



AUSTRALIAN INSTITUTE FOR THE CONSERVATION OF CULTURAL MATERIAL INC.

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Abstract

Title:

What is the object? Identifying and describing time-based artworks

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Abstract:

A primary task in any art museum is that of identifying and describing artworks so that the collection database record adequately represents the nature of the work and its component parts. When considering time-based artworks there are a range of digital, physical, electronic and ephemeral components that need to be considered. All of these components may be required to 'perform' a time-based work, but will differ in their importance in relation to the integrity of the work. For this reason, how a time-based artwork and its associated components is identified and described impacts our understanding of the work, while also informing how the work is catalogued, located and managed over time. This means that how a museum defines a time-based artwork must take into account the artist's intentions in creating the work and also the practical issues that will impact the museum's ability to care for and manage the work over time. This paper investigates the practical and theoretical issues that impact on the decision-making associated with the cataloguing of time-based artworks and discusses the approach that has been taken at the Art Gallery of NSW to address these issues

Brief Biography of the Author(s):

Carolyn Murphy is the Head of Conservation at the Art Gallery of New South Wales. Carolyn has worked at a number of cultural institutions including the Museum of Contemporary Art, the Canadian Conservation Institute and the Queensland Art Gallery. Carolyn undertook a Getty Fellowship at the Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco after completing a Bachelor of Applied Science in paper conservation at the University of Canberra. Carolyn has also completed a Bachelor of Arts majoring in History and Law and postgraduate qualifications in Museum Studies and Writing.

Asti Sherring is currently employed as the first time-based art conservator at The Art Gallery of New South Wales, a position which began in 2015. Asti completed a Bachelor of Media Arts with honours from Sydney University in 2005. She completed a Post-Graduate Certificate in photographs conservation (Melbourne University) in 2011 and a Masters of Materials Conservation specialising in paper and photographic materials in 2012. Asti undertook a photographs conservation fellowship at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art in 2014. In 2017 Asti began postgraduate research in the form of a PhD at the University of Canberra on Time-based art conservation in Australia.

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