

THE DECISION-MAKING MODEL FOR CONTEMPORARY ART CONSERVATION AND PRESENTATION

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1. Introduction

Decisions regarding the conservation¹ and presentation² of artworks may constitute crucial turning points and as such may significantly influence an artwork's biography. Therefore, the development of conservation and presentation strategies as well as the guidance of related decision-making processes is the core task of conservators and curators in museums, galleries and cultural heritage institutions. To structure these frequently complex processes and to enhance their transparency, in 1999 the Dutch Foundation for the Conservation of Contemporary Art (SBMK) published the Decision-Making Model for the Conservation and Restoration for Modern and Contemporary Art (SBMK 1999).³ Since its publication the model has served as a valuable tool for navigating through complex problems in the conservation of modern and contemporary art, for discussing and documenting decision-making processes, and for training emerging professionals. However contemporary art forms and recent research results demonstrate that it requires revision.

To meet this need the *Cologne Institute for Conservation Science* (CICS) organized two workshops in conjunction with the *Cultural Heritage Agency of the Netherlands* (RCE, Rijksdienst voor het Cultureel Erfgoed) and *Maastricht University* (UM). Workshop participants were professionals from the fields of conservation, cultural heritage preservation, art history, philosophy, and decision theory as well as researchers from the training programme *New Approaches in the Conservation of Contemporary Art* (NACCA).⁴ This paper summarizes the results and proposes an extended decision-making model that addresses decision-making processes regarding the conservation and presentation of modern and contemporary art as well as the old masters.

2. The *Decision-Making Model* (SBMK 1999)

The initial model proposed by SBMK in 1999 consists of a flowchart with seven subordinated steps, each comprising of instructions and a checklist (see Figure 1). It is characterized by a simple, open and flexible structure and by the fact that it raises questions instead of providing rigid answers. Ideally, different stakeholders with varying backgrounds reply to these questions in order to achieve a wide range of answers.

The first three steps provide support when generating and registering information about an artwork (Step 1), on the artwork's condition (Step 2) and on its meaning (Step 3). Step 4 compares a work's condition and meaning and addresses discrepancies that might indicate a need for taking conservation measures. The question of whether there is a discrepancy, reveals the possible need for conservation and is therefore considered central to the decision-making process.

In Step 5 conservation options are elaborated. The implications of the options are anticipated and weighed against each other in Step 6, before a decision is eventually reached and documented in Step 7.

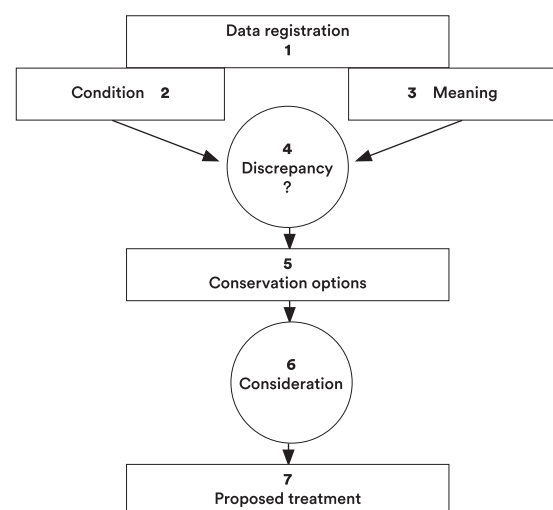


Fig. 1: The Decision-making Model for the Conservation and Restoration of Modern and Contemporary Art, SBMK 1999

3. Reasons for a Revision

Traditional art conservation usually considers some “original” or ideal state of an artwork, whereas contemporary works of art often challenge this perspective. Some artworks, such as concept-based or kinetic art, require a rethinking of the approach that considers authenticity⁵ as bound to a work’s original materials. Other forms like installation, media or performance art, develop in different conditions more or less in accordance with the artwork’s meaning/-s and identity/identities⁶ and the continuation of these artworks often depends on their reinstallation⁷, restaging⁸ and display. Thus, collection caretakers are increasingly confronted with the question of how to translate a time- and/or site-specific experience into an artwork with a sustainable collection life. Consequently, decisions on their presentation may have a significant impact on the conservation of these artworks.

Making complex conservation and/or presentation decisions can therefore require the consideration of both an artwork’s material aspects, including a scientific investigation, as well as the artwork’s intangible properties, including reflection on different aspects such as the artist’s intent⁹, the artist’s sanctions¹⁰, installation instructions¹¹ and the artwork’s trajectory.¹² The appreciation of these aspects may vary from one interpreter to the next and what’s more over time, their understanding is subject to change. The shifting values and changing interpretations as well as a frequently non-linear process of decision-making require room for reflexivity and entail dynamic decision-making.¹³ Finally, the continuously evolving terminology in contemporary art conservation and presentation makes it necessary to revise and define the terms used in both the initial and the new model.

The aspects that required revisiting the model were:

- the acknowledgement of the complex trajectory and evolving character of many contemporary works of art
- the recognition of presentation decisions that may have a significant impact on the conservation of artworks the need to increase consideration of an artwork’s intangible properties¹⁴
- the dynamics and subjectivity in decision-making
- the continuous development of terminology in contemporary art conservation.

4. The Revised Model

The revised model consists of a flowchart with nine steps, including two additional steps, Step 1: Point of Departure and Step 9: Implementation and Assessment. Each step is accompanied by (a) a brief explanation of the aim of the specific step, (b) a set of instructions how to proceed, (c) an example and – if applicable – (d) a checklist. In addition, terms pivotal to (decision-making in) conservation and presentation of contemporary art are defined in the attached glossary¹⁵.

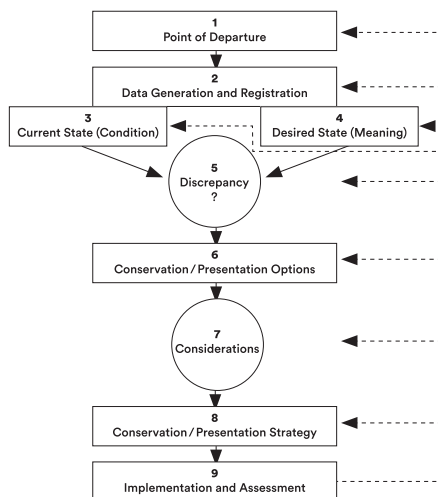


Fig. 2: The Decision-Making Model for Contemporary Art Conservation and Presentation, 2019

Step 1 is dedicated to the starting point in the specific case at hand where the initial aim(s) of the decision-makers, the relevant circumstances as well as other stakeholders are identified and described. The subsequent three steps serve to gain a deeper understanding of the artwork: data on the artwork is generated and registered in Step 2, and both the current and desired state(s) of the work are explored and described in Step 3 and Step 4 respectively. In Step 5 it is determined if there is a discrepancy between the current and desired state of the work. If so in Step 6 the goal is specified and options for the conservation / presentation are developed and then weighed and evaluated against each other in Step 7. One of these options is then chosen and documented in Step 8. To conclude Step 9 addresses the implementation of the selected strategy, which not only includes monitoring and controlling the effect of its execution, but also an assessment of the final result.

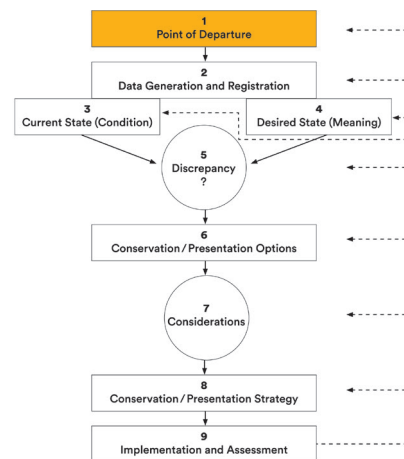
While those steps where information is generated and gathered are boxed, steps in which decisions are required are circled (Step 5 and Step 7). The sequence of steps is marked with arrows – from top to bottom. However, additional dotted arrows on the model's right side indicate that a return to earlier stages in the process is always possible, e.g. to enrich previously gathered information or to revise decisions. The explanation of the steps includes checklists from the original model, supplemented with further questions to address current challenges in contemporary art conservation, and also incorporates the continuously evolving terms and terminology in the field. Accordingly, the new model follows a more dynamic process, allowing for finer-graded reflection and decision-making at all stages in the process.

To illustrate the different steps of the revised model, the conservation of Nam June Paik's multi-channel video installation *Fish Flies on Sky* (1985/95) was used. Consisting of 88 cathode ray tube televisions (CRT TVs) suspended from a ceiling showing fish, airplanes, and other motifs in short intervals it is one of Paik's earliest large multi-monitor-installations and contributed significantly to promoting the artist's international success. Initially presented with the title "fish flies on sky. fish hardly flies anymore on the sky... let fishes fly again" in 1972 *Fish Flies on Sky* was instantiated and acquired by the Kunstpalast Düsseldorf in 1985 where it is on permanent display.

Step 1: Point of Departure

Aim and instructions: In the first step of the model the starting point of the specific decision-making process is described. It is broken down into three substeps in which the users of the model are requested to identify and describe (a) the circumstances, (b) the initial aim(s), and (c) the decision-makers and other relevant stakeholders involved, along with their overarching goals. The applied mode of decision-making is also recorded (e.g., decision made by an individual, by consensus, by a majority, etc.).

