

IV. PRACTICAL THEOLOGY

EDUCATIONAL METHODOLOGIES IN MURAL PAINTINGS CONSERVATION

THEO MUREȘAN*

ABSTRACT. The following paper presents the history of forming the Romanian conservators-restorers of mural paintings from the point where this field was understood as a multidisciplinary science, the higher education institutes of forming and accreditation, the missions and the curricula of these departments, the approach theories and also the knowledge and competences gained by the future specialists.

Key-words: history, heritage, conservation, restoration, intervention methodology, mural painting, academic education.

Development of conservation and restoration of wall paintings in Romania begins by setting the Historical Monuments Commission in 1892. The action of restoring the monuments was stimulated causing a gradual crystallization of a unitary concept regarding the safeguarding of the national cultural heritage. Between the two world wars Historical Monuments Commission was able to restore numerous monuments and at the same time to establish a system for displaying the general problems in the restoration work: respect for the monument in all its entirety, with all its components, this explains also the attention given to mural paintings.

In 1955 was approved a new list of historical monuments and at the same time were settled the legal obligations on the conservation of architectural heritage. In 1968 occur sites with formative role at the monastery Cozia and at the parish church Crișcior, aiming to begin a systematic restoration of wall paintings.

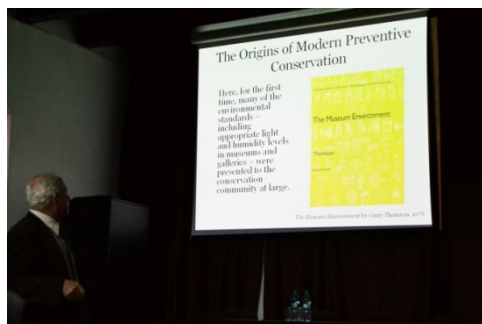
* Prof. Univ. Dr., University of Art and Design Cluj-Napoca, email: tmuresan33@yahoo.com

1970 is the beginning of multidisciplinary scientific approach by organizing a UNESCO mission to research on the conservation status of the main medieval monuments in Romania, which included significant foreign specialists such as Raymond Remaire, Paul Philippot, Paulo Mora and Gerry Thomson. As a result of this visit, in the following summer a pilot site is gathered at the Humor Monastery and at the Black Church in Brasov. Through this project realised in 1971, the Romanian conservators-restorers were given the chance to learn from the most important foreign personalities in the field: Sbordoni Laura Mora, Paolo Mora and Paul Philippot, Helmut Scholz, Fredreich Buchenrieder, Emerich Mochapp, Zbigniew Majcherovicz, Jacqueline Brukhardt, Maria Pia Gazzola, Carmen dell Valle, Claudia Cornaggia. Some of the Romanian conservators already had the experience of a specialization in Rome. With the effective participation of all specializations required, the restoration avoids becoming a subjective action, deeply harmful to the artwork. The work program established by this opportunity, aimed the creation and development of a comprehensive group action to act into enhancement of murals paintings heritage.

The colloquium conservation and restoration of wall paintings in 1977 (with the participation of specialists: Sbordoni Laura Mora, Paolo Mora, Paul Phillipot) held in Northern Moldavia and by publishing articles under the direction of art historian Vasile Dragut, introduced conservation guidelines in restoration of wall paintings in Romania, by exposing the principles of conservation and restoration: methods of documentation, investigation and intervention. At the same time they established the approach principles, technical procedures which still remain valid and which actually led to the implementation of the principles of scientific restoration. This raises the question of compliance with environmental framework of a monument and the existing traditional site-specific that should be preserved and the intolerance for the demolition or processing within the protected area, which cause an alteration of the volume's relations and scale. The accumulation of consistent data in this interdisciplinary colloquium and pilot sites, led restorers to the idea of introducing scientific training in university. Main place of training specialists in the field of conservation and restoration of wall paintings was *Nicolae Grigorescu* Art Institute in Bucharest, generating a process of assimilating the experience of specialists in higher education and research in collaboration with institutions from abroad in an interdisciplinary system.

