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Conservation: Cultures and Connections

Communications

Whose decision is it? Reflections about a decision making model based on qualitative methodologies

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Abstracts

Français English

En partant de l'expérience acquise dans le cadre du projet de recherche sur la *Documentation d'Art Contemporain*, les méthodes qualitatives en sciences sociales et les théories les plus récentes de la conservation, cet article propose et discute un modèle de prise de décision visant la conservation des œuvres d'art complexes. Dans ce processus, les théories sont appliquées à la prise de décision avec des méthodologies d'analyse d'interviews aux artistes.

Departing from the experience gathered in the research project *Documentation of Contemporary Art*, this paper discusses a decision-making model for the preservation of contemporary complex artworks. In this project, social sciences disciplines and current conservation theories are brought together. For this model, qualitative methodologies for artist's interviews and decision-making theories are applied.

Index terms

Keywords : modèle, décision, decision making, conservation, art contemporain

Keywords : decision making models, preservation, contemporary art

Full text

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Introduction

- 1 The experience from the research project *Documentation of Contemporary Art*¹, which dealt with complex artworks by Portuguese artists, brought together disciplines in the social sciences, such as ethnography and psychology, and current conservation theories. The preservation of these works (installations, performances, ephemeral and other variable media artworks) continuously challenges the traditional material focus of conservation. Based on the experience developed in this project, the aim of this paper is to present for discussion a decision-making model for the preservation of complex contemporary artworks. The bond between social sciences and conservation theory was essential for the definition of this model, and one of the case studies of the project – the *oeuvre* of Francisco Tropa (b. 1968, Lisbon) – was selected as an example.
- 2 First of all, it is necessary to explain why these so-called complex artworks require new methodologies and decision-making models. When entering the Guggenheim Museum in New York, it is possible to experience Félix González-Torres' candy pieces (1957-1996). Visitors realize that the work is composed of numerous candies, or pieces thereof, displayed in a variety of ways: from being exhibited as candies in a corner of the museum to being transformed into a carpet (Spector 2003). The relation with González-Torres' candy pieces is not just visual, as the audience is tempted to reach for the candies and take them (Spector 2003). Such practice raises questions regarding the preservation of this type of works. How can we preserve something intended to be consumed? What is the role of conservation in such cases? How can we define limits and degrees of freedom of the conservator? How can we preserve the “total experience” (van de Vall *et al* 2011:11)?
- 3 These issues have been extensively discussed in literature, but no definite answer has yet been reached. Maybe it is not even reasonable to expect that final and definitive answers will ever be reached. However, in order to preserve this type of works, the development of new theories is urgent. The complex nature of these works has no counterpart in traditional theories of conservation, which were formulated for the preservation of self-contained artworks.
- 4 Traditional, material-based conservation argues that conservation's primary responsibility resides in the maintenance of the physical, aesthetic and historical integrity of a given object (van Saaze 2009). Such principles become problematic when one cannot rely solely on the materiality of the works to properly conserve them. This is especially critical when those principles are applied to complex artworks, which break among other things with the perennial character of traditional art objects.
- 5 In 1997, Renée van de Vall emphasised one of the biggest difficulties of preserving these artworks – where values are highly subjective in terms of hierarchy and perception, the complexity of decision-making rises to the point where ethics become more personal (van de Vall 2005). Tragic choices are inevitable: preserving a given value will certainly jeopardise the preservation of others. Facing this inevitability. Van de Vall suggests that instead of a Platonic approach to conservation, which presents general, universal and unshakable principles, conservators should adopt an Aristotelian perspective, based on jurisprudence, and define solutions through a casuistic practice² (van de Vall 2005).
- 6 These problems attracted the attention of several research groups over the past twenty years, leading to significant progress in this area. These groups suggest a shift from the traditional theory of conservation, based on the material properties of an object, to a contemporary one that acknowledges different perspectives and considers concept and artistic intent as essential (van Saaze 2009). The importance of documentation, simultaneously systematic and flexible, produced by conservators in close cooperation with artists, assistants and even visitors, has been extensively highlighted by these new theories.