Remarks: This step builds on the idea that a decision-making process begins due to a particular question, an interest, or a specific situation.¹⁶ Describing the starting point in the case at hand should help decision-makers to understand and navigate through the actual process. This information can also help future custodians to retrace previous decisions and comprehend what influences the stakeholders and contextual aspects had on those decisions and consequently, on the artwork's biography.¹⁷ Therefore, in Step 1 the context for micro- and macro-decisions is established and the motivation that drives the overall process is ascertained and elucidated.



Circumstances

Aim and instructions: The objective of the substep "circumstances" is to analyse the context and institutional framework/infrastructure, in which the decision-making process takes place. The initial situation and questions are considered, and the reasons why the artwork has become the subject of investigation are explored and described.

Example: A loan request, the new presentation of a work, damage to a technical component or obsolescence

Initial aim(s)

Aim and instructions: The next substep serves to identify and record the initial aim(s), which initiated the decision-making process. In contrast to the circumstances, the initial aim(s) is/are something the decision-makers actively commit to adopt (although it/they can be brought up by any stakeholder).

Example: This could be to keep a video installation functioning that involves defective, obsolete devices.

Stakeholders, intentions and overarching goal

Aim and instructions: The last substep is meant to identify and list the stakeholders¹⁸ who influence the decision-making process. As such, users of the model are asked to provide information on:

- the stakeholders who are or should be involved
- the stakeholders' professional background, affiliation, legitimation and professional mission
- the stakeholders' motivation and personal interests (possibly identical) in the case at hand
- the decision-makers', their common overarching goal, and the mode of decision-making.

Remarks: Recording the decision-makers and other stakeholders may raise awareness of who is or who should be in charge of decision-making. This illustrates who influences the process and possibly to which degree. Specifying the mode of decision-making further acknowledges that depending on their position and authority, a decision-maker can affect the team decision-making process. Furthermore, identifying the overarching goal makes allowance for the professional and

ethical common ground between the decision-makers. Users of the model can thus refer to e.g. professional or institutional guidelines, charters, codes or other documents that comprise a peer-imposed mission statement.¹⁹ While it is not intended that the overarching goal be discussed in detail each time a decision is pending, a specification might be required when applied to contemporary art as most extant charters or codes have been developed for more traditional artworks. *Example:* In 1993 Nam June Paik's installation *Fish Flies on Sky* was destroyed by fire and in 1995 re-installed in close collaboration with the artist and his gallery, replacing faulty technical components and using reworked video clips (Heydenreich 2005, 32–38). However, after having been in permanent operation for more than 20 years since its re-installation the multi-monitor-installation had manifested increased technical failure rates. With the general replacement of cathode ray tubes by flat screen displays in the early 2000s TV-technicians and suppliers of replacement parts also diminished, and it became progressively difficult to repair the CRT TV-monitors. The initial aim was to increase the lifespan and to enable this iconic media artwork to function. Stakeholders included curators, conservators, the artist's former assistant, TV-technicians, security administrators, and insurers. For example, the professional interest of the conservators and TV-technicians was to advance research and to develop conservation options for CRT-based artworks. As *Fish flies on Sky* is a key work by Nam June Paik that plays a significant role in the museum's collection and is displayed in the Kunstpalast's central exhibition space, the decision-makers' common overarching goal was to preserve the audio-visual experience and material integrity of the artwork. Finally, the decision on the conservation strategy was made by consensus.

CHECKLIST

Central Questions

- What are the circumstances that triggered the decision-making process?
- How did stakeholders get involved? Are there more relevant stakeholders that should be involved? What do the stakeholders wish to achieve (and according to whom)?
- Who are the decision-makers and how is the decision going to be made?

Circumstances

- Who and what (events) triggered the present decision-making process?
- What circumstances and questions are worth noting to explain your involvement in the decision-making process?
- How urgent is the need for a decision?

Initial aim(s)

- What is/are the initial aim/s that kick-started the decision-making process?

Stakeholders, intentions and overarching goal

- Who is currently involved in the decision-making process?
- What is the professional background and affiliation of the decision-makers and other parties involved?
- What is the decision-makers' professional mission or personal interest in the case at hand?
- Is there an overarching goal that the decision-makers subscribe to, e.g. an institutional mission statement or professional guidelines, chartas or codes?
- Who else should or should not be involved? Why?
- Who takes the decision? What is the mode of decision-making? What is the share of power? Will it be a decision made by an individual, by consensus, by a majority, etc.? How will the process be organized, recorded, and documented (meetings, interviews, reports, etc.)

Step 2: Data Generation and Registration

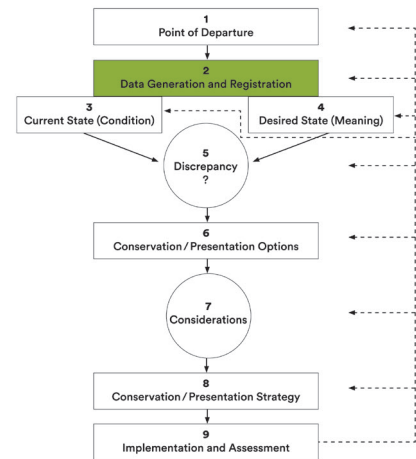
Aim and instructions: The objective of the second step is to search and register relevant data on the artwork. The information gathered forms the basis for a comprehensive understanding of the artwork in question and paves the way for a well-argued decision-making process.

Users of the model are requested to search, collect, and register a variety of different data, e.g.:

- the artwork's identification
- the description
- information on the production and creative process, materials, techniques and technology used or associated with the work
- the overall condition of the artwork – this may include condition reports and results from scientific examination, including material analysis, imaging techniques, etc., as well as information on when and by whom the reports/scientific analysis were submitted
- the location of the artwork and associated materials/components and environmental conditions
- requirements for handling, transport and storage
- installation instructions and information on the variability (including scores²⁰, notations²¹, floor plans, architectural and exhibition models, etc.)
- past iterations²²
- the acquisition history
- bibliography, publications, correspondence, archival documents on the artwork
- information on the artist, assistants, technicians, performers (contact details)
- oral and written information from the artist, his/her assistants, confidants or contemporaries, such as artist interviews etc.
- related artworks²³

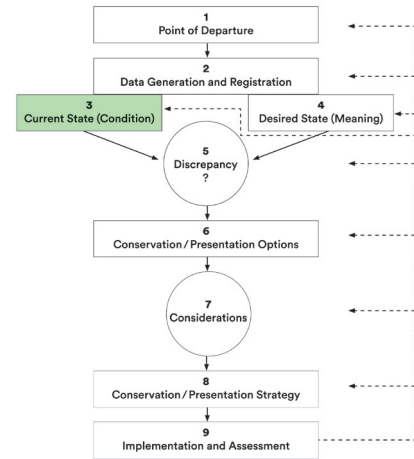
When necessary existing documentation models may provide support.²⁴ In general the process of data generation and registration is not restricted to one case scenario as the pool of information is accumulative and does not have to be re-generated every time. Once data has been gathered it can inform future decisions.

Remarks: Collecting, generating and registering data is not a neutral process. Different users of the model will consider different data as crucial information. Amongst other things, the choice of data depends on the circumstances, on the initial aim(s) of each case, as well as on the stakeholders involved and their particular intentions (cf. Step 1, Point of Departure). As documentation decisions have an impact on conservation decisions²⁵, the information gathered in Step 2 influences the subsequent process of decision-making.



Step 3: Current State (Condition)

Aim and instructions: The aim of this step is to develop a comprehensive understanding of the artwork's current state by interpreting the results gained in the Step 2: Data Generation and Registration. Following a holistic approach, the decision-makers are requested to evaluate and document the current state of the artwork by considering changes, the artwork's biography, environmental conditions, and other information concerning the properties of the artwork that may be considered significant with regard to Step 4. Further investigations including scientific analysis, material research, etc. might need to be carried out. Questions about the future of the work can also be raised, including the ageing properties of specific materials, the potential obsolescence of equipment and the feasibility of future manifestations.²⁶



Remarks: The interpretation of the artwork's current state is likely to vary among the involved stakeholders and is liable to change over time.

Example: In the 2010s increased failure rates of the CRT TVs disturbed the experience of Nam June Paik's *Fish Flies on Sky* at increasingly shorter intervals (Imhoff 2014; Imhoff et al. 2016). A row of seven defective TVs had to be permanently de-installed and altered the appearance of the video installation significantly. Furthermore, heterogeneous and increasingly pale images influenced their emotional power.

CHECKLIST

Central Questions

How can the artwork's current state be evaluated on the basis of the information gathered in Step 2? What are the reasons for the current state and possible changes in the artwork and how are the causes to be assessed (according to whom)?

Tangible and intangible aspects

How can the current state of the works' material components, functionality and immaterial aspects be described, e.g. light specifications of a light installation, political and social aspects for works linked to a particular political and social situation, performative aspects etc.? How may its condition be evaluated based on the results of visual examination, tests, or scientific analysis? In the case of changes regarding the artworks condition, how were they caused (root cause analysis)? Were they triggered by e.g. environmental conditions?²⁷ Did changes occur due to the artist's involvement or due to other past events in the artworks biography (e.g. former conservation or presentation decisions)? Are there any external dependencies beyond our control required to activate the artwork such as analogue broadcast, keratin radio wave frequencies, or artworks crawling the internet for data from obsolete websites?

Are there any uncertainties about the work? Is further research needed to understand and evaluate the artwork's current state, potential changes in its condition and their possible causes. Is it necessary to elaborate presentation/installation/performance specifications (e.g. information on production techniques, the political and social context at the time of creation or manifestation, etc.)?

Biography

How can the work's condition be evaluated within the context of its own biography? Which events in the artwork's trajectory are to be considered as important in order to evaluate its current state, e.g. previous iterations, changes of ownership and the acquisition history, previous conservation campaigns, political and social context, different installation spaces?

