

From *prism* to *kaleidoscope*: metamorphosis of contemporary conservator's tools

Contemporary Art has an *aesthetic function* completely different to that of a classical work of art. It is no longer about contemplation (where aesthetics and history are expressed together), but about life-span, action and interaction. Often polysensorial, these complex works are also polysemic. So, we need a new "conceptual tool box" to apprehend them outside the traditional categories and values. This toolbox has to be designed in a practical perspective: it is about renewing our conservation approach, to rethink our methodology.

The contemporary artist uses technical means to fulfil the *aesthetic function*: they aim to create an "effect". The material and functional analysis combined with the technical and analytical approach are not enough to perceive this fully. If we require the traditional conservator to take a practised, sharp look, we must encourage the Contemporary Art conservator to have a broader sensitivity that encompasses all the senses. To understand the work, the conservator must therefore become a "perceptor", and "test" the stimuli created by the artist as objectively and sensitively as possible. Even if it seems paradoxical, the conservator's sensitivity is more essential than ever when dealing with these contemporary and often significantly technical works.

Is it possible to awaken the conservator's sensitivity, and to train it? How? Are traditional decision-making models adequate, or should other methodologies be considered? What role could the most recent value assessment models play in this sensitive approach? This paper will suggest some leads and will recall the importance of updating critical concepts for Contemporary Art. Indeed, conceptual tools are not theoretical, but practical. They help to see and perceive the work from other angles. Objectivity is a prism: but for a complex work, conservator also need to use the kaleidoscope of perceptions.



CV

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