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Anunciação Prize Conservation, restoration and dissemination of academic works

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ABSTRACT

This communication presents the research undertaken on the Anunciação Prize paintings, emphasizing the study, documentation, and the conservation and restoration work performed on these artworks. The project ended in a public exhibition that employed accessible resources to engage visitors of all backgrounds, offering a multisensory experience of the paintings' representations.

INTRODUCTION

The Faculty of Fine Arts of the University of Lisbon (FBAUL) holds a vast and diverse collection of different items, including art and multimedia, ceramics, ancient and contemporary drawing, communication design, equipment design, ancient and contemporary engraving, sculpture, medals, ancient and contemporary painting and the Lagoa Henriques legacy [1]. The collection results from the incorporation of works acquired through diverse channels: donations from alumni, prizes from student competitions, student projects, faculty donations, faculty competition awards, and ornate painting models [2].

The Anunciação Prize, examples of which can be found in the painting collection (Figure 1), was established on July 25, 1884 [2] by an executive committee of friends of the painter and professor of the same name at what was then the Royal Academy of Fine Arts of Lisbon [3]. The competition was open to students in both history and landscape painting courses, with a theme dedicated to representations of "animals" taken from nature" [4], including donkeys, horses, bulls, cows, sheep, goats, ducks, and rabbits.



Figure 1 - Detail, FBAUL Painting Reserve, Anunciação prize.

CONSERVATION AND RESTAURATION

The conservation and restoration methodology comprised three distinct phases [5]. The first phase involved examination (Figure 2). The second phase consisted of creating maps within a geographic information system (GIS) to document the various forms of alteration (Figure 3). Finally, the third phase implemented the conservation and restoration treatments. These treatments were selected for their ease of identification and reversibility [6]. The intervention process included stabilizing the paint layer, cleaning, reinforcing the support, cleaning the chromatic layer, filling and leveling losses, and, finally, reintegrating color in areas of paint loss (Figure 4). Because the paintings lacked proper support, custom-made, expandable stretchers were fabricated to provide appropriate tension management for these artworks.



Figure 2 - Identification of a protective layer. Detail of the photograph of UV light fluorescence in the painting Horse by

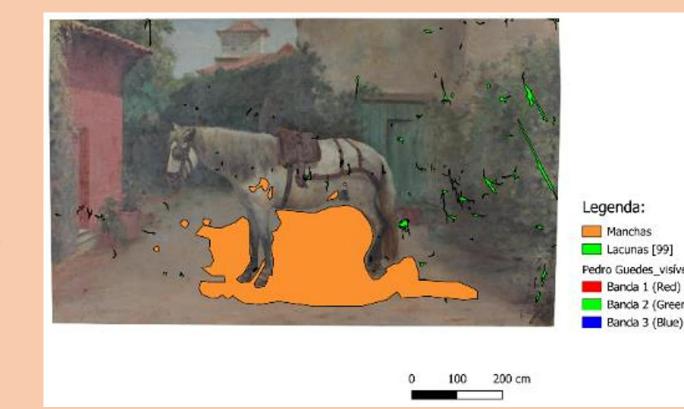


Figure 3 – Graphic registry the degradation phenomena present in *Cavalo* by Pedro



Figure 4 - Reintegrating color in areas of paint loss

EXHIBITION

The exhibition project aimed to disseminate the Anunciação Prize paintings and the associated conservation and restoration treatment. This work contributes to the historical, technical, and artistic understanding of 19th and 20th-century painters. The exhibited works reflect artistic academic teaching within the historical and landscape painting courses [5].

The exhibition presented seventeen paintings from the Anunciação Prize, along with two engravings by Tomás da Anunciação. Of the paintings, two were originated from the National Academy of Fine Arts (ANBA) and fifteen from the FBAUL. Organized chronologically, the paintings were displayed in two rooms of the ANBA Gallery (Figures 5 and 6).



Figure 5 - First room in the gallery.



Figure 6 - Second room in the gallery.

CATALOGUE

An exhibition catalogue [7] brought together contributions from 17 researchers from different Portuguese universities and research centers. The catalogue contains texts from different areas such as: Conservation and Restoration, Art History, Materials Science, Agronomy and Museology.



Figure 7 - Cover of the exhibition catalogue.



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ACCESSIBLE RESOURCES

While primarily focused on accommodating visually impaired visitors, these materials were developed to enhance the experience for all attendees.

The comprehensive set of resources included navigational aids, such as an embossed gallery plan. Additionally, audio descriptions were provided for each displayed painting, offering detailed verbal representations of the artworks.

To further enrich the sensory experience, interactive displays were created, featuring tactile elements that corresponded to the animals depicted in the paintings. Each of these displays incorporated representations of the animal's form, coat texture, and characteristic sounds, allowing visitors to engage with the artwork through multiple senses [8] (Figure 8 and 9).

An immersive space was also created, with an easel, a canvas the size of the ones used in the competition and a palette. Here people could experience the environment in which the artists made their works (Figure 10).



Figure 8 – Interactive display about the sheep



Figure 9 – Interactive displays



Figure 10 - Immersive space.



See the exhibition

CONCLUSIONS

This project made it possible to rediscover the works of the Anunciação Prize, promoting their preservation and dissemination. It brings together a wealth of information about the competition and the works. Through the interventions carried out, it was possible to stabilise the works, but also to acquire information about their characteristics.

The exhibition project was intended to be an inclusive space, with accessibility strategies for exhibition spaces having been applied. Demonstrating the existing concern for the inclusion of audiences in spaces for the dissemination of heritage.

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