

Original Article

AUTHENTICATION OF WORKS OF ART: EVALUATION AND EXPERTISE STRATEGIES IN THE AREA OF CURATORSHIP AND ARTISTIC DOMAIN

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ABSTRACT

This study demonstrates that the assessment and preservation of works of art require the integration of specialist knowledge, methodological rigour, ethical responsibility and interdisciplinary collaboration. Its aim is to contribute to the systematisation of concepts relating to the identification of works of art, by establishing standards and criteria that integrate specialist knowledge in the fields of art, documentation, provenance research, authentication, technical examination, conservation and market analysis. This approach aims to contribute to the training of qualified professionals capable of establishing well-founded and responsible relationships with works of art. Collaboration between art historians, conservators-restorers, curators, researchers, art market professionals and other specialist practitioners is essential to ensure more rigorous, transparent and responsible practices in the processes of identification, valuation, conservation and circulation of art objects. In this context, graphic and photographic documentation is of particular importance, not only for the physical preservation of the works, but also as a means of supporting scientific research and safeguarding cultural memory. Ultimately, the integration of these skills into higher education and professional practice helps to strengthen the link between academic knowledge and the realities of the art world. This approach not only promotes a more rigorous assessment and preservation of artistic heritage, but also helps to ensure that works of art continue to serve as sources of knowledge, cultural identity, historical memory and an expression of human creativity.

Keywords: Works of Art, Aesthetic Experience, Expert Appraisal, Galleries, Auction Houses

INTRODUCTION

Art valuation is an activity within the art market that aims to determine the authenticity and, where relevant, the value of a cultural object for those wishing to buy, sell or undertake other transactions within the market. The authentication process enables a work to be identified and its provenance traced from the moment of its creation through the various stages of its history and circulation among participants in the art market.

This process is carried out by experts and other professionals with recognised expertise in the relevant fields. The assessment should begin with a physical examination of the object, combined with research into its production, history and provenance, where appropriate. It should draw on the appraiser's artistic knowledge and other knowledge acquired through professional practice, as well as on the expertise of specialists from other fields, in order to evaluate the available evidence and reach a well-founded conclusion.

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Initially, the expert undertakes a bibliographic and documentary survey and consults relevant sources and individuals in relation to the object under assessment. This may include questioning the owner or previous owners about publications, certificates, documents, correspondence, invoices, exhibition records or other information relating to the history of the work. The expert should also endeavour to address all relevant questions that arise during the assessment process. Any uncertainties or unresolved issues should be documented in the expert report accompanying the assessment. This is important, firstly, because it establishes the basis and limitations of the expert's conclusions and, secondly, because technological and scientific developments may eventually provide answers to questions that cannot currently be resolved.

As Moncada states, "the expert assessment of an object can never, or almost never, be considered definitive" (Moncada, forthcoming, p. 70), while [Lopes \(2012\)](#) argues that "'truth' may change over time" in accordance with the development of knowledge. Professional experience and tacit knowledge may contribute significantly to the recognition and interpretation of artworks; however, expert conclusions should be supported by a critical evaluation of the available evidence and remain open to revision when new information, methods or technologies emerge.

This study therefore examines the role of professional expertise in the authentication and valuation of works of art, focusing on the relationship between professional experience, tacit knowledge, interdisciplinary collaboration and evidence-based judgement. It also considers the professional and ethical responsibilities involved in establishing the authenticity and history of works of art, particularly in relation to the protection of cultural heritage and the integrity of the art market.

METODOLOGY

This research project is based on a literature review aimed at examining scientific knowledge and professional experience relating to creative and professional practice in the field of art expertise. The study considers the importance of expertise in the arts sector, particularly in relation to the identification, authentication and valuation of works of art. An art expert is regarded as a specialist who possesses a high level of knowledge and skills acquired through professional practice, experience, tacit understanding and an intuitive approach to dealing with complex processes and situations [Dreyfus et al. \(1986\)](#).

