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Author(s): Stephanie E. Hornbeck
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INTERSECTING CONSERVATION APPROACHES TO ETHNOGRAPHIC AND CONTEMPORARY ART: EPHEMERAL ART AT THE NATIONAL MUSEUM OF AFRICAN ART

STEPHANIE E. HORNBECK

ABSTRACT

At the Smithsonian’s National Museum of African Art, conservators apply experience with preserving ethnographic objects to contemporary works in the collection, and vice versa. Both are often made of ephemeral materials, which pose conceptual and practical challenges to the conservators faced with their display, treatment, and preservation. Issues of unpredictability, permanence, and deterioration processes particular to ephemeral materials, as well as legal and ethical conservation considerations, will be presented via case studies. The ethnographic object conservator’s wide knowledge of materials, tendency toward minimal intervention, and a philosophical approach, which seeks to preserve though not restore original materials, can contribute to the debates and decisions affecting the conservation of contemporary art.

1. INTRODUCTION

The permanent collection of the Smithsonian’s National Museum of African Art (NMAfA) includes both tradition-based and contemporary objects, which sometimes employ fugitive materials or media that render them ephemeral. At NMAfA, my conservation colleagues Steve Mellor and Dana Moffett and I applied our experience preserving ethnographic materials to contemporary works in the collection, and vice versa. We found the ethnographic conservator’s repertoire and familiarity with the wide range of materials found in anthropological collections readily applicable to aspects of the conservation of contemporary art. While contemporary African art objects share significant aspects with international contemporary art trends, materials, and media, it has become apparent that contemporary African objects also share many characteristics with African tradition-based objects. Yet, important divergences exist in conservation ethics and treatment approaches to ethnographic and contemporary art.

Drawing on a number of African tradition-based and contemporary object case studies, this article aims to present an overview of the key conservation issues and challenges that ephemeral media have presented at NMAfA. Juxtapositions of these tradition-based and contemporary works will address: shared aspects of ethnographic and contemporary materials; documentation of artist’s materials and techniques; the challenges of the ephemeral-by-design concept; the complexity of contemporary installations; the conservator as artist’s surrogate; and both shared and divergent aspects of ethnographic and contemporary art treatment philosophy and ethics.

To comprehensively fulfill its mandate to collect and preserve the visual arts of Africa, NMAfA began acquiring contemporary works in the 1990s while continuing to collect tradition-based art. NMAfA has subsequently amassed 600 works, the largest public collection of contemporary African art in the United States. Since 1997, a large gallery has been dedicated to contemporary African art, in which rotating exhibitions are always on view.

Ephemeral materials pose challenges on conceptual and practical levels to the conservators faced with their display, treatment, and preservation. Indeed, the concept of ephemeral-by-design stands in direct opposition to the major tenet of conservation: the preservation of cultural patrimony for future generations. Consequently, conservators sometimes affect a compromise between the objectives of preservation and artistic intent, thereby aiming to prolong the life span of a transient work.
The conservation challenges inherent to ephemeral art have been addressed by a number of conservation conferences and attendant publications. These include *Saving the 20th Century* in Ottawa in 1991; *Modern Art: Who Cares?* in Amsterdam in 1997 and the follow-up *Contemporary Art: Who Cares?* in 2010; *Mortality/Immortality* in Los Angeles in 1999; *Modern Art: New Museums* in Bilbao in 2004; and the Getty Conservation Institute panel “The Object in Transition” in 2008. These conferences and publications demonstrate that issues of unpredictability, permanence, and deterioration processes particular to ephemeral materials, as well as particular legal and ethical conservation considerations, have been widely discussed by conservators. Opinions can vary widely. The viewpoint presented here is my own and does not attempt to represent all ethnographic object conservators.

