

PROJECT PLAN "Inside Installations. Preservation and Presentation of Installation Art"

2004-2007

EUROPEAN UNION CULTURE 2000 PROGRAMME

Ref. 2004-1490

Description of the project "Preservation and Re-installation of Installation Art"

In the past 10 years Installation Art has become a mainstream art form representing some of the most important and exciting art of our time. Contemporary artists are producing installation works that are entering the collections of European museums and institutions at an increasing rate. Installation works of art are prominent at all major international contemporary art festivals in Europe, for example the Venice Biennale and Documenta in Germany.

The nature of installation works of art is distinct from traditional art objects. Works incorporating timebased media, such as audio-visual & electronic media, *net.art* or performance are understood in terms of their behaviours as much as their component parts. These works often anticipate an active involvement by the spectator (*interactivity*) and evoke a multi-sensorial experience (sound, vision, touch and smell). These works are often created for site and time specific occasions, and demonstrate specific vulnerabilities both in terms of the contexts and technologies on which they are dependent.

This project asks - How can we safeguard these expressions of our contemporary visual culture so that they can be experienced by future generations? For contemporary art museums this question is key, as they struggle to address their responsibilities in relation to art which differs significantly in its nature from earlier forms. These works are seen as complex and expensive. One aim of the project is to build confidence in the display and appropriate management of these works enabling them to be shared and displayed at venues across Europe. These works present new challenges, not only with respect to the production processes and artistic intentions, but also in the (re)-presentation and preservation once they enter a museum collection. In order to be able to display these works in the future it is important to understand what is important to preserve and where the risks and vulnerabilities lie. Installation works of art require a greater interdisciplinary approach in their conservation and collections management and one which is ideally suited to a collaborative approach in the development of guidelines and models of good practice for European museums.

Main objectives of the project are:

- To preserve and (re)-present a significant body of works of installation art, created by leading international artists and belonging to important European collections of contemporary art. Since the problems are diverse and occur with heterogeneous materials and media, the case studies will represent a wide range of installation works.
- 2. To increase the awareness of the general public (museum visitors, students in art history, conservation & art schools) for contemporary art, by displaying these installation works in the partners' institutions, by means of publications and presentations of the cases studies on the internet.
- **3.** To develop good practice for the preservation and (re-)presentation of installation works and share this knowledge with the European conservation community (through seminars, publication and knowledge & information platforms).
- 4. To develop and improve the knowledge and information infrastructure for the conservation of contemporary art (<u>www.incca.org</u>)
- 5. To target contemporary artists as a primary source of information and seek the artist's participation in the preservation and (re-)presentation of installation works.

Methodology:

The projects' activities will be:

- A. Execute and present at least 30 case studies on Installation Art to the general public and professional field
- B. From the framework of these case studies develop good practice and tools on the following topics:
 - **B1** Preservation Strategies
 - **B2** Artists' Participation
 - B3 Documentation & Archiving strategies
 - **B4 Theory and Semantics**
 - **B5 Knowledge and Information Exchange**
- C. Working Group Meetings and Seminars

5 co-organisers of leading European institutions (representing 6 countries) will collaborate in the execution and presentation of, at least, 30 case studies. Each co-organiser will be responsible for at least 6 case studies and for the development of good practice of one research topic. The studied works of installation art will be on display during the project in the co-organisers countries according to the partners' exhibition agenda's (with an average of 10 case studies per year), and be identified as part of the project; i.e. through reference material in the exhibition space and/or representations of the case studies at the museums'/institutions' websites.

Based on the results of these case studies and through additional multi-disciplinary research, good practice will be developed on 5 main topics that are essential for the preservation and re-presentation of installation art (see B1 – B5 above).

The development of good practice for the five subject areas will follow the same procedure:

- 1) Create an inventory of already existing methods, tools and guidelines for that activity.
- 2) Test with reference to the case studies and, where appropriate, develop new strategies and tools.
- 3) Disseminate what has been achieved so far (e.g. at the INCCA website) and discuss results with a peer group of professionals.
- 4) After evaluation, and where appropriate, implement good practice, methods and tools in the case studies.
- 5) Publish the project's results at museums' and INCCA websites.

The case studies and topics of research will be developed at 3, 2-day working group meetings and 3, 2-day seminars. The participants will include: conservators, curators, registrars, documentation experts, theorists and technicians. The project recognises the significance of the participation of artists and will facilitate the provision of essential information on the production and meaning of their work and its preservation and future display via five public events.

