

February – May 2022

Introduction

Research-based and archive-based art projects are increasingly common in contemporary art, especially since the 1990s. They are bound to the proliferation of discursive, scholarly and participative strategies in visual art, supported by the emergence of artistic PhDs in academies worldwide. While many museums, including M+, have actively presented and acquired these works, the question remains how can we provide the care necessary for maintaining them in collections.

These works are often manifested in a range of objects and events with no clear aesthetic "hierarchy". They may be centred on a discrete art object (physical or digital, such as video) or artform (such as installation) intended for display, but they may equally involve various physical and digital objects in the form of archives and research material, and even presented outside exhibition setting, activities in public and digital space, workshops, publications, and so on.

Because these artforms are not constituted only by material objects but by a range of components and elements with variable relations and dependencies as well as aesthetic and functional roles, they cannot be collected and preserved solely under the assumption of material fixity – which is the principle of the modern museum concept. Similarly to the case of certain installation art, participatory art, relational art, performance and digital art, etc. their perpetuation relies on the interpretation of the work's identity. What makes the difference is the degree of complexity, inherent processuality and (often) the lack of the fixed, authentic "end product". Moreover, often sustaining these art forms rely more on their further development and continuation rather than re-creation.

Workshop #1

Date: Thursday 24 February 2022, 9:00-11:30 AM HKT

Introduction

Aga Wielocha, David Smith and Dušan Barok introduce the objectives, goals and outline of the project.

Part 1: Information Overload: Research-Based Art and the Politics of Attention

Guest: **Claire Bishop** (Professor at the Graduate Center of the City University New York)

This lecture is a critical survey of “research-based art,” a type of installation practice characterized by the use of text and documents to support an abundance of visual materials, distributed spatially. I offer a genealogy for the emergence of this work in the early 1990s, and chart changes since over the past three decades through the lens of developments in digital technology (the Internet) and the pressures of an attention economy.

Claire Bishop is a critic and professor in the PhD Program in Art History at the Graduate Center, City University of New York. Her books include *Artificial Hells: Participatory Art and the Politics of Spectatorship* (Verso, 2012), and *Radical Museology, or, What’s Contemporary in Museums of Contemporary Art?* (Walther König, 2013). She is a Contributing Editor of *Artforum*, and her essays and books have been translated into twenty languages. She is currently completing two books: a short publication about Merce Cunningham’s *Events*, and a collection of essays about contemporary art and attention. Her most recent publication is a book of conversations with Cuban artist Tania Bruguera (Cisneros, 2020).

Part 2: Research-Based Art Practices and Knowledge Production in Southeast Asia

Guest: **Caroline Ha Thuc** (art writer, curator and researcher)

Since the 2000s, more and more artists in Southeast Asia are engaged in research processes inspired by the social sciences, working as historians, archivists, archaeologists or sociologists, yet applying freely the methodologies of work of these disciplines. The outcome of the artists’ research is exhibited as an artwork and not presented in a written and academic format. Still, these artistic “incursions” into academic fields are challenging the established system of knowledge production and in particular its domination by local authoritative discourses. Research appears thus as a new strategy to convey legitimacy and value to counter-narratives on social, cultural, historical and political issues, while bringing forth new creative possibilities and innovative epistemological languages.

Drawing from extensive fieldwork, I seek to analyze this creative entanglement of academic and artistic research in Southeast Asia, in particular in Cambodia, Myanmar, Singapore and Vietnam, and to examine its epistemological significance as a potential new mode of knowledge production.

Dr. **Caroline Ha Thuc** is an independent art writer, curator and researcher. Her research focuses on Asian contemporary art and the artistic production of knowledge.

Workshop #2

Date: Thursday 3 March 2022, 4:00-6:30 PM HKT

Part 1: Preserving and Presenting Net-based Art

Guest: **Patricia Falcão** (Time-based Media Conservator at Tate; Goldsmiths, University of London)

Tate has recently conducted an extensive project *The Lives of Net Art* as a body of research into 15 works of net art commissioned by Tate in 2000–2011. Tate’s programme was intended to reach audiences beyond London, and to respond to directives to make art more accessible. As the works were commissioned, not bought, they did not become part of Tate’s collection, but were licensed for display on Tate’s website. Today, the pages that came to host these artworks remain accessible from Tate’s servers. The research project asked how can these works “live on” today. What are the strategies to preserve and present these different artforms? What are the obstacles and challenges involved in this process in terms of licensing, collection management and archiving? What is to learn from these insights in digital commissioning at M+?

