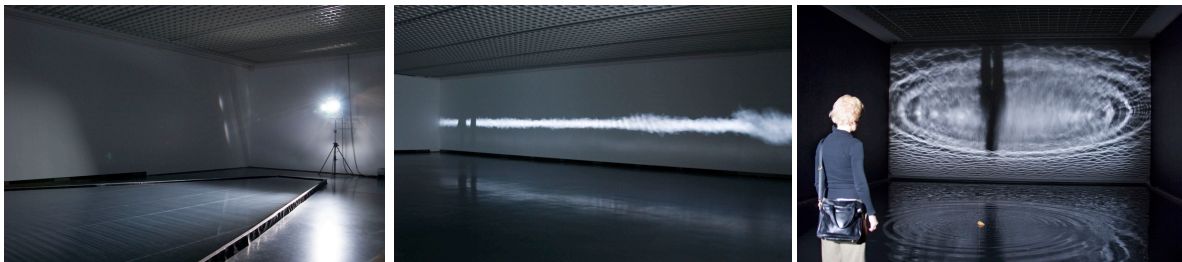


summary of the case-study

OLAFUR ELIASSON - NOTION MOTION, 2005

*in the collection of Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen, Rotterdam, The Netherlands
as part of the Culture 2000 project Inside Installations
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INTRODUCTION

Notion Motion by Danish artist Olafur Eliasson (Copenhagen, 1967) was exhibited in Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen Rotterdam from 8.10.2005 till 8.1.2006.

The installation consists of three consecutive situations using water and light (HMI projectors) to visualise the reflection of the light on the water, linked to the movement of the gallery visitors.

Connected by a long, elevated wooden walkway, the situations experiment with vibrations as a phenomenon that defines and reconfigures space. In his large-scale installation Eliasson explores the consequences of visitor movement within a museum space, thus drawing attention to the fact that no space is neutral or stable.

Originally, Eliasson planned a more complex work for this location, but this turned out to be impossible. In three weeks time Notion Motion was developed, based on some elements that were already part of the initial idea for the given space.

The Werkstatt / Büro Olafur Eliasson had been doing research for the initial project for more than a year. They prepared technical drawings for the work and one of Eliasson's employees came to the Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen to lead the installation for two weeks. Apart from him, Notion Motion was executed by a building company and the technical staff of the museum. The artist was present for two days to fine-tune the work.

During the exhibition, Museum Boijmans van Beuningen acquired the work through donation of the H + F Patronage (Han Nefkens), under the condition to show it every five years.

Because of the nature of the work - and apart from some technical elements (lamps, rotating system, ...) - the whole installation has to be made anew every time it is installed. For this, a thorough documentation is necessary.

FOCUS OF THE CASE-STUDY

This case study focused mainly on the many complexities of re-installation. Since Notion Motion is built anew every time it is installed and new materials are used, physical preservation has no relevance at all. Precise documentation, both of the material aspects and the concept, on the other hand, are extremely important. Only through this, it is possible to preserve the work for the future. It is the preservation of a splash.

Apart from this, two key aspects were unclear: whether the work was site specific and connected to this, the possibility of loan.

The case-study was complicated by the fact that some of the people involved with the first installation have left the museum, before a proper registration or documentation of the work and its complexities has been made.

RESEARCH

For the first time in Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen, documentation of the work was arranged thoroughly in various media, thanks to the experiences in the Inside Installations project so far. But the different files about Notion Motion have been found in almost ten locations in the museum.

During the installation of Notion Motion, many details were executed somewhat different than they were contrived before. Because of this, the groundplan and technical drawings made by the Werkstatt Olafur Eliasson are no longer accurate. Upon investigating the sketches that were made during the installation and dismantling of Notion Motion by the technical staff of the museum, it became clear that many parts were not exactly clear. New construction drawings are being made.

After interviews with the technicians who were involved with the first installation of Notion Motion and after research of the documentation, an extensive questionnaire was compiled and sent to Olafur Eliasson and his Büro to be answered. An interview with Eliasson is scheduled as well. He would like to show one of the rooms of Notion Motion in a retrospective exhibition that will travel through the US in 2009. This means the questions of site-specificity and loan will have to be clarified in the the near future.

RESULTS OF THE CASE STUDY

The results of this case study are twofold: on the one hand this complex installation becomes more manageable in the future, because of the precise documentation, both of the material and the immaterial aspects; on the other hand, the Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen was and still is forced to rethink the ways information is gathered and stored. Ideally, the department for documentation of the collection should contain all physical data and also a list of all sources. It's up to the museum to find a proper solution in general for the accessibility of data of complex installations in the collection.

In this case study, a couple of key issues in preserving complex installations became apparent. At the moment of acquisition, the work is a 'hot topic'. When the first enthusiasm and some of the people involved have gone, a lot of the understanding of the work disappears, even though it might be documented. Apart from this, the case emphasises the changed conditions for preservation of a collection.

One issue that became very clear, is that models and new protocols to handle complex installations should be apt for the daily practice in museums or related institutions. Apart

from this, it is important that there is a common responsibility in the museum for preservation and presentation issues.

The re-installation of a part of Notion Motion in the near future could be an important test to see whether the thorough documentation and registration of the work has succeeded and whether this case-study has resulted in making this complex installation more manageable.