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Configurations of Cross-Professional Collaboration in Digital Art Exhibitions: A Scoping Review of Roles, Division of Labour, Interdependencies, and Decision Rights

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Abstract

Digital art exhibitions connect artistic, curatorial, technical and operational work, but published accounts vary in how they attribute decisions and responsibilities. This scoping review maps these working relationships and examines their reporting across production, organising and conservation. The review was informed by Joanna Briggs Institute guidance and the PRISMA-ScR reporting framework. Scopus and Web of Science were searched for English-language journal articles, conference papers and book chapters published from 1 January 2016 to 25 September 2026. Twenty-four reports were included and charted for professional functions, interdependencies, interfaces and decision rights. Reports frequently described role combination and brokering roles, while expertise, funding and venues were linked to working arrangements. Among 108 realised or ongoing decision episodes, a chooser was identified in 71 and a subsequent responsibility holder in eight. Reported subsequent responsibilities included exhibition close-out, continuing care, archival custody, administration and finance, and commercial duties. These findings describe reporting patterns rather than the prevalence of practices or the formal authority of participants. The review provides a framework for distinguishing collaborative contributions from decision rights and subsequent responsibility, identifying documentation priorities for curatorial practice and future research.

Keywords: Curatorial Practice, Time-Based Media Conservation, Boundary Objects, Brokerage, Accountability

Introduction

Digital art exhibitions depend on work that extends beyond the moment of display. Artists, programmers, curators, producers and venue teams must connect creative intentions with software, equipment, spaces and schedules. These arrangements also matter after an

exhibition: software and hardware age, and keeping a work accessible may require its translation into a different technical form (Rinehart & Ippolito, 2014). In museums, such works can behave as what Domínguez Rubio (2014) called unruly objects, drawing several forms of expertise into decisions about their identity and care. Festivals, studios and university laboratories face related coordination demands when they commission, produce or show digital art. Research on immersive exhibitions similarly describes collaboration between museum teams, design firms and specialist subcontractors, although immersive exhibitions are not necessarily digital artworks (Popoli & Derda, 2021). These participants must divide tasks, secure resources and establish who may make or approve consequential changes. As van Saaze (2013) argued for installation art, working practices cannot be treated as a backstage matter when they help determine what the artwork becomes.

The central problem is how professional contributions relate to decision rights and subsequent responsibility when exhibition work crosses occupational and organisational boundaries. This connects the review to social-science debates about professional jurisdiction, coordination in temporary projects and boundary-work in cultural production (Abbott, 1988; Bechky, 2006; Yeğinsü, 2025). Digital art exhibitions make these questions consequential because technical interventions can affect how an artwork is experienced and preserved, while its production, exhibition and later care may involve different combinations of artists, museum professionals and technical collaborators (Aristidou & Stylianou-Lambert, 2024). Clarifying these relationships matters for how institutions recognise expertise and document accountability across an exhibition's life.

Several bodies of scholarship address parts of this work. Curatorial studies examine how new media art unsettles established approaches to presentation, documentation and collecting (Graham & Cook, 2010; Paul, 2008). Conservation research examines the identity and continuity of time-based works (Laurenson, 2006; van Saaze, 2013), including networks of care in which tasks and responsibilities are distributed (Dekker, 2023). Practice-based research contributes accounts in which making an artwork forms part of the inquiry (Candy & Edmonds, 2018). Neighbouring reviews have examined organisational questions in museum digital technology (Taormina & Bonini Baraldi, 2022), participant roles in co-designed digital heritage (Nikolakopoulou & Koutsabasis, 2025), and stakeholder participation in art–science collaboration (Chen & Mao, 2026). This review addresses a more specific intersection: how artistic, curatorial, technical and operational work is connected in digital art exhibitions, and what the published accounts reveal about decisions and responsibilities. It does not assume that these questions have been absent from the wider literature.

Recent empirical studies show why these relationships require closer comparison. Interviews with museum professionals and artists or their representatives revealed reliance on external technical teams for virtual reality and augmented reality exhibition support and skill development (Aristidou & Stylianou-Lambert, 2024). Through practice-led curatorial research, Jeon, Masunah, and Karyono (2024) described how visiting and locally recruited teams divided festival work and exchanged knowledge in Bengkulu. Yeğinsü's (2025) interviews in Turkey described the balancing of artistic intentions and commercial demands in the pursuit of financial sustainability. These studies illuminate technical dependencies, practical coordination and professional boundaries in different settings. The present review

brings such accounts into a common framework for comparing how contributions, actual choices, explicit approvals and subsequent responsibilities are reported.

The available accounts differ in purpose and form, including project reflections, interview studies and conservation case histories. Their terms for roles, interfaces and authority also vary. A scoping review is appropriate for mapping that range, clarifying concepts and identifying gaps in reporting (Arksey & O'Malley, 2005; Munn et al., 2018). Three boundaries guide the review. A digital system must be constitutive of the artwork, rather than only a tool for presenting a collection. The collaboration must concern exhibition-related work, from commissioning to re-display. The synthesis then examines how work and authority are described, without estimating the effectiveness of one collaborative arrangement over another.

The aim is to show how cross-professional collaboration in digital art exhibitions has been configured, and how fully it has been reported, in recent research. It treats collaboration as an arrangement of work and authority among professional functions rather than as a quality of good teamwork, asking where the published record allows that arrangement to be traced. Four research questions (RQs) follow from this aim.

RQ1. What is the extent and nature of the evidence on cross-professional collaboration in digital art exhibitions published from 2016 to the search date in 2026?
RQ2. Which professional functions take part, and how is artistic, curatorial, technical and operational work divided among them?
RQ3. Which resources, interdependencies and interfaces connect these functions?
RQ4. How are role boundaries, decision rights and responsibilities allocated, and how fully are they reported?

The first question describes the literature itself. The other three follow the work from its division to the authority over it, and the next section defines the concepts on which they rest.

Conceptual Background

Interdisciplinary collaboration has been examined through relationships among disciplines and different logics of working together (Barry, Born, & Weszkalnys, 2008; Engel, Hinkson, Phillips, & Thain, 2018; Strunden & Müller, 2026). Cross-professional collaboration, as used here, instead foregrounds kinds of work and claims over tasks. Abbott (1988) described professions as an interdependent system in which jurisdictions are negotiated against other groups' claims. A programmer and a conservator may consequently contribute different expertise while both claiming a say in a migration. The review uses professional functions rather than fixed occupations: a function is a kind of work, and an artist who writes code can hold more than one. Holding several functions alone does not establish collaboration; the account must also show how work is connected, negotiated or handed over between contributors or organisational units.

Becker (1982) treated art as collective activity sustained by cooperation and shared conventions. Every work, on this view, rests on a division of labour, and the line between the artist's tasks and everyone else's is drawn by the conventions of an art world rather than by the work itself. Digital art redraws that line often. A curator may take on production, a

programmer may shape how a work behaves, and the tasks one person holds can change from project to project. The division of labour, the first dimension charted here, covers who carried out which tasks, which functions one person combined and where a brokering role connected the others by translating between them. Such a division needs coordination, "the process of interaction that integrates a collective set of interdependent tasks" (Okhuysen & Bechky, 2009, p. 463).

Professional functions depend on resources controlled by other participants and organisations. Resource dependence theory draws attention to the constraints and influence created by this reliance (Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978). Funds, spaces, systems and specialist knowledge are therefore examined alongside work interdependencies. Interfaces are the points at which work passes between functions. Star and Griesemer's (1989) concept of boundary objects helps explain how an object can support cooperation while serving different local purposes. A score, build or documentation page may perform that role, but a shared file is not automatically a boundary object. The analysis identifies the object, the functions using it and the work it helps connect.

Decision rights concern who is entitled to decide about a specified object, such as a migration, venue or display version. Fama and Jensen (1983) distinguish initiation, ratification, implementation and monitoring. This review adapts that distinction rather than applying the four stages unchanged. It separates proposals and advice, actual choice, explicit approval or agreement, veto, execution and subsequent responsibility. Monitoring is not coded as a separate stage. An attributed choice demonstrates reported action; it does not by itself establish a formal entitlement to decide. Likewise, advice, execution and permission to edit documentation do not establish authority over the artwork. Subsequent responsibility is recorded with its scope: exhibition close-out and return logistics, continuing care, archival custody, or rights and commercial arrangements. These responsibilities are analytically distinct even when the same participant holds several.