Experts do not rely solely on theoretical knowledge; they also draw on tacit knowledge acquired through professional practice and accumulated experience. This form of knowledge enables them to recognise patterns, identify relevant characteristics and respond intuitively to specific situations, often without being able to fully articulate the processes underlying their judgements. According to [Dreyfus et al. \(1986\)](#), expertise develops progressively through experience and practice, enabling professionals to move from rule-based responses towards increasingly intuitive, contextualised and nuanced forms of decision-making.

In the context of the authentication of works of art, this form of expertise is particularly relevant, as the assessment of a work may require the integration of multiple forms of evidence, including stylistic, technical, material, historical and provenance information. Expert judgement cannot therefore be understood merely as the application of predetermined rules; rather, it involves the interpretation, comparison and evaluation of evidence through specialised knowledge and professional experience.

The authentication of works of art requires a critical and systematic approach in which expert judgement is supported, wherever possible, by documentary research, technical examination, provenance research and scientific analysis. This literature review therefore examines the relationship between expertise, tacit knowledge and professional judgement in the authentication of works of art. It considers how experts develop and apply their knowledge, the role of experience and intuition in decision-making, and the limitations and ethical responsibilities associated with expert judgement. Ultimately, effective authentication strategies require continuous research, interdisciplinary collaboration, critical evaluation of available evidence and adherence to high professional and ethical standards.

PRESENTATION OF THE PROBLEM AND INITIAL QUESTIONS

As professionals, art experts develop their knowledge and expertise through education, professional practice and accumulated experience. However, questions regarding the nature, competence and limitations of expert valuation remain relevant in both professional and academic contexts, particularly with regard to the relationship between specialist knowledge, aesthetic education and scientific research. The integration of professional expertise with academic and scientific approaches can contribute to more rigorous and transparent methods of evaluating works of art.

This study therefore raises the following initial questions:

- What does specialisation in expert art valuation entail?
- What forms of education, training and professional experience qualify a professional as an expert?
- To what extent does the training of an expert involve aesthetic education?
- How can the knowledge of researchers and art historians contribute to expert valuation?
- In what circumstances can expert valuation contribute to scientific research?
- In what respects can be expert judgement integrated with documentary, historical, technical and scientific evidence?

As a further contribution, this study considers how combining established professional expertise with scientific and technological approaches can strengthen assessment and curatorial practices.

Such an interdisciplinary approach may contribute to safeguarding the authenticity, integrity and cultural significance of works of art for present and future generations.

STATE OF THE ART ART EXPERTS

To supplement what has already been said about art conservation, we present conservators as technical experts who carry out conservation work on works of art. In other words, their role is to study a work in order to contribute to uncovering the 'truth' about it. As already mentioned, this discovery of the 'truth' involves a physical analysis of the work, together with an understanding of its material and physical characteristics. The expert must verify the presence of any restoration work and assess the authenticity of the piece. They will then proceed with historical and, where necessary, scientific research in order to trace its history, with particular attention to authorship, period and place of production. Experts play an important role in the art market because they contribute specialised knowledge to the identification and assessment of cultural assets and to establishing their historical and cultural value.

They are therefore professionals with a high level of cultural and artistic knowledge who perform the important function of assessing the authenticity of works circulating in the market. It is the art market and its participants that assess an expert's competence, experience and recognition, which must be publicly established within the market itself (Moncada, forthcoming, p. 62). Consequently, the expert must remain in constant contact with market participants and keep abreast of relevant studies and research, as this constitutes one of the most important tools at their disposal. For this reason, many experts provide services to auction houses and prominent art dealers (Moncada, forthcoming, p. 91).

Consequently, experts must be appropriately identified in every report they produce so that they can be held accountable for any errors they may make. In all cases, the expert must adopt a professional approach when analysing the artwork, drafting the report and communicating their conclusions to the owners. The expert should emphasise the importance of examining the artwork in person, since an assessment based solely on photographs or other indirect sources may be incomplete. This limitation should also be clearly stated in the report. At the same time, these professionals should make it clear that their purpose is not to discredit the owners of the artworks, but rather to establish and communicate the available evidence concerning the object's history and authenticity, which may ultimately reveal a value greater than initially expected. Of course, such situations do not always arise, and sometimes the expert finds themselves in a 'thankless position (...) when they have to inform the owner of a work of art that their asset—whether inherited or acquired—is not what they had always thought it to be' (Moncada, forthcoming, p. 64). 'These events demonstrate the reluctance many people show when experts have to analyse their possessions' (Moncada, forthcoming, p. 64).

