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Interdependence of Conservation and Education: three interactive artworks by Piero Gilardi

ABSTRACT

This paper explores the boundaries and potentialities of the relation among the conservation and education fields with the artist intent, focusing on the case study of three interactive works by Piero Gilardi: *Ipogea* (2010), *Tiktaalik* (2010) and *Aigües Tortes* (2007). The interaction with the public is the main cause of deterioration of these polyurethane foam sculptures, and determines the challenge of how to guarantee the full experience of the works, while containing the damages.

In order to analyse this issue, an interview with the artist and one pilot interview with a group of visitors provided interesting outcomes. Beside the artist's priority remains the interaction, he values the materiality and technique of his work. At the same time visitor's reactions and relationship with the sculptures, provided a different reading of the artist's work, and can become part of the cluster of values that should inform conservation decision.

The search for equilibrium among visitor's needs and artist intent constitute the main objective on which the collaboration among conservators and educators can build up interdisciplinary solutions.

KEYWORDS: *interactive artworks, conservation, education, Piero Gilardi*

INTRODUCTION

This paper is part of a doctoral research project within the Polytechnic University of Valencia, centred on the *Interdependence between conservation and education in contemporary art museums*. The research project aims at investigating collaborative experiences among conservation and education museums departments, demonstrating how an effective interdisciplinary approach in these two fields can improve the relation between the public and contemporary artworks, making the people aware about the future of their contemporary heritage.

These issues were explored during my collaboration with the MAXXI, Museum of 21-Century Arts in Rome, on the 2017 monographic exhibition "Nature Forever. Piero Gilardi". The retrospective presented 60 artworks by Piero Gilardi, realized over the past 50 years, in which art, criticism and politics are intertwined. From the complex relationship between man and nature, to the use of new technologies, the artworks included in the exhibition tackled themes such as Ecology, the relational nature of art and social and political commitment.

In particular the exhibition included numerous political - street performances masks, archival documents and the famous *Nature Carpets*, hyper-realistic but artificial sculptures representing natural scenes, made with expanded polyurethane foam. Furthermore there was a group of relatively recent and interactive works, realized in polyurethane foam combined with technological elements and other materials.

Among these, three resulted particularly challenging for their high level of interactivity. In the first one, *Aigües Tortes*, of 2007, visitors can sit on a polyurethane foam tree trunk, activating a sound mechanism; in *Tiktaalik*, of 2010, visitors can lean and press on the work activating the movement of a gigantic lizard skeleton, while in *Ipogea*, also of 2010, visitors can physically enter into the artwork activating sounds and lights to live a cave's immersive sensorial experience (Phot. 1,2,3,4). In *Ipogea*, particularly, the interactivity results challenging both

for the artwork and for the visitors, since it requires a certain degree of agility to climb on it, while putting a lot of stress on the foam.

These three artworks offer a completely immersive context, where the public is invited to enter in a multisensory experience, containing rich symbolic meanings, on which the artist built his artistic intent. The search for an harmony between the tangible experience of the work and its symbolic meaning has been highlighted by the artist in numerous situations, including in relation to *Ipogea*, which is inspired by an ancient Mediterranean myth, according to which the fragments of the sunlight have remained nestled in subterranean hidden caves'. The two objectives of guaranteeing the full experience of the artworks, while containing the damages caused by the interaction were the focus of the meetings between MAXXI conservation and education departments, and stimulated the two questions on which this paper is grounded:

What can be done to improve the relation between the public and contemporary artworks, and which role can be played by conservation in this dynamic? How does the visitor experience contribute to the meaning of the artwork and to the values to be preserved?

The hypothesis is that a better understanding of conservation issues from the public could stimulate a sense of belonging and ownership towards collections of contemporary art, and a greater respect to the material nature of the artworks.

Through a pilot interview with a small group of 9 visitors, it has been possible to sound visitor's perception and interest towards the materiality of the artworks by Piero Gilardi and of conservation issues in general, while the interview with the artist provided an insight into his intent and priorities.



