

THE GLASGOW SCHOOL OF ART

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THE GLASGOW SCHOOL OF ART

Honesty in Conservation

Exploring if conservation is and can be an honest process using the restoration of the Glasgow School of Art Mackintosh Building as a basis for debate

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Year 4 Painting and Printmaking

Synopsis

This dissertation explores the ethics of conservation in regard to its honesty, focussing on the potential questions raised from the fire destroying the Mackintosh Library and its subsequent restoration. The research began as a project looking into honesty in conservation generally; its authenticity and what it reveals. However, the events of 23rd May 2014 changed the direction of this essay to focus on the Glasgow School of Art Mackintosh Building. Volunteering in the paper conservation department at the National Libraries of Scotland channelled the work into an exploration of libraries, more specifically the Mackintosh library and what a library's purpose should be. How can conservation create honesty and authenticity? Is it an impossible task?

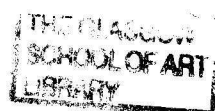


Table of Contents

Synopsis	1
Honesty in Conservation	2
Introduction.....	3
Conclusion	28
Bibliography	31
List of Illustrations	34
Appendix	35
Appendix 1.....	35
Appendix 2.....	36
Appendix 3.....	37
Appendix 4	38



Figure 1 Hannah Blackwell, Fine Art Photography Glasgow School of Art Graduate, installation shot of 2014 degree show days before the studio and its contents were completely destroyed by fire. *The Guardian* Website URL: <http://www.theguardian.com/education/gallery/2014/jun/16/a-z-student-graduate-art-shows-2014> (29/09/2014)

Honesty in conservation seemed an exciting complex topic to research. What is an honest representation of an artefact? Can we continue to honestly represent the initial meaning the creator wished to communicate? To 'be honest' is widely defined as to 'tell the truth'¹ however; in conservation the words 'honesty' and 'truthful' are not so easy to define. I will explore what honesty in conservation is and could mean or if it is even possible to be an honest conservator. Is the work of a conservator inherently dishonest?

My research was halted on the 23rd May 2014 by a fire. To me and many of the staff, students and alumni of the Glasgow School of Art the Mackintosh building is not just a building, it is our home, our inspiration, our life. Although inanimate, many buildings are described as having 'life'.² Some architects believe they must listen to a building's 'voice' before "'breathing new life" into and restoring the "soul" and "heart" of elderly buildings'.³ Loss is experienced deeply when a structure that had identified a significant chapter of a community's and

¹ <http://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/british/honest> (10/02/2015)

² Cairns and Jacobs, *Buildings Must Die*, p 1

³ Littlefield and Lewis, *Architectural Voices*, p 10

individual's life is taken away.⁴ The place has memories.⁵ I spent more time in studio 39 than my home, flat 2/1 52 Carrington Street. It was bathed in the light from the huge north facing windows where I created portraits of my friends and fellow students. I have cried, laughed, sung in this magnificent building aware that I am part of a long history of painters just like me who have covered its walls and floors in layers of thick oil paint.

Have I come to terms with it? I am struggling. However, I felt a way of dealing with it was to study its recovery. Could we create an honest representation of the Mackintosh building? Having attended a debate on whether to 'Reinstate or Reinvent' the Mackintosh Library (25th September 2014) I have decided to focus my research on libraries as this poses yet more problems to the conservator as it is traditionally a working, functioning and inspiring place.

The library has now been wiped away. The star of this magnificent work of art gone, but in going the slate has been wiped clean. If the library space is to be reused, conservators, builders and restorers now have a decision to make. To restore it to:

- a) How it was on creation
- b) How it was before the fire
- c) To create a new space which is useable

In making the library a useable space it can no longer be exactly like it was before the fire. However, if the restorers were to add Wi-Fi and make the library function does it not become more authentic? The suggestion of a technologically equipped restoration was suggested at the 'Reinstate or Reinvent' debate.⁶ Scuffed furniture, worn floors, students working at desks, does this not return the Mackintosh Library to a library? The Mackintosh Building is the Glasgow School of Art.

I shall start by exploring the opinions of those with a clear connection to the Mackintosh building. David Mullane, a Mackintosh enthusiast, believes the Mackintosh Library to be a 'magical forest like space' and a 'work of art' and argued at the debate 'Reinstate or Reinvent' that a restoration project would be 'backward looking' and for tourists rather than students. Mackintosh had an affinity with Japan; so, why not commission a Japanese architect to design a contemporary library 'fit for purpose'? Mullane claimed Mackintosh was a modernist and would want something new. Photographs of the Mackintosh Library could be projected onto a space elsewhere, such as Kelvinhall, this would give tourists an idea of what it was like to be in this inspiring space.⁷ However others would question the term 'modernist' (arguing that his work was no more modernist than his European art nouveau designer contemporaries) as similarly to most aesthetes he enjoyed novelty.⁸

⁴ Tamara K. Hareven and Randolph Langenbach, 'Living Places, Work Places and Historical Identity', from *Our Past Before us Why do we Save it?*, edited by David Lowenthal and Marcus Binney, p 109

⁵ Cairns and Jacobs, *Buildings Must Die*. p 11

⁶ Audience suggestion, *Reinstate or Reinvent*

⁷ David Mullane, *Reinstate or Reinvent*, debate at the Mackintosh Church (25/09/2014)

⁸ Nicholas Oddy, discussion

Mackintosh never became involved in restoration and 'conservation' was not a common term for 1907. Debating as to whether or not he would have wanted something new is not a conclusive way of deciding the future of a building of which its creator, along with his opinions, are dead.

Michael Davis, a historian and architectural conservationist, disagreed with Mullane. In material terms the library was gone, lost for ever, but something very close can be put in its place; 'successive generations will still be able to experience it and be inspired'. It should be remembered that the Library is an interior but part of an exterior. New architecture surrounds it- the Bourdon and the Reid. Unlike the 'House for an Art Lover' we know how it looked before. The library that people remember is not even the 'original' library.⁹ Repeated applications of varnish and shellac have darkened the wood and furniture has been replaced. A staircase was even added. 'Reproduction' and 'pastiche' have negative connotations; the aim is to restore and the question is to what state? Only in an abstract way is it lost. It is important to be able to walk through these spaces in 3D in the location they belong. The Mackintosh Library belongs in the Glasgow School of Art. It is a service to the enjoyment of Mackintosh as long as we ensure that 'we do it well'. He believed that heritage is a place to be in and sarcastically stated 'Who needs heritage if you can look at a TV screen'. There is a creative element to conservation. This library is one of the 'most important rooms in Europe' how can we 'let a Japanese architect design it'?¹⁰

David Mullane's argument is that the library should be 'fit for purpose' (therefore replaced); Michael Davis argues that it is an interior part of an exterior; so, it belongs within the Glasgow School of Art (therefore restored). When the audience was invited to vote, of those who raised their hands approximately 1/3 voted to replace and 2/3 voted to restore. I was left undecided. This 2/3 majority may reflect the view of the general public.¹¹

Patrick Macklin (Head of Interior Design, The Glasgow School of Art) believes the Mackintosh Library to be a work of interior design rather than art. The Mackintosh Library is an interior contained; it does not depend on the journey through the corridors and studios to be impressive but can be 'plucked' out of the building and placed elsewhere. Like Mullane, Macklin believes the interior can be separated from the exterior; however, he disagrees with the hierarchical use of the term 'work of art, seeing design as equal. Macklin believes that a reproduction would lose the imperfections created by years of use and also imperfect craftsmanship that make the library authentic. He would be fascinated to see the space left. In a way the room was 'destroyed' before it was burned. It was not an active space, the library could not 'adapt' to the needs of contemporary students. Maybe nocturnal opening hours would help the space to adapt into a new different use which could inspire students? Macklin believes that contemporary interior design should be adaptive to reuse but that the changes

⁹Davis cited in Will Hurst. 'Conservation specialist challenges 'replica' restoration of Mac library' 3 December 2014. *Architects Journal* website URL:<http://www.architectsjournal.co.uk/news/conservation-specialist-challenges-replica-restoration-of-mac-library/8673516.article> (05/12/2014)

¹⁰ Michael Davis, *Reinstate or Reinvent* a debate on the Mackintosh Library held at the Mackintosh Church (25th September 2014)

¹¹ *Reinstate or Reinven*, debate at the Mackintosh Church (25/09/2014)

made should be minimal. Most interiors are not built to last (such as retail spaces with a fast turnover) but the designer should consider how the materials can be reused and adapted. Cairns and Jacobs state:

Architects design architecture to be durable, but that is always a relative attribute. Given a long enough time frame or a violent enough context, even the most durable buildings will disappear. Durability is not an intrinsic attribute of architecture, it is an attribute of how the social world approves architecture.¹²

If the library is a 'work of design', rather than art, should it 'adapt' to students' needs? Some designs become fixed such as the London Skyline. The London eye began as a temporary addition which has now become an iconic symbol for the capital.¹³ Is fixed design contradictory to its purpose? Design should function, however its function may be that of resonance rather than the traditional functionality. Functionalist design can be tedious but not exclusively. Mackintosh chairs are beautiful, successful works of design, yet they could be considered uncomfortable, not functional in a utilitarian way, their function could be considered to be of resonance and beauty instead.¹⁴

I also felt a connection with the Mackintosh building because of the many students who had studied there before me. I was lucky enough to have a tour of the damaged interior and was struck and overwhelmed by the emotion I felt.¹⁵ I kept touching the walls as if they were more than concrete and wood. My connection to the building is to its story, its history rather than material. It was not the concrete wall that I was connected to but the many students who had also touched that wall. Macklin believes there is a capability of space where something traumatic has happened.¹⁶ So should the space remain a ruin? I was uncomfortable to look at the library carcass. A balance needs to be met of remembering the past both pre and post fire and adapting the space for students. I disagree with Macklin in that I believe the library to be part of the whole building. It may be a concentration of decoration which is impressive alone, but I think the continuity of space is what makes this building so special. Its impact would be lessened if displaced to an alien location.

If the library was built for students then the views of the current student body may be a route to establishing ideas for this building's future. When speaking to a small sample of final year students the initial general consensus was that the library should be restored. 'Joy' had been 'destroyed' and being an iconic library is must be recreated. The amount of visitors would be affected as they come to see this famous interior. However, further discussion raised other issues. The fire in itself was a moment in history, should this be recorded through leaving the library as is? Artists often find something romantic and inspirational in the decaying form of ruins as it creates a challenge to the imagination. I will explore the 'beauty of decay' later in my essay. In product design it is about the communication of an idea which functions as the 'product', in fashion the instructions are more important than the final product as these instructions can make multiples.

