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Contemporary Art without the Artist

One of the great privileges for the conservator working with contemporary art - in many cases - is to have access to the artist's studio - or to the artists themselves. Questions about the making process and the meaning can best be answered by the artist or their assistants. But what happens when the artist is no longer?

Artists' estates, often run by the family, former assistants or close confidants, take over an enormous authority over the artist's physical and intellectual legacy. They are involved in decisions about conservation, refabrication, installation, but also in the release of information and the authorization of research on the artist's work.

What information and insight is this authority based on, and how can a productive and meaningful collaborative between estate representatives and conservators be established? This talk will address a few cases of collaboration between estates representing recently deceased artists, and conservation (Jason Rhoades, Mike Kelley, Felix Gonzalez-Torres).