

A theoretical reflection on the documentation of contemporary art: a proposal for a chronological protocol

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Abstract: Contemporary artwork is a complex entity made up of several superimposed planes: the material plane, the conceptual plane and the biographical plane. The need to apprehend the entity, determining where its substantial attributes lie, those that determine its consistency and constitute both, its essence and its specificity, is the objective of the documentation.

This article proposes a documentation protocol that collects, from an empirical and useful perspective, the order in which the different actions of the contemporary art conservator should be documented. This protocol must analyse the different planes of which the artworks consist; it must apply an updated decision-making model and prioritise the relative importance of the material and immaterial constituents of the artworks. It must also include the documentation of the intervention process itself. The order and the tools to achieve it are analyzed in this article.

Keywords: conservation theory, contemporary art, documentation, protocol

Una reflexión teórica sobre la documentación del arte contemporáneo: una propuesta para un protocolo cronológico

Resumen: La obra de arte contemporánea es una entidad compleja formada por varios planos superpuestos: el plano material, el plano conceptual y el plano biográfico. La necesidad de aprender la entidad, determinando dónde se encuentran sus atributos sustanciales, que determinan su consistencia y constituyen tanto su esencia como su especificidad, es el objetivo de la documentación.

Este artículo propone un protocolo de documentación que recoge, desde una perspectiva empírica y útil, el orden en el que se deben documentar las diferentes acciones del conservador de arte contemporáneo. Este protocolo debe analizar los diferentes planos que componen las obras de arte; debe aplicar un modelo de toma de decisiones actualizado y priorizar la importancia relativa de los componentes materiales e inmateriales de las obras de arte. También debe incluir la documentación del propio proceso de intervención. El orden y las herramientas para lograrlo son analizados en este artículo.

Palabras clave: teoría, arte contemporáneo, documentación, protocolo

Uma reflexão teórica sobre a documentação da arte contemporânea: uma proposta para um protocolo cronológico

Resumo: A obra de arte contemporânea é uma entidade complexa formada por vários planos sobrepostos: o plano material, o plano conceptual e o plano biográfico. A necessidade de apreender a entidade, determinando onde se encontram os seus atributos substanciais, aqueles que determinam a sua consistência e constituem tanto a sua essência como a sua especificidade, é o objectivo da documentação.

Este artigo propõe um protocolo de documentação que retoma, de uma perspectiva empírica e útil, a ordem em que se devem documentar as diferentes ações do conservador de arte contemporânea. Este protocolo deve analisar os diferentes planos que compõem as obras de arte; deve aplicar um modelo de tomada de decisões atualizado e priorizar a importância relativa dos componentes materiais e imateriais das obras de arte. Deve igualmente incluir a documentação do próprio processo de intervenção. A ordem e as ferramentas para consegui-lo são analisadas neste artigo.

Palavras-chave: teoria, arte contemporânea, documentação, protocolo

Introduction

The constant experimentation and research of contemporary artists has resulted in the emergence of complex works in relation to their ontological nature. These new artistic typologies have placed the conservator-restorer before the problem of the passage of time and its effect on matter, but also, before the problem of its effect on the consistency of the artworks.

If the consistency of the work is the sum of its essential and accidental properties, that is to say, its essence, in a phenomenological sense (Ferrater Morab 1975), the documentation of it, with the intention of transmitting it to the future, must take into account the knowledge of these properties and their hierarchization.

In the field of conservation and restoration of contemporary art it is common to find the need to replace artistic elements due to technological obsolescence, loss, degradation or reinstallation. In other words, it is common to be faced with the possibility of change (Van Saaze 2013).

In addition, we find the intermittent materialization of the artworks, as in the case of the installations; or even, the irremediable death of the artwork before the impossibility of bringing the entity to the experimentation, as a consequence of the loss of its essential constituents (Llamas 2020: 6-7).

The fact that for contemporary art, matter is the bearer of meanings implies that the transformation of it, voluntary or involuntary, can affect essential issues.

In relation to the possibility of reaching absolute Truth and knowledge of the entity, there are opposing positions. In any case, the conservator must transmit the artwork to the future, and must do so after having apprehended it, trying to eliminate as much as possible any hint of subjectivity, again, if this is possible; in any case, the bequeath process of documentation contributes to this.

Existence is the ontological category that gives rise to the perceptions we obtain from the entity. On the other hand, the experiences that we obtain from these perceptions, analyzed rationally, constitute the knowledge of it. Documentation serves to describe these perceptions and experiences as precisely as possible, so that the future experimentations of the entity are as faithful as possible to the Truth.

In the case of contemporary art, the passage of time becomes a fundamental risk factor. And this is not only due to the effect of the usual agents of degradation, but also due to the possibility of forgetting and the consequent transformation of the consistency of the artwork.

On the other hand, the accidental properties (Locke 2002), those that refer to minor attributes, must also be known,

since in view of the possible discrepancies that could exist in the decision-making processes, they could be sacrificed. The passage of time influences the loss of information, also in the decontextualization of the artworks, and as result, in difficulties in reinstalling them. Documenting to bequeath consists in gathering in an individualized way which are the qualities that define the entity. For that, is necessary collecting what are its substantial attributes, identifying the artwork, but at the same time, classifying it according to its ontological nature.