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PHOT. 1

Visitors interacting with *Ipogea* (outside), July 2017
Pasha Praditha

PHOT. 2

Visitors interacting with *Ipogea* (inside), July 2017
Pasha Praditha

PHOT. 3

Visitors interacting with *Tiktaalik*
Pasha Praditha

PHOT. 4

Visitor interacting with *Aigües Tortes*
Pasha Praditha

ISSUES AT STAKE

The relation between visitors and contemporary artworks presents some challenges, which may differ from those with other cultural objects.

Most visitors do not recognize contemporary art collections as their future heritage. The sense of belonging and ownership is not developed yet, the category is extremely broad and undefined and often is difficult to talk about “heritage” also with other professionals in the conservation field. However the artworks are there, produced, and those entering in museums collections tend to acquire the status of “selected for the future”.² Contemporary art is treated as an “out of history” category, condemned to a permanent “newness”, which affect a lot art history and conservation interpretations.³

The museum experience is often consumed by visitors, especially in the case of interactive artworks, without a comprehensive awareness of the material characteristics, their meaning in time, and aesthetic contents embedded in the artworks. This can have two effects: on one hand the learning opportunities offered by the artwork are reduced; on the other the conservation status of these artworks can be affected by an aggressive interaction.

Contemporary art museums can suffer from a commercial identity, where visitors are fed with interactivity as this could stimulate a learning process itself. The space of the contemporary art museum is frequently perceived as ambiguous, especially regarding to what can be touched and what not and why. When is possible to touch, visitors are not always sure about HOW to touch.⁴

How can we create the conditions to foster the balance between the conservation needs and the usage needs of the artworks? The visitor and the artwork are part of the same historical moment, and their dialectical relation is only possible thanks to the mediation of the museum as institution, as space and most of all as interpretative framework.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The objective of this paper is to study the main conservation issues of *Ipogea*, *Tiktaalik* and *Aigües Tortes* in relation to their exhibition and interaction with the public, in a long-term perspective. Through this analysis it will be possible to explore the challenges posed by the most recent production of the artist, which has not been studied as much as his production of the '60 and '70.

In the past two decades issues related to the conservation of Piero Gilardi *Nature Carpets* and to some big interactive installations such as *Survival*, provided the occasion for the most advanced findings in the analysis of conservation issues of polyurethane foam artworks and technologies⁵.

Furthermore, the artist, over his career, has always been available to collaborate with conservators, accepting interviews and explaining a lot of the techniques he used and the aesthetical reasons behind them. However, the problems experimented with the most recent artworks seem to go further than the issues posed by the *Nature Carpets* of the '60.

Piero Gilardi has always produced artworks with the intention to engage the public in a direct contact with them: in principle, also the *Nature Carpets* where created to be “consumed”, by sitting, laying, leaning and interacting with them. But they were not combined with technologies and their aesthetical value proofed to be embedded in a sculptural and pictorial identity, which can live beside the physical interaction with the public. With the passing of time these artworks suffered the deterioration processes typical of polyurethane foam (progressive lost of elasticity, development of cracks, brittleness, deformations, etc.),⁶ which on one hand compromised their interactive function, and on the other produced a new historical and aesthetical meaning.

Instead, in the case of interactive artworks such as *Ipogea*, *Tiktaalik*, or *Aigües Tortes*, the aesthetical value is completely embedded in their interactive nature. When the deterioration of polyurethane foam, or the obsolescence of the electronic

components, prevents the interaction, the meaning of the artworks is compromised or completely lost. The pure aesthetical aspect of these artworks in polyurethane foam seems to be not enough to give back their intrinsic dynamics and their meaning.

Also the artist has declared that, even if for him the interaction was very important, in the case of the *Nature Carpets*, it would not be a problem to conserve these works under plexiglas cases.⁷

He agrees about the new meaning gained by the *Nature Carpets* with the ageing of their material components. Instead, until today there were no clear opinions on interactive artworks such as *Ipogea*, *Tiktaalik*, and *Aigües Tortes*, which represents the most recent production, of the last 10 years. The big dimensions would not allow their exhibition in a plexiglas case, without creating the effect of artworks exhibited in huge coffins.

In some occasions the artists further explained how for him the functionality of these works is connected with their aesthetical-experiential value, through which it comes out also their symbolical value.⁸ For example, in the case of *Ipogea*, if it is not possible anymore to physically enter into the sculpture, it becomes also impossible to make the experience of the stone lights embedded into the cave and of the Mediterranean myth to which the artworks is inspired.

