

*Aga Wielocha, Early Stage Researcher, NACCA*

Bridging collection and archive, artworks and documents: radical institutional approaches to contemporary art and their impact on conservation

The immanent features of contemporary art call for new approaches to the institutional collecting and all related practices including conservation. The identity of a contemporary artwork is distributed between physical objects and processes, concepts and contexts that shape artworks throughout their career. These intangible agents often exist in, and thus might be preserved only through various kinds of documents. The resulting archive does not only contain information about artwork's provenance, history, meanings and character but it hosts an important part of the artwork itself. As decisions about the future presentations and hence interpretations of artworks are made on the basis of the archive, the archive not only shapes but also determines contemporary artworks. Nevertheless, in practice the museum archive is still often secondary when compared to the collection and undervalued within the hierarchy of museum priorities.

This paper traces various emergent institutional attempts to bridge, both conceptually and practically, the notions of archive and collection. It aims to demonstrate that such approaches, although developed in response to different needs than the conservation in the traditional sense of the word, can be inspirational and beneficial also from the perspective of conservation.