Methodology

The review was informed by Joanna Briggs Institute (JBI) guidance for scoping reviews (Peters et al., 2020) and organised using the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses extension for Scoping Reviews (PRISMA-ScR) reporting framework (Tricco et al., 2018).

Eligibility Criteria

Eligibility was framed through the Participants, Concept and Context (PCC) elements recommended by JBI (Peters et al., 2020). Participants were professional functions connected through the work described, rather than inferred from job titles, affiliations or authorship. The concept was the configuration of that work: division of labour, interdependencies, interfaces, role boundaries, decision rights or responsibilities. The context required a digital system constitutive of the artwork and a connection to exhibition-related work, including commissioning, production, installation, maintenance, conservation or re-display (Table 1).
Three boundary rules were clarified during screening. Digital displays of heritage collections qualified only when a digital system was constitutive of the artwork. Teaching projects could qualify when their works reached a public exhibition (Strunden & Müller, 2026), as could interview studies reporting exhibition-related work across a field rather than a single named

project (Lyu & Dolah, 2025; Yeğinsü, 2025). Eligible source types were English-language journal articles, conference papers and book chapters. Eligibility was based on publication date, from 1 January 2016 to the recorded search date of 25 September 2026, irrespective of when the artwork or project originated. The window spans eleven calendar years, with partial coverage of 2026. This window applies to the included corpus; conceptual and methodological references provide context and are not restricted to that window.

Table 1
Eligibility Criteria

Criterion	Included	Excluded
Participants: professional functions	At least two professional functions connected through collaborative work in making or showing digital art; one contributor may hold several functions, but role combination alone is not sufficient	Functions inferred only from job titles, author lists or affiliations
Concept: cross-professional work (C3)	An extractable division of labour, negotiation, handover, dependency, role boundary or working mechanism between those functions[a]	General calls for collaboration; functions inferred only from authorship or technology use; one contributor's work described without a collaborative connection
Context: digital artwork (C1)	A digital system generates, runs, makes interactive or re-presents the artwork	Digitised collections, guides, wayfinding and audience-participation tools; heritage displays in which digital media serve historical objects
Context: exhibition link (C2)	Exhibition, commission, production, installation, maintenance, conservation or re-display of the work, including public teaching exhibitions and interview accounts of exhibition work in a field	Prototypes, speculative scenarios and creative methods with no exhibition or re-display
Source type	Journal articles, conference papers and book chapters reporting research or documented practice	All other source types
Language and period	English; publication from 1 January 2016 to 25 September 2026; eleven calendar years with partial coverage of 2026; artwork date does not determine eligibility	Other languages; published before 2016

Note. C1 to C3 are the codes used in the selection records. The wording follows the retrospective clarification described under Source Selection.
[a] Neither a complete approval chain nor a named project was required.

Search Strategy

Scopus and the Web of Science Core Collection were searched to cover journal articles, conference papers and book chapters across digital art, museum studies and related fields. The strategy combined three blocks with AND: forms of digital art, exhibition settings, and

collaboration or coordination. Broad terminology was used because relevant accounts appear in literatures with different vocabularies. Roles and decision rights were also assessed during screening and charting rather than requiring those exact expressions in every retrieved record.

Scopus was searched using TITLE-ABS-KEY. Web of Science was searched using its Topic field, which includes titles, abstracts, author keywords and Keywords Plus. The recorded search date was 25 September 2026. Publication-year limits were 2016–2026; eligibility was restricted to English-language journal articles, conference papers and book chapters. Table 2 presents the retained search strings and associated search details. Search reporting was informed by the extension to the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses for reporting literature searches (PRISMA-S; Rethlefsen et al., 2021). Reference-list searching and grey-literature searching were not undertaken. Records were exported with abstracts for screening and deduplication.

Table 2
Database Search Strategy

Database	Search string	Fields and limits	Date searched	Records
Scopus	TITLE-ABS-KEY ("digital art*" OR "media art*" OR "new media art*" OR "interactive art*" OR "immersive art*" OR "installation art" OR "interactive installation*" OR "immersive exhibition*" OR "time-based media" OR "art and technology") AND TITLE-ABS-KEY (exhibit* OR curat* OR museum* OR galler*) AND TITLE-ABS-KEY (collaborat* OR cooperat* OR interdisciplinar* OR "cross-disciplinar*" OR "cross-professional" OR "division of labo*" OR interdependen* OR coordinat*) AND PUBYEAR > 2015 AND PUBYEAR < 2027	Title, abstract and keywords; publication years 2016–2026. Eligible sources: English-language journal articles, conference papers and book chapters.	25 September 2026	245
Web of Science Core Collection	TS=("digital art*" OR "media art*" OR "new media art*" OR "interactive art*" OR "immersive art*" OR "installation art" OR "interactive installation*" OR "immersive exhibition*" OR "time-based media" OR "art and technology") AND TS=(exhibit* OR curat* OR museum* OR galler*) AND TS=(collaborat* OR cooperat* OR interdisciplinar* OR "cross-disciplinar*" OR "cross-professional" OR "division of labo*" OR interdependen* OR coordinat*) AND PY=(2016-2026)	Topic: title, abstract, author keywords and Keywords Plus; publication years 2016–2026. Eligible sources as above.	25 September 2026	201

Note. Search strings are reproduced from the retained search documentation. The 2026 publication year is covered only to the search date.

Source Selection

Duplicates were identified by normalised DOI, followed by normalised title and publication year. Three remaining title variants were matched after comparing authors, sources and abstracts. The unit of synthesis is the report, rather than the project or artwork (Page et al., 2021). Reports sharing an institution were retained separately when they described different projects or episodes; such contextual overlap is considered in interpreting the synthesis.

Titles and abstracts were screened in two passes, each recording a decision and reason code. The passes disagreed on 39 records. Differences were resolved against the eligibility criteria and documented in the screening record. Where more than one exclusion reason applied, a fixed order of precedence determined the primary code. These screening passes are not presented as evidence of independent reviewer agreement.

Reports were sought from publisher sites, repositories and author pages. Those recorded as not retrieved were kept separate from content-based exclusions. The assessed material was reviewed in successive rounds, with decisions linked to an eligibility criterion and an available page, section or other source location.

Some eligibility wording was clarified after title and abstract screening. The clarified wording allowed public teaching exhibitions and exhibition-related interview studies, while retaining the requirement for an extractable collaborative arrangement. Applying it to the assessed reports replaced one conceptual paper with one interview study (Yeğinsü, 2025); two exclusions were recoded from C3 to C1.

The recorded searches returned 446 records: 245 from Scopus and 201 from Web of Science (Figure 1). Removing 160 duplicates left 286 records for screening. The recorded title-and-abstract stage excluded 238: 116 under C1, 26 under C2, 88 under C3 and eight for ineligible document type. Of 48 reports sought, 11 were recorded as not retrieved and 37 as assessed. Thirteen were excluded at that stage: five under C1, three under C2 and five under C3. The current charted corpus contains 24 reports. These counts describe the retained screening record and are not revised by the exploratory subsets.