In short, experts are specialised professionals within the art market who contribute to the identification, assessment and authentication of works of art. Due to the high level of knowledge required for such tasks, they may occupy specialised roles within different areas of cultural production. As a general rule, they may begin their careers in other areas of the art market, such as researches, collecting, dealing, auctioneering or conservation and restoration, before attaining recognition as experts based on their accumulated knowledge, professional experience and scholarly expertise. At this level, art-market professionals must recognise the significance and responsibility associated with their opinions and act in accordance with the ethical standards governing their professional role.

EXPERT ASSESSMENT: THE 'TRUTH' BEHIND THE WORKS

Expert assessment is an activity that requires those who undertake it to keep their knowledge constantly up to date, given the high level of responsibility and expertise demanded by the role of the expert across a range of historical and artistic disciplines. The expert is responsible for liaising with specialists in other fields in order to obtain all the information they consider relevant to the study of the work in question. Despite technological advances, which enable the identification of techniques and interventions present in artefacts, some of these may remain extremely difficult to detect due to the skill and precision with which they were executed. Similarly, these professionals must keep abreast of new publications, relevant research and recent methods of laboratory analysis of artworks.

Conclusions reached today may differ from those reached in the future, either because of limitations in the knowledge available at the time of the assessment or as a result of technological advances. Added to these risks is the possibility that "at the same point in history and with the same resources at their disposal, two different experts may, in some cases, draw different conclusions about the same work" [Moncada \(2006\)](#). It is therefore very important that the information supporting expert assessments is properly documented and, where appropriate, made available for consultation. Extensive and up-to-date knowledge is crucial for identifying possible forgeries, and the greater the amount and quality of documentation available for a particular work, the more substantiated and reliable the expert assessment is likely to be.

In some cases, the location of the artwork or the owners' lack of interest may mean that the expert is not given the opportunity to examine the work in person. The assessment may then have to be carried out using photographs or other indirect sources, or under less than comprehensive conditions. This limitation must be taken into account when formulating the assessment and should be clearly stated in the report. As Moncada states, "In any case, the expert must always draw their conclusions taking into account the actual viewing of the work of art and consult it whenever necessary. Only such an approach can be considered rigorous and consistent with a proper expert assessment" (Moncada, forthcoming). All information that the expert considers relevant should be included in the expert report. This document should identify the expert and the artwork, including a physical description of the object, and should specify the date on which the assessment was undertaken, since subsequent assessments may produce different results.

The report should also document the conditions under which the assessment was carried out, including the condition of the object and, where relevant, its original or previous condition; the circumstances and purpose of the assessment, particularly where these may affect its market value; the history and provenance of the object; the conclusions reached by the expert; and any observations, uncertainties or concerns that the expert considers important to communicate. From this perspective, the aim of an expert assessment is to identify and contextualise a cultural object by drawing on the expertise of one or more specialists and on the documentary and material evidence considered relevant to the study of the work.

This process seeks to establish, as far as the available evidence permits, the work's chronological and geographical context, authorship, provenance and history. In short, when undertaking an expert assessment and preparing the corresponding report, the expert should be in a position to formulate a reasoned opinion concerning the nature, authenticity and history of the work. This opinion may accompany the work throughout its subsequent circulation in the art market and may have significant positive or negative consequences for its trajectory, since expert opinion can influence perceptions of the object's value and significance within the market and within the broader fields of art and cultural heritage.

VALUATION: THE VALUE OF WORKS OF ART

Valuation is a process through which a valuer—who is usually also an expert—assesses the economic value of a work of art, having first had access to the relevant expert report. This value corresponds to the price at which a particular item is expected to sell within a specific period and in a specific location.

It is a forecast based on the factors that determine the value of works of art, publicly available data relating to auction sales, and other information concerning private sales of which the valuer is aware (Moncada, forthcoming, p. 71). Consequently, the price achieved by a work that has just been sold at auction may represent the most accurate and up-to-date indication of the value of comparable works of the same genre.