As in most of Piero Gilardi's artistic projects, his interactive artworks are studied meticulously, taking into account both the visitor's interaction and conservation issues. His confident attitude towards conservation informed also his collaboration with the MAXXI for the mounting of the 2017 exhibition. In particular, for this occasion he provided the museum with a kit for repairing periodically the damages caused by the interaction while the artworks were on display, and a dossier full of information about each work. Among these documents and materials, there was a detailed dossier about *Ipogea*, where he included pictures illustrating the suggested way to use the artwork. The document, available to the museum conservation team and to the author, was full of information related to the composition

of the artwork's materials, to the artwork's significance, and included the design for an instruction sheet showing the correct use of the artwork.

Beside all the inputs from the artist, and the collaboration among different colleagues in the preparation of the 2017 exhibition, the attitude assumed by the museum visitors towards the interactive artworks could eventually be considered a missed opportunity in terms of understanding the contents and significance of these works, and of course had its predictable consequences, in terms of damages to the sculptures.

Certainly visitors could not perceive their role as active actors, part of a broader community in relation with contemporary artworks in a long-term perspective. This is an issue affecting many exhibitions of contemporary art. The case offered by *Ipogea*, *Tiktaalik*, and *Aigües Tortes* is quite illustrative of these attitudes and feelings, and shows the need to analyse and take into account the interaction with the public as a fundamental aspect, both in terms of conservation issues and of expanding the potential significance of the artwork.

METHODOLOGY

This preliminary study has been developed through three simple steps:

1. The analysis of the means adopted by the museum in collaboration with the artist, in order to guarantee the use and preservation of *Ipogea*, *Tiktaalik* and *Aigües Tortes*.
2. The recording of a video interview with a selected group of 9 visitors, realized in June 2017.
3. The recording of an interview with Piero Gilardi, realized in December 2017.

1. Analysis of the means adopted by the museum

The 2017 exhibition at the MAXXI Museum was conceived into four sections, named respectively *New Media Art*, the *Habitable Art*, *Political Animations*, *The Theorist and Activator*, and distributed over the Gallery 3, a space already characterized by

the irregular architecture of the museum. *Ipogea*, *Tiktaalik* and *Aigües Tortes* were positioned in the section *New Media Art*, which was differentiated from the rest of the gallery by an artificial grass ground. This delimitation, besides contributing to the overall aesthetic of the exhibition concept, served also to separate the interactive area from the other non-interactive exhibition sections.

During the preparation of the exhibition, the museum conservation and mediation team foresaw the challenges posed by the compresence of interactive and non-interactive areas within the same exhibition. It was evident that a certain number of gallery assistants and mediators was needed, in order to facilitate the interaction with the artworks while maintaining both the sculptures and the visitors safe. However the budget constraints could not allow the presence of an adequate number of professionals on a daily basis for the 6 months of the duration of the exhibition. Due to these circumstances, the museum teams involved discussed about possible alternative solutions and, through further consultations with the artist, planned the realization of an informative sheet to be distributed to the visitors. This information sheet included instructions on the correct use of the artwork, and has been designed on the basis of drawings and graphics created by Piero Gilardi.

Nonetheless both measures, the delimitation of spaces and the creation of an information sheet, adopted by the museum to facilitate the interaction and limit the damages to the artwork, seemed to be not so effective. According to the testimony of some gallery assistants,⁹ in crowded days people were approaching the artworks with a certain vehemence, with the only objective of “consuming” the experience, without understanding the relation between their body and the works; for example, in the case of *Ipogea*, where a certain degree of agility is required to enter into the cave and get out of it, there were situations in which some visitors seemed to be not aware of their weight or height. Once they entered into the sculpture, they did not know how to get out of it, and needed the help of the gallery

assistants, who later admitted it was not possible to worry about the stress caused on the artwork. The priority for them at the time was to get the visitor immediately out from the uncomfortable and embarrassing situation, before reporting to the museum staff.

The artist expected this type of accidents and provided the museum restorers with a kit for quick and frequent interventions on the artworks, taking into account that the damages caused by the interaction are an inevitable part of the identity of these sculptures.

