Modern Materials - Contemporary Art

Modern Materials and Contemporary Art (MMCA)


Modern Materials - Contemporary Art is the official newsletter of the ICOM-CC Working Group
Modern Materials and Contemporary Art (MMCA)

June 2015
Welcome to the 2015 Newsletter from the Modern Materials and Contemporary Art (MMCA) working group of ICOM-CC. This issue is – even more than usual! - packed with project updates, conference reviews and announcements. It includes conversations with two great colleagues: one with Susan Lake, former Director of Collections and Chief Conservator at the Hirshhorn Museum (Washington DC, USA) reflecting on her career on occasion of her retirement in May 2015; and one with Mirta Pavić, Head of Conservation at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Zagreb (Croatia), discussing her role in her museum and her take on the conservation of contemporary art in South Eastern Europe. Many thanks to Julia Langenbacher and Andrea Sartorius for designing and coordinating this issue!

The ICOM-CC 17th Triennial Conference was held 15 – 19 September 2014 in Melbourne, Australia. I always enjoy the Triennial Conferences and thought this one was excellent. MMCA had a great session with eleven papers and eight posters spread over the course of two days. For those of you who could not make it, you will find a short review on page 3 of this Newsletter. And as is customary, the venue for the next Triennial was announced on the last day: the beautiful city of Copenhagen!

The 2014 conference marked the end of the 2011-2014 Triennial and with it also the end of Tom Learner’s six years’ tenure as coordinator – I am sure you will join me in thanking Tom for all his hard work for the working group and especially in bringing the membership from 50 in 2009 to the current impressive number of 266! There is still plenty of room for growth, though – please encourage your friends and colleagues to sign up! A reminder on how to join is included at the end of this issue.

As for me, I am delighted and honored to be the new coordinator and to be working with a great team of assistant coordinators:

Rachel Rivenc, coordinator rrivenc@getty.edu
Julia Langenbacher, assistant coordinator jlangenbacher@getty.edu
Lydia Beerkens, assistant coordinator lydia.beerkens@planet.nl
Barbara Ferriani, assistant coordinator info@barbaraferrianiisrl.com
Andrea Sartorius, assistant coordinator andreasartorius@gmx.de

Julia and Andrea will mostly assist with the newsletter while Barbara and Lydia will help with conceiving and organizing the interim meetings – we have an ambitious WG program; see the full program below and the save the date for our first interim meeting to be held in Milan in 2016 on page 10.

Please contact us with any queries, comments or suggestions you might have, or feedback on the newsletter. I also encourage you to make use of MMCA’s website and all the news, downloads and calendar of events – we are also planning on stepping into the era of social media by opening a Facebook page!

So, with plenty of exciting prospects ahead of us, I hope you enjoy the newsletter and wish you all a great summer!

Rachel
Departing slightly from previous triennials, we decided not to include thematic area of research within the working group program since ICOM-CC does not provide actual support or framework for research. Instead, we decided to focus on programatic activities:

- Ensure regular and dynamic communication within the working group through emails, MMCA’s website, and a Facebook page.
- Create at least one newsletter a year, and strive to make it engaging, informative, and a useful resource.
- Plan up to two Interim Meetings: a meeting on the theme of kinetic art in Milan (in collaboration with the Museo del Novecento); and another one on the conservation of biological materials in contemporary art (food, bodily fluids etc.), possibly in Istanbul.
- Explore options for publishing postprints.
- Create synergies and work in partnership with other Working Groups: explore the possibility of holding joint sessions during the next Triennial meeting with other WGs (Sculpture and Polychromy, Legal Issues, Theory and History of Conservation, Scientific Research, Education and Documentation could all be relevant).
- Keep exploring possible synergies and collaboration avenues with INCCA.
- In keeping with the ICOM-CC strategic plan 2014-17, seek to expand the WG membership base outside Western Europe and North America in order to be more inclusive.
- 2017 will mark the 50th anniversary of ICOM-CC and part of the strategic plan for the Triennial includes a special history project to document the history of ICOM-CC. As part of it, MMCA will create a special issue of the newsletter dedicated to the history of the working group as part of the ICOM-CC history project. Thea Van Oosten, who joined the group in its early days and who served two terms as coordinator, has a lot of documents pertaining to the history of MMCA and has volunteered to help. Believe it or not, MMCA has been in existence since 1975!

The papers were fairly well distributed between scientific or applied research, treatment case studies, and theory of contemporary art conservation, with only one on technical studies. The sessions felt well rounded and covered a variety of important aspects in contemporary art conservation – in posters and scientific papers, however, plastic was definitely the leading topic.

In the broad category of treatment case studies - Meta Chavannes (Stedelijk Museum) discussed the challenges associated with the treatment, mounting and storage of Richard Serra’s monumental, monochrome paintstick drawings on canvas.

Roy Marchant (formerly National Gallery of Australia) presented a paper on the treatment of Hery Doono’s Flying Angels, a work consisting of nine motorized angel figurines with an electronic sound component—the angels are meant to fly while producing chirping sounds. The paper raised interesting questions of replacement, artist involvement, and acceptable changes.

Sandra Weerdenburg (Stedelijk Museum) detailed the treatment of Untitled (1967), an early assemblage also by Richard Serra consisting of a horizontal iron frame on which a red neon light and several narrow rubber strips were mounted.

Finally, Bronwyn Ormsby (Tate) described the extensive testing used to support the removal of graffiti ink from Mark Rothko’s painting Untitled, Black on Maroon (1958).

Scientific papers included Michael Schilling’s (Getty Conservation Institute) and Kristen McCormick’s (Disney Animation Research Library) presentation of research done on the characterization of chemical and physical properties of animation cells.

Yvonne Shashoua (National Museum of Denmark) discussed the effectiveness of a variety of commonly used conservation adsorbents to inhibit the degradation of cellulose nitrate.

Frank Preusser (Conservation Center, Los Angeles County Museum of Art) focused on the effect of the application of a sol-gel coating on the deterioration of cellulose diacetate; and Anna Laganà (private conservator) presented the results of her research on methods and adhesives to repair scratches, abrasions and losses in works of art made of cast unsaturated polyester.

Julia Giebeler (Cologne Institute of Conservation Science) examined the tensions between physical originality and authentic functionality using Heinz Mack’s light-kinetic as a case study.

Marina Pugliese (Servizio Polo Arte Moderna e Contemporanea Milan) explored possible ways to link strategies in the preservation of our ethno-anthropological heritage and contemporary art.

The only paper this year dedicated to technical studies was Joyce Townsend’s (Tate) in-depth analysis of Kurt Schwitter’s’ small sculptures and three-dimensional mixed-media, made in the 1940s in Britain.
The sessions ended with a business meeting during which Tom Learner said his farewell as coordinator and consulted the WG members on directions to follow during the next Triennial (the answers varied greatly: time-based media, installations, and paintings were among the topics mentioned).

For those of you who could not attend but would like to read the published papers, the preprints can be purchased as a flash drive for £50 plus shipping – contact Joan Reifsnyder at secretariat@icom-cc.org.

Rachel Rivenc

Aluminum: History, Technology and Conservation

April 7-11, 2014
Smithsonian American Art Museum and National Portrait Gallery, Smithsonian National Air and Space Museum, Steven F. Udvar-Hazy Center

The American Institute for Conservation, in partnership with the Lunder Conservation Center, Smithsonian National Air and Space Museum (NASM), and the International Council of Museums - Committee for Conservation Metal Working Group, presented a three-day conference on aluminum – its history, technology and conservation. It included a great variety of topics, ranging from architectural structures, archaeological materials, and objects conservation as well as modern / contemporary art. The keynote speaker, Lyndsie Selwin (Canadian Conservation Institute in Ottawa) set the tone of the conference with her fantastic presentation on the conservation and scientific issues of aluminum in cultural heritage.

An unrestored Lockheed P-38 Lightening on exhibit under the wing of the Boeing B-29 “Enola Gay” in the Udvar Hazy Center. Both aircraft were cited during the workshop for their metallurgical characteristics and their unique preservation challenges. Photo: Lynn Lee.

Another great talk was from Bruce Hinton (Monash University), who focused on corrosion prevention and control via surface treatments. Other presentation topics included, among others, the science behind corrosion formation on aluminum and its alloys, factors that dictate which alloys are used for specific purposes, conservation treatments of objects and architectural structures, and the strengths and limitations of certain analytical techniques that can be employed for the analysis of aluminum alloys.

A two-day workshop followed the conference and was held at the NASM. Malcolm Collum, chief conservator of NASM, gave a tour of the facilities and conservation lab spaces – it was great to see amazing historical aircrafts up close! The first day of the workshop, led by David Hallam (National Museum of Australia, Canberra) and Bruce Hinton, was devoted to hands-on understanding of finishes, surface treatments, and different strategies to mitigate corrosion of aluminum alloys.

Will Lee, NASM Preservation and Restoration Specialist presenting his work on repairing a damaged aluminum landing gear door in the Mary Baker Engen Restoration Hangar. Mr. Lee described the challenges involved in striking a balance between preserving original paint and markings while coping with major structural damage. In the background an unrestored Sikorsky JRS-1 which was at Pearl Harbor on December 7th, 1941. Photo: Lynn Lee.

The focus of the second day was hands-on demonstrations of two analytical techniques, x-ray fluorescence spectroscopy (XRF) and Fourier-transform infrared spectroscopy (FTIR) that are commonly used to analyze metal alloys and their coatings. This day was led by Bruker Elemental’s Bruce Kaiser.

Overall, the conference and workshop provided a great opportunity to understand the many issues of aluminum. The attendees included people from the cultural heritage field, the aluminum industry, the military sector, the architecture sector, and academia. The diverse background of the participants provided for dynamic discussions!

The complete conference agenda can be found at: www.conservation-us.org/aluminum

A publication of the conference papers by Smithsonian Institution Scholarly Press is expected in spring 2016.

Lynn Lee
Legal Issues in the Conservation of Contemporary Art

Paris, France
October 13, 2014

On October 13th 2014, INCCA-CED, the French speaking branch of the International Network for the Conservation of Contemporary Art (INCCA), held a workshop on the theme of “Legal Issues in the Conservation of Contemporary Art”.

In addition, contemporary works often evolve over time (issues of instable or ephemeral materials, replacement, re-installations, re-fabrication etc.). What constitutes the authenticity and originality of a work of art is not always easily identifiable and is not necessarily understood by the different parties involved in its preservation in the same way. Conserving a work of art has implications both in terms of copyrights and contractual obligations. Under these conditions, what is the role of the artists or their estate in the conservation of their work? What are the possible implications with regards to the market value and sale of the work?

Prof. Alexandra Bensamoun, director of CERDI, introduced the day with a rich and enthralling speech, focusing on the strain that contemporary art causes to the legal system because it is the form and not the idea, which is protected whereas certain artists will claim the protection of ideas. Suggesting some possible answers, she discussed conservation through the prism of copyright laws and questions of protecting the author (creator) of a work that underwent conservation as well as the owner or buyer. Her speech was followed by case studies presented by Anne Cadenet (CAPC musée d’art contemporain, Bordeaux), Céline Le Bacon (Musée d’art moderne de Saint-Etienne Métropole), and Anne-Laure Saint-Clair (MAC/VAL Musée d’art contemporain, Val-de-Marne). They focused on works by Fabrice Hyber, Don Judd and Raafael Soto, respectively.