- 7 Finally, the acknowledgement of the multiplicity of experiences and subjectivities, from the perspective of the artist to that of the audience, led to the development of the notion of artwork's biography. This concept implies that it is impossible to reproduce an artwork in every reinstallation or re-creation. Such artworks, ephemeral in nature, do not exist in a single state but rather undertake a trajectory, which is, itself, part of the artworks' existence and intention. The conservator should be considered a manager of change and an *actant* (van Saaze 2009: 138). Therefore, past decisions will inevitably affect the artwork's biography, and consequently future decision-makings (van de Vall *et al* 2011).
- 8 Obviously, this perspective raises enormous controversy and uncertainty regarding subjects like authenticity and ethics. These issues require a profound reconsideration of principles and values in conservation and their adaptation to contemporary art. Several authors advocate for the need of new methodologies, arguing that the inherent multiplicity of experiences and authenticities associated with the aesthetic experience deserve respect (Beerrens *et al* 2012). Likewise, those methodologies could provide structure and reliability to the decision-making process.
- 9 Based on the experience of the research project *Documentation of Contemporary Art*, and taking Francisco Tropa's *oeuvre* as a paradigmatic example, we propose and reflect on a decision-making model. Our research led us to believe that qualitative methods used in ethnography and psychology may be of great value in assisting conservation in its quest for new solutions for these crucial problems.
- 10 The proposed model not only provides a path for the decision-making process, but also suggests the use of an interview methodology and correspondent data analysis (i.e. content analysis), used in cognitive psychology research. This method promises a clear way to understand topics, which are usually difficult to understand or to structure, such as meaning, methods of working, techniques and materials. Being crucial to the decision-making process, this information also presents possibilities in terms of the application of casuistry to the preservation of these complex works.

Complex art and complex conservation decisions: works by Francisco Tropa

- 11 Francisco Tropa is currently considered one of the most important Portuguese artists of his generation. Although he has been exhibiting since the late 80s, it was in the 90s that he gained recognition for his work (Melo 2007). Recently, he officially represented Portugal in the 2011 Venice Biennial with the work *Scenario*.
- 12 Tropa's works exist somewhere between *performance* and installation. They evoke moments, stories, situations or references through complex visual devices, strongly allegorical, designed to induce an endless web of interpretations. In the artist's own words, the devices are nothing but *empty containers* designed to be filled by the spectator's own versions. His works are meant to be indecipherable enigmas, whose interpretation drives viewers through immensely different and unpredictable perspectives (Macedo *et al* 2012).
- 13 In fact, Tropa takes some of his enigmas to a higher level of complexity. He often creates projects that comprise several independent works. Each one of these works has its own trajectory, as the artist repeatedly alters them. In addition, Tropa creates different physical versions of the same artwork (Duarte *et al* 2012). Generally, his "works, are, first of all, situations in process, which achieve their own sense through perception and experience" (Melo 2007: 210). Moreover, the artist rarely explains his artworks, claiming that they have a specific language, lacking rational explanation. Instead, his *oeuvre* refers to sensorial experiences, witnessed by the spectator.

Projecto A Assembleia de Euclides (The Assembly of Euclid's project) and its preservation

14 This project comprises six relatively autonomous moments/installations. In the artist's conceptualization of the work, all moments exist simultaneously. They occur inside an imaginary cube, whose interior is revealed by unfolding it off (Duarte *et al* 2012). The core of the project is based on the first three installations: performance-based works where the artist or an actor interacts directly with the objects.

15 As the majority of Tropa's artworks are currently part of different museum collections, the objects used in *The Assembly of Euclid's* project became autonomous. Although they are part of the same project, and often the same installation, they remain dispersed in different collections, in different museums and galleries.

16 One of the biggest challenges regarding the preservation of these works is, therefore, to establish the relationships between them. This task becomes even more problematic considering that, usually, museums do not exchange documentation or engage in inter-museum communication.

17 The importance of these relationships was underscored in the interviews with the artist. As stated by Tropa, this project is a "machine of relations" (Duarte *et al* 2012). He expresses those relations in the use of the same materials, shapes, techniques and colours, among other things. It is part of the viewer's role to interpret each work and the relation of the individual components to the work, although they have never been exhibited together. But how can the conservator deal with such a relational project, which is scattered in different collections and remains fragmented in storage?

