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Database for the Documentation of Contemporary Art

The International Network for the Conservation of Contemporary Art (INCCA) was formed in the 1990s with the intention to exchange and contribute to the knowledge on modern and contemporary art produced in heritage institutions. Responding to initiatives for collecting information on the materials and methods used by artists through questionnaires and interviews, INCCA reflected the drive for international collaboration. The network has designed its flagship project as an online database for artists' archives, available to members. The bulk of the database consists of materials produced on the occasion of practice-based research projects coordinated by INCCA from its host institutions. However, despite being unique and extensive, this resource comes short of supporting the needs of conservation practitioners and researchers today. It begs the question of how its adequacy can be restored. INCCA's innovation was a singular blend of new developments in the 1990s, including the rising profile of contemporary art in museum collections, the inclusion of the artist and academia in conservation research, the embrace of online database as a viable medium for research, and the introduction of European funding for international collaboration in cultural heritage. Contrasting these phenomena with our current situation we may ask what might constitute a database for contemporary art documentation today.