¹² Cairns and Jacobs, *Buildings Must Die*, p 64

¹³ <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/england/1701602.stm> (10/02/2015)

¹⁴ Patrick Macklin, personal interview 18/11/2014

¹⁵ Tour of Mackintosh Building, 5/11/2014

¹⁶ Patrick Macklin, personal interview 18/11/2014

But is the library about more than instructions; is there a history to the space which cannot be recreated? The library does not exist in isolation. There is a consistency in experiencing the whole Mackintosh building. If the library were to look different from the rest of the space this consistency would be jeopardised.¹⁷

Whether or not conservation should be carried out is in constant debate. Rebecca Gordon argues in her essay 'Material Significance in Contemporary Art' that there needs to be a decision as to whether the materials are 'structure' or 'signifier' in relation to communicating the meaning of the artwork. Is it the physical object or the idea that carries meaning? What is the best way of preserving it; through photography, literary documentation, re-enactment or conservation?¹⁸ Salvador Muñoz Viñas describes three main reasons for conservation from a theoretical point of view:

1. to preserve or improve the scientific meanings of an object, that is, to make sure that it can be used as scientific evidence now and in the future;
2. to preserve or improve the social, hi-cult symbolic meanings that an object has for large groups;
3. to preserve or improve the sentimental symbolic meanings that an object has for small groups or even for individuals.¹⁹

Preserving the meaning of an object shares the same importance as preserving its materials.²⁰ Michael Davis believes that the spirit of a building is not just in the materials.²¹

I will now consider what the purpose of a library is and if its purpose differs if it is an artistic library. Kerry Eldon, a Librarian at the Scottish National Gallery, says that:

The Scottish National Gallery Library's purpose is to care for enhance and promote the Scottish National Gallery's collection as a national resource, to support the research needs of the National Galleries of Scotland staff, the academic community and the wider public...Our library is very similar to the Art and Architecture Library at University of Edinburgh and I am not aware of many differences between us. Our library also receives many student and academic visitors but there may be a possibility we have more curators (from our own institution and other institutions) and members of the public visiting our library.²²

The purpose of a library can also be to support the needs of research meaning that the library should be accessible to the public. Dr Isobel Griffin, Collections Care Manager at the National Library of Scotland, stresses not only the need for the long-term preservation of physical and digital collections, but also an outreach

¹⁷ Y4 Visual Materials workshop 28/10/14

¹⁸ Gordon, 'Material Significance in Contemporary Art', in *ArtMatters International Journal for Technical Art History*, 5, 2013, pp 2-3

¹⁹ Salvador Muñoz Viñas, *Contemporary Theory of Conservation*, p 175.

²⁰ Skowranek, 'Should We Reproduce the Beauty of Decay?', in *Tate Papers*

²¹ Davis, *Reinstate or Reinvent*

²² Kerry Eldon, from personal email received on 26/09/2014

purpose with education work.²³ Readers must be able to find the information they require quickly and efficiently. Danuta A. Nitecki, writing in the *Library Journal*, states that 'identifying both the content and the engagement of space is critical to its design.'²⁴ The environment should desirably be comfortable in temperature and aesthetically non-distracting but inspiring. Nitecki explores Scott Bennett's argument that the purpose of a library should be to:

...bring together readers and books in part by providing rooms needed for reading, reflection, and contemplation; to build and share large and growing collections; and to embrace the emerging opportunity to address the "transformational character of intentional learning" by "making learning happen" in the library.²⁵

He describes 'preserving information' as a role of the librarian. As the Strategies document made by the Bodleian Library in October 2013 states, the spaces must meet the users' needs. (see appendix 4)

The mission of the Bodleian Libraries is to provide an excellent service to support the learning, teaching and research objectives of the University of Oxford; and to develop and maintain access to Oxford's unique collections for the benefit of scholarship and society.²⁶

In order to make the thousands of books, documents and drawings available to the public a balance must be struck. Items can become damaged once handled, placing a pressure to preserve them. However, keeping them in cooler, dark, controlled humidity conditions with little oxygen makes them inaccessible and purposeless. A compromise has to be made so that the Nation's collections can be viewed accessibly but with a minimum of further damage occurring. Paul Hambelton (a member of staff at the National Library of Scotland) explains this problem:

I rather admire the boldness of some of the modern binders of our sixteenth century German pamphlets who have just gone all out for preservation and not really paid much regard to authenticity, ruthlessly slapping durable modern boards onto these fragile items to protect them against wear during use, and extending their useful lives. The alternative would be to pickle them and lock them away after digitalising them, as I believe we do with some older newspapers which cannot be handled at all without turning rapidly to dust.²⁷

²³ Dr Isobel Griffin, from personal email received on 30/10/2014

²⁴ Danuta A. Nitecki, 'Space Assessment as a Venue for Defining the Academic Library' in *The Library Quarterly*, Vol 81, No. 1, p 31

²⁵ Nitecki, 'Space Assessment as a Venue for Defining the Academic Library' in *The Library Quarterly*, Vol 81, No. 1. p 29

²⁶ 'Strategies and Policies', *Bodleian Library* website. URL: <http://www.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/bodley/about-us/policies> (27/09/2014)

²⁷ Paul Hambelton, from personal email received on 30/10/2014

Having explored the libraries purpose I will now consider if preserving an honest history includes things which we might wish to forget. An ethical problem is posed to the archivist, librarian and conservator. Should potentially offensive material be stored in our Nation's archives and libraries? Paul Hambelton comments that 'Ideally, the library will preserve its collections for ever, unless we are very certain indeed that material doesn't deserve to be preserved'²⁸. Should we let racist, sexist and violent material deteriorate and not intervene? Or does an honest history include these parts of our culture we would rather forget. This is not an issue for the Mackintosh library, however this predicament is apparent in other buildings, for example Auschwitz. 1.33 million people visited the Auschwitz memorial in 2013. We choose to remember the events that took place there, rather than hide a brutal ugly part of humanity's history.²⁹

The Osbert Lancaster Cartoons (currently undergoing conservation at the National Libraries of Scotland (see appendix 1)) offended pretty much every group. They are both sexist and racist. The humour was at the expense of groups of people. In comparison to some material they are probably reasonably tame. The viewer should view the work through the eyes of the period. However, where do we draw the line? At what point is material too offensive, too vulgar to keep? Having an exhibition of Osbert Lancaster's work would be challenging if you were to censor certain pictures. Could the public appreciate his work on the draughtsmanship rather than the offensive humour?

It is not just the library that faces this problem. Recently a number of famous figures have been arrested, questioned, trialled and jailed for historic child abuse. Rolf Harris is among these celebrities. His work has hung in galleries all over the world but curators is now posed with the question of whether the public are comfortable with looking at paintings done by someone convicted of child abuse? Amanda Vanstone, former (Howard Australian) government minister, offers one answer in the article 'Why do we want to tear down Rolf Harris' artworks?':

When we look at any of Harris' work, these and other uncomfortable questions will come to mind. We will be reminded of how, celebrity and money can cause us to give some more benefit of doubt than we do others.

A better option may be to keep all these murals and artworks and place them by a plaque that would remind future generations of the pitfalls they face when they let celebrity, money, seniority or friendship stand in the way of calmly and coldly ensuring that our children get the benefit of any doubt before anyone else. That's not a call for believing every allegation a child makes, it is a call to put ourselves on red alert when any allegation is made.³⁰

²⁸ Hambelton, 30/10/2014

²⁹ *Auschwitz Memorial visited by 1.33 million people in 2013*. Auschwitz website
URL:http://en.auschwitz.org/m/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=1153&Itemid=7 (27/11/2014)

³⁰ Vanstone, 'Why do we want to tear down Rolf Harris' artworks?' *The Age Comment* URL:
<http://www.theage.com.au/comment/why-do-we-want-to-tear-down-rolf-harris8217-artworks-20140720-zuye1.html> (27/09/2014)

Should the work be taken down, left to rot, destroyed? Or is it more honest to keep Rolf Harris as part of our history? The problem is if the National Gallery were to take down all the paintings done by artists with less than perfect pasts it would have a very small collection. Caravaggio's work would have to go for a start.³¹ Can artistic merit be separated from a person's character? Can this only happen once the creator is dead? Is it honest to keep all our creative history?

Continuing on from this ethical problem, does honesty mean conserving the totality of a collection and can there be a method to determine if and what intervention is necessary? The contents of the Mackintosh library may be physically ash, but every effort is being made to recreate the collection of books and journals that were housed there.³² Many people have donated rare books so the collection can be rebuilt. However, the fire has given the librarians an opportunity to 'revisit' its 'collecting strategies' in a 'highly strategic and targeted way'.³³

Three categories can be used to determine whether an item should be preserved, replaced or collected. Is it the individual, the object or the abstract form which we desire to keep?

Individual- unreplaceable personal element created by an individual (artist, designer) that if dead is impossible to recreate.

Object- the technique, beauty, innovation or content of the item stands alone regardless of the creator meaning that the item can be replaced to give the viewer an understanding.

Abstract form- an architectural concept, the item is just a disposition of elements so it does not matter who built it or when.

Is it Harris the celebrity (the individual), or Harris' work (the objects), that we are housing in our galleries and museums?

Rembrandt's Self Portrait at the Age of 63 (1669) is, in many peoples' opinion, a fantastic work of art regardless of the reputation of its maker. It is visually stimulating and exciting. The colours, texture and technique as well as the wise melancholy gaze of the subject can be marvelled at by the viewer whether or not they know its economic value. A replica would not be authentic as it would not be a self-portrait by Rembrandt. However, it would give the beholder a clear idea of why this painting is so great. The technical and visual aspects could still be conveyed. Going back to the three categories we could place this item in the object category. Both the object and individual can be appreciated separately.

³¹ Milner, 'Red-blooded Caravaggio killed love rival in bungled castration attempt' *The Telegraph* URL: <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/europe/italy/1396127/Red-blooded-Caravaggio-killed-love-rival-in-bungled-castration-attempt.html> (28/01/2015)

³² 'Book donations help fire hit Glasgow School of Art Library' (15 September 2014) *BBC Website* URL: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-scotland-glasgow-west-29203857> (27/11/2014)

³³ 'Update on fire affected GSA services' *Glasgow School of Art Library* website URL: <http://lib.gsa.ac.uk/update-on-fire-affected-library-services/> (27/11/2014)

The question remains whether Harris' work is collected because of artistic merit or because of his celebrity status? Should we continue to preserve and keep the creations of the fallen celebrated figure if they fall into the 'individual' category?

