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VALUES ASSESSMENT TOWARDS DECISION-MAKING IN CONSERVATION: THE VICEREGAL PORTRAIT COLLECTION OF PORTUGUESE INDIA

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ABSTRACT

The portrait gallery of the vice-roys and governors of former Portuguese State of India is a unique collection which testifies 450 years of Portuguese ultramarine history. Although most of the earlier paintings are in a very poor state of conservation, one can still identify different intangible values which are important to recognize in order to properly interpret the collection, as well as defining a conservation methodology. The recent study of these portraits allowed the assessment of values as well as the development of several approaches concerning their valorisation in which regards decision-making towards its conservation. In this paper we will explore values assessment in this collection as well as useful diagrams that help quantify intangible values under the scope of contemporary conservation theories.

Keywords: Vice-Roys gallery / Values assessment / Paintings conservation/ Decision-making diagrams / Repaints

1 INTRODUCTION

Conservators have a unique role among the professionals that deal with cultural property; they alter the object itself, not just people's ideas about it. Conservators therefore have a special responsibility to consider both material and non-material information's in their decision-making. (APPELBAUM, 2010)

During our team's first fieldwork in Archaeological Survey of India Museum (Old Goa) in 2011, we made the survey of the conservation condition of all 72 portraits in exhibition, 55 in wooden support and 17 in canvas. At the time, it wasn't possible to include in our survey the portraits in reserve rooms, where 44 portraits are kept, 32 in wooden support and 12 in canvas. In terms of chronological frames, the older paintings were made in 1547 and the last one, the photography from General Governor Manuel Vassalo e Silva, dates from 1961 (Table 1). The conservation condition of the collection is variable as well as the causes of degradation, but for the purpose of this paper, we will focus on the repaints issue. In fact, the older paintings on wooden support are the ones in worst condition. Among these, some are only partially repainted in the background around the figure of the ruler, but the majority, around 31 portraits in exhibition and an extra 24 in reserve rooms (chronologically situated between 1547 and 1680) are fully repainted with several layers of paint from the XVIIth and XIXth centuries. These will constitute the case-study for this paper.

Table 1: Chronologic distribution of the portraits from the Vice-Roy Gallery and their support (including the three MNAA portraits)

Attributable period	Number of governments	Number of portraits	Support
1547-1600	33 (since 1505)	32 (16 in display)	wood
1605-1645	15	17 (13 in display)	wood
1651-1698	22	24 (13 in display)	wood
1701-1750	16	14 (9 in display)	wood (12) / canvas (2)
1754-1794	11	6 (5 in display)	wood (3) / canvas (3)
1807-1844	24	3 (2 in display)	canvas
1851-1900	34	8 (4 in display)	canvas
1905-1961	28	13 (8 in display)	canvas (12) / photo (1)

A preliminary observation allowed the identification of older paint layers underneath the surface. Moreover, it was also clear the presence of underlying details such as lacunas and other textures highlighting different compositions of the figures, coats of arms and details such as the raised decorative effects of the rulers' costume or background draperies. Further documental investigation proved this collection suffered several 'renovation' interventions over 400 years which added up to four different layers over the original painting. Also, the comparison between some of the portraits restored in 1954-61 and the gallery's descriptions from coeval documents proved the artistic quality of these paintings, and their iconographic value, depicting the coats of arms, insignias, armoury and other attributes of each ruler. The original compositions held a unique documental value to ultramarine history and indo-Portuguese art history which remains sadly hidden behind several layers of paint. From a painting conservator point of view, a number of questions pops up immediately:

- a) To remove or not to remove the repaints?
- b) Should historical values prevail over originality values? Most interventions are documented and took place in a specific identified context, some of them have attributed authorship.
- c) The technical needs of such endeavour are enormous and need prior exams to assure the original layers are still there and that can be recovered.
- d) ASI's policy of non-intervention has probably saved this collection from a worst destiny, but its current conservation condition brings about misinterpretation issues and loss of values. Are the custodians aware of these issues?
- e) Who should decide then which values should be preserved? And how could we cooperate?

Reviewing contemporary conservation theories seemed an interesting start point to address our questions.

