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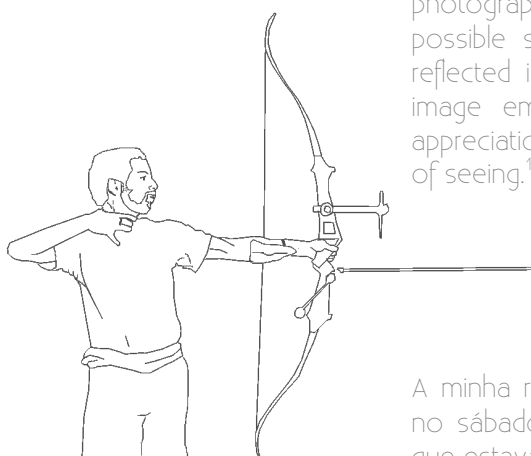
Embracing transience and subjectivity in the conservation of complex contemporary artworks: *contributions from ethnographic and psychological paradigms*

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An image is a sight, which has been recreated or reproduced. It is an appearance, or a set of appearances, which it first made its appearance and preserved – for a few moments or a few centuries. Every image embodies a way of seeing. Even a photograph. For photographs are not, as is often assumed, a mechanical record. Every time we look at a photograph, we are aware, however slightly, of the photographer selecting that sight from an infinity of other possible sights. (...) The photographer's way of seeing is reflected in his choice of subject. (...) Yet, although every image embodies a way of seeing, our perception or appreciation of an image depends also upon our own way of seeing.¹

A minha relação foi completamente diferente. Os silêncios no sábado não eram tão grandes, hoje foram. O público que estava a assistir connosco também era diferente, e isso mudou a minha perspectiva (...) Vejo sempre pelos olhos das pessoas que eu sei que estão no público. A tua presença faz-me por exemplo saltar uma frase, porque no fundo não estou seguro dela. Cada pessoa te propõe um olhar novo.²

¹ BERGER, J. *Ways of Seeing: Based on the BBC Television Series*, London: Penguin Books, 2008, [2].

² GIL, P. *Enquanto vivermos*, Lisboa: Culturgest – Fundação Caixa Geral de Depósitos, 2012, [9].

**Embracing transience and subjectivity in the conservation of complex contemporary artworks:
*contributions from ethnographic and psychological paradigms***

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Foreword

Building this dissertation was an as long and troubled journey as a captivating experience. I tried to bring together my background in natural sciences with my enthusiasm for psychosocial domains, in exploring potentially new avenues of progress in the conservation of complex contemporary artworks. The dissertation presented below is an intellectual exercise trying to interconnect diversified fields of knowledge into structured solutions in conservation. This is not, and is not intended to be, a finished work, but rather an "installation" of ideas, designed mainly to stimulate the presentation of the diversity of opinions, and, through discussion and further research, hopefully foster progress. Drawing contributions from philosophy and from social sciences, mainly psychology and ethnography, this dissertation is, above all, an attempt against certainties in a field where subjectivity has an inherent value.

Due to space constraints, some concepts are not addressed in depth. For the same reason we have used an asterisk to identify concepts whose definition may be found, if needed, in a Glossary (Appendix 7.1, pp. 41).

In this valuable learning process, I was not alone. I present sincere thanks to my supervisors, Rita Macedo (FCT-UNL and IHA) and António Duarte (FP-UL), for the precious advice, support and inspiration they have given me. I would also like to thank to Museu Nacional de Etnologia and to Dr. Francine Brinkgreve (Volkenkunst, Leiden) for their valuable and generous cooperation. Thank you to José António Pereira da Silva for the English revision. My deepest thanks go to my beloved friends and family, for their love, understanding and support.

This dissertation served as basis for several papers and oral communications. Among them, we may highlight the following publications:

1. **MARÇAL, H.**, MACEDO, R. & NOGUEIRA, A. “Whose decision is it? Reflections about a decision-making model based on qualitative analysis of the artist’s discourse”, in ICOM-CC Theory and History WG Interim Meeting, 15-17 May, Copenhagen, 2013 (accepted).
2. **MARÇAL, H.**, MACEDO, R., NOGUEIRA, A. & DUARTE, A. “The poetics of discourse: from artistic intention to spectator’s perception in the artist’s point of view”, in 3rd Global Conference of Performance: Visual Aspects of Performance Practice, 13-15 November, Salzburg, 2012 (in press).
3. **MARÇAL, H.**, MACEDO, R. & NOGUEIRA, A. “The conservator as a performer”, Athens: ATINER’s Conference Paper Series, No: ART2012-0087, 2012 (published).
4. **MARÇAL, H.** & MACEDO, R. “Social networks: the ultimate source for preserving the immaterial” in AIC Annual Meeting, 29 May – 1 June, Indianapolis, 2013 (Poster: accepted).

ABSTRACT

Drawing from philosophy and social sciences, mainly ethnography and psychology, this dissertation explores new roles that conservators often assume, while proposing new methodologies for artist's interviews.

In order to preserve complex artworks, such as installations or performances, conservation theory needs to embrace transience, and therefore suggest new and more adequate methodologies. Several authors already accepted change, and proposed concepts that acknowledge artworks' trajectories. However, currently applied methodologies do not follow that perspective and endanger preservation of such complex artworks.

Through a comparison between ethnographic objects and complex artworks, ethnographic methods showed promise for extrapolation into the conservation field. Examples from Bali's cremation rituals and the Portuguese artist Francisco Tropa (b. 1968, Lisbon) helped illustrate this question.

Ethnographic methods applied for interviewing and analysing the artist's discourse were of great value, as they provide for validation and data reproducibility. From these methods, content analysis stood out by allowing a better structuration and validation of the artist's discourse.

During this process, conservators' role was re-considered. Substantially different tasks and decisions are for conservators to make. Ultimately, are they interpreters, performers, executors, reporters, archivists, *actants*?

Inevitably, this study held more questions than offered answers. However, it is by challenging current practices, placing them constantly under scrutiny, that possibilities emerge. New theories for contemporary art preservation, contemporary in themselves, need to be uncovered in order to, subsequently, being questioned again. It is only through this demanding process that contemporary art conservation can continue to be propelled forward.

Keywords: subjectivity, contemporary art, conservation, ethnography.

RESUMO

Através da filosofia e das ciências sociais e humanas, nomeadamente da etnografia e da psicologia, esta dissertação procura explorar as características dos novos papéis dos conservadores de arte contemporânea, através da análise crítica das metodologias utilizadas na prática da preservação, com um maior foco nas entrevistas a artistas.

A preservação de obras de arte complexas, nomeadamente instalações e performances, requiere uma noção alargada de subjectividade e mudança. Este paradoxo implica a definição de novas metodologias. Diversos autores consideram que mudança é uma característica intrínseca a estas obras de arte, contudo as metodologias aplicadas não seguem esta tendência, colocando em risco as próprias obras.

Através de uma comparação entre objectos etnográficos e obras de arte complexa, os métodos etnográficos mostraram-se promissores para uma extrapolação para a disciplina da conservação. Os exemplos dos caixões crematórios de Bali e do artista português Francisco Tropa (n. 1968, Lisboa) auxiliaram na definição desta problemática.

A aplicação de métodos etnográficos às entrevistas a artistas, tanto na execução como na análise, mostraram-se vantajosos, uma vez prometem a validação de dados. Destes métodos, a análise de conteúdo projectou-se, visto que permite uma estruturação fiel do discurso do artista, assim como a sua validação.

Durante este processo, o papel do conservador foi re-considerado. Este actor promove diversas tarefas e a ele são designadas diversas responsabilidades. No extremo, os conservadores são interpretes, performers, executantes, arquivistas, *actants*?

Inevitavelmente, este estudo apresentou mais perguntas do que respostas, contudo, é através do desafio das práticas correntes que novas possibilidades podem emergir. Novas teorias para a conservação da arte contemporânea, contemporâneas em si, precisam de surgir, para serem novamente questionadas. É através deste processo exigente e crítico que a conservação de arte contemporânea pode continuar a projectar-se para o futuro.

Palavras-chave: subjectividade, arte contemporânea, conservação, etnografia.

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1 INTRODUCTION

The aim of this dissertation is to reflect upon current practices (namely artist's interviews) for contemporary complex artworks preservation. Drawing from social sciences, the conservator's role will be reconsidered at the light of his/her inherent subjectivity. As subjectivity is fully embraced, new methods for artist's interview will be drawn from ethnography and psychology, and adapted to the conservation contemporary field.

First of all, it becomes necessary to ask why do these, so-called, complex, artworks require new methodologies.

When entering Guggenheim Museum in New York, it is possible to experiment several iconic artworks, like Félix González-Torres' candy pieces (1957-1996). As a member of the audience you realize that the works are composed of numerous candies, or pieces thereof, disposed in a variety of ways - from being exhibited as current candies in a corner of the museum to being transformed into a carpet [1]. Your relation with González-Torres' candy piece it is not just visual as the artist invites the audience to reach for the candies and take them outside [1]. Such a practice illustrates the core issues addressed in this thesis: the legitimacy and adequacy of traditional conservation values [2], once the artistic intention lies in the works' ephemerality. How can we to 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?

Traditional, material-based conservation is structured around the concepts of originality and authenticity. It argues that conservation's primary responsibility resides in the maintenance of the physical, aesthetic and historical integrity of a given object - ideally, the artwork would be forever frozen in the pristine state it was originally left by the artist [3,4]. Such principles become problematic when one cannot rely solely on the materiality of the works to properly conserve them. This is especially critical when they are applied to complex artworks, such as *performances**, *installations** or other variable media artworks, which rupture with the perennial character of traditional art objects. In fact, those genders were originally developed as a form of rupture with the institutional sphere: it is no wonder that they are difficult to adapt when we bring them back into this space [3]. Although the dematerialisation of the art object has evolved since the 60's³, the doctrines that guide the practice of conservation and museology are still not fully adapted to the contemporary art reality.

This problems has attracted the attention of several research groups over recent years: Modern Art: Who Cares? (1999) [5], Inside Installations: Preservation and Presentation of Installation Art (2004-2007) [6], PRACTICs (2009-2011) [7], The Variable Media Network (2001-present) [8], International Network for the Conservation of Contemporary Art (INCCA), among others. These and other 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 intention as essential [3,8]. The importance of documentation, simultaneously systematic and flexible, produced by conservators in close cooperation with artists, assistants and even visitors, has been highlighted by this new theory⁴ [4].

In Portugal, this is a recent but dynamic area of studies [10,12]. However, among us, as elsewhere, the paradigm shifts observed in the academic field faces difficulties of acceptance and implementation in museums. The production of documentation has, on occasions, been less careful than desirable leading to irremediable losses in Portuguese contemporary collections. This endangers the perpetuation of our cultural heritage and it occurs mainly because adequate procedures are not in place.

Several authors, considering the trend of art dematerialization as a growing reality, suggest that modern preservation needs to focus on the artwork's intangible features, in as much as the core of the artist's intention lies on them, rather than on materiality [10,13,14].

These concepts impose documentation as the essential step for complex artworks' preservation. Respect for the artists' intention and the artwork's intangible aspects requires a careful and detailed recording of immaterial features such as concept, artistic intention, creative process, the intended

³ For a historical perspective about performance and other complex artworks, please consulte GOLDBERG, R. *Performance art: from futurism to the present*, London: Thames & Hudson, 2001.

⁴ For a literature review about conservation, please check "7.2 - The path towards a contemporary conservation theory – a literature review", 42.

meaning, the exhibition contexts (such as light, smell, location, *performance* and relationship between elements), the public conveyance and principles and processes of change and alteration⁵. This documentation may require the application of *quantitative* (material analysis, geodetic measurements of room installations [15], etc.) and *qualitative methods* (2D and 3D schema, photographs, video, artist's interview, bibliographic survey, etc.).

Despite the careful use of all these methods to register the original status of the work of art, the conservator, and the artist, acknowledge that it is impossible to exactly reproduce it 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 artworks existence and intention. This perspective requires that new conservation strategies are employed, including not only storage*, but also emulation*, migration* and re-interpretation*. Such strategies may be viewed as radical but necessary ruptures with the traditional techniques: the transient, changeable, ephemeral character of the artwork lie, in many cases, at the very core of the artist's intention. Freezing it forever within static limits of its material existence would equate to vandalizing the essence of what we are committed to preserve [4,8]. At this light, the conservator must now consider himself as a manager of change, as an *actant* – in Bruno Latour's words, intended to reflect the conservator as an agent that may subjectively change an artworks' trajectory (Latour [16], quoted by [4:138]).

Of course, this perspective raises enormous controversy and uncertainty regarding authenticity and ethics. These issues require a profound reconsideration of the principles and the values of conservation and their adaptation to contemporary art. Several authors argue in the need for new methodologies, claiming that the inherent multiplicity of experiences and authenticities associated to the aesthetic experience deserve respect by and of itself [4,8,9,17]. These issues have been extensively discussed in the 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. In the end, contemporary conservation may find itself forced to accept subjectivity in its own philosophical core, emulating the very nature of the artworks it is called upon to preserve.

It is within this context that this dissertation emerged: how can we best adapt current methodologies applied in conservation to this fast changing world in terms of their pertinence, effectiveness, appropriateness, feasibility and ethics? How can we identify and resolve any voids there may be? Our research and understanding of this problematic 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.

⁵ For a wider concept of *alteration* related to the intervention process, please consult M. C. Casanova in CASANOVA, M. C. 2012. *De artifice a cientista. Evolução da conservação e restauro e da função e estatuto profissional do conservador restaurador de documentos gráficos no Instituto de Investigação Científica Tropical (1931-2006)* - non-published PhD dissertation.

To better present and reflect on this unexplored idea, we chose to organize this work in three different chapters that mimitize, from our point view, a certain temporal trajectory. In the first chapter, *Beyond the communicative turn*, Salvador Muñoz Viñas's concept is revisited (mainly on its epistemological, cognitive and phenomenological expressions) and adopted as the founding pillar for further explorations. In the second chapter, *The ethnographic turn in conservation*, the relationship between contemporary artworks and ethnographic objects is explored, looking for opportunities of mutually beneficial interactions and inspirations. In the third chapter, *New perspectives for complex artworks' communication*, the potential application to conservation of contemporary art, of innovative perspectives and methodologies derived from the previous chapters, is discussed. It proposes a revision of current methods for artists' interviews and other documentation procedures, as the foundations of a creative and still respectful relationship between the conservator and the contemporary artwork. These concepts are also discussed in the fourth and final chapter as the object for further research.

Among other cases, the artist Francisco Tropa was the main source of case studies and various practical examples.

2 BEYOND THE COMMUNICATIVE TURN

We can no longer talk about the authentic object, because we know too much. We can't say that that's the same object that an artist originally created. It's altered physically, and in the case of installation art or time-based media, it may have nothing to do with the original technology even. So we have to question that and we have to tease it out, or what is it then. And that's one of the questions I ask the artists – (...) what is this work of art? (...) I'm trying to answer questions that people are going to ask in the future, and I don't know what those questions are, so let's just get the artist to say, what is it? And how do you want people to experience it? (...) I think it's really important to realize that authenticity itself is socially constructed and cannot, can ever be understood objectively. - Glenn Wharton⁶

Since the communicative turn that authenticity as a concept started to be understood as plural: there are, putatively, many different authenticities. As a consequence, conservators' neutrality was questioned:

The communicative turn in conservation has important consequences upon the entire logic of conservation (...). In contemporary conservation theory, the primary interest is therefore no longer on the objects, but rather on the subjects. Objectivism in conservation is replaced by certain forms of subjectivism [2:147].

Indeed, "one of the principles applied by creators of installation art is the (...) interaction between the viewer and the work" [14:24]. The spectators' role is an intrinsic and indispensable part of the contemporary artwork and intended as such by the artist. Following a perspective from Yves Michaud, philosopher and art theorist, installations and performances remain in evanescence, *gaseous*

⁶ WHARTON, G. 2009. Lizzie Frasco interviewing Glenn Wharton, Conservator at MoMA and Professor at IFA School for Conservation (February 4th, 2009) in *The Contingency of Conservation. Changing Methodology and Theoretical Issues in Conserving Ephemeral Contemporary Artworks with Special Reference to Installation Art*, Visual Arts Undergraduated Thesis, University of Pennsylvania, pp. lvii-lviii.

state until they are experienced by the spectator [18,19]. This fact becomes particularly clear in installation art where the subject needs to enter the artwork to make it exist.

This perspective acknowledges that “the character of installations obliges us [conservators] to preserve not only the object itself, but the experience which it provokes” [14:28]. At this light, the conservator has to be considered as an *interpreter and executer* in contemporary art conservation [14]. This approach to subjectivity and its consequences for the conservator’s role needs to be understood in epistemological*, phenomenological* and cognitive* terms.

2.1 EXPERIENCES, MULTIPLICITY & RELATIVISM

All the interactivity that occurs between the viewer and the work, even if not physical, implies an individual experience and, thus, an individual perspective [20]. Originally, experience is an epistemological concept that refers to one of the ways of acquiring knowledge. The Aristotelian approach already suggests that *empeiria* (greek root for *experience*) is associated with memory and sensations but also with perception [20,21]. However, it is with Descartes’ *cogito* that experience starts to be associated to an individual, implying that there is the “possibility of an experience of the subject without any external object” [21:22]. The Cartesian experience is then separated from knowledge once it might be proof-free, created by illusions and interpretations of the mind, in opposition to knowledge that must obey to objective criteria. Contemporary philosophers agree in considering two types of experiences: perceptual (dependent on the apprehension of external stimuli) and introspective (one that starts within and belongs solely to the individual’s mind) [20,21].

In a constructivist view of epistemology, *subject* and *object* are distinguished. However, they are interdependent once one only exists in relation with the other. In conservation, for example, the researcher (conservator) may be considered the subject and the artwork, the artist, or the artist’s assistant may be considered objects. Conversely, the conservator is the object of the artists’ scrutiny. We all are, simultaneously, objects and subjects in our human interactions. Important considerations may be derived from the epistemological conceptualization of these two entities:

- ▶ All knowledge depends on position. That is: every subject has a particular rather than a universal *perspective* of the object [22];
- ▶ Every observation is dependent on a referential, which may be both spatial and/or temporal. This horizon (referential) is explicitly or implicitly adopted by the subject;
- ▶ Breuer, researcher in the field Ground Theory Methods, and Roth, researcher in Applied Cognitive Science, also suggest that the dialog between subject and object “brings the two ontologically different entities into a dialectical unit*” [22:4]. In fact, “every observation in a social context changes the object of observation” [22:4]: the epistemic subject is necessarily, willingly or not, an actor while executing the observation.

The potential implications of these principles - interactivity, participation and perspective - upon documentation, reinstallations, rematerializations or emulations of complex artworks are clear.

Conservators can no longer consider themselves as neutral, but should recognize and acknowledge their own horizons and perspectives, as well as the consequences of each one of their acts.

2.1.1 *Perceptual experiences: a cognitive psychology perspective*

Philosophical concepts described above have echoes in cognitive psychology. Physiologically, the laws of sensorial perception and transmission are similar from individual to individual. However, impressions are not limited to sensorial aspects, also involving the “observer’s cognitive background, which gives such experiences meaning” [23:48]. In other words: the material object and its sensorial properties are universal but the experience it induces is individual. Usually, contemporary artists’ quest resides in the multitude of subjective experiences that may be triggered by the same physical artwork:

[The artists] seek to provide the viewer with more than an opportunity to engage in object recognition *per se*. Rather, they attempt to evoke subjective reactions on the viewer to the stylistic and structural properties of their works. [23:62]

The conservator’s ‘perception of the artwork is not limited to visual sensorial stimuli, but also comprehend spatial, auditive, olfactive and, sometimes, tactile, gustatory and cynesthetic experiences. Unfortunately, cognitive psychology studies related to art are most dedicated to visual stimuli. However, new horizons are being created in psychology of art, which consider other sensorial stimuli and cognitive processes, relevant to kinetic art and other complex artworks [24].

However, current psychological models of visual stimuli processing, are worth considering in the field of conservation. An interactive process of perception and cognition is paramount. An interactive model of artist perception and cognition is proposed by Solso, a cognitive psychologist with a special interest in psychology of art. This model (*vide* Figure 2.1) is based on stages, which are associated with different areas of the brain, but may occur simultaneously. Visual information is detected by the eye, transduced into neural impulses and “passed along to the visual cortex” [23:44], where recognition of shapes and forms takes place⁷. Then, this information is communicated and processed in other areas of the cerebral cortex, leading to semantic interpretations of the visual signs.

