

Documenting digital art: the role of the audience

Gabriella Giannachi

New approaches are needed to bridge the gap between the theory and practice of documentation and archiving of complex hybrid works, especially mixed media artworks. These new approaches should not only be about formats but also about provenance. We know that documentation plays a major role in the conservation of art, yet a key factor in documentation, the role played by the audience in the design, experience and the documentation of art, is generally overlooked. I hope to show here that in complex hybrid artworks the role of the audience is crucial not only to understand how an artwork is conceived and received but also in relation to how it changes over time. While researchers and museums have started to address this gap, it remains to be seen how best to include both documentations about the role of the audience and documentations by the audience in museum documentation. Here I look into a number of case studies which illustrate the significance of the role of the audience in documenting contemporary art and illustrate the responsibilities of researchers and museum professionals in facilitating the conservation of materials produced by and about the audience in their archives and/or collections. Last but not least, I hope to show how a shift in focus from the ontology of a work to its epistemological capacity or potential may begin to address the widening gap that is emerging in the field of complex hybrid art documentation.

It has been established that artworks, especially those that entail a hybrid, technological and performative dimension, should no longer be conceived of purely as objects or even solely as time-based events but rather they should be considered as processes. These processes start before the artworks exist as material objects or events, and continue after their, so to speak, 'end', in that most artworks are, adopting Umberto Eco's well known expression, *opere aperte*, open works (1979) whose lives evolve over time. Considering artworks as processes within the context of documentation means that invaluable information about the aesthetics, creativity, and legacy of these works ought to be preserved not only about the artworks as artistic products, whether objects or events, but also about their conception, design, co-production, exhibition, reception and, as recent research by the Unfold network led by the curator and museum director Gaby Wijers at LiMA, has shown, also their reinterpretation by other artists over the years (Wijers et al 2017).

In the context of the documentation and conservation of art, a seminal study by art historians and performance studies theorists Renée van de Vall, Anna Hölling, Tatja Scholte and Sannike Stigter suggested that since 'the meaning of an object and the effects it has on people and events may change during its existence', we should construct the 'lives' of artworks 'as individual trajectories' (2011: 3). The study draws from Bruno Latour and Adam

Lowe's use of the term trajectories to describe how an artwork does not behave like an 'isolated locus' but a 'river's catchment, complete with its estuaries, its many tributaries, its dramatic rapids, its many meanders and of course with its several hidden sources' (2008: 3). Computer scientist Steve Benford and I used the same term, trajectories, in the context of the design and orchestration of spaces, times, roles and interfaces in complex mixed reality artworks (2011). This study intended to create a distinction between canonical and participant trajectories to express the constant tension between the artists' design of and the participants' actual journeys through these works. Here I will suggest that when creating a documentation of complex mixed media artworks it is crucial that both canonical and participant trajectories are documented and preserved if a rich future understanding of what it means to be a participant in such a work, or to experience such a work, is to be arrived at. I will also show in this content the importance of understanding not only what a work is or does but also what it could do from an epistemological point of view.

Studies like these indicate that when documenting artworks, especially complex mixed media works, we should attempt to capture their life histories, by which I mean their conception, design, co-production, exhibition, reception and re-interpretation, not only in the words of the artists but also in those of the producers, performers, designers, curators, and audiences that took part in them. While in theory there is no question that these research strategies are crucial in terms of building an understanding of the behaviour of complex mixed media works over time, in practice the draw on resources to carry out such documentations has so far rendered this an impractical proposition. Whereas research into the life histories of works therefore plays a crucial role in telling us about what these works are, and how they may be preserved, it can only be impactful within the museum context if the framework underpinning the research is manageable. The four examples I am about to discuss will hopefully illustrate the value of this research for the field of complex mixed media work documentation but also show the complexity of its applicability within the museum context.

The first example is a documentation of Blast Theory's *Day of the Figurines* (2006) which was a massively multiplayer board-game for up to a thousand participants who could interact with the game and each other remotely via SMS through their mobile phones from anywhere in the world. The game took place over a period of 24 days in a digital setting based on an imaginary British town within which players could visit a number of destinations, be allocated missions and dilemmas, and interact 'live' with other players. The piece, developed in collaboration with Nottingham University's Mixed Reality Lab, was part of a larger research project, IPerG, funded by the European Commission's IST Programme. The world premiere took place in Berlin at Hebbel am Ufer where the game was engaged with by 165 players.

