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Introduction

1 Our main purpose in this paper is to question the place of the conservator in an art school and to focus on research and the relationship between art conservation and art production, or, as it is more often referred to, creation. As teachers – theorists – in the École supérieure des beaux-arts TALM, in Tours, France and the École supérieure des arts Saint-Luc in Liège, Belgium respectively, we found thanks to an enquiry made possible by an Erasmus Exchange, that we have several common points regarding our history and our conception of teaching, essentially based in a studio practice and regarded as fundamental in the etymological sense of the term.

“Je t’aime moi non plus” (parodying a French film)

2 The conservator trained in an art school is often seen as a relic of the past “painter-restorer” the one who, according to the traditional connaisseurs, should have the skills to ‘make’ the object in order to re-make it. For the artists, he or she is a kind of denatured painter, a technician whose creativity is curbed; on the other hand, the scientists encountter the conservator-restorer with suspicion as the studio and its secrets would be by nature resistant to the laboratory or scientific truth. Despite of the fact these C-R training programmes follow the international recommendations as they are laid out in the ECCO framework, the status of the conservation-restoration students inside these art schools is still ambiguous, because of the aforementioned reasons.

3 A conservator in an art school is first defined by the negative: he or she is neither a creator nor an artist. Most of the time concerned with “old things” and museum

artefacts, he or she is too cautious with objects and has a “technical” or “scientific” perspective : he or she often uses chemistry or physics to “understand” the work of art. So what does a conservator do in an art school? He or she doesn’t speak the same language as artists and even if some terminologies are shared they do not always have the same meaning. Perceived as isolated in the cultural life of the school, the conservation-restoration student works in specific studios often with restricted access due to security and handles equipment that doesn’t belong to artistic practice. All of this strengthens the perception of conservation-restoration being a strange discipline that is practised in an ivory tower, by people Munos Vinas qualifies as “chimeric”, hybrid by nature and by temperament. One last point: the conservator-in-training is also relatively expensive and asks for more financial support and scientific equipment. This is not easily understood and accepted, particularly in times of restrictions. So, a purely accounting logic tends to push the conservation-restoration to other institutions presumed better for him: in particular, the University which is identified more with this perceived “elitist” education and training.

4 But as a matter of fact, being embedded in an art school has many opportunities. In an art school we can have studios and workshops, appropriate spaces with the appropriate equipment: light, easels and modelling stands, ceramic furnaces. But most of all, it is a place where art is in progress in a dynamic and organic way. So for the conservation student, art and creation are not only an object of study: they are alive and considered in a conceptual process, as well as a technical and even technological one in close relationship with artists. In this specific environment, a practical approach is required, we are able to observe these processes, understand and sometimes explain impromptu events in a constructive dialogue.

Fig. 1 Collaboration with the artist Dorothée Selz

Marie Courseaux, Master's degree student, replacing and colouring the lichen on *Trans Europe Express*, 1972, with the artist, Conservation-restoration studio, esba TALM, site de Tours, 2012.

Credits Marie-Hélène Breuil

5 We would like to sketch some specific ideas for a better recognition of our place in the art schools. In fact, we focuss ontwo aspects defining our specificity, that should be considered as wealth and not as a threat.

Conservation-restoration research in art schools

6 Since the 1960s, the *Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development* (OECD) has attempted to define research and development activities (mainly in science and technical subjects). The *Frascati Manual*[1] and its definitions wich have now become a benchmark, proposed a methodology by enabling statistical analysis; its terminology and classifications are now used as a basis for allocating funding, in particular tax credits for research. The manual[2] devotes a section to human sciences, including a sub-category entitled (6.4) *Arts (arts, history of arts, stage arts, music)*.

7 However, the artistic world opposes against this classification and defends the specific and ontologically different nature of "artistic research", rejecting any form of definition (because defining means limiting, which goes against creative freedom). In both France and Belgium, artists and art teachers are concerned about this issue. They claim a new area of exploration and invention, which could previously only be defined negatively: artistic research would **not** be fundamental, applied or experimental, nor scientific, technological or guided. It would be artistic: purely and simply. Maybe in this (categorical and almost frenzied) refusal there are remnants of Kantian thinking, whereby art has no other purpose than art itself.