Considering the measures adopted by the museum, the information sheet was not consulted very much and the demarcation of spaces was not always obvious to visitors. The sheet was positioned in a corner of the gallery that was not very visible, and the graphics were presented with a very light green on white. The drawings proposed by Gilardi, instead, were much stronger but they have not been used. Furthermore the artist himself later admitted that nowadays few visitors have the patience to read and follow written instructions.

According to the gallery assistants accounts, visitors who firsts walked through the *New Media Art* section, where *Ipogea*, *Tiktaalik* and *Aigües Tortes* were displayed, were tempted to touch also the *Nature Carpets*, exhibited in the non-interactive section. Similarly, visitors who first walked through the non-interactive area where the *Nature Carpets* were displayed did not always understand that they could interact with *Ipogea*, *Tiktaalik* and *Aigües Tortes*. Some others were confused and shy about what to do or how to react.

In conclusion, it was clear that the solutions chose by the Museum could not guarantee the full experience of the artwork. Certainly they did not affect the success of the exhibition and, as said previously, the damages are considered inevitable by the artist himself. However the question regarding how much these interactive artworks have been understood and what will be their life expectancy in a long-term perspective remains, especially for *Ipogea*, which has been acquired by the Museum at the end of 2017.



PHOT. 5
Interview to the visitors
Giulia Comito

2. Video Interview with the public

With the objective of testing visitors' perception in relation to the materials and techniques, to the concept of artwork's fragility, and to the interaction with *Ipogea*, *Tiktaalik* and *Aigües Tortes*, a short video interview was realized. Nine visitors from different ages and backgrounds have been selected for the interviews; they were not completely new to the museum environment, since they visited other museums before, but they were not familiar with contemporary art, nor with Piero Gilardi, who was completely unknown to them.

The interviews have been realized all on one day, and took about 10 minutes each. The visitors have been offered a free entrance ticket to the museum, so that they could see the exhibition and participate to the interview at the end of the visit.

Through 10 questions, they have been asked about their feelings while interacting with the artworks,

their perception of the artwork's fragility, and their point of view on the sculpture's life in a long-term perspective. Each one of the visitor interviewed had approximately one hour and half to visit the exhibition, before replying in a spontaneous dialogue to the following questions:

- Do you remember any other exhibition in which you had the opportunity to physically interact with the artworks?
- If you had to describe this exhibition to someone who has never seen these type of sculptures, how would you describe them?
- Try to mention all the materials with which has been realized the sculpture *Aigües Tortes*
- Were you afraid or worried before or while interacting with the artworks? If so, why?
- Do you think *Ipogea* can be considered a fragile? Yes/No why?
- With which of these artworks do you think you

have established a more significant interaction?

What type of interaction have you had?

- *Which of these artworks do you think will have a longer life? Why?*
- *Which of these artworks do you think is older and why?*
- *What do you think future generation will learn from these artworks?*
- *What do you expect from contemporary art museums? To which extent the museum has to take into account the public opinion? Can you provide some example?*

The first two questions aimed at introducing the interviewed to the general theme of artwork's interactivity and to stimulate their reflections on the exhibition. The following questions served to motivate a reflection on the materials, and on the artwork's life, before concluding with considerations on the contemporary art museum's mandate and function.

Due to the challenges posed by some questions, during the interviews has been necessary to build up an informal dialogue, in order to stimulate reflections, and facilitate the understanding of the questions. The dialogue with the interviewees was also necessary to limit a sense of inadequateness that emerged spontaneously from them, while discussing these topics, and trying to understand the objective of the current research.

3. Interview with Piero Gilardi

In order to understand the artist's intent in relation to the interaction between visitors and his most recent works, realized after 2000, an interview with Piero Gilardi was crucial, and it became possible on 15 December 2017.

The interview included questions about the role of interactivity in his artistic research, the priorities between the public interaction and the preservation of authenticity, and questions about and possible solutions and recommendations to educate the public towards aesthetical experiences such those proposed by *Ipogea*, *Tiktaalik* and *Aigües Tortes*. Question related to Gilardi's attitude towards the ageing of his works were also included, as well

questions dedicated to more technical aspects in relation to the restoration and physical intervention on his sculptures. Furthermore specific questions were also dedicated to the role played by his collaborators and conservation professionals with whom Gilardi has worked frequently.