2 ASSESSING HERITAGE VALUES

2.1 WHY? HOW? BY WHOM?

Conservator Barbara Appelbaum, considers conservators shouldn't be the only ones responsible for intervention decisions which can lead to dramatic alterations of values in a work of art. Her opinion is that *an optimal treatment will rely on explicit decisions shared with all stakeholders, not by the formulaic applications of familiar pre-conceived patterns of treatment* (APPELBAUM, 2010). In order to reach consensus in this

multidisciplinary approach, she developed an intervention methodology which allows the construction of a '*structured space*' for discussion, between experts, custodians and stakeholders, regarding the valorisation or loss of values and/or meanings that can occur from conservation intervention. She believes an open discussion and sharing of responsibilities, in what concerns values assessment and the expected treatment outcome, increases the probability of a successful intervention. All steps of her methodology¹ seem pretty clear to what concerns traditional conservation practice, but the third, '*Determination of the ideal state*', presumes the existence of that *shared decision* towards values assessment, that conservators and other heritage professionals, custodians and stakeholders are normally not used to share. Usually, the values more associated with the object's authenticity will prevail, in a non-shared decision process. However, conservation theorist Salvador Muñoz-Viñas, reflecting about the 'ideal authentic state' of the work of art warns us that authenticity as an '*essential qualifying factor concerning values*' (as proposed by Nara's Document on Authenticity) is relative and highly influenced by each person's own 'favourite authentic state', which derives from one's personal relation created with the work of art. Furthermore, he points out that conservation practice can alter the object, but cannot make it more authentic, for '*the only truly authentic condition of anything is the state in which exists* (MUÑOZ-VIÑAS, 2009).

What these author's tell us is that conservators should avoid unclear or biased decisions in conservation practise, based only on common methodology methods which primarily address material preservation and the search for the 'authentic' in a single perspective. Values assessment should then become an objective process, through which conservator, custodian and stakeholders contribute to a shared definition of heritage cultural significance, which respects cultural identity, since authenticity has proven to be a relative concept. For the conservator, this means leaving a comfort zone and finding a way to interact with a new collective who will have different perspectives regarding the scope of his/her work and that are supposed to participate in its process. In effect, recent trends in conservation developed since the Nara convention in 1994 highlight the need for conservators to open from academic and institutional framework towards a broader and inclusive participation in civil society, to what concerns heritage. In a global context of change as a natural process in the evolution of societies and heritage functions, conservators are meant to play an important role, among other stakeholders, when defining values such as cultural identity and cultural significance (AVRAMI, TORRE, 2000). This sharing of decisions, on the other hand, assumes that 'negotiations' concerning heritage values can generate debate between the different groups in society who believe have a right over it. Furthermore, after some years of value-based conservation management and practice, authors stress out that the social value and the participation of the public aren't still properly included in heritage values assessment and implementation processes (POULIOS, 2010; DÍAZ-ANDREU, 2017), leading to decisions based in implicit rather than explicit heritage significance (FREDHEIM, KHALAF, 2016). Conservator Irit Narkiss had already pointed out that social significancy comes from the relationships the public makes with heritage objects and sites (NARKISS, 2007) so engaging the public within heritage values assessment is a challenge that still needs to

¹ The methodology she proposes is divided in 8 steps: 1) Characterization; 2) Historic reconstruction; 3) Determination of *ideal state*; 4) Decision on a *realistic goal* of treatment; 5) Choosing treatment methods and materials; 6) Pre-treatment documentation; 7) Treatment; 8) Final treatment documentation. (APPELBAUM, 2010).

be addressed. Case-studies regarding public access to technical art history and conservation issues in exhibitions (SHELDON, 2008) highlighted the positive response from the audience to a 'universalist' approach. The use of visual material allowed a 'sense of discovery' and promoted different levels of interpretation by the public. Effectively, architectural historian Daniel Bluestone had already suggested contemporary conservation should move towards interpretation, by making places and creating social connections, an approach which will have a more close connection to '*values-and-benefits part of conservation*' (BLUESTONE, 2000). Conservation practice must then ensure correct interpretation of the object's dual nature, i.e. its material and non-material aspects, where the conservator bears responsibility for identifying the appropriate interpretation after consultation with other parties and for devising a treatment that embodies it (APPELBAUM, 2010), a process still not very common in conservation-restoration practice, although included in E.C.C.O.'s (European Confederation of Conservator-Restorers Organization) professional guidelines.

