

Language: English
Title route: In and Out of Storage



Laurie Parsons_Depot



Philippe Meste_Depot



Daniel Spoerri_Depot



Walead Beshty_Depot



Jessica Diamond_Depot



Mathieu Mercier_Gallery

This route takes you on a trip behind the scenes of the *Out of Storage* exhibition. It follows the work of the caretakers and explores the artworks on their journey from in to out of storage.

The conservation of contemporary artworks presents collectors with great challenges. If you regularly visit exhibitions of modern or contemporary art, you must have wondered at some point how artworks are preserved when they are made from aging, transient or vulnerable materials such as plastic, food and glass. How do you present film and video art when the equipment that is used to show it wears down and is not available anymore? But also: what does it mean for an artwork when it was designed for a specific space and later re-installed in a different environment? How do collectors deal with these 'instable', transient artworks? Which decisions are made, why, by whom and what are the consequences of all this for the artwork?

Artworks are usually presented as original, unchangeable objects. However, the short biographies that are brought together in this route show that activities such as acquisition, storage, transport, installation, presentation, conservation and restoration affect the life and the meaning of an artwork. In some cases, they even lead to great changes to the artwork. The route focuses on practices of conservation that usually take place behind closed doors and shows how backstage and front stage are irrevocably connected.

The route is compiled by students and researchers from the Faculty of Arts and Sciences of the University of Maastricht: Julia Bevilacqua Alves da Costa, Juri-Apollo Drews, Cyra Pfennings, Vivian van Saaze and Renée van de Vall.

DEPOT

Name: Laurie Parsons
Title: Stuff, 1989
Location: Depot C4
Text by: Julia Bevilacqua Alves da Costa



What is the minimum of objects required for this artwork to remain the artwork?

An important role for conservation of contemporary artworks comes from the artists. Usually they give information about the material they use or how a museum can re-install the artworks afterwards. Laurie Parsons, however, does not seem to be too much troubled about the future of this artwork.

This was highlighted when part of the installation, an arrow, went missing during an exhibition in 2001. The FRAC consulted the artist, and she answered that the missing part was not a problem. Moreover, she said the security guard that was in the room could be instructed to let people actually take other parts of the artwork too.

bought an artwork that was supposed to remain in the collection in the same state as when it was bought, without interference of the visitors.

In essence, the fact that one of the objects went missing and the subsequent decision not to replace this object by a new arrow or a different object, does little to change the meaning of the artwork. However, it is worth questioning what would happen when most of the objects were stolen or went missing, as the artist suggested. What is the minimum of objects required for this artwork to remain the artwork?



Caretakers opening the crate that contains Stuff



Detail of one of the objects

This 'new' position of the artist towards her work could also be understood as an invitation to add personal objects to the artwork. The FRAC does not seem to have taken this idea of the artist into account, as becomes clear from the sign that is often placed next to the artwork: 'work of art – do not touch'. This presents an interesting tension between the position of the artist and the position of the institution, which

Name: Philippe Meste
Title: Miroir, 2002–2003
Location: Depot F2
Text by: Juri-Apollo Drews



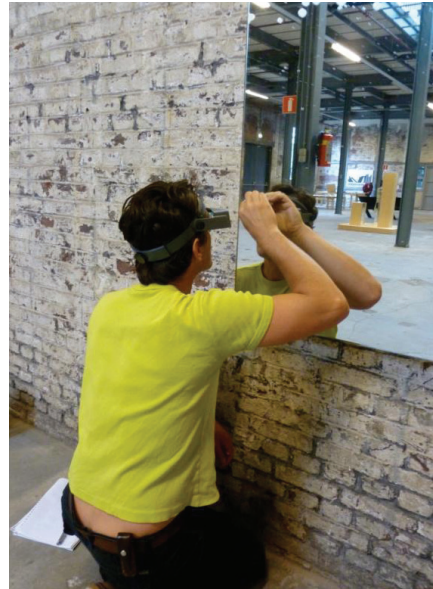
How would you clean this?

Meste's artwork basically consists of a mirror and sperm. While it is not difficult to clean a mirror, the sperm is an organic and fragile material and therefore presents a great challenge for both the conservator and the cleaner. As a consequence, the boundaries between these two professions blur as conserving this work in its original state also means cleaning it from anything that was not part of it from the beginning.