Marie-Hélène Breuil and Cécile Dazord

‘Blind spots’ in contemporary art conservation

October 2014
Workshop at Cologne Institute of Conservation Sciences, Germany

In October 2014 twenty-five experts in conservation theory and practice, art history, history, philosophy, media studies and jurisprudence met for a two-day-workshop at the Cologne Institute of Conservation Sciences (CICS). The goal of the workshop was a) to analyze the theoretical background of conservation decisions; b) to discuss the applicability of existing codes of ethics towards contemporary art; and c) to identify needs of further research. The workshop format served to focus on ‘blind spots’ that are often omitted in the interest of museum politics, artists, collectors or the market.

Four case studies, three current master theses from students at CICS and one from the conservation studio of Christian Scheidemann (New York), provided a broad variety of contemporary conservation issues and served as basis for in-depth discussions. Christian Imhoff discussed Fish Flies on Sky by Nam June Paik; Jessika Lunk presented her study on Katharina Fritsch’s Dealer; Sebastian Köhler focused on a motorized Light-Disc called Lightintegration by Günther Uecker; and Mareike Opeña addressed issues posed by Atrabiliarios by Doris Salcedo.
Contemporary Art: Preservation Of What?
International Conference in São Paulo, Brazil
October 6-8, 2014

In contemporary artistic production, the expressive, communicative or symbolic potential of materials often seems to be more appealing to artists than the possible longevity of works of art, and as a consequence the life expectancy of contemporary art work has often decreased radically. However, the frailty of the works or their so-called impermanence is in conflict with established museological practices and their preservation mandate. Problems of both ethical and practical nature spring from this conflict and place curators, conservators, art historians, and museologists in a permanent state of reflection.

The international conference “Contemporary Art: preservation of what?” took place at the Museu de Arte Contemporânea da Universidade de São Paulo (MAC USP) October 06 - 08, 2014 and provided a platform to discuss some of these issues. The conference was organized by Cristina Freire (MAC USP) with contributions from Humberto de Carvalho (Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro (UFRJ) and the Study Group for Conceptual Art and Conceptualisms in the Museum (GEACC). The event was attended by researchers from several institutions in Brazil, Portugal and Spain, and it aimed at discussing some theoretical, methodological, and informational instruments for the documentation of contemporary art in museums. It strived to establish consistent articulations between the human sciences and the museological practices.

Lúcia Almeida Matos (Faculdade de Belas Artes da Universidade do Porto, Portugal). Photo: Cristina Freire (MAC USP).

Some of the issues discussed throughout the three days, and within a session which included specific case-studies were: material values versus conceptual and aesthetic values, originality, authenticity, author’s intention, social function of the work of art, and other topics. A space for discussion was created to debate alternative processes of conservation, as well as the use of specialized professional services, whose expertise goes past the universe of materiality and no longer concentrate their efforts only on physical objects, as is often the case with new media and information technologies.

The participants of the workshop analyzed theoretical aspects associated with conservation decisions by focusing on the use of central terms in the case studies, like intention, authenticity, originality, integrity and materiality. It became obvious that the use of some terms implies an interpretation, even a decision and consequentially influences a conservation treatment. The concept of ethical guidelines, their role and content were discussed and the need to further develop subset of guidelines applying to contemporary art was highlighted. An issue that was singled out as a pressing need of more attention is the replacement of components, especially within the context of media art.

The participants identified numerous needs for further research regarding the development of a theoretical framework for the conservation of contemporary art, including, for example, the analysis of the management of ethical dilemmas within our profession, further research on how authenticity is constructed, and the negotiation of an extension for the Venice Charter with regard to new art forms.

An extended summary will be published later this year, in the postprints of the symposium Authenticity in Transition. Changing practices in contemporary art making and conservation. Glasgow 1-2 December 2014.

More information at:
https://www.fh-koeln.de/hochschule/workshop-restaurierungsethik_14017.php

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Julia Giebeler, Gunnar Heydenreich

Participants discussing the results of two emulated CRT-TVs in comparison to one original TV of Nam June Paik’s multi-monitor installation Fish Flies on Sky. Photo: Diana Blumenroth, CICS.
As an outcome of the meeting, the Portuguese book, *Contemporary Art: Preservation of What?*, contributes to the debate about such issues, raises questions of thematic interest, and enables diverse theoretical consequences in Brazil. The book was released on May 5 and is available through MAC USP. Please visit: [www.geacc.mac.usp.br](http://www.geacc.mac.usp.br).

Emanuelle Schneider

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**Authenticity in Transition**

Glasgow, UK
1-2 December 2014

The conference was supported by the Network for Conservation of Contemporary Art Research (NeCCAR) and was the third conference on authenticity and conservation issues organised by the University of Glasgow, this time in collaboration with the Glasgow School of Art, to explore shifts in authenticity and their potential impacts on contemporary art making and conservation.

*Speakers from the first panel receive questions from the audience. Photo Credit: Erna Hermens.*

Over the course of two days, 35 papers were presented to an audience of 250 delegates. The focus was on scientific and theoretical investigations into practices and media encountered in contemporary art making – and the challenges these represent to traditional conservation theory and philosophies.

Most presentations focused on specific case studies while the plenary sessions provided background and context by discussing philosophies and theories from the arts, music and conservation. The case studies included a wide range of contemporary works of art, such as software art, time based media, installations, ephemeral sculpture, paintings, street art / wall paintings, kinetic sculptures, and performance art.

The interactions between contemporary art conservation and the wider museum infrastructure and on audiences were discussed in papers presenting new museum or storage spaces designed to allow access and observation of handling, storage, and conservation preparation by the visiting public.

*A large bottle of Poison, a perfume by Christian Dior, is passed among the audience during a presentation by Clara Ursitti. Photo Credit: Erna Hermens.*

On the second day an interesting insight into questions of authorship and ‘authenticity’ of non-tangible art works such as performance, time based media and ephemeral sculpture, was raised during a question-and-answer session with three invited artists. This session highlighted the gap between the artists’ motivation for creating and the conservators’ motivation for preserving, with the artists highlighting the ‘playfulness’ and ‘joy’ in contemporary art rather than ideas of originality and authenticity connected with the physical material culture.

The wealth of contributions to this event provided a comprehensive overview of challenges in the conservation of contemporary art while serving as a platform for networking and exchanging questions, ideas and opinions during the tea, lunch breaks, and the welcome reception in the New Reid building of the Glasgow School of Art on the evening of the first day of the conference. A publication of presentations of this event will be available in late 2015.

Stephanie de Roemer
Workshop review: Digital Media Archaeology in Practice
with Ben Fino-Radin (MoMA), organised by PACKED / iMAL
Brussels, Belgium
April 9 & 10 2015

PACKED vzw - Expertise Centre in Digital Heritage and iMAL - Centre for Digital Cultures and Technology are collaborating in a program dedicated to the preservation and access to digital art and heritage. PACKED vzw is located in Brussels and has grown from a platform organisation for the archiving and preservation of audiovisual arts into a centre of expertise for digital cultural heritage. iMAL (interactive Media Art Laboratory) is a non-profit association created in Brussels in 1999 with the objective to support artistic forms and creative practices using computer and network technologies as their mediums.

The joint program includes exhibitions, workshops and conferences throughout 2015. The launching event of this program was Welcome to the Future! an exhibition presenting more than fifty artworks produced in the 1980s and 1990s and distributed on floppy disks and CD-Roms. In the framework of this exhibition, Ben Fino-Radin, digital art conservator and digital repository manager at the Museum of Modern Art in New York, was invited to Brussels to host a two-day Data Preservation Bootcamp. The workshop included several topics and hands-on activities.

Identification
The participants of the workshop were first taught how to identify and characterise different types of disks and data carriers based on their technology, format (single-sided or double-sided), and density. This is crucial as usual migration procedures are based on these parameters.

Disk imaging
A common preservation practice involves creating disk images to copy the whole package of data stored on a physical disk. Ben Fino-Radin demonstrated several ways to create disk images using the computer terminal as well as software with a graphical user interface (GUI).

Reading floppies at the lowest level possible using the KryoFlux.
Picture: iMAL.

Stream files
Ben Fino-Radin also demonstrated raw stream capture using the KryoFlux floppy controller. The KryoFlux is a transfer tool that includes a hardware board and software developed by the Software Preservation Society. It allows access from any current operating system to floppy drives (5.25” and 3.5”) through a USB connection to create low-level readings and capture of the magnetic flux transitions and outputs of the magnetic media.

File type and access
Once the original medium has been stabilised through disk imaging, file identification is the next step that archivists and conservators have to carry out. During the workshop, participants used Droid, an open source file identification tool based on the PRONOM file format registry. Once technical information about their file was identified, the participants were able to access the information using any relevant emulator (e.g., MESS, MiniVmac, Sheepshaver, and DOSBOX). Other digital preservation topics such as file integrity, fixity checks, description models, technical metadata, ingest and access were also discussed during this two-day event.

More pictures of the workshop are available here: https://www.flickr.com/photos/malicy/sets/72157649551507823

Future events and activities to be organised by PACKED vzw and iMAL in 2015 will be announced on the following websites:
http://www.imal.org
http://http://www.scart.be

Emanuel Lorrain (PACKED vzw)
Layers in time –
4th European Student Conference on Object Conservation
Budapest, Hungary
April 17-18, 2015

The 4th European Student Conference on Object Conservation was held in Budapest, Hungary, from 17th to 18th of April 2015. The conference was organised by the Hungarian National Museum’s National Centre for Conservation and Conservation Training in association with the Department of Conservation at the Hungarian University of Fine Arts. Traditionally, the aim of the conference is to provide opportunities for conservation students at European universities to present their projects to an international student audience, and also to build personal contacts with students in other countries. 24 papers were accepted from nine different universities originating from eight European countries. About 130 students from ten European countries came to Budapest to listen and discuss the presented papers. Three of the papers dealt with modern objects.

Supporting their students to attend conferences organized by students for students is a great way for conservation programs to encourage early professional development. Krakow is currently being discussed as the next venue for the conference.

Dinner at the Hungarian National Museum.

All conference abstracts are available for download on the following website: http://www.studentconference2015.hu/abstracts.pdf.

Friederike Waentig

The First Crack:
Conservation and Value in Contemporary Art
SVA Theatre, New York
April 29, 2015

The First Crack: Conservation and Value in Contemporary Art, organized by Contemporary Conservation Ltd. and hosted by the School of Visual Arts, was held at SVA Theatre in New York on April 29. The symposium generated a high level of interest with 250 attendees from all fields of the art world: artists, collectors, art historians, curators, dealers, registrars, art-lawyers, art insurers, advisors and adjusters, auction houses, art handlers, artist’s estates, and conservators.