Article 6: The conservator-restorer, in collaboration with other professional colleagues involved with cultural heritage, shall take into account the requirements of its social use while preserving the cultural heritage. (...) Article 24: The conservator-restorer shall strive to promote a deeper understanding of the profession and a greater awareness of conservation-restoration among other professions and the public. (E.C.C.O., 2003)

Ultimately, considering this broader meaning of conservation, the conservator's role, by assuring the correct interpretation of heritage, 'universally and democratically' accessed, will help promote education, awareness, preservation, thus contributing to more conscious trends of other economic and political activities. On a more practical level, let's apply these reflexions to our case-study and how could they be developed.

2.2 ASSESSING VALUES TOWARDS CULTURAL SIGNIFICANCE. A CONSERVATOR'S INTERPRETATION OF THE VICEREGAL GALLERY

Cultural heritage values are qualified in different typologies, attributed by theorists and international charters over time. Depending on the heritage category and authors' expertise and approach, the values chosen for assessment may vary. For our case-study, we will continue to adopt objects conservator and theorist Barbara Appelbaum's proposed terms, considering their relation with the collections' interpretation and influence on treatment methodologies. This values assessment² is influenced by our personal and professional relation with the collection, in the context of our investigations, assuming that this isn't a definitive process, but a starting point, and that should benefit from other points of view as mentioned earlier.

Artistic Value: Currently, due to overpaint layers, the real artistic value of this collection can't be properly appreciated. Even in the portraits which were restored in the former Institute for Exam and Restoration of Works of Art, the chromatic integration process valued aesthetic rather than the interpretive appreciation. Still, comparison between restoration reports and documentation from the XVIth and XVIIth centuries, proves this collection has an important artistic value in the context of portrait collections and indo-Portuguese art. The study of these paintings would allow to gather new information regarding authorships, artistic activities and techniques from local painters as well as establishing artistic comparison between indo-Portuguese painting.

Aesthetic Value: Again, aesthetic value of this collection is hidden behind overpaint layers, but some of the restored portraits illustrate the potential aesthetic visual impact of these paintings. In fact, as in other regal or viceregal portrait collections, the decorative and plastic qualities of the composition matched the portrayed importance. Besides, the paintings were produced by the

² Although Appelbaum includes *Newness Values*, we considered that was not applicable to our case-study.

most qualified artists working in the region at the time.

Historical Value: Commissioning the portrait of the Portuguese 'Estado da Índia' ruler before leaving the government was a tradition that started with vice-Roy D. João de Castro in 1547, that lasted until the last general governor António Vassalo e Silva, in 1961. All the portraits contain information regarding the ruler represented, namely their name, period of government and sometimes their political or military achievements. The portraits also represent other information such as coat of arms, military insignias and other personal information associated with the ruler's biography, thus adding a unique *documental* and iconographic value. This collection has been reproduced several times throughout history, as well as cited in travellers and explorers documents, giving us precious information regarding its evolution in terms of places of exhibitions and renovation interventions. In addition, the last major renovation intervention by Captain Gomes da Costa (future 10th President of Portuguese Republic) is signed and also reproduced in an aquarelles album produced by Costa himself. Later, the portraits restoration process in the Institute for the Exam and Restoration of Works of Art³ in Lisbon also added a few pages to this collection's history, mainly due to Afonso de Albuquerque's intervention. This iconic representation is, if fact, just an addition to other rulers' portrait, in a misinterpretation which dates back to 1840 and that lingered after restoration process due to a political decision which involved several personalities from the culture and political sphere of that time.