Thus, in order to be qualified to carry out valuations, the valuer must, like an expert, be an active participant in the market in which they operate, maintain constant contact with the subjects and works with which they deal, and possess up-to-date information on current market values.

They must either be an art expert or have access to a previous expert report, and be able to recognise the specific characteristics of both the works and the market, as well as understand how these characteristics influence their value (Moncada, forthcoming, p. 72). According to Miguel Cabral de Moncada (forthcoming, p. 77), a valuation comprises two stages: the first relates to the analysis of market values, while the second concerns the analysis of the characteristics of the work that may influence its valuation.

In the first phase, the valuer must investigate the results of public sales of works that are identical or comparable to the work being valued. It is important that these results are recent, since changes in the economic and political climate can have a strong and rapid impact on the art market, and that they relate to the market in which both the work in question and the valuer operate (Moncada, forthcoming, p. 78).

At the same time, given that the valuer is a professional who is well established in the art market, they may have access to information concerning private sales, that is, transactions conducted outside the auction context. Consequently, they may use both sources of information—auction results and information from galleries and antique dealers—to predict whether particular works are likely to appreciate or depreciate in value (Moncada, forthcoming, p. 77). It is also important to note that the greater the amount and quality of information available about a particular work, the greater its potential value may be (Moncada 2012).

When valuing works of art, it is important to determine whether they were produced during the relevant historical period, as well as to consider their physical characteristics, features identifying the artist, state of preservation and rarity. Rarity may be understood in terms of the number of objects produced and the number of comparable works appearing on the market, both of which may affect value.

The value of a work may also be influenced by its aesthetic qualities, the quality of the techniques and materials used, the quality of its design, its intended purpose and marketability, its history and provenance, and the circumstances surrounding its acquisition and sale. From its production to its most recent owner, factors such as place of origin, historical context, fashion and broader cultural phenomena may influence the marketability of a work and, consequently, its valuation (Moncada, forthcoming, p. 83). The timing of

a sale may also be significant, particularly in relation to changing criteria of taste and prevailing political and economic circumstances.

These factors represent constantly changing conditions that can influence the valuation of a work of art to varying degrees. Similarly, “apparently identical works may have specific characteristics that only a competent valuer can understand and, consequently, value them very differently” (Moncada, forthcoming, p. 74).

Only professionals possessing this kind of knowledge can, when faced with a work of art they are required to value, assess and anticipate the market’s potential response to the object and, consequently, arrive at a well-founded valuation (Moncada, forthcoming, p. 73). In this context, both valuers and experts benefit from developing areas of specialisation.

The distinctive features that may substantially affect the valuation of a work of art are so numerous within each specialist sector that only someone with profound knowledge of the relevant works and market will be able to identify them and assign appropriate importance to them. This reinforces the significant advantage that may arise when the valuer is also an expert, as this combination of expertise can contribute to the quality of the valuation (Moncada, forthcoming, p. 75). When discussing valuations, it is sometimes stated that “a work is worth whatever people are willing to pay for it”. This expression should be supplemented by the qualification “over a given period of time”, since the assessment of the criteria mentioned above changes over time.

Consequently, a particular type of artwork may undergo significant changes in economic value within a relatively short period (Nunes (2011). “The values that a standard valuation should aim to determine are those at which a work of art should be put up for auction—its reserve price”, which represents the amount that a specialist dealer would have to pay for the work. “It roughly corresponds to the reference value for the two traditional options available to a private individual wishing to sell their art—putting it up for auction or selling it to a specialist dealer” (Moncada, forthcoming, p. 71).

AUCTION HOUSES / ONLINE AUCTIONS

Auction houses are “spaces” within the art market where a wide variety of market participants come together, primarily to view, examine and handle works of art, including rare pieces offered on the market (Moncada, forthcoming, p. 19).

Within this context, art-market intermediaries play an important role. Unlike galleries, auction houses are primarily dedicated to the resale of artworks and generally do not have direct relationships with artists. One of the most important events in the art market takes place within auction houses: the auction itself. For auction houses, the expertise associated with the identification and documentation of works is particularly important, firstly because new information about artworks may emerge over time and, secondly, because auction record can constitute an important source of documentary information for both sellers and buyers.

