

Inside Installations: Preservation and Presentation of Installation Art

Seminar: Theory & Semantics of Installation Art

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The DOCAM Project: Issues and challenges

Abstract

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The DOCAM research Alliance was initiated by the Daniel Langlois Foundation for art, science and technology, following observations on the rapid state of obsolescence that threatens many of the components constituting the media and technological arts heritage comprised in the collections of a great number of museums. Furthermore, outside from the preservation and conservation issues, the DLF remarked that little work had been done, in the realm of new media, on the documentation, cataloguing and semantics strategies as well as on the history of the technologies used by artists.

Created throughout a recent time span, the artworks concerned, be they digital, mechanical or electronic, are often multimedia pieces that include apparatus that range from machines, software, electronic systems, containing analog and digital images as well as traditional materials (sculpted and pictorial elements) and non-traditional mixed media (industrial equipment and techniques). Hence, institutions are grappling with two types of challenges such as the need to create effective strategies to preserve past artworks featuring technological components and the necessity to record, conserve, name and understand the technologies used to build these works of arts, within an historical and contextual time frame.

Adding up to the previous issues and challenges at hand, is the fact that most curators, conservators, art historians and educators have not yet been adequately trained to deal with these emerging problems surrounding the documentation, preservation and semantics of artworks that include technological, electronic or digital components.

Consequently, in order to alleviate these important issues, the DOCAM research Alliance, funded for a five-year period by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada with the help of the Daniel Langlois Fondation and its partners, has undertaken a vast multidisciplinary research endeavour whose ultimate objective is to produce tangible lasting results. Some of these outcomes developed within the Alliance will be, among other things, the establishment of university core curriculum pertaining to the impending issues and the implementation of tools (Best practice guide, bilingual thesaurus, cataloguing structure, etc.) by the targeted academic and museological communities.

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