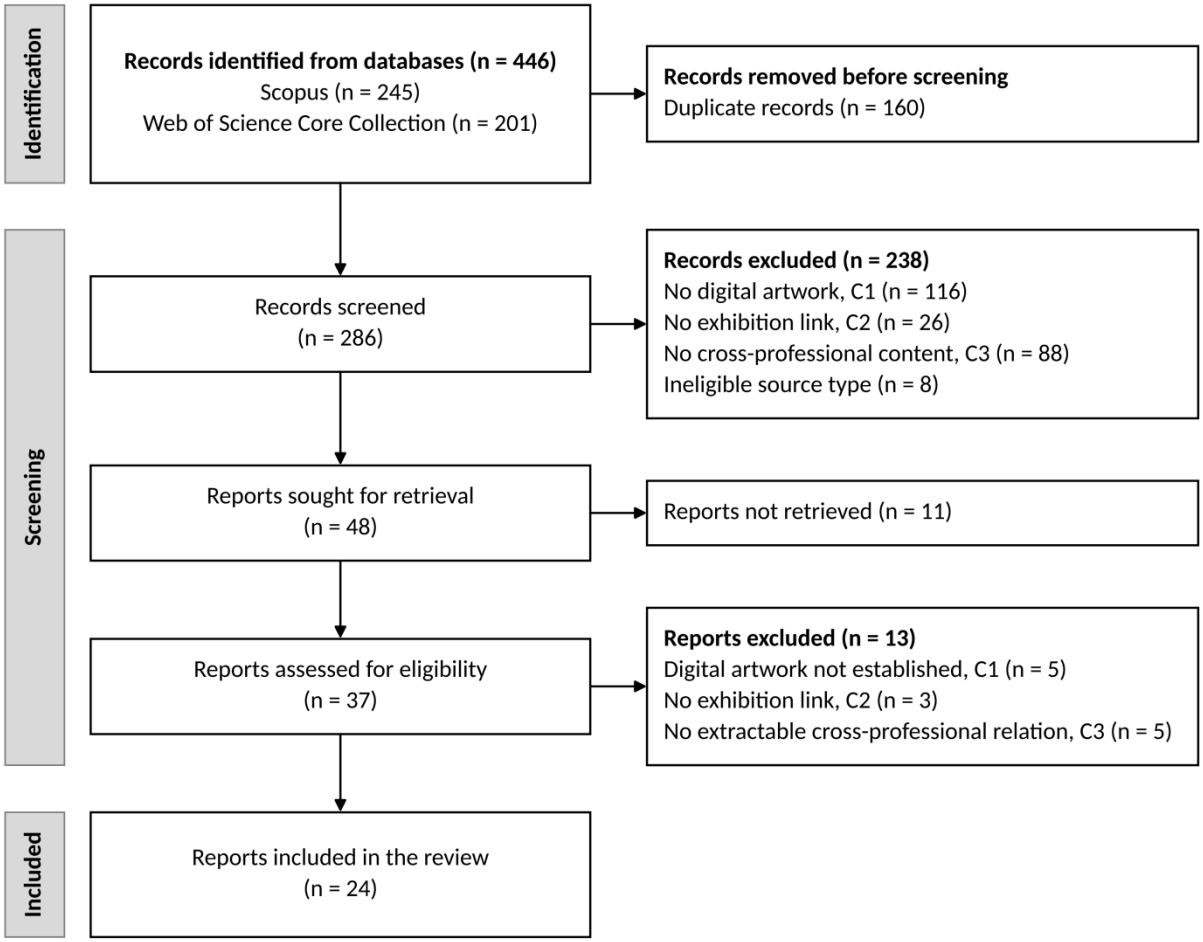


Figure 1. Recorded source-identification and selection pathway. Layout adapted from the PRISMA 2020 flow diagram (Page et al., 2021); C1–C3 refer to Table 1. Counts concern records or reports, not projects.

Data Charting and Synthesis

The charting form followed the four RQs. It recorded bibliographic details, project or exhibition, setting, geographical context, scope of the account and whether authors participated in the reported work. Resource fields describe funding or other dependencies mentioned in the project; they are not a systematic extraction of publication-level funding declarations. The four conceptual dimensions were operationalised through five reporting indicators: division of labour, interdependencies, interfaces, choice or approval, and responsibility. Professional functions received multiple labels when appropriate; community participants were identified separately. Shared objects were coded with the work they connected. Each extract retained a quotation or source description and an available location. A decision episode was a passage-grounded selection, configuration change, choice, approval or specific proposal concerning an identifiable object. General tasks, standing rules, bare exhibition occurrences, recurrent practices without a delimited episode and duplicate umbrella descriptions were kept outside the episode denominator. Actual choices were coded as attributed to one identifiable person, role or unit; to distinct parties jointly; to an organisation without a responsible unit; or to no identified chooser. Explicit permission, agreement, consent, ratification or sign-off was coded separately from actual choice, and neither was assumed to demonstrate formal authority. Execution and subsequent

responsibility were separately attributed. Realised and ongoing episodes were distinguished from proposed actions. One coded episode may summarise related choices in a passage; the counts do not enumerate every decision made in practice.

Non-exclusive source-mode labels classify the material supporting an account: D denotes direct project accounts or documentation; I, interviews; S, secondary accounts; and P, unrealised proposals. These labels classify sources rather than grade their quality. Reporting coverage was coded as explicit, partial or not reported. Synthesis used qualitative content analysis, with the four dimensions providing deductive categories and more specific arrangements grouped within them (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008; Levac, Colquhoun, & O'Brien, 2010; Pollock et al., 2023). Cross-dimension propositions summarise recurring patterns supported by identified reports. Report-level and episode-level denominators are stated separately in the text and Supplementary File. These labels do not establish independent corroboration or implementation; "not reported" denotes missing information in the source, not absence in practice.

Exploratory Subset Comparisons and Methodological Boundaries

Two exploratory omissions examined the influence of particular accounts. Omitting Smithson (2019), whose charted evidence comprises secondary accounts and unrealised proposals, produces a 23-report subset. Omitting five reports at interpretive boundaries of the review—Lawler-Dormer (2018), Corinto (2022), O'Reilly, Miller, and Bodor (2016), Barok, Boschat Thorez, Dekker, Gauthier, and Roeck (2019), and Yeğinsü (2025)—produces a 19-report subset. Applying both omissions produces an 18-report subset. Membership is coded 1 for retained and 0 for omitted. The main selection count remains 24 reports, and the comparisons describe sensitivity to these specified omissions. No formal critical appraisal was undertaken. The two San Francisco Museum of Modern Art (SFMOMA) reports were retained separately because they concern distinct projects.

Results

Characteristics of the Included Reports

The current corpus contains 24 reports published from 2016 to the search date in 2026 in 21 outlets (Table 3): 18 journal articles, four conference papers and two book chapters. Only Studies in Conservation and Convergence carried more than one. Five reports appeared in 2016 and none in 2017 or 2020 (Figure 2). Each report was assigned by its main focus to production and display (9), organising and curating (8), or conservation and re-display (7). These are analytical groups, not study designs. Six conservation reports date from 2019 or earlier; 13 of the 14 reports published since 2021 concern production or organising. This distribution describes the current corpus and does not establish a trend in the wider field.

Table 3
Characteristics of the Included Reports (N = 24)

Report	Site and setting	Work or exhibition	Scope and source mode	Functions
Production and display (n = 9)				
Jacobs et al. (2016)	Venues unnamed; UK climate data and funding; library, galleries, universities, science festival	*The Prediction Machine*: climate-prediction machines and public workshops developed with climate scientists	Project; D, I	Ar Te Op DE FC CP
Marecki & Małecka (2016)	Kraków publisher and online; later showings in the USA	English "total translation" of Katarzyna Giełżyńska's 30 kinetic poems, *C()n Du It*, remade clip by clip	Project; D, S	Ar Cu Te DE CP
Lawler-Dormer (2018)[b]	Auckland, New Zealand; university laboratory and gallery	Leah, a digital avatar built in a computer-science laboratory and shown in the installation Witness (2017)	Project; D, S	Ar Cu Te DE
Hall et al. (2022)	North East England, UK; festival and conference exhibit	*Cyber Eyes Wide Open*: 42 works from three-month collaborations between artists and cybersecurity companies	Project; D, P	Ar Cu Op DE
Baker (2023)	UK venues, Toronto and online; galleries, festivals, a library	*INTER/her*, an immersive VR and haptic installation made and toured in 2019–2022	Project; D	Ar Cu Te Op FC CP
Estadieu et al. (2023)	Macao, China (organiser); online	Virtual exhibition of 14 works, with optional NFTs, for the ARTeFACTo2022 conference	Project; D, P	Ar Cu Te Op
Turner & Hennessy (2025)	Canada; touring gallery exhibition, Second Life gallery, university studio	*Wrapped in the Cloud*, an animation of Jaad Kuujus's woven robe, shown in the robe's place on the *Boarder X* tour	Project; D	Ar Cu Te Op DE
Strunden & Müller (2026)	Weimar, Germany; university studio and campus exhibition	*The Sensing House*: seven hacked furniture pieces, each extended by a VR experience, made by student groups	Project; D, I, P	Ar Cu Te Op
Valenzuela Dow et al. (2026)	Cali and Bogotá, Colombia; museum, universities, community centre	*Reimagining Potrero Grande*: 14 community artworks with AR filters, shown as a travelling exhibition	Project; D, I	Ar Cu Te Op CP