This information is also relevant to researchers, as auction houses and museums are frequently consulted by scholars studying artworks, artists, subjects and themes. Prior to an auction, a catalogue is produced and distributed to potential buyers. It generally contains photographs of the works offered for sale, accompanied by a brief description and the reserve price; in many cases, an auction estimate is also provided.

In the days leading up to the auction, the works to be offered are publicly displayed, allowing prospective buyers to examine the objects before bidding. This opportunity for direct examination is particularly important because it enables potential buyers to assess the physical characteristics and condition of the works (Moncada, forthcoming, p. 19).

When the auction takes place, several bidders may compete against one another, either in person, by telephone, through advance bids or online. This process may create “an atmosphere of rivalry, game, spectacle and exhibitionism” (Melo (2012), with the element of risk acting as a stimulating factor (Melo (2012). Melo describes auctions as “the ideal example of economic subversion in relation to works of art” (Melo (1994). The primary objective of an auction house is to sell a work of art at the highest price that the market is willing to pay, in return for a commission from the seller for the service provided. Auction houses may also receive a commission from the buyer (Moncada, forthcoming, p. 20).

The fact that auctions are public events, widely accessible to market participants, gives them considerable social, cultural and economic significance. The inclusion of an artist in the auction circuit may represent an important stage in the development of their market recognition and economic visibility. Prices achieved at auction can serve as an important reference for art-market participants, whether they intend to buy or sell. For this reason, an artist’s price performance at auction may have significant implications for their position in the market. Consequently, the entry of certain contemporary artists into the auction circuit should be carefully considered, since significant fluctuations or declines in auction prices may affect perceptions of their market position and career development (Melo (2012).

In twenty-first-century society, digital platforms have become increasingly important for a wide variety of purposes, including the organisation and promotion of auctions. Online auction platforms allow potential buyers to view lots, access catalogue information and, in some cases, participate directly in auctions without being physically present at the auction house. Digital technologies have therefore expanded the reach of auction houses and facilitated access to artworks and market information.

In addition to these considerations, the museum database contains records relating to the lot number, the auction number to which the item belongs and the date on which it was acquired. Such information is particularly important in the digital age, as it can

be stored in computerised systems and preserved through regular backups, preventive conservation measures and appropriate archival procedures. These practices contribute to the long-term preservation and accessibility of information relating to artworks and their histories.

ARTISTS AND PRODUCERS OF ARTISTIC WORKS

Artists are the pre-eminent producers of cultural goods and identifiable works of art. One of the defining features of the art market is its diversity: while some artists may remain relatively unknown, others achieve significant recognition, with their names functioning as brands within the market.

An artist's career is closely linked to the calibre of the galleries with which they work, particularly in the case of contemporary artists. Gallery owners play an important role in the development of an artist's career, particularly during its early stages, advising them on their artistic practice, career trajectory, and the materials, forms, and techniques they adopt professionally. During these formative years, students may hold exhibitions at their art schools, while final-year students have the opportunity to participate in academic group exhibitions in spaces provided by these institutions.

The next step in an artist's career is generally to exhibit in a gallery space, initially through group exhibitions in small-scale galleries within the city where they are based.

As the artist gains greater visibility and opportunities to stage solo exhibitions, they may begin to work with more prestigious galleries, and the value of their works may consequently increase. This progression may continue until the artist enters into a long-term contract with a gallery. Such arrangements generally involve artists and gallery owners who have achieved recognised positions within the national or international art scene. In these circumstances, the gallery helps to maintain and enhance the artist's standing, while the artist, in turn, contributes to maintaining the gallery's prestige and reputation.

It is important to note that gallery owners play a crucial role in an artist's career, as they advise artists on both the production and exhibition of their works.

However, this process has recently undergone some changes, with certain artists approaching auction houses directly to sell their works, without involving other intermediaries, particularly galleries. By operating more independently, artists may allow their works to reach a wider audience, as auctions are public events that can attract a broader range of participants than gallery exhibitions.

Above all, this approach may enable artists to exercise greater control over the selection of works offered for sale. An artist's entry into the auction market can therefore be of considerable importance to their career, as it provides a public indication of the market value attributed to their work.

