

THE OWNER AS ARCHIVIST

(WHAT I WOULD LIKE TO SAY TO THE OWNER OF ONE OF MY WORKS WHO, LIKE ME, WILL BECOME RESPONSIBLE FOR THE ARCHIVE)

In this attachment, the owner is asked to help keep the memory of the work alive through their active participation in the archive. It is like entrusting the collector with a part of the process of historicising the work. As well as giving them ownership of the work, it is as though they were also symbolically becoming the owner of a percentage of the archive.

By distinguishing the archiving of the work from the work itself, we are declaring that the mechanical body of the work will always be owned by the collector, while the spiritual integrity of the work will be owned by the archive.

While in attachment no. 1 to the certificate of authenticity the artist states that she does not want immediate control of the work and gives the owner complete freedom in decisions directly regarding it (maintenance, restoration, etc), this attachment defines the fundamental importance of the archive in relation to the work and suggests some rules that the owner has to respect in relation to this organism, which should remain an essential reference point.

This document does not bear any legal weight, but it is important for me to express my wish that I hope will be heeded with a sense of responsibility by the person who has the work after me. Everything that I would like to happen obviously cannot happen without there being an individual awareness, following one's own inclinations and abilities, and finding one's own way of taking care of things.

STATUTE

A good statute defines a set of fundamental, institutionalising rules, which in order to last must be flexible and receptive to change. Everything about to be stated here is not inflexible, but susceptible to changes and open to transformations in order to keep up with the natural course of things.

On the one hand, the archive as a place that produces documents and keeps the memory; on the other, the archive as image or metaphor.

I consider the archive to be an integral part of my work, and I also think of it as a work that contains all the others. I perceive the very gesture of cataloguing, conserving and memorising – just as I perceive every other thought process behind my working methods – as an intrinsic part of my artistic process.

In a certain sense, the archive is the place where I have defined my vision, the world I live in, and at the same time the place where I can take a step back from what I am doing, analysing and relativising everything.

Despite being extremely vast, the part of the archive that is visible on the site is only a portion of the whole. The private one that can be consulted, but which is not public, encompasses other things and information.

In its entirety, the archive is substantially made up of five parts:

- Archive of works
Concentrated symbolically in the 'Gestureplace', which contains the four 'Archivers': 'Sedimentary', 'Infinite Painting', 'Diary-theque' and 'Dad's Diary Home'.
- A physical archive of documents
Containing photos, slides, books, paper documents, etc.
- Private digital archive
Containing most of the things from the physical archive which have been digitalised with the addition of further documents that only exist in digital form.
- Private web archive
Almost all the web archive, but with low-res images and with the possibility of connecting all its parts and of doing different types of searches.
- Public web archive
This is a part of the private web archive and is open to everyone through the 'Maria Morganti: An Archive of Time' site.

My archive's structure has been defined slowly over the years, adapting the form to the contents and not the other way around. For years, I let things come out of me without a precise project, letting them form fluidly, not thinking about what they were and what they could be. It was only later that I started to see them as given facts,

to look at them, to try to understand them and name them. When I began cataloguing them, I didn't leave anything out. I tried to keep in everything with no sense of reserve. In the archive not only are the completed works catalogued, but also those that I was unable to create, the ones that no longer exist and those that sooner or later might be created. Everything, truly everything, has been added to this archive that I have produced and experienced professionally: works, documents and exhibitions, without making any kind of selection precisely because the obsessive form of keeping everything without leaving out anything is something that perfectly suits the nature of my work, my psyche and my mind.

When the way of thinking about the archive started to tie in with my artistic process, when it became clear that the fulcrum of my work was becoming the fact of letting things happen to then document them, I began thinking about creating an actual archive. I started thinking about it between 2003 and 2006, more less at the same time as the beginning of the 'Sedimentations', the 'Diaries' and the 'Infinite Painting', or rather those works that metaphorically recall the forms of the archive. In 2010 I started working on it directly and in 2016, as soon as it was ready, I published it online. Since then, it has been perennially updated, edited and corrected.

