ABSTRACT: This paper aims to present the research work carried out on the ethnological Cándido and Emilia collection at the Casa de la Señoría in Olocau. This collection of ethnological objects was handed to the Olocau Town Council by the Figuerola family following the married couple’s death in 1982. Therefore, it has become part of the municipal heritage collection located in the Castell or the Casa de la Señoría. Research into the origin of the pieces, the photographic documents of each piece, and the cataloguing and intervention of part of the collection, proved to be gratifying work which we hope to continue with time.

KEYWORDS: olocau, cándido and emilia collection, casa de la senyoría (manor house), ethnological material

1. INTRODUCTION

This research was carried out as a result of the interest shown by the Olocau Town Council of Culture regarding this particular ethnological collection handed over to be included as part of the municipal heritage, which is now on show in the Castell or the Casa de la Señoría. The Town Council provided software material, with which the “Amics del Castell” Association voluntarily attempted to catalogue as many pieces in the collection as possible. This collection includes diverse materials and objects, which had been patiently compiled by the Figuerola married couple during their almost 6-year residence in the town of Olocau. The work intends to create awareness within a totally unknowing environment of the importance of preserving cultural heritage. From the very beginning therefore, our work focused on preventive conservation criteria as the Casa de la Señoría is not a museum and, consequently, its conservation conditions are relatively poor. This involved creating new ways of prevention, that is, conservation by eliminating the causes of deterioration.

2. THE CASTLE, OR CASA DE LA SEÑORÍA, IN THE EARLDOM OF OLOCAU

In 1999, this building was acquired by the Olocau Town Council. Since then, several restoration phases have been carried out [FIGURES 1, 2]: the building’s structure, which was in danger of collapsing, the roof, walls and exterior woodwork, have all been shored up. However, there is still much to be done to the tower, oil mill, wine press, adapting the inside of the building and the courtyards. Nevertheless, the activity in the area has not been at a complete standstill during the restoration work; for instance, the series of concerts held in the courtyard in July over the last four years organised by the “Amics del Castell” Association. “El Castell” in Olocau is a popular term for the collection of historic buildings comprising the ancestral home of the Earls of Olocau. It consists of a central building, the manor, and the remaining buildings include a wine cellar, a wine press, an oil mill and an Arab tower with subsequent medieval architectural restructuring. The tower is the most primitive part of the collection, which dates back to the 13th century and corresponds to the farmstead of Pardines, a village from the time of King James I’s conquest which is part of the Castillo de Olocau district, currently more popularly known as Castillo del Real. On 23 August 1398, the first baron of Valle de Olocau, Antoni de Vilaragut i Visconti, added these lands to his lineage. Years later in 1628, one of his descendants was to be granted the title of Earl of Olocau, this being Joan de Vilaragut i Sanç.

The first documented reference to the building of the Vilaragut family was a residence built next to the tower in 1493 when Baron Ramón de Vilaragut i Pardo de la Casta took possession of it. This house was used as the administrative centre for the collection of tithes delivered by the vassals to the Baron. In time, the house would be converted into the stately palace of the Earldom of Olocau which comprised the towns of Olocau, Marines, Gátova, Olla, Torres, La Garrofera and Pitxiri. Eventually, the Vilaragut family abandoned their usual residence in the Royal Castle or the Castle of Olocau. At this time, the village of Pardines was renamed Olocau.

The medieval palace of La Senyoria displayed its maximum splendour with the second Earl of Olocau, Jordi Sans de Vilaragut, Marquis of Llanera (1650), who married Agnès de Lima i Abreu, sixth Countess of Regalados who had lived in Olocau over lengthy periods. In 1628, it was the venue of the wedding between Margarida de Vilaragut y Castellvi and Didac de Fenollet i Albinyana, a Knight of Játiva.
In 1787, the palace deteriorated due to the earthquakes registered at the beginning of the century, and the tower half collapsed. It was then that Dídac de Fenollet i Valter ra de Blanes took possession of the Earldom who, in 1796, ordered the construction of a new building away from the tower, as we are reminded by the stone plaque located at the entrance. The building was renovated in 1805 by the master builder of Líra, Miquel Vergara, in accordance with the widowed Countess of Olocau, Síforosà Crespi de Valladaura’s orders.

In 1871, Earl Pasqual-Vicent de Fenollet died without leaving any direct heirs. He had left his niece, María del Carme Crespi de Valladaura i Caro, as his universal heir, she being the daughter of the Earls of Orgaz y Sumacarcer, a resident of the city of Palma and the wife of Josep Quint de Zaforteza i Togores who occasionally visited Olocau. Gradually, the house became the home of its donees, the Roc Romero i Puig family, who were farm workers responsible for the cultivation of the lands under the Earl’s legal ownership.

