

From Research to Restoration

The 'research to restoration' process for contemporary art conservation

The 'research to restoration' process, although in detail may vary depending on the artwork or material in question, can be described in general terms. The R2R process is a combination of scientific and historical research.

www.incca.org/r2r

Step 1: Explain the motivation behind the case research.	Write a document explaining why the research is necessary. In this initial phase, your research question may still be quite broad. Later in the process you will be able to define your research question more exactly.
Step 2: Put a research team together.	If possible, include individuals from diverse backgrounds who can compliment each other and carry out the diversity of tasks; conservator, art historian, conservation scientist. If the artist is still living it is important to involve them as much as possible.
Step 3: Create a project plan	Together with the research team write a plan including the goals of the project and a description of the tasks needed to achieve these goals. Delegate the tasks amongst members of the research team so it is clear everyone knows what they need to do. The plan will also include a budget and a time schedule. Tasks would include:
Artist research	Find out as much as you can about the artist by searching literature and conducting interviews. If possible conduct an interview with the artist. You could also talk to (previous) owners of works by the artist or artist assistants. Search the INCCA Database to see if research on the artist has already been done.
Artwork research	Write up a condition report. Find out as much as you can about the history of the artwork. Where was it exhibited? For how long, and under what kind of conditions? Research the technique used by the artist to make the artwork and make dummies to use for testing.
Material research	Find out as much as you can about the material(s) used. Use literature and the internet. Use scientific testing techniques to analyse samples if necessary. Carry out tests using a variety of techniques.
Project management	One or two people need to be delegated the task of project manager. Organizing a research project takes time; someone needs to monitor the process and the budget.
Step 4: Carry out the research	
(Re-) define your research question / add more tasks	As you have learned more about the artist and the material, there may come a point in the project that you need to re-define your research question and/or add extra tasks to the project that may be necessary to achieve your project goal.
Step 5: Choose the treatment	At this point you should have done enough research and testing to be able to choose which treatment would be most suitable for the restoration. Use the SBMK Decision-making Model to help with your decision. http://www.sbmknl/uploads/decision-making-model.pdf
Step 6: Carry out the restoration	
Step 7: Evaluate the project	It is always a good idea to evaluate the results of a project together with the research team. Mistakes made can be avoided in the future, but also things that worked well can be built into new projects.
Disseminate what you have learnt	Don't forget to disseminate your results. Your research could be very useful to others in the field. Present a paper at a conference, upload interviews or other documents to the INCCA Database or post a question at the INCCA Linked In group.
Document the process	It is important that you document each step as you go so that it is clear why you made certain decisions. Try to organise photos and documents in clearly labelled files and folders from the start.