is part of the Roadmap. It provides the basis for all decisions on the selection, re-use or deaccessioning of religious objects. If objects are to be relocated, it is

important to know what cultural value they represent. In many European countries, it is up to a church's owner to make this assessment. By using an assessment instrument that is as practical and simple as possible, church owners and administrators can maximise their contribution to assessing objects' value.


The situation in the Netherlands: the future for Europe?

The rapid change in ecclesiastical life in Western Europe is attributable to a variety of factors. In some European countries, such as the United Kingdom, Norway and the Netherlands, secularisation is the most important factor. In countries such as Sweden, France, Germany and Spain, demographic trends weigh more heavily. More and more people live in urban areas, where there is least involvement in the life of the Church. As a result, both urban and rural churches end up with dwindling congregations. The social or cultural role of churches also differs from one country to the next. Thus, in many countries, while attendance at Sunday services has declined, the Church still plays a significant role in landmark events in people's lives.

The situation in the Netherlands

The Netherlands has witnessed a sharp decline in interest in ecclesiastical and monastic life, and the future does not look encouraging. Is the Netherlands indicative of the situation awaiting other countries in Western Europe in the near future?

The largest Christian denominations in Europe are represented in the Netherlands. The combined membership of the Catholic and traditional Protestant Churches in the Netherlands is falling by 170,000 each year. These churches will not vanish altogether, but at this rate, by 2050 the traditional Protestant churches will be dangerously close to the brink.

The same applies to the Catholic Church in the final quarter of the century. Most Catholic dioceses are being restructured, and parishes are merging on a large scale. Typical mergers involve four or five parishes, but one that combines seven or eight is not exceptional. 

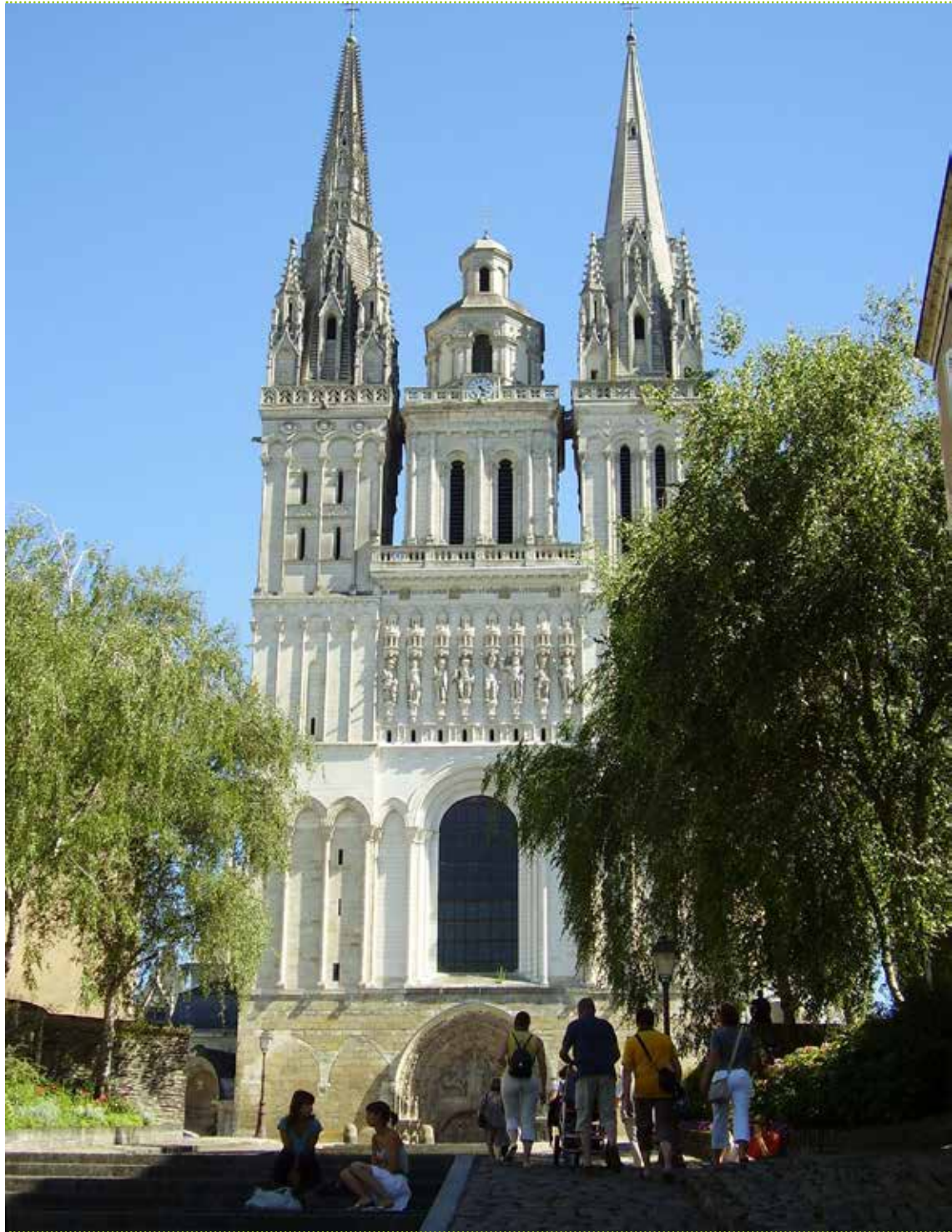
Number of church buildings in the Netherlands still used for religious purposes		
	2008	December 2011
Protestant Church in the Netherlands	2,638	2,540
Other Protestant Churches	1,560	1,466
Roman Catholic Church	1,707	1,627
Baptists	134	125
Evangelical Churches etc.	705	631
Temples, Sufi, Buddhist, Mormon	61	66
Apostolic Churches	195	169
Miscellaneous	712	350
Old Catholic Church	31	32
Judaism	51	54
Islam	399	440
Eastern Churches, foreign	130	147
Total	8,323	7,647

◀ *In just three years, 98 of the churches attached to the 'Protestant Church in the Netherlands' (representing the most traditional Protestant Churches in the Netherlands) had to close their doors. The number of Catholic churches fell by 80. Other Churches too, such as the Mennonite Church, as well as evangelical and apostolic churches, have been obliged to close churches in this period.*

Source: Nelissen, Geloof in de Toekomst, p. 44, and based on information provided by J. Sonneveld, *Inventarisatie Kerkelijke Gebouwen in Nederland*, December 2011.

►
Church and State have been officially separate in France since 1905. In that year, all churches along with the movable property they possessed came under State ownership. There are two categories of historic buildings in France: the high-ranking 'monument classé', which is the responsibility of the State, and the 'monument inscrit', which is the responsibility of a specific region. Angers Cathedral (Cathédrale Saint-Maurice d'Angers) in France is a national historic building, partly because of its Romanesque stained-glass windows, Gothic architecture, and thirteenth-century murals. The Cathedral is the responsibility of the French State.

French
Wikipedia



The relationship between Church and State:

A few examples

When dealing with religious heritage, the relationship between Church and State is an important factor to take into consideration. Some countries of Western Europe have a strict separation between Church and State, while there are others in which the government plays a central role in the preservation and management of religious heritage.

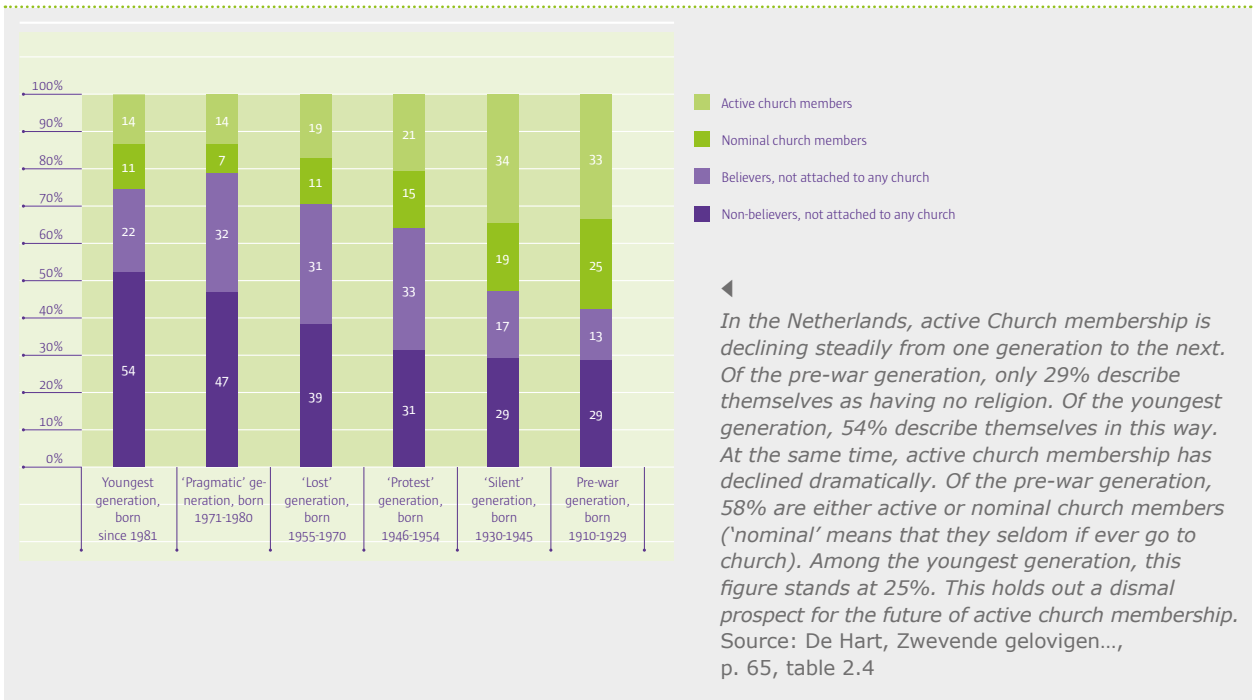
In France, for instance, churches dating from before 1905 are the property either of the State in the case of cathedrals, or of local authorities in the case of other churches. In Belgium, certain Churches and faith communities possess so-called 'recognised status'. The protection of the moveable religious heritage is laid down in the Imperial Decree of 1809, which provides that from that date on, church administrators or kerkfabrieken must by law compile inventories of all the objects in their care. Since 1834, church authorities have been forbidden to deaccession artworks or other objects, or to remove them from their original location, without the permission of the federal Ministry of Justice. In Germany, members of recognised religious organisations pay a surtax, *Kirchensteuer*, of approximately 9% of taxable income. The government redistributes this money to the central administrative authorities of the religious organisations, which use them to pay wages and for instance to finance the maintenance of religious buildings.

Denmark has a similar system, with a church tax of roughly 1% of taxable income for the Lutheran State Church. This does not cover the Church budget; the government makes up the shortfall of 13%. In Norway too, the Lutheran Church was until recently the established Church, but the Norwegian Constitution was amended in the summer of 2012, and the king is no longer the head of the Church. Financial ties continue to exist, however: although there is no church tax, the Church of Norway does receive government funding. In Sweden, the role of government was also recently changed: the Church of Sweden was disestablished in 2000 and it is now an independent congregation. Swedish children are no longer born into membership of the Church. In Italy, people pay a church tax of approximately 0.8% of taxable income, but they are free to stipulate whether it goes to the state or to a specified church. There is no government funding for churches in the Netherlands. Responsibility for religious heritage lies entirely on the shoulders of the churches themselves, with a few exceptions in the realm of restoration grant schemes.

Numerous local Protestant congregations too are merging. These mergers mean that many church buildings are becoming obsolete. Over the past few years, an average of 27 Catholic churches and 33 traditional Protestant churches have been forced to close each year.

The decline in monastic life is more dramatic still; in the Netherlands, it has almost ceased to exist. In the period between 1975 and 2008, as many as 1,500 houses had to close. At present, around 160 orders and congregations still exist. The average age of members of monastic communities is 85. According to the Dutch Religious Conference, the umbrella organisation for religious orders and congregations in the Netherlands, only eight to twelve monasteries, convents and abbeys will be left in the near future.

In total, the Netherlands has seen about 100 churches, monasteries and convents closing their doors each year over the past three years. This number will probably increase still further. All these closures place interiors and religious objects in jeopardy too. It is estimated that at least 150,000 religious objects will become obsolete in the longer term.



Specific guidelines for dealing with religious objects

This brief sketch makes it all too clear: these developments place enormous pressure on the moveable religious heritage – not just in the Netherlands, but in many European countries. The relative invisibility of religious objects, compared to the churches, monasteries and convents that stand out so conspicuously in village and city landscapes, poses an added threat.



▲ *Park Abbey, which dates largely from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, rises prominently amid an old man-made landscape, near Leuven in Belgium. It is still inhabited by three Norbertines, who found that they could no longer cope with the maintenance of their abbey and land. Since 2004 the building has been open to the public, and a number of social and cultural organisations have moved in, including the Park Abbey Museum and the Centre for Religious Art and Culture (CRKC), which is the expertise centre for religious heritage in Flanders and Brussels. The library has a superb stucco ceiling dating from 1672, with scenes from the life of St Norbert, who founded the order.*

Park Abbey

What is more, this type of religious heritage is of a sensitive nature, because of its liturgical use, or its sacred or devotional value. So we now face a difficult decision: what must be done with all this endangered heritage? Of course, we could place it in storage. But storing and managing such objects would be an expensive operation. Furthermore, once placed in storage, objects are stripped of their context, and it is questionable whether they would ever re-emerge. Would such a solution not amount to shirking our responsibility for our religious heritage and leaving subsequent generations to deal with it? It is time to make responsible choices about preserving or deaccessioning religious objects. Specific guidelines are indispensable to this process.