The case studies and guidelines for good practice will be published and disseminated to professionals and the public via the web. The project will make use of expertise and tools developed during earlier European funded initiatives, such as INCCA (Raphael Programme 1999) and the congress "404 Object Not Found/What Remains of Media Art" (Culture 2000); the Variable Media Initiative, TechArcheology and Archiving the AvantGarde. Collaboration and knowledge exchange will be sought with other organisations and research institutes.

There are great advantages in collaboration in the conservation and management of installation art on a European level. Artists now operate internationally and the project will respond at the same level seeking collaborative solutions that save time and money by pooling expertise to address shared problems and to safeguard the economic capital already invested. Added value is provided by increased public awareness of these works, contributing to a general understanding of our European contemporary culture and the need to preserve this heritage for the future. Furthermore, by the development and improvement of an infrastructure for the exchange of knowledge and information as a condition for the future preservation of installation art.

The same partners in this project have been collaborating successfully in two previous European projects: Modern Art: Who Cares? (1997, 1999) and INCCA (1999-2002). The results of these projects are now internationally recognised as milestones in the development of the conservation practice in Europe.

Activities for the project "Preservation and Re-installation of Installation Art"

A. Activity A: Execute and present at least 30 case studies on Installation Art to the general public and professional field

Problem

Installation Art covers a wide range of materials, techniques and media. To preserve and re-install these works causes numeorus problems to professionals. Often, the museum staff is considered to be *the* expert, who has all the necessary knowledge and experience to take care of these works. However, due to the technological, artistic and conceptual complexities, this is an almost impossible task. More and more, museums and

Institutions are becoming a platform where the artist realises conceptual works and installations, using the equipment and staff available at the site. On the other hand, professionals are often dealing with works of international artists whose works are collected by several museums. Therefore, the exchange of knowledge and information and the joint development of good practice, will be necessary to safeguard these works for the future and present them to the public in the way they have been intended by the artist. There is a huge advantage (professionally, artistically and economically) to tackle the problems with installation art through collaboration on a European scale.

Target groups: conservators, curators, collection managers, general public, artists

Approach:

In the project at least 30 case studies will be executed and presented to professionals and the general public. The installation works for the case studies have been selected so that they represent the variety of installation works and through comparison will form a solid basis for the development of good practice, methods and tools. These include: complex object based installations (compiled from mixed media); video, film and sound installations; slide projections and light installations; multimedia installations and computer-based works; kinetic installations; and works in progress. Appendix 5 shows an overview of the case studies selected for the project (including problem description and objectives per case).

Each case study will include: 1) in-depth investigation of the work, 2) formulation of questions to the 5 working groups of the project (see Activities B1-B5), 3) preservation and re-installation of the work, 4) implementation of the good practice developed in the project's working groups.

During the project the works will be on display in the co-organisers countries and be identified as part of the project; e.g. through leaflets and/or multimedia presentations in the exhibition space. Realising the importance of promoting the participation of European citizens in our contemporary visual culture, the co-organisers looked for an alternative for a travelling exhibition, which will not be feasible within the scope of this project (due to exhibition schedules of the participating museums and institutions). As an alternative the case studies will be re-presented as 'creative web productions' at the museums' and institutions' websites, as well as at the website of the International Network for the Conservation of Contemporary Art – INCCA (see Activity B5).

To the professional field the case studies will be presented, discussed and further developed at the 6 project's meetings. (See Activity C)

Deliverables

- 30 works of installation art, preserved, re-installed and exhibited
- Framework for good practice for installation art, knowledge exchange with professional field, creative web productions, publication (See Activities B1-B5, C)

Role of co-organisers

Each coorganiser will execute and present 6 case studies (with an average of 2 per year)

Activity B1: Preservation Strategies

Problem

The nature of Installation art is distinct from traditional art, as it is wholly dependent on display for its realisation. An installation is more than a collection of physical objects but often includes relationships to the space and dynamic behaviours. It is necessary to establish a full description of the state of an installation in order to understand the significance of the component parts to the installation as a whole. Only then can appropriate preservation strategies be developed and evaluated. The conservator's preservation activity follows this shift away from a unique material object to an installed event. Conservation has moved beyond minimising change in a physical object to a broader mission to enable the installation of the work in the future according to the artist's intent and the historical character of the work.

Building on professional practice to address new challenges

Installation art is often neglected because conservators simply do not know how to approach it. This project will give guidance in developing effective and appropriate conservation plans, develop survey techniques and tools to improve conservation decision-making in this area, addressing the real risks to these works and identifying the true costs of their care.