Report	Site and setting	Work or exhibition	Scope and source mode	Functions
Organising and curating (n = 8)				
Turnbull Tillman & Velonaki (2016)	Vancouver, Canada; symposium art programme across several venues	Producing the ISEA2015 Art Program under a five-week contract	Project; D	Cu Te Op
Wang & Nino Carreras (2021)	Copenhagen, Denmark; VR studios working with museums, galleries and festivals	Production at two VR art studios, Khora Contemporary and MAKROPOL	Multi-project; D, I	Ar Cu Te Op FC
Corinto (2022)[b]	Florence, Italy; gallery	*Raging Babies* (2019): a painting shown with an electronic score and recorded soundscapes	Project; D, I	Ar Cu Te Op
Yetişkin et al. (2022)	Online, streamed from nine network nodes from Casablanca to Bishkek	a'21 amberNetworkFestival, a co-curated translocal art and technology festival (2021)	Project; D, I	Ar Cu Te Op DE FC
Hamid et al. (2024)	Lahore, Pakistan; public spaces of the Walled City	*Sheherezade: The Walled City Anthology* (2019), a public festival; only its digital works were charted	Project; D	Ar Cu Op FC CP
Jeon et al. (2024)	Bengkulu, Indonesia; government-led festival in a cultural park	Festival Komunitas Seni Media 2022, with 16 artists and artist communities	Project; D	Ar Cu Te Op FC
Lyu & Dolah (2025)	Beijing, China	Interviews with 20 artists who have exhibited new media art in Beijing	Field; I, P	Ar
Yeğinsü (2025)[b]	Turkey, mainly Istanbul; festivals, galleries, corporate events	Interviews on boundary-work among new media artists, curators and producers	Field; I	Ar Cu FC
Conservation and re-display (n = 7)				
Clark & Barger (2016)	San Francisco, USA; museum	SFMOMA's Artist Initiative and a third iteration of Julia Scher's *Predictive Engineering* (2016)	Project; D, P	Ar Cu Te Op CR FC
O'Reilly et al. (2016)[b]	Cardiff, UK; national museum	Ivor Davies's 1968 multimedia performance remediated as an installation for a retrospective	Project; D	Ar Cu Te CR

Report	Site and setting	Work or exhibition	Scope and source mode	Functions
Engel et al. (2018)	New York, USA; museum and online	Restoration of Shu Lea Cheang's web artwork *Brandon* (1998–1999) in 2016–2017	Project; D, I	Ar Cu Te Op CR
Barok, Boschat Thorez, et al. (2019)[b]	Amsterdam and Rotterdam, the Netherlands; media art platform, workshops, online archive	Archiving UBERMORGEN's *Chinese Gold* (2006–) with version control and a wiki	Project; D, I, S, P	Ar Cu Te Op CR
Barok, Noordegraaf, & de Vries (2019)	San Francisco, USA; museum	SFMOMA's preservation dossiers and Media Wiki; Hans Haacke's *News* re-shown in 2018	Project; D, I, S, P	Ar Cu Te Op CR
Smithson (2019)[a]	UK and USA; regional museums and galleries, online platforms	Models for collecting and distributing new media art in regional arts organisations	Multi-project; S, P	Cu Op DE
Aristidou & Stylianou-Lambert (2024)	USA and Europe; museums, a private collection, festivals	Interviews on preserving VR and AR works at six institutions and with four artists	Field; I	Ar Cu Te Op CR FC

Note. Reports are grouped by main focus and ordered by year. Site and setting concern the project, not author affiliations. Account scope (project, multi-project or field) and source modes are recorded separately. Non-exclusive source modes are: D, direct project accounts or documentation; I, interviews; S, secondary accounts; P, unrealised proposals. Neither classification is a quality ranking. Functions: Ar, artistic; Cu, curatorial; Te, technical; Op, operational; CR, conservation and registration; DE, domain expertise; FC, funders and clients; CP, community participants, coded separately. AR = augmented reality; NFT = non-fungible token; SFMOMA = San Francisco Museum of Modern Art; VR = virtual reality.

[a] Omitted from the 23-report subset and, together with the five reports marked b, from the 18-report subset.
[b] Omitted from the 19-report subset and, together with the report marked a, from the 18-report subset.

Fifteen reports concern settings in Europe or North America. Four concern Macao, Pakistan, Indonesia and Beijing (Estadieu, Ng, Martins de Abreu, & Farinha, 2023; Hamid, Hameed, & Kuusk, 2024; Jeon et al., 2024; Lyu & Dolah, 2025), and one each concerns Colombia, New Zealand and Turkey. One festival report spans nine network nodes from Casablanca to Bishkek (Yetişkin, Yiğit, & Ermiş, 2022); another describes venues only by type (Jacobs, Benford, Luger, & Howarth, 2016). Festivals appeared in 11 reports and universities in nine, with some projects spanning several settings. For example, an animation made in a university studio

replaced a woven robe on a three-year gallery tour and was later transmediated for a gallery in Second Life (Turner & Hennessy, 2025).

Authors participated, wholly or in part, in the work described in 19 reports. Nineteen accounts focus on a single project, two compare projects, and three describe a field through interviews (Aristidou & Stylianou-Lambert, 2024; Lyu & Dolah, 2025; Yeğinsü, 2025). These mutually exclusive categories describe the scope of each account. The evidence sources within an account can overlap: direct project accounts or documentation support charted claims in 20 reports, interviews in 12, unrealised proposals in eight and secondary accounts in five. Sixteen reports combine at least two source modes. Participant accounts also differ in method. One pairs ethnographic observation with the reflections of an artist who also acted as a researcher (Jacobs et al., 2016), while another draws on about a dozen conversations within an exhibition working group (Corinto, 2022). The four reports without direct project documentation are the three field studies and a review of collecting models based on secondary accounts and proposals (Smithson, 2019).

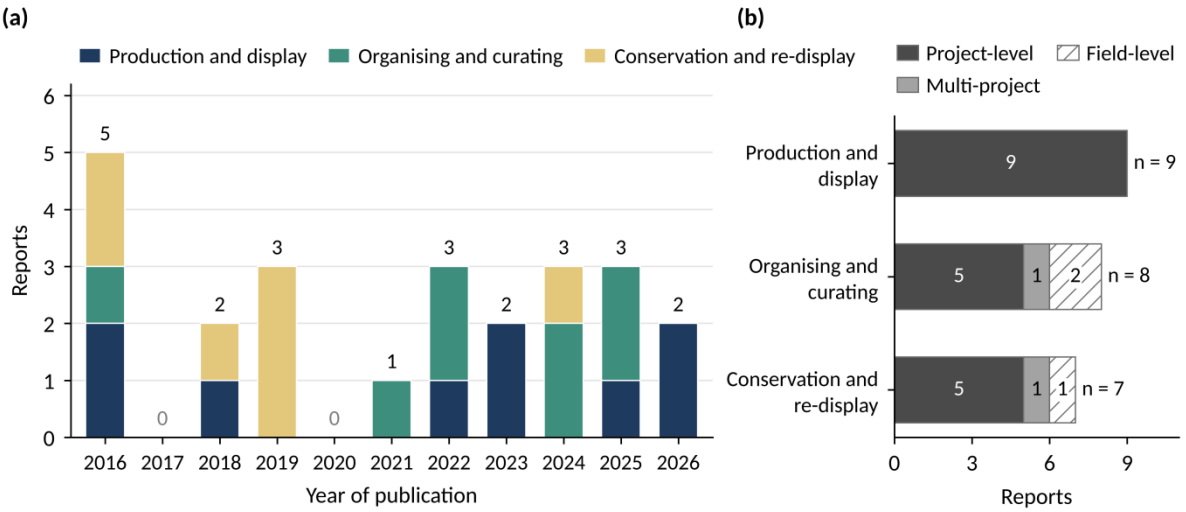


Figure 2. Publication year and scope of accounts in the current corpus (N = 24). (a) Counts by year and main-focus group; 2026 is observed only to the search date. (b) Project-level, multi-project and field-level describe the scope of the account, not evidence quality. Counts are reports, not independent projects.