In developing these guidelines, Museum Catharijneconvent based its approach on two key principles: first, valuable items belonging to the religious heritage must be preserved, and second, the remaining religious objects must be deaccessioned in a transparent fashion.

The result is a unique document. No one has ever developed an assessment framework or deaccessioning guidelines for religious objects before. We prepared the Guidelines in close collaboration with churches. They incorporate the conclusions of the latest studies on heritage, such as the direct influence of the heritage community, and the notion that national heritage is not necessarily more important than local or regional heritage.



►
Front of the Dutch
Guidelines on
Ways of Dealing
with Religious
Objects



Furthermore, it is the first set of guidelines to explicitly address the painful and difficult subject of destruction. The Guidelines are not intended exclusively for the Christian denominations that are traditionally found in the Netherlands. They may also be useful for other denominations, such as Orthodox, Evangelical, or Pentecostal churches, or faith communities such as Islam, Judaism, Hinduism, or Buddhism.

The Guidelines will help Churches, orders and congregations, and heritage specialists to make well-founded choices when dealing with their ecclesiastical heritage. There is a great need – certainly in the Netherlands, but undoubtedly in the rest of Europe too – for a simple, practical instrument to help make these choices. These Guidelines fill that gap. ►

This introduction is based on Marc de Beyer, 'What Should We Do with Items Belonging to Our Religious Heritage? Reflections on the Guidelines on Ways of Dealing with Religious Objects', in L. Noppen (ed.), Des couvents en héritage/Religious Houses: A Legacy, Québec, Les Presses de l'Université du Québec, 2012.

The Driving Force behind the Guidelines: Museum Catharijneconvent

The Guidelines were prepared at the instigation of Museum Catharijneconvent, which stands in what has been since mediaeval times the Archdiocese of Utrecht. The national museum of Christian art and culture contains a rich collection of Christian heritage in a sixteenth-century convent of the Order of St John. Two Catholic collections (one episcopal, the other archiepiscopal), the precious collection of the Old Catholics, and a Protestant art collection illustrate the turbulent history of Christianity in the Netherlands. Museum Catharijneconvent possesses a superb collection of mediaeval sculptures, paintings, and manuscripts, seveneenth-century religious paintings and church silverware, and one of the finest collections of liturgical vestments in Europe.

Museum Catharijneconvent has been assigned the task of conducting research on matters relating to the religious heritage. Until mid-2012, the inventories of churches, monasteries and convents were charted by the Church Art Heritage Foundation (*Stichting Kerkelijk Kunstbezit in Nederland*). From 2013 onwards, responsibility for documenting and assessing the value of ecclesiastical art in the Netherlands passes to Museum Catharijneconvent. In this context, we shall be focusing mainly on the closures of churches, monasteries and convents, which place a particular strain on the movable religious heritage. We shall collaborate closely on a practical level with parishes and monastic communities. Our work will be attuned to their preferences. Parishes and monastic communities can – and want to – do a great deal themselves. We shall encourage this enthusiastically, for we face the challenges together. At the same time, we adopt a realistic approach to the religious heritage: it is impossible to keep everything, and choices will have to be made.

The former convent of the Order of St John since the Reformation has had numerous different occupants. In 1979 it became the premises of Museum Catharijneconvent. In the former refectory of Museum Catharijneconvent, highlights from the museum's mediaeval collections of paintings and sculptures are on show.

Museum Catharijneconvent ▼





The first church
closures since
the Middle Ages

For the first time since the Middle Ages, Copenhagen is closing seventeen churches. 'Obviously that has not happened without causing controversy', says Michael Andersen. Andersen is chief curator of the National Museum of Denmark, which advises churches on matter of renovation and restoration, and now – for the first time – on closures.

'Churchgoers obviously oppose the closures', says Andersen. 'They're attached to their church, besides which closures mean job losses.' About 85% of the Danish population belongs to the established Evangelical Lutheran Church. This percentage is falling, however, because a growing number of parents are choosing not to baptise their children. 'In addition, there are about 30% fewer churchgoers today than in the days of industrialisation, when workers flocked to the city to find employment.' So it is not so strange that a number of churches are closing down.

Taxpayers' money for church maintenance

In Denmark, parishioners bear primary responsibility for the maintenance of churches and their interiors. Every parishioner pays church tax for this purpose. In addition, Evangelical Lutheran churches receive support from public funds. So indirectly, all Danish taxpayers help to maintain Evangelical Lutheran churches.

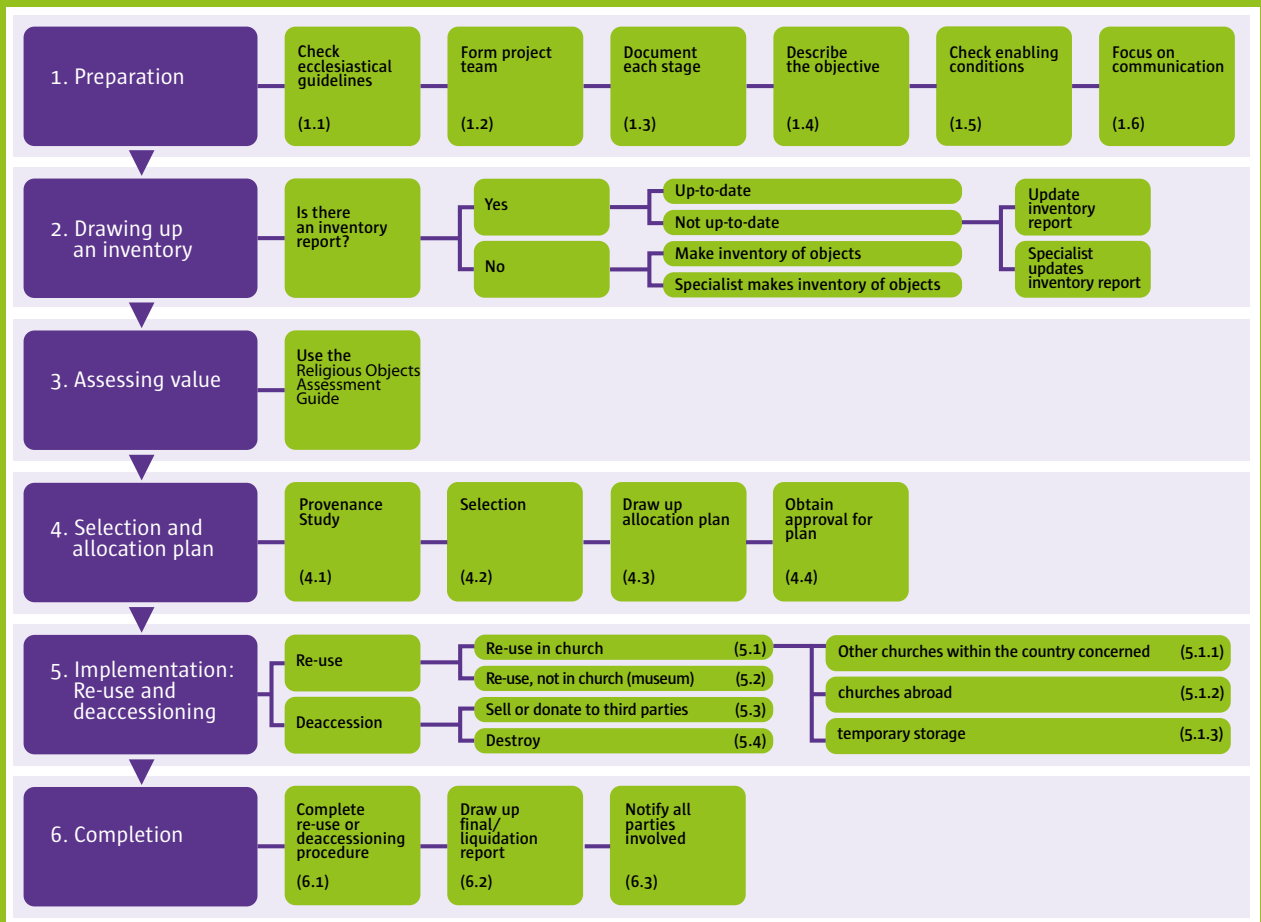
Mandatory recommendations

Andersen is curious to see how the buildings will be used: 'That also depends on the interior: if pews possess unique value within a specific space, it's more difficult to relocate them.' Since 1927, the National Museum has described every church in the country in minute detail; its encyclopaedic publications are updated on a regular basis. If parishioners want to renovate or restore their church, they are required to ask the National Museum for its recommendations first. This only applies to churches that are over a hundred years old, of which there are quite a few – more than a thousand. These have frequently been preserved in good condition, since Denmark was untouched by the Iconoclastic Fury. 'In assessing the renovation plans, we try to make sure that important heritage doesn't get lost or damaged', says Andersen. 'For instance, many mediaeval churches have murals.' In most cases, churches adopt the museum's recommendations.

Mosque in a church

On a working visit to the Netherlands, Andersen was struck by the originality of the Dutch approach to religious heritage. 'For instance, it never occurred to us to divide the church in two, with one half still being used as a church and the other half as an office. We also saw that a former church could perfectly well be used as a mosque. This made it possible to preserve the characteristic architecture as a landmark. These examples broaden the mind.'

Roadmap for Re-using and Deaccessioning Religious Objects



This chapter describes the six steps that members of parishes, congregations, and orders may take in arranging for the re-use or deaccessioning of religious objects. The *Roadmap for Reusing and Deaccessioning Religious Objects* ('the Roadmap') will hopefully serve as a source of inspiration for you when you are called upon to draft guidelines tailored to your own situation.

The Roadmap was devised in accordance with the ecclesiastical law or ecclesiastical guidelines of the various Churches involved. There are major differences between Catholic and Protestant Churches. The Catholic Church is an international Church with a clear organisational structure, while Protestant Churches are more autonomous. The Catholic Church has the Code of Canon Law, which includes provisions governing the treatment of religious heritage. Protestant Churches often have guidelines on how to deal with churches and their inventories.

The Roadmap was originally written for members of parishes, congregations, and orders, and therefore addresses this readership directly.

1. Preparation

1.1 Check ecclesiastical guidelines

Sound preparation is crucial: check to see what procedures and guidelines apply to the deaccessioning of religious objects and which bodies are in charge of supervising this process. This will differ from one Church to the next. Gaining a clear picture of this will ensure that you know from the outset who you can approach for advice and/or consent for the deaccessioning of religious objects, and when to do so.

For the Catholic Church and, for instance, the Anglican church the diocese bears ultimate responsibility for decisions. Other Churches and monastic orders frequently have special committees that concern themselves with the movable religious heritage. The Dutch Guidelines include a list of all ecclesiastical institutions that concern themselves with religious heritage.

1.2 Form a project team


Set up a project team to deal with the deaccessioning of objects. Make sure that its members possess the necessary mandates from the diocese, church council or monastic order concerned.

1.3 Document each stage

Document every step you take in order to guarantee a transparent process. This will make it possible for you to perform checks afterwards.

1.4 Describe the objective

Describe in advance the reason for embarking on this procedure and the goal to be pursued.

Is a church closing because of a merger or reorganisation? Or are changes being made 

to the interior of the church, for instance? The initial situation will influence the final selection of objects. By way of illustration: when two parishes merge, some objects will be transferred to the 'merger church'. In such cases, the *current value* (see pp. 35-36) is probably of overriding importance. The primary goal could be described here as follows: 'the church is closing, and the objects need to be relocated'. A secondary goal may be: 'parishioners or members of the congregation must feel at home in the new church by ensuring that objects with a high current value are transferred from the church that is closing to the new place of worship.

The Guidelines include a set of 'Guidelines for Compiling an Inventory'. These explain the process of compiling an inventory, one step at a time.

They answer questions like 'Why compile an inventory?', 'What are the ecclesiastical guidelines on compiling an inventory?', 'What do you include in an inventory?', 'How do you go about compiling an inventory?' and 'What are the important details to be included?'. The guidelines provide owners and administrators with a simple introduction to the ins and outs of compiling an inventory, so that they can get down to the task at hand. Answers to a questionnaire revealed that respondents regarded the 'Guidelines for Compiling an Inventory' as a useful tool.

Frank en Vrij Media

1.5 Check enabling conditions

Is the church a protected, listed building? In that case, its inventory may be governed by specific rules. In the Dutch Guidelines we included a list of bodies that may be relevant in this connection.

1.6 Focus on communication

Deaccessioning religious objects can be a sensitive issue. It is therefore important to organise the communication surrounding the process carefully. Clear, transparent communication can help to dispel a sense of unrest among the parish or congregation as well as in the outside world. It is therefore a good idea to designate a spokesman: the local and in some cases even the national media may well express an interest. It would also be wise to coordinate communication with the church council or diocese.

2. Drawing up an inventory

Find out what inventory reports of the objects exist, and whether they are up to date. If no such report exists, we advise drawing up an inventory of the objects, or having one made. Several European countries have agencies with expertise in drawing up inventories of the religious works of art and cultural artefacts in the possession of churches, monasteries and convents.