To participate in *Day of the Figurines* audiences visited Hebbel am Ufer where they

found a large-scale white metal model of an imaginary town at table height. On the board there were fifty cut-up destinations based on a typical British town including, for instance, a 24 Hour Garage, a Boarded up Shop, a Hospital, an Internet Café, and the Rat Research Institute. Each of the destinations was cut out of the surface and bent up vertically to form a white silhouette. Two video projectors beneath the surface of the board shone through holes in the table and reflected off mirrors mounted above it enabling the surface of the table to be augmented with projections of live information from the game.

As part of their registration into the game, audiences selected a figurine from a display of one hundred figurines arranged on a second, smaller square table. Assisted by an operator, they gave their figurine a name, and answered a few questions about him or her which were designed to facilitate the construction of minor role play. Before leaving the space, audiences, who had by now become players in *Day of the Figurines*, were given some basic instructions about the game, which explained how to move, speak, pickup and use objects, find other players, receive help, and leave the game.

The first SMS was received soon after registering with the game. If the player chose a destination, orchestrators would move the figurine within it. Here the figurine was likely to encounter other players with whom they could exchange SMS in real time (or live, as in a live performance). Players might have also encountered objects, and be presented with dilemmas and missions in the form of multiple-choice questions and open questions, some formulated in real time by the game operators. As time went by, with each day corresponding to one hour of game time, the town went through a series of transformations and as events started to occur, players soon learnt that by eating and drinking certain foods, or advising others on how to do so, their health could improve or, if poorly, be restored. Once players had registered they could leave and continue to engage in the game wherever they were. Some players remained very active, others behaved more like spectators, and a few quit the game or died, and so were cut off the game. As in most other works by Blast Theory, the experience of the game was therefore highly subjective.

I documented the work as part of the AHRC-funded Performing Presence project (2006-9), which aimed to explore the construction of individual and social presence in live, mediated and simulated performance. The aim of the documentation, in this case, was to evidence how a sense of social co-presence was received in this work. I therefore decided to document the work by conducting a 24-day-long auto-ethnography describing what was happening in my life as well as in the game. Crucially, the documentation also traced the initial research and design phase, reflecting also about the project's initial evaluation by the artists and the computer scientists at the Mixed Reality Lab. Documenting the game for 24 days generated interesting evidence of how *Day of the Figurines* affected my personal life, about how players interacted with each other, and about the level of orchestration necessary to keep the game *live*, and so for the audience to feel present within it. While presenting

some preliminary findings about this at the Mixed Reality Lab in Nottingham, I realized that despite my sustained engagement I had only partially documented the work since the Lab held in-game data the public had no access to, which, however, when juxtaposed against my documentation, offered a much richer picture of what I and other participants had experienced during the game. As part of this richer picture, design and orchestration decisions became apparent and these are crucial towards building an understanding of how to orchestrate engagement and facilitate presence and social co-presence within mixed reality artworks. Findings produced by this project led to the development of the trajectories framework, distinguishing between canonic and participant trajectories, to which I referred to earlier. This was subsequently used in a wide range of publications in both humanities and human computer interaction journals (Benford and Giannachi 2011). The framework, I hope to show here, is also useful in the context of the documentation of complex mixed media works.

In the UK Research Councils usually have an obligation to preserve data generated by research for a period of five years. So there is no guarantee that after this period any of the data and associated unpublished documentations would be preserved. Moreover, while there were a couple of other researchers documenting the work, nobody documented it as systematically as I did. Because the work was highly subjective it would have been advisable to capture more participant trajectories. Finally, while the platform was analysed by the staff in the lab in a number of papers, it was not part of the overall project documentation largely because of the difficulty of documenting complex human computer interaction. This means that the overall documentation of *Day of the Figurines* is scattered between two universities, the artists, and the blogs of a number of participants. Despite the significance of this work in new media history, as well as in human computer interaction, the wider documentation of this work will not be available to future public audiences.