A number of collaborations among conservators specializing in contemporary art have arisen, the largest perhaps being the International Network for the Conservation of Contemporary Art (INCCA). Founded in 1999 by the Netherlands Institute for Cultural Heritage (ICN) and the Tate Museum in London, INCCA is a network of interdisciplinary professionals dedicated to the conservation of modern and contemporary art, and it has grown to include 800 members from 55 countries (INCCA 2013). One of its most useful contributions to the field is its literature database. A search of publications in this database revealed no papers related to the ethnographic conservation approach to the conservation of contemporary materials. Yet, ethnographic object conservators have a knowledge base of materials and an ethical approach readily applicable to the conservation of contemporary art. Submission of papers by ethnographic object conservators to INCCA’s publication database would enrich the dialogue.

2. EPHEMERAL MATERIALS: DEFINITION AND EXAMPLES OF DETERIORATION

Ephemeral objects are often fabricated of fugitive media, a category comprising materials that in a relatively short period of time—within decades—undergo deleterious chemical or physical changes that permanently alter them. Both inorganic and organic materials can exhibit inherent vice issues from undergoing chemical and consequent physical changes from exposure to agents of deterioration. When agents of deterioration are multiplied, such as when an object is exposed to both heat and light, the agents of deterioration can combine synergistically to accelerate chemical reactions resulting in faster deterioration. Composite objects can have materials that act as agents of deterioration, which have an antagonistic effect that accelerates damage on other materials. Interventive methods to slow down the deterioration process involve environmental measures—such as refrigeration, dark storage, and anoxic microenvironments—that are not readily applicable to whole categories of artifacts, especially those composed of composite materials.

Advances in organic chemistry over the past two centuries have dramatically increased the materials available to artists. Advances in mapping, shipping, and transport have created vastly more extensive trade routes, reaching even to geographically remote areas. Both tradition-based and contemporary African objects incorporate synthetic materials. Some, like early plastics, are highly unstable. Examples of deterioration include hardening, discoloration, crizzling, and softening/separation of plasticizers.

3. SHARED CONSERVATION ASPECTS OF ETHNOGRAPHIC AND CONTEMPORARY MATERIALS

Contemporary African art has everything in common with global contemporary art trends, materials, and media; indeed many artists born in Africa may live and work in major cities around the world. These contemporary objects also share many characteristics with tradition-based objects, including the use of...
composite media on a single object (figs. 11, 14); the use of repurposed materials (fig. 6); and the use of fugitive media (figs. 5, 13).

Each of the following two case studies presents an object in the collection, one tradition-based and the other contemporary, which have undergone post-manufacture changes that have altered their appearance. These examples illustrate how conservators draw on their experience with ethnographic and contemporary materials, rely on analytical testing, and consult with artists and scholars to formulate treatment protocols.

The first object is a polychrome bowl fabricated by renowned Yoruba artist Olowe of Ise in 1925, which has an applied dark coating obscuring the painted surface below (fig. 1).

In 1997, Olowe scholar and then senior curator at NMAfA, Roslyn Walker, observed that this dark coating is unusual for Olowe’s sculptures, notably as compared to a similar bowl thought to be earlier in date (fig. 2).
Conservators sampled the coating and submitted it for analysis. If characterized as a synthetic material, it would have provided clear rationale for removal, as most synthetic coatings were not used as early as 1925. However, Fourier transform infrared spectroscopy (FTIR) revealed that the coating is a natural substance, a gum-carbohydrate mixture. While it could have been applied post-collection, it could also have been applied by Olowe. In the latter case, it is also possible that the coating was clear originally but darkened over time, thus changing the appearance in an undesirable way. However, as Olowe died in 1938, these questions remain unanswered and the coating has been left intact. If conservators had the benefit of communication with Olowe regarding his artistic intent, the treatment outcome could have been completely different.

With the second object, communication with the artist was possible. Through extensive experimentation over the past three decades, the ceramicist Magdalene Odundo has perfected the use...
of a marl-rich terra sigillata to create her ceramics. The term terra sigillata refers to an ancient technique where slips are made from the same clay as the ceramic body. Subsequent to manufacture, tiny white spots have formed on some of her oxidation-fired ceramics, as in the vase shown here (fig. 3).