The array of talks focused on some crucial questions for contemporary art conservation today: Who is behind the decisions on conservation, refabrication, devaluation and total loss in an increasingly investment-oriented art market? Is it possible to balance the aging of materials with the intention of the artist, while taking into account the historical and monetary values of works of art?

Visit at the conservation departments on the first day.

Johanna Elebe from the University of Applied Arts in Cologne talked about her MA-project, a work in progress: Decision-Making for the conservation and restoration of the installation: ‘il resto del carlino del maggio 1976’ by Mario Merz. Elisabeth Delvai from the University of Applied Art in Vienna presented her research entitled A symbol of modern furniture design, conservation and restoration of a Barcelona Ottoman from House Tugendhat, Czech Republic. And Polyxeni Xiradakis from the Technological Educational Institute of Athens presented her work on Protective coatings for outdoor public murals.

Two full days of technical and professional lectures which covered almost every field of conservation, gave a great impression on what is happening at different universities. It gave the students the opportunity to meet, talk, discuss, compare their programs and to celebrate, as well as to go on a variety of tours and excursions.

It was a great pleasure to listen to the student lectures, their intense discussions and to witness them starting to network and make friends.
Christian Scheidemann (Contemporary Conservation Ltd.) opened the symposium by describing the "life of the artwork" starting from its fabrication, as it travels between galleries, fairs, collections and auction houses. He used the expression “The First Crack” to discuss the shift from a new pristine condition to the first signs of age, making a clear distinction between signs of aging and the damage from accidental impact.

Dana Cranmer (Cranmer Art Group LLC) drew from decades of experience as a conservator to give a capsule history of the conservation of modern art in New York. In his talk “When Contemporary Art Works,” conservator Reinhard Bek (Bek&Frohnert LLC) used four case studies to explore some of the challenges associated with the conservation of artworks with a media and / or kinetic component. He especially advocated the importance of historical research and thorough documentation of the work’s conservation and installation history.

Ingrid Schaffner’s (Curator, CMA, Pittsburgh) presentation on curating the exhibition Jason Rhoades: Four Roads described a dense intersection of curatorial, conservation, and artist-estate concerns, and was a particularly compelling example of the complex of materiality and artist’s intention.

Artist Matthew Barney spoke with Scheidemann via Skype from the Walla Walla, Wa., foundry about his early work with unruly and unusual sculptural materials such as petroleum jelly and the importance of failure and experimentation. He showed the audience videos and a live feed of recent water-castings — some of them the inspiration for which came from the rainy conditions during the Detroit castings event for River of Fundament.

In her presentation on the damage and loss process in art, art appraiser and advisor Renee Vara (Vara Art) illuminated the highly complex issues of her occupation and made important distinctions between roles in the legal and insurance claim procedures. Art lawyer John Cahill (Cahill Partners LLP, New York) explained the main elements of the 1991 Federal Statute VARA (Visual Artists Rights Act).

The day ended with a panel discussion on artist’s estates and the challenges of ensuring the longevity of a late artist’s work. Moderated by Martha Buskirk (Montserrat College of Art) the panel included John Hogan (Sol LeWitt Estate), Debbie Taylor (Al Taylor Estate), Ted Bonin (Alexander and Bonin Gallery; represents estates of Ree Morton and Paul Thek). Buskirk also questioned the common dependency upon the artist’s interview when making conservation or estate decisions.

Natalie Zayne

Panel discussion with estate representatives John Hogan, Debbie Taylor and Ted Bonin, moderated by Martha Buskirk (from left to right).

Conference Announcement and Call for Papers

Keep it moving? Conserving kinetic art

Palazzo Reale by Museo Del Novecento, Milan, Italy
June 30th and July 1st 2016

“Kinetic: relating to the motion of material bodies and the forces and energy associated therewith”
(Merriam-Webster dictionary)

The Getty Conservation Institute, the Museo del Novecento and the Modern Materials and Contemporary Art (MMCA) working group of ICOM-CC, in partnership with INCCA (hosted by the The Cultural Heritage Agency of The Netherlands - RCE) are pleased to announce the upcoming conference: Keep it moving? Conserving kinetic art.

Kinetic art is art that not only includes movement but often depends on it to produce the desired effect and fully realize its nature as work of art. Kinetic art emerged throughout the 20th century and had its major developments in the 1950s and 60s. In addition, in the 1960s, a branch of Op art or Optical art, i.e. abstract art based on optical illusion, also started to incorporate actual movement. Kinetic works of art include a wide range of motion, from motorized and electrically driven movement to motion as the result of wind, light, or other sources of energy.
Much thought is currently given in the field of contemporary art conservation to re-thinking the concept of authenticity and to solving the dichotomy often felt between original materials and functionality of the work of art. The dichotomy is especially acute with kinetic art where a compromise between the two seems impossible: when engine parts stop working, when light bulbs go out, the work will stop functioning if replacement is not performed. Issues of technological obsolescence, as well as the strong sociological and historical information or meanings often embedded in a given technology and its use by an artist, further complicate matters.

This two-day conference will look back at the history of kinetic art and its preservation, take into consideration the artists’ point of view, and discuss the ethical dilemma and practical challenges of conserving and documenting kinetic works. It will include invited keynotes and submissions. The conference will serve as the interim meeting of MMCA and is organized by the Museo del Novecento and the Getty Conservation Institute, in partnership with INCCA. It will take place at the Palazzo Reale one week before the general ICOM-CC meeting. A visit to the rich collection of kinetic works in the Museo del Novecento will be included.

If you would like to give a presentation, abstracts can be submitted until October 15th 2015 to: kinetic2016@gmail.com

They should include the author’s name and affiliation as well as contact details, full titles and a 350-word summary. All papers will be delivered in English. We welcome papers dealing with ethical considerations, especially those presenting innovative thinking or drawing from parallels with other fields such as preservation of musical instruments, case studies, updates on research projects, as well as papers focusing on innovative documentation strategies and approaches to conserving kinetic art collections.

For more information please contact:

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**SPark: Conservation of sculpture parks**

September 14-16, 2015

Sisak, Croatia

**SPark conference is now open for registration!**

We are pleased to announce that the registration for SPark: Conservation of Sculpture Parks conference is now open. Please click on the link below for more information.

Arts Academy of the University of Split (Croatia), Museum of Contemporary Art in Zagreb (Croatia) and Cologne Institute of Conservation Sciences (Germany) are presenting an international conference on the conservation of sculpture parks, September 14-16, 2015 in Sisak, Croatia.

The conference is divided into different sections addressing all aspects connected to the conservation of outdoor sculpture parks, from technical questions to collection administration, management and maintenance. Additional tours and workshops are offered during the three-day event.

For the complete program and registration procedure please visit: [https://spark2015sisak.wordpress.com/](https://spark2015sisak.wordpress.com/)

We hope that you will join us September 14-16 in Sisak, Croatia!

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**SOIMA 2015: Unlocking Sound & Image Heritage**

See, Listen and Share!

3 & 4 September 2015

Brussels (BE)

**What?** This is an international conference on ensuring a safe and creative future for sound and image heritage. Twelve national and international institutions are supporting the event.

**Why?** Recorded sound and images have captured our world, our lives and our imagination. Thanks to rapid advancements in social media and information technologies, it has become much easier to share and use sound and image content. Yet contrary to common perception, not all content is readily usable. Today’s knowledge on preservation and access is fragmented, often trapped in separate areas of expertise, presenting a challenge to content collectors and users.

**Join us!**
The conference will bring together professionals and policy makers with an interest in sound and image preservation around 4 themes:

**Memory, Intangible Heritage and Creative Expressions**

**Sustaining Sound and Image Heritage**

**Creative Use and Access**

**Education and Training: Current Needs and Future Possibilities**

More than 60 different contributions ranging from Australia to Austria, from UK to USA, from Poland to the Philippines, from Kenya to Kuwait, from Chile to Congo, from Mozambique to Mexico, from Switzerland to South Africa and many more!

Collaboration, and exchange of information and know-how between institutions and specialists is key to unlocking this heritage!

More information:
www.soima2015.org
soima2015@kikirpa.be

Partners & Sponsors:
ICCRROM, ICCROM-ATHAR, Stichting Nederlands Instituut voor Beeld en Geluid, Flemish interface centre for cultural heritage (FARO), Royal Institute for Cultural Heritage (KIK-IRPA), AVPreserve, Baltic Audiovisual Archival Council (BAAC), Museo delle Culture, Flemish Commission for UNESCO/Commission belge francophone et germanophone, Vrije Universiteit Brussel (VUB), PACKED vzw, Wikimedia Belgium, Memnon Archiving Services, Flemish Institute for Archiving (VIAA)

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Masterclass Plastics: Identification, Degradation and Conservation of Plastics
15 – 18 September 2015
University of Amsterdam, The Netherlands

A four-day masterclass by Thea van Oosten (formerly employed at Cultural Heritage Agency of the Netherlands) and Anna Laganà (Lecturer Conservation and Restoration of Contemporary Art at the University of Amsterdam).

This masterclass aims to acquaint object and sculpture conservators with the current state of knowledge regarding identification, degradation, curative and preventive conservation of plastics, rubbers and composite materials.

This four-day course is split between theoretical and practical sessions. Participants will improve their theoretical background on plastics and develop practical experience in conservation treatments such as: cleaning and adhering plastics and consolidating PUR ether flexible foams. The state of the art for preventive and curative conservation will be discussed and include the latest research.

Due to the growing need, this course on the conservation of plastics is to be offered by the University of Amsterdam for an international audience.

Participants are strongly encouraged to bring objects or images of objects to the course for discussion.

For full information about the masterclass programme, the lecturers and how to apply, please see the following webpage.


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TechFocus III: Caring for Software-based Art
Two-day Workshop, Sept. 25-26, 2015
Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York

**SAVE THE DATE AND REGISTER TODAY!**

**DESCRIPTION:**

The Electronic Media Group of the American Institute for Conservation, the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum and the Foundation of the American Institute for the Conservation of Historic and Artistic Works (FAIC) are pleased to announce a new two-day workshop: TechFocus III: Caring for Software-based Art.

Software-based artworks have been gradually entering collections over the past three decades. However, the preservation of this medium has proved challenging for collection caretakers due to its relative scarcity and perceived complexity.

The purpose of the workshop is to spotlight this emerging conservation practice, build on a number of existing research initiatives, and respond to an acknowledged desire from the community to expand its understanding of software-based art and its preservation strategies. TechFocus III is designed to educate conservators, curators, archivists and other collection professionals about how software is employed by different artists, looking at its functionality and aesthetics through case studies. It will also cover topics such as documentation, acquisition, artist’s code, display and strategies for long-term preservation.
There will be a practical software exercise for participants to provide insight into some of the basic technical aspects.

For more information about TechFocus, please visit: http://cool.conservation-us.org/cool/techfocus

TECHFOCUS III PLANNING COMMITTEE:
Helen Bailey, Christine Frohner, Agathe Jarczyk, Mona Jimenez, Kate Lewis, Joanna Phillips, Eric Pourchot and Martha Singer.