Owners and administrators can draw up inventory reports themselves. To help them, the Dutch Guidelines include an appendix with guidelines for compiling an inventory. We would advise compiling this inventory, at least in part, together with a heritage specialist. >





◀ **Jakobs kirke, Oslo**

Where is the dividing line between movable and immovable property? The case of the Lutheran Jakobs kirke in Oslo, Norway, illustrates the way in which this problem may be approached. Falling church attendance made it necessary to merge a number of parishes. The Jakobs kirke was threatened by demolition, but it was saved by being accorded protected status as a historic building. Today it houses a Christian cultural centre with a theatre, exhibitions, fashion shows, and a recording studio. The building's façade has been preserved largely in its original state, while its interior has been in part preserved and in part assigned to other uses. The choir with the altarpiece and the pulpit are still there, but the pews were removed to allow for a flexible use of the space. This means that these fixed parts of the interior were detached from the building itself, and were no longer regarded as part of the church's immovable heritage. Oddbjørn Sørmoen, Riksantikvaren

Grey area between church buildings and religious objects

Some religious objects – such as liturgical vestments, church silver, paintings, candlesticks, or *prie-dieux* – are indisputably 'movable property'. In other cases, however, specifically when objects are built into or attached to the building, whether they are classified as moveable property or as part of the building may differ from one situation to the next. This applies to altars, altarpieces, text panels, pews, manorial pews, communion rails, and stations of the cross, as well as items like chandeliers. Since these objects are in a 'grey area' between moveable and immovable property, we advise having them valued.

What items of an interior are inextricably connected to a building and are indisputably part of the religious real estate? Such items include, for instance, stained-glass windows, rood lofts, ritual basins, mural and ceiling paintings, mosaics, floors, tombstones, foundation stones, organs, church screens, and confessionals. Even so, it may be advantageous to have these elements valued. Depending on the church's listed building status and the plans that exist for its future use, these elements of the interior may in some cases be separated from the building and relocated elsewhere.

3. Assessing value

Before religious objects can be relocated, their cultural value must be determined. This assessment serves as the basis for subsequent decisions on reallocation and deaccessioning. Such is the importance of this assessment of objects' value that we elaborate it in a separate chapter: *Assessment Guide* (see pp. 32-41).

4. Selection and allocation plan

Once the objects' value has been assessed, you can select the objects and draw up a plan for dealing with them. When it comes to deaccessioning objects, the question of ownership is crucial. Legal ownership differs from one country to the next. In the Netherlands, churches are owned exclusively by the Church communities concerned. In many countries, however, the local or central government may be part owner of the property, or have a say in any deaccessioning of objects. Furthermore, legal ownership may differ from one Church community to the next.

4.1 Provenance Study

Determine the legal owner and provenance of the objects, and find out whether they are governed by any conditions. Notify the present or former owners or heirs, where relevant, of the deaccessioning plans.

- *Property*

Is the parish, church community, order or congregation or the parish the owner of the property? Or is ownership vested in the diocese or local or central government? It is crucial that the person who selects and 'deaccessions' objects is the actual owner, or has been authorised by the owners to make these decisions. Donations and restorations may be governed by restrictions.

Financial value

Items that may be valuable as religious artefacts or in terms of cultural history do not always possess commercial or financial value. When considering the question, 'What do we want to preserve?', financial value is not an isolated criterion. Furthermore determining financial value requires specific expertise and therefore falls outside the scope of the Assessment Guide. Of course, financial value may well be one of the subjects discussed in the assessment and deaccessioning process. It is certainly important in relation to the sale or management of objects, for instance because of insurance issues. A certified appraiser can advise the church council or monastic order on such matters. It should be borne in mind that the assessment of an object's financial value is extremely contextual in terms of time; only a recent valuation is of any use. Some church communities have rules on the compulsory financial assessment of objects before they may be deaccessioned.



◀
Dispute of the Holy Sacrament Peter Paul Rubens, c. 1609

This superb altarpiece by Peter Paul Rubens (1577-1640) is protected by the Decree on the Protection of Cultural Heritage of Exceptional Importance (Topstukkendecreet), and therefore cannot be exported from Belgium. It was given this status primarily because it plays a key role in the Flemish painter's oeuvre. Rubens produced it shortly after returning from Italy, and its composition derives from the large altarpieces that he painted there. The Brotherhood of the Holy Sacrament of the church of St Paul commissioned the painting for its altar in the Sacrament Chapel, where it can still be seen today. The painting served as a source of inspiration for the Utrecht painter Abraham Bloemaert (1566-1651), who copied a number of figures from it for an altarpiece with the same subject in the collection of Museum Catharijneconvent. Wikimedia Commons

○ **Loans**

Objects that have been provided on loan are not eligible for deaccessioning. They must be returned to the person who provided them on loan, or to this person's heir or legal successor.

○ **Donations**

It is permissible to deaccession objects that have been donated, unless conditions were attached to the donation. Moral considerations too may prompt caution when deaccessioning donations. Thus, it may be wise to inform the donor or his heirs in the event of a change of ownership.





◀
**Reliquary of the
Martyrs of Trier,
Luxembourg**

This superbly gilded wooden reliquary contains the relics of the Martyrs of Trier. Until 1870, Luxembourg came under the diocese of Trier. The reliquary is on the votive altar in the choir of Luxembourg's cathedral. It is on view only two weeks a year, during the annual pilgrimage to honour Mary, 'Comforter of the Afflicted.' Assigning relics to a new destination requires special attention. The policy is to hand over the relics to the diocese or the church province, where they will be administered by the 'custos reliquiarum'.

Alex Langini

○ **Testamentary dispositions and bequests**

An object or inventory from a bequest or testamentary disposition is obtained 'without express acceptance'. A bequest has a different legal status from a donation, since no agreement is concerned. But just as in the case of a donation, conditions may be attached to a bequest. So when considering the relocation or deaccessioning of such an object, you should always contact the heirs of the legatee or testator.

○ **Grants**

If the objects selected have been acquired or restored with the aid of a grant, conditions may be attached. In many cases, you will need to ask for permission to deaccession these objects. If you fail to obtain it, the party that provided the grant may claim the money back. If that party consents to the object being deaccessioned and money is earned on the transaction, the party concerned may claim a sum in reimbursement.

- o *Statutory protection*

Objects may be protected by legislation. For instance, the Netherlands has the Cultural Heritage Preservation Act (*Wet tot behoud van Cultuurbezit*) and Flanders has the Decree on the Protection of Cultural Heritage of Exceptional Importance (*Topstukkendecreet*).

4.2 Selection

Once you have charted all the existing conditions and assessed the objects' value, you can make decisions on the reallocation of the selected objects. Several possibilities present themselves. If a faith community is moving and certain objects are not being taken to the new place of worship, the objects may be reallocated. Several possible courses of action can be considered. Objects may be sold to churches at home or abroad, given or sold to museums or private individuals, or if all else fails, they may be destroyed. This final option is discussed in the section with the heading 'Step 5.4'.

4.3 Draw up an allocation plan

Draw up a plan for dealing with the objects on the basis of the steps listed above: the inventory report, the results of the assessment, the recommendations on the reallocation or deaccessioning of objects, and the provenance study. Check whether special procedures apply to any of the objects – for instance, relics or sacred vessels (*vasa sacra*). In the case of objects that possess definite current value, or cultural-historical value, you should indicate what is to be done with them. In the case of the remaining objects, or groups of objects, the preferred modes of reallocation should be indicated.

4.4 Obtain approval for plan

Before implementing the allocation plan, you will need to obtain the approval of the competent authority. This may differ from one country to the next, and more notably from one Church community to the next. We advise enlisting the services of an expert to determine the financial or commercial value of objects that are not being taken along to the new place of worship. This is in accordance with the guidelines laid down by the Catholic Church.

5. Implementation: Re-use and deaccessioning

Once the allocation plan has been approved, it can be implemented. In our Guidelines, we distinguish between *re-use* and *deaccessioning*.

Re-use or deaccessioning?

We refer to 're-use' if an object is donated or sold, or transferred on loan, to a church or museum. In cases of this kind, the object will once again acquire a public or institutional role. Deaccessioning applies to cases in which an object is sold or donated to a private owner, whose identity is generally unknown beforehand. The object will then be used in a private setting; the new owner can do what he wants with it. Destruction also comes under the heading of 'deaccessioning'.



▶ **Altar of St Peter's Church, Preston Park, England**

The need to assign items of religious heritage for re-use elsewhere is not something new. The altar of St Peter's Church in the Preston Park area of Brighton in the UK is a good example of a historical decision for re-use. The altar was originally the chest-tomb of Edward Elrington (d. 1515), a former occupant of Preston Manor. The top of the altar was made from a memorial tablet for Anthony Shirley (d. 1624), who had inherited Preston Manor in 1569. When the chapel was restored in 1877, the tomb was moved from the north wall to the centre of the church. As a result, it became suitable for use as an altar. The Churches Conservation Trust



A number of ways are indicated in which religious objects can be re-used or deaccessioned in a transparent way:

RE-USE

RE-USE IN A CHURCH (5.1)

- Other churches within the country concerned (5.1.1)
- Other churches abroad (5.1.2)
- Temporary storage (5.1.3)

RE-USE, NOT IN A CHURCH (5.2)

- Museum

If it proves impossible to arrange for an object's re-use in a church or museum, deaccessioning can be considered:

DEACCESSIONING

THE SALE OR DONATION OF OBJECTS TO THIRD PARTIES (5.3)

DESTRUCTION (5.4)

Re-use

5.1 Re-use in a church

Three distinct possibilities exist in this respect: other churches within the country concerned, other churches abroad, and temporary storage.

The Dutch Guidelines include a large number of practical suggestions for trying to arrange for the re-use of objects in a church. For instance, you may want to place the objects on a website for transfers of ecclesiastical objects. In addition, there are certain umbrella organisations through which you can approach other churches. We also make recommendations on how to approach churches, on the way in which interested churches can respond, and on criteria you may wish to draw up for the transfer.

5.1.1 Other churches within the country concerned

You could start by offering the religious objects to other churches within your own Church community. Preferably, one would start by approaching churches within one's own city, region, diocese or classis, and then widen the search to the rest of the country. However, as the number of churches still being used for services steadily declines, it is becoming increasingly difficult to find a church within the same country that is willing to accept such objects. Other Christian churches, such as the growing number of churches frequented by migrants, may possibly be interested.

5.1.2 Churches abroad

Another possibility is to donate the objects to churches, monasteries or convents in another country. This has a better chance of success and is already taking place quite frequently. Monastic orders often donate their objects to communities within their own mission districts. Church communities frequently maintain good ties with sister Churches in Eastern Europe, for example, where there has been a great demand for religious objects since the fall of Communism. In the coming years, the same will undoubtedly apply to Asia, Africa, and South America, where Christianity is experiencing robust growth. It is clearly preferable to keep objects that are of great current or cultural-historical value in your own country.

5.1.3 Temporary storage

You can store objects in the church or in an ecclesiastical or external storage facility. This is a temporary solution. Some dioceses or ecclesiastical organisations have storage space for religious objects. The ownership of the objects frequently passes from the parish to the diocese.

5.2 Re-use other than in a church (museum)

A non-church allocation may mean a museum with a religious section, or a city specialised in local urban or regional history that includes information on the local religious life. It must be said that it is relatively rare to succeed in transferring an object to a museum. The storage facilities of most European museums are already filled to overflowing.

Deaccessioning

When no other church or museum expresses an interest in the objects, there are several ways in which religious objects can be deaccessioned.



In 2005, St Peter's Church (Sint-Petruskerk) in Vught, the Netherlands, stopped holding religious services. Its inventory was moved in four trucks to various churches in the diocese of Lemberg, Ukraine. In the church, the pews and votive candle stands come from this church.

Eugène van Deutekom



◀
Statuettes of the Virgin Mary with the Christ Child and Joseph, Sint-Joris pottery workshop, Beesel, the Netherlands, c. 1950

It still occasionally happens that objects are successfully reassigned for re-use at a different church in the same country. In 2011 these ceramic statuettes of the Holy Family moved to St Martin's Church (Sint-Maartenkerk) in Gorinchem, the Netherlands. They come from the Church of St Theresia (Sint-Theresiakerk) in The Hague, which closed after a merger of parishes. The parish priest is delighted with them: 'they greatly enrich our building, and we hope that the presence of images of these important figures will constantly remind us of the love of Christ'.



Reliquary Head of St Fabian, Portugal Aragon, late 13th, early 14th century

This Reliquary Head is one of the most important treasures in the diocese of Beja in southern Portugal. The diocese has eight museums in which its religious heritage is displayed. The silver reliquary with skull comes from a small rural church. It is now displayed in the treasury of the royal basilica of Our Lady of the Immaculate Conception in Castro Verde. The basilica and the treasury are open to the public every day.

Department of Historical and Artistic Heritage of the Diocese of Beja

5.3 Sale or donation to third parties

You can sell or donate objects to third parties. It is our experience that Protestant Churches are more willing to sell religious objects than Catholic communities. The Catholic Church is in general less disinclined to go down this path, because many liturgical objects have been consecrated.

Practical suggestions in relating to the sale or donation of objects

Transparency is paramount. Bear the following points in mind:

- In many Churches consent must be obtained from a Synodal Committee, or from the diocese or a specific ecclesiastical committee that supervises the works of art owned by churches.
- The church may organise an auction itself, or hire the services of an auctioneer. The latter can save considerable time, and is transparent, but may be very expensive. It is important to assure oneself of the auctioneer's reliability.
- In some cases, resale right may exist. This is the right of the maker of a work of art, or his heirs (until 70 years after the maker's death) to a percentage of the resale price when a work of his is resold, whereby the services of a professional art dealer must be used. This also applies when a work is sold to a museum. For more information, see: http://ec.europa.eu/internal_market/copyright/resale-right/resale-right_en.htm.
- One possible option may be to sell or donate objects at a public sale or auction, or in a lottery. Objects may also be sold or donated to members of the parish or Church community by way of mementos. Preferably, however, these transactions too should be wholly transparent, so as to forestall any disputes.
- Private sales are also possible, but these tend to be less transparent. This procedure may be attractive if you have relatively few objects to dispose of.