Through the analysis of this model, it is possible to distinguish four cognitive processes: sensorial, attentional, perception and semantic processing. The first two occur simultaneously and determine which information is transmitted to the next stage: perception.

In this phase, the brain-mind looks for meaning in the compiled stimuli. If no meaning is found, it retrocedes to sensorial and attentional processes, trying to get more data. Then, back to perception level, it looks again for meaning and relationships. Meaning is reached through association with previous knowledge stored in long-term memory. When meaning is associated to the visual stimuli, the brain-mind finally proceeds for semantic processing. In this final phase (top-down processing), the individual gains knowledge (that is, conscience) of what he is seeing. “Without knowledge, meaning

⁷ For more information about visual cognition, please check “7.3 – Visual Cognition an attentional tendencies (Solso, 1996)”, pp. 45.

(...) is lost” [23:78].

Parallel to these apparently cold mechanisms, emotional processing takes place, impacting a powerful influence on the cognitive process and its memory [23,25,26].

Substantial parts of this model can be considered universal, but each individual has a unique mental structure and memory base: this means that every process is experienced in a different way. Each new perceived experience adds information to the mental matrix and will, therefore, influence future experiences. Therefore, the cognitive experience of a conservator or a curator faced with a given artwork is necessarily different from that of a member of the audience and the experiences of different people with similar background tend to be more similar than among people of diverse upbringing. In fact, it has been shown that different connoisseurs tend to have a much more homogeneous view of a given artwork than people without special education in arts [23,26].

(...) Those subjects who had had extensive art training tended to concentrate on finding thematic patterns among compositional elements, while the untrained subjects tended to concentrate on representational and semantic use of (...) elements. [23:147]

That may imply that a biased perspective may affect the decision-making moment, once a conservator will inevitably prioritize some aspects over others. Each individual’s attentional tendencies⁸ will condition the amount and character of transmitted information [23]. Besides, one’s personal characteristics (e.g., personality, ideology, etc.) will influence the way the work is experienced and thus documented, described and reinstalled.

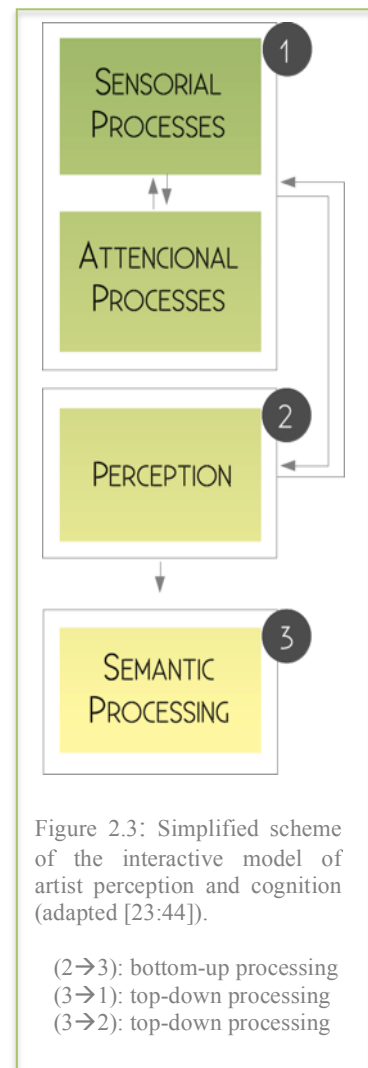
The top-down processing described below has major influences upon the way the observer (e.g., a conservator) experiences and documents an artwork:

The first two stages initiate the process of visual cognition and are sometimes called bottom-up processing, in which the stimuli drive the workings of visual awareness. The third stage is called top-down processing because cognitive operations drive visual awareness. [23:78]

Hypotheses about the nature of reality are essential to top-down processing, and they frequently affect perception. When we read text, for example, we not only detect the letters and word, which are bottom-up features, but we also perceive these characters in terms of our expectations. The expectations are aroused by contextual element. [23:110]

In other words, whenever a conservator is observing and thus experimenting a work of art, she/he is not free of preconceptions associated to her/his previous knowledge and experiences.

One may (and perhaps should) assume that a conservator who experiences an artwork can only



⁸ For more information about attentional tendencies, please check “7.3 – Visual Cognition and attentional tendencies (Solso, 1996)”, pp. 45.

describe it in his/her own terms. Even the perspective of other will be integrated into hers/his subjectivity. In every action, the conservator, as any subject, is bound to his/her own perspective, which carries and encloses his/hers whole experience, values, emotions and interests.

In social sciences, methods were created in order to embrace subjectivity*. Conservation, however, only recently began to evolve from the material-based paradigm [2]. Although a certain amount of objectivity should be chased, its limits need to be assertively determined in order to promote a more transparent conservation practice. As it will be discussed later, this situation may have been jeopardizing the actual preservation of this kind of artworks.

2.1.2 Introspective experience and relational objects

Regarding *introspective experience*, which is born and limited to the mind of the subject, a phenomenological approach becomes appropriate. Considering that such experiences are personal and unconveyable in their whole, the referential for its interpretation is strictly individual [27].

There are several studies about phenomenology and the arts⁹. In this case, the perspective of the art theorist and performer Eleonora Fabião seems relevant. She addresses the question of phenomenology in performance art, in her PhD thesis *Precarious, precarious, precarious*. Her approach to this question, is mainly a reflection about the relationship performance art and its precariousness, and history and its historiographical practices [27]:

The *historical fact*, understood in its performative dimension, is not an absolute category, but a *relational* one. Within this performative dimension, a *fact* is always plural rather than singular, i.e., a fact is the artificial construction of a singularity that in fact is constituted by the many points of view that (in) form in, the *conflicting imaginations, at once past and present* that strive to fix it, and the many narrative versions derived from it. [27:79]

This *relational and relative* character of facts and therefore perceptions, allows a *multiplicity* of perspectives and experiences, which is, again, *subjectivity*. Undoubtedly, this view is full of challenges. Looking at it from the conservation field one is bound to ask whether current conservation methodologies are prepared to incorporate and reflect the conservator's subjectivity. Where should the acceptable limits between the conservator's acts and the artist's intentions lie? How should the acceptance of subjectivity in conservation impacts upon its doctrine? How can we incorporate this perspective in the debate about new conservation methods?

⁹ Amongst the most relevant literature for this subject, it is possible to find Merleau-Ponty's *Phenomenology of Perception* (Routledge, Oxford: 1945), Gallagher's and Zahavi's *The Phenomenological Mind: An Introduction to Philosophy of Mind and Cognitive Science* (Routledge, Oxford: 2008) and Clark's *Supersizing the Mind: Embodiment, Action, and Cognitive Extension* (Oxford University Press, USA: 2010).

3 THE ETHNOGRAPHIC TURN AND CONSERVATION

[About artworks biography and the idea of the concept above the material] Yeah, it's the same thing that's been going on in anthropology, cultural anthropology, there's nothing new here that isn't old, division between people who think the ideas are more important than the actual artefacts. You know it's the chicken and egg issue, for us you can talk about an artist, you could describe beautiful and spectacular piece of art that only exists as a descriptive text because you let it disintegrate. How do you really then know how good or bad the thing was, what it's real visual or emotional or other impact is if you don't have it there in front of you? So there's lots of art, it could be made of sound, [and] other things ... [but] that's a whole other issue. – Andrew Lins¹⁰

This chapter's introducing quote, from Andrew Lins, Head of Conservation at the Philadelphia Museum of Art, suggests a relationship between contemporary artworks and ethnographic objects. Clearly, the acknowledgement of the conservator's subjectivity inevitably leads to a reflection about the *Other* and the *Self*. Considering the several *authenticities* of any artistic object and the relationships that occur between all the entities involved in its existence, the art object must be contemplated as a *cultural object** in line with modern cultural anthropology. This approach considers the contemporary art object as cultural, an object whose entirety demands the plural and relativistic perceptions it arises, whose holistic definition becomes social instead of personal [28].

This perspective has already been lightly addressed by some authors, regarding conservation and

¹⁰ LINS, A. 2008. Lizzie Frasco interviewing Andrew Lins, Head of Conservation at the Philadelphia Museum of Art (October 27th, 2008) in *The Contingency of Conservation. Changing Methodology and Theoretical Issues in Conserving Ephemeral Contemporary Artworks with Special Reference to Installation Art*, Visual Arts Undergraduated Thesis, University of Pennsylvania, pp. xxvi.

its practices [4,16,29-48]. By comparing ethnographic and contemporary objects, they directly or indirectly suggest an ethnographical approach to conservation (Table 3.1). This conception may be contemplated as an *ethnographic turn* in conservation. This perspective was inspired in anthropology and its notion of cultural objects.

Hal Foster, art theorist, used this same expression in the context of art theory and history [49]. This author defined

the *ethnographic turn* in contemporary art production by acknowledging that artists share five main characteristics with ethnographers: they are scientists of “*alterity*”*, they take *culture as object*, and *produce contextual objects*, that claim a *contextual and interdisciplinary creative scope*. *Reflexivity* then follows their creative process [49].

In order to guide the following reflections about the ethnographic turn in conservation, two cases were studied: a typically ethnographic object (three coffins from Bali’s cremation rituals) and a contemporary work of art (*Projecto A Assembleia de Euclides*, from the Portuguese artist Francisco Tropa)¹¹.

3.1 BALI’S CREMATION COFFINS AND *PROJECTO A ASSEMBLEIA DE EUCLIDES*

Bali’s coffins are part of Museu Nacional de Etnologia’s (MNE) collection. The cremation of these coffins is a ritual of passage of the foremost importance for the Balinese people once it allows them to release their souls from the corpse. This is only accomplished when the corpse is fully cremated [50].

The shape of cremation coffins depends traditionally on caste, but for most people, nowadays, the choice of shape is purely a matter of aesthetic taste. They may change from winged lions, black bulls, white cows and elephant fishs (*gajah mina*) [51]. One of the three specimens from MNE is a black bull (Figure 3.1.1) and the other two are white cows (Figure 3.1.2 and 3.1.3). Both cows are partially burned while the bull, which was especially ordered to the museum collection, remains untouched by the ritual [51].

Regarding Francisco Tropa’s works, they 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. They

Similarities	References
Ephemeral materials	[28-31]
Emphasis on the intangible features	[28-36]
Performative aspects	[29,32,33-37]
Action-objects	[28,29,38,39]
Audience as essential for the artworks meaning	[31-33,38,39]
Artists are contemporary and so may be consulted	[4,29,35,36,40,41]
Contextual dependence, contemporarily	[30,35,36,42,43]
Lack of historical perspective	[36,39,44]
Artwork’s temporality and biography (ies)	[16,29,31,43,45-47]

Table 3.1: Similarities between ethnographic and contemporary objects and references.

¹¹ Due to space restrictions, these objects will not be discussed in detail in this chapter. For more informations regarding this type of objects, including photos and other information, please check “7.4-Bali’s cremation rituals”, pp. 48, and “7.5 - Francisco Tropa and his work”, pp. 56.

are *versions*, not interpretations, meaning that, in his view, the artwork only comes to true existence in the spectators' mind: as many versions as spectators. His works are meant to be indecipherable "enigmas", whose interpretation drives viewers through immensely different and unpredictable perspectives. To the same end, Tropa's takes some of his enigmas to a higher level of complexity. He often creates projects that comprise several independent works. Each of these works, although related among them, has their own trajectory, as he repeatedly alters them, creating different physical versions of the same artwork [19].

This particular project, *Projecto A Assembleia de Euclides* (2005-2010), comprises six relatively autonomous moments/installations¹². In the artist's conceptualization of the work, all these moments exist simultaneously: they occur inside an imaginary cube, whose interior is revealed by unfolding it off [52].

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. In the installation work *A Assembleia de Euclides* (2005), for example, the artist jumps onto a ramp and starts to ride a bicycle. In addition, many of the concepts and action-objects are present in more than one installation, creating visual and empirical relationships that the observer is expected to perceive. And this is expected to take place even if components of the project are dispersed by several museums' collections, as autonomous works [52].

Obviously, the Bali coffins and Tropa's *Projecto A Assembleia de Euclides* share a common condition of **ephemerality** but in quite different perspectives: while the coffin is meant to perish in the burning flames of the cremation fire, every installation is ephemeral in as much as it is unrepeatable. Such ephemerality is a core quality of both objects – a quality that deserves preservation in and of itself.

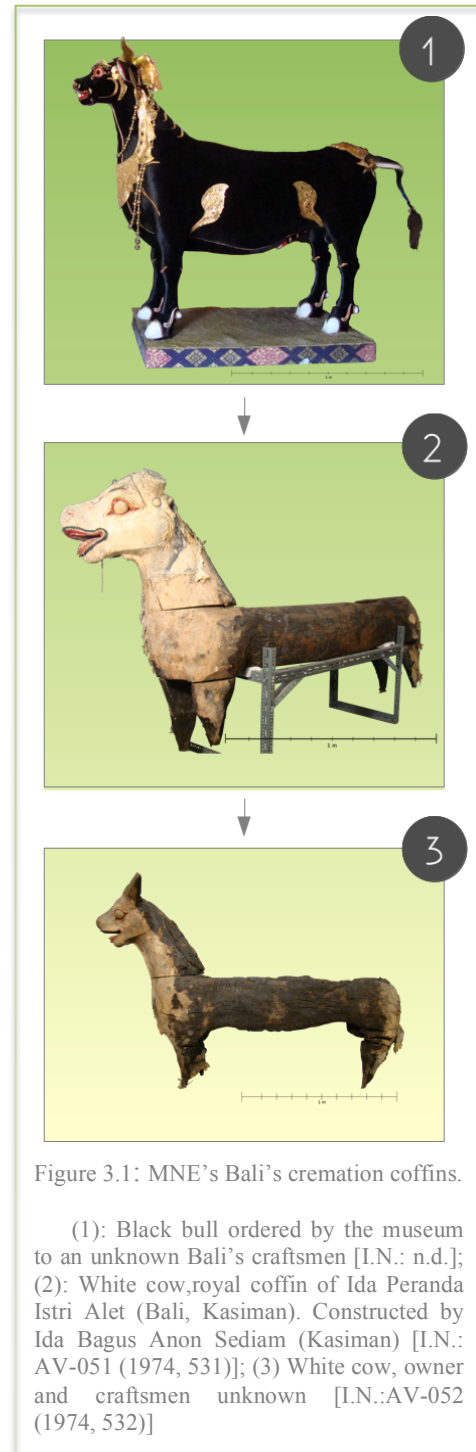


Figure 3.1: MNE's Bali's cremation coffins.

(1): Black bull ordered by the museum to an unknown Bali's craftsmen [I.N.: n.d.]; (2): White cow, royal coffin of Ida Peranda Istri Alet (Bali, Kasiman). Constructed by Ida Bagus Anon Sediam (Kasiman) [I.N.: AV-051 (1974, 531)]; (3) White cow, owner and craftsmen unknown [I.N.: AV-052 (1974, 532)]

¹² These moments are entitled: *A Assembleia de Euclides* (The Assembly of Euclid), 2005; *O Transe do Ciclista* (The Cyclist's Trance), 2006; *A Marca do Seio* (The Mark of the Breast), 2006; *Sim Não* (Yes No), 2006; *A Assembleia de Euclides (Final)*, 2008; and *Gigante* (Giant), 2010

3.1.1 Change: contexts and ephemerality

That notion of *change* is not only material but also conceptual. What is the coffin before and after a cremation? Is it an artistic or ethnographic object? Or is it merely a document?

The three coffins, are not an unit but rather three different objects, as they represent three distinct moments of the ritual. In a personal interview, Francine Brinkgreve, conservator of Insular Southwest-Asian collections at Volkenkunde Museum, in Leiden, was asked about the nature of these objects. She promptly stated that in Balinese cultures the question about whether each coffin is art or not does not exist [53]. The community makes an effort to make the coffins look as beautiful as possible through the hands of the artist in charge. In the artist's mind, at the moment of creation, it is irrelevant whether the coffin will be cremated afterwards or not.

Whether the coffin should be considered a work of art or an ethnographic object depends on perspective and context. The black bull (Figure 3.1.1) may be considered an artistic object in Bali but not so in other societies, or segments thereof. While the process of cremation is in progress, this designation will again change and the coffin lies in a status between artistic object and cremation document. This is the case of the white cow in Figure 3.1.2. This object still has the grids that sustain the body, suggesting that the cremation process was still unfinished: the object testifies, in Bali's inhabitants view, a blasphemy, unsuitable, therefore, to be considered an ethnographic document. It may testify the blasphemy itself but does not document the immaterial heritage of Bali's cremation. In the final stage of the cremation, the coffin finally becomes an ethnographic document (Figure 3.1.3) [53], testifying the full ritual.

Even if unwillingly, these MNE's objects objectively document Bali's coffins trajectory towards ephemerality. Shouldn't the trajectory of complex contemporary artworks also be preserved and documented? The answer depends on how much relevance the artist and relevant stakeholders (owners or others with legal rights upon the work) attribute to ephemerality itself. Francisco Tropa's works are intentionally designed to change, but endlessly so – not into a definite documentation of an ephemeral moment, as in the case of Bali's coffins.

Every installation remains incomplete if not re-assembled or if the *whole* (including performative features) is not completed [50,54]. In the case of *Projecto A Assembleia de Euclides*, the importance of installing the works is enhanced as each work is almost fully based on its intangible features. As stated by the artist, this project is a “machine of relations”¹³. He expresses those relations in the use of materials, shapes, assemblages, techniques and colours, among other things. According to him, it is part of the audience's role to interpret the works in their relationship towards each other. Those relationships are an example of intangible values that need to be preserved. And yet the artist realizes and expects that the installation will change in every exhibition. How is this possible if all details, including light, relationships between objects and works, space, context, are expected to be fully

¹³ Personal communication: Francisco Tropa (June 8th, 2012) – several instances

documented and preserved? In the words of Francisco Tropa no installation “will ever be assembled twice in the same way”¹⁴. For him, his works are infinite in possibilities and interpretations:

FT [Francisco Tropa]: The *Gigante* [element of the installation *Marca do Seio*] is something that I’ve done [installed] in so many ways. It’s almost infinite.

I [Interviewer]: Almost infinite in which sense?

FT: Of possibilities. Of what that is. In its nature. The ways of seeing are infinite. I think...

I: And by being reinstalled, there are some possibilities...

FT: Yes. I’m always finding new things. I’m very pleased when that happens, obviously, because that means that the work still moves.¹⁵

In summary, while the Bali’s coffins document ephemeral moments of change through static objects, complex artworks, such as these by Tropa, 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, then? Moreover, to what extent can or should they continue to change?

3.2 CONSEQUENCES FOR OBJECTS’ AUTONOMY

The contrast of these two objects inevitably brings specific consequences upon their autonomy. Which is the role of those objects after the action? What are they? Such considerations become even more pertinent when considering ways of presenting complex artworks without the artist’s presence. Marie de Brugerolle, art historian and curator, was faced with this problematic when she curated the exhibition project “*Hors limites, l’art et la vie*”, at MNAM Centre Pompidou (Paris):

The question was then how to show objects most of which, whose destination was not the context of an exhibition, and not concern with the making of “an art piece” but the making of a moment of life. [39:28]

Concerning this matter, *Inside Installations* working group propose the notion of “artworks’ biography”, which would allow actions after the artist’s death [16]. Those biographies “may be considered part of conserving the work. Not only because examination of decisions taken in the past and the work’s exhibition history underlies sound decisions in the present, but also because each new chapter added today makes decisions transparent for conservators in the future” [16:4].

Language becomes part of the description, documentation, process, reinstallation, and even composition of the object [54]. According with the definition of *artwork’s trajectory*, it is possible to argue that it may define the limits of acceptability of future change. With this perspective about languages, acts and gestures, as providers of subjective versions of the object, Fabião proposes a solution:

As performance and body both keep recalling, there is no stable ground, no static archive, no frozen document, no full and homogeneous subject – one cannot repeat a move but only make it over, make it

¹⁴ Personal communication: Francisco Tropa (June 8th, 2012) – question n.º 26

¹⁵ Personal communication: Francisco Tropa (June 8th, 2012) – question n.º 95-97

other while being permanently remade by it. In the same way, performances and bodies cannot be historically reproduced but only historiographically presented in and as language. [27:48]

3.2.1 Historiographical presentations

When historiographically presenting the artworks, the conservator needs to accept and gauge his/her subjectiveness as an “*actant subject*” [4:132]. The conservator can thus be understood as a performer when reinstalling and documenting complex artworks as a method for its preservation.

Opposed to historical reproductions, which rely primarily on memory, historiographical presentations imply a critical perspective, a predominant focus on meaning and interpretation rather than on materiality, while retaining methodological support. In fact, these characteristics and competencies are similar to those used by conservators when producing documentation about contemporary works. In this process, they are historiographers in as much as they exert critical judgment to select among the available sources of information and also to validate them.

Similarly, it may be argued that while *presenting* or *exhibiting* the works, conservators engage in the reinterpretation of the historiography of the artworks. Consequently, the works will be presented *as language* (by documentation) and *in language* (with their reinstallation) [19,27]. On the other hand, the concept of historical reproduction, as applied to other conservation fields, could never find appropriate expression in the conservation of *performances* or installations. *Reproducibility* is dependent on the ability to copy something or, at least, preserving it without change. Evidently, in performance and installation art, no gesture, no shape, no relative position or circumstances are exactly reproducible. This ultimately means that they can only be presented as a different version of the original action [19]. Likewise, someone that reinstalls an artwork based on someone else's produced documentation will, most certainly, perform an action with a different outcome. Each nuance that is introduced to the action will cause a different result and, consequently, a different version of the installation. In every choice made by the conservator, a different detail will appear and a different result is to be expected [19]. Accepting the epistemological argument of hermeneutics* and the principles of cognitive psychology revised above, it should be presumed that every new reinstallation of a given artwork will be influenced by its previous versions, through the change in the conservator's interpretation, among many other mechanisms.

Ultimately, every conservation action has a degree of authorship. At the same time, the conservator's authorship is not limited to *writing* as in *documenting*, but also to every other conservation act. Thus, other interpretations, languages and discourses are allowed. Facing Francisco Tropa's *Projecto A Assembleia de Euclides*, the elements are so abstract and fluid in their interpretation that every and each observer becomes devoid of any referential besides his/her own – she/he is, therefore, isolated in his own “*microcosmic monad*” [55].

How could the diverse perspectives and contributions revised above be brought together into an integrated framework for conservation? How could they be translated into practical methodologies?

4 NEW PERSPECTIVES FOR COMPLEX ARTWORKS' COMMUNICATION

I think the real challenge is taking inanimate art, that was once moving, or once part of a motion, part of something that was enlivened, that's no longer – how do you restore the life to it? That really is the crux of it. And I'm beginning to see that it's all these other clues that go to our senses, all these other sensory clues, which help do that. (...) I guess that's where I'm coming to. And this is very new; I'm just coming to this in the last couple of weeks. But I'm beginning to see that we rely on the visual, but performance art is a lot more than the visual, so now I'm beginning to think that in order to really enliven this stuff, I have to go way beyond thinking about art as visual, and all the other components need to weight in on it. And maybe we really can do something about making a jump, allowing people to make the jump. And maybe that is what art is, maybe the art is the imagination, and it always was the imagination. – Carol Mancusi Ungaro¹⁶

In the preceding excerpt, the Head of Conservation at the Whitney Museum of American Art, Carol Mancusi-Ungaro, expands concepts that are very much in line with the previous sections of this work.

The following analysis supports the view that there is a close relationship between ethnographic objects and contemporary artworks in what concerns the immaterial core deserving preservation.

¹⁶ MANCUSI-UNGARO, C. 2009. Lizzie Frasco interviewing Carol Mancusi-Ungaro, Head of Conservation at the Whitney Museum of American Art (March 2nd, 2009) in *The Contingency of Conservation. Changing Methodology and Theoretical Issues in Conserving Ephemeral Contemporary Artworks with Special Reference to Installation Art*, Visual Arts Undergraduated Thesis, University of Pennsylvania, pp. xxxi-xxxii.

Additionally, by historiographically presenting the works in the various types of language, conservators behave as ethnographers. As so, it is conceivable that ethnographic methods may not only be suitable for contemporary art preservation, but they may also provide the best possible service for its purpose, once they are meant to preserve the artworks' trajectory rather than its fixation:

The postmodern turn [in ethnography] attempts to celebrate the paradoxes and complexities of field research and social life. Various postmodern ethnographies have been produced that employ a striking variety of textual devices in a highly self-conscious way. [56:204]

In this ethnographic approach, reflexivity is the “key” quality of the method as it “provides evidence not only of the contexts and communities in which [the researcher] interact[s], but also of [him/her] self as their product” [57:3]. The distance between the research topic and the researcher is cancelled out: the subject is an integral part of the object. Reflexivity implies an interaction, intervention, and participation with and within the context. In ethnography the author frontally embraces protagonism: the text is written from an explicit perspective of *Self*. The *Other* is, therefore, understood through its *intersubjective encounter* with the researcher [58-60]. As a consequence, the discourse lies on a reflexive scenario, in “the attempt to understand how one is perceived and how this may shape the research” [37:28]. Likewise, the interaction itself needs to be analysed considering a previous self-reflexive process, where the researcher acknowledges her/his own preconceptions (meta-cognition). This is decisive, not only because the success of the project is often determined by the researcher's personal characteristics whilst engaging with people in the field [61], but also, and more importantly, because the results will inevitably be biased by the “eyes” of the researcher, i.e. his/her subjectivity.

The *field* may be the museum space or even the artist's studio. Here, the conservator becomes the researcher. The ethnographic object, therefore, is an artwork in its social context. Within conservators' research, a large variety of methods are needed to encompass the complexity of the object. Among these, the artist's interview is paramount.

4.1 ARTIST'S INTERVIEWS REVISITED

In 1990, Carol Mancusi-Ungaro launched a programme aiming at recording “information from living artists that would assist conservators in future restorative efforts” [62:392]. 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. Temple (Director of Gemeentemuseum, in Den Haag) and Ottens (Head of Research in Moveable Heritage in RCE, Maastrich), emphasize this method as a successful and crucial tool:

It is impossible to imagine our contemporary art world without the artist interview. (...) It provides a perfect opportunity to ask the artist about the creative process and meaning of his work and the materials and techniques used. [9:9]

Without the interview the conservator will 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. This risk is

emphasized by Vivian van Saaze, in her description of documentation methodologies from Bonnefantenmuseum, in Maastricht:

[They] have been geared towards measuring the works in order to reproduce them in the same manner (...). When the artist is no longer around to be consulted, and without any additional information, the chances are that reinstallation will start from the documentation (...). The kind of document produced (...) may lead up to a fixation of the work. [4:116]

We have experienced a living demonstration of this. In fact, the interview with Francisco Tropa, revealed itself as an absolutely indispensable tool to understand the complexity of his work. The scarce documentation available before the interview included some photos, catalogues, articles from magazines and inventory sheets¹⁷. Everything we thought we knew about *Projecto A Assembleia de Euclides* was shattered after the interview. The interviewers view of the work was so extraordinarily expanded and changed by the interview, that it became obvious to us that a conservation work based solely on the knowledge we held before that encounter would certainly jeopardize its preservation. An example is provided by *Embankment #7*, an exhibition held by Colectivo Embankment: *Templo das Alegorias* and *Polícias*, from Francisco Tropa (Figure 4.1) were presented in a particular way, without the artist's sanction. We obtained his first statement concerning that exhibition. When asked about it, the artist spoke hesitatingly:

FT: I really didn't like that assembly.

I: That's what I've meant to ask you ... whether you agreed with that.

FT: No! (...) I went there and I said nothing. But I think is too much...

I: Yes, because the artworks cohesion is lost.

FT: Yes, it is lost. There's a limit (...). But at the time it was ok. Sometimes you just don't realise it.¹⁸

What will happen if one hundred years from now, a conservator wants to reinstall Tropa's work? They would probably consider this reinstallation as valid as any other and would possibly proceed to its reinstallation. More documentation would then be produced, increasing its acceptability. That is the problem with reinterpretation strategies: they may as much allow the work to change and live, as they may, unwillingly, lead to its misrepresentation and even distortion.



Figure 4.1: Images from the exhibition Embankment #7 © Colectivo Embankment # 7, held in Galeria Municipal Paços do Concelho / DoisPaços Galeria Municipal de Torres Vedras, 2010.

¹⁷ For more information regarding documentation about Francisco Tropa, please consult Andreia Nogueira's dissertation intitled: *Documentar: porquê, o quê, como e quando? A Conservação da obra de Francisco Tropa*.

¹⁸ Personal communication: Francisco Tropa (June 8th, 2012) – question n.º 328-333.

The first book dedicated to the theories and practices of the artist's interview has recently been published [9]. Designed with the intention of providing a sourcebook, *The Artist's Interview* is mostly based on previous literature [63-65]. This comprehensive collection of resources reveals, however, the existence of critical voids in the current methodologies, regarding both the execution and the subsequent analysis of interviews. Although the predominant approach is based on ethnographic methods, such as reflexivity, and oral history, crucial limitations become clear in several domains, such as the interviewing process and its validation, and methods for interview analysis, which remain technically undefined.

The following paragraphs will be dedicated to the exploration of potential innovations in the methodology for artists' interviews, derived from principles of interview in psychology and ethnography.

In both these social sciences interviewers are made critically aware, from the very early stages of their training, of the decisive influence they may impact upon the object of their observation. The interviewer takes conscience that he/she is a participant-observer, meaning that he/she interacts with, and therefore changes, the object. He/she is expected to make every effort to diminish this artificial impact and to make this potential risk of bias explicit in scientific reports. The same clearly applies to the artist's interviewer.

In the interviewing process, every action, wording, tone, and even the interviewer's personality, will determine the outcome [9]. Regarding methodology, structure and type of the interview, its translation and analysis not only influence the way the communication process will be perceived in the future but may also determine future interviews. In interviews, it must be acknowledged "that both the interviewers and the interviewee determine the outcome" [9:15]:

The understanding that the response of the artist varies depending on when, in what way and under what circumstances the interview takes place and who the interviewer is, may contribute to the quality of the interview and the subsequent validation of the information obtained. [9:15]

By assuming this position, conservators allow themselves to be storytellers, as they transform raw data into narratives. One advantage of *telling stories* is that it allows subjective considerations by the one who is reading the narrative. In a hermeneutical view, this engagement is necessary for creating meaning:

The reader must have an (...) active participation in the story; narrative is a matter of engaging tellers and listeners, writers and readers, not only in imaginative terms, but also in a creative sense. [27:68]

4.1.1 Interviewing process

In conservation literature, usually, a semi-structured interview is advised [9]. This type is between a close interview – which follows a script – and an open interview, where the artist may speak freely about topics previously agreed with the interviewer [66]. In the semi-structured strategy, the interview starts with open questions and evolves to in-depth probes (which may be planned or not), in the final stages of the interview. The questions to be addressed, should be previously defined and follow a settled order. This should allow narrowing the conversation from topics such as the artist's *oeuvre* to

topics, which regard the specific works under consideration (*vide* Figure 4.2) [9]. Some authors, such as the sociologist Norman K. Dezin (PhD), caution against to direct or closed questions – acknowledging that an ethnographic inquiry “seeks to study a phenomenon from the perspectives of the people studied” [61:80], saying that such types of questions may disturb or induce a biased description of the phenomenon.

A semi-structured strategy was applied to Francisco Tropa’s interview about *Projecto A Assembleia de Euclides*. With this purpose, a script was previously designed. This process took place in order to test the previous described methodologies and gather more information about his work.

Although the sequence of questions tried to follow the recommendations presented above, namely moving from broad to more focused aspects, it dominated the interview, hindering the fluidity of the artist’s discourse: on the one hand, the script repeatedly broke the artist’s flow of mind; on the other hand, the artist resisted the scripts’ flow.

Obviously, some questions were designed or presented in a way that is prone to influence the response. Closed questions are especially prone to this risk. However, in accordance with the tradition of qualitative methods used in social sciences, simple concordance answers (e.g. yes, maybe, no) do not provide rich information on the interviewer’s perspective, restricting the possibility of a truly content analysis of his discourse [66]. Also, they usually are the result of a previous induction. In the case of our interview with Francisco Tropa, some inductions occurred by quoting previous statements by the artist, ending his sentences, or associating artistic references to his work. This was a spontaneous reaction to the artist’s reluctance to provide light into the enigmatic qualities of his work, but the result was, nevertheless, undesirable:

[About references in his work] I: And what about Duchamp’s *Great Glass*?
FT: Yes, it is there.¹⁹

Atkinson and Hammersley, ethnographers, recognized similar inductive questioning tendencies in other sorts of ethnographic projects [58]. If the interviewer recognizes that this has occurred, an opportunity to recover some data can be provided by *confirming questions*, e.g. “What do you mean by that?” or similar. These questions could thus be acknowledged in the further analysis.

Our planned interview addressed not only creative process, meaning of techniques, materials and equipment, production context and conveyance, but also conservation issues such as deterioration and

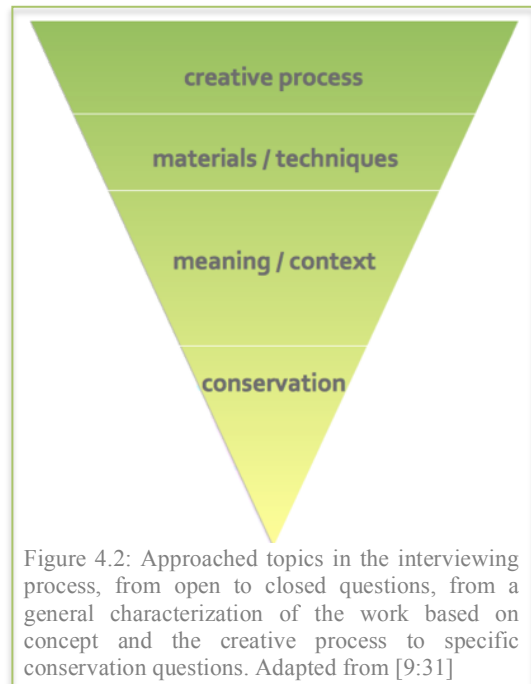


Figure 4.2: Approached topics in the interviewing process, from open to closed questions, from a general characterization of the work based on concept and the creative process to specific conservation questions. Adapted from [9:31]

¹⁹ Personal communication: Francisco Tropa (June 8th, 2012) – question n.º 129.

the artist's position regarding reinterpretation or other preservation strategies. It is important to note that none of the interviewers had ever seen any installation from the works being considered and, due to a scarcity of documentation, they found it necessary to scrutinize every detail. Installations comprise several different objects, each one justifying specific questions regarding physical and immaterial conservation.

Tropa's interviews lasted for more than three hours, by which time the artist was obviously tired and impatient. Despite this, some specific planned questions remained unaddressed.

All the inconveniences and limitations described above suggest that a better methodology of interview technique should be sought.

Our experience led us to agree with Butler, in considering that the semi-structured interview is probably not the most appropriate type, as it imposes upon "the information in three ways: *by selecting the theme and topics, by ordering the questions and by wording questions in [the interviewer's] language*" [57:31]. Which alternative strategy (ies) could be used to solve these problems?

Let us look first at the problem of duration: the interview had to be long given the number and complexity of works under consideration. It might have been shortened into smaller interviews, about single installations, but this collided with Francisco Tropa's availability. To solve or minimize this problem we suggest that the interview might be split into two phases with different objectives and structure. In the first phase, prior to the encounter, the artist would receive a description of the planned interview scope and strategy, together with a set of written focused questions regarding specific aspects of the conservation of the artwork, such as conveyance, deterioration and conservation strategies. This questionnaire would, ideally, be answered before the encounter. Examples of questions might be: "Should the flannel be preserved in its material state or not?", "What are acceptable limits for geodetic changes in future installations?". In the second phase, the encounter takes place. It starts by an informal interview (e.g. open interview), aiming at addressing the intangible aspects of his work, including creative process, meaning of materials and techniques and context. The topics to be covered in this interview had been previously agreed with the artist, but should try to be as informal and fluid as possible, in order to capture the free flow of mind of the artist. The interviewer should try to influence as little as possible, selecting probing opportunities, while trying to make sure that all relevant topics are addressed [66]. The artist should be allowed to speak fluently and freely about his representations of the selected themes.

This method is obviously a lot more demanding for the interviewer. The preparation of such an interview needs to be carefully undertaken, not only regarding the selection of the topics, but also, and perhaps especially, the attitude and strategy during personal interaction. The difficulty of driving an interview without imposing cannot be overstated. The artist's interviewers will obviously need to be adequately trained in this technique – no more so, however, than psychologists or ethnographers. However, it seems reasonable to expect that it will lead to much improved results, as all data on hard

matters is provided directly by the artist and intangible domains are addressed in an as much flexibly and unstricted way as possible.

Obviously, this strategy is only proposed as a starting concept, which will need to be adapted to the specific aspects of the work and the artist. In cases of uncooperativeness, for example, it may be unavoidable to resort to some degree of induction. The interview should keep a reflexive check on this risk and make use of caution and wise advice such as those provided by Atkinson and Hammersley:

(...) What is important is to assess the likely direction of bias that the question will introduce. Indeed, a useful tactic is to make the question *lead* in a direction opposite to that in which one expects the answer to lie, and thus avoid the danger of misleadingly confirming one's expectations (...). [57:120]

Might the conservation world devote more attention to interviewing techniques, and opportunities for interaction and exchange of views could expand, making us all progressively better interviewers.

Whilst the conversation takes place, an assistant would check the answers to the written focused questions and prepare any clarifications needed, which would close the interview. This approach may have *three main advantages*: the artist would recover his concentration once knowing that the interview was about to end [9], it would allow the conservator to be absolutely sure of the artist's will regarding specific conservation issues and it would make sure that no relevant question remain unanswered. The artist would also be encouraged to add any further guidance or specific directions.

The need for this flexibility is exemplified by the following transcript of Francisco Tropa's interview, which reveals how complex and intangible can the artist's intention behind a simple object actually be:

I: And the projector? Does it need to have any dimensions in particular?

FT: No.

I: Only has to be effective...

FT: Yes. Regular. With a regular lamp.

I: And does it have to be flannel or just a regular black tissue?

FT: It has to be black flannel, opaque. Materials are always important to me. The tent is made of flannel, as the curtain in *Marca do Seio* It is flannel in the three occasions. It's the same tissue.

I: But which kind of flannel? Thick or thin?

FT: It's a thick flannel. Theatre flannel. It's one of those theatre curtains, made of flannel, really heavy and difficult to get. So, the curtain in *A Marca do Seio*, the tent in *Sentinela [Plana]* and the *Tenda de Revelação*, are all of the same material.²⁰

This transcript highlights an interesting opportunity: focused questions on specific objects were actually pivotal in bringing to the surface unforeseen dimensions of the artist's work and intention.

Through this method, it would be possible to attend to every feature, both tangible and intangible, presented in the installation, while saving time in the process. It would also allow a better organization and documentation of the artist's opinion concerning conservation issues and their strategies. Reaching these objectives will obviously require an adaptation of interview guidelines to emerging difficulties.

4.1.2 Data analysis

Despite an extensive effort, we could not find in the conservation literature any in-depth guidance

²⁰ Personal communication: Francisco Tropa (June 8th, 2012) – question n.º 294-297.

or discussion regarding methods for analysis of interviews. In this section, a reference framework for interview data analysis in conservation, based on psychological techniques is proposed.

The analysis of data from interviews requires a method that is adequate to the inherently qualitative property of data. It is fair to state that our 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. Every choice is, in fact, *tragic* as no method fully fits the following requirements:

- ▶ To provide data validation (as this is one of the main questions regarding artists' interviews),
- ▶ Allow ample freedom. (Obviously, it should not categorize or freeze the artwork, in any way, rather allowing a diversity of perspectives),
- ▶ To trustfully respect artist's intentions and thoughts,
- ▶ And finally, to be communicable.

After an assessment of current relevant literature [58,61,66], we believe that an adequate methodology for the interview analysis could be structured around two main methods: *reflexivity*, which was already highlighted as crucial for this ethnographical approach to conservation, and *content analysis* based on ground theory*. We believe that this approach would *increase analysis validation*, while *promoting flexibility* and *consistently acknowledging the artist's discourse*.

First, it is important to reflect about transcription techniques. Although video is typically the method for recording interviews, transcription into a written form, which can be analysed, commented and shared, is universally considered necessary [9,10]. However, this process is associated with considerable risk and should, therefore, be subjected to closer scrutiny and guidance. Curiously, in relevant literature, authors usually do not describe the technique of transcription used, and actually accept that a selective transcription is acceptable [9]. The risks of subjectivity and biased documentation are obvious, with relevant implications for the artwork's trajectory. Theorists of qualitative methods emphasize the important advantages of a full transcription, to safeguard not only the validity of the content but also its reproducibility [66,67]. Verbal but also non-verbal languages should be registered [66,67]. This is a paradigm, and a prerequisite to proper content analysis [66,67].

Content analysis consists on 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 [66].

This process involves three sequential operations:

1. Allocation of the transcribed answers from the artist into theme *dimensions*,
2. Identification of *variables* and *sub-variables* within each *dimension*,

3. Assessment of reliability of the analysis.

The second step consists on the attribution of statements from each *dimension*, to *variables* – the words themselves are not segmented, but their meanings (e.g. *Intention - artist's intention with the work of art*). The identification of *variables* is conducted deductively or inductively (*ground theory*), by identifying the meaning (*variable*) and eventual sub-meaning (*sub-variable*) of a given statement (e.g. for a *dimension* coded as *Intention*, a *variable* might be *Aim of intentionality* and a *sub-variable* receive the title of *Intention of provoking an effort of comprehension*).

Taking Francisco Tropa's interview as an example, one could easily allocate the following statement to the previously noted notions of *dimensions: variables / sub-variables (Intention: Aim of intentionality / Intention of provoking an effort of comprehension)*:

(...) The purpose of things remaining like this [in the installation], is for you to make an effort to discover the reason why.²¹

The process is independently performed by two or more analysts, who verify the identified themes. 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 to filter the variables of intention in the artist's discourse, while maintaining flexibility, which is essential when analysing this type of artworks. The inclusion of two different analysts takes account of variability of interpretation [66].

When content analysis is performed on an inductive way, the script used for the interview or its intentions are not used as guidance to the analysts. 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 [66]. 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: the conservator would establish the categories he/she needs and would be allowed to introduce additional ones deemed necessary to convey the artist's discourse in its wholeness.

In the third step of content analysis, reliability is assessed by comparing the results of the independent analysts. In the initial phase of this process, the analysts compare the structure they have reached and negotiate differences and common ground. In the cases where the allocation of a statement cannot be brought to a consensus, a new category is added. Subsequently, agreement is defined according to a specific formula: the analysis is considered reliable if more than 80% of agreement is reached [66:64]:

$$\text{reliability} = \frac{\text{number of agreements}}{\text{total number of agreements} + \text{disagreements}}$$

Validation methods can also give valuable contributions to other fields of conservation, but this is beyond the scope of this thesis. Some comments are presented in Appendix 7.6 (pp. 60).

²¹ Personal communication: Francisco Tropa (June 8th, 2012) – question n.º 66.

We used Francisco Tropa's interview to explore the applicability of this method to the conservation scenario, contrasting it with the former method of analysis. This exercise can be found in Table 3, in Appendix 7.7 - (pp. 61). The main conclusions are presented below:

- ▶ The definition of *dimensions* provides a better structuration of the artist's discourse and, probably will, in terms of conservation practice, allow a more pragmatic and yet flexible way to define its content.
- ▶ The discourse's segmentation in content analysis, however, hampers an overall view, which is especially clear when the subject of analysis is so complex.
- ▶ According to several authors, this analysis is considered as objective as possible [65]. In our opinion, although this categorization is finally validated by an accepted method of agreement rate, it cannot be considered objective*, *stricto sensu*. Perhaps this should be expected and accepted, as subjectivity is inherent to the actual process under evaluation.
- ▶ This method can be criticized for not being (easily) communicable. Its application to several conservation fields may be problematic as current practices are based on narratives.

In fact, the final table of contents analysis does not lend itself immediately to story telling. However, the comfort of telling a story *needs to be subdued to the obligation of being as close as possible to the perspective of the artist*. Content analysis could then be seen as the scientific method to grasp the content of a discourse. Its results can then be used as a basis to build a truthful and valid story.

Even the most perfect interview will however be limited. Similarly, interview analysis can only be as good as the interview itself. Especially in complex artworks, documentation can be highly enriched if the conservator accompanies the artist during the process of installation. This process can be considered similar to performance-ethnography in ethnographic research. Cristina Oliveira, in her dissertation about Alberto Carneiro and his work *Árvore jogo/lúdico em sete imagens espelhadas*, considered this process as essential. When she participated in the reinstallation with the artist, she realized that several technical aspects had been left unclear by the interview [68].

4.2 NARRATING EXPERIENCES

In order to obtain an overall view with better communication features than content analysis, narration methods can be applied *in combination*. Again, some technical aspects deserve consideration.

One of the most interesting ethnographical works from Museu Nacional de Etnologia is the one about the Wauja Indians. It offers an excellent example of an ethnographic narrative: the ethnographer Aristóteles Neto starts by describing the ethnographic fieldwork in the first person and then goes on to present his findings, whilst keeping his personal experience at the foreground [69]. His writings, more than providing knowledge, deliver experiences, leaving to the observer the freedom of interpretation. Such an approach seems, at first sight, extremely adequate to the final objectives of contemporary art

conservation. Is it so? And how could this be done?

4.2.1 Experiencing the artwork

If one accepts that researchers/conservators should assume their subjective role as spectators-operators, the advantages of using a phenomenological-ideographic* approach to writing become clear. This is endorsed by Eleonora Fabião, art theorist and performer, when stating that narrative “makes (...) intellectual absorption become also corporeal imagination. Through condensed narratives, one experiences a version of the performer’s experience” [27: 102].

This method employs a variety of textual devices and applies reflexivity by exploring and stimulating the conservator’s self-consciousness [58,59]. The conservator’s voice dominates the text, assuming his/her role as author, conveying his/her experience without falling into a narcissistic account, or in the trap of communicating his/her perspective as the truth.

Narrations could be seen as the description of the writer’s interaction with the artwork. They go beyond the technical and material description of the objects, to *describe the intangible dimensions experienced by the writer*. This may be used to stimulate the reader to assume the freedom to undertake similar wonderings, not to tell him/her that this is the single or the appropriate path. As a writer of a narration, the conservator is not totally free, as he/she has the responsibility of respecting the artist’s discourse. After all, he/she is a conveyer of someone else’s *draft story*. The content analysis might prove a very useful source of valid and creative hints.

Sarah Butler, a curatorial assistant at the Cooper-Hewitt, National Design Museum in New York, and a Cultural Anthropology graduate, explores this technique with *Salle C*, a performance work from Olivia Boudreau (b. 1979, Quebec) [59]. Her description of the performance is extensive, however a single excerpt may serve as an example of this technique:

Before entering *Salle C* of the Leonard and Bina Ellen Art Gallery, I found my path obstructed by a floor-to-ceiling projection of someone’s jean-clad seat. From wall-to-wall, the blue-jeaned bottom appeared alternately as a still and a slightly moving image; I noted the sitter’s goose bumps, but wasn’t sure if I was free to go behind the screen or not. There I found the source of the image: a woman, approximately my age, in the centre of the room between a camera and a reverse image of her lower torso. Her posture adjusted as I entered the room. (...) She appeared to me at first as Rodin’s *Thinker*. [59:1]

4.2.2 Communicating artist’s interviews

It is conceivable that the communication of artist’s interviews between conservators and other stakeholders is appropriately served by the original recording, the full transcript and the content analysis. In some circumstances, the conservator may find the need to narrate the interview. The type of textual description quoted above is not applicable to the narration of an interview. For this purpose a holistic narration is suggested, as opposed to a first person discourse.

The holistic narration is designed to promote engagement and empathy between the subject who tells and the subjects who reads, while allowing a grasp of the artist’s idiosyncratic perceptions and a *hearing* of his voice, meanings and feelings. This needs creative freedom, but this is only permissible

around the roots that bind the narration to the actual statements of the artist: these are to be collected from the content analysis. Holistic narration is considered a flexible method, which guarantees methodologically sound descriptions both for artist's interviews and for any other documentation procedure that share characteristics with the ethnographic fieldwork.

4.2.3 Describing events

In situations other than interviews, where there is a need for describing an event in chronological order, the employment of *Vignettes* is strongly advised by Miles and Huberman, researchers in qualitative analysis [66]. This is a method that presents the writing with a “vivid portrayal of the conduct of an event (...), in which the sights and the sounds of what was being said and done are described in the natural sequence of their occurrence in real time” [66:81].

It is possible to believe that a wise combination of some of these methods holds substantial promise of valuable inputs to documentation work in conservation. It would allow data validation through the employment of content analysis, while still communicating to broader audiences with the contribution of narration methods. This dichotomy may become a dialectic unit when considering the need for documenting the artwork's biography and its several authenticities and perspectives.

4.3 PRESERVING PERFORMANCES?

Narrations are an extremely important part of the conservator's work and the responsibility attached to this activity cannot be overrated. Saying something is equal to doing something [70]. However, there is much more to conservation communication than writing. Both Eleonora Fabião and Vivian van Saaze, reflect about practices, ways of doing and performing that are not necessarily associated to or transmissible by verbal language. Performances are the best example of such an instance.

Suchan Kinoshita (b. 1960, Tokyo) is a Japanese artist who frequently uses performative features in her works. She requires a particular documentation method for preservation of her work: delegation. She trained “godmothers”, which take care and make decisions about the work and its trajectory [10]. For this artist, and thus for museums which present any of her works, future authenticity will rely on these godmothers' sanction.

Tino Sehgal (b. 1976, London) has another radical perspective: he declared to an interviewer from project *Installation art: who cares?* that he did not want his works to be documented in any form. He manifested concern that the documentation of his works would eventually replace the performances approached. As so, his works exist only while they are being performed and they cannot be seen or enjoyed at any other time or by any other means [71].

Performances pose especially difficult challenges to conservation as the action cannot be stored, nor can the artist's intention be described in absolute precision [72]. By definition the concept of performance excludes reproductions and welcomes change and variability. In the words of Fabião, “performance art is against repetition in a broad subjective sense: it is against automatic modes of

behaviour, it works against habit” [27:95]. However, this is not to say that reinstallations are tautly open to improvisation: there are limits for acceptable variation. How can they be defined and preserved?

As described by Norman K. Denzin, performance-ethnography and ethnodrama are methods that are usually applied to ethnographic rituals and in which the researcher goes beyond his/her typical role of participant-observer to become a full participant. *Performance-ethnography* implies the direct involvement of the researcher in the performance itself “as means of access to embodied knowledge (...), which can also lead to performative outcomes” [61:75]. Ethnomusicologists, on the other hand, call this method “musical participant-observation”, as the learning to perform is, itself, the research technique [60]. *Ethnodrama* is another technique of ethnography, in which the outcome of the research is not an ethnographic text but rather an enactment [58,61,72].

Could these techniques be applied to the preservation of *performance art*?

Certainly, the conservator could be invited to actually execute the performance under the guidance of the artist, to “recreate it in and as language” [27:48]. He/she would have, then, the opportunity to collect the artist’s views and understand the limits of freedom he/she intended to give the performer. The conservator would also understand how artist’s instructions are perceived by the performer, and improve its communication to performers in future re-enactments. A phenomenological-ideographic approach, as described above, might seem appropriate to this end. Interviews might be held with various performers trained by the artist in order to collect their individual testimonies and interpretations.

Some artists, like Tino Sehgal, refuse any performances’ documentation. In such cases, artist’s wish should be clarified and respected: does he wish that no performances are enacted without his guidance? Does he want to establish any degrees of freedom? Does he want to leave it to the inspiration of the conservator or the performer? Does he wish to rely solely on oral history? Would he endorse an ethnodrama-like strategy? The adequate methods to achieve these objectives are so variable that they will need to be decided case by case with the artist.

Previous chapters have shown that preservation of complex, mutable, ever-changing artworks, impose challenges that can only be met by historiographical presentations. Such presentations can be achieved in a variety of languages – languages of *telling*, languages of *doing*... In this particular chapter we tried to demonstrate how these languages can be conveyed by different structured methods: it discusses the “*how*” to the “*what*”. A summary of these methods, their advantages and downsides, as well as some suggestions for their employment, may be found in Appendix 7.8, pp. 65.

5 CONCLUSIONS

Contemporary art is, by excellence, the realm of subjective interpretations. The material artwork is essentially a trigger for the viewer's intellectual exercise. The diversity of interpretations is at the core of the artworks' value and becomes, by itself, one of the most important assets to preserve. This concept, which is close to the idea of *cultural object* from ethnography, imposes several guiding principles to conservation, which need to be served by appropriate and reliable techniques. This research led to some interesting and relevant findings:

1. The conservator, as other stakeholders, need to be aware of their own subjectivity, their relative position towards a given object, their inevitable intervention into the artwork's trajectory, and adopt strategies to control them and make them visible. This is meant to avoid the risk of cutting the diversity of interpretations short by communicating his/her own and also, to make the audience aware that his/her perspective is not devoid of subjectivity.
2. Reflexivity, an essential tool to the conservator, as to any social researcher, can be strongly reinforced by understanding the psychological mechanisms behind cognition.
3. Observations from the ethnographic field can be very useful in helping the conservator to select his/her strategies, the concepts of participant-observation, cultural objects, historiographical presentations, ethnodrama and performance ethnography may provide especially fruitful contributions to complex artworks preservation.

4. Further to reflexivity, conservators' work should be based on the artist's perspective. Artist's interview is essential to this purpose, but its validity needs to be reinforced by appropriate questioning and registration methods and supported by structured and validation techniques. The methods of content analysis seem especially appropriate, if not indispensable to this purpose, although adaptations will be needed in specific cases.
5. There still is a critical void in conservation education concerning processes of interviewing and further data analysis. Perhaps, it should be of value to reform current educational courses in order to introduce those skills.

Those outcomes, however, present more questions than absolute answers. What is the role of the conservator? Is he/she an interpreter, a performer, an executor, a reporter, an archivist, an *actant*? Which are the degrees of freedom? Should we fully embrace subjectivity and revoke some of the prominence of the artist's sanction?

Ultimately, the conservator's role needs to be re-examined. Similarly, although the conservator's actions are reasonably expected to impact on the artworks' trajectory, and the audiences' perceptions, more research is needed to clarify the extent and relevance of this impact and explore means of controlling and/or documenting it. Factors affecting the relationship between the social individual and the artwork, including conservation decisions, need to be understood and documented, as they will be pivotal to design the decision-making process.

During this dissertation, a theory involving the social individual and social artworks emerged – *theory of aesthetical anastomoses* (more details in Appendix 7.9, pp. 66). In this model, individuals are called to report their own unique experience. From this basis, it is possible to create nucleuses of meaning and process an entire network made out of communicative bridges, which follow the growth and change of any given artwork. At first, a simple structure shared only by the artist and the few people that surround him is built. From the first exhibition on, the network begins to grow and becomes denser and more complex as more perspectives are included. There is, however, a practical problem - how to interpret publics' reports and how to overcome the subtleties and subjectivities language entails?

No perfect solution was found. However, an alternative came into discussion: the ARTHIVE project. The ARTHIVE project uses that information to extend connectivity to and between artists, public and researchers while creating a complete and reliable reference database of art with articulated tools, specific for each of the entities' needs. With this tool, it would be possible to reach a 3.0 version of Muñoz Viñas *communicative turn* [2]: every *actant*, from visitors to assistants, from conservators to directors or artists, would be both a transmitter and a receiver of information.

Obviously, the ARTHIVE database (check for more details in Appendix 7.10, pp. 67), available for every museum involved, would be extremely relevant for the decision-making in conservation. Current decision-making models are not yet adapted to the most recent conservation theories, as they do not acknowledge casuistic or “jurisprudence” as 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. Shouldn't this question be addressed in further studies? The need for methods that address these three factors was extensively requested by relevant conservation stakeholders²². 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" [4:168]. Institutional stakeholders need to embrace the responsibility of dealing with such complex artworks. They need to embrace transience and the subjectivity accompanying every conservation act. They need to accept the absence of a stable ground, to let the "long accepted certainties fall apart" [4:36].

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 in themselves, need to emerge in order to, subsequently, be questioned again. It is only through this demanding process that contemporary art conservation can continue to be propelled forward.

²² About this problematic and a proposal for a new decision-making model, please consult Appendix 7.11, pp. 68.

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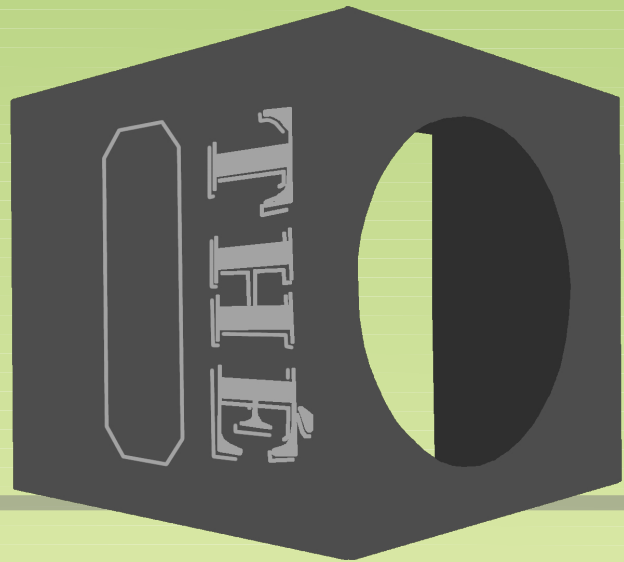
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APPENDIX

7.1 GLOSSARY

Artist's sanction	This term was firstly use in conservation of contemporary art by S. Irvin. In her article <i>The Artist's Sanction in Contemporary Art</i> she states that "contemporary artists fix the features of their works not only through their actions of making and presenting objects, but also through auxiliary activities such as corresponding with curators and institutions." To that fixing of features she calls "the artist's sanction" [73].
Cognition	The mental action or process of acquiring knowledge and understanding through thought, experience, and senses [74].
Culture (in anthropology)	The anthropological sense of culture "is [considered] plural and relativistic. The world is divided into different cultures, each worthwhile in its way. Any particular person is a product of the particular culture in which he or she has lived, and differences between human beings are to be explained (but not judged) by differences in their culture" [28].
Dialectic unit	"The ancient Greeks used the term dialectic to refer to various methods of reasoning and discussion in order to discover the truth. More recently, Kant applied the term to the criticism of the contradictions that arise from supposing knowledge of objects beyond the limits of experience, e.g., the soul. Hegel applied the term to the process of thought by which apparent contradictions (which he termed thesis and antithesis) are seen to be part of a higher truth (synthesis)"[74]. According with this definition, a dialectic unit represents a set of abstract concepts that are often opposed but interdependent.
Emulation	"To emulate a work is to devise a way of imitating the original look of the piece by completely different means. Possible disadvantages of emulation include prohibitive expensive and inconsistency with the artist's intent. For example, Flavin deliberately chose to use ordinary off-the-shelf components rather than esoteric materials or techniques" [8].
Epistemology	"The theory of knowledge, esp. with regard to its methods, validity, and scope. Epistemology is the investigation of what distinguishes justified belief from opinion" [74].
Ground theory (method)	Grounded theory method is a research method. The first step is data collection, through a variety of methods. From the data collected, the key points are marked with a series of <i>codes</i> , which are extracted from the text. "Codes are grouped into similar <i>concepts</i> in order to make them more workable. From these concepts, <i>categories</i> are formed, which are the basis for the creation of a <i>theory</i> . This contradicts the traditional model of research, where the researcher chooses a theoretical framework, and only then applies this model to the phenomenon to be studied" [75].
Hermeneutics	"The practice of interpretation. In anthropology, it refers to the theoretical position which sees ethnographic practice as one of interpreting, or 'reading', cultures as if they were texts" [28].
Installations (artistic form)	There is no exact definition of installation art. Many describe it as a genre, others as an art form or type. Claire Bishop defines as an ambiguous developing art form upon which she refers as a "genre" in contemporary art and not a "medium" because the word medium from her perspective would not make any sense. Because of the different types of viewing experience, she infers that a different approach to the history of installation art be necessary; one that does not focus on theme or materials but on the viewers experience [54].
Migration	"To migrate an work involves upgrading equipment and source material. The major disadvantage of migration is the original appearance of the work will probably change in its new medium. Even if state-of-the-art fixtures cast similar light to Flavin's originals, the actual fixtures are likely to look different" [8].
Objectivity	"Not dependent on the mind for existence; actual" [74].
Oral history (method)	Oral history "is used by anthropologists and others to refer to unwritten forms which can be regarded as in some way possessing literary qualities. It thus broadly covers such oral forms as myths, narratives, epics, lyrics, praise poetry, laments, and the verbal texts of songs; also sometimes riddles, proverbs and perhaps oratory and drama. The study of such forms is an area in which both literary or linguistic scholars and folklorists have for long interacted with anthropologists" [28]. Sometimes it may also be associated with non-verbal languages, such as dance or music.
Alterity	Also <i>Otherness</i> . "Variously used in recent anthropology to describe and comment on the construction and experience of cultural difference" [28].
Performance art (e.g. performance)	Performance art "has been considered as a way of bringing to life the many formal and conceptual ideas on which the making of art is based" and at the same time, "has become a catch-all for live presentations of all kinds" [76]
Phenomenological-ideographic approach (method)	Also <i>Interpretative phenomenological analysis</i> . Method with an idiographic focus, which means that it aims to offer insights into how a given person, in a given context, makes sense of a given phenomenon. Usually these phenomena relate to experiences of some personal significance - such as a major life event, or the development of an important relationship. It has its theoretical origins in phenomenology and hermeneutics [57].
Phenomenology	"Science of phenomena as distinct from that of the nature of being: an approach that concentrates on the study of consciousness and the objects of direct experience" [74].
Reinterpretation	"The most radical preservation strategy is to reinterpret the work each time it is re-created. Reinterpretation is a dangerous technique when not warranted by the artist, but it may be the only way to re-create performance, installation, or networked art designed to vary with context" [8].
Storage	"The most conservative collecting strategy-the default strategy for most museums-is to store a work physically, whether that means mothballing dedicated equipment or archiving digital files on disk. The major disadvantage of storing obsolescent materials is that the work will expire once these ephemeral materials cease to function"[8].
Subjectivity	"Based on or influenced by personal feelings, tastes, or opinions: dependent on the mind or on an individual's perception for its existence" [74].

7.2 THE PATH TOWARDS A CONTEMPORARY CONSERVATION THEORY – A LITERATURE REVIEW

Conservation theory has travelled a turbulent path throughout the years. Since the first theories, there have been several questions growing with the rhizome that characterises contemporary art practice. In this chapter, the evolution and differences from classical to contemporary theories will be discussed, as well as its relation with the need for new strategies for contemporary art conservation, and the many innovations regarding that subject, which include already adopted strategies and a review of some basic definitions, now settled under impingement.

Classical theories suggested an overlapping between originality and authenticity concepts, being the physical, aesthetic and historical integrity of a given object, conservation's primary scope. Thus, physical integrity implied the material preservation of the artwork, aesthetic integrity explored the aesthetic experience's conservation, and the historical maintenance involved patina's persistence, the Brandi's *tempo storico* [2,77]. Those notions have been developed through *Teoria del Restauro*'s first input, with its approach being based on an object's identity intrinsically related to its materiality. In fact, according to Brandi (1963), considering that an artwork is an expression, given by the artist, of a combination of different materials chosen by him, the final object maintains its authenticity with the permanence of those materials (“[the] object’s *true nature*” [77: 90]).

According to that vision, Salvador Muñoz Viñas (2005) suggests that scientific conservation, thus designated by him, allows a higher objectivity, since decisions are based on a scientific background – the search for the material's true nature does not count on its emotional or aesthetic response, once they are not scientifically verifiable [2]. It is relevant to note, however, that all data requires interpretation, therefore, a full objectivity is clearly absent.

This theory, although considered adequate for material's conservation, becomes scarce with the growing complexity of contemporary artworks, which provides new roles to materials, sometimes even cancelling its importance.

With this perspective in mind, there are several definitions and values that reside in a grey area. One of the main concepts in conservation lies in the definitions of *authenticity*²³ and *originality*²⁴. Currently it is possible to assume that *authenticity* is an unambiguous term with unfixed criteria. Actually, it may be related to material, aesthetics, context or other values. *Originality*, on the other hand, can be related to the point the artwork came into its existence [4]. In fact, this duality is widely explored in relevant literature. Usually, authors only agree that they are, in fact, very different (and frequently overlaid) concepts²⁵. The distance between them continues to increase, as *reality* (as

23 *Authenticity*, from «truth» and «genuine», e.g., that expresses the truth, the idea or proposition that is according to the *real*. Phenomenology says that *real* related to the subject, therefore, all the experience of the real is subjective. In this perspective, authenticity is also subjective. In: The Free Dictionary by Farlex (2012) – Authenticity. Url: <http://www.thefreedictionary.com/authenticity>. Visited on March 15th, 2012.

24 From «origin», The point at which something comes into existence or from which it derives or is derived. In: The Free Dictionary by Farlex (2012) – Origin. Url: <http://www.thefreedictionary.com/origin>. Visited on March 15th, 2012.

25 For a review about *authenticities*, consult HERMENS, E. & FISKE, T. *Art, Conservation and Authenticities: Material, Concept, Context*, London: Archetype Publications Ltd, 2009.

definition of *authenticity*) may no longer be inherent to the artwork's materiality. Assuming subjectivity as an essential variable in any interpretation-based activity, inevitably, *authenticity* becomes a subjective concept, as its meaning becomes dependent of one's perception of the real [2,4]. This alteration turned out to be even more rhizomatic, since different emotional, cognitive and social responses to an object are not only expected, but are often enclosed into the artistic intention [2,17].

Basic principles of classical theories can't be applied on those cases. Reversibility and minimum intervention lose their suitability (it may even be questionable if they ever had it). In the first case, with materials interactions it becomes almost impossible to reverse any treatment. Every treatment inevitably causes an alteration to the material's integrity²⁶. Regarding the second term, Muñoz Viñas explains that *minimum intervention* is a relative concept and, therefore, a subjective one as well [78]. With those changes, new concepts were introduced, such as retreatability (every applied treatment has to allow new treatments in the future) and *balanced meaning loss* [78:50] (instead of *minimum intervention*, this concept replies a notion of economics science, which determines that the best decision is the one which guarantees the least loss at the biggest gain).

Since the 60s, with the acknowledgement of the limits of scientific conservation, bridges have been built between hard and soft sciences, contemplating a future of an interdisciplinary approach, which is now considered the answer to contemporary art conservation. Indeed, subjectivity's acceptance is increasing after Salvador Muñoz Viñas introduced *the communication turn*, in his *Contemporary Theory of Conservation*. He suggests a shift from the traditional theory of conservation, based on the material properties of an object, to a contemporary theory of conservation that acknowledges and incorporates perspectives [2]. In fact, in recent years several research groups focused on this problematic: Modern Art: Who Cares? (1999), Inside Installations: Preservation and Presentation of Installation Art (2004-2007), PRACTICs (2009-2011), The Variable Media Network (2001-present), International Network for the Conservation of Contemporary Art (INCCA), among others. The importance of a flexible and systematic documentation, produced by conservators in straight cooperation with artists, assistants and even visitors, has been brought to light by these new theories and working groups.

With this perspective in mind, Renée van de Vall, emphasised one of the biggest difficulties. She observed the inevitability of *tragic choices*: preserving a given value will certainly jeopardise the preservation of others. With values being highly subjective in importance and perception, decision-making complexity arises to the point that ethics becomes an extremely personal characteristic. This author suggests that, instead of a Platonic perspective, which presents general, universal and unshakable principles, we should adopt an Aristotelian perspective, based on jurisprudence, and find intelligibility established on a casuistic approach [79].

26 This concept of 'alteration' related to the intervention itself was explored by M. C. Casanova in CASANOVA, M. C. 2012. *De artifice a cientista. Evolução da conservação e restauro e da função e estatuto profissional do conservador restaurador de documentos gráficos no Instituto de Investigação Científica Tropical (1931-2006)*, her non-published PhD dissertation.

Vivian van Saaze clarified that *installation art* stretches the limits of the «long-accepted certainties» in conservation theory. Contemporary art conservators need to let such certainties fall apart, giving birth to a creative way of preserving that kind of artworks. Structuring the basis of this complex conservation demands the re-examination of several common procedures. One of the highlights of this re-examination is the urge to accommodate the transient and ephemeral nature of installations, understanding and accepting that such artworks do not exist in a single state, but rather undertake a trajectory. That trajectory is not a straight line, but a route full of variations and options [4,16].

In fact, a work does not necessarily stop changing when it enters a museum collection. When installations are in storage, they remain fragmented, only turning into artworks when re-installed or displayed. This means that their preservation depends on re-installation, performed by the conservator according to a set of instructions given by the artist [16]. Therefore, preservation of installations “may allow for the idea that each rendition or *performance* of a piece may be different” [13:215]. In this perspective, it is the conservators' role to embrace the transitory, and make the conservation action a dynamic one, shaping himself to the particularities that the artwork offers and demands. Thus, the conservator is defined by van Saaze (2009) as an *actant*: a word meant to reflect the conservator as someone that may change an artworks' trajectory, even if within limits.

This new conservation perspective enhances the conservator's action – his/her actions have authorship and obviously, consequences. Every action has a subjective and inherently interpretative touch. For that reason, the conservator's role needs to be revisited, as he/she needs be aware of his/her cognitive and philosophical limitations. In the main document, those limitations were explored. Some further explanations regarding cognition are presented in the next chapter.

7.3 VISUAL COGNITION AND ATTENTIONAL TENDENCIES (SOLSO, 1996)

Visual cognition

“To better understand human visual cognition, we need to consider three stages of the problem:

“- First, visual cognition (seeing and understanding") involves the basic analysis of shapers, forms, colours, contours, contrasts and movements. These primitives are sensed by the peripheral nervous system located in the eye. Electromagnetic signals and passed along the visual cortex for further processing. It is during this latter stage that visual recognition and high-order processing takes place.

“- Second, primitive information is organized into fundamental forms. These fundamental forms are the basis for higher order processing (such as the interpretation of what a form means) and are perceived mostly without prior learning or experience..

“- Third, fundamental forms are given meaning through association with previous knowledge of the world stored in long-term memory (LTM). This final stage of the information-processing model is sometimes called higher-order cognition, not because it is more elegant but because it occurs as the consequence of previous, *lower* stages. Furthermore, the thinking brain directs our attention to specific parts of a visual scene, giving greater notice to salient features or things that are of personal interest, Finally, the brain adds information to the raw visual impressions, which gives a richness of meaning far beyond the simple stimuli it receives.

“In modern cognitive terms, the first two stages initiate the process of visual cognition and are sometimes called bottom-up processing, in which the stimuli drives the workings of visual awareness. The third stage is called top-down processing because cognitive operations drive visual awareness, although at both stages elements of top-down and bottom-up processing are operating.” [23:76-78]

Attentional tendencies

“In specialized fields that depend on visual skills (radiology and art, for example), experts are more efficient in their eye movements than nonexperts. There is evidence for this in the medical literature and, to some extent, in the art literature. The pattern of eye movements produced by expert radiologists as they make a diagnosis from an X ray is far more parsimonious than that of novices. This fact is important to professors of medicine, as identifying eye movements and fixations of skilled physicians (which ultimately reflect underlying cognitive activities) may prove to be beneficial in the training of new physicians. Interestingly, many of the same cognitive/perceptual ingredients seem to be brought into play when a radiologist searches for a lung tumor as when an art critic looks at a painting, which suggests that underlying these search procedures is a cognitive schema, in the form of a cancer prototype for example, based on specialized experience that directs eye movements and fixations.

“Studies of the behaviour of experts in the field of art (art critics, students of art and artists) is based on the postulate that art can be understood by observing those trained to view it. In other

endeavours, such as medical diagnosis of X ray by expert radiologists, memory of chess pieces by grand masters, and map reading by skilled cartographers, technical knowledge significantly enhances what is seen and how the material is remembered. It is reasonable to suppose that the perception of art follows the same underlying psychological laws, and that eye-tracking experiments are a likely way to reveal some of these laws. What sets the viewing (and evaluation) of art apart from medical diagnosis, chess problems and map reading is that in those fields objectively determined standards may be ascertained - the evaluation of an X ray by a physician may be validated by other diagnostic methods, and by the course of events. In art, standards and values are largely subjective.” [23:143]

Art training and the perception of art

“Does formal training in art education change the nature of the visual exploration of art? In a recent paper on this topic, Nodine, Locher, and Krupinski (1993) examined the eye fixations of art-trained and untrained viewers as they looked at pairs of paintings that differed in terms of their composition, balance and symmetry.

“Artists have always had some sense of balance and symmetry in their work, and this seemingly natural proclivity has been formalized in art education courses. The deep psychological reason for the predisposition engages theories of the universal attributes of the mind as it interacts with the physical world. At every opportunity we humans form taxonomies; we like to believe that the universe is organized in some systemic pattern and that we scientists are intrepid explorers searching to find its logic. (Perhaps it is, or perhaps it is simply the mind that invents order, which it understands, and rejects chaos, which it does not.) Symmetry is one of the techniques used by artists to achieve a pleasing design. However, visual symmetry involves much more than simple balance. A perfectly balanced painting would be rather boring, as would a perfectly balanced building, face, or even personality. While we understand order, we find minor visual dislocations interesting and invest greater effort to investigating them. (Perhaps we choose to add our own organization to seemingly maverick pictures and people.)

“The stable, harmonious whole of *Pragnanz* is also an important part of Gestalt psychology. Some idealistic art scholars maintain that idealized forms exist in a type of abstract utopia and that terrestrial forms are only counterfeit representations, each of which, more or less accurately, mimics the ideal. One measure of the merit of art is its approximation to the ideal. Others, more socially or behaviourally oriented, insist that art appreciation is learned and based on social and environmental factors. While the debate cannot be resolved here (and the ideas are not quite mutually exclusive), it is generally agreed that art education teaches principles of balance, proportion, and symmetry as powerful forces in pictorial composition, and that artists for centuries (especially Western artists) have faithfully applied these principles in their work.

“It is possible to alter balanced pictures to make them unbalanced and observe the eye movements of trained and untrained viewers. Since exploratory eye movement (diversive exploration) is

motivated by curiosity, we might expect sophisticated subjects to exhibit more diversive exploration when viewing an unusual work - one in which the canons of proportion and symmetry have been defiled.

“The results obtained by Nodine et al. did show a difference between the eye movements of art-trained people and those of untrained viewers in these conditions, Trained viewers spent relatively more time in diversive exploration than in specific exploration when viewing the altered pictures, while untrained viewers performed just the opposite. Additionally, it was found that those subjects who had had extensive art training tended to concentrate on finding thematic patterns among compositional elements, while the untrained subjects tended to concentrate on representational and semantic use of pictures elements. Nodine et al. concluded that “‘*untrained*’ viewers failed to recognize the perceptual organizing functions of symmetry, focusing attentions instead on the representational issue of how accurately individual elements conveyed *objective* reality.... Art training seems to teach viewers to appreciate paintings not because, in Levi-Strauss's words, 'they are good to see,' but because they are 'good to think.' This suggests that beauty is less in the eye, and more in the mind of the beholder”” This insightful analysis is perfectly attuned to current theories in visual perception (as well as aligning exactly with my views) stressing the *cognitive* basis of art. We *think* art as much as, no, even more than, we *see* art.” [23: 147-148]

Further Reading (Cognition and the arts)

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Visual cognition was not the only theme, which needed some further details and explanations. In the following chapters, Bali's cremation rituals and Francisco Tropa's *Projecto A Assembleia de Euclides* will be explored. A brief survey is complemented with several graphic examples. More examples and detailed images are provided for the previously discussed examples (MNE's coffins and Tropa's *Projecto A Assembleia de Euclides*).

7.4 BALI'S CREMATION RITUALS

In the Balinese culture, God *Siwa* (God Creator, *Bhatāra Guru*, the divine professor) is the origin of all things. When he incarnates as *Surya*, he shows himself as the Sun. Incarnated as *Gunung Agung*, he becomes the highest mountain, the centre of the world. This God, in all his incarnated forms, receives more offerings than any other God in the Hindu mythology. In the Bahamian ritual (which is a total mystery for the farmer on the rice fields), *Siwa*, taking the shape of *Surya*, is the ultimate God Creator, source of life, centre of all the creative and destructive power of nature. Since the Second World War there has been a monotheist tendency in favour of *Siwa*, the Almighty. He has become a dialectic unit embracing the Holy Spirit, Allah and Brahman (from India). Depending on the situation and function, *Siwa* may adopt different names and postures: *Sang Hyang Widhi* (Main God of Order or The God of the World), *Sang Hyang Tunggal* (The Only God), *Cintya* (The One Who Cannot Be Imagined or Conceived). Names vary between *Tuhan*, *God*, *Tuhan Yang Maha Esa* and The Unique and Powerful God, in Indonesian language [50, 80].

Faith in *Sang Yang Widhi* was usually confined to religious circles, where he appeared as the Being/Self of the Universe. Due to his feelings of loneliness, he created other Gods with whom he wished to share his knowledge of creation [50, 80]. Fearful of incompetence, four of his sons refused to create the World and, as consequence, *Sang Yang Widhi* expelled them for the four cardinal points and transformed them into beasts. *Siwa*, on the other hand, by having absorbed the magic and the knowledge from her father, managed to create the World.

Sang Yang Widhi is considered an abstract and intangible entity. Therefore, no offerings or rituals are held in his honour. To the inhabitants of Bali Island, the real God Creator is *Siwa*, as *Surya* and *Gunung Agung*. He is the centre of the universe. To *Sang Yang Widhi*, however, although rituals are not important, the purity of thoughts and attitudes are [81]. Amongst the rituals that evoke *Sang Yang Widhi* through *Siwa*, we find in the *Indian Trimurti*, the *Brahmā* (*Widhi* as a Creator), *Wisnu* (*Widhi* as a Preserver) and *Siwa* (*Widhi* That Destroys All And Takes Everything Back To The Beginning) [50].

Dichotomies

When studying and/or visiting the Balinese culture, some cultural adaptations have to be made:

The visitor has to orient himself spatially, temporally and socially to an unfamiliarly great extent in order to do the right thing at the right time in the right place and avoid doing what is wrong. When greeted with “*Jaga lunga kija?*” “Where are you off to?”, he should reply “*Tityang gelodang*” “I’m going towards the sea”, or “*Tityang ngauhang*” “I’m going to the west”, which presupposes that he always knows where the sea and the west are. [50:93]

In the Balinese culture there are permanent dichotomies: Good – Evil, East – West, etc. [80]. These oscillations provide a constant contact between populations and nature. These populations see this dualism in all their dimensions: birth, ageing and death, all cycles of the natural world; the Sun (male) which fertilizes the Land (female); high mountains, with their dense rivers, produce a rich and

fertile soil, contrasting with coast where no fertile soil is found; at sea, a process of birth and death takes place [50].

It is therefore considered that the Balinese culture has its foundation in a two-category characterization process: Uranian (intangible, divine) and Chthonian (tangible, profane). Between the chaotic emptiness and an orderly world, several reference points were created to guide human behaviour [50,80,81].

In Bali, the Uranian epicentre is the volcano, where soils are fertile and the will of God is prominent. The highest volcano, *Gunung Agung*, is simultaneously a reference point of the Bali's life but also of Good, as it is *Siwa* as *Surya*'s place. The highest volcano is also the residence of other divine predecessors, who actually own the Land lending it temporarily to humans. Uranian spheres thus contain the concepts of Sun, mountain, *Gunung Agung*, predecessors and fertility. The influences that emanate from the mountain (*Kaja* or *Kalér*) are positive, fertile and divine. This emanation suffers a vertical alteration as it gets weaker when approaching the centre of the Earth, and thus stronger when approaching heaven. *Surya*, born in the East (*kangin*) also makes emanation change in a horizontal perspective – positive powers decrease from east to west [50].

The guiding axes, Uranian and Chthonian, define the rituals and the daily life of the Balinese lifestyle: the Uranian axe is formed between *Gunung Agung* and the East side of the island. The chthonian axe is formed from the West side and reaches sea.

This is an iconoclast culture. It is prominently based on natural phenomena from everyday life. For example, the most Eastern temple, or the highest place, are places of choice to establish contact with powers from the Uranian side [50]. Through this perspective we can understand why the head should be positioned East when resting, and also why the cremation area and funerary rituals are found on the West side of the island, facing the sea [80].

The characterization system is essential to understand the rituals of this Indonesian island, although they not linear in their execution: one cannot expect only positive situations from the Uranian sphere or only negative aspects from the Chthonian one. It is actually in these spheres that death and fertility are observed – Land is not only the source of all human creation, as it is also where life-sucking demons dwell. The Sun does not rise only in the Uranian side, as it is sucked to the end of the World every night, to the Chthonian sphere. Dualism is found even inside its own polls, as this complementation is essential to the vital balance [50]. The role humanity in this system is found in the power to enhance favourable situations through good actions and attitudes.

The division of the spiritual states goes three ways: head-chest-feet, hot-warm-cold, birth-life-death, etc. This three-way division system is visible in the temple or crematoriums which, besides having a Uranian part (the top) and a Chthonian one (in contact with Land), promote the contact of Uranian spirits with man through a middle area [50,80].

To the Balinese people, there are five natural elements: earth, fire, water, wind and atmosphere. This fact is essential when studying the passage rituals in this island. *Pañca-Mahā-Bhuta* idea is that

body is a miniature planet: body and cosmos possess the same natural elements. These elements are Chthonian in nature, however humans' microcosms as planets' macrocosms have a Uranian side: the soul [50].

Cremation rituals

Cremation is the most common ritual used to celebrate death. In Bali, cremation is not a mourning ritual, but one of passage. The body belongs to the Chthonian side and soul belongs to Uranian spirits. It often takes place several months after the death, mainly due to monetary reasons [50,80,81].

Cremation occurs on towers built to that purpose. Coffins take many shapes, determined beforehand by the deceased caste or, more commonly, by an aesthetical preference. Cremation rituals are divided in several phases and through several objects:

Corpse Preparation [50]

1. The deceased body is placed in a special surface. If previously buried, the body is exhumed and cleaned. In its absence, a representation substitutes the body.
2. The cremation's location is ostentatiously ornamented, using natural elements, small mirrors, colourful papers and pearl necklaces.
3. Besides the crematorium pavilion (*bale bandung*), two bamboo altars are raised, decorated with *lamak* extensions.
4. In those altars, inhabitants make daily offers.
5. Once clean, small broken mirrors are placed in the eyes of the body, flowers in nostrils, wax in ears, leaves in eyebrows, a golden ring with a ruby in the tongue, a piece of steel in teeth and several flowers and leaves in the stomach and genitals.
6. After several days of purification, the corpse is rolled in white cotton and *pandan* leaves, tightened with a rope made out of palm tree leafs and placed inside the coffin. Subsequently, the coffin is covered with a white cloth.

Ornamentation and offerings [50]

- ▶ Objects are placed near the coffin, symbolizing the cremation and the releasing of the soul of the deceased. One of those objects is the "measure" (*ukur*). Made of Chinese coins, this object has an anthropomorphic shape. This figure has the size of the deceased and serves as a guarantee that, when reincarnating, the body will have the right proportions.
- ▶ At the corpse's head an essential object takes its place: the "memory" (*angenan*). Through a hole in a coconut structure, four threads of different colours and several links hold in an S shape. This shape is executed in wood and in its extremity a small basket containing a small

eggshell is found. This eggshell works as a light bulb. Its function is to keep the deceased soul alive.

- ▶ Next to the body, the “Self” (*pangawak* or *pangaraga*) is placed. It takes shape of a cylindrical vase made of palm tree leaf with a new banana sprout - a symbol of the apotheosis of a new life after reincarnation. On the top of this vase, there is a vegetable motif with several different illustrations, made of paper and palm tree leaf. Finally, a light bulb vase (*damar kurang*), similar to Japanese lanterns, is found underneath the coconut lamp. Every night the lamp is turned on and guides the corpse’s soul.

Cremation ritual [50]

In the cremation day, the Brahman pavilion lights. In this structure, holy water is produced, the corpse is cleaned and several letters are written in order to allow his entering into heaven (*ratnyadana*). These letters are sealed inside palm tree leaf with small butterflies in their extremities. Letters and butterflies, with divine inscriptions (*Ang*, *Ung* and *Mang*), are placed in a small clay vase filled with holy water (*toya pangentas*), together with *Kuca* grass, which spreads the holy water.

After this process, participants walk to the cremation zone - *pamuhunan*. The cremation takes place in six phases:

1. The body is taken to the tower through ostentatiously decorated stairs and later placed in a specific place (*balé spatika*). Stairs have a few meters and are only mandatory in the cremation of wealthy people, who can afford long cremation towers. These towers can sometimes have more than twenty meters, with several overlapping ceilings (*tumpang*). These ceilings represent the divine, the middle earth (where humans live), and the subsoil. In rural populations, sometimes the symbolism of the three worlds is lost in small towers.

The wealth of the deceased family will determine not only how quick the cremation is made, but also the richness of the decorations, the size and shape of the coffin, etc.

In the case of *ksatria* cremations, the procession usually has a serpent (*nāgabanda*). In Brahman’s cremations, the divine covers *nāgabanda*’s head with flowers, killing it symbolically, turning it into transportation for the deceased, and helping him to reach heaven.

2. All the procession is filled with screams, music and applauses. To those who carry the tower, wine is provided without limitations. Men are soon covered in sweat, alcohol and euphoria. After reaching destination, the heavy tower turns three times in the Chthonian direction (counter clockwise - *maprasawya*). Subsequently, the tower travels the main streets in zigzag, in order to confuse the soul, so that it won’t find its way back. Finally, the tower is turned three times again. This process is repeated until the cremation coffin is reached.
3. The body is transported from the tower, through the stairs, and placed inside the coffin. Women then gather the cloth (which was covering the body (*rurub*) and hold it over their heads.

4. Only covered with a white cotton cloth, the body receives holy water, immediately before the wood places beneath it is set on a purifying fire:

What has been built and artistically fitted out at great cost for weeks now goes up in flames in seconds. [50:143]

5. Once the cremation begins, most of the people disperse. When the body is fully burnt, white ashes (from the body) are separated from the black ones (from the coffin). They are gathered in a white cloth decorated with flowers and coins. Ashes are then introduced in a coconut shell painted white and heavily decorated (*jempana*). They are thrown into the sea and the cremation ritual reaches its end. At this moment, the body is separated from the soul. Cremation separates soul from body, however it does not remove its profanity. This second purification (*ngerorasin*) is therefore advised. The last and most expensive purification ceremony, in which the ancestors become gods, is rarely held, decades after the cremation.
6. In all the purification rituals, after cremation, sphinxes representing the deceased are also purified, using water and fire. They may consist of flower arrangements or anthropomorphic figures. Ashes of the sphinxes are brought to coast, where they are distributed in a bamboo tower decorated only with a white paper sheet and golden embellishments. In this ritual, screams of happiness are absent as mourning takes their place. Even the harsh drum sounds are replaced by pure melodies, played by *angklung*. The ritual finally ends when ashes are thrown into the sea.

After all rituals are finished, the soul of the deceased ascends to heaven and, completing its life cycle, returns into the blood circle of its descendants, reincarnated.

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Figure Caption (from top to bottom, from left to right)

Figure 7.1: Different looks of MNE's ordered cremation Black Bull. Unknown craftsmen. Inventory number: n.d.

Figure 7.2: Several and subsequent stages of the manufacture of these coffins. First a wooden structure is made and then it is covered with paper plaster and sheets. The most talented craftsmens then proceed for the adornment of these coffins. Courtesy from Dr. F. Brinkgreve, Conservator Insulair Zuidoost-Azië, Volkenkunst, Leiden.

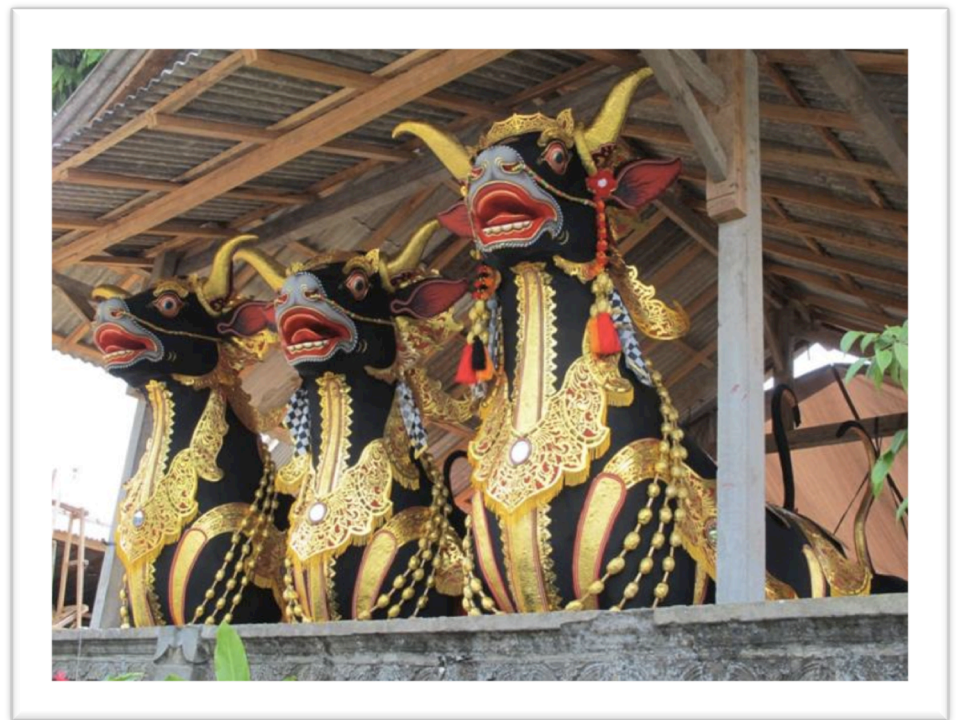
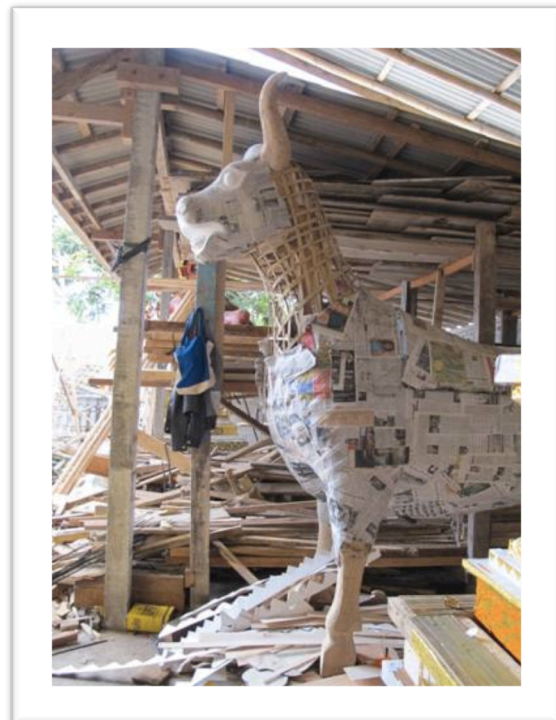
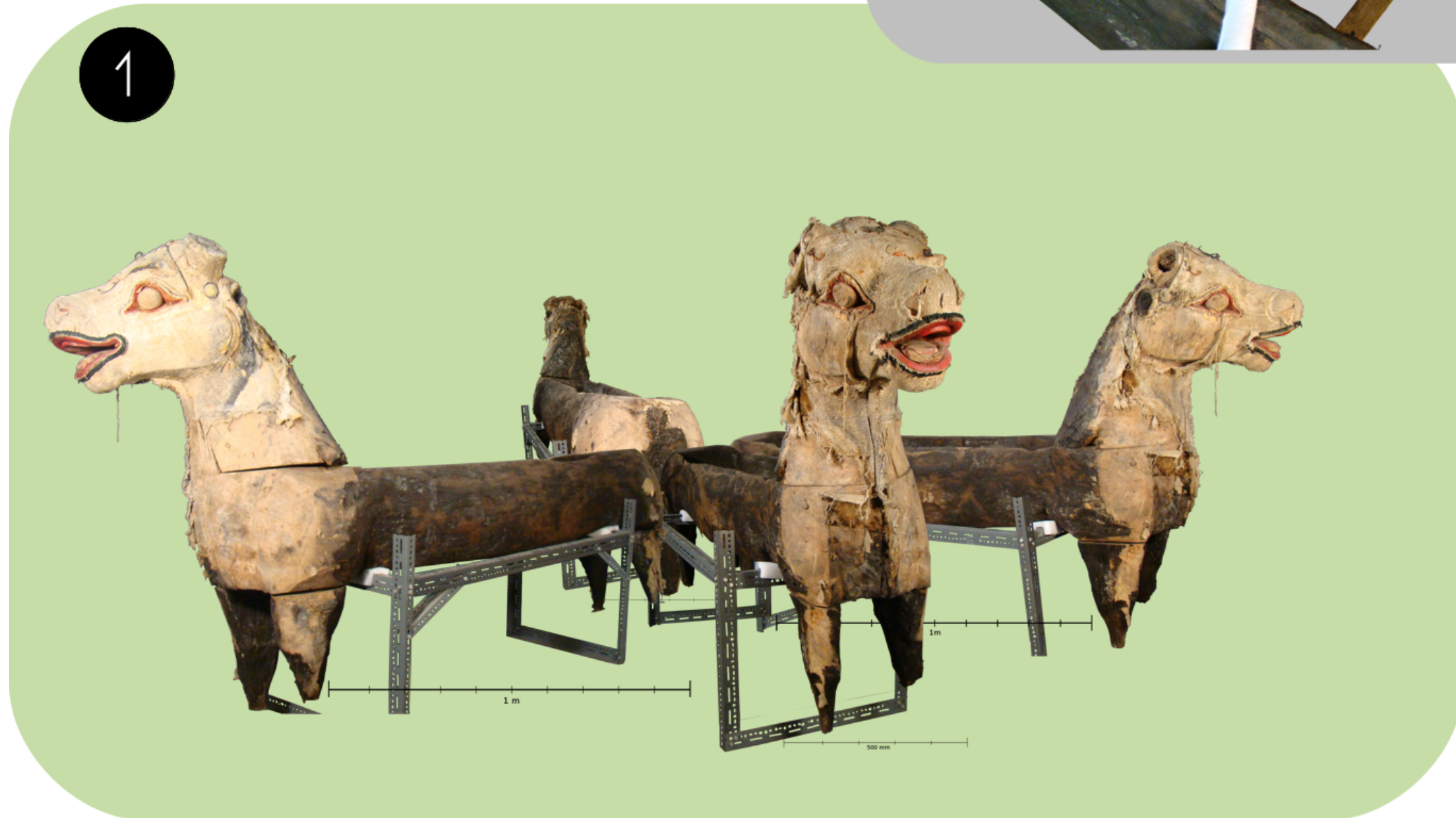




Figure 7.3: (1) Different looks of MNE's cremation White cow. Royal coffin of Ida Peranda Istri Alet (Bali, Kasiman). Constructed by Ida Bagus Anon Sdiam (Kasiman) [I.N.: AV-051 (1974, 531)]. (2) Detail, which demonstrates that the corpse could not have fallen to the cremation tower. Thus, the ritual was incomplete.



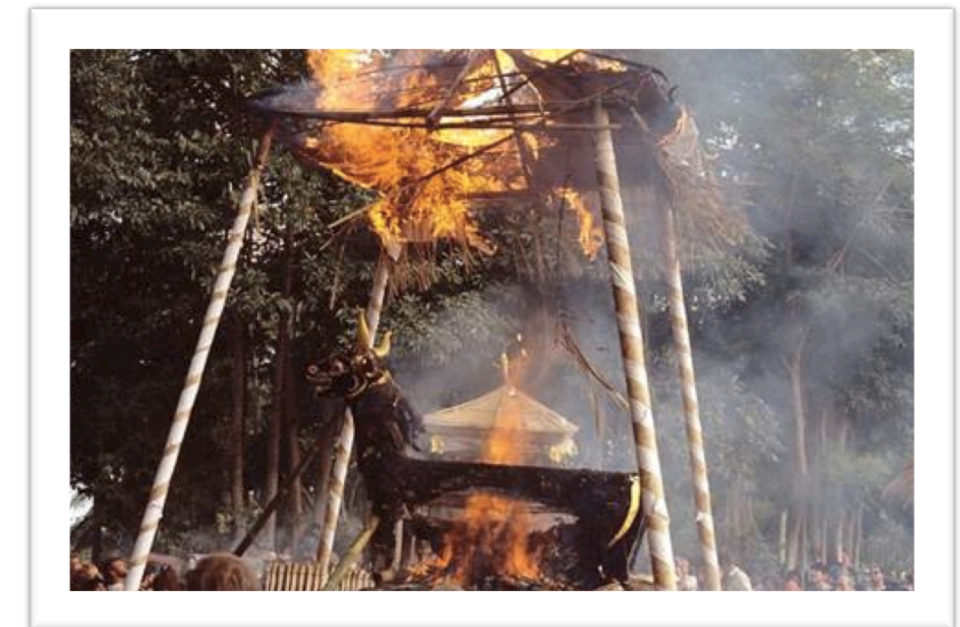
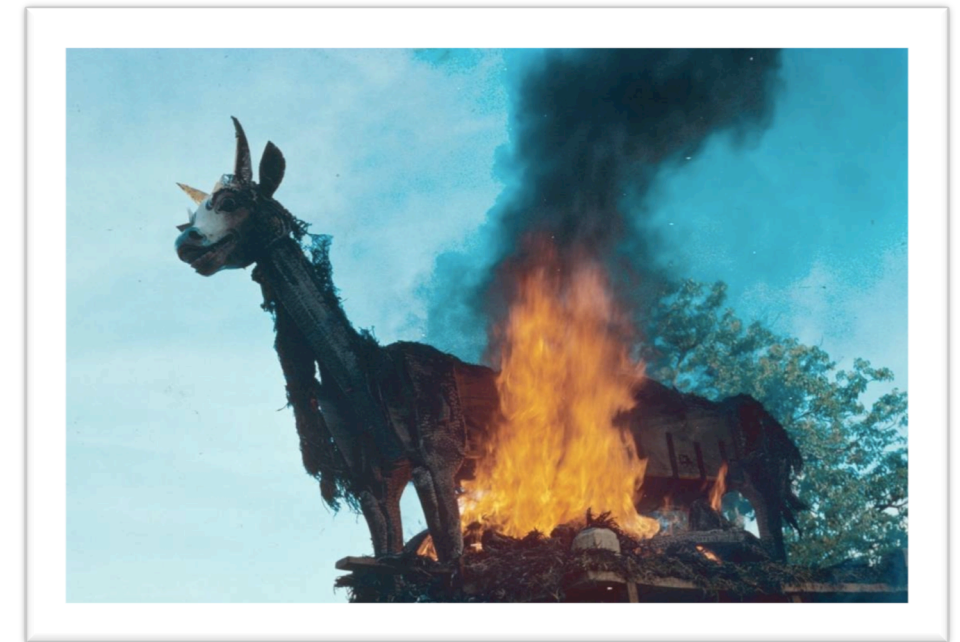


Figure Caption (from left to right)

Figure 7.4: Different looks of MNE's cremation White cow. Craftsmen and owner unknown [I.N.: AV-052 (1974, 532)]. They represent the coffin after the completion of the ritual.

Figure 7.5: Several examples of the cremation moment. Courtesy from Dr. F. Brinkgreve, Conservator Insulair Zuidoost-Azië, Volkenkunst, Leiden.

7.5 FRANCISCO TROPA AND HIS WORK

Francisco Tropa (b.1968, Lisbon) is currently considered one of the most important Portuguese artists of his generation. Although he has been exhibiting since the late 80s, only in the 90s did he get recognition for his work, mainly through his participation with Lourdes Castro in the 24th Biennial of São Paulo (1998). He also participated in the 2003 Venice Biennial and was the official Portuguese ambassador to the 2011 Venice Biennial, where he presented *Scenario*.

Since the beginning of his career, Francisco Tropa has consistently dedicated himself to a reflection about the role of the artist and the nature of the creative process. In this process, he deliberately avoids the use of a single medium or technique, and uses a variety of materials and techniques. His materials include sand, water, sound, wood, stone, metal, dust, flies, snails, light, shadow, etc., and the techniques vary from drawing, sculpture, photography, film, slide projection, engraving, installations, to performance, and so on. All these elements are articulated in a specific time and space, exploring the enigmatic phenomenological field of sensitive experiences, while turning themselves into an observatory of artistic creation in its connections to nature and to life.

Notably, his artworks evoke moments, stories, situations or references that frequently imply the construction of complex visual devices, strongly allegorical. They provide spectators with an endless web of interpretations: the artist explained that he only creates *empty containers* designed to be filled by the spectator's own experiences. Tropa describes his works as indecipherable enigmas, whose interpretation drives the viewers through an immensity of unpredictable perspectives.

7.5.1 Projecto A Assembleia de Euclides

Tropa took some of his enigmas to a higher level of complexity. This particular project comprises six relatively autonomous moments/installations²⁷. Each of these moments, although related among them, has its own trajectory, as he repeatedly alters them, creating different physical versions of the same artwork.

In the artist conceptualisation of the work, all these moments exist simultaneously. They occur inside an imaginary cube, whose interior is revealed by unfolding it off (*vide* Figure 10). His works cross life (i.e. *Sim Não*) and death (i.e. *Gigante*), however, four moments (installations) occur transversely to a process of trance, that is somewhere in between those two extremes (*vide* Figure 10) [52].

²⁷ These moments are entitled: *A Assembleia de Euclides* (The Assembly of Euclid), 2005; *O Transe do Ciclista* (The Cyclist's Trance), 2006; *A Marca do Seio* (The Mark of the Breast), 2006; *Sim Não* (Yes No), 2006; *A Assembleia de Euclides (Final)*, 2008; and *Gigante* (Giant), 2010.

The core of this project is based on the first three installations (*A Assembleia de Euclides*, *O Transe do Ciclista* and *A Marca do Seio*)²⁸ [52]. The majority of Tropa's artworks, currently part of museums collections, are autonomous works from these three installations. They represent a 19th century photographic studio, but the action happens in three different dimensions. For example, *A Marca do Seio* represents the action inside the photographic camera.

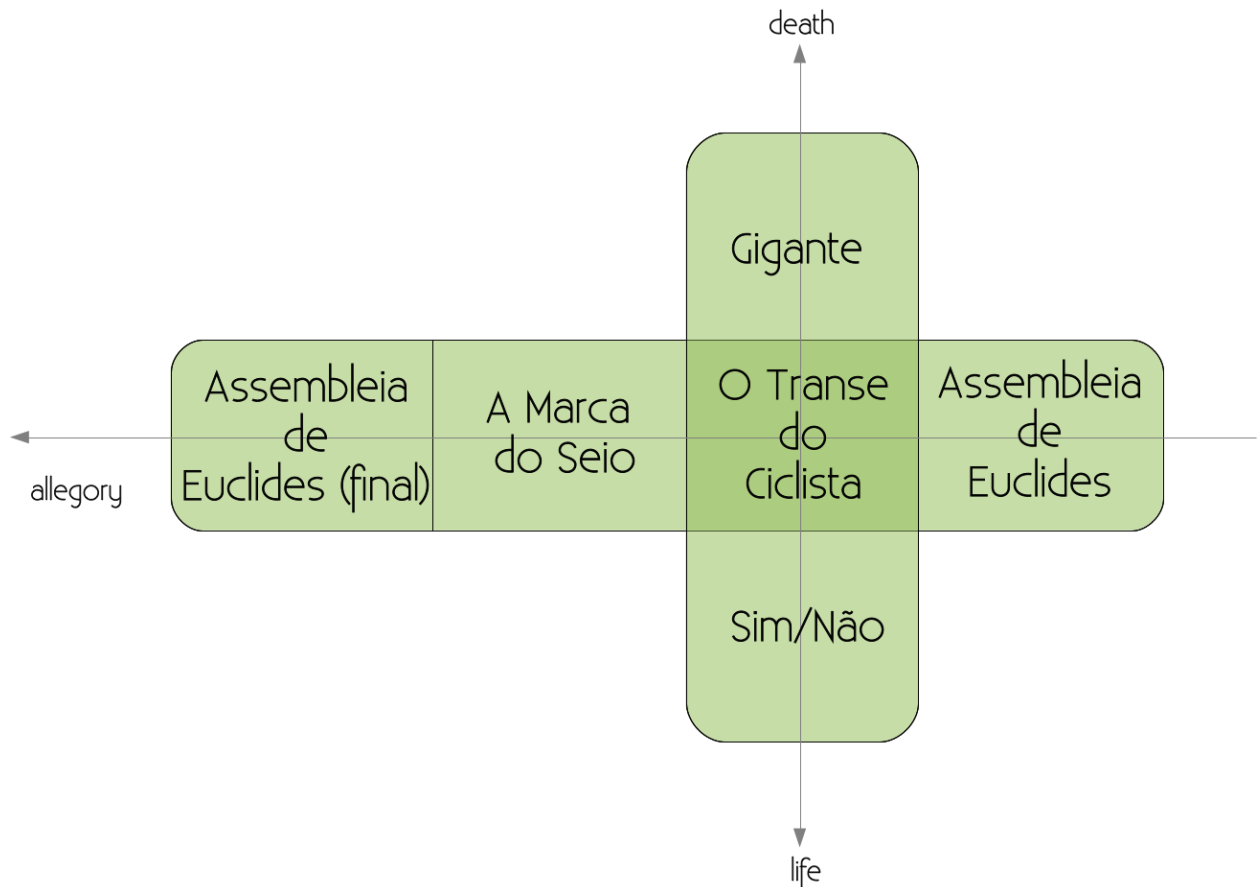


Figure 7.6: Scheme reproducing the relationship of the works present in *Projecto A Assembleia de Euclides*. These relationships were conceptualized and drawn by the artist in the interview moment [at his atelier, 08.06.2012]

The first installation (*vide* Figure 7.7) starts for exhibiting two different worlds, a scenario of the beach and the forest. Usually a performance by the artist/actor occurs. The *persona* walks up the ramp, climbs onto the bicycle and pedals (Figure 7.7.2) [52]. While he accelerates and stops, a mime theatre gradually comes into existence. Afterwards, the cyclist gets into a deep trance and his head is cut decapitated. During this process, photos are taken and revealed (Figure 7.7.3). At the same time, in the antechamber of the exhibition space, a beheaded *Body* (Figure 7.7.4) is presented as a portrait of the experience of trance, and the skeleton (Figure 7.7.4) is represented apart from its *Head* (Figure 7.7.5).

In the second exhibition (Figure 7.8), photos taken in the first one are presented (Figure 7.8.1).

²⁸ For more informations regarding this project, and particularly those works, please consult NOGUEIRA, A. *Documentar: porquê, o quê, como e quando? A Conservação da obra de Francisco Tropa*, [Unpublished] MPhil Thesis, Monte da Caparica: Universidade Nova de Lisboa, Faculdade de Ciências e Tecnologia, 2012.

Before plunging into a deep trance, the cyclist passes through the *Sentry* (Figure 7.8.2) and has three visions: the mask, the skull and Venus (Figure 7.8.3). However, when he encounters two *Policemen* (Figure 7.8.4). Trance is abruptly interrupted and his head returns to its initial position. In a last impulse, the cyclist finds the *Temple of Allegories* (Figure 7.8.5) and *Grotto* (Figure 7.8.6)[52].

Finally, the third exhibition (Figure 7.9) is also configured as a scenic space, a stage where an event occurs. This performance culminates with the production of an image, which is projected through a *camera obscura* (Figure 7.9.1). A female figure (Figure 7.9.2), presumably from the spectators, turns the film projector on and the first film, *Giant*, is projected. She takes her clothes off. Meanwhile, the second film, *Snail*, is projected. Later, she walks to her pedestal and a line of light divides her body in light and shade, while the image of her lighted side of the body is projected inverted and enlarged on the wall [52].

Figure 7.7: *A Assembleia de Euclides* (The Assembly of Euclid): (1) examples from the mechanism; (2) examples of the performance; (3): Easel (where the images are exposed) and *Tenda de Revelação* (where images are processed); (4): *Corpo e Esqueleto* (The Body and the Skeleton); (5) *Cabeça* (The Head).

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Tropa, F. Wandschneider, M. & Falcão, P. (eds). *A Assembleia de Euclides*. Porto: Fundação Caixa Geral de Depósitos –

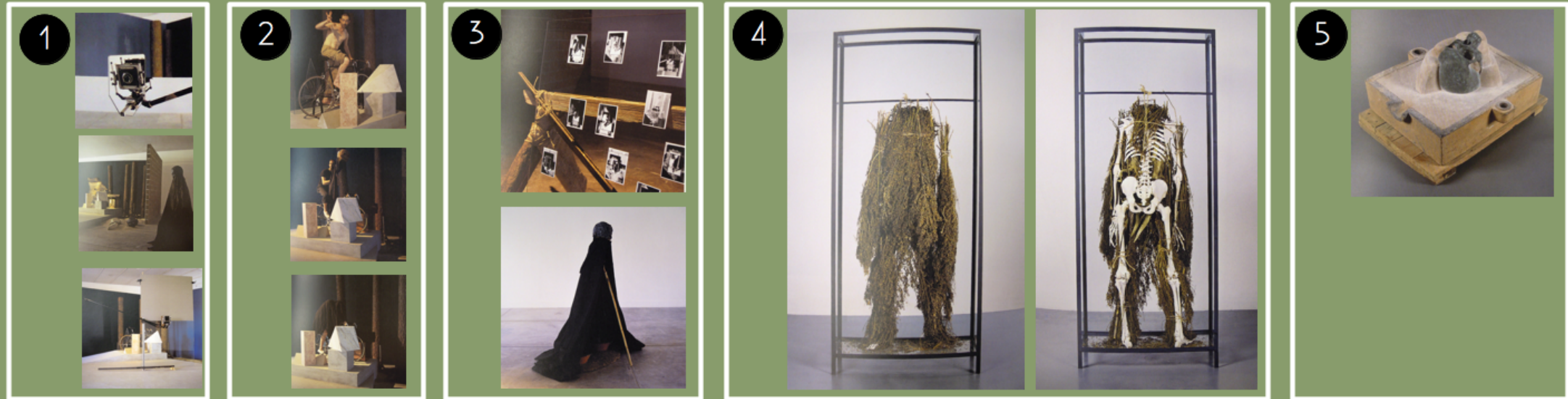


Figure 7.8: *O Transe do Ciclista* (The Cyclist's Trance): (1) examples from the images he creates; (2) *Sentinela Plana* (Sentry) (3): Images that the cyclist sees when he is in trance – The Mask, The Skull and Venus; (4): *Polícias* (Policemen) (5); *Templo das Alegorias* (Temple of Allegory); (6) *Gruta* (Grotto).

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Tropa, F. Wandschneider, M. & Falcão, P. (eds). *A Assembleia de Euclides*. Porto: Fundação Caixa Geral de Depósitos – Culturvest 2009

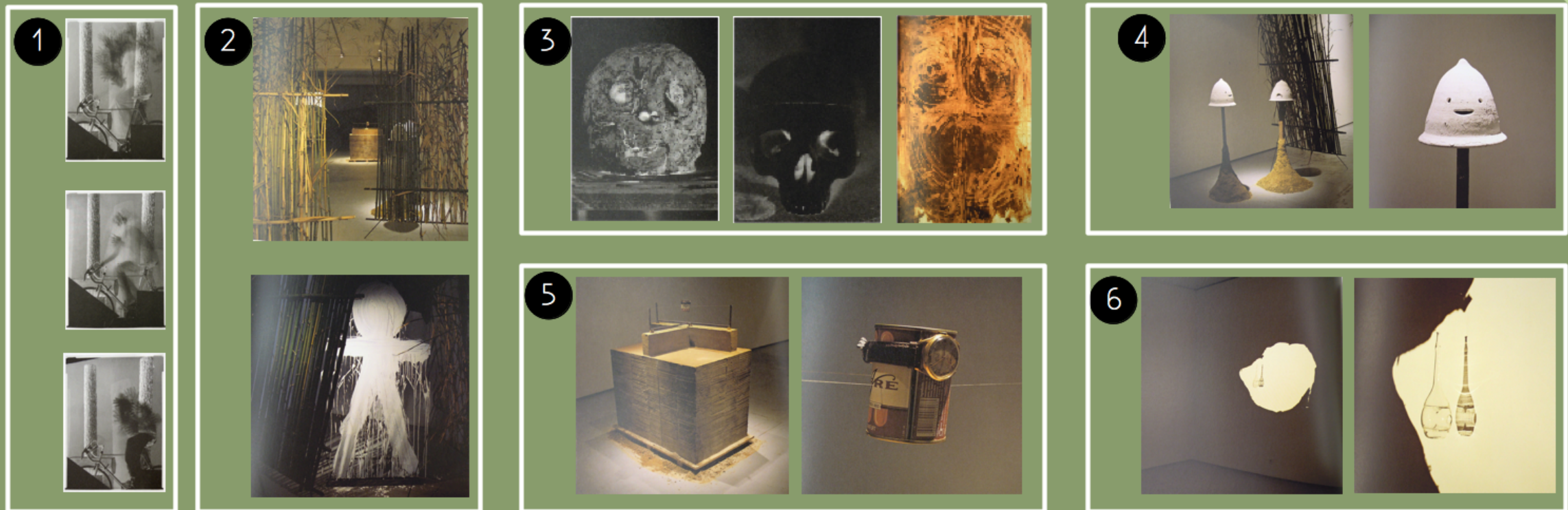


Figure 7.9: *A Marca do Seio* (The Mark of the Breast): (1) General view from the mechanism (2) Details from the performance.

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Tropa, F. Wandschneider, M. & Falcão, P. (eds). *A Assembleia de Euclides*. Porto: Fundação Caixa Geral de Depósitos – Culturgest, 2009.



The reflection that emerged from those examples, which never cease to change, allowed some insights from ethnography and psychology. Methodologies drawn from social science present great opportunities for conservation, as they provide means for data validation and reproducibility.

Content analysis was widely explored in the main document. In the following chapters, new insights of the employment of those methodologies in conservation are explored. Firstly, validation tools are extrapolated for conservation purposes. Secondly, content analysis is employed in Francisco Tropea's case. This exercise was important to test this technique and perceive its advantages and disadvantages. Lastly, as this dissertation mainly consists on a meta-analysis, all the above-mentioned methods were analysed concerning their main advantages and disadvantages. This was a fruitful exercise as it allowed for a better understanding for this methods' applicability to the conservation field.

7.6 OTHER APPLICATION METHODS FOR VALIDATION TOOLS

Validation methods may also be applied to other conservation problems. In traditional ethnographic methodology, triangulation was reached when three different ethnographers went to field and at the end of the day compared their field notes – accounts that were present in every set of observations were considered valid [67]. This method may be applied, for example, to video edition.

Usually, when doing videos for documenting installation practices by artists, conservators end up with several uneditable hours of film [10]. Also, edition and transcription techniques often fail in delivering results that communicate with wider audiences [10]. If the validation method described in the previous paragraph was applied, three different landscapes should be recorded, as those directing videotaping should have the permission to attend to every detail they independently select as important. The three observers would be invited to do a common edition of the material, selecting points of commonality and acknowledging others as extras.

Similarly, triangulation could be applied to the process of documentation itself: the different observers could be invited to establish beforehand which aspects of the installation process need diversified documentation and which may be documented by a single person (electrical circuitry, for instance). Such decisions may, in fact be the object an institutional norm. Having three descriptions of the artwork, on the other hand, increases the complexity. There is no stable ground or exact science to define what is correct in artworks' descriptions. However, it seems appropriate to say that their inherent and cherished diversity cannot be conveyed by a single voice [4]. Wouldn't several descriptions allow a deeper and therefore more accurate view of the object? However, in theory there are no limits to the number of descriptions, and so this demand could become endless. It is the conservator's and other stakeholder's task to define what the right balance between effort and validity is, as it will change according to resources, audiences and the nature of the work of art in question. Validation methods may help in this quest.

Content Analysis

7.7.1 Content Analysis – psychological and conservation variables

As explained before, content analysis is a technique that allows scrutiny of the artist's discourse, while sanctioning validation and data reproducibility.

In order to test how appropriate this technique is to conservation, Francisco Tropa's interview about *Projecto A Assembleia de Euclides* was employed. Regarding psychological variables, the method described by Miles & Huberman was applied [66]. In the case of conservation variables, a new method, based on the former, was developed for a better adaptation to specificities of the area.

A short explanatory caption, followed by content analysis, is presented below.

Content analysis (psychological variables) – Table 7.1

Intention: artist's intention towards the work and the audience reactions

Learning: artist's previous experience

Referencing: artist's processing of information - like artistic, scientific, philosophical, religious information, etc. - that then serve as artist's references

Preparation: artist's planning of his work

Planning through sketches: artist plans the artwork by developing sketches

Unpredicted development: the planning of the artwork evolves in a non-previous way

Revision: artist's modifications on a finalized own artwork

(Exhibition) Exhibition's variability: artist's introduction of variations on the artwork in the moment of exhibition

Audience reactions: artist's representation of audience reactions

Emotional → *Emotional chock:* feeling any kind of emotional chock when experiencing the artwork

Cognitive → *General:* discovering something by appreciating the artwork

Cognitive → *Sensorial:* basic processing of the work of art through the senses: seeing, hearing, smelling...

Cognitive → *Attentional:* focusing on the artwork or one of its parts

Cognitive → *Mnemonic:* relating the artwork with previous knowledge

Cognitive → *Comprehension:* decodifying the meaning of the artwork or making meaning from the artwork

Cognitive → *Problem solving:* solving problems or riddles presented by the artwork

Behavioural → *Movement:* moving around or inside-out the artwork

Reliability [66]: 82,81 %

Content analysis (psychological variables) – Table 7.2

Considering that the approach used for content analysis is based on Ground Theory, categories emerged from the artist's own speech. Therefore, some categories of interest for conservation may be absent, as they are not portrayed in the artist's discourse.

Reliability [66]: 93,6 %

Table 7.1: Content analysis of Francisco Tropa's interview (concerning psychological variables, dimensions and subdimensions).

VARIABLES	DIMENSIONS	SUB-DIMENSIONS	EXAMPLES [Translated from Portuguese]
A. Intention	I. Degree of intentionality	1. High intentionality	I have started to control them [the images produced with photography <i>a la minute</i>] and I've done this set of images, each one of them with a sort of intention (...). If I am the one doing it... I sort of know what I want to do, and what I am, in fact, doing. (35)
	II. Aim of intentionality	1. Intention of communicating an idea	The spectator is the assembly of Euclid, it's part of the assembly of Euclid. (29)
		2. Intention of provoking an effort of comprehension from the audience	(...) the purpose of things remaining like this [in the installation], it's for you to make an effort to discover the reason why. (259)
		3. Intention of manipulation	Actually, I have some things that are meant to be moved [manipulated]. (68)
		4. Intention of absence of manipulation of the audience	Because you can't move it, you can't touch it, I don't allow you to touch it. That forbiddance is part of the work. The fact that you can or cannot move it changes the work. So, if I put something inside glass, I'm telling you that you cannot touch (laughs). Your approach to that object will be different than your approach to one you can move. (163)
5. Intention of provoking an effort of problem solving from the audience	It's a game (...). It's a jigsaw puzzle (...). (191) Divide the concrete cube by a marble pyramid. What's left? That's the question. The true art object is the result, so, what's there is a calculation to be made. (206)		
B. Learning	I. Referencing	1. Non-artistic references	The representation of trance is mainly based on two things: a Jean Rouch's film, <i>Les Maîtres Fous</i> (...) and obviously other things from o Arpho, Mexican indians (...). (7)
		2. Artistic references	My references are connected to everything. I mean, I use stuff from different ages, which are artistic manifestations of several types. Obviously, what I want, personally and artistically, are things that are derived from Art History and History. (52)
C. Preparation	I. Planning through sketches	-----	I make drawings about everything. When I construct, I know exactly what I want. (145)
	II. Unpredicted development	-----	I wondered in my thoughts. At the beginning, as I have told you, I had no clue about the result [of the installation]. (24)
D. Revision	I. Refinement	-----	I am always changing things. (54)
E. Exhibition	I. Exhibition's variability	-----	The <i>Giant</i> [an element from <i>The Assembly of Euclid</i>] is a thing that I have done in so many ways. It's almost infinite (...). Of possibilities. Of what it is. Of its nature. The way of seeing it is almost infinite. I think... (96)
F. Audience reactions	I. Emotional	1. Emotional chock	What's odd [in the exhibition of <i>O Duche</i> (The Shower), 1998], (...) is that, when it was a [naked] girl, everything was fine, people stand watching, couples... everyone watched. When was the boy's turn [to be naked], men didn't looked, and the women, when in couple, wanted to see but the men didn't let them. I got to see the men with their hand covering women's eyes and pushing them out of there (laughs). (76)
	II. Cognitive	1. General	The <i>Giant</i> [an element from <i>The Assembly of Euclid</i>] it's a thing that I've done in so many ways. It's almost infinite (...). Of possibilities. Of what it is. Of its nature. The way of seeing it is almost infinite. I think... (96)
		2. Sensorial	Two colours, one next to another, make a kind of thing. So, that [the installation] it's a machine. Artworks are machines. For example, artists make reaction machines. That's what I think. (218)
		3. Attentional	The artwork must be the most important thing. It needs to make someone stop. Before that, there's no work of art. If someone passes through and doesn't stop, there's no artwork. So, at least it needs to have the capacity to make someone stop. (221)
		4. Mmnesic	So, the references [that exist in the installation] are meant to create bridges between all the components (...). [The references] are part of the artwork's construction (...). It is supposed that someone who's seeing the work recognizes some references. (135)
		5. Comprehension	[When someone is appreciating the installation] needs to make an effort and needs to look for certain references that, sometimes, are not instaneous. But I give clues. (213)
	6. Problem solving	If someone solves that problem, he/she will have a result. That's why I have called it <i>fractions</i> . (205)	
III. Behavioural	1. Movement	It is supposed to be possible to go around and see the works from various angles. (244)	

details).

Table 7.2: Content analysis of Francisco Tropa's interview (concerning conservation variables, dimensions and subdimensions and some

VARIABLES	DIMENSIONS	SUB-DIMENSIONS	EXAMPLES [Translated from Portuguese (Question number)]	DETAILS
A. Creative Process	I. Representation	1. Abstract concept		It is rather difficult to define Francisco Tropa's work. He departs from an abstract concept, underlining that his works are no more than mechanisms. To him, they are "machines of relationships".
		2. Other than abstract	-----	
	II. References	1. Non-artistic references	The representation of trance is mainly based on two things: a Jean Rouch's film, <i>Les Maitres Fous</i> (...) and obviously other things from o Arpho, Mexican indians (...). (7)	References: Jean Rouch's film, <i>Les Maltres Fous</i> , Arpho, Mexican Indians, Medici's Venus (In <i>A Marca do Seio</i>), <i>a la minute</i> photography, Ancient Greece, Jacques Tati, Roland Barthes, Duchamp's <i>Great Glass</i> , Dante. Francisco Tropa also makes several mentions to the existence of other (unknown) references. To him, it is part of the work to discover those references.
		2. Artistic references	My references are connected to everything. I mean, I use stuff from different ages, which are artistic manifestations of several types. Obviously, what I want, personally and artistically, are things derived from Art History and History. (52)	
	III. Preparation	1. Drawings	I make drawings about everything. (145)	The artist is not willing to share his own schemes, drawings or models.
		2. Samples/models	I haven't made any models (275)	
3. Other		-----		
B. Execution (material)	I. By the artist	1. With meticulous final vision	When I construct, I know exactly what I want. (145)	Others often execute his works.
	II. By others	-----	(<i>Who produced the Head?</i>) A foundry worker. (159)	
C. Meaning	I. Material's meaning	1. Specific	Materials have meaning (157)	Every material used has a high degree of intentionality, e.g., there is no randomness in the choice of materials.
		2. Non-specific	-----	
D. Flexibility	I. In finalization		By now, that [<i>Projecto A Assembleia de Euclides</i>] is more or less over. (1)	One of the main premises caught from the artist's discourse is the need for a flexible approach in the preservation of his works. There is flexibility and opening for change in every degrees of his work. He looks for other's definition. He looks for continuously changing his own works, and also allows others to do it for him. He wants change as part of the artwork's trajectory. One of his main concerns is that his works stop changing and "moving".
	II. In object's definition	1. He refuses to characterize his work	I am not going to give you my reason [of the objects' positioning in the installation]. The author's reason blocks any other reason. It destroys it! (260)	
	III. In performance		Everytime I am making a new image, it ends up different. It's like if I was drawing. When it's an actor doing it, he/she is not drawing at all. He/she is representing the act of drawing. He/she only goes up to a certain point. (119) (<i>And yet, is it still authentic?</i> Of course! (...)) It doesn't change the work!	
E. Exhibition	I. Exhibition's variability	1. He introduces variations	I'm always changing things. (54)	To Francisco Tropa, intangible features, such as light, materials' meaning and disposition, among others, are the core of his work. In several excerpts, it is possible to understand that he sees no need in preserving the materiality of objects. He plainly states, however, that every exhibition aspect (including meaning of materials) should be preserved. He also argues that although preservation is needed, it cannot freeze the artwork (see E.I)
		2. Others may introduce variations	(<i>Could others reinstall your works?</i>) Yes. They could! They should! I'll not always be here! (<i>But, are there any restrictions?</i>) No. (245-246)	
	II. Relevance of exhibition aspects in the artistic intention (light, environment, objects disposal, etc.)		Light is a very important element of my work. I've always worked with light and perception. (234)	
	III. Audience reactions as essential for artworks' meaning		We are the assembly of Euclid (<i>Assembleia de Euclides</i>) (28)	
F. Intention	I. Degree of intentionality	1. High degree	I have started to control them [the images produced with photography <i>a la minute</i>] and I've done this set of images, each one of them with a sort of intention (...). If I'm the one doing it... I sort of know what I want to do, and what I'm, in fact, doing. (35)	(See C.1)
		2. Low degree	-----	
G. Intention towards audience reactions	I. Emotional reactions	1. Emotional chock	What's odd [in the exhibition of <i>O Duche</i> (The Shower), 1998] (...) is that, when it was a [naked] girl, everything was fine, people stand watching, couples... everyone watched. When was the boy's turn [to be naked], men didn't looked, and the women, when in couple, wanted to see but the men didn't let them. (76)	n.d
		II. Cognitive reactions	1. General	
	2. Sensorial		It is a machine. Artworks are machines. For example, artists make reaction machines. That's what I think. (218)	
	3. Attentional		The artwork must be the most important thing. It needs to make someone stop. Before that, there's no work of art. (221)	
	4. Mmnesic		Someone who's seeing the work is supposed to recognize some references. (135)	
	5. Comprehension		[When someone is appreciating the installation] needs to make an effort and needs to look for certain references that, sometimes, are not instantaneous. But I give clues. (213)	
	6. Problem solving		If someone solves that problem, he/she will have a result. That's why I have called it <i>fractions</i> . (205)	
	III. Behavioural reactions	1. Manipulation	Actually, I have some things that are meant to be moved [manipulated]. (68)	
		2. Absence of Manipulation	Because you can't move it, you can't touch it, I don't allow you to touch it. That forbiddance is part of the work. The fact that you can or cannot move it changes the work. (163)	
3. Movement		It is supposed to be possible to go around and see the works from various angles. (244)		
H. Conservation	I. Ageing	1. Acceptable	(<i>In this figure we may see that Templo das Alegorias bottom is cracking. Do you agree with that ageing? Or should we avoid it?</i>) It doesn't bother me. (335)	Ageing is not a relevant matter for Francisco Tropa. He clearly claims that every material can be replaced or remade.
		2. Not acceptable		
	II. Intangible features (light, sound, environment, objects disposal, space, context, etc.)	1. Intangible features are essential for the artwork's meaning	It is a thick flannel. Theatre flannel. It is one of those theatre curtains, made of flannel, really heavy and difficult to get. So, the curtain in <i>A Marca do Seio</i> , the tent in <i>Sentinela [Plana]</i> and the <i>Tenda de Revelação</i> , are all of the same material (297)	Throughout the interview, several were the examples of the importance of intangible features. Francisco Tropa evidently disregards any importance of materiality on his work. Materials create meaning by being associated to references. To him, materials can (and should) be replaced, however, pieces need to maintain a certain coherence: for example, it does not matter to him if the flannel itself is the same. It only matters that it is theatre flannel, so the association with classical arts and theatre endures.
	III. Materiality	1. Material preservation is not important	It doesn't matter. What matters is that those elements (eucalyptus leafs) are known. The piece [<i>Body</i>] doesn't loose meaning by being made by others. Or by being different. (183) (<i>Which materials need to be absolutely preserved?</i>) None of them. Everything can be replaced. They just need to look the same. (200)	Essentially, there is no material that clearly needs to be preserved. The relationship between several materials is the main feature to be preserved. (See H.II.1)
	IV. Documentation	1. He wishes its production	(<i>Could we produce documentation according to your instructions? We mean, when you reinstall those works again?</i>) Yes, of course! You can do that! (277)	n.d.
	2. He produces his own	(<i>It would be great that we could have a copy of those drawings of yours...</i>) No. They are mine (laughs) (173)		

7.8 METHODOLOGICAL DETAILS: A CRITICAL REVIEW

Table 7.3: Comprehensive evaluation of the previously discussed methodologies.

METHODOLOGIE	ADVANTAGES	DISADVANTAGES	APPLICATION
Interviews	<p>Usually yield richest data, details, new insights [66] Allow face-to-face contact [56,66,67]</p> <p>Afford opportunity to experience affective and cognitive aspects of responses [66]</p> <p>Allow the interviewer to explain or help clarify questions, increasing the opportunity for useful responses [56,57,66,67]</p> <p>Provide opening to explore topics in depth [56,66]</p> <p>Allow interviewer to be flexible in managing the interview to particular individuals or circumstances [56,66]</p>	<p>Expensive and time-consuming [57,66]</p> <p>Need well-qualified, highly trained interviewers</p> <p>Interviewee may distort information through recall error, selective perceptions, or desire to please interviewer [56,57,66,67]</p> <p>Flexibility can result in inconsistencies across interviews (as sometimes it was noticed in Francisco Tropa's case) [56,66,67]</p> <p>Volume of information is too large – there might be some difficulties in transcribing and reducing data [66]</p>	n.d.
Content Analysis	<p>It provides a better structuration of the artist's discourse.</p> <p>It guarantees flexibility and variability (specially when associated with Ground Theory).</p> <p>If necessary, it is possible to find patterns. Although this goal is not appropriated when analysis artist's interviews, it can be useful when studying museum publics, for example. [66]</p> <p>It is an unobtrusive mean of analysing interactions [66,67]</p> <p>There are several resources in specialized literature that could allow a better adequation of this technique to current procedures</p>	<p>It is not easily communicable. Conservator would need training before applying this method.</p> <p>It can be extremely time consuming (specially if based on Ground Theory). [66,67]</p> <p>It is inherently reductive, particularly when dealing with complex texts. [66]</p>	Interviews in general. It should be applied to a complete transcription of the interview.
Phenomenological – ideographic approach and Holistic narrative	<p>Readers can readily empathise with the researcher and the topic when they learn about their thoughts and motives. [56,57,66]</p>	<p>It limits the author to a specific context.</p> <p>The absence of objectivity may provoke unwanted outcomes. It may, for example, jeopardize the validity of the testimony.</p> <p>It may fall into a narcissistic account. [56]</p>	Ideally, it would be used as a content analysis complement, in order to promote an easier way of communicating the outcomes from the interview.
Vignettes	<p>It allows narration according with a specific timeline. [66]</p>	<p>It cannot be applied to the interview.</p> <p>Any other disadvantage from narrative methods</p>	It may be used to describe an event circumscribed to a specific timeline
Performance Ethnography	<p>This practice-based method allows practical experience of the subject matter. [71,72]</p> <p>The experience can be reported afterwards in form of testimony.</p>	<p>It only enables a biased view, as the activity is absolutely participatory. [71]</p> <p>It may allow distortions as the social group changes with the researcher's participatory position. [67]</p>	It is an alternative method that may possibly be used in cases when the artist does not allow any type of documentation.
Ethnodrama	<p>Similarly to performance-ethnography, this method allows a practice-based experience [71,72].</p>	<p>To add to all the previously reported disadvantages (explained above), the basis of this practice does not allow any kind of documentation. If a scientific report is meant to be presented afterwards, a performance-ethnography practice is being held.</p>	

The final conclusions of this dissertation mainly related to the understanding of complex artworks as social and cultural objects. The relationship between ethnographic objects and complex artworks, and the employment of ethnographic and psychological methods helped reaching that conclusion. Complex artworks are dependent on context. They function interdependently of other objects and subjects. The acknowledgement of this circumstance led to the creation of the *theory of aesthetical anastomoses*, which is briefly explained in the next chapter.

7.9 AESTHETICAL ANASTOMOSES

This dissertation has showed that reinterpretation strategies need to be applied to paradigmatic and complex cases such as the one of Francisco Tropa.

With the employment of reinterpretation strategies, some questions emerge: which are the public reactions to those changes? Also, if complex artworks only exist when experienced by the spectator, shouldn't this issue be sorted out under a conservation view? These pertinent questions are not new. In fact, the need to deal with these problems was already recalled [4,8,9,17]. Several authors also describe the need of studying publics, claiming the multiplicity of experiences that are exploited by a complex artwork and consequently several authenticities associated to it:

When the artwork leaves the studio, others take over the artist's responsibility by presenting, selling and storing the artwork. The function of the work may change. How does the conveyance to the public take place? (...) What impression does the artwork make on the public at these different stages and does this still agree with the artist's intention? [9:35]

Yet surprisingly, although it has claimed relevance a lack of literature regarding this subject is recognised. With this perspective, an aesthetical anastomoses model has been developed. This is a brand new model, developed within this study from the previously mentioned qualitative methodologies, which may prove to be a valuable asset in the quest for the answers I have been faced with.

The term anastomose comes from the Greek, meaning *communicative breaches*. Aesthetics, also from Greek origin, means *sensations*. We then find a model, which starts with the idea of a trajectory the artwork intakes, and goes through the perceptions of individuals who experience it at different times. This is, in fact, a rhizomatic model which takes into account two of the most important characteristics of this kind of artwork: the fact that they mostly exist not as an inanimate form, but as a diverse and almost living thing, which partakes its own trajectory; and secondly, the viewer as an active participant, looked for by artists as such, to achieve a more complete and multi-sensorial experience.

In this model, we find that although experiences are unique and unconveyable, they have something in common. Individuals could (and should!) be engaged in reporting their own unique experience. And from this basis, it is possible to create nucleuses of meaning and process an entire network, made out of communicative bridges, which follow the growth and change of any given artwork.

At first, a simple structure shared only by the artist and the few people that surround him is built. From the first exhibition on, the network begins to grow and becomes denser and more complex as all the sides of an artwork increase in perspectives. There is, however, a practical problem - how to interpret the public's reports and how to overcome the subtleties and subjectivities language entails? No perfect solution was found. However, an alternative came into discussion: the ARTHIVE project.

7.10 ARTHIVE PROJECT

(...) interviews don't always get published. They're considered internal documents. I'm all about sharing information, and maybe because I didn't work for museums most of my career, and so I'm a very big proponent of sharing information among professionals and even with the public when it's relevant and engaging. So I always start my interviews by asking the artist if they mind if I share this information with others. (...) Robert Gober (...) said, "Well I'd like to use the information as well, so could we please add a signature line for MoMA so I can have a copy of the transcript?" And I just thought that was brilliant. – Glenn Wharton²⁹

In order to promote a way of communicating outside the museum borders, the ARTHIVE project was created. This project led to the application of two funding opportunities: one from the MIT-Portugal challenge *Building Global Innovations* and another (PRÉMIO SIM), from Samsung, with a special scope in creative industries.

The ARTHIVE project is a web-based network of art institutions and owners which allows safe, fast and easy exchange of large volumes of information, thus facilitating cooperation and information access at low cost. Unlike any related website, the ARTHIVE project uses that information to extend connectivity to artists, public and researchers while creating a complete and reliable reference database of art with articulated tools, specific for each of the entities' needs.

Regarding art institutions, a secure, cloud-based platform would be provided where information of all formats (text, audio, video, databases, etc.) can be stored and shared according to defined protocols. There is a system that can be adjusted to the specific needs of a given institution, suitable for the management of their collections and program exhibitions but also to establish inter-institutional protocols in a proficient way. The need to foster the relationship with the public is also served by this interactive channel, which can operate as a unique tool to attract new and affectionate audiences.

Having a centralized network will also create a unique setting for direct interaction with suppliers of products and services, providing art institutions with an easy way to identify and select suppliers.

Researchers would have easy access to valuable information, usually difficult to find. This would also be the right place to advertise and seek for employment opportunities in the arts, a service well in need to both employers and professionals.

The public, on the other hand, is thirsty for quality information and values the possibility of

²⁹ WHARTON, G. 2009. Lizzie Frasco interviewing Glenn Wharton, Conservator at MoMA and Professor at IFA School for Conservation (February 4th, 2009) in *The Contingency of Conservation. Changing Methodology and Theoretical Issues in Conserving Ephemeral Contemporary Artworks with Special Reference to Installation Art*, Visual Arts Undergraduated Thesis, University of Pennsylvania, pp. lvii-lviii.

finding diversified, reliable and complete information in a single site without having to engage in time-consuming web searches. A fair but limited depth of information would be available. Such public would engage not only as art consumers, but also as providers of feelings and opinions that could become part of the artworks history.

7.11 DECISION-MAKING MODELS

Obviously, the ARTHIVE database, available for every museum involved, would be extremely relevant for the decision-making in conservation.

Regarding documentation and its methodologies in museum context, Vivian van Saaze states that although they can be very meticulous, in the majority of time they do “not include argumentation to explain” the decision-making process [4:115]. Decision-making models are tools that give structure to complex cases and define a trajectory, propose several conservation options and logically offer some solutions. Back to Felix González-Torres’ candy pieces, any conservation treatment has to embrace the fact that the original material is gone. *Strange Fruit (For David)*, from Zoe Leonard (b. 1961, New York), on the other hand, being made of several rinds and skin of various fruits, *repaired* and ornamented in memory of a friend of the artist, is meant to perish and no direct conservation procedures can be undertaken [1]. Francisco Tropa, on the other hand, does not want his works to be frozen in time. Any of these artists have peculiar points of view and a decision-making model tries to answer them the best possible way.

Indeed, decision-making models are not yet adapted to the most recent conservation theories, as they do not acknowledge casuistic or jurisprudence as method. From this point of view, a decision-making model based on qualitative methodologies and four main theoretical assumptions was developed:

1. *When preserving works based on such abstract and complex concepts, which may never be fully understood, a decision making practice based on jurisprudence is possibly the best alternative:* René van de Vall, in 1999, has published an article in the well known Symposium *Modern Art: Who Cares?*, where jurisprudence was considered the best alternative to a decision-making model. Within her observations, there comes the inevitability of tragic choices: the preservation of a given value will jeopardise others’ conservation. With them being highly subjective in importance and perception, decision-making complexity comes to the point that ethics becomes an extremely personal characteristic. This author suggests, then, that instead of a Platonic perspective, which presents general, universal and unshakable principles, we should adopt an Aristotelian one, based on jurisprudence, and find intelligibility established on a casuistic approach [79].

2. *Decision-making behavioural scientists have proved that with more options inadequate decisions increase:* Behavioural economist Dan Ariely, the author of *Predictably Irrational*, showed that with more choices, noise increases and people get more susceptible to choose incorrectly [82].

3. *Every decision has an emotional ground:* António Damásio, in his work about mechanisms of

decision-making, proved that the trigger that allows a subject to make a decision is based on emotions. In fact, people with no capacity of having them (due to cerebral accidents) had problems in making any decision, even if simple [83].

4. *Usually, the artist's sanction is the main factor in choosing a particular preservation strategy* [8,10]: In her unpublished PhD thesis, Rita Macedo specifies that, in groups such as *Variable Media Network*, the artist is asked to give an ideal description of the work. Afterwards, and acknowledging that this ideal description can never be portrayed with any conservation strategy, he/she reveals which ones may be applied to that specific case. This author yet explains that, although the artist's sanction should be one of the main variables in the decision-making process as it ensures the work's authenticity, when the work enters the public sphere there are other opinions that should be taken into account.

This decision-making model is based on the artist's sanction in order to reduce possible options within a method of jurisprudence. It does not ensure important variables such as financial or spatial resources. However, it seems to optimise the conservator's decisions regarding preservation strategies.

Following 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 presented. This process reduces preservation strategies while presenting a comprehensive and structured sample of similar cases. At the same time, it allows the conservator to make sustained decisions more easily and quickly by learning with past experiences shared by his peers. The decision-making process changes from an isolation act to a social experience. However, regardless of this perspective, one should not forget the long-lasting conservation *line of thought*: each case is unique and even similar cases should be analysed fully as such.

Obviously, this perspective 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 into the information age. INCCA network already took the first steps in promoting the practice of jurisprudence by providing a database of artists' interviews, which could serve as basis in the implementation of this format. Ultimately, this method would transform decision-making in conservation, changing it from an isolation act to a social experience.

7.12 APPENDIX'S ADDITIONAL REFERENCES

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