The archive is a work in progress, continually in transformation. It bears the traces of each work, of each professional engagement and of every consideration made about the work. This is why it is a living organism that keeps track of all the changes and all the things that are added. The number of works grows and changes, as do the relationships that are generated between them.

I can attest that above all, I created this organic whole because it is useful for me while I am alive and not when I am dead. I need to see myself and reflect. However, I hope that it is also a useful tool for anyone who wants to help me define, study, interpret and keep alive what I am doing. Those coming after me can decide whether to crystalise it, keep it alive or make it disappear forever.

The archive is the act of accountability that I wanted to perform for my work, the organ deputised with ensuring its authenticity, the guarantor that gives the work value, allowing it to be traced.

Everything that is inserted in the archive-work immediately assumes the statute of being a work. Everything that is in the archive is considered a work, while everything that is not in the archive is not. As soon as something is added to it, the work remains inescapably linked to the archive.

Anyone who has and will have a relationship with the work can always refer to this device and can feel responsible for the estate of the archive, starting from me, who created it. Anyone who owns, treats, restores, conserves, studies and bequeaths a work will actively participate in the archive, keeping it up to date with everything related to the work, from the transferral of ownership, to the participation in new exhibitions or publications, to accidents, etc. It will become on the one hand testimony to events in the work's life and on the other will feel part of an organism that watches over it.

In order to explain this point more clearly and to involve the owners of the works in this act of archiving, I wanted to include this text in the attachment that is sent together with the certificate of authenticity every time someone becomes a new owner of my work. Paradoxically, it is almost like saying that it is more important to keep the history of the work alive than the work itself. The work can thus continue to exist even if it should disappear.

At a certain point a doubling occurred. Two identities came to be defined: the work as an open and uncertain act and the archive as a place of certainties. On the one hand, the physical body of the work and on the other the physical body of the archive, or rather the structure created to continue thinking about it and caring for it. As if the actual brain of the work were not materially within it, but somewhere else, in the archive.

It doesn't matter to me whether the work effectively deteriorates or disappears, whereas what is extremely important to me is everything that concerns it from the time it has been envisaged to the time it enters into the archive, from the moment it has started to live in another way, becoming an agglomeration of stratifications of memory. You could say in a certain sense that the real meaning is not in the work itself, but in the archive that holds its aura.

Having stated that the archive is a work and having said that the work has a life beyond the artist's wishes, then I can conclude paradoxically by stating that the fact that it existed is already enough for having determined something in reality. If the archive itself should melt like snow in the sunshine because nobody keeps it alive, this could be accepted as a natural course of events. What I am trying to say is that I can guarantee its continuity during

my lifetime, but I can't think of things beyond my existence. It is not within the limits of the individual to be able to determine the course and survival of things, but it is only in the desire of a synergic effort of a group of people that the transhuman passage can be envisaged. The artist cannot decide the future of her work – it can persist or disappear even against her will. This is why I will never disown it, precisely because the work itself is already the documentation of something that has happened.

The artistic gesture existed before me, it continues to be expressed in parallel to me and it will continue to exist after me in many different ways. My way of perceiving myself in history, in other words of knowing that there is something that precedes me, something that runs alongside me and something that will outlive me, is exactly what I want to say through this concept of archiving. I want to push myself further by adding something else. Dealing with this archive in particular means not merely or only being interested in my work, in my story, but also means considering the importance of taking care in general of the possibility that humans have of expressing ourselves and leaving a trace of one's existence as central. This archive aims to become a metaphor of the representation of a view of art and the world. This is the common feeling I am referring to, at the primary moment in which each human being takes inspiration from whenever they repeat the gesture, to the need to make it potentially infinitely repeatable and finally to trace a story from it. In its particular subjectivity, an archive – this archive – thus becomes part of a broader whole of universal archiving in which each trace of individual history is given the same weight and the same importance.

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