Patricia Falcão is a time-based media conservator working at Tate, where she researches and develops strategies for the preservation of software-based artworks. More recently, in the context of the *Reshaping the Collectible* project, this has broadened to include the acquisition and preservation of web-based artworks. In the past eight years, she has consistently published on the theme of preservation of time-based media, digital and software-based art, in the conservation and digital preservation communities. She is also currently undertaking doctoral research at the Goldsmiths, University of London, and Tate on “Artists, Conservators and Game Developers: A Comparative Study of Software Preservation in Three Domains.”

References:

Ben Grosser, *Go Rando*, 2017-. Case to be discussed. <https://bengrosser.com/projects/go-rando/>

The Lives of Net Art, online resource, 2021.

<https://www.tate.org.uk/research/collection-care-research/reshaping-the-collectible/net-art-introduction>

Part 2: Caring for and Stewarding Artworks that Generate Archival Material

Guest: **Sarah Haylett** (University College London / Tate; former Archives and Records Management Researcher at Tate)

This presentation will explore the forms of practice that have been called upon to recognise, care for and steward a new type of artwork at Tate: artworks that generate archival material. These artworks are actively producing records as part of the way they function and unfold, challenging not only the institutional boundaries between archive and collection, but conservation documentation practices. Rooted in a history of archival artworks, and Hal Foster’s archival impulse, this research has looked to community and participatory archive methodologies to develop a proposal that centres the artist and participants as record creators. Participants will think about how to recognise such artworks in their collections; working across museum disciplines to develop a workflow for future acquisitions and consider potential new forms of archival practice in the art museum.

Sarah Haylett is a London based archivist and researcher. Between 2018 - 2021 Sarah was the Archives and Records Management Researcher on the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation funded project *Reshaping the Collectible: When Artworks Live* in the Museum at Tate. In this role she explored artworks that challenge the boundaries between Tate’s archives, records and art collection, and the process of institutional record keeping.

Currently, Sarah is an AHRC collaborative doctoral student at UCL and Tate, she is researching if and how community and participatory archiving practices can be used to collect the traces of socially engaged art.

Workshop #3

Date: Thursday 10 March 2022, 4:00-6:30 PM HKT

Part 1: Documenting Complex Artworks: The Case of SFMOMA Wiki

Guest: **Martina Haidvogel** (Bern University of the Arts, formerly Media Conservator at SFMOMA)

The process of setting up complex artworks is often hindered by the simple fact that documentation is dispersed across a range of stakeholders, systems, folders and formats. It can be stressful to gather information necessary to install a work properly in the limited timeframe of exhibition production. The SFMOMA has come up with a practical approach to this problem by setting up an internal museum system which combines all the necessary knowledge needed to install a particular installation from their collection. The museum has adapted the software used by Wikipedia in a way that allows museum staff to combine different instructions, photos, videos and other materials for each artwork in one place. How does it work in practice? What are the pros and cons of using wiki software as an example of collaborative space of artwork's documentation?

Martina Haidvogel is a lecturer in Conservation and Restoration of Contemporary Art at Bern University of the Arts. She came to the university from the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, where she was Associate Media Conservator. In this role, she has piloted documentation and preservation initiatives for SFMOMA's Media Arts collection and has lectured and published internationally on media conservation and its implications for museum collections. Martina's research focuses on cross-disciplinary collaboration practice and how it can be fostered through digital tools, serving the needs of the art of our time.

References:

Haidvogel, M., White, L. (2020). "Reimagining the Object Record: SFMOMA's MediaWiki." *Stedelijk Studies* 10: "Digital Archives and Collections". <https://stedelijkstudies.com/journal/reimagining-the-object-record-sfmomas-mediawiki/>

Barok, D., Noordegraaf, J., de Vries, A. "From Collection Management to Content Management in Art Documentation: The Conservator as an Editor". *Studies in Conservation* 64(8), 472-489. <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/00393630.2019.1603921> (open access)

Julia Scher, *Productive Engineering*, 1993-. Case to be discussed. <https://www.sfmoma.org/artwork/98.513.A-PP/>

Part 2: Publishing as a Strategy for Preserving and Presenting Research-based Projects