Artist's instructions and sanctions

How can the artwork's current state be assessed within the context of the artist's statements, instructions and sanctions? Are any instructions or sanctions given by the artist that for example, specify the significant properties (both tangible and intangible) of the artwork?

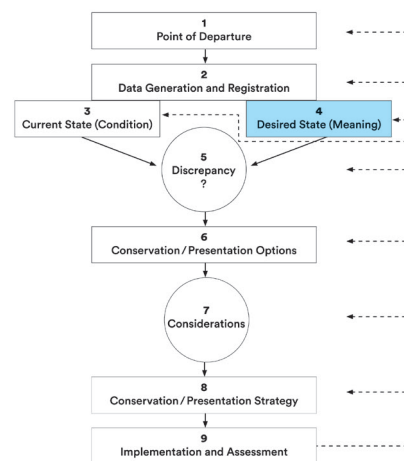
Step 4: Desired State (Meaning)

Aim and instructions: The objective of the fourth step is to develop a profound understanding of the artwork in order to reach a consensus about its identity/ies and the state(s), in which the artwork is considered as authentic (desired state). This step is used to determine and record which of the artwork's properties are essential/deemed constitutive to its identity/ies by considering:

- the artist's intent and/or concept(s)
- the attributed meaning(s) derived from its materials,
- production process, appearance and any changes
- the anticipated or intended reception of the artwork
- the artwork's biography.

Users of the model thus attempt to find out how they believe the artwork is meant to appear and function. This step serves to understand whether different values might have been attributed to the work in the past, whether they have changed over the years and how they affect the current interpretation and understanding of the artwork. There might also be different desirable states – for example different iterations of an installation artwork – that correspond to the meaning(s) attributed to the artwork and that transmit its significant properties.²⁸ It is therefore crucial to consider how the artwork appeared and functioned in the past, what stages it went through and what further developments are to be expected in the future – cf. Step 3.

Remarks: Although assessing the artwork's identity, meaning, and desired state is a precondition for decision-making, this can be ambiguous. An assessment of the artwork's constitutive and significant properties is constructed and subject to change as attributed values may shift over time. The same applies to the artist's intent, the intended reception of the artwork as well as to its attributed meaning(s). Moreover, different decision-makers may inevitably interpret the desired state of an artwork in different ways, not least because of their professional background, a varying access to knowledge, individual decisions about the importance of certain information, personal interest and temperament, as well as the context and current *zeitgeist* prevailing in conservation and the art world. *Example:* According to statements by Paik, experiencing the video sequences was the priority. In the case of *Fish Flies on Sky*, as Paik had changed the work several times in the past and was favourable to the idea of migrating technology, the decision-makers considered the functionality of the work to have the greatest significance. They also appreciated that a specific dimension, shape, and look of the CRT TVs were important for maintaining the sculptural aesthetic of the installation.²⁹



CHECKLIST

Central Questions

What are the distinguishing significant properties that make the artwork unique? What and who determines the expressive meaning of the work (e.g. evidence)?

Tangible and intangible aspects

What significance do the concept(s), material(s) and their expression, artistic technique(s) and/or processing method(s) - as well as other immaterial or functional aspects - have for the identity of the artwork?

— What is the significance of the artwork's different material, immaterial and functional aspects in relation to the specific cultural-historical context? Which materials has the artist used in other works? Are potential future changes anticipated in the materials and technology used for any presentation?

Biography

— Which events in the artworks' trajectory need consideration in order to fully understand the artwork's identity e.g. past presentations, acquisition history and change of ownership, conservation treatments, etc.?

Artist's instructions and sanctions

— Is there information on the artist's intention or concept? How is this information contextualized (who interpreted it and when, what is the context and source of the information, are there relevant artist statements and / or interviews)?

— Are there artist's sanctions that further specify the significant properties of the artwork, both tangible and intangible such as later additions to the existing installation instructions supplied by the artist?

— Are there any authorized instructions, explaining how the artwork is to be assembled and presented? Are there any confirmed requirements that future iterations of the artwork should meet (e.g. room size, site-specificity)? Are there any legal aspects, including copyrights and delegated rights to assistants that have an impact on the desired state of the artwork?

— Are changes intended regarding the context, the setting and components and / or their configuration?

— Do the instructions, if any, include information on the scope of interpretation the artwork permits e.g. with regard to the replacement of conceptual-based industrially manufactured or obsolete technical components, or regarding the artwork's adaptation to different architectural settings?

Step 5: Discrepancy?

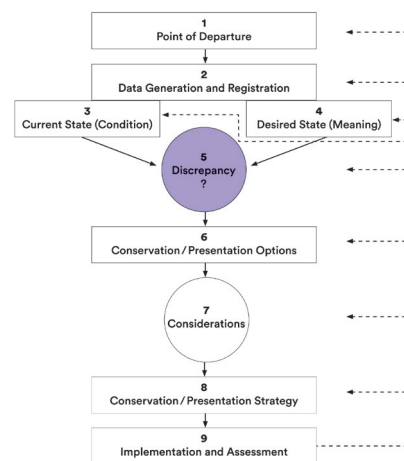
Aim and instructions: In this step users are requested to determine whether there is a discrepancy between the artwork's current and desired state, which provokes the conservation and/or presentation question(s). A precondition is a comprehensive understanding of the artwork's current state on the one hand (Step 3) and its desired state and attributed meaning(s) on the other hand (Step 4). Before evaluating any potential discrepancy, it is necessary to establish whether or not certain forms of change or decay are intended by the artist.

Decision-makers are thus asked to evaluate and document if the current state of the artwork corresponds to the desired state by taking different values into account, such as:

- authenticity
- aesthetic and artistic values
- historicity
- functionality and use
- artist's intent and anticipation of potential future development/changes

Remarks: The answer to this question often expresses a compromise, considering various values that may weigh differently from one case or decision-maker to the next. The weight each value carries depends on the prevailing *zeitgeist* as well as on Step 1's point of departure for the case at hand. This includes: the initial aim(s), the decision-makers and stakeholders involved, their professional mission, personal interest, the overarching goal and the mode of decision-making. Furthermore, all the information and interpretations executed in Steps 2 to 4 impact on how the different values are rated.³⁰

Example: According to both Paik's various statements and the past modifications of *Fish Flies on Sky* by the artist himself, the decision-makers interpreted the functionality of the artwork as being the priority. Thus, in the opinion of the decision-makers, there was a discrepancy between the desired state of *Fish Flies on Sky* as a functioning video-installation and the work's current condition with the inoperable and dismantled CRT-TVs. This discrepancy will increase over time due to the limited lifespan of the CRTs in his work.³¹



CHECKLIST

Central Questions

Is there a relevant discrepancy between the artwork's current state and the desired state, under consideration of its authenticity, historicity, functionality/use, aesthetic/artistic factors or the artist's intent (according to whom)?

Authenticity

As a value, authenticity is particularly important when determining if there is a discrepancy between the artwork's current and desired state. Values related to aesthetics, historicity, functionality/use, the artist's intent and potential future development/changes increase the understanding of the artwork's specific authenticity.

- What importance does the artwork's appearance have for its identity / desired state / meaning? In a case where the work's current state differs from its initial appearance (caused by use, ageing, damage, decay, or conservation) what impact does this have on the identity / meaning of the work?
- Is the production process important to consider in relation to the desired appearance / state / meaning? Can one speak of a single materialization or of an edition / version / iteration? To what extent is the concept and / or 'hand of the artist' in the production process important for the meaning?
- Does the work have parts that were made, either commissioned or not, by third parties? What is the meaning / function of these parts for the work as a whole?
- What relation does the use, ageing, damage, or decay have to the initial materialization / meaning of the artwork? Does the work have parts that can be regularly replaced without affecting the identity / meaning of the artwork? Are there arguments in favour of or against a possible re-making or re-staging of the work or parts thereof?

Aesthetic and artistic factors

The overall subject or theme of the artwork is addressed as well as its intended appearance. When determining if there is a discrepancy between the current and desired state is it possible to assess whether the intended associations with or reactions to the artwork can still be experienced at the time of investigation? Within this context any meaning conveyed by the materials and the underlying artistic concept need to be considered.

- Which subjects or themes are explicitly addressed by the work? Does the current state influence the subject or theme of the artwork (as a result of use, ageing, damage, decay, staging / display, presentation)? If so, is this intended or unintended?
- Does the work evoke associations or reactions that are important for its identity / meaning? Could they vary from one interpreter or socio-cultural display context to another?
- Has the appearance of the artwork changed as a result of use, ageing, damage or decay and if so to what extent does this affect the meaning of the work or its intended use?
- Do the results of use, ageing, damage or decay affect the meaning of the material?
- Is the expressiveness of the work affected as a result of use, ageing, damage or decay of the materials or media?

Historicity

Existing traces, alterations or signs of ageing or decay are considered in relation to successive manifestations of the artwork. Evaluation takes place as to whether these changes were intended and to what extent they correspond with the artwork's desired state or meaning. As such, the present condition and potential impact of the changes on the artwork's desired state / meaning are contextualized.

- Are there traces of use, ageing or significant events in the artwork's trajectory that contribute to its identity / meaning? To what extent is the established use, ageing, decay and change part of the work?

Functionality and use

Both the context and the "performance" of the artwork are evaluated with regard to the artwork's identity and future function. Artworks with technical components (but not exclusively) are particularly subject to defects and obsolescence and the need to preserve them "as a functioning system" often complicates the conservation of original material and any values related to originality / authenticity. Decision-makers can thus face potential ethical conflicts:

- Does use, ageing, damage or decay impact the functionality / use so that the identity / desired state of the work is affected?