18 Additionally, Tropa expects that his installations will change every time they are exhibited. Complex artworks, such as these, are intended to preserve change itself, as a living persistent process. They change in as much as they are reinstalled. They are as diverse as the minds that read them. They do not produce a path towards ephemerality but rather to multiplicity and yet, by continuously changing, they are still as ephemeral as time. However, what happens when the artist dies? Without his sanction, should the fragments of his installations and the installations themselves be frozen into documents? Frozen in time? Would this respect the artist's intention? How should they be exhibited? To what extent can or should they continue to change? An extensive documentation may be the only answer to these problems.

19 In fact, the preservation of many contemporary artworks often depends on re-installation, re-materialization or re-enactment *performed* by the conservator, according to a set of instructions generally given by the artist. These instructions should be documented; otherwise the preservation of the works could be endangered. This documentation, as it will be explained, is essential for the decision-making process.

Decision-making model

20 Most of the time, a conservation action acknowledges the fact that the original material is gone or damaged. In the case of Tropa, he does not want his works to be frozen in time, but shows some flexibility by specifying what is meant to change.

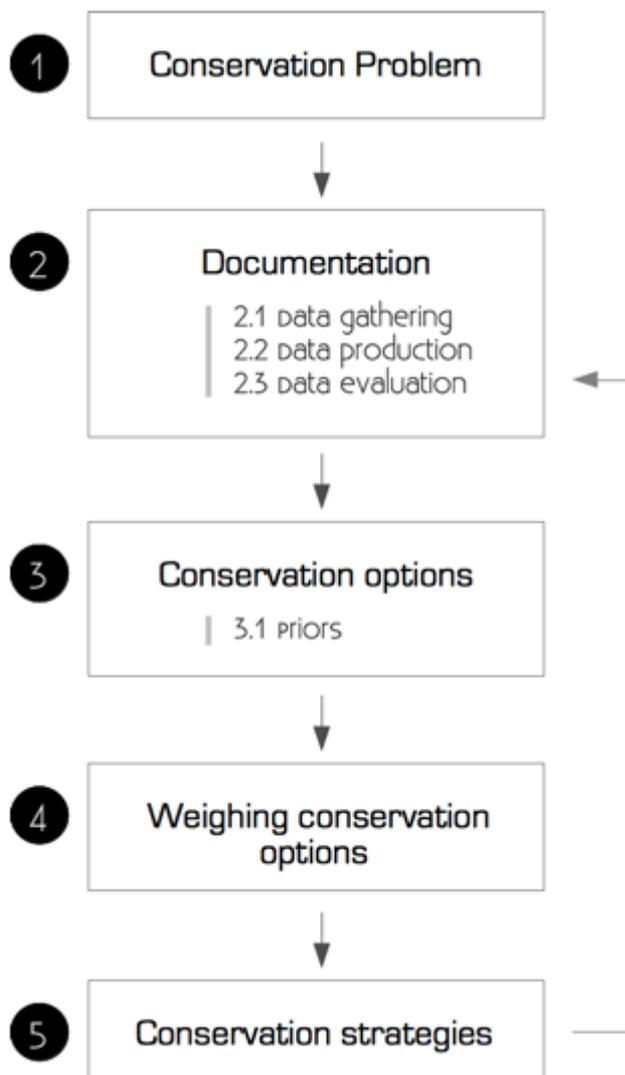
21 Considering the specificities of these complex works, together with the difficulties that conservators experience while managing change and diverging points of views, we propose a decision-making model for discussion. In terms of methodologies, this model was developed from the theories for ethnographic research design. According to B. L. Berg and H. Lune, the main ethnographic research model is the spiral method, which is based on reflexivity (Berg and Lune 2011). The ethnographer Charlotte Davies states that reflexivity "refers to the ways in which the products of research are affected by the personnel and [the] process of doing research" (Davies 2008). Thus, the spiral method proposes that each step of research needs to be analysed in relation to the previous one,

as new variables are added and new knowledge is acquired. When new data emerges, questions need to be revised.

