

**The Following is a transcript of the ASM Museum Chat 42 which took place on September 24, 11 am**

The initial part was a PowerPoint presentation followed by a typed chat

**Begin PowerPoint:**



Contemporary art in Alaskan museums has increased by thousands of artworks since the Rasmuson Foundation began to provide funding through its Art Acquisition Initiative (AAI) in 2003. Note that part of the purpose of the grant was to “encourage Alaskan museums to develop formal collections policies.”



During the August 2014 move of the entire Alaska State Museum collection, condition issues were seen on several pieces of contemporary artwork, particularly works from the 1960s and 70s. Seeing all the works again also reminded staff of exhibition concerns for some pieces.



Conservation and exhibition questions are not new, but have not been systematically captured in the AAI application process the way curatorial information has been gathered.

## ARTIST INTENT

1. Curatorial (meaning and context)
2. Exhibition (mounting and display)
3. Conservation (materials and techniques)

One example of the kind of information we find important is the diagram on file from sculptor Jim Bachman, indicating the importance of the cross formed by shadows when his 1984 work “Cairn” is properly displayed.



“Cairn” by Jim Bachman, 1984.  
Alaska State Museum V-A-820

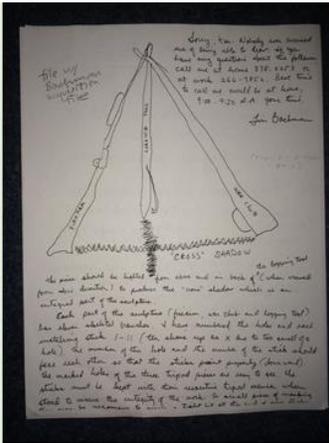


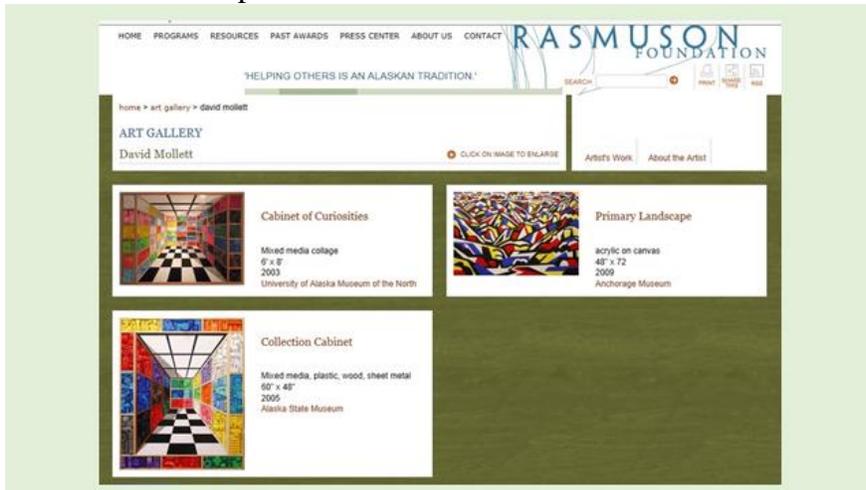
Diagram from the artist,  
from the ASM files

Another example is frame damage, which might be easy to remedy if a new frame can be used, but require more sensitive intervention if the artist considers the original frame important.



Frame damage

Some Alaskan artists are being actively collected by more than one museum. David Mollett is one example, and treatment of his multimedia artworks that include glued linoleum and riveted plastic toys could be made much easier if we had instruction from the artist on how he would like us to handle the repairs.