Guests: **Aymeric Mansoux** (Willem de Kooning Academy, Rotterdam), **Julie Boschat Thorez** (Varia, Rotterdam)

In our contribution we will discuss the roles that collaborative and experimental publishing can have for preserving research-based, processual artworks and practices. As a case study, we will present the process of documenting the artwork *Naked on Pluto* by Aymeric Mansoux, Marloes de Valk and Dave Griffiths on the Monoskop platform, which functions as a wiki. At the heart of *Naked on Pluto* is an artist-built online open-source multiplayer video game that has served as an experiential impetus for a broader exploration of privacy in the age of social media through exhibitions, workshops, lectures, talks, books, and websites. More than just art software or conceptual work, artists see this work more broadly as research. We propose an approach that remains rooted in documentation practices and extends them to what we call experimental publishing. It is inspired by the range of online research publications produced by various art preservation initiatives in recent years. They bring expert knowledge about selected artworks together with documentation and the views of their creators. Recent examples include *Net Art Anthology*, an online retrospective of net-based works created by Rhizome, and *Digital Canon*, an online catalogue of historical digital artworks from the Netherlands

launched by LIMA. What are the possibilities and limitations of preserving these types of works through online publishing?

Aymeric Mansoux is an artist, musician and media researcher, with a background in economics, fine art, graphic design, and computer programming. He is lector of Commercial Practices at the Willem de Kooning Academy in Rotterdam. For the past twenty years, Aymeric's work and research has explored the value, sustainability, and impact of alternatives modes of organisation and production. He received his PhD in 2017 from the Centre for Cultural Studies at Goldsmiths University of London for his investigation of the techno-legal forms of social organisation within free and open source based cultural practices. The same year he was tasked to design and lead the Experimental Publishing master course (XPUB) at WdKA/Piet Zwart Institute, Rotterdam. In more recent years, the scope of his interest has narrowed increasingly in relation to alternative economic models and the climate crisis in the context of art and culture production. While there seems to be a consensus that artists and designers will have a key role in responding to the need to transition to a sustainable economy, it remains to be found how exactly and under which new constraints.

Julie Boschat-Thorez is a researcher, artist and educator whose work focuses on knowledge organisation systems and their orientations. She primarily investigates archives, collections, datasets or museums, to identify material traces of the ideas and circumstances under the influence of which they were created. She also has an overlapping practice of conceptualising and developing archival systems with an interest for variability, circulation, community and access. This has lead her to collaborate with Lozana Rossenova as a lead developer for the DAAP (Digital Archive of Artists' Publishing). She has also worked with various organisations such as LIMA or the Institute of Network Cultures in Amsterdam on research projects related to Digital Art preservation or Living Archives. She is a member of Varia, a Rotterdam based initiative which aims at developing critical understandings of the technologies that surround us. She teaches at the Willem de Kooning Academy a course greatly inspired by Gloria Wekker's notion of the Cultural Archive.

References:

Aymeric Mansoux, Marloes de Valk and Dave Griffiths, *Naked on Pluto*, 2010-. Case to be discussed.

https://monoskop.org/Naked_on_Pluto

Barok, D., Boschat Thorez, J., Mansoux, A. (2020). "Publishing as a Strategy for Preserving Artistic Research".

https://monoskop.org/Naked_on_Pluto/Preservation (short article summarizing the preservation project)

Workshop #4

Date: Thursday 17 March 2022, 4:00-6:30 PM HKT

Part 1: Archiving a Network: The Case of Old Boys Network

Guest: **Cornelia Sollfrank** (artist and researcher, Berlin)

The Old Boys Network was the first cyberfeminist alliance. The self-organized project was active from 1997 to 2001 and provided a platform for online and offline activities for almost 200 participants related to emerging cyberfeminisms. In the context of a renewed interest in the topic of gender and technology, the idea was born in 2020 to create an archive of OBN's activities. The documenta studies group at the Kunsthochschule Kassel [<https://documenta-studien.de/en/team>] took the initiative for the project obn_archive and was able to win over the documenta archiv as collaborator and host for the archive. The goal of the archival work was to create an open access archive in progress in order to include diverse and extensive material that would allow to capture the spirit of the time. Concepts such as situatedness, organizational aesthetics and micropolitics provide the conceptual framework. Initiator of OBN and temporary archivist Cornelia Sollfrank provides an insight into the process and discusses some of the questions that arose related to the archival work.