Register online for this event here: www.conservation-us.org/TechFocus3

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FAR-SITED: Creating & Conserving Art in Public Places
October 16 - 18, 2015
Long Beach, California

The University Art Museum and the Getty Conservation Institute, and Museum of Latin American Art present FAR-SITED: Creating and Conserving Art in Public Places, a three-day conference examining new trends in public art, the use of new materials and technology, and the role of conservation for art in the public realm. Nationally renowned arts professionals will engage in curated panels and presentations for an audience of artists, conservators, arts administrators, scholars, and students.

Using the 50th anniversary of the historic 1965 California International Sculpture Symposium as the catalyst for the conference, it seeks to explore the possibilities and the challenges of creating and presenting art in public places for the 21st Century. The conference will be held on the campus of California State University, Long Beach.

SAVE THE DATE AND REGISTER TODAY!

For more information and registration details, please visit: www.far-sited.org

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FUTURE TALKS 015.
October 28-30, 2015
Pinakothek der Moderne, Munich, Germany

After an overwhelming response to our last three FUTURE TALKS conferences we are looking forward to another extensive three-day congress on international research projects and case studies on active conservation treatments and technology of modern materials in design and modern art.

Recent advances in this field, addressing technology, design and production processes of modern materials, new and innovative treatment methods for degrading plastics as well as current research and ongoing projects will be presented. During the three day conference experts from all over the world (21 nations at the last FUTURE TALKS conference) will share their experiences and knowledge in this field. Knowing very well that the conservation of modern materials is not only limited to design objects, a part of the programme is dedicated to conservation projects on modern / contemporary works of art.

The conference will take place from October 28 – 30, 2015 at the Pinakothek der Moderne in Munich, Germany. There will also be social events and opportunities to visit local conservation studios, research labs, plastic producers and design studios on Saturday October 31, 2015. The conference and the associated publication will be in English.

We are pleased to announce the program for the fourth edition of the FUTURE TALKS conferences: http://die-neue-sammlung.de/ft/future-talks/future-talks-015/lectures-015

HERE you can ensure your participation

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Revisiting the Surface
National Museum, Oslo, Norway
13th November 2015

SAVE THE DATE!

The interdisciplinary conference is organized by the Munch, Modernism, and Modernity Research Group at the University of Oslo, the Munch Museum, and the National Museum of Art, Architecture and Design in Oslo. This conference examines the relationship among artist, action, surface, and reception within the modernist tradition and is organized into three broad conversations: Vision, Touch, and Materials.

Questions: Elsebet Kjerschow elsebet.kjerschow@nasjonalmuseet.no

More information: http://munchmuseum.no/interdisciplinary-conference
Media in Transition
Conservation of time-based media works of art and related practices
Tate Modern, London, UK
18-20 November 2015

The Getty Conservation Institute, Getty Research Institute and Tate will host this major international conference focusing on the implications of collecting time-based media works of art and related practices. This two-day conference aims to foster lively, inter-disciplinary dialogue about the impact of technological change on an artwork and the growing networks of professionals that are required to support contemporary media art works and their conservation.

Following the format of the highly successful Object in Transition conference in 2008 this event will explore – through papers, panel discussions, demonstrations and dialogues – how the field is adapting and responding to these new forms of artistic practice, and how emerging modes of collaboration between artists, conservators, art historians, technical experts and curators can help advance the field.

A key part of the conference will be a number of case studies involving in-depth and inter-disciplinary discussions about specific works of art.

Themes that will be explored are broad and include the:

• “Lives” of time-based works, key moments of transition and engagement
• Creation of works with future forms of display or realisation in mind
• Impact of strategies developed within time-based media conservation on other forms of conservation practice
• Decision making and values
• Responding to the loss of networks of production and expertise
• Ideas about documentation within artistic, art historical, curatorial and conservation practice
• Vanishing histories and fragile ecosystems

If you would like to learn more about the conference, please contact us at media_in_transition@tate.org.uk.

Or visit: www.tate.org.uk/whats-on/tate-modern/conference/media-transition

AMIA 2015
November 18-21, 2015
Portland, Oregon

The Association of Moving Image Archivists (AMIA) Annual Conference provides an opportunity for all of those working with moving images to meet, share information and work together. AMIA members and conference attendees come from a broad range of institutions and from all areas of the field. This makes the Conference a unique forum for anyone working with audiovisual media in their collections – libraries, archives, museums, studios, universities, broadcast or anything in between.

Organized by working moving image media professionals, the conference program focuses on urgent problems faced by units from the “lone arranger” to national collections, with attention to pressures of shifting technologies and limited resources. Sessions focus on practical and essential information on film, video, and audio issues and are geared at all levels.

In 2015, AMIA celebrates its 25th anniversary in Portland. In addition to the usual workshops, screenings and sessions, this year’s conference will feature a half day Reel Thing Technical Symposium and a full day DAS (Digital Asset Symposium) program.

Program and registration information will be available in June at www.AMIAConference.com.

Call for Papers and Posters

Historic and Modern Assemblages: Treatments of Wood-based Multimedia Artworks/Interiors in Context
8-10 April, 2016
University of Applied Sciences Potsdam, Potsdam, Germany


Set within the historic gardens and palaces of Potsdam, this conference will focus on site-specific wooden works of art of a composite nature. Included in this broad theme are the exploration of the purpose and the complex means used to create these works consisting of multiple elements and mixed materials as well as the conservation strategies designed to preserve and display them. Relevant topics include, but are not limited to, secular and religious interiors or assemblages (in situ or removed from their original setting), composite works of art, architectural elements, and historic and modern artist installations.
Call for Papers

Collecting and Conserving Performance Art
June 2016
Kunstmuseum Wolfsburg, Germany

In June 2016, the specialty group Modern Art and Cultural Heritage (MKKM) of the German Association of Conservator-Restorers (VDR) will host an international two-day symposium on the topic of collecting and conserving performance art. The symposium will be held in English and will take place at the Kunstmuseum Wolfsburg, Germany.

Over the last decade, art collections and museums around the world have seen a rapid increase in the acquisition of historic and contemporary performance art and its relics.

This emerging collection practice challenges artists and collection caretakers alike: How can the time- and site-specific experience of an artist’s live performance be expanded and transformed into an artwork with a sustainable collection life? What status do performance props and documentary materials hold within a collection, and how is their status determined? How can the artwork’s identity and integrity be preserved and experienced now and in the future? What information and components should be entering the collection to ensure the authentic reactivation of the work? How are copyright laws, artist’s rights and future interpreter’s rights accounted for in the acquisition contract? What are the vulnerabilities inherent to a performance artwork? And how are preservation risks identified, documented and responded to?

Interested authors are invited to submit an abstract. All abstracts must be submitted in English. Papers may not be presented or published elsewhere prior to the symposium. Subsequently to the symposium, qualifying papers are intended to be published in a peer-reviewed, electronic publication, edited and published by the VDR.

Please visit the webpage below for the complete Call for Papers.

Deadline for abstract submission: July 15, 2015
Send abstract to: performance_art@restauratoren.de

Submissions related to completed and in-progress treatments, newly developed treatments and preventive conservation are especially encouraged. Authors interested in presenting a paper or poster, please submit an abstract (400-600 words, 1-2 images) by August 1st, 2015 to: assemblage.potsdam.2016@gmail.com

Please direct all questions to the conference committee at performance_art@restauratoren.de.
Conference committee: Andrea Sartorius, Esther Rapoport, Eva Rieß, Joanna Phillips

Call for papers and posters still open

IIC 2016 Los Angeles Congress - Saving the Now: Crossing Boundaries to Conserve Contemporary Works
Los Angeles, CA
12-16 September 2016

The variety of materials, processes and modes of creative expression making up contemporary cultures poses increasingly complex challenges for the conservation professional. Conservators, faced with the uncertainty of judging which aspects of contemporary culture will be valued by future generations, have responded by encouraging stronger dialogue with artists, carrying out unprecedented levels of documentation and adopting an increasingly interdisciplinary approach to conservation.

How are these decisions made? And what is their impact?

Papers and posters presented at the IIC Los Angeles 2016 Congress will examine:

- How can conservators work without the benefit or comfort of a well-established hierarchy of values often afforded to colleagues preserving more traditional heritage objects?
- How can conservators balance the best practices of the varying conservation philosophies and approaches used in different disciplines, markets, countries and cultures to develop some common methods for conserving contemporary works?
- What will be lost if the major guiding principle for conservators remains the artist’s intent?
- What is the consequence of avoiding treatments due to the unavailability of established procedures?
- Has the debate on replicas already become too polarised?
- Can ethics and values adopted by the built heritage sector assist in conserving moveable heritage, and vice versa?
- Can approaches used for ethnographic collections be integrated more broadly into contemporary art practice?
- Can the different issues posed by public art, or the art market, help influence Institutional thinking?
- Can non-materialistic philosophies help to move the field forward in broader terms?
Submit your proposal for a paper or a poster now!

All abstracts must be submitted by 1st July 2015 online at https://www.iicconservation.org/congress
Only abstracts submitted online will be considered.

Questions?
International Institute for Conservation of Historic and Artistic Works
3, Birdcage Walk
London SW1H 9JJ UK
iic@iicconservation.org
Tel: +44 (0)20 7799 5500

INCCA-Asia Pacific

INCCA-Asia Pacific is a regional group of the International Network for the Conservation of Contemporary Art (INCCA). It aims to draw on existing INCCA experience to promote the specificity of Asia Pacific regional practice and also to encourage regional input into the INCCA database and projects. In particular, INCCA-Asia Pacific aims to encourage communication and mutual assistance through the sharing of knowledge and skills in the region. It aims to develop a local network to document and address common concerns, and to communicate specific regional issues and challenges of contemporary art conservation in the Asia Pacific.

Exhibition display of works by Niue artists from Faleipipi He Mafiao Niuean Handcraft Group, 2011. Photo credit: Auckland Museum.

The group was launched at the Melbourne ICOM-CC Triennial Conference in September last year. It has a website (http://www.incca-ap.org/www.incca.org) and a presence on Facebook and LinkedIn. Regular posts to subscribers include regional profiles on topics such as an upcoming Pacific Island Arts Fono in Auckland, the state of time-based media collections at the Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tamaki, a Masi Workshop at the Fiji Museum, the Indonesia Visual Art Archive (IVAA) and the Cheng Shiu University Conservation Centre in Taiwan. The group intends to collaborate on research in areas of mutual interest, but is currently focused on gaining more information about the collections and expertise in the region, as well as local events.

INCCA-Asia Pacific welcomes new subscribers.

Staff and students of Indonesia Visual Art Archive (IVAA).

Sarah Hillary and Anne Carter

Voices in Contemporary Art (VoCA)

The International Network for the Conservation of Contemporary Art - North America (INCCA-NA), a recognized leader in educational initiatives that explore the nuances and complexities of contemporary art conservation, is pleased to announce its new name: Voices in Contemporary Art (VoCA).