5.4 Destruction

The Roadmap includes a section on the destruction of religious objects. This is obviously the very last resort. Nonetheless, destruction cannot be avoided altogether: it is impossible to preserve everything. There are several possible reasons for opting for destruction. Perhaps an object is in extremely poor condition, or perhaps you are eager to prevent certain objects coming into the possession of private individuals because of their religious nature. It is self-evident that objects with great current or historical value (see pp. 35-39) will in principle never be considered for destruction. What is more, the consent of the competent authorities will be required. It may be advisable to build in a period of reflection. And it is important to bear in mind that all assessments of value are products of their age, and based on criteria that may change over time.

Destruction can also have positive implications. In the Dutch Guidelines, we suggest using objects that have been destroyed to make a new work of art, one that can serve as a binding factor in the faith community. Alternatively, objects earmarked for destruction can be donated to a restoration workshop.

Practical suggestions for the destruction of objects

It is preferable to consult a heritage specialist when selecting objects for destruction;
Document and/or photograph the objects, or groups of objects, that are to be destroyed;
Make sure that the objects are actually destroyed and do not end up on the market in some roundabout way. In the Catholic Church, it is sometimes possible for the diocese to oversee the destruction procedure. It is best to have the destruction carried out by a specialised destruction company.

6. Completion

The final stage is to complete all the necessary paperwork relating to the re-use and deaccessioning of the objects. This may sound obvious, but it deserves to be mentioned since it is important to the transparency of the process.

6.1 Complete re-use or deaccessioning procedure

Draw up a deed of transfer and transfer the objects and their details to the new owner. As a rule, the transport costs are borne by the new owner.

6.2 Draw up final/liquidation report

Draw up a final report. The report details where the objects are to go and whether the transfer is a sale, donation, or loan. Enclose copies of the appropriate agreements or the documentation relating to destruction, if relevant, to the final report.

6.3 Notify all parties involved

Notify all parties involved and add the final reports to the archives of the parish, Church community, diocese, monastery or convent. Is there a regional or national institution that keeps records on the public ecclesiastical art collection or bears responsibility for it? If so, send the final report to this organisation too.





Striking a balance
between religion,
heritage and community

'In England, churches tend to be re-used rather than closed', explains Michael Hoare, treasurer of Future for Religious Heritage, a European network for the preservation of religious heritage. 'Wherever possible, we try to keep the original objects in them.'

'You can't just shut churches down', says Hoare. 'That has to be done in an organised way. Because if religious heritage is reassigned to a different use, it is essential to strike the right balance between three factors: religion, heritage, and community. Otherwise, financial factors end up prevailing at the expense of other kinds of value.'

'More churches should be closed'

In England, the Catholic Church and the Anglican Church take different approaches to this issue. 'It is important to be aware of this difference. The Catholic Church is actively involved in closing churches, but it does not inform Church members sufficiently of the changes.' In Hoare's view, the Anglican Church should really be closing more churches than it does, because they no longer have any social function. 'But this is often too delicate an issue to broach within a parish. Especially where a parish has built up the church itself.'

Faith and the benefits of churches

Hoare hastens to say that churches are still needed: 'Churches have a social function: they are meeting places and they represent a local history. If the community does not realise this, and fails to take action, you find that the church has suddenly vanished.' Joking: 'And then where do you bury Granny?' With the network Future for Religious Heritage, he hopes to prevent local communities from being caught unawares by such *faits accomplis*.

A church interior belongs in a church

Village churches deserve to receive special attention, in Hoare's view. Most are mediaeval, including valuable interiors that should preferably be kept in their original function within the church. Hoare: 'If there are services or pilgrimages, for instance, that's a good thing. But if the local community is not involved it becomes difficult, since it's just not possible to keep all the objects that were in a church.'

Copy the Guidelines

To make balanced decisions about what to do with a church and an interior, you need information, says Hoare. 'You need to know the actual value of the building itself and the objects in it. That includes social value. If a widow puts flowers in the church every week, that is in itself a social function. The Dutch Guidelines could be helpful here. We're going to copy everything from them that would be suitable in our situation.'

Religious Objects Assessment Guide

Heritage assessment form

Guidelines on ways of dealing with
religious objects

Church: _____

Object: _____

Inv. no.: _____

Current value filled in by: _____

Historical value and comparative criteria filled in by: _____

Date: _____

Auxiliary questions

The auxiliary questions are intended as aids in assessing an object's heritage. It is not necessary (and indeed it may not be possible) to answer each one.

a current value

low moderate high n.a.

explanatory notes: _____

a current value

Is the object closely related to the proclamation of the Word of God, the celebration of the sacraments, or does it play an important liturgical role in some other way?

Does the object possess any devotional heritage?

Does the object illustrate certain present-day traditions or customs that are characteristic of the church community?

Does the object illustrate the close ties that unite the community?

Does the object possess a particular commemorative or memorial value for the community?

Is the object of particular value to the community?

b historical values

local regional level	national level
<p>b1 church-historical value</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> low <input type="checkbox"/> moderate <input type="checkbox"/> high <input type="checkbox"/> n.a.</p> <p>explanatory notes: _____</p>	<p>b1 church-historical value</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> low <input type="checkbox"/> moderate <input type="checkbox"/> high <input type="checkbox"/> n.a.</p> <p>explanatory notes: _____</p>
<p>b2 general historical value</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> low <input type="checkbox"/> moderate <input type="checkbox"/> high <input type="checkbox"/> n.a.</p> <p>explanatory notes: _____</p>	<p>b2 general historical value</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> low <input type="checkbox"/> moderate <input type="checkbox"/> high <input type="checkbox"/> n.a.</p> <p>explanatory notes: _____</p>

b1 church-historical value

Are there important details on the object relating to church history and/or the traditions or customs of the church or the Church denomination, or does the object help to clarify them?

Does the object illustrate characteristic traditions, customs or lifestyle of a church or Church denomination, monastery/convent, order or congregation, or a specific sub-group of one?

Can the object be associated with an important group, figure, event, place, development or school of thought within the history of the church or the Church denomination?

b2 general historical value

Does the object bear witness to a historical theme, process, development, school of thought, or lifestyle?

Can the object be associated with an important historical group, figure, event, place, development or school of thought?

1/4

In this chapter we explain how members of parishes, orders and congregations can assess the value of religious objects with the aid of the *Religious Objects Assessment Guide*. They can determine this cultural value on the basis of three distinct criteria: *current value*, *historical value*, and *comparative criteria*. Using these criteria, each object ends up with a final score. Depending on the objective pursued in assessing the objects' value, certain criteria may be accorded more weight than others in determining the final selection. When assessing an object's value, the heritage assessment form can be used. You can find this form on pp. 60-63, and it can also be downloaded from www.GuidelinesReligious-Objects.com. The following section first proposes an organisational structure for the assessment procedure, before going on to explain the different assessment criteria.

▲ Using the heritage assessment form, owner and heritage specialist can together determine the current and historical value of religious objects.

The Roadmap was originally written for members of parishes, congregations, and orders, and therefore addresses this readership directly.

1. Setting up the assessment procedure: division of labour

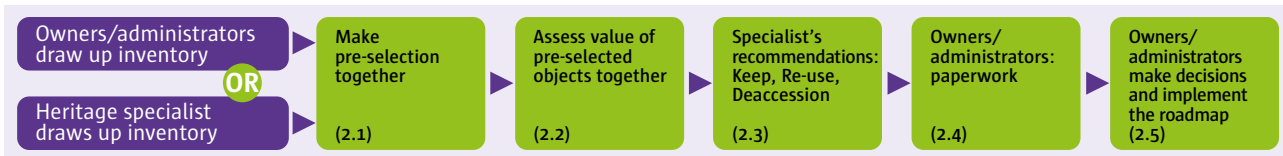
Set up an assessment team consisting of the owner/administrator and one or more heritage specialists. It is important to establish clearly who bears ultimate responsibility.

Combining different kinds of expertise

Everyone looks at an object differently, depending on his position, knowledge, and responsibility. A museum curator views an object primarily from a historical – or art historical – perspective, and thinking about whether it fits into the museum’s collecting policy. Churchgoers, on the other hand, will be influenced mainly by personal experience, and by an object’s sacred quality or its connection with local history. They will often be less swayed by factors relating to church or art history. None of these perspectives is inherently more or less important; they complement each other. It is therefore best to ensure that no single party is responsible for valuing items of religious heritage. Instead, their value should be assessed by the owner or administrator together with a heritage specialist, each working on the basis of his own expertise and experience. ...▶



◀ A heritage specialist and an administrator together assessing the value of the collection of religious objects in a Catholic Church. Frank en Vrij Media



2. Description of the assessment procedure

For the above reasons, the following description of the assessment procedure is based on a cooperative partnership between the owner/administrator and a heritage specialist.

2.1 Preselecting items together

It is not necessary to use the heritage assessment form to assess the value of every single object in a church, monastery or convent. You can determine in advance which objects will require a more detailed mode of assessment. This preselection should be carried out in careful consultation with a heritage specialist, the aim being to single out objects that are believed to possess historical or current value.

Of course, preselecting items in this way is in itself a kind of assessment. Still, this is unavoidable, given the constraints of human and financial resources. This forces you to set up the procedure as effectively as possible. In preselecting items, each one must be looked at carefully. The next stage will be to subject valuable heritage to more detailed consideration.

2.2 Assess value of preselected objects together

The preselected items can now be valued with the aid of the heritage assessment form. The owner or administrator will fill in the current value of each object, while the heritage specialist will note down the historical value and comparative criteria, taking account of objects' local/regional or national significance. Each object ends up with a final assessment or 'score'. The application of the comparative criteria may lead to an adjustment in the historical values. In determining the final result, current value and historical value are assessed separately. This is because one may be considered more important than the other, depending on the subsequent plans. For instance, if an object has considerable current value, owners/administrators may well want to keep it for use in the 'merged' church. If it possesses considerable historical value but little current value, a non-church destination may be deemed more suitable. You will find detailed instructions on how to fill in the heritage assessment form on the back of the form.

2.3 Specialist's recommendations: Keep, Re-use, Deaccession

Depending on the purpose of the assessment and the owner's wishes, the heritage specialist may make recommendations for each object, as to whether it should be kept, assigned for re-use elsewhere, or deaccessioned. In arriving at this verdict, he or she will look at the mutual connections between the different objects, or groups of objects, and between these objects and factors such as the building or the surrounding area. The recommendations may single out certain items to be assigned to a church or museum and others that could be sold or donated to third parties. In making such recommendations, the heritage specialist

will take into account the fact that the owner may prefer not to sell certain religious objects that may be difficult to reassign elsewhere. In such cases, destruction may be recommended as a possible course of action (see pp. 28-29).

2.4 Owners/administrators: paperwork


The paperwork involved in this procedure will differ from one country and denomination to the next. In any case, it is important to keep good records of the assessment results and the recommendations. The official bodies that ultimately approve the decisions must also be sent these results. Official bodies that are involved in religious heritage, and that keep stock of it, will also appreciate being provided with the assessment and selection results.

2.5 Owners/administrators make decisions and implement the roadmap

Once you have the results of the procedure described above, you can decide which objects are to be kept, which are to be assigned for re-use elsewhere, and which are to be deaccessioned, both in relation to the selected items and the rest of the inventory. In cases of assigning items for re-use or deaccessioning them, you may apply the follow-up procedures detailed in the Roadmap, on pages 16-29.

3. Assessment criteria

A. Current value

Using the heritage assessment form, you will start, as the owner/administrator, by determining an object's current value. This indicates the object's significance to the community: its current emotional or religious value. 



Bronze statue of St Lawrence, the Netherlands Pieter d'Hont, 1968

After a merger of parishes, the community of the Church of St Lawrence in the Dutch village of De Bilt started worshipping at St Michael's Church (Sint-Michaëlskerk). They took a number of religious objects with them that were ranked high in terms of current value. A chapel in St Michael's Church was dedicated to St Lawrence, and the statue of the martyr with his grill was placed there. The churchgoers from St Lawrence's Church greatly appreciated the fact that this chapel was set up especially for them. It helped them to feel at home in their new surroundings more quickly. Jacoline Takke

This is assessed at local/regional level. High current value is often associated with objects that are venerated for their unique devotional properties, such as relics and certain statues of saints. But current value can also derive from significance to a community's identity or sense of shared destiny. Then again, some objects, such as founder's portraits or mementoes from the previous church, may possess commemorative value for a particular group of people. You should bear in mind that an object's current value may change if its function changes.

B. Historical value

Next comes an assessment of the different kinds of historical value, preferably by a heritage specialist. This expert's findings may perhaps be supplemented by the owner/administrator, a local archivist, or a historian. Historical value is assessed from three separate vantage points: church history, general history, and art history. Of course, one could easily think of others, but we have chosen to base this part of the assessment on these three types of historical value, which are the most relevant when dealing with religious heritage.