In 1902, the house and lands of the Earldom fell under Marià Zarforteza i Crespi de Valladaura’s legal ownership. In 1918, their nephews, Mateu, Josep and Dídac Zaforteza i Mussoles, residents in Palma, became the rightful owners until they sold it in 1959 to the children and descendants of its last recipient, Lluís Romero i Bernad.

In 1864, Earl Pasquàl-Vicent de Fenollet granted power to Roc Romero i Puig to administer the lands in the Earldom and to represent him before the municipal authorities of Olocau, Marines and Gátova. Roc Romero had spent his childhood as a servant in the Convent at Portaceli, where he was taught to read and write. He was also secretary of the town of Valle de Olocau. He moved into the Casa de la Senyoría with his wife, Francesca Agustí Oliver, where he lived for the remainder of his life.

In 1879, Countess María del Carme Crespi de Valladaura granted power to Lluís Romero i Agustí, Roc Romero’s son, to represent her and manage the lands under legal ownership as well as the mountains, uncultivated lands and forests of Olocau, Marines and Gátova, together with the La Garrofera farm. He inhabited the house with his family following the death of his father. After the death of Lluís Romero, his children inherited the house, these being Pep, Lluís, Mâxim, Cecílio and Cecilia. In 1959, his family, together with the descendants of Mâxim and Francesca Romero, acquired the lands and house. Cecilia Romero lived in the house with her son, Vicent Agustí, until 1969.

In 1999, several interventions were carried out: maintenance, restoration, improvement of services and structures, all of which aimed to convert this magnificent place into a Show House. The building, with a rectangular ground plan, had undergone various adaptation or modification processes according to the different demands of use over time. However, its structure remains unaltered since 1969. Since recommencing such work, the intention is to restore the decorations and paintings on the walls of the building as they are part of the cultural heritage and, for this reason, must be preserved by means of a specific project in connection with the general project.

As the group of buildings was never related to an initial architectural project to coherently respect its structure and elements, it has been subjected to a constructive modification and adaptation process over a good many years which has consequently altered its rooms. Therefore, we are now faced with a lived-in, occupied and used building with its resulting modifications, alterations and general wear.

The purchase of the Casa de la Senyoría de Olocau presents us with the challenge of functionally renovating the interior elements, which can only take place wherever required for the purposes of maintaining the building in use. The idea was to use the rooms of the house by leaving part of the Cándido and Emilia collection on permanent display while storing the other part under correct conditions. The greatest drawback we came across was that the project was discontinued owing to a change in both municipal policies and the Council of Culture members who did not appreciate the value of this collection. Even so, we were able to continue with part of our work which can only benefit this collection’s material as the scope of preventive conservation is essentially dedicated to the control and improvement of environmental conditions. Evidently, this also affects the remaining tasks to be carried out in other areas of the institution, such as the architecture of the building and its microclimate, the design of the showrooms and display cabinets, the
mounting of stones, lighting, storage conditions, etc., which are all subjected to the established regulations being fulfilled.

Unfortunately when it comes to practically applying these principles, preventive conservation is transferred to the persons in charge of the institution, who, at best, are curators or restorers (if not, the exceptional cases) who tend to find the direct intervention of the pieces more appealing. In our case however, the absence of working staff in the Casa de la Señoria means that our radius of action and control is virtually zero which, in any case, is better than the effects of certain damaging actions by others.

3. THE CÁNDIDO AND EMILIA COLLECTION

This ethnographic Fund was created by the Olocau Town Council of Culture to safeguard a series of objects which form part of the cultural material of the Olocau citizens, belongings which were essential for the working, social and domestic lives of this town's citizens. Nowadays, the majority of these pieces are no longer used by society as the function they were created for either no longer exists or is currently performed by new objects, mainly electrical and electronic devices. Indeed, this situation has led to the destruction of these tools or, at best, to them being disowned by their owners, and we fear that this disuse may lead to their disappearance.

Most of these objects are characterised by the work carried out by the craftsmen in the area who, following their client's indications, produced the different objects required for day-to-day life (farming equipment, tools, furniture, domestic utensils, etc.). Therefore, individualised attention must be paid to each object to determine its specific problems in order to establish an appropriate intervention for its diagnosis without using standard techniques.

