

Conservation of contemporary art

The case of the stained glass windows of Mathias Goeritz in the Metropolitan Cathedral of Mexico City

Conservación del arte contemporáneo: el caso de Mathias Goeritz en la Catedral Metropolitana de México.

Conservação da arte contemporânea: o caso de Mathias Goeritz na Catedral Metropolitana do México.

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Abstract

The work of Polish-German artist Mathias Goeritz—more specifically, his stained-glass windows in the Metropolitan Cathedral of Mexico City that, currently, are at risk of being removed—has been questioned since its creation in 1960, given that its modern language is in contrast with the architectural style of the religious building. This situation opens the discussion of a problem that arises when modern art works carried out by foreign artists are placed in religious buildings of patrimonial character. It is difficult to understand whether this discussion is, in effect, a rejection of the artistic language used by modern artists, since it does not correspond to the architectural language of historical buildings, despite the fact that this practice is common in some European countries, or whether this rejection is rather a consequence of the values inculcated by the Mexican State after the Mexican Revolution, which promote the National Spirit and reject everything foreign. This paper aims to determine which of these arguments is relevant in the case of Goeritz's work. Through the conceptual definition of work of art, it seeks to identify the real value of these stained glass windows, and which are the most effective legal forms to protect them.

Keywords: Mexican architecture; religious architecture; Mexican art; monuments; material heritage; stained glass windows.

Resumen

La obra del artista polaco alemán Mathias Goeritz —y los vitrales insertos en la Catedral Metropolitana de la Ciudad de México, que a la fecha están en riesgo de ser retirados— es cuestionada desde su creación por el lenguaje moderno que contrasta con el estilo arquitectónico del edificio religioso. Esto pone en discusión el conflicto que se origina entre obras modernas, artistas extranjeros y edificaciones de carácter patrimonial. El estudio se realizó a partir de una revisión documental que recurrió principalmente a literatura italiana y mexicana para, por medio de la definición conceptual de obra de arte, reconocer el valor de estos vitrales. El desarrollo plantea dos argumentos, el primero reconoce un rechazo debido a que el lenguaje utilizado por estos artistas no corresponde al lenguaje de la arquitectura de los inmuebles patrimoniales, a pesar de que esta práctica es habitual en algunos países europeos; y, el segundo, asume un rechazo como consecuencia de los valores inculcados por el Estado después de la Revolución mexicana, que fomentan lo nacional y rechazan lo extranjero. Esto sirvió para evaluar los posibles argumentos y las formas legales para la protección de los vitrales contemporáneos.

Palabras clave: arquitectura mexicana; arquitectura religiosa; arte mexicano; monumentos; patrimonio material; vitrales.

Resumo

A obra do artista polaco-alemão Mathias Goeritz — e os vitrais da Catedral Metropolitana da Cidade do México, que, neste momento, estão em risco de serem retirados — é questionada por causa da linguagem moderna que contrasta com o estilo arquitetônico do edifício religioso. Isso coloca em debate o conflito que é originado entre obras modernas, artistas estrangeiros e edificações de caráter patrimonial. Este estudo foi realizado com base numa revisão documental que recorreu principalmente à literatura italiana e mexicana para, por meio da definição conceitual de obra de arte, reconhecer o valor desses vitrais. O desenvolvimento propõe dois argumentos: o primeiro reconhece uma rejeição devido à linguagem utilizada por esses artistas não corresponder à linguagem da arquitetura dos imóveis patrimoniais, embora essa prática seja habitual em alguns países europeus; o segundo assume uma rejeição como consequência dos valores estabelecidos pelo Estado depois da Revolução mexicana, que fomentam o nacional e rejeitam o estrangeiro. Isso serviu para avaliar os possíveis argumentos e as formas legais para proteger os vitrais contemporâneos.

Palavras-chave: arquitetura mexicana; arquitetura religiosa; arte mexicana; monumentos; patrimônio material; vitrais.

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Introduction

The present study, financed by the Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana in Xochimilco, is part of a doctoral thesis developed in the Division of Sciences and Arts for Design, and is a continuation of the article “The gothic and the stained glass windows” (2014) by Alberto Cedeño-Valdiviezo and Claudia Huidobro-Olvera, which studies stained glass windows in human history.