The nature and status that the various types of documentation generated in these processes will acquire are varied. Studying the condition that the documentation obtained acquires, is part of the necessary theorization. Sometimes the documentation of the artistic act itself may become the work of art and be exhibited in museums; in other cases, the documentation may simply be the graphic testimony of what the work was; or even, in some cases, the documentation may be forbidden by the artist (Van Saaze 2014).

According to our experience, in order to document, it is necessary to establish a sequential methodological process, a process that can be implemented by the conservator-restorer with the intention of transmitting the consistency of the artwork, that is, with the intention of preserving what makes the entity what it is.

This process consists of several successive moments that will help the interpretation of the work of art and the apprehension of the various values that substantiate it.

From an empirical point of view, the documentation must include the intervention processes themselves once these have been carried out, it must include the decision-making processes and it must specify the specific actions to be carried out in relation to preventive conservation.

One of the objectives of this study is to propose the monitoring of a sequential protocol of action for the documentation of contemporary artworks, a protocol based on the practical experience and knowledge of conservator-restorers. This conceptual and methodological tool can be used to collect all the information that helps to understand the entity, that is: the study of the material plane; the study of the conceptual plane; the study of the biographical plane; the study of the condition of the artwork; the study of the possible discrepancies that could arise between the condition of the current matter and its ideal pristine state, in relation to the significance; the in-depth study of the factors that intervene in the decision making for the determination of the intervention process (application of a decision making model); the documentation of the intervention process itself, or of the proposal of a strategy for configuration (according to the application of the decision-making model updated in 2019); and finally, the approach of the individualized preventive conservation actions, as well as the verification

of the effectiveness of the proposals. The order indicated is essential for the adequate construction of the knowledge of the artwork.

This protocol of action can be applied to any type of artwork, whatever its ontological nature, because when each artwork is analysed in this way, we believe that a good understanding of it can be achieved. The perspective from which the actions for the documentation in the proposed protocol follow each other, is that of the conservator-restorer, since the conservator must apply an intervention treatment and have documented his action once it has been finished.

In the area of documentation of contemporary art technical sheets, at first, were based on the study of traditional artworks. Little by little, initiatives have appeared that have attempted to gather together the needs of contemporary art, including the participation of the artist in the process of documentation or the adaptation to the art of the new media: (DOCAM; VARIABLE MEDIA NETWORK; 40YEARSVIDEOART. DE-PART 1; INSIDE INSTALLATIONS; ICOM-CIDOC, INCCA, or MATTERS IN MEDIA ART), among others.

This concern for transmitting the authentic work, without loss of information, nor changes or alterations due to lack of understanding, led to the development of projects for the design of new documentation models (Heydenreich 2011: 155-171).

Generally, these more current models require the joint and collaborative work of various types of conservation and restoration professionals, such as engineering and information technology, art history, chemistry, etc. As Wharton (2015: 180-191) notes, "the resulting archives contain information on production methods, materials, past events, artists' concerns..."

However, we believe that we can make a contribution to the need to have the conceptual aspects of the artworks well collected, on which subsequent actions should be based. Studies aimed at studying the problems of documenting contemporary art in greater depth must focus on establishing an appropriate methodology of action that will lead to decisions being taken and that will be useful empirically for the conservator himself.

Thus, our study, from a methodological point of view, reviews some important theoretical concepts, such as consistency, existence, ontological status or essence. The research makes a comparison between the two decision-making models developed at INCCA and NACCA and examines how the neutral description of the artwork is possible and can, if done at an early stage, help the conservator-restorer in the process of interpretation. After studying the role of social representations in obtaining information, it analyses the different planes that constitute the work of art and the different paradigms in which it can be placed, determining that it is essential to situate the

work in one of them in order to reach an understanding of it. Finally, it proposes a documentation protocol that chronologically helps the conservator-restorer to construct knowledge and record his actions.

Comparison of two decision-making models (1999-2019). The need to describe case by case

The decision-making model designed by the Foundation for the Conservation of Modern Art in 1999 and by the Netherlands Institute for Cultural Heritage was an important step in documenting contemporary artworks. One of the important aspects that it established was the need to study each work to be intervened on a case-by-case basis. In the application of this model, the figure of the artist plays a fundamental role.

Recently, in the context of the NACCA project (New Approches in the Conservation of Contemporary Art, 2016-2019) there has been a review and update of that decision-making model.

One of the new features of this review is the inclusion of a preliminary step in which the study of the current situation of the artwork is addressed. This is followed by an analysis of possible conflicts that may have been established between the current condition of the matter and its pristine ideal condition (Heydenreich, Fischer, Giebeler, & Sartorius 2019). This review focuses on the evolving nature of the artworks and considers, in addition to the options for intervention, the options for presentation of the artworks.