Reporting coverage varies across the five indicators (Figure 3). Division of labour, interdependencies, interfaces and actual choice or approval are explicit in 20, 22, 21 and 21 reports, respectively. Responsibility is explicit in seven, partial in ten and not reported in seven. Explicit responsibility appears in two production reports, one organising report and four conservation reports. The organising example concerns exhibition close-out and artwork returns (Turnbull Tillman & Velonaki, 2016), not a commitment to long-term conservation. The indicator therefore cannot be read as a measure of long-term care alone. Responsibility remains explicit in six of the 18 reports in the smallest subset.

Report	Source modes	Division of labour	Inter-dependencies	Interfaces	Choice or approval	Responsibility
Production and display (n = 9)						
Jacobs et al. (2016)	D I	●	●	●	●	◐
Marecki & Małecka (2016)	D S	●	●	●	●	◐
Lawler-Dormer (2018)‡	D S	●	●	●	●	◐
Hall et al. (2022)	D P	●	◐	●	●	○
Baker (2023)	D	●	●	●	●	●
Estadieu et al. (2023)	D P	●	●	●	●	●
Turner & Hennessy (2025)	D	●	●	●	●	○
Strunden & Müller (2026)	D I P	●	●	●	●	◐
Valenzuela Dow et al. (2026)	D I	●	◐	●	◐	○
Organising and curating (n = 8)						
Turnbull Tillman & Velonaki (2016)	D	●	●	●	●	●
Wang & Nino Carreras (2021)	D I	●	●	●	●	◐
Corinto (2022)‡	D I	●	●	●	●	○
Yetişkin et al. (2022)	D I	●	●	●	●	◐
Hamid et al. (2024)	D	●	●	●	●	○
Jeon et al. (2024)	D	●	●	●	●	◐
Lyu & Dolah (2025)	I P	○	●	○	○	○
Yeğinsü (2025)‡	I	◐	●	○	◐	○
Conservation and re-display (n = 7)						
Clark & Barger (2016)	D P	◐	●	●	●	◐
O'Reilly et al. (2016)‡	D	●	●	●	●	●
Engel et al. (2018)	D I	●	●	●	●	●
Barok, Boschat Thorez, et al. (2019)‡	D I S P	●	●	●	●	◐
Barok, Noordegraaf, & de Vries (2019)	D I S P	●	●	●	●	●
Smithson (2019)†	S P	◐	●	◐	●	◐
Aristidou & Stylianou-Lambert (2024)	I	●	●	●	●	●
Reports (of 24): explicit / partial / not reported		20 / 3 / 1	22 / 2 / 0	21 / 1 / 2	21 / 2 / 1	7 / 10 / 7

● Explicit ◐ Partial ○ Not reported

Source modes (non-exclusive): D, direct project accounts or documentation; I, interviews; S, secondary accounts; P, unrealised proposals. Source modes are not quality grades.
Responsibility covers close-out, rights/business arrangements, ongoing care and archival custody.
† Omitted from the 23-report subset. ‡ Omitted from the 19-report subset.
Not reported indicates missing information in a report, not absence in practice.

Figure 3. Reporting coverage in the 24 reports. Filled, half-filled and open circles indicate explicit, partial and not reported coverage. Choice or approval and responsibility operationalise different aspects of decision rights; an attributed choice does not establish formal authority. Responsibility includes close-out, care, custody or rights and must be interpreted by scope. D/I/S/P identify source modes, not quality. Symbols mark membership exclusions in the exploratory subsets described in the Methodology.

Professional Functions and Division of Labour

Artistic and curatorial work were charted in 22 reports each, and technical and operational work in 19 (Table 4). Funders and clients appear in nine reports, and holders of domain expertise, such as climate scientists or cybersecurity firms, in seven. Conservation and registration appear in six, all of them conservation reports. In five reports, material from people outside the project team entered the works, from residents' stories to predictions

written in public workshops (Hamid et al., 2024; Jacobs et al., 2016; Valenzuela Dow, Araújo Mejía, van der Woude, Vélez Rolón, & Moros Ochoa, 2026). These community participants were coded apart from the professional functions.

Table 4
Professional Functions, Tasks and Shared Objects in the Included Reports

Function	Reports	Typical tasks	Shared objects	Examples
Artistic	22	Concept and artistic direction; editing assets; choosing what represents the work; approving re-made versions	Sketches, prototypes, builds, cue sheets	The artist edits assets in a shared Unity build (Baker, 2023); Haacke chooses 18 news agencies for a re-display (Barok, Noordegraaf, & de Vries, 2019)
Curatorial	22	Themes and selection; placing works; framing a festival or programme	Calls, briefs, site themes, wall texts	A core team assigns site themes to invited artists (Hamid et al., 2024); three curators fold exhibition and performance into one theme (Jeon et al., 2024)
Technical	19	Programming, modelling, fabrication, sound; migrating code	Code, builds, repositories, hardware	A furniture maker builds the machine casings (Jacobs et al., 2016); students build JavaScript migration prototypes (Engel et al., 2018)
Operational	19	Scheduling, venues, administration and finance; installation teams	Calendars, rosters, task sheets, contracts	A producer keeps shared calendars and daily install sheets (Turnbull Tillman & Velonaki, 2016); a partner organisation runs administration and finance (Yetişkin et al., 2022)
Funders and clients	9	Setting conditions through fund rules, commissions and client briefs	Fund protocols, commissions, contracts	A fund requires a local partner (Yetişkin et al., 2022); corporate clients' interests weigh on commissioned work (Yeğinsü, 2025)
Domain expertise	7	Supplying knowledge from outside art on which the work depends	Data, challenges, translations	Climate scientists advise on the prediction model (Jacobs et al., 2016); cybersecurity companies set challenges for artists (Hall, Hagan-Green, & Paracha, 2022)
Conservation and registration	6	Documenting, migrating and re-installing works; keeping records across showings	Wikis, dossiers, questionnaires, instructions	A media conservator builds the work's wiki page (Barok, Noordegraaf, & de Vries, 2019); two conservators join the team for a new iteration (Clark & Barger, 2016)

Function	Reports	Typical tasks	Shared objects	Examples
Community participants[a]	5	Contributing stories, texts and local knowledge	Workshops, stories, legends	Workshop participants write prediction texts (Jacobs et al., 2016); residents' stories and legends feed the artworks (Valenzuela Dow et al., 2026)

Note. Reports = number of the 24 reports in which the function was charted from the work described; one report usually shows several functions, and one person may hold more than one.
[a] Coded apart from professional functions.

Where the division of labour is set out in detail, it is set out by phase. Task tables for the Potrero Grande exhibition assign each sub-phase to named groups, from the art design and the AR filters to testing the exhibition route and the opening (Valenzuela Dow et al., 2026). Only the core managing team of the Bengkulu festival travelled there. The rest of the crew, display and documentation teams included, was recruited locally so that local artists and students could learn to build an exhibition of this kind (Jeon et al., 2024). For the Art Program of the 2015 International Symposium on Electronic Art (ISEA2015), the contracted producer kept shared calendars current on every phone, printed rosters for a technical director who preferred paper, and used daily installation task sheets for each major venue (Turnbull Tillman & Velonaki, 2016). Accounts of this kind show who did what and when. They do not show who could overrule whom.

Knowledge from outside art often entered the work through technical tasks. A designer with a background in science and fashion based the haptic corset's vibrations on discussions with the artist about which sensations should be felt on which parts of the body (Baker, 2023). Climate scientists, creative programmers and a furniture maker each shaped a different part of the prediction machines (Jacobs et al., 2016). The makers are not always visible. A programme pairing artists with cybersecurity companies describes the companies' challenges and the artists' responses without consistently attributing the technical implementation of the works (Hall, Hagan-Green, & Paracha, 2022). The Lahore festival account assigns design and execution to a core team but does not specify the technical implementation of individual interactive works (Hamid et al., 2024), and two conservation reports mention technicians or engineers without saying what they did (Clark & Barger, 2016; O'Reilly et al., 2016).