The principal objective of this article is to analyze the reasons for rejecting contemporary art by foreign artists in Mexican colonial churches, as well as possible mechanisms for the conservation of stained glass windows made by contemporary foreign artists in churches with high heritage value, considering the lack of legal framework for protecting such artwork.

The reason for addressing this issue is that some prestigious Mexican restoration architects wish to destroy such stained glass windows under the argument that their contemporary artistic language inappropriately contrasts with the architectural style of colonial churches. Specifically, they propose that the stained glass windows made by contemporary Polish-German artist Mathias Goeritz in Mexico City's Metropolitan Cathedral (Figure 1) should be replaced.

According to some authors, in Mexico there is a very particular hierarchy for the recognition of heritage. Prehistoric heritage appears to have a greater value than colonial heritage, which in turn is recognized as superior to contemporary art (Escalante, 2011). In particular, Mexicans associate churches with intense, often contradictory emotions; on the one hand, these buildings generate joy and pride in a rich majestic past, but, on the other, they are associated with resentment and hate for the Spanish who ordered their construction, and whom many Mexicans continue to see as enemies and oppressors. For this reason, 19th-century anti-clerical liberalism and 20th-century revolutionary nationalism favored archeological heritage over colonial heritage (Roselló, 2011).

Churches are places of encounter and dialogue, essential to daily community and individual life, and they nourish Mexico's collective memory. The great baroque cathedrals and churches bring Mexicans close to a rich, majestic, and monumental past, and provide many with a sense of

grandeur. Furthermore, religious beliefs aside, in the 21st century, colonial churches, chapels, and cathedrals are important centers of socialization, and link that which is earthly with the celestial, history with everyday life, and architectural and artistic heritage with customs, habits, and forms of living that contribute to Mexican identity (Roselló, 2011).

Nevertheless, since the early 20th century, post-revolutionary nationalism, seeking to create “cultural identities,” ended up manipulating and denying the plurality and versatility of local or other cultures, which were considered to be false identities (Pérez, 2011). Given Mexico's nationalist culture, which currently influences the comprehension and valorization of Mexican architectural heritage, an important question arises: how to evaluate the work of foreign artists in Mexico, especially that of an artist who dared to display his work in Mexico's most significant colonial churches. Thus, the present article aims to understand how Mexicans evaluate this heritage, as well as to contribute to protecting such works of art.

As occurs in other nations, the Catholic Church in Mexico has always required the work of visionary creative artists to communicate to believers, through contemporary art, that there is a continuity between the historic Church and that of today. Through contemporary art, believers may experience what it means to believe and relate to the divine, and to construct thus their religious experience. This is not only true for Mexican believers; travelers may also enjoy space inside churches and the aesthetic experience of religious art (Huidobro, 2014).



Figure 1. Mexico City's Metropolitan Cathedral
Source: Cedeño, 2015.



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Figure 2. Parish of San Lorenzo Mártir, where Mathias Goeritz contributed his artwork before taking charge of the stained glass windows of Mexico City's Metropolitan Cathedral

Source: Cedeño, 2018.

Methodology

This study reviewed different theoretical perspectives regarding what is a work of art, including those of renowned Italian restoration architects Carlo Ceschi, in *Teoria e restauro dei monumenti* (1970), and Césaire Brandi, in *Teoria del restauro* (1977), in order to understand why an object may be recognized as a work of art and how those objects recognized as art could be protected. For this purpose, an explanatory model was constructed regarding the characteristics and historicity of the stained glass windows of the Metropolitan Cathedral, as well as motives for replacing them. Following this, the existing Mexican legislation regarding artistic heritage was reviewed in order to identify legal mechanisms that could be used to protect these stained glass windows.

After defining the research topic as the case of the stained glass windows of Mathias Goeritz, the research was centered on the historic relationship between Mexicans and their heritage, including how Mexicans perceive the work of foreign artists in Mexico, in order to understand reasons for rejecting the work of such artists, and of Goeritz, in particular.

