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# **The Textile Conservators Role in the Conservation of Contemporary Textile-Based Art.**

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Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Master of Philosophy in Textile Conservation in the School of Culture and Creative Arts, University of Glasgow, 23<sup>rd</sup> August 2012.

## **Abstract**

Current research into the conservation of contemporary art has been focused mainly on digital and multi-media works of art, with very little discussion involving textile-based art. However, textile conservators are involved in the conservation of textile-based artworks. This dissertation looks in depth at the textile conservators role in the conservation of contemporary textile-based art and at the specific issues within the conservation of contemporary art, such as the artist's intent and meaning of their art and how this can affect conservation and documentation. The use of case studies involving textile conservators illustrate the role that they fulfill and how this may not be dissimilar to their role in conserving historical objects within a collection. An artist interview was carried out and analysed to determine its value and importance in the conservation and documentation of contemporary art. With results showing that determining the meaning of the work prior to conservation is essential to the conservation decision-making, and that a textile conservator can employ the suggested research and documentation methods without changing their practice.

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## 1.0 Introduction

Conversations in the conservation of modern and contemporary art have emerged in the past ten years, provoking serious research and collaborations into the subject, discussing issues such as how conservators safeguard artistic expression for future generations and how time-based media or ephemeral materials are preserved.

Much research has been done by two institutions in the Netherlands; the Foundation for the Conservation of Contemporary Art (Dutch Abbreviation: SBMK) and the International Network for the Conservation of Contemporary Art (INCCA) and this forms the basis of the dissertation research.

The SBMK is a collaboration among Dutch museums and related institutions that have collections of modern and contemporary art. As well as their national role, they are also active internationally in the conservation, presentation, documentation and maintenance of modern and contemporary art. The website states that the foundation's aims are to<sup>1</sup>:

- *promote theory development, discussion and research in order to broaden the expertise of (Dutch) professionals;*
- *initiate and organise research projects, theme-related events and symposiums;*
- *become closely involved in maintaining an international network of knowledge and information for the exchange of expertise on the preservation of modern art in the broadest possible sense*

Since its inception in 1999 the INCCA member numbers have increased from 23 to almost 600. Members include students and independent professionals connected to the conservation of modern and contemporary art. Members include conservators, curators, scientists, registrars, archivists, art historians and researchers from around 400 organisations in around 50 countries.

INCCA aims to be a platform for information and knowledge exchange and holds the *Database for Artists' Archives* where members can add and search other members' unpublished documents. There are close to 200 artists in the database including Panamerenko, Tracey Emin and Joseph Beuys.

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<sup>1</sup> *Objectives*, SBMK, <http://www.sbmknl/objectives/> (accessed 11<sup>th</sup> April 2012).

Both SBMK and INCCA were involved in the project *Inside Installations: Preservation and Presentation of Installation Art*. This was a three-year research project carried out between 2004 and 2007. The project was coordinated by the Netherlands Institute for Cultural Heritage (ICN, Amsterdam) and co-organised by SBMK, along with Tate, London; Restaurierungszentrum der Landeshauptstadt Düsseldorf; Stedelijk Museum voor Actuele Kunst, Ghent; Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofia, Madrid. The project was carried out by members of the INCCA.

The Inside Installations project formed the starting point of the dissertation research, however of the 33 complex installations that were investigated, documented and re-installed during the project, not one was textile based. Many of the artworks featured were technology based, with moving parts or multimedia components, or were comprised of materials such as polymethyl methacrylate and packing tape, to ephemeral components like light, sound and performance.

These are all materials or components that would not be treated by a textile conservator, but textiles are widely used by artists, so it is inevitable that modern or contemporary artwork may be presented to a textile conservator for treatment. The fact that within this large project there were no textile based artworks presented highlights the lack of information available and discussion specifically for textile conservators, so where would a textile conservator look for knowledge and guidance when faced with the conservation of complex textile-based art?

As well as a personal interest in modern and contemporary art, it is hoped that this research will provide a place for textile conservators to go to for information on the conservation of textile art. The aim of the dissertation is to bring all major research on the conservation of modern and contemporary art together and to help to interpret this research to textile conservation for textile conservators. Questions such as where does a textile conservator start when faced with the conservation of contemporary textile-based art? What are the major issues to consider when conserving contemporary textile-based art, and how are these issues approached and dealt with? Does the conservation of contemporary textile-based art differ from the conservation of historical textiles, and if so, should it?

As illustrated in the aforementioned descriptions of, and connections between, SBMK and INCCA, researching such a topic appears to be a complex and extremely time

consuming task. The research suggests that the conservation and documentation of modern and contemporary artwork needs to be approached differently, this may be difficult for a conservator who works to specific deadlines or already has a particular documentation method to follow. It is hoped that the dissertation can provide suggestions as to how a conservator can incorporate the issues that are considered important into their practice.

The research is not intended to give precise instructions on the treatment of modern and contemporary artworks, nor will it give treatment solutions for particular materials, instead it will highlight current issues such as the importance of the artist's intention for their art and where this fits in with the artwork's documentation, as well as the importance of documentation, particularly when the artwork is a site specific installation or where the artwork is de-installed and then re-installed within another space.

## 2.0 Literature Review

### 2.1 Introduction

The aim of this literature review is to pull together major relevant publications into one paper. As the literature will not be specific to textile conservation it is recognised that it may be more difficult for readers to appreciate their relevance. In this literature review each publication will be described and evaluated to illustrate how they can be applied to the conservation of textile-based art. The review includes a brief description of what each publication's main research and theories encompass, with a short biography of its authors and contributors to highlight the major people involved and their background.

From the literature review, issues such as the artists' intent for their work, the artist's interview and suggestions for documenting complex art will be brought to the fore. These are issues that a conservator may not necessarily come across in their daily working practice, but need to be addressed when the conservator is treating a modern or contemporary work of art.

### 2.2 Modern Art: Who Cares?

The earliest publication accessed was *Modern Art: Who Cares?: An Interdisciplinary Research Project and An International Symposium on the Conservation of Modern and Contemporary Art* edited by Ijsbrand Hummelen and Dionne Sillé. *Modern Art: Who Cares?* was one of the first international symposia to deal specifically with the problems of the conservation and restoration of modern and contemporary art<sup>2</sup>. The event was the culmination of a Dutch research project titled *The Conservation of Modern Art* (1995-97) which aimed to identify problems in the conservation of

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<sup>2</sup> There have been symposiums dedicated to the conservation of contemporary art prior to the *Modern Art: Who Cares?* symposium in 1997, the earliest being the *International Symposium on the Conservation of Contemporary Art* held by the National Gallery in Canada in 1980. There were two subsequent symposiums after this with *Conservation and Contemporary Art* held by the Institute for the Conservation of Cultural Material (ICCM) in Sydney, Australia in 1984 and *From Marble to Chocolate* in 1995 held by Tate Gallery, Britain. The Tate Gallery symposium was published and edited by Jackie Heuman, it is titled *From Marble to Chocolate: The Conservation of Modern Sculpture*. The former two symposiums were not published in the same manner and have not been able to be accessed for the purposes of this dissertation.

modern and contemporary art and investigate possible solutions to these problems in order to develop a methodology. The results of the original research project, as well as post-prints of the symposium, were published in the book *Modern Art: Who Cares?*<sup>3</sup> which is still considered a milestone for the profession.

The publication is edited by Ijsbrand Hummelen and Dionne Sillé and both have been involved in the conservation of modern and contemporary art for the most part of their careers. Ijsbrand Hummelen has been responsible for the content of several national and international research programmes in the field of the preservation of contemporary art. He is currently senior research conservator at the Cultural Heritage Agency of the Netherlands (RCE) and has recently started his PhD research within the research project *New Strategies in Conservation of Contemporary Art*.<sup>4</sup> Dionne Sillé was project manager at the Foundation for the Conservation of Modern Art when the publication went to press.<sup>5</sup>

The *Modern Art: Who Cares?* project asked each Dutch museum with a large collection of modern art to submit three objects that they did not know how to conserve but felt were worth preserving. This is where the condition and complexities of each object is reported and includes areas such as chemical analysis, material identification, object cleaning and the reporting of specific conservation issues within each object. These papers are relevant when viewing them from a conservation interest point of view, however, out of the ten objects only two used materials which would be considered textile.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Hummelen, Ijsbrand & Sillé, Dionne, *Modern Art - Who Cares?: An Interdisciplinary Research Project and An International Symposium on the Conservation of Modern and Contemporary Art* (London: Archetype, 2005).

<sup>4</sup> Beerkens, Lydia, t' Hoen, Paulina, Hummelen Ijsbrand, van Saaze, Vivian, Scholte, Tatja and Stigter, Sanneke, *The Artist Interview: for Conservation and Presentation of Contemporary Art, Guidelines and Practice*. (Heijningen: JAP SAM Books, 2012) p151.

<sup>5</sup> Sillé, D., Introduction to the Project. In Hummelen, Ijsbrand & Sillé, Dionne, *Modern Art - Who Cares?: An Interdisciplinary Research Project and an International Symposium on the Conservation of Modern and Contemporary Art* (London: Archetype, 2005) p14.

<sup>6</sup> The two artworks that contained textile elements within them were Piero Manzoni's *Achrome* (1962) Beerkens, L., A Contemporary Cleaning Controversy. In *Modern Art - Who Cares?: An Interdisciplinary Research Project and an International Symposium on the Conservation of Modern and Contemporary Art* (London: Archetype, 2005) pp128-131. And Mario Merz's *Città irreale* (1968-69) Beerkens, L., The Preservation of a City of Light. In *Modern Art - Who Cares?: An Interdisciplinary Research Project and an International Symposium on the Conservation of Modern and Contemporary Art* (London: Archetype, 2005) pp67-73.

One weakness of the publication may be its age as the conservation of contemporary art is an evolving, ever changing topic. With more institutions and professionals becoming aware and involved in the conservation of contemporary art, theories, ideas and practice have been updated and evolved as more research and collaborations are formed. The publications successors, *Inside Installations* and *The Artist Interview*, would best serve as more contemporary, up-to-date publications to consult. However, for a textile conservator new to the issues relating to the documentation of contemporary art, the papers featured between pages 164 to 195 would be a recommended starting point. These pages feature *The Decision-Making Model for the Conservation and Restoration of Modern and Contemporary Art*, *The Model for Data Registration*, *The Model for Data Registration Linked to Other Databases* and *The Model for Condition Registration*<sup>7</sup>, all of which are easy to follow and emulate if required. If they are not followed step by step, these models at the very least, highlight the particular considerations and topics within documentation that a conservator should consider and/or include, and could be easily included in an institutions existing standard documentation model. These models are discussed further in this dissertation in the chapter titled *Documentation*. In comparison to the more high tech methods of documentation featured in the *Inside Installations* publication, the methods presented in *Modern Art: Who Cares?* would be favoured for their accessibility and would be highly recommended for textile conservators.

### 2.3 Inside Installations Project

As well as the publication titled *Inside Installations: Theory and Practice in the Care of Complex Artworks* edited by Tatja Scholte and Glenn Wharton, there is also a website of the same name, [www.inside-installations.org](http://www.inside-installations.org), that is described as a “unique digital repository of the projects results and will be filled by project partners as their research unfolds”.<sup>8</sup> This statement highlights that the *Inside Installations* project is an ongoing one, and that the research does not stop at the publication. Although the papers featured in the publication can be found on the *Inside Installations* website, it also holds further information, lectures, events and case studies that in some instances can be downloaded.

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<sup>7</sup> The decision-making and registration models were developed by the Foundation for the Conservation of Modern Art in 1999, and more specifically the working group for Registration and Documentation.

<sup>8</sup> *Welcome*, [www.inside-installations.org/home/index.php](http://www.inside-installations.org/home/index.php), (accessed 8<sup>th</sup> June 2012).

The *Inside Installations* book was edited by Tatja Scholte and Glenn Wharton. Tatja Scholte is senior researcher at RCE and programme manager of the scientific conservation project *Object in Context*. Since 1998 she has been involved in the RCE/SBMK artists' interviews projects. She specialises in the conservation of contemporary art, and in 2009 she started her PhD research within the project *New Strategies in Conservation of Contemporary Art*.<sup>9</sup> Glenn Wharton is a conservator specialising in modern and contemporary art. He is currently based at the Museum of Modern Art (MOMA), New York, as Time-Based Media Conservator, where he cares for the video, performance and electronic collections. He is also on the research faculty in Museum Studies at New York University where he teaches seminars on the conservation of museum collections, the challenge of installation art in museums and the museum life of contemporary art. In 2008 he established the *International Network for the Conservation of Contemporary Art – North America* (<http://www.incca-na.org>), the North American group of the *International Network for the Conservation of Contemporary Art* (INCCA).<sup>10</sup>

The artworks represented in the project display a specific problem or type of installation artwork, such as extra-large-scale installations, installations consisting of multiple artefacts, works that are made up of combined materials and media, or that are constructed from temporary or ephemeral materials, and installations that are conceptual works or remakes, including performances.<sup>11</sup> The publication highlights the many different approaches that have been taken in the conservation of the artworks within the project, and although the artworks featured are non-textile or are digital, technological and multi-media based, they are still relevant and the approaches can be applied to the conservation of textile-based artworks.

One of the more relevant papers within the project that can easily be transferred to the conservation of textile-based art is *Installation Art Subjected to Risk Assessment – Jeffery Shaw's Revolution as Case Study* by Agnes W. Brokerhof, Tatja Scholte, Bart Ankersmit, Gaby Wijers and Simone Vermaat. This paper takes the rational collection risk management approach and applies it to the preservation of an installation made by Jeffrey Shaw and Tjebbe van Tijen titled *Revolution*. Collection

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<sup>9</sup> Beerkens, L. (et al.) 2012, p152.

<sup>10</sup> *About Me*, <http://glennwharton.tumblr.com/aboutme> (accessed 8<sup>th</sup> June 2012).

<sup>11</sup> Scholte, Tatja & Wharton, Glenn, *Inside Installations: Theory and Practice in the Care of Complex Artworks* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2011) p13.

risk management deals with all threats, to which objects and collections are being exposed, from light and climate to fire and theft, and thus places preventive conservation together with security and facility management. The method consists of identifying possible risks, analysing and quantifying them, ranking them, and setting priorities in order to select options for reducing relevant risks.<sup>12</sup> The paper is set out in steps from 1-8 and includes a value distribution pie chart and graph illustrating the artwork in questions magnitude of risks. Both visual aids are easy to read, understandable and can be easily applied to any artwork regardless of material composition. At first glance the graph appears to be irrelevant as the issues within the graph include risks such as malfunction audiobox/comlink, malfunction operating system and corrosion laser disk. But these risks can be replaced with any associated with the conservation of textile-based art, and the graph should not be discounted as it highlights the multitude of risks and issues that can be involved in complex artworks, allowing the textile conservator to include the risks and issues that they would not normally consider or include such as incorrect installation and malfunction of digital components.

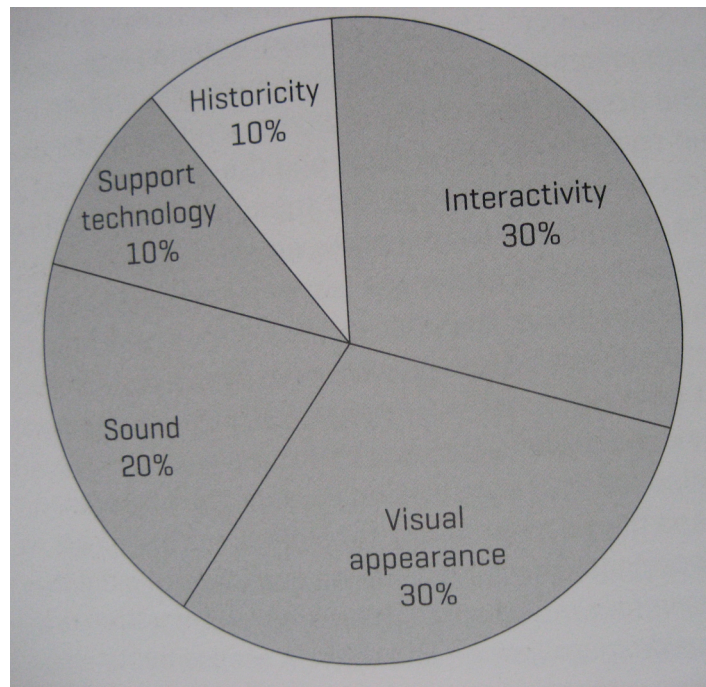
The value distribution pie chart in particular (see Fig 1.) could be easily and quickly utilised and incorporated whilst a conservator is carrying out the artworks documentation. The example drawn up for Jeffrey Shaw's *Revolution* illustrates and contrasts issues such as historicity, visual appearance, interactivity, support technology and sound.

This type of activity carried out can be useful in showing the various values and features that contribute to the total significance of the installation, allowing the conservator to consider what would remain if one of these characteristics were lost<sup>13</sup>.

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<sup>12</sup> Brokerhof, Agnes W., Scholte, Tatja, Ankersmit, Bart, Wijers, Gaby & Vermaat, Simone, Installation Art Subjected to Risk Assessment – Jeffrey Shaw's *Revolution* as Case Study. In Tatja Scholte & Glenn Wharton, *Inside Installations: Theory and Practice in the Care of Complex Artworks* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2011) p91.

<sup>13</sup> Brokerhof, A. (et al.) 2011, p96.



**Fig 1.** Value distribution pie chart for Jeffrey Shaw's *Revolution*. Artistic/aesthetic values in gray; historic value in white. © Image Copyright Brokerhof, Agnes W. (et al.).<sup>14</sup>

This ties in nicely with the authors visit to the Whitworth Art Gallery that is discussed further in the chapter titled *Participants in the Process*. A discussion with textile conservator Ann French revealed that the issues she has experienced with modern and contemporary textile-based art at the Whitworth Art Gallery are more risk management and care and maintenance rather than conservation treatment. If the textile conservator's role in the conservation of a textile-based artwork is mainly maintenance and risk management, then this paper is extremely relevant and useful.

Part 4 of the publication titled *Recording the Process and the Process of Recording* is particularly useful when thinking about the documentation of a textile-based artwork. The first paper in this chapter by Gunnar Heydenreich titled *Documentation of Change – Change of Documentation*<sup>15</sup> seeks to provide an introduction to the documentation of contemporary art, exploring its challenges, initiatives, methodologies and perspectives. It presents seven models for the documentation of installation and media based art. As the documentation methods are for media

<sup>14</sup> Brokerhof, A. (et al.) 2011, p96.

<sup>15</sup> Heydenreich, Gunnar, *Documentation of Change – Change of Documentation*. In Tatja Scholte & Glenn Wharton, *Inside Installations: Theory and Practice in the Care of Complex Artworks* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2011) pp155-171.

based works of art specifically, this paper may not hold any relevance for a textile conservator as the majority of models presented deal with the storage of an artworks digital media. However if a textile-based artwork has digital components it may be useful to know what the possibilities and limitations are for the storage, conservation and documentation of these components to aid any recommendations for future care.

*Visualisation and Documentation of Installation Art* by Ulrike Baumgart<sup>16</sup> and *Coordinates and Plans: Geodetic Measurements of Room Installations. Methods and Experience gained at the Pinakothek Der Moderne, Munich* by Maike Grün are two papers within this chapter that may not be able to be utilised by a textile conservator, but are interesting in their own way and highlight the developments being made in documenting installation art in particular. Ulrike Baumgart states that:

*A distinguishing feature of installation art is that it conveys entire complex compositions to a space. Conceiving of the space as the 'canvas', as a component of the installation itself*<sup>17</sup>

As well as:

*The positioning of the individual 'works of art' within the space, as well as the 'sculptural objects' in relationship to one another, is of particular importance.*

What Baumgart is highlighting is that within an installation the artist's ideas, meaning and intent are not only projected by the objects and components placed within the space it is displayed, but the space itself is the artwork. Its size, dimensions, distance and the position between objects and components within the space, all play an important role as the artwork. Baumgart and Grün's papers both illustrate the developments made in visual documentation. With technological advances and digitisation, photography and video recording have been surpassed by Baumgart's use of high-resolution (full) spherical still imaging (shortened to 'spherical view') and Grün's comparison of Tacheometry, Laser Scanning and Photogrammetry as methods of visual documentation.

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<sup>16</sup> Baumgart, Ulrike, *Visualisation and Documentation of Installation Art*. In Tatja Scholte & Glenn Wharton, *Inside Installations: Theory and Practice in the Care of Complex Artworks* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2011) pp173-184.

<sup>17</sup> Baumgart, U., 2011, p173.

In regards to documentation the *Inside Installations* project and publication have pushed the boundaries as to what is possible and have taken the methods in documentation to the proverbial “next level”. These developments are quite astounding in such a short space of time, however, they do appear to be particularly relevant for an institution that has many installation artworks within their collection and could afford to implement such high tech methods. It is highly unlikely that a textile conservator will have access to the equipment used by Baumgart and Grün. But what these examples can tell a textile conservator is the issue of and importance of the space within installation art and how this can impact on the artist’s intent and message. That within the documentation, whether traditional paper records with detailed photography or using digital methods, accurate and precise documentation of the installation as a whole needs to be carried out.

A more traditional approach to documenting installation art is illustrated in the paper titled *Updating Knowledge in Conservation Criteria. Circle Puppets Case Study* by Arianne Vanrell Velloso<sup>18</sup>. On page 139 Arianne Vanrell Velloso shows a digitally drawn floor plan of the installation *Circle Puppets* by artist Dennis Oppenheim and is discussed in further detail in the chapter titled *Documentation*. The illustration details the ‘measurements, distances and location’<sup>19</sup> of all the components of the artwork and ‘their relationships with the exhibition room’<sup>20</sup>. This drawn floor plan shows how simple the visual documentation of an installation artwork can be. This method is easy to understand and read and can be used by any member of staff within an institution, whether this is a conservator, curator or conservation technician. It does not require the reader to have knowledge about a particular technological method of documentation, or a piece of high tech equipment.

Part 3 of the *Inside Installations* publication the chapter titled *Participants in the Process*<sup>21</sup> looks at the cross-disciplinary participants in the conservation and documentation of installation art and the artist’s involvement within this, it is the author’s opinion that all four papers within this section are particularly relevant and

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<sup>18</sup> Velloso, Arianne Vanrell, *Updating Knowledge in Conservation Criteria. Circle Puppets Case Study*. In Tatja Scholte & Glenn Wharton, *Inside Installations: Theory and Practice in the Care of Complex Artworks* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2011) pp131-142.

<sup>19</sup> Velloso, A.V., 2011, p139.

<sup>20</sup> Velloso, A.V., 2011, p139.