In order to confirm the trust and positive attitude already showed by the artist during the mounting of the exhibition in spring 2017, the interview was carried out leaving certain flexibility to the artist to express his thoughts. As it was clear from previous publications and from his availability during exhibition at the MAXXI, the artist was particularly generous, explaining his poetic, techniques, and providing documents and materials samples for the research.

The visit to his studio also provided the opportunity to see the materials used, and better understand the context of his creative processes. Gilardi is meticulous in the documentation of this work, conserving in organized records all the information related to the materials he uses, their pros & cons. Each artwork is a project, with an entire set of archival records, organized by contents, materials, techniques and eventual colleagues involved. An example of this modality is offered by the record of *Ipogea*, which was shared by the artist over the interview, and includes a presentation of the work and its meanings, an instruction manual with a DVD, the instruction manuals of the laptop embedded in the work and of the sound apparatus, and receipts of the materials purchases needed for the realization of the work (Polyurethane Foam OLMO, rubber látex EOC, Plextol GAMMA CHIMICA), notes for the maintenance of the work.

DISCUSSION

The main challenge in the realization of the video interviews with the visitors has been their reaction to the questions, which in some cases they found difficult. After the interview some of them commented that they did not understand the questions related to the fragility and longevity of the artworks.

The replies of the interviewees offered interesting keys of interpretations, highlighting the challenge of developing an awareness of the heritage value in contemporary artworks, and the difficulty in educating the public towards materials and techniques with which the artworks are created. For example, to the question "Try to mention all the materials with which has been realized the sculpture *Aigües Tortes*" one of the visitor replied:

"The artwork with the trunk (Aigües Tortes) I think is made of plastic, maybe moss, but I can't say if real or synthetic moss, and certainly electric components and devices for sound and pressure" and then another continued: *"Aigües Tortes can be made of wood, with some addition of sponge, because it was soft, and some cables and electric elements inside, to reproduce the sound"*.

Here for example is surprising the difficulty in understanding if the moss is real or synthetic and the impression that the trunk could be made with wood.

The video showed also how visitors considered polyurethane foam as a resistant material due to its softness. When questioned about the potential fragility of the artworks, visitors replicated that these were not fragile, since they could sustain their bodies during the interaction. To the question "Do you think *Ipogea* can be considered a fragile? Yes/No why?" some visitors replied:

"It doesn't seem to me a fragile artwork, it rather seem to me an artwork that can offer you feelings like confidence and strength", or *"It didn't seem to me a fragile artwork. At the beginning I thought it could be fragile, but coming out of Ipogea, I leaned over it, and I didn't have any problem"*.

Furthermore, some others also commented:

"While glass objects can give you an impression of fragility, these softer materials never look fragile, they look like something that never breaks"; *"From a material point of view, most of these artworks seem easy to conserve"*.

In view of these answers, it is clear that the interviewees, in the majority of cases, did not think that the works could be broken during the interaction,

because their perception of polyurethane foam was instinctively linked with its texture, considered soft and not fragile. Particularly, some of them linked the concept of fragility with their perception of safety in the interaction with the works, and assumed that the softness of the material could not create any problem to the public nor to the conservators.

The visitors interviewed separated esthetical and historical value from material values, which were considered less relevant. Furthermore they were particularly challenged by all the questions, since they tended to give for granted the present and the future of the artworks. When it came to think to the life of the artwork in a longer-term perspective they tended to disconnect the aesthetical-historical value from its materiality.

At the end of the interviews most of them told that they found these questions quite weird, that they never thought about conservation of contemporary art, nor that they could have a role as active actors, part of a broader community in relation with contemporary artworks. Also they never thought to contemporary artworks as part of their future cultural heritage.

The interview with Gilardi provided further issues to be considered when thinking about preservation strategies for artworks such as *Ipogea*, *Tiktaalik* and *Aigües Tortes*.

The artist clearly explained how for him the interaction with his works always represents a priority, before the deterioration consequences eventually determined by the visitor's use of the artwork. However, when questioned about a long-term perspective on these interactive works, he explained he is not favourable to the creation of replicas, or to the duplication of his works.

