

Documenting artistic networks: Anna Oppermann's Ensembles are scale free networks!

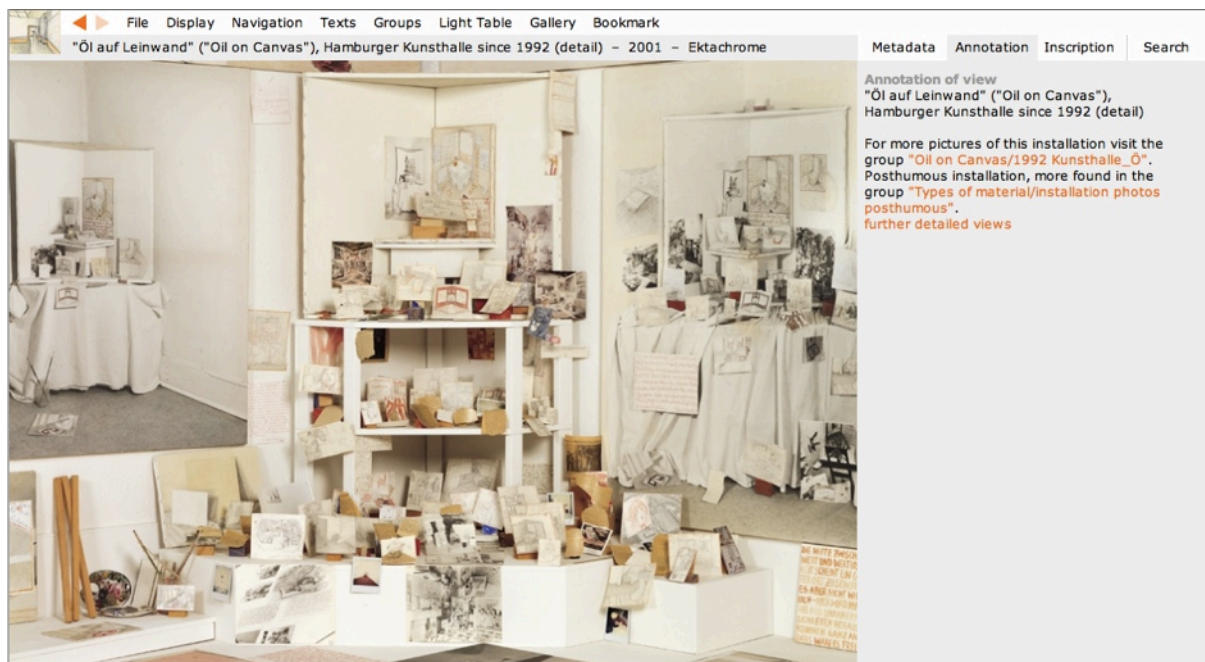
PD Dr. Martin Warnke <warnke@leuphana.de>
Carmen Wedemeyer, M. A. <wedemeyer@leuphana.de>

The late Anna Oppermann (1940-1993), participant of the documenta 6 and 8 and of the Venice (1980) and Sydney (1984) biennials invented an artistic practice of ever re-representating objects recursively: depicting depicted pictures. Her »Ensembles« vary in size, from a few to tens of thousands of objects. Her artistic form could grow almost limitless, not exhibiting any typical scale. She created offspring ensembles by layering them, and art critics and historians found varying metaphors for them as »mirror cabinets« or »jungles«.

We have developed a software system to document this kind of artwork and generalized it to become an everyday medium for image scientists (hyperimage.eu). With our technology everyone can investigate her image networks thoroughly in every detail.

http://www.uni-lueneburg.de/hyperimage/HI_Kunsthalle/

An excerpt of the Ensemble "Öl auf Leinwand" (since 1992) that can be visited at the url above, consisting of approximately 100 objects, shows her recursive strategy of representation. A mouse click on any of the depicted objects leads to its full view, again showing other pictures, until the very beginning is reached:



The Ensembles we investigated show a power law behaviour not known to the artist, when the number of images is plotted against the number of their image links. The reason of their ability to grow, robustness, peculiar artistic appeal turns out to be their scale free network nature.

We have proven scale free networks to be the artistic means of a famous artist, and we have introduced a software system that enables everyone to build image networks by linking image details to one another as Aby Warburg did with paper in his Mnemosyne atlas.