We would like to point out that throughout our study the concept of pristine, which will be used on several occasions, will be related to one of the four possible authentic states mentioned by Muñoz Viñas (2003: 84-86): the state that the object had when it was produced, according to Riegl's theory (1858-1905), or the closed originary state pointed out by González Varas (2008:40).

More than analyzing the significance of matter, which was a section of the previous model, we would analyze what would be its desired optimal condition, in relation to the Truth of the entity. In the case of discrepancies between both, intervention options or presentation strategies would be considered, we could point out, taking into account the paradigm where the artwork is located.

Finally, according to the new model, it is necessary to check the effectiveness of our actions. This last step has been very rightly included with respect to the previous decision-making model.

This revision has meant an advance, again, very adequate to reality, which takes into account the evolution of the theory during these years. However, the paradigm of the death of the artwork must be taken into account, which entails the acceptance of its disappearance due to the

impossibility of bringing the Truth of the entity to the world of sensible.

Another aspect that could influence the decision-making process, and which must be taken into account, since the biographical level is part of the artwork, is the role of the public in relation to preservation. This aspect that has been little studied.

Thus, the steps to follow that have been established in the current decision-making model (2019) would be: study of the current situation of the artwork, data recording, study of the condition of the matter, study of the ideal pristine condition, analysis of discrepancies between these last two, proposal of action options or conservation strategies, evaluation of the proposals, specification of the action to be carried out (intervention process or long-term strategy) and review of the action taken.

Assessing discrepant factors in decision making is a complex process. Balancing the weight that each of these variables must have is, in the end, what will determine the intervention to be carried out. The list of discrepant factors involved in determining the intervention is constantly expanding. In addition to the traditional ones, such as the authenticity of the artwork (nuanced at present), functionality, the artist's opinion, historicity, aesthetic factors, etc... we have contributed that of pressure from the art market (Llamas 2014), (artists are influenced by this agent when participating in decision-making processes), and we would also like to point out the importance of analysing the role that the public (community) may have in this process. It is possible to find works of urban art that, although they were born with the intention of being abandoned, have ended up being worthy of conservation given the affectivities (values) that the community has deposited in them.

With regard to the artist's opinion, which has been placed in the current decision-making model, as in the previous one, in the section on consideration or assessment of discrepant factors, it is interesting to note that the artist is not aware of the possibilities of the discipline of conservation, and that his contribution is already taken into account in the legislative factor, since it is known that we conservator-restorers have to respect the moral rights of creators. For this reason, it seems to us more appropriate to include the study of the artist's opinion with respect to conservation, on a biographical level.

The neutral description of the artwork as a first step in the documentation.

We think that interpretation of the artwork is necessary to be able to bequeath it correctly to the future. But is the interpretation of the entity an automatic process that takes place in the course of a conservation intervention? What importance does the figure of the artist have in this process of interpretation and to what extent should he influence the decision-making processes? The description of the

artwork is part of its documentation, but can the neutral description of the work be produced without the need for prior interpretation?

Irvin Sherri (2006: 143-156) analyses the problem of the interpretation and configuration of the artwork in relation to its documentation. Although his point of view is directed towards the need to understand the entity, his contributions and criticism of what Danto maintains in relation to documentation are very interesting.

According to Sherri (2005: 135-148), Danto (1989: 195-196) states that it is not legitimate to seek a neutral or pre-interpretative description of the artwork, since such a description does not respect the work as a work of art. For Danto, previous interpretation is necessary for the constitution of the work of art, and it is not possible to describe it in a neutral way, since in that case, we would appreciate it as a thing and not as an artwork. On the other hand, and on the contrary, Sherri defends that it is possible to see and describe an artwork before interpreting it. That would also be our opinion.

This is an interesting topic, and we can contribute to analysing it from the point of view of the conservator-restorers. When an artwork arrives at an institution and a conservation strategy must be considered, or when it arrives at the laboratory to be intervened, the conservator must put into operation all the information available to reach the comprehension of the entity. He will not be able to determine intervention treatments, or conservation strategies if he has not come to understand where the essential lies in it, what makes the artwork what it is, the what of the thing, its quiddity.

However, we argue that the description of the artwork, as a material object, can help interpretation, and interpretation is necessary to make appropriate decisions [Figure 1]. The interpretation is linked to the apprehension of the artwork, it is not produced in an intuitive and direct way in front of the contemplation, it needs tools that help the conservator and also the public, obviously, to the construction of the meaning.

Danto already points out that one of the functions of interpretation is to attribute a certain importance to certain elements, so as to justify their very inclusion in a description. According to him, this would be one of the essential aspects in the description of the artwork and, he maintains that it is not possible to recognise these characteristics without interpretation.

For our part, as we have explained above, we think that the hierarchization of essential and anecdotal constituents of the artworks must be done after the interpretation, otherwise, the importance of each of them, both the material and the immaterial, in relation to the whole cannot be understood. Indeed, like Danto, we also believe that before interpretation, it is not possible to establish the relative importance of each of them.