Role combination appears in 20 reports. Baker (2023), for example, edited visual assets and audio in the Unity build and carried out operational tasks during showings. Brokering roles appear in 16 reports: studio directors connect artists and developers (Wang & Nino Carreras, 2021), a project manager translates between an artist's vision and technical responses (Aristidou & Stylianou-Lambert, 2024), and a translator's notes guide the remake of animated poems (Marecki & Małecka, 2016). In ten reports the broker is also an author or part of the author team. Five accounts specify a practical choice or advisory remit for a broker, including the ISEA2015 producer's joint arrangement of return shipping. Such a remit does not demonstrate a general power to approve or overrule other contributors.

Conservation and registration connect successive showings. For the 2018 re-display of Hans Haacke's News at SFMOMA, a media conservator assembled a wiki page, a curator added wall

texts and a safety report, and an installation-team member contributed a maintenance report (Barok, Noordegraaf, & de Vries, 2019). The museum's Artist Initiative similarly brought curators, conservators and technical specialists together around Julia Scher's Predictive Engineering (Clark & Barger, 2016). These examples establish task contributions without automatically allocating control over the artwork. Operational work is also visible in hosting, scheduling and exhibition close-out. The ISEA2015 account describes return coordination by the producer and colleagues after responsibilities had not been assigned clearly in advance (Turnbull Tillman & Velonaki, 2016). The account therefore documents both an initial coordination gap and the arrangements through which the team completed close-out work.

Resources, Interdependencies and Interfaces

Expertise was the resource most often depended on, in 22 reports, followed by venues or space in 18 and funding in 14. Several accounts describe how funding conditions shaped working arrangements. The fund behind the a'21 amberNetworkFestival required a local partner, so Oyoun Berlin "was tactically integrated into the fund application as well as into the network" (Yetişkin et al., 2022, p. 4). Yetişkin et al. report that, during preparations, Oyoun's CEO, a principal actor in the festival's administration and finance, addressed node curators with monetary threats. Contracts set the terms of work as well. The Art Directors of ISEA2015 brought in a producer with experience of large-scale interactive production on a short contract at a set fee (Turnbull Tillman & Velonaki, 2016). At field level, interviewees describe the same dependence from experience. Curators and producers in Turkey balance artists' intentions against corporate clients' interests where state funding is absent (Yeğinsü, 2025). Artists exhibiting in Beijing count insufficient funding among their main difficulties, alongside limits of venue and set-up and barriers of communication (Lyu & Dolah, 2025).

Technical dependencies included proprietary systems or laboratories in seven reports. The avatar Leah relied on a university laboratory's computational infrastructure (Lawler-Dormer, 2018), while Brandon's restoration required analysis of obsolete Java applets before migration (Engel et al., 2018). The Prediction Machine depended on climate data and people able to interpret them (Jacobs et al., 2016). Fourteen reports connect a resource condition with a reported change: seven in production, two in organising and five in conservation. Examples include pandemic-related moves online (Estadieu et al., 2023; Turner & Hennessy, 2025), changes of venue (Baker, 2023), and the venue and return-logistics constraints of ISEA2015 (Turnbull Tillman & Velonaki, 2016). These are reported associations, not estimates of causal effects. Prospective sustainability concerns without a demonstrated change were not counted under this indicator.

Twenty-two reports describe at least one shared object, and the kind of object differs by group. Documentation and instructions appear in all seven conservation reports but in only four of the other 17. Production reports rely instead on prototypes, builds and media files (seven of nine) and on plans, briefs and schedules (six of nine). For *INTER/her*, shared Unity files carried the build between collaborators, and a cross-media map tied its imagery, sound and vibration together (Baker, 2023). Contracts and agreements appear in six reports, none of them in the production group. Instructions and scores could carry a work across versions. Those for *Predictive Engineering* require each installation to evolve with new technologies yet keep elements of earlier ones (Clark & Barger, 2016). Ivor Davies let the team start the remediation from the 1968 cue sheets rather than from the documentary film of the

performance (O'Reilly et al., 2016). Shared systems also allocate work. In the *Chinese Gold* archive, editors "can self-appoint themselves to oversee creation of a new artwork entry and patrol respective changes" (Barok, Boschat Thorez, et al., 2019, p. 110), a rule about editing rather than about the work. At SFMOMA, paper dossiers were given up partly because the shared responsibility for maintaining them had been "reduced to a single person" (Barok, Noordegraaf, & de Vries, 2019, p. 478).

Role Boundaries, Decision Rights and Responsibility

The episode chart contains 117 decision episodes in 21 reports: 107 reported as having occurred, one ongoing and nine proposed. The descriptive denominator is the 108 realised or ongoing episodes; proposed actions remain separate. A chooser is identified in 71, an executor in 75 and a subsequent responsibility holder in eight. Explicit approval or agreement is reported in nine episodes, but its actor or formal basis is not always identified. No episode explicitly identifies a veto holder. The difference between a named chooser and an explicit approval is therefore retained throughout the analysis. Table 5 illustrates seven episodes; standing rules and removed duplicate or non-episodic descriptions remain traceable in the Supplementary File.

The distribution also varies by phase. A chooser is not identified in 12 of 31 exhibition episodes and 17 of 40 commission or production episodes, compared with seven of 32 acquisition or conservation episodes. These are descriptive differences within the charted passages, with no claim of independent observations or a phase effect. Specific approval examples include permission to use Ivor Davies's cue sheets and Shu Lea Cheang's approval of Brandon's migration prototypes (Engel et al., 2018; O'Reilly et al., 2016). Artistic selection is a different kind of evidence: Haacke's selection of news agencies identifies a choice but does not, by itself, show approval of a collaborator's contribution (Barok, Noordegraaf, & de Vries, 2019). Production and organising also contain consent or agreement, including approved textual solutions with an unnamed approver and artists' acceptance of alternative display spaces (Marecki & Małecka, 2016; Turnbull Tillman & Velonaki, 2016). These examples distinguish artistic selection, approval and consent across the groups.

Table 5
Seven Illustrative Decision Episodes from Proposal to Subsequent Responsibility

Report	Phase and decision	Proposed or advised by	Actual choice or explicit approval	Carried out by	Responsibility afterwards	Basis
Jacobs et al. (2016) R286-E1	Commission or production: the model behind the prediction machine	Some climate scientists suggest a more complex model	Not reported ("the final decision ... was made", p. 501)	Not reported	Not reported	D
Yetişkin et al. (2022) R164-E4	Commission or production: a Berlin venue as the local partner in the fund application	A fund rule requiring a local partner	Not reported ("tactically integrated", p. 4)	Not reported	Partner CEO: administration and finance	D

Report	Phase and decision	Proposed or advised by	Actual choice or explicit approval	Carried out by	Responsibility afterwards	Basis
Strunden & Müller (2026) R028-E6	Exhibition: seven separate VR experiences sharing one room	Not reported	Not reported; negotiated compromises do not identify a chooser	Student groups; tutors coordinate the installation	Not reported	D
Estadieu et al. (2023) R139-E6	Distribution: whether to mint each work as an NFT	The organising committee, with tutorials and online support	Each artist; 57% wished to mint, half of them in time	The artists, under their own web3 identities	The artists, who hold and sell their NFTs	D
Aristidou & Stylianou-Lambert (2024) R135-E8	Acquisition: a 360° video version of a commissioned VR work	Not reported	The museum ("it decided", p. 1585); unit or person not named	The production company	Not reported	I
Engel et al. (2018) R250-E4	Conservation or re-display: migrating Java applets to JavaScript	Conservation department and university team, after source-code analysis	The artist approves the prototypes (1 April 2016)	Two students, supervised by a professor and conservator	Museum media conservation; ongoing care scope	D
Turnbull Tillman & Velonaki (2016) R277-E3	Exhibition close-out: return-shipping arrangements for six artworks	The producer and Fiedrich; advice from university finance staff	The producer and Fiedrich jointly arrange the approach	Finance staff, Ferris and couriers	Producer and Fiedrich: artwork returns; continuing care not reported	D

Note. Examples are illustrative, not representative. All 117 retained episodes are source-linked in the Supplementary File. Choice does not establish formal authority; not reported denotes textual silence. D = direct project accounts or documentation; I = interviews.