Documenting *Day of the Figurines* inspired me to carry a documentation of Blast Theory's subsequent work, *Rider Spoke* (2007-) in collaboration with documentation expert and art historian Katja Kwastek who was then still working at the Ludwig Boltzman Media Art Research in Linz. *Rider Spoke*, a location-based game for cyclists, was developed by Blast Theory in collaboration with Mixed Reality Lab as part of the European research project IPerG. The work encouraged participants to cycle around a city in order to record personal memories and make statements about their past, present and future that were associated with particular locations in the city and/or find and listen to the responses of preceding players. The recordings built over time as each day's best recordings were loaded into the system overnight to appear in the performance the following day. The experience of the piece was therefore always being counter-pointed by its historicity, the present moment torn between past and future game trajectories.

Participants, who arrived at the hosting venue, usually in the early evening, either on their own bicycle or to borrow one, were registered at the reception where they were briefed about the work by Blast Theory staff, and informed about how to use the interface and cycle safely. Riders then left the venue individually and had about one hour to complete the experience. After the first few minutes, a narrator asked them to find somewhere they liked, choose a name and describe themselves. While proceeding on their bikes, participants listened to further questions and were prompted to look for hiding places in which to record their answers or listen to the stories of others. The questions asked them to reflect on significant moments of their life while engaging with the city through which they cycled. While these kinds of instructions encouraged them to use details from the physical world around them to start reflecting about themselves, others turned them into voyeurs, required to transform everyday life occurrences into spectacles. Toward the end, riders were given one final task, to make a promise for the future. After the promise, they were asked to return to the hosting venue where the device was dismounted from their bike and their deposit returned. Over time, Blast Theory were able to select the best answers and so the work revealed a map formed by the rich history of engagement from each of the participant trajectories through the work. The life of the work, in this case, consisted of the summation of each participant trajectory, an overlay of participants recordings into a kind of diachronic map that could be described as a living archive.

The documentation was carried out in September 2009, by a team comprising staff from the Universities of Exeter and Nottingham, as well as personnel from the Ludwig Boltzmann Institute Media.Art.Research in Linz, as part of Horizon. As the aim was to capture multiple aspects of the work, and to see how they sat in juxtaposition to each other, a range of equipment was utilised to make the recordings of the participants' experience. The riders' location was recorded using a GPS device. In-game audio was recorded along with the participants' responses and any environmental sounds. Following advice from Henry Lowood, an expert in the documentation of virtual game worlds at Stanford University, videos were taken of the riders from two key vantage points (a 'chase cam' followed the bike, creating a third person perspective, and an upwardly mounted 'face cam' mounted on the handlebars of the participant's bike creating a first person perspective). An original requirement was to allow data to be immediately re-played to participants during a post-trial interview. To this end, all data was recorded to memory cards so that these could be immediately downloaded into a laptop for data review.

Each documentation started at the *Rider Spoke* registration desk to capture the induction process Blast Theory habitually carry out, and which is often neglected by documentors, and terminated with a semi-structured interview conducted straight after the experience in a studio space within the Ludwig Boltzman Institute Media.Art.Research to compare the data captured by the ride, the GPS and in-game data, with the riders' memories

of what they experienced. Two riders were fully documented (first and third person documentation plus GPS and interview); six riders were partially documented (third person documentation plus GPS and interview) and one rider was very partially documented (GPS and interview). The documentation revealed that participants had highly subjective experiences and that their memories of these experiences were not always aligned with the in-game records of these experiences. The use of a documentation platform, CloudPad, which was subsequently devised to annotate these documentations, revealed that documentations are in fact fascinating memory prompts not just for the audiences but also for the artists, who were inspired by CloudPad to add personal detail to the documented materials. However, while these findings were invaluable from a research perspective, the data were not subsequently turned into a documentation that could be used by museums or the public at large. As was already the case for *Day of the Figurines*, the documentation remained scattered between two universities, the Ludwig Boltzman Institute Media.Art.Research, which has since closed, and the artists.