Figure 1.- Cildo Meireles, *Insertions into Ideological Circuits: Coca-Cola Project*, 1970. Tate Modern. Photograph by the author. The passage of time affects the appearance of the work. The glass in the bottles is less and less transparent. Interpretation is needed to determine the extent to which the work is affected by this fact.

But to describe is not to establish a hierarchy, and therefore, the description of the constituent elements of the artwork could be the first task of the conservator when faced with the need to document. Describing is simpler than understanding, and it is simpler than establishing relative importance of something, which is why it seems logical to begin the study of the artwork in this way.

Starting with a neutral description of the integral elements of the artwork is a manner of beginning to comprehend, and provides the conservator with a prior partial understanding, which will be useful at the time of the interview, which, on the other hand, should be done as soon as possible. The interpretation, in our view, will occur in parallel to the documentation process.

In relation to the concept of identity, there are several dimensions from which it is being analyzed (Martore 2009). If the essence is related to typologies, to quiddity (Ferrater Mora, 1975b) (a term adopted in medieval scholastic philosophy, but very useful in our field), and constitutes the set of properties shared by the members of a class, haecceity could be related to individual identity, that is, to what makes one individual different from another (Caponi 2018:1-15; Vos 2006, 412)). And within the field of theory for the conservation of contemporary art, this fact refers to

what, within an artistic category, for example, ephemeral art, would make one artwork distinguishable from another.

Moving away from the social perspective, for Sherri, identity would be linked to the conceptual plane of the artwork, and not to the biographical plane, a point that we also share, since, for example, three materially identical artworks can receive three different interpretations if the title next to them is different in each case. Following an example given by Danto.

In this sense, Stigter (2017) provides an updated vision of the nature of contemporary art, insisting on the need to understand it, in many cases, as a process, and not as art materialized in an object. This author brings together three new approaches aimed at studying the behaviour of the artwork, the autoethnographic approach, already pointed out by Wharton (2013: 19-173), the biographical approach, mentioned above, and the approach aimed at studying new media art.

It is also interesting to note his contribution in revaluing the figure of the conservator as an active agent, highlighting the auto-ethnographic approach coming from the social sciences, in valuing the participation of the conservator in the processes of reinstallation and documentation of the artworks. Thus, the qualitative reflection carried out by the conservator in the process of reinstallation should be taken into account (Stigter 2016: 227-232).

Different planes in the work of art: the conceptual, the material and the biographical.

The conceptual plane of the works would be, as Althöfer (2003) already established, ahead of the material plane, since even in the case of artworks in which matter is the bearer of the essential, this fact has had to be determined previously by the artist.

At the same time, there is the possibility that the degradation of matter has been known and assumed from the pristine moment of the work (video art, kinetic art, technological works in general). In these cases, the functional objects, which serve the experimentation, but do not constitute the substantial, must be understood as accidental components, with the possibility of replacement or substitution without loss or damage to authenticity.

On the other hand, matter can degrade, this process constituting the substantial of the artwork. In this situation, we would find in the paradigm of the processual pointed out by Van de Vall (2017), and obviously, change and mutation would be the essential thing in the entity, which would help to place it within a category.

Artistic installations could be analyzed from the perspective of the paradigm of the performative pointed out by Van de Vall, as well as happenings and performances (live art). In

this paradigm, in relation to matter, the most likely thing is the possibility of change or substitution.

For its part, urban art has introduced great complexity into the world of contemporary art conservation. Understanding the ephemeral nature of the artworks in most cases, which is the essential feature of the entity, it may happen that for several reasons (art market, social pressure, excessive musealization...) the artwork ends up being conserved. This places the conservator before the disjunctive of respecting the quiddity of the artwork, defending its natural ephemeral character, or proceeding to its conservation. At present, urban art museums are appearing, although fortunately, in most cases the artworks remain in the place for which they were created, fulfilling their natural life cycle.

About paradigm of the death of the entity, in this group of rules, the conservator, freed from the need to preserve the work of art in a single authentic state, a state that is close to the pristine one, must focus his efforts on determining the ontological status of the matter that served the entity's experimentation, since we must have assumed that it is not capable of fulfilling its function. In this paradigm, documentation will include terms such as relic, ruin, replica, copy, reissue or rematerialization, and in each case, it will be necessary to determine whether a new manifestation of the entity would be endowed with "artisticity".

As we have pointed out, the description of the artwork, as a complex entity, must take into account the three planes of which it is composed: the material plane, which makes it possible for the entity to experiment; the conceptual plane, which includes all those aspects related to the artistic intention, symbolism or meaning; and the biographical plane, which analyses the evolution of the work throughout its existence specifying the affectivities contributed by the community that endow it with values of all kinds (Szmelter 2013). Also, in this plane we analyze how the diverse moments in the artwork have been happening, the new editions, the interventions of restoration, the interactions with the public... Thus, this passing of the artwork will generate this third plane in the documentation, which also has to be gathered suitably, since the biography of the work, determines its current reality, that is, its current condition, and can help when making conservation decisions, especially if the conflicts previously faced by the conservators have been collected and documented (Van de Vall, R; Hölling, H. Scholte, T.; Stigter, S. 2011) and (Van de Vall 2017: 83-100).