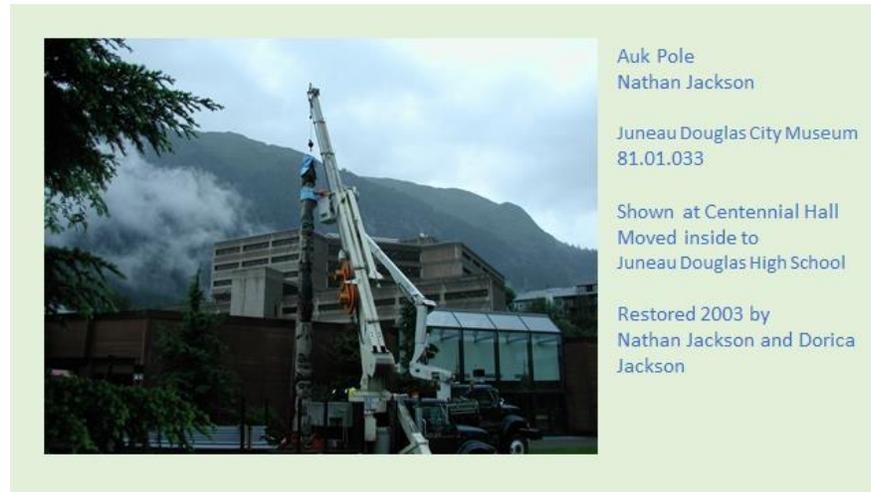


Scott Carrlee repairing

"Collection Cabinet"  
David Mollett  
2005

Alaska State Museum  
2005-29-1

Ideally, artists would do the repairs themselves. When the Juneau-Douglas City Museum moved Nathan Jackson's Auk Pole to an indoor display location for condition reasons, Nathan and Dorica Jackson were contracted to do the repairs and repainting of the pole in collaboration with museum staff.



Nancy Burnham, whose works include poured wax with embedded materials such as lace and porcupine quills, has stated that cracks or flaws in the delicate surface mar the intended visual effect. Since repairs to this material are exceedingly difficult, she would prefer to simply refabricate her own artwork entirely.



Sometimes there may be unintended effects, such as the stickiness of the drips on one of Joan Hornig's painting more than a decade after it was completed. While the drips are an intentional part of the work, we're not sure about their stickiness. What are these drips made of? What if they attract dust and become dirty? These questions become all the more vital when an artist is no longer available.



Detail from  
"Young Joan Works Out III"  
Joan Hornig  
2000

Alaska State Museum  
2001-6-1

Andy Kochergin died in 1965, but the museum did not receive this carved formline platter until many years later. Unfortunately, the donor had wrapped it in Saran Wrap, which reacted with the wood finish and left disfiguring marks on the surface. What finish did he use on the wood? Would he rather the conservator wipe off the marks with solvent (which would remove some of the finish and alter its surface qualities) or would he rather the conservator use microabrasives to remove the marks (which would remove some of the wood)? We cannot ask him now.

Platter by Andy Kochergin (Deceased 1965)  
Alaska State Museum 2007-10-12



What if there were records at another museum about what the artist thought was important? How could we capture that kind of information for the future from artists who are still alive? Let's brainstorm this together...

#### WHAT INFO DO WE GATHER?

- Display mounts/ frames
- Hanging height
- Lighting issues
- Materials used
- Prognosis for preservation
- Who/ how conserved
- Do-Not-Resuscitate
- Other

#### HOW DO WE GATHER INFO?

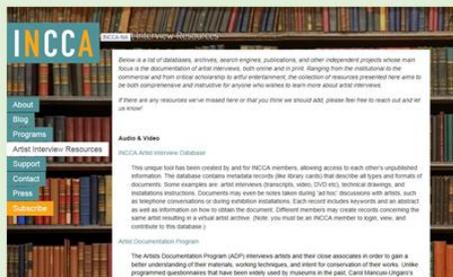
- Questionnaire
- Notes
- Audio
- Video
- Other

#### WHO GATHERS INFO?

- Museum staff
- Volunteers
- School groups
- Artist
- Grant project
- Other

### HOW CAN WE SHARE INFO?

- Confidentiality issues?
- Museums Alaska?
- SLAM / Anchorage/ UAMN?
- International Network for the Conservation of Contemporary Art (INCCA)?



International Network for the Conservation of Contemporary Art (INCCA)

<http://incca-na.org/>

### BRAINSTORMING SESSION!

Museums Alaska/ Alaska Historical Society Joint Conference  
Seward, Alaska

Friday October 3, 2014 2:30-3:00 pm

“How to Collect Artist Intent for Museum Care & Display Statewide?”

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[jacqueline.fernandez@alaska.gov](mailto:jacqueline.fernandez@alaska.gov)

### Begin Transcript

Denis

11:34 AM

Seems like a starting place for getting this information is to request or require basic info re media and care requirements of any piece

Heather Beggs 1

11:35 AM

Yes - the more general the better for sharing info. Most of the examples today were specific to a work, rather than an artist.