We can explore how the Mackintosh Library fits into these three categories. Mackintosh, the individual, designed the library. This makes replacing the interior impossible if one considers the involvement of Mackintosh vital to it being called the Mackintosh Library. However, one can also consider the library as an object. This space inspires and is visually beautiful and unique. Recreation of the aesthetic design can enable the future to experience the space. Finally, we can view the library as an abstract form, an architectural concept. Whether it was built yesterday or by Mackintosh, whether it is art nouveau or brutalist architecture, by being located within the walls of the Glasgow school of Art it is the library.

My personal view is that the library is an 'object' worth preserving within an interior (The Glasgow School of Art). For future generations to be inspired and educated by the beauty of this interior, a high quality recreation is required. This 'object' exists within an 'abstract form'. Mackintosh's work can be appreciated regardless of his celebrity status.

How honest do we want our library to be? An edited autobiography or a private diary revealing our deepest feelings and darkest times? The strategies document for the Bodleian Library suggests an honest history; the collections should be in 'all formats' from a 'across all disciplines' preserving our 'cultural and scientific heritage'. (see appendix 4) I agree with Amanda Vanstone in that we can learn from the past if we keep it in our collections.

I have previously mentioned how a library should support the 'learning, teaching and research'³⁴ of the public. Before considering how this could be applied to the Mackintosh Library, I will consider whether the current layout of our libraries is effective. Paul Hambelton is 'amazed at the unsuitability of many library buildings nowadays for concentrated thought, and at how much better this function is being met by Costa Coffee.'³⁵ In *Art as therapy* Alain de Botton and John Armstrong propose a new layout for museums and galleries.

A more ambitious and beneficial, arrangement would be to arrange the works in line with the concerns of our souls, bringing together those objects which, regardless of their origins in space and time, address the troubled areas of existence. Aided by wise and forthright labels, a tour of the gallery would keep at the front of our minds the things we most need to hold on to, but which so easily fall from view.³⁶

³⁴ 'Strategies and Policy's', *Bodleian Library* website. URL: <http://www.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/bodley/about-us/policies> (27/09/2014)

³⁵ Hambelton, 30/10/2014

³⁶ Botton and Armstrong, *Art as Therapy*, p 91

They want us to be inspired, taught treasures should not be 'behind high walls'³⁷, instead they should be distributed 'more widely through the world'³⁸. It is suggested that the everyday places such as the bathroom, kitchen, park 'become temples to our values as much as the quiet, marble halls of galleries'³⁹.

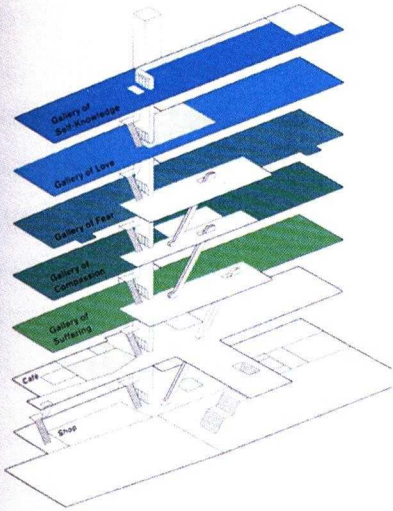


Figure 2 The revised floor plan for the Tate Modern; 'an art gallery reorganised to a therapeutic vision', Botton and Armstrong, *Art as Therapy*, page 90

Dr Jill Sterrett (Director of Collections and Conservation, SFMOMA) opened the conference *Authenticity in transition: Changing practices in art making and conservation* (An international conference organised by University of Glasgow and Glasgow School of Art held in Glasgow 1-2 December 2014)⁴⁰ by describing how the backstage viewing in a gallery should be brought to everyone so that the public could have the multisensory experiences of art that artists, handlers and conservators experience. However, resources often make a barrier. By altering the layout in the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, the conservation studio could be viewed through a glass wall on the terrace and the public were able to be more part of this experience. Further still the gallery is giving the public access to 'the workroom', a flexible interchangeable space of artists' studio, classroom, meeting room, artists' materials archive. This collections centre has a joining display storage and support area. It is not the part of the collection that is not on display packed away, but instead a mock up gallery open to play and experimentation. It has open doors for close looking, collaborations, classrooms, gallery prototyping. A place for artists to create. A movement in both directions between public and private has been achieved. These works of art can make closer friendships with people. The artists materials archive is currently only available in the flesh, no digitalisation of this information has happened as of yet. However, as Sterrett explained some items may not lend themselves to that sort of access.⁴¹

³⁷ Botton and Armstrong, *Art as Therapy*. p 94

³⁸ Botton and Armstrong, *Art as Therapy*. p 94

³⁹ Botton and Armstrong, *Art as Therapy*. p 96

⁴⁰ *Authenticity in Transition: Changing practices in art making and conservation* (Glasgow 1-2 December 2014)

⁴¹ News Press release: SFMOMA announces the Artist Initiative, supports by \$1.75 million grant from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation. *SFMOMA* website URL:

http://www.sfmoma.org/about/press/press_news/releases/983 (05/12/2014)

But what of the purpose of the Glasgow School of Art library? In the debate on whether to Reinststate or Reinvent the Mackintosh Library David Mullane pleaded for a library 'fit for purpose'⁴². Similarly Danuta A Nitecki describes the Association of College and Research Libraries' guide to the space of a library which says that the 'library's equipment should be adequate and functional.'⁴³ Mullane claimed that the Mackintosh Library was a 'work of art' so not replaceable. A masterpiece cannot be recreated.⁴⁴ However, on researching the purpose of a library I would argue that Mackintosh was an architect first who created works of such beauty that we the public idolised them and called them 'works of art'. The Mackintosh Library is first and foremost a library and according to many a librarian is there to support the user in their acquisition of knowledge. But our cultural and scientific heritage must also be preserved. The Mackintosh library is aesthetically and academically part of this. By recreating the interior and replacing many of its lost collections, are readers not given an honest insight into the knowledge and creativity of the past and inspired to create new work and formulate their own views and ideas?

'Adapting' a space can mean change. At what point does something become unoriginal through replacement and adaptation, therefore a dishonest representation of the Past? Michael Rea sums up the problem of how material components alter over time.

Just as adding to a given quantity of objects yields a new quantity, adding parts to a human being yields a new human being: hence, growth is impossible.⁴⁵

In the debate 'Reinststate or reinvent' Michael Davis used Theseus' ship as an example of this.⁴⁶ (See appendix 3) At what point is the object no longer the object? If you keep replacing part after part of something is it no longer authentic to the day it was created? However by replacing each part the object can still function and have an eternal life. The wooden Ship of Theseus gradually has parts replaced meaning that the ship survives the test of time. '...there is good reason to think that the ship that exists once the series of replacements is complete is the ship we originally started out with.'⁴⁷ What if the discarded planks were to be reassembled to form a ship... is this ship the Ship of Theseus? There cannot be multiple Ships of Theseus; so, which is the original (which is honest)? Rea asks of this dilemma whether "continuity of matter" or "continuity of form" is more important as a criterion for re-identifying objects⁴⁸. He goes on to ask 'How is the Ship of Theseus related to its parts?'⁴⁹ Rea then bewilders the reader with mathematical equations, constantly changing his mind of which ship is Theseus', at one point claiming that neither are. His final conclusion is that the puzzle is 'rhetorical':

⁴² Mullane, *Reinststate or Reinvent*

⁴³ Nitecki, 'Space Assessment as a Venue for Defining the Academic Library'. p 35

⁴⁴ Mullane, *Reinststate or Reinvent*

⁴⁵ Michael C. Rea, 'The Problem of Material Constitution' in *The Philosophical Review*, Vol. 104, No. 4 (Oct, 1995), pp. 525-552 (Duke University Press on behalf of Philosophical Review) P 529

⁴⁶ Davis, *Reinststate or Reinvent*

⁴⁷ Rea, 'The Problem of Material Constitution'. p 532

⁴⁸ Rea, 'The Problem of Material Constitution'. p 532

⁴⁹ Rea, 'The Problem of Material Constitution' p. 532

...it highlights the fact that we have intuitions that *conflict* with the PACP [Principle of Alternative Compositional Possibilities], intuitions that we might otherwise suppress if the puzzle merely asked us to decide whether the continuously repaired ship was the Ship of Theseus or whether Theseus's ship lay disassembled in the plank-hoarder's yard.⁵⁰

It is highly likely that whoever was confronted with this problem would come out with a different solution or, like me, would be so completely and utterly perplexed that their head hurt from all the confusion. A similar predicament to that of Theseus' ship is that of the steam locomotive the 'Flying Scotsman'. A member of the audience present at the 'Reinstate or Reinvent' debate mentioned this locomotive saying that it is a living creature (an interesting choice of words considering that some would consider it an inanimate object) that now 'contains not one piece of metal' that is original but it is 'still the Flying Scotsman'.⁵¹ Her view on Theseus' ship would clearly be that the real, authentic ship would be the one that has forever been called Theseus' ship even though it no longer contains a single original plank. (Is it honest to the original design? Is a further issue in such cases.) Applying this to the Mackintosh Library, we could say the Mackintosh Library exists in the Glasgow School of Art and it is currently the Mackintosh Library, even as a burnt out carcass, and will continue to be the Mackintosh Library if and when it is restored to the plans. We could say that the Mackintosh Library is the Mackintosh Library simply because we say it is. When it is in that location it has that name. However, even if we can call it the Mackintosh Library, is it the *authentic* Mackintosh Library?

This brings us to the complexity of how authenticity relates to honesty. Authenticity is in a transitional stage. Rebecca Gordon suggests that authenticity should be authenticities- a plural word, it is complex as there are many authenticities.⁵² Dr Monika Jadzinska believes that there needs to be an individual conservation approach.⁵³ It is easy to say that the artist's intention makes the final call but this becomes a problem when the artist is dead. Is the artist always right, even? Sanneke Stigter described the conservation carried out on Ger Van Elk's 1973 colour photograph and airbrush. Over time the magical appearance of the object had fallen apart as the viewer could clearly see the airbrushing of three images together. Van Elk believed this image to be no longer the real thing- inauthentic to the way the artist wished the object to be seen. So, with the approval of the artist, the image was digitally scanned so that the visual image was restored. Both versions are now framed together with a hope of 'safeguarding' the aura of the original.⁵⁴ There is a note written by Van Elk confirming the authenticity of the work. In his opinion it is still authentic, although some may consider it unoriginal. Is this clarification needed for the public to see it as authentic? Does the public need authentication that the restored Mackintosh Library is authentic? Who can give this authentication when the creator is dead?