The objective of the acquisition of this donation by the Town Council is to also encourage the production actively carried out in local craftsmen's workshops because the Fund will not only comprise pieces related to the past production of handicrafts, but it also intends to include present-day products.

A population's material culture, its material and immaterial goods are not only the remains of a way of life which must be conserved for them to remain in the collective memory, but they are also elements which allow a society's identity to be built.

A wide range of objects comprises this collection. The farming equipment used by farmers is widely represented by a numerous and varied collection of ploughs, yokes, threshing machines, pitchforks, sickles, etc. The collection of domestic utensils is no less varied and includes spoons, plates, cages, lanterns, pots for milk and gofio (roasted maize meal), watering cans, etc. In addition, there is a collection of pieces which used to be part of the means of traditional trades: sieves, iron tongs, storekeepers' scoops, churro presses, saws, mallets, flowerpots, looms, hairdresser's scissors, etc.

The inventory and cataloguing of the Cándido and Emilia collection pieces are being carried out using a database (unfinished) which the "Amics del Castell" Association started. This database has allowed us to create new documentation for the objects on which we have worked. A partial inventory of the collection has been done and a detailed description has been prepared for each object.

We also carried out a graphic inventory of the collection by taking pictures of each piece before and after the interventions performed. The inventory was completed at the same time as the cataloguing and registry files were made (which we aim to improve and inventory within the collection).

These files are divided into four sections:

1. General project information. This section, in addition to cataloguing each piece as part of the Cándido and Emilia collection, introduces identification-type information for the item to be catalogued, analysed and treated.

2. Information on the work to be intervened. This section specifies whether there is a signature, contract or date of execution, as well as the title, theme, author, dimensions, type of object, painting technique used, polychromy, previous restorations and attached documentation of the piece.

3. Others

4. Bibliography
We also intend to guarantee and maintain the conservation of each piece. To go about this, and in accordance with our limitations (principally limited space, although our limitations later included lack of budget and poor interest shown by the new municipal corporation that manages the collection), we are applying various preventive conservation and maintenance techniques related to the nature of all the materials that are available. The diversity of these materials has led us to divide the objects of the collection always in accordance with the material from which they are made. Thus, we obtained 4 different groups: 1. Leatherwork and leather objects, 2. Wickerwork-rope work, 3. Ironwork-tinwork, and 4. Ceramic objects.

3.1. Leatherwork and leather objects

When we undertook the conservation and restoration work for the collection, we were faced with a relatively normal situation in terms of these objects. Their state of conservation was not so poor as damage had been caused by dirt, dehydration and loss of nutrients over time, as well as totally unsuitable storage conditions which affected all the collection pieces.

The fundamental phase of the conservation and restoration process of the only leather object, a bag, consisted in applying a treatment that cleaned, neutralised and hydrated the leather. For this purpose, we chose the curator method as it has been used since 1985 to achieve excellent results in the recovery of organic materials. The use of this method provides the treated leather with pliability, and we observed that the twistable pieces afforded greater resistance to the forces applied without cracks or tears appearing.

3.2. Wickerwork-rope work

For a correct and homogeneous classification, we divided the wickerwork into four groups:
- “Coiled”, in which the material has a spiral shape with overlapping volutes that are sewn together.
- Plaited”, with wide strips obtained from plants
- “Twined”, with materials such as roots.
- “Wickers”, with reeds, Phragmites, willows, oak or ash trees.

In general, the technique used on such objects in the collection may be qualified as fairly unsophisticated, mainly because the tools are also relatively simple. The tools required were the following: opening (wedges and wooden needles), cutting (curved blade penknives, knives, pruning shears) and finishing touches (mallets, pounding bench). All these tools were found to be part of the collection, but we preferred to classify the objects by the material from which they are made and not according to the type of use or trade to which they pertain. This is mainly due to the fact that we do not know whether they came from the piece’s original workshop, from other workshops or from the family dwelling as this work was frequently carried out in some area or place of the family home (courtyard, terrace etc.). As a result, we can affirm that the reed basket maker did not have a workshop unlike, for example, the blacksmith.

All the objects found were in a good state of conservation, although their surfaces had accumulated a considerable amount of dust and grease which, at times, had incrusted in the plaited fibres of the pieces. The cleaning operations including mechanical cleaning, wet
terms of its handling but, as seen by the state of conservation of the pieces found in the collection, it also offers greater resistance to the passing of time. All the pieces in this group had been extensively used in homes. This was evidenced by the erosion on the polychrome pieces located on the areas close to the lid. In addition, braziers had repaired the pieces that had broken with use. We also noted that several pieces had been mended and fixed, along with some ceramic pieces that had been mended with tin staples (we will discuss this type of intervention in the next section).