Advice, control and formal authority did not always sit together. Some of the climate scientists suggested a more complex model for The Prediction Machine. Yet "the final decision to use a very simple model (adding 3.7 C to the current temperature) was made in response to a variety of constraints" (Jacobs et al., 2016, p. 501), and no decision-maker is named. In the Khora studio, contracts fixed roles early and the directors advised on finance and sales, while the artist's concept counted for more than the developers' craft (Wang & Nino Carreras, 2021). Execution could also reshape a work. When the Guggenheim acquired Lin Yilin's VR commission, "some unavoidable compromises were made by the company" that exported a 360° video version (Aristidou & Stylianou-Lambert, 2024, p. 1585). The account reports a request for a narrative explanation without identifying its requester; whether the artist

approved the compromises is not reported. The Macao organisers, by contrast, deliberately held back. They wrote tutorials, funded new wallets on request and left each artist to decide whether to mint a non-fungible token (NFT); 57% wished to, and half of them finished in time (Estadieu et al., 2023).

Subsequent responsibility is reported in different forms. Cheang maintained access to the Brandon server before institutional acquisition; the Guggenheim later held hosting and conservation responsibilities (Engel et al., 2018). The Ivor Davies account anticipates returning works to the artist, which identifies intended custody but does not demonstrate completed return or care of the remediated installation (O'Reilly et al., 2016). ISEA2015 identifies who coordinated artwork returns after the exhibition (Turnbull Tillman & Velonaki, 2016). Other passages concern continuing maintenance, archival custody or commercial rights. Across the eight episodes with a named subsequent holder, four concern ongoing care, and one each concerns archival custody, exhibition close-out, administration and finance, or commercial transactions. These scopes should not be pooled as eight examples of long-term preservation. Six reports describe documentation or online material without identifying its subsequent keeper; this is a reporting gap, not evidence that nobody maintained it.

Synthesis Across Dimensions

Four propositions organise the synthesis (Table 6). First, attributed choices are more commonly reported than explicit approval or agreement, while formal authority requires a separate evidential basis. Second, reports connect resources with changes but sometimes leave the chooser unidentified. Third, shared documentation and a named subsequent keeper are distinct features of a record. Fourth, a brokering contribution does not by itself specify the broker's authority. These propositions express recurring reporting patterns and questions for further research. They do not rank collaborative configurations or establish the effects of resources, documentation or brokers.

Table 6
Exploratory Propositions and Their Evidential Limits

Proposition	Support in 24 reports	Support in 18 reports	Examples and limits	Question remaining
1. Attributed choice, explicit approval and formal decision rights are distinct	20 reports identify a chooser in a realised/ongoing episode; 7 report explicit approval or agreement	15 identify a chooser; 5 report approval or agreement	A dated artist approval is explicit (Engel et al., 2018); textual solutions are approved by unnamed actors (Marecki & Małecka, 2016)	What formal entitlement, if any, permits the reported choice or approval?
2. Resources are linked to changes, sometimes without an attributed chooser	14 reports describe a resource-linked change; 11 of 20 constraint-linked episodes lack a chooser	11 reports; 9 of 16 constraint-linked episodes lack a chooser	ISEA2015 names local responses to venue and return constraints; The Prediction Machine leaves its model chooser unnamed	Who chose among alternatives, and what options were available?

Proposition	Support in 24 reports	Support in 18 reports	Examples and limits	Question remaining
3. Documentation and subsequent responsibility require separate attribution	Responsibility explicit in 7 reports; documentation/online material has no named subsequent keeper in 6	Responsibility explicit in 6; no named keeper in 5	Close-out return coordination differs from ongoing care; intended return is not observed preservation	Who maintains each shared object, for how long, and under what scope?
4. A brokering contribution does not establish general authority	Brokers in 16 reports; author-associated in 10; practical choice or advisory remit specified in 5	Brokers in 14; author-associated in 9; remit specified in 5	Advisory studio roles and practical producer choices indicate limited remits, not a general power to overrule	Which decisions can the broker approve, change or escalate?

Note. Counts refer to reports unless episodes are specified. The 18-report subset omits the six reports identified in Table 3; it is not a revised inclusion set. Formal decision rights are not inferred from actual choice or agreement. Shared institutional context is treated as a limitation, not removed by merging distinct projects.

Subset comparisons retain several descriptive patterns while changing their scale. In the 18-report subset, 15 reports identify a chooser in at least one realised or ongoing episode and five report explicit approval or agreement. Responsibility is explicit at report level in six reports, and five describe documentation or online material without a named keeper. Nine of the 16 constraint-linked episodes in that subset leave the chooser unidentified, compared with 11 of 20 in the full corpus. These results characterise the influence of the specified omissions; alternative coding or additional eligible reports could produce different patterns.
The three groups produce different kinds of account. Production identifies executors in 35 of 48 realised or ongoing episodes and choosers in 25. Organising identifies executors in 17 of 21 and choosers in 16. Conservation identifies executors in 23 of 39 and choosers in 30. Five of the eight subsequent-holder attributions occur in conservation reports, but organising reports also identify financial or close-out responsibilities. These patterns are shaped by source detail, publication genre and the boundaries used to define an episode. They cannot be treated as rates of practice in the wider art field.

Discussion

The 24 charted reports describe the organisation of work more readily than the formal basis of authority over it. Many passages identify a chooser, whereas fewer explicitly describe approval, agreement or responsibility beyond immediate execution. Explicit approval and formal entitlement remain distinct. The synthesis maps how published accounts attribute work and responsibility; the implications for actual governance require further investigation.

Where Decision Rights Enter the Record

A conservation account may record an approval because a new version must be related to an existing work's identity (Laurenson, 2006). Brandon's dated prototype approval is an especially clear example (Engel et al., 2018). Production accounts can leave attribution unresolved: the Potrero Grande report identifies 14 artworks for augmented reality without identifying who selected them (Valenzuela Dow et al., 2026). Becker's (1982) analysis of

artistic credit offers a lens for examining whose contributions become visible. These examples suggest differences in reporting emphasis, for which publication genre, period and source detail are plausible explanations. Comparisons therefore require the same definitions of actual choice and explicit approval across groups.

The absence of an explicitly named veto holder in the episode chart should be interpreted narrowly. Withdrawal and access control can still matter. Turner and Hennessy (2025) describe the withdrawal of a woven robe from a tour and the development of an animation in its place. Aristidou and Stylianou-Lambert (2024) also report occasional artist deletions from an online archive. These passages concern different objects and forms of control. The latter describes recurrent instances rather than a delimited episode and is retained as contextual evidence. Neither should be converted automatically into a documented formal veto procedure.

Brokering roles also separate contribution from authority. The brokers in these reports resemble actors who join otherwise separated participants (Obstfeld, 2005) and coordinate through roles across temporary projects (Bechky, 2006). Yet describing translation, mediation or coordination does not specify who can approve a change. In ten of the 16 reports with brokers, a broker is also an author, which may shape what the account makes visible. That relationship does not prove selective reporting. Star and Strauss (1999) provide a useful reminder that descriptions of work depend on the indicators through which it is observed. Technical and operational work is particularly unevenly documented in the present corpus (Hall et al., 2022; Hamid et al., 2024; Strunden & Müller, 2026).

Constraints, Shared Objects and the Missing Keeper

Some accounts describe constraints more explicitly than the people who made the resulting choices. In The Prediction Machine, the artist felt that the public "would not necessarily understand the more complex models", whereas the scientists favoured greater detail (Jacobs et al., 2016, p. 501). The final choice is described in relation to constraints without naming its maker. This example shows how a judgement about an audience can enter the account as a constraint. Resource dependence theory similarly directs attention to the influence associated with control of critical resources (Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978). In amberNetworkFestival, a funding requirement brought a partner into the network; the report subsequently describes that partner's financial role and monetary threats (Yetişkin et al., 2022). The account provides a basis for examining how resource conditions and decision authority intersect.

