Contemporary artist Dario Robleto (b. 1972) challenges conservation ethics and practice because he often uses transformed historic and culturally sensitive material as his source materials, a fact which he represents through a written description, called liner notes, that are an integral component to the work. The conservation issues posed by Robleto's materials and the exchange between text and image were examined during a series of interviews conducted between the author and artist that began in 2013. Topics covered include technique, materials, and practice, with special focus given to A Defeated Soldier Wishes to Walk His Daughter Down the Wedding Aisle, 2004.

**Artistic Method**

- **Writing**
  - occurs before any material manipulation and/or material collection; the first step
  - helps to decide what materials to use, what story to tell, and how to tell it
  - culminates in the final artwork as written material lists, referred as “liner notes”
- **Research**
  - does the material exist?
  - where and how can it be obtained?
- **Collaboration**
  - With the public, historic figures, scientists, and/or engineers
  - receives representation in the final work
  - provides a source for materials and for inspiration

**Technique:** Transformation of found materials into new forms
- grinding up record albums into dust that can be mixed with a binder and cast anew
- macerating letters into pulp that can be reconstituted as new paper
- melting and stretching audio tape into hair-like fibers

**Found Materials**
- war time letters, pulverized and made into new paper
- melted bullet lead from various battlefields

**Culturally Sensitive**
- human hair
- human wedding ring finger bones

**Rare**
- a million year old blossom (preserved in amber)
- a wand made by a practicing witch

**Language**
- Three Types:
  - as text embedded in the work
  - as verbal communication
  - as Liner Notes

**Liner Notes**
- lyricized, edited material lists of an object’s components that identify the original context of some materials included in the object; often a sole witness to:
  - integral to the artwork
  - a verbal representation of the artist’s intent

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**A Defeated Soldier Wishes to Walk His Daughter Down the Wedding Aisle**

Dario Robleto, 2004, 21” x 80” x 20”, mixed media, Los Angeles County Museum of Art

The work is one of a series of sculptures born from a direct response by Robleto to the events of September 11, 2001 and the ensuing wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. It is inspired by a Civil War era letter in Dario’s collection in which a veteran amputee expresses his desire to walk his daughter down the wedding aisle.

**Liner Notes:**
- Cast of a hand-carved wooden and iron leg that a wounded Civil War soldier constructed for himself, made from The Shirelles’ “Soldier Boy” melted vinyl records and femur bone dust, fitted inside a pair of WWI military cavalry boots made from Skeeter Davis’ “The End Of The World” melted vinyl records, oil can filled with homemade tincture (gum oil, rose oil, bacteria cultured from the grooves of Negro prison songs and prison choir records, wormwood, golden rod, aloe juice, resurrection plant, Apothecary’s rose and bugleweed), brass, rust, dirt from various battlefields, ballistic gelatin, white rose petals, white rice

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**Conservation**

**Potential Conservation Concerns**
- Hydrolyzed gelatin will not bear the detailed tread mark in the same way powder does.
- A stable plastic with more than 50% of its original material is not capture the emotional quality associated with the original concept.
- The possibility of adding an inscription to the work was not favorable to the artist, though specific regarding the level of aging that accumulated materials without intervention. An example illustration such as, “Sculpturn has suffered lesser due to-, preserving over time” was unacceptable.

**Structural Recommendations**
- A sand-like material is only useful for holding visual observations in its pristine form, as “found” or “as is.” Hydrolyzed gelatin, is actually more faithful to its description in the liner notes than its printed form as represented in the object. The liner notes suggest a gel form is acceptable, but does the material adequately represent the meaning of the piece?
- Where is the tipping point? Robleto points out the importance of quantitative ratios. A piece with more than 50% of the original material is not faithful to the original concept.
- A stable plastic with 30% of the original recast in the plastic?

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