

ABSTRACT

This poster discusses the development and implementation of a workshop aimed at improving accessibility for the visually impaired in the field of conservation-restoration, using Alves Cardoso's painting "Au Soir" as a case study. The workshop consisted of three parts: participants were involved in experiments regarding the painting's materials and techniques; a simulated easel painting was constructed by superimposing layers; participants interacted tactilely with materials and treatments used during intervention procedures used in conservation-restoration. The goal was to identify shared challenges for future work and explain the main tasks of the conservation-restoration project. Additionally, the workshop allowed for an evaluation of its functionality and impact on participant expectations.

INTRODUCTION

The information presented in museums, exhibitions, and other spaces of cultural dissemination is fundamentally visual [1]. This situation may be motivated by the fact that the sense of vision has, for those who see, a role of "dominating their experience and interpretation of meanings to the detriment of the use of other sensory pathways" [2]. This vision-centred position is also present in other areas, such as exhibits that evoke conservation and restoration work. This research started with information gathering about accessibility resources, such as direct touch in original pieces, audio descriptions or didactic materials (such as replicas) applied in museums [3]. Exploring these alternatives, the aim was to understand which can be adapted to the conservation-restoration context. The main idea is to bring inclusive and accessible resources to visually impaired audiences and to convey, in a didactic way, information harnessed from the processes and methodologies used in conservation and restoration projects.

CASE STUDY

Alves Cardoso, a well-known Portuguese painter who lived from 1883 to 1930, specialized in creating beautiful landscapes and rustic scenes. Carlos Reis, Cormon, and Jean-Paul Laurens influenced him. Pamplona noted that Alves Cardoso's rural scenes were the most prominent feature of his work [4]. In his painting "Au Soir," a female figure is depicted with heavy lines on her face, often associated with rural life's hardships. "Au Soir" is a two-meter-tall by three-meter-wide oil painting on linen canvas that showcases the lives of two peasants from Brittany (Fig. 1). It was painted in Paris in 1905 and is owned by the Faculty of Fine Arts at the University of Lisbon (FBAUL). In 2016-2017, the painting underwent conservation and restoration as part of the first crowdfunding campaign, "Apoie o Restauro," launched by FBAUL.

This painting tells both a story of rural life in 20th-century Brittany, as well as a political message from the 1970s in Portugal. The red inscription, which reads "VIVA A ALIANÇA OPERÁRIO-CAMPONESA, MRPP," along with a symbol of a sickle, hammer, and star in the sky, adds historical context to the piece.



Fig. 1 - The painting "Au Soir", by Artur Alves Cardoso (1882-1930), was made in French (1905). The primary materials are linseed oil and linen canvas with dimensions 193 cm x 303 cm. The inventory number is FBAUL/376/DA.

MATERIAL, TECHNICAL AND FORMAL CHARACTERIZATION OF THE PAINTING



Fig. 2 - The relief demonstrates the composition of "Au Soir".



Fig. 3 - Two full-figured figures refer to the peasant couple represented in the painting.

