



Cultures of Conservation, Milan 16th – 18th May 2012

May 17th MUSEO DEL NOVECENTO – Presentations and Abstracts

10.00 Barbara Ferriani and Marina Pugliese

We would like to focus on a comparative study of art historians', conservators' and artists' practical and theoretical approaches to conservation both in the field of Museums and public institutions and in the private and commercial sectors (Foundations, Archives, Galleries, and private collections). These different approaches will be addressed, as will all relevant legal and market related issues linked to themes such as obsolescence, substitution, reinterpretation, conceptual artworks and installations.

10.20 Paolo Martore

With regard to the comparison between art historians' and restorers' approaches to conservation, my interest would be in something like:

Redefining conservation discourse - Local practices in a multiculturalist debate.

The idea is to examine the different views on basic (theoretical) terms from different participants to the conservation process, within a national context with a well established tradition of study.

10.40 Rita Macedo and Lúcia Almeida Matos

Awareness of the specific problems raised by the need to preserve contemporary art is very recent. Twelve years ago conservation was not an academic discipline and any research was carried out. In Portugal, academic research in this field started in 2000 and it is becoming stronger, but this development is particularly informed by hard science cultures, especially chemistry, physics and biology. We are particularly interested in developing relationships with anthropology, ethnography and sociology in order to deepen the discussion about: interview methodologies, scripts designing, the interaction with the interviewed and the position of the researcher as participant, and the process of validation of the collected information. Contributions of philosophy and psychology are also very welcome to reflect about the aims of documentation production, archiving, and its dissemination.

11.00 Tea break

May 17th MUSEO DEL NOVECENTO - Presentations by NeCCAR partners, cont.

11.20 Gunnar Heydenreich

Responding to diversity: challenges and developments in training for the conservation of contemporary art. Within the ICOM interim meeting in Maastricht in 2010 it became clear that in response to the increasing diversity of contemporary art further discussion and exchange is required concerning the training needs and core curricula for conservation students in that field. This talk will reflect on some of the issues brought up with the 2010 meeting as well as on further developments, needs and a few perspectives.

11.40 Erma Hermens (also on behalf of Pip Laurenson and Alison Bracker)

is Lord Kelvin Adam Smith Lecturer in Technical Art History at the University of Glasgow where she leads the Technical Art History Strand in the Centre for Textile Conservation and Technical art History. She also convenes a Masters in Technical Art History which includes modules on modern and contemporary practice and preservation, and on issues of authenticity. The Centre is organizing a conference in December 2012 entitled *'The Real Thing?' The Value of Authenticity and Replication for Investigation and Conservation.*, and intends to build on this theme as a research strand for future collaborative projects, involving the conservation sector. Authenticity depends on context. Art works may be autographs, or signed by the master but executed by his assistants; they may be workshop products or copies, serials, or concepts. They tell stories of alteration and intervention, loss and damage; how much of the artist's original intent remains? Historic objects also have biographies of use, alteration and re-use before coming to rest in museum collections. The concept of authenticity is one of the core factors driving decision making in conservation and restoration, as reflected in the professional ethical codes. These judgments are becoming more complex because of rapidly changing conservation methodologies, both technical and virtual, and new approaches towards interpretation, display and use of collections by the cultural heritage sector, while advances in conservation science provide us with increasing amounts of information. The tangible and intangible qualities and the conceptual aspects of contemporary and non-western artifacts in particular, have made the role of curators, conservators, art historians, and conservation scientists even more complex and pressing. The Centre is looking into Continuous Professional Development Training, where conservators could expand their experience and knowledge whilst continuing to work. The courses could be tailored versus specific needs such as short CPD courses aimed at the theory and practice of modern art conservation with a focus on modern fibres and plastics, as well as mixed media works. The University of Glasgow is currently designing a short course programme.

12.15 Lunch

May 17th MUSEO DEL NOVECENTO - Presentations by NeCCAR partners, cont.

13.30 Julia Noordegraaf

Cultures of Time-based Media Conservation - In the field of audiovisual archiving and exhibition I encounter three different cultures of conservation, related to respectively film archives, broadcasting archives and media art institutes and museums. Whereas the media in question (different film, video or digital formats) often are similar, the approaches to their conservation differ within each of these fields. In my view, these different approaches to conservation are related to the underlying academic discourses: respectively Film Studies, Television Studies (or, more broadly: Cultural Studies) and Art History, Theory and Criticism. These academic discourses determine the way the object of conservation is framed differently in each context. In my presentation I discuss these disciplinary cultures of conservation and illustrate them with a few examples.