Along with the post '89 events and developments, a conservation and restoration department was created at the Fine Arts Academy of Bucharest, but other art universities such as the one in Cluj and Iași were encouraged to establish their own conservation and restoration departments. The conservators of these departments had their basis formation and experience on the Conservation-Restoration Department of Bucharest along with a permanent specialization at ICROM Rome and OPD Florence.

One of the tasks of conservation and restoration department of Cluj-Napoca was, from the beginning, the perpetuation of right principles on conservation and restoration in Romania. At the same time trainers and students of the department of Cluj are attending specializations, study visits and workshops with other schools and international institutions of conservation and restoration: ICOM ICROM, OPD Florence, Rome ISCR, Romualdo Del Bianco Foundation, Accademia di Belle Arti, Macerata, Accademia di Belle Arti e del Restoration, Palermo, Accademia di Belle Arti, Bari. Being aware of the value of this kind of teaching, synchronizing the curricula for Diploma and MA studies with the other tree universities along with the important institutes on conservation and restoration in Europe, well known for their professionalism - ICROM, OPD, ISCR, is desirable for an optimized teaching and study program in our department.



Conservation lectures by conservator Paul Schwartzbaum, Erasmus + Programme at University of Art and Design Cluj-Napoca in collaboration with Guggenheim Foundation, 2014.

Harmonization number and type of courses and passing on the European Credit Transfer System has also been imposed by the European university exchange program (Erasmus - Leonardo) leading to mobility and placement of both trainers and students, thus ensuring constant correlation of Romanian education in conservation-restoration with the European one. Taking the main objectives of Carlo Argan and Cesare Brandi, ICR founders of Rome who wanted to create a new profession - "scientific restorer", conservation-restoration department has determined that the complex formation of a restorer occurs both technical skills and theoretical multidisciplinary knowledge, involving intervention products and their use.

Contemporary academic documentation and research implies also a personal activity of the conservator-restorer for optimizing his capacity to find the ideal techniques in studying, observing the artifact and to have an objective reading of the information given through the investigation technique.

Training in conservation-restoration includes both theoretical courses and practical activities aimed at giving all conservation-restoration methodologies and investigation methods specific to each area addressed. This double area of studying is what makes conservation and restoration domain a very complex one.

Conservation-restoration study in the academic years, largely ensures the student with skills into handling specific restoration laboratory equipment. The idea of the art work identity and the extreme care for it through non-invasive procedures are particularly pronounced for the student through the need of protecting it with minimal intervention during the investigation or conservation and restoration process. An important part of the preliminary analysis is the understanding of the aesthetic and historical context in which the work was created in order to see how the art object was made as the conservation-restoration procedures needs to be correct and fair for the status of the artifact.

This also requires recording each step in the conservation and restoration of the artistic object, the restoration itself seen as being part of the object's history. Research and practice in current Romanian education is based on fixating in the future restorer's conscience, the intrinsic value of the art object, this being largely subordinated to a consistent visual culture and art history theory.

The courses of specialization in Conservation and Restoration at UAD Cluj-Napoca are closely addressed to conservation and recovery of both historical and aesthetic restoration of wall paintings. Conservation and restoration interventions reveal changes in the appearance of the original architecture, media and painting, changes due to historical events or otherwise. Regarding the original appearance of the changes suffered by the painting, they are found in various forms, either as over-paintings, additions or repairs to damaged or vandalized areas or representation as reversals of custom cut scenes at the demand of the founder or donor. The experience gathered in the conservation and restoration sites, puts us face-to-face with a wide range of issues regarding the forms of alteration of wall paintings, causing us to interpret, to establish and apply the correct methodology of intervention, depending on area and the level of degradation. In chronological order of conservation and restoration process, examination is the first and most important step in reviewing the historical artistic and technical aspects of murals. In general, investigations (invasive or non-invasive) that precede a restoration are aiming to restore data acquisition on: history of the monument

and mural decorations (historical data) technique and execution methodology of paintings, including the steps and the order of their constituent materials and their structure, maintenance history of the object (individualization and recognition of previous interventions of material nature restoration), pathological processes that undermine stability (study of the conservation status of the products and processes of degradation) etc.



