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Total Art or Dichotomy? Classical and Modern Art in the Documentation and Care

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**TOTAL ART OR DICHOTOMY?
CLASSICAL & MODERN ART IN THE DOCUMENTATION & CARE**

Contemporary art is dichotomous – that means that it functions either within the classic art disciplines or the innovative ones, which have existed generally from the times of Marcel Duchamp. The aim of this paper is to consider an innovative, practical and theoretical framework for the documentation and conservation of the works of art created by the new generation of artists who utilise new media and integrate their works with new technologies, interactive sonic spaces, transformation of sensual processes, etc. Is it possible that one day the human mind, including artists' memories and their consciousness, will be downloadable into a data-base?

The key issue is the conservator's thorough knowledge about the work of art. This is achieved through cooperation with artists. A conservator should play a role in the artworks' pre-acquisition and should use all of his/her knowledge, including the complexity of humanities and science, one's erudition, experience with art, sensitivity and empathy. The result is therefore an appropriate diagnosis of the object allowing the conservator to undertake the appropriate documentation method and action. The artwork shows the truth about the artist, bears the traces of the artist's personality, has traits associated not only with their sensitivity and artistic abilities but also with the creative process and the technical solutions that the artist selected. We can discover these technical methods and materials by a scientific instrumental analysis.

- The specifics of the care over contemporary art and its classification with regard to the choice of a particular conservation strategy:
- The co-operation with an artist, artwork's pre-acquisition, registration, interview with the artist.
- The perception of artworks in the exhibition space. The measurement of the impact of the surrounding architecture on the artwork's expression.
- Preservation and restoration of objects created using atypical techniques (new materials and the specific use of them).
- Records of objects that include ephemeral elements, such as: dematerialisation, the recording of noise, smell, kinetic effects.
- Care over objects that include multimedia elements (video, audio, slide projections, interfaces and computer programs etc.).
- Supervision over the transportation, manipulation and storage of exceptionally sensitive objects or/and ones that have a specific, complex construction.
- Registration that complies with the specific nature of installations.
- Supervision during the objects' assembly and disassembly (e.g. re-installation of installations).

Based on case studies we have discovered the need to define an innovative domain for the care of contemporary art, both for the sake of science and the significance of art in society. A conservator is a specific recipient of a work of art, because he/she is a mediator between an artist and a final member of the audience — both in the present and the future. This is achieved by a long-term study of the artist's work, his/her technique etc., and a search for the truth hidden in the work of art.

Only this way it is possible to recover, create or recreate the lost artistic values. A conservator should be an artist's advocate and sometimes ought to substitute him/her. This concerns replicas and emulations compliant with the artist's intention. Until now, the artistic and creative aspect of a conservator's actions have remained on the margin of our field, and sometimes they are even negated. Yet it has become extremely important in the field of the care over contemporary art and therefore must be openly spoken about, because — as Cesare Brandi said — restoration is a critical interpretation of the work.

In consequence, innovative knowledge is related to the development of artistic ideas, the concepts and models according to which a tangible and intangible heritage is taken care of, the cognition, communication and contextual aspects of art, the principles and processes involved in perception, the senses and the potential role of new media in creating new aesthetic experiences.

Bibliography: see p.55