22 Drawing from the domain of psychology, decision-making theories studied in behavioural economics and neurophysiology were also briefly explored. Although this is still in an initial phase, for the time being, it was assessed that decision-making is constrained by the ability to process information (Plous 1993). Every human being processes information differently, according to his/her own personality and past experiences. The neurophilosopher Patricia Churchland adds to this the idea that *case-based reasoning*, or *inference*, is a cognitive solution to a problem (Churchland 2009). According to her, “case-based reasoning yields a solution to a problem (...) by using memory for relevantly similar cases, and applying past knowledge to present circumstances” (Churchland 2009: 422). As every other human being, conservators rely in their past experiences to make decisions. However, conservation decisions encompass several variables, and thus they should be made by an interdisciplinary team. Different people, different backgrounds and cognitive characteristics, are the answer in finding new perspectives. Nonetheless, how can this interdisciplinary quality of decision-making become more efficient and global?

23 The proposed decision-making model for the preservation of complex contemporary artworks was developed in the pursuit of solutions (Fig.1).

Fig. 1 Conceptual framework for decision-making



A model for decision-making with phases and steps guides the conservator through a process, ensuring a well-founded decision.

24 This model is based in four theoretical assumptions as pillars:

Structuring value attribution

- 25 When preserving works based on such abstract and complex concepts, which may never be fully understood, a decision making practice based on casuistry is possibly the best alternative. In 1997, René van de Vall presented a paper at the Symposium Modern Art: Who Cares? where the notion of casuistry was considered as a complement to the decision-making. According to her observations, there comes the inevitability of “tragic choices”: the attribution of a given value will jeopardise others (van de Vall 2005: 101) These values, being highly subjective, transform decision-making into an extremely personal process

Limitation of choices

- 26 Decision-making behavioural scientists have proved that with more options inadequate decisions increase. Behavioural economist Dan Ariely, showed that, for a given problem, when more inadequate possibilities are presented, people are more susceptible to choose incorrectly (Ariely 2010). With more options, even if they are mostly redundant or inadequate, noise increases. Psychologically, people tend to get confused and doubt themselves due to this overload of options. Not only are they more susceptible to doubt, as choices become more “tragic” indeed – in this situation, people tend to be more unsatisfied with the choices they make (Schwartz 2005).

Impact of emotions

- 27 Every decision has an emotional ground. In his work about mechanisms of decision-making, António Damásio proved that the trigger that allows a subject to make a decision is based on emotions. In fact, people with no emotional capacity (due to cerebral accidents) had serious difficulties in making any decision, even if simple (Damásio 1994).

Artist’s intent

- 28 Usually, the artist’s sanction is the main factor in choosing a particular preservation strategy. Several research groups, such as Variable Media Network, encourage artists to make an ideal description of their work (Ippolito 2003). However, although the artist’s sanction should be one of the main variables in the decision-making process, when the work enters the public sphere, other opinions should be taken into account.

Description of the model

- 29 This proposal for a decision-making model is divided into two main phases:
30 In this first phase, the conservation problem is identified. After this step, the conservator is guided through the process of collecting, producing and analysing information. In this process, the conservator is able to evaluate if the information is enough to ensure a well-founded decision. If the information is adequate and fulfils all the requirements, the conservator can then proceed to the full documentation of the work. Obviously, this phase could be almost eliminated if a proper documentation of the work already exists;
31 After documentation, the second phase starts with the settlement of all the conservation options. Here, an intermediate step is proposed, between specifying conservation options and their weighing. With a practice based on priors, conservation options can be reduced, as examples of other cases may serve to automatically exclude some inadequate choices. After this step, there will be fewer options to analyse, and

therefore the decision will be more efficient. When weighing conservation options, casuistry may have its place. Again, by considering other cases, value distribution becomes more efficient. After defining the conservation strategy(ies), the conservator should return to the documentation. This procedure guarantees the record of the artwork's biography also in terms of the decision-making process.

Conservation problem

32 As stated by the psychologist Scott Plous, “there is no such thing as a context-free decision making. All judgments and decisions rest on the way we see and interpret the world” (Plous 1993:14). Every model explored in behavioural economics states that the first step of the decision needs to be a clear identification of the problem, as “(...) decision frames are partly controlled by the formulation of the problem, and partly controlled by the norms, habits, and characteristics of the decision maker” (Plous 1993:70).