You can use the Assessment Guide to establish whether an object's historical value possesses local/regional or national significance. For instance, an object may be significant to the history of a particular denomination, but it may also teach us something about everyday life in a specific village or urban community. None of these kinds of significance is in itself more important than the others.

b1. Value in terms of church history

Many religious objects possess value in terms of church history. For instance:

- *Objects containing information about the history or customs of a church, religious community, monastery, convent, order, or congregation.*
Examples include lists of names of former ministers or organists, processional banners with references to church associations or fraternities, and Communion cups inscribed with donors' names.
- *Objects associated with an important group, figure, event, or place within the history of a church, religious community, monastery, convent, order, or congregation.*
Examples include magistrates' pews in Protestant churches, portraits of priests and ministers, hatchments, or objects originating from the founder of an order or congregation.
- *Objects that illustrate the specific customs or lifestyle of a church, religious community, monastery, convent, order, or congregation.*
Examples include the lantern carried by a priest on his way to administer the sacrament of anointing the sick, rattles, or the characteristic plain crockery that was (and still is) used in some monasteries and convents on a daily basis.
- *Objects and ensembles that illustrate the way of life of a particular group within a church community.*
Examples include elegantly furnished regents' meeting-rooms, vestries, and presbyteries. Some of the objects within these ensembles may not in themselves be religious, such as landscape or still life paintings.



In the Cathedral of Saint-Pierre in Geneva stands a sixteenth-century wooden chair. It is said to be the chair from which John Calvin (1509-1564) lectured in the final years of his life. The chair's current value is low; it is chiefly a tourist attraction. Nonetheless, it is of national – or indeed European – importance. The Reformation not only precipitated an enormous upheaval in the sixteenth-century Church, but it also had an impact on international politics, art, literature, and scholarship. The chair as a symbol of this key figure of the Reformation therefore scores 'high' in terms of general historical value. Its art-historical value is 'moderate'. The church-historical value is confined to the fact that it stands in the church in which Calvin preached.

The notion that Calvin gave his lectures from this chair has great imaginative appeal. The uncomfortable chair fits perfectly with the image we have of the rigid reformer. This gives the chair a high presentation value. All this makes it clear that we are dealing here with an object of national historical significance and high presentation value. In the unlooked-for event that this chair might ever need to be relocated, placing it in a museum should absolutely be the first choice.

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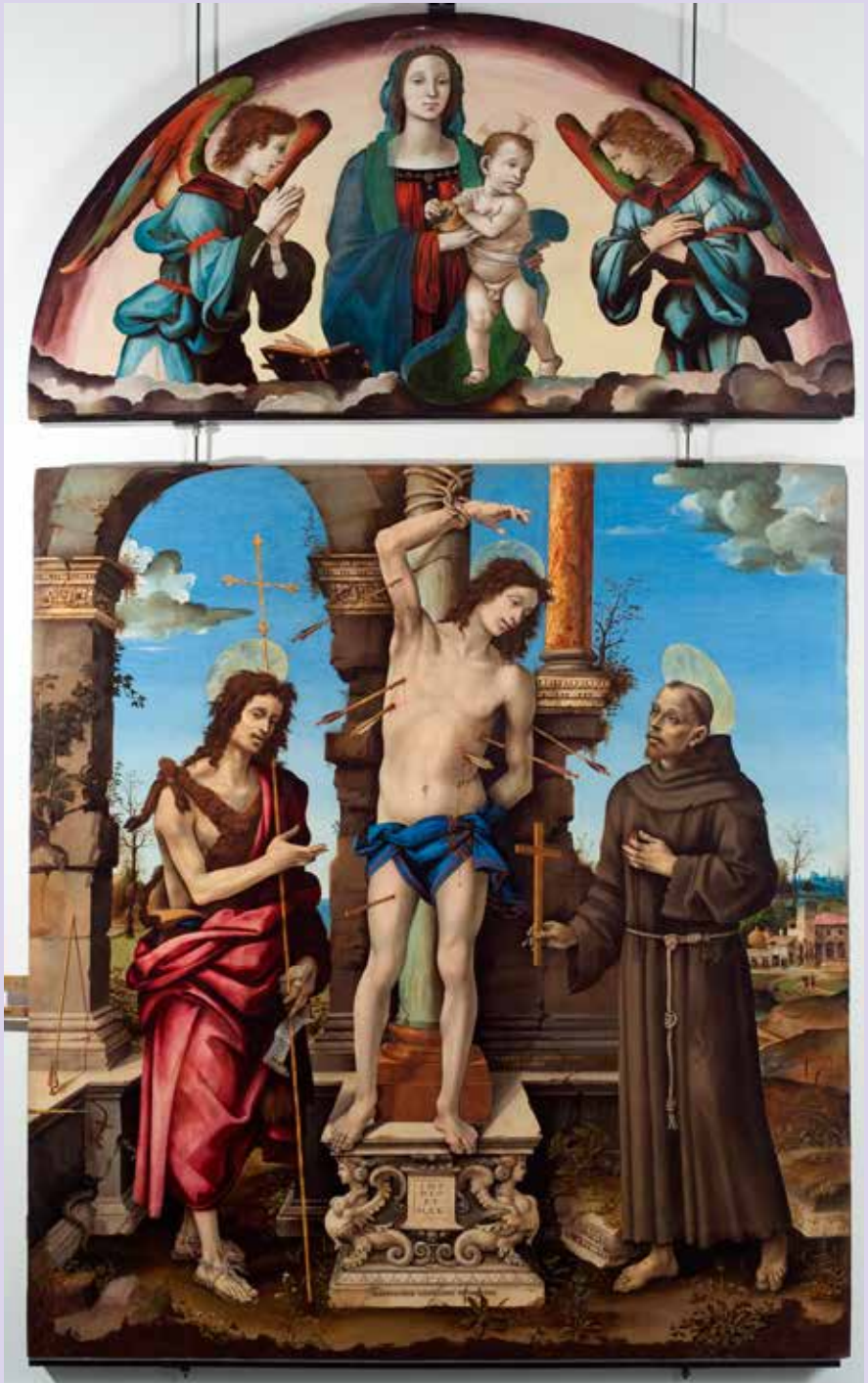
b2. General historical value

Some religious objects possess general historical value. This applies, for instance, to objects that are connected with an important (non-religious) event, group, figure, or place, such as tombs of, or religious objects belonging to, major historical figures. This category also includes objects that illustrate local or regional history, or that testify to a socio-historical aspect of church history. There is often a certain overlap between church-historical and general historical value.



▶
**Altarpiece with
St Sebastian, Italy
Filippino Lippi, 1503**

Examples abound, of course, of religious heritage possessing special art-historical value. Certainly in Italy. The prominent Genoan nobleman Francesco Lomellini (1460-1528) commissioned this altarpiece from Filippino Lippi (1457-1504) for a family chapel dedicated to St Sebastian in the Church of St Theodore (San Teodoro). It ended up in Paris in 1810 during the years of French occupation. Six years later, the altarpiece returned to Genoa, but without its frame and without its predella. Decades later, it was hung in the Palazzo Bianco. St Sebastian, pierced with arrows, is flanked by John the Baptist, patron saint of Genoa, and Francis of Assisi, Lomellini's patron saint. The lunette displays a Madonna and Child and two angels at prayer. The golden light in the background symbolises Heaven. Lippi's late work is characterised by bright colours and complex compositions. His versatility and virtuosity made him popular among the leading patrons of his day. This altarpiece has a somewhat more balanced design, with slightly elongated figures and numerous elaborated details, foreshadowing the Mannerist art of the sixteenth century. It will be obvious that the altarpiece by this Florentine master ranks very high in terms of art-historical value. Indeed, it is one of the masterpieces of the Palazzo Bianco. Musei di Strada Nuova - Palazzo Bianco © Musei di Strada Nuova, Genoa



b3. Art-historical value

Many religious objects are designed with careful attention, sometimes by well-known artists or designers. This applies to Catholic as well as Protestant objects, such as Communion silver or church furniture.

- An object is deemed to possess great artistic value if its design or the way it was made reflects a high aesthetic standard, creativity or originality in concept, form or function. The standard of design and execution, the maker's originality and skill, and the use of materials are all significant in this respect.
- An object is interesting from an art-historical point of view if it illustrates a specific trend. This applies, for instance, to objects that exhibit the earliest features of a new style, objects with an innovative iconography, and objects reflecting an innovative liturgical development.
- An object is important if the appreciation for a large number of other objects can be linked to it. This would include, say, the only dated or signed work by an artist, which enables art historians to date the rest of his oeuvre or attribute it to him.
- An object may have been made by an artist who is considered important within the field of art history. This category is certainly not confined to outstanding works of art. Lesser works of art illustrating an artist's development may also be of interest.

C. Comparative criteria

Once an object's historical value has been established, comparative criteria are applied to determine the extent to which it distinguishes itself from similar objects. This involves calculating its 'score' in terms of rarity, physical condition, ensemble value, presentation value, and documentation value in relation to similar objects.

The comparative criteria may qualify an item's historical value. The final score may end up higher, for instance if the object is rare in some respect or if it has marked educational value. In other cases, the final score may end up lower, for instance if the item is in poor condition compared to other objects.

c1. Rarity

An object may be unique or rare in some respect.

c2. Physical condition

Where two objects are similar, physical condition may be the decisive factor. The same applies to the completeness of a group of objects that belong together. The degree of authenticity is also significant: an object may acquire added value if it is still in its original, unrestored state. This applies, for instance, to old liturgical vestments, which are very vulnerable to decay.

c3. Ensemble value

The interrelationship between different objects or elements of an interior or between the interior and the building and the surrounding area determines the ensemble value.



Ensembles

We refer to an ensemble when there is a certain cohesiveness between movable and immovable property of historical or art-historical significance. This refers not only to buildings with their interiors, but also to the connections between certain objects. If an ensemble is broken up, this changes the value that is attributed to its separate parts.

Four types of ensembles are distinguished:

- *Cohesion arising from historical continuity*: an ensemble determined by cohesiveness in continuity of ownership and use.
- *Cohesion arising from composition*: an ensemble determined by unity of composition or by production in the same period, but not according to an integrated architectural plan.
- *Cohesion arising from a total, integrated design*: an ensemble determined by the cohesion of an integrated architectural plan, also known as a *Gesamtkunstwerk*.
- *Cohesion arising from provenance*: ensemble determined by the cohesiveness of one of the previous ensemble types. In this case, however, the elements of the ensemble are no longer in the original location.

The value of the whole is sometimes greater than the sum of the parts. Because of the historical continuity that applies in the use of churches, ensembles occur quite frequently.

c4. Presentation value

An object may have special appeal to the public. If it displays religious traditions and customs in an attractive way, it possesses educational or 'presentation' value. This kind of value is important for objects designated for museums. In addition, with the rise of cultural tourism, growing importance is attached to presentation value in objects that are preserved in churches.

c5. Documentation value

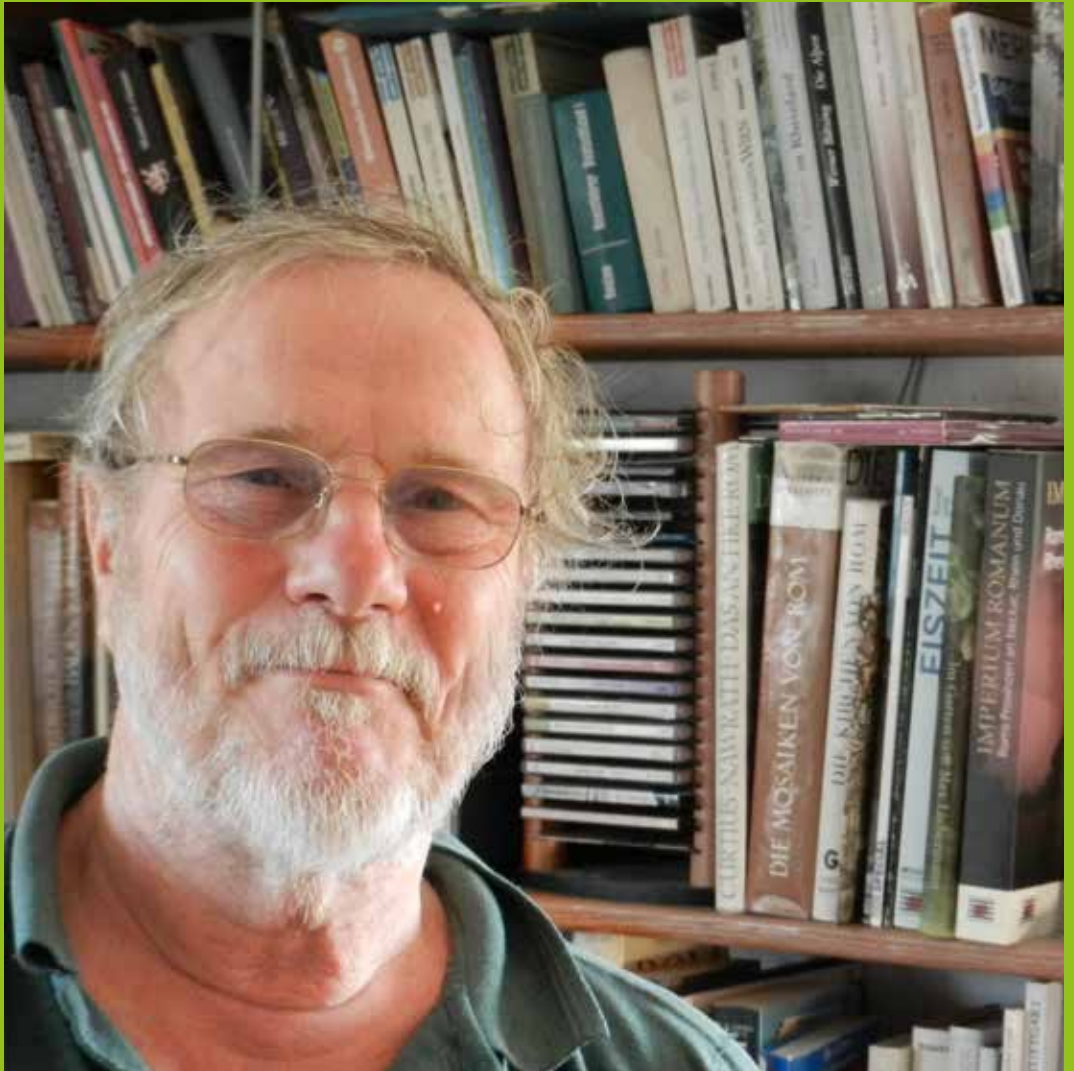
If a document is well documented, this may boost its value in relation to similar objects that are less well documented. An object is considered to be well documented if sketches or contemporary descriptions of it, accounts relating to it, or correspondence about it with the artist have survived.



