

The cleaning of works of art: Ethics, expectations, limits and choices

Paolo CREMONESI

Valencia, 24 and 25 January 2012
UNIVERSIDAD POLITÉCNICA DE VALENCIA



*Why cleaning? When to clean?
What to clean? How to clean?
How much should we clean? ...*

This course is addressed to reflect critically about the appropriateness of cleaning treatments and will focus on issues dealing with a more respectful, selective, safe and controllable approach. Throughout the different lectures, materials and methods will also be explained regarding both surface cleaning and varnish removal. Issues regarding the boundaries, expectations and ethics of such a treatment will also be discussed.

REGISTRATION

Registration will be open until January 23rd, 2012.

- **Early bird:** Until January 8th 2012: 150 Euros
- **Standard:** From January 9th, 2012: 200 Euros

Fees include attendance to all sessions, notes of the course, simultaneous translation English>Spanish>English as well as certificate of attendance.

VENUE: Paraninfo of the Universidad Politécnica de Valencia.

TIME SCHEDULE: 9 -13h. and 15 -19 h.

ORGANIZATION (IRP-UPV)

Maria Teresa DOMÉNECH CARBÓ	Montserrat LASTRAS PÉREZ
Laura FUSTER LÓPEZ	Jose Luis REGIDOR ROS
Dolores Julia YUSÀ MARCO	José M. SIMÓN CORTÉS
Mercedes SÁNCHEZ PONS	Juan C. VALCARCEL ANDRÉS
Sofía VICENTE PALOMINO	Eva MONTESINOS FERRANDIS
Virginia SANTAMARINA CAMPOS	Laura OSETE CORTINA
Angela CARABAL MONTAGUD	Demian RAMOS SANPEDRO
Xavier MAS I BARBERÀ	Miguel F. SILVA

ORGANIZATION



UNIVERSIDAD
POLITECNICA
DE VALENCIA



SPONSOR:



Concept

- FOUNDATION:** A recurring operation, based on the removal of materials, both foreign and endogenous to the artwork.
- DIVERSITY OF TERMINOLOGY:** Very different interventions go under this same name: surface cleaning, thinning (?) or removal of deteriorated coating, removal of retouches and overpaints.
- JUSTIFICATION:** How Brandi's *Teoria del Restauro* legitimated cleaning. More than half a century later, the same issues remain valid? How the attitude has evolved in the last 30 years. When and why do we clean?
- APPROACH:** A new approach: Just "new" materials or a whole new attitude?
- EXPECTATIONS:** Our expectations from cleaning. The selectivity of the intervention: Is it for real, or is it just in our minds?
- THE TREATMENT:** Cleaning within a whole conservation project and its relationship to other operations (consolidation, retouching, varnishing).
- RISKS:** Any risk of removing "information" as well?

Methodology

- START POINT:** A sensible, more respectful approach to the artwork.
- OBJETIVES OF THE TREATMENT:** It's time for higher precision in defining and pursuing "cleaning":

A. Cleaning a film-forming material (coating, paint medium...) **while conserving it**

B. Removing a Film-Forming Material (coating, paint binder, adhesive)

- LEVELS OF INTERVENTION:**

I. Surface Cleaning

- JUSTIFICATION:**
 - Always a legitimate procedure.
- METHODOLOGY:**
 - Mechanical means. Any simple way for predicting mechanical stability?
 - The aqueous medium. Which materials are most apt to this operation?.
- TREATMENT CONTROL:**
 - **Control parameters to tailor the operation** to specific :
 - Binding media (oil, egg, gelatine, synthetics...)
 - Supports (paper, polychrome wooden sculpture, the verso of paintings on canvas...).
 - Other technical issues: i.e.: varnished vs. unvarnished paintings
 - State-of-the-art on the **sensitivity of paint-media**: latest information from Cleaning 2010.
 - **Predicting the sensitivity to water**; any simple way to assess it?
 - **Controlling water diffusion**: GELLING AGENTS; RIGID GELS; EMULSIONS. Advantages and limits.
 - **Surface cleaning with solvents**: Is it feasible?
 - **Cyclododecane** as a temporary waterproofing agent.

2. Removing a Film-Forming Material (coating, paint binder, adhesive)

- **JUSTIFICATION:**
 - Evaluating the necessity of the intervention.
 - Is it possible to predict the degree of interaction in the specific instance?
- **METHODOLOGY AND TREATMENT CONTROL**
 - The use of organic solvents.
 - **A systematic approach** to the use of neutral organic solvents.
 - **Control parameters.**
 - Different **solubility tests** depending on the specific artefact.
 - **How to proceed** when neutral solvents fail?
 - **Limiting the use of dipolar solvents**; which alternatives?:
 - ✓ Back to water?
 - ✓ Combining water and polar solvents? or
 - ✓ Combining water and non-polar solvents?
 - The **aqueous medium**:
 - Which parameters to adjust for switching from "respect" to "removal"?
 - Any acids/alkalis in non-aqueous medium?

Criteria

- Cleaning cannot be a challenge between the artwork and the restorer/conservator: How far are we prepared to go?
- When does it become advisable to reconsider our expectations and the intervention?
- Evaluating the results. Is it possible a simple assessment of the selectivity?
- Seeing the naked-eyed unseen:
 - Observing the surface with UV light at two different wavelengths, short and long;
 - Observing the surface under a microscope.
- Monitoring the treated work of art in time.
- Ok, the painting is cleaned; NOW WHAT?