Use Value/ Function: The collection's current use differs from its original use or *function* a term we prefer to use in this context. The Vice-Roys and Governors portrait gallery's purpose was to emphasize the Portuguese's heroic achievements overseas as well as their precedence in Asian territories. This gallery created a great visual impact to all its beholders, deliberately creating an imposing and reverent background of all diplomatic events in the main Acts room, resembling an iconostasis. Viceroy and humanist D. João de Castro idealized this gallery in 1547, probably inspired by other European portrait galleries and also to enhance the notion of Empire associated with the Portuguese territorial extension from western Lisbon, ruled by King D. João III, to eastern Goa. Historian Annemarie Jordan-Geshwend believes D. João de Castro was 'honouring himself and also paying a visual tribute to the epic men that preceded him'. Anyway, this original function had already changed in the late XIXth century, when the portraits were restored by Gomes da Costa in order to be incorporated in the future *Real Museu da Índia Portuguesa* (Royal Museum of Portuguese India) to be established in Old Goa, in the context of several activities towards Old Goa's heritage preservation and musealisation (MENDIRATA, SANTOS, 2011). Current function of the portraits in Goa is associated to archaeological artefacts and other objects from former Portuguese period, such as currency, stamps, statues and Christian art, according to ASI's policy to keep antiquities in association with their place of origin (ASI, 2013). Regarding the three portraits incorporated in National Museum of Ancient Art, in Lisbon, two of them are exhibited together with oriental art, associating a more symbolic and iconographic function.

(Hidden) Research Values: Scholars and experts have been stressing out the need for adequate restoration of this collection since the beginning of the XXth century. In fact, the portraits appearance have no valid research value to what concerns original historic information such as the rulers physiognomy, their coats of arms and other artistic, aesthetic and historical data mentioned above. Moreover, even the restoration process of some paintings didn't value original aspects, but aesthetic ones, so the original inscriptions are concealed as well as other iconographic information. These images can't be classified as being true to their original composition in the illustration of academic or non-academic publications. Besides, the exchange of portraits during renovation processes created a series of historic forgeries that can't be considered historically accurate for research. Nevertheless, there is a high research potential

³ Between 1953 and 1961, seven portraits of this collection were restored in the 'Oficina de Beneficiação de Pintura Antiga' (*Old paintings improvement studio*), under the supervision of restorers Fernando Mardel and Abel de Moura (from 1960 onwards). This studio was in the Institute for the Exam and Restoration of Works of Art, which was under the survey of the National Ministry of Education. During that time Portuguese government was ruled by a dictatorial and centralist regime.

regarding the materials and techniques used, from several periods, to the study of indo-Portuguese paintings and also regarding historical and iconographic information. Still, there is a need to conduct scientific exams and analysis to reveal those hidden research values.

Age Value: The overall condition of the portraits illustrates age value. Materials natural degradation, paint flakes, yellowing varnishes, artists techniques used, repaint layers, etc. If restoration intervention is meant to take place, methodology should respect age value and correct interpretation, rather than recovering the aesthetic apparatus of the portraits.

Sentimental Value: The Portuguese State of India⁴ lasted for 450 years and the miscegenation colonization process, created a specific social identity in the people from those territories, apart from India's society, government and culture. The integration in India of the last territories under Portuguese rule in 1961, caused a great impact in that society, specially to the ones that were born 'Portuguese' and never considered themselves Indians, but Goan, Damanese or Diuan. Still today, nationality and social identity issues are present in those territories, even in the younger generations. This social and cultural minority, among the diverse Indian multiculturalism, still uses civil and religious heritage from Portuguese origin that is nowadays under the custodianship of the government of India (REIS, 2008). For them, this portrait collection isn't considered just another archaeological heritage, but a 'living heritage', a symbol of its cultural identity, as descends from the Rome of the Orient.

Monetary: In an open market context, either the collection, or the portraits *per se*, would have monetary value as well as a highly collectable value.

Associative: Associative values can be assessed only through further research on authorship, and identification of the portrayed. Regarding authorship, art historians Vitor Serrão and Pedro Dias have already pointed out probable artists, such as Constantino, for the earlier portraits from the XVIth century (DIAS, 1998) and Aleixo Godinho for the portraits of the beginning of the XVIIth century (SERRÃO, 2011), but further archival investigation still needs to be done regarding artists in Goa. Also, it is known that some portraits were made in Lisbon and arrived in Goa along with the new ruler. Associative values can also relate to the cooperation of chronicler Gaspar Correia in the physical description of the portrayed in 1547 and to other later events, such as the signed renovation intervention of Manuel Gomes da Costa in 1893-94, who would become the future President of Portugal during a brief period in 1926.