Museums, however, occupy a different position within the art market, as they constitute important institutional spaces for artistic recognition, where the cultural and artistic significance of a particular work or artist may be formally acknowledged. An artist may therefore regard the inclusion of their work in a museum collection or exhibition as an important form of recognition. This status is reinforced by the restrictions and professional principles governing the disposal of museum collections (ICOM, 2004, p. 5).

This framework applies not only to painting and sculpture but also to contemporary forms of artistic expression, such as video, photography, and installation art. In other creative fields, studios or production centres may be established by designers or creators and may continue to operate following their death, often under the guidance of heirs or successors who remain active in the field. In the case of established artists, the management of their estates may contribute to the preservation of their artistic legacy and the continued circulation and valuation of their works [Haffner \(2016\)](#), [Würtenberger \(2022\)](#). Such organisations may therefore contribute to the preservation and continuation of the creator's artistic or creative legacy. However, the extent to which they remain established and financially stable within the market may vary considerably depending on the specific context.

GALLERY OWNERS

Gallery owners are, par excellence, key players in the sale of contemporary art, as they are the commercial agents closest to artists. They are also key players in the career development and recognition of artists who appear promising among the large number of artists completing their training. Once this selection has been made, gallery owners decide which works to exhibit, provide guidance on new artistic productions, and promote the artists they represent, according to the level of investment they intend to make and the resources at their disposal. In doing so, they contribute to determining the market value of the works through agreements established with the artists. Their commission varies according to the market value and profile of the artists they represent.

Therefore, in addition to selecting artists and preparing them for the market by promoting and financially supporting them according to their means, gallery owners act as a link between artists and the public. They provide artists with the contacts and professional networks necessary to enter the market and gain greater visibility and recognition. At the same time, they maintain close relationships with collectors, investors, and buyers, advising them on acquisitions. However, the extent of their responsibilities

towards an artist depends on the nature of the relationship and the terms of representation established between the artist and the gallery.

At the highest levels of the art market, artists may have established contractual relationships with galleries for the organisation and promotion of exhibitions. In the case of artists with significant international recognition, representation may also be shared among several galleries.

This may involve participation in group exhibitions in which artists share visibility with others, particularly where no exclusive representation agreement has been established [Melo \(2012\)](#).

ART DEALERS (“MARCHANDS”) AND INTERMEDIARIES

These agents purchase works from participants and at events within the sector—including private sellers, auction houses, galleries, art fairs, antique dealers, other dealers, collectors and, at times, the artists themselves—with the intention of subsequently reintroducing them to the market.

“The dealer acts on the basis of the quantity and quality of the information they have about the works” [Melo \(2012\)](#). They are also responsible for the “discovery and recovery of a substantial proportion of the works of art that have long been ‘hidden’ from the general public” (Moncada, forthcoming, p. 19). Unlike galleries, art dealers are not necessarily required to maintain a physical space that is open to the public. Among art dealers are intermediaries known as marchands, who sell works that come directly from artists.

Although they operate within the art market, their activities may also involve the sale of material goods that possess a certain decorative value and are offered at relatively affordable prices. Private agents, including intermediaries and other cultural agents, may therefore play an important role in the development and evolution of aesthetic taste among the public (Moncada, forthcoming, p. 18).

We now turn to those agents who, although they do not necessarily perform a direct economic function within the art market, are nevertheless of pivotal importance because they are dedicated to studying its various aspects and to disseminating artistic knowledge. These include teachers, researchers, journalists, critics, curators, and museum professionals, as well as those responsible for managing private and public collections.

ACADEMICS AND ART CRITICS

The art market encompasses significant artistic, cultural, historical, and sociological dimensions. As such, knowledge is an essential asset for anyone wishing to pursue a career in this field.

Lecturers, researchers, and students of art history or fine arts—professionals who operate primarily within the academic sphere—conduct research into various aspects of the art world, thereby disseminating knowledge to future practitioners and to anyone with an interest in the subject under consideration.