In a subsequent project, Performance at Tate (2014-16), an investigation into the rich history of performance at Tate from the 1960s to today, I decided to adopt some of the findings from my work with Blast Theory and the Mixed Reality Lab and investigate the role of the audience and participants in documenting the work, looking also at the value of documenting salient phases in the curatorial process, by which I mean the conversations between artists and curators at the time that the planning of the work had started in relation to the host venue, Tate Modern. The idea behind this was to look at the work as a process rather than an event or object. The work selected for documentation was Musée de la Danse's *If Tate Modern was Musée de la Danse?* (2015). The choice of this work was made on the basis of the Musée de la Danse's recurrent inclusion of audiences in processes of transmission, and the documentation challenges caused by the fact that the work involved ninety dancers, lasted twenty hours over a period of two days, was streamed live and was simultaneously staged across several locations at Tate Modern. The aim of this documentation was to understand how Tate's documentation practices could be augmented by involving the audience in the process and by capturing the work both before and after it took place.

Conceptually, for the choreographer Boris Charmatz, who since 2009 had been leading the Musée de la Danse, a choreographic centre based in Rennes, dance is akin to 'wearing "glasses"' with a 'corrective function' (Wood 2014). This means that one kind of institution (e.g., Tate) could be seen through the lens provided by the other (e.g., Musée de la Danse), which is something Tate Curator Catherine Wood was particularly keen we captured. For this reason we decided to employ the Mixed Reality Lab ethnographer Peter Tolmie to document how The Musée de la Danse's inhabitation of a number of spaces in the museum challenged 'the viewing behaviour of visitors', turning Tate into a more fluid space, one, in Wood's

words, 'filled with potential' (Wood 2015).

The documentation had started well before the piece was staged at Tate Modern, so as to capture the conversations between and decisions made by Charmatz and the Tate curators Wood and Capucine Perrot, especially those pertaining to the significance of the juxtaposition of the permanent collection at Tate and the Musée de la Danse's history of work. As Tate had created an appetite for the piece in advance of the scheduled event by sharing a question via social media which asked audiences to imagine what a dancing museum would look like and to think about where it might take place, we decided to prompt social media use through a twitter Q&A which was held with Charmatz in the lead up to the performance whose responses revealed that the audience was keen on the idea of 'curating' Tate as a fluid space.

Tate's standard photography and live broadcast were used to capture the event itself on the day, while photographer Louise Schiefer was employed to capture what visitors looked at so as to document the work literally from the point of view of the audience. Members of the team, their families, and staff at Tate were also encouraged to record their own experience of the piece via social media through the bespoke twitter hashtag #dancingmuseum that had been created at the time of the Q&A with Charmatz. Finally, a video documentation was produced, both of the work showcased in the Turbine Hall, and of the work that took place in the Galleries, and smart-phone photography was shared using Facebook, Instagram and Twitter. The marketing photographs were shot by photographer Hugo Glendinning, prior to the opening of the piece, and influenced early responses by those members of the public who had engaged through social media.

From the documentation of the exchanges between Wood, and Charmatz it transpired that the former had envisaged for the work to be 'an evolving model of the Museum', in which one place was super-imposed with another, something that is already, at least metaphorically, explicit in Glendinning's image. Wood indicated, '[i]t could be as much the planting of a conceptual perspective as a demarcated space'. In particular Wood suggested, '[t]o try an astronomical metaphor, if the majority of the museum behaves according to a framework of certain space-time co-ordinates, how would the placement of the "musee de la danse" open up an alteration of those co-ordinates, where such laws do not apply, or are "curved"?' Wood was interested in drawing attention 'to the human activity existing within all the "found" spaces of the museum', those "'readymade" dances that are already happening there [...] set this in conversation with the event-dance that is programmed' (Wood 2013). So, in commissioning the ethnography and the photographers, it was decided to pay particular attention to the way audiences worked at responding to the transformation of spaces that curators had anticipated would occur during *If Tate Modern was Musée de la Danse?*

The ethnographic study, which covered a wide demographic, including individuals as well as families was carried out over two visits: one set took place the weekend before the performance and the other over the days of the performance. Tolmie found that there was a constant flow throughout the galleries on non-performance days and that, generally speaking, the dwell time was short, a few seconds, maximum two minutes per work, slightly longer for video works. However, this changed significantly on performance days when dwell time in a single place could be ten minutes or more. There were also multiple choke points, i.e. points where people stopped, especially at the entrances to galleries. Once performance spaces were created, people, except for children, were reluctant to cross them. Group cohesion also changed in the sense that people would usually tolerate some degree of separation in museums, but during this performance they stayed tightly together.