33 Current decision-making models in conservation suggest data registration as a starting point³. However, the simple fact of choosing a given artwork to proceed for data registration unconsciously implies the identification of a given problem. The formulation of the problem, the question of inquiry, will affect the way documentation is produced – it implies the definition of a given discourse, which will depend on the conservator, the artwork, and the spacial and temporal context.

Documentation

34 After being organized and structured, the information about the works not only aids present decision-making processes, but also future decisions. Essentially, as stated by Vivian van Saaze (2009: 20), “rather than merely retrieving documentation, the conservator is asked to play a role in creating documentation”. Produced documentation should embrace some considerations about the identification of the artworks; incorporation and legal rights; location; general description; creative process; techniques, materials and their meaning; material description; technical description; exhibition conditions; storage; transportation; condition; history of exhibition; related works; and other relevant observations (Laurenson 2006; Weyer and Heydenreich 2005). This documentation will be crucial to the establishment of the conservation options. This is even more relevant when the artist is not available any more.

35 Considering any decision as context-dependent, the documentation step will justify past decisions, based on past contexts, and serve as a foundation for new decisions – as explained by S. Plous, “(...) decision makers do not perceive and remember material in isolation; they interpret new information in light of past experience and the context in which the material occurs” (Plous 1993: 39).

Data gathering

36 Concerning this first step of documentation, conservators gather all published and unpublished information regarding the artist and the work under discussion. In other words, conservators should gather the existent information regarding the artist and the specific artwork. In some cases, other important information for the decision-making process may be obtained by re-installing the works under study.

Data production

37 One of the most important methodologies to create new knowledge and information is the artist interview. In 1990, Carol Mancusi-Ungaro launched a programme aiming at recording “information from living artists that would assist conservators in future

restorative efforts” (Shadford 2012: 392). Twenty years have passed and this brilliant initiative still holds a prominent place in the world of contemporary conservation. For present day conservation, communication is essential. Conservators need to communicate with museum staff, former conservators or curators, visitors, and, perhaps above all, the artist. Without the interview, the conservator would not have the ideal window into the soul of the artwork, into its intentions and will be tempted to restrict its reach to the limits of its physical parts (Saaze 2009). In the study of the project *The Assembly of Euclid*, this tool was absolutely indispensable. The scarce documentation available before the interview included some photos, catalogues, criticism texts and basic inventory sheets. After interviewing the artist, the interviewer’s view of the work was extraordinarily expanded.

Data evaluation

38 The step of data evaluation is of the foremost importance when foreseeing the following steps of this model. As stated by S. Plous, “good information does not guarantee good decisions, but bad information pretty much guarantees bad decisions” (Plous 1993: 54). It becomes clear that, before pursuing the decision itself, conservators need to ensure that the available information is reliable enough to support the decision.

39 As explained before, the interview became one of the most important steps when producing documentation for contemporary art. After the interview, it is relevant to analyse the artist’s discourse. Nonetheless, no in-depth guidance or discussion regarding methods for analysing interviews is found in conservation literature. Therefore, considering the importance of the artist interview to the decision-making process, a reference framework for interview data analysis in conservation is proposed.

40 The analysis of data from interviews requires a method adequate to the inherently qualitative property of the data. It is fair to state that this search for the ideal method to properly address the specificities of complex artworks was difficult and unfulfilling. There is no ideal method as there is no ideal conservation strategy.

41 Analytical methodologies have been searched for in the realm of social sciences. Content analysis was considered the method with most benefits, according to various researchers from the fields of ethnography and psychology (Berg and Lune 2001; Miles and Huberman 1994). It consists of a technique that reviews and dissects *parts* of the discourse, while maintaining the relationship between them. It may be compared to the conservation of an installation work – as if this analysis is intended to separate the several objects of an installation in storage, still maintaining the meaning and the relationship between them, and keeping enough information to rebuild the essence of the work. With content analysis, segments of the artist’s discourse are associated to different categories based on the identified themes of the interview (Miles and Huberman 1994).

42 This process involves three sequential operations:

1. Segmentation of the transcribed answers from the artist into theme *dimensions*;
2. Categorization of each segment into categories and eventually sub-categories (*variables* and *sub-variables*);
3. Assessment of reliability of the analysis.