These sculptures are quite representative of the work of an artist, for whom the creative act is definitively anchored to his hands, beside in many of his creations the artist has counted with the collaboration of technicians specialized with different media. Therefore, Gilardi confirmed how in principle it is possible to intervene on his works to repair them, in order to ensure that they can continue to

be used by the public. However the value always remains in the original creation of the artist, and these interventions must be planned in agreement with the artist, his collaborators or restorers he trusts. He clearly mentioned during the interviews the name of the professionals he trust and he is confident can solve most of the conservation issues related to his works: Heinrich Vogel, Antonio Rava, Thea B. van Oosten. These collaborators and conservators can ensure the restoration of shapes, colours, and materials in their original consistence,¹⁰ to guarantee the future of the material life of the artwork.

The use of polyurethane and some technologies reflects the search of the artist towards new and experimental materials in relation to the time in which the works were fabricated. Gilardi is favourable to the substitution of the electronic components included in his interactive sculptures, if these can guarantee the original functioning of the artwork. With respect to the polyurethane foam, instead, when the experience of the work and consequently its function becomes impossible because of the ageing of the material, the artist suggested to exhibit the artwork accompanied by a video, showing the demonstration of the original use of it. The artist strongly recommends the use of these videos, not only as a documentary solution which could accompany the sculptures over the years, but also as a tool to educate the public towards a “sustainable relation” with his artworks. This solution would be more effective than the sheet provided to the visitors by the MAXXI, could encourage the most shy visitors to interact with the works, and also educate the most impulsive ones to enjoy the experience in a way, which will stay longer in their memory and in that of the future generations.

RESULTS

The analysis of the measures adopted by the museum to guarantee the use and preservation of *Ipogea*, *Tiktaalik* and *Aigües Tortes*, showed how simple prevention measures cannot guarantee the double objective of limiting the damages and facilitating

the understanding of the works. The need for an expanded perspective when considering interactive artworks emerged.

From the video interviews realized with the visitors of the MAXXI exhibition, it came out how the public does not know the material properties of the artworks, attribute with more facility their value to aesthetical-historical issues, disconnecting it from its material aspects.

The interviewees did not have a long-term perspective about the life of the sculptures considered, which instead were perceived as an experience to be consumed in that particular moment. The interviewees responses also confirmed how these visitors were not use to think about contemporary art collections as something that needs to be conserved. The theme of conservation resulted quite new and they did not expect to talk about this during the interview.

The interview based on conservation related questions offered to the visitors the opportunity to look at the artworks in a different perspective and stimulated them to interpret the artwork quite deeply, beside they did not have any previous knowledge of Piero Gilardi’s work.

Furthermore the video offered the opportunity to document the use of the artworks, as Gilardi suggested during the interview, but in a more spontaneous way, not directed by the artist.

When thinking about the public we might also consider the variety of visitors, which are not a unique category and interact with the artworks in different ways. Their diversity, number and frequency of interaction with the artworks are influencing factor to be considered when thinking about displaying strategies.

The interview with Gilardi showed the confidence of the artist towards restoration in general; particularly, he recalled his background as a restorer, coming from a family of restorers, and he confirmed his full trust in the possibility to find a solution to the majority of the conservation problems posed by his artworks.

During the interview he recognized the value of researches such as those of Thea B. van Oosten

and of her team at the Cultural Heritage Agency of the Netherlands (RCE), from which he could greatly benefit while working on his polyurethane foam artworks. From his comments, it came out a concept of restoration not only as a science dedicated to the extension of the artwork’s life, but also as a science, which can contribute to the artist’s knowledge of the materials he is working with.

Furthermore, the interdisciplinary collaboration among professionals dedicated to the production and to the conservation of his works came out also as an important aspect of Piero Gilardi’s considerations. The collaboration is particularly relevant for the production and conservation of the technological aspects of his most recent works, but also for the search of new materials, and the dialogue with new companies producing plastics and varnishes he uses in his work.

