

*S.M.A.K.'s collection contains more than 1800 works and covers a wide range of developments in international art history from 1945 to the present day. Inside Installations brings 11 installations from the collection face to face with one another and with the space in which they are located: Leo Copers, Honoré d'O, Noritoshi Hirakawa, Mariusz Kruk, Mark Manders, Dennis Oppenheim, Jason Rhoades, Andreas Slominski, Paul Thek, Joëlle Tuerlinckx, Wolf Vostell, and Klaus von Bruch. The exhibition immerses the spectator in the multifaceted world of installation art and at the same time explains the questions and difficulties which can be involved in archiving these sometimes quite complex artworks and making them accessible.*

Inside Installations focuses upon the 'invisible processes' that take place in the museum. How does a museum deal with installations that were designed for a quite specific space? Can one depart from this and display the work elsewhere? How are installations documented? Are plans and photographs sufficient to be able to reconstruct the exact arrangement of an installation at a later date? S.M.A.K. has examined these questions and developed documentation which also includes the spatial perception of an installation. This allows the installation to be rearranged following its dismantling without losing any of its essential elements. For each installation, a dossier is drawn up containing every possible item of information. Ideally, various arrangements are tested and adapted according to the specific space in question. Joëlle Tuerlinckx, for example, designed five different scenarios for displaying *Un Ensemble autour de Mur* (1999). For *PIG (Piece In Ghent)* (1994), a complex installation with objects which each refer to elements from *The Lamb of God* (1432) by the Van Eyck brothers, Jason Rhoades devised a single arrangement which had to be rigidly adhered to. During the course of the exhibition, Honoré d'O will arrange *Draaiboek voor de Schatbewaarder* (1996) in five different ways. These scenarios will be closely documented, thereby allowing S.M.A.K. to create an optimal scholarly dossier in dialogue with the artist.

The installations included in the exhibition offer a range of information – art-historical, the arrangement and the artist's specific requirements, the ideal architectural context, various documentation techniques etc. – which mostly remains concealed from the spectator. Inside Installations is the first initiative to offer a look behind the scenes. The documentation room was designed in such a way as to allow the spectator to discover the various aspects of conservation and management in a unique way. Those who want to hear from the artists themselves can watch a number of video accounts and those who want to dig deeper can unashamedly browse through the complex dossiers related to the works of art. And those who just want to head straight for the installations, go right ahead

What is installation art? How does one conceive of it? Due to the enormous diversity of materials,

objects and meanings, it is difficult to give a definitive answer to these questions. 'Installation' first appeared in the 1960s as an explanatory term for 'installing' an exhibition, the 'arrangement' of sculptures and paintings in a room. The confusion between the installation of art and installation art is therefore understandable. Both terms point to an awareness of the way in which objects are arranged in a particular space.

An installation artwork is characterised – this is not an exhaustive definition – by a number of features: sometimes the spectator can physically enter the artwork. An installation can use the entire space as a supporting and compositional element. It does not need a pedestal or a wall or any breathing space around it. An installation is a combination of various objects and media (and sometimes also performances) which enter into dialogue with each other and the architectural space. The 'whole' functions as art, but this does not mean that one of the objects or integrated videos cannot also exist as a work in its own right. An installation is often described as theatrical and experience-oriented. Some installations stimulate the spectators' senses, while others make their presence less self-evident. The spectator is actively involved in some installations, but in others there is a sense of detachment. Whatever 'experience' is generated, the following saying generally applies: 'you had to see/experience it to know exactly what it meant.'

The art-historical development of installation art cannot be traced in a linear fashion. The limitless combination of influences such as architecture, performance, happenings, sculpture, theatre, design, painting... has ensured that installation art is today extremely difficult to approach from an art-historical perspective.

A summary of 'possible' properties or art-historical influences does not always guarantee the elimination of certainties regarding the status of an artwork. The thin dividing line between sculptures and installations is a good example of this. Are the ready-mades by Marcel Duchamp – a bicycle wheel mounted on a stool – sculptures or installations?

In *Inside Installations*, the spectator becomes acquainted with these complex art-historical developments. Installation art seems to have a 'subversive' character due to its lack of marketability, its site-specific nature and the problems of maintenance, guardianship, restoration and accessibility. However, despite these criteria, installation art closely resembles a museological activity... a friction which is exposed and boldly documented in *Inside Installations*.

The exhibition is an offshoot of or a reflection on the Europe-wide research project *Inside Installations: Preservation and Presentation of Installation Art* which took place between 2004 and

2007 and met with an international response. S.M.A.K. was involved in the project as one of the active partners and in this exhibition it aims to involve the spectator in the somewhat 'hidden' but nevertheless important tasks which a museum has to fulfil, namely conservation and guardianship. Together with Tate Modern in London and Reina Sofia in Madrid, amongst others, the S.M.A.K. investigated the complexity of installation art and the issues which arise when an installation is included in a museum collection.

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