<sup>21</sup> Scholte, T., 2011, pp105-153.

can be easily utilised by a textile conservator in particular the paper by Iwona Szmelter titled *Shaping the Legacy of Krzysztof M. Bednarski: A Model for Artist/Conservator/ Curator Collaboration*. Szmelter proposes a model titled *Structure for the Care of Modern and Contemporary Art* (SCMCA) specifically for use by conservators and curators in collaboration with the artist. She states that it is for those that already have a long-term relationship with the artist. However, it is believed that the model is still relevant even if a long-term relationship has not been established. Pages 128 to 129 are particularly relevant as Szmelter proposes what the documentation of contemporary installation art should comprise, listing headings such as documentation, report and archives, and gives a brief description on what each heading means and what information should be included under each heading within the documentation. This is easy to follow and understand, and is not specific to installation or digital artworks, so can be easily manipulated by a textile conservator for the documentation of a textile-based artwork.

#### **2.4 The Artist Interview: For Conservation and Presentation of Contemporary Art, Guidelines and Practice.**

This is the most recent of the relevant publications on the conservation of contemporary art to be produced, and as the title suggests deals specifically with the artist interview. Born out of the *Modern Art: Who Cares?* research project and based upon projects titled Artist Interviews (1998-2000) and Artist Interviews/Artist Archives (2001-2005), it takes the theories, ideas and research already featured in *Modern Art: Who Cares?* and the *Inside Installations* projects and neatly wraps it up into a publication of its own.

*The Artist Interview* was edited by Lydia Beerkens, Paulien 't Hoen, Ijsbrand Hummelen, Vivian van Saaze, Tatja Scholte and Sanneke Stigter. Lydia Beerkens, Ijsbrand Hummelen and Tatja Scholte have featured in, or been editor for, the previous publications in this literature review, *Modern Art: Who Cares?* and *Inside Installations*, Paulien 't Hoen is currently coordinator for the Foundation for the Conservation of Contemporary Art (SBMK) and has been since 2004. Vivian van Saaze has participated in several research projects concerning the presentation and preservation of contemporary art. She is currently a postdoctoral researcher at Maastricht University, Netherlands; within the research project *New Strategies in*

*Conservation of Contemporary Art*. Sanneke Stigter is currently lecturer and programme leader of the MA in Contemporary Art Conservation at the University of Amsterdam, as well as undertaking her PhD within the research project *New Strategies in Conservation of Contemporary Art*.

The publication is set out in two parts, part one is the interview scenario, providing guidelines intended to create a clear interview structure for a conservator and/or curator. The chapters within part one contain information such as a classification of the questions that have to be asked during an interview, the preparation and revision of the interview, as well as information on issues like the location of the interview and interview structure. Part two of the publication titled *Practice: Case Examples of Artist Interviews* consists of ten articles that have been written by conservators and curators that have carried out artist interviews. These ten articles act as case studies illustrating the information gained by conducting an interview as well as reflecting on the experience. This section can be read in-depth or can be used to quickly pick out the interview questions relevant to type of interview being conducted.

If a textile conservator intends to carry out an artist interview then this publication is the main reference point, with part one being of most interest. Part one starts by discussing the method, approach and objective of an artist interview, all important aspects as this looks at why an interview is to be carried out and what is to be gained by carrying out an interview. It goes on to discuss the preparatory research that needs to be carried out before conducting an interview, and makes reference to the *Decision Making Model* that is featured in *Modern Art: Who Cares?*<sup>22</sup> and the SBMK website<sup>23</sup> as being an aid to help identify the various aspects of an artwork that are important and the kind of conservation treatment it would need. An important chapter is *Analysing the Information* on page 20, this is where all the preparatory research has been compiled and tells us what basic information we should have from this research. Components such as the dating of an artwork, its title, meaning and materials used, production method and exhibition history. If any of the information

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<sup>22</sup>Hummelen, Ijsbrand & Sillé, Dionne, *Modern Art - Who Cares?: An Interdisciplinary Research Project and An International Symposium on the Conservation of Modern and Contemporary Art* (London: Archetype, 2005) p164-172.

<sup>23</sup> *The Decision Making Model for the Conservation & Restoration of Modern & Contemporary Art*, [www.sbmkn.nl/uploads/decision-making-model.pdf](http://www.sbmkn.nl/uploads/decision-making-model.pdf) (accessed 5th May 2012).

listed is missing, then questions to the artist that will fill in the missing areas have to be asked as a priority.

The second part moves on to *Selecting the Type of Interview*<sup>24</sup>, there are four types of interview; type one is the *Oeuvre*<sup>25</sup> Interview, which is based on the exemplary artworks from the artist's entire portfolio. Type two is the *Theme Interview* based on a *Specific Group of Artworks*, type three is the *Collection Interview*, based on *Artworks from one Collection* and type four is the *Case Interview* which is focused on one *Specific Artwork*. These types of interviews will be discussed further in this dissertation in the chapter on *Artist Interviews*, as well as how this publication was used by the author to form questions for an artist interview.

From the types of interview, the publication then gives examples of opening questions.<sup>26</sup> Pages 33 through 36 detail questions on the creative process, materials and techniques, questions on meaning and context, conveyance and public, questions based on ageing, deterioration and damage, as well as questions on conservation. From here pages 37 through 46 detail questions and interview scenarios related to particular art forms, for example, paintings, works on paper, photography, sculptures, installations and media art. However, textile-based artworks are not featured as an art form in themselves, so if questions need to be formed for an interview with a textile artist, or artist that has used textiles within their work, the questions will need to be taken from one or more of the lists detailed. The conservator will need to try and match the questions to the artwork and its conservation issues, and find a common connection between the type of artwork being discussed with the artist and the types of art forms featured in the publication. This is not as difficult as it may appear and has been done by the author for an interview with Scottish artist Malcolm Lochhead for this dissertation in the chapter titled *Artist Interview*.

Part two of *The Artist Interview* features the case studies and results of ten artist interviews that were carried out. Each case study gives a short biography of the

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<sup>24</sup> Beerkens, Lydia, t' Hoen, Paulina, Hummelen Ijsbrand, van Saaze, Vivian, Scholte, Tatja and Stigter, Sanneke, *The Artist Interview: for Conservation and Presentation of Contemporary Art, Guidelines and Practice*. (Heyningen: JAP SAM Books, 2012) p21.

<sup>25</sup> The dictionary definition of Oeuvre is: a substantial body of work constituting the life work of an artist, writer or composer.

<sup>26</sup> Beerkens, L. (et al.) 2012, p28.

artist, the type of interview conducted (i.e. Oeuvre, Theme etc) and a few sentences about the interviewers. The authors of each case study have reviewed, reflected on and analysed their interview and compiled the results into one paper for publication. It is interesting to see how the authors have reflected on their interview experience and translated this onto paper, but one thing it is felt is lacking in this section is the specific questions that were asked of the artist. When preparing an interview the biggest issue is what questions do I ask? And what kind of answers do I expect from a particular question? It would have been useful here to have the case studies include the questions they asked the artist so the reader could identify what questions were asked to get the responses from the artists' shown in the case studies.

## 2.5 Textile Conservators

As mentioned in the introduction there are not many textile conservators with experience in the conservation of contemporary textile-based artworks, so publications specific to this subject are very few. However, there are two particular textile conservators that have contributed significantly to the subject, and in very different ways, Ann French and Frances Lennard.

Ann French has written several papers on the conservation and care of contemporary textile art. Many issues are highlighted from her shared experiences, such as display and storage issues and methods, to pest management and the protection of historical, vulnerable collections. Ann's experiences illustrate that the textile conservators role may be predominantly risk assessment and a preventive one rather than an interventive conservation role. Her paper titled *Skins, Shoes and 2,500 Saplings: Combining Integrated Pest Management and Contemporary Art Installations*,<sup>27</sup> describes how the Whitworth Art Gallery has had to adapt its integrated pest management (IPM) programme to respond to contemporary art installations that contain found objects and materials such as animal skins, multiple used shoes and tree saplings. This paper highlights how institutions that acquire and

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<sup>27</sup> French, Ann, *Skins, Shoes and 2,500 Saplings: Combining Integrated Pest Management and Contemporary Art*. In Helen Kingsley, *Integrated Pest Management for Collections: Proceedings of 2001: A Pest Odyssey* (London: James & James, 2001) pp174-179.

exhibit contemporary art, on most occasions, have to source materials and “make” the artwork themselves.

This requires collaboration between curator, conservators, gallery technicians, the artist’s agent or gallery and the artist themselves. The role of the conservator here, whether textile, object or paper conservator, is preventive, assessing the types of materials within the contemporary installations, how they may impact upon the Whitworth’s permanent textile collection and taking appropriate action and devising solutions to prevent any detrimental impact the materials may impose. Ann French gives a list of new IPM practices that have been adopted by the Whitworth Art Gallery in light of the evolving programming and inclusion of contemporary artworks into their collection. Some are as follows:

- *liaising with artists to establish materials and practice as early as possible*
- *appreciating that these demands must not alienate creativity*
- *a rapid and creative response may be required from conservation staff*
- *dedicated and diplomatic liaison with all concerned works best*
- *consideration of additional preparatory and storage space may be required*
- *duration and de-installation practices are as important as installation*<sup>28</sup>

All of the practices listed in French’s paper can be adopted not only for IPM but in general when a museum or gallery, acquires or exhibits a contemporary artwork or installation, and can serve as a set of guidelines for textile conservators to follow if faced with the complexities associated with contemporary textile-based art.

*In Textile or Art?: The Conservation, Display and Storage of Modern Textile Art*<sup>29</sup>

French generalises the issues raised by contemporary art for conservators as the following:

- *The choice and range of materials used by artists*
- *The changing techniques of manufacture used by artists*

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<sup>28</sup> French, A., 2001, p179.

<sup>29</sup> French, A., Textile or Art? The Conservation, Display and Storage of Modern Textile Art. In *Modern Art, New Museums: Contributions to the Bilbao Congress, 13-17 September 2004*, ed. Ashok Roy & Perry Smith (London: International Institute for Conservation of Historic and Artistic Works, 2004) pp34-38.

- *Display methods*
- *Storage methods*<sup>30</sup>

These issues listed highlight the role of the textile conservator in the conservation of contemporary textile-based art, and these generalisations illustrate that perhaps the textile conservators role in the conservation of contemporary textile-based art is not that dissimilar to their role in the conservation of historic textile artefacts. In essence the questions a conservator asks of an object are the same, what materials were used?, how was the object made?, what are the display and storage considerations and how do we overcome them?. This paper looks at these issues in detail using artworks as case studies. Ann looks at each individual artwork in terms of materials used, techniques used, issues of display and issues of storage, describing the issues and the methods employed to overcome them. This gives the reader a real insight into the role of the textile conservator in the care of the artworks mentioned and how no two artworks are ever the same.

A similar publication is Ann's paper *Modern and Contemporary Textile Art: Issues for Textile Conservators*.<sup>31</sup> It features as case studies some of the same artworks as in *Textile or Art?: The Conservation, Display and Storage of Modern Textile Art* and highlights the same issues, however listing packing, transporting artworks and the role of the artist and associated copyright right controls as additional current issues mentions in this paper:

*a list cannot convey the complex interrelationships of their issues [an artworks issues], and while each issue can be examined and exemplified, the interrelationships remain key to understanding overall approaches to conservation and care*<sup>32</sup>

So although Ann perhaps lists and sums up the issues in the conservation of textile-based contemporary art, this statement perhaps highlights that not all contemporary artworks fit into a list or classification and that the approaches to the conservation of

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<sup>30</sup> French, A., 2004, p34.

<sup>31</sup> French, A., *Modern and Contemporary Textile Art: Issues for Textile Conervators*. In Frances Lennard and Patricia Ewer, *Textile Conservation: Advances in Practice* (Oxford: Butterworth-Heinemann, 2010) pp283-290.

<sup>32</sup> French, A., 2010, p283.

contemporary textile-based art is dependant on the relationship between, and meaning of particular materials to the artist's intent. It is also dependant on relationships and collaborations between other professionals and the artist.

Frances Lennard is a textile conservator and is currently Senior Lecturer in textile conservation at the University of Glasgow. Frances Lennard has a substantial body of work published on the issues in the conservation of contemporary art. *Behaving Badly?: The Conservation of Modern Textile Art*<sup>33</sup> and *Mixed Media: The Conservation of Modern Textile Art*<sup>34</sup> are similar in the use of textile-based art conservation case studies to illustrate conservation issues such as the positioning of contemporary art in a public space, the installation of an artwork and how its dimensions, shape and weight can be detrimental to an artworks condition, modern chemical dyes reacting differently to light and wet cleaning in comparison to the highly documented reaction of natural dyes and the flame-proofing of textile art within public spaces Health and Safety regulations may lead to damage to textile fibres.

It is clear that the aim of both these publications is to discuss and highlight the issues within the conservation of modern and contemporary textile art, however, as a textile conservator it would have been interesting for them to go into more detail about the conservation of the artworks used as the case studies. The conservation reports of these artworks were largely unpublished conservation reports, so access to them is difficult. As the subject of the conservation of contemporary textile art does not have a publication showing their conservation in practice, perhaps these case studies could be included in a publication of its own as a type of manual for textile conservators.

In *Mixed Media: The Conservation of Modern Textile Art* Frances looks at the role of the textile conservator stating:

*Although textile conservators may be called upon to treat damaged textile artworks, their most valuable input may lie in the provision of safe display and storage*

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<sup>33</sup> Lennard, Frances, *Behaving Badly? The Conservation of Modern Textile Art*. In *Restauro*, 5 (Munich: G.D.W. Callwey, 2006) pp328-334.

<sup>34</sup> Lennard, Frances, *Mixed Media: The Conservation of Modern Textile Art*. In *Proceedings of Techno, Eco, Smart ...?: New Developments in Textiles and the Implications for Conservation* (Amsterdam: Stichting Textielcommissie, 2007) pp30-39.

*environments. Environmental conditions and the actual mechanisms of display and storage are both crucial. The unusual shape and size of textile artworks often challenge the ingenuity of textile conservators called upon to display and store them safely.*<sup>35</sup>

The statement can be compared to the experiences shared by Ann French in that the textile conservator's role may be one of preventive conservation rather than interventive conservation, with their skills and expertise in problem solving and compromise being of the utmost importance.

Two of Frances Lennard's papers look at and discuss the artist's legal rights, *Behaving Badly?: The Conservation of Modern Textile Art* and *The Impact of Artists' Moral Rights Legislation on Conservation Practice in the United Kingdom and Beyond*.<sup>36</sup> Both look at the 1886 Berne Convention for the Protection of Literary and Artistic Works and how these legal rights differ between the United Kingdom, Europe and the United States of America. To a textile conservator this is a rather daunting subject and may be discouraging when faced with the conservation of a contemporary artwork. Although this issue requires consideration, Frances states that:

*The legislation giving moral rights to artists does not appear to threaten conservators acting with the best intentions; it is one more factor to take into account when making decisions about conservation interventions.*<sup>37</sup>

This is an essential read, as it is more desirable to know about legal obligations and where a textile conservator may fit within these obligations, than not to consider them a factor at all.

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<sup>35</sup> Lennard, F., 2007, p34.

<sup>36</sup> Lennard, Frances, *The Impact of Artists' Moral Rights Legislation on Conservation Practice in the UK and Beyond*. In Isabelle Sourbès-Verger, *Preprints ICOM Committee for Conservation 14th Triennial Meeting, The Hague 12-16 September 2005* (London: James & James, 2005) pp285-290.

<sup>37</sup> Lennard, F., 2005, p290.

## 2.6 Conclusion

All of the published works within this literature review have been included as they are viewed as being useful in many ways to a textile conservator. Although they do not act as a step by step guide to the conservation of contemporary textile-based art, they do serve to highlight particular issues to be aware of and methods that can be employed when conserving such complex objects. In particular *Modern Art: Who Cares?* would be recommended as the first publication to consult. Although an older publication, *The Decision-Making Model for the Conservation and Restoration of Modern and Contemporary Art*, *The Model for Data Registration*, *The Model for Data Registration Linked to Other Databases* and *The Model for Condition Registration*<sup>38</sup> have remained un-changed by the Foundation for the Conservation of Contemporary Art that founded the models. These models are also featured in the later *Inside Installations: Theory and Practice in the Care of Complex Artworks* and *The Artist Interview* publications, showing that they perhaps have stood the test of time. The published work by textile conservators Ann French and Frances Lennard have been included as it is important to be aware of what is happening within textile conservation specifically and their contributions illustrate perfectly the role of the textile conservator in the conservation of textile-based contemporary art.

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<sup>38</sup> The decision-making and registration models were developed by the Foundation for the Conservation of Modern Art in 1999, and more specifically the working group for Registration and Documentation.

## **3.0 Participants in the Process**

### **3.1 Introduction**

The artist can be involved in many ways in a gallery or museum, from installing their artwork and giving instructions on installation, to artist interviews. This chapter looks at some of the different ways an artist can be involved and can collaborate with a textile conservator. It also looks at the role of the textile conservator in the display and care of contemporary textile-based art, as well as the role of the gallery or conservation technicians, with the use of case studies to illustrate the varying ways that artists can be involved. Case examples are taken from a visit to the Whitworth Art Gallery with textile conservator Ann French, where the current exhibition *Cotton: Global Threads* was taking place. The exhibition was a display of contemporary art and historical textile objects from the Whitworth collection, telling the history and story of the cotton trade. With such a diverse range of textile objects on display, how do the contemporary artworks fit in with conservation and what role does the conservator play during the exhibition?

Gallery or conservation technicians are an integral part of any gallery or museum, but like a textile conservator, what role do they play in the conservation of contemporary art? It is hoped consultation with former gallery technician Zoë Lanceley, who has experience working with artists and installing artworks, will shed some light on these questions, to better understand the issues in the conservation of contemporary art. It is not only in art galleries that the conservation of contemporary art is an issue, traditional museums are now acquiring contemporary artworks for future generations. An example is included to highlight how a textile conservator, who has never had to deal with the issues regarding artists intent or an artists opinion, is able to manage these issues, make compromises and yet still stay faithful to the integrity of the institution they are representing.

### **3.2 Participants Role**

There is the potential for textile conservators to find themselves working alongside the artist, whether this is for installation and display purposes or conservation

reasons. However, participation is very dependent on the character of the artist. In some instances the artist is very involved in the installation and care of their work, transporting, unpacking and installing themselves or by their assistants. On the other hand however, there are those artists that are not involved at all and leave this to their gallery representative to communicate specific instructions to the host gallery or museum.

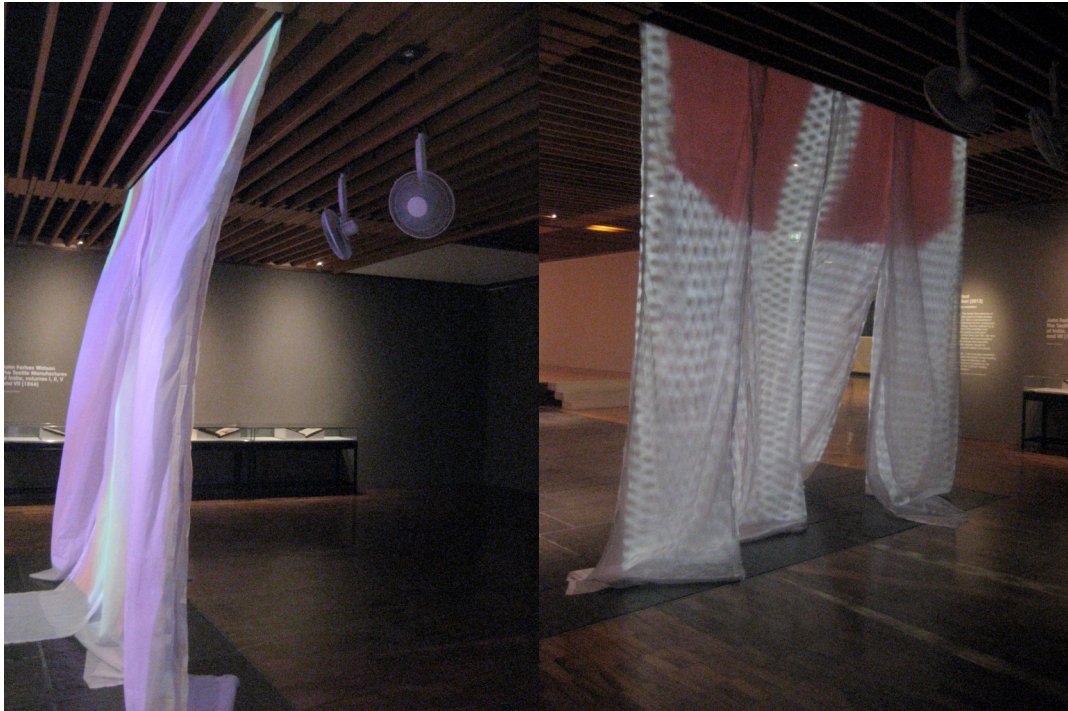
To get a better idea of the way in which an artist participates, and how a museum or gallery manages this, a visit to the Whitworth Art Gallery in Manchester was arranged. Ann French has been a textile conservator at the Whitworth Art Gallery for over 20 years and has witnessed the gallery's move towards acquiring and exhibiting modern and contemporary textile art alongside their historical collections. During the visit to the Whitworth Art Gallery an exhibition titled *Cotton: Global Threads*<sup>39</sup> was running. This exhibition told the history and story of cotton from its production, consumption and trade. Contemporary artists included Yinka Shonibare, Aboubakar Fofana, Grace Ndiritu, Liz Rideal and Anne Wilson and their artworks were exhibited beside historic cotton objects from the Whitworth collection. The contemporary artworks featured in the exhibition were inspired by and/or constructed from textile material.

Artist Liz Rideal's work in the exhibition was inspired by cotton, in particular the Whitworth's Forbes Watson sample books, and she also used the material within her art. Liz Rideal exhibited three artworks in the exhibition using cotton, digital, installation, printmaking and video as her media. Viewing her art from a conservation perspective the artwork titled *Drop Sari* (2012) gave the only cause for concern (see Fig 2 & 3.). This installation uses three separate pieces of cotton fabric, saris, suspended from the ceiling. Images of colourful textile patterns are projected onto the fabric pieces as they are moved and agitated in the space by fans suspended from above. The combination of projected light and movement on the textile pieces would naturally trouble a textile conservator, but French explained that the saris were purchased specifically for the installation and had no significance other than the purpose the artist intended for them. The projectors were tested for ultra-violet radiation and were found not to emit UV radiation. It was found that the biggest issue when exhibiting contemporary art such as *Drop Sari* is the maintenance of the

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<sup>39</sup> *Cotton: Global Threads* ran from 11<sup>th</sup> February – 13<sup>th</sup> May 2012. Its curator was Dr Jennifer Harris. At time of going to print the exhibition website, [www.cottonglobalthreads.com](http://www.cottonglobalthreads.com), was still accessible.

artwork rather than any conservation issues. Components like projectors regularly need to have light bulbs changed due to the length of time they are in use during an exhibition. This type of maintenance can be expensive and needs to be considered within exhibition budgets. The gallery also needs to have components such as fans and projectors available for artworks as the artist does not always provide them.



**Fig 2 & 3.** Image of Liz Rideal *Drop Sari* showing fans installed to create movement and projection of light and images onto textiles. © Image authors own, copyright Whitworth Art Gallery.