Discernible on these monochromatic orange wares, the spots have been noted as “flaws” by curators and collectors. X-ray diffraction (XRD) analysis identified the spots as portlandite, calcium dihydroxide (fig. 4). The portlandite is formed when compounds in the clay absorbed ambient moisture to yield a new larger compound, whose formation caused spalling of the ceramic surface. Since this process, known as “lime popping,” has been found on archaeological ceramics fabricated of certain types of clays, we looked to the archaeological literature to understand what was happening to Odundo’s ceramics. The occurrence of lime popping is related to firing temperature, and while the phenomenon can be avoided by firing in a specific temperature range, this will also alter the color of the ceramic. When consulted, Odundo explained that she accepted the lime popping as a minor consequence of her working method, which she refined to yield the desired clay plasticity and color of these wares (Moffett et al. 2002). The white spots were therefore left intact and are monitored for changes.
4. DOCUMENTING ARTISTS’ MATERIALS AND TECHNIQUES

Working with art created by living artists involves complex, sometimes competing, issues. These may include conservation ethics, authenticity, functionality, exhibition installation, and the preservation of original materials versus (sometimes) complete restoration. The conservation process can be protracted, involving an interdisciplinary team consisting of conservators, conservation scientists, curators, anthropologists, artists, artisans, studio assistants, fabricators, and gallerists. Ensuing documentation can be extensive, even voluminous.

While the curator is often the point of contact with an artist, the information that the conservator needs may differ greatly from what the curator seeks. As we know, it is useful for curators and conservators to collaborate in dialogues and sometimes formal interviews with living artists. In the case of contemporary materials, American conservators and curators and our European counterparts, most notably at institutions in the Netherlands and Great Britain, have initiated the development of elaborate surveys for living artists. The resulting documentation has been archived for reference on INCCA’s website (INCCA 2013). In a way, such interviews have anthropological antecedents, familiar to the conservator of ethnographic materials.

5. THE CONSERVATION CHALLENGES OF ARTISTIC INTENT: EPHEMERAL-BY-DESIGN

In addition to recording technical information from artists, documentation should also record artistic concepts and decisions, which can have direct bearing on treatment and display. For example, while the use of fugitive media is not necessarily a deliberate choice, sometimes artists knowingly elect to work with
materials that they know will deteriorate, incorporating this aspect into their overall concept. The following case studies illustrate this point.

For *The Nasser Era* and *Om Kalsoum* and *The Dogs*, painted in 1994, Egyptian artist Chant Avedissian chose to paint these images evoking ancient and contemporary Egypt using local dyes and gum Arabic medium applied to cotton cloth backed with thin, curved, acidic cardboard substrates, formerly used as packing materials for refrigerators (fig. 5). These substrates curl and crease, which disrupts the thin paint layer. While conservation intervention has not yet been necessary, eventual paint loss is highly likely.

For his 1995 assemblage *Urban Testament IV*, artist Rudzani Nemasetoni incorporated found objects, including large chains from a marine environment (fig. 6). The iron chains have developed chloride corrosion resulting from the failure of an applied corrosion inhibitor and immersion in salt water (Moffett et al. 2002). The resulting corrosion products crystallize on the surface of the chain, causing the applied plaster to spall off the surface in numerous areas, yielding a spotted appearance overall. This deterioration process cannot be halted and periodic treatment will be necessary to repair the damaged plaster. Both artists have expressed their deliberate use of ephemeral materials, which impart temporality to their work. Yet, in the interest of preservation, we continue to routinely stabilize them.