Unattributed choices may make later interpretation more difficult, although the review does not measure that consequence. A later team may need to distinguish a property central to a work's identity from a temporary response to a technical or organisational constraint (Laurenson, 2006). The reported request for a narrative account of changes to a commissioned VR work illustrates one way of retaining that distinction, although the requester is not identified (Aristidou & Stylianou-Lambert, 2024). The differing materialisations of Chinese Gold before detailed documentation was developed provide another relevant example (Barok, Boschat Thorez, et al., 2019). Establishing whether such records improve re-display would require evidence beyond the reporting patterns mapped here.

Shared objects raise a related question about custody. Boundary objects can connect work across functions (Star & Griesemer, 1989), while infrastructure research directs attention to the labour of maintaining them (Star, 1999). At SFMOMA, shared documentation arrangements eventually placed editorial work on a conservator (Barok, Noordegraaf, & de Vries, 2019). The Museum of Modern Art's (MoMA) cross-departmental arrangements, described in contextual scholarship, offer a further example of an institutional response (Domínguez Rubio, 2014). The six reports without a named keeper for documentation or online material identify a gap in the published record. They do not establish that temporary projects lacked arrangements comparable to museums, or that a shared object caused responsibility to become unclear.

Contributions to Research on Collaborative Art Production

The first contribution is a common framework for reading working relationships across otherwise different reports. Functions, rather than occupations, make it possible to trace combined roles and the objects connecting them without assuming that every artist, curator or technician has the same responsibilities. This complements curatorial accounts and neighbouring participation-focused reviews (Chen & Mao, 2026; Graham & Cook, 2010; Nikolakopoulou & Koutsabasis, 2025; Paul, 2008). A festival, laboratory and museum can be compared in terms of reported arrangements while their institutional differences remain visible.

The second contribution is a distinction between reported action and decision rights. Fama and Jensen's (1983) separation of decision management and control helps identify questions that a general role label leaves unanswered. Brandon's acquisition account, for example, distinguishes a curator's proposal from committee ratification (Engel et al., 2018). The episode chart separates attributable choices, explicit approvals and their stated basis, rather than treating every choice as an exercise of formal authority. It also separates immediate execution from different forms of subsequent responsibility. Figure 4 summarises these reporting distinctions; the counts measure what was charted, not what authority participants possessed.

Read alongside these recent studies, the synthesis places their accounts of technical support, local knowledge exchange and professional boundary-work within a broader comparison (Aristidou & Stylianou-Lambert, 2024; Jeon et al., 2024; Yeğinsü, 2025). It asks whether participants identified as contributing to collaborative work are also named as making choices, giving explicit approval or holding subsequent responsibility for the relevant work or activity. Across the reviewed reports, those connections were documented unevenly. This cautions against inferring shared decision rights from collaboration or brokerage alone. The contribution is therefore a comparison of what published accounts make visible about work and decisions; missing attributions remain gaps in reporting, not proof that responsibilities were absent in practice.

The third contribution is to identify where further observation is needed. Okhuysen and Bechky (2009) associate coordination with accountability, predictability and common understanding. Calendars, task tables and shared documentation in this corpus can be read through that framework, but the review did not measure those three conditions or compare their effectiveness. Its contribution is to identify missing attribution and to formulate

questions about responsibility. Whether records carried between showings alter the next division of labour remains an untested proposition, not a demonstrated feedback process.



Figure 4. Reporting distinctions and cross-dimension propositions. The descriptive bars refer to 108 realised or ongoing episodes; nine proposed actions are excluded. Choice, execution and subsequent responsibility are separately coded and may co-occur. Explicit approval or agreement is a distinct indicator and does not establish a formal entitlement. The conceptual dimensions organise the synthesis in Table 6; their placement does not represent a causal model. Subsequent responsibility includes close-out, rights and continuing-care scopes.

Implications for Curatorial Practice

The following suggestions arise from reporting gaps and illustrative cases; the review has not tested their costs or effectiveness. At a project's outset, participants could identify consequential decisions and record who proposes, chooses, approves, implements and retains responsibility for each. The record should distinguish an actual action from the authority permitting it, and specify how disagreements are referred or resolved. Studio contracts illustrate that some role boundaries can be discussed early (Wang & Nino Carreras,

2021). The Macao case also illustrates an explicit limit to organisers' involvement when artists choose whether to mint NFTs (Estadieu et al., 2023).

During production, technical acceptance and artistic approval can be recorded separately: a working system does not by itself establish that a version is artistically authorised. A dated approval such as Cheang's approval of the Brandon prototypes illustrates the distinction (Engel et al., 2018). During display, responsibilities for failures and content changes can be identified without assuming that an artist who performs upkeep must be its formally designated owner. At close-out, a return or handover plan should distinguish practical transport and finance duties from continuing custody and care. The ISEA2015 account shows why this distinction matters even when tasks are eventually completed (Turnbull Tillman & Velonaki, 2016).

For re-display, what matters is the record the next team inherits. It should set out which conditions must not change and how far the rest may vary. Just as useful are a route to the artist or a delegate and a named keeper for each shared object, with a term for how long. Contracts can carry such terms, as when guidelines based on the variable media approach (Rinehart & Ippolito, 2014) were added to the Guggenheim's legal contracts and purchase agreements (Engel et al., 2018). Smithson (2019) describes a regional gallery's plan to agree at commissioning who may display and reproduce a work, and to record interviews with collaborators and technicians as well as with the artist. That last step could make less visible technical and operational work easier to trace.

Limitations and Future Research

The synthesis is bounded by two databases, English-language publication and three source types: journal articles, conference papers and book chapters. Neither reference lists nor grey literature were searched. Contracts, condition reports and other operational records may contain details absent from publications, so part of the apparent authority gap may follow from the search boundary. Some of the 11 reports recorded as not retrieved might qualify.

Source and coding limitations also constrain interpretation. Participant accounts can be detailed while still reflecting a particular position in the work. Shared institutions or authors may create contextual dependence, but do not justify automatically merging distinct reports. More detailed accounts contribute more episodes, and one coded passage may encompass several related choices. Episode frequencies are consequently neither independent observations nor estimates of how common a practice is. The eight named subsequent holders concern different responsibility scopes; the broad report-level coverage indicator also includes intended responsibilities and standing rules. Fifteen reports are set in Europe or North America. The exploratory subsets show what changes under specified omissions, but do not substitute for critical appraisal or independent coding. None of the counts establishes comparative effectiveness or absence of unreported practices.

Future research could follow decision episodes as they unfold. An ethnographic or longitudinal study that traced one work from commission to re-display would capture what the literature leaves out, above all who approves a collaborator's contribution and who keeps the work once the exhibition closes. Read with permission, contracts and production files would show whether the gap lies in practice or in publication. The functions that seldom write

about themselves, such as programming and installation, deserve accounts of their own. Projects made with communities and Indigenous artists need particular care, since there the question of who approves extends to who may speak for a community or a cultural tradition (Turner & Hennessy, 2025; Valenzuela Dow et al., 2026). Comparative work could ask whether the differences between production, organising and conservation reports reflect genres of publication or real differences in how these activities are governed. Studies in additional languages and regional settings could broaden this geographically concentrated corpus. The field studies from Beijing and Turkey also point to funding conditions that a single-project lens can miss (Lyu & Dolah, 2025; Yeğinsü, 2025). Finally, the suggestions for practice could be tried in real projects, to learn whether naming decisions early changes what later keepers inherit.

Conclusion

The 24 charted reports, published from 2016 to the search date in 2026, describe cross-professional work across production, organising and conservation. Functions are frequently combined, brokers connect contributors, and expertise, space and funding shape reported arrangements. Shared objects carry work between functions, but their presence does not establish who holds authority or subsequent responsibility. Separating actual choice, explicit approval, execution and the scope of subsequent duties makes these distinctions visible. The episode chart contains 117 episodes, of which 108 are realised or ongoing; the counts describe the published record rather than the frequency of decisions in practice.

The review offers a framework for reading collaborative arrangements and developing questions for future investigation. Its propositions remain exploratory. Further study of contracts, production files and observed work is needed to establish how reported choices relate to formal rights and continuing responsibilities.

For digital works that are installed or re-made across successive showings, a record of who selected or approved a version, who implemented it and who retains which responsibilities may help later teams interpret the work. Testing that proposition is a task for subsequent research.

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Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest.

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