— Does the current context (exhibition space / surrounding / socio-political framework etc.) fit the meaning / identity of the work? Does the current context influence the intended expression of the work?

— Regarding time-based artworks, in what way does the performance of the work contribute to the meaning of the work? Can the work be faithfully displayed / continued / perpetuated even if some of its technical components no longer function?

Artist's Intent

When considering the artist's intent, their instructions and sanctions are taken into account:

— Does the current state of the artwork correspond to the artist's intent?

— If applicable or available, what is the artist's opinion on the current state of the work?

— Are there any legal issues to consider?

Potential future development/changes

A conservation question may also arise from a potential future discrepancy, resulting from unintended changes or developments in the work due to for example, use, ageing, decay, damage, obsolescence or misinterpretation (e.g. when one iteration is mistakenly prioritized over another).

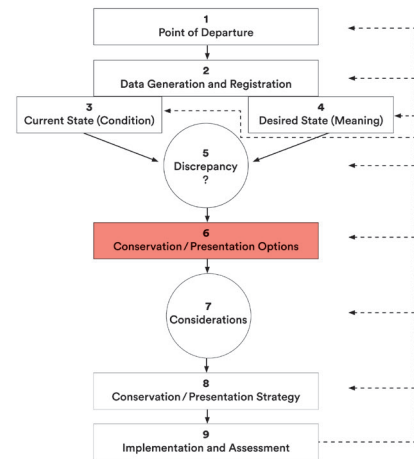
— Are any changes in the condition or presentation of the work to be expected in the future?

— Are any such changes intended?

Step 6: Conservation/Presentation Options

Aim and instructions: The aim of this step is to first specify and document the conservation/preservation goal, e.g. to reduce a discrepancy between the current and the desired state of the work, or to prevent unintended future changes such as those resulting from damage, deterioration/decay or contested interpretations.

Then options for conservation and/or presentation are elaborated. This may involve further research, evaluation, or testing, also with respect to potential methods and techniques or modi of presentation. Previous, comparable cases may be consulted to explore possibilities and integrate/incorporate the relevant assertions and expectations. Moreover, the option of taking “no action” is also included as a possible approach.³²



Remarks: When developing an option for conservation and/or presentation, decision-makers play a decisive role. Their professional background and personal and professional motivation (described in Step 1: Point of Departure) as well as their skills, creativity and personal temperament will have an impact on the selection of options and how they are developed.

Learning more about other approaches taken in comparable cases can provide a well-grounded understanding for the case at hand. It can serve as ethical guidance, for example when attributing values to an artwork and prioritizing them. The aim of confronting one’s own valuation with other opinions is to obtain a *value distribution*³³. Furthermore, this casuist reasoning helps to exclude poor choices at an early stage, narrowing down the number of options, and easing the valuation process.³⁴

To include the option of “no action” in this step underlines that the decision-making process might result in doing nothing, regardless of whether this is because of an inability, financial limitation, or because – in search for alternative options – the decision needs to be postponed. It might also transpire that in contrast to initial expectations, an elaboration of the options prompts neither inter-ventive nor non-interventive action.

Example: In order to reduce the discrepancy between the actual and the desired state of Nam June Paik’s *Fish Flies on Sky* the following options were proposed:

- 1 Emulation: reproducing Paik’s *Fish Flies on Sky* by using different technology to play-back the installation’s video content, e.g., rear projection into the separated curved glass front of CRT monitors to maintain the work’s appearance (a prototype monitor with rear projection was successfully developed by Christian Imhoff).
- 2 Migration: upgrading the existing technology used by Paik to a contemporary standard (e.g., suitable flat screen displays).
- 3 Replacement of the inoperable CRT TVs with identical but functioning equipment (e.g., CRT TVs from second-hand market or use of formally matching new CRT monitors).
- 4 Repair of the inoperable CRT TVs by rebuilding their tubes (preservation of a service infrastructure).
- 5 No action/refraining from taking any measures (preservation as a relic).

CHECKLIST

Central Questions

- What is the goal of a conservation and/or presentation strategy (this might differ from the initial aim(s) given in Step 1: Point of Departure)?
- What are the options for conservation and/or presentation that could contribute to reducing the existing or expected discrepancy?
- Are there any stakeholders that should be involved at this point in the process, e.g., external experts that may be able to provide technical advice/support?
- Are further analyses, tests, trials, or preliminary installations required?
- Are there presentation options (Stigter 2017) that prioritise the material integrity of the work (contained), that prioritise changes up to a certain degree (installed) or that allow for variations and involve reproducing components (performed)?
- What individual working steps do the options involve? Is it appropriate to include an option of "no action" in your considerations?

Step 7: Considerations

Aim and instructions: In this step options previously elaborated are weighed against each other in order to develop a conservation/presentation strategy.

Decision-makers are asked to anticipate any possible implications and risks that the options might entail for the artwork by taking into account different assessment criteria³⁶ including:

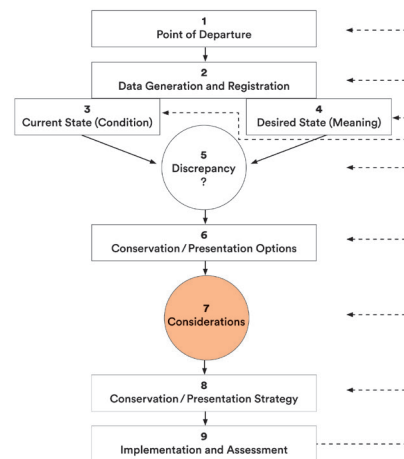
- aesthetic and artistic values
- authenticity
- historicity
- functionality/use
- artist's intention/opinion (regarding the proposed options)
- relative importance of the artwork / iconic value
- financial limitations
- legal aspects
- technical limitations
- restoration/conservation ethics
- educational/research
- sustainability

Remarks: The assessment criteria and the priorities attributed to them can change from case to case, according to the respective specific Point of Departure. Conditioning factors on the criteria and priorities may include the triggering events, its context and time, the initial aims of the decision-makers, their influence, professional mission, personal interests and the overarching goal of the project. Therefore, decision-makers are requested to discuss the evolved conservation/presentation strategy within a framework of possibilities, risks, and limitations.³⁷ The disclosure of the valuation process aims to help decision-makers, peers and future custodians to understand the outcome, especially as the result is often some form of compromise.

In the process of comparing different options a need for further elaboration of certain aspects of the options may arise. In this case a step back to Step 6 may be warranted.

In Step 7, the factor "authenticity" is conceived as one value amongst a number of different assessment criteria and is neither superordinate nor necessarily the most decisive criterion applied. Factors other than authenticity can also have repercussions on the valuation process. For example, if there is a tight budget and certain options are expensive, the financial factor becomes more relevant than in a case where a generous budget is available, or the best options are cheap.

The option for "no action" is valued like any other option and where "no action" is decided the decision-making process may come to an end here at Step 7.



Example: With Paik's *Fish Flies on Sky* the potential options were valued as follows (selected arguments)³⁸:

- 1 Emulation significantly affects the work's material integrity and may entail considerable costs. Although rear projection provided an image quality very close to the CRT TVs the heat and noise emission of the projector appeared unacceptable for a permanent installation of 88 monitors.
- 2 Migration could threaten the material integrity of the artwork. By using newer but obsolescence-prone technical components the artwork may ultimately be further removed from its initial state.
- 3 Replacement is unlikely and will be increasingly difficult in the future due to the shrinking market for CRT monitors.
- 4 Repairing CRT TVs by rebuilding their tubes can prolong a monitor's lifetime significantly (up to 35 years) and preserves the viewer experience of the video content, as well as the artwork's material integrity and sculptural qualities.
- 5 The option of taking "no action" would result in an increasing degree of equipment failure, compounding the discrepancy in the future. Preservation of the iconic work as a relic was considered inappropriate.

CHECKLIST

Central Questions

To what extent will the identity/meaning of the work be altered as a result of the proposed conservation/presentation strategy with regard to authenticity, aesthetic and artistic factors, historicity and functionality/use, as well as the relative importance of the artwork? Does the proposed strategy affect the desired state of the work? How will the decision-making process be organized and documented (e.g. meetings, interviews/reports, etc.)?

Authenticity

This step evaluates the potential impact that the elaborated options may have on the identity of the work. It also takes into consideration whether the artwork includes parts/components that are not essential for the work's identity/desired state and can or should be substituted.

Following the proposed conservation/presentation strategy, what is its impact on the artwork's identity/meaning/desired state?

Will traces of the production process be influenced by the proposed strategy to such an extent that the identity of the work changes (e.g. traces of the production process that disappear by black boxing with migration and emulation)?

Will the proposed strategy affect the original concept/material/desired state to an extent that it will change the identity/meaning of the work?

Does the work have parts that can be (regularly) changed without affecting the identity/meaning/desired state of the work?

Are there arguments to support or oppose a possible re-making of the work or parts thereof?

Aesthetic and artistic factors

The intended associations with or reactions to the artwork are evaluated, taking into consideration the effect of the strategy on the tangible and intangible properties of the artwork:

Will the concept, theme or subject of the work be influenced by the proposed strategy?

What importance do the results of the proposed strategy have for the identity/desired state/meaning of the work (e.g. changes in its appearance)?

Will the meaning of the concept or the materials be altered as a result of the proposed strategy?

In what sense is the expressiveness of the work affected by the proposed strategy?