Commemorative: Again, further research should be developed regarding commemorative value. Besides the first and second sequences of portraits, commissioned only by only ruler (D. João de Castro and Fernão Teles de Menezes) to portrait other rulers before them, the common tradition was to order the portrait of the Vice-Roy or Governor before leaving its position. This commission constitutes itself as a commemoration of the portrayed. Some paintings may have an additional commemorative value, such as the one from D. João de Castro which was commissioned to commemorate his victory in the second siege of Diu, in 1547.

Educational: Educational value is associated to historical, commemorative and sentimental values. Goa's and other ultramarine territories under Portuguese rule history relates to these characters and the portraits serve as physical testimonies of that past. Besides, the fact that they are displayed together with objects of the 'Portuguese period', and in the core of World Monument Site of Old Goa easily enhances the context and educational value of all objects displayed.

Rarity: Rarity value also needs further research, since there exists other portraits of some of the main rulers, but not all of them are accurate or made in the rulers' presence. A survey still needs to be done to identify other portraits or accurate reproductions.

Values assessment is an important exercise when discussing preservation or

⁴ The Portuguese presence in India lasted for 450 years, from 1505 to 1961. It once included the coastal territories from the Malabar Coast until the Bay of Bengal. The territories which still constituted the Portuguese State of India in 1947 were Goa, Daman, Diu, Dadra and Nagar Aveli which returned to Indian administration in 1961.

conservation goals and the conservator has an important role, due to the fact that conservation intervention does alter the object as well as the values associated with it. Shared analysis and quantification of values will insure that different points of views have been addressed and consensus may be achievable. Then, the conservator may define a conservation methodology that enhances the object's meanings and correct interpretation, assuring first of all an optimal conservation treatment, which respects ethical and deontological conservation directives.

3 QUANTIFYING VALUES TOWARDS DECISION-MAKING

3.1 VALUES ANALYSIS AND CONSERVATION

Barbara Appelbaum considers that the objects' 'ideal state' (and not authentic state) corresponds to the object's physical state that best embodies the values given by stakeholders and custodians, under the condition that it will have to match one of the object's actual 'historical states'. It involves discussion concerning the object's projected future and, as Muñoz-Viñas had already stressed out, no historical state can be considered more important or the best one. A good starting point will be based on a values analysis that can help clarify meanings and develop a conservation methodology which takes in account not only preservation goals, but also enhance significance and object interpretation, creating a less technical and more accessible approach towards custodians and stakeholders not familiar with conservation-restoration terminology. Nevertheless, we believe an 'ideal state' condition may not always be practically achievable through conservation intervention, mainly due to specific ethical and deontological considerations of the conservator's profession, as well as its vow to long-term preservation. Challenges can arise when defining an achievable treatment goal and the solution may sometimes be found outside the object (through replicas or digital mock-ups). Regarding the Vice-roys gallery, defining an 'ideal state' brings about a great deal of responsibility, so conducting prior radiographic exams will be essential to confirm, foremost, the correct identification of the portrayed and, secondly, the conservation condition of the 'original' or more primitive layer underneath the repaints.

Our first approach may be to consider the 'original state' (the general appearance of the object at the time of its accomplishment) as the ideal state, in order to access the most primitive layers of the portraits that will match documental references. It can turn out that there is little evidence of the primitive layers and that a large area of compensation is required through restoration intervention. Other hypothesis is that later (but of good quality) renovation interventions are in better condition than the underlying layer and still have documental value. In terms of interpretation, the gallery's narrative should have a coherent chronologic construction, so shouldn't the collection share the same 'historical state' in all portraits? Considering 'ideal state' as the original state may be tricky and we should bear in mind that removal of repaints is always an irreversible operation. Could we reproduce this original state in another support with digital technology and keep a 'current state'? How could that work in the exhibition room? As one can understand, a potential conservation process of this collection poses many challenges which are delicate to address. Still, promoting discussion about them is always positive and reflect the idea of change has a part of cultural heritage evolution and universality. Over more, considering this collection as transcultural heritage, a dialogue between both responsible 'cultural communities' which generated and care for it constitutes a UNESCO's fundamental principle internationally accepted. However, any 'negotiation' regarding this collection won't be

easy, especially considering its association with a foreign colonial reference and a cultural minority that may pose some sensitive issues in the political and sociological sphere.