Results

Historical context of the work of Mathias Goeritz in Mexico

The crisis of the Catholic Church following the Second World War led to a search for renewal, while also seeking to maintain tradition. The war, involving substantial loss of lives, was devastating for many nations, and led to a societal process of reflection on the human being, its existence and faith, as well as a general reformulation of values, rules, traditions, society, politics, and art. In Mexico, the Catholic Church was not foreign to this process, and, for this reason, it sought artists capable of creating contemporary works of art that would not break with the past, but rather would link the past with the present, revitalizing churches and, in turn, heritage sites (Huidobro, 2014). Therefore, the recovery of churches involved intervention by famous innovative artists with radical ideas, capable of generating new meanings.

In the mid-20th century, a time when many considered the world to be on the verge of modernity, cultural expressions of modernization in Mexico included the adaptation of some colonial religious buildings through a new artistic language to reinforce the ongoing liturgical renovation in Mexico's Catholic Church. One of the most significant figures involved in this transformation was theologian and priest Sergio Méndez Arceo, a sympathizer with Liberation Theology, who sought a new discourse for the Church in 1959 by introducing modern artistic features first in the Cathedral of Cuernavaca and La Purísima Church in Monterrey, and later in the parish of San Lorenzo Mártir in Mexico City (Figure 2), which served as precedents for modifications in the Metropolitan Cathedral, the Church of Santiago Tlatelolco, and the Church of Azcapotzalco in Mexico City. Some people considered that these modifications enriched and renovated these historic churches, while others—including some artists and architects—had more conservative ideas regarding the correct manner of renovating a historic monument (Huidobro, 2014).

Mathias Goeritz was a Polish-German sculptor, who moved to Mexico in 1949, after having fled German nationalism in 1941 to work with other artists in Morocco and Granada and later founding an art school in Spain. According to his wife, Ida Rodríguez Prampolini, he was very poorly received: "Mexico is a nation that discriminates foreigners. If they are extremely famous, they are well-received, but if not, they are always attacked" (interview with Ida Rodríguez Prampo-

lini, in Méndez-Gallardo, 2014, p. 19). The most famous Mexican muralists at the time—Diego Rivera and David Siqueiros—greatly criticized Goeritz. Rivera, the patriarch of early 20th-century Mexican nationalism, accused him of being a Nazi homosexual, corruptor of Mexican youth. This rejection of Goeritz by such important figures was also due to the fact that they considered his work to be poorly executed abstract art. Meanwhile, Goeritz believed in the freedom of expression for each individual. One of his most significant artistic contributions was his design of the Satellite City Towers in 1957 with Mexican architect Luis Barragán, who failed to give him credit for his work, due to which they ended their very close friendship. Even his students did not give him much recognition because he was a foreigner (Méndez-Gallardo, 2014). Nonetheless, Goeritz said that Mexico was not a nation but rather a vice, and that he could not leave, despite having many friends in the United States.

Born to a Protestant family, Mathias Goeritz was the author of a large number of religious artworks representing different denominations. His great spiritual longing led him to create settings for retreat and introspection that encouraged a search for the transcendental in those who perceived his art (Torres & Méndez-Gallardo, 2014). In addition to being a painter and sculptor, he was also a designer, architect, and teacher of architects with a strong conviction that art modifies and reclaims humanity. Rather than trying to classify his work within a specific artistic genre, Goeritz should be recognized for his vision and his need to continually produce art according to his strong sense of ethics (Torres & Méndez-Gallardo, 2014).

Along with other European artists of his era, he witnessed the crisis of utopias and faith itself, as well as the disintegration of the world's principal economic systems, and experienced disenchantment. He began to study art history, which led him to become familiar with the aesthetics of different regions of the world over time, as well as being influenced by vanguard movements, such as expressionism and the Dada and Bauhaus movements (Torres & Méndez-Gallardo, 2014). In a similar manner, German architect Hannes Meyer—director of the Bauhaus movement, who in 1939 brought his revolutionary architectural and urbanistic ideas to Mexico—never managed to carry out any transcendental work despite receiving government support, as he was strongly criticized by Mexican architects.