If you look closely, you will see that apart from the larger stains there are many tiny dots spread all over the mirror. Of course it is not desired that any of these be removed during the cleaning process. How, then, can fingerprints, dust and any spots that did not belong to the original work be removed so that the work can be shown without aesthetic distortions?

In fact, this is nearly impossible. Cleaning the work requires some research on how the sperm was applied to the mirror, namely from high above, with the mirror lying on the ground. With this knowledge the cleaner/conservator can deduce and assess the angle in which the original smaller dots must be positioned and can consequently begin to clean around them.

This, however, is also far from simple. A magnifying glass is required during the whole process to make sure that as much as possible is retained of the original spots. The whole mirror is meticulously dabbed, millimeter-by-millimeter, with a mixture of alcohol and water on a cotton swab. As you can probably imagine, this takes a lot of time on a work of this size!



Name: Daniel Spoerri
Title: Triple Multiplicateur d'Art,
1969–1971
Location: Depot D2
Text by: Renée van de Vall



How would you transport this?

When on Tuesday 20 February 1990 Daniel Spoerri's multiple *Triple Multiplicateur d'Art* returned from Antwerp, the staff of the FRAC was in for a shock. The work, which consisted among other things of a sheet of glass, several glasses, bottles and a mirror, had been on loan to the Museum of Contemporary Art (MuHKA) for the exhibition *Au delà du quotidien* since December. It had left the FRAC in good condition, but when it came back by truck and was unpacked from its storage case, it turned out to be completely broken.



What to do now? The work had been too badly damaged to be repaired. As it was a compilation of elements that were still readily available, remaking it seemed a more viable option. After consultation with the artist, the remains of *Triple Multiplicateur d'Art* were sent to Otto Hahn in Paris, who took on the task to reconstruct it. Spoerri then authenticated the reconstruction. On a piece of paper with the photo of the original work, Spoerri had drawn a cross through the photo and written next to it:

“Otto en tification:
Pièce détruite en 1990
et refaite
“verschlimmbessert”

(embellaidit)
pour que ceux qui ont
des yeux, voient:
Daniel Spoerri
1.1.91”

The new work was indeed ‘worsebettered’ in more than one sense: Spoerri had slipped three small photos of the previous version between the bottles and glasses, adding a new layer to its already complex relation to time and space, matter and reflection, reality and representation. Since 1991, the work has been exhibited many times and travelled as far as Maidstone (UK) and Genua (Italy) without further trouble.

Name: Walead Beshty
Title: FedEx® Large Kraft Box ©2005
FEDEX 330508; Standard
Overnight, Los Angeles-Wash-
ington DC Trk#797476282367,
April 3-9, 2009; International
Priority, Washington DC-Lon-
don Trk#823852740440, Sep-
tember 24-October 8, 2009;
International Priority, London-
Dunkerque Trk#862012042228,
February 12-February 15,
2010; International Priority,
Dunkerque-Maastricht
Trk#862012042228, June
8-June 15, 2011
Location: Depot B2
Text by: Cyra Pfennings



How would you transport this?

How did this box get from the FRAC in Dunkirk to the Timmerfabriek in Maastricht? Did it break during this journey or did it look like this before?

The fascinating question of how to transport an artwork as fragile as this one is cleverly answered by the concept of Walead Beshty's *FedEx® Kraft Boxes* project itself. The project comprises a number of glass objects, all produced to exactly fit the standard sized boxes of the FedEx logistics company. Accordingly, Beshty's FedEx-artworks are not transported like other artworks, which always travel as secured as possible, but are shipped by FedEx in the often already pretty battered FedEx boxes *only*. The unique cracking patterns you see on the box form during these journeys and continue to form until the box's security glass eventually breaks completely.

By incorporating the problematic issues of transportation and conservation in the case of a fragile glass box into the artwork itself, Beshty seems to mock the whole concern with conservation issues in general. If the box breaks, it simply ceases to be an artwork; it will not be repaired. In the contract with the artist it says that the broken box will be replaced by a new one, also produced by Beshty.

The extremely long title of the artwork changes with every new trip the box undertakes. Shipping type, point of departure, destination and dates are added for each new trip. Thus, the title is a nice indicator of all the journeys' exertions.