This project aims to develop a shared vocabulary and discourse resulting in core guidelines for procedures relating to key activities for the care and management of installation art. This is a new area of conservation and this project will significantly add to the field by providing a clear reference for conservators who are approaching these problems for the first time.

Installation art requires a multidisciplinary approach and presents a challenge to the conservator who can no longer rely on technical expertise alone. Different stakeholders may hold different views about the criteria for successful conservation of an installation, this project will make clear these differing views and suggest ways of reaching consensus.

The development of agreed standards

Contemporary art is largely accessed by means of exhibitions and displays. At present there are no agreed standards for the care and management of installation art. The establishment of standards would aid co-operation of museums and collectors in the loan and display of these vulnerable works across Europe.

Target groups: conservators, collection managers, curators, artists and related training programmes

Approach

The 30 conservation case studies will exemplify good practice in relation to installation art in terms of shared decision making, artist's involvement and with explicit reference to the guiding principles of professional conservation.

From the experience of the participating organisations, guidelines for good practice will be distilled to form an invaluable resource for museum professionals. These guidelines will be subjected to peer review by the museum community and museum training programmes via presentations and publication.

Deliverables

This project aims to establish conservation standards for:

- Risk assessment and conservation surveys for installation art
- Conservation record keeping for installation art
- Condition reporting for works on loan.
- Conservation and collections management strategies for technological and media elements
- Storage and transport guidelines

Role of co-organisers:

Reina Sofia: coordination, **TATE**: participation and contribution, **Restaurierungszentrum**: participation and contribution, **SMAK**: participation and contribution, **SBMK**: participation and contribution

Activity B2: Artists' Participation & Documentation

Problem

The idiosyncratic character of contemporary art, and the huge variety in concepts and use of materials, techniques and media, urge for an active involvement of artists in the process of showing, documenting and preserving the works. The intervention of the artist is essential to determine the meaning, the 'heart', of the work. In this respect important questions, for instance, are: What are the essential aesthetic and technological elements that absolutely need to be preserved if the piece is to retain its integrity into the future? What is the artist's intent towards preservation and re-installation, and how is this determined in the absence of the artist?

Good practice for capturing artists' information still need to be developed, not only with respect to a pro-active approach of collecting artists' information, but should also include the documentation strategies developed by the artists themselves. Considering installations with a conceptual base, the long-term effect of its future preservation is depending on the quality of the documentation and the participation of the artist at the time of acquisition. Once good practice and instruments are developed, it will be possible to re-present these works for future generations. Only when adequate tools are available, it will be possible to re-create the artist's conceptual ideas and display the works in the way they have been intended.

Transnational communication

Another need for the artist's participation is relating to the 'nomadic' lifestyle of contemporary artists. They often live in different countries and integrate a diversity of artistic and cultural contexts into their works. Installation works are acquired and put on show in various European countries, giving the public the opportunity to see and experience contemporary art in an international context. It is evident that for a better understanding of this transnational character of contemporary art and artists, the direct communication between the artist and the public is valuable for both parties and will have a farreaching effect on the awareness of the public for our contemporary culture.

Target group: conservators, curators, registrars, artists, general public and related training programmes

Approach

1. In accordance with the 30 case studies artists' information will be captured in different ways, such as interviews with the artists or their representatives, artists' participation in the process of representing/re-installing the work, and collecting documentation material from the artists themselves. The information will be captured on audio-videotape, or documented in other ways (from text documents to multimedia presentations to databases).

2. In connection to their installation works on show, at least 5 artists will be invited to communicate directly with the public, through lectures, interviews or an artist's forum. These public events will be organised in the 5 co-organising countries, in accordance to the exhibition schedule of the installation works.

Deliverables:

- For each of the 30 case studies artists' information documented in various ways (databases, audio-video registrations, 3D registrations, text documents, images, etc)
- Good practice and tools for documenting artists' information
- 5 artists' presentations, interviews to the general public

Role of co-organisers

SMAK, coordinator, TATE: participant and contributor, Restaurierungszentrum: participant and contributor, Reina Sofia: participant and contributor, SBMK: participant and contributor

Activity B3: Documentation & Archiving Strategies

Problem

Today many museums are using digitised collection management systems for documentation and maintenance of their artworks. These systems have been developed for traditional art (paintings, sculptures, graphic works). Complex multimedia installations are presently not considered, while the need for an adequate documentation of these works is extremely urgent for future preservation and representation.