### **3.3 Conservator /Artist Collaboration**

It is not only in an art gallery where issues regarding artist's intent and opinions are challenged. Museums are acquiring contemporary artworks into their collections for future generations meaning that conservators, curators and technicians are now having to think about the issues with contemporary art acquisitions as well as the traditional issues within a collection. The National Museums for Scotland (NMS) is one such museum where the author was able to observe the working relationship between textile conservator and artist. Head of Paper and Textile Conservation Lynn McClean was courier for tapestry titled *A Clean Sheet* (1980) by weaver and artist Fiona Mathison (see Fig 4.). This woven artwork was on loan from NMS to the

Dovecot Studios in Edinburgh for exhibition titled *Weaving the Century: Tapestry from Dovecot Studios 1912-2012*<sup>40</sup>.



**Fig 4.** Image of artwork *A Clean Sheet* by artist Fiona Mathison. © Image Copyright Cumming, E., 2012<sup>41</sup>

The major issue with the artwork was the installation. NMS had had their own hanging mechanism for the artwork specially made. It was constructed of two clear Perspex® blocks that could be screwed into the wall and with hooks fastened to the tapestry; it could then hang securely from the Perspex® blocks. The space that the artwork was to be installed in appeared unsatisfactory to the artist who felt that it was too close to the David Hockney tapestry it was to be mounted next to. The artist's opinions were adhered to and the Perspex® blocks were replaced with wooden blocks that were painted to blend in with the white wall it was mounted on to and to fit in with the artist's original intent, and the artwork was moved slightly to the right to allow room between it and the adjacent tapestry.

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<sup>40</sup> *Weaving the Century: Tapestry from Dovecot Studios 1912-2012* was the first major Dovecot tapestry exhibition to be presented in Scotland for over 30 years and its curator was Dr Elizabeth Cumming. The exhibition ran from 13<sup>th</sup> July-7<sup>th</sup> October 2012.

<sup>41</sup> Cumming, Elizabeth, *The Art of Modern Tapestry: Dovecot Studios Since 1912* (Surrey: Ashgate Publishing, 2012) p49.

As the artwork was a tapestry it was given a tapestry conservation treatment by the conservators at NMS. It is common practice for them to give a tapestry within their collection a full support lining on the reverse, especially tapestries that are going out on loan and on display. This is to protect the reverse of the tapestry when it is lying close to a painted, potentially dusty or dirty wall for a long period of time. The artwork had also had a metal rod inserted into the folded edge at the top. It is thought that this was a previous hanging mechanism and was done before NMS acquired the artwork. The artist was not happy with both the metal rod and the lining on the reverse stating that both affected the way in which the artwork was hanging and its overall appearance. To try and rectify this Lynn McClean applied some stitching to the lining on the reverse so it was not visible along the edges of the artwork when hanging, but explained that as the artwork was part of NMS collections, the metal rod had to remain as it is part of the artwork that they acquired and the lining would also remain as it is now in the museums care and the lining is how they can insure its protection when the artwork is out with the institution.

This scenario shows that compromises can be made when institution and artist have differing views, ideas and opinions about an artwork, but it also highlights issues as to which party has the ultimate rights when an artwork has entered a national collection. On the one hand the artist is telling us what was and was not original to their artistic intent. On the other hand the institution that now owns the artwork and has an obligation to care for it and protect it has guidelines, procedures and methods to follow in which conservators, curators and technicians have to adhere to. When the care for the acquired object is concerned there can be no compromise.

### **3.4 The Role of Conservation Technician**

It became clear when speaking to Ann French that at the Whitworth Art Gallery the gallery technicians play an integral part in installation and maintenance of exhibitions. Zoë Lanceley, currently a textile conservation student at the University of Glasgow, worked with Ann French at the Whitworth for many years as a gallery technician, and has personal experience when the artist is involved. In conversation with Lanceley about her experiences she recalls occasions where a particular artist disassembled their woven artwork one week before an exhibition was due to open and relied on Zoë spending four full days stitching the artwork back together. The artist had

chosen a weak thread for Zoë to complete the task even though a stronger, longer lasting, more robust thread was suggested.

Another encounter with an artist and their work that Zoë recalled was the transportation of a textile, crochet piece to multiple venues. This particular artwork consisted of 77 separate pieces of crochet. The artist initially gave instructions on the installation of the artwork, but there were no written instructions for Zoë to follow. The crochet pieces were hung with nails to the gallery wall, with the nail penetrating the textile components causing damage. This resulted in the artwork under going 77 separate condition reports.

This illustrates the important role that gallery technicians play in the care and maintenance of contemporary art. The Role of the Conservation Technician by Ralph Wanless<sup>42</sup> describes the duties, complexities and success of the conservation technician at the Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority (LACMTA). Having addressed care and maintenance problems with multiple solutions a part-time position was created after the transport agency:

*realised the many benefits of an in-house conservation technician, including cost savings, improved intra-agency coordination and development of a centralised, contiguous knowledge of the collection's history and concerns*<sup>43</sup>

An interesting concept is born from the involvement of gallery and conservation technicians in the care and maintenance of contemporary and public art. With the technician working closely with both the artist and the artwork, they can acquire knowledge about the work and the artist's intent for the work over a longer period of time than the conservator can. The technician can then impart this knowledge to be included in the conservation reports, where it can be kept and utilised for future treatments. They can also highlight any conservation issues that they foresee, allowing the gallery or museum to seek the artist's opinion and views about the artwork before treatment is required.

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<sup>42</sup> Wanless, Ralph, The Role of the Conservation Technician. In Hafthor Yugvason, *Conservation and Maintenance of Contemporary Public Art* (London: Archetype, 2003) p87-89.

<sup>43</sup> Wanless, R., 2003, p88.

### 3.5 Conclusion

The conservator may be entering into new, unfamiliar territory when faced with an object's maker, something which textile conservators in museums, or who care for historic textile objects, may never have had to experience. But it does not take a textile conservator with experience in these issues to be able to manage and resolve them. The conservator can draw on their experiences communicating with private clients and owners of objects, and with curators, technicians and other staff within an institution. Explaining and justifying why a particular demand from an artist cannot be carried out may be all that is needed. In the scenario that involved Lynn McClean and artist Fiona Mathison ultimately both parties had the same agenda and outcome for the artwork, to install for an exhibition, their differences being their perceived role of the artwork. For Lynn McClean the artwork as part of the NMS collection is under her care so this is her priority, for the artist it was the way in which the artwork looked within the exhibition and in relation to the other works on display. In this instance the textile conservator and artist had the same agenda, but different perspectives.

One idiosyncrasy of contemporary art is perhaps the idea that it is never complete once it enters into a gallery or museum collection. This is certainly the view of Frederika Huys, who states:

*Too often, contemporary art museums are still organised in a traditional manner, considering the work is completed as soon as it is included in the collection*<sup>44</sup>

Here there is a suggestion that institutions may need to accept that, where contemporary art is concerned, conservation practice needs to change and adapt to allow for changes, either through deterioration or by the artist themselves.

In Barbara Sommermeyer's paper titled *Who's Right – the Artist or the Conservator?*<sup>45</sup> this idea is augmented in Sommermeyer's statement that:

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<sup>44</sup> Huys, Frederika, Keeping Performances Alive: Marina Abramovic's Views on Conservation and Presentation. In Lydia Beerkens et al. *The Artist Interview: for Conservation and Presentation of Contemporary Art, Guidelines and Practice*. (Heijningen: JAP SAM Books, 2012) p66.

<sup>45</sup> Sommermeyer, Barbara, Who's Right – The Artist or The Conservator? In Inside Installations: Theory and Practice in the Care of Complex Artworks. In In Tatja Scholte & Glenn Wharton, *Inside Installations: Theory and Practice in the Care of Complex Artworks* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2011) pp143-151.

*It is often difficult for an artist to develop distance from the work of art he or she has just completed or finished ten years ago. The artist often carries a desire to update the piece, which is not permissible from a conservation standpoint.*<sup>46</sup>

This statement can be linked to the scenario where textile conservator Lynn McLean found the artist making suggestions about changes to the artworks current state. Here Lynn McLean knew exactly the guidelines which NMS have set out in relation to making changes to an object, so she was able to justify why the artwork had to remain the way it was and why the artwork was given the protective lining on its reverse. This is evidence that having clear guidelines and parameters which conservators work to has purpose and value. In this instance perhaps having a set of guidelines specifically for contemporary art, similar to those SBMK and INCCA are developing, should be adopted by institutions. However, with guidelines on the care and preservation of objects already in place does there need to be separate guidelines for contemporary works of art?

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<sup>46</sup> Sommermeyer, B., 2011, p146.

## 4.0 The Artist Interview

### 4.1 INTRODUCTION

The publication *The Artist Interview: For Conservation and Presentation of Contemporary Art. Guidelines and Practice* has been produced by the Foundation for the Conservation of Contemporary Art (SBMK) and the Cultural Heritage Agency of the Netherlands (RCE), working together to develop guidelines and good practices within the area of artist interviews. It is described as a handbook that provides scenarios, including tips and checklists for conducting artist interviews, as well as ten sample interviews that give an insight in the use of an artist interview as a tool for documentation and conservation treatments. The artist interview is described as being 'considered an indispensable factor in conservation practice for modern and contemporary art' in the paper titled *The Artist is Involved! Documenting Complex Works of Art in Cooperation with the Artist*<sup>47</sup> by Frederika Huys, see *Literature Review* chapter for more details.

Using this, and other publications, as a guide, a set of questions was formulated to conduct a real artist interview. The artist that the questions were directed towards was Glasgow artist Malcolm Lochhead. Malcolm's three-dimensional textile artwork titled *A Matter of Life and Death*, produced in the 1970's and acquired by Glasgow Museums in the 1990's, was a conservation treatment and documentation project undertaken by the author, a textile conservation student. The standard conservation documentation was used to record the artwork and its condition, with a brief, impromptu discussion with the artist and only a few details from that discussion included in the original documentation.

This chapter aims to look in more depth at the research into the use and relevance of the artist interview and the suggested methods of conducting an interview and puts this into practice with the interview with Malcolm Lochhead as a case study. The results from the interview have been analysed to assess its success, value and usefulness within conservation documentation and its effect on the conservation treatment carried out, as well as its relevance in understanding and appreciating the

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<sup>47</sup> Huys, Frederika, *The Artist is Involved! Documenting Complex Works of Art in Cooperation with the Artist*. In Tatja Scholte and Glenn Wharton, *Inside Installations: Theory and Practice in the Care of Complex Artworks*, (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2011) p109.

artwork. The information provided through the artist interview hopefully provides an insight into the concept and meaning of the artwork as intended by the artist, whether degradation is part of the meaning of the artwork and what views the artist has on the conservation of their work.

## 4.2 Oral History

*The approach [artist interview] draws on insights from anthropology and sociology (especially in their application as a research tool), the interview scenario shows a strong affinity with oral history.*<sup>48</sup>

The methodology of oral history can be used as a research tool. An artist interview is the process of recording history, ideas and opinions in oral form. The aim of early oral historians was to collect memories that would bring new perspectives to understandings of the past.<sup>49</sup> Rebecca Gordon, former PhD researcher at the University of Glasgow, has traced the use of data provided by artists from medieval times to present day. Her PhD thesis titled *Rethinking Material Significance & Authenticity in Contemporary Art*<sup>50</sup> looks at the use of oral history and the artist's voice as a method of 'building a picture of the way the practitioner [artist] thinks about the significance of materials to their work'<sup>51</sup>. Her historical look at the artists' voice, ideas and opinions is an interesting concept, with:

*Medieval manuscripts to twentieth-century statements, providing an overview of the type of information the artists' were seeking to communicate, the way these sources were used at the time and how they have been used subsequently by art historians and art professionals.*<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> Beerkens, Lydia, t' Hoen, Paulina, Hummelen Ijsbrand, van Saaze, Vivian, Scholte, Tatja and Stigter, Sanneke, *The Artist Interview: for Conservation and Presentation of Contemporary Art, Guidelines and Practice*. (Heijningen: JAP SAM Books, 2012) p15.

<sup>49</sup> Thompson, Paul, *The Voice of the Past: Oral History*, Third Edition (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000) p7.

<sup>50</sup> Gordon, R., *Rethinking Material Significance & Authenticity in Contemporary Art*. Unpublished PhD thesis, University of Glasgow, 2011.

<sup>51</sup> Gordon, R., 2011, Abstract.

<sup>52</sup> Gordon, R., 2011, p18.

She states that:

*Implicit information can also be gleaned from these artists' voices about the cultural and artistic contexts in which they operated as well as their attitudes towards their practices.*<sup>53</sup>

It is clear that such interviews were used in an art historical context, but when were they used as a conservation tool? This is hard to pinpoint, however, the *Inside Installations* website states:

*Oral history was investigated as research tool in museums, galleries, conservation departments, archives and libraries. Starting from the historiography of this format in the early 1960's.*<sup>54</sup>

It has been observed that the artist interview within a conservation context is a fusion of the historical purposes of recording and using the artists' voice. As Rebecca Gordon's research into medieval manuscripts and 17<sup>th</sup> century accounts showed, we can use the technical and material information provided to get an idea of how the artwork was made and with what materials. In the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century the artists' private and personal correspondence give insights into technical decisions and also the social and personal contexts that the artists were working in. Finally the 20<sup>th</sup> century artist statements give the artists' ideology, intent and purpose of their artwork. All of this information is important in the understanding of any type of artwork, it will then inform the conservation decision-making. From the literature reviewed it appears that interviews with artists in a conservation context have been routinely happening since the *Modern Art: Who Cares?* project in the early 1990's.

Textile conservation is predominantly occupied with the conservation of historical textile objects, rather than contemporary pieces, so a meeting or interview with the maker of these historical objects is impossible. The closest person to a historical object may be a museum curator or a private owner, providing valuable information on an object's purpose, intent, manufacture and biography. One of the exciting aspects of contemporary art is that the maker is present. We have access to precise

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<sup>53</sup> Gordon, R., 2011. p18.

<sup>54</sup> *Research on Artists' Participation*, [www.inside-installations.org/research/detail.php?r\\_id=659&ct=artist\\_intent](http://www.inside-installations.org/research/detail.php?r_id=659&ct=artist_intent) (accessed 16<sup>th</sup> June 2012).

information about material choice, techniques used and the intent or meaning behind the artwork. It is perhaps more important that we have access to this information from the artist themselves, as with contemporary art, its purpose and meaning are not always obvious.

### **4.3 The Artwork**

The conservation of a contemporary artwork was carried out at the Centre for Textile Conservation and Technical Art History (CTCTAH) at the University of Glasgow. The artwork was part of the Glasgow Museums collection and is stored alongside their textile collection at the Burrell Collection in Glasgow. The artwork is by local Scottish artist Malcolm Lochhead and is titled *A Matter of Life and Death*. The artwork was acquired by Glasgow Museums circa 1995, a time when records and photography were not undertaken prior to an object being placed into permanent storage, therefore the artwork came to the CTCTAH with no information about its condition and appearance on acquisition.

The artwork consisted of a wooden frame structure with textile and mirrored glass panels attached to it (see Fig 11 & 12.) The textile panels contain coloured embroidery and appliqué decoration, using multiple different materials. It is a three-dimensional artwork, at 691(w) x 1020(l) x 150(d) mm (69.1(w) x 102(l) x 15(d) cm) in dimension. It was apparent that the artwork was intended to be hung using standard picture wire or twine. Before conservation treatment the textile components of the artwork were largely stable, but there were loose embroidery threads, missing beads, and frayed and curled edges of fabric within the appliqué decoration. The mirrored panels were structurally stable, however some of the black adhesive tape that covered the sharp outer edges of the mirrored glass was missing. The wooden backing panels had structural damage at the bottom of the artwork resulting in the panels separating from one another, causing instability to this area.



**Fig 11.** Image showing front of artwork *A Matter of Life and Death* by Malcolm Lochhead, before conservation treatment. © Image authors own, copyright Glasgow Museums.



**Fig 12.** Side view of artwork *A Matter of Life and Death* by Malcolm Lochhead. © Image authors own, copyright Glasgow Museums.

The requirement of the textile conservator was to stabilise the artwork for potential display and permanent storage, and to design or recommend a suitable storage method for the artwork. During the conservation treatment the artwork was featured in an annual open day, which took place on the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> March 2012. Through the open day it emerged that some of the guests knew Malcolm Lochhead personally, so from there the artist was invited to visit his artwork at the CTCTAH workrooms. This was an exciting experience for the textile conservation students and tutors, as previously mentioned, textile conservators rarely, if ever, get to meet and talk to the person that made the object under conservation.

As this was an impromptu meeting, the conservator had not had time to formulate exact questions to ask or methods in which to conduct any type of interview. This resulted in only a few notes being taken. Through the meeting it was discovered that:

- the artwork was created for Malcolm Lochhead's final year of art school examination in 1970 at Glasgow School of Art.
- he had kept his sketches, drawings and artist statement for the artwork.
- it had been hung within his student flat for several years, where occupants would smoke cigarettes.
- the wooden panels were constructed by a friend.
- he had used whatever textile materials were available to him at the time, including electricians tape which was used for several of the appliqué pieces.
- he had used off the shelf adhesives such as Evo-Stik™, UHU™ and Copydex™ to adhere the appliqué fabric pieces to the black backing fabric.
- the mirrored panel edges were covered with black adhesive tape as he was unable to afford to have the edges properly finished.
- the circular embroidery motif on the top textile panel contains glass beads that shone and sparkled.
- the correct orientation of the artwork was confirmed.

For an impromptu meeting the few questions asked did draw out some important information about the artworks history and manufacture. For example, to know that the artwork was created for a final year examination and that of the material use depended on cost, places more importance on the artwork in terms of its biography and provenance. Knowing the artwork was exposed to environmental pollution through cigarette smoke helps determine the reason behind the discolouration of the

lighter coloured appliqué fabrics. The mention of the different adhesives the artist used to adhere the appliqué fabrics helps when making decisions about re-adhering these elements, it also helps when determining potential future degradation and making recommendations about storage and display temperature and relative humidity (RH).

But what if a proper interview was conducted, one with structure, intent, and formulated questions? Would this glean more information about the artwork to inform its conservation? How would this fit in with artworks documentation?

A more formal interview was arranged with Malcolm Lochhead and questions and structure were formulated from *The Artist Interview: For Conservation and Presentation of Contemporary Art, Guidelines and Practice* book. This publication was integral to the interview as well as information and advice from University of Glasgow research assistant Rebecca Gordon.

#### **4.4 Before the Interview**

*The Artist Interview* asks that before any interview as much research as possible into the artwork and artist is compiled, stating that the following basic information for each artwork in question is gathered. If one or more of these components is missing, it is suggested that this information is attained during the interview. This basic information is as follows:

- *The exact dating of the work;*
- *The title of the work (including variations or any nicknames)*
- *The meaning of the work (state who has assigned meaning)*
- *Themes of the artist (based on source research)*
- *Materials used, production method and art form;*
- *Appearance and perception of the work (state who described the work and when)*
- *Exhibition history (presentation and installation details)*
- *Storage, conservation and restoration history.*<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> Beerkens, L. (et al.) 2012, p20.

This basic information listed will not be unfamiliar to a textile conservator as it is the basic information that is also asked of historic objects for documentation and conservation purposes.

Once this information is established, the type of interview to be carried out needs to be decided. *The Artist Interview* proposes that there are four types of interview;<sup>56</sup> type one is the *Oeuvre* interview. This is the most comprehensive of all four interview types, and possibly the most complex in terms of carrying out the interview. This interview encompasses the entire body of the artist's work and would include work from other institutions calling for a joint, collaborative approach. The point that is raised is that by carrying out this type of interview, the artist will not be repeatedly approached by institutions with similar questions.

The second type of interview is the *Theme* interview, this interview is focused on a particular group of an artist's work, for example work from a particular period in their life, or work characterised by specific materials used. It is suggested that the *Theme* interview will give specific information from which a set of guidelines for this particular group of work can be devised. These guidelines can then be disseminated to all institutions that hold individual pieces from this group of work.

The third type is the *Collection* interview. As the title may suggest this interview is concerned with artworks by a single artist within one institutions collection. With this type of interview the artworks may already have information on record or within archives, the artworks are readily available for research purposes and for the interview, and possibly employees, or former employees, can be approached for information.

The fourth interview type is the *Case* interview. This interview is focused on one particular artwork with a specific conservation problem. It is suggested that the interview is conducted where the artwork is on display and that its aim is to find out as much information as possible about the artwork and to find out why it has been included in the collection.

It is thought that the latter two types of interview, *Collection* and *Case*, will more likely be the types of interview a textile conservator would be involved with or wish to carry

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<sup>56</sup> Beerkens, L. (et al.) 2012, p21.

out themselves. By categorising interviews by type this should help when formulating the questions for an interview. Knowing what type of interview you are conducting will enable you to focus on the artwork or collection being addressed and assist in formulating the most appropriate questions. As the Malcolm Lochhead artwork is one piece of work, the Case interview was the type that was carried out. So questions specific to the artwork, its condition and conservation were sought out.

#### 4.5 Preparation

There is much preparation to be done before the interview takes place. Along with the aforementioned initial research about the artwork, it has to be decided, and agreed with by the artist, as to how the interview is recorded. This will largely be dependant on what equipment is available, but also what the artist is comfortable with. The interview with Malcolm Lochhead was recorded using a Dictaphone, as video recording equipment was not available. A Dictaphone is a relatively compact piece of equipment, as well as being cheap to buy and easy to use. Once any digitally recorded interview is over, the information needs to be transcribed, this is a time consuming job, whether the recording is done via video or audio.

The location of the interview needs to be carefully considered as well. *The Artist Interview* suggests that the location may have a bearing on the progress and outcome of the interview, emphasizing that the artwork/s in question should be on display when discussing it, as this will help obtain the most detailed information.<sup>57</sup> It is uncertain if this should be done as a matter of course, certainly during the interview with Malcolm Lochhead, held at his home/studio, the artwork was not present as it was still under conservation treatment at the CTCTAH. It was felt that in this particular interview, the artist had viewed and examined the artwork recently, so photographs were taken to the interview only to help recall particular issues.

It is also a good idea to contact the artist prior to the interview to inform him/her of what the interview will entail, such as its themes, as well as which artwork/s are being discussed. It may also be a good idea to send the artist a copy of the questions you are going to ask, as it will allow the artist time to recall the particular information or aspects of the artwork being addressed, it will also ensure that the artist is not

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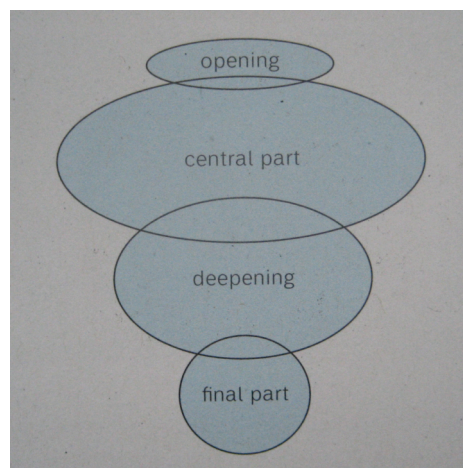
<sup>57</sup> Beerkens, L. (et al.) 2012, p22.

disconcerted by any unexpected questions. However, *The Artist Interview* suggests not doing this, as it would *prevent the artist from having the feeling of repeating his story*.<sup>58</sup> In the Malcolm Lochhead interview he was not given the interview questions before the interview, but in this case, many of the questions had already been asked at the prior open day meeting, so he already had an idea of the questions and themes of the interview, and had time to recall any information.