We could be excused for assuming that this type of product was limited to domestic uses. However, this was not so as we found agricultural tools such as watering cans, instruments for sulphuring, and water pails. We also found objects related to other economic activities, for example, storekeeper’s scoops, funnels, standard measuring cups (1/4, 1/2, and one litre) used in shops, etc.

Apart from the variety of materials found (candelabras, vases, centrepieces, frames, goblets, lamps, trays and many purely practical objects), they had been made from all types of metals and alloys. Some objects were adorned with inlays, engraving, embossed work and a variety of patinas. Aluminium, bronze, copper, brass and iron are just some of the metals found in this collection. All of them had been spoilt by the passing of time to a lesser or greater extent. Oxidation and wear, ageing of the original colours, scratches, breakages and dents, are just some of the more common problems observed in the metal pieces found.

The metal restoration processes varied depending not only on the metal involved, but also on the problem presented. In general, mechanical and chemical cleanings were carried out in an attempt to
prevent the piece from deteriorating further. Under no circumstances did we attempt to restore the original shine to the metal as we always maintain the concept of minimum intervention over that of greater action. However, we realised that all the dirt had to be removed because if dust or particles adhered to the surface, they could lead to future corrosion processes. For this reason, the cleaning mechanisms focused on removing dust, which was heavily incrusted on the majority of the pieces. The rusted areas were eliminated in an attempt to stop corrosion from worsening and extending to all the metal or from even affecting other metals. Mechanical cleanings were carried out with a binocular loupe and with the help of scalpels, micro abrasion machines, etc. Chemical cleanings were performed with solvents such as xylene, acetone and ethanol.

Both the solvents and the application and cleaning techniques were adapted to the conservation needs and conditions of each piece. Those chemical treatments considered aggressive for the various pieces of the collection were avoided at all times as the quality of the metal must be taken into account plus the fact that, on many occasions, we were working with alloys. Therefore, we ruled out the possibility of using the following cleaning products: degreasing agents, decalcifying agents, and attacking agents including acids, bases and chemical baths.

We must bear in mind that presently, and following the restoration process of the metals, the object is subjected to a gloss-based treatment to protect it over time from subsequent oxidation and loss of patina that will always maintain its original shine without having to perform further cleaning interventions.

3.4. Ceramic objects

This was the most irregular group in terms of the number of objects and their state of conservation. We found objects ranging from enamelled ceramics to clay pieces and porcelain figures. Some objects were composed of several pieces of which one was missing and were, therefore, incomplete. This is the case of sugar bowls or casserole dishes without lids. The majority of the pieces were cooking utensils or pieces used for decoration purposes.

Restoration processes were adapted to the specific requirements of each piece, depending on its type and state of conservation. In general, the following operations were carried out: mechanical cleaning, wet cleaning, piecing fragments together, replacing missing fragments and colour reintegration. Glazes were not applied to any of the objects, and was the only operation deemed unnecessary due to the good state of conservation of the finishes on all of the pieces.

In the catalogue files, the state of conservation of each piece was taken into account, and they were classified as follows:
- Degree of wear of the enamel on the piece and whether it had been attacked by abrasive products.

- Existence of cracks or fissures, and whether they affected the integrity of the piece.

- Whether the piece presented chips or peeling.

- Existence of concretions and stains on the surface, their extent and whether they were of a material origin or a technical origin.

- Missing elements due to breakage or broken pieces.

- Existence of tin staples from prior interventions.

This last consideration was of considerable interest as we had to include it because, during the restoration work on the collection, we found various objects which had been intervened on previous occasions and different fragments had been pieced together with clamps or tin staples. The different ways in which the tin was used led us to believe that it was likely that the tin worker who used to work on the different vessels was not always the same person.

Following our intervention, an exhibit of the restored works was organised in the Casa de la Senyoria. The area used lacks the conditions required to house a collection of such characteristics. For this reason, we constantly reminded the councillor of culture (the manager of this collection and of the house where the objects are stored), that the rooms and depository should be adapted to meet the conditions required for a problem-free accommodation of the objects in this collection.

We contemplated the possibility of conducting regular inspections for the purpose of certifying the state of conservation and storage of the pieces, or with a view to discovering any new damage which may appear on the pieces during their storage.

4. STORAGE CONSIDERATIONS

Monitoring the depositories of works of art and arranging the locations for the pieces, together with the monitoring of their internal and external movements, are essential tasks towards the correct conservation of this collection.