In response to the transformation, visitors organised themselves as audiences and started looking at the central spaces, where the performances were taking place, rather than the walls, where the Tate collection tends to be located. Visitors commented on how things were being set up and organised themselves in much the same way for both the rehearsals and the actual performances. Moreover, while visitors do not tend to look at each other much during gallery visits, they were notably looking at one another much more during the performances. In particular, the ethnographic study found that about 90% cent of visitors stopped for at least a few moments, 50% stayed for up to five minutes, and around 10% stayed across multiple performances, while less than 1% tried to walk around the gallery as though nothing was happening around them. Interestingly, while some visitors became audiences, or even participants, some amongst them also became 'documentalists'.¹ Most visitors switched between these modes during the course of their visit. This suggests that during *If Tate Modern was Musée de la Danse?* visitors were particularly active in designing their visiting experience, which, in turn, indicates that performance may constitute a powerful mechanism in shaping museum visits as experiences.

This extensive documentation of both the expectations and reactions to the work led to the publication of a report, a thesis and numerous articles and book chapters. However, once the research was completed the documentation was not made available to the public. Nevertheless, the project did lead to some development on what is know as the Tate Live List. This, alongside Head of Collection Care Research at Tate Pip Laurenson and the performance studies and documentation theorist Vivian van Saaze's 'Collecting Performance-based Art: New Challenges and Shifting Perspectives', was an outcome of the Collecting the Performative Network funded by the AHRC between 2012-14. The Live List, one of the most comprehensive frameworks about the conservation of live art that is

¹ I am indebted to Annett Dekker for introducing me to this term which is used here loosely to describe members of the public who take on the role of document creators in a systematic way.

available to the public on the Tate website, intends to produce prompts for those thinking about acquiring or displaying live works. As a consequence of findings by the 'Performance at Tate' project the project PhD researcher Acatia Finbow was able to work with the conservation department at Tate to further develop this list so as to consider documentation and produce what is now known as the Live Art Documentation Template. Crucially the template looks at the life of a work in the museum and prior to its point of entrance in the museum, producing also 'iteration reports' based on the model of the Guggenheim iteration reports initiated by Senior Conservator, Time-based Media Joanna Phillips in 2015. Interestingly, the latter both includes feedback on public reception and actual visitor feedback though this does not tend to be in the format of documentation unless we may assume that the heading 'other' could be used for this purpose. However, the template does include feedback by curators, exhibition designers, media technicians, conservators and external contractors indicating that 'in tracking these individuals' reasoning behind their aesthetic, conceptual, practical, or economic decisions, Iteration Reports help generate a deeper understanding of the behaviours of an artwork under different circumstances' (Time-Based Media). So, by taking the curators' point of view into account this template could be documenting not only the artist intention but also, to put it with Vivian van Saaze, a work's interpretation or co-production (2013: 115). While these templates are beginning to address the fact that a work may have different iterations and that it is important to document the audience's reception of a work, they still only partially address the fact that some works are the result of a collaboration or even, as in the case of the two Blast Theory examples, a research collaboration and that by engaging only with the artists, the curators and their museum audiences primarily the research dimension (for example in the case of the two Blast Theory works the human computer interaction design and orchestration elements) are not captured in the documentation.

The case study is about a prototype platform that I developed with researchers at the University of Nottingham and Tate as part of Horizon, the EPSRC-funded Cartography Project. The platform, developed in 2016, consists of two parts: a web application responsible for enabling participants to input data and generate visualizations, and an associated server that is meant to store all the relevant data and allow for collaboration among users. These then could, by utilising an online interface, facilitate the entering of data, including text, image, video and audio commentary pertaining to artworks, artists, participants, spectators, institutions, festivals, installations in the field of participatory art practice in museums and art galleries.

The primary purpose of the platform was to visualize the rich and burgeoning history of the field, comprising participatory events developed by artists, practitioners, and associates, within and beyond the arts sector forming part of Tate Exchange, a new civic space in the Tate Modern Switch House, offering a site for collaborative and innovative

projects, attempting to realise museum studies expert Richard Sandell's vision of a museum as an agent for social inclusion and change (2010). Initiatives like Tate Exchange suggest that a responsibility of the museum may be not only the facilitation or participation, as the curator and experience designer Nina Simon shows in her 2010 *The Participatory Museum*, but also the documentation or even co-curation of such participatory practices.