6. THE ARTIST–CONSERVATOR INTERACTION: INSTALLATIONS

Temporal installations, in which the artist has chosen to limit the lifespan of an installation, represent large-scale examples of the ephemeral-by-design concept. At NMAfA, this scenario has become increasingly common, occurring in several exhibitions. In each case, the artist worked in situ with
conservators to install large-scale works, which were destroyed upon the close of exhibition. Photographic documentation shows each work in progress and records its existence; in-progress videos can be viewed on NMAfA’s website.

Egyptian artist Ghada Amer came to NMAfA in the spring of 2013 to create the work *Hunger* in the garden in front of the museum building for the exhibition *Earth Matters* (fig. 7). Amer’s work frequently incorporates words in Arabic and English. For this work, she created the first earth work at NMAfA, in collaboration with Smithsonian Horticulture. The work is fabricated of earth and rice seeds to be harvested and replaced by kale later by gardeners following direction provided by the artist. The work will evolve through the seasons over its lifespan, which is short and temporary.

Over a three-week period in 2010, Brazilian artist Henrique Oliveira’s monumental work *Bololo* was built and installed as a site-specific work, of wood imported from Brazil (fig. 8). Upon the closing of the exhibition in 2011, the work was “destroyed” by cutting it apart with electric saws and then discarding the fragments.
Fig. 7. Ghada Amer stands before *Hunger* in Smithsonian’s Haupt Garden, 2013, installation photograph from *Earth Matters*, April 2013–January 2014, National Museum of African Art, Smithsonian Institution (Courtesy of Franko Khoury)

Fig. 8. Henrique Oliveira, *Bololo*, installation photograph from *Artists in Dialogue 2*, February 2, 2011–January 8, 2012, National Museum of African Art, Smithsonian Institution (Courtesy of Franko Khoury)
For the 2005 exhibition, TEXTures: Word and Symbol in Contemporary African Art, South African artist Willem Boshoff created his sand installation, Writing in Sand, of stenciled words in black and white sand on the gallery floor (fig. 9).

Boshoff expressed his belief that anything that might occur to the work while on display was an acceptable consequence of openly exposing his fragile work of art to the public. However, as the meaning of Writing in Sand depended in part upon the legibility of its words, NMAfA curators consulted with Boshoff about having conservators restore any damage the work might encounter during exhibition.

In this scenario, the conservator acts as the artist’s surrogate, executing the artist’s wishes in his or her absence. For Writing in Sand, Boshoff left his materials (black and white sand and stencils) with conservators to use for repair as needed. Visitors frequently touched or stepped on the sand, displacing the black sand of the words and the natural sand of background. The work required repair nearly once a week. While the conservation interventions restored legibility to the text, the displaced black and natural sand became increasingly mixed together. Consequently, as the exhibition continued, the initial crisp lines of the work evolved into a slightly blurry evocation. Upon the close of exhibition, Boshoff wished the work to be destroyed, erased as it were. We conservators invited all interested NMAfA staff to participate in this process.

7. TREATMENT PHILOSOPHY

One of the distinguishing aspects of ethnographic artifacts is the wide variety of materials—both natural and synthetic, organic and inorganic—used in their fabrication, often in a composite fashion. The conservation of composite material artifacts may involve collaboration between object and textile
conservators. Collaboration with colleagues in other related fields is also common. At NMAfA, we sometimes needed the assistance of experts in entomology, mammalogy, and ornithology from the National Museum of Natural History to provide precise material identifications for artifacts that were to be published or exhibited.

Conservators of ethnographic objects typically approach treatments conservatively, with stabilization of original materials being the primary goal. Retention of evidence of cultural use—such as wear or some accretions—is important (note the oil on the Chokwe figure’s face and chest, fig. 10), and ethnographic repairs are retained. While legibility matters, restoration for purely aesthetic considerations is rarely done. For example, loss compensation is undertaken mainly in cases where structural support is necessary rather than for purely aesthetic reasons.