The New York City-based non-profit was founded in 2006 and is evolving its name to VoCA in order to better reflect the organization’s commitment to developing knowledge through dialogue between artists, art professionals, and students that will ensure the preservation of contemporary art for future generations. VoCA promotes this interdisciplinary dialogue by partnering with arts institutions around the country to realize a variety of programs, including the Artist Interview Workshops, Artist Research Project, and ongoing Talks Series. Recent programs include a joint session presenting 10 papers on Artist Engagement at the 2015 AIC Conference, a public interview between curator Robin Clark and artist Sarah Oppenheimer at the Brooklyn Museum, and our fourth round of Artist Interview Workshops, held at the Rubell Family Collection in Miami and the Brooklyn Museum in New York.

While our name is evolving, our programs will continue to focus on the collaborative, interdisciplinary dialogue that is central to the preservation of contemporary art. The name VoCA underscores the multitude of voices - artists, fabricators, curators, conservators, registrars, collectors, and gallerists – exploring these issues.
We hope you will join us in celebrating this new phase of our organization, and look forward to unveiling a great roster of programs in the coming months. For a full list of our Board and Program Committee members, or for more information about our programs, please visit our website at [www.voca.network](http://www.voca.network).

Lauren Shadford

**Artist Initiative, San Francisco Museum of Modern Art**

The San Francisco Museum of Modern Art’s Artist Initiative is a collection research grant funded by the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation. Through this initiative, SFMOMA is piloting new models of collaborative research featuring interdisciplinary teams of curators, conservators, art historians and participating artists.

The Artist Initiative comprises five robust research engagements that serve the curatorial collecting departments of the museum (Photography, Painting and Sculpture, Media Art, and Architecture + Design). Three of the projects are monographic studies (examining the work of Ellsworth Kelly, Vija Celmins, and Julia Scher in depth) while two more are thematic (exploring modes of displaying digitally-driven design objects, and developing strategies for addressing the color shift common to photographic prints made with experimental materials during the 1970s and 1980s).

At the Collections Center, a 1300 square foot Mock-Up Gallery has been built as a working model of one of the museum’s new galleries. A museum-quality exhibition gallery, it is also a venue for interviews, a space to prototype exhibition formats, and a meeting space for students, scholars and staff.

![Julia Scher with Artist Initiative team members. Photo: Aurora Crispin](image)

With the goal of contributing to the critical discourse in art history, museum management, and art conservation, each of the Artist Initiative engagements includes a colloquium that will bring experts from the field together with the featured artists. Thereafter we aim to share our findings widely through public programs and a range of publications, both digital and in print.

For more information please contact Robin Clark, Director of the Artist Initiative, [rclark@sfmoma.org](mailto:rclark@sfmoma.org).

**Conservation of Contemporary Metal Heritage**

Objects and structures made of modern metals are a significant part of our cultural heritage. Aluminum and titanium alloys, certain steel families (stainless and weathering steels), metals presenting superficial modifications produced by anodization, and electrodeposition processes have been widely used to conceive sculptures, architectural ornaments, and structures as well as many others items present nowadays in museums. In response to the demand for more information regarding the appropriate conservation of this contemporary heritage, an 18-month project has been launched at the Federal University of Rio Grande do Sul (UFRGS) in Porto Alegre, Brazil. The project was developed at PGDesign and is funded by FAPERGS (Rio Grande do Sul Research Support Foundation).

The project - Elements for the conservation of contemporary heritage: metallic materials in design, art and technology - entails a multidisciplinary approach applied to the characterization of contemporary metallic artifacts. It focuses on selected artifacts chosen among three different groups: outdoor sculptures, museums indoor collections, and scientific items. The study of these artifacts includes researching their composition and manufacturing processes as well as a detailed examination addressing their state of conservation and possible ongoing alterations.
The project relies on the collaboration between engineers, museologists, art historians and artists to attain a holistic view of the materiality questions of contemporary art and design works. By the end of the project a ‘study guide’ based on the collected data will be compiled and a workshop will be organized aiming at sharing results with the professional community.

For further information please e-mail us at virginia.costa@gmail.com or isra.savaris@gmail.com

Virginia Costa

Outdoor Sculpture Project
at the Getty Conservation Institute (GCI)

The Getty Conservation Institute recently launched a research project on Modern and Contemporary Outdoor Sculpture. The project is a component of the Modern and Contemporary Art Research Initiative and seeks to address the specific challenges associated with this type of objects. The main focus so far has been on outdoor painted sculptures, because their conservation is especially challenging: constantly exposed to uncontrolled, and often harsh, environments, their painted surfaces are often expected to appear pristine. In addition, the paint layers hold a crucial protective role for the substrate.

For these reasons, the treatment of these sculptures routinely involves major interventions that would be deemed drastic in other areas of conservation, such as full repainting of a work, often accompanied by stripping of previous paint layers. Such treatments pose many challenges when it comes to choosing the right type of paint and defining the correct surface appearance. They can also be extremely costly, which emphasizes the need to minimize the frequency of these conservation campaigns. Accurately replicating the original appearance of a painted sculpture (color, gloss and texture) is also a challenging task especially when material evidence is lacking.

Because of the complexity of the issues and of the treatments themselves - often involving industrial materials and procedures and large scale operations - the dialogue between professionals involved in the conservation of outdoor painted sculpture is essential (conservators, paint chemists, paint industry, artists’ estates, foundations, and studios, curators, and caretakers). Facilitating and catalyzing such a dialogue is one of the major goals of the project, which includes at the moment a number of activities, most of them interrelated:

Collaborating with artists’ Estates, Foundations and Studios (EFS): to develop guidelines on original paint surfaces related to their respective artists and best practices for production of EFS-approved coupons.

Documenting Original Painted Surfaces: in collaboration with experts in the field, create guidelines for the production of paint swatches for the documentation of paint surfaces (gloss, color and texture).

Developing New Paint Systems specifically formulated for the field, with improved durability and suitable working and optical properties in collaboration with the Army Research Laboratory and the paint industry, and in consultation with conservators and EFS.

Analyzing and understanding paint composition: paints used for outdoor sculpture are generally industrial paints with very different chemistry than traditional artist’s paints.
The project aims at developing a broad understanding of the main categories of industrial paints that can be used for outdoor painted sculpture, and how the paint’s composition relates to the properties and aging behaviors of these paints.

The project will also include a number of case studies to test and apply research results: this year, the GCI has been collaborating with the University Art Museum at California State University, Long Beach (CSULB) to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the 1965 Long Beach Sculpture Symposium. The collaboration includes treatment of selected sculptures from the CSULB outdoor sculpture collection, as well as the organization of the conference: FAR-SITED: Creating and Conserving Art in Public Places. Other case studies and pilot field projects will be implemented in the coming three years.

Christina Vorvi (Rosa Lowinger & Associates) and Julia Langenbacher carrying out paint excavations on Murray’s Duet (Homage to David Smith), 1965. Photo: Rachel Rivenc, reproduced courtesy Special Collections and University Archives, CSULB, International Sculpture Symposium, 1965.

The GCI recently published the proceedings of MMCA’s previous interim meeting, organized in partnership with the GCI and hosted at the Kröller-Müller Museum: Conserving Outdoor Painted Sculpture constitutes a great resource for anyone interested in the topic.

For more information, go to http://www.getty.edu/conservation/our_projects/science/outdoor/index.html

Rachel Rivenc

Research programme on heritage of the modern age

January 1st 2015 marked the start of a three-year research programme – Heritage of the Modern Age at the Cultural Heritage Agency of the Netherlands (RCE).

The programme aims to:
- Increase knowledge on the preservation of heritage of the modern age.
- Encourage the appreciation of heritage of the modern age and its responsible use.
- Develop new (digital) presentation methods that promote access to heritage of the modern age.

The modern age, for our purposes, is considered to be the period from the Industrial Revolution throughout the 20th century. The value of relatively young heritage is often not yet known, making it vulnerable to neglect. In addition, new materials and techniques (especially experimental applications) used in this period can contribute to the premature decay of objects because manufactured products often have shorter life cycles than traditional ones. Society has changed rapidly, and as a consequence, the approach to heritage conservation has changed quickly as well. The relationship between heritage, its makers, and its users is different because, among other reasons, artists, architects, designers, residents, and users are often available as living sources of information. These factors affect the attribution of value, conservation, and accessibility of heritage of the modern age, as shown by the questions posed to the RCE. Concrete cases and issues from practice will be dealt with in ten projects that have been developed with RCE stakeholders; the owners and managers of moveable and immovable heritage including museums, local governments, and universities. Some projects focus on modern materials such as new building materials, twentieth century paints, and plastics while other projects focus more on the use, accessibility and presentation of heritage, and the use of digital resources. Finally, value attribution is the focus of projects dealing with our youngest heritage such as buildings and the built environment, interior design, and art post-1965.

Contact:
Tatj Scholte, programme manager, t.scholte@cultureelerfgoed.nl
Karen te Brake-Baldock, programme secretary, k.te.brake@cultureelerfgoed.nl
Moholy-Nagy / Construction of Space and Light

Conservators from the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum (SRGM), New York, and scientists from the Northwestern University/Art Institute of Chicago Center for Scientific Study in the Arts (NU-ACCESS) have been collaborating on an in-depth investigation of the materials and techniques employed by artist László Moholy-Nagy (1895-1946), a pivotal figure of the Bauhaus movement and a pioneer of modern art.

The outcomes of this research will be used in the preparation of the 2016 upcoming exhibition László Moholy-Nagy: Vision in Motion, co-organized by the Guggenheim Museum, the Art Institute of Chicago, and the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, which explores the wide variety of media and unconventional materials used by the artist to “paint with light”. A key aspect of our interdisciplinary study, Moholy-Nagy/Construction of Space and Light, is to explore how Moholy-Nagy experimented with texture, transparency and reflectivity in newly developed industrial materials to further his lifelong artistic pursuits.

In October 2014, the Guggenheim Museum Conservation Department hosted a two-day symposium on Moholy-Nagy to discuss the extensive research findings. The next meeting of the group will be held in spring 2015 at the Art Institute of Chicago to discuss the most recent progress. The team is also working toward a joint technical contribution to the exhibition catalogue as well as a dedicated special issue of a journal.

Johanna Salvant and the Moholy-Nagy / Construction of Space and Light team

Acknowledgements: This collaborative initiative (2013-2015) is part of the NU-ACCESS broad portfolio of activities, which is made possible by generous support of the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation as well as supplemental support provided by the Materials Research Center, the Office of the Vice President for Research, the McCormick School of Engineering and Applied Science and the Department of Materials Science and Engineering at Northwestern University.

New Research Centre on Arts and Heritage in Maastricht

The 22nd and 23rd of March 2015 marked the Kick-Off conference and launch of a new research centre: the Maastricht Centre for Arts and Culture, Conservation and Heritage (MACCH). MACCH is an initiative of a group of researchers from the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, Faculty of Law, Faculty of Humanities and Sciences, School of Business of Maastricht University, as well as the Sociaal Historisch Centrum voor Limburg (SHCL) and the Stichting Restauratie Atelier Limburg (SRAL).

