

Vieira Da Silva's Tiles at Universidade Federal Rural Do Rio de Janeiro: A Conservation and Restoration Project

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Abstract : The present project showcases a tile work from the Franco-Portuguese artist Maria Helena Vieira da Silva (1908-1992). It is a set of 8 panels composed of figurative and geometric tiles, with extra tiles framing nearby doors and windows in a study room in the (UFRRJ, Universidade Federal Rural do Rio de Janeiro). The aforementioned work was created between 1942 and 1943, during the artist's 6 year exile in the Brazilian city. This one-of-a-kind tileset was designed and made by Vieira da Silva between 1942 and 1943. Over the years, several units were lost, which led to their replacement in the nineties. However, these replacements don't do justice to the original work of art. In 2007, a project was initiated to fully repair and maintain the set. Three panels are removed and restored, but the project is halted. To this day, the three fully restored panels remain in boxes. In 2016 a new restoration project is submitted by the (Faculdade de Belas Artes da Universidade de Lisboa) in collaboration with de (Fundação Árpád Szenes-Vieira da Silva). There are many varied opinions on restoring and conserving older pieces of art, however, we have the moral duty to safeguard the original materials used by the artist along with the artists original vision and also to care for the future generations of students who will use the space in which the tile-work was inserted. Many tiles have been replaced by white tiles, tiles with a divergent colour pallet and technique, and in a few cases, the incorrect place or way around. These many factors make it increasingly difficult to maintain the artists original vision and destroy and chance of coherence within the artwork itself. The conservative technician cannot make new images to fill the empty spaces or mark the remaining images with their own creative input. with reliable photographic documentation that can provide us with the necessary vision to allow us to proceed with an accurate reconstruction, we have the obligation to proceed and return the piece of art to its true form, as in its current state, it is impossible to maintain its original glory. Using the information we have, we must find a way to differentiate the original tiles from the reconstructions in order to recreate and reclaim the original message from the artist. The objective of this project is to understand the significance of tiles in Vieira da Silva's art as well as the influence they had on the artist's pictorial language since the colour definition on tile work is vastly different from the painting process as the materials change during their merger. Another primary goal is to understand what the previous interventions achieved besides increasing the artworks durability. The main objective is to submit a proposal that can salvage the artist's visual intention and supports it for posterity. In summary, this proposal goes further than the usual conservative interventions as it intends to recreate the original artistic worth, prioritising the aesthetics and keeping its soul alive.

Keywords : Vieira da Silva, tiles, conservation, restoration

Conference Title : ICCHMACR 2021 : International Conference on Cultural Heritage Management, Art Conservation and Restoration

Conference Location : Paris, France

Conference Dates : June 24-25, 2021