

tatements

23 conceptual art actions for performance in
or using the tate archive, london

matt martin

since food and drink are forbidden inside the
archive ask a famous artist to write to
you using non-toxic ink on rice
paper deposit it into the archive
then make an appointment to consult the
document eat it then leave

since coats and bags are forbidden inside the
archive in case anyone tries to smuggle
a document out deposit as ephemera a
large paper bag with the logo of an
exhibition go to the archive and consult
this item then leave with it when
challenged by security you can show them that
your bag is empty

email the archives and make an appointment to
view several conceptual artworks the
kind that consist of instructions for their
own performance on the day of your
appointment stay at home you have
just made a conceptual visit

submit to the archive a long series of
requests for documents this list is
secretly a musical score the items are
chosen so that when archivists retrieve them
the roller racking system's sounds the
turning of wheels and the squeaking of
shelves along tracks and the percussive
bumping of units into one another will
play your tune

the normally cool climate in the archive
fluctuates interrupted by moments of
sweltering heat sometimes the hot period
lasts for only a few minutes sometimes
half an hour over the course of a month
it becomes apparent that the hot interludes
are dots and dashes in a morse code
sentence spelling out the next
instruction to be performed

treat the cloakroom as an archive choose
from an index of visitors who have deposited
coats and bags sign out a person's
possessions for research rifle through
pockets and browse the books in their
rucksack try to learn as much about them
as possible

visit the archive and sign out a document of interest leave it on the desk and instead converse with the invigilating archivist ask them about whatever theme you would have used the item to investigate keep the archivist talking as long as you can surreptitiously record everything that evening type up their discourse repeat the next day with a different document until your dissertation is complete

declare that whatever happens in the gallery
on one particular day is all part of an
artwork at the end of this day collect
every piece of A4 paper from recycling bins
throughout the building the crumpled
ticket printouts the partly completed
activity trails the minutes from
meetings riddled with typos the gallery
assistants' rotas bind them as a
catalogue deposit it in the archive
also sell copies at the gift shop

change gallery signage so that visitors looking for a special exhibition are led to the archive instead they form a queue in front of the archive's locked door let them in a few at a time to take turns watching footage on the archive's computers the artwork they watch is livestreamed c.c.t.v. footage of the queue that they've just been in

borrow from the archive the audio recording
of a conference about conceptual art rig
this up to play through the fire alarm system
while the building evacuates there will be
eloquent discourse about sol lewitt and
christine kozlov interspersed every five
seconds by wailing sirens

turn every page in the archive into a
microdot destroy the originals
print the dots so that they fill the pages of
a single hardback leave it on a randomly
chosen shelf in the archive fill the
rest of the shelves with books whose pages
are blank these other volumes are
otherwise identical let there be no
finding aid that can locate the one printed
copy

deposit with the archive a cassette in a new
format that no one has seen before open
a contest for engineers to design a device
that could play it display all the
entrants as an exhibition the sound they
all play is a recording of this instruction

archive the artist herself as preparatory material for artworks she sleeps on a mattress high on a shelf corresponding to her place in the filing system visitors can request to access her for research but she honours the quiet of the reading room and will not answer questions researchers must make do with inspecting the calluses where she holds her paintbrush or shining an ophthalmoscope into her eyes to measure how her vision might affect her landscapes

archive a pair of living sculptures
artists who pose as their own works of art
mummify them in their own paper
documentation inter them in a mausoleum
within the archive with all their
personal effects as grave goods the
digital catalogue entry reports rumours of a
lethal curse researchers daring to enter
the tomb die of fright when the mummies
sit up in their sarcophagi and start singing

document a wooden sculpture by offering it to
a swarm of wasps their jaws will pulp it
into paper for constructing their
nest don protective clothing to write on
the nest's exterior all you can recall about
the lost sculpture deposit the nest in
the archive the archivists must nurture
the wasps as an integral part of this record

the artwork consists of pedalling an exercise bike this charges a battery which is the record of the performance to consult it one must sit watching a light-bulb lit by the battery until its power runs out then repeat the performance to recharge the documentation ready for the next visitor

the artwork is a conceptual instruction to
replace every piece in a gallery with copies
of itself the digital record of this
item is a computer virus spreading
through the archive database it turns every
entry into a document of this act

the artwork is a flower garden to
document it a beehive is set up the
record thus produced and deposited in the
archive is a jar of honey when someone
wishes to access it an archivist must lead
them with the jar to the gallery café so
that the visitor can consult the document on
a piece of toast

the artwork is a dance piece performed upon
fresh snow with dancers' footprints as
documentation block by block the surface
is levered up and carried on refrigerated
trucks to the archive to be kept in a
cold storage vault visitors are given
parkas when they go to read it

the artwork is a performance in which objects
are ritually deposited from a barge into the
river outside the gallery as
documentation this section of river is dammed
off and water drained from it silt
containing the sacred objects is then scooped
up and moved to a room behind a submarine
door in the archive the room sits
between lines of low and high tide a
tunnel is opened from the foreshore to this
chamber at high tide the room is
submerged at low tide readers may enter
to consult the mud

mail to the archive one postcard per day
purchased from the gallery's gift
shop on the back of each card are
written instructions for how and where to
display the depicted artwork in a proposed
rehang archivists mount the postcards in
the relevant positions inside a scale model
of the gallery forming a parallel
institution around which archive visitors'
gazes stroll

show every work in the gallery's stores to an
art critic use an m.r.i. scanner to map
her brain activity while she behold them
then destroy all the works and their
archive apart from these brain scans
when one of the pieces is needed for display
hire another artist to create a work that
will perfectly duplicate in the critic the
same neural response

engrave a document into a tablet of
plutonium-239 so lethally radioactive
that it must be kept in a lead-lined vault
under the gallery floor no one who
consults the document can survive the
experience the whole neighbourhood must
evacuate first and the building with all
its artworks be destroyed afterwards so
long as the document is not consulted the
archive stays lavishly funded throughout the
element's millennia-long half-life to
prevent horrors occurring