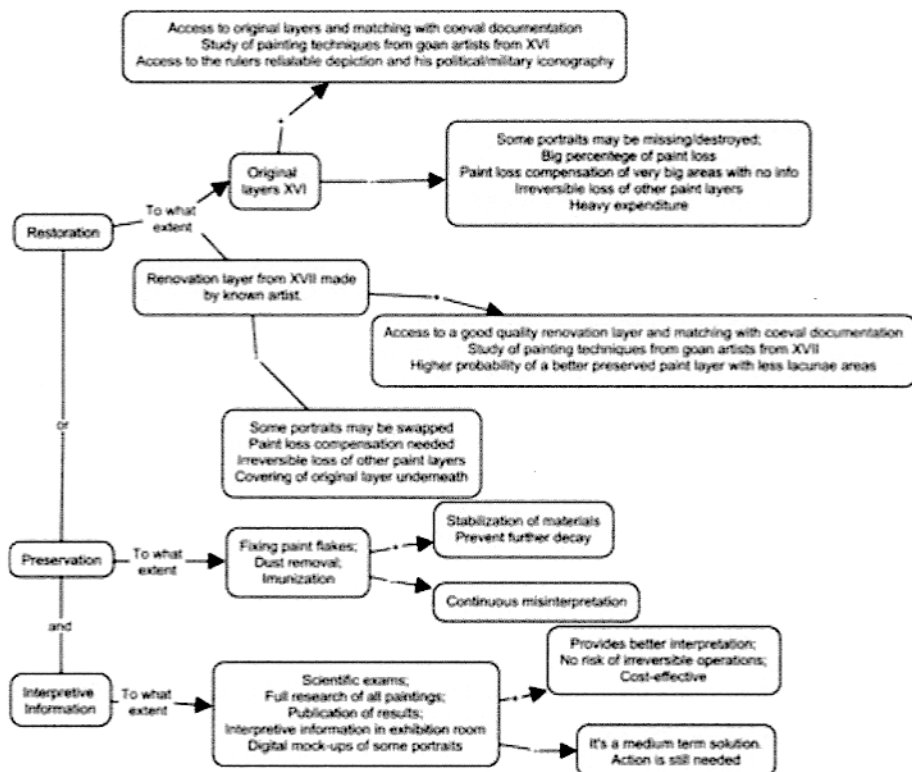
3.2 DECISION-MAKING AND DECISION-MAKING TOOLS

The concept of "sharing conservation decisions", was first developed by conservator Stephan Michalski in 1992 and has been passed on to conservators and heritage managers by ICCROM courses since 2002. It urged from the need to '*strengthen further interdisciplinary decision-making in conservation and restoration, to develop common discourses and unifying themes, while recognizing and celebrating approaches and methods, which are rooted in different cultures, [thus improving] conservation decisions by ensuring transparency, traceability, and the effectiveness of the process*' (ICCROM, 2008). Applying this concept in everyday conservation practice has successfully helped conservators develop tools for assessing and surveying different solutions to overcome issues that can rise during an intervention, proving that different options do not imply that each participant is subjective, arbitrary or mistaken (MICHALSKI, ROSSI-DORIA, 2011). We believe that simplifying and laying-out complex issues in decision diagrams and tables, can also be applied to quantification and qualification of values, as well as assessing a conservation methodology in our case-study. These systems could then be used as demonstrative and working tools within discussion platforms and frameworks between representatives of custodians, stakeholders and community and experts regarding possible solutions for these portraits.