43 The categorization of statements from each *dimension* may be deductive or inductive.

44 Taking Francisco Tropa’s interview as an example, one could easily categorize the following statement to the previously noted notions of dimensions, variables and sub-variables (“Intention” as a dimension, “Aim of intentionality” as a variable of the dimension, and “Intention of provoking an effort of comprehension” as a sub-variable): “(...) The purpose of things remaining like this [in the installation], is for you to make an effort to discover the reason why” (Duarte *et al*, 2012).

45 Two or more researchers perform the process of analysis independently, verifying the identified themes and categories. Usually the variables of the artist’s discourse are defined by the analysts, with or without taking any reference from the structured

interview plan. This method aims at filtering the variables of intention in the artist's discourse, while maintaining flexibility, which is essential when analysing complex artworks. The inclusion of two different analysts takes into account the variability of interpretation.

46 When content analysis is performed in an inductive way, variables are chosen independently from the interview script. This can be seen as an advantage, but it may also involve the risk that aspects considered essential for the conservator's work are not highlighted in useful units. Such an inconvenience, if considered important, can be circumvented by applying a deductive approach (Miles and Huberman 1994). In this case, a framework of categories is given to the analysts/conservators to guide their work. The cost is a loss of flexibility and diversity. One would be tempted to suggest that a combination of both would be ideal: according to Miles and Huberman (1994), an "intermediate approach" would allow the conservator to establish the categories he/she needs and to introduce additional ones deemed necessary to convey the artist's discourse.

47 In the third step of content analysis, through a comparison of the results of the independent analysts, reliability is assessed. In the initial phase of this process, analysts compare the structure they have reached and discuss differences and common ground. In cases where the allocation of a statement cannot be brought to a consensus, a new category of analysis is added. Subsequently, the analysis is considered reliable if more than 80% of agreement is reached (Miles and Huberman 1994).

48 In this study, Francisco Tropa's interview was used to explore the applicability of the data analysis method to the conservation scenario. This exercise showed that the definition of *dimensions* provides a better structuration of the artist's discourse and will probably (in terms of conservation practice) allow a more pragmatic and yet flexible way to define and edit its content. On the other hand, the discourse's segmentation in content analysis hampers an overall view, especially when the subject of analysis is as complex as *Project The Assembly of Euclid*.

49 However, this technique can also be of value in the decision-making process, mainly due to its promises of data structuration. With the definition of dimensions, variables and sub-variables, fragments of the artist's discourse can be labelled. This labelling, when applied to conservation, could organize interviews, which are usually shared as raw data, and therefore difficult to consult. Also, with this structuration of past and current discourses, a transparency policy between cultural institutions and a web-based platform sharing decision processes can become a reality.

Conservation options

50 In this phase, conservators confront the conservation problem with the documentation of the work in order to achieve possible conservation options.

51 Despite careful use of all methods mentioned to register the original status of the work of art, the conservator and the artist acknowledge that it is impossible to reproduce it exactly in every reinstallation. This is especially clear in performances and installations, where interaction with the audience is part of the artwork. In summary: such artworks do not exist in a single state but rather undertake a trajectory, which is, itself, part of the artwork's existence and intention. This perspective requires that new conservation strategies be employed, including not only documentation followed by storage, but also emulation, migration and re-interpretation (Ippolito 2003). Such strategies may be viewed as radical but represent necessary ruptures with the traditional ones, particularly when the transient, changeable, ephemeral character of an artwork lies at the very core of the artist's intention. Freezing it forever within static limits of its material existence would be equivalent to vandalizing the essence of what we are committed to preserve.

52 There are many conservation options. Every small detail is accountable for the artwork's biography. In performance-based works, any re-enactment changes the work, as it adds a chapter in its history – it will provide different stimuli and therefore different fruitions. Taking into account that each and every nuance may alter the work,

casuistry is proposed as a means of reducing choices, allowing conservators to focus in the relevant ones.