#### 4.6 Structure

The structure of the interview is also important, it allows the interviewer to plan their questions and allows the interview to flow naturally. If the interview veers off track, with a clear structure, the interviewer can bring it back into focus. *The Artist Interview* has a useful model for the structure of an interview. It begins with four interview stages (see Fig 13.) which are summarised as follows:

- The opening stage. This stage serves as an introduction to the interview.
- The central part of the interview, this part is open and broad, dealing with the artworks as they are made and intended. This part allows the artist to speak freely about his/her work.
- The deepening phase, containing more specific, professionally orientated questions posed by the interviewers.
- The final phase, this part allows for other discussions such as other artworks or to point out salient issues.

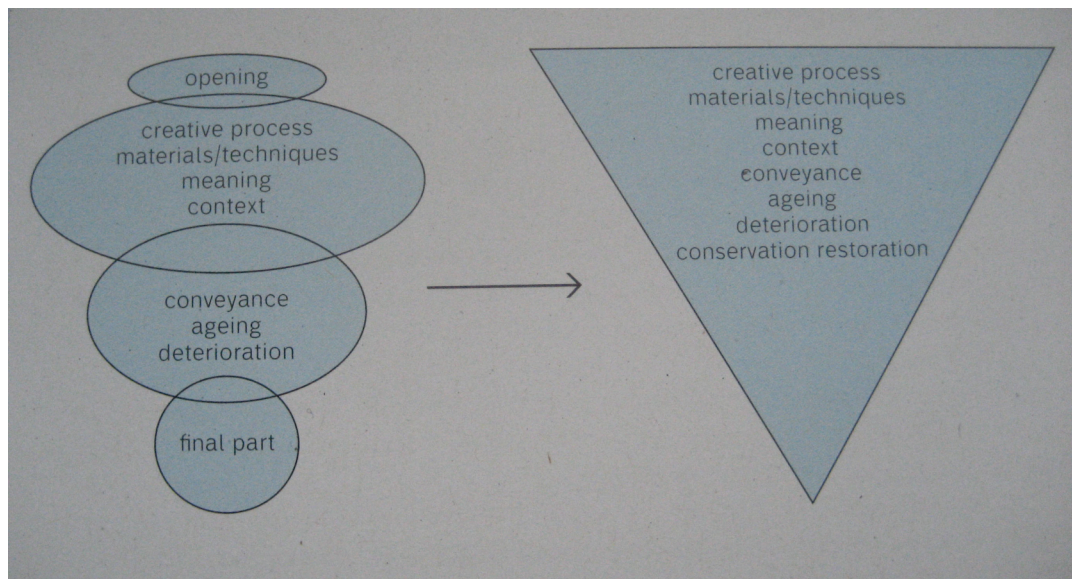


**Fig 13.** The Four Interview Stages. © Beerkens, L. (et al.) 2012<sup>59</sup>

<sup>58</sup> Beerkens, L. (et al.) 2012, p24.

<sup>59</sup> Beerkens, L. (et al.) 2012, p27.

The book then goes further and introduces eight aspects that fit within the four interview stages (see Fig 14.) The first four aspects (creative process, materials and techniques, meaning, context) are discussed in the core of the interview. The following three aspects (conveyance to the audience, ageing, deterioration and damage) are discussed in the deepening stage, and the last aspect, (conservation) may be discussed in the final stage.<sup>60</sup> This can be used to help formulate questions, but in the case of the Malcolm Lochhead interview, it was useful in planning when to ask particular questions, and how to start and end the interview professionally.



**Fig 14.** Triangle Shape: From General to Specific Questions. The questions relevant to the central part of the interview, the subsequent stages and each separate artwork proceed from general and deepening to specific and concrete, as in a triangle. © Beerkens, L. (et al.) 2012<sup>61</sup>

#### 4.7 The Interview Questions

*The Artist Interview* has set out multiple questions that can be used within an artist interview. The publication firstly lists useful opening questions, then makes suggestions for questions on the artist's creative process, materials and techniques, meaning, context, conveyance and public, ageing, deterioration and damage and finally conservation. These particular questions can be used in an interview about

<sup>60</sup> Beerkens, L. (et al.) 2012, p31.

<sup>61</sup> Beerkens, L. (et al.) 2012, p31.

any type of artwork. There are then questions set out specific to the type of art form being addressed, such as paintings, work on paper, photography, sculptures, installations, and media art.

As the Malcolm Lochhead artwork does not fit neatly into any one of the suggested art forms, questions were chosen which were felt to be relevant to the artwork and the information that was to be gained from the interview (see Appendix A). For the Malcolm Lochhead interview questions were used and/or based upon those within the *Sculpture*<sup>62</sup> and *Installation*<sup>63</sup> suggestions. Based upon the *Sculpture* questions they were as follows:

1. How is the internal construction made? How are the outer parts of the sculpture mounted and how are the materials given shape? What parts are assembled and could possibly be disassembled?
2. How do materials and techniques applied in the artwork relate to the meaning of the work? Which other elements give the work its meaning i.e. missing additions or artworks, space, light?
3. Preferred hanging height?
4. To what extent do tactility and appearance of the surface play a decisive role?
5. Should the work be viewed from several angles?.<sup>64</sup>

Questions posed based upon the Installation suggestions:

1. How do you see your role as an artist in decisions regarding conservation issues?
2. What changes have you noticed over time? What are the margins within which changes or modifications are acceptable?<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> Beerkens, L. (et al.) 2012, p41-42.

<sup>63</sup> Beerkens, L. (et al.) 2012, p42-46.

<sup>64</sup> Beerkens, L. (et al.) 2012, p41.

Additional questions posed were:

1. How do you see the viewer's interaction with the artwork?
2. Are there things that have attracted your attention and things that you might want to change?
3. During your training at art school, was there a focus on materials, their properties and how to use them? Has this changed within teaching?

These were the questions set out initially, but they were adapted, modified and added to whilst the interview was progressing, responding to the answers being given and the mood of the interview. One aspect of the interview that proved successful was the addition of a second interviewer. Margaret Smith, conservation science intern, attended the interview as she was at the initial meeting at the CTCTAH open day and was particularly interested in Malcolm Lochhead's use of adhesives in his practice. Margaret Smith did not have any specific questions formulated, but as the interview progressed and the discussion was becoming more in-depth she felt confident to get involved, which allowed Malcolm Lochhead to then pose questions to the interviewers about his use of adhesives and if he should have used different, longer lasting materials. It is felt that because of the presence of a second interviewer, with a different professional background and agenda, this allowed the interview and artist to open up and an in-depth dialogue and discussion followed. The full transcript of the interview can be viewed in Appendix A.

#### **4.8 Conclusion**

Reflecting on the interview experience with Malcolm Lochhead, the artist interview is without doubt a useful, relevant and worthwhile exercise to undertake. Any opportunity to gain further information about an object intended for conservation treatment should be taken full advantage of, as the more information a conservator has access to, the better their decision-making about treatment and future care will be. In comparison to the impromptu meeting with Malcolm Lochhead at the CTCTAH open day, the formal interview (see Fig 15) did impart more useful information to

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<sup>65</sup> Beerkens, L. (et al.) 2012, p44.

consider during conservation such as the importance of the shape of the artwork to the artists intended meaning, methods, materials and techniques the artist used in its construction, as well as important information on the artworks significance and provenance. However, it is believed that if there is no time or desire to carry out a long, structured interview such as those featured in *The Artist Interview*, then a short, 30minute discussion is almost as valuable as important information can be gained through any discussion with the artist, provided the specific questions about the materials used and their meaning within the artwork, how the artwork was made and the meaning of the artwork are posed. The most important exercise during any discussion or interview is the exact recording of the information. The impromptu meeting with Malcolm Lochhead only allowed for quick notes to be taken, it is felt that this method did not accurately or concisely record all of the artist's comments and views, and when reflecting on the notes and the meeting, it was felt that a more structured, precise method should have been used to record the information.



**Fig 15.** Image of interview with Malcolm Lochhead taking place at the artist's home/studio © Image authors own.

One aspect about an interview with an artist that cannot be predicted is the artist's personality, mood and interest in what is being discussed. This may play a large part in the quantity and quality of information that is obtained from the interview. A scenario where a disinterested artist does not get involved in any dialogue with the interviewers, or where the responses have to be drawn out of the artist, could make for a difficult interview. In the case of the interview with Malcolm Lochhead, the artist

was extremely friendly, approachable and interested in conservation. This allowed the interview to become an open discussion almost, with the interviewers gaining the information they were seeking and much more.

Transcribing an audio recording of an interview is a time consuming exercise, but this allows the conservator to replay views and statements from the artist and to reflect on the interview and experience, as well as acting as a permanent record. This reflection and analysis is viewed as being an integral part of the interview, and aids the interpretation of what the artist has said, *The Artist Interview* states:

*The interview as a source of information will become more transparent and its content more accessible when the interviewer writes down his experiences and analyses the contents of the interview. This may require time and reflective insight, but it does provide the interview afterwards with a clear context for interpretation.*<sup>66</sup>

Carrying out an artist interview may be a daunting prospect for a textile conservator as questioning a curator or private client about a particular object is considerably different than talking to the maker of the object, especially when the maker has a different, personal or emotional, attachment to the object. However textile conservators should already possess the communication skills to overcome any doubts about the interview process. If the interview is looked upon as another tool to help weigh the advantages and disadvantages of conservation treatment, and to aid decision-making, then this should be no different to discussing the object with a curator or private client.

After the interview has taken place, including the transcription and reflection, the final step in the process of an artist interview is utilising the information gained. Questions such as, has the interview informed the conservation? and where does the interview fit in to the documentation? now arise. Suggested documentation methods for modern and contemporary art are discussed in the chapter titled *Documentation*.

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<sup>66</sup> Beerkens, L. (et al.) 2012, p76.

## 5.0 Documentation

### 5.1 Introduction

Documentation standards within museums are generally included in a museums code of ethics, ensuring that each accessioned object is documented according to professional standards. The documentation usually includes object identification, location within a museum store, a description of the object, its provenance, condition, and records of any conservation treatment carried out.

In the paper *Documentation of Change-Change of Documentation* by Gunnar Heydenreich, the author lists the following aims that exist with regard to the documentation of contemporary works of art<sup>67</sup>:

- *Documentation facilitates the preservation and presentation or representation of artworks at an operational level. It is the basis for developing preservation strategies, planning loans and presentation, determining environmental conditions and risk assessment*
- *Moreover, documentation is an essential basis for understanding and mediation of contemporary artworks and defining their artistic significance in a historical perspective. Installation artworks can only be experienced when exhibited, but as only a small percentage can be exhibited, it is important to communicate works through documentation. Documentation also provides an important tool to communicate ephemeral art to present and future generations.*
- *Finally documentation and information contribute to a more efficient use of resources in museums. An appropriate degree of documentation at the right time avoids later difficulties in the presentation and restoration or even loss of artworks.*

These aims are not unfamiliar to textile conservators as some of the points being made can also apply to any object within a museum, particularly the first point where documentation is the basis for determining an objects preservation, risk assessment

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<sup>67</sup> Heydenreich, Gunnar, *Change of Documentation-Documentation of Change*. In Tatja Scholte & Glenn Wharton, *Inside Installations: Theory and Practice in the Care of Complex Artworks* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2011) p159.

and environmental conditions. Where documentation appears to differ with modern and contemporary art is when an artwork has meaning through the space in which it is installed or exhibited, and also where an artwork has ephemeral components such as light and sound. It is hoped that through the research some of the solutions to these documentation issues can be explored and suggestions can be made as to how the solutions could apply to the conservation of contemporary textile-based art.

Contemporary textile-based artworks are often complex objects that can include components such as light, sound or movement, as well as having a complicated means of installation. Until recently the only method of recording the installation of an artwork would be through photographs, video recordings or diagrams. However, new insights and technological methods of recording the artwork within a space have been researched through the *Inside Installations* project. One such solution is the use of geodetic surveying such as tacheometry, photogrammetry and laser scanning. Maïke Grün features these particular methods in the paper *Coordinates and Plans: Geodetic Measurement of Room Installations*<sup>68</sup>, and are methods currently used in the Sammlung Moderne Kunst (Collection of Modern Art) at the Pinakothek der Moderne in Munich. These methods, among others, will be analysed to determine how efficient and effective the suggested methods may be for a textile conservator.

*The Decision-Making Model for the Conservation and Restoration of Modern and Contemporary Art* was produced by Stichting Behoud Moderne Kunst (SBMK) in 1997. This model was formed as a result of the complexities of the ten pilot artworks featured in the *Conservation of Modern Art*<sup>69</sup> project, it was felt necessary that a structure was developed to assist treatment and it builds upon a model for decision making in respect to 'traditional' works of art developed by Ernst van de Wetering in the 1980's.<sup>70</sup> This chapter looks in depth at this model to determine its relevance for a textile conservator and compares it with the existing standard documentation

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<sup>68</sup> Grün, Maïke, *Coordinates and Plans: Geodetic Measurements of Room Installations. Methods and Experience Gained at the Pinakothek der Moderne, Munich*. In Tatja Scholte & Glenn Wharton, *Inside Installations: Theory and Practice in the Care of Complex Artworks* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2011) p185-194.

<sup>69</sup> *The Conservation of Modern Art* project was the precursor to the *Modern Art: Who Cares?* symposium and publication. It is the ten pilot objects from this project that feature in *Modern Art; Who Cares?*

<sup>70</sup> Wetering, Ernst van de & Wegen, Derk, H. van, *Roaming the Stairs of the Tower of Babel: Efforts to Expand the Interdisciplinary Involvement in the Theory of Restoration*. In *Preprints for the 8<sup>th</sup> Triennial Meeting, ICOM Committee for Conservation, Sydney 1987* (Los Angeles: The Getty Conservation Institute, 1987) pp561-565.

methods asking if the suggested *Decision-Making Model* can and should be used? If it should replace the existing standard documentation methods?, and how a textile conservator can utilise the *Decision-Making Model*. The *Modern Art: Who Cares?* publication also features the *Model for Data Registration* and the *Model for Condition Registration*. These additional models will also be analysed for their potential in aiding and assisting documentation and conservation decision making and if and how they can be utilised by a textile conservator.

## **5.2 Current Practices - Documentation within Textile Conservation**

Conservation documentation can take many forms within textile conservation, and its length and depth can depend largely on the institutions documentation practices. Within textile conservation teaching in the UK, large, in-depth documentation reports are carried out as standard, with the aim that if conservation students can produce well written comprehensive documents, they can take these skills and apply them to shorter forms of documentation that are generally implemented within museums and conservation studios. A well produced piece of documentation can contribute to the preservation of an object and it can reveal information about the object that is not necessarily shown through photography. Textile conservation student reports generally include:

- Object record – this section generally includes the objects identification number, dimensions, main characteristics, materials, manufacture and details of repairs or alterations.
- Condition report – this is before any treatment has been carried out and includes information on the objects physical state, completeness and obvious signs of deterioration.
- Substantiated treatment proposal – this section records what the clients requirements were and all treatment options recommended, it can also included treatments that were not carried out with information to justify all decisions made.
- Substantiated treatment report – this section details the process and materials used during the treatment. Here any results from material testing or scientific analysis will be included, as well as details about any changes to the proposed treatment and justifications for these changes.

- Evaluation of treatment – the evaluation of the treatment states the conservator's opinion and thoughts on the success of each stage of the treatment and whether it fulfilled the client brief.
- Future recommendations – this section gives information on any future care recommendations such as required temperature and relative humidity, handling and packing, and any recommendations for future conservation treatment.

Museum and private conservator documentation records encompass the information within the student documentation, but on a smaller scale.

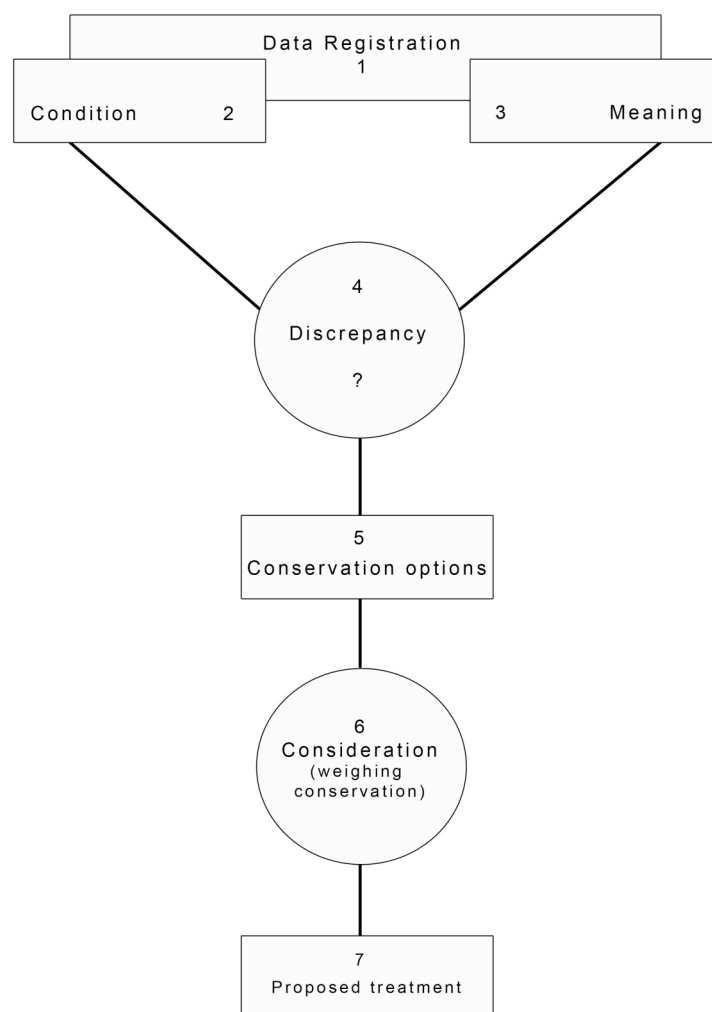
### **5.3 Methods for Contemporary Art**

In 1997 The Foundation for the Conservation of Contemporary Art, now SBMK, developed *The Decision-Making Model for the Conservation and Restoration of Contemporary Art*, shortened to *The Decision-Making Model*. The models function is described to;

*afford a structure for leading a discussion; it organises the decision making; it affords possibilities for checking an existing decision in the light of consequences that may have been less clear when determining the problems; it helps formulate issues of the justification of the decision making; and it guarantees insight into the justification so that it may later also be consulted by others.*<sup>71</sup>

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<sup>71</sup> Hummelen, IJsbrand & Sillé, Dionne, *Modern Art - Who Cares?: An Interdisciplinary Research Project and An International Symposium on the Conservation of Modern and Contemporary Art* (London: Archetype, 2005) p164.



**Fig 5.** Diagram: Decision-Making Model for the Conservation and Restoration of Modern Art.  
© Image Copyright Foundation for the Conservation of Modern Art<sup>72</sup>

The model consists of seven steps (see Fig 5.), data registration, condition, meaning, discrepancy, conservation options, weighing conservation options and proposed treatment. Instructions are given at each step guiding the reader as to what to do, what information or data to include and what questions are to be asked at each stage. *The Decision-Making Model* also incorporates a *Data Registration Model* (see Appendix C) and *Condition Registration Model* (see Appendix D) within particular stages. These additional models were produced by SBMK as a means of collating and storing all information that is obtained during conservation and as an aid in

<sup>72</sup> Hummelen, I. (et al.), 2005, p165.

completing the decision making process. The information on each step in *Modern Art: Who Cares?* is lengthy and appears complex, however, an attempt will be made here to summarise the instructions in each step using information from *Modern Art: Who Cares?*<sup>73</sup> and The Artist Interview.<sup>74</sup>

1. *Data Registration – Register the following information, preferably using the Data Registration Model. Information about (and from) the artist about the actual production of the object, its meaning and particularly the meaning of the material (possibly through an interview with the artist). Visual material of the original condition and/or intermediate condition, registration of motion, sound, installation. Literature on the artist. Information on the composition of materials, brand names, production processes, information from assistants and producers.*
2. *Condition – make a condition report of the work using the Condition Registration Model (See Appendix D).*
3. *Meaning – Determine the meaning of the object on the basis of the following questions: What is the subject or theme of the work? What is the importance of the perceptible appearance for the meaning of the work? The perceptible appearance can be visual, but also auditive, kinetic etc. What is the importance of the various materials used for the meaning of the work? What is the importance of production processes for the meaning of the work? In what lies the expressiveness of the work? What are other important associations?*
4. *Discrepancy? – discrepancy weighs the different factors influencing the diagnosis of the conservation problem determined by the discrepancy between the current condition, the original work and the meaning of the work. The central question is: Does the meaning of the work change as a result of the ageing, damage or decay it has sustained to such an extent that intervention must be considered? There is a checklist for determining a*

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<sup>73</sup> Hummelen, I. (et al.) 2005, pp166-172.

<sup>74</sup> Beerkens, Lydia, t' Hoen, Paulina, Hummelen Ijsbrand, van Saaze, Vivian, Scholte, Tatja and Stigter, Sanneke, *The Artist Interview: for Conservation and Presentation of Contemporary Art, Guidelines and Practice*. (Heijningen: JAP SAM Books, 2012) p16.

discrepancy between the physical condition and the meaning of the work, see *The Decision-Making Model* in Appendix B.

5. *Conservation Options* – formulate possible treatments to terminate or diminish the discrepancy, i.e. the conservation problem. They are the outcome of a process of deliberation involving a number of factors, and therefore imply a compromise.
6. *Weighing Conservation Options* – the consequences of conservation are weighed, taking into consideration factors such as authenticity, aesthetic factors, functionality and historicity (for the meaning of the work) but also legal aspects and economic limitations. Here the conservation options are balanced against the consequences and risks that the treatment would have for the meaning of the work. The central question is: *in what sense will the meaning of the work be altered as a result of the proposed conservation options?* A checklist for weighing the conservation options follows (see Appendix D).
7. *Proposed treatment* – Draught the treatment plan and make sure that the motivation for the decision making is stored with the data registration.

#### **5.4 A Comparison of Methods**

When reviewing the *Decision-Making Model*, *Data Registration Model* and the *Condition Registration Model*, together with the suggested questions, information and check lists shown in *Modern Art: Who Cares?*, it appears complex and exhaustive. This may illustrate that indeed a complex object requires a complex means of decision-making and documentation, but is this really necessary? In comparison to the standard conservation documentation mentioned previously in the chapter there are many similarities. For example in the *Decision-Making Model* step 1, Data Registration, is similar to the standard methods Object Record. Both sections are concerned with information on the object such as identification, location, description and production. Where they differ is within step 1 of the *Decision-Making Model* additional material is required, such as information on the artist (through literature and correspondence) and presentation/installation instructions. However, this

additional information could be easily added to the Object Record section of the standard documentation without any difficulty.