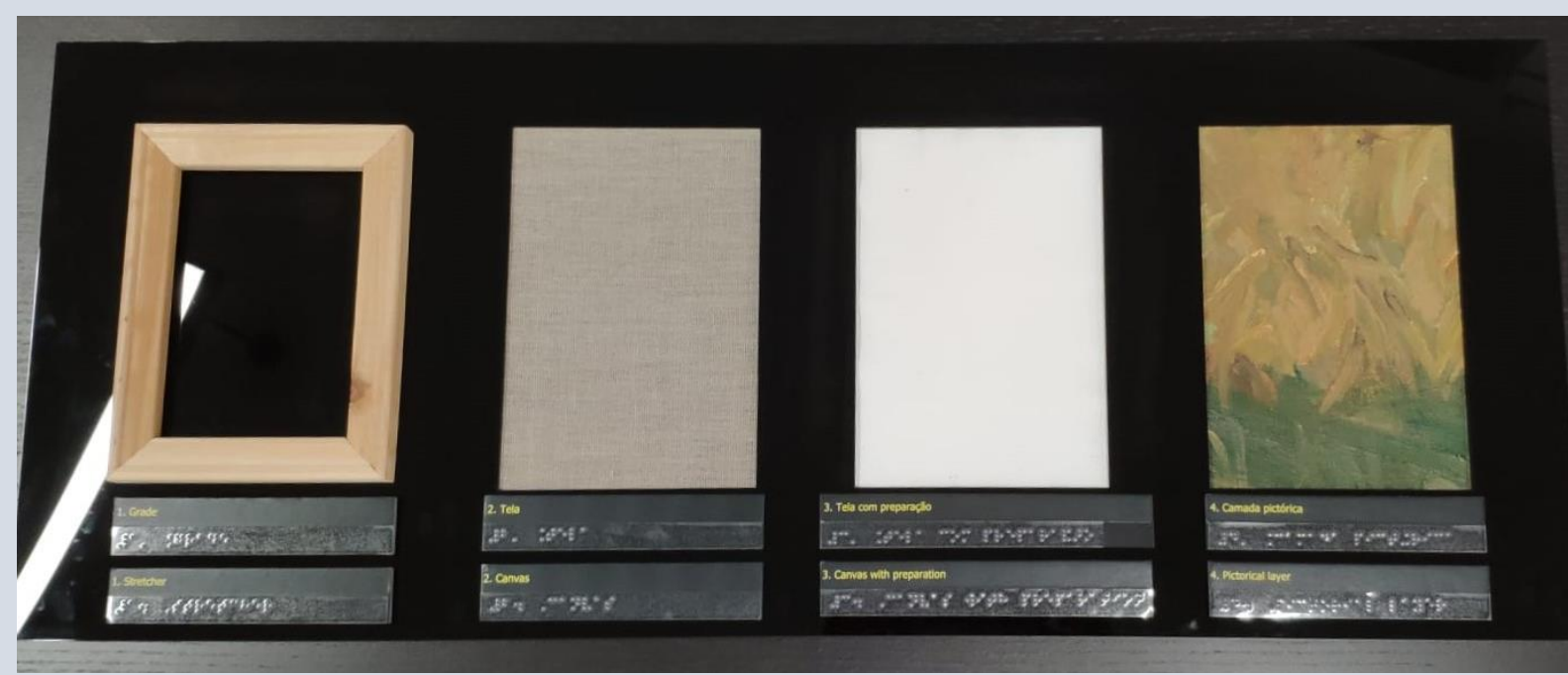


Fig. 4 - This image refers to the order in which the layers of the painting are arranged.

Initially, the participants engaged with some of the already constructed models. These models depicted the technical and material aspects of the work, such as the composition of the artwork (Fig. 2), two full-figured figures representing the peasant couple in the painting (Fig. 3), or a sequence of the layers that make up the painting (seen in Figures 4 and 9).

MOCK-UPS: BUILDING THE STRATIGRAPHIC LAYER OF THE PAINTING AND CONTACT WITH PATHOLOGIES THAT OCCUR IN PAINTINGS

Participants used mock-ups to construct the stratigraphy of the painting by layering on a stretcher, canvas, preparation layer with gesso, and pictorial layer (seen in Figures 5 and 8). They also had the opportunity to learn about various pathologies found in paintings, such as deformations in the canvas. To simulate pathologies, mock-ups were created with tears, detachments, or losses in the chromatic layer (Fig. 6).



Fig. 5 - To construct the stratigraphic layer of the painting, mock-ups were used to overlay the various layers.

