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The Artist Interview and Installation Practices as Art Technological Sources for Contemporary Art

Sanneke Stigter

The artist interview has become an important source in the conservation of contemporary art. The installation process is an intimate encounter for the conservator with the artwork itself. The artist interview has become an important source in the management of the artwork's appearance in the future. By putting forward the role of the artist interview and the discussions during the installation process turned out to be an effective way of documentation, which included a critical reflection on the conservator’s own role in relation to the outcome.

Installing a complex artwork in co-operation with the artist is the best opportunity to get to know an artwork inside out. The artist’s statements could be analysed in combination with what was noted in practice, which explained what was really meant, because what was stated was immediately put to the test in practice.

The documentation of Jan Dibbets’ All shadows... should make clear that the final form of the artwork is open-ended, akin to a lot of contemporary artworks that are not restricted to one single form. For All shadows... a thoroughly annotated transcription of the artist interview and the discussions during the installation process made it possible to have an effective way of documentation, which included a critical reflection on the conservator’s own role in relation to the outcome.

The artist interview has become an important source in the conservation of contemporary art. Moreover, an interview during the installation of an artwork could even be considered a new research tool in conservation. First hand information is generated while the artwork’s possible manifestations are explored in dialogue with the artist. This was experienced with the installation, interpretation and documentation practices of Jan Dibbets’ All shadows that occurred to me in... are marked with tape from 1969, a conceptual and variable artwork with a site-specific character.

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Both the artist interview and the process of installation could therefore be considered dynamic art technological sources. In conjuction with archival and comparative research, these practices offer unique insight in the dialogue between concept and material. When these dynamic sources are captured in documentation, the conservator’s own role should be made explicit and reflected upon in order to be transparent about his mediating role in the installation process and the potential impact of the documentation in the future. After all, the documentation and the reinstalment procedure itself could be considered new forms of conservation for ephemeral art, because these are, in effect, guiding the artwork into the future. By putting forward the role of various stakeholders in this process, it is aimed to leave a transparent view of the artwork’s concept, while mediating role in the installation process turned out to be an effective way of documentation, which included a critical reflection on the conservator’s own role in relation to the outcome.

References

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