Graduates exhibition UAD Cluj-Napoca, specialization conservation and restoration, Expo Transilvania, 2014

In the process of conservation-restoration of wall paintings, it is first important to establish conservation status, eliminating the causes and factors of degradation, but also the constituents. To determinate the conservation status of the color layer, the testing is done for adhesion and absorption. The following procedures will be addressed in the order of their stages and intervention methodologies applied depending on the type of the present degradation: fixing, consolidation, cleaning, and treatment with barium hydroxide. The last part of the intervention is devoted to issues of aesthetic approach on murals, which aims to remove discontinuities in color layer, monitoring the overall optical drive, documentary and aesthetic image, after appropriate principles, answering every application in different ways of efficiency.

This paper summarizes the results of personal research and the reflection and contribution it has into the current debate about the history of the Romanian monuments, the technique and methodology of execution of murals that decorate them, but also into the debate regarding the steps and the interventions in enhancing these assemblies.

Conservation and restoration of murals by multiple scientific investigations that we undertake, using multidisciplinary teams, manages to clarify the level of support to the color layer, helping to clarify the technical execution, the dating, the style, the refutation or confirmation of legends. Romanian school of conservation and restoration, through its trainers, requires critical and self-critical rigor in the conservation and restoration of works of art, according to the principles of the two great founding theorists and restoration of schools in Rome - Cesare Brandi and Florence - Umberto Baldini: to restore only the work of art's matter and only if there is enough information and skills that respects the historical and aesthetic court.

The conservator-restorer always finds himself between the new materials and intervention methodologies adding to this also the economical part. This way a practicing conservator-restorer needs to be careful at the general conservation-restoration theory of the mural painting and at the new theoretical trends to be able to synchronize them to the, also new, materials and methodologies but at the same time to keep their minimal use under the rule of minimal intervention on an artwork, as we all know Cesare Brandi's books *Teoria dell restauro* and *Theory and practice of the restauro*.

The students from the University of Art and Design of Cluj-Napoca also learn the importance of a conservation-restoration project least but not last to conceive such a project as they work on restoration sites and their diploma consist in a real conservation and restoration project which needs to have a multidisciplinary background. Their diploma project has to include the history of the monument on which they have worked, the iconography, the chemical analysis of the art work materials but also of the new ones if existent, also biological tests if needed, an archeological study of the structure, the methodology, hydrology based on the type and cause of the degradation. The students are also confronted with visits on the site during the conservation-restoration by an interdisciplinary team from the Romanian Minister of Culture.

The final diploma has to be presented in front of a university board where the students present a visual display of their work. The dissemination of their results is facilitated trough a major diplomas exhibition of all departments of the University of Art and Design into a polyvalent space called Expo Transylvania. Exhibitions of their activity are also curated in the university's gallery, Casa Matei Gallery, at the Metropolitan Museum of Cluj, the History Museum of Transylvania, the Ethnographic Museum of Transylvania and also in the frame of conservation-restoration national or international salons and conferences, but also at the National Restauration Salons, MATCONS (Matter and Materials in/for Heritage Conservation), YOCOCU (Youth in Conservation of Cultural Heritage) etc.

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Conservation and restoration exhibition: *Clujul Arheologic*, History Museum of Transilvania, 2015.



Symposium: *Patru decenii de funcționare a Sistemului Românesc de Conservare și Restaurare a Patrimoniului Cultural Național*, Ethnographic Museum of Transilvania, 2015.

As a conclusion, at the University of Art and Design's conservation and restoration department, we enhance our students with knowledge and principles such as: *primum non nocere*, minimal interventions, compatible interventions

between the original material of the art work and the intervention's material, respecting the historical and aesthetic status because is not the missing part that is harmful but could be harmful what we add to the art work. Also what remains essential in their training is to own a critic attitude, to respect the original and to acknowledge their theoretical and practical skills but also to know the limits of the methodology they are applying¹.

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