The stained glass windows of Mathias Goeritz

After finishing a three-year contract teaching art at the School of Architecture of the University of Guadalajara, Goeritz moved to Mexico City, where he had the opportunity to participate in the construction and renovation of several churches as a consequence of urban demographic growth. This allowed Goeritz, a deep believer, to fulfill his desire for placing art at the service of religiosity. In 1954, architect Ricardo de Robina and Father Ertze Garamendi invited him to participate in the restoration of the 16th-century San Lorenzo parish church in the center of Mexico City, where he designed a cement relief in the wall behind the altar (Figure 3), a stained glass window above the area of the choir, and seven Moorish style stained glass windows in the dome (Figures 4 and 5). The design of his stained glass windows was oriented toward satisfying visitors'



Figure 3. Cement relief in the wall behind the altar in Mexico City's San Lorenzo Church

Source: Cedeño, 2018.



Figure 4. View of the dome in the San Lorenzo Church in Mexico City, containing what many consider to be the most interesting stained glass windows of Moorish influence in Mexico
Source: Cedeño, 2018.



Figure 5. Two stained glass windows of Moorish influence in the dome of the San Lorenzo Church in Mexico City
Source: Cedeño, 2018.

spiritual needs, and his works discretely expressed religious longing with great humbleness, as if through prayer (Ibarra, 2009).

Beginning in 1960, by invitation from architect Ricardo de Robina and commissioned by the Commission of Order and Decorum of the Catholic Church, over the course of six years, Goeritz constructed stained glass windows in the Metropolitan Cathedral of Mexico City (Rodríguez & Torres, 2011). This work included six amber colored stained glass windows of abstract forms (Figure 6), for a total of 134 amber colored glass pieces in the principal hall, four purple pieces in the dome, and four red pieces in the entrance. “The result was illumination in the interior space that highlighted the gold of the

altars, and an atmosphere, which favored the retreat of believers and their encounter with divinity” (Ibarra, 2009, p. 71). However, not all were happy with his work.

Two years later, a strong campaign was unleashed against the novel windows, such that in 1966 the National Heritage Secretariat gave a time limit of one year for the complete removal of the stained glass windows and their replacement with [colorless] glass windows [...] with a design approved by the directors [of Mexico’s National Institute of Fine Arts] (Rodríguez & Torres, 2011).

From 1961 to 1966, arguments were presented by specialists regarding the inappropriateness of Goeritz’s stained glass windows, as well as possible substitutes (Rodríguez & Torres, 2011), and in 1966, newspapers published the announcement that the “horrible eyesores” or “go-go dance” windows (as architect Agustín Piña referred to them) would be removed from the Metropolitan Cathedral, and that it would be a very serious mistake to continue allowing such windows to be exhibited in such a respectable monument (Ibarra, 2009), as their ultra-modern style distorted the aesthetic and functional sense of Mexico’s largest Catholic Church. The National Heritage Secretariat, in support of this idea, argued that the irregular shapes of the stained glass windows distorted the neoclassical lines of Manuel Tolsá, the architect who designed the interior of the Cathedral.

Despite these criticisms, Goeritz received several invitations to collaborate in the renovation of colonial churches, including an invitation from Bishop Sergio Méndez Arceo—controversial for promoting liberation theology—to renovate the Cathedral of Cuernavaca, for which he designed stained glass windows that harmonized with the church’s large paintings depicting the martyrdom of Mexican missionaries in Japan. He also collaborated in renovating the Dominican Church of Azcapotzalco and the Franciscan Church of Santiago Tlatelolco in the Plaza of the Three Cultures (Ibarra, 2009), and in 1963, along with architect Luis Barragán, he created a sculpture in the Chapel of the Capuchin Sacramentarian nuns in Tlalpan (Rodríguez & Torres, 2011).

Meanwhile, in order to counteract the arguments of Goeritz’s critics, Ida Rodríguez Prampolini, his wife, sent a letter to the newspaper *Excelsior*:

... [Goeritz] pointed out to his friend and teacher, doctor [in history] De la Maza, that if it is more appropriate to make replicas of the past, then modern art is incapable of contributing religious artistic values to the Cathedral, as did artists in other eras. He reproached architect



Figure 6. Detail of one of the stained glass windows of the Metropolitan Cathedral of Mexico City

Source: Cedeño, 2015.