The new transdisciplinary centre brings together a unique combination of legal, historical, philosophical, economic and practical expertise in response to the demands of the increasingly multi-layered and complex challenges facing the fields of arts and heritage today. To meet these challenges MACCH initiates collaborative research projects across the traditional boundaries separating academic and professional practice and institutions.


Right: Detail of X-Ray Fluorescence (XRF) analysis. Photo: M. Walton.

The Guggenheim holdings of Moholy-Nagy (1921-1945) consist of a representative diversity of the artist’s work, ranging from traditional paintings on canvas to painted artworks on plastic and metallic substrates. Scientific analysis of the collection, combined with archival research, is shedding new light on Moholy-Nagy’s artistic processes and innovative materials choices. Most notably, the support material of two early paintings on plastic (T1, 1926 and Tp 2, 1930), historically referred to as either Bakelite or Troilitan (both phenol-formaldehydes), was characterized in detail using a complement of analytical techniques and determined to be a pigmented cellulose nitrate.

This finding has significant implications for long-term preservation and treatment possibilities. The results from some of these analyses were recently presented in the symposium Plastics Heritage in Berlin in October 2014 and will be published in the next issue of the electronic journal e-plastory. Julie Barten also presented the project at the American Institute for Conservation of Historic & Artistic Works (AIC)’s 43rd Annual Meeting in May 2015.
Arts, natural and cultural heritage are studied and taught in relation to social-cultural and political transformations with a focus on the changing role of experts and expert knowledge, public participation, and technological mediation. Research topics include, for example: conservation of modern and contemporary art, re-use of industrial heritage, pillage and looting in the past and in the present and the protection of cultural property in times of war and peace, art and heritage disputes, contested heritage and restitution policies, trust and transparency in art markets.

Convened towards the end of the TEFAF art fair, the Kick-Off conference highlighted the transdisciplinary research conducted by MACCH. By bringing together a wide variety of scholars and art and heritage professionals, this two-day international conference offered a rich range of perspectives on the changing roles of experts in arts and heritage worlds.

With a full house and lively discussions, the conference proved to be a successful Kick-Off of the new centre and a fruitful basis for the development of new liaisons and ventures for collaborative research.

For more information, please visit our website: www.maastrichtuniversity.nl/macch or contact Dr. Vivian van Saaze Vivian.vansaaze@maastrichtuniversity.nl.

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**The perfect paint in Modern Art Conservation:**
**A comparative study of 21st century vinyl emulsions**

Polyvinyl acetate emulsion-based paints have been used by Portuguese artists since the early 1960s. Their long-term stability is currently being investigated as part of a PhD project with the Departamento de Conservação e Restauro, Faculdade de Ciências e Tecnologia-Universidade Nova de Lisboa.

Julião Sarmento (b. 1948) is one of the most prominent Portuguese modern and contemporary artists who made wide use of several vinyl paints for more than 35 years. His monochromatic works, mainly black figures on white textured backgrounds, are of particular concern due to the yellowing of the white areas. This white paint is homemade with Cenógrafo dry pigment (lithopone plus calcium carbonate) and Vulcâno V7 (a homo-polymer emulsion) bought from Favrel Lisbonense, a Portuguese fine arts materials company.

Some of the vinyl paints used by Sarmento were studied with mock-ups subjected to natural and artificially aging. In parallel, an assessment of the condition of selected paintings was carried out. Interviews with the artist and a video recording of the artist at work were included in the research in order to document his views on his materials and techniques and on the aging of his works.

With the exception of the works from the 90s, the studied paintings are in good condition. Aged mock-ups showed that a more recent binder, a combination polyvinyl acetate, polyvinyl chloride, and polyethylene terpolymer, is less stable when compared to the homo-polymer one. Some pigments appear to have a stabilizing effect on the binder (rutile titanium dioxide and a carbon based black) contrary to the effect of the Cenógrafo in the white mixture. Natural aging indicates that the yellowing of the 90s white paint is irreversible and ongoing.


Preliminary studies on the effects of surface cleaning were also performed. Immersion/cleaning tests showed that Sarmento’s vinyl paints can be sensitive to water and organic solvents with removal/diffusion of additives. Further research is needed on this topic.

Ana Isabel Pereira

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**Job Opening**

**Project Specialist at the Getty Conservation Institute**

The Getty Conservation Institute will be seeking a paintings or objects conservator with experience in the conservation of modern and contemporary art, an interest in scientific research and its application to conservation practice, and a keen interest in education to fill the position of Project Specialist.

The Project Specialist will be primarily responsible for implementing the series of courses, workshops and didactic resources associated with the GCI’s Research into Practice workshop series; these workshops seek to enhance the connection between scientific advances and their application in the field through the timely transfer of research results and analytical processes from the laboratory to the practicing professional.

For more detail, see https://jobs-getty.icims.com/jobs/2581/gci-project-specialist/job

Applications will be accepted from May 25 - July 3, 2015 at https://jobs-getty.icims.com/
Conserving Outdoor Painted Sculpture

Proceedings from the interim meeting of the MMCA Working Group of ICOM-CC, Kröller-Müller Museum, Otterlo, the Netherlands, June 4-5, 2013

Edited by Lydia Beerkens and Tom Learner

This volume is a collection of seventeen papers presented at the June 2013 symposium held at the Kröller-Müller Museum. The papers include case studies of works from Europe, North America and Asia, and include works by Alexander Calder, Christo, Niki de Saint Phalle, Jean Dubuffet, John Hoskin, Roy Lichtenstein, Claes Oldenburg, Nam June Paik, Shinkichi Tajiri, and Franz West. Also featured are papers on issues facing conservators of outdoor painted sculpture — ethical/philosophical, technical/material, legal, management, and information exchange — and possible responses to those; and technical issues, such as how paints or coatings can be developed or tailored to conservators’ or artists’ needs.

This symposium was the interim meeting of the Modern Materials and Contemporary Art working group of ICOM-CC, in collaboration with the Kröller-Müller Museum, the Getty Conservation Institute, and INCCA.

Issues in Contemporary Oil Paint

K.J. van den Berg, A. Burnstock, M. de Keijzer, J. Krueger, T. Learner, A. de Tagle, G. Heydenreich (Eds.)

This volume represents 27 peer-reviewed papers presented at the Issues in Contemporary Oil Paint symposium held in March, 2013. The book will help conservators and curators recognise problems and interpret visual changes on paintings, which in turn give a more solid basis for decisions on the possible treatment. The subject matter of the papers ranges from developments of paint technology, working methods of individual artists, through characterisation of paints and paint surfaces, paint degradation vs. long time stability, to observations of issues in collections, cleaning and other treatment issues as well as new conservation approaches.

Available as hardcover and eBook at: springer.com/shop

Current Technical Challenges in the Conservation of Paintings

Angelina Barros D’Sa, Lizzie Bone, Rhiannon Claricoates, Helen Dowding (eds)

As artists have increasingly utilised modern materials and techniques, it has presented the conservator with a host of new and complex problems that need to be addressed. As such, this is a subject of great interest to conservators, many of whom had expressed an interest in an event that could supplement their existing knowledge in this field. In response to this, the Institute of Conservation’s Paintings Group decided that this would be an appropriate theme for a conference that could provide a platform for contributors to disseminate their research on a number of topics relating to the conservation of contemporary art works. In addition, a call was put out for contributors who might be developing new and innovative techniques and materials to address conservation problems, or who might be utilising well-known materials that are already in the conservator’s toolkit in a new capacity.

Download the free GCI PDF Publication: http://www.getty.edu/conservation/publications_resources/pdf_publications/conserv_outdoor_painted.html

A print-on-demand edition can also be purchased through Lulu.com.
For Tomorrow: Investigating New Materials in the Works of Alexandru Rădvan

Ruxandra Demetrecescu, Diana Dochia, Roxana Rădvan (eds)

For Tomorrow: Investigating the new materials in the works of Alexandru Rădvan came into being from very extensive research into the work of Alexandru Rădvan over the last decades and explores his works from critical and art historical points of view. This book also serves as a call to us to make records of the materials used by contemporary artists in their artistic processes and also to interest contemporary artists in the methods of preventive conservation of their artistic works.

Available at: http://www.archetype.co.uk/publication-details.php?id=207

Conservation Issues in Modern and Contemporary Murals

Editor(s): Mercedes Sánchez Pons, Will Shank, Laura Fuster López

This volume represents a forum for conservators, conservation scientists, artists and heritage managers. It includes the voices of many of the different partners involved in the complex task of preserving artworks:

• The vital experience of artists who create murals and are sometimes asked to treat their creations;
• Theoretical reflections on how to deal methodologically with conservation;
• Scientific studies on the identification of constituent materials and/or on the development of procedures for their preservation;
• The opinion of cultural managers;
• The specific experiences of conservators.

All of the above must have a voice in the difficult task of preserving such a challenging and changing heritage.


The papers in this volume were presented at the Paintings Group’s conference Modern Conservation: What’s New? held at The Wallace Collection in London in October 2014. It covered a variety of topics including: consolidants and flake laying; the possible use of sports injury tape as a temporary means of support during structural conservation treatments; rigid inserts to stretchers to reduce vibrations; auxiliary supports for modern paintings; the problem of softening and weeping paints in modern works of art and methods of treatment; wet surface cleaning treatments for contemporary paintings; and ethical considerations when dealing with conceptual artists’ wishes.

To order, visit: http://www.archetype.co.uk/publication-details.php?id=226

Alexandru Rădvan, a man with astounding creative energies, is one of the most prominent contemporary artists in Romania and his art not only fits into the art historical tradition, but itself reinterprets the old myths and mythologies.
Symposium FAIL BETTER – videos now online

In December 2013 seventy international conservators and curators met for the symposium FAIL BETTER at the Hamburger Kunsthalle to continue discussions about conservation practice and decision making in Modern and Contemporary Art. The symposium has been successfully recorded and the video material is now online.

Please find the video album on vimeo: https://vimeo.com/album/2917134

Or open the programme with all 14 video links (PDF). Please click on each title to view the respective video: http://www.restauratoren.de/fileadmin/red/FG_Moderne_Kunst/FAIL_BETTER_programme_with_video_links.pdf

Case Study

The Conservation of Bagni Misteriosi by Giorgio de Chirico at La Triennale, Milan

Giorgio de Chirico made Bagni Misteriosi (Mysterious Baths) for the 15th Milan Triennial (20 September – 20 November 1973) as part of the Contatto Arte / Città project. On that occasion, Giulio Macchi, a film director and brilliant cultural organiser, invited a group of artists to create a number of works that would then be produced by large industrial companies. These included de Chirico, Alberto Burri with Teatro continuo. Struttura all’aperto in painted steel and concrete (Italsider – Finsider – Italcementi), Arman with Accumulazione musicale e seduta. Compressione all’aperto in concrete and metal (Fiat Engineering), Umberto Bignardi with Implicor, Tunnel visivo e sonoro (Olivetti Kodak), and Sebastian Matta with Autopocalipse. Architettura ad alta velocità. With the exception of those by de Chirico, Burri and Arman, all the works were de-installed by the artists at the end of the Triennale.