To ensure that the platform was developed so as to generate a Cartography that would empower artists but also other practitioners and participants to document their work, a set of workshops was conducted at Tate Britain and Tate Liverpool in 2016 and 2017 in which leading practitioners from the field of participatory arts were asked to contribute their ideas to the design of the platform as well as their response to and critique of the original proposition. This iterative way of researching and developing the platform made it possible for us to consider a number of cartographic models and finally select, following the first workshop in 2016, a relational model based on the Graph Commons platform, an existing open source platform created by the artist Burak Arıkan, so as to make visible the range of processes and practices that operate in this field.

A few characteristics of the field of participatory art practices played a significant role in our way of thinking about documentation in this context. As art historian Claire Bishop indicated, participatory artists often produce situations rather than objects; works of art tend to be conceived of as projects, rather than performances or artefacts; and the audience is reconceived as co-producer or participant (2012: 2). So we decided that it was important that the platform should support multiple perspectives and contested viewpoints; that the visualization of lineage would show long-term projects by association across countries and organizations; and that not only should, right from the research stage, practitioners in this field be brought in, but also that they should be enabled to generate entries even when they were not associated with any existing element in the Cartography. The latter, in particular, was considered, by the participants to the first workshop, as particularly significant for those artists whose work may not as yet be in any museum or gallery collection.

The participants to our first workshop also quickly identified potential difficulties, summed up by the comment: 'This project needs ambassadors and community leaders to broker the information gathering'. This comment suggests that the production of documentation should perhaps not happen purely online and Tate's work on the five-year HLF-funded Archives and Access project confirms that, and, rather, that facilitated participation is essential for many audiences new to the material or the online format to actually participate. So to document participation one needs to facilitate the conditions for participating in the first place.

Our second engagement workshop took place at Tate Liverpool in 2017. Liverpool has a rich history of this practice, so we asked participants, who were members of three major participatory art projects in Liverpool, OK The Musical, Homebaked and The Welsh

Streets, to feed back to us by focussing in particular on the importance of place in their work. In presenting their work to us, a number of factors became apparent. All three groups used social media (Instagram, Facebook, Vimeo, YouTube) to illustrate their practice to us. Worryingly, this suggests that the documentation of these artists' works is currently located in third party-owned platforms owned by commercial providers who do not have archiving standards at heart, so this justified our impression that our project was in itself timely. All groups, however, indicated that at that point in time the Cartography looked like an art history and yet the field was not artist-centric. Moreover, some groups pointed out that the Cartography, at that stage in its development, did not visualise different versions of a work, was too static, and unable to show a whole range of materials that might be submitted, including, for example in the case of the work of the Welsh Streets, letters from residents, images and photos, a play, a film, amateur responses, interviews, learning materials and even a gardening project. Finally, Homebaked, indicated that the visualisation did not communicate any sense of urgency, thus raising the concern as to why people would want to participate in such a project. Additionally, they specifically mentioned that the motivations or issues that drove their initiative – e.g. gentrification, housing justice – should be an option for organising or searching the platform instead of the artists' names.

The feedback from the Liverpool workshop significantly impacted on the subsequent iteration of the platform but also revealed a number of factors that in the documentation of our encounters with heritage are often forgotten about. First, documentation does have an urgency as people's memories will not last forever but not all artists, as we know, are actually interested in documentation. Second, documentation is ethically charged so one must not only think about participation but also the ethics, ownership and authority over the documentation of participation. Third, in most forms of art, we elevate individual artists over their collaborators losing significant information about a work. Finally, art, especially when hybrid, ephemeral, non-object based, subjective, can only be documented through its reception and yet the ways in which we capture reception, as this study may have shown, are often too time-consuming and so unsustainable within the museum context.

While all forms of documentation are at some level hierarchical, the co-habitation of different hierarchies may be what a digital platform like that created by the Cartography Project can visualise in a range of ways. It is then this emergent practiced space, this relational form of documentation, that may show us how the 'History' of this particular art can be rewritten as an intersection of a whole range of 'histories' of collaboration that may inspire generations in years to come. While this research identified an interesting possibility for rendering documentation a more social or even shared practice, the proposition remained at the level of theory as no further funding was made available to develop the prototype largely because the reviewers critiqued the project by pointing out that crowdsourcing should be considered as exploitative, cheap labour, and that researchers and museums should avoid

such methods which means that documentation, at least according to those reviewers, might remain in the domain of the museum.