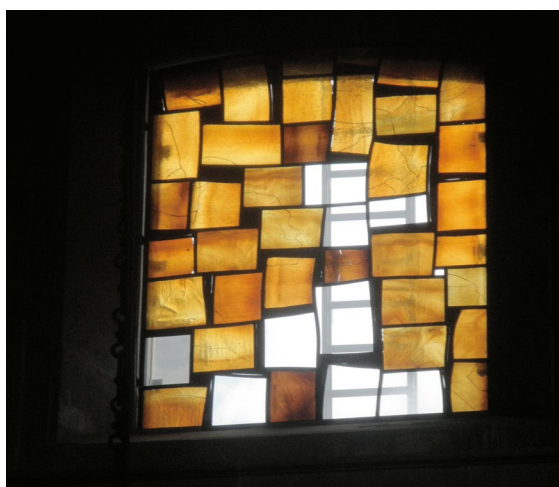


Figure 7. Detail of some of the stained glass windows of the Metropolitan Cathedral of Mexico City, which were saved from the 1967 fire

Source: Cedeño, 2015.

González Galván for having referred to the red stained glass as “filth,” arguing that this statement showed “a lamentable form of anti-aesthetic expression for a member of the Institute of Aesthetic Research of the UNAM [National Autonomous University of Mexico].” To [...] Antonio Bodet, he simply clarified that the windows that were being replaced had modern frames, and therefore they were not destroying valuable objects (Rodríguez & Torres, 2011).

September 1967 was set as the deadline for the complete removal of the stained glass windows. Nevertheless, in January 1967, a disastrous fire destroyed part of Goeritz’s work, along with important older works, such as the choir benches, that would take years to be restored (Figure 7). In light of this disaster, specialists discussed the future of the Cathedral, and two positions were suggested: that of “neobarroque restorers” against the stained glass windows, and that of “modernists and renovators” in favor of preserving the windows.



Figure 8. Interior of the Metropolitan Cathedral of Mexico City, showing the current view of the stained glass windows designed by Mathias Goeritz

Source: Cedeño, 2015.

The neobarroque faction consisted of art critics such as Jorge Alberto Manrique; historians of the likes of Edmundo O’Gorman and Francisco de la Maza; Antonio Castro Leal, ex-president of the Commission of Historical, Artistic and Archeological Monuments of the UNESCO in Paris; and, as was to be expected, the group of architects headed by Agustín Piña Dreinhofer, among others. The modernist or renovator [faction] included figures such as the priest Ramón de Ertze, bishop of Cuernavaca Sergio Méndez Arceo, and archbishop of Mexico Miguel Darío Miranda; [...] art history critic Ida Rodríguez Prampolini and art critic Antonio Rodríguez; as well as architects Mario Pani, Ricardo de Robina, and Enrique del Moral, among the most controversial (Rodríguez & Torres, 2011)

While the 1967 fire interrupted the removal of Goeritz’s work (aside from what was destroyed by the fire itself), in 1990, months before Goeritz’s death, the Metropolitan Cathedral Friends Association announced that they had assigned 690 million pesos to remove his remaining works.

This provoked strong protests against dismantling the stained glass windows by researchers and art historians, such as Graciela Schmilchuk, Francisco Reyes Palma, Ida Rodríguez Prampolini, Jorge Alberto Manrique, and Lily Kassner, as well as artists, such as sculptor Helen Escobedo and architect Ricardo de Robina (Rodríguez & Torres, 2011)

Due to this opposition, the windows were not removed, and in 2004, the General Directorate of Cultural Heritage Sites and Monuments of the National Council for Culture and the Arts carried out the “Project for the windows of the Metropolitan Cathedral of Mexico,” which concluded that, as a result of the fire, earthquakes, the continual sinking of the land, lack of maintenance, and the geometric correction and structural rehabilitation of the cathedral from 1989 to 2000, 98 stained glass windows were either intact or salvageable, while 36 had been destroyed. However, the head of the General Directorate of Cultural Heritage Sites and Monuments, Xavier Cortés Rocha, visited Goeritz’s son Daniel and Ida Rodríguez to inform them that the 98 remaining stained glass windows would be demolished. As a result, Ida Rodríguez wrote:

