AHRC ICT Methods Network Student Bursary Awards

CHArt (Computers and the History of Art) Conference
Fast Forward - Art History, Curation and Practice after Media
Birkbeck College, University of London, 9 – 10 November 2006

CONFERENCE REPORT

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MA course: Preventive Conservation.

I attended the CHArt Conference primarily because of my interests in the area of conservation of e-media based artworks. The first session, as I'd expected, proved to be the most rewarding for my purposes. In particular the paper by Nick Lambert of Birkbeck College, University of London (*Preserving and Recovering Computer Art: Reconstructing Data or the Artwork*). The premise of Nick's paper seems to have been that the gallery may wish to concentrate on the documentation of an ephemeral or strictly time-specific work, as opposed to the simple physical preservation of that work. This may ultimately result in a more 'useful' record then would a collection of the work's constituent parts. With this in mind he went on to suggest how recent technological advancements may be employed in order to facilitate this documenting process.

Speaking with Nick after his presentation I found we shared many areas of interest and concern. Nick suggested that an upcoming research project at Birkbeck in which he is involved may be of interest to me and asked if I'd be interested in acting as consultant, should this project acquire funding. This opportunity may prove immensely useful to me, as it combined my key interests in e-media, conservation and fine art practice. If the project develops I would make an attempt to tie the project into my MA Preventive Conservation, which amongst other topics, deals with the ethical implications of duplicating and documenting works for the purposes of access.

All papers were thought provoking and may lead to other possibilities, for instance Anne Laforet's (University of Avignon, France, *Preservation of Net Art in Museums*) suggestion that archaeological conservation tactics may be drawn upon to allow the conservator of e-media work to embrace inevitable 'gaps' in the fabric of the work. Anne's mention of recreation of a work as a conservation tactic was also new to me, and I suspect (with suitable artist/conservator cooperation) may be a useful tool in some cases.