English summary

Friends and family often inherit artwork of deceased fine artists with whom they were close. Only few of those artists belong to the top. Their work can be found in the Dutch State collection. The reputation of these famous artists is not likely to fade away. Their work will remain visible and in demand. But what about the works of art produced by less- known artists? In contrast to famous artists, the newsworthiness and visibility of less-known artists fades as soon as they die. Friends and family, responsible for the work they have left behind, often lack the financial means to provide sufficient publicity and visibility. They also lack time and knowledge in the field of collection management. As a result these collections are in jeopardy. They face oblivion.

In this exploratory research I look to uncover best practice in the collection management of deceased contemporary artists, who do not belong to the top. This way I hope to find a general strategy to improve the visibility of their work.

The research consists of three parts. Through literature I view the role of the Dutch government in the origin of the collections concerned and the way she deals with collections of Dutch cultural heritage. I also describe existing initiatives, recommended during my research, that may serve as best practice. Empirical research by means of interviews with parties concerned and a survey among fine artists gives an insight into existing practices of collection management by professionals and non-professionals.

Even though there were no best practices as a whole, parts could contribute to a general strategy. Exploitation of storage and exhibition space could be run by combined efforts. Cataloguing of art work could take place on a platform that complies with open standards. It would enable professional and non-professional collection managers and artists alike to upload and download their work, together with appropriate metadata. The platform could serve as a publicity tool, as an archive and as an information source. It would require public-private cooperation, in which public organizations, concerned with standards and visibility of cultural heritage, provide the technology. In return they receive metadata they otherwise would have to create themselves. Private parties see their efforts translated into a sustainable product.

Metadata should be created only once, preferably by the artists themselves. Therefore collection management should be part of any curriculum in art education. A survey to monitor both requirements and willingness to participate in a standardized infrastructure is also recommended, as well as a quantitative research into the amount of collections concerned.