When asked about solutions for improving the balance between preservation and interaction, he acknowledged the limits of the informative sheet and mentioned the proposal of a video demonstration of the use of the artworks to be presented next to each of them. The videos should be played on small screens positioned next to the artworks. This solution was not implemented by the MAXXI Museum. Beside it suggest a combination of conservation, documentation and education objectives, only represents the point of view of the artist in a particular moment of his career. Being “the artworks a museum object in a museum environment, can the relationship with the audience define the work as much as the artist declared intention?”

CONCLUSIONS

The experience of discussing conservation issues related to Piero Gilardi’s interactive artworks with visitors showed an increased learning potential, where conservation provides an historical framework to the artworks, offer a comprehensive understanding of the artworks where material and significance are interdependent, in addition a sense of belonging and ownership is stimulated, and can

contribute to a greater respect towards the materials, which today is often lost.

On the other hand, considering the high level of interactivity of these type of artworks, and their aesthetical limitations outside the interactive dimension, as we have seen in comparison with the Nature Carpets, their conservation strategy cannot ignore the audience’s reactions and relationships with the artwork. The visitor’s reactions and relationship become part of the cluster of values that should inform conservation decision.

The public, as it includes people of all kind, it is not a unique entity, without the capacity to understand. Public must be trained, capacitated to interact with artworks such as *Ipogea*, *Tiktaalik* and *Aigües Tortes*. A better understanding from the public of the technical and material characteristics of the works, as of the conservation problems related with them could have a double positive effect: to reduce the consequences of an aggressive interaction, the damages to the artworks, and offer to visitors a deeper and more comprehensive knowledge of the creative process of the artist, learning a respect and appreciation towards the materiality which today is often unknown.

The education of the public towards an exploratory interaction, which can be not aggressive, brings potentially to positive effects both from conservation and an education point of view.

ENDNOTES

- [1] Communication to the author, during the interview in December 2017 and Palopoli, A. (ed.), *Nature Forever. Piero Gilardi*. Rome, Quodlibet, 2017, p. 148.
- [2] "To designate artworks as museum-worthy is to mark the mas objects that would deserve a particular place in what Philip Fisher has called "the future's past". This past is that of art history, whether viewed as a linear narrative or, in tune with recent directions of inquiry, as a more variegated story. Contemporary works valorised by entering museum collections – and, to a lesser extent, by being exhibited in museums – are in a sense projected into the future, identified as playing a role in an anticipated history." Altshuler, B., 'Collecting the New: A Historical Introduction', in Altshuler, B. (ed.), *Collecting the New. Museums and Contemporary Art*. Princeton University Press, 2005, p. 2.
- [3] About this position it is interesting to look at: Meyer, R., *What was contemporary art?*. The MIT Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 2013; and Bishop, C., *Radical Museology or, What's 'Contemporary' in Museums of Contemporary Art?*, Koenig Books, London, 2013
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- de los materiales plásticos de moldeo", *Patina*, Vol. 2, no 13-14, May 2006, pp. 65-74; and Rava, A., 'La conservazione di opere in poliuretano espanso. Il lavoro di Piero Gilardi', *Kermes*, year 28, no 98, 2015, pp. 16 – 17.
- [7] Angelucci, S. (ed.), *Interview with Piero Gilardi, in Arte Contemporanea, Conservazione e Restauro*, Prato, Nardini Editore, 1994, pp. 219-227.
- [8] Specified during the interview in December 2017 and in the documentation provided by the artist during the interview.
- [9] These professionals, working for a private company which provides security services to the Museum, have been informally interviewed by the author in June 2017, but were not available to appear in official interviews, nor to be named in the paper.
- [10] Rava, A., 'La conservazione di opere in poliuretano espanso. Il lavoro di Piero Gilardi', *Kermes*, year 28, no 98, 2015, p. 20.

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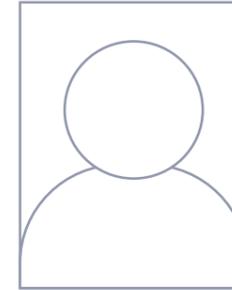
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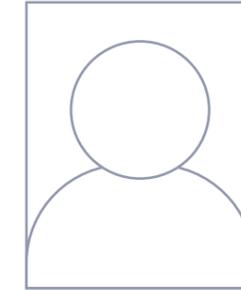
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