The Mysterious Bathers is a masterpiece of planning and design. It re-evaluated some of the themes de Chirico had explored in the 1930s with modern criteria and a wealth of pop overtones. It was to be a polychrome monument that, in the artist’s vision, was on the one hand a return to his painting inventions and, on the other, a fusion of the legacy of classical statuary (the fact that statues from Antiquity were actually coloured was being increasingly documented in those years) with contemporary trends in British and American Pop sculpture.

De Chirico created a number of small signed maquettes (which still exist) and entrusted the actual production of the work to Margraf Industria Marmi Vicentini and Swimming Pool International. The project had ups and downs, due to uncertainties about the desired outcome (which led to many changes during construction) and was not fully completed because of abundant rain.

The unveiling of Bagni Misteriosi (Mysterious Baths) by de Chirico in 1973.

The work is made of Vicenza marble and concrete, painted with acrylic colours. The Mysterious Bathers was made for one particular event, the Triennial, rather than with longevity in mind: within a few years of completion, the work started deteriorating.

A first structural intervention was carried out in the late 1980s, and a second one took place in 2009, on both the structure and the paint layers. During the second intervention, the two figures of bathers and the fish were replaced with replicas (the originals are now in the Museo del Novecento in Milan) and all the surfaces that had lost their original colours were repainted.

De Chirico’s fountain was treated once again in 2015 for two exhibition openings. Even though only a few years had passed since the previous intervention, the artefact was once again in a terrible state. The colours applied during the 2009 intervention had almost entirely flaked off and a thick layer of atmospheric particulate had deposited on the surface and appeared to be embedded into the protective layer. Widespread biological attacks (mosses, algae and lichens) at an advanced stage were also detected, giving the surfaces a brownish green colour.

Detail of the pool after the second restoration in 2009.

The aesthetic criteria and the methodologies for the treatment were decided in collaboration with Paolo Baldacci - Archivio dell’Arte Metafisica of Milan and with the Department of Environmental Sciences of the University of Venice.
Examination of the original models, backed up by colorimetric analyses, photos of the monument being put into place in 1973, and comparison of these data with the aesthetic and chromatic solutions adopted by the artist in paintings of similar subjects (made in 1934-1938 and 1968-1973), made it possible to establish the result that was to be achieved for the painted surface.

It was also decided to restore the circulation of water in the pool, both because this was the original idea, even though it had stopped working for a while due to technical problems, and because it would help give a greater sense of vitality to the monument.

Prior to the treatment, an in-depth diagnostic survey was carried out to detect not only residue of the original colours, but also to identify the materials used in previous restoration work and the different types of deterioration on the surfaces.

Considering that the loss of the original colours was to a great extent due to the use of acrylic paint (poorly compatible with marble and concrete, and with poor resistance outdoors), with the expertise of Prof. Mauro Matteini, it was decided to carry out tests to establish which paints would be most compatible with the stone. Inorganic colours were tested, but the results were not entirely satisfactory from an aesthetic point of view. The vivid red and intense blue of the swan, the ball and the fish, which were applied in 1974 with synthetic organic colours, could not be achieved using inorganic colours, containing exclusively mineral pigments.

In order to protect the unpainted Vicenza stone (the pool and the two jetties), it was decided to remove the deteriorated layer of organic protection which had been applied during the previous restoration, and to carry out passivation treatment with ammonium oxalate. Since its hydrophilic characteristics are entirely similar to those of the stone supports, the patina of calcium oxalate that subsequently forms on the surface does not alter its level of permeability and, unlike in the case of polymer-based treatments, fatty aerosols are unlikely to be absorbed into the surface.

This purely inorganic treatment will ensure better conservation of the unpainted parts of the monument and will avoid the need for periodic replacement of a polymer-based protective layer.

Barbara Ferriani and Silvana Annicchiarico
(Triennale Design Museum, Milan)

In Conversation with Susan Lake

Dr. Susan Lake is Conservator Emeritus at the Hirshhorn Museum, Smithsonian Institution, and former Director of Collections and Chief Conservator at the Hirshhorn.

Rachel Rivenc (RR): Hi Susan - can you introduce yourself and tell us about your work at the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden (HMSG)?

Susan Lake (SL): My name is Susan Lake. Prior to retiring in March 2015, I was Director of Collections/Chief Conservator at the Hirshhorn Museum since 2005. In that position, I supervised the conservation lab, the registrar’s office, the photography studio, and the Hirshhorn Archive.

Andrea Sartorius (AS): What was your initial background, and how did you get interested in conservation of contemporary art?

SL: My route into the conservation field was a circuitous one, one that reflects how the profession has since changed. After receiving a Master’s in Art from the University of California, Davis, I worked briefly as a technician in the Conservation Lab of the U.C. Davis Art Department prior to accepting a position as Assistant to the Director at the Crocker Art Museum, Sacramento.

My experience in the Davis lab, supervised by Jerry Hoepfner, was formative. As a technician, I learned to stretch canvases, prepare wax-resin adhesive, remove linings, etc.; but, what set that lab apart was the extent to which it was frequented by artists and art students curious about conservation in general, the range of art materials we had available to us, and the objects we were working on—everything from American Indian Artifacts, to 19th century portraits, to works by contemporary artists. Once I began working at the Crocker, I quickly realized I much preferred the dynamic world of contemporary art to researching and lecturing about art by long-dead artists.
While planning to apply to one of the three U.S. conservation programs on the east coast, I took a job at the newly opened Hirshhorn Museum, again, as a technician. After working at the Hirshhorn for about two years - and not having applied yet to any of the training programs - I pursued a Mellon Fellowship at the Walters Art Gallery in the paintings conservation lab and began working under the supervision of Melanie Gifford. Working with Melanie was a revelation for she introduced me to what since has become known as technical art history using microscopy and a range of other instrumental methods, most of them still in their infancy.

Once my Fellowship was completed, I returned to the Hirshhorn and was offered a position as a paintings conservator.

Perhaps a bit self-conscious that I did not have the degree in art conservation that my colleagues had, but mostly frustrated by the dearth of knowledge available about the materials that were present in the artworks we were treating, I entered the newly formed Ph. D. Art Conservation Research Program at the University of Delaware / Winterthur. After completing the requisite coursework, I eventually completed my dissertation on the painting methods and materials of Willem de Kooning.

Susan Lake

RR: I understand you retired just a few days ago – congratulations! At the HMMSG, you were Director of Collections and Chief Conservator. It is still quite exceptional to have conservators in top management positions in museums. How did your job title evolve?

SL: When Olga Viso became Director of the Hirshhorn Museum in 2005, she prioritized collection care and as a means to that end, created the Collection Care and Management Department made up of the Museum conservators, registrars, and photographers. I was Chief Conservator at that time and she asked me if I would head the newly formed department while still remaining head of the conservation lab.

AS: What is the impact of having conservators and registrars work under the same supervision, and is it important to have a conservator at the helm? Do you think it could and should become a trend in the future?

SL: I feel that the creation of the Collection Care and Management Department at the Hirshhorn has been a positive move. On-site collection spaces were jampacked, in large part, due to the fact that the number of permanent collection objects had doubled in number since the Museum opened in 1974 as the square footage of collection storage spaces had decreased. Moreover, prior to the formation of the department, conservators and registrars seldom worked together and the state of the collection reflected that situation. Registrars, through necessity, were focusing almost all their efforts on a busy exhibition schedule and had little time to attend to the state of the collection. While conservators worked mostly on collection objects, they had little or no oversight over what is now known as preventative conservation: environmental condition in galleries and storage, general storage conditions, object housing, light levels, duration of the time objects were on view or on loan, etc.

Once the department was formed, the entire collection was inventoried by the registrars, rated as to significance by curators, and condition reviewed by conservators. As a result of those surveys, 50% of the painting and sculpture collection was moved off-site to a newly renovated Smithsonian facility, freeing up valuable on-site space.

When registrars and conservators are part of the same department, I do believe that it is important to have a conservator at the helm, but I acknowledge that I am biased on this point.

RR: What were the main challenges of your position, and what achievements are you the most proud of?

SL: It was an almost impossible challenge to be simultaneously head of the department and supervise the conservation lab. Over the 10 year period that I held this dual position, I found myself spending less and less time in the lab and, through necessity, more time attending to the administrative functions required of the job, including being a member of Senior Staff.

When I announced my retirement, I recommended that the position be separated into two functions and my suggestion was taken. The Hirshhorn’s new Director of Collections now directly supervises the Sr. Conservator, Sr. Registrar, and Sr. Photography all who, in turn, supervise the members of their respective staff.

Achievements of which I am most proud: Greatly improving the state of the collection; fostering an environment in the conservation lab that prioritized conservation of contemporary art and discussions with artists about the preservation of their works in the collection, and hiring conservators who are implementing these programs;
my ongoing study of modern artist’s materials, including publications on the art materials used by Willem de Kooning; planning for and receiving funding for a new conservation lab to be located on the 4th floor of the Museum, scheduled to open in 2016.

AS: You have been many years in this profession – can you reflect on the changes and developments you’ve seen in the conservation of contemporary art?

SL: When I began working as a conservator, contemporary art for the most part could still be neatly classified as painting, sculpture, and works on paper, including photography. That situation has greatly changed with the acquisition of time-based media and installation-based works of art.


RR: Can you talk a little bit about the collection and acquisition policy at the HMSG? How does it impact the conservation department?

SL: As a rule, when a curator proposes a work of art for acquisition, he/she notifies the appropriate conservator and whenever possible the work is examined prior to acquisition. An acquisition proposal form posted on the Museum’s shared drive allows conservators, registrars, and exhibition installers to comment on the condition, storage options, and installation challenges of the proposed object. This system works fairly well for more conventional art media, but it often breaks down when the work is a complex installation and/or includes time-based media. This, in large part, is because there often is insufficient time to do the necessary research prior to the proposed acquisition date and/or because insufficient or inaccurate information is supplied by the artist, donor, or gallerist.

AS: Do you do a lot of preservation of time-based media at the HMSG? How does this fairly recent field shift the role of conservators in contemporary art collections and museums?

SL: Yes. The preservation of these complex works is the shared responsibility of the Museum’s New Media Committee which includes conservators, curators, registrars, and exhibits staff. Six months ago, the museum hired a second objects conservator whose major responsibility is documenting and proposing preservation strategies for the almost 100 time-based media works in the collection.

RR: What is your vision of the role of conservators in contemporary art collections in the future?

SL: I see a primary role of conservators of contemporary art as mentors and trainers to the future generation of conservators who choose to become stewards of the art of our time. Since none of the conservation programs currently provide in-depth training in this field, it has become the responsibility of those few museums in the U.S. which collect contemporary art to provide that training through 3rd year internships and fellowships.

AS: Do you have plans for your retirement?