However, post-collection alterations—those undertaken after the work is removed from its culture of origin—may be reversed to return the work to its original, intended appearance. In the case of
Artist Berni Searle provided precise instructions for the 2000 (and subsequent 2006) installation of her work *To Hold in the Palm of the Hand*, including the sprinkling of powdered green henna onto the lower portion of the six panels comprising the work (fig. 13). Because the henna gathers dust from display, it cannot be reused for future installations. With the assistance of the curator of contemporary art, I asked Searle about the purchase of additional henna to use as her stock diminished. Searle agreed and a supply of pure henna was found at an Ethiopian market in Washington, DC.

In contrast, ethnographic object conservators would not typically replenish lost pigment on tradition-based objects. Many African objects have friable pigments, which are poorly bound to the
substrates. Conservators consolidate pigments and paints to preserve existing materials. However, significant amounts of non-original colorant would not be added to areas of loss to the powdery red lead pigment on a Zulu hat, for example (fig. 14).

8. CONSERVATION AND ARTISTIC INTENT

When communicating with artists regarding original materials, desired appearance, and display of the artwork, artists and conservators have distinct roles. It is imperative that the artist remains focused on providing information related to the original intent, materials, and techniques used rather than approaching treatment as an opportunity to revise the original artwork. The conservator is not obligated to use materials advocated by the artist in the repair of their artwork; indeed it is advisable to continue...
Fig. 13. Installation detail. Berni Searle, *To Hold in the Palm of the Hand*, 2000, inkjet prints on vellum, henna, 156.3 × 389 × 135 cm, National Museum of African Art, Smithsonian Institution, 2000-9-2 (Courtesy of Stephanie Hornbeck)

Fig. 14. Zulu peoples, *Hat*, mid-20th century, plant fiber, cloth, red lead pigment, 15 × 45.3 × 45.3 cm, National Museum of African Art, Smithsonian Institution, 95-11-1 (Courtesy of Franko Khoury)
our best practices of using proven, stable materials that can be differentiated from original media. Treatment is the realm of the conservator, not the original maker and we must continue to apply our core principles and ethics, despite an artist’s wish to focus on the preservation of aesthetics or original concept.

The curator and conservator together consider the intrinsic value of the original, no matter how deteriorated, when exploring conservation intervention. Every conservation treatment carries the risk of damage or change to the original, thus the conservator bears the responsibility of approaching treatment judiciously. As the upcoming case studies illustrate, sometimes the issues presented by modern materials require a greater emphasis on restoration than would be considered ethical today for tradition-based objects.

The guidelines for practice of the AIC were revised in 1997 to address this issue with a commentary to Guideline 23: Compensation for Loss, D. Special Practices:

In the treatment of contemporary cultural property, the aesthetic requirements of the maker/artist may necessitate compensation practices that sacrifice original material and surface to obtain a specified result. The conservation professional should document the rationale for such treatments. (AIC Guidelines 2012)

A second commentary related to the cultural property of living cultures appears just below the one related to contemporary cultural property above:

Compensation for losses to some sacred and ceremonial cultural property of living cultures may require more extensive intervention to restore conceptual meaning. The conservation professional should document the rationale for such treatments. (AIC Guidelines 2012)

These commentaries apply to contemporary and ethnographic art of living cultures, respectively. Both attempt to allow for the special considerations that each sometimes requires. While both descriptions relate to complex issues, they are broadly and somewhat vaguely worded. The emphasis on documenting rationale would seem to provide “cover” for exceptionally extensive interventions that sacrifice original materials in the case of contemporary art and overly restore losses to art and artifacts created by living cultures. I would argue that such invasive approaches should give the conservator serious pause. Even if rationale is documented, removal of original materials and causing permanent changes to objects go against the tenets of professional conservation ethics.

