

Interpreting the ethic and the creative hypostasis of the conservator to the triptych: Artist/Transmitter - State of preservation of the work of art - Spectator/Receiver

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All art, at same time, is contemporary art.

(Jim Coddington, Time and Change: A Discussion about the Conservation of Contemporary Art, http://www.getty.edu/conservation/publications/newsletters/17_3/dialogue.html)

The present announcement has as a target to present the dilemma of “conservation or restoration” which remains for decades incorporated in the theoretical reflection of every conscientious professional and affects his method.

Analyzing the meaning of the terms “conservation” and “restoration” and studying the theory of conservation, from J. Ruskin, E. Viollet-le-Duc, A. Riegel, M. Dvorak, C. Brandi until the recent Chart of York (1991), we can observe big differences and revises, especially in the restoration of objects of cultural heritage issue.

Every object of art changes aesthetically because of various types of deterioration and as a result, according to its nature and destination, the process of its conservation, presentation and arrangement contains a wide variety of choices. Portable icons, such as other ecclesiastical artifacts, with the passage of time often change their initial devotional character and utilitarian function and constitute in our days a part of a museum or personal collection. According to the current deontology of conservation, conservators are called to respect: 1. the past/the history of the altarpieces – including its historical course from the time of its creation until today and all of its historical and artistic “coatings”. 2. The present – from the time of the decision to conserve the altarpiece until the completion of the conservation, 3. the future – from the time the conserved altarpiece is delivered to its owner.

The reverse of the theory about the use of traditional and “compatible” with the conserved object materials sets the conservator freer to choose the aesthetic

restoration, keeping, at the same time the current deontology of intervention reversibility.

Via chemical and non-destructive examinations, nowadays, the conservator can recognize the nature, the state of preservation and object's building materials. Consequently, in the frame of the strict rules and ethical restrictions, an answer is given to the problem of searching reversible materials and methods of conservation, restoration and presentation of the altarpieces.

Application of those strict limits of aesthetic restoration of works of art is not always practical or feasible, since the conservator and the results of his interventions are usually judged by the final, the aesthetic result. The rules of this common aesthetic perception usually accept influences from the area of modern art and the spectator is now much more familiar with its most complicated forms and as a result the acceptance of many versions, from the preventive conservation to the total restoration, is easier than it was in the past.

Knowledge and the interdisciplinary collaboration during the examination of the work of art, such as the ability to choose new materials and different methods of conservation correspond better to the current requirements of the public. Each period has the right to leave its mark representing its aesthetical perception. What has to be saved through the restoration processes is authenticity, as well as the historical, spiritual and emotional values of each work of art.

The interdisciplinary of the conservator profession offers many capabilities of choosing or not choosing the restoration of the work of art that is going to be conserved. New technologies and the capabilities of working out the digital images increase the creativity and interpretation abilities of the modern conservator. The detailed documentation of possible applicable choices can be an important bequest for the future conservators leaving them a wide field of interpretation and ability of further improve of the aesthetical presentation of the work of art.

Based on relative bibliography, as well as a series of experimental digital work on a variety of restoration, presentation and arrangement of a portable icon with extensive wastage or big lacunas this announcement tries to present a series of ethical and aesthetic reflections in order to set the vital question: are we really ready to make our mark and support our creative choices scientifically?