Keeping information up to date and ensuring its dissemination are essential in this constantly evolving market. Consequently, professionals in the art world cannot remain active in the field without keeping abreast of the latest research and developments. Such information may take the form of informative texts, articles in specialist journals, books, and bibliographic resources, depending on the type of information being conveyed or the subject being explored in greater depth.

In general, practitioners who devote themselves primarily to the study of the art world tend to distance themselves from its commercial sphere, producing discourses that may comprise four types of elements: information, contextualisation, value judgements, and reflections, depending on the knowledge and perspective the ‘writer’ seeks to convey [Melo \(2012\)](#).

There are also cultural journalists, whose role is to follow developments in the art market, inform the public, and, depending on their level of artistic knowledge and degree of independence within the sector, produce texts that become progressively less informative and more analytical and critical in nature. The term ‘technical agents’ refers to the various professionals and stakeholders within the art market who play a key role in the appraisal, authentication, valuation, assessment, conservation, restoration, and transportation of works of art.

CONSERVATORS/RESTORERS/CONSULTANTS

Conservation and restoration professionals are generally referred to as conservator-restorers because the practice of restoration necessarily requires expertise in conservation, whereas the reverse is not necessarily the case. The importance of conservation and restoration to the art market is closely related to the limits of intervention that practitioners must observe. In the context of a work of art, restoration involves “intervening on a piece when such action is essential to preserve its integrity, aesthetic appeal and historical and cultural value” [Lopes \(2012\)](#).

Restoration therefore involves physical procedures carried out on a material object that possesses an auratic, almost sacred quality, in accordance with its cultural and heritage value. As [Lopes \(2012\)](#) explains, “There are no ideal interventions, only possible

and fundamental solutions, depending on the conservation and use of the artefact, minimising harmful effects and, above all, respecting the material nature of its history" (p. 160).

Thus, "it is only through an analysis of the work that the restoration specialist can propose the best course of action in accordance with professional ethics" [Lopes \(2012\)](#). These principles require the integrity of the artefact to be preserved, as the work constitutes a formal unity possessing artistic and aesthetic values that correspond to the intention underlying its creation. Conservation and restoration are therefore closely interconnected fields, and professional practice generally encompasses both areas. According to the European Confederation of Conservator-Restorers' Organisations (E.C.C.O.), the conservator-restorer is a qualified professional responsible for the preservation of cultural heritage, undertaking activities that include preventive conservation, conservation, and conservation-restoration treatments [European Confederation of Conservator-Restorers' Organisations. \(2002\)](#). This is a highly sensitive field because restoration involves interventions that may affect the material, aesthetic, historical, and cultural dimensions of a work of art. The objective is to intervene only when necessary to preserve the work's integrity and its aesthetic, historical, and cultural value [Lopes \(2012\)](#).

Conservators and restorers must therefore proceed with the utmost care so as not to alter the essential characteristics of the artistic object. There are "no ideal interventions or treatments, but rather a set of possible and fundamental solutions, which must be adopted with a view to the conservation and use of the artefact, minimising harmful effects whilst, above all, respecting the material nature of its history" [Lopes \(2012\)](#). Consequently, "it is only through a very close analysis of the work that the restoration specialist can determine the best course of action in accordance with the standards governing professional ethics" [Lopes \(2012\)](#).

These standards require the integrity of the artefact to be preserved, as it constitutes a formal unity possessing artistic and aesthetic values consistent with the intention underlying its creation. Another risk faced by conservators and restorers is the production of so-called 'historical forgeries'.

This may occur when an intervention seeks to restore a work to an assumed original appearance, effectively attempting to replace the artist's intervention and altering the characteristics of the creation, thereby compromising the work's unique and irreplaceable aura [Lopes \(2012\)](#). In this context, the legal protection afforded to the artist's moral rights is particularly relevant. Under Law No. 16/2008 of 1 April, concerning Copyright and Related Rights, the integrity of a work is protected as part of the author's moral rights.