Historicity

The potential impact of the options is evaluated with regard to historic traces, alterations, signs of use, ageing, decay and other changes that the artwork might have undergone during its various manifestations.

— *Will the proposed strategy affect any historic traces and does this influence the identity/meaning/desired state of the work?*

— *Will the proposed strategy affect any historic traces, which should otherwise be preserved for artistic or historical reasons?*

Functionality

Each option is evaluated to measure its effect on the functionality of the work, thereby taking into account e.g. the context in which the work is displayed:

— *Does the proposed strategy affect the functionality of the work in any way that is important to the identity/meaning/desired state of the work?*

— *Are there any external dependencies as potential influencing factors of the functionality?*

Relative importance of the artwork

How does the artwork under consideration relate to the artist's oeuvre, relevant artistic movements, and the rest of the collection?

— *What role does the work play within the oeuvre of the artist, associated artistic movements and collection? What importance does it have in wider cultural heritage/world heritage, as heritage from a political majority/minority, etc.? What is the potential impact of its significance on the conservation/presentation strategy?*

— *Is the work part of an edition or a single work of art? In case of the latter, is it part of a series or is it an individual work of art?*

— *How does the relative importance of the work influence the conservation/presentation decision?*

— *Is the significance/identity/meaning of the artwork interpreted differently by the various stakeholders? Are there disagreements or uncertainties?*

— *Should the decision-making process be suspended until more information is gathered and/or until a consensus has been reached?*

Financial limitations and possibilities

What are the costs involved in the implementation of the proposed strategy:

— *What are the financial limitations and possibilities?*

— *What is the maximum available budget for the conservation or presentation of the work?*

— *Does the financial value of the work justify the costs of the proposed strategy or are there other arguments justifying the expense?*

Legal aspects

Anticipating legal consequences arising from implementation of the strategy:

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

Artist's opinion on the intervention

The artist's intent, installation instructions and artist's sanctions are all considered to inform the strategy. In some cases, it might be possible or beneficial to discuss the proposed strategy with the artist:

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

Technical limitations and possibilities

The efficacy of the elaborated strategy is anticipated by taking technical limitations and possibilities into account:

What are the technical limitations and possibilities of the proposed strategy?

Conservation ethics

The decision-making process is evaluated with regard to the implementation of the proposed conservation/presentation strategy:

Is the integrity of the work sufficiently guaranteed after the strategy has been implemented?

Are the answers to the previous questions sufficient to warrant implementation of the strategy?

In case of hands-on treatments, can the proposed methods be reversed? If not, are there decisive reasons for using them nonetheless?

Is a professional standard of implementation guaranteed?

Will the implementation of the strategy be documented?

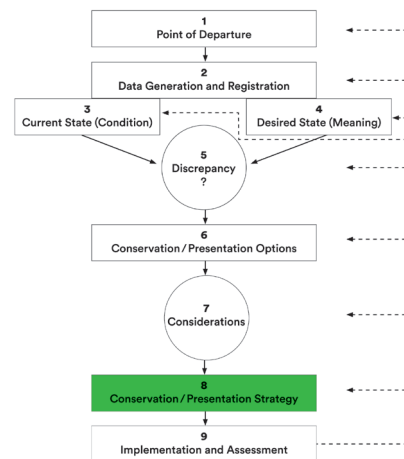
Step 8: Conservation / Presentation Strategy

Aim and instructions: In this step the arguments for the preferred conservation and/or presentation strategy are documented.

Decision-makers are asked to formulate the conservation / presentation strategy chosen and to detail the underlying reasoning – this includes the actions to be taken and the methods to be employed.

If further information on particular aspects of the conservation / presentation strategy is required, a step back to Step 6 further research, testing or evaluation regarding things such as the specifications of the materials to be used may be warranted

Example: In the case study, rebuilding the tube may extend the life expectancy of the CRT TVs by up to 35 years. In 2016, repair therefore appeared to be the best option to meet conflicting demands like an authentic appearance and the material integrity of the artwork.³⁹



Step 9: Implementation and Assessment

Aim: The objective of the model's final step is (a) to carefully monitor the immediate effects of the selected strategy's implementation, and (b) to reflect on whether the final result of the measures taken has been successful in solving the discrepancy / identified problem.

Implementation of the strategy

Aim and instructions: In Step 9's first substep measures are taken to document and monitor the strategy's implementation so that any immediate effects can be controlled. The objective is to detect any premature conclusions early on so that actions can be adjusted in time. During implementation, decision-makers are also asked to evaluate whether the measures taken are successful with regard to reducing or eliminating the identified discrepancy or preventing any anticipated discrepancies.

Remarks: The addition of this substep acknowledges that valuable information on the artwork is often gathered during a strategy's implementation. It also recognizes that the chosen strategy might need to be adapted or even changed, because of unexpected turns, difficulties or uncertainties of the implementation process. As such, the strategy is constantly reviewed by the decision-makers during implementation and adapted as required to the dominant/new circumstances.

Example: In 2017 rebuilding of the CRTs was successfully completed in collaboration with Christian Imhoff, the artist's former assistant Jochen Saueracker, and Colorvac, together with the generous support of the Wüstenrot Stiftung.

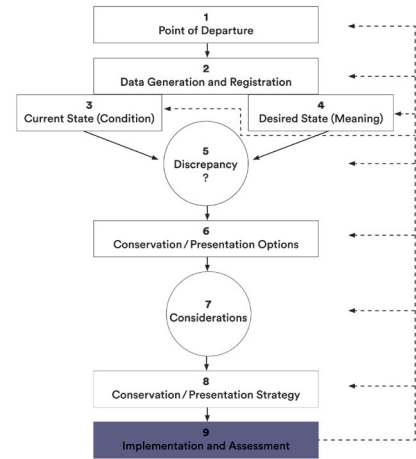
Assessment

Aim and instructions: The aim of Step 9's second substep is to evaluate the final result of the implemented strategy and to analyse how the overall process of decision-making unfolded (including difficulties and uncertainties along the way).

Remarks: The addition of a final assessment can contribute to the continuing discourse and critical reception of the artists' oeuvre. It recognizes the value of knowledge gained after the decision has been made, and how this, in turn, can inform future decisions. This feedback-process becomes part of the decision-makers' collective memory for the particular work, which can also be consulted when dealing with a comparable case in the future.

Additionally, a final assessment gives the opportunity to evaluate the information of previous steps so that decision-makers can critically self-reflect on their role and impact on the decision-making process and make adjustments even at the very end.

Example: For Paik's *Fish Flies on Sky* the implementation of the conservation strategy led to the desired result of prolonging the artwork's life expectancy. One advantage of renewing the tubes was that the material equipment only required a minor intervention. Upon completion all 88 CRT TVs were fully functional and the artwork could be experienced once again in the desired way. However, only continued monitoring will help to understand the actual lifespan. New decisions regarding the long-term preservation of the artwork will be required in the future. As the lifespan of the repaired tubes is also limited, it is likely that the discrepancy between the desired state of *Fish Flies on Sky* as a functioning video-installation and its obsolete technical components will reoccur.



CHECKLIST

Central Question

Did the implementation of the strategy lead to the desired result?

Implementation and effect control

Does the implementation of the decision meet all the decision-makers' expectations? Was the hypothesis and its realisation well understood and anticipated?

Assessment

Has the discrepancy between the current and desired state of the artwork been reduced as a result of the implementation?

How did the overall process of decision-making unfold? At what points was it necessary to step back to refine the results of steps already completed?

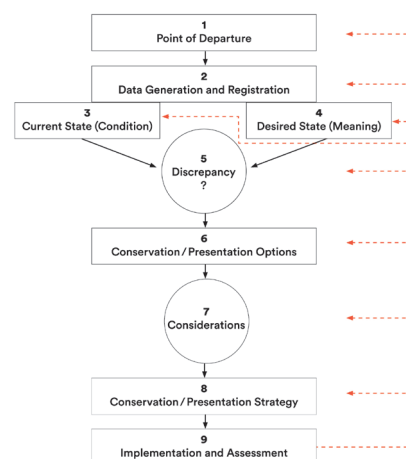
Did you or other decision-makers encounter problems or uncertainties during the process? Did these encounters have an impact on how the decision-making process developed?

Did any unforeseen circumstances lead to a revision of the initial aims for the case at hand? Or did uncertainties arise, requiring the involvement of more stakeholders/experts than anticipated?

The Revised Model Structure: Dynamic Processes

Shifting values, changing interpretations, and the frequently nonlinear process of decision-making⁴¹ imply that each step of the model is subject to change and that taking a step back for clarification may be warranted. Thus, the revised 9-step model provides room for reflexivity: additional indicator arrows acknowledge the intrinsic dynamics whereby one can return to earlier stages of the process from any step of the flowchart in order to revise or enrich previously gathered data. After returning to a previous step, it is highly recommended to check for implications on the steps already taken before progressing to new steps.

For example, if further elaboration on an option (Step 6) proves necessary during the documentation of the decision on a strategy option (Step 8), it is generally recommended to consider the implications on the process of consideration of all strategy options (Step 7) before beginning Step 8.



5. Conclusions

Decision-making does not take place as an isolated process, and is always connected with the past and future of the artwork. It is likely that during the lifetime of an artwork difficult, complex decisions will need to be made several times – such decision-making events are interrelated and become part of the trajectory and identity of the artwork.

