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Publication date

2014

Document Version

Final published version

Published in

Making and Transforming Art: Technology and Interpretation: proceedings of the fifth symposium of the ICOM-CC Working Group for Art Technology Source Research, held at the Royal Institute of Cultural Heritage (KIK-IRPA), Brussels, 22-23 November 2012

[Link to publication](#)

Citation for published version (APA):

Stigter, S. (2014). Dynamic art technological sources for contemporary works: the artist interview and the installation process. In H. Dubois, J. H. Townsend, J. Nadolny, S. Eyb-Green, S. Kroustallis, & S. Neven (Eds.), *Making and Transforming Art: Technology and Interpretation: proceedings of the fifth symposium of the ICOM-CC Working Group for Art Technology Source Research, held at the Royal Institute of Cultural Heritage (KIK-IRPA), Brussels, 22-23 November 2012* (pp. 147-148). Archetype Publications. <http://www.archetype.co.uk/publication-details.php?id=214>

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Dynamic art technological sources for contemporary works: the artist interview and the installation process

Sanneke Stigter

The artist interview has become an important resource for the conservation of contemporary art (Beerkens *et al.* 2012). The installation of an artwork in collaboration with the artist is an even more valuable research tool. However, as with the artist interview it needs critical assessment, because first-hand information is gained but also co-constructed (van Saaze 2009). Different ways of presenting the artwork can be explored in dialogue with the artist, as was experienced with Jan Dibbets' conceptual and variable artwork *All shadows that occurred to me in... are marked with tape* from 1969 in the collection of the Kröller-Müller Museum (Fig. 1).

Installing the artwork in cooperation with the artist was the best opportunity to get to know the work inside out. The conservator is situated on the crossroads of translating the artist's ideas into a physical display, a crucial position for a conservator with the responsibility for the management of the artwork's appearance in the future (Fig. 2). During first

installation significant viewpoints are not only articulated, but also negotiated (Stigter 2014 and forthcoming). Thus the artist interview and the installation itself are dynamic sources about the art making process, demanding careful documentation. Thoroughly annotated interview transcriptions, which included critical reflections on the conservator's own role as a mediator in the process, proved to be effective to make clear the artwork's informal nature and open-ended form. The artist's statements were analysed in combination with what was noted in practice, explaining what was really meant by what was stated, because it was immediately put to the test.

By putting forward the role of various stakeholders as well as the influence of site and context, including that of the resulting documentation, a critical view of the dynamics around the artwork is captured, making clear that installation and documentation processes are continuously shaping the artwork's biography.



Figure 1 Jan Dibbets, *All shadows that occurred to me in the Kröller-Müller Museum on Good Friday 2009*, 1969, execution 2009, detail. Masking tape, dimensions variable. (Photo: Sanneke Stigter/ KMM.)



Figure 2 Jan Dibbets and conservators Evelyne Snijders and Sanneke Stigter while installing *All shadows that occurred to me...* in the Kröller-Müller Museum, 10 April 2009. (Photo: Toos van Kooten/ KMM.)

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Jan and Kaayk Dibbets, Evert van Straaten, the former director of the Kröller-Müller Museum, and my former colleagues at the Kröller-Müller Museum as well as Evelyne Snijders and Marleen Wagenaar for assisting me, and the New Strategies in the Conservation of Contemporary Art research group for all supportive feedback.

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