The Metropolitan Cathedral has styles from several eras [...] Why can’t our time leave its mark also? Why do they always insist on destroying what is proven worldwide to be very beautiful and that produces a setting of mystical retreat? It has been said that the amber light does not have a good effect on the Altar of the Kings. In my opinion, and in that of many art historians, the opposite appears to be true. The luminosity highlights the beauty of the beautiful altar. I ask for more care and respect for a work considered worldwide to be a good choice. Mexico is indebted to Goeritz; it’s enough to recall that his Satellite City Towers are now presented as if they were designed by architect Luis Barragán. Many works of [Goeritz] the creator of emotional architecture, such as *The Echo*, and of minimalist art have been destroyed.

Ida Rodríguez was joined by [...] those of the press, who allowed their energetic protest to be felt, and by that time the artist had died and therefore his work in the Cathedral had been historically revalued as an artistic contribution of the 20th century, and therefore, national heritage in the 21st century (Rodríguez & Torres, 2011).

The stained glass windows of the Cathedral persisted, and everything seemed to indicate that with the 100th anniversary of Goeritz’s birth in 2015, and with the publication of a book on the stained glass windows, the idea of preserving them was supported.

These difficulties to conserve the stained glass windows of Goeritz demonstrate that there does not exist legal protection for such artworks in Mexico. In order to work toward the protection of these and other contemporary stained glass

windows as heritage, there is a need for critics to comprehend what qualifies an object as a work of art; in this sense, it is necessary to understand the importance of protecting such artwork through existing national laws and international agreements on the protection of monuments and cultural heritage in general. It is also important for Mexico to develop laws regarding the conservation of national heritage.

The human being and the work of art

The rejection of an artwork, made by a national or a foreign artist, leads to ask how the relationship between human beings and their works of art has been. Ceschi (1970), one of the brilliant students of renowned 20th-century Italian restorer Gustavo Giovannoni, refers to the fact that a work of art exists if those who inherit it—whether an individual, a group of people, or a nation—make it exist for themselves and for others. This provides the work of art with recognition. A work of art may have great influence on human beings in any determined period of history, and this influence has continually molded the sensibility of humanity and, consequently, humanity’s relationship with past works of art, and with the past itself. Ceschi affirms that, effectively, society in each era has a particular way of perceiving the past and proceeding according to social consensus, which can be reaffirmed or countered later by the same society, accepting or rejecting impositions or suggestions (Ceschi, 1970).

Due to a lack of historic vision of the past, the man-work of art relationship is imprecise, mutable, and arbitrary, and when architects relate to a building in order to readapt it to new demands, or to substitute one of its parts, or to complete it, it is always the monument that should enter the vision of the architect, and never the opposite (Ceschi, 1970, p. 13).

It is important for a society to determine whether a given work is or is not art. One should question the role of an architect who feels more authorized than other members of society—for example, Mexican society—to evaluate “that which is worthy” and determine those parts of a historic building that “are not worthwhile.” But what makes a work of art worthless? According to Brandi (1977), a renowned restoration theorist, a work of art is considered art due to the fact that it is recognized by collective consciousness, whether because it was created by a single individual, or because that individual is generally recognized for his or her art. The work of art that we observe could be generally classified as a product of human activity. Thus, its recognition in the individual consciousness as a work of art does not exclude such work from

coinciding with other products of human activity. This is a peculiar characteristic of the work of art inasmuch as neither its essence nor the creative process which has produced it may be questioned, given that it forms part of the particular world of each individual (Brandi, 1977; see also Ceschi, 1970).