We must point out that most of the pieces in the collection are of an organic origin, with materials derived from the plant world. Therefore, they contain a considerable amount of charcoal and are inflammable. Many pieces are also hygroscopic, which enhances the tendency to capture or transfer the moisture contained in the atmosphere. In addition, we also know that a combination of relative humidity over 65% and temperatures of over 20ºC may contribute to the presence of insects, moulds and fungi.

Temperature is closely related to humidity and also acts by accelerating or delaying biological activity and chemical reactions. It is important to determine temperature and relative humidity so that the works are in equilibrium with their environment and to slow down their natural ageing as much as possible by achieving an optimal state of conservation. Temperature control is necessary due to the influence of this factor on relative humidity. Therefore a temperature of around 18º C ± 2º C with a maximum fluctuation of 4º C is recommended. In any case, it is essential to control fluctuations on both a daily and monthly basis to prevent any abrupt or rapid changes so that daily variations do not exceed ±2 or ±3%. Another factor which may lead to deterioration is the rate of air ventilation as it can alter the suitable levels of relative humidity and temperature and, at the same time, may cause the penetration of polluting gases into the depository, such as sulphur dioxide, hydrogen sulphide, sulphuric anhydride and acid, as well as solid particles, like dust and soot, which after falling on to the objects can contribute to decolouration, stains or to the spread of plagues. The use of several dehumidifiers in exhibition areas, as well as silica gel in the display cabinets, are recommended measures.

Regarding the light sensitivity of the materials, light exposure recommendations have been made according to the type of object, which are as follows:

1. Insensitive objects: no special recommendations.
2. Sensitive objects: 600,000 lx/h per year
3. Very sensitive objects: 150,000 lx/h per year
4. Hypersensitive objects: 15,000 lx/h per year

One positive condition came over, that of the objects being stored (in fireproof boxes) in one of the rooms of the Casa de la Senyoria. We do not know for how long exactly, but we presume that it will be for a long period of time given the minimum interest shown by the local authorities in the conservation and restoration of this collection.

BIBLIOGRAPHY


NOTES

1. We must not forget that, as included in the 2001 KRAKOW LETTER, the PRINCIPLES FOR THE CONSERVATION AND RESTORATION OF CULTURAL HERITAGE: The intention of the conservation of historic buildings and monuments, whether they are in rural or urban contexts, is to maintain their authenticity and integrity, including interior spaces, furniture and decoration, in accordance with their original configuration. Such conservation requires an appropriate “restoration project” which defines methods and objectives. In many cases, this also requires an adequate use which is compatible with the
6 Although light does not cause severe deterioration on metal objects, as it is a source of energy, it can catalyse the oxidation-reduction and hydrolysis reactions which often occur in these types of materials.

6 Materials are classified according to their light sensitivity as Insensitive (stones, metal, ceramics, some types of glass, etc.), sensitive (oil paintings, photographs, wood, etc.), very sensitive (textiles, paper, watercolours and pastels, leather, fur and hair, etc.), hypersensitive (silk, feathers, newspaper, etc.).

4 Clamps are staples that were placed by hand to repair ceramic objects or pottery, which were cracked as the result of a blow. Using the crack as an axis, pairs of holes were made through which the ends of the cramps were later inserted. Clamps would stick out on the other side where they were bent over.

5 Another trade, which no longer exists today, is that of the clamper-tin worker; this person was known as a clamper because he placed the staples and clamps, and clamped all the kitchen utensils. A punch (inertia drill), pliers and tin wire were used to staple vessels, while paste was used to hermetically seal the cracks in the vessel.

Versión española

TITULO: Primeros trabajos sobre la colección etnológica de “Cándido e Emilia” en la Casa de la Senyoria de Olocau, Valencia.

RESUMEN: Con el presente artículo, se pretende dar a conocer el trabajo de investigación realizado en la colección etnológica de Cándido e Emilia de la casa de la Senyoria de Olocau. Una colección de bienes etnológicos que viene cedida al ayuntamiento de Olocau por la familia Figuerola tras la muerte del matrimonio en 1982 y así, que forme parte de los fondos patrimoniales municipales que se encuentran en el Castell o la casa de la Senyoria. La investigación sobre el origen de las piezas, la documentación fotográfica de cada una de ellas, la catalogación e intervención de parte de la colección fue una tarea gratificante que esperamos proseguir en el tiempo.

PALABRAS CLAVES: Olocau, Colección Cándido y Emilia, Casa de la Senyoria, material etnológico.