

Jenny Holzer, *Instalation for Bilbao*, 1997 Guggenheim Museum; Silvia Lindner

The piece was commissioned by Bilbao Guggenheim Museum directly from Jenny Holzer. It is placed in the Museum's Boot gallery (101), an interactive space that invites visitors to move around freely. The gallery's curvy walls, the floor and the ceiling have been coated with a shiny, mirror-like finish, where the nine thirteen-metre high LED (Lighting Emitting Device) columns are reflected. The columns consist of nine double-sided steel girders covered with a red and blue LED panel on the front and back sides respectively. The texts come up from the bottom and display a combination of letters, backgrounds, shapes, sequence of the texts, rhythm, cycles, and directions managed by the software. The texts are a variation of the Arno text and show phrases in Basque, Spanish and English.

The technical and conceptual complexity of the piece brings conservation concerns and obstacles in the short term. The foundation of this research is: the use of elements that are obsolete nowadays, the continuous technological development of equipment and programmes; both electronics and informatics, and an exhaustive study of the piece's concept and genesis.

In order to investigate, tackle, solve and prevent present and future conservation problems, the study was carried out in close collaboration with the artist and her working team. The artist's input together with the collaboration of a multi-disciplinary studio working team coordinated by the Guggenheim Bilbao Museum have ensured the success of the project. Their contributions to the project have enormously assisted in establishing a working methodology which details criteria and procedures and assures the future conservation of the piece. Jenny Holzer's contribution and the collaboration of her working team have been crucial in tackling the issue of the conservation of the piece. Being a piece mainly composed of technological elements (electronics and informatics) it was deemed necessary to allocate time to look for constant updating in order to solve issues of obsolescence. A thorough knowledge of the science involved was essential in understanding the piece and to determining the action strategy to adopt. The importance given to the piece's language and perception issues, (as opposed to the manufacturing technique), has assisted in the definition of the installation's exhibition and conservation procedures.

A thorough understanding of the essence of the piece was possible thanks to the identification of the technical elements and aesthetic concepts that the artist deems essential to preserve the integrity of the piece, i.e. those that are immovable and those that are irrelevant and eventually replaceable.

The specific actions carried out during the research were as follows:

- Establishment and management of: procedures, manuals and forms regarding maintenance, incidents and interventions.
- Technical interventions due to electronic / informatics failure, replacement of LED panels, aging process of components, specific deterioration patterns and maintenance.
- Study and analysis of the obsolete components. Acquisition of material (red LEDs) and replacement (blue LEDs).
- Improvements of the stenographical finishes.
- Establishing criteria and procedures (curatorial, technical) that support the future exhibition of the piece.

The research results have been documented in various ways: texts, photography, video, Betacam SP, drawings, animations, and several electronic folders. The speed of technological evolution makes continuous study and updating an absolute necessity.