So where does the research into these four particular case studies leave us? The first works, *Day of the Figurines* and *Rider Spoke*, show the importance of capturing audience-generated documentations to understand the audience's often very subjective experience of a work. In a sector which is increasingly dominated by the production of experiences, it is clearly a desirable outcome that at least some of these experiences are documented by the public as well as by professional documentalists. These two documentations also show the importance of capturing interdisciplinary research, design, curation and so more generally process. But who would organise this and how? And who would preserve these documentations for the future? Are all documentations equally valid? Should the author of a documentation clarify their intent so that the point of view of the documentation is more explicit? If museums are not preserving these documentations, who should? How many documentations of the same work should be produced anyway given that popular works like those by Blast Theory often tour around the world for years?

The third work, *If Tate Modern was Musée de la Danse?*, shows that even when a work is thoroughly documented by both documentalists and the public it is only if these documentations are organised (in other words archived for use) that they become useful for both the museum and the public. The project showed that the public has an appetite to document and to contribute these documentations to the museum. But who in the museum has time not only to preserve but in effect to curate these audience-generated documentations and why would they do so from the museological point of view? Is it really the case that preserving these documentations tells us more about a given work or does it just tell us about how a work is received at a particular point in time? In other words to really capture the lives of works do we need museums to collaborate more with each other and with research centres on documentation across sites?

Audience-generated or audience-facing documentations tell us more about the life or trajectory of a work, to use the terms introduced by Renée van de Vall, Anna Hölling, Tatja Scholte and Sannike Stigter, than conventional forms of documentation, but what is the best way to engage audiences in producing these documentations without being accused of exploiting them by crowdsourcing? This raises a complex question to do with an artwork's ontology (what the work is) and its relation to its epistemic potential (what knowledge it could produce). Is the life of a work part of the work? As Pip Laurenson suggested in *Histories of Performance Documentation* (2018: 34-5), the two should be viewed as inter-related and artworks should be seen in their capacity to 'unfold' when re-engaged with (35), a term also chosen by Gaby Wijers at LiMA to describe her network which explored reinterpretation as a strategy for preservation (Wijers et al 2017). Does that mean that when documenting we

need to make a work's epistemic potential more explicit, rather than focus, as we tend to do, on its ontology?

Finally, the Cartography Project shows that by focussing only on the artist intention, as is often traditionally the case in documentation, we miss out on finding out about the input of other stakeholders in the work which, especially in the case of participatory art, but also in art produced through research processes in collaboration with universities or commercial providers, as is the case for Punchdrunk or Blast Theory's work, means that we only have one perspective into work that is in fact often produced by a team with a wide range of competencies. However, how can museums or other cultural organisations trace these groups of participants or researchers to build a richer history of documentation of participatory art forms? And how can museums help companies to preserve their histories which are currently often shared with the public on third party platforms, and are usually produced through increasingly unreliable forms of social media?

In some ways it should not surprise us that there is a gap here between the theory and the practice of documentation of digital art and through digital methods. We are living at a time of rapid and significant technological change. In a 2001 interview published in *A Brief History of Curating New Media Art* (2010) Barbara London, then curator of Media Art at MoMA pointed out that in 1995, that is twenty-four years ago (at the point of writing this paper), MoMA did not have a website and that, interestingly, and, unlike in the case of other museums, their website had emerged from a curatorial initiative (59-60). This means that it has only been just over twenty years that art museums have acknowledged websites as strategies for curation, documentation, and archiving, as was the case for Artport, for example, launched on the Whitney Museum website in 2001 as a documentation portal dedicated to netart and digital art for which artists created splash pages on a monthly basis with links to their work as a way to document their own art (Paul in Cook et al 2010: 96). The site subsequently also started to commission work like Martin Wattenberg's *Apartment* (2000-4), showing that a documentation or archival site could become a commissioning and an exhibition site. We know that there is a strong link between documentation, curation, preservation and replay or re-interpretation yet, despite the popularity of all three of these practices, we under-invest in documentation which means that in the future not only we will have less information about complex digital artworks than other forms but also that we will not be able to exhibit these in their complexity but only as images or ephemeral records.