In the conservation of contemporary objects and sculpture, it has become increasingly common practice to remove original material, overpaint, or refabricate contemporary objects, as needed, to preserve their “intended appearance,” “conceptual properties,” or other non-tangible qualities. Certainly ethnographic objects now in museum collections also had original concepts and cultural functions in their culture of origin. The realm of the conservator has traditionally focused narrowly on the preservation of the physical materials and not typically on evocation of original concept and/or context, although this is changing. As the chronological parameters that define contemporary art lack consensus, the question arises: how far into the past and the future will these more involved treatments apply?

In certain cases, removal of original surface material and refabrication have become acceptable, even in posthumous instances. The issue of such significant conservation interventions has been perennially discussed at conferences of contemporary art conservation. The 2008 Getty conference, “The Object in Transition,” presented two panels where significant conservation interventions were discussed. These panels are available as video-casts on the web and are noted here because they are in the public domain, readily accessible in their entirety, allowing nuances of the conservation arguments to be studied. In one case “Sol LeWitt, 49 Three-Part Variations on Three Different Kinds of Cubes” the artist Sol LeWitt was involved in discussions with conservators about the treatment of his own painted sculpture (Getty Conservation Institute 2008). In that situation, conservators elected to completely remove the original painted surface by stripping, sanding, and repainting it.
The other case, “Eva Hesse *Expanded Expansion*,” involved a discussion at the Guggenheim Museum of how to address the display of the much-altered 1969 sculpture *Expanded Expansion* by Eva Hesse, who died in 1970 (Getty Conservation Institute 2008). To better understand the behavior of the materials, conservators collaborated with Hesse’s still-living studio assistants to replicate the artist’s methods and materials—fiberglass poles with latex rubber-coated cheesecloth. While these new fabrications inform care and display, the Guggenheim conservators have so far elected not to undertake significant interventions with the sculpture.

The divergent outcomes of these two projects illustrate how conservators approached each situation on an individual basis. Yet, the range in possible treatment outcomes indicates a degree of subjectivity that may warrant revisiting. In our profession, we have codified standards of practice that attempt to present objective criteria to guide our treatments. It is worth remembering that accepted standard approaches to treatment are important and have evolved over decades of discussion, based on previous treatments.

An aging ephemeral work, albeit altered in appearance—as is the darkened bowl by master artist Olowe of Ise—can retain its power and beauty (fig. 1). Fundamentally, we strive to preserve original materials and to limit our restoration interventions to areas of loss. Once original materials have been removed, they are gone forever. Rather than undertaking an extensive intervention, we could rely on archival images, film footage, and creative mounts to illustrate original appearances in conservation documentation, catalogs, and exhibition didactic materials. This approach is the current accepted practice for the documentation and display of ethnographic objects (figs. 15, 16), and I believe it could be applied successfully to contemporary art objects, as well.

Fig. 15. Yoruba peoples, *Egungun Mask and Costume*, mid-20th century, cloth, wood, metal, plastic, 170.2 × 129.5 cm, National Museum of African Art, Smithsonian Institution, 2005-2-1 (Courtesy of Franko Khoury)
9. LEGAL AND ETHICAL ASPECTS OF CONSERVING CONTEMPORARY ART

An important consideration in thoroughly documenting communication with living artists pertaining to the conservation of their work is the legislation related to copyright law. Copyright law distinguishes between economic rights and moral rights; the most important moral right is termed “the right of integrity” and describes the right of the artist to resist another’s intervention in his or her work (Beunen 1999).

Although the moral rights of artists were introduced internationally in Berne in 1886, the United States did not ratify the Berne Convention until 1989, 103 years later (Beunen 1999). The American Visual Artists Rights Act (VARA) of 1990 resulted in the addition of Section 106A, the “Rights of certain authors to attribution and integrity” to the Copyright Law of the United States of America, thereby incorporating the moral rights of visual artists into American copyright law (Copyright Law n.d.). Importantly, a subsection of Section 106A protects conservators from broad categories of legal recourse from living artists. Section 106A(c)(2) states:

The modification of a work of visual art which is the result of conservation of the work is not a destruction, distortion, mutilation, or other modification unless the modification is caused by gross negligence (Copyright Law n.d.)