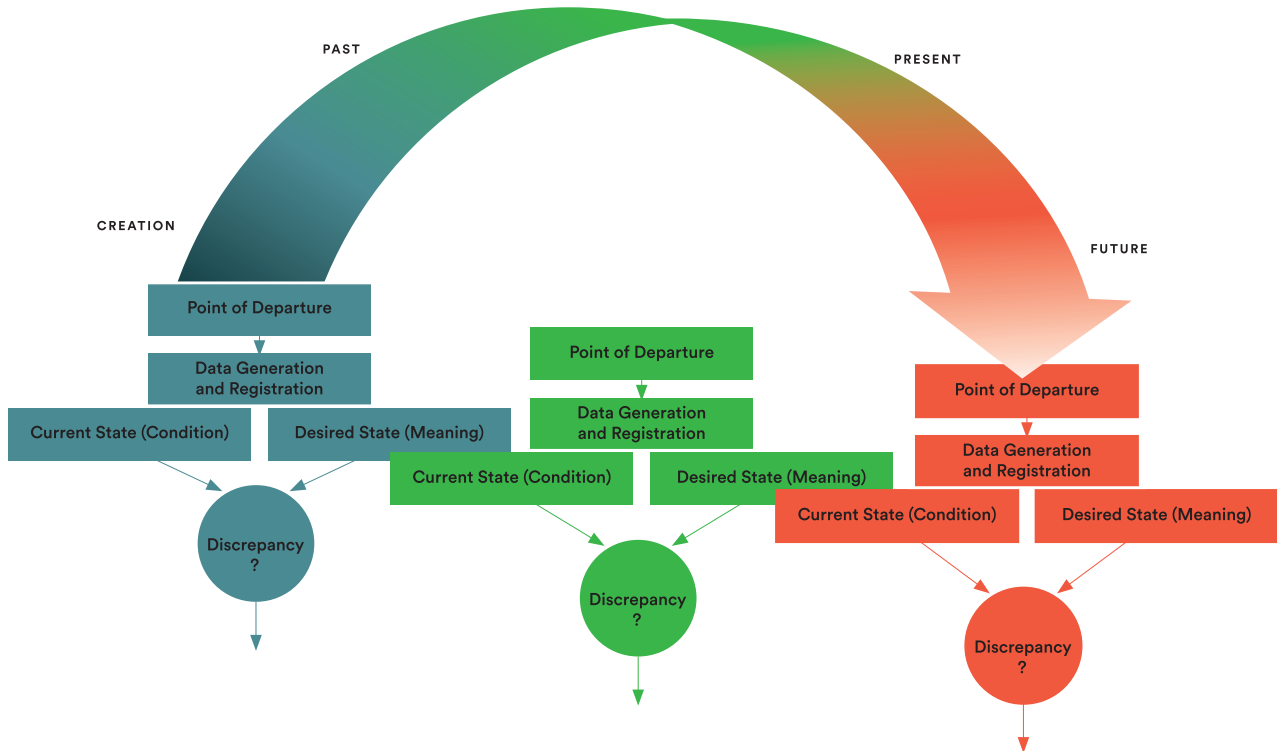


Fig. 13: Decision-making processes in an artwork's life.

The overall structure of the model was still useful, but in order to improve its applicability to a larger group of emerging contemporary art forms, it was decided to modify several of its aspects:

- The Point of Departure was added as an initial step that sets out the circumstances and motivations to contextualize the process and to track the subjectivities involved.
- The centrepiece of the initial model – the steps detailing condition, meaning and discrepancy – was revised to broaden the scope of its application by drawing attention to the artwork's constitutive tangible and intangible characteristics. By contrasting the artwork's current state with its desired state, the new model broadens its applicability to include options related to preventive conservation and presentation. At the end of the model a new step is added, which considers the implementation and monitoring of the proposed strategy, as well as an evaluation of the result. Moreover, this step is self-reflexive, leaving room for an evaluation of the overall decision-making process in retrospect.
- Finally, dynamic processes were integrated into the model to allow for reflexivity and flexibility.

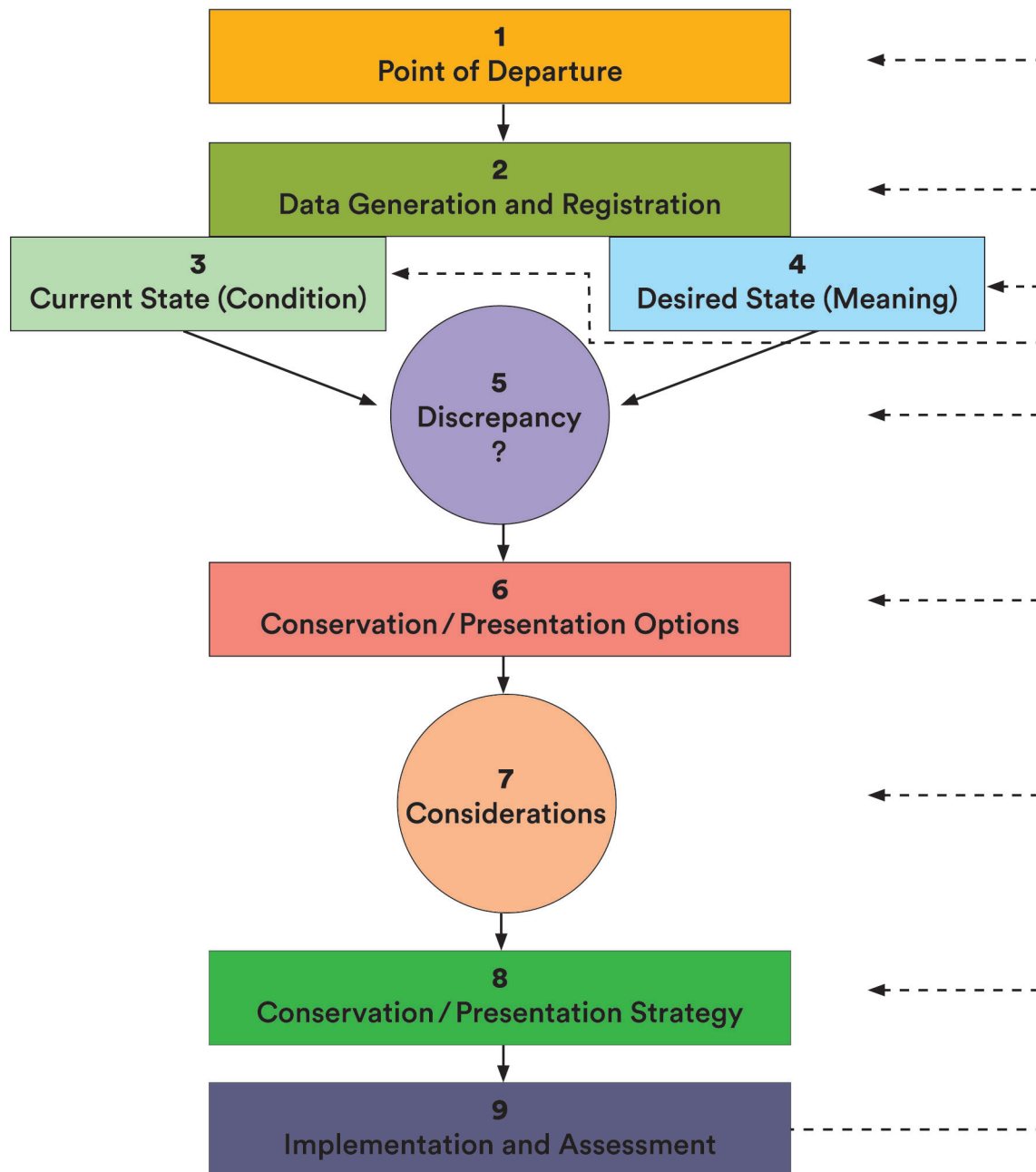


Fig. 14: The Decision-Making Model for Contemporary Art Conservation and Presentation, 2019