Step 2 of the *Decision-Making Model*, Condition, is identical to the Condition Report in the standard documentation method. The only difference is the *Condition Registration Model* asks for comparisons between the objects original condition and current condition in detail. This is only possible if evidence, either visual or written, exists for the artwork, and such information can be added to the Condition Report section of the standard documentation with ease.

Steps 5 and 6, Conservation Options and Weighing Conservation Options, are usually included within the Treatment Proposal section of the standard documentation. A textile conservator should consider all the options, justifying why a particular treatment has been considered and why others have not. For example, if a textile conservator rules out wet cleaning as an option, they state the reasons why, always balancing the conservation options with the risks and consequences. However, where this differs in the conservation of contemporary art is the added issue of weighing the risks and consequences that a treatment would have against the preservation of the meaning of the artwork.

Steps 3 and 4 are issues/sections that do not exist within the standard documentation, but their contents are crucial to the conservation of contemporary art. These sections are concerned with the meaning of the artwork, as well as the meaning that particular materials within the artwork have and whether there is a discrepancy between condition and meaning. These two steps within *The Decision-Making Model* are crucial to one another as it states that:

*a discrepancy can only be determined with extensive knowledge of the meaning of the work on one hand, and investigation of the physical condition of the work on the other.*<sup>75</sup>

However, the Meaning and Discrepancy steps could be included in the Treatment Proposal section of the standard documentation, as this is where a textile conservator would normally include the conservation options and justifications in treatments chosen or treatments disregarded.

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<sup>75</sup> Hummelen, I. (et al.) 2005, p168.

## 5.5 The Documentation of Installation Art

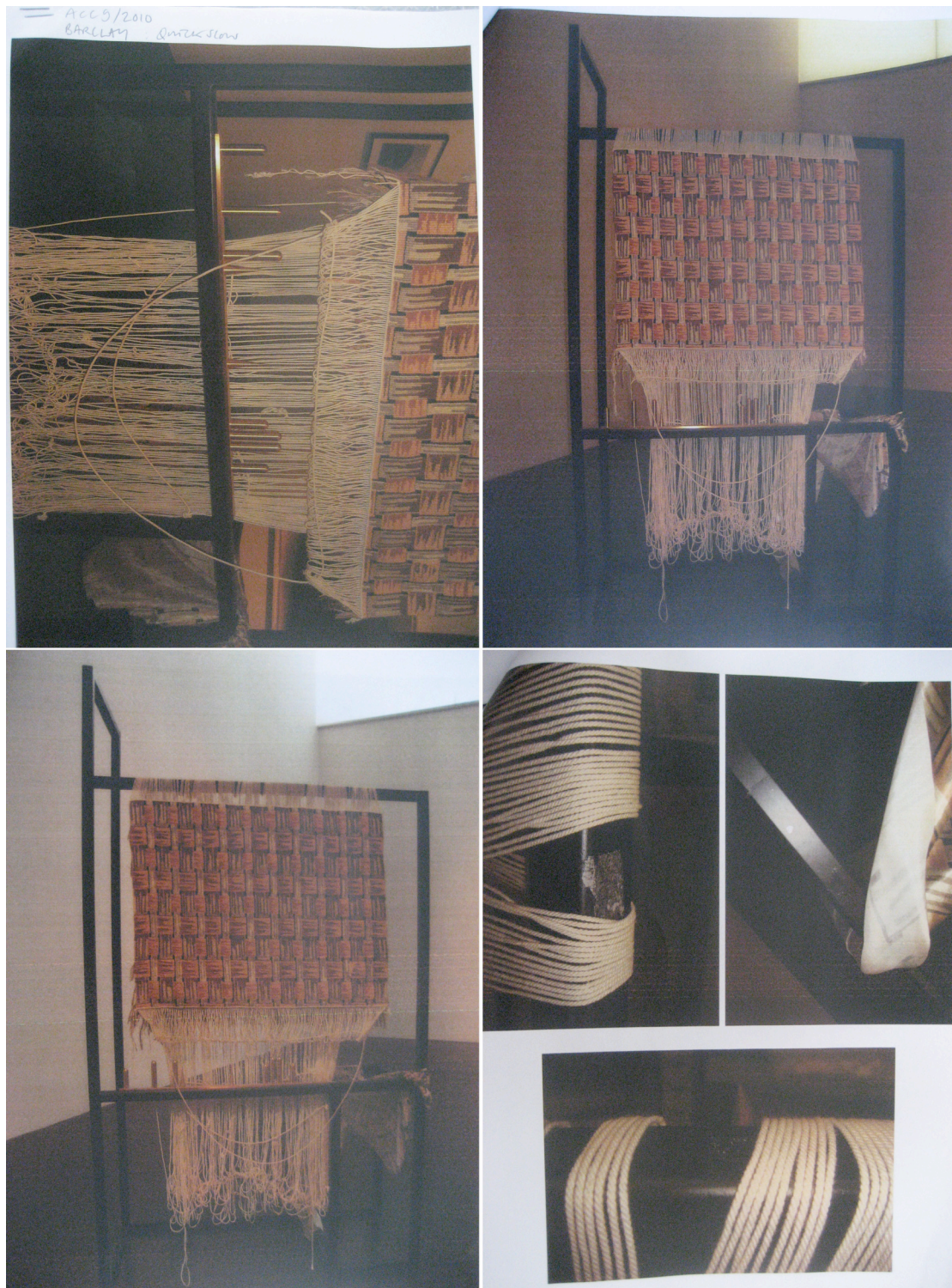
An installation artwork can include elements such as projections, sound, movement, live performance and multiple objects. The intent of the artist can be *to create a total experience*<sup>76</sup> with the viewer physically entering the installation space. Therefore, it is crucial that when the artwork is re-installed within a gallery or museum space, it stays true to the original intent of the artist, and that all objects, projections and sounds are positioned within the space correctly. The *Inside Installations* project by SBMK and INCCA looks specifically at installation art and the complexities in its conservation and display. Research into potential methods to document installation art has been carried out and more importantly the documentation of objects or elements within the installation space.

During voluntary work at the Dovecot Studios in Edinburgh the author assisted the head technician to assemble a contemporary sculpture by artist Claire Barclay titled *Quick, Slow* (2010 (see Fig 7.)). The artwork is a mixed media sculpture using materials such as painted steel, tapestry, wool, silk, linen, printed fabric and machined brass, and its dimensions are 189 x 100 x 45cm. The documentation that accompanied the artwork contained the following typed instructions and images (see Fig 6.):

- *One end of the silky scarf is slightly greener than the other; it is this end that is tied around the work.*
- *The holes, which have been drilled for screw holes, should be covered by the tassels from the woven piece.*
- *Double sided tape can be used to stop the fabric slipping.*

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<sup>76</sup> Scholte, Tatja, Introduction. In Tatja Scholte & Glenn Wharton, *Inside Installations: Theory and Practice in the Care of Complex Artworks* (Amsterdam; Amsterdam University Press, 2011) p11.



**Fig 6.** Copies of the images used within the documentation for Quick Slow (2010) by Claire Barclay, showing their lack of detail and quality. © Images Copyright Arts Council Collection, Southbank, London.

This documentation was basic in its format, and the dark photographs with very little detail were not particularly helpful and did not enhance or add to the written installation instructions. The main concern installing the sculpture was whether the

technicians were positioning the textile pieces within the sculpture correctly. There were two textile pieces, one woven and the other printed silk. The woven piece was to be hung over the sculpture's metal frame and the silk printed piece was to be tied to a section of the metal frame and draped across sections of the frame. The main concern was whether the hanging of the woven piece and tying on and draping of the printed silk piece was carried out correctly and whether carrying this out incorrectly had any bearing on the intended meaning or look of the artwork. If there was room for error or differences in installation, then what changes or modifications were acceptable? The task was carried out to the best of the technicians' abilities, however, it was felt that if the documentation had been more comprehensive then there would be no cause for concern. It would have been useful to have better quality photographs, with detailed shots of the textile pieces at different angles to aid the installation, and within the written documentation an indication as to the importance of securing the textile piece to the metal frame correctly and whether this is essential to the meaning of the artwork.



**Fig 7.** Quick Slow 2010 by Claire Barclay © Image Copyright Cumming, E., 2012<sup>77</sup>

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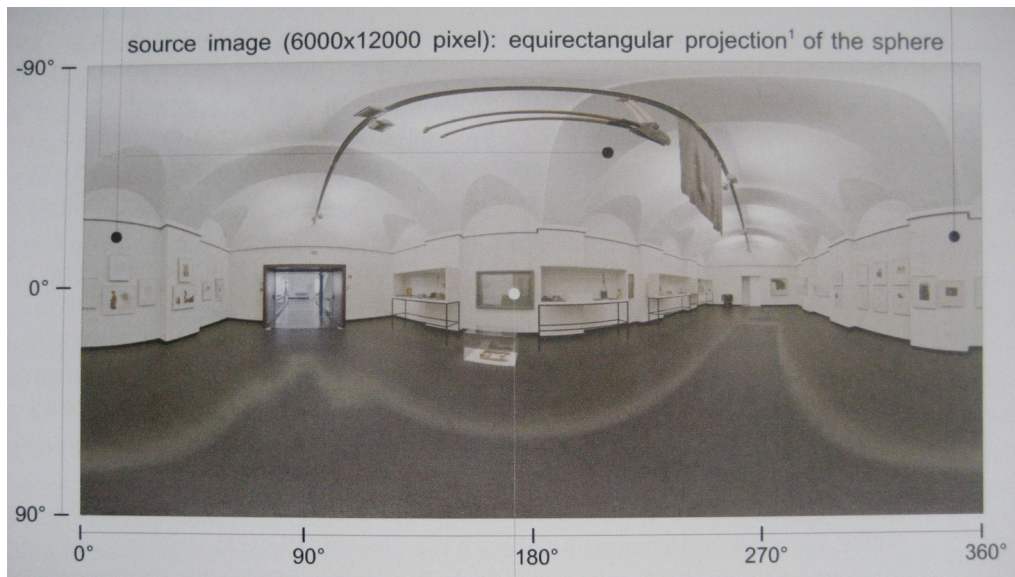
<sup>77</sup> Cumming, Elizabeth, *The Art of Modern Tapestry: Dovecot Studios Since 1912* (Surrey: Ashgate Publishing, 2012) p167.

With the use of photography and video as a method of visual documentation, research by SBMK and INCCA has highlighted the potential for digital methods of visually documenting installation artwork. Ulrike Baumgart in *Visualisation and Documentation of Installation Art* has looked at the potential use of spherical panoramic photography as a tool for visual documentation. This method takes a 360-degree panorama photograph and presents it in one individual 2d image (see Fig 8.) There are three techniques to this method. The first uses a conventional camera with a wide-angle lens and panoramic tripod head. Segments of the installation space are photographed then pieced together using specialised software to create one image of the space. The second method uses a conventional camera with the aid of a curved mirror scope attachment. The resulting image (a round image in the form of a ring with a hole in its centre) then requires the use of specialised software to convert the image into a cylindrical 360-degree panorama image. The third technique uses a scanner camera, this equipment takes one shot of the space and through specialised software, converts the shot into a 2D photograph. This equipment can measure distances and show differences in light conditions within the space.<sup>78</sup> With all three techniques detailed close-up images can be taken of particular areas or objects within the installation, which through the specialised software can become interactive by clicking onto the area<sup>79</sup> within the 2D photograph, enhancing and zooming into the area or object for a detailed examination.

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<sup>78</sup> *What's the Meaning of VR Photography/VR Panoramas?*, [www.inside-installations.org/research.detail.php?r\\_id=488&ct=3d\\_registrations](http://www.inside-installations.org/research.detail.php?r_id=488&ct=3d_registrations), (accessed 14<sup>th</sup> August 2012 (pdf download)).

<sup>79</sup> These interactive areas are known as 'Hotspots' in Ulrike Baumgart's paper *Visualisation and Documentation of Installation Art*.



**Fig 8.** Equirectangular projection (also called geographical projection) is a method of representing the surface of a sphere on a plane. Installation view: *Beuysraum*. Neue Galerie, Kassel, 2006. © Image Copyright Baumgart, U., 2011<sup>80</sup>

There are three methods of visual documentation used at the Pinakothek der Moderne in Munich all of which are geodetic surveying methods. Maike Grün has described and compared these methods in *Coordinates and Plans: Geodetic Measurements of Room Installations. Methods and Experience Gained at the Pinakothek der Moderne, Munich*<sup>81</sup> which include tacheometry, photogrammetry and laser scanning. Geodetic surveying is *the science of measuring the topology and size of the earth and parts of its surface*<sup>82</sup> and has been used in the documentation of modern and contemporary art due to its current use in modern archaeology. Grün states that:

*In principle, the documentation of archaeological excavation sites has the same requirements as those of modern art installation: three-dimensional documentation of numerous objects and features*<sup>83</sup>.

<sup>80</sup> Baumgart, U., 2011, p176.

<sup>81</sup> Grün, Maike, *Coordinates and Plans: Geodetic Measurements of Room Installations. Methods and Experience Gained at the Pinakothek der Moderne, Munich*. In: Scholte, Tatja Scholte & Glenn Wharton, *Inside Installations: Theory and Practice in the Care of Complex Artworks* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2011) pp185-194.

<sup>82</sup> Grün, M., 2011, p186.

<sup>83</sup> Grün, M., 2011, p186.

The first method Maike Grün analyses is tacheometry which is derived from Greek meaning 'quick measurement'. This method uses a tachometer and comprises a theodolite, which is a telescope through which the surveyor can aim at a desired point, and an angle gauge (see Fig 9.) It also has a device for measuring distances that uses a laser beam or infrared light. An electronic tacheometer is equipped with a data processing unit that automatically calculates the respective coordinates from the measured angles and distances<sup>84</sup>. This method can project measuring points within a space, which is advantageous when there is little time during a re-installation.



**Fig 9.** Tacheometric measurement used for photogrammetric rectification of the images. © Bayerische Staatsgemüldesammlungen; © VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn, 2010<sup>85</sup>

The second method is photogrammetry and is ideally suited for accurate topographic mapping of flat surfaces and for flat or small installations. It is a method of measuring images and photographs are taken with a measuring camera and are rectified on the basis of control points using a special computer programme so that they can be shown true to scale<sup>86</sup>.

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<sup>84</sup> Grün, M., 2011, p187.

<sup>85</sup> Grün, M., 2011, p188.

<sup>86</sup> Grün, M., 2011, p187.

The third method Maike Grün analysed was laser scanning. This is where a 3D laser scanner registers point coordinates on the surfaces of the objects by measuring horizontal and vertical angles as well as distances. Computer editing is required to create plans of the installation space. Its advantages are that the equipment automatically scans the space without the requirement of a surveyor to select measurement points. It is useful for measuring complex geometries whose exact positions are to be entered in a plan.<sup>87</sup>

The testing and comparison of all three methods proved to be useful as a tool in the visual documentation of installation art, especially where an object's placement within an installation is essential to the intent and meaning of the artist's work. Maike Grün felt that if the geodetic plans were not used for every re-installation, the plans were essential as an authorised recording of the arrangement of the artwork by the artist, which can be used for future generations.

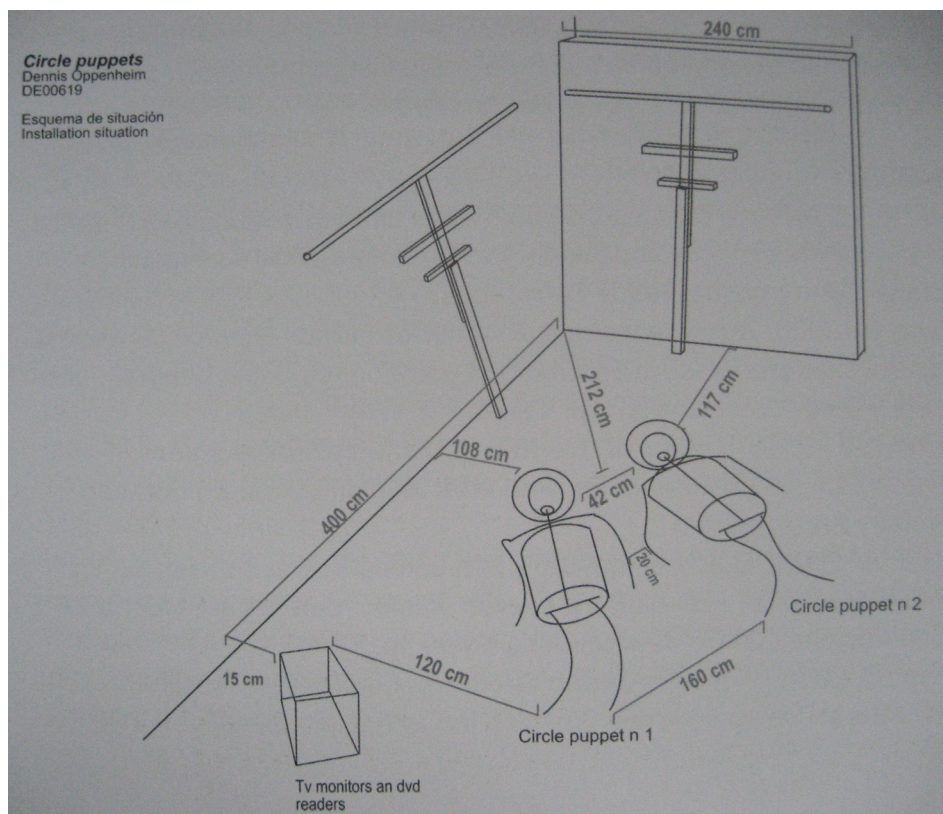
Perhaps a more primitive method of installation documentation is the floor plan created by conservator Mikel Rotaeche<sup>88</sup> for *Circle Puppets* by artist Dennis Oppenheim. The method is featured in Arianne Vanrell Velloso's paper *Updating Knowledge in Conservation Criteria. Circle Puppets Case Study*<sup>89</sup> and was created as an aid to re-installing the artwork without the artists presence. It is simply a map with measurements, distances, location and relationship between each object within the installation space (see Fig 10.) Although it may not be as high tech and detailed as the methods introduced by Ulrike Baumgart and Maike Grün, it is easy to re-enact, understand and include within the artworks existing documentation. It is also a method that can be carried out by a conservator without the need for specialised equipment and computerised software.

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<sup>87</sup> Grün, M., 2011, p187 & 189.

<sup>88</sup> Mikel Rotaeche is a conservator for the Department of Conservation at Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía (MNCARS).

<sup>89</sup> Velloso, Arianne Vanrell, *Updating Knowledge in Conservation Criteria. Circle Puppets Case Study*. In Tatja Scholte & Glenn Wharton, *Inside Installations: Theory and Practice in the Care of Complex Artworks* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2011) pp131-142.



**Fig 10.** Floor plan, measurements, distances and location of all the elements in Circle Puppets and their relationships with the exhibition room. © Image Copyright Vellosillo, A.V., 2011<sup>90</sup>

## 5.6 Conclusion

The documentation of modern and contemporary art appears as complex as the artworks themselves, with large documentation models suggested as essential methods of recording artworks. However, it is hoped that this chapter has shown that the suggested documentation models such as *The Decision-Making Model*, *Data Registration Model* and *Condition Registration Model* suggested by SBMK are not dissimilar to the standard documentation that a textile conservator currently carries out. The only difference being that within *The Decision-Making Model* information like the meaning of the artwork, weighing the conservation options and the discrepancy are separate sections. It is felt that this doesn't need to be the case as these issues can be entered into appropriate sections within the standard documentation. What should be taken from these suggested models are the importance of materials,

<sup>90</sup> Vellosillo, A.V., 2011, p139.

objects and elements such as light and sound to the meaning of the artwork and how these factors are essential within an artworks documentation.

The methods in documenting installation artworks have given an insight into the developments in this area, but the more high tech methods may be out of reach for most textile conservators. The methods suggested by Ulrike Baumgart and Maike Grün employ the use of specific digital equipment and computer software which may not be readily available to textile conservators and too expensive for a museum or gallery to purchase. However, these methods could be used by an institution like the Whitworth Art Gallery in Manchester, where contemporary works of art are a large part of their collection, justifying the use of digital techniques.

The method introduced by Arianne Vanrell Vellosillo may appear as an obvious solution to the documentation of installation art, but it shows that this can be done professionally and accurately without the use of expensive digital equipment. The method is similar to that which textile conservation students use to take measurements of costumes and objects and map out their proposed stitching, so is proposed as a visual documentation method when faced with the documentation and conservation of complex installation art.

## 6.0 Conclusion

It is hoped that this dissertation has highlighted some of the issues within the conservation of textile-based contemporary art. As contemporary works of art are complex objects, so too is their conservation, however, the aim of this dissertation was to make this process clearer and easier for textile conservators.

The first question it aimed to answer was; where does a textile conservator start when faced with the conservation of contemporary textile-based art? The literature review showcased the relevant, current publications that would be considered as a starting point when embarking on the conservation contemporary art. Although the majority of publications were based on digital and multi-media works of art, they are still relevant for textile conservators as the solutions to conservation issues could apply to the conservation of textile-based art. For example, the case study in *Inside Installations* by Agnes W. Brokerhof (et al.) titled *Installation Art Subjected to Risk Assessment – Jeffrey Shaw’s Revolution as Case Study*<sup>91</sup>, looks at a media based artwork with concerns in the preservation of ageing media technologies. However, this paper describes the application of risk assessment methods to determine the artworks significance, meaning and values. This risk assessment approach can be utilised by textile conservators to determine the significance of a textile-based artwork to inform conservation decision-making. As the conservation of contemporary art is a current topic of research, this list of publications is not exhaustive. The additional use of online resources from SBMK, INCCA and the *Inside Installations* project will keep conservators up to date with new research methods, theories, ideas and discussions.

The issues raised through the case studies featuring textile conservators Ann French and Lynn McLean aim to illustrate the current issues in the conservation of textile-based contemporary art and how this is approached and managed by textile conservators. From the case studies it appears that the role of the textile conservator is one of preventive conservation, risk assessment and risk management rather than an interventive conservation role. Ann French indicated that at the Whitworth Art Gallery, the gallery technicians are involved more in the handling, packing and installation of artworks from their collection. This is mainly due to the

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<sup>91</sup> Brokerhof, Agnes, W. (et al.) 2011, pp91-101.

number of conservators employed at the Whitworth Art Gallery and the delegation of tasks when an exhibition is being installed. However, Lynn McLean's collaboration with artist Fiona Mathison in the installation of artwork *A Clean Sheet* was particularly interesting as it was something that the textile conservator had never encountered in the past. This shows that the skills that a textile conservator possess, such as the ability to justify treatments and weigh conservation options against risks to an object, to communicate ideas and treatments to clients and the public and the ability to make compromises without detriment to an object. These skills can be applied to any type of object, historical or contemporary, and that issues with installation, conservation and artist intent can be overcome. It also illustrates that compromises can still be made when conservators are working within museum guidelines and parameters.

