

Vektor – Project within the programme Culture 2000 of the European Commission, June 1, 2000 to September 30, 2003

## Basics and Goals

The VEKTOR co-operation between various archives and databases was founded in 1999 with the aim to link decentralised archive information through scientific standardisation methods in order to install a central, online interface with access to locally operated databases.

The working group has always formulated the thesis that the documentation of art does not end in a numerical listing of materials: All production and distribution processes of art and its involved protagonists are meant to be vectors linking to other spheres: From the individual production of an artwork to the personal and local environment of a gallery, medial dissemination and presentation at international festivals (documenta, biennials etc.) – each of these manifestations constitutes entities directed in space, the latter of which they form but are also formed by. Via VEKTOR, this complex and dynamic system should be made visible and accessible through (a) public database(s).

Altogether the overall budget of the project amounted to approximately 1,5 Million Euro, from which 817.000 were sponsored by the „Culture 2000“ programme of the European Commission. The remaining funds had to be raised by various partner countries and came from state and city governments as well as private sponsors. Under the guidance of the art archive, basis wien, 5 main partners and more than 10 associated partners participated. The range went from research activities via an online-research-platform to big exhibitions, such as the documenta 5 in Kassel.

## Research

The focus of our research was laid upon the development of a scientific basis for the digital gathering and mediation of **materials of contemporary art** within the differently structured institutions. The content centred on the work of an **internationally valid standardisation** for (online) inputs of data on art.

For the duration of the project, the AIT – Applied information technology company, which is located in Graz, installed a **research platform** based on the computer language XML. The platform will be made available as of September 2003, linking archive records from various contexts to evaluate the international media standard Dublin Core according to its applicability on data of contemporary art. Already existing thesauruses from the museum context as well as standardisation proposals for libraries and archives, such as the Union List of Artist Names and the Art and Architectural Thesaurus (Getty Museum, Los Angeles), were also part of these examinations as well as a forum on the direct information exchange within this evaluation.

## Further Topics

Apart from the main focus of this work, further questions were at stake, such as aspects of copyright and usage in Europe (e.g. the non-existence of Europe-wide regulations). Moreover, we dealt with current problems in the area of digitisation and long-time archiving of photographic material, or compared and discussed different software and database models. Involving projects by contemporary artists in the context of the archive and the recording of digital data was made visible in exhibitions and catalogues. Last but not least, we dealt with concepts in the area of e-commerce, which could not be fully treated since the main goal was the attempt to communicate scientific standards of digital recordings.

## Exhibitions

In two large exhibitions, we examined various aspects of the digitisation of works and materials of contemporary art, the effects for research and mediation purposes as well as the presentation design and the reaction by the audience.

The first big project in 2001 was the exhibition developed by the documenta archive in Kassel, "**d5 Re-take – Questioning the Archive of documenta 5**", which was curated by Harald Szeemann in 1972 at Museum Fridericianum. Here we could show a somehow ideal form of an analogously and digitally supported archive presentation in connection with historical archive materials and contemporary artworks, including extensive interviews with the audience. This exhibition was adapted and taken over with a focus on multimedia units by Kunsthalle Wien and basis wien in 2002.

The second extensive exhibition project was „**ArtWord**“ at **Museion** – Museum for Modern and Contemporary Art **Bolzano** in autumn 2002. With its focus on the area of text-based visual art, the museum houses a highly qualitative art collection, whose digitisation started on the basis of the research platform by the Vektor project in 2001. A complex and mediation-oriented arrangement of the exhibition from the museum's own collection presented artworks and their digitally processed data to a broader audience for the first time.

## Symposiums / Workshops

The symposium "**The Artist and the Archives**", organised by the **Archives de la Critique d'Art (ACA)** in December 2001 in Rennes undertook a localisation of the relationship between archive work and artistic production and their conservation and evaluation by museums. Participants from international art institutions and museums discussed the problematic of, for instance Fluxus works, action and performance art of the 70s or issues on archiving current, process-oriented and interactive art. A publication on this topic will be published shortly.