[Andrew Goldstein \(Valdez Museum\)](#) 11:35 AM  
On a similar note, what about ephemeral works where that is not the intention? I have received works in our community shows made with inflated balloons that I know will not last the duration of the exhibit.

[Scott Carrlee](#) 11:36 AM  
Wow balloons  
now there is something that will not last 11:36 AM

[Andrew Goldstein \(Valdez Museum\)](#) 11:36 AM  
Yes, usually not more than a week at best.

[Heather Beggs 1](#) 11:37 AM  
I'm thinking on the back-end of this - how we want to share information statewide. It may impact what we collect initially.

[Karinna](#) 11:37 AM  
for new acquisitions it seems like a standardized questionnaire, perhaps optional and short, would be great

[Jackie](#) 11:37 AM  
Good points, A, D and H. I'm curious how many of you have policies and/or any mechanisms to gather this data already in place at your museums ?

[Heather Beggs 1](#) 11:37 AM  
making sure you collect general artist recommendations on their works, as well as those specific to the piece you collect.

[Denis](#) 11:38 AM  
Considering the broadening of media used these days, a collecting policy could state the institutions willingness of ability to collect such stuff

[Andrew Goldstein \(Valdez Museum\)](#) 11:38 AM  
Some artists seem to take it as an affront to their craftsmanship, so tact will be needed.

[Denis](#) 11:38 AM  
speaking of balloons etc., and how much extra work they might include.

[Heather Beggs 1](#) 11:40 AM  
Should a standardized questionnaire be part of the application submitted for MA funding for the piece?

[Scott Carrlee](#) 11:41 AM  
That is a good question  
I think that is one of the fundamental questions that needs to be answered 11:41 AM

[Heather Beggs 1](#) 11:41 AM  
It may need to be optional, like the photo rights

[Denis](#) 11:41 AM  
Some artists say 'it's the museums or collectors problem" . I think most don't have such disregard

for the life of a piece but.....?

Heather Beggs 1 11:41 AM

But MA could be encouraging this through a form

Scott Carrlee 11:42 AM

But the problem is a pre-questionnaire may not be specific enough

Jackie 11:42 AM

and it might encourage entities to adopt it who perhaps haven't already thought of formalizing

Scott Carrlee 11:42 AM

There will always be questions specific to the art piece that you collected

Like what if that thing right there falls off 11:42 AM

Denis 11:43 AM

For ephemeral pieces, photo documentation could be an integral part of a piece. Something to ask the artist

Heather Beggs 1 11:43 AM

S- maybe it's something we encourage then, when funding is awarded. Once the piece is being acquired and examined.

Scott Carrlee 11:43 AM

Ellen mentioned that maybe having friends of the artist do the interview

They would be familiar with the work and the artist 11:43 AM

and the artist would be comfortable with them 11:43 AM

Andrew Goldstein (Valdez Museum) 11:44 AM

It could be as simple as requiring a condition report and maintenance notes in the final report.

Scott Carrlee 11:44 AM

same kind of mind-set and vocab from the local of the place as opposed to an outsider

Jackie 11:44 AM

It would be interesting to put out there, in the artist community, the question of how they would feel about it. I think it would vary

Jackie 11:44 AM

I've had artists bring up the subject before I did during conversations about purchases

Heather Beggs 1 11:45 AM

Perhaps part of the condition/maintenance notes include a questionnaire given to the artist to fill out (or other)

Denis 11:45 AM

Speaking as an artist, I have no problem being asked to provide info regarding care of work.

11:46 AM

Andrew Goldstein (Valdez Museum) 11:46 AM

In the longer term, outdoor works are also a cause for concern -- nothing's worse than exposure to the elements.

Denis 11:46 AM

Asking to fill out a questionnaire poses no problem to me or anyone I know I can think of.

Heather Beggs 1 11:46 AM

A - Now that's a unique Alaskan questionnaire to develop!