While Artport only documented work at the Whitney, other websites, like Rhizome, documented across museums raising the question again as to whose responsibility it is to document and what our collective responsibility it is to preserve existing documentations and their platforms. We know that the question of what to document and archive is accelerated by new technologies, and we also know now that while on the one hand, to put it with new media theorists Beryl Graham and Sarah Cook 'a useful thing about new media is that in

some cases the media can document itself “as it happens” because materials placed on the Internet by users are to a certain extent stored there’ (2010: 200), on the other hand, as Katie Lips commented regarding the social media *Bold Street Project*, which uses a combination of a Website, blog, and Flickr sites to gather materials by many participants, these documentations tend to be ‘messy’ (Lips 2007) and therefore, as we have seen also in almost all the examples I cited, difficult to preserve and re-use in years to come. Moreover, do we still believe that art or documents placed on the internet are safe? If we don’t, how can we preserve them? Shall we migrate them? How often should we do that?

So where does all this leave us? Should we go back to these early examples of documentation and archiving and devise more systematic ways of documenting and archiving a wider range of complex hybrid art works? Or should we mistrust the web for it is unclear how best to preserve and even outsource web-based documentations? Not only is it a question of what we document or who should document but also where should we preserve documents. Should documents enter museum collections alongside the artworks they are associated with or should they enter archives? We know now, having traced the history of performance art documentation, that in this field documents, over time, often became artworks. So we should learn from performance studies and start thinking about preserving documentation of all art more systematically for today’s documentations may be tomorrow’s iterations of the work itself.

In her essay ‘Towards an oral history of new media art’ written in 2008 new media theorist and documentation expert Lizzie Muller imagines that ‘it is the year 2032’ and the reader is ‘a 25-year-old artist living in London writing a doctoral thesis on the explosion of interactive installation art at the turn of the century’. The Tate, in her prediction, is hosting a ‘permanent exhibition devoted to computer-based interactive art from the 1970s to the present day’ and while there are numerous books about the topic, there is very little available, says Muller, about how audiences at the time experienced these works (2008: 2). Among the works that Muller suggests do have an audience-generated record you find, she says, Blast Theory’s *Day of the Figurines*, which may well be in reference to the documentation I mentioned earlier in this study. Then Muller reminds the reader that both the Variable Media Network and the Capturing Unstable Media initiative had stated that the audience experience is important (2005). For her, a way to capture oral histories was through the video-cued recall interview technique, a proposal adapted from ethnographic methods using semi-structured interviews and exit interviews (2008: 4), which we adopted in the documentation of *Rider Spoke* and which indeed did generate a wealth of useful data but which nevertheless, as we have seen, remained an academic exercise since the interviews were not finally integrated into a public-facing resource. This raises one final question: who should we be documenting for? The artists? The co-participants? The Museums? Research organisations? The public? Or a future student writing a thesis 25 years from now?

In her essay 'Old Media, New Media? Pip Laurenson identifies 'areas of focus for Significant Properties for Software-based Art that are Distinct in a Significant Way from Traditional Time-Based Media Works' and among a range of parameters she identifies the visitor experience, suggesting that museums should look into 'how are people intended to interact with the work? How do people interact with the work?' (in Graham 2014: 94). This distinction between a canonic understanding of how visitors might interact with a given work produced by artists or curators and how participants may actually interact with it seems to provide an interesting field of study for documentation, illustrating also how the ultimate success of creativity not only resides in the artistic intention but also in its interpretation by the audiences.

Unless we start to document artworks not only in relation to their ontology but also in relation to their epistemological capacity or potential we will only preserve part of the history of the work and in the year 2044, the researcher writing their thesis on complex digital art will not be able to trace the history of this field any better than they were in 2008, or even now, in 2019, 11 years after Lizzie Muller wrote her insightful study. Hopefully projects like the recently awarded 'Documenting digital art: rethinking histories and practices of documentation in the museum and beyond', a, AHRC-funded collaboration between new media theorist and documentation expert Annet Dekker, the curators Katrina Sluis and Francesca Franco, Gaby Wijers at LIMA, the Venice Biennale, the Photographers Gallery and myself, will bring together many curators and researchers to shift the field and narrow the gap between theory and practice in the intricate and yet fascinating field of complex mixed media art documentation.

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