Contemporary Sculpture Conservation: Materials and Issues

Deadline: Apr 30, 2025

Rachel Cunningham (on behalf of the Gabo Trust)

Call for papers regarding the topic "Contemporary Sculpture Conservation: Materials and Issues" for a new publication supported by the Gabo Trust.

The Gabo Trust supports research in the conservation of modern and contemporary sculpture. Based in Britain, it supports specialists internationally, helping them disseminate their research findings and share their expertise with the visual art community at large. To this end, the Gabo Trust is planning the publication of an ambitious new collection of essays dedicated to the materials and issues of contemporary sculpture conservation.

The first priority of this collection will be to present new approaches to the conservation of more traditional materials such as bronze, stone, wood, plaster and ceramic, as well as other new synthetic and bio materials. It will also focus on the conservation of time-based media and materials used by sculptors in works that incorporate film, photography and performance elements – as well as all those other ephemeral, organic and less stable materials that artists have been increasingly using for their sculptures over recent years, during which we have become more accustomed to contemporary sculptural practices that use material impermanence and disintegration as meaningful parts of the works themselves.

Conservation today has a changing and dynamic relationship with contemporary sculpture, which is itself informed by developments in conservation, influencing the choices artists make. Contemporary sculpture and contemporary conservation share the same present and many of the same challenges – materially, technically and intellectually. Our new book would pay attention to this and the material diversity of much contemporary sculpture - and, in turn, the issues and new conservation considerations that follow.

The second major concern of the book is to ask ‘why conserve’ sculpture today, looking closely at the issues that follow from this. In this way, this second part will include considerations on many issues, including but not limited to:
- The ethics of sculpture conservation
- Conservation through reproduction and facsimile – and the issues concerning of renewal of sculpture through its re-making
- The relationship of sculpture conservation to the art market and to institutions, including art gallery and museum collections
- The outdoor lives of contemporary sculpture and the challenges of conservation in sculpture located the public domain

The book will also be interdisciplinary in outlook and, as well as conservation specialists, it will draw upon a range of contributors and a variety of approaches and perspectives, including those of curators, artists and art historians. We would also be interested to hear about artist/conservator collaborations and other kinds of art/art history/conservation conversations.

Submission:
We would like to hear from those who have been recipients of Gabo Trust funding in the past, as well as those who are making contact for the first time. Please send an email (titled 'CSC BOOK') with your CV and a 250-word abstract outlining the proposed subject of your 4,000-5,000 word essay to: gabotrust@btinternet.com

The deadline for proposals is Wednesday, April 30, 2025, 6 pm (GMT).

Reference:

CFP: Contemporary Sculpture Conservation: Materials and Issues. In: ArtHist.net, Mar 3, 2025 (accessed Nov 6, 2026), <https://arthist.net/archive/44091>.