Table 1: Matrix simulation for value-based conservation decisions on the vice-roys gallery

Possible conservation solutions	Removal of all repaints until primitive layer	Removal of all repaints until best preserved quality layer	Preservation, scientific study and interpretation solutions (display/media)	Do nothing
Values				
<i>Artistic</i>	2	2	0	-1
<i>Aesthetic</i>	1	2	0	-1
<i>Historical/documental</i>	1	1	2	-1
<i>Use/Function</i>	2	2	2	0
<i>Research</i>	1	1	2	-1
<i>Age</i>	0	0	0	0
<i>Sentimental</i>	1	1	1	0
<i>Monetary</i>	2	1	1	-1
<i>Associative</i>	1	1	1	0
<i>Commemorative</i>	1	1	1	0
<i>Educational</i>	1	1	2	-1
<i>Rarity</i>	2	1	1	0
Total	15	14	13	-6

Table 1 simulates quantification of values depending on the conservation solution chosen, in a quantification system which can be easily exposed to a panel or collective of non-conservators, thus promoting objective and constructive discussions of complex issues. It points out, in our point of view, the different expected results from no intervention to full restoration in an immediate way. Of course, each solution could still be divided in several steps and details of its methodology, in order to address traceability and also the classification system can be modified to other mathematical functions that best adapt the needed assessment.

Diagram 1: Decision-tree⁵ to complement value assessment matrix table

The biggest advantage, in our opinion, is that compels us to reflect and discuss complex issues in a simple display. The biggest disadvantage may be the lack of specific information, when one values a specific decision ignoring non-specified details, for example, choosing the removal of all repaints can turn out in a collection with few original material, so the final result could imply a great percentage of compensation, which would then compromise interpretation. When the outcome of this type of reflexion is needed, other tools can be used to complement the matrix table such as the 'decision tree', a diagram which helps 'sharing a mental arithmetic and its conversions and weightings as explicitly as possible' (MICHALSKI; ROSSI-DORIA, 2011). These types of diagrams are used to illustrate the path to a final decision, while revealing all the other paths rejects and why, as well as other options not considered at the time. They are not meant to automate decisions, but to help us to think through complex decisions and to share them transparently, giving a sense that the best possible option at the time was taken (MICHALSKI; ROSSI-DORIA, 2011). In this case, we developed a path pointing out advantages and disadvantages of conservation options mentioned in the table and their probable consequences. More captions need to be added regarding interpretation issues or other questions that need to be addressed towards a solution. Probably, after this step, other tables may be needed as well as other decision trees, but the sharing decisions records are kept for reference.

⁵ This decision-tree model was developed using Cmap software, available on IHMC Cmap Tools© at <http://cmap.ihmc.us/>

When one needs to find a common terminology to ease communication between people from different areas of expertise, a visual illustration of all reflexions can be a productive tool.

4 CONCLUSIONS

Conservation methodology paradigms have changed since Cesare Brandi's *Teoria del Restauro*. The conservator's reflexions concerning heritage conservation and methodologies moved from the studio, to multidisciplinary teams and now to the public and social sphere. Conservator's commitment is not only to heritage, but also to the community who generated it, takes care for it, values it and, ultimately, to mankind, in a universalist meaning of heritage. In that sense, conservation interventions which may lead to a shift in the values related to the cultural identify of that social collective need a different and more democratic approach, which respects uses and functions of the community. If common conservation terminology and methodology isn't explicit to everyone involved, one should find other relatable concepts to work with. Authors mention the importance of recognizing values and meanings towards cultural significance and that conservation's ultimate goal is to assure correct interpretation. Conservator's, by default, will consider more important to preserve and stabilize the tangible aspects of heritage as long as possible and will avoid any solution that questions conservator's code of ethics and universal heritage charters. But, in the end, intangibility does matter, so consensus must be achievable and decisions must be shared, the conservator needs to find tools which allow the collective to understand possible intervention outcomes (under a limited number of reasonable solutions) and be responsible for the consequences of their choices.

In this paper we presented the case-study of the vice-regal portrait gallery and the complex issues regarding a conservation intervention due to number of repaint layers over the original layer, the values associated with both repaint and original layers and the technical requirements of such endeavour. The conservation condition of the original layers may not allow correct interpretation, as well as choosing to preserve a more recent layer or to choose doing nothing. A dialogue should take place between custodians, experts, stakeholders and representatives of the community who still relate to the collection, in order to define cultural significance and correct interpretation, supported by scientific exams and further investigation.

To that end, we present decision-making tools that can help qualify and quantify values in a necessary assessment and analysis, as well as constructing a decision path that includes all possible solutions in an explicit and not subjective way towards the best possible outcome, which takes in account material and non-material dual nature of heritage and the need to reach to a wider range of decision-makers.

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