In total, three workshops took place two times in Vienna and one time in Nuremberg to have archivists, librarians, and researchers discuss concrete measures for data processing. The evaluation of the **Dublin Core categories**, based on extensive exemplary inputs into the research platform by 8 institutions with more than 1000 data sets founded the basis for the resulting guidelines, which are published in the final publication in December 2003.

## Guidelines to access works of contemporary art

The main part of the final publication about vektor's research work form the guidelines to process art and its materials. Dublin Core, named after its place of origin, Dublin, Ohio, stands for an initiative with the aim to develop the broadest possible and compatible meta-data standards and reference systems. This initiative consists of people from highly different institutions, from digital libraries to archives and educational institutions. Thus, various national libraries such as the German library are members as well as the Library of Congress or open archive initiatives. This initiative started in October 1994. Since 1998, Dublin Core can be accessed online via an extensive web site: HYPERLINK „<http://www.dublincore.org>“.

Via an open mailing, all interested people are able to participate in this work. The advantage of using and evaluating the Dublin Core standard with the context of the vektor working group was that Dublin Core can principally be applied to various materials, resources and contexts. For a group of users, who document very diverse material, this is an efficient possibility to work on a mutually compatible system despite individual databases. Hence, it is possible to use a common digital interface/search engine (see [european-art.net](http://european-art.net)). Although one is limited to the simple structure of Dublin Core, i.e. 15 descriptive elements, it is also possible to integrate existing databases through simple interface adaptations. The AIT-produced instrument of the research platform took into account the Dublin Core object data sets. These 15 Dublin Core elements as well as the respective discussions of the working group formed the basis for the vektor group's recommendations.

## European-art.net

Basis wien and two guest partners from Switzerland developed the first model interface for databases: a European art gate. The content impulse for this special co-operation derived from the interest in an advanced presentation of the results of database searches in various databases with one web address, and the special focus on the problems of Eastern European contents and structures (diacritics in names and many offline databases). Basis wien, and the magazine Kunstbulletin of the Swiss art association as well as the Swiss Institute for Studies in Art (SIK) together commissioned the programming.

The result was a tool, which enabled also *Offline* databases to participate in this *Online* presentation. This is possible, because the programming of this interface is based on a simple dual system. The EAN data set consists of two parts: the name of the object (e.g. Max Ernst) and the link where the actual information on this object can be found, i.e. a reference to the original database. The EAN database opened in December 2002 and, since recently, runs via Linux on the web server Apache, the Application Server Macromedia ColdFusion and the database MySQL. New databases are integrated very simply with an ASCII file to import the respective data sets, a routine, which can quickly be learned by its administrators.

Users will find two search methods, on the one hand via an alphabetical index, on the other an individual search for titles. The search results or the names of the searched persons and individuals link to the actual databases, whose detailed data sets can be accessed in a separate browser window. If a name appears several times, users can decide to which of the offered data they want to be linked. With the integration of the documenta-archive database in September 2003, about 45.000 data sets with hundred thousands links to international contemporary art from European archives could be made accessible via a common link. An additional thematic focus is the quick integration of Eastern and South Eastern European institutions and databases. The vektor project already features some partners from the Czech Republic, Slovenia, Slovakia and various other countries of this region, whose technical implementation is very likely to be soon facilitated with the help of Pro Helvetia.

## Publication

### **ARCHIVING THE PRESENT - GEGENWART DOKUMENTIEREN**

Manual on Cataloguing Modern and Contemporary Art in Archives and Databases - Handbuch zur Erschließung moderner und zeitgenössischer Kunst in Archiven und Datenbanken

An focus on archives in institutions for contemporary art has not been developed until very recently. The task to conserve cultural heritage is faced with a living art praxis, which often escapes traditional means of documentation, collection and classification through process and context-oriented strategies. As one of the first pragmatic steps to open up this problem area, the research results of the EU project „vektor – Contemporary European Art Archives,“ which was run by basis wien will now be published.