The point is important in relation to future interventions, as documenting the decision-making process, which must take into account all the discrepant factors (historicity, iconicity, ethics, legislation, artist's opinion, art market, technical limitations...) that have taken part in it, can facilitate our work.

Contemporary artworks are made up of a series of constituents, both tangible and intangible, which have

a relative importance in relation to the quiddity of the artwork. The artist can help us to establish, for each of these elements, what their importance is in relation to the ensemble. For this purpose, and in the face of the reality of degradation, having the importance of each of these constituent elements hierarchized can help us understand to what degree the artwork would be damaged.

At times, the matter has an anecdotal role, remaining in the last places of importance for the artist. At other times, the opposite may be true. It would therefore be a question of determining which elements of the artwork are absolutely essential and must be maintained over time in order to guarantee the transmission of the entity, and which aspects of it are unimportant, anecdotal and not worth the effort of conservation [Figure 2].

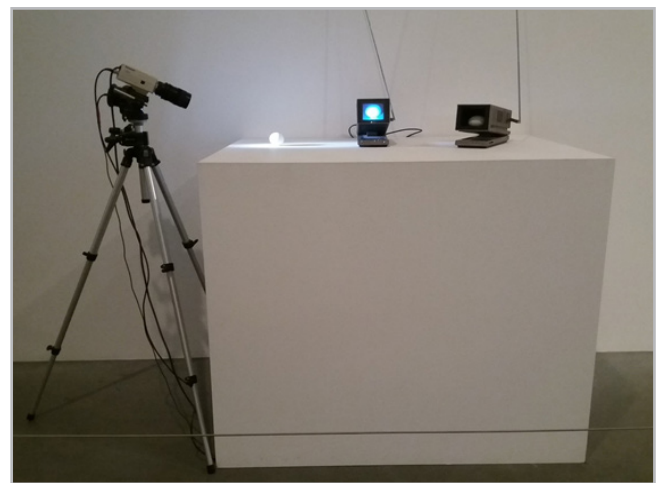


Figure 2.- Nam June Paik, *Three Eggs* 1975-1982, Video, video camera, 2 colour television receivers, 2 eggs. Photograph by the author. The egg is an anecdotal element in the artwork. Its transmission over time is not possible.

Sometimes the re-editions are carried out by the conservator, who has become an agent that participates and collaborates with the artist in the mounting of exhibitions. It seems obvious that the role of documentation will become fundamental in each case to determine the ontological status of each new work (ruin, copy, rematerialization, authentic...).

The influence of social representations among the groups participating in the documentation

The social representation of the subject is an area that, as part of social psychology, analyzes the relationships between groups (Moscovici 2001), in our case, between different agents whose intention is the conservation of contemporary art (artists, curators, art historians, gallery owners, public...). Interviews with the artists are part of the process of documenting an intervention. Interviews are usually conducted early in the process and are useful in many ways. But these semi-directed interviews are not free from anticipated social representations. (Souza M.; Llamas R. 2016: 263-264).

Both the artist and the conservator bring a social, cognitive and experiential background to the moment of the initial interview, or when an installation is being assembled, for example, that can determine the result of the conversation. Thus, the information obtained from this meeting will be influenced and conditioned by different previous perceptions of both agents, which may be of an individual or group nature. Analyzing the outcome of the interviews, trying to discern how these previous representations have influenced the obtaining of information, should also be part of the documentation process.

Interviews with conservators themselves can provide important information. Conservators of contemporary art have had to face complex problems arising from the technical and material diversity of the artworks; from the inclusion of the ephemeral categories; from the obsolescence suffered by new media art; from the inclusion of works whose matter is degraded against the artist's intention; from the inclusion of real life and transformation as part of the artistic discourse; and also, among others, from the use of the human body as a means of expression or by performing live actions.

In addition, the conservator-restorer has now become a participatory agent (Pereira 2017: 97-104), who is required to be neutral in the co-production processes of the artworks when working with the artist. However, this neutrality is difficult, since the decision-making processes can be influenced by the social representations acquired towards the artists' collective and vice versa. It is important to be aware of this fact, since the final objective of the relationship between both agents is to correctly document the artwork in order to bequeath it to the future. It is the conservation of the work that brings these groups together, and the ultimate purpose of documentation is the comprehension that comes from perception, experience and analysis.

Description of the proposed documentation protocols

To make the right decisions regarding conservation, restoration, exhibition, transport and storage of artworks, careful documentation is necessary. The quality of the documentation will determine the quality of the decisions taken.

A good protocol (a succession of actions) for the documentation of contemporary art must give the same importance to the documentation of the intangible aspects as to the tangible ones, collecting information that is useful also for the knowledge of the conceptual and biographical aspects.