⁵⁰ Rea, 'The Problem of Material Constitution'. p 537

⁵¹ Member of the audience, *Reinstate or Reinvent* a debate on the Mackintosh Library held at the Mackintosh Church (25th September 2014)

⁵² Rebecca Gordon, speaking at: *Authenticity in Transition: Changing practices in art making and conservation* (Glasgow 1-2 December 2014)

⁵³ Dr Monika Jadzinska, *Authenticity in Transition: Changing practices in art making and conservation* (Glasgow 1-2 December 2014)

⁵⁴ Sanneke Stigter, *Authenticity in Transition: Changing practices in art making and conservation* (Glasgow 1-2 December 2014)

However, by recreating Van Elk's image digitally the contemporary audience will still not appreciate the 'magic' of image manipulation as to contemporary standards it is clear that the image is not 'magical' at all. The contemporary viewers are used to manipulation and can carry it out themselves. Would it be better for them to see the discoloured version, where the content of the work shifts from artwork to historical object documenting the state of image manipulation in 1973? This was not of course the artist's intention.

When was the Mackintosh building truly authentic? The artist Ross Birrell commented on the impossible brief that has been created that the 'task of the new [GSA] library' is to be 'more authentic' than the 'original' one.⁵⁵ Historical architecture is unique in that it is rarely presented to the contemporary viewer in the form it originally had. Pamela Jerome uses the Hunterfly Road Houses of Weeksville and the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum in 'An Introduction to Authenticity in Preservation' as examples of buildings which could be restored back to many states. Alterations have occurred over the lifetime of these buildings which make for a challenging predicament for the contemporary restorer. In which state should it exist to be considered authentic?⁵⁶ Conservation is often accepted as returning an object to its 'true' 'authentic nature'. However, this claim suggests that in its current state the object is somehow 'non-true' and that it is the 'moral duty' of the conservator to 'enforce truth'.⁵⁷ If an object exists, surely it cannot be false? So, it must be real in whatever condition. I agree with Salvador Munoz Vinas in his concept that conservation can end up becoming a quest to return an object to a desired state in its history- enforcing truth.

Unlike many other historically important buildings, The Mackintosh still functions as it was intended. It was designed to be an art school and has remained so since its creation. Peter J. Fowler categorizes buildings that are preserved in his essay 'Archaeology, the Public and the Sense of the Past':

What sort of archaeology are we preserving for the future? Generally, the material falls into three classes. First, those sites and buildings which are consciously given a new lease of life as 'show-piece archaeology', the display sites made safe, probably restored or reconstructed, and made available to the public... Second, those parts of our heritage which have been designated in one way or another – in England, listed if a building is in use, scheduled if an Ancient Monument – but to which the public have no consequential rights of access...Third, that part of the archaeological heritage which has been accidentally protected – perhaps we should say non-specifically protected.⁵⁸

The Mackintosh building must fall into the first category as it still functions as The Glasgow School of Art and has regular tours for the public. However, some areas have become 'sacred' and unable to be used by all. The Mackintosh Library was no longer a functioning library with limited numbers of people allowed on the gallery

⁵⁵ Ross Birrell speaking as part of *Panel 9: Artists' discussion Round Table* at the conference *Authenticity in Transition: Changing practices in art making and conservation* (Glasgow 1-2 December 2014)

⁵⁶ Pamela Jerome, 'An Introduction to Authenticity in preservation', in *APT Bulletin*, Vol 39, No. 2/3 (2008)

⁵⁷ Muñoz Viñas, *Contemporary Theory of Conservation*,

⁵⁸ Peter J. Fowler, 'Archaeology, the Public and the Sense of the Past' in *Our Past Before us Why do we Save it?* Edited by David Lowenthal and Marcus Binney (London: Temple Smith, 1981) pp 60-61

and students only allowed access once a week due to restrictions by Historic Scotland.⁵⁹ It had become museum-like in order to protect it. Besides, to the contemporary art student it did not have the facilities required. There was no internet access, few power sockets and limited space for books.

I will now discuss whether the work of a conservator is honest using the opinions of academics, historians and conservators as well as drawing on my experience in conservation studios (see appendix 1). There is not a '10 commandments' in conservation, only ethics. Opinion varies from country to country, region to region, institution to institution, person to person. When asked whether conservation was an honest process Nicholas Oddy (head of Forum for Critical Inquiry, Glasgow School of Art) stated:

Conservation should be, as, in theory, it conserves what is there without altering it. Often it does intervene, but in general the intention is to somehow freeze the object in 'as found' condition in such a way that it is 'stable' and not subject to further degradation.⁶⁰

Honesty seems key to most vocations but in the artistic sector many decisions are hard to distinguish as right or wrong, honest or dishonest. Around the globe there is varying emphasis on the importance of procedures involving aesthetics and those involving the technical.⁶¹ However, it is generally accepted that all conservation interventions should be minimal and reversible. In some cases this is straightforward; wheat starch paste used as a natural adhesive to repair paper is reversible in water. (See appendix 1 and 2) This brings me to the unequal treatment of different objects.

Architecture and working artefacts (such as some veteran cars) are constantly repaired as it is expected that their function is to be useable and to withstand what life and time throws at them. Yet a sculpture such as the Greek statue Venus de Milo with missing limbs is left in this disjointed state. A missing corner in a paper map is replaced with a sympathetic but blank fill to add strength. However, it is paintings that cause the most debate. Very few are actually completely done by the hand of the master artist. Dr Isobel Griffins explains how repairs should be obvious close up, but this is not always true of painting. The work of painting conservators 'whose infills are not always discernible to the naked eye' should be detectable under 'analytical techniques such as X-ray' and the work should be thoroughly documented.⁶² (An attempt is being made to create an honest record of different states of an object's life.) At what point has the conservator become restorer, and the restorer overstepped the mark? Would the gallery goer be content seeing a one eyed Mona Lisa? Why does this art from differ from the statue, an art form of similar age?

The practices of restoration and conservation can be compared with that of the medical world. Architects such as Arthur Cotton Moore have made the comparison of new additions to architecture being similar to organ

⁵⁹ Audience explanation of limited access to library, *Reinstate or Reinvent*

⁶⁰ Nicholas Oddy; interviewed in personal email received on 28/09/2014

⁶¹ Helmut Ruhemann; *The Cleaning of Paintings Problems and Potentialities*. (Faber and Faber, London: 1968) pp 60-61

⁶² Dr Isobel Griffins, from personal email received on 30/10/2014

transplants and that unfortunately the original structure often tries to reject the new addition.⁶³ Many are uncomfortable seeing facial disfigurement and it is expected by many that these 'uncommon' differences be disguised by surgery. Conservation processes such as fixing tears in paper artefacts or filling holes with a leaf casting machine are necessary to lengthen the life of the object. Similarly a patient with severe facial burns may be more at risk to infection without intervention to their skin via surgery. However, processes such as painting in a missing figure are verging on restoration and maybe into artistic, creative art making. The function is aesthetic, to make the viewer at ease. Surgery to restore the face not only puts the burns victim at less risk of infection but also looks as close to the 'normal' unburnt population, directly comparable to art restoration. But which is the more 'true' or 'honest'? Does the patient feel more genuine with a disfigured face, or with one that approximates to the original unscarred face they once knew? Is the meaning of a picture better conveyed when the contemporary viewer can see it as close to how the artist intended to be or would they prefer to see the 'honest' unaltered picture? Keeping conservation processes minimal and reversible and separate from aesthetic norms is impossible in our commercialised world fixated on the perfect and the beautiful.

Is honesty a universal currency or is it subject to financial constraints, priorities and judgements about worth and who has control of these judgements? How is a conservator or restorer meant to make unbiased decisions when they are just human? You cannot take away the individual element of people. Over time an artefact will undergo multiple treatments, be housed in different collections, be worked on by different conservators and all these factors create decisions made by individuals with different trainings, backgrounds, ethnicities and ages. Inevitably there will be variation in their opinions and the decisions they chose to make. We must trust that the preserved artefacts they present us with have been treated with the uttermost care.

Different institutions have different purposes and thus different priorities. Money plays a big part as does the client. The client may be an institution. The conservators' hindrance/restriction being time. When surveying the National Library of Scotland's collection (see appendix 1) it was not possible to treat all 250 items flagged up as needing conservation. A hierarchy was made. The conservator does not have the time to treat every single item; so, priorities must be made. Is this problem affecting the long term prosperity of the item?

Then there is the question of value. How valuable is the item and who decides its worth? A Leonardo da Vinci drawing will undergo in-depth analysis in its conservation report describing to almost microscopic proportions the condition on this single sheet of paper. The treatment of this master work will be prioritised and given to only the most experienced conservator. Yet a cartoon drawing by Osbert Lancaster of similar condition will have minimal repairs and a very general report as it is part of a massive collection of similar cartoons and is, in comparison, of little economic value. Because of time and budget decisions must be made as to which items to conserve and the amount of work that should be done.⁶⁴ Kerry Eldon (librarian at the Scottish National Gallery library) explains:

⁶³ Cairns, Jacobs, *Buildings Must Die*. p 14

⁶⁴ Muñoz Viñas, p 202.

Any items we send away to be conserved at Downie...Allison Downie in Glasgow is dependent on our allocated annual library budget.⁶⁵

In private conservation is it the client or the conservator who should be the final judge of what is honest? Ethical standards are less clear. The clients, often wealthy collectors or heads of family estates, have opinions that the conservators may be obliged to follow, given that their wages are paid by these clients. If the clients want the painting to look brand new then that is what they will get, unless the conservators feel it unethical... in which case their only option is to turn down the job losing money and a future client. Their business is at risk therefore it might be an option not worth taking. Then there is the possibility of unnecessary 'conservation' being carried out on the object. Many conservators charge by the hour, the more time they spend on an item the more money they will make. Conservation in the private sector is a business. In some countries conservators are paid by the hour; so, often carry out unnecessary treatments. Conservators from other countries are trying to teach them ethical standards to prevent this dishonest practice.

Is it honest to 'hide' a mistake? The trainee/volunteer/student needs experience to gain experience but someone needs to give them that opportunity. But what happens if they make a mistake? In fact, what happens if even the most senior conservator makes a vital error? Speaking to a private conservator brought my attention to this ethical dilemma. Was it dishonest for conservators not to tell the client, say, the student (whom they were unaware was assisting with the treatment) broke the original glass on the frame of the object and that the glass was replaced with different glass of a similar age. Telling the client runs the risk of ruining the enjoyment of the item. The client will see it as unoriginal and inauthentic when really the glass plays little part in the appreciation of the work of art behind. The trust between client and conservator could also be lost. Is it kinder to leave the client unaware so they are content? In this case is dishonesty the right thing to do?