Silver-gilt reliquary bust, Basilica of St Servatius (Sint-Servaasbasiliek), the Netherlands c. 1580

The basilica of St Servatius in Maastricht, close to the Belgian border, has a superb treasury. One of its greatest treasures is without a doubt the reliquary bust of St Servatius, with the skull and a piece of the jawbone of the fourth-century bishop of Maastricht. The reliquary bust was a gift from the Duke of Parma, Prince Alessandro Farnese. Besides its church-historical and art-historical significance, the reliquary possesses – most importantly perhaps – presentation value. It is a real 'crowd puller', and provides expressive insight into the centuries-old veneration of relics.





Growing awareness
of religious heritage

Many churches were destroyed, mostly in towns and cities, in the Second World War, and much religious heritage was also lost in its aftermath. Angus Fowler, committee member of the Förderkreis Alte Kirchen (FAK) in Marburg since 1976, explains what this organisation does to preserve religious heritage.

Both the Protestant Churches and the Catholic Church used to be wealthier than they are today, especially in the former West Germany, since church tax (*Kirchensteuer*) brought in more revenue. Churches in East Germany were poorer, as a result of ideological pressure, in addition to which many churches in the former East Germany that were badly damaged during the war were demolished.

Old versus new

Since money was available in western Germany, church authorities built a great many new churches between the 1950s and the 1970s. New churches sprang up in their dozens, both in new urban neighbourhoods and in the countryside. They often replaced characteristic churches that were demolished because of being labelled 'old-fashioned', such as timber-framed buildings. Fowler: 'And yet old churches are the spiritual heart of a community, and stand out as landmarks in the surrounding area.' Features such as galleries, and special seats for noble families, were also destroyed as part of a drive to purify and modernise church interiors. An organisation was founded in 1973 to preserve this religious heritage, the Förderkreis Alte Kirchen Marburg. The FAK works to achieve the restoration of churches and of fittings, furnishings and religious objects, in particular redundant churches, threatened by decay and demolition, and to find cultural and social uses for them.

Rural churches in East and West

Many village churches in the eastern part of Germany are threatened by depopulation and demographic change, especially in sparsely populated areas. Keeping them going is a struggle, and it is done primarily by widening their cultural uses. Many church ministers are in charge of ten or more parishes. Parish merges are now common, and lists are drawn up of priorities for preserving and maintaining churches ('*Bedarfslisten*'). Once a church has been closed, in some cases its fittings and furnishings are removed and stored in church repositories, in other cases they may be left in the buildings. Fowler: 'Demographic changes are also starting to affect the maintenance and preservation of churches in relatively remote and sparsely populated rural regions of western Germany.' Some of the Protestant Churches in Germany have started drawing up inventories of their fittings, furnishings and religious objects.

The Guidelines fill a gap

Fowler remarks that the Dutch Guidelines reflect the trend towards a growing awareness of religious heritage since the 1970s. 'It is also more common now for money to be made available for this purpose.' He believes that the Guidelines may be useful.

The making of the Guidelines

A joint effort by Churches and heritage agencies

This chapter tells the story of the development of the Dutch Guidelines. It is intended mainly as a source of inspiration, to help those who are involved in drafting something similar. Some of the conditions in your country will undoubtedly be different from those in the Netherlands. Even so, you will surely be able to identify with much that is related here.

The Dutch Guidelines were drawn up together with Churches and heritage agencies. We also collaborated closely with researchers, research institutes, and a communication agency. The efforts of all these parties helped us to produce a well-thought-out instrument in a relatively short space of time.

Methodology

2008 was Religious Heritage Year, and to mark the occasion, Museum Catharijneconvent developed a plan of action, together with representatives of the Dutch Church Art Heritage Foundation (SKKN), the Protestant Church in the Netherlands, the Roman Catholic Church, the Cultural Heritage Agency and the Netherlands Institute for Heritage.

In this plan, we set out to develop two sets of guidelines: one for the assessment of objects and one for deaccessioning. We also decided to conduct four sub-projects:

- To chart the current state of affairs with regard to movable religious heritage in other denominations and religions;
- To develop specific criteria to determine ensemble value;
- To look into the physical condition of the valuable nucleus of movable religious heritage in the Netherlands;
- To chart European initiatives and foreign destinations for the re-use of objects.

The Minister responded to our proposal by awarding a lump sum to help develop the Guidelines. We set up a project group to achieve the set goals.



◀ One of the working groups during the round-table meeting at Museum Catharijne-convent. Ruben de Heer

Research: interviews and round table meeting

In the project's start-up phase, we commissioned a study to discover the wishes and needs of the owners and administrators of movable religious heritage and heritage professionals. We conducted several interviews with owners and administrators representing the most important denominations. We then organised a round-table meeting, at which we discussed subjects that had been raised in the interviews. This was attended by about thirty individuals from the broad field of movable religious heritage. The recommendations that emerged from this research served as input when we compiled the Roadmap, the Assessment Guide, and our marketing and communication strategy.

Working groups and focus group

For the duration of the project, the project group was assisted by the *Main Working Group* and the *Representatives of Churches, Monasteries and Convents Working Group*. A *Focus Group* supervised the process.

Main Working Group

This group consisted of representatives of the Catholic Church, the 'Protestant Church in the Netherlands', and a number of national heritage agencies. This safeguarded the influence of churches and made it possible to formulate sound theoretical foundations for the Assessment Guide. Each of the specialists involved represented a specific field. The working group included a specialist on the value and assessment of cultural heritage, someone with specific expertise on monastic life, a specialist on historical interiors and ensembles, a professor specialised in Christian art and architecture, and a specialist in dealing with heritage in an international context.



Continued
on page 48



Raising awareness:
what do churches
have in their interior?

'People frequently say "There's nothing of any value in our church", recall Eloy Koldeweij and Martin van Wijngaarden, who helped to draft the Guidelines. 'And then you look around and the quality of the objects dazzles you, and the vase containing flowers turns out not to be a vase at all, but a Communion cup.'

Eloy Koldeweij and Martin van Wijngaarden helped the initiators of the Guidelines formulate criteria to help decide how to deal with religious objects. They did so together with five other representatives of the 'Protestant Church in the Netherlands', the Catholic Church, and a number of heritage agencies. Together they formed the Main Working Group. Van Wijngaarden is the minister of an Evangelical Lutheran congregation. Koldeweij is an expert on interiors at the Cultural Heritage Agency, which operates under the auspices of the Ministry of Education, Culture, and Science.

A unique achievement

'The aim was to produce Guidelines that would be suitable for all churches and all heritage agencies', said Koldeweij: 'An almost impossible feat.' And the process was in fact anything but easy. Van Wijngaarden recalls: 'We went through about ten different models before ending up with this one. It was a challenge to find an intelligible way of describing such multifaceted material.' It worked in the end, after about twelve sessions and within a year. All the denominations in the Netherlands that are involved endorsed the Guidelines: a unique achievement in this complex world.

Collaboration between churches and government bodies

'This could never have been achieved by just the government or just the churches', remarks Koldeweij. 'It was a job that had to be done together. Of course we had some spirited discussions, but there was never an antagonistic atmosphere. Everyone participated openly, on the basis of his or her particular area of expertise: it was an interdisciplinary and inter-denominational structure.' Van Wijngaarden: 'As a minister, I represented the Protestant churches. For Protestant churches, more than for the Catholic Church and its Episcopal hierarchy, it is important for all the rules to be clear at grassroots level.' Both found the involvement of non-faith participants refreshing. Koldeweij: 'That proved very useful in achieving a systematic approach to the Assessment Guide, where emotional value acquired a place of its own, alongside church-historical, religious, and historical values.'

Living objects within the community

Transparency was one of the principles on which the Guidelines were based. 'For instance, you can't just give some candlesticks to the verger's daughters if the donor's children are still in the church.' More than anything else, the Guidelines provide a practical aid to help local communities become aware of what they possess. 'And that is the most important thing', says Van Wijngaarden. 'Because we are talking about living objects in communities and parishes, each one with its own value.'

▶
The focus group included a representative of the Jewish Historical Museum. The JHM acts as the custodian of Jewish heritage, and its staff have drawn up inventories of numerous objects in Dutch synagogues. The JHM itself occupies religious heritage that was reassigned to a different use: the Ashkenazi synagogue complex dating from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

Liselore
Kamping



Representatives of Churches, Monasteries and Convents Working Group

This group consisted of representatives of the different Churches. It focused primarily on the Roadmap and on adopting the correct formulations in terms of ecclesiastical law. The close involvement of representatives of Church bodies ensured that the different denominations would see their principles reflected in the Guidelines. The most important task of this working group, perhaps, was to watch over the practical feasibility of the Guidelines.

Focus group

The Focus Group consisted of representatives of religious and municipal museums, government bodies, and civil society organisations. This group concentrated mainly on the other sub-projects and on the role of museums, civil society organisations, secular authorities and non-Christian religions in designating church heritage for re-use. The Focus Group was also closely involved in weighting the criteria in the Assessment Guide.

Success factor: oecumenical cooperation

Intense oecumenical cooperation was key to the project's success. The input of knowledge from diverse backgrounds and disciplines was indispensable. What is more, it created wide-ranging support for the decisions within the administrative layers of the various Churches. The chairman of the Board of Economic Advisors to the Catholic Church writes: 'warmly recommended for use by all church boards.' The working group members greatly valued the oecumenical cooperation between the different denominations and with the heritage agencies, both for the resulting input for the Guidelines and because of the dialogues it generated.



◀ **Crucifix, Lutheran church of Tidersrum, Sweden c. 1350**

The crucifix below hangs in Sweden's second oldest wooden church. Rather roughly carved, it was probably made in a local workshop. It illustrates the fact that objects may possess value on a national as well as local/regional level. For this local crucifix also tells a national story: after the Reformation, Catholic objects were removed from churches en masse, but seldom destroyed. In the early twentieth century, many of them were once again gracing Lutheran churches.
Henrik Lindblad

Development of the Assessment Guide and the Roadmap

In preparing the Assessment Guide and the Roadmap, we were fortunate in being able to use existing sets of guidelines as examples. There are two documents that we want to mention by name. In drafting the Assessment Guide, the Australian *Significance 2.0* played a very important role. In the case of the Roadmap, the most important example was the *Netherlands Guidelines for Deaccessioning of Museum Objects* (LAMO), developed by the Cultural Heritage Agency. However, both the Assessment Guide and the Roadmap ended up as unique documents, each with a character of its own.

Assessment Guide

The Main Working Group laid the foundations for the Assessment Guide. An important point of departure was the importance of determining not only an object's historical significance, but also its current value. The assessments of value as put forward by the owner/administrator and the heritage specialist are of equal importance. This links up with the current insight that the value attached to an object by a heritage community is of great importance. The way in which we arrive at this assessment is new: instead of the heritage specialist asking the owner's opinion, the owner determines the current value himself.



Another recent insight that the Main Working Group incorporated into the Assessment Guide is the notion that national heritage is not necessarily more important than local or regional heritage. Local history too helps to shape a country. In the heritage assessment form, objects can be assessed on all these levels (see pp. 60-63).



►
Members of the
Main Working
Group and the
project group test-
ing the Assess-
ment Guide and
the heritage
assessment form
in the Old Catholic
St Gertrude's
Cathedral (Sint-
Gertrudis-
kathedraal) in
Utrecht.
Frank en Vrij
Media



In defining the assessment criteria, we were guided by the need to devise a practical instrument. We included only those criteria that are of greatest relevance to religious heritage. To make things as easy as possible for users, we developed the heritage assessment form.

The Main Working Group and the project group tested the Assessment Guide and the heritage assessment form at length in different churches. An important element here was deciding on the relative weight to be accorded to the different values. A system of points to be attributed to the difference assessment criteria turned out not to be feasible. Instead, we therefore adopted a system in which you can tick boxes marked 'low', 'medium', 'high', and 'not applicable'. You can find more information about the relative weight accorded to the different values, and how to determine the final score, in *Notes on using the heritage assessment form* (see pp. 64-66).

Roadmap

The Roadmap was developed primarily in partnership with the Representatives of Churches, Monasteries and Convents Working Group. The main points of emphasis in developing the Roadmap were ensuring that ecclesiastical rules, guidelines and institutions were anchored in it, and the sections on sale and destruction. Thanks to the working group, the Dutch Guidelines became a practical instrument containing provisions formulated in such a way that every denomination can identify with them.