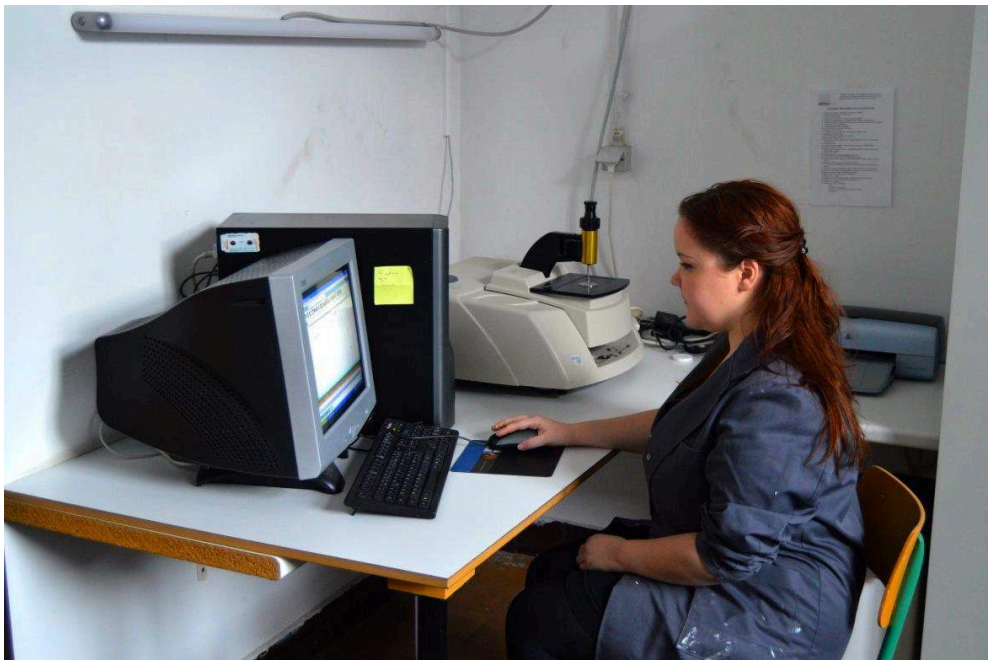
8 However, the fact remains that conservation-restoration students find themselves in an awkward situation. According to ECCO's recommendations, a conservator-restorer, even if educated and trained in an art school, is a researcher. In a short-term training course, he could maybe content himself with being a "technician", but in a long-term training course (*European Qualification Framework level 7 –EQFL7*), his knowledge and expertise should be combined to "increase the pool of knowledge, including knowledge of man, culture and society"[3] his research, even targeted, does not go against the "use of this pool of knowledge to devise new applications", even if this is not always systematic, given the original and even unique character of the art objects he cares for. His education and training familiarises the conservation-restoration student with scientific and interdisciplinary research: he feels in no way "different" from other academic, scientific or technological world. It can even be said that, in this respect, he is uninhibited. However, it should be noted that the aesthetic component of conservation-restoration research, although not always vital, does often remain an overriding dimension; and the "qualitative" aspect of interventions on objects which are unique because of their past, is not well suited to traditional evaluation processes that are often quantitative. How, for example, should the relevance of a reintegration, a degree of intervention, the sensitivity and nuance of an adjustment or treatment be assessed?

9 The potential trap with the particularisation of "artistic" research, the privileged framework of which would be the art schools, is as follows:

- Artists are tempted to move conservation-restoration projects to applied, even scientific, research because they do not, strictly speaking, include a "creative" dimension (other than experimental). At the same time, artists, are generally relatively not sensitive for the aesthetic aspects of a method or a technology).
- Academics, whose financial resources are restricted in the current economic climate, are tempted to reject conservators-restorers, for their research may not appear likely to be "applied" or systematically "developed" enough concidering the often unique objects they deal with. Therefore, access to budgetary resources of "art research" is often insufficient. If academics do show openness - and I would like to hail the fruitful collaborations which we have developed over the years with the University of Liège and, in particular, the archeometry department, there are still many potential pitfalls.
- Finally, Research Academies' evaluation and finance commissions have very few or no conservation-restoration experts. We continue to be surprised by the ignorance of the academic world in general as to the nature, objectives and methods of our specific education and training. In case only art historian "experts" are called upon to assess the value of research in conservation-restoration, a potential candidate immediately finds itself at a disadvantage... Incidentally, is it still necessary to highlight the fact that a conservator-restorer from an art school who succeeds to obtain one of the few assignments allocated to university graduates (for example, in art history), is rarely seen in a positive light?

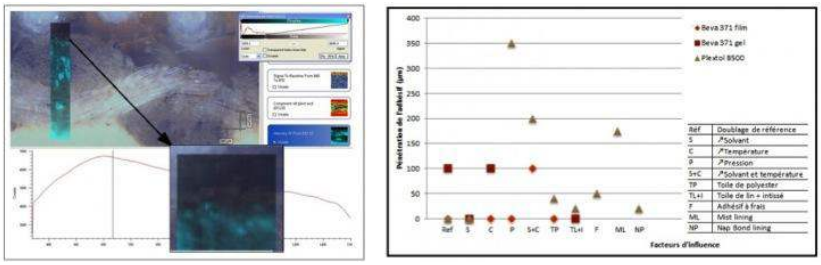
10 Despite these pitfalls, we do carry out research in art school certainly in our Master courses, sometimes in association with Universities, and especially in the case of doctorate studies. This trend is developing slowly but steadily.

