The Artist Archives Project – David Wojnarowicz

The *Artist Archives Project* develops information resources for the display and conservation of contemporary art. The initiative responds to a growing need for museum and archive professionals to work with artists in documenting their production methods, and building knowledge for future treatment and re-activation of their work. The first undertaking of the *Artist Archives Project* is to create an information resource devoted to the multidisciplinary artist/activist David Wojnarowicz. The resource will contain technical and historical information about the artist's films, video, photography, paintings, drawings, and performance work. The artist's personal archive in the *Fales Downtown Collection* at NYU serves as a primary source for research.

The project takes a digital humanities approach by assigning equal emphasis to the content and the database / web portal design.

Project researchers are working in conjunction with curators at the Whitney Museum of American Art who are preparing for a Wojnarowicz exhibition, along with others familiar with his work. The research team creates transcripts from interviews, annotated guides to other resources, and information regarding the challenges of exhibiting and conserving his work.

Upon launching the research, the project team immediately realized the complexity of the task at hand from a database design perspective. We needed to create a database and website that would accommodate complex relationships between objects, media, people, dates, places, exhibits, conservation reports, publications, and other archival resources regarding Wojnarowicz' life and work. These relationships proved to be challenging to conventional database design that privileges a highly structured and hierarchical arrangement of information.

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NYU Project Advisors include faculty and staff from the Archives/Public History Program, Art History, the Grey Art Gallery, Cinema Studies, Computer Science, the Digital Humanities Program, the Institute of Fine Arts, the Moving Image Archiving and Preservation Program, Museum Studies, and Performance Studies.

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