Endnotes

- 1 Cf. Glossary. Conservation.
- 2 Cf. Glossary. Presentation.
- 3 <https://sbmk.nl/source/documents/decision-making-model.pdf> (accessed 19 March 2021).
- 4 <http://nacca.eu/about/> (accessed 19 March 2021).
- 5 Cf. Glossary. Authenticity.
- 6 Cf. Glossary. Identity.
- 7 Cf. Glossary. Reenactment, Reinstallation, Restaging.
- 8 Ibid.
- 9 Cf. Glossary. Artist's Intent / Intention.
- 10 Cf. Glossary. Artist's Sanction.
- 11 Cf. Glossary. Instructions, Notation, Score.
- 12 Cf. Glossary. Biography, Trajectory, Career.
- 13 Dynamic decision-making refers to the multitude of dynamically intertwined decisions that have to be made in regard to the conservation and presentation of contemporary art (i.e., the so-called "environment" of the decision-making process that may change as a result of or independent of the decisions taken). The defining features of dynamic decision-making are: (1) decisions are made at multiple points in time, and (2) in between decisions the environment may change as a result of previous decisions, or (3) the environment may change spontaneously as a result of autonomous processes (Fischer et al. 2015, 1-3; Fischer et al. 2012). In the event of unforeseen changes, it may be necessary to adjust plans and revise decisions. (cf. The Revised Model Structure: Dynamic Processes, p. 24.)
- 14 Cf. Glossary. Significant Properties.
- 15 Definitions for a selection of terms and terminology in contemporary art conservation and presentation were elaborated by the 'Early Stage Researchers of the NACCA' training programme: <http://nacca.eu/> (accessed 19 March 2021).
- 16 Cf. Fischer, A. et al. (2016) pp. 217-29.
- 17 Cf. Glossary. Biography, Trajectory, Career.
- 18 In a decision-making process, different stakeholders may be involved, including the decision-makers who eventually take the decision. There are also stakeholders that have an impact on the decision, but do not necessarily take part in the final decision-making. The role of various stakeholders in conservation decision-making has been studied amongst others by Jane Henderson and Tanya Nakamoto (Henderson et. al. 2016), and Marta Garcia Celma (Celma 2021).
- 19 Venice Charter (1964), Nara Document of Authenticity (1994), E.C.C.O. Professional Guidelines (2003), ICOM Code of Ethics for Museums (2017) et al.
- 20 Cf. Glossary. Instruction, Notation, Score.
- 21 Ibid.
- 22 Cf. Glossary. Iteration.
- 23 Marçal, H., 'Decision-making in the conservation of performance art', presentation at the SBMK Symposium Acting in Contemporary Art Conservation, Amersfoort, Amsterdam, 15 November 2018.
- 24 Models that have been developed for contemporary art documentation, registration and condition reporting purposes include: Matters in Media Art Initiative, 2005; DOCAM, 2005; the Inside Installations Documentation Model 2IDM, 2007; Tate's The Live List, 2014; Joanna Phillips' Iteration Report, 2015 (Cf. Bibliography – Online Sources).
- 25 Hummelen, I., Scholte, T. (2006) pp. 5-11.
- 26 Cf. Glossary. Manifestation.
- 27 Cf. Agents of Deterioration, 1995.
<https://www.canada.ca/en/conservation-institute/services/agents-deterioration.html> (accessed 19 March 2021).
- 28 In case of more than one desired state, the Initial aim – phrased in Step 1: Point of Departure – may have an impact on which of the desired states is addressed in the decision-making process.
- 29 Cf. Imhoff, C. et al. (2016).
- 30 There are several ways to visualize differing opinions and the impact that different stakeholders may have: for example by using barplots, radar charts or flower charts.
- 31 Cf. Imhoff, C. et al. (2016).
- 32 Cf. Fischer, A. et al. (2016) pp. 217-29.
- 33 Cf. Marçal, H. et al. (2013).
- 34 Ibid.
- 35 Cf. Imhoff et al. (2016).
- 36 Alois Riegl distinguishes in the context of heritage preservation between historical value, artistic value, age value, commemorative value, use value, and newness value (Riegl 1903). Gabriele Dolff-Bonekämper introduced the 'Streitwert' or dispute value (Dolff-Bonekämper 2010). Miriam Clavir adopts and further differentiates the terms physical, aesthetic, historical and conceptual integrity from codes of ethics in art conservation (Clavir 2002). Barbara Appelbaum specifies the terms art value, aesthetic value, historical value, use value, research value, educational value, age value, newness value, sentimental value, monetary value, associative value,

commemorative value, and rarity value (Appelbaum 2010). Marta Garcia Celma considers the values aesthetic, artistic, artist's intention, historical, sentimental, iconic, educational research, use, associative, and monetary values (Celma 2021).

- 37 When weighing the options, the Behaviour Index for Complex Artworks (Stigter 2017) and The Variable Media Approach (Depocas et al. 2003) provide conceptual tools to analyse the potential changes that the proposed conservation/presentation strategies may imply.
- 38 Cf. Imhoff, C. et al. (2016).
- 39 Ibid.
- 40 Rebuilding the tube was proposed by Christian Imhoff and executed by Colorvac, experts for CRT-monitors: <http://colorvac.de/> (accessed 19 March 2021). Cf. also <https://www.kunst-auf-lager.de/stiftungen-foerdermoeglichkeiten/wuestenrot-stiftung/fish-flies-on-sky-von-nam-june-paik/> (accessed 19 March 2021).
- 41 Cf. Fischer, A. et al. (2012) Article 3.

Glossary

Artist's intent / intention

Artist's intent or intention, two terms, which appear to be used interchangeably, are used to describe the process of coding the work and choosing the form. In a conservation context, the terms center on understanding the identity of an artwork. The notion of the 'original intent' of an artist was traditionally closely connected with the idea of the 'original state' of an artwork; a concept which is limiting, if not fraught with errors, when considering that many contemporary artworks are inherently in flux. The use of the terms was critically reviewed in recent conservation literature (i.e. Gordon and Hermens 2013, Wharton 2015). For the conservation of contemporary art, the 'artist's intent' is reframed as a collaborative process that evolves over time, as guidelines which are negotiated by the artist together with other stakeholders to determine what elements of a work of art signify and how we are to work towards their continuation. In this understanding of intent, a given statement is not so much a closed declaration but a point of departure.

Joanna Kiliszek, Nina Quabeck

Artist's Sanction

The term "sanction" coined by Sherri Irvin (2005) should not be considered synonymous with intent. According to Irvin, the artist's sanction is his or her own fixing of an artwork's rules of display and perpetuation (consciously or unconsciously) through their consent and approval of certain presentations. The sanctions protect the integrity of the work against inappropriate treatments, be it display or conservation of the work.

Joanna Kiliszek, Nina Quabeck

Authenticity

Authenticity is the degree to which an individual or group regards a physical assemblage, event, or experience as a manifestation of the work of art it purports to be at a particular point in time. The recognition that a physical object, event, or experience is an instance of a particular work is not a Boolean, true / false quality; rather, authenticity may "admit of degrees" (Laurensen 2006). Judgements of authenticity are made by an evaluator on the basis of evidence (OAIS 2012). However, these judgements may be modulated by other inter-subjective factors including the evaluator's knowledge,

memories, beliefs, and cultural values. Judgements of authenticity may vary not only between individuals, but also over time.

Brian Castriota, Marta García Celma

Biography, Trajectory, Career

The use of these terms in conservation literature takes a non-linear, processual view on artworks, recognizing that they evolve over time and go through differently characterized life stages, as do people, with significant turning points and changes in status and meaning.

These terms also highlight the effects of influences other than the artist on the identity of artworks, such as production, collection, ownership, display, storage, and conservation.

Adopted from anthropological theories that look at the 'cultural biographies' of things (Appadurai, 1986; Kopytoff, 1986), the relevance for conservation lies in critically analyzing how artworks move into and out of certain categories.

To contend with how artworks evolve, many conservators have for decades used a metaphor of 'life stages,' using words like gestation, infancy, adolescence, ageing, death, afterlife, etc. The use of the term 'biography' was brought into conservation to account for artworks' parallel and multiple lifelines.

This was adopted into conservation literature from the early 2000s (i.e. Wharton 2006) to reconstruct shifts in an object's material and symbolic value. It was further developed in the 2011 article by Van de Vall et al., who cautioned against taking a contemporary artwork's identity for granted and instead tracked practices that contribute to the multi-faceted ways artworks are understood and manifested. To avoid a reductive understanding of identity as singular, the authors adopted Latour and Lowe's (2011) metaphor of a river's complex catchment area, or 'trajectory,' meaning that artworks have not only one original entity, but their trajectory includes copies and other manifestations. The word 'career' (Appadurai, 1986) has been used interchangeably with 'trajectory'.

While trajectory and career are similarly meant to denote the journey taken by an artwork (in all its multiple parts), the idea of biography must be thought of as the active and subjective construction of these journeys by those who write it.

Artemis Rüstau, Caitlin Spangler-Bickell

Career

Cf. Biography, Trajectory, Career

Conservation

All activities that stem from the methodological recognition of an artwork's identity, that aim to safeguard an artwork's continuation in an informed, structured and documented way.

This expanded notion of conservation is framed for the purpose of institutionally collected contemporary art. It is understood as a set of scientific, technical and social activities that are performed by various individuals and groups including conservation professionals.

Thomas Markevicius, Aga Wielocha

Identity

The identity of a work of art is a term employed in the conservation of contemporary art to refer to a work's unique character and self-sameness. It is closely connected to the notion of significant properties, understood as the features or properties regarded as constitutive of that identity.

The notion of an artwork's identity has antecedents that go back to discourses in aesthetics (for example Joseph Margolis' 1959 essay "The Identity of a Work of Art"; see also Thomasson 2005). At *Modern Art: Who Cares?* Tineke Reijnders described the replacement of foam in a Tony Cragg sculpture as "possible without disrupting the identity of the work" (1999, 151) but asked rhetorically "will it still be a Cragg once more than fifty percent of the work is replaced?" Tina Fiske (2009) has observed how, "the conservator's ethical remit becomes focused on minimizing the erosion of identity between instances of a work" (234). Building on Laurenson's (2006) theoretical frameworks, Joanna Phillips' (2015) developed a "Documentation Model for Time-Based Media Artworks," whereby information about a work's exhibition history and the anatomy between its various dependencies is captured in "Identity Reports". The term is frequently invoked to refer to an innate and authoritative, singular essence or core despite the growing recognition that works of art do not necessarily possess a singular identity (van de Vall et al. 2011, 3; Spangler-Bickell 2018).

The concept of identity as it is understood in aesthetics and contemporary art conservation has a history that extends back to Saussure's (1916) concept of "linguistic identity," whereby the identity and meaning of a particular word may be liable to change due to changes in the surrounding system. Identity was reframed in

post-structuralist discourses as an illusion perpetuated through citational repetition (Derrida 1967; Deleuze 1968), particularly around notions of gender and sexual identity (Butler 1990) and cultural identity (Hall 1990). Within these discourses, identity is understood as a construction, re-affirmed through performativity. Accordingly, identity is constructed in an interplay between affirmation (of some characteristics that are elevated to essential properties) and negation (differentiation from others).