Priors

- 53 From the results of content analysis, categories of intention are translated into a dichotomous key, where exclusive options are presented (e.g. yes/no answers for questions like “May the artwork be reinstalled in other spatial contexts?”). Following the key’s completion, strategies applied to similar case studies are searched for. This process reduces preservation strategies options while presenting a comprehensive and structured sample of similar cases. At the same time, it allows conservators to make sustained decisions more easily and quickly, by learning from past experiences shared by their peers. With the translation of this model to an open web-based platform, the decision-making process changes from an isolation act to a social experience. Obviously, this idea requires resources that are not yet available. However, it becomes necessary to join current resources to current methodologies in order to take the “communicative turn” (Muñas Viñas 2004) into the information age.

Weighing conservation options

- 54 In order to weigh a conservation option conservators consider several factors, such as authenticity, aesthetics, functionality, historicity, legal aspects, economic limitations, artist intention, restoration ethics, among others. Moreover, “an important feature when weighing conservation options is that various considerations steer the decision on conservation in various directions.” (FCMA 1999: 11). This step should provide enough information to proceed to a specific conservation strategy.

Conservation strategies

- 55 A final conservation strategy may be reached after the completion of the previous steps. Having the decision-making process in background, this strategy is explained in detail, as it will serve as a basis for future decisions. In fact, regarding documentation and its methodologies in museum context, Vivian van Saaze states that although they can be very meticulous, more frequently than not, they do “not include argumentation to explain” the decision-making process (Saaze 2009: 115). With this perspective in mind, this decision-making model endorses a review of the documentation step. The decision-making process and its argumentation should be part of the documentation of the work, and therefore, its biography. In the future, the conservator should start by analysing the pre-existing documentation and proceed to the subsequent steps, returning to documentation to register the proposed strategy and its justification.

Conclusion

- 56 Current decision-making models are not yet adapted to the most recent conservation theories, as they do not acknowledge casuistry or “jurisprudence” as a method. From this point of view, a decision-making model based on qualitative methodologies, and sustained by the artist’s sanction and a practice of jurisprudence seems to have the potential for allowing the conservator to make better, faster and more informed decisions. The proposed model also explores alternatives, being fully adapted to each particular case. This model can be applied through a checklist framework, in a web-based platform.
- 57 Obviously, the INCCA database⁴, available and categorised, would be extremely relevant for the decision-making in conservation. In order to pursue it, however, institutions need to be more transparent. As explored by Vivian van Saaze, quoting

Annemarie Mol, there is a need for “keeping the practicalities of enacting (...) artworks visible, so that what happens may be doubted” (Saaze 2009: 168). Institutional stakeholders need to embrace the responsibility of dealing with such complex artworks. They need to embrace transience and the subjectivity involved in every conservation act. They need to accept the absence of a stable ground, to let the “long accepted certainties fall apart” (Saaze 2009: 36).

58 It is by challenging current practices, placing them constantly under scrutiny, that possibilities for new perspectives can be achieved. New theories for contemporary art preservation, contemporary themselves, need to emerge in order to, subsequently, be questioned again. It is only through this demanding process that conservation of contemporary art can continue to be propelled forward.

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Notes

1 Documentation of Contemporary Art is a research project developed by researchers of Instituto de História da Arte (IHA) and funded by Portuguese Fundação para a Ciência e Tecnologia (FCT). For more information about this project see: <<http://iha.fesh.unl.pt/apresentacaoDetalhe.php?id=32&nr=48&langExp=en>>

2 Casuistry has its roots in the mid-seventeenth century, and then became increasingly discredited. However, as procedure, it has survived in less theoretical sciences. As stated by van de Vall (2005), "moral reasoning is supposed to start from the details and circumstances of a particular situation" (Van de Vall 2005: 198). In summary, with this approach, paradigmatic cases are compared with the case at hand, and reasoning is made via analogy.

3 For more information about decision-making models in conservation, please check (FCMA 1999) and (Michalski and Rossi-Doria 2011)

4 The INCCA database is an "unique tool created for and by INCCA members, allowing access to each other's unpublished information. The database contains metadata records (like library cards) that describe all types and formats of documents. Examples are: artist interviews (transcripts, video, DVD etc), technical drawings, installations instructions." (INCCA 2013).

List of illustrations

	Title	Fig. 1 Conceptual framework for decision-making
	Caption	A model for decision-making with phases and steps guides the conservator through a process, ensuring a well-founded decision.
	URL	http://journals.openedition.org/ceroart/docannexe/image/3597/img-1.png
	File	image/png, 42k

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