Brandi (1977) states that it is not important how ancient or classic a work of art is; instead, a work of art exists currently—and not only potentially—inasmuch as it lives in someone's personal experience, and inasmuch as the physical matter that makes it up remains identical through time. However, as a work of art, it is recreated each time it is aesthetically experienced. This means that until a work of art is recreated or recognized, it is only potentially a work of art; that is, it does not exist, but rather subsists; it is only a slab of marble or a piece of cloth (Dewey, 1939, in Brandi, 1977, pp. 4-5). According to Giovanni Carbonara, Brandi over-exaggerates the significance of the aesthetic aspect of a work as that which converts it into art (1976, pp. 74-75). According to these opinions, it is up to Mexicans to decide whether or not a work is recognized as art.

According to Fernández Arenas (1972), a work of art is an intellectual and creative product elaborated by human beings with the aim of transmitting sensations, knowledge, and values. The characteristics of a work of art include originality, authenticity, uniqueness-singularity, communicability, and artificiality (Fernández, 1972). We feel that the work of Goeritz perfectly fulfills these requirements.

Colombian cultural manager Manuel Drezner (2015), in his text *Exploring art: How to look at and understand a painting*, points out basic elements of a work of art: the inspiration of the artist, techniques used, perspective, the combination of colors, and composition. Also important is the historical context (El Universal, June 11, 2015).

According to modern criteria on how to judge a work of art, we find the work of Goeritz unquestionable. Nevertheless, in order for his work to be legally protected from destruction, it would have to be recognized as an artistic monument. Below we explore the possibilities of such protection.

Legal protection of stained glass windows

Conservation of artistic heritage in Mexican legislation falls under the topic of *intellectual property*, defined by cultural heritage lawyer Ernesto Becerril (2003) as:

... the set of currently existing objects and manifestations, product of the creation of one or several

individuals, through their action alone or together with nature, which, as they contain a set of intellectual, scientific, technical, aesthetic, and/or social values, are object of special protection and recognition by the State in favor of the creators with the aim of avoiding their illegal use or reproduction (p.18).

In Mexico, the 1972 Federal Law on Archeological, Artistic, and Historic Monuments and Zones classifies monuments into three categories:

Archeological monuments are those objects and buildings, product of cultures prior to the establishment of the Hispanic [culture] in national territory, as well as human remains and [remains] of flora and of fauna related to these cultures [...]. Artistic monuments are works that have significant aesthetic value. Except for Mexican muralism, the works of living artists may not be declared monuments [...]. Historic monuments are objects related to the history of the nation, from the establishment of the Hispanic culture in the nation, through the terms of the corresponding declaration or by determination of the Law (Federal Law of 1972, articles 28, 33, and 35).

According to the Federal Law of 1972, stained glass, and particularly the work of Mathias Goeritz (Figure 9), perfectly fits the definition of artistic heritage. Becerril (2003) mentions that the protection of a determined set of objects that has a recognized cultural value requires the establishment of special legislation. In order to establish such legislation, the government agency responsible for historical-artistic heritage carries out a study to determine whether the object, building, or geographic area where a monument is located is worthy of protection. To the effect, the corresponding government agency must establish a "scale of historic-artistic values," which allows the given object to be covered by legislation. The object in question should be significant to the social group or have meaning for society; on the contrary, it will not fulfill the requirements for protection, given that its protection will not be socially accepted. As Becerril notes, determination by government agencies of whether an object be socially significant may be questionable, potentially resulting in the lack of protection of a large part of our cultural legacy (p. 72). Enrique Florescano (1993) emphasizes "that selection of cultural objects [...] is carried out by dominant social groups, according to criteria and values that are not general, but rather restrictive or exclusive" (cited by Becerril, 2003, p. 72). For example, a Nationalist state may determine the value of cultural heritage according to the "national interests" of the hegemonic group, which does not always coincide with the interests of all sectors of the nation.



Figure 9. Detail of one of Goeritz's stained glass windows in Mexico City's San Lorenzo Church

Source: Cedeño, 2018.



Figure 10. One of Goeritz's stained glass windows in the dome of Mexico City's San Lorenzo Church

Source: Cedeño, 2018.

