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The Artist Interview in Conservation Research

The Role of the Conservator

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Sanneke STIGTER

Bio

Sanneke Stigter is Assistant Professor in Conservation and Restoration of Cultural Heritage at the University of Amsterdam. After receiving her graduate degree in art history at the University of Amsterdam, she went on to complete the five-year postgraduate training program in conservation of modern art at the SRAL with honours. She headed the conservation department of contemporary art and modern sculpture at the Kröller-Müller Museum for nearly eight years and curated several exhibitions on conservation. She has published widely and takes part in several advisory boards and research projects devoted to the conservation of contemporary art. She has directed the specialisation in Contemporary Art of the training program in Conservation and Restoration of Cultural Heritage at the University of Amsterdam (MA and postgraduate programmes) since 2007, recently being awarded her PhD. Her research interests lie in conservation theory, museum practice, oral history and artist interviews, with a special focus on installation art, photoworks, and conceptual art.



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Abstract

The Artist Interview in Conservation Research

Interviewing has become an important research tool in the conservation of contemporary art. However, the interview as a source needs critical assessment, because it is not only first-hand information, but the information is also constructed. As oral history theory makes clear, the role of the interviewer is crucial to the outcome, as it is a negotiated text. In our aim to keep a low profile as the conservator involved, special guidelines have been developed to conduct artist interviews geared at conservation. In addition, a reflexive stance based on ethnographic research methods should allow for a critical approach to use the new source material for decision-making in conservation practice. This course offers insight into the theoretical basis and practical understanding of the artist interview in conservation research, and aims to provide participants with the intellectual tools to prepare, conduct, and analyze interviews as source material in conservation and presentation of contemporary artworks.