Communication

To make the Guidelines a success, we enlisted the services of a communication agency. Together with this agency, we also set up a large-scale communication plan to draw the attention of the owners and administrators of churches to the existence of the Guidelines.



◀ The Guidelines being presented to representatives of seven churches at the symposium. The suffragan bishop of the Roman Catholic archdiocese of Utrecht, pictured here, is leafing through the Guidelines during the symposium. Rick Huisinga

The following ideas were elaborated and put into practice:

- ◉ The development of a target 'persona';
- ◉ The creation of a house style for the text of publications;
- ◉ The launching of a website for interested parties such as owners and administrators;
- ◉ The making of an introductory film (long and short versions);
- ◉ The production of a pamphlet;
- ◉ The organisation of a symposium to conclude the project;
- ◉ The production of the Guidelines themselves: a practical workbook in the form of a file or ring binder.

There are two elements that we should like to clarify here: the development of a target 'persona' and the introductory film.

Target persona

A target persona can be seen as a typical member of your target group: he is given a name as well as a specific lifestyle and interests, to help you judge whether a particular subject or vantage point is appropriate to the target group. We developed three target personas: a policymaker, a church administrator, and a verger. The policymaker needs to perceive the usefulness of the Guidelines, so that they can be implemented in the Church community's policy. The church administrator – the parochial church councillor or church warden – must find the Guidelines helpful in meeting the challenges facing him; they must encourage use at local level. Finally, the verger is the person who will actually be working with the Guidelines. The target personas proved to be extremely useful. We were able to reflect on the probable reception of all the proposed decisions by the three target personas.

Introductory film

In an introductory film, we show the problems that are currently facing numerous



Evaluation of the Dutch Guidelines: First Impressions

One year after the Dutch Guidelines were published, we conducted a small-scale survey on their use. We approached over fifty people, both Protestants and Catholics. In general, they took an extremely positive view of the Guidelines. Only a few points were mentioned that merited improvement.

Use of the Guidelines

The Guidelines are used for a variety of reasons. In the majority of cases, their use is prompted by the closure of a church, but we found they were also used in some cases to ensure the careful management of the building and its inventory. Of all respondent users, 71 per cent stated that they had used the Roadmap, while 57 per cent used the *Guidelines for compiling an inventory* and 30 per cent used the Assessment Guide. The appendix *Addresses for information, advice and assistance* was consulted by 30 per cent of respondent users. A substantial proportion of those questioned stated that they had not yet used the heritage assessment form, but that they planned to do so later.

Findings

The respondents classified the aids they had used as 'useful' or 'extremely useful'. In the case of the Roadmap, the respondents were unanimous in delivering a highly positive verdict. The Assessment Guide too was deemed useful, despite the fact that it was used less often than the other instruments. The respondents also took

a favourable view of the Guidelines' readability and user-friendly quality. A gratifying 90 per cent of respondents said that they constituted a good practical instrument.

Points that are in need of improvement

Users mentioned very few elements that they would like to see changed. One person wrote that the heritage assessment form is rather detailed as an instrument to be used for all objects. We could emphasise our advice to use this form only for a limited, preselected group of objects. A small number of respondents stated that they would have liked more illustrations and examples to have been included.

Asked whether the Guidelines helped to produce the desired result, 67 per cent of respondents replied in the affirmative. The remaining 33 per cent replied that they had not yet reached the stage of having achieved a 'result'.

Positive reactions

We conclude that users are pleased with the Guidelines. The figures for use of the Assessment Guide are rather low. The stage preceding it, however, which is using the Guidelines for compiling an inventory, scores quite high. We therefore assume that the next stage, using the Assessment Guide to assess the value of objects, will be used with growing frequency in the future. Some of the respondents confirm this point themselves.



◀ You can download the Guidelines on Ways of Dealing with Religious Objects from the website www.Guidelines-ReligiousObjects.com. You can also watch the video on the Guidelines on this site. Pictured here is the Dutch Guidelines website

churches in the Netherlands, and how the Guidelines can provide assistance. A film can clearly illuminate challenges and possible solutions, but more importantly perhaps, it can show the emotions that are involved. What is more, by filming in different churches, we were able to show that as an instrument, the Guidelines transcend all denominations. We frequently receive highly enthusiastic reactions to the film. You can watch the film, which has English subtitles, on the website www.GuidelinesReligiousObjects.com.

Distribution of the Guidelines

The distribution of the Guidelines is an important part of the communication strategy. The Guidelines need to be in the right place at the right time. There is no point sending them to churches that are not facing (or not yet) the threat of having to deaccession objects. We therefore chose to use Church bodies or umbrella organisations as the distribution channels. In other words, the Guidelines will be provided from within the Church organisation itself. A different approach is chosen for each denomination. The following paragraphs give a brief explanation of the choices we made in relation to distribution.

Catholic Church

In the Catholic Church, dioceses are responsible for distribution. An official of the diocese will provide the Guidelines to the parochial church council when a church ceases to be used for worship. This means that the Guidelines will be given to the right people at the right moment.

The Protestant Church in the Netherlands

The 'Protestant Church in the Netherlands' (representing the most traditional Protestant Churches in the Netherlands) is organised along different lines, and it was therefore decided to distribute the Guidelines by using a body that coordinates services and information for church wardens. If a Protestant church closes, many church wardens apply to this organisation for advice. In such cases, the Guidelines will be on hand there, ready ▶▶▶▶▶

to be provided to them. Other Protestant denominations and the Old Catholic Church of the Netherlands Within the smaller Protestant denominations and the Old Catholic Church of the Netherlands, the Guidelines are distributed through the national administrative offices of these Churches. This is because lines of communication tend to be short in these smaller Churches. Here too, these offices do not offer the Guidelines to those concerned until the moment at which a church closes its doors.

Orders and congregations

For monastic orders and congregations we adopted a different solution. Virtually every order and congregation is being confronted at the moment, or will be in the near future, with closures of monasteries and convents. So in this case, we decided to send the Guidelines simultaneously to all 220 locations on behalf of the coordinating organisation for the Conference of Religious in the Netherlands.

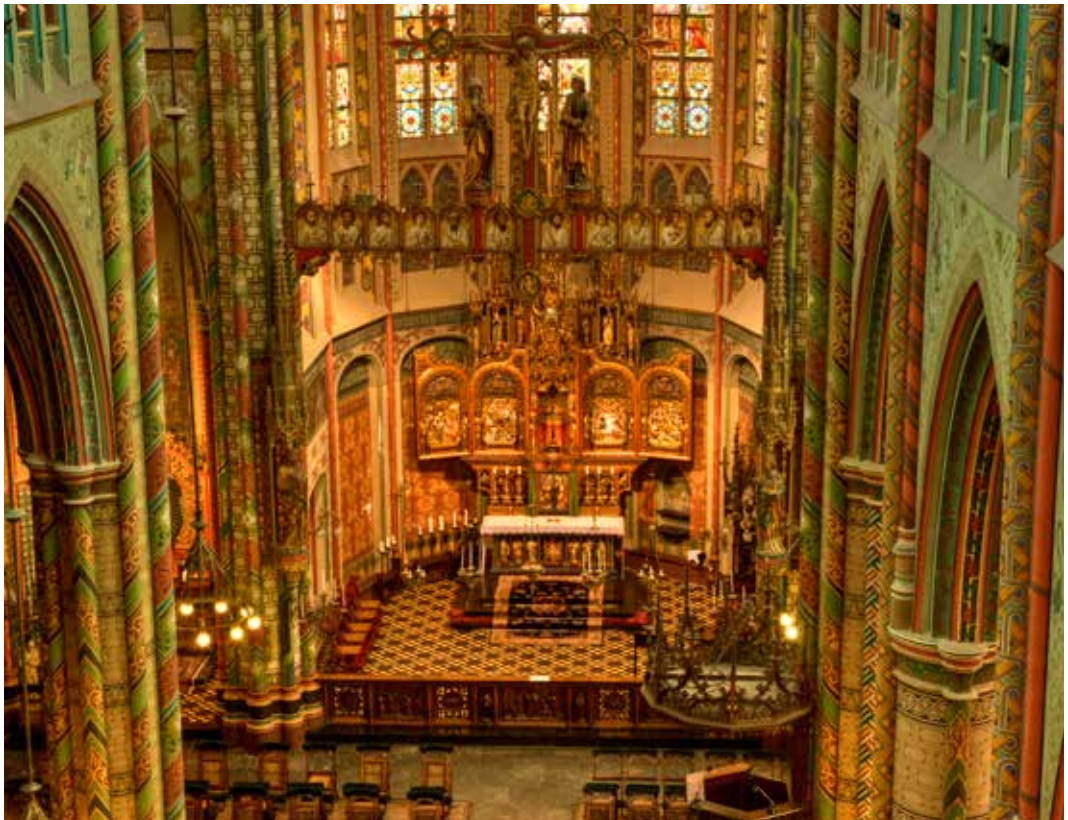
Sub-projects

In the course of this project, we conducted four supplementary research projects. They provided input to help compile the Guidelines or supplemented them. A brief explanation is given below.

In 1853, three hundred years after the Reformation, the episcopal hierarchy was restored in the Netherlands.

Catholicism started to flourish again, and neo-Gothic churches sprang up everywhere. In 1869 the Guild of St Bernulphus was founded in Utrecht, a society of priests and artists who sought to promote Catholic art. The exuberantly decorated church of St Willibrord in Utrecht exemplifies their work. Built in 1879, it possesses a superb neo-Gothic ensemble.

The separate parts of the interior, all designed in perfect harmony, were made by artists who were closely involved with the Guild of St Bernulphus. Georg Pauwen
www.farhorizon-media.com



Other denominations and religions

We were curious to know how people of religions outside the traditional Christian Churches viewed the movable religious heritage, and to find out whether they were facing the same problems. An agency that specialises in policy research in the area of Church, religion, and philosophies of life therefore conducted a study, at our request, on the scale and nature of religious objects, and attitudes to them, among smaller Christian Churches and non-Christian religions. In general, we found that these faith communities are not facing this problem on the same scale as the traditional Christian churches. Indeed, many of them are growing. Where smaller Christian Churches are concerned, many of them are relatively young, and do not see their property in terms of heritage. Several respondents nonetheless stated that they thought the Assessment Guide was important, because it heightens awareness on the subject of religious heritage.

Ensemble value

According to a random check, over 70 per cent of churches that enjoy protected status as national listed buildings possess ensembles. This is partly because churches have in general retained their original function. Since so many churches possess ensembles, according to the current criteria, many objects acquire added value. We therefore reached the conclusion that supplementary criteria were needed to make it possible to distinguish first-class ensembles from the rest. This will be extremely important when it comes to assessing the value of movable religious heritage in the future; after all, keeping everything is not an option. For this reason, we commissioned a researcher to formulate supplementary criteria. This report (in Dutch only) is available on request from the project group.

Investigating the physical condition of the valuable nucleus

To arrive at an integrated set of principles for dealing with our religious heritage, it is not enough to draft guidelines for the assessment of value and for deaccessioning items. We must also look at the management and preservation of religious heritage. In this connection, it is important to know the physical condition of valuable religious objects in churches. We found that there was a lack of reliable figures here. We therefore took the initiative to conduct a study on this subject. A research agency conducted a nationwide questionnaire among the administrators of religious heritage.

The results of the questionnaire, combined with our own research data, revealed that of the religious objects judged to possess national significance, 43% are in good condition, 34% in reasonable condition, 16% in poor condition, and 6% in bad condition. The figures for objects judged to be of local/regional significance are virtually identical.

International initiatives and assigning objects for re-use in a foreign destination

This final sub-project had two distinct objectives. We wanted to gain insight into:

- European initiatives in the area of religious heritage (and movable heritage in particular);
- The scope for assigning objects for re-use in a foreign destination.



In charting European initiatives, we wanted to exchange knowledge about ways of dealing with the movable religious heritage. To achieve this, we mainly contacted experts who are active in dealing with religious heritage buildings. Several major European initiatives exist in this area. One that we would particularly like to mention here is Future for Religious Heritage, a European network of charities, governmental, religious and university departments that work to protect religious heritage buildings across Europe.

Allocating religious objects for re-use in a foreign destination is one of the most important recommendations in the Roadmap. Dutch parishes and congregations consider this to be a good solution, for two reasons: first, because it is a way of helping the new users, and second, because it means that the objects will retain their original function. The research reveals that both Protestant Churches and the Catholic Church send objects to foreign destination. We looked into the most common destinations. At present, they are Poland, Ukraine, and Romania.



Symposium

On 29 April 2011 we organised a symposium about movable religious heritage and launched the Guidelines. The central question of the symposium was: how can we meet the challenges facing us in relation to the movable religious heritage? During the symposium we presented the Guidelines to representatives of six different Churches, the umbrella organisation for orders and congregations, and the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science.

Do you have any questions about the development of the Dutch Guidelines? If so, you are very welcome to contact us. You will find our contact details in the credits at the back.