The major issues with the conservation of contemporary art are the artists' intent for their artwork, and documentation. These issues can be intertwined as information on the artists' intent, meaning and use of materials are integral in the documentation of modern and contemporary art. If an interview with an artist is not possible, then a short meeting, conversation or correspondence through email could get the information that is needed, as long as the correct, direct and appropriate questions are being asked. This is where the research through *The Artist Interview* publication and the *Decision-Making Model* for documentation can assist, as both publications highlight specific questions or issues that need to be asked of an artwork and artist. They can be used to form the basis of any further research or investigation into the artwork.

The interview with Malcolm Lochhead was invaluable for the documentation records and future care of his artwork. Without the interview Glasgow Museums would not have had the information about the artworks purpose, meaning and materials used. The information provided by Malcolm highlighted the importance of the shape of the artwork to its meaning. As the textile components were the largest part of the artwork and of most interest to the CTCTAH, it was assumed the textile panels were the most important element to the artworks meaning. This illustrated that the need to establish the meaning and intent of the materials used, shape and installation of an artwork is integral to its conservation. This greater knowledge about the artwork will have a positive impact on its future care and storage. Before the artwork was conserved by the CTCTAH it was stored vertically with weight bearing down onto one side of the object. This caused structural damage to the wooden frame that forms

the artworks shape. Although it had been recommended the artwork should not be stored in this way in the future, through the interview with Malcolm Lochhead it was found that the shape of the artwork was integral to its meaning. This information places greater weight and significance on the wooden frame, therefore the storage solutions have to take this into account.

Once the information is gathered for documentation, this can be entered in to any standard documentation format. The dissertation illustrated potential methods of documentation by using the *Decision-Making Model*, *Data Registration Model* and *Condition Registration Model*. They appear complex and lengthy but they are not dissimilar to what textile conservators will be familiar with in standard documentation, and the additional information that they require can be added to the standard documentation methods.

The most important thing with regard to the conservation of contemporary textile-based art is being aware of what the issues are. Every artwork will be different and will require a different method of installation, documentation and care. Provided the textile conservator is aware of issues such as legal rights, artists intended meaning through materials used, and installation requirements, the conservation of a textile-based contemporary artwork is no different to the conservation of a historical artefact. The questions we ask of a contemporary artworks remain relatively the same as the questions we ask of a historic artefact, how was it made? What materials have been used? What is its function/purpose?

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## **APPENDICES**

Interview with Malcolm Lochhead

Artwork: *A Matter of Life and Death*, Glasgow Museums E.1995.27

Location: Artist's home/studio

Date & Time: 14<sup>th</sup> June 2012 at 11:30 am

Interviewers: Danielle Connolly (textile conservator, University of Glasgow) & Margaret Smith (conservation science intern, University of Glasgow)

Danielle Connolly (DC): So we are going to talk about this piece here (gesture towards photograph of artwork) you had said it was for . . .

Malcolm Lochhead (ML): Diploma exam, diploma in art

DC: Was that at Glasgow school of art?

ML: It was yes, degree programmes weren't introduced until the beginning of 70's and I think that was after the change in the education act 1972 and what happened was if you had a diploma from the period where I was a student '66-'70, you could send in what I call two Persil tops and your diploma was translated into a degree which was quite handy.

DC: Where you given a brief to fulfill?

ML: It was a simple brief to interpret the concept of contrast and it was a huge, huge topic and I can remember thinking almost instantaneously, although I think I sent you the notes, it was a second thought and Cath White [course tutor] always said my second thoughts were always so much better than my first and that is true of many people I think, anyway I decided I would go with the contrast of life and death, and the rest they say is history.

DC: So how do you start when you are doing a piece? I maybe got an idea when looking at your studio, do you start off with drawings first or do you have materials in mind at the same time?

ML: They come from all sorts of starting points. This one was the first conceived [piece] that I did because, [pause] I think I was a late developer. I went to art school when I was 17 and had a wonderful time but I don't think I fully absorbed exactly what should have been happening and this was an opportunity to work through the design process from beginning to end which is what, at the time, diploma examinations were all about, from concept to product, so there was a lot of drawing, a little writing. We were also the first students to write a theses, and mine was on the subject of religious symbolism and has remained a fascination of mine ever since and you know, when you look at it now, in comparison to the sorts of piece of academic work that you are doing and the pieces of academic work that I have done subsequently, it was "toy town", it was a very pretty "toy town"!

DC: And the training you had done or when you were at art school was there a focus on the materials and their properties and how to use them, and do you think that has changed at all?

ML: Well interestingly it was the department of Embroidered and Woven Textiles so we did know about the structure of woven fabrics but not knitted fabrics, we used to spend happy periods where Cath White [course tutor] would have boxes of pieces of

fabric and we'd look at them and comment on them. I remember there was a lovely sort of natural coloured fabric, with a sort of hairy surface, and I liked that very much and she [Cath White] said 'well you should know what that is', and I didn't, but I should have known because it was horse hair interlining, which is used in gentleman's tailoring, and my grandfather was a master tailor, so I should have known. I know now.

DC: I don't know the experience you have had with the teaching institutions now, but do you think that that has changed slightly?

ML: I would think, and you know from observations of what they are doing in the art school now, the technology of textiles is far in advance of what we did, coz I can remember wanting to weave something, and I wasn't particularly good at weaving because I am not particularly mathematical, and the tutor wasn't able to help me, but with all sorts of computer aided stuff now I think it's probably a great deal easier to do this sort of thing. And actually I was at a degree show last week and everybody in design is using the technology now, most of the graphic design was on video, which is actually quite sad because paper is still a valuable resource and it should be, you know paper and magazines.

One thing I can say about my art school experience, was the joy of fabric, you know the fact when you see exquisite fabric now, it's either a kick in the gut or you're purring like a cat that it is so beautiful.

DC: If we can go on to talk about the piece, it was titled "A Matter of Life and Death".

ML: I think so.

DC: It had a label on it that did title it that.

ML: A matter of life and death sounds quite good. You know that when Picasso, in his later life, people would bring drawings for his authentication and if he liked them he would sign them and if he didn't, he didn't, so we'll call this "A matter of Life and Death"! [laughing]

DC: Do you remember how the piece was constructed, the outer parts and how the materials were given their shape?

ML: I was determined it was going to be in a box with mirrors so that it would reflect infinity, which it didn't quite do, the angle of the mirrors was wrong and that was my fault, but I had a wonderful friend who was a master cabinet maker and he made the box for me and everything else fitted in from there.

DC: So you knew you wanted this particular shape and because of the meaning of the mirrors and infinity.

ML: Yes.

DC: So how do the materials and techniques applied in the artwork relate to the meaning of the piece?

ML: Well up at the top my thinking was that life was vital, vivid and moving, so the stitchery has that but it also has the glass beads but I see that many have fallen off [laughing] but they sparkled and as you probably know one of the problems with beads is they have sharp edges and they cut through the thread. What you are

supposed to do, but what I can't remember if I did do, is that you run the thread through beeswax and that strengthens it although you probably [get] things like monofilament nylon now would be better, the only thing about it [monofilament nylon] is it had a tendency, it doesn't sit in the fabric it tends to bounce over it. So the stitchery was worked into black crepe and I think it was rayon crepe, have you analysed it?

Margaret Smith (MS): We looked at it and it was viscose.

ML: I don't think silk crepe was available, and I can't remember where I bought it but it was a dress fabric, it wasn't a furnishing fabric, although another piece that I did at the same time, there was a wonderful shop called Art Fabrics on Sauchiehall Street, which is now a Russian bar. It would be worth following up Art Fabrics because they did the very, very best of furnishing fabrics and the other wonderful thing was, it was owned by a gentleman called Mr Grant and I was 19 years old but I was treated with the utmost respect, because I was a customer. Now a days I use very expensive fabrics and sometimes I feel, you know "hello, be nice to me". And what I did was I mounted velvet and grosgrain ribbon onto something sticky, it might have been Bondaweb®, that was the central [panel], the black and grey ones there, and they were then either ironed on or stuck on to the background. One of the things about it is it is actually quite a big piece and it had to be finished in three weeks and as with many things there is probably quite a lot of cheating went on in it, you know glue bad thing? Good thing?. But it was a means to an end and some of the white shapes were also glued on and others were stitched on and I do remember that two of my friends, Christine and Ann helped with the stitchery because there was just so much to do, and Christine is still my friend and I don't know what happened to Ann, but she was shoplifter to the stars, she used to shop lift to order, she called it 'zipping' [laughing]

DC: What other elements within the piece that give the artwork its meaning like the space it is supposed to be in, the light?

ML: I think the mirror thing worked quite well, is maybe something I should investigate again and do again in a different kind of way, looking at it now I think the stitchery should have come further down in the shapes [top panel into central panel] and maybe the bone shapes are a bit high up [pause] I'm amazed I had forgotten how grubby it had got, and that had got to do with the fact it hung in one of my flats where we all smoked and the white parts have absorbed the smoke. With your work could you find out whether there is nicotine or tar?

MS: I could, I could extract it and do HPLC. I would have seen polyaromatic hydrocarbons which could be detected with HPLC.

DC: We know that cotton; white cottons can go yellow/brown through oxidation degradation, which I had initially thought had caused the discolouration.

ML: It's probably a combination of both. So I guess a lot of textiles, until relatively recently, will have been contaminated by smoke?

MS: Which maybe has been interpreted incorrectly as light fading or photo oxidation.

DC: How did you see the viewers interaction with the piece, tactility and appearance?

ML: People love touching and that is one of the great joys and great sadnesses of textile art is that you would love people to handle them but their grubby fingers and sticky fingers are not going to do any good, but leaving that aside I think that it had a slight emotional, or I hoped it would have an emotional impact, but things that I have done subsequently have been far, far more emotional and made people cry and [pause] I like that! It's, well paintings can do that but there is absolutely no reason why textile pieces can't do that and textile pieces often find themselves in places where perhaps paintings may be inappropriate.

I did a piece for the Maggie's Centre, it's basically 2600 pieces of Harris Tweed and then people got a piece of paper and a piece of Harris Tweed and then they wrote things about cancer and some people had tears pouring down their faces and it [the paper piece] was rolled up in the Harris Tweed and then tied with wool into the background and it's suffused with emotion. I remember a friend who'd had cancer had a look at it and walked away and said nothing and outside I said to him "I guess you didn't like it?", coz if I don't like something I say nothing, and he said "no I was just overcome [with emotion]" he was exuding and it made him mourn for a young man who was killed in a terrorist attack, and people just look at it and cry, it's a bit otherworldly.

And that to me is what I want I want people to have a slight feeling of emotion when looking at it.

I'm just looking at it again [looking at image of piece], I think I would make the embroidery in one piece coz the join from there to there, and probably there to there [pointing to the joins between the top and central panels and the central and bottom panels] and it would have been quite simple to make it in one piece, but I didn't! That's how I made it, a pretty huge patchwork.

DC: So you made each of the sections separately and then put them together?

ML: Yes. That meant Christine and Ann could work on one bit and I could work on another. Don't take my diploma away! Which is bad coz Christine failed!

DC: From [first] looking at it I don't know which way it was supposed to hang, is there a preferred or specific hanging height at all?

ML: I think with that one you'd had to have eye level, coz you can look up into the piece.

DC: When you create pieces, does display and exhibition come into your decisions and decisions about the spaces it is going to be in?

ML: If it's something that is being commissioned for a space then it is fundamentally important otherwise you just have to let things go where they are going and hopefully people will look after them and love them. It's very interesting though when you go to somebody's house that you didn't know and suddenly think "oh, that's where it ended up" I know where just about everything is but there is one piece that was bought by somebody in Oban and I'd love to see it again, I've got the drawing and a black and white photograph of it.

DC: And what do you think of this piece now in terms of its appearance?

ML: I think it looks a little bit tired and a little bit sad but I'm still quite proud of it, I think it's not a bad piece of work and I think it was the first grown up piece of work I ever did that says something about me. I don't think it says much about the period, I don't think it's dated terribly, you know some things move through time, for example

it's the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Coventry Cathedral which for a while looked so dated, but its come through that pain barrier and its come out the other side and is stunning, absolutely stunning.

MS: I think it looks more modern that the time you did it, that's what I think as an onlooker.

ML: That's interesting.

MS: I wouldn't have dated it from the late '60's early '70's.

ML: There have been many television programmes about the 70's recently, and I don't know if you know, but the 70's are referred to as the decade that taste forgot [laughing]. There was some pretty ugly stuff going on then, you're too young to remember.

MS: I remember it, the orange colour was very popular in the 70's.

ML: That was the end of the 70's. When you think of the Clockwork Orange, Glasgow underground, they had, I think, they showed three schemes and one was hellish, one was orange and one was fabulous. The public, coz they were tuned into the fashion of orange, and of course orange is in fashion again.

MS: But then this was done in the late 60's early 70's am I right?

ML: 1970

MS: So that was before the fashion for orange became popular.

ML: Just before that was the fashion for purple because it was the first time that they managed to get substantive dyes of purple, I remember one of my pals a year ahead of me, she painted something purple, it was the first purple paint that was available that wouldn't fade, maybe it did fade, I don't know.

DC: it would be interesting to see.

MS: Was that an acrylic paint?

ML: No it was house paint, it was a gloss or eggshell or something.

DC: Is there anything else that you have noticed now that you would want to change or anything that is attracting your attention within the piece?

ML: I don't think I would have glued stuff on [laughing]. The thing is you know that making things look as if they are floating in air, these stitched pieces they were cut out of thick Vilene® and then stitched over, then the Vilene® was pulled out so that you get these linear bits. And to cover little shapes that size and then stitch them down would have been so time consuming and I think possibly beyond my technical capabilities coz I always think of myself as more of a designer than an embroiderer, there are people out there who do work of exquisite quality, I don't think I could ever you know manage that sort of thing, which is great when I work with expert people who do things for me.

MS: I think the definition of your edges is fantastic considering the difficulties to do that.

[Pause to look at image]

ML: I think I would have the edges of the mirror polished, but I couldn't afford that, it was insulating tape cover[ing] the edges.

DC: That's the insulating tape down the side there? [pointing to the left hand edge of the piece] How would you feel about any elements or materials being replaced within the piece? There's evidence that a piece [of appliqué on bottom panel] is missing, how would you feel about anything like that, and the insulating tape, being replaced?

ML: It wouldn't worry me greatly, I've heard of other pieces, there was a piece made for St Giles, it was asymmetrical and the ladies of the church didn't like it being asymmetrical so they took it apart, symmetrized it! That's naughty. You know I think I have a painting and I don't like the colour of the background, one day I'm going to take it out and I'm going to re-colour the background. When you think 'The man in Armour' in Glasgow Museums, Joshua Reynolds didn't like the composition so he added a bit on and painted it and when you stand and look at it you can see there's a seam where he'd painted it.

DC: Who do you think should carry out any replacement of materials?

ML: I think if you can get the person who made it then they should be the ones to do it, if not I think you just have to trust people.

DC: That leads me on to my final question really, who do you think is responsible for the future or any artwork, any piece that you make, once it is sold or once it is within a collection?

ML: [Pause] People who buy them buy them because they like them and they will do their best for them. Museums I think are duty bound to look after them and churches are notoriously bad about looking after stuff. The more powerful the church the worse they are. A small church where they have saved up a goodly amount of money will love and cherish, other places, it can be quite distressing.

MS: I think churches will be the poorest [for] ambient temperature and relative humidity for you work, out of the three locations you have mentioned. [Churches are] maybe not aware.

ML: It has been pointed out to me of late that halogen lighting can be very damaging, particularly to silk, something scientific! I would recommend people stop using it [silk], the artificial ones now, John Smillie that I mentioned earlier said "they will produce a silk that will be undetectable from the real thing" and I said "no they won't". The only thing is sometimes handle, it feels colder than real silk actually does. I was so delighted to see it being loved and looked after [piece in question].

DC: How do you feel about the piece being conserved?

ML: I think you should put it in the washing machine and given it a good wash, a good boil wash!

DC: The most damage was structural.

ML: But Cath [course tutor] was right she wouldn't use glue in anything, but if you persuade Glasgow Museums to let you look inside Ann Macbeths 'Sleeping Beauty' you'll find she's used glue, it's glue pot glue, it's brown and on her [the pictured figures] face.

From your perspective if you were using a glue with textiles today what glue would you use?

MS: Well I think it depends and I don't think you done wrong coz it's been forty-two years and is it in bad condition? No. You used off the shelf glues that were very successful and have been very successful.

ML: I tell you what I do know now that may or may not horrify you, it would horrify a conservator, probably, if something is beaded then I paint the back with Copydex® so that if the threads break they will be held in place.

MS: the only thing I probably wouldn't use would be things like super glue because they become very brittle.

ML: Sometimes it's good to put the end of a thread [in super glue] which stops it fraying. I suspect UHU® has a degree of flexibility. I use Araldite® for something recently, we made a cross and the jewels were becoming problematic, so we glued it onto a textile background.

Do you think it's got a life span? [piece in question]

DC: Yes I think it has another forty-two years, there are now recommendations for storage, it's had conservation and it has recommendations for future conservation.

ML: They [Glasgow Museums] have another piece of my work which is paper, I suspect it is in quite good condition, it's only been shown once and I don't think this [the piece in question] has eve been shown, but they [Glasgow Museums] have so much stuff.

DC: Is there any other thoughts you have had about the piece since seeing it?

ML: I had more or less forgotten about it, [and when I saw it] "oh there it is, you are grubby!"

DC: It must bring back lots of memories? Do you find that when you see a piece?

ML: Oh yes, things do rush back and sometimes a little bit of emotion, not necessarily unhappy emotion, [the piece in question] with the three of us, what a laugh.

The Decision-Making Model  
for the  
Conservation and Restoration  
of  
Modern and Contemporary Art

Foundation for the Conservation of Modern Art 1997/99

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## **A. Why a decision-making model?**

During the discussions concerning the desired treatment of the pilot objects in the initial phase of the Conservation of Modern Art project, it soon became apparent that it was necessary to develop a structure. In the first discussions it was clear how many differing and disparate arguments could play a role in establishing a decision-making model. It was evident that the problems arising in the conservation and restoration of modern and contemporary art are complex. The present model originated from new and improved attempts to steer the discussions of the theoretical working group into proper channels.

Once a consensus has been reached concerning the terminology, the model appears to function well: it affords a structure for leading a discussion; it organises the decision making; it affords possibilities for checking an existing decision in the light of consequences that may have been less clear when determining the problems; it helps to formulate issues of the justification of the decision making; and it guarantees insight into the justification so that it may later also be consulted by others.

The model presented here builds upon a model for decision making in conservation issues developed earlier by Ernst van de Wetering.<sup>C</sup> This model took into account an important aspect of such decisions, namely that they always represent a compromise between various kinds of considerations. These considerations can sometimes conflict. Moreover, comparable considerations may weigh differently depending on the individual cases. Each case requires a new evaluation of whether preservation of the appearance is more or less important than preservation of the authentic material or possible functioning of the object.

The pros and cons of each individual case have to be weighed and guide the final decision in various paths. The final result will always prevail over one or even more of the various considerations. This process is illustrated as a circle with the factors to be considered as arrows facing inward which, in accordance with the value attached to the various considerations, guide the process in a certain given direction with more or less force. The final decision, thus, is both a compromise and a reflection of the relevant factors.

Ernst van de Wetering's model was initially developed with the conservation problems associated with 'traditional' art in mind. In order to apply it to 'contemporary' art, it had to be expanded. With regard to 'traditional' art, the meaning of the object in a material sense is generally unambiguous. Material and technique serve the meaning, which is largely determined by the representation. This means that as long as the representation is preserved, intervention with regard to the material characteristics of the work do not have to take place at the expense of the work's meaning, to the extent that this is determined by the representation. Naturally, they can take place at the expense of other elements of the meaning that are determined by technique and material, such as the transparency and depth of the colour, or of other values, such as authenticity. In addition, with traditional art there is usually greater agreement as to the meaning of a given work of art: the meanings it can embody are generally shared. With regard to 'non-traditional' objects of modern and contemporary art, the relationship between material and meaning is usually ambiguous. Meanings are mostly specific to the artist in question or even the object in question. Materials and techniques, moreover, also carry their own meaning. The array of materials and techniques is thereby so expanded that in principle anything and everything can be used.

A concomitant factor is that the less traditional the material used is, the more it contributes to the meaning of the work. A consequence of this is that a change in the material characteristics of a contemporary art work often directly alters its meaning. Along these lines, active conservation procedures which directly intervene with the

material identity of the art work can also have repercussions for the meaning.

With respect to non-traditional objects of contemporary art, two moments can be distinguished in the decision-making process as to their conservation in which the role a particular material characteristic plays with regard to meaning must be investigated. The first moment in the model is when the consequences of a change in the material condition of a work for its meaning have to be established. Is there a discrepancy between the physical condition of the art work and its meaning?

Not every change in the condition of the material is equally problematic: a scratch in a floor plate by Carl André can confirm its meaning, while a similar scratch in a metal object by Donald Judd would negate its meaning. Sometimes the meaning can denote decay: namely, if the transience of an object is consciously produced by the maker and is part of the content of the work. In that case, conservation implies an intervention affecting the intended meaning.

Should a conscious discrepancy be established between the physical condition of the work and its meaning and treatment proposals have been formulated, a second moment arises when the significance of material characteristics for meaning must be investigated. At this point, the consequences of various possible active conservation interventions – which entail just as many changes in the material characteristics of the work – must be investigated.

Thus, there are two moments when the relationship of the material characteristics to the meaning of the art work must be investigated: when the question is posed as to whether condition and meaning can be united and whether intervention and meaning can be united. These considerations led to an expansion of Ernst van de Wetering's original model and now we speak of two circles: one in which the central issue is whether in the present case there is a discrepancy between physical condition and meaning; and a circle in which certain conservation options and their consequences are considered. For both of these moments various considerations can guide the decision to be made in various directions. For both moments, moreover, the considerations that lead to an answer are not predetermined, but originate from the problem at hand.

The questions formulated in the instructions indicate only a direction. The questions are grouped around various aspects of the object: aesthetic considerations, authenticity, historicity and functionality. Moreover, the questions can be answered from various perspectives: that of the artist (or of his/her surviving relatives and studio assistants), that of a forum of authoritative art critics and art historians, and that of those responsible for making a decision (the curator and/or conservator). The answers will rarely agree, and it cannot be stated a priori which perspective should prevail.

The model presented here suggests a decision-making trajectory. It addresses the condition phenomenon; whether this phenomenon is a problem; and if so of what nature; it proposes various solutions; weighs the consequences of these solutions; and proposes a definitive conservation plan. The model is not intended to give a description of the manner in which decisions are made in reality. The model is not descriptive, but normative: it describes how a decision should be taken in an ideal case. It serves as a guideline for the manner in which the decision should be made, as an aid to explicating and thereby controlling the considerations which in practice are often implicit, and finally as an instrument to check and provide an insight into the decisions ultimately taken.