In storage at the FRAC



Before unpacking at the Timmerfabriek

Name: Jessica Diamond
Title: Tributes To Kusama:
Me Constellation, 1992–1993
Location: Depot C1
Text by: Vivian van Saaze

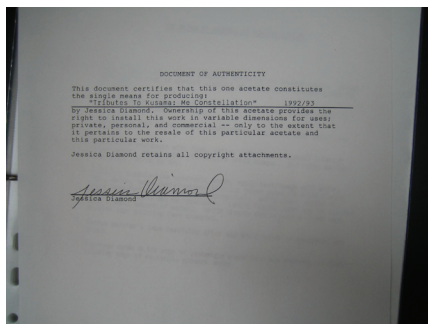


Do you believe the wall label?

Contemporary artworks are often more complex than their wall labels suggest. Although *Me Constellation* by Jessica Diamond is said to be a mural painting, one could question whether this is an accurate description in the case of *Out of Storage*. One of the key characteristics of a mural painting is that it is applied directly on the wall. However, the walls in the Timmerfabriek were not allowed to be painted and the exhibition makers did not consider the brick walls as an appropriate surface for the painting. Therefore it was decided to construct a fake wall made out of plywood and to place it in front of the existing wall. Also, one could argue that this *Me Constellation* was not made by the artist in 1992/93. Instead, the painting was realized in 2011 by one of the exhibition team members, following the written instructions of the artist.

execute the work, the outcome depends on several variables, such as the available space, size, placing, lighting, and the personal touch of the person executing the painting.

What will happen to *Me Constellation* once the exhibition has come to an end? Probably, the plywood on which the painting is made will be dismantled and thrown away and *Me Constellation* will no longer exist until it is executed again.



The document of authenticity signed by the artist



The acetate utilized to project the image onto the wall

The painting is made by projecting the image on a wall using an overhead projector and then applying several coatings of black and white paint. Despite the artist's clear instructions of how to

GALLERY

Name: Mathieu Mercier
Title: Structure de mélaminé blanc
pour plante, 1995–1996
Location: Gallery
Text by: Juri-Apollo Drews

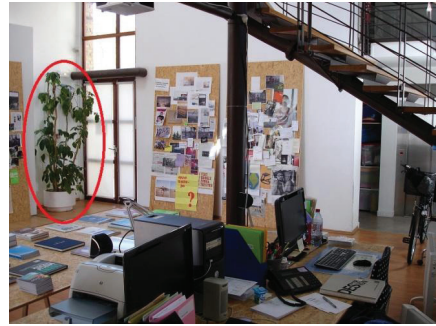


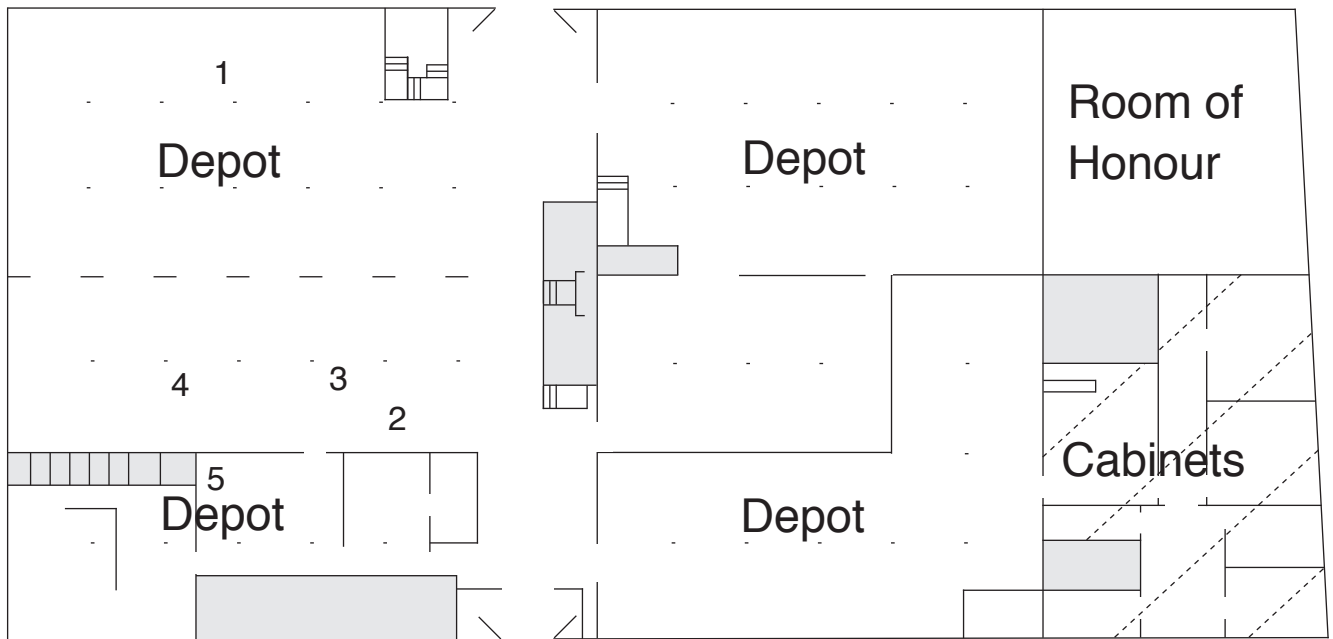
Who makes this artwork?