◀
*The symposium took place in the Church of St Geerte (Geertekerk) in Utrecht. The church was the first to fall prey to the Iconoclastic Fury, in 1566. So this was a historic place in which to discuss the challenges of dealing with the Netherlands' movable religious heritage. The church is used by the Remonstrant Church.
Rick Huisinga*



Liturgical use and
cultural preservation
go hand in hand

Spain

'The Catholic Church has been keeping inventories of its religious heritage for many years', says Dani Font, who is responsible for the cultural heritage of the diocese of Vic in Catalonia. 'The Catholic Church is the largest denomination in Spain, and the only one with cultural heritage', says Font. But Spain is rapidly undergoing secularisation, in Catalonia as elsewhere in Spain. Fewer and fewer people are getting married in church and the number of those studying for the priesthood is falling. There is often no longer a priest living in the presbytery. 'In that case, no one is in charge of guaranteeing the safety and preservation of the immovable or movable religious heritage,' says Font. 'And yet that is in fact the exclusive responsibility of the Church and its parish priests.'

The significance of donations

Since there are fewer believers today, revenue has fallen too. Parish churches take responsibility for funding maintenance, and where necessary they receive financial support from the diocese. Church members contribute voluntarily, in the weekly collections in their parish churches, added to which some pay annual contributions, which are tax-deductible. 'In certain cases the government subsidises the restoration and maintenance of buildings and religious objects possessing outstanding artistic value.'

Guidelines for dealing with religious heritage

The dioceses, the Spanish Bishops' Conference, and the Vatican all consider the listing, management and preservation of religious objects a matter of priority. They have therefore drawn up strict rules for these objects' preservation. Most of the dioceses in Spain are currently in the final stages of drawing up their inventories.

Heritage preservation project

It is thanks to Dani Font that the Accuro project got off the ground. For the past ten years, he has been preserving the movable religious heritage in the parishes of the diocese of Vic. The Accuro project has helped to ensure that the objects are now preserved in safety while remaining available for liturgical use. With this project, Font aims to identify religious objects, draw up inventories of them, and preserve them.

Museum with objects on loan

Part of the sacristy of one of the parishes in Vic has now been turned into a museum where visitors can come and look at this heritage. Churches in the vicinity can store their objects here in safety, and parish priests can borrow objects here for liturgical use in their churches. Liturgical use and cultural preservation thus go hand in hand here.

Concrete examples of cooperation

Font does not envisage any problems in developing a Spanish version of the Guidelines. His main concern is to find practical solutions to enable parish churches or dioceses to cooperate with local, regional or national public authorities. 'Because it is precisely by working together that the various parties can attain their goals, whether these goals are cultural, religious, or in tourism.'

Heritage assessment form

Heritage assessment form

Church:
Object:
Inv. no.:
Current value filled in by:
Historical value and comparative criteria filled in by:
Date:

a current value

low moderate high n.a.

explanatory notes:

b historical values

local | regional level

national level

b1 church-historical value

low moderate high n.a.

explanatory notes:

b1 church-historical value

low moderate high n.a.

explanatory notes:

b2 general historical value

low moderate high n.a.

explanatory notes:

b2 general historical value

low moderate high n.a.

explanatory notes:

Auxiliary questions

The auxiliary questions are intended as aids in assessing an object's heritage. It is not necessary (and indeed it may not be possible) to answer each one.

◀ a current value

Is the object closely related to the proclamation of the Word of God, the celebration of the sacraments, or does it play an important liturgical role in some other way?

Does the object possess any devotional heritage?

Does the object illustrate certain present-day traditions or customs that are characteristic of the church community?

Does the object illustrate the close ties that unite the community?

Does the object possess a particular commemorative or memorial value for the community?

Is the object of particular value to the community?

◀ b1 church-historical value

Are there important details on the object relating to church history and/or the traditions or customs of the church or the Church denomination, or does the object help to clarify them?

Does the object illustrate characteristic traditions, customs or lifestyle of a church or Church denomination, monastery/convent, order or congregation, or a specific sub-group of one?

Can the object be associated with an important group, figure, event, place, development or school of thought within the history of the church or the Church denomination?

◀ b2 general historical value

Does the object bear witness to a historical theme, process, development, school of thought, or lifestyle?

Can the object be associated with an important historical group, figure, event, place, development or school of thought?

local | regional level

b3 art-historical value

low moderate high n.a.

explanatory notes:

national level

b3 art-historical value

low moderate high n.a.

explanatory notes:

b interim score - historical values

local | regional level national level

low moderate high n.a. low moderate high n.a.

explanatory notes: explanatory notes:

c comparative criteria

local | regional level

c1 rarity

low moderate high n.a.

explanatory notes:

national level

c1 rarity

low moderate high n.a.

explanatory notes:

b3 art-historical value
Does the object reflect artistic talent, creativity or originality in terms of concept, form or function?

Is there anything remarkable or innovative about the object's design, form or execution?

Is the object a good example of a development or an essential phase / new departure in the oeuvre of an artist, or in an artistic school or trend, or does it display a new visual language (iconography)?

Can other objects be related to the object (for instance, in the case of a signed painting, on the basis of which other paintings can be attributed to a particular artist)?

Was the object made by an artist with an established reputation?

Is the object a striking example of a school of art or style that is generally deemed significant?

c1 rarity
Is the object unique or rare?

Heritage assessment form

local | regional level

c2 condition

What is the object's condition?

good reasonable poor bad

How would you score the condition, compared to objects at local | regional level?

low moderate high n.a.

explanatory notes:

c3 ensemble value

Is the object part of an ensemble?

yes no

If so, what type of ensemble?

low moderate high n.a.

explanatory notes:

c4 presentation value

low moderate high n.a.

explanatory notes:

national level

c2 condition

What is the object's condition?

good reasonable poor bad

How would you score the condition, compared to objects at national level?

low moderate high n.a.

explanatory notes:

c3 ensemble value

Is the object part of an ensemble?

yes no

If so, what type of ensemble?

low moderate high n.a.

explanatory notes:

c4 presentation value

low moderate high n.a.

explanatory notes:

c2 condition

Is the object in good condition, in comparison to objects of a similar kind? Does it show traces of wear or decay?

Is the object in its original, non-restored state?

Is the object intact and complete?

c3 ensemble value

Are we dealing with an ensemble? What is the nature of the ensemble (see page 40)? How do the various parts relate to one another?

Do any other ensembles exist of a similar kind?

Are objects of this kind quite often part of such an ensemble?

Is the ensemble complete in comparison to similar ones?

Is the original ensemble intact or has the connection between the different parts been broken?

c4 presentation value

Is the object suitable for display?

Would the object appeal to the public?

Can a particular story be told in relation to the object?

Is the object a characteristic example of a particular group of objects? And does that make it suitable for display or for educational purposes?

local | regional level

national level

c5 documentary value <input type="checkbox"/> low <input type="checkbox"/> moderate <input type="checkbox"/> high <input type="checkbox"/> n.a.	c5 documentary value <input type="checkbox"/> low <input type="checkbox"/> moderate <input type="checkbox"/> high <input type="checkbox"/> n.a.
explanatory notes:	explanatory notes:

c5 documentary value
 Is the object or its history well documented, in comparison with similar objects?
 Does the documentation add to our knowledge of the object or its history?
 Is the available documentation interesting from the point of view of cultural-historical research?

c interim score - comparative criteria	
local regional level <input type="checkbox"/> low <input type="checkbox"/> moderate <input type="checkbox"/> high <input type="checkbox"/> n.a.	national level <input type="checkbox"/> low <input type="checkbox"/> moderate <input type="checkbox"/> high <input type="checkbox"/> n.a.
explanatory notes:	explanatory notes:

final score – determination of value	
a current value <input type="checkbox"/> low <input type="checkbox"/> moderate <input type="checkbox"/> high <input type="checkbox"/> n.a.	
explanatory notes recommendation:	
b historical value + c comparative criteria	
local regional level <input type="checkbox"/> low <input type="checkbox"/> moderate <input type="checkbox"/> high <input type="checkbox"/> n.a.	national level <input type="checkbox"/> low <input type="checkbox"/> moderate <input type="checkbox"/> high <input type="checkbox"/> n.a.
explanatory notes recommendation:	explanatory notes recommendation:

Notes on using the heritage

The heritage assessment form provides members of parishes, church communities, orders, and congregations with a simple tool to assess the value of their movable religious heritage. These notes explain how the form can be used. It is important to take into consideration the way in which you can balance the different assessment criteria.

Basic description

In this box, you note down the object that is being assessed. This is also the place to record its inventory number, the name of the person who will assess its current value, and the name of the person who will assess its historical values and the comparative criteria.

Current value

In this box, you write down what the object means to the faith community. This current emotional and religious significance is generally relevant only to the local community, and sometimes to the city or region. An object's current value will therefore only be assessed at local/regional level, and not at national level.

The auxiliary questions are intended to help you. You do not need to answer them all. You can assess current value as 'low', 'moderate', 'high' or 'not applicable'. If the object's value is moderate or high, you can clarify this assessment in the space below.

Historical values

In the case of historical values, an object may possess significance at local, regional or national level. Since it will not often happen that an object possesses significance at national level, we advise you to start by assessing each object's value at local/regional level. Do you suspect that an object may possess significance beyond the regional level? If so, you can also assess its significance at national level. Alternatively, you can opt to fill in the object's historical value at both levels at the same time.

Here too, you will find the auxiliary questions useful. For each value, you can fill in the object's score as 'low', 'moderate', 'high' or 'not applicable'. If the object's value is moderate or high, you can clarify this assessment in the space below.

assessment form

Below, space is provided to fill in the interim score representing the different kinds of historical value. This interim score equals the highest value accorded to the object in terms of church-historical (b1), general historical (b2), or art-historical value (b3).

Comparative criteria

In assessing the comparative criteria, you will be considering the object in relation to other, similar objects. Here you will be looking at comparative qualities such as rarity, condition, ensemble value, presentation value, and documentary value. Here too you can fill in the values 'low', 'moderate', 'high' or 'not applicable'.

There are two exceptions in which you are expected to answer an additional question. In dealing with physical condition, you should first rate the object's condition as 'good', 'reasonable', 'poor' or 'bad'. For instance, suppose a candlestick is in poor condition, and there are a fair number of similar candlesticks in better condition. In that case, you would fill in the comparative score for physical condition as 'low'.



The object's condition

Good	= no damage or decay
Reasonable	= minor damage but no active decay
Poor	= some damage and/or slow, active decay
Bad	= considerable damage and/or intervention is urgently required.

An object should also be classified as being in bad condition if it is broken, or damage has rendered it unusable.

Ensemble value

In considering an object's ensemble value, you start by indicating whether it belongs to an ensemble, and if so, what type of ensemble it belongs to (see page 40). Only then do you make comparisons with similar ensembles. If the object's ensemble value is moderate or high, you can clarify the reasons for this conclusion in the space below.

At the end of this section, you can fill in the interim score of the comparative criteria. In this case, you should take the average of the scores, unless the score for one specific value is deemed to be of exceptional importance. In that case, you would add some explanatory observations to the interim score.

Final score | determination of the object's value

To determine an object's final score, you start with the interim score for the historical values. Then, you may adjust this score on the basis of the comparative criteria. Comparative criteria cannot fundamentally alter the primary historical significance, but they may boost or reduce it. In most cases, the final score here will be identical to the interim value filled in for the object's historical values. In a few cases, the final score may end up higher or lower because of the comparative criteria.

Take the following example. Suppose a baptismal dish scores 'moderate' for church-historical value. Under the heading general historical value the dish scores 'low', and for art-historical values its score is 'moderate'. In this case, the interim score for historical value would be 'moderate'. However, only a few specimens of this type of baptismal dish still exist. This means that the dish scores 'high' for rarity. And compared to similar baptismal dishes, it is in good condition (score: 'high'). Furthermore, the dish is particularly suitable for use in telling a story (presentation value: 'high'). When these additional qualities are factored into its primary historical value, the final score of the baptismal dish will be 'high'. In the space provided for comments, you can explain in brief how and why you arrived at this assessment.

The score for current value can be copied down from the first page. Current value should be kept separate from historical value when noting down the final score.



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Guidelines on Ways of Dealing with Religious Objects
is published by Museum Catharijneconvent, the Netherlands.

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Copy-editing and interviews

Sabel Communicatie: Maria Farag, Annemieke van Ramshorst

English translation

Beverley Jackson (www.jacksonacademic.nl)

Graphic design

Sabel Design, Bilthoven

Printing

Drukwerk Consultancy, Utrecht

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We should like to acknowledge the assistance of:

Michael Andersen (Nationalmuseet, Denmark), Rob Dückers (Foundation for the Saint Servatius Treasury, the Netherlands), Irene Faber (Jewish Historical Museum, the Netherlands), José António Falcão (Department of Historical and Artistic Heritage of the Diocese of Beja, Portugal), Dani Font (Cultural Heritage of the Diocese of Vic, Spain), Angus Fowler (Sponsors' Organisation for old churches in Berlin-Brandenburg, Germany), Poul Grønder-Hansen (National Museum, Denmark), Michael Hoare (National Churches Trust, United Kingdom), Jan Klinckaert (Centre for Religious Art and Culture, Belgium), Eloy Koldeweij (Cultural Heritage Agency of the Netherlands), Henrik Lindblad (Church of Sweden, Sweden), Catherine Piddington (The Churches Conservation Trust, United Kingdom), Leena Seim (Future for Religious Heritage, United Kingdom), Oddbjørn Sormoen (Church Association, Norway), Lonnie Stegink (Jewish Historical Museum, the Netherlands), Marc Sureda i Jubany (Episcopal Museum of Vic, Spain), and Martin L. van Wijngaarden (Rotterdam Evangelical Lutheran Congregation, the Netherlands).

With special thanks to:

Lilian Grootswagers (Erfgoed.nu, the Netherlands, Future for Religious Heritage, United Kingdom)