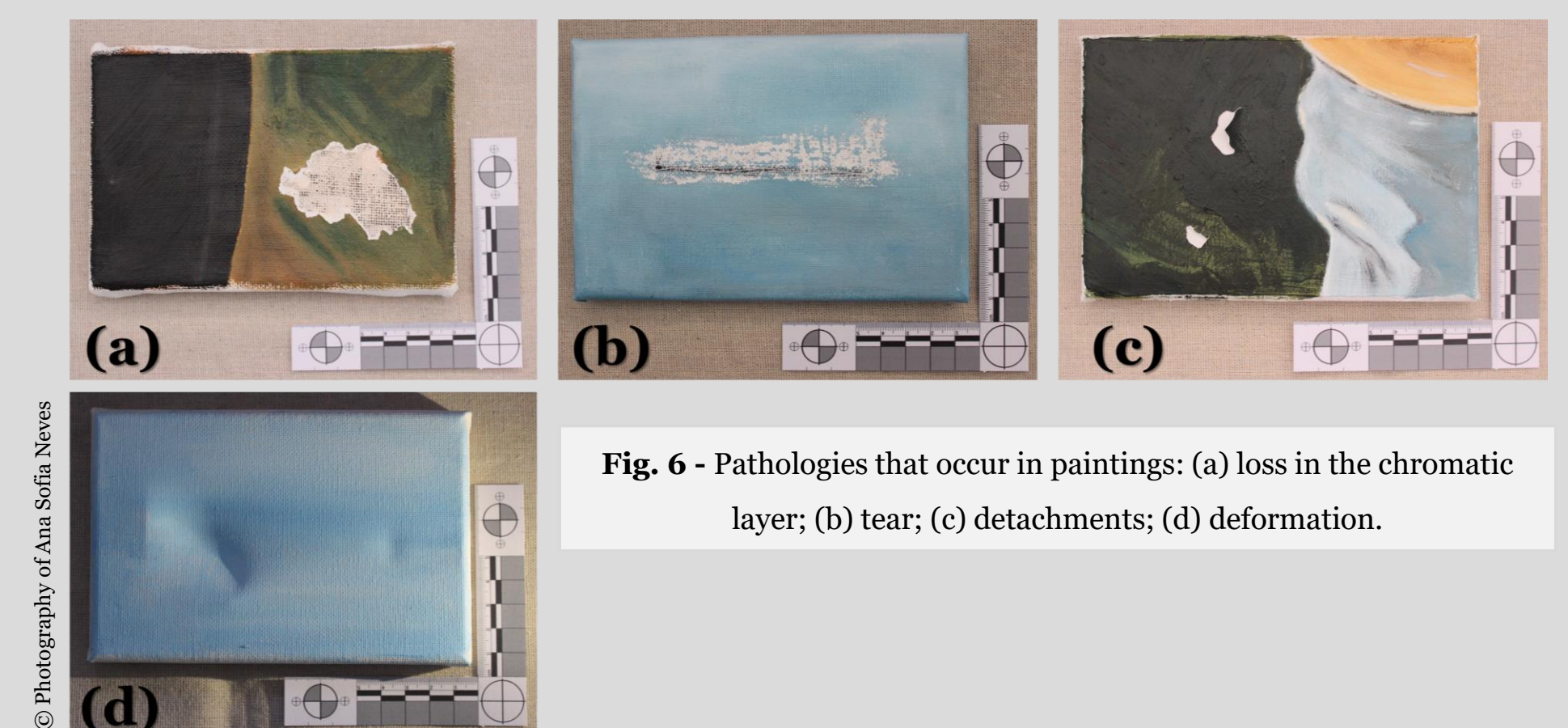


Fig. 6 - Pathologies that occur in paintings: (a) loss in the chromatic layer; (b) tear; (c) detachments; (d) deformation.

WORKSHOP: EXPLORING THE AU SOIR PAINTING BY ARTUR ALVES CARDOSO



Fig. 7 - Materials used in the workshop.



Fig. 8 - To construct the stratigraphic layer of the painting, mock-ups and layer superimposition were used.

