

To support this view I would like to refer to complex or composite works like art installations, video installations and net.art, as well as other works intended to be much simpler, but which are in fact complicated by mechanisms such as slide projectors or mechanical motors. Their technology is becoming rarer and more fragile over time, which actually makes restoration, cleaning or even just regular maintenance more complex.

For instance, an emblematic piece of the artist Nam June Paik, entitled “Mirage Stage” has been part of our collection since 2005. At that time we presented it in a big exhibition with many videos, installations and electronic works. We had bought the piece directly from the gallery just after Paik’s death, and we hired his assistant to mount the artwork in order to obtain all the information necessary to be able to re-install it again without him. In addition to the complications of assembling and mounting this large artwork, one of the most laborious issues was keeping the electronic devices that make up this piece working during the exhibition, and providing fast and effective answers when the DVD or TV monitors broke down. Problems were noted on the three DVD systems which provided the three different films and which were placed at the back of the piece, hidden behind the antique TV cabinet. There were also problems with the twelve monitors showing the films, which were placed at the front of the piece, slightly inclined and supported at the back. The problems arose because of the length of time the equipment was used during the museum’s hours of operation, and also because the support on the back of the TV monitors was not strong enough to sustain their weight.

### New expertise

All these new approaches test the level of development and adaptability of our profession. Most of us come from a classical training in conservation of contemporary or traditional art, but in our professional life, especially in modern or contemporary museums, we are facing new scenarios with each new installation or mounting. This is especially so during temporary exhibitions where we have to innovate and learn new ways and tools to resolve new situations. This is achieved through everyday experiences during the installation process and by solving problems related to mounting. It is also achieved by encouraging participation and sharing experiences with other museums and colleagues through research projects, conferences and symposia.

We often have the opportunity to work directly with the artist, their assistants or their relatives. Sometimes we help them to install their artworks. Many times though, we even help them to produce the actual piece from an initial drawing or conception to completion. This can include resolving some technical problems that they had not thought of during their creative process, or adapting the piece to a museum environment that is characterized by a large number of visitors for several hours a day and over a long period.