A work's perceived identity is liable to difference and multiplication over time as its materiality and contexts undergo change, and/or the work recurs in time and space in new contexts and with new materials. An artwork's identity is constructed, performed, and affirmed both in discourse surrounding a work, and in the work's manifestation(s), which may either perpetuate the illusion of a fixed and stable identity, or fracture that illusion through deviation or alteration. Like authenticity, judgements of a work's identity are intersubjective characterizations.

Brian Castriota, Marta García Celma

Instructions,

Notation,

Score

The existence of instructions, notations, and scores, for a work of art, whether a visual or musical work, means that it can be recreated or reinterpreted any number of times, either by the artist him or herself, or by another. What all three terms, instruction, notation and score, have in common is that within the art world they have increasingly assumed the status of commodity, as a means by which inherently variable artworks can enter the museum. The term instruction instead is more commonly associated with conceptual art, the most obvious example being the instructions for Sol LeWitt's Wall Drawings, whereby third parties follow detailed guidance or specifications from the artist in order to realise their concept.

In conservation literature, the notions of instructions, notations, and scores are firstly developed by Laurenson (2006), proposing an allographic reading of installations. Indeed, for her, the traditional conceptual framework of conservation corresponds to autographic works, but is not adapted to those that are not, such as installations, which are "temporary and ephemeral" works (Ibid., 4). Laurenson (2006) refers to Goodman (1968) for whom, the relevance for certain works of the notion of authenticity introduces a categorical division within the different

artistic practices: autographic works, such as paintings, can be counterfeited, on the contrary, allographic works, such as musical compositions, can be redone without one instance being more authentic than another, because the presence of a “notational system” (Goodman, 1968, 122, 130) makes it possible to reproduce them in an unlimited number of copies, each equally valid. Indeed, the notational system provides a “test of correctness” (Ibid., 119) – for scores, scripts and texts – and a “test of compliance” (Ibid., 122, 144) – for performances, establishing that an object has the “constitutive properties” of the work, that is, the required features, and describing the “contingent properties” of the work, that is, the limits of permissible variation in each, without specifying by whom the work was produced.

In this spectrum, installations are allographic because (1) they are realized “in-two-steps” (Ibid., 4), like musical compositions, where the score is the first step determining the second final stage of the performance, namely its execution, (2) they can be performed several times, remaining authentic, because, like musical compositions, they are based on the interpretation of the artist’s instructions, (3) their authenticity doesn’t reside in their materiality, but in their identity, which must be preserved being sure not to lose any essential elements from one installation to another. The identity is defined by the “work-defining properties”: negotiated decisions (Ibid., 9), often revisited by the artist (Ibid., 8), that can be captured through his instructions, the previous installations that he approved (Ibid., 7), and the understanding of the context in which the work was firstly installed (Ibid., 11).

Even if the artist’s instructions are not standardized like scores, Laurenson (2006) assumes, referring to Davies (2001) for whom, scores have an ontological significance, that the constitutive properties of the work can be thinly described, that is, not very detailed, or thickly specified, that is, dense and precise. However, in both cases, it is essential for the artist to succeed in leaving a “gap” (Laurenson, 2006, 5) between his specifications and how the work must be performed, that is, a margin of manoeuvre for the interpretation of what is generally referred to as his “intention” (Ibid., 6).

Referring to Derrida (1972), Tina Fiske (2009) questions this goodmanian allographic reading for installations. For her, Laurenson (2006) operates another attempt to fix the identity of these works, and their limits of variation, whereas installations are – by nature – designed to change, and the global transformations they undergo in the different contexts, make it necessary to dis-

tinguish the work, from its various instances, and from its instructions. Indeed, they are not made to be shown permanently, on the contrary, they are thought to disappear materially between each exhibition (Fiske, 2009, 233). Thus, being able to connect them in time and space remain a crucial issue, and Fiske (2009) evokes the deridian’s notion of “tethering”, in order to “secures the work-in-absentia, disarming absence as a condition that could threaten the viability of the work, and rendering it essentially benign” (Fiske, 2009, 233). In this theoretical framework, an installation is not embodied, but iterated, and the set of practices such as documentations, installations and uninstallations allow a movement of “différance” rather than the pursuit of an actualization.

Iona Goldie-Scot, Sophie Lei

Iteration

While *iteration* is often used synonymously with instance, manifestation, and version, Castriota (2018) proposes that iteration should refer to the overall process of repetition, one that entails alteration and difference, rather than a single instance, manifestation or instantiation of a work. Drawing on Derrida and Deleuze, iteration in this sense is a faculty of identity, predicated on deferral and difference. It permits repetition, and enables multiple and variable manifestations

Zoë Miller, Claudia Röck

Manifestation

Manifestation refers to a discrete occurrence or instance of a work in time and space (Castriota 2018); a physical embodiment of expression (DOCAM); an action or object that gives form to an abstract entity. This term also implies an element of variability – a manifestation is a discrete occurrence, one of multiple possible spatial and temporal instances of a work.

Zoë Miller, Claudia Röck

Notation

Cf. Instruction, Notation, Score, Script

Presentation

The term *presentation* denotes a manifestation or instance of a work that is both perceptible to the mind and senses (the work therefore has to be installed in order to be presented), and being received and perceived by someone (an audience, spectators).

Zoë Miller, Claudia Röck

Significant Properties

Significant properties may be understood as the tangible and intangible characteristics of a work of art that an individual or group considers constitutive of its identity and important for the work to be maintained or recur. Those properties deemed significant, critical, essential, or work-defining may change over time and may vary among stakeholders. The identification of significant properties is therefore a collaborative and discursive process.

The term has antecedents in aesthetics (see “constitutive properties” in Goodman 1968, 116) and semiotics (see “pertinent features” in Eco 1976), however it first emerged in discourses around digital preservation in the early 2000s (see “significant properties” in Holdsworth & Sergeant 2000 and “essential properties” or “essence” in Heslop et al. 2002). The term was popularized in contemporary art conservation by Pip Laurenson (2006), reformulated as “work-defining properties,” based on the writing of Nelson Goodman and Stephen Davies (2001). A similar notion was introduced by Rebecca Gordon in her description of an artwork’s “critical mass,” defined as “the optimum choice and grouping of factors or attributes that demonstrate the core identity of the work of art” (Gordon 2014, 97). The term generally refers to the characteristics, features, or qualities regarded as constitutive of a work’s identity and therefore important or necessary for a physical assemblage, event, or experience to maintain in order to be regarded as an instance of the work in question (cf. “authenticity”).

Certain properties may be characterized as significant by the artist through declarative statements. However, more often than not, museum staff or collection caretakers may argue that certain properties are significant on the basis of a work’s exhibition history and various statements made by the artist. Cultural values also play a critical role in the evaluator’s assessment of a work’s significant properties – for example, the historical value attached to original materials, materials manipulated by the artist, or historic technologies or processes employed in the work’s initial manifestation(s).

Certain properties may come to be viewed as more or less significant depending on who is doing the judging and his or her values, the different courses the artwork’s trajectory takes as it is manifested in new ways over time, and the ever-changing cultural context or technological landscape surrounding the work.

Brian Castriota, Marta García Celma

Reenactment, Reinstallation, Restaging

The terms Reenactment, Restaging, and Reinstallation refer to the process of presenting, and/or the actual presentation of, a work of art – particularly an installation or a performance known to have been presented in the past. The presentation, to varying degrees, relies on the artwork’s available material: for instance, documentation of the artist’s intent, testimonies and exhibition documentation. The terms do not indicate the level of direct involvement of the artwork’s author. The terms are in times presented with a dash following “re”, such as in “re-enactment”, however, the use without it prevails in art conservation literature. The terms are used variably by different scholars, largely referring to a re-configuration of an artwork in relation to new spatial and/or contextual parameters.

Dušan Barok, Panda de Haan, Maria Theodoraki

Score

Cf. Instructions, Notation, Score, Script

Trajectory

Cf. Biography, Trajectory, Career

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Editor

Cologne Institute of Conservation Sciences / TH Köln

Authors

Julia Giebeler, Gunnar Heydenreich, Andrea Sartorius (Cologne Institute of Conservation Sciences / TH Köln), Andreas Fischer (University Heidelberg)

in collaboration with

Co-operating partners: IJsbrand Hummelen (Cultural Heritage Agency of the Netherlands, RCE), Tatja Scholte (RCE), Renée van de Vall (Maastricht University)

Working group members: Lydia Beerkens (Stichting Restauratie Atelier Limburg, SRAL), Christiane Berndes (Van Abbemuseum), Tiziana Caianiello (ZERO Foundation, Düsseldorf), Paulien't Hoen (The Dutch Foundation for the Conservation of Contemporary Art, SBMK), Hélia Marçal (Tate), Angela Matyssek (Technische Universität Dresden), Marc Peez (LVR-Amt für Denkmalpflege Rheinland), Vivian van Saaze (Maastricht University), Sanneke Stigter (University of Amsterdam), Andreas Weisser (Doerner Institut)


NACCA researchers: Dušan Barok, Brian Castriota, Marta García Celma, Iona Goldie-Scot, Panda de Haan, Joanna Kiliszek, Sophie Lei, Tomas Markevicius, Zoë Miller, Nina Quabeck, Claudia Röck, Artemis Rüstau, Caitlin Spangler-Bickell, Maria Theodoraki, Aga Wielocha

Other contributors: Julianne Bell, Anna Distelkamp, Eliza O'Donnell, Christian Imhoff, Jonathan Kemp, Lúcia Almeida Matos, Ainslee Meredith, Anna Schäffler, Glenn Wharton, Christine Frohnert, Mareike Opeña, Helen Smith-Contini

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