The Glasgow School of Art Mackintosh Library will have a generous budget as it is considered by many as 'a work of art' and one of the finest works of architecture in 'the whole of Europe'.⁶⁶ However, if it is decided to be a restoration project there will be many decisions to make, which will inevitably vary in outcome depending on who makes the decision. At which time should the Library be returned to? Should it be built by local craftsmen or internationally skilled craftsmen? Should the craftsmanship and techniques used be identical to that of the original builders? Or should it be restored ascetically, but in a more robust way? Should only the structurally necessary areas be restored? The dilemma can only be solved by deciding on who the library is for. Staff? Students? Alumni? Mackintosh enthusiasts? Historians? The public?

⁶⁵ Kerry Eldon, from personal email received on 26/09/2014

⁶⁶ *Reinstate or Reinvent* a debate on the Mackintosh Library held at the Mackintosh Church (25th September 2014)

I will now look at examples where conservation interventions, both successful and unsuccessful⁶⁷, have been opened up to the public through media coverage or directly from the institution. Conservation happens in the depths of museums and galleries or in warehouses and storage facilities. It is shrouded in secrecy. The gallery being the stage, the conservation studio the dressing room. When a mistake unveils itself to the public the press jump on it. 'Spanish fresco restoration botched by amateur'⁶⁸ or 'It was work in progress! Pensioner whose restoration effort destroyed 19th century religious artwork says she wasn't finished'⁶⁹. Cecilia Gimenez (claiming to have permission from the priest) decided to 'restore' *Ecce Homo* (Behold the Man) by Elias Garcia Martinez because she was 'upset' at the deterioration that the fresco had undergone.⁷⁰ The media enables the vast majority of the public to hear about a wide range of topics. However, journalists rarely explore the ethical questions interventions can. Is the process even authentic? Cecilia Gimenez's actions were done spontaneously and authentically, her aim to save the fresco. The conservators are attempting to recreate what is lost; so, surely this is an inauthentic pre-thought about intervention.⁷¹

Some institutions have begun to display information on conservation work carried out on their collections. The Kelvingrove Art gallery and Museum not only displays Salvador Dali's 'Christ of St John of the Cross' (1951), it also has a video explain the conservation work carried out after a visitor used a sharp stone to tear the canvas. The public can appreciate just how complicated the treatment was and admire how the repair is barely visible.⁷²

An innovative and exciting display is currently showing at York Minster. The stained glass windows are undergoing restoration, therefore tourists cannot see the magnificent windows in the flesh. However, curators are displaying fragments of finished work in a tent like structure ('the Orb') with an explanation of what work was done to the section and what the section is about. The display changes monthly showing an update on progress.⁷³

⁶⁷ Although who has the authority to give these judgments is debatable as I have previously discussed.

⁶⁸ Spanish fresco restoration botched by amateur, 23 August 2012, *BBC News* website URL: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-19349921> (29/10/2014)

⁶⁹ It was work in progress! Pensioner whose restoration effort destroyed 19th century religious artwork says she wasn't finished, Tom Worden, 23 August 2012. *Mail Online* website URL: <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2192629/Pensioner-destroyed-19th-century-religious-artwork-insists-permission-restore-painting-isnt-finished.html> (29/10/2014)

⁷⁰ Spanish fresco restoration botched by amateur, 23 August 2012, *BBC News* website URL: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-19349921> (29/10/2014)

⁷¹ It could be argued that the fresco has developed a new authenticity. It can never be returned to how it was. But is it right to leave the Fresco in this authentic but changed state? It will never be how it was so is this the most authentic state?

⁷² Christ of St John of the Cross, Kelvingrove Art gallery and Museum, *Glasgow Life* website URL: <http://www.glasgowlife.org.uk/museums/kelvingrove/about/collection-highlights/Pages/Christ-of-St-John-on-the-Cross.aspx> (29/10/2014)

⁷³ York Minster Revealed the Orb, *York minster* website URL: <http://www.yorkminster.org/about-us/york-minster-revealed-ymr/the-orb.html> (29/10/2014)

The display not only gives disappointed stained glass window admirers something to look at it, but could be argued to offer them a better alternative. Stained glass windows are stunning and create an amazing, wondrous atmosphere which changes with light and seasons. However, the detail cannot be appreciated in a vast space such as York Minster. By giving viewers a focus of a single section at eye level they can truly appreciate the beauty, craftsmanship and religious message. Is this a more honest representation for the viewer? No longer elevated to a high place it reminds the viewer its original purpose, it was created for the enjoyment and understanding of the Christians who worshipped there. Enjoyment can be intimate, but also celebratory and awe inspiring, yet the objects have become decontextualized as they no longer inhabit their intended position. It enables the viewer to see the window as the craftsman did- is this also 'honest'?

Conservation can make what seems unbelievable relatable and understandable. Positive publicity will 'normalise' its use and improve its reputation. The public must trust conservators if they are to enjoy, appreciate and visit collections now and in the future. The disappointment of seeing a sign saying 'picture undergoing conservation' could be replaced by an enlightening display on progress of treatments. By opening up the Mackintosh building, now and throughout the restoration process, the public may have a better understanding and not feel alienated from the decisions made and work carried out and are more likely to appreciate the work done.

Conservation can reveal hidden truths, which in turn alters our understanding of an artefact, as well as affecting its value. Through pigment analysis the age of a painting can be determined, brushstrokes analysed under raking light. X-raying the ultimate dissection:

X-ray images (radiographs) provide a clear means of understanding the way in which an artist worked. The internal structure of the picture is revealed...Materials that are dense to X-rays...appear light or white in the radiograph. Less X-ray dense materials register as grey or black.⁷⁴

The painting undergoes brutal and thorough scrutiny so as to prove whether or not it is the product of a master painter, thus altering its economic value and, strangely, its perceived standard. Father Jamie MacLeod took a painting he bought for £400 on the 'Antiques Roadshow'. One of the world authorities on Van Dyck- Dr. Christopher Brown verified that this portrait was indeed a genuine Van Dyck after it had undergone conservation and worth approximately £400,000.⁷⁵ Why does the value of the painting alter whether or not it is a Van Dyck? Surely artistic merit alone should be a measure of worth? Can we not appreciate it as a painting for its aesthetic and conceptual ability to move us, rather than let the status of a famous name alter its value?

However, the job of a conservator is to be the pathologist and detective. It comes down to the historian to be the judge and decide the painting's sentence. The conservator can do positive work by returning works of art to their former glory.

⁷⁴ 'Painting the Sunflowers' *National Gallery* website URL: http://www.nationalgallery.org.uk/paintings/learn-about-art/paintings-in-depth/the-sunflowers-feature/*/viewPage/4 (28/09/2014)

⁷⁵ 'Antiques Roadshow portrait revealed to be by Anthony Van Dyck', *BBC News* website. URL:<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-25535536> (28/09/2014)

For the darkened old varnish layers (and with them many a tinted one put on by eighteenth- and nineteenth- century restorers) were either taken for part of the artist's work or the romantic 'golden glow' was so admired that more of it, in the form of pigmented varnishes was applied.⁷⁶

Delacroix admired Rubens and the old master's methods, however he did not see a cleaned Rubens until he was 59⁷⁷. By this time he had been inspired by work which was 'distorted by a yellowed varnish'⁷⁸. Cleaning a painting and removing yellowing varnish can significantly alter the appearance of a painting. However, would the revolt of the Impressionists and artists such as Constable and Turner have occurred had these 'masterpieces been the shining examples they are now becoming'⁷⁹? Perhaps the yellow veiling of our nation's collections has provided an ignition to spark some of the most exciting developments in art. However, this veiling was out of lack of knowledge and technical resources. Who can blame a 12th century peasant for believing the world is flat when he has no means of knowing otherwise? Who can blame Delacroix for believing that Rubens deliberately painted with a yellow tinge? The knowledge, understanding and techniques are now available to reveal the truth so conservators, scientists, curators, historians and librarians have a duty to the public to preserve, acquire and display honest collections. Collectors lending to museums enables work to be assessed for conservation and advice to be given as to whether conservation should be carried out.⁸⁰ However, is ageing not an honest natural process? The act of removing yellowing varnish could be deemed in inauthentic intervention as it disguises age.⁸¹

Conservation can reveal how an object was made. Using scientific analysis we can understand Gwen John's painting technique. She drew directly onto the primed surface with pencil, fixing it by covering this with chalk and glue, preventing smudging. The next stage was to add 'blobs' thickened with chalk, adding 'luminosity unattainable by the addition of white paint alone.'⁸² Her technique can be compared between her early and later works as well as gaining even more detailed information from her unfinished canvases. As a Gwen John worshiper I find this gripping reading and vital to my research as a figurative painter and printmaker. Whether or not Gwen John would have wanted her portraits to go under such thorough examination is debateable, but for the purely selfish reason that I love every 'blob' of paint on the surface of her work, I am thankful that the technology and expertise exists to reveal the truth. However, let us only use it sensitively to reveal exciting artistic traits and subtleties, rather than exposing and downgrading our nation's collections.

⁷⁶ Helmut Ruhemann; *The Cleaning of Paintings Problems and Potentialities*. (Faber and Faber, London: 1968) p 50

⁷⁷ Ruhemann; *The Cleaning of Paintings* p 52

⁷⁸ Ruhemann; *The Cleaning of Paintings* p 51

⁷⁹ Ruhemann; *The Cleaning of Paintings* p 50

⁸⁰ Behind the Scenes: Anselm Kiefer. *You tube* website URL: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qmn-w2J68pU> (29/10/2014)

⁸¹ The yellowing is evidence of ageing- an honest, authentic process. The artists who deliberately 'mimicked' the old masters by applying a yellow varnish to their paintings were doing so authentically through misinterpretation. Imitating age for example forgery is dishonest.