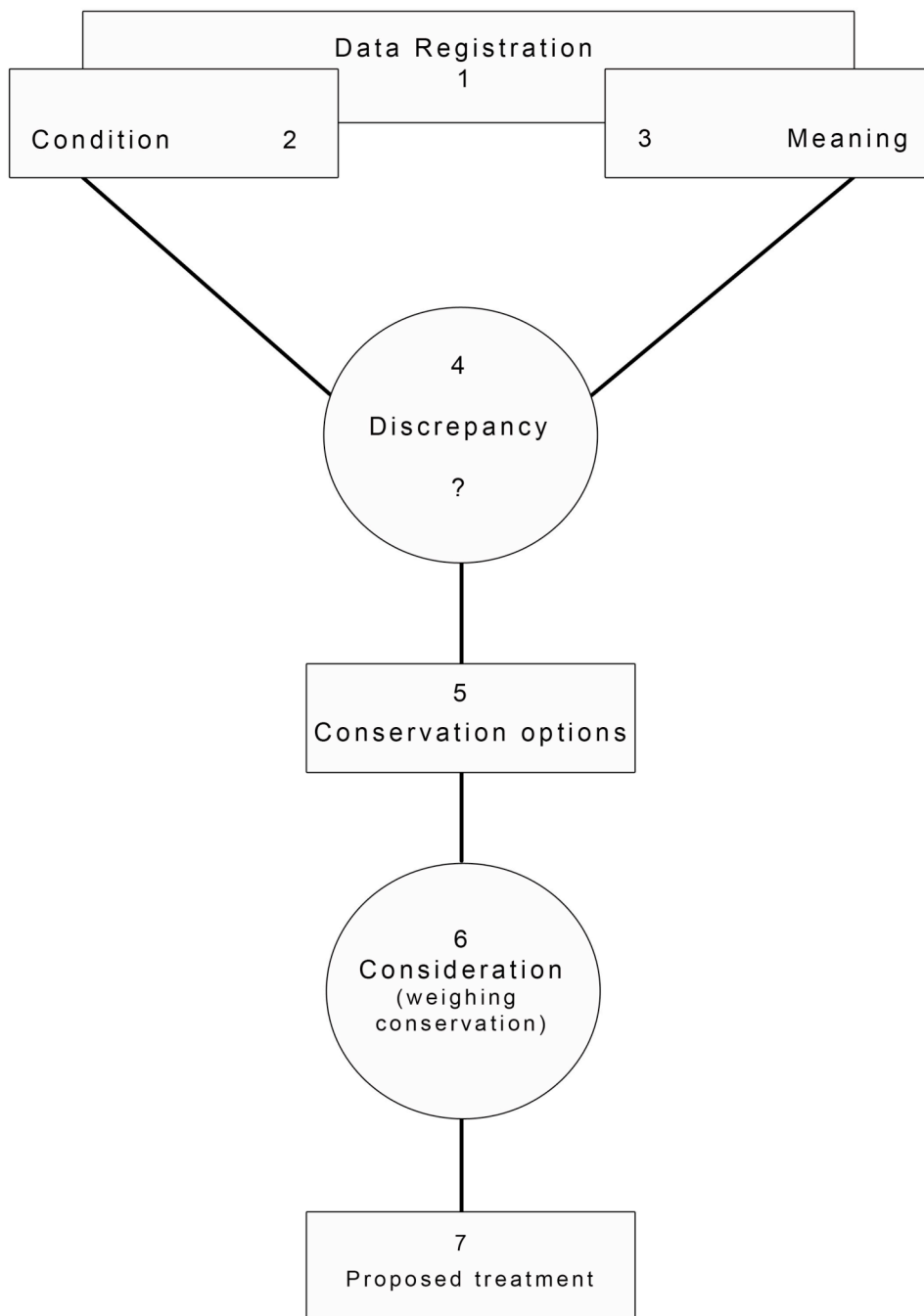


Diagram: Decision-making Model for the Conservation and Restoration of Modern Art  
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## **B. Explanation of the 'steps' in the model**

### **1. Data registration**

Knowledge of the object, including information on the materials used, the way it was made and the intentions of the artist is crucial for the conservation of contemporary objects. The gathering and registration of this knowledge forms the basis for a responsible decision as to conservation.

Experience has taught the Conservation of Modern Art project that some basic information is necessary for the conservation of contemporary objects. This was only sporadically available from the museums involved in the project. In some instances the implicit knowledge of a curator, conservator or another outside expert could be tapped. In a number of instances, the necessary information could no longer be recovered.

A model for data registration was developed during the Conservation of Modern Art project that can be used as a guideline in gathering and registering the necessary information.

#### **Instructions:**

Register the following information, preferably using the model for data registration.

- Information about (and from) the artist about the actual production of the object, its meaning and particularly the meaning of the material (possibly through an interview with the artist).
- Visual material of the original condition and/or intermediate condition, registration of motion, sound, installation.
- Literature on the artist.
- Information on the composition of materials, brand names, production processes, information from assistants and producers.

## **2. Condition**

In determining the condition of a work, first the composition and ageing of the materials must be scientifically (chemically, biological, physically) investigated. This is followed by an analysis of the mechanical ageing (for example through use) and of reactions to the environment (pollution). In the event of damage to the object, the damage and consequent changes must be precisely documented.

In establishing the condition of the object, questions can also be formulated about the future ageing behaviour of a specific material. In a number of cases it will be difficult to predict the future ageing behaviour and the conditions under which this will arise.

A problem in describing the condition of contemporary objects is that the composition of many of the materials used is not known and moreover the ageing behaviour of many materials has not been investigated. This holds true primarily for the 'new materials', such as plastics, but also for parts of equipment, such as transistors and cathode-ray tubes (screens). The more information we have concerning the materials used and their composition, the better their condition can be determined. The condition report is made on a regular basis, when checking the condition of the object or when there is a concrete reason for doing so, for example when the object is being lent or has been damaged. Each new condition report is then appended to the data registration. The model for condition registration was developed in the course of the Conservation of Modern Art project.

### **Instructions:**

- Make a condition report of the work using the model for a condition report. The most appropriate expert for making such a report is a conservator. If necessary, he/she will consult other experts.

### 3. Meaning

Determining the meaning of the work prior to conservation is the foundation for responsible decision making in the conservation of modern art. The meaning of a work, however, is layered and certainly not unambiguous. One can speak of meaning imparted by the artist, but also by a context (criticism, group, style, time), by a place (collection, country, 'site-specific'), or event (performance). In addition, the choice of material and working method has consequences for the meaning of the work. Finally there are also ideological (political, philosophical and religious) layers of meaning. In the case of modern art, materials and working methods acquire a highly specific significance so that conservation research must be conducted per artist and per work.

Because conservation in most cases constitutes an intervention in the materiality of the work, research into this layer of meaning before a conservation method is established is particularly important.

The meaning of the work is determined on the basis of available data gathered in the course of the investigation. The gathering of data that could influence the meaning of the work – with an emphasis on the use of material and working method – is thus one of the first activities to be undertaken in the conservation of modern art. The curator/conservator determines the meaning.

Following specific research for the sake of conservation, information related to the meaning is amplified and refined.

#### **Instructions:**

Determine the general meaning of the object on the basis of the following questions:

- What is the subject or theme of the work (whether or not this can be gauged from the title)?
- What is the importance of the perceptible appearance for the meaning of the work? The perceptible appearance can be visual, but also auditive, kinetic, etcetera.
- What is the importance of the various materials used for the meaning of the work?
- What is the importance of production processes for the meaning of the work?
- In what lies the expressiveness of the work?
- What are other important associations?

#### 4. Discrepancy?

Correct diagnosis of the conservation problem is extremely important for the decision making concerning the method of conservation. In the Conservation of Modern Art project it appeared that a conservation problem was engendered by a discrepancy between the condition and the meaning of a work. A discrepancy, therefore, can only be determined with extensive knowledge of the meaning of the work on the one hand, and investigation of the physical condition of the work on the other hand.

Whether there is a discrepancy between condition and meaning of the work can be determined by answering the following question: *Does the meaning of the work change as a result of the ageing, damage or decay it has sustained such that intervention must be considered?*

It cannot be stated beforehand whether a certain ageing or damage, indeed, constitute a problem. As mentioned in the introduction, a scratch can reinforce the meaning of one work of art (for example in a floor plate by Carl André) while negating it in another (a metal object by Donald Judd). Therefore, designating a potential discrepancy is not a linear process: one can speak of various kinds of considerations and factors. Determining whether a discrepancy can be identified in each individual case will differ in each case. Moreover it is possible that in a later phase of the research (namely in weighing the conservation options), new information will come to light that will also influence the assessment of the discrepancy. The factors to be weighed in determining a discrepancy (aesthetic factors, authenticity, historicity and functionality) can be presented as arrows pointing inward in a circle that will guide the decision in a certain direction with more or less force according to the value attached to these considerations. The final determination of the discrepancy is thus the outcome of a process of deliberation involving a number of factors, and therefore a compromise.

#### Instructions:

- Determine whether there is a discrepancy and define the conservation problem. This can be done with the help of the following checklist. The factors to be weighed can be applied in the circle.

## **Checklist for determining a discrepancy between the physical condition and the meaning of a work**

### **Central question:**

*Does the meaning of the work change as a result of the ageing, damage or decay it has sustained to such an extent that intervention must be considered?*

### **4a. Aesthetic and artistic factors**

— Does the ageing, damage or decay influence the subject or theme of the work? What subjects or themes does the work explicitly refer to? Does the work evoke associations or reactions that are important for its meaning?

— What importance do the changes in the perceptible appearance of the work have as a result of ageing, damage or decay to the meaning of the work? What importance does the perceptible appearance have for the meaning of the work?

— Does the meaning of the materials used change as a result of the ageing, damage or decay? What importance do the various materials used have for the meaning of the work? What importance do the various materials used have in relation to the (cultural-historical) context? What materials were used by the artist's contemporaries? What materials does/did the artist use in the rest of his oeuvre?

— Is the expressiveness of the work affected as a result of the ageing, damage or decay? In what lies the expressiveness of the work?

### **4b. Authenticity**

— What importance does the deviation from the original appearance (generated by damage, ageing and decay) have for the meaning of the work? What importance does the perceptible appearance have for the meaning of the work?

— Is the production process important in assessing whether the change in appearance influenced the meaning? Can one speak of a single implementation or of an edition?

To what extent is the 'hand of the artist' in the production process important for the meaning? Does the work have parts that were made, whether or not on commission, by third parties? What is the meaning of these parts in the work?

— What relation does the ageing, damage or decay have to the importance of the original creation for the meaning of the work? Does the work have parts of which the originality is not important for its meaning and that can be regularly changed without problems? For example a palm rather than the palm provided by Broodthaers. Can arguments be found in favour of or against a possible re- making of the work or parts thereof?

### **4c. Historicity**

— Are there traces of ageing that contribute to the meaning of the work? To what extent is the established ageing and decay part of the work?

### **4d. Functionality**

— Does ageing, damage or decay affect the functionality in a way that is important to the meaning of the work?

## **5. Conservation options**

Should a discrepancy be established between the condition and the meaning of the work, the technical possibilities for conservation and restoration are then explored. This is done by a conservator, who gathers the relevant information from specialists (material experts and scientists).

### **Instructions:**

- Formulate various options for passive and active conservation that could contribute to the termination or lessening of the discrepancy or of the conservation problem.

## **6. Weighing conservation options**

The possibilities for conservation and restoration are weighed in light of the consequences and risks that the treatment would entail for the meaning of the work. The following question is central: In what sense will the meaning of the work alter as a result of the proposed conservation option?

The factors related to the object when considering the options (authenticity, aesthetic factors, functionality and historicity) are important in answering this question. In addition, external limitations (legal aspects, economic limitations and possibilities: see also the checklist in this chapter) that play a role when weighing the various options for conservation must also be considered.

The various conservation and/or restoration options are considered within a framework of risks, meaning and limitations. In this way, technical possibilities might yield to ethical or economic considerations, or a treatment might be abandoned in the light of ideological priorities. As when determining a discrepancy, an important feature when weighing conservation options is that various considerations steer the decision on conservation in various directions. Consequently, a decision always has the character of a compromise. Here, too, the weighing factors are illustrated as arrows pointing inward in a circle which, in accordance with the value attached to the various considerations, guide the decision in a certain direction with more or less force. Thus, the final decision is a compromise and the outcome of a weighing of

### **Instructions:**

- Balance the conservation options against the consequences and risks that the treatment would have for the meaning of the work with the aid of the following checklist.
- The weighing factors can be applied in the circle on page 14.

## **Checklist for weighing the options for conservation**

### **Central question:**

*In what sense will the meaning of the work be altered as a result of the proposed conservation options?*

### **6a. Aesthetic and artistic factors**

— Will the theme or subject of the work be influenced by the proposed conservation? What subjects or themes does the work explicitly refer to? Does the work evoke associations or reactions that are important for its meaning?

— What importance do the changes in the perceptible appearance as a result of the proposed conservation have for the meaning of this work?

— Will the meaning of the materials used be altered as a result of the proposed treatment? What importance do the various materials used have for the meaning of the work? What importance do the various materials used have in relation to the context? What materials does/did the artist use in the rest of his oeuvre? What importance does the perceptible appearance have for the meaning of this work?

— In what sense is the expressiveness of the work affected by the proposed conservation? In what lies the expressiveness of the work?

### **6b. Authenticity**

— Following the proposed conservation, what is the impact of an intervention in the original appearance of a work on its meaning? What importance does the perceptible appearance have for the meaning of the work?

— Will traces of the production process be influenced by the proposed conservation such that the meaning of the work changes? What is the importance of the production process for the meaning of the work? To what extent is the 'hand of the artist' in the production process important for the meaning? Can one speak of a single implementation or of an edition? Does the work have parts that were made, whether or not on commission, by third parties? What is the meaning of these parts in the work?

— Will the proposed conservation affect the original creation to such an extent that the meaning of the work changes? Does the work have parts of which the originality is not important or its meaning and that can be regularly changed without problems? For example a palm rather than the palm provided by Broodthaers. Can arguments be forwarded in favour of or against a possible re-making of the work or parts thereof?

### **6c. Historicity**

— Will the proposed conservation affect the traces of ageing and does this influence the meaning of the work?

— Will the proposed conservation eliminate other traces of ageing, which should be preserved not for artistic but for historical reasons?

### **6d. Functionality**

— Does the proposed conservation affect the functionality of the work in any way that is important to the meaning of the work?  
*Which are the preconditions in the decision-making process on conservation and to what extent do they influence the process?*

#### **6e. Relative importance of the art work**

— What role does the work in question play within the oeuvre of the artist, artistic movement, museum collection, or national collection in the decision about conservation?

— Can one speak of an edition or a single work and is this work part of a series or is it an individual work of art? What are the consequences of this for the decision regarding the proposed conservation?

#### **6f. Financial limitations and possibilities**

— What are the financial limitations and possibilities for the proposed conservation options? What is the maximum available budget for the conservation of the object? Does the financial value of the object justify the costs of the conservation or are there other reasons for justifying the expense of conservation?

#### **6g. Legal aspects**

— What legal consequences can be anticipated as a result of the proposed conservation?

#### **6h. Artist's opinion of the intervention**

— What is the opinion of the artist concerning the proposed restorations and how does this fit in with earlier statements by the artist concerning the work?

#### **6i. Technical limitations and possibilities**

— What are the technical limitations and possibilities of the proposed conservation?

#### **6j. Restoration ethics**

— Is the integrity of the work sufficiently guaranteed after treatment?

— Are the answers to the previous questions sufficient for treatment to be initiated?

— Can the proposed methods be reversed? If not, are there decisive reasons for using them nonetheless?

— Is the professionalism of the implementation guaranteed?

— Will the treatment be documented?

## 7. Proposed treatment

The result of the previous steps in the model is a definitive treatment proposal with a well-founded motivation. This treatment plan contains proposals for preventive conservation, for active conservation and for restoration.

### Instructions:

Draught the treatment plan and make sure that the motivation for the decision making is stored with the data registration.

The decision-making model was conceived under the supervision of the working group *Decision-making model* in the project 'Conservation of Modern Art'.

The working group comprised:

Wilma van Asseldonk curator De Pont Foundation, Tilburg

Marja Bosma curator Centraal Museum, Utrecht

Marianne Brouwer curator Kröller-Müller Museum, Otterlo

IJsbrand Hummelen coordinator Netherlands Institute for Cultural Heritage  
conservation research Amsterdam

Dionne Sillé project manager Foundation for the Conservation of Modern Art

Renée van de Vall philosopher & lecturer Faculty of Art and Culture, Maastricht  
University

Rik van Wegen curator Bonnefantenmuseum, Maastricht

## The Model for data registration

GENERAL INSTRUCTIONS FOR DATA REGISTRATION:

- Complete the model for data registration as far as possible.
- Always fill in the inventory number, date, and the name of the person who compiled the description.
- Other compulsory fields (printed in bold) must be filled in. Use the existing fields as much as possible. Use the field 'comments' at the end of each section for any comments that are not covered by the other fields.
- If the work in question comprises several, separate parts, it may be necessary to describe these individually. Use one model for data registration to describe the entire object. Then use a new form for data registration for each part. Only fill in the fields that are relevant to that specific part of the object. Do not forget to fill in the inventory number and the serial number of the part that is being described.
- Where necessary, use additional sheets to specify general information. If a field cannot be filled in, do not leave it empty. Fill in 'unknown' or 'not applicable' where necessary.
- If the accuracy of the information being provided is in doubt, indicate with a question mark (?).
- When information in a field is altered, add the name of the person who is making the alteration and the date the changes were made.
- The standardisation of the terminology used is crucial to information retrieval and automation. As far as possible, use the same key words and terms for the same concepts. Preferably use existing lists. During the working process, add the terms that are used in the museum to these lists. Periodical checks and additions will create a practical list of approved and preferred terms.
- Use standard English and recommended spelling (no slang or colloquialisms). Use the singular wherever possible. Avoid articles (definite and indefinite). Only use capitals for proper nouns.
- Names should only be written as follows: Surname, initial(s), preposition (e.g. de, du, van, von).  
Examples: Maria, Nicola de Wandesheim, Peter von
- Place names should be in order from the specific to the general.  
Examples: Oxford & Oxfordshire & England & United Kingdom  
Amersfoort & Utrecht & Netherlands
- Key words within in a single section should be written in order of importance, from the general to the specific.  
Example: Object & plaque
- Apply the following rules for punctuation:
  - : Colon for separating different elements
  - & Ampersand when more than one key word is used in a single field
  - () Round brackets after a key word to enclose detailed information
  - ; Semi-colon in lists
  - = Equal sign for separating elements in a series
  - [] Square brackets to indicate indirect information
- Record data as follows:
  - YY-MM-DD
  - Note the year using four digits:  
1935=1949  
1920 (c.)  
1889 (before)

## The model for data registration

Compiled by:

Date:

### 1. IDENTIFICATION

#### 1.1 Name of institution

Examples: *Moderna Museet (Stockholm)*  
*Stedelijk Van Abbemuseum (Eindhoven)*

#### 1.2 Inventory number

Fill in inventory number. In the case of objects that consist of more than one part, give each part a serial number based on the inventory numbering. Use zeros before the numbers if the system requires this.

Examples: *1807 A-E (whole) 1807-A (table)*  
*1807-B (chair) 1807-D (chair)*  
*1807-C (chair) 1807-E (chair)*

#### 1.3 Artist's name

Artist's full name. Use the name most used within the art world. Where necessary, note other names by which the artist is known in round brackets. Notation: see General Instructions.

Examples: *Broodthaers, M.*  
*Constant & (Nieuwenhuis)*

#### 1.4 Complete title

Fill in full title of the work. Note possible variations separated by a semi-colon (;).

Example: *Città Irreale*

##### 1.4.1 Identification

Name and position of the person who gave the work its title if it was not the artist.

Example: *Title 1; title 2 (title changed by artist 1990-03-05).*

#### 1.5 Dating

Fill in the date the work was made.

Notation: *YY-MM-DD*

Examples: *1983 1980=1985*  
*1989 (c.) 1970 (before)*  
*1965 (after) 1975-04-24*

#### 1.6 Key word for object

Using a key word or a combination of key words from the list of approved terms, indicate here which group or what kind of art works the object belongs to. For example: assemblage, installation, environment, relief, sculpture, object, painting.

If the object belongs to different groups or types, separate the key words using ' & ' (ampersand). When in doubt about the use of a particular key word, use a question mark in round brackets: (?).

Examples: *relief*  
*object & plaque*  
*installation (?)*

#### 1.7 Style/movement

Using a key word or a combination of key words from the list of approved terms, indicate to which style and/or movement the object belongs. Examples: Minimalism, Conceptual Art,

Photorealism, Zero Movement, Pop Art, Realism. If an object can be placed in several styles or movements, separate the key words with ‘&’ (ampersand). When in doubt about the use of a particular key word, use a question mark in round brackets: (?).

### 1.8 Meaning of the art work

Indicate whether the decision-making model for the object has been completed. Use a specific code to indicate where this information may be found.

N.B.: If there is no completed decision-making model, collect and record as much of the following data as possible:

- Artist’s comments about the intentions underlying the work. Sources such as letters, interviews, notes, texts with notations about the use of materials, the means of presentation, means of preservation, ideas about restoration and conservation.
- Art-historical interpretations of the meaning of the work.  
See Decision-making model.

### 1.9 Additional comments

Record here, in full, any additional information concerning the identification.

*Example: Artist’s proof.*

## 2. LOCATION

### 2.1 Location of the object

Using a specific code or sign to show where the object is situated, record the date the object was first moved to that location. Avoid unclear notations such as ‘in the cupboard, third shelf on left’. If a work consists of more than one part, state the location of each part.

*Examples: depot cupboard 5 : drawer 2 : 1990-05-12*  
*depot case 057 : 1807-A (table) : 1993-07-29*  
*depot case 153 : 1807-B (chair) : 1993-07-29*  
*gallery 2 : 1996-01-14*

### 2.2 Location of packing materials

### 2.3 Additional comments

Record here any additional comments about the location of the object in full.

*Example: The work should be stored horizontally.*

## 3. DESCRIPTION

### 3.1 General description

Give a short description of the art work. Record aspects such as colour, representation or other factors that are visible but which cannot be described in another field.

*Example: Table and four chairs made from waste objects of different colours and materials threaded together.*  
*(for: ‘One Space, Four Places’, Cragg, Tony 1982)*

### 3.2 Illustration/Reproduction of the work

State here whether images of the work exist. Use a specific code or sign to indicate where the images can be found. Use a separate sheet ‘Illustrations’ to record as much data as possible about the images. Use the list of approved terms for ‘Illustrations’.

### 3.3 Number of parts

State here how many parts the work consists of. Specify the separate parts in round brackets.