Scott Carrlee 11:47 AM

Is a questionnaire too simplistic?

won't it have to be so long that most artist will balk at filling it out? 11:48 AM

Ellen Carrlee 11:48 AM

I have seen examples of questionnaires that differ by media, such as paintings or sculpture

Heather Beggs 1 11:48 AM

I think it would take some work to be sure we have the right questions covering these unknowns -- and short enough

Denis 11:49 AM

Seems like it could have different levels of info requested, depending on fragility of a piece of fugitive nature of medium.

Scott Carrlee 11:49 AM

ok and how to we write the questionnaire?

is it a committee 11:49 AM

who is on the committee 11:49 AM

Heather Beggs 1 11:49 AM

Perhaps existing forms Ellen notes are a place to start and we supplement with AK examples

Jackie 11:49 AM

it might not hurt to ask curators at MOMA and other entities what success they have had with their questionnaires, how they think it might be improved..

Heather Beggs 1 11:50 AM

Encouraging the use of these forms is something MA can do, certainly.

Ellen Carrlee 11:50 AM

Outdoor wooden sculpture form, collage form, traditional painting form, etc.?

Heather Beggs 1 11:51 AM

We also used to have annual workshops for Art Acquisition issues (funded by Rasmuson) and may benefit from reinstituting that...

Andrew Goldstein (Valdez Museum) 11:51 AM

Yes, those were helpful

Heather Beggs 1 11:51 AM

Rasmuson saw them as helping launch the initiative, but we've had a number of worthy topics recently

Denis 11:52 AM  
Has anyone had an artist balk at providing info about their work?

Scott Carrlee 11:52 AM  
I think we should also address the tricky issue of hierarchy  
Like should we start with the most famous 11:52 AM  
the oldest 11:52 AM

Heather Beggs 1 11:52 AM  
spoken like an ARGUS-lover

Scott Carrlee 11:52 AM  
the most sensitive material  
most collected 11:52 AM

Ellen Carrlee 11:52 AM  
Hierarchy? Like who might die off soon?

Denis 11:53 AM  
ouch

Andrew Goldstein (Valdez Museum) 11:53 AM  
D- Not necessarily with maintenance notes, but sometimes it has been difficult to get all the  
information I need from artists... 11:53 AM

Ellen Carrlee 11:53 AM  
Not you, Denis, you're not that old!

Scott Carrlee 11:53 AM  
I think Denis should go first

Heather Beggs 1 11:53 AM  
Should this be categorized by artist or medium?

Scott Carrlee 11:54 AM  
ooh good H

Denis 11:54 AM  
Thank you Ellen. No thank You Scott

Heather Beggs 1 11:54 AM  
seems like existing material points to medium 11:54 AM  
then we include artists within that medium in AK? 11:54 AM

Andrew Goldstein (Valdez Museum) 11:55 AM  
Medium is probably most relevant to preservation

Scott Carrlee 11:55 AM  
Yes but the info might be too specific to the artist to be of much use from a strictly material  
based standpoint

Scott Carrlee 11:55 AM  
How an artist think about their media might be totally different

Ellen Carrlee 11:55 AM  
Wouldn't the questionnaire be by medium and the info we get organized by artist?

Heather Beggs 1 11:55 AM  
true - well, I see a web project that has no bounds (multiple linkings, etc)

Scott Carrlee 11:56 AM  
Ok we have about 5 minutes  
any last minute comments 11:56 AM

Jackie 11:56 AM  
I like the web project idea, Heather

Scott Carrlee 11:56 AM  
That is where INCCA might come into the picture

Heather Beggs 1 11:56 AM  
I'll also share all this with Mike

Denis 11:57 AM  
Looking forward to continuing this in Seward. Thanks

Heather Beggs 1 11:57 AM  
It won't affect your hierarchy

Ellen Carrlee 11:57 AM  
Thanks y'all, we'll talk more in Seward!@

Heather Beggs 1 11:57 AM  
Bravo!

Jackie 11:57 AM  
Great comments

Andrew Goldstein (Valdez Museum) 11:57 AM  
Thanks everyone, see you next week.

Scott Carrlee 11:57 AM  
Ok I will get the transcript out ASAP  
and we can continue this conversation 11:58 AM

Jackie 11:58 AM  
Thanks Scott, Ellen