⁸² *Gwen John and Augustus John* edited by David Fraser Jenkins and Chris Stephens (Tate Publishing, London: 2004) p 200



Figure 3 X-radiograph (by Mark Heathcote) of Gwen John's 'The Convalescent'. *Gwen John and Augustus John* edited by Jenkins and Stephens page 201

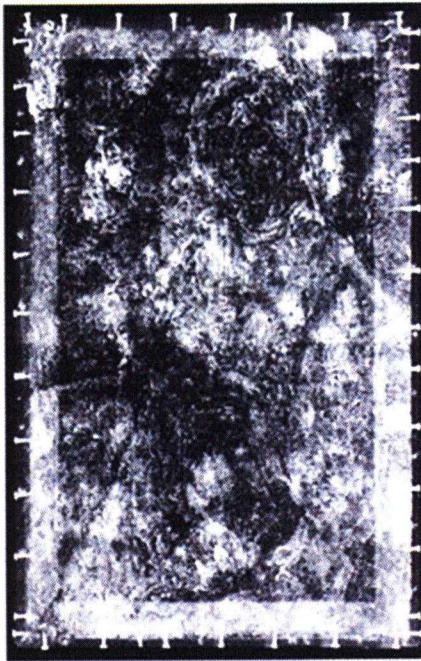


Figure 4 X-radiograph (by Mark Heathcote) of Gwen John's 'Young Woman holding a Black Cat'. *Gwen John and Augustus John* edited by Jenkins and Stephens page 201

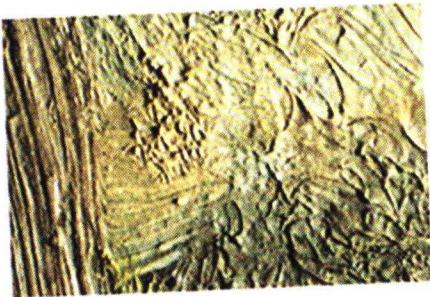


Figure 5 Intersection of dress with the background in 'The Convalescent' showing how 'Gwen John stabbed the paint with dry bristles to add texture' and 'softened

As an art student with a strong interest in conservation and an obsession with the late 19th and early 20th century, I was more than excited to visit the National Gallery's display of 'two of Vincent Van Gogh's iconic 'Sunflower' paintings'.⁸³ This was the first time they had been shown in London together in 65 years. Visitors could compare the two 'much loved masterpieces'; one from the National Gallery, the other from the Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam, side by side. They are part of a collection of five versions of 'Sunflowers' located in Tokyo, Munich and Philadelphia.⁸⁴ The National Gallery produced one of the most enlightening and honest displays by not only allowing viewers to compare and pass judgement, but also enabling them to understand Van Gogh's working methods by providing them with data and facts usually exclusively given to those at the top of their scientific and artistic fields. The public could step inside the painting by reading the informative text and studying the X-rays, the X-rays mesmerised me the most.



Figure 6 X-ray detail of the National Gallery London's 'Sunflowers'

revealing the 'basketwork' brushstrokes National Gallery website URL: http://www.nationalgallery.org.uk/paintings/learn-about-art/paintings-in-depth/the-sunflowers-feature/*/viewPage/4 (29/09/2014)

The radiographs revealed the vigorous rapid nature of the application of paint the thickets 'applied wet-on-wet and manipulated with the brush on the canvas' surface. The background made up of a 'basketwork' paint structure'.⁸⁵ With this knowledge the viewer could return to the original 'Sunflowers' and appreciate the subtleties in brushwork.

Seeing a live Shakespeare play is a fantastic experience. However, I enjoy the story and appreciate the beauty of his language more when I come to the performance with a prior understanding. Similarly, my appreciation of art increases when I have an insight into the maker's methods. I can admire Van Gogh's confidence with the

⁸³ 'The Sunflowers' National Gallery website URL: <http://www.nationalgallery.org.uk/whats-on/exhibitions/the-sunflowers> (28/09/2014)

⁸⁴ 'The Sunflowers' National Gallery website URL: <http://www.nationalgallery.org.uk/whats-on/exhibitions/the-sunflowers> (28/09/2014)

⁸⁵ Painting the 'Sunflowers' National Gallery website URL: http://www.nationalgallery.org.uk/paintings/learn-about-art/paintings-in-depth/the-sunflowers-feature/*/viewPage/4 (28/09/2014)

knowledge at how rapidly he applied his paint. Gwen John's analytical observation of her sitters, allowing her to 'meditate on her subject'⁸⁶, is emphasized with the knowledge of her methods and technique.

More information from photographs, interviews, journals, text, and word of mouth can provide evidence for the gallery 'detective' wishing to remain true to the artist's intention. Matisse left us with data which we can choose to use in making an informed decision of what interventions are necessary to preserve his much loved cut outs. Writings and quotes from Matisse, as well as information from his gallery assistants, provide contemporary historians, curators and conservators with the knowledge that this innovative artist was concerned by the longevity of the materials he chose. The relationship between colours was of vital importance and he was aware of the fading properties of some gouache colours. He was also concerned that some cut outs may come unstuck from their supports. However, because of the vast information available, there are sometimes contradictions of intent. Matisse commented on how he preferred the maquette version of the publication 'Jazz', rather than the finished product. Some critics prefer the more lively changeable nature of the cut outs when they are loosely pinned to the studio walls rather than stuck firmly on a support. The evidence left behind is cloudier on second inspection. The case harder to solve.⁸⁷

The conservation and restoration process of the Mackintosh Library will almost certainly give us insight into the techniques of the craftsmen and the genius of the designer's vision that they were creating. This, in turn, will aid the understanding of historical working methods, which will support the future of skilled restorers and tradespeople. Without this understanding these skills will be lost forever.⁸⁸

I have not so far discussed an alternative to reinstating or replacing the Mackintosh Library. Nicholas Oddy (Joint Head of Forum for Critical Inquiry, Glasgow school of Art) proposes that the library be left 'as a burned-out ruin.'

A facsimile library could be built anywhere to give those with little imagination an idea of what had been there pre-fire. This could be built as a total facsimile, or as a working library, it really would not matter. The essential thing is that the authenticity of the original would not be compromised.⁸⁹

A controversial solution that seems brutal, but is it? There is a beauty of decay and destruction which one may feel guilty about admitting. Over 5 million people flock to see the Colosseum in Rome annually.⁹⁰ It is essentially a ruin. Erosion, fungal growths are considered natural phenomena. In their book *Buildings Must Die*, Cairns and Jacobs explore how buildings could be designed to "decline gracefully and be "easily replaced".⁹¹

⁸⁶ *Gwen John and Augustus John*. p 200

⁸⁷ *Henri Matisse: The Cut-Outs*, edited by Karl Buchberg, Nicholas Cullinant and Jodi Hauptman. (Tate publishing, London:2014) pp 253-265

⁸⁸ *Reinstate or Reinvent*

⁸⁹ Nicholas Oddy; interviewed in personal email received on 28/09/2014

⁹⁰ Joshua Pramis, 'Worlds Most-Visited Ruins No. 46 The Colosseum, Rome', (October 2011) Travel and Leisure website URL: <http://www.travelandleisure.com/articles/worlds-most-visited-tourist-attractions/47> (29/09/2014)

⁹¹ Cairns, Jacobs, *Buildings Must Die*. P 44

In some cases the conservator is faced with the ethical conundrum of whether to intervene at all as the artist's intention was to let the work degrade.

By purposefully introducing decay, the artist appears to emphasize the irreconcilable need to simultaneously maintain both the material dimension of the work and its conceptual dimension. If we disregard works such as sculptures made of sugar in the Baroque period, it is evident that food has increasingly been incorporated into artistic works since the 1960s- the idea of the accidental transformation processes, and the beauty created by them, being an integral component of the art.⁹²

Skowranek asks whether it is right to 'dispute artistic intentions' by preserving an 'object for reasons of cultural heritage'? She explores whether there is a point at which meaning is lost. Is a replica, replacement, or documentation the best way to convey a degrading work to the viewer? Skowranek looks in particular detail at the work of Dieter Roth as his sculptures are made of edible substances 'which beetles and micro-organisms then transform.'⁹³ Similarly to Theseus' Ship, if the materials are replaced at what point is the work no longer the one created by Dieter Roth? The replacement of elements would prevent degrading and thus alter the meaning of the piece.

A prestigious institution had this dilemma when an artist donated a fragile book sculpture that would degrade if displayed. However, this was the intention of the artist who wanted it to be seen by the public. Part of the institution's values was to care for and preserve its collections. By leaving the book to degrade they were going against their values; being dishonest to them. A possible answer was to donate them to an institution without these strong values.

The conservator confronted with Anselm Kiefer's work has to ascertain which bits are meant to decay and which bits are integral to the artwork. For example, the barbed wire he often used was actually damaged on creation but flaking off elements on the image may fall off if left untouched. It was discovered that some areas were more stable than initially expected for example materials such as sand. However elements such as wire naturally move which can be dangerous for the longevity of the artwork.⁹⁴

Leaving the Mackintosh Library in a vulnerable destroyed state seems at first glance cruel⁹⁵, but is our motive to change its current aesthetic only to satisfy ourselves so we do not have to remember the horrors of 23rd

⁹² Heide Skowranek, 'Should We Reproduce the Beauty of Decay? A *Museumsleben* in the work of Dieter Roth' (*Tate Papers* October 2007 issue 8) *Tate* website URL: <http://www.tate.org.uk/research/publications/tate-papers/should-we-reproduce-beauty-decay-museumsleben-work-dieter-roth> (29/09/2014)

⁹³ Skowranek, 'Should We Reproduce the Beauty of Decay?'

⁹⁴ Behind the Scenes: Anselm Kiefer, *You tube* website URL: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gmn-w2J68pU> (29/10/2014)

⁹⁵ However, the use of the word 'cruel' could be deemed incorrect, as this would suggest that the Mackintosh building somehow felt pain; as Cairns and Jacobs put it to suggest they 'have life' (*Buildings Must Die*). Yet it is just a sum of materials. I am unwittingly imposing my own emotions onto this building; it has become a carrier of my own feelings. When do objects/buildings/artworks have agency?

May 2014? Is restoration or replacement just a way of masking the truth? The honest truth being that the authentic Mackintosh Library is lost for ever and there is nothing we can do to change that.

The 'authentic' Mackintosh building can be viewed in a digital format either via photography or film. Dieter Roth claims that restoration can be replaced by photography.⁹⁶ He claimed that 'materiality' of a source is not lost in a digital surrogate and that both the digital and the physical can be 'real'.⁹⁷ In the article 'The Work of Art in the Age of Digital Reproduction', Douglas Davis argues that the replica and original are 'merging'. Aura is not in the object but instead is 'in the originality of the moment we see, hear, read, repeat, revise'.⁹⁸

Does a replacement or reinterpretation function as an honest representation? I will use opinions and existing reinterpretations of artefacts to explore this topic. As I have previously mentioned, David Mullane believes a projection of the Mackintosh Library in an alternative location will suffice in giving the tourist an 'authentic' experience of the library.⁹⁹ Dr Isobel Griffins believes that the library needs to be a functional space and that it is 'acceptable to recreate the missing parts' as long as it is done 'sympathetically and not 'deceptively'. However, she believes a 'full recreation' would not be appropriate if virtually nothing is left and in this case photographs on the walls would suffice as a reminder.¹⁰⁰ I disagree, I believe that the Mackintosh Building has an aura which is not transmitted or at least not as strongly transmitted in digital reproductions. To work in its studios and walk through its corridors connects the individual to a past, a history of creative people who have inhabited this magnificent building. To sit in the library is to be immersed in an architectural forest, the hen run a glass tunnel looking across the rooftops, ever changing in colour and mood. It is an ever changing building full of the creative future. An exciting and inspiring place to be.