The aim is to determine the features to be kept unchanged over time, as change is inevitable. Thus, some of the most important questions to be answered would be: in what paradigm should the artwork be situated, how does the passage of time affect the artwork, what aspects determine its consistency, what importance does pristine matter have

in relation to the entity? The analysis of the relationship of matter with the entity helps us to situate ourselves in a certain paradigm.

The answer to these questions will be reached as we study the plans that make up the artwork, so that in the end, we will have completed the process of interpretation.

In relation to the material plane, the main issues to be collected would be: the type of materials, their chemical nature (making a wide and deep description of each of them); the technique of execution of the artworks, that is, how the artist has used these materials; the degradation factors affecting the works (of the materials separately and in combination); the type, number and location of the pathologies present in the works, among others.

The analysis of the conceptual plane of the work should include: the historical-artistic contextualization of the author; the historical-artistic contextualization of the work in relation to the artist's production; the artistic intention in the work (in relation to the interpretation); the meaning of the materials that help the configuration (determining the properties by which they have been used); the study of the effect of the passage of time on the matter and its repercussion on the meaning of the artwork.

In this context, the qualities of these materials that serve the aesthetic function must be identified [Figure 3], since, as Muriel Verbeek (2019) points out, conservation must pay special attention not only to the artistic intention, but also to the "...induced and perceived effect of the work, often multi-sensory and synaesthetic..."

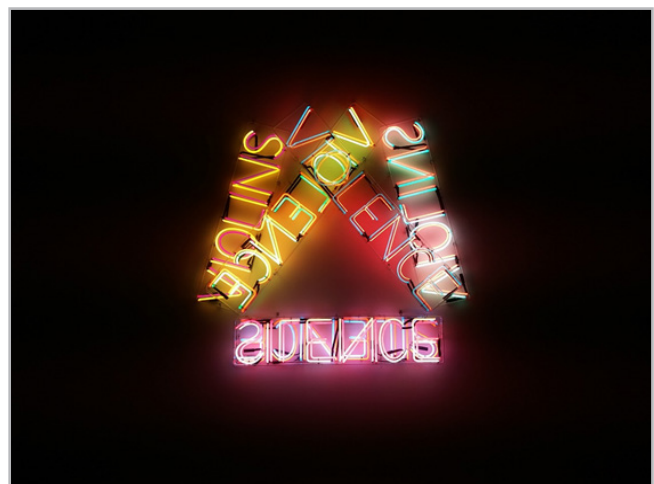


Figure 3.- Bruce Nauman, *Violins Violence Silence*, 1981-1982, Neon tubing with clear glass tubing suspension frame. Photograph by the author. It is necessary to document the intensity, brightness and shade of the color for proper experimentation.

The biographical plane of the work should include the study of previous interventions (where decision-making processes will have already taken place); the important moments of the artwork (previous exhibitions, reissues...); the cultural context

in which it is generated (moment and social intention); the identity acquired by the work in an ethnographic sense (analysis of the values it treasures); and perhaps, also in this section, the artist's opinion about the restoration (which is different from the artistic intention, and which must be taken into account) could be included.

The study of the material plane of the artwork has been widely developed in the paradigm of scientific conservation. In order to obtain information on the conceptual plane, we can rely on interviews with the artists, analysis of written sources, collaboration with the artist himself at the time of re-edition of the works, or interviews with other agents involved in conservation (historians, curators, artistic foundations...). At the biographical level, interviews with conservators themselves, the study of previous intervention reports, the study of written sources, social and cultural studies and interviews with the public or communities may be useful.

We insist that the logical order of the proposed actions is based on the practical experience of the conservation and intends that the documentation process itself helps to; interpret and hierarchize elements in the artwork; to study their relative importance; to make decisions; to document the intervention process itself and to propose the appropriate

preventive conservation strategies. That is to say, to have all the actions of the conservator-restorer collected. We propose an open scheme that can serve as a guide when establishing the steps to be followed. The single fact of following them helps to make decisions and to document the process of intervention.

A first moment should be dedicated to collecting general identification data; a second moment should be dedicated to the study of the base materials from which the artworks are constituted (describing is easier than hierarchising). Is possible to begin by studying the constituent material, since at the end, both the condition and its meaning must be known in order to establish possible discrepancies. A third moment could be dedicated to the documentation of the conceptual plane of the artwork and the study of its semantic and symbolic aspects; a fourth moment to the study of the condition of the matter; a fifth moment to the study of the biographical plane; a sixth moment to the evaluation of the discrepant factors that are influencing the decision making; a seventh moment is dedicated to the description of the intervention process carried out; an eighth moment is dedicated to the recommended conditions of preventive conservation; and a ninth moment is dedicated to the verification of the effectiveness of our treatments or configuration strategies..