Another problem is that there are still no criteria or techniques for documenting technical and conceptual aspects that are fundamental to describing installation art, i.e. the documentation of light, sound, space, movement, video (brightness, contrast, colour), intended decay, interaction with visitors, tactility and olfactory, etc.

Target Groups: conservators, curators, collection managers, registrars, artists, general public

Approach

The project will develop new strategies, tools and templates for the documentation, administration and maintenance of installation art that can be integrated into different collection management systems, information retrieval systems or content management systems. In these matters, collaboration with software companies who have specialised in museum information systems will be of crucial importance.

All the 30 works of installation art will be documented, respecting the multiformity in museums'/institutions' daily practice, facilities & systems on the one hand, and with a common ground regarding overall strategies on the other hand. The products (guidelines, tools and templates) will be tested on the basis of the case studies and be implemented during the project where appropriate.

- 1. The documentation of the 30 works of installation art will include registration of the technical, formal and conceptual aspects of the work, visual registration of the work (e.g. images, video registration, 3D registration), artist's and context information (e.g. interview, art historical information)
- 2. The documentation, gathered through the 30 case studies, will be compiled in (digital) archives, e.g. structured information in databases, as well as unstructured information, such as videos and other multimedia material. New archiving strategies, including the development of adequate templates will be part of the research activity.

Deliverables

- 30 works of installation art documented in the institutions local systems
- Parameters and templates for documenting installation art
- Good practice for documenting installation art

Role of co-organisers

Restaurierungscentrum: coordinator working group, **SBMK**: participant and contributor (main focus on 3D registration, VR Presentations), **TATE**: participant and contributor, **SMAK**: participant and contributor, **Reina Sofia**: participant and contributor

Activity B4: Theory and Semantics

Problem

One of the most challenging theoretical (and practical) issues of contemporary works of installation art is the notion of 'the original'. Because installation works are often produced for a site-specific context, it gets extremely difficult to define 'the original', bringing along questions such as: What is essential to determining origins and authenticity of the work? What parts of it should be preserved, transformed or re-created? How to identify the 'original' work when reproducible media are involved, such as video, and the artist is using (parts of) the original work in future editions? Evidently, the complex notion of 'the original' already is and will become increasingly relevant for collectors, as well as for conservation, curatorial and collection management tasks in museums and art institutions. Other, relating questions, are: How to identify 'craftsmanship' where new technologies are being used in contemporary art? How to identify the public's (interactive) participation when the work undergoes considerable changes in the course of time? What is the museum's role when it interacts as intermediate between the artist and the public?

Another problem is the lack of a 'common language' to describe installation art. As with contemporary art in general, new concepts are being introduced and new ways of thinking are developed rapidly. This 'sliding semantic scale' presents a challenge to the international conservation community who recognises the need for exchanging knowledge and information. Following the recommendations published by the DigiCult Project (2003), regarding the (future) possibilities for knowledge and information exchange (i.e. interoperability between different cultural networks), it is extremely important to start developing a shared vocabulary for specific domains. The project therefore will develop a set of basic terms for installation art (see B5: Knowledge and Information Exchange & Management).

Target Groups: conservators, curators, art historians, collection managers, registrars, artists

Approach

1. The Theoretical Working Group will address theoretical, art historical and philosophical issues, such as authenticity, craftsmanship, the public's (interactive) participation, the role of the museum, copyrights, etc. from the context of the 30 case studies on installation art.

Using the other research activities of the project (case studies and working groups) as a 'playing field' they will develop a theoretical framework for the other research activities of the project. Two PhD researchers will be closely involved in the project.

Pip Laurenson is a sculpture conservator for electronic media and kinetic arts at Tate Gallery. With support of the New Art Trust and in conjunction with Tate and San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, she began a four-year research project into the conservation and management of time-based media works of art in fall 2001.

Vivian van Saaze recently began a five-year research project into the meaning of sensory aspects with regard to the presentation and conservation of contemporary installation art. The research project is a collaboration between the University of Maastricht and the Netherlands Institute for Cultural Heritage. 2. The Theoretical Working Group will develop a set of basic terms for describing installation art, making use of semantic research and the information generated by the case studies and the other working groups.