Who makes this artwork? “The artist, of course” might be a straightforward conclusion. However, with Bruno Latour’s *Actor-Network-Theory* in mind, we should probably reformulate this question and ask: Which actors were involved in this artwork? I would like to show that there are quite a lot of them and what this means for the work’s conservation.

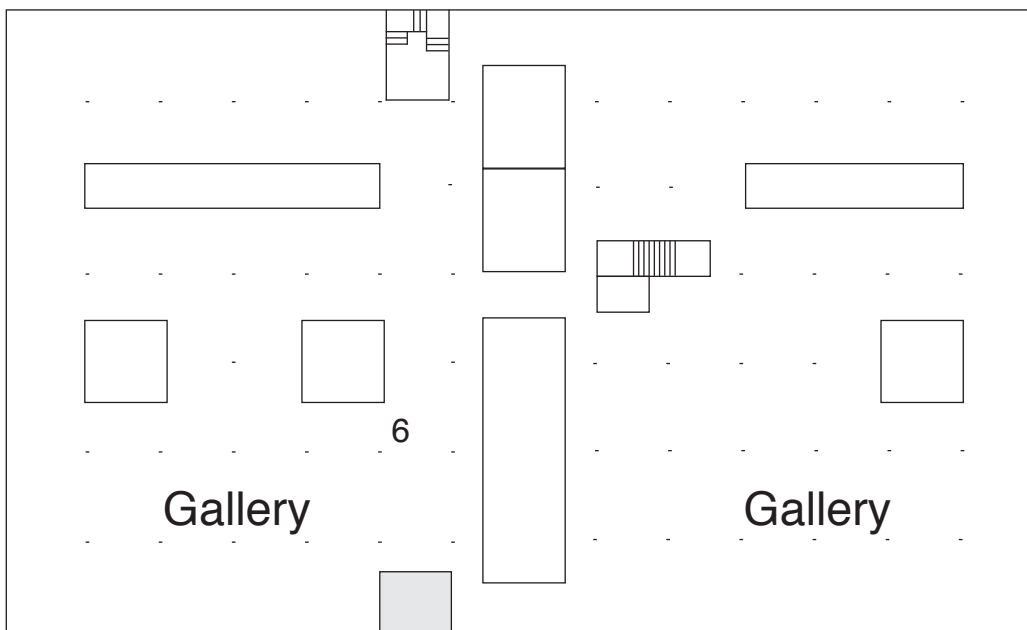
First of all, we have the artist who initially came up with the idea of the work and who left detailed instructions on how the work is to be installed. Secondly, there are the persons who reinstall the artwork for every new exhibition and who readjust the melamine chipboards during the exhibition and cut new ones. This is necessary, because the plant (maybe our third actor?) is constantly growing; the plant you see here is still the original one from 1995. When the plant is not presented in an exhibition, it is kept as an office plant in the FRAC, since it is a living organism and in constant need of care. In that sense, the people in the office could also be considered actors who might alter the nature of the work. We could list a nearly infinite number of such factors that influence this artwork, or *act* on it.

With such a vast network of actors around this particular piece, the question of its conservation, of keeping it in its original state, seems a bit misplaced. Is *Structure de mélaminé blanc pour plante* not an extreme example of an ever-changing network which is constantly *being made* and whose fate is determined by all those who are involved in it?





Ground floor



First floor

- 1 Laurie Parsons, Depot
- 2 Philippe Meste, Depot
- 3 Daniel Spoerri, Depot
- 4 Walead Beshty, Depot
- 5 Jessica Diamond, Depot
- 6 Mathieu Mercier, Gallery