13.50 Sanneke Stigter

Sanneke Stigter, Lecturer and Coordinator of the MA training program in the Conservation and Restoration of Contemporary Art at the University of Amsterdam, aims to further develop the focus on the dynamics of knowledge production within the interrelations between the artwork, the artist, the conservator and museum practices with reference to tools such as the artist interview, documentation and re-installation of artworks – with special attention to the artist interview.

In tackling these initially secondary sources to the artwork, in the form of written, photographic and audiovisual documentation, new training practices are introduced to the curriculum of the contemporary art conservator, on their use and influence on the primary source - the artwork itself. Therefore it has not only become important how these sources are analyzed and used in conservation, but also how these sources can be produced. The awareness of the responsibility of the conservator to the artwork from a standpoint of minimal intervention in conservation treatment actions, has provided all kind of methodological tools on how to conduct an artist interview with conservation as its aim, while at the same time the awareness of the subjective interpretation of this same source, that may be co-produced by the conservator in question, led to a sound validation of the artist interview in order to use it as a source during the careful decision-making on conservation strategies.

Points of attention / research:

- Fieldwork: Overview of how and if this is carried out around the world.
 - Overview of way of implementation in museum practice
- Theory: Awareness of conservator as a co-producer
 - analyses of the artist interview, external factors of influence on outcome
 - annotation and interpretation, construction of knowledge
 - use of the artist interview in weighing conservation options – case based analyses
- Practice: Training of conducting an artist interview
 - Theory and analysis of artist interviews
 - Aim and interview methodology
 - Practice in interview workshops
 - Methodological tools to manage content of interview
 - Distinction in methods in the application on various type of artworks.
 - practical tricks and pitfalls - do's and don'ts
 - practice in preparation of real case based artist interview
 - conducting real artist interviews

May 17th MUSEO DEL NOVECENTO - Presentations by NeCCAR partners, cont.

14.10 Renée van de Vall and Vivian van Saaze

In our presentation we will focus on the study of contemporary art conservation practices and we will approach the topic of Cultures of Conservation by focussing on the intertwinement of theory and practice. Which insights and methodologies from philosophy and Science and Technology Studies are useful in the study of conservation processes, ethics and decision making? Also, we will briefly point to some theoretical concepts (e.g. boundary object and the concept of biography) that may be fruitful for the investigation of conservation practices and allow bringing these practices further. The topics of interests will be addressed in relation to current research projects conducted at Maastricht University and teaching modules that are now under development.

14.30 Discussion Cultures of Conservation

15.30 Tea break

16.30 Presentation website / network practicalities

17.00 Closing

20.30 pm – Dinner for NeCCAR partners at “*Da Giacomo*” in the Palazzo dell’Arengario.

May 18th Palazzo Reale, Piazza Duomo 14, Milan - Main Conference Room

9.30 Round table discussion with: Mariano Boggia — Fondazione Merz, Turin; Roberto Dipasquale — Società Attitudine Forma, Turin; Antonio Rava — Società Rava & C. Srl, Turin; Paolo Rosa — Studio Azzurro Produzioni S.r.l., Milan; Marco Scotini — Archivio Gianni Colombo, Milan
Moderation: Marina Pugliese

Key questions to guide the discussion:

- Do you believe that the varying schools of conservation promoted and followed in different countries has an impact on the culture of conservation?
- Do you believe that different cultural traditions have an impact on the approach to restoration? And if so, how does this feature in your own nation?
- 3) Do you believe that in contemporary art conservation practise it is better to have a wide ranging general knowledge that encompasses many aspects of the contemporary art sector, or rather to be highly specialised in one field and work with a team of people with different specialisations?
- In your opinion, what is most urgently needed in our field of research?
- Conservators have to deal with decision making. Who, in the absence of the artist, do you believe has the right to decide on the substitution of an artwork or a conservation treatment? The collector? The artist's Foundation? Or, should a foundation not exist, the artist's heirs? Who guarantees the conservator's choice to be the correct choice?
- How different is the approach of museums to contemporary art conservation from that of the private market (collectors, gallerists)? Is there a way to ensure the correct methodologies and good practice in both fields?

May 18th Palazzo Reale, Piazza Duomo 14, Milan - Main Conference Room, cont.

12.30 Lunch

13.30 Marie Curie Initial Training Network (ITN)

16.00 Preparations Lisbon meeting, publications, website.

17.00 Closing