These rights are distinct from economic rights and remain relevant beyond the commercial exploitation of the work. Copyright in economic terms generally expires 70 years after the author's death, subject to the provisions and exceptions established by law. From the perspective of conservators and restorers, these legal and ethical requirements may represent an important consideration when undertaking interventions, particularly when the artist is still alive or when the work remains protected by copyright. In practice, restoration may be carried out without direct contact with the artist, whether because of the artist's unavailability or because the relevant legal and professional requirements are not fully understood. From the perspective of the art market, interventions undertaken by someone other than the artist may affect the perceived value or authenticity of a work, whereas maintenance carried out by the artist may be perceived differently in terms of its commercial implications. As Moncada (forthcoming) observes, "Because works of art are composed of materials that begin to deteriorate from the very moment of their creation, the intervention and action of the conservator-restorer becomes, sooner or later, essential" (p. 27).

Restoration work on an artistic object must therefore be carried out with restraint so as not to alter its form or authenticity, while at the same time enhancing its preservation and appreciation.

Owners should consequently seek professional advice on conservation from conservator-restorers, who are the technical specialists in this field, in order to minimise the risks of deterioration to which works of art may be exposed. Art consultants also emerge as professional agents within the art market through forms of informal consultancy (Moncada, forthcoming, p. 26). Such consultancy may take the form of brief exchanges of information between private individuals and other art-market agents. The role of these professionals is to select and recommend specific works of art for acquisition, particularly for private collections. As Moncada (forthcoming) states, "These decisions are relevant in terms of the authenticity of the works, their cultural significance, their quality, their state of preservation and their value" (p. 26).

Consequently, private clients who engage the services of an art consultant may not need to independently appoint several technical specialists, such as valuers, experts, and conservator-restorers, particularly when the consultant is able to coordinate or draw upon the expertise of these professionals. Consultants may therefore consider a range of factors before providing advice and may frequently rely on the knowledge and expertise of other professionals within the art world and art market. Similarly, consultants may advise clients on insurance matters, taking into account their activities, the nature of their collections, and the assets comprising them. Thus, owing to their knowledge, experience, and involvement in the art market, consultants can provide private clients with a significant degree of confidence when making new acquisitions and selecting the professional services required to manage and preserve their collections.

CONCLUSIONS

This study demonstrates that the systematic integration of art expertise and the evaluation of works of art into arts education constitutes a significant component in the development of aesthetic knowledge and in the training of professionals working in the field of artistic and cultural heritage.

Aesthetic knowledge encompasses the interrelationship between perceptual sensitivity, critical interpretation and cognitive processes, thereby enabling the decoding of works of art from aesthetic, historical, cultural and epistemological perspectives.

Consequently, the study reinforces the importance of procedures relating to inventorying, cataloguing, documentary and provenance research, attribution, authentication, technical examination, specialist valuation, conservation and restoration. The application of these procedures contributes to a body of evidence through which the identity, authenticity, physical condition, historical significance and cultural value of works of art can be assessed rigorously and critically.

It is evident that advanced theoretical and practical training enables future professionals to engage with works of art through methodologically rigorous and evidence-based approaches, integrating art-historical research with technical examination, materials analysis, documentary evidence and comparative evaluation.

This interdisciplinary framework is becoming increasingly necessary within the contemporary art ecosystem, where artistic, historical, technological, and cultural, heritage and economic dimensions are intrinsically intertwined through authenticity, appreciation, conservation and exhibition. The findings also indicate that expertise in works of art should be conceived as an interdisciplinary field of knowledge production. Art historians, conservators-restorers, curators, researchers, scientists, gallery owners, auction house specialists, art dealers, valuers, consultants and other professional practitioners contribute, through distinct yet complementary forms of expertise, to the interpretation, authentication, valuation, conservation and circulation of art objects.

Meaningful collaboration between these fields is essential for establishing responsible practices.

Within this framework, graphic and photographic documentation takes on particular importance; visual documentation provides a permanent record of the formal and material characteristics of a work of art, enabling comparative analysis, the identification of alterations and interventions, and the documentation of the work's history. It can be concluded that the identification, authentication, evaluation and preservation of works of art should be understood as interlinked processes that require the convergence of specialist knowledge, methodological rigour, empirical evidence, documentary reliability and ethical responsibility.

Their effective implementation depends not only on disciplinary expertise, but also on the ability to foster a dialogue between academic research, scientific analysis, conservation practice and curatorial methodologies within the art market.

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