*Examples: 5 parts (1 table, 4 chairs)*  
*(For: 'One Space, Four Places', Cragg, Tony 1982)*  
*parts (Eve; Adam & plinth)*  
*(For: 'Adam and Eve', Brancusi, Constantin 1916-1924)*

### 3.4 Complete: yes/no

State here whether the work is complete or not. Record – as far as possible – which parts are missing.

### 3.5 Certificate: yes/no

State whether there is a certificate for the work and, using a specific code or sign, indicate where the certificate can be found.

### 3.6 Signature: yes/no

Indicate whether the work is signed. If it is, record the following facts about the signature:

- the literal representation of the signature, where possible
- where the signature is on the object
- the method used to make the signature.

*Example: M.B. (verso) & (in red felt-tip pen(?))*  
*(For: 'M.B.', Broodthaers, Marcel 1970-1971)*

### 3.7 Inscription: yes/no

### 3.8 Legend: yes/no

### 3.9 Label: yes/no

Indicate whether the work contains a legend. Delete what is not applicable and record, as accurately as possible, the literal reproduction of the inscription, legend or label. Make a sketch if necessary. Then indicate the position of the lettering on the object and how it has been applied.

*Example: legend yes*  
*tomba della caccia (upper edge of crucible) & (text has been cast with the*  
*object & partially illuminated with gold leaf).*  
*(For: 'Tomba della caccia', Siebelt, Ben 1991)*

### 3.10 Dimensions

Note the height x width x depth, where relevant diameter and/or circumference of the object. State the measuring unit and, in round brackets, the part of the object that has been measured. Finally state the circumstances in which the object was measured.

*Examples: 78 x 308.5 x 15 cm (whole)*  
*50 x 180 x 15 cm (freighter)*  
*73.5 x 115 x 13.5 cm (sail boat)*  
*whole object measured : hanging in exhibition*  
*(For: 'Freighter and Sailboat', Oldenburg, Claes 1962)*

### 3.11 Weight

State the object's weight and, in round brackets, indicate which part of the object has been weighed.

State the circumstances in which the object was weighed.

*Example: 35 kg (whole: weighed in gallery Wide White Space, Antwerp)*

### 3.12 Material key word

Using one or more key words, indicate here from what material or materials the object has been made. Use the list of approved terms for 'materials'. Avoid using brand names as much as possible.

When the precise nature of the material is not known, write a material group (e.g. wood, plastic, leather, metal etc.).

*Examples: plastic*  
*ebony & acrylic-styrene-acrylonitrile-terpolymer*  
*wood (& mahogany)*

#### 3.12.1 Specifications

Using one or more key words, indicate what kinds of materials have been used, applying the following categories. (For this field a separate sheet entitled Material Data can also be used to provide as many details about the materials as possible.)

*Example: materials: wood plastic*  
*prefabricated parts: brick light bulb*  
*reused objects: plastic bottles book*  
*immaterial aspects: rotating movement*  
*sound smell*  
*additional original material/spare parts supplied by artist:*  
*blue dye*  
*appliances/accessories:*  
*transformer slide projector*

#### 3.12.2 Condition key word

Using a key word, indicate what condition the material is in: good, moderate, bad.

n.b. The attribution of these key words is largely subjective. The exact definition of the key words should be agreed upon within the museum. This field is primarily concerned with the condition of the material.

Determining the condition of the object is highly complex. Data relevant to this can be collected using the model for condition registration.

#### 3.12.3 Additional comments

Write in full any additional remarks about the description of the object.

## 4. PRODUCTION

### 4.1 Location of production

State where the work was made.

*Examples: New York (& United States)*  
*Haarlem (& The Netherlands)*

### 4.2 Production method/technique

Briefly describe how the work was made. Provide as much information as possible about the following aspects.

#### 4.2.1 The production process used in the work

*For example by the artist's own hands;*  
*by a company commissioned by the artist;*  
*in a workshop, with practical help from assistants;*  
*a purely conceptual work;*  
*a combination of the four points mentioned above*

#### 4.2.2 Production method

**Example:**      *welded tube frame*

#### 4.2.3 Tools and equipment used

**Example:**      *arc welder*

#### 4.2.4 Documents relevant to the production

**Example:**      *drawings, photographs, pictures, videos*

#### 4.2.5 Persons involved

**Example:**      *family, friends, assistants who can be consulted*

#### 4.2.6 Literature

If no information is available for this field, fill in 'unknown'.

#### 4.2.7 Comments

Note here, in full, any additional remarks about the production of the object.

### 5. HANDLING AND STORAGE OF THE OBJECT

#### 5.1 Past treatment

Indicate whether the object has undergone any treatment in the past. Describe the treatment briefly and, using a specific code or sign, indicate where data concerning earlier treatment can be found.

#### 5.2 Completed model for condition registration

Indicate whether a model for condition registration has been completed for the object and, using a specific code or sign, indicate where these data can be found.

#### 5.3 Storage conditions

State the preferred storage conditions for the object.

Record any details concerning:

- storage
- packing material
- climate (temperature level, rH, light level and degree of air pollution)

**Example:**      *the object must be stored on a rack and protected by a cotton cover*

*temperature 10oC(±3) per 24 hrs, rH 40%*

#### 5.4 Maintenance

Describe here the maintenance that should be carried out on the object and how often this should take place. Use a specific code or sign to indicate where the maintenance reports can be found.

#### 5.5 Handling

Accurately describe the guidelines that apply to moving the object. Indicate the following:

- the number of people required to move the object
- what 'instruments' are needed (for instance: only handle with gloves, use a fork-lift truck to lift it)
- indicate where the object should be held for lifting and how it should be handled (for instance: do not lift from the cage construction; only handle the wheeled undercarriage)

## **5.6 Transportation**

Indicate how and by what means the object can or should be transported. Use the separate sheet 'Transportation conditions' to list as many specifications as possible concerning transportation conditions.

## **5.7 Exhibition procedures**

Indicate whether or not the object may be exhibited. Using a specific code or sign, state where the documentation for the decision-making process can be found. Use the separate sheet 'Exhibition conditions' to record as many details as possible about the exhibition conditions.

## **5.8 Lending**

State whether or not the object may be lent out. Using a specific code or sign, state where the documentation concerning the decision-making process can be found. Use the separate sheet 'Lending conditions' to record as many specifications as possible concerning the required conditions for loaning the object.

## **5.9 Additional comments**

Any extra comments about how the object should be handled, written in full.

# **6. PRESENTATION/INSTALLATION**

## **6.1 Particular conditions**

State any particularities relating to whether or not special conditions are required for the installation of the object. Using a specific code or sign, indicate where these data can be found. Use the separate sheet 'Presentation/Installation specifications' to record as much information as possible.

## **6.2 Additional comments**

Any additional comments about presentation/installation written in full.

# **7. LITERATURE/CORRESPONDENCE**

## **7.1 Exhibitions, internal/external**

State the title, location, place and date of internal and external exhibitions in which the object has been displayed.

*Example: Robert Ryman, London Tate Gallery beginning 1993-02-17 end 1993-04-25*

## **7.2 Literature on the art work**

Provide a list of literature. Only literature on the object in question.

## **7.3 Correspondence**

Indicate whether there is any correspondence about the work. Provide a brief description of the subject and use a specific code or sign to state where the correspondence can be found.

*Example: correspondence: yes: dossier 1807 (acquisition and damage)*

## **7.4 Comments**

Any additional comments about literature/correspondence written in full.

## 8. THE ARTIST

### 8.1 Interview with artist: available/unavailable

State here whether an interview with the artist exists and where the transcript of the interview can be found.

### 8.2 General information about the artist: present/absent

Indicate whether there is a file containing general information on the artist. Using a specific code, indicate the location of this file.

n.b. If no such file exists, collect and note as many of the following facts as possible:

- personal details about the artist
- artist's address
- names and addresses of people associated with the artist
- extra information about the artist.

## 9. ACQUISITION

### 9.1 Key words for acquisition

Fill in how the museum acquired the object.

Examples:    *purchase*        *on loan*        *conveyance*    *exchange*        *gift*  
                  *legacy*

### 9.2 Acquired from

Fill in the name of the person or institution from which the object was acquired.

Example:        *gallery Wide White Space (Antwerp)*

### 9.3 Date of acquisition

Fill in date of acquisition.

Notation:        YY-MM-DD

### 9.4 Provenance

State here whether there is information on the object from the time before it was acquired by the museum. State in brief the kind of information and, using a specific code or sign, indicate where the relevant documents may be found.

### 9.5 Purchase price

Fill in the price paid for the work. Indicate the exchange rate for the day the object was purchased.

### 9.6 Insurance value

Fill in the insurance value of the work. State the date this amount was established.

### 9.7 Additional comments

Record here any additional information about the acquisition, written in full.

---

The Model for data registration and the Model for condition registration were conceived under the supervision of the working group Registration and Documentation in the project 'Conservation of Modern Art', The Netherlands 1997.

The working group comprised:

Lydia Beerkens                      conservator, Foundation for the Conservation of Modern Art, The Netherlands

Christiane Berndes	curator, Van Abbemuseum, Eindhoven
Marianne Brouwer	curator, Kröller-Müller Museum, Otterlo
Claas Hulshof	conservator, Foundation for the Conservation of Modern Art, The Netherlands
Ysbrand Hummelen	coordinator Conservation Research, Netherlands Institute for Cultural Heritage, Amsterdam
Pieter Keune	director, Foundation for Artists' Materials, Amsterdam
Annemiek Ouwerkerk	lecturer of art history, University of Leiden
Dionne Sillé	project manager, Foundation for the Conservation of Modern Art

The models were developed by Lydia Beerkens, then conservator-researcher with the Foundation for the Conservation of Modern Art. She drew up the data registration with Maaïke Ramos-van Rossum (from a graduate project at the Reinwardt Academy, Amsterdam). The editor was Romy Buchheim, a graduate of Conservation and Management at the same Academy, who also designed the Model for data registration linked with other databases. The English version was checked by Derek Pullen, head of the conservation department at the Tate Gallery, London.

Use has been made of existing models as applied by:

- Museum für Moderne Kunst, Frankfurt (computer network for data and condition registration suited to their own collection);
- Tate Gallery, London (a condition registration model for sculpture)
- Foundation Kollektief Restauratie Atelier Amsterdam (condition registration forms for modern paintings)
- Van Abbemuseum, Eindhoven (data registration model suited to their own collection)

Reference publications for information on museum registration:

- Jean Aitchison and Alan Gilchrist, *Thesaurus construction: a practical manual*, second edition, London, Aslib, 1987; 173 pages.
- Caroline Boot, Jan van de Voort, and Boy Wonder, *Handleiding voor de beschrijving van historische voorwerpen: instructies bij de Historische-Voorwerpkaart*, SIMIN, Rotterdam, 1982; 35 pages.
- Jeanne Hoogenboom, *Basisregistratie voor collecties, voorwerpen en beeldmateriaal*, IMC Foundation, Rotterdam, 1988; p. 114.
- Jeanne Hoogenboom and Jan van de Voort (ed.), *MARDOC – handleiding voor de beschrijving van afbeeldingen*, MARDOC Foundation, Rotterdam, 1982; 65 pages and 261 pages.
- *Spectrum*, the UK museum documentation standard project, compiled and edited by Alica Grant, MDA, Cambridge, 1994; Separate sheets, ISBN 0-905963-92-x
- Jan van de Voort, *Woordkontrolle en kollektie-ontsluiting: de thesaurus*, Information storage and Retrieval: an Improvement for the Accessibility of Documentation Systems?, symposium report, Stadsparkpaviljoen Groningen, 27 February 1987, InfoManagement, Groningen, 1987, pp. 26-37.
- *The Art and Architecture Thesaurus (AAT), use it*, lectures for the SIMIN's theme day at the Netherlands Office for Fine Arts (RKD) in The Hague, 22 April 1994, compiled by Jan P. van de Voort, RKD, The Hague, 1994; pp. 43-51.

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### THE MODEL FOR CONDITION REGISTRATION

#### Condition registration

Name of institution:

Inventory number:

Artist:

Title:

Date:

#### 1. DIAGNOSIS

Compiled by:

Date:

Location where examination took place:

Reason for the condition report:

##### 1.1 Original condition (material and technique)

1.1.1 Model for data registration filled in:

yes (give reference)

no

1.1.2 Original condition:

Briefly describe the original condition – use the model for data registration.

##### 1.2 Current condition of art work and material

1.2.1 Age of art work:

Record the age of the art work.

1.2.2 Material and/or conservation history:

Record in chronological order the changes to the materials and the restoration work that has been carried out in the past, including names of conservators/restorers, dates and reasons where possible.

Changes that can only be inferred through comparing photographs from different dates should also be mentioned, as well as changes that can be read from the present state of the objects, even if the executor, date or the reason for the changes cannot be traced.

1.2.3 Storage history:

Record in chronological order where the art work has been stored up until now and the storage conditions. The storage history should be traceable from the 'Location' field of the completed model for data registration.

Relocation, internal exhibitions and lending history also belong to the storage history.

1.2.4 Illustration, visual and audio material:

Specifically in relation to the current condition or damage. For general photographs refer to the representative photographs named in the model for data registration.

(Enumerate with dates, photographer, brief description and location.)

1.2.5 Dimensions:

State the dimensions of the whole work and/or the parts to compare with the dimensions recorded in the model for data registration. Indicate the accuracy of the measurements. Where necessary record how much space the work occupies when installed in a gallery.

- 1.2.6 Weight:  
State the weight of the work and/or the parts. If the weight is not known, provide an approximation.
- 1.2.7 Description of Condition:  
The subdivision of this field is flexible, depending on the sort of object, and may be adapted to follow a logical/relevant order.  
Examples:
  - 1.2.7.1 Describe the general condition of the whole and/or each part according to:  
Deterioration within the art work:
    - a. Effect of materials on each other within the work (chemical/ physical)
    - b. Effect of construction, weight, electricity, mechanisms, other
 Damage from external sources:
    - a. Physical (mechanical damage, breakage, falls etc.)
    - b. Chemical (climate, air composition, light etc.)
 Condition of previous restoration work:  
Parts that have been renewed or replaced by, for instance, a copy (transformer, neon)
  - 1.2.7.2 Describe the present condition of material, supplemented with an enumeration of the material that has been added later where necessary.
  - 1.2.7.3 Provide a prognosis for the increase in soiling, deterioration and the decay of the existing construction of the work.
- 1.2.8 Additional research required for a complete diagnosis: yes/no
  - 1.2.8.1 Literature
  - 1.2.8.2 Interview the artist
  - 1.2.8.3 Question (former) museum workers
  - 1.2.8.4 Microscopic examination
  - 1.2.8.5 Scientific analysis of materials
  - 1.2.8.6 Other:
- 1.2.9 Current situation, results of additional research

Conclusion current condition:

### **1.3 Compare the current condition with original condition**

- 1.3.1 Comparison: the following sections may be used where relevant:
  - 1.3.1.1 Visual comparison
  - 1.3.1.2 Immaterial parts (perceptible features such as smell, light, movement): refer to sample material, videotapes, audiotapes etc.
  - 1.3.1.3 Aesthetic function: research whether the art work can function materially and technically in its current condition. Use the model for data registration for the original condition to establish this (headings Description, Production and Identification).  
Consult the conservator or other experts who are familiar with the work.
- 1.3.2 Additional research to determine differences: yes/no  
Inform the artist of the condition  
Consult the artist  
Consult the curator/director  
Consult the owner (if the work is on long-term loan)  
Consult external experts (conservators, manufacturers, institutes)  
Literature (conservation and/or material-technical information)  
Initiate photographic or other form of documentation
- 1.3.3 Current situation, results of additional research

#### **1.4 Assess present and original condition**

Determine whether or not there are discrepancies between the present condition and the original meaning of the object using the following question:

As a result of changes, damage or degeneration, has the meaning of the art work altered to such an extent that intervention has become necessary? (Use the checklist in the decision-making model.)

### **2. CONSERVATION OPTIONS**

#### **2.1 Preliminary examination**

Indicate whether a preliminary examination has been carried out, what it contained and where the reports or supplements can be found. If the preliminary examination contains many different aspects, indicate this at the end in a summary or with a conclusion.

#### **2.2 Material-technical options**

Provide a survey of the options for preventive and active conservation and for restoration.

#### **2.3 Weighing the options for conservation**

Make a selection from the conservation options discussed and assessed above. Record the discussion and explain the reasons for the decision. Indicate what subsequent treatment is required or desired in the following order. If the decision has been made for 'No conservation/restoration required or possible', provide recommendations for preventive conservation/minimal conservation requirements (5).

1. Active conservation treatment
2. Restoration
3. No conservation/restoration required
4. No conservation/restoration possible
5. Preventive conservation/minimal conservation requirements.

### **3. PROPOSALS**

Proposed by:

Date:

#### **3.1 Conservation proposal or restoration proposal**

#### **3.2 Planning of conservation or restoration**

### **4. TREATMENT REPORTS**

Executed by:

Date:

#### **4.1 Treatment reports on active conservation and restoration respectively**

- 4.1.1 Execution/method
- 4.1.2 List of products used (brand names etc.)
- 4.1.3 Materials, parts added to object

## **5. RECOMMENDATIONS**

Preventive conservation/minimal conservation requirements

Described by:

Date:

### **5.1 Depot/storage conditions**

5.1.1 Location in order:

5.1.2 Storage:

Current storage:

Current packing material:

5.1.3 Action required:....., store as follows:

5.1.4 Climate conditions during storage:

a. Present storage climate

b. Store work under the following conditions: .....%RH; .....oC, .....lux, .....UV

(absolute maximum and minimum conditions)

5.1.5 Special maintenance required during storage:

5.1.6 Regular inspection required during storage:

Pay particular attention to:

Present condition

Progression of natural deterioration

Frequency of inspections

Action in the event of changes:

(for example, make a condition report, photographic documentation of the condition, consult experts)

Planning & execution (example)

Task of technical department: executed by .....

\* once, regularly (every six months, year, two years)

Task of depot supervisor: inspection .....

\* structurally...times a year, ..... minutes per inspection

Task of photographer: documentation.....

\* occasionally, lasting ..... days (e.g. .... times every 10 years)

### **5.2 Handling and transportation**

5.2.1 Instructions for internal transportation:

crate/case/frame available for internal transportation:

5.2.2 Instructions for transportation: (state what is and what is not permitted)

packing material:

transportation crates:

(compulsory) position of crates during transportation:

method of transportation: (car, boat, plane)

temperature: maximum and minimum over ... hours

manner of moving crates: (e.g. on trolley with pneumatic tyres)

courier: (task)

5.2.3 Method of handling of art work:

as follows .....; or: never .....

5.2.4 Placing in and removing from crate:

as follows: .....; or: never .....

### **5.3 Exhibition conditions**

5.3.1 Exhibition inscriptions:

see model for data registration: installation and presentation

- 5.3.2 Assemblage instructions:  
refer to handbook, schematic drawings and other documentation
- 5.3.3 Climate requirements during exhibition:  
Climate and light conditions:  
rH and temperature conditions (state as absolute minimums/maximums); light conditions (state as absolute maximums lux  $\mu$  Watt/lumen)  
Maximum duration of exhibition:  
Maximum period object may function (electronic functions, visual material etc.)
- 5.3.4 Special maintenance during exhibition:  
Instructions for invigilators/guards:
- 5.3.5 Regular inspection of possible changes during exhibition: overall condition  
progression of natural deterioration  
instructions to cleaners
- 5.3.6 Proposal for photographs/film of the condition before/after exhibiting:  
re: damage reports
- 5.3.7 Do not exhibit:
- 5.3.8 Only exhibit exhibition copy:
- 5.3.9 Existing lending policy: (restrictions)
- 5.3.10 Proposed lending policy:  
see also the specifications established above; adapt according to reasonableness and the situation for external exhibitions
  - a. Minimum conditions: (transportation crate and climate; see previous specifications)
  - b. Maximum frequency: (depending on susceptibility of object to damage)
  - c. Registration & courier: (tasks, agreements)
  - d. Only lend exhibition copy:
  - e. Proposed photographs/film of the condition before/after lending: (re: damage report)

Planning and execution of tasks during exhibition internal/loan (indicate number of hours/days)

Task of depot supervisor/technical department:

(pack work, prepare for transportation and where necessary, make crates with hanging and handling construction)

Task of registrar:

(prepare loan, complete forms etc.)

Task of curator/conservator:

(registration of the condition, the model for condition registration, travel with the art work as courier)

Task of conservator/curator of exhibition:

(carry out daily/regular inspections of changes)

Task of photographer:

(only in the case of damage or obvious deterioration after lending)

The Model for condition registration and the Model for data registration were conceived under the supervision of the working group Registration and Documentation in the project 'Conservation of Modern Art', The Netherlands 1997.

The working group comprised:

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Marianne Brouwer                curator, Kröller-Müller Museum, Otterlo

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The models were developed by Lydia Beerkens, then conservator-researcher with the Foundation for the Conservation of Modern Art. She drew up the data registration with Maaïke Ramos-van Rossum (from a graduate project at the Reinwardt Academy, Amsterdam). The editor was Romy Buchheim, a graduate of Conservation and Management at the same Academy, who also designed the Model for data registration linked with other databases. The English version was checked by Derek Pullen, head of the conservation department at the Tate Gallery, London.

Use has been made of existing models as applied by:

- Museum für Moderne Kunst, Frankfurt (computer network for data and condition registration suited to their own collection);
- Tate Gallery, London (a condition registration model for sculpture)
- Foundation Kollektief Restauratie Atelier Amsterdam (condition registration forms for modern paintings)
- Van Abbemuseum, Eindhoven (data registration model suited to their own collection)

Reference publications for information on museum registration:

- Jean Aitchison and Alan Gilchrist, *Thesaurus construction: a practical manual*, second edition, London, Aslib, 1987; 173 pages.
- Caroline Boot, Jan van de Voort, and Boy Wonder, *Handleiding voor de beschrijving van historische voorwerpen: instructies bij de Historische-Voorwerpkaart*, SIMIN, Rotterdam, 1982; 35 pages.
- Jeanne Hoogenboom, *Basisregistratie voor collecties, voorwerpen en beeldmateriaal*, IMC Foundation, Rotterdam, 1988; p. 114.
- Jeanne Hoogenboom and Jan van de Voort (ed.), *MARDOC – handleiding voor de beschrijving van afbeeldingen*, MARDOC Foundation, Rotterdam, 1982; 65 pages and 261 pages.
- *Spectrum*, the UK museum documentation standard project, compiled and edited by Alica Grant, MDA, Cambridge, 1994; Separate sheets, ISBN 0-905963-92-x
- Jan van de Voort, *Woordkontrolle en kollektie-ontsluiting: de thesaurus*, Information storage and Retrieval: an Improvement for the Accessibility of Documentation Systems?, symposium report, Stadsparkpaviljoen Groningen, 27 February 1987, InfoManagement, Groningen, 1987, pp. 26-37.
- *The Art and Architecture Thesaurus (AAT), use it*, lectures for the SIMIN's theme day at the Netherlands Office for Fine Arts (RKD) in The Hague, 22 April 1994, compiled by Jan P. van de Voort, RKD, The Hague, 1994; pp. 43-51.

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