David Mullane was suggesting a contemporary reinterpretation or response to the Mackintosh Library. Can reinterpretation succeed as an alternative to restoration and conservation? The artist Rankin responded to Rembrandt's portraits of old age which are some of the most arresting in western art. His subjects were vulnerable without losing 'vitality'. Rankin's contemporary photographic versions were collaborations with Terry Gilliam, Ken Loach, Zandra Rhodes and Una Stubbs. Rankin and his collaborators analysed what makes up a Rembrandt portrait and transferred this through the contemporary photographic lens.¹⁰¹ There were, of course, obvious differences between the two media. Rankin captured a single moment, by contrast Rembrandt captured a period spent with his sitter (this could be months). However, Rankin was able to take some key features of Rembrandt's work. Lighting is one of the first things that strikes the viewer when gazing at

⁹⁶ Heide Skowranek, 'Should We Reproduce the Beauty of Decay?'

⁹⁷ Roth cited by Samuli Kaislaniemi in *The Permissive Digital Archive*, a paper given at *The Permissive Archive Conference*, (UCL London: 9 November 2012) website URL: <http://blogs.helsinki.fi/kaislani/2012/11/20/the-permissive-digital-archive/> (10/12/2014)

⁹⁸ Douglas Davis, 'The Work of Art in the Age of Digital Reproduction (An Evolving Thesis: 1991-1995)', in *Leonardo*, Vol. 28, No. 5 (Third Annual New York Digital Salon: 1995), p 386

⁹⁹ Mullane, *Reinstate or Reinvent*

¹⁰⁰ Dr Isobel Griffin, from personal email received on 30/10/2014

¹⁰¹ Rankin Shoots Rembrandt, The Culture show, first broadcast at 10pm 18 October 2014, director: Lesley Smith Series Editor: Janet Lee. *BBC i Player* website URL: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/iplayer/episode/b04mm12z/the-culture-show-rankin-shoots-rembrandt> (29/10/2014)

Rembrandt's work and it is actually the shadow that is the key as it is where the viewer's imagination comes alive. The more time you spend with Rembrandt's portraits the more emotions seem to appear in the subject's old face. They are enigmatic expressions making the picture intriguing and more complex than a first glance reveals. Rembrandt was honest with his portraits. The weathered faces depicted in unflinching detail, yet he saw the beauty in imperfections, there is more value in enjoying old age.

Rankin succeeded in creating portraits of old age that, like Rembrandt's, were honest but celebratory. However, if every Rembrandt in the National Gallery was to be replaced by a Rankin, would this truly represent the 17th century Dutch master's work? The question arises to what element of the Rembrandt painting are we trying to preserve? This brings us back to our three categories; the individual, the object and the abstract form. Rembrandt, the individual, is dead. Any touch-up, in fact any intervention to the paint, canvas, support, varnish can be considered a breach of this painting's authenticity as a painting made by Rembrandt's hand. However, it is almost certain fact that there no longer exists an exclusively Rembrandt Rembrandt. The reason these paintings have stood the test of time is because of intervention by others, however small, however delicate. So, can we rule out the argument that Rembrandt's work should be left completely untouched?

Rembrandt's paintings can be viewed as objects, in this case technically dazzling pictures. This image can be recreated enabling the future to appreciate the image rather than the artist. The composition, the lighting, the colour, the texture, the subject. Is it the image we love or the artist? Surely we admire the artist because of the image; so, the image can exist without the artist.

We can go one step further to a more abstract recreation. Rankin deciphered aspects that make up a Rembrandt painting. In separating these aspects from the medium of paint, Rankin only heightened the clarity of their importance. Rankin displays the vital characteristics of Rembrandt in a medium that the contemporary viewer can relate to. Like Rembrandt he has taken the common medium used for portraiture, sitters who are admired and celebrated, lighting that is honest yet creates magical shadows, enigmatic expressions and details such as props and costumes. Rankin has transferred Rembrandt to the now, making him more easily understandable. But the question still remains of whether this act Rankin carries out is preserving or reinventing Rembrandt.

I believe that Rankin's photographs are not sufficient replacements for Rembrandt's portraits because they cannot exist as Rembrandts without being presented in relation to Rembrandts. To make myself clearer, their function, to draw our attention to the elements of Rembrandt that make Rembrandt great, is most apparent when next to the originals. They also miss out a fundamental feature of Rembrandt's; the crusty texture of oil paint, which under analysis, sometimes contains sand, grit and egg.¹⁰² How can a photograph emulate this? How can a digital representation conjure up a 3D object like an iconic library interior?

¹⁰² Schama on Rembrandt Masterpieces of the late years, first shown 9pm 18 October 2014 director: Frank Hanly executive Producer: Basil Comely. *BBC 1 player* website URL:

I began with exploring the purpose of a library. The 'Strategies' document for the Bodleian Library states that its collections should:

Improve the accessibility of materials through cataloguing, digitization, publication and academic initiatives.¹⁰³

They want to 'expand access to content' and 'help shape legislation and policies relating to digital resources'. I still do not believe that a digital reproduction can alone transmit the authentic nature of an object. By having digital reproductions, yes, art, design, music, architecture, books can be experienced by a much wider ranging audience. In one of Tate's most successful years (2012-13) 7.74 million visitors to its four galleries but 13.6 million people visited them online.¹⁰⁴ However, very few would disagree that hearing a symphony orchestra on CD is anywhere close to the exhilarating experience of hearing that same orchestra live.

People become attached to certain buildings because of the association with past or present experience, which the buildings symbolize, even if that experience has not been a continuous part of their lives.¹⁰⁵

But could this mean that it is the people that create the Mackintosh Building? In her essay 'Material Significance in Contemporary Art' Rebecca Gordon discusses how people can be 'material'. The artist Aileen Campbell lists 'people' as her material. In explaining Vito Acconci's 'Following Piece' (1969) Gordon suggests that the 'participant' contributes to the structure of the work rather than affecting it.¹⁰⁶

I have explored the purpose of a library, if the original state of an object can be decided upon, what is the most authentic representation of an object, the varying rules within the field of conservation, the things one can discover through conservation techniques, the beauty of decay, digitalisation and replacement. All these issues can be discussed in relation to the Mackintosh Library, but still do not provide a clear cut answer, only opinions. And opinions are diverse on this subject. Paul Hambelton sees the fire as an 'opportunity rather than something that should just be undone by turning back the clock'¹⁰⁷. Similarly, Sally Todd (a member of staff at

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/iplayer/episode/b04mhsn1/schama-on-rembrandt-masterpieces-of-the-late-years> (29/10/2014)

¹⁰³ 'Strategies and Policy's', *Bodleian Library* website. URL: <http://www.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/bodley/about-us/policies> (27/09/2014)

¹⁰⁴ Press Release: '2012-13 is a year of success and worldwide development for Tate', (19/09/13) *Tate website* URL: <http://www.tate.org.uk/about/press-office/press-releases/2012-13-year-success-and-worldwide-development-tate> (29/09/2014)

¹⁰⁵ Tamara K. Hareven and Randolph Langenbach, 'Living Places, Work Places and Historical Identity', from *Our Past Before us Why do we Save it?*, edited by David Lowenthal and Marcus Binney, (Temple Smith, London:1981) p117

¹⁰⁶ Rebecca Gordon, 'Material Significance in Contemporary Art', in *Art Matters International Journal for Technical Art History* (2013)

¹⁰⁷ Hambelton, 30/10/2014

the National Library of Scotland) would see 'any attempt to recreate the original as paramount to creating a 'Mackintosh Theme Park'.¹⁰⁸ Architect Julian Harrap believes:

The institution needs a vision for how the library can become, once again, a symbol of Mackintosh, of the city and of the institution and I believe that involves avoiding simplicity and avoiding the idea of a replica.¹⁰⁹

Yet the brief of designing an iconic library seems destined to fail. The location of the library within the art school and the consistency throughout the whole interior and exterior cannot be ignored.

The Participants were the vehicle for the expression, as it were, the outworking of the concept, and not in themselves carriers of significance.¹¹⁰

I believe that the Mackintosh Building is only 'authentic' when functioning as an art school. People are a vital element to its being.

Buildings are built for, and by, people; serving the needs of people is what buildings do, and wilfully turning a building into a ruin is a reversal of its most fundamental purpose.¹¹¹

However, The Glasgow School of Art can exist in any form, even a marquee or shed. It is the people alone which make up the Glasgow School of Art. The Mackintosh building differs in that it is a fantastic building created by artists for artists containing artists. It takes all three along with being designed by the architect which shares its name to be truly The Mack.

The importance of collaboration and cross fertilisation as well as creativity in conservation were common conclusions made by the speakers at the conference 'Authenticity in Transition: Changing practices in art making and conservation'.¹¹² With the range of materials and in some cases lack of materials (e.g. performance art) in contemporary art there is a need for expertise out-with the museum. Conservation is a social domain we should be more open and flexible to other concepts of authenticity.¹¹³ There was a suggestion that 'creation' did not end at the 'completion' of the art object but instead continued throughout the contemporary art objects museum life; acquisition, storage, exhibition, exhibition, loan, conservation intervention.¹¹⁴ This

¹⁰⁸ Sally Todd, form personal email received on 30/10/2014

¹⁰⁹ Will Hurst. *Conservation specialist challenges 'replica' restoration of Mac library* 3 December 2014.

Architects Journal website URL:<http://www.architectsjournal.co.uk/news/conservation-specialist-challenges-replica-restoration-of-mac-library/8673516.article> (05/12/2014)

¹¹⁰ Gordon, 'Material Significance in Contemporary Art',

¹¹¹ Littlefield, Lewis, *Architectural Voices*. P 17

¹¹² *Authenticity in Transition: Changing practices in art making and conservation* An international conference organised by University of Glasgow and Glasgow School of Art held in Glasgow 1-2 December 2014

¹¹³ Magdalena Grenada, paper conservator, Warsaw Uprising Museum, *Stills and Touches. Paper conservator in a private gallery*. Panel 2 Speaker at conference *Authenticity in Transition: Changing practices in art making and conservation* (Glasgow 1-2 December 2014)

¹¹⁴ Dr Glenn Wharton, clinical Associate professor, Museum Studies, New York university, *Authorship and intentionality in the Contemporary Art Museum*. Panel 2 Speaker at conference *Authenticity in Transition: Changing practices in art making and conservation* (Glasgow 1-2 December 2014)

continuation of creativity produced something new. This, of course, provides the dilemma of who is the artist/author? With preservation there is often a compromise between the preservation of the historic relic or preserving functionality; a dilemma very much felt with the restoration of the Mackintosh Library. Should it be a museum or a library 'fit for purpose' with up to date technology? Should conservators be putting time into restoring obsolete technology or, in the case of the Mackintosh Library, a library that was not readily accessible or suitable to contemporary students? At the conference it was suggested that codes of ethics were about managing a relationship between people not art; people and their relationship with the object. The closing remark at the conference by Prof. Renée van de Vall being that conservation depends on our 'careful judgement to survive'.¹¹⁵

As for honesty in conservation, the research I have done has made me question my desire to be a paper conservator. I do not want to be part of a vocation built on hiding the truth; it is the truth I want to preserve for the future. However, I have come to the conclusion that out of all the disciplines conserving works on paper is the most honest. A paper conservator tends to be involved with libraries where it is the purpose and usability that comes first, rather than restoring ascetic elements. It is about prolonging the life of paper through cleaning using natural processes such as washing and repairing tears using sympathetic handmade papers and reversible wheat starch paste (see appendix 1). The results are interventions visible but subtle, the bass guitar of the object, present and noticeable; but not the main star, but integral to supporting the overall structure, holding everything together. Without it everything would fall apart and, in itself, it is a beautiful process.