Cornelia Sollfrank (PhD) is an artist and researcher, living in Berlin (Germany). Since the early days of the World Wide Web she has explored the potential of the digital for rethinking traditional aesthetic categories while also searching for innovative forms for aesthetic and political transformation. Recurring subjects in her artistic and academic work in and about digital cultures are artistic infrastructures, new forms of (political) self-organization, critical authorship, aesthetics of the commons, and techno-feminist practice and theory. Her experiments with the basic principles of aesthetic modernism implied conflicts with its institutional and legal framework and led to her academic research. In her PhD "Performing the Paradoxes of Intellectual Property," Cornelia investigated the increasingly conflicting relationship between art and copyright. This led to her research project "Creating Commons" (2017-2019) based at the University of the Arts in Zürich. In her current research "Latent Spaces. Performing Ambiguous Data," she investigates the potential of social media for political manipulation. Recent publications include *The Beautiful Warriors. Technofeminist Practice in the 21st Century* (minorcompositions.org), *Aesthetics of the Commons* (diaphanes.net) and *Fix My Code* (with Winnie Soon) (e eclectic.de) – all open access. Homepage: <http://artwarez.org>

References:

Wiki documenting the process of archiving Old Boys Network. <https://obn-archive.multiplace.org/>

More information about Old Boys Network. https://monoskop.org/Old_Boys_Network

Part 2: Networks of Care

Guest: **Anna Schäffler** (Networks of Care, Berlin)

Anna Schäffler's input is based on her years of experience and collaboration with the estate of German conceptual artist Anna Oppermann and will address the challenges of museums regarding processual and installation-based artistic practices. The increasing shift of preservation tasks into so-called "networks of care" also entails far-reaching consequences for collections of contemporary art, which we will discuss together.

Anna Schäffler PhD is an art historian and curator based in Berlin, Germany. She conducts theoretical and practical research on the preservation of contemporary art at the intersection of art history, conservation, and curating. Together with a media conservator, she advises museums and archives on the long-term preservation of their collections. Anna also develops projects for experimentally testing new methods of knowledge transfer.

References:

Schäffler, A., "Reorienting Custody through Common Care for Artists' Estates", in: *Artists' Legacies: Preservation, Study, Dissemination, Institutionalisation*, ed. Fundação Arpad Szenes Vieira da Silva, Lisbon, 2021, 23-33.
https://institutodehistoriadaarte.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/Artists-Legacies_FINAL.pdf

Anna Oppermann Estate. Artist to be discussed. <https://bthumm.de/artists/estate-anna-oppermann/>

Workshop #5

M+ case studies

Date: Thursday 28 April 2022, 4:00-6:30 PM HKT

Part 1: 2019.635 / The Bianwen Book / Chen Chien-Jen

Presented by Ulanda Blair (M+, Curator, Moving Image)

Part 2: Touch for Luck / Moniker

Presented by Kate Gu (M+, Producer, Digital Special Project)

Workshop #6

M+ case studies

Date: Thursday 12 May 2022, 4:00-6:30 PM HKT

Part 1: 2012.1178 / Keywords School / Xu Tan

Speaker: Mo Wu (M+, De Ying Associate Curator, Visual Art)

Part 2: 2020.377 / PAWN SHOP / E-flux; Vitamin Creative Space

Presented by Hester Chan (M+, Curator, Collections) and Fabiola Rocco (M+, Associate Conservator, Variable Media Art)

Project team

Dušan Barok, artist

Fabiola Rocco, conservator, M+

David Smith, conservator, M+

Aga Wielocha, conservator, M+

Literature

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https://www.berghahnbooks.com/downloads/intros/GrattonArt_intro.pdf
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<https://www.arenablock.com/block/472583>
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https://monoskop.org/images/7/77/Steyerl_Hito_2013_Art_as_Occupation_What_Happens_to_Knowledge.pdf
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<https://artsofsoutheastasia.com/the-first-research-based-artworks-in-cambodia/>,
<https://www.academia.edu/43708473>
- Thuc, C.H. (2021). "What is South East Asia? Emancipatory modes of knowledge production in Ho Tzu Nyen's Critical Dictionary of Southeast Asia." *South East Asia Research* 29(1), 1-15.
<https://www.academia.edu/45106135/>