MOMENTS IN THE DOCUMENTATION RELATED TO THE CONSERVATOR'S PRACTICE

MOMENT 1. RECORDING GENERAL DATA OF THE ARTWORK

General identification data of the artwork

Study of the current situation of the work

MOMENT 2. DOCUMENTATION OF THE MATERIAL PLANE

Study of the materials that serve the configuration of the artwork

Study of the execution technique (combination of materials)

Study of the effect of the passage of time on matter at the physical-chemical level

Sources of information:

Scientific methods of analysis

Interview with the artist

Material data sheets

Industry

MOMENT 3. DOCUMENTATION OF THE CONCEPTUAL PLANE

Historical and artistic context of the author

Historical and artistic context of the artwork

Artistic intention in the work

Meaning of the materials that make up the work

Study of the effect of the passage of time on matter and its repercussion on artistic intention

Determination of the paradigm in which we find ourselves (processual, performative, scientific, death)

Hierarchy of elements of the material plane

Hierarchy of elements of the immaterial plane

Sources of information:

Scientific methods of analysis
Interviews with conservators
Interview with the artist
Historical-artistic sources
Interviews with different agents involved in conservation:
foundations, galleries, owners...

MOMENT 4. STUDY OF THE BIOGRAPHICAL PLANE OF THE ARTWORK

Study of previous interventions
Study of previous decision-making processes (previous conflicts)
Important moments on the artwork
Cultural context
Study of identity (analysis of present values)
Artist's opinion on the restoration

Sources of information:

Study of previous intervention reports
Institutions' databases
Interview with the artist
Community interviews
Interviews with conservators

MOMENT 5. STUDY OF THE CONDITION OF MATTER

Analysis of risk and degradation factors affecting materials separately
Analysis of risk and degradation factors affecting materials in combination
Type, quantity and location of the pathologies.

Sources of information:

Scientific methods of analysis
Scientific Photography
Interviews with conservators
Interview with the artist

MOMENT 6. CONSIDERATION OF DISCREPANT FACTORS IN THE DECISION MAKING PROCESS: PROPOSED OPTION

Consideration of discrepant factors: historicity, iconicity, authenticity, aesthetic factors, financial limitations, technical limitations, ethics, legislation, art market, social aspects, functionality
Proposed treatment or long-term conservation and display strategy

MOMENT 7. DESCRIPTION OF THE INTERVENTION PROCESS OR CONFIGURATION STRATEGIES

Description of the intervention process carried out
Determination of the ontological status of the matter serving the experimentation
Description of an entity configuration strategy

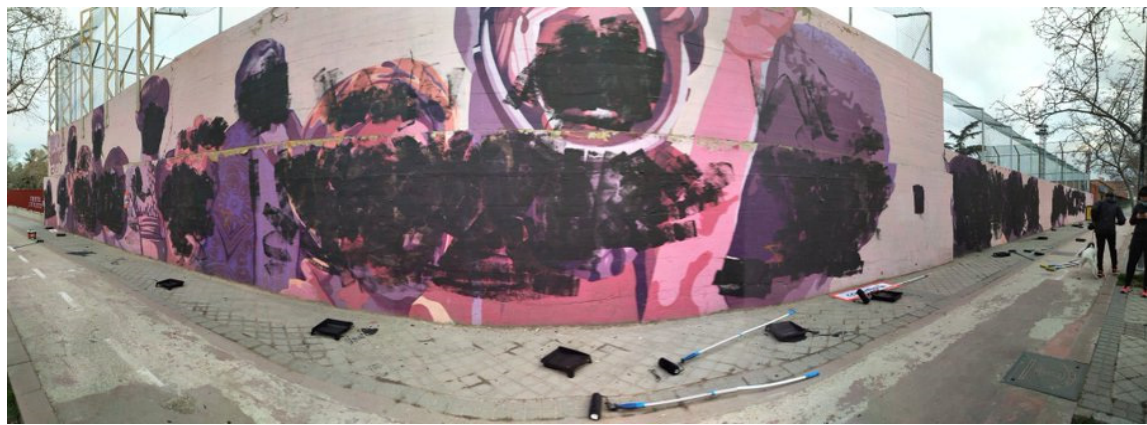
MOMENT 8. SPECIFIC PREVENTIVE CONSERVATION RECOMMENDATIONS

Study of general and specific aspects of preventive conservation

MOMENT 9. REGULAR RESULT REVIEWS

Verification of the results of the intervention
Verification of the effectiveness of the proposed conservation and configuration strategy

Table 1.- Documentation as a methodological process towards interpretation and conservation



Figures 4, 5 and 6.- The images illustrate the before and after of an act of vandalism on a feminist mural in Ciudad Lineal, Madrid, as well as the reaction of the community to it. The act, in which numerous people pasted posters with the portraits of illustrious women on the black paint that crossed out the mural, included in the biographical plan of the work, should be taken into account in conservation decision-making, for bringing new values coming from the subject. Image source: The Independent.

Analysis of the specific issues of documentation according to the paradigm in which the artwork is included

We can begin by pointing out the special problems of the death of the artwork paradigm. This fact does not imply that matter must be discarded and the work abandoned. The artwork will be the bearer of many kinds of values that will make it worthy of conservation. However, the configuration of the artwork and therefore its experimentation will not be possible. This matter, loaded with cultural or social affectivities, will be equally preserved, but understanding its aesthetic limitations, in this case the aesthetic instance pointed out by Brandi (2002) would be definitely affected. In many cases, the various values of an iconic, symbolic, pedagogical or historical nature continue to be awarded by the artist, the community, the curator, or the institution, and all of them will make the artistic object be preserved.