My personal proposal for the Glasgow School of Art Mackintosh Library involves preserving the complete story including the fire. Like Alain de Botton's art gallery I want this library to be 'recognised according to a therapeutic vision'.¹¹⁶ When the person approaches the doors to the library they see the restored Mackintosh Library. Lovingly and hand crafted, restored to Mackintosh's original design. A past that inspired so many, a much loved 'work of art' or 'work of design' or 'work of architectural genius', take your pick. Upon entering the library the viewer turns left (as in the western world you traditionally read left to right) and is confronted by the unrestored, untouched embers and remains of the burnt and destroyed library. (Possibly protected by a glass division) The viewer can ponder the past- the 'real' Mackintosh and admire the melancholy beauty of decay. He/she can compare the restored centre, a memory authentic in design but not in material form. To the viewer's right lays a blank and neutral space. However, it is not completely empty as projected onto these blank walls are the future of design. Every month the projection changes revealing different students' proposed designs for the Mackintosh Library. The past, an unforgettable memory and the ever changing future- in my eyes an honest library.

¹¹⁵ Prof. Renée van de Vall, professor Arts and Media, Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, University of Maastricht and head of NeCCAR, *Authenticities and ontologies: an approach from practice theory*. Closing Keynote Speaker at conference *Authenticity in Transition: Changing practices in art making and conservation* (Glasgow 1-2 December 2014)

¹¹⁶ Botton, Armstrong, *Art as Therapy* (Phaidon, London: 2013) p 90

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¹ York Minster Revealed the Orb, York minster website URL: <http://www.yorkminster.org/about-us/york-minster-revealed-ymr/the-orb.html> (29/10/2014)

Conferences/meetings

Reinstate or Reinvent a debate on the Mackintosh Library held at the Mackintosh Church (25/09/2014)

Y4 Visual Materials workshop attended on 28/10/14

'You Build the Mackintosh', student platform initial meeting held at project space 2 in the Vic Bar, Glasgow School of Art Students association on 29/10/14

Tour of Mackintosh Building, 5/11/2014

Authenticity in Transition: Changing practices in art making and conservation (Glasgow 1-2 December 2014)

List of Illustrations

Figure 1 Hannah Blackwell, Fine Art Photography Glasgow School of Art Graduate, installation shot of 2014 degree show days before the studio and its contents were completely destroyed by fire. *The Guardian* Website

URL: <http://www.theguardian.com/education/gallery/2014/jun/16/a-z-student-graduate-art-shows-2014> (29/09/2014)

Figure 2 The revised floor plan for the Tate Modern; 'an art gallery reorganised to a therapeutic vision', Alain de Botton and John Armstrong, *Art as Therapy* (Phaidon, London: 2013) page 90

Figure 3 X-radiograph (by Mark Heathcote) of Gwen John's 'The Convalescent'. *Gwen John and Augustus John* edited by David Fraser Jenkins and Chris Stephens (Tate Publishing, London: 2004) page 2

Figure 4 X-radiograph (by Mark Heathcote) of Gwen John's 'Young Woman holding a Black Cat'. *Gwen John and Augustus John* edited by David Fraser Jenkins and Chris Stephens (Tate Publishing, London: 2004) page 20101

Figure 7 Intersection of dress with the background in 'The Convalescent' showing how 'Gwen John stabbed the paint with dry bristles to add texture' and 'softened transitions from one plane to another'. *Gwen John and Augustus John* edited by David Fraser Jenkins and Chris Stephens (Tate Publishing, London: 2004) page 200

Figure 6 X-ray detail of the National Gallery London's 'Sunflowers' revealing the 'basketwork' brushstrokes *National Gallery* website URL: http://www.nationalgallery.org.uk/paintings/learn-about-art/paintings-in-depth/the-sunflowers-feature/*/viewPage/4 (29/09/2014)

Appendix

Appendix 1: Volunteering at the National Library Scotland July-September 2014

Making objects both useable but with as little intervention as possible is very important for the National Library of Scotland. Books, maps and archives must be strong enough to be handled by the public otherwise they are not accessible and the library cannot function. Whilst volunteering at the conservation department I came to the conclusion that the most honest representation often was a compromise. For example to leave a paper document from the Glasgow film archive in an acidic degrading brown envelope will only help to further damage and age the paper. However, is the envelope not also integral to the object? It too tells the story of who the document was for and bears the handwriting of a person. The decision was to place the document in an acid free envelope but keep the envelope separately. The archivists at the Glasgow Film Archive could then decide the importance of the envelope. The conservators job is to conserve what is there. Similarly, removing staples from the sheets may seem invasive but by replacing them with brass paper clips the viewer could still see how sheets were attached but the rusting of the staples was no longer a problem.

The conservation of the Glasgow Film Archive was more of a rehousing project. It was about making the documents accessible to the public but in a way that would not damage them further. Photographs were placed in polythene pockets for protection and films and negatives removed to be stored in cooler temperatures. By contrast the other project I assisted with was conserving the newspaper cuttings and cartoons of Osbert Lancaster. The 'look' of the object as well as the message where important to the viewer's understanding. The cuttings were previously stored in small files but many were falling off and out of order. The original cartoons were crumpled and torn. The decision was to refile the cuttings in polythene pockets keeping them in order and attaching any loose ones with wheat starch paste. This natural adhesive is reversible with water so a future conservator or historian can remove any unoriginal elements. The drawings were repaired and hinged into specially designed pockets. The main aims were to keep everything in order and carry out as little intervention as possible.

Even though it could be argued that the work we carried out altered the look of the objects and thus made it unoriginal and unauthentic I think it was an honest representation of the artefacts. The Glasgow Film Archive was created to be kept and used in the future; we were only continuing to make it accessible. Osbert Lancaster's work was not in a state that could be handled by the public we transformed it to a state that meant it was no longer unusable or un-seeable.

Appendix 2: My project

My aim was to conserve the piano sheet music so that it was useable not just so it looked better.

I removed the cotton thread holding the sheets (or some of them together). I also removed what I assume was the unoriginal paper added as a support to the cover which was causing discolouration and deterioration of the paper.

I surface cleaned the sheets using chemical sponge and removed any tape.

I then washed the loose paper sheets 3 times in slightly alkaline water which turned a yellowy colour. The dirty water was acidic showing how the aging paper had become acidic. By making the water alkaline I was increasing the diffusion gradient and by moving the water or replacing it I was doing this too.

I dried the paper between sheets of blotter and towels with heavy books on top to act as weights.

I made Wheat starch paste using 1 part powder to 4 parts water on a low heat on the hob stirring for 40 mins. I left it to cool then added water and sieved twice. I stored the paste in the fridge until needed under a jar on a plate.

Using strips of Japanese tissue I used a brush to apply the paste to the tissue and placed it on tears in the sheet music. I used bondina, blotter and a bone folder to stick it down then applied blotter and weights to the repair.

I then strengthened the double pages or reattached pages that had come apart using a thicker strip of paper down the centre and wheat starch paste on both sides.

I then re bound the pages in sections then eventually all the sections back into a booklet.

Appendix 3: The Ship of Theseus

The ship on which he [Theseus] sailed with the youths and was kept safe [coming] back, the thirty-oared vessel, the Athenians preserved until the time of Demetrius of Phalerus, removing the old pieces of wood and putting in strong ones, and putting them together so that the ship was a model for the philosophers with respect to the disputed argument about growing, some of them saying it remained the same, some of them saying it did not remain the same.

Plutarch, Life of Theseus translated by Michael C. Rea in 'The Problem of Material Constitution' in *The Philosophical Review*, Vol. 104, No. 4 (Oct, 1995), pp. 525-552 (Duke University Press on behalf of Philosophical Review) Page 531

As the University of Oxford aims to lead the world in research and education, so the Bodleian Libraries aim to support the University in its mission by providing a world-leading library service.



Bodleian Libraries
UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD

Mission Statement

The mission of the Bodleian Libraries is to provide an excellent service to support the learning, teaching and research objectives of the University of Oxford; and to develop and maintain access to Oxford's unique collections for the benefit of scholarship and society.

Strategies

Collections

- Acquire books, articles, source materials and special collections in all formats and across all disciplines to support teaching and research and to preserve cultural and scientific heritage
- Care for the Libraries' collections
- Improve the accessibility of materials through cataloguing, digitization, publication and academic initiatives
- Support the curation, preservation and accessibility of research data generated by the University
- Develop digital services that benefit research, teaching and learning
- Provide a robust digital infrastructure that supports innovative services
- Expand access to content using established and emerging platforms
- Help shape legislation and policies relating to digital resources

Service & Staff

- Provide a well-informed staff able to help readers and other users receive the best possible service
- Collaborate with academics and students to support and contribute to research, teaching and learning
- Support the professional development of library staff through training, best practice and innovation

Digital Initiatives

Library Spaces

- Ensure our spaces meet our readers' requirements
- Care for and enhance historic library spaces

Communication

- Understand the needs of readers and other users through consultation and analysis of data and feedback
- Communicate news, policies and services in a clear and timely manner

Outreach

- Promote the Bodleian's collections to a wide audience through exhibitions, events, publications, tours, products and other initiatives
- Use digital technologies to share the collections
- Contribute to local, national and international cultural life

Governance

- Manage the Bodleian Libraries' resources effectively & safely
- Secure funds and generate income to further the work of the Libraries and the University
- Maintain a strong leadership role in the international library sector
- Pursue partnerships and shared initiatives with academics and organisations to mutual benefit and in support of the University's mission