The Shock of the New: Modern Materials, Media and Methods
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Abstract

Title:
A lesson in software-based art: Conserving Philip Brophy's *The Body Malleable* (2004-)

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Abstract :
Philip Brophy's *The Body Malleable* (2004-) was commissioned by the Australian Centre for the Moving Image (ACMI), but displayed only once before being placed into storage. In 2016, it became a case study for students at the University of Melbourne. The aim of this presentation is twofold. Firstly, examination of the challenges for ACMI arising from those intervening twelve years, as indicative of legacy software-based works found in collections. Secondly, description of our intellectual pathway as emerging conservators grappling with such works. Post-acquisition documentation of an interactive installation needs more than a focus on the storage and maintenance of its customised ('bespoke') components. With a complex array of interactive scripts, proprietary systems, and ephemeral materials, any conservation strategy must be grounded in obvious and concealed work-defining properties. Despite ACMI's acquisition remaining in storage, another copy has been (re-)installed several times. Any changes to its variable media across this exhibition history have not yet been captured or reported. We consider whether an investigation of the artwork's display history and modification since 2004 can bound its inherent complexities, and whether our documentation practices can ground a conservation strategy that generates consistent future iterations.

Brief Biography of the Authors:
Shannon Klaassen is currently completing her Masters of Cultural Materials Conservation at the University of Melbourne. Shannon has an avid interest in the digital futures of cultural heritage, and in 2016 was chosen to participate in a Copland Foundation Grant digitisation project at the Warlayirti Artists Aboriginal Corporation in Balgo, WA.

Karen Wilcox is a Conservation Assistant at the Australian War Memorial. She recently graduated with a Masters in Cultural Materials Conservation from the University of Melbourne in the objects stream, and has particular interest in contemporary social history and electronic technologies.

Robert teaches in the Grimwade centre program at the University of Melbourne. He works with graduate students on performance and time based art. He is currently researching ceremonial documentation in the School of Archaeology and Anthropology with Australia National University.

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