SL: As Conserver Emeritus at the Hirshhorn Museum, I plan to continue my research on modern and contemporary artists’ materials. I currently am studying the paintings of Robert Irwin for an upcoming exhibition at the Museum and am continuing to research the painting materials used by Clyfford Still.

Mirta Pavić is head of the Conservation Department at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Zagreb (MSU- Muzej Suvremene Umjetnosti Zagreb), Croatia.

Rachel Rivenc (RR): Hi Mirta, can you introduce yourself and the Museum of Contemporary Art (MSU) in Zagreb?

Mirta Pavić (MP): I’ve been working at the MSU for 14 years now. Since I came to the Museum two years after the conservation department was founded, I participated in developing and equipping the department that has grown from a service facility into a contemporary conservation studio.

The MSU is an institution with a rich 53-year history, and one of the most significant changes was the move to a new building that opened in 2009. I was part of the team that prepared and moved the entire collection to the new building. It was a huge step because Zagreb finally got a place where contemporary art can be presented and seen by a wider public – very exciting! Before that we were limited to temporary exhibitions in several small spaces located throughout the city. From its beginnings the MSU has had a prominent role in the region, ever since the late 1950s and early 1960s, when for example the international New Tendencies movement started at the museum. Numerous works from those exhibitions now belong to our collection. But the new building really made the museum more visible to a wider audience.
Julia Langenbacher (JL): What are your main activities and responsibilities as the head of the conservation department?

MP: I became head of the department one and a half years ago in 2013 and I have to admit this has not made my life any easier! It is a great honour and a great responsibility as well. The department, which is severely understaffed, has to take care of 14 collections, supervise all the loans, and prepare and install the temporary exhibitions; in addition to maintaining the permanent collection, monitoring potential changes and treating the objects requiring attention.

My role is to oversee these activities and collaborate with all the museum departments. Together with my colleagues curators I am involved in many decisions concerning exhibition preparation and collection maintenance. We probably all know it, but every day I am reminded that a conservator’s role in a museum of contemporary art has little to do with quietly working in the studio. My work includes a lot of communication: with colleagues, artists and their families. It is certainly varied and interesting, just like contemporary art itself.

Croatia is a small country, but there is a need for more contemporary art conservators. However, many students who graduate from university cannot find an employment and it is hard to organize their training within institutional framework – the current economic situation is not helping.

JL: Can you also speak a little bit about the history of the MSU - when was it created, what is the collection like and the acquisition policy?

MP: The MSU was founded in 1954 by the National Council of the City of Zagreb with a mission to collect, research, document, and exhibit modern and contemporary art. The collection comprises around 6,000 works by artists from Croatia and abroad, all created after 1950. Until 2009 the museum was situated in the Count Kulmer’s baroque palace in Zagreb’s old town where its permanent collection was never exhibited in its entirety, due to the lack of space. We were able to show our collection for the first time after moving to the new located in New Zagreb (Novi Zagreb), where its presence visibly contributes to the life of the local community.

I am part of the MSU Expert Council, which decides on acquisitions and donations offered to the museum. It is funded mostly by its founder, the City of Zagreb, and to a smaller extent by the Ministry of Culture as well as by our own income. The Expert Council discusses and decides on the best choices among the proposed acquisitions within the allocated budget - which is rather modest, especially now during the recession.

Another one of MSU’s projects is the collaboration with the Hrvatski Telekom (T-com) Corporation to present the annual award for contemporary Croatian art. T-com provides the funds for the exhibition and acquisition of the three highest ranking works. They are chosen by the MSU Expert Committee and included in the collection.

RR: How was the museum impacted by the war, and is it still felt today?

MP: At the time I was not working in the museum yet, I was still studying. I came to the museum six years after the war was over. But according to what my colleagues remember from the period, it was a difficult time, dangerous for those working in the museum as well as for the collection itself. As the old museum building was in the ancient part of the town, in immediate proximity to the seat of the Croatian government that was a major target of the attacks, the collection was exposed to great risk. Luckily, nothing fatal happened to the staff, or to the art! But there was a real psychological stress. The employees were on call in turns, constantly, and had a precise plan for evacuating artworks by priority. It has been 20 years since the war and I think that the consequences of these events are no longer felt in our field.

JL: Does the MSU focus mostly on modern and contemporary Croatian art? Do you often work with Croatian artists?

RR: Can you tell us about your background: How did you get involved in the conservation of contemporary art?

MP: After I graduated from university, I was hired by the Croatian Conservation Institute and I worked there for almost three years. It was a great experience, but I soon realised that I’m interested in contemporary art and in all the challenges and unpredictability modern materials can offer. So I continued my education and completed a specialization course on the conservation of contemporary art in Italy, where my teachers were Vishwa Mehra and Paolo Cremonesi, among others. Later I got a master’s degree on contemporary art conservation at the University of Ljubljana in Slovenia. In the meantime I was fortunate to get the job at the MSU because at the time there were no conservators specialized in contemporary art in Croatia.
MP: Not really, but there is a slightly greater number of works by Croatian artists simply because they are more readily available. Through a residency program that the MSU implemented recently, we collect works from foreign artists who donate their piece for the collection after their stay and work in the MSU is finished.

As the museum exhibits a lot of contemporary Croatian art, our department also works and consults with these artists frequently. A long time ago I decided to set up a database of our interviews, but my days are too busy - I have still not managed to set it up. I was lucky to have the chance to meet many famous Croatian artists, such as Julije Knifer, Vjenceslav Richter or Ivan Picelj, when they were still among us.

MP: Right now the Conservation Department of the Arts Academy in the city of Split is the only one in Croatia that offers a course on conservation of modern and contemporary art - the course that I teach. Conservation programs are still mostly oriented towards traditional materials. But the need for such a program in the other conservation trainings is obvious.

I was invited to lecture at the Conservation Department of the Academy of Fine Arts in Zagreb and at the Dubrovnik Academy as well, but it is very hard to fit all of that in with my regular work at the museum.

We have few conservators with experience working on modern materials, so it is hard finding lecturers for the three universities with conservation departments in Croatia. The Conservation Department of the Slovenian Arts Academy solved this problem by inviting guest teachers from different European countries.

In order to offer students access to contemporary objects, it is a policy of our department to loan works to those who are interested in doing their final thesis in contemporary art. Practical work is performed under supervision of their mentor and my own supervision. In addition, I make myself available to them for all advice and practical help they might need.

At the moment we don’t offer internships or fellowships, but in Croatia there is a state program in place for training students who are not offered employment right after graduation. In the conservation field this training takes two years. At the moment we have a trainee, Maja Vurušić, in the department, who came to the museum through this program. That is a good way to gain experience and understanding of what modern and contemporary art conservation is all about.

RR: How is the situation in general for conservators of contemporary art in Southeast Europe? What are the main needs and challenges?

MP: In my opinion significant changes took place in the past ten years. The community is more tightly knit and more up to date with who is doing what. We communicate better. There are still issues, mostly in terms of funding for equipment and materials as well as to participate in conferences and workshops. But these issues aren’t as pressing as they used to be – at least, more reference works are available and much information can be accessed online. When we organized a workshop on Prof. Wolbers’ cleaning methods at the MSU, the interest was overwhelming, with applications pouring in from the entire region. So people do want to keep up with the field and are eager to exchange information.

But I still get the impression that conservation is not valued enough in some Croatian museums. In my experience it requires much more effort to secure funds for a conservation project than it does for an exhibition, for example. But I think that this is changing because of the inherently interdisciplinary nature of contemporary art museums. The public is very interested in our work because it represents something tangible with a clearly visible result. There is a great potential for education through presentation of conservation activities.

Museum of Contemporary Art in Zagreb (MSU- Muzej Suvremene Umjetnosti Zagreb).

RR: Can you paint a broad picture of the contemporary art museum and gallery scene in Southeastern Europe?

MP: The MSU has a very dynamic exhibition program and works with similar institutions and museums in the region on various projects. Some of these include Universalmuseum Joanneum in Graz, Moderna galerija in Ljubljana, Ludwig Museum in Budapest, museums in Bosnia and Herzegovina and many others. It is a very active scene, our exhibitions often travel outside Croatia, and we get many requests for lending artworks from our collection to institutions worldwide.

In Croatia there are three strong centers of modern and contemporary art. Besides our museum, there are the Museum of Fine Arts (Galerija umjetnina) in Split and the Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art in Rijeka. Our conservation department has close connections with colleagues working in those institutions. We collaborate on projects and consult each other if necessary, so that we have actually become friends through work. There are also a few commercial galleries but I believe it is hard to make a living with a commercial gallery in Croatia right now.

JL: You are also teaching courses at the Arts Academy of the University of Split in Croatia. Is there training offered specifically on the conservation of contemporary art or modern materials in Croatia?
One challenge I still experience is that I feel that conservators are sometimes expected to be miracle workers – and we cannot! Maybe we should slowly start to change our attitudes and accept that certain things as impossible. Not only that, museologically speaking, it is not even necessary to try to make everything appear new. I appreciated Michelle Barger’s (SFMoMA) conclusion to her talk at the Fail Better conference in Hamburg in 2013: “I look forward to the day when we will appreciate degradation of plastic as we appreciate patina today.”

![Exhibition Julije Knifer: Uncompromising at the MSU in 2014.](image)

**JL:** One of your recent project was the installation of the Julije Knifer’s exhibition at the MSU. Can you describe his work and the main conservation challenges it presents? Where can we learn more about it?

**MP:** Knifer is one of the greatest Croatian artists of the second half of the 20th century. He is renowned for his unceasing repetition of the meander motif. Knifer’s paintings are extremely sensitive and fragile, but must appear aesthetically neat. Some of them had been disfigured by previous interventions. So preparing the paintings for the exhibition was very challenging but rewarding. I am proud of the interest that the exhibition attracted among visitors – including the conservation aspect.

We produced a movie on the treatment of some of Knifer’s paintings which really contributed to provide visitors with a new insight into Knifer’s work and significance. The Culture Program Department of the Croatian Radiotelevision requested this movie for a slot on this public broadcaster’s program and we are hoping to have it online soon. For me it is very important to include conservation in the museum education programs.

### Membership of ICOM-CC and MMCA

**How to join:**

For those of you who are already ICOM-CC members but without an ICOM-CC web account, all you need to do is request an on-line account at [www.icom-cc.org](http://www.icom-cc.org) and then choose *Modern Materials and Contemporary Art* as one of your working groups. You can also send an email to Joan Reifsnyder (secretariat@icom-cc.org) and request log-in details.

If you already have an ICOM-CC web account, then just go to the *Modern Materials and Contemporary Art Working Group* page and click on the “Join This Working Groups” button. It is very easy and you can join as many working groups as you wish!

Joining is slightly long-winded – but absolutely worth it! Some of the benefits of joining are:

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- Reduced registration fees at ICOM-CC Triennial Conferences and Working Group Interim Meetings (where applicable)
- Priority consideration for paper/poster acceptance at the ICOM-CC Triennial Conferences
- The possibility to join any working groups you like and receive regular updates, news and announcements.

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If you experience any problem joining, please contact me or Joan Reifsnyder at secretariat@icom-cc.org.