

Mapping authorship and ownership in contemporary art conservation

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Propositions

1. Authorship is not a fixed status designated at the moment of creation. It is ongoing, relational, and enacted through practice.
2. In both copyright law and conservation, the work is a concept that facilitates movement between the realms of the tangible and intangible, and between presence and absence.
3. For contemporary artworks, the copyright work and the artwork rarely fully align and important aspects of the identity of contemporary artworks, including process, concept, and context can be excluded from copyright's protection. These exclusions have significant implications for the work's custodianship and care.
4. The concept of authorship should be sufficiently elastic to recognise multiple interests in contemporary artworks (curatorial, conservatorial, participatorial), without undermining the artistic authorship of the creator.
5. The notion of practitioner invisibility, drawn from translation studies, describes how the epistemic and interpretive aspects of conservation are strategically obscured. While there are various reasons for conservators to assume a position of invisibility, there should be greater transparency of the role conservation plays in relation to contemporary artworks.
6. Greater visibility of conservation practice could facilitate deeper understanding of the conservator's knowledge, labour, and expertise, and enable different understandings and appreciation of contemporary artworks.
7. Conservators benefit from understanding how copyright law applies to their practice, not only in order to comply with the law, but because copyright's concepts and theories can inform new understandings of the work.
8. As more contemporary artworks challenge our understandings and expectations of authorship and ownership, more meaningful dialogue will be needed between the fields of contemporary art conservation and copyright law.
9. Recognising the subjectivity and situatedness of museum practitioners can contribute to greater institutional transparency.
10. Interdisciplinary research relies on curiosity and generosity.
11. The most difficult part of writing a thesis is the letting go.