Thus, the documentation of the artwork and the decision making process will not be directed to establish a specific intervention, but to establishing a long-term conservation and configuration strategy. The artistic experience could be obtained through re-editions, establishing, depending on the work, the artistic status of each new object in relation to its authenticity.

In the case of the processual paradigm, the artwork constantly mutates and transforms. The role of the conservator will be to manage this change (Van de Vall; Hölling, Scholte; Stigter, 2011), we insist that, with the intention that there is no loss of authenticity.

The usual conflicts in this paradigm occur before the need to substitute material elements, making the Truth of the artwork prevail over the importance of their pristine matter. In this case, it is absolutely necessary to have a hierarchy of all the elements of the work, of the material sphere and of the immaterial sphere, in order to determine what is immutable and what is accessory or functional, and therefore, dispensable.

Finally, in the case of the performance paradigm, several issues need to be addressed. In the first place, the possibility of recreating the artistic event must be taken into account, that is, the question must be answered: is it possible to perform again? If this is the case, the documentation process will include all those aspects necessary for the reinterpretation, that is, the "list of instructions" should be as detailed as possible.

Performances can attend to three possibilities. The first, that the artwork can only exist as live art, so that it only manifests itself in its performance; and within this circumstance, that it can only be produced on one occasion, or on several occasions.

A second possibility is that, once experienced the entity, it can be preserved in its audiovisual documentary records,

so that they acquire the status of a work of art, with no reinterpretation being possible. In the case of audiovisual documentation, it must also be considered that it may not have acquired the status of a work of art.

A third possibility would be for the performances to be transformed into installations. This occurs when the vestiges of the performances, the relics, to use the appropriate term for Hermann Nitsch's work, arranged in space according to an established artistic intention, become the work of art to be conserved.

On the other hand, it can happen, in the case of the performance paradigm, if the artistic intention so determines, that adherence to a paradigm is not exclusionary. Thus, once the performance is over, the relics or vestiges of the performance could be installed, or, thanks to the collaboration between conservator and the artist's legacy, represented.

Conclusions

The conservator-restorer, faced with the need to make decisions, requires an understanding of what the artwork really is and an analysis of where its quiddity lies (that which allows it to be classified within a category or type of artwork) and where its haecceity lies (that which makes it distinguishable within that category from another artwork, that which relates to its individual identity).

In other words, he needs to know what is substantial in the artwork, what endures the accidental features that can not exist by themselves: he needs to know what lies beyond the changing phenomena that impress our senses.

The protocol of documentation contributes to this in-depth knowledge, as it includes the analysis of the three levels on which the artwork consists: conceptual, biographical and material. In this way, the documentation process itself becomes a methodological tool that increases the possibilities of apprehending the entity and, therefore, of success in the treatment or strategy proposed.

The protocol has achieved to order chronologically the different actions that the conservator must carry out to know the artwork, and will serve, from a pragmatic point of view, to record each of his actions, from the most analytical, to the most practical.

We believe that the neutral description of the constituents of an artwork is possible, and therefore, that it is the point by which to begin the documentation. After the interpretation, which would take place in parallel with the documentation process, it would be possible to carry out the hierarchization of the constituent elements, both material and immaterial, since it is not possible to determine their relative importance before.

Since the contemporary artwork must be understood as an entity that mutates with time, this transformation must be analyzed in terms of the paradigm in which it is. We have pointed out the importance of establishing this paradigm in the first moments of the documentation: when analyzing the conceptual level of the work. This is important, since the construction of the knowledge we obtain from it and the proposed conservation actions will depend on it. In other words, it is not possible to propose an appropriate methodology for conservation or an intervention process, if the work has not first been placed in a certain paradigm. In the case of the paradigm of the processual, of the performance and of the death of the artwork, after applying a decision-making model, we no longer arrive solely at the establishment of an intervention treatment, but also at the proposal of a long-term conservation strategy; or at the proposal of a strategy to enable the future configuration of the artwork to facilitate its experimentation; or at the determination of the ontological status of the matter (relic, ruin, authentic, re-edition...).

Finally, it should be noted that forgetting is one of the most important factors of deterioration in the preservation of contemporary art.

Correct documentation of the artworks addressed to conservation, as well as the adequate recording of previous conflicts faced for their restoration (Van de Vall 2017), together with the documentation of the intervention processes themselves, will be of great help to conservators. The future existence of the artwork will be determined by the experience we obtain from it. The purpose of documentation is to ensure that that experience is as faithful as possible to what determines its consistency.

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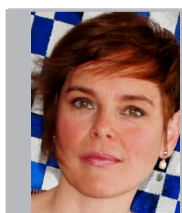
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Artículo enviado el 02/09/2020
Artículo aceptado el 14/02/2022



<https://doi.org/10.37558/gec.v21i1.813>

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