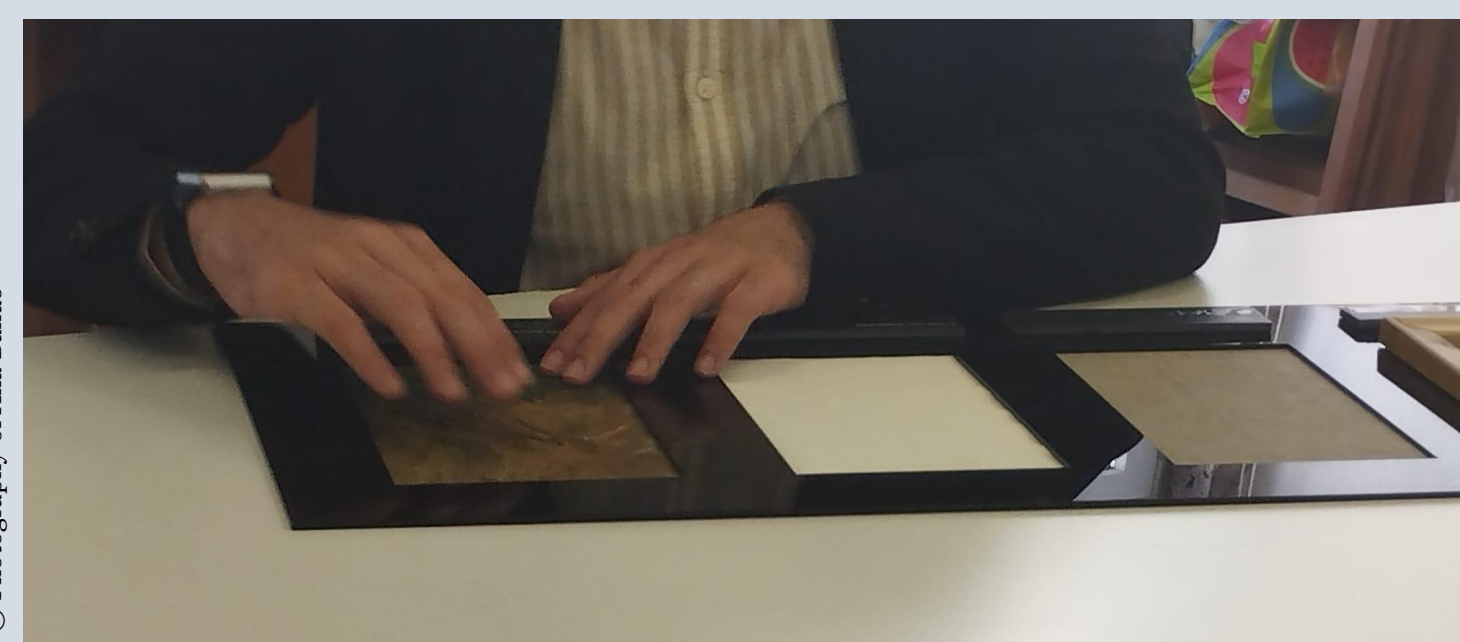


Fig. 9 - This refers to the order in which the different layers of the painting are applied.

At the workshop, participants had the opportunity to learn about the production of fabrics used in canvases by using a loom. They also experimented with different sizes and types of brushes (as shown in Fig. 7) and learned how to handle materials and equipment used to treat canvas damage, such as rabbit skin glue. In addition, they did small conservation-restoration procedure, flattening their own 10 x 15 cm canvas by humidifying the fibres with a spray bottle and applying weights.

CONCLUSIONS

"Unlike sight, touch assesses the material properties of objects much more quickly than their formal properties" [5]. This fact leads the mock-ups produced in this project to fulfil the objective of making known the contents of the painting and its conservation and restoration project. The mock-ups reproduce the painting's shapes and composition, whereas the mannequins showcase the materials represented in the pictorial composition, such as the peasants' clothes or the metallic buckets they hold. A regular visual person observing this painting can distinguish the materials, like the clothes' textiles and the buckets' metal. For a visually impaired person, this has to be passed on to the touch, hence the creation of the peasant mannequins. During the workshop, the feedback from the participants was positive; as they explored the resources, they asked questions about more details, which led us to conclude that verbal communication is a solid complement to tactile exploration. The curious spirit of the group led to some questions that were not planned for the workshop, such as how the stretcher was attached to the canvas or how the canvas, being a fabric, was so hard. They were given a fixed canvas with tacks and staples to get in touch with the different affixing methods, as well as linen textile with and without rabbit skin glue, so that they could distinguish the raw canvas surface from the one with the glue preparation, as well as the one with a gesso layer. Throughout the workshop, the participants commented on the painting and its composition, and through their speeches, we ascertained that they understood the composition of the painting through the models created, as well as the position of the peasants in the picture.

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