Fig. 2 ESA Saint-Luc Liège research equipments



Fourier Transform InfraRed spectroscopy
Credits: Nico Broers

Fig. 3 Raman Spectroscopy - Archeometry research equipments (University of Liège)



Scientific research led within the framework of a thesis of Master's degree[4].
Credits: Manon d'Haenens

11 In Belgium and France, the solution to our limited resources often involves collaboration with institutional laboratories, such as IRPA (*Institut Royal du Patrimoine Artistique*, Bruxelles), C2RMF (*Centre de recherche et de restauration des musées de France,* Paris), CICRP (*Centre Interdisciplinaire de Recherche en Conservation-Restauration,* Marseille), CRCC (*Centre de recherche sur la conservation des collections,* Paris). Professionals linked to these institutions are very well able to understand the specific nature of our needs and also the interest of our approaches. This institutional collaboration lends a form of credibility to our specific approach to art.

12 Another option is the creation of international research groups, which, although with limited financial resources but with committed staff resources, could enable the organisation of highly specialised study days or workshops. Nevertheless, it must be noted that the complexity of funding applications can be a great burden on the staff involved.

Fig. 4 Experimental research in conservation-restoration

Workshop : ESA Saint-Luc de Liège – Urbino University – Porto University.
Crédits: Olivier Verheyden

Fig. 5 Applied Research in conservation-restoration

Chassis courbe auto-tendeur: conception et installation: Nico Broers[5].
Credits: Nico Broers

Fig. 6 Targeted research in conservation-restoration

Design of a specific equipment in the framework of a master thesis.
Credits: Nico Broers

13 Finally, it is the mediatisation of our training courses and the publication of research undertaken, which will contribute to the establishment of our status and at least our legitimate position as researchers. The publication of special reports by CeROArt, devoted to the research performed by young graduates, contributes towards this goal. Also the poster session during this symposium, proves that all of the objectives pursued by ENCoRE are present.

14 In conclusion, as well in art schools as in laboratories or at universities, young conservation-restoration researchers are seen by their colleagues as either renegades or mutants. Yet we are not the unique product of "hybridisation", but are formed by complete and independent education and training programs that are designed to be multi-disciplinary and free of any inhibitions in terms of art, science and technologies. We are convinced that research is inherent to the conservation-restoration profession: it is time to reject sterile classifications which aim to pigeon-hole conservation-restoration education in one field or another, and, quite simply, allow us fair access to “Research” budgets of all kinds.

Production-transmission

15 Another approach is to address the question of ‘production’ in order to have access to the art school research budgets: this is the focus of the programme “Replace or remake?”[6] that looks into the production and re-production of contemporary works of art. The calls for research projects from the French ministry of culture insist that an art

school is a place for production in art and design, so it seems that we as conservation-restoration educators do not have any place there. Therefore, we have to consider in what way conservation-restoration can be fitted in within the concept of 'art production'. Exploiting different aspects of conservation of contemporary art might be the way to constitute a better integration in the art schools.

16 As conservation specialists, we contribute to the development of knowledge, notably through the study of materials and techniques used in the production of art objects, often bearing in mind their future conservation and exhibition. We acknowledge that in recent decades, art historians traditionally neglecting technique in favour of formal or conceptual approaches (or a combination of both) , seem to be more and more interested in the materiality of artworks. This seems in phase with the increasing demand from art students for teaching of technical subjects without rejecting notions of project based work. Since the 1960's there has been a separation between creation and technique in teaching art, both in France and in Belgium. Technical aspects have been rejected and were considered to be workmanship and were neglected in favour of project and concept. The teaching of conservation-restoration implies forms of practical work and apprenticeship, the mastery and transmission of a wide range of traditional and non-traditional techniques that may interest some art students curious to learn about subjects such as mould making, historical polychrome techniques, wood and stone sculpture, as well as about our knowledge of modern materials, resins and plastics. Hence, we can help to understand and reframe artistic and technical processes which are sometimes no longer used or understood by artists. If one of the objectives of conservation-restoration, as is explicitly mentioned in every ethical code or charter, is the transmission of artworks and cultural objects to future generations, it seems that the conservator must also contribute to the transmission of skills, techniques and technologies.

