

# CONSERVATION MAKING ART HISTORY

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## HISTORY OF CONSERVATION PRACTICES AT THE CRDS

The Centre IFAN (French Institute of Black Africa) was founded in 1943, following a decree that created subsidiary branches of IFAN in each territory of what was then the A.O.F. (French West Africa). Later renamed the Centre de Recherches et de Documentation du Senegal (CRDS), the Centre is now part of the Gaston Berger University in Saint Louis. The Centre houses one of the oldest libraries in Francophone Africa; a history museum with 1,005 objects; a refurbished storage facility; a photographic collection holding a wealth of 42,971 documents; and a collaborative workspace. Our expertise in issues of conservation is often solicited on the national, indeed the international, level. Moreover, the museum is distinguished in its commitment to teaching and learning. Our Heritage Crafts Section within the research and training program Civilizations, Religions, Arts, and Communications (CRAC) at the University Gaston Berger is a striking example, in which the CRDS provides pedagogical support for practical or supervised work. None of this could have been accomplished without staff training and capacity building in institutional management, cultural mediation, and conservation through international cooperation with institutions like ICCROM-Université de Paris 1, EPA, and others. This talk shows how we have struggled to get to this point. I will also discuss what could be done in the other institutions of Senegal and West Africa, particularly in the areas of training, conservation (documentation, inventory, exhibitions, etc.), and cultural mediation, to enhance the value of their collections and documentary archives.

Fatima Fall is director of the Centre de Recherches et de Documentation du Senegal (CRDS) in Saint-Louis, Senegal. A specialist in heritage conservation, she is also developing a Master's program in marketing at the Higher Institute of Management of Saint-Louis. Fall has been involved with the Civilizations, Religion, Arts, and Communication Training and Research Unit at the Gaston Berger University of Saint-Louis since 2011, and in Tourism and Conservation at the Literature and Human Sciences of the African Heritage School (EPA) in Porto Novo, Benin, since 1999. She has conducted research and inventory surveys on the architectural heritage of the

city of Saint-Louis following its addition to the World Heritage List and has participated in numerous culture and tourism heritage conservation projects in Saint-Louis, the Senegal River Valley, and in the region of Thies. A member of the board of directors of EPA, Fall is also president of the International Council of Museums (ICOM) committee and of the advisory council of International Council of Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS).