

Reflections on the restoration of contemporary works in plaster

This article aims to present a conservation and restoration intervention in contemporary plaster sculptures that arises within the scope of my final Master's project in Conservation of Modern and Contemporary Art in the academic year 2023/2024. We intend to reflect on the ethics of conservation and restoration of contemporary works and demonstrate the entire methodology of intervention and restoration.

Contemporary art brings with it a new principle that is the intention of the artist, which must be respected and known during conservation and restoration. Considering this factor, it is important to know the conceptual field that involves the works: the intention of the artist and the materials.

In this project is addressed the study and intervention of conservation and restoration carried out in plaster sculptures of the artist Charters de Almeida. The sculptures belong to the Faculty of Fine Arts of the University of Lisbon (FBAUL).

The main objective is to study the concepts of conservation and restoration, which follow a classical aspect, applied to art with a great temporal distance, and how to adapt and create methodologies of intervention for the world of contemporary art. Due to the complexity of the subject, questions are raised, priority definitions and the search for appropriate methods on the ethics of restoration. In this intervention of conservation and restoration of contemporary art, it is possible to have dialogue with the artist, different from what happens with classical art, which has a fundamental role for the knowledge of the work. In this way, it is possible to use the artist as a reliable source to help with appropriate conservation and restoration criteria that allow to maintain the aesthetics, intention of the artist and obtain relevant historical information. This dialogue between artist and conservator-restorer allows us to face the challenge of volumetric reconstitution, because we have knowledge of how the area that was lost was and thus remake the area equal to the original and, therefore, carry out the chromatic reintegration.

This project follows a line of work that consists of the investigation of the works of Charters de Almeida that allows knowledge of his work, interview with the artist, investigation of appropriate methodologies of intervention, study of the results and final considerations.

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