In conclusion, the historic-artistic value of an object, building, or geographical area where a monument is located should be based on a set of objective criteria that should be determined by specialists, with the aim of developing adequate regulations to protect those objects that are significant to society (Becerril, 2003, p. 73). According to Becerril, the difference between historic objects and artistic monuments lies in the fact that artistic heritage has an aesthetic value, which is important for the historic development of the nation in question. The evaluation of a historic monument should take into account the following characteristics: representativeness, belonging to a determined style, level of innovation, materials and techniques used, and other characteristics. According to Mexican law, works

by foreign artists may only be declared monuments if they were produced in national territory, and the declaration of a work as monument may incorporate all or part of the work of an artist. Becerril (2003) points out that a frequent error in Mexico is to consider historic monuments to be those produced prior to 1900, and artistic monuments to be produced after this date.

Finally, Mexican law defines two mechanisms by which an object may be protected as an artistic historical heritage: one is by meeting the criteria established by pre-existing laws, while the other consists of the government agency charged with historical and artistic heritage declaring monuments and zones as heritage. In the first case, which is applicable to the stained glass windows of Mathias Goeritz (Figure 10), a building or object may be a monument if it fulfills the criteria established by existing laws, without the need for a declaration by a government agency; in this case, legal dispositions instantly take effect. This is the case for archeological and artistic historical monuments, addressed in sections I, II, and III of Article 36 of the 1972 Federal Law on Monuments and Archeological, Artistic, and Historic Zones, which refers to, for example, "significance" and "rarity" when determining certain objects as historic monuments. This legal framework has been criticized for being ambiguous and for restricting the property of private individuals who own the land on which the monument is found (Becerril, 2003). For this reason, the stained glass windows of Mathias Goeritz in the Metropolitan Cathedral of Mexico City remain unprotected.

Final Considerations

The Mexican State undeniably played a strong role in instilling a sense of nationalism after 1917 as a consequence of the Mexican Revolution, and along with this, rejection toward that which is foreign. This partially explains why the work of Mathias Goeritz, despite being considered by many to be aesthetically very valuable and fulfilling the legal requirements to be declared heritage, has not been valued and granted status as artistic heritage, which would protect it against attempts at its destruction. Ceschi (1970) and Brandi (1977) point out the need for the people to develop a sense of ownership of this work, so that there is no doubt about it being considered a work of art, which would support its cataloguing and protection.

From a legal perspective, the difference between historic objects and artistic monuments lies in the

fact that artistic heritage involves a significant aesthetic value. Given the criteria for declaring monuments as heritage, the aesthetic value of the work of Mathias Goeritz justifies its recognition in Mexico, despite resistance by Mexican artists and architects to recognize the work of foreign artists.

Finally, Díaz-Berrío (1986) criticizes the inclusion of contemporary art in heritage buildings, favoring rather the *reintegration* of dismantled parts of a work in its original site as a form of restitution in order to assure the work's conservation, like the archeological technique of *anastylosis*. This author also generally opposes to the restoration technique of *integration* of new, visible parts in an object or building, rather favoring the technique of *consolidation*, which involves the renovation of structural elements of said object that are ideally hidden from sight. Thus, despite accepting new visible elements to a work of art by *integrating* them, Díaz-Berrío (1986) criticizes any creative act in restoration. In contradiction, Carbonara (1976) states that neutral restoration is not possible, as every modification of a work of art always creates new relationships between the monument and its environment.

We conclude that there is no reason for not recognizing stained glass windows, such as those created by Mathias Goeritz, as works of art, and thereby protected and conserved as artistic heritage. The principle problem lies in the fact that the National Institute of Fine Arts of Mexico (INBA for its initials in Spanish) has not carried out the task that the law bestows upon it to catalogue artistic heritage and therefore to officially recognize this art as national heritage. In the face of new challenges posed by globalization and the marketing of heritage through media, it appears to be superficial to continue to question the validity of a work of art and to reject artistic works such as the contemporary stained glass windows of the Metropolitan Cathedral of Mexico City, while in European nations the practice of including contemporary art as part of historic heritage is widely accepted.

The debate about the conservation of the stained glass windows of Mathias Goeritz continues. This paper argues for the need to emphasize legal and cultural positions that promote the recognition of distinct moments in the history of Mexico's material heritage. Nationalistic intentions aside, works of art and monuments represent what was valued in a given moment, and therefore their maintenance and conservation form part of the legacy of the nation and its peoples.

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