

Research questions

Introduction:

'Revolution, a monument for the television revolution' was created for the travelling exhibition 'Imago, fin de siècle in Dutch contemporary art' (1990) as co-production between the Netherlands Office for Fine Arts (now Netherlands Institute for Cultural Heritage, ICN) and Netherlands Media Art Institute Montevideo/TBA.

'Revolution' was acquired in 1990 by ICN. After the 'Imago tour' technical devices (such as laserdisc player, monitor and speakers) became part of the audiovisual collection of NIM/Montevideo. A laserdisc containing images for 'Revolution', as well as for other Imago's works of art, were stored with Montevideo.

'Revolution' was recently asked on loan for the exhibition 'Moveable Parts: Forms of the Kinetic', Kunsthaus Graz, Austria (October 9, 2004 – January 16, 2005) and Museum Tinguely, Basel, Switzerland (March 6 – June 26, 2005).

A trial installation was arranged in Montevideo (11-07-2004) which should give an answer on whether the work could be sent on loan for a period of three months. During the re-installation Montevideo's technician Ramon Coelho, ICN's curator Simone Vermaat and registrar Nathalie Menke examined the work. Their conclusions were later discussed in a larger group of experts.

Most vulnerable parts:

- o 180 images of revolutions printed on a laserdisc together with other works of the Imago exhibition (3 copies of the images on 2 discs).
- o Eprom audio player, built by the artist and producing the sound accompanying the images.
- o The monitor used for 'Revolution', belonging to a series of 30 Sony Trinitron monitors originally purchased for the Imago exhibition. Three copies are still in use.

Questions and items to be addressed:

1. A proper registration of the work did not exist; it was even unknown where all components were stored.
2. Current condition was unknown and should be assessed.
3. Installation instructions should be elaborated (a short list of instructions existed)
4. How should be the strategy for the custom made Eprom audio player? Could it be sent on loan? Could audio data be extracted? Does a copy of the audio data exist? Should emulation be considered for long-term preservation of the sound? What is the artist's opinion on this?
5. What should be the approach for the copies of the laserdisc images? Should more copies be made, if possible? Should the various works of the Imago exhibition be separated or stored together? What should be the long-term preservation strategy for laserdiscs?
6. Could the work still be exhibited if not all images were reproduced?
7. The monitor used for 'Revolution' belongs to a series of 30 Sony Trinitron monitors originally purchased for the Imago exhibition. Three copies are still in use. The other monitors have been hired out by Montevideo in the past and are now written off. What should be the strategy if these three monitors are written off too? Could they be replaced? What criteria?
8. Questions to the artist regarding the condition of the frame, handle and floor plate (for example, corrosion, scratches, dirt)? Who made the frame and floor panels?
9. Who else could provide information?

Action items:

1. Proper registration and documentation
2. Assessment of condition
3. Conservation of physical components (frame, handle, floor plate), devices and technical components
4. Draw up installation instructions
5. Video registration of setting up and dismantling the installation
6. Video registration of 180 images of revolutions (captured when the installation is working)
7. Video registration of installation when viewer is inter-acting with it (turning the column around)
8. Interview with the artist
9. Interview with technician Ramon Coelho

Findings during re-installation:

1. All parts stored with ICN were taken to Montevideo. Since the registration of the work was incomplete, it was difficult to find out if all parts still existed and where they were stored.

'Revolution' has been registered at the ICN under inventory number K90043-A-E. In the original registration the following components were listed:

- A. Monitor 2730QM
- C. Floor elements
- D. Turntable
- B. Frame with push bar
- E. Laser disc player, computer, etc.

The registration of component E is vague, while most problems were expected at that point. Next to the incomplete registration, ICN had a patch diagram and an English summary of technical data, a list of parts (described according to Imago's packaging units) and instructions.

Extensive documentation was set up using a model developed by Montevideo which includes a detailed registration of each component and description of the properties, function and meaning of that particular component. Photographs were made and instructions for setting up the installation were drafted.

2. Slight corrosion was assessed on the metal frame, scratches on the leather grip of the handle, small damage and dirt on the floor plate.
3. Not all 180 images of revolutions were presented; after the first 15 images, the very first one of the French Revolution reappeared. The others were not presented. What could be the reason? What should be the strategy if not all images were presented?
4. There were a few drop-outs in the images (not disturbing, but more than in earlier viewings, according to Ramon Coelho). What should be the strategy if drop-outs get worse in the future?
5. The laserdisc and laserdisc player had to be cleaned (possible reason for the defect in presentation of the images).
6. Three copies of the Imago images are printed on two different laserdiscs (one laserdisc carries the images on both sides). Although back-ups of the video images exist, the images for Revolution cannot be separated from the other Imago artworks unless video data are migrated. Since laserdisc and laserdisc player are essential elements for the installation, an emulation plan should be set-up.
7. The tracking wheel had to be cleaned (possible reason for the defect in presentation of the images)
8. The Eprom audio player was still functioning well. Since this is a unique device, the question arose whether it could be sent on loan. It is an essential part of the installation; without this component the installation could not be exhibited. Question arose whether the audio data could be extracted from the player.
9. The remaining three monitors (Sony PVM 2730QM Trinitron colour video monitor ser. No. 2011533) were tested. One had a good picture quality but an (invisible) melted spot at the top, two others had an average picture quality. The one with the best picture quality was selected; calibration had to be done.
10. The operating programme (stored at floppy disk) should be examined with an eye to possible emulation of the installation in the future (study of the source code). A copy of the floppy disk was being made.
11. In general, the question was whether the condition was well enough to send this work, containing many vulnerable and unique parts, on loan for a period of three months.
12. The long-term preservation should include a plan for emulation of the installation.
13. An interview should be conducted with the artist as well as with technical assistants like Ramon Coelho.

Results of the re-installation (11-07-2004):

- 'Revolution' could be sent on loan for a period of three months
- A registration of 16 elements (in stead of 5), including pictures
- Installation instructions were drawn up
- A video of setting up and dismantling the installation
- Two video's of the working installation (one of the images, one of a viewer turning the column around)
- Problems (such as the defect in presentation of the images) were solved
- Problems for long-term preservation were summarised

Long-term preservation:

- Set up an emulation plan for Revolution
- Ask the artist
- Strategy for preserving Eprom audio player, laserdisc, laserdisc player, monitor
- Study the source code of the operating system