Fig. 7 Sculpture studio, conservation-restoration department, esba TALM, site de Tours

Legend : Students working on stone sculpture reproduction techniques.
Credits: Esba Tours

Fig. 8 Sculpture studio, Conservation-restoration department, esba TALM, site de Tours

Student working on mould making techniques.
Credits: Esba Tours

17 In addition, the re-production or reconstruction of (parts of) artworks through the replacement of materials or elements is a solution which is often sought to meet the demand for well known, non-preserved art work to be exhibited; especially if the evocation through documentary methods is considered to be inadequate (at least from the point of view of the spectator). This puts the conservator in the position of an expert that is of interest to curators as well as artists especially when a public artwork is being commissioned and durability is a condition.

Fig.9 Students working on Federica Matta's sculpture La Maison des enfants

Federica Matta, La Maison des enfants, 1992, sculpture garden La Petite Escalère, Landes (40), being restore in june 2014 during a field trip organised by the Conservation-restoration department, Tours, and La Petite Escalère.

Credits : Federica Matta, LPE, Picture: Marie-Hélène Breuil

18 Naturally, we do not want to impose upon art students how to make sustainable works of art or how to use stable and durable materials. This would be a non-understanding of modern and post-modern artistic processes. But reintroducing technique as a moment in art teaching is a way to strengthen our attachment to an art school, not as an accident, or a political decision, but as a necessity in understanding the art process as a global fact.

Conclusion

19 In conclusion, we can both bear witness through similar experiences to the advantages and disadvantages of teaching conservation-restoration in an art school. In our view, the advantages easily outweigh the disadvantages. However there is still some way to go before all the grey areas of this cohabitation are cleared: thinning the varnish which confers on restorers the “gallery tone” employed in old museums, finding methods of

improving our communication, finally adding the last touches to these conservation-restoration programmes so that they are perceived as an integral part of the art school, of its historical and aesthetic case.[7]

20 We believe that one of our tasks is to work on something beyond our traditional image, on our capacity to express what we are and what we do as conservators. We should avoid the old clichés, render them obsolete, transform them: what we offer is original, dynamic, vivid, as is the art and research that our knowledge and skills produce.

21 As we say in French, *avec l'art et la manière.*

NOTES

1. According the place of the meeting, in Frascati, Italy (1963).

2. Frascati Manual, *The Measurement of Scientific and Technological Activities*, *Proposed Standard Practice for Surveys on Research and Experimental Development,* OECD Publishing, Publication date: 11 Dec 2002 (6th edition) , Online, (March 13th 2014) , http://www.oecdbookshop.org/oecd/display.asp?LANG=EN&SF1=DI&ST1=5LMQCR2K61JJ

3. Frascati Manual, *ibidem.*

4. Manon D'HAENENS, « La pénétration des adhésifs de doublage », *CeROArt* [Online], | 2013, Online since 12 May 2013, connection on 21 August 2014. URL : http://ceroart.revues.org/3082

5. Nico BROERS and Eleni MARKOPOULOU, « La restauration d'une œuvre monumentale de Lucien Simon », *CeROArt* [Online], 2 | 2008, Online since 04 October 2008, connection on 21 August 2014. URL : http://ceroart.revues.org/560

6. See the seminary document "Tables de travail" devoted to conservation and reports most notably on research led by the ER[cr]OS team in the course of its work at the Ecole supérieure des beaux-arts de Tours. (OnLine, 21/08/2014) http://tablesdetravail.hypotheses.org/seminaire-de-lequipe-de-recherce

7. Refering to Cesare BRANDI, *Teoria del restauro*, Roma, Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 1963.

ABSTRACTS

Teaching conservation-restoration in an art school can be considered a blessing as well as a challenge: What is the position of a conservator-restorator in this environment? What are the relationships between art conservation and creation, creation and technique? What legitimises research in conservation-restoration, scientific or applied, in this context? This paper, based on our teaching experiences in France and in Belgium reveals a field of expertise and the necessity of understanding the processes of art creation holistically.

L'enseignement de la conservation-restauration au sein d'une école d'art est une chance et un défi. Quelle y est la place du conservateur-restaurateur? Quelles sont les relations entre conservation et création, création et technique, et quelle légitimité pour la recherche en conservation-restauration, scientifique ou appliquée, dans ce contexte? Cet article, fondé sur notre expérience de l'enseignement en France comme en Belgique, met en lumière un champ d'expertise et la nécessité de comprendre les processus artistiques dans leur globalité.

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Mots-clés: enseignement, conservation-restauration, art, technique, recherche, production
Keywords: teaching, conservation-restoration, art, technique, research, production

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