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

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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 information is used by the conservator with a responsibility for the proper management of the artwork's appearance in the future. All shadows that occurred to me in the Kröller-Müller Museum on Good Friday, for example, were marked with tape from 1969, a conceptual and variable artwork with a site-specific character.

Installing a complex artwork in co-operation with the artist is the best opportunity to get to know an artwork inside out. One is situated on the crossroads of translating the artist's ideas into a physical manifestation, a crucial position for a conservator with a responsibility for the proper management of the artwork's appearance in the future. Jan Dibbets' All shadows... is physically destroyed after each exhibition and then waiting to be reinterpreted again. The choices and adjustments that are made during each installation moment, so crucial for the final result, are rarely ever documented, since documentation practices generally start after an artwork is finalized. However, during the moment of materialisation significant data are negotiated, particularly if the physical appearance is only temporary. Thus the installation practice itself becomes an important source of information, especially when this is combined with an artist interview, making the final appearance an authorised version.

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. Both the artist interview and the process of installation could therefore be considered dynamic art technological sources. In conjunction 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 reinstallation 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 passing it on to the future - shaping the artwork's possible transformations of the work of art in progress.

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References