The book has been conceived as a theoretical and practical guide for the thematic structuring of archive systems and databases in art institutions, libraries, and archives. The book is an introduction to the current status of scientific discussions on standardised data processing, legal foundations and technological environments. An extensive survey on international art archives and databases with a special focus on Eastern European institutions is added to the manual part.

With texts by Jacqueline Cooke, Elisabeth Dartiguenave, Thomas Fürstner, Rudolf Gschwind, Anne Harding, Günter Herzog, Richard Leeman, Peter Nosbers, Jean- Marc Poinot, Lioba Reddeker, Mechtild Widrich, Gerd Zillner

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## Project Konsortium

### Project Coordination

**basis wien. Kunst, Information und Archiv, Wien.** Founded in 1997 by state curator of fine art, Lioba Reddeker, basis wien is a place for contemporary art. It is structured to provide information about artists working in Austria and the documentation of artistic output in the basis archive and online-database. In addition, basis wien collects materials on art theory and related topics, like art and politics or the working conditions artists are faced with in Austria.  
<http://www.basis-wien.at>

### Konsortium-Partners

**Archives de la Critique d'Art, Rennes** were founded in 1989 as research centre for art criticism, art theory and contemporary art history. All authors documents are systematised in chronological order of their publication, the biographies and bibliographies compiled in a database. A special library with general literature on art criticism and theory supplements the materials of the critics archive. Symposia, the publication Critique d'art and the archives homepage introduce and discuss current publications. Parts of the archive should be digitised within VEKTOR and made accessible via Internet.  
<http://www.archivcriticart.org>

**documenta Archiv, Kassel** With its collection of books, exhibition catalogues, art magazines and other ephemeral material, the documenta Archiv possesses one of the most extensive speciality libraries for modern art in Germany. The heart of documenta Archiv, however, is to be found in the comprehensive collection of files and materials assembled since 1961 in the course of organizing and carrying out the documenta exhibitions.  
[www.uni-kassel.de/bib/documenta/docum1d.html](http://www.uni-kassel.de/bib/documenta/docum1d.html)

**John Hansard Gallery der University of Southampton** The John Hansard Gallery aims to present all aspects of contemporary visual art, creating a context through practice and debate. The gallery opened in 1979 and was refurbished in 1997. It continues to pursue a policy of showing and initiating exhibitions of critical, challenging work by both new and established artists, keeping contemporary cultural discourse at the core of its programme. Mounting six or seven exhibitions a year, the John Hansard Gallery aims to place British art in an international arena that challenges the context in which living artists work.  
[www.soton.ac.uk/~infoserv/hansard/hansard.html](http://www.soton.ac.uk/~infoserv/hansard/hansard.html)

**Museion – Museum für Moderne Kunst, Bozen** Museion, an exhibition site for contemporary art in Bolzano has existed since 1987. Geographically situated in the border region of two countries, the various exhibition projects deal with the relation between the Italian and the German-speaking language areas. The collection hosts about 1700 works of national and international art, which is also shown through the stock exhibitions. The specialised library offers 8000 titles on modern and contemporary art. At Museion, the collection as well as the library have specialised in Art and Language.  
[www.museion.it](http://www.museion.it)

**Zentralarchiv des internationalen Kunsthandels, Bonn** Since 1993, ZADIK has worked on the documentation and registering of materials of the German and international art trade after 1945. The core of the stock are the archives and estates of galleries, art critics, collectors, and photographers. Hence, the central archive offers systematic records about the history of the art trade, looking also at its developments and orientations, which has been made accessible through a database. Beside the production of video interviews with gallery owners and the organisation of theme-specific exhibitions, the central archive publishes the bulletin *sediment* half a year.