European copyright law is guided much more stringently by the rights of the artist, whereas American copyright law is guided by the right of owners, and the larger public interest, to preserve cultural property (Beunen 1999, 227; Robinson 2000, 1935–36). Importantly, even in cases where the

Fig. 16. Photograph by Eliot Elisofon, *Egungun Masked Dancer in Ede, Nigeria*, 1970, National Museum of African Art, Smithsonian Institution, EEPA EECL 4003 (Courtesy of Eliot Elisofon Photographic Archives, National Museum of African Art, Smithsonian Institution)
artist consciously chooses to incorporate deterioration into works of art, VARA states that the preservation of the cultural property supersedes the individual wishes of the artist (Beunen 1999, 232). To this end, conservators may elect to educate curators and artists about how the conservation approach strives to preserve the work as it is, without an effort to return it to its original appearance at the time of fabrication.

10. CONCLUSION

Ephemeral materials, because they are often unpredictable, present challenges to conservators entrusted with their preservation. Ephemeral concepts, such as temporary, site-specific installations, can involve conservators acting as the artist’s surrogate in his or her absence, involving us in fabrication as well as maintenance or preservation. Working with art created by living artists, as we navigate between the sometimes-competing demands of preservation of the physical artwork and respect of artistic intent, requires collaboration among the artist, his or her studio assistants, curators, conservators, and conservation scientists. At NMAfA, we have come to apply our experience with preserving ethnographic materials to contemporary works in the collection, and vice versa.

The ethnographic object conservator’s wide knowledge of materials, tendency toward minimal intervention, and a philosophical approach—which seeks to preserve, though not restore, original materials—can contribute to the debates and decisions affecting the conservation of contemporary art. In particular, the removal of original materials, even if rationale is documented, is worthy of serious reconsideration as a viable treatment option. Exhibition displays of contemporary ephemeral art objects that have been altered over time could emulate the current display choice of ethnographic art, which relies on didactic photographs, film clips, and mounts to illustrate the original work of art, in its original context and before its materials changed.

Descriptions of materials and media and documentation of artistic intent, including installation details, are critical resources, which will guide us as unknown, future scenarios unfold. The research and documentation of artistic intent is an important aspect of the conservation of both contemporary art and art produced by living cultures. Indeed, artist interviews can be seen as contemporary examples of anthropological interviews of indigenous peoples. However, the original maker does not necessarily have the final word in how his or her work is treated by conservators. Rather, an understanding of the original materials can guide the conservator’s choice of stable conservation materials to emulate, though not replicate, the original materials. The subsection of VARA that addresses conservation states that the preservation of the work of art supersedes artistic intent. The dialogues surrounding the conservation of ephemeral art are dynamic and continually evolving, all the more reason to adhere to objective standards in our treatments of these materials.

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REFERENCES


FURTHER READING


STEPHANIE E. HORNBECK is director of conservation at Caryatid Conservation Services Inc., her private practice in object and sculpture conservation based in Miami, Florida. From 2010 to 2012, she served as chief conservator for the Smithsonian Institution Haiti Cultural Recovery Project in Port-au-Prince, Haiti, directing conservation recovery efforts of cultural patrimony damaged in the January 2010 earthquake. In recognition of her service, Stephanie was awarded the Smithsonian Secretary’s Gold Medal for Exceptional Service. From 1998 to 2010, Stephanie was conservator at the Smithsonian Institution’s National Museum of African Art in Washington, DC. She received her BA in art history from Wellesley College and her diploma in fine art conservation (objects) and MA in art history from the Conservation Center of the Institute of Fine Arts at New York University. Address: Caryatid Conservation Services Inc., 500 NE 29th Street, No. 606, Miami, FL 33137, tel. 305-401-6527. E-mail: shornbeck@caryatid-conservation.com