Deliverables:

- Document on theoretical issues & decision-making tools for installation art
- Contribution by two PhD researchers to the project, and vice versa
- Set of basic terms for the preservation and re-installation of installation art
- Implementation of semantics into Activities B1-B5

Role of co-organisers

SBMK / ICN Conservation Research Department: coordination, TATE: participant and contributor, Restaurierungszentrum: participant and contributor, SMAK: participant and contributor, Reina Sofia: participant and contributor

Activity B5: Knowledge and Information Exchange & Management

Problem

Contemporary art in general, and installation art in particular, has a unique position in the broad spectrum of European cultural heritage for two key reasons:

- a) The practitioners employ an ever-evolving and increasing range of new technologies, which necessitate the development of wholly new preservation strategies if the works are to be safeguarded for the enjoyment of current and future generations.
- **b)** As the works are often interactive and/or networked, and frequently the result of collaborations between various specialists with differing skills, co-operation is essential from conception right through to conservation.

The challenge for the installation project is both to provide professionals with templates and tools for the exchange and management of knowledge and information on installation art, and to ensure this vibrant contemporary art practice reaches as broad an audience as possible. While 2D reproductions of installation art are commonplace, there has been surprisingly little innovative use of new technologies to represent this works, and very little provision of contextual information to help support, demystify and interpret them. These new techniques and materials will prove most useful if a common approach is adopted for their development.

Target groups: conservators, curators, artists, teachers, school children and the general public

Approach: Two main distribution channels will be used to achieve the project objectives: 1) the INCAA website and 2) Tate Online.

- a) The INCAA website (<u>www.incca.org</u>) is an existing European platform for information exchange and good practice, targeting the professional community. The results of the installation project will be added to the site incrementally, over the course of the 3 years, building on this resource.
- b) Tate Online (tate.org.uk) will be used to target the general public and promote greater appreciation of installation art. The project will benefit from the existing high profile of Tate Online. Reciprocal links will be implemented between all the collaborators ensuring maximum exposure.

Deliverables:

- a) A new section will be created within the INCCA Website, to document the project and disseminate the findings to an international, professional audience. This section is likely to include a discussion forum and publishing tools which will enable participants to update information immediately, themselves.
- **b)** Metadata will be added to the INCCA Database for all 30 case studies. A shared set of basic terms will be compiled and defined for installation art, and also made available via incca.org.
- c) Research will be undertaken into how best to include installation art in disparate collections management systems, so the information can still be shared, and the findings circulated.
- d) A series of 3 learning packages will be developed by Tate Digital Programmes, focusing on key works in the project, and delivered via Tate Online. These packages will be geared towards schoolchildren, but will also include support materials for teachers. Teachers often express a lack of confidence when encountering unfamiliar aspects of installation art, and discussion of this practice has therefore often been absent from the classroom. The packages will employ a range of digital technologies to present the diverse physical and conceptual perspectives.
- e) These packages will also be of interest to life-long learners and the general public who share a keen interest in conservation, and will find network of narratives directing the installation works highly engaging.

Role of Co-organisers: TATE: coordination, major contribution by TATE Digital Programmes, ICN Conservation Research Department: major contribution with INCCA Website and metadata, SMAK: participant and contributor, Restaurierungszentrum: participant and contributor, Reina Sofia: participant and contributor, SBMK: participant and contributor

Activity C: Working Group Meetings and Seminars

During the implementation period of the project 6 meetings will be organised by the 5 Co-organisers and the Project Manager. The meetings will be hosted by the 5 Co-organisers and the Project Manager and have a two-days programme. The 3 Work Shop Meetings will be attended by the project's participants, the 3 Seminars will be open meetings in which other professionals can participate as well.

At the Working Group Meetings and Seminars the case studies will be presented and discussed; in working group sessions the project's participants will work on the development of good practice, methods and tools. Experts from the conservation practice and other disciplines will be invited to contribute to specific topics with their expertise.

Time Schedule Working Group Meetings and Seminars

2004, June (workshop) 2004, November (seminar) 2005, March (workshop) 2005, September (seminar) 2006, April (workshop) 2006, October (seminar) Amsterdam, hosted by ICN Madrid, hosted by Reina Sofia Düsseldorf, hosted by Restaurierungscentrum Eindhoven, hosted by Van Abbemuseum Ghent, hosted by SMAK London, hosted by TATE

Co-ordination of Working Groups by co-organisers

B1. Preservation

B2. Artists' Participation

B3. Documentation & Archiving Strategies

B4. Theory and Semantics

B5. Knowledge and Information Exchange

TATE SMAK Restaurierungszentrum SBMK Reina Sofia

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Partners: (Verband der Restauratoren)

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<u>THE NETHERLANDS</u>

Co-organiser

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