[www.kah-bonn.de/zadik/index.htm](http://www.kah-bonn.de/zadik/index.htm)

## Associated Partners

**Academy of Fine Arts, Archive, Prague.** Headed by cultural studies scholar Jiri Sevcik, the academy developed a research centre, which partly functions as an archive, partly a research centre. Over the last three years, the staff has scientifically worked upon the material, part of which has recently been put online  
<http://www.avu.cz/vvp>

**Archive for Small Press & Communication.** The ASPC is part of the collection of the New Museum Weserburg in Bremen. Together with the University of Bremen, the archive is working on a research centre for artist publications. The ASPC will participate within Vektor as head of an international working group in the field of artist books.  
[http://www.nmwb.de/fr\\_slg.htm](http://www.nmwb.de/fr_slg.htm)

**The Contemporary Art Centre, Skopje.** The Contemporary Art Centre, Skopje is an interdisciplinary cultural association, which is presented online and has its own exhibition space. The CAC supports various activities of contemporary art in Macedonia and organises exhibitions, festivals, multimedia projects and conferences. The CAC has essentially contributed to setting up the "Balkan Art Network."  
<http://www.scca.org.mk>

**Generali Foundation Wien.** The Generali Foundation, Vienna developed out of the internal art association by the Generali group. Over the last 10 years, the activities and exhibition facilities have been considerably extended. The focus lies on an extended notion of sculpture, relating Austrian positions to international examples.  
<http://foundation.generali.at>

**Goldsmiths College, University of London.** The Curating programme in the Department of Visual Arts is especially interested in research into innovative contemporary curatorial practices, particularly as they reflect upon representations of contemporary visual culture - above all those in which art practice forms a central element. The collection held in the Library consists of ephemeral material relating to contemporary alternative art events in London.  
<http://www.goldsmiths.ac.uk>

**Institut für moderne Kunst Nürnberg.** The Institut für moderne Kunst Nürnberg was founded in 1967 in order to establish an archive on contemporary art after 1945. The institute hosts about 8000 information files of representatives of the national and international art scene and an extensive research library. Special importance is placed on amassing "ephemeral" printed matter, such as invitations, brochures, leaflets etc. and on maintaining a wide-ranging collection of newspaper and magazine clippings.  
<http://www.moderne-kunst.org>

**Kunst-Bulletin, Zurich.** The Kunstbulletin is published by the Schweizerische Kunstverein 10 times a year and one of the most important art magazines in Europe.  
<http://www.kunstbulletin.ch>

**Moderna Galerija Ljubljana.** The Moderna Galerija Ljubljana is the Slovenian national museum for modern and contemporary art. The focus lies on the presentation of the collection on Slovenian art of the 20th century, which is linked with exhibitions on international contemporary art.  
<http://www.mg-lj.si/>

**Muzeum Ludwig, Budapest.** The Ludwig Museum Budapest officially opened in its present location (Royal Palace, Building 'A') in June 1991. It was founded on an agreement signed by Peter and Irene Ludwig, the Aachen Ludwig Foundation, the Hungarian Ministry of Culture and Education and the Hungarian National Gallery. The Ludwig Museum Budapest was the first to be established in Central and Eastern Europe, which was followed by St. Petersburg and the recently opened museum of international contemporary art Beijing, the first of this kind in China. The collection of the Museum of Contemporary art starts with 1989 and hosts international artists, focussing on Central Europe.  
<http://www.c3.hu/~ludwig/>

**Neue Galerie Graz.** The Neue Galerie Graz informs about contemporary art production on a regional, national, and international level in exhibitions and accompanying programmes. The Neue Galerie hosts an extensive collection of art from the 19th and 20th century.  
<http://www.neuegalerie.at>

**Schweizerisches Institut für Kunstwissenschaft (SIK)** Founded in 1951, the Swiss Institute for Art Research (SIAR) is a centre for research in the fields of art history and technology. It specializes in art in Switzerland. The institute carries out scientific and technological research projects and publishes scientific dictionaries, monographs and catalogues on art history and technology. The documentation and information centre in Zurich collects and archives information material, such as press clippings, invitation cards, details on public art and correspondence. These documents registered in the institutes data base along with key dates concerning the work and biographical information of artists currently producing